

LIBERATION



A Tribe  Cycle



Dream Pod 9

A Tribe & Cycle

LIBERATION

Yes I know her. She is my sister. Upon the Wall she became blood-of-my-blood. That is what you can never understand, who were not there, every man and woman who stood upon the Wall is blood-of-my-blood. On the Wall we died and were reborn a new Tribe.

— Alva the Knife, coeleader of Yarnin Letharian.

The Liberation that began with the fall of the HPI War resumed, becoming a war against Vinn's greatest enemy, the Z'hri of Canal. For the first time since the World Before, humanity stands ready to take back their lives, spirits and world. Now is the time of Prophecy. Now is the time of the Eighth Tribe.

Liberation is the concluding volume of the Conquest Cycle, bringing the epic story of the Fallen and Tribals' conflict with the nations of Z'hri to an epic close. Five Quarts detail the War of Liberation against Canal, and the new allies and enemies who shape the future.

Liberation contains:

- Five Full Quarts, and dozens of hooks for further adventure.
- Many new NPCs, beasts and Totems.
- New information on Bearhead's Confederation, the Sanlon Koonore and a glimpse of the mysterious Mistrance of Hatten.

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Part Five

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From Gary: To Nicole for her patience and
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From Lisa: To my family, who spent the last
several months showing me what's really
important. And to my friends, who were
patient with me while I was learning it.

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Prelude to War

I call them heroes
 who held the pillars of heaven
 while goddess and demons fled.
 — Deus, at the founding of the Nation of the Fall



We Are One

- Kymber, Lightbringer, speaks:

My brothers and sisters, members of my Clan and Tribe, we have come through the winter together. Not just the winter of snow and frost, but the winter of isolation and fear. I remember the days of starvation, when we would walk past the dying and the sick without letting ourselves see them. Those days are over — now we stand together! Alone we might all have withered, together we all became strong. You, all of you, are blood of my blood and bone of my bone. We are a family now. We are a Tribe. We, the Eighth Tribe, were foretold and now we are strong, and feared, and ready to face and build a better future for all.

Understanding

- Kyr, Herite, speaks:

You have heard the words of the Lightbringers, and for once they have it right. We are a people now; we are a Tribe. No one can doubt it, as we have power, we have freedom, we have fields and homes, we even have children who are starting to grow. Now, however, is not the time to forget what we have been through. We must always remember who we are and what we have sacrificed for our freedom.

Everyone is now looking at the Tribes and speaking of peace and unity, all of us living under one law. Do not be fooled! One law for the wolf and the sheep is tyranny! Those strong enough to stand alone should not be tied to the same restrictions as those who need a shepherd. I do not hate the Tribals, and I do not want war with them. Maybe once I spoke of retribution, but not anymore. I do want my children to grow up free, though. I want them to be able to question, to be able to walk free under the eyes of the sky and the One Goddess alone. I want that freedom for my children, and for theirs, and for the brave children of the Squats who stood with us against the beasts. Now is not the time for peace, now is time to make the last trade of blood for freedom!

The Dying of the Light

- From the writings of Mek:

I am an old man. I realized this today while Kyr was giving his speech at the Cage. The boy has fire, and he really believes what he says. Once upon a time I was like that, but when you fight for long enough you start to give up on ideals in order to win battles. I've been doing that for years, and I am proud of what I have gained. Joan Herself thanked me and praised me for my part in taking down the H'l Kar. The Z'bri in Vimary are broken, and I had a hand in that. I thought that was what I wanted. I thought that was all I wanted. I was wrong. Seeing Kyr speak today, hearing the thunder of the drums in his words, I realized what I want. I want to believe again, as he does. I want to have one last fight in my life, and with the fading embers of my old and dying heart start a fire that will blaze forth and burn clear the future. That is what I want. This is all I want. Goddess, grant me this wish and then let me return to you.

Liberation

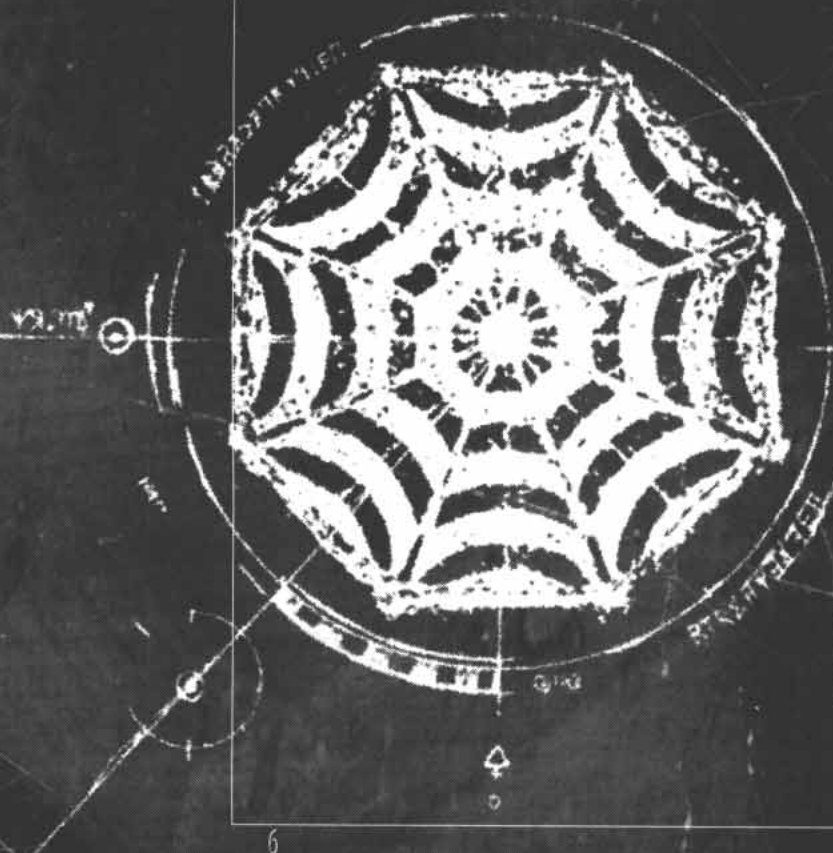
Liberation is the fourth and final Cycle book in the Conquest Cycle for Tribe 8. While the format of the book is similar to previous Cycle books, the content is a little different. Much of Liberation is set up in a fairly freeform structure. Rather than having adventures that go from point A to point B, the Quests are set up to give a loose structure with plenty of support for Weavers to make the scenarios and quests their own. While there are Acts in which there is a solid, predefined adventure structure for Weavers, most of Liberation is based around a loose modular structure that allows the Player Characters' actions to determine the course of events, and lets Weavers play out as much or as little of the war as they feel is necessary.

Liberation continues the tradition of Broken Pact and Revanche in its combat intensiveness. However, despite the importance of the war and its bloody finale, much of the Cycle also revolves around making (and breaking) alliances, and focuses in on themes of spirituality and character motivation. No one should be left out of Liberation, combat monster or Synthesis user, as there are plenty of different challenges to be faced.

Chapter One: Sins of the Mothers

In the end we all pay for every action, good and bad
— we pay.

- Baba Yaga, the Ashen Tale.



INTRODUCTION TO LIBERATION

Liberation is the fourth and final Cycle book for the second **Tribe 8** Story Cycle, entitled **Conquest**. It follows the events in the Cycle books **Warrior Unbound**, **Broken Pact**, **Vimary Burns** and **Revanche**. It is not necessary to have played the previous Cycle, **Children of Prophecy**, or the earlier books in **Conquest** in order to enjoy **Liberation**. Several years and many major events have changed the setting described in the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, however, and so a short summary is given below in order to help Weavers catch up on the timeline.

If you intend to play **Liberation**, or think that your Weaver will use information for the book in her Cycle, please stop reading now.

Liberation details the war between the newly freed Vimary and Capal, the heart of the Z'bri in the north. This book is broken up into five Quests, with numerous interludes, adventure seeds and resources, with additional support information in the *Weavers' Resources* section (p. 86).

Liberation covers the rise of the Fallen as they lead humanity's war against the Z'bri of Capal. With the Nation rebuilding, the Fallen end up leading the armies against Capal. Forming a tenuous alliance with Boarhead's Confederation, and working with (and sometimes against) the Keepers of Vimary and Sanjon, the Fallen set out on the largest military undertaking in Tribal history — the storming and liberation of the fortress city of Capal. In **Revanche** the Characters had a chance to end Z'bri power in Vimary, though at great cost and in often ugly ways. In **Liberation** the PCs will get the chance to end Z'bri power in the whole of the north, once and for all. Where the events **Revanche** were often the wrong things for the right reason, **Liberation** shows the growth of the Fallen as they fight nobly for a noble cause. This book uses a modular and flexible format that allows Weavers to use as much or as little of all these themes as they wish.

After struggling through the hard and often hungry winter following **Revanche**, the Tribals and Fallen start looking towards Capal, knowing that a war with the distant city is inevitable. Most, however, feel that it is a war that won't take place for many years yet, as Vimary needs to be rebuilt before the Nation can pursue a war with a city two hundred clicks away. Capal, however, is not content to wait, and tries to eliminate the Nation before it can regain its numbers and become a threat. Offering the Machine Monks a chance to reverse the Rust Plague, the Z'bri trick the Keepers into attempting to poison the Great River with a plague from the World Before. The PCs are drawn into the plot when a friend of theirs is murdered by the Machine Monks. From there the PCs discover, and hopefully thwart, the plot. When they bring news of it back to Vimary, the march to war begins. Before war can be made with Capal, however, peace must be made with Boarhead and Capal's allies must be drawn away from the city and its rulers. With that done, the combined armies of the Fallen, the Nation, and Boarhead's confederation descend upon Capal in a wave, crushing Z'bri power in the Second City for all time.

LIBERATION

In many ways **Liberation** is an extension of the war that began in **Revanche**. The Fallen continue to "cut through the land like fire, emerging strong and feared." The Fallen also, however, take a very important step forward, becoming more than they were in **Revanche**. In the earlier war the Fallen fought for their lives, and for vengeance against the wrongs the beasts had done to them and their families. In **Liberation** the Fallen find a nobler goal, fighting for not only their own freedom, but for the freedom of all humanity. By learning to accept Squats as equals, and with the aid of the last Marians, the Serfs as well, the Fallen come one step closer to healing the rifts that have kept humanity splintered apart since the opening.

Just as importantly, by rising up and leading the Nation, and Boarhead's confederation, to war the Fallen will finally establish themselves not just as worthy warriors, but as leaders and visionaries. In the final battle against Capal a Fatima follows the orders of a Fallen leader; Serfs, Squats, Tribals and Fallen fight side by side; the camps of Capal are destroyed not by Fatimas — but by humanity. Once Capal is free it will become the center and strength of the Eighth Tribe, no longer Fallen, but acknowledged by all as the Children of Prophecy and leaders of the Nation of the Fall. As a result of this important and prophetic time, Weavers are encouraged to make as much use of symbolism and Dream as they and their Players are comfortable with.



CONTENTS

The rest of this chapter involves the setup information for **Liberation**. *What Has Come Before* gives a brief synopsis of the events that have taken place in the **Tribe 8** world between the **Tribe 8 Rulebook** and the beginning of **Liberation**. Following is the section *Themes and Atmospheres*, which discusses the mood and nature of the Quests of **Liberation**. A timeline of events and the scope of the book is then given in *Timeline*. *Current Events* gives a brief overview of the political situation on Vimary at the start of the Quests.

The Quests proper start with *Sins of the Mothers*. In this Quest, the Z'bri of Capal, having taken in the vengeful and frightened surviving Z'bri from the H'l Kar, decide that it is time to end the threat of the Nation and the Fatimas once and for all. To do this, they plan to use the sins of the Fatimas against them in a dark mirroring play. Melanis monks arrange for a group of mad Keepers to find a viral warfare agent from the World Before. The Melanis convince the Keepers that the virus is, in fact, the cure for the Rust Plague and the only way to save their homes from a slow, disintegrating death. The Keepers then plan to take the agent upriver and release it, bringing a plague of biblical proportions to Vimary. With the rest of Vimary distracted by politics, rebuilding and preparing for war, the Player Characters are brought into the situation when a friend discovers too much and is killed. The PCs enter into a desperate race against time, trying to find out who the Keepers are, what they are doing, and how they can be stopped before the plague is released. Along the way the PCs get a chance to learn the truth about the Rust Plague, and must decide how to handle this incredibly dangerous information. If the PCs are successful and bring news of the attack and its true instigators back to the Council, the Nation will realize they cannot stand still any longer, and preparations for war with Capal commence.

Black Boar is the second Quest. While dealing with the logistical nightmare of getting an army to Capal, the leaders of the Nation come to realize that they cannot hope to win (or even fight) this war unless they can make an alliance with Boarhead's confederation. With politics between Fallen and Tribals growing hot, the PCs end up being thrust into the center of the negotiations. The heroes must then travel to Boarhead's stronghold to negotiate for peace and aid. Before they can convince Boarhead to join them, however, they have to pass a series of tests and trials to prove their worth. If the PCs complete them all, then they are made honorary Tusks, and are given a place of honor at Boarhead's council fire. They then face the momentous and difficult job of working out a mutually satisfying diplomatic pact with one of the most canny, powerful and ruthless warlords known to the Nation.

With the move towards the siege of Capal underway, Boarhead's outrunners discover that Capal is receiving Serfs, weapons and supplies from Hattan. This leads to the third Quest, *The Mistresses*. In this Quest, the Characters must work with Boarhead to find a way to disrupt the links between Hattan and Capal, without drawing Hattan into the war. After meeting with the Sanjon Keepers the PCs must decide between politics, piracy, trickery, or a combination of all three in order to break

the alliance between Hattan and Capal. In addition to completing a vital task for the war, the PCs will also be the first Fallen to interact with Hattan, and to get a glimpse of the mysterious Mistresses.

The Fourth Quest, *Legacies*, brings the action back to the army and the war. This quest starts with the first major field battle with Capal, some distance from the city. As well as giving the Characters a taste of what lies ahead, it also introduces one of the darker sides of the Liberation. After the battle, maddened warriors of the Fallen rape, murder and torture the Serfs they are supposedly liberating. For a horrifying day the Fallen become as bad as the Z'bri, and the resulting carnage and spiritual pollution are unbelievable. In the darkest hour, when the Fallen are starting to turn on each other and it looks like the madness of the dark hours of *Revanche* will return, the Player Characters discover that the Marians still are among the Tribes. The PCs must then delicately and quickly convince the Marians to come out of hiding and resume their place as the purifiers of humankind. Nothing is ever simple, however, and a Marian who has surrendered to the taint herself tries to kill the characters to stop what she sees as the destruction of her Tribe. If successful, the Characters will be able to not only bring the Marians into the open, but will also bring them into a stable relationship with Agnes — which will help the Child learn more of Her Mother.

The final Quest of the book is *The Forlorn Hope*. The Fallen army lays siege to Capal, and with winter coming on tries a desperate gambit to take the well-fortified city. Joan and several Children of Lilith use Force to blow a narrow hole through the wall of the central Z'bri fortress. A Forlorn Hope is called for, a small suicide group to pour through the narrow hole, against the full strength of the Z'bri inside, in an attempt to drive in and open the gates. On the Forlorn Hope rests the sole chance of victory against the Z'bri before winter — and starvation — sets in. Those who are in the Hope are all expected to die, but those who live will be heroes forever. The Z'bri unleash a great monstrosity and the PCs must take center stage as the leaders of the Hope are slain around them. Capal will stand or fall based upon the actions of the PCs, and in that moment they and they alone will determine the future of their world.

Chapter Six, *Aftermath*, then describes the state of Vimary, Capal, and the rest of the world of **Tribe 8** in the wake of the Liberation. It is followed by Chapter Seven, *Weaver's Resources*, which contains NPCs, weapons, Z'bri forces and information about Boarhead, Sanjon, Hattan and Capal to help Weavers run **Liberation**.

FORMAT

All of the Quests in **Liberation** share a similar format, to allow Weavers to keep track of information more easily. Each Quest is headed by a bit of narrative that establishes the tone for the Quest. Following the narrative is a Quest Prelude that details the state of the world at the beginning of the Quest, and sets the necessary players on the stage.

Each Quest is then divided up into three to six sections called Acts. Each Act is a specific scenario beginning with a *Weaver's Synopsis*, which gives a quick summary of the events in the Act. Following the *Weaver's Synopsis* are the Scenes of the Act. Some of the Scenes are quite specific, allowing Weavers to quickly run through the adventure. Most, however, are fairly open and modular in nature to better allow PCs to control the flow of the story through their choices and actions.

Tips and Resources finishes out each Act. This section gives thumbnail statistics for combatants in combat oriented scenes, as well as additional rules, tips and options for Weavers running the scene. Many suggestions for dealing with changes to the story are given, along with ideas for further scenarios and encounters.

