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FROM THE ASHES!

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF SECOND EDITION WFRP

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EDITORIAL

By John Foody

Before issue 24 hits the shelves WFRP2 will be upon us. I am pleased to say we are able to bring you a sneak preview. Many thanks to Black Industries for making this happen.

Those of you who have been taking part in the playtest will recognise the preview text. I have been one of those playtesting and taking part in the discussions on the playtest forums. It has been an interesting experience watching the game develop and seeing a little of how Green Ronin and Black Industries work. Certainly there will be much more comment on all this next issue.

It is good that the game has been heavily tested, something that rarely seems to be done as part of the RPG design process. The playtesters have shown a range of opinions on various issues and we shall see what ends up in the final version. It goes without saying that the new rules will generate plenty of discussion. We are holding off publishing comments until we have seen the final version, but looking forward to bringing you some reviews.

Since last issue I've attended games' conventions at opposite ends of the scale: from Timcon II to Games Day 2004 (both reviewed on page 4). What is common to both is the sheer enjoyment that players take from the day, not only from the games themselves but also from discussion of them afterwards. If we could only show all this to potential new players, then it could only attract new blood in to the hobby: something roleplaying badly needs. That is, no surprise to say, much easier said than done.

So with issue 24 approaching fast, this is the last issue of *Warpstone* dedicated to classic/old school WFRP. It has been a long journey for many of us, in my case since the first days of the game. As a bit of indulgent nostalgia, and this *is* a fanzine after all, here are my favourite memories of my WFRP games.

1. A certain town disappearing into a hole. A much-argued misunderstanding of the fireball rules and sheer cowardice results in the PCs running rather than fighting.
2. The killing of a tied up warehouse guard by a (grinning?) Halfling. Much arguing about morals and one of the best *Warpstone* articles to date (WS 16).
3. The death of the major campaign villain and the entire party in the climactic fight of a long running campaign.
4. Escaping from Castle W, our heroes leap for their boat. Only one "lucky" PC makes the roll, crushing his legs on the deck and dying horribly while all his comrades get safely away.
5. Looking for a boat the PCs are offered one at a fair price, "Hi Guv, wanna buy a boat". Sadly, the real owner didn't think it was fair at all...
6. A possessed PC convincing the last standing member of the party to throw away his weapon.
7. Too horrible to tell, but it involved a Jabberwock and a new low.

Enjoy the issue and see you all soon in the brave new world of WFRP2...

INFO



All correspondence to :











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www.warpstone.darcorc.net

SUBMISSIONS

Version 1.6 – November 2004

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 do not hear back from us in good time, please drop us a line to remind us. Failure to reply is simply 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 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 the world of Warhammer, filling in the gaps that are present. We also look at how the game is played, discussing issues relevant to a gamers.

If you have an article but you are not sure whether it is 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.) the 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:** We are currently not accepting fiction.

REPORTS FROM THE HEART OF CORRUPTION

Dates and Demagogues

7

Some thoughts on the Old World calendar and where it goes wrong.

"But for GMs who like to sit astride their fantasy lands like some omniscient deity, this sort of bookkeeping needs to be done."



WFRP2 Preview

23

A preview of second edition WFRP, including a look at the concept art for the cover.

"Wizards and priests can draw on the Winds of Magic to cast spells, from the insignificant magic flame to the mighty Conflagration of Doom."



Marienburg History

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Highlighting clashes in the WFRP background for Marienburg.

"The Jutones were the last tribe to swear allegiance to Sigmar Heldenhammer when he founded The Empire."



Conspiracy

29

Part one of three of our epic Marienburg based scenario.

"In the midst of all this plotting, there are two other groups for whom the breakdown of order will be seen as a sign their time has come."



The Order of the Black Griffon

9

A Sigmarite Templar order dedicated to guarding pilgrims on their way to Dog Peak Pass.

"The Sigmarite force was lead by the fanatical priestess Sabine Heistlenburger, and consisted of lay brethren and a handful of militia."



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Part two of our article looking at Alchemy in the Old World.

"Alchemy still carries the stigma of a dark science, one related to demonology and necromancy."



Arcane Language Magick

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Expanding on the language of wizardly folk.

"It can perfectly describe the essence of any entity that ever was or shall ever be or can even never be."



The City of the Damned

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Some ideas on using Mordheim as a setting for WFRP campaigns.

"Throughout the land rivalry set brother against brother, city against city."



More than Just a Career

16

A different approach to WFRP careers.

"One need not be a bawd to enjoy life; one simply must be open-minded and have a great hunger for new experiences."



Divine History

55

One of the things WFRP is short of, are legends of the gods. Here are a few.

"I maintain the poor fellow's gruesome fate was undeserved. In my view."



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19

An article for those who dare delve into the secrets of the foulest of undead.

"The average Old Worlder knows nothing of their habits, if even of their actual existence."



Elemental

60

A short story in which our heroes come up against a creature with a rather strange ability.

"He then crashed raging into his daughter's chambers, sword drawn to find Egon bedding his daughter."



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

LICHEMASTER

by Carl Sargent & Rick Priestley

Published by Flame Publications

Reviewed by Toby Pilling

TIMEWARP REVIEW

"It misses with its second attack."

"I got it. Eight damage..."

Common sense, maybe, but it is an easy trap to fall into, especially here because the enemies are all the same thing – undead. If the fighting becomes routine and fails to get the pulse racing, *Lichemaster* is dead and buried.

The adventure is also doomed if the sight of the undead fails to evoke any horror. One good way to avoid this is to have characters the players meet later show up as reanimated zombies. Though the player characters are supposed to be unsuspecting of the necromantic tide soon to overwhelm them, the players themselves will usually be expecting it. The title *Lichemaster* and the glaring skeletons on the front cover always gave the game away. Far better to have called it *Terror in Frugelhofen*, with a neutral cover illustration.

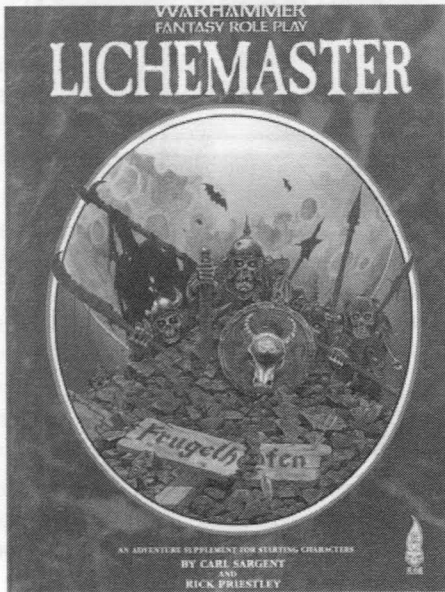
Having spoken about the preponderance of combat, there is a surprising amount of roleplaying potential. The best opportunity is with the people in the threatened village of Frugelhofen. During the calm before the storm the players crucially get to know the inhabitants in a series of encounters that set the scene nicely. There are also chances for more urbane discourse, so the adventure is not completely one-dimensional. However, many NPC speeches are written down word for word and a good GM should paraphrase these into a more conversational format to build the atmosphere. But what sets this adventure apart is the unique chance to interact with a band of Skaven who happen to want something the PC's themselves will need to save everyone.

Fortunately, once again we have interesting pre-generated WFRP characters thanks to time put into developing them. Each of the six here has their own physical description, background, and motivation for being in the story's area. These and other added details, such as personality, identity traits, and opening lines, makes them seem realistic. Finally, some of the pre-rolled characters have "Guilty Secrets" which are specifically designed to go with parts of the five chapters of the adventure.

On the down side, there are too few new magic items, spells and other rules. Necromantic magic is generally helpful only to (evil) NPCs and the only magic items here, *The Arca Chaotis* and *The Iron Man*, while amazing, are too powerful for many GMs to want them permanently in the hands of the PCs. The monk "career outline" is more outline than anything else and offers no skills. As such, it is not even really usable as a career. Finally, the artwork is rather ordinary with merely a couple original pieces.

Something to be careful about is that the published experience point awards are very generous: roughly two thousand points can possibly be awarded by the printed guidelines. Since *Lichemaster* was set for a party having a total number of careers at six or less it is quite difficult to find any published adventures for the players to graduate onto, as their characters will be too advanced. The *Doomstones* Campaign is the sole viable option if the more sensible approach of cutting down the rewards is not used.

Despite its doubtful origins as a *Warhammer Fantasy Battle* supplement, *Lichemaster* has the potential to be a good adventure, if run well. It requires different narrative skills of a GM than most published scenarios, but that is not a negative aspect. It deserves a reprint one-day.



Lichemaster was published in 1990 by Games Workshop under the Flame Publications logo. The scenario was actually an amalgamated WFRP version of the earlier Warhammer Fantasy Battle Campaign *Terror of the Lichemaster*, and a subsequent battle scenario in *Citadel Journal*.

Lichemaster's origins in the battle game are extremely clear, yet it is remains worthwhile

as a roleplay supplement.

The initial premise is neat: a centuries-old, mad necromancer, Heinrich Kemmler, stumbles upon a Daemon of Nurgle in the Grey Mountains. The two make a bargain whereby the demon will feed off the psychic energy from Kemmler's victims and then give Kemmler a little more energy each time. So the more people this necromancer kills, the stronger the demon becomes. The main action, however, centres around Kemmler raising an undead army to bring revenge upon a monastery that drained his magic. The player characters are the unwitting heroes, stuck in the valley and the only hope of rallying the available forces to turn back the evil tide. That is it in a nutshell. A sort of cross between *Day of the Dead* and *The Seven Samurai*. High potential indeed!

The *Warhammer Fantasy Battle* roots are obvious. The original campaign consisted of three separate battles, where each side's relative success in the first two affected their subsequent strength in the third. Authors Carl Sargent and Rick Priestley keep this format in their conversion. The WFRP version includes the fourth battle from *White Dwarf* as a climax. This means that the plot is quite linear, created so that players flow from one section to the next. However, rather than being railroaded into doing certain things, the transitions are logical and make sense to go along with.

As one can imagine though, there is a lot of pitched fighting, which may not be to the taste of the more refined roleplayer. Having said that, the settings are good; well planned and escalates nicely to the final apocalyptic struggle. Therefore an important requirement of the adventure is that a GM runs them with style. The whole thing will soon go down the tubes if it gets like:

"It hits."

"I dodged."

BRETONNIA

by Rory Naismith, Mark Saunders & Others

Project Co-ordinator: Peter Butterworth

Reviewed by John Foody



The Corrupt Kingdom of



BRETONNIA

Bretonnia-Project : www.s.cenex.com/WFRP/



The Bretonnia of the WFRP rulebook presented itself as a cesspit of disease and corruption, ruled over by the decadent court of King Charles de la Tête d'Or. It was a popular view, but one that remained undeveloped. Then in 1996, Games Workshop released the Bretonnia Army Book and it proved itself the most controversial piece of Warhammer background to date for WFRP players. Here Bretonnia was a land of chivalry and honour. The

golden age of Camelot had come to the Old World.

Many WFRP players didn't like the change and different solutions were aired on how to merge the two backgrounds. Out of this came the announcement that a web based Bretonnia project was to be launched, inviting contributors to take part. Since then it has continued to slowly grow. It would be fair to say that it did not impact much on to the wider WFRP conciseness. However, this would change. In 2003, project co-ordinator and founder, Peter Butterworth, announced that version one of the project had been released as a PDF. So would this book make Bretonnia a GMs paradise? Indeed, would it manage to solve the problem of the conflicting Bretonnian backgrounds? This review is only of the available PDF rather than the whole project, which contains more information. It has declared itself a work in progress and so I have been careful to review it as such.

Available as a free download, the sourcebook is a huge document, spread over 170 plus pages. The material is generally well written and historical illustrations are liberally placed throughout the text. These have been well chosen and add to the atmosphere and appearance of the book.

The book starts with a prologue and the first chapter contains maps, calendars and other solid background material. The descriptions of the cities develop the background given in the main rulebook, deliberately downplaying the corrupt and decadent versions as the whole truth.

The next chapter concentrates on the history of the country. It includes interesting articles on witches and Witch Hunters and the punishment of man-cages. Next the nobility and government are covered, including descriptions of the leading factions in the country while the Palace of Oisillon is examined in some detail, and rounded out with some scenario ideas.

Religion is covered in some detail with the Lady of the Lake

appearing in an interesting way. The "Imperial" gods are featured and Shallya, Myrmidia and Verena take prominent roles in the Kingdom. The project's view on the Cult of Shallya is one of the strongest parts of the project.

The city of Guisoreux is comprehensively covered, including descriptions of districts, locations, personalities, societies and other organisations. There is plenty of material here for any GM to use the city. The accompanying scenario is not as strong as the preceding material. The final chapter contains various odds and ends such as a short story, scenarios and characters.

The book falls down in a number of areas. The structure seems rather haphazard and the order of the material seems wrong on occasion. More seriously, there is a failure to place the material in a wider context. Arguably this could come from the WFRP rulebook background, but more is needed here. On occasion the writing is a little dry and sprawling, and more links could have been made between material by different authors. Some of the weaker material should have been cut down.

Some of the background suffers from not being "Bretonnian" enough and it could easily sit within The Empire. One solution that could have been used to temper this would be to introduce more French (pseudo or not) names and titles. It is a cheap and lazy way of adding atmosphere, but one used successfully in much of the material for The Empire. Such omissions are a little odd as it recommended at the beginning of the book.

For those wanting to campaign in Bretonnia the project is well worth checking out. There are plenty of good ideas here to help you develop your own games and certainly rounds out the description in the main rulebook. The project makes little attempt to incorporate the WFB background. Not that many will find this a problem.

The Bretonnia Project can be downloaded from the Warpstone website or visit the project at www.warhammer.net/bretonnia.

BRETONNIA: WARHAMMER ARMY BOOK

By Anthony Reynolds

Published by Games Workshop

The second edition of the Bretonnia army book comes with everything you expect to find; army lists, painting guides, background and rules. Clearly this is not the Bretonnia of WFRP; it is a country of Arthurian legend with knights, grails and the Lady of the Lake. It is a vision many have found impossible to reconcile with WFRP.

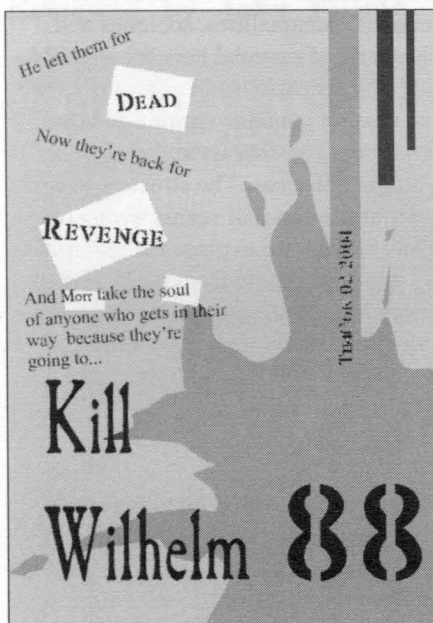
To some degree it is a little unfair to review this book as it is written for the battle game, and a review for WFRP uses different criteria. However, WFB books can sometimes give us useful background.

So, would this update change WFRP players' minds about Bretonnia? It is a promising start. The art is largely impressive being dark and sombre, an impressive feat when you have pegasus flying around. However, the text never reaches these heights. An introductory history is difficult to read both in quality and presentation. The book improves after that but there is nothing of any depth or real interest for WFRP. The background in the main WFRP rulebook remains much more evocative and useful.

Therefore, if your interest in this book is for WFRP, there really is no reason to buy.

WARPSTONE FRAGMENT'S

BRIEF REVIEWS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF WARHAMMER



Timcon II

*They roared. They rampaged.
And they had their fun.*

The second Timcon, a WFRP convention held in London in October 2004, was a great success. The games that were run highlighted the wide range of styles possible in WFRP. The morning session found high powered slaughter in *Kill Wilhelm*, young rakes initiation ceremony in *Jolly Decent Fellows* and James Bond styled spying and copious amounts of a certain chocolate in *The Ambassador's Party*. The afternoon found Watch investigations in *Carroburg Blues*, camp actors on the loose in *Unfinished Symphony* and a legend being born in *The Fen Beast of Farad*.

Timcon III is planned for Easter 2005. More details can be found at

www.shadow-warriors.co.uk/TimConIII.htm

Critical Hit Forums

R.I.P. Soon after the last issue of *Warpstone* went to press, with an advert for its own *Critical Hit* forum, the forums were taken down. Visitors were greeted by the message, "It is my sad duty to inform everyone that the *Critical Hit* Forums have been closed. The major factor in this decision has been the increasing amount of time it takes to administrate the forums, time which we cannot now afford." *Warpstone* would like to thank Andrew, the man behind *Critical Hit*, for all the hard work over the years. It has been appreciated by many. *Critical Hit* is still worth visiting for the wealth of WFRP material that remains.



As every year, hordes of gamers packed the main hall of Games Day 2004 where frenzied buying and happy gaming go hand in hand. As you might expect the wargames were very impressive, with several *Storm of Chaos* games taking place, as

well as Warhammer Historical's Wild West game.

Down in the lower hall could be found artwork for the forthcoming *Ogre Kingdoms*. It will be interesting to see where this goes for WFRP2. I was also slightly shocked to see a copy of *Warpstone* issue 1 on display in the Games Workshop Archive. I did ask and it was no accident. The archive is to feature related material in addition to everything Games Workshop has ever published.

What made this years Games Day even more interesting was the presence of Black Industries. Alongside, a case of old material the team had a copy of the new rules on display alongside various concept art from John Blanche. The Black Industries team also ran a couple of raucous games of WFRP- more mob skirmish than roleplaying-as-we-know-it. Nevertheless, the players and crowds were thoroughly entertained.

It will be interesting to see next years event and WFRP's place in it all.

Mootland

The latest issue of *Le Grimoire* is dedicated to the Halfling homeland of The Moot. The price is 15 euros for Europe (19 US\$ or 12 Pounds) shipping costs included. For more information check out www.legrimoire.net.

Crimson Empire Rebranding

Crimson Empire (advertised this issue) is no more. It has now become *Cursed Empire*. A press release stated, "Pursuant to an amicable resolution with Lucasfilm Ltd., the use of *Crimson Empire* as a brand name will cease. *Crimson Empire* Fantasy Roleplaying Game will continue under the new title of *Cursed Empire Fantasy Roleplaying Game - Divided Loyalties*." More on the game can be found at www.cursedempire.com.

WFRP2 Releases

The latest copy of SFX contains a Black Library sponsored calendar containing BL releases for the next year. For Black Industries and WFRP2 there is; Mar 18: WFRP, Character Pack, Plundered Vaults; April 22: GM Pack, Empire Bestiary; May 20: Paths of the Damned Vol 1: The Ashes of Middenheim; Jun 24: Old World Armoury: Misillania and Miltaria; July 15: Sigmar's Heirs: A Guide to The Empire; August 19: Paths of the Damned Vol 2: The Spires of Altdorf; Oct 21: Karak Azgal: Dragon Krag; Nov 18: Realms of Sorcery.

The *Critical Hit* forums had become the central location on the internet for WFRP discussion. It is a huge loss for the WFRP community. Months later it still hasn't really been replaced. Black Industries' official WFRP forum seemed perfectly placed to take over but hasn't really managed to do so, not yet reaching the same level of debate as *Critical Hit*. In part this is because many of the more active posters can be found on the dedicated playtest forums. It also remains opposed to wider aspects of the WFRP community. A discussion mentioning *Strike-To-Stun* was stopped, Timcon details were removed and *Warpstone* could not announce its release. There are reasons for these restrictions but, nevertheless, the use of the forums remains limited.

To my mind the forums at www.strike-to-stun.com remain the likely successor to those of *Critical Hit*. Again many of the *Critical Hit* audience don't seem to have crossed over yet.

THE CORRESPONDENT

Religion in WFRP By Tim Eccles

"Old Worlders venerate a number of deities; their religion is pantheistic in a similar way to that of the Ancient Greeks of our own world" WFRP, page 193

Whilst I have mused on the nature and place of religion before in this column, my intention here is to consider what WFRP tells us about religion, and how this has developed over time and the various WFRP products. I have two themes. The first is that WFRP does not understand religion, and the second is that we have all become lazy. I am not intending to prove or disprove these themes, but offer a commentary for every player to decide for themselves if I have a point, and perhaps sketch a framework for us to examine what Green Ronin elect to do with this important part of the game.

The above quote from WFRP perfectly exemplifies my first point. Pantheism is completely different and unrelated to the polytheism that I assume the authors mean. Pantheism is the belief that God is everything and everything is God. It tends to follow that pantheists are also monotheists. We are left with a clear contradiction, but this seems rooted in the fact that whoever used the word pantheism, misused it. Hence my point that WFRP does not understand religion. That said, followers of the Old Faith could be pantheists. I do think, however, that we can all accept that WFRP is a polytheistic religious system. Maybe.

Religion in Greece varied over time. Although the religion was initially broadly polytheistic, during the Classical period the ascendancy of Zeus led to a more henotheistic system. And in Athens (for example) there was a henotheistic system focusing on the patron goddess. We will return to these terms later, but we already have a shaky position. Despite WFRP's statement, its religion does not appear to be pantheistic, pantheism does not venerate many gods and the Greeks' belief system varied between a number of forms of what it appears to be meaning - polytheism.

"As stated above, all characters are expected to show respect for all the gods of the Old World, praying and offering sacrifices when they desire the favour of a particular god." (ibid)

You see, I think that subsequent writers have become either lazy in their use of shorthand, or have actually changed the way that religion operates. Most PCs at some point became described as of alignment Neutral (Sigmar) or some other specific god. Equally, we have created Ulrican and Sigmarite provinces - yet this should not happen under the polytheism that

appears to be described. I have always taken Old Worlders to be polytheistic, in that they all worship all the gods. That is why I use the term. A few might venerate one (or more) for particular geographic or historic reasons, but the vast majority worship all gods (more or less) equally. However, we find under the Hogshead tenure at the very least, a distinct tendency to adopt a single deity for an individual worship, sometimes additionally antagonistic to other(s) within the pantheon.

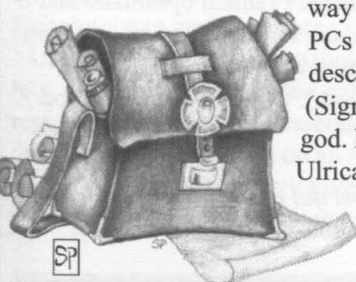
Strictly speaking, most Old Worlders now seem to believe in henotheism - that is, the belief in (and possibly worship of) many gods, but with personal veneration of one in particular. Some Sigmarites (and followers of the Lady?) may be more likely to be monolatrists - in that they believe in other gods, but do not worship them at all. These are both subsets of polytheism, but are more complex than straight belief in many gods - and seem to be against what WFRP proposed. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but it does require us to examine the pantheon as a whole rather differently if we are to venerate only select members within it. That this was not intended to be the case, to my mind, is best illustrated by the following quote.

"Clerics, and some more devout characters, may follow one god in particular...Even these characters are not excused from the normal obligations that all characters have towards all gods: a Cleric of Taal, for example, must still treat Verena and her temples with respect." (WFRP, p.193)

This sentence is, of course, a contradiction to the other quoted statements about polytheism as it is actually discussing henotheism! This might suggest that actually WFRP intends the world to be henotheistic, and not polytheistic at all.

Does any of this matter? I think it does. It is very difficult to contemplate the sort of questions that one might reasonably expect a PC to have views upon, if we are unclear about religion. Mórr seems to provide a perfect case in point. Where does my PC (and where do all the NPCs) think he goes when he dies? In what ways might this affect his attitude to risk? If Mórr is the afterlife, whilst (say) Sigmar is only relevant to the very short lifespan that I might have, why would I worship any god except the one with whom I will be spending eternity? If the Old World is a polytheistic society, I can accept that there is no issue with Mórr "managing" the afterlife. However, if we are moving towards worshipping only one particular god, then it raises a whole series of questions about the role of Mórr within the afterlife. Can any god prevent any soul from entering? A devout follower of Ulric might be seen as a heretic to a devout follower of Sigmar; how does Mórr manage this? And what of those who have sworn service to Khaine or the Chaos Gods?

There is nothing wrong with developing antagonisms



within the pantheon. Polytheism tends by its very nature to be less prone to schism and religious discord than monotheism, but this should not prevent it (especially in a mere game). Since I have had a hand in developing the monotheistic tendency of the Cult of Sigmar, I am partial to this development and think that it adds colour - but only when used in moderation. With reference to the Mórr example above, I can see the cult of Sigmar putting forth arguments to redefine theological belief in the afterlife to give The Empire's patron god a more leading role. I usually bury clerics of each faith within their own graveyards and rites, since I think it is an easy way of adding diversity. The key, however, is tone and balance and it is with this sense of proportion that I examine my next point - the simplification and repetition of the Sigmar-Ulric divide. Whilst it does offer a nice twist concerning the evolution of religious belief into a new contest between supporting the "old" religion of pantheism (Ulric) and quasi-monotheism (Sigmar) we are not exactly short of twists to play with (from Ancient Spirits to localised gods like Bogenauer and through to saints). We need to be careful with Sigmarite monotheistic tendencies and ensure that it stays as a fringe belief motivated primarily by secular political influence rather than a genuine theological position. There will always be nutters in a church, and the odd example can add extra colour and adventure - but again, it is a matter of balance. Most Sigmarites are perfectly reasonable people living in a pragmatic way. If we make too many of them fanatics, then we risk going down the WFB route of monotheistic Sigmarite zealots on every street corner and every witch-hunter an obsessive nutbag. That approach is fine for a figure wargame but far too over-powering for a RPG.

I would assume that most people will probably have a favourite deity, determined by their profession and social standing. However, I doubt that there is a wider reason for any particular favouritism. A fisherman is very likely to spend more time praying to Manaen than the other gods, but it certainly does not mean that he neglects his devotions to Ulric, Sigmar, Shallya and the rest. Where every individual would have a stronger need for some god or goddesses than the others, I would class this as mild henotheism. What matters is that this would tend to throw into question the notion that we can have Sigmarite and Ulrican provinces, inasmuch as that infers that the one excludes the other. Where someone is described as an Ulrican, they would also be a Sigmarite - with the few exceptions of those who believe in the Heresy. To my mind these are a minority. Where the intra-Empire conflict comes from is within the political and economic domains. Religious disputes might add polish, but very few within the various cult hierarchies would propagate anti-deity beliefs in any form - as clearly stated in the final quote that I gave from WFRP. Personally, I find the constant large-scale warfare tedious and prefer a series of petty and private conflicts, many of which may not even take a military form. Wherever one draws the line, I do think it has been trampled underfoot by official and fan writers to the point that we have lost sight of the true polytheistic nature of religion. NPCs are increasingly described within one religious paradigm in the WFRP books,

most notably in *Empire in Flames* which stresses an Ulrican v Sigmar sentiment throughout the nation to the point that we have a civil war. No one seems to say that everyone is both an Ulrican *and* a Sigmarite anymore, despite the fact that WFRP does so very clearly. Instead we stress the differences and the monotheism of each particular group. We might accept that this is a political contrivance, but I have trouble accepting its plausibility within polytheism. In a similar vein, *Something Rotten in Kislev* never really tells us what a Kislevan's religion consists of, aside from (supposedly 'dead') Ancient Spirits. We are left almost with the notion that they are Ulrican monotheists (and WFB and the novels certainly give that impression). Even the notion of saints that Warpstone has promulgated is - to my mind - based in monotheism. I think most supportive to my argument is that I cannot recall a single example in WFRP of a temple dedicated to the worship of a number of (or all of) the gods - even in the poorest environments where one might expect this.

As I stated at the start, I am not intending to prove my hypothesis but raise the questions. Nearly two decades on, we all play different versions of WFRP, and with the coming of a second edition, any definitive argument concerning first edition would be irrelevant anyway. I raise the questions simply because religion holds a central place in the Old World, and it needs to work, and work consistently. Religion is a central foundation for how society is structured; everything we write about the Old World peoples is (perhaps subconsciously) predicated on assumptions about belief and the practice of that faith. It should be clearly spelled out. The question any new writer for the game must be seen to resolve is whether the drift and laziness has been stopped, and that religion moves beyond the simplistic one-dimensional 1980s style of spell lists and template write-ups including blessings, symbols and holy days. What we need is a serious integration into the world and a 'living' belief system and religious infrastructure. Given the concerns that one sees expressed by WFRP fans that the new edition will be some sort of WFRP-lite or quasi-WFB RPG, we need it to seriously deal with the major issues that we as role-players use within our games. I do not regard these issues as simply ones of colour or optional extras. When we write our adventures and campaigns, and if we are serious about role-playing characters in the world that we have created, then we need to know answers to some very basic questions about the way the world operates. On the positive side, both Mórr and Shallya seem to have come in from the cold as far as Games Workshop is concerned - they get mentioned all the time in Black Library novels and periodically in *White Dwarf*. On the downside, Verena, Myrmidia and Ranald have much less (if any) coverage and Khaine seems to have been completely removed and subsumed into Khorne. I remain optimistic that WFRP2 will have all the old gods in it - there was an article in *White Dwarf* only a year ago that covered them all in some detail (even including the Old Faith). Quite how they will be co-ordinated is a different issue.

"People who are openly disrespectful of the gods are often lynched" - WFRP. Green Ronin and Warpstone take note!

DATES AND DEMAGOGUES

The WFRP Calendar by Clive Oldfield

Something is wrong with the WFRP calendar! It is an artificial construction, of course, and strangely convenient, designed to make it easy to keep track as the days of the campaign go by. Precise timekeeping in WFRP is often necessary as many of the adventures are tied to special dates (feast-days) and the phases of the moon.

Two versions of the calendar have appeared. The first was in the *Mistaken Identity* supplement (included in Hogshead's *Shadows over Bogenhafen*) and the second in Hogshead's GM's Screen and Reference Pack.

It is worth considering what the designers were up to during the development of the calendar. What did they intend to achieve, and how may they have failed? Why does the WFRP calendar look the way it does, and what are its flaws?

Famously the WFRP calendar has 12 months of 32 or 33 days each. There are exactly 400 days in the year. Exactly. The phase of the only predictable moon, Mannslieb, is 25 days exactly. Exactly. This is the sort of thing that RPGs can get away with because most GMs are very happy to have a bit less bookkeeping and a bit less complexity in things that players do not usually notice.

Days and Confused

Our own world's calendar is pretty clunky and fiddly. This does not make too much difference to us; just a leap year now and again, and a quick consultation of a diary to know what day a certain date will fall, etc. But for GMs who like to sit astride their fantasy lands like some omniscient deity, this sort of bookkeeping needs to be done. From inside our own world, and taken one day at a time, our calendar is not difficult to handle. From outside it is more complicated, influenced by the lunar orbit and the Earth's orbit around the sun. In a fantasy RPG world most players can get by without much reference to the calendar. However, a GM looking in, needing everything to hang together, often finds that calendar management can be a fiddly process.

That is why, I imagine, the calendar designers tried to make it as simple as possible to manage the calendar: four hundred days, made up of 12 months of 33 or so days each, erm...and some bits left over.

An even more simplistic model, with twelve months of thirty-three days each, would have left four days over. These could have been made into feast-days; the solstices and the natural times for the feast-days. Then it seems that the creators of the calendar wanted a couple more special days, as well: Geheimnistag and Hexenstag.

Unfortunately, not giving these feast-days normal day-names (e.g. Wellentag) throws the calendar out of its previous nice, regular cycle. Now the calendar in *Mistaken Identity* begins on a Wellentag and ends on an Aubentag. This means that each year the day-names of any given date shift by two. So the year will not begin on a Wellentag again until four years have gone

by. The calendar, I am sure, was intended to be the same for every year. Somebody made a mistake. This is a flaw in the calendar supplied in *Mistaken Identity*.

In order to correct this flaw, the same calendar was presented in the GM's Screen with an explanation that this was the calendar of 2512 (or 2500) and that next year the day-names would be offset by two days. Therefore the 2513 calendar would begin on a Marktag.

This surely begs the question: why construct a clearly artificial, exceptionally convenient calendar which requires a small fiddle, when it would be just as easy to construct a clearly artificial, exceptionally convenient calendar without the annoying two day offset? 'To make it more realistic' is not an answer, because there is nothing realistic at all about the WFRP calendar.

I would favour one of two solutions to this. Either you can give the feast-days day-names, so then Mitterfruhl would fall on Aubentag, etc. This would mean, however, that after Mitterfruhl you would have to start shuffling up the day-names to accommodate this. This quick fix, unlike the equally quick fix in the GM's Screen, would not be easy to map over the printed calendars, but it would ensure every date of every year has the same day-name.

The second, and best, solution would simply be to lose the last two days of the year. This would involve no fiddling or extra bookkeeping, and, as a bonus, would give the GM two feast days to invent and insert anywhere at all.

Loony Phase

There is another strange thing about the WFRP calendar. The months seem to be based on Mannslieb's lunar cycle of around 33 days. I am certain, in the convenient calendar that was created for the Warhammer World, the designers had in mind a lunar phase of exactly 33 1/3 days. Exactly. That would allow months of 33 days each and a few days left over for feast-days.

More evidence for this lies in the Old World week. Our week follows the phases of the moon, also. The lunar phase in our world is roughly 29 and a half days long. Therefore, over the course of a week, the moon goes from full to half, or half to new, etc. The Old World has weeks of eight days. This certainly is consistent with the 33 (and a bit) day lunar phase.

But, the lunar phase as described in *Mistaken Identity* is actually 25 days. Clearly, a calendar based on 25 day lunar phases and 33 day months is a bizarre thing. A 25 day phase and eight day weeks is equally bizarre. I can think of no in-game reason for this.

I would think that the calendar was designed with a 33 1/3 day lunar phase in mind. But, in keeping with the simplifying approach to the calendar that was being pursued, it was decided that it would be better to change the phase to 25 days. This would allow people to easily follow the lunar phases and keep track of Mannslieb. They did this without bothering to change

the lengths of the months or the lengths of the weeks. For me, this was a mistake; it makes no sense to have months of 33 days, weeks of eight days and a lunar phase of 25 days.

So, in my campaign I have lunar phases of exactly 33 1/3 days. Exactly. It is not realistic, of course, and hints at artificial influences upon the Old World (which I like), but it suits me much better than the ill-fitting 25 day construct.

A New Start, A New Year

Clearly, there is a now an opportunity for a new calendar to be produced for WFRP second edition. If the new designers feel the need to go into as much detail as to include a calendar (and I think they should), then hopefully they manage one as convenient to use, but without all the errors mentioned above.

COMMENTS ON ANTONIUS SCOLASTICUS' ACCOUNT OF THE CITY OF MARIENBURG

By Doctor Albrecht von Kauhafen, Freiburg Middenheim, Nachgeheim 2512 IC

I have decided to comment on the *Account of the City of Marienburg* that my most esteemed colleague, Antonius Scholasticus of Marienburg, has recently authored, after discovering some strange conflicts in his accounts.¹

Taking his point of departure in Dobbe Arend's saga (unquestionably the best source for Wasteland history during the time of Sigmar), Antonius claims that the Jutones arrived in the Wasteland around -20 IC. The then ruler was one *Marius* known as the Fen Wolf. A decade later Marius defeated a Fimir Queen, an integral step in clearing the lands of the cursed demons. Marius proclaimed himself King of Jutonsreik, close to the lands of present day Wasteland (Whether Marius actually ruled a land of this size is highly questionable). I have no problem with accepting this account but the dating troubles me.

Prior works, including *A Brief History of Marienburg and the Wasteland* from *Weisszweg: The Collected Works*, vol. 118 (with contributions by Antonius!), have dated the rule of Marius to the last decades of the first century IC; an entire century after Antonius' dating. It is important to note that *Weisszweg's* account also has Marius as the very first First Baron of Westerland, a vassal of the Emperor. The last statement is most likely wrong for the contemporary chronicle of Venerable Ottokar places this incident in the year 501 IC, and names the first baron Bram. This source is quoted by Antonius in his manuscript. Hence, one must conclude that *Weisszweg's* account is erroneous. I find it plausible that it confuses several of the early rulers of Marienburg. Still, I find Antonius' dating and account of the life and deeds of Marius to be the best available.

Antonius continues his account with references to the inscriptions on the famous column in the crypt of the Marienburg Cathedral of Manaan. He mentions one *King Euricius Mariuszoon*, implying he should be one of Marius' successors. Yet, Antonius notes that the inscriptions mention a twin tailed comet during the reign of Euricius. I can hardly believe this comet to be none but the one heralding the birth of Sigmar. But Sigmar was born in the year -30 IC, or twenty years before Marius allegedly founded Marienburg. Clearly, Scolasticus must either be misinterpreting the inscriptions, or Euricius is a predecessor of Marius. Sadly I have not had the

chance to see the inscriptions, I find it hard to take a stand here and I personally find it plausible that Euricius is the father of Marius, and Euricius' surname refers to his father; the grandfather of Marius. I believe it was an established tradition among Jutone chieftains to name their firstborn sons after their fathers. Yet, I stress that this is mere speculation.

Further confusing matters, I personally would have liked Antonius to comment on the mythical Jutone chieftain *Gulderic*, who is detailed in *Weisszweg*, vol. 118. According to Wasteland legends, Gulderic duelled with Sigmar himself before acknowledging Sigmar as his liegelord. These legends are normally considered as historically incorrect, and I must say that I too find them implausible. Yet, it is an irrefutable fact that the ancient manuscript *The Deeds of Sigmar Divine* (the original in the Nuln Temple of Verena is believed to be from the third century IC) states the following:

"The Jutones were the last tribe to swear allegiance to Sigmar Heldenhammer when he founded The Empire."

This raises the questions: Who is Gulderic, and if the ancient manuscript is true, what became of Gulderic's oath of allegiance?

Marienburg: Sold Down the River

Jutones arrive in the Wasteland -20 IC under leadership of Marius. IC -10 he defeats Fimir Queen. Proclaims himself King of Jutonsryk and names the city after himself. *Source: Dobbe Arend's saga.*

King Euricius Mariuszoon ruled when the twin tailed comet appeared IC -30 (!)

Gijsbert Mannlykheid and his son Grootneus from the third century IC. *Source: Columns in the Manaan Cathedral.*

Sigismund II receives submission by then King Bram, who became Baron of Weysterland, in 501 IC. *Source: Chronicle of Venerable Ottokar.*

White Dwarf 118

Jutones the last to swear allegiance to Sigmar. Local legends tell of an epic duel between Sigmar and the then Jutone chieftain Gulderic.

Marius granted title First Baron of Westerland. He cleared the land of the Fimir and founded Marienburg.

¹ This article looks to highlight some conflicts of history between *Marienburg: Sold Down the River* and the original background in *White Dwarf*.

THE ORDER OF THE BLACK GRIFFON



**A Templar Order
by Ryan Wileman**

'From this day forth, I swear by the hammer of holy Sigmar that no humble pilgrim shall need to fear the threat of banditry or the hated greenskins in this valley. All shall pass to this most sacred site in the peace that befits contemplation of our Lord and his Empire united.'
- Sabine Heistlenburger after the Battle of Dog Peak Pass

BACKGROUND

The Foundation Of The Order

The site of Sigmar's greatest victory over the Goblinoids was Black Fire Pass in the Black Mountains - it was here that the decisive defeat of the hordes brought the war to a close and allowed Sigmar to unite The Empire. Prior to the battle there were numerous smaller skirmishes in the region, and the forces of Sigmar and his allies camped out in the surrounding hills. Legend has it that one such camp was in the Dog Peak Pass, a winding valley to the west of Black Fire Pass, named for the oddly-shaped peak that overlooks it. Through the pass winds the Troutbeck River which eventually finds its way into the Upper Reik, although boat traffic cannot travel further upriver than Hochsleben in Averland. The rocky sides of Dog Peak Pass are dotted with caves, and it is in one of these that Sigmar is said to have rested before the battle of Black Fire Pass. In the centuries following, the Cult of Sigmar established a shrine in the cave and pilgrims began to journey to visit and pay their respects to the founder of The Empire. The 'Holy Cave of Sigmar Heldenhammer' was watched over by a small Dwarfen outpost in the Dog Peak Pass, and for over 2000 years the sheltered valley remained a relatively peaceful place.

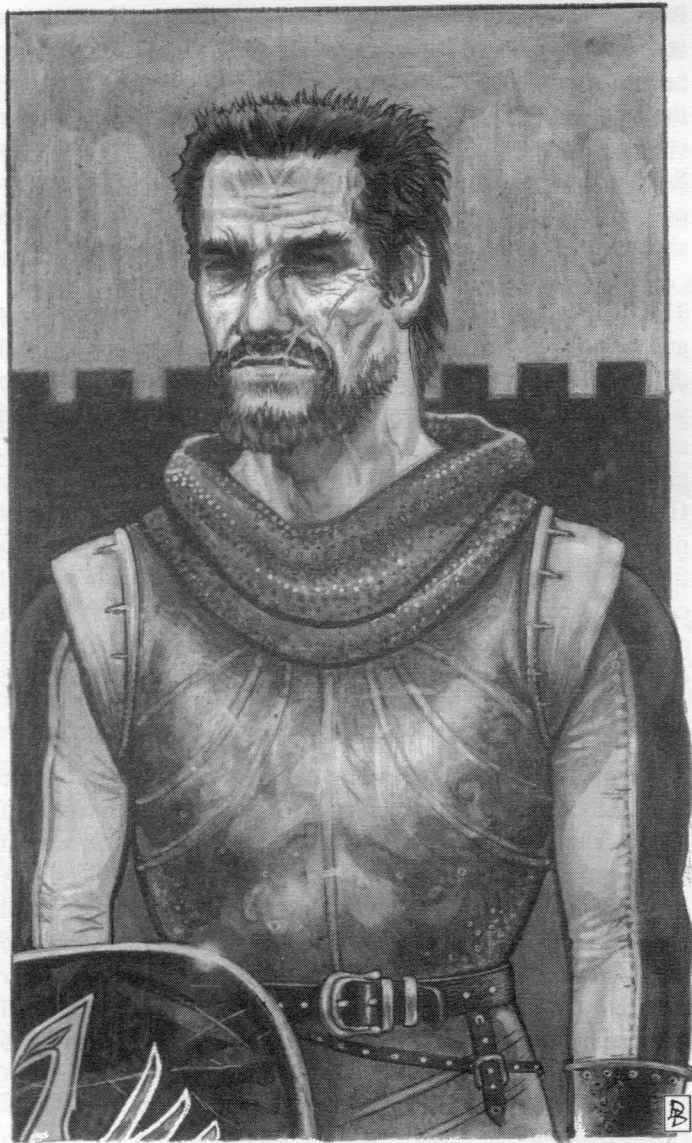
This changed during the autumn of 2285, when a force of Orcs and Goblins swept through the pass, capturing the outpost and defiling the shrine. The Goblinoids then settled in the valley to weather the coming winter, staying in the outpost, caves and scattered farm buildings. As the first snows began to fall, pilgrims to the shrine arrived and swiftly fled with news of the Goblinoids to the Cult of Sigmar in Averland. The Dwarfs of the Black Mountains came to hear of the situation, and during the month of Ulriczeit, sent a force to the valley to join a small command of Sigmarites appalled at the presumed desecration of their god's sacred site. Despite the deep snow and hostile conditions, both forces were motivated by ancient hatreds to rout the greenskins as soon as possible.

The Sigmarite force was led by the fanatical priestess Sabine Heistlenburger, and consisted of lay brethren and a handful of militia from southern Averland. Despite the lack of professional or military expertise, the Humans and Dwarfs were victorious in the Battle of Dog Peak Pass, cutting down the Orcs and Goblins in the swirling blizzard and chasing the survivors into the deep snowdrifts. When spring came, the Cult of Sigmar restored a small Human-Dwarf force to the hastily repaired outpost and by the end of 2287 pilgrims had begun to return to the remote valley.

Unfortunately, for the following decade gangs of Goblins

continued to harass pilgrims and travellers coming to the valley. Groups of the devout were murdered and worse, and Human bandits continued to prey on the area taking advantage of the insufficiently guarded outpost. However, the Cult lacked the resources or support to improve the situation, and by the time the Incursions of Chaos were repulsed by Magnus' crusade, the pass remained a precariously-held territory of The Empire.

With the defeat of the hordes in the north, Magnus ushered in a new era of optimism and piety throughout The Empire. With this new age of unification came the founding of more than one order of templars. The Arch Lector of Nuln made it known in Altdorf that the Holy Cave of Sigmar Heldenhammer was under constant threat of attack and pilgrims approaching the region were in serious danger. In 2307, the Grand Theogonist granted a charter for the establishment of an order of templars with the express intent that they should be charged with 'keeping the highways to Dog Peak Pass safe, with especial regard for the protection of pilgrims'. The newly appointed Grandmaster of the Order of the Black Griffon was Wilhelm von Augsheim, a Sigmarite noble who had fought bravely at the Siege of Praag.



Although this was not an unpopular choice among the Lectors, some of the more progressive clerics were surprised to note that Sabine Heistlenburger was pointedly overlooked for a position which should have naturally been hers. Furious with the decision, which was not her first encounter with the misogyny of the Cult, Sabine Heistlenburger requested permission to be posted in Ostland, where she was forgotten by the patriarchs of the Cult.

Fall From Grace

During the first fifty years of the Order's existence, they were largely successful in their duties. With the assistance of the nearby Dwarf communities, the Order constructed a temple and preceptory at the base of the cliff, protecting the Holy Cave from attack and the elements. The templars numbered around thirty, most of which were recruited from Wilhelm von Augsheim's command at the Siege of Praag. The majority of templars dwelled in the preceptory, with a small contingent at the Temple of Sigmar in Hochsleben charged with accompanying pilgrims to the pass.

With the passing of consecutive grandmasters, the physical distance of the Order from the Preisthood's strongholds began to tell, and the templars began to grow complacent. Bandits and Goblinoids began to return to the region as the patrols became less frequent and more cursory. The templars started to demand increased donations for the upkeep of the preceptory and temple, and by 2460 they had become little more than bandits themselves. Despite this, they maintained their position, partly due to their location but also due to the ability to react to advance warning of visits from the Cult hierarchy.

The Present Day

The Order of the Black Griffon has reached its nadir under the present grandmaster Lord Gunnar Hilgenburg, a lazy and disinterested Sigmarite who sees his position at the head of a small order as the perfect opportunity to increase his personal wealth through legal and illegal means. Not only do the templars extort money from pilgrims, but they also disguise themselves and mount the occasional raid on caravans travelling through the region. Furthermore, the templars in Hochsleben use their position to collect 'for the Holy Cave' in the town taverns - refusal to contribute often being met with a severe beating for 'lack of due piety'.

Grandmaster Hilgenburg has ensured that he maintains good relations with the Lector of Averland, presenting the Order as pious warrior monks that carry out their holy duties with diligence and purpose. He is fortunate to be blessed with considerable charm, and those who witness him wringing his hands when reporting the increase in banditry around Dog Peak Pass would never suspect that it is largely due to his own actions.

ORGANISATION

The Order of the Black Griffon numbers twenty-nine templars at present, with attendant lay brethren and squires maintaining

the Temple of the Holy Cave and the Order's preceptory in Dog Peak Pass. Although there is a strict hierarchy as with other Sigmarite orders, this has largely broken down under the stewardship of Hilgenburg, with his cronies and favoured templars taking the lion's share of the money taken by the order. Beneath Hilgenburg there are two marshals - Heinz von Freiknopf, the Marshal of the Highway based in Hochsleben and Franz Liszter, the Marshal of the Temple. Each of these are favoured by Hilgenburg, and have maintained their positions as a consequence.

Appearance

When patrolling the Dog Peak Pass and surrounding area, on official duty or trying to intimidate, the templars wear their armour - traditionally plate surmounted with a white tabard bearing a black griffon. They also carry shields bearing the griffon beneath a hammer.

The order's heraldic device derives from one of the images daubed in the Holy Cave - the dark silhouette of a griffon swooping down on a force of Goblinoids. Its origins are obscure, but it is likely that it was painted on the wall in the first few centuries of The Empire's existence.

Relations With Others

As mentioned, Hilgenburg has maintained healthy relations with the Lector of Averland (who is ultimately responsible for the Order) and as such there are very few members of the Cult of Sigmar that suspect anything is amiss in Dog Peak Pass.

Beyond the Cult, the Order have a strained but cordial relationship with the Dwarfs of the Black Mountains, but marginally better dealings with Karak Angazbar, in whose dominion the Order's outpost is a part. King Duregar Sharpblade's soldiers are stationed at the Dwarfen outpost, led by their grizzled captain Rorek Kragghal. There is only one of their number who suspects that something is amiss with the order, beyond 'manling ways' - Vala Skaldshaf, a young soldier who saw a number of templars ride off one night while she was on watch. They did not return for several days, during which there were a series of attacks on pilgrims coming to the Temple. Vala isn't sure what to do about her suspicions.

The townsfolk of Hochsleben are suspicious of the Order, but the understandable fear of the people ensures that any concerns are voiced late at night, away from the ears of possible informers to the Cult.

The Preceptory

At a narrow point in Dog Peak Pass is the location of the Holy Cave of Sigmar. The sides of the pass are relatively steep at this point and the preceptory and attendant structures huddle together at the cliff edge and down to the swift-flowing waters of the Troutbeck River.

The Temple of the Holy Cave of Sigmar is constructed jutting out from the cliff-face itself, an octagonal structure with the cave itself incorporated into the back of the building. Sturdily built, what it lacks in ornamentation on the outside, it makes up for on the inside. The cave itself is a small grotto about 20 yards deep and marked with paintings and relics inserted into niches in the walls.

The Preceptory of the order is a blocky fort-like structure adjacent to the highway running through the pass and downhill from the temple. It contains the templar's cells, armoury, the great hall and shrine. A small courtyard contains the stables and forge.

On the other side of the highway is a walled farm, where supplies for the templars are produced. A small farmhouse offers limited accommodation for pilgrims, although the majority will camp in the shelter of the cliff face.

The dwarven outpost stands on the far side of the river, overlooking the other buildings and providing a commanding view of the pass for several miles in each direction.

The soldiers of Karak Angazbar live here and have limited contact with the templars, beyond trading for food and regular meetings to discuss traffic through the pass or pertinent news from elsewhere.

Using the Order of the Black Griffon

The order have been developed as a local organisation who have some influence in the southern border of Averland. Any party travelling in the region could encounter members of the Order and hopefully the article above provides GMs with several ideas for integrating them into an adventure. A few suggestions follows:

ADVENTURE IDEAS

An All Knight Session

A meeting of Sigmarite templar orders is called in the town or city where the party are present, overseen by the nearest Arch-Lector or Lector. The aim is to resolve matters that have recently



caused disruption in the military arm of the Cult. The main problem is a tendency for the responsibilities of each order to be confused and overlapping, the heritage of 2500 years of disorganised church bureaucracy and politics. Lord Hilgenburg sees this meeting as an opportunity to extend the Black Griffon's influence and his own power base, but inevitably most of the other orders have their own agenda.

The party are recruited through an associate with close connections to the Knights of the Twin-Tailed Orb, a fanatical order who need the services of less pious individuals to dig around and find out what the other orders' grandmasters are up to. Several days into the conference, a number of Black Griffon squires are sent to ransack the chambers of the Knights of the Twin-Tailed Orb and take any documentation found therein. The party just happen to be on the premises, leading them deeper into the murky world of religious and military politicking.

Revenge Is A Dish Best Served Cold (With Greens)

Five years ago, Otto Eckart was a successful, small-scale merchant living in Hochsleben and trading with the northern towns of the Border Princes. But then his caravan was attacked by a group of brigands while travelling through Dog Peak Pass. Inevitably, these were members of the Order of the Black Griffon in disguise who had paid the caravan's scout to lead them into the ambush. The caravan was scattered and a freak snowstorm accounted for most of the survivors. Struggling back to Hochsleben, he managed to track down the scout and forced him to confess that he had been approached by associates of Heinz von Freiknopf and paid handsomely to set up the attack. His whole livelihood destroyed, Eckart was driven insane with rage. He killed the scout and fled into the mountains, vowing vengeance on the Order of the Black Griffon.

The party find themselves somewhere near Dog Peak Pass in the early spring. A herald is travelling around the region, recruiting a force to help defend the Holy Cave of Sigmar against marauding bands of Goblinoids that are said to be massing for an attack. The PCs are recruited and make their way to the preceptory with a motley band of conscripts and religious maniacs.

Meanwhile, Eckart has been living as a hermit in the mountains,

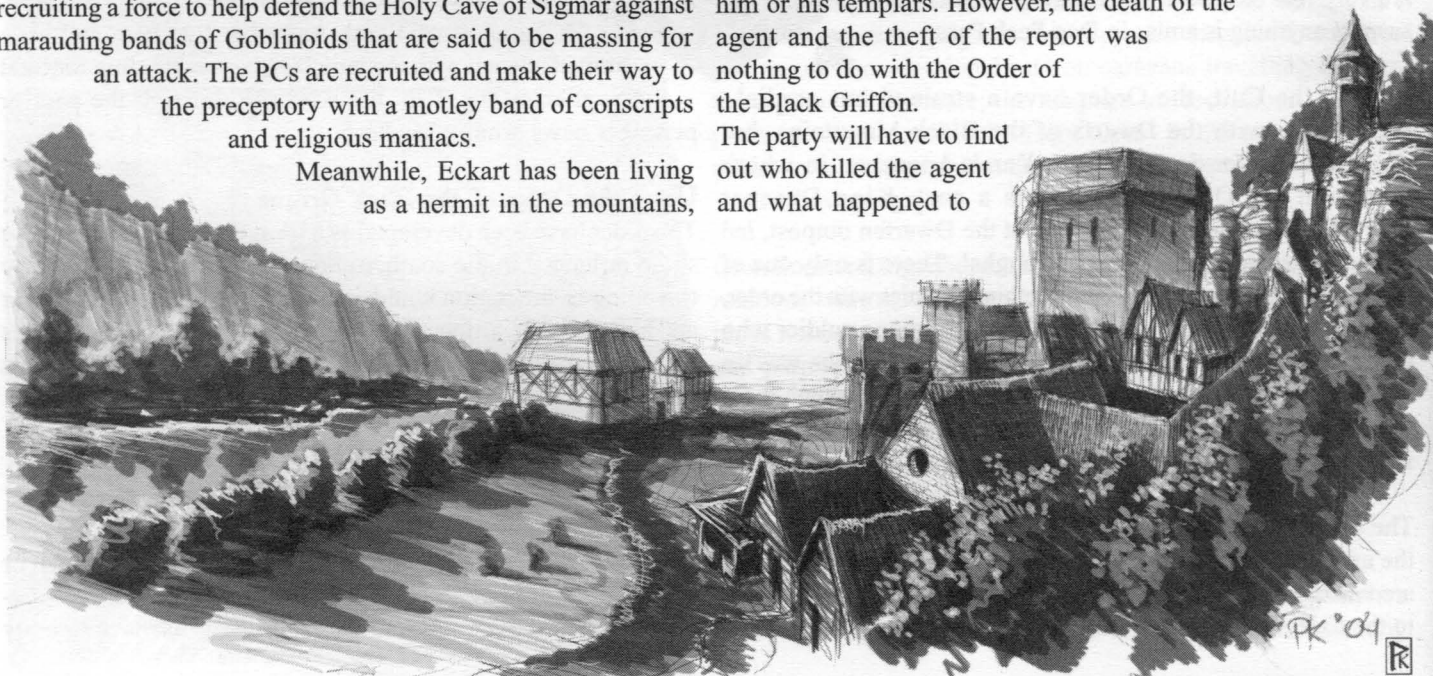
eating only what he can forage. At some point he met Khal Graznach, a half-Orc outcast who leads a small gang of bandits. Through Graznach, Eckart has made contact with local Orc and Goblin tribes and is Orchestrating an attack on the preceptory to finally get revenge on the Order. The PCs can help defend the preceptory from the Goblinoid attack, or they can take a more subtle route, making contact with Eckart and trying to dissuade him from his mad course.

Loose Lips Sink Griffons

In a secluded side street off the Koenigsplatz in Altdorf is the House of the Silver Veil - a high class brothel patronised by the more discerning client. Shameful though it is, the House of the Silver Veil sees many important individuals pass through its doors - from ambassadors to senior priests and members of the Imperial court. Unsurprisingly, such a location has proved an invaluable source of intelligence and the Graukappen (the Emperor's secret service) are behind the running of the house, with several senior agents working there to gather information and blackmail material.

On a recent visit to the Imperial capital with a party of his templars, Lord Hilgenburg spent some time in the House of the Silver Veil and when intoxicated boasted to one of the Emperor's agents that he was stealing from pilgrims to line his own nest. Dutifully the agent recorded this in code, but before she could report to her case officer she was found dead in her room and the report stolen. A concerned 'friend in a high place' lets Lord Hilgenburg know the true purpose of the House of the Silver Veil, but it's too late - the agent is dead and the evidence gone. He hires the PCs to help regain the report, claiming it is an important religious document, by whatever means necessary, swearing them to (and offering to pay vast amounts for) secrecy. He is unconcerned (relieved) that the agent is dead, but knows that whoever finds and deciphers the report will know the truth about the Order and will be able to pin the murder on him or his templars. However, the death of the agent and the theft of the report was nothing to do with the Order of the Black Griffon.

The party will have to find out who killed the agent and what happened to



the report. The truth is that it was stolen by another party who were also compromised by the contents of the report. This can be tailored to fit your own campaign - it could be a senior figure in the Purple Hand, an advisor to the Bretonnian Ambassador, a retired Imperial admiral or whatever works best for your purposes. You could confuse matters by having more than one other party looking for the report, with one responsible for the murder and the other securing the report.

If and when the party find the report, they may be able to decipher it and learn some unpleasant truths about the Order of the Black Griffon. Lord Hilgenburg is prepared for this eventuality and will happily double-cross the party, by sending his templars to 'clear up loose ends'.

SCENARIO OUTLINE

Trial of the Templars

The PCs are travelling in the southern Empire - it doesn't really matter where, although Nuln, Averheim or Pfeildorf would be ideal. They are contacted by Father Gregor Teumass, one of the priests of Sigmar in the town, who is clearly under orders from someone very senior within the cult; he behaves nervously and seems desperate to ensure that the PCs understand exactly what is required of them. Gregor will explain that the PCs are to travel up the Upper Reik to Wuppertal, where they will be charged with accompanying a 'very important figure' back downstream to Nuln. Rewards will be substantial, although followers of Sigmar will be leaned on to offer their services for free - PC clerics of Sigmar are obliged to do so.

Few PCs would embark on a mission with such vague description, and it is likely that they will require further explanation. Father Gregor can (with great difficulty) be persuaded to give more information, but it shouldn't be too hard to find out the full details from an educated citizen who keeps up with current events, or with a member of the Cult who can be persuaded that he will remain anonymous.

Six months ago, the Holy Cave of Sigmar was visited by pilgrims that went missing, apparently due to banditry on the road. This was not unusual and it is unlikely that the news would have gone much further than southern Averland if it wasn't for the fact that one of the pilgrims was the nephew of the High Priest of Kemperbad, Hans Niebel. The priest was understandably upset, and began to question the worth of the Order of the Black Griffon who were supposed to prevent such tragedies. He decided to make a pilgrimage to the Temple of the Holy Cave himself, to see what the order were doing. Upon arrival Niebel was impressed by the templars (who had been forewarned) until he noticed that Franz Liszter was wearing an amulet that he himself had given as a gift to his nephew upon his 18th birthday. Although horrified, the priest kept his peace until back in Kemperbad, where he voiced his concerns to the Officium Arbitrorum, the cult's internal 'police force'.

Once the arbitrators began to investigate the Order of the Black

Griffon, a picture of corruption began to emerge. Although the cult was careful to ensure that information did not leave its temples and property for political reasons, it became increasingly clear that it was necessary to act. The Officium Arbitrorum informed the Arch Lector of Nuln, who issued the command to arrest all members of the Order and to bring Grandmaster Gunnar Hilgenburg to Nuln for trial.

Hilgenburg was called to Wuppertal, a town populated by fanatical followers of Sigmar where the priests are dogmatically obedient to their superiors within the cult. On arrival, he was arrested. Simultaneously, arbitrators arrested the templars in Hochsleben. The Temple of the Holy Cave was taken by templars from Black Fire Pass, who are now guarding the area. Unfortunately, some of the templars escaped, including Franz Liszter. A subsequent manhunt by the Arbitrorum has failed to bring them to light.

The PCs are to escort Hilgenburg from Wuppertal (where he is being held by the local priests) to Nuln for trial. It should be simple to think of potential adventures on the way - maybe the escaped templars want to free their grandmaster and escape with him to the Border Princes? The Order was fairly rich before being dissolved, but upon arrival at the Temple of the Holy Cave the arbitrators found no evidence of wealth or riches - what has happened to the treasure? Why is Gunnar Hilgenburg so relaxed and unconcerned during the journey to Nuln, and is his corruption entirely the consequence of amorality, or is it a symptom of something far more sinister? Will he try to bribe the PCs with his fabulous wealth to set him free? And what will he do on arrival at the trial to find that the Officium Arbitrorum's judge is a devout priest from Ostland called Kaspar Heistlenburger? Why have the PCs been hired for the job rather than a group of soldiers? Perhaps the patron is a friend of Hilgenburg and considers the PCs expedient to his intended ambush and rescue? Perhaps the cult find the whole incident highly embarrassing and want Hilgenburg dead before he can face a public trial?

References

The Battle of Dog Peak Pass is from the WFB scenario 'Blood on the Snow' in *White Dwarf* 91.

The Order of the Black Griffon are one of the 'about half a dozen smaller templar orders' mentioned in the Cult of Sigmar article in *Warpstone* 15.

Karak Angazbar and King Sureblade are from *Dwarfs: Stone and Steel* by Alfred Nunez.

The Knights of the Twin-Tailed Orb are mentioned in *Warhammer Armies: The Empire*, for WFB 6th edition.



A treatise on the initiation of man to mage, mud to marble, mind to moon! From "Lunagabalus: The Inscrutable Ascendancy of the Acolyte" By Travis Dunn

The study of the arcane language of magic is a lucubration of the most profound difficulty. It explicates the nature of the Warp and of the reality we see in the Old World. It can perfectly describe the essence of any entity that ever was or shall ever be or can even never be. It is a vocabulary of names, and within each name is contained every circumstance and attribute, every action and history, specific to its owner. It is a cogitatio caeca, a blind calculus between free variables, to which an indefinite number of meanings can be bound, so that the combinational laws of the expressions can even lead to the discovery of new possible connections between names and their essences, and can with metaphysical precision reflect with a single word any object in existence. With an infinite mind one could thus learn the names of all eternity and command a supreme intelligence of power, mastering the cosmos by describing in an interminable lexis, its true form.

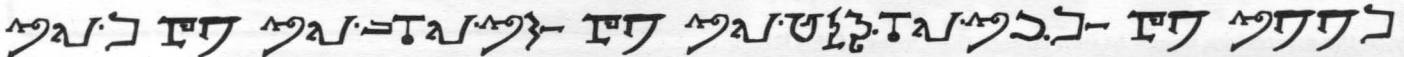
Strictly speaking the language of magic has no alphabet. The script is tremendously obscure and its requirements challenge the common calligraphy of language as much the wizard's quills that dare to write it. But to say it has no alphabet is not to say that its sigils are merely scores of scribbled ogees and that there is no structure or framework to write in and communicate with. On the contrary, there are a great number of marks and guidelines that must be toed by the studious abecedarian. The language of magic is written with shapes, or at times, parts of shapes. A sound may also be indicated by an angle, or by the vertical placement of the shape in the line of its neighbours, or by the thickness of the shape, or by its size or distortion from normal form, or the shape may function as a diacritic to a partner sigil or as many diacritics as there are sigils nearby it, each alteration determined as much by the character of the sigils in question as by the diacritic itself. Therefore each sigil is a mutable shape or line that, while recognizable by some general feature and the vocal component associated with that feature, nonetheless operates on a spectrum of pronunciation depending on the circumstance in which it is put into writing. Consequently, most of the study of the written language involves learning how to create and alter shapes.

Indeed, because there is no fundamental alphabet each wizard must learn to generate his own as the need arises to produce certain sounds; and yet so precise are the calligraphic rules he must follow that any other wizard reading his sigils will understand their meaning though he did not devise them himself. Some of this correspondence owes to the nature of the sounds of magic and the script which captures it, for it is decidedly non-ideographic. Even its mutable sigils necessarily reproduce in their shapes the most incommodious movements of tongue, palate, uvula, and glottis, and each associate themselves with one of these physical components so that by

simply looking at such a script one would have an idea of how to use their mouth to imitate alien noises. Imagine it, when a wizard incants a spell, the most unnatural, cacophonophilistic distortions of the mouth, the tongue writhing in paroxysms of enunciation, modulating beyond the scale of human speech into the trembling lexiphanicism of sorcery.

The language of magic must be this difficult; it must transport our human conceptions of sound into the sublime. It demands so much because any less would utterly fail to accomplish its principle task: the true naming of things. Indeed, the entire language involves only the spelling and pronunciation of names, and of course, their composition. But these are true names. A true name is a perfect name that conceptually typifies its object, no matter whether that object is a person or a hound or an oak or a fire. It typifies it in that it denotes a vast number of things at once, each syllable or section of the word devoted to revealing some part of the object's true nature. One part of the name will categorize the object by species and class, one by its physical properties, one by its emotions and virtues and vices, one by analogies and metaphors, one by its history in the world and places it has existed, one by the balance of its humours, one by its esoteric relationship to the eight elements of magic, and so on and so forth. Therefore, in the language of magic, in order to name something, one should first know the whole of its properties and its precise place in a tree of genera and species, its history, essence, reflection on the warp, personality attributes, and every other such superordinate feature from which can be recreated the image of the object in question. Thus, magic is a language where the word for horse not only naturally and evidently portrays all the properties of a horse, but also where every minimal modification of the word expresses any minimal variation of the nature, the behaviour, the properties of a horse; either of horses in general or of a particular horse, as the case may be.

For this reason all mages must spend untold years investigating the nature of objects, employing augury, scrying, and reading the voluminous treatises compiled by bygone scholars. Most elementary concepts are already known in full and are sufficient for the general inventory of spells known to man. Fire has a true name, Spiders have a true name, Humans have a true name, The Cities of The Empire each have true names; in all likelihood the Emperor himself has a true name (although those who have dared learn it would use it only on pains of treason, heresy, and death). And so, a mage will work his ceaseless logomachy as he permutes, substitutes, and modifies the true name of some unknown. Because the fundamentals of existence are mostly already named, the mage will take this as his starting point and move in increasing



degrees of truth along the vectors of his subject. Perhaps the mage works from the true name of an ancestor of a human target, then studies the information he has garnered knowing - depending on the nature, the deeds, the wisdom, the hobbies, the vices and virtues, the writings of his target - that he will attach various syllables and for each feature comprising his target's nature, add, subtract, or alter some given number of characters in the true name to better conceive of its owner. Thus may partially constituted true names be used in spells but with dangerous and sundry compromises made to the chaos of magic and the nuances that permit its control. In this philosophical language characters of the true name are easy to muddle either phonetically or graphically, and so whenever a mage ventures to extend his power by way of names he must be fatally aware of the implications arising from the unwarranted confusion of an original true name's construction, as is largely the case in the search for the true names of certain people or entities. Yet the rewards of success often motivate desperate adversaries. As awful as a fireball may be, so much more awful is it if, when the caster incants the name substantiating the spell, he also appends to it the true name of its target. Now should a more powerful sorcery include in it the true name of its victim, the horrors hence inflicted swell to great bounds limited only by the power and malice of the caster.

Naturally, true names are the closest guarded secrets of a mage, both their own and whatever others they have independently discovered. Fortunately, the names of sentient beings are naturally more difficult to deduce than those of less organic things. Each alphabetic element in the language of magic corresponds to an idea or conceptual affect of some thing, the combinations enabling one to produce true philosophical or metaphysical propositions predicated about their subject, and in doing so conceive a flawless simulacrum, indeed, a figurative and esoteric logocracy superior to the corporal original. A more obscure power, than the simple magical command availing controllers of a true name, is that by manipulating the general radicals through inversion, anagrams, segregation, reconstitution, and permutations, one can derive the perfect etymologies of the true name. In effect, a subject's entire life can be re-created, reverse engineering not just their life in the sense of their activities but their very psychological and spiritual development! That is not to say that a true name changes throughout one's life, but that in its entirety it gives such an ideal model for its owner's actual nature that their personal resolution of any circumstance can be understood at once by how they shall be affected by it. Furthermore, it is the sophistication of meaning that limits the length of a true name, not some base lifespan; and Dwarfs, Elves, Humans, Orcs, all own names of similar complexity. Being fixed, a true name also allows for an intensely intractable graptomancy that few have managed to master. Those historic few have immediately ascended to the legendary, being hermetically appraised of their precise place in the cosmos and thus enabled to transmute their life in the world under full awareness of its outcome in advance.

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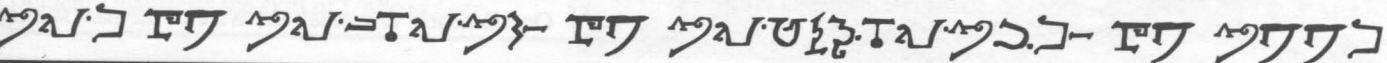
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When one mixes ABC in order to create anagrams, these three characters can produce six results. But according to the Reikspiel lexicon, only CAB and BAC make sense, and the rest must be disregarded as irrelevant. Not so with the language of magic, which contains terrifying strings of consonants and aspirate letters, its guttural hissing punctuated only by the occasional vowel sound or diphthong. There is little to no semantic limitation and consequently the language of magic, when spoken, ascends grand new levels of difficulty and physically defies human mages to master it. Even the dulcet melody of Elthárin and the thunder of Khazalid are impotent tongues when confronted with the illimitably preternatural sonance of magic. Indeed, and perhaps tellingly, the only language which seems naturally compatible with the arcane syntagms of magic is the Dark Tongue, its loathsome nature formed of boasts, oaths, names of renown, and recurrent appeals to celestial planes of demons, of the warp, of forgotten eons and Old Ones, of terror and horror (being the strongest emotions of mankind), of revenants and the phantasms of the void which are the true souls of men, and like magic, when the Dark Tongue is spoken even in animal cadence by the shamans of Chaos, it turns the most primeval wails and feral braying into dread logomatchtic whispers to the Winds, and sounds not unlike the timeless chants of the arch mages, alone in their towers in Altdorf.



MORE THAN JUST A CAREER

Character Motifs in WFRP By Rev. Lepper

In WFRP, characters are primarily defined by their career. It is through the career that one changes, and that career shapes and moulds the experiences gained and the lessons learned. It is hard to deny the role a career plays in an individual's development, but the WFRP system fails to take into account almost any other factors. A newly created character gets all the skills of the starting career to show previous learning. However, an individual who moves from the city to a rural area is likely to pick up new skills from the mere change in environment, even if they continue in pursuit of the same profession.

The WFRP career system emulates a general experience, but what happens when a character deviates from the norm? How does one take into account the learning and experiences from unique character forming events? What of a toll-keeper who seeks out the murderer of their family? The experience of hunting down a foe must surely teach them all manner of things?

Characters should always advance through a career system comprised of a practical trade but also through a destiny all their own. This article seeks to explore these questions and to offer some alternatives. It introduces archetypes or themes that can be added to existing characters, whether PCs or NPCs. A mercenary on the run from the comrades they betrayed need not leave their Mercenary career, but instead become a Hunted Mercenary. A noble smitten by love and seeking fulfilment in a tragic romance

Stereotypes?

Archetypes are intended to enhance roleplaying, not detract from it. They are broad enough so they can be easily individualised. Take for example the potentially clichéd miser. It could be a mean old miser, but the archetype could really be developed. How about, the sad miser, one who was impoverished, lost his love, and saved up his wealth to buy back a love he could never have again? The fearful miser, who lost his beloved wife and now never wants to lose anything else ever again? The hateful miser, ridiculed and mocked early in life, who acquired wealth in an effort to gain the respect he never had?

would become a Star Cross'd Lover. Essentially these are additions to existing careers to reflect an archetype or motif that the individual character is embodying.

The ideas in this article can be used in different ways. They can be added to the existing career and the character may purchase the skills, thus providing a chance to gain new skills without having to spend the experience points or make the Intelligence test to acquire the skill.

It is important to note that if these are applied to player characters, they are there to enhance and reward role-playing, not merely a means of attaining new skills. Certainly no player should choose an archetype, they should be presented one when the GM feels it fitting.

THE ARCHETYPES

Archetypes are broad themes that often appear in literature and life. Some of these may seem immediately applicable, some may seem ideal for careers, and others may seem of little use at all. The intent here is to provide a range of possibilities for GMs and players to consider. At the heart of each archetype is the concept that should be easily recognisable. They shouldn't be construed as generic, but rather a foundation for further development. Each offers specific knowledge, in this case a series of skills that represent the experience. This is the core mechanic behind archetypes. In general the character can purchase these skills as long as they embody the archetype. Some of the archetypes listed below are best suited for NPCs only.

Aged Wise One (Mentor)

"Young Grasshopper..."

Whether they be a wise old wizard or a grizzled veteran of a dozen campaigns, the image of the Aged Wise One is nearly universal, the wise of the past sharing



their knowledge to an eager future. While the Aged Wise One is long past their prime, they look forward to passing on to their adopted protégé their vast knowledge and attempt to do so before death visits. This Archetype can be added to any career to create an "ol' timer". This character makes an ideal mentor for players.

Archetype Skills: Blather, History, Story Telling, Wit

Special Abilities (Optional): Wisdom of the Ancients: The Aged Wise One is able to pass on vast knowledge to others easily. When teaching a skill, the student gains +20 to their Intelligence tests to learn any skills the Aged Wise One can teach them. Another possibility is that this skill cuts training time in half, an event best depicted in the game by a montage of training scenes involving repeated failures by the PCs punctuated by sagely nuggets of wisdom offered by the Aged Wise One in the finest of Kung Fu movie traditions.

The Avenger

"My name is Artur Montag. You killed my father. Prepare to die..."
Injustice and vengeance weigh heavily upon the human soul. Those idealists seeking justice or those pragmatists seeking vengeance are drawing upon some of the most powerful of human emotions. The Avenger is seeking to right some wrong and will not be deterred. Whether it is the return of a family heirloom or the persecution of those guilty of some atrocity, the Avenger is

Development in Play

Pause before you let the players roll up their character's background skills or their parents' careers! A character's history does not have to be drawn up before the character is played. Merely make a note of the number of skills the character has. As the characters interact and come to a situation, they may suddenly reveal to the group an aspect of their upbringing. For example, when the characters start investigating rumours of an old monastery, a character may suddenly reveal that they had learned the *History* skill, and explain that it was taught to them by their tutor before the family's fortune was lost in that fire. Remember, that fire was already mentioned when the character explained how they had the *Flee!* skill, when they discovered their ability to run fast when fleeing that fire that had burned down their home.

This allows characters to dynamically develop in play. Characters will be actively sharing with their group their character's unique history, and as a reward they can shape their character to fit the campaign. This opportunity shouldn't be abused however. A Wizard shouldn't suddenly produce the *Strike Mighty Blow* skill during their fifteenth battle. It should be carefully and plausibly integrated into the character's past and the collective game narrative.

These archetypes can be carefully integrated and developed through play. The GM may for example slowly reveal a noble's haunted family and the curse that will afflict the character. Gradually the character is given skills, for example *Sixth Sense*; and gains a constant creepy sensation. When they first encounter a ghost, suddenly they know what they are seeing and repressed memories come rushing through in a jumble and the character suddenly manifests the skill of *Undead Lore*.

consumed wholly by their desire. Whether vengeance will appease them is uncertain, or whether they are truly pursuing the guilty parties is another question.

Archetype Skills: Follow Trail, Frenzied Attack

Special Abilities (Optional; GM should choose only one): "I know only vengeance!": the character is single-mindedly consumed with vengeance and this is reflected in their Will Power. The GM may permit the Avenger to change their existing career's advance scheme to +40 WP. Or the GM may raise the character's existing WP bonus to +40 in situations regarding the character's pursuit of vengeance.

"Consuming Hatred": The character gains the psychological trait "Hatred" to those they are pursuing. This is not a skill but a psychological condition afflicting the character until justice is wreaked.

"Not Before I Die": So great is the character's will, or the gods' approval of their mission, that they may cheat death. The player is awarded one Fate Point that can only be used when confronting the wrongdoers.

Bon Vivant or Hedonist

"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!"

One need not be a bawd to enjoy life; one simply must be open-minded and have a great hunger for new experiences. A Bon Vivant may simply be an exuberant person with a love for life, but more likely than not they are spoiled nobles with too much money and time and too little sense.

Archetype Skills: Consume Alcohol, Dance, Gambling, Immunity to Drugs, Seduction, Sing

The Bully or The Sadist

"Squeal Like a Pig!"

The cruel mother. The brutal thug. The callous noble. The petty bureaucrat. Where there is power, there is the abuse of power, and the Bully epitomises the naked use of power. Others are to be controlled, and used as seen fit. The Bully can exist in all layers of society and terrorise all around them.

Archetype Skills: Intimidate, Streetfighting

The Coward

Some people have learned that the best response in the face of adversity is to turn tail and run. For the Coward, every little obstacle, every confrontation is something unendurable, and to be avoided.

Archetype Skills: Begging, Concealment (Rural or Urban), Dodge Blow, Flee!

The Drunk (Benign, Belligerent)

"99 gottles of geer on the wall..."

Alcohol has both delighted and plagued people since its creation. For some it is a pleasant diversion, for others it is the only thing that matters. Regardless these slaves to the bottle span every social level and area. Some are benign and friendly, others aggressive and violent.

Skills (Benign Drunks): Begging, Blather, Consume Alcohol, Sing, Story Telling

Skills (Belligerent Drunks): Consume Alcohol, Frenzied Attack, Intimidate, Specialist Weapon - Fist or Improvised, Street Fighter or Wrestling

The Fool

The Fool is an exceedingly common image in the Old World. Both ridiculed and respected it is a complex and ambiguous character. The Fool is believed to be a person with little sense or wisdom. Yet despite this, the Fool seems to flourish which leads many to believe that they are watched over by the gods. Many secretly envy their carefree lifestyle and their ability to effortlessly prance through life blissfully unaware of the hardships that afflict others.

Archetype Skills: Clown, Jest, Luck

Special Abilities (Optional): Wisdom of a Fool/Victim of Circumstance: The Fool excels at taking risks, although all too often unaware of the dangers. All Risk tests are at +10% bonus.

The Fool's Smile: The Fool, for all the contempt they attract are likeable sorts, and thus the advance scheme for *Fellowship* can be increased to +40.

Hunted/Fugitive

They may never tell you their story, but you can tell the hunted by their restless eyes. The reasons why they flee are numerous. They live transient lives full of fear, moving on when too many questions are asked.

Archetype Skills: Acute Hearing or Excellent Vision, Concealment (Rural or Urban), Flee!, Silent Move (Rural or Urban), Sixth Sense

Mad Man

"The End is Near!"

There are those suffering from illness, and then there are those inexplicably afflicted by something unexplained by medicine. Some claim to be given divine visions, some suffered from some great tragedy, others have always been different, yet all are categorised as mad. Some are dangerous, others benevolent, but in their madness there is said to be wisdom. A character who has gained some insanity could adopt this archetype.

Archetype Skills: Blather, Divination, Frenzied Attack, Public Speaking

Miser

The miser has only one passion, the acquisition of wealth. This single-minded pursuit comes at the expense of all others and misers are hated and envied, emotions that simply reassure the miser that their wealth is the only thing that can be embraced.

Archetype Skills: Numismatics, Palm Object, Set Trap (Dwarf and Gnome Misers only), Sixth Sense, Super Numerate

Prodigy

For reasons that only the gods know, some are born remarkable. For some people this marks them as special and they are highly regarded while for others it marks them as a freak. They could be smarter or more charismatic than their peers, or they may have a penchant for art or some other craft. Regardless, they represent the pinnacle of potential.

Special Ability: Prodigy: One skill or a set of related skills may

be purchased multiple times allowing up to +40 bonus to one skill. If a *Specialist Weapon* skill, it may only be purchased twice, once giving the specialization in the skill and a second time awarding a special +10 bonus. Alternately a prodigy may have a +10 modifier to one of their starting profile personality characteristics, or their initial career may have a +40 modifier to one of the personality characteristics.

Star Cross'd Lover

"My only love sprung from my only hate"

It's argued by philosophers that hate and love are among the most powerful emotions, but the Star Cross'd Lover knows that love is the most intense. They are not merely in love, but possessed by a love so profound yet tragic, for there are great challenges in their way. Perhaps they are of humble birth and their true love is of the nobility. Perhaps their lover is a member of a rival noble family, sent away, or most tragic, their true love died before their love could be consummated.

Archetype Skills: Charm, Dance, Poetry, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move Urban

Special Abilities (Optional): "Vision of a Muse": The Star Cross'd Lover is constantly inspired by the sheer thought of their true love. They gain a +10 or +1 bonus to a roll 1d6 times per day when doing something on behalf of their love.

The Role of Culture and Environment

The foundation of this article is to lessen the influence of the career as an advancement mechanism by proposing alternatives. Another option is to allow characters to buy "cultural skills" as if they were part of their career due to their constant exposure to the skills. For example any Dwarf should be able to purchase the *History* skill since they are constantly exposed to it, while Bretonnians might find it very easy to pick up *Etiquette* due to their cultural sense of refinement.

A list of environments follow with some skills that could be acquired by immersion:

Academic: Blather, Secret Language - Classical, Read/Write
Artisan: Any Artisan/Craft Skill, Evaluate, Secret Language - Guilder

Entertainer: Any skills from Entertainer skill list

Feral: Concealment Rural, Game Hunting, Set Trap, Silent Move Rural, Spot Trap

Genteel: Art, Blather, Dance, Etiquette, Sing

Maritime: Fishing, River Lore, Row, Sea Lore, Swim

Mercantile: Evaluate, Hagglng, Secret Language - Guilder, Speak Additional Language

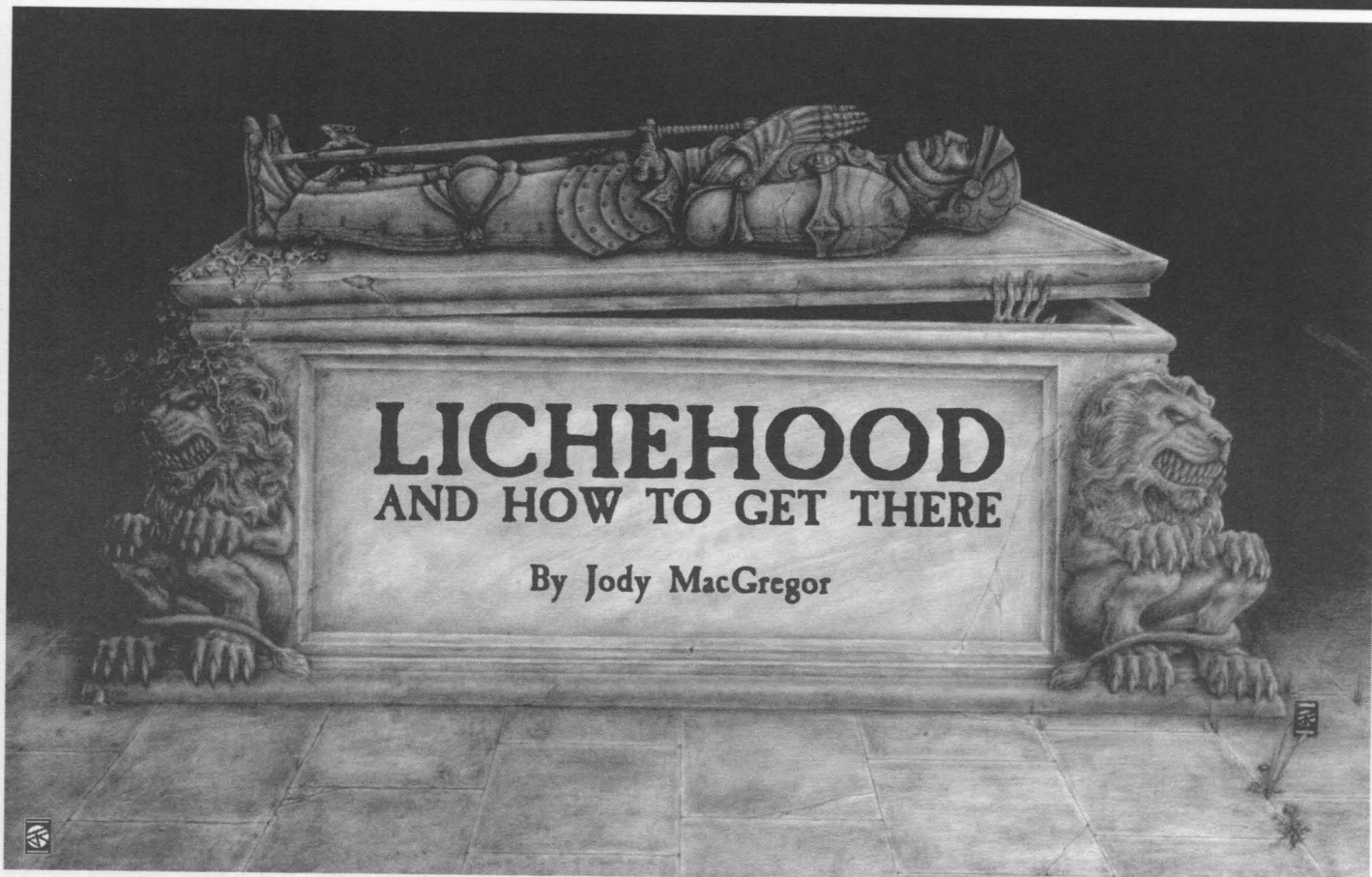
Noble: Dance, Etiquette, Heraldry, Ride, Wit

Nomadic: Animal Care, Orientation, Ride

Rural: Animal Care, Herb Lore, Silent Move Rural

Urban: Begging, Haggle, Immunity to Diseases, Speak Additional Language

For further ideas on this subject in relation to the non-human races see Tim Eccles' article *Skills and Role-Playing Humans in WFRP* in issue 7 or on the Warpstone website.



LICHEHOOD AND HOW TO GET THERE

By Jody MacGregor

Liche: *A dark magician who lives on after death in the form of an animated rotting corpse; an abomination against all that is holy.*

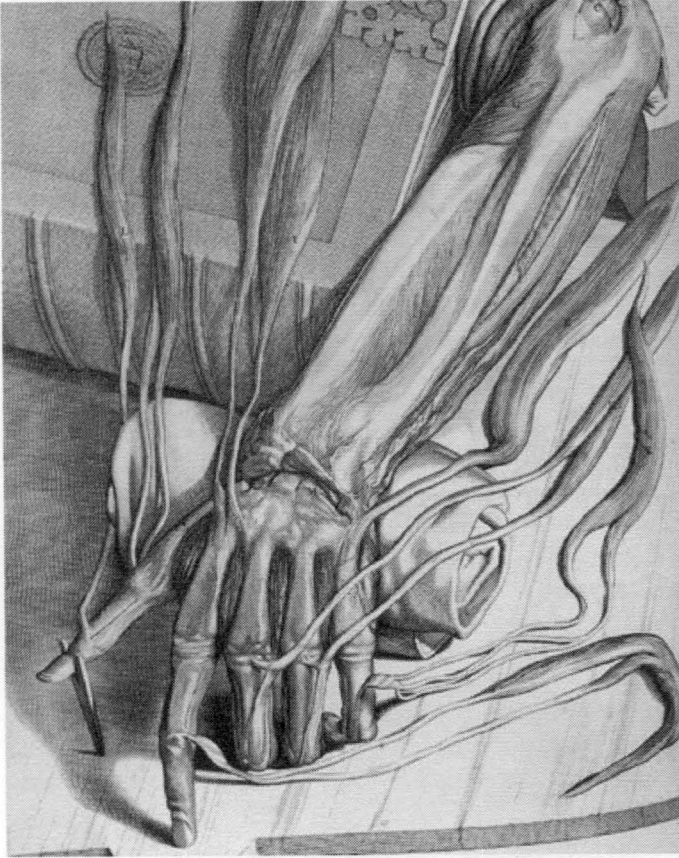
- Doktor Brauer's Book of Fancy and Fable

Legends of necromancers are common; Sigmar fought several in his heroic period, while many were brought to trial by Witch Hunters in the Age of Three Emperors, and a band exiled from Bretonnia once made a famed last stand in the Geistenmund Hills of the Border Princes. Legends of Liches are rarer. The average Old Worlder knows nothing of their habits, if even of their actual existence. The priesthood of Mórr are the experts, and anyone else who delves too deeply into the study of these foul creatures - no matter how well-intentioned - may soon receive a visit from Raven Knights. Prospective Liche-fighters would do well to emphasise their piety when consulting priests or turn towards different sources. Certain reclusive scholars, the enigmatic Wizards of the Amethyst College, or experienced Witch Hunters are other possible sources of reference. Of course, the more reliable the information, the more dangerous it is to its seekers. Accuracy has its price.

The physiology of these twisted beings has been documented elsewhere, but their habits are less documented. This is because Liches are invariably eccentric, often outright insane. The morbid curiosity that leads necromancers to their chosen field may develop into full-blown dementia by the time mortality is considered. Necromancers realise what waits on the other side of Mórr's gate, and those who succeed in

avoiding this fate find themselves with swathes of time and plot broodingly in isolation. No more can they hide among polite society; Liches are reviled creatures, chased by Witch Hunters and bands of adventurers alike. A Liche may use mortal servants or magically disguised agents to enact its will at a distance, pursuing revenge or power as a way of filling the time. Just as common are those who become entirely dissociated from humanity and retire to the countryside of the Eastern Empire, the Border Princes, or a lawless area of Bretonnia to carve out a small domain. In most regions Liches are less than welcome and only maintain control by ruthlessness. Still, a few Liches rule surprisingly workable miniature kingdoms simply requiring a regular supply of corpses and the occasional sacrifice. Compared to the unpayable taxes and wanton raping of the worst Human landlords, a Liche can be a welcome ruler in the more brutal areas of the Old World.

Transition from Necromancer to Liche is not to be taken lightly. It is possible for necromancers to extend their lives beyond mortal limits by other means - transfusions of blood from the elder races, potions and elixirs, spells, enchanted items, and demonic bargains - but to become a Liche is to step beyond Mórr's reach in a much more drastic way. There is always the possibility of things going wrong, leaving the necromancer completely insane, permanently dead, or a mere Zombie. Still, many are determined or foolish enough to try, and techniques to this effect are described below.



REBIRTH

If necromancers who are far advanced along the dark path (typically those who have the Cadaverous Appearance disability at its third stage) die before their time, the corruption that accompanies the practice of trafficking with the dead may yet drag life back into their corpses. The process takes 2D6 months, after which the necromancer awakens and is often faced with the immediate difficulty of digging out of a grave. Special rites need to be performed by the Cult of Mórr to prevent this resurrection. Reborn Liches are weaker than those brought back by other means, lacking the transfixing ability, being vulnerable to mortal weapons, and sometimes having weakened mental abilities. See the **Middenheim** city book (page 69) for a description of a reborn Liche.

TRANSFORMATION

The spell *Transformation of the Liche* (**Realms of Sorcery** p231) can be used to ensure that the caster will become a Liche upon death. It is considered an imperfect method as the caster risks insanity and requires the brains of five necromancers to cast. Still, many have tried and some succeeded. When Mordecai the Unholy assembled together the Conventicle of Soul Stealers and explained to them that they would be vital to his plans, little did they realise they would end their lives empty-headed Zombies under his undead command.

THE RING OF NAHASSA

The Ring of Nahassa is a gold band decorated with a ruby-eyed serpent devouring its own tail, which was first brought to the Old World from Araby by the tomb robber Nikolas Nine-

Fingers. He sold it to a sickly and dying Marienburg merchant, Bonifatius Karlov, who was entombed with it a month later. When Nikolas was approached by a group of Arabs referring to themselves only as members of 'the Brotherhood' and claiming to be the rightful owners of the ring and threatening exotic tortures, he quickly divulged its location. Upon their arrival at the tomb, the Brotherhood agents found it empty. This perplexed them - it was written that the ring gave its bearer eternal life as a Liche, but the process was supposed to take many moons. One of Karlov's heirs was later found completely drained of life; dissatisfied with her share of the will she had opened the family tomb and taken the Ring. Bonifatius's body, infused with dark magic by its temporary contact with the Ring, animated as a vengeful Wight and pursued her to take back his possession. The whereabouts of Bonifatius and the Ring remain unknown.

PRIESTHOOD OF KHAINE

Clerics of the Lord of Murder who complete the career's fourth level may pray to their god to be granted immortal lichhood, but they had best hope Khaine finds them worthy. The next step is to contract a member of the Red Harvest, the chosen assassins of Khaine, to kill the cleric with a blade made holy by the slaughter of a priest of Mórr. If Khaine sees the penitent as being valuable (someone who has slain at least 101 victims or another equally appropriate offering), he rises at the next sunset as a full-fledged Liche. If not, he is damned to roam the land of the Raving Dead for eternity.

ASCENSION

This is the technique rumoured to be loosely based on the actions of Nagash, and described in Johann Adenauer's book *Ascension to Lichedom*. Copies of this book formerly resided in the libraries of Castle Drachenfels and Castle Drakenhof, though the current whereabouts of both are unknown.

To begin Adenauer's Ascension a necromancer must have completed the fourth level of the career. (Note that if the necromancer is slain during this lengthy process, there is a strong chance of rebirth occurring as described above.) The process takes several months, and starts with the regular siphoning of small quantities of the necromancer's blood. The blood is then mixed with various chemicals, including a preparation made with Black Lotus, formaldehyde, and amber resin. This serum is then slowly reintroduced to the bloodstream. If done correctly it induces a state of delirium and detachment that lasts for the remainder of the process. As a test, Adenauer suggests that the prospective Liche remove one of the more extraneous organs while conscious, perhaps the appendix or a kidney. If all goes well, the necromancer will feel nothing - a hint of the power over undeath to come. Further injections of the treated blood serum follow.

When Mórrslieb is full the necromancer performs a sacrifice of a sentient creature, and enters into a spiritual combat with the soul (a series of opposed **WP** tests). If the necromancer

emerges victorious, the reward is essentially a hallucinogenic piggyback ride to the realm of the dead to discover various secret details of the afterlife, including how to return. If the necromancer is beaten in the spiritual combat, another sacrifice must be performed at each full Mórrsliab until successful.

As the process nears completion, the necromancer takes two last injections directly into the eyeballs. The eyes turn red, and the transfixing ability is granted. The final stage of ascension is the necromancer's death, achieved with an extremely strong dose of Black Lotus taken at the height of a complicated ritual in which the caster is cut three times with nonmagical blades of steel, silver, and iron, chanting, "I have grown beyond death. These weapons shall wound me no more."

The next sunset, if all has gone well, the necromancer arises Undead. The heart and other major organs may now be removed, their functions maintained magically. Sentimental Liches like to pickle and store them somewhere cool and dry.

USING LICHES IN A CAMPAIGN

A Liche makes a good enemy for an epic campaign. PCs unearthing cultists who worship an unheard of dark god, find that the object of their worship is technically alive and capable of direct earthly retribution. In this kind of story, the Liche is a manipulator who acts behind the scenes, making grabs for power through a network of mortal acolytes. Plots revolve around foiling these actions, beating the agents to an ancient relic, preventing an assassination, destroying a tome which they seek. Only slowly do the PCs discover who their enemy is and what he seeks.

Like Vampires, Liches make perfect serial villains who just will not die and they have a tendency to keep coming back if not dealt with properly. The party defeats a necromancer one week, only to face a very familiar rebirthed Liche the next. The ultimate object of this campaign is to find out what it is that keeps the villain coming back and undo it. Perhaps the Liche's preserved organs must be destroyed, but what if they are transplanted into living people scattered all over the Old World? Maybe some magical item perpetuates the cycle, and it can only be destroyed by being reunited with its twin, or digested by a Troll, or reforged in the place where it was made.

A Liche may have been around for a few hundred years, and those seeking an obscure piece of historical information during an investigation might consider asking someone who was around at the time. Liches also make good sources of high-level spells, particularly the less wholesome variety of magic, or even adventure patrons. Obviously this is more of an option for less than altruistic parties who are willing to perform some dubious service for their master before receiving their reward, but there are rumours of necromancers of old in Araby who practiced the dark arts without sacrificing their goodness. Some of them may live on as a more philanthropic variety of Liche who could prove a useful ally. Of course most Old

Worlders are not so sympathetic and the company PCs keep may come back to haunt them.

It is very important not to let NPCs with as much potential as Liches become bland and predictable. Keep your players guessing, and never serve them the same dish twice. In that spirit, described below are two nonstandard NPCs, two Liches with a twist to keep jaded adventurers on their toes.

BONIFATIUS KARLOV BARROW-LICHE

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	43	43	4	4	8	50	1	33	59	60	50	51	-

Skills: Arcane Language - Magick; Astronomy; Evaluate; Haggle; Magical Sense; Numismatics; Read/Write; Ride; Secret Language - Classical, Guilder; Speak Arabic; Super Numerate.

Psychological traits: Subject to *Instability* on alternate nights, causes *Fear*.

Special rules: Cannot be damaged by non-magical weapons. Karlov can either *transfix* as a Liche, or drain Strength as a Wight, depending which form he is in.

Trappings: The Ring of Nahassa, princely converted warehouse lodgings.

Quote: "My belongings are important to me - as the sages say, you are what you own. I do not like to have part of my self taken from me."

Bonifatius Karlov looks like a rotting corpse wearing the modern grave clothes of the wealthy, glowing with unholy radiance.

Karlov is confused. The Ring of Nahassa is supposed to bring its owner eternal unlife, but not like this. The Arabic tome said nothing about strange urges to return to the tomb, nor the cravings for life and wealth. Sometimes he feels solid, at other times he is only semi-material. It is most frustrating.

Since murdering his thieving bitch of a niece, Karlov has been in hiding. He anonymously prepared a luxurious hideaway in one of his warehouses in Schattinwaard, stashing a tidy sum there in case of emergency, along with his exotic personal library and all the other things he decided he would rather take with him. Every other night Karlov's tomb beckons him and he goes out, hidden by robes and perfumes, but odd-looking Arabyans with serpent tattoos are always watching over it and he flees before light. The thing most likely to draw him out of hiding are his heirs. Karlov spread many of his possessions widely among his relatives, not having any children of his own, hoping to disguise the funds used to set up his safe house. Now that his unlife has begun, he regrets what he gave away and is considering hiring an agent to get them back. There was the tomb robber who sold him the ring, but is the man trustworthy? Perhaps he should find some other agents as well, just to be sure.

MORDECAI THE UNHOLY DEMONIC LICHE

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	41	25	4	4	23	60	4	43	89	89	89	89	-

Magic points: 49

Skills: Arcane Language - Demonic, Magick; Astronomy; Cast Spells - Petty, Battle 1, Necromantic 1, 2, 3, 4; Demon Lore; Identify Plants; Identify Undead; Magic Sense; Read/Write; Rune Lore; Secret Language - Classical; Scroll Lore.

Spells: Although Mordecai knows a selection of Petty and first level Battle spells and most of the Necromancy spells found in the core rules and *Realms of Sorcery*, D'stenzz is not willing to let him cast them unless desperate, afraid that this may allow him to regain a measure of control. Instead he casts from spell jewels and scrolls.

Trappings: Well-stocked magical library and observatory, sword of *Flight*, spell jewel - *Fireball*, scroll of *Summon Skeletons*, wizard's staff, 35 GP.

Psychological traits: Morbidity,

Special rules: Causes *Fear*, Cadaverous Appearance - stage 3, Disfigurement, Nocturnal Lifestyle - stage 3, Palsy - stage 2.

Quote: "See how beautiful the stars look from here? The way they shine so wondrously! Alas, you will never see them again."

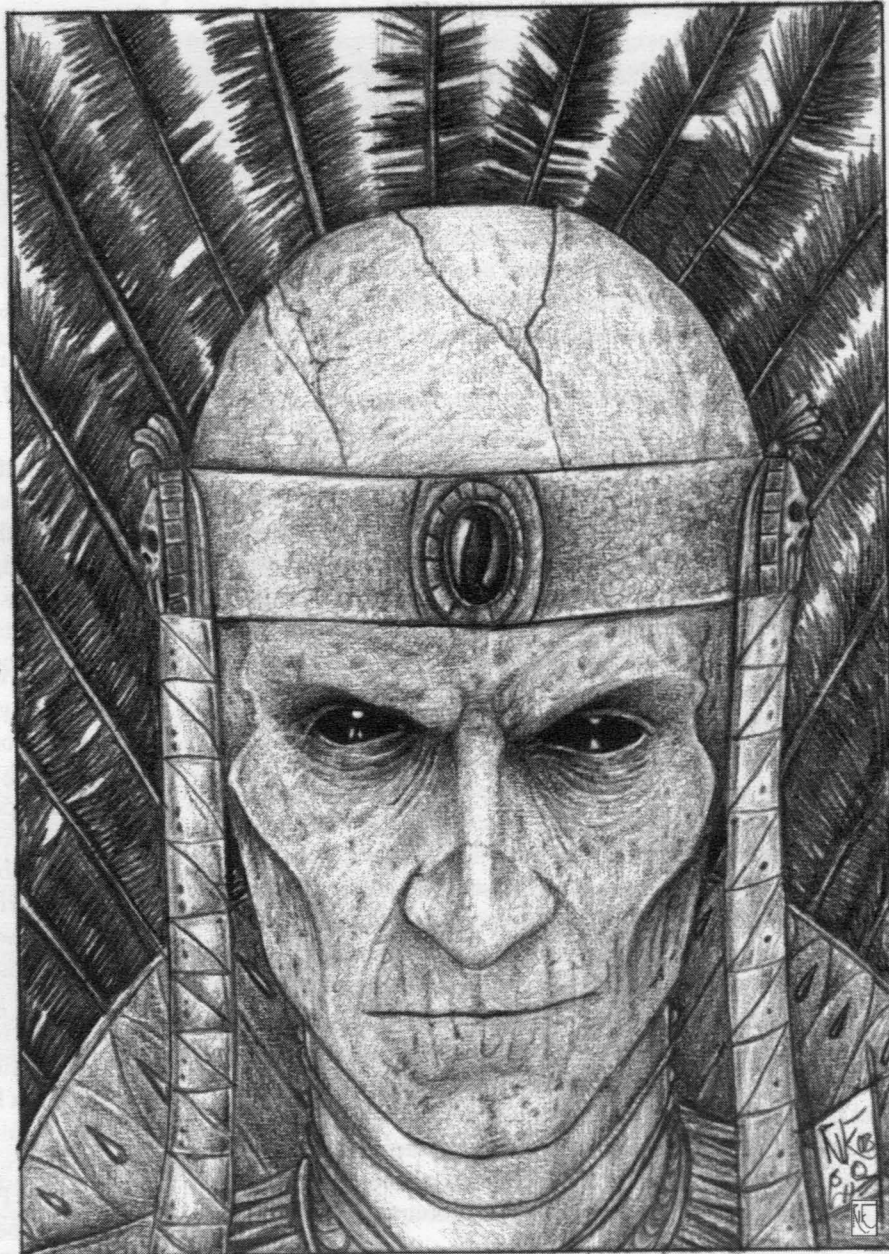
Mordecai resembles most Liches; a red-eyed rotting corpse dressed in wizard's robes, unless he is seen up close. His semi-transparent parchment skin occasionally bulges and flows, and something like blue feathers can be seen shifting beneath it.

At the height of the Great Working, Mordecai's fellows in the Conventicle of Soul Stealers were surprised to discover two things: the ritual wine had been laced with a powerful paralyzing agent, and they were about to lose their brains. Mordecai had always possessed a thirst for power, but he kept secret from his colleagues the deal he was making with an agent of Tzeentch. Perhaps he would have been wiser not to, for as so often happens with demonic bargains, Mordecai got the short end of the shaft. The daemon D'stenzz (true name Un'prunnum-sibyl) lent his power to Mordecai, promising no risk to his soul - and took possession of his body instead.

Tzeentch's plan was for D'stenzz to use Mordecai's position as head of a magical cabal

to further the cause of Chaos, but D'stenzz had his own ideas. D'stenzz had been plotting rebellion for millennia, but was always held back by his fear that he would be caught and made mortal. His new host owned a book which described a spell that would give him immortality, and he had all the ingredients near at hand.

D'stenzz is currently enjoying his freedom, working his way through Mordecai's well-stocked magical library and discovering simple pleasures like watching the sun set, star gazing, and holding hearts in his hand. Mordecai is still in there with him, his personality suppressed but watchful, only showing momentarily during fits of palsy or when D'stenzz requires the use of one of his skills. One day Mordecai may find an escape, but it is just as likely that D'stenzz will tire of his prison of decayed flesh and burst out like a bird from a hideous egg.

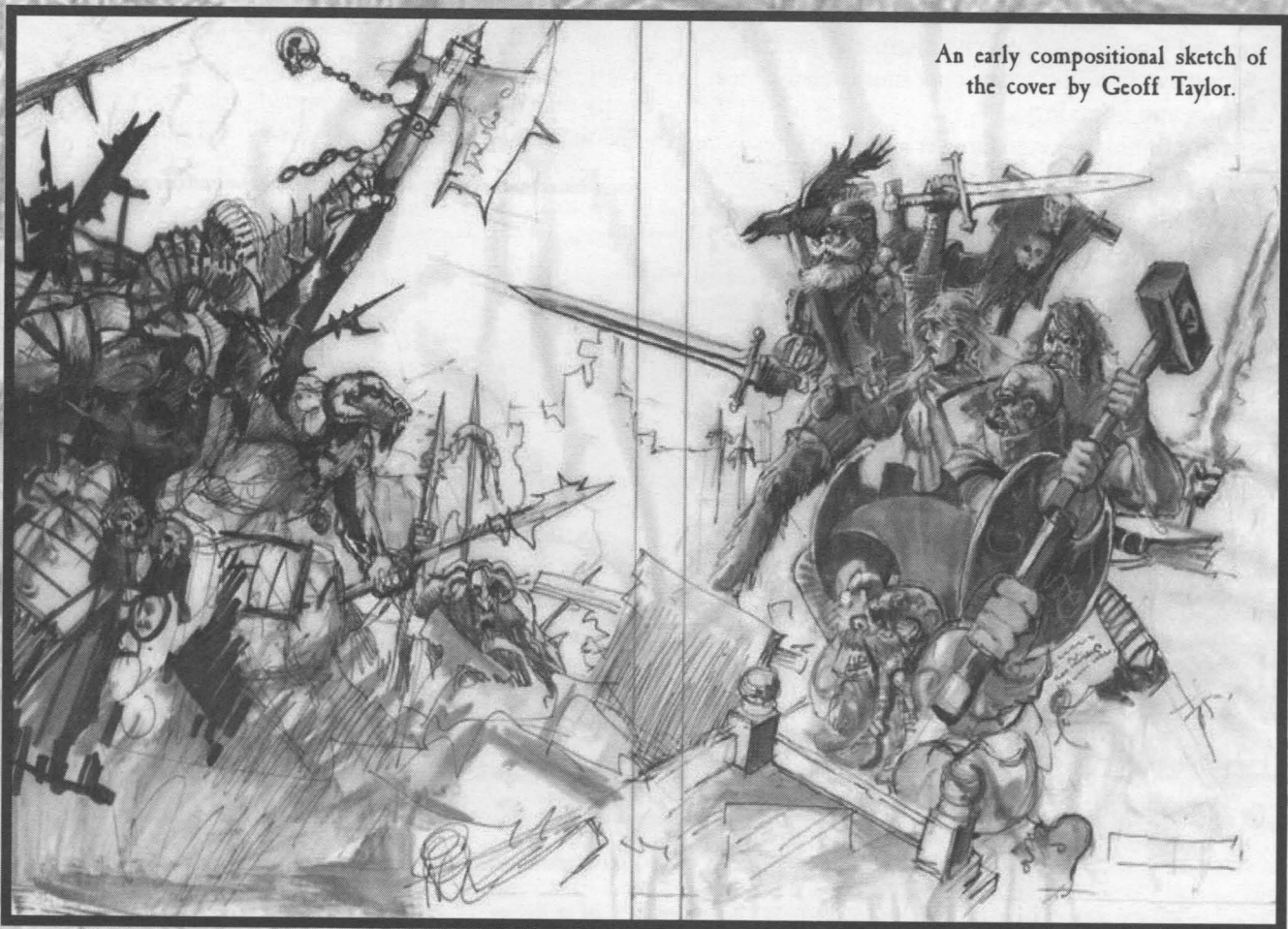


WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

*"In the name of Sigmar,
keep watch against the dark."*

Welcome to the Warpstone preview of the new edition of WFRP (referred to here as WFRP2). Black Industries have kindly given us permission to reproduce some sample text from the new rules as well and offer a look at some concept art. Remember that the game is still a work in progress so the text is subject to change.

"How quickly the lights go out!"



An early compositional sketch of
the cover by Geoff Taylor.

The rulebook opens with a short story from Black Library author Dan Abnett. This is how it begins...

LIFE, AFTER DEATH

The rain caught them as they were negotiating the slopes of rubble behind the cattle market, or, more precisely, behind the wasteland where the cattle market had once stood.

Franz looked heavenwards as the first few spots hit his brow, and said a grace to Taal-in-the-sky that it would only be a light shower. But more spots came, heavier, and then the deluge began.

There was no point running for shelter. Every one of them was skin-soaked in a moment. Besides, they couldn't run. The rubble slopes were too precarious at the best of times, and now they were treacherously wet. Safe progress could be only one slow, carefully-planted step after the next.

Despite their care, two of the rag-pickers went over in the first few minutes of the downpour, as loose tiles or bricks slid out under the soles of their pathetic shoes and sent them sprawling. One landed hard on his backside. The other, a woman of advancing years, fell badly and began to slither down the slope itself, causing an avalanche of dislodged rubble.

Franz and Grunor went down to help her, picking their way cautiously, the filthy rat-catcher more steady because of his low centre of gravity.

"What'ye think, Falker?" Grunor asked, the heavy rain streaming off his scarred nose and the long, pitch-wound strands of his beard.

"He'll turn us back," Franz replied. "He won't want to, but he'll turn us back. The streets will be a-mire already. We'll be wasting our time unless this stops and it dries out a bit."

The Dwarf nodded, and together they helped the unfortunate woman up, half-carrying her as they made their way back up the slope.

Werner Broch was standing near the summit of the slag-heap, rain dripping off him, gazing at the ruins beyond the veil of rain.

"We're going back," he announced at length, his bark delivered with the characteristic twang of a Middenland accent.

There was a chorus of disapproval from the thirty plus rag-pickers in the procession behind him.

"Ulric's arse to you!" Broch snarled back. "I make the decisions and that's my word on it! Falker, Grunor, get the line to come about!"

If anything, the rain was getting heavier. Franz made

his way carefully along the line of the hunched, shabby rag-pickers, and began to wave his arms to get them to herd the other way. Further down the line, the Dwarf did the same.

"Back! We're going back!" Franz called, clapping his hands. "Back to the camp! No picking today!"

The girl caught at his sleeve as he went past. He'd noticed her three days earlier when she'd first come to the camp and been put in their troop. Imke, Imma, something like that. She was as filthy as the rest, her skin ingrained black with dirt in some places, and her clothes were torn and stiff with clay-mud, but under it all she was young, and there was an intense cast to her eyes that he thought unusual.

"Really?" she asked. "Back to camp? We'll never make a scrap at this rate."

Franz shrugged. He gestured about them. The rainstorm was so thick, it was dissolving the distance, and raising a kind of steam from the ruined city.

"Nothing else for it," Franz said. "Those gods as have not yet deserted us are shedding tears for Wolfenburg today."

Wolfenburg, great Wolfenburg, first city of Ostland and Franz Falker's home once upon a day, had fallen to the hosts of the enemy the previous year. A vast and ravaging horde, commanded, so the stories went, by some warlord named Surtha Lenk, had risen in the north and burned its unholy path down into the lands of The Empire, making Wolfenburg its prey, and a dozen other towns besides. Word was, Lenk's host was but one of many that had made savage inroads from the northlands. The world had turned upside down.



"The world had turned upside down."

“Gather close and listen now, be you ploughman or warrior, high-born or low. These words are meant for you, for are you not all men born of The Empire?”

WFRP2 CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter you are reading now. It provides an overview of *WFRP* and roleplaying in general.

Chapter 2: Character Creation

This chapter shows you how to make your own character for the game. It explains Characteristics, describes the races you can play, and provides advice on bringing your character to life.

Chapter 3: Careers

Careers are the building blocks of your character. They both describe what you did before you became an adventurer and provide you with new paths to explore. This chapter details all the various careers and explains how to switch between them.

Chapter 4: Skills and Talents

Every character has a variety of abilities called skills and talents that define what you can do. This chapter describes the skills and talents and tells you how to use them.

Chapter 5: Equipment

Every adventurer prizes his equipment. This chapter describes the tools, trappings, weapons, and armor that can be found in the Old World.

Chapter 6: Combat, Damage, and Movement

The Warhammer World is not a peaceful one. You will be forced to fight for your life and this chapter tells you how to do it.

Chapter 7: Magic

Wizards and priests can draw on the Winds of Magic to cast spells, from the insignificant magic flame to the mighty Conflagration of Doom. This chapter explains how magic works, the dangers inherent to it, and the spells you can choose from.

Chapter 8: Religion and Belief

The Old World is a polytheistic society. This chapter describes the gods, from the merciful Shallya to the gore-drenched Khorne, and how they are worshipped.

Chapter 9: The Game Master

The GM has a special role to play in *WFRP* and this chapter explains how to take it on. In addition to advice on how to run a game and how to be a good Game Master, it contains rules for insanity and experience.

Chapter 10: The Empire

The Empire, the greatest nation of the Old World, is the core setting for *WFRP*. This chapter describes The Empire, its neighbours, and the threats it faces.

Chapter 11: Common Creatures and NPCs

The Old World is a dangerous place. This chapter, meant for the GM's eyes only, details many of the foes to be found there, as well as some common non-player characters (NPCs).

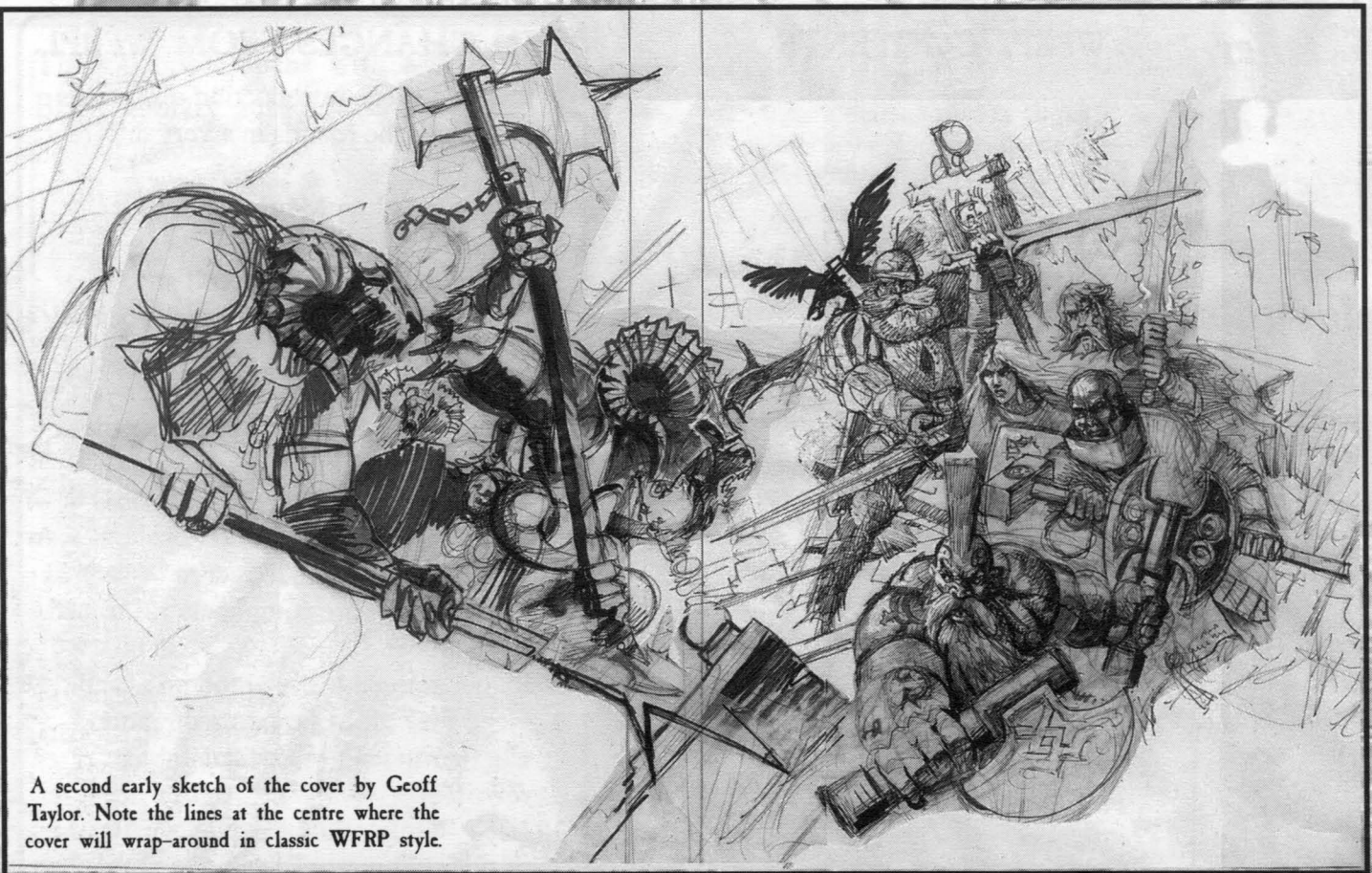
Chapter 12: Introductory Adventure

This is a short scenario you can use to jump right into the action. If you are a player, you should not read this chapter.

TEN CHANGES FROM WFRP1

- 1 Combat – The introduction of Actions structures the rounds in a very different way.
- 2 Magic – Colour Magic is now the standard magic.
- 3 Magic Points – There aren't any.
- 4 Mortal Danger – Casting spells can be fatal to your health.
- 5 Old Worlder – Gone. Now your average Kislevian and Imperial citizens cannot talk to each other.
- 6 D6s Gone – No D20, D12, D8 or D4s either.
- 7 Heroic Idiocy – No longer to be seen as insanity rules are completely revamped.
- 8 Scale Sheer Surface – You can no longer automatically climb up a wall.
- 9 Head flies off in a random direction – Cut (sorry!) out as Critical Tables rewritten.
- 10 Luck – Only rarely can NPCs make use of this skill now.





A second early sketch of the cover by Geoff Taylor. Note the lines at the centre where the cover will wrap-around in classic WFRP style.

The way in which Magic works has been completely changed. Here is a sample of one of the new spell lists.

THE LORE OF FIRE

The Lore of Fire, or Pyromancy as it is sometimes known, is the most aggressive school of magic. It is based on manipulation of *Aqshy*, the Red Wind of Magic. Magisters of this lore are known as Bright Wizards and are frequently found on the battlefield, since they command an array of impressively destructive spells. As they grow in power, Bright Wizards grow ever more quick tempered and hyperactive. Their hair and eyebrows turn to flaming red and flicker in an unseen breeze. They are quick to take offence, and quick to feel the cold. Bright Wizards often take on facial tattoos as they progress in ability.

Lore Skill: Command

Cauterize

Casting Number: 4

Casting Time: 1

Ingredient: A piece of charcoal (+1)

Description: You can lay your hands on an open wound and sear it shut. While this does not restore any wounds to the subject, it does count as medical attention and can thus save the critically injured from certain death.

Fires of U'Zhul

Casting Number: 6

Casting Time: 1

Ingredient: A match (+1)

Description: You can throw a bolt of fire at an opponent within 18 squares (36 yards) of you. This is a *magic missile* with Damage 4.

Crown of Fire

Casting Number: 8

Casting Time: 2

Ingredient: 1 *gc* (+1)

Description: This spell creates a majestic crown of shimmering flame above your head. It remains for a number of minutes equal to your Magic Characteristic. During the spell's duration, you gain a +20% to all Command and Intimidate Tests. Furthermore, enemies must make a successful WP Test in order to attack you in melee combat. If they fail, they must take a different action.

Fire Ball

Casting Number: 12

Casting Time: 1

Ingredient: A ball of sulphur (+2)

Description: You create a number of balls of fire equal to your Magic Characteristic and can hurl them at one or more opponents within 24 squares (48 yards). Fire balls are *magic missiles* with Damage 3.

Shield of Aqshy

Casting Number: 12

Casting Time: 2

Ingredient: An iron amulet (+2)

Description: You wrap yourself with currents of the Red Wind, which shields you against fire attacks. You receive a +20% to your Toughness for 1d10 minutes, but only against fire damage such as dragon breath, fire balls, etc.

"When magic is involved, nothing is certain."

Back in the WFRP rulebook was Jodri, a sample Trollslayer PC*. Here we show you what he looks like in the two versions of WFRP.

Name: Jodri Race: Dwarf
 Hair: Orange Eyes: Copper
 Age: 51 Height: 4' 10" Weight: 155lbs
 Current Career: Troll Slayer Career Exits: Giant Slayer

WFRP1

Career Class: Warrior
 Alignment: Neutral

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I
Starter Profile	3	42	21	3	4	7	23
Advance Profile		+10	+10	+1		+4	+10
Current Profile							

	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fcl
Starter Profile	1	21	29	30	50	20	
Advance Profile	+1✓	+10			+20		
Current Profile	2						

Skills

Acute Hearing, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Luck, Mining, Night Vision, Smithing, Specialist Weapon (2 Handed Weapons), Street Fighter, Strike Mighty Blow

Equipment

Two-Handed Axe

“They spend a great deal of time boasting of their exploits and show off their many scars”

WFRP2

	WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
Main Profile								
Starter Profile	42	31	30	45	21	30	30	20
Advance Profile		+10%		+5%	+5%	+5%		+10%
Current Profile	42	31	30	45	21	30	30	20

	A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
Secondary Profile								
Starter Profile	1✓	13	3	4	3	0	0	2
Advance Profile	+1	+3						
Current Profile	2	13	3	4	3	0	0	2

Skills

Common Knowledge (Dwarfs), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Intimidate, Speak Language (Khazalid), Speak Language (Reikspiel), Trade (Smith)

Talents

Dwarfcraft, Hardy, Grudge-born Fury, Night Vision, Quick Draw, Resistance to Magic, Stout-hearted, Sturdy, Very Resilient, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-handed), Street Fighter, Strike Mighty Blow

Equipment

Two-Handed Axe, Leather Jerkin, One Bottle of Poor Quality Spirits

Main Profile Characteristics

Weapon Skill (WS): Represents your character's skill in hand-to-hand combat, both with weapons and without.

Ballistic Skill (BS): Represents your character's skill with missile weapons, such as bows, crossbows, and pistols.

Strength (S): Represents your character's muscle and brawn.

Toughness (T): Represents your character's ability to withstand injury, disease, and poison.

Agility (Ag): Represents physical quickness, manual dexterity and reaction speed.

Intelligence (Int): Represents your character's intellect, insight, and ability to reason.

Will Power (WP): Represents your character's mental toughness and resolve.

Fellowship (Fel): Represents your character's personal charisma and social skills.

Secondary Profile Characteristics

Attacks (A): Represents the quickness of your character's attacks. The number indicates how many effective attacks you can make in 10 seconds.

Wounds (W): Represents your character's general vitality. It indicates how much damage your character can suffer before becoming critically injured.

Strength Bonus (SB): This Characteristic, derived from Strength, is used when inflicting damage in melee combat.

Toughness Bonus (TB): This Characteristic, derived from Toughness, is used to resist damage.

Movement (M): Represents your character's base land speed. More specifically, this score is the number of 2-yard squares your character can move in one action on a tactical map.

Magic (Mag): Represents your character's magical power.

Insanity Points (IP): Represents the state of your character's sanity. PCs begin with 0 Insanity Points but can gain them during play as a result of horrific experiences and grievous wounds.

Fate Points (FP): Represents luck and, to a certain extent, your character's destiny. Fate Points can be used to avoid certain death.

SKILLS & TALENTS

Skills have now been split into Skills & Talents. Skills can be taken more than once and are either Basic or Advanced. Talents can only be taken once. Here are a few of each...

SKILLS

Academic Knowledge (Various)

Skill Type: Advanced.

Characteristic: Intelligence

Description: Use Academic Knowledge to remember pertinent facts and figures, and (if you have access to the proper facilities or resources) to do research. Academic Knowledge represents a depth of learning far beyond Common Knowledge and requires extensive study. Academic Knowledge is unusual in that it is not one skill, but many and each must be acquired individually. Each Academic Knowledge skill is a separate field of study, with the speciality noted in parenthesis. For example, Academic Knowledge (Religion) is a different skill than Academic Knowledge (History). The most common Academic Knowledge skills are the Arts, Astronomy, Daemonology, Engineering, Genealogy/Heraldry, History, Law, Magic, Necromancy, Philosophy, Runes, Science, Strategy/Tactics, and Theology.

Related Talents: None.

Animal Care

Skill Type: Basic.

Characteristic: Intelligence.

Description: Use this skill to take care of farm and domestic animals, like horses, cattle, pigs, oxen, and the like. Routine care and feeding require no Skill Test. Tests are most commonly made to spot developing illnesses or signs of discomfort, or for special grooming (preparing a mount for a parade, for instance).

Related Talents: None.

Secret Language (Various)

Skill Type: Advanced.

Characteristic: Intelligence.

Description: Use this skill to communicate with others of a common profession. Secret languages are more like codes than real languages. By the use of signifiers, body language, and/or code words, users can speak in one tongue but use a secret language to impart deeper meaning or to relay a lot of information quickly. Under normal circumstances, Skill Tests are unnecessary if all speakers know the secret language. They may be required in adverse conditions (a noisy venue, the chaos of battle, etc.). Like Academic Knowledge, Secret Language isn't one skill but many. The most common Secret Languages are Battle Tongue, Guild Tongue, Thieves' Tongue, and Ranger Tongue.

Related Talents: None.

TALENTS

Ambidextrous

Description: You can use either hand equally well. You do not suffer the normal -20% Weapon Skill penalty when using a weapon in your secondary hand.

Artistic

Description: You have true creative talent. You gain a

+20% bonus on Trade (Artist) Tests and +10% on tests to Evaluate objects d'art.

Dark Lore

Description: You have embraced one of the forbidden arts of sorcery. Dark Lore is unusual in that it is not one talent, but many. Such is the study and focus required that you can only ever know one. Each Dark Lore talent is a separate magical proficiency, with the speciality noted in parenthesis. For example, Dark Lore (Chaos) is a different talent than Dark Lore (Necromancy). The most common Dark Lore's are Chaos and Necromancy. Future supplements will detail additional Dark Lore's, including those of the Chaos powers Nurgle, Slaanesh, and Tzeentch. If you know a Dark Lore, you can attempt to cast any spell from that lore.

Streetwise

Description: You know how to get by on the street. You gain a +10% bonus on Charm and Gossip Skill Tests when dealing with the criminal underworld.



CONSPIRACY

A Scenario (Part One of Three) by Alfred Nuñez Jr.

GM Notes

Conspiracy is designed for characters in their second or third career (total EP of 1,200 - 1,600). Minimally, one or two characters should be able to read. Though not required, *Marienburg: Sold down the River* would be invaluable. Some skills and spells can be found in *Apocrypha 2* or *Realms of Sorcery*.

Edward van Rugkil was a gifted merchant whose business instincts and acumen were so honed that he raised his family fortune from the modest inheritance to a level so high that his appointment to the Directorate of Marienburg was all but assured. Then four years ago, Edward and his wife Anna were brutally murdered in their mansion. While the City Watch (commonly called the "Black Caps") investigated the murders, tragedy fell upon the two younger van Rugkil children. Willem was murdered in his own home and Elisabeth vanished without trace. Only Alfons and Caroline remained of the van Rugkils. Within days, the Watch arrested Caroline and her husband, Herman Bokherder, for the murders.

At the trial, eyewitnesses placed Caroline and Herman in the van Rugkil mansion during the night of the murder. Evidence was also gathered at their townhouse implicating both. Though they proclaimed their innocence, the magistrate found them guilty and sentenced the two to be executed within the week on Rijker's Isle.

Although enraged at the murder of his family, Alfons van Rugkil used some of the fortune he inherited to persuade the magistrate to reduce his sister's sentence to life. It was the least he could do for his only remaining flesh and blood. No such pity did Alfons have for Herman and he was dragged from his cell to the hangman's scaffold. He continued to shriek his innocence to all who

were there and the gods that weren't as the trapdoor opened beneath his feet.

The Plot

The reality of the van Rugkil tragedy is very different. Lacking his father's abilities, while nursing a lust for wealth and power, Alfons planned the murder of his parents and the undoing of his siblings. Through intermediaries, now dead, Alfons was able to contact the Skaven Warlord Skweech of the Clan Scruten and arrangements were made for Skaven assassins to slay three of the van Rugkils. He would then frame Caroline and her husband. Alfons' plan for his younger sister was far different. Harboring strong incestuous feelings towards Elisabeth, Alfons could not bring himself to have her murdered. He did know that leaving her alive in Marienburg was not in his best interest. Thus, he arranged for her kidnapping by a slaver who would subsequently sell her in Araby.

talented employees left Alfons' employ. The Directorate position fell out of Alfons' grasp as his fortune dwindled. Alfons believed that the Directorate was behind his misfortune, conspiring to deny his rightful seat of power.

One night, Alfons van Rugkil met with Skweech to outline his new plan. A plan, Alfons held, that was brilliant in its simplicity. First, Skaven assassins would murder members of Marienburg's various gangs while leaving evidence implicating their rivals. This would lead to gang war that (with additional Skaven help) would escalate to fever pitch. Eventually, the Watch would be sucked into this maelstrom of violence. With the Black Caps overwhelmed the Directorate would be left vulnerable, even with their own private armies. When all looked bleak, Alfons would then lead his own army (which he has been building outside Marienburg for months) to re-establish order. In this way he expects to be proclaimed Staadtholder by a grateful

**"AS FORETOLD BY THE PROPHET
URLAN HEARTRENDER, LET THE TIME
OF MURDERS BEGIN."**

Alfons soon demonstrated all too clearly the numerous differences between him and his late father. At first, the momentum of the businesses that his father created continued to be profitable and covered Alfons' lack of knowledge and foresight. Opportunity after opportunity was squandered and many

populace (remember, only Alfons thinks this plan is a sound one). As compensation for their services, the Skaven would be welcome to enslave any of the surviving Directors and their households - as well as any unfortunates who happened along. The calculating Skaven Warlord readily agreed.

The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men...

Although unconvinced that the greedy Human's plan will work, the Skaven Warlord sees a golden opportunity to pay back his immense debts to Clan Skryre (which always seems to demand a large number of subjects for its experiments). He will be of little use to the Skaven afterwards and the Warlord is certain that van Rugkil would never honour any agreement. Perhaps the Horned Rat will have use for him as a sacrifice.

In the midst of all this plotting, there are two other groups for whom the breakdown of order will be seen as a sign their time has come. Unknown to van Rugkil and the Skaven, the first of these is the Cult of the Scorpion. Led by Bram Scherplemmet, High Priest and Chief Assassin of Kháine, the cult is awaiting a special shipment that will enable them to institute a reign of murder. The anarchy in the streets will be considered a sign that the "Time of Murders", foretold in the *Prophecies of Urian Heartrender*, is about to dawn.

The second group consists of a number of idealistic students and agitators - the Orde Democratisch Samenleving or ORDESA. They are led by Walewijn Droomer, a gifted orator whose radical views regarding the election of government leaders by the common people is considered by many to be extreme. Droomer will take the view that the disintegration of order in the streets is indicative of the corruption and impurity of the current establishment. Only through his vision, Walewijn believes, can the common people rise up and overthrow the yoke of oppression. Further, he embraces the idea that purging the current system can only be achieved if its leaders are removed.

Through his spy, Reiner Derschakal, Alfons van Rugkil became aware of ORDESA. He saw the radical group as another potential ally in creating the chaos in the streets he needed to see his plans through. Through Reiner, Alfons began covertly providing funds to help Droomer realise his dreams of rebellion.

Spinning out of Control

Just to add more complexity to this little drama, dear Elisabeth van Rugkil secretly returned to Marienburg six months ago. It is been over four years since her brother turned Elisabeth over to the slavers. In that time, the youngest of the van Rugkil siblings found mentors who have taught her the skills necessary to avenge the deaths of her family.

She also learned that her brother's bid to win a seat on the Directorate failed. Knowing how her brother reacts to setbacks, Elisabeth is determined to end his schemes and extract a measure of revenge.

Such grand plans take time to unveil themselves; Elisabeth knew that she wasn't quite ready to reveal her presence and she

adopted several aliases in order to cover her tracks. One of her disguises - as the courtesan Sara - allowed her to roam about the streets of the better neighbourhoods of Marienburg observing the nocturnal activities of a number of households. In fact, her brief dalliance with the elderly widower, Johann van der Groot, allowed Elisabeth to observe

Rumours & News

Initially, rumours of the impending doom will be sketchy and inaccurate. As time moves forward, things become (unfortunately) increasingly clear. Samples of the initial rumours are listed below by career class. Note that some of the following information is based on fact. These are marked by an asterisk (*).

Academics

1. "In my day, students respected authority and hard work. Now, they look for the easy way out and claim hard workers are exploiters of the downtrodden. What hogwash!"
2. "If something isn't done, the rich will get richer and us all poorer. I tell you, it's the merchants who are running the city and writing the laws. Naturally the ones they like are those that line their pockets. They're no better than the nobles we got rid of. Trouble is, people are afraid of the sacrifice needed to change things."
3. "There's an exhibit of ancient artefacts at the University. I heard that the artefacts are from an ancient kingdom of Araby. I heard that something was stolen about four nights ago. They say the object is cursed and no-one wants to talk about it."* **The Stolen Artefact**

Rangers

1. "Check at Elfgate Bridge. They usually post a notice for a guide there whenever a group of Elves from overseas wishes to tour The Empire's forests. Pay's good but you have to put up with those snobs and oddballs."
2. "A friend of mine in the garrison told me that several strangers who entered through the Oostenpoort Gate last week were Imperial Witch Hunters from around Middenheim. He didn't know why they had come to Marienburg. Personally, I don't trust their kind. They're too paranoid."
3. "Year after year those pesky Marsh Flies swarm over everything travelling through

the marshes. Except this season. There's hardly any of them. Almost like they're waiting for something to happen. Kind of creepy, really."

Rogues

1. "I knows yuv felt the tension. I tells ya that even a dull knife can cut through it. Sumpthin's gonna happen and then all hell's gonna break loose."
2. "Did ya 'ear that two o' the Guild's boys got whacked last night? Some say that it was the work of those flea-bitten Bretonnians."* **Murder in the Streets**
3. "Something strange is going on hereabouts. Hear tell that there are more strangers lurking about in the shadows than normal."* **Streets of Suiddock**
4. "I hear tell that some secret shipment is due to arrive in Riddra from one of the far off Imperial Provinces some time soon. They say no one boards that ship without its owners say so. Otherwise, a long stay on Rijker's is guaranteed."* **The Mysterious Shipment**

Warriors

1. "If they were recruiting seamen for fighting, I'd say that pirates and wreckers were active again. Why would anybody be recruiting mercs? Who's the enemy? I heard that The Empire has its own problems. Bretonnia? Not a chance. Those pompous dandies would rather strut than fight. Bloody peacocks!"
2. "Sure the rich merchants have their own private army. Used in other lands fighting for their master's business interests. Dangerous work, but it pays well I hear, and you get to see the world. I'd rather stay here."
3. "There's gonna be a tournament at Monniker's this Festag. 'Ear tell it's winner take all. I was gonna enter. Probably would've won if not fer this kink I 'ave in me neck."

PART ONE TIMELINE

Adv. Day Previous to adventure start	Week Day	Event	Section
		Artefact from ancient Araby stolen from Baron Hendryk's College of Navigation and Sea Magicks	Stolen Artefact
1	Bezahltag	Adventure begins. PCs approached by Thijs Bockarts. Gang War heats up. Either this night or following two nights, PCs witness a murder. Antiquarian Kaspar Gibberig killed. Witch Hunter Rutger Nachtrabe arrives from Middenheim.	Rumours/News A Day in the Life Murder in the Streets Streets of the Suiddock Stolen Artefact The Witch Hunter Cometh
2	Guilstag (Konistag)	A ship from Sylvania arrives. Berths in Riddra until the afternoon of Angestag. Either this night or the following, the PCs witness an unusual kidnapping.	Mysterious Shipment / Dark Warehouse Streets of the Suiddock
3	Angestag	Body of Kaspar Gibberig discovered and Exotic Curios boarded up.	Stolen Artefact
4	Festag	Distribution of radical pamphlets in the Suiddock. Celebration / sacrifice at Crimson Claw cabaret.	Enter the Crimson Claw

the neighbouring estate of her brother without fear of discovery.

It was during this time that Elisabeth was able to learn of Alfons' continuing meetings with the Skaven by spying on the Warlock Engineer. Besides, Elisabeth's objective was more important than killing the Skaven and alerting others that they have been uncovered.

Elisabeth was fairly certain that time was running out. As fate would have it, Johann had passed away in his sleep that night. Elisabeth could not risk losing this "safehouse". With some sorrow, she buried the old man in his garden and prayed to the God of Death to allow Johann to join his late wife in Mórr's realm. She promised that when her brother was dead, she would arrange a proper burial with the Temple of Mórr.

Another alias – as Nadine Zomer – allowed Elisabeth to roam the Suiddock looking for someone of minor importance, whom she could coerce into doing her bidding. Thijs Boekarts (see below) was one of her father's bookkeepers who had found like employment with the League of Gentlemen

Entrepreneurs. The vain little man with a cowardly streak was easily seduced and, thus, the perfect patsy for Elisabeth. One of Thijs' tasks was to be Elisabeth's go-between with a group of so-called "adventurers" who would have no conceivable association with the van Rugkil family and could be counted on to do her dirty work.

Starting the Adventure

Hook, Line, and Sinker

The manner in which the PCs become involved in the unfolding drama will depend upon their respective backgrounds. If they are outsiders (any place outside the Suiddock), then they will depend upon overhearing rumours and news (see pg. 30). Natives of Suiddock will hear the same information from their contacts or friends. A good source of information are the various taverns about the Suiddock. One such source is described under **Shipwrecked Tavern**. In any case, PCs with initiative will follow-up on some of the more promising rumours and news.

Finally, the adventure begins on Bezahltag.

Old Man Houder's Boarding House

The PCs will need somewhere to reside in Marienburg and Old Man Houder's is just the place. Reasonably priced at 1 Gu per room per week, it is a clean establishment located on Luydenhoek Isle in Suiddock near the Draaienbrug Swing Bridge. Excluding his private quarters in the back of the ground floor, there are eight rooms available for guests on the top two floors. Each room has a single door with a simple lock and is kept clean by Old Man Houder and his daughter Ingrid.

To his neighbours, Houder is a kindly, bespectacled grandfather who is a little hard of hearing and near-sighted. He is protective of his daughter and boarders, doting on them as if they were innocent children. Fact is, Houder is a cagey old bird who misses absolutely nothing. Moreover, Houder is one of the more important and accurate gossips in this part of the Suiddock as well as an informant to the League of Gentlemen Entrepreneurs. Unless the PCs act like boorish braggarts, he will not initially be concerned with their activities. As the PCs get deeper into their investigations, Houder

(and the League) will become more interested.

There are two other boarders residing at Old Man Houder's. One of these is Jean-Paul Mainsoyeux, a handsome, struggling artist from the Bretonnian city of Couronne. Very shy, Jean-Paul is not one to socialise with the PCs, preferring to stay in his room. Once a week, however, Jean-Paul will slip out for the night and quietly returns in the pre-dawn hours exhausted. The second boarder is Ernst Erzähler, an Imperial émigré who is (at least on the social level) the opposite of Jean-Paul. There is nothing Ernst loves more than an audience (especially a captive one) to whom he can tell stories of his adventuring youth. If asked, Ernst will be unable to support any of his tales with evidence. Not that it matters as Ernst sincerely believes that his recollections of what occurred are accurate. Even given his exaggerated view of himself, Ernst is a fairly reliable source of rumours and news.

Shipwrecked Tavern

Located three buildings away from the Boarding House, the Shipwrecked Tavern is not quite a dive but it is far from the plush taverns one can find on Hightower Isle across the Niederbrug Bridge. Its ale and wine are passable (especially if one is drunk) and its whisky is akin to rotgut. The Shipwrecked Tavern is just the place for the occasional brawl and frequent gossip. Even with its low ceiling, the common room is large enough to accommodate fifty patrons. It is poorly lit and the booths next to the far wall are enshrouded in gloom; just the place for informants to meet their employers. The upper floor is the residence of Olaf Blodhaand, the owner and bouncer.

Olaf is a brute of a man, quick to laughter and slow to anger. When he does lose his temper, he is violently difficult to handle. Rumour says that wolf's blood courses through his veins while others see him as embodying the battle madness of the fabled Norse Berserker. In any event, most of the patrons clear out until Olaf's anger abates (usually determined by sending an outsider in to order a pint and watching Olaf's reactions).

To work for a man like Olaf Blodhaand, one must keep their wits about them as well as their courage. This description fits the Estalian barkeep, Manuel Hernandez y Martinez Durango de Magritta, well. He is a wiry little man who fancies himself a

Giving Chase in WFRP (Optional Rules)

There are occasions, especially in urban settings like this scenario, where player characters find that an individual with information that is needed attempts to run away from them. At times, the GM weighs whether allowing the PCs to catch the informant advances the plot line or not and decides the outcome after due consideration. While this approach keeps the game moving, it can be frustrating for some if their characters do not get a chance to run down the fleeing individual.

If you wish to run a chase, I suggest using a series of **I** tests with proper modifiers. The **M** score of both pursuer and quarry should also be considered. If the pursuer has the higher **M**, then she has a reasonably good chance of catching her quarry assuming that nothing untoward happens to her (like a bad slip resulting in a twisted ankle). If the quarry has the higher **M**, then he has the better chance of escaping. When the **M** scores are the same, the **I** tests become so much more important.

Assuming the same **M** rate for illustration purposes, if both pursuer and quarry succeed passing their respective **I** test (with whatever modifiers the GM deems appropriate), then the chase continues with no ground lost or gained. If both fail, then the relative positions should be judged on how badly they failed. A failure of 30 or less should mean that the character lost some speed by bumping into other people, being knocked slightly off-balance by a lamppost or bench, etc. Failures of more than 30 should be indicative of getting knocked down by an obstacle or losing one's footing and falling down with an injury (no more than 1D2 **W**, irrespective of armour or Toughness is recommended). If one succeeds and the other fails an **I** test, then the one who failed loses ground.

GMs could add the element of the pursuer having to pass an **Observe** test to spot her quarry should the former fail the **I** test while the quarry succeeds.

The GM will need to decide how long to run the chase before the quarry is either captured or escapes.

swashbuckler and ladies man. To fellow Estalians, Manuel's a filthy little rat whose sliminess is offensive. Thus, they bestowed upon him the nickname, "El Cochino" ("The Dirty One").

Olaf employs Sergei Stoilensky of Praag, barkeep and bouncer. Though not quite Olaf's size, he is still a man to be respected as anyone who frequents Monniker's Pit Fighting School can tell.

Buying drinks is one way to get information, but can get very expensive. Another method that innovative adventurers can use is to trade information. Though a whole lot cheaper than buying drinks or bribery, the PCs will usually get information less worthy than they provide. Don't give away anything valuable at little cost. Make the PCs earn the information they desire. The accuracy of the information will depend upon whom they ask. A downtrodden drunkard is hardly going to have anything worthwhile.

Olaf or Sergei will refer anyone looking for accurate information to Pieter Vluogoog, known as a very reliable source of information. Pieter's price is relatively high for a gossip: either a pricey three-course meal with Norse mead or highly reliable information. Pieter is very good at

differentiating good information from bad so the PCs need to be prepared to make a good exchange.

In contrast to Pieter, Anton Loslippen, a local ratcatcher, is a gossip whose information is dubious but cheap. A tankard or two of ale is all he asks. Most of the locals know Anton for his wild stories and conspiracy theories. With absolute certainty, Anton knows that there are large frog-like beings who are behind all of Marienburg's troubles.

Act One Blood Tics

As the scenario begins Alfons van Rugkil's plan is reaching the final stages. The Skaven are continuing to murder various gangmembers and planting evidence to the guilt of their rivals. Meanwhile, mercenaries are arriving at his compound in Goudberg.

Across town one of van Rugkil's loyal servants, Reiner Derschakal, is about to put an end to Thijs Boekarts, an old employee of the van Rugkils. Boekarts has been poking his nose around recently and Reiner is making sure there are no loose ends. However, Boekarts is working for Elisabeth

van Rugkil and she has ordered him to hire a group of adventurers to look into the gang killings, and other matters, to see if they are related to her brother's activities.

In distant tunnels Skaven forces are approaching the city under the leadership of Warlord Skweech. Little does he know that his second in command, Rantok, wants the mission to fail for his own ends.

Meanwhile, the Khainite group, the Cult of the Scorpion, is planning its own trouble. The remains of the long dead Klara von Teufelheim are on their way to Marienburg for the Cult have discovered a way to return her to (un)life. This, they believe, will herald the long prophesied Time of Murders. To ensure they can complete their ceremony they steal the Al-Qantram Shalem Fetish of Kháine from the University. The ceremony to raise von Teufelheim is to take place at the Crimson Claw, a club now under ownership of the Cult. They also murder

Kaspar Glibberig, the only non-cult person who knows its full powers.

In a small room in Tempelwijk, Walewijn Droomer is putting the last touches to the manifesto of his revolutionary group ORDESA. He is being funded by Alfons van Rugkil and his sponsor wants action soon.

Against this approaching maelstrom, a few forces of good are gathering. Rutger Nachtrabe, a witch-hunter of Mórr, has arrived led by an omen from his god. Sergeant Kuilstier of the Black Caps is investigating the gang murders and beginning to realise things are not as they seem. Last but not least, the PCs are given the chance to save Marienburg.

A Day in the Life

As the PCs are enjoying a meal or drinks at the Shipwrecked Tavern (or another local tavern), a moderately well dressed man approaches them. "Good day. I apologise for

the interruption, but may I have a word with you?" He sits down before the PCs can reply or ask questions. He continues, "I am Thijs Boekarts and I have need of your services." He looks around nervously and then says in a low voice, "I understand you have considerable talents and skills that are useful in discretionary matters. I am prepared to pay you very well to handle a rather delicate task. Unfortunately, this is not a place where I can speak freely. If you're interested, and I pray you are, please meet me at my flat in two hours. It's at 39 Natsteen Straat, room 6. Now I must go." With that, Thijs jumps up and hurries off before the PCs are able to reply.

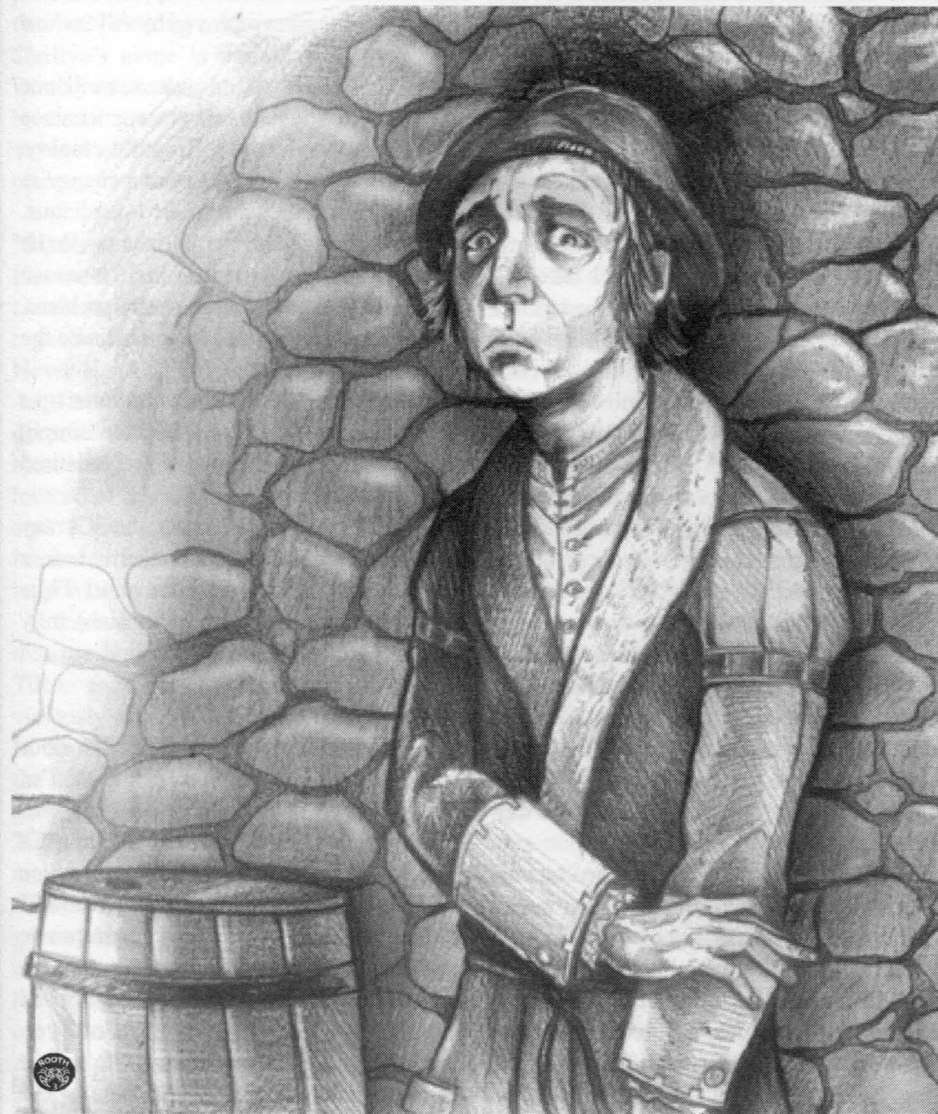
Being what they are, the PCs may decide to scramble after Thijs in the hopes of following him. PCs moving quickly should pass an **I** test to avoid falling over their chairs or one another in their haste. The only opportunity any PC has to spot Thijs before he disappears down an alley requires the PC to pass an **Observe** test once they get outside the tavern.

Should the PCs decide to chase Thijs, the GM may decide to use the Chase Rules provided (see **Giving Chase** sidebar). Thijs has **M** 4 and **I** 43.

PCs who succeed in following Thijs are not alone. Those with the *Sixth Sense* skill realise this at once. Unfortunately, they will not be able to discern who is following them. Fearing that he is being pursued, Thijs hurries down the dark alleys and narrow streets that characterise this part of Marienburg. Shaken by his fears, Thijs hopes to lose his pursuer.

If the PCs went directly to his flat, they will wait for over an hour before the fearful Thijs appears. Looking around nervously, he invites them to accompany him upstairs. He hurries ahead of them and fumbles with the keys before finally managing to unlock the door.

"Please be seated," Thijs tells the PCs as he motions to some chairs around a table. "I need a drink. Just to calm my nerves before I can put forth my proposal to you." Thijs walks to another table where a decanter of dark brownish-red liquid sits by a small glass. Quickly, Thijs pours then drinks the beverage, "Ahhhh, that's better. Good brandy is the elixir of the gods, I tell you. Now to business. My life is endang...". Thijs swiftly grabs his throat and gives off a choking sound. His eyes widen as he realises that he has been poisoned. Dropping the glass and bottle (which shatters), Thijs looks at the PCs with pleading eyes. He then convulses before



collapsing on the floor dead. PCs with *Brewing*, *Cook*, or *Prepare Poison* skills may detect the scent (or taste) of something foreign to the remnants of brandy on a successful **Int** test. A second successful **Int**+10 test by a character with *Prepare Poison* can determine the poison as Nightshade.

As the amount of poison used is equal to two doses, the PCs will be unable to do anything to save Thijs unless they have access to a *Cure Poison* spell. If cast straight away, Thijs will be drowsy for a time.

Should the PCs try to stop Thijs from rapidly downing the brandy, allow them an **I** test to succeed. Should they fail, they are unable to save Thijs from his fate. Should they succeed and the poison is detected, Thijs will thank them profusely.

If they save Thijs: Once he has gathered his wits, Thijs will quickly come to the conclusion that things are worse than he assumed and immediate flight from Marienburg necessary. Somebody wants him dead and he's not sticking around to find out who. "I'll talk as I pack, if you don't mind. A war is brewing between factions in the city, which is bad for business. I've had a recent meeting with a few of my... contacts about the situation. We suspect that some other party is involved in inciting this unpleasantness. While I'm not in a position to actually do something about it officially, I have to do something. That's where you come in, if you're willing. I can advance you each fifteen Guilders and pay you an additional sixty-five each upon you gathering enough evidence to identify and expose these culprits. I need to get out quickly but you can send word upriver to Kalkaat. The innkeeper at the Hog and the Weasel Tavern will know where to find me."

Finishing his packing, Thijs turns to the PCs and says, "There are two rumours that might be related. The first has to do with a shipment that's expected to arrive within a day or so from The Empire. You might have to nose about the dock area. The second thing is the theft of some artefact from Hendryk's a few nights ago. I can't really give you any further information as to do so would needlessly compromise my employers. That is not a wise thing. It would be safer for you to remain ignorant of them. Still, I suspect there will be some danger. Right. Are you willing to do this for me? If so, I need your signature or mark on this." Thijs hands the

PCs a contract. PCs with the *Read/Write* skill can read the following (Player Handout One):

We, the undersigned, have agreed to undertake the task as laid forth by Mijnheer Thijs Boekarts of uncovering the party responsible for commencing the conflict that is disrupting the business of the major Suiddock interests. Evidence of their identity and involvement will be collected and represented to Mijnheer Thijs Boekarts so that he can take further action with his employer. In compensation, we, the undersigned, will receive an advancement of fifteen Guilders each with an additional sixty-five to be paid to each upon completion of this task.

Once the PCs have signed or fixed their mark, Thijs places the contract in his bag. He then walks over to his desk in the far corner and unlocks it (CR 5) with one of the keys he carries on a chain. From the top drawer, Thijs pulls out another key and tells the PCs to wait a moment. Thijs then walks over to another room in the flat where he slides the rug from the middle of the room. Thijs then lifts a loose floorboard to reveal a locked strong box. Opening it, he doles out the promised advance. The remaining guilders he stuffs in his purse. "I take my leave of you now, so if you would be so kind to close the door as you depart."

He will not reveal his employer nor know much more than he is telling. Moreover, Thijs is rather anxious to get out of town quickly and quietly. Should the PCs be reluctant to take the job, Thijs looks somewhat dejected and says simply, "I guess I misjudged you, my apologies for wasting your time. I trust you can see your way out." If he gave them the money, Thijs demands its return. If the PCs refuse, then Thijs lets them leave with it. There should be time in the near future when he can inform his employer of the PCs' theft of the League's funds (Suiddock natives will know The League of Gentlemen Entrepreneurs by other names, see **Murder in the Streets**).

If Thijs dies: Should Thijs die a search will yield a key chain with several keys (one of which opens the desk) and a pouch with 12 Gu and 20 shillings. Searching the room the PCs will find nothing of interest unless they check in the drawers of the desk. On top of the stack of paper, is a sheet of paper signed by a N. Zomer noting "Unique cargo due to

arrive from eastern Stirland and Artefact stolen from University. Are they related to the troubles plaguing Suiddock?" In addition, there is a card with the words, "Change in ownership of Crimson Claw Cabaret. Is the new owner on the League's payroll yet?" PCs with the *Read/Write* skill must pass an **Int** (+10 for *Forgery*) to notice that the card is written in the same handwriting as the note. Most of the rest of the materials are of a mundane nature.

A rather unusual medallion can also be found jutting out from beneath the desk on a successful **Search** test. It is in the shape of a tulip with the letters "AvR" etched upon its centre. Unless the PCs are well versed in the more obscure heraldry of the minor merchant houses of Marienburg (if native to city then allow a -20 modifier to a *Heraldry* test) they will not recognize the symbolism as belonging to the House of van Rugkils. The medallion was accidentally dropped by Reiner Derschakal (who re-appears in Act Three), an assassin employed by Alfons van Rugkil.

Reiner has had Boekarts under surveillance off and on for the past two years, ever since the bookkeeper left van Rugkil's employ. Only recently did Reiner notice a change in behaviour and habits that looked suspicious. Though Reiner did note a dalliance with (he assumed) a prostitute, the assassin discounted her as a source of the problem. So, the decision was made to assassinate the bookkeeper.

A second successful **Search** test turns up a screwed up bit of paper. The note simply states in a small block print, "Have you hired them yet? NZ."

Having done all they can here, the PCs may decide to depart quickly and silently before they are discovered near the dead Thijs Boekarts. Some (the more foolish) may decide to seek out the Watch.

Leaving Thijs

As they leave, an old lady opens her door down the hall from Thijs' flat. "Oh, I'm terribly sorry," says the woman, who will introduce herself as Greta should the PCs politely ask. "I was hoping you were that nice young lady friend of Mijnheer Boekarts. I wanted to ask her if they had plans since Mijnheer Boekarts is a shy young man. Do you know if they have? Really, I'm surprised that he hasn't even introduced me yet. Goodness, these young people are so private about their affairs, especially those of the

heart. Ah, I can see in your eyes that you're curious about the lady. Young men, you're so easy to read. I can see why. Such beautiful dark hair and a fine figure. Good for at least four, maybe five children. She does need to get on with her life I daresay, as she's not getting any younger. But she has good breeding - such pride and confidence. You know, she reminded me of myself when I was her age. By the way, how is Mijnheer Boekarts? He seems so nervous these days."

This may be the PCs' opportunity to escape. Greta is a lonely old lady and gossip who will continue to talk to the PCs. After she's finished prying about Thijs, she'll turn her attention to the PCs. If the PCs engage her in conversation, she will work her way into asking them very personal and embarrassing (and perhaps cruel) questions. For example, Greta asks a female PC, "So, you've been travelling around with these men for sometime, eh dearie? Which of them do you plan to settle down with? None? How can that be? [Turning to the male PCs] What in Shallya's name is wrong with you men? Don't you see that this lovely lady's life will be meaningless without a good husband and several children? Or, do you prefer the company of small boys?"

Murder in the Streets

Known affectionately as "The League of Gentlemen Entrepreneurs", this Suiddock organization is also called the "Guild We've Never Heard Of" or simply, "The League." As the adventure opens, the locals have discovered the bodies of two brutally murdered members of The League. Evidence located at the scene implicated Bretonnian and Tilean gangs in perpetrating these heinous crimes. Word of the connection is beginning to spread.

Unknown to most Suiddockers is the fact that the bodies of several Bretonnian and Tilean gang members have also turned up viciously slain in their respective quarters. In the Bretonnian case, evidence points to the involvement of the League and a Tilean gang in the murders. With respect to the Tileans, both the Bretonnians and the League are implicated.

PCs following up on the murders will not get much more than rumours of a potential move by either the Bretonnians or Tileans (or both) to encroach upon The League's territory. Wild speculation on the reasons for this sudden move runs the spectrum.

Should the PC approach a Watchman on

the streets, they must make a **Fel** test. Failure results in the Watch informing them to "move along" and "mind your own business". If successful, then the PCs are referred to Watch Sergeant Reinbert Kuilstier at the Suiddock Watch Barracks near the Draaienbrug Swing Bridge on Sikkeleiland Isle. Finding the Barracks is relatively easy. All Suiddockers know its location and will provide directions for a small fee (a couple of shillings are typical). Getting into the Barracks is also relatively easy. Seeing Sergeant Kuilstier is not.

The Duty Watchman will ask that the PCs identify themselves and state their business. If the PCs are willing to wait about a week or so, they can schedule an appointment with the Duty Watchman. The only way they will get to see Kuilstier without an appointment is by greasing the palm of the Duty Watchman and successfully passing a **Bribe** test. Any bribe less than a Guilden will result in a -10 modifier to **Fel** (-25 modifier if offered less than 10/-). Likewise, offering more than 5 GU will result in a modifier of -10 (too much money arouses suspicion). If the **Bribe** test is failed, the Duty Watchman will strongly suggest that the PCs leave. As this is the main Watch Barracks in the Suiddock, there is more than enough Watch available to ensure that any trouble caused by the PCs is brutally quashed. To add further insult, troublemakers may find themselves fined up to 10 GU or jailed for the night in a cold, dank holding cell.

Should the PCs successfully bribe their way in, the Duty Watchman will point them to Kuilstier's office. There they will find Sergeant Kuilstier at his desk reviewing some papers. These papers are sketches of dead men with slashes and other bodily wounds. After a brief moment, Kuilstier will place the pictures down and inquire after the PCs' name and business. Should the PCs (foolishly) reveal themselves as adventurers, Kuilstier will tell them, "Your kind is not needed here. I'll assume that since you found your way into my office, you can find your way out." PCs wanting to help will have to convince Sergeant Kuilstier of their sincerity and ability. Test vs. **Fel-10** (+10 if past or current career of Watchman or Mercenary) to determine whether Kuilstier accepts their offer.

If successful, the Watch Sergeant will share what he knows. Kuilstier is well aware that members of the Bretonnian and Tilean gangs were killed the same night as the ones

belonging to the League. Additionally, he knows that each was killed in a different manner. Those in the League had a thin line about the neck (suggesting a garrotte) and stab wounds in the back. The stab wounds were not as clean as one would expect from a straight-edged dagger. Rather, the wounds were ragged indicating that the edge of the blade was irregular. The throats of the dead Tileans were slashed. Again the cuts were not as clean as one normally finds. The Bretonnians were killed in a third, more gruesome manner. In both cases, some edged object thrust upward into the abdomen killed the men. If asked how he knows so much about wounds, Kuilstier comments that he spent some years in the eastern Imperial provinces and has seen wounds of all kinds. Furthermore, the evidence found near the bodies seems to be deliberately placed.

While he believes that there is an obvious connection, Kuilstier will not volunteer his view that a heretofore unknown gang committed these murders, especially since Kuilstier refuses to speculate without further evidence. If the PCs offer up their views of conspiracy Kuilstier will dismiss the more outrageous but will listen to any that are reasonable. If the PCs obtained any clues from Thijs Boekarts' flat, they may present these to Kuilstier. The mysterious medallion will certainly stir his curiosity. Kuilstier will also be mildly interested in N. Zomer, but since there is no other clue to the identity of that person, he will not pursue it at this time. Kuilstier then interrogates the PCs about the Boekarts affair, sometimes repeating his questions to ensure consistency. Once he is assured of their tale, Kuilstier informs the PCs that he will keep the medallion as it may help his investigations.

Should the PCs enquire about a more "official" position with which to provide assistance, Sergeant Kuilstier will consider their request for several moments. "I can only offer to pay you each eight shillings per day. You won't be official Black Caps, although you will be paid almost as well. Still, you will be able to go about this investigation without too much hassle. Come by my office in a day and I've the proper warrant for you. Until then, you will report your progress to me."

Should the PCs return the next day to see Kuilstier, the Watch Sergeant will not be available. The Duty Watchman will have the dated warrant and four days advance for the PCs. The warrant states:



The following individuals have been deputised to act as agents for the Suiddock Black Caps as authorised by Sergeant Reinbert Kuilstier for the duration of one week from the date of this warrant.

The individual PCs' names are listed on the warrant.

Streets of Suiddock

This section is mostly for background noise, red herrings, and other distractions that give atmosphere to the adventure unless otherwise noted. As the adventure progresses, there will be a need to amend (in some way) the descriptions in this section.

The streets of the Suiddock are normally full of life and character, but are a very dangerous place at night. During the day and early evening hours, businesses and markets are active. The streets are full of people cutting deals, struggling to get ahead, and taking advantage of the unwary. The PCs may well come across drunken sailors, prostitutes, an unlucky gambler considering whether to throw himself in the water, slumming nobles or members of the Directorate households, urchins, buskers, a bounty hunter close to a capture, pie sellers, or any one of the individuals that make up life here.

Anyone walking the streets at night will rarely (5% chance every twenty minutes) run into a Black Cap patrol (composed of 2d3 Watchmen). Shops are generally closed and the action moves to the numerous taverns, gambling halls, drug dens, and brothels that litter the Suiddock. Those remaining on the streets tend to engage in some of the illegal and unwholesome activities that give the Suiddock its unsavoury reputation.

These are not, however, normal times in the Suiddock. The killings have begun a ripple effect that threatens the fragile peace established between gangs. A GM can convey the changes simply by describing a scene where the PCs come across a blind beggar and his small dog at the same corner the first few days of the scenario. Then one day they come across the whimpering dog with no sign of its master.

The PCs may well, in the first two days, roam the Suiddock streets at night looking for trouble (sure, they'll sugar coat their intentions if they run into a Black Cap patrol, but the tendencies of self-styled adventurers to cause trouble are legendary). PCs taking to the streets in the late afternoon will notice that various businesses (except taverns,

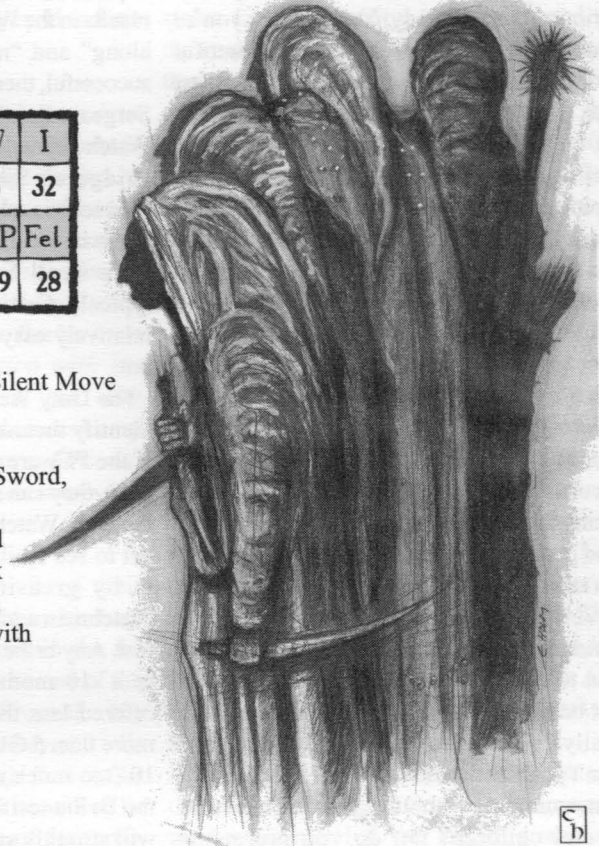
Cultists of the Scorpion Footpads

Alignment: Evil (Kháine)

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I
4	33	35	3	3	6	32
A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
1	31	28	26	34	29	28

Skills: Silent Move Rural, Silent Move Urban, Strike to Stun

Possessions: Leather Jack, Sword, Club, Crossbow and Ammunition, Black Hooded Cloak with Red Trim, Black Mask with Red Scorpion on Forehead and Signet Ring with Scorpion Motif.



gambling halls, and brothels) are unusually closing their shops tightly well before sunset. If the PCs approach any shopkeeper to inquire about their closing time, most will reply that business has been dropping off late in the day and that there's no good reason to stay open longer. While that may sound plausible, allow any persistent PC a **Fel** test to persuade the shopkeeper to divulge the real reason for the early closures: fear of the fallout resulting from gang reprisals. No one is sure when or where these reprisals will occur, but the certainty that they will is beyond question.

As the days progress, lawlessness increases in the Suiddock as the Black Caps find themselves drawn deeper into spiralling events. The following list details some of the situations GMs could use to convey this atmosphere of disorder. The likelihood of such events occurring increases on each succeeding night.

Arson - One or two people can be spotted sneaking about in the shadows. Closer inspection reveals that the would-be perpetrators are in possession of flammable materials (lamp oil, rags, flint and steel, etc.). Arsonists are: (1) either hired by someone

or acting on their own to extract revenge on the owner of the establishment; (2) hired by a landlord to "burn out" pesky (or undesirable) tenants; or (3) pyromaniacs. Once the fire is set, all but the pyros quickly vacate the area to avoid possible capture. Arsonists prefer to find the right vantage point from where they can appreciate the splendour of their work. PCs who intervene before the fire is set will always chase away arsonists from the scene. Once the fire starts the PCs can bring the arsonists to justice or vacate the area before they are mistakenly implicated. Mobs have a tendency to do unspeakable things to anyone they believe to be an arsonist.

Assault - A band of thugs (d6+2) can be seen roaming the narrow streets and dark alleys looking for a victim to beat into a bloody pulp. These street roughs will attack anyone that they outnumber just for the fun of it. They will also attack anyone suspected of being a member of a rival gang to "teach 'em a lesson." PCs may, of course, intervene. Well-armed PCs will probably chase away the thugs and rescue a grateful victim. In contrast, a more cautious approach may find the thugs reacting aggressively.

Break-in - An individual is spotted attempting to enter a building through a window or locked door. In most instances, it will be a thief or else a prelude to some other crime. This is a perfect situation for imaginative GMs to add some red herrings to the adventure.

Kidnapping - Most of the time, the aim is to make money. In some cases, it is a press gang looking for a few good hands to man a merchant ship bound for faraway lands. More rarely the kidnapper sells his victim to the slavers who frequent Suiddock's seedier areas. Kidnapping also occurs whenever powerful people want to "talk" to certain individuals in private. Many of these are never seen again. Not expecting much trouble from elsewhere, kidnappers will scatter should armed individuals intervene. The chances of catching a kidnapper aren't very high, as they know the streets of Suiddock intimately. Those captured will not talk for fear that their employer will silence them once their loose tongue becomes known. Rescued victims will likewise keep their mouth shut in the vain hope that their silence will save them. It rarely does.

Some kidnap victims taken by the various gangs may tell the PCs that the war between the League, Bretonnians, and Tileans is escalating (among other bits of information).

Looting - There are many Suiddockers looking for the right opportunity to enrich themselves, especially in times this unsettled. Looting usually begins when a group of (d6+4) individuals with seemingly nothing to do congregate. All it takes is one action (e.g., shattering a store front window with a rock) to get them whipped up into a mob. Once looting begins, d6 individuals join in every three rounds until the Watch shows up en masse. The looters then scatter quickly. Sometimes looters will attack the Watch to defend their "right" to steal. PCs acting quickly may disperse the crowd before any looting actually takes place. Once it begins, however, the PCs must act decisively or leave quickly. Otherwise, they may find themselves involved in a minor riot.

Murder - Most murders involve family and some result from criminal activity that doesn't quite work as planned. A few murders are planned hits by a professional. After the first day, the frequency of killings increases. PCs are more likely to come across the body of a murder victim than encounter a murder in progress.

Street Robbery - Most robbers are pickpockets who slyly relieve their victims of their burdensome purses; others are more aggressive. PCs capturing or otherwise overcoming robbers have a reasonable chance of recovering money or other valuables from previous victims.

Surveillance - Lurking in the shadows and other less than obvious places are those who are paid for their eyes. The targets of these "shadows" may include other shadows, rival gang members, innocents, Watch patrols, or even the PCs. Detecting surveillance is more difficult than running into other nocturnal activities due to its indirectness. PCs must pass an **Observe-20** test (+10 for *Sixth Sense*, +10 for *Night Vision*) to detect the shadow who has them under surveillance. If the shadow is watching someone other than the PCs, then the PCs' base chance of detecting them is **Observe-30** (+10 if any PC has the career of Bounty Hunter or Spy). Most will retreat immediately if discovered. Clever PCs will come up with creative schemes to trail, entrap, or otherwise engage a shadow. The information that PCs can obtain from a captured shadow will depend on who was being observed and why. GMs can use captured shadows as a means to communicate critical bits of information (or help) to the PCs. Moreover, the more involved the PCs become, the greater the chances that someone wants them followed.

Two Certain Encounters

Two critical events need to take place, the first occurring sometime during the first or second night of the adventure. Its location is any narrow street in the Suiddock (except Hightower Isle) several blocks from any waterfront.

Killer in the Shadows: As the PCs walk the streets they notice a person watching them. Before any PC can react, a second shadowy cloaked figure appears behind the first. The first figure will bend backward and emit a choking, gurgly noise before collapsing. The second figure flees.

Checking the fallen figure, they find a dead man lying in an expanding pool of blood. The man had been stabbed in the back while being strangled. The latter can easily be determined by the thin wire cutting into the neck. If the PCs haven't reached the conclusion that there is no way any one person can both strangle someone with a

garrotte while stabbing them, allow them an **Int** test to reach that deduction. The killer was a Skaven assassin, but no need to let the PCs in on that revelation at this time.

Should PCs give chase to the killer, they will not be able to catch them. Any Wizard will find it impossible to cast a spell while on the run as the killer is never in sight long enough. After turning the third corner, the PCs will see the cloaked figure drop down a manhole to the sewers below. Next to the metal grate that covered the manhole, the PCs see a large bloody dagger with a serrated edge. At this point, the PCs will have to decide whether to follow the killer into the malodorous sewers or let him go. Moreover, the PCs will hear the whistle of a Watch patrol.

Even if they went straight down, the killer will escape the PCs. Naturally, they may wish to slop around the sewers in the vain hope of capturing the killer. Let them for as long as they're willing. Feel free to further entice them with any odd noise you wish to describe. The constant dripping of water and occasional rush of effluence is more than enough to confuse the trail.

First sign of the Claw: The next critical event takes place either on Guilstag (Konistag) or Angestag. By this time, the PCs should be well aware of the increase in killings resulting from the escalating gang war. If they met Sergeant Kuilstier, and are talking with him regularly, they will know that the method of killing varies from one body to the next. Additionally, none of these recent killings seem to match the methods detailed by Sergeant Kuilstier. The difference in methodology has to do with the gangs killing one another rather than the Skaven.

As the PCs patrol the streets late that night, they spy two suspicious individuals in the shadows. They are dressed in long black hooded cloaks trimmed with red. Their attention seems to be focused on a slightly built man in tattered clothes. As the two watch, another two, similarly attired, leap out of the shadows and quickly subdue him. Should the PCs be content to watch, the two observing individuals turn towards the PCs and watch them while the others drag their captive away. Once the abduction is safely completed, the two retreat.

If the PCs intercede, the four armed cultists draw their weapons. These cultists of the Scorpion are fanatical followers of the murderous god, Kháine. Since there are

plenty of potential sacrifices in this city, the cultists will opt to flee if the PCs prove to be too powerful. This could entail another chase scene. Should the PCs capture a cultist alive, they will be unable to extract one ounce of information.

As soon as their task is completed, the cultists will try to scatter. PCs may opt to let these cultists go in the hope of following one of them. That would be a bad idea. Being members of a proscribed cult has sharpened the abilities of these individuals to lose any pursuit on the narrow and winding streets and alleys of the Suiddock. If the PCs successfully get within reach, the cultist will turn on them to prevent the PCs from any further pursuit.

If the PCs search the body of any cultist they have slain, they find a signet ring on each bearing a scorpion motif that matches the figure scarred onto their chests. On one of the bodies, the PCs will find a note that states:

Crimson Claw Cabaret
11:00 P.M. Festag

The Mysterious Shipment

As the largest port in the Old World, substantial numbers of ships arrive and depart Marienburg daily. The particular ship for which the PCs are looking will arrive in the Suiddock on Guilstag (Konistag). The ship is unique in that it is the only ship to arrive from the barony of Langwald in eastern Stirland in recent memory. As such, nearly all Marienburgers (even those with the Heraldry skill who must test with a -20 modifier to their Int) are unfamiliar with its colour and coat of arms. Except for rumour, the PCs will be unable to substantiate anything until the ship's arrival. They can proceed with the information they obtained through rumour in one of two ways. They can either start at the Lord Harbourmaster's or the Brotherhood of Seamen and Pilots.

The Lord Harbourmaster's

Located next to the Niederbrug Bridge on Hightower Isle, the Lord Harbourmaster's building is a large, three-storey, green-painted affair. Within these walls, the arrival and departure of all ships conducting (legitimate) business in Marienburg is recorded. The Lord Harbourmaster is responsible for collecting all duties and docking fees and enforcing Port Law. The Lord Harbourmaster doubles as the

Commandant of the Marienburg Harbour Watch and has jurisdiction over everything waterside. During the day (when the harbour is the busiest), Lord Harbourmaster Odvaal van den Huister is present with a number of Clerks, Collectors, and Harbour Watchmen. Any attempt by the PCs to see the Lord Harbourmaster will be doomed to failure. Instead, they will be directed to one of the Lord Harbourmaster's secretaries, Watze Schiptoren.

PCs wanting to see the logs of incoming ships are going to have a problem. Namely, they will have to convince Watze that they have legitimate cause. If the PCs are foolish enough to divulge their real task, Watze will scoff at their assertions and tell them to leave. Persistence on the PCs' part will result in Watze calling the Harbour Watch to escort the PCs off the premises. PCs concocting a cover story should be allowed a **Bluff** test to convince the reluctant Watze of their need. If all else fails, any PC may try a **Bribe** test. Under no circumstances will threats intimidate Watze (in fact, the Harbour Watch may find it amusing as the PCs are tossed into the brig).

Success in viewing the records presents some new problems for the PCs. For one thing, river traffic between Marienburg and The Empire is common. The vessels are usually the larger, ocean going variety, but a number of river barges also make the journey. Unless the PCs clearly state that they are looking for anything odd, this approach rapidly reaches a dead-end. PCs stating that they are looking for the unusual and passing an **Int** test (a +10 modifier for those who have experience trading merchandise or working on boats) will find that only one river barge arriving from The Empire is registered as a ship from the Barony of Langwald; The Schwarzdame. More unusual is that its cargo is listed as "One crated luxury" (a PC with experience in trading will realise that the cost of transporting one item from Altdorf - much less from an unknown location further away - is generally prohibitive). In addition, the cargo was never inspected. The log indicates that the cargo was off-loaded at Berth 31 on the eastern side of Riddra Isle.

Guildhall of the Brotherhood

The crooked streets of Stoessel will have to be traversed until the PCs reach the middle of the waterfront and the guildhall of the Brotherhood of Seamen and Pilots.

Unless they are members, the PCs will have difficulty getting in to view records and two guards prevent any unauthorised entry. PCs wishing to appeal to a higher authority will be unsuccessful if they are not members. If the PCs try to overpower the guards to gain access, the two (hardly the brave, heroic types) will shout an alarm bringing a Watch Patrol within D6 rounds. Breaking into the guildhall at night is a possibility. Careful planning and execution should give a high chance of success.

PCs with some seafaring background receive a +20 modifier to **Bluff** tests and apply additional modifiers as appropriate for any cover story. If all else fails, heavy bribery may be the order of the day.

Once inside, the PCs can find the records room. An old scribe, Rolf Schrijven, can help find the correct records, though it will take some time. The information here is that a ship bearing an unknown coat of arms on its flag was piloted to Berth 31 on Riddra Isle. There is no mention of the ship's cargo or any other useful information.

Unlike the Lord Harbourmaster's, the Guildhall has large maps on the wall of the record room which details the location of each berth in the Suiddock, including those in Riddra. Should none of the PCs have the Cartography skill, they are reduced to searching the Riddra waterfront on foot. Or, for a little monetary consideration, they can ask Rolf to provide directions or services as a guide. The latter should cost the PCs at least a couple of Guilders. If Rolf so agrees, then he will only lead them to the point where he can point out Berth 31 to them.

The Dark Warehouse

Many centuries ago, Riddra was the heart of the Suiddock. As the islands upriver were built (Stoessel first, then Luydenhoek), the main dockyards moved eastward. Now the docks of Riddra are mostly empty, used primarily by smugglers. None of the berths are identified in any way and only the locals who frequent the waterside can correctly identify them. PCs attempting to learn such from the locals must offer at least a Guilder as a bribe.

The Schwarzdame will remain at Berth 31 until Angestag afternoon. PCs searching for it during its stay will find the black vessel moored without any apparent guards. An orange flag with black borders and a crossed swords motif in its centre flies from its stern (the coat of arms of the Stirlander Barony of

Langwald). In the event that the PCs merely post a watch, they notice that no one comes aboard until the ship is ready to depart. At that time, Captain Erich Wassermann and his three crewmen approach from a direction opposite the PCs. The four men are anxious to leave and board the ship quickly. They will not stop to talk to the PCs unless heavily bribed (at least 10 Guilders or Imperial Crowns each). None of the four know much other than the following:

- A man named Helmut Nachtwanderer from Waldenhof, Sylvania hired them to deliver a special cargo to Marienburg.
- Herr Nachtwanderer paid them a considerable sum to carry forth their task without question.
- The flag on board was Herr Nachtwanderer's requirement.
- They were to report to a gentleman named Anders Smid upon arrival.
- Herr Smid instructed the four to stay away from the Schwarzdame until departure.

Further questioning yields no other information unless the PCs try to intimidate the foursome. A successful **Ld** or **Fel** test will yield the following information:

- Herr Smid was waiting on the docks when they arrived in the early evening.
- The tone of Smid's instruction carried an implicit threat if he were disobeyed.
- There was some shuffling movement in the shadows behind Smid.
- Each of the four felt a chill in their backs until they were away from Smid's presence.

Wassermann reluctantly agrees to any request the PCs make to examine the ship provided that the Captain and his crew are allowed to leave afterward. PCs who do not agree will find themselves in a fight, as Wassermann is extremely eager to depart.

The PCs may opt to search the ship prior to the crew's return. In either event, the PCs find nothing obvious in the hold except for provisions. A successful **Search** test indicates a fragment of bone near an area where a large crate was situated, judging by the heavy dust 'footprint'. Any PC with a suitable career is able to determine that the bone is that of a Human finger. Neither Wassermann nor his crew know anything about the bone.

Across from Berth 31 are two boarded-up warehouses with a narrow alley separating them. Both have large double doors facing the waterfront and have two-storeys. PCs

checking the entrances find that both are securely shut and the back entrances locked. The one oddity is that the locks on the left warehouse are new.

PCs searching the left warehouse will find a concealed sliding wall facing the other warehouse on a successful **I** test. Once the sliding wall is uncovered it will take just moments to find the opening mechanism.

Should they enter during the day, the warehouse is very dim (the windows have all been covered up with boards). The PCs must take a moment to allow their eyes to adjust unless they have a light source (torch or lantern). Once they are able to see, the PCs notice at the far corner of the warehouse a hooded woman in dark clothing (black with red trim) removing a small container about one cubic foot in size from a large opened crate. The woman notices the PCs if they entered the warehouse noisily or during daylight. She ignores them as she opens the trapdoor leading to the sewers below with container in hand. PCs crossing to intercept the black-clad woman (or casting spells or shooting arrows) are in for a surprise. At the start of the round that the second PC enters the warehouse six figures, Khainite Cultists, charge from the shadows and attack. Their intent is to allow the woman to make good her escape with container in hand. Once her getaway is assured, the six cultists will attempt to withdraw.

Assuming the PCs get past the cultists and go after the black-clad woman the PCs will find themselves in a narrow sewer line with no sign of the woman. Tracking her is impossible given the delay. Should the PCs search the crate above, they will find an opened coffin within. The lid of the coffin is propped up against the wall and bears a black and yellow coat of arms with a red skull and crossed swords motif. PCs with both *History* (Imperial) and *Heraldry* skills must successfully pass an *Intelligence*-10 test (due to its obscurity) to identify the ancient coat of arms (circa 1200 IC) of the Imperial province of Sylvania. PCs with only the *Heraldry* skill must pass a test at half **Int**. Should the PCs fail, they can provide a description (or take the coat of arms) to the Great Library of Verena or the Temple of Mórr to discover its significance.

The Stolen Artifact

Befitting the largest city in the Old World, Baron Hendryk's College of Navigation and Sea Magicks (also known as the University) is one of the largest and most diverse institutes

of learning known. Baron Hendryk's is also considered by Marienburgers to be the wealthiest institute of higher learning in the Old World and houses the largest collection of artefacts from ancient civilisations (thanks, in part, to the patronage Marienburg explorers and scholars enjoy).

One such collection was obtained from the ancient tombs of eastern Araby by the late explorer and scholar Doctor Diederich Grafzoekener. He claimed that the artefacts were three thousand years old and came from an ancient kingdom. Through means he never divulged, Diederich somehow smuggled these ancient treasures from under the very noses of suspicious Arabians and brought them to the University several months ago. Unfortunately, Diederich contracted a mysterious wasting disease on the return voyage. By the time he arrived at the University, he was a shadow of his former robust self. When he died soon after, Diederich's face had taken on a reddish hue and had virtually shrunk down to the skull. Guild Physicians were unable to develop any reliable treatment for this unfamiliar disease and thanked the gods that it did not turn out to be some new plague. Suspicious sailors on board believed the disease was a curse called down upon Diederich's head for violating the ancient tombs. They remembered Diederich's fixation on one of the artefacts (a fetish).

Dismissing the crew's foolish superstitions, Baron Hendryk's College proudly exhibited its "find" with Diederich's younger brother, Lucas, assuming responsibility. Days before the scenario began, someone broke into the room where the ancient Arabian treasures were housed. Several items were damaged, but only the fetish (the Al-Qantram Shalem Fetish of Kháine, see description on page 46) was taken. In addition, the two guards were brutally murdered. Fearful of the publicity this crime would arouse, the University regents decided to deny its occurrence. Lucas Grafzoekener disagreed with that decision and began his own investigation. By the time the PCs arrive at the University, Lucas will be ready to act.

Should the PCs inquire with the Watch, they will be directed to the Tempelwijk Ward Barracks. Compared to the Suiddock Watch, the Temple Watch have better tailored uniforms, are more orderly, less busy and are also not as well armed as the Suiddockers. Furthermore, the Temple Watch are more attentive to the concerns of the upper class and their households than they are to the less influential (reflecting the political ambitions of their Captain). Unless they are of a high



social class, PCs will not even get their questions considered without passing a Fel-20 test (+10 for *Charm*, +10 for *Etiquette*). If successful, they will learn that the University reported such an incident.

If the PCs make inquiries at the University, they must do so during daylight. Neither students nor faculty know anything about the rumoured theft and will suggest that the PCs take their questions to the administration. There, the PCs will meet with a wall of silence. All University officials will deny that any such crime took place. PCs expressing an interest in seeing the exhibit must convince officials of their sincerity. They will then be directed to Doctor Lucas Grafzoekener at the Hall of Antiquities.

Lucas' office is located next to the large room where the ancient Arabian treasures are on display. The door to that room is locked (CR 10) at night, as is the one to Grafzoekener's office (CR 15). Since the murders, the number of guards has been increased to four. During the day, Lucas is in his office and the exhibit is only opened to those he admits. PCs with *Art* and *History* skills might find the exhibit rather interesting, though others will find it downright dull. The exhibit includes an ancient sarcophagus (nothing is in it), carved stone figurines of men with exotic animal heads (mutants, perhaps?) intricate jewellery, and some stones with bas-relief imagery.

Lucas is a very astute observer and will quickly see through any pretence that the PCs are interested in the ancient Arabian exhibit. With his usual directness, Lucas will ask probing questions to determine their reasons for coming to the University. PCs who try to bribe Lucas, act in a disrespectful or dishonest manner, or resort to threats will immediately be told where to find the exit. If the PCs manage to avoid any pitfalls, then allow them a **Fel** test to convince him that they can be trusted. Only then will he ask them if they are willing to undertake a task for him. Lucas will initially offer to pay the PCs twenty Guilders each to recover the stolen artefact, no questions asked. (If need be, Lucas is willing to pay more for the task so long as it does not exceed thirty Guilders to each PC.)

Once the PCs agree, Lucas will tell them that the artefact is a foot long fetish in the shape of a scorpion's tail. Three dried, real scorpion tails dangle from the barbed end with three unusually well preserved vulture tail feathers attached to the other end. Should the PCs inquire, Lucas will inform them that fetishes are generally used in rituals. He is not certain, however, just what kind of

ceremony this scorpion-tail fetish would be used in (Lucas does suspect it is used in rituals concerning the dead). If prompted, Lucas will also add that the two guards on duty the night the fetish was stolen were murdered in a ritualised fashion and their hearts and eyes taken. Naturally, University officials were worried about unwanted publicity. As they didn't trust the local City Watch, they referred the matter to the Star Chamber (from whom the University officials are still awaiting word). The PCs will probably ask Lucas for a lead to get them going. After a momentary pause, Lucas will direct them to a Suiddocker named Kaspar Glibberig, a dealer in antiquities located on Sikkeleiland Isle. On Marktag, Lucas had asked Kaspar to make some discreet inquiries about the fetish in the hope of uncovering some lead to its whereabouts.

Exotic Curios

If the PCs hope to get anywhere, they need to pay a visit to Kaspar Glibberig before Angestag. After that date, Kaspar's shop, "Exotic Curios," will be boarded up and empty. Assuming they get there in time, the PCs find "Exotic Curios" closed. This will be clearly out of place should they visit during daylight. Glancing through the windows will only reveal that the interior is unlit and no one is in. Anyone looking more intently must pass an **I** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*, +10 for *Night Vision*) to notice that there is a faint light behind the clutter-covered table in the back. The only way the PCs can investigate is by entering the shop through either locked door (CR 10 for the front and back doors). Once inside the shop, they will have to step carefully around the items strewn about the floor (if they are searching at night the PCs need a light source).

Behind the desk, the PCs find the corpse of Kaspar Glibberig. So hideous is the state of the corpse that anyone viewing it must make a **CI** test (failure causes the PC to lose his lunch while gaining 1 Insanity Point). Once the PCs overcome their revulsion, they will notice that there is nothing left of Kaspar other than skin and bone. All muscle and other tissues seem to have vanished from the dead husk. What's left of Kaspar's face has taken on a reddish hue that gives it the appearance of a grimacing red skull. The eyes are empty sockets with tracks of ooze running down the cheeks. PCs checking the body will find red markings on the back resembling a skeleton hand. PCs studying the murder scene will conclude that a tremendous

struggle took place between Kaspar and his assailant. PCs thoroughly searching the area must make an **I+10** test to find a crumbled piece of paper under the desk. Should the PCs unravel the paper, it reads:

"The trail leads to the Crimson Claw."

A second test, this time at **I-20** test, allows the PCs to find a piece of black cloth with a red trim nearby.

At this point, the PCs may be torn between reporting the murder to the Suiddock Watch or returning to Lucas Grafzoekener with the news. PCs (foolishly) considering the first course of action need to make an **Int** test (+10 if they had a career as a Militiaman or Watchman) to realise that the Watch, perhaps even if they have a warrant, will probably lock them up as prime suspects until the situation can be sorted out (anywhere from three days to three weeks).

News of Kaspar's death will not sit well with Doctor Grafzoekener as they were very good friends. Once he has regained his composure, Lucas asks the PCs how Kaspar died. He will listen dispassionately until the PCs describe Kaspar's facial appearance. At that point, Lucas will stare at them wide-eyed and inform the PCs that his brother had died from a mysterious disease that caused similar disfigurement and relates the story of his brother's fate.

If the PCs present Kaspar's note about the Crimson Claw, Lucas looks at it before handing it back. "I've not heard of 'the Crimson Claw' before this moment. Is it a tavern? Could you follow up on this note in case it's related?"

If the PCs are unsure of how to proceed, Lucas reveals his suspicion that the stolen fetish was used in rituals involving the dead and suggests that they may find answers at the Temple of Mórr in the Ostmuur district. Visibly shaken, Lucas will then ask the PCs to leave.

The Witch-Hunter Cometh

The Temple of Mórr is easily distinguished from the other temples by its dark grey basalt walls and unique gate-like, lintel-covered entrance. It is currently severely understaffed as most of the clerics (including the entire senior staff) had departed two weeks previously to attend the cult's convocation (held once every ten years) in the Tilean city-state of Luccini. Only a skeleton staff remains. As soon as they enter the temple, an Initiate greets the PCs and asks them their

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Lodewijck Raffleugel

Cleric-Lvl 2, ex-Student, ex-Scholar, ex-Initiate

Height: 5 ft 8 in

Weight: 149 lbs

Hair: White

Eyes: Medium Brown

Age: 70

Alignment: Neutral (Mórr)

Trait: Charismatic eyes

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I
3	43	36	3	3	9	46
A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
1	35	40	62	44	62	52

Skills: Acute Hearing, Arcane Language-Magick, Arcane Language-Necromantic Magick, Astrology, Astronomy, Augury, Cartography, Cast Spells-Cleric 1, Cast Spells-Cleric 2, Cryptography, Divining, History, Identify Plant, Identify Undead, Linguistics, Magical Sense, Meditate, Night Vision, Numismatics, Public Speaking, Read/Write (Arabian, Breton, Estalian, Norscan, Reikspiel, and Tilean), Rune Lore, Scroll Lore, Scrying, Secret Language-Classical, Speak Additional Language (Arabian, Breton, Estalian, Norscan, and Tilean), Theology

Magic Points: 21

Spells: 1st Level: Destroy Undead, Funeral Rite, Locate Corpse, Nameless Funeral, Zone of Life

2nd Level: Control Undead, Dedicate Staff, Exorcism, Retribution (see description in *Dwarfs: Stone & Steel*, page 74)

Possessions: Plain, Black-Hooded Robes; Raven Medallion (under Robes), Purse (3 Gu, 7 shillings).



Lodewijck has been the chief librarian and keeper of the cult's lore for the last 40 years or so. His ability to remember details far exceeds what one would expect from someone his age. He is also a busy man, very direct, and has little patience for people who waste his time. Towards those who handle themselves in a straightforward manner, Lodewijck is quite the amiable chap. He will assist them in any matter to the extent that he is able, especially if that matter involves the eradication of Necromancers and followers of Kháine.



Rutger Nachtrabe

Witch-Hunter, ex-Pit Fighter, ex-Judicial Champion

Height: 6 ft 5 in

Weight: 227 lbs

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Medium Brown

Age: 31

Alignment: Neutral (Mórr)

Trait: Scar on face, very tall

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I
4	73	66	5	6	13	71
A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
3	49	63	38	44	72	27

Skills: Cure Disease, Dance, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Heal Wounds, Identify Undead, Immunity to Disease, Lightning Reflexes, Marksmanship, Night Vision, Public Speaking, Resistance to Illusionist Magick, Ride-Horse, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move Rural, Silent Move Urban, Sixth Sense, Specialist Weapon-Crossbow Pistol, Specialist Weapon-Fencing, Specialist Weapon-Fist, Specialist Weapon-Flail,

Specialist Weapon-Lasso, Specialist Weapon-Net, Specialist Weapon-Parrying, Specialist Weapon-Throwing Knife, Specialist Weapon-Two-Handed, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun, Very Resilient, Very Strong

Possessions: Full Plate Armour over Mail Coat, Sword, Crossbow and Ammunition, 4 Throwing Knives, Medallion with a raven perched atop an open portal (under his Armour), Rope-10 yards, Purse.

Favouring black attire, Rutger is the archetypal Witch-Hunter of Mórr. A stern, rather humourless man, Rutger has dedicated his life to uncovering and eliminating hidden covens of Kháinite cultists, Necromancers, and nests of Undead. Like a few others in the High and Chivalric Order of Deserved Rest (a.k.a. Raven Knights - see *Apocrypha 2: Chart of Darkness* pg. 23), Rutger receives some of his information on his quarry through visions (dreams) sent directly by Mórr. Rutger usually works alone and as such prefers to surprise his quarry, especially since he is most often outnumbered.



names and business; information required for them to gain an audience. Should the PCs invent a cover story, allow them a **Bluff** to succeed. Once they succeed, the Initiate will ask them to wait for a few moments.

Minutes later, the Initiate returns with a much older cleric, whom he introduces as Lodewijck Raffleugel. Normally, Lodewijck is the chief librarian of the Temple and its expert on cult lore. At the moment, the venerable Lodewijck is in charge. PCs trying to be coy will try Lodewijck's patience. He is a busy man after all. If they persist in being evasive, Lodewijck will give the PCs two warnings before ordering them out. PCs who refuse to comply with that instruction will get an opportunity to meet Rutger Nachtrabe, a Witch Hunter of Mórr, in less than ideal circumstances.

Anyone dealing with Lodewijck in a direct manner finds him an affable, intelligent man. When the PCs ask about the information regarding the stolen fetish, Lodewijck requests that they divulge all they know of the object and its assumed purpose. At the first mention of ancient Araby, rituals involving the dead, or - if the PCs can make the leap - Kháine, Lodewijck interrupts the PCs in order to escort them to his private office in the Temple's library. Once there,

Lodewijck closes the door before asking them to continue. The description of the fetish confirms the connection to Kháine as far as Lodewijck is concerned. He informs the PCs that the scorpion and its barbed tail are symbols of the God of Murder. Moreover, Kháine was once a major deity in some ancient kingdoms of Araby whose demented civilisations were eventually crushed. With that, Lodewijck stands up and asks that the PCs give him a moment to summon an individual that they ought to meet.

In his absence, the PCs may want to explore Lodewijck's office. The drawers of the desk are easily opened and contain scraps of paper, a writing kit, and a large locked book (CR 10). Should the PCs open the untitled book, they will find that it contains references to the worship of Kháine as well as rituals dedicated to him from other lands. All are described in such lurid detail with illustrations that anyone reading the text carefully must make a **CI** test. Those who fail gain 1 Insanity Point and will be plagued by nightmares for the next d4 nights. If they continue, the PCs will come across references to suspected Kháine cults in some of the major cities in the southern Old World. Before they read those sections, however, Lodewijck returns with a large individual.

PCs making a *Listen* test for normal noises (+10 for *Acute Hearing*) will be able to close, lock, and put away the book in time. The Priest of Mórr will be most displeased if he finds that the PCs abused his hospitality.

Upon entering the office, Lodewijck introduces Rutger Nachtrabe as a follower of Mórr who specialises in handling situations involving those who violate the sanctity of Mórr's realm. Rutger had recently arrived from Middenheim where he received a vision (anyone making a wisecrack will find neither Lodewijck nor Rutger in the mood for such). Rutger then tells the PCs of his vision where he saw a large seaport crossed by many canals. Rising from the dock area was a large red scorpion whose claws would scoop up the terrified populace and snap them in two. The carnage continued until the scorpion took on a crimson hue. Then the scorpion's carapace split, emitting pinkish smoke that soon began to coalesce into some form. The vision ended before the form revealed its true nature. Rutger set forth immediately to Marienburg. Since his arrival Rutger has been unable to learn more.

Lodewijck turns to the PCs and comments that Rutger's vision, coupled with the description of the stolen fetish, clearly indicates that a secret temple to Kháine is

somewhere in the city. Lodewijck assumes that either the Doodkanaal or Suiddock are the likeliest place for the Kháinite temple because of their reputations, but he cannot rule out the Kruiersmuur district.

Should the PCs offer to pass the problem of the stolen fetish or the cult of Kháine to Lodewijck and Rutger, the priest will tell them that their services are essential for eliminating this threat to Marienburg as the cult's resources are stretched too thin at the moment. Rutger then states his preference that the PCs continue their work while he continues his. Further, Rutger is willing to meet them to be briefed on any additional information they come across. If the PCs mention the note they found that suggested something would occur at the Crimson Claw Cabaret on Festag evening to Rutger (assuming they have made a connection between Rutger's dream of a red (or crimson) scorpion and the cabaret's name), he'll suggest they try to gain admittance. Rutger plans to find his own way into that "special event." Should Lodewijck hear the name of the establishment ("The Crimson Claw Cabaret"), he will recall that its previous owner, Edwin Schaap, passed away over a week ago. Lodewijck vaguely recalls that the new owner (Count somebody) is some distant relative of Schaap's from Nuln. With that, both Lodewijck and Rutger wish the PCs good luck.

Enter the Crimson Claw

Finding the Crimson Claw Cabaret is as easy (and costly) as obtaining directions for any other location in Marienburg. It is located at the western end of Stoessel Isle across from Riddra Isle.

The establishment is closed during the day and opens for business at dusk. Given the condition of the rundown neighbourhood, it is surprising that the patrons of the Crimson Claw tend to be fairly well to do. They include upper-middle-class merchants and artisans, as well as minor members of the great merchant families of Marienburg. The quality of the Crimson Claw is further exemplified by the fact that the majority of its patrons stay until the establishment closes around 2am. Admission is by membership only and the Crimson Claw's bouncers know most members. PCs trying to gain entrance can only do so if they force their way in. Such action will guarantee that the PCs will become involved with the Watch.

The Crimson Claw has recently

experienced a change in ownership. Having arrived from Nuln the month before, Count Stefan von Schweinfurt found his newly discovered half-brother and owner of the Crimson Claw, Erwin Schaap, dead in his sleep over a week ago. The Count assured the employees at the Crimson Claw that the establishment planned to continue providing its patrons with the service they've come to expect. Moreover, the only change that the new owner planned was to bring in additional help for the next few days in preparation for the festivities.

In reality, Count Stefan von Schweinfurt - a.k.a. Wolfgang Schwarz - assisted Erwin Schaap's passing from the world. Since the method of removal was simply a pillow held firmly over the face (thus leaving no mark), a board of inquiry was not needed. As Erwin's only "relative" in Marienburg, Count von Schweinfurt's take-over of the Crimson Claw was uncontested. This move enabled the Cult of the Scorpion (for which Wolfgang Schwarz is a high ranking member) to consecrate a new shrine to Kháine in the basement. The ritual of consecration involved the sacrifice of several drunken indigents whom no one would miss. Additionally, the Cult dedicated the ancient Arabian fetish to Kháine's foul service by the sacrifice of the two slain University guards' hearts and eyes. Thus the stage was set for Festag.

Any daylight surveillance on Festag will not detect any unusual activity outside - most of the preparation is taking place in the basement and adjoining sewers. Around noon, the PCs will notice a young man about seventeen years of age nailing a pamphlet on a nearby street lamppost. He will also pass out one or two (carefully selected) pamphlets to passing individuals reciting the same information as appears in the text. If the PCs call out or try to nab the young man, he will flee. If the PCs catch the individual (I 34 if one wants to run another chase scene), the young man simply states that he is Seth den Breems, a student from the University. He is doing nothing more than helping a friend who is

ill. Other than that, Seth claims to know nothing else.

Bored (or nosy) PCs might decide to expend some energy reading the pamphlet (Player Handout 2).

An hour or two before dusk, one of the new doormen (a Kháinite cultist) emerges from the Crimson Claw. Smartly dressed in black, he posts a sign upon its main door (Player Handout 3).

*Notice to our esteemed patrons,
The Crimson Claw Cabaret will open its doors at 10:00 pm this Festag evening for a special celebration. Commencing promptly at 11:00 pm, the merriment is guaranteed to be a heart-stopper.*

*Sincerely,
Count Stefan von Schweinfurt*

Overzealous PCs may try to overcome the doorman and force their way into the Crimson Claw. The door has been locked behind him and will only open for him when he knocks in a specific coded manner. He will sound an alarm at the first sign of trouble (and bring at least three patrols of the Suiddock Watch within d6 rounds). There are others within the building that will do whatever it takes to keep anyone from entering the establishment before it is opened.

Eventually, the time arrives for the Crimson Claw to open its doors. Anyone carrying

OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF MARIENBURG!

Tired of the Killing in the Streets?
Angered by the Corruption that Allows It to
Continue Apace?

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW!

Join Us at 5:00 pm Aubentag, Draaienbrug Bridge.
We Will March on the Stadtholder's Palace and
Demand that the Directorate Step Down.
We Want a Government Elected by and Amenable
to the People Now!

ORDESA

more than a hand weapon and dagger is required to surrender the excess at the door. The bouncers escort out the door (forcibly if necessary) anyone who refuses to comply. Any individual wearing armour is considered a troublemaker and denied entrance. Any PC may make an *Int* test (+10 for *Etiquette*) to realise this limitation before trying to Bluff their way in. With the anticipation of the night's activities, the bouncers have been instructed to relax the normal restrictions on attendance and allow any who seem to be of the right social level admittance, even if they are not members.

From the time the doors open until the festivities commence, PCs gaining admittance are free to mingle. Unless PCs have the *Etiquette* skill or some social status, most of the patrons will look down on them as riff-raff.

The celebration begins with the curtains rising on stage to reveal female dancers in attire more revealing than concealing. The music is engaging as are the dancers themselves. In between the dance routines, other entertainers perform. During the show, von Schweinfurt makes the rounds playing the perfect host. PCs looking around will notice that the black-clad bouncers (there are six cut-throats plus any who survived the encounter at the Riddra warehouse) are taking up positions by the doors exiting the room. With the exception of the stage door, all the others are locked or barred at this time to ensure that no one escapes prematurely.

Minutes before midnight, the room is darkened as the lamps on the wall are extinguished and the curtains drop. The only light in the room emanates from the candles on each table. Soon the musicians begin to play an ominous melody and the curtain rises

again. During this time, PCs with *Acute Hearing* hear a banging on a far door if they pass a **Listen** test. At the same time, PCs with *Night Vision* need to successfully pass an **Observe** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*) to notice that the bouncers are quietly retrieving swords and crossbows from nearby hiding places. Two of these seem to be drawn to a far door while Count von Schweinfurt places himself in front of the stage. A second *Observe* test is needed to pierce the darkness on the stage to see a cloaked figure standing next to a table or platform of some sort with what appears to the PCs as a sizable pile of rags (enough to cover a body) on its top. A second cloaked figure kneels next to the rags. Before the PCs can act, the light from numerous black candles flare into brilliance and illuminates the stage.

The PCs can now clearly see that the first figure is a man cloaked in black with red and yellow trim and wears a grotesque mask. Any PC with the *Theology* skill must successfully test vs. **Int** (+20 for clerics of Mórr) to identify the mask as representing Kháine, the god of murder and undead. In one hand, the man holds a small, open casket over which he waves his other hand while chanting. The second figure is that of a woman similarly dressed (minus the mask) who yanks up the head of the person from the pile of rags on the table by his hair. Any PC involved in the earlier encounter with the cultists (**Two Certain Encounters**) may make an **Int** test to connect the person on the table to the victim abducted some nights before (if the PCs did not prevent that crime from occurring). Another successful *Int* test allows the PCs to recognise the woman from the Riddra warehouse.

The casket contains the ashes of Klara von

Teufelheim, a champion of Kháine. The ritual is to restore her to life. Anyone who tries to interfere with the ritual will become a target of the bouncers. The cultists' strategy is quite simply to shoot first, then close for hand-to-hand combat. Obvious spellcasters are prime targets. Count von Schweinfurt will head off anyone rushing the stage.

The ritual continues with the woman slitting the victim's throat with an odd-shaped knife while proclaiming to all, "As foretold by the Prophet Urian Heartrender, let the Time of Murders begin." The blood flows onto a foot long object (the fetish) on the floor. As this occurs, the chanting Kháinite priest pours ash from the casket on to the fetish so it mingles with the blood. A bone-white coloured cloud rises from the mixture of blood and ash to hang in mid-air. Once all the blood and ash dissolve, the cloud begins to pulsate and glides towards one of the frightened patrons. The man screams as the cloud grasps him with reaching tendrils, lifts him high into the air, and drains him of blood and other bodily fluids. The same fate overtakes the priest that brought the cloud into being. Anyone watching this must make a **Terror** test to overcome the impulse to scream hysterically and join the maddened and panicked crowd seeking escape.

If the PCs do not act, the now pink coloured amorphous cloud will continue to grab victims to satiate its millennium-long hunger. This takes another four victims before it departs the cabaret through a narrow, open window to seek a host body. In addition, doing nothing means that Wolfgang Schwartz and the other cultists will escape to join up with the conjured being later in the scenario.

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The Late Bram Scherplemmet

Possessions: Black Robes with red and yellow trim, Elaborate Mask (depicting the horned, fang jawed face of Kháine), Sword, Staff (carved from Human bone), Al-Qantram Shalem Fetish of Kháine.

Murdering his way to the top, Bram is the ambitious High Priest of Kháine in Marienburg and leader of the Cult of the Scorpion. Bram is a cold, cruel, and ruthless killer more concerned for his grandiose (and murderous) plans than for the lives of anyone. Naturally, his long service to Kháine has taken its toll on him.

For many years, he and his followers have been preying on the weak and hopeless in the streets while coldly plotting for their day (referred to as the "Time of Murders"). Plans were put into effect in which the ashes of a long-dead cult hero were recovered from the desolate lands of Sylvania and shipped to Marienburg. Coupled with the arrival of Wolfgang Schwarz, the escalating gang warfare came at the most opportune time for Bram. It provided the cover under which the Cult of the Scorpion can now implement their designs in turning Marienburg into the ideal killing ground. One of their first objectives was to retrieve from the University and activate the ancient Al-Qantram Shalem Fetish of Kháine. Their next objectives were to find an appropriate sacrifice and dedicate a site for the coming ritual.

Wolfgang Schwarz (alias Count Stefan von Schweinfort)

Assassin, ex-Bounty Hunter

Height: 5 ft 10 in

Weight: 160 lbs

Hair: Ash-Blond

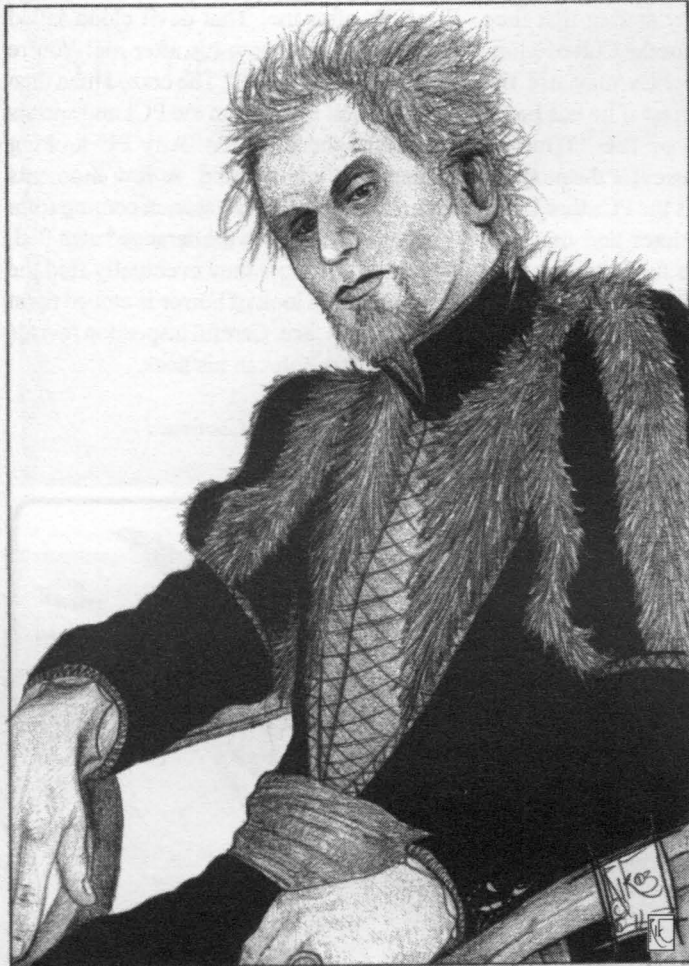
Eyes: Light Brown

Age: 37

Alignment: Evil (Kháine)

Trait: Moustache, birthmark (red on neck), very short hair

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I
4	52	47	4	4	10	69
A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
3	61	46	45	58	48	51



Skills: Charm, Concealment Rural, Concealment Urban, Disguise, Etiquette, Follow Trail, Lightning Reflexes, Marksmanship, Prepare Poisons, Scale Sheer Surface, Shadowing, Silent Move Rural, Silent Move Urban, Specialist Weapon-Blowpipe, Specialist Weapon-Fist, Specialist Weapon-Flail, Specialist Weapon-Lasso, Specialist Weapon-Net, Specialist Weapon-Parrying, Specialist Weapon-Throwing Knife, Specialist Weapon-Two-Handed, Strike Mighty Blow, Wit

Possessions: Mail Shirt, Sword, Garrote, 4 Throwing Knives, 3 Doses of Blade Venom (2 Manbane, 1 Elfbane), Formal Dark Red Clothing, Black Cape with red and yellow trim, Signet Ring with scorpion motif, Purse (21 Gu 25/7).

Wolfgang hides his sadistic and murderous impulses behind the veneer of a caring and likeable chap. He varies his identity and appearance from one town to the next. Since escaping from Talabheim (just ahead of the Witch Hunters of Mórr), Wolfgang has assumed the identity of Count Stefan von Schweinfort of Nuln. A cunning and calculating man, Wolfgang became one of Bram's lieutenants (Helena Koel being the other) and helped solidify Bram's plans for turning Marienburg into a bloodbath. Furthermore, Wolfgang used his charm and wits to weasel himself into a position whereby he could obtain a place of high visibility for the sacrifice.

Helena Koel

Cleric-Lvl 1, ex-Protagonist, ex-Initiate

Height: 5 ft 2 in

Weight: 113 lbs

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Light Brown

Age: 28

Alignment: Evil (Kháine)

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I
3	44	27	4	4	8	42
A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
2	36	29	34	54	40	31

Skills: Arcane Language-Magick, Arcane Language-Necromantic Magick, Cast Spells-Clerical 1, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Meditate, Public Speaking, Read/Write (Arabian, Reikspiel, and Tilean), Scroll Lore, Secret Language-Classical, Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Theology, Very Resilient

Magic Points: 11**Spells:** 1st Level: (Battle) Cause Animosity, Fire Ball, Steal Mind; (Daemonology) Summon Guardian; (Necromancy) Hand of Death**Disabilities:** Cadaverous Appearance (Stage 1)**Insanities:** Morbidity**Possessions:** Sword, Black Robes with Red and Yellow Trim, Purse (d6 Gu, 2d6 shillings).

Helena's beautiful appearance belies her true self: quick to lose her temper and bloodthirsty. Before joining the Cult of the Scorpion, Helena was known as a cruel individual who thought little of killing anyone who gave her the slightest insult. Convicted of killing an upper class Merchant just because he glanced in her direction, Helena was sentenced to be executed on Rijker's Isle. She broke free of her captors and disappeared. Naturally, she caught the eye of Bram who quickly took her under his wing. Helena currently serves the Cult as one of Bram's trusted lieutenants (although she is beginning to think of herself as Bram's soon-to-be successor).

Should the PCs react decisively to attack those perpetrating the foul deed, the pinkish cloud departs immediately after slaying its first two victims.

If the PCs have mentioned the Crimson Claw to the Mórrians, the far door breaks down at whatever moment the GM deems appropriate. The Witch Hunter Rutger Nachtrabe crashes the festivities and ploughs into two Kháinite cultists. The Mórrite Cleric Lodewijck Raffleugel follows him into the fight.

With the death of her master, the second Kháinite priestess seeks to escape the chaos of the cabaret. The priestess hurls fireballs at different areas of the room to start a fire and cover her escape into the sewers below. The rest of the cultists, including Count von Schweinfort, fight a rearguard action to prevent the PCs and any allies from reaching the Kháinite priestess. As soon as she is away, the rest of the cultists attempt their own escape.

Aftermath

No matter how the combat ends, the Crimson

Claw Cabaret should be ablaze. Alarms sound throughout the immediate area and locals begin to form lines to put out the fire. There is the possibility that several surviving patrons may mistakenly identify the PCs as being active participants in the horror that occurred within the Crimson Claw. This guarantees their arrest and incarceration until the situation can be sorted out unless they have a warrant from Sergeant Kuilstier.

Should Lodewijck Raffleugel be present he comes to the PCs' aid by stating that they were working as agents for the Cult of Mórr. If such is the case, the PCs may use the opportunity to ask the Priest if he has heard of Urian Heartrender or the "Time of Murders." Lodewijck pauses for the moment in reflection. He then tells the PCs that Urian Heartrender was a murderer and madman who lived in Sylvania in the latter years of the reign of the last von Drak (circa mid-18th century IC). He is said to have ranted what he claimed were the prophecies of Kháine before he was drawn and quartered. The "Time of Murders" was Urian's most memorable utterance. He claimed that a

plague of murders would herald the rise of a Kháinite champion who will lead the deranged on such a killing spree that would cause the mightiest of Imperial cities to fall to the Raving Dead. If asked, Lodewijck does not believe that such a time has come.

After a long harrowing night at the Crimson Claw, the PCs will probably return to their lodgings. As they move away from the Crimson Claw, a man runs at the PCs from the shadows screeching hysterically, "Run! Run! It's after me! That devil cloud killed my woman! And now it's after me! You're next! Run away! Flee!" The crazed man then pulls himself away from the PCs and sprints away into the darkness. Any PC looking around will see nothing. A few moments later, the PCs will hear a scream coming from the direction in which the deranged man fled. Should they follow they eventually find the man's body - a look of horror is etched upon his pale, cold face. Careful inspection reveals two puncture holes in his neck.

- To Be Continued -

Al-Qantram Shalem Fetish of Kháine

At the height of their power in ancient Araby, the priests turned to the darkness and power that characterises Kháine and all things necromantic. During the centuries that followed, the High Priests were among the foremost of Pharaoh's advisors and its people suffered greatly. In time, the mob rose against this tyranny. In his last act before fleeing into the southern desert, High Priest Al-Qantram Shalem created and consecrated a number of artefacts to the service of Kháine. Many were uncovered from their hiding places and destroyed, but a number survived. One of these was a foot long fetish in the shape of a scorpion's tail. Dangling from the barb end are three dried scorpion tails, with three unusually well preserved vulture tail feathers are attached to the other end.

Once its magic is properly activated (by sacrificing the heart and eyes of two humans), the fetish can only be used by a cleric of Kháine for two purposes. The first activates the spell *Summon Lesser Daemon of Kháine* which arrives in the form of a giant scorpion. Its profile is as follows:

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
5	50	0	5	4	17	60	3	0	89	89	89	89	14

Special Rules: Causes fear, subject to instability, immune to psychological effects except those caused by Greater Daemons or gods, tail attack is venomous and victims must make a Poison test for every hit which cause Wounds (first failure results in drowsiness and a second failure results in the victim's death in 1d3 rounds), the daemon's tough exoskeleton counts as plate armour (2 AP all over).

The second purpose is as a catalyst in a ritual to resurrect a servant (usually a High Priest) of Kháine from the dead. All that's needed to complete the ritual is a mixture composed of the ash from the servant's body and freshly spilled blood from a Human sacrifice. An amorphous cloud rises from this mixture needing more nourishment that can only be obtained from a nearby Human's blood. Note that the cloud will just as likely feed on the summoner as any other. Once satiated, the cloud escapes until it can find the "right" host body. Once occupied, the body changes to take on the look that the servant of Kháine had in their previous existence, with all their skills and abilities. Naturally, the victim is killed. The cloud has the same attributes and resistance/vulnerabilities as a typical vampire.

Anyone attempting to use the fetish other than a Cleric of Kháine will suffer in the same manner as a victim of the Withering Hand of Kháine spell.



OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF MARIENBURG!

Tired of the Killing in the Streets?
Angered by the Corruption that Allows It to
Continue Apace?

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW!

Join Us at 5:00 pm Aubentag, Draaienbrug Bridge.
We Will March on the Stadtholder's Palace and
Demand that the Directorate Step Down.
We Want a Government Elected by and Amenable to
the People Now!

ORDESA

Player Handout 2

We, the undersigned, have agreed to undertake the task as laid forth by Mijzheer Thijs Boekarts of uncovering the party responsible for commencing the conflict that is disrupting the business of the major Suiddock interests. Evidence of their identity and involvement will be collected and represented to Mijzheer Thijs Boekarts so that he can take further action with his employer. In compensation, we, the undersigned, will receive an advancement of fifteen Guilders each with an additional sixty-five to be paid to each upon completion of this task.

Player Handout 1

Notice to our esteemed patrons, The Crimson Claw Cabaret will open its doors at 10:00 pm this Festag evening for a special celebration. Commencing promptly at 11:00 pm, the merriment is guaranteed to be a heart-stopper.

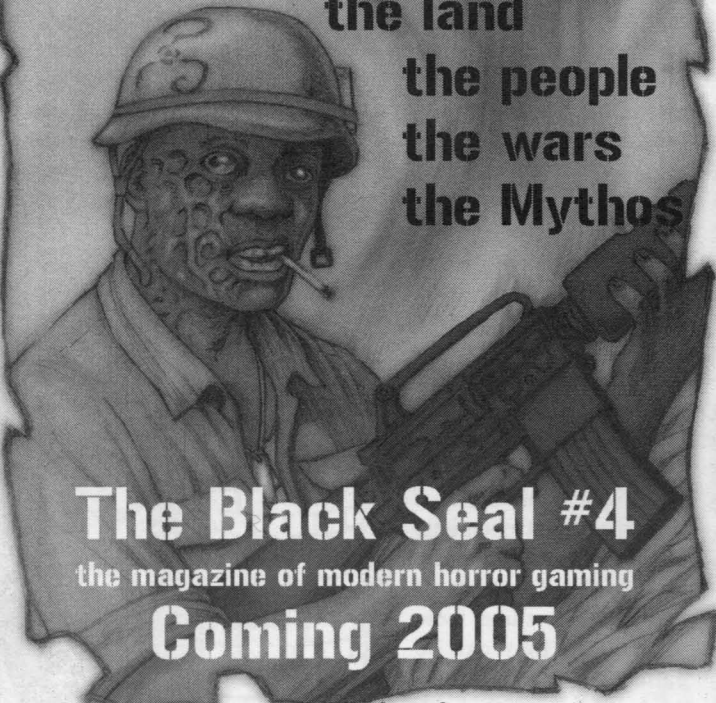
*Sincerely,
Count Stefan von Schweinfort*

Player Handout 3

"Every minute the Great Old Ones
squat in the bush they get stronger"

Vietnam...

**the land
the people
the wars
the Mythos**



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The Return

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ΨΩΔΠΡΣΔΓΘΚΩΞΛΟΥΦΔΓΠΕΛΡΣΤΩΥΦΔΓΠΕΛΡΣΤ
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A DARK ART IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT

A treatise upon Alchemy (Part Two) by Doctor Leif U. Schrader

The Profession of an Alchemist

*Gentlemen, think, there has been strife of old
In every class waged between men and gold,
So fierce there's hardly any to be had.
Alchemy has made many people mad
And on my word I think it may well be
The greatest reason for its scarcity.*

Alchemy still carries the stigma of a dark science, one related to demonology and necromancy. However, most civilised nations have begun to accept its importance. The prejudice against alchemists is that many who claim such a title are charlatans only trying to steal money out of people's purses. The most recent attempt to restrict alchemists was a canonical order issued by the Grand Theonogist, forbidding any kind of alchemy unless supervised by the holy church. Some, wrongly of course, speculate the reason for this was to ensure the control of any discovery rather than any ideological disagreement.

Although alchemists rarely form circles and communities, most follow some general rules of practice. These strictures were written down by Heraclitus of Tilea and handed from master to student over the centuries and resemble strictures common in monastic orders. These ten rules are:

1. Be reserved and silent.
2. Work in a remote private home.
3. Choose your working hours prudently.
4. Be patient, watchful, and tenacious.
5. Work on a fixed plan.
6. Use only glass or glazed earthenware crucibles.
7. You must be rich enough to pay for your experiments. (Several centuries earlier, an alchemist named Zosimos the Wise suggested marrying a rich wife.)
8. Have nothing to do with princes and nobles.
9. Live in celibacy while you practice.
10. Let no women touch your work or it is spoiled.

The last three rules have been the subject of dispute among alchemists. The eighth rule is now often ignored since many alchemists rely on the sponsorship of noblemen. Many argue that the ninth was added much later and therefore it need not be followed.

The tenth is the most contentious. Although clear in statement, a female alchemist is known, one who rivalled Heraclitus. Her name seems to have been Miriam. Her texts and scriptures are used today, but she is rarely referred to openly. Some historians do think that the tenth rule was but a reaction of Heraclitus who envied Miriam. Largely, this rule is still followed and many laws forbid women from practising alchemy. However, female alchemists are rumoured to exist.

The Grand Theonogist's attempt to take control of alchemy has caused problems with the other cults. Five years ago an alchemical text of great significance appeared, written by the Lord of Lambsprinck. Since no such peerage existed, the search for the true author began. The only

place called Lambsprinck was a small convent of Verena - implying a woman must be the author. The intelligence and expertise of the writer immediately stirred the attention of alchemists, the cult and the Sigmarite Inquisition. While the Inquisition could not enter another cult's property, alchemists and Verenan clerics have visited the convent in the hope of uncovering the author.

The attempts have been futile. Today the author is generally referred to as the *Soror Mystica* (the mystical sister). To many, it is no surprise that a female alchemist came from the order of Verena, since the cult is always associated with the highest sciences and liberal concerning the education of women. Although some other female (what we could call) alchemists come from the church of Shallya, their work is almost exclusively in the vast field of medicine and pharmacy and rarely - if ever - do they follow the higher goals of alchemy.

Education

"It is only one percent inspiration, the rest of the work comes from your pores." - Lothar Schaffenberg, alchemist in Middenheim

Dear Sir,

Your son Albrecht, whom I have the pleasure to educate, has blown up my house for the second time this year. I humbly ask for a raise of my low wages or I shall not be able to educate him further. - Markus von Lichtstätten

There is no coherent form of education for an alchemist, save the fact that they begin as apprentices. The apprentice often begins as handyman, taught little else but the most basic theories of alchemy. Should such a student show true understanding and intelligence the master may decide to impart some of the deeper wisdom. It can be years before the apprenticeship is finished and the apprentice can be released from his service. Afterwards, most immediately begin to practice, but very few are able to achieve more than the most primitive results.

Many have given up the search for the Philosopher's Stone and work on more mundane things. Few go to places of learning. The most famous is the Gold College in Altdorf, which specialises in alchemy, or the Middenheim Guild of Wizards and Alchemists, also the first to offer specific training for alchemists. If they are successful at these institutions they can be called "Imperial Alchemist," a title with



certain privileges. Few reach this exalted position.

Degrees of Alchemy

"Ha, soap, only fools work on soap. The Quintessence should be our goal." - Sebastian Schnelle

"You Sir, have every reason to think about soap." - Philip Gräfe, giving an answer and starting a fight

It is important we distinguish between low and high alchemy. While the former is only manual work as done by smiths or miners, the latter is closely connected to wizardry. Most alchemists practice low alchemy, and only those with the intelligence to understand magic can become real alchemists and free themselves from the simple task of forging metals or hammering stone. Most serious alchemists work in universities or other places of learning. Yet there are many employed by noblemen or prospectors. Very few are rich enough to live a life dedicated to research.

As mentioned, charlatans have tainted the public's opinion of alchemy. It is a view further tainted by alchemists who try to open up new sources of wealth by poisoning water supplies and selling the cure afterwards.

Laboratory

The most vital part of any alchemist's research is his laboratory. Alchemists prefer not to leave their hometown after they have finished their education. They require too many different tools and equipment to practice other than in a permanent location. However, many are often forced to pack up and move on. Most laboratories are found either in the castles of sponsors or in houses outside cities. Most cities ban alchemists' laboratories, since they produce foul smells or even full-scale explosions. An exception to this is Nuln where the university has

a thick-walled building dedicated to alchemy. Other exceptions include the Gold College of Altdorf and the Middenheim Guild of Wizards and Alchemists who have erected a new building for the research of alchemy inside the city, even though Graf Todbringer and Ar-Ulric still have major concerns regarding safety. Most serious alchemists work near a university or library, so they may have access to uncommon books.

Besides those alchemists who work openly under the title of Imperial Alchemist, a number of alchemists exist that are neither officially allowed to practice nor welcomed. These alchemists often have a laboratory hidden away. Some houses standing outside city limits that are rumoured to be haunted are or have been the working place of alchemists. Quite probably they have composed and encouraged the very ghost stories that keep the people away.

The Trust (*Warpstone* 18) is also known to sponsor Alchemists and supply them with equipment.

Equipment

Although serious alchemists need a laboratory, some choose to wander the world. This is especially true for those specialised in metallurgy who travel between mines or follow prospectors. They need a cart to carry all their equipment and bodyguards to protect the various fluids and acids that can, in the hands of the wrong person, poison whole landscapes. It is important for an alchemist to protect his equipment, since undisciplined mixing of the substances can lead to surprising, often dangerous results.

The most important materials are acids and alkalis. An alchemist normally has a number of these, of which the strongest, like yellow ink (*sulphuric acid*), will eat through almost any substance. King's Water (*mixture of sulphuric and hydrochloric acid*) is probably the most renowned, since it is the only acid that can dissolve gold, the king of metals. To test a piece of jewellery, it is rubbed on a small stone, so that traces of the material are left on the stone. Then a number of acids are tried on it and only when it shows no reaction (unless King's Water is used) is it clearly gold.

River acid (*fluorine hydrogen acid*) is a rather new discovery, but difficult to transport, because it is the only known acid that dissolves glass. Therefore it is normally transported in bottles cut from gems, amber, or ceramics. Another important part of the equipment is lye, which has similar effects on substances as acid. We know that lye and some kinds of acid, when mixed, neutralise each other.

Every alchemist would be nothing without a burner and an assortment of bottles and plates. Certain experiments also need a great amount of pressure. For this a cylinder is used with a piston. This cylinder is connected to a globe, generally made out of glass. The globe contains the appropriate substance and can be heated over a fire or cooled in water.

A number of books have been written on alchemy and some of the wealthier alchemists have access to them. The less fortunate however rely on trial and error. Nevertheless, all of them have a tendency to record their discoveries for posterity. Such notebooks, often scribbled in haste are difficult to decipher by anyone not familiar with the handwriting or thought of the author. [Reading such a book requires an **Int** test with a cumulative modifier of -10 for the bad penmanship and -30 for the lack of the *Chemistry* skill.]

Alchemy and Religion

"In the name of Sigmar you are proclaimed a heretic. May he have mercy upon your soul." - The Tribunal of Sigmar, Altdorf

Today most of the cults keep a keen eye on alchemy. Except for regular bursts of activity by the Inquisition and the execution of heretics, the two sides live in a state of watchful stability. Most cults acknowledge



and accept alchemy's importance to secular life. Verena is the friendliest, while many others mostly ignore it. Shallya supports alchemy, since alchemists have discovered many healing potions. Sigmar however, is more antagonistic. The current Grand Theogonist is, like his recent predecessors, against any form of alchemy and has recently issued a canonical order strongly condemning the practice. This is not followed strictly, not even by his clerics. The biggest opponents of alchemy are the gods of Law, since alchemy's main goal is change and transmutation. Much of the suppression alchemists have suffered comes from Witch Hunters following these gods.

Interestingly, alchemy is widely practised in monasteries, even those of Sigmar. Many see alchemy as another way to understand the ways of the gods. Monasteries are the perfect place for research, safe from greedy intentions and isolated enough to avoid any suspicion.

The Order of St. Flavius, a Verenan monastery near Nuln, is one of the most renowned. Many legends say that St. Flavius was the first to learn the secret of the Philosopher's Stone and that Verena herself taught him. He is said to have passed the knowledge to his student Victor von Bollstadt, who became the abbot. During his time, he made St. Flavius the richest monastery in the world. Who could do that other than someone with the knowledge of the Stone? Von Bollstadt was also the first known alchemist to train women in the art.

However, even in monasteries, the practice is open to attack. Various Witch Hunters have tried to ban any kind of science in the monasteries, arguing that the true nature of the gods can only be revealed by prayer. They argue that the gods only reveal what they want us to see, considering the search for knowledge to be heresy.

Alchemy and the Law

Alchemists have often had problems with the law and those who enforce it. Today alchemy is regulated by five sources of law: Imperial, canonical, regional, city and guild. Since many of the statutes overlap it is difficult for alchemists not to be ground between the millstones.

Imperial Law details the rules for the sale of certain goods: Not all goods can be freely bought, especially true for goods associated with magic. Selling such goods without permission is considered an offence, but is often only punished by a fine. The Emperor's Exchequer is responsible for enforcing these laws. Any Roadwarden has the right to search a person and collect a fine should he find suspect goods. Goods falling under this law include poisons, acids, drugs and suspected spell ingredients. The only people excluded from this ban are those with Imperial warrants. Others, especially Merchants, can petition for a permit which must be issued by the Emperor's Exchequer in Altdorf, although this authority is often delegated across the cities and regions of The Empire.

Canonical Law states that no one shall offend belief by his conduct.

This rule of course is wide ranging and can include almost anything, very much depending on the view of the prosecutor. Some alchemists were incarcerated and tried because they created a dye and humorously called it "Chornite Red". While at the same time others published lengthy works on the connection between the Homunculus and necromancy without consequence. Violations mean the offender is declared a heretic and punished with a capital sentence: often burning.

Regional Law generally has detailed regulations on the when, where and how of alchemy. Ostland, for example, has laws banning the practice without the continuous supervision of an official and special permission issued by the local ruler. Only Imperial Alchemists are excluded. Breaking this law results in being outlawed and the confiscation of all belongings. Often the churches are quick to step in and claim that the offender is a heretic.

City Statutes often contain regulations to prevent fire. Therefore some ban laboratories operating within the city walls. Punishment can range from a fine to the seizing of the building.

Guild Law is, to a degree, applicable to alchemists. Most alchemists in wizard and alchemist guilds cross the boundary to other professional guilds, whether it is making medicine like pharmacists or working with metal like smiths. The relevant guilds try to protect their monopolies and are quick to petition to fine the alchemist. Therefore working in any field claimed by a guild is considered an offence and can lead to a hefty fine or the mysterious burning of the alchemist's laboratory during the night.

An alchemist can obtain special permission from the guild, if he agrees to a donation. This prohibition also applies to Imperial Alchemists, although they may manufacture potions and substances when they need it for their own work, when it is a by-product of their experiments or a new invention. In the latter case the guild has the right to buy the invention from the alchemist at a reasonable price.

Besides the aforementioned privileges, Imperial Alchemists are officially allowed to teach students in their profession. Wizards are also required to buy all substances that they cannot produce themselves from Imperial Alchemists.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that alchemy has nothing to do with the dreaded practice of necromancy or demonology. It is a profession like all others and it is not inherently more likely to support the worship of Chaos than any other profession. Indeed, it may help overcome it.

Alchemists form the spearhead of many new scientific developments within The Empire. By the proper use of alchemy our glorious Empire can remain the example it is for the rest of the world and deserves admiration and not prejudice.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE STAR

The Sigmarite Inquisition has declared the Knights of the Star extinct more than once. However, in time new members appear on the scene. Their origin is unknown, but many argue that it lies either in Araby or the Far East. They are said to be the true bearers of all alchemical secrets, including the Philosopher's Stone and the Quintessence. The name is derived from what we believe to be their symbol, a complex star resembling the wind rose. Their prime text is the *Yün chi ch'i ch'ien* ("Seven Tablets in a Cloudy Satchel") in the tongue of Cathay, but this has never been seen by any known scholar.

They seem to be a community of loosely connected adepts. The little information the Inquisition obtained from those caught is that they do not even know each other by name, but instead use aliases. They claim to be invisible and are never seen in public. The

Inquisition suspects that they can become invisible. This may hint at their origin in Cathay where the *Order of the Secret of the Golden Bloom of the Highest One* is said to have this power. Their highest maxim was, after the government captured and executed most members about five hundred years ago, "to live among humans, hidden and visible, to be different from them and yet like them; no one should recognise our manner and no one should understand it."

We do not know if they follow a plan or just practice their art to enhance their knowledge. Strangely, the Inquisition seems to be extremely concerned about the Knights of the Star and does whatever possible to uncover them or destroy their work. Therefore we can assume that they may pose a threat towards the interests of the holy church of Sigmar.

THE CITY OF THE DAMNED

WFRP Campaigns in Mordheim by François Dubé

*For it is power that brought you in
and death that will keep you there*

In the year 1999IC, The Empire was without an Emperor. Throughout the land rivalry set brother against brother, city against city. It was a time of anarchy, war and hunger. And there was Mordheim. Mordheim was the beautiful and decadent capital of Ostermark, a city blessed among all cities because in the sky appeared a two forked comet announcing Sigmar's return. The prophecy said, "And those who joined in the chosen city for Sigmar's return will never die." Thousands moved to Mordheim and decadent feasts were organised daily for Sigmar's return.

Then all became horror. On the last day of the year 1999, "Sigmar's fist" fell from the sky. In a fraction of a second Mordheim was no more than ruins, rocks and mutated bodies, but this was only the beginning. The following year, in Altdorf, lead was transformed into gold using the curious rocks discovered in Mordheim's ruins; wyrdstones, they called them.

Then it became madness. The Empire's fighting lords offered tremendous amounts of gold for those wyrdstones since it was believed that the one with the most would become the next emperor. From all over The Empire they came - for power, for glory and for gold. They fought with frenzy and hate, for there was no honour in this rage. And others came too: rat things, Vampires, Beastmen, Orcs, Witch Hunters and more.

In this article I will present reasons to choose the Mordheim setting for a WFRP campaign, discuss roleplaying aspects and some game mechanic issues. Finally, I will present you with some possible ideas for campaign plots.

Mordheim: The Tabletop Skirmish Game

If you have never heard of "Mordheim", a quick Internet search will reveal fanatics of this excellent game all around the world. The game pits "warbands", groups of five to twenty warriors led by a mercenary captain, a priest or worse, against each other. There are mercenary warbands (Reiklanders,

Middenheimers, Marienburgers, Averlanders, Osterlanders and Kislevites), religious warbands (Witch Hunters and Sisters of Sigmar) and non-human powers (Vampires, Skaven, mutants, Beastmen, Orcs, Dwarfs and more).

All those powers are represented in Mordheim. They fight against a setting of ruins, sewers and twisted forests. At the start of Mordheim campaigns no warband has a clear advantage over the others. As the campaign moves on, warbands' power increases. Can one warband take control of the city? Probably not. A warband can be the strongest, but has little chance of beating all the other warbands at the same time. Therefore Mordheim stays eternally contested.



Why Roleplay in Mordheim?

Mordheim is a unique setting in the Warhammer Fantasy universe because so many powers are fighting for the same thing at the same time. Fans can play for weeks never facing the same kind of foes. It is also a place where warpstone's corrupting power is at its best, twisting and warping the minds of the crazy fools who venture into the city. Here, human rivalry and obsession for power is transformed into rage to find more and more warpstone and destroy other warbands. It is dark, bloody and mysterious: great ingredients for a WFRP campaign.

With all the skirmishes it is easy to forget Mordheim's roleplaying potential. Mordheim is anything but fair. There is a race for power going on and no warband will give the others any chance of getting the upper hand. Classical Mordheim skirmishes take place in the ruins of the city where warbands meet and fight and the winner gets the chance to find more warpstone. In roleplaying campaigns though the fight is everywhere: on the road to get to Mordheim, on the road to get out, when you sleep at night, when you buy your weapons and when you hire mercenaries. You think you've found the jackpot? Somebody will be thinking the same thing, looking at your wagon. The challenge can go even further: in the monastery of the Sisters of Sigmar, in the opposing cities, in the vampire kingdom, in the Skaven underground maze and more. Roleplaying in Mordheim can be all you want: battles, skirmishes, treasure-hunts, twisted politics, competition for trade or simply a fight for survival.

The first thing to do is buy the Mordheim rulebook. This is the most complete source of information on the setting and you will discover the atmosphere and rhythm of this haunted city. Then you can try a few skirmishes to get a better feeling for the city. You can also buy some *Town Cryer* magazines (published by Games Workshop) and the Mordheim annual 2002 (to get the map of Mordheim).

The Empire 500 Years Ago

WFRP campaigns and printed material are mainly set during the years following 2500 IC. Playing in Mordheim in 2000 IC is a step back in time. Gunpowder exists but is primitive. Warpstone's power and warping side-effects are generally unknown to human scholars. Teclis has not yet taught colour magic to men.

However, what makes the setting really different from traditional WFRP campaigns is the politics. 2000IC is a time of total anarchy compared to 2500IC. There is no emperor. The Empire is divided between lords fighting against each other for the throne while people are starving and groups of outlaws and bandits rule rural areas. Marienburg is not an independent state. The Vampire Counts' power is on the rise.

The formal Witch Hunter organisation (founded in 1913IC) is controlled by the cult of Sigmar. In 1979, Magritta of Marienburg was elected Empress, but in 1980 the Grand Theogonist of Sigmar (controlling the Witch Hunters) refused to acknowledge the election and the Imperial system collapsed. In the same year, the Wizards' War began in Middenheim and spread throughout The Empire. Anarchy spread with the collapse of central authority. In 1991 the War ended, but the Witch Hunters' power continued to grow.

In the year 1999 the comet fell on Mordheim and the race for wyrdstones began. Little is known about the ten years that followed. A few scholars talk about a dark power who came with the comet, a Daemon they called the Shadow Lord (Be'lakor). The Shadow Lord ruled the mutants after possessing the body of some unknown hero, giving himself the name of Khaardun the Gloried. What happened to the Shadow Lord remains unknown.

One thing known for sure is that in 2010, the Wars of the Vampire Counts began with the devastation of Ostermark by the first of the notorious Vampire Counts of Sylvania, Vlad von Carstein. Located at the border between Sylvania and

Ostermark astride the river Stir, west of Waldenhof and near Hel Fen, it is no surprise that undead armies surrounded Mordheim. After strong initial resistance the vampires took the control of the access to the city.

Little is known of what happened inside the city during the war. Legends say that the resistance continued, mainly involving the Sisters of Sigmar, the Skaven and the Possessed warbands. The monastery of the Sisters of Sigmar was known to be hard to attack and, more importantly, it was also known that the Sisters held a significant amount of wyrdstone to call powerful magic on any organised army. Documents of the time state that in 2009, Possessed warbands and Skaven were well established in the city sewers and ruins. It seems possible that the Vampire Counts already at war with the rest of The Empire were not able to take full control of the city.

A lot of mystery surrounds the role of the Sisters of Sigmar during this time of war. Some historians say that their intensive use of wyrdstone eventually warped their human nature. Others claim that they were already witches. Some say they were saints chosen by Sigmar who fought to the end against the undead threat. The truth is unknown but historians tend to agree that the Sisters' battle against the undead prevented them taking control of Mordheim and perhaps The Empire.

After the Vampire Counts' war the city was a haunted place where only adventurers and Skaven ventured. Then, three hundred years after the fall of the comet, Magnus the Pious had the city totally destroyed. All that remains is twisted grass and trees where a few archaeologists work, although Skaven activity is reported from time to time.



WFRP vs Mordheim

The Mordheim game and WFRP use different systems and not always easy to match. Preparing a WFRP campaign in Mordheim requires some thought.

The standard career system used in WFRP is not well suited to a campaign in Mordheim where you will mainly find mercenaries (captain, champion, young blood, swordsman and targeteer), Witch Hunters or specialists (Elf ranger, Bretonnian knight and so on) and less urban careers (student, rat catcher, etc). I found it easier to start from the Mordheim setting and then create or adapt WFRP careers, skills and magic rather than the other way around. Firstly I selected the careers that I found interesting and plausible for the players.

A second aspect to consider is the battle and magic. Since roleplaying will be more important in the campaign than in the tabletop skirmish game, WFRP should be selected as the reference game system and Mordheim players will have to adapt to a new set of rules and game mechanics. On the other hand, experienced WFRP players might have to adapt their roleplaying style to a place and time of anarchy and rivalry. This, for some players, can be much more difficult than a change in the rules.

Warpstone Corruption

And then there is the warpstone.

Its warping power twists your mind and warps your body. You came as a glorious soldier serving the next emperor and you became a twisted ugly thing. You came as a great Dwarf champion and you are now an ugly little shape with tentacles and deer hooves. You bear the marks of Chaos. Your friends look at you with fear and soon with hate. You must fight or run. But where? To the sewers? To the woods? Will you walk Mordheim's streets at night searching for food? Will you switch sides and join a Possessed warband? Is there a way out of this nightmare?

A specific WFRP rule adaptation that is worth considering is the corrupting power of warpstone. You can find different rules for warpstone corruption (see *Warpstone* 11), but most of these are made for campaigns where warpstone is rare. In Mordheim things are different. If you spend a few hours searching the ruins you can find quite a few of those terrible stones. Also, the air you breathe is corrupted, the water you drink tainted and so on. If you use some of the published rules the PCs will mutate the first day they get inside the city. Clearly, this is not what happened in Mordheim. On the other hand the corrupting power of warpstone can't be avoided. The city was doomed and warpstone was the curse.

For campaigns set in Mordheim, one good system is to accumulate Corruption Points. After a day in Mordheim the characters make a *Will Power* test (or 0-3 tests/day depending on exposure, 1 test/week if living in the surrounding inns

and camps). If they fail then they gain a Corruption Point. When they reach six Corruption Points they get one mutation and the mutation takes a few days (1D6) to appear and a few weeks to 'grow' (D6 weeks). In this regard it is a good thing that the GM keeps track of CPs, not the players. The lag time of mutations is a powerful curse since when the character knows he is starting to mutate it is already too late.

Another option is for characters to also make an Insanity test at least once a day.

To decrease the corrupting power, if your campaign is set a few years after the comet fell, you can say that warbands are aware of the mutating powers of warpstone and use lead coffers to carry the stones. This would not completely prevent them from being corrupted but could reduce the number of *Will Power* tests or give a bonus to the tests. This could be very important if a great part of your campaign is not in the city but outside. Racial bonuses can also be given. Halflings and Skaven are said to have some racial resistance to warpstone and could receive a +30% bonus.

Whatever rules you choose for your campaign, you must

remember that Mordheim is a doomed city. It is the city of the damned. A character should not spend many weeks in Mordheim without suffering. At the same time, you must keep in mind that a single day in Mordheim does not mutate everyone.



Typical Daily Life Outside the City

Wagons, horses, warriors and traders all enter and leave Mordheim daily. Riches have been found. Everyone wants a share, one way or the other.

Mordheim is not a city deserted except for deadly monsters and traps. Wyrdstones were found and it was said they could change lead into gold; that deserved the attention of all the poor and the thieves of the known world in this time of starvation. They all came expecting something better, but they discovered a dangerous city where evil things killed without mercy. So they joined warbands, organised groups with enough equipment and skills to survive in the city, or they found work in the inns and camps.

A typical day around Mordheim, in the inns and camps, begins with the departure of warbands to the ruins. They head to the doomed city with their new weapons and mercenaries. Almost at the same time, traders and warbands carrying warpstone and gold head in the opposite direction. They leave knowing they will have to fight against Beastmen, Orcs, thieves and other warbands. The morning and afternoon are then quieter. Food is prepared, injured warriors are tended to. Some warband heroes look for new weapons and mercenaries in the inns and trading settlements. A Witch Hunter has caught a mutant and burns it at the stake. As the

afternoon ends, wagons of food and weapons arrive with new warbands, mercenaries and peasants. As the wagons stop and begin establishing a trading settlement, beggars, innkeepers and heroes move in. Traders are happy. They have survived and they will be able to sell their goods for many times what they cost in the cities. The evening begins and some warbands leave Mordheim and head to the camps. Again a skirmish begins, an ambush this time. The experienced warriors win easily; they have seen worse, and the thieves flee.

As the night begins, campfires surround Mordheim. The inns are full and stories that will become legends are told, while hired swords haggle for the price of a day's employment. Then, again, a new fight begins. The innkeeper asks his thugs to hit hard. The innkeeper will be rich: Mordheim tradition states that innkeepers can keep the possessions of those who die in their inns. Tomorrow he will hire an Ogre to protect his property.

Midnight comes. Outside, sounds of battle and wolves are heard: undead and Skaven warbands are taking advantage of the night to search for wyrdstones. A hero leaves the inn to go back to his camp. Hearing a sound, he raises his sword - too late; the assassin stabs him, taking the Mordheim map he had. Injured and weak but alive - if he can make it to his camp, he will live another day. A gentle face looks at him. A lady; Sigmar be blessed! Then he sees the teeth, feels the bite and the blood leaving his veins. His body is now sleeping, for a few seconds only, then it stands up, not alive but moving.

Typical Daily Life in the City

If you thought the inns and settlements outside Mordheim were dangerous, think twice before going into the ruins for there are worse things than being hit with a sword. In Mordheim when the night comes Humans are the prey.

A typical day in Mordheim starts with the arrival of the warbands. As long as they keep far from the centre of the city they might have a fairly safe day of digging and searching in the rubble. They will fight one or two battles and be able to leave the city to live the next day. As they go deeper things become different. They have the feeling of being watched. In the streets they will meet Rats, Wolves and Mutants. Eventually they will meet other warbands - more experienced ones. These warbands control more interesting areas of the city. Those areas have more gold, warpstone and artefacts. Deadly battles are likely to start with human and possessed warbands during the day. During the night, Vampires and Skaven hunt, taking advantage of their night vision to search the most interesting areas or to attack Human warbands.

Experienced warbands will stay up to a week in the city to explore the most interesting areas. They band together in camps, where they get food, rest, new weapons and

reinforcements. Many warbands surviving a week in Mordheim will leave the city forever to bring their loot to their master and receive their rewards.

Role Playing and Scenarios in Mordheim

Mordheim is all about gaining ultimate power and for this all means are accepted. Your campaign should start with greed, vengeance and a quest for power. Having characters with the powerful goal of uniting all the human warbands to fight Chaos is great but probably out of place and time (at least at the beginning of a campaign). Every player should be introduced to this aspect of roleplaying: If they choose to be a member of a specific warband, they will mistrust and maybe even hate the other warbands. If they choose to be a hired sword, they choose to fight for money first and for warbands second. Exceptions exist but not every character or NPC should be an exception.

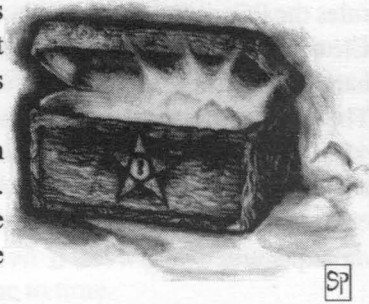
To prepare your campaign you should ask a few questions. Where did the characters come from and what are they after? Where do you want your main campaign to take place: in the ruins, on the road between Mordheim and a city-state, or further afield?

What is your campaign about? Will it be about finding warpstone for a city-state, finding a special artefact in the ruins or bringing a killer to justice? Maybe the players

are owners of an Inn near to Mordheim. Perhaps they are spies working undercover for a specific power. Maybe they will turn into mutants and will have to find ways to survive the Witch Hunters and other warbands finding some cause that will give meaning to their tainted existence.

You can also choose to play wider campaigns using Mordheim's setting. Your campaigns could focus not only in gathering wyrdstones but also on the politics of The Empire after the fall of the comet. Many daemonologists and necromancers were killed during the Wizard's War. Are they all dead? Do they plan revenge on the church of Sigmar? The fall of the comet happened ten years before the war against the Vampire Counts. Is the fate of Mordheim linked to this war? What will happen if the undead warbands take control of Mordheim? Then there are the Skaven and the Sisters of Sigmar. Their matriarch predicted the fall of the comet that killed or mutated thousands. Yet, the sisters survived and were not affected. Are they witches or saints?

Roleplaying in Mordheim can be all you want. Possible scenarios are endless. Let madness be your guide.



SP

DIVINE HISTORY

Religious Myth and Legend by Jean-David Lanz

Patrice LeRoux, writing from Praag, salutes Stefan Falkend, Abbas Archivorum Ecclesiae in Altdorf.

Your Eminence,

I have recently come across a pamphlet, of which you are undoubtedly aware, called, "A Religious History of the Old World" and signed by a Stefan Kymiskie. While I agree that even the most open-minded priest is liable to take exception, I maintain the poor fellow's gruesome fate was undeserved. In my view, an Officium Arbitrorum High Priest not only participating in but leading the stoning mob only shows weakness on behalf of the Church. Does Sigmar grant nothing but force to meet adverse arguments? If such was Sigmar's sole virtue, how would he have stood apart from other conquerors?

To illustrate this point, let me present an account of the Sigmarite Church's early history, when priests of the other faiths convened to decide what to do with the upstart cult. After heated debate cooled down yet one more time, an old and respected Ulrican by the name of Gammalyel spoke: "Consider this, brothers and sisters: these people work either with or against the Gods. If they work against them, we do not need to take heed of them for they are already doomed to fall. But if they do work with them, who of us shall dare oppose them?" He was made an honorary Verenan and the priests decided to let the new cult tread its own path. I contend this wisdom could profit this age. I can hear you muttering it also could profit my own hide - but that is beside my main point.

From here, we could start healthy debate about how reasoning is in the long run more efficient and productive than burning and mob-raising as a method to deal with heretics, but this is not my point. Instead I am following my own advice and proposing to you a counter-document. My self-appointed task of lore-seeker has exposed me to a host of tales and views, some of them sadly twisted and unsavoury, others invigorating and rousing. From these I have been able to compile the following, which I call a divine history. Though it does contain contradictions with widely-accepted folklore, I believe it serves a worthy purpose, one I shall discuss afterwards. I hope you will find it to your liking and look forward to your inspired comments and reactions.

The Creation

In the beginning was Chaos; raw, unshaped substance that was neither matter nor thought nor spirit and yet contained the germs of all those. Hovering over this was Avam'n, whom Elves call Tar and Dwarves call Karz. Avam'n's will touched the roiling mass and gave it purpose, intent and beauty. Thus were born Ilbeth, Khorne, Rhya and Slaanesh, the four

sisters; and Gareð, Nurgle, Tzeentch and Samdo, the four brothers. Avam'n conceived love for his children and gave them his will to use as they saw fit.

Ilbeth marvelled at her own fairness and sang a single crystal note whose sound sparked tiny lights from her. She shook her head to let her hair flow, and more shining beads were born from the motion. Her hand arched gracefully in front of her; her feet drew elaborate curves; and she launched herself into a dance, every gesture spinning another thread of a fiery tapestry across the surrounding darkness. Thus were her lights of life born, aloof and brilliant.

Gareð watched her and pondered his own acts. His feet stood upon Chaos; he gave it concrete substance. Plunging his hands into the solid yet yielding matter, he gave it purpose and shape. He worked slowly and patiently to mould an image of Ilbeth's beauty, defined by his own perspective into a female mate. Thus was she born, a strong and enduring companion.

Khorne sought to create beings in her own image. She watched the first one stand tall with pride until she noticed that it still bore a slight but undeniable flaw. In frustration, she scattered it into pieces and set herself to work again. When her second being stood before her, she could find no flaw in it despite holding its every fibre under close scrutiny. She obliterated it - despairing that the defect was there but had escaped her very gaze. Thus were all her creations destroyed, in anger or in anguish.

Nurgle felt only concerned with the act of creation itself. He built myriads of similar beings, his contentment growing with their number rather than their diversity; yet he never took the time to consider their conception or sustenance. Thus they crumbled under the same failings he had left within them.

Tzeentch envisioned countless possibilities for his get yet could not select one. On the verge of making his first idea real, he stayed his hand in realisation that some of the abilities he had forethought could not take place in the definition he had. He gave it some more thought, trying to incorporate everything his future creation still lacked. As he did so, he found out that every addition cost him another feature. Tzeentch decided to forget and forego his initial idea and set out to develop his creation again, numerous times. But each choice meant abandoning options, all of them desirable; deprived of actuality for want of universal perfection, his get remained unborn.

Rhya rejoiced at the fairness her elder sisters and brothers had created and sought to go further, becoming one with her very creations. Instead of shaping them from outside, she let them grow inside her. Thus from her womb were born her sons and consorts: she named one Taal and pronounced that he would beget new creations she would bear, and called the other Ulric,

who would put all things to an end when their time came.

Slaanesh rolled a ball between her fingers and juggled with it, pleased with her ability. Then she moulded a long, flat shape and marvelled at the softness of its contact on her skin. She created a slave to caress her as she would order it to, finding pleasure in its soulless touch. She produced objects of great beauty and greater power for her sole use. Yet her interest in her own creations faded as her toying with them gradually grew dull and predictable in her own eyes, limited as she had made them to remain petty achievements. Thus she let them wither and die of her own ennui.

Samdo watched in calm amazement around him and asked Ilbeth for one of her sparks. He reached out with his hand to catch one and placed it on a plain surface like Gared had done before him, fostered it and made it grow, emulating Rhya's fertility. Beneath his hands, the light grew into something closer than Ilbeth's seeming infinity, more inspiring than Gared's pondered mate, and more immediate than Rhya's dominion over life. Thus was she born, a warm, welcoming flame.

Avam'n watched the wonders Ilbeth, Gared, Rhya and Samdo had made, and praised them. The four others protested in jealousy, claiming to want nothing to do with creation, slothfully chiding him for drawing them out of the Chaos they pretended to long for. "You were created free and so remain," Avam'n declared. "If your desire is to return to the unshaped, it is within your grasp to fulfil it. Beware, though, for Chaos contains the seeds of its own bane." Heedless, the four ungrateful powers drowned themselves in what they had been unable to master. Yet their consciousness survived within Chaos, for they were kin to the other Gods who still lived beyond. Thus did the Chaos gods in desperation seek to bring about their own end, turning against Avam'n's intent and forsaking his heritage.

The four remaining deities gave themselves to their creations, merging with them and each other while retaining their own identity; thus was both of the Earth, unique yet belonging to all.

Manann, the Ocean-borne

Rhya and Taal knew each other; thus were all things human begotten. When the time came for their birth, Ulric held Rhya's hand to give her his strength through the pains of childbirth. The world was offered to their eyes anew, its beauty and strength a wonder to behold. Rhya then decreed that both her consorts would visit it once a year. On the winter solstice Ulric would hold a court to acknowledge every adult in his dominion; he would demand their name and weigh their worth in the cold of his gaze. The unworthy were cast down in ice, as were those on whom others sought righteous justice. On the summer solstice Taal would take part in a festival the people held to celebrate Rhya's generosity. Three youths would be selected to replay the role of each deity in a commemoration of the world's creation. Those who performed before Taal were considered favoured, even more so the young man who actually played the Life-giver's role. The God never revealed himself until after the performance, so his presence would not trouble the actors. This meant any stranger was most welcome, lest he be the God in disguise.

One spring, a woman bloomed into full maturity, beauty and life flowing inside her body. Her name was Cathee, which means "pure". Watching her from the heavens, Taal saw her and his heart conceived desire. On the following summer solstice, he descended again among his people but hardly watched the play, focusing his attention on her instead. As the sun set, he revealed himself and roused a wild revel to celebrate life and growth. Amidst the crowd, Cathee's lilting chest and swaying hips enticed him again, and he joined her voluptuous dance. In the warm, starry night, God and mortal became lovers.

Nine months later, as Taal's sun was thawing Ulric's snow again, Cathee gave birth to a vigorous boy. Stumbling with fatigue and pain, she walked outside to present the babe to the sun in her outstretched arms, proudly announcing: "Thy son is born, Life-giver!" Taal rejoiced at her words yet feared his brother's jealousy, for as God of withering and battle, Ulric could not sire children as he had. Thus he instructed her to flee towards the midday sun until she found a land that never suffered the bite of the frost. Forty days and forty nights did she carry her child on her breast until she reached a village by the sea where no elder could recall an ancestor who would have known of snow.

The winter before the boy's seventh birthday saw cold go much deeper than ever and Ulric's snow claimed the village. While children laughed and played, the elders worried at the rigours awaiting them and fear seized Cathee's throat. Yet she followed her fellow villagers to the summons of the winter God's court. She approached him with unyielding resolve, knees trembling but voice firm. Ulric's voice boomed above her: "Whence comes the fear that gnaws at your heart, woman?" She struggled to respond, "I fear for my son's life, revered lord." Pondering her answer, he motioned the boy to kneel beside his mother. "What is thy name, boy?" "I am called Manann, revered lord," he answered. "And why does your mother fear for you so, when your youth is strong and lively?" "I know not, revered lord." The God of battles commanded then, "Raise your eyes and face me, that I know the truth of your hearts!" As he stared into Manann's eyes, he learned of the boy's ascendance - as did the boy himself. Enraged, Ulric cursed Cathee and raised his hand to strike her down, but Manann stood and stayed his mighty arm.

"For the love of your brother, do not slay her!" he pleaded. "Let me atone for this offence. As long as I live on this world, I shall never touch its earth again. My realm shall now lie besides yours, forever shared between you and your brother: wrathful and puissant as you are, yet life-bearing and enduring as he makes the land. In fear of you, my mother spent her life in exile from those she knew and loved; if you spare her life now, we shall be exiled from each other." Ulric's rage abated as he pondered those words, and he spared Cathee's life for now, although he declared she would die the instant she touched the sea. But he also ruled that Taal would never descend on the summer solstice again; and that humans would have to mete out their own justice to each other, for he would also remain in the heavens.

Thus Manann built himself a boat as he had seen his fellow villagers do; and on his seventh birthday, he bid farewell to his mother and

left to sail the oceans of the world. As long as she lived, he acquired lore and succour from the oceans and taught those ways to any and all who met him. Every day, Cathee would go by the sea and stay there for hours, and Manann called the waters back so that they would not touch her. When she left, Manann released the waters again; thus the tide came to be, moving back and forth across the shore.

Cathee lived for seventy more years; when she reached her final day, she climbed up the highest cliff she could find and threw herself far into the waves as Manann came to her in his ship. Though he had sailed every way around the seas of the world, he knew of another straight way that he now followed, carrying Cathee with him into the heavens. Thus she came to be the brightest light in the night sky, the moon people call Mannslieb in memory of the sea god's love for his mother; though she hides at times to escape Ulric's gaze, she always comes back to guide sailors in her son's dominion.

The Ascension into Death

As Ulric took the land from Taal every autumn, so did the young turn old; as winter brings hardship and trials, so did the old fear death. Two men had enough faith in the Gods to see that they would revive souls after death just as Ulric relinquishes the land back to Taal. They were brothers and their names were Mórr and Khaine. They spread their vision to the people, who came from distant lands to hear them preach. Among them was a woman called Verena, whose wisdom was as renowned as their faith; she and Mórr betrothed themselves to each other.

In the morning after their marriage, she told him of a vision she had had during the night, of her homeland on the seacoast. Watching the waves, she had conceived a belief that the soul attained a state after death that was as unending as Manann's dominion. Both Mórr and Khaine marvelled at her vision, and they preached it to the people.

Taal heard Mórr and Khaine's sermons, and pointed them to Ulric. "Brother," he said, "these men spread teachings that drive the people towards you with more diligence than most we have seen throughout the ages. Surely you could adopt one of them, to match my siring Manann?" Ulric agreed, but asked for a delay so he could choose. Indeed, Taal refused to let him have more than one son lest a rivalry settled between them.

Meanwhile Khaine and Mórr's ways were drifting apart from each other. While Mórr was content with quiet conversations among the faithful, the curious and the travellers, Khaine engaged in high ritual to praise the Gods, raising loud chants and wild crowds to their worship. And the people came to respect Mórr and admire Khaine; while the latter basked in that sentiment, it slowly built contempt in him for his most devout followers, that in turn caused him to envy the quiet reverence Mórr was given. That feeling became only worse when he turned his eyes towards calm Verena and her constant love for her husband, towards the two daughters she gave him. He likened their childish love for their parents to the adoration his disciples were giving him, which demeaned them in his eyes. When they remained the same while

the children grew in body and wisdom, one a healer and the other a defender, murderous rage boiled within Khaine.

Another point separated the brothers. Often granted gifts in admiration from the people, they were dedicated to the gods in sacrifice. Mórr's gifts were always received in that understanding, but some of Khaine's followers began worshipping his person instead of his Gods and insisted he kept the gifts. Soon he kept everything for himself, vainly trying to appease the hunger he had for Mórr's position with sundry baubles and items. Reckoning that they would never suffice, he sought to demean his brother. Subtly at first, but soon openly, he began preaching the opposite of what he and his brother had been teaching the people. He derided his vision, contending that it was an insult to the Gods; that comparing the realm of death to the sea was ignorance of Manann's generosity; that viewing death as just another beginning was contemptuous of Ulric's might; and that claiming life did not end in death demeaned Taal's vigour and led people not to live to the fullest. Life, he taught, was for the strong who could survive the trials set before them. Soon his followers marched in battle against those of Mórr to prove the superiority of their ways.

Under the light of the full moon, Khaine appealed to Ulric before rallying his troops: a white dire wolf was the answer, carrying on his back a huge warrior. The warrior dismissed the wolf and named himself Fenric, raising two weapons in his hands, a great battle axe and an immense sword; he declared that he would lead the army into battle.

The following days saw victory after victory for Khaine's forces. Not only were they greater in number than Mórr's faithful, but their general's prowess carried them on a swathe of death; Fenric was always at the very worst of the battle, felling opponents by scores. Indeed, his power was such that fighters rallied to him instead of rallying to his commander; thus Khaine's army was now Fenric's.

When the news of that unknown general reached Mórr, both his daughters expressed their will to help their people, one by meeting the foe in battle, the other by healing the wounded. He blessed them and sent an ancient raven along with them, whom he had befriended after Myrmidia had found him wounded by a hunter's lost arrow and Shallya had healed him. The daughters raised a small force to march against the enemy to a narrow defile known by the name of Lion's Den. There they waited for three days for the enemy army to reach them. Deserters from previous battles took heart again at the fair sisters' courage and joined them during that time. Still outnumbered ten to one, they were now prepared to stand their ground staunchly, should Fenric prove to be a demon sent by the dark gods - which many believed him to be.

At the beginning of the fourth day, the raven brought news of the arriving army. The enemy walked through the Lion's Den; only at the other end did the enemy show up, appearing small but resolute. Fenric gave a howl of laughter and ran to meet his foes, his great axe and sword swinging. Yet as soon as he had engaged Myrmidia's warriors, a deep, rushing sound came from above. An avalanche of rocks and boulders rushed along both sides of the pass, separating both forces. At the same time, Myrmidia's people

ran down from the other side of the pass, attacking the rear guard with mighty battle cries. Surprise seized the heart of the enemy; Fenric's orders did not carry over the panic and he found himself caught within his own crazed army. Myrmidia was leading the charge, engaging the enemy first. Among the soldiers facing her, she noticed a familiar figure. "Uncle!" she exclaimed, and Khaine quivered before her grief and surprise. She asked the raven to carry the news to her father and the great bird flew away to his friend.

A howl of terror swept across the battlefield: in frustration against his men, Fenric was cutting them down himself to reach the front line. When his sword and axe found Myrmidia's soldiers instead of his own, however, both sisters came up to meet him.

Fenric's raw power and rage were overwhelming, but Myrmidia's knowledge that she was fighting for her people and her family added resolve to her refined skills. For every smashing blow Fenric launched, she found a parry and made a counter strike. Yet that move left her open to another ferocious attack of his, and the fight raged on for the entire day. Soldiers around them were fighting and falling, and Shallya grabbed the fallen on her side to heal them again so they could fight on. Myrmidia parried a hundred blows from her enemy, but the next would land and cut her; then Shallya would crawl to her sister's side and swiftly apply balsams to the wound. And Fenric prevented a thousand ripostes, but the thousandth would strike him. Slowly but steadily did his forces desert him; as the sun set and touched the horizon, wreathed in blood both his own and of those around him, he fell to the ground at Myrmidia's feet. She raised her sword in victory, and her remaining opponents recoiled and dropped their own weapons in surrender.

Shallya tended the wounded; she also healed Fenric, but once the puissant warrior was able to fight again, he seized his sword lying on the ground and ran her through with it. Myrmidia engaged him again and the battle raged in earnest until a voice from the other end of the pass spoke "Cease."

Standing on the rocky mass, his black robes appearing bloody in the crimson sunset light, Mórr addressed the people, Verena standing beside him. "It does not become us to take up arms against our brothers. What is your quarrel with me? What have you done, brother mine?" Khaine raised his bow at his brother, and let fly his arrow. Verena screamed and sprang in front of her husband to protect him. But the raven had been swifter, and he plucked the arrow out of the air. Mórr descended among the stoned fray; all who would strike the empty-handed priest or his serene wife found themselves unable to. Walking amidst the clanking of dropped swords, he reached his daughters and took Shallya in his arms, life slowly ebbing from her.

"Mighty Taal and formidable Ulric," he prayed, "I now leave my daughter's soul to you. May her new life with you be happier than the end she had."

"Generous Taal," Verena added, "praise be to you for the boons she received from you, for that very mercy that saw her end. Yet I know she would have made the same choice had she known what fate awaited her, for she knew your great hand, dread Ulric,

would ease her into this new beginning. Go now, my beloved child; fare thee well among the heavens." On those last words, Khaine sneaked in behind them and his sword arced across their backs in a deadly blow. Fenric watched them fall over the body of the woman he had just murdered, and raised his face to the sky to cry, "Taal!"

A thunderbolt struck the ground beside him. Fenric's guise was now ripped apart; in his stead was now Ulric himself, and his brother Taal was standing at the place where lightning had touched the earth. "Is your choice made now, brother?" he asked, looking at the dying family. "It is," answered the God of wolves. "Mórr, once man among men, you shall now be known as Mórr Ulric-son, for I shall make you mine, for I shall make you one of ours. You shall rule over the realm of the dead, and welcome them into that dominion I grant you. Know then," he said, elevating the man in his mighty arms, "that this man shall now be no mere man, but Mórr Ulric-son, God of Death!"

Taal watched his brother for a long time as the people praised the Gods. "I cherish your choice, brother," he said when silence fell again. "And I will give you another one. Would you raise one of his family to stand by his side?" Ulric looked around him at Shallya, who had raised him again only to die at his hands; at Verena, whose faith in her husband's words and desire for justice had granted her the same end as his; at Myrmidia, whose cunning tactics and willingness to let her sister help her had let her best him. And he answered, "Brother, let this boon of yours be granted according to your own mind. Who of them shall you pronounce worthy?"

Taal seized Shallya and announced, "Young healer, you have shown mercy beyond hope. Let life eternal flow within you, that you may cry for the weak and cure the pain-ridden!" And the God's force seized Shallya, and her eyes opened again. Yet before the people's renewed praise, she refused the exalted gift. "Nay", she called out, "my family shall remain united."

"Would you rather share death with your mother and sister than eternal life with us?" Ulric boomed.

"My father's faith and my mother's wisdom nourished each other," she spoke. "If he is to rule the dead, he shall need her advice."

"Your words bespeak that very discernment," Ulric agreed. "Verena shall then enlighten the living and the dead on the path of justice, reason and insight," he announced. "From this day forth, she shall no longer be counted among humanity, but among the Gods!"

Shallya spoke again, however. "My sister stood in front to preserve us from invasion as our father had stood to preserve us from fear. In fairness, she shall be our equal. Has she not also proved her mettle enough today?"

Taal smiled and lay his hand on Myrmidia's shoulder. "In truth, your exploits grants you a place among us. Let it be known, that henceforth Myrmidia shall endure as an eternal defender. Will you accept our gift now?"

Shallya added, "I will have my whole family with me. Almost all his life, my uncle served you as worthily as my father did; how could he not share this reward?"

"You would presume to forgive his betrayal?" Taal asked. Shallya kept silent.

"Then you shall also guide souls after death," Ulric growled to Khaine. "Yet since you contend that justice is second only to strength and have killed innumerable people to prove your point, the only souls you shall rule will be those you take for yourself or have others give you. Mórr will be the sole master of his domain, and you shall have to carve your own," he pronounced.

Still Shallya did not relent. Her eyes set on the assembled crowd; on the people who gave away their life and health so others would live on; on those who had been misled by a madman now raised above them.

"They shall not be granted the same gift!" Ulric warned in a voice that spoke of thunder.

And the young goddess finally gave in, and tears rolled from Shallya's eyes, for death and mourning would still burden her people. Yet she took that burden on her own back, and still offers to carry it for us.

Further Thoughts

Concerning the creation myth: I assume many of the names found there are unknown to you. Indeed, the existence of Avam'n is subject to speculation, but appears in several prophecies uttered by apparently raving madmen throughout the Old World and Araby. In my view, if people from lands as sundry and distant as Araby, Estalia and the Border Princes can come up with such a name, maybe there is a power behind it. By the same token, the names of Tar and Karz are even rarer: I am still unsure whether the first is not the result of a very elaborate Elven joke. The Elves have about a hundred libraries' worth of creation odes, each more vibrant than the others and none of any religious significance; the Dwarfs are too practical to worry about how the world was created, their main purpose is being to remake it for their own use; and the Halflings stand in between both attitudes, dismissing such tales until after a healthy supper or two and then giving you a host of stories about how the Moot was made up but none about the outside.

The names of Ilbeth, Gared and Samdo are rarely spoken either; for similar reasons to those exposed above, our neighbour peoples have little use for an Earth Mother (or Father) deity. Forgotten tomes of Dwarfen myth and a very old Halfling storyteller were instrumental in their incorporation.

I can only imagine the delightful shade of purple your face took if you believed I suggested the Chaos gods to be akin to greater powers such as Rhya. I am merely acknowledging their divine stature: could lesser beings even threaten our Gods' dominion? Of course, this is only a statement of their power, not of their ethical worth. Chaos powers of any kind, let me stress, are our worst enemy and should be fought on every battlefield they enter, be it military, political, magical, theological or economical.

Oh yes: You may have noticed Khorne, who we generally picture as male, amongst the sisters. However, what few creation myths I came across depict him as female. This change seems to have to do with the birth of the law gods, but my information on these is

as now sketchy at best. However (knowing me, the right word should be "Therefore"), it is my intent to gather a tale of their birth similar to the ones above; if you get tired of tales, maybe it could be completed with current information on their cults ...

You may have noted that the Chaos gods are depicted as rather pathetic and weak characters, flying in the face of everything we (believe to) know about them. I do not believe myself that this view reflects a theological or practical truth; I do, however, contend that a reputation of omnipotence only adds to their power, and would like to point out that the Chaos gods' influence may be limited to what we let them grab, which is certainly the sad case of our contemporaries who turn to their worship. You may further argue that the tales presented here overlook their role in shaping our world as it is today. Again, I have taken this view to counter our human tendency to downplay boons and ills: the siege of Praag and the destruction wreaked upon our every settlement are indeed painful, terrible events. Still, are they truly significant in the long term compared to the millennia during which our Gods have been gifting us with succour, lore, justice, mercy, strength and protection?

You have undoubtedly noted I did not include Sigmar either, and will no less undoubtedly understand and agree that there would be little point in adding one more tale to the dozens of contradictory ones already in existence. Not to mention that I am unwilling to test the religious authorities' patience further, having an interesting enough time these days. Certainly, your sigilled letter certifying my moral and politic integrity - for which I renew my gratitude to you - did convince most of the Witch Hunters and self-styled cleansers to give up their quest to rid The Empire of my foul presence. Still, the worst and most self-righteous ones are still on my trail, and I grow tired of seeing bodyguards die in my stead for mere handfuls of gold.

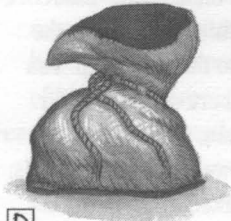
A final note on the purpose of these tales again. My main point in compiling (and admittedly editing, yet not rewriting) them and sending them to you, evidently, is inspiration. A lot of our contemporaries hold a very bleak view of our world, trapped between the devouring maw of Chaotic war bands and the gnawing teeth of secret corruption. While this outlook does have its strengths - if only because a man with nothing to lose is a man without fear - it can also drive us into inaction and impotence, thus justifying itself.

Consider Mórr in the tales I tell. Consider Ranald. Consider your Lord Sigmar's own legend. Born mere humans, they grew in stature and rose to reach the very heavens. Certainly such a fate does not await everyone; yet its simple possibility allows us to envision other lofty yet closer goals as well within our grasp. If a mother could bear the child of a God, if a couple of sages can put forth wisdom that amazes the very Gods it praises, if a human can battle and overcome one of those and another can heal him despite his enemy guise, then the power is within us to rise above the threats of this age.

*Your friend,
Patrice LeRoux*

ELEMENTAL

A Short Story by Craig Bunting



B

Egon in a crude insulting imitation of the old Dwarf's grumbling tones. 'It's all rock for crying out loud!' he snapped in his own harsh bark.

'No! Useless bloody human! This is a competent sandstone. Look at the fractures, not too close together, makes for good tunnelling, means the roof won't fall in on you. It's just a bit weathered, that's all.'

The tall solid and dark-haired Egon, knight in the service of the Graf of Middenheim, swung into the cover of a bush that afforded him some small degree of respite from the constant steady drizzle that had been falling out of the lurking grey clouds that swathed the Vaults in springtime.

The Dwarf continued to prod and poke the rock, making a show of closely examining some of the chips he had set loose. Secretly he suspected they had come too high up this rock face that stood at the end of the small valley; and the Dwarfen mine they were looking for had been dug out of the better rock further down.

They were following the trail of an Elementalist who had been found to be indulging himself not only in the acceptable Imperial magical arts but also the blacker arts of Chaotic Sorcery.

'We are going to lose the light in an hour or so,' reported Uther numbly, a young shaggy bedraggled man sitting in the branches of a tree that jutted out of the rock face. He was tired; his furs and woollens were damp through to his skin and weighed him down. He sat on the branch like a lazy cat, uncaring about being seen. He was from over the Sea of Claws, a one-time archer in the service of his lord, a companion to Egon and Grout and now, like them, a knight.

The three of them shuffled along the narrow ledge that was part of a hundred-yard high uneven precipice of tiered scrappy ledges punctuated by bursts of dark green foliage brooding over the dreary valley below.

The three of them were formerly commoners, raised to the status of knights for services

'Not so good rock this, see,' stated Grout thoughtfully, as he clawed at some loose rock with the pick-end of his hand axe.

'Not so good, poor engineering quality, a bit *shappy*,' began

coincidentally rendered to the Graf of Middenheim while trying to make a quick bag of shillings tracking down practitioners of the Black Arts for a bounty. Their fellow knights of Middenheim were of a distinctly nobler breed (although not persuasion) and did not take kindly to the trio of adventurer-cum-mercenary-cum-freebooters taking their meals in the same halls. It was not long before some young slip-of-a-thing was dressed up and paid to catch Egon's eye.

Her father, a notable guildsman, and had been tipped off and burst into his sizeable larder to find Grout stuffing expensive cheeses into his face instead of being on lookout. He then crashed raging into his daughter's chambers, sword drawn to find Egon bedding his daughter. Uther had been implicated on the grounds that he was unaccounted for in the barracks that night. The next morning their captain roared at them about proper conduct and the formal introductions associated with being defenders of The Empire. In short order they were made Witch Hunters to be sent far from the civility of Middenheim to the mountains on the trail of a deviant and dangerous sorcerer found to be dabbling in the arts of Chaos.

They were told to find him or die trying.



B

before they too sloshed into it up to their calves, soaking their cold feet through.

The three were all adept at moving through the wilds with care and caution but their fatigue and ill-mood got the better of their fieldcraft.

They stamped into the secluded stand of thin birch trees and boulders that their horses had been left in for most of the day, shedding armour and weapons' belts without care. Uther began very carefully to start a fire with some wood he had left in a dry place. Without speaking the three went into the instinctive process of setting a fire, making camp, checking their boots for damage and brewing some tea.

'He's got to be here somewhere,' grumbled

Grout as he started ripping open rabbits with his dagger.

'Course he's here, he's just hiding,' responded Egon testily as he began unstrapping the plates of steel from his shoulders, arms and chest and letting them just fall to the ground.

'I know he's hiding! That's why we haven't found him!' growled Grout in return, carelessly waving his bloodied dagger and flicking drops of gore across Uther's face.

'Well if he knew we were on his trail he surely would have sent fouler weather against us,' Uther commented, trying to look on a bright side - any bright side at all. By now the light had gone and with the dark the last dregs of winter manifested themselves by sending icy whistles of wind seething around the valley.

Later the three were gnawing the last shreds of meat from the bones of the rabbits when there was the sound of the pounding of feet on the turf not far from their camp. In a heartbeat the three froze; each identified the direction the runner was coming from and slashed weapons out of their sheaths just in time to greet the throat and belly of a ragged blue-robed figure as he leapt into the firelight from out of the dark rainy night.

'Save me save me save me!' pleaded Remus, Elementalist and supposed agent of the filthy arts. The gangly young man sank to his knees in front of them.

'No,' declared Egon flatly and pulled the trigger of his short-barrelled pistol, inches from the wizard's face. The hammer smacked the flint down but the damp powder sat inert in its pan. Remus closed his eyes and let out a few squeaking sobs before he crawled into a ball, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the two men and Dwarf had been ordered to drag him back to Middenheim for trial.

Grout dropped his axe, heaved Remus easily to his knees and shoved him against a boulder. He stared into the dirty, hollow-cheeked face with its patchy short beard and bright blue watery eyes but saw no sign of the bitter leering taint common amongst the dark artists.

In their travels, escapades and rampages the three knights had seen the twisted unwholesome nature of Chaos in many guises and forms. They, however, did not study the books that described the signs and marks the Tainted usually bore as other Witch-Hunters did, but had a more hands-on gut-instinct way of sniffing out the vile

cultists and practitioners.

'This bloke's not a witch,' moaned Grout.

'Aye but lets strip him and see if he has any marks,' added Uther reaching for a dirk.

'How old are you boy?' demanded Grout.

'Twenty t-twenty- two,' stammered Remus.

'You been dabbling in the black arts then?'

Grout forced his ample nose up into the young wizards' own slender nostrils. The Dwarf's solid fist gripped his robes like a vice and Remus could feel a knife poking into the inside of his leg; one slash there and he would bleed to death like a fountain in less than a minute.

'No,' he squeaked.

'He's lyy-ying,' crooned Egon in a cruel sing-song voice as he crouched in the firelight checking his pistol was working properly.

'So why did we get sent from Middenheim to the foothills of the mountains to find you?'

'I w-was practising the third suffusion of stone when something in the room blew all the candles out. There was a sound - like wet meat being slapped on a cutting block by a butcher and when I managed to make a light the walls were covered in all manner of foul runes, written with blood for ink. I left the room and found my master's servant slain as if by a beast but strangely bloodless. Something terrible was lurking behind the thickness of a shadow from our world. It used the small amount of magic I summoned to bridge the gap and escape into this world. I received a flash of its thought as it burst through. It was escaping, running; it wanted a place where it could re-enter its own world unobserved, as one might swim under water across a river so no one sees you getting to the other bank.' said Remus breathlessly.

'So how did the runes get there then, eh? You must have made them. I've seen them; they cover every inch of the walls!' roared Grout, bending the frightened wizard backwards over the top of the boulder.

'The-the thing took the blood from my master's servant and in a trice painted the walls. The symbols are a ward to stop anything from using the room as a conduit to follow it.'

'Sigmar's bollocks are they! *You* made them! If not, how do you know they are a ward then, eh?'

'I know because it knew. As I said, it used the natural magic I was channelling. It used me to enter this world. It left its thoughts in my head.' Remus was whimpering now. Grout fancied he could smell urine but was not certain it belonged to the wizard; they had all been in the saddle for days and were equally filthy.

Grout stood back and released his grip on the wizard so the young man could slump exhausted onto the damp turf around the boulder, his small pack and equipment still slung about him.

'So why run all the way out here?' demanded Egon, attention still focused on his pistol in the firelight.

'I was scared. I know what the Templars do to

seek confession. I am a woodcutter's son. I know how to travel the wilds and I knew it was coming here. I thought if I took some of my master's money I could find it and stop it, bring proof that it had left the world.'

Grout stood back and rubbed his beard as Uther now rounded on the quivering wizard with more questions.

'There is rumour of a Dwarfen mine, lost and derelict, at the head of this valley. Your master told us it had some foul enchantment or quality infesting it and that beastmen had been seen attending something in this region. What of it, boy?' asked Uther, his stern eyes locked onto the wizard's own.

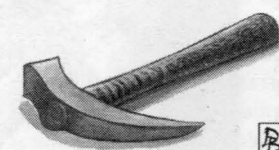
'In antiquity this valley was a stronghold for the Druids. Their power mirrors ours, although as Elementalists ours is somewhat more refined. Many of us have travelled here to one of the stone circles in this area to study and practice our natural arts. Something else exists in this valley, something that spelled doom for the dwarves, some source of Chaos. The thing must have read this knowledge from my mind and decided to make for it.'

'So it knows your mind, eh?' replied Egon sarcastically. 'And now it has felt you following it and guesses your intent, just like we have followed the string of gruesome bloodless murders in your wake, across The Empire in your service to the dark gods!'

'Not me!' squeaked Remus in feeble protest. 'It takes nourishment from life by consuming blood. I merely followed the grim news, posing as a Witch-Hunter myself to find it.'

'You!' bellowed Egon, 'a Witch-Hunter! You could barely lift a sword, never mind swing one.'

'Sir, I am not so weak. As I have said I am the son of a woodsman, a little out of prime fettle but still I am capable. I have another weapon though. It took not only my knowledge of this place, but as one catches an illness from another, it caught a fear I have had since childhood, a fear of the dark.'



Egon's belly laugh burst out offensively into the calm night.

Uther was reduced to helpless yelping tears and Grout's rasping strained laugh sent a drizzle of spittle into the wizard's face. Their laughter did not stop when, in Egon's jocular weakness, he dropped his pistol into the fire where he had bent a trifle too close. The powder in the bowl, now just dry enough, flared and fire flashed through the pinhole into the powder charge and the ball shot out of the barrel up into Remus's mouth and out through the top of his head. Splinters of white skull and wads of grey brain both gleaming with a film of red blood fountained out the top of the elementalists' head and painted a red splat onto

the rump of Egon's horse. The ball, luckily for the beast, was almost spent and bounced harmlessly off the horse's flank and onto the turf.

The guffaws of laughter faded into snivels of amusement and then stopped when they realised what had happened.

'A demon...afraid of the dark...' snivelled Egon still in tears at the absurdity of the idea.

'Bloody useless human. Look, he's dead now. You and your black powder!' Grout ranted on for a while at Egon who ranted back.

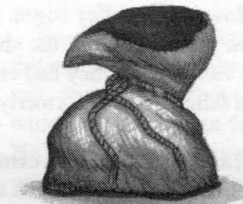
'Belt up the pair of you!' bellowed Uther. 'For crying out loud there are brigands about. Do you not recall those five we slew at the head of the valley?'

'We slew? I slew; beardface here slew; you did not,' barked Egon.

'You did not notice the arrows in the back of the last two, then?' protested Uther.

'No, nor did the brigands it seems,' replied Egon curtly.

'Shut up. You're all making a racket. Useless bloody humans.'



Eventually they lowered their voices and later still stopped arguing and finally fell asleep with Egon on guard. In the morning they buried the dead wizard under a cairn of stones that was disrespectfully thin in Uther's opinion. They then moved back up to the rock face to try to find the source of power the creature was seeking.

Remus had not come unprepared. According to the thick book of notes Grout had rummaged out of the dead wizard's pack the element earth opposed air while fire opposed water. There were a lot of scratched notes in all manner of writing, runes and symbols the three did not understand as well as several diagrams and drawings. They could not make much of it and so Grout stuffed the thick wad of paper in his own pack and forgot about it.



A few hours of trudging and searching later they found themselves edging nervously along a ledge that Grout had declared the day before as definitely not where any sensible Dwarf would excavate into the rock.

Thick grey clouds rolled across the region frowning down over the valley threatening more rain and thunder. The oppressive air was turning moods black and Egon was making much of pointing out features he had seen the day before. Uther was trying to retain some composure

despite the rank stink of his damp furs and thick dreadlocks that hung around his shoulders. He was determined to remember his fieldcraft in spite of his two bickering companions giving their position away to any pair of eyes or ears within two miles.

'Look, a lintel! This is the entrance, see,' declared Grout indicating a low, vaguely square unassuming opening in the rock face.

'An entrance? Not the bear's poke-hole you saw in this exact spot yesterday?' retorted Egon.

'I said...' started Grout in protest.

Uther clamped a hand around the Dwarf's mouth, pushing a healthy volume of brown beard over the ruddy face. He held a finger to his lips. Egon stopped talking and slowly reached for his pistol.

'Listen,' said Uther softly.

'To what exactly?' asked Egon, equally quietly. Uther pointed up to the overhanging trees and bushes generously decked in bird's nests. There was a moment before Egon realised what the tall warrior was indicating.

'Yesterday the chatter of the wee birdies almost rivalled your own, but now nothing,' whispered Uther.

There was the despairing sigh of the light breeze and that was about all; the chatter of birds building nests was absent. They all squatted down and looked out over the land, peering into stands of trees, nooks and crannies in the rocks and tried to see into the deep shadows at the valley edges. All was still, as if waiting. They even saw no sign of the short deer that seemed abundant in the valley when they had entered it three days ago. A shadow had fallen over the formerly lush, verdant land.

Suddenly, above them, a slide of loose rock came rattling down the cliff face. The three threw themselves back against the rock under the overhanging foliage in a reflex action as a quarter of a ton of loose rubble came crashing down around them; nothing big enough to hurt them but too much in one fall to be natural.

Uther's bow creaked as he notched an arrow. Grout's crossbow squeaked quietly as he drew the string back and Egon's pistol clicked as the hammer was cocked.

They leaned out, laying on their backs on the ledge to get a view up the face above them. It was a near-vertical landscape of scrappy sandy rock and shreds of green plants. About twenty yards above them they could see a thinning cloud of dust where something had dislodged the loose rock. Three pairs of searching eyes scanned the rock face for movement.

They saw it almost at once, a long, gangrel, pale brown thing, like something unnaturally twisted together from an elf and a weasel but with a long wicked face. It was hugging the rocks upside down, almost mimicking the colour but not quite. Its arms ended in paws bearing three talons that were used to cling to the rock. Its eyes were pools of dark with a point of orange light. Its face also bore a thin wide crooked mouth that leaked a viscous liquid.

The drops left its slightly parted jaws, fell twenty yards and patted heavily onto a broad leaf near Grout's face. The Dwarf watched in horrid fascination as the leaf darkened as if burnt, twisted as if writhing slowly and snapped off the branch as if the bush had to reject it lest it be infected wholly.

'Now!' shouted Grout. There was a thwack, thud and flash as arrow, bolt and ball was shot up the rock face. At the same time it plunged down, simply letting go of the rock. All three missiles hit and all were deflected as if they had been shot at the stone itself.

The three rolled back into the rock face and drew weapons as the thing came crashing down through the trees and bushes in a hail of stone fragments and a cloud of fluttering leaves. It landed uncertainly on their ledge two feet in front of their faces. Uther had trouble drawing



B

his two-handed sword in the restricted space and it smacked him in the chest with an open-handed strike, slamming him back into the rock. Grout swung his axe into the thing's chest to have the blow turned as if it had struck the rock itself. Egon simply punched the thing in the face and despite his thick gauntlets he barked in pain at the impact.

It was enough however to put the thing off the edge and it leaned backwards, arms cartwheeling in the air to regain balance. Uther had managed to get his sword out of its scabbard and used it to poke it in the chest and soundlessly it opened its mouth and screamed silence as it tumbled backwards over the edge. Its clawed feet left the ledge and it hung in mid air for a moment then froze as if turned into a statue.

There was a shattering sound, and as they looked over the edge, they saw the shattered remains of the thing lying around a boulder.

'It was made of bloody rock,' declared Grout. 'I bloody well know,' winced Egon, hand out of glove examining his bruised knuckles.

'Aye, looks like it took more than a little knowledge and a wee fear of the dark from that elemental wizard with his stone-magic. But I seem to have killed it for you,' declared Uther, proud of his deduction and kill.

'So what is that?' replied Egon pointing down to the valley floor. The other two peered over and saw the thing, running over the grass and rock as if it were a dog.

'There's two,' replied Uther uncertainly.

'It's a different colour,' said Egon. The three looked again. It was indeed a light grey instead of sand brown.

'It's the same bloody one. Look at the boulder it fell on. That's granite that, see. Hard as nails, harder than this stuff.' The Dwarf picked up a fragment of the sandstone from his shoulder and threw it over the edge. 'It's taking on the rock it touches as a body. Its old body smashed and its spirit passed into the granite.'

'It's coming back,' replied Egon urgently, and it was. Clawing its way up the rock face it was scrambling as if all the armies of The Empire were on its heels, gripping bushes and jamming talons into crevices; it was scaling its way up towards them.

'Let's get into the tunnel, see. Find out if it really is scared of the dark,' declared Grout.

They ducked inside the low opening that had been partially shrouded by bushes. The floor was flat and littered with leaves. The walls were solid and the roof competent. Uther pulled a torch out of his pack and snicked the tarred end alight with his flint and steel. Ahead of them the tunnel just went down at a constant, comfortable, well-engineered incline. Behind them the square of daylight remained and they waited.

Shortly the gangrel creature scabbled into view and its silhouette could be seen in the entrance way. It crouched and glared at them. Its eyes glowed orange and it paced into the dark

slowly, peering at the three knights and their torch standing slightly crouched, facing them from fifteen yards away.

It came in on all fours. The only sound was the click of its new granite claws on the rock as it took one step at a time towards them. Its unnerving lack of vocal sound and bright orange eyes, illuminating the walls of the tunnel, was instilling a dreadful unease into the three knights. Then Uther dipped the torch to the ground and pushed it into the dirt with his foot, extinguishing the light. All went black and there was a frantic scabbling from ahead of them as the thing bolted back to the light and sat there pawing the entrance in soundless fury and despair.

'It is, you know; it's afraid of the dark,' Egon said brightly.

'Well that much is bloody obvious.' Grout snapped back.

'Did you see the way it froze in mid air when I pushed it off the ledge?' asked Uther.

'Yes we bloody saw it,' replied Egon testily. 'Sigmar's patience! Please! He pulls his weight in battle for once and wants a bloody reward.'

'Shut up Egon. Uther get that torch lit,' snapped Grout. Uther re-lit the torch as the Dwarf rummaged around in his pack and brought out the former wizard's book of notes. 'Look see, earth and air oppose each other, that thing froze like a statue when it was in the air and not touching the rock. When it smashed on that granite boulder below it animated again in a new granite body. This thing see, used that bloke Remus' magic and caught a bit itself; it is now subject to the laws of elemental magic.'

The two humans looked at their Dwarf companion, mystified as to where and when Grout had developed this sudden mystical insight.

'He cannot be bothered to keep an eye out for some girl's old man for you but can quite happily sit and read books all day,' said Egon to Uther.

'I don't read books!' protested the Dwarf. 'I work with rock. If you two blokes took your hands from your groins long enough to look about you, you might learn a thing or two. If you leave air still in a mine it goes bad and you cannot breathe it, same as if you throw a rock in the air it comes down again to the other rocks. It is not natural that it should sit up there in the air on its own. Bloody obvious!'

'Of course it comes down,' shouted Egon in reply, incensed at the stupidity of Grout's statement. 'The air is not thick enough to hold the rock up there. Water is thick enough to hold a boat up on its surface, but air is not; that's why boats float on water but not on air.'

'Rubbish...' retorted Grout.

'Aye, belt up the pair of you,' bellowed Uther. 'We are not Elementalists; we are knights. We shall have to find a knightly way of killing it.'

Egon and Grout stopped arguing and merely glared at each other as Uther led them back

further into the tunnel. It went back and down for a hundred or so more yards, always square never turning, with stable walls and a secure roof. Eventually it opened out into a wide round chamber about ten yards across. The floor was flagged and the walls made good with cut stone pillars. It was very definitely of Dwarfen construction. There was another tunnel entrance opposite the one they had entered by but a yard or so down it had been sealed up with roughly cut blocks and pale crumbling lime cement.

In the centre of the chamber was a solid wooden frame with a winch over a shaft three yards wide. As they peered down they saw the rock change from the pale sandstone to a crystalline red-orange. Grout picked up a piece of it that was lying on the floor by the pit and licked it.

'Salt. This is a salt mine.'

'You sure?' asked Egon accusingly.

'Lick that and be silent,' replied Grout.

Uther stood back and picked up a piece of the rock salt. He rubbed it for a moment and then dropped it on the floor and ground it easily on the flags into crumbs with the end of his warhammer.

'See this here salt is soft,' he looked down at the pit dug through the sandstone and into the salt; it was only about seven yards deep and widened out to about four yards at its bottom. He then looked at the entrance way and the few yards from the entrance to the pit. Egon seemingly saw Grout's thoughts written on his face and smiled. The two men nodded appreciatively to each other.

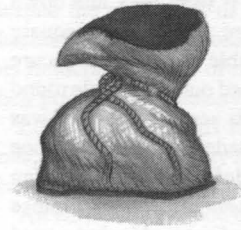
Egon pulled his pouch of powder out. He had several pounds in a securely waterproof leather bag.

'I think I know where the taint is coming from,' said Uther quietly and warily. He was staring at the tunnel that was blocked up a yard or so down; he could see the contrast in workmanship between the chamber and the wall blocking the tunnel. The other two walked a little closer to it and felt the uneasy sensation that came to those who had developed a more than passing familiarity with the taint of Chaos.

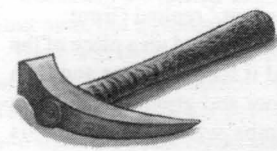
'See that? That is a good wall built in a hurry. They probably caved it in further back too. Plug the hole to whatever they mined into,' reported Grout quietly.

'I'm not arguing with you this time,' replied Egon neutrally.

The three of them poked the wall at arm and sword's length just to convince themselves it was solid. They could feel the seething malicious intent further back down there; behind wall and rubble, something was down there and it wanted to get out. They knew that the thing outside was wanting to escape this world. It wanted to escape the body of stone it was forced to adopt but to do so, to let it use its granite talons to claw away the plug, would allow the taint to pour into the valley.



A glance around the chamber revealed a large old Dwarfen copper tea urn in an alcove cunningly designed with a small chimney to duct smoke out the chamber and up the tunnel. The old dry wood of the winch was cut up and a small fire laid. Soon the three were discussing in a more civilised manner over tea and in short order a plan was made. Remus' notes were hopelessly beyond them so they agreed to apply their own style of fighting to what they understood of the elemental sphere of natural magic and try to 'gang-up' the elements against the stone-bound creature.



Later, Grout was creeping up the tunnel with a torch lit. The thing had not been seen or heard from in the three hours that they had been underground. He had left torches along the way burning, illuminating the passage with a trail of light to the waiting two humans inside.

Grout almost got to the entrance when the thing lunged in from the side of the exit, its long arms reaching out to rip open the Dwarf's face. Grout swung his axe, clanged it against the stony limbs and bolted back down the tunnel.

All the way the thing followed, scrambling on all fours after the Dwarf who could run upright in the low tunnel. Grout burst out into the chamber and narrowly avoided falling into the salt pit. The thing leapt out a second or two after, grinding its feet and hands on the stone in pursuit, when it sensed the seeping taint weeping through the rubble and the wall erected by the original miners.

The strength of sensation overwhelmed the thing's senses; it was blinded and stung by the aura of the power as if staring into the first rays of the dawning sun. Then the two humans leapt on it.

Uther swung his warhammer with all his might and smashed it into the thing's legs, making it fall sprawling onto its stony face. Grout grabbed a sack and fought to get it over its long head. Egon leapt on its back and wrapped a long thick bundle around its neck and one arm while Uther continued to smash his hammer into the back of its knees.

The strength it had was terrible. Once it had realised it was down it thrashed with the power of a warhorse. Out shot its arms, fists balled. Grout rolled to one side and an arm lashed out and smashed into his nose, breaking it for the

umpteenth time. One upward-lashing foot raked a claw up the outside of Uther's right forearm, ripping through the chainmail and leather. Egon rolled clear and gave one heave with both feet and tipped the thing forwards into the pit.

The thing thrashed even more. There was a second when it was hanging in mid air and it felt itself freeze. Unable to touch the rock under its feet the power left its limbs as it fell in free air. The sack had blinded it but it could see the chamber of rock in its head as if the earth was speaking to it.

Suddenly power surged through its limbs again as it crashed into the bottom of the salt pit. It felt the soft rocksalt meet its fall like a welcoming cushion. Tearing the sack from its face it looked up at the three faces above it and sensed something wrong. They were grinning; they were not afraid.

Egon turned away as he saw the fire of the fuse whiz into the main charge of powder draped around the thing's neck and right arm. There was an explosion and the stink of powder. Smoke billowed up out of the salt pit like an acrid gaseous mushroom. At the bottom lay the shattered fragments of a granite statue.

'Where is it?' rumbled Grout, impatiently hefting his hand axe.

'There, coming out of the wall!' Uther pointed. There indeed the thing was simply walking out of the wall. This time its granite hide was replaced by the reddish rocksalt. Its orange eyes burned up at them like fierce coals fanned by a gale.

'Get it, then!' shouted Egon.

At once Uther and Grout dropped down on the creature. Seven yards they dropped, crashing down onto the creature's shoulders. It went down but not for long.

Scrabbling wildly it rolled like a savage dog and lashed out at the man and Dwarf. This time long cruel talons clashed and ground into crumbs of salt against the steel chain and plate armour. Grout and Uther exchanged blows with it, the Dwarf hacking with his axe at its legs while the man pounded its arms with his warhammer. The soft rocksalt claws were no match for steel and the two knights broke pieces from it. Grout went to grapple it just after Uther brought his hammer down on one shoulder, shattering an arm from the body. It was no trouble at all for the powerful Dwarf to twist and snap the head from its shoulders.

'Got it, Egon, you about ready?' shouted Uther triumphantly.

'Hold your bloody horses and do not let it touch the wall,' he bellowed back.

'I bloody know,' shouted Grout.

The Dwarf was holding the head of the thing at arm's length, its once gnashing jaws now immobile but still seeping a little of the strange

clear ooze from its twisted lipless mouth. Uther got another sack and the head went inside. Shortly Egon lowered a rope down and the sack was tied on. Very slowly and carefully the sack was drawn back up without it touching the walls of the pit for fear the essence of the thing would escape into the rock to form a fresh body. The three knights doubted it would fall for the same trick twice and in any event Egon was out of black powder.

Uther and Grout climbed up and out to find Egon holding the sack over the tea urn that was furiously boiling water.

'So you reckon now we have separated it from the rock it is helpless?' asked Egon.

'Course it is, see. It just cannot move,' replied Grout. Egon very carefully removed the head from the sack and saw the two orange eyes burning still.

'Aye, its in there,' replied Uther.

'You had better be bloody right about this Grout,' Egon said grimly as he let the head slide from his fingers into the boiling water.

'See, get all the elements against it; get it off the rock so its vulnerable; then get some water bloody hot with fire; like I said, get the other elements to gang up on it. Let the salt dissolve into the hot water and it has nowhere to go. Must die, see,' replied the Dwarf smugly.

They stood and watched the red-orange head get smaller and smaller over the next few hours. One of them cut more firewood and another brought fresh water to top up the urn as it boiled away. It was dark outside when the head had finally dissolved away, burning eyes and all.

While the thick salt crust on the inside of the pan seemed inert enough the three knights were not so sure, although nothing happened to it or them on the long journey back to Middenheim and they reached the city reeking but in good health.



'Yes sirs, quite inert salt. You could eat it if you chose to, reported the Graf of Middenheim's senior alchemist. There were myriad glass wares and bottles scattered

about a bench. The copper tea urn sat in the middle. For a few seconds there was a satisfied silence as the three knights patted themselves on the back for dispatching the demon. It did not last long.

'See, I told you,' said Grout quietly.

'You bloody did not, you said it...' began Egon abruptly.

'You wee liar!' snapped Uther.

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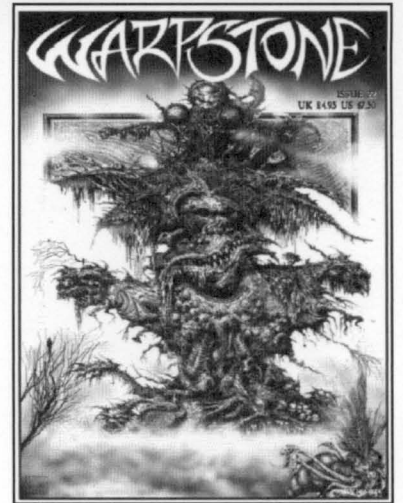
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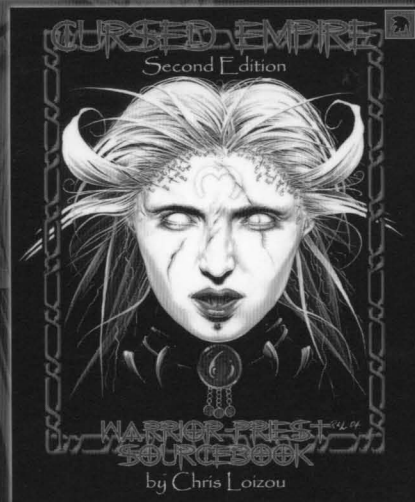
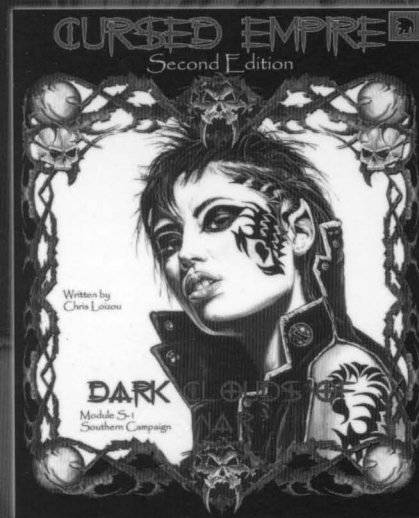
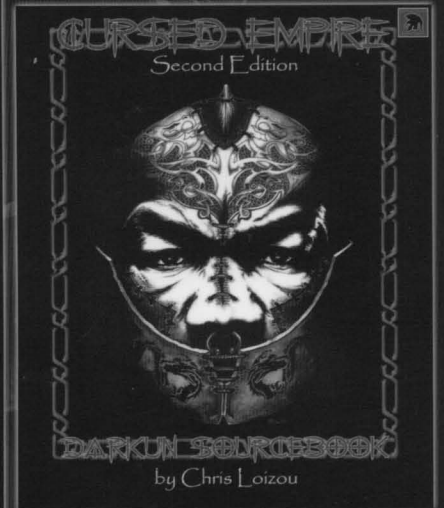
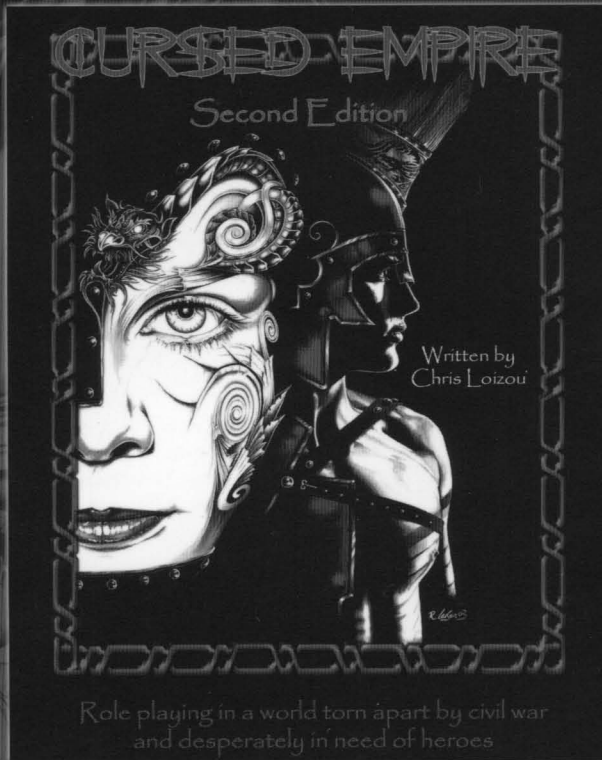
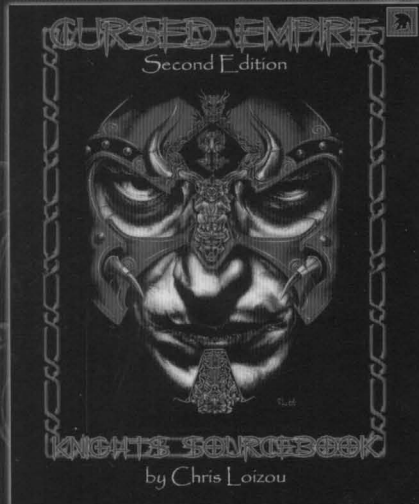
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