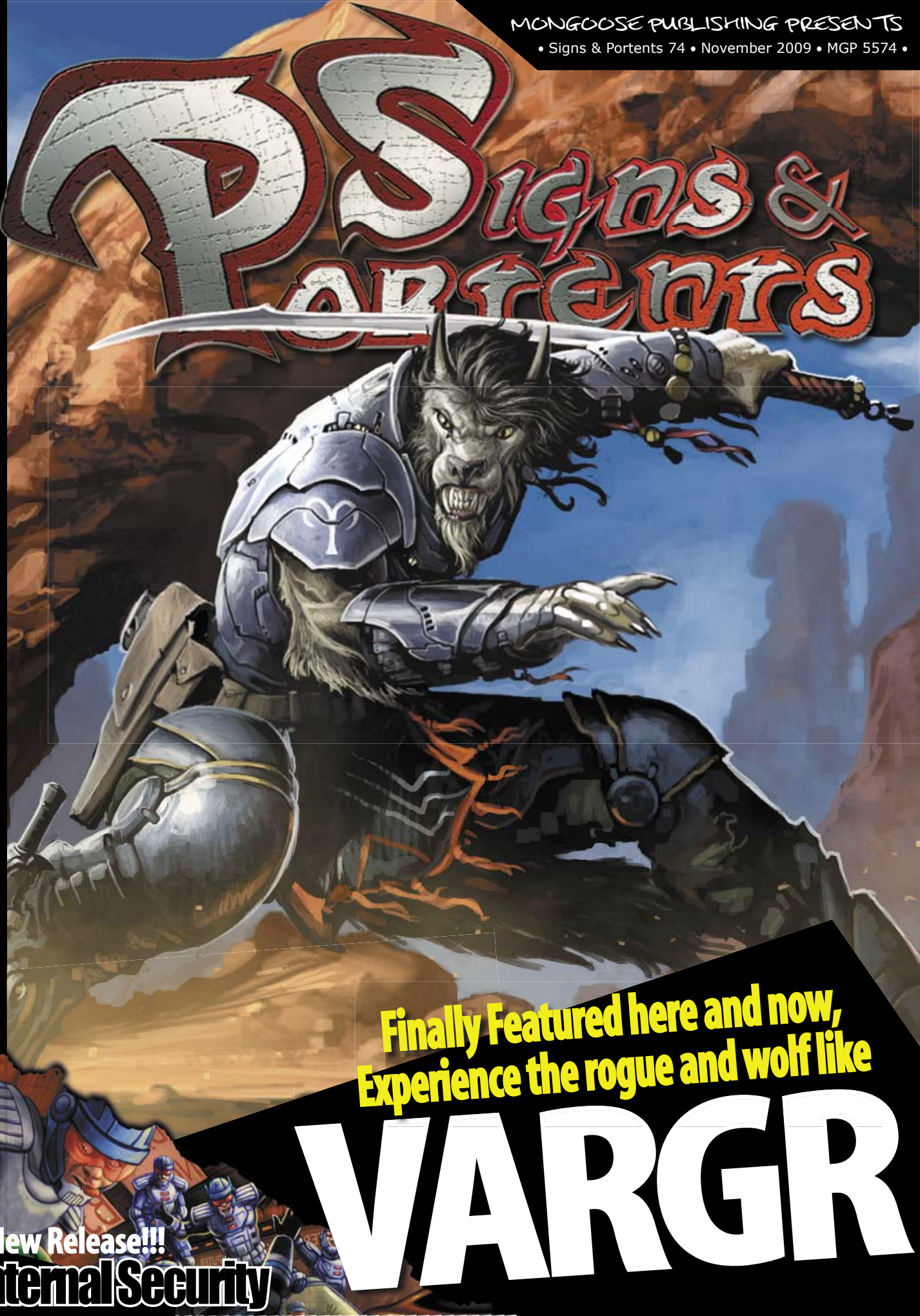


MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

• Signs & Portents 74 • November 2009 • MGP 5574 •

Also This Month: **Gamefest 09** - This years coverage • **Conan** - Cimmerian Moons • **Earthdawn** - Buried Truths



Finally Featured here and now,  
Experience the rogue and wolf like

**VARGR**

New Release!!!  
**Internal Security**

# COMING THIS ISSUE

□ □ □	Mongoose News	4
□ □ □	Convention Diary	5
□ □ □	Featurettes	6
□ □ □	New Releases	8
□ □ □	Conan's Score of Steel	14
□ □ □	Gamefest 09	18
□ □ □	The Fine Art of World Domination	22
□ □ □	Buried Truths	28
□ □ □	Artism	48
□ □ □	A Friend in Need	50
□ □ □	Habakkuk Class Aircraft Carrier	52
□ □ □	Halloween at Mongoose Halls 09	54
□ □ □	Heavy Systems Defense Boat	56
□ □ □	Village of Eshnar	60
□ □ □	Cimmerian Moons	68
□ □ □	Legacy of War	76
□ □ □	S&P Contribution Information	86

□ □ □	Mongoose
□ □ □	Features
□ □ □	Traveller
□ □ □	Lone Wolf
□ □ □	Conventions
□ □ □	Conan
□ □ □	RuneQuest
□ □ □	Paranoia
□ □ □	Flaming Cobra
□ □ □	Information
□ □ □	Miscellaneous



# Editorial



Halloween has been and gone, the leaves are changing, the chestnuts are roasting and now you have the penultimate issue of S&P for 2009. My, how the time flies. In fact, just last week I was in Sicily, climbing Mount Etna and "sampling" all of the local vino. Now I am sat in the studio with the windows veiled to prevent myself from witnessing the horror that is the British autumnal weather!

Still, on the plus side, here is a brand spanking new issue of S&P! We have plenty to tickle the taste buds, including the first part of an Earthdawn article that I mightily enjoyed editing, so I am sure that you guys will enjoy playing it!

I shall leave you with a picture from the side of Mount Etna... and let us all learn the lesson of why you don't build a house on a live volcano!

Have a good month



Charlie

# Credits

## Editor

Charlotte Law

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Ben Wooten

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# Mongoose News

By Charlotte Law

## State of the Mongoose

The State of the Mongoose 2009 will be released at the end of November. It will be posted on our forums as usual and will look back over this year, as well as looking forward to what you can expect from Mongoose Publishing in 2010.

## Unfortunate Delays

Due to some unexpected delays a couple of releases have been unavoidably detained. *Military Vehicles* and *Paranoia: Internal Security* will now be appearing in November so keep a watch on the Mongoose website for delivery status.

## RuneQuest what?!

There have been several rumours flying about the internet over the past few months, with many a die hard fan screaming "RuneQuest II... what the heck is that?" For those of you who are in the dark about this latest development to the *RuneQuest* line, there is a post on Planet Mongoose. Also *RuneQuest* fans will not want to miss the State of the Mongoose later this month!

## Mongoose Movie Magic

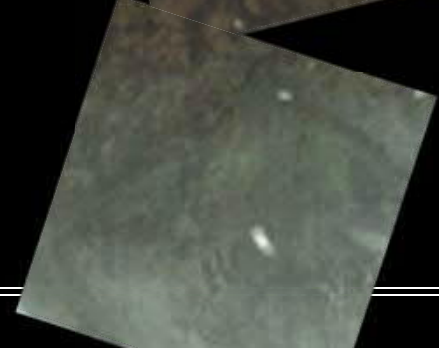
Mongoose has just signed a major new property, with a major film studio. This will see the development of new games for next year. The specific property, and what we intend to do with it, will all be revealed in the State of the Mongoose so, once again, stay tuned!

## Traveller en Français!

Our French translation team are currently working away at the translation of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. This should be ready for release in the next few months so keep an eye on the upcoming releases section of the Mongoose Website.

## Minis Mayhem 2010

We have a host of new miniatures games planned for 2010. The first of the new sculptures are being prepared right now and we shall be unveiling them in all their glory and wonder very soon so keep an eye out!



# Convention Diary

## Ludicrus '09

Kesgrave Community Centre, Ipswich, UK  
Sat 5th - Sun 6th Dec 2009

[www.ludicrus.org](http://www.ludicrus.org)

## Siege of Augusta

Doubletree Hotel, 2651 Perimeter Pkwy, Augusta, GA, USA  
Fri 22nd - Sun 24th January 2010

<http://www.siegeofaugusta.com/cgi/index.php>

# The Awesometer

Generic events that get our hearts racing (or sometimes not) each and every month!

## Will Chapman's TOP 5 Mythological Heroes

5. Brünnhilde – A Norse figure who appears in a few stories most notably the Nibelungenlied as a Valkyrie in the employ of Odin, she fell in love with a human hero named Siegfried, this story is full of both heroism and tragedy; a must read.
4. Cú Chulainn – The Hound of Ulster was an epic Celtic hero who had many adventures defending his homeland and people, one of the main reasons Cú Chulainn stands out for me is his weapon, the Gáe Bulg! A barbed spear with an awesome name.
3. Gilgamesh – Maybe the oldest story ever found was the Epic of Gilgamesh, about a - demi god king who raised huge structures to defend his people; you can't get more heroic than that.
2. Heracles – You may know him as Hercules, read about his 12 labours and then deny this guy is heroic, if you ever get the chance to watch the T.V show Hercules: The legendary journeys, do so, KEVIN SORBO!!!
1. King Arthur – There is history to back up the fact that King Arthur actually existed but I believe there is a movie quote "when legend becomes fact, print the legend". The legend of the hero king and his magical sword are more than enough to send Arthur to the top of my list.

# AWESOME

Bonfire Night!!!  
Fireworks and Toffee  
Apples, Americans  
and the rest of the  
world just don't know  
what their missing!



Thanksgiving!!!  
Turkey and Family  
Gatherings, Britains  
and the rest of the  
world just don't know  
what they're  
missing!

Assassins Creed 2,  
If you have not  
played the first one,  
drag yourself out  
from under that  
rock and get ready



Coming back  
to work after a  
vacation... need we  
say more?



Gift Vouchers  
Suck... Especially  
when irrelevant,  
Newly engaged  
couples don't want  
more clothes, we  
want vacations!!!

Last minute release  
changes, the UK  
release of Blazblue  
was put back to  
January, days before  
it was due out!! We  
want this game!



# GRUESOME

# The Timeline

A visual guide to get your tails wagging for future Mongoose releases

December: Traveller is the next line to turn French

January: Look out for the Mega-City One Archives

February: It's a Secret...



# ???

# Quote of the Month

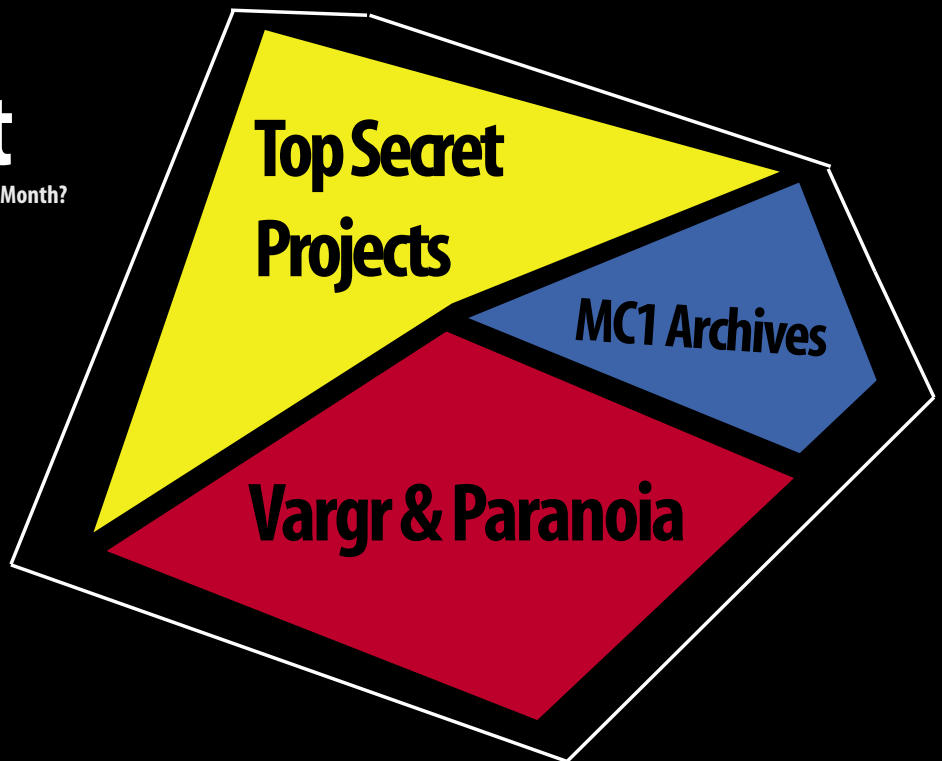
Which phrases have been flying around the office more than the dogs ball?

## Dilly Dally, Shilly Shally

**S**ometimes when you look over at someone, they just seem to be staring into space.... well thats when they seem to be stuck in limbo, worrying or overthinking about whatever is in their head at the time. We get that a lot in the office and have many moments where you just can't find that extra special piece of something that gets you moving again. So don't Dilly Dally and get a move on, while your're staring into Space life is just drifting by. Aswell as that infamous deadline.

## The Time Chart

What have we been spending our time on at Mongoose this Month?



... No Really.....

March: This one's a big Secret too

April: It wil not be like this next month, Honestly

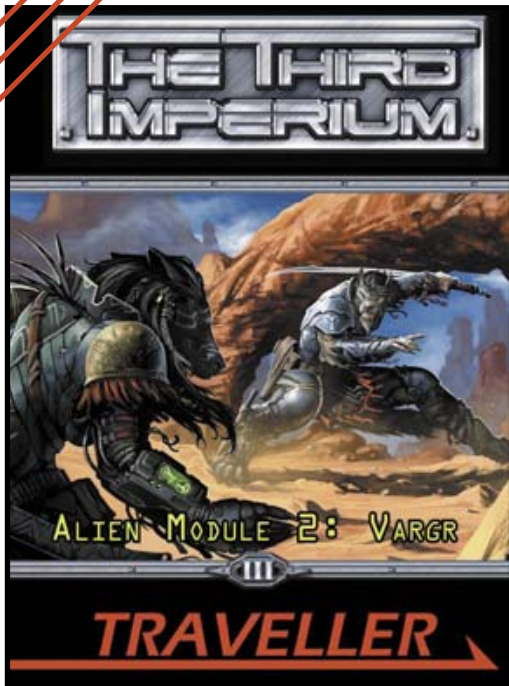
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# November 09 Releases



*Alien Module 2: Vargr*

Price: \$34.99

Format: Hardback (184 pages)

MGP3825

*Callously viewed by other races as thieves, vagabonds and pirates, the wolf-like Vargr are a complex and varied race whose society is light years beyond their stereotype. Alien Module 2: Vargr peels back the layers of prejudice to reveal a fascinating race who have a powerful effect on their region of the galaxy.*

*This book is packed with information for both players and referees. New rules for careers allow players to create their own Vargr characters, which are then well served by technology and ships designed by and for the Vargr. Chapters are devoted to playing a Vargr and how their society and culture are structured. Finally, we have also included a complete sector to explore, meshing seamlessly with the Spinward Marches – the Gvurdon sector.*

*Earthdawn: Ardanyan's Revenge*

Price: \$24.99

Format: Softback (104 pages)

## JEALOUSY

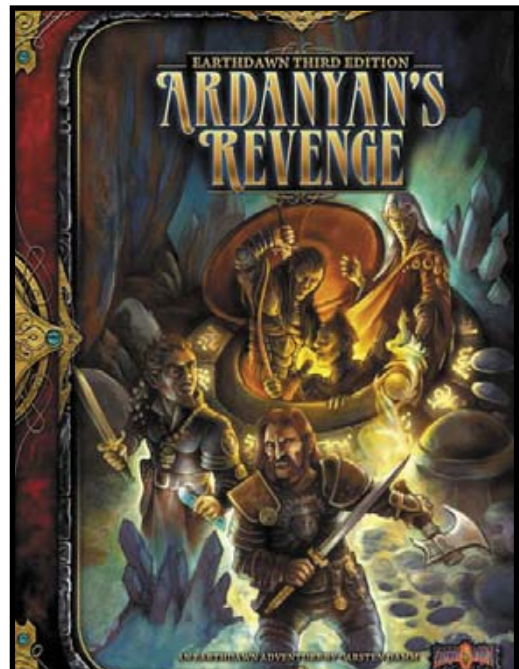
*When the Scourge was imminent, the people of the town of Ardanyan sought shelter in an underground kaer, expecting only the Horrors to be a threat. During the centuries of confinement, small quarrels grew into conflicts, which in turn developed into blood feuds and racial hatred. The Horrors would gladly have fed on Kaer Ardanyan—if only they had found it...*

## BITTERNESS

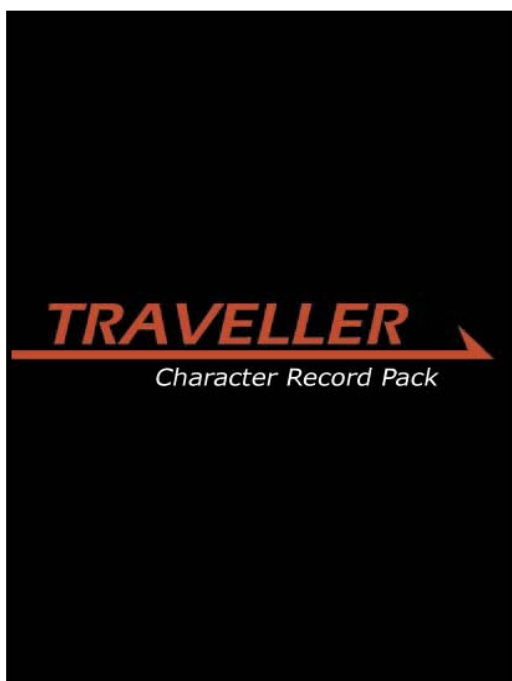
*For generations a secret society betrayed the unsuspecting citizens of Ardanyan. Now they struggle to keep their terrible secret. The player characters are the spark igniting a bonfire of intrigue, deceit, and illusion. But the heroes have to be careful not to fall victim to the flames while on their dangerous quest to save the residents of a lost kaer!*

## VENGEANCE

*Ardanyan's Revenge is an adventure supplement for Earthdawn Third Edition. Intended for Novice and Initiate characters of any Discipline, this book provides comprehensive information on starting an Earthdawn game for kaer-dwelling characters, but integrates easily into any running Earthdawn campaign. Requires use of the Earthdawn Player's and Gamemaster's Guides.*







Everything you ever wanted to know about your character can be found in the Traveller Character Record Pack. From your character's career history, to a detailed summary of all the allies and enemies he has collected over the years, you will never be caught by surprise by a new turn of events!

*Traveller Character Pack*

*Price: \$9.99*

*Format: Softback (24 pages)*

*MGP 3826*

*Les Cultes de la Loi ont depuis toujours essayé d'éradiquer les Cultes du Chaos. Au cours de cette période conflictuelle, plus d'un livre est passé au bûcher, réduit en cendres par les feux de la Loi. Ce manuscrit contient un de ces livres que l'on avait cru perdu comme le reste ; une enquête a révélé au monde toute la magie qu'il contenait.*

*La Magie des Jeunes Royaumes contient des trésors d'informations, qui ne concernent pas uniquement les alliés du Chaos. Dans ces pages, vous trouverez de nouvelles runes, ainsi que des conseils sur la façon de les utiliser efficacement. Des sorts d'invocations, inconnus jusqu'à présent, vont vous aider à conjurer des démons redoutables pour vous servir.*

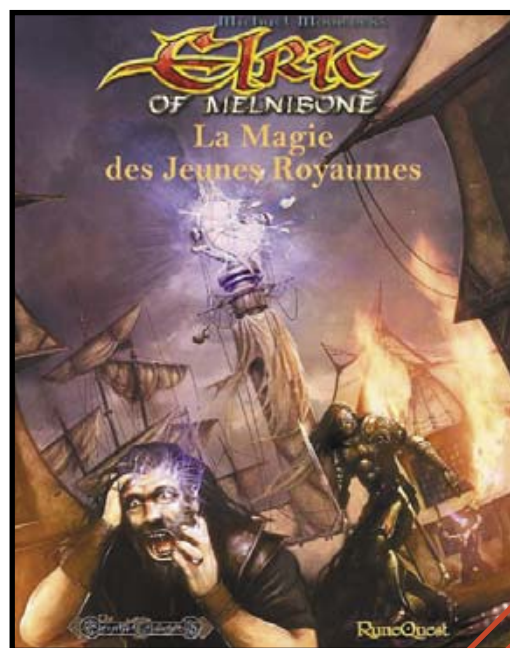
*Ce livre comprend non seulement un guide des Voies Élémentaires, mais aussi des descriptions approfondies et des indications sur les emplacements des textes anciens, remplis de secrets magiques dépassant l'imagination des sorciers les plus expérimentés.*

*Lankhmar Unleashed*

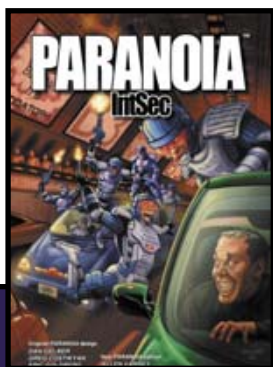
*Price: \$35.00*

*Format: Softback (152 pages)*

*MGP 8168*



# November 09 Releases



*The mandatory enjoyment of Paranoia's 25th Anniversary continues! With this high-security book, players can leave behind the trials and tribulations of Troubleshooters and instead bask in the joy of being Blue level Internal Security Troopers – to serve, to protect, to vaporise!*

*With a very different mission briefing, players will jump at the chance to play Troopers, the brave citizens who stand between Alpha Complex and the criminal minds who seek to subvert it. There is no way the dangers that plague Troubleshooters could follow them into this elite service. None at all.*

*There will be brand new dangers instead!*

*Blue Line is the limited edition version of Internal Security, demanded by fans, sporting a new cover matching that of Black Missions. Strictly limited to just 100 copies worldwide, Blue Line can only be found on the Mongoose web site. It will not be appearing in stores.*

*Paranoia: Internal Security - Blue Line*

*Price: \$49.99*

*Format: Hardback (184 pages)*

*Paranoia: Internal Security*

*Price: \$39.99*

*Format: Hardback (184 pages)*

*MGP6668*

*Dragon Warriors - Prince of Darkness*

*Price: \$19.99*

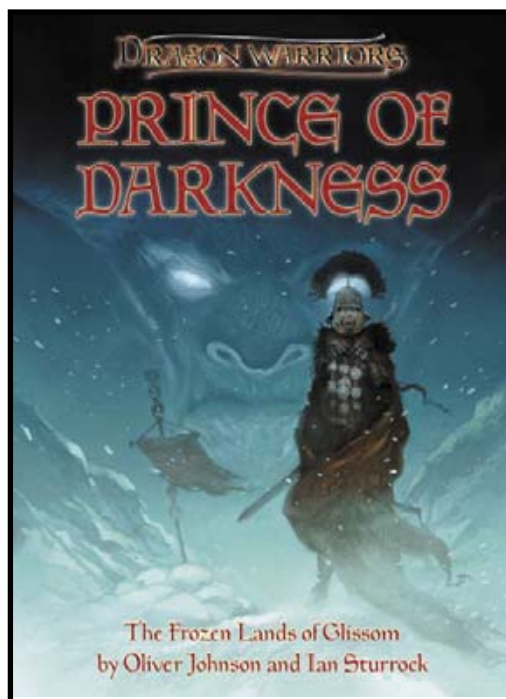
*Format: Softback (88 pages)*

*The tiny fief of Glissom sits at the northernmost tip of Ellesland, caught between icy wastes and warlike neighbours. Like its mountains, its culture seems to have been frozen by the ice: even its busy merchant-port is a throw-back to an earlier time, while bands of bloodied reivers stalk the roads and rivers, while folk-tales speak of ancient giants and stranger beings among the glaciers in the Brack Mountains.*

*When the PCs befriend a swashbuckling adventurer only to discover he is the heir to the throne, they find themselves caught up in what looks like a power-struggle for control of the fief. But it spirals out of control at dizzying speed and they find themselves on a race against time to rediscover a long-lost city buried in the ice--and its terrifying occupants.*

*They will face implacable enemies, bizarre monsters and near-insane cultists set on raising the Prince of Darkness himself.*

*'Prince of Darkness' is for Dragon Warriors characters of ranks 5-7. Written by fantasy author Oliver Johnson, with additional material by Adrian Bott and Ian Sturrock, it provides Dragon Warriors' trademark blend of classic fantasy and ancient horror. Jon Hodgson provides a chilling cover.*





*The Spinward Marches awaits your exploration in this huge poster map, featuring every system, trade link and starbase in the sector. Beautifully illustrated in full colour, this map is the first in a series that will allow you to explore the entire Third Imperium and beyond, joining posters together to form one gigantic map!*

*Includes a full key to aid navigation.*

*Spinward Marches Map Pack*

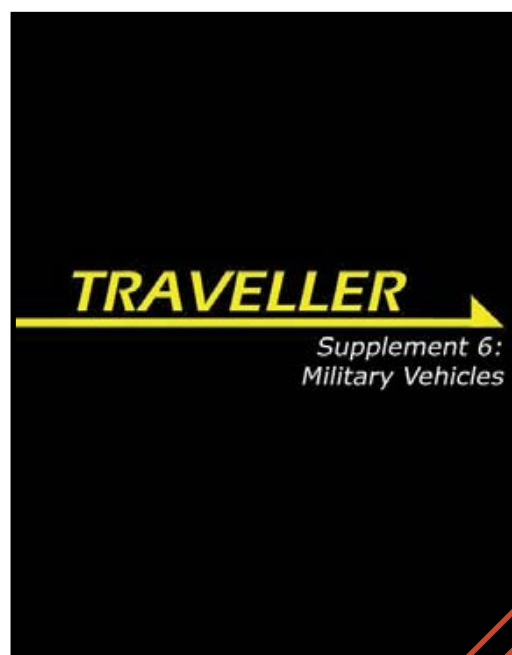
*Price: \$9.99*

*Format: Poster (1 page)*

*MGP 3827*

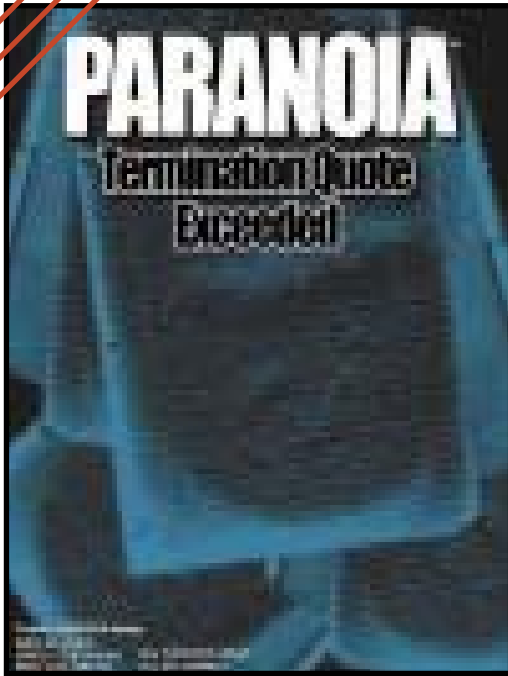
*Traveller: Military Vehicles*  
*Price: \$24.95*  
*Format: Softback (104 pages)*  
*MGP 3822*

*Sometimes battle dress is just not enough. Upgrading the vehicle creation system from Civilian Vehicles, Military Vehicles gives you the armour and weaponry you need for mass destruction. From simple scout skimmers to heavy self-propelled guns, to giant walking mecha, Military Vehicles contains everything a Traveller needs for self-defence on the road, in the wilderness and in the skies.*





# November 09 Releases



*Your termination quota's exceeded, but your happiness index is still way down in the doldrums of despair, and your loyalty index ain't looking too good. Total Security means that everything's tracked and monitored, including your own dwindling chances of survival. There's a whole sector of traitors out there, and your gun won't fire until the next business day. You've got the BLUE clearance blues.*

*A 32-page mission for IntSec Agents.*

*Paranoia - Termination Quota Exceeded*

*Price: \$9.95*

*Format: Softback (32 pages)*

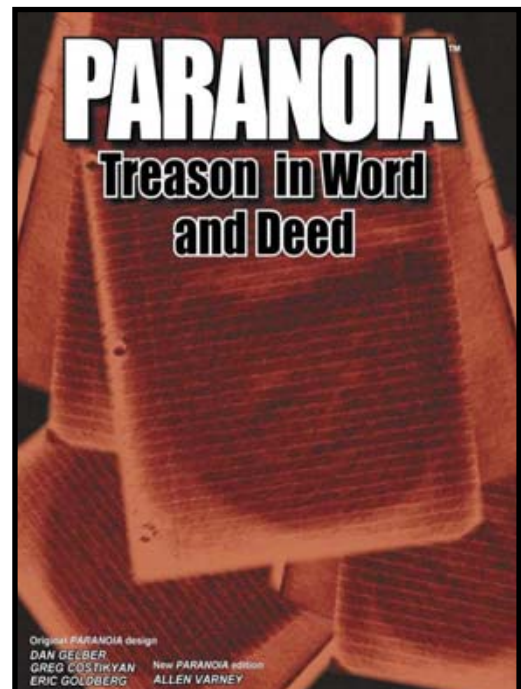
*Paranoia - Treason in Word and Deed*

*Price: \$9.95*

*Format: softback (32 pages)*

*Troubleshooters! Internal Security believes that there is a traitor in your team! Therefore, you will be locked inside this vault for the next 72 hours and subjected to a series of rigorous psychological tests to determine your loyalty. If you are loyal, you have nothing to fear (except extreme physical discomfort, lack of oxygen, potential psychological damage and accidental termination). However, if you are a despicable traitor, then you will be uncovered and punished! Seal the vault! Let the testing commence!*

*A 32-page deathtrap, er, mission for Troubleshooters.*



Original PARANOIA design  
DAN GELBER  
GREG COSTIKYAN  
ERIC GOLDBERG  
New PARANOIA edition  
ALLEN VARNEY



TRAVELLER

THE IMPERIAL

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING

[www.mongoosepublishing.com](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com)





# CONAN'S<sup>®</sup>

## SCORE OF STEEL

Every month the guys at Mongoose will be looking to bring you their reviews and opinions on some of the hottest events happening around the world, from Movies, Video Games, Books and naturally Hobby Gaming, of course we all need some scoring assistance.



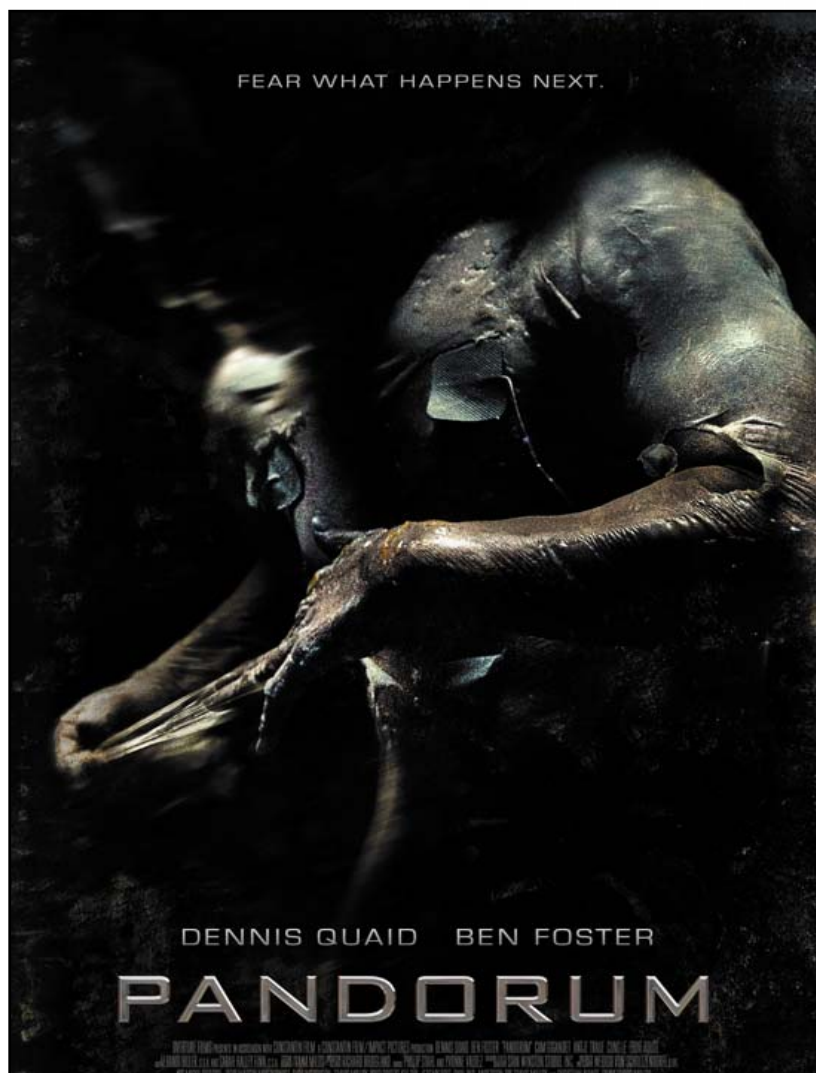
## Pandorum

By Bryan Steele

\*\*\*WARNING: SPOILERS AHEAD\*\*\*

When one of my best friends came over and said, 'I have to show you the trailer for *Pandorum*,' I was a bit shocked that I had not yet heard of the movie. Two minutes and fourteen seconds later, I knew I needed to see this film. Unlike so many trailers that are coming out these days, it did not give away the details of the movie, show the best shocks or ruin a surprise ending by flashing a particular scene. It simply showed a man waking up in cryofreeze on a deserted ship, finding that he is alone on a dark vessel filled with darting shadows and perfect jump-scares. I was hooked. When it came into theatres, I grabbed the wife and made a date of it – and I did not leave unhappy.

