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EDITORIAL

By John Foody

Earlier in 2008, there was widespread surprise when it was announced that Games Workshop and Black Industries were no longer to publish WFRP. However, it was not long before Fantasy Flight Games were granted the licence to do so. As we go to press the first WFRP releases from FFG are eagerly awaited. (See pg. 5 for more on this story).

WFRP fans are used to 'dark ages' between publishers but in reality they are anything but. The WFRP community has a reputation for keen and vocal fans and this is reflected by the amount of material that they have produced, often to an extremely high standard. Without much looking, a newcomer to the game can find a wide variety of support material.

The material that Games Workshop and Black Industries produced was often viewed with mixed opinion. Overall, the quality of the material they produced largely improved during their tenure with a number of books likely to remain firm favourites for some time. I do not think it coincidence that one reason for this improvement was the growing involvement of those from the fan community.

With such support I am convinced that WFRP will continue to go from strength to strength. However, Warpstone will not be here for much longer to help the game grow. The last issue of Warpstone will be issue 30. I have always said that Warpstone would not just disappear and this will allow us time to fulfil our commitment to those who have taken out subscriptions. We plan to ensure that the last few issues are of the high quality you have come to expect. Then it is over to you.

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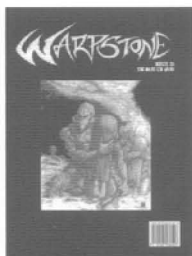
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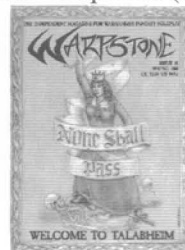
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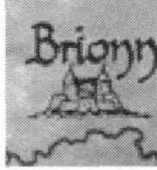
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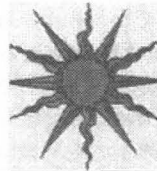


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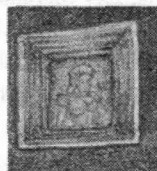


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ABBREVIATIONS

A	Number of Attacks	FP	Fate Points	IP	Insanity Points	SB	Strength Bonus	WFB	Warhammer Fantasy Battle
Ag	Agility	gc	Gold Crown	M	Movement	SL	Secret Language	WFRP	Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (Second Edition)
AP	Armour Points	GM	Game Master	Mag	Magic	SS	Secret Signs		
BI	Black Industries	Gu	Guilder (Marienburg Coinage)	NPC	Non-player character	SW	Specialist Weapon	WFRP I	WFRP First Edition
BS	Ballistic Skill	GW	Games Workshop	PC	Player Character	T	Toughness	WP	Will Power
Cl	Cool	IC	Imperial Calendar	R	Range	TB	Toughness Bonus	WS	Weapon Skill
Fel	Fellowship	Int	Intelligence	S	Strength	W	Wounds	xp	Experience Points

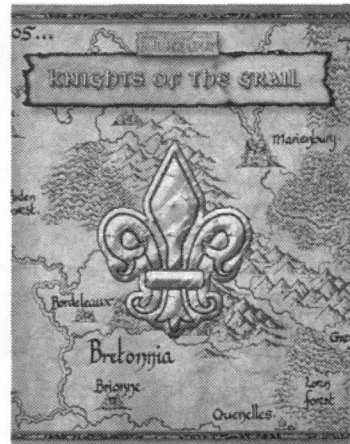
REVIEWS

Knights of the Grail: A Guide to Bretonnia

By David Chart

Published by Black Industries

Reviewed by Robin Low



By the time this review sees print, *Knights of the Grail* (KotG) will have been available sometime. I am confident most readers either already have a copy or have heard a great deal about it. For that reason, I will not waste space with any discussion of the major changes from the WFRP1 depiction of Bretonnia to the WFB version or a chapter by chapter analysis of contents. Instead,

I will focus on aspects striking me as particularly significant. However, I will state up front that despite the setting change and some serious underdevelopment of important aspects, KotG is a good supplement – that is, as I read it I was inspired and had ideas for characters, locations and plots that I would like to use in a game.

The founding of Bretonnia as a nation is presented as little more than a series of heroic battles between Gilles le Breton and his knights against various evil-doers. Seemingly, there is little disputing this was how the Bretonni were united into the Kingdom of Bretonnia; this is what Bretonnians believe and that is that. Laurent de Parravon, a “history scholar”, makes that clear in the opening quote of the history chapter, and it makes sense within the context of the setting as described. No formal scholarly groups within Bretonnia capable of debating the evidence are mentioned: the peasants lack the skills, the merchants are too busy making money, and the nobility has no desire to challenge the stories of their heroic ancestors; Laurent de Parravon is presumably a noble dilettante.

However, Bretonnia is not isolated from the surrounding lands, with connections to the Empire via the northeast coast and through the Gisoreux Gap and Axe Bite Pass, as well as by sea. Trade and social contact is certain to have taken place during the time of Gilles. With the recorded history of Bretonnia beginning around 930 I.C. and physical connections between Bretonnia and the Empire, it is highly unlikely that Imperial scholars (probably in the form of Ulrican and Sigmarite priests) failed to record stories coming out of this western realm. In a nutshell, there should have been some alternative viewpoints offered in the history chapter.

As it stands, the history of Bretonnia is as incredible as the Arthurian myths that inspired it. This lack of credibility is useful,

as GMs can invent their own truth behind the official Bretonnian history as the driving force for an entire campaign. Nevertheless, I would have liked the lack of credibility acknowledged in the text, together with hints or suggestions regarding what really happened with Gilles and his knights. This could have easily been done through quotes from NPCs and scholarly texts, thereby avoiding any charges of Black Industries actively deviating from the official WFB depiction of the setting.

Bretonnia’s social structure is staggeringly crude: there are nobles and there are peasants. The nearest we get to anything more complex is the rising merchant class (still regarded as peasants by the nobility) and the Herrimaults (peasant outlaws, some with revolutionary tendencies). The idea that this type of society has existed for the last one and half millennia is quite simply ridiculous. Unless, that is, some *major* force is at work keeping it that way. A god of Law, perhaps? A particularly contrary god of Chaos? Given what we know, a more likely candidate is the Fay – the Wood Elves are quite clearly manipulating the Bretonnians to some degree and have been doing so since the time of Gilles. They bless some Bretonnian knights with magical Gifts and take certain children, girls becoming Grail Maidens and the boys vanishing forever. To my mind, the activities (known and unknown) of the Fay are the only reasonable explanation for why Bretonnian society is so utterly stagnant. What’s lacking is any hint of why the Wood Elves might be doing this. One possibility is self-preservation, fear of the strength of the humans should they be allowed to develop, although their cousins in the Empire have survived well enough. The Fay/Wood Elves clearly have an agenda, potentially very interesting and useful to GMs, but KotG offers no explanation or suggestions.

The social structure highlights another underdeveloped area, namely merchants and mercantile activities. The propping up of the nobility by moneyed merchants is mentioned, and there are hints that the merchants of the city-port of l’Anguille are looking to Marienburg as an example of a city gaining its independence. However, merchants represent a major driving force for change within Bretonnia, both politically, with their desire for greater economic freedom and power, and socially, as they have the most contact with non-Bretonnians and new ideas. House Agnew, which is mentioned in *Sigmar’s Heirs* as a merchant house “famous across the Old World” and “key to the economic prosperity of Bretonnia”, is not mentioned here. There is a long tradition of scenarios beginning with PCs hired to protect trading caravans, but the opportunity to use trade and merchants as a hook for stories and to link the core setting of the Empire with Bretonnia is missed.

The new monsters in KotG have come in for some criticism. This seems unfair given the complaints about the absence of many WFRP1 beasts from WFRP2. Apparently we only want the old monsters back, no new ones created. I find it hard to

entirely agree with that when focusing on a new land, but criticisms can still be made with regard to what and how additions are created.

The feeblest new monster is the Iron Orc – just a tougher, stupider Orc – and I would agree this is pointless. The Artois Boar is entirely appropriate to Bretonnia, as boar hunting is traditionally French, but they are just beefed-up Wild Boars. Contrast this with the Bretonnian Truffle Hound, which is recognised as a War Hound variant and gets background instead of updated stats. The Derelich is of interest for its ability to manipulate its physical environment through illusion. Superficially, it looks like another undead creature with a gimmick, but it is appropriate to the Arthurian setting where ugliness and horror is often hidden by beauty. The failing here is the Derelich's presentation as a simple lure-and-eat-victim monster, but this does not prevent GMs using it as a more interesting manipulator and possible patron. The Undead Knockers, as the victims of mining accidents caused by greed and carelessness, are a scenario seed in themselves: the PCs are hired to clear a mine of monsters, but learn that the Undead can only rest when the mine owner, the real monster, is punished for failing to pay for more pit-props and support miners' widows. Of course, they are just presented as something else to beat up. Similarly, Chasm Spawn, Lakemen and Dracoleeches are combat monsters, offering little of interest without some effort on a GM's part.

The monster that has come in for most criticism is the Hagranyms: the intelligent, carnivorous horse. This is a shame as it is a perfect WFRP monster. It is rooted in folklore, a transfer of the malevolent fairy water horse to the mountains. It is a mixture of creatures – horse, carnivore and intelligent being – and frankly you do not get much more WFRP than that. As a race, the Hagranyms are manipulating the Orcs, and I see no reason why individuals should not hide their natures and manipulate NPCs and PCs for their own evil ends. And what happens when the PCs get entangled in a romantic relationship between a Knight's Pegasi and a Hagranyms? Who gets custody of the foal? Accusations of high fantasy be damned: that's pure WFRP.

Perhaps unusually for WFRP, KotG offers new powers for PCs in the form of Virtues of Knighthood and Grail Virtues, as well as Gifts from the Lady of the Lake. I am unsure whether this is a good thing or a bad thing in terms of the flavour of the setting, although I do think some degree of corruption or negativity should have been associated with these powers – in WFRP, every silver lining should have a cloud. However, their inclusion highlights the fact that WFRP has little to offer players looking for exciting character options beyond careers. For many, this is part of WFRP's appeal, but in terms of harsh financial reality players outnumber GMs and any game company needs to sell to as many of the potential audience as possible. How can Black Industries sell to players and GMs alike, without compromising the feel of the game? Answers to the forums, please.

For all its many good points, KotG is frustrating at times. It raises (perhaps unintentionally) some interesting questions regarding the bigger picture, but stubbornly refuses to answer

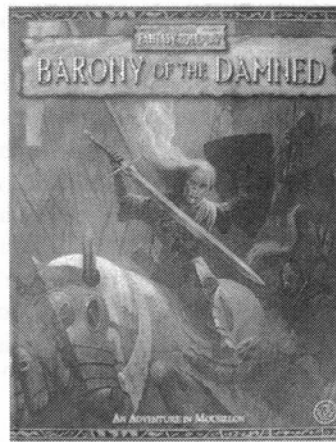
them. This would not be so bad if it was at least acknowledged that there is a bigger picture. On the plus side, GMs have some excellent starting points if they consider developing the setting and its future. Having released a scenario, it seems unlikely that WFRP will return to Bretonnia again in a hurry, so GMs are probably free to guide Bretonnia as they see fit without the worry of what future supplements might say.

Barony of the Damned: An Adventure in Mousillon

By Ben Counter

Published by Black Industries

Review by Steve Moss



Barony of the Damned was released by Black Industries to little fanfare. I had my doubts that a Bretonnian adventure would be useful to WFRP fans in general or to my group in particular. I was wrong. *Barony of the Damned* was full of surprises.

Written by Ben Counter, it is a 96 page black and white hardcover book with a colour cover of a female knight on horseback running the gauntlet

of Undead. Most of the interior artwork is by Tony Parker, the artist used for most of Black Industries' 96 page books to date. His artwork here is dark and evocative and captures the desolate and pestilent atmosphere of the Barony of the Damned. The maps are drawn by Andy Law and Hal Mangold, and most are well laid out and easy to read.

Barony of the Damned is divided into three main parts: the first is a guide to Mousillon, the second details Mallobaude the Black Knight and the third features the main adventure. Mousillon is a very bleak and desperate region of Bretonnia, a cursed place where the light of the Lady of the Lake does not shine and the people live in despair and squalour. The book does an excellent job of conveying the sense of stagnant gloom and misery that the inhabitants and visitors would feel in such a forsaken place.

The guide examines the society of Mousillon, religion, travel, an extensive history of the Duchy and various geographical locations. There is useful information on the various quarters of the city of Mousillon and the swamp, "Cordon Sanitaire", that separates Mousillon from the rest of Bretonnia. It details the inhabitants, including a couple of new Mousillon-specific careers. There is even a humorous mutation chart for providing the afflicted peasants with the "Mousillon look".

The second section of the book offers information about the renegade Duke of Mousillon – Mallobaude, the Black Knight – and his followers. He is intent on destroying Bretonnia's ruling order and with the help of Mousillon's nobles has begun amassing a revolutionary army. This section also contains descriptions of various individuals who are trying to help the

people escape the "Curse of Mousillon". The section concludes with descriptions of various creatures that can be encountered in the duchy and contains a few Mousillon specific beasts including a supernatural pig with attitude.

The third and final part of the book features the main adventure. The player characters are hired by a Bretonnian noble to travel into the cursed duchy of Mousillon, apprehend a bandit and return him to the noble - dead or alive. The NPCs are gritty, interesting and varied. Mousillon is populated with a wide selection of disgusting characters and a GM will have good fun portraying the various scumbags. Some of them even make *Blackadder's* Baldrick seem positively respectable. The adventure contains several well-developed locations, and after a brief time spent in the countryside most of the action takes place in and around Mousillon city. This is a well-crafted and interesting scenario with lots of moral ambiguity, plenty of dangerous situations for the characters and opportunities for challenging roleplaying. The characters will need to find creative solutions if they hope to achieve a successful conclusion to the adventure. Oozing macabre atmosphere and filled with lots of dark humour, *Barony of the Damned* has a similar feel to the Wittgenstein section of *Death on the Reik*. It is not for the squeamish; some of the disgusting characters and their actions may make you squirm. This is my kind of WFRP: this region of Bretonnia is not populated with virtuous knights or fair damsels. It remains true to the Mousillon described in the WFRP1 rulebook.

The book also contains sidebars filled with scenario ideas. These are a good resource for a GM who wants to go beyond the main adventure to offer the players the chance to delve deeper into the mire that is Mousillon. The Black Knight section of the book provides plenty of potential for further campaigning in Mousillon. Mousillon is so different to the rest of Bretonnia that the Knights of the Grail sourcebook is not necessary to enjoy *Barony of the Damned*. If a GM wanted to explore some of the background issues, such as the nobility or the Lady of the Lake then the sourcebook would prove useful, but it is not essential.

Although *Barony of the Damned* is set in Bretonnia, this book could be useful for campaigns in other parts of the Old World, transplanted to Kislev, the Border Princes or even the post-Storm of Chaos Empire.

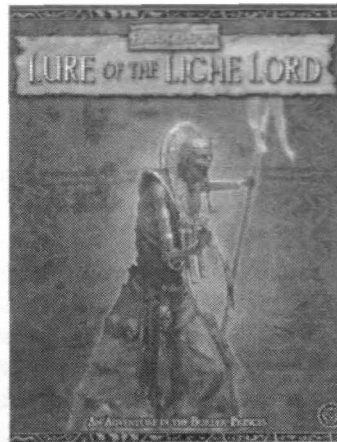
Despite assurances from Black Industries about better quality control, the book still contains typos, and is missing sections of text. The main two-page map of Mousillon city is also a disappointment. It is too dark, the text is difficult to read in places and the middle sections disappear into the spine of the book. Despite these mistakes, *Barony of the Damned* is one of the best books written for WFRP in years. It is a gritty and humorous book that examines the dirty underbelly of the abandoned region of Bretonnia. I knew that I was going to enjoy this book when I first read the description of how Mousillon peasants trap unfortunate birds on sticky trees. It made me laugh out loud, and that has not happened much while reading recent Black Industries output. This book was a pleasure to read and review. *Formidable!*

Lure of the Liche Lord

by Aaron Rosenberg

Published by Black Industries

Reviewed by Vidar Edland



Lure of the Liche Lord is a sourcebook for the tomb of a Nehekharan sorcerer-king, the Liche Lord, who once upon a time ruled the land of the Border Princes as a vassal king of the Nehekharan Empire. Although his kingdom is long gone and forgotten, scattered remains still exist throughout the Border Princes. One such place is the king's own tomb – "one of the most dangerous

tombs ever known".

The first chapter gives an overview of the rise and fall of the Liche Lord, describing how he came to conquer and rule the land of the Border Princes, how he was corrupted by power, and how he came to an end. The next outlines the region in the immediate vicinity of the hidden tomb, describing three present day neighboring Princes at conflict. This is followed by a short exploration of the region's geography, with a description of the central town at the western mouth of Mad Dog Pass. The fourth chapter explores ten ways to employ the Princes, their realms, and the Liche Lord's tomb in an adventure or campaign. The fifth chapter describes the immediate area around the tomb. There follows seven chapters mapping and detailing the seven levels of the Nehekharan royal crypt. The thirteenth chapter considers outcomes of the Player Characters meddling with the tomb and its inhabitants. Finally, there are three appendices; a bestiary of critters specific to the tomb, an extensive article on traps, curses and new tomb critters that do not occur in this particular tomb, and six pre-generated characters.

Lure of the Liche Lord promises "more than just an adventure, more than a setting sourcebook", saying "[it is] a toolbox, a resource to give you everything you need to build adventures or campaigns in this region of the Border Princes. But it is far more than just a 'dungeon' crawl." The book seems to be aimed at mature gamers, making the supplement something other than a monster hack in an interesting environment. But does the book deliver? The short answer is, no.

The book does not cover enough ground or give enough detail to be a sourcebook, and neither is there an actual adventure. The region of the Border Princes where the tomb is located is pretty much glossed over, apart from references to the three ruling Princes. It is more or less left to a single map to describe the region with very little detail about other locations. Intended to work as a springboard to the Liche Lord's tomb, the region deserves far more coverage than this.

Apart from the background story, a list of deities, and some general notes on tombs and mortuary practices, the Nehekharan civilization and culture is left largely unexplored.

Although ten adventure hooks are discussed and all of them interesting enough there is no actual adventure in the book. The adventure hooks present various motivations for the PCs to come to the region and seek out the tomb, but there is no story to tie it all together. An eleventh adventure hook in the book shows a bit more work, involving a Chaos cultist after an artefact in the liche's crypt. When approaching *Lure of the Liche Lord* I was looking forward to an adventure dealing with something other than Chaos so I was disappointed. The Chaos elements seem out of place and serve no purpose (as it turns out, there is an out-of-game reason for this and I discuss this later).

In the end *Lure of the Liche Lord* is all about the Liche Lord's tomb. Half of the book is given over to describing it in great detail, with a further twenty pages spent on critters and hazards. It follows a classic dungeon crawl formula, albeit beautifully mapped out and described in minute detail, with very little character interaction, but a whole lot of monster bashing and trap evasion. Traps are commonplace, and often poorly conceived. For example, spear-traps nail characters to the floor regardless of the damage caused and there is a hidden cache of scorpions that have seemingly survived there for millennia. Most rooms also have treasure of some kind, often reasonable items, but rarely required.

There are highlights. The possible interaction with the Liche Lord and another sentient inhabitant are high points in the tomb, and should be exploited for all they are worth. The artwork is generally good, with a few pieces standing out. Some is recycled from elsewhere, although a fair number of pictures reflect rooms explored or episodes that might occur. The writing is quite good, and the tomb has a fair amount of atmosphere. The most inspiring writing, however, occurs in chapter one where the Liche Lord's history is explained. This chapter is by far the strongest, setting a standard that the rest of the book fails to maintain.

By far the strongest point of *Lure of the Liche Lord*, for which the author deserves credit, is the quality of the antagonist. It is difficult to make good bad-guys, and to make a good bad-guy-monster is harder still. Nevertheless, Mr. Rosenberg achieves just this, and the Liche Lord is a character with a lot of potential. A fair amount of space is spent detailing his agenda, personality, power limits and role-playing potential. Contrary to what one might expect, the PCs do not have to fight him when finally encountered, but could interact with him in other (possibly more interesting) ways. This character briefly lifts the book above a dungeon hack, and it is sad that the rest of *Lure of the Liche Lord* does not achieve this standard.

It is not revealed until page 99 that *Lure of the Liche Lord* is based on the Warhammer novel *Night of the Daemon* (also by Rosenberg). This explains much of its quiriness, such as the apparent out-of-place occurrence of Chaos elements. These do not really fit the setting but presumably make more sense in the novel. More importantly, this novel might provide spoilers for *Lure of the Liche Lord*, and some kind of warning (or advertisement) on the book's cover is perhaps needed.

Lure of the Liche Lord promises something other than it delivers. If you want a dungeon crawl sourcebook, you could

do worse, but *Lure of the Liche Lord* spends too much time detailing the dungeon and too little on the setting and adventure. While it does offer an interesting *Liche Lord*, the book leaves it to the GM to work out his *Lure*.

FRAGMENTS

BRIEF REVIEWS AND NEWS

Bergsburg is 10!

The Bergsburg project is ten years old and to celebrate, all the background on the city is now available on PDF. Check it out at www.bergsburg.darcore.net/v2/pdfs.html.

All Change for WFRP

With the success of the *Dark Heresy* RPG seemingly assured thanks to excellent pre-sales and positive word-of-mouth, there was a sense of shock across various RPG forums when on the 28 January 2008, Games Workshop announced that the partnership with Green Ronin had been terminated and Games Workshop would no longer be producing RPGs. In the days following it became clear that Games Workshop were undergoing major internal changes with a number of familiar names leaving the company,

Once more WFRP was without a publisher. However, it was only a month before it was announced that Fantasy Flight Games (FFG) would be publishing WFRP and *Dark Heresy*, although they would not work as closely with Games Workshop as Green Ronin had done. FFG already had close ties with Games Workshop as FFG had republished a number of the old Games Workshop boardgames (*Fury of Dracula* and *Warrior Knights*). FFG are a well respected games company although one not that well known for RPGs (they currently publish *Grimm* and *Midnight* among others).

A little later Jay Little was announced as the person who would be taking the game forward as Senior RPG Developer for WFRP. Two initial WFRP releases were soon announced, *Tomb of Thieves* and *Shades of Empire*, and Jay began publishing regular Designer Diaries, where he also announced the *Career Compendium*. Check out FFG's WFRP site at www.fantasyflightgames.com/wfrp.

With the future of WFRP secure once more, the WFRP community eagerly began waiting to see how FFG perform and speculating about the possibility of WFRP3. We caught up with Jay and looked to gain some insight in to how WFRP would look under FFG. Jay's interview can be found in issue 8 of our sister publication Legion at www.warpstone.org/downloads/legion.htm. Jay has also been interviewed, along with other WFRP luminaries, by Adolphus Altdorfer at altdorfer.blogspot.com/search/label/Interview.

Lone Wolf

The team behind the long running but now defunct French WFRP magazine *Le Grimoire* are now publishing the French version of *Lone Wolf*. Check out www.legrimoire.net for more information.

TimCon VII

It was another successful year for the London two-day WFRP convention held in August. Once more the convention was over subscribed as numbers were limited due to lack of GMs to run games. It was good to see a number of new faces this year and hopefully the convention can expand in 2009 with TimCon VIII scheduled for May 2009. Further details can be found at www.shadow-warriors.co.uk.



A Changing Bretonnia



The Development of Bretonnia by Toby Pilling

In 2006, *Knights of the Grail* was published for 2nd edition WFRP by Black Industries as a sourcebook for Bretonnia. The country portrayed differed in many ways from the glimpses offered in the original rulebook of 1986. Over that twenty year period, Bretonnia has undergone several changes, probably of a greater scale and significance than any other Old World nation. This article attempts to chart those changes.

Origins

Four pages were devoted to Bretonnia in the original WFRP rulebook, along with an outline of the geography (which has changed little over the years) and the mention of Gilles le Breton as founder of the nation; it was a depraved, decadent and corrupt society under the misrule of King Charles de la Tête d'Or III. Basically, a downtrodden, diseased mass of squalid peasant scum toiled beneath a pleasure-obsessed aristocracy of bewigged, dandified fops. One quotation sums it up.

The Bretonnian ruling classes are ridden with corruption, willfully blind to the decay around them and sordidly decadent in every way. Painted fops parade their finery amongst the mud and dung of the streets, ladies sit like dolls in shining carriages, bedecked in glittering jewels and tall white wigs, while hiding their ghastly pox-marks and worse disfigurements behind rouge and white powder. The taint of Chaos is less apparent in Bretonnia only because its citizens remain blind to it, unbelieving and unwilling to accept its dreadful implications, hiding their fear behind extravagance and tawdry display.

WFRP 1st edition rulebook

The historical influence of France placed Bretonnia sometime between the 17th Century cavaliers and musketeers of Louis XIV, and the pre-revolutionary 18th Century excesses of the court of Louis XVI. Bretonnian NPCs in early scenarios and campaigns confirmed this historical anachronism (as Bretonnia borders the early renaissance Empire), but along with the

existence of the dark ages Viking type Norse, we had learnt to live with it.

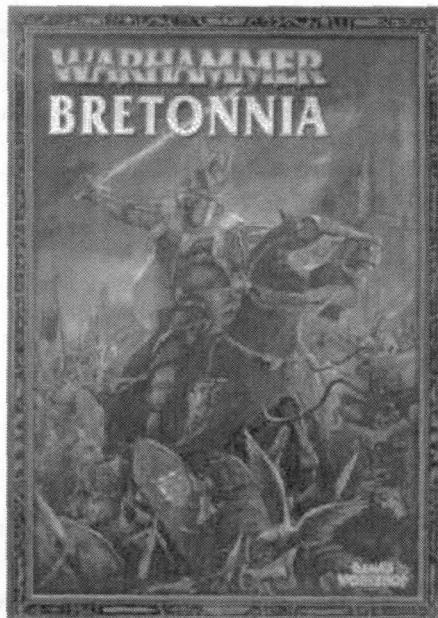
Cities were described as virtual cess pits and dens of iniquity – even Brionne, the City of Thieves, seemed little worse than any of the others.

The society then was certainly different from the Empire, and grounded in a pseudo-historical alternative version of France. As alluded to in the above quote, despite these extremes, it was claimed that “the mark of Chaos is less apparent than (for instance) the forests of the Empire.” Hmm... try telling that to any visitors.

Going Medieval

The constant revision and re-writing that has changed the WFB version of the world over the years has certainly influenced the latest incarnation of WFRP, as we shall see. Originally though, WFB Bretonnia took its cue from the portrayal in WFRP. Whilst Bretonnia was not even mentioned in *Ravens Hordes* (the army book for 2nd edition WFB), later that year (1987) the 3rd edition WFB rulebook was released, and contained a brief snippet on Bretonnia. This mirrored the earlier WFRP

description – except in one small respect. It was described how the excesses of the current king and aristocracy were a far cry from the earnest nobility of his forefathers – a recent aberration, therefore. No doubt a Bretonnian scribe harking back to the



Bretonnia in Warpstone

Some back issues of *Warpstone* contain pieces that describe and discuss the changing face of Bretonnia. Issue 7 has both a review of the WFB 5th edition army book, and an article by Robert Clark on the History of Warhammer, which covers a changing Bretonnia, amongst others. Issue 23 then reviews both the WFB 6th edition army book, and the gathered writings of the web based Bretonnia project, co-ordinated by Peter Butterworth.

golden age of yesteryear, decrying the fecklessness of modern youth, penned this addendum.

The first big change though came not in 1996 with the 5th edition army book, as is generally believed, but five years earlier with the publication of *Warhammer Armies* for 3rd edition WFB, which contained a Bretonnian army list – the first chance gamers had had to do battle with and buy figures for that nation.

The description of Bretonnian society was tiny – a few paragraphs – but gone was any mention of corruption, decadence, Charles de la Tête d'Or III or, indeed, wigs. Whilst there existed no Arthurian type influences as yet, the Bretonnian soldiery had regressed to a technological equivalent of France in the late 14th Century. This was a slip of several centuries, and placed Bretonnia behind the Empire – it could now officially be considered backward. The army contained few if any fantastical elements, bar a male wizard figure, though it could have cannons and crossbows. Indeed, the figures were useable for anyone considering buying lead to re-fight Crécy or Poitiers. It is interesting that even when considering an identical troop type that it shared with the Empire – crossbowmen – the range of figures were different; Bretonnian crossbowmen were depicted in simpler, less advanced armour.

Quite why GW decided to make this change, one cannot say, though a guess may be hazarded. It could be that an army based upon the musketeers model might have been an anachronism too far; something that did not fit. The decision to go medieval also allowed GW to devise a range of figures that would allow the artistically inclined to practice their heraldry designs – an important factor when considering painted armies. The Empire's knights tend to belong to various Templar-like orders, whereas Bretonnia gives the painter more chance to be creative.

Whatever the reasons, this was a significant move for WFRP, though it probably did not appear so at the time. The game was out of print undergoing its own dark age. Even a medieval Bretonnia had its historical precedents in France of course. But the open decadence and corruption had gone.

For the Lady!

One can only assume that modelling the Bretonnians so closely on medieval France was considered a mistake by GW, for the army disappeared without trace in 4th edition WFB. In truth, it needed more fantastical elements to be part of a fantasy game. Nigel Stillman wrote the *Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia* book that came out to support 5th edition WFB in 1996. It is a publication that is still cursed by many WFRP fans to this day.

Stillman certainly introduced many fantasy elements, but these were virtually all derived from the legends of King Arthur. Gilles the Unifier took up the Arthur role, with the various dukes becoming his trusty knights. The Lady of the Lake, the Green

Warhammer Fiction

Bretonnia is the setting for *Errant Knight* by Anthony Reynolds and has appeared in a number of short stories by Brian Craig:

A Gardener in Parravon

The Phantom of Yremy

Who Mourns a Necromancer

The Light of Transfiguration

Knight, Morgiana the Fey and Mordred (Maldred) all appeared, along with the Grail itself. Not only that, but the tone chosen did not reflect some of the darker elements of the Arthurian mythology, which after all contains incest, rape and numerous betrayals. Instead, a rather shiny version was propounded:

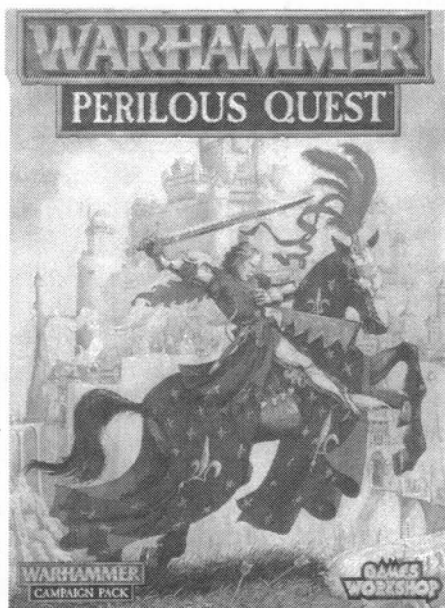
"Castles will often be magnificent, with gleaming white stone and gilded roofs surmounted by fluttering banners."

Many felt it was all a bit Disneyish, and could not reconcile this image with the dark and gritty world of Warhammer.

There was plenty of fighting, but on a heroic scale against villainous armies and monsters – indeed, part of the 'rules of honour' that were outlined forbade a knight to draw a sword against a fellow Bretonnian (except in tournaments or trials by combat), allow himself to be captured or retreat from the enemy.

The aforementioned horror that many in the WFRP community felt at this new incarnation, gave birth to the Bretonnia Project, conceived and led by Peter Butterworth. A web-based resource penned by multiple contributors that came on-line in 2000, it provided background information and resources for those who preferred the original, corrupt version. As the years have progressed, it has also introduced elements of the current WFB background, where it is deemed they don't clash overly – for example, the Lady of the Lake is portrayed as a Water Spirit that has become worshipped as a deity. Archaic knights also do exist in the rural backwaters, and some magic items gleaned from WFB army books are outlined as artefacts of yore.

Arthurian Bretonnia also presented some problems to Hogshead Publishing under James Wallis, who had picked up the license to publish WFRP again. A Bretonnian sourcebook was planned, but bringing in the shiny knights in order to gain GW's permission to publish was difficult to reconcile with the desires of many roleplayers, most of whom preferred the original, decadent version. The option chosen was to set the sourcebook around the same time as the WFB timeline, with the rotten Charles having usurped the noble Louen, but with the possibility of Louen re-appearing. Various scenarios to enable this were discussed, from a man in an iron mask in a dungeon, to a returning crusader.



Clive Oldfield was writing a draft for Hogshead, which in the end never saw print. Here follows an amended and clarified quote from him describing the ill-fated sourcebook, taken from a Strike-to-Stun forum posting of 2006, when the new WFRP sourcebook, KotG, had just been released.

"Apart from the standard guide to the land thing which was pretty straight forward (if mostly ripped out of French history and Dumas movies) most of the arsing about was involved in coming up with some sort of rationale for the Lady. I had her mostly as a nationalistic noble-class cult similar to the Sigmarite cult but worse and more exclusive. But I also had her as an earth deity version of Rhya and also as Shalya as part of a triad of river spirits/goddesses.

"I included the grail quest but mostly as metaphor in a way similar to what I'm expecting from Knights of the Grail. But all the no gunpowder and knights in shining armour stuff was put down to martial code and reactionary legislation rather than any reflection on the technology of the place."

Anyway, regarding Stillman's army book, transposing Logres onto Bretonnia did present some interesting and amusing threads. Bretonnia was revealed as archaic, virtually trapped in a time warp, with an obsessive and faintly ridiculous ruling class. Being medieval, some of the changes made sense too – large urban cities are drivers of change and innovation, so urban Bretonnia became little more than walled towns or large castles, with few craftsmen and scant industry. They lost most of their dark edge too, though glimpses remained – the Duke of Bordeleaux would waste no opportunity to summarily raze the slum areas of his town, for example.

Disney, Jaberwocky and Gormenghast

Years passed, and the 6th edition of WFB appeared, along with, in 2003, a new army book. There is an interview on the Games Workshop website with the author, Anthony Reynolds, which is quite revealing and one passage is worth quoting at length. It appears that even GW thought that Bretonnia had been too high fantasy and did not fit in with the rest of their brand.

"Just flicking through the Bretonnian book, you may notice that Bretonnia seems to be a slightly darker place than it had been in recent years. The peasants look that little bit more hunched, that little bit more, well, ugly and downtrodden (insert joke about the 'closeness' of peasant families here if you must). The knights are still shining paragons of virtue fighting against the horror of the world, but they are a bit more hardened and gritty than before. The castles look a little more Gormenghast or Jabberwocky than Disney. This was a conscious decision made early on in the project, for we felt that this fits better with the Warhammer world. Now, no one wanted the pendulum to swing so far that Bretonnian knights were depraved, arrogant and corrupt, but darkening up their lives a little would make

them more interesting and able to gel better with the rest of the Warhammer world. I thought that emphasising the contrasts of Bretonnia would really work to carry across the character of the place. The knights make the peasants look even more destitute than before, and the peasants make the knights look even more saintly and heroic."

The pendulum did indeed swing. Bretonnia gained a few rough edges, which were noticeable throughout the art and text, though probably not enough to satisfy most roleplayers. For example, whilst in 5th edition an evil weapon wielded by an Orc warlord had felled Gilles, now an unknown hand – possibly one of his own knights – had cast the weapon. A little more ambiguity had been inserted – moral ambiguity too. The Fey's practice of kidnapping children with magical powers is introduced to a now extremely superstitious society, as is the presence of the fanatical religious cult of peasant Grail pilgrims. Having said that, many

WFRPers would have indeed preferred the Knights to become 'decadent, arrogant and corrupt', arguing that such was their original incarnation. At least things appeared not to be as unbalanced as they were before.

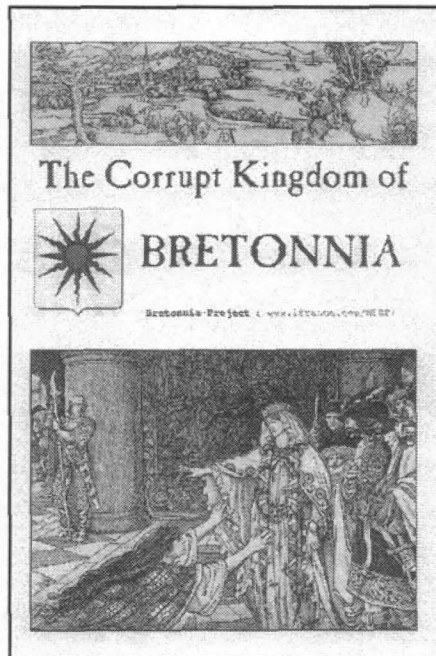
Knights of the Grail

And so to the recent WFRP sourcebook, penned by David Chart. This is based upon the aforementioned WFB view of Bretonnia, which many would claim is an uninspiring source of raw material. As David himself indicated in some notes posted on the Black Industries website; the difficulty was not devising distinguishing features to make the Bretonnia different from the Empire, but somehow maintaining the intangible Warhammer feel:

"Warhammer is grim and perilous. Thus, the life of a peasant in Bretonnia needed to be grim and perilous. On the other hand, so did the life of a knight, even when he wasn't in battle. Feudal society is perfect for this, with authority based on personal loyalty and family connections, and the possibility that an insult over dinner could develop into a war between two Dukedoms. Knights can do whatever they like to peasants, near enough, so peasants try to avoid the notice of their lords as far as possible. That means applying their own 'justice'. Merchants do not really fit into the system, and therefore have a permanently insecure position."

The pathetic lives of the peasantry are certainly emphasised in contrast to the nobility's privileges, though no city is described as containing dens of iniquity or sprawling slums. Religious practices other than the ubiquitous worship of the Lady are also outlined, and most welcome.

There are also a few more attempts to darken the tone; the children snatched are now babes rather than pre-pubescent adolescents, and the dukes number amongst themselves adulterers and even a possible cultist. The main addition though



is the role of the Elves of the Loren forest as manipulators and string pullers. The 'big secret' is never revealed, but freedom is deliberately given to GMs to come up with one of their own.

The question then is: How far do you want the pendulum to swing?

My centime's worth

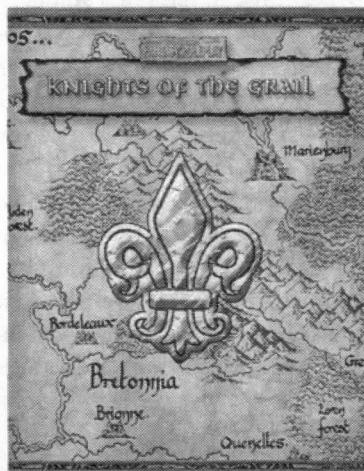
For many, much of the reason for WFRP's attractiveness over the years has been its dark and gritty nature, un-heroic PCs, moral ambiguities and the threat of the chaotic enemy within – a hidden corruption and danger behind the façade of society's normalcy. Though the shining knights of Stillman's Bretonnia are too powerful, virtuous and one-dimensional to satisfy that criteria, I wonder if the original featuring Charles de la Tête d'Or III did either? In that version, corruption wasn't hidden at all – it was all in your face. As obvious a grimy malignancy in its own way as a paladin's pristine purity. Neither could contain many surprises or subtlety as a result.

Regarding historical precedents, whilst the original is certainly inspired by real world France, so is the medieval one. I'd contend that the latter is actually more likely, if one accepts that the Elven influence helps exert a brake on technological innovation or societal change.

Also, an often forgotten fact is that one major aspect of Bretonnian society hasn't changed at all over the last twenty years – the abject plight of its peasantry, who make up the vast majority of the populace. That they remain as downtrodden under the saintly Louen Leoncoeur as the despicable Charles, provides much food for thought.

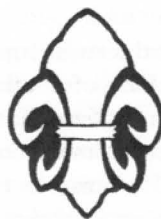
It's the Arthurian influences that are the big ones, and change the flavour of Bretonnia the most. But though often scoffed at, these needn't necessarily be harmful. Much of the invention of the Arthurian mythology was French in origin anyway – we're sending Chrétien de Troyes with his own legends back, but with a Warhammer twist. The key to making the whole thing work is, quite aptly, the secret of the Grail. Who knows what is going on with the Elves and the Lady? The purer the façade, the more shocking the exposure

of corruption. In that respect, the Bretonnia of Knights of the Grail is an even better vehicle for surprising revelations than the Empire. Your imagination really is the limit, and the deliberate ambiguity about the Elven conspiracy let's you use it. My advice is to do so. As dark and gritty as you like.



Errant Land

Adventuring in Bretonnia by Toby Pilling



Apart from a foray into Kislev as part of the Enemy Within campaign, the Empire has long been the default setting for adventuring in the Old World. With the advent of WFRP 2nd edition, Bretonnia gained a sourcebook – the first country outside the Empire to do so – to enable and encourage GMs to run sessions within that nation. The take up of that opportunity though seems to have been rather slight. One reason is that the majority of source material is still Empire-centric. However, there appear to be other reasons, often to do with the 'feel' of Bretonnia, which make players and GMs shy away from it.

Whether one follows a WFRP 1st edition slant – 'The Corrupt Kingdom of Bretonnia' – or that presented in the modern WFB-influenced 'Knights of the Grail', this article attempts to discuss the issues surrounding campaigning in that land of plenty. It will also, I admit from the outset, aim to encourage it

Physical Differences

The Empire's own geography and ecology do more than just provide a descriptive setting – they inform the atmosphere and mood of the whole WFRP hobby. Beneath slate grey skies, dark, forbidding forests fill the landscape. Each village, town or city perches precariously on the edge of a mysterious arboreal realm, populated by creatures of nightmare, shunned and feared in equal measure. Roads and rivers form slender ribbons of communication linking society – ribbons often cut when the numberless and terrifying denizens of the forest emerge.

It is this dark, Teutonic forest that has done so much to colour WFRP, evoking the sense of a civilisation under threat from the unknown, hidden enemy lurking just beyond sight. Paranoia becomes second nature – the gloomy trees are indeed grim, the threat they conceal perilous. The landscape affects the whole game.

Regardless then of the society that resides within, Bretonnia's many physical differences to the Empire comprise the first hurdle on the path to it being considered a useful adventuring setting. Both editions of the WFRP rulebook are quite clear on this, to quote them in turn: *The rolling hills and serene valleys of*

Brettonnia produce abundant crops and fine wines...’ and ‘The forbidding forests and frowning mountains of the Empire are nowhere to be seen.’

Of course, each then quickly re-assures us that plenty of peril still exists, despite the lack of any obvious signs. It remains a fact however, that the lazy, hazy pastoral bliss portrayed, cannot but alter the mood. Images of verdant valleys of golden, rippling corn beneath an azure sky and blazing sun, do not easily evoke claustrophobic fear and paranoia. This is unavoidable – indeed, I would label it as the major difference in the Bretonnian WFRP experience, whether there is a soaring pegasus on the horizon or not.