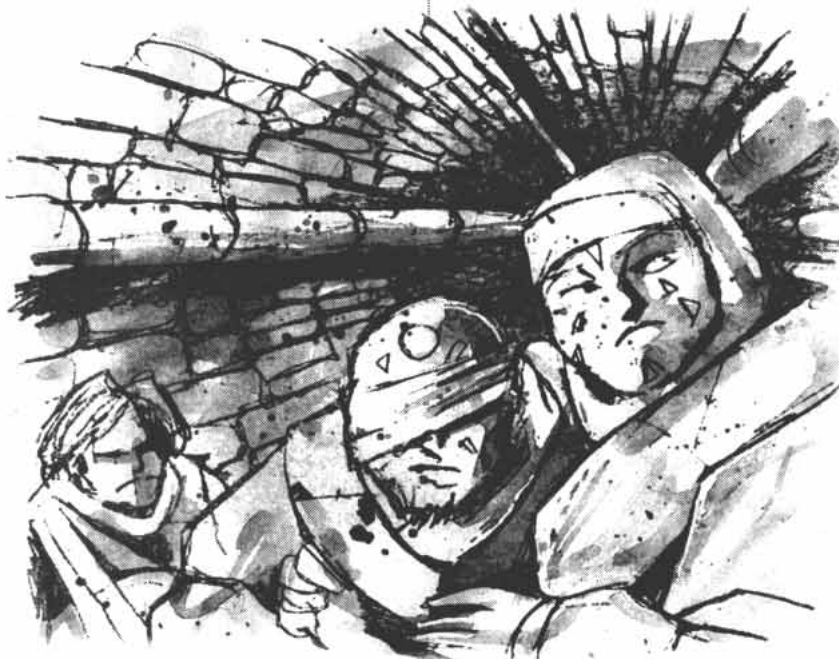
WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

The following is a very brief summary of the events that have changed the world of **Tribe 8** since the setting described in the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**. Note that these events are very condensed and without a great deal of the detail that brought the stories to life. What is given here is enough for groups to jump directly into **Liberation**, but those interested in more detail and history should check the appropriate books.

The metaplot began with **Enemy of My Enemy**, in which a member of the supposedly extinct Tribe of Joshua appeared in Vimary. Following his trail led Fallen heroes to find a new Fatima, Lilith, in **Children of Lilith**. Though originally created by Dahlia as a trick to teach the Fallen a lesson about independence, Lilith quickly started making changes that Her creator had not foreseen. She raised the isle of Haven next to Hom, giving the Fallen more room and new agricultural lands. She also led many Fallen against the Z'bri, and gave them a feeling of hope and belonging. In the end She even overcame Dahlia's illusions, and seemingly became a true Fatima. In a confrontation with Tera Sheba, Lilith was killed and a guilt-racked Joan took Lilith's body into the Watchtower to ease Her own pain. In so doing, Joan openly defied Tera Sheba, and heralded the split between the Pillars.

Next, the Fallen were subjected to an inquisition and attack by the Tribals in **Trial By Fire**. This grand Cycle began when the Z'bri kidnapped Agnes, and managed to place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Fallen. In reality the Fates had set Agnes up, hoping to force Her growth by putting the Child through a trial and test of strength. The Nation was fooled into believing that the Fallen had betrayed Agnes, and Tribal armies attacked Hom and Haven, forcing the Fallen into hiding. Many important Fallen, including Ardati Maque, Veruka the Wraith and Kara the Hunter were lost, though their sacrifices helped to save the Fallen. The Fallen finally redeemed themselves and proved their innocence when they joined the attack on Abonom and freed Agnes. Agnes returned to the Nation, changed and pained in many ways. Slowly, She started to grow.

Warrior Unbound began the **Conquest** Cycle. It began when Joan opened Her Tribe to the Fallen, letting them return to the Nation if they passed tests of courage and strength She set for them. This led to a fission between Joan and Tera Sheba that resulted in Joan being put on Trial and sent deep into the River



1. Sins of the Mothers

of Dream. In the end Joan was saved by Fallen heroes, and stood free and proud — no longer shackled by chains of guilt or loyalty to Tera Sheba.

Joan's new-won pride, combined with the hatred that the Fallen and Joanites had for the Z'bri, led to Joan's destruction of the secret Pact of the Dome in **Broken Pact**. The Fatimas and the Z'bri had long ago sealed a mutual non-aggression pact by trading Joshua and Tibor's Heartstones. Manipulated by the Baron and wanting to regain Her brother's Heartstone, Joan broke the Pact when She and a small army made a lightning-raid on the Ziggurat. When Joan found out that Joshua's Heartstone was gone, She returned to Vimary in a fury, retrieving and smashing Tibor's Heartstone. This impulsive action forever shattered the peace between Z'bri and Fatimal followers, and completed Joan's split from Tera Sheba.

Mad with rage and yearning for the taste of war and human pain, the Z'bri then invaded Vimary in a massive wave of two opposing armies in **Vimary Burns**. The Tribes, weakened and split by internal feuding, were unable to stand before the invasion. Within a week most of Vimary had been overrun, and the Tribes were forced to flee to Hom and Haven, taking refuge with the Fallen. The Evans and Shebans took refuge in the Firmament, a gigantic living fortress that Eva had caused to grow up to encompass Sanctuary. For the next two months the Z'bri ravaged what was left of Vimary, turning Bazaar and the surrounding areas into ruins.

Joining together after a series of prophetic dreams and near disasters, including a staged attempt on Magdalen's life, the Fallen and the Tribals took the war back to the Z'bri in **Revanche**. After being goaded to war by Dahlia, the Nation and the Fallen managed to reach a tentative peace while they faced the Z'bri threat. Fallen diplomats brought many Evans, and some Shebans, out of the Firmament, though many remained behind. Shortly afterwards, Fallen spies, working with a Magdalite Withered Rose, gained information which they used to break apart the Houses of the H'I Kar, causing House Koleris to leave the H'I Kar undefended as they ran for Capal. With the Z'bri thus weakened, the combined Tribal-Fallen Army of the Crusade took the war to the Z'bri. After a bloody victory at the Seven Fingers the war descended into months of plague, burning and madness in which serfs, and even some Tribals and Fallen, were massacred without pity by the Crusading army. Only when the River of Dream started to choke with spiritual pollution did the leaders of the army wake up enough to end the war. The Ziggurat was toppled, and with its fall the power of the Z'bri in the H'I Kar ended forever.

Since the fall of the H'I Kar the Tribals and Fallen alike have been doing the hard work of rebuilding, feeding themselves through a hard winter, chasing off the remaining rogue Z'bri and trying to arrive at some form of living arrangement. It is after this harsh winter, in the first warmth of spring, that **Liberation** begins.

THEMES AND ATMOSPHERE

Liberation takes the Fallen out of the cradle and into a larger world. No longer will Hom be the center of the Eighth Tribe, nor will Vimary be all of the world that matters. With the liberation of Capal, the Fallen, and the Nation along with them, are about to be catapulted onto a larger stage. Where the Army of the Crusade in **Revanche** marched to the north of their island to war, the Army of Liberation will march nearly 200 clicks up the Great River to destroy a Z'bri stronghold larger and more formidable than the H'I Kar had been since the time of the camps. **Liberation** will also show the Fallen the price of things that have been lost, and the glory of blood and sacrifice. These are all large and sweeping movements, and so the following themes are presented to help Weavers maintain the right atmosphere for **Liberation**.

GROWTH

The Eighth Tribe is growing. Not long ago, they were a scattered group of outcasts who were exiled to a tiny and unimportant island. By the end of **Liberation** they are the leaders of a mighty alliance of Fallen, Tribals, Squats and Serfs that stretches from the ocean to just south of Vimary. This meteoric rise is shown throughout **Liberation**, as the Fallen are the ones who are able to step up to all the challenges presented to them, taking the lead when others tremble and fall. It is also shown in the Fallen's ability to build coalitions, to bring together not only their own ideals, but also those of such diverse groups as the Shebans and Boarhead's Tusks.

Weavers should use images of growth to show the PCs how far they've come. It has been at least six-eight years since the start of the metaplot, and Characters that were children at the beginning of the campaign will be coming into their teens and late teens. Friends and siblings may well have children now, and the baby that the Character once knew may now be four feet tall and looking to take on the world. The future generation is growing in the New Bloods, as well. These youth of the Tribes and the Fallen, led by the Children of Hom, are starting to grow into something more than the old Nation; they are building a united front that is stronger than the old fractiousness. Seeing their growth, and the Characters' growth in wisdom and strength, will help Players draw parallels between the growth of the Fallen and the direction of their own stories.

PURITY

The war in **Revanche** accomplished the right things, but in the wrong ways and often for the wrong reasons. Hate and anger drove the Army of the Crusade as much as any desire for freedom or justice. That hate became manifest in the plagues, filth and fire that dominated the war. **Liberation** offers the Fallen, and the PCs, another opportunity to do battle, and a chance to do it right. This time, the army has a chance to fight the good war for all the right reasons. Images of hope, of freedom and of justice should be more common than images of hate and fire. There is a determination, a certainty and sense of purpose in the

soldiers of the Liberation that wasn't there in the Crusade. This time they get to fight for the freedom of their sisters; they get to fight for the future rather than the past, and that knowledge shines in their eyes.

At the beginning of the War of Liberation, the ugliness that marred **Revanche** starts again. This time, however, the Characters have a chance to work with the Marians to halt the spreading rot in its tracks. Bringing the Marians back into the fold of the Nation is a very important step. For too long the Nation has been without Forgiveness and Purity, and now they have been given an opportunity to return. Weavers may wish to foreshadow this return by having images of the rediscovery of mercy, forgiveness and hope seeded throughout the Cycle. Old enemies forgiving each other, feuds ending and the nonjudgmental acceptance of others will all help set an appropriate mood.

GLORY

The central theme of **Liberation** could be summed up simply enough, as "It is right and pleasing to sacrifice for the future of humanity." In **Liberation** many characters, NPCs and possibly PCs alike, will give their blood, their sweat, their tears and even their lives for something greater than they are. The youth who

just missed fighting in the Crusades of **Revanche** take up the sword and march in the armies of **Liberation**. Their ardor, their hope, their growth shape the future. From the events of this book and the actions of the PCs, the future will be born.

For many long-standing NPCs, **Liberation** will be the end of the road. Faces that have been part of the community of the Fallen since the beginning will meet their end here. It is even possible that the PCs will die in the brutal final battles of the war. Weavers should not let this go unnoticed. The eyes of all, from The One Goddess to the lowly serfs of Capal, will be on the PCs during this story. They should shine out of the grime and pain of the Conquest Cycle, bringing hope and wonder back to the world.

TIMELINE

Liberation starts in the early spring of the year after **Revanche**.

The long winter has passed, and the Nation is starting to rebuild from the devastation of the last two years. The first three Quests take place between Spring and early Fall, and the Forlorn Hope begins in mid-fall, with the threat of winter hanging over the army's head. **Liberation** then ends with the Fallen occupying and cleansing Capal throughout winter.



1. Sins of the Mothers

QUEST ONE: THE SINS OF THE MOTHERS

"There are many who say the past is dead; forget it and move on. I say the past is not dead — it isn't even fully in the past. History is like a minefield, full of bombs just waiting for the unwary to find and trigger them. These Goddess-worshipping savages have yet to learn that."

- Jonathan Abrams, Keeper

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The events of *The Sins of the Mothers*, which begin to turn the eyes of the Eighth Tribe north to Capal, begin approximately four months after the end of the war detailed in *Revanche*. It is a time of jubilation and of mourning, a mix of victory celebrations and solemn funerals for the victims of the Crusade. An uneasy peace has remained intact, for the most part, between the Eighth Tribe and the Tribals, complicated as always by the shortage of food and the overcrowded conditions on Hom and Haven. The winter since the war has been a difficult one. Faced with starvation and disease and the seemingly never-ending cost of the war against the Z'bri, tempers are running high among the former allies. The remaining Z'bri survivors of the Crusade have fled Vimary almost entirely, going elsewhere to begin plotting their revenge while the Tribes rebuild their devastated homeland.

On Hom, Haven and in the slowly rebuilding sections of Bazaar, the Tribes and the Fallen have reached an uneasy state of equality. Mek is currently the nominal head of the Fallen, his role as the most successful general of the Army of Crusade in *Revanche*, putting him in universal high esteem. Hal, Deus and most of the Lightbringers are giving Mek their full support, seeing in him a chance to make the Tribals accept the Fallen as equals. So far they have been successful in getting Mek a position on the Tribal Council, now simply called the Council, with Hal as his aide-de-camp. Mek is now moving to have a representative from every Outlook on the Council, but so far the Tribals have blocked this from happening — though they have not been able to block Mek from bringing "advisors" to the Council meetings, turning them into something akin to the old Fallen Rants. Deus and Altara have been working with the surviving members of DELTA, the allied Keeper fighting force, to improve relations with the Keepers, but things on that front are touch and go.

Mek's position is strengthened by the uncertainty of the Tribal attitudes. The Fatimas are currently scattered and distant, pursuing other matters and leaving their people to rule themselves for the first time in years. Tera Sheba and Eva are still encased in the Firmament, and will not come out or receive any visitors. Joan is often gone, wandering the wilderness and hunting rogue Z'bri, and Agnes can usually be found at Her side. Baba Yaga and Magdalen are both secluded in their temples, chasing visions of the future to help them find their correct path in a changing world.

Meanwhile the New Bloods are using their youthful energy to build alliances across Vimary. While conservative Tribals, led by Nostra Guy'on and Storm Cry, are chafing at having to work the Fallen as equals, they are unable to gain political leverage to force the Fallen back into their "proper place." Instead they have started a program of petty slights, nastiness and general non-cooperation. This has split the Council, making its newly born alliance shaky and uncertain.

In the middle of this tension, the PCs find themselves caught up in a mystery once more. They befriend a young Agnite named Joie and her Keeper friend Jack. When Joie is mysteriously murdered, the PCs uncover a plot aimed at the utter destruction of Vimary. The trail leads them from Hom to the underground, to the Keepers and ultimately to the Melanis of Capal, who have manipulated a group of Machine Monks into acting as Z'bri agents.

SCENES

And a Child Shall Lead Them: As the PCs are making their way home after a Rant late one evening, they are ambushed by a small but well-armed group. The tide of the battle turns against the PCs, until the ambushers are themselves ambushed by two small, shadowed assailants. The distraction provided by the two allows the PCs to regain the upper hand and win the fight. Once their opponents have been routed, the PCs are introduced to their allies: an Agnite Child named Joie and a Keeper boy of the same age, Jack. The two children are delighted that their assistance was effective, and the PCs gain two new friends, or at least two insistent new tag-alongs.



As the group gets to know the pair, it becomes apparent that little that passes in Hom escapes the children's notice. Joie, in particular, has a knack for eavesdropping from small, hidden places. Several nights after the attack, she comes, alone and frightened, to the PCs as they are leaving Junks. While creeping around in the tunnels, she overheard inhuman voices, laughing over the upcoming downfall of Vimary. She rambles in her fear, and before she can calm enough to give the important details, she staggers and falls, a crossbow bolt buried in her back.

If the PCs hunt for the sniper a chase ensues, leading the group on a wild run through Hom in the dark. Likewise, if they choose to investigate Joie's report on their own, they will have the opportunity to do so. Both the chase and the investigation raise new questions, but neither proves to be completely conclusive, as pieces of the puzzle remain missing. The PCs do discover that the crossbow bolt is likely of Keeper make, and difficult to come by for any Tribal or Fallen. Obviously this is not concrete evidence, but it is a starting place. Other clues lie in the bit of the tale that Joie was able to tell before her murder (above).

Strange Bedfellows: Eager to help solve his friend's murder, the Keeper boy Jack now approaches the group. He insists that the evidence points towards a Keeper assassin, and offers to lead the group into the Rust Wastes and ultimately Olympus for answers. If the PCs wish to investigate on their own instead, more evidence surfaces during interviews and research, including eyewitnesses who saw a figure, heavily cloaked despite the warm spring night, flee the scene and vanish into a tunnel. Eventually, all leads point toward the Rust Wastes as the hiding place of the assassin, making Jack's offer to play tour guide an attractive one.



The trip is a dangerous one, the ever-present risk of Z'bri creatures, wild animals, Keeper patrols (much more vigilant since the destruction of Vimary) and traps both man-made and natural marking the journey. While traveling through the Rust Wastes, the PCs stumble across a small campsite protected by a three-walled ruin. Within lies a dying Yagan — Pox — burning with a high fever. The old man is bitter, but cryptic. He rants about the sacrifices he has made for Baba Yaga, of home and family, how he has wandered for years doing Her will, only to die friendless and alone. Vimary, he tells them, will be destroyed by two bloody plagues, "the one we gave and the one we will receive." Pox's dying words are troubling, and should raise more questions than they answer. PCs with Mystery, Inspiration, Truth, or Recognition may be able to determine that his first reference is to the Rust Plague, but exact meaning of his words is vague. Use of Healing, Herbalism or the Eminence of Life may extend his death by a few hours or days, but his illness has progressed too far to be halted. He slips into hallucinations, and his ramblings become more confused as time passes. Eventually, despite the best efforts of the PCs, he slips away.

After Pox's death, the PCs may wish to look further into the old man's prophecy; their distance from Vimary precludes library research unless one of the PCs carries texts, and a ritual of some sort is probably the best option. The Weaver should allow for the Players' creativity to guide the rituals performed, and should give a great deal of leeway in the application of Eminences. It isn't very difficult to learn a few more details about the future Pox seemed to see — through the successful use of Dream (Thresholds should be kept relatively low — around 4 or so — due to the PCs' proximity to the source of that possible future), the PCs receive visions of a small Squat village in an empty valley. The village has been decimated by an unknown force, and those few residents who remain move lethargically, their hands and faces streaked red with blood, some doubled over with the force of coughing fits. As villager after villager drops to the ground, a pile of bloody corpses begins to rise over the top of the houses, representing thousands of dead.

