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# WARPS

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## EDITORIAL

By John Foody

Plenty to talk about this time so I'll try and cut down the usual waffle. We had hoped to bring you a review of *Realms of Sorcery* but as the issue went to press it had not yet been published. However, we do have a limited edition copy to give away in one of two excellent competitions. For various reasons we also haven't reviewed *Heart of Chaos*, the concluding part of the *Doomstones*' saga. We should have full reviews of both these products next issue. One WFRP product you will not see reviewed in these pages is *Corrupting Influence: The Best of Warpstone*. Full details of this are to be found in Fragments.

Over the last two or three issues we have had some complaints about the size of the font we have been using in some articles. So this time we have spaced articles out more and given more space than perhaps we might have done in the past (although we have squeezed the letters page in). This has meant we have less articles than normal. It means we have also given less space to the latest instalment of Talabheim. Thus, you'll have to wait longer for the whole thing. Tell us what you think.

Much to our surprise we have done well for a second issue on the letters front. This time around we have dedicated nearly three pages to them. Tim Eccles' regular Correspondent column has provided plenty of discussion since it started. A couple of reviews have recently praised the column for its content, but criticised it for not going into full enough detail. However, the aim of the column was not to examine issues comprehensively, as other articles would do. Instead it is there to throw ideas out for discussion and to provoke further thought. Some of the issues could be expanded upon to form articles down the line, whether by Tim or others, but the Correspondent will stick to its current format – unless you tell us otherwise.

Another debate I have recently been involved in, is whether role-playing games are a suitable forum to discuss sensitive issues - whether these be racism, rape, abuse, Nazism or any one of a number of other concerns. All these have been used in various games over the years, but is it right to do so? The argument against is usually that this is only a game and potentially controversial subjects should be avoided. In a game, a GM can avoid areas where their own players will become upset. However, it is not always easy. Nastiness is a part of RPGs, and such subjects often can be the topic of everyday conversations and with peoples' true feelings hidden. Writing for public consumption is harder, but I feel that they are valid topics for a roleplaying game. Authors need to be careful too not exploit a subject but treat it with care. Of course, that is the hard part.

Finally, issue 19 of *Warpstone* will be delayed. Instead of the planned March 2002 release date it won't appear until July 2002. Issue 20 will thus be put back until November 2002. We know this is a long time to wait for your next issue, but we are taking a small break for personal reasons. We hope you'll bear with us.





## INFO

All correspondence to :




Warpstone  
c/o John Keane  
5a Wolsey Road  
Wealdstone  
Middlesex  
England  
HA3 5RZ

E mail: [warpstone@bigfoot.com](mailto:warpstone@bigfoot.com)  
Website: [www.warpstone.darccore.net](http://www.warpstone.darccore.net)

Editors: John Foody & John Keane  
Associate Editors: Martin Oliver & Mel Tudno Jones  
Additional Proofing: Steve Gerke  
Cover: Olivier Bergerat  
Our man in the USA: Spencer Wallace

Illustrations: John Keane  Ralph Horsley  James L. Shipman  Steven Jones 

\*All uncredited art  
by John Keane.

Steven Punter  Olivier Bergerat  Oliver Bancroft  Talabheim District Maps  
by Alfred Nunez

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## SUBMISSIONS

Version 1.5 – July 1999

Warpstone is happy to receive submissions of both written work and art. We will *always* respond to submissions, even if they are not suitable for publication in Warpstone. If you send a submission and don't hear back from us in good time, please drop us a line to remind us. Failure to reply is simply a symptom of the chaotic nature of the Warpstone organisation. If you take the time with a submission, we will take the time to respond.

### Payment

A published contribution earns a you a free copy of Warpstone.

### How?

We are happy to receive submissions by post or e-mail. Articles should be in RTF (Rich Text Format) or MS Word format. Disks should be 3.5", formatted for PC and marked with your name and article names.

### Art Submissions

We are always looking for artists. You must have an understanding of the "Warhammer style" (which covers a broad range of styles, as our current artists will testify!), but we are happy to look at all kinds of work, whether your speciality is maps, caricatures, portraits or anything else. Just send us a picture you think should be included in Warpstone, and some examples of any other work you have done. Please remember not to send originals, but only copies.

### Article Submissions

Warpstone tries not to include articles that rewrite game rules or are in themselves rules-heavy. In the same vein we are not looking for new monsters, careers, skills, gods etc. (That said, if you have something good send it in.) We are looking for articles that expand of the world of Warhammer, filling in the gaps that are present. We also look at how the game is played, discussing issues relevant to all gamers.

If you have an article but you're not sure whether it's suitable, send us an outline. We will tell you if we are interested in seeing it developed. If you could include a sample of some other work you've completed at the same time, this would be useful (but is not essential).

### Regular Articles

**Reviews:** We will review WFRP material. If you wish to write a review on any other release (WFB etc.) then please check with us first to make sure no-one else is writing it. Should be 600+ words.

**Comment Articles:** We are always looking for articles where you put across your point of view on a particular subject. **Cameos:** Brief encounters and adventure outlines. Don't include character profiles, only descriptions.

**Scenarios:** Full length, detailed adventures. We are especially interested in scenarios that do not include hosts of creatures, lots of magic or loads of Chaos cultists. When these are included, they should be an integral part of the story. A tribe of goblins with +1 swords all round will prove the adage that 'the editor's red pen is mightier than the sword...' **Short stories:** Set firmly in the Warhammer World. Same guidelines as Scenarios.

## The Article List

If you want to see any WFRP related article then let us know. We will add it to the article list. Only the following on the list at the moment;

**Careers:** As mentioned in issue 10. Not new ones, but fleshed out cultures and backgrounds for the current ones.

## ETC.

Arrggghh!!? He awoke with a start. It had been a terrible dream, men with no noses or mouths pulling his organs from his body. It wasn't his that made him sick though, it was the sickness from the wound he had received. It knew it was infected and that unless he could find a Temple or wise woman soon he would be dead. It wasn't an auspicious start from to his quest. The blue bearded seer had told him to track down those who would help him save The Empire. It was not to be easy. The Champion was rumoured to be heading north but in a roundabout route. Wherever he was, he knew his mind was mind was being warped by the corrupting influence. The other had been spotted disguised as a peasant at the fair. When he had last spoken to him, he said the forger (hah!) had been lost to them but could not explain clearly. Other rumours said the wanderer was to return. Until then he would find the agitator but he would have to be careful, for he was often hidden amongst his enemies.

## REPORTS FROM THE HEART OF CORRUPTION

### Reviews

2

A look at all the latest Black Library releases and an interview with the man in charge, Marc Gascoigne.

"Now that the Black Library has had time to truly establish itself it is time to go back and give their latest releases a look."

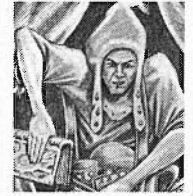


### Up the Ladder

27

Two new careers for the light fingered: The Cat Burglar and the Master Thief.

"When it comes to break-ins and thievery, no one matches the Cat Burglar for sheer ability."



### The Correspondent

7

The Future History of the Old World. Just where is it going and how to have fun getting there.

"The point is that future events take root in the present, and PCs might wander across these seeds, even affect them."

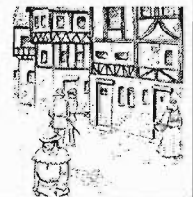


### Talabheim

28

Part three of our city background. Some advice for those with ambition, illegal groups and details of the administrative hub.

"Their prospects are limited and crime is often the only way to escape the daily grind."

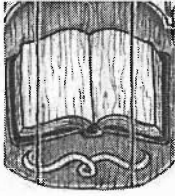


### Guilds in WFRP

12

A look at the Guilds in The Empire. An introduction to a series of articles detailing various guilds.

"Detailing guilds is useful as a background, for scenarios, and also as a source of help or hindrance to PCs."



### A Recipe for Trouble

36

Travellers on the Trillheim Road go in fear of the bandit Johann Stagge. Can the PCs stop his raids?

"The scared passengers were ordered from the coach and told to place their valuables in a bag."



### The Real Enemy Within

16

Some ideas on putting together a comprehensive campaign.

"There is lots of WFRP material out there, but how can a GM make it all work together?"



### The Nature of the Obligation

42

A short story showing just what friendship means.

"My name is Oskar Schon, and I'm the greatest warrior since Sigmar! Unhand that lady."



### The Trust

17

Background to this charitable group of visionaries.

"What is the Trust? The Trust is a hope for a better future for all."



### The Forum

46

Lots of letters. Keep it up.

"I believe that the internal struggle (within the party itself, inside the PCs) against the seduction of the forces of Chaos is one of the most interesting way to set up and play out the Warhammer world."



### ABBREVIATIONS

A	Number of Attacks	Fel	Fellowship	M	Movement	SL	Secret Language
AP	Armour Points	GC	Gold Crown	MP	Magic Points	SS	Secret Signs
BS	Ballistic Skill	GM	Gamesmaster	NPC	Non-player character	SW	Specialist Weapons
CI	Cool	Gu	Guilder (Marienburg Coinage)	P	Parry	T	Toughness
CR	Complexity Rating	GW	Games Workshop	PC	Player Character	W	Wounds
DB	Dodge Blow	I	Initiative	R	Range	WFB	Warhammer Fantasy Battle
Dex	Dexterity	IC	Imperial Calendar	RoS	Realm of Sorcery	WFRP	Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay
EPs	Experience Points	Int	Intelligence	S	Strength	WP	Will Power
ES	Effective Strength	Ld	Leadership	SDiR	Marienburg: Sold Down the River	WS	Weapon Skill

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# REVIEWS

## THE BLACK LIBRARY Novels & Inferno Various Writers & Artists Reviewed by John Foody



I am not alone in disliking much fantasy fiction. Gamers, fantasy fans and avid readers all dislike much of the genre. Popular fantasy fiction has long been lost in ever decreasing circles of sub-Tolkien stereotypes. Time and time again, cliché after cliché is wheeled out. The words “a new fantasy trilogy” (or evermore a “series”) fill me with dread. More scorn still is saved for those books that bury this information in tiny print so you are “happily” surprised later on. Matters only get worse when volume one looks like an encyclopaedia anyway.

However, such an attitude is unfair to a small band of excellent books and writers, a number of whom are trying something new and writing with style. So much can be forgiven if the author has flair, humour and talent; still more if they are trying something innovative or imaginative. Nevertheless, they remain a minority.

Now that I have set my stall out with regards to my thoughts on fantasy fiction, I will review some.

The Old World is a rich and exciting place, one full of great opportunities for plots and ideas. When Warpstone interviewed Kim Newman (aka. Jack Yeovil) he commented that fantasy can provide a canvas in the same way as Westerns used to do in films. Simply, they allow you to tell stories without having to worry about explaining the rules of the setting. Newman himself showed what could be done in Warhammer Fiction in his two best Warhammer books, *Beasts in Velvet* and *Drachenfels*.

Back in issue 13, Rick Davis gave a mixed review to the original Warhammer books, Newman's among them, that Games Workshop released in the eighties. Although they seem to have sold well, the plug was pulled on them, and fiction set in Warhammer World was restricted to flavour pieces in supplements. Then, a few years ago, the Black Library appeared. Working within Games Workshop, they produced novels, short stories in the bi-monthly *Inferno*, and comic strips in *Warhammer Monthly*. Warpstone looked at some of the early efforts and gave them a cool reception. Now that the Black Library has had time to truly establish itself it is time to go back and give their latest releases a look. (However, I shall be ignoring the 40K universe.) The Black Library has the potential to be a huge source of inspiration and ideas for WFRP players, and thus deserves closer examination.

The Black Library's flagship novels are the six books featuring Felix and Gotrek. Written by William King, they concern the journeys and adventures of the Trollslayer Gotrek, and his companion Felix Jaeger, who swore an oath to record the Slayer's death. *Dragonslayer* is the fourth book concerning the duo, and sees them travelling out of the Chaos Wasters into Kislev carried by the airship *The Spirit of Grungri*. On their arrival, Grey Seer Thanqual, a long-time enemy of the pair, attacks them. Escaping the ambush, the airship is later attacked by a huge dragon. After visiting the Slayer keep of Karak Kadrin they

set out to hunt it down, surrounded on every side by enemies.

*Beastslayer*, the fifth book, finds Felix and Gotrek in Praag, where a huge Chaos army is approaching. Hasty preparations are made as the city prepares for the siege. With a number of companions, some of whom have escorted them through a number of books, the pair help defend the city from Chaos within and without.

All the Felix and Gotrek books are pure pulp fantasy: fun, easy-to-read, fast, furious and full of action. King is adept at writing bloody and gripping combats, whether one-on-one or huge battles. However, as is perhaps to be expected from Warhammer novels, there are far too many of them. Every few pages produces some new enemy to be overcome. King's style balances this well, but it can become boring if you are expecting more than this.

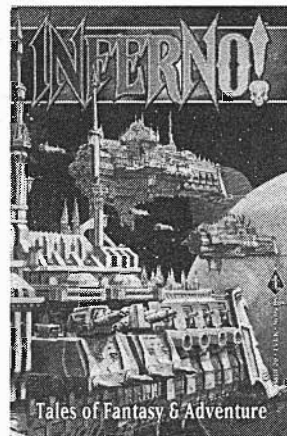
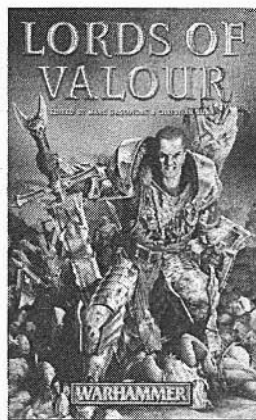
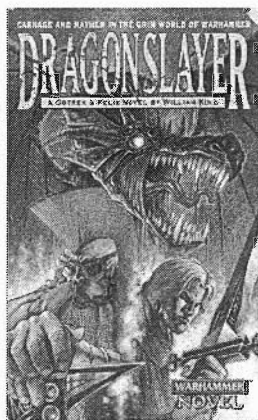
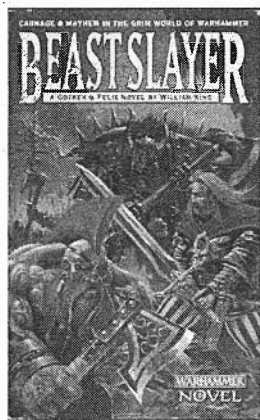
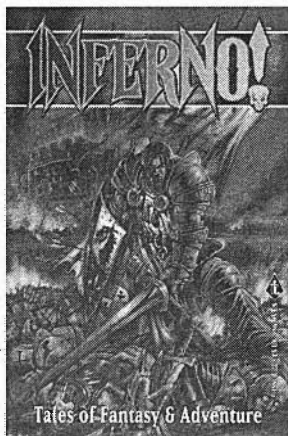
Felix is a well-defined character and King tells much of his stories through him. Certainly, Felix has become increasingly the focus of the work. This is a welcome development, as Gotrek is rather dull. As you would expect from a Trollslayer, all he does is kill and drink. Fine in short bursts, but over a novel, tedious. Also, by bringing in a list of supporting characters King has widened the focus of action. He generally succeeds in making the temporary characters, generally the duo's enemies, interesting. Certainly he manages to ensure they are often more than two-dimensional punch bags.

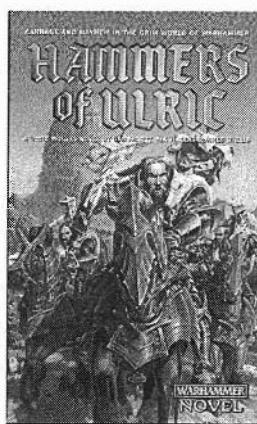
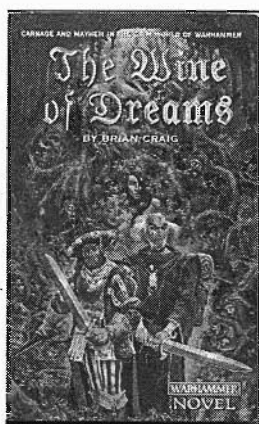
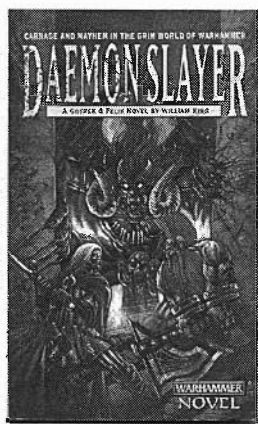
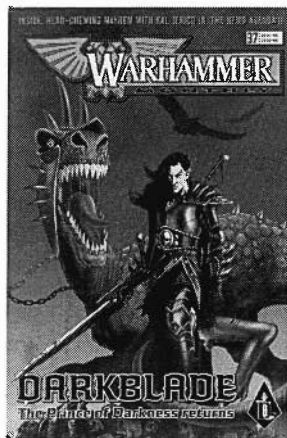
One recurring character is the Skaven Grey Seer Thanqual. His adventures run parallel to Felix and Gotrek and provide a change of pace. The plotting of Thanqual and his accomplices does give a good introduction to the Skaven, and would provide some good background to GMs thinking of using them. Thanqual has been set up as an Arch-Enemy, whose plans are always thwarted by Felix and Gotrek. However, the downside to this is that he has become more of a comic foil, and this reduces the sense of danger and fear the Skaven invoke. Any intended comic intent is also pretty poor.

*Dragonslayer* is the weakest of the Felix and Gotrek books to date. Really, it “does what it says on the tin”. It is little more than a stop-off on the wider plot that King is drawing. *Beastslayer* is far stronger, looking at the siege of Praag and successfully getting across the atmosphere of a city under attack by Chaos. It doesn't succeed as well as, say, David Gemmell's excellent *Legend* (aka *Against the Horde*), but thankfully does avoid Gemmell's sentimentality. Where it works best is where King looks at the effect on the defenders, and their infighting.

Where the two books both fall down is that they become overly familiar. Ideas and situations are recycled, and on top of constant fighting, none of it feels new. In the end, though, King's books are fun. They are high fantasy but still successfully convey the grim world of Warhammer.

*Wine of Dreams* is set within the shadow of the Grey Mountains. Our hero is Reinmar Weiland, being groomed to one-day take over his father's wine shop. Not that he is happy about such a fate. However, his life is thrown into disarray when his mysterious cousin enters the family shop. He has come to find the source of Dark Wine, a substance linked with the worship of chaos. On his heels comes a Witch-Hunter and his men. Events led Reinwar on the trail of the Dark Wine, uncovering family secrets and placing himself and others in grave danger.





A very different book to Felix and Gotrek, it could be fairly be said that if Felix and Gotrek are Warhammer Battle then this is WFRP. Certainly for the first three-quarters of the book Craig keeps it nicely low-key, concentrating on the characters and situation. Reinmar is well written, although some of the surrounding characters are less so. The book also gives a brief glimpse into Imperial town life, complete with dark secrets and petty jealousies.

The set-up of Wine of Dreams is well done; low-key with an atmosphere of mistrust and worry. Craig keeps the enemy enigmatic, so you are not really sure of their intentions or motivations. Indeed, had the whole book continued in this style to the end, it could have been outstanding. The real truth of the matter could have remained clouded, with the outcome pushed by the factions' motives. Instead it is finished with a grand climax. Well handled, to a point, but it does let the rest of the book down. In the end it feels like Craig loses the courage of his convictions and falls into a "stock" battle. It certainly feels as if he had to get a battle in there for form's sake.

This is certainly the best of the recent crop of Warhammer books, and better than most of the older ones too. Therefore it would make an excellent introduction to the Black Library's output.

Far weaker is **Hammers of Ulric**, a collection of stories written by Dan Abnett, Nik Vincent and James Wallis (yes, of Hogshead fame). Three different stories are told, all three coming together by the end. Set in Middenheim, the first and main thread follows a group of Knights of the White Wolf, the second a street thief, and the third a Cleric of Mórr. All come to realise that something untoward is happening in the city, and they set out to find out what.

Although there are three different authors, their styles don't jar. However, the quality of the stories is markedly different. The weakest stories concern the thief Kurza. They lack any real impact and certainly don't impart any new background that GMs could use. The White Wolf segments are better. They deal with a unit of Templars under a new commander. Their encounters are more of what you would expect from a Warhammer book: fights, heroism and the rest. All of this is well handled, and although some of the characters remain a little undefined you do get some sense of what it means to be holy warrior in The Empire. Certainly parts are useful as background. Those sections concerning the Cleric of Mórr are the strongest of the three: low-key, with some interesting ideas and temple politics.

At the end, The White Wolf and Kurza plot comes together well, but the Cleric of Mórr's addition is a little more clumsy. Overall, this remains an average book. It doesn't really have anything that stands out to make it memorable. The real down-point as far as WFRP is concerned is the rather large Enemy Within spoiler carelessly mentioned in passing. Slapped wrists, Mr. Wallis!

**Lords of Valour** is the second compilation of short stories from Inferno magazine, following on from Realm of Chaos. A dozen stories, the majority featuring soldiers or knights (usually Bretonnian) as central characters. Take Jonathan Green's The Plague Pit as an example: it features a band of mercenaries hired to help a scholar with uncovering an ancient tribal tomb. Not is all as it seems, and they find they have been tricked. They then have to fight for their lives against a fearsome enemy.

Whilst Green handles the characters and characters well enough, The Plague Pit falls foul of the common pattern of setting up the situation just to finish with a big fight. Not to mention ensuring a great evil is overcome. As with much of the fiction, the comradeship of men-at-arms is brought to the fore, leaders are weighed down with the responsibility of it all and the rank and file

don't trust the person with the knowledge of chaos. These themes appear time after time.

All the stories try, with various degrees of success, to use the atmosphere of the Old World to make the stories different to other fantasy fiction. Patrons are never as they seem, few can be trusted and evil things are always in the forests. Sadly, all too often these only come across as being Warhammer's very own stereotypes (ones WFRP often uses too). Still, stereotypes can be subverted and made to work – but here little is really tried. The few stories that do try something different, such as Who Mourns a Necromancer and Portrait of My Undying Lady, work far better and are more interesting because of it. Even where they don't succeed, like The Ultimate Ritual, at least the ideas are different.

Lords of Valour is a mixed bag. All the stories make easy, and to a large degree fun, reading. Few try anything really new and those looking for background will be disappointed. It certainly does not add anything to the Bretonnian background. Where the book succeeds as a whole is when it diversifies the type of story being told, but this variety could have been expanded.

Much of what I have said about Lords of Valour could be directly applied to

### Warhammer Monthly Reviewed by John Keane

Amongst the Black Library's valiant efforts to breathe renewed literary life into the Warhammer world is *Warhammer Monthly* – a comic covering all facets of the Games Workshop portfolio. The comic regularly features stories stemming from their Fantasy and 40K worlds. They also use the comic to bandstand new products, such as the new Albion supplement, by introducing new stories or new plot lines to existing ones.

On average there are four to five strips per issue, over forty pages, although on occasion the fifth strip is replaced by a 'short' purely literary offering, probably due to a lack of available space. Both the writing and art are of a variable nature and I can't say that I'm overly impressed with the whole product. A few of the regulars are both well written and accompanied by fine artwork, most notably *Mordheim – City of the Damned* and *Daemonifuge: The Lord of Damnation*.

*Mordheim* tends towards one off stories which more-or-less revolve around the same theme, although I'm pleased to see that some longer stories are also cropping up. The only on-going non-futuristic story that appears is *Darkblade*, the story of a Dark Elf fighting to contain a Daemon within him. *Darkblade* is uninspiring in both it's storyline and art, and fails to succeed in the difficult task of creating an interesting and succinctly compelling story.

The Black Library are in the difficult situation of trying to cover the plethora of GW games in just one 40 page comic when they'd probably be better off splitting it into two – Old World and Futuristic Worlds. This would allow for longer, more interesting, stories. As it is, I can see little in the comic that either a GM or player could use to enrich their FRP world. If you play or are interested in the full range of games, I'd say that it was a fairly reasonable purchase at £2.20 (\$2.95) per issue. However, if your only interest is in Warhammer Fantasy Role-play, or Battle, there is little to hold your interest.

**Inferno** itself. Released every two months, *Inferno* contains around a half dozen stories, sometimes mixed with comic strips. The mix of Warhammer fantasy to Warhammer 40K stories changes from issue to issue (issue 22 has but one fantasy to four 40K, while issue 20 has four out of six). The quality of the work is also variable, but never completely unreadable.

One story, *The Gifts of Tal Dur*, is perhaps not the best written but its central premise is good. The story concerns soldiers from the Siege of Praag, as told in *Beastslayer*. In addition to giving another point of view on this important event it makes the world come alive in ways that other stories don't. There is a sense that everything ties together and is moving forward. This is clearly something that is very hard to get right, but which can only be looked forward to as the aspiration for the remainder of the Warhammer fiction.

Another highlight of *Inferno* is Ralph Horsley's features. A Warstone artist, here he does something different: a mixture of stories and comic strips. They are filled with detail and excellent ideas. In issue 47 is *Treasure Hunt*, a story of mercenaries trying to find a family heirloom in Mordheim. Horsley shows the map the party take and details their adventure, highlighting the main parts

as pictures. Perhaps not his best piece (it is a little too dense and cluttered), it is still full of wonderful atmosphere and touches. Such work really does make *Inferno* unique.

I would recommend *Inferno* to those who are fans of all Game Workshop's games. For those interested in just the fantasy side, and in getting some ideas, then *Lords of Valour* and *Realm of Chaos* are better purchases. *Inferno* is frequently entertaining, occasionally excellent, but still has some way to go before I would consider it essential.

Overall, I consider the Black Library a success. Although it has its faults, it is getting stronger and stronger with time. Many of the worst faults of fantasy fiction have been avoided, although not all. There is a need for a little more diversity in the fiction, but you can see that this is coming too. The novels work better than the stories, but their weak point is the over-reliance on large battles. The Warhammer world has much more to offer than this. WFRP fans could do worse than pick up a couple of these books and give them a try. I will be surprised if they do not help the world come a little more alive and give you at least a couple of ideas, even if only for a snippet of background.

## The Warstone Interview with Marc Gascoigne



Marc Gascoigne is in charge of the Black Library, and so we thought we would throw a few questions at him. Marc has a long history in gaming, running a fanzine named *Dragon Lords* and writing the *Judge Dredd* RPG while working for Games Workshop, amongst other things. After leaving Games Workshop, he ran the *Fighting Fantasy* line for Steve Jackson & Ian Livingstone. He rejoined Games Workshop in 1997 to set up the Black Library along with Andy Jones. (The full interview with Marc can be found on the Warstone website.) The Black Library can be found at [www.blacklibrary.co.uk](http://www.blacklibrary.co.uk)

### How successful has the Black Library been?

Startlingly successful, as it happens. Games Workshop had focused purely on games for so long that it was always going to be a gamble re-entering the fiction market. Our first line, the *Inferno* fiction anthology, was designed specifically to find and encourage new writers and artists. That did its job well, thus laying the foundations for first Warhammer Monthly comic and now the novel line. Even so, when we launched the new novel range we planned pretty modestly. We thought that we would perhaps print ten thousand copies of a title. Two years in, our first titles have sold over fifty thousand copies worldwide, and show no sign of fading.

To date we have translated editions on shelves in Germany, Spain, Poland, Czech Republic and Finland, and we're finalising details in at least three other countries. It was great to hear from William King that he had wandered into his local bookstore in Prague to find the Czech edition of *Trollslayer* at #1 in the SF/Fantasy charts!

### Is there a policy of trying to have "official" gameworlds or are you happy for Black Library fiction to disagree with other books and game background? Is there any communication between the Black Library and the game authors?

Well, the Black Library office is in the main Games Workshop headquarters building in Nottingham, and my desk is perhaps fifty yards from those of the Warhammer and 40K developers... Also, some of that team continue to write fiction for us. So no, no links at all...

Such facetiousness aside, well, we have two main aims when preparing fiction for publication. Obviously, it must be written and edited to a certain standard. But it must also fit in with both the spirit and the detail of the Warhammer world, and not contradict the current version of the tabletop game.

Sometimes that's not straightforward. Millions of words of background, both core and peripheral, have been printed by Games Workshop over the decades. There have been changes in the focus of such material too, from the role-playing game to the tabletop wargame, that have produced minor inconsistencies. Occasionally we have to make a judgement call as to which source of a detail to treat as the truth. Now and then we might even have to decide that a previously mentioned

incident was misreported, a myth. But, well, it is all meant to be set in a savage fantasy world where mankind huddles in tiny pockets of civilisation and communications are poor...

### Why did Games Workshop abandon the idea of publishing for so long?

Well, I wasn't working for the company at that time, but my take is that we were perhaps a little distracted by the explosion of our success as a games company. At that time, our tabletop games went through the roof, sales wise, and as a result all our attention went onto developing the core range. It wasn't until we had a stable, mature market for our games, and more especially the worlds in which they were set, that we realised we should be exploring those worlds through fiction and comics as well.

### Have there been any concerns raised over the excessive violence in Black Library publications, either from inside GW or from the public? Is it something considered when looking at submissions? What have you heard?

No, we haven't heard any complaints from people about "excessive violence". Ultimately, we are writing war stories aimed at people aged fourteen to adult, so there will be some rough stuff - it does what it says on the tin! We operate an informal code of standards that has developed over the years, tempered by our own moral judgements. We don't "sanitise" the nastier side of battle, but we're not in the business of publishing exploitative fiction without an underlying emotional resonance. One of our most popular, and in the department most favourite, titles is Dan Abnett's *Necropolis*, the saga of a Stalingrad-like siege from Warhammer 40,000. During the course of the book many characters die, but because Dan has taken the trouble to make us like them, identify with them, feel for them, their deaths become far more sudden and far more shocking. In terms of looking at submissions, what is far more pertinent is that we don't accept glorified "battle reports". We get too many of those turning up in the guise of stories, but without proper plot, setting and characters we will always reject them.

### What are the future plans for the Black Library?

Where to start, where to start...

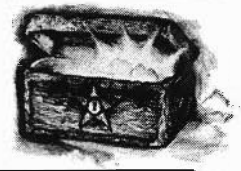
Firstly, of course, we want to keep on doing what we are doing: releasing a monthly comic, a bi-monthly fiction anthology, tons of novels and several more graphic novel collections and art books and limited edition models and t-shirts and posters and...

The next big step will October 2001, when we ramp up novel production to two books per month. To ease in gently, we will be re-issuing a selection of the old Games Workshop/Boxtree novels. Our art book range is growing all the time and then there are mutterings about colour comics, art prints, background books, and so much more. We've only just started.



# WARPSTONE FRAGMENTS

BRIEF REVIEWS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF WARHAMMER



## CORRUPTING INFLUENCE IS HERE



We are pleased to announce that *Corrupting Influence: The Best of Warpstone Volume One* will be released soon. There has been much demand for these early issues, most being long sold out. After all we only printed around one hundred and fifty of issue one, with four hundred of issue nine. Since issue ten, when Hogshead

began to distribute *Warpstone*, the circulation has increased hugely. As with the magazine itself, Hogshead are distributing the book, so it should be widely available. We are hoping it will be in the shops around the end of the year.

With a colour cover by John Keane (we show you a preview sketch here), it will contain the best articles from issues one to nine. There will be no new material, so if you have issues one to nine then you can spend your money elsewhere. However, we have taken the opportunity to revise some of the text as well as commissioning some new art.

The full listing of articles is; Fighting Chaos: Why Bother?, To Fight or Not to Fight?, Secrets of the Warhammer Artists, Volatile Magick, the entire Templars series, Low Life on the Highway, Disease in the Warhammer World, A Gentleman's Guide to Marienburg, Prosthetics in WFRP, Witch-hunters, The Final Adventure or Ursula Urjingrad, A Hundred Years of Trade, The Greys, four Cameos, The Eternal Guard, One Hour (to) Mórr, The Cannon Ball Run, The Missing Children of Regensdorf & A Buried Past.



### Hogshead News

Before The Best of *Warpstone* reaches the shops in December you should all be proud owners of *Realms of Sorcery*. As we go to print the soft-cover version is at the printers. The hardcover version will follow in early November. Hogshead are also producing a limited leather-bound edition. There are only a hundred copies of this and all are sold out. *Dwarfs: Of Stone and Steel* will be early next year – delayed to *Realms of Sorcery*.

Hogshead are hoping *Nobilis* will be out in late November as well, and *De Profundis* in December. A part of the *New Style* range, it is the first Eastern European game to be translated to English. Based on the works of HP Lovecraft, it is a self contained game with, Hogshead promise, “stunningly original gameplay”.

Hogshead also donated a number of limited edition items to an on-line auction, raising money for the Gaming Industry Disaster Fund setup after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in America. These included the printer-proofs of *Realms of Sorcery* and leather bound copy of the rulebook. As we went to print bids of over \$1000 had been pledged for these, with over \$7000 in total.

### White Dwarf

The August 2001 issue of *White Dwarf* contained something of a surprise. Just to show that the arrival of *Realms of Sorcery* is a huge event, it even got a mention here. Not only that but further on was to be found a four-page article looking at the Hogshead line of WFRP. It was a mixture of reviews and introduction to the game. It will be interesting to see if such coverage will gather some new recruits to the WFRP stable.

## STRIKE TO STUN

Strike to Stun is a brand new e-zine dedicated to the world of Warhammer. Its not just for WFRP but will give equal space to Warhammer Fantasy Battle and Mordheim. Strike to Stun Issue One was launched on the 20th September, with a issue dedicated to Albion, especially Games Workshop's new Dark Shadow Campaign for Warhammer Fantasy Battle which takes place on that isle. Indeed, *Strike-To-Stun* hope that each issue will have a main focus on a specific theme, with issue two covering Bretonnia.

Strike to Stun's editor is Natascha Chrobok, author of the highly regarded *Monastic Orders* manuscript (review in issue 15). Other articles are, among others, by Alfred Nunez, Garrett Lepper, Richard Iorio and Leif Schrader, all of whom have (or are due to) write for *Warpstone*. New issues of *Strike to Stun* will appear bi-monthly, with the stated aim of being more like a traditional magazine.

Early impressions are highly favourable. There are small teething problems but issue one comes with a plethora of material, from reviews to scenarios. These can be viewed as with standard website or you can download the whole thing as a PDF files. We hope to bring you a review soon. Check it out at [www.strike-to-stun.com](http://www.strike-to-stun.com)

## CRITICAL HIT

Another excellent resource for Warhammer is Critical Hit, an unofficial website that runs entertaining forums and contains new rules and background for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay and introduces a new system for role-play in Games Workshop's Warhammer 40,000 universe. Critical Hit can be found at [www.role-play.co.uk](http://www.role-play.co.uk)

### A Private War

Regular Warpstone columnist Tim Eccles has produced his own campaign supplement *A Private War*. Set in east of The Empire it is available now. The final price will only cover Tim's expenses and is £10 in the UK. Warpstone will bring you a review next issue. For more information see [www.shadow-warriors.co.uk](http://www.shadow-warriors.co.uk)

### Charity Auction

A couple of issues ago we announced that we were auctioning five out-of-print back issues for the charity the NSPCC. As we are always being desperately asked to supply this and have seen issues at silly prices on e-bay we thought these would be snapped up. Sadly no-one submitted a bid. So, yes they could have all been yours for less than a rather small chewy sweet. However, all was not lost. We put them on the website for a couple weeks and am glad to announce that we recently donated £50. Many thanks to all those who took part.

### Roleplay in Egypt

The British Centre for Egyptian Studies has announced that is producing a boardgame and RPG supplement with Britannia Game Designs. For more information on this and other things ancient Egyptian check out the BCES website at [www.bcegypt.com](http://www.bcegypt.com)

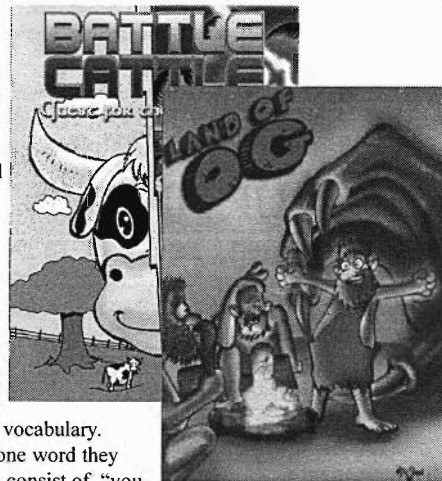
### Warpstone Website

A few new updates. There is an improved version of the Imperial names listing by Peter Rutkowski, some impressive player handouts and pregenerated characters for *Remains of the Knight* by Lars Gottlieb, not to mention details on how to buy Warpstone through Paypal.

### REVIEW

#### Wingnut Games

Wingnut have become well known for producing reasonably priced, entertaining games. Games with a sense of humour. However, we at Warpstone don't believe anything we hear so we thought we would put them to the test. A lot of RRGs take place in caves so we thought it would be appropriate to start with Land of Og. Here each player takes the role of a caveman in a land beset with things that want to eat you. First you have to decide what kind of caveman you want to be: Strong, Smart and so on. There are skills, statistics and the like but the central point to this game is that players have a limited vocabulary. They can use actions and the like but the one word they know may be "cave". A conversation may consist of, "you cave bang", "me cave?", "you, bang bang, cave". Personally I think this is fabulous idea. The game is simple to grasp and rules are easy. Rules are also given for a live RPG and I think it could work even better without distractions of dice and the like. The real strength of Land of Og is that it is fun in a pick up and play kind of way. It won't work for frequent play but as an hour long filler or convention game it is a winner.



Blessed with an even poorer sense of humour is Battle Cattle. This is basically Car Wars with cows. An expansion set is Quest for the Holy Pail, taking combat to medieval times. You can be a Moo-gic User or a Cowvalier among others. Both books are reasonably fun to read (if you like such puns) and although you can buy figures for these, I am not sure I can ever see myself playing. Why play Cars Wars with Cattle, when you can just play Car Wars?

It is cheaper and simpler, but I feel the joke will wear very thin quickly. For its price of around £5 I certainly recommend Land of Og. It's the kind of game you should have for emergencies. Battle Cattle I would only recommend for those who want to see how you can base a game around fighting cows with rocket launchers.

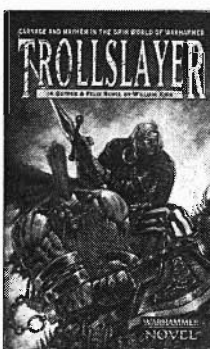
## COMPETITIONS

### REALMS OF SORCERY

To celebrate the release of the long awaited sourcebook, Hogshead have given us a very special prize to give away. We have a copy of the limited edition leather bound version (one of 20 special presentation volumes) of *Realms of Sorcery* for the first name pulled out of the bubbling cauldron. We have wracked our brains to come up with a suitable task for such a great prize, and finally decided on a simple question. All you have to do is match one entry from each column with the other from the list below. When you have your answers just let us know by post, e-mail or diverse magical means marking your entry *Realms of Sorcery*. Closing date is 15<sup>th</sup> February 2002.

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. Gandalf      | 1. Ankh-Morpork |
| b. Harry Potter | 2. Avalon       |
| c. Merlin       | 3. Earthsea     |
| d. Rincewind    | 4. Hogwarts     |
| e. Sparrowhawk  | 5. Middle Earth |

### FELIX & GOTREK



The Black Library and William King have generously given Warpstone a rather excellent prize to give away. We have a set of signed copies containing Felix & Gotrek's entire adventures to date. That is six books in total. To earn this great prize you have to answer the following question. Closing date is 15<sup>th</sup> February 2002.

Which one of these things is the odd one out: Orange hair, tattoos, honour, a large weapon or a death wish?



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# THE CORRESPONDENT

The 'Future History' of the Old World by Tim Eccles

The purpose of this article is to ponder the future of the Old World, and examine events in the way that historians of its future might. It is not my aim simply to do this as an exercise in itself, but to assist the creation of campaigns wherein the seeds of these great events can form a backdrop to the events in which the PCs are embroiled. My aim, then, is to take what we know of the past, what we know of current events, and what we know of possible plot developments. The point is that future events take root in the present, and PCs might wander across these seeds, even affect them, as they travel along on their adventures. At the very least, such things form a backdrop to those events currently concerning PCs and they will hear rumours (true, garbled and containing fabrications) concerning such happenings as they pass through regions. Groups within the Old World - and beyond - are currently working to effect these changes. Thus adventures might involve the PCs being hired to (involuntarily or otherwise) further the plan of such a group, foil them, or simply pass them by as they solve an adventure that coincides with such happenings. It is worth stressing at this point that players should not read further; I am bound to give details of plots and personae from published adventures that will spoil enjoyment of those games.

It seems to me that a clear thread runs throughout the Old World: religion. In our secular era, it is often difficult to understand the beliefs and actions of our own history, but in the Old World there is the additional characteristic that deities are visible to their followers - at least, priests are quite clearly able to utilise 'divine' magic powers. This, in my view, means that religion will remain a major force in Old World events.

At the same time, I do not wish to devalue the role of national politics. Few countries can be thought of as national units, by the modern understanding of the term. The Empire is a blatantly de-centralised confederation of (frequently contradictory) states and provinces; Bretonnia is nominally united under a hereditary king; nations such as Tilea are independent states with their own political and leadership structures. If nothing else, the fact that these areas have a single name, despite their various organisational

differences, suggests that the idea of nationhood is not completely irrelevant. However, the thread that links and directs much of the political activity of all these 'nations' is religion, and their devotion to particular (often conflicting) deities. For example, in *Warpstone* 10 I examined the importance of politics to the cult of Shallya, and in *Warpstone* 15, political ambition was central to the church of Sigmar as presented by myself and Arne Dam. Therefore, what I aim to present here is a future based upon the idea that religion is the primary motivation for the actions of participants, although these might also be seen (particularly by the actors) as having national, political or economic motivations. This is, of course, both a simplification and cheating, but RPG campaigns are generally improved when given a structured overview for the GM to hang their ideas and plot developments from. Religion offers such a conceptual framework.

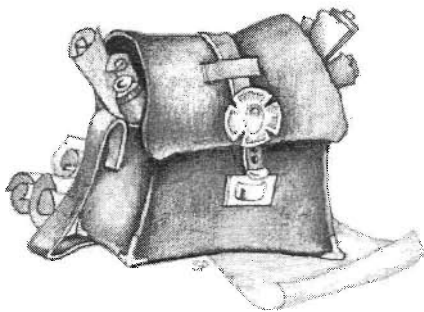
## Present Events and Future Predictions

Most of the WFRP material is concerned with The Empire, and the most obvious cause of dissent is the continuing Sigmar-Ulric divide. This thread is very important, but not necessarily for the obvious reasons. It would be highly simplistic to assume that with the ascent of Heinrich in *Empire in Flames* the hatred between the two camps will be healed. I do, however, think that the effects of the civil war will be quite short-lived. The actual fighting clearly continued for no more than a single campaigning season, and the lack of preparation (which would probably have included the levying of new taxes) prevented the large-scale hiring of mercenary units. This means that most soldiers were Imperialist military units, noble's personal retinues or hastily assembled militia or fyrd troops. After the furore has past, most of these would simply return home. Others might be utilised to purge the forests of beastmen and outlaws. The result of the war might in fact be improved economic efficiency, since transportation would be made more secure by these soldiers. Whilst there were clearly a number of hate crimes within regions, there seems to have been relatively little organised slaughter of people from different sects; the actions seem to be more a case of settling old grudges. In many ways, these are simply the continuation of private wars that occur all the time - border raids, family feuds, smuggling, slavery, protection rackets and the like. This means that the long-term repercussions of the civil war would be minimal, and will play little part in the development of future events - with one notable exception. The ascension of a capable Emperor, and one who is apparently rather liberal in his personal ideology, suggests that The Empire might become a more efficient political entity and perhaps a socially fairer one. This needs to be tempered by the innate conservatism of the ruling elites, who would naturally be opposed to

such tendencies, but who are at the same time perhaps a little diminished by the events which surrounded Heinrich's ascension. Whilst the lack of an heir and 2,500 years of tradition might leave Heinrich with little lasting influence, the point here is that GMs need to give consideration to the nature of Heinrich's reign in order to determine the future path of The Empire. There is clearly a parallel possible between Magnus the Pious and Heinrich.

To my mind, worship of Ulric is in terminal decline. The god is not appropriate in a 'civilised' urban and urbane culture, which is what The Empire is steadily progressing towards. In addition, Ulricans do not make good politicians since they are prevented from being duplicitous. This means that in the moral uncertainty of political necessity, they are easily manipulated or outflanked by their enemies. Put bluntly, Ulrican clerics tend to be dominated by a form of dogma and certainty in the permanence of their beliefs that does not find much support within multi-cultural, modern, urban landscapes. This is reflected by the irrelevance of core Ulrican beliefs. Winter and war are not central to modern existence, and, where war is worshipped, the more sophisticated Myrmidia is a much better model for the intelligent wars of the future. Battles will be more about technology and tactics than raw strength, as Old World armies develop gunpowder and artillery, scouting and reconnaissance, strategic warfare and battlefield tactics. Therefore, religious conflicts will be more concerned with which deity fills this gap. Clearly Sigmar hopes to do this, particularly with the use of Saints to absorb local pantheons. In addition, Sigmar was also a noble warrior in a broadly Ulrican mould.

However, there are some for whom Sigmar is a traditional enemy, given the regional nature of his worship. Kislev is a case in point. It is quite possible that southern Kislev admires The Empire, and would not be averse to closer relations, including religious links. Some Sigmarite scholars already believe that parts of the south are in fact Imperial in any event, although in reality border nobles are likely to be inter-married and own lands on both sides of the nominal border, thus confusing matters. They probably send their sons to Imperial universities and trade heavily with the Empire, however. The problem for this region is that this gradual secession will not be to the liking of the tsar, who sees the region as his, nor to the cult of Ulric, which will retain a strong hold in Kislev for the foreseeable future. This is due to a mixture of conservatism, backwardness and the importance of winter and the wolf to Kislevite traditions and everyday life. Thus, it is quite likely that there might be a break within Kislev, and a move by the south towards The Empire. This would be opposed by Kislev and the tsar, and could lead to war between The Empire and Kislev. It is unlikely that Kislev could win, unless



something quite astounding happens to either country. The remaining vestiges of Ulrican power within The Empire might temper this conflict - it is possible that Nordland and Talabecland inter alia might be uncomfortable with such expansion, particularly when the likely gains would be for Ostland and Ostermark. A strong Emperor or well-judged political compact would be required to satisfactorily complete such a move.

Another possibility for the survival of Kislev concerns the next tsar. Tsar Bokkha is portrayed as little better than Emperor Karl-Franz, though it would appear that he was a very young and able military leader when he ascended the throne. In fact he could currently be no more than 21, according to the timeline, and yet was lauded by the military and has since scared the priesthood into acquiescence<sup>1</sup>. Something appears to have happened in the 37 years of his reign. *Something Rotten in Kislev* clearly describes a Kislev that is no longer a nation - the Wheatlands are in open revolt or have been evacuated (depending upon which page of SRiK one assumes to be correct), but so too is Bolgasgrad, the only major settlement within the Kislevite heartland<sup>2</sup> outside of Kislev. It is very doubtful that any future tsar, however powerful, could depose Sulring Durgul, who is an immortal (and invincible) sorcerer. The loss of the Kislev heartland is, in my view, economic death for the idea of Kislev as a nation. On the other hand, WFB gives us the Tsar's daughter (Je)Katarin, the Ice Queen, who is clearly a powerful character and perhaps capable of military rejuvenation. Given the nature of WFB, it is open to discussion as to whether the Ice Queen is simply a powerful sorceress, or also an excellent tactician and/or capable politician. Either way, it is unlikely that anyone will have the ability to bring the various colonies back to the fold, defeat Durgul and keep The Empire from invading in addition to holding back any further chaos raiding incursions. It is possible that Durgul can be negotiated with, but since he openly worships chaos and utilises Undead, it seems highly unlikely that this can be done with the acquiescence of any cult - particularly the powerful Ulric and M6rr.

As a sorceress, the new ruler's relationship with the Cult of Ulric is likely to be strained (at best), and this might offer an alternative political future should she turn her back on the old state religion. It is unlikely that she would seek to join The Empire, but stronger ties with Norsca might be possible depending upon one's position on the Cult of Olric. In WFB, Katarin utilises *Ice Magic*, and this has its roots in its own Shamanistic tradition. It seems to me (from his picture in *Something Rotten in Kislev*) that the Tsar is not of Norscan descent but of Gospodar heritage (another *Something Rotten in Kislev* inconsistency); this might also be utilised as an interesting development. Since *Ice Magic* has its roots within Gospodar culture, as suggested by Tuomas Pirinen's excellent Kislev army list in early Citadel Journals, this offers an interesting alternative for a Kislev racked by civil war between the racial groups.

A similar expansion of the Sigmarite faith might drive Imperial expansion into the Border Princes.

As a disjointed and fractious territory, there is likely to be minimal resistance - at least initially. Some states are also described as satellites of The Empire already. However, there is unlikely to be much economic gain from such a move. Much more wealthy land could easily be found within The Empire by converting forest to agricultural land. It would be much more economically sensible to simply set up new settlements within the forest rather than embarking upon a military campaign into the Border Prince Kingdoms. However, this peaceful alternative might not satisfy the religious aims for expansion. Such Imperial aggression might involve Tilea, fearing both the expansion of the Sigmarite faith and The Empire's political ambitions. If this is the case, then GMs might decide that they would enjoy having international spy rings operating in the Border Princes, developing something similar to Shanghai in the 1930s or Sweden or Portugal during the Second World War. Expansion into Lustria and the Southlands would be equally interesting to the Cult of Sigmar, but this is likely



only to occur within a longer timeframe, and only if other nations prove it to be viable and worthwhile. Simply retaining the likes of Leopoldheim might even be deemed irrelevant, given their expansionist aims elsewhere. It seems to me that the existence of Leopoldheim ignores the continental expansion possible to The Empire, and that politicians, clerics and economists have plenty of more viable expansionist opportunities to the north, west and east without having to embark upon sea journeys. As a piece of 'landgrab', swept along in a mad rush of opportunism, such areas are plausible, but strategic necessity will force the Imperial powers that be to look at these settlements more rationally over the medium term.

The Old World is likely to see a liberalisation in economics and social structures as old religions like that of Ulric fade away. Not only has the church of Sigmar shown great adaptability, but the god Handrich is also likely to become an important part of these events. Many will no doubt see the rise in prosperity linked to this god, and this also (of course) brings Marienburg greater significance as a portal to some of this wealth. I suspect importing luxuries through this one route will decline in importance over time, but in the short run the city will be central to future events. Notwithstanding some of the propaganda found in *Marienburg: Sold Down the River*, it is clear that a city with no walls or army is unlikely to remain

independent for long, however good its politics. The question is, what will happen to the city? The simplest response is that a rejuvenated Empire will conquer it. Given the poor defences of the city, its reliance upon the Sea Elves and Bretonnia as a balance to Imperial ambitions is doomed to failure in the medium term. Since the Laurelorn Wood Elves are a part of The Empire, there is presumably room for a diplomatic agreement with other groups of Elves, and there are many nobles who would happily see the city sacked if they were able to make sure that certain merchants there - and their records - were destroyed. This is the neatest and simplest option, tempered by the ability of The Empire to carry out its attack and its political desires to the north as well. However, it seems to me that a wily Marienburg response, linked to the expansion of Handrich, is to embrace re-incorporation into the Imperialist confederation - but on its own terms. Marienburg is clearly in a position to join a number of states within The Empire in a trade bloc that will neatly balance the Sigmarite Reikland and the Ulrican northland, hopefully replacing the latter. Culturally, Marienburg clearly remains close to The Empire, particularly when compared with its other neighbour, Bretonnia. This might lead to some fragmentation within The Empire, as a new region emerges incorporating Carroburg, the northern ports of Neues Emskrank, Norden and Salkalten, and perhaps even Erengard. All of these towns would benefit from the new religious dominance of Handrich, although this would inevitably bring them into conflict with Sigmarites and Ulricans. This conflict would, in part, be religious, but there would also be political overtones - with the Sigmarites, who wouldn't want 'special cases' complicating their unified Empire, and with the Ulricans, who would lose some of their Northern influence as this new region emerges. The key issue here is the influence of Handrich and the liberalisation of trade. Marienburg merchants would make money whether goods are landed in Marienburg, Norden or Erengard. This, of course, might stir up problems within the city, since Marienburg merchants making money in Erengard does not generate jobs for Marienburgers. It would also become plausible for Marienburg financial interests to involve their sticky fingers (and thus the influence of Handrich) in Kislevite colonies in the Trans-Lynsk and Wheatlands (all going cheap!), Lustria and the Southlands.

Thus far, we have covered religious and economic changes. Further trouble lies behind our third tendency. With the rise of urbanisation, massive (relative) poverty is generated. This injustice will be given voice, and support, by urban deities such as Shallya and Ranald. To some extent, there will be dissension between these two, but this dissension will be overshadowed by the increasing gulf between the pair, the traditional rural gods of the nobility and the narrow interests of the deities of the merchant and bourgeois elites. The future is a time of the towns, and the worship of Shallya and Ranald will lead to increasingly open competition and disagreement with the gods of the status quo. This disagreement will work its way northwards from Tilea and Estalia, but will also explode in cities like Marienburg as a reaction

<sup>1</sup> I'm afraid this strikes me as one of many inconsistencies in SRiK. Tsar Radif Bokkha is assumed to be an important military figure by the age of 21 (and this assumes that "in his fifties" means 59) and yet has become a bungling incompetent by 2512, whose armies have proven unable to win a war. At the very least, I would suggest this offers an intriguing plot hook for games set in current Kislev.

to the rise of the antithesis to both deities - Handrich. The point here is that rural poverty is a different concept to this newer urban poverty, with the old kind based upon traditional birthrights and feudal obligation. In the towns and cities, traditional social ties are being replaced by contractual obligations, and the poverty this creates for the poor is not accepted so easily.

A similar problem concerns the position of the Guilds. Whilst they would appear to side with Handrich, their position on the worship of this god would not necessarily be quite so simple. A rise in free trade and the spread of urbanisation would tend to attack the positions of the guilds, both economically and socially. Where guilds are powerful they control the demand for services, since guild structures are unable to vary supply greatly. Guilds prefer high cost, limited demand items. Opening up trade would undermine this. In addition, the large number of under-employed workers created by urbanisation leads to illegal labour, whereby people will work for non-guild employers who can thus offer cheaper products in greater quantity. There are three main ways in which this theme could be developed:

- (a) Handrich suffers a similar division as other faiths, in terms of alternative belief systems. Some worship the god almost as an aspect of personal greed, others as a tool of spreading a new economic order, whilst a third group use his worship to bolster the existing economic infrastructures.
- (b) Trade is developed as an aspect (or Saint) of other religious groups. For example, Sigmarites might approve the use of free trade as a means of carrying out their expansionist policies and as part of a national 'economic race' - to sell more goods to Lustria than the Bretonnians. At the same time, other Sigmarites would want tariffs imposed to defend domestic trade from foreign imports.
- (c) Handrich becomes a political god for those who do not believe in the ideal of the 'one-nation state', and is utilised in order to lend legitimacy to those who seek to recreate themselves as powerful independent figures with control over their own lands. These powerful private figures would amass their own personal fiefdoms - with vassals, workers, factories and the like. This aspect of Handrich would then seek to create a powerful patrician ruling class, each with their own personal fiefdoms. In some nations, this might simply reflect existing political units, but elsewhere it might cause internal disputes and war.

Brettonnia is a much under-rated nation, particularly with regard to its interest in Marienburg, an issue that the city has used to counterbalance The Empire's desire to regain their 'lost' lands. However, Brettonnia's actual desire to attempt to seize the city and force a confrontation with The Empire is perhaps less real than imagined. The Bretonnian nobility seems much less interested in political expansion than their Imperial counterparts, and much less likely to be able to achieve it. The superficially united nation is in actually much more fragmented than its leaders would have foreigners believe - as described in WFRP. I also suspect that the rise of

working class unrest in Brettonnia, as described above, is likely to be tempered by the fact that the country will remain primarily rural for far longer than The Empire, and has less popular support for Shallya and Ranald. The spa at Couronne, for example, probably serves the elites as a spa town rather than the downtrodden poor deserving of pity and mercy. However, Brettonnia is also less likely to gain the economic benefits achievable by The Empire through its industrial expansion, and will continue to suffer from rural poverty and under-development. Something to cause a sudden change in demographics - plague, say, or peasant emigration to industrial jobs in The Empire - will hit feudal Brettonnia very hard indeed. It seems probable that Brettonnia will be largely focussed on its internal politics and retaining the status quo. Faith in the rural and noble ideals of traditional deities will be affected by the spread of a more egalitarian forms of worship of Shallya and Ranald, whilst new commercialism will spread the faith of Handrich, Manaan and Verena, alongside the spread of Myrmidia and her modern warfare.



The existing faiths will do well if they can control these tendencies. In the longer term, a Revolution along the lines of that in France would certainly be a sensible option, as the elite attempt to maintain their out-of-date ideals. If Brettonnia did decide to pursue military or political expansion, its simplest course would be to expand towards Estalia and Tilea to the south, particularly Bilbali and northern Estalia.

Estalia and Tilea are little mentioned within official WFRP material, which makes any prediction based upon current events almost impossible. The Bretonnian interest in northern Estalia has already been mentioned. In terms of expansion, Estalia is unlikely to reverse this idea and look to invade Brettonnia, nor is Tilea likely to pre-empt Imperial expansion into the Border Prince Kingdoms. The most likely expansion would be the development of colonies within Lustria and the Southlands. However, the individual identity of particular cities and the defence of local deities are likely to be the primary motivation for change within this region. Personally, I think that *Marienburg: Sold Down the River* overstates the power of that city and underplays the trading status of these two regions. Conflict around trade and the relative powers of deities seems feasible.

Information on Norsca is even sparser, and I can find little to use in a prediction as to its future. The way in which the Old World was created tends to leave some of the main conflicts in world history as impossible (such as the Baltic Crusades) or already covered within game history (the Outremer Crusades, the Vikings and other great human migrations). It seems unlikely that Norscans will return to their successful raids upon the coast of The Empire, though their devotion to Ulric might suggest some form of alliance with Kislev as part of that god's last defiant stand.

The Hobgoblin Hegemony, is to my mind, one of the most intriguing possibilities within WFRP, being a 'monster culture', and not one located many miles over the sea. This is likely to continue to be a thorn in the side of Kislev, and needs to be linked to the position of that nation. Whether the Hegemony pushes westward or Imperial advances push Kislev eastward, interaction is likely to be military. The Hegemony offers an obvious parallel to the Mongols and can be used in the same way - a westward moving killing machine, the enemy of all civilisation, but ignored by squabbling and short-sighted western powers. Of course, the Old World has many such 'invincible' enemies, including chaos generally and the Chaos Dwarfs in particular. It might be more interesting to develop the Hegemony into a Prester John kingdom - a 'friendly' power willing to deal in the west's fight against chaos. This is particularly relevant if GMs base their campaign around the concept of a new Incurion. At the same time, a less grand possibility is for the abandoned Wheatland Colonies in Kislev to seek the protection of the Hegemony from Chaos Dwarf and goblin attacks. Humans freely serving as vassals to hobgoblins would make an intriguing idea to throw at players.

Dwarfs and Elves are likely to be covered within the relevant sourcebooks, but both races are clearly on the decline and have limited ability to engage in any pro-active measures. Defence of the status quo and retreat into their traditional faiths is likely the interests of both parties. However, some Dwarfs will, without doubt, harbour designs on regaining lost holds, and they might eventually seek human help in doing so. Mercenary bands can be hired, but an alliance with a major power is probably necessary - and that suggests The Empire. However, given the outline presented here it seems unlikely that they will have the resources to spare or the interest to help their allies. After all, Dwarfs have had little to do with helping The Empire defend its northern frontier from Gospodar and Ungol Kislevites for the last thousand years (At least, there has been no mention of them doing so), so why should The Empire help them now? Depending upon exactly where the Dwarfs decide to commence their campaign, they might develop unusual alliances within Kislev and the Border Princes. Even more outlandish, the Hegemony might be (politically or as mercenaries) interested in a two-fronted attack upon the Chaos Dwarfs, goblins and other unsavoury types within the north-eastern regions of the Worlds Edge Mountains. Of course, this assumes that GMs wish to transcend the fairly simplistic treatment that Dwarfs seem to receive. There is nothing wrong per se in dealing with a lesser evil in order

to destroy a greater one, as certain Dwarfs would realise. Dwarfs have not survived the millennia by living as the monochromatic stereotypes that have been produced to date. Internal Dwarf schisms can be created as a background to such alternatives. Dwarf Wars has already examined this break from the uniform, and religious divisions can be utilised between the pro-human and more traditional camps. Whilst no official sanction has been granted for the idea, it seems likely that some holds live with humans as fellow inhabitants and would be much more flexible in their choice of allies for their eternal struggle to defend and reclaim their homeland.

The initial development of the Dark Elf of Naggaroth revolved around the overthrow of the old Slaaneshi elite and their replacement with Khorne as the official religion, heralding Dark Elf expansionism - particularly towards Ulthuan. This follows a trend within later Games Workshop releases to generate battles that would boost figure sales. Whilst the idea of military nations bent on expansion has merit, it is far too common for my tastes, resulting in large numbers of powerful forces moving in upon the civilised (non-chaos) nations. Chaos is best left as the enemy within, and as a distant fear beyond the borders of 'civilised' nations. Nonetheless, both the Badlands and Darklands offer intriguing areas for powerful enemies to be rumoured about as they slowly build their strength, engage in civil war or push goblins or Dwarfs slowly towards civilised human lands.

The New World offers some scope for investigation into the colonies of Lustria. Just as European powers sought imperial colonies abroad, the Old World powers might seek fame or valuable resources in Lustria. However, such adventuring will likely be short-lived. Firstly, there are no gold deposits or slaves to pillage, and so no economic return is likely on such risky investment. Secondly, as described above, many nations would be more interested in obtaining (or defending) lands within their own continent. Religious expansion into Lustria is difficult, given the paucity of creatures to convert, and the gods of Lustria are powerful in their own right and likely to take a dim view of intruders. Given our lack of information on Lustria within official material, and indeed on the Southlands too, it is difficult to predict future developments. The alien nature of Lustria suggests that Old World faiths have much more promising targets closer to home for their dreams of expansion.

It is worth commenting that current Games Workshop material about the New World seems to have reversed some of this information, so that it is likely that deposits of gold, copper and silver, and the availability of hardwood and spices would make excellent commercial investments and hence warrant expansion. GMs utilising this background will need to develop the exploration and attempted colonisation with much more fervour. In this case a clash of the predominantly Lawful gods of Lustria with the more flexible gods within the Old World offers seriously world-altering developments.

Finally, I have said little of the chaos cults, which are core to the ideas first developed within *The Enemy Within* campaign. It is important to

recognise that these are not simply bad guys hanging around until the PCs turn up, but groups of motivated individuals working to achieve some purpose. Whilst some groups might not develop much beyond arranging the date for their next orgy or poisoning a well (and themselves at the same time), cultists should be developed with their own long-term aims. The most intriguing development for this discussion would be for them to develop strategies linked to the above plots, particularly the corruption of official sects of mainstream cults. Rather than have Nurgle followers die of self-inflicted diseases, use them to infiltrate Physicians' Guilds and certain sects of the Cult of Shallya and develop their own research into the nature of disease. In my own campaign, a group of Nurgle followers are investigating 'positive' diseases that make humans 'superior', in a reflection of contemporary arguments concerning genetic manipulation and the 'improvement' of our species. Similar ideas could be developed for other cults. Slaanesh needs to move away from simple sexual cavorting, and towards the pursuit of excesses in all things - gluttony, miserhood and the like. This offers some common cause that could lead to the exploitation of the more selfish aspects of Handrich. Tzeentch is perhaps best left alone for a while, being very heavily used in official material, but is clearly an excellent source for the manipulation of any of this material. Finally, Khorne is always a difficult god to understand, being a very 'obvious' chaos danger but rather too shallow for role-play purposes.

### Summary

The Empire is set to expand, with options for new land including Kislev, Marienburg, the Border Prince Kingdoms and the New World. Whatever is chosen, GMs should seek to ensure that border regions are maintained as areas of conflict, full of raids, brigandage and internecine rivalry. Expansion of belief in Sigmar within and outside The Empire is likely to continue, overcoming political and military obstacles as it does so. At the same time, this move towards a single powerful faith will be obstructed by those whose own interests are also being developed. Merchant interests will increase support for Handrich, but also Verena, as trade needs uniform codes of law, and Manaan, if sea travel increases with global trade. Meanwhile the urban poor's restlessness will support Shallya and Ranald. Military expansion of The Empire offers interesting insights into the martial aspects of Sigmar, Ulric and Myrmydia which offers additional avenues for religious conflict.

Kislev will find itself the last bastion of the worship of Ulric, and will fight in its defence against The Empire. To many, this will simply be seen as aggression by The Empire as it attempts to seize southern Kislev, or perhaps even as a civil war within Kislev. To Kislevites, Ulric is their national identity, and this will be viewed as a patriotic war of defence. Kislev is also likely to face pressure from both the north and the east, as it continues its internal fragmentation. However, it might receive some support from Norsca.

Marienburg's independence is doomed, but whether through conquest or alliance, the rise of

Handrich-led free trade will maintain the importance of the city, and perhaps make it a base for a merchant faction of Imperial states. Both Manann and Verena might also increase in influence on the back of this movement. At the same time, the urban Shallya and Ranald will find themselves far more powerful in their representation of the ordinary worker - particularly within those trade centres, and especially in Marienburg.

Brettonia is more conservative and is likely to be dominated by attempts to retain its traditional concepts of nobility and faith. As such it may become a last bastion for Taal and so have some common cause with Kislev, although this is unlikely to lead to military support.

Tilea and Estalia will find much of the north adopting their faiths. Handrich and Verena might not appeal in quite the same way in these nations, but increased free trade will benefit both nations, as they continue to maintain their commercial importance. At some stage this might lead to political conflict with Marienburg (whether dominated or a lead within a confederated Empire), but the expansion of Handrich, Verena and Manaan should limit the scope for Sigmarite expansion here.

For the rest, much is left to individual GMs. The Hegemony offers arguably the most intriguing options for campaign development, whilst chaos should generally be allowed to fade into memory a little and be retained more as a figure of fear in the night and for cultists within. Corruption forms a major part of the world, but it is much more interesting when used with discretion.

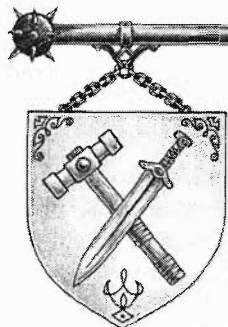
Notwithstanding this, however, most campaigns are likely to move towards a cataclysmic finale of some sort, reflecting the power-play of the assorted divinities. The rise and fall of individual gods is nothing compared to the power of the forces of chaos, both in mass and as influences upon indigenous beliefs. Nurgle and Shallya, Ulric and Khorne, Sigmar and Tzeentch all have common aspects and aspirations, albeit diametrically opposed. This might form a useful paradigm to develop chaos wars in a slightly less blatant fashion.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to develop existing threads into a possible future, along which GMs can develop their campaigns. These threads are by no means exclusive, and often assume that another does not exist. The contradictions inherent in this will give rise to much of the political, economic and military conflict in the future - and also the uncertainties that PCs might help to develop along a particular route. The point is to encourage the GM to develop some overall idea for how the world is developing, so that NPCs in the background will be acting towards these as their lives mingle with those of the PCs. PCs are a small, if important, part of the world and things happen without them. Moreover, chaos is only a part of what is happening in the Old World - and it is probably ignored by most of those creating these plans. Therefore, whilst much remains to be decided, the material above offers a framework for developing the Old World beyond 2512 IC.

# GUILDS WITHIN THE EMPIRE

By Tim Eccles



Outlining guilds within the Old World assists GMs in further developing the cultural milieu of WFRP. Guilds as they stand are sketchily mentioned in a couple of scenarios and in the career descriptions of coachmen, beggars, engineers, artisans and merchants, amongst others. There is also a Secret Language (Guilder) skill, and an optional Covert version (*Warpstone 11*).

Detailing guilds is useful as a background, for scenarios, and also as a source of help or hindrance to PCs. Later articles will focus upon individual guilds and examine them as membership organisations for PCs and NPCs, as adventure seeds and as background material for the Old World.

## The Guild

A guild is an organisation whose members are recognised as qualified within a specialist field. The guild serves two purposes: to protect the interests of its members, and to protect the interests of their clients. Its goal is to ensure a minimum standard of competence within that field by allowing only member-trained individuals to undertake work, thus guarding against “quacks”, “cowboys” and the unskilled. Less formally, the guild seeks to ensure continued work for its members by controlling both the supply and demand for its work. In this way, it is both a monopoly and monopsony, a feat which requires political support. Small wonder then, that guilds are prevalent in decision-making structures, from members found on town councils to their rank and file attending appropriate meetings. In extreme situations, more direct action, such as a demonstrations, strikes or riots, is necessary but normally guilds want to maintain social stability and are far removed from radical politics. In any case, guilds are extremely important domestic influences within the Old World: through direction of their members they try to control the supply of goods and services, and through their influence on town councils, the demand for goods and services from public expenditure. Both are needed. Guilds are very conservative and unable to respond to rapid fluctuations. Therefore they need to maintain a steady demand at about the level of its current membership’s output capabilities. Since most demand is likely to come from the temples, the nobility and state bureaucracies - as they have all the wealth - co-operation with these institutions is essential.

A guild operates under a hierarchical membership structure. At the top are the *Masters*, who are employers and business owners in their

own right, as well as experts in their specialism. Next are the *journeymen* who are at various levels of training, and hoping to become masters themselves. Finally there are the *apprentices*, who are officially indentured trainees, but in reality are often little more than unpaid servants. An apprentice’s family usually pays for the privilege. It is important to note that *in theory* a guild is an upwardly-mobile educational process; the future masters are



the current apprentices. However, in reality, the existing masters limit the creation of new masters to replace retiring members. This is partially to ensure that the organisation grows by organic evolution, rather than revolution, but mostly to ensure the existing masters and their families retain control. Guilds walk a tight line between maintaining the status quo, and appearing to promote their journeymen on ability and time served. This is obviously a concern for journeymen, who will worry over when or if they will be promoted, and will be a source of internal strife. The journeymen have a number of alternatives. They could *try* and sue for advancement or create their own co-operative (or union), but it is more likely that they will leave and set up elsewhere. Of course, this requires the permission of the guild where they are hoping to settle. Journeymen are thus excellent targets for those attempting to establish new settlements within The Empire and its hinterland, such as the Border Princes, for there are no guilds to worry about there.

## The Professions

There are certain technical differences between a guild and a professional institute, but these are irrelevant to WFRP. Therefore, wizards, physicians and pharmacists can be deemed to operate in guilds in essentially the same way as the merchants, pedlars and stevedores.

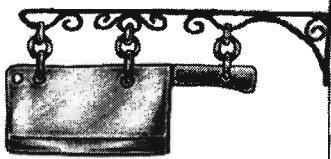
## Historical Guilds

It is worth stressing the importance of two characteristics which guilds must possess

- A trade of some description. This is primarily concerned with some form of manufacture, better termed craft. However, WFRP includes knowledge-based professions.
- A monopoly. Trade in the Middle Ages was concerned almost completely with the creation, sale and maintenance of monopolies. Rulers gained large sources of their income from the sale of such monopolies to individual businessmen. Guilds must be seen as part of this process. They are concerned with helping create and maintain the environment for the maintenance of monopolistic control.

## Fantasy Guilds

The most obvious fantastical guilds are those for thieves, assassins and beggars. These are discussed in the section on illegal guilds, and are also covered in *Warpstone 11*. But a guild PCs will be interested in joining, or even forming, is one for Adventurers. However, such an institution would have problems with legitimacy and membership. The Empire is already cluttered with fighting orders of inquisition, templars, witch hunters, together with other guilds and an assortment of covert organisations. Is there a need for what is, by its very nature, a relatively independent and loose-knit structure? A GM would have to be convinced that the Emperor would see some profit for sanctioning such an organisation. On the other hand, there are a number of Mercenary and Free Companies operating throughout the Old World (examples are The Grudgebringers in *Shadow of the Horned Rat* and *Dark Omen*, and those found in the *Dogs of War* WFB Army book and in *White Dwarf*). An Adventurers’ Guild could simply offer another form of regulating these. It is unlikely to exhibit typical guild characteristics, but the possible benefits could make the attempt worthwhile. Still, it seems unlikely that there are enough



adventurers in the Old World to form a guild. The rules clearly stress that adventurers (the PCs) are unusual in that they are both favoured by the gods (with Fate Points, for example), and fated to see the world differently than most, as

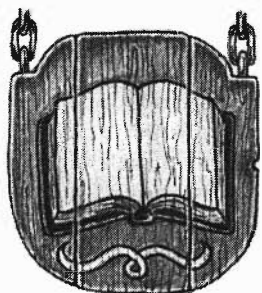
they desire to escape an ordinary life. An Adventurers' Guild depends upon the existence of an accepted adventuring career. Whilst there may be a number of adventurer-types trawling the Old World for work, they are not (currently) formally organised or numerous. Players will have to be particularly creative to make such an institution happen.

One universally important fantasy guild is the Merchants' Guild. In reality, there was no single community of merchants. Merchants would tend to be specialised within particular trades, and operate within those guilds. The idea of a Merchants' Guild is actually rather problematic. On the one hand, the guild would apparently try and control the sale of goods and services within its particular region, whilst at the same time its members would be dealing with their own individual trade in other regions in competition with the members of other Merchants' Guilds. Of course, a Merchants' Guild is extremely useful as a focus of wealth, power and corruption to set adventures around, but within an integrated Old World trading economy, it is rather tautological. The most obvious purpose for a Merchants' Guild would be as a national confederation, serving the interests of merchants of the entire country by negotiating at a national level the waiving of duties for home merchants, and the imposition of tariffs upon foreigners. Within the Old World, and The Empire in particular, this seems rather unlikely. It would be rather ironic given the political, social and economic fragmentation of The Empire, if its merchants were to be found co-operating on a nationalistic level.

### Warhammer Guilds

*Shadows over Bøgenhafen* provides a description of the political power of the guilds within The Empire. *Middenheim: City of Chaos* [pp17-18] provides a clear description of how guilds function within Middenheim and the rest of The Empire.

The following guilds could exist within The Empire. Most will operate an office in towns and cities, though many might be seasonal or part-time. In addition, where centres of production or materials are found in villages, they too will have a branch. Friendly guilds might share a secretariat to reduce costs. Alternately, the guild facility might simply be the residence of the leading guildsmen. In addition to the formal organisation, most of the guilds manage regional societies. These might be simple social organisations, economic, and/or more sinister in nature. Guilds in the Old World are concerned with large amounts of power and wealth, and depend upon the restraint of trade, the control of monopolies by certain elites and the furtherance of their own members. They have immense resources to support these far-impacting goals.



Armourers' Guild: consists of those who manufacture arms and armour.

Artillerists, Guild of: rather more an officers' club than a true guild, but it enables its members to obtain mercenary work. It is antagonistic towards the Guild of Gunners and has one office, in Altdorf.

Artisans' Guild: provides membership for a confederation of artisans, not numerous enough to form their own organisations. It includes Calligraphers and Engravers from the WFRP career list. The guild also acts as a secretariat for a number of smaller guilds in the regions.

Barber' Guild: Within the Old World, the barber is a mixture of surgeon, dentist and cutter of hair. Barbers are excluded from the Physicians' Guild, but carry out much of the physical labour involved in surgery. They are the ones who get their hands 'dirty'. Many barbers are called *Surgeon-Barbers*.

Beggars' Guild: concerned with ensuring that all beggars are licensed and providing support for genuine hardship cases. The guild is effectively controlled by those who need some form of outlet for injured members, and represents a means of controlled charity to keep the poor under control. Most of the members are retired military, since much of the membership consists of maimed soldiers. The guild is unusual in that its Masters are not better qualified than the members are; they are not beggars, although some have retired through injury. An alternative structure can be found in Talabheim, and is detailed within *Warpstone 17*.

Blacksmiths, Guild of: eponymous

Brewers, Guild of: eponymous. Some of the more prosperous regions have adopted a rather more prosaic title, the Guild of Vittalers, and have expanded their business beyond simple brewing.

Builders, Guild of: consists unsurprisingly of builders, but is antagonistic towards the Stonemasons' Guild. This is because it welcomes all skilled building tradesmen of repute, and does not accept the previously pre-eminent position of the stonemasons within the building process.

Carpenters' Guild: eponymous

Cartwrights' Guild: consists of those who make carts.

Chandlers' Guild: consists of those who make candles.

Charlatans: will no doubt use guilds, existing or faked, as they use everything else.

Cobblers' Guild: consists of those who make and repair footwear.

Coopers, Guild of: consists of those who make casks and barrels.

Duellists' Guild: not a guild in the normal manner, and is usually referred to as The Club for Gentlemen Duellists. It produces the acknowledged handbook upon accepted behaviour and maintains records of its members' exploits and scores. The guild is a relatively secret association, with an Imperial office reputedly located within the University district of Altdorf.

Engineers' Guild: based upon the more eminent Dwarf Engineers' Guild. Its members consist of a variety of civil, mechanical and semi-magical engineers, architects and surveyors. Some of the more commercial alchemists join this guild.

Entertainers' Guild: ensures that only licensed members play the local nightspots and street corners. This is done with the agreement of local authorities who issue permits to "appropriately qualified" entertainers. However, it is also known to employ heavies to police their rules.

Explorers, Guild of: part of the University of Altdorf and acts as an archive for discoveries, and a meeting place for members. It is a discrete division of the Imperial Geographical Society. The guild ensures that appropriately qualified personnel head expeditions, and

that their members are assured leadership of all major projects.

Glassworkers' Guild: for Glass Makers (artisans).

Gunners, Guild of: similar to the artillerists guild. It is rather more an officers' club than a true guild, but enables its members to obtain mercenary work. Antagonistic towards the Guild of Artillerists. Has one office, in Nuln.

Goldsmiths' Guild: eponymous, currently in competition with the Jewellers and Silversmiths for control of the infant banking industry.

Jewellers, Guild of: eponymous, currently in competition with the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths for control of the infant banking industry

Labourers' Guild: Middenheim: *City of Chaos* [p17] states that many of these exist, but proceeds to describe the Teamsters' and Cartwrights' guilds. Their members no doubt took great exception to this description, and discussed the issue rather forcefully with Herr Sargent and the other authors. In reality, a simple Labourers' Guild is more akin to a job agency than a genuine guild, and serves the purpose of making sure that only reliable workers are taken on in even the most basic duties. Reliable, of course, means pliable. Simple labourers have no skill with which they can define themselves a trade, and such guilds are an attempt by either the ruling elite or an underworld elite to control the unskilled and unwashed.

Lawyers, Society of: effectively the guild for lawyers. However, the legal profession claims that its members are public servants, and not members of self-serving trade associations, and so their organisation works under a number of different titles. Middenheim is alone, in that it is indeed known there as the Worshipful *Guild of Legalists*.

Locksmiths' Guild: eponymous

Merchants' Guild: *Middenheim: City of Chaos* [p18] offers a simple account.

Millers' Guild: eponymous

Milliners' Guild: consists of those who make women's hats.

Peddlers' Guild: unusual in that it has its strongest representation within the villages and small towns frequently overlooked by the Merchants' Guild. The two are frequently antagonistic, although in certain towns the Merchants' Guild hosts a secretariat for the Peddlars' Guild. This is because they are usually seen as too small for concern, and rarely compete with merchants. Indeed, there are some merchants who deal solely with peddlars, as they sell wholesale, breaking up bulk orders for the smaller traders.

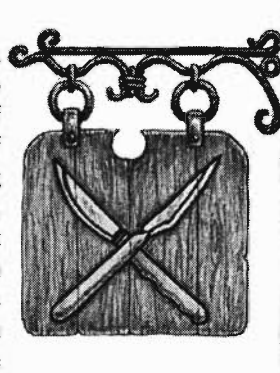
Pilots, Guild of: ensures that only competent pilots are employed in the dangerous business of guiding ships into port.

Physicians' Guild: There is an important cultural distinction throughout the Old World between the 'physician' and the 'surgeon-barber'. Physicians practice medicine, a theoretical body of knowledge involving an understanding of the body, its humours and its ailments, based upon classical theories of the body and health. Physicians carry out an intellectual discipline, and are not involved in actual surgery work. Indeed, most surgeons are excluded from the guild and are members of the Barbers' Guild. The guild is also sometimes referred to as the College of Physicians, typifying its academic approach to the subject, and is linked to appropriate university departments. Pharmacists are also regarded as junior members of the guild, with separate membership criteria and rewards.

Potters' Guild: eponymous

Printers' Guild: eponymous

Public Works Guild: acts partly as a local authority regulator, but also to maintain guild control in all areas of public life. This includes a variety of unsavoury trades including gravediggers, rat catchers, executioners, jailers and torturers. It is also organised in agreement with local cults. For example, the guild is affiliated with the Cult of Mórr in most regions of The Empire, because of its work with burials. In areas where Verena, Sigmar or Ulric are either politically important or heavily involved in legal matters, much of the work of jailer, torturer and executioner members is carried out in accordance with cult agreements.



Rivermen, Guild of: due to the temporary and trans-regional nature of their work, this is one of the most unified guilds within The Empire. Wherever they end up, released boatmen will find help from their local guild.

Sea Captains, Guild of: open to both navigators and sea captains.

Shipwrights' Guild: consists of those who build ships.

Silversmiths' Guild: eponymous, currently in competition with the Goldsmiths and Jewellers for control of the infant banking industry

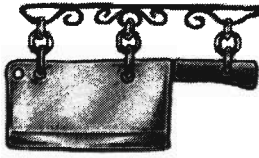
Stevedore Guild: quasi-trade union, but very much an ally of the Merchants' Guild. It maintains a monopoly through political control of work. For example, much of its work is done via portage arrangements enforced by the local authority. Most Empire cities refuse entry to carts on the grounds of controlling the mess created by draft animals and the relatively narrow size of streets and gates [the latter usually for deliberate defensive reasons]. Therefore, merchants have to have their carts unloaded at the city gates. The carts are stored in caravanserais outside the gates, and the goods carried to bonded warehouses by Stevedore Guild members, or loaded onto smaller carts driven by Teamster Guild members. The process works in reverse when merchants leave the city. A similar pattern is followed by river traffic. Most cities build bridges to prevent the passage of large boats. Therefore, a boat has to be unloaded, and the cargo transferred to a boat on the other side of the bridge. Again Stevedore Guild members (known as lighters) carry out the transfer. Larger cities might also have winches for transferring the boat itself. Theft from cargoes being transferred is endemic, and merchants expect a loss of around 10% of a transferred load; however, theft during transfer is a capital offence. Those caught are chained to the riverbank and left to drown. As can be seen, the building of a bridge, or widening of a gate, can have enormous economic consequences and will thus be major political decisions. PCs could be caught in a riot to prevent the demolition of a bridge - or hired by a merchant to blow one up.

Stonemasons' Guild: sometimes referred to as the Masons' Guild. It is antagonistic towards the Builders' Guild.

Tailors, Guild of: eponymous

Tanners' Guild: consists of those





involved in making leather.

**Teamsters' Guild:** quasi-trade union, but very much an ally of the Merchants' Guild. It maintains a monopoly through political control of work, particularly in co-operation with the Stevedores' Guild.

**Witch Hunters, Fraternal Brotherhood of:** similar to a guild in some ways (see *Warpstone 8* and the forthcoming *Best of Warpstone*).

**Wizards' Guild:** includes alchemists and apothecaries. In some poorer regions, it operates as the Guild of Apothecaries whereby membership is a little more flexible. These rural chapters are held in contempt by the more urbane chapters, who can rely upon magic wielding members to increase their status.

### Titles

Because of the functional nature of the Imperial bureaucracy, and the pragmatic needs for immediate visibility by the guilds, all guilds are titled either "— Guild" or "the Guild of —". This is, of course, rather boring, and some have adopted other titles. However, this can cause problems to an illiterate and provincial population, who are indoctrinated to recognise the concept of "the guild".

### Running the Guilds: General Notes

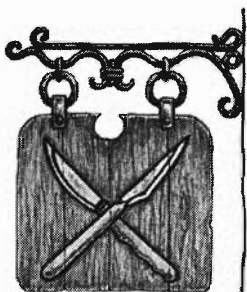
There are a number of characteristics that are useful for GMs to keep in mind.

**Attitude:** Each guild can be played broadly as one of the two idealised types described in the *History* section above, or as some point between the two. The precise make-up of each will differ, especially between regions. Put simply, a guild can either function as a:

1. *Closed shop*, run by existing masters to keep control for themselves. Journeymen must leave the guild and risk estrangement (or worse) in order to set up their own business, and apprentices are little more than cheap labour. Masters have strong political power, and are willing to engage in unsavoury practices to retain it.
2. *Utopian co-operative*, arranging well paid work and good training for members, and with progression through skill and hard work. The guild still needs power to prevent cheaper and less skilful firms undercutting them, but there is a benefit to this in the quality products and happier citizens and employees.

Since this is the Old World, the former is more likely, and places journeymen in a difficult position. Exactly how they proceed depends upon a GM's view of The Empire. Assuming that The Empire is a highly decentralised state, it is unlikely that the same guild will co-operate much across borders. This allows journeymen some chance

of finding a Master-ship in another region. However, only areas desperately short of skilled labour promote this since it is unpopular with other regions (who accuse them of "stealing" trained employees), and it also forms a vicious circle if it encourages all journeymen to curtail their training simply to obtain a Master-ship. However, just as some cities award escaped serfs their freedom if they work under a Master for a year and a day,



so too will some welcome fled journeymen.

**History:** Guilds today are located in urban communities with relatively large and sophisticated markets. This has not always been the case, and early guilds relied on the patronage of churches and nobility. Whilst today's successful merchants and businessmen are frequently at odds with the cults and aristocracy, the early guilds were dependent upon them since they alone had enough wealth to afford work. Most guilds were mobile, as members travelled from region to region serving those who could afford their services. For example, few could afford permanent stone and brick construction and internal plumbing and joinery services except those desiring new (or maintaining existing) castles, temples, manor houses and the like.

Since their early histories are linked to these two institutions, much of the guilds' ceremonial and cultural ideology is linked to this period. New members frequently swear oaths to traditions of which they are ignorant, in words they do not understand. Much iconography is linked to awards by (now forgotten) nobility or cults on which they had depended and fawned over. Therefore, GMs are encouraged to introduce religious and aristocratic colour to the guilds.

**Ancillaries:** Guilds reflect the societies in which they currently operate and their history. They are an integral part of their towns, and take part in annual parades and other festivities. They have social clubs for their members, and perhaps charitable trusts. Many are traditionally linked with local deities; indeed, if a GM has adopted saints into their campaign, guilds will campaign for, and adopt, patrons appropriate for them. Equally, where local deities or spirits are used, these can form a particular association with a guild or an association of guilds. Bögenauer offers one simple example.

**Rank:** Different guilds have different ranks, and this might vary between regions. Indeed, it is quite plausible for guilds to be at war with each other - openly or otherwise - to gain control of a new technology or to force a particular political decision. Some are also on the rise and others going into a terminal decline.

More individually, some guild members are *liveried* and others are not. Masters who regard themselves as successful usually distinguish themselves in two ways. First, they tend not to practice their craft, but to engage in trade; they became superior in their craft, and now employ others to do so. A senior Master in the Goldsmiths' Guild will cease working with gold, and simply buy and sell it, dealing with those who wish to use his banking services. Secondly, they purchase the right to wear their own livery from the Emperor (and possibly regional rulers) and become - at least in their own eyes - members of the aristocracy. Whilst the nobility resent these upstarts, it is true that liveried guild members have greater access to the nobility, and therefore greater opportunities.

There is also rank within guilds based upon the ownership of royal monopolies. For example, those goldsmiths and silversmiths allowed to act as minters for currency are regarded as senior to other guild members. They also adopt imperial or local crests within their own symbols to identify that role.

**Prestige of Membership:** Membership of a guild is likely to confer additional privileges to those of work and trade. Many cities in the Old World will offer varied citizenship and suffrage rights to those living within its boundaries. Guild membership will define one as an upright and honest citizen, and guarantee additional benefits as befits such a station. In addition, senior members are likely to be very wealthy prominent men within The Empire, the sort who can



personally loan funds or act as amateur spies.

### Guild Leaders

Whilst in theory all Masters within a guild might be thought of as equals, this is clearly not the case. In a time when the merchant class is in the ascendant and industrial manufacture is not unknown, some members of the aristocracy will seek to use their inherent privileges to support moves into commerce. These noble merchants will have family and “old money” support. In addition, those who have obtained a royal monopoly or livery are clearly superior. It is too simplistic to simply say that wealth determines one’s position within the guild – but it certainly helps!

GMs might also wish to use certain powerful guild members as important political figures within the Old World. After all, leading Masters have immense personal wealth and vast trade empires. This makes them excellent senior figures in any Emperor’s government. They can utilise their trade contacts for obtaining information (spying to you and me) and their business acumen and wealth for the good of the nation (as Chancellor of the Exchequer).

### Player Characters and Guilds

John Foody has already raised the issue of how PCs treat their careers in *A Job for Life* in *Warpstone* 11 (page 6). As recognised in the article, a problem with the WFRP career system is that it is unclear. Whilst PCs are expected to follow their chosen careers and develop along linear progression routes, they are equally expected to act as adventurers who have turned their backs on the mundane and boring obligations of ordinary life. However, Guilds can still play a part in making PCs play a more realistic role. After all, they will be expected to continue to pay dues, undertake training and carry out their trade. Travelling to new regions will involve registering at the appropriate local house, and possibly being excluded for some reason. PCs will be expected to act in the interests of their guild at all times, and report appropriate matters to their masters.

### Secret Language – Guilder

WFRP offers this secret language to a number of careers without ever describing exactly what it represents. There are two options:

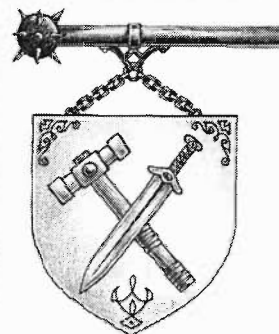
1. It is a business language. This is very simple, but does not distinguish the particular guild flavour of the language.
2. It is a language created as a form of jargon to protect craft secrets and identify fellow members. This option is developed below.

Secret Language - Guilder consists of two elements. The first is a universal basis for confirming social status and the basics of introduction. It is highly rudimentary. The second is more specialised and is concerned with establishing an identity and trust as brothers (or sisters) within a particular guild. It is used to protect both craft secrets (called *mysteries*) and the rituals within guild ceremonies. Therefore, technically, there are two languages, a Guilder (Common) and a Guilder (Particular Trade). A silversmith would have some common terms with a carpenter, enough to prove their identity, but each would be different. However, it is very important to remember that Guilder does not offer a complete language, nor does it operate within normal conversation. One can confirm identity and discuss prices; one cannot speculate upon the Southgate Slammers’ chances in the Snotball Finals or agree the details of the plan to assassinate the Emperor.

### Non-Human Guilds

Generally, non-human societies are structured differently than human ones, and have little need for guilds. Those living in The Empire

might join a relevant professional group, but there is no indication of non-human participation in guilds at an organisational level. The most obvious exception is the Dwarven Engineers’ Guild, which will be discussed next issue. An obvious additional guild might be a (predominantly) Halfling Chef’s Guild, or some similarly culinary-based organisation.



### Illegal Guilds

There are a number of associations that must operate illicitly, for a variety of reasons.

Thieves and assassins are deemed to have societies in WFRP, and these operate in the same basic way in terms of training and control of activities.

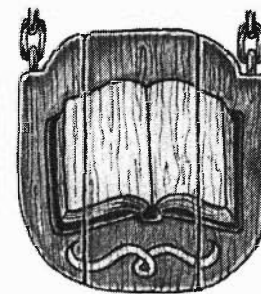
Trade unions as organisations of labour are also effectively guilds. It is another example of the harsh realities of the Old World that merchants are allowed to organise, but ordinary workers are not. The reason that unions are illegal is purely political, as they are perceived (rightly) as a threat to the ruling elite and as a force for social upheaval. Certain labour guilds are allowed for historic reasons, such as those for stevedores and teamsters. However, the GM should be clear that these have strong links with the Merchants’ Guild, and have no interest in fairer pay for ordinary workers, better safety or job protection. They are there to serve the purposes of their leaders and (to some extent) their members.

### Conclusion

The scene is now set for the later articles that describe individual guilds. The important point to note at the moment however is the immense power of the guilds, and the fact that most NPCs are likely to be either members or envious of those who are. To become a guildsman - at whatever level - is to gain social and economic standing. Meanwhile, guilds have expectations of support from their members. Whilst they might not be natural allies of the nobility, guilds will be staunch supporters of the church and Emperor - and anyone who seeks to maintain a centralised control on society. In the case of The Empire with its apparent de-centralised political structure, the guilds will support the divine right of the Emperor and church, whilst extending their own influence in the many town councils that possess localised power.

WFRP is a Renaissance-like world where the importance of the guild structure would be paramount. The Old World is a much more urbane and contractual society than historical feudalism. In other words, Old World citizens are less likely to be serfs bound to a noble, and more likely to be wage labourers drifting between employers. Whether there is one for Adventurers or not, in this environment, guilds are important, as they gradually grow to replace the nobility as the ruling powers.

From next issue we will begin to detail a number of guilds from across The Empire, beginning with the Medical and Engineering Guilds



# NOW, THAT'S WHAT I CALL CHAOS!

An Extended Enemy Within Campaign by Paul Slevin

Some players will just not be happy with a typical campaign, and might even find *The Enemy Within* boring! Others have a justifiable problem with the weak links between adventures. Meanwhile, many GMs try to run the most magnificent and intricate storylines possible. There is lots of WFRP material out there, but how can a GM make it all work together? Simple – by connecting everything into one coherent epic! Not only is this easier than you think, but I'm going to show you how it's done. Even if you don't agree with the way I've done it, I hope it will give you some thoughts on how you can approach a similarly grand vision yourselves.

First the basics. Practically every WFRP product ever produced has details for tying it into one or more of the existing books. Looking through them, we see that the most commonly mentioned is *The Enemy Within*, so this plot will become our base. Our full campaign now runs:

Mistaken Identity (The Enemy Within) - Shadows Over Bögenhafen - Death on the Reik - *Carrion Up The Reik*<sup>1</sup> - *Grapes Of Wrath*<sup>2</sup> - Power Behind the Throne - *Something Rotten in Kislev* - Empire in Flames

From this base we can now include what I'll call Extensions. No, this is nothing to do with buildings. Or hair. It is simply a matter of adding extra encounters (or even whole campaigns) to the base. Good extensions include: The Dying of the Light, Doomstones, Castle Drachenfels, Return of The Lichemaster and Death's Dark Shadow. (The Oldenhaller Contract can also be included here.)

It might make sense, for example, to try and tie this in based on their geographical position, so that the players just happen to find themselves in the right place and the right time. Thus our outline now might look something like this:

*Lichemaster* - Mistaken Identity (The Enemy Within) - Shadows Over Bögenhafen - Death on the Reik - *Dying of the Light* - *Oldenhaller Contract* - *Death's Dark Shadow* - *Carrion Up The Reik* - *Grapes Of Wrath* - Power Behind the Throne - *Doomstones* - *Castle Drachenfels* - *Something Rotten in Kislev* - *Empire in Flames*

We can now add Additions to our plan. These are generally short scenarios that you stick in the middle of an appropriate existing scenario/extension Campaign, just by finding two relevant sections to link. Additions available from various sources including *Apocrypha Now*, *Apocrypha 2: Chart of Darkness*, *Hogwash*, *The Restless Dead*, *Marienburg: Sold Down the River & Warpstone*. These are best allocated in terms of their location, but since many of these (such as the *Warpstone* scenarios) give instructions for re-setting in new locations, they can also be used to vary the flavour of different parts of the story. However, narratively, they should be used to allow the different sections to blend together better.

For a true epic, you may wish to run your campaign as follows:

1) Run *Lichemaster* as the start

2) After this, the PCs are asked to escort one of the junior monks (See 'A Useful Acquaintance' on page 77) to his home, a small country house northeast of Volga (See *Restless Dead*). Here they see a notice about the Crown Prince's expedition (*Mistaken Identity*, *The Enemy Within*). Tell them the quickest way to Altdorf is to travel to Delberz, from where they can travel by coach.

3) You can then run *The Restless Dead* on the journey. In Delberz, start with *The Ritual* (pages 41-49) which goes right into *The Haunting Horror* (pages 50-62). I would use the suggestion about the pot of magical oil. This of course leads on to:

4) *Mistaken Identity & Shadows Over Bögenhafen*.. Follow this up as far as *Death on the Reik*. However, do not involve the signal tower just yet. Send the PCs off after the Red Crown, then steer them to Nuln to meet Herr Oldenhaller. (Another option is begin the whole campaign here.)

5) If you have managed to keep the players poor (always a good idea), they can be hired by a certain academic and sent off to Marienburg for *The Dying of The Light*. Possibly get them involved in *The Eternal Guard* (*Warpstone* 5) while passing through Marienburg. Using *Sold Down the River*, you can expand the city and have the characters stay for a while using scenarios from that book, the *Warpstone* Marienburg special (issue 9) & *Bad Tidings* (*Hogwash* 4). Don't let PCs get too much money though. Ideally, they should still need more cash when they return.

6) Take them back to Nuln, running various smaller scenarios and encounters from *River Life of The Empire*. Then hire them to take a cargo to Kreutzhofen, and hence move them to...

7) *Death's Dark Shadow*. There are numerous plots and scenarios to weave together here. Have their boat damaged so they spend a couple of weeks in town. Then, when you're ready, go back to the main campaign. Carry on with *Death on the Reik* where you left off, by hiring them to take supplies to a certain building site...

8) The PCs are now sailing around, so again run some smaller scenarios, followed by *Carrion Up The Reik*. Then, as the PCs travel towards Middenheim, it's time for *Grapes Of Wrath* before moving on to...

9) *Power Behind the Throne*. You can also involve the plots and ideas from *Warhammer City/Middenheim: City Of The White Wolf* (depending on which print run you have) while the characters are in the area. After all this, the powers that be will want them out of the way. So they send the PCs off on...

10) *Doomstones*. The introductory scenario in *Hogwash* can be modified to get the job assigned to the PCs politically. Run all five parts in succession. Assuming they survive this, send them to...

11) *Castle Drachenfels*. Use the *Drachenfels Lives!* plot line (page 75), even though the PCs will have been sent to destroy the castle. Then it's back to the main campaign.

12) After *Something Rotten in Kislev*, send the PCs on *Empire in Flames/Chaos* (or even merge the two!), and stick some extra encounters in on the way in/out of the empire. These shouldn't prove any major problems, but help set the scene.

13) With *Empire in Flames/Empire in Chaos* finished, the PC's are now heroes, nobles, etc. and the campaign is likely to be over. Would that it were that simple. Having built up this far, it's inevitable that the PCs will have left loose ends, unfulfilled bargains and vengeful foes across the length and breadth of the Old World. The pre-written scenarios may have ended, but now that they're in the limelight, their troubles are just beginning...



# THE TRUST

By Robin Low



*"Beware of believing that the Powers of Chaos are fixed in their natures. Never assume that They and Their minions behave in a predictable manner. Always remember that They have more than one face – often many more – and that goodness and generosity of spirit can be made Their tools as easily as evil and meanness of heart."*

*"What is the Trust? The Trust is a hope for a better future for all."  
Anders Deshalb*

## Introduction

The Trust is a well-respected charitable organisation dedicated to the advancement of science, technology and magic. Founded fifteen years ago by the late Lord Mathias Gewinn and the merchant Anders Deshalb, its principle activity is providing support to those who want to conduct research into a range of areas, from alchemy to engineering, medicine to magic, agriculture to exploration. The Trust's ultimate aim is to improve the wellbeing of society through the practical application of science and magic, and it has always keenly supported alchemical research into potions for healing and curing sickness. Would-be beneficiaries apply to the Trust and their applications are carefully scrutinised by various experts who make up the Trust's board. One criterion for receiving the Trust's support is a willingness to publicly share the results of success or failure so that others may benefit.

Resources offered by the Trust come mainly from donations made by the nobility, wealthy merchants and religious groups. Normally, the Trust has to actively fundraise in order to solicit these. A significant amount of money also comes from the profits of the estate of the Trust's principal founder, the late Lord Mathias Gewinn, and a modest amount of income is made by sales of materials and equipment used in research.

Based principally in the country home of Mathias Gewinn, near Altdorf, the Trust maintains offices in the Capital itself, as well as in Middenheim, Nuln, and Marienburg. Each office is overseen by one or more members of the Trust's board, together with paid administrative staff.

## THE SCHEMES OF TZEENTCH

The Powers of Chaos are typically seen as wholly destructive. In the case of Khorne, this is not an entirely unfair point of view. Similarly, Nurgle seems wholly allied to the forces of decay, although for his followers it may be comfort rather than corruption that they seek. Slaanesh probably cares not one bit for creation or destruction, just so long as both remain pleasurable.

Tzeentch is another matter. Often called The Changer of the Ways, Tzeentch is usually depicted as the arch-conspirator, plotting the downfall and annihilation of society. This misses the point. What Tzeentch seeks is *change*. Now change may

come in the form of mutation, anarchy and social collapse, but can also arise in industry, communications, and medicine. Advances and discoveries in science and technology have massive effects on the way people live and think (and not everyone will agree that it's for the better). Any force that seeks change in society is just as likely to see science and creation as a way forward as it does conspiracy and destruction. For the most part, scientific progress is seen as a good thing. The idea that Tzeentch could be involved in the development of science may conflict with received wisdom that Chaos is undeniably evil, but it shouldn't. Chaos should be viewed as a force that is essentially contrary, not always behaving or existing in the expected forms, especially when it comes to the complicated machinations of Tzeentch and his followers.



## Public Perception

The general image of the Trust is a highly positive one as it has proven its competency and honesty in its dealings. This has helped when getting funds from those who would otherwise be wary. Also, insisting that those who benefit from its aid make their research available has emphasised its altruistic nature. The cult of Shallya has given vocal endorsement, as it has benefited greatly from advances in the alchemical treatment of diseases afflicting the poor.

However, there are voices of dissent. Unsuccessful applicants for the Trust's assistance are sometimes bitterly vocal in their criticism. Some of those badgered by the Trust for donations are cynical, and less caring sections of the nobility (who actively object to the idea that life should be made better for ordinary people) have attempted to subvert its work by buying out important researchers just before their labours are complete. In addition, there are academics, especially magicians, who hate the idea of having to share their research with anyone, and so want nothing at all to do with the Trust.

## The Truth behind the Trust

The truth behind the Trust is that it is exactly what it appears. Almost. The Trust's noble aim of advancing science and magic so as to benefit society is its true and honest goal. But it's not quite that simple. At its heart lies a Tzeentchian conspiracy. Not a conspiracy to destroy the Empire. Not a plan to unleash demons, or corrupt society. No, it's far subtler – and far more ambiguous, too.

Tzeentch is called The Changer of the Ways, but sword and flame are not the only tools of change. Tzeentch is primarily a being that seeks to transform, and it can do that by using science and magic to uplift and empower the masses, radically altering society in the process, narrowing social divisions. Surely, the Trust is a force for good?

Of course, there's more. Science and magic have a darker side. The conspiracy within the Trust secretly supports illegal and highly questionable research in the belief that good can sometimes come from bad. Maybe it will, but few people will have any sympathy for that view. However, the Trust has done, and continues to do, good work and helps many people throughout the Empire. It's just that its greatest supporter is a Power of Chaos.

*"A friend. I miss him."*

*Anders Deshalb on Mathias Gewinn*

## The History of the Trust

### The Late Lord Mathias Gewinn

Mathias Gewinn was a minor noble who should not have been destined for much more in life than watching the last of his family's wealth slowly drain away. However, after his parents' deaths, Mathias, an only child, inherited what was left and did something truly outrageous: Lord Mathias Gewinn became a common merchant. He proved to be quite a good one, too. Within five years he started renovating his family's country home outside Altdorf, and made regular donations to the cult of Shallya.

Gewinn's father had been an amateur alchemist in his time, and Gewinn inherited the interest. In line with his charitable nature, Gewinn decided to see if he could persuade some of the alchemists of Altdorf to conduct research into cheaper curative potions for the benefit of the cult of Shallya. Many were not interested in the idea, being only concerned with making money, but several were happy to assist in a charitable scheme that would also benefit their profession. Their modest successes and the benefits they brought to many people set Gewinn wondering if the idea could be developed further.

### Enter Anders Deshalb and the Trust

From the outset of his career as a merchant, Mathias Gewinn had a friend in Anders Deshalb, a successful Altdorf merchant. Initially, Deshalb was only interested in Gewinn for his connection with the nobility, but very rapidly he

became close to the nobleman-turned-merchant. They shared a sense of generosity towards society and the less well off, as well as a mutual interest in the art of alchemy. With this in mind, Gewinn approached Deshalb with the idea of creating a charitable body designed to support alchemists who wanted to conduct research into new techniques and products beneficial to society. After some discussion, the pair decided on something grander, supporting a whole range of sciences, magics and technologies, with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of life for all people. In this way the Trust was born, an organisation dedicated to raising money and distributing it to those with ideas worthy of help. The pair threw themselves into the project with great enthusiasm, swiftly setting up the structure of the Trust and bringing together volunteer experts to form the board. Work began within a year, initially in the funding of a few showcase research projects with Gewinn and Deshalb's own money, spreading word to potential researchers, and to those looking for donations. There was much interest within the academic community and with the swift development of an ointment for cheaply and effectively repelling body lice, it looked like the Trust might work. Once they realised that there was life in their idea, both men knuckled down to the task of making the Trust a respected organisation. They realised that in order for the Trust to function and survive they had to prove to potential donors that their money would be put to good use, and would lead to demonstrable results.

Gewinn and Deshalb were excitedly optimistic about the long-term future of the Trust. As neither man had family at the time, they arranged legally that if they died without wives and heirs then their properties and businesses would become the Trust's and be put to work for its benefit.

**Secrets**

Unknown to Mathias Gewinn, Anders Deshalb had been loosely involved



**THE GUILD'S LEGACY**

Of the few members of The Guild who escaped Deshalb's revenge, only one, Pieter Fenner, was a member of the inner circle. When his fellows started to die, Fenner gathered as much cash as he could and fled fast to Marienburg. Since then, he has slowly been rebuilding his life and business, and in recent years has set about creating a new Guild. The New Guild has a handful of members, once again dedicated to Tzeentch and to manipulating and eventually usurping the nobility for the benefit of the merchant class. Fenner also has the personal, secret goal of killing Anders Deshalb, Johan Heiter and either destroying or controlling the Trust. At present, his resources are limited, but he is planning on infiltrating the Trust in some manner, probably by having one of the board members killed and then providing someone suitable to fill the vacant seat. This will put him (unknowingly) in direct conflict with his own god Tzeentch, but then, that's Chaos for you.

with a small and obscure Tzeentchian cult composed almost exclusively of merchants. It called itself simply The Guild and its goal was to break the power of the nobility in favour of the merchant class. Unlike many of the other merchants in the cult, Deshalb was not merely interested in the acquisition of power and money, but was also motivated by a social conscience and a desire to see the common man rise up from beneath the heel of the nobility. With the formation of the Trust, Deshalb changed his focus from politics to science, seeing it as a more effective and infinitely more subtle way of empowering the masses. Deshalb tried to bring The Guild to secretly support the Trust. This was a gross mistake.

**Murder**

Deshalb was only a minor member of The Guild and not privy to its inner circle, the majority of whom (though not all – see below) possessed a fierce hatred of the nobility. Rather than attempt to manipulate the Trust, they decided to assassinate Lord Mathias Gewinn. Then, through Deshalb, it would take active control. Anders Deshalb was not to be told.

Johan Heiter shared many of Deshalb's qualities and was the only member of the inner circle to vote against this plan. After some thought, Heiter decided to warn Deshalb about the plot, but he dithered too long. Mathias Gewinn was killed in an 'accident', crushed to death by an unstable wagonload of ale barrels.

When Johan Heiter told Deshalb what had happened, Deshalb was outraged – he had genuinely cared for Gewinn. However, he kept his cool and avoided making trouble with The Guild. Instead, he behaved meekly, accepting his role as their puppet while he and Heiter set about avenging Gewinn's murder. They quietly put out word in the darkest areas of Aلدorf that assassins were required. Both were surprised when they were contacted by a human representative of a small band of Skaven of the Clan Moulder. A deal was struck and in a matter of a week virtually all members of The Guild were killed by swarms of rats, with only a lucky few escaping. (See sidebar, *The Guild's Legacy*, for more on this.) The event caused something of a stir – many regarded it as a sort of divine punishment for over-pricing. In the end, Deshalb and Heiter, the latter unofficially, were left in charge of the Trust.

**Dubious Practices**

The idea of using the Trust to fund projects of dubious legality was not one that Anders Deshalb had in mind from the start, but was sparked when, passing through a Reikland town, he witnessed the burning of an alleged necromancer. Throughout his ordeal the wizard kept weeping and crying out, "I only wanted to help!" Talking to the townsfolk, Deshalb learnt that the necromancer had stolen the bodies of two recently drowned children. When discovered, he claimed that he just wanted to restore them to their parents.

For days afterwards, Deshalb dwelt constantly on the idea that good might be born from what may only appear to be evil. After many sleepless nights, Deshalb finally realised that he could potentially use the Trust to pursue this idea. Not publicly, of course, but with cleverness and secrecy dark trees might yield bright fruit.



When Deshalb spoke of his idea to Johan Heiter he used this same metaphor, and Heiter commented that this was surely an idea prompted by Tzeentch itself. For nine consecutive nights afterwards they each dreamt of a fruit-laden black tree, convincing them that Tzeentch was advising them. The symbol of a black-branched tree laden with many-coloured fruits became the emblem of a conspiracy within the Trust.

*"I mostly enjoy going through the endless applications. I like travelling to see the researchers. I don't really mind discussing the duller aspects of fundraising and finance issues. But I swear, if I have to deal with another application to research a cure for baldness, I'll commit murder!"*

*Halls Steemund, board member for alchemy, at the end of a long day*

*"Give it a few more years and they'll be your favourites."*  
*Leopold Quellewasser, not missing a good punch line*

## The Trust Today

### The Board

The Trust is run by a board of nine members (which just happens to be one of the numbers favoured by Tzeentch) who oversee the finances, fundraising activities and purchases. Each member is an expert in their field and is responsible for assessing the worthiness of funding applications, sometimes in conjunction with fellow members with a related interest. Not all the members live near one another, but the board convenes annually at the country home of the late Mathias Gewinn to make plans, discuss problems and vote on a variety of issues. This meeting usually takes place just before the annual Masquerade Ball (see *Sources of Income* below). Members often come together in smaller groups at other fundraising events throughout the year or when visiting researchers they are currently, or are considering, supporting. Most communication between board members is via letters.

As a group they function very well with one another, largely because Anders Deshalb selected each for their similar mindset (the advancement of *all* science, for the benefit of *all*) and a friendly nature (albeit with a liking for vigorous intellectual argument).

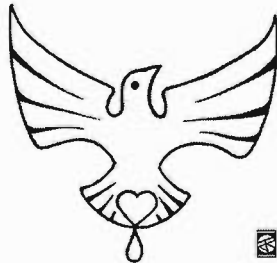
**Chairman:** Anders Deshalb is the most important part of the Trust. Since

### THE TRUST AND THE CULT OF SHALLYA

Much is made in this article of the relationship between the Trust and the Cult of Shallya, and any campaign involving the Trust will inevitably involve the cult and its followers. The article *Clerics of Shallya in Warpstone 10* is highly recommended to GMs looking to develop and make use of the relationship.

One issue of note from this article is Saint Beguine, the Shallyan patron saint of pharmacists. Based in The Wasteland in Beguinage, the House of the Beguines, the Sisterhood of St. Beguine has been largely overlooked by the Trust, principally due to its relative isolation. Difficulties between the Trust and the Guild of Pharmacists have prompted the Trust (and Diehl in particular) to foster stronger links with the Sisterhood and thereby improve the Trust's standing with the Guild. Given existing links to the Cult of Shallya and the fact that the Sisterhood of St Beguine operates one of the most important research laboratories in the Old World, this makes a lot of sense.

Whilst most Shallyans who know of the Trust are openly friendly towards it, there is a small number who dislike what it stands for. These Shallyans, usually exceptionally devout in their worship, also tend to have problems with alchemy, pharmacy, herbalism and medicine. Although those all aid healing, they are seen by such Shallyans as ultimately damaging their religion. Why have a goddess dedicated to healing, if men and women can make and sell cures for everyone? Good health and happiness comes from the teachings and wisdom of Shallya, and Her compassion and healing power passed on through Her clerics.



Mathias Gewinn's death, he has been the driving force and his decisions and choices of board members have made the Trust the respected success it is.



Friendly, enthusiastic and outgoing, Deshalb is also a genuinely caring and well-intentioned man. There is a darker side, but even his secret projects are motivated by good intentions. He has committed at least one unjustifiable act of evil, namely arranging the 'sale' of *The Sea Mist* and her crew into slavery (see text box, *Lost at Sea*), and he is willing to kill to maintain the concealment the illegitimate projects. In his defence, it must be said that Deshalb is not entirely to blame, as he is certainly a victim of Tzeentch's insidious lies and manipulation. If it were not for Tzeentch's control, Deshalb would undoubtedly recognise the evil of his actions.

Deshalb is aided in his activities by his friend and confidante Johan Heiter, a small group of Skaven of Clan Moulder (who are unaware that they are inadvertently helping the hated Tzeentch, and who expect payment for their help) and the shadowy 'middlemen'. The middlemen are anonymous agents of Tzeentch who carry out tasks for Deshalb so as to distance him and the Trust from any dangerous and illegal activity.

**Medicine:** Diehl Ackerson looks after the Trust's interests in Nuln, and examines proposals for new medical procedures and surgical techniques. He also evaluates results. Ackerson is quite happy to get his hands bloody if researchers want additional qualified assistance.

Ackerson has been closely involved with attempts to ease tension between the Trust and the Physicians' and Pharmacists' Guilds. Both Guilds feel strongly that the assistance of alchemists was undermining non-magical approaches to healing. His efforts, as well as funding for a couple of Guild projects, have improved relationships, but there is some way to go before all difficulties are resolved. Ackerson is looking to form closer personal ties with the Sisterhood of Saint Beguine, the Shallyan patron saint of pharmacists, to help bridge the gap. He is planning to visit Beguinage, the House of the Beguines, in The Wasteland at the first opportunity (see *The Trust and the Cult of Shallya*).

**Exploration:** Anton Vendtardt has lived his life either in Marienburg or on board ship sailing the world, visiting dangerous and unknown regions. Claus Derwin (see the text box, *Claus Derwin*) recommended Vendtardt for the post when he quit. A highly capable planner and organiser of exploratory expeditions on both sea and land, Vendtardt is feeling constrained by his responsibility, which requires him to spend his time in Marienburg and Altdorf and not out travelling. Vendtardt is frequently mistaken for Anton Deckhardt (see above).

**Engineering:** Haakon Ironvault is one of the oldest Dwarfs living in the Empire proper. At two hundred and fifteen years of age, most other Dwarves would have long since have returned to their families and the responsibilities of being a social elder, but not Haakon. Rumour amongst the Dwarfs of Middenheim, where he lives, has it that he's just been avoiding going home to his wife. Haakon maintains that he just likes humans and finds them constantly surprising in their behaviour and ingenuity. This latter point is what led to his involvement in the Trust – if those canny humans (or others)

were going to come up with interesting and original construction techniques and machinery, he wanted to be among the first to see.

Despite his great age, Haakon is as fit as a flea and has lost few of his marbles, especially when it comes to engineering and architecture. However, his innate Dwarfen ability to consume huge quantities of alcohol has seriously diminished. Consequently, he now avoids the stuff like the plague for fear of getting dead drunk and never waking up again. He becomes very crotchety when people start drinking around him.

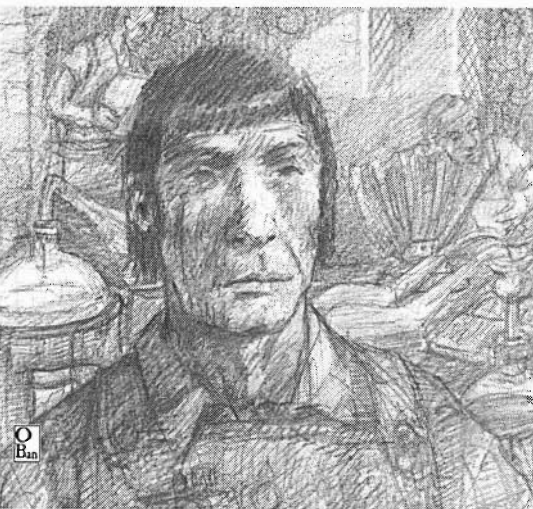
**Magic:** Leopold Quellewasser has arguably the lightest burden of all the



board members in terms of project assessment. Throughout the existence of the Trust, magicians have proved to be reluctant to benefit from its assistance. Naturally suspicious and covetous of their own powers, few magicians make applications to the Trust, wary of letting anyone else in on their research. One of Quellewasser's main activities is trying to break down the

reluctance of his peers. Being an open, friendly and tolerant sort of chap, with homes in both Altdorf and Middenheim and strong links with the magicians' guilds in both cities, Quellewasser is the man for the job.

Quellewasser is an elementalists, specialising in water magic, and his chosen speciality is reflected to some degree in his personality. Typically, he is as calm and serene as a gently babbling stream, finding the simplest course through life's obstacles and difficulties. When excited by an idea, he becomes loud and enthusiastic, rushing headlong down the path to the idea's conclusion. On those very rare occasions Quellewasser is provoked to anger he is very much like sudden thunderstorm, raging and shouting, but soon over. By and large though, he is a placid humorous man, with a tendency to tease those who take life too seriously, especially Charlotte Dumpling (see below).