It is true that Kislev too lacks a forest mantle and still provides a traditional WFRP setting. However, whether it is the freezing winters, the arid, featureless plains, the sparseness of settlements or the physical closeness to the Chaos Wastes, that country has always managed to seem under immediate threat. Bretonnia, as a veritable land of plenty, presents problems.

These are exacerbated by the lack of any viable threats, internal or external. The Empire and Kislev shield Bretonnia from the Chaos incursions, just as Marienburg acts as a buffer against Imperial aggression. Estalia and Tilea are just conglomerations of independent, bickering city-states. All Bretonnia has to contend with are a few Orc and Beastman tribes scattered about in those hills, mountains and forests that do exist. This cosy existence has enabled the nobility to become self-obsessed, pursuing increasingly eccentric interests.

What brooding menace does that leave to threaten humanity, one wonders?

It may well be, therefore, that the atmosphere and type of adventures and campaigns within Bretonnia need to be different; simply re-writing Empire material does not easily slot in.

There are areas of wilderness and risk within Bretonnia – the Massif Orcal and the forests of Châlons and Arden, for example – around and within which standard forces of darkness can be concealed. But to really get a taste of Bretonnia, the aim should be to insert something unique to that country.

Traversing the Hinterlands

The lack of hiding places away from ubiquitous humanity has one surprising effect in Bretonnia – the various nasty beasties that populate the neighbouring Empire’s forests are far rarer. This contradicts the accusations directed at KotG Bretonnia for its alleged high fantasy slant. It must logically be true, and bears repeating – the Empire holds many more fantastical creatures, because of its much larger expanse of wilderness.

Some interesting and amusing plot threads flow from this thought. The monster killing exploits of various magnates can seem less than heroic, and more like the big game hunting of the Victorian era. One imagines hunting seasons being strictly enforced, and Dukes with enormous retinues heading into the forests to bag a fearsome critter – with the help of their supporting armies, of course. Naturally, they do not want these creatures to become extinct and end their glorious fun. Who knows – to provide a healthy supply of game, perhaps some breeding is going on, or is being licensed? The fiends only prey

on the peasants after all, and they will be deliriously happy when the Duke reveals the head of the beast he has ‘vanquished.’

This general lack of standard WFRP foes leads on to a second point that is often missed by many – the main enemies, allies, patrons, protagonists and passers-by the PCs will come across are predominantly human: this in a setting that is often condemned as possessing few moral quandaries.

Whatever misdeeds the PCs are investigating therefore will nearly always uncover at its heart the simple old truth – man’s inhumanity to man. Orcs, Skaven or Beastmen need rarely feature. How more grey a morality can one get?

Urban Terror

Another physical difference, though one wholly man-made, is the composition of cities. Much of WFRP is set in an urban environment, and the advanced Imperial cities – thriving hubs of trade, culture, learning, science and innovation – are virtually a trademark.

Within Bretonnia, the cities reflect the differing versions of their societies. The corrupt version was similar to the Empire, though the cities were much darker – each one was described as little more than a teeming slum of vice and degeneracy. Indeed, a visiting Skaven would probably find little difference between the above and below ground versions. Whilst adventuring can still take place in these familiar settings, the grimness is rather unremitting.

The Bretonnian cities of KotG are less one-dimensional, but cannot claim to be as advanced as the Empire’s. Artisan, craft and merchant guilds are less prevalent due to the stultifying influence of a conservative aristocracy. In this respect, they are far closer to the *Warpstone* version of Talabheim, with its hidebound nobles clinging to power, than they are to Nuln or Altdorf. Even then, any Imperial visitor would declaim them as backward, and so would veteran WFRP players. There are not even any colleges of wizards, thanks to the Elves.

Once again, this means that the feel must be different to the more established WFRP one. There are no easy answers to get around this, though the medieval style does open up the option of courtly intrigue amongst the magnates of the realm, alongside the ever present bickering amongst religious cults.

Perhaps the best cities to offer traditional WFRP experiences are the great ports, which are also the most open to outsiders. Trade always acts as a dynamic; indeed in l’Anguille (which boasts the Elven lighthouse and ruins – useful sources of local colour and plot threads), the Brethren of the Lighthouse are a powerful merchant club who would like nothing more than to emulate Marienburg and declare l’Anguille a free city. Involving PCs in these nascent stirrings of modernity and self-determination could be most interesting – the gathering of allies, warships, gunpowder weapons and mercenaries would, one imagines, be a pre-requisite of any declaration of independence.

Societal Differences

Within Bretonnia, whichever version (Charles or Louen) you follow, the gulf between the nobility and the commoners is

extremely stark – more so than historical France. A better model might be that of feudal Japan – more caste than class. This has repercussions both for adventuring and party make-up when the PCs are from Bretonnia.

Social interaction is generally important in RPGs. Within Bretonnia though, we are informed that nobility and commoners rarely interact to any depth at all – most nobles deem peasants below their notice, who in turn do their best not to elicit any such scrutiny for fear of their awe-inspiring betters. Such behaviour does not great dialogue make.

The implication for party make-up is also clear – thought must go into how the PCs will interact with each other, as well as the stratified society. The commonly found eclectic group of adventurers rolled up at random, might find it difficult to function. Three main group archetypes exist:

Scum of the earth

A party of peasants can comprise a random assortment of careers, or display more of a theme. Two such that work particularly well in Bretonnia are that of the outlaw band, or the revolutionary group. After all, usually in the Empire (or indeed most fantasy RPGs) the great struggle is against change, whether it is fighting against the conquest of Chaos or evil. In Bretonnia though, the social stratification is so blatantly unjust that the struggle can be *for* change, against the oppressive status quo. Again, that such low fantasy campaigning works well in

Bretonnia helps refute the allegation that all it is about is shiny Pegasus Knights.

Whilst peasant PCs will also find it easy to interact with each other and their own class, they will of course suffer myriad disadvantages in any discourse with nobles. GMs will have to build their campaign plans around this obstacle, and make sure their players know their characters' limitations.

Band of Brothers

Another option that works well (especially for KotG) is the opposite of the above – the whole party start as errant knights. We could call this the Pendragon option. Whilst they may be devoted to the ideals of chivalry and the Lady (with an unhealthy fervour and fanaticism), I feel fun can be had marking their journey from romantic glory seekers to grizzled veterans. No one could ever describe historical knights – famous seekers of glory, adventure, riches and bloodshed – as being dull, shiny paladins. Bretonnian knights similarly deserve not to be dismissed with a sneer as one-dimensional boors.

Once again, they will have the advantage of being able to interact fully and openly between themselves and to move in high society. The disadvantage is that they will usually garner merely a few grunts and obsequious bows from peasants they wish to question – it is unlikely they would be able to find out anything going on below the surface of peasant culture. Again, GMs must take this into account when structuring adventures.



Master and servant

The third themed PC group that is particularly viable when role-playing in Bretonnia is that of the noble and his retinue. One PC takes the role of the leader (normally a knight) and the others have peasant type servant roles about him (or her, or a her masquerading as a him – this is Bretonnia, after all). This option enables a group to bear more diverse career types, and can allow more interaction with NPCs of differing class. The challenge though comes within the party this time, as the egos of many players dislike subservient roles, or deferring to leaders they do not always agree with. The leader too must be prepared to slap down insolence, and not merely take any and all wisecracks or jibes. It encourages therefore role-playing within the group, either to the campaign's benefit or detriment, depending on the role-playing skills and personal qualities of the players. Another option is that the noble is an NPC and his servants PCs.

Kings of Conspiracy

Conspiracies are a constant theme in WFRP, and here again Bretonnia and the Empire differ. The big Imperial conspiracies tend to be instigated by Chaos, Skaven or Vampires, usually acting through their proxies – human cultists, hidden amongst society. Indeed, there are many who feel that cultists have become an overused plot device, so prevalent are they. The old corrupt Bretonnia would also follow this model; though from the description, it seems there are few plots the Ruinous Powers could fiendishly devise to make things much worse.

But whilst Chaos cults exist too in KotG Bretonnia, a whole new grand conspiracy is available for GMs to utilise: that unholy trinity of the Grail, the Lady and the Elves (see pg. 16).

Even if one takes a relatively benign view of Elven influence and motives, it is a fact that the social system they help maintain secures the constant bondage and suffering of the peasantry, whilst those children who display any propensity for magic are kidnapped. This moral ambiguity is far from the black and white that many declaim Bretonnia for. Things can get much worse with a little imagination, and I have already outlined one darker option for the Grail secret elsewhere in this publication.

Regarding the influence of the Ruinous Powers, there are some unique Bretonnian slants.

The knightly society is a martial one that delights in battle and exults feats of arms. It would not be difficult therefore to conceive of Khornate followings developing as the cult of choice for the young, up and coming warrior – particularly those who feel their ambitions or aptitudes are being unfairly ignored or thwarted. Perhaps a few failed or disillusioned questing knights might also fall prey to the lures of easy advancement.

Amongst the peasantry, it could be that the large-scale deformity, disfigurement, illness and plague they suffer from, is actually a cause or symptom of Nurgle worship. The boils and buboes become then either blessings, or afflictions to be warded off with sacrifice and dark ritual.

Another interesting option is that the blatant unfairness of the Bretonnian feudal model may lure many to worship

Tzeentch, knowingly or unknowingly. Indeed, it would really blur the moral boundaries to have the PCs as a group of revolutionary Tzeentch worshipers, dedicated to overthrowing the oppression of the knights and their Elven masters.

A last option is that of the Horned Rat. I can foresee an escaped human slave of the Skaven observing the total squalor of the Bretonnian peasant and comparing it unfavourably to his previous fate. Such an individual, if suitably gifted, could well both deal with Skaven emissaries and inspire a devoted following, dedicated to the overthrow of knightly dominion, in hope of a less wretched existence beneath un-human masters.

Why Bretonnia?

Adventuring in Bretonnia alters the WFRP experience, far more than doing so in Kislev, or even Lustria. The differences I have described are not just cosmetic – I contend that they fundamentally alter the feel of the game. Whilst a change can be good, if GMs and players want a break from standard WFRP fare they will generally switch systems – a bit of Conan, Traveller, Runequest or whatever. The question that GMs will then ask is: I like the WFRP atmosphere as it is, so am not interested in change for its own sake. If I want a feudal game, I'll play Harn. If I want Knights, I'll run Pendragon. Why should I run stuff in Bretonnia?

In reply, let me first say that there is a rich vein of humour that has gone largely untapped in the Bretonnian background. Critics call it po-faced, but I feel there is something ridiculous about pompous Knights propounding one romantic ideal, whilst living another. Blinkered and archaic, they remain in denial about technological advances and are wilfully ignorant about the plight of the peasants. One of WFRP's selling points that sets it apart from Harn, Pendragon and the rest is supposed to be black humour – Bretonnia has much potential for it.

The main reason to campaign in Bretonnia though is the opportunity to surprise your jaded players. The freedom you have in concocting a secret of the Grail can be utterly at odds with the stereotypical blandness of shiny knights. There is a unique chance to create the conditions for a classic loss-of-innocence campaign, leading to searing revelation.

In most WFRP backgrounds, corruption is largely taken as a given – its exposure too often a recurrent adventuring theme. Players respond to and get used to this – they soon even expect most patrons to be baddies.

In Bretonnia, it is the very stereotype of a nation of strait-laced do-gooders that enables a truly epic campaign to be devised. This works particularly well if the PCs are all members of the ruling elite. Once the secret of the Grail is revealed, players will then face a choice – uphold the status quo that preserves their families' privileges, or fight to topple everything they previously supported? That is what I call a moral dilemma.

Bretonnia offers the perfect background to uncover a conspiracy of jaw-dropping profundity – one that the players will never have guessed exists.

What's more WFRP than that?

A Knight's Tale

A Story by Toby Pilling

Phillipe opened the door a crack and peered within. As he did so, he realised such caution was hardly befitting a Questing Knight of Bretonnia, but just as quickly he banished the negative thought from his mind. He had seen too many of his peers suffer through over-confidence, and the foe he now hoped to overcome was rumoured to be a powerful magus, with much knowledge of eldritch lore.

The wan glow of candlelight illuminated the interior of the room

somewhat, but he could not see far within. There was a creaking sound, as of weight settling in a chair, and the scratching noise of quill on parchment. Slowly pushing the door fully open, Phillipe grasped his sword and stepped inside. Was it his nerves that made it so hot in the room, or just his own full armour?

The figure seated ahead had its back to him, but, seeming to sense his presence, turned and stood. Cool grey eyes appraised him from behind thick spectacles – the shining plate and mail, the elaborate



long sword, the shield bearing the fleur de lis, mark of the Lady of the Lake – and the figure sighed.

‘So, they have caught up with me at last. Ah well, I led them a merry chase. And you are to be the assassin?’

Phillipe scoffed. ‘No such subterfuge, sorcerer! Death you have brought upon yourself for your unholy practices. Your doom at my hand emerges not from the shadows, and shall be less painful than you deserve!’

The old man regarded him dispassionately. ‘May I enquire what crimes I am accused of?’

Again, Phillipe was scornful. ‘Sedition. Rebellion. Spreading lies, deceit and slander. Worshipping the Ruinous Powers. The charges against you demand justice.’

‘In a court of law?’ the old man enquired immediately. Perhaps he noted the involuntary flinch that crossed Phillipe’s face, for he continued. ‘I thought as much. Your masters prefer their justice summary. A trial would allow me to speak the truth, after all, and they cannot allow that.’

Phillipe was silent. The instructions had been clear, to him and all his brethren: To slay the sorcerer at the first opportunity, allowing him no time to fashion some magical escape. So why did Phillipe not strike? True, such an act seemed unfair, especially against an unarmed man, even one rumoured to be in alliance with dark powers. But there was something else. Over the last few years of his questing he had...seen things. Heard things. Nothing explicit and nothing to make him doubt the righteousness of his cause. And yet...

The old man spoke again. ‘If I am not to be permitted a chance to defend myself against these accusations, at least let me unburden my soul to a fellow human being before I die. A last confession, if you like, before I journey to Morr’s realm, if he will have me. Grant me that mercy, if naught else, and then execute me if you must. In truth, I weary of this life and the burden I carry.’

The old man did indeed look weary at that moment. Could he afford such clemency, wondered Phillipe? His orders had been specific.

Phillipe’s face hardened. He had received other orders over the years which he had always obeyed, though he had at times questioned in his mind their wisdom or morality. Let it not be said that a knight of Bretonnia lacked mercy.

‘Speak on,’ he declared.

The old man relaxed somewhat and ruefully rubbed his bewhiskered chin. ‘Do you mind if I pour myself a glass of wine? I have much to say and talking dries the throat. Not to mention the fact that it shall be my last ever taste of Carcassonne Special Reserve.’ As a fellow Bretonnian, Phillipe understood his impending loss and could not deny him.

As the red liquid flowed into a crystal glass, the old man spoke again. ‘My name is Jean Benoit, by the way. It has been years since I have gone by it, but now at the end, after decades of long travel, it seems right to do so once more.’ Goblet in hand, the old man... Jean... sat down, lightly swirling the crimson fluid as he pondered unknown thoughts, gazing into space. ‘Where to begin?’ he asked himself.

Then he smiled. ‘That is as good a place as any.’

‘What do you know of the Fey Enchantress? What do you know of her nature?’ he asked suddenly.

Here it is, thought Phillipe. He couldn’t help himself glance nervously left and right, before licking his lips and answering in a whisper. ‘I have seen her with my own eyes. I too have travelled widely, beyond the borders of our land. She does look much like those who dwell within the Athel Loren.’

To his consternation, Benoit laughed. ‘Yes indeed! She’s an Elf from that forest. Only a dullard or a fool would not realise it. Unfortunately, most of our countrymen are both.’

Phillipe began to bridle at the insult.

‘Calm yourself, noble knight!’ Continued Benoit, placatingly. ‘I merely point out that this great secret is nothing of the sort. It is a smoke screen for the curious, nothing more, devised to divert attention from deeper truths. It tells us nothing of the nature of the Lady of the Lake, for example.’

He didn’t know why, but Phillipe felt freed to voice his deepest concerns with this wizard. ‘Are you saying that the Lady herself is of the Elven folk?’ he queried.

‘If only,’ replied Benoit. ‘No, I’m afraid that being is of a different type completely.’ Again he paused, and then began again, taking off at a seemingly random tangent.

‘If you have heard this history lesson before, then indulge me. I speak of the Elves. Of the Gods the Wood Elves worship, one is named Liadriel. It is the deity of music, dancing, poetry and wine,’ Benoit fixed his gaze on him for a moment before continuing. ‘It could be said that Liadriel represents the pursuit of pleasure. Interestingly, the deity as represented is neither wholly male nor female, being rather androgynous; a vision of surpassing beauty. One of the main symbols of the cult is that of a cup, or chalice.’

So saying, Benoit re-filled his own glass, letting his words sink in. ‘The heart of the cult within the Athel Loren is in the west, bordering our own land. That area of the forest seems to be semi-autonomous, from what I can gather, and is ruled by a group who call themselves the nine sisters. Reliable information about them is extremely difficult to amass, but I have learned that they have amongst their number one whose name may be familiar to you: Morgiana, known as the Fey.’

A frown creased Philippe’s brow. ‘The Fey Enchantress?’ he queried. ‘The same,’ answered Benoit. ‘Whether she has always acted in that role, or whether others of the nine have done so over the centuries, I know not. After all, compared to the life spans of men, Elves are near immortal.’

Phillipe struggled with the implications of this for a moment. ‘Is your claim then that the Lady of the Lake is but an aspect of this Liadriel being?’ he asked. To his increasing consternation, Benoit laughed again, though this time it was a sharp and mirthless sound.

‘In a manner of speaking, I suppose I am. The real question though, is who or what Liadriel itself represents.’

Phillipe’s confusion must have shown on his face.

‘Let me elucidate,’ said Benoit.

‘Historical information is hard to gather about that secretive race. What fragments I have uncovered however, point towards a less than wholesome relationship with powers that mankind would call ruinous. We all know the scourge on our coastline of the Black Arks of the Druchii, or Dark Elves, who worship Khaine, Lord of Murder. Less well known is that far beyond the western oceans, in fabled Ulthuan, the so-called High Elves themselves at some point fell into the worship of the Lord of Pleasure, whom we name Slaanesh.’ Did the candlelight flicker somewhat at the mention of that name, casting eerie shadows about the oppressively hot room?

‘A fell power indeed. I have confronted his followers myself, and have witnessed the despicable and inhumane acts they deem pleasurable,’ muttered Phillippe, with feeling.

‘Just so,’ continued the scholar. ‘But it is well to remember that Elves are not human, so the term ‘inhumane’ may not apply to their minds. The cult of pleasure persisted in Ulthuan unchecked for many years, and when it was eventually challenged, helped precipitate the sundering of their folk. It was believed, or at least it was hoped, that it had been abolished.’ Benoit ruminated over his wine, swirling it idly about the glass. In part to fill the lengthening silence, Phillippe asked a question.

‘Interesting enough if true, I’ll grant. I have seen the remains of men the Elven folk deemed invaders of their forests; woodsmen who had strayed; romantic dreamers wishing to catch a glimpse of unworldly beauty. The state of those bodies persuades me that the Asrai are far from the frolicking faeries of legend, or at least, that they have a side as dark as the bleakest winter. But what has this to do with the Fey Enchantress, or the Lady of the Lake? You said the cult of pleasure was abolished.’

Benoit looked sharply up. ‘I said they hoped it had been. That is not the same thing. We state it as fact that memories fade. But for their race, to whom a human lifetime passes in the blinking of an eye, who can say if anything is truly forgotten? The worshippers of the Lord of Pleasure may have been banished from Ulthuan, but some exiles fled to the Old World, or were already here, far from the gaze of the Phoenix King. Within their forest strongholds, they practiced dark rites over the centuries, at first hidden, but then subsuming and subverting other legitimate cults.’ Benoit halted his speech, and then looked Phillippe squarely in the eye.

‘Morgiana is not only the Fey Enchantress, chief representative of the Lady of the Lake. She is the high priestess of Liadriel in the Athel Loren. And the cult of Liadriel, at least within that realm, is a front for the worship of the Lord of Pleasure.’ He paused. ‘For more than a thousand years, Bretonnia has been worshipping an aspect of Slaanesh.’

For a moment, Phillippe was too stunned to reply. Then he guffawed mightily.

‘You are no sorcerer, Benoit, but surely a jester! Are you merely a very tall Gnome?’

The old man bridled at the sleight. ‘Your masters find my claims so amusing, they wish me dead.’

‘Perhaps because they fear for their own lives, for truly a man could

die of laughter, should he listen overlong to your wordplay!’ Despite Phillippe’s chuckles, Benoit continued in a low, clipped voice. ‘That symbol,’ Benoit gestured towards Phillippe’s shield, ‘The fleur de lis. What does it represent?’

‘The white lily? Why, ‘tis the symbol of our Lady. It represents innocence and purity.’

Benoit scowled. ‘It was not always so. In the times before Gilles le Breton, amongst the wild tribes who populated our land, the lily had a more...lascivious, connotation. The budding, tumescent pistil symbolised rampant male virility. A phallic symbol worthy of the Lord of Pleasure.’

‘You’ll have to do better than that,’ answered Phillippe, smiling. ‘There are other signs, for those who choose to see. If you’ve witnessed the depredations of Slaaneshi cultists unmasked, you’ll know the almost psychedelic disorder of bright colours that accompany their rituals. Rather like the extravagant montage that assails the eye when viewing our noble knights and their ladies in all their finery. Or indeed, the dazzling spectacle of discordance, filtering through stained glass windows in all Grail chapels.’

‘I’m not convinced,’ smirked Phillippe.

‘What are the holy days of the cult of the Lady?’ snapped Benoit. ‘The foremost would be the Jour de Ensorceleur and the Jour de Mystère.’

‘And which other cults celebrate those Holy days?’

Phillippe shrugged.

‘Only one,’ said Benoit, answering his own question. ‘Slaanesh.’

Phillippe raised an involuntary eyebrow. Encouraged, Benoit continued. ‘The highest levels of our society hold Bretonnia in a stranglehold, pursuing pleasures of the flesh whilst the mass of peasants who support their lifestyle toil in squalor. Nowhere else in the Old World is there such a disparity between the nobility and the commoners. This stranglehold exerts total control, eradicating dissent; science is discouraged, so as to allay change; military innovation, such as hiring mercenaries or utilising gunpowder, is outlawed to maintain power in the hands of the landed elite; magic is practised only by women who have been chosen as children by the Asrai and raised as acolytes in the cult of the Lady, which itself dominates the religious field. Because of this, Bretonnia is centuries behind our neighbours. Only their disunity prevents our destruction. We can’t even quell a few tribes of Orcs within our own borders!’

‘Be careful of your words, Benoit,’ scolded Phillippe, angry now. ‘I count myself a noble of this realm, and am no worshipper of Chaos!’ Benoit raised his hands, palms outwards. ‘I accept that. But unaware of its true nature as you may be, that regime still functions as I describe: As a perfectly crafted tool of control. Those at its apex are the inner circle: The Grail Knights and Damsels.

‘Nonsense!’ bellowed Phillippe, ‘They act as paragons of virtue!’ ‘An act indeed,’ agreed Benoit, warming to his theme, ‘Have you never questioned the dichotomy between the chivalrous ideals they propound, and the reality faced by our peasantry? Those poor downtrodden souls are treated as less than animals. Few live to see thirty summers. They undergo pestilence, starvation and plague, in

order to pay taxes which will help resource the latest tourney in Couronne. What chivalry for them?’

‘So that is it. You are a revolutionary,’ stated Philippe.

‘Another convenient lie,’ sighed Benoit. ‘Label all who point out the glaring faults in the Bretonnian model of chivalry as revolutionaries. It helps stifle debate, quell argument and maintain the status quo.’ He shook his head.

‘Look about you, man!’ he urged. ‘If you lack compassion for the peasantry, at least ponder the motivations of your peers. The nobility is driven by the base desire for carnal fulfilment. Joy in battle brings joy in the bedchamber. Of course, it’s hidden behind the façade of courtly love, but all these sonnets, gentle wooing and feats of daring are aimed at procuring one thing alone for the knight. And it’s more than merely wearing his ladies colours! Yes, it’s all repressed and hidden, but such repression inflames the desire, rather than dampens it. And the chief sirens, the string pullers, are the Grail Damsels. Do you claim you are immune to their attraction?’

Hardly, thought Philippe to himself, blushing. But his desire was pure! Benoit made it sound sordid and squalid. Why, he and Lauren had exchanged the merest brushing of lips over the years, though even that remembrance brought heat coursing through his veins. How dare this old fool slander her! Though, now he thought about it, this quest had been her idea. ‘‘To prove your love through bravery,’’ she had said.

Sensing his thoughts, Benoit went on. ‘It is no dishonour to fall beneath the spell of those enchantresses. Most knights start out good-hearted, with noble ideals. But it is the goal of the Prince of Chaos to corrupt the pure, and Morgiana and her acolytes excel in leading them down the path to damnation. Pleasure delayed is pleasure doubled. In public, of course they all act with modest decorum towards each other. It’s when the doors are closed that their true nature is unmasked. Then, the devotees of the Grail gather together to practice their foul rites, and partake in orgies of an abominable nature, where pleasure and pain are indistinguishable. Once they have supped from the Grail itself, there is no return.’

Philippe did not feel like mocking the man now. ‘So you claim the King himself, and half the dukes of this land, are also part of this unholy cabal?’

Benoit merely nodded his head.

‘They were right to label you a threat,’ said Philippe, grimly. ‘Many are those who would heed your words - the disgruntled and those of low intelligence foremost amongst them. Yet you dare to appeal to my reason. Very well! Let me then use reason to dispel your fabrication,’ Philippe pursed his lips in concentration, before continuing. ‘You claim the Lady is in truth an aspect of Slaanesh. And yet we both know that the God of Pleasure, Pain and Terror, is neither wholly male nor female. Whilst Liadriel may satisfy that criterion, the Lady does not.’

Benoit began to smile, and Philippe noted the air of smugness about the man. ‘I think worshipping a transgender God, helps explain a lot about our society: Like the national obsession with cross-

dressing, for example. You are right though, at least in part. Of course, I could point out that some images of Slaanesh depict him as a voluptuous woman. However, the dual gender of the deity is not in this case encapsulated in one being. The Lady represents but one aspect - the feminine. There is another who represents the masculine.’ Benoit paused, grinning slyly, and Philippe felt he was being toyed with.

‘Name him!’ he demanded.

‘Why, who do you think the Green Knight is?’ queried Benoit, lightly. Philippe’s jaw dropped, as the old man went on. ‘Just another mysterious figure, who turns up on the battlefield to aid our ailing and obsolescent armies? He and the Lady are two sides of the same coin. Those Grail Knights who succeed must face both in turn - first they lance the Green Knight, then they “lance” the Lady. Sexually, it’s all very ambiguous and muddy. Less muddy than the “water” of the fabled Lake itself, which is of course naught but the raw, swirling stuff of Chaos.’

Philippe could feel himself beginning to jabber. ‘But not all those who seek the Grail would be so seduced. I know I would never accept a sip from it, if I thought it tainted.’

‘Would you not?’ mused Benoit. ‘Perhaps not now. But in a few years time, when your morals have been eroded further, when your desire for your Damsel’s caress has swelled almost beyond your ability to control? The Lady only appears to those she deems ready for conversion. She herself is so beautiful, they say, not even a eunuch would spurn her advances. But I’m sure there are some who would reject her blandishments. Those stout-hearted souls may earn my respect, but they will always pay for their honour with their lives. They become just more questing knights who have failed to return.’

Philippe was silent as he took stock. All his arguments were being thrown back in his face. ‘But you have no proof, Benoit. You rely on insinuation and co-incidence. If the Ruinous Powers had subverted our land, evidence would exist on a larger scale, methinks.’

A steely glint entered the old man’s eyes. ‘The proof is before your eyes, sir knight. It is the eternal shame of our nation. Rarely even acknowledged, the guilt of our compliance forces most into a state of denial. I speak of the scandal of our stolen children! Babes in arms, snatched from their cots and kidnapped. The girls are doomed to be indoctrinated as Slaaneshi witches. It’s worse though, for the boys. They are groomed as willing victims, to undergo the horrific lusts of their tormentors. I said before that the Great Serpent desires most of all the corruption of the pure. For millennia, we have offered up our own innocents to be so defiled. What further proof do you require?’

‘It is not true!’ cried Philippe. ‘The boys lead a life of happiness and joy within the Athel Loren. The Elven King would not allow such an abomination!’

‘You have seen these boys? Or do you merely recount what you have been told?’ Benoit scratched his chin for a moment, pondering. ‘Their minds and flesh have, for as long as they can remember, been tormented and abused. Perhaps what would pass as torture to us, is to them happiness and joy? Such a corruption would amuse

the Prince of Pleasure, I'm sure. As for the Elven King – seek no mercy or compassion there. Who knows the mind of an Elf? Perhaps he is ignorant of the covenant that operates in his land. Perhaps not. Certainly, Morgiana the Dark Queen provides him with a pliable army of chivalric pawns to defend his lands against aggressors. He would shed few tears at our blood being spilled, methinks. For that is indeed the fate that awaits most of those poor, wretched boys. Their doom is to be sacrificed to Slaanesh, their valuable lifeblood collected. The cult of the Lady requires plenty of blood, after all.'

'What for?' asked Philippe, horrified.

Benoit turned, and something like a sneer crossed his face. 'What do you think they drink from the Grail?' he spat.

Philippe reacted as if he'd been physically slapped. 'The Sangrial!' he stuttered.

'Yes, the Holy Grail. Only, in archaic Breton, that has two meanings, doesn't it? San Grial means Holy Grail. Whilst Sang Rial means...'

'Royal blood,' answered Philippe, dully.

'And there's no blood more royal than the blood of a God. That's what they exchange, in their damnable bargain. They sup a cocktail of blood, which binds the Grail Knight's soul to Slaanesh for eternity. In return they receive "Gifts of the Lady", which are basically mutations. I have a theory that the nature of the Grail prevents those mutations being overtly physical in their manifestation, though I wonder whether the renowned "endowment" of Grail Knights is entirely natural. Whichever way, the Grail Knights all have uncanny charisma and charm after their experience. For some, the blessings are great indeed. How else can Louen Leoncoeur be still fighting battles at the age of ninety? His life span has been extended unnaturally.'

'What then is the Grail?' asked Philippe, though he was not sure he wished to know the answer.

'I can't answer that for certain,' replied Benoit, ruefully. 'Though I can hazard a good guess. From what I can discover, it is not metal, but is made of stone. The description I have would suggest it might even be constructed from warpstone. Though I know not how such a material could be so fashioned. As for its origins, fragments I have gleaned from ancient sources provide a clue. Legends speak of a timeless enmity between Slaanesh and Khaine. The former's theft of an artefact is spoken of, which is described as a "blood cauldron". Of course, we hear dire stories of vast blood cauldrons, being used as devices by Dark Elven witches. It is my belief though, that the Grail is none other than the original cauldron. Rather than bathing within it, blood is drunk, sealing a bond which somehow conveys unholy powers upon the recipient.'

Philippe shook his head to clear it. 'This is madness. I have fought on the field of battle alongside Grail Damsels. The magical energies they wield speak to land, tree, bird and beast. Why would the natural world provide such allies to a power of Chaos?'

'Allies, or slaves? Do the Grail Damsels ask for such aid? Or do they compel it, through fear of pain, demanding obedience?'

'Or the errantry war!' shouted Philippe. 'We fought against the Ruinous Powers outside Middenheim, to drive back the Storm of Chaos. Give me the reason for that!'

Benoit scoffed. 'The Powers you mention hate each other more than they hate us,' he declared. 'And the direst enemy of Slaanesh is Khorne. I expect you'll find the flower of Bretonnian chivalry was arrayed against the foes of Slaanesh that day. For humanity, it was a happy co-incident, nothing more. Besides, the God of Pleasure leads a cosy existence in our land. He wouldn't want his rivals to upset the apple-cart.'

'What of those Grail Knights who ride the soaring pegasi? Those wondrous beasts would never bear a servant of evil. Everyone knows they are creatures of good heart.'

'They are also creatures of Chaos. I hear some bear Dark Elf warriors too, so they can't all have high moral standards. I fear though, that even those of goodly leanings, are eventually turned. My suspicion is that demons are bound to the beasts, no doubt through a ghastly ritual. Though I cannot confirm it, eye witnesses have confided to me that the Grail Knights gain pleasures from their unnatural relationship with those they ride, that no man and beast should share.' Benoit shuddered as he related this last.

Philippe could feel his resistance slipping away. Like a stout yeoman archer, his quiver was empty and the end was fast approaching. He could muster no more arguments against Benoit's revelations. All he had left was faith. Blind faith.

'So what do you want me to do with this information?' he enquired wearily.

A sad smile spread over the old man's face.

'Exactly the same as I chose to do,' he replied. 'Nothing.'

Philippe's drawn face frowned. Benoit continued. 'There was a time I would have urged rebellion, an uprising, to sweep the foul cultists from power. But I had a revelation of my own, though it was slow to dawn.' He shook his head, and the years seemed to weigh heavy upon him at that moment. 'Bretonnia needs these monsters at its head if it is to survive. I realise that now. They have made our armies weak, and therefore dependant on their support. We have become so reliant on the parasitic cult of the Lady, that its death would herald our own. For who would provide the mages to protect us from sorcerous attack? Our finest warriors are knights of Chaos! We are one organism, and would fall prey to a greater one were we to attempt a divorce. No, to my chagrin, the real misery is that knowing the truth just confirms the masterful strategy of the Prince of Chaos. We are doomed. The price we pay for our continuing, pathetic existence, is our acquiescence.'

Philippe was speechless. Benoit continued grimly. 'There's a saying that sums up our hopeless predicament,' he muttered. 'Better the devil you know.'

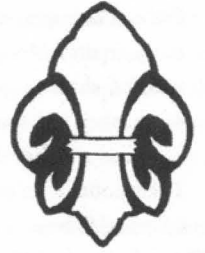
Silence reigned. It seemed to do so for several minutes. With a surge of fury, Philippe raised his sword to strike. 'You lie!' he shrieked. But while Benoit waited patiently for the blow to fall, the sword quivered in Philippe's hand. The old man had to be lying, didn't he? Could what he had said possibly be true?

'Gods! What shall I do?' he cried in anguish, as the sword point hovered over Benoit's breast.

But there was no one to answer his question.



Unveiling the Lady



Toby Pilling Looks for the Truth in Bretonnia

'There are some questions, however, to which the answers should remain mysterious.'

Knights of the Grail

All you have been taught about the Lady, all you know, all the history and legends, is lies. There is a cancer at the heart of Bretonnia that goes back over millennia to Giles de Breton and his damnable bargain with the Prince of Chaos.

Prepare yourself. What I shall recount on these pages are but fragments of the truth. Only the Gods know what occurred all those centuries ago, for even Morgiana the Fey and the Nine Sisters did not witness everything – and their minds are, thank Shallya, closed to us. What I can give is a summary of diverse beliefs, along with a little supposition. It is for you to explore these threads, and pull at them in unceasing curiosity. In doing so, you shall unravel the veil of the lady herself. I warn you though – you may not thank me for what is so revealed.

As you will have gathered, Bretonnia lies in thrall to the wishes and whims of Slaanesh. It is the Grail that links the corrupt cabal which rules the land, crushing all dissent. The mark of such domination pervades society, for those with eyes to see.

I sense you think such an event unlikely. If so, I question you thus – what was your expectation of a land subservient to Chaos? Demons cavorting in the streets? Foul rites practiced openly? Temples under a permanent cloud, as human sacrifices are burned to satiate Dark Gods? Alas, the reality is far more mundane. The parasite achieves most when the host is not aware of its existence. And the parasite Bretonnia hosts is bloated indeed.

Let us appraise then an alternative history, shedding light on events which become more explicable under such examination.

Before the Kingdom

It is an irony that our knowledge of this period of history, of which so little remains through record or artefact for the scholar to study, in fact contains the most truth. There is little to add or challenge therefore in official accounts.

As an aside, I do find it interesting that the original number

of tribes, that formed the basis for eventual Dukedoms, was sixteen. This was then pruned, with the fall of Cuileaux and Glanborielle, to fourteen. Perceptive observers may then realise that this number matches exactly that required for most occult covens – thirteen members and a High Priest or Witch to lead. I am sure this is just a coincidence, for to think otherwise will surely induce despair at the thought of Bretonnia's fate being so manipulated. Even my paranoia, dear reader, has limits.

Prelude to Unity

I have often pondered the state of mind of Giles, 'the Unifier', for clues as to his later actions. There is little in official sources that challenge the orthodox view of him as near perfect. I wonder though if a well related event from this period may explain much.

It was no doubt a worthy deed of Giles to dispatch the wyrm Smearghus. But what little knowledge we have of such beasts mentions time and again their ability to ensorcell and befuddle the minds of men, even planting seeds of darkness within them. Further, at the time of the slaying, it was common practice of the Bretonni tribesmen to ingest the blood of mighty creatures they had defeated, in the belief that they might procure for themselves some of their foes' power and majesty. Did Giles drink the noxious blood of the dragon? It would explain much. One hears that in Bastonne the head of the red wyrm still at intervals inspires murderous dreams upon the most susceptible of its inhabitants.

It might be a heresy to even think, but I believe that Giles was, as a Bastonnian might say, 'listening to the dragon.'

Unification

Did Giles and his companions know the true nature of the Lady when she appeared to them in the forest of Châlons? None can know. Given Landuin's later actions though, I believe they must at least have suspected. It also seems unlikely, however, that they pledged their souls to Chaos, in full knowledge of her nature. The latter account is that advanced by the innermost cultists of the Grail. I deem it more probable the three companions viewed the alliance

as a temporary one; a marriage of convenience. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, after all. This is why I may surprise you, by urging an understanding attitude towards their eventual damnation. They were, after all, expecting to die on the morrow, fighting an inhuman enemy that threatened to destroy all Bretonnia. It is easy to see how they might see the end justifying the means. It may even be that they were honestly prepared to sacrifice their own souls for the salvation of their people.

All this is, of course, conjecture. The bargain was made. (If I may be so bold, I see the morphing of the visage of Smearghus on Giles' banner, into the Lady, as an interesting addendum to my theory above. For is not Slaanesh also known as the Great Serpent?).

The Twelve Great Battles

There are so many accounts of these battles, that we have no reason to doubt their existence. What our knowledge enables us to do though is study some of the significant events within them in a new light. It is the ninth battle in particular that bears closer scrutiny.

Landuin is an even greater enigma than Giles. It is today a common maxim that power corrupts even the most noble hearted. The gifts bestowed by the Lady were certainly unique and extraordinary, and seem to have seduced Giles and most of the original companions. Landuin, however, lest we forget, was renowned as the finest knight ever to have lived. If there were ever a chance that one of the companions would forswear the pact with Slaanesh, it would surely be him. In the battle of Mousillon, I believe we can see glimpses into his turbulent mind, and realise more of the manipulations of the Great Serpent.

Consider, for a moment, that Landuin was experiencing doubts regarding Giles' cause. Even if he saw his own pact with the Lady as a sacrifice for the greater good, and the vow of allegiance to her and Giles as unbreakable, the innumerable chansons about him seem to indicate a troubled conscience. Perhaps Landuin feared for the future of Bretonnia, not from destruction by the Greenskins, but from the poisoning of its very spirit? If we assume such an inner war within the man (I admit, I have no proof to underlay such an assumption), then the mystery seed of the curse of Mousillon becomes clearer.

Whether as a threat to Landuin to persuade him of the dangers of disunity, or a simple punishment for rebellious thoughts, in the

sudden appearance of the undead army we can see the finger of the culprit: none other than the Lady herself. By removing protection (if that is the right word) from that land, and so cursing it, Slaanesh invited into that Dukedom the foremost of his enemies. A risky strategy it is true, but one that achieved its initial objective of bringing Landuin back within the fold of the original companions. Of which enemy do I speak? I shall come onto that subject later.

Back to Landuin then, and the discovery of his land befouled and his kin amongst the walking dead. After the rage of battle, we know that from that day forth he was forever touched by deep sorrow. It is only a guess, but I suspect he knew his doubts had doomed his own family and lands, and was determined that none would suffer in future but himself.

Louis the Rash

Who cast the bolt that struck down Giles? Legends ascribe it to a cowardly Orc, but I wonder at the co-incidence of the



event occurring in the shadow of the Forest of Loren. Had Giles outlived his usefulness to the Fey? Or was the hand that cast the bolt someone who desired the power he wielded, maybe even one of the companions themselves? Some clues exist, but whoever committed the deed, the succession soon came into question, and here we discuss another of the great secrets of the Grail cult – the demon seed.

The whispers are true: Louis, who eventually claimed the throne, had indeed been conceived through the union of Giles and the Lady. Imbued with demonic power, he was in fact more powerful than any of the original companions – especially once he had supped from the Grail. The nature of his re-union with his own ‘mother’ is one we can only guess at, though given the nature of the Goddess, it was no doubt abominable.

Over the centuries, it has been common for Kings to sow their seed widely, so to speak, especially amongst the high born. Again, this should not surprise us. As a side effect, however, the original ‘demon seed’ is spread throughout the Bretonnian nobility, in differing levels of potency. This helps explain the fact that succession to the Bretonnian throne is often not through direct lineage. Instead, it would seem that Morgiana and other witches amongst the Nine have some way of assessing the bloodlines, and manipulate the succession to ensure the least diluted line is crowned.

Some amongst the Grail cult claim that the last incumbent, Charlen, was such a trifling specimen that rites and rituals were enacted to reconstitute the demon seed. Some swear that the night King Leon Leoncour was conceived, a Knight attired all in green attended the chamber of the Duchess of Couronne. Others claim that Leon himself was born with a twin brother, whose fate was to be sacrificed to Slaanesh. Leon certainly seems the most vigorous King for centuries, so perhaps some of these tales are fact. Only Morgiana and her sisters, I suspect, know for sure.

Errantry Wars

Once again, viewed through the prism of the Slaaneshi domination of Bretonnia, we begin to understand otherwise baffling events, such as the Errantry War declared by King Charlen (or King Charles de Tete D’Or, to pronounce his full title).

Why should the fate of the Border Princes be of such concern to the King of Bretonnia? What could provoke this seemingly illogical war on foreign Orcs?