*Pandorum* is a good representation of a dark future for earth. It places the protagonists in a position that no audience member would care to find themselves in and constantly makes us wonder what happened to make things go so very, very wrong. Although it reminded in some ways





to one of my other favourite space thrillers, *Event Horizon*, it was definitely an original concept that was great fun to watch and discuss with my wife later.

## The Plot

The movie starts off by telling us that war, crime and poor resource management has the human race looking for places to colonise. Scientists, whose deep space probes find an earth-like planet that seems unpopulated but habitable, send titanic sleeper ships to start new populations. One of these ships, the *Elysium* (an ironic name, considering it means 'paradise'), is shown in the first few moments of the movie in all its glory. Truly immense, the ship takes several minutes to pass through the screen fully, with the camera eventually focussing in on the command bridge area.

We are shown to a crew cryofreeze area where our main protagonist, Colonel Bower, wakes up suddenly in a deactivating cryofreeze chamber. It obviously causes him some panic, as he seems extremely distraught by his waking. Colonel Bower is suffering from normal cryogenic side-effects but the amnesia involved makes him question everything. This scene is disturbing for several reasons but the primary reason it is so believable is for Ben Foster's amazing acting. Foster is one of my absolute favourite actors that has appeared in the last 10 years and he does not disappoint here. From the strain in his eyes and the bulge of his veins, you can honestly feel the pain he is going through. Pulling long life support tubes out of his veins, dealing with badly atrophied

muscles and tearing the protective layer of chemical skin off of his own are visceral scenes and cringe-worthy.

Finding a series of numbers on his arm that label him as fleet bridge staff, Bower gets a grip upon himself. As Bower starts to understand what has happened to him, we begin to understand that his military fleet training is cutting through the haze of amnesia. He somehow knows exactly which hidden levers and flushed panels to activate in order to get dressed, open doors and turn on a few emergency lights. Despite the look of curiosity and confusion on his face, he remains able to function like he belongs on the ship.

Once awake and fully dressed, Bower comes across empty cryo-tube after empty cryo-tube, until he eventually finds the tube containing another bridge officer – Payton (played by Dennis Quaid). Payton goes through a similar shock of coming out of freeze but recovers quickly and soon the two of them are trying to figure out what happened and why they cannot get out of the ready room they are in. When they decide to send Bower down into the conduit tunnels and access spaces between the decks, they hope to get him to the ship's reactor to get it turned back on. With full power, they may be able to see where they are and get the ship back on track.

This is the point in which the movie turns from a mysterious space drama into a proper thriller. After finding

a long dead crewman in the tunnels, Bower gets down onto another deck, where he finds more empty tubes and full equipment lockers. During his search he discovers what he thinks is a dead body strung up by some kind of snare-trap. The body turns out to be a surviving crewman, who is panicked and terrified of something. This crewman is so afraid that he has completely abandoned the idea of the chain of command and ignores Bower – especially when strange lights appear.

The lights are torches held by humanoid *things* that are fast, monstrous and violently carnivorous. These things are stalking the decks of the ship and Bower finds himself in need of a weapon. Arming himself with a very cool arm-mounted riot gun, he continues his search for the reactor.

While Bower is searching, Payton makes a discovery. A bloody and horrified man crawls out of the access tunnels, revealing himself to be bridge crewman Gallo. Gallo has a twisted story about the cryo-freeze sickness known as 'pandorum', which causes people who have slept too long to become paranoid and self-destructive. The audience is sure that Gallo is suffering from the sickness already but the early symptoms have also been seen in both Bower and Payton.

Bower's search puts him in contact with two non-military passengers, a scientist woman named Nadia and a puissant agriculturist who doesn't speak English. Both of these passengers show that a lot more time has passed since Bower was put into freeze after all and that most of the crew have either been killed and eaten by these 'things', or are currently in small bands of survivors on the ship's many levels.

The trio of survivors flee from a large group of the cannibal creatures – which are revealed to be hyper-evolved passengers from the *Elysium*! Evolving to best survive in a strange environment, that of a powered down spacecraft the size of a large city, they are what the human passengers needed to become in order to survive. They find a hiding place they can lock themselves in but quickly discover its owner. The crazed Leland tells them a story about the insane crew member that damned the *Elysium* because



of a horrible onset of pandorum. When his story is over, Leland gasses Bower and his allies – stringing them up to be his next meal. He has to survive somehow...

While the three are trying to survive their crazed captor's hunger, Payton and Gallo's situation worsens. Gallo has seriously started to lose control of his faculties and Payton is soon forced to try to sedate him. They fight viciously and eventually Payton locks Gallo into a cryo-tube.

After convincing Leland to not eat them, but instead help them get to the reactor and save the ship, the now quartet head into the reactor core. They discover that it is used as some kind of nest or breeding orgy grounds for the evolved creatures, making it a dangerous place. I will not give the scene away here but Colonel Bower has to do something terribly disgusting (with an appropriate level of queasy sound effects) to cross the room and reboot the reactor.

Once the reactor has started and the creatures awakened, Bower's group begin the harried foot race toward Payton and the bridge. On the way, Bower discovers a cryo-tube that jogs his memory about Payton...the fact that the man he met in Payton's tube was NOT him! He was Gallo, and he was the one that slaughtered the bridge crew. He was the one suffering from pandorum madness and all of this was effectively his fault.

At the same time, Payton is thrown back into a battle with the somehow freed Gallo. In a cool visual effect, the audience is shown that 'Payton' is Gallo...and that he has been talking and fighting with himself. By the time Bower reaches the now powered-up bridge, Gallo (formerly thought of as Payton) is waiting for them. The creatures are right behind them, only being held back by a rhythmically thrumming doors.

Bower, in an effort to figure out what actually happened to the *Elysium*, triggers open the bridge viewports to look upon the stars – to the dark laughter of Gallo. This is where the audience sees the tragic

truth of *Pandorum*. A computer screen reads off that, instead of the four or six years that Bower thought had passed, it had been over 900 years! Outside the ship, float by huge aquatic organisms; the *Elysium* was underwater, not in space at all. The ship had reached its destination ages ago but crashed into the sea and remained effectively in stasis.

In an open-ended, somewhat positive closing to the movie, Bower and Nadia escape the cannibal creatures and Gallo's insanity by jumping into an escape pod and triggering the jettison ship. They rocket to the surface, shortly followed by dozens of other pods. These pods could be containing colonists that must have never re-awakened previous to the crash, or they might just hold a teeming mass of evolved cannibal monsters.

The new planet could become a new earth...or they could have just unleashed a new hell upon it.

Perhaps both.

**Score: 8/10**



### In Roleplaying

*Traveller* is the perfect system to run a game similar to *Pandorum*. There are several interesting parts of the movie that, in my opinion, scream a good sci-fi game like *Traveller*. The following few points are parts of *Pandorum* that I would (and probably will) like to adapt for my own *Traveller* game.

The first piece of interesting *Pandorum* technology is the presence of hand-powered mini-generators for all sorts of equipment. Starting with a revolution-style generator for the computer terminal, a crank-style wall panel that charges a door enough to open or close and my personal favourite – a knuckle-pump that charges each shot for a kinetic energy firearm. Although they take time to operate, having this sort of power source in *Traveller* could save many credits on power and fusion cells.

Another interesting technology we are told about is medication for colonists designed specifically to speed up biological evolution. While it creates monsters in *Pandorum*, this is because the colonists never made it off the ship. In a normal environment, these sorts of drugs could be an excellent way to augment Player Characters to better survive a dangerous game chronicle. Alternatively a group of Player Characters could be asked to take this medication before a trip, only to find that it works too fast – creating a cast of strange mutants. Messing with biological evolution could be a plot point in and of itself.

Mental illnesses brought on by extended low berth passage may not be something that Player Characters want to ever deal with, but Referees can use some of their symptoms to help set the mood or confuse characters in the most tense of moments. Players finding out how they have been talking or listening to people that are not really there, seeing images that are nothing but hallucinations or being led to believe entire plotlines that are merely dementia; these could be some ways to liven up any gaming chronicle.

Humans play a large role in *Traveller* and creating mutated enemies that were once humans can sometimes place Player Characters in strange moral positions. Could there be a cure? Is it a sin to kill them? What caused such an evolution in the first place? These are questions that could be raised when dealing with humans-turned-mutant. How the players answer is the real entertainment of the plotline; especially when the players disagree on how to proceed.

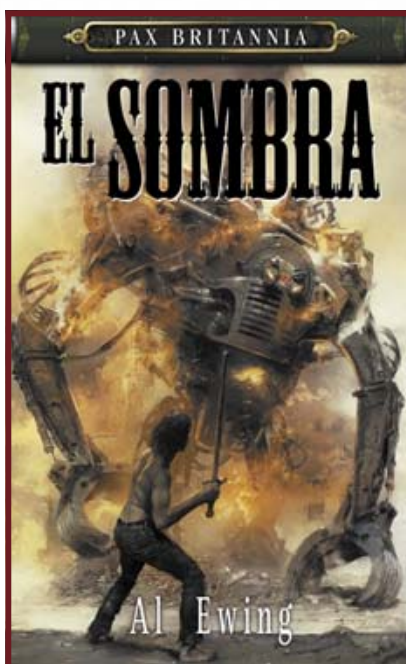
*Pandorum* is a good representation of a planetary colony ship mission gone awry. Seeing the film made me wish I could write more equipment into the *Central Supply Catalogue* and gave me a dozen ideas on how to spice up my own home chronicle of *Traveller*. Even if you do not play or run a science fiction game, I think *Pandorum* is a good enough movie to want to see on its own merits. It has fuelled my desires to put my *Traveller* players into sinister situations and hardships but even if you will just enjoy the creepy environment and dark feel – you should see for yourself.



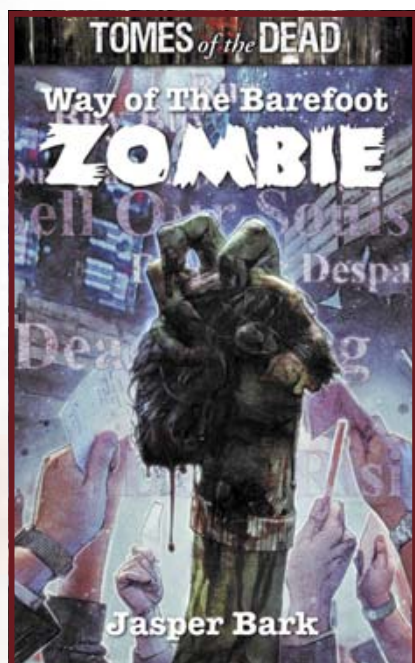
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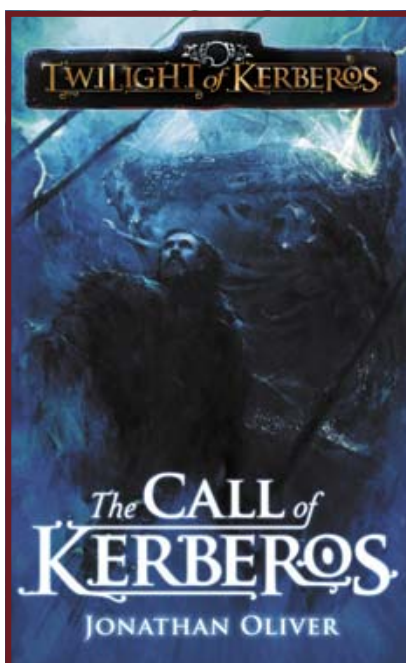
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# GAMEFEST 2009

## By Katrina Hepburn

It was 5am; zombie-like moans came from the bedroom "Mmmnnggg Cup of Tea nngggghhh" resounded through the corridor. "AAAAARRRGGGHHHH!" came from the bathroom as Sandrine caught a glimpse of her hair in the mirror.

It was 5am, and we both needed our caffeine fix before heading off to the Halls of Mongoose to load up the 'laminated books of dreams' that would be placed on sale at Gamesfest 2009.

Hosted by Mark Lucas and Walter Mathews this gaming convention was not one to miss. Despite Matt being a history buff, he was unable to remember that the venue was located at "The Coliseum" in Watford but after passing it three times we eventually arrived.

The Minions of Mongoose scuttled about the stand (including myself), setting up the hoards of books to be placed on sale and making everything sparkly, pristine and presentable for Matt's approval. After we all got a pat on the head, I fanned out from the stand to get a better look at everything and to start snapping pictures.

As well as Mongoose Publishing, dominating the centre aisle there was a whole host of gaming companies selling their wares, including Bob the Diceman from Reaper's Revenge with his masses of



dice, personally I love the solid crystal sets he sells. Triple Ace Games were promoting the next releases of their Hellfrost collection and their latest releases of Savage worlds; Mantic Games Promoting their 'Kings of War' Miniatures and passing out free Elf Scout Miniatures to boot! Otherworld Miniatures who specialise in the old style D&D miniatures that are so hard to find these days and of course Forge World with their masses of Warhammer gear... to name but a few.

To say the tabletop games around the hall looked impressive would be an understatement. In one corner there were 4 large tables in a row hosting huge Warhammer 40k battles, right next to these tables was where I caught up with a man named Bob Long who was setting up a game of Space Hulk and is a Committee Member and Treasure of the Watford Wargames Federation – GCN Club. Now I know how hard it can be to find local gaming communities so whenever I meet up with someone who hosts or runs such communities I

try and get in a mention for all the Signs and Portents fans out there looking for local gaming clubs; so if you live in or near Watford and are looking to meet up with like-minded gamers check out their website at <http://watfordwargames.freeforums.org/> and maybe pop around to join in the fun they have every Wednesday.

In another corner there was The Shire of Thamesreach – Society for Creative Anachronism setting up a visual display of middle

ages combat, these people spent the course of the day taking turns to beat each other senseless with makeshift swords, spears and shields while clad in various amounts of chainmail and plate armour. While they are very serious about their combat techniques, watching these guys is a hoot a second and if you are anything like me, you just can't resist the opportunity to watch anything with even a remote amount of violence. Other Games spread around the hall included Privateer Press Warmachine, Hordes and Board games including Battlestar Galactica, a backstabbingly fun game





and one that seems to frequent the Mongoose Halls Tuesday gaming night.

Several Artists also showed face. David Michael Wright among them who contributed to the Earthdawn books available from Mongoose, as well as Neil Roberts who has also contributed artwork to the annals of Mongoose halls with his covers for Judge Dredd and Strontium Dog. I had a tickle in my stomach as he proceeded to hand sketch a Warhammer Sister of Battle for me.

But the one thing that made this convention stand out is the amount of authors present: one whole side of the hall dedicated to writers, displaying and signing copies of their own published works. New writers showing off their first books included Graham Willerton with his dark rock and roll style of writing and (in contrast) Bob Fischer with his parody sci-fi comedic style. There were also many established writers who have released numerous books, among these included Peter Mark May, Paul McKenzie, Raven Dane, Steve Dean, Robyn Young, Derek Gunn who is having his Vampire Apocalypse book made into a movie.

Also amongst the hoard of authors included many Warhammer writers who were more than willing to sign copies of their books

and chat; Graham McNeill, James Swallow, Sandy Mitchell, David Deveraux (Who forgot to bring copies of his book, so instead posed for a photo with the cover image on his handheld computer, bless him.), Gav Thorpe and Richard Williams who I must say is a funny guy who actually managed to make a sentence from the three random words I gave to him - Ambidextrous, Hippopotamus and Philanthropist. I just wish I had written down a copy of the sentence to include in this article. Needless to say, it was very funny.

While it was an immense pleasure to meet and speak to all of these writers in person, the two writers who were significant for me were Frazer Lee and Steve Jackson. I was shocked when Horror Writer and Director Frasier Lee lifted a plastic pumpkin towards me filled with jellies and said "Want a sweetie!" This phrase was continued by the words "Buahahahaha" but only in my head. A brilliant Horror fiction writer, Frasier Lee passed me a copy of his book titled "Urbane" which I proceeded to read in the car on the way back to the Mongoose offices after the convention and which I believe is also being made into a movie starring Doug Bradley (Pinhead from Hellraiser). This book of both short stories and horror script will have any fan of horror hooked from the first few pages, not to



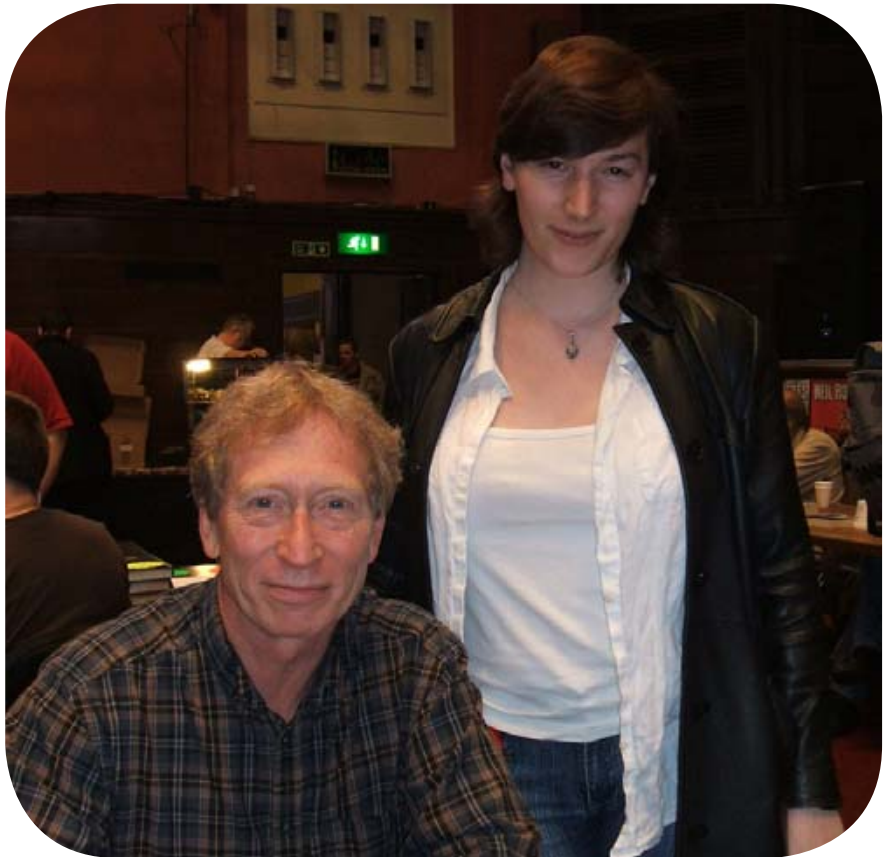
mention the fact that he also plays Dragon Warriors RPG, available from Mongoose! He was an immense pleasure to chin wag with and I'm looking forward to yapping with him again at future conventions.



# GAMEFEST 2009

Steve Jackson was my other personal favourite author; this man made famous from the renowned fighting fantasy collection of novels was a delight to meet in person. My first ever RPG was based in the world created from his fighting fantasy novels and "The Warlock of Firetop Mountain" held a special nostalgic place in my heart as it was the first book I had purchased back in 1985 which subsequently led to my interest in RPG and gaming in general. I stood beside him with a grin that would put the Cheshire cat to shame as he signed my copy of the book with a personal message of "May your stamina never fail!" and said "Of course, why not" to a photo. —————>

Gamesfest for me was so much fun I still have a sore mouth from the constant smile that played on my face throughout the event. A wonderful mix of authors, nostalgia, gaming and the one primary thing that makes each and every convention very special indeed – The brilliant people that come along and get involved in all the activities.





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# The Fine Art of World Domination

By Mark Newman with additional material by Emma Newman

## Using Masterminds in World on Fire

What image springs to mind when you hear the word 'Mastermind'? For me it's Ernst Blofeld, stroking his white cat as he orders his SPECTRE minions around his secret headquarters. Perhaps you envision Auric Goldfinger, delivering the classic line "No Mr. Bond, I expect you to die!" Modern cinema has given us the genius of Ozymandias, the infamous Keyser Söze and even the diabolical Dr Evil. Others may think back to earlier films and literature, evoking Professor Moriarty, Fu Manchu or Cardinal Richelieu.

Each of these villains serves as a counterpoint to the hero of the story, a photo-negative of his very soul. Be he an Irredeemable Monster or a Magnificent Bastard, a good mastermind is never forgotten. Even in defeat, his impact remains. One only has to view the late Heath Ledger's performance as the Joker, a villain so dastardly, yet so entertaining that he upstaged the very hero who thwarted his schemes.

Presented here are five new Masterminds to add to your World on Fire campaign setting. Each is provided with a Spycraft 2.0 stat block and a number of helpful suggestions to aid you when integrating the NPC into your ongoing story.

## Mors

There is a story in the spy community – more an urban legend, really – that speaks of a killer, a hunter and slayer of spies. In truth, this assassin is not so different from the rumours and conjecture. He is an Eternal, one of those secretive immortals who has pulled the world's strings since before anyone knew there were strings to pull. Mors no longer remembers his real name, his age or where he was born. They are all details crushed under the weight of history.

To stave off the ennui of his long existence, Mors hunts everything that can hunt back and in all his many years he has found that spies are among the rare prey worthy of his skill. His hunts can take years and he relishes each kill, his life revolving around the elaborate plots he builds to draw in unsuspecting undercover operatives. The boring ones he kills quickly. The rest... Sometimes he lures their entire teams into complex schemes, toying with them across many missions before silencing them for good.

Mors' secret hideaway is filled with the grisly trophies of centuries. His fondness for mementoes has earned him a terrifying reputation amongst the players of the Great Game.

**Mors (Special NPC – 146 XP):** Init IX; Atk IX; Def X; Resilience V; v/wp V; Competence VI; Skills: Falsify IX, Sneak IX; Wealth VIII; Weapons: Punch dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal, error1, threat 19–20, SZ/Hand D/1h, qualities: *armour-piercing 4, finesse, sure grip*), Smoke Grenade x3 (dmg –, error 1–3, range 10 ft. x 4, SZ/Hand F/1h, qualities: *smoke 25 ft. radius*); Gear: None; Vehicle: None; Qualities: *Class ability (Goliath: unstoppable; Faceman: 1,000 faces, quick change 2/session; Intruder: evasion I, uncanny dodge I), feat (Equilibrium Basics, Faceless, Ghost Basics, Knife Basics, Knife Moves, It's Down To Us, The Long View, Mano a Mano, Sands of Time, Spider Basics, Traceless, Zeroed), mastermind, specialist (Killer), superior attribute (Dex 18, Wis 18), talented (Eternal)*

## Story Seeds

**To Catch a Killer:** The team is assigned to investigate a series of murders in the spy community. Forensic evidence reveals a serial killer, apparently highly skilled, is eliminating targets on all sides of the Great Game. Several disparate groups have united to solve the problem but there are as yet no leads. Each of the bodies appears to have had a bloody trophy cut from its remains. The killer is of course Mors and woe betide the team when he realises that

he is being tracked – assuming that he did not stage the kills as part of a larger, more insidious scheme...

**The Deadliest Prey:** Mors targets a member of the team, having spent months manoeuvring the agents into position, creating false leads and sacrificing minions to lure them in. His henchmen have fed the characters intelligence leading them to believe the situation is dire, ensuring their interest and their backers' investment in what appears to be a critical mission. Yet when they locate and infiltrate the mastermind's base, they find that it is actually a complex death trap, designed to separate the agents and kill them one by one. This seed works great as a follow-up or highlight in To Catch a Killer.

**Murder by Proxy:** Rather than soil his hands with unworthy prey, Mors enlists the team to deal with a fellow Eternal who has crossed him once too often. He feeds the agents information, making the target both alluring and accessible, without revealing his immortal nature. Though indirect, this is clearly violates the Eternals' closely held laws, putting the team in a unique position to negotiate an alliance with the elusive immortals – assuming they put down Mors first.

**Step Up:** Mors chooses a target in the team's organisation, and he does not keep it secret. In fact, he uses an intermediary to contact the team and explain who and when. He is daring them to stop him, of course – daring them to best his centuries of experience.

**The Hunters Hunted:** Mors captures the team and delivers them to a remote tropical island. As they explore, relying on ingenuity and raw skill to evade or best dangerous animals and vicious cannibals, the agents may stumble upon any number of fantastic finds: a wrecked Spanish treasure ship, trap-laden ancient ruins and an extensive cave system that defies geologic reason (and looks a lot like





it was *burrowed* – by something *huge*). The only way out of this weird and wonderful hell hole seems to be Mors' mountain top helipad but to get there the team must brave the very worst the island has to offer – and Mors himself.

## Brigadier General Charles M. Swanson

Charles Swanson is one of Project: Pitfall's anti-terror specialists. Veteran of a dozen different war zones, he is a career military man who transferred to Triumph Tower to make a difference. He is proud of his work and a fanatical Pitfall supporter. His military command authority is second

only to General Cornelius Fitch and he is granted startling latitude to pursue targets as he sees fit.

General Swanson runs missions in many theatres but by far his forte is urban combat. From the streets of Sarajevo to the slums of Baghdad, he is not afraid to strap on a sidearm and personally take charge of his troops. Command frowns on his methods, of course, but they cannot complain with his results. Indeed, he is fast becoming one of Pitfall's strongest go-to men. His years of tactical experience and fearless leadership put him squarely at the top of many operational short lists and his track record keeps the brass from condemning his often brazen methods.

**General Swanson (Special NPC – 150 XP):** Init VI; Atk VI; Def V; Resilience V; v/wp V; Competence VII; Skills: Intimidate VIII, Tactics VIII; Wealth V; Weapons: Beretta 92 service pistol (dmg 1d10+1 lethal, error 1–2, threat 20, ammo 15M4, recoil 12, range 25 ft., SZ/Hand D/1h); Gear: Military uniform, class IIA duty vest (partial armour, DR 1/3, Notice/Search DC 16; upgrades: weight reduction); Vehicle: Jeep (SZ L (2×3), Occ 1+3, A/T 4/4, MPH 60/100, D/S 9/+7, qualities: *dependable, open (1/2 cover), off-road*); Qualities: *Class ability (Centurion: police action I (city); Counter-Terrorist: crowd control, shoot first; Pointman: lead 1/session, orders I), feat (Battlefield Trickery, Battle Hardened, Contempt, Fire-Team Basics, Friends in Power, Guts, Hardcore, Martial Arts (Strength), Old School, One World Doctrine, Tac-Squad Basics, Tac-Squad Mastery, Task Force Tactics, Under the Gun, United We Punish), mastermind, specialist (Commando), superior attribute (Str 14, Con 14, Wis 14, Cha 14), talented (Pitfall)*

## Story Seeds

**No Place to Hide:** A team that suffers enough exposure eventually finds its way onto Swanson's short list. He bides his time, carefully gathering intelligence, including the names and addresses of everyone the agents know (especially their loved ones). He conducts full background checks, identifying team members with legitimate jobs that might be stripped away. He even tails them back to their home office(s) if they are sloppy enough to let him. When the agents least expect it, Swanson makes his move. He takes their friends and families into custody, systematically cuts their support networks out from under them and waits for them to come to him. With any luck, they will make enough noise to justify any 'special measures' he has to take to bring them in.

**Thumbscrews:** Swanson captures an operative or contact friendly to the team. With Pitfall's methods, the prisoner *will* talk – it is only a matter of time. The agents must infiltrate Pitfall's facilities, tracking their ally from location to location and



# The Fine Art of World Domination

extract them before the team, and perhaps its entire agency, is compromised. Failing that, should the agents find their ally but not be able to get him out of Pitfall's brutal clutches, there is only one solution: deny the asset, by any means necessary.

**Organised Chaos:** A recent meet between disparate branches of the spy community was raided by 'Swanson's Silencers,' a particularly efficient arm of Pitfall's terrorist suppression engine. Several innocent civilians were shot and killed in the ensuing gunfight and the outraged public is clamouring for justice. Riots have erupted, covering the trail of several office analysts who survived the fracas and have

gone to ground. The team is tasked with finding them and bringing them home safely, which is easier said than done in a city of looting, street fighting and trigger-happy Silencers.

**Lockdown:** The team's current mission is interrupted when a bomb detonates in the area, slaughtering dozens of bystanders. Pitfall steps in and places the area under 'protective quarantine,' declaring all but official martial law. A curfew is enacted, checkpoints are set up along all major roads and helicopters and APCs patrol the area. General Swanson wastes no time turning the place upside down looking for the perpetrators – who as it happens, are also at the heart of the agents' recent assignment. If only they had not made it look like team was responsible for that little explosion...

**Below the Belt:** The General has made a nuisance of himself once too often and Control wants some leverage to hold over him. The home office has located what appears to be the General's mistress, living under an alias in protective custody. Looks like someone at Pitfall, perhaps Madeline Sax, expected someone to track her down and try to use her against the old man.

The team receives orders to hit the safe house and kidnap Swanson's mistress and her daughter. It won't be easy and they

cannot just kick in the door. There is undoubtedly a panic room and a silent alarm. No, this will have to be a carefully planned mission. It will require *finesse*.

## Renee Fitzroy

A financial and scientific genius, Renee Fitzroy is one of the richest, most successful men in the world. He is a self-made billionaire, or so the papers read; in truth he is a product of the mysterious Franchise and its sinister Timetable. Fitzroy has no issue carrying out his part of the grand plan, which he keeps carefully guarded from outside scrutiny. If the Timetable is a great clock, then Fitzroy is the mainspring – his financial backing is behind some of the most impressive Franchise operations in the last decade.

Fitzroy owns a small archipelago near France's Mediterranean coast, where he has lived as a virtual recluse for years. Recently he has started lobbying to have 'Fitzroy Islands' recognised as independent sovereign territory and since he has offered the French government a very handsome sum of money to grease the wheels, he may get his wish very soon indeed.

Between acquiring mountains of cash and redefining national borders, Fitzroy indulges his greatest private passion: fencing. He is trained to an Olympic standard and fancies himself a Musketeer of old, carrying a rapier at all times. When needed, he is quite capable of using it – to defend himself, or demand the same of his enemies.

Despite his cultured, gentlemanly exterior, Fitzroy is a violent, sadistic egomaniac. He loves nothing more than crushing his enemies, preferably in the most theatrical manners possible. He is also prone to epic monologues when he thinks he has the upper hand.

**Renee Fitzroy (Special NPC – 148 XP):**  
Init VI; Atk VII; Def V; Resilience VI; v/wp VII; Competence IX; Skills: Impress VII, Science (Economy) X, Science (Super-Science) X; Wealth X; Weapons: Rapier (dmg 1d8 lethal,





error 1, threat 20, SZ S/1h, qualities: *finesse, keen +3*, .380 ACP Walther PPK backup pistol (dmg 2d4 lethal, error 1–2, threat 20, ammo 7M8, recoil 13, range 15 ft., SZ D/1h, qualities: *discreet*); Gear: cloaking watch (gadget: invisibility, housing: wristwatch); Vehicle: Heavy business jet (SZ C (2×20, W20), Occ 3+19, A/T 2/3, MPH 550/600, D/S 6/+11, qualities: *dual controls, luxury, sensors (radar 1)*); Qualities: *Class ability (Schemer: calculating; Scientist: bright idea), feat (Before Your Demise..., Bloodstain Resistant, Change of Plans, Diabolical Genius, Dirty Fighting Basics, Duelling Basics, Duelling Mastery, Finesse Basics, Finesse Mastery, Finesse Supremacy, Personal Lieutenant), mastermind, superior attribute (Dex 16, Int 20, Cha 16), talented (Franchise)*

## Story Seeds

**Big Gun:** Fitzroy is building something on one of his islands. Satellite intelligence reveals only a partial profile of the soaring metal and concrete tower being

assembled in the thick tree line and given his associations this is cause for concern. The team must gain access to the island and scout out the construction area. Unfortunately, they find the island swarming with what is best described as a private army. Sneaking or bashing their way through, the agents learn that the structure is some sort of energy weapon and further investigation reveals that it targets satellites in orbit. Fitzroy plans to use it to disrupt global communications as part of something called 'the Timetable.' He must be stopped!