Jack keeps urging the PCs on to Olympus, which proves to be a confusing swirl of conflicting loyalties and enmities. Any PCs with a prior connection to the Keepers will be at an advantage here. If not, Jack will prove a helpful assistant, filling the characters in on the political situation and keeping abreast of the rumors going around — namely, that the Machine Monks are in the middle of some massive new experiment, and may be colluding with outsiders to accomplish it. The PCs also discover that a splinter branch of the Machine Monks is rumored to have found a ruined "palace" of a great warlord from the World Before, ruins they call the Halls of Silence. These ruins apparently hold the secret that will allow the Monks to wreak vengeance on those who seek to destroy their homes and put an end to the threat of the Rust Plague forever. Most of the Keepers laugh this off as another insane notion from their mad counterparts, but a few darker rumors — mostly from a few Junkers and Derelicts — suggest that the Machine Monks have found a powerful ally in this task.

See the Tribe 8 Companion for more information on Olympus and its inhabitants.

1. Sins of the Monks

Through intrigue and deception, the PCs can learn the Monks' secret — the secret Joie died trying to tell them. A few possibilities present themselves, and groups may come up with their own plans. The most straightforward way would be to convince the Ancients to help them capture and interrogate a Machine Monk — the alternative is doing it themselves, a daunting but not impossible task. Another possibility is to find a Keeper willing to infiltrate the Monks, in hopes of learning more details of their plan.

Whatever method is used, once the PCs have found a source of information, they learn that the Monks are being guided by Cog Null-1, who claims to be using old texts to solve the mystery of the Rust Plague. The destruction can be ended and perhaps reversed, the Monks believe, by releasing a counteragent from the World Before into the Great River. Some theorize that this compound could be something that humanity once used to keep the rust at bay before the Ending Times.

In any case, the Monks say that once the counteragent has spread, the effects of the Rust Plague will be stopped. In actuality, the Melanis of Capal, who have been using the Halls as a laboratory and testing ground for generations, are subtly influencing Cog Null-1's research, guiding him towards the ancient weapons of mass destruction hidden in the Halls — a store that includes biological agents.



The full implications of this will probably be beyond the experience of most Tribals and Fallen, and even many Keepers, but the involvement of the Z'bri should be reason enough for the PCs to be alarmed. Once the truth has been at least partly unveiled, the PCs must find the location of the Halls of Silence and decide upon a way to stop the Monks. If they share their information with the Keepers, the Keepers will insist on sending a small group to accompany the PCs on their trip. This will prove beneficial once the PCs reach the Halls of Silence.

More information on Cog Null-1 may be found in Vimary, p. 113.

House of the Dead: The PCs need to use ingenuity to find the Halls of Silence in time to disrupt the Monks' plans. Some possibilities would be for them to trail a group of Monks on their way back to the site. Aside from requiring a decent Tracking Skill on the part of one of the PCs, the PCs will require the use of Illusion or the Disguise Skill in order to keep themselves hidden or otherwise unidentifiable. Synthesis could also be used to find the location, through Mystery or Recognition. A third option would be to find a Squat or Keeper who is highly familiar with the Outlands and would be willing to direct the party.

The Monks' trail leads to a tiny valley hidden away well off the blacktop running north and east, towards the Living Bridge. Successful PER rolls (Threshold 5) allow the PCs to recognize the small village as the one from their visions, although it appears to be abandoned. Sensitive PCs (or NPCs, if no PC has any skill in Dreaming) may pick up the presence of several spirits of the Squat inhabitants, now bound to the ground on which they lived and died. Following the small stream north from the village reveals a half-buried metal door that seems to lead underground. If the PCs try to speak to the spirits (who are fearful, but willing to speak with a strong Dreamer), they say that the doorway leads to the House of the Dead. The spirits of the dead that dwell within can sometimes be heard screaming and laughing, the Squats say, and sometimes they steal forth in the night and poison the village, causing bloody sickness and death to all affected.

The description of the spirit-sickness matches the images of death from the PCs' visions, as well as the condition of the decaying corpses littering the ground. Getting inside the tunnel is not difficult. Jack, a PC with some mechanical awareness (Dahlian heritage, Agnite, Keeper contacts) or another Keeper should be able to figure out the ancient sliding mechanism that triggers the door. Inside, the Halls are a dark, nightmarish place. Kept airtight for generations after the Z'bri burst through the Fold, the Halls of Silence have been remarkably well preserved, giving the PCs perhaps their first clear glimpse of the World Before. Also preserved, dry as dust and on display along the ominous echoing halls, are the corpses of the former lords of the hall. Spiritually attuned PCs will sense the Melanis Atmosphere that infuses the area, and may often hear mocking whispers and faint laughter tugging at their minds.

The Keepers argue between themselves over where the threat lies. Here the PCs must step up and take the lead, pulling the group into a cohesive unit. While the Keepers (and any PC with appropriate Lore) work to find the Monks' storage area, the PCs will need to be ready to defend the group physically and spiritually. The Melanis Atmosphere is a particular threat.

The Halls are, for the most part, empty of containers or living creatures. The desiccated bodies that line the walls are ancient, crumbling to dust at a touch. Finally, the PCs come to a room cleared of corpses, the walls lined with glass cases. Within each glass case are rows of sealed jars and containers. The shelves are all full, except for one case, which is nearly empty, showing signs of recent tampering. Examination of the jars by a Character familiar with chemical or herbal compounds (Keepers, Ecstatics, etc. Threshold 6) shows the fluid filling them to be a disease-causing agent, potent enough to wipe out the populations of Horn and Haven.

All that is left is for the PCs to find and stop the Monks on their way to the Great River. Some groups may wish to destroy the Halls of Silence, or at least the storage rooms containing the remaining jars, the source of the contagion the Monks plan to spread. This would certainly be a wise move and the Weaver is encouraged to give the Players free rein here. Fire would be the most effective cleansing agent, although the Keepers suggest less destructive means that are at their disposal.

The River Run: All that is left is for the PCs to track the Machine Monks to the Great River, and to overtake them if at all possible. The most difficult task will be to find the exact location the Monks plan to introduce the Red Plague into the river. While it should be upstream from Vimary, it cannot be too far upstream — no more than a day's journey — or the toxin would become too dilute to be immediately effective. The PCs' best chance of finding the location is simply to track the Machine Monks. Fortunately, they are not difficult to find, physically or in Dream. Once the trail is found, either through Tracking or Synthesis, the race begins.

The use of Motion would be helpful here, but if the PCs have close ties to the Keepers, they may be able to hitch a ride on a Keeper vehicle — which is, of course, how the Monks are traveling. The Weaver should create an atmosphere of suspense and tension here, and is encouraged to reward clever thinking by giving Players an extra edge over the Machine Monks, perhaps even allowing them to reach the river just ahead of their opponents.

Once both sides have reached the river, if the PCs decide not to rely on stealth (or if that stealth fails), a battle breaks out. In addition to the usual Keeper weapons, many of the Monks have blades attached to what remains of their limbs, one or two even with eerie, motorized weapons, such as electric carvers and small drills. While the fight goes on, some of the Monks will still

try to drop their "counteragent" into the river. It is up to the PCs to divide their attention as well, and keep focused on stopping the Monks from reaching their ultimate goal. Whether or not the PCs win the battle is irrelevant. All that matters is stopping the spread of the plague. If the PCs are losing the battle but still find a way to destroy the motorized cart carrying the stolen jars, then they can retreat, knowing they have accomplished their objective. Once again, fire is the most effective, but not the only, means of destruction. Should the liquid leach into the ground or fall into the River, however, a side quest will be necessary to find or develop some antidote to prevent the death of all within the area.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs fail to stop the Machine Monks, Tribals and Fallen alike will be exposed to the Red Plague, which is virulently contagious and has a high fatality rate. If they fail, the cost will be overwhelming to Vimary, and will greatly weaken the Nation's position for the rest of the cycle. The plague can be stopped, but it will require enormous resources, many healers, and possibly even Fatimal intervention. A large-scale ritual like the one used to bring down the H'I Kar would be called for, draining just more time and energy from a Nation still licking its wounds.

With success or failure determined, several questions are raised. The first, for the PCs, will probably be what to do with their knowledge of Z'bri involvement in the plot. With the H'I Kar broken, and the local Z'bri scattered to the four winds, Capal is the most logical source of the threat — it is known that some of the H'I Kar Z'bri fled to that eastern city, and Rhanto has yet to make any moves against the Nation. If the PCs go to either Tribal or Fallen leadership with their information, the councils realize that the Capal threat must be met if they are ever to know peace. Driving their enemies away didn't stop the threats, so a move must be made to annihilate them totally. If the plague is spread across the population, news or rumors of Z'bri involvement surface, and a call for retaliation rises from the people, pushing the Nation towards the war with Capal.

Finally, there is the question of the Rust Plague. Astute PCs recognize, from the information gleaned from Pox, that there is a link between Baba Yaga, Pox and the Rust Plague. (See the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p. 62 for more on Fatimal involvement with the Rust Wastes) Should they choose to reveal this information as well, there would be a rift between the Keepers and the Tribals, dividing the two groups bitterly on the eve of war. Many among the Fallen would be appalled at the Fatimas' actions, spreading doubt and dissent among them as well. If the PCs are not cautious about spreading the information, an NPC mentor advises them to leave the disturbing matter of the Rust Plague to be dealt with another day.

WEAVING SINS OF THE MOTHERS

At the core of *Sins of the Mothers* is the realization that nothing comes without a cost. Everything, from the Crusade in *Revanche*, to the PCs' friendship with Joie and Jack, to the realization that one or more of the Fatimas may be behind the Rust Plague is linked and connected by its consequences. At the end of the Crusade the Z'bri from the H'I Kar fled to Capal, and plotted, along with their local allies, to destroy Vimary once and for all. By using the Fatimas' own Rust Plague against them, the Z'bri managed to make the Fatimas ultimately partially responsible for the threat of plague presented by the Machine Monks.

As well, the actions of the PCs have consequences that should be reflected throughout the Quest. Simplest of all, if the PCs fail to stop the Machine Monks in *The River Run*, the Red Plague overtakes Vimary at a massive cost of life to an already devastated people. This, of course, is what the Z'bri (both of Capal and formerly of the H'I Kar) have planned, and have deluded the Machine Monks into serving as their agents. Along the way to discovering the truth, every small action has possible repercussions. Some of these are suggested within the individual scenes, but the Weaver is encouraged to come up with her own as appropriate.

In addition, and connected to the notion of consequences, there should be an underlying awareness that the World Before still lingers in many ways, some potentially helpful, and some quite unpleasant. The discovery of the plague bunker in *House of the Dead*, with its store of ancient and deadly viruses, serves as a reminder of this. The PCs might be tempted by the old contaminants just lying around waiting to be picked up, particularly if they're aware of the possibility of war with Capal or if they've developed a close bond with any of the Keepers. Whether or not this is encouraged is left to the Weaver, but the notion of consequences for all actions should never be left completely behind.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

For Joie's stats use the Agnite Child template in *Word of the Dancers*, p. 95, or the following statistics: AGI +2, BLD -1, CRE +1, KNO -1, PER +1, WIL +1. **Skills:** Athletics 1/0, Craft (bead weaving) 1/+1, Dodge 1/+2, Hand-to-Hand 1/+2, Notice 1/+1, Sneak 1/+2, Streetwise 1/0, Theatrics 1/0, Throwing 1/+2. **Equipment:** A doll, a torn-up book of fairy tales. She is perhaps about thirteen years old, with a normally bubbly personality. Like many Agnites, she views living on Hom as an adventure.

Infinitely sure of himself, Jack is a cocky fourteen year old. He does everything with a swagger, and like his best friend, Joie, everything about life is one big adventure. Jack's stats are as follows: AGI +1, BLD -1, CRE +1, KNO +1, WIL +1, STA 20, AD2, UD 3. **Skills:** Combat Sense 1/0, Dodge 2/+1, Firearms 1/+1, Hand-to-Hand 1/+1, Human Perception 1/0, Lore (Hom) 2/+1, Notice 3/0, Tinker 1/+1, Technosmithing (Jury Rig) 1. **Equipment:** Zip Gun (ammo x12), Bic Lighter, relic leather jacket.

The Machine Monks accompanying Cog Null-1 may use the following stats: APP -2, BLD +1, CRE +2, KNO +2, PSY -1, WIL +1, STA 25, UD/AD 6. **Skills:** Combat Sense 1/0, Demolitions 2/+2, Dodge 1/0, Firearms 2/0, Techlore (Medicine) 2/+2, Techlore (Mechanics) 2/+2, Technosmithing 2/Fule Fire. **Equipment:** Pistol (ammo x18), Dermal Plates (AR 8).

Blood Plague: Also known as the Red Plague, periodic epidemics of this disease threaten to wipe out the small Squat population living near the Halls of Silence. Due to the isolation in which the Squats live, it has never been seen beyond their valley, nor will it likely spread, unless the PCs fail to stop the Machine Monks from disseminating the toxin. The disease starts as a high-grade fever and diarrhea, but the final, fatal stages include the bloody sweat that gives the disease its name.

Contagion:	10
Method of Contagion:	Water
Onset Time:	5 days
Virulence:	14

EFFECTS:

Success or MoF 0	Dehydration and diarrhea
MoF 1 - 4	High Fever, Vomiting, Watery Diarrhea, severe dehydration
MoF 5+	Incapacitated, life threatening fever and vomiting, massive dehydration. Roll HEA vs. 5 once per day to avoid taking a deep wound. Symptoms continue for MoF days.
Fumble Bloody sweat, near total dehydration, voiding of all liquid, HEA test vs. 7 to avoid death. If passed, treat as MoF 7.	

KEEPING THE KEEPERS

Enraged that the Machine Monks came so close to destroying the fragile Nation and unable or unwilling to make the distinction between the various Keeper factions, a vocal group of Tribals, mostly Yagans and those Shebans outside of the Firmament, demands that the Keepers be driven off of Vimary. The would-be avengers are led by the Fisher King, who declaims the Keepers as dangerous heretics who do not worship the One Goddess and invite disaster with their veneration of technology.

The crusaders are met with little support on Hom and in many cases they are greeted with outright condemnation from Fallen and even Tribals who are friendly with Keepers. Very abruptly, nearly all those who supported action against the Keepers disappear from Hom; a few days later a large force of armed warriors on horseback are seen leaving the Fisher King's fortress on the Stone Shores, headed east.

If the Characters have contacts among the Shebans, Yagans or even Keepers, they may feel compelled to act on their own. Otherwise, the War Council calls on the Characters, among others, to overtake the marauders and hopefully stop them from further souring relations with the Keepers, who will be essential allies in the upcoming war with Capal. If the PCs refuse to go, a combined force of Tribals (mostly Dahlians and Joanites) and Fallen will take arms and head out instead.

The Fisher King's force, numbering about forty people strong, heads directly into the Rust Wastes and strikes into the heart of the wasteland, using the Judge's control over the Eminence of Truth to guide them towards Olympus. More than once they encounter Keepers en route; all are met with deadly force. If the Characters do not intervene before the Tribals reach Olympus itself, the Fisher King leads his followers in a ritual intended to bring out the Truth of the structure's great age and shoddy original construction, the end result being a disastrous collapse. The Ancients living in the Thumb will almost certainly perish in the destruction, leaving the Vimary Keepers alone and lost, without any central authority to maintain cohesion.

The Characters' pursuit of the marauders is problematic. Previous contacts among the Keepers may be used to secure guides into the unnatural territory; otherwise the Characters will be hard pressed to navigate amid the swirling rust. In addition to the featureless landscape and choking atmosphere, Scray Swarms and hiding Z'bri haunt the Wastes. Tracking the attackers through the Rust Wastes is difficult, though not impossible, especially with so many to follow.

In addition to tracks, the Characters come across dead Tribals, first the victims of the Rust Waste and its dangers, later the receivers of gunshot wounds. Those Keepers who survived the rampaging Tribals are no longer making distinctions between Tribals and Fallen, and may well open fire on the Characters and their group.

There are two primary ways for the PCs to prevent Olympus' destruction, although Weavers are encouraged to prompt creative Players to come up with plans of their own. If the Characters can overtake the Fisher King's forces, which will entail moving through the Wastes faster than he can (Dahlian contacts able to manipulate Motion would be valuable allies here) and appeasing the angry Keepers in his wake, they may be able to stop the Tribals before they reach the heart of the Vimary Keepers' civilization. The Characters must determine whether this is accomplished by words or blows. Keeper defenses are formidable, but even they cannot keep the forces of Synthesis at bay. If, on the other hand, the Characters are unable to beat the Fisher King to Olympus, they come upon the Tribals in the midst of their ritual. Their efforts in the River of Dream are brutally obvious; any Dreamer of any ability will recognize their intent. The Characters will have to abort the ritual to save Olympus, as well as prevent the marauders from being picked off one by one by the Keeper snipers defending their home; merely stopping the ritualists, however, will only release the power of Dream in one great, uncontrolled rush.

The ritual must be contained before it can be stopped, most likely with extensive use of Synthesis or Dreaming (it's generally best to roleplay out the conflict, but if a short resolution is desired, a roll against a Threshold of 9 is appropriate). Once the ritual is aborted, the Tribals themselves still need to be stopped and/or rescued.