Survivors of the disastrous battle of Death Pass claimed that the standard of Morglum Necksnapper bore upon it the crude semblance of a cup or chalice. Most saw this as a deliberate provocation: an affront to the Holy Grail of the Lady. I however, harbour doubts. I hold that the chalice depicted was the very cause of the Errantry War itself. A

war that was called to retrieve it. You may have guessed the provenance of the artefact already, but I shall discuss it further next.

The Fall of Mousillon

The great irony of Merovech is that the rite he carried out over the body of the fallen King – drinking his blood from a goblet – was merely deliberately mocking what the Grail Knights had been doing themselves for centuries. Of course, he was an evil and insane monster. Personally I believe he had dedicated himself to the Chaos God Khorne; another enemy of Slaanesh.

Maldred and Malfleur are far more interesting characters. Victors write the history books, as you know, and those two names are now truly accursed throughout the land. The facts as I can ascertain them however point to two individuals of remarkable purity of heart, acting for good in trying to overthrow the tyranny of the Grail. That they failed merely points to the power of the Chaos God they faced. Were they inspired by a God in their turn? Possibly, but I shall save my guesses on that subject for a future debate.

Rumours abound as to the eventual whereabouts of the infamous false grail. I favour those that point to it being smuggled out of the city before its fall, and we know that some of Maldred’s knights, having lost all, fled to the Border Princes to take up service with new lords, or claim lands of their own. The objective of the subsequent Errantry War then becomes clear, if we imagine it had fallen into greenskin hands – to capture and presumably destroy it. How foul Orcs could utilise such a holy chalice I know not. Unless perhaps, it influenced them?

The Undead

What then of this great enemy of Slaanesh I described, bringing a plague of undead vermin to Mousillon and beyond? Tomes I have consulted indicate the culprit is Khaine, the Lord of Murder, who it is said holds Slaanesh in enmity for some ancient sleight. Some claim that Khaine is the brother of Morr, which might explain his connection to the foul practice of necromancy. Whatever the truth, the result of that curse lives on today, where those foul Gods continue their timeless struggle through their proxies.

Behind the Veil

So there you have it. The truth; or at least, the best approximation I can make given the fragmentary and often contradictory sources I must consult. Do with it what you will. I intend to merely further my investigations, digging deeper to ascertain reality. Further revelations await, I have no doubt. I shall be sure to appraise you of them, if I am able.

The Derelich of Château Fnaargh

By Robin Low



Stay awhile.

As a child, my nurse told me tales of the Jabberwock and how it murdered the good folk who dwelled in the Barony of Rosier. Tomorrow, I set out to that benighted realm to slay its beast at last. I will succeed when all others failed and in doing so I will win the hand of the Baron's fair daughter! You may accompany me, if you dare.

Gastonne le Courageux, Knight

The Barony of Rosier? Hmm. A mixed place to do business, so I'm told. Most of the peasants were wiped out by a monster decades ago. Only one village still exists, but the peasants seem to do well for themselves, so you should get some sales of tools, clothes and a few cheaper luxuries. The Baron in the nearby château is very welcoming, but he seems more interested in having guests than buying anything, but it might be worth trying. Go speak to Luc Ronet. He's a bit addled these days, but he sailed down the coast and visited it a few years ago.

Phillipe Tissier, merchant of Bordeleaux

There's good land going to waste in Rosier, I hear. Fields untilled in forty years. I don't believe in a monster and it's probably long dead if it ever existed. I heard the baron there wants tenants and he's not greedy, so a man and his family can live as well as anywhere in Bretonnia. We just need some protection for the journey. And in case there is a monster when we get there.

Marc, a Bretonnian peasant with a dream



On a remote stretch of Aquitaine's gentle coastline lies Château Fnaargh. Sitting on top of an entirely anomalous outcropping of granite, just a step inland from an otherwise smooth sandy cove, the castle is a classically beautiful Bretonnian castle. Its white-washed walls shine in the summer sun; its tall round towers fly gaily coloured banners. Flowering vines creep up the walls. The clean air is filled with the scent of the sea and the calls of seagulls.

Forty years ago a Jabberwock rampaged across the lands of the Baron Jean de la Rose, frightening away many of the peasants and killing the knights. The area has never recovered although the new Baron, Jean Michel, has sworn that the Jabberwock will be slain. In the meantime life carries on as normal and the inhabitants of Château Fnaargh welcome new visitors with open arms.

However, like many tales of Bretonnian chivalry, something darker lies beneath...

Knights of the Grail: A Guide to Bretonnia describes a new type of monster called the Derelich (page 48). Superficially, it is nothing more than a malevolent illusion-creating spirit, with no motivation beyond killing those exploring its lair. A victim's death seems to provide some sort of spiritual food. Initially unimpressive, the Derelich is an interesting idea worth developing further. This article seeks to do just that. It begins with a few changes to the Derelich described in KotG, with some advice on handling its spirit manifestations and illusions. The second part provides a possible setting using the creature. The article assumes the reader has access to KotG.

A Derelich's Powers

A Derelich has two key abilities. The first is the creation of illusions, allowing a Derelich to make the ruined castle or derelict fortress it inhabits appear to be well-maintained and lived in. From the information in KotG, these illusions seem to be purely visual, but I suggest they include sounds (pots and pans clanking in the kitchen), smell (soup steaming in bowl), touch (a spoon feels wooden, soup has weight when drawn from the bowl with the spoon) and taste (the soup is spiced turnip). In reality, the illusion is still just an illusion (eat all the soup you wish; you might think you feel full, but you will gain no sustenance from it).

KotG also implies illusions are not solid and thus potentially dangerous – a perfect polished oak floor is really a rotten, hole-filled death-trap. Instead, I suggest illusions relating to the physical structure of the dwelling are solid for practical purposes, until a Derelich chooses to weaken them. This provides the GM with a more flexible environment for the PCs to operate in, as well as giving a Derelich another tool in its arsenal. For practical reasons, limit the reach of these illusions to the real outer walls of a Derelich's lair, regardless of the size of the building itself. For this reason, Derelich prefer castle ruins to tumbledown cottages.

A Derelich's second ability is the manifestation of solid spirit bodies. There can be up to 24 in total at any one time, and they have real, physical effects on the environment and PCs. These spirit bodies are only vaguely described in KotG and it is unclear what their Characteristics are, although they can take the form of any living creature. We know spirits' Wounds are actually a

Derelich's own Wounds shared between all manifested spirits, explaining the 24 spirit limit (two spirits with 12 Wounds each, twenty-four with 1 Wound each, or five with 6, 6, 4, 4, and 4 Wounds, and so on). In practice, a Derelich never manifests more than 23 spirits at a time. Since the Derelich loses Wounds as the spirits lose Wounds, a Derelich always keeps one Wound wholly to itself, and stays hidden.

I suggest that spirits' Characteristics are based on the Derelich's. Any *single* career, basic or advanced, can then be applied. *All* the career's advances add to the Characteristics. The spirit also gains the Skills, Talents and Trappings of that career, but it does not have the Derelich's own Skills and Talents.

The Derelich cannot manifest spirits that are capable of performing magic. A spirit might appear to be a Wizard Lord and play the part convincingly, but it cannot cast real spells. Similarly, a spirit appearing as a Grail Maiden cannot demonstrate the Gifts of the Lady. The power of illusion can be used, though. However, anyone subject to such illusory magic must make a **Very Easy (+30%) Will Power Test**. If the victim fails the Test his mistaken belief in the magic allows the illusion to have some limited effect (the illusion of a fireball will do minimum damage, for example). The GM should determine exactly what happens on a spell-by-spell basis, but must remember that since it is just an illusion, the victim should not be unduly harmed.

Regardless of the above, GMs are perfectly free to apply a wizard Career to a Derelich, especially if it offers a good hook or greater flexibility. A Derelich wizard cannot, however, cast its spells through its manifested spirits. If a Derelich wants to cast a spell on a PC, it has to involve itself directly.

The Derelich can manifest spirits that appear as animals and monsters, in which case use the Characteristics, Skills and Talents of the basic creature. However, the limit on using magic remains. It is best to limit the size of any spirit to creatures no larger than a horse. 23 dragons with one Wound would be absurd, but a horse-sized one with lower Characteristics might be tolerable.

Unlike the Derelich's illusions, its spirits have very real physical effects. If a spirit soldier successfully punches a character, it does real, normal damage.

Spirits act as the Derelich's senses. The eyes and ears of a spirit guard atop the battlements function as though the Derelich itself was stood upon the battlements. A Derelich safely ensconced at the heart of its lair knows well in advance about the PC party walking up the hill to the castle gates if it has a spirit guard on a tower. The Derelich can also experience the senses of touch, smell and taste through its spirits, though these senses are dulled somewhat.

The KotG rules say a manifested spirit cannot move more than one yard per Wound beyond the physical boundary of the Derelich's lair or the spirit will vanish. Changing this to one *mile* per Wound makes the spirits much more versatile, and allows the Derelich to have a far greater influence on its local environment.

Characters with Witch Sight or the Sixth Sense Talent have a chance of recognising both the illusions and the spirits for what they are. This requires a simple Will Power Test, with whatever difficulties the GM sees fit (spirits are harder to recognise than illusions). The GM makes these tests on the character's behalf in secret, so as not to alert the player.

Using a Derelich

As originally described, a Derelich is a dangerous foe even for large PC groups. They are possibly deadlier now. Fortunately, there is a more interesting way to use a Derelich other than in combat or suddenly removing illusory floorboards.

In KotG, a Derelich's aim is to lure people to their deaths, with death providing some mystical sustenance. Would it not be more interesting if the Derelich could feed off the PCs without killing them? If it feeds on something insubstantial and mystical, why not let it be emotion? We know from WFRP background that emotions have power (in the formation of Gods, for example), so let's say the Derelich consumes energy from mortal emotion.

This changes a Derelich's behaviour significantly. It needs people alive. It needs them to have emotions. It needs them to stay close to its lair, or at least close to its spirits which are effectively emotion harvesters. It needs to interact with living beings, if only through its spirits.

The Derelich becomes more than a simple aggressor; the Derelich becomes a Game Master.

Like any good Game Master, a Derelich is not seeking to kill whole parties of visitors, although it accepts that an occasional death or even mass death can sometimes happen. A Derelich derives spiritual sustenance from emotions experienced by the intelligent living creatures it involves in the peculiar scenarios it creates with its illusions and spirit manifestations. There are no rules dictating how this works – from a game perspective it only matters that a Derelich is motivated to do it.

Game Masters can run a Derelich on this basis alone, without having to relate in-game events and emotions to a new rule or characteristic measuring sustenance a Derelich gets from them. However, GMs who want rules can consider the following:

- ♦ For every Insanity Point any PC (or mortal NPC) gains through interaction with a Derelich's illusions or spirits, the Derelich gains one temporary Wound.
- ♦ For every Critical Wound any PC (or mortal NPC) gains through interaction with a Derelich's illusions or spirits, the Derelich gains one temporary Wound.
- ♦ For every five mortal PC or NPC deaths (cumulative) resulting from interaction with a Derelich's illusions or spirits, the Derelich gains one permanent Wound.

A temporary Wound adds to any single spirit's Wound total, extending the distance it can travel from the Derelich's lair, as described above. Once that Wound is lost through injury, it is permanently gone. It never adds directly to the Derelich's personal Wounds.

A permanent Wound adds directly to a Derelich's Wounds Characteristic, allowing it to increase the number of spirits it can manifest or the number of Wounds shared among the spirits. Also, for every permanent Wound above 24, a Derelich can extend its illusions 200 yards (or 200 metres; it hardly matters) beyond its lair's normal boundary (usually the outermost wall). Although a Derelich might be tempted to kill as many people as possible, in practice it will not. While a Derelich seeks to protect itself, it also craves interaction. Killing an entire group of visitors means that word cannot spread of its mysteries and curiosities, and repeated group deaths would likely inspire serious investigation by local authorities.

CHÂTEAU FNAARGH - A DERELICH SETTING

The perfect setting and the classically beautiful Bretonnian castle is largely, of course, illusory. Although more intact than many Derelich lairs, Château Fnaargh's appearance is still a product of the imagination of the Derelich it hosts. In reality, its gleaming walls are really as dull as the granite outcrop it rests on. A great crack has grown in the château's central tower, the New Keep; when the tower trembles as masonry shifts, even the power of illusion cannot hide the ominous grinding. Floorboards rot in places, some doors swing loosely from their hinges and the banners flying on the turrets are little more than wind-ripped rags. However, the flowering vines, the salty scents and the seagulls are all real.

A Little History

Almost forty years ago, a terrible tragedy befell the inhabitants of Château Fnaargh. Long a thorn in the side of Baron Jean de la Rose and his Barony of Rosier, a horrible Jabberwock emerged from its forest lair and sneaked into Château Fnaargh under the cover of darkness. Inside, it slaughtered almost every single living being before returning to the forest.

The Jabberwock had not been acting alone. Normally too stupid to effect a subtle entry, the monstrous beast was encouraged and aided by a Derelich. Obsessed by the castle, a Derelich chose to make it its own. However, its current occupants and champions needed to be disposed of first. So, the Derelich persuaded the Jabberwock to attack, helped it overcome the castle's defences, then caused disruption and confusion as the Jabberwock began its savage spree.

One person survived, a young girl barely ten years old, the daughter of a kitchen maid. Little Belle was adopted by the Derelich on a whim, and has served it dutifully in all the years since; she is a willing, if slightly mad, participant in the Derelich's masquerade. Apart from the Derelich, Belle is the only real person in the entire castle. Today, she is approaching fifty, and serves as a lady-in-waiting to the Baroness, one of the spirits created by the Derelich.

With the Baron de la Rose and his Knights wiped out, the Jabberwock was left free to rampage across the Barony. Villages and farmsteads were wiped out, whole families slaughtered, and children gathered up by the gibbering beast and carried off into the woods for who knew what purpose. The Derelich created spirits to masquerade as the Baron's Knights and guards and used them to put on shows of fighting the Jabberwock, only to have them slain. With even their noble protectors unable to drive back the beast, the situation seemed utterly hopeless, so the surviving peasants gathered up their meagre possessions and fled to other parts of Aquitaine. To this day, the ghostly wreckage of villages remain uninhabited, the buildings little more than fall stacks of rotting timber.

In the aftermath of the slaughter, the Derelich put its powers to work. It created spirits to masquerade as the castle's original inhabitants and carry on life as normal for the benefit of the few remaining locals (mainly the folk of **Plage de Sable**) and any travellers who might visit. The blood stains on the walls and claw marks on the doors were hidden under illusions. However, the Derelich did deal with the bodies, which were buried by its spirits

in a mass grave in the rose garden. Curiously, it never found the body of the Baron's baby son Jean-Michel, but assumed the child had made a conveniently sized morsel for the Jabberwock.

In years following, the Derelich gave an elaborate performance to an occasional audience. Through its spirits, the Derelich portrayed the noble de la Rose family in decline. The Baron Jean de la Rose fell into despair as the Jabberwock murdered his Knights and drove the people of his Barony away. Many who sought to defeat the Jabberwock were either found horribly mutilated or never seen again; others just fled the place, and spoke only in whispers of stranger experiences in the Château. The Barony of Rosier became a place where even Knights Errant found excuses not to visit.

After two decades of misery and decay, the Baron died, passing his bleak castle and Barony to his son Jean-Michel de la Rose. As the new Baron, young Jean-Michel threw off the shroud of gloom and presented a more positive image, white-washing the castle, trimming the vines, replacing the flags. So improved was the castle's appearance that ships sometimes dropped anchor and sent men ashore in rowboats to politely enquire what noble dwelt within. Baron Jean-Michel took a bride, who in time produced a daughter, who is said to be most beautiful.

Of course, all this is deception and illusion, cultivated to serve the Derelich's needs. The creature wants people to visit it, but not too many and not too often. The image it presents – a tragic past, a blighted land, a wicked beast to be slain, a Baron's beautiful daughter of marriageable age – are designed to pique the curiosity and ambition of an adventurous few.

Independence

Officially, Château Fnaargh remains the home of the Baron Jean-Michel de la Rose. As a Baron, de la Rose and his barony are legally independent of the Dukedom of Aquitaine, answering only to royal law and royal command. Being such a small barony, Rosier has remained of little interest to the Duke of Aquitaine in the decades since the Derelich took control. The Derelich has played host to the duke on a few occasions, and has received his officials from time to time, but this has never caused a problem. In fact, the Derelich relishes such visits, as it gives opportunity for the games from which it draws sustenance, though it plays with great care (although there was an unfortunate incident when the duke visited a decade ago; a courtier fell from the upper window of one of the towers).

The Sandy Bay and the Wreck of the *Peitsche*

Château Fnaargh looks out over a pleasant sandy cove. The only thing to mar the view – or enhance it, depending on one's point of view – is the listing wreck of a ship. The sea here is shallow with numerous sand bars, making it impossible for deep hulled ships to come too close to shore without becoming trapped. This unfortunate vessel, the Imperial warship *Peitsche*, was driven aground by a storm fifteen years ago. The crew survived and most eventually made their way back to the Empire, but not before they spent a few months as guests of the Derelich. The Captain, Otto Walheim, who now sits behind a desk in the Imperial Naval Offices in Altdorf, has nothing but good things to say about Baron de la Rose and his hospitality, especially after bedding the Baron's wife, Fleur.

As for the *Peitsche*, she lies firmly wedged in a sand bank, reachable by rowing boat. One of her three masts has snapped and fallen, poking into the water. The sails are tattered rags, and ropes swing uselessly from the yard arms in the breeze. The hull remains impressively intact, although small leaks have flooded the lower sections of the ship. When the crew was rescued by another Imperial vessel, most of the *Peitsche's* useful equipment (weapons, cannon, shot) was salvaged. However, generous GMs might find excuses for some interesting items to have been overlooked, perhaps in hidden compartments or forgotten sea chests.

In recent months, the Derelich has become aware that a band of Goblins in a small boat has been visiting the *Peitsche*. It is not sure what the Goblins are up to, but it would be interested in drawing them into one of its games.

Plage de Sable

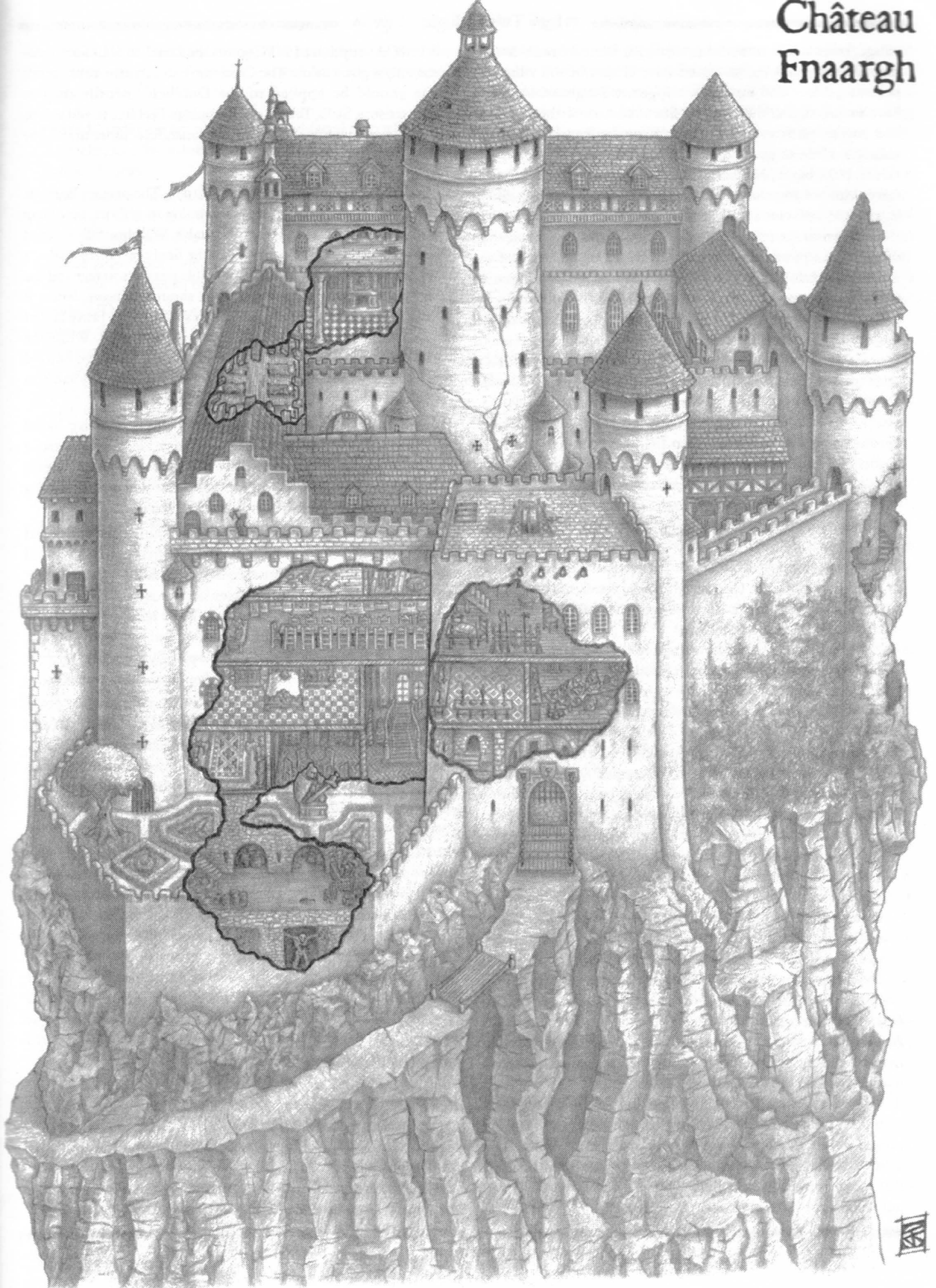
A twenty-minute walk along the pleasant coastline, characters can find the fishing village of Plage de Sable. A small community, its inhabitants run from babes in arms to venerable elders. Compared to many Bretonnian villages, Plage de Sable seems a surprisingly happy and picturesque community. This is mostly because its baron fails to tax them. In fact, the only time Baron de la Rose requires anything of the village is when guests arrive, and then he asks for the best fish, shellfish, vegetables and wine the village can offer. With fishing boats that can travel to the port of Bordeleaux for trade and no taxes, the comfortably well-off peasants are happy to oblige on these infrequent occasions.

What enabled Plage de Sable to survive the Jabberwock for forty years is a mysterious object drawn up from the sea in a fisherman's net half a century ago. Carved of wood and bored with worm holes, it is hard to say what this object was meant to represent: a woman, a fish or just a decorative column? Nevertheless, the simple villagers of Plage de Sable were drawn respectfully to it and, fearing it would be taken from them, hid it in a concealed room at the back of one of the sheds where they smoked herring. It remained there for a decade, a village secret, a strange treasure, dusted weekly by the fishwives. Its importance only increased when the peasants discovered that the Jabberwock would not come too close to Plage de Sable. It was seen skirting its edges warily for several nights until it stopped coming at all, seemingly content with the slaughter it inflicted elsewhere.

After that time, nobody came from the castle to collect taxes anymore, although the nobles were seen passing from time to time, even waving and smiling at the peasants. The people of the village know that some of the young folk go to the castle or meet in the woods for secret trysts with the castle's inhabitants, but nobody has ever suffered from this (although a few younger lads have been scared off by the maids). The folk of the village know that something has not been right at the castle for nigh-on forty years, but while it leaves them alone, they have been content to leave it alone. They will say only good things about the castle, its inhabitants and the baron, but will not volunteer information unless asked. They know the names of many of the people there.

Bonard Blanc is Plage de Sable's leader and spokesman. At 56, he has reached a ripe old age for a Bretonnian peasant and he knows it, having fished the coast to Bordeleaux often enough to know how others live. For his good life he knows that he, and his

Château Fnaargh



village, owes a debt to both the baron (or whoever really lives in that Château) and the sea-given relic hidden in the village. If necessary, Blanc and his fellow villagers will fight with all they have to ensure that their way of life continues. If they discover that anyone plans to do the baron harm (perhaps a village girl visiting a Château guard overhears the PCs' schemes), they will side with the baron. Neither he nor his people are fighters, but he can quickly pull together a couple of dozen men and strong-armed lads armed with clubs and staves.

Unknown to the folk of Plage de Sable, their relic is a creation of significant power. Once it was a perfectly carved effigy of the Elf deity Torothal, Goddess of Rain and Rivers, which was floated out to sea many centuries ago by Wood Elves. Bound within the effigy is a servant of the goddess. It slumbers, but is aware that its vessel is cared for and respected. The spirit within remains formidable, and if it senses the distress of those who care for it is liable to wake. That the Jabberwock sensed its presence and avoided it says something about its power.

Involving the PCs with Château Fnaargh

Before the Derelich can play games with the PCs, they need a reason to come to the area. Here are some ideas:

- ◆ The PCs hear about the Jabberwock from a descendent of a peasant who fled, back in the day, and hope to slay it for fame and glory.
- ◆ The PCs are drawn to investigate the wrecked ship, having heard interesting rumours, false or otherwise, about it.
- ◆ Sailing along the Bretonnian coast, a storm drives the PCs' ship onto the sand banks in the bay.
- ◆ The PCs are hired to act as tax collectors by the King of Bretonnia's administrators and are sent to the Barony of Rosier to collect an outstanding debt.
- ◆ Captain Otto Walheim (see **The Sandy Bay...** above) has been dreaming of Fleur, Baron Jean de la Rose's wife. Wondering if Fleur still remembers him, he is looking for someone to carry a letter to her, expressing his fond memories.
- ◆ On the night the Jabberwock tore through the château, the old baron's baby son was whisked away by his nurse through secret passages. She fled the barony to family elsewhere in Aquitaine. Having lost her first child, she claimed the baby Jean-Michel as her own. Now she is on her death bed and will tell her adopted son the truth, pointing him and his own family towards the Barony of Rosier. What will Jean-Michel, who is secretly one of the Faceless and leader of a small band of Herrimault, do with the knowledge that he is one of the nobility? What will he do when he discovers his inheritance has been usurped?

Cast of Characters

Although only 23 can be on stage at once, the Derelich potentially has a cast of thousands. It cannot possibly remember so many, so it works with a more manageable number. For its own amusement, the Derelich creates personalities and background for most of them, but it is not infallible, and when under pressure can mix things up (one château guard behaving with the personality of another guard, for example). This is a handy way to drop hints to PCs and players that something is not right in Château Fnaargh, but it is best not to overdo it or do it too early.

A brief description of NPC spirits the Derelich manifests most frequently is given below. The Careers in brackets after each spirit's name should be applied to the Derelich's profile to give Characteristics, Skills, Talents and Trappings. Feel free to add spirits, but remember that the Derelich never manifests more than 23 at once.

Baron Jean-Michel Rose (Noble Lord) – The present Baron is a charming, gracious host, very welcoming to visitors, accepting even those of base rank as guests at his table. Will cheerfully recount the terrors that assailed the barony in the final years of his father's rule, lamenting the loss of his honourable peasants to fear and the Jabberwock. However, he is optimistic about the future, letting it be known that he will grant his daughter's hand to the brave knight who slays the Jabberwock and returns with its head. While the baron does leave the château to go hunting, he does not go beyond the barony's borders, claiming he is reluctant to "leave my subjects to face the horrors of the Jabberwock alone".

Baroness Fleur de la Rose (Steward) – An attractive blond woman somewhere in her mid to late thirties, Fleur is a courteous and regal wife to the baron. However, the Derelich uses this spirit to involve visitors to Château Fnaargh in secretive and fleeting love affairs in the rooms and corridors of the castle.

Lady Eloise de la Rose (Noble) – Young, beautiful and headstrong, Eloise will let it be known that she is unimpressed with the idea of being married off by her father to any knight who slays the Jabberwock. She sees herself as the equal of any man and hopes to seek out and kill the beast herself one day. She observes the guards practising swordplay, and will attempt to get any visitor with obvious martial skills (especially women) to secretly teach her a few moves. She has already picked up a few tricks.

The Ghost of Baron Jean de la Rose (Noble Lord) – Scary and doom-laden, the ghostly form of the elderly father of the current baron is known to stalk the halls and corridors of Château Fnaargh, wailing and lamenting the ruin of his realm. He seems to have little purpose beyond causing visitors sleepless nights. However, he can bring outright terror when he appears leaning over someone in bed, his eyes weeping blood.

The Ghost of Gastonne de la Veille (Knight of the Realm) – A spectral knight in his mid-twenties. Gastonne is only seen when the moon is full, kneeling in the overgrown remains of the village of Pneut, praying and keeping a vigil. If spoken to, he tells of how he was killed by the Jabberwock as he defended the village. He implores PCs of a martial nature to seek out and slay the Jabberwock, before melting away into mist. (Of course, the real Gastonne was killed by the Jabberwock as he struggled into his armour in his bedchamber.) If the PCs are reluctant to go to the château, an encounter with Gastonne anywhere in Rosier could be used to prod them towards it in search of information.

Castle Guards (Militiaman)

Every castle needs guards. The ones below are mostly caricatures of silent movie comedians. Use these as regulars the PCs encounter as they enter and go about the castle. Feel free to add others that are seen walking the battlements, but whom the PCs never meet or get any sense of personality from if they do (they are under-

developed NPCs, but may develop). The peasant girls of the village sometimes have brief dalliances with the younger guards, particularly Arolde L'Oid.

Olivier L'Ardie – a fat, pleasantly round-faced man with a small moustache; usually partnered with Stanlé Laurier on either side of a gate or doorway.

Stanlé Laurier – thin as a rake and permanently perplexed, Stanlé is friendly and full of unhelpful suggestions and incorrect facts. Panics or over-reacts in a crisis.

Charles Aumōnier – one of the older guards, he actually walks with a stick! Complains that Olivier copied his moustache.

Arolde L'Oid – a slim pale man with large expressive eyes that appeal to the ladies. Shy and nervous but can pluck up the courage when required. He frequently falls off the castle walls, only to save himself by catching hold of the growing vines or flagpoles. He is a brilliant climber, but scared of heights. If he looks down (which he does the instant he is told not to) he freezes, and the PCs will have to rescue him.

Paul Mertone – Responds to almost any incident or crisis with a deadpan bemusement, and often comments dryly, “Init marv'lous” when something goes wrong.

Buste Quiton – One of the great castle guardsmen of all time, but now sadly forgotten except by enthusiasts.

Jean Cléce – Awkward, condescending and with an outrageous Bretonnian accent, Jean Cléce is just an excuse for fans of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* to recreate a classic scene or two. “Iss verra narce!”

The Cook (Innkeeper) – Marie Cholet is the Derelich's attempt at a Halfling, but she looks more like a very short human. She is middle-aged, and very busy and very fussy in her manner, and can be met outside her kitchen and the castle walls collecting the roots, flowers and leaves from wild plants and flowers to flavour her culinary creations.

Monsieur Rouillé (Veteran) – Massively bearded, his mouth completely hidden from sight, Monsieur Rouillé tends the gardens and extensive vegetable plot of Château Fnaargh. He also looks after the chickens, sheep and cattle in various pens outside the castle walls. He might be found up a ladder trimming the vines on the château's wall or in the rose garden (under which lie the bones of the inhabitants killed by the Jabberwock four decades earlier). The Derelich plays him as a fit, but verbally incomprehensible old man who only becomes really active if his gardens and plants are threatened. He can wield almost any garden implement as though it was a properly balanced weapon.

Maidservants (Servant) – There are about half a dozen maidservants flitting around the castle, performing various chores. Being rather lazy, the Derelich plays them all very much the same way, although he does vary their appearance. All of them are rather disturbing to be around, having an uncomfortably flirtatious nature, combined with cruel, aggressive and spiteful streaks. Many young lads from Plage de Sable will drop nervous hints about their experiences (although this never stops others trying their luck). The maidservants will try it on with male PCs, who will inevitably come to some emotional or physical harm as a result, though this

is rarely fatal. One of the first maidservants PCs are likely to meet is Lisbet Bordeaux, who is either chopping wood or carrying it to a fireplace somewhere in the castle. She always carries a small axe.

The only human inhabitant of Château Fnaargh, Belle has long grown used to the Derelich and the strange ways of the castle. Although scared at first, Belle found life in the castle was not as horrible as it used to be. Under the Derelich there was little casual bullying or outright nastiness most of the time. Belle often interacts with the Derelich through his spirits and tries to answer its questions on human behaviour, although Belle's own experience is limited on this. If Belle put her mind to it she would be able to identify the illusions of the Derelich and she knows that the Derelich itself resides below the Château. However, Belle would have to be convinced that the Derelich was evil before doing so.

The Derelich of Château Fnaargh

Hidden in a secret chamber in Château Fnaargh's catacombs the Derelich hides, weaving its illusions and living vicariously through its spirits. As an additional layer of protection it has adopted an extreme way of living. Rather than simply lurking and prowling the catacombs, waiting to be found, it long ago had itself chained up like a prisoner. Not needing real food or water, or physical comforts, this is a perfectly reasonable existence for the creature. Should any characters find the hidden room in the catacombs, they discover a ragged, almost decayed figure hanging limply from chains. The Derelich plays dead or near dead, appearing as a victim rather than a villain.

When using the castle and the spirits remember that the Derelich is not a Human and it does not think like a Human. It does not understand Humans and their way of life all that well and this shows in the sort of spirits it creates and the way it uses them. As it stands, the Derelich of Château Fnaargh presents an uneasy mix of comedy and horror, and the more the PCs get involved with it, the less it seems to work.

Think of this Derelich as a rather poor GM; it just grabs ingredients it thinks are cool and shoves them into the pot. Running this incoherent and rather messy set-up without looking foolish could be awkward, but the clumsiness of the Derelich's setting and characters should indicate to PCs and players that something is not right in the castle. Of course, this is not the only way to use the Derelich of Château Fnaargh. The setting and characters can be modified, perhaps to emphasise the silly comedy inherent to the guards, the disturbing sadism of the maids (extended to the other females of the Château), or the family tragedy of the de la Roses, so that the themes do not pull in so many directions.

In terms of Characteristics, Skill and Talents, the Derelich is as described in KotG. There have been a few deaths in its forty years in the château, but not enough to gain any permanent Wounds, and none of its spirits currently have any temporary Wounds added to their scores.

Games the Derelich Plays

Every Derelich has its favourite scenarios to draw its visitors into. Remember that a Derelich's games do not have to directly affect the PCs. If mortal NPCs are also visiting, the PCs could easily be drawn into or affected by games the creature plays with those characters.

Romance: The Derelich is fascinated by romantic liaisons and enjoys a seduction or two. It mostly uses its spirit guards and maids, particularly for visitors it understands to be commoners (brief, frivolous relationships between these spirits and the younger lads and lasses from Plage de Sable are not uncommon). For more noble characters and authority figures, it uses the baroness. Few women of quality ever visit the château, but the baron himself could be called to action if necessary. If other mortal NPCs are visiting the château at the same time as the PCs, the Derelich might seek to engineer a jealous love triangle to see what conflict ensues.

Ghost Stories: A good scare is a delicious source of emotion for the Derelich. In addition to the ghost of the late baron, the Derelich loves to use its illusions to create the traditional cold spots, clanking chains, windows that fly open in a howling wind, ghostly moans and sheeted figures. It loves a good séance or ouija session with flickering candles. If the GM wishes, a séance might even result in a real ghost reaching out to the PCs – one of the Jabberwock's victims from forty years ago, perhaps. Consider a séance that results in the true ghost of the late Baron Jean de la Rose manifesting and confronting the Derelich's spirit manifestation of the late baron's ghost!

Rats in a Maze: Château Fnaargh is a large building, with many rooms and stairs and corridors. With its powers of illusion, the Derelich can make it even bigger and more confusing. A character could find himself stepping through a doorway onto a spiral staircase and walking down. He keeps walking down, but cannot find an exit: the stairs just keep spiralling down. So, he walks back up to leave the spiral through the doorway he first entered, only to discover the stairs just keep going up and up and up. He cannot get out until his companions come looking for him. He hears them shouting and discovers the door just round the twist of the stairs he has just walked. Similarly, doors that lead back into the room you have just left; corridors that get narrower as you walk towards the door at the end; waking in the night to discover oneself trapped by clutching, living blankets, and the ceiling is coming closer and closer and closer... Worth a Terror Test in the right circumstances?

Slay the Wicked Beast: Not so much a game, but a genuine quest on behalf of the Derelich. Somewhere out in the dark woods the Jabberwock still gibbers. The Derelich has no particular affection for the beast – it was just a tool in a plot forty years ago. The baron will encourage martial characters to try their luck. His daughter's hand is the prize offered.

Final Thoughts.

There's this ol' keep up on Vignell's Hill, down the ol' valley way. Been ruined

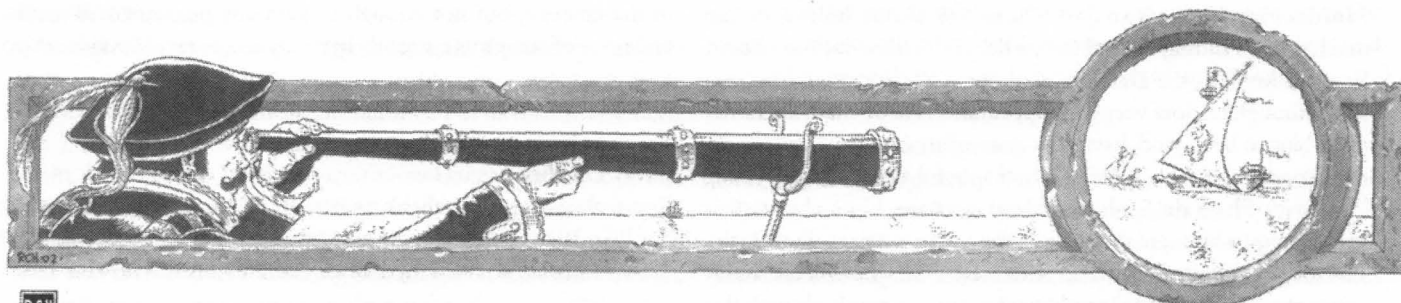
for decades, so my ol'da' says. Now, I was up the valley collecting mushrooms not so long back, and I swear someone's moved in, 'cos the keep is looking all done up. Even got a flag on top. Dunno who it can be, but they musta got workers in through the other end of the valley to fix it up, 'cos they din't come through 'ere.

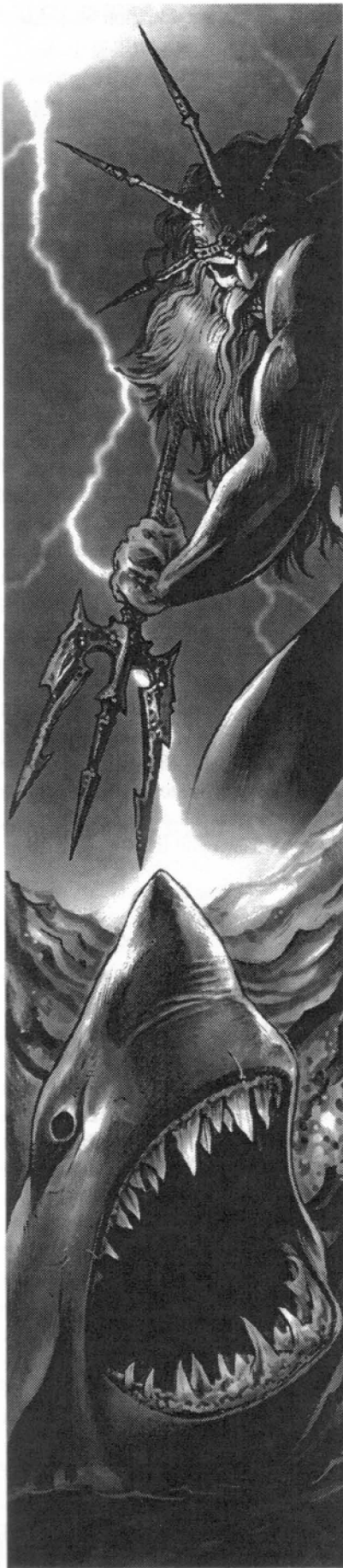
Ah, yes. You'll be seeking the wizard's lodge out in the woods. Used to be a community of charcoal burners out there twenty years back, at least until the Wood Elves came and dealt with them. They were cutting down too many trees, you see? Anyway, the charcoal burners lived in a large communal lodge they built for themselves, and that quickly fell into disrepair. A few years later the wizard arrived with a small group of apprentices and set up residence there. Fixed it up in no time at all – that's magic for you, I suppose. Nobody in town was very happy about it, but they kept themselves to themselves. A trio of witch-hunters passed through a couple of years ago and we told them about it all and they decided to pay a visit. Since they didn't return to start calling us to arms we assumed the wizard's paperwork was in order.

You know that place over on Ketzplatz? The big house, with the ivy all over the walls and the boarded up windows. Someone's moved in! Must be loaded, too, 'cos a place like that can't be cheap. New tiles on the roof and everything. Might be worth a visit from a fully-licensed member of the Re-Distribution of Wealth Authority, if you know what I mean!

A Derelich could be used in a completely different setting altogether. As I finished this article, it occurred to me that I could have written two completely different settings. The first would draw heavily on Roger Corman's classic film adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's stories: *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Tomb of Ligeia*. With their intense imagery and atmosphere of death, decay and madness (of place as well as person), these films make superb backdrops for adventures involving a Derelich. Applying this to the Derelich of Château Fnaargh is easy. The horrible history of the Jabberwock's slaughter is perfect, and the Baron can become a man barely sane, tortured by his family's decline and fear that the Jabberwock will soon lay claim to the rest of his family. The supporting cast of guards and maids should be dramatically reduced and the action should take place during a terrible storm. Take a look at the films and Poe's work for inspiration.

At the other end of the scale lies pure comedy. I'm a huge fan of British ensemble comedies, such as *Dad's Army*, *Are you Being Served?*, *Hi-de-Hi!*, and *You Rang, M'Lord?* The advantage of these comedies for a busy GM is that you have a ready-made cast of NPCs, perfect for a Derelich. Just play around with the characters' names, give them appropriate Careers and you have familiar WFRP humour. It was hard to resist rewriting this article to feature a Derelich and entourage of spirits based entirely on the cast of *'Allo, 'Allo*, running a roadside inn.





S T R O M F E L S

Lord of the Raging Sea

Stromfels, the Shark, the Lord of the Raging Sea, is something of a mystery as far as most folk of the Old World are concerned; only those living on the coasts are really familiar with him. He is not an entirely evil god, but he possesses a cold, callous and rather vicious streak shared by most of his priests and followers, who argue that he is, in fact, a more realistic image of Manann. Stromfels' priests are commonly pirates and wreckers who believe that the strong have the right to take advantage of the weak, and they call on their lord's powers to aid them in their activities.

CULT OF STROMFELS

To those that worship him and the few scholars and heretical priests who dare speak of such things, Stromfels is the true nature of Manann: the sea in all its primordial fury with power over life and death and the tempests that rage upon it. Some legends even place Stromfels as the first god of the world at a time when the world was covered with water and before the awakening of the Earth Mother. Though forced to give way, Stromfels still dominates as the waters of all the seas cover the majority of the world.

In fact, worshippers of Stromfels consider their god as mighty as any of the Ruinous Powers. After all, these fell warriors can only invade in large numbers via land routes rather than across the seas.

The Cult of Manann sees the world differently, and it is their beliefs about Stromfels that are shared by most of the Old World. They view Stromfels as the god of the dangers of the sea such as violent storms, marine predators, pirates, and wreckers. In the lore of Manann, Stromfels was a deity of the Norse who migrated across the Sea of Claws to the northern frontier of the Empire in the seventh century. He was also enshrined in the Wasteland during the Norse conquest of Marienburg in 1109 I.C. In this time of trouble, the cult of Manann defeated and outlawed the cult of Stromfels, absorbed its holdings and riches, and officially reduced its deity to a violent aspect of Manann.

There are a few scholars who reject both views of Stromfels. They consider him as nothing more than an aquatic version of Khorne the Blood God despite the dissimilarities between the two as well as the absence of any corresponding myths.

Stromfels is normally depicted as a raging Manann with his trident dripping with blood. In other representations, Stromfels appears as a shark with its tooth-filled jaws opened as if ready to rip chunks of flesh from its prey. Many pirates and wreckers hope to emulate Stromfels as the ultimate predator while others seek the means to placate the raging sea.

Symbols

Stromfels' most common symbols are the bloody trident, a huge shark, or a bolt of lightning. The blood-soaked trident is a corruption of Manann's symbol and used during the occasional ritualised human sacrifice. It is also used in rites involving combat with sharks.

Crude drawings of sharks are used as a common secret sign indicating a safe hiding place for followers of Stromfels. A hand gesture with the fingers curled and bent thumb moving up and down is often used for worshippers to covertly identify one another.

Many of Stromfels' priests (and few priestesses) have the symbol of the lightning bolt hidden in their clothing. The lightning bolt symbolises the furious storms that churn the waves and destroy the sea-going craft of Man and Elf. These are favoured times to conduct services and sacrifices to Stromfels.

Areas of Worship

The worship of Stromfels is more widespread than the cult of Manann admits, ranging along the coasts of the Old World as well as the lower reaches of the great rivers. In Estalia, he is known as El Bicho del Mar.

Temperament

Stromfels is a violent and wild god, who preys on the weak like the divine predator he is. He has no use for those who would coddle the weak and infirm and constantly tests the resolve and ruthlessness of his worshippers. Those showing any sign of weakness (such as cowardice or mercy) can expect to meet their doom.

Strictures

Initiates and Priests of Stromfels must abide by the following:

- ◆ Never show mercy to prisoners for only the strong would have resisted capture.
- ◆ Priests or any gathering of ten or more cultists must sacrifice a Human or Elf every equinox and solstice, particularly if stormy, to placate the god.
- ◆ Always cut out the tongue of a priest of Manann before torture and their subsequent death in the maw of a shark.
- ◆ Always slay those who survive a wreck unless a sacrifice is needed.

Holy Sites

The only temple of Stromfels that operates openly is the one on the pirate isle of Sartosa. The temple was once dedicated to Myrmidia, but that deity fell into disfavour as the pirates gained absolute control of the island.

In all other locations, services to Stromfels are conducted in hidden shrines and chapels, often located in secret grottoes and caves along the coast. Sharks lurk in the pools within these hidden places during the equinoxes and solstices, waiting for the sacrifices they seem to know are coming. Shrines can also take the form of a certain rock with a small engraving of a shark, on the beach or a small icon in a sailor's locker. Small personal shrines are often hidden in the home of the headman of any village that makes its living scavenging wreckages or in a pirate captain's quarters. In less reputable towns, such as Brionne,

shrines are placed in a relatively secret location in sailors' guildhalls, out of sight of what passes as authority.

Holy Orders

The cult of Stromfels is so fragmented and informal that there are no holy orders.

Cult Skills and Talents

Initiates of Stromfels start with the Navigation Skill in addition to their normal Career Skills. At their option, Priests of Stromfels can learn the following Skills and Talents as part of their careers: Frenzy, Intimidate, Outdoor Survival, Row, Sail, Secret Signs (Pirate), Specialist Weapon (Gunpowder), Street Fighting, Trade (Shipwright).

Prominent Figures

Markus Schlegel is the ranking High Priest of Stromfels in the northern Old World. His base of operations is in the area of Broeckwater to Reaver's Point, a place riddled with caves. At times, the High Priest will sail with the notorious pirate Kaptain Schwarz. The old sea dog, Schlegel, is the object of a hunt by the Cult of Manann, though he in turn hunts them. The grim Shark of Stromfels takes great pleasure in sacrificing followers of Manann whenever they fall prisoner to him.

Holy Days

Mitterfruhl, the spring equinox, is the first holy day for the cult of Stromfels as it is for the cult of Manann. This day represents the start of the hunting season. A lesser holy day, Miththerbst (the autumn equinox) represents the start of the storm season. This is the time when Stromfels' wrath lashes the oceans and coasts, slamming his victims from both the sea and the air.

LORE OF STROMFELS

Spells from several existing Lores may fit the nature of Stromfels and his Priests. GMs should consider letting Priests use them, although changes to Casting Numbers and different spell ingredients might be applicable. Spells of Mannan's Lore are obvious choices, although the more benign spells are less appropriate to Stromfels. *Glowing Light* and *Marsh Light* from Petty Magic (Arcane) are useful for wreckers in their unpleasant activities. *Form of the Raging Bear* can become *Form of the Silent Shark* and may be combined with *The Talking Beast*. *The Beast Unleashed* is also appropriate to Priests of the Shark God. *River's Whisper* can be used to commune with the spirit of a salt water estuary; a higher Casting Number may allow communing with the spirit of an area of sea. *Curse of Rust* can become *Curse of Salty Corrosion*. *Illusion* might be used by powerful Priests to conjure an image of a ship or small lighthouse, so as to lure ships into rocky coasts and wreck them. A sea-based version of *Geyser* is highly fitting. Priests of Stromfels can also cast spells equivalent to *Ice Storm* or *Lightning Storm*, but the damage done can affect ships as well as people; however, the savage waves of the suddenly raging sea is responsible for the physical damage, the blackened skies, ice and lightning becoming disquieting special effects.

BLOOD TRAIL

Casting Number: 5

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: Any small, fresh part of a prey animal (+1)

Description: You gain +10% when following the trail of someone who has been injured, as you can smell the smallest drops of blood even if some attempt has been made to remove them. You can follow the trail over land and water. The effect lasts one hour.

SEASICKNESS

Casting Number: 6

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A vial of saltwater (+1)

Description: You curse someone, even the saltiest of seadogs, with a bout of seasickness that will last for one hour. The victim's Main Profile Characteristics are reduced by 10%. The curse is effective on land, but may be resisted with a successful Will Power Test.

SHARK BITE

Casting Number: 10

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A shark's tooth (+2)

Description: Your mouth widens and rows of serrated teeth sprout from your gums. You gain the Talents *Natural Weapons* and *Menacing* for a number of minutes equal to your Magic score.

HARSH MISTRESS

Casting Number: 12

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: Something small belonging to the target soaked in sea water (+2)

Description: You inflict nightmares upon your target that make it impossible to get a good night's sleep, resulting in lethargy and weakness. The nightmares are extremely vivid, disturbing and connected to the sea in some way; they commonly involve a woman, sometimes a man, draped in seaweed walking from the sea to torment and harass the victim. The effect is to increase the victim's Test Difficulties by one step for each bad night. The victim can make a Will Power Test each night to resist the dreams, but after the first failure cannot roll again and must endure the dreams and their consequences. The dreams last for a number of nights equal to the caster's Magic Characteristic. The effects cease after the victim gets a decent night's sleep.

RAGING SEAS

Casting Number: 15

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: A dagger carved of whalebone (+2)

Description: You command the sea to form massive waves that crash into a specific target, such as a person in the water or on the shore, a boat or a lighthouse. For practical purposes, this counts as a *magic missile* with Damage 6. Anyone on land struck by a wave must make a successful Strength Test or be knocked

to the ground. Anyone in the sea struck by a wave will begin to drown (see *Suffocation*, page 136 of the WFRP2 rules).

STROMFELS' CHILDREN

Casting Number: 19

Casting Time: 1 minute

Ingredient: A bucket of blood (+2)

Description: You summon two Norscan Blue Sharks (described in *Sharks* below) to you, which will attack whoever and whatever you command them to, including boats. The control lasts for up to one hour, so the sharks can be summoned and then sent on specific missions. The Sharks are natural creatures (*not* Daemonic), and just swim away when control ends, unless they are already attacking prey and winning. Obviously, this can only be cast at sea or on an estuary with sufficient depth.

THE TEMPLE AT ORADEUR



They say the only way to guarantee that someone will buy you a drink on the docks of Brionne is to lay claim that you are a citizen of Oradeur, a coastal village 50 miles north of the city on the Golfe du Bidouze. With such a claim sailors from across the Old World and beyond will slap you on the back and call you friend, brother and comrade, while calling down the blessings of the gods on you and all your children.

A stranger to the ways of the sea will ask what kind of hero deserves such acclaim and the sailors will rush to tell them of the lights of Les Dents en Dessous and Oradeur. The fishing village of Oradeur overlooks Les Dents en Dessous, a mile of jagged rocks, many beneath the surface. Not as dangerous or as well known as the Dragon's Maw but during a night storm they are a terrible hazard for shipping. On such nights the people of Oradeur, wrapped in oilskins and carrying torches and lanterns climb to the highest points of land and warn ships of the danger. No-one knows how many ships have been saved but for such courage a drink is but a small thing to pay. Many years ago the people of Oradeur used to send boats out to rescue floundering ships but this is no longer done.

However, not all ships survive Les Dents en Dessous. Sometimes the storm is too fierce and ships and their crew are crushed and battered upon the rocks. Few suspect that some of these wrecks were caused by the people of Oradeur themselves for only a handful survive to observe the dark secret at the heart of the village, and those who do, wish they had succumbed to Manann's embrace.

Oradeur was founded many generations ago by the survivors of a whaling vessel wrecked upon the rocks. They found the ruins of a temple to Manann and saw it as an omen. The lucky few thanked the sea god for their deliverance and to bless his name they swore to try to protect others from the danger of the rocks. It became the reason for the village's existence. However, over the generations bitterness grew. The young asked why they risked their lives and died for no reward. The old would spit and tut, telling them the fish on their plate each day was reward enough. And so it went on.

Then one day, sixty years ago, a young priest of Manann came to Oradeur. François Saunière was charismatic and devout. He also believed that Stromfels should be honoured alongside Manann and the other gods. Saunière discovered that the ruins were once a temple of Stromfels and later he found, among the Cult's archives, the story of its destruction at the hand of the Cult of Manann. Slowly Saunière turned minds, but it was not until four fishing boats were lost in a sudden storm that he came to lead the village. The old priest was the first to die.

The villagers still honour Manann but believe that Stromfels' anger must be placated with blood. The bounty that washes from wrecked ships is but another boon of the gods of the sea.

Once or twice a year, usually in the weeks leading to Mittherbst, on the night of a storm, the priests lead the people to high points away from the shoreline. The ships looking for the safe lights of Oradeur are tricked into coming too close to land and are smashed upon the rocks, a process that can take many hours. The villagers watch in silence until they hear the first sounds of splintering timber and then they begin to chant in honour of the wrath of Manann-Stromfels.

The first three survivors of any wreck are taken prisoner and carried to the temple of Stromfels. Any other survivors are killed in a frenzy by the villagers using cudgels and rocks. It is a rite of passage for any who have passed their ninth birthday to take part. The next few days are spent claiming salvage and burying the dead at sea with the full blessing and ceremony of Manann.

Those taken prisoner are taken to the temple located beneath the rocks. There are two entrances to the temple, a cave visible only at low tide and a hole in the floor of the rock near the ruins of the old temple. This hole is the main entrance and ropes are needed to enter and exit. Parts of the inside of the hole have been carved in the style of sharks' teeth, sharp enough to catch the unwary.

The entrances lead to a tunnel, worn smooth by the sea, which drops low enough at points so that adults need to crouch to pass. Around the entrance hole, light floods in and a few yards beyond this is the temple. There is no gate or door and the floor drops in to three channels to form the shape of a trident. Between these rise two platforms, at the end of one is a large sharp rock, carved with symbols of Stromfels. A single doorway leads from one of the platforms to six cells, a storeroom (containing weapons, lanterns, oil, a ladder and various other items) and cramped, now empty rooms once used as living quarters.

Prior to a ceremony, the worshippers climb atop the platforms and pray while the sea rushes in to fill the room. The priests say that if it is the will of Stromfels then all those within will be drowned, but although it can be a very scary experience watching the water rise, the temple was designed so that this is unlikely to happen. However, Morrslieb does cause unpredictable tides so it is never certain.

With the water rushing in the priests summon the sharks. They swim in to the room and some worshippers cut themselves so blood drips into the water. With the sharks and congregation in a frenzy the bound prisoners are brought out. The high priest then smashes their heads on to the sharp rock (usually not enough to kill them), cuts their bonds and throws them to the sharks. If there are less than three prisoners or the priest feels that Stromfels

has not been fully honoured he may order a villager to be thrown in as well. The ceremony ends when the tide goes out and the exhausted worshippers go home to rest and prepare for the feast the next night.

Oradeur consists of two dozen homes centred on a wooden temple dedicated to Manann and the Lady of the Lake. Any gatherings are usually held outside. The people of Oradeur are a sullen and suspicious lot and visitors are not welcomed although they will be fed and if necessary put up in someone's home. The locals see no reason why anyone should be passing through and are suspicious of those who do. Due to Oradeur's remote location, the small population and general high esteem in which they are held, the villagers are largely left alone by secular and religious authorities. There is also a certain amount of inbreeding as they are wary of inviting others to join their community.

The current high priest, Jean Haegy, like all priests after Saunière, was born and bred in Oradeur. He is fanatical in his worship of Manann and Stromfels but has little formal training and would feel threatened by any other priest of Manann. Haegy is also a fisherman and four other locals also serve as junior priests and initiates.

Player Characters may come across Oradeur by accident or are hired to find survivors or goods from a ship rumoured to have been wrecked upon Les Dents en Dessous. An unsuccessful search could lead to investigations in Brionne, L'Anguille or Marienburg and perhaps the ravings of a survivor who witnessed the massacre of his shipmates. Wiping out the cult at Oradeur may also have repercussions. It could lead to an increase in ship wrecks along the coast and perhaps some seeking revenge on those seen as the cause.

SHARKS

Common to all the major seas of the Old World and beyond, these voracious aquatic predators are a terror to anyone who encounters them. Many sailors still refer to them as sea-dogs and there are many superstitions surrounding them. Broadly, these say that it is good luck when they are swimming away from you and bad luck when they are swimming towards you. The practice of throwing a member of the crew to following sharks as a sacrifice has largely died out.

From The General's Compendium

GREY BARBED SHARK

"I saw the black fin rise out of the water like the blade of Stromfels himself. It crashed into the side of the ship and poor Larrs fell over the side and was gone, lost to the bloody red foaming sea. I don't know why I survived the destruction of the boat, but that day Manann looked out for me. Still, even blessed Manann cannot remove the sight of that evil beast from my mind when I sleep; only the bottle does that for me."

Drunken ex-sailor in Middenheim

The Grey Barbed Shark, also known as Stromfel's Kitty, is a terror of the seas, made famous in *The Song of Little Wilhelm*

Ketter on the Sea of Ruin. The largest of sharks, it is said to be able to sink a galleon and devour the entire crew before the wreck hits the bottom. The shark's skin is a dark grey colour, and some have three red marks on the top of their heads, said to signify the protection of Stromfels. Adults in the wild grow to up to twelve metres long. Some worshippers of Stromfels venerate the animal and hang the huge jawbones in its honour. However, some sailors and coastal communities also do this as protection from Stromfels.

Grey Barbed Sharks live naturally in the Sea of Claws, and have been reported in the seas between Lustria and the Southlands. Curiously, however, there is a Daemonic equivalent known as the Bone Throated Dread. While the spell Stromfels' Children (pg. 35) summons two entirely natural Norscan Blues, there are no known spells to summon natural Grey Barbs, only a ritual to summon a single Daemonic Bone Throated Dread. Stromfels worshippers can use the Daemon summoning rules from *Tome of Corruption* or *Warpstone* 25 (in both cases, treat the Bone Throated Dread as a Lesser Daemon). Larger daemons can be summoned by more powerful priests. Part of the pact of summoning the shark is ensuring that its blood lust will be satisfied. Occasionally this is by eating the priest.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
57	-	64	47	33	25	55	0
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	25	6	4	1	0	0	0

Skills: Follow Trail +30%, Perception +10%, Silent Move +10%, Swim +20%

Talents: Daemonic Aura, Frenzy, Strike to Injure, Strike Mighty Blow, Will of Iron

Traits: Frightening, Keen Senses, Natural Weapons (Bite)

Special Rules:

Aquatic: Sharks can breathe underwater. They have a Movement of 12 in water.

Blood Sense: Sharks can always "see" any bleeding creature in the water, regardless of light conditions or intervening terrain.

Crushing Bite: All of the Shark's attacks count as having the Impact Quality.

Sharp Skin: Due to their unusually thick skin, reduce the Critical Values of Critical Hits against them by 1. Additionally, as the skin is highly sharp and abrasive, anyone grappling a shark automatically takes a strength 1 hit each round.

Instability: On any round in which a Grey Barbed Shark is injured in melee combat but fails to inflict any Wounds in return, it must succeed at a Will Power Test or be banished. This only applies to sharks that have been summoned through magic.

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head: 0 Fins (Arms): 0 Body: 0 Tail (Legs): 0

Weapons: Bite (1d10+7, Impact)

Slaughter Margin: Hard

NORSCAN BLUE

"Remarkable creature, the Norscan Blue. Beautiful scales. If you see a school of cuttlefish then watch yourself, they won't be far behind."

Old sea-hand mending nets in Brionne

When Old Worlders think of sharks, it is likely they are thinking of the Norscan Blue, sometimes called the Blue-Boar. The shark is commonly found in the waters of the fjords around the coast of Norsca and the Sea of Claws. A vicious predator, its name comes from the colouring of the top half of the body (the belly is white). The Blue hunts the area around Norsca during the summer, pushing out to the Middle Sea and beyond in the colder months. They hunt in small packs formed in the first year of their lives and usually the larger the sharks the smaller the pack. The blue hide of the shark is prized in many places for decoration in clothing. The dried skin from the belly is used as sandpaper by coastal settlements. Sailors also use the teeth as lucky charms.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
45	-	44	47	33	12	15	0
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	12	4	4	1	0	0	0

Skills: Follow Trail +20%, Perception, Silent Move, Swim +20%

Talents: Frenzy, Strike to Injure, Strike Mighty Blow, Unsettling, Will of Iron

Traits: Keen Senses, Natural Weapons (Bite)

Special Rules:

Aquatic: As above.

Blood Sense: As above

Crushing Bite: As Above

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head: 0 Fins (Arms): 0 Body: 0 Tail (Legs): 0

Weapons: Bite (1d10+5, Impact)

Slaughter Margin: Hard

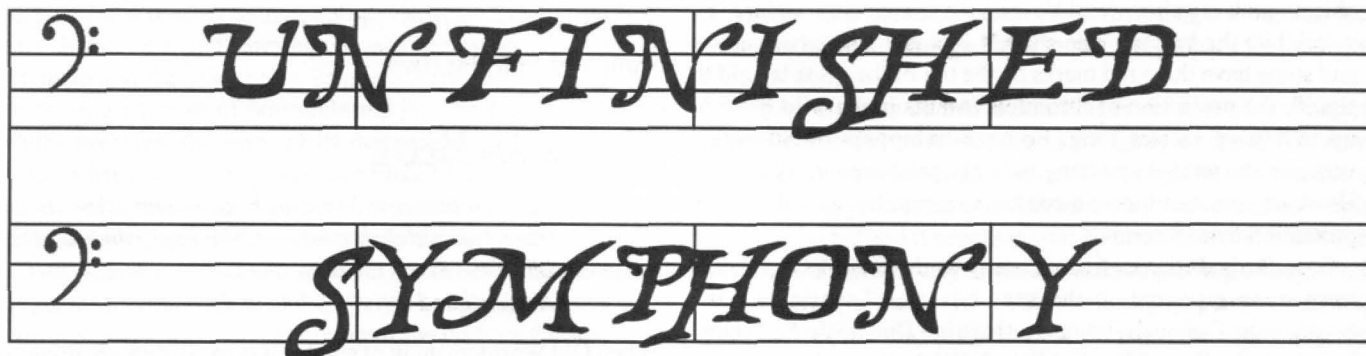
Credits

Cult / God Description: Alfred Nunez Jr

Lore: Robin Low

Temple: John Foody

Sharks: Alexander J. Bateman and John Foody



A Scenario by Clive Oldfield

Here is an investigation, a ghost story set in Altdorf (although almost any city will do) that should be playable in a single session (it was originally designed as a convention scenario). The PCs all receive a vision demanding that something needs to be done by the end of Geheimnistag. It is assumed that the party come to Altdorf specifically to resolve this adventure and arrive on the evening of Festag 32 Vorgeheim. If they are already in Altdorf, then they should experience the vision at about this time. This gives them two whole days to solve the problem. What exactly needs to be done is not at all clear at the start, but a number of clues should eventually lead them in the right direction.

The adventure is not linear in nature, with many branches of investigation offering themselves to the players. Below is a load of facts, gossip and information they may discover and a list of encounters that they may experience. They do not need to find or do all these things to solve the adventure. There should be enough information coming the PCs way and they should have enough leads that they should be quite proactive in their investigation. Much of the adventure will be driven by what the PCs actually do, and so the GM should be prepared to play it by ear.

Solving the mystery involves the PCs bringing the corpse of Count Mussheim (or perhaps his living heir) to the Lupertal Theater on the evening of Geheimnistag and carrying out an old Kislevan spirit ritual backwards. How they reach this conclusion depends on them.

Overture

Leonid Leshikov was a struggling composer of the Flambar school, moderately well known among Altdorf's musos of the early 25th century. After a few popular hits (ditties and drinking songs) and a few failures (his more serious works never became popular) he poured all his energy into his magnum opus, *The Bride of Fagazzino*.

After rave feedback from his trusted friends and the company of the Lupertal Theater, which was to stage *The Bride*, Leshikov was convinced that his latest work would become a huge hit and place his name among the greatest composers of the age.

Unfortunately, on *The Bride's* opening night, just as the performance was beginning, a fire broke out in the theatre razing

the place to the ground and killing many of those present, including Leonid Leshikov who was conducting.

Today, though little remains of the Lupertal Theater, it is famously haunted and the site still lies entirely unclaimed. Geheimnistag this year (I am assuming 2522 IC) will be the one hundredth anniversary of the terrible fire. It is time for Leshikov to finally find peace. He is using his old violin as a focus, to manipulate those who might help, into lifting his self-inflicted curse and freeing him from his eternal torment.

Shortly before his death, and desperate for more cash to finance the production of *The Bride*, Leshikov dedicated a Kislevan Spirit Blessing ritual to Morr and promised that he would not rest until *The Bride* was performed in front of his patron at the Lupertal. He wrote in his journal, "I shall not rest until *The Bride of Fagazzino* is performed before Count Georg von Mussheim at the Lupertal; this I swear before Morr". True to his word, Leshikov (together with many victims of the fire) has been haunting the site of the Lupertal Theater ever since.

Count Mussheim was an influential patron of the arts and eminent in Altdorf high society at the time. As it happened, warned of impending conflagration by a scullery maid's reading of the tea leaves, Mussheim never did travel to the Lupertal that night, and was thus saved from an untimely death.

The body of Count Georg von Mussheim currently resides at the family mausoleum in the catacombs below the family townhouse in the swanky Westenden district of Altdorf.

Leshikov will use (has used) all the energy he can muster to bring a vision to the players of his violin. He hopes this will draw the violin player and those listening to Altdorf to do his work. The PCs will need to bring the body of Mussheim to the ruined theatre on the evening of Geheimnistag where Leshikov will rouse the ghosts of those who died in the inferno to one last (and first) great performance of *The Bride of Fagazzino*, thereby laying all the ghosts to rest.

The Violin

The players need to get hold of the violin before the adventure can take place. It is one of the PC's playing of the violin that brings the vision that tells them something needs to be done.

There are many ways they can get hold of the instrument. They

can win it in a game of cards, find it as some piece of treasure in any of their other adventures. They can be gifted it by some old vagabond they rescue from thugs. They might be offered it in part payment by someone who owes them money. A desperate widow might beg the PCs to buy it as she is near-destitute after the recent death of her husband. Or they can encounter Lilwick Dribble as detailed below.

The violin comes in an ancient, tatty leather case, full of various old papers and music manuscript. There is nothing physically special about the violin other than its obvious age (it is about 110 yrs old). When one of the PCs plays it he begins to play movements from *The Bride of Fagazzio* incredibly skilfully and far above his normal standard. The performance moves the musician and the audience (all the other PCs) greatly.

If no one in the party can play a musical instrument (let alone the violin) then it would be fair to have the instrument captivate one of the PCs. The PC, on a whim, will pick up the instrument and begin to play. Expecting a terrible noise, or that one badly played tune he learnt as a youngster and has not played for fifteen years, the music will be excellent instead.

When the violin is played everyone present experiences the vision, as described in Player Handout 1.

Lilwick Dribble

"You sir, I've got just the thing. You look like a fellow in need of a fine hunting rifle and a set of Ludwig the Fat commemorative spoons. Tell you what I'll do, I'll throw in this violin for just ten more crowns. I'm cutting my own throat. Fine, sir, you drive a hard bargain, the rifle and the spoons will get you the violin for

Keeping Time

The PCs arrive in Altdorf on the evening of the 32 Vorgeheim. This means they have little over 48 hours to solve the mystery. Being WFRP it should be obvious to everyone sooner or later that it all has to happen on Geheimnisnacht.

Keeping stringent track of passing time should help lend an air of immediacy to proceedings. Every half-hour, or even quarter of an hour, should be ticked off by the GM giving the impression that every minute is precious. Clever groups can split up and be much more efficient with their time. The time taken to travel across town should be taken into account, even though the locations are not mapped.

Unless the players are very slow, there should be plenty of time to get everything done and have the PCs ready to enter the Lupertal as the sun sets on Geheimnistag. If the players are getting too much done too quickly, then petty delaying tactics will come in handy: people turning up late for meetings, having to run an errand half way through a conversation, misplacing a book and promising to look for it in a bit or taking the wrong turn in the catacombs. Even a smarmy watchman doing a stop and search can be a challenging encounter, with the PCs required to hold their tongues or be taken down town for a waste of a couple more hours.

Ideally, players should feel rewarded for quick and efficient play, but they should also make it to the Lupertal at just about the right time.

free. And that's my final offer. Alright, if you take the violin I'll knock five crowns off the price of the rifle. Can't say fairer than that."

Lilwick is a Halfling pedlar who will buy and sell virtually anything to make a living. His old wagon is filled almost to bursting with bits and pieces he has accumulated over the years. Whatever the PCs might require, there is a good chance Lilwick can find it somewhere amongst his junk.

Lilwick has a good sales patter and a pleasant manner. He also has a knack for guessing what a prospective customer might want to buy, even perhaps before the customer realises it himself. Lilwick prides himself on having "just the thing" and therefore does not usually need to lower his prices to find business.

When selling to the PCs, however, Lilwick will offer the violin cheap, as part of any deal. Even if the PCs make it clear they do not want a violin, he will continue to offer it as a bargain. He just wants to get rid of it as soon as possible. He cannot remember picking the violin up, and thinks it may have been as part of a job lot.

Recently Lilwick has been having strange dreams. They involve raging conflagrations, with the horrified faces of those dying in the fire accompanied by haunting violin music. He feels (rightly enough) that the violin is to blame for this and wishes to get rid of it before Geheimnistag. He will not necessarily share this information with the PCs, of course.

The Vow

Leshikov decided that in order to raise the money to ensure his show's success he would make an old Kislevan Spirit Blessing but dedicate it, as he now lived in the cosmopolitan Empire, to Morr. The Spirit Blessing is a common enough charm in Kislev and mostly harmless. For some reason, Leshikov's excellent ritual and dedication to Morr meant the vow intrinsic to the blessing (which was unfortunately thwarted by the fire) caused the enchantment that keeps Leshikov as a ghost.

The note in the violin case (Player Handout 2) was written by Leshikov's old great aunt in Praag in response to his request in one of his letters home, to remind him of the steps of the ritual (he had not done this since he was a boy). It should look to the inexperienced like a powerful magical ritual, but the right person, a Kislevan, especially a magically educated Kislevan or an archetypal 'old wife', would know exactly what it is. Further, if a library is checked out for 'Kislevan Spirit Blessings' there will be some information there. The actual note is written in the Praagish dialect of Kislevan, so this might be a clue that some sort of extra Kislevan knowledge is required. Before the party can get hold of the handout they will have to get the letter translated.

The Handouts

This adventure has many handouts. It is not intended that they should be worked for and hard to come by. A major part of the adventure is piecing the backstory together through the handouts so the PCs should be given as many as soon as possible.

The Vision

The ghost of Leshikov's supernatural powers causes anyone

playing the violin or listening to the performance to have a horrifying vision. All will share the same vision and it has such a great effect on those witnessing it, the players should be able to refer to the description (Player Handout 1) during the adventure. All involved in the vision should make an **Average Will Power Test** or gain an Insanity Point.

If the characters wish to see the vision again over the course of the adventure (and perhaps demonstrate it to others) then this should be allowed, but anyone who has an Insanity Point from the vision already, must make an **Average Will Power Test** or refuse to be anywhere near another playing of the instrument. Anyone who gets a second Insanity Point from a subsequent rendition will refuse to hear or play the violin ever again.

The Vision

Player Handout 1 describes the vision that the PCs experience. It should be vivid enough and make a big enough impression that they will not forget the details. They can therefore refer to this handout whenever they wish.

It should be important to stress that the vision is asking for aid. It is not trying to frighten the PCs away, or scare them half to death (although it may do that, too). If the players do not feel for the victims of the fire or realise that they are required to help, they will throw the violin away, or flog it to some other

unsuspecting party, and be sensibly done with the entire adventure. The GM should help the players to see that this is an adventure, not necessarily for characters looking for trouble, but those looking to help. They may help through the goodness of their own heart, but as this is WFRP, they may feel compelled to help simply to rid what is left of their conscience of these haunting visions.

Handout 2.

This is a screwed up note in the bottom of the violin case. It is written in Kislevan in the spidery sprawl of Leshikov's great aunt. It is difficult to read and will also need to be translated.

Handout 3

There is a label stuck to the inside of the bottom of the case. Some anonymous subsequent owner had the case relined in velvet as extra protection for the instrument. So, this label will not be visible unless the lining is cut or ripped off. It should be apparent, though, to a bright spark, that the lining is much younger than the case or the violin.

There is a three digit number written in ink on the label. It should be clear that the number was written after the label was printed. It is the issue number of the Violin.

Player Handout 2

Create a double circle in six parts. Mark each part with a tallow and light them deasecil at dawn.

Evoke the spirit thrice with the blessing clearly thrice round. Pour the water into the first part, and the blood into the second and the ash into the third and the gold into the fourth and the iron into the fifth.

I call on thee to bless my endeavours. I give thee six gifts. I ask for one. I declare my vow to thee.

Beware! To undo move through these stages "widdershins and make good on any vow.



Player Handout 3

The sounds of the violin seem to make shapes in the air. In between the notes you see fire catch onto the velvet curtains. People scream and panic. Heavy smoke fills the air. The orchestra run, fighting each other to reach the exits. You can almost smell the burning hair and melting faces. In the distance you see the shadow of a raven cross two full moons. And beneath

them you recognise the towers of the Imperial Palace. Something needs to be done in Altdorf, this Geheimnis. You can see the burning figures reaching out to you through the smoke and flames, imploring you to help them. Somehow, you sense that the violin is sending you a ghostly message, begging for your aid.

Player Handout 1



Leshikov's Notes: Handout 4

Contained within the violin case are about 30 pages of manuscript musical score for *The Bride of Fagazzio*, handwritten by Leshikov. These are clearly a work in progress and are just rough notes, the odd musical phrase, some lyrics, doodles, and so on. Bits and pieces can be played and/or sung but they are merely snippets and mostly incoherent. Some of the papers have been signed and dated. The details of the notes are not vital or relevant, so only a single sample is supplied as a handout.

The Investigation

There are many ways the PCs can go from here. Below are covered the most likely routes. Possibly all these courses need to be taken if the party is to get a full picture of what has happened and resolve the adventure in time for Geheimnisnacht.

Information

The PCs will have to work out what they need to do. Some information is available to them immediately from the vision and from the papers in the violin case, but the rest they have to root for. Because of the size of Altdorf and the open nature of any investigation, the information the party can glean will be broad and from many sources. The GM should use his discretion as to the actual source of any information, depending on who the PCs decide to talk to and what they need to know.

The PCs should need some source of bureaucratic and general information. The

Leonid Leshikov, *The Bride of Fagazzio*, 2422IC Act I Pg17

Altobelli

Now my daughter you must marry Fagazzio for I have agreed a fee for your hand in marriage

Ana

But why father must I marry him? Because I just told you. Pay attention.

Altobelli

Don't you listen to a word I say, a word, a word, a word I say?

Ana

But why... why father must I marry that big oaf Fagazzio? ...

Altobelli: Because he has lots of money.

Ana: But why? But why? But Why? I thought you had lots of money, lots of money, piles of cash, in fact, lots of money.

Altobelli: I'm afraid I'm a bit short this week! I did lose the family fortune at cards.

Ana: Oh no. What is to become of me? I must marry the big oaf Fagazzio!

Player Handout 4

THE ALTDORF CELESTIAL BODY

Markt 2 Nachgeheim, 2422IC

First Night Fire Fans Fagazzio Flames

COR WHAT A SCORCHER

The Lupertal Theater was burned to the ground Geheimnis night during the debut performance of the new Leshikov opera *The Bride of Fagazzio*. The death toll is estimated to be around 200. The composer, Leonid Leshikov (43) is thought to be among them. Though it is not known what

caused the fire, it spread quickly through the old wooden structure of the Lupertal.

The patron of the opera, Count Georg von Mussheim was not present and is said to be shocked and saddened by the disaster. The Temple of Shallya is taking a collection for the victims. For every donation the Altdorf

Celestial Body receives, we'll send you a free commemorative Lupertal Theater Fire paper hat.

"I am shocked and saddened by the disaster."

Count von Mussheim

The Lupertal Theater was designed by Hotto Kreiger, although lack of funding meant his vision was compromised and Kreiger storm

CORRUPTION

Adolf Massburg of the Hofbauer-Bodelstein Trading Company has been arrested on numerous charges of corruption. His arrest comes amid increased calls for the authorities to investigate the activities of the Company. A keen observer in the Merchants' Guild has said that the Company has been in turmoil following the mysterious death of Seigfried

Player Handout 5

Secretarium in the administrative district around the palace would be a good choice for official documents and the like. These should not really be easy to get hold of, but the odd bribe should smooth the way for the PCs to get any information they require. The Great Library in the university district north of the river will also be a 'must visit'. Tolls need to be paid to cross the bridges across the river so this can inconvenience the PCs.

Morr: God of Artistes

The patronage of Morr is common among wannabe artistic geniuses and the bohemians of the Old World. His role in dreams, his fatalism and his gothic trappings make him the perfect god of doomed aesthetes and those obsessed with their 'life's work.' This is an often overlooked side of the cult and may have to be explained to the PCs.

Finding Karl Leshikov

Via Messerschmidt and Fleiss

There is a music shop on Bootweg, but it is called Nertz Bruders Musik. They make mostly woodwind now. Jozef Nertz will be there; he is not young and will say they have had the shop for 30 years or so. Before that it belonged to some young man who wanted to sell up and seek his fortune in Tilea. It was called Gleiss or Weiss or something, then.

Fleiss did sell up and go to Tilea, and before that his grandfather, Messerschmidt, and father, Fleiss senior, had run the shop. Nertz cannot really help the PCs although he is affable enough. He knows the records in the back office date back a long way but he couldn't say how far back. The PCs would have to be very nice in order to be allowed to rummage through.

As luck would have it, at the back of the records area and at the back of a huge wooden file system are the original records from Messerschmidt and Fleiss. Looking up instrument number 283 will bring up a violin sold to Leonid Leshikov Esq. of 24 Altflugelhausstrasse in Westenden.

Via the Secretarium

If the party go to the Secretarium office they can apply to get the address of a (Karl) Leshikov. If they only have the surname then that will be a harder deal. In either case they will have to fill out paperwork and wait for two weeks to get the result. If they are clever they can bribe a scribe (or similar) to go straight to the Leshikov files and get every Leshikov in the city. Depending on the time left (in the adventure or the session) there could be a couple of dead ends to follow up. But they will get the Karl Leshikov address of 24 Altflugelhausstrasse in Westenden.

At the Library

The PCs will probably not be able to solve the adventure without some general background on the history of the Lupertal and Leshikov. They can get some of this from talking to people in the music business and around the ruins of the theatre. However, they should probably be encouraged to visit the Great Library where this sort of information comes in neat handouts.

Anyone looking for information on strange happenings one

hundred years ago should come up with this clipping from a contemporary news sheet (Player handout 5).

Wer'st Wen

There are various sources for bits and pieces of information on Leshikov and his contemporaries. The player handouts below (6-9) are from *Wer'st Wen 24211C*. *Wer'st Wen (Who's Who)* is the definitive reference book for aristocracy and the aspiring upper middle classes in the Reikland. It has been going for over a hundred years and good libraries will have a current copy. The Great Library of Altdorf has every issue.

von Mussheim, Count Georg

An enthusiastic patron of the arts, 'Boris' Mussheim supports artists, composers and choreographers from all over the Old World. His taste is generally regarded as impeccable. He is also a keen dog fancier. He lives with his attractive family and dogs in Westenden.

Wer'st Wen 24211C

Player Handout 6

Leshikov, Leonid

Reasonable 'Flambard Movement' composer. The Curse of Florenz (24151C), Erika (24191C).

Wer'st Wen 24211C

Player Handout 7

Mantichore, Lucifer

Greatest of the Flambard Composers. Travels between Altdorf and Miragliano. Does lots of good works for charity. La Talabheme (24021C), Don Girardbelli (24071C), The Magic Butterfly (24131C).

Wer'st Wen 24211C

Player Handout 8

Flabbernack, Stefan-Ulric

Successful 'Flambard' composer. Famous for The Three Lira Opera (24171C). Also Fantazia (24091C), Nordwick (24121C). Scholar of ancient artefacts and Renaissance man.

Wer'st Wen 24211C

Player Handout 9

Flambard Movement: *Reikland centred composers exploring Tilean themes and classical form in modernist operetta, esp. Flabbernack, Mantichore, Leshikov.*

how they laughed at my jest.

I went to tea at Leshikov's. He is such a trier, and tediously so. I haven't the heart to tell him that he'll never write a tuneful bar in his entire life. He has a dank little pad in Altflugelhausstrasse, oh the horror, anyway, I made my excuses and left.(2)

Instead I graced the soiree at Ivana's house and who should be there but the lovely Katrina and her awfully boring and beastly cousin

(1) Manager of the Nuhn von Blech theatre (25011C to 25111C)

(2) Leshikov was later to perish in a theatre fire at the Lupertal Theater, on the opening night of a new operetta.

Flabbernack: Life of a Genius, Schutt 24321C;

Serendipitously Morr and Sigmar have saved me from certain death. Oh joy. I was due to appear at the première of Leshikov's something or other at the Lupertal. I wished to meet a few people, not least the Count of Mussheim. I had my wonderful scarlet a la Bretonnia tunic all ready. Cut a dash, I should say so. Anyway, I got word that Mussheim would not be appearing. I didn't want to bother with Leshikov's dirge on Geheimnismacht so I went to a party instead.

Lo and behold if the whole Lupertal didn't burn to the ground with everyone in it!

Flabbernack: Life of a Genius, Schutt 24321C;

Flambard

Looking up Flambard in some general music reference like *Music through the Ages* will find the entry in Player Handout 11 above.

Via Flabbernack (Player Handouts 12 & 13 above)

Here are quite obscure references to Leshikov by a contemporary musician, Flabbernack. He is mentioned as a 'Flambard' movement composer, with Leshikov, so the PCs might think to look him up when they go to the Great Library. If they do (his autobiography is available at the Library), they might get these clues and also the reference to Leshikov's address.

Wolfram's Musical Instruments

If the PCs can think of nothing better to do than visit the nearest music shop and start a conversation about Leshikov then they can enter this place. Wolfram is a youngish man trying to look much older and much more sophisticated than he is. He is a failed musician; there is not an instrument in existence that he cannot play with mediocrity. However, he knows his trade,

generally. He is not an instrument maker, but more of an agent for many such tradesmen.

He knows a few details about Leshikov, but looks down his nose at his mention insisting that "Flabbernack and Mantichore were the only two authentic late Flambard movement parochial copyists and of course, only Verdicelli can do the genre justice." Wolfram will generally find Tilean exponents to be better than Imperial ones in any era and style.

He knows Leshikov was a bit of a failure and that he would never have amounted to much had he lived. There is no evidence to suggest that *The Bride of Faggazio* would have been any more competent or successful than the dreadful *The Curse of Florenz* or *Erika*.

Finding the Lupertal Theater

The PCs will need to locate the Lupertal. Its derelict remains are easy to find, near the waterfront of Hochbech. The area has gone downhill in the last hundred years (thanks in part to the ghosts of the Lupertal) and so the demand for land and the haunting itself has made it not worth anyone's while to rebuild the site.

It is a semi-famous site in the city so many people will know

of it. Most too, if asked about it by PCs, know something of its past and that it is haunted. If the PCs are too eager for information then enterprising locals could make some stuff up for them (at a price): a necromancer cursed the bones of the dead so that they will rise up and take over the city; it was not just an ordinary fire – the place was hit by a meteorite just as the flames began; strange rat-shapes were seen running around in the flames wearing funny masks.

Also, the view in the vision is a realistic one of the landscape of the Palace from the Lupertal, so just by remembering this sight the PCs should get pretty close (or perhaps go in the exact opposite direction).

The Morrite Portals

In the middle of each face of the theatre building there are portals, simply white-painted wooden posts set into the ground and joined across the top (about eight feet high and twenty-four feet across). They have Morrite carvings on them and an inscription written on vellum is hung from each portal (Player handout 14).

Player Handout 14 (Right)

These portals are blessed by Morrite priests and imbued with a certain amount of power. Though they are not capable of warding off determined Undead, they are powerful enough to cast a vague discouragement to spirits. The Morrites placed the portals there long ago after reports of hauntings in the area and they do serve to keep the ghosts inside the theatre, though they have no pressing reason to go wandering off.

Ghosts

The Lupertal is teeming with ghosts all held on this earth by the power of Leshikov's vow and the brutality of their deaths. They are old, though, and will take time to congregate should the PCs enter the ruins. The PCs will get a chance to make out the location of the proscenium and the orchestra and other parts of the theatre. But very soon they will be beset by tormented souls. These will mostly appear as barely discernible shadows, but as they approach they are seen to have tortured expressions and gesture violently at the PCs. Some ghosts even appear to be on fire. With the crowd of ghosts around them, the PCs will soon have little option but to flee.

There are a number of ways to get around the ghosts which can be left to the players. Certainly their return on Geheimnisnacht will be fraught. They could bring a priest of Morr with them who could protect them long enough to carry out the ritual. Or they could use the four portals that guard the walls as temporary protection. Or the pious could consult their own temples as how best to buy them some time there. This is dealt with in **Protection from Ghosts**.

Gromkin Olafssonsson, the one-armed Dwarf

Gromkin Olafssonsson, the Dwarf responsible for the burning down of the Lupertal, can still be found in Altdorf. If the PCs need a bit of help, or you just find it amusing to use him, then you can orchestrate a meeting with him. If the PCs loiter around

General Sayings and Old Wives' Tales of Ghosts

If you see a ghost, eat a whole onion that very same day or you'll be dead within the year.

Ghosts only stay on this miserable world if they have pressing business they didn't get done in this life.

Those who commit crimes and aren't caught, when they die they stay here as ghosts, 'doing their time' as it were.

Ghosts don't exist. It's a figment of your imagination, or just people trying to get attention.

The only way to get rid of them is to have a priest (preferably a mourner) bless a stick and then hit them with it.



*We pray this
unto the Lord of
Peace, may He
protect us from
the dead, may
He bring them
unto His realm,
may He give
them rest, may
He bring this
eternally. So let
it be, in Morr's
holy name.*

the ruins of the Lupertal he might wander up to talk to them, proud of his erstwhile role in the theatre and fond of a chat. He might be drinking at the same inn as the PCs and get chatting to them, coincidentally. If the PCs ask around about the Lupertal then someone can always mention the old one-armed Dwarf who used to work there or even introduce them.

Another option, if you have time to foreshadow the adventure, is to have Gromkin associated with the PCs for a while, and for his one arm (or rather, hand) to be well known to them. Perhaps he is the barman in their local, and famous for his slow service. After listening to the PCs chatting about the Lupertal for a while, he might finally get round to mentioning when he worked there. And thus the mystery of how he lost his hand is solved, if not the more important mystery that the PCs are working to solve. Of course, this sort of coincidence might be too much for some GMs.

Gromkin can also be useful for imparting general information and clues about theatre life, Leshikov, the Lupertal, or anything the GM needs the PCs to know.

"Aye, I was a young Dwarf in those days. My beard was barely as long as my hand and I was filled with the wild fancies of youth. I worked in the Lupertal. Mostly, during the shows, I rigged the scenery and helped with the lighting. Otherwise I used to help make the scenery and paint it. My first love was the lighting though, so I used to harass old Herr Flaschenburg, the

man who made our pyrotechnics. He was a genius. He could make any sort of lighting you wanted, any colour, any brightness and he could make them safely. I was in awe of his skill so I kept at him until eventually (against his better judgement, he said) he agreed that he would teach me the secrets of lighting and pyrotechnics.

I never really had a natural talent for that sort of thing, and I made too many explosions at the workshop [indicates missing hand]. Nevertheless I persevered. In fact the opening night of The Bride of Fagazzio was the first performance where the pyrotechnics I constructed were actually used. I was really proud. Unfortunately I couldn't make the performance, I was called away to look after my sick mother, but at least my stuff was used.

And then of course there was the fire. Poor old Herr Flaschenburg was unfortunately killed in the fire and so that was the end of my brief career as apprentice pyrotechnician. It's all haunted now, of course."

Find where Leshikov lived and get his journal**24 Altflugelhausstrasse in Westenden.**

The PCs should eventually find Leshikov's old address and visit

the place to see if there is anything worthwhile at the house. As it happens, a descendant of Leonid lives there and owns a key clue: Leshikov's journal.

Karl Leshikov, about 60 years old, is Leonid's great grandson and eventual heir. He lives in a townhouse in what was once a smart area but has now been annexed by the Grauspitz slum. He is decrepit, but will be glad of guests once he is sure they mean him no harm.

Karl is, as it happens, the true heir to the violin and his great grandfather's papers, but the PCs do not know this and neither does he, though he might guess. He knows few facts about Leonid. He knows his family has music in the blood, and that some of his ancestors were into more serious music, and that Leonid was a bit famous.

There is a family story that Leonid sold his soul to one of the dark gods in exchange for the genius to master his art and write one great opera. The catch being that Leonid did not specify that the opera actually be performed, so vindictively the dark god reaped his reward, Leonid's soul, before the masterpiece

performance was even begun, and burned down the theatre as he went.

Note: This Dark God lead is a wild goose chase. It is a very convincing story for the Warhammer World so should be used with care, especially if the PCs are short of time.

Karl has been having a rough time from a gang of thugs (actually just a few kids) who dominate one end of his street. If the PCs were to teach the kids a lesson, then Karl will be impressed, and more likely to cooperate with them.

While chatting with the PCs and telling them the story he knows of his great grandfather's life, he will also say he has his journal somewhere amongst all the clutter in his place, and he will even give it to the PCs if they go out and make sure the thugs stop bothering him.

The Street Kids

The thugs are just a bunch of kids and they do not really mean much harm. The PCs should treat the situation carefully, though. The kids have parents and a huge extended family in the area so



just going out and bashing them might be counter-productive. A quiet word with the right amount of menace will do the trick, however. If it turns to bloodshed then the PCs have already lost.

The Journal

The journal is largely tedious; the writer seems to have little talent for knowing what might be interesting, but then he probably did not intend this to be read by anyone else. To get the useful snippet someone is going to have to read all the way through. This should take a few hours. Of course if they have the sense to start at the end and work backwards then it will be much quicker. Leshikov's scribbles can also be difficult to read. Anyone reading the journal will get a good insight into Leshikov generally and *The Bride of Fagazzio*. As it happens, though, all the vital information can be got from a single handout (Player Handout 15).

Find out about the Spirit Blessing

The PCs should have found enough references to the Spirit Blessing by now. To make sense of this. They will probably need to talk to some Kislevans. If the PCs tell any of these Kislevans about the ghosts, then the Kislevan will offer to sell the PCs a recipe for warding off the ghosts (see **Old Kislevan Recipe** below).

14 Sommerzeit, 2422 - Nice Weather. Work progresses on the Bride; it goes well. I think this could be the one that makes my reputation here. Then we'll see how they laugh. The middle movement of the third act, I have just the right phrase now it works well with the returning warrior. I might bring in some chorus in counterpoint.

16 Sommerzeit, 2422 - Rehearsals are going well. Even the artists are beginning to see how this will work. Some bystanders were visibly moved during the aria yesterday. It is nearly all in place.

17 Sommerzeit, 2422 - I have had to beg for the means to finish this project, but I promised the count that all will be well. He has asked around among the cast, I believe and word is good. I hope and pray that the 250 Crowns will come. He will be a fool to refuse now, just when we are so close to triumph.

19 Sommerzeit, 2422 - I am getting desperate, I called on Morr, today, like an old Kislevan spirit blessing, for aid.

*20 Sommerzeit, 2422 - Today went very well indeed. We have the money and Claudia is beginning to master her part. I must make sure that I have enough energy to see this through, I shall not rest until *The Bride of Fagazzio* is performed before Count Georg von Mussheim at the Lupertal; this I swear before Morr.*

The final entry is as follows

33 Vorgeheim 2422 - So everything is in place. Tomorrow will be the moment of truth. I am confident it will all be a roaring success.

Magically Educated Kislevan

If the PCs look hard enough they might find Yuri Adrianopov, an alchemist who works above a fancy tailor in Obereik. He mostly makes perfumes, but has a sideline in charms and potions for half-witted or flaccid dandies. For a price, or the purchase of one of his candles 'to light for your one true love' or perhaps his 'legendary black Kislevan sustained performance draughts', he will tell what he knows.

Andrianopov will explain that intrinsic to the ritual is a promise that will bind the requestor to the spirit until that promise is kept. As well as general background, Adrianopov can explain the ritual more clearly, ensuring that only an idiot might mess it up, if the PCs think to ask.

Old Wife Kislevan

Kyria Kyriakova reads fortunes in the marketplace, nearby. She wears traditional Kislevan dress and talks of magic and visions. The PCs should notice her and might try to talk to her about the ritual, but frankly no one generally approaches mad fortune tellers about academic matters.

Kyria will be happy to explain (for the price of a reading or two) that the gifts are for the spirits. The water is to refresh the spirit, the blood (the ritual performer's blood) to show sincerity, the ash for hospitality, the gold for payment, the iron for tools (that the spirit might need to make in order to carry out the blessing), and the air to let the spirit escape. She will also explain that you have to promise the spirit that you will do this thing in order for it to help, and that the spirit will hold you to it.

For a good price the Old Wife will offer to make a Spirit

Asking the spirits to bless endeavours is commonplace in the bucolic hinterland. These spirits seem to be called upon almost at random, but it is clear the peasantry have their own reasons for the spirits they choose.

Not just once has a Kislevan in The Empire been accused of witchery for this adherence. And, I hazard, not just one has been burned. Plainly, despite magicalous trappings, the ritualised calling to the spirit is more akin to a prayer than a thaumaturgy. This is borne out by the requirement of a vow or promise to the chosen spirit.

The efficacy of the blessing seems to hinge on the sincerity and continence of the vow. It is said that any broken vow will not be able to be mended for one hundred years.

The practice of 'Spirit Blessing' is dying in all but deepest rural areas and the urban Kislevans come soon to realise the advantages of the sophisticated Imperial gods.

From *Kislevan Life: Customs and Practices*, Klaus von Raumansburg, 2443IC.

Blessing on a PC's behalf, too. The ritual she uses will be markedly different to the one Leshikov used, but it will be generally instructive. She will vow to some Kislevan-named thing that she believes is a water-spirit that lives just off Oberreik. If the PC in question does go along with this, it might be amusing to have the spirit show up to help out at one point, if GMs do not prefer to retain more arbitrary interaction with the divine.

Spirit Blessing in the Library

Dispel

The correct process for the dispel should be to draw two concentric circles and divide them into sextants. Working anti-clockwise (widdershins; deaseil is clockwise) in the evening, light a candle in each section (six in total) and then put a 'gift' in each. The sixth gift is air. With each gift, say 'Morr' three times, then say 'I call on thee...' and so on. Go round the circle three times, making a total of eighteen invocations.

This might be over-detailed for WFRP magic. If the PCs make a bit of effort to decipher the ritual and perform it backwards then they should be given the benefit of any doubt. Of course, this simple backwards ritual will not be enough to put Leshikov to rest, and the party will need to bring Count Mussheim's remains to the Lupertal Theater on Geheimnisnacht and then perform the ritual in order to make everything right again. (In the playtest, the players did not bother with the dead contemporary of Leshikov. Instead, they kidnapped the current Count Mussheim. This is good, too.)

Find where Mussheim lives and get his body

The seemingly throwaway line in Leshikov's journal holds the key to solving the mystery. Someone should hopefully realise that Leshikov's pledge to Morr (and his old Kislevan ritual) is what keeps him at the Lupertal, and the only way to fulfil the pledge is to bring Mussheim's body to the theatre on Geheimnisnacht.

The part of Westenden where the Mussheim townhouse is situated has long been the home of those of above average wealth. The cellars generally lead to a network of catacombs where generations of Altdorf's finest citizens have been interred. The network is generally not unpleasant. There are a few areas taken by rats, their rat-men cousins and other nasties. But generally it is pretty nice for an underground area given over to the dead.

The various burial areas are all linked together forming one gigantic labyrinth beneath the city. There are many ways they could enter the network, once they know it exists, but navigation is a more difficult problem for the PCs. They probably want to get into the catacombs as close as possible to the Mussheim residence.

Help in the Dark

Quite sensibly, the PCs might be unwilling to enter the catacombs alone. They could get aid from a number of places. If they seek help from the Temple of Morr then see that section below.

Tomb robbing is known to happen occasionally in Altdorf. The PCs may decide to find a gang of tomb robbers and take advantage of their expertise. It should be up to the GM how

successful this might be, but remember that robbing tombs is punishable by death and is a highly specialised pursuit. As the PCs only have a few days in which to act, they would have to do well to get hold of reliable tomb robbers and win their trust in such a short space of time.

Rat catchers have a legitimate reason to explore the catacombs and they are usually on the look out for some extra employment. A bit of digging should find a rat catcher willing to guide the PCs into the catacombs. Some will need to be assured that it is all in a good cause; some will not care either way. (More information on Altdorf rat catchers can be found in 'A Fistful of Rat Tails', *Warpstone* 24.)

The PCs have a choice of entrances. They might hear of the public entrance several hundred yards away at a small Morrite temple. This would mean trekking quite a distance through the scary darkness and should provoke an encounter, or at least 'the willies'. They could find a house close to the Mussheim house and use that as a base, or they could break into the Mussheim residence.

There is a basement apartment for rent in a house just across the road from the Mussheim one. The landlord, a tall slow creaky kind of gent, wants payment for two months in advance. It is also a nice area and the landlord is not desperate so if the slightest thing makes him uneasy about the PCs then he will decide not to rent to them. The cellar leads easily to the network of catacombs.

Whatever trouble they attract on the surface during their escapades, it might be worth hurrying the PCs up with an encounter below ground also. A group of ghouls inhabits the catacombs. If the PCs are taking too long, or strolling about underground like they own the place, then one or more of the ghouls attack the party, or preferably a stray, lone party-member. The noise of this may attract others to the feast.

Under the Mussheim house it might be easy to find a niche given over to Count Georg. These would be the wrong bones, however. As is not uncommon with nobles, the Mussheims are generally identified by affected sobriquets. Count Georg is Georg I. Count Geoglein is Georg II. Count Musschen-Georg is Georg III. The one the players want is Georg-Boris, IV. Georg-Walther is Georg V. The PCs will have to have heard the Georg-Boris name to know which bones they require, or end up with five sets of remains.

The PCs should have thought about how they intend to carry the bones across town to get them to Lupertal. However and whenever they do it they will meet a Watch patrol wanting to know their business. This should not be too much of a problem as long as everyone sounds reasonable and respectful. What will make the Watch act is any sight of long dead body part. That will bring instant arrest.

The Living Mussheim

If the PCs decide to kidnap the living Count von Mussheim, then they should probably be allowed to make a successful attempt at the ritual with him present, instead. Or, the GM may decide to disallow this course as against the terms of the Spirit Blessing. It is up to interpretation.

The present Count von Mussheim is still a wealthy and important individual, but much less so than his ancestor of one

hundred years ago. He will be at home with his valet/bodyguard and his housekeeper. If the PCs manage to get to talk to him, and that should not be easy, he will be interested and amused by their account of his ancestor. However, he will think it ludicrous to actually go to the haunted theatre on Geheimnisnacht because of the tale. The PCs will do very well indeed to convince him otherwise and they are likely to have to resort to dirty tactics to get him there.

The PCs had better have a good plan for getting him to the theatre, because the Watch patrols are dilligent in Westenden and numerous at Geheimnis. They will be in no mood to listen to their mad-sounding excuses should they be caught harassing a nob.

Geheimnisnacht

As the finale of the adventure takes place at Geheimnisnacht there should be something in the air. Even the least superstitious citizens of Altdorf tread warily on this day. Most people will not go out after dark. Inns lock in, good folk stay shuttered up

indoors. The day is spent in celebration and observance of religious rites. The citizens will take to the street as the sun begins to set, but most will head home soon after. The PCs can witness some of the events listed below to give them a feel for the evening. But, they should know all about Geheimnisnacht. It should give them a chill to know they must venture out, and they should all have heard any number of ghost tales about the sorts of things that happen on this night.

A Mummers' Play

The PCs can watch a group of masked and painted players perform their play in an inn or on some platz. The play will follow a traditional story that some of the PCs may already be familiar with. Sigmar tries to win Rhiannon's hand from the Bear King as in many plays, but in the Geheimnis version he gets captured by the Witch and marries her instead, while the moon-head character, Looney, gets a bigger part than usual and runs about the inn playing tricks on the audience and whacking them with his stick. It is a sign of good luck for the coming year to be



whacked by Looney's stick on Geheimnis. Apparently.

A Penny for the Hag

It is a tradition in the Empire for children to make effigies of Witches, Beastmen, Jabberwocks, and other terrors and then burn them on Geheimnisnacht. The children accost passers-by in the street and ask them whether their creations should be condemned to death. If the person agrees that the effigy should be burned then they are expected to pay the children a penny as a reward for capturing the dangerous reprobate. If he does not agree, however, then he himself will be accused of collusion with the Dark Gods and hounded by the children. The children will try to hit him with sticks and throw stones at him until he can get away. Most learn soon enough that it is always better to throw the children a few pennies than incur their wrath.

Some of the more convincing hags are often the kids' grandmother in disguise.

A Doomsayer

Some strange-looking robed figure stands in the middle of the street telling anyone who will listen of the imminent destruction of Altdorf. This is not such an unusual event in itself, but generally these types are ignored. Because it is Geheimnistag, though, a crowd has gathered and the PCs can tell that an air of trepidation is spreading through the crowd; they think the mad fanatic might just have a point this time. If the GM wishes, the doomsayer can single out one of the PCs and embark on a rant about how that PC is vital to the survival of the city. He will say the PC knows deep down inside what must be done, and if it is not done, then all will perish. If the PCs press the doomsayer for more information, as if he actually might know what he is talking about, it will become increasingly apparent that he is talking gibberish.

A Witch Hunt

The PCs come across a band of locals surrounding an old lady. It soon becomes clear that the locals have got a bit over-excited about Geheimnisnacht and want to cleanse their neighbourhood of any influence of the Dark Gods. It is equally clear that the old lady is just an old lady and very unlikely to be any sort of witch. The PCs may want to put the locals right. They are a tough bunch, but nothing that should trouble brave adventurer types. If the PCs do help out they will be rewarded with the old lady's grateful thanks, and nothing else. If they leave the mob alone, they will more than likely burn her.

(More general information on Geheimnisnacht can be found in 'In the Light of the Two Moons,' *Warpstone* 15.)

The Temple of Morr

As we are dealing with ghosts, the PCs may decide to approach the cult of Morr for help. There is a small temple in Westenden with access to the catacombs, which the PCs might come across, or they could approach the main temple of Altdorf.

Obviously, one of the cult's main responsibilities is dealing with hauntings like this, and in an ideal world the cult would take up the job from the PCs and solve everything for them. Luckily it is not an ideal world. If the PCs get to talk to a real priest and convince him to help then he should only be of limited

usefulness. There is no point having him solve the adventure while the PCs watch.

A friendly priest could be of some use to the PCs, giving them legitimate access to the catacombs, advising them generally on ghosts and their ilk and helping them interpret the Spirit Blessing ritual. The most useful thing a friendly priest could do for the PCs is explain to them about the protective the Morrite Portals that have been erected around the ruined theatre, and how they help to ward off the dead.

If the PCs are desperate to get into the theatre and they have made a very good impression on the priest, then the priest might just have access to a protection from undead ritual and he might be prepared to perform it outside the theatre on Geheimnisnacht. This will give all within a ten yard radius of the priest protection from the ghosts for up to half an hour, long enough to perform the Spirit Blessing in reverse.

Go to the Lupertal on Geheimnisnacht

So, after two days solid investigation the PCs should find themselves outside the Lupertal as darkness falls, some candles and some ritual ingredients in one hand, a hundred year old corpse in the other. If they do not have all this it could get painful for them, but it is generally the job of the GM to ensure the PCs have a fighting chance come the denouement. That or laugh as they die horribly.

The ghosts will be particularly active as it is their centenary and Geheimnisnacht to boot. The PCs should have thought of some way to protect themselves from the ghosts, or they will surely be scared witless and run screaming into the night.

Protection from Ghosts

Short of wielding magical weapons and cutting down the dozens of ghosts in the theatre, the PCs will need to work out some way of gaining protection from the ghosts for long enough to perform their ritual. They can get help from the Temple of Morr as described above, or may find other options.

The Morrite Portals

It might sound like moving the goalposts, but someone might have the bright idea to uproot the Morrite Portals and carry them in to use them as some sort of barrier against the ghosts. The blessing on the portals is quite weak, but it could be allowed to succeed. Perhaps the PCs will need to get into a very small area, hiding behind the portals, and one or two ghosts might actually break through towards the end of the ritual. If a PC strays from the protection of the portals, then he will be set upon immediately.

Old Kislevan Recipe

If the PCs have talked to one of the expert Kislevans about the situation, then perhaps the Kislevan, knowing they will require some protection from the ghosts, will offer to sell them an old Kislevan recipe for warding off ghosts. The PCs are likely to think of this as old wives' nonsense, but actually the recipe does work.

Player Handout 17

Or, if they make a good impression on one of the Kislevans then

that person may decide to help more, and offer to accompany the PCs to the theatre. They will know a ritual, similar to the one described under The Temple of Morr, to ward off the ghosts for a short time.

Player Handout 17

~ Recipe for Warding off Ghosts ~
 Mix three cups of flour with a whole peeled and chopped onion
 Drain the blood of an eager rooster and mix it with six egg-whites and the flour
 Take the rooster's spleen and cut it up with a sprig of graveroot and two sprigs of parsley
 Boil up the rooster's head with the head of its favourite mate for two hours
 Pour the broth into a silver tankard together with the blood mixture and spleen
 Leave to cool
 Paint yourself from head to toe with the concoction
 Only good for half an hour

Any Other Method

If the PCs go to the trouble of researching or asking around for ways to deal with the ghosts, then they should be rewarded with some success. It might be a bit unbalancing to give them a reusable and easy method of reliable protection but a single use charm or one-off ritual could work. The streets of the Empire are full of opinions on supernatural solutions for almost any ailment or obstacle imaginable. Only the very gullible would consider one in ten of these to hold any truth, so the PCs might need to put their faith in some dubious long shot.

Laying the Ghosts to Rest

To put things right the PCs need to get to the theatre (preferably the stage area) with some sort of protection from the ghosts and perform the Spirit Blessing in reverse. They will also need to perform what they can of *The Bride of Fagazzio* in front of any Count von Mussheim they have to hand. The violin part is the most important part of the performance, but the PCs have lyrics and they may wish to sing along, also. If most of this happens they should be allowed to stop the haunting and put Leshikov's ghost to rest. The PCs should probably be given the benefit of the doubt if they have done reasonably well and followed most of the clues.

The musician playing the violin should be overcome once more and begin to play brilliantly. The ghosts who will be trying to encroach on the PCs' territory at this point should become the audience once more. The atmosphere should change suddenly as if lime lights have been ignited and the theatre is whole again.

The ghosts will begin to act like an audience, applauding in the right places and as the playing of the violin reaches a climax at the denouement of the opera they will erupt into applause and shouts of 'encore' and 'auteur.' Then the figure of Leonid Leshikov will proudly march onto the stage and take their

plaudits. He will wipe a tear from his eye, bow to the audience, then bow to the PCs and gradually fade into the brightening air. The ghosts of the audience will do likewise and the PCs will be left alone in silence.

The Cast

WYNTER KATZGERRINGENHOF - PRIEST OF MORR
 Male Human Priest (ex-Initiate)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
41	38	34	44	33	43	50	32
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	16	3	4	4	1	0	0

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Astronomy), Academic Knowledge (Theology) +10%, Channelling, Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Gossip, Heal +10%, Magical Sense, Perception, Read/Write, Speak Arcane Language (Magick), Speak Language (Tilean), Speak Language (Classical)

Talents: Petty Magick (Divine), Strike to Stun

Armour: Robes (1 All Over)

Weapons: Dagger, Staff

Trappings: Robes, Symbol

The priest knows (somehow!) the Morrian spell 'Circle of Morr'

CIRCLE OF MORR

Casting Number: 9

Casting Time: Full Action

Duration: Twenty minutes or so

Range: 10'

Ingredients: A lemon (+1)

This creates a circle (or rather sphere) that ghosts and other ethereal undead spirits will not enter. The circle is centred either on the caster or a suitable symbol he may imbue. Or, alternatively, it does whatever is required to give the PCs a worthy challenge at the denouement of the adventure.

GROMKIN OLAFSSONSSON

Male Dwarf Artisan (ex-Tradesman)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
41	31	31	41	21	31	31	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	12	3	4	3	0	0	0

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Pyrotechnics), Common Knowledge (Dwarfs), Drive, Evaluate, Gossip +10%, Haggle,

Perception, Read/Write, Secret Language (Guild Tongue), Speak Language (Khazalid, Reikspiel), Trade (Smith), Trade (SFX)

Talents: Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Night Vision, Resistance to Magic, Stout-hearted, Sturdy, Specialist Weapon Group (Gunpowder)

Armour: None

Weapons: Dagger, Axe

Talents: Hardy, Lesser Magic (River Watch), Meditation, Petty Magic (Hag), Savvy

Armour: None

Weapons: Dagger

Trappings: Healing Draught, Antitoxin Kit, Salves, Charms, Shawl of Office



RIVER WATCH

Casting Number: 10

Casting Time: Full Action

Duration: A Month

Range: see below

Ingredients: A Fish from the River (+1)

This summons a spirit from a nearby river to keep an eye on the target, watch over them and help them out if necessary for a whole month. The spell is immediately dispelled if the target should wander out of range (a sensible distance) of the river.

RIVER SPIRIT

Easily confused with a mutant Fish-man, this spirit appears as a large fish (appropriate to its river of origin) with some anthropomorphic features such as legs. It attacks by biting with its toothless bony maw, which is a lot more effective than it might look. When it gets excited it flaps its gills violently.

If summoned as part of a River Watch spell, then the spirit will watch over the target magically from the Aethyr, until such a time as it feels it is required. Then it will appear suddenly to aid the target. Unfortunately being a river spirit, it does lack a certain sense of propriety and perspective in regard to the human world. It is also ugly as sin.

After the danger is seen off, the River Spirit will hang around the target, dumbly, for ten minutes or so, to make sure the coast is clear.

KYRIA KYRIAKOVA

Female Human Hag Witch (ex-Wise Woman)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
28	32	37	38	35	50	42	31
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	13	3	3	3	1	0	0

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Spirits), Charm, Intimidate, Common Knowledge (Kislev) +20%, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Gossip, Heal +10%, Magical Sense, Perception, Performer (Fortune Teller) +10%, Prepare Poison +10%, Speak Arcane Language (Magick), Speak Language (Reikspiel), Speak Language (Ungol), Trade (Herbalist)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
45	0	35	35	35	45	55	5
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	16	3	3	4	0	0	0

Skills: Perception, Silent Move, Swim +20%

Talents: Daemonic Aura, Frightening, Keen Senses, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Will of Iron

Armour: Scales (2)

Armour Points: Head 2, Arms 2, Body 2, Legs 2

Weapons: Bony Mouth

Slaughter Margin: Challenging

COUNT GEORG MUSSHEIM

Male Human Noble

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
42	37	31	34	35	35	32	37
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	11	3	3	4	0	0	0

Skills: Command, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Consume Alcohol, Charm, Gamble +10%, Gossip, Read/Write, Ride, Speak Language (Reikspiel), Speak Language (Classical)

Talents: Etiquette, Public Speaking, Savvy, Specialist Weapon Group (Fencing)

Armour: None

Weapons: Dagger, Rapier

STREET THUGS

Male Human Thug

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
43	33	36	41	27	24	30	31
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	13	3	4	4	0	0	0

Skills: Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Gamble, Intimidate

Talents: Disarm, Strike to Injure, Wrestling

Armour: None

Weapons: Club, Dagger

Trappings: None

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Check out the Warpstone website for additional material for articles in this issue:

Unfinished Symphony
Sewer Guide profile
Player Handouts

Chaos Dwarfs
More sample NPCs
Chaos Dwarf mutation table
NPC: Thymbrin Snakebeard
More spells

There is also supporting material from issue 27 - NPC profiles for scenarios and Dogs of War and extra material for Weaving a Web, including a new secret society.

Also check out

legion 8

Including an interview with Jay Little, WFRP's Senior RPG Developer with FFG.

legion 9

Including an interview with David Chart, author of Knights of the Grail.

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MAGICAL CHARMS

By Tim Eccles

There are a number of features of the new edition of WFRP that offer good background ideas, but then seem to ruin it with an overly powerful rule mechanism. Both lucky charms and holy relics fall into this category. As a nice piece of colour and a deepening of the game, they are an excellent idea. As a cheap artefact readily available from any street vendor, and with massive game properties, I am less convinced of their value. Still, as part of the game they are worth examining in more detail. I hope the following examples will provide a little more depth to these items.

Charms

"Magical" charms can take many forms and appear in many guises. Physically, they are usually worn as amulets, bracelets or brooches. Metaphysically, they usually appeal to either the gods or the mysteries of the past. The former is the simplest to deal with, being readily available and the safest to wear in terms of acceptance by the authorities. Generally speaking, no one will take exception to the wearer of a bracelet representing Ulric, Sigmar or Taal - although regional variations can sometimes cause problems. Much more open to interpretation is the second style of charm, those which originate in the past, or whose aesthetic and mystical claims are founded there. Whilst it is possible for a lucky charm to be an heirloom, the rule mechanic makes this very unlikely, since it supports a very disposable view of these items. After all, having used a lucky charm once, you should throw it away and buy another. Even better, purchase them by the dozen for portable luck. However, for the sake of additional colour to the background, it is worth considering that charms can appeal to the earliest gods and spirits, those who are now either proscribed, subsumed into the Old Faith or simply forgotten. Folklore should be more powerful in our games than in real life, to which we might add the mystery of charms claiming to be from the furthest east (or at least the Farside Wheatland Colonies) or the jungles of Lustria (or at least a charm based upon a sketch, from a guy whose sister worked on a ship that once dropped some passengers off there).

The following offers some rarer examples than those licensed by the official cults. Wearers would always run the danger of an overzealous cultist reporting them, but most Old Worlders tend to be tolerant of all beliefs. After all, when faced with the total devastation brought about by the Storm of Chaos, most are pragmatic enough to offer a devotion to any deity that might offer some protection against the incursion. Indeed, who can blame them even for dallying with powers that might not be quite 'safe' should they offer a shelter from the forces of Chaos?

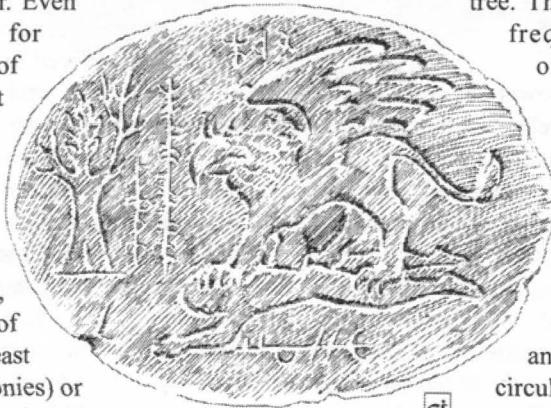


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The Green Jasper Tear follows a traditional shape for this design, which may be made from other types of stone. The two primary figures are of an origin unknown to the users, but are believed related to nature spirits or (latterly) Taal. Dominant in the artistry is the bulbous nature of the eyes, a feature that is often heavily exaggerated. In Kislev, the two figures correspond to a number of ancient spirit deities.

The precise meaning of the figures or the design is not known, but it is a common depiction of luck. It is unlikely that even survivors from Lustria would recognise the figures as representing Slann figures. Certainly, the central design as a rude copy of a spaceship would be unfamiliar.

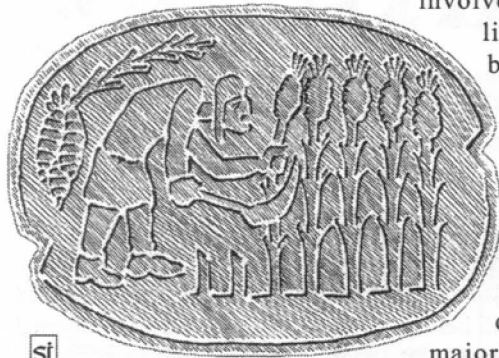
The Griffin Charm, is made of rock crystal and represents a griffin atop a Human, adjacent to an anthropomorphic tree. The runes are arcane druidic symbols, frequently copied incorrectly from originals. The modern meaning is usually unclear, but has been adopted in certain areas of the Empire since the griffin became the nation's heraldic device. In fact, its origins date back to a time when the Elves lived in the Old World, teaching the Humans their own ways. The griffin is a representation of the Human soul, and the design is intended to convey the circular nature of creation and death, which



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begets further creation. This theme became a central tenet of the Old Faith and is retained as an atavistic belief to this day.

A **Reaper Stone** is carved from haematite and is the type of charm that would be common amongst the poorest in society. Historically, backache was a major cause of pain to those involved in what was

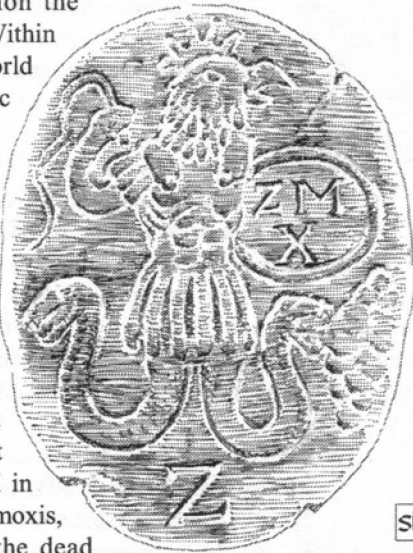


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literally back-breaking work, and the symbol of a reaper bent over was believed to cure or reduce the distress. Mundane symbols should probably provide decoration for the majority of amulets,

bringing the bearer luck in his trade, craft or daily life. Guild symbols and artefacts associated with occupations would be common designs to similarly protect against work-related afflictions, and bring success.

A **Kislevite Burial Charm** is made of green jasper. This figure is an anguipede. It has snakes as its limbs, with a cock's head. It holds a whip in one hand and one snake, its left leg, breathes a vapour in the direction the creature is looking. Within the 'civilised' Old World such apparently chaotic depictions will be relatively rare since they might be taken as evidence of worship of proscribed gods. However, many purportedly chaotic creatures have a much less simplistic history and meaning, a discussion not relevant here. The runes ZMX in this case represent Zalmoxis, a localised deity of the dead within the Wheatland Colonies. The Z at the bottom would represent the owner's name for whom it was created. In addition, its rather archaic cuirass and pteruges link to a much earlier period of human history, again a theme outside the scope of this article. Such amulets are quite popular imports from Kislev and its colonies, either as genuine finds from old burial and settlement sites or as imitation copies by more recent craftsmen.



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A **Myrmidian Cavalry Charm**, is obviously a horse, and is typical of those used by anyone within the military or required to ride or otherwise deal with horses. The runes on this carnelian charm ("MV") represent "Myrmidia wills it" in the Classical tongue, implying that it belongs to a cavalryman.

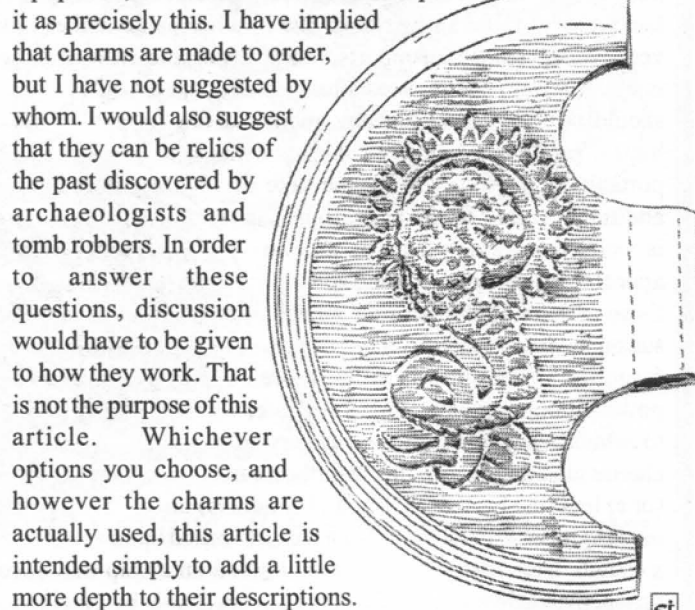
The **Dwarf Axe Charm** is an axe-head shaped piece of gromril, and so extremely valuable in its own right. The list price for charms should be assumed to exclude any inherently valuable materials, such as might be found in genuine heirlooms or items that have a wider significance than their simple use within the game mechanism as a lucky charm. Ordinarily a Dwarf smith would not waste such a valuable metal on such a trifle, but this is actually a religious symbol to a minor spirit worshipped by the Chaos Dwarfs. Once again, this item was found in a deserted hold beneath the Wheatland Colonies, and was also copied as an interesting design by smiths there, serving the collectors back in the west. Should the original item fall into the hands of the PCs, then it would have a number of very interested parties seeking its return.



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Conclusions

Magical gems have been traditionally carried throughout history in the real world. I have utilised them in my own WFRP1 game for some time as a little extra colour. In this the properties of the item have been almost entirely imaginary. Within the second edition, these items do actually offer benefits. Since the lucky charm does offer a guaranteed service, I would suggest that they might radiate magic for those able to sense this. This would, of course, prevent the sale of forgeries or 'duff' charms should the GM so wish, something I would normally envisage would be the intention of both charlatans and genuine craftsmen seeking to sell to the desperate and the ill. However, as a priced item of equipment, it seems unfair not to accept it as precisely this. I have implied that charms are made to order, but I have not suggested by whom. I would also suggest that they can be relics of the past discovered by archaeologists and tomb robbers. In order to answer these questions, discussion would have to be given to how they work. That is not the purpose of this article. Whichever options you choose, and however the charms are actually used, this article is intended simply to add a little more depth to their descriptions.



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Chaos Dwarfs

From the Darkness

By Alfred Nuñez Jr.

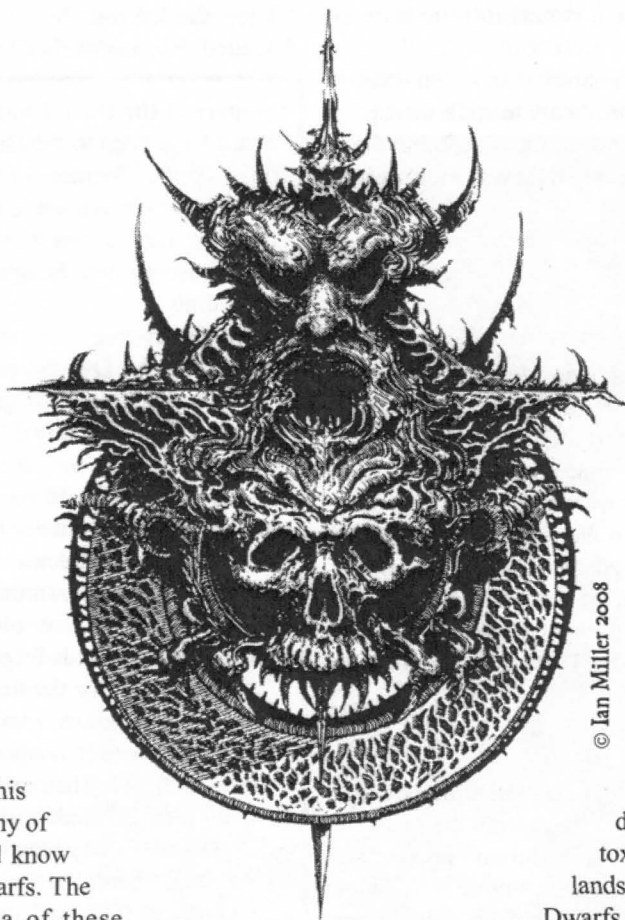
The original plan when I wrote the WFRP1 Dwarf book for Hogshead Publishing was to include a small section detailing the Chaos Dwarfs. However, at the final stages of editing the decision was made to pull the Chaos kindred out of the Dwarf book with the idea to include them in another book with the Dark Elves. Unfortunately, *Dwarfs: Stone and Steel* proved to be the last WFRP1 book.

I have now revised the background to make the Chaos Dwarfs a darker society than I had originally envisaged as well as revising it for second edition of WFRP.

Overview

The information contained in this piece is generally for GMs as many of the inhabitants of the Old World know next to nothing about Chaos Dwarfs. The few who may have some idea of these degenerated beings live near the northern Worlds Edge Mountains in Kislev and Ostermark or have known someone who has travelled the Wheatlands.

In addition, the Imperial Dwarfs of Karaz Ankor are rather unlikely to speak of these abominations to anyone outside their clans and holds, not even to expatriate Dwarfs, given their shame and hatred that some of their race has fallen into Chaos. Such Dwarfs can be categorised into two broad groups. The oldest of these groups, and ironically, the more genetically stable, is



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descended from the Dwarf clans that migrated to the Dark Lands over 7,000 years ago. Sometimes called *Dark Dwarfs*, it is this group to which the name *Chaos Dwarfs* most commonly refers. The Dwarfs of the Worlds Edge Mountains refer to these with much disdain as *Tuskers*.

The Chaos Dwarfs refer to themselves as the *Dhark-Zharrandri*, which loosely translates as "The Fiery Masters of Darkness". This air of superiority reflects how the Chaos Dwarfs view their role in the world. Essentially, the Chaos Dwarfs see themselves as a race whose destiny includes mastery of all known races and riches of the earth. They care nothing about the pains they inflict upon lesser races or the earth's bounty.

The reality of the situation is very different. Existing for millennia in the toxic wastes with which they poison their lands has had a greater impact on the Chaos Dwarfs than they realise. The polluted lands have affected their birth rate as well as increasing unacceptable mutations. Their numbers are depleting more rapidly than any of their leaders care to acknowledge. More than any other race, the Chaos Dwarfs are just one catastrophe away from extinction. The question is how much of the world's misery will increase before such a day comes to pass.

The second type of Chaos Dwarf is more recent, and their origins are the subject of much speculation. Simply known as the Tainted, these mutants have been found in the northern Worlds

Edge Mountains since the Chaos Incursion of 200 years ago. In contrast to the Dark Land variety, the numbers of the Tainted seem to be growing in conjunction with the threat of Chaos to the world. The Tainted seem to be oblivious to any kinship they might have once shared with other Dwarfs, even the Dark Land Chaos Dwarfs.

To the casual observer or would-be victim, the differences between the two mutated races are hardly significant. Both are utterly evil and deadly.

A GM should exploit the lack of common knowledge about the Chaos Dwarfs to its fullest. Wild rumour should reach their Players' ears well before their characters encounter any Chaos Dwarf. It is also recommended that the GM use Chaos Dwarfs sparingly. This should maintain an unknown and menacing quality to these corrupted races.

Chaos Dwarfs should be introduced in situations where their intelligence and arrogance can be best put to use. They should normally be encountered in sufficient numbers and with enough cunning to render them a major threat to the Player Characters. Ambushes and other such traps are a common tactic used by Chaos Dwarfs.

Tainted Dwarfs are more bestial in nature with a high level of animal cunning. They might be more likely to stalk their prey for a considerable distance before attacking. The Tainted are less likely to desire slaves, so they tend to fight with more deadly intent.

HISTORY

Before the Fall

Before the coming of Chaos, the region now known as the Dark Lands was a well-watered and fertile region between the Worlds Edge Mountains and the Mountains of Mourn. Nomadic tribes of Orcs, Goblins, and Hobgoblins roamed the land.

The Eastern Dwarf Clans (as they were then called) migrated from the Worlds Edge Mountains to the western slopes of the Mountains of Mourn. After initial confrontations, the Dwarfs developed trading arrangements with the Goblins. Pretty baubles and well-crafted stone tools served as barter for foodstuffs from the primitive Goblins. In time, even the Hobgoblins learned the benefit of trading with the Dwarfs.

The Coming of Chaos

When the Warp gates collapsed, the messengers from Grungni never made it to the Mountains of Mourn to warn their eastern brethren. In all probability, either Orcs or Hobgoblins waylaid them. However, the eastern clans could not ignore the black clouds rolling from the north. The Dwarfking of the eastern clans ordered his kinsmen to retreat into the mines and seal the doors behind them. The earth would protect them from the swirling winds and mysterious falling dust until the danger had passed.

Deep in the safety of the earth, the Dwarfs could still hear the howling winds and the crackling of powerful thunderbolts. In time the sounds of the storm faded but when they tried to open their sealed gates they found themselves trapped. The surface lands were altered, and their way to the upper world was now barred.

The Corruption

For hundreds of years, the Dwarfs of the eastern clans were trapped underground. No matter where they tunnelled, impenetrable rock prevented them from reaching the surface. But the Dwarfs were determined, and they decided to tunnel deeper to find a way around the rock that entrapped them. To survive, the Dwarfs learned to subsist on the strange fungi that grew in the dark caverns.

The Dwarfs eventually tunnelled into a magnificent underground gallery with walls of obsidian. At one end they found a huge sealed door made of brass and darkened iron, with arcane writings inscribed upon it. Grimdalf the Grey, a Rune Lord of great renown, laboured for many years to translate the glyphs and glean some knowledge of what lay beyond the door, while his brethren continued searching for a path that would lead them to the surface. Eventually, Grimdalf succeeded; it was the last thing he ever did. A mighty blast tore him apart, reverberating throughout the underground tunnels – as did the roar of some terrible creature.

Then the killings began as Dwarfs were butchered and devoured. Even after the Dwarfs escaped the earth's darkness,

Dangers of the Dark Lands

"Yes, I have been to the Dark Lands... at least the western fringe of that Sigmar-forsaken land. I was part of an... expedition to locate some ancient Dwarf mines where our employer, Herr Schmidt, hoped to find precious gems and other treasures, and thought we had a reasonable chance of succeeding.

"We were twelve strong when we set out. Our first obstacle was getting the Dwarfs' permission to pass through their lands. The stubborn little gits extracted a promise from our employer to return any Dwarf artefacts we came across. Schmidt made the promise, but had no intent to fulfil his end. He figured that we could find a way past the Dwarfs on our return. It turned out that this was the least of our problems.

"At any rate, there was some trouble, but nothing we couldn't handle or skirt around. We eventually made our way to what looked like an old Dwarf colony in the eastern foothills of the Worlds Edge Mountains.

"All went well for the first week or so and then disaster. Seems that the stunties who let us pass didn't really trust our employer. They sent a rather cruel looking bunch with some crazy hats after us. They surprised us one night and we fought for our lives. Schmidt tried to speak with them, but they refused to talk in anything but their harsh tongue.

"We fought hard, but their number was greater. Fritz was killed outright followed by Otto and Bruno. The Dwarfs seemed to be more interested in taking prisoners as they were using clubs to beat us down. Reiner and I realised that we didn't have a chance and made a run for it.

"I don't know what happened to the others, but poor Reiner caught a Goblin arrow in the back during our sixth day in the mountains. I just ran at that point and eventually made it here half-starved. Now I just drink to forget."

Confessions of a broken man in an inn in the Border Princes town of Akendorf.

the killings continued. Some Dwarfs survived to tell tales of a gigantic creature in the darkness. With their late Dwarfking one of the first to fall, the remaining clan leaders approached the creature and learnt its intent.

The creature told them that its name was Hashut, Father of Darkness, and that great power would be theirs if they worshipped him alone. Otherwise, their line would come to an end and their achievements would be forgotten.

When the delegation returned with Hashut's proposal, a heated debate arose. Some were inclined to accept Hashut, pointing out that the Ancestor Gods abandoned the eastern clans to the *onslaught of Chaos*. Others believed that forsaking the Ancestor Gods was the first step to damnation. Fighting broke out and Hashut infused the favourably inclined clan elders with sorcerous power, and they quickly won the skirmish. In celebration of their success, the victors sacrificed many of their rivals. Others were given over to Hashut for his pleasure. The Father of Darkness shaped some of these Dwarfs into the beasts that serve him: the Great Taurus, the Lammasu and the Bull Centaurs. He rewarded the victorious clan elders with powerful sorcerous abilities and they became the first of the Sorcerer-Priests.

The Gathering of Darkness

While Hashut was shaping his new servants, the remaining Runesmiths led some of their kin in revolt against the Sorcerer-Priests. The war raged for months, but the Sorcerer-Priests were too strong. The forces of the Runesmiths were broken and enslaved; most were sacrificed to Hashut after several days of ritual torture. As part of the ritual, the Sorcerer-Priests and their corrupt followers ate the burnt flesh of the prisoners. The "Orgy of Triumph" damned the eastern clans. Their lower canine teeth mutated into tusks, which the Chaos Dwarfs welcomed as a sign of Hashut's favour. Those who most pleased the Chaos deity were further rewarded with cloven hoofs and horns.

The Chaos Dwarfs looked over the once fertile land and noted a change in the greenskins. Orcs had become the dominant force in the Dark Lands. The less aggressive Hobgoblins now lived on the fringes of the Orc-dominated wasteland. However, all the greenskin tribes continued to use primitive weapons of stone and wood. The Chaos Dwarfs traded metal weapons and armour to the weaker tribes, strengthening them and creating allies against the rest of the Dark Lands' inhabitants.

While the Chaos Dwarf-backed Orcs and Hobgoblins fought their more

primitive cousins for domination of the Dark Lands, the Chaos Dwarf Sorcerer-Priests oversaw the construction of Mingol Zharr-Naggrund in the Plain of Zharrduk. The mighty ziggurat fortress of dark iron and black obsidian was built over the site where the Sorcerer-Priests defeated the Runesmiths. The Temple of Hashut was placed at the pinnacle of the stronghold.

The Hidden War

The Chaos Dwarfs sank countless shafts beneath the city of Zharr-Naggrund. However, the Sorcerer-Priests realised that their remaining clansmen were too few to mine effectively. The Chaos Dwarfs therefore enslaved a multitude of Orcs, Goblins, Hobgoblins, and Human steppe nomads to work the mines, sacrificing the weak and injured to Hashut. The basis of Chaos Dwarf society was now established.

Eventually, the depredations of the Chaos Dwarfs forced two massive migrations. The nomadic Human tribes of the Steppes were the first to move westward through the high passes of the Worlds Edge Mountains, and into the forested lands of the northern Old World. The second – and perhaps the more significant – migration consisted of the Orcs and Goblins swarming across the Worlds Edge Mountains into the Dwarf Empire of Karaz Ankor.



The greenskin tribes of the Dark Lands had suffered dramatically from a combination of disasters. In addition to Chaos Dwarf slavery, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions tore the Dark Lands apart. The greenskins were equipped with armour and weapons manufactured by the Chaos Dwarf smiths, or crude copies made by greenskin artisans. However, these sturdy instruments of war bore no resemblance to the items that the Chaos Dwarfs forged for themselves. So the Imperial Dwarfs of Karaz Ankor remained ignorant of the Chaos Dwarfs' existence; the Chaos Dwarfs, on the other hand, were already plotting the downfall of their western kin.

The Orc and Goblin migration caused considerable damage to the realm of Karaz Ankor, but it was the second wave, influenced in part by the Chaos Dwarfs from afar, that overran the Imperial Dwarf settlements in the eastern Worlds Edge Mountains. The Imperial Dwarfs no longer presented the remotest threat to their corrupt brethren.

In addition, the wars in the Worlds Edge Mountains brought a new source of slaves to the mines of the Chaos Dwarfs: Skaven. The Ratmen had emerged from the depths of the mountains to plague the Orcs and Goblins as they did the Imperial Dwarfs. The greenskins were eager to capitalize on this new source of trade with the Chaos Dwarfs, and many Skaven found themselves led to their doom in the mines of Zharr-Naggrund.

Rebellion

With their holdings in the Mountains of Mourn and the Plain of Zharrduk secured, the Chaos Dwarfs set about defiling the earth of its bounty. Huge pits were dug to store the black, sticky tar that percolated up from the ground. Great slag-heaps and huge mounds of coal dotted the landscape, fouling the earth and water with the poisons that seeped from them. Smoke and ash from furnaces and active volcanoes filled the air with clouds of choking, toxic vapours. Within a few generations, the Chaos Dwarfs so polluted their land that nothing could grow in the dim light and the choking air, apart from a few straggly black thorns.

Still, the Sorcerer-Priests wanted more. Fights among the squabbling greenskin slaves – and the occasional full-scale slave revolt – caused inexcusable delays to production. In their frustration, the Sorcerer-Priests instituted a breeding programme to develop a race of stronger and less quarrelsome Orcs. Within one hundred years, they had produced the Black Orcs: larger, stronger, and more disciplined. The Black Orcs were also more cunning and dangerous than their wilder forebears – a fact that was to lead to near disaster.

Within fifty years, the Black Orcs led their Orc and Goblin brethren in a huge revolt. Even the Hobgoblins, who had enjoyed a comparatively privileged position as overseers, joined in the slaughter of their Chaos Dwarf masters. Battle raged throughout the mines, and boiled up into the lower tier of Zharr-Naggrund itself. While thousands of greenskins were slaughtered by the Sorcerer-Priests and their followers, their numbers were too many – and the Chaos Dwarfs too few – for the tide of the revolt to be stemmed. Just as all seemed lost the Hobgoblins switched sides, hoping to regain the favour of their masters. The Chaos Dwarfs struck with renewed vigour and their dark powers broke the rebellion, the altars of Hashut smoking with countless sacrifices.

Restoration

The Chaos Dwarfs and their Hobgoblin allies set about rebuilding after the near-disaster. In time, the Chaos Dwarfs started expanding their borders southward. Gorgoth became the Chaos Dwarfs' furthest outpost, proving to be particularly rich in minerals and ore but the Sorcerer-Priests realised that their race was spread too thin to protect their borderlands.

For centuries, fiercely independent nomadic Hobgoblin tribes lived in the Steppes just north and east of the Mountains of Mourn. Still, the Chaos Dwarfs needed allies after the rebellion so they entered into an alliance. This arrangement essentially created what would become the Hobgoblin Hegemony, a buffer state from the Chaos Dwarf perspective.

Moreover, the Chaos Dwarfs reached treaty agreement with the neighbouring Ogre Kingdoms. An annual tribute of weapons and spent and deceased slaves are passed to the large humanoids in order to satisfy their varied diets in return for non-aggression and newly-captured slaves.

With this new era of stability established, the Chaos Dwarfs continued to expand. But two fateful events prevented them from achieving their dream of further conquests. A little over a thousand years after Sigmar's reign the Black Plague that had devastated the Empire found its way into the Dark Lands, spreading to the Chaos Dwarfs. It took several centuries for the Chaos Dwarf population to recover – though low birth-rates prevented the population from reaching its former level – when another calamity struck.

Large numbers of slaves had died in the mines beneath Zharr-Naggrund in the millennia of its existence, and the Chaos Dwarfs let the corpses rot where they fell. Their indifference was nearly their undoing. On the night known as “the Night of the Restless Dead” by Imperial historians, the dead rose up and attacked the living across the known world. The Chaos Dwarfs and their allies were nearly overwhelmed. As in the earlier Black Orc rebellion, the Chaos Dwarfs were driven back to the upper tiers of Zharr-Naggrund, with the loss of many lives. Only the intervention of the Sorcerer-Priests and the coming of dawn saved the Chaos Dwarfs from obliteration.

From this experience, the bodies of slaves are now either tossed into lava pits or pools of highly toxic wastes. Some are even dismembered and sent to the Ogre Kingdoms as foodstuff (rancid meat being considered a delicacy among the monstrosities).

Blood from the North

The next disaster to strike the Chaos Dwarfs was not a complete surprise. The waters of the River Ruin began to run low, and it was no longer able to cool the huge Chaos Dwarf forges to power the steam-driven engines. Troops sent to scout the headwaters did not return, and the Sorcerer-Priests read disturbing portents in the entrails of sacrificed slaves.

Then the River Ruin ran blood-red, and the Sorcerer-Priests knew that Hashut's immortal enemy, Khorne the Blood-God, had sent an army against them.

As Praag fell in the west, a vast Khornate army besieged Zharr-Naggrund. Battles raged across the Plain of Zharrduk as Chaos Dwarfs from other mines and factories came to the aid of the obsidian ziggurat. The Chaos Dwarfs unleashed their fearsome

war machines upon the Blood God's ravaging horde. The slaughter continued for two years, with neither weather nor weariness lessening its desperate intensity. Then, abruptly, the borders of the Chaos Wastes retreated to the north, and the Khornate army weakened. In one final surge, the Chaos Dwarfs were able to break the siege and obliterate their foe. Victory was once again theirs – but at a terrible price, for the Chaos Dwarf race was decimated.

Meanwhile, in the northern Worlds Edge Mountains, another drama unfolded. The Chaos Incursion engulfed the Dwarfhold of Karak Vlag; when the Chaos hordes finally retreated, there was no sign of the ancient stronghold. But in the years that followed, heavily-mutated Dwarfs were seen throughout the surrounding area. Known as the Tainted, these Chaos Dwarfs did not follow Hashut nor was there a common thread that typified their Chaos gifts. Some followed Khorne, Tzeentch, or Nurgle while others followed Chaos Undivided, and a few even followed the lesser-known Renegade Gods.

Storm of Chaos

In recent years, the Sorcerer-Priests detected ominous signs in the entrails of sacrificial victims as well as the increase in activities of the wild Human tribes of the Steppes. These portents indicated that changes were coming, none of which boded well for the Chaos Dwarfs if they grew too careless. The Sorcerer-Priests felt the winds of Chaos blowing ever stronger from the north and realised that the Northern Wastes would soon expand southward as it did over 200 years before.

The Chaos Undivided Champion Archaon sent an emissary to negotiate an exchange of hundreds of slaves with promises of thousands more to the Chaos Dwarfs to purchase some of their most potent war machines and crews for the war in the West. Seeing a chance to survive the struggle unscathed, the Sorcerer-Priests were willing to sacrifice a few of their number in the hope that Archaon would keep his Khornate allies in check. They also knew that no matter the outcome, the victors would be in no better shape than the defeated to extract any vengeance on the Chaos Dwarfs.

The Chaos Dwarf Empire Today

Although the decline of their population has lessened since the Chaos Incursion of 2302 I.C., the Chaos Dwarfs are still fewer in number than at any time. Despite the fact that they are a dying race, the power of their Sorcerer-Priests and the prowess of their warriors ensure the dominance of the Chaos Dwarfs throughout most of the Dark Lands. Still, there is some speculation among the few who know of their existence that they may well become extinct in the next several hundred years.

The Chaos Dwarf demand for slaves remains insatiable, though they are wary of any new slave rebellions. A repeat of the revolt on the scale of the one led by the Black Orcs would surely cripple, if not end, the Chaos Dwarfs and their Empire. Though brutally suppressed, a recent uprising in Uzkulak exemplifies the danger to the Chaos Dwarfs' way of life.

Chaos Dwarf slaving bands have recently expanded their operations to include the Worlds Edge Mountains and the western foothills. In many cases, the Chaos Dwarfs employ a number of

Appearances Can Be Telling

PC will usually encounter Chaos Dwarfs far from the latter's normal haunts. Whether a warband or slaving party, Chaos Dwarfs will usually be armoured in red-coloured scale mail, with shield and hand weapon or double-handed weapons. Some may carry blunderbusses, especially in open country.

Hunting parties of Chaos Dwarfs may also be stumbled upon in the eastern reaches of the Worlds Edge Mountains or the steppes along the Mountains of Mourn. These Dwarfs are usually attired in padded leather of a greyish-brown colour to better stalk their prey. They are equipped with a hand weapon, crossbow, and a number of traps. Chaos Dwarf hunters forego their tall hats when on the hunt, perhaps the only instance when a Dark Land Chaos Dwarf can be seen without their characteristic attire. In some cases, one or two Bull Centaurs may accompany a hunting party.

Should characters penetrate the defences of the Chaos Dwarf settlements, they would find some changes. Chaos Dwarf males, not wholly trusting one another, usually wear padded leather tunics with metallic braces on their forearms. Such braces are very decorative, but functional.

In contrast, Sorcerer-Priests know that attacks on their person from their clansmen are rare. Normally accompanied by armed bodyguards, Sorcerer-Priests wear red robes with their personal device sewn in yellow on the black trimmings. Sorcerer-Priests are generally armed with a ceremonial (and very sharp) dagger made of obsidian when they are in their domain.

agents to lure the unwary into forced servitude. Additionally, the Chaos Dwarfs have cemented a trade arrangement with the Hobgobla-Khan whereby the masters of the Dark Lands would supply the Steppe Hobgoblins with higher quality arms and armour to stave off the encroachment of the Dolgan tribes and the remnants of other wild Human tribes roaming the Steppes in exchange for the slaves captured from the Wheatland colonies and caravans on the Silk Road.

Knowing the Chaos Dwarf preference for Human and Dwarf slaves, the Steppe Hobgoblins extracted a heavy price from the Chaos Dwarfs and use their gains to foster an active slave trade with slavers in Cathay and the wilder parts of Kislev. Strangers to any of these regions may find themselves set upon by the inhabitants and traded to the Steppe Hobgoblins.

The trade arrangement between the Chaos Dwarfs and Steppe Hobgoblins has pinched the flow of goods to the less reliable Orcs and Goblins of the Worlds Edge Mountains. If not for the decimation of the Orc horde that followed Grimgor Ironhide into The Empire, the greenskins might well turn their attention to their erstwhile trading partners.

The aftermath of the Storm of Chaos may yet prove to be disastrous for the Chaos Dwarfs. Although the remnants of the wild Human tribes and greenskins no longer pose a short term threat, the devastation of the Wheatlands, Kislev, and northern Empire by the Chaos forces have greatly reduced the slave traffic. This not only threatens the Chaos Dwarfs' industry, but it also creates tension in the area. The neighbouring Ogres still expect

their tribute of weapons as well as meat even though they may not be able to reciprocate with supplies of new slaves. The ravenous behemoths may decide that dining on the Chaos Dwarfs is a more appealing alternative to starvation.

DARK LAND DWARFS

Betrayers of the Ancestor Gods

Player Characters in the western Empire have little chance of learning about the Chaos Dwarfs of the Dark Lands. Their chances improve marginally towards the eastern provinces of the Empire and Kislev near the end of the various mountain passes. PCs spending time in the wreckage of the Farside colonies (see WFRP1's *Something Rotten in Kislev* and *A Pass too Farside* by Tim Eccles) will have a fair chance of learning about the Masters of the Dark Lands – especially if they find themselves captured by a slaving party.

Chaos Dwarf Society

Unlike the Old World Dwarfs, the Chaos Dwarf clan is defined by its ranking Sorcerer-Priest and the level of political power that this individual achieves. Clan members are bound to one another by blood and common ancestry. Each Chaos Dwarf clan is the extended family of its reigning Sorcerer-Priest, who rules with an iron fist. He also has absolute rule over his part of the Dark Lands Empire, with all the forges, workshops, mines, and slaves therein. Each clan's council is filled with the most fervent and vicious supporters of the ruling Sorcerer-Priest. Its primary role is to ensure that his dictates are carried out to the letter. They are seldom given the authority to debate important matters.

The blood-bond makes Chaos Dwarf clans especially loyal. Family obligations are taken very seriously, even if such obligations are generations old. Any wrong done to a Chaos Dwarf is considered a wrong done to the entire clan. Thus any Chaos Dwarf may be selected by the Sorcerer-Priest to redeem the clan's honour – by whatever means appropriate.

Chaos Dwarf clans are not aligned by craftguild. In Chaos Dwarf society, each clan functions as a separate entity unto itself. In addition to the ruling Sorcerer-Priest, their subordinate Sorcerer-Priests and the subservient Council, there are a number of other layers in the hierarchy of Chaos Dwarf society. The next tier of the cult hierarchy includes artisans, weaponsmiths, and military leaders. Lesser status clan members are the warriors, slave masters, and various apprentices. At the bottom are the slaves.

Many Chaos Dwarfs carry the name of their clan's ruling Sorcerer-Priest as part of their surname. The surname changes when a new Sorcerer-Priest takes over the clan. Dwarf males remain members of the clan into which they are born; only Chaos Dwarf women can leave their clan, and then only when this suits the purpose of the Sorcerer-Priests. The importance of Chaos Dwarf women centres on their ability to produce offspring and they may be used by the Sorcerer-Priest as a reward to a particularly loyal clansman, or as a means of cementing an alliance with another clan's Sorcerer-Priest.

Social Values

The Chaos Dwarfs respect age and knowledge like the Old World Dwarfs, but they do so when these attributes are coupled with power and evidence of Hashut's blessing. The latter takes the form of mutations involving horns and hooves.

Although Chaos Dwarfs lust for material objects, it is the number of slaves that measures their wealth. Slaves are used as commodities in a similar manner that other races use coins. From a Chaos Dwarf point of view, the well-being of a slave is only as important as its use. This view is consistent with the little regard that Chaos Dwarfs have towards other, inferior races. After all, these races are only fit for enslavement.

In a sense, the typical Chaos Dwarf is treated marginally better than a slave by their clan elders, especially those considered weak or unsuited for higher service to the clan. To survive in his own society, an individual Chaos Dwarf must quickly learn to be as ruthless as his superiors. He also must learn how to manoeuvre through the whims of the clan leaders. It is not uncommon for a Chaos Dwarf to become a sacrifice to Hashut if he fails to carry out the commands of the ruling Sorcerer-Priest.

Chaos Dwarfs have a special contempt for the Old World Dwarfs. It is these western traitors and their Ancestor Gods who

Mad Hatters

One of the more consistent questions about the Chaos Dwarfs when they were introduced in fifth edition Warhammer Battle has been "why the big hats?" With the release of Storm of Chaos, it seemed that the big hats were gone. On the other hand, it could be that the Chaos Dwarfs accompanying Archaon's forces were forbidden to wear these by their Elders.

For the sake of discussion, this portion assumes that most of the fragmentary reports on Chaos Dwarfs have commented on the significance of the tall hats.

Among the few who study the matter of the Chaos Dwarfs' headgear, there are several theories. One of the more popular and simpler has it that the Chaos Dwarfs deem that the tall hats, coupled with the thick beard and large tusks, makes them more threatening to their enemies. Others have concluded that there must be something more behind it as the tall hats are more comical than threatening.

A few adhere to the view that the large hats have a more religious aspect to them. These scholars have come to view the hats as an aspect, like the mutations and apparel, which serves Hashut's purpose of moving the Chaos Dwarf mindset and traditions away from their former brethren in the Worlds Edge Mountains. This is further exemplified by the more elaborate hats worn by the Sorcerer-Priests, the oldest warriors and even the Bull Centaurs. This view seems to be confirmed, in part, by the incomplete Dwarf record that somehow managed to make its way out of Karaz Ankor.

One outrageous theory is that the hats actually hide another mutation shared by a number of Chaos Dwarfs: a conically-shaped head. Evidence has not supported this view but its adherents claim that the evidence has not yet been collected.

Curse of Grungni

For the Sorcerer-Priests who do not die in battle, the price of their sorcerous power eventually takes its toll. The Sorcerer-Priest knows that the decline of his power manifests itself when his feet begin to turn to stone. The growing transmutation will then move up his legs to the torso. At this stage, the Sorcerer-Priest depends upon his clansmen to move him about. The next stage of mineralisation appears in the Sorcerer-Priest's hands, and then his arms. The change is complete when his head and shoulders become immobile, leaving only his eyes and brain untouched. The transformation may last for a hundred years or so. The living statue of the Sorcerer-Priest is placed alongside others of his kind from the past, guarding the highways radiating from Zharr-Naggrund with their malevolent, resentful gaze.

The few Dwarf Loremasters who have learned of this process refer to the transformation as the "Curse of Grungni." It is generally cited as proof of the corrupting power of Sorcerous Magic. The scholarly Karaz Ankor Dwarfs believe that Expatriate Dwarf wizards could easily suffer the same fate if they had the ability to live as long as Chaos Dwarf sorcerer-priests.

abandoned the Chaos Dwarfs to their fate. The savagery of the two races when they meet in combat matches that of any Old World Dwarf-Orc conflict. Still, the Old World Dwarfs have value to their corrupted kin as high quality and hardworking slaves.

Stages of Life

Chaos Dwarfs normally age at the same rate as Old World Dwarfs. The primary difference is how each race marks significant events in an individual's life.

Unlike their erstwhile western brethren, not all newborns are immediately accepted into the society. All newborn Chaos Dwarfs are placed before the altar of Hashut by the Sorcerer-Priests in a ceremony called the Ordeal of Fire. If the newborn survives the intense heat of the altar's fires, it is deemed fit to live. In addition, the fate of newborns depends strongly upon their mutation. Newborn Chaos Dwarfs are born with small tusks breaking through their gums. Some may show further signs of Hashut's favour by small bumps on their heads denoting horns or a hardening of the feet portending a change to hooves.

The relative stability of the Chaos Dwarfs' mutations is actually a façade. There are an increasing number being born with mutations other than those culturally accepted. Such "impure" offspring are immediately killed by being placed very near, if not actually in, the Fire of Hashut.

Chaos Dwarfs are considered adults and full clan members when they reach their thirtieth year. Before then, they spend years learning their role in the clan as determined by the ruling Sorcerer-Priest and their craft. Upon reaching adulthood, a Chaos Dwarf is expected to provide an offering to their clan's Sorcerer-Priest and the deity Hashut. The type of offering is traditional to the race: it should involve either the sacrifice of a bodily part, such as part of a finger, or a slave. Once the offer is completed,

the Chaos Dwarf meets the Sorcerer-Priest to learn of his chosen role and continue his rigorous training.

Over the next ten years, adult Chaos Dwarf males are watched closely by the Sorcerer-Priests for any signs of magical ability. Those who exhibit some aptitude undergo the Ritual of Fiery Magic (*Hargorakanhk*). The nature of this rite varies from individual to individual, and is determined by the wisdom of the Sorcerer-Priests. As a result, it remains a mystery; all that is known is that those who are unworthy in the eyes of Hashut do not return. Those who survive are initiated into the mysteries of the cult, and become apprentices to their clan's reigning Sorcerer-Priest.

Should he survive to the age of 150, a Chaos Dwarf becomes an Elder. All Elders become part of the Clan Council, led by the clan's oldest, non-ruling Sorcerer-Priest. The Council is rarely empowered to make decisions, except on matters of no interest to the ruling Sorcerer-Priest. In fact, the Council's role is to execute whatever commands they receive from their Master.

Chaos Dwarf women are treated as chattels, and are almost always the property of their clan's reigning Sorcerer-Priest. Upon maturity, most maidens are wedded to someone of the Sorcerer-Priests' choosing. At times, the husband-to-be is someone with whom the Sorcerer-Priest is forming an alliance. On other occasions, a bride may be awarded to a loyal clansman. Most of the time, however, the Chaos Dwarf maiden finds herself in the harem of the Sorcerer-Priest, who may also be her father.

Like Old World Dwarfs, the average Chaos Dwarf generally lives for approximately 200 years. There are a few notable exceptions to this limit, mostly Sorcerer-Priests. There is no upper limit to the years of life that Sorcerer-Priests can achieve before the corrupting power of their sorcery turns them to stone. The great Astragoth, High Priest of Hashut, was the most powerful Sorcerer-Priest for a thousand years. Now in his 3200th year, however, Astragoth's legs have petrified and his hands have also started to calcify. It is only a matter of time – perhaps mere decades – before the rest of him solidifies.

Death Rituals

Like his Old World counterparts, a Chaos Dwarf knows when his time is approaching. The clan's reigning Sorcerer-Priest orders an escort to lead his dying clansman to the Temple of Hashut, where the Chaos Dwarf is prepared for departure. At the appointed hour, the Sorcerer-Priest commends the soul of the dying kinsman to Hashut's burning embrace. Once the ceremony is completed, the still-living Chaos Dwarf is then dropped into a river of lava hundreds of feet below the surface of the land.

Chaos Dwarfs who perish in battle are usually burned on the field in a huge funeral pyre. Only the bodies of Sorcerer-Priests are returned for proper burial.

The passing of any reigning Sorcerer-Priest starts a recognised process of succession which is both contentious and deadly. It is not a certainty that the oldest will succeed and inherit his predecessor's harem, apprentices, and wealth. The succession is a struggle where the strongest prevails and his rivals are obliterated. The fact that their numbers are declining makes little difference to the Sorcerer-Priests' naked ambitions.

Anatomy

Like the Dwarfs of the Old World, the physique of Chaos Dwarfs is ideally suited for life in the underground caverns and cave systems where they spend a considerable part of their lives. They have the short, densely muscled limbs; thick, heavy bones; and compact, powerful torsos.

One of the distinguishing features of male Chaos Dwarfs is their dark, thick beard. Chaos Dwarfs curl their beards into exotic styles, believed to mimic that of their patron deity, Hashut. Such

styles also draw attention to one of the clearest signs of the influence of Chaos upon these foul beings: their tusks. Some Chaos Dwarfs, mostly Sorcerers, also develop bull-like features such as cloven hoofs and curved horns.

Like the Old World Dwarfs, Chaos Dwarf women do not have beards. They do have very long hair, which they curl and braid in a manner similar to their menfolk's beards. Chaos Dwarf women occasionally sport the same mutations as their menfolk.

Diet

The diet of Chaos Dwarfs is similar to that of the Old World Dwarfs in that it consists of meat and fungi gathered from underground caverns. Given the Chaos Dwarfs' fondness of fire, most of the meat will be overcooked, sometimes to the point of incineration.

The desolation of the Dark Lands limits the amount of grain, fruits, and vegetables available to the Chaos Dwarfs. The small amount they acquire comes in the form of tribute from their Hobgoblin allies to the north and east. Other sources of food include the Orc and Goblin villages that the Chaos Dwarfs and their allies raid in search of slaves.

The vast majority of the grain obtained is used in brewing ale and baking bread. In the deeper caverns, slave farmers raise several varieties of mushrooms. These fungi are primarily used as seasonings for meats and beer, but can form a staple diet in times of crisis.

Chaos Dwarfs are skilled hunters and trappers, readily exploiting the small amount of game to be found in the Dark Lands. Chaos Dwarf hunting parties range far afield after any prey, and are able to find meat and fur in the mountain valleys that ring their domain. Chaos Dwarfs are not too particular about their quarry and have been known to hunt slaves for sport. In lean times, slaves



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(including Old World Dwarfs) may be cooked and eaten. Even in times of plenty, slaves are often on the menu at the major feasts of Hashut.

The term “fire water,” often applied to alcoholic drinks of dubious quality, is almost literally true of Chaos Dwarf beer. Even the vile product of Orc and Goblin brewers is more drinkable. As noted above, such grain as the Chaos Dwarfs can obtain is often old and rotten, and the water they use for brewing is fouled by their factories and mines. However, the Chaos Dwarfs care little about such niceties as taste. To them, ale is a sustenance and a means of making their polluted water supply slightly less toxic; it is not an art to be perfected. Slaves are given watered beer with their meagre rations, one of the many reasons for their short life expectancy.

Law and Punishment

Each ruling Sorcerer-Priest also occupies the role of the High Priest of Hashut for his clan. The most powerful of these is the ruler of Zharr-Naggrund. The will of each determines the respective laws of his clan, and what violation brings swift and certain punishment. There is absolutely no appeal.

There are very few capital crimes among Chaos Dwarfs. Treason – which covers disagreeing with the ruling Sorcerer-Priest in word or deed – is the most common capital charge. Murder without cause of another Chaos Dwarf is also a capital crime, but since almost any cause is considered to justify the act, convictions are rare. In fact, very little violence takes place between Chaos Dwarfs. Anger and frustration can be easily taken out on the many hapless slaves. Killing or injuring the slave of another is considered a crime against property, and is dealt with by a payment of compensation, almost always in kind. Any Chaos Dwarf accused of a capital crime must appear and present his case under oath before the ruling Sorcerer-Priest. The Sorcerer-Priest may, at his discretion, allow witnesses for and against the accused (including any victim). Judgments are usually quick, and anyone found guilty is immediately sacrificed to Hashut.

Each clan’s ruling Sorcerer-Priest also judges lesser crimes, such as theft, killing of slaves and other crimes against property, oath-breaking and slander. Punishment varies with the severity of the crime, ranging from fines and compensation in most cases to banishment in the most severe. It is the very rare case where the Sorcerer-Priest’s judgement is not accepted as this is held as a sign of weakness, which is often followed by a struggle for power. In such circumstances, a violent feud erupts and blood is spilled. These blood feuds are very destructive and lead to a struggle of power among the Sorcerer-Priests of the clan. Once the new ruling Sorcerer-Priest rises to replace the weak (and most likely dead) predecessor, a number of those involved in the feud are sacrificed to Hashut. Not surprisingly, this arrangement keeps feuding to a minimum.

Slaves

Chaos Dwarf society is wholly dependent upon slaves. The average life expectancy of a slave ranges from six to eight years, although Dwarfs may last twice as long. The labour is hard, and their treatment is harsher still. Some slaves, mostly female, may find themselves placed in the private chambers of one of the

upper echelons of Chaos Dwarf society where they are forced to perform a wide range of demanding tasks by their abusive masters.

Bands of Chaos Dwarfs constantly scour the Dark Lands, the Mountains of Mourn, and the eastern Worlds Edge Mountains in search of slaves. Other bands trade weapons and armour to Orcs and Goblins in return for slaves and food. Chaos Dwarfs also trade with their Hobgoblin allies and neighbouring Ogres for slaves from among the steppe nomads and the peoples of Imperial Cathay. In addition, the Chaos Dwarfs employ members of other races, chiefly Humans, to act as their agents, procuring slaves by whatever means necessary for gold.

Many slaves work, and die, in the workshops, forges, and mines of Zharr-Naggrund and Gorgoth. Others struggle in the poisoned Plain of Zharrduk. Those who survive are likely to meet a yet more terrible fate on the altar of Hashut or in a vat of molten metal. It is not surprising, then, that many slaves take their own lives when given the opportunity.

Language

The Chaos Dwarf language is recognisable as a Khazalid dialect, even though they speak it with a harsher accent. Most speak no other language, although the Sorcerer-Priests are known to be conversant in the Dark Tongue and in some of the Human tongues. They also use the ancient Dwarf runic script, inscribing their books on long, thin scrolls of beaten metal in the manner of their Imperial kin. Most Chaos Dwarfs are illiterate. Only the most educated can read and write the alphabetic runic script or the more common pictograph script.

Relations with Chaos

Chaos Dwarfs have a curious view of followers of the other Chaos gods. They at once fear their destructive power and look upon them with contempt.

Chaos Dwarfs view the Tainted (described below) as little more than mindless tools of the other Chaos Powers. They are considered almost as good in the role of slaves as the Old World Dwarfs, even though they are not quite as skilled as their former brethren.

The servants of the four Lords of Chaos are too troublesome to be slaves but more than acceptable sacrifices to Hashut. Khornates are generally sacrificed on the spot of capture and their remains burnt.

The Dark Realms

Once they had committed themselves to the worship of Hashut, the Chaos Dwarfs needed to establish a realm in which they could build an empire. The nomadic Orcs, Hobgoblins, and Goblins presented little opposition, and the Human tribes across the Mountains of Mourn were of little consequence (the Ogres had not yet migrated in any significant number to the eastern mountains).

Filled with the volcanic power of Hashut, the first and mightiest Sorcerer-Priests raised the Tower of Zharr-Naggrund from the earth, using their power to shape the black obsidian and dark iron. The city was divided among their clans, with each Sorcerer-Priest ruling with absolute power over the clan of his birth.

Darklands

High Pass
(Belyevorota)

Preslav

Uzkulak

Zura Uzku
(The Wastlands)

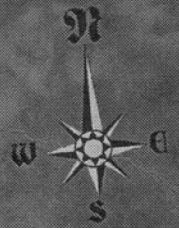
Gorodische

Ohrid

River Zayadyeka

Chernozavtra

Steppes



World Edge Mountains

Hobgoblin Hegemony

Peak Pass

Desolation
of
Drakenmoor

Zharr
Maggrund

Gash Kadrak

Plain of Zharr

Ogre Kingdoms

Blasted Wastes

Mountains of Mshun

Gates of
Zmarr

Devil's
Stump

Wolf Lands

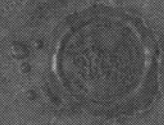
Howling Wastes

Gorgoth

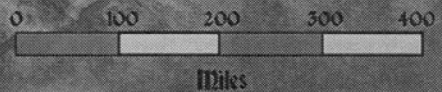
Black
Fortress

Flayed
Rock

River Ardun



John M. Peterson



In time, rivalries among some of the ruling Sorcerer-Priests caused their clans to frequently come to blows. Increasing pressure from such rivalries caused the weaker clans to build other settlements, such as Gorgoth and Uzkulak.

Even with the boundaries of their domains established, the clans continue to probe one another to uncover weaknesses to exploit. Many of the ruling Sorcerer-Priests of the lesser clans also plot for the day that they can march into Zharr-Naggrund as victors over the current ruling clans.

Over the millennia, the Chaos Dwarfs sank thousands of mines into the earth around Zharr-Naggrund. They extracted coal and piled it high on the Plains of Zharrduk. They drilled for oil and tar, which they stored in open pits throughout the land. Eventually, the toxins from these sticky black lakes polluted the region, destroying most of its flora and fauna. The Chaos Dwarfs also quarried so much stone that much of the Plains of Zharrduk is now a series of gigantic open pits. Heavy clouds of acrid smoke mask the bleak, lifeless landscape under a perpetual gloom of twilight.

Zharr-Naggrund

The capital of the Chaos Dwarf empire rises above the Plain of Zharrduk like a mountain of black obsidian and dark iron, dimly reflecting the lights of the many furnaces and forges. Zharr-Naggrund is built like a ziggurat, with each square-shaped step hundreds of feet high. Each step is surmounted by battlements cut to resemble the Chaos Dwarfs' lower tusks.

Four huge stone gateways, each barred by huge gates bound in the blackest iron, have been constructed on the four sides of the bottom step. From the east and west gates, roads paved with slabs of gold and brass lead to other parts of the Dark Lands, and to the Mountains of Mourn. The River Ruin enters Zharr-Naggrund through the north gate. Its cold waters cool the huge forges, power machinery, and flush away the refuse of industry and inhabitants. When it leaves through the south gate, the steaming, thick water is a poisonous mixture of acids and worse. Clouds of iridescent poisonous gas hang over the river.

Countless furnaces burn within Zharr-Naggrund; the heat in the lower levels is nearly unbearable. Massive crucibles pour molten metal into moulds to make parts for the machinery and weapons of destruction. The roaring of furnaces and grinding of machinery fill the air day and night. The air inside the massive ziggurat is foul, even though the worst of the fumes are channelled to the outside through shafts cut from the obsidian.

The succeeding step of the ziggurat houses an ascending level of Chaos Dwarf society. The third and fourth highest steps are the sanctuary of the Sorcerer-Priests, open only to members of their harems and their most trusted servants. The lower levels house the bulk of the clan's population.

The Hobgoblin overseers also reside in the lower levels, but closer to the workshops, forges and slave pens. This ensures that the Hobgoblins can respond quickly to any trouble. It also places them between the slaves and their Chaos Dwarf masters in the event of a slave revolt.

Huge doors, guarded by massive Bull Centaurs, bar entry to the uppermost tiers. A separate passageway, with heavily-guarded doors, bypasses these tiers and leads to the very top of Zharr-

Naggrund, and the Great Temple of Hashut. The immense temple can accommodate the entire Chaos Dwarf population of Zharr-Naggrund.

Astragoth is the current High Priest of Hashut and ruler of Zharrdrakk, the most powerful clan in Zharr-Naggrund. However, his days are numbered as creeping petrification has already taken his legs, and his hands are beginning to lose their mobility. Waiting for the approaching day when he becomes the new High Priest, Ghorth the Cruel has assumed a number of Astragoth's ceremonial duties. Ghorth's formidable power has led to the instalment of one of his sons as Exalted Marshal of Zharr-Naggrund. Zhatan the Black is the cruellest and most bloodthirsty of the Chaos Dwarf generals.

The mines of Zharr-Naggrund honeycomb the land beneath and around the Obsidian City. Though heavily polluted, the Plains of Zharrduk are rich with mineral deposits, gemstones, and metal ores. Thousands of slaves labour in the mines.

Although periodic slave revolts occur, the Chaos Dwarfs believe that the Hobgoblins are largely in control of their charges. In fact, parts of the deeper mines have become bastions for renegade slaves of every type. The Hobgoblins, afraid to incur the wrath of their masters, have not reported the worsening situation; instead, they have done their best to seal off these sections, and avoid them whenever possible. Occasional heavily-armed raiding parties venture in with the aim of recapturing some of the renegade slaves.

Gorgoth

The Tower of Gorgoth perches on the northern edge of the plateau of Zorn Mizpal in the southern Dark Lands. The region is a dark, gloomy place. The skies are filled with ash from the numerous active volcanoes. The plateau is rich in ore and gemstones, and riddled with Chaos Dwarf mines.

The second largest Chaos Dwarf settlement, Gorgoth is only a fraction of the size of Zharr-Naggrund. Its ruler is the Sorcerer-Priest Xeros. He recently succeeded his older brother, who was captured in a recent battle against Zharr-Naggrund and sacrificed. Xeros is responsible for ensuring a steady stream of tribute (mostly slaves) from the wild Orc and Goblin tribes of the Wolf Lands (*Varagazan*), as well as securing the south-western frontier of the Chaos Dwarf empire.

Gorgoth is a huge factory. Enormous furnaces and numerous forges provide the only light in this dismal landscape. The area is almost as heavily polluted as that around Zharr-Naggrund itself. Hobgoblins are scarce in these parts, which places the burden of controlling the large slave population on Xeros' lesser kin. The Chaos Dwarfs have elevated certain favoured Humans to act as overseers in exchange for a slight improvement in their own living conditions.

Gorgoth comprises a central spire of obsidian – about 150 feet tall – surrounded by four smaller towers of dark grey stone. The citadel's temple to Hashut is at the top of the spire, near Xeros' chambers. The entire complex is surrounded by a massive fifty-foot wall, with a single gate opening to the world beyond. Bas-reliefs of Lammasus wearing the characteristic hats of the Chaos Dwarfs flank the gate. This is the last sight of the outside world that most captives ever see.

The Gates of Zharr

The Gates of Zharr are built on the highway (*Gorgothdrin*) midway between Zharr-Naggrund and Gorgoth. Their structure is simply a large archway flanked by several towers of black-grey basalt. The Gates mark the southern boundary of the Chaos Dwarf empire proper. Beyond it lies the frontier, where the Chaos Dwarfs' control is continually contested by the wild Orc and Goblin tribes.

Most of the Chaos Dwarfs and Hobgoblins stationed at this outpost reside in underground chambers; only their superiors lodge above ground. General Dariek is the commander of the outpost, and is assisted by Montaz, the sorcerous liaison to Zharr-Naggrund. Patrols of Chaos Dwarfs and Hobgoblins sweep the Blasted Wastes (*Thrudgrimaz*) to the west and the highway to the south for raiding bands of greenskins, and for any other potential slaves.

The Gates of Zharr have no mines, forges or furnaces, and as a consequence the area is less polluted than any other Chaos Dwarf settlement. Still, this region of the Dark Lands is relatively uninhabitable for all but the most determined and thorny plants. Periodic windstorms blow clouds of dust and pollutants from the north, leaving the region desolate. Food and drink is brought from the Chaos Dwarf capital, or obtained through trade with a few allied Orc and Goblin tribes.

Dangerous Reading

"Outside of the Four Ruinous Powers, the Father of Flame and Darkness claims his own dominion. A once fertile land is laid waste by the industry of his own creations as he of the Flame seeks to grow his own power. Before the End of Time, the power of the Flaming Darkness must decide against whom to vie for survival."

Passage from the second book of the Daemonomicon from the Liber Malefic, The Book of Chaos Foreseen, written by Marius Hollseher around 1322 I.C.

Uzkulak

Known as the "Place of the Skull", Uzkulak is the northernmost of the Chaos Dwarf settlements. Located far north of the Farside valleys of Kisleve and the High (Belyevorota) Pass, just a few dozen leagues south of the Chaos Wastes. Sorcerer-Priest Zargon has been the Lord of Uzkulak for over a hundred years. In his hands lies the security of the northern gate to Zharr-Naggrund and the Chaos Dwarf empire. Uzkulak is connected to the plains of Zharrduk and the River Ruin by a Chaos Dwarf excavated tunnel system called "Skullfire Way" (*Ghalzharrdrin*).

Uzkulak was a small outpost until the Chaos incursion of 2302 I.C. It was quickly overrun by the followers of Khorne, and its garrison slaughtered. The Blood God's army breached the gate to the Skullfire Way, and made their way quickly to besiege Zharr-Naggrund. Years after Chaos retreated northward, the Chaos Dwarfs rebuilt Uzkulak as a stronghold to guard the northern approaches.

The fortress of Uzkulak is dominated by a single tower of granite, the top of which contains the residence of Zargon and the Temple of Hashut. Granite walls, 25 feet high and studded with gun emplacements, surround the tower. The garrison is several hundred strong; about two-thirds are Hobgoblins. Uzkulak is ever vigilant against the threat that the Blood God's

minions may return. Large, heavily-armed patrols of Chaos Dwarfs and Hobgoblins scout the surrounding area regularly. Any individuals caught wandering the land are captured as spies and mercilessly interrogated; very few survive the ministrations of the Chaos Dwarf torturers.

Through use of unknown sorcery and Hashut's blessings, it is said that Sorcerer-Priest Zargon has bred a type of Minotaur from the Great Taurus and some of the captives from the marauding Steppe-dwelling Human tribes. These creatures are very much like the Minotaurs in form and function with only a face like a Lammasu (see below) differentiating Zargon's get from those creatures found in the Forest of Shadows. It is clear that Zargon plans to use his Minotaurs to enhance his army's fighting strength.

The mines around Uzkulak are few. The region, called the Great Skull Land (*Zorn Uzkul*) is a vast, inhospitable, mineral-poor plateau where the cold air is thin and vegetation is scarce. The little vegetation that still exists has been mutated by the warp dust that occasionally blows in from the Wastes.

Twenty-five years ago, a slave revolt threatened to destroy the fortress and was violently put down after considerable losses.

The warning was not lost to the Chaos Dwarf masters and the shortage of slaves continues to this day.

The Daemon's Stump

Downriver from Zharr-Naggrund, the Daemon's Stump marks the southeast boundary of the Chaos Dwarf empire.

The lone tower sits atop the lonely rock outcrop from which it takes its name. Across the polluted river lie the Mountains of Mourn, home to the hostile Orc and Goblin tribes and the Ogre Kingdoms. Foremost among the greenskins are the descendants of the Black Orc slaves that escaped Zharr-Naggrund over 2,500 years ago.

Sorcerer-Priest Mhartok surveys his domain from his chambers at the tower's pinnacle. Through his leadership and sorcerous abilities, Mhartok has maintained the peace (that is to say, he has not suffered any catastrophic losses) in the region for the past five hundred years. Mhartok is one of the more powerful of the Sorcerer-Priests, but must remain at his post. His older twin, Khomenu, is the clan elder and has demonstrated an uncanny ability to survive even though he is the less powerful of the two. Only Mhartok's deference towards his elder restrains him from doing anything to hasten Khomenu's demise. Still, his twin has acceded to Mhartok's demand to choose the clan females to populate his harem.

The citadel of Daemon's Stump is constructed from the black iron found in the foothills of the Mountains of Mourn. The Chaos Dwarfs use the same metal to forge their weapons and armour. Legions of slaves toil under Hobgoblin overseers in the rugged

foothills. Most of these slaves are Humans, Dwarfs or Skaven and this limits any potential rebellion, as the only escape route is deeper into the Orc- and Ogre-infested mountains.

Black Fortress/ Flayed Rock

The Black Fortress lies south of the Daemon's Stump on the banks of the River Ruin. Like Gorgoth to the west, the Black Fortress marks the southern frontier. The obelisk across the river, called the Flayed Rock, delineates the extent of Chaos Dwarf influence and serves as a warning to possible intruders. The Fortress and Rock are both constructed of obsidian and basalt.

The River Ruin is marginally less polluted here than at any point since it passed through Zharr-Naggrund. Most of the heavier toxins have already seeped into the ground by this point. South of the Flayed Rock, the River Andun emerges from the east and mingles its clean water with the polluted and sluggish River Ruin. This mixing dilutes the remaining poisons, and the lower River Ruin flows more freely to the sea.

The Black Fortress is the smallest of all Chaos Dwarf settlements. Few, if any, threats to the Chaos Dwarf empire pass through this way. This situation suits General Hussen. Sadistic even by Chaos Dwarf standards, he can safely pursue his pleasures, abusing lackeys and torturing everyone else. He has even reduced the clan's ranking Sorcerer-Priest Aruk to being little more than an advisor and lackey. With little support from other settlements and no Hobgoblins to manage, Hussen has taken to elevating the cruellest Humans from his slave bands to act as overseers – and even as officers in his army. Hussen has found these Humans to be especially driven to better their lot in life, even at the expense of the lives of their erstwhile fellows.

Other than providing supplies of obsidian and basalt, the mines at Black Fortress are rather marginal. The small amount of wealth they produce is just enough to keep the remote outpost viable and supplied. The surrounding land is so desolate that even the Orcs and Goblins from the nearby Mountains of Mourn shun it.

Diplomatic Appeal

"The problem with you Imperials is that you take this concept of Chaos far too seriously. You claim that 'beastmen' plague your forests, 'ratmen' burrow beneath your cities, and that there are Dwarfs who have succumbed to the corrupting influence from the far north. Such foolishness. A Dwarf would be as likely to abandon their traditions and gold as they are to find elegance and sophistication.

"The only real threat to your lands and ours is the green-skinned horde which invades from the east and lay waste to all before them. Even our best was only able to put a dent into their numbers during the gallant Errantry Wars in the Border Princes. Thus, I put to you that the threat that you must focus your effort against is that of the Orcs and their lesser kin, the Goblins."

A plea from a Bretonnian ambassador before his disappearance while touring the eastern borders of the Ostermark.

CHAOS DWARF RELIGION AND MAGIC

The Sorcerer-Priests of Hashut have a strong foundation for their religious and political power. There are times when the Sorcerer-Priests come together in the Great Conclave of Zharr where important matters for the entire race are debated and decisions reached. Such gatherings are usually held in the Great Temple of Hashut atop Zharr-Naggrund. Violence and death are not rare occurrences at such meetings as some discussions get quite heated.



The Cult of Hashut

The worship of Hashut is the sole religion of the Chaos Dwarfs. To the individual, religion means the sacrifice of slaves, participation in festivals, and war with a purpose. The Sorcerer-Priests place the worship of Hashut foremost in their lives. Hashut's gift grants the Sorcerer-Priests immense power and a very long life, even though its final price is immortality as a stone statue lining the highways of Zharr-Naggrund. The ruling Sorcerer-Priest of each settlement is the High Priest of Hashut for his clan. Until he is physically unable to do so, the High Priest conducts all rituals of sacrifice to feed Hashut's enormous hunger for souls.

Sorcerer-Priests and Magic

Chaos Dwarf Sorcerer-Priests are unique in that their relatively high Casting Number requirement for casting spells remains constant whether they wear armour or not. This gift of Hashut is both a blessing and a curse. The spells of Hashut (described below) already incorporate this relatively high cost.

Because their sorcery derives from their pact with Hashut,

Chaos Dwarf Sorcerer-Priests do *not* need to roll on the Chaos Manifestation tables (WFRP, page 143 or RoS2, pages 179-181) whenever they roll doubles, triples, or quadruples on their casting roll. They are still penalised with an Automatic Failure whenever they roll a 1 on all the dice in their casting roll (WFRP, page 142) and still gain an Insanity Point.

HASHUT – CHAOS GOD OF FIRE AND DARKNESS

Hashut is a lesser Chaos deity. The Bull God was once a Daemon Prince of Chaos Undivided (or so some scholars believe) who failed in an attempt to thwart the will of the Four Lords of Chaos. During the first IncurSION, the goals of the Four were believed to have been so distracted by the rebellious Hashut that they could not concentrate their forces to sweep away the Dwarfs and High Elves from the world. Hashut finally fled into the vastness beneath the surface of the Dark Lands. Khorne sent several Daemon Princes to battle the powerful rebel and the Bull God was finally entombed behind a massive door of brass and darkened iron. With a sweep of his mighty war-axe, Khorne sealed the land to imprison Hashut in his hiding place.

In the darkness and safety of the earth, Hashut's wounds healed and his power grew. The rocks beneath his hooves liquefied into the lava that spewed from volcanoes. Hashut knew that his new-found power would only last for a short time unless he found worshippers to fuel him with sacrifices and ritual. Hashut's mind wandered until he found the trapped Dwarfs of the Eastern Clans. Finding one with power, but a weak mind, Hashut lured the doomed Rune Lord to the door and tempted him to unlock its secrets. The blast that opened the door claimed Hashut's first sacrifice.

Many died before the most desperate of the survivors approached the Father of Darkness begging for a pact. In exchange for their obedience, Hashut granted the petitioning Dwarfs great power. These Dwarfs became the first Sorcerer-Priests of Hashut. After destroying the Runesmiths, the Sorcerer-Priests reshaped their brethren into a new Chaos-aligned race. Hashut visited mutations on these Dark Land Chaos Dwarfs to mark them as his own.

Hashut is generally depicted in his bull form with flame-red fur and black hooves. He has large curving horns and shoots flames out of his nostrils. At other times, Hashut takes on an amorphous black form with searing red eyes. He carries no weapon; Hashut depends solely upon brute strength.

Symbols

Hashut's main symbol is a skull with its top removed and lightning bolts firing from it. At times these skulls may include the braided beards of the Chaos Dwarf males. The skull symbol adorns the tops of the Sorcerer-Priest's banner poles, and serves as the device of their shields as well. Sorcerer-Priests of Hashut and apprentices generally wear flame-red tunics and ornate black armour. They also wear the tall, stylised hats typical of their race, though more elaborate.

Area of Worship

Hashut is worshipped by the Chaos Dwarfs throughout the Dark Lands.

Temperament

Hashut is a demanding god and does not suffer failure easily. He despises the weak and sickly.

Strictures

All Apprentices and Sorcerer-Priests of Hashut must abide by the following strictures:

- ◆ Labour towards the enslavement of all other races
- ◆ Exterminate all threats to Hashut and the Chaos Dwarf race
- ◆ Obliterate all servants of Khorne
- ◆ Extract all the riches of the earth to extend the power and influence of the Chaos Dwarf race.

Holy Sites

The largest temple to Hashut is located at the top of the Zharr-Naggrund ziggurat. The immense temple is the scene of festivities and sacrifices to the Father of Darkness. At its eastern end is a smaller ziggurat upon which stands the enormous statue of Hashut in his bull form. Fuelled by coal and the bodies of slaves, a furnace within causes the statue to grow red hot. A gilded, ogre-sized altar stands before the statue, with two sunken vats of molten metal flanking it. The temple walls depict battle scenes where the victorious Chaos Dwarfs march their captives to the mines. Sacrificial slaves are usually dropped into one of the vats of molten metal. A few, mostly mighty warriors vanquished in battle, are held on the altar as they are ripped from sternum to waist and their heart removed before their eyes. The presiding Sorcerer-Priest then honours the fallen foe by eating the still-beating heart. The carcass is dropped into a chute behind the statue of Hashut, which falls away to a river of lava thousands of feet below the surface.

Smaller temples can be found at the top of all the major Chaos Dwarf settlements in the Dark Lands. All are adjacent to dwellings of the resident Sorcerer-Priest. They are similar to the major temple, but on a smaller scale.

Sub-Cults

There are no sub-cults dedicated to Hashut.

Church Skills and Talents

There are no additional Skills or Talents required other than those listed for the Sorcerer-Priest Apprentice.

Prominent Figures

Though he is losing his body to petrification, Astragoth is the High Priest of Hashut and the most powerful Sorcerer-Priest in the Dark Lands. He rarely leaves the confines of Zharr-Naggrund, but still evokes fear in his minions. In truth, the recent activity from the Chaos Wastes has exacerbated Astragoth's condition and his would-be successors are preparing themselves for a bloody civil war to determine which one will ascend to the position of High Priest.

Holy Days

Both Hekesdrazh (Hexensnacht) and Skraksdrazh (Geheimnisnacht) are holy days to Hashut. These days are marked with feasts, combat to the death between pit-fighting slaves, and many sacrifices.

LORE OF HASHUT

MAGIC FLAME

Casting Number: 6

Casting Time: Half Action

Ingredient: Piece of Charcoal or Wood Chip (+1)

Description: Similar to the Hedge Wizard Petty Spell of the same name (WFRP, page 147). The Sorcerer-Priest brings forth a red-coloured flame in his open palm. The spell remains active until either the Sorcerer-Priest closes his hand or casts another spell. The flame can be used to light torches or set thatch aflame, but is too small to cause damage in combat.

ENVELOPING DARKNESS

Casting Number: 8

Casting Time: Full Action

Ingredients: Pinch of Ash (+1)

Description: The Sorcerer-Priest can cover an area centred within 50 yards in complete and utter darkness. All light sources – even magical ones with a lesser casting number – within this 10 yard radius area (up to a height of 20 feet) are extinguished for 1d10 minutes. These light sources cannot function for the duration of the spell.



FIST OF FIRE

Casting Number: 14

Casting Time: Full Action

Ingredients: A Piece of Flint (+1)

Description: This spell wraps the Sorcerer-Priest's hands with glowing bands of magical fire that snake out and envelope all opponents within 2 yards. A successful routine (+10%) **WS** Test indicates that the opponent has been hit with damage equal to the caster's **SB**+3. *Flammable* creatures suffer an additional 1d10 wounds. Toughness and armour reduce damage as normal and creatures that are subject to *fear* or *terror* of fire must make the appropriate psychological test. The spell lasts for 1d10 rounds.

FLAMES OF AZGORH

Casting Number: 16

Casting Time: Full Action

Ingredients: Sulphurous Rock (+1)

Description: This spell enables the Sorcerer-Priest to breathe out whirling tendrils of sorcerous flame. The flame lashes out at any opponent within a 15-yard long cone which begins at the Sorcerer-Priest and spreads to a width of 5 feet. Characters enveloped by the lashing flames take one **SB**4 hit and any flammable item is set aflame (see WFRP, page 136). Non-magical armour does not reduce the damage inflicted by this spell. A victim of the *Flames of Azgorh* may attempt a dodge to avoid its full effects by making an **Ag** test. A successful test results in the victim receiving only half the indicated damage from the attack. *Flammable* creatures suffer an additional 1d10 wounds. Toughness and armour reduce damage as normal and creatures that are subject to *fear* or *terror* of fire must make the appropriate psychological test.

SHARDS OF OBSIDIAN

Casting Number: 20

Casting Time: Half Action

Ingredient: Sliver of Obsidian (+1)

Description: The Sorcerer-Priest shoots shards of obsidian up to 50 yards, embedding in the first character or group in its path causing 1d10+2 hits at **SB**3. Shards of Obsidian is a *magic missile* attack.

LAVA STORM

Casting Number: 24

Casting Time: Full Action

Ingredients: Dust of a Fire Opal worth 50GC (+2)

Description: This spell enables the Sorcerer-Priest to fill the air in an area centred within 30 yards with balls of molten lava. The Lava Storm instantly causes 2d5 hits at **SB**3 to any targets within the 5-yard radius area. *Flammable* creatures suffer an extra 1d10 Wounds. Toughness may reduce the damage inflicted, but armour – including magical armour – does not. A victim of a lava storm may attempt a dodge to avoid its full effects (**Ag** **Test**). A successful test results in only half damage from the attack. Creatures that are subject to *fear* or *terror* of fire must make the appropriate psychological test.

TAINTED DWARFS

Twisted and Corrupted by Chaos

Chance encounters with the Tainted will likely occur in the regions of the Worlds Edge Mountains and surrounding foothills from Ostermark northward. Bands of the mutated Dwarfs have been reported in the Forest of Shadows, despite the denial of many of the local authorities. PCs can learn about the danger of travelling in these parts from the native population, though most of these peasants know little more than the rumours spread by superstitious folk.

Tainted Dwarf Society

What little is known about the Tainted reveals them to be unlike any other Dwarf society. Age and wealth bestow no obvious status among their number. In fact, many Tainted do not reach the age of other Dwarfs. Those who lose their vitality and weaken are usually eliminated – an inevitable consequence of the brutality of their existence. Moreover, the Tainted notion of clan has a much narrower definition than found among the Old World Dwarfs. Tainted clans have closer familial relationships as they are not extended beyond the offspring of what would be considered their grandsire.

At the top of Tainted society are the strongest and most

physically imposing mutated Dwarfs. The reputations of the various Chiefs are based on their respective success in leading their clan against one another, as well as against those they consider to be their prey – which includes all creatures and races not subjected to that clan's particular definition of Chaos. Beneath these Chiefs are the warriors, the smiths who arm them, and the occasional brewer (since some habits die hard). The Tainted smiths are solely dedicated to crafting exceptionally sharp, powerful weapons and very durable armour. No other craft is known to exist in their society.

Generally, the Tainted are dedicated to Chaos Undivided, Khorne, Nurgle, or Tzeentch. A few leave their clans to follow one or more of the Renegade Gods.

The Tainted who follow a specific Chaos deity frequently live among the tribes and/or warbands of that Power. These Tainted tend to be more savage and less Dwarf-like than the ones that follow Chaos Undivided. There are no Tainted who follow Slaanesh; perhaps this has to do with the speculated link between the Elves and Slaanesh – or it may be that the Slaaneshi precept of unbridled indulgence, decadence, and depravity is foreign to any Dwarf, no matter how corrupt.

The majority of the Tainted follow Chaos Undivided, fighting for or against any of the Chaos powers according to circumstance. These clans usually live in their own settlements and maintain trading arrangements with the followers of the four Lords of



Chaos. Perhaps as a result of this, the Tainted have become the main source of weapons and armour for Beastmen, mutants, Minotaurs, and Chaos Warriors. In exchange, the Tainted receive food (often in the form of captives), and also trade for metal and other materials captured in raids. Tainted followers of Chaos Undivided range from unorganised savage packs of killers to relatively structured groups of psychopaths battered into a tribal entity. These latter communities of Tainted are able to build and maintain the various war machines that are used by the various Chaos warbands, including their own.

Recent encounters indicate that the number of Tainted is growing and their range is expanding. They have been seen as far south as the fallen dwarfhold of Karak Ungol, and as far west as the Forest of Shadows.

Stages of Life

The Tainted do not seem to mark time at all. Once young Tainted are strong enough to wield a weapon and do manual labour, they must rely on their own devices to find a master from whom to learn a trade. Their lifespan varies greatly, with most living less than a century. Only the toughest and most vicious live longer than this, and for such individuals there seem to be few who die of natural causes, irrespective of their age. A number of these more resilient individuals follow the path of the Chaos Warrior.

Anatomy

The Tainted Dwarfs of the northern Worlds Edge Mountains usually maintain the same general body structure as the Dwarfs from whom they are descended, but they display a wide range of mutations, with no discernible pattern. In most cases, the Tainted retain the long beards of their former kin, although the cultural significance of the beard is seemingly lost on them.

The mutations of the Tainted vary greatly from one individual to the next. Even those assumed to be blood-related do not necessarily share any common mutations (see www.warpstone.org for a mutations table).

Diet

Tainted Dwarf brewers use whatever grain they can find – either wild or from raiding isolated farmsteads – and other ingredients can only be guessed at. Old World scholars will not discount the possibility of the use of “animal matter” (loosely defined as body parts and, perhaps, waste). Tainted Dwarfs occasionally trade armour and weapons for food, but hunting and raiding provides

View from a Settler in the Wheatlands

“What? Yes, I’ve heard stories that Dwarfs in the Old World are a civilised folk, but I don’t believe any one of them. The ones we have hereabouts deserve to be killed. They’re from the mountains to the west and south and come in the dead of night to steal away livestock as well as men, women, and children. The only difference between the two is that the southern Dwarfs wear large hats and the western ones steal any metal they can find in addition to any victims. So, don’t tell me that we hung the wrong one: any of the cursed race will do. Bloody worse than Dolgans, if you ask me.”

Use of Chaos Dwarfs in a Campaign or Scenario

There are a number of ways that Chaos Dwarfs can be used without sending Player Characters to the Dark Lands. Chaos Dwarfs are few in number and relatively scarce, particularly outside their home territory. GMs who want to use these fell beings should do so in the context of a manipulating enemy, hidden behind agents acting on their behalf. These tools can easily be foul Humans engaged with a network of slavers, or greenskins – mostly Goblins – who understand the trading value of living captives to the Chaos Dwarfs.

The machinations of the Chaos Dwarfs penetrate far beyond the borders of their own land. A number of unfortunates who are captured or enslaved in the lands of the western Empire or eastern Tilea are then sold or traded from one group to another until they make the arduous trek to the Dark Lands. Only in this toxic land do those enslaved come to the realisation that their doom began the moment they were captured.

Chaos Dwarf slavemasters are not likely to be well disposed towards any who are involved with breaking up or compromising their slaving networks. They expect troublemakers to be dealt with firmly and swiftly, generally by assassination if the perpetrators cannot be taken as captives with reasonable risk. Likewise, Chaos Dwarfs generally employ others to remove any link in the network that becomes a high risk or might turn against them.

In essence, a GM should consider using Chaos Dwarfs in adventures that feature intrigue and travel over large distances. To this end, the presence of Chaos Dwarfs should not be detected until the latter stages of a campaign when the PCs are at greatest risk.

the bulk of their diet. They mostly eat meat, and care little about its source. Tainted Dwarfs range far in search of food, and many a farmstead has been found uninhabited after sightings of Tainted Dwarfs in the vicinity.

Reproduction

The reproduction of the Tainted remains a mystery. It’s virtually impossible for anyone (apart, presumably, from another Tainted Dwarf) to determine the sex of some of these mutated Dwarfs. Still, these creatures of Chaos are able to multiply in some fashion, although young Tainted have only been seen in the rarest of circumstances.

There are also rumours that a small number of Old World Dwarfs – most likely of expatriate origin – begin to develop mutations sometime during their life. Those that do not meet their end before they lose themselves to Chaos will usually make the dangerous journey to the lands of the Tainted. Most die along the way whether by accident, Witch-Hunter, or hungry Beastman. The few that make it must fight their way into acceptance. These battles are generally fatal to one of the combatants. Should the newly Tainted prove victorious, then they take the place of the vanquished as a member of the clan. Whoever loses becomes the next meal.

Language

The Tainted mostly speak the Dark Tongue. Those few who know how to write tend to use the more rudimentary pictographic Dwarf runes. Few born into Tainted clans have any knowledge of Khazalid and some of these might likely know Reikspiel or the Dwarfen dialect of Old Worlder.

Lands of the Tainted

Small settlements of the Tainted are scattered across the far northern ranges of the Worlds Edge Mountains. These “villages” tend to be a few shacks located near the mouth of the various cave openings that dot the region, housing the mostly adult male population. These “settled” Tainted only leave their villages to forage for food and metal scraps. Foraging parties may chance upon travellers from the Old World, whom they will attack without hesitation.

As followers of Chaos Undivided, the Tainted communities are the chief manufacturers of the weapons and armour used by the majority of the servants of Chaos, but apart from this their knowledge of manufacture or engineering is limited. The most powerful warrior of the village is considered its leader. Challenges are savage and, at times, fought to the death.

The Tainted dislike intruders, including other Tainted bands. Some of these intruders include the warbands who follow other Chaos powers. Generally, these Chaos warbands come to trade for weapons and armour, and the transactions are completed relatively peacefully. At other times, however, Chaos warbands, especially those following Khorne, rampage through the area. These battles are without quarter, and usually end with one side in full retreat or completely slaughtered.

Tainted Dwarf Religion and Magic

In contrast to the Dark Land Dwarfs, there are neither Priests nor Sorcerers among the Tainted population. Their skills are limited to the crafts of brewing (since fighting creates a mighty thirst) and war: warriors, armourers, or weaponsmiths. Only in rare circumstances will either Nurgle or Tzeentch grant sorcerous power to any of the Tainted who worship them, usually to those who become champions of their respective patron.

Religion in Tainted society is very primitive. Captives are often sacrificed to appease whichever form of Chaos that particular group of Tainted follow (Chaos Undivided, Khorne, Tzeentch, or Nurgle) – and also to provide sustenance. Tainted who follow Chaos Undivided worship in a manner similar to ancestor worship as the *Great Blackness* (which is one reason why Tainted have been referred to as *Black Dwarfs*) or *Grandfather Void*¹. Those Tainted Dwarfs who worship one of the Great Powers follow whatever debased practices are typical of that deity's followers.



Si

Chaos and Tainted Dwarf NPCs

This section is intended to provide GMs with standard profiles for the various Chaos and Tainted Dwarf NPCs that they want to use in their campaigns.

Chaos Dwarf characters generally have dark coloured eyes and hair. Their mutations – the lower tusks and occasional horns and hooves – are fairly stable for reasons described in earlier sections. Chaos Dwarfs will generally be encountered in small groups some distance away from the Empire. Adventurous GMs might want to create a campaign scenario where the PCs must infiltrate a Chaos Dwarf stronghold and rescue an enslaved individual of some importance.

In contrast, Tainted Dwarfs are built like Old World Dwarfs with the same range of hair colour. The one constant is that all have red eyes, which marks their allegiance to Chaos, and one or more mutations.

¹Such worship is loosely based on that described in *Dwarfs: Stone and Steel*, page 77.

NPC PROFILES

BERSERKER (RAVER)

(WFRP, page 46) The only thing that distinguishes these Tainted from the other psychopathic killers is that they have the mutation Blood Rage (*Frenzy*), which manifests almost at the instant they see blood drawn in combat. This mutation is in addition to any others that the Berserker may have.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
58	31	43	51	21	29	43	20
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	15	4	5	3	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Tainted Dwarf), Consume Alcohol, Intimidate, Speak Language (Dark Tongue)

Talents: Frenzy, Grudge-born Fury, Menacing, Night Vision, Quick Draw, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-hearted, Sturdy

Trappings: Mail Armour, Great Weapon

BODYGUARD (GUARDIAN / SHIELDMAN)

(WFRP, page 33) Chaos Dwarf leaders use bodyguards for the protection they provide and the status they represent. Bodyguards, in turn, benefit from the opportunity to prove their worth. Those who do so may be rewarded with a promotion to unit commander, the prestigious role of a Slaver, or torturer of slaves and captives. Chaos Dwarf bodyguards wear mail shirts when they serve their masters.

Like Chaos Dwarfs, Tainted leaders use bodyguards for the additional protection they provide and the status they represent.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
52	31	36	46	26	31	31	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	15	3	4	3	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Dodge Blow, Heal, Intimidate, Perception, Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Disarm or Quick Draw, Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Night Vision, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Parrying, Throwing), Stout-hearted, Street Fighting, Strike to Stun, Sturdy, Very Strong or Very Resilient

Trappings: Buckler, a pair of Throwing Axes, Mail Shirt

CAPTAIN (WARLORD)

(WFRP, page 63) These are commanders of the various armies under the overall command of the Elder Sorcerer-Priest. Favoured commanders are allowed to ride the Taurus (see the **Bestiary** section below for descriptions) in battle.

Among the Tainted, this career is simply called Warlord and may be the leader of a particular band.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
71	51	54	64	41	46	46	46
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	19	5	6	3	-	-	-

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Strategy/Tactics), Command, Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Common Knowledge (Hobgoblin Hegemony), Common Knowledge (Empire, Karak Ankor, or Kislev), [Chaos Dwarf] Common Knowledge (Ogre Kingdoms), Dodge Blow, Gossip, [Chaos Dwarf] Perception, Read/Write (Khazalid), Secret Language-Battle, Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Speak Language ([Chaos Dwarf] Goblin Tongue or Grumbarth; [Tainted Dwarf] Khazalid, Kislevian, or Reikspiel), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Disarm or Quick Draw, Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Lightning Parry, Night Vision, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Flail), Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-hearted, Sturdy

Trappings: Flail or Great Weapon or Hand Weapon and Shield, Full Mail Armour, Unit of Troops.

CHAMPION (DARKMASTER / WARMASTER)

(WFRP, page 64) A few Chaos and Tainted Dwarf warriors are so exceptional that they become known to other soldiers as great warriors. Some of these individuals do not have the ability to command troops, or do not wish to do so, but their proficiency allows them to be the first into combat.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
86	71	56	66	51	31	51	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	20	5	6	3	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Dodge Blow, Evaluate, Intimidate, Perception, Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Dwarfcraft, Fleet Footed or Lightning

Reflexes, Grudge-born Fury, Lightning Parry, Master Gunner, Mighty Shot, Night Vision, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Flail), Specialist Weapon Group (Gunpowder), Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-hearted, Sturdy, Warrior Born

Trappings: Flail or Great Weapon or Hand Weapon and Shield, Firearm or Crossbow with Ammunition, Full Mail Armour

HUNTER (FORAGER)

(WFRP, page 41) Chaos Dwarf hunters range far afield, since their region was depleted of game long ago. Their role in providing meat for their people is limited. Thus, the few chosen to be hunters are being tested for advancement as scouts and slavers. Hunters have their own versions of the *Secret Signs-Ranger* skill. These signs are based more on their own dialect of Khazalid and its pictographic runes, and will be incomprehensible to anyone who does not speak or read Khazalid.

Tainted hunters provide a large portion of their tribe's food supply including goat, sheep, deer, and the rarer Chaos creatures such as Griffons. Hunting parties are known to descend into the lowlands during lean times.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
41	48	31	46	31	36	31	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	15	3	4	3	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Concealment, Follow Trail, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Search, Secret Language-Ranger Tongue (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf versions), Secret Signs - Ranger (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf versions), Silent Move or Set Trap, Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Hardy, Lightning Reflexes or Very Resilient, Marksman or Rover, Night Vision, Rapid Reload, Resistance to Magic, Stout-hearted, Sturdy

Trappings: Hand Weapon, Crossbow with Ammunition, 2 Animal Traps, Antitoxin Kit

SCOUT (SEEKER)

(WFRP, page 83) Chaos and Tainted Dwarf scouts are few and only used to reconnoitre areas where they may choose to set an ambush or some other trap, observe enemy movement, or search for prospective slaves. Chaos and Tainted Dwarf scouts do not use mounts. They also share the same Secret Language and Secret Signs as the hunters of their kind, from whose ranks most scouts are recruited.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
61	51	41	51	36	51	46	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	18	4	5	3	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Common Knowledge (any two: [Chaos Dwarf] Dwarf, Dwarfs, Goblins, Hobgoblins, or Ogres; [Tainted Dwarf] Dwarfs, Empire, or Kislev), Concealment, Dodge Blow, Follow Trail, Navigation, Perception, Secret Language- Ranger Tongue (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf versions), Secret Signs-Ranger (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Silent Move, Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Speak Language (any two: [Chaos Dwarf] Goblin Tongue or Grumbarth; [Tainted Dwarf] Khazalid, Kislevian, or Reikspiel), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Mighty Shot or Sure Shot, Night Vision, Orientation, Rapid Reload, Resistance to Magic, Stout-hearted, Sturdy

Trappings: Hand Weapon, Crossbow with Ammunition, Mail Shirt, 10 yards of Rope.

SLAVER (SLAVESEEKER)

Chaos Dwarf slavers are held in high esteem as the entire fabric of their society would collapse without fresh slaves. The most renowned and tenacious travel far to secure quality slaves, such as Old World Dwarfs and Humans. The less skilled settle for the more numerous greenskins. On some occasions, Skaven are taken from the western Dark Lands or the Worlds Edge Mountains. Slavers are known to employ corrupt Humans as agents.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
56	46	41	46	36	36	46	31
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	16	4	4	3	-	-	-

Skills: Charm, Common Knowledge (Chaos Dwarf), Common Knowledge (any two: Dwarfs, Empire, Goblins, Hobgoblins, Kislev or Ogres), Drive, Evaluate, Gossip, Perception, Read/Write Speak Language (Khazalid), Speak Language (any two: Dark Tongue, Goblin Tongue, Grumbarth, Kislevian, or Reikspiel), Trade (Slavery), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Coolheaded or Savvy, Dealmaker, Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Night Vision, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Entangling), Stout-hearted, Strike to Stun, Sturdy

Trappings: Hand Weapon, Mail Shirt, 3 sets of Manacles, 10 yards or Rope, Whip

SOLDIER (ZHARRMAN / WARRIOR)

(WFRP, page 54) Soldiers make up a large part of Chaos Dwarf and Tainted populations.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
51	41	31	41	31	31	36	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	14	3	4	3	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Dodge Blow, Drive, Heal, Intimidate, Perception, Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Quick Draw, Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Night Vision, Resistance to Magic, Sharpshooter or Strike Mighty Blow, Specialist Weapon Group (Gunpowder or Two-Handed), Stout-hearted, Strike to Injure or Rapid Reload. Strike to Stun or Mighty Shot, Sturdy

Trappings: Great Weapon or Hand Weapon and Shield, Firearm or Crossbow or Bow with Ammunition, Mail Shirt

SORCERER-PRIEST

Magical aptitude is very rare among Chaos Dwarfs, and the few who have this talent must endure the gruelling hardships that accompany years of apprenticeship. Relatively few apprentices successfully conclude their initiation into Hashut's priesthood. Many simply perish in their first years while others meet their end as sacrifices.

Sorcerer-Priests who accomplish a higher level of achievement have a greater chance of being marked as a favourite of Hashut. When a Sorcerer-Priest successfully completes their apprenticeship, he has a 25% chance of receiving a gift from Hashut. This chance increases to 50% when on becoming a Master and to 75% when becoming an Elder. The first gift has an equal chance of being a set of bull horns, or cloven hooves for feet. The second gift is whichever of the two has not already been granted. The third gift is always a bull's head (though the beard remains intact).

SORCERER-PRIEST APPRENTICE

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
46	36	31	46	25	44	60	31
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	14	3	4	3	1	-	-

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Magick), Channelling, Common Knowledge (Chaos Dwarf), Heal, Magical Sense, Perception, Read/Write (Khazalid), Search, Speak Arcane Language (Magick), Speak Language (Khazalid)

Talents: Aethyric Attunement or Fast Hands, Divine Lore (Hashut), Grudge-born Fury, Lightning Reflexes or Warrior Born, Night Vision, Public Speaking, Stout-hearted, Sturdy

Trappings for all Sorcerer-Priest careers: Flame-Red Tunic, Full Ornate Black Mail Armour, Tall Stylised Hat, Hand Weapon, Spell Components, Staff, Back Banner Pole with Symbol of Hashut

SORCERER-PRIEST

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
51	41	35	51	31	54	60	36
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	16	3	5	3	2	-	-

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Astronomy or History), Academic Knowledge (Magick), Channelling, Command, Common Knowledge (Chaos Dwarf), Common Knowledge (Hobgoblin Hegemony or Ogre Kingdoms), Heal, Intimidate, Magical Sense, Perception, Read/Write (Khazalid), Search, Speak Arcane Language (Magick), Speak Language (Goblin Tongue or Grumbarth), Speak Language (Khazalid)

Talents: Aethyric Attunement, Divine Lore (Hashut), Fast Hands, Grudge-born Fury, Lightning Reflexes or Warrior Born, Meditation or Mighty Missile, Night Vision, Public Speaking, Stout-hearted, Sturdy

VETERAN

(ZHARR WARRIOR / WARCRAFTER)

(WFRP, page 86) Many soldiers eventually reach the apex of their existence by becoming veterans.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
63	53	41	51	36	31	46	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	16	4	5	3	2	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos or Tainted Dwarf), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Gossip, Intimidate, Perception, Secret Language (Battle Tongue), Speak Language (Khazalid or Dark Tongue), Trade (Smith)

Talents: Dwarfcraft, Grudge-born Fury, Mighty Shot or Strike Mighty Blow, Night Vision, Rapid Reload or Strike to Injure, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Gunpowder), Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-hearted, Sturdy, Very Resilient or Very Strong

Trappings: Great Weapon or Hand Weapon and Shield, Firearm or Crossbow or Bow with Ammunition, Full Mail Armour

SLAVER (ADVANCED)

One of the curious omissions in the rulebook for **WFRP** is the Slaver career from the first edition. No official explanation has been provided for this seeming oversight. On the face of it, the omission seems rather odd given that Warhammer is a violent and dark world and slavery is one of the more persistent of the dark aspects of human existence. Along with gory violence and Slaaneshi debaucheries, slavery and slavers fit in the Warhammer milieu.

Although outlawed in many parts of the Old World, slavery of one sort or another exists in every inhabited land. It is the lot for many thousands of people, whether it is under the pretext of indentured servitude, forced labour or agricultural bondage.

Slavers are the unscrupulous individuals who engage in the merciless slave trade, whether they do so for the Emirs of Araby, the wealthy landowners of Tilea and Estalia, the money-grubbing merchants of the Empire and Wasteland, murderous Chaos cultists, or the inhuman races (such as Chaos Dwarfs, Dark Elves, and Skaven). They may be involved in the actual enslavement of the too young or too poor, in trafficking the

unfortunate merchandise from one location to another, or the sale of the slaves.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
+15%	+15%	+10%	+5%	+15%	+5%	+15%	+10%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
-	+4	-	-	-	-	-	-

Skills: Charm, Common Knowledge (any three), Drive, Evaluate, Gossip, Perception, Read/Write, Ride, Speak Language (any two), Trade (Slavery)

Talents: Coolheaded or Savvy, Dealmaker, Specialist Weapon Group (Entangling), Streetwise or Suave, Strike to Stun

Trappings: Hand Weapon, Horse and Cart, Horse with Saddle and Harness, 3 pairs of Manacles, 10 yards or Rope, Whip

BESTIARY

With the influence of Chaos permeating the land upon which they live, Chaos and Tainted Dwarfs associate with certain creatures warped by Chaos. Those listed below are the more commonly known beasts.

BOAR CENTAURS

Boar Centaurs are recent creations. Some say that they are the gift of a Chaos god to the Tainted, although often times it is the gifted Tainted Dwarf, Thymbrin Snakebeard, who breeds them into existence. Boar Centaurs mostly function as beasts of burden for the Tainted. They are the "engine" that powers some Tainted war machines, notably the Juggernaut, Tenderiser and Whirlwind.

Boar Centaurs are also used as fast moving troops. For this they are usually equipped with an axe and full body armour. They get a *stomp* attack in addition to their weapon attack.

Though they prefer grunts, growls, and snares, the ill-tempered Boar Centaurs are able to speak the Dark Tongue and a few can even manage some words in Khazalid.

Boar Centaurs have the upper torso of a Tainted Dwarf and the tusks and body of a boar. Their hair, beard, and fur tend to range from medium brown to black. Like Tainted Dwarfs, Boar Centaurs have red eyes.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
45	31	41	45	30	30	36	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	16	4	4	8	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos Dwarf), Follow Trail, Intimidate +10%, Perception, Speak Language (Dark Tongue)

Talents: Keen Senses, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-Hearted, Strike to Injure, Sturdy, Wrestling

Special Rules:

- *Armoured Torso:* Boar Centaurs usually wear armour on the head, arms, and torso.
- *Thick Skin:* The thick hide of Boar Centaurs reduces the value of any Critical Hits they suffer by 1.
- *Tusks:* The tusks of a charging Boar Centaur attacks as if they have an Impact Quality.

Armour: Sleeved Mail Shirt, Helmet

Armour Points: Head 3, Body 3, Arms 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon, Hand Weapon

Slaughter Margin: Challenging

BULL CENTAURS

Bull Centaurs were created by Hashut thousands of years in the past from some of the Dark Land Dwarfs he had corrupted. They are used mainly to guard the great statue of Hashut in the temple atop Zharr-Naggrund, as well as the temple entrance. Bull Centaurs are completely dedicated to the Father of Darkness, which makes them ideal for Sorcerer-Priests to entrust with complex and dangerous tasks.

Bull Centaurs are also rather arrogant as they see themselves as just a notch below the Sorcerer-Priests in terms of Hashut's favour. This causes some problems when dealing with the non-priestly elite of the Chaos Dwarf clans, whether in their "normal" setting of the temple or in the field. Though few in number, Bull Centaurs fight alongside the Chaos Dwarf army whenever the need arises. Units of Bull Centaurs are led by the most powerful

and intelligent of their own number, which could create some interesting problems for normal commanders. Some of the Bull Centaur leaders have actually led their units to action contradictory to their orders.

When guarding the temple precincts, Bull Centaurs are armed with double-handed axes. When preparing for war, these creatures don scale mail over their upper torso (1AP Body). In combat, they get a *stomp* attack in addition to their weapon attack.

Bull centaurs speak the Chaos Dwarf dialect of Khazalid and a few may even know a smattering of other languages, usually the Goblin tongue. They are certainly not dumb beasts, though they may play that part initially when encountering non-Chaos Dwarf characters.

Physique: Bull Centaurs are large creatures with the upper torso and head of a Chaos Dwarf and the body of a bull. They wear the tall hats of the Chaos Dwarfs and braid their beards in the same style. Their bull-body is covered with flame-red fur, and their cloven hooves are black.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
45	31	41	45	30	30	36	21
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	16	4	4	8	-	-	-

Skills: Common Knowledge (Chaos Dwarf), Intimidate +10%, Perception, Speak Language (Khazalid)

Talents: Night Vision, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-Hearted, Strike to Injure, Sturdy, Wrestling

Special Rules:

- *Armoured Torso:* Bull Centaurs usually wear armour on the head, arms, and torso.

Armour: Sleeved Mail Shirt, Helmet

Armour Points: Head 3, Body 3, Arms 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon, Hand Weapon

Slaughter Margin: Challenging

GREAT TAURUS

Sometimes called the Red Bull of Hashut, the Great Taurus is a terrifying creature of Chaos. Its whole body is wreathed in fire and smoke. Sparks fly from its hooves. The creature also breathes fire in great snorting bursts as dark smoke blows from its mouth. It is believed that Great Taurus were once Dark Land Dwarfs shaped by Hashut into his bull likeness. They are stabled in large pens beneath the Temple of Hashut, where they are fed on specially selected slaves. In general, they only emerge from Zharr-Naggrund when the most powerful Chaos Dwarfs mount them for battle.

Occasionally, the Great Taurus are let out of Zharr-Naggrund to seek out prey. Led by the more intelligent Lammasus, they hunt any non-Chaos Dwarf creature in the Dark Lands.

The Great Taurus is a huge monster with the body of a massive bull and dragon-like wings. Its hide glows red hot and flickers with sparks. Huge horns adorn the Great Taurus' head and its mouth is filled with sharp, pointed teeth.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
57	-	63	63	70	14	66	-
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
4	40	6	6	6(9)	-	-	-

Skills: Perception +10%

Talents: Flier, Frightening, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Strike Mighty Blow, Will of Iron

Special Rules:

- *Breathe Fire:* A Great Taurus can breathe fire as a full action. The fire breath is cone shaped: 24 yards long and 8 yards at its widest point. All targets within the area automatically receive 1d5 hits at SB 7 (flammable targets take additional d5 Wounds for each hit). Victims of the fire breath may take an **Agility Test** to halve the damage.

Armour: Fiery Hide (1AP all over)

Armour Points: Head 1, Body 1, Arms 1, Legs 1

Weapons: Hooves, Horns, Teeth, Wings

Slaughter Margin: Very Hard

LAMMASU

The Lammasu is believed to be a rare mutation of the Great Taurus. Its Chaos Dwarf ancestry is evident in its tusked head, thickly curled beard and considerable intelligence. The Lammasu is a magical creature that draws the power of Chaos about itself. When it exhales, the Lammasu covers itself with whirling clouds of dark sorcery. Only the most powerful Sorcerer-Priests can ride the Lammasu in battle.

The Lammasu has the body of a gigantic bull, powerful dragon-like wings, and a mace-tipped tail. It also has clawed front feet and curved horns. In addition, the Lammasu has the distorted face of a Chaos Dwarf, with a huge gaping mouth and large lower tusks. The typical coloration of a Lammasu ranges from sooty dark grey to black, and its beard and crest of hair vary from bright orange to flame red.

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
57	-	63	73	60	29	6	-
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	40	6	7	6(9)	-	-	-

Skills: Perception +10%

Talents: Flier, Frightening, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Strike Mighty Blow, Will of Iron

Special Rules:

- *Whirling clouds:* The whirling tendrils of black sorcery that surrounds the Lammasu give a 50% chance that the effects of any spell cast against it or its rider are nullified. Additionally, the threads of black sorcery foul the powers of any magic weapons used against it or its rider. Thus, the attacker receives a **WS** modifier of -20% when using such a weapon. Normal and divine weapons are not affected.

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Body 0, Arms 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Claws, Mace-Tail, Teeth, Wings

Slaughter Margin: Very Hard

Suggestion for GMs using Chaos Dwarf Beasts

With the exception of the Great Taurus, the beasts mentioned in the Bestiary section are fairly intelligent and use this attribute to their advantage.

A number of the beasts have learned that many of the two-legged creatures – including the followers of the Chaos powers – react to the Centaurs as if they are no more intelligent than other four legged beasts. Only too late in the encounter will the two-legged creatures learn of their mistake. In contrast, the reaction of characters to a Lammasu would be much the same as they would react to a Griffon or other flying monstrosity.

GMs should try to play these creatures as if they combine animal cunning with Human-like intelligence. Simple ruses that two-legged characters use against wolves, Griffons, and the like simply would not work against these creatures. In a number of cases, these beasts may feign less intelligence in order to draw their prey ever nearer.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the Centaurs are rarely too far away from their respective type of Chaos Dwarf, whether Tuskers or Tainted. Thus, encounters with these creatures, especially solitary ones, should be a rarity.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

No Way Out

The Player Characters are hired to escort several wagons of provisions and other trade goods over the Worlds Edge Mountains from Praag to one of the Wheatland colonies. The season is late summer and the merchant financing the trip, Nikolai Chekov, is eager to get things moving quickly. Nikolai is anxious that the caravan makes it through High (Belyevorota) Pass before the early winter arrives in the mountains. The PCs are paid rather handsomely (100 Imperial Crowns each, now, and a similar amount upon their return) to see this task through.

Depending upon the size of the party, there will be a few more armed men hired to provide escort so that the total is twelve. There are also several tradesmen in the caravan, one of which is

bringing his family as he hopes to establish a trading post in one of the new Farside colonies. The family of Yuri Trovsky includes a young, pretty daughter of about 15 years (and eligible for marriage) among his six children. Irina knows the effect she has on the opposite sex and will flirt with the two male Player Characters with the highest **Fel**. The reason for this obvious GM device will soon become clear.

Before they set off on their journey, the PCs may want to ask about Nikolai's status as a merchant. If they expend enough effort, they will learn that Nikolai has a reputation as a habitual procrastinator. His trading missions are generally the last to be organised and often set out late. As such, his caravans tend to experience more misfortune than those of other merchants. Nikolai tries to compensate by hiring more able-bodied guards (usually three per wagon) to escort the traders than his competition.

In actuality, Nikolai's procrastination is a façade. He is a willing agent of the Dark Land Chaos Dwarfs and times his trading missions so that there would be less traffic on the pass and the chance of inclement weather provides cover for any trading mission that turns up missing. To further his ploy, Nikolai provides information to his slaving masters of one out of every five missions or so. Unfortunately for the PCs, this caravan is that one.

Among the other guards is one of Nikolai's own agents, Pyotr Malkovich, whose main task is to leave signs along the trail to alert the Chaos Dwarf slaving party to the presence of the caravan. This man should have an above average **Fel** and openly flirt with Irina as if attempting to woo her. This not only provides the male PCs some competition, but, more importantly, serves to make the guard's treachery all the more heinous.

The Chaos Dwarfs will attack one night sometime after the caravan passes the summit of High Pass. When all looks bleak, a warband of Khornate Tainted should appear to complicate matters. Like any good Khornates, this warband will focus their attacks on the followers of Hashut, particularly any Sorcerer-Priests. Any wizards or clerics among the PCs might well try to get their comrades to flee with the remnants of the trading party. It won't be long before the Khornates realise their presence.

The PCs should have two conflicting priorities: to try to flee from these savages or try to eliminate whichever one succeeds in obliterating the other. Forming a temporary alliance with one side of mutated Dwarfs over the other is a bad idea. Neither side can be trusted to honour their end of any deal.

Vicious GMs might even have Irina captured by one type of Chaos Dwarf or the other. The Tainted might either sacrifice the young woman to the Blood God or just eat her, while the Dark Landers might well consign her to be a slave in their ruling Sorcerer-Priest's harem. In the latter case, the GM could steer the PCs into the lands of the Chaos Dwarfs in order to effect a rescue.

Blowing in the Wind

Ostlander Baron Wolf von Borkum is not a man who easily forgets any abuse of his hospitality. What made matters worse for the villain is that he stole one of the Baron's horses – an over-aged mare with a brighter future as a draft horse no less –

and fled deeper within the Forest of Shadows.

The Baron commissions the Player Characters to run the offensive man down and bring him back to face the Baron's justice. He describes the man as about average height and weight with a closely cropped beard in the style of an Imperial student of philosophy, though the man was clearly not as learned as he pretended to be. The man went by the name of Gareth Schwätzer and had a rather condescending look about him.

At first, the trail is rather easy to follow as the fleeing man made no attempt to conceal his tracks. Sometime after, other footprints from within the forbidding woods joined with that of Schwätzer. A character with the **Follow Trail** skill must pass a test to determine that the new tracks look to be Dwarfen (about twelve of them) with a large, even-toed hoofed creature accompanying them. At this stage, the PCs will likely consider the newer tracks as if they were either a coincidence (at best) or allies of the horse-thief (worse case).

The other footprints belong to a Tainted warband in the company of a Boar Centaur. They have spotted the unlucky criminal and decided to follow the prey as they thought that Schwätzer and the horse would make fine additions to their menu. The GM should not let the players know anything more about the nature of the warband until the adventure unfolds. At some point, the warband separates from the trail Schwätzer has taken in two stages. The first breaks off to the right, while the second breaks off further down the trail on the left.

Some time should pass before the forest erupts with activity. In the distance, the PCs see a number of birds suddenly taking to the sky and hear crashing through vegetation. These are followed soon after by a human cry and the screaming of a horse. Other, undistinguishable noises should follow, then end abruptly. The forest then becomes silent. In combination, these events should be all the PCs need to know that something is amiss.

The PCs have two choices before them: continue forward to learn of the fate of Herr Schwätzer or retreat certain the bothersome man has met a cruel end. No matter which choice the PCs chose, one of the Tainted has caught their scent.

Should the PCs try to complete their mission, they will eventually come to a meadow where the bloody skin of Herr Schwätzer has been stretched across two saplings to dry in the wind. A sign drawn in blood on the skin's "back" allows a PC with **Academic Knowledge (Daemonology)** to determine what patron the killers follow. Bloody remains of both man and horse are scattered throughout the clearing. It should be evident to the PCs that a good portion of the victims were eaten, though the amount depends upon how cautious the PCs were in their approach. Passing a **Follow Trail Test** will see that the killers have scattered.

In fact, the random departure of the Tainted was planned. Each will make their way to a point on the other side of the PCs where they will set an ambush. The Players will have to exercise great care with some ingenuity and luck to avoid becoming victims of the ambush.

PCs who decide to clear out without learning the fate of Herr Schwätzer may find themselves in a predicament should they not leave quickly. The Tainted "fellow" who caught their scent will lead some of the warband in an attempt to set up an ambush

ahead of the PCs' retreat. The rest of the warband will follow the Characters' track with the intent of trapping the PCs between the two forces.

No matter how the Players resolve the situation, they will find themselves in a lot of trouble with Baron von Borkum unless they bring back proof of either Herr Schwätzer's death or one of the bodies of the Tainted. Without such evidence, the Baron may just conclude that the PCs did not act in good faith and are attempting to swindle money from him. Wounds will be considered self-inflicted as a means to corroborate a false tale.

The Great Escape

This adventure hook will take a bit of development and set-up on the part of the GM to properly work. The attempt here is to create a type of Necromunda style adventure in Zharr Naggrund.

No matter how this is accomplished, the PCs have been captured by the Chaos Dwarfs and transported to the mines of the ziggurat. Given the resourcefulness and skills of the PCs, their trip from wherever they were captured has been spent in a drugged stupor. Chaos Dwarfs Slavers use such techniques on slaves considered to be potentially troublesome. This approach also serves to minimise any fatality to the Chaos Dwarfs themselves.

As mentioned above, sizeable portions of the mines of Zharr Naggrund are hardly as controlled as the Hobgoblin overseers make them out to be to their masters. Members of the various slave races have carved out their own fiefdoms in the dark recesses where the Hogoblins fear to tread. So long as the Chaos Dwarfs are oblivious to the situation, the Hobgoblins have allowed (with some elements of fear) the situation to continue – and fester.

As newcomers, the PCs will be considered threats to the established order. Each gang of slaves will do their best to isolate, humble, and break the will of the Characters. The only way for the PCs to survive long enough to escape is to supplant one of the gang leaders and take over their domain. This adventure hook calls for a style of play that includes backstabbing, lying, murder, and retribution. Basically, the type of adventure made for PCs who like to disrupt the proper order of things.

Even if they are the types to thrill to the challenge of destroying others to better their own lot, any success at becoming a leader in a gang of slaves should be considered an end to itself. Life for those at the top of the slave pecking order is hardly one of ease and comfort.

Life in the mines is one of famine and near famine. The Hobgoblins are likely to leave enough grub-infested bread (a major source of protein) and stale, sometimes putrid, water to stave off any serious rioting. Thus, if one has the strength to seize more than their fair share from their enemies and followers, they do not really benefit in any meaningful way. Of course, fresh meat is always available in the form of a weaker, and perhaps sickly, slave.

In any event, the GM should depict life in the bowels of the ziggurat as one of hardship, deprivation, disease, toxic poisoning, and constant danger of becoming a meal for those stronger than oneself. The PCs should be made to feel that the only option for their continued health and future is to escape their predicament.

One way to achieve such an end is to create such chaos (pun intended) that the Hobgoblin overseers are overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. Since direct rioting by one's gangs could lead to serious reprisals and a diminishing of much needed strength, cunning PCs should focus their efforts to compel other gangs to war against each other. Of course, leaders in the other slave races might be considering the same strategy, through other devious tactics.

If successful in their endeavour, the timing of the PCs' escape should be made in the small window of opportunity when the anarchy is at its height and well before the Chaos Dwarfs can intervene with their devastating weapons. Once free of the confines of Zharr Naggrund, the PCs will face the danger of crossing the toxic wasteland with (most likely) no provisions of fresh food and water. GMs should make the PCs' lives miserable while they traverse the dangerous lands.

To make matters worse, the Chaos Dwarfs will quickly dispatch

hunter bands to capture the PCs. In time, bands of Orcs and other greenskins might join in the chase. There are bounties for returned slaves, if not a need for fresh meat. Any attempt to reach safety – either in the Wheatlands to the north or the Worlds Edge Mountains to the west – is fraught with great danger.

Lessons for an Apprentice

"Come here, lad, and take a look at these etchings on the wall," Loremaster Gramak said as he pointed them out to his young charge.

"Master, do you think it wise that we have left our escort in this Ancestor-forsaken place?"

"Thrent, my apprentice, you needn't worry. Olan and Berek should be back momentarily from their patrol. We need some time to determine what information we should bring back to Karak Kadrin from this old outpost on Peak Pass. Now, what do you see?"

"It looks to be in the tongue of the thrice-cursed goblins. Something about the Masters of the Flaming Darkness. The rest is typical greenskin nonsense about so-and-so's mother... Wait, there seems to be a sketch of sorts."

"What do you make of it?"

"Looks to be a Dwarf, but something is wrong with the appearance. More like a shortened version of a minotaur, I should think."

"Take a closer look, Thrent. What else do you see?"

"Bull's head and a thick, unbraided beard. There's also something that looks like a tail..."

"So, it isn't a Tusker, but a Tainted."

"What, Master Gramak?"

"It's time, my apprentice, to learn about two of the darker aspects of our race. One is an ancient evil whose malevolence and ill deeds exceed their diminishing numbers, while the other is a newer, but fouler, presence whose number is ever increasing. We know far more of these twisted creatures than our allies in Sigmar's Empire, and we do not share our information capriciously. Both dark races are a blight on our honour and, as such, ours alone to destroy. It is our doom."



GASPAR'S GUIDE TO THE INNS OF MIDDENHEIM

By François Poulin, Illustrations by Christophe Boucher

The Drowned Rat Tavern

District: Southgate-Ostwald

Owner: Johann Stallart, a big-built, bearded ruffian and would-be chef. Johann actually believes in keeping his customers happy, but his personal expectations of life in general are so dreadfully low that he does not get very far in his efforts. It's very easy to hurt his feelings, and he invariably responds aggressively (only later sobbing himself to sleep).

Description: Thanks to the low ceiling, the interior of the tavern is dark, dingy and malodorous. Naturally, the usual clientele are thieves, footpads and, notably, poison dealers. The two most regular dealers are Hanna, an Estalian heart-breaker (with her beauty and as well as her poison), and Jekil Ide, a crazy guy who goes from table to table offering his stuff. (GMs can increase poison availability by one step). Transactions are normally made in the inn's cellar, which also connects to the sewers. When outsiders enter the tavern, all conversation ceases and eyes follow every movement of the visitors (or perhaps victims). Sometimes, Johann will offer the stranger the inn's speciality – a plate of roasted rats for 1 penny. Anyone foolish enough to eat this disgusting dish will suffer for it (**Challenging (-10%) Toughness Test** or suffer the galloping trots, WFRP2 p.136).

Gaspar's view of the Drowned Rat: "This tavern has an exquisite choice of contraband goods and a wholesome choice of poisons, not all of which are the spirits. You'll appreciate your visit here!"

Rumours and Gossip in and around:

"Eh ya know buddy, if ya find a drowned rat in your drink, ya lucky guy, Johann will offer ya the lunch of ya life, for free!"

Gawin, drunkard

"The Drowned Rat? You fool, it's one of the most dangerous places in the city of the White Wolf."

A Middenheimer

"You're in love with a women? And she doesn't reciprocate? Go see Hanna at The Drowned Rat; she's surely got some Bottled Love for you."

Diebold, regular customer and footpad

"The Drowned Rat's a rat trap! And that's if you're lucky!"

Rat Trap: Thieves' Tongue for strangers who finish the night down an alley stunned and stripped of everything.



Something Overheard:

"A drowned rat in your drink is a lucky charm!"

Anonymous

"Madcap! Henbell! Sagekill! Offering poisons for sale? I'd never do such a thing! Manbane! Graveroot! Spider Bite!"

Jekil Ide, Poison Dealer

The Last Drop Inn

District: Altmark Altkwartier.

Owner: Werner Wutend. In his thirties, Werner is easily recognised by the dramatic scar running down the left side of his face from forehead to throat. Uncomfortable with the way people look at it, Werner tries to present his right side whenever possible and

hurriedly changes the subject if it is mentioned.

Description: The interior of The Last Drop Inn is like any slum tavern. For a few coins, one of the staff can introduce you to Edam Gouda, one of the most prolific drug dealers in Middenheim. Transactions are made on the first floor and Gouda is very proud to present his drugs in detail with an impressive professionalism. Stardust, Moonflower and the highly addictive Ranald's Delight are easily available here.

Gaspar's view of the Last Drop Inn: "You came to the Last Drop Inn for a drink? Bad choice, unless you don't care about cheap beer, vinegary wine or headache-inducing spirits. However, for a brawl or something to take you somewhere else you're at the right place. Why am I here? Well, sometimes you need to remind yourself how bad it can be. Helps you appreciate the good stuff."

Rumours and Gossip in and around:

"Want something to take away the pain or give you a good time? Go see Edam Gouda. He helps so many people. He's such a good man. You'll be satisfied, I'm sure of it. Don't forget to tell him I sent you, good old Emil."

Emil Pain, Drug Addict

"The Last Drop Inn? You're crazy, unless you don't care about your life. It's a meeting place for the Big Cheese. They say he is the most powerful crime lord in the history of Middenheim. He likes secrets as much as he likes hard coin. Not a good man to cross. They say he can put you under his thumb for life."

Loric Zonveilt, Middenheimer



Hosgood's Stove

District: Ulricsmund, north of the Physician's Guild.

Owner: Harbridge Oddfellow. Passionate but practical in his cooking, Harbridge sticks to what he knows works, but keeps an open mind to new possibilities. He is refreshingly down to earth, with little time for food and wine snobs. He is also a keen business man: "Don't forget: the tip is *not* included."

Description: The staff of this excellent restaurant are exclusively Halfling and the recipes typically come from the Moot. For a reasonable price, the clientele (mostly Humans and Halflings) are very satisfied by the exquisite food. There are the occasional rumours about an unspecified food-related incident several years ago, but Harbridge laughs off any mention of such, saying that jealous rivals often spread such nonsense.

Gaspar's view of Hosgood's: "Want to eat something very tasty and still be able to rattle your purse? Well then, listen to this! With every meal, you have the choice of beans, beets, broccoli, Ostland sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, peas, peppers, radish, spinach, tomato, turnip, watermelon, squash, and finally the pumpkin. You want your meal cooked in stews, casserole, soups or pies? No problem. You want a thrush stuffing, a partridge in crust, an earthen pan woodcock or roasted pigeon or quail? No problem. You prefer fish? Carp, eel, perch and pike will be offered fried, in raised pie, hearth cake or with a wine sauce. Also, every dish in Hosgood's Stove can be cooked with garlic, thyme, chives, coriander, oregano, parsley, sage and some sweet basil."

Rumours and Gossip in and around:

"Hosgood's Stove is the best restaurant outside of the Moot. We all go there when we can, so a lot of interesting Halfling news and gossip passes through. If country cousins come visiting we take them there. It's a great place to meet friends and kinfolk. Seriously, if you want to understand Halflings eat there. If you want to befriend us, take us to dinner there. If you need to know our secrets, just listen there!"

Zmo Pupkin, Halfling wine merchant

"Trust me: the last place you want to do business or take a prospective lover is Hosgood's. Oh, the food's marvellous, the wine is excellent, and the service top notch, but you can guarantee that if it's interesting enough at least half of anything you say will be known to the city's Halflings by the following morning. Nosey little buggers. Oh, most of them keep it within their community, but there's always a few who pass on information for a few coin, and I've heard that at least one waiter is a spy of some sort."

Hans Schmit, Middenheim merchant

Something overheard:

"A good appetite needs no sauce! Simple and hearty is my watchword. However, I never shy away from new culinary experiences, and if I hear of a new ingredient, then I'll always give it the benefit of the doubt. This Arabyan Ashan-Ful Root,

for example – a delicacy in the Border Princes, they say, but the traders haven't brought any this far north yet. I wouldn't mind getting hold of some."

Harbridge Oddfellow, Owner

"The Humans have scholars, we have loremasters. The Humans have soldiers, we have troll slayers. The Humans have cooks, Halflings have Hosgood's Stove. Yes, I am looking to start a fight, what's it to you?"

Karkazy Galgorouky, Dwarf mercenary



The Gold Barge (aka The Barge)

District: Southgate-Ostwald

Owner: Red Marcus, an ex-pit fighter who proudly adorns the wall behind the bar with his collection of weapons. He boasts that a consortium of nobles are still out for his blood after he killed their prize champion a few years back. However, some may notice that Red's dislike of the refined and the noble seems based in fear, although he hides it very well.

Description: The interior of the tavern is dirty, and smells like a mix of vomit and perfume. The floor is rotten and a mysterious black liquid oozes from the walls; some say the Barge is ready to sink, but into what no-one is sure. Red frequently joins the regular brawls, especially when haughty or daring nobles come slumming it. Red has a lot of information about folk in the city that he will share for a couple of Karls. There are at least five prostitutes who work the Barge. The two most popular are Lucky Liz and Ingrid, and it is from them that Red gets a lot of his information. Local footpads are always interested in anyone with a full purse, but Red discourages those he notices, preferring his customers' silver to go into his coffers. Red tolerates two thieving brothers, Heinz and Hagen Dazze, as he is amused by their lack of cunning and dislike of the nobility.

For many pick-pockets the Gold Barge is a rite of passage.

Gaspar's view of the Gold Barge: "Given to wine and women? You'll find both here. Eh? Wait a minute, for the wine it will be better at the Last Drop Inn, but if you want to take a wife for the night... Please enter!"

Rumours and Gossip in and around:

"The Barge? Are you tired of living? Unless you spend a few hours in the sewer, you'll be nobles as far as that lot care."

A Middenheimer

"The girls who work the Barge are smart. Be careful what you say to them, but listen to everything they tell you."

Felicks Brindle, Die Graukappen agent

Something Overheard:

"Do you need some company? I'll chat for hours and tell you things you've never heard before. No, really."

Ingrid, harlot

"White teeth? Check. Beautiful hat? Check. Jewellery? Backpack? Writing kit? A nob if ever I saw one!"

Heinz Dazze, footpad



BARAK CHAR

The Seafire Hold by Robert Derie

Swamp-rat fur and bog iron, that's all you Manlings know how to get out of a swamp. Here now lad, haven't you heard of Barak Char? No? Well buy me an ale and I'll tell you, or my name isn't Resnick Split-Tongue. I was born and raised there, you know. Not the old salty beard I am today.

Standing on the shores of the Black Peninsula, Barak Char, or Seafire Hold as some call it, is one of the many small Dwarf settlements and holds that dot the Old World. These fortified mines, breweries, farms, and Dwarf-towns provide many of the essentials of Dwarf existence, and support the many great holds with essential food and materials.

To the Dwarfs, Barak Char is *gnol*. There is no word in your

Mannish tongue for it, but think of it as meaning reliable and respectable, the reliability and respectability that comes from age and long, hard service. For its walls have stood for four thousand years, and it has never been taken by Greenskin, Skaven, Elf or Man.

This is not the saga of Barak Char—that is a tale too long in telling for tonight—but I will tell you of its founding and its purpose, and how it stands today.

THE ROLE OF SALT

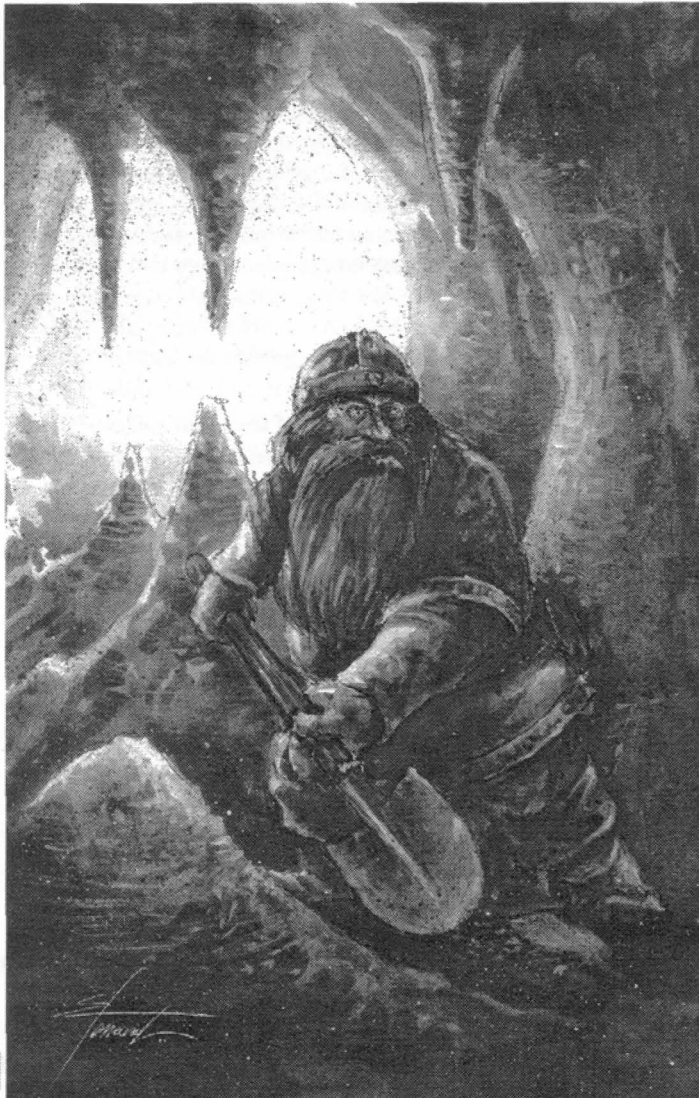
Stone and steel are the first friends of the Dwarfs, but you cannot eat stone for bread, nor smelt steel with wood alone. Without salt, the great dwarfholds could not have survived through the dire winters and long sieges of the centuries, nor could the Dwarf steamships engage in long voyages over the oceans. Besides a general improvement in taste when added to many dishes, salt acts as a preservative for meats, fruits, and vegetables and according to Dwarf physicians constitutes an essential part of the Dwarf diet.

Throughout its history, salt has been scarce. Like other minerals it may be mined, but few Dwarfs settle in the swamps and lowlands where salt deposits are most likely to be found. More commonly, salt is derived from the sea. When brine is allowed to evaporate in a shallow pool, a rime of salt remains that may be gathered; though often the salt must be further refined by smoking it. Indeed, our distant cousins at Kraka Drak are said to gather much of their salt in just this fashion. Dwarf alchemists have also studied the distillation of salt for thousands of years, but none have found an economical way to produce it in any quantity.

So it is that for many centuries a few dwarfholds have dominated the production of salt: Barak Varr, Karak Varn (may it one day rise again), Kraka Drak Zhufbar, and the black salt mine at Karak Azul. Then came contact with the sea-roving Elves of Ulthuan; even their coarsest sea-salt is fit for a High King's table, and the trade of silver for elf-salt played an important role in the Golden Age of the Dwarfs. Indeed, the Dwarfs of Karaz Ankor knew much hardship when the War of Vengeance came and the salt trade fell off. Without salt, Dwarf armies could not march and Dwarf ships could not sail. Those were lean years where salt was rationed and at times traded for its weight in gold dust, and that is where begins the tale of Barak Char.

THE FOUNDING

It was in the year 1496 after the founding of Karaz-a-Karak, in the waning years of the War of Vengeance when Vagg Oathkeeper set out from Barak Varr with a fleet of three triremes to raze an Elven trading-fort on the side of the Black Peninsula facing the



Lagoon of Tears. The presence of the fort threatened the timber rafts from Dwarf logging down the River Skiros, timber that was needed to build and maintain Barak Varr's ships and war machines. The siege was a resounding success and, in addition to the Elves captured for ransom, Oathkeeper seized nearly three tons of elf-salt from the fort stores, supplies badly needed in Barak Varr.

In reward for his outstanding success, the King of Barak Varr commissioned Oathkeeper to set up a fortified outpost on or near the Elven settlement, and to reestablish the salt works. Oathkeeper himself was named thane, and placed in charge of many young clans of woodsmen and engineers. On the most solid ground he could find, Oathkeeper's engineers erected a trade-tower, Mingol Sal, with stones culled from the Elven settlement. So it stands to this day, and Thane Oathkeeper's heirs hold court in it.

The Lagoon of Tears is so named for its salty nature, being notably more briny than the waters of the Black Gulf, despite the freshwater rivers flowing into it. The ancient Elves settled on the salt marshes of the Black Peninsula, probably mooning over the great trees and colorful wings of the insects that infest the swamp if I know Elves at all. The Elven salt works were simple: large trays of baked clay were filled with the brackish waters and left to evaporate, or in days of little sun encouraged by slow-burning fires. The Dwarf engineers of Mingol Sal decided to take this industry to the next level, and so began the construction of a proper distillery, where the salty waters of the lagoon would be pumped into metal chambers by steam and boiled to separate the components. Metal and stone were scarce, and for many years Oathkeeper relied on the interim production of the old Elven salt works and the graces of Barak Varr.

Oathkeeper's greatest obstacle, however, was not the lack of stone, but of coal. The great distillery was a fine product of Dwarf engineering, but without fuel it was worthless.

THE ROLE OF COAL

It is said that it was Grungni who first smelted iron using coal—*kol*, the black stone that burns. Dwarfs have found many types of coal since those ancient days, and any smith or engineer will be happy to talk for days about the quality and colour of coal, from the soft brown coal traded by the Marienburg Dwargsbeitz to the hard, shiny black coal from the mines of Karak Kadrin that is so valued by the weaponsmiths of Karaz-a-Karak and that it is traded to Manlings.

Not all coal needs to be mined, however. Smiths and engineers require the finer coals to forge strong steel or make black powder for the great Dwarf cannons and firearms, but for heating homes—or a salt distillery—charcoal will do. I have heard that in the Empire and elsewhere the Manlings have charcoal-burners, itinerants that travel the forests of the Old World plying their trade by cutting down any stand of trees they please and covering it with turf, forming a smoking mound that they must then hack apart for the coal, leaving nothing but a mess and devastation behind them. Dwarfs, of course, have finer methods.

When trees are felled, or arrive in log rafts from Dwarf woodcutters up the River Skiros, they are cleaned and sorted—some set in warehouses to age and dry, others taken to the

charcoal retorts, cast-iron chambers where the wood is burned to coal under the watchful eye of Dwarf charcoal-burners. This method has many advantages, not the least of which is the harvesting of tar, pitch, turpentine, and coal-dust ink for the black tattoos of slayers and the pages of scribes; all valuable products in their own right. Many a Dwarfhold has defended itself with cauldrons of boiling tar, and pitch is essential to the navy of Barak Varr for caulking ships and sealing amputations at sea. Little goes to waste in Barak Varr, and the stripped tree limbs and stumps are sent to the ashery to be turned into potash and pearlsh.

By the waning of 2135, Mingol Sal was a thriving Dwarf community of over a thousand Dwarfs, known equally for its charcoal and associated products as for its salt works. At the beginning of the year 2136, Thane Oathkeeper renamed the settlement Barak Char—the Seafire Hold. It has remained so ever since.

BARAK CHAR TODAY

Today, Thane Ogrim Vaggsnev can claim little more than six hundred Dwarfs under his rule. Smoke still churns from the charcoal-retorts, the ashery and the great salt distillery, but years of war and diminishing trade have taken their toll. Fewer trees come down the River Skiros, where Manling settlements have taken over the river trade, and the Dwarfs of Barak Char husband their local forests; Dwarf woodsmen plant saplings and seeds for every tree taken while Dwarf rangers watch the marsh for signs of Boglars and Troglagobs (What? Never heard of Boglars and Troglagobs? Greenskins, of course, and nasty ones at that. As at home in the salty waters of the swamp or the Lagoon of Tears as on dry land. The Troglagobs are about the size of goblins, the Boglars somewhat shorter, like Gnoblars.)

The Greenskin menace has grown, as the army of Barak Char is too few to keep their numbers in check, though it is rare that they find the will to attack Barak Char. To attack Barak Char by land means crossing a killing-ground open to deadly crossbow and rifle fire, only to scale stout walls protected by pots of boiling tar. Pirates—Manling or greenskin—have learned to their peril the deadly accuracy of Barak Char's cannon, the strength of the seaward walls, and the power of the hold's sole steamship. A few of the elders still recall when one of the Border Princes and a band of Ogre mercenaries attempted a siege of the small dwarfhold. The Dwarfs were still eating pickled vegetables and salted fish when the Ogres had eaten all the horses, draft animals, and all three Halfling cooks. Still, there are worse things in the swamps than goblins; many a slayer comes to hunt Swamp Troll in the depths of the marsh.

Barak Char remains an important trading center for the Dwarfs, however, especially as a supplier of salt and coal to Barak Varr. Alchemists and wizards from across the Old World call on Barak Char for certain chemicals, and the recent discovery of black water wells beneath the Black Peninsula may bode better things for the future of this community.

THE CHECKERED HOLD

Barak Char is sometimes called the Checkered Hold because it is divided between the charcoal-burner clans and the salt-miner

clans. The former are predominantly charcoal-burners, woodsmen, and rangers, with some tradesmen. The salt-miners comprise the rich merchants and engineers who operate the great salt stills, the timber warehouses, and the trade with other ports.

While they must work together, the disparity in wealth between the two groups is the cause for many grudges, which are dealt with by the Thane. Of course, since the Thane himself comes from one of the Salt Clans, the Coal Clans often perceive him to be preferential in his rulings! By consequence, the Coal Clans often snub the Thane's rulings on small matters, such as the long-standing prohibition on distillation of hard liquor in small family stills out in the woods.

The Runesmiths of Barak Char traditionally stand with the Coal Clans. An old line, distaff cousins of the Runesmiths of Barak Varr, their skills are considered poor compared to the Rune Lords of the great dwarfholds. Still, the local Runesmith, Daki Firehands, is a master at creating very fine runework on leather and wood using a heated stylus, and his work is highly

prized by the Dwarfs of Barak Char.

The disparity between the clans is most pronounced by the fact that Barak Char is built predominantly on the surface—there is too little solid rock for extensive subterranean construction—and the Salt Clans occupy the majority of the underground dwellings, while the Coal Clans must make do with the surface.

Many of the younger kin from Barak Char move on; the Coal Clanners often become marines in Barak Varr while the Salt Clanners apprentice as engineers in one of the great holds. Others spend their lives on the many attempts to reclaim the lost holds, especially Karak Azgal and Karak Eight Peaks.

Aye, Barak Char has proved its worth to the Dwarfs, and like all things that stand the tests of age and fire, it has our respect. By Grimnir! It has survived when countless mines have played out or been overrun by Grob and Skaven. Barkeep! Enough of this weak mannish brew; bring me a mug of Bugman's. I would drink to Barak Char, may it last another thousand years!

USING BARAK CHAR

Game Masters may use Barak Char in their campaigns as a starting-off point (Player Characters meet by chance on the wharf or at the local tavern while accompanying ships or caravans from elsewhere) or as a scheduled interruption to break up a longer journey, the setting for a sidetrack, or as the home hold of a Dwarf Player Character, especially a charcoal-burner. While this article locates Barak Char on the Lagoon of Tears side of the Black Peninsula, Game Masters can situate it wherever it is convenient, from the Sea of Claws to the New World.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The bare, overgrown remnants of the old Elf settlement persist, their salt works long abandoned and its graceful white buildings torn down for their stone. Still, some who have picked over the ruins find the delicate silver-and-jet jewelry the Elves once made. Daki Firehands believes his ancestor, Thurgrom the Hermit-Smith, may have left a powerful rune-weapon or testament of rune-lore in the settlement before the War of Vengeance.

In addition to producing ash, the ashery hosts the local Assayer's office, where merchants go to test the quality of their coins, ingots, trade bars and steel hallmarking tools. The Dwarf assayers are skilled at their task, and too honest to be bribed. Local counterfeiters might turn to kidnap or blackmail to see their false monies are taken at face value.

Nearly a century ago, a doomed pirate ship looted a trove of treasure from a Nehekharan skeleton-ship, including a chest of black sea-pearls. The ship sank in a storm a league from Barak Char, but a Tilean rogue was recently seen buying Dwarf beer with queer, triangular gold coins like those from the dusty tombs of Nehekharan, and drunkenly claiming he had dived down to the wreck.

Some of the Coal Clanners have begun adding weirdroot to the mash in their stills, and the resultant liquor has become a popular and profitable contraband item. The Thane wishes to secretly hire neutral parties to disrupt the weirdroot stills so it does not appear that he is favoring the Salt Clans by cracking down on the Coal Clan bootleggers.

A senior Dwarf assayer is found dead in his office. He has been robbed and the only clue is a bloodied Arboho knife, a tool commonly used by Old World sailors. However, the Dwarf's partners suspect that this is more than a mere robbery. The items stolen included all his assaying tools. Was this the work of a professional rival, inter-clan feuding or simply a personal matter? The Player Characters may be hired by his partner or family as they will be seen as having little involvement in local politics or perhaps they are being used to upset the authorities into launching a proper investigation themselves?

A grizzled and drunk Human miner approaches the Player Characters in a tavern on the night before he leaves town. He has been trying to sell some gold in Barak Char. However, he has discovered that the assayer undervalued his haul. He approached others in the town and they also undervalued his ingots. Asking around he found out that there is a policy of paying non-Dwarfs less. He plans to confront the Thane and accuse him of theft. As the man leaves the tavern he is killed by a Dwarf. The dying miner tells the Player Characters where his hoard is hidden in his room and it is theirs. However, the room has been searched and the gold is gone. PCs also notice they are being watched. Will the Player Characters get out of town before the authorities come after them or will they seek to avenge the man's death (and get his gold)? Perhaps those the miner approached will contact the PCs with a view to continuing the miner's legal case against the Thane? Is the Thane even the guilty party?



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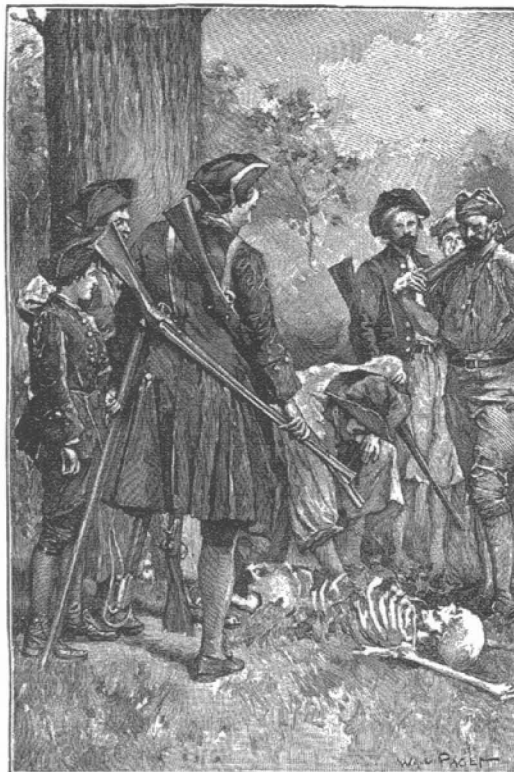
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