**Dress to Impress:** A grand charity ball is being held at one of Fitzroy's chalets and Control has secured a number of invitations. Using this cover, the team finds and infiltrates a secret base beneath the building, where the mastermind's storing samples of the deadly Nightfall virus. Worse, he is apparently culturing it for some nefarious purpose – and has already set the chalet's gas vents to release the toxin into the party as a field test!

**Horse Trading:** Rumours are circulating that Renee Fitzroy is working on a secret project for the Franchise. The Bloodvine Syndicate contacts the team's employers (assuming they are not actually the team's employers), claiming they captured Fitzroy's Franchise contact months ago and have brainwashed him to their cause. They might consider trading him for a few favours...

The agents are ordered to jump through the Syndicate's hoops, which consist primarily of settling grievances between the bickering Dons, after which the Franchise contact is delivered as promised. He offers to lead the team deep into the installation where Fitzroy keeps the project, not realising that the Syndicate also brainwashed him to claim various profitable data and hardware for them. The agents are in for a hell of a fight as the contact acts on his subconscious programming, leading them into some of the most secure sections of the base.

**Great Minds:** Renee Fitzroy travels to Paris for a charity dinner held in his honour – a dinner where he is secretly being interviewed to join the Alliance of Evil Geniuses! Several other guests pop up on home office watch lists and the agents are sent to investigate, which is just what Fitzroy wants. He has promised the team to the Alliance as a gift, hoping the gesture will be enough to get him into their select and rather murderous club.

**Over the Top:** One of Fitzroy's schemes runs afoul of Project Pitfall and the counter-terrorists opt to deal with him directly. The agents are sent to shadow the Pitfall strike team, ensuring they do not leave any unnecessary destruction in their wake. Of course, Fitzroy anticipated both these reactions and baits Pitfall into unleashing its worst, hoping to use the resulting groundswell of sympathy to help his bid for sovereignty.



# The Fine Art of World Domination

## Katja Anastasia Mikhailovich

The American Mafia refers to her as 'La Putanna.' The Russian Mob uses a variety of other, less pleasant epithets. She is among the most feared figures in organised crime and yet her public reputation is spotless. Katja Anastasia Mikhailovich is the daughter of a New York Mafiosi's little sister and a Russian gangster. The marriage was intended to unite the groups, forging a criminal empire unmatched since the Marinos in Europe. Instead it drove a wedge between them as each side asserted its dominance and sparked a turf war of epic scale.

Katja grew up in this chaos and by her mid-twenties parlayed her stunning good looks and vicious megalomaniacal streak to a position of leadership spanning both organisations. With a powerful combination of seduction, empty promises and devastating violence, she rules most of the American underworld with an iron fist. She has yet to turn her eyes to Europe but it is only a matter of time.

**Katja Mikhailovich (Special NPC – 128 XP):** Init III; Atk III; Def III; Resilience IV; v/ wp IV; Competence VIII; Skills: Impress VIII, Intimidate VIII, Networking VIII; Wealth IX; Weapons: None; Gear: None; Vehicle: Extravagant yacht (SZ G (7×35, D 8 ft.), Occ 10+12, A/T 1/0, MPH 10/15, D/S 2+18, qualities: *capital scale, fire suppression system, luxury, living quarters, sensors (radar 1)*), limousine (SZ H (2×5), Occ 1+11, A/T 2/2, MPH 55/100, D/S 8/+8, qualities: *luxury*); Qualities: *Class ability (Politico: no hard feelings, security detail), damage resistance V (stress damage) fearless III (+12), feat (Glint of Madness, Gorgeous, Iron Will, The Look, Silver Tongue, Simply Irresistible, Stone Cold, Undermine, Venomous Dialogue), mastermind, seductive, superior attribute (Cha 18)*

## Story Seeds

**Friends and Enemies:** The Bloodvine Syndicate's attempts to cross the Atlantic

have so far been stymied by a joint effort between the American and Russian Mafias. The media has picked up on the resulting turf war and there is a danger that the FBI may get involved. Syndicate characters have an obvious stake and others may employ Bloodvine contacts and allies, leading to an effort to identify and eliminate the leaders of the American and Russian cartels. Sadly, this places the team squarely in Ms. Mikhailovich's crosshairs – and she is nothing if not a crack shot in these situations.

**Internal Affairs:** To gather accurate intelligence on the Mikhailovich crime family, the team is asked to pose as criminals for hire. They must ingratiate themselves with Katja's underlings and seek an introduction with the mistress; hopefully impressing her sufficiently enough that she brings them on. Unfortunately, their targets in this delicate ruse turn out to be friends, allies and contacts – the same people with whom they have been working to bring Mikhailovich down.

**Sun, Sea and Shooters:** The united cartels have been smuggling drugs past Miami PD for years now; it is a great source of revenue for them. It is also their Achilles' heel. The agents can gather evidence typically unavailable to police – and if that were to suddenly appear in law enforcement's hands, the cartels' finances would take a dive. This would also clear a path for the Bloodvine Syndicate to step in, making a play for the American east coast. Sadly, it is not quite that simple – Mikhailovich employs, among others, a dogged group of cooperative Columbian ex-patriots and some very nasty Caribbean pirates. This will get a lot worse before it gets better...

**Cutting the Strings:** Knowing that Katja's cartel is held together primarily by fear of retribution and that several groups are chafing under her leadership, the Agency orders the team to discreetly supply members of the Russian Mafia with weapons, vehicles and critical data. With any luck, they might also be able to sew some seeds of discontent – that is, if Katja's

supporters on the inside do not have them murdered first.

**Wedding of the Century:** Katja is at last 'back on the market,' her husband having suffered a tragic and somewhat suspicious death. The home office hopes to insert an ally at the black widow's side and scrambles to build a personality profile of the perfect man for her. In the meantime, the team is directed to politely discourage, or undermine, potential suitors, who are as numerous as they are powerful.

## Digital Plague

Gliding through society like an electronic shark, the hacker known as 'Digital Plague' is a digital blight. He has been on the scene for years and is one of the few of his ilk who has not faded into obscurity or suffered criminal charges following the now infamous Mouthwash Confession. He has hacked the databases of every major spy ring and governmental espionage group on the planet, is wanted in dozens of countries and evades numerous contract hits every year. All of this works just for him – after all, his reputation is his bread and butter.

Digital Plague's past is as carefully protected as his real name and for good reason. Anthony Snow murdered his parents for his inheritance and used the funds to set up a number of legitimate businesses, making his first million in the dot com boom of the 90's. It was thrilling at first but quickly lost its appeal, driving him to more illicit pursuits. His natural skill with computers was a perfect fit, letting him slice his way into one secure system after another, each with new secrets to reveal.

Snow ensconced himself in technological havens deep in his company's many warehouses and surrounded himself with a private mercenary army. He took on his new moniker and sold out his services as a virtual hit man, commanding groups of loyal thieves and script kiddies to steal information too secure or too trivial for his personal attention.



The Plague is greedy, malicious and spiteful, the very definition of a 'black hat' hacker. He's recently started singling out Banshee Net agents, broadcasting their secrets just as they did the world's in 2001.

### Digital Plague (Special NPC – 153 XP):

Init IV; Atk I; Def IV; Resilience III; v/wp II; Competence VII; Skills: Computers IX, Electronics VII, Falsify VII; Wealth VII; Weapons: None; Gear: Desktop computer x 3 (PR 5, networked), "Typhoid Mary" (gadget: miniature laptop computer, PR boost +2, traceless self-destruct (PR 5), housing: metal briefcase), anti-virus software (PR 5), probe software (PR 7), security software x 2 (PR 5), trace software (PR 7), virus software (PR 5); Vehicle: SUV limousine (SZ H (2x6), Occ 1+17, A/T 2/0, MPH 55/90, D/S 8/+7, qualities: *luxury*); Qualities: *Class ability (Hacker: '1337, mad skillz (complex substitution), master cracker), feat (Advanced Skill Mastery (Techie), Cryptographer, Faceless, False Start (Computers), Grand Skill Mastery (Techie), Living Cipher, Mark of a Professional, Perfect Skill Mastery (Techie), Practice Makes Perfect, Traceless, Techie), inferior attribute (Str 8, Cha 8), mastermind, superior attribute (Int 18)*

## Story Seeds

**The Hard Way:** With the aid of Banshee Net hackers, the Agency identifies a 'back door' installed in its mission coordination servers. It takes over a month to figure out who put it there but a few subtle clues point to a hacker on the rise known as 'Digital Plague.' This leads to several quiet and carefully coordinated raids on locations identified through the Plague's digital trail. These are all traps, of course, and the home office *knows that* – but they are also leads, the only leads available.

**Stolen to Order:** Thieves hit the home office by night! Security guards are shot dead and a secure computer server is stolen, along with many paper files. Tracking the culprits is difficult but leads to a group of mercenaries hired via the internet. Digital Plague is, of

course, behind the scheme but pinning him down for the crime is impossible – or is it? Maybe the agents can use what they know about the thieves to pose as another group that Digital Plague might be interested in hiring...

**It's All About the Benjamins:** Digital Plague delights in power plays but his first love was cold hard cash. For no reason other than his own amusement, he manipulates a number of casinos around the world, raiding their virtual coffers. Knowing this is only possible with inside help, the Banshees enlist the other factions of the Shadow Academy to infiltrate the casinos, identify Plague's minions and use them to finally locate their slippery master.

**Hit Him Where it Hurts:** After a lengthy psychological evaluation, the home office determines that the best way to force Digital Plague out of hiding is to attack the one thing he values above all else: his bad

name. The agents are assigned to plan and execute a grand slander campaign, up to and including posing as the black hat.

**Tipping Point:** Nasty rumours spread about a new super virus; a program coded so divinely that no firewall can stop it. Banshee knows Digital Plague is behind the malicious program but they also know its true purpose: to identify the hallmarks of Automatic Genius and reveal these operations to the world. Unfortunately, many of these principles are still in use at Triumph Tower, where Pitfall uses what's left of the captured Chaos Engine to scan the world for terrorist activity. Assuming the incarcerated Banshees in the Tower are responsible, General Cornelius Fitch puts the building on lockdown and starts conducting extreme, borderline-brutal interrogations. It is up to the agents to sneak in and restore the delicate balance – or, failing that, save as many of the prisoners as possible.



# Buried Truths

By Carl Walmsley

For 400 years, Harrowflint Kaer provided a place of safety from the terrors of The Scourge. Then, its defences were breached by a Horror known as Malvagio – and its most trusted hero made a dreadful pact: one that he spent the rest of his life trying to atone for.

## Introduction

For almost 80 years, the village of Gabledown has prospered and grown under the steady guidance of the Gowen family. Recently, however, the town's Lord Protector, Orted Gowen, has been the subject of criticism regarding his leadership: there is talk of empty coffers and bad investments and bandit raids have increased in frequency. Orted's grip on the reins of power is becoming increasingly precarious.

During this time, Orted has been experiencing a number of vivid dreams. In these, he re-lives the exploits of his heroic ancestor, Tarun Gowen: a man who – almost single-handedly – saved Harrowflint Kaer from the Horror that found its way into the underground settlement. It was also Tarun that led the inhabitants of Harrowflint back up into the light. It was in honour of these great deeds, that Tarun was named Lord Protector over the new settlement of Gabledown – a position his descendants have retained ever since.

Orted's dreams are no mere imaginings but rather the workings of his ancestor's plagued spirit. Tarun was not the hero everyone believed and, rather than destroying the Horror that invaded his kaer, he made a pact with it. Now, years after his death, Tarun's Horror stained soul is unable to find rest and he is trying to summon his descendent so that he might be released from his torment.

Guided by his dreams, Orted has hatched a plan to return to Harrowflint Kaer. In doing so, he aims to reclaim some of the riches his people were forced to abandon. More than this, he wishes to re-forge the bond

with his (supposedly) valiant ancestor and renew his people's faith in him. All he needs now are some hardy adventurers to accompany him on his quest...

## Orted's Proposal

At the start of the adventure, the PCs are staying in or near the village of Gabledown. The scenario will work especially well if at least one member of the party was born in the settlement and grew up under the (until recently) wise leadership of Orted Gowen.

The adventure has been designed with six PCs in mind. If the adventuring group is smaller than this, the gamemaster may need to scale encounters accordingly.

Orted has let it be known that he wishes to meet with brave souls willing to travel beyond the safety of the settlement on a mission of importance. Assuming that the PCs show an interest, he will meet with them in the village hall, the better to demonstrate his authority and the importance of the task at hand. Read or paraphrase the following:

*Though not a large building the town hall is the grandest in Gabledown, decorated with those few relics brought up out of the kaer some three generations ago. Orted, the settlement's Lord Protector, sits bolt upright upon a chair carved from white wood, flecked with peeling gold leaf.*

*'Thank you for coming. Please...' He gestures to a row of chairs set out before the platform upon which he sits.*

*'That you are here tells me all I need to know about you. The prospect of travel beyond the village fills many of our people with fear. Not so, you. And that makes you just the people I need.'*

*'Eighty years ago, when our clan left Harrowflint Kaer and ventured up into the world once more, they took with them only what they could carry – what was vital to*

*survive. The majority of our wealth had to be left behind.'*

*The aging lord's eyes glint fiercely as he sweeps the room with his gaze. 'It is time we reclaimed what is ours.'*

*'What I need – what Gabledown needs – are people willing to go back to the kaer to recover the treasures we left there. In exchange, they would receive a princely share of the spoils – not to mention my gratitude and favour. A place in our clan's history, even.'*

*'In a few days I hope to set out. It is my hope that you will march beside me.'*

*'What say you?'*

For all his flaws Orted is a persuasive man and, whilst relying on the PCs accepting his offer, he will do all he can to make it seem as though they are the ones being presented with an opportunity. If pressed for specifics he offers the party 25% of the value of everything that is recovered. This may not seem very generous but he points out that many of the items they are hoping to recover – ranging from pottery and paintings to books and tools – will not be easy to transport or sell. If the PCs haggle, he will offer 30%, perhaps even with a small advance to help with the purchase of equipment.

Assuming that the PCs accept his proposal, Orted will give them a copy of two pages from his grandfather's journal that he hopes will prove useful (Tarun's Journal One and Tarun's Journal Two). The pages have deteriorated over time but will still provide the adventurers with a number of useful clues later in the adventure. A full summary of what the pages once said is provided for the gamemaster at the end of this first half of the adventure.

Orted will instruct the PCs to meet him at dawn the following day – at which point they will depart.



## Questions and Enquiries

The PCs have enough time before they set off to gather supplies and to ask some of the townsfolk about Orted, his heroic ancestor and other recent goings-on. A locally born character may know as much or as little of the following information as the GM sees fit.

Encourage the PCs to roleplay out encounters with the locals: this will offer the GM a chance to bring the townsfolk to life and will make the revelations which follow far more significant.

## An Unhappy Flock

Many residents of Gabledown are unhappy with their current leadership and will be only too happy to discuss their concerns with anyone that will listen:

- **Orted has exhausted the village's reserves of cash.** This rumour is true: Orted paid a pair of bounty hunters to deal with the bandits that have been stealing livestock but the men disappeared. He also sanctioned the building of a town wall, which proved to be very costly. Any vital expenses are currently being paid out of Orted's own pocket.
- **The town has become the target of bandit raids.** Over the past year, more than 100 herd animals have been stolen by bandits.

## Memories of Harrowflint Kaer

There is only one person in Gabledown old enough to remember the clan's departure from the kaer. Her name is Estella Gardelock. She is over 90 years old and almost completely blind. If the PCs talk to Estella, she is more than happy to regale them with the tale of her journey from the kaer:

*'The Horrors had left us more or less alone during The Scourge; certainly we fared better than many other poor souls. There was just the one incident and Tarun – Passions bless him – dealt with that.'*

*'The truth is we'd had enough of living underground by the time Tarun raised us up. We yearned for sunlight and trees and meadows and the other things we'd only read about in books.' The old woman is lost for a moment in her reverie. 'It was a wondrous thing to look upon them for the first time.'*

*'We set out, taking only what we could carry: travelling clothes, weapons, vital tools. We built a small settlement near the kaer but there were a few incidents – someone died, I believe. There was something evil in the soil. So we moved on.'*

*'Tarun guided us through a forest – another dark place, tainted by the Horrors. The animals there...were not right. Beyond that was a swamp. We call it The Mire now. After that, we found better land, fertile soil. We came upon a river and a valley – untouched by The Scourge. It felt right and so we stayed. Put down our roots and made the land our own.'*

*'Tarun went back into those woods years later but he never came out again. He'd wanted to return to the kaer. No one seemed willing to try again after that. I guess we decided to stay where we were and make do with what we had.'*

## Tarun Gowen

The consensus of opinion is that Tarun Gowen was a hero. He (apparently) defeated a Horror and led the clan to their new home. The older members of the clan – several of whom remember him firsthand – are especially vociferous in their praise of this legendary figure.

After 10 years as Lord Protector of Gabledown, Tarun set off alone to return to the kaer. It is presumed that this was to recover items of treasure left behind. Tarun was never seen or heard from again.

## Bandits

Over the past year, there have been a number of raids by bandits based somewhere to the west. In every instance

the bandits have come under the cover of darkness and all they ever steal is livestock.

## The Key

One morning, between the time the PCs agree to accompany Orted on his quest and the time they set off, one of the characters will wake to find a two-headed metal key beside him. Any attempts to ascertain who delivered it will prove fruitless – and nobody in the village will have any idea where it comes from or what it is for.

The key has, in fact, been on quite a journey. It opens two doors within Harrowflint Kaer. The first grants access to the main part of the settlement. The second is an enchanted door behind which Tarun's soul is imprisoned.

After years as a Horror-Bound Spirit, Tarun has developed a number of abilities that allow him to control and manipulate living creatures. Over several months, he has used a variety of animals to transport the key all the way from Harrowflint to Gabledown. On the night before one of the PCs receives the key, Tarun's latest animal messenger will have tried and failed to deliver the key to Orted, who is too well protected. Delivering the key to one of his travelling companions serves as the next best thing.

If, for any reason, the PC who receives the key shows little interest in taking it on the quest, Tarun will seek to retrieve it – using another mind-controlled animal – and pass it on to Orted or to one of the other PCs.

## The Journey Begins

Awaiting the PCs on the morning of their departure are three large, empty wagons, each manned by two of the braver townsmen. These will be needed to transport back the spoils from the Harrowflint Kaer. Orted, himself, sits proudly alongside in the saddle of an aging warhorse. He wears the armour of



# Buried Truths

his grandfather, a tabard adorned with the Gowen stag, and has Tarun's two handed sword strapped to his back. The townsfolk have gathered in force, ready to see off the valiant members of the expedition. It is clear that their leader is already benefitting from a much-needed boost in popularity, with the aura of his esteemed forebear already rubbing off on him.

At this point, Tarun shows the PCs the rough map he is using to guide them back to Harrowflint Kaer (Tarun's Map).

## Grave New World

One of the great things about the Earthdawn setting is that, in the wake of The Scourge, it has become a place of mystery. The PCs have a whole world to explore and investigate. Every time they climb a hill, force their way through a tangled wood or take ship down a river, they literally cannot be certain what they will find. Entire cities have been lost, environments have been warped by the Horrors and terrifying new beasts have arisen to lay claim to these territories.

To really capture the essence of Earthdawn, the players need to feel a sense of wonder. The limits of the world their characters traverse are unknown. This adventure is specifically designed to showcase some of the bizarre things that they might encounter. As much as possible, the gamemaster should draw attention to the strange sights, smells and sounds that are a part of each new place the characters visit. They are pioneers and the things they discover may never even have been seen by another person.

## A Bit of a Shock

Beyond the town, the landscape stretches away in shades of unbroken pastel. Indeed, the first dozen miles of travel are trouble free. Soon, however, the expedition reaches an area of swampland. The only route

through this – certainly for the wagons – is an ancient earthen pathway that rises a foot or so above the waterline.

Though damp underfoot, the first few miles of the pathway can be navigated with relative ease. It does, however, slow the passage of the wagons considerably.

After a few miles, the travellers begin to notice patches of blackened earth and burnt grass. This should strike the PCs as odd as the damp surroundings make it unlikely that a fire could occur naturally.

A little further on and the cause of the charred vegetation becomes apparent:

*Reed-laden pools and tufts of waterlogged grass dominate the terrain. A few sickly looking trees struggle above the damp soil but the world about you is predominantly flat and soggy. Only the narrow strip of road beneath your feet seems relatively solid and dry.*

*A sudden flash, away to the east draws your eye. A moment later, there is a second flash, this time closer. After a moment, thick smoke rises from a bush that seems to burn with a sodden flame.*

Astute players may deduce that some sort of lightning strike is responsible for causing the fires that have blackened the earth. Despite this unexpected danger, the group will have little choice but to press on.

When they have progressed a little further, placing themselves somewhere in the middle of the swamp, the adventurers will see that the path ahead is especially perilous:

*To either side of the path are clumps of spiky blue foliage. The grass around these areas is black and dead and the stretch of path between them is badly scorched. Even as you watch, a shiver of lightning explodes from one of the plants and crackles through a nearby pool.*

The PCs have encountered a colony of shock grass – a plant corrupted by The Scourge.

The PCs may decide to take their chances and move between the clumps of shock grass. There is a 1 in 6 chance of being struck by lightning if they elect to do so. Roll separately for each character and for each wagon. A lightning bolt inflicts 2D8 Damage. Any wagon struck by lightning loses a wheel and must be abandoned.

There are various ways that the PCs might deal with the shock grass. However, the grass is highly resistant to heat and completely immune to electrical attacks. The most effective option is some sort of ice spell, which will destroy the plant instantly.

A character that moves within 5 yards of the shock grass has a 1 in 6 chance of being struck each round.

To further complicate matters, any character who makes it beyond the shock grass will notice something hidden within the plant's leaves, just below the surface of the water: something that glints temptingly. Retrieving the item requires touching the plant: this delivers an especially nasty shock for 3D8 Damage to whatever item is used.

A character who manages to retrieve the item will find himself in possession of a single Bracer of Aras (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 132). What is more, Orted will recognise this as having belonged to his grandfather, Tarun. He will correctly deduce that Tarun lost it whilst making his way through the swamp whilst travelling back to the kaer. Orted will take this recovery as an auspicious omen.

Note that the bracer will not function until its twin is recovered and the two items are reunited.



## Brigand Country

As the PCs traverse the edge of The Mire (a journey of some twenty five miles) and leave the narrow pathway behind them, they encounter another odd sight:

*The land before you appears much dryer and stretches away to a distant green smear that marks the edge of a forest. It is not this that draws your eye, however, but the patch of blackened earth 100 yards distant. Something – a piece of wood, perhaps – juts from the ground beside it.*

Upon closer inspection the PCs will find that the blackened earth is the remains of a funeral pyre. The jutting wood is a rough headstone. Scratched into it are the following words:

*Be at peace. They may take your life but not your body.*

The cremated man is one of the bounty hunters hired by Orted to deal with the bandits. He and his partner found those responsible for rustling livestock from Gabledown but discovered a lot more than they bargained for – a carnivorous Fleshwood Tree. After an ill-fated sally against the tree and its 'kin', the bounty hunters retreated. One soon died of his wounds and his companion burned his body so that it would not become food for the tree. Enraged, he then returned to try and destroy the tree.

## Something on the Horizon

As the expedition moves on across a flat expanse of grassland, they will see small herds of crackbill roaming the plains. A few hours further on and they will notice an odd shape silhouetted against the skyline. As the party advances, this will resolve itself into the form of an enormous, lone tree. Hanging from one of its branches, is an object of some kind.

At this point the PCs will need to make a decision. Orted's goal will be to reach the edge of the forest as quickly as possible and press on towards the kaer. He will wish to stay well away from this rather ominous tree. If the PCs feel strongly that they want to investigate it, they will need to go on their own and then join up with the wagons later.

## The Fleshwood Tree

At its widest point, the tree's red-barked branches span more than 40 yards; and its uppermost leaves are twice that distance from the ground. Almost certainly, this will be the largest tree the characters have ever seen. Dangling from one of its branches – visible through the foliage if the PCS advance to within 100 yards of the tree – is a man.

The human, his feet bound with vines, is the second bounty hunter dispatched to deal with the brigands. He is weak from hunger but will make an effort to wave and call for aid if the PCs approach the tree.

Hidden amongst the branches and roots of the tree are 'the brigands' that have been rustling livestock from Gabledown. In truth, they are doing far more than simply hiding in the tree: they have become a part of it. Utilising a strange symbiotic relationship, the brigands – who see the tree as both their home and matriarch – act as foragers. They venture forth to gather food, which is stashed in and around the roots of the tree. As it rots, this nourishment is absorbed and then distributed by the tree in order to sustain both itself and its 'kin' who, each night nestle within its arms to rest and feed. This organism – a Fleshwood Tree – is another by-product of The Scourge and is distantly related to Blood Oak Roots (Gamemaster's Guide, page 158).

Around the roots of the tree are numerous animal bones. Many of these come from livestock taken from Gabledown.

If the PCs make any attempt to free Morten – the bounty hunter – the Fleshwood Kin will reveal themselves: Morten knows this will happen but will provide no warning for fear of scaring away his potential saviours.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*From the heavy, twirled branches of the monstrous tree, shapes begin to emerge. They peel back like shedding leaves and humanoid forms tug themselves free. Skin as rough as bark is juxtaposed with normal human flesh, so that the things you see climbing towards the ground seem part human, part tree.*

The Fleshwood Kin will not immediately attack – not unless the PCs attempt to damage them or the tree. Instead, one of their number will seek to communicate with the PCs:

*One of the creatures advances. Its face is split between calloused bark and human skin. Its one eye blinks, slowly.*

*The creature raises a hand and gestures at the captive in the cage. It then motions towards a bulging root, beneath which animal bones jut crookedly. It opens its mouth and snaps its teeth before uttering a single word: "Food".*

It should be fairly clear that the Kin will regard any attempt to take Morten as an act of hostility.

The PCs could elect to leave Morten – though he will plead for help if this seems likely. They might also decide to fight the Kin but there are as many of them as there are PCs.

There is another alternative, however. They could provide the Kin with an alternative source of food in exchange for Morten. One of the horses pulling the wagons would do – or the PCS could hunt the crackbill herds that roam the grasslands. They will need two birds to affect an exchange for Morten.

# Buried Truths

Any negotiation with the Kin should be roleplayed out. The Kin are now something less than human and rarely speak in sentences of more than a few words but they are not needlessly violent – and they certainly have a sense of self-preservation.

## Fleshwood Tree

**DEX:** 5    **STR:** 9    **TOU:** 11  
**PER:** 5    **WIL:** 8    **CHA:** 6

**Initiative:** 5    **Physical Defence:** 7  
**Actions:** 1    **Spell Defence:** 7  
**Attack:** (4) 9    **Social Defence:** 8  
**Damage:**    **Physical Armour:** 6  
Root Lash: 9    **Mystic Armour:** 4  
**Death:** 76    **Recovery Tests:** 5  
**Unconsciousness:** 66    **Knockdown:**  
N/A (does not suffer Knockdown)  
**Wound Threshold:** 17    **Movement:**  
N/A

**Legend Award:** Third Circle

**Powers:** Blood Veins (1) 10, Durability (3), Sticky Spit (1) 10

## Rules

Fleshwood Trees receive sustenance via their maw-lined roots, which may burst from the ground to attack creatures within 10 yards of the trunk. Typically, Fleshwood Trees emit a spray of sticky liquid from their branches to hold targets in place, better allowing them to feed.

## Fleshwood Kin

**DEX:** 6    **STR:** 5    **TOU:** 5  
**PER:** 5    **WIL:** 4    **CHA:** 4

**Initiative:** 6    **Physical Defence:** 8  
**Actions:** 1    **Spell Defence:** 7  
**Attack:** (1) 7    **Social Defence:** 5  
**Damage:**    **Physical Armour:** 3  
Gnarled Claws (2): 7    **Mystic Armour:** 0  
**Death:** 32    **Recovery Tests:** 2  
**Unconsciousness:** 24    **Knockdown:**  
**Wound Threshold:** 8  
**Movement:** 6

**Legend Award:** First Circle

**Powers:** Camouflage (7): 11

## Rules

Fleshwood Kin have long claws formed from a wood and bone composite that they use to attack their enemies.

Using a Called Shot, it is possible to avoid the parts of a Fleshwood Kin that are protected by thick, bark-like skin. This reduces its Physical Armour to 0.

## A New Companion

Should the PCs manage to free Morten, they will have made an ally for life. He will show his gratitude by offering to accompany them on their quest. For Morten's characteristics use First Circle Human Scout (*Player's Guide*, page 296).

If the PCs search about the roots of the Fleshwood Tree – something they may not do while the tree or its Kin are alive – they will discover several sets of Namegiver bones. The ground around these remains contains 10D10 silver pieces, along with a single air elemental coin (worth 100 silver pieces). There is also a dwarf sword and a buckler. Both are coated in grime but in serviceable condition.

## The Bleak Wood

According to Tarun's Map there is an old path that leads all the way through The Bleak Wood to the other side. Once the party is close to the edge of the forest, Orted will instruct the party to locate it. This can be achieved with a Search (12) Test, with each attempt taking an hour.

Once the path is found – or it becomes too dark to search any more – the party will strike camp.

All night, whoever is on watch will hear strange sounds – animals calling, birds shrieking and other unidentifiable growls and moans – emerging from the wood. It should be clear that the things which lie ahead will be even more perilous yet.

## The Old Path

Once the PCs have located the path, read the following:

*The remains of an archway, its top long since fallen away, marks the beginning of the path. Centuries-old flagstones emerge from the dusty ground beyond, creating an uneven roadway into the woods. To either side of the path is thick vegetation. It is clear that, with the wagons in tow, you will have little choice but to follow it.*

The party may make slow but steady progress as they venture into the woods. The wagons will bounce and judder across the bumpy road, but if a moderate pace – 2 miles per hour – is maintained there is little danger of throwing a wheel.

From time to time, the PCs will find other fallen archways that once adorned the road, each bearing carvings so faded as to be unidentifiable. All the while the PCs travel deeper into the wood, they will notice the foliage becoming denser, thinning out the light and mixing it with vivid forest hues. Unknown animal calls continue to thicken the air.

Any character inclined to try to age the trail and ruins may do so with a Knowledge (Province History) or (Trades Routes) (8) Test. The path pre-dates The Scourge and is large enough to indicate that it was once a well-used trade route. Such routes typically featured way points such as warden towers – from which the safety of a trail could be monitored – and roadside inns.

## A Second Option

Two miles into the forest, the PCs will hear the roar of a fast-flowing river. Following the sound, it is a simple matter to locate the River Swift.

Read the following to any character that goes to investigate:





*Beyond the thick foliage that leans out from the bank to touch the fast flowing water is the River Swift. Churning and writhing against its channel, the muddy water rushes away westwards. A little way upstream is a shallow bank. Resting there like a grounded fish is the rounded hull of a boat. From this distance it seems to be in reasonable condition.*

A proper examination of the boat is only possible if someone crosses the river. A Swimming (10) Test is required to safely cross the flow. Characters who fail this Test begin to travel downriver. A character who fails five Tests in a row will begin to drown.

A closer look at the boat reveals that it is in serviceable condition, though its boards have shrunk where parts of it have been out of the river. These need to spend 12 hours immersed in water in order to expand back to normal. The boat seems once to have been a cargo vessel. It is large enough – some 100 yards long – to transport everyone in the party, along with the wagons. Of course, getting them on board might be tricky.

Searching the inside of the boat – a disorientating experience given that it is resting on its side – reveals no sign of whatever crew once employed the boat. Some of the cabins contain mouldy sheets and scraps of clothing. One of the holds is filled with long-rotted food and several coils of aged rope: each time this is used, there is a 1 in 6 chance it will break.