Whether the Fisher King is stopped peacefully or by force, the Keepers are sure to see the Characters' actions. Word quickly travels to the Ancients, who may invite the Characters in for a debriefing of sorts, in an attempt to uncover the purpose behind the Tribal incursions and the pitched battle.



Chapter Two: The Black Boar

"Political Necessity is the power to which even our blessed Magdalen bows. It is Political Necessity that forces us to go to Boarhead, and approach him as supplicants, treat that barbaric warlord as an equal, smile and bow and scrape before him for the simple privilege of traveling through his lands. This is the madman whose men have slaughtered our caravans and our gatherers, who thinks that his petty Confederation of Squats is the equal of our divine Nation. And yet we slink eastward to meet him, in the hopes that he will make our goals possible. This is Necessity, but it is also Travesty."

- Maura Ibenkin



QUEST TWO: THE BLACK BOAR

ACT ONE: TO THE BOAR

The PCs are included in a small group asked to escort a delegation of Diplomats to deal with Boarhead's Confederation, intent upon securing permission to travel through his lands to better attack Capal. Mek and Hal Ninva (or another appropriately placed NPC with ties to the Characters) ask the Characters to represent the Eighth Tribe in negotiations, not trusting the Magdalite Diplomats (and for good reason). On the trip east, the lead Diplomat harasses the PCs endlessly. When they come across a squat settlement under Z'bri attack, she orders the Characters to help break the siege, winning the respect of the Confederation Squats.

When the Z'bri are routed, the Squats are indeed impressed and offer to take the PCs to Boarhead's Winter Camp, where the Confederation's Elders' Council is meeting. The Diplomats begin their talks before the Elders' Council and the Characters may interject. The Elders are split between many different agendas, but in the end decide that neither the PCs nor the Diplomats have the right to speak to the Council. Only those who have passed the Gauntlet of Spirits may do so. It becomes quickly apparent that the PCs and Diplomats must take the tests to prove their worth.

The Gauntlet of Spirits comprises five separate tests, each one administered by one of the totems worshipped by the diverse Confederation tribes. In each test, the spirit determines the challenger's worthiness according to its own specific set of values. During the last test, Maura and the Diplomats attempt to assassinate the Characters, leading to Maura's death on the tusks of the totem King Boar. The final test complete, the PCs stand before the Elders' Council and, if they succeeded overall, are proclaimed just and right in their quest. Boarhead pledges the support of his Tusks in ten days' time. If the Characters failed, however, Boarhead refuses to spend any more time listening to their words and banishes them from his presence.

"Boarhead. The name still sends shivers down my spine. My cell and I ran into Boarhead's men out near Magog. They let me live as a witness, so I could warn the others on Hom, so that I could tell you how deadly and bloodthirsty they are. They took my cellmates' heads as trophies. Somewhere in the Outlands, my friends have been stacked in a pile as a warning to all who would follow..."

- Renault, member of the Eighth Tribe

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The PCs are asked by the War Council to escort a Magdalite delegation to meet with Luther Boarhead; by the conflicting messages from the Council, it is readily apparent that not all is as it appears. The Characters are asked to serve as a military escort and as wilderness guides for the trek into the Outlands. Later, Hal Ninva approaches the Characters and asks them to represent the Eighth Tribe.

The lead Diplomat, Maura Ibenkin, works to undermine the Characters throughout the trip down the Great River, doing everything she can to make their lives a living hell. Shortly after entering Confederation lands, the group comes across a Squat settlement under Z'bri attack. Maura taunts the Characters, insisting that they must prove their worth by defending the village. With the PCs' assistance, the Squats rout the Z'bri. Lourie, one of Boarhead's elite Tusks, approaches and thanks the Characters, inviting them to join him in a meal. The caravan is brought inside the village's palisade and the Diplomats go to work, winning over the village's chief and elders. When Lourie hears of the Characters' mission, he offers to conduct them to Boarhead's Winter Camp on the shores of Lake Etchim.



MARCHING ORDERS

A member of Mek's Outlook, the Jackers, comes and tells the Characters that they are needed by the War Council. The Council has been meeting in a wide building with an arching roof three stories high, large enough to accommodate any Fatimas who choose to attend. When the PCs arrive, the tension in the room is nearly palpable, but Mek steps forward to welcome them inside. Mek introduces the Characters to the other members of the Council, if they are not already known. Nostra Guy'on and Benjamin Aria'on are seated, with the Joanite looking ruffled and the Evan appraising the Fallen with a cool eye. Hal is dwarfed next to Magdalen, but insists on sitting next to Her in a gesture intended to make him appear to be some sort of equal to the Lover. Joan is standing at a window, looking out into the night sky, barely participating in the debate inside.

Mek squares his shoulders towards the Characters, his back to the fire that lights the room. He speaks slowly and deliberately, and silence reigns in the room until he is finished. The Jacker explains that the War Council has sent Outriders and scouts down the Great River towards Capal, mapping the lay of the land and preparing the way for the army to follow. Shortly after they passed Lac Pere and the Valley of White Death, they began running into resistance, not from Z'bri, but from Boarhead's Squats. Most of the land between Lac Pere and Capal is claimed by the warlord, and the War Council must deal with Boarhead if Vimary's army is ever to reach Capal. At the very least, they hope to secure permission for the army to pass through Boarhead's lands unharmed; at best they want Boarhead as an ally against Capal.

Magdalen has offered the services of Her Diplomats, and a stripped-down Dahlian caravan is already being prepared for transport. The journey to Boarhead's Confederation is long and the territory it crosses is only secured in the academic sense. Mek has refused to allow a delegation into the Outlands without strong arms and Outlands experience to guide them, which the Council hopes to find in the Characters. If they are willing, the PCs will provide an escort (military or otherwise, depending on PC focus and capabilities) for the caravan taking the Diplomats into Boarhead's Confederation to bargain with the warlord.

It is some four days' journey from Vimary into Boarhead's territory, plus an unknown distance and time to reach Boarhead himself. The Caravan is equipped with food for ten days — probably not enough to last without hunting and foraging, but more than Hom's pitiful stores can afford. The caravan leaves in two days, at the break of dawn.

MIDNIGHT DEALINGS

Late at night after the War Council concludes, Hal Ninva approaches the PCs either at home or wherever they might be. If the Characters have any good history with Hal, he calls upon them to serve the Eighth Tribe. When the War Council decided to send a delegation to Boarhead, Magdalen offered Her Diplomats, Hal explains. Her Diplomats have been specially trained for exactly this task, and it was impossible to turn Her down, but Hal does not trust the Magdalites to be the sole representation to Boarhead. It would be all too easy for them to gloss over the Eighth Tribe and only represent the interests of the Nation. Hal voiced his fears to Mek, and the Jacker demanded that a military escort, preferably Fallen, be provided for the diplomatic mission.



Telling the Characters that "The Eighth Tribe cannot go without representation," Hal entreats them to enter the negotiations once they begin. The Diplomats will not be expecting the Fallen to participate, but once out of Vimary, all bets are off and there is nothing the Whores can do to stop them. The goal is still the same — securing permission to pass through Boarhead's territory or even an alliance — but Hal does not trust the Diplomats and wants someone he can trust to be involved in the negotiations. In addition, he insinuates that if Boarhead joined in alliance with the Fallen, rather than with the Nation as a whole, it would vastly improve the standing and power of the Fallen, allowing them to face the Nation as equals.

TRAVEL AND DISPARAGEMENT

The Caravan leaves at dawn two days after the Characters met with the War Council. Unless the PCs asked to speak with the others in the Caravan, this is the first time they will meet Maura Ibenkin, the lead Diplomat for the expedition, and Johannes Tinker, the Caravan's Little Trickster. Maura finds the Characters to be a needless addition to the diplomatic mission, and makes sure that her opinion is clear from the beginning. She interrogates the PCs on their preparations, negatively comparing their equipment, weapons, and armor with what Joanite Rangers would have brought in their stead.

After the trip begins, her attentions do not diminish. Despite the recent actions of the Eighth Tribe, Maura is a traditionalist and despises all Fallen for turning their backs on their proper Fatimas. She schemes to make the Characters' lives as difficult as possible on the trip to the Confederation.

Unexpected Ecstasy: The Diplomats slip an Ecstatic's drug into the food of one or more Characters. The drug might make the victim painfully aroused, with all the Diplomats under orders to tease and taunt the PC, without giving her any release. Alternately, the drug might be a powerful hallucinogen, disorienting and confusing the Character(s). The Weaver might slip in a vision of Far Sight (see p. 104) watching the Characters as they make their way towards Etchim.

Sparking a Duel: Maura manipulates the Joanites at the Seven Fingers to misconstrue the Characters' words or actions as a slight against their honor. In short order a skilled Joanite warrior challenges one of the PCs to a duel. While the duel is not to the death, losing will be humbling and embarrassing for either the Joanite or the PC. Should the PC win, she has made an enemy who will not hesitate to make life difficult in the future. Later, Maura insinuates that she was behind the challenge.

Pointing Fingers: One of a Character's prized possessions (a locket, medallion or fetish) disappears, stolen by one of the Diplomats. Maura hopes that the PCs will blame one of the Dahlians, causing a rift to form between them. The Dahlians truthfully deny that they had anything to do with the theft. If the Characters get close to uncovering Maura's involvement the stolen item turns up, fallen between the cracks of a wagonbed.

2. The Black Boar

The Tinker Caravan is a ragtag collection of patched-up wagons made of detritus and junk. Despite their appearance, the Tinkers were one of the least-damaged Caravans to make it through the recent wars with the Z'bri. Their skills at jury-rigging and repairing nearly anything have made them invaluable scouts into the northern Outlands. The Tinkers also have a (sometimes deserved) reputation for having light fingers, and the Characters' possessions might disappear. Unlike Maura's *Pointing Fingers* scheme, above, the Tinkers are sure not to steal things of intense personal value, and they always return the things they 'borrow' as soon as they are confronted by the owners. In the Tinkers' minds it's all in good fun.

The Tinkers' route crosses Vimary and the group camps at the Seven Fingers the first night, their journey sped up thanks to Johannes' powerful Motion Synthesis. The next day, the caravan proceeds over the now-dead Spine Bridge and skirts the southern coast of H'I Kar's ruins. Johannes makes sure that the Caravan clears the middle of the Z'bri lands before camping again for the second night, at the end of a blacktop that proceeds north-east, paralleling the Great River. Johannes tells the Characters that this blacktop continues all the way to Capal, but further north it is guarded and fortified at a number of important points. The Caravan continues up the blacktop for two days. The trip is intended to be mostly uneventful, but it does present a good opportunity for character interaction and the insertion of group-specific plots and subplots. At the end of the fourth day, the caravan pulls into an advance camp on the bank of Lac Pere. The camp is filled with perhaps thirty people, most prominently Dahlians, Agnites, Joanites and Jackers.

MAKING CONTACT

On the fifth day, the Caravan's wagons are loaded onto barges prepared at the advance camp and floated across Lac Pere and down the Great River. The Valley of the White Death lies on the southern shore, and Johannes is sure to keep to the northern side of the river until it is passed. The Living Bridge, a Z'bri bridge composed of living flesh and decorated with still-moaning faces, passes overhead without comment: no one seems to want to even acknowledge its existence. The barges then cross the river and land on the southern bank. The wagons are unloaded and the barges pulled up onto land for the return journey. Johannes declares that the hard part of the journey is now ahead: without blacktops or trails, the Caravan will continue overland, trying to find a settlement loyal to Boarhead.

One or two days inland, an observant PC spots black smoke on the horizon. Maura misconstrues the smoke as cook fires and asks to turn that direction. As the Caravan nears, however, the sounds of battle come through the forest, and soon a settlement under attack by Z'bri can be seen through the trees. Maura taunts the Characters, shouting at them to prove their worth and go defend the settlement, hoping to win the Squats' favor. If the PCs have made friends among the Tinkers, a handful of the Dahlians will take up weapons and accompany them. If the PCs choose not to assist the Squats some of the Tinkers run in to help, but there will be fewer survivors and the Squats will be much more hostile towards the Caravan.

2. The Black Boar

The settlement is surrounded by a high palisade, from which Squats are firing arrows and throwing spears. The report of a gun is also heard from the walls. Z'bri and Serfs ring the exterior, flinging flaming balls of tar into the village. As soon as the PCs and/or Dahlians begin their attack, the palisade's doors open and Squat warriors use the distraction they provide as an opportunity to pour out to join the battle. The Characters soon find themselves facing a Koleris Iv'chet, the commander of the invaders, along with his command staff. This is a chance for the Characters to shine, and display a martial prowess and courage that will be admired by the Squats.

BREAKING BREAD

When the Iv'chet is vanquished, the Serfs break and run north, pursued by Squat warriors. A Squat armed with a long musket crosses the battlefield to greet the Characters. He introduces himself as 'Lourie,' communicating in a strange mix of pidgin Tribal and hand gestures. Lourie speaks Irinakoiw and Leox fluently, but only knows a few words of Tribal; he manages to thank the Characters for breaking the siege around his home. The caravan and Maura come out of the trees, and the Diplomat strides forward to introduce herself to Lourie. She speaks Leox well enough to hold a conversation. While Lourie is glad to have someone he can speak with, by his gestures it is apparent that he is only interested in those who aided his people, and not Maura, which annoys the Diplomat to no end.

Lourie invites the group into the settlement to share a meal and talk. Maura makes sure to remain close to the man, and her Diplomats go to work on the rest of the settlement, quickly finding the more important Squats and introducing themselves. Lourie insists that Characters involved in the attack sit with him at the meal, and tries to speak with them through Maura. The lead Diplomat, however, has other plans, and tries to monopolize the conversation herself. If the PCs press the matter (such as speaking and waiting for Maura to translate for Lourie), she will be forced to keep up appearances and translate. She is not above garbling words and meaning, however.

Lourie speaks freely of himself, explaining that he is a Tusk, one of the elite warriors and leaders of Boarhead's Confederation. The settlement's chief, at the meal but across the room with a Diplomat hanging on his every word, looks after domestic details of planting the fields and assigning labor. As a Tusk, Lourie is in charge of the settlement's defense, and also dispenses judgment when conflicts arise in the village. The Z'bri have attacked more often in the past year, but he has fought them off each time. When Lourie is informed of the Caravan's intention to speak with Boarhead, he offers to conduct them to the warlord himself, explaining that the Elders are meeting at the Winter Camp for the next two weeks before abandoning it for the summer.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

All of the Tribal/Fallen named NPCs in this Act can be replaced by campaign-specific NPCs, if desired. Using an already-established Magdalite foe in Maura's place can bring added importance to the conflict, and should Hal or Mek be unavailable or uninfluential for the PCs, any NPC of suitable status within the Eighth Tribe can be substituted for the purposes of forming the caravan.

If the Player Characters are not combat-heavy types, Mek describes their role as less a combat unit and more tailored to their individual talents. Outlands experience, hunting or scouting skills are especially appropriate for this purpose. Characters more attuned to the occult might be included as seers to predict and avoid upcoming difficulties, or to barter with the spirits of the land that they pass through.

The Weaver can include encounters with Z'bri ranging from minor attacks to full-blown side plots on the trip from Vimary to Lac Pere. The Weaver should scale the number and power of Z'bri attacking the settlement to the prowess of the Characters, who will only face a handful of Serfs and Iv'chet themselves. The PCs need not massacre the entire raiding party themselves, but they should make enough of a difference that the Squats are encouraged to join the fight. Use the templates given on page 106 for the Koleris Iv'chet and Serfs.

The Weaver may also use the template for Boarhead's Warriors in *Into the Outlands*, page 70, or the following statistics for the Squat warriors: AGI +1, APP -1, BLD +1, CRE -1, FIT 0, INF -1, KNO -2, PER +1, PSY +1, WIL +1. **Skills:** Athletics 2/0, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Intimidate 1/+1, Melee 2/+1, Notice 1/+1, Survival 2/0, Tactics 1/-2, Throwing 2/+1.

Language difficulties begin to rear their heads in this Act, and continue to plague the ambassadors throughout the rest of the Quest. Boarhead's Squats all speak Irinakoiw, and most also speak Leox, the language of the Squats to the south of Vimary. If any of the Characters speak Leox, they will be able to speak to most of the Squats they meet. Of the caravan, Maura and three of her Diplomats speak Leox; Johannes and one of his Dahlians do too, but will not advertise this fact. The PCs may also use Synthesis to bridge the language gap. Eminences of Inspiration, Empathy, Unity and even Mystery may be appropriate.

ACT TWO: TUSK TO TUSK

"I am a Tusk of Boarhead, of the Mowak, and I bring brave warriors from the west. They have proven their prowess to my eyes by defending my village. They bring this woman, who says she has news from the west, and offers many things for the Confederation. She and the warriors, and others like them, plan to attack the Fortress of Beasts to the north. They seek to invite us to the battle."

- Lourie, Tusk of Boarhead, of the Mowak

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Lourie takes the group through Confederation lands to Etchim, where the Elders' Council is meeting before the tribes begin their summer migration. Lourie, the PCs and the Diplomats interrupt the Council meeting and present their case. Arguments and negotiations begin at once as the Squat tribes clash over whether to support, reject, or even listen to the strangers from the west. The Characters have a chance to defy Maura and participate in the talks, and this rivalry potentially ignites into one-upmanship as the Diplomats and PCs challenge each other to prove their right to speak before the Council.