**Alchemy:** Hals Steemund is one of the busiest of the board's members, always studying heaps of research proposals. Alchemy, especially in the field of healing, is the Trust's flagship interest and its successes are widely noted. Steemund often works closely with

Diehl Ackerson and Charlotte Dumpling, who have related interests. He also has close friendly contacts at various temples of Shallya.

**Artillery and Firearms:** Anton Deckhardt, formerly an artillerist in the Imperial Army, has one leg and very poor hearing. Due to his hearing difficulties he tends to shout so that he can hear what he is saying, and is

always asking people to speak up. Despite his injuries, he is obsessively enthusiastic about cannon and guns, and will waffle loudly in public about barrel length and projectile velocity. Deckhardt is frequently mistaken for Anton Vendtardt (see below), and the two sometimes receive each other's Trust-related mail.

**Agriculture and Herbalism:** Charlotte "Charlie" Dumpling is a halfling, and is the eldest daughter of the Elder of one of the many Mootland villages. A herbalist by trade, Charlie grew up in a large, prosperous farming family. Originally invited to join the board as an expert on herbalism, she swiftly initiated the expansion of her role to include agriculture, an area not previously considered by Anders Deshalb. So, in addition to overseeing proposals involving the growing, breeding, preparation and usage of herbs, Charlie is also concerned with agricultural practices, such as trials of experimental crops, the testing of new farm equipment, and the treatment of sick animals. A number of experiments have been conducted on her family's farm in The Moot.

Despite the fact she prefers to be known by the nickname of Charlie, Charlotte is rather more serious than many other halflings and is not overly fond of her race's reputation as easy-going and frivolous. She works hard, perhaps too hard, in order to prove herself to others, especially the rest of the board. They respect her and her efforts on the Trust's behalf, although Leopold Quellewasser sometimes pokes gentle fun at her seriousness and dedication, which she is never sure how to take.

**Astronomy and Navigation:** Pieter Seestern, an experienced sailor and pilot, has found that there are relatively few applications for funding in his areas of interest, so he has been trying to expand his role into communication systems. (He is particularly interested and knowledgeable about the Emperor Karl-Franz's semaphore/signalling machines – see *The Enemy Within* and *Death on the Reik*.) Young and handsome, Seestern is often called upon to flatter noblewomen at fundraising events.

#### Applying for Support

*Dear Herr Guntenmeyer,*

*Many thanks for your recent application for Trust funding to assist with your creation of a steam-powered cart. Your application was more impressive than many we receive and your idea is interesting. However, we feel that you may have over-looked the cost of fuel to heat the water when compared with the costs of caring for the average horse. On the basis of your obvious ingenuity, we feel that you will be able to find a way round this issue, but until that time we regret to say that we cannot fund your work. We look forward to any revised proposals you may wish to make.*

The Trust operates a strict application procedure, which is used for all applicants regardless of background, status or reputation. Applications are divided into three components. The first is a written overview of the project in which the researcher describes the background, aims and requirements of the project, together with what is needed from the Trust. The second

#### The Infamous Doktor Sausage

The board keeps a file of requests it considers to be classic howlers, either of truly rotten quality or for ideas simply so daft that they reduced the board to laughter when they were read. One of the most notable petitions came from a certain "Doktor Sausage of Bögenhafen", who requested monies to pursue his research into the reanimation of footwear. Doktor Sausage apparently believed that through necromancy it was possible to "revive the animal essence in boot leather, thus allowing the creation of boots which walk, saving the wearer the effort". As an example of his previous successes, Doktor Sausage enclosed a pair of extremely repellent woollen socks, together with the command words, "Dance, sheep, dance!" Needless to say, the socks didn't dance. However, the board was left wondering whether it should report Doktor Sausage to a cleric of Shallya or a Witch-hunter. Instead, it simply sent a polite rejection letter, and Doktor Sausage has not been heard from since.

### THE UNOFFICIAL REGISTER

Long before the official registers began, Anders Deshalb started his own register. Originally, it was created as a record of the illegitimate projects, meticulously detailed in a complex cypher, but Deshalb soon found that it was worth keeping notes of those who could supply the illegal materials and services so often needed. In the back of this record of payments, Deshalb began to list artisans who asked no questions, grave robbers, corrupt physicians, wizards gone bad, drug dealers, underground slavers, smugglers, and any one who might be potentially useful to his researchers. Unlike the illegitimate project details, this information was not written in a cypher. Over the years, the list grew quite extensive, but it degenerated into something of an incoherent hodgepodge of names, places, activities and notes. Certainly, many in the list will have long since been caught and punished for their activities, but several still provide regular services. One thing Deshalb does not record in this register is his contacts with the Skaven.

This register is a huge, leather-bound, but otherwise undistinguished ledger, kept locked in a safe, in Deshalb's study in his home. Unauthorised opening of the safe triggers a *Magic Alarm* and causes a Guardian demon to manifest and attack the would-be-thief. The demon appears as a large slaving hound and it materialises as if coming out of the safe, making it impossible to simply grab anything and run.

If anyone gets their hands on this register, they'll have to translate it. The cypher used to record project details is a particularly tricky one, being the product of Tzeentchian magic: it changes every reading and only the original writer, Deshalb, can read every change. A translation requires a wizard with knowledge of code-breaking, *who then needs to break the code and transcribe it in one sitting!* It will take 2D4 hours of study together with a successful roll against Intelligence with a -20 penalty to crack the code. The code-breaker must then make a Willpower roll every hour whilst they are transcribing the information or their concentration will wander and the code will change into a different one, whereupon they need to start over. Given that it takes about an hour to translate and transcribe the details of just one project, and there are a few dozen of them, this could be a *very long job*.

The list of useful people at the back is a little easier, being written in Old Worlder. However, compared with the projects details at the front it is in the form of scribbled, hasty and vague notes, so the information contained is often unclear and imprecise.

component is a detailed breakdown of the project outlining how the researcher intends to proceed should the Trust offer its backing. This part is important, as it should demonstrate clear thinking, the ability to plan and the seriousness of intent, hopefully indicating that money will not simply be squandered. The final part should be some evidence of previous work. This might be a published scientific treatise, a successful lecture tour, the demonstration of an original spell, potion, or device, or artefacts from far off lands after a successful expedition. Occasionally, good, reliable references from renowned tutors are accepted.

The Trust has three responses to applications. Outright rejections are the most common, followed by acceptance provided that certain modifications or improvements are made, and the rare simple acceptance. All solicitations made to the Trust are retained for future reference. Researchers whose projects are accepted for support are required to sign a contract before the Trust hands over any money.

*"I'll have one of those small brass scales. With all the weights, please. Then a pound of sulphur, two pounds of iron shavings and a half pound of quicksilver. Now, can you tell me where I could find a good local glassblower who can make-to-order? Look in the register? Thank-you. Now the cost? Really? A quicksilver shortage, you say? Well, never mind: the Trust's paying for it."*

*A researcher anxious to get to work*

#### What the Trust Can Offer

**Funding:** The principal form of assistance the Trust provides is financial. Successful applicants are awarded grants of up to, and in exceptional cases

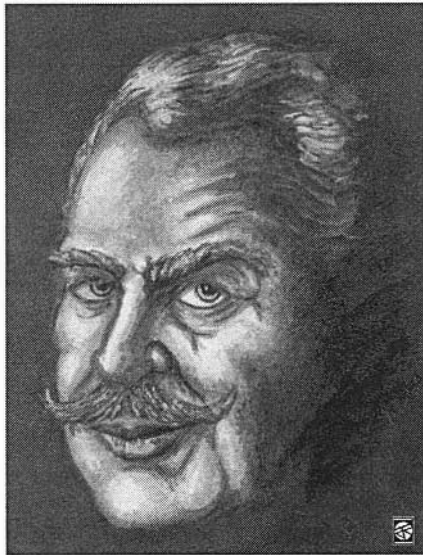
over, the amount they ask for in their formal application. Beneficiaries are required to provide some sort of evidence that they are spending the money in accordance with the intentions expressed in the original application, and that work is proceeding as anticipated. However, the Trust is not ruthless in its scrutiny, and setbacks and problems (and sometimes failure) are considered inevitable. That said, if it is clear that fundamental problems exist, funding can be withdrawn. The Trust has taken legal action to reclaim money from a very few researchers who failed to make any effort to live up to their side of the arrangement, and even hired professionals to go and ask politely for the money back.

**Equipment:** The Trust has built up a large collection of scientific apparatus and useful equipment, and has invested in one or two small craft centres to ensure a steady supply of essential resources, the surplus from which are sold on to cover costs and generate small amounts of additional income. The Trust collection includes traditional wood-, stone- and metalworking tools, alchemical glassware and all manner of laboratory tools, herbs and chemicals, items for astronomy and navigation, medical instruments, and portable Dwarfen forges. It also owns several small cannon and a range of firearms and ammunition for military researchers. Additionally, it has a modest number of obscure Elven magical devices and tools, and some Dwarf engineering equipment. (Rumour has it that the Trust has also recently purchased several curious items reported to have been looted from the strange pyramids in Lustria.) This equipment is available for purchase (herbs, chemicals, glassware, spell components), rent (tools and devices) or loan if a piece of equipment is prohibitively expensive or rare, and a project is considered worthy (some researchers who apply to the Trust only ask for loans of expensive equipment). The more commonplace items can be bought or borrowed from any of the Trust's offices in Altdorf, Middenheim, Nuln or Marienburg. Rare and valuable items are stored at the late Mathias Gewinn's country house near Altdorf, and researchers are required to make use of the facilities there, rather than take the devices elsewhere.

**Human Resources:** Over the last few years the Trust has begun to build up a register of people who would be helpful to researchers. Access is free to those already being supported by the Trust, but a modest charge is asked from other enquirers. Copies can be found in any of the Trust offices, but there has been a tendency for each office to fail to pass new names to the other offices, so in practice there are several registers sharing some names, but not others. The registers includes highly skilled artisans, such as blacksmiths, glassblowers, woodworkers, and jewellers, vendors of herbs, chemicals, spell components, expedition outfitters, bright students throughout the Empire who might serve as assistants, as well as experts in specific fields of scientific and magical endeavour. Each register is divided up into sections (Sages, Artisans, Suppliers, Outfitters, and Student Apprentices), giving name, city or town of work and area of expertise. At present, that's the only information provided, and the people listed are mostly those who have volunteered their name or been recommended for inclusion. There is some suggestion within the Trust that those who are listed should be more thoroughly evaluated and detailed, and the Board is considering hiring people to conduct such an examination.

**The Trust Library:** The country house of the late Mathias Gewinn also houses the Trust's library, containing a thousand volumes on subjects ranging from astronomy to zoology, magic to medicine, herbalism to religious science, and engineering to alchemy. It also boasts texts on philosophy and exploration, and several in Dwarf, Elven and Arabic (most of which have yet to translated into Classical). Probably to the frustration of PCs, there are absolutely no books dealing with the subject of Chaos in any depth (although certain books on magic and religious science touch upon it). Many books are standard classics, but the Trust has a policy of acquiring rarer tomes, as it is such books that researchers have a harder time getting a look at. The library is open freely to anyone already being supported by the Trust, but those with a reference from a reliable source are welcome to study the books for a fee (variable, according to a book's rarity). The books are not permitted to leave the confines of the library, but recently there have been several thefts (presumed to have been magical in nature) and security is being increased. The missing books were really taken by Anders Deshalb, some to be sold to

CLAUS DERWIN



Up until recently, the member of the board representing exploration was the respected traveller and naturalist Claus Derwin. Enthusiastic, pushy and intellectually brilliant, Derwin was immensely popular with the other members, especially for his aggressive arguments for scientific advancement. Unfortunately, a year or so ago he voluntarily resigned from the board to avoid embarrassing the Trust when he published a monograph on possible ancestral links between certain races. The main thrust of the monograph was that since it was possible for Humans and goblinoids to interbreed, it was possible that the two species shared a common ancestor. As he had anticipated, Derwin caused uproar amongst the scientific community and the general public within the larger cities of the Empire. Consequently, Derwin was forced, for his own safety, to retreat to his childhood home of Marienburg, where he began making plans for more controversial research into the relationship between Humans and the Fimir. The board as a whole was sorry to see him go, but reasoned it would be bad for the Trust had he stayed.

Derwin's true motives for publishing his monograph and leaving were not entirely due to scientific zeal. Derwin is as much a man of instinct as he is a man of science, and his gut was telling him that something was not quite right at the Trust. He had had the feeling for a while, but the loss at sea of a Trust-funded exploration ship, *The Sea Mist* (see the text box, *Lost at Sea*, for more details), a project he'd assisted in organising, brought his worries to a head. Publicly accepting the losses as "one of those risks", he waited for a year before using his monograph as an excuse to leave. Derwin even hired a professional assassin to make a mock attempt on his life, thus justifying his move to Marienburg where the lost ship had set sail and from where he could keep a discreet eye on the operations through its offices there.

Derwin has maintained friendly relations with the Trust and the board members, recommended Anton Vendtardt as his replacement and still acts occasionally as an unofficial advisor for it, whilst at the same time making his own enquires concerning the loss of *The Sea Mist*. Derwin has not shared his doubts with his friend and replacement Vendtardt. For more details on Derwin's activities and discoveries, see *Using the Trust*.

raise money for the illegitimate projects, some for loan to illegitimate projects (the latter will later be 'found' again in the library, one with suspicious notes scribbled in the margin by a careless researcher).

*"Ah, Lady Kolibri, what a pleasure to meet you again. I'm so glad you were able to make it down to our little picnic in the country. Pardon? Oh yes, your contribution to the Trust will have been most helpful. Indeed, many noble ladies such as your good self are assisting us. Your, er, 'friend' Lady Coulard has been exceptionally generous. How much? Discretion does not allow me to divulge the precise size of Lady Coulard's contribution, but I may say it was a generous donation. How could you do more to help us? Well, maybe I can tell you about our direct monthly donation scheme. It allows you to spread your donations, you see..."*

*Anders Deshalb, taking full advantage of noble rivalry*

**Sources of Income**

In order to function the Trust needs a regular supply of money. The following are the principle sources:

**Anders Deshalb's Business Activities:** Deshalb himself provides a significant amount, either in the form of Gold Crowns or items he purchases, such as books and equipment, drawn from the profits of his mercantile activities. Deshalb also oversees the business estate of Mathias Gewinn, the profits of which are split between the Trust and the business.

**'Charitable' Donations:** The Trust has been very ingenious when it comes to getting money out of wealthy benefactors, typically merchants and the nobility. Tactics for squeezing money out of these people varies according to the individual target. The most common method is promoting the idea that giving for the advancement of science, magic and technology is a noble cause that confers a certain prestige upon those who donate, and demonstrates how rich and powerful they must be. Encouraging rival nobles and merchants to 'bid' against one another for this sort of status is a neat and effective fundraising trick. It has been used very effectively between archrivals Grand Prince Hals von Tassenick of Ostland and Grand Duke Gustav von Krieglitz of Talabecland. This tactic is helped by the circulation of a newsletter at irregular intervals, ostensibly to update contributors as to the Trust's successes, but also containing short features on particularly generous donors and lists of the most generous recent contributors. Competition to be seen in such lists is surprisingly fierce.

The advancement of science can also be presented as a way of raising peoples' quality of life, the people in question (rich or poor) depending on the sympathies of the potential donor. Some people donate purely in the hope, or demand, that they will be the first to benefit from any successes, and the Trust is not adverse to giving such people token examples of progress, whether a prototype longevity potion, the latest make of firearm or a variety of high-yield wheat.

**Outside Sponsorship:** If the Trust thinks it can get another wealthy organisation to support a good idea then it will try to persuade them to do so. Examples have included asking a temple of Shallya to fund a local alchemist and herbalist developing cheaper, more effective healing salves for eye infections, and successfully persuading two coaching houses and a rich merchant to help finance an elementalists' research and construction of a flying ship (see *The Golden Eagle* in *Legitimate Projects* for more details on the latter).

**Fundraising Events:** The Trust hosts various events to raise monies and awareness in each of the cities boasting an office. Most often, these take the form of a banquet, with occasional excursions to the countryside to view some new technological marvel and have an upper-crust picnic. These are free to local donors who have given within the last year, but open to others prepared to make a financial gesture. These are entertainment, designed to make donors feel valued, make them feel part of something important and noble, and most importantly, to keep them donating.

The main annual event is a Masquerade Ball at the Gewinn country home. It's treated as a long weekend in the country, with food, drink and dancing, and demonstrations of the more entertaining things the Trust has funded over the previous year, such as new cannon (always popular with the noblemen), flashy spells, and various potions and elixirs offering useful or amusing effects. It's actually a relatively cheap way of making those donating money to the Trust think they are getting something in return.

*"And then we had problems with the kiln over-heating, of course. Look: you can see the crack we had to repair. Spoil a whole batch of the new compound and meant we had to start over. We've managed to successfully produce some more, though nowhere near as much as we had originally hoped."*

*An illegitimate project researcher explaining where the money went*



### Funding the Illegitimate Projects

One of the key challenges Anders Deshalb faces is funding the illegitimate projects without anyone noticing. Deshalb has always striven to make sure that the Trust appear to be an organisation above reproach, if only because its legitimate activities are as vital to Tzeentch's aims as any of the illegitimate projects. Consequently, the Trust's accounts are clear and open to scrutiny.

A certain amount of money for the illegitimate projects comes directly from Deshalb's own pockets, so nobody ever knows about it. Similarly, Johan Heiter also makes substantial donations specifically for illegitimate projects. However, money often has to be siphoned directly from Trust funds without anyone asking where it has gone. Deshalb has developed various methods for doing this.

The principle method is a cover project. Following Deshalb's advice, the originator of the illegitimate research makes a formal application for the funding of an entirely reasonable project. When it's accepted (it invariably is, thanks to Deshalb's help in writing it) the researcher actually spends at least half of his time working on the legitimate project and producing enough results to satisfy the board that the money is well spent. In reality, of course, much of the funding is diverted into illegitimate work. This is effective, especially for minor projects that are not subject to too much scrutiny (Alphonse Dwyer in *Illegitimate Projects* is an example of such a scheme). Of course, some researchers try this trick themselves *without* Deshalb's collusion (see Pieter Schwebe in *Legitimate Projects*).

Another technique is the Failed Project Method. Again, this relies on a researcher making a formal solicitation, usually for a very risky project with a significant chance of failure, but interesting enough or with sufficient potential value to receive funding. As a result, no one is surprised when the project fails. Little, if any, of the funding really is spent on the legitimate project, and the researcher is free to spend it on efforts that are more dubious.

### Legitimate Projects

The Trust has funded scores of legitimate projects since it was founded, and usually has about 15 to 20 active ones on its books at any given time. Most progress steadily towards their conclusions, failures and successes all slowly advancing knowledge. Although certainly helpful and useful, few successes have major impacts on society. However, below are a few examples likely to give the PCs (and the Trust) some headaches.

*"My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen: it has been a good year for the Trust. Representatives of Shalhya inform us that at least four new healing potions are proving effective and that a new wound salve is looking promising. One of our sheep-breeding projects looks set to introduce a new thicker fleeced crossbreed to the Empire by the middle of next year. Further afield, an expedition to seek fresh mineral deposits beyond the World's Edge Mountains is shortly due to get underway."*

*Anders Deshalb addressing guests at the annual Trust Masquerade Ball*

**Werner Krebs** wanted to become a Druid, but was more interested in how the wilderness could be changed to suit mankind than he was in dealing with nature on its own terms, and he failed his initiation. Instead, he became a magician, with grand ideas of improving on nature's efforts.

The Trust has funded Krebs' research into magically modified crops. Until now, Krebs has worked exclusively inside expensive glasshouses built with Trust money, using magical skills to create all manner of fast-growing, high yield and disease-resistant crop varieties. However, Krebs is convinced that his new crops are ready for field trials. There has been much suspicion from the farming community regarding the use of magic in this way, but the board member Charlotte Dumpling has volunteered a large field on her family's farm in the Moot as a testing site.

The Halfling farmers of the Moot are highly suspicious of magically modified crops and don't like the thought of such things growing anywhere near their fields. Consequently, the hot heads amongst them plan to take action to see that the trials are not completed. The PCs are likely to get involved when they are brought in by the Trust to protect the crop against possible trouble. If they badly handle a confrontation with the Halfling farmers, any action against the magically modified crops could escalate into a frenzied

riot, with attacks on the Dumpling family and property and even adjacent farms. As a separate or related plot thread, followers of Nurgle, outraged at the idea of disease-resistant crops, could also become involved.

**The Golden Eagle** is the brainchild of elementalist Wilhelm Wolke and his apprentice Emily Eckstadt. *The Golden Eagle* is nothing less than a genuine flying ship, patterned after a Dwarf one, *The Spirit of Grungni*. It is made to levitate high above the earth by air elementals bound into the hull. Like a normal ship, sails are used to propel it through the air, although air elementals bound into the sail can be awoken to power the ship when there is no wind. It has been a costly project, and the Trust enlisted the financial support of Cartak Lines and Castle Rock Coaches, and a wealthy shipping merchant provided the ship itself. The project is nearing completion and *The Golden Eagle* will make her maiden flight, flying from Altdorf to Middenheim, with representatives of the Trust, the two coaching houses and the shipping merchant.

The PCs can be on that maiden voyage, either hired as crew (sailors, engineers, magicians or for defence) or being treated because they are popular with the Trust. Of course, it will not be a journey without problems. Firstly, at least one coaching firm not involved with the project sees it as a threat and will have arranged to get a saboteur on board (the saboteur will have some magical means of flight for escape). Secondly, the ship will experience some magical glitches along the way and start to fall from the sky. There will be time to deal with this before disaster, probably involving Wolke, Eckstadt and any PC magicians making some Willpower rolls and spending some magic points, and the other PCs clambering dangerously amongst the rigging securing ropes and sails. This will not end the voyage, but will make it trickier until some redesigning can be done (however, if attempts to restore control fail, don't be afraid of a crash, marooning the ship in some dangerous and isolated region until repairs can be made). Thirdly, along the way *The Golden Eagle* will be passing over a lot of forest, and people looking over the sides might spot all sorts of hidden ruins, mysterious villages and secret glades just crying out for investigation. What's important to keep in mind as a GM is that the flight is just too 'high magic' for this to become a viable means of transport in the Old World.

**Pieter Schwebe** is but one of a number of Trust-supported alchemists conducting experiments to brew new potions for curing disease. Outwardly, his research seems good, although it has suffered a number of understandable setbacks along the way.

Unknown to the Anders Deshalb or to the Trust, Schwebe is a follower of Nurgle out to damage the Trust's reputation. Schwebe has taken advantage of his god-given understanding of sickness to brew up a few minor cures, whilst actually funnelling most of the money from the Trust into creating horrible new diseases in his secret laboratory (a vile fungal den). In addition

### LOST AT SEA

On one occasion, Deshalb used what he called The Total Disaster Trick, involving the creation of an expensive high-risk, high-gain project designed to fail. This method was used five years ago in an expedition to map Lustria's coastline and conduct a geological survey. Deshalb and the then board member representing exploration, Claus Derwin (see text box, *Claus Derwin*), organised the journey. Unbeknownst to Derwin, Deshalb contacted (through middlemen) a group of Norse pirates and offered them *The Sea Mist* and her crew (to be sold as slaves) in return for gold and safe return of the scientific equipment. To make it easier for the pirates, Deshalb promised to place some of his own people on board and reduce the number of cannon by insisting that they should make room for additional scientific equipment. *The Sea Mist* sailed from Marienburg, the pirates took it with relative ease and four years later the expedition was officially recorded as lost. Deshalb finished with a lot of money for illegitimate work without the need for risky cover projects or using the Failed Project Method. As far as Anders Deshalb is concerned, this is now ancient history, a reminder to the board to be wary of expensive projects, but not in itself suspicious. However, Claus Derwin has secretly harboured concerns and has made it his business to do some digging (see *Using the Trust* and *Claus Derwin* for more details).

to these new diseases, he has created a potion that very effectively treats Harich's Blotch (an unpleasant, but non-fatal skin disease). However, anyone who takes the potion will eventually find themselves harbouring a new and unpleasant parasitic disease – this will manifest some months later. Whether working independently or at the behest of the Trust, PCs will be called upon to investigate this new and terrible sickness. They can discover these common factors of the victims in this order: that they all had Harich's Blotch a few months earlier; that they all went to a certain temple of Shallya for treatment; that they were all treated with a new (and highly effective) cure for the Blotch. This will lead them back to the Trust, and from there on a hunt for Pieter Schwebe and a cure for his new sickness.

### Illegitimate Projects

Over the past fifteen years, Deshalb has funded at least a couple of dozen researchers and their illegal activities. The majority of the researchers who run these projects come to the Trust as legitimate applicants. Deshalb decides whether a researcher would be interested in the support he can offer before making guarded suggestions. Deshalb makes his decisions by getting to know the researchers, based on his merchant's instinct for character and hints in dreams from Tzeentch.

How many illegitimate projects are active at any given time is variable, but four or five is Deshalb's upper limit – this makes them easier to administrate and keep an eye on, not to mention less risky. A few of the current projects are described below. Whilst most illegitimate projects are conducted without any problems, the ones below provide opportunities for discovery.

*"Tell me Magister Hockmunn, what do you make of the suggestions in certain quarters of the magical profession that the so-called warping stone might have useful qualities? Can you see any good that might really come of it?"*

*Anders Deshalb tentatively approaching a potential illegal researcher*

**Alphonse Dwyer** is a reputable alchemist in Altdorf, specialising in legal potions promoting good health and curing illness. He does a particularly good trade in pick-me-up tonics for wealthy Altdorfers, but also stamina-enhancing potions for the city's bouncers, strongmen and the city watch. Dwyer even sends out a shipment of the latter every couple of months to a group of Estalian bullfighters. Currently in Altdorf there is craze for bodybuilding and fitness, and several Training Schools have sprung up, catering for the noble and merchant classes, so Dwyer has been very busy.

In order to make the most of this current fad, Dwyer applied to the Trust for money to boost his research into new, better and cheaper potions to boost muscle development, citing all sorts of benefits for many groups in society, from the military to labourers. His excellent application was accepted. In a subsequent private discussion about alchemy with Anders Deshalb, Dwyer mentioned in passing that he had sometimes wondered what effect the cerebral fluids of certain sorts of people might have on others if suitably prepared. He cited the so-called warriors of Chaos as an example: could their brain juice be alchemically manipulated to boost strength, courage and fighting skills in those who might consume it? Deshalb's response was simply, would Dwyer like the opportunity to find out?

Responding to Dwyer's affirmation, Deshalb promised to make it known, anonymously through his middlemen, in the city's adventurer community that someone had put a bounty on the heads of "the vile soldiers of Chaos" and was prepared to pay for them. Over the next few months, using Trust money and with Deshalb's cronies acting as middlemen, Dwyer acquired the heads of three genuine Chaos warriors, four beastmen and half a dozen mutants. From the brain fluids of each he brewed up a range of potions. All that Dwyer needs now is some test subjects.

Alphonse Dwyer could be used in several ways. To begin with, the PCs might hear of the bounty on the heads of Chaos followers and end up providing them! Then there are the potions. Their effects can include Chaos steroids (heightened Strength, Toughness and loss of Cool, not to mention heightened aggression), bizarre mutagenic effects (especially from the brain fluids of mutants) or mental degeneration into animalistic behaviours (beastmen brain

potions). If he starts testing his new potions on Altdorf's fitness fanatics, Training Schools across the city will erupt in violence. However, there will not automatically be a trail leading to Dwyer's door, as he has an excellent and reliable reputation, and he is not the only alchemist or herbalist selling tonics. Alternatively, Dwyer might be more sensible and conduct some tests on animals first. Of course, the test animals may subsequently escape and cause havoc. Another possibility would involve Dwyer getting over-enthusiastic and sloppy, trying to buy more heads without using Deshalb's middlemen as go-betweens and thus drawing attention to himself. If trouble starts and PCs link Dwyer to it, then Deshalb's men will kill Dwyer before the PCs can speak to him. However, they'll still find a connection (albeit seemingly innocent) between Dwyer and the Trust, and may begin to investigate.

**Moritz Grozlauf** is the sixth son of a minor noble from the south of the Empire. With few prospects within his family, Moritz became part of a mercenary force fighting in various skirmishes in the Border Princes. During this time he was involved in several sieges and was greatly impressed by the use of cannon: cheaper than men, less wasteful of their lives and potentially more effective – at least in theory.

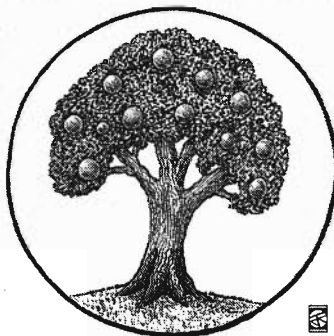
With his saved earnings, Moritz decided to form his own specialised mercenary artillery unit. Despite its success, he was never entirely satisfied with the cannons' performance and reliability. On hearing of the Trust, Moritz decided to apply for money to conduct experiments into improving the science of artillery in every aspect, from metallurgy to barrel design, gunpowder composition to ammunition. Based at the country house of the late Mathias Gewinn, his work led to significant improvements, and the Trust has funded him for several years.

From his personal experiences of them, and the stories of his peers, Moritz has become fascinated by the firearms and novel weaponry of the Skaven and has discussed them casually with members of the board. Moritz suggested that trying to talk to the Skaven might yield useful information. However, Anton Deckhardt and Haakon Ironvault pointed out that the Trust could never be seen to have anything to do with such creatures. Later, in private, Anders Deshalb indicated that he might be able to help. Explaining that he

had contacts who had contacts who might just be able to arrange a meeting between him and some Skaven, Deshalb encouraged Moritz and emphasised the need for discretion (future funding was at stake). Within a few months, Moritz was able to meet with some Skaven. He was disappointed to meet with representatives of Clan Moulder, but the Skaven explained that the engineers, Clan Skryre, would never part with their precious, precious secrets. Instead, the Skaven offered Moritz a couple of gun designs and a bottle of "liquid fire" from a warplame thrower, cunningly stolen from their rivals. Moritz paid for these out of his Trust funding and with the gift of a very small cannon, gunpowder and shot. In the following months, Moritz set about designing a gun based on the stolen blueprints, whilst Deshalb promised to get an alchemist to analyse a sample of the liquid fire.

PCs could become involved after encountering a group of Clan Moulder Skaven and their creations and finding the cannon Moritz gave them. If the PCs initially think nothing of it and do not ask anything about it, emphasise that it looks like it was designed in the Empire, not by Skaven. Perhaps it is marked with a worn and scratched emblem, maybe the Trust's emblem, the Moritz family coat of arms (remember it's minor southern Empire family, so it'll take some research) or even the banner markings of Moritz's mercenaries. Depending how you want to play it, PCs may be led to the Trust or directly to Moritz. Of course, as far as the PCs are concerned it could just be a case of returning stolen property, although if Deckhardt and Ironvault hear about it, they may remember their conversation with Moritz and have their suspicions. If it looks like Moritz could be uncovered, Deshalb will try to arrange for a nasty explosion to happen in Moritz's workshop.

**Mona Santonio** is a jack-of-all-trades scientist. She has been an apprentice physician, a wizard's apprentice, a herbalist's apprentice and an apprentice alchemist. Mona successfully completed her basic training in each of these professions, but always felt she had to move on to something new. She has



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lived all over Tilea as she pursued her studies, and first encountered Johan Heiter whilst he was meeting some business contacts in the city of Luccini. Heiter told her about the opportunities offered by the Trust, and when Heiter returned to the Empire, Mona went with him. The pair became lovers.

Mona has undertaken several illegitimate projects, mostly in the field of mutations. She has been keen to discover if ‘useful’ mutations (great strength, enhanced senses, thicker skin, etc.) can be transferred between organisms by implanting the flesh from a mutated creature into that of a non-mutant. Her most successful experiment to date has been to graft a piece of mutant tentacle into a young fig tree, rendering its branches capable of grasping movements.

Mona has met and worked with the Skaven of Clan Moulder with whom Deshalb and Heiter have had dealings.

PCs involved with the Trust can meet Mona in connection with Johan Heiter. However, they can also come face to face with examples of her experiments that go rogue and escape her secret laboratory. The key thing about Mona’s creations is that when first encountered they never appear dangerous, and indeed may, on the surface, appear entirely normal. For example, the PCs might walk past or spend time in the vicinity of the fig tree on several occasions, but never be attacked. In fact, someone can eat its fruit and it will not object (they might just start sprouting tentacles a few weeks later). Mona also undertakes analysis work for Deshalb, examining the results and products of other illegitimate projects. PCs may even end up consulting her themselves, unaware of her other activities.

*“Here is a set of scales, my friends, a symbol of both science and justice. Perhaps you should examine the facts, the arguments and evidence, and then weigh the good, and potential good, against the bad before you reach your conclusions.”*

*Anders Deshalb about to put his case*

#### Using the Trust

There are four ways of using Trust in a game: as benefactor, as employer, as victim or as villain. The chances are that, eventually, the PCs will end up in a confrontation with the more sinister side of the Trust. However, you do not have to leap in at the deep end, and doing so will waste a lot of gaming potential. It is far more interesting to initially set up the Trust as a helpful, friendly organisation for the PCs to become involved with. Then, over time, hints can be dropped that all is not well within the Trust, and the PCs can begin making discrete investigations, eventually leading to confirmation and confrontation.

**The Trust as Benefactor:** Adventurers are often in need of money and equipment, and the Trust is a good source of both. It is likely that PCs, especially academics, will hear of the Trust and seek to gain its aid. However, the Trust does hand over cash and equipment willy-nilly. PCs seeking to benefit from the Trust’s resources will have to make a formal application (see *Applying for Support*). Don’t forget that the aim of the Trust is to advance science, technology and magic for the betterment of society – applying for money and supplies to enable the PCs to go off adventuring is not going to cut it, but a well-conceived proposal to discover a new trade route through the World’s Edge Mountains might stand a chance. The Trust is a good way of allowing academic characters to indulge in research that would normally be too expensive for them, especially spell research and alchemy, but don’t forget that results have to be shared. If the Trust approves of the proposal the PCs will inevitably get to meet some of the Trust’s board members, and learn more about the Trust, its activities and some of the other projects it supports.

PCs can also purchase and rent materials and devices, or pay to examine the Registers in the various Trust offices (see *What the Trust Can Offer*). The Registers are especially useful for PCs who are looking for potential teachers, although at present the competence of those listed in the Registers has not been formally assessed.

**The Trust as Employer:** This is easily the simplest way to introduce the PCs to the Trust; it has many jobs it needs doing all over the Empire and potentially beyond. Jobs the Trust might offer include the following:

- ◆ Carrying letters and news from one board member to another, or to researchers.
- ◆ Checking the backgrounds of those applying for the Trust’s support.

- ◆ Transporting equipment and funds to successful applicants.
- ◆ Checking that funds and resources are being used for the intended purposes.
- ◆ Reclaiming inappropriately used equipment and funds.
- ◆ Providing assistance to researchers.
- ◆ Evaluating and assessing the competence and value of those people listed in the Registers.
- ◆ Assisting in fundraising.

If the PCs prove themselves competent and trustworthy, they could find that the Trust offers them more work, or even takes them on as permanent employees. Potentially, the Trust could become their patron and support them in activities of benefit, directly or indirectly, to the Trust and society. (In the longer term, PCs might find that Deshalb has secretly prepared them as potential fall guys in the event of discovery of some of his illegitimate activities – this is more likely to happen late in any Trust-based campaign.)

**The Trust as Victim:** The Trust might be persecuted in various different ways, including the suggestions below.

- ◆ Vengeful academics that were refused funding (“*You dared to laugh at my plans for increasing the virility of bulls, but now prepare to be gored by my new breed of Ostland Redflank!*”).
- ◆ Dodgy peddlers claiming to sell “Trust-approved healing tonics” that do no good or have unpleasant side effects (they have authentic-looking labels, too).
- ◆ Farm workers wrecking the trial of an automated scythe. (You think the forces of Chaos are hard? Try handling thirty labourers with pitchforks whose livelihoods are threatened.)
- ◆ Not to be forgotten are the remnants of The Guild (see text box *The Guild’s Legacy*). The Guild is slowly reforming, and wants its revenge on Deshalb, Heiter and the Trust.

A perhaps unusual threat to the Trust comes from the Cult of Sigmar. Parts of the cult have been particularly interested in the Trust’s weapon development projects, and would like to see the Trust turn its resources exclusively towards the areas of weaponry and war machines. Whilst such things have their place, the Trust would be fiercely opposed to such a change in focus; even Anton Deckhardt, the board member concerned with Firearms and Artillery, would not support the idea. Deckhardt has Ulrican sympathies and the Cult of Sigmar



will make use of this fact when the Trust resists its pressure. This situation has the makings of a complex religious/political intrigue with the Cults of Shallya and Ulric and the nobility becoming involved. (Don't forget: the similarity between the names of the board member for Firearms and Artillery and the board member for Exploration means that poor Anton Vendtardt might become the first victim in any violent action by the Cult of Sigmar, leading to all sorts of confusion.)

The greatest threat to the Trust (aside from discovery of its illegitimate projects) is attack by Nurgle and its followers. Tzeentch and Nurgle are sworn enemies, but the Trust's good relationship with the Cult of Shallya and its special interest in the creation of new cures for sickness and infestations makes it especially repugnant to the Lord of Decay. Pieter Schwebe in *Legitimate Projects* suggests one way Nurgle's followers are seeking to directly harm the Trust, but they might also try to corrupt and poison trials of crops (or simply stop them; see Werner Krebs in *Legitimate Projects*), harass researchers with swarms of vermin or simply spread malicious rumours. Using Nurgle like this is a great way of maintaining the illusion of the Trust's honest wholesomeness. Once one foul plot against the Trust has been discovered, should any of Anders Deshalb's illegitimate projects come to light it's easier to suggest that they are just another attempt by Nurgle to discredit the Trust. It will be all the harder for the PCs (and players) to discover the truth, and a far greater shock when they do.

**The Trust as Villain:** Sooner or later, the PCs are will get hints that the Trust is not all that it appears. It is best that these hints are subtle to begin with, but they can be blunter (see some of the ideas in *Illegitimate Projects*). If you've already established the Trust, Anders Deshalb and the other board members as positive forces in the lives of the PCs then all the better – any hints of wrongdoing should be a surprise.

Once some doubts have been sown in the minds of the PCs it's a good idea to make use of a Nurgle plot, as described above, to throw the PCs off the scent. Do not allow the PCs to become too certain too quickly that the Trust is villainous; there is a lot of gaming mileage in this organisation and it's a shame to waste it.

Claus Derwin and his investigations into the loss of a Trust expedition (see


text boxes Claus Derwin and *Lost at Sea*) are likely to be significant. At some point in any campaign involving the Trust PCs should hear in passing about both Derwin and the loss of a ship, and later get to meet Derwin himself (perhaps the PCs are sent on some errand to the Trust's Marienburg office, where Anton Vendtardt can introduce them to Derwin). Derwin can drop hints to the PCs then or at a subsequent meeting that he has his doubts about the loss of *The Sea Mist*. If they pick up on his hints, and they've shown themselves to be trustworthy, Derwin will reveal that his own investigations have revealed that shortly before *The Sea Mist* was due to sail a rumour went around the dockside taverns that someone was looking for a ship and crew willing to undertake piracy and slavery. This someone was one of Deshalb's middlemen seeking to 'sell' *The Sea Mist* and her crew to pirates. It is not much of a clue, but it is the beginning of chain eventually leading back to Anders Deshalb. However, muddying the water with Nurgle and its followers can keep Deshalb in the clear for a little longer (perhaps one of Deshalb's middlemen is struck down by some foul pox just as the PCs are closing in – it's a simple act of spite by Nurgle against the Trust, but the PCs aren't to know that – making it appear that Nurgle was behind the loss of *The Sea Mist*). The Guild can be used in a similar way.

If Deshalb becomes aware that the PCs are learning things he would rather they did not he will take steps to do something about it. However, he will not necessarily try or harm them or stop them, but might instead create red herrings and false trails (taking advantage of the Nurgle or Guild or Sigmarite problems for example) or do some ruthless covering up. If the PCs' investigations look like serious trouble, Deshalb may try to set them up, making it look as though they have been behind one or more illegitimate projects, destroying their credibility.

Eventually, the PCs will be faced with the truth and a confrontation with Deshalb will take place. However, the PCs will be left with a problem: by now, they should know full well that the Trust has done a great deal of good and can do so much more. Deshalb will certainly give a convincing argument in its favour and show that his motives are purer than they might think. The PCs should be left wondering whether they should bring down the Trust and destroy the prospect of future achievements, secretly reform it from within or actually side with Deshalb and aid his schemes.

Valkyrie

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# UP THE LADDER

## Two Advanced Careers for Thieves

### CAT BURGLARS by Alfred Nunez



In most Old World nations, it is the eldest son of a noble family who receives the inheritance. Younger sons follow a military career so as to experience the thrilling and bloody, pursuit of war or are encouraged to follow holy orders. However, some instead seek a celebrated status more suited to their class. Hence they undertake the task of becoming skilled in the art of burglary, while developing the flair and style which will give them the notoriety they crave. They take on colorful monikers ("the Panther," etc.) and leave a calling card (perhaps a white monogrammed glove) at the scene of their crime. Besides the nobility, more talented charlatans may become Cats. Most develop a facade of noble birth, as well as the style and flair required of Cats. Besides the thrill of the burglary, Cats need the money. Fencing stolen merchandise funds their extravagant lifestyles. After all, living as nobility requires lots of money. The Cat socializes to steal and steals so he may socialize. They are the ultimate gentlemen thieves.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
	+20	+20	+1		+3	+30		+40		+20	+30		+30

When it comes to break-ins and thievery, no one matches the Cat Burglar for sheer ability. Although loners and very independent, it is the rare challenge that will entice a "Cat" to leave his normal haunts in the high and upper middle class districts. Since successful conclusion of their work furthers their reputation, these jobs must be against high-profile targets with an exceptional degree of difficulty.

They attend the lavish parties and social events frequented by the nobility, both to enjoy themselves and hunt for new targets. A number of Cats adopt foreign accents and titles, such as Count or Viscount of someplace faraway and exotic. This fabricated story intrigues potential victims, especially those of the opposite sex. If necessary, Cats may develop a relationship with their victim before the heist.

A Cat's identity is a closely kept secret. It has been known for some organisations to use spies to track Cats back to their lairs, enabling them to compromise the Cat, making them more agreeable to accepting commissions. However, finding and tracking them is no easy task. Many are the occasions where a Cat was spotted and lost after a long and merry chase (as they sensed they were being followed).

A successful Cat will always know when to move on, wherever they have robbed just about everybody or at high risk of capture. It has been known for too many

Cats to turn up in a city. This situation will usually end up in an unseen, though not unfelt, "war" until the number is reduced to that which the city can support.

#### Skills

Bribery  
Charm  
Concealment Urban  
Dance  
Etiquette  
Evaluate  
Gamble  
Heraldry  
Numismatics  
Palm Object  
Pick Lock

Pick Pocket  
Read/Write  
Ride  
Scale Sheer Surface  
Seduction  
Sense Magic Alarm  
Silent Move Urban  
Specialist Weapon-Fencing  
Spot Trap  
Wit

#### Trappings

Black-Hooded Tunic  
Expensive Clothes  
Grappling Hook  
Hand Weapon  
Lockpicking Tools  
Ordinary Clothes  
Rope- 10 yards  
Townhouse  
6D6 Gold Crowns

#### Entered From

Burglar  
Duellist  
Charlatan  
Noble

#### Career Exits

Assassin  
Highwayman  
Spy

### MASTER THIEF by Vidar Edland and John Foody



The Old World is a crime-ridden place, and most will have their pocket-picked, house robbed or become scammed at some point. Making a dishonest living from these victims is an underworld of criminals, some organised, others not. However, a few skilled members of the shadowy trades grow beyond humble beginnings to become true craftsmen at their art. It is these Master Thieves who pull off the daring exploits that become legendary.

Burglary, mugging and picking pockets are generally high-risk, low yield activities. A Master Thief has evolved past these common illegalities and seeks high reward, low confrontation work. Partly out of wisdom and partly out of growing greed, they decide to go for larger payoffs. The target may be more visible, but by stealth and trickery the reward is attainable. The key is undetected theft, legerdemain, and other non-violent methods. Flight is always chosen over fight and incapacitating to killing. Leaving a trail of bodies is the handiwork of an assassin not an artist.

These individuals are highly organised and committed

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
	+10	+10			+4	+30		+30	+10	+30	+20	+10	+10

to the task at hand, often planing weeks before being carrying out a single job. Most see this as a premiere performance and rehearse accordingly. The complete range of their skills, whether disguising themselves as the victim or scaling castle walls, are put to full use. They haven't reached the top of the ladder by being careless and rarely do those who reach the pinnacle fall.

Going for one, last big score quickly fuels a drive for bigger and better things. However, money soon becomes secondary to the challenge and the thrill coming from risks is worth more to these artists than gold. The Master Thief looks to all kinds crime, and may know the law better than most magistrates and lawyers. Many are also well connected, with regular anonymous payments to the Watch keeping them one step ahead. However, their record is likely to be well known amongst the criminal fraternity even if their true identity isn't. Indeed their reputation is often the matter of tavern talk and tale swapping, although it is then hard to tell where fact ends and the fiction begins. Most have a particular style or modus operandi that is recognisable as their signature, and some have a calling card that they leave behind.

Many inner circles of thieves' guilds are made up of Master Thieves, especially the more established ones. It is likely the thief will have risen through the ranks of the guild. His talents will have been noticed by the hierarchy who will have trained him and tested his loyalty. Thus, it is within the guild structure that the path to Master Thief is easiest.

The other common way to become a Master Thief is

by being trained by a Cleric of Ranald. Ranald looks favourably on the type of crime the Master Thief favours. Thus, in the minds of many the Master Thief and Cleric of Ranald is firmly linked.

#### Skills

Acting  
Blather\*  
Bribery  
Concealment Urban  
Contortionist\*  
Cryptography\*  
Dance\*  
Disguise  
Escapology\*  
Etiquette  
Evaluate  
Haggle  
Law

Numismatics  
Palm Object  
Pick Lock  
Read/Write  
Secret Language - Thieves' Tongue  
Secret Sign - Thieves' Sign  
Silent Move Urban  
Strike to Injure\*  
Strike to Stun\*  
Supernumerate  
Ventriloquism\*  
Wit\*

#### Career Entries

Must have completed at least one advanced Rogue career, and two Thieves careers (Gambler, Outlaw and/or Smuggler may substitute Thieves career(s)).

#### Career Exits

Cat Burglar  
Counterfeiter  
Fence  
Merchant  
Lawyer

#### Trappings

Suit of Good Quality clothes  
Disguise Kit  
Appropriate tools

# TALABHEIM

## Part Three: Abroad in the City

### Getting Ahead in Talabheim

"Some advice for those abroad in the City"

Talabheim's harsh laws and powerful nobility restrict many of the routes to wealth enjoyed by citizens of the Empire's Western cities. This is not to say that the bold and daring will go unrewarded in Talabheim, but rather that social advancement requires an approach as idiosyncratic as the city itself.

The poor of any city are much alike. Their prospects are limited and crime is often the only way to escape the daily grind, though more find an early grave than the riches they desire. This is even truer in Talabheim, where the labour markets are highly regulated and punishments are harsh. There are few large criminal organisations in Talabheim, and smaller criminals tend to prey on their own class. Protection is an ever-popular racket, as is burglary (or 'Milken', as it is known). However, there are many people who will pay for smuggled goods, since they avoid the high taxes. A good smuggler can live well, though the risks are high.

Harder to find, more risky, yet ultimately more rewarding, is covert work for the nobility. Many a noble is happy to bend the law to their advantage, and there is often demand for someone of little significance to carry out their schemes. It is rare for the pawn in these games to be aware of their master, but one who survives for a while will become valuable, both for their proven skill and their knowledge. However, whilst it is said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, many find that too much knowledge is deadly.

In other cities, particularly Marienburg and Nuln, the middle classes are experiencing previously unseen social mobility on the back of their skills as merchants and craftsmen. This is not the case in Talabheim, where the Guilds are heavily regulated, and the privileges commonly given to Guild members in other cities are largely reserved for the nobility. For example, in many cities members of the Merchant's Guild pay less taxes on goods entering the city. In Talabheim, this privilege is reserved solely for the nobility, who also command the exclusive right to trade in certain speciality items like suede leather and game such as venison. Newer products like gunpowder are also subject to strict control, although the reason for this is as much political as economic. So what's a well-educated young man to do? In many cases, one can do almost as well by working on behalf of a noble as could be achieved by working alone. Many nobles lack the ambition or ability to make the most of their privileges, and employ a small army of specialists to manage their affairs.

Several of the richer merchants enjoy the kind of patronage that is normally reserved for artists. By trading in the name of a noble and paying them a small commission, they avoid the usual restrictions and have managed to become quite wealthy, although their continued wealth is always dependent upon remaining in their patron's favour. It is not unknown for talented merchants to be actively headhunted by their rivals.

Another profession that does well in Talabheim is the lawyer. With the incredible complexities of Talabheim law there is always the demand for someone who can remember the correct law to apply (or misapply) to aid their client's case, although lawyers cannot always speak to the courts on their client's behalf.

It is not too far from the truth to say that anything goes in Talabheim if one is born with noble blood. Power is the driving force at this level of society. New alliances and constant double-crossing is rampant, as nobles attempt to gain support in the House of Peers where they can directly influence the law to further their own ends. Outside the House, they will be involved in business activities or plotting each other's demise. The law is one of a noble's greatest weapons. Since Talabheim's tangled and confusing legal system normally contains laws in support of both sides of any argument, the judgements made in the Peer Court are extremely important – and these are decided as much by whom has the greater favour as by the wit of lawyers.

### Advice to the Games Master

When running political adventures in Talabheim it is important to create a dynamic sense of history. In early Renaissance cities it was not unusual for power to change hands every few years, with the loser exiled and their possessions claimed by the victors. The state will not be as strong as its modern equivalent, and Imperial intervention cannot be expected to stifle dissent. Although the Duke and Peers are particularly strong in Talabheim, the bulk of the nobility have to fight tooth-and-polished-nail to stay ahead of the pack.

### Adventure Ideas

If the PCs are of a dubious moral nature, they could start their own criminal gang and go head-to-head with the Vory. There are many adventures to be had in Talabheim, stretching the law in the name of profit, avoiding (or not) rivals in their industry, and so forth. Lucrative criminal activities include smuggling, gambling and extortion. Such a campaign could be

adapted to the level of the characters: beginners could start with petty theft, whilst advanced characters may become engaged in open warfare with the Vory. There is also the potential for unexpected diversions: what if the character's nocturnal adventures bring them into contact with creatures of the night somewhat more unusual than the usual thieves and rogues...?

Politically minded characters may become rabble-rousers, seeking freedom from noble rule. This would lead to a lot of interaction with the poorer parts of society, and, as the PCs grow in influence, with intellectuals and other sympathetic power groups within the city. For example, there is much resentment of the nobility amongst the Dwarfs of Iron Town, and some of the younger Dwarfs agitate for more involvement in the political processes of the city. Also, few know that the socialist wizard Nico Zwickel, who some twenty years ago was expelled from Talabheim when the Wizard's Court discovered his plot to assassinate the Duke of the time, is alive and living in a cottage at the crater rim. Although he is now old, his political convictions have not changed and he would be eager to help the PCs, should they learn of his existence. In this campaign there is also the potential to become involved in some of the greater mysteries of Talabheim, such as the nature of Kancer, the Beggar King. This style of game favours players who enjoy

### Talabheim: Credits

#### Project co-ordinators

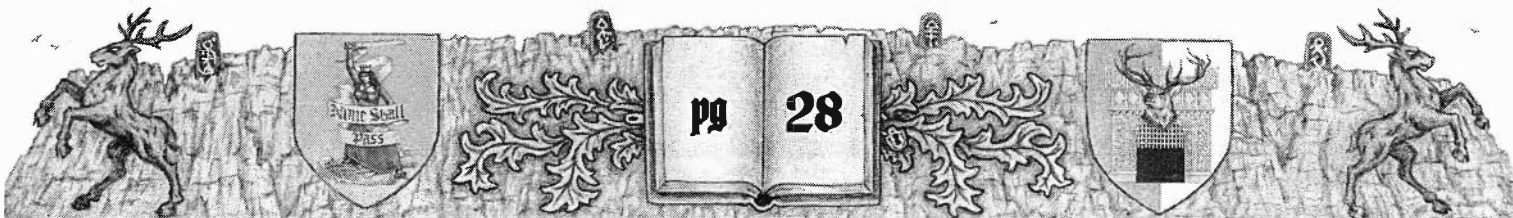
John Foody & Noel Welsh

#### Project Team

N. Arne Dam, Alfred Nunez, Anthony Ragan with Andrew Hind, Ryan Wileman, Luke Twigger, Tom McGrenery, Mark Bell & Zeno Collins

#### Part Three

How to get ahead in Talabheim: *Noel Welsh / Proscribed Cults: John Foody & Noel Welsh / Talabheim Reunion Front: Tom McGrenery / Blutberg: Ryan Wileman, Additional Material by N. Arne Dam, Anthony Ragan & Alfred Nuñez Jr / Custom & Law: John Foody & Ryan Wileman*





social interaction over combat, though there will be times that the PCs are forced to confront the militia.

The PCs could simply be hired to perform the dastardly deeds of a power hungry noble. The scope of 'dastardly deeds' is enormous. It may be a burglary, incriminating another noble, procuring illegal goods, espionage, repossession, causing public disorder, or plain and simple thuggery. If the PCs are hired by a noble to provide specialist knowledge or skills, they will find that they have many of the troubles of running a normal business with the additional complications brought about by their employer (who *will* be fickle or unreasonable in requests, and in all probability unknown to them, acting through an agent). Rival employees will also be happy to see the PCs suffer if it furthers them in the eyes of their employer. Just when the PCs think things are working out for them, the whole nature of the campaign can change: their patron suffers a disastrous blow in the Peerhaus and is exiled from Talabheim, for example. And why not make it personal – what if one of the characters falls in love with their patron's beautiful daughter, Imola?

There is also the possibility of sculpting an entire campaign from the political machinations, with the PCs as allied nobles and their retainers. The PCs may optionally be from the same family; this has the added benefit of encouraging dissention within the party, as the later born characters will naturally resent the eldest, who stands to inherit the family's wealth. Most noble families have a traditional association with a certain form of business. For example, the Maxvells are urban bankers with wide connections. In the past they have bankrolled Kislevian nobility and even the Cult of Ulric, but have recently over-stretched themselves with a bad debt to the Bretonnian monarch. The von Brucks are rural landowners whose money is in wool and leather. Always eager for a punch-up, they strongly believe that Talabheim should reclaim Talabecland.

PCs born to nobility will naturally pick up the family business and become involved with the politics of the city. Such a campaign gives great scope for the players, as they may function at almost any level of the Talabheim society. Characters are as likely to be found mucking through sewage-covered slum streets midnight as they are to be engaged in airy debates on the finer points of etiquette.

### Proscribed Cults

As in the other Imperial cities, membership in the cults of Kháine or of Chaos is considered to be a serious crime against the city. Anyone accused of being a "priest" in these cults is dragged before the Ecclesiastical Court for trial. The accused are first brought before the judges to confess to their crime and name their accomplices. Normally, they proclaim their innocence, just before the judges have them removed to the care of the Inquisition. Kháinite priests are questioned jointly by Ulrican and Mórrian clerics. Assuming the accused priest survives the interrogation, they will be returned to the Ecclesiastical Court for sentencing. Any commoner accused of being a Chaos cultist will be dragged straight to the Inquisition for interrogation and trial.

These stringent measures haven't had the effect on the proscribed cults that Talabheim officials would have people believe. The Slaaneshi cult of The Golden Caress thrives amongst the youth of the lesser nobility, and there is a rumour that its reach embraces a couple of members of the Peer House. There are cells of the Tzeentch cult of the Rainbow Serpent active in the poor areas of the city, including Ostenfeld and Nyesnavistny. Another Tzeentch cult, the Order of the Keys, is said to operate somewhere in the city. Even Kháine has adherents, chiefly in the warrens of the Old City. Anyone travelling here, especially at night,

takes a risk, since most proscribed cults seek their sacrificial victims here.

### The Order of the Keys

This is a highly organised, small, exclusive and very powerful group, nominally worshipping Tzeentch. Never more than a dozen strong, their secret knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation. The Order is believed to be over two thousand years old, and there is a suggestion it came to the City with Talgris. However, their objectives are completely unknown and they have never made a move against the safety or status quo of the city. Indeed, they look to ensure it. Their membership is also unknown but currently contains a high-ranking member of The Cult of Ulric among them. His first loyalty is to Ulric but he would still never betray the Order.

The little that is known about the Cult was unearthed two hundred years ago by Mathius Rebold and published in a pamphlet. He was murdered soon afterwards and his writings have long since been destroyed.

### The Talabheim Reunion Front

*"Fifteen years ago I watched, bound hand and foot, while a patrol of Dogmen beat my brother to death. We were in Nyesnavistny - they said he'd 'sullied the streets of The Empire'. It wouldn't be so bad, but they gloat. Every Sigmarzeit 18<sup>th</sup>, there they are, parading their banners in their best clothes for the Sigmarite festival. In Talabheim, of all places. They say they're celebrating, but they're not - it's a taunt. One we can never answer, not openly."*

*Mikhail Mishkin, TRF leader.*

Kislevites don't have an easy time anywhere in The Empire and it doesn't get much harder than in Talabheim. Here the long presence of an immigrant



population has given hatred time to fester and grow. The Talabheim Reunion Front is a radical but small Gospodar revolutionary group (with terrorist leanings) who aim to improve the lot of Kislevites in Talabheim.

*"Crossbow bolts don't grow on trees, you know. What don't they grow on? Right. Trees."  
Sergei Pudovkin, TRF quartermaster*

The Front's stated agenda is simple enough - to bring about the handing over of Talabheim from The Empire to Kislev. The TRF proper, as opposed to its allies and hangers-on, is most concerned about doing this through violent and revolutionary means.

One of the primary channels of the Front, which both increases local support and furthers its ideals of fighting The Empire, is to look after the interests of Gospodar citizens. On occasion described as "a city watch for the little guys", the TRF's activities range from lending money to the destitute to maiming or killing members of the watch with a noted anti-Kislevite bent.

Most important is the advance of the Front's central agenda. The TRF has several sympathetic members in the Peerhaus and amongst the nobility. These men must be careful not to reveal their hands. Instead of vocally pushing for unity with Kislev, the Front's politicians seek to subtly alter the policy that emerges from the Peerhaus. This usually takes the form of distance from The Empire, often with an emphasis on the independence of Talabheim, which would (in the minds of the TRF) make the city fairly neutral with regard to territorial claim.

They achieve their blatant political propagandising through pamphlets and posters distributed on the streets (usually with graphic pictures depicting revolution, for the benefit of the illiterate). The message is also spread through violence. This is the trump card of the Front.

The TRF's tactics are primarily to kill prominent public figures known to be anti-Gospodar and important enough to attract everyone's attention. They are also known to firebomb buildings, and rumours speak of attempts to get hold of gunpowder. After this, they do yet more pamphleteering proclaiming the TRF's involvement, and proclaiming that these incidents will continue unless changes are made. The demands vary depending upon current politics within the Front, and upon which members were responsible for arranging the operation.

As with any organisation, there are various, ever-shifting factions within the TRF. The founding party from some years ago gave the group its name. They draw a line back to the historical signature of the treaty with Igor the Terrible's Confederacy of Kislevian States. Dubious at best, granted, but as it stands the TRF was founded to fight for "reunification" with Kislev. These people, either old hands or violent firebrands, are what one might refer to as "hard line". They are nowadays less and less strongly represented in the upper echelons of the Front.

A more political element exists, ranging from the more well-to-do with a pro-Gospodar agenda to students and other agitators. These politically minded people are not directly aligned with the TRF, but will often know many members of, and have sympathies with, the organisation.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those members of the Front who are in it for the fun of being in a secret group, or the violence. These insincere recruits are difficult to handle but can be useful.

In between is the bulk of the group. These people, almost exclusively Gospodars from the poorer areas of the city, act in all capacities for the Front. They are the couriers, informants, fighters, and the keepers of safe houses. There is no formal distinction between those who are 'in' and 'out' - links of family and friendship are largely the basis of the Reunion Front. Some of these people are full-on hard liners, who yearn for Talabheim to be part of Kislev. Slightly more want a separate council for the Gospodar people of the city, perhaps with a district for themselves. Still more simply want to stop being second-class citizens.

At its core, a committee of just seven men runs the Talabheim Reunion Front. No one elected them and they have no formal chain of command. They are just the men in charge. Each of the seven heads of the TRF has his trusted lieutenants. These lieutenants are in charge of getting together the Front's members for whatever job is at hand. If a member is especially noteworthy, a lieutenant may introduce that member to his patron on the committee.

The committee's seven members are not known to the general membership of the Front. Instead, the most well-known are those few soldiers of the TRF who live undercover, working more-or-less full time for the group. The committee controls the Front whilst hidden behind intermediaries, in order to avoid arrest. They are known to the public only by their *noms de guerre*.

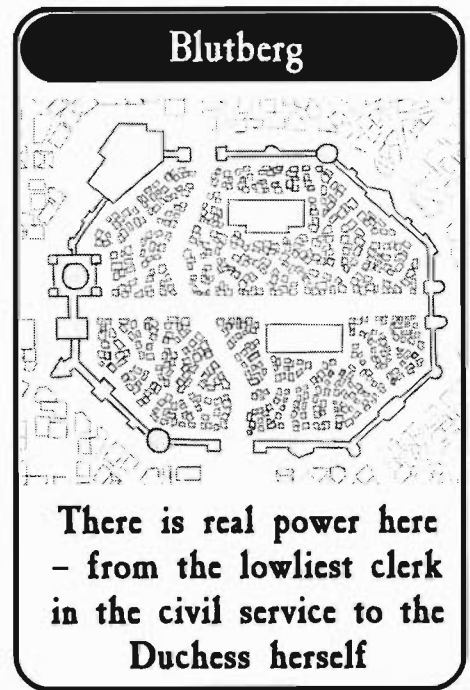
**Mikhail** - This is Mikhail Mishkin, the overall head of the Talabheim Reunion Front. His code-name is a double bluff, but one that has worked so far. Mikhail was present at the founding of the Front, though only as a witness. He has since risen to the top and manages as best he can to control a poorly organised terrorist group with too many wild factions. By day the forty-year-old Mikhail is an overseer at the Eldenstadt vodka factory.

**Boris** - Sergei Pudovkin owns The Star, a large inn in Silbertor. Unsurprisingly, The Star functions as the main safe-house and meeting point for the upper echelons of the TRF. High-profile members make a point of not going there but some of the lower-level TRF foot soldiers have taken to hanging around, even if they don't have any particular reason. The sight of lower-class Gospodars in the middle-class Silbertor is raising eyebrows and attracting attention, however.

**The Hammer** - Nikita Mirov is the committee's tool of vengeance. If someone hurts the TRF, he is in charge of making sure they get hurt back. If someone betrays the TRF, he is in charge of deciding how they are punished. Physically unimposing, Nikita is a scribe who works at the temple of Verena.

**Dmitri** - Nicholas Ouromov is the owner of, amongst other business ventures, several printing presses. He organises the Front's propaganda with several of his trusted employees.

**Angel, Marcos & Pyotr**. Angel and Marcos are brothers. They are Vladimir and Alex Rushkov - wealthy property owners who move in court circles within Talabheim. "Pyotr" is Ivan Syberg-Gronzy, a noble whose cousin sits in the Peerhaus.

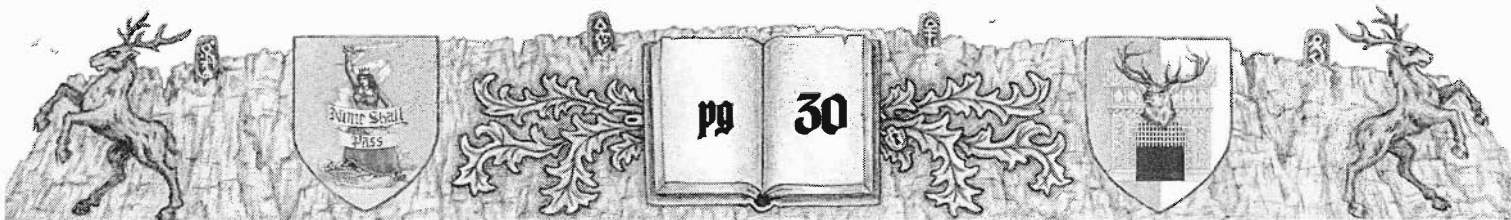


Blutberg is the administrative hub of Talabheim, the location of the government for the city and its hinterland. This is where the Royal Palace and the Peerhaus can be found, along with the Royal Chancellery. There is real power here - from the lowliest clerk in the civil service to the Duchess herself, the denizens of Blutberg are all concerned with the maintenance of the status quo in Talabheim.

Much of Blutberg is taken up with the buildings of the civil service and government, although there are a few residences here. These are the city homes of the nobles who run Talabheim, a place to stay when attending the Peerhaus, away from the petty concerns of their estates. All are grand townhouses, maintained at great expense whether or not the master wishes to make use of them. No noble house is taxable, and the city's treasury subsidises the upkeep of these residences through the Master of the Rolls.

The buildings of Blutberg are well kept if dated edifices. The architecture is generally conservative and old-fashioned, with the highly ornamented 'Dacisque' style predominant. Most of the buildings were constructed between the late 14th Century and the early 16th Century, from granite imported from quarries outside the crater. The streets are well tended and flagged, and there is a degree of order to the roads - most are straight and wide, allowing two carriages to ride abreast. There are a number of plazas, the largest of which is the famous Dieterplatz.

Blutberg is saturated with tradition and customs, even more so than the rest of the city. This is most apparent in the workings of the political administration. For example, every year a new Warden of the Sash is appointed from the civil service to ensure that on the first day of each month, the Messingweg is adorned with oak branches.







Although the origins of many of these rituals are forgotten, they are strictly upheld. One of the most notable customs is that commoners must walk on the right hand side of the street at all times, while the nobility can choose where to walk. Any commoner found in Blutberg either walking on the wrong side of the street or wearing a hat can be flogged where he stands by a member of the nobility. No resident of Talabheim would be stupid enough to break these unwritten rules, but visitors can often be caught out – two years ago a carpenter from Grunberg was flogged, almost to death, in the street by a minor member of the von Brunckhorst family.

During the day Blutberg throngs with important officials and civil servants going about their business between the Marble Hall, the Palace and the Peerhaus. Nobles can be seen travelling back and forth, tradition dictates that they should ride on horseback, and this is rarely broken. Loitering is almost unknown in Blutberg, and any common citizens with business in the area will leave once it is done, before the Watch find some pretext for arrest. Those who have come to engage in sightseeing may be subject to harassment unless they look respectable.

At night, the area is relatively quiet, with only a handful of younger rakes to be seen walking the streets in small parties, safe from the undesired attentions of the filthy commoners. Many are on

their way to the Spaltenskeller beer hall, from which they will roll home in the early hours of the morning. Nobles can be seen returning home from long sessions in the Peerhaus, or from an evening at the theatre. Any commoner found wandering the streets of Blutberg after dark is almost certainly up to no good, and will be subject to some very pointed questioning from one of the many Watch patrols who guard the area at night.

The City Watch maintain a constant heavy presence in Blutberg, with patrols posted at all major roads entering the district. This is known colloquially as the 'iron ring' – the intention is to maintain the safety of the Duchess and city government. This is only slightly relaxed at night, and the result has been that there is very little crime in the area at all. Two years ago, there was a spate of burglaries from the homes of several leading nobles. The stolen items were all returned the following week along with a small pendant in the shape of a cross. The culprit was never caught, and many suspect that he or she was a noble, resulting in the nickname of 'Stibbitzen, the Gentleman Thief'.

### Royal Palace

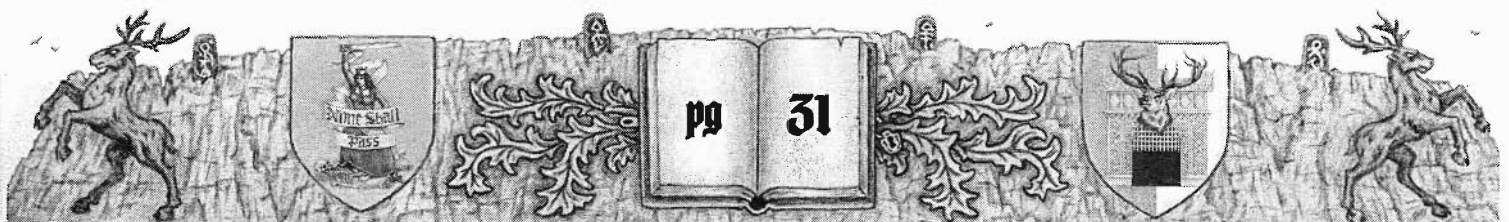
The Royal Palace stands apart from the other buildings of Blutberg, surrounded by 12' high metal railings topped with alternate wolf and stag's heads. The front gates are approached from the Dieterplatz by the broad expanse of the Breitstrasse. Twice a

month, the Grand Victualler of the Palace leads a procession carrying food and drink to the gates to commemorate the breaking of the siege of 1552.

The gates themselves are fashioned in the form of the city's crest in wrought iron – a gift from the city's dwarfen community in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The Royal Palace is generally referred to as the Neues Residenz by Talabheimers to differentiate it from the mouldering ruin found in the Old City. It is a majestic building, distinguished from the surrounding buildings in Blutberg by its lack of ostentation – it doesn't need it. With four storeys, the Palace is easily the biggest building in the area. It was built with harsh simple lines and has consequently not dated like many of the city's other significant buildings. The building is symmetrical, with two wings – that on the left houses the staff and retainers of the Duchess, while the right wing has the state rooms for visiting dignitaries. The right wing also houses the Duchy's extensive collection of antiques and curios from around the globe. Many of these (such as the set of golden plaques from Lustria) were gifts to the city from those trying to curry favour with the Duke of the day, although some were acquired so long ago that no record exists of their origin. The most famous example is the exquisitely beautiful set of Arabian armour and horse barding, thought to have been acquired during the crusades against Araby.

In front of the Palace is a paved forecourt on



**Rudolf Unteilbar**  
**Senior Civil Servant (Department of Records)**

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
3	32	31	3	3	7	38	1	39	48	58	68	60	36

**Alignment:** Neutral (Verena (leanings toward Arianka))

**Skills:** Acute Hearing, Arcane Language – Magick, Etiquette, Excellent Vision, History, Law, Read & Write, Secret Language – Classical, Sixth Sense, Super Numerate

**Possessions:** Well-cut conservative city garb, knife, writing materials.

**Quote:** *‘There are 742 documents of that name. You need to be more precise. And you will need to fill in a request chit.’*

Rudolf is a distinguished-looking gentleman, with an aquiline nose and a gaunt face. His mannerisms are precise and slightly effeminate – you get the impression that every movement has been worked out beforehand. He has a neatly cropped head of grey hair, receding at his temples. He is tall, and his height means that he tends to look down his nose at people, although this is merely a consequence of his stature, and not of attitude. He dresses in well cut but exceptionally conservative city garb.

Rudolf is not a passionate man, and tends towards a certain coldness in his demeanour. He views social interaction objectively, seeing himself as merely an observer and not a participant. He disapproves of change (typical for a civil servant in Talabheim), and as such sees no reason for anything to be hurried without due consideration. In common with many Talabheimers, he believes in a golden age of the city some time in the past, which change can only move further away from. Rudolf’s main motivation is to keep everything that surrounds him in order – he can’t abide mess or imperfection. Everything must be catalogued and pigeonholed before he is satisfied. This extends to the people he meets, and unless he can fit someone into his mental catalogue, he will avoid dealings with them.

Rudolf entered the service of the Royal Chancellery as a scribe at the age of 15. He has progressed up through the ranks of various departments to his current status as head of the Department of Records. He has no immediate family, and as such is very much married to his desk. Some of the younger scribes within the department have even joked that his desk is his wife. The older ones recognise that a family would not suit Rudolf, bringing as it does an inevitably disruptive change to one’s life.

Like a number of the city’s civil servants, Rudolf has religious leanings towards the little understood cult of Arianka. Whilst paying his respects at the shrine of Verena on occasion, he is far more drawn to the worship of a goddess which he confesses to knowing little about. All he knows is that the lost one holds a mysterious appeal, evoking prayer and the occasional financial donation to her shrine. It frustrates him immensely that Arianka has no clerics, but the ‘neatness’ and absolute nature of the Law gods appeals to his personality.

The Hall of Records has a poorly maintained and incomplete register of birth, marriages and deaths. The imperfect nature of this catalogue offends Rudolf’s natural sensibilities, and consequently he has spent the past 20 years requesting the funds and permission to go ahead with a complete census of all citizens. This has involved a great deal of process and delay as the funds and permission slowly but inexorably moved through the system. Rudolf finally got the necessary permission from the Peerhaus when he enlisted the support of Albrecht Schwetz, who recommended it by arguing that collecting information on all the inhabitants of Talabheim would allow them all to be taxed fully. This coincided with the introduction of a new Hearth Tax by the Abteilungsteuer, and the

Treasury supplied a small bursary for the census to be instituted and the relevant legislation was put in place. Not all members of the nobility support the census, as the more traditional peers believe that if the city could do without a complete record of its citizens for 1500 years, then it can well do without one now. Rudolf is pleased that the census can now proceed, although his true motivation is a personal one drawn from the pleasure he takes from indexing and filing everything around him.

In the last six months, he has begun to co-ordinate the information gathering. The census is intended to take the names and ages of all citizens, by household. It also has their professions, and taxation status. Rudolf has employed a number of census gatherers, who have already surveyed half of Schaffenhurst and a small portion of Silbertor. The task is necessarily a huge (and arguably impossible) one, and Rudolf has been granted permission to recruit larger numbers of census takers. PCs could be recruited but they will have to display the ability to read, count and write. After going through the myriad rituals required of even a temporary employee of the civil service they will probably be sent to survey the less than co-operative inhabitants of Suden Eldenstadt, or even the Old City.



which there is an elegant fountain, fed with waters supposedly from the Crystal Lake. By the main entrance stand two of the Storm Guard, in full knightly panoply. They are symbolically responsible for the defence of the building and all that are within. Walled off behind the building are extensive gardens, beautifully landscaped to resemble a ‘natural’ landscape, with rolling green hillocks and well-tended leafy glades.

The Storm Guard are permanently barracked at

the palace. An ancient order, their numbers are now limited to nine. This number was fixed in honour of the nine survivors of the Battle of Nizkiy Ridge, in Magnus the Pious’ great campaign.

Providing the main Palace defence are the Knights Panther. In addition to a heavy presence in the Palace grounds, they are frequently seen in Blutberg patrolling the area. An old law gives the Panthers full rights to kill “anyone threatening the presence of the ruler of Talabheim” and few doubt

their vigour in defending the Grand Dukes over the years. The Grandmaster lives at the Palace.

**City Hall**

The City Hall is widely known as the Marble Hall, and stands with its accompanying buildings alongside Dieterplatz. The main structure is not actually built from marble – rather the pillars and facings of the stone on the fascia are made from white Tilean marble, whilst the rest of the building



is constructed from local granite. The architectural style is typical of Blutberg – the steep pitched roof with dormer windows tops the carvings of animals and stylised ‘arboreal’ columns in the typical ‘Dacisque’ fashion. The accompanying Hall of Records is similar, whilst the City Treasury is conspicuous by its small high windows, reinforced door and the adjacent Watch post.

Within the Marble Hall is the Royal Chancellery itself. The many staff of the civil service spend their working day here, processing requests, filing chits and consulting ancient deeds. This is all done to a strict protocol that serves to make any dealings with the Royal Chancellery both incredibly long-winded and extremely frustrating. The staff of the Royal Chancellery are also entitled to many days when they are not permitted to work, either to commemorate a religious festival, or to pay homage to the death of some notable Duke from history.

On working days the Marble Hall is a mass of activity, with junior scribes running to-and-fro while irate merchants and citizens attempt to discover how they get permission to sell cloth, build a midden or one of a thousand seemingly inconsequential activities which the laws of Talabheim restrict. Some of the city’s wags have commented that with all the frenzied business apparent around the Chancellery, ‘it’s amazing that they have time to get nothing done.’

There is a large entrance lobby in the Marble Hall, through which citizens must pass to reach the central paved quadrangle in which those requesting to see the Lord Chancellor or representatives of the various departments are expected to wait. Each morning the petitioner must apply for permission to have an audience, and when (or if) this is granted they give their name, and wait in the quadrangle. They are then called by the High Summoner to their appointment. The post of High Summoner for the Chancellery is not necessarily given to a man with a loud voice – it is hereditary, and many appointments are missed because Old Wurtbad can barely speak above a whisper. The petitioner must respond with the correct response before he or she is admitted into the building. This is how it should work in practice, but in reality, very few people are seen each day, and most are forced to return the next day and the day after that. Even assuming an audience is granted and a member of the public succeeds in speaking to one of the departments, there is little or no guarantee that their request or complaint will be processed. Naturally the central quadrangle is a place where tempers can run high, and a number of Watchmen are posted here at all times.

Within the Marble Hall are the departments of the chancellery, including the offices of the Department of Guilds and Trade, the Department of Borders and Boundaries and the Department of Works. There are numerous scribes and lawyers who operate within and between departments, and the whole building is notoriously overstaffed. Every piece of correspondence and documentation is recorded in triplicate, with a copy going to the Hall of Records.

A small and dedicated staff of accountants and scribes, who maintain the city’s ledgers and financial records, staff the treasury building. They are headed by the notorious Albrecht Schwetz, a

cold, spare man who is arguably the most powerful figure in the Royal Chancellery, the tenacity with which he clings to the city’s purse strings have made him some powerful friends in high places, and some bitter enemies amongst the middle classes. Also within his jurisdiction and contained within the Treasury building is the Abteilungsteuer – the department of taxation and excise. Seemingly the only efficient part of the civil service, the tax inspectors of the Abteilungsteuer are expert at finding those who are not paying the numerous and confusing duties imposed by the city onto them. Nobles and their property are exempted from taxation and the payment of tolls in Talabheim. In the heavily fortified vaults below the Treasury is stored the city’s wealth, which does not amount to a great deal.

The Hall of Records holds the copies of the city’s extensive collection of deeds, charters, treaties and contracts. It is run by Rudolf Unteilbar, who expects his staff to keep the numerous papers and manuscripts strictly catalogued. Should a request of any particular document be handed to the department, whether internally from the civil service, or from a citizen, the large cataloguing ledgers are consulted before a request chit is filled out. Finding the requested document will take two to three weeks from this point. As almost all business in the Royal Chancellery will involve consultation of documents within the Hall of Records, it is unsurprising that nothing gets done very quickly.

#### Custom & Law The Halfitzen Clause

It is illegal for a peer to enter the Peerhaus while wearing a full suit of armour, unless he be a member of the Halfitzen noble house, who have special dispensation for their deeds in defending the city during battle with Tsar Ivan ‘the Lunatic’.

#### New Peerhaus

The New Peerhaus was built between 1363 and 1366, being the first building in Blutberg to be completed after the Royal Palace. In contrast to that building, the New Peerhaus is overdecorated and dated, with successive generations adding to the exterior masonry for well over 1000 years. Stag and wolf head reliefs dot the high walls, while ugly half statues of previous Dukes stand around the doors. The ornamentation is supposed to mimic the lines of the forest, but the architects have only succeeded in crowding the façade with too much detail. The flying buttresses, for example, are intended to give the impression of leafy boughs, and are secretly held by Dwarven masons to be one of the worst examples of carving ever done by men. Thankfully, ivy obscures much of the walls on the southern and eastern sides of the building and the adjoining Courthouse.

The original building was conceived and executed by the master builder Würztaub, who oversaw its construction from the foundations up. It is said that

the construction was much delayed due to the difficulty of obtaining stone, and that the Empress Ottilia herself threatened Würztaub with execution if he did not complete the Peerhaus within the year. Almost immediately the rate of construction doubled and the building began to take shape. However, as the months progressed, Würztaub began to grow weaker and more drawn. Some said that the strain of overseeing the building was taking its toll, whereas others intimated that he had made a pact with a demon to get the building completed on time. The New Peerhaus was completed in time, but shortly before he was due to be presented to the Empress, Würztaub disappeared.

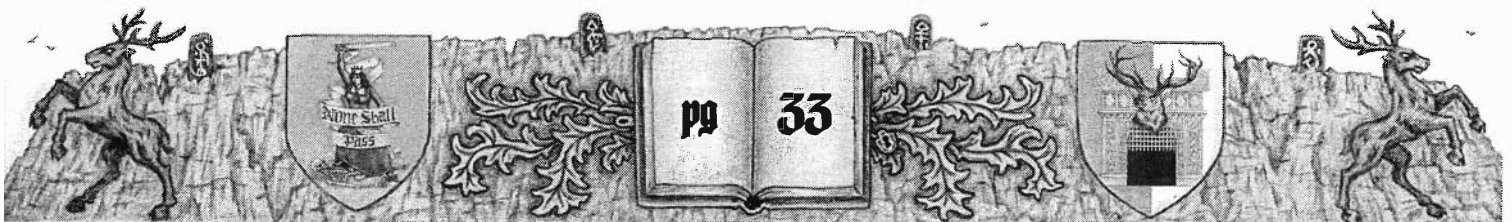
Popular folklore aside, it is very fortunate to the city’s rulers that Würztaub was never seen again, as it was only himself that had knowledge of the tunnels which run beneath the building. It is in these that the ‘Record Keeper’ dwells, in the form of The Auguste Brotherhood of Oath Sworn Keepers and Protectors of the Book. The tunnels have been modified in the past four hundred years, to slightly improve the living conditions.

Inside the Peerhaus there is one large room – the chamber, and a number of anterooms. The chamber has a high ceiling and the walls are decorated with dark carved oak panelling. The chamber is lit by a number of candles, lit each morning before the opening of a session by the Master Illuminator of the Chamber.

The chamber contains one hundred and fifty seats, one for each member of the Peerhaus, although the reduced number of peers means that at an average sitting, only fifty or so will be occupied. The peers sit in the same place whenever they attend a sitting, and consequently superstitions have arisen around certain seats in the house. The ‘Verdammensitz’, for example has not been occupied for over two hundred years and is shunned by all and sundry – the last occupant having been Graf Vierhaus, who disappeared shortly before Magnus came to Talabheim. During the battles against the hordes of Chaos in Kislev, he was seen by a company of Templars of the White Wolf leading a group of beastmen. Other seats carry bizarre names, relating to some forgotten event from the distant past.

There is one high stained-glass window in the chamber, which depicts Talgris founding the city. Underneath this is the platform on which the Duchess sits above all the representatives of the Premier Families. Directly beneath this is the Speaker’s Chair, from which the Speaker tries to keep order in the house and ensure that the correct protocol is followed at all times.

In one corner of the room is a raised dais with a lectern. Behind this is an ancient door, made from an unknown wood, which despite its age has not rotted or been attacked by worms. This door was brought from the Old Peerhaus when it was abandoned, and is the entrance to the Record Keeper’s tunnels. Carved upon the door is the image of a closed book – symbolic of the absolute authority of the Book of Records. The door is locked from the inside with a key of singularly strange design. At either side of the door stand the Eternal Guard of the Book – two members of the



Knight's Panther specially selected for their loyalty. Should anyone, including the Duchess herself, attempt to enter the door, the Guards will kill them where they stand. They are not permitted to leave their posts at any point during the year in which they are appointed to the position, only being relieved to eat and sleep.

When the Record Keeper is to be consulted, the Speaker of the Peerhaus will knock three times on the door, and calls 'Where is he that bears the Book?' three times. The door is then unlocked by the Record Keeper, who enters the chamber with the Voices, and places the Book of Judgements onto the lectern. He will then pass on what the Book says on the relevant matter and return through the door, locking it behind him.

There are several dozen staff of the New Peerhaus, who all have roles to play in the running of the building and in the numerous ceremonies and rituals. These include the Serjeant at Arms, who is responsible for the lives and welfare of the peers whilst they are in the Peerhaus. The man known as 'Ashen Square' sits to the left of the Duchess, and has a responsibility lost to all but the Record Keeper. There are a number of Yeoman Ushers who guide peers to their seats and are subservient to the Serjeant at Arms in guarding their safety.

Above the Peer's floor is a small gallery, which sits about two dozen. Members of the civil service, who have a particular interest in the day's debates, usually occupy this. Commoners are not otherwise permitted to sit in the gallery. On some days a peer may bring along a group of noble supporters or even clerics, but this is strictly controlled by the Serjeant at Arms.

There are many strange customs which have risen in the Peerhaus, and whilst they are not formally dictated rituals, they are nevertheless adhered to. Whilst there are no political 'parties' as such, family allegiances are strong, and for the past seven centuries members of the Untermenschen family have always sat directly opposite members of the von Nebelsfeuer family. In addition to this, many peers have bizarre props and items of clothing peculiar to the history of their ancestors. Duke Treidlich of Vateresche is one; he always carries a swatch of Orc hide into the Peerhaus, symbolic of his family's supposed triumph over a goblinoid raiding party 500 years ago. These curious relics also extend to the terms of address between peers - for example, members of the von Kruteun family are referred to as 'Stickbreaker', owing to the occasion when Otto von Kruteun broke a stick over the head of a political opponent in 2356. Peers from families whose estates lie distant from Talabheim are referred to as 'backwoodsmen'.

Beyond the main hall, the Peerhaus has a number of anterooms, including the lobby, a robing room, a small shrine to Ulric and the refectory, where peers can take refreshment.

### Courthouse

Attached to the New Peerhaus is the courthouse, at which the High Court holds its sessions. Similar to the New Peerhaus in appearance, it is effectively a wing of the building joined by a covered walkway.

Beneath the Courthouse and the Peerhaus run the

### Friedrich Spalten Patron of the Spaltenskeller

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	43	38	3	3	8	40	2	45	50	43	53	65	56

**Alignment:** Neutral (Ulric)

**Skills:** Blather, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Evaluate, Haggle, History, Law, Numismatics, Public Speaking, Read & Write, Ride - Horse, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun

**Possessions:** Smart clothing, short sword, leather jerkin.

**Quote:** *'Now where do you think the Dwarfs get all their gold? It certainly isn't from the hard work they are always claiming to do. No - it comes from the purses of decent humans like you and me. And what do you think goes on in that temple of theirs?'*

Friedrich is a short, slightly overweight man, with a thinning head of greying sandy hair, cut into a harsh militaristic style. He affects an avuncular manner, and has a broad smile. His clothes are smart and unobtrusive, although his wealth is apparent from his discrete jewellery. Despite his age, he stands up very straight.

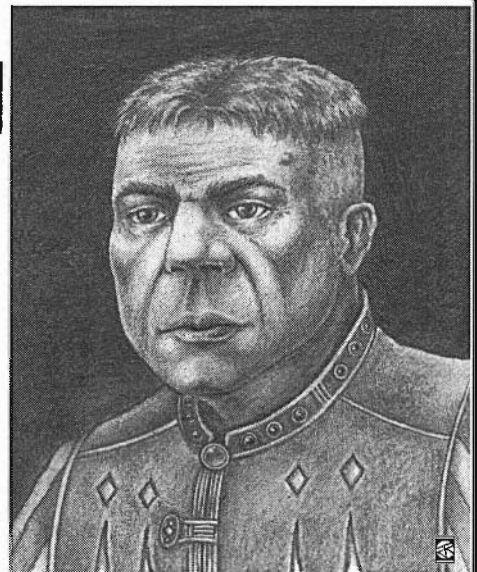
However, Friedrich is a dangerous man. He gives out an air of reasonable friendliness, and many come to like him immediately. His years of running the Spaltenskeller have given him an easy authority, and people have a tendency to defer to his judgement and look to him for leadership. Unfortunately, his fervent patriotism to Talabheim has resulted in his harsh and extreme views on all topics. He is a vicious racist, with a intense hatred for Dwarfs, foreigners and anyone who does not match his narrow views of decent folk. His reasonable manner serve to make his views seem more palatable to the casual observer, but a more astute listener can see how deluded and bitter Friedrich is. At the moment he is making noises about how The Empire should invade Bretonnia and the Wasteland.

Friedrich inherited the Spaltenskeller from his father, who inherited it from his father, and so on. He grew up in Talabheim, spending only a short period living in Middenheim during his 20s. He

tunnels of the Record Keeper, enabling him to appear in both places as appropriate. The interior of the courthouse is panelled much like the Peerhaus, with a door leading to the tunnels, which while impressive, is a modern copy of that found in the main building.

### Spaltenskeller

Blutberg is not a part of the city conducive to carousing and entertainment, and this is reflected by the lack of hostleries to be found. Whilst there are a number of high class inns in the neighbouring districts, Blutberg itself has only one place where alcohol can be purchased - the Spaltenskeller. Owned and run by Friedrich Spalten, it is where the upper classes of Talabheim go to get extremely drunk, sing loudly and act even more obnoxiously than usual.



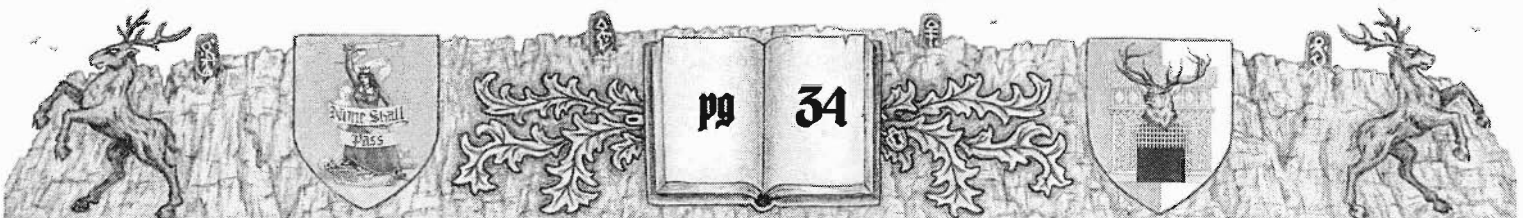
was sent to join the army by his father, but deserted and became a protagonist. He still tells of his exploits during service, and has started to believe them himself. He affects the personality of an old campaigner.

When Friedrich took over the running of the Spaltenskeller, he was glad to continue the tradition of the nobles' drinking hall. He has gained many influential friends, and is heartened to find that many of the nobility share his views, although with a little less fervour. The only thing that frustrates Friedrich is that the life of Talabheimers carries on with such inertia - whilst he approves wholly of tradition, he is annoyed by the fact that some of the changes he wishes to see put in place are unlikely to happen within his lifetime.

Friedrich lives with his wife Hilde, in a small town house just behind the Spaltenskeller, although most of his time is spent in the beer cellar. He has two sons and Hans, the eldest, is destined to inherit the Spaltenskeller, despite being a disappointment to his father. Hans has married a second generation immigrant from Averland, and this is not deemed a fitting match by Friedrich.

Despite its description as an 'Altes Bierkeller', the establishment is not situated under the ground. Rather it is a large and roomy hall, surrounded by a small leafy garden enclosed by railings with a large chestnut tree growing by the door. The building is reasonably featureless from the outside - a traditional Talabheim beer cellar in every way, although slightly better maintained than those found elsewhere.

Inside the hall, there are four long tables arranged longitudinally down the room. At the far end from the door is a small bar, although drinks are ordered at the tables and brought by one of the four serving maids. Greta, Lotti, Isolde and Hedda dress in traditional local fashion, and are all the very image of a stereotypical Imperial serving maid: blonde, buxom and pig-tailed. They spend the evenings weaving between the tables clutching several



foaming steins and maintaining their good humour, regardless of the behaviour of the clientele. There is a reason for this - they are paid very well by Friedrich to maintain the role of the genial hostess. The walls are hung with various martial paraphernalia in commemoration of the city's history, along with a bearskin affectionately referred to as 'The Tsar'.

The Spalteskeller serves only one kind of drink - a potent and expensive wheat beer brewed in the resident Hausbrauerei found in the basement. This is served in traditional iron steins. The patrons of the cellar are much enamoured of Spaltensbier, many of them (including Friedrich himself) expressing loudly that it is far superior to that 'disgusting dwarf muck' drunk by the commoners. Plates of food are also consumed to accompany the beer, including such traditional fare as pork knuckles, many varieties of sausage (Friedrich will particularly recommend the weisswurst), pickled cabbage and half chickens.

The Spalteskeller is open from mid-afternoon until the morning, although the majority of custom is during the night until early morning. Until the early evening, many of the customers are civil servants and the younger members of the city guard - the atmosphere is relatively calm, and PCs are unlikely to be made to feel very unwelcome. However, after dark, the Spalteskeller comes into its own as the most popular drinking hall amongst the traditionally minded upper classes. Most of the patrons will be of noble birth, or at least have some close connection to those who are. They bring with them the staunchly conservative mentality of the

Talabheim nobility, and the atmosphere reflects this. The Spalteskeller is a place where the most obnoxious views of the average noble are laid bare - the hatred for commoners, the uncompromising racism and virulent bigotry are all given free rein. Friedrich is a staunchly conservative man himself, and agrees with much of what is said over the beers and sausages. Parties of nobles come here to drink and say what they really think - and any commoner will have a very difficult time. Conversation frequently turns to the inadequacies of commoners, the clannishness and untrustworthy nature of Dwarfs or the stupidity of Alddorfers.

There are certain traditions practised by the patrons of the Spalteskeller, and failure to observe them will immediately brand someone as not being 'a regular'. First of all, the regulars all have their own places at the tables - anyone found sitting at someone else's place will be challenged to a duel, by either the person themselves, or by one of their 'good friends'. Duels are a common occurrence after a night at the Spalteskeller, as the nobility of Talabheim consider it the most honourable way to settle a dispute. Between the nobility they are rarely carried out with any real malice - there is little or no ill feeling after a duel resulting from a night at the Spalteskeller.

Also a problem for anyone unfamiliar to the beer cellar is the baffling variety of strange toasts which are called with alarming regularity. Each has its peculiar accompanying actions and songs, which are almost impossible to learn unless you have been drinking here for decades. Suffice to say, non-regulars are often caught out, and this can be taken

as a slight to the beneficiary of the toast. A duel will inevitably result.

### Dieterplatz

A large paved square, and at its centre is the only place where duelling is legal for all (nobles may fight on the Field of Justice). Each corner of the square has a statue of a famous Talabheimer.

### Temple of Verena

Situated on Dieterplatz between the new Peerhaus and the city hall. The temple is much smaller than the church of St Tomas of the Snows found in the Old City, and smaller than those in Middenheim and Nuln, but it still has the colonnaded facades. A symbol of an owl over an open book is in relief over the doorway. The rectangular temple is spacious and well lit by the many windows high on the walls.

There are a number of side rooms attached to the main temple. A couple of these are where Verenan mediation takes place. One of the larger rooms is the temple's extensive library, opened to any member of the Peerhaus by appointment and under a priest's supervision. Another room contains the shrine to Arianka.

This Temple was built so the Cult could make their influence felt in Blutberg. However, they did not wish to abandon their church in the Old City. Although there is always at least one priest here, the others make their way here in the early morning. The Shrine to Arianka was built into the Temple, moved from a forgotten location in the Old City. There is certainly a secret tradition associated with this, one only the most senior clerics are privy to.

## Relations with Neighbours and Other Cities

### Rivalry with Talabcland

In the two decades following Talabheim's secession, relations between Talabheim and Talabcland were strained if not miserable. A series of skirmishes were fought for control of the border lands. Yet the marriage between the Untermensch heiress and the son of the von Krieglitz Grand Duke proved effective at establishing a peace. The Grand Duke of Talabcland at times seems to take the support of the Talabheim Duke for granted, since 'they are but a junior branch of our House'. So far, the Krieglitz-Untermenschen have found no good reason to do otherwise, but few Talabheimers doubt that they would, if they found it in their interest.

### Hochland

During the eighth century, the Grand Duke Talgris II bequeathed the northern part of Talabcland to his younger son, the only child of Talgris II's second marriage to a Reiklander princess. Since then, what became the Barony of Hochland has been an independent province, although formally the Baron of Hochland is a vassal of the Grand Duke (since 2430 IC of the Duke of Talabheim).

The Hochland Barons have no record of interfering in Imperial politics. Therefore, they have been allowed to have things their own way since the Grand Dukes have had their hands full dealing with their other neighbours. During the Age of Three Emperors,

the Hochens became close allies of the Otilians, fighting the common enemy from Middenheim for the supremacy over the Ulrican provinces. The close ties proved strong, when almost a thousand years later Hochland changed its allegiance to the Otilian Duke of Talabheim, as Talabheim seceded from Talabcland in 2429 IC.

The present ruler of Hochland is Baroness Hildegard Tussen-Hochen. She is a peaceful middle-aged woman. She pays lip service to the Cult of Ulric as well as the Church of Sigmar (which has caused some raised eyebrows among the Ulrican nobles of the Hochland countryside), yet her true dedication is to the Mercy of Shallya. This has caused her involvement in Imperial politics to be at a minimum.

### Relations with other Cities

**Nuln** - During the second millennium Talabheim and Nuln were archenemies. The conflict was fuelled by religious disagreements between the Ulrican Talabecers and the Sigmarite Stirlanders (close allies of Nuln, which served as the cultural centre of Stirland) as well as ambitious rulers. Magnus the Pious successfully ended the open conflict, but there is still mutual animosity between them. Adding to this, the Talabheimers are at last realising that they are falling behind Nuln in economic and political power, and this pains them although they would never admit it.

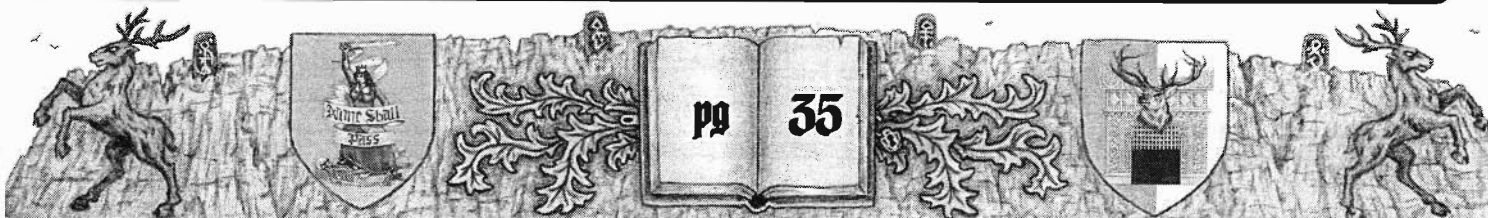
**Middenheim** - During the last centuries Talabheim

and Middenheim have been on friendly terms. The Sigmarite pressure following the era of Magnus, has forced the two major Ulrican cities to ally. Things have not always been so "civilised". A thousand years ago the two cities fought for dominance of the Ulrican lands. For two centuries Ar-Ulric resided in Talabheim, and the Otilians seemed likely to succeed. But that was a long time ago, and now Middenheim is the undisputed leader of Imperial Ulricans. However, the conflict with the Sigmarite provinces is currently at a level where these historic disagreements are forgotten.

**Alddorf** - Political relations with Alddorf are neutral. Talabheim is no dumber than other provinces and knows it is wise to be on good terms with the capital. Frequent disagreements between the Grand Theogonist and Fræi-Ulric tend to strain the relationship, but Duchess Elise is rather competent at smoothing things out.

### Kislev

There has been a large minority of Kislevites in Talabheim since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which has resulted in close ties with the southern cities of Kislev. The conflicts around 1900 IC seriously strained relations, but since Magnus the Pious' pact with Tsar Alexis, political relations have been peaceful, and there is substantial trade with the merchants of Kislev via the River Urskoy.



# A RECIPE FOR TROUBLE

A Scenario by John Foody

The Korver Hills are located in the east of Talabecland. At their foot runs the road between Kislev and Talabheim; otherwise, they are surrounded by the thick wood of Drakwald. The hills and a large expanse of the surrounding land was historically the seat of the Earl of Korver. However, two hundred years ago the heir to the title married into the von Strachen family of Nuln. Her descendants have remained in the south of The Empire and, except for the small matter of taxes, Korver has been all but ignored ever since.

There are two settlements larger than villages in Korver: Fort Korver and Trillheim. They sit on opposite sides of the hills, and relations between them have usually been good. Fort Korver is the older settlement, built on high ground to look over the forest. A garrison is located here with the remit of guarding the land and roads. Trillheim has grown large on the passing trade between Kislev and The Empire, and is more than happy to have no interfering Lord nearby.

The merchants who run Trillheim have made their money buying goods from both countries and transporting them to the nearest city to sell at a profit. The town's inns perform a booming trade (outside Winter, when all goes quiet) and Road Tolls give further profits for the town coffers. However, things

have taken a turn for the worse recently. The Trillheim road has become dangerous. A group of bandits, led by the now infamous Johann Stagge, have brought terror to travellers. For the past year, caravans and riders have been attacked on an almost weekly basis. Occasionally, they have killed; there is a total of ten confirmed deaths at this time. Troops from the fort and Road Wardens from the town have tried to track them down, but such efforts have been fruitless. The stakes were recently raised when three wardens disappeared on patrol, believed murdered by the bandits. Rewards have been posted for the capture of Stagge and his men, all of whom face execution. (The Korver road, being less travelled, has generally escaped these attacks.)

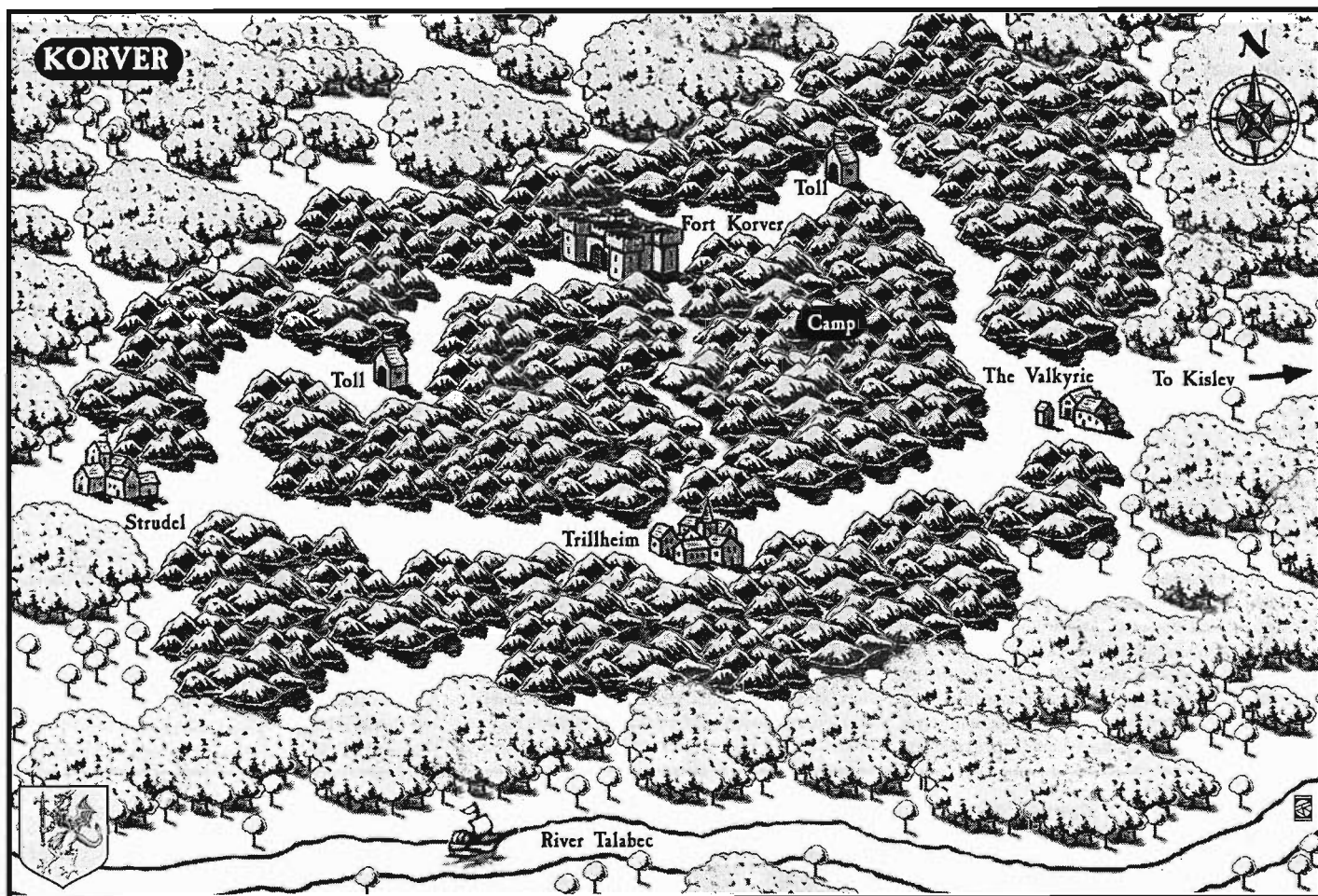
The reason the bandits have not been caught is because they are well supplied with intelligence. This is because they are composed of troops from Fort Korver. Johann Stagge is a work of fiction, a name given to the supposed raider by a local bard and which has grown into a local legend. The bandits certainly don't mind, as this serves to protect them.

Two years ago Aldred Gutmann, a clerk serving the von Strachen family in Nuln, was sent to Korver to act as treasurer. He took up duty at the Fort and was charged with collecting taxes and arranging their shipment back to Nuln. He was not happy with his

new job, being firmly a lover of city-life. He also grew to hate Trillheim's arrogant and greedy Burgurs. Depressed, he sat and seethed. His only relief in life was his relationship with Helga Wagner, owner of The Valkyrie, a nearby inn.

A year ago, Wim Dor, the garrison's second in command, came to him. Dor had run up huge gambling debts while on leave in Talabheim and was in danger from some shifty characters. Gutmann agreed to loan him the money, the seeds of a plan growing in his mind. He approached Erwin Prochnow, a merchant who he knew to be as unscrupulous as himself. Between them, the pair came up with a simple plan. Using men from the Fort, they would attack travellers on the Trillheim road. Not only would they get rich on the spoils, travellers would start to come through Korver instead. Helga would be able to inform them of potential targets and they would hear of any military action. It seemed perfect.

Dor knew which men he could trust and soon gathered them together. The attacks were a success. Helga's information was the key. She knew which caravans were worth attacking, either because they were rich or lightly guarded. The stolen merchandise was then taken to the bandits' hideout in Drakwald Forest. Here, Gutmann took the best items and the



other goods were sold, the profits split between everyone involved.

Last month the Fort's commander was replaced with Margrave Aspell, a young man from Talabheim. He is tasked with bringing Johann Stagge to justice. However, despite the eager "help" of his men, he has had no success. With the Fort Guard Captain drunk most of the time, the bandits have little chance of being caught. If they hadn't stolen a cookbook that is...

### Strudel

Strudel is a small village standing just before the fork in the road leading to Fort Korver and Trillheim. A large inn, The Waterfall, forms the centre of the village, and here the locals can be found complaining about the lack of official response to attacks. Their trade has been hit; fewer caravans are coming through and some aren't stopping at all, having lost time going on the Korver route. The PCs are asked if they are going east, and if they say yes they will be told that the quickest and easiest route is via Trillheim. However, they warn that the Trillheim road has been very dangerous recently, with a group of bandits who attack travellers. The less travelled road to Fort Korver is safer; it's longer, but there have been no attacks reported there. The locals speculate that this is because fewer travellers take this road and it is well patrolled by troops from the Fort.

### The Road

The Road to Korver: Soon after leaving the Trillheim road, the PCs notice a deterioration in the road surface, and soon it is little more than a wide and muddy track. A little later in the day they are approached by a patrol of eight armoured horsemen. All are dressed in red and white tabards, each adorned with a gold tree. The pull to a halt and greet the PCs, asking if they have seen anything suspicious, and warning them to be careful on the road. They recommend they speed up to reach the fort before nightfall, but that they enjoy the hospitality of the inn.

Around mid afternoon the road narrows noticeably, dropping in to a shallow dip, with rocks on both sides. Soon, they come to a tollbooth, built so that it cannot be bypassed. They are seen approaching and, when they reach the locked gates, two guards are waiting for them. A further two look down from the walkway above the gate. Their uniform is the same as the patrol. The toll is three crowns a leg. They ask similar questions to the patrol, but are friendly. PCs will be aware that the toll is very expensive but will be able to do little except either pay up or turn around and go back the way they came.

**The Road to Trillheim:** Late in the morning the PCs spot a horseman who turns and rides in the opposite direction. An hour later a caravan of six wagons is seen coming the PCs' way. The PCs recognise the same rider and notice that the guards are armed and prepared for a fight. They have no interest in stopping, and greet the PCs with hostility if any attempt at communication is made.

Coming to the crest of a hill, the PCs spot Trillheim in the distance. Soon after, they notice what seem to be some freshly dug graves at the side of the road. There are two of these, each with the bark of a tree placed in the earth at the head. On each has been

scratched a rough gate symbol. These are the graves of two guards killed by bandits a month ago and buried here by the caravan master, who didn't wish to lose any time or bring the bodies with him.

As they reach the city gates, the PCs will catch up with a slow moving pedlar, laden down with a full backpack. An old man, he is grateful for any assistance. If the PCs do help him, he will give one of the group a lucky Ulrican charm, "to light your way". He says it has been a bad time recently – the woods have been full of Orcs and the bandits have taken advantage of the lack of men on the road. The local farmers are scared that they will be the next target and that no will be there to help.

The guards at the gate, among them a Halfling, question the PCs as to their intentions, destination and origin. The toll here is a gold coin per leg. They are pointed towards the Trillheim Tavern, located near the far gate.

### Trillheim

Due to the reduction in passing trade Trillheim is quieter than normal, but it remains busy. Wagons and people fill the streets and once a week there is a popular farmers' market. The people of the town are generally friendly, although there is a lot of anger towards the bandits. Much of this is directed towards the town's burgers. However, as the town's richest inhabitants, it is the burgers who are losing out most.

Trillheim was born out of a village that grew up around various mining settlements, but the mines were emptied long ago. Some prospectors still pass through, but most end up heading to Bergsburg. The town's crest incorporates a pick as a sign of this heritage.

A stone wall surrounds the town, although a few buildings do stand outside this. The gates are open during daylight hours and are well guarded at all times. Shrines to Ulric and Handrich are the most frequently visited in town, although many villagers also place offerings at a shrine to Taal located on the edge of the forest. Although no-one is really sure why, there is much bad feeling towards the Old Faith here, and Druids will be given at a hard time. The town has no shrine to Sigmar; the last was burnt down during the Age of Three Emperors.

The only other distinguishing feature in the town is the presence of a small group of halflings. Numbering a dozen families, they are fully integrated into the town and have little, if any, trouble from the humans. Alphonse Gooseberry, a cleric of the goddess Esmeralda, is their spokesperson. He is a popular figure in the town, and the good relations between races in the town are thanks to him.

Jasper Vorheim runs the town inn. His brother runs the inn at Fort Korver.

### Fort Korver

Standing on atop a hill, the central tower of the fort looks over the surrounding land. The fort wall encompasses a large area, but the main fortification consists of a small inner keep and the outer wall. In between these stands a large number of buildings. These include barracks, homes, stables, storerooms, a number of traders and a good size inn. Indeed, once the PCs enter they will notice a number of labourers working on an extension of the inn. All this is a sign of prospering trade bought about by the bandit's activities.

The Fort is much quieter than Trillheim, but trappers, travellers and soldiers all go about their business. The population of the Fort consists of forty soldiers, eight local traders and fifteen or so other civilians. This is often more than doubled by passing travellers.

The guards on the gate are friendly, but PCs will notice they are eagle-eyed, carefully looking over the PCs. They ask them first for their chits to show they have paid the road toll. They recommend they stay at the inn and try some of the famous pigeon pie. However, they are also warned it is illegal to go out after dark unless accompanied by a member of the guard. Nailed to a post by the gate is a wanted poster for Johann Stagge offering a 50GCs reward for him and 10GCs for each of his men. (This can be changed to any amount the GM feels is suitable.)

Walking towards the inn, the PCs pass a couple of fur traders, their goods piled high on outside tables. One merchant is haggling with a large, mean-looking Kislevite over the price of some stoat fur. PCs looking for a good quality fur coat or hat will be able to get a bargain here.

### The Baker

Past the fur traders the PCs catch the smell of cooking food, seemingly coming from a shop with a tin pie hanging over the door. Nearer, though, shouts can be heard from inside. Opening the door results in some birds flying at the PCs in a bid to escape. They are followed by a shout – "shut the damned door!" Inside the shop, all is commotion. A large table and two large ovens dominate the warm room. However, running around the table is a harassed middle-aged baker covered in flour. Pigeons are flying everywhere, a cat chasing them from one part of the room to another. Feathers fly everywhere, and on the floor lie two broken wicker cages. The baker, Sepp Castel, begs the PCs to help him get rid of the cat. Once the cat is gone and the birds are back in their cages he thanks the PCs and introduces himself. He offers to come across to the Korver Arms later and buy them dinner – one of his finest pies. He says to tell Ivan, the landlord, that Sepp sent them.

### The Korver Arms

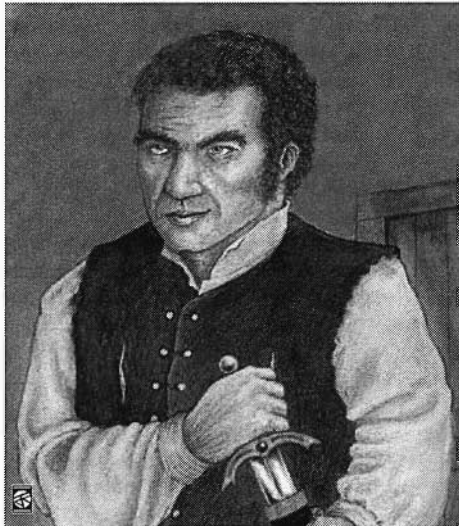
Inside, the inn is busy and somewhat noisy as a result of the labourers' ongoing work on the building. As they walk in a young serving girl waves to them and points to a table in the corner. A few minutes later she asks them what she can get them. At the moment they only have bread and cabbage stew to eat, but there will be pie later. If they say Sepp sent them she will bring over a jug of good ale. The drink is good here, but anyone drinking only water will suffer a bad stomach bug.

Rooms are available but both room and board are more expensive here than elsewhere on the PCs' journey. Double the prices in the WFRP rulebook.

As the evening stretches on, the inn fills with travellers and off-duty soldiers. Around eight o'clock, two men arrive in the inn and take an empty table near the fire. The conversation in the inn quietens as they settle, but soon picks up to its previous level. The serving girl, or anyone else, will be able to tell the PCs that this is Margrave Aspell, the commander of the Fort, and Herr Gutmann, the Treasurer of Korver. The Margrave is new here, and has been sent to deal with the bandits.

### The Cleric

Whether the PCs are in Trillheim or Korver they will be approached by a dignified and well-dressed halfling. Halfling characters and those with Theology recognise a brooch he is wearing as that of the goddess Esmeralda. Shaking hands, he introduces himself as Alphonse Gooseberry of Trillheim. He says to the PCs that he is looking for help, and asks if they will hear him out. If they agree, he begins by asking them various questions. Only if they strike



him as (reasonably) competent and trustworthy will he explain his problem.

"I have lived in Trillheim for twenty years now. I look after the spiritual needs of the many halflings in the town. I am also proud to say that I am a friend to many, and I do my best to help settle disputes and provide support wherever I can. However, a problem that I cannot begin to solve has occurred. Sad to say, I also believe I cannot trust anyone locally. We arranged for an artefact to be brought here from The Moot for a ceremony to inaugurate a new temple to the goddess. We were also lucky in that two children were due to be born and we hoped to use the artefact to help perform their naming ceremony – this would be a great blessing for them.

"However, as the artefact was being brought here, the escort was attacked. The raider took the artefact and other possessions from the three guarding it. The cleric who had brought the artefact to us was wounded when he tried to take the men on. Thankfully, he only received minor injuries. The culprit, as you may have guessed, was Johann Stagge and his bandits. I hope you will take on the task of tracking down these bandits for me, and for all my congregation."

Gooseberry can only offer a small amount in payment, although he promises "the blessing of the goddess". The reason he has asked the PCs is that he strongly suspects someone locally is linked to the bandits and passing them information. The artefact

is a good sized gold box inscribed with symbols of Esmeralda.

If there are any halflings among the PCs, he takes them to one side and says, "I hope you will, for the sake of the goddess, help me find the artefact. As you may have guessed it is one of the original Books of Algar Heathersop. However, when you try and explain what it contains, humans immediately think it is nothing more than a book of recipes. Thus they treat it with scorn. The book was my responsibility, and I hope you convince your friends to help."

The artefact is indeed a cookbook, although it scared to the Cult of Esmeralda. It is stored in a locked box made of oak and coated with a layer of gold. The key for the box is carried by the Cleric responsible for its safety. Although the bandits didn't get hold of the key they broke the box open to discover there was only a book inside. The box still lies at the bandit's hideout, but Gutmann has taken the book. He recognises that it must have value (although he doesn't appreciate what it really is) and that he may be able to sell it somewhere far away. Thus it lies at their hideout.

### The Murder of the Other Cleric

Hans Stall was a frequent visitor to the Fort, a Cleric of Taal who maintained the Temple there. A month or so ago Udo Kluge, a local trader, told him that he suspected someone in the fort was involved in the bandit attacks. Stall investigated but was spotted and killed, and then buried in the forest. Kluge suspects foul play, as Stall left behind various possessions. However, he is too frightened to approach anyone else.

### The Bandits' Operation

The bandits consist of anywhere between twelve and twenty men. (This is up to the GM, depending on the ability of the party.) All are from Fort Korver, and they include Wim Dor, the garrison's second in command. He leads their day to day actions, but is commanded by Aldred Gutmann, who decides on what should be attacked and what shouldn't be. When travellers arrive at the Valkyrie, usually having come from the town of Bonstad, Helga sends a message to Sepp Castel (who cannot read), who brings it to Aldred Gutmann. He then decides on whether or not to attack. If so, he summons Wim Dor and lets him know when and where. Wim then leads a patrol that day, and attacks.

### The PCs' Investigations

What the PCs decide to do after speaking to Gooseberry is up to them. The scenario has no set plotline, but if the PCs do not uncover who is involved then eventually Dor leaves the fort after falling out with Gutmann. This occurs five days after the PCs arrive at the fort and a day after the bandits lose a man attacking a caravan. However, the PCs can still save lives and bring the criminals to justice by their actions if they persist with their investigation.

Details are given of the main events over these days, along with possible character reactions to PC investigations. GMs should be familiar with the time scale, who is involved and to what degree, as it is likely that a fair amount of improvisation will be required.

There is also a danger the PCs will drift a little at first. In these cases GMs should consider using Udo

### TIMELINE

- Day One:** This is the day that the PCs arrive at the fort. If they came here directly they will meet Alphonse Gooseberry at the inn. Otherwise this will have occurred earlier in Trillheim. Late in the evening Captain Gottahrt is carried out of the inn drunk.
- Day Two:** Early in the morning Gutmann receives news by pigeon of a caravan coming through. Mid-morning, Aspell summons his men to tell them about the importance of finding the bandits. "It is our duty to Korver and the people who travel its roads that they can do so in safety."  
Gutmann tells Dor of the caravan and he changes the patrol rota. If the PCs bribe a guard and know roughly what to ask for, they can discover this. Dor leads the patrol out an hour later.  
Around midday a caravan arrives, having being attacked by the bandits. This is the first attack on the Korver road, and shows that Johann Stagge is becoming more daring. Bales of fur, along with whatever else the bandits could carry by horse, were taken.  
During the evening one of the caravan's teamsters recognises Albers Ullage, who is both a guard and a bandit, and follows him outside. Ullage stabs him to death, claiming the man attacked him. Dor has him jailed on grounds of lunacy and murder, for subsequent trial by the commander.
- Day Three:** Dor comes in the pub and whispers to Gutmann. Gutmann tells him to go away. Dor refuses and Gutmann gets angry. Dor smacks his drink from the table and storms out. Albers Ullage is brought before Margrave Aspell, who listens to the evidence of the events leading to the stabbing. Three other guards (all bandits) confirm the story that the man simply followed him outside and attacked him. Albers will be found guilty of murder, and sentenced to be hung in a week's time. (It would be sooner, but what with all this business, there is no time to properly organise a scaffold, entertainments and the like.)  
Later that night another pigeon arrives.
- Day Four:** A patrol, led by Dor, returns claiming to have fought the bandits and lost a man. Actually, the caravan proved tough and one man was badly wounded, and now lies dying in the forest. Three others received minor wounds. The caravan stays at Trillheim overnight.  
Later that evening Dor goes to Gutmann and demands a larger share of the profits. After all, he argues, it's his men that are dying. Gutmann says that he cannot agree, and Dor storms out.
- Day Five:** Dor leads a patrol of his men out early in the morning. They head to the camp site and take the goods they have accumulated before heading out.



Kluge to involve them further. His suspicions should focus the PCs on the involvement of the fort personnel.

### Life in the Fort

Fort Korver is a small place, but a busy one. Mostly there are soldiers and trappers to be seen, but families are here too, so it seems more like a small town. The atmosphere is generally good, although strangers are treated a little more coolly. The various traders are open during daylight hours, as are the two gates. Patrols leave soon after dawn and return later in the day. Often they stay elsewhere before returning the next day. Sentries are relieved after six hours and all soldiers eat in a common mess hall. The centre of the village is the inn, although soldiers often relax in their barracks. The after-dark curfew is strictly enforced. After all, travellers are all expected to be at the inn. Known locals are exempted from this.

### The Caravans

The following list broadly details the caravans and travellers that have passed, or will pass, through the area and in doing so get attacked in the days before and during the PCs' stay. Numerous others have passed though safely.

**Three weeks before PCs arrive:** A caravan of three wagons travelling west was attacked on the Trillheim road. One guard was killed as he attacked a bandit, shot by a crossbow. The caravan was carrying Vodka and the bandits emptied a wagon and rode off.

**Two Weeks before:** A pair of merchants travelling

to Trillheim from the East were robbed. Both were searched by one of the bandits, but only one was injured. The PCs can talk to them in Trillheim, where they are being cared for by the town. They saw eight men, and the only one who spoke was Johann Stagege (they are assuming this). His voice was muffled but his accent was local.

**A Four Seasons Coach:** The coach was travelling to Talabheim and was halted by six riders on the road. Two more arrived behind the coach. Five of the bandits were pointing crossbows at the driver and guard. They were pulled down from the seat and taken into the woods. The scared passengers were ordered from the coach and told to place their valuables in a bag. Meanwhile one of the men searched their cases. When the bandits had gone, the drivers were found tied up just away from the road. None of these people are around to talk to.

**Five Days before:** A noble family heading West were stopped. One of their guards tried to struggle when searched, and was stabbed with a dagger. He survived and is recovering at an inn in Trillheim. He is an ex-soldier and says they were well organised and that Stagege was obviously their leader. The horses were also well looked after. He noticed two different markings on the horses. (Early on, the bandits took horses from their victims; they now use these, keeping them at their hide-out.)

**Two days before:** Two wagons carrying fur are stopped. They are heading to the Talabec to begin a long journey to Marienburg. Again, six bandits stop them, while two come from behind. They take what

they can carry and head South into the forest. One of drivers thinks he also saw movement in the bushes.

**Two days after they arrive (Day Two):** A Kislevian Artisan and his escort are forcibly stopped. Instead of stopping the coach the artisan orders it to crash through the men. They fired their crossbows, all missing. However the leader cut the drivers' head clean off as he passed. They then beat the artisan, stole his horses and set the coach on fire. His two servants carried him to the town. He remains unconscious for a week.

**Five Days after:** Two wagons carrying expensive furs are stopped. It is heading to Talabheim too. An escort of four soldiers accompanies the guards. One was shot dead from the trees and a second was pulled from his horse as the bandits struck. A further two were injured, and a horse had to be put down. However, they did fight back, as they were armed with bows too. They succeed in wounding a number of the bandits; one later dies in the forest and is buried near there hideout.

This is only a fraction of the traffic on the road during these days. Some other travellers are listed in case your players ask:

- A caravan of six wagons and twenty guards going East to Talabheim. They are carrying various expensive foods unavailable in Kislev.
- Two caravans carrying Bretonnian wine, also heading for Kislev. They have six guards. The caravan master is nearly comatose with fear of being attacked. However, he will not hire more men.
- A coach of dignitaries travelling to Wolfenburg to discuss trade. They are carrying a concealed chest of gold and are thus nervous.
- The Pushkin family, travelling from The Empire to the Kislevian capital to see their daughter who is living at the court.
- A family of fairground performers travelling to Trillheim to perform.
- Three wagons, six guards, three drivers and a wagon master. They are going to Wolfenburg, carrying furs, and pass through Fort Korver.
- Two wagons and four guards/drivers. They are going to Trillheim only to sell furs, claws and teeth.
- Five Caravans with a dozen guards and drivers. They are going to Talabheim, to sell ore.

The information on these travellers can be gained from a number of sources, whether through gossip or by talking to the travellers themselves. If the PCs delve into the details enough they may discover the following facts:

- None of the attacked saw a patrol of soldiers that day. Many other travellers did. This is because the bandits were supposed to patrol that stretch of road. There are few records that could be checked to establish who was on patrol when. Instead, everyone simply points them to Dor. He will lie and dismiss the stories, claiming that sometimes the guards ride off-road to track down toll-evaders or sightings of bandits. However, if the PCs talk to the guards themselves, they won't think to change their stories. However, once Dor suspects the PCs are asking questions he will tell his men not to talk to them.



- All the travellers were going west. Talking to the staff at The Valkyrie inn will confirm that they all stayed there the night before. (This isn't particularly surprising; of course they did – where else would they stay?)
- Those attacked were generally the easiest targets, having few guards or just being smaller.

## The Players

### Ulrich Gottaht Captain of Guard

Ulrich Gottaht is Fort Korver's Captain of Guard. Nearing fifty, he is frequently drunk and little respected by his men. He has been here twenty years but few remember him as the brave and dashing captain who arrived at the fort a hero. Back before his hair turned to grey he had served as a cavalry officer for Duke of Talabaleland. He was renowned for great deeds during a number of minor wars, and was decorated many times. Indeed, he was a close friend of the Duke and often drank at his side. However, he soon discovered that the loyalty was only one way. One autumn morning he was asked to escort the duke's cousin on a hunting trip and happily did so. However, luck was not with them. When Gottaht and the young noble were separated they were attacked by a rogue Beastman. Gottaht only just managed to defeat the beast, only to find his companion reduced to a nervous wreck.

On Gottaht's return, he collapsed from his wounds. When he awoke he found that the Duke would no longer talk to him and he was to be sent to Fort Korver; the young cousin did not want any witness to his disgrace. Before he could leave, however, he had to wait some months for a festering leg wound to heal. He has walked with a pronounced limp ever since.

His life at the Fort was a slow path to alcoholism. Driven by bitterness, in time he became a shadow of his former self. A few years ago he began skimming money of the top of tolls. It was never a large amount – until recently, when more traffic began coming through due to the bandits. However, he has no idea about what is really going on. He has left most of his duties to his lieutenant, Wim Dor.

### Lieutenant Wim Dor Second in Command of Fort Guard

Lieutenant Wim Dor is Ulrich Gottaht's second in command. He is also the leader of bandits and perhaps the closest to being the real life Johann Stagger. He performs many of Gottaht's duties, but has grown to realise he is never going to amount to anything more while he is the military. Although a competent soldier and administrator, his surly attitude means many don't get on with him. He is also well known to have a gambling habit and several debts. His latest is by far the worst. He spent some time in Talabheim, and ended up owing The Vory money. This was no light matter, and not paying meant his death.

On his return he went to Aldred Gutmann, begging to be loaned the money. Gutmann, saw that Dor was the perfect leader for his bandits – and he was right. Dor leapt at the chance. Not only would Gutmann pay his debt, Dor saw that he could make enough money to successfully get out of the fort and set himself up elsewhere. Gutmann chose well, for Dor

threw himself into the task. Not only did he know which men he could trust to follow him, he is also in charge of organising the guard rotas. Thus he could ensure that his trusted men were on the same patrol at the same time.

The only doubts he has had so far came to him when he realised he had to kill Stall, the Cleric of Taal. It had been obvious that the cleric had begun to suspect him, and thus Dor tricked him into the forest. There he and two of his men killed and buried him.

Still, it couldn't last. Dor has become greedy. He wants to attack more travellers and is happy to take some risks doing so. He also wants a larger share of the profits. He has argued with Gutmann on more than one occasion but has so far been convinced to hold back.



M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	50	35	4	5	10	45	2	39	50	39	39	32	45

**Skills:** Disarm, Dodge Blow, Drive Cart, Follow Trail, Secret Language – Battle Tongue, Specialist Weapon – Two Handed, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun, Very Resilient  
**Possessions:** Sleeved Mail Coat, Mail Coif, Shield, Dagger, sword, flail (on horse)

### The Bandits

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	40	30	4	3	9	39	1	32	27	29	32	29	29

**Skills:** Dodge Blow, Drive Cart, Follow Trail, Secret Language – Battle Tongue, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun, Very Resilient  
**Possessions:** Sleeved Mail Coat, Mail Coif, Shield, Dagger, Crossbow (while as bandits)

### Aldred Gutmann Fort Treasurer

Being exile to Fort Korver was the worse fate that could befall Aldred Gutmann. In Nuln, the theatre, opera and social parties were his very reason for



living. He had to work hard to fund such a lifestyle, and was trusted by the von Strachen family. When they became aware that Trillheim could provide valuable income, they sent him to ensure the collection and delivery of taxes. His many protests were of no avail, and he was made Fort Treasurer and given a handsome salary. He arrived at two years ago and has not grown to like the place since then. He particularly grew to loath Trillheim's Burgomeisters, who are always asking for concessions and blatantly lying to his face.

A handsome man, he dresses plainly and is always well groomed. He also has an excellent mind for figures, takes great pride in his job and would never consider fiddling the books for himself. He considers the banditry as something completely separate. A year or so ago he met Helga Wagner, owner of The Valkyrie, a nearby inn. Much to his surprise they fell in love. He plans to gather enough money to leave as soon as he can. He senses Dor is becoming unreliable, and has never really trusted Erwin Prochnow. Gutmann has hidden the smallest and most valuable items in a chest in his bedroom, which has a false bottom. This includes the book of Algar Heathsop.

### Margrave Aspell Commander of Fort Korver

After the first few weeks of bandit attacks, the leaders of Trillheim send a delegation to the von Strachens in Nuln. Their response was to send a new Commander of the Fort. They gave the task to Margrave Aspell, not because they had any belief in his abilities but because he was showing far too much interest in one of the young von Strachen women – one they planned to wed off to more favourable advantage.

Aspell is eager to solve the problem, not only because it will make him look good but also because he genuinely dislikes people being killed. (He realises, however, that it is sometimes necessary – for example to uphold the law by setting an example to other potential criminals.) He has no idea that it is his men that are responsible. He has no inspired plan to solve the problem except regular patrols. He listens to and trusts Gutmann, and welcomes Prochnow's advice, but will listen to any ideas that might help solve the problem. Once he has heard a good idea, he will go for it. Thus if the PCs can get to him he will prove a useful ally.

In his mid-twenties Aspell is a handsome, rather

pale looking noble. He is very polite and well-spoken and takes the time to listen to everyone including the servants. This has not endeared him to the guards at the fort who are used to a more forceful leadership, but they know enough to follow his orders.

**Erwin Prochnow  
Merchant & Fence**

When Aldred Gutmann came to him with a plan to make money from robbing travellers, Erwin Prochnow knew that it was a good deal. Originally making his fortune from buying and selling furs, he has now grown to be the most powerful man in the Fort. It is not a power he has ever really excised, but is fully aware that if he wanted to he could.

Prochnow was to sell on any goods that Dor and his men took. He would find it easy to place them on wagons going West to Talabheim or East to Kieslv, there to be sold. He also had enough people he trusted to be able to do this. The money was then split between himself and Gutmann. No-one apart from the Treasurer knows of his involvement. If he was ever accused of being involved he would claim that he simply bought goods from Gutmann in good faith. As Gutmann was Fort Treasurer, he never thought to question him as to their origin.

In his fifty-second year, most of his hair has turned grey. Overweight, he is also afflicted by terrible gout. Due to this he hardly ever leaves his home. His wife has been dead ten years, and he gets all his meals delivered from the inn. The only effort he makes to go out is to deal with his more important customers and to dine with the Margrave. If the PCs approach him he will be reasonable and concerned, but will deny all knowledge. He will not crack under any pressure less than torture, which is not a good idea.

**Udo Kluge  
Trader**

Kluge has lived and worked at the fort for twelve years. His father was a trapper who settled at the fort to trade furs instead of catching them. On his death, the twenty-year old Udo took over the business. Many of his customers are friends from his father's days and although he does well, he hasn't any real aptitude for trade. A timid man, Udo's shyness means he is often beaten to the best bargains and customers. He has three children from his marriage to a Korver girl, and they make him very happy. Thus his life is ever so simple, just the way he likes it. Or it was, until it went wrong.

Some weeks ago Udo was passing the stables, where a patrol had just returned. By chance he happened to catch a glimpse of a cloak sticking out of a pack. It was heavily splattered in fresh blood. Then news arrived that travellers had been attacked and killed that very day, and the guards had failed to catch them. No stories were told in the inn that night of a violent encounter with Orcs or anyone else, and Udo began to suspect that the bandits are in the pay of fort. However, he was afraid to say anything, not knowing who to trust, and was worried about putting himself and his family at risk.

The days went by, and with them came news of further attacks. Udo knew he had to tell someone, and as luck would have it a friend arrived at the fort. He had always got on well with Hans Stall, the local Cleric of Taal, looking after the shrine when the cleric was away. They spoke into the early hours, and Stall

promised Udo that he carry out some investigations. That was the last he saw of the cleric, for soon after, Stall went missing. Udo has been maintaining shrine ever since, and if the PCs visit it they will see him tidying up. He is more terrified than ever now, believing Stall to be dead, for he has left his few possessions behind.

If the PCs talk to him about any of this, it is obvious he is trying to hide something. A little persuasion will get him to tell the whole story. However, he is unclear of the details. He has no idea who the cloak belonged to, nor even remembers exactly what day he saw it.

If the PCs ask around about Stall, he was seen speaking to Dor and another guard. They certainly weren't arguing. If Dor is asked, he says that was true, and that he was simply asking the Cleric if he had come across any sign of the bandits in his travels. He claimed not to. If asked, he will claim that Stall made no mention of the idea that the fort was somehow involved.

**The Valkyrie**

This is a successful inn, owned by Helga Wagner. Her family has run it for generations; it is renowned by travellers who regularly use it. Helga is a widow; her husband died in an accident six years ago. They had no children and she threw herself into the inn. Many consider her to be a very cold person – this is a shield she deliberately developed. This was cut through when she met Aldred Gutmann and she is willing to throw it all away for him.

He convinced her to send a message to Sepp when a suitable traveller/target stays at the inn. Sepp then hands it to Wim. A party is then organised to rob them. Helga does feel remorse at this, but she doesn't wish to disrupt her relationship with Gutmann.

The inn is large, surrounded by a solid wall. At this time of year it is always busy and six staff are employed on a full time basis. All are loyal to Helga and will tell her of anyone asking questions. They all know about her relationship with Gutmann and are pleased for her, although they think he is a bit of a snob. Ochs, the stable boy, has been given the task of looking after a half-dozen pigeons that Helga and Gutmann use to communicate. He has become fond of them and named them all. He cannot read the messages but should the PCs get hold of them, they will find that they contain only basic information, and that in code ("3C, 2G" means 3 caravans and 2 guards). Aldred knows that Helga will judge matters well enough that she will not need to provide about times, and he knows the route they will be taking. All this changed recently when a caravan took the Korver road at the last minute, but Helga sent another message to warn him and it was attacked between Fort Korver and the inn.

**What to do?**

What the PCs do is wide open. They have a number of options to pursue. The GM must keep in mind that the actions of the NPCs and their decisions will be based on what happens. An investigation by the PCs at the fort is going to bring events to a head. Killing all the bandits will resolve one problem, but it will not get the PCs the book.

If the PCs try to follow the bandits after they attack, success should be based on the length of delay. Tracking them will necessitate a number of Follow

Trail skills. Ultimately whether the PCs succeed is up to the GM.

Another option for the PCs is to use themselves as bait. They can hire a coach and act as rich travellers. Should they perform a convincing display of this and stay at The Valkyrie, travelling from East to West, then they may well attract Helga's attentions. If the PCs attack the bandits they will retreat almost straight away. They cannot risk being taken prisoner killed. If they do kill one and take his body to Trillheim, then the others will try and get the body back. No one will recognise the deceased in the town. If they take the body to the Fort, however, that will put a cat among the pigeons. If at any stage Dor or Gutmann believe the PCs are on their tails then there are a number of steps they will be prepared to take. They will be happy to have the PCs arrested, and perhaps even framed for the bandit attacks. They will also have them attacked if they can do so outside of the settlements, but this will be more of a last resort.

**The Bandit Hideout**

The bandits have a hideout deep in the forest between the two roads. The location is well hidden and accessible by a narrow path, through which the horses have to be led. They have sited their base under a rocky outcrop and placed a number of waterproof sheets to protect the twelve horses here. To one side are piled various supplies and goods stolen over the last weeks. Only the bulk goods are here: the more valuable items are returned to Gutmann for sale. Thrown to one side is the empty box the housed the hallfing's book.

**Conclusion**

The outcome of the scenario will be heavily weighed by the PCs actions. If they do nothing then five days later Dor and some of his men will run after he falls out with Gutmann. Gutmann calls it a day then, and things return to normal. In the end he returns to Nuln with Helga to start his own business with the capital taken from the profits for the robbery. Over the following months Dor and men will be captured and hung. However, should the GM decide to develop the story, the PCs could well run into either party again.

If the party discovers some or all that is going on at the Fort, Dor and Gutmann may well run together, perhaps with another couple of men. Picking up Helga on the way, they head to Kieslv. If the PCs give chase they will be given a good reward. Gutmann may well use the book to get the PCs to let him and Helga go. He is certainly happy to give up Dor to pursuers.

Should the PCs end the bandit attacks, and provide the proof to back it up, they will be treated as heroes in Trillheim. Let them enjoy it. They will be able to stay in the town on their reputation alone for the next few years. If they behave well and cultivate the story it could well last decades. Abuse of such privileges will mean their grace is cut short, though.

**Experience Points**

Players should be rewarded for ending the bandits' terror, especially if they performed bravely in doing so. Returning Alphonse's book to him should also be well rewarded. Outside of this, good role playing and intelligent investigation should, as always, result in good rewards.

# THE NATURE OF THE OBLIGATION

A Short Story by RW Krpoun

"My name is Oskar Schon, and I'm the greatest warrior since Sigmar! Unhand that lady."

Reiner Autler sighed and shook his head at the roared declaration and command. He should have known better than to try and have a quiet word with the innkeeper this early in the evening. Muttering to himself, the slender man with an air of bookishness about him darted back across the crowded common room.

Yes, as he expected, there was Oskar, his friend and boon companion since childhood, facing down three drunken mule-skinners. The lady in question was of the sort you found in coaching-inns, and not looking very pleased at Oskar's defense of her honor. The three 'skinners bore the marks of many a brawl; for the moment they were watching a lone man confront them with something akin to wonder.

Of course, they knew what Oskar didn't, which was that a fourth member of their party was returning from the outhouse and was even now briskly striding up behind Oskar, pulling a small axe from his belt with an evil grin.

The grin faded and the stride faltered to a abrupt stop when Reiner jammed the muzzle of the pistol he called Hammer under the man's ear and released the spring safety. "Let's just watch, shall we?"

Reiner could have spoken Oskar's part by now without missing a beat. The dramatic challenges, the

insults directed to men who accosted honest women, anger getting through a mule-skinner's surprise and drunkenness, blades flashing free, and finally Oskar changing from what he did poorest in life, which was choosing when, where, and how to start a fight, to what he did best, which was finishing one.

Most of the watchers would have marked Oskar as a hayseed with his father's sword, fresh off the farm. Certainly, he looked a good deal less than his twenty-eight years, and his bright blue eyes, corn-silk hair, and ruddy good health gave him a fresh-faced aura of innocence that seemed to conceal the fact that he was well over six feet tall and heavily muscled. Oskar kicked the first 'skinner square in the face as the man lurched up out of his chair, twisting his torso to the side to counter-balance the kick.

Reiner knew he'd open that way; it had cost Oskar twenty guilders to get a sailor to spend a couple days teaching him that move, two years ago in Marienburg.

The skinner crashed back into the table, weighted down so as to be useless in a brawl, and then sank to the floor, stunned. As he recovered from his kick, Oskar drew his bastard sword and swung viciously overhead, bringing the flat of the blade crashing down onto a second teamster's head, felling the man in his tracks. The third hastily tossed his knife on the table and backed away, hands held before him.

"Just throw away your axe, friend, and let's call it a night," Reiner eased the heavy pistol back into its loop across the front of his belt. The teamster shot him a dark look as he put up his weapon, but seemed willing to let the matter rest for the moment.

"Did you see that?" Oskar chortled as he rejoined Reiner at their table.

"I saw you make four new enemies defending the honor of a woman of rentable affection," his friend observed drily. "At least I got a word in with the innkeeper before you beat up four of his customers."

"Old priss," Oskar shook his head. "Twenty people here will remember my name."

"True enough." It was an old exchange. Born weeks apart in a tiny village south of Carroburg, the two friends had grown up together and been apprenticed to the same merchant company when it became obvious that neither had it in him to farm. When the life of journeymen merchants (meaning clerks and fetch-boys) paled they joined the Road Wardens, and then onwards to their present station in life. They were something of a contradiction: Oskar, tall, broad-shouldered, with a shining ruddy face and an infant's blue eyes, perpetually happy; and Reiner, standing of average height, slender build, dark hair and darker eyes turned inward, ever brooding. Despite their differences, the two had been fast friends since they were old enough to walk, brothers born of camaraderie



rather than blood, and inseparable companions who had shared victory, defeat, money, food, women, and battle throughout their wanderings.

"Yep, years from now, when they're an old grandsire around a hearth, they'll tell the tale of how they saw Oskar Schon pound a dozen men into a pulp, bare-handed, to preserve the honor of a lady fair."

"You're right, tales grow," Reiner conceded, digging into the bowl of stew the fat serving girl laid before him. "But a little less flamboyance might work in our favor." He knew the tales wouldn't speak of the hero's friend covering his back.

"Old priss."

"Anyway, the innkeeper dropped a word or two about our good friend Moritz Franz. For Sigmar's sake, stop counting the people and listen."

"Yes, yes, you've another precious nugget of news," Oskar fluttered a hand. "Just once I'd like you to enjoy something. Worry, worry, worry, never a lively minute. Me, I'm enjoying myself, and working on my reputation. Someday people'll say...."

"Oskar Schon was the greatest warrior since Sigmar, and tell exaggerated tales about the time they saw him. Your name will live on in legend and tale," Reiner finished for him. "It's a form of immortality, I know."

"And what will they say about Reiner Autler?"

"What a rich, fat bastard he was. How from the time he was thirty until the day he died he slept dry, ate well, and always had money."

"That's not a legend, that's a eulogy."

"Good enough for me. Now, back to Moritz: he's nearby. He's got a friend in a hamlet this side of Kemperbad, a miller who fences goods for him. After selling his loot, word says Moritz stops by a friendly widow's house before heading back into the forest. Most folk around here are afraid of Moritz, so he travels with just a couple of men. With a bit of luck we can catch him away from his main group."

"...good," Oskar muttered distractedly.

"Pay attention, Oskar, you're not a legend yet, you're a bounty hunter, and Moritz's head will fetch five hundred Imperial Crowns in Auerswald." Reiner paused, then played his trump card. "Not to mention the fame: Moritz's been robbing travelers throughout the central Empire for years. Ought to coin a few tales, being the man who brought his head in."

"So we grab him at the widow's?" Oskar was all business.

"If it looks right," Reiner hid his smile.

"This is hardly noble, daring, or tale-worthy," Oskar muttered.

"No, but it pays five hundred Crowns with only a modest danger of getting killed. Time to get moving."

For three days the pair had been watching Dame Yuogene's house from an old shearing shed outside the tiny nameless hamlet between Auerswald and Kemperbad. Reiner had passed through the morning after the fight with the mule-skinners, posing as a hired courier, a common enough sight on this road. Pausing to water his horse, he had engaged in conversation with a local boy, learning that the hamlet boasted a well-to-do miller and a pretty, young woman widowed just a season ago. Since then the two had watched, and waited.

"He's got two men dicing and drinking out front, four

more unloading the cart at the miller's. We can't bring our horses up without being seen."

"At least I meet the foe with honest steel," Oskar held up his bastard sword and dirk for emphasis. "Instead of killing them with a toothpick and black magic."

"Pistols are hardly black magic," Reiner grinned. "And killing your foe before he gets to sword-reach is a good idea." He had two wheel-locks: Hammer, which was an angled pistol with a gaping bore and a brass and oak ball pommel, and Fork, a long horseman's pistol, double-barreled in an over-and-under style, the stock and fourteen-inch barrel laid in almost a straight line. Unlike Hammer, which was a simple weapon, Fork had obviously once been part of a lovingly crafted set, made of fine black steel and burnished walnut, with elaborate knotted filigrees etched into the trigger guards and lock-plates. Fork's bores were narrower than Hammer's, barely a half-inch where Hammer's was three-quarters; Reiner cast balls with Fork's mold, and added a few buckshot with the smaller ball when loading Hammer.

Oskar grunted; his views on the matter were clear. Checking the straps on his steel breastplate (he disdained a back plate as cowardly, relying on bull's-hide), he snugged down the studded leather bracers that protected each arm. "Let's get this over with."

Reiner eased up against the back wall of the widow's modest house, thankful she owned no dog, and motioned Oskar to check on the men out front. He paused to mop away the sweat from his forehead. Although the day was slightly overcast and cool, being the twelfth of Kaldezeit and well into fall, he had just trotted three hundred yards wearing studded arm bracers fastened to a stout leather tunic covered with laminated metal plates, carrying two pistols, a sword-rapier, parrying dirk, and boot dagger. He'd left his steel cap with his horse, and halfway through the rush to the widow's house he was wishing he'd left his armor, as well.

Oskar signaled that all was well; easing to the back door, Reiner used the blade of his boot dagger to slip the latch and stepped inside. It was a cottage, really, he saw as he eased through the kitchen, a tidy sort of place, far better furnished than was usual, but then, Moritz had been having a string of luck since he had shifted to this area.

The bandit was in the bedroom, predictably; clad only in his breeches. The stocky, balding man was acting out some encounter or other for the benefit of the pretty woman lying beneath the bedclothes.

She was giggling, and he was declaiming in a singsong voice when Reiner stepped into the room and put the point of his sword-rapier to the base of Moritz's neck. "Both of you be quiet."

The widow gasped and clutched the bedding to her breasts, while Moritz calmly looked over his shoulder at the bounty hunter. "You're making a mistake."

"Perhaps. Making noise would be a bigger one. Oskar."

The blonde-haired man stepped around Reiner and pushed the bandit up against the wall, expertly binding his wrists in front of him, and then tying them to a rope which was lashed around Moritz's waist in the manner of a belt.

"Leave her be," was Moritz's only comment.

"Agreed," Reiner nodded, scooping up the bandit's

sword belt, shirt, and boots. He stuffed them all into a sack, which he drew tight and hung around Moritz's neck while Oskar pulled leather sandals onto the man's feet.

"Listen, not a peep out of you; if his men corner us, Moritz's the first to die," Reiner warned the widow. The sound of the front door crashing open drowned out any possible reply she might have made. "Outside," Reiner shouted.

Oskar slung the bandit over his shoulder and darted into the kitchen. Reiner was close on his heels. As his friend smashed the back door's latch with a kick, the dark bounty-hunter darted behind the pantry.

Guided by the widow's shrieked instructions, two men raced into the kitchen in hot pursuit. As they reached the back door Reiner stepped out and shot the nearest in the head and the second in the neck with Fork, thrust the smoking pistol into the case on his back and raced out the door, coughing at the billowing gun smoke.

Oskar had just reached the fence as Reiner burst out the house and four men rounded the corner of the house. Ripping Hammer from his belt, Reiner aimed and fired, only to curse bitterly as the wheel spun a shower of sparks which failed to ignite the priming powder. Instead, as the bandits closed, Reiner drew his sword and dirk.

They were a rough lot, hardened bandits one and all, and odd-looking, to boot. One hulking axe-wielder wore a steel ring through his cheek, a swordsman was utterly without hair, multicolored tattoos twisting and swirling like strange smoke across his arms, scalp, and bare chest. The third had a pair of maces and a stag headdress that was so cunningly cut that Reiner would have sworn the horns were growing straight from his very skull, while the fourth ran on legs that seemed only half as long as they should be.

Cheek-ring closed, being the fastest and most eager. He lunged in with a mighty swing, both hands death-gripped on the shaft. Reiner ducked and stop-thrust, the man's rush spitting himself upon the narrow blade, the axe spiraling end over end across the yard as it leapt free of hands suddenly robbed of all strength. Booting Cheek-ring in the groin, he ripped his blade free and the dark bounty hunter jumped back as Tattoo bore in, Stag close behind.

Tattoo led with the edge, as most broad-swordsmen will do, and Reiner deflected the stroke with the flat of his dirk and carved a bloody furrow across the man's bare chest, white bone winking in the groove before blood filled the gash. The speed of combat plays tricks on men's minds; Reiner could have sworn that the man's out-of-focus tattoos shifted away from his blade as it cut.

Stag was focused on Reiner as Tattoo reeled back in pain, careful not to make the same mistake of being over-hasty that the other two had, but before he could make his attack Oskar roared in from the side, decapitating him with a two-handed stroke. The blonde warrior's return swing cut Tattoo's left leg off at the knee, spilling the bleeding bandit into the dirt. Short-legs, predictably, had been the last into the fray; now he spun and pumped his odd limbs frantically to escape the roaring blade-storm that was Oskar – to no avail.

Wiping his blade clean on Cheek-ring's filthy shirt, Reiner raced for the fence. It was time to get away.

"I must say, your planning was impressive," Moritz observed as the three rode along an old logging trail. The bandit-chief, now wearing his shirt but bare-footed, was riding the mule they had brought for the purpose, his wrists bound together and lashed to the saddle, while a cord ran from ankle to ankle beneath the mule's belly. "Sandals so I could run, a sack for my belt and pouches, a spare mount. really quite impressive."

Reiner grunted, not looking up from his examination of the bandit's weapons. "Good steel; these'll bring a fair piece of change." He started on the pouches, tossing the valueless items into the brush.

"And a mount which is trained to come at your call or whistle, no doubt, so that I cannot suddenly gallop away; yes indeed, it is good to see young men take a serious interest in their trade." The bandit was short, stocky in the manner of a man who likes to eat well but lives hard, and olive-skinned, suggesting southern blood. Tilean, perhaps. With a fringe of black hair going gray, his features were clean-shaven and thoughtful, the face of a scholar rather than a warrior, showing his fifty-odd years in a manner that added strength and dignity. "Now, the question that troubles me, is how did these two professional young men come to know which house to ply their trade at? Clearly, I have become careless."

"The question before me," Reiner said as he opened a small case that had been in one of the pouches and scowled at an ugly amulet that lay on a bed of coiled necklace links, "is how your men knew to come rushing in when they did. I heard no alarm." The runes on the gold amulet seemed to twist before his eyes; uneasy, he closed the case. After a moment's hesitation, he hurled it off into the brush, missing Moritz's flinch.

"Ah, that, my friend, is a trade secret."

Oddly unsettled, Reiner threw away everything else in the pouches except the money, and even sorted through the coins while pretending to count them. "Odd-looking crew you lead."

"Yes, well, an outlaw turns away no one," Moritz shrugged. "You'll even find a few mutants in bandit bands, here and there."

"Mutants," Oskar spat. "No glory in hunting mutants, nor Witch-Hunting either. Precious little in bounties, too."

"Ah, glory," Moritz smiled crookedly. "The noblest ambition. I once lusted after glory, myself; I thought to become the greatest bandit-chieftain in all the Empire. Long after I died mothers would warn their children that if they weren't good, Moritz the bandit-king would steal them away."

"Enough talking," Reiner didn't like the look in Moritz's eyes. "I didn't capture you in order to hear you chatter like a magpie."

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Their night camp was well off the road to avoid chance encounters, or detection by Moritz's men. A small fire was built in a deep pit for cooking, and the three made themselves as comfortable as possible.

"That's an unusual dirk you carry," Moritz observed to Reiner.

"It's Estalian, called a cinquedeas." Reiner was tired, and sick of the gloomy walls of the Great Forest that lined the roadway. Here and there farms and hamlets had pushed the walls back, but they were still there. All the logging and farming hadn't really touched the forest, or so it seemed.

"Cinquedeas," the bandit repeated thoughtfully. "A reference to five fingers?"

"Yes," the bounty hunter was surprised. "Because the blade is five fingers wide at the hilt, allowing it greater effectiveness in parrying. How well do you speak Estalian?"

"A bit, not over-well, but I've knocked around some strange corners of the land." Moritz grinned at memories, and Reiner felt uncomfortable. "In fact, while we're on the subject of weapons, I've come across something that you might find more interesting than the bounty on my head."

"What's that?" Oskar asked.

"A sword, an enchanted sword, Dwarfen made and potentially blessed with spells and clerical incantations from Ulric's minions."

Reiner shook his head, cutting Oskar off with a gesture. "And why isn't this blade at your side instead of the ordinary steel we found?"

Moritz grinned crookedly. "This sword is meant to be the property of a great hero and devotee of Light and Law; I might encounter some damaging side-effects were I to attempt to wield it for any length of time."

That seemed plausible. "And how did you come by this blade?"

"Actually, I didn't; I saw it while dealing with another band of, shall we say, practitioners of my craft. They obtained it in trade from a tribe of Goblins."

"If bandits had it, it's long since sold," Reiner shrugged. Oskar's shoulders slumped as the blonde man nodded sadly.

"You would think," Moritz agreed. "But this band had a habit of hoarding their loot, and stayed close to a particular spot when not actively out seeking trade, you understand. It was a habit that proved to be their undoing. When I last passed by to pay my respects, there was but a single survivor."

"And you left this single bandit with an enchanted blade and other rat-holed loot out of the goodness of your heart?"

"Ah, in that you are partially correct. The survivor was a leader such as I, deserving of a certain respect, you see. When you live the life of an outcast, you learn a certain fondness for others of similar inclination. Besides, the sale of such a weapon would be a tricky business, and the next wielder would certainly be a man of ambition and glory-lust. I could very well end up being hunted by a man bearing the sword I returned to circulation. No, it seemed best that I leave this weapon to Cedric's trove, and go about my business. Caution has always been a byword of mine."

The two bounty hunters exchanged a glance and Reiner saw the burning desire in Oskar's eyes. Naturally, an enchanted sword would vastly further his friend's dreams. "So," Reiner drummed his fingers on his sword scabbard, "You would exchange this blade for your freedom?"

"I'll lead you to Cedric's bolt-hole," Moritz clarified. "Without my guidance, you'll never find it. Cedric was well-provisioned, and planned on laying low after his close call, not seeking to restore his band until the coming spring. He'll certainly still be at his place."

Reiner couldn't meet the terrible hope in Oskar's eyes. Instead, he stared at the small fire, thinking hard. He disliked Moritz, the strange way his odd men had come uncalled to his rescue, the way the bandit

seemed to look a bit different each time he looked at him. There were no strange markings on the man, no indications of Chaos, but still, the bounty-hunter was uneasy. On the other hand, Oskar longed for such a blade. It was a major step towards the fulfillment of his cherished dreams. To deny him this chance troubled Reiner even further.

"How do you propose that we accomplish this trade?"

Moritz smiled, and once again Reiner was struck with unease. "We will meet with Cedric; he will ransom me with the sword from his cache. Or, you can simply pillage the cache and leave me there. I will guide you as we go, so that you cannot leave me behind; once at the cache, I trust your sense of honor."

"My word on it, then," Oskar blurted.

Reiner nodded slowly. "I'll go into Kemperbad alone tomorrow, and arrange things. Tell me what we will need."

"We'll go into the Barren Hills; a boat would be useful, as water will take us very close to our destination."

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"What are these?" Reiner asked the pert young girl, eyeing the items she was offering him; he had paused at a tavern to eat after making the necessary arrangements.

"Blessed talismans of Ulric, consecrated by the High Priest himself not two weeks ago," she held up the devices: silver balls of varying sizes held in a mesh-net of brass wire. "We are acolytes seeking to raise funds for a pilgrimage."

"I'll take two," Reiner smiled at the girl as he reached for his money.

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"What the blazes is that?" Oskar asked, standing in the bow. Six days and a hundred miles had passed since Kemperbad. Reiner had hired Klaus Wecker, a sell-sword well known to the two bounty hunters, a reliable man who knew boats, traps, and locks. He had also hired a twelve-foot fishing boat, which had taken them northeast up the Stir, and then north up the River Nam into the Barren Hills. The latter had lived up to their name: rolling hills and ridges that were bare save for dun-colored grass and clumps of twisted brush, dotted here and there with crumbling ruins.

What Oskar had been referring to was a stone breakwater that stretched from bank to bank, piles of crumbling stonework rearing up here and there just above the brisk-running water.

"Dwarfen work," Moritz wheezed from where he was manning the oars to air the slow breeze, the iron manacles and chains Reiner had purchased in Kemperbad clinking with every stroke. "A bridge, I think, collapsed now so that you can walk very nearly across the river on the rubble. There is a gap there," he pointed, "that we can pass through."

"I can see why Cedric chose the place," Reiner observed Klaus. "No boat would make it through there if you had men on the rocks."

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Moritz directed them to the east bank four hundred yards beyond the breakwater where a barely discernible path led between two hills. Oskar dragged the boat up on the shore while Klaus looked to his equipment.

"Still polishing?" Moritz asked as Reiner gave the ball a last buff. "I thought you cast them to size."

"Sometimes you have to use jeweler's cloth to ensure roundness and a good fit," Reiner explained as he seated the charge and projectiles, wound the spring tight, and primed Hammer. He loaded Fork, settled it in his back case, and turned to Moritz. "How far, exactly?"

"An old shrine five hundred yards up the path."

"Good." Grabbing the bandit's shirtfront, Reiner drove the point of his boot-dagger up under the man's sternum and into his heart.

"By the Light, what are you doing?" Oskar demanded as Moritz collapsed and thrashed away his life.

"Taking no chances. I bought a bucket with a lid filled with salted brandy; take his head...by Mórr!"

As the life left the bandit, his form seemed to ripple and change; dark veins bulged and snaked across his skin, a third eye appeared low on his neck, and a dark symbol appeared to be branded onto his left hand.

"What... how..." Oskar was at a loss for words.

"I think that's how he really looked," Reiner said slowly. "Magic kept us from seeing it. Remember how strange his men looked? There's something... Chaos, maybe? Nothing good about him, that's for certain." Reiner had heard tales of the followers of Chaos in common rooms here and there – not of mutants, but of men who had willingly embraced the forbidden cults. He had never expected to have encountered it, however, and was sorry he had.

"It explains how his men knew to come," Oskar nodded shakily, then squared his shoulders and drew his sword. "Get the bucket."

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As promised, the trail led to a small stone structure on the side of a hill a quarter-mile from the river. The three warriors approached carefully, but there seemed to be no signs of life around the square, single-room structure, nor any indication of what the building was meant to be. If it were a chapel, as Moritz had said, the years had worn away any marking on the stones which would have indicated to whom it was dedicated.

"Klaus, take a look for traps," Reiner instructed, watching the hills nervously. "Let's not waste time."

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The single room was free of dangers; inside was a shabby pile of bags and purses. Plunder from travelers, the trio surmised. Oskar stood watch while Reiner and Klaus filled the backpacks they had brought for this purpose, moving with a haste born of growing unease. Weapons leant against the wall; swords, axes, and maces of good make, most spotted with rust, but the hilt of one slender-bladed longsword stood out, as fresh as if it had just come from the maker's forge. It was securely wired into its sheath with numerous turns and twists of wire. Reiner strapped it to his pack while Klaus grabbed a couple of the better swords, and the two emerged into the daylight.

"Did you get it?" Oskar asked eagerly.

"Yep, but we'll have to get it back to the boat, it's wired into the scabbard." Reiner was already walking briskly towards the river, Klaus at a half-trot ahead of him. "Time to go."

They were within sight of their boat and Moritz's headless corpse when a figure bounded out of the twisted brush and embraced Klaus, picking up the burly man as if he were a child. The swordsman screamed hysterically and thrashed madly, blood gushing from his mouth and nose.

Reiner blinked and shook his head, then shook his head again. The attacker was fully seven feet tall, his frame oddly proportioned – as if he had been a good deal shorter, then heated like wax and drawn to the new height. Naked, his wrists tapered into boney blade-like plates, which were embedded in Klaus's torso. The man – Cedric, Reiner guessed – clutched Klaus to his chest, where scores of worm-like cilia burrowed into the howling mercenary's flesh.

Cedric, eyes half-closed, twitched and gasped like a man lost in orgasm until Klaus' agony faded with his death. Sighing, the tall figure tossed the corpse aside; Reiner, still stunned, saw that Klaus' chest was riddled with deep, bloody holes.

"Afterwards," Cedric observed in a lilting, happy voice. "I like to wait and enjoy a bit of conversation before loving again." he giggled girlishly. "Oh, do put away your sword, pretty boy, ordinary steel means nothing to me, and you'll not draw Graunblade without tools and time. How naughty of you to kill Moritz; he was a good comrade, if obsessed with his dreams of power and control."

Reiner shakily drew Hammer as he motioned Oskar back. "Stay, he's mine."

"Ohh, a volunteer, how delightful," Cedric cooed. "Stand aside, Cedric, and let us pass." Reiner aimed Hammer.

"Sweetie, lead and stinky powder don't affect me either." Cedric glided forward.

Hammer roared, the ball and shot taking Cedric high in the chest, tearing great rents in the man's flesh; blue-gray smoke poured from the wounds. The creature screamed and dropped to his knees, batting at the wounds with his bloody blade-hands.

"How about silver consecrated by a High Priest of Ulric?" Reiner inquired, drawing Fork. He shot the twisted figure twice in the head, the second shot sending a gout of pink brain matter spraying from the sundered skull. "Oskar, grab Klaus' pack and let's get out of here."

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"I can't get the pliers to grip," Oskar complained, kneeling over Graunblade's wired hilt. Several strands had parted, but a few dogged twists were resisting the swordsman's best efforts.

"Huh," Reiner adjusted the tiller as the breakwater came into view, the speed of the current carrying them along briskly. "Try..." A sudden explosion of numbing pain wiped out what he was going to say; for some reason, he was looking up at the sky, body slack, as Oskar dragged him upright. Then his chin flopped onto his chest, he saw the interior of the boat, and for some strange reason there were lead sling bullets littering the deck. It made no sense, but his head hurt too much to worry about it.

Oskar was shouting at him; frowning, the bounty-hunter concentrated, and his ears began to function. "Wake up," Oskar urged, lashing the tiller into place. "Can you hear me?"

Reiner tried to answer, but for some reason all he managed was a groan. It was odd.

"Damn; listen, Reiner, a slung bullet got you in the head; it clipped Fork, so you're head's still intact.

Can you wake up?" Oskar looked over his shoulder; Reiner followed the direction, and saw that their boat was aimed at the narrow gap in the breakwater, moving smoothly with the current. Thirty-odd armed men were trotting across the stones towards the gap.

"Moritz's men," Oskar cursed. "Tracking their leader; we must have beat them to Cedric, but they weren't too far behind. Reiner, can you wake up?"

His limbs and tongue failed him; Reiner mumbled and twitched feebly.

"All right," Oskar sighed, then smiled tiredly. "Live your dream, old friend."

When Oskar stepped away, Reiner slumped sideways, his body merely a weight, his world dominated by the dull ache in the back of his head and the ringing in his ears. He saw Oskar, bastard sword in hand, move to the bow of the boat; as they entered the gap the blonde man leapt to the stones as the bandits closed.

The sword-blade flashed, and a bandit crashed into the river, spraying blood. Moritz's men hurled themselves forward, only to meet bloody steel wielded expertly. Reiner saw the blows exchanged, the misshapen bandits falling, then his friend collapsing and the excited down-thrusting of spears and the bloody rise and fall of axes. His ears weren't working too well, but a tiny corner of his fogged brain knew exactly what his friend had been shouting.

The bandits gained the gap, but by then the river had carried the boat, and Reiner, through and beyond. They howled and cursed, but the dark bounty-hunter was beyond their reach.

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"Yes, excellent, my caravan-master confirms his identity," Johann Priess, owner of the Green Drake hauling company rubbed his fat hands together, grinning at the lidded bucket on the floor by his desk. "Moritz Franz's head, right here in my office; I'll boil the skull and put it on a pike in front of my stable, the bastard. Now," the merchant became all business. "My clerk will pay you the five hundred crowns, money well-spent. What's your name, young man?"

Reiner sighed. "Oskar Schon, the greatest warrior since Sigmar."

The merchant barked a laugh. "Perhaps not yet, but someday, eh?"

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Pausing outside the Green Drake's offices, Reiner rubbed the knotted scar on the back of his head, his left hand resting upon Graunblade's hilt. There were rumours of a wyvern harassing a village near Grunberg, and a band of mutants and beastmen operating deep in the Great Forest near Delberz. Word said a man in black armor, based at an unholy shrine, led the latter. Worthy tasks for Oskar Schon; he'd get about them once he had paid out some of Cedric's gold to a poet and a bard; songs and staves about the capture of Moritz Franz, bandit-king, would do much to boost Oskar's reputation.

Reiner watched a man his age, dressed in a richly embroidered tunic, climb into a carriage, and sighed; he had battles to fight and fame to win; it was, after all, the nature of the obligation.



# THE FORUM

More thoughts on *A Touch of Evil* (among others), including a rather long letter. Keep 'em coming...

## Valkyrie's Editor Responds

**Jay Forster:** I'd like to have come away from reading Tim Eccles' very negative pro-zine review in *Warpstone* 17 with the feeling that publicity is publicity whether it's good or bad. But I'm actually getting a bit fed up with most mentions of the magazine I edit being negative. Not because I can't handle criticism but because these opinions seem to come from a vocal minority who manage to find platforms to air their opinions. Where is the representative of the silent majority and how come they never get to air their views? I don't think I am deluding myself there is a silent majority. As a *Warpstone* reader I also think it's two pages not being used for WFRP, to instead air a minority view that should really be on Mr Eccles own website or a more industry orientated organ.

What's done is done however and I'm not making a very convincing case against Mr Eccles by whining about the inclusion of the article. I'll continue by tackling some of the points he raised. This is a purely biased critique. Biased in that I'm not going to stick up for the other magazines. I can't say I agree with all he says about them but I have enough things to say about his opinions of Valkyrie without going into the rest.

Valkyrie isn't marketed as an amateur magazine, but we have never claimed it is 100% professional either. The artists and writers are a mix of amateurs, semi professionals and professionals. Partizan Press isn't a large publishing house, I am not paid a fully professional rate to edit as the contributors aren't for contributing. None of these factors have been kept secret to delude the consumer. If that isn't good enough for everyone they have the right not to buy the magazine. Generally the art and writing is of a good quality, the grammar is accurate through most of the magazine (it does suffer in the news and reviews sections admittedly). Overall it compares favourably with proper, squarebound gaming books released by professional games companies. For £3.75 for 72 pages I don't think we are ripping people off. Some people like that raw edge and the only way you break new ground is by taking risks. It isn't going to work every time.

Should you support Valkyrie just because it is British? Of course not. (Actually Tim it's the only British mag in that critique. I wonder which mag was on your mind at that moment?) Would gaming suffer if it didn't exist? As many people would say yes as would say no. Too be honest I don't know, but the lack of a zine doesn't send a good signal as to the state of the hobby.

Another point Tim raises in the opening paragraph I don't think applies to Valkyrie - the use of a clique of contributors. I have been quite explicit that I have a very open door policy with the magazine. Anyone who follows the magazine regularly will have seen new writers and artists contributing each issue. There are good reasons to use the same people continuously however, reliability being the most essential.

'Much-hyped' is one way of looking at it. By who and where? We have done our best to promote the magazine where and when we can. It would be particularly inept, unprofessional and idiotic not to.

Presentation and typeface 'unhelpful', well Tim is entitled to his opinion, I can't say I agree. Over all, when you cater for multiple systems you have to vary the design to suit the content, when you don't it is easier to be consistent and get it right.

Tim thinks our reviewers are biased? That's odd as I don't allow reviews that have nothing but praise for a product. Generally. The odd few do make it in. News can only be neutral, it isn't news otherwise, that's a very odd point to pick on.

I'm afraid Tim missed the point of #20 completely. It was meant to be as much, if not more, of a *celebration* of D&D, not just a parody. I would argue the Assassins piece in #21 did have an adequate amount of game ideas in relation to dry facts. Besides you need to provide a certain amount of fact or it's not serving its intended purpose. The down side to making something game specific is that it makes it harder to transpose to other systems & it uses up space with stats. What system should it have been in that case? *World of Darkness*? *Call of Cthulhu*? *In Nomine*? The last page did contain ideas for different systems and genres anyway. The 'lecture' only lasted a couple of pages before going into ways of bringing the Assassins into campaigns and using them there. As for the 'hash history', I could have put a picture in instead, would that have been more inspirational?

Did any 'self appointed experts', in issues 20 or 21 do the same things in other magazines or was Tim just making a generalisation?

The sub-title to the Victorian piece, considering it was essentially an article about a dark and smelly interpretation of Victorian London, was more a play on words done for effect, rather than any claims about the articles originality. The title in full: 'London Most 'Orrid: A fresh perspective on a stale metropolis'. You see, 'fresh' - 'stale'.

Any opinion piece that is biased to an extreme, good or bad, is effectively worthless. Though Tim admitted positive sides, he skimmed over them and focused on the negatives. In a throwaway couple of lines he effectively admitted, in fact, that he liked a significant amount of that issue, yet chose to phrase his critique in a way that would discourage people to see it. Several glaring inaccuracies and gross misinterpretations also contributed to render the point of the article meaningless. Taken as a whole they leave me fairly unconvinced with his views.

If *Warpstone* is going to run articles of this nature, which I would rather it didn't, I suggest it uses a writer who can make an objective and balanced argument.

*JF: Gaming would suffer if Valkyrie didn't exist. I personally am a fan of the magazine, but Tim is entitled to air his views, even though many may see them as harsh. Warpstone is also the correct place to air these. Although we are dedicated to WFRP we have always spent some space looking at the rest of the industry. We have written favourably about the magazine in the past and will likely do so in the future.*

*Tim Eccles: I am not proposing to defend my article point-by-point against Jay Forster's response to it. However, I do take exception to the tone, the inference being that I am unrepresentative, that I am "from a vocal minority who manage to find platforms to air their views" and that - presumably because I happen to dislike Valkyrie - I am not a "writer who can make an objective and balanced argument." On the balance of probability, I suspect that someone who happens to buy Valkyrie magazine is likely to be more objective about it than its editor and I personally do not see anything within what the author admits is a "purely biased critique" to disprove my general thesis, which was that professional products are generally overrated. I did what anyone can do - including Mr Forster's "majority" support - and submitted an article proposal and various drafts for consideration by this magazine. The fact that he is "actually getting a bit fed up with most mentions of the magazine being negative" is perhaps more indicative of general opinion than this silent grouping? In any event, I strongly dispute the suggestion that I lack perspective or balance. That Mr Forster and others might disagree is their right, and that is precisely what the letters forum is there to offer in my opinion.*

*With regards to whether the article is relevant to WFRP, one of the outcomes was indeed to comment upon those products' relevance to WFRP. Indeed, WFRP or Warhammer is mentioned specifically sixteen times within the piece. I would say that is pretty relevant.*

*Mr Forster states that "you are entitled to your opinion", which is very kind of him to say so. I am, and it is there. I do not believe that this means that, because he might disagree or that I might agree with others, I should not be allowed to present it, or that I must develop web production skills to place them on an Internet site. We are part of a community of WFRP players, wherein - my 'entitled' opinion - we might disagree with each other. As to the arguments about the nature of Partizan Press, these are irrelevant. The fact that Mr Forster works for less than "a fully professional rate" hardly destroys the professional tag, more his own ability to command a 'professional' salary (whatever that might mean). Valkyrie is an investment of Partizan Press, owned I believe by Caliver Books - in business to make a return upon their investment. You are professional. Period.*

**Thomas Larue:** I very much enjoyed issue 16, especially the moral dilemma presented to us through Blibby's action (*A Touch of Evil*). What is evil and how can we define whether a character's alignment is evil or neutral? In my days as a player, our GM put us under morale dilemmas by forcing us to actually deal with Chaos in other ways than simply smashing the cultist's or beastman's head in. We were actually each were tempted and "stalked" by the forces of Chaos. Khorne and his disciples thus constantly pursued my character. For each death I took and each drop of blood I spilled, I made myself more his servant. Actually, I did not stop killing (although I never murdered anyone: still I even ended up killing one of my best NPC friends by mistake) and so the whole thing got rather serious for my character...

I believe that the internal struggle (within the party itself, inside the PCs) against the seduction of the forces of Chaos is one of the most interesting way to set up and play out the Warhammer world. Nevertheless, I am being sidetracked.

What about evil? If one adopts universal standards for what is evil and good, then actions are defined according to that "objective" measure. Yet, if one adopts a relativistic point of view, such objective "rulers" are not applicable. However, the example that you described leaves one important lesson to be drawn: If you break the law, do not be sloppy: Wear masks. Do not use each other's names. Then you will not be forced to kill pestering guards...

It is an easy way out of a very hard discussion. Leaving aside the idea of truth and concentrating on different players' point of view. I thought John F's last comments were reasonable. If players continue to indulge in semi-evil activities and constantly use solutions to problems, which are to say the least doubtful, let them take the consequences: "Oh, your move with the throwing of the newborn baby at the Jaberwock went very well! After having run for a good half an hour you now are in safety. By the way, delete one of your fate points..." Again, it was interesting that you brought the issue up because Warhammer is a world where there are shades of grey and not just black and white. Your example has shown this in an effective way.

**Frank D. Reinart:** I am writing this letter in response to "A Touch of Evil". While I agree that there are no easy answers to questions of alignment and gaming, particularly the questions raised by this situation, I feel that the participants described in the article have all made the situation more complex than is truly warranted.

Let me make it very clear right now that what follows



comes from my own points of view on the subject of alignments in general, and the content of the aforementioned article in particular. This is not the first ambiguous situation I have encountered surrounding alignment, nor is it the stickiest.

I am assuming that the gaming group in the article, more or less, views the alignments as described in the WFRP. No extraneous house rules were presented in the article (beyond the private views of the participants, anyway), so I will assume there are none. I also respectfully point out that there may be more to this gaming group and setting than was revealed in the article. That being the case, my assertions and conclusions may be flawed based on information that was not presented in the article.

Thirdly, I wanted to point out that the article was not conducive to soliciting an impartial opinion from others, such as myself, notwithstanding that was what John F. requested at the end of the article. The structure and balance of content of the article was clearly biased against the point of view of Tim, the player of Blibby. It would have been fairer (as well as easier to read) to present two opposing views, rather than what was basically three similar views against a single opposing view. The "in-character" stories also didn't present a very "fair" picture, as Larrs' Story did not contain that character's story at the same time frame as the other two. That is a very significant part of the whole picture here. By presenting the article in that fashion, it deliberately manipulated the viewpoints of any responses. I was so influenced myself, and had to step back from the article for a few hours before writing this, just to restore impartiality. No one appreciates being manipulated, no matter how you justify it. John F. and John K. present a strong enough case without having to resort to such underhanded methods to solicit the response that is apparently desired.

It is apparent from the article that there are some very different viewpoints as to what alignment is, and what it isn't. Some are very obviously wrong (made obvious by the writers themselves as they point out the flaws in their own, and others', reasonings). Most stem from misconceptions about what alignment is, and what role it is supposed to play in an RPG. Before going into how alignment might play or represent in the actual game, here is what alignment is not.

1. An Alignment is not a character label: It amuses me to no end how often I hear the words "My character is Neutral" or "My character is Good"; as if that is supposed to somehow define a character in the same manner that, say, "My character has a Strength of 4" does. Nothing could be further from reality. Using alignment as a character label is one of the worst causes of misconceptions and gamer-group conflicts.

2. Actions speak louder than words: Alignment is ultimately dictated by a character's actions (and, by extension, how a player guides those actions), not the other way around. Sure, one of the purposes of having an alignment is to present some sort of framework for how the character should, or should not, act in the world. However, this is not as rigid or as all-defining as many people believe (and the rulebook is clear on that point as well). Consequently, if a character consistently acts in, say, a good manner, then that character's alignment will eventually change to.

3. A given character can never act contrary to their alignment: This is another one of those amusing viewpoints for me, because it runs totally contrary to both real and fictional stories. We see plenty of stories where a good person performs a reprehensible act, just as we read stories about the bad guy who occasionally does something good. A true change of tune, however, is much more rare. Alignment is defined by one's actions, specifically on an on-going basis, not the other way around. That being the case, one or two evil acts do not an alignment change. Yes, it likely means a reduction in experience. It also means the characters will have to accept the consequences, good and bad, of their actions. And, it means that the GM may consider an alignment change

for the character in the future.

4. Alignment rules are firmly defined in the main rulebook and not subject to interpretation by an individual GM in a given setting: It is weird how often people acknowledge this fact, and then turn around and say the exact opposite.... even in the same paragraph. An individual GM defines what is good and evil in his or her setting. Every GM's setting is going to be just a little different, and thus the morality and alignments of the setting are going to be treated differently. This is particular significant when considering the Good-Neutral-Evil alignments. In a generalized manner, WFRP presents Neutral as being a very broad range of levels of morality, when compared with both Good and Evil. However, exactly how broad that range truly is is directly and exclusively in the hands of the individual GM. The very important consequence of this is that comparing the morality present in a given game with any other model, such as another person's game setting or, worse, the "real world" is not only unreasonable, it's ultimately going to prove futile. Thus, the arguments that all three people present, attempting to compare or contrast Blibby's action to some sort of vague "real world" model lack any sort of real validity.

Now, how does this all apply to the scenario described? It applies by revealing some truths about the situation (and the people involved), truths that the group's GM would be wise to take into account in the future.

To start with, there are several different shades of morality present in the article, despite the relative simplicity of the story itself. The first reasonable step would be to look at the simplest picture for a solution. To sum up the story; we have a halfling who killed an incapacitated attacker to avoid a perceived negative consequence for the character. Obviously, from that alone, one doesn't know enough to make any kind of fair judgement of the character or the character's actions.

The next level of inquiry takes us to the actual facts. The PC group was present in a building illegally, suspecting they would find indications of foul deeds. The PC group apparently took no precautions in performing this activity to avoid discovery, showing that either the players weren't thinking rationally, or they were accurately roleplaying thoughtlessness and/or incompetence in their characters (that isn't meant to be a criticism, it is just a statement of fact based on the events which subsequently occurred). The group was discovered by a stranger, whom they assumed was the night watchman, but in truth could have been anyone. Natascha attempted to capture or incapacitate Werner (all things considered a smart move, considering the rather large number of nasty possibilities of who or what the attacking stranger might have been). Werner incapacitates Natascha, and is attacked by Blibby, taking him prisoner. From this point, the roleplay and rationalisations gets a bit muddled, but the facts remain clear. Blibby cuts the watchman's throat, killing him, while Larrs stands by after putting up some resistance to the idea.

The facts raise some serious questions about the morality of Blibby, of course, and of Larrs as well. However, as was pointed out in the article, the facts alone do not tell the complete story. There are two significant pieces of the puzzle that are clearly missing, from a relatively impartial standpoint.

The most significant piece lacking is a concrete view of the morality of the game setting portrayed. It is not enough to merely state, "We're playing in the Warhammer World". That defines as little as saying, "My character is Neutral". The only real insight we get into what kind of setting the characters play in is through Blibby's narrative, which paints a very dark, cynical, almost even bitter version of the world. Werner's version is not quite as grim, but only because the character is clearly portrayed as a victimized innocent. It is still quite grim. Yet, when one reads the comments of both John F. and John K., one wonders if either of them play in the same world as Tim. Clearly the two of them don't view the level of morality in the setting in the same light, apparently seeing a place where morality

may be closer to what is present in high fantasy or in our own world. This missing piece is of paramount importance, because it defines at what level an act becomes evil in that world; and that is the only truly valid basis to impartially judge the morality of Blibby's action. The responsibility there lies in the hands of the GM. If the GM has gotten carried away in the past with portraying the much advertised and flaunted grimness of the Warhammer world, then Blibby's action might be clearly justifiable based on what is just plain realistic. It is the GM's responsibility to ensure that the setting sufficiently rewards good behaviour if that GM wants to see good behaviour. Nobility and honour are not always their own reward. Blibby's narrative makes it clear that his character, and his player, perceives nobility, honour, and basic goodness in the setting that the character lives in as being largely a waste.

The other piece that is missing is the actual story of the warehouse fight and aftermath from Larrs' point of view. We don't see a valid point of view in his narrative, which is set well after the fact; at least not valid when placed next to, and compared with, both Blibby's and Werner's narrative. This leaves some very significant questions unanswered. For instance, why did Larrs finally allow Blibby to execute Werner? Was that in character? The point of the question is, the act of homicide perpetrated by Blibby is not Blibby's responsibility alone. Larrs could have interfered, yet he did not (save for some initial reluctance, followed by an insistence that he not be the one to perform the act; still of generally questionable morality). Moreover, we see both Larrs and Natascha staying on with Blibby, instead of leaving him. Either the roleplay has gotten very muddled over this event, or there is some precedent in the setting (including its morality) that indicates they have a reason to stay with him. Ultimately, this contributes to the ambiguous question of the morality standards of the setting.

Tim clearly has a very liberal interpretation of what encompasses self-preservation, in order to justify his character's actions as being neutral in nature. Whatever the rationale was there for self-preservation, clearly by executing a helpless adversary when other options were clearly open violates a number of the other components described in the Neutral description. Primarily, it violates the restriction against extremes of violence or cruelty. Granted you usually can't get much more violent than killing someone, but definitely killing a helpless enemy qualifies as an exception. Moreover, slashing someone's throat is a slow and painful way to kill someone. It also raises serious questions about personal freedom. The NPC's death clearly does not free up Blibby in the slightest, as there are all sorts of obvious consequences that will clearly restrict the character in the not too distant future (including, but not limited to, conflicts with more honorable/noble fellow player characters and an official inquiry into the murder). There were just too many other options available to the player characters that night to make the claim that they (and I do mean they, not he) "had no choice". However, that by itself, isn't enough. Morality in a setting is defined by the GM, not a handful of words under each alignment category. Just as the cliché actions speak louder than words (including written ones) applies to character alignments, it more strongly applies to the setting morality that ultimately sets the standards for character alignments.

It is clear that there was not a common view of the morality of the given gaming setting firmly established by the GM. This has inevitably led to one character committing a reprehensible act with the complicity of at least one other character, a situation that ultimately spotlighted the lack of clear moral definition to the setting. The GM should work in future game sessions to solve this lack in his or her game, before such a situation arises again. This is not a difficult task to accomplish; one just has to define in advance one's standards of good and evil (and the associated consequences of both), and both adhere to them in giving out experience awards as well

as clearly communicate them to the players both inside and outside the game.

It is clear that Blibby did perform an act that was at least partially contrary to Neutral, as loosely defined by the WFRP rulebook. However, without a solid moral framework specific to the setting, the characters, and the GM, it's impossible to judge his actions fairly beyond that general conclusion.

3. A single action is largely irrelevant in the grand scheme of the character. After dealing with the consequences of that one act of execution/homicide, the matter should be at an end; unless Blibby continues such actions into the future.

Both Natasha and Larrs will need to decide whether they can forgive Blibby his choice that once, given that both characters are apparently more noble/honourable than Blibby is. Otherwise, it may be necessary to recreate a new group, as one or more of the player characters leaves Blibby (and maybe Larrs as well) to his or their collective fate.

The players of both characters will need to determine at what point Blibby crosses the line in the future, and determine what their character's reactions to that must be (as we see Larrs doing in his narrative). Tim will need to accept the consequences of those determinations by his gaming friends; his fellow character's reactions are just and fair consequences to any future chosen actions that those character's perceive as crossing the line. This is always the case in a player character group, as anyone knows who has ever played a game where different characters have different levels of morality. This is the case in fantasy stories as well.

**Frederic Mari:** Regarding Ouroboros's Warriors Grimoire article (WS 13). I notice it has been commented by other readers but I think both Ouroboros and his detractors missed one important point: It is quite useless to try to improve WFRP's Combat system as it is grossly unreal and, unless rewriting all the rules, you cannot change that. An example? Well, Strength, to start with. In order to do a lot of damage, you must have as high a strength as possible. It is not incorrect per se, but being supple, quick and precise could be as deadly. Another point: Wounds. In French, the rule book is actually unclear on what Wounds exactly represent. Classically for RPGs, it says that is the actual amount of damage bearable before death or mutilation. OK. Then it should be influenced by or correlated with Toughness. Then, in the Combat Chapter, it suggests that it is the ability to carry on a fight before serious injuries occur. Kind of a "Fatigue" factor. This would actually be more correct in view of real life fencing but then the rest of the rules about recovering from being wounded don't make sense. In a real life fencing fight, the first blow is almost (fatigue plays a part) as likely to kill you as the fifth or the tenth. You do not get bruised then slightly cut then mutilated then dead. But

the Warhammer combat rules have a great advantage on a more realistic system. It gives you adrenaline rushes! Who has not felt Morr's grip when your PC wounds are slowly eroding? Especially with no Fate points left! What is lost in realism is more than made up in emotions!

A Touch of Evil: Neutral versus Evil. I had quite a few discussions on that subject with my friends. One of my GMs actually forced one of my PC to move from Neutral to Evil after he undertook some arguably debatable actions (My GM withheld a large amount of XP in the process). In the case of Blibby, I would say Werner died of incompetence. Not only his, but primarily the actions of the PCs. So they go breaking and entering without masks or disguise?

They use first names? They don't check out for guards even when they suspect the warehouse might be used for smuggling (therefore likely to be guarded)? The PCs may have been slightly inexperienced but not the players! That people that experienced in Warhammer would not make their PCs take these elementary precautions and therefore reduce the chance of the Watch catching them or the likelihood of having to kill bystanders to protect themselves is amazing! Then Werner surrendered! As a GM, I would have made him try to surround himself with containers right and left to block off more than one PC attacking him at the time and then try to make it up to the point where the PCs would have to flee or be caught by the Watch. I have heard many complaining that people (PC and NPC alike) do not surrender often enough. Well, one should surrender only when one has something valuable to trade off for his life. It might be himself (ransom) or, more likely, information. To extract information takes time. Time generates opportunities for evasion. But, for Werner, to surrender was foolish and wholly inappropriate.

So, anyway, mistakes were made. What about the evil (or not) of the act in itself? Well, I have role played PCs with various alignments but, if left to my own devices (i.e. neutral), I tend to give my PC (especially the warrior kind) a professional behaviour i.e. they act in a cold blooded and professional fashion. Most of my neutral PCs would have killed Werner. I read that an S.A.S. team, behind Iraqi lines during the Gulf War, killed a shepherd boy without even being sure the kid had spotted them. They just would not take any unnecessary risks. Are the SAS soldiers evil? According to strict Judeo Christian morality, yes! According to society's rules, this is a grey. According to me, they just acted reasonably. I would define Evil as rejoicing in the suffering or the killing of people, raping, murdering and torturing for one's personal pleasure. But if acts (even like torture) are dictated by circumstances and do make sense, I consider them neutral. The end justifies the means. My two GMs disagree. Many more of my PCs could have ended up Evil. But remember: according to strict Judeo Christian code, even trying to be neutral and pursuing self preservation at all cost in

considered evil! John F mentions that the Watch is actually more likely to try to catch the party after the murder than before. Debatable. A burglary, unsuccessful at that, is not likely to rank very high on their priorities but with the clear clues given by a living Werner (a male human, a kisleite woman and a halfling named Blibby) even an incompetent Watch could be on their trail. With Werner dead, the Watch will indeed consider it a higher priority. Then it is down to whatever clues they can collect. Did anybody see anything (beggars on the docks...)? Does the merchant know the party is interested in his activities and could help the Watch catch them? Did the party leave any trail (footprints...)? Moreover, should the party bring the corrupt merchant to justice, a judge will ask about their implication in the murder an could indict the PC for it, no matter what. It is indeed illegal for a mere adventurer to take justice into their own hands.

Conclusion: I think Blibby did increase his chances of survival by murdering Werner. At the very least, in the short term. Is it evil? It depends on your moral structure. In my view, an act is clearly evil when it provokes suffering and was committed for one's pleasure. If there is a higher end, then the discussion should be about this higher end (Is it really worth it?). In Blibby's case, stopping a weapon smuggling ring was worth it. Just do not expect a court of law (in the Old World or on our Earth) to recognise that.

*JF: Just a couple of points I would like to pick up from the above letters regarding A Touch of Evil. Frank says that the balance of the article is biased against Blibby. Oddly, I have heard comments that the article is biased towards him, as his is the first commentary. The reason why there is not a fair spilt of few is because it is the thoughts of people involved in the situation, told first from the party's point of view. I think it help show that such situations are also open to different points of view. Frederic's point that Werner wouldn't have surrendered I feel is wrong. People surrender when they feel it may save their lives, even when it seems unlikely it will do so. Werner was only a young man, not an experienced warrior. Saying that the party shouldn't have made basic mistakes, that is fair enough. However, I welcome this. People make mistakes all the time. It is often how criminals are caught. First names do slip out, guards can be missed when an area is scouted. Such mistakes make things fun. Too often PCs tend to work on autopilot: Enter the room, search for secret doors, check for traps, tick - tick - tick...*

*When Frank's says that each of the characters has a different view of the world and thus there is no concrete view of the morality of the campaign I would say this is also a good thing. Each character and player view things in a different way, even though they each play in the same game. Blibby is a neurotic ball of paranoia and bitterness, so it means his view is different to the Natascha's who tries to do the honourable thing.*



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## NEXT ISSUE

### DANGER AT SEA

A look at the Sea of Claws

### THE SEARCH FOR GOLD

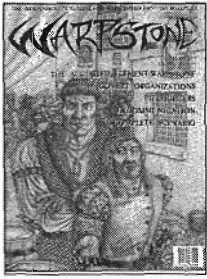
Alchemists and their Art

### DOCTOR, DOCTOR

Physicians and their Guild

TALABHEIM & MUCH, MUCH MORE...

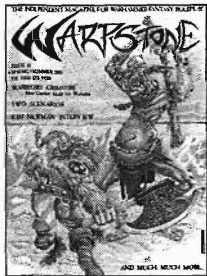
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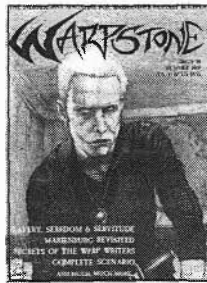
**Issue Eleven**  
 Convert Organizations  
 \* Pit Fighters \*  
 Warpstone: Uses and Abuses \*  
 Excommunication \*  
 Noble Blood: A complete Scenario \*  
 Warhammer Battles \*  
 Getting Old in WFRP



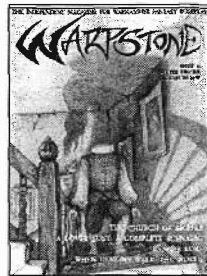
**Issue Twelve**  
 Thralls of Darkness: Cults & Cultists \*  
 Complete Scenario: Ring a Ring of Cultists \*  
 Chemistry \* Tomes of Magic \*  
 Librarians in WFRP \* Marienburg Sources \*  
 Dreams and Omens \* Reviews



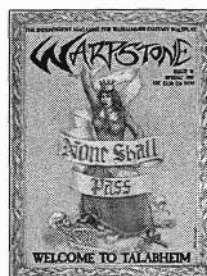
**Issue Thirteen**  
 Interview with Kim Newman \*  
 The Road to Damnation: Cults & Cultists \*  
 Remains of the Knight: Scenario \*  
 Sold in the Hills: Scenario \*  
 Warriors' Grimoire \*  
 Reviews \* Fiction



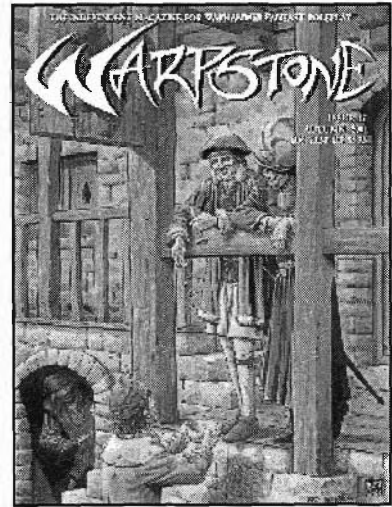
**Issue Fourteen**  
 Slavery in The Old World \*  
 Secrets of the WFRP Writers Part One \*  
 Headhunters: Scenario \*  
 Marienburg: Locations & Cameos \*  
 Ostland Gazetteer \*  
 Books & Tomes \*  
 Reviews \* Fiction



**Issue Fifteen**  
 Adventurers in the Old World \*  
 Geheimnischacht and Hexensnacht \*  
 Patrons in WFRP \*  
 The Church of Sigmar \*  
 Scenario: A Lover Lost \*  
 Ranger Skills \*  
 History of Religion \*  
 Fox Crowe \*  
 Reviews \* News



**Issue Sixteen**  
 Talabheim: Part One of our guide to the city \*  
 Culture in the Old World \*  
 Doomstones \*  
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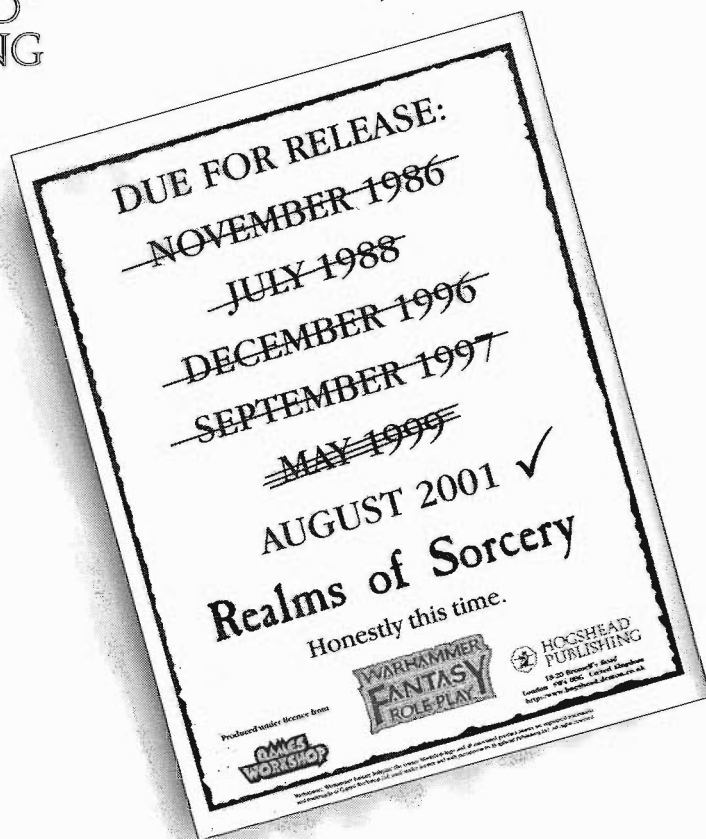
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