Whilst examining the outside of the boat, any character that passes a Perception (6) Test will notice a number of scorched trails leading from the bank into the forest. These trails were made by the acidic passage of a saural (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 196) that has staked a claim to this area. Once the PCs have been rooting around the boat for a few rounds the suaral will emerge from the forest and attempt to drive them away.

Climbing up into the boat may seem like the best option for any character encountering this ferocious beast. However, given that the saural spits acid, they may have to

think again if they wish to keep the craft in serviceable condition.

If the PCs can deal with the saural, re-soak the shrunken boards and find a way to get themselves and the wagons onto the boat, they will have found a much swifter – and ultimately safer – way to travel to the kaer. In fact, they will encounter only a single challenge on route to Lowingstone Docks, from where they may disembark and walk the final few miles to Harrowflint Kaer.

## The Journey Downriver

Assuming that there is someone amongst the PCs who can steer the boat, they will have little trouble navigating the fast-flowing currents. The journey to Lowingstone Docks will take a day, providing the PCs with a chance to rest and recuperate.

If nobody in the group is suitably skilled, Orted will pilot the boat. The only real danger will come when the PCs pass through an area of water where a colony of river-dwelling krilworm is nesting (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 181):

*Ahead of you, where the river arcs around a sharp bend sending spray up over the bank, you spy several mounds poking above the water-line like tiny islands. They have the look of ant hills, dotted with holes. You realise that it will not be easy to guide the boat between them, given the surging current.*

Whichever PC is steering the boat will need to make three Sailing (9) Tests to guide it between the small islands. Each failure indicates that the vessel has struck one of the islands. Each time an island is struck 1D3 krilworms will emerge from their nest and attack the creatures on the boat. If the pilot is hapless enough to strike all three nests, an additional 1D6 krilworms will go on the attack.

The krilworms will continue to attack the occupants of the boat for 10 rounds: after this time, it will have moved far enough downriver for them to abandon their

efforts. The pilot may seek the swiftest path through the water in order to speed the boat's escape: each successful Sailing (6) Test reduces by 1 round the time the krilworms will continue to attack.

If the PCs hide below deck, they should be safe – though the krilworms will kill the horses and there is a 1 in 12 chance each round of an unsteered boat suffering significant damage or being grounded.

Beyond the krilworm colony, it is plain sailing all the way to Lowingstone Docks.

## The Journey by Land

If the PCs elect to take the road through the forest they will have both a longer and more arduous journey ahead of them. In addition to the encounters outlined, for each night the PCs spend in the woods the GM should roll on the following table to determine whether any creatures come to investigate their camp.

D6Roll	Result
1	Wild Boar ( <i>Gamemaster's Guide</i> , page 207), taking its young out to feed
2	A hungry wood lion ( <i>Gamemaster's Guide</i> , page 209)
3	An Inquisitive pangolus ( <i>Gamemaster's Guide</i> , page 188) comes to inspect the PC's packs
4	A pair of harpies ( <i>Gamemaster's Guide</i> , page 177) disturb the PC's rest and attempt to lure them into the forest with a torrent of abuse
5–6	A (relatively) quiet night

## Challenge

A few miles beyond the point where the River Swift draws near the forest road, the PCs will encounter one of the animals responsible for the bizarre calls that fill the Bleak Wood:

# Buried Truths

*Resembling a bear, but with curved horns like a ram, the creature before you lumbers from the trees and positions itself in the centre of the road. Rising upon its hind legs, it bellows: a sound that makes the leaves shake and can be nothing less than a direct challenge.*

The creature is a Brithan (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 160) and it is indeed challenging one of the party to meet it in honourable combat. Any character that succeeds with a Knowledge (Creature Lore) (9) Test knows about a Brithan's ritual combat – and the ensuing frenzy if its challenge is denied.

## Rumble in the Jungle

As night falls towards the end of the party's first day within the forest, they will hear a faint rumbling hiss emanating from the trees. This will grow steadily in volume until a number of animals and birds begin rushing southwards through the forest. Any character who succeeds with a Knowledge (Creature Lore) (6) or Wilderness Survival (8) Test will know that this sort of behaviour is normally seen ahead of a fire.

In this instance, the animals are fleeing ahead of something different: Cinder Ants. A horde – consisting of millions of inch long insects – is moving through the forest, towards the PCs. As they draw near, read the following:

*The hissing rumble has grown now so that the sound seems to fill the forest to the north of your position. In the gathering gloom, the darkness appears to congeal about the forest floor, creating a swath of shadows.*

At this point, the PCs have only five rounds until the swarm is upon them.

The cinder ants emit a constant haze of cloying, grey smoke as their stomachs – tiny elemental furnaces – digest whatever is in their path. Cinder ants are too small to have characteristics – or to be fought individually.

Any character on the ground when a swarm of cinder ants passes will suffer 2D8 Damage each round until he is eaten alive. Natural Armour provides protection against this damage but any worn armour provides protection only for the first 1D3 rounds – as the ants find a way around or through it. In addition, characters that are 4 feet tall or shorter are exposed to the ants' choking emissions. This generates exactly the same drowning effect as being immersed in water (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, page 109).

A PC who climbs a tree will be safe from the main horde; however, stray bands of foragers will climb up to a height of 5 yards in search of food. Anyone within this area will suffer 1D8 Damage (modified by armour as explained previously), for 1D6 rounds before the foragers move on with the main swarm.

A character who immerses himself entirely in water will not be harmed by cinder ants. There are pools of water within the forest that can be located with a Search (12) Test.

Only area effect attacks have any chance of damaging a swarm of cinder ants. As elemental creatures of fire and earth, they are vulnerable to abilities derived from the elements of air and water. Any lightning or water based spells are enough to convince them to steer clear of a particular area or character: though individually stupid, cinder ants possess a collective intelligence.

After the passing of the cinder ant swarm, this region of the forest will be left as blackened and burnt as if subjected to a forest fire.

## The Warden Tower

Some 30 miles into The Bleak Wood, the PCs encounter an old ruin:

*Beside the road is the shell of a tower, its upper portions having long since fallen*

*away. What remains seems sturdy enough: a solid base that rises to a height of 15 feet. An arched and open entranceway faces the road, the door having long since fallen and rotted away. Entwining the tower like green filigree are spiny, thin-leaved creepers.*

The tower presents the PCs with a defensible place to spend the night. The only real danger comes from the Bladevine that surrounds the structure and chokes the entranceway. A character who attempts to manoeuvre around the plant (rather than hacking a clear path through it) must make a Dexterity (7) Test or cut himself on its razor sharp leaves. This inflicts only a single point of Damage but will make the character bleed profusely because of the anticoagulant slime that lines the edges of the leaves.

If one of the PCs is wounded in this way a pair of giant carnivorous squirrels (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 173), attracted by the smell of blood, will attack the party once night falls.

## The Red Flowers

If anyone searches the forest near the tower they will encounter a number of beautiful red flowers called *scarlet sunrise*. The scent of these flowers is repellent to the giant squirrels in this area and they will not attack any character who is carrying a freshly picked bloom.

If the PCs are attacked by the giant carnivorous squirrels, they will need to inflict a wound on each creature in order to drive the pair away.

Inside the tower, amidst the overgrowth and tumbled stone, is an iron box. It is sealed with a long-rusted chain that is brittle enough to be pulled away. Inside the box are a dormant crystal buckler, a Last Chance Salve and a pair of Quiet-fingers gloves. These items have in no way deteriorated with age. This is because the iron box within which they have resided is itself enchanted, preventing items placed inside from aging.





## Lowingstone Docks

A natural widening in the River Swift creates an area where the fast-flowing water spreads and calms. Centuries ago a dozen wooden jetties and docks criss-crossed this bay, creating a place where boats could unload or collect new cargo. What the PCs find is a place where they can come ashore, though the piers have long since rotted away. However, they are not the first ones here.

Read the following if the PCs arrive via the River Swift,

*Lowingstone Dock – or at least the site where it used to be – is a wide recess in the river, where the water is becalmed. A shallow, sloping bank stretches down to the water creating a place where it will be easy to disembark. However, another boat is already docked here. Several figures move about its deck.*

And, if they took the forest road:

*According to Tarun's Map, you are close now to Harrowflint Kaer. Ahead of you and off to the south you once again hear the sound of the River Swift – now softer and less frantic than it was within the forest. A wide, crescent of sloping bank marks the spot where the*

*docks used to be. To your surprise, nestled within the bay is a boat. Upon its decks, several figures step deftly about the boards.*

The boat is a cargo vessel, captained and crewed by T'Skrang sailors. They have come to this area to harvest rare plants that grow around the edge of the Bleak Wood. They are unused to seeing others out here and will be wary if approached. However, they are a friendly bunch and it will not be hard for the PCs to put them at ease.

Captain of the T'Skrang vessel – *The Dragonfly* – is Quoil. He is a typically flamboyant fellow, bedecked in turquoise and black. His crew consists of eight experienced T'Skrang water-men.

If questioned about this area, Quoil proves only too familiar with the site of the abandoned kaer, which is only a 30 minute walk away. He and his crew once ventured inside, intending to search for spoils. They were soon filled with a sense of dread and when the captain heard a voice whispering in his head, he and his men fled the place. If asked specifically what he heard, Quoil says it was the words 'Release me'.

Quoil and his men have a number of supplies that they will sell to the PCs. This should include whatever basic adventuring

equipment the GM deems appropriate (see Players' Guide, page 268), along with a few more unusual items:

2 doses of Night Pollen (25 silver pieces each; *Gamemaster's Guide*, page 125)  
1 booster potion (50 silver pieces)  
1 Kelix's Poultice (50 silver pieces)  
4 Trispears (20 silver pieces each)

## Dramatis Personae

### Orted Gowen

**DEX:** (16) 7

**PER:** (13) 6

**STR:** (15) 6

**WIL:** (13) 6

**TOU:** (11) 5

**CHA:** (14) 6

**Initiative:** 5

**Physical Defence:** 9

**Phys Armour:** 6

**Spell Defence:** 7

**Mystic Armour:** 1

**Social Defence:** 8

**Death:** 32

**Recovery Tests:** 2

**Unconsciousness:** 24

**Knockdown:** 6

**Wound Threshold:** 8

**Movement:** 6

**Skills:** Animal Handling (2): 8, Avoid Blow (1): 8, Climbing (1): 8, Conversation (4): 10, Diplomacy (3): 9, Etiquette (3): 9, First Impression (4): 10, Barsaive History (2): 8, Melee Weapons (1): 8, Read/Write (3): 9, Sailing (2): 9, Wilderness Survival (1): 7

**Armour:** Ring Mail (Phys 6; Init 2)

**Weapons:** Two-Handed Sword (Damage 14)

**Equipment:** Adventurer's kit, traveller's garb adorned with the Gowen stag, 2 Booster Potions, waterskin



# Buried Truths

## Tarun's Journal (Gamemaster's Summary)

### Page One

I had to turn off many of the traps and wards in order to get everyone out safely before M. realised what I was up to. I should never have trusted her.

It was a shame that the docks had rotted away. If we could've got our hands on a boat, the journey would surely have been easier.

The Bleak Wood was well named. We lost two men during the first night. If only we could have worked out more quickly that the squirrels hate the red flowers we might have saved them.

Remember my shield!

Remember the door!

Curse this swamp and the freakish things that grow here. What kind of plants won't burn?

The key is in the horse's mouth!

### Page Two

When the gargoyles begin to speak, make sure you're not weighed down!

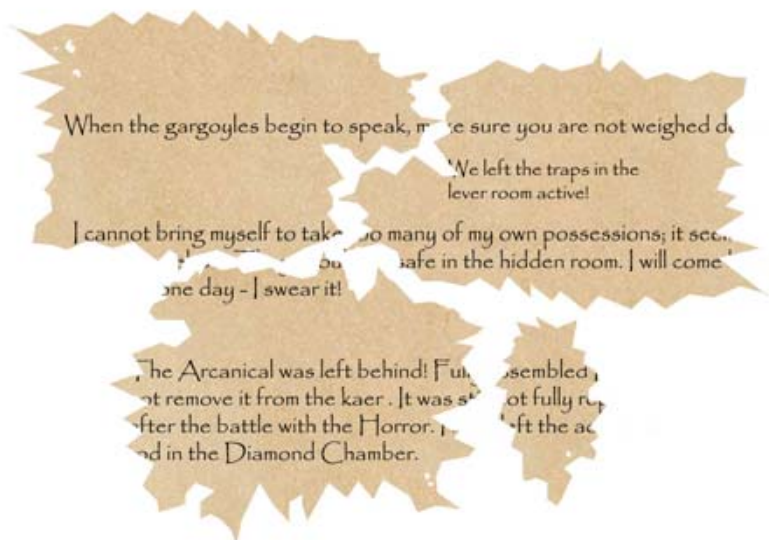
We left the traps in the lever room active!

I cannot bring myself to take too many of my own possessions; it seems wrong somehow. They should be safe in the hidden room. I will come back for them one day - I swear it!

The Arcanical was left behind! Fully assembled I could not remove it from the kaer. It was still not fully repaired after the battle with the Horror. I have left the activation rod in The Diamond Chamber.



## Tarun's Journal (2)





## Harrowflint Kaer

When the PCs reach the kaer, read the following:

*Hidden within a depression ringed by three large, moss-covered boulders is an opening in the ground. Its square shape and the regular if weather-worn steps within indicate that it is clearly manmade. More than that, there is something ominous about this hole: something that goes far beyond its modest construction and makes you feel apprehensive.*

*'You're supposed to feel like that,' says Orted glancing about the group. 'It's part of the old spell that protects this place. It weaker now of course: it would once have made us flee in terror.'*

*Despite his words, the Lord of Gabledown unsheathes his greatsword and holds it before him. 'Wait here,' he tells the wagon men, before turning to the party. 'Let us go in.'*

The stairs visible to the PCs lead fully 200 feet down into the ground via a stone tunnel. Ominously, not a single insect or rat is encountered on the long journey down – even these simple creatures are subject to the lingering sense of dread that pervades the kaer.

## The Truth About Tarun

Despite all the wards and protections put in place to protect Harrowflint Kaer, its defences were eventually breached. Before anyone realised what had happened, several members of the clan were slain by a monstrosity, which came to be known as Malvagio.

As panic spread through the community, Tarun Gowen stepped forward to rally the defenders. With only four volunteers, he led an expedition against the Horror. After a fierce struggle, Tarun's allies were slain, though not before they had managed to wound the Horror – which had already been weakened by the dwindling magical currents outside the kaer. More than likely, Malvagio still possessed the power to slay Tarun but knew that there was an element of risk involved in confronting him. The Horror therefore proposed a bargain. She would remain hidden and dormant within the recesses of the kaer, feeding only once every year on the life force of a human soul. In exchange, Tarun would convince his people that he had succeeded in destroying the Horror – and receive their undying gratitude. Tarun, wounded and with little chance of surviving another confrontation, agreed to these terms.

A year passed: a year in which Tarun's reputation and influence grew. In all but name, he was already the leader of the clan. All the while, true to her word, Malvagio slept – and Tarun allowed himself to hope that she might never awaken.

But, of course, the year passed and there followed a mysterious death. Tragically, it was a child that was slain. Ripples of doubt and fear shook the clan. Had another Horror violated their defences?

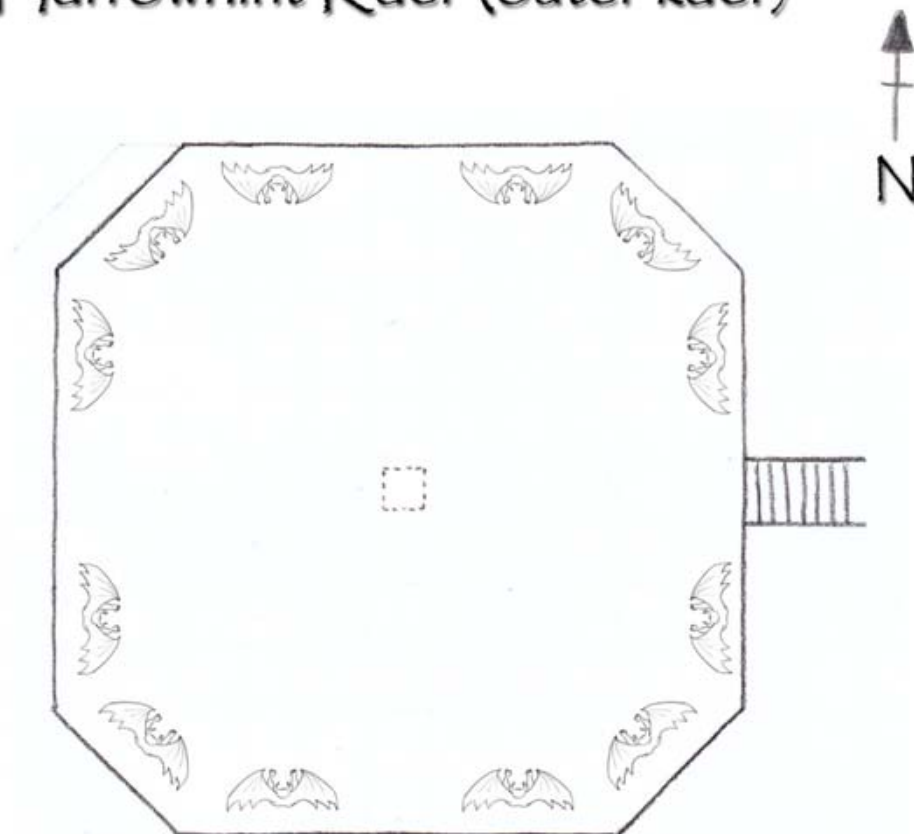
Tarun returned to the deepest hollows of the kaer – an area he had convinced his people was cursed and must be avoided (Room 22). He confronted Malvagio, demanding to know why she had chosen a child. The Horror laughed at his rage and said that she would choose whomever she wished as her 'offering' – such was the nature of their bargain. It became clear to Tarun then that he could not trust Malvagio. He began to suspect that the Horror would eventually turn on him or, when her strength was sufficient, upon the entire clan. Spurring his people on, Tarun led them hastily out of the kaer – leaving behind many valuable belongings – on the journey that would eventually lead them to Gabledown.

Ten years later, wracked by guilt-laden dreams, Tarun returned to the kaer. He planned to slay Malvagio or to die trying. As it transpired, the Horror was gone. She had, however, left a trap for Tarun – whom she knew would be drawn back by the dreams that she herself had sent him. After being sealed inside the room where Malvagio had lay hidden for many years, Tarun starved to death and was doomed to rise again as a Horror Bound Spirit, trapped forever within the crumbling kaer. That is unless someone can release him...



# Buried Truths

Harrowflint Kaer (outer kaer)



Scale  $\square = 2$  yards



## The Kaer Interior

Unless otherwise noted, assume that the kaer tunnels and rooms have the following characteristics:

- Walls, ceilings and floors are made of stone
- Ceilings are 8' high
- Doors are constructed from wood, treated long ago with an alchemical varnish that drastically slows the aging process
- A typical door has Physical Armour 9 and a Death Rating of 30

## Room Descriptions

### Room 1 – The Outer Kaer

This large chamber was designed as the kaer's main defence against the Horrors and other potential intruders. When the clan emerged many of the traps and wards were deactivated. However, there is still a single obstacle that the PCs will have to deal with.

When the PCs enter this room, read the following:

*This huge chamber is adorned with gargoyle-like statues that lend the place a fearful, ceremonial atmosphere. The walls, floor and ceiling are constructed of smooth granite blocks. They fit seamlessly together, indicating great skill and the use of magic. Beside the door through which you entered is a metal wheel that looks like it is designed to turn. In the centre of the high ceiling is a square recess three feet across.*

If the PCs explore the recess, they find it rises three feet up into the rock, leading to a horizontal metal panel, engraved with images of galloping horses. As hinted at in Tarun's notes, the secret to opening this is to be found in the horse's mouth: there is a hidden keyhole here that can be opened using one end of the key given to one of the PCs earlier in the adventure.

The many statues and gargoyles all around this room have water pipes hidden within their mouths. These pipes are linked to a tank built in the rocks above. Carefully hidden in the floor slabs are also a number of drainage vents.

The wheel beside the entrance door may be turned in order to lower a 1 foot thick stone slab. If turned three times, the slab descends fully and seals the doorway. Once the slab is in place, it locks and the wheel can no longer be turned.

Water immediately begins to gush from the gargoyle's mouths, filling the chamber. After two minutes (20 rounds) the chamber will fill with water. The only safe area is the recess in the ceiling – though it is only large enough to accommodate two human-sized characters at a time. Characters not weighed down with armour (again hinted at in Tarun's notes) will be lifted by the water – either into the recess or against the ceiling. A character lifted into the recess will be close enough to insert the key into the horse's mouth, thereby opening the metal door. They are then free to climb up into Room 2.

Note that the stone slab must block the doorway fully in order for the water to start flowing into the chamber. The water will not drain away until someone pulls the lever in Room 2. Once the water is drained, the door to Room 1 will return to its original position.

Note also that the metal door in the recess will not open until the door to Room 1 is sealed and the water has started flowing.

### Where Did You Get That Key?

It is quite likely that Orted will, at some point, witness one of the PCs using the kaer key that turned up earlier in the adventure. Orted will immediately demand to know where it comes from and will wish to examine it. If allowed to do so, he will remember seeing his grandfather with the key when he was a boy. He will claim – quite rightfully – that it is a family heirloom and insist that the PC hands it over.

If for any reason, the PC will not give Orted the key he will become very suspicious of the party as a whole. From that point onwards, his dealings with the PCs will be marred by mistrust.

## Inner Kaer

### Room 2

Situated directly above Room 1, this chamber is far less grand and lacks any ornate decoration. Built with defence in mind, it would be easy to hold against an attack from below – as enemies were forced to climb one at a time through the narrow opening.

Resting beside the metal door in the floor are several mouldy coils of rope left over from when the clan departed.

At the northern end of the room is a lever. When pulled, this empties Room 1 of water, returning it to a storage tank via vents in the floor.

Two heavy doors, studded with iron (Death Rating 40), lead east and west from this chamber.

As mentioned in Tarun's notes, these doors are trapped. In the floor before the eastern door is a pressure plate that triggers a mantrap (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 111). The door to the west is protected by a Ward trap (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 112). The spell this triggers is Crushing Will (*Player's Guide*, page 161). Due to the waning of this ward's power, this spell is considered to have a Willpower Step 11 for determining its effect.

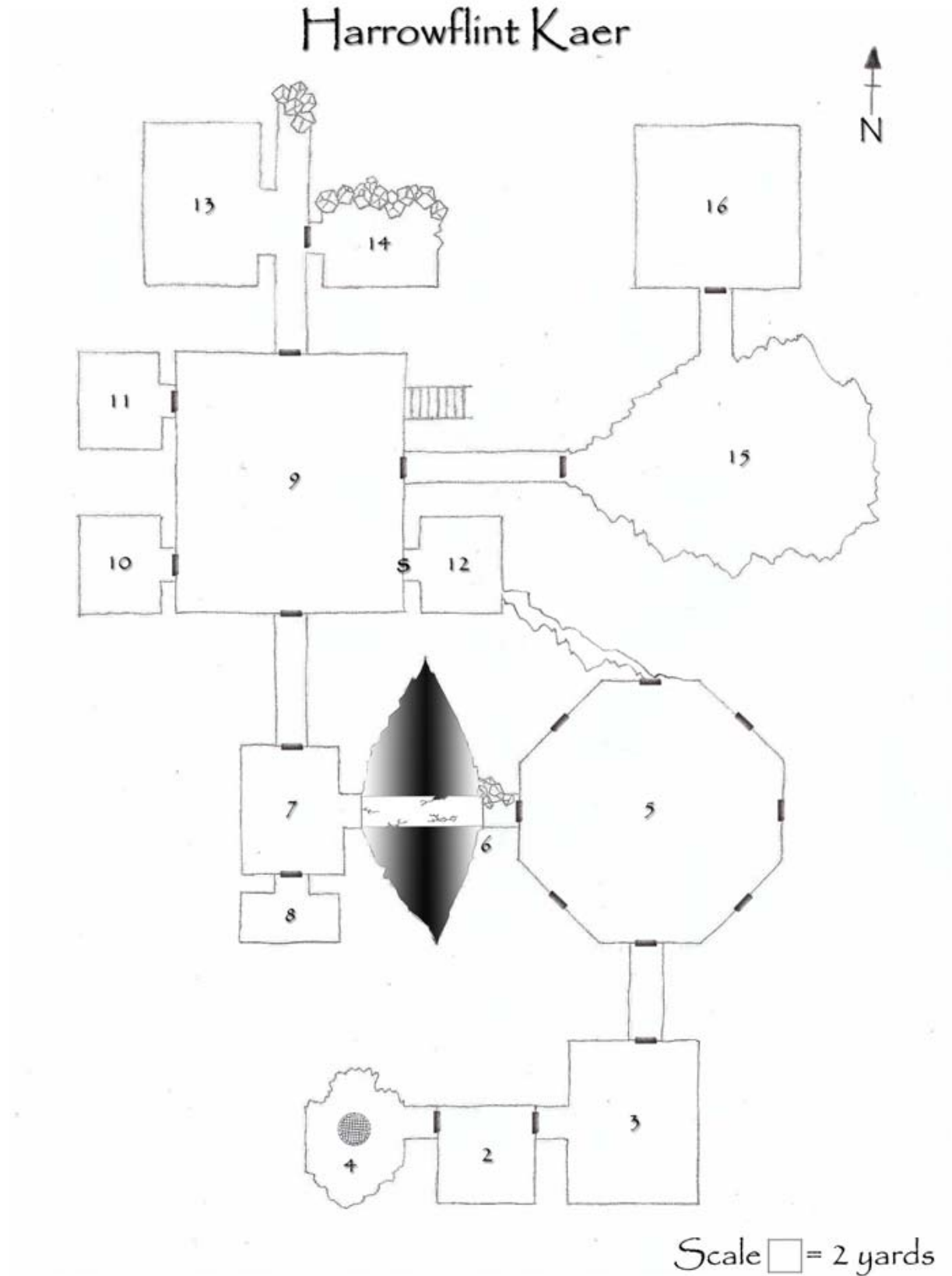
### Room 3 (Barracks)

*This musty room is coated with a layer of dust and cobwebs that make its immediate dimensions difficult to fathom. Irregular shapes jut up from the floor, obscured by the silver-white covering of web. Other objects protrude from the walls, one or two visible as aged shields.*

This room was once a barracks, from where members of the clan could take turns watching over the entrance to the kaer.

A dozen shields, adorned with the coats of arms of the three noble families that took refuge here, line the walls. Four of them bear the Gowen stag, four more the Gardelock Trident and the final four the

# Buried Truths







gauntlet of the Claytons. Collapsed and rotted furniture is heaped on the floor beneath the thick covering of dusty webs. If the PCs search through the webbing they will find shed spider skin some 12 inches across.

Within this room, and further into the kaer, the sense of dread that pervaded the air begins to fade – hence the presence of the arachnids.

#### **Room 4 (Well)**

*This small, roughly hewn room must, at least in part, have been a cave before excavations made it part of the kaer. A carefully constructed stone tube topped with a metal grill marks the location of a well.*

In order to survive, the occupants of Harrowflint Kaer needed access to clean, fresh water. This room houses one of the wells constructed to provide this.

The metal grill is attached firmly to the top of the well with two rusted but sturdy metal poles. These can be slid aside, allowing the grill to be lifted. If anyone examines the grill or the interior of the well, scratch marks indicate that something has tried to get into the cave. Whatever was responsible will not trouble the PCs in this adventure but it might keep them on their toes.

The well descends 30 feet to a fast-flowing underground river.

#### **Voices in the Dark**

At some point during the party's exploration of the kaer, their presence will be detected by Tarun's spirit. He is alerted by any casting of a spell, the outbreak of combat or by anyone opening the door to Room 6.

At this point, Tarun will use his mental abilities to contact one of the PCs and plead for help. He will select a PC at random and this character will hear the words "help me" echo through his mind. These words will resound every few minutes, growing louder as the PC draws closer to Room 22.

#### **Room 5 (Checkpoint)**

*This large octagonal room is ringed with 8 doors including the one through which you entered. The ceiling and walls are daubed in sheets of webbing, though the floor is entirely free of it.*

This chamber is designed specifically to keep out intruders. All but one of the doors is false and will activate a trap if someone attempts to open it. What is more, the floor is ensorcelled with a powerful flame spell. It will scorch any creature touching it that is not holding one of the four shields bearing the Gowen stag from Room 3. The flame spell manifests as a flaming sword, inflicting 2D10 Damage and making a Step 15 Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defence.

The only real door leads directly west out of this room. Any other door that is opened triggers a Blade Trap (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 111).

#### **Room 6**

A short, half-collapsed corridor ends abruptly at the edge of a deep precipice. Spanning this chasm is a narrow stone bridge. From the machinery visible on the far side of the gulf, you deduce that the bridge can be raised and lowered like a drawbridge. Deep cracks permeate the stone of the bridge so that it puts you in mind of a fractured ice sheet covering a frozen lake. The sound of rushing water swirls up from the darkness below.

If anyone examines the section of the corridor-wall that has collapsed, they will find claw marks in the stone. It looks as though the wall was torn down by an immensely strong, taloned beast.

The stone bridge spanning the chasm is four feet wide and one foot thick. Heavy linked chains are connected to the eastern edge of the bridge. When a wheel located in the mouth of Room 7 is turned, these chains retract or extend, raising or lowering the bridge.

The bridge is clearly damaged and if more than 200 pounds of weight is placed upon

it, it will snap in the middle. Broken stone – and anything on the bridge at the time – will plunge into the icy waters below and be swept away.

The chasm is 20 feet wide. Seventy feet below is the underground river that sourced the kaer with water. The chasm ascends to a rocky ceiling fifty feet above the bridge.

#### **A Damaged Kaer**

When Malvagio learned that Tarun had evacuated the kaer – depriving her of her food supply – she flew into a rage. In her fury, she swept through the tunnels and chambers, tearing down walls and ceilings.

As a result, sections of the kaer are not accessible during the course of this adventure. Of course, there is no reason why an inventive Gamemaster might not have the characters return to the kaer at a later date to fully excavate the site. Who knows what treasures or perils might lie undiscovered?

#### **Room 7 (Checkpoint)**

*This simple, rectangular room has doorways leading north, east and south. There are two wheels built into the eastern wall by the entranceway. A strange and unpleasant smell hangs in the air of this chamber.*

The eastern doorway to this room houses a small but sturdy portcullis (Physical Armour 12, Death Rating 35). It is currently jammed in the raised position.

Two wall-mounted wheels control the raising and lowering of the portcullis and the bridge.

This unadorned room was built as a final checkpoint from which the kaer-dwellers could defend themselves against intruders. The strange smell in this room comes from the tiny amounts of ammonia seeping through from Room 8.

# Buried Truths

## Room 8 (Store Room)

This room was built to contain supplies for the citizens posted on guard duty in Room 7.

A few years ago cracks began to appear in the walls of the room, linking it to an existing cave network. A number of bats already using the caves flitted in through the narrow passages and began to roost in this room.

Pushing open the door to this room is difficult and requires a Strength (7) Test. This is due to the mounds of guano blocking its movement.

If the door is successfully opened, two things will happen: the bats will emerge shrieking in a flurry of beating wings; and a wave of ammonia will flood Room 7.

Each character in Room 7 when the door is opened will be attacked for one round by a bat (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 156), before the swarm disperses throughout the kaer – most likely towards the ceiling in Room 6.

In addition, each character in Room 7 or 8 will begin to drown in ammonia (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 109 – Drowning). This effect ends if the character moves to another room.

Hidden amongst the piles of guano are a chest and a barrel. The barrel is filled with horribly spoiled wine but the chest contains carefully wrapped bone china crockery worth 200 silver pieces.

The narrow fissures in the walls leading to the larger cave network are too small for even the smallest of the characters to crawl through.

## Room 9 (Hall of Words)

*This large chamber is roughly 40 foot square, with several corridors converging upon it, including a stairway leading down. The centre of the room is dominated by several statues. The largest, a towering structure of pale stone, depicts Garlen, the Passion of*

*Hearth and Healing. Before her stand five human-sized figures – one of which has been roughly decapitated and scrawled with writing.*

*Beyond the statues, warped and peeling benches line the walls, which in places are adorned with faded murals of forests and fields. Cracked and once-beautiful glass lamps, fashioned to resemble leaves, hang from the ceiling.*

When Harrowflint was still in use this chamber served as meeting place, where people came to socialise and discuss matters of importance. Plaques on the benches serve as dedications to those who lived and died within the confines of the kaer.

The five statues standing before Garlen were built to honour the warriors who did battle with the Horror. The central carving is of Tarun. When Malvagio discovered that Tarun had led his people out of the kaer, she attacked and beheaded his statue. Since that time, the cadaver men that haunt the kaer (see Room 18) have scrawled the word 'betrayed' on the remains of the statue using cave-pig blood. Anyone that examines the severed head will detect a striking likeness to Orted.

The stairs in the eastern wall of this room lead down to the lower level of the kaer. Any character standing at the top of the stairs can hear a rhythmical clanking noise echoing up the stairway (see Room 17).

## Room 10

*Clearly a store room of some kind, this small chamber contains numerous sacks, crates and boxes. Several odd aromas mingle and congeal in the stale air.*

This room contains many of the communal items that the fleeing kaer-folk did not have time to take with them. A thorough search reveals all sorts of flotsam and jetsam – old blankets and clothing, a variety of brittle tools, empty bottles and so on – but there are a few useful items as well.

These are:

- Several paintings and sculptures of the pre-Scourge world (250 silver pieces)
- 4 suits of padded leather armour (treated with an anti-aging lotion)
- Cleaning Broom
- 9 flasks of oil (3 silver pieces each)

## Room 11

Identical in design to Room 10, this chamber houses personal items that people did not have room for in their private accommodation. Amidst the spoiled and useless knick-knacks are:

- 2 Heat Stones
- Finely crafted dresser (50 silver pieces)
- A redoubtable oak table (60 silver pieces)
- A collection of rugs and carpets (treated with anti-aging agents) (350 silver pieces)
- An enormous tapestry depicting the 'Birth of the Horrors' (120 silver pieces)
- A collection of folk tales by 'Doublet the Bard' in gold-leafed, leather bound volumes (75 silver pieces)

## Room 12

The door to this room is concealed. A Perception (15) Test is required to find it. The door is made from stone and fits snugly into the wall. It may be pushed open (or pulled from within) and is set with a spring that automatically nudges it closed.

*This room is approximately square, perhaps five yards from wall to wall. The stone work is shrouded with webbing, as are the three chests that rest in one of the far corners. Hundreds of tiny skeletons and insect husks adorn the web-like macabre decorations. There are also other shapes, roughly spherical, suspended within the silk.*

The chests within this room contain some of the treasures that the people of Harrowflint Kaer were forced to leave behind and wished to keep hidden until their return.



The first chest contains a dozen silver, gem-encrusted goblets, each representing one of the 12 passions. The goblets are worth 100 silver pieces each, though the full set is worth 2,000.

The second chest contains a gold-filigreed mirror (250 silver pieces), an ivory brush (50 silver pieces) and a jewellery box containing various rings, bracelets and earrings. All told, this final item contains 1,000 silver pieces worth of jewellery.

The third chest contains a collection of silk robes and brocaded shirts that unfortunately have started to rot. They are worth no more than a few silvers.

Hidden amongst the webbing are cracks in the walls, through which the kaer-spiders have entered. Unfortunately for the PCs, a cluster of nest pouches has been built in the webbing around the chests. A Dexterity (10) Test is required to access or move a chest without disturbing the nest. If a nest is disturbed, half a dozen kaer-spiders – hidden in the wall crevices emerge and attack the PCs. They will continue to do so until slain, or the PCs retreat from the room.

#### Kaer Spiders

**DEX:** 6    **STR:** 5    **TOU:** 4  
**PER:** 3    **WIL:** 4    **CHA:** 4

**Initiative:** 6    **Physical Defence:** 9  
**Actions:** 1    **Spell Defence:** 4  
**Attack (2):** 8    **Social Defence:** 6  
**Damage:**    **Physical Armour:** 1  
**Bite (3):** 8    **Mystic Armour:** 0  
**Death:** 28    **Recovery Tests:** 2  
**Unconsciousness:** 19    **Knockdown:** 5  
**Wound Threshold:** 7    **Movement:** 6

**Legend Award:** First Circle

**Powers:** Climbing (6) 12, Poison (SD 5, Damage 5), Silent Walk (3) 9

#### Room 13

*This large open room contains a sloping gully along its western wall. In the stonework above it are several rusted pipes. Set into the floor of the north-eastern corner is a five foot*

*deep basin. In the centre of its 10 foot square flooring is a grating. Several further metal nozzles are set into the walls of the basin.*

This room provided one of the few luxuries the folk of Harrowflint Kaer were free to enjoy – bathing.

This room was once a bustling bath house. Deprived of maintenance, the system which once piped water up from the river below has broken.

#### Room 14

*The northern wall of this chamber and the northward leading corridor outside it have both collapsed. The remains of weapon-training dummies, one crushed beneath the rubble, one still standing, suggest that this was an exercise room of some kind.*

Those responsible for safeguarding Harrowflint – along with those who simply wished to keep themselves in shape – would use this room to spar and work out.

The northward corridor between Rooms 13 and 14 once lead to the warren-like living areas. Malvagio's fury collapsed the structure here, meaning that this area of the kaer is inaccessible.

#### Room 15 (Mushroom Farm)

*Entering this room once again introduces you to a number of strange new smells; this time the air is thick with the cloying smell of fungi. This entire chamber, which seems a naturally occurring cavern, further excavated in parts, is covered in mushrooms. They range in colour from deepest red to pale blue and have variously shaped stalks and cups. Several species produce their own luminescence, providing the chamber with an otherworldly glow. A single corridor leads northwards out of the cavern.*

Even with access to magical items and spells, the occupants of Harrowflint Kaer were always going to struggle producing conventional crops without soil or the sun. For the bulk of their nutrition they therefore turned to a number of specially grown mushrooms. These provided all the vitamins that were required to survive

– along with a number of other useful products. These can be identified and harvested by a character who makes a Wilderness Survival (9) Test.

The unusual mushrooms are:

- **Lethy grey** – a sleep-inducing mushroom that duplicates the effects of Keesra (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 125)
- **Soldier's Balm** – a bitter, white fungus that grants anyone who ingests it an immediate, additional Recovery Test. Subsequent doses within a 24 hour period have no further effect.
- **Flickering Fancy** – a stimulant that increases a character's Perception by 2 steps. This effect last for 12 hours. During this time, the character finds it impossible to sleep. After this time elapses the character suffers two levels of Fatigue. Additional doses cause vomiting and belly-ache.

1D6 doses of each type of unusual mushroom may be collected.

As the PCs search this room, they will encounter a number of harmless blind worms feeding on the mushrooms. These creatures – known affectionately as cave-pigs by the kaer-folk – provided much of their meat. In the years since the kaer was abandoned the cave-pigs have escaped and now roam freely between Rooms 15 and 16.

#### Room 16

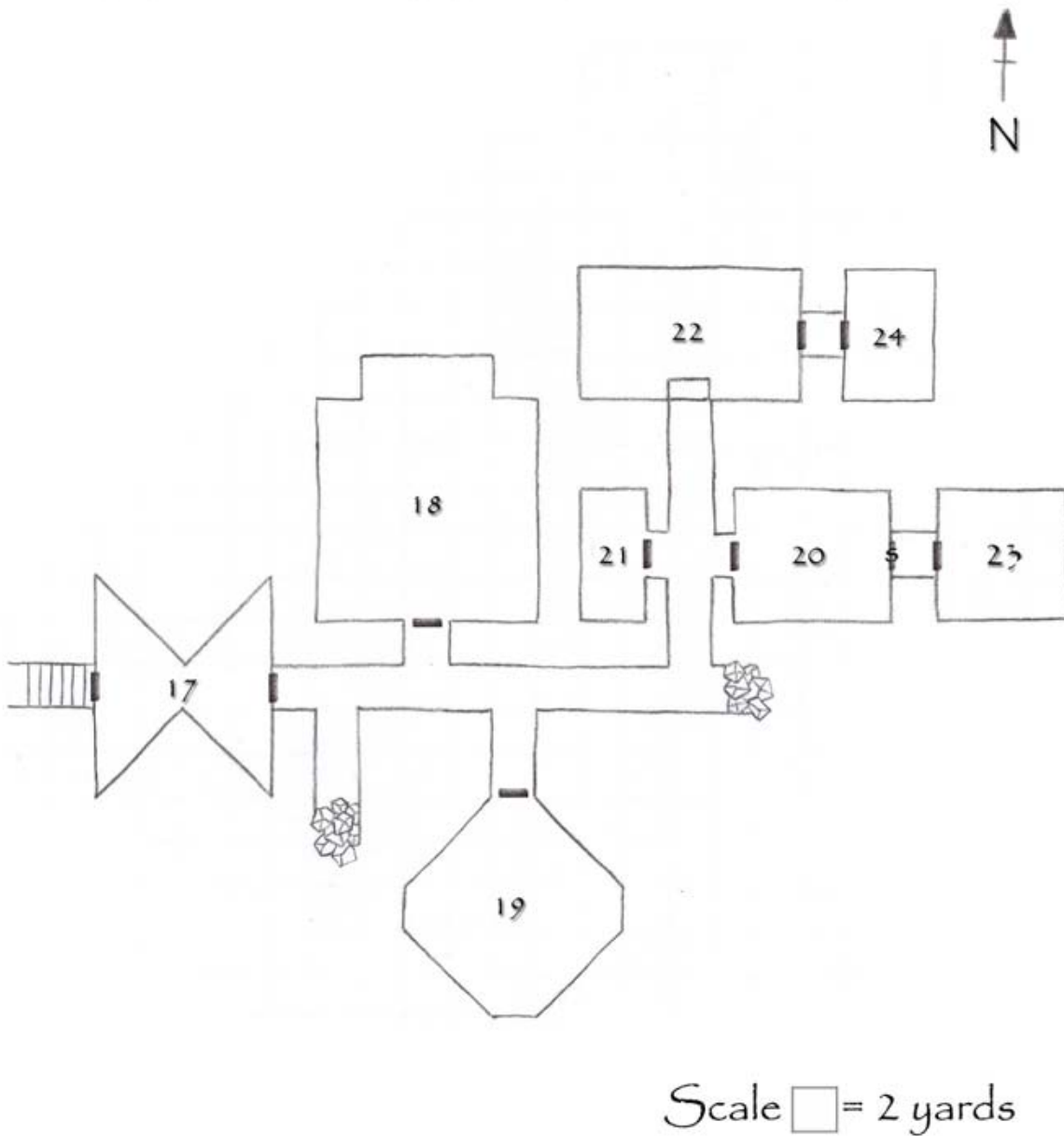
*This chamber is sectioned off into a number of pens, though the wooden partitions have rotted or fallen away in places. A number of eyeless worms, pink-skinned with pronounced pig-like noses, are nesting hither and thither.*

The cave-pigs are entirely non-aggressive. If attacked by the characters, the best they can do is crawl away and try to hide amongst the mushrooms.



# Buried Truths

## Harrowflint Kaer (lower level)



### Lower Kaer

#### Room 17

At the base of the stairs leading down from Room 9 is an oddly shaped chamber, designed to create a bottleneck that can be easily defended from either side against intruders:

*This strangely shaped room narrows in the centre creating a bottleneck. At this point, a portcullis rises and falls every few seconds, sparking against deep grooves worn in the floor.*

A malfunctioning mechanism is continually raising and lowering the portcullis. Years of friction have worn away the stone and

the pointed tips of the gate. Nevertheless, a Dexterity (7) Test is required to duck safely under the portcullis. A failed attempt inflicts 1D6 Damage.

Hidden in the eastern half of the room is a switch that will lock the portcullis in place. A Perception (11) Test is required to locate this.



### Room 18 (Chapel of the Passions)

*The most ornate chamber you have seen so far, this room is a chapel devoted to all 12 of the passions. Likenesses of each Passion are carved into the walls and ceiling. There are a number of benches dotted around the room for people to sit and meditate.*

*Of more interest than the room itself, however, are its occupants. Four figures, all positioned with their backs to you, sit as though deep in prayer.*

This chamber was a place of quiet contemplation for the generations of folk that lived and died within the confines of Harrowflint Kaer. It now serves as a 'home' for the four unfortunate souls who accompanied Tarun in the attack against Malvagio and were slain in the attempt. When the Horror found it was all alone in the kaer, it used its power to restore a semblance of life to the warriors' mutilated bodies, dooming them to a tortured existence as cadaver men (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 278).

The cadaver men have not conversed with outsiders for almost 80 years. This makes them curious enough not to act aggressively towards newcomers until they have had a chance to talk.

Assuming the PCs are willing to engage them in conversation, the cadaver men will share the following information:

- They are unable to leave the kaer whilst Malvagio continues to survive – or to go deeper into the kaer than the entrance to Room 19.
- Malvagio left the kaer decades ago; they do not know where she went.
- They were part of a group that went with Tarun to kill the Horror but were slain in the attempt.
- Malvagio has told them that Tarun betrayed them and made some sort of pact with her.
- Tarun's soul is trapped somewhere in the kaer; they have felt his presence but he has never communicated with them.

The cadaver men must be handled with care. If they learn that Orted is Tarun's descendent they will be inclined to take him hostage until such time as the PCs locate Tarun's spirit and force it to come before them to explain what happened after their mortal lives were ended. Fighting four such powerful adversaries is foolish in the extreme – Orted will see this even if the PCs do not – and the characters will be better off using their persuasive skills than their sword arms. If it comes to it, Orted will be willing to hand himself over as hostage: learning that the spirit of his ancestor is trapped in these halls, he will be as anxious as anyone to meet it and discover the truth.

### Room 19 (Diamond Chamber)

When the PCs first encounter this room, it will still be protected by one of the original wards placed upon the kaer:

*Before the door to the next chamber, the air shimmers as though baked by the sun, and something in the air makes the hairs on your arms stand up.*

This mystical barrier blocks the passage of both physical objects and magic. Only Tarun is able to deactivate this spell and allow the PCs to enter the room beyond.

If the PCs do get inside:

*This roughly diamond shaped room houses the kaer's magic level indicator. This resembles a golden metallic ball, resting a few inches above a black stone bowl. Ancient maps hang at irregular intervals about the walls. Odd scraps of twine and cloth hanging from hooks indicate where more vital ones were hurriedly removed when the kaer was evacuated.*

*Elsewhere in the room are a number of sacks, crates and boxes.*

The most significant item located amongst the containers is the Arcanical activation rod (see Room 23). This is stored within a purpose built wooden box, 12 inches long.

The other containers hold:

- A collection of botanical tomes
- A set of crystal figurines
- Assorted exotic dyes
- Several aged maps
- Navigational equipment
- Astronomical devices (telescope, star charts and so on)

All told, the items in this room are worth 1,400 silver pieces.

### Room 20

This particular storeroom houses all sorts of mining tools and equipment, including helmets, lanterns, pick axes, rope, shovels and black powder. Harrowflint Kaer was not complete when initially occupied and work continued for many years to finish off the tunnels and chambers now in place.

The black powder keg in this room contains 20 lbs of explosive. A single pound produces an explosion that inflicts 1D6 Damage, with a one yard blast radius. Each extra pound of explosive increases the damage by one step and the blast radius by half a yard.

A single pound of black powder can be used to lay a fuse trail up to 10 feet long. A trail of black powder burns through at a rate of 10 feet per round.

### Room 21

This small room was almost entirely cleared when the kaer was evacuated. A small amount of timber treated with anti-aging varnish is piled in the corner, along with several hammers and some nails.

### Room 22 (Tarun's Prison)

This room is sealed with an enormous stone door engraved with images of galloping horses. Just like the metal doorway hidden in the recess in Room 1, there is a key hole concealed in a horse's mouth. The second end of the key delivered to the PCs earlier in the adventure fits snugly into this lock. As soon as it is turned, read the following:

*There is a resounding click and the huge stone door swings open of its own volition to*

# Buried Truths

*reveal a solid but featureless room. A gust of chilled wind washes over you, ripe with the stench of death and corruption. In the centre of the room stands a lone, spectral figure. His back is bent, his head bowed. His eyes, when he lifts them towards you, are filled with sorrow.*

*Lying facedown on the flagstones before this apparition are the skeletal remains of a man.*

The spectral figure is the ghost of Tarun Gowen. Now that the PCs have opened the door to his prison, he hopes finally to be free. However, he is well aware that Malvagio will not allow him to escape without a fight.

The figure on the ground is Tarun's own corpse, trapped here long ago. On the body is the second Bracer of Aras – the twin to the one Tarun lost in The Mire. There is also a suit of slightly rusted ring mail (Physical Armour 5), a warhammer, a dagger, a buckler and a lifeless light quartz.

## Wisdom of the Dead

Tarun – whose voice is like a hollow echo – will tell the characters that in unsealing this room they will have alerted the Horror which long ago attacked the kaer. He says that they do not have long before it returns and must prepare themselves for the battle.

With obvious urgency, Tarun will tell the adventurers that a hidden chamber (Room 23) houses a mechanical device called the Arcanical. If they can activate this, it will give them a much better chance of defeating Malvagio. To do so, they will need to retrieve the activation rod from The Diamond Chamber (Room 19). Now that he is free, Tarun has the power to disable the ward protecting this room.

## Hostage

It is possible that the PCs will not believe (or be interested in) what Tarun's ghost has to tell them. The most likely reason for this

will be a desire to take Tarun before the cadaver men so that he can explain his actions and Orted can be freed.

If the PCs are insistent in their efforts to achieve this, Tarun will acquiesce. He will make his way to Room 18, there to confront his accusers:

*As Tarun enters the chapel, all four of the withered forms look up from their prayers.*

*'I am sorry,' begins Tarun. 'It was never my intention to betray you. After each of you was slain by the Horror, I did not have the strength to defeat it on my own. I feared for my life – yes – but also for those of our friends and family.'*

*Tarun's spirit glances down, overcome with shame. 'I made a deal with the Horror. It would not leave its chamber – a room that would be specially sealed against intrusion – and in exchange it would receive a single life each year.'*

*One of the withered figures growls angrily.*

*'I thought that I would be free to choose who was sent,' says Tarun. 'A criminal or one who was already ailing. Perhaps myself, if necessary. But the Horror betrayed me. It took a young life. I knew then that it could not be trusted.'*

*'In secret, I gathered our people and led them out into the world. We found a new home and I did my best to atone for what I had done.'*

*Tarun's spirit moves his eyes from one withered face to the next. 'I had no idea that the Horror would bring you back and torment you in this way.'*

*There is a heavy pause, then the figures move in to surround Tarun. They raise their hands one by one and place them on his shoulders. It is a silent sign of forgiveness.*

*With tears in his eyes, Tarun turns to you. 'We will fight this Horror together.'*

## Room 23 (Arcanical Chamber)

The Arcanical is a mechanical marvel, constructed to protect the kaer from intruders. It resembles a three yard long chrome insect with large pincer claws.

It may be entered via a hatch in its belly. Inside, there is room for two crewmen. One person lays with his arms inside the pincers; the other with each of his limbs fitting inside the four legs that move the contraption.

The activation rod fits snugly inside a slot within the machine's inner workings. Once this is in place, the contraption is moved by the two pilots manoeuvring their own limbs and therefore requires no training to use.

The **Arcanical** has the following characteristics:

**DEX:** As rear pilot **STR:** as front pilot

**TOU:** N/A

**PER:** As front pilot **WIL:** N/A

**CHA:** N/A

**Initiative:** As rear pilot

**Physical Defence:** As rear pilot +1

**Actions:** 1

**Spell Defence:** As rear pilot

**Attack:** as front pilot's DEX +2

**Social Defence:** As rear pilot

**Damage:**

**Physical Armour:** 10

As front pilot's STR +9

**Mystic Armour:** 0

**Death:** 60

**Recovery Tests:** N/A

**Unconsciousness:** 50

**Knockdown:** 15

**Wound Threshold:** N/A

**Movement:**

**Powers:** Charge (2)

## Rules

If the arcanical suffers 50 points of damage it is rendered inactive. If it suffers 60 points of damage it is destroyed.





Up until the point where the arcanical is destroyed, the two pilots suffer no damage from attacks directed against it.

The arcanical attacks as a single creature, even though it needs two crewmen to operate.

**NB** – the Death and Unconsciousness ratings provided allow for the fact the arcanical starts the fight slightly damaged: it was never fully repaired from the original battle with Malvagio. Fully repaired, it has Death 80 and Unconsciousness 70.

### Room 24

Some of the items in this hidden store room were left behind by the kaer folk; others were collected by Malvagio during her centuries-long pillage across Barsaive and left here for safe-keeping.

The items are:

- Elemental long spear (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 134)
- An ivory harp (450 silver pieces)
- Chair of comfort
- Naga-Scale Brooch (*Gamemaster's Guide*, page 137)
- Salve of closure
- A sapphire necklace (120 silver pieces)
- 650 silver pieces

## Malvagio's Return

From the moment the PCs enter Room 22, Malvagio will begin her journey back to Harrowflint Kaer.

The PCs have time to do one of two things before she manifests and the climax of the adventure begins. They may either retrieve the activation rod for the Arcanical and power this up or they may take Tarun before the cadaver men and acquire them as allies.

Once one of these has been achieved, Malvagio will manifest and seek to re-imprison Tarun and slay the PCs:

*The air splits like an overripe fruit and something black and putrid leaks in from*

*beyond. It congeals like tar, taking the form of a pale-skinned woman with black hair matted to a lop-sided skull. Swarms of tiny white crabs scurry constantly over her ashen skin and beneath the surface grey veins pulse and flow. Her waist tapers to a stream of slimy flesh within which severed body parts twist and clench. Raising hands like rusted hooks, she glides forward menacingly.*

In his spirit form, Tarun will engage the Horror by attacking it on the Astral plane. This part of the struggle need not be played out – it simply adds flavour to the battle.

Malvagio has been significantly weakened by the declining forces of magic in the world and has expended a great deal of her energies returning suddenly to the kaer. Even so, she should provide a significant challenge to the PCs.

### Malvagio

**DEX:** 10 **STR:** 9 **TOU:** 10  
**PER:** 10 **WIL:** 9 **CHA:** 11

**Initiative:** 10

**Physical Defence:** 13

**Actions:** 1

**Spell Defence:** 13

**Attack:** (1): 11

**Social Defence:** 15

**Damage:**

**Physical Armour:** 3

Claws (2): 11

**Mystic Armour:** 7

**Death:** 52

**Recovery Tests:** 5

**Unconsciousness:** 45

**Knockdown:** 9

**Wound Threshold:** 15

**Movement:** 7

**Legend Award:** Fourth Circle

**Powers:** Animate Dead (4): 13, Astral Sight (2): 12

### Rules

Malvagio revels in causing suspicion and fear but her true calling is the corruption of noble souls.

### Stealing the limelight

The PCs must remain the stars of the show. If fighting alongside Tarun – and perhaps the cadaver men – their efforts must not be overshadowed. The Gamemaster may elect to describe the contribution of these allies – which should certainly not be ignored – without making them the focus of the battle.

Another alternative is to let the players control the cadaver men during the fight. This will avoid the Gamemaster spending long periods of time running a battle with himself!

## Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs manage to defeat Malvagio she will vanish screaming into a slimy, etheric vortex. Her death will mean the end for the cadaver men. Without the Horror's will sustaining their unnatural life, they will crumble to dust. Before they go, the PCs may witness a look of peace pass over their withered features.

Tarun, too, will be free to move on. He will have time to thank the PCs for their help and to wish his descendent good luck before he fades and vanishes into the ether.

Depending on how much Orted has learned about his ancestor's deeds, he may need to re-evaluate a few things. Even so, he will be reluctant to destroy his ancestor's legend – unless the PCs leave him with little choice but to do so. At the very least, this will shake things up in Gabledown.

All that will remain is to load up the wagons (or boat) and to transport the spoils back to Gabledown. Whether that journey proves easier than getting to the kaer in the first place is entirely up to the Gamemaster...

# Artism... Vol 3

## The Lupin

By Robyn Aurens

To draw a good figure means learning the basics of structure, proportions and positions. Once you have an understanding of that you will be able to play around with the positions of your figures. For this I shall be showing you how to draw a Lupin and encourage you to build your own creatures from their.

1. First off we need to start out by building the structure of the figure, this is easily accomplished by drawing a stick figure and defining the joints with circles as shown in fig 1. You will probably find it easier to start with the pelvis and work your way outwards.

2. Now that you have established the structure we want to begin fleshing it out. All you need to do is

start connecting the joints together by drawing a rough line from the edge of each joint to the other joint as shown in fig 2 and finish this step by adding rectangular shapes for the feet.

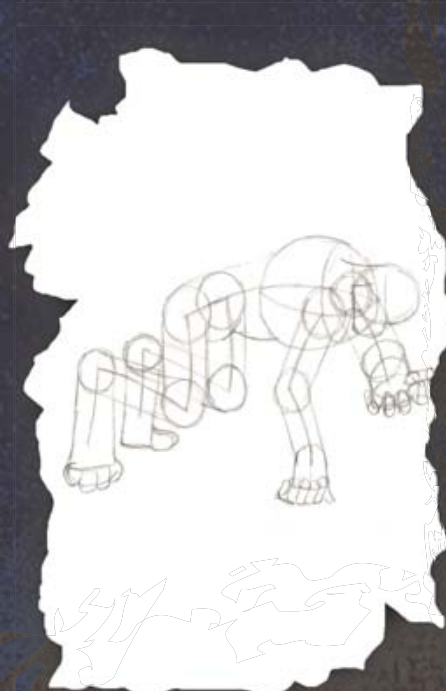
3. As you can see the figure is now starting to develop. The next step is to start doing the hands, feet and head. With the feet all we're doing is shaping the toes, this is done by drawing a "U"



1



2



3



shape with the middle two toes being the biggest and the jaw for the head is simply a backwards "J". The hands will be the hardest part of the drawing but this is done by following the method in step 1.

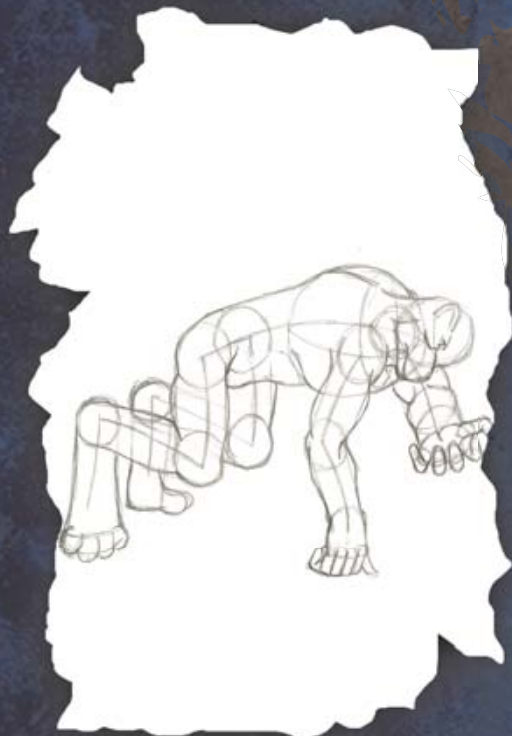
4. What we need to do now is shape the figure, a nice and easy thing to do as all the hard work has been done. Then we need to define the face with the eyes, mouth and ears, again this is very straight forward and you just need to follow how its done in fig 4.

5. All that's left to do is rub out the construction lines of the figure and add the detail. This last step is very open to what you want to do with the Lupin and features you want to add. For fig 5 all I did was add a piece of cloth that he is looking at in his left hand and a shackle on the right hand. As for the fur all it is a case of doing is tiny zigzags around the body. To add more depth to the muscle is to simply start by shading them in, we do this by shading the edges of the muscle as shown in fig 5. Once that has been done your Lupin is complete. Do not stop there, feel free to add your own personal touches and features.

Robyn Aurens

<http://al-sogno.blogspot.com>

4



5





# A Friend in Need

By August Hahn

## Patrons for Traveller

The galaxy is really big. There are hundreds upon thousands of known worlds, many of them explored to some degree or other. From balls of rock to gas giants, corporate colonies to toxic jungle worlds, they all have one thing in common. No matter where people go, they always have needs. Some are small and easily handled. For the bigger tasks a helping hand is sometimes required. Need and conflict are the driving forces behind adventure. Conflict creates itself once players get involved.

Need is what patrons are for. A patron is anyone or anything with a direct need and the means to both communicate that desire to others and a way to reward them for the task's completion. This can be as simple as a gourmand ordering a meal and paying for it or as complex as a distraught noble hiring freelance operatives to infiltrate a war zone and rescue his captured son from an enemy stronghold. Patrons provide both the source of an adventure and the benefit for undertaking it.

This article series will present a pair of patrons each issue, providing all the background needed to incorporate them into an existing campaign and the details required to use them in several different ways. Patrons may not always be forthright, or even honest, in their dealings with players but in every case they serve to get the ball rolling on a great adventure!

### Dermont Calaway, Human

#### Entertainer

**Requires:** Broker, Persuade, Streetwise

**Rewards:** Cr. 10,000 or more if the characters can bargain their fee higher.

**Player's Information:** Dermont is better known as Derm, a name any character with knowledge of current music culture will know without need for a skill check. Derm is a master of the aerosynth, a complicated

instrument pioneered by him in his much younger days and now a common sight in bands across the known stars. Derm is a living legend and though his musical days are mostly behind him, he still lives well off royalties and the very occasional personal appearance.

Derm is well known for just reaching out seemingly at random and hiring strangers to do things for him with little explanation and often for obscenely large rewards. Most people assume it to be a sort of dependability test. Many of Derm's most famous associates and band mates were once strangers he pulled in and trusted with some mundane task. Others think Derm does it because it amuses him to watch people scurry around at his slightest whim. The truth may be a little of both.

**Referee's Information:** Derm is actually in a bind this time. Though he is not in any great need of money he is in dire straits where his anti-aging drugs are concerned. Derm has developed a rare allergy to normal grade anagathics. Without a steady supply of cutting edge 'youth juice' Derm's long, hard years will start catching up with him in a hurry. His normal supplier is willing to make a special trip to bring him his drugs but he wants a bonus this time – one of Derm's original Calaway aerosynths. Since anyone who actually knows Derm would be able to figure out that something huge must be happening to get him to part with one of only three such instruments in existence, he has to rely on total strangers to make the exchange for him.

1. Derm is a little eccentric but he is also a straight shooter with no intentions of backing out on his part of the bargain. The same cannot be said of his supplier, a chemist in the pocket of a large criminal cartel. Now that his supplier knows how desperate Derm is to get what he is selling, negotiations are liable to get heated. A rare instrument just will not be enough when the characters arrive to make the

exchange. Bargaining skills might diffuse the situation before guns are drawn but going into the meeting strapped would still be a good idea.

2. Though he seems pretty honest, Derm has everyone fooled. His reputation is a sham, a construct of a public relations firm and some well paid word of mouth. He has no intentions of trading one of his priceless aerosynths for black market anagathics. If his supplier wants to raise his prices it is time to get a new supplier. The characters will be shadowed by a trained assassin and framed for the chemist's death after the exchange is made.

3. In a cutthroat world like the music industry, a secret is worth 100 hit songs. Gerry Gallows, one of Derm's rivals, has found out about his debilitating allergy and would like nothing better than to tamper with the supply that the characters are about to deliver. When the characters finish with the exchange Gerry will spring into action. How she approaches the characters will depend on how they handle themselves with the chemist. A reasonable, conversational group might actually have Gerry come speak to them and offer them twice what Derm paid them for the drugs. A seemingly violent or difficult party might have to deal with an ambush or three before they make it back.

4. Derm's supplier arrived on time but, as smugglers are wont to do, he is in trouble with the dock authorities and his cargo is locked down. If the players want Derm's drugs they are going to have to either find a way to clear up the Cr. 60,500 fine the supplier has outstanding or retrieve the metal chemical case from his ship's hold on their own.

5. The anagathic allergy Derm has is actually caused by a drug interaction with a 'recreational' chemical Derm enjoys on a fairly constant basis. If the characters

manage to handle the exchange properly and do not try to haggle him for more money he may decide to keep them on as 'procurement' specialists. He gets his drugs from several different suppliers on a dozen other worlds and if the characters are amenable to playing fetch he could become a long term patron. They keep him high, he keeps them loaded.

6. Sooner or later the Reaper always catches up. Moments after the characters hand over his anti-aging medicine Dermi takes a dose, has a violent reaction and falls over dead. Their arrangement was a secret, Dermi's guards just outside the door have no idea why the characters were let in and the rock star just screamed loudly and died at their feet. Cue the drama.

## Ihjat Aatli-Rko, Vilani Arbiter

**Requires:** Diplomat, Gun Combat, Investigate, Streetwise; Spacecraft

**Rewards:** Cr. 500/day plus a personal favour

**Player's Information:** No caste system works perfectly, even one as old and ingrained into its people as the Vilani's. When disputes and disagreements arise it is the role of an arbiter to hear all sides concerned and make a judgement that will serve the people involved and the community as a whole. Arbiters are afforded considerable power in Vilani society and members at every caste level have reasons to fear their coming. Arbiters are somewhat outside the system. They can make decisions that punish Vilani born many times higher than their own station and their decrees offer no simple appeal. This makes them both envied and despised.

While most arbiters operate with a small crew and a ship of their own the rigours of space can be hazardous even for them. Ihjat's vessel was shot out from under

him and he survived only by the grace of a passing merchant freighter looking to score some payback against those same raiders. Now he needs freelance assistance with a ship of their own and a willingness to help him complete the caste duty that called him to this side of the galaxy.

**Referee's Information:** Ihjat is part bureaucrat, part secret agent and all business. He does have a personal side but he is not likely to show it to the characters until after they have completed at least their initial assignment for him. He is a dangerous man with extremely high-level contacts and a willingness to do whatever it takes to further the Vilani way of life. Even if he bonds strongly with one or more of the characters his devotion to his people is nearly unbreakable and his duty will almost always come first.

1. In the same star port where the characters meet Ihjat there is a caste-jumper that he was here to track down and bring back to his family for punishment. The caste-jumper is a violent criminal and has already hired thugs of his own from local workers and ex-military to protect him while he waits for a ship to help him flee the planet. Ihjat wants the caste-jumper alive. Beyond that the man's condition is entirely irrelevant.

2. The caste-jumper mission is the same on the surface but it will not take long for the characters to discover why the jumper is here. He fell for a cargo worker on a ship that visited his homeworld and stowed away to be with his beloved. This may make the situation more morally ambiguous for the characters but it does not change a thing for Ihjat.

3. A Vilani casteless that escaped his culture years ago has discovered Ihjat's identity and role as an arbiter. Old resentments never die and now the casteless wants to make an example of Ihjat to all those

who would force the caste system onto his fellow Vilani. What starts as a simple escort mission for the arbiter will quickly become a fight for protection and survival when the casteless moves against Ihjat in full force, even using himself as a suicide bomber if he must.

4. By giving the characters a small recovery mission or simple bodyguard work Ihjat has been testing them. If they are not found wanting he will reveal the real reason for his coming here – an illegal Vilani colony on a remote world a few jumps away. With their help he intends to infiltrate the colony and dismantle it from the inside. While this mission may be extremely long-term and hazardous the reward would be nearly priceless as Ihjat will have no use for the resource rich colony world once the caste-deniers are dealt with. If the characters can hold it once he leaves, it is theirs.

5. There are no limits to what an arbiter is expected to do in the course of his duties. When the characters discover that the target they have been sent for is the only means of support for a homeless child she adopted they will have a serious moral dilemma on their hands. This may not faze them but if it does they will have a hard choice to make, one with which Ihjat will be of absolutely no help.

6. Ihjat has the potential to be a lengthy employer for the characters. If they have dealings with him over a long period of time he may start to bend a little in his dealings with them. He is stoic but he is not a robot. When some of their missions become morally grey, how they have interacted with him will determine how he responds if they try to show mercy or let a caste-jumper go. If he does bend for them he risks 'going rogue' and forcing his government to send an even more capable arbiter after him. When that happens the characters' adventures have only just begun.

# Habakkuk Class Aircraft Carrier

By David Manley

One of the more unusual hypothetical naval projects of WW2 was the British "Habakkuk" (also spelt Habbakuk, although the former spelling is correct). The name is a biblical reference to the project's ambitious goal: '...be utterly amazed, for I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.'

Habakkuk was, in its final design version, a 2.2 million tonne aircraft carrier, 2,000 feet long, 300 feet wide, to be built in Canada from ice. However, this was no ordinary ice. Instead it was a modified form known as Pykrete, named after its inventor Geoffrey Pyke. Pykrete combined ice with wood pulp to create a new material that melted far more slowly than normal ice. It was also highly resistant to blast and bullet effects (the story goes that Churchill fired a pistol at a normal ice block and a pykrete block at a demonstration – the ice block shattered, the bullet hitting the pykrete block bounced off and grazed the leg of Admiral King!). Extensive trials in Canada proved the concept.

Habakkuk's purpose was to provide a (barely) mobile air base in the mid Atlantic from which ASW and surveillance patrols could be flown against German submarines and raiders. The final design of *Habbakuk* had a displacement of 2.2 million tons. Steam turbo generators were to supply 33,000 hp (25,000 kW) for 26 electric motors and these were to be mounted in external modules to keep heat out of the internal structure. Armament included 40 twin 4.5 inch DP (dual-purpose) guns (as fitted to RN's *Illustrious* class aircraft carriers) and over a hundred 20mm and 40mm AA guns. Her hangars would have accommodated over 150 aircraft.

In the end Habakkuk joined the massive pile of weird and wonderful WW2 projects that went nowhere. Costs escalated, the impact on allied paper production of the hundreds of thousands of tons of wood pulp needed was realised and in the end the advent of the highly successful escort carrier designs of the RN and US navies made the idea of a floating mid Atlantic base unnecessary.

For those of you who just to have a model, I believe that Hallmark make the only commercially available one, in 1/6,000.

*Habakkuk in comparison with an "Iowa" class battleship and a "Nimitz" class carrier (source unknown)*

## Ships of this class: Habakkuk

**Speed:** 2"

**Turning:** Special

**Target:** 3+

**Armour:** 5+

**Damage:** 1,200/400

**Crew:** 200/66

**Special Traits:** Armoured Deck, Carrier, Radar

**In Service:** 1944

**Aircraft:** 25 flights (select from Firefly, Avenger, Seafire, Mosquito, Barracuda)

Weapon		Range	AD	DD	Special
Secondary Armament	12"	20	1	Weak	
AAA	8"	40	—		

**Length:** 2,000 ft.

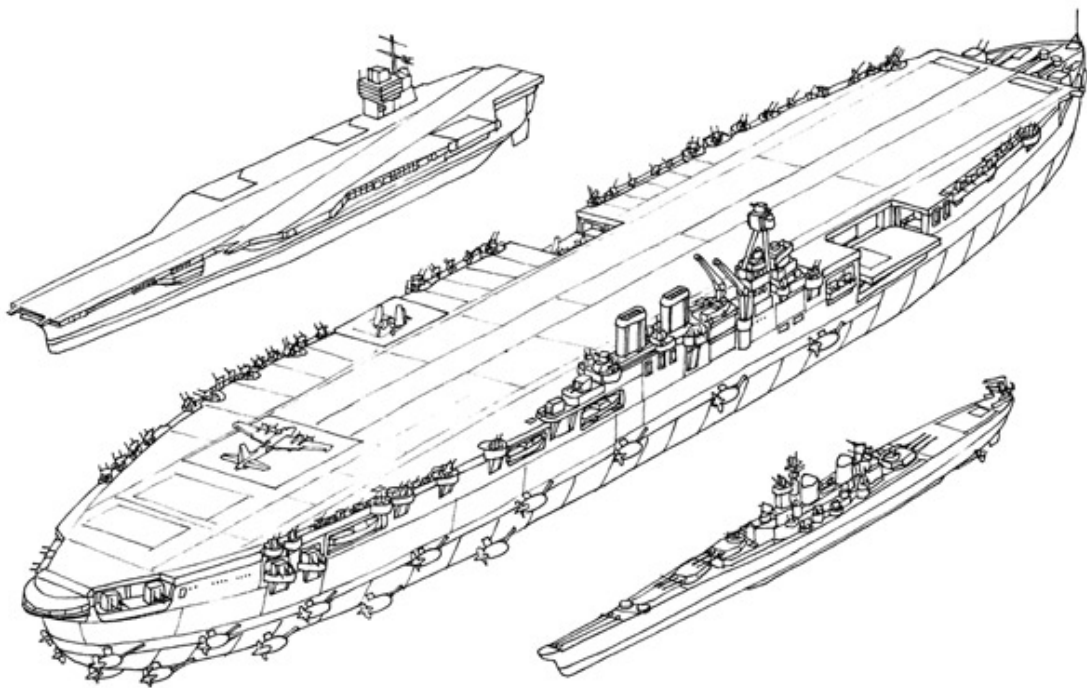
**Displacement:** 2,000,000 tons

**Speed:** 10 kts.

**Crew:** 5,000

Turning – Habbakuk can turn 1 point every 2 turns.





# Halloween at Mongoose Halls 09

By Katrina Hepburn

As we walked into the offices of Mongoose the first thing noticeable was the smell of the Halloween goodies being brewed up on the counter, a bountiful array of sweet delights, cup cakes, biccies and Jaffa cakes! Added to all the sweet stuff was our very own Peter Curzon, who was charring assorted flesh on his mini Australian cooker thingy...Burgers and hotdogs...thankfully these were more appetising to the eye than last year's zombie burgers, which were all green. The first thing I jumped for food wise was the delicious looking pumpkin soup, which was bubbling away in the pan.

So...2 Cup Cakes, 3 Jaffa Cakes and a bowl of pumpkin soup later, I hit the gaming floor!

The one thing I love about this event is the abundance of horror games, through the course of every year I see at most one or two of these games at all the conventions and events. But the



Halloween event at Mongoose has them all! Monsterpocalypse, Monsters Menace America, Tannhauser, Fury of Dracula and Warhammer Chaos in the Old World to name just a few. The games that dominated my evening were Last Night on Earth, The Zombie Board game by Flying Frog Productions and Arkham Horror by Fantasy Flight Games.

In Arkham Horror players take on the role of investigators in H. P. Lovecraft's Massachusetts town of Arkham. Gates to other planes of existence open throughout the town. If too many gates open, a supreme nasty ugly being will enter, probably destroying the town, very likely threatening the world and will most definitely

leave your investigators as little more than red stains on the carpet, but not until it has driven you completely insane upon seeing its grotesque form. The players must avoid or fight vicious alien creatures that enter Arkham through the gates, enter the gates themselves, survive the weird alien places beyond (which is a feat in itself.), return to Arkham and close the gates...Now, doesn't that sound like a hoot?...don't you just love games that completely obliterate life as we know it?...I DO!

Arkham Horror is an amazingly engrossing game and takes a good 3-4 hours to play, possibly more; it has a multitude of different counters for a huge amount of different things. But don't let this dissuade you from trying the game, it's not as complex as it all sounds and I guarantee that if you're a fan of anything H.P.Lovecraft then this game is a simple MUST to play, providing you don't mind an almost hopeless chance of winning, but then, if you're a fan of H.P.Lovecraft then you will know exactly





the kind of odds you have...slim to none...  
That's what makes it so fun!

Last Night on Earth, The Zombie Game, is a fast-paced game of brain eating zombies, small town heroes, and old-style horror movie action. You take on the role of either the Heroes, working together to survive the night; or the zombies, sending unending waves of undead through the town like a plague. I had taken on the role as one of the much misunderstood zombie parties, after all, we got to eat!... Brains...Brains...more Brains...Brains... By the time our zombies had sated their appetites from the hero's cranial cavities it was unfortunately quite late in the evening and time to pack up the day.

Halloween at Mongoose Halls is always a wonderful event, good food, good people and most importantly, good gaming. I highly recommend it for experienced and new gamers alike as a brilliantly fun evening out. So next year pop on by! We won't bite!...well...we will try not to draw blood at least...ok ok...just a few chunks of flesh? ...BRAINZ!





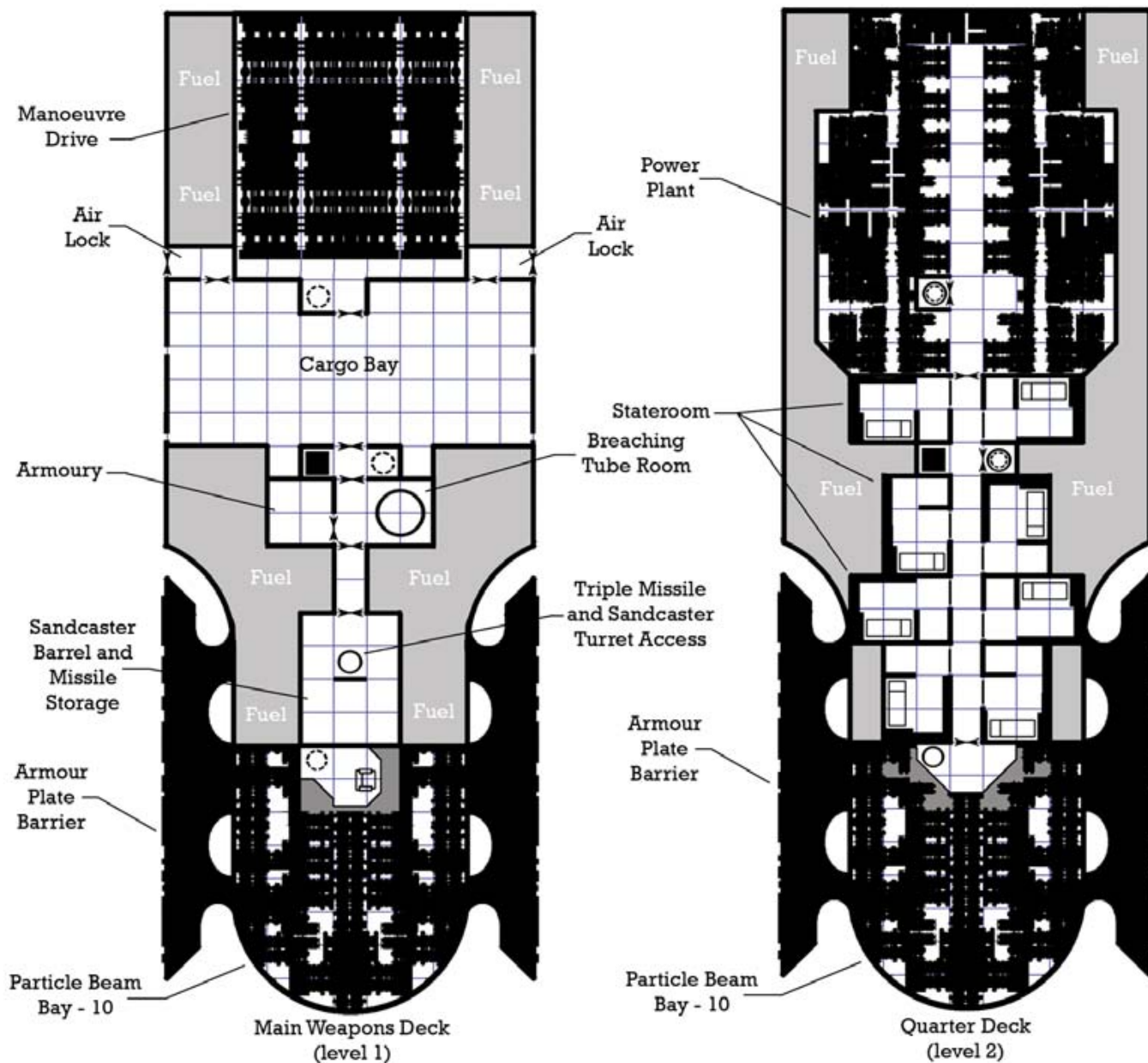
# Heavy Systems Defense Boat

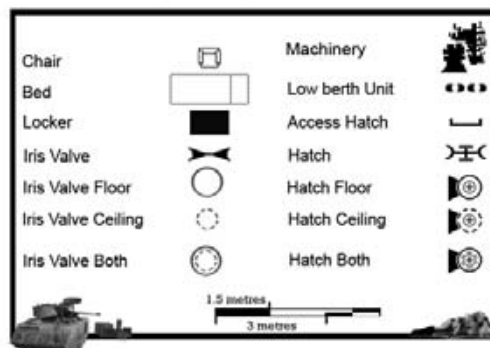
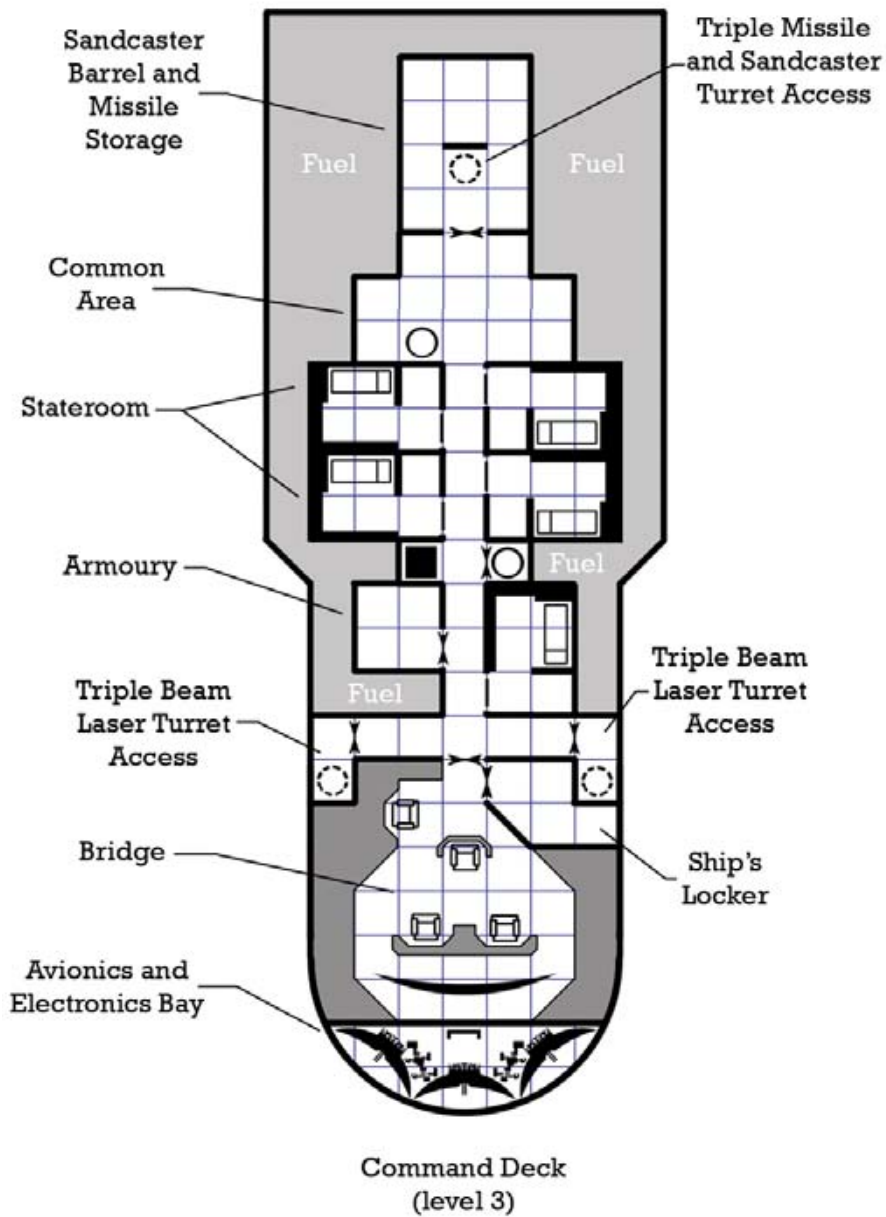
By Nick Robinson

The large numbers of Vargr corsairs operating throughout the extents can be a real threat to trade as opposing factions launch raids upon one another. The long-ranged heavy systems defence boat is used to protect key systems from attacks or from retaliatory strikes, being far too expensive to use in any but the most important of duties. Tough and durable it carries a force of marines to capture crippled corsair vessels.

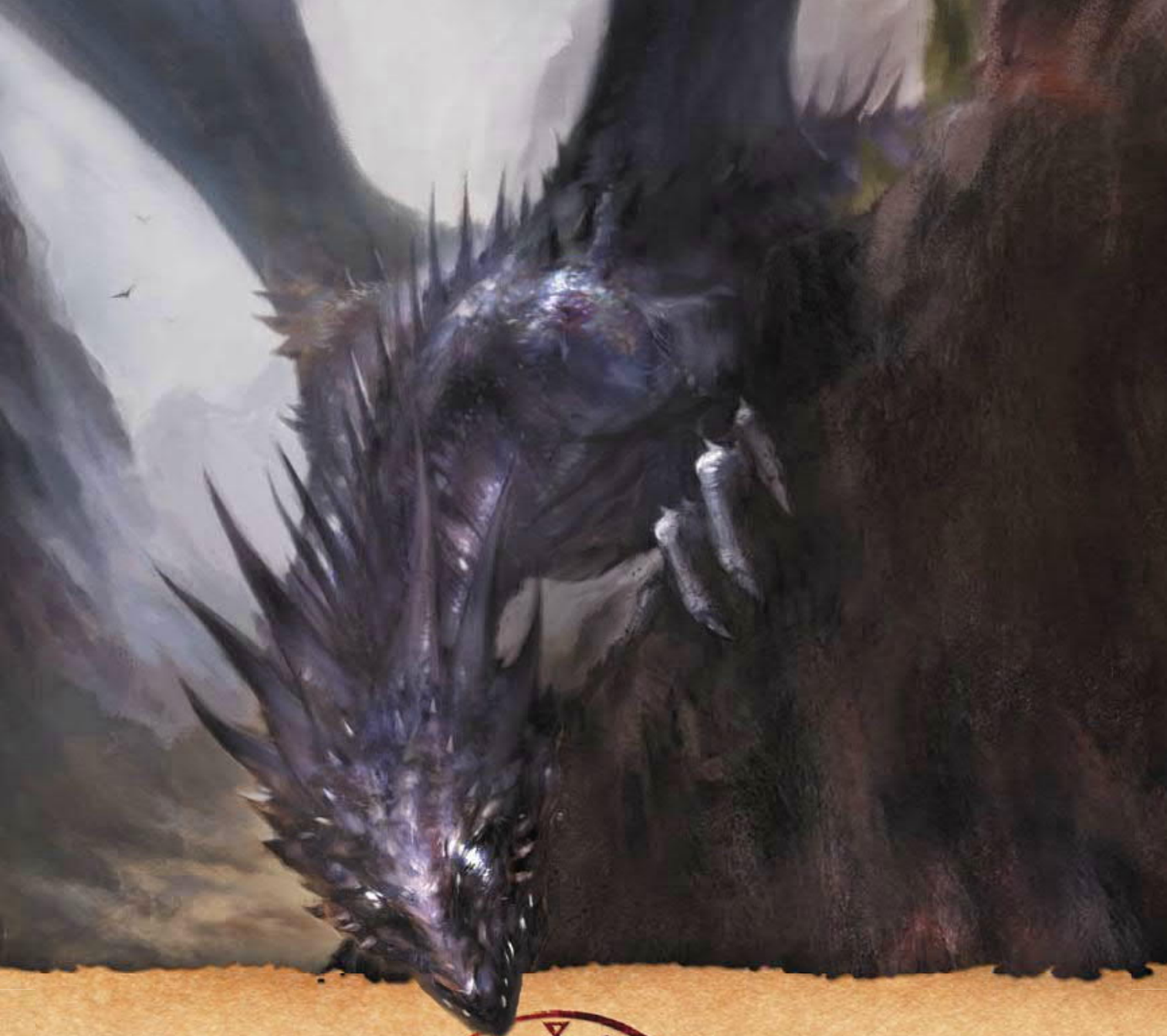
Normal Crew consists of 2 pilots, 4 engineers, 5 gunners and 15 marines. The heavy systems defence boat is a Technology Level 12 design.

			Tons	Price (Cr.)
Hull	500 Tons	15 Hull	—	32,000,000
	Streamlined	8 Structure	—	3,200,000
	Reinforced Hull	—	50	5,000,000
Armour	Bonded Superdense	18 Points	75	48,000,000
No Jump Drive	—	—	—	—
Manoeuvre Drive	Q	Thrust 6	29	60,000,000
Power Plant	Q	Rating 6	46	120,000,000
Bridge	—	—	20	2,500,000
Computer	Model/4	Rating 20	—	5,000,000
Electronics	Very Advanced	+2 DM	5	4,000,000
Weapons	Hardpoint #1	Particle Beam Bay-10 (very high yield)	51	25,000,000
	Hardpoint #2	Triple Turret (Sandcaster/Missile Rack/Missile Rack)	1	2,750,000
	Hardpoint #3	Triple Turret (Sandcaster/Missile Rack/Missile Rack)	1	2,750,000
	Hardpoint #4	Triple Turret (Beam Lasers)	1	4,000,000
	Hardpoint #5	Triple Turret (Beam Lasers)	1	4,000,000
Ammunition	—	96 standard missiles	8	—
	—	80 sandcaster barrels	4	—
Fuel	120 Tons	Eight weeks of operation	120	—
Cargo	9 Tons	—	29	—
13 Staterooms	—	—	52	6,500,000
0 Low Berths	—	—	—	—
Extras	Fuel Scoops	—	—	—
	Breaching Tube	—	3	3,000,000
	Armoury x 2	—	4	1,000,000
Software	Evade/2	Rating 15	—	2,000,000
	Fire Control/4	Rating 20	—	8,000,000
	Intellect	Rating 10	—	1,000,000
	Manoeuvre/0	Rating 0	—	—
	Library/0	Rating 0	—	—
Maintenance Cost (monthly)	—	—	—	25,478
Life Support Cost (monthly)	—	—	—	24,000
Total Tonnage & Cost	—	—	500	305,730,000









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# LONE WOLF

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## THE VILLAGE OF ESHNAR: UNCOVERED

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BY DARREN PEARCE

*'Well now, I can really say that the mead from the Pick and Shovel is the finest you'll taste in all of Sommerlund. But I am biased; I'm quite sweet on the 'lass' that owns it. But never you mind about that, back to work with you.'* Ulmar Tharsson, Village Elder.

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### BRIEF HISTORY

Around the same time that Ruanon was built and populated, the early miners of the Maaken found that they desired a quieter life. A group of them remained to found Ruanon but some of them moved east across the Sommerlund towards Cloesia. They stopped just shy of the Ruanon Pike and built a small settlement there that became known as Eshnar. Eshnar quickly grew to support a mixed population of disgruntled miners and hard working farmers; those unhappy with their lot in Ruanon swiftly reinforced the people of Eshnar and established a thriving community in a few years.

Eshnar has had trouble with various small bandit groups as it is situated east of the Ruanon Pike, the road that leads to Ruanon and so on. Raider parties of Giak and human bandits loyal to the Darklords have always been a thorn in the side for the settlement and have sought to disrupt traffic along the road, taking the spoils to hidden caves and lairs throughout the area. It was not until MS 5040 that a

small group of Kai dispatched from the monastery sought to redress the balance and eliminate many of the Giak and raiders around Eshnar.

The Kai used the small village as their base of operations and within five years, MS 5045, they managed to cull the raiders down to a small group. This operation took its toll on both the Kai and the people of the village; many of them were drafted to help fend off reprisal attacks from the Darklord's minions and the remaining raider leaders. The raiders claimed the life of the previous Village Elder, a miner by the name of Quen Hagland who was killed as he rescued a family from their burning cottage.

The raiders were finally driven back by the Kai and order was restored to Eshnar. Despite the attacks, the hard working people of Eshnar picked up their lives and moved on with their lot. By MS 5050 they had expanded their population and had repaired most of the damage done by the raiders during the years before and elected a new Village Elder, a shrewd negotiator called Ulmar Tharsson. He is faithfully served by a couple of hard working Ruanon miners, Derek and Bren who keep an eye on the village and have constructed a secret tunnel system beneath Eshnar that runs nearly to Ruanon. This tunnel system was designed to evacuate the village to a stronger neighbour should it ever be attacked again.

The Kai left the village at the turn of MS 5050 and returned to the Monastery where they were killed in the Darklord's attack.

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### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

There are small farms scattered at the edges of Eshnar, they surround and encircle the village. The buildings are made from traditional Sommerlund materials, a local grey and brown mud makes excellent bricks and many of the cottages and houses have thatched rooftops. The village in MS 5050 does not have a defensive wall and it looks a cheerful and happy place with many farmers and miners working the fields as an onlooker approaches during the day.

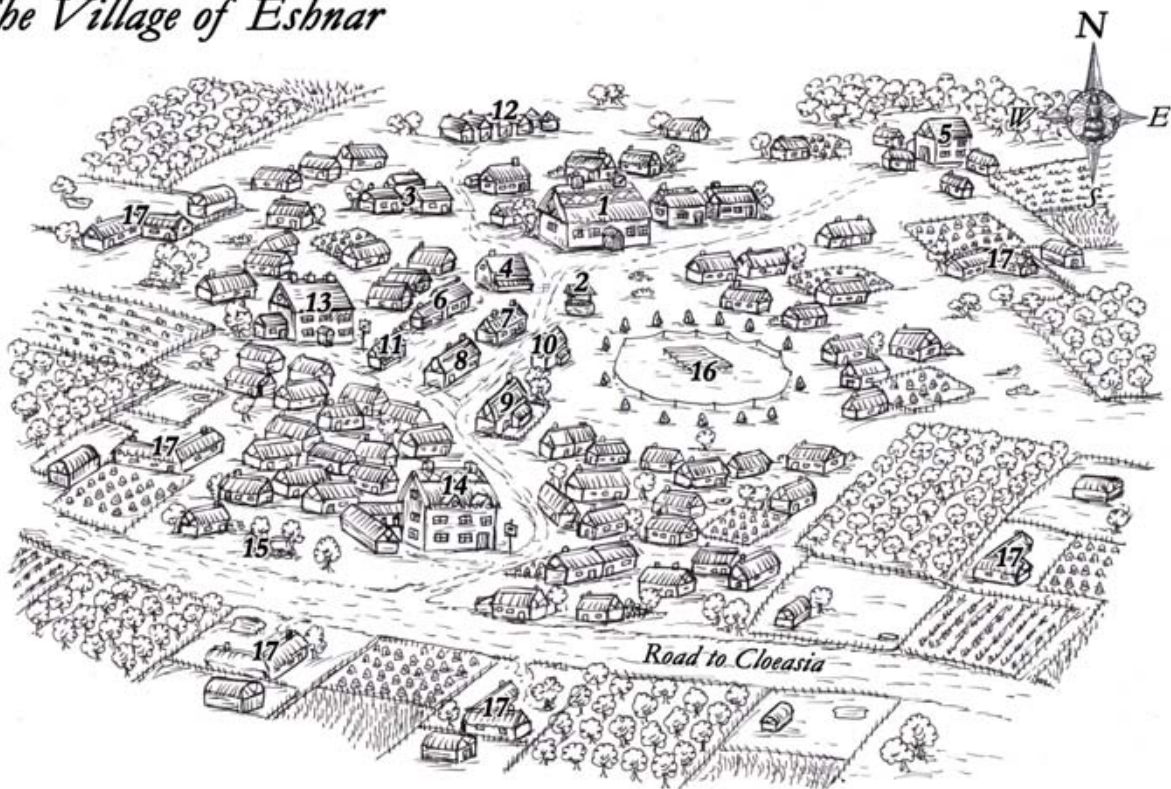
Lazy white smoke often drifts upwards in a picturesque manner, puffed from flat stunted chimney pots into the sky. It is the very model of a perfect looking society. At night the village comes alive with ghostly yellow lights from many of the candles used as lighting, or the oil lamps that are securely fastened to wooden posts outside of the cottages and small houses. During the day the village is quite busy with the hard working folk moving about their daily chores, at night it becomes deserted all barring a small patrol of village militia that move through



## Key

- |                     |                                |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. The Village Hall | 10. Potter                     |
| 2. Village Well     | 11. Bob Candlewick             |
| 3. Militia HQ       | 12. Brickmaker                 |
| 4. General Store    | 13. The Pick and Shovel Tavern |
| 5. Woodcutters      | 14. The Wild Boar Inn          |
| 6. Blacksmith       | 15. Shrine to Kai and Ishir    |
| 7. Leather Worker   | 16. Festival Circle            |
| 8. Bakers           | 17. Farms                      |
| 9. Butchers         |                                |

## The Village of Eshnar



the area keeping watch for predators and other things, they have not seen much action of late.

In the centre of the village there is a small stone well that provides clean water from the local source, the well has a cast iron grate over the top that provides protection to the local youngsters, since there was a near-drowning a couple of years ago when a youth toppled in after being pushed by his friends. Now the iron grate is also securely fastened with

several large bolts in the stone work. A small sign has been erected near the well to warn children not to play near it.

The village has a small hall that serves as the headquarters of Ulmar and close to it there are a couple of brown brick houses where he and his people stay. The Pick and Shovel Tavern, a local drinking establishment set up by a miner and his family, provides one of the few places for the village to congregate near the western side of the settlement and it is usually

brightly lit and packed at night. As is the custom with many smaller settlements, a coaching inn, the Wild Boar, is just down the road from the Pick and Shovel and remains open all hours to accept weary travellers.

To the south of the Pick and Shovel there is also a small shrine dedicated to Kai and Ishir, it is often packed with produce during the Feast of Fehmarn.



# PLACES OF INTEREST

## The Village Hall

A heavy thatched building made of dark brown brick; the village hall is where Ulnar and his people administrate the day to day running of Eshnar. From the outside the building has character, two large chimney pots adorn the roof and one of them is slightly worse for wear with a cracked pot that has fallen onto the thatch, this causes the smoke to come out at a slightly awkward angle. The front door is made of strong Sommerlund Oak and the symbol of the village, the Sun with the Sheaf of Wheat is burned into the wood on the left hand side. It is a single storey building and inside it has the administrators of the village as well as a couple of militia to keep an eye on the populace. In MS 5051 the hall is extended as the village population swells even more too over 3,000 people.

## Farms

These small outlying settlements ring Eshnar on all sides and are usually the home to hearty souls and disgruntled ex-miners. The folk of the farms are a steadfast lot and their dwellings are of a simple but effective design, mostly L-shaped with enough room to support their family and whatever crops and livestock they can manage. Sommerlund supports a vast variety of crops but Eshnar specialises in grain, hops, wheat and big juicy cider apples that it makes into a delicious cider all year round. There is also a secondary set of farms that focus on beekeeping, which produce thick honey that is useful for a sweet treat or to make the gorgeous mead that is served in the Pick and Shovel.

## Homes

At one point homes were nothing more than wooden huts and lean-tos, brought up hastily out of the mud before Eshnar expanded. Now the original constructions have been torn down and replaced by

simple cottages and small houses. Whilst not as grand as Ruanon, the village maintains a rural look and these homes and dwellings are made from the same strong brown and reddish brick, they are decorated sparsely and the more affluent residences have small picket fences that they can use to wall off their property from the rest of the village. They are mostly clustered around the centre and there are a few dirt roads that lead into the village well and the market shops.

## Village Well

The village well provides clean and fresh water to the population of Eshnar that is drawn from the local Sommerlund water table. This water is packed with minerals and has been filtered down through a soft bed of rock and earth, picking up very little in the way of impurities even though there is a local mine close to Eshnar. The top of the well is typical in that it is ringed with hefty grey stone and features a capped iron grating, securely fastened to the stonework. The bucket and rope passes through the centre. This was put in place a while ago to prevent further accidents, a local youth nearly drowned when he was toppled in by his friends. The village has erected a sign that warns children not to play near it.

## Militia HQ

Barely more than three small wood and stone houses built closely together, this area is the headquarters of the Eshnar Militia, a small fighting force that remains to this day. The original force was put together by the Kai who helped save Eshnar in the past. Now they are led by an ambitious young man who desires to see himself in a better place, an arrogant youth known as Carland Grier who has ideas above his station. The headquarters has an underground dungeon where prisoners can be kept and it is adequate enough to hold six people.

## Market, Shops and Services

General Store: The general store of Eshnar is run by a tired man. Abbalon Fer is fed up of most things in Sommerlund. He is disgruntled and lost both his sons in

a mining accident in the Maaken range a couple of years ago. He is dour and possessed of a very slim temper. He does his best to provide some kind of service to those who visit his establishment but usually leaves people with a sour taste in their mouth, since he is brusque and rude at the best of times. The store stocks the general goods that one might expect from an establishment like this, selling many of the village's handmade tools and crockery.

Woodcutters: Gerl Harclave has a hut close to the edge of the village; from here he overlooks a small woodcutting industry, a saw mill and a few woodcutters' homes. He runs a fairly successful business doing what he can to provide wood for various people in the village. He is a tall man, definitely of Sommlending descent and has a loud brash voice.

Blacksmith: Anna Harva works in the smith here, she is a tough, hard-working ex-Naval Marine who came to Eshnar a few years ago, took over the old smith's job and now puts her hammer to good use. She can mend any broken metal item that requires a smith's hand and does a roaring trade in shoeing horses for the various farmers.

Leather Worker: Ogden Cutter is a man who prides himself on being able to cure, tan, cut and do as much as possible with hides and leather. Usually they are brought to him by the patrols of Border Rangers that pass by Eshnar now and then; he takes them and makes them into leather goods. He can repair leather armour and makes fine scabbards for the village militia. He is a jovial soul with the heart of a Durenese businessman, shrewd and clever.

Bakers: A couple of houses are given over to the production of baked goods, fine honey cakes and orange curd tarts are the speciality here. The best baker is a man known as Curly. He came from Port Bax a while ago and stopped here because he likes the rural life as well as the fresh air. He is allergic to fish, so this may have also influenced his decision to find a place far away from the sea.

**Butchers:** One of the local farmers and his three sons, Berek, Juvald and Rovald look after the meat produce in Eshnar. Berek is a lean man and his sons are growing fat off the best cuts, which they have been stealing for themselves, Berek is too kind to suspect them of such behaviour though. The sons also make sure that they provide just enough meat and effort to keep their father happy and to make certain that they are not caught.

**Potter:** Symon is a friendly young man, a potter by trade; he can turn his potter's wheel to anything and uses his skill to produce fine quality earthenware for the village. He can also glaze pottery and maintains a functioning kiln outside of his house in the village. He is extremely anal about details and will not quit on a job until it is 100% completed to his satisfaction.

**Bob Candlewick:** A candle maker who came to Eshnar from Ruanon, he tired of the busy life as the village grew into a town. Of course, he sees Eshnar going the same way now but is content to make candles for everyday use for people as long as the village does not expand too much. He has recently taken on two apprentices who he has now passed his craft knowledge onto; they help him meet the demands of this village's need for his wares.

**Brickmaker:** A trio of dwarf siblings run the local brick making service in the village, they in turn have a group of human workers who bring in mud and cure it in the many ovens in the four building establishment. A brick farm is what they tend to call it. The brothers, Kuln, Ghim and Hanr are all miners who decided to break away from their vocation and try something new, they tired of toiling in the Maaken Range for what they considered very little pay. They can be found in the Pick and Shovel most nights, playing games of chance with dice.

**The Pick and Shovel Tavern:** Before the events of MS 5054, the Pick and Shovel Tavern is a friendly and homely place. It is made of red and brown local brick, has three stacked chimney pots and a

red slate roof, one of the only buildings in Eshnar to have such a treatment. It is a fairly large building with two storeys; the upper storey is a square balcony that has a flight of stairs leading upwards to it, through a doorway. A packed taproom sits below the balcony and is served by a large bar. A massive fireplace warms the tavern on cold and lonely nights. It is run by Jessa Dana, a short haired, blonde woman who has been in Eshnar quite a while. She is famous here for making a spiced version of the honey mead that is popular in her establishment and gets honey right from the local farmers. She is a friendly woman and remains unmarried at the moment.

**The Wild Boar Inn:** This large three storey building has been remodelled recently, with the third storey added prior to the birth of the proprietor's two sons. Many have called this fortuitous planning on behalf of Lusan Aralda, an ex-coachman. The Wild Boar is a clean and friendly place constructed from brown brick and good quality thatching. It has rooms to accommodate many travellers on the lower and middle floor, with the top floor reserved for the Aralda family; Brenna his wife, Kiri and Veldt, his daughter and son respectively, with little Mordi and Jon, the newborns, safe in their cribs away from the noise downstairs. The tavern boasts a fully stocked kitchen and serves a variety of meals night and day, with a special roast on the days reserved for Kai and Ishir.

## Other places of interest within Eshnar

**Shrine to Kai and Ishir:** Just at the edge of the village, close to the road that continues on to Cloesia, is a small wayside shrine to Kai and Ishir. It is garnished with various rural offerings, apples, pots of honey and sheaf's of wheat. These offerings increase drastically come the Feast of Fehmarn. The shrine is well tended and covered in iconography featuring the sun and moon.

**Festival Circle:** Off to the right hand side of the village well and just a little bit lower lays a cleared circle of grass. It is ringed by a rope fence and has a wooden platform

that has been erected there recently. The rope is surrounded on the outer edge by a ring of colourful stones, alternately painted with the sun and moon motif. This is the Festival Circle and all revelry and fest related celebrations are held here. Upon the Feast of Fehmarn the people gather under the first rays of the new dawn and sing praises to Kai from this place.

## POPULATION

The Village of Eshnar boasts around 2,000 people pre MS 5050, in MS 5050 that number has climbed to reach at least 3,000 with more coming during festival times and the mead making season. The summer months in Eshnar see a lot of additional traffic from the lands around. The majority of the population are also made up of local miners who seek to take a break from Ruanon when the work dries up for a while, or there is a strike at the mine. A few migrant workers from Vassagonia try their luck in the nearby mines as well but many are either never seen again in Eshnar or they return back home, empty handed.

## CULTURE

The people of Eshnar are deeply devoted to the worship of Kai and Ishir, there are usually small statues and shrines of the god and goddess found in many of the homes and many folk use the blessing, 'May the warmth of Kai keep you' in their day-to-day lives. The villagers are hard working people and they toil in the fields all day long, work their various jobs and eat a hearty meal morning, noon, evening and night. They are also strong stomached, with an iron constitution garnered from many years of drinking fine mead and heady cider. They have elevated both cider making and mead making into a near religious art.

On the Feast of Fehmarn, like many Sommlending settlements they throw open their doors and invite strangers into their homes. They produce a mead or cider



that is served in a special earthenware mug adorned with the blazing sun. All the stranger must do is share a drink with them from this mug, even if they do not drink alcohol they are invited to partake of a non-alcoholic substitute, like berry cordial or a local apple juice sweetened with sugar imported from Cloesia.

The Festival Circle is also packed with revellers all day and night during the feast, the village becomes a very lively place and there is much sport, music and merriment for a whole week as the people celebrate this special occasion with great gusto.

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## SOCIETY

Eshnar has a very simple social structure, there is the Village Elder and his people at the top of the social ladder and everyone else is below them. The Village Elder answers to the Sommlending Baron and things are kept on an even keel in that way.

Ulmar Tharsson: A tough man with a shrewd manner, Ulmar is a tall gentleman who sports a short beard, bald head and wears simple clothes most of the time. His chain of office is a golden disc with Kai's sun upon it. In that way he is recognised like those who came before him as a leader in the village. He is not battle hardened as many Sommlending are but he can use a sword and a bow. He has only fought once before and it frightened him to see the reality of combat.

Derek: One of Ulmar's advisors, Derek is a Vassagonian spy masquerading upon orders from his homeland. He is a crude man with a short moustache and ruddy skin. He acts properly around Ulmar but when in the company of his co-conspirator he works to undermine Sommerlund from within. He knows soon that something will happen to allow him to rid the village of Ulmar and his meddling but waits quietly until then, a hidden knife in the dark.

Bren: Another of Ulmar's chief advisors and an agent for the Darklords, Bren is a nice enough man, clean shaven and

helpful. He is married to a beautiful woman and even has a daughter, no one suspects that he is one of the agents who will bring about the downfall of Eshnar in MS 5054, kill his wife and family in the name of Vashna and aid Derek in murdering the village elder and his men.

Carland Grier: An arrogant young man from Durenese stock, he came here with his father who died in a mining accident (caused by Derek and Bren) replacing him as the leader of the Eshnar Militia. He does not really want the job; he wants to move into another position with more power and seeks to climb up the social ladders. He is constantly complaining about his lot in life, yet he is too lazy and ill-motivated to bother bettering it himself, he waits to be discovered rather than putting himself out there. He has short blonde hair, a stocky build and walks with an obvious swagger. He prefers to delegate rather than deal with things himself.

Eshnar Militia: Drafted a few years ago, the militia are a loose collection of the village folk who can fight if need be. They are trained in the sword and bow but they are not battle hardened by any means. They are often found patrolling the village and looking for trouble in and around Eshnar. They also mediate local disputes since Ulmar cannot be bothered with trivial matters like farm squabbles.

Village Council: Under the direct command of Ulmar, the village council deal with everything that Ulmar cannot be bothered with. During MS 5052 this becomes apparent when the man begins to fall gravely ill, some suspect foul play but every investigation comes up without a lead. The council, made up of prominent members of Eshnar's society take over all of Ulmar's duties during that time until their enslavement in MS 5054.

Villagers: The hearty and hardy folk of Eshnar, they are people who dress in simple clothes and do various tasks, all of which they sink their heart and soul into. There are no poor in the village, just various states of wealthy and less wealthy. Everyone has a home and even the poorest person can afford a hut under the village's fair tax laws. They are

a friendly bunch until MS 5054 when Barakka turns them into dour workers and enslaves the lot of them.

Miners: There are around 20 or so miners in the village who prefer to make a longer trek to Maaken, compared to the easier journey from Ruanon. They dislike the change in Ruanon and have come here to get away from the mine company. A few smaller mines along the range have opened up and given migrant workers from all over a chance to dig for riches without needing to present any formal identification or papers to the mine master.

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## GOVERNMENT & LAW

Ulmar's laws are fair and even handed for the most part. He has erected stocks for minor infractions, there is no public execution permitted in the village and weapons are to be peace-bound at all times, even the Kai must obey this law. Dangerous prisoners are transported in iron-bound wagons as far as Ruanon or even in some cases directly to Holmgard itself under armed escort. There is only the militia who investigate crimes and there is no dedicated branch that solves murders and so on. Eshnar has a very low crime rate that slowly climbs in MS 5052 to the eventual enslavement of MS 5054 when bandits siege the village and take it over.

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## ECONOMY

Eshnar produces mead, cider, beer and a local strong red or brown brick. It imports wooden items from Ruanon and other goods from places like Cloesia and Holmgard. The famous Eshnar Honeymead is known as far as the Durenese City of Port Bax and is often requested at noble functions and the like all across Sommerlund.



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# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / REGIONAL RELATIONS

Eshnar enjoys a good relationship with Ruanon and Cloesia. It has some migrant workers from Vassagonia and on the whole the relationship with them is good. In MS 5054 diplomatic relations are strained due to Barakka's actions against Eshnar and Ruanon. Then Eshnar falls mysteriously silent.

## Secrets

There are old mine and smuggling tunnels that run from Eshnar close to Ruanon, these tunnels are dangerous and form part of the mine network between the Maaken Range and run expansively under the lands around. They are a honeycomb of monster and terror infested passages where death lurks at every turn.

In MS 5054 the Village of Eshnar falls mysteriously silent due to the actions of Barakka and his men. The King's Guard, Remir D'Val goes missing and Lone Wolf is sent to discover what is going on. The truth of the matter is that bandits now control the village; they have either killed or enslaved the populace and ruined many of the buildings. Eshnar is now a ghost of its former self and the people

will never be the same again, many are permanently mentally and physically scarred by the atrocities visited upon them by the servants of the Darklords.

The Village Elder lies dead and the owner of the Pick and Shovel has also been killed, someone else has replaced her in this time. The Pick and Shovel becomes a poignant place for the last of the Kai as he discovers treachery within and must battle for his life. Derek and Bren flee Eshnar and are caught by Sommlending Border Rangers as they try to gain access to Holmgard to attempt another stage of the Darklord's plans, this failure forces Barakka to send an assassin into the city after them as he does not wish to compromise the mission if they are interrogated and crack.



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# LONE WOLF

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# Cimmerian Moons

By Rodrigo Vilanova de Allende

## OVERVIEW

"Cimmerian Moons" is an adventure for low-level Barbarian characters, giving them the opportunity of leaving Cimmeria to explore the Hyborian world. Although designed for Cimmerians, it can easily be adapted to suit any other barbaric nation and even the borderer class characters of "civilised" realms. It can be used as a background plot for a whole campaign with recurring antagonists or as a simple sub-plot or adventure hook in order to make the characters leave their home countries.

The adventure begins with the characters returning to their home village after a hunting trip, only to find their homes razed and sacked by a band of marauding slavers from the Border Kingdom. Not only have the raiders destroyed the characters village but they have also kidnapped several women and children, including the joy of the clan: the two beautiful twin sisters, Aen and Kala.

Depending on the time available, the Game Master can make this a 2-3 session adventure or a long-term campaign objective, setting the final rescue of the girls according to their Campaign's needs. The information presented here is for a quick adventure focusing on the introduction to a long-term campaign.

## PREPARATION

Non-Player Characters appear in Appendix 1 at the end of the adventure. Some adjustments must be made to characters and geography in case the adventure takes place in another kingdom.

The adventure starts in a small Cimmerian village and takes the Characters into the Border Kingdom where a feud is beginning between two warlords. The characters are following the tracks of the slavers that raided their hometown through a hostile territory, requiring a fair amount of cleverness and brawn.

If played as a short adventure, the Characters will reach the slavers at the start of the Kingdom's Civil War. If used as a long term Campaign, the need for revenge will take them into the Nemedian and Ophirean borders towards Zamora where they will be able to complete the first part of their mission: the rescue of beautiful Kala, sold into slavery to a brothel in Shadizar. After that, the characters will have to learn the whereabouts of innocent Aen, who has been taken to Zamboula, to be sold into a merchant's seraglio.

The GM can choose any moment to detour the character's journey of vengeance towards any special location he wishes. Side-quests can be easily introduced since the Player Characters do not have any means of subsistence, giving the adventure the length required by the Game Master.

Both Games Master and Player Characters will need a copy of *Conan the Role-playing Game*. This adventure is designed for 1 - 4 beginner (2nd to 6th level) Player Characters, although adjustments can be made to suit a particular campaign. Rules supplements like *Cimmeria* or *Cities of Hyboria* can be a good addition but are entirely optional.

The main feelings of this adventure should be obsession and revenge.

## CHAPTER ONE: RAIDERS AND HUNTERS

It is fall in Cimmeria, the last months of light in the gloomy hills south of Mount Crom and the Characters are returning from a successful hunting trip. Their spirits are high since their small hamlet will welcome the extra food and pelts brought by the Characters. Upon a successful hearing check, the Characters will notice bickering in the harsh accent of the Border Kingdom, nearing a clearing less than half a day from the hamlet, they will come upon (unless they decide to be stealthy) a small band of Hyborians from the Border Kingdom (four 1st level borderers), arguing about

the repartition of some loot; it is clear that these men have set up camp for a day or two and that they have been drinking ale most of that time. The men are typical Border Kingdom (or "Hyborians" to the local Cimmerians) dwellers: brown-haired and stocky with ugly faces and uglier spirits. The loot they are arguing over includes some silver pieces, a brass knife, a long cape and a copper bracelet. Both the bracelet and the cape can be easily recognised by the Characters as belonging to the chief's daughters, the twin sisters Aen and Kala.

When confronted, the Hyborians will attack on sight trying to capture the characters in order to sell them into slavery. The skirmish should be bloody, violent and quick, with the last slaver alive trying to escape as soon as his companions fall.

Once the fight is over, the smell of burnt wood reaches the characters: it is their village, burnt to the ground with only corpses to receive them. The small village was plundered a couple of days ago (the raiders killed by the characters where trying to scrounge up some extra loot from the remains of the village). If the characters search thoroughly they will find Colhain the chief, who is dying, wounded during the battle.

Colhain will quickly tell the characters that they were attacked just before dawn two days ago by a band of Hyborians from the Border Kingdom led by a tall, blond man. The attack was ruthless and the blond man ordered every warrior to be put to the sword and then had the village burned. The raiders took several children and women as captives to be sold into slavery, among them the maidens Aen and Kala, daughters of Colhain.

The chief also explains that the attackers divided themselves into three groups, one of these groups is the one encountered by the characters earlier. Finally, he beseeches

the characters to bring back their kin and exact revenge on the culprits.

The man in charge of the raid on the characters' village is none other than Vertos the wolf, an infamous Brythunian slave driver currently working for Vilosk, the self-appointed heir to the Border Kingdom's crown. Vertos has been raiding his liege's borders and engaging in a profitable slave-trade for some time now in order to pay for a mercenary army. So far he has been successful to the degree of actually believing it a good idea to steal the twin daughters of Colhain. Still, he is not a careless man and he took the girls and some of the healthiest captives with him, pressing them hard to reach the city of Tarsus.

This leaves the second group, with the wounded and children within easy reach of the characters (assuming they succeed in a Track or Survival check, DC 20). If the characters reach this group, it will be nightfall; if they fail their rolls, then they will catch up with the group either at dawn (if they continue their pursuit throughout the night) or early in the morning, at a Hyborian trade camp along the road to Hyperborea, where the slaves have been penned and will be sold in an auction.

There are 12 captives: 4 women, 2 men (12 year-old boys) and 6 children (5 boys and 1 girl), they are guarded by 6 Hyborians. The slavers are a nasty lot and have been abusing their captives for over a day now, anxious to get paid. If the characters engage the Hyborians, they will fight fiercely until the tide of battle goes definitely against them, which is when they will flee. If ambushed during the night, the slavers will have posted at least 2 guards around the slaves; assuming the slaves try to fight against their captors the slavers will kill them immediately. If approached at dawn, all the slavers will be ready for action and thus will have to be approached carefully.

Raiding the trading camp is a tricky affair since there are about 20 Hyborians living there, including a Hyperborean slave trader and Border Kingdom farmer with their escorts (four 2nd level soldiers each); both the Hyperborean and the farmer are interested in buying the men and some of the children but will not risk themselves in defending the camp in case of an attack. The captives are held in a stockade near the centre of the camp and, if given enough time, the Hyboreans will present some kind of coordinated defence against the raiders.

If the characters are defeated they will join the slave auction and be bought by the Hyperborean slaver (if the characters are male) who intends to send them to the stone quarries of Castle Haloga; if there are female characters, the one with the highest charisma score will be bought by the Hyborian farmer, although he intended to buy fieldworkers. In any case, characters and slaves alike retail at 5 + 1d4 silver pieces.

If the characters attack the buyers of the slaves after the auction, they will defend themselves unless overwhelmed, in which case they will surrender.

Assuming the raid on the trading camp is successful, news of this will reach Tarsus, unless everyone in the camp is killed. Vilosk response to the attack will be to send a squad of riders to hunt for the Cimmerians (6, 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl. Soldiers). If the characters make sure to cover their tracks or be discreet, the riders will assume that the barbarians headed back to their country and will follow the shortest route to the Cimmerian border.

## CHAPTER 2: REACHING CIVILISATION

At this point, the characters have either rescued their fellow villagers or simply moved onward towards Tarsus to rescue



# Cimmerian Moons

the twins. If they managed to liberate the other captives, the characters will have the choice to go on with the survivors on their quest or send them back to Cimmeria. Whatever the characters' decisions, once they leave behind the Great Salt Marsh, dusk will catch them in the limits of the so-called "Haunted Lands," at a crossroad near a hostel in ruins.

The characters will have to decide where to spend the night. At this point, a Hyborian patrol will come down the road to Tarsus (six 2<sup>nd</sup> level Soldiers). The characters will have to decide if hiding or ambushing is the best action. The riders will set camp in a clearing near to the road but will clearly avoid going near the ruins. The soldiers are not expecting to meet with the Cimmerians this deep in the Border Kingdom territory so they have a -2 on their Spot checks.

Treat this region as Hills (gradual slope) with light undergrowth (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 312) for all survival, spot and hide checks required.

The city of Tarsus is barely worthy of the title 'city' but it still offers the characters a first glimpse into 'Civilisation', with all its trappings and curses. Surrounded by a very strong palisade, Tarsus keep is a massive structure, it shows the signs of decay common to all the Border Kingdom. Tarsus defences are composed of a local militia (200 strong) and Vilosk's men-at-arms: mostly Brythunian and Hyperborean mercenaries.

When the characters arrive at Tarsus, it will be the day before market day, which will allow the characters plenty of infiltration opportunities in the already light security of the city. Although nobody expects the Cimmerians, if encountered by the city's guard, they will be treated as the barbarians they are and will be captured and thrown in the dungeon.

The best way for the characters to go undetected is to disguise themselves either as guards (if they choose to ambush the road patrol) or as peasants going into the market.

Once inside Tarsus, the characters' problems begin, since they are unfamiliar with a city and its rhythms. Yet, if they show a little temperance they will be able to reach the slave-auction yards, behind the Keep. During the day, the slave yards are carefully guarded by Vertos' henchmen. At night, there are only three guards stationed along the small square, being fairly easy to sneak upon them (Hide, Move Silently or Disguise Checks at a DC of 15).

During daylight, characters will have to devise a plan to free the slaves, since going near the cages will raise suspicions (the characters are after all barbarians!) unless some good disguises or another kind of ruse comes up.

If the characters do a little research or if they reach the holding pens of the slave market, they will find 5 women from their village but no sign of the twins. With the slaves there are also two Brythunian thieves (level 3) that are also to be sold in the next day's auction. If freed, the Brythunians will offer their aid to the characters since they actually know the streets of Tarsus. The cage's lock is very simple (DC 10) but the chains and gate can be noisy if the characters are not careful.

Waiting for the next day, to free the slaves will entail either participating in the auctions (where do the characters get the money?) or waiting until all the slaves are sold. This will be a problem, since the slaves will be sold one by one to different buyers, some of them leaving Tarsus as soon as they are sold.

If the characters are surprised by the guard, the alarm will be raised and a patrol of 6 militia will arrive shortly to the premises.

It is up to the characters to try and fight the city's guard or escape into the winding streets of Tarsus in hopes of losing their enemies. This will require Knowledge: geography and opposed movement checks against the guardsmen, to avoid getting lost in the city or being caught by the watchmen.

Since they were separated on arriving at Tarsus, the slaves do not know the whereabouts of the twins. The girls were taken by Vertos to Vilosk, who bought the girls but decided to profit on their beauty instead of keeping them for himself (he finds Cimmerian women unattractive). Later, Vertos took his leave from Vilosk court and left for the South. The girls were then shipped off to Zamora and Turan respectively, following the route between the borders of Nemedra and Brythunia, along the Yellow River.

This information can be gleaned if the characters question or bribe any of the slave yard guards. Otherwise, the best option is to capture any of the keep's men-at-arms and force the information out of them.

If the characters raid Vilosk's keep in search for the twins or to exact revenge on him, they will have some difficulty in gaining entrance into the keep, which is a building made of timber and stone. The characters may try to either infiltrate the keep with a diversion or to climb the keep's walls, which is the best option. During the day, the keep is full of servants coming and going while at night there are only guards around the entrances and rooftops of the small fortress. Any diversion will be quickly controlled (especially fire) and will detonate search parties for the culprits.

In his quarters, Vilosk will defend himself fiercely since he is far from being a pampered noble. If necessary he will call on his guards. Vilosk will not parlay with



the characters, assuming they are sent by his nemesis, Lucio the Nemedian. If the characters explain their quest to Vilosk, he will explain the destiny meant for the girls: one will be sold into a Zamoran brothel at Shadizar and the other one will be sold to a wealthy Turanian in far off Zamboula. Vilosk will let the characters know that one of the girls, the one destined to Turan, has been taken care of and her integrity respected but that is not necessarily the same thing for the other girl, who is considered to these Hyborians as a mere commodity and has been subjected to all kinds of brutality by her captors, beginning with Vertos.

If possible, Vilosk will try to capture the characters as he still believes them to be assassins paid by his enemies. Assuming they are captured, the characters will be thrown into the dungeons to be tortured and sold into slavery, once Vilosk's suspicions have calmed. At this point, the

characters may try to escape or wait to be sold into slavery and then escape the city.

In case the characters free the slaves, they will have to elude the city's guards and leave town as quickly as possible; doing this with a group of escaped slaves may be difficult but the aid of the Brythunian thieves should prove more than enough to at least hide in Tarsus' slums.

The day after the slaves escape, Vilosk leaves Tarsus to collect "taxes" on the Southern villas of his domains.

## CHAPTER 3: A KINGDOM TORN IN TWO

The Border Kingdom, is not a stable country. Currently it is torn between two political forces: the 'Brythunian faction' and the 'Nemedian faction'. The Brythunian faction is composed of landowners, merchants and 'aristocrats' of Brythunian stock, with a traditional control over the villas and towns of the north-eastern part of the Kingdom.

They are led by a local strongman who believes himself the lawful successor to the kingdom's throne. He is Vilosk of Tarsus and he controls the lands bordering Cimmeria.

Meanwhile, the Nemedian faction is formed by Nemedian and Aquilonian adventurers established in past years in the Southern limits of the Border Kingdom. Lead by a scoundrel exiled from Nemedias, they claim the crown by merit of their 'noble blood' and Mitra-given rights! Lucio is the leader of this faction with his 'capital' in the town of Eridu.

So far, the conflict has consisted of heavy taxation on the villages and towns in the central territory of the Kingdom by both sides and demanding allegiance to one or the other factions. Currently, aggressions between loyal towns and tax collectors have been escalating and it is just a matter of time before there is an actual clash between the factions.



# Cimmerian Moons

Heading south, the characters will soon reach the outskirts of a small hamlet called Dnik. Here, they will find a troop of the Brythunian faction men. From a small tree on the southern road of Dnik, hang two men from the Nemedian faction.

Depending on how the characters approach Dnik, there will be different encounters. If the characters approach Dnik by the northern road, they will be challenged by two guards. The guards will inform them that the Nemedian faction's men are coming to attack the hamlet on account of the people of Dnik lynching the tax collectors sent to extort money and grain from them. The guards will also assume the characters to be mercenaries and will refer them to the captain of the guard who will hire them as scouts in the upcoming battle.

The characters may decide to avoid the small town and head directly south; in this case, they will be confronted by a scouting patrol of Nemedian faction borderers (five 2<sup>nd</sup> level borderers). If not hostile towards the scouts, the characters will be offered to join Lucio's army. The leader of the scouting party will explain that at dawn, the Nemedian faction will attack the hamlet on account of rebellion against the true heir of the Kingdom: Lucio the Nemedian.

Assuming the characters get involved in this conflict, they will be assigned scouting duty at dawn, when the Nemedian faction forces mobilise on Dnik. While the Brythunians are fighting in a defensive position, the Nemedians have superior weaponry and armour. The skirmish should be a bloody affair. The fight will begin with the clash between the two scouting patrols, just outside the limits of Dnik, once the melee ensues, the full force of the Nemedian faction will fall upon the settlement.

Thus, the combat will be a brutal melee since the only ranged weapons are those carried by the scouting parties. The battle will fall back into the Dnik proper with Vilosk's bodyguards and himself protecting the centre of the town. It is important to

note that Vilosk and his men are more than apt to hold their ground against Lucio's raiders but these will proceed to burn and pillage the hamlet instead of facing the Brythunian faction head-on.

At this point, the characters may try to kill either Vilosk or Lucio (depending on their impulses) or focus on the battle and the plundering of the hamlet, which still harbours innocent bystanders. At any rate, Vilosk will fall back if the attackers manage to burn down the hamlet, returning to Tarsus after vowing vengeance on 'the usurper'. The surviving characters may decide to follow their employers, the winners of the battle, or simply collect their payment and pursue the trail of vengeance. If Lucio's side emerged victorious and the players were on their payroll, Lucio will give them safe conduit and horses in order for them to catch up with the Brythunian slaver as quickly as possible.

## EPILOGUE.

The conflict between the Nemedian and Brythunian factions will not be resolved by the skirmish fought during this adventure, on the contrary, it will only serve as kindling to a bigger and ever more violent Civil War. Not until the leaders of either (or both) factions are dead will the Border Kingdom attain some real stability.

In case the characters manage to kill Vilosk or Lucio, someone will rise to assume leadership of their factions, trying either to bribe the characters into serving them or have them pursued in order to execute them (GMs choice).

If Vertos the wolf manages to elude the characters, he will head towards Corinthia, following the road to Numalia and then southwards to Polopponi, where he will do a stint as a thief before hiring himself out as a mercenary to one of the Free Companies. The GM may wish to make another adventure out of this or it could be the background for a Campaign set in another kingdom.

In case the characters avoid the conflict between the two warring factions, they

will reach the border with Nemedian and a crossroad between the small road that runs through the Varakiel marshes up to the Yellow River (which is the route taken by the twins) and the main road to Numalia, which is the route Vertos has taken.

The GM must decide if the twins are too far ahead on their way to slavery or if the characters may reach them at the Yellow River source, before the slavers taking them to their destiny embark on a ferry heading south. If this is the case, the salvors will be found in a Nemedian outpost where the ferry is docked. The slavers will be getting ready for the trip and will be totally unprepared for an attack by the Cimmerians. When this happens, all the captured slaves (6 in total) will help the characters against their captors. The characters must ensure that the girls are not harmed during this skirmish as the slavers and guards will attack them as soon as the characters themselves!

At the same time, the GM may allow the characters to reach Vertos at a small road inn a couple of days from the border. The final showdown between the mercenary and the characters must be quite dramatic since the Brythunian will try to escape if things go against him.

## APPENDIX ONE: CHARACTERS

### Cimmerian captives.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> level Cimmerian barbarians

Treat as "Picts on the Warpath" (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 353) but with no weapons and with Cimmerian attributes instead of Picts. The Cimmerian 'slaves' captured by Vertos the wolf are women and children. They are overpowered and constantly brutalised by their captors but will rebel and try to escape if the opportunity presents itself.

### Brythunian Faction soldiers and Nemedian faction soldiers

The soldiers involved in the Border Kingdom conflict are little more than commoners. Treat them as City guards (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 357), with a more aggressive profile. The Nemedian faction soldiers should be better equipped and

have slightly (1d4) more Hit Points than their Brythunian counterparts. At the battle of Dnik, Vilosk has fielded 25 soldiers (with two officers) against Lucio's 22 men (with 2 officers).

## Vilosk's men-at-arms.

Treat as Sellswords (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 358) with broadsword, spear and dagger as equipment. During the battle of Dnik, there will be 4 such mercenaries guarding Vilosk.

## Border Kingdom scouts (2<sup>nd</sup> level Hyborean borderers)

The scouts of both factions are rangers and hunters hired by the nobles to foray and gather intelligence on their enemies, treat as Bandit (*Conan the Roleplaying Game*, page 357) with hunting bow, javelin, mace, club and dagger as equipment. At Dnik, there will be 6 scouts on the Brythunian side and 8 on the Nemedian.

## Vilosk, Border Kingdom 'noble' 6<sup>th</sup> level Border Kingdom Soldier

**Hit Dice:** 6d10 (38 HP)

**Initiative:** +1

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Parry defence:** 16

**Dodge defence:** 14

**DM:** 8 (mail hauberk and scale corselet)

**Base attack:** +6 +1

**Attack:** +9/+4 broadsword (1d0 +2/19-20 x2/AP 3), +9/+4 battleaxe (1d0 +4/ x3/AP 4)

**Special Qualities:** Formation Combat (Heavy Infantry), Officer.

**Saves:** Fort +8 Ref +3 Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Intimidate 5, Knowledge (geography) 2, Knowledge (local) 3, Knowledge (rumours) 2, Knowledge (warfare) 5, Ride 5, Search 3.

**Feats:** Power attack, Cleave, Improved Bull



Rush, Weapon Focus (broadsword), Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialisation (battleaxe), Greater Fortitude, Mounted Combat.

**Reputation:** 10

Vilosk, a lesser warlord of Brythunian ancestry has a reputation as one of the bloodiest landowners of the northern Border Kingdom. Implacable against Hyperboreans and Cimmerian raiders, he has come to terms with the Hyperboreans in order to amass an important fortune that has been used to win all the other 'nobility' of the north to his side. Thus

the 'Brythunian faction' was formed, consisting of the traditional rulers of the Border Kingdom and centred on expelling foreign influences, be them Nemedian or Aquilonian.

## Lucio, Lord of the border, a Nemedian mercenary.

### 7<sup>th</sup> level Nemedian Noble

**Hit Dice:** 7d8 (31 HP)

**Initiative:** -1

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Parry defence:** 12

**Dodge defence:** 10

**Base attack:** +5



**Attack:** +6 war sword (1d12 /19–20x2/AP 3)

**Special Qualities:** Title, Rank Hath Its Privileges, Wealth, Regional Feature +2, Social Ability (ally), Lead By Example +2, Enhanced Leadership.

**Saves:** Fort +4 Ref +1 Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 16.

**Skills:** Appraise 4, Bluff 11, Diplomacy 11, Gather Information 3, Handle Animal 2, Hide 1, Intimidate 10, Knowledge (history) 6, Knowledge (local) 4, Knowledge (nobility) 4, Knowledge (religion) 3, Knowledge (rumours) 6, Knowledge (warfare) 5, Perform 4, Ride 4, Sense Motive 8, Spot 3.

**Feats:** Persuasive, Mounted Combat, Trample, Negotiator.

**Reputation:** 10

Living in the border town of Eridu, Lucio entertains dreams of royalty. Since falling from grace in the Nemedian court, he exiled himself to the Border Kingdom where he has plotted slowly to crown himself as sole king. With the help of Nemedian-born settlers and ambitious merchants, he has managed to form a steady alliance of land-owners and aristocrats: the so-called Nemedian faction. Although only popular in the south of the Kingdom, it has access to higher quality weapons, lands and mercenaries, which gives them an edge over the Brythunian faction. Lucio is not interested in the well-being of the people and is a lazy cynic at heart. Although he will lead his men in battle, he will avoid entering the melee since he frowns upon actual work.

**Vertos the wolf. Brythunian Slave-driver.**

**5<sup>th</sup> level Brythunian Borderer**

**Hit Dice:** 5d10 (29 HP)

**Initiative:** +1

**Speed:** 30 ft. (40 on hills)

**Parry defence:** 13

**Dodge defence:** 12 (13 on hills)

**Base attack:** +5

**Attack:** +6 arming sword (1d0 +1 /19–20 x2 /AP 2), +6 club (1d8 +1 x2 /AP 1), +6 knife (1d4+1 x2/ AP —)

**Special Qualities:** Track, Favoured Terrain +1 (Hills), Combat Style (trapping), Endurance, Favoured Terrain +2, Improved Combat Style.

**Saves:** Fort +7 Ref +4 Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 13, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

**Skills:** Climb 1, Gather Information 1, Handle Animal 1, Hide 4 (+2 on Hills), Knowledge (geography) 1, Knowledge (local) 1, Listen 2 (+2 on Hills), Move Silently 5 (+2 on Hills), Ride 2, Search 2 (+2 on Hills), Spot 5 (+2 on Hills), Survival 2 (+2 on Hills), Swim 1 and Use Rope 4.

**Feats:** No honour, Stealthy, Diehard, Two weapon combat.

**Reputation:** 6

A brutal and sadistic beast, Vertos will sell the Cimmerian lot to Vilosk and then migrate to Corinthia, where he plans to continue his evil ways. In no way is he interested in the Brythunian-Nemedian conflict but he is currently loyal to the Brythunian side and thus will use his status in order to protect himself.

**Aen and Kala, of the Ox clan.**

**1<sup>st</sup> level Cimmerian Barbarians.**

**Hit Dice:** 1d10 (6 HP)

**Initiative:** +1

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Parry defence:** 10

**Dodge defence:** 11

**Base attack:** +1

**Attack:** any weapon available +1

**Special Qualities:** Fearless, Track, Versatility (-2)

**Saves:** Fort +3 Ref +3 Will –1 (Kala has a Will save of +1)

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 15.

**Skills:** Climb 4, Craft (herbalism) 3, Craft (pottery) 1, Handle Animal 1, Hide 1, Jump 2, Listen 1 (3 for Aen), Move Silently 1, Perform (flute) 2, Spot 3 (5 of Aen), Survival 1, Swim 1.

**Feats:** Kala: Iron Will, Performer. Aen: Brawl, Alertness

**Reputation:** 4

The beautiful daughters of the clan's chief, the day they were born it was considered a great sign of favour by Crom and their beauty and strength was a motive of pride for everyone in the village. Aen and Kala are identical twins, yet Aen was chosen as the one destined to be sold in Turan, so Kala has been subjected to all kinds of mistreatment. If the GM decides to run this adventure as a long-term campaign, when the characters reach the girls they will be 1st level Barbarians/6th level Temptresses, with Kala's secret art being sneak attack, while Aen's is sorcery. The twins will grow to be very different women, as a result of their cruel fates: although Kala will behave as a cold woman, it is Aen who will grow to be resentful, borderline psychotic on account of the guilt she has for not sharing Kala's tragic past.

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# LEGACY OF WAR

## Episode 12: The Beginning of the End

**Episode Date:** June 2268

*'When you have reached the end of the road, then you can decide whether to go to the left or to the right, to fire or to water. If you make those decisions before you have even set foot upon the road, it will take you nowhere, except to a bad end.'*

Galen

### News Reports

The players will be travelling for a while before the events of this episode start properly. At a convenient point give them the latest Universe Today handout. Alternatively, you can wait until the players meet up with the Excalibur where Captain Gideon will show them the news as detailed later in the episode.

### Background

Major Lee is the commanding officer at Legacy Base 2 located in Sector 420. Captain Gideon discovered this base and was captured by Major Lee in December 2267. With help from Galen, Gideon was able to escape the base after learning

much about the Legacy Group and their activities. It was shortly after this that Gideon was assassinated on Mars as detailed in Episode 10.

Using their resources and knowledge of Shadow technology, the Legacy Group were able to develop a cure to the Drakh plague. This was based on technology that the group used to create mindless slaves to do much of the menial work such as expanding the base and constructing hybrid ships. Many of these slaves were prisoners at Legacy Base 1, before being transported and implanted with Shadow technology to make them subservient to their new masters.

The cure works by surgically implanting organic technology, which then grows throughout the host body to replace the immune system, eventually able to destroy the virus. However, the side effect to this is that the recipient suffers a similar lack of willpower to the slaves the technology was originally intended to create. Although this was not intentional, it serves the Legacy Group's plans so no effort was made to counter the effect.

With organic tech being hailed as superior, the secrecy and reputation that once surrounded it is no longer an issue. Those who speak out against using it are soon silenced by the fact that it has been used to save humanity. With the influence gained from developing the cure, Major Lee and other high ranking individuals within the Legacy Group have come forward. With most of Earth's population, including much of the administration, now of weak and suggestible mind, the Legacy Group plan to seize control.

Seth and other telepaths remain in the background and continue to support the group in secret. However, their ultimate goal is to control the Legacy Group through subtle manipulation and ultimately reform the Psi Corps but for now Seth is content to let Lee and the senators think that they are running the show.

### Encounters

The players have been on the run for a while now and with recent events it has probably been a while since they have had any run-ins with bounty hunters or the law. The players may have even grown



# Universe Today

**Galaxy Edition**

**3rd June 2268**

## Earth Is Saved

The people of Earth are rejoicing after it was announced that a cure to the Drakh plague has been discovered. Experts estimate that quarantine will be lifted within a year, when Earth will once again be free.

Working under the command of Major Lee, Earthforce scientists have been studying organic technology for some time. For the last 18 months, their efforts have been focussed on using the technology to develop a cure to the plague and last week they confirmed that they have finally found the solution.

The cure involves implanting advanced technology using a simple surgical procedure. Tests have shown that the technology will irradiate the Drakh virus within weeks of receiving the implant.

Earthgov is now constructing a manufacturing facility on Mars to produce the technology so every man, woman and child on Earth can receive the cure. Major Lee and his team have been hailed as saviours and planetary-wide celebrations have already commenced.

*Continued: Page A2*



## Victory Goes Renegade

Whilst humans everywhere celebrate the wonderful news that a cure has been found, Universe Today is saddened and shocked to report that the Excalibur – the flagship assigned to find the cure – has gone rogue after hearing that a cure had been discovered.

Disobeying direct orders, Captain Gideon refused to relinquish command of the powerful Victory Class ship and fled Earth space.

Even more troubling are the rumours suggesting that Captain Gideon and his crew have joined the fugitives who obtained an advanced alien vessel – the same group responsible for the attacks in hyperspace that have been reported over the last two years.

*Continued: Page A6*

## Q & A: Organic Tech

Scientists have been studying and experimenting with organic technology for a number of years now but what is it and how does it work?

Universe Today have spoken with some of the greatest minds on this subject to answer the questions surrounding this mysterious subject. See our Questions & Answers feature on page A10.

complacent about this so now it is time to remind them that they are still the galaxy's most wanted criminals.

There are many people hunting the players but none more so than the Legacy Group. Seth and Major Lee are very much aware that between the players and command staff of the Excalibur, the combined knowledge of these two groups poses a significant threat to the Legacy Group's plans and they are determined to stop the renegades before either ship causes more problems.

You can plan an encounter as detailed in Episode 10. This can take the form of bounty hunters, Earthforce or the Legacy Group. However, do not use any of the main personalities from the Legacy Group as they will be encountered in the final episode.

## Meeting

Gideon will contact the players on their new secure link asking that they meet up to discuss their next steps and that Galen has some important information to share with them. The exact place and time of the meeting will largely depend on where the players are currently situated but it will be somewhere neutral and relatively safe.

Once they meet up, Gideon will invite the players onto the Excalibur. As the players are led into the briefing room they will notice that the crew is much smaller than before, with nearly a third being killed or forced off the ship from the mutiny in the previous episode.

In the briefing room, Gideon is joined by Galen. Gideon will welcome the players and begin by discussing the media reports concerning the cure. He will show the players the issue of Universe Today if they have not already seen it. Once all the players are familiar with the content, read out the following:

*'Much of this we already know of course but it is Major Lee who got my attention. In December last year, we tracked a Shadow hybrid vessel to a Legacy Base in Sector 420. I was captured and questioned by Major Lee*

*who ran the facility there. With Galen's help we escaped and it was shortly after this that they attempted to kill me on Mars.*

*The fact that Lee and others have stepped out of the shadows gives me cause for concern. They are obviously up to something if they are confident enough to reveal themselves in this way but what are they planning?'*

Allow the players to discuss any theories they might have. One point they should consider is the fact that organic tech has been used for the cure, which means that the secrecy and negative views (including the ISA's ban on Shadow tech) can be put aside so the Legacy Group can more openly pursue their research. This will no doubt be of concern to the ISA as well.

Once the party have finished their discussions, Gideon will want to discuss the way forward. At this point Galen will explain his latest findings:

*'I have been checking the discoveries you made on Omicron 4/II, specifically the information on the Zener space station. It took some doing but it does appear as if the station is one of, or perhaps the only, facility where Techno-mage implants are created.*

*These places were kept secret from us for obvious reasons – if our order discovered the secrets to create our own implants then the Shadows would potentially have lost control over us. However, even in their absence the Drakh, aided by Zener technicians, have continued to run the facility. No doubt they want to try and control us themselves.*

*As part of the Techno-mage implant procedure, our blood is infused with a type of organic nanotech called organelles, which are designed to augment our natural healing capacity. I believe that with enough organelles Dr Chambers and I could reprogram them to work as a nano-tech anti-virus that could cure everyone on earth within a matter of weeks.'*

The players may point out the irony that the cure Galen is proposing is still based on Shadow tech. Galen will explain that the organelles will destroy the virus without effecting the body before transferring

to another person and they will also be programmed to dissolve after a short period of time (long enough to cure everyone on Earth) so no trace of the tech remains. The implants being used by the Legacy Group are permanent and significantly change the recipient to be weak-willed and submissive. In addition to this Earth has little understanding of the nature of the tech, whereas Galen, a Techno-mage, has a much better understanding.

## Planning the Assault

The players and Excalibur command staff must devise a plan to board the station and acquire the organelles. This also gives the Techno-mages the opportunity to obtain not just the unused implants but possibly the key to creating their own tech and securing the future of their order. The players will most likely want to obtain some technology too and since Galen took everything they found on Omicron 4/II, the players may want to discuss such plans in private.

The only intelligence on the station is that it orbits Fallav III near the Omicron system. Little else is known but some reasonable assumptions can be made. Galen or Gideon will help out here if the players get stuck but try to let the players devise the plan as much as possible.

The scanners on Zener space stations are Shadow technology and have been designed to detect a Techno-mage pinnacle and similar technology, so Galen cannot simply go in and take what he wants.

The station will be protected by Drakh ships or other defences – the tech on the station is too important to leave unguarded. However, there is no way to know the exact defences until they arrive there. A reconnaissance mission would also be unsuccessful because once a ship is in scanner range the station will already be aware of it, thus destroying any hope of stealth and surprise.

During their discussions, it should become clear that the only way to get onto the station is to fight their way onboard. Ideally, the players should really discuss a number of strategies depending on the forces they

come up against so they are prepared for any situation. Some ideas are detailed here. However, no matter what they plan it is unlikely they will be prepared for the events that are going to happen as detailed later in the episode.

One strategy is a straight forward assault on the station, destroy any defences and board the station. A second tactic is for one ship (most likely the Excalibur) to make an initial attack and then retreat to draw away the main defences, the second ship can then board the station with little resistance. Another method is similar to the first but to engage the enemy in such a way to tie up their forces, allowing a shuttle or breaching pod to dock with the station.

## Fallav System

Once the players have decided upon their strategy they must set course for the Fallav system where the space station is orbiting Fallav III. The Fallav system is part of the jumpgate network but is on a restricted route that is rarely used. The few ships known to have ventured to this system have never returned, presumed to be lost in hyperspace.

The Fallav system is roughly one days travel in hyperspace from the Omicron system just beyond Centauri space. The total travel time will depend on the players' current location but will most likely be around two weeks in hyperspace.

## History

The Zener space station was originally built by the Shadows to create the technology for the Taratimude, who formed the Techno-mage order (as detailed in Episode 11). The station orbits Fallav III, which was once a Shadow colony and forbidden to the Taratimude. When the Taratimude destroyed themselves the Shadows left, leaving only the station to serve their needs in controlling the newly formed Techno-mage order. There is nothing left of interest on the planet and the homeworld of the Taratimide, Fallav IV is similarly barren, all but destroyed by the ravages of war.

## Ambush

There are still several crew onboard the Excalibur who remain loyal to Earth and have informed Earthforce of their intended destination. Two Omega class destroyers (detailed in the previous episode) were immediately dispatched to apprehend the fugitives. The players' ship and the Excalibur will exit from hyperspace at a safe distance from Fallav III to avoid being detected by the space station. As they do so, read out the following:

*As you exit from hyperspace, two Omega class destroyers are positioned a short distance away. All fighters have already been deployed, obviously waiting for your arrival. You are hailed by the lead ship.*

*'This is Captain Roberts in command of the destroyer group. By the authority of the Earthforce Alliance we are here to place you under arrest. You are ordered to stand down and prepare to be boarded.'*

*You receive a secure transmission from Captain Gideon.*

*'There is too much at stake to risk being captured or detained. We'll hold them off and you head to the station to complete the mission. Galen will join you. Good luck.'*

*The transmission ends as the Excalibur launches fighters and engages the Earthforce vessels, providing a screen for you to make your escape.*

Statistics for the Excalibur can be found in *Signs & Portents* issue 71.

The players will have little choice but to attack the space station without the assistance of the Excalibur. Gideon was correct – the cure must be obtained and he has risked the lives of his crew so the players can acquire what they need. Should the players remain to help Gideon, Galen will use his pinnacle to override the controls of the players' ship and take them toward Fallav III (he has spent some time studying the alien craft without the players' knowledge).

During the battle, the Excalibur will take some heavy damage and their communications will be down, preventing any contact with the players.

## Zener Space Station

The space station has the same modular design to the one encountered in previous episodes but this one has a slightly different configuration and is not as heavily armed. It is constructed from the same organic technology with the usual smooth edges and mottled brown skin. The primary control sphere sits at the centre and leads to two secondary spheres via connecting pylons. One of these is the science sphere, containing the laboratories. The second contains the living quarters and is linked to a tertiary sphere that houses the landing bay. The bay contains a small shuttle with room for an addition small craft to transport supplies and personal from ships outside the station.

Like all stations of this design each sphere has its own power reactor, which can power up to two spheres, allowing the station to remain operational if any reactors are damaged. Unlike the station the players encountered previously, this one has fewer armaments with only a single turret mounted fusion beam on the primary and secondary spheres but they are positioned for maximum coverage around the station. Most of the station's defences are provided by two Drakh Heavy Raiders.

Due to the design of the station, each sphere is treated as an individual ship. The pylons are also treated separately but they serve only to connect the spheres and relay power from a neighbouring pylon if required.



Zener Sphere			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	200 tons	Hull 4 Structure 4		8
		Self-Sealing		2
Armour	Bio-Lattice	6 pts	10	4
Jump Generator	Point	None		—
Manoeuvre Drive A		Thrust 1	2	4
Power Plant A	Bio-Fusion	Rating 1	4	8
Bridge			10	1
Computer	Model 5	Rating 25		10
Electronics	Ancient	DM +2	1	4
Weapons	Double Turret	Medium Neutron Cannon (see <i>Warships of Babylon 5</i> )	1	20.2
Fuel	2 tons	Two Weeks of Operation	2	—
Cargo	49 tons		49	—
30 Staterooms			120	15
Extras	Internal Fuel Generation	Full Refuel in One Day	1	0.5
Software	Manoeuvre/0			0
	Intellect	Rating 10		1
	Library			0
	Auto-Repair/2	Rating 20		10
	Evade/3	Rating 25		3
	Fire Control/2	Rating 10		4
Total Tonnage & Cost			300	94.7

Zener Pylon			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	40 tons	Hull 1 Structure 1		1.4
		Self-Sealing		0.4
Armour	Bio-Lattice	6 pts	5	0.7
Cargo	35 tons		35	0.7
Total Tonnage & Cost			40	2.5

## Drakh Heavy Raider

Using the same basic hull as the Drakh Light Raider, the Heavy Raider is designed to mount a bigger and more destructive weapon, the Heavy Neutron Cannon. The Heavy Raider forgoes the energy grid of its counterpart to allow maximum damage from its weapon but it has more armour and a reinforced hull to compensate. The additional firepower of the Heavy Raider comes at the expense of speed and manoeuvrability. The standard crew consists of the captain, executive officer, 3 pilots, 3 engineers, 2 gunners, 1 small craft pilot and 24 soldiers.

Weapon	Race	Optimum Range	Damage	Tonnage	Cost (MCr)	Special	Notes
Heavy Neutron Cannon	Drakh	Long	5D6+Crew Hit	100 tons	Est. 50	Armour Piercing	Ignores the first 4 Points of Armour

Drakh Heavy Raider				Tons	Price (MCr)
<b>Hull</b>	800 Tons	Hull 25 Structure 24			80
	Reinforced Hull			80	8
	Reinforced Structure			80	32
	Streamlined				8
<b>Armour</b>	Bio-Lattice	14 points		100	120
<b>Artificial Gravity</b>		Bio-Lattice Framework (100%)		—	
<b>Manoeuvre Drive V</b>		Thrust 6		39	80
<b>Power Plant V</b>	Bio-Fusion	Rating 6		61	160
<b>Bridge</b>		Holographic Controls		20	—
<b>Computer</b>	Model 7/fib	Rating 35			45
<b>Electronics</b>	Counter Measures	DM +4		7	6
<b>Weapons</b>	100 ton Bay	Heavy Neutron Cannon		101	50
<b>Fuel</b>	120 tons	Six weeks of operation		120	—
<b>Cargo</b>	30.5 tons			30.5	—
<b>19 Staterooms</b>				76	9.5
<b>Extras</b>	Repair Drones			8	1.6
	Armoury x 2			4	1
	19 Escape Pods			9.5	1.9
	Armoured Bulkheads	Drives		12.1	2.42
		Weapons		10.2	2.04
		Bridge & Sensors		2.7	0.54
<b>Small Craft</b>	30 ton Ships Boat	Standard Hangar		39	25.629
<b>Software</b>	Manoeuvre/0				—
	Intellect	Rating 10			1
	Library/0				—
	Auto-Repair/2	Rating 20			10
	Evade/3	Rating 25			3
	Fire Control/5	Rating 25			10
<b>Total Tonnage &amp; Cost</b>				800	705.629



## The Battle

Once the players are within range of the Zener space station, the Drakh Raiders will intercept and engage the players (but will remain within range of the station's weapons for covering fire). Galen will relinquish control of the player's ship if necessary and will join the fight in his pinnacle, which is more powerful than its size would suggest. However, as Galen closes the distance, the Zener space station transmits a signal that disables all Techno-mage technology (a safeguard against Techno-mage attacks and monitoring devices).

The players are now alone and will only notice that something is wrong with Galen once the battle starts. His ship will simply drift out of control and a Sensor check will reveal no power signature coming from his ship but whether that is normal for a Techno-mage ship the players will not know.

This should be a long and tough battle and there is a good chance of casualties amongst the crew. Whatever tactics the

players decide to use, the Referee should attempt to make this as descriptive as possible – this is a crucial part of the campaign so it should not just be dice rolls and number crunching.

Once the enemy vessels and weapons have been disabled, the players can investigate Galen's ship but they will have no way to contact him or access the pinnacle. The pinnacle will eventually drift out of range of the jamming signal (or the players can tow it), at which point Galen and his ship will come back online, although Galen will take a few hours to fully recover. Once he is out of range, Galen will keep his distance and notify the players as to his situation.

## Boarding the Station

Unless the players have a way to breach the station during the battle, they will have to destroy the Drakh Raiders and station's weapons before they can successfully attempt to gain access. The docking sphere can be determined by inspecting the outside and looking for the bay doors. Gaining access to the dock is a little more difficult but can be done in a number of ways:

- One of the characters can don an EVA suit and attempt to manually hack the lock with an Engineer (electronics) check DM -2. If successful, they can take a shuttle or fighters into the landing bay.
- Similar to the first option but entry can be gained via the inner pylon doors (no DM) by destroying one of the pylons.
- Blast the bay doors open with the ship but the bay will not repressurise and the players must enter in EVA suits. This is done using a standard attack roll – two shots will be enough to destroy the doors but on an Exceptional Failure the reactor is hit and blows the entire sphere.
- As before but simply blow a hole in one of the spheres to gain direct access. However, since the players do not know which spheres contain what they came for, they risk destroying the organelles.



Once the players have a way in, they will either need to bring their shuttle into the landing bay or take the risky approach of wearing EVA suits. The size of the boarding party will be limited by the number of EVA suits or shuttle capacity, depending on the method used to gain access.

If the players blast their way in, the inner doors will seal to maintain the atmosphere and pressure within that section. Opening these doors requires the same procedures as above but explosives or a powerful hand weapon will be needed if the players take the destructive option.

## Searching the Station

Like the previous Zener space station, the interior of this one has the same metallic and clinical feel to it. Three Drakh officers oversee the running of the station supported by 10 solders. There are 17 Zener technicians spread throughout the laboratories, developing and maintaining a variety of organic technology.

**Drakh Officer (3)**

**Str:** 9 (+1), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 8 (+0), **Soc:** 8 (+0)

**Skills:** Computers 0, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 2, Leadership 1, Persuade 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Tactics 1.

**Traits:** Cloak.

**Equipment:** PPG (3d6–3).

**Drakh Soldier (10)**

**Str:** 10 (+1), **Dex:** 12 (+2), **End:** 14 (+2), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 8 (+0), **Soc:** 7 (+0)

**Skills:** Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 2, Melee 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Tactics 1.

**Traits:** Blast (3d6).

**Equipment:** Flak jacket (6).

**Zener Technicians (17)**

**Str:** 7 (+0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 7 (+0), **Int:** 12 (+2), **Edu:** 11 (+1), **Soc:** 7 (+0)

**Skills:** Computers 2, Engineering (Electronics) 3, Engineer (Organic) 4, Medic 3.

**Equipment:** Surgical tools (improvised weapons, 2d6–2).

When the players attempt to gain access to the station, the Drakh officers will be aware of the players' actions and will deploy soldiers at strategic points throughout the station to ambush the players. The

boarding party will have to fight their way through the soldiers before they can begin to find what they came here for. The Zener technicians will not engage the players except in self defence or to protect the tech they are working on.

## Techno-mage Implants

The Techno-mages have never been given the secrets of their technology, always relying on the Shadows to provide it for them. There are a number of different items that have been developed as follows.

**Chrysalis:** The chrysalis is an external piece of equipment that hangs down the back and is attached to the recipient's spinal cord via special implants at the base of the skull. This device gives an apprentice the ability to use any Techno-mage ability whilst being monitored and controlled (if necessary) by their mentor. Each chrysalis must be attuned to the recipient's DNA before it can be used.

**Organelles:** These nano-tech devices are infused into the recipient's blood during their apprenticeship. Organelles must be programmed before given to the recipient and become more effective when the recipient receives the full Techno-mage implants.

**Implants:** Once an apprentice is deemed ready to become a full Techno-mage, they receive the final implantation. With this tech, the recipient no longer requires the chrysalis to use Techno-mage abilities. The party would have already seen these implants in Lodan's tomb in the previous episode.

Since the Shadows left the galaxy in 2261, the Techno-mage order has not had any contact with the Drakh to obtain new implants. However, the presence of the technology here would suggest that the Drakh are either experimenting or dealing with certain individuals for the continued use of the tech.

## Finding the Tech

Once the station is secure, the party can begin looking for the organelles and any other tech they wish to procure in the science sphere. Unless they spoke to Galen about this they will not know what to look

for, so Engineer (organic) checks will need to be made to identify the items they find. If Galen's pinnacle has drifted to a safe distance he will contact the players and can advise them.

The laboratories contain a variety of strange equipment used to grow and develop the tech as follows.

**Chrysalis Lab:** This room has 10 upright glass cylinders. Three of them containing chrysalises suspended in fluid, each at different stages of development. Premature removal from the maturation tubes will result in the chrysalis 'dying'. There is also a DNA refrigeration unit used to store samples taken from Techno-mage apprentices in order to attune each chrysalis to the recipient during the development stage.

**Organelle Lab:** This room contains a large machine that manufactures the organelles. It is not currently in operation but there is a locked storage area where the organelles are kept. The door can only be opened by a Zener technician's handprint or an Engineer (electronics) check DM –4. Behind the door is a small room containing racks and racks of small empty glass vials. If Galen is not yet available to advise the players, they can determine the use from the knowledge they have and a successful an Engineer (organic), Medic or basic Intelligence check.

Each set of 100 vials must be loaded into the machine, which fills each vial with a suspension fluid containing enough organelles for a single recipient. The players will need to operate the machine and fill all the vials to get the organelles they need. This can be achieved by attempting to get a Zener technician to help them or with an Engineer (electronics) or Computers check. It will take several hours to fill all the vials to provide thousands of doses which will be enough to deploy and spread the anti-virus.

**Implant Room:** This room comprises of four iso-labs where the Techno-mage implants are constructed using delicate tools and equipment. Each set of implants must be created in a sterile environment before being stored in special containers. Only one of the labs is currently in use by a

Zener technician working painstakingly on a set of implants.

**Medical Bay:** This small medical room is similar to the facilities the players discovered on the previous Zener station but it does not look like it has been used recently. These facilities were once used to perform experiments but Techno-mage implantations were never performed here – the tech was always implanted by other Techno-mages who were forbidden to come here.

## Aftermath

If the players manage to obtain the organelles without destroying all the Drakh forces, they will do everything in their power to prevent players getting technology and pursue the players. The players can either fight or flee.

If all goes well, the players will rendezvous with the Excalibur where they exited from hyperspace. Once at the scene of the battle the players will see that the Excalibur survived but it has been badly damaged. The wreckage of an Omega class destroyer

fills the area along with numerous Starfury remains. The other omega destroyer was badly damaged but managed to escape.

Communications are still down on the Excalibur so the players will need to take a ship over to speak to Gideon. The crew sustained heavy casualties and are completing repairs to the jump drive so they can leave before any Earthforce or Drakh reinforcements show up. Gideon will request that the players return to their ship to provide support until the Excalibur is able to make the jump to hyperspace. They can discuss the way forward once they are safe and away from here.

If the players ask what happened, Gideon will explain that a few traitors remained and contacted Earthforce who were able to get here to ambush them as they came out of hyperspace. The traitors have been rooted out and detained.

## Technology

Galen will want any technology that the players obtained from the Zener space station as it could be vital to the survival of

the techno-mages. However, since he was unable to board the station himself he may allow them to keep some items but this is entirely at the Referee's discretion.

Drakh reinforcements will eventually arrive at the station to either continue their work or destroy it. Again, this is at the Referee's discretion depending on how much technology you want the players to have access to. This could also form the basis of new story arcs involving Shadow tech, the Techno-mages and the Drakh.

## Ending the Episode

The episode ends when the players and the Excalibur leave the Fallav system and jump to hyperspace. Galen and Dr Chambers will begin work developing the cure and programming the organelles.

# NEXT TIME

## IN THE LEGACY OF WAR

The new cure is developed by the Excalibur crew and the players must travel to Earth to help deploy it, whilst avoiding Earthforce defences. Plans are also made to travel to Mars to prevent the Legacy Group's cure from being used to enslave humanity.



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