TO ETCHIM

Lourie takes the Caravan deeper into Boarhead territory for four days, stopping each night at a different village ringed by a robust palisade. The route uses a combination of worn blacktops and newer trails, and the village sites are too conveniently placed at

regular intervals of a day's travel to be accidental. If asked, Lourie explains that no one wants to be caught outside at night. The gates are decorated with a small pyramid of skulls on either side. Some are twisted and distorted, obviously the remains of vanquished Z'bri and Serfs; the rest are presumably the skulls of Squats. Lourie will readily acknowledge that these are trophies taken in battle with Z'bri forces and other Squat tribes, now standing as warnings of Boarhead's power. In each village Lourie meets with another Tusk, arranging for food and shelter, and telling his comrades of the Characters' bravery. Maura and her Diplomats also spread through each settlement, making sure that their passing will not be forgotten, either.

On the fourth night the Caravan reaches Boarhead's Winter Camp, on the banks of a small lake. The palisade here is taller than the other villages, and reinforced with earthworks. Lourie blows on his horn to announce their arrival, and the doors swing open to admit the travelers. After they move inside and the wagons are parked in the ample courtyard, Lourie conducts Maura and his chosen PCs to a wide, strong-looking building where the Council of Elders is meeting. On either side of the entrance is a pyramid of skulls higher than a man. The building only has one room, lit by a large central fire and torches ringing the walls. Perhaps twenty men and women sit in the semi-darkness, listening to a giant of a man as he rants, pacing in front of the fire. This man is Luther Boarhead.

Boarhead thrusts a finger at Lourie and demands to know why he has interrupted the Council meeting. Lourie gives Maura and the Characters a short introduction and then steps aside, allowing the delegation to speak for themselves. Unless the Characters are prepared to step forward, Maura will push ahead and make her introduction in Leox. The negotiations have begun.



DANCE OF DIPLOMACY

The negotiations that ensue are complex, with no fewer than seven sides represented, and the results are highly dependant on the actions of the PCs. Weavers must earn their name by weaving together a number of motivations, agendas and gambits, never forgetting that the Characters and their actions should be the focus of the scene. The agendas and plans of the participants are described below, to be introduced and used as fits the scene and progress of the negotiations. Despite the number of sides represented, the words that matter should be the Characters'. Use only as many different speeches or positions as will challenge the Players to bring out their best.

The Characters' options are many. Eloquent speeches and debates should be encouraged; judicious Etiquette, Theatrics, Leadership and even Hagglng rolls can be utilized to judge their effectiveness. Human Perception may be used to divine some of the internal divisions in the Elders' Council. It is difficult to weave Synthesis rituals into negotiations without arousing suspicion (Magdalite rituals, which are designed with this situation in mind, are a notable exception — see below), but creative PCs will be able to use any number of Eminences to good effect in earning the trust and support of the Council. The PCs must never lose sight of the end goal — to win the Squats' support for the Tribal and Fallen movement against Capal.

MAGDALITE GAMBITS

Maura's first gambit is to thank and dismiss the PCs; it is doubtful that the Characters will obey such a patronizing command. If the PCs ask Johannes to stay he will gladly oblige, and the Characters will have one more ally in the room. Maura will continually demand that the Fallen leave, as they have no authority to negotiate with Boarhead. The Elders' Council does not seem to care if the Characters have any authority according to Tribal law, as they see little distinction between all the various strangers who come from the west.

The Diplomat's second move is to bring out trade items brought from Vimary. These include fabrics, clothing, beads, jewelry and Joante-forged weapons. She has even brought a long sword imported from the Bury Keepers far to the west, which she tries to pass off as Tribal work. Maura promises trade agreements between Vimary and the Confederation once Capal is leveled. Conlan protests that Vimary is all but leveled itself. Maura insists that Bazaar and the rest of Vimary will be rebuilt within a year (which the Characters should be aware is highly doubtful) and production and trade will resume.

To defuse Conlan's suspicions, Maura uses Sensuality to wrap him around her finger. Her words take on an almost sing-song cant and her movements become exacting and precise. As Conlan's eyes begin to glaze as he watches her speak, the Characters (especially any Magdalites or ex-Magdalites) might recognize Maura's actions as a subtle ritual contacting the River of Dream (Dreaming, Lore: Dream, Lore: Ritual, or other suitable Skill at Threshold 6, Magdalites or ex-Magdalites at Threshold 3). Whether or not they act to interfere with Maura's

deceit is up to their discretion. Synthesis or a direct interruption of Maura's lucid dreaming will destroy her intended effect. The Squats of the Confederation are generally ignorant of Conjunctioal Synthesis' power, and do not recognize the threat.

If allowed to continue speaking by the PCs, Maura calls upon the Squats' anger and sense of powerlessness against the Capal Z'bri, reminding them that they will remain the victims of the Beasts forever unless they take action. She warns that the Z'bri will not remain idly by while the Confederation grows strong and powerful. If humanity does not strike first, they will all fall to the Z'bri when they attack.

If the negotiations begin to turn against them, Maura plans to use Conflict to strain the bonds that hold the Confederation together. It is primarily Mowak lands between Vimary and Capal, and Maura seeks to break the warrior Mowak away from the rest, in order to use the Squat men and women as pawns and shock troops. If she does not arrive at this last-ditch measure before the Council or PCs refuse to let her speak any further, she resolves to pursue this avenue outside of the Council itself.

CONFEDERATION RESPONSES AND AGENDAS

There are seven members on the Elders' Council of the Confederation. Three are from Boarhead's tribe, the Irinakoiv, and always support him. The other four represent tribes invited into the Confederation. They are Aren of the Tuscarora, Conlan of the Mowak, Ignac of the Kayoo and Ariann of the Nodagga. More information on the various tribes and their representatives can be found in *Weaver's Resources*, pp. 87-89.

Boarhead and the Irinakoiv: Until moments before the Characters entered the Elder's Council, Boarhead was enumerating the virtues of mounting a full-scale attack on Vimary while they still reeled from their war with the H'l Kar Z'bri. That the delegation arrived with news of a new war underway undermines his claims that the Seven Tribes can barely feed themselves, let alone field an army. In response, Boarhead denies that the Tribes and Fallen are capable of fighting a war, and presses Maura and the PCs with questions on Vimary's resources. Boarhead takes every opportunity to cast doubt on the capabilities of the Tribes and Fallen, and on the visible representatives before him. He accuses them of having waged a sloppy and wasteful war against the H'l Kar and stupidly allying with the Z'bri until the Z'bri chose to destroy them. When Ignac casts doubt on the delegation's right to speak to the Council, he heartily supports the motion.

Aren of the Tuscarora: Informed by Far Sight of the coming of the caravan from Vimary, Aren has sat through Boarhead's ranting hiding his smile. He is the first to welcome the delegation and vocally supports Maura and the Fallen with equal vigor. More than once during the debates, another Elder questions why Aren is suddenly so vocal when normally he is silent. Aren hopes to divert Boarhead's enthusiasm for war on Vimary to war on the real enemy, the Z'bri of Capal. Aren's support for the Tribal and Fallen delegation is guaranteed, and only wavers when Maura and the Fallen argue, which is one of the few things

he is not prepared for. He knows a great deal about the situation, and can supply information helpful to the PCs' cause. The Characters may be surprised, though, when he admits that the delegation has no right to speak to the Elders' Council and supports the demand that they prove themselves. He is confident that the spirits will show the truth of the matter.

Conlan of the Mowak: It is the Mowak who have recently clashed with forward scouts from Vimary, and Conlan, Boarhead's son-in-law, believes these to be incursions into his territory. He is well aware that the armies of Vimary crushed the H'I Kar, and he worries at how much advantage the Seven Tribes and Fallen have over his own tribe. Allowing their armies to march through his tribe's lands and to fight on their side is to give them an even greater advantage if betrayal is on their minds. At the same time, the Z'bri of Capal have intensified their attacks on Mowak settlements, and he believes a pre-emptive strike against the city is necessary before Capal gains too much of an advantage over the Confederation. If Conlan can be persuaded to trust the Tribes and Fallen, he will support an alliance. Unless Maura successfully seduces him, he will not trust her in the least, knowing that she grossly exaggerates her descriptions of Vimary's wealth. On the other hand, he is apt to trust the PCs, whose reputation has come on the lips of his own tribesman, Lourie.

Ignac of the Kayoo: Ignac is immediately impressed by the trade items offered by Maura. Rather than embrace this offer, however, Ignac sees only competition for the Kayoo's own trade. Ignac supports Conlan's initial criticism of Vimary's ability to trade or even mount a war. When talks continue, he asks what right the Tribals and Fallen have to speak as equals at the Elders' Council. Every other member of the Council earned their place on the Council and their right to speak. Ignac grows incensed, demanding that the delegation be thrown out of the Council and their pleas ignored. If they are too weak to attack Capal themselves, then they are too weak to speak to the Elders! He is surprised to find Boarhead and the Irinakoiv supporting him against the upstart westerners.

Ariann of the Nodagga: In many ways, Boarhead's wife represents both the Nodagga and the Maalin on the Elders' Council. As such, she knows that Far Sight has seen the caravan coming, and that the eagle-spirit hopes to welcome and assist them. As a servant of Manylegs, Ariann is immediately and violently opposed to anything that Far Sight desires. She masks her contempt for Far Sight's wishes by verbally supporting Boarhead's misgivings and doubts. When Ignac questions their right to speak before the Elders' Council, Ariann supports him, although she takes the demand a step further. She claims that in order to speak on the Council the delegation must challenge the Gauntlet of Spirits. Ariann trusts that the spirits will dispatch or embarrass the delegation haste-post-haste, and the situation will be resolved. Ariann trusts the spirits implicitly, and will firmly defend the Characters' opportunity to challenge, knowing that they will fail.

RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH

Eventually all the Elders are united in the conclusion that the delegation from Vimary has no right to speak to the Council. If the Characters do not react to this, Maura demands to know how she can prove herself worthy. If the PCs do ask or protest, Maura is the first to respond, spitting that the Fallen have no right to speak at all. Aren stands and steps forward to explain that only the Elders of member tribes and the Tusks may speak. Member tribes must be invited into the Confederacy, a prospect that Aren describes with a smirk as "doubtful at this time." Tusks, on the other hand, must pass a series of five tests called the Gauntlet of Spirits, a rigorous trial that tests each challenger in mind, body and soul.

Maura looks over her Diplomats and scoffs, muttering disdainfully that the Squats want them to become 'mere soldiers' and refuses to take part. This provides the Characters with an excellent opportunity to upstage the leading Diplomat by accepting the challenge, at which point Maura hastily stammers that she and her Diplomats will gladly challenge the Gauntlet as well. If the Characters are not so impulsive, Maura indulges herself in a smirk and gloats that the Fallen are not so eager to take on the responsibilities of a true Diplomat. She asks for a day to consider such a task, during which she plans to draw Conlan and the Mowak away from the rest of the Confederation. If the PCs accept the challenge at this point, she scowls at them and asks to challenge the Gauntlet the next day, as well.

Aren describes the Gauntlet of Spirits if asked, either in the Elders' Council or during the day that Maura takes to make her decision. He only explains the basics, saying that the totem spirit of each tribe administers one test, judging if the challenger is worthy of their respect and attention. While he names and describes each of the totem spirits, he does not describe what is entailed in each test.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Information on the five tribes of the Confederation, their totems, the Elders' Council itself and the Maalin can be found in the Weaver Resources section on pp. 87-89. Statistics for Luther Boarhead can be found in **Vimary**, page 115, or use the following stats: AGI +1, BLD +3, FIT +1, INF +1, PER +1 PSY -1. **Skills:** Archery 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/1, Intimidate 3/3, Leadership 2/1, Lore (Outlands) 3/0, Melee 3/+1, Riding 2/-1, Sneak 2/+1, Survival 2/0, Tactics 3/0.

Allow information about the Elders and their various strengths to come out during discussion and debate, instead of simply piling the information on all at once. If Aren says to Conlan, "While you are a great warrior, you do not look to your future enough to anticipate your enemy's next attack," the Characters not only learn that Conlan is a warrior of some renown, but that Aren favors informed action over brute strength.

It is easy for the Weaver to conclude that it does not matter what the Characters say in the initial talks, and the 'real' action occurs in the Gauntlet of Spirits. This is not the case. This

2. The Black Boar

meeting is the PCs' chance to make a positive impression on the Elders of the Confederation and to explain the necessity of the Confederacy's support of the attack on Capal. The Characters are also unaware that the Gauntlet is awaiting them until the very end of the scene, and should be given the chance to state their case and be as eloquent as they like. When the PCs' words are later justified by the spirits, it will make their arguments all the stronger. A simple scene after the Gauntlet with Conlan or another Elder agreeing with one of their prior points made during this act will strengthen the Characters' sense of accomplishment greatly.

It is essentially necessary for the PCs to have overcome the language barrier by the time of the meeting with the Elders' Council. Most Characters, after having spent a number of scenes dealing with these difficulties, will have found some way to resolve them. Some PCs might speak Leox or even Confederation, making this point moot; others may use Synthesis to translate for them or bless them with the gift of tongues. Forward-thinking Characters might learn one of the appropriate languages from Lourie on the way to Etchim, using Synthesis to hasten the learning process. If and only if the PCs seem unable to overcome this problem, the Weaver may have Far Sight intervene just after the negotiations begin. An eagle flies in through the front doors before they close, and lands on one of the Character's shoulders. The eagle bends its beak down into the Character's ear and whispers, "Hear the language of the Tuscarora." Every member of the delegation hears the same message as if it was whispered into their own ears, and for the next week they are able to speak and understand Tuscarora.

ACT THREE: THE GAUNTLET OF SPIRITS

"A Tusk has proven that he is strong, alert and wise. The spirits watched him, and questioned him, and judged that his actions and words are worthy of attention. A Tusk is hailed by the powers of the world."

- Aren of the Tuscarora

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The Characters must pit themselves against five tests of skill, strength and character to prove themselves worthy of speaking before the Elders' Council. Each of the five tribes who sit on the Elders' Council venerates a totem spirit, and it is these spirits who test the PCs. Each spirit respects different qualities or abilities, and the Characters must prove themselves to each one according to its values. Far Sight tests the Characters' vision, the Onto tests finesse, Fire-on-the-Water tests their ingenuity and Manylegs tests their self-knowledge.

During the final test, King Boar's test of strength, Maura attempts to rid herself of the PCs by having them assassinated. Her plan backfires and she is attacked by King Boar. When the Characters return, the Maalin proclaim that the spirits have found their quest worthy of the Confederation's aid. Boarhead pledges the support of his Tusks and quickly helps them on their way home, eager to have the source of his embarrassment gone.

THE FIVE TESTS

Aren and Lourie are waiting for the PCs when they wake the next morning, and make sure they eat a hearty breakfast and are in their best form before the tests begin. Both Squats are enthusiastic about the tests; Lourie because he respects the Characters' prowess and Aren because he looks forward to the culmination of Far Sight's predictions. Aren explains that he can say very little about what happens in each test, only that each entails some trial assigned by the spirits. Lourie only smiles, telling that the Characters that they should wait and find out. When the PCs are ready, Aren and Lourie take them to the first of the five tests.

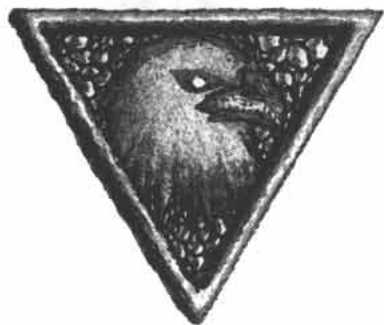


FAR SIGHT'S TEST: WHAT DO YOU SEE?

The group (PCs and Diplomats alike) is taken to the top of the tallest nearby hill, where a tree trunk, denuded of branches, pierces the sky. Each Character in turn is sent through the test. First, the Character is stripped of extraneous clothing, including armor, coats, cloaks and especially belt pouches, which are given to another Character to hold. The PC is then given a large chunk of bloody meat, and told to climb the tree trunk to meet Far Sight, the eagle. The first challenge is how to manage the heavy and slippery meat; climbing with one hand is difficult and dangerous (Climbing, Threshold 5), but Characters who think to hold the meat in their teeth will have a much easier time of it (Climbing, Threshold 3, or the Weaver may elect to waive the roll entirely).

The pole is seventy feet tall, and with the height of the hill, the top is nearly three hundred feet above the floor of the valley below. Tree-carpeted hills stretch out to the horizon, cut by rivers flowing below the leaves. Clouds spill across an impossibly blue sky. The Great River is visible near the horizon, and Capal sits as a dark blot along that line, the only thing marring the breathtaking landscape. An eagle drops out of the sky and lands on the Character's shoulder, regarding her with one wide-open eye. If offered the meat, the eagle wolfs it down and turns back to the Character. The eagle looks out to the landscape and asks, "What do you see?"

If the Character states the obvious, saying "trees" or "hills," the eagle is silent, blinks once, and asks, "Is that all?" There is no 'right' answer: what Far Sight wants to hear is the PC understanding more than the obvious. Answers such as "a strong and mighty nation," "a land of plenty," "the future" or (pointing to Capal) "the enemy" are all acceptable, and most answers will be intrinsically tied to the individual Characters. The only 'wrong' answers are those with a blatant lack of vision or understanding. Far Sight goads the Character until she provides him with an acceptable answer or offends him completely, and then leaps into flight. The test is over. If a Character lies and describes a vision she does not believe, (as Maura does, claiming she sees 'a proud and mighty land unafraid to confront its enemies'), Far Sight leaves immediately, and the next four tests will proceed for the Character as they do for Maura.



THE ONTO'S TEST: COUNTING COUP

For the Onto's test, the Characters and Diplomats are taken to the mouth of a cave. The Squats form a ring around the cave mouth and bring out a tightly-woven basket filled with a viscous and fragrant unguent. The unguent is bear musk; in a whisper, Aren explains that a she-bear is sleeping within the cave with her cubs. The Onto values not just bravery but also finesse, and teaches that a Tusk must be able to gain advantage without her enemies being aware of her presence. The challengers must go into the cave and come out with one of the cubs, preferably without waking the mother bear. After the challenger has proved her bravery and skill, the cub is returned to its mother. The unguent is provided so that the challengers' scent can be masked as they enter, but also so the cubs are not tainted with the smell of humanity.

The cave is not deep, nor is the bear's den far inside. Little light trickles in, and the area where the bears sleep is nearly pitch black. Without stopping to take the measure of the situation, a Character will have difficulty navigating the cave and may very well step on the bears before seeing them (Sneak, Threshold 6). If the Character takes her time, letting her eyes adjust to the lower light level, she can see the uneven ground and proceed with ease (Sneak, Threshold 3, or the Weaver may waive the roll entirely). The she-bear is a massive black bear, lying on her side, encircled around her cubs. If the Characters are gentle, the cubs can be lifted up, covering the cub's mouth so they do not wake their mother. Rough or careless Characters will cause their cub to squeal once; the mother bear shifts in her sleep. If the Character presses on without caution, the she-bear will wake. If a PC wakes the she-bear, she charges from the cave as below.

Maura and the Diplomats go after the Characters have taken their turns. When it is Maura's turn, she disappears into the cave only to come screaming out a moment later, nearly strangling the cub in her arms. The she-bear barrels out right behind her. Maura throws the cub into the arms of a Player Character and continues fleeing. The bear attacks the PC with the cub, or whoever is closest to the cub if it is dropped. The she-bear can be placated if her cub is returned and the humans walk away.

FIRE-ON-THE-WATER'S TEST: LAKE OF SOULS

After a short hike into the hills above Etchim, the Characters are shown a small, dark lake with a miniscule island at its center. Barely visible across the water is a short, squat building set back on the island, flickers of firelight shining from the windows. Aren explains that the lake is the burial site for Tusks who have fallen honorably in battle, and is populated with their spirits. Tusks and chiefs come to this lake to ask the advice of the spirits, or to simply meditate and acquire the wisdom of their ancestors and predecessors. The shrine on the island holds a powerful fire that keeps the restless spirits of the Tusks bound beneath the surface. It is no ordinary fire; it is provided by Fire-on-the-Water, who imbues the flames with his own strength. The shrine's fire must be replenished regularly with Fire-on-the-Water's flames, a task that becomes the Characters' test.

A Kayoo steps forward, bearing a small wooden bowl filled with dancing tendrils of flame. There is nothing in the bowl for the fire to consume; it seems to burn without fuel. He explains that Fire-on-the-Water freely gives of his fire; his test is how the challengers put it to use. He lifts the bowl to his lips and drinks the fire, untroubled by heat, and then looks up at the Characters. His smile is alight with flames weaving inside his mouth. He then blows a stream of fire back into the bowl. He tells them to partake of the Salamander's Fire so that they may take it to the shrine, holding it in their mouths without swallowing. Drinking the flames is like drinking water; once taken, the flames lick the roof of the challengers' mouths. The fire is warm, but not hot enough to burn.

There are a handful of canoes pulled up onto the shore, and even a novice can paddle them across the still lake. The real obstacles are the spirits of past Tusks, who try to rise out of the lake and board the canoes, pulling challengers into the water. The Tusk spirits know that they are participating in the Gauntlet of Spirits, in a test that they completed themselves long ago. One of Maura's Diplomats is the first to be dragged under. The grasping hands can be batted away with the oars, but this slows the canoe's progress, and there are always more hands coming out of the dark waters. Characters may notice that when they exhale or shout, tendrils of flame escape their lips, but it does not seem to diminish the fire inside their mouths. If they try to blow flames at the Tusk spirits, the beings scramble to avoid the fire's power.

The island is little more than a muddy hill, and the shrine is modest, with a number of carvings on the inside walls of a dancing salamander and a brooding spider with far more than eight legs. A brazier is set within the shrine, its flames sinking low. As the Characters blow the fire out of their mouths, the brazier's fire grows brighter and stronger. One of the salamander carvings twists to look at the Characters, and a whispering voice thanks them, and tells them that the fire is now strong enough that the Tusks can no longer reach above the surface of the lake. The trip back to shore happens without any interference.

MANYLEGS' TEST: THE DARKEST PLACE

In the swampy land at the outlet of Lake Etchim sit a series of boxes the length of a man on each side. Ariann escorts the challengers instead of Aren, and stays silent, for the most part. She is annoyed that the Characters have survived to the fourth test, but is certain that Manylegs will dispatch them. She has come so that she can witness their downfall. The only things she explains are that the swamp is sacred ground and that Manylegs will test them inside the boxes. She refuses to describe Manylegs, allowing the Characters to worry over what they will be confronting soon.

Each of the Challengers is thrust into a different box. The boxes have been treated with tar until no light can penetrate inside. Once the lids close, and the PCs are trapped in their individual darkneses, they discover that the boxes are crawling with spiders: webs drift into Characters' faces and individual spiders fall from the lids to crawl across exposed arms and legs. No amount of slapping can diminish the number of spiders that seem to boil out of the woodwork, and soon the Characters cannot tell the real spiders from phantom sensations of spider-legs across their skin. With the lack of light, Characters imagine moving shadows and shapes that are not there. To make matters worse, the floor lurches, and the box seems to be slowly sinking into the swamp. Without being able to see outside, it is impossible to be sure, but the sensation of the floor settling is readily apparent — when uninterrupted by the spiders running across skin. Screams erupt from the other boxes, and gather in strength. This continues until the darkness and fear pushes the Characters into the River of Dream (PCs might roll Dreaming against a Threshold of 6 to notice this transition), where Manylegs waits.



It is difficult to distinguish at first, but slowly, out of the darkness comes a pair of red eye slits. Two more follow, and two more, and two more, until there are too many eyes to count. A spider leg — far larger than the mundane spiders — brushes across the Character's face. A hissing whisper grates, "Welcome to the darkest part of your own soul. This is where the deepest secrets lie." Manylegs then demands of each PC "What is your weakness?" Like Far Sight, Manylegs is not looking for a specific answer, but one that displays understanding. What Manylegs wants, and does not expect to receive, is an answer revealing understanding of one's own foibles and obstacles to overcome, inner failings that the Character knows are dangerous to herself and her companions. If a Character does not provide an appropriate answer, Manylegs mocks her and threatens to eat the imposter, until the Character finds an acceptable reply. If a PC lies, Manylegs only chuckles and strikes out, dropping the Character back into the Material Orb, in the box, to be collected by Ariann. If not, the PC is returned to the Material Orb, feeling strangely comforted, and the box is now empty of all spiders, and all the evidence that they were ever there.

KING BOAR'S TEST: THE HUNT

The final test is administered by King Boar, and is performed with all the challengers together. Each is given a spear and advised to shed any unnecessary clothing before they are led to the opening of a box canyon. The entire Elders' Council as well as a collection of Maalin attend the final test, waiting under a pavilion. Boarhead explains that a pair of wild boars was found and has been chased into the canyon. The challengers must hunt the boar and bring back one of the heads; all those who participate in the kill will be accepted as Tusks.

Maura and her Diplomats immediately separate from the Fallen, vowing to track and kill their boar first. They disappear into the verdant canyon. The vegetation in the area is dense: the ground is covered with creepers, shrubs grow thick along the banks of a small stream, and tall reeds grow in the swampy ground. In such a small area, it is not long before the Characters stumble over boar droppings and can begin to trail the animal (Hunting or Tracking, Threshold 5). The Characters can easily corner the boar against the steep slope of the canyon.



As soon as the PCs' boar is cornered, two Magdalites attack from the trees, first with poison-tipped darts shot from blowpipes. When their limited ammunition is exhausted, they move in with short swords. These are assassins from the order of the Bloodied Rose, and fight well. The poisoned darts compensate for their fewer numbers. When the tide of battle turns against them, they fall back and signal their fellow Magdalites by blowing a whistle. Maura and the other Diplomats arrive three rounds later, hoping to finish off the Characters already softened by the assassins.

The cornered boar, most likely nearly forgotten by the Characters, bolts forward as soon as Maura appears. He dodges past the PCs and Magdalites, leaping into the air to gore her on his tusks. The lead Diplomat falls with the boar on top of her, his tusks and sharp hooves gutting her in seconds. The others from her group blanch at the sight, and those not already fallen flee. The boar turns towards the Characters, takes three steps forward, and then arches its head high, baring its throat to them. The boar will not resist as the PCs kill him; King Boar has ordered him to give himself to the kill, giving his blessing to the Characters' quest.

BOAR'S BLESSING

As the Characters hike back out of the canyon, female screams echo from up the meeting site. When they emerge from the brush, Boarhead and most of the Elders' Council is waiting under the pavilion. Ariann and the Maalin are notably absent, but their location is not hard to deduce. A large closed tent stands nearby, the source of the screams of both passion and pain. The PCs are welcomed back, and those carrying the boar are relieved of their burden. Any wounds are seen to, and Aren offers the Characters his waterskin. No one mentions the Characters' success or failure, or question where the deceased Diplomats are. Any inquiries the Characters make about the tent and its occupants are met with the answer, "The Maalin are communing with the spirits." Boarhead in particular looks pained with the answer, and resolutely looks away from the Maalin's tent.

The cries of the Maalin eventually quiet, and Ariann emerges from the tent, nude and covered with blood, sweat and other bodily fluids. She walks to face the Elders' Council and speaks: "Hear the word of the spirits. Hear the word of Fire-on-the-Water, who attests to the fire within the foreigners' hearts. Hear the word of the Onto, who proclaims that they are brave and alert. Hear the word of Manylegs, Queen of Secrets, who admits that they know their own souls. Hear the word of Far Sight, who has seen the course of time, and tells us that his vision is matched by those who come from the west. Hear the word of King Boar, who speaks to Boarhead, mortal chief of all the Confederation. The cause of the Eighth Tribe is just and right, and requires your support. All the spirits of the Confederation speak with one voice: you must join the Eighth Tribe to attack Capal."

2. The Black Boar

Boarhead only grunts at the message, but Aren happily clasps the Characters' shoulders. Conlan approaches the PCs and offers them his congratulations, saying that he hopes to fight bravely along their sides. Ignac stands conflicted, trying to come to terms with his totem's support of the strangers. He speaks only if spoken to, and puts on a positive face to show his public agreement with the spirits' verdict. Ariann's shoulders slump after the spirits' message is given, and gravitates to Boarhead's side. Her drained voice betrays her fatigue as she quietly confers with her husband. Boarhead then turns to the Characters and says, "You will have your support. My Tusks will meet your army on the northern shore of Lac Pere in ten days' time." Without any more comment, he turns and stalks off towards Etchim.

The caravan is resupplied and a squad of Tusks is called up to escort the delegation back to Lac Pere. A few of the fleeing Magdalites have been found and loaded into one of the wagons, bound and gagged, to be returned to Vimary. The Tinkers find the Diplomats' situation more humorous than anything else. Boarhead refuses to speak with the PCs; his personal guard claim that he is busy mustering the Tusks from villages across the Confederation.

Boarhead is intentionally ignoring the Characters so that he can avoid defining the political relations between the Confederation and the Eighth Tribe (see below). He does anything he can to be rid of them and get the caravan to leave. Aren bids farewell to the group, and says he looks forward to speaking with them again. Lourie accompanies the caravan to Lac Pere before returning to his own village.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Especially with large Player groups, Weavers may find repeating the same test over and over again for each PC to be tedious. The tests may be modified so that they occur concurrently (with five poles and five eagles for Far Sight's Test) or the Weaver may employ non-linear pacing like one might see in a film (describing the landscape below and giving the question to all the Players at once, even if their Characters perform the tests concurrently). Unless the Characters request otherwise, have a different one go first in each test.

Weavers need not ensure that all the Characters pass all the tests; it is only necessary that one of the PCs prove herself worthy. In fact, if some Characters do fail while the others succeed, the accomplishment is all the more emphasized. Especially towards the end of the Gauntlet of the Spirits, the Characters' right to speak before the Council becomes less important, as the spirits' support begins to focus on their quest, and not the political etiquette of the Confederation. Should all the PCs fail, or fall before the Magdalite attack, Boarhead gleefully pronounces the Fallen and the Nation weak and unworthy, and the war will be fought on two fronts — Capal and the Confederation at once.

Use the game statistics in the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, page 191, for the bear in the Onto's test.

For the Magdalite Assassins, use the Bloodied Rose template in

Word of the Fates, page 99 or the Magdalite Diplomat Template with the following adjustments: AGI +2, Archery 3/+2, Combat Sense 2/+1, Melee 2/+2. Their weapons are tipped with Heartspray poison, a Fatal Toxin with a Potency of 6 and Onset Time of two rounds. Use Diplomats, unmodified, for the other Diplomats.

ALLIANCE AND VASSALAGE

One curious implication of the events in *Black Boar* is the PCs' new relationship with Boarhead and the Confederation. The Characters took the tests to prove themselves worthy of speaking to the Council, but because the spirits of the Confederation intervened, no further debate was necessary. The Characters proved the worthiness of their quest as well as their right to be heard.

The PCs still took the tests to become Tusks, however, and some succeeded. It is uncertain where this leaves them. Are the PCs now Tusks? Do they owe any allegiance to Boarhead? As representatives of the Eighth Tribe, have they committed all of the Fallen to vassalage to Boarhead? It is doubtful that Boarhead could enforce any of these obligations, but such bonds work both ways. Does this enable the Eighth Tribe to claim a seat on the Elders' Council? Alternately, the spirits advised Boarhead to 'join the Eighth Tribe and attack Capal.' Do they mean that Boarhead must only assist the Eighth Tribe in its current war, or should he *join* and become a member of the Eighth Tribe?

The nature of the alliance between the Confederation and the Eighth Tribe is amorphous in many ways. Boarhead, for his part, is savvy enough to realize the longer it remains undefined, the better chance he has of turning the uncertainty to his advantage. This is the reason why he avoids further discussion with the PCs. If the army is severely weakened after capturing Capal, Boarhead will be in a prime position to claim Vimary as yet another part of his growing Confederation.

HOOKS

The following hooks fill the time between *Black Boar* and *The Mistresses*. They can be used as background information, or can be played out to give the Characters a deeper involvement in the war. Additionally, if the PCs for some reason miss the events of *The Mistresses* then the Weaver can flesh these events out to replace that quest with military conflict.

HOOK: UNITED WE STAND

With the successful alliance with Boarhead complete, the formation of the Army of Liberation begins in earnest. While the PCs were out making alliances, those at home have been busily fighting, politicking and backstabbing over the formation of the army. Once in a while they even get enough free time to do something useful, such as recruit fighters and start looking at what kind of resources the army is going to need. Despite the

difficulties faced by the leadership, however, most of the Fallen are very eager to help in the war effort, and no few Tribals are equally eager to end the power of the northern Z'bri once and for all.

Following the PCs' triumphant return, the city of Hom has become a buzz of constant activity. The city bustles with all able-bodied persons doing their best to aid in the preparations for war and the march against Capal. A hum hangs in the air, with tension etched upon the faces of the Fallen and the Tribals alike. Many seem to be keeping busy with the preparations, attempting not to think about what lies ahead, while those who participated in the war against the H'I Kar retell stories of that battle, attempting to lighten the mood of those about them. Doomsayers move through the streets, not saying a word to any, while Jackers squat in small groups sharpening weapons and intently discussing tactics.

The Lightbringers attempt to work with all sharing words of encouragement for the Fallen and Tribals, while the Herites go about their business, with suspicious looks for all who look their way. Though all of the people are doing their part, grumbling can be heard throughout the city, regarding the length of time it will take to get to Capal. Speculations run from two months to four months, and in both cases many feel that it is quite a distance to march to do war against the Z'bri. These grumbings are usually the means to mask the fears that all have about such an endeavor. A war so far from home has many of the residents trying to decide whether this really is a good idea or not.

With the war being fought so far from Vimary, and with the very real need for people to stay home and rebuild so that the army can stay supplied (and have a safe place for retreat should things go wrong) the Army of Liberation ends up having less than half the numbers of Tribals than the Army of the Crusade (as seen in *Revanche*). While the numbers of Fallen actually increases (to 1,100) and the numbers of Joanites stays roughly the same (2,600), the other Tribes simply cannot afford to send more members. It is thus a fairly small army that marches out to meet the support promised by Boarhead.

When the Army of Liberation meets up with Boarhead's Tusks they find themselves unprepared for what they face. Almost a full 5,000 Tusks and a further 8,000 squat warriors stand ready to

join the army. Before the new, combined force can even march everyone realizes that an organization, including a leadership structure that everyone can agree on, is going to have to be arranged in order to keep this massive force from falling apart at the seams.

SCENES

Bringing the Tusks: Once Boarhead has collected his troops and sent them to the meeting, the PCs will need to lead them to a place where they can join the Army of Liberation on the road to Capal. Doing so, however, is easier said than done. While the Tribals and Fallen are used to the Vimary Squats being cringing and subservient, the Tusks are strong and proud. What's more, they do not see themselves as coming to join the Army of Liberation, they see the Army of Liberation coming to join them as the Confederation does have more numbers, after all!

Many of the Tusks also know that Boarhead is not completely happy with the alliance, and do everything in their power to be sure that the Nation must make all the concessions to Boarhead. The group sent to bring the Tusks from their gathering point on Lac Pere to the Army of Liberation on the north bank of the Great River just north of the Cristal Mines have their work cut out for them. They face racism, rebellion, the difficulty of moving a large body of troops across rough terrain, and several skirmishes with rogue Z'bri who haunt the woods. The Characters will have the opportunity to make alliances with Lourie, Nathan and Foller (pp. 93-96), and start to face the troubles that Deskaheh (page 93) causes with his constant attempts to take command.

The High Command: After the Army of Liberation joins with the Tusks, it quickly becomes obvious that a new command structure is vitally necessary. The triple army model that the Nation used during the Crusade will not work with the varied and difficult nature of the new armies' troops, or the rough terrain they must cross. It is Mek who develops the new organization of the army, stealing techniques that Jacker cells have been using for years. All groups are organized into cells of ten soldiers. Each cell is led by a lieutenant. In turn, ten lieutenants report to a captain, whose one hundred warriors



2. The Black Boar

form a company. (Many cells and companies contain veterans of the War of the Crusade, and usually name their force for the group they fought with in the old war — so the Jackers, the White Guard and so on still exist as named fighting forces, but their composition and size have changed drastically from previous engagements.) Ten captains report to a commander, who leads a thousand-strong legion. The ten commanders that form an Army then take orders from two generals (one for each army), who will report to Joan Herself, acting as the High Commander of the Army.

Of course, all of this is easier said than done. The political infighting over who is accepted into which legion, company, cell, and who takes the positions of leadership is intense. It isn't limited to words, either, as several blows are exchanged and duels are fought. PCs who did well in negotiating with Boarhead, and passed the tests of the spirits, may be surprised to find a group of Tusk captains coming to them and asking one of their number to act as their commander. At the same time PCs who fought in the War of the Crusade will almost certainly find themselves being pushed to take roles as captains or commanders of Fallen or Fallen/Tribal companies. How the PCs deal with the pressures of the situation, and how they negotiate the demands of various groups, will set the tone for the rest of the army. If the PCs can negotiate smoothly and get various groups to work together peacefully under their command, even to the point of inviting Tribals or Tusks to join their cell, then others will follow their example. If, on the other hand, the PCs allow the tensions between Tribal, Fallen and Tusk to get out of hand, then others will react with similar carelessness or violence.

ARMY NUMBERS

Group	Number of Troops	Role
Agnites	150	Scouts
Dahlans	795	Snipers, Scouts, Raiders
Evans	1,200	Regular Troops, Supply and Support
Joanites	2,600	Elite and Regular Troops
Magdalites	250	Assassins, Spies, Liaisons
Shebans	350	Regular Troops, Military Police
Yagans	500	Regular Troops, Dream Warriors
Fallen	1,100	Shock and Elite Troops
Keepers	75*	Shock Troops (gunners), Special Assignment
Tusks	4,780	Elite Troops (musketeers and raiders), Scouts
Squat Warriors	8,375	Regular Troops

* The number of Keepers can be anywhere from 25 to 250 - depending on how well the PCs, or other negotiators, did in *Keeping the Keepers*, p. 15.

In addition, Joan, Agnes, Magdalen and Dahlia march with the army. Tera Sheba and Eva are still in the Firmament, and Baba Yaga remains behind to guard Vimary.

Birth Pains: While the PCs are dealing with their own difficulties with leadership and the political/racial tensions within the army, Joan drops a bombshell that stuns many of the Tribal members of the army. Rather than taking the position of High

Commander, as Mek had planned, She steps aside and appoints Mek as the High Commander of the Army of Liberation. Calling a meeting, She announces before the assembled army that Mek has proven himself to be one of Joshua's scions, and has established himself as a leader and general, both before and during the Crusade. While assuring the army that She will be with them, and will fight with them, it is not Her time to lead, and Mek is the one best suited to take Her place as High Commander. Should one of the PCs have established herself as a war hero and leader of similar stature and responsibility over the course of long-term play, however, it is entirely possible to replace Mek with that PC from here on in. Some descriptions may need to be altered somewhat to reflect the PC's motivations in Mek's place. Under his command Nostra Guy'on and Lourie are named generals. The fact that a "tribeman" is High Commander enrages many of the Tusks, and the fact that a Fallen is High Commander enrages many Tribals. Most of the Fallen are caught flat-footed, completely unprepared for Mek's sudden rise to power.

In the three days after Mek is named high commander two separate sets of conspirators attempt to assassinate him. The first is a group of Tribals, led by Kalina Tarakin, who publicly support Mek in order to get close enough to poison him. Kalina is working with a Bloodied Rose, Marisa Overmkin. Marisa is unsure about the wisdom of murdering a man backed by a Fatima — even if he is Fallen — and her hesitance may be noticeable to watchful PCs. She can be seen arguing with Kalina just before Kalina starts to insinuate herself into Mek's command circle. Also, after their own experiences with the Magdalites in *Black Boar* the PCs may be wary enough of sudden Magdalite attention to start investigating on their own.

Kalina is not stupid and does what she can to avoid scrutiny; however, she has little time and is under a great deal of pressure. She knows that if Mek has time to secure his position then assassinating him later would only make him a martyr, and would likely end in her own death. Her hurry to slip a poison Marisa gave her into Mek's drink may cause her to slip up. Even if Kalina successfully poisons Mek, Marisa could be convinced (or threatened) into providing an antidote.

More on Kalina Tarakin can be found in *Word of the Fates*, p. 9.

For Marisa Overmkin, use the Bloodied Rose template in *Word of the Fates*, p. 99, or the following statistics: AGI +2, FIT +1, PER +1, PSY -1. **Skills:** Athletics 1/+2, Combat Sense 2/+1, Disguise 1/0, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Melee 3/+2, Notice 1/+1, Sneak 1/+2, Throwing 1/+2.

The second group is a group of Tusks led by Deskaheh (*Weaver's Resources*, page 93), who try to lure Mek into a duel, or simply surround him and murder him. Deskaheh has five Tusks who are loyal enough to him to back his play against the High Commander. This group lacks subtlety, but Deskaheh has many friends among the Tusks, and when he starts to publicly stir them against Mek they listen. Deskaheh's first tactic is to tell the Tusks they should not follow a non-Tusk, and he then starts to publicly insult Mek's honor. To the Tusks this is a grave thing, and Mek will lose face (and thus the ability to command) if Deskaheh is not stopped — either through violence or counter-oration.

PCs could defend Mek's honor, or attack Deskaheh's status until he is forced to challenge them. If Deskaheh cannot draw Mek into a fight (and if he survives a fight with a PC), he will lose patience and will gather his loyal Tusks and surround Mek as the High Commander is making a tour of the Tusk camp. Though Tusks other than his five will not join the attempt, they will not stop it either, as they wish to see what Mek is made of. PCs must stop the attempt, but do so in a way that does not make Mek look like a weakling in need of protection.

If the PCs are not around or choose not to intervene then Mek will make a brave showing, killing three of the Tusks before being seriously wounded. Some of the more loyal Tusks will step forward to beat off the rest of his attackers at this point, but Mek is effectively restricted to policy for quite a while afterwards.

Through all of these events Mek tries to maintain a policy of fair play and clear thinking. He does his best not to favor any group over another, while still keeping his friends loyal and his enemies under control. Hal Ninva travels with him to advise him, but most of Hal's advice is aimed at securing his own position. Politically savvy PCs who have a good history with Mek could advise him, either officially as members of his command staff or unofficially as friends 'just stopping by for a drink.' PCs doing so will have to help Mek deal with the multiple tensions of the army. The Tusks don't get along with the Tribals, and only like some Fallen. The Nation wants to regain its position of dominance, but both the Fallen and the Tusks want to keep their positions. It will take patience, and probably several meetings with leaders such as Lourie and Nostra Guy'on, to get the army to settle in under Mek's command.

AFTERMATH

Depending on how the PCs perform in these events, they could end up having very high positions within the army. Lourie could, possibly, even be convinced to step aside in order to let one of the PCs (the 'chosen of the spirits') take his place as general. However, PCs should think carefully before attempting to make such a step, as the position of general would tie the PC down in a number of ways, and removing Lourie from his position could very well cause a mutiny among the Tusks. Weavers and Players should work together to figure out where the PCs end up. Some Weavers may be comfortable with the PCs commanding whole legions, others may want the PCs to remain basic soldiers, involved on the front lines.

HOOK: THE LONG ROAD

Once the troubles of setting up and organizing the Army of Liberation are taken care of, the army still faces a very long, hard march to Capal. The land between the two cities is rough and broken, crossed by rivers and thick with brush and forest. While some areas are lush and growing, many others have been stripped barren by the Z'bri and will leave no forage for the army. As a result the leaders have to keep a long supply line, going all the way back to Vimary, while trying to keep their undisciplined and inexperienced troops moving through difficult territory.

It quickly becomes obvious to the leadership that the army is going to have to use the blacktop that runs along the north bank of the Great River if they are going to make it to Capal in one group (and even then it's difficult — hands and even whole companies occasionally get lost). The problem with using the blacktop is that the Z'bri know it and the land it goes through better than the Tribes, and so are able to make constant ambushes and set traps all along its length.

The trip is arduous, but there is plenty of time to include character interaction and to introduce some NPCs who will become important in the next little while. Nathan (p. 95) and Valida (p. 93) both play a part in the PCs' future, and introducing them now will build a sense of continuity through the campaign.

SCENES

Never Get Rich: The blacktop running from Vimary to Capal is no longer in the shape it once was, having been worn away, overgrown and shattered in many places. As the Army of Liberation needs an open, clear path to keep together on the long march to Capal, the first order of business is for everyone to set to and help clear the road. Many of the younger Tribals, their minds full of the glory of battle, nearly revolt when they realize that they will have to spend the next few months performing the terribly ignoble tasks of digging, chopping and hauling. It's only when the cooler heads of veterans explain to them how important the grunt work is that they settle in to work. PCs in command positions find their troops grumbling and sullen, and may have to step in to put down mutinies in order to keep their troops working.

Things get worse when the heat of early summer starts to set in, and mosquitoes rise out of the river in sky-blocking numbers. Fevers start to tear through the army, leaving many sick, though not in danger of dying. PCs who keep their eyes open notice that though Tuscarora warriors do get sick, they never stay sick for long or develop high fevers. PCs who respectfully inquire about the matter may be able to get the Tuscarora to share their secret — a concoction made of the bark of certain trees and mashed berries that reduces fever and pain. Armed with this concoction the PCs and the Evan Nurses who are traveling with the army can prevent the fevers from becoming a plague.

2. The Black Boar

Ambush: As the Characters come around the western edge of Lac Pere the Z'bri begin their offensive by ambushing the vanguard of the army. Never striking in large numbers, and always waiting until the army has its guard down, the Z'bri strike at parties working on repairing and clearing the road, or at those who have moved away from the main army to forage. The Z'bri attempt to take the bodies of those they kill, skinning them and setting up the corpses impaled on rows of spikes that line the sides of the blacktop all the way to Capal.

Mek and the other commanders quickly take action, assigning several companies — including the reformed Band of the Red Hand (Jacker/Joanite/Yagan skirmishers), The Black Masque (Dahlian Reavers) and DELTA (Keeper gunners) — as a counterstrike force. These companies spend days at a time away from the main army, engaging the enemy in battles as brief as they are brutal. Though they manage to kill a few Lords, most of the enemies facing the companies are Gek'roh chained to lions, wolves, and in a few terrible cases hordes of frogs and lizards. (Base stats as Hiayshar, **Vimary**, p. 121, or use the following statistics: Aggressiveness 5, Damage/turn 5, Damage Threshold 30, Random Horde Size 6D6, Basic Horde Size 200.)

Digging In: While the outrider parties are able to keep the Z'bri at a distance from the main army, the caravans that bring supplies from Vimary to the army outposts take heavy losses. As a result, and in part looking to a future where there is regular travel between Vimary and Capal, Mek orders a series of small defensible fortifications built every ten clicks along the blacktop. Built on raised mounds, constructed with timber walls with wrecked autos for gates, and defended by one to two cells each, these fortresses act as shelter for caravans that come under attack, as well as bases for regular patrols of the area. PCs with engineering or planning skills can aid in the construction of these forts.

Building the fortresses slows the army's progress to a crawl, but when the caravans start coming through more regularly (meaning everyone gets enough to eat) the complaints stop quickly. However, just before the army reaches the Living Bridge, several of the fortresses are sacked and destroyed. The attacks happen so quickly that no one survives, and the army begins to fear a major Z'bri presence to their rear. If PCs choose or are sent to investigate they find that the destroyed forts had their walls toppled, allowing the Z'bri warriors to storm in and massacre the surprised defenders. The Z'bri are using a Gek'roh that is built of nearly a dozen serf bodies, made to look something like an immense burrowing creature. The Gek'roh, Trall (page 99), acts as a sapper, digging out the loose earth under the walls so that they fall before the defenders can figure out what is happening. In order to stop the raids the PCs must track down the Gek'roh and its handlers and destroy them all.

CLIMAX

The largest battle before the walls of Capal are in sight comes from the Living Bridge. This monstrous structure, built of the bodies of tens of thousands of humans and imbued with a tortured, nightmarish life by their bound souls, stands at the eastern end of Lac Pere. When the army sights it, the command-

ers come to a quick agreement that they cannot leave it standing. Its existence is an affront to all of humanity, and just as importantly it could be used as a base for the Z'bri to strike at the army's back. The Army of Liberation thus makes its first major strike by destroying the Living Bridge. (For more on the Living Bridge see **Into the Outlands**, page 69.)

Mek decides to strike at the Bridge in much the same way that the Army of the Crusade struck down the Ziggurat, by combining Tribal siege weaponry, Keeper explosives and Synthesis. Tribal and Tusk engineers set up trebuchets on the north bank of the river, and start to bombard the bridge with burning oil drums that the Keepers help them fashion. After a few days of that, Keepers and Fallen take Thunder Canoes to place explosive charges against the bridge's supports. At the same time the Priests of the Tribes and Fallen use Synthesis to cloud the movements of the miners, and to weaken the mind and spirit of the bridge itself. PCs can easily find assignments in any of the groups involved in the assault, depending on their skills and abilities.

Luckily for the army the Bridge is only lightly defended by Z'bri, but the Bridge itself does have several built-in protections. The most dangerous of these are the Scray Swarms (**Tribe 8 Rulebook**, page 193) that house within. Though the Bridge does not actively control these drones, they do consider it their home, and an attack on it brings them out like hornets from a kicked nest. The Bridge is also armed with giant acid-spitting mouths, poisoned nipples, and (much to the Tribes' horror) is able to move its vast bulk. Though it cannot rip free of its moorings or walk, it can cause itself to sway violently from side to side and up and down — so much so that it can smash boats that get too close to it.

When the Bridge's defenses have been overcome enough for the Keepers to plant their explosives, the Army begins a combined assault that brings the Bridge down. Before it falls, however, it manages to twist itself about like the spine of a great snake, and attempts to fall upon those surrounding it rather than collapsing into the Great River.

AFTERMATH

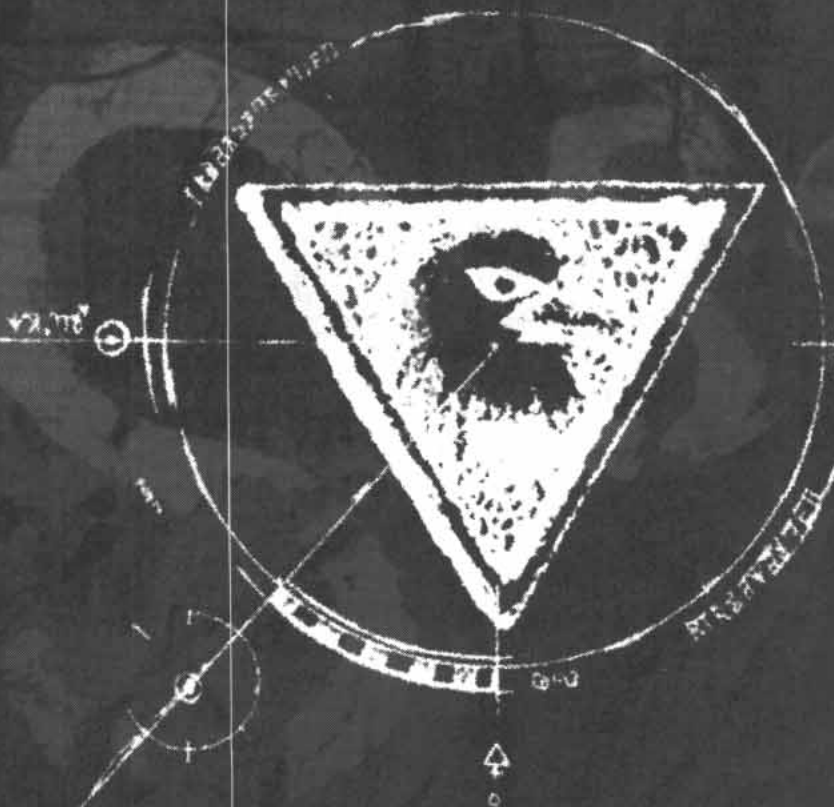
The Capal Z'bri are dismayed by the speed with which the Army was able to destroy the Living Bridge, and many of the Z'bri return to Capal in order to form up an army formidable enough to stand against the Army of Liberation. Though raids and ambushes continue, the next months of rebuilding and fortifying the road to Capal proceed with relatively few casualties.



Chapter Three: The Mistresses

You say that we should be worried. I say that the Fatimas are working with us on this one, and that they will ensure our success. Remember the H'l Kar. Remember the Camps. The Fatimas wish us to wage this war, and wish us to win this war. This means that they have everything in hand, and are already weakening the Z'bri for us. Once we arrive at this Capal, the Z'bri will easily be defeated. The Fatimas want us to succeed, and succeed we shall.

- Aerin, Joanite Warrior, said to Chloe, Fallen Doomsayer, during the march towards Capal



WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The Mistresses begins once the Army of Liberation has traveled past the ruins of the Living Bridge towards Capal itself. This Quest focuses upon events occurring some distance from the moving troops, which nevertheless have a vital impact on the outcome of the war. Act One, *Words from the North Wind*, begins during the march to Capal. Two of the Tusks who traveled back with the PCs from the Confederacy will seek them out, with word from the Maalin. They have been assigned to work with the PCs to ensure that the war against Capal is a success. One of Boarhead's Witch Women has had a vision detailing the catastrophe that will ensue if the alliance between Capal and a distant place called Hattan is allowed to stand. The Maalin have also put the Tusks in touch with a Sanjon Keeper who has information detailing a Hattan trade ship that recently set sail for Capal. As Boarhead does not wish a war with Hattan, the Tusks are to aid the PCs in doing everything in their power to sour relations between the two cities. To this end, the Tusks would like to spy upon the ship, then stop it from returning with its cargo in the hopes that it will weaken the bonds between the two evil cities.

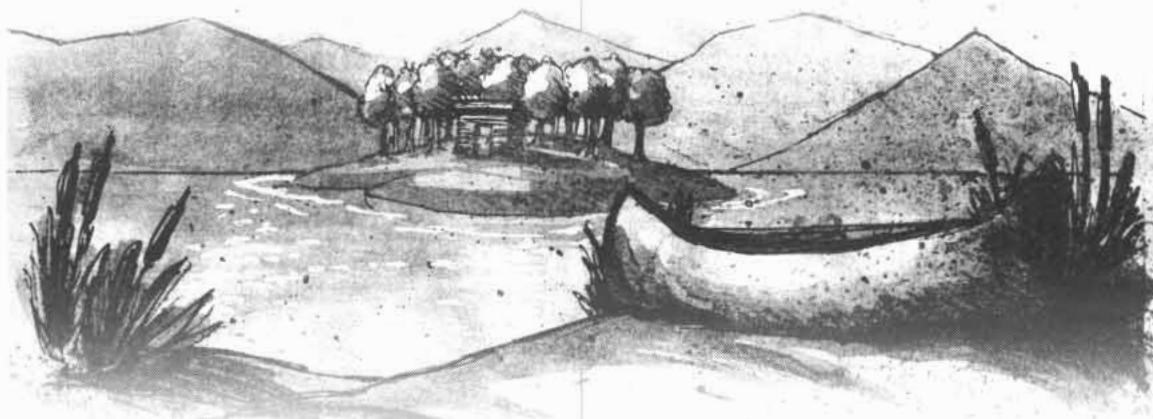
Between the two Acts, the PCs are free to undertake any actions that they believe will aid in the disruption of Capal's trade activities. During the first Act, they receive information from one of the trade ship slaves indicating that a caravan has set out for Capal at the same time that the ship set sail from Hattan. As this land caravan will be carrying food for the serfs of Capal, and other such goods, stopping it could aid in weakening the serfs of Capal, ensuring that they are less effective during the war.

Foller suggests that the PCs disguise themselves as Oneida Warriors, with clothes captured from the caravan, and strike at various groups of Z'bri in the lands surrounding Capal. This will sow further confusion into the ranks of the enemy, making them suspect betrayal. Acts such as this — and whatever creative additions the Players can develop — are an integral part of the battle to drive a wedge between the allies.

Act Two, *An Unlikely Ally*, occurs once the PCs have seen some measure of success (or failure!) with their covert missions. In this Act, as the PCs are returning to join back up with the marching army, an Oneida Warrior approaches the party. This Oneida Warrior and his band have been watching the PCs' actions since they took action against Hattan, and come to offer them a deal. The resolution of this Act will rest upon the shoulders of the PCs, and whether they are willing to deal in the present with a potential future enemy. It is a tricky situation, as the PCs are outnumbered in hostile territory, and have to weigh their personal needs against the political good of the Nation. Should they decide not to deal with him, he is intent on returning to the Mistress of Hattan and informing them of what has transpired here in the lands around Capal at the hands of the PCs. If they work with him, however, he can ensure that Hattan and Capal break apart completely and permanently.

Both of the Acts in *The Mistresses* place the PCs in a position to aid the war effort. The thing which is most needed, in terms of strategy, is for the PCs to run a guerilla campaign against the trade routes between Capal and Hattan. They have to capitalize upon the small amount of time they have been given — between two and four months, depending on when the Tusks come to them. Weavers must decide when the PCs start out based on how much of the march they wish to play. If the PCs leave early they will have more time to complete the events of the Quest, but will miss the battle at the Living Bridge. If they leave after that battle, however, they will be constantly pressed for time and continuously on the run.

Due to the time frame involved, speed is of the essence in *The Mistresses*. A small group is ideal, as they can travel more quickly and move through the Z'bri lands in secrecy. PCs may want to seek out someone with the ability to manipulate Motion, if none of them are capable. Motion will allow them to cut their travel time down considerably, and permit the group to attempt much more within the time period they have. *The Mistresses* should focus upon cunning and stealth, as the PCs will not have the necessary numbers to engage in full-on combat. Due to this focus on time within the Quest, the Weaver is encouraged to make the PCs feel as if they are always in a hurry to accomplish their task. They should feel that there are always more things that they could be doing with the time they have.



3. The Mistresses

As a great deal of the Quest involves the Characters traveling through wild areas, some resources for wilderness encounters are provided in the *Traveling Seeds* section to be used as encounters during the trek through the Outlands. The comfort of a large army at one's back is lost as they move further away, and soon the PCs will be alone against the world æ a familiar situation for some, but unnerving for others.

The success of the PCs within *The Mistresses* directly impact upon the success of the army once the siege of Capal has begun. The more that the PCs are able to accomplish within this Quest, the lower the rate of casualties will be for the army. Should the PCs opt not to participate in *The Mistresses*, the casualties will be 25% higher than depicted in *The Forlorn Hope*.

TRAVELING SEEDS

A few months time passes between the Acts, and a number of possible traveling encounters have been provided to be slotted in by the Weaver as deemed appropriate. All of the encounters have been designed for use at any part of this Quest, and can be easily intermingled with group-specific subplots.

Prophecy: On a night when the fog rolls in thickly from the river, and shadows play at being real, the PCs are set upon by a mad man who stumbles out of the fog. At first he freezes in his tracks, watching the PCs around the camp with great suspicion, and then stumbles forward attempting to get a closer look at the forehead of the nearest PC. Once he has assured himself that they are not Tribals (if any Tribals are present, he vanishes again into the fog the way he came), he recites Joshua's Prophecy word for word, whilst warding off any attempts made to touch him. Once done, he becomes incoherent, repeating the word 'pride,' the only word they are able to make out from his ravings, and disappear back into the fog. Any attempts to locate the mad man after this are met with no success. It seems as though he has disappeared into the very fog that spawned him.

Trickster in the Night: The travel through the wilds has its toll on even the heartiest of travelers, and it is during one of the times that the PCs are most exhausted that a form appears within the smoke of their campfire. This spirit claims to be an emissary of the North Winds, and demands that they state their business in his territory. Whatever reason they may give for their presence, the spirit will make each of the party relive a memory that causes them the most guilt. The spirit will then demand that they defend these deeds or thoughts. Regardless of whether they have succeeded in convincing the spirit or not, it will leave. The moment the PCs check on their food supplies, they will realize that half of their supplies have been stolen.

A Cry for Help: While traveling, an escaped Serf stumbles into the group's midst. At first he attempts to fight his way past them, but quickly realizes that the PCs are not Z'bri. Once this realization has dawned upon him, the Serf pleads with the party to lead him to safety away from the lands of the Z'bri. Having escaped, the Serf would rather die than return to his village near Capal. Any attempt to restrain this individual should be met with the sudden onslaught of fury. Though very weak, the Serf fights much like a cornered animal.

Misunderstanding: At any point, should the party be disguised as Oneida Warriors, they can be attacked by one of the local Squat tribes loyal to the Confederacy. This hunting party attacks them, and attempts to take them prisoner for questioning.

A Chance Encounter: Deep in the lands of the Z'bri, the PCs come into contact with a small group of Flemis who have become separated from the rest of the collective, and are in the process of establishing their own identity. Without the reassuring presence of the rest of the hive, these Flemis are extremely confused, and see in the PCs a possible means of establishing some contact with other living creatures. Though the Characters are not Z'bri, these Flemis have decided that they might be able to make a connection with the PCs and could possibly glean something from their understanding of the world.



TIPS AND RESOURCES

Stats for Oneida Warriors: AGI +1, BLD +1, CRE -1, FIT +1, PER +1, PSY -1, STR +1, STA 25, AD 7, UD 4. Skills: Athletics 1/+1, Archery 1/+1, Boating 1/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Intimidate 1/+1, Lore (Dark Mistress) 1/+1, Melee 2/+1, Music 1/-2, Survival 2/-2, Ritual 2/+1, Swimming 1/+1, Throwing 1/+1. Equipment: Short Swords (AD + 8), Bows (*8), Hatchets (AD + 6).

Stats for Tusks: Use Nathan's stats from page 95.

The Flemis use the following stats: FIT +1, PER +2, PSY +1, WIL +4, HEA 1, STA 30, AD 3, UD 3. Skills: Camouflage 1/0, Dodge 2/0, Intimidate 3/0, Notice 3/+2, Speak (Tribal) 2/0, Speak (Tusk) 2/0, Sundering (The One Thought) 3, Survival 2/0

The lands surrounding Capal are twisted and often dead, though the effect fades the farther one gets from the city. Though the Characters should have arrived in the first few weeks of summer, the sky seems to maintain a heavy shade of gray, which darkens angrily over Capal. The threat of downpour seems to threaten daily, but such life-giving rain never comes. Bloated insects move throughout the lands, seeking any possible source of food, while natural animals of any description seem scarce. The few animals that may be seen in these lands are twisted in some manner, a mockery of what they once were.

This pending death of the land does not only pertain to the physical plane, but has also had its affect upon the River of Dream itself. On the fringe of this taint, anyone using Synthesis should feel nauseous and dizzy. As they move closer to Capal this feeling will move to one of overpowering revulsion. Any attempting Synthesis will be unable to take any other actions as they become physically sick. To make matters worse, bands of Koleris and Gek'roh travel throughout these lands.

ACT ONE:

WORDS FROM THE NORTH WIND

We will involve ourselves in the war these Tribesmen wage against the Z'bri of Capal, but I have seen that the road before us is lengthy and rough. My dreams have been plagued with the stench of death. My dreams have been plagued with the cries of the dying. My dreams have been plagued with the sight of warriors fallen on the field of battle. My dreams will come true if we do nothing to stop the alliance of Capal and Hattan. We wage war with the Z'bri; do the Mistresses of Hattan deserve amnesty because their home is so far from here?

The goods they send to Capal ensure that the bloated city of hate will be strong when our warriors arrive, and my deadly nightmares will be fulfilled. If we are to succeed, then these shipments must be stopped. There are those who have recently visited our people, who have been found to be true in their words and deeds. These are the ones that must aid us. They are the ones that can stop the Z'bri from receiving these goods. We must seek them in the city of the Fallen. I hope that they hear the truth in our words, and in our actions.

- Witch Woman Lilianna, to Boarhead's Council

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

A *Call to Arms* begins the journey that the PCs undertake to ensure the success of the war. Nathan and Foller, two of the Tusks who traveled with them to Hom, bring word that they have been called by prophecy, along with the PCs, to a great task. *Rampart of Civilization* picks up after the PCs have traveled the wilderness to Sanjon, where the Hattan trade ship is spotted and seized.



A CALL TO ARMS

Once the PCs return to Vimary after *Black Boar*, those with have a high Dreaming or Synthesis score (2 and up) begin to have visions and dreams of a great black boat sailing across a body of water so vast and deep that no bank or shore can be seen. The boat itself sails through a haze in their dreams, and a feeling of terror precedes it. Over the following nights details get added to the dream, images of Koleris Lords — giant monsters of rage and hate — arming themselves with a few, then a dozen, then a hundred weapons. The next night shadowy figures far to the south can be seen crafting the weapons, and the red gleam of Heartstones shines about their necks and heads, great chains of them worn like necklaces and crowns. The main image in all of the visions, however, is the ship which sails the black water between the Koleris and the shadow smiths.

Not long after the dreams become strongest, Nathan and Foller arrive seeking the PCs. Nathan and Foller are two of the Tusks who traveled back to Hom with the PCs. With the two comes a Keeper, though her garb seems slightly different from that of the other Keepers situated in Vimary. Nathan and Foller introduce the Keeper as Miriall, who they say has been sent to help them with a task entrusted to them by the Spirits and Leaders of the Confederation. Foller, the more vocal of the two Tusks, informs the PCs that a Maalin has had a vision, and declared that the PCs must travel with them if they are to ensure that the war goes favorably. That they must travel from Hom to the Sigil Hill, where they will be able to spy upon a trade ship, which should be leaving Capal shortly. Foller states matter-of-factly that the Fallen came to his people for aid, and that the Confederacy has agreed to help them in the war against Capal. As their allies, they intend to win the war, and it is time for the Fallen to fulfill their role in this alliance by joining them in the travel to the Outlands.

Boarhead's Council has indicated that the shipping of goods between Capal and Hattan must be stopped. They have also strongly stated that the Confederacy has agreed to do war with the Z'bri, and not the Mistresses. Should Hattan enter into direct conflict with the Army of Liberation, then the Confederacy of Boarhead will no longer be able to help them in the war. Foller indicates that if they can make it in time, they might be able to stop the trade ship from returning to Hattan. Speed is of the essence, and they will only travel with those that the wise woman has chosen.

If the PCs refuse to listen, or if they want the Tusks to come with them to the High Command to get permission to leave, then the Tusks gladly go to Mek (if the Army is underway) or the High Council (if the PCs are still on Vimary) in order to get the Characters officially assigned to help them. Mek is glad to have them go once he hears the full story, and encourages them to take control of the expedition and see that it is done right. The High Council on Vimary would do the same, for political reasons, but would be less supportive of the PCs. Mek or Nostra Guy'on would both see it the same way in the end, however — though the Army will be able to hurt the Z'bri in the field, the Lords at home in Capal are currently able to build up their forces, calling on various allies to bring them extra resources. Only by disrupting this trade will the Army be able to successfully carry out the siege.

The PCs are given a short period of time to prepare for the journey, but it is evident that the Tusks and their Keeper companion are anxious to be underway. As both of the Tusks are very superstitious, they are reluctant to allow anyone other than the PCs to travel with them. Foller grudgingly agrees to allow others to join them, however, should the PCs push this matter and personally vouch for their companion's conduct.

Once the PCs are prepared to leave, Miriall leads the party to the South Tier Bridge. The trip is long and arduous, with many small portages needed along the way. The summer weather stays clear, for the most part, but rainstorms force the group to take shelter where they may. Wild beasts roam free along the wooded shores, and abandoned Z'bri fortresses rise high into the clear sky. Food is plentiful along the route, if the party is brave enough to venture into these long-forgotten forests. While traveling on the Great River, Miriall cuts the engine suddenly every once in a while, allowing the boat to coast down the river. Should one of the PCs make inquiries, Miriall informs her matter-of-factly that she doesn't want the attention of anything that might be in the area. The closer that they come to Sigil Hill, the more frequently this occurs.

After about a week (Weaver's discretion, based upon the weather and encounters along the route), the river widens and opens into an immense bay. An island about ten times the size of Hom and Haven combined divides the flow in two, the northern branch about half the width of the free-flowing southern fork. Miriall steers for the southern branch, aiming for a gap in the distant land mass that seem to divide the bay from an even greater water. Another island of the same size is visible to the south, and as the small boat navigates the dangerous currents which seem to spring out of nowhere, it is drawn past that silent and green place. The scenery here is like nothing most Characters have ever seen before, the water pulling the boat along in a rushing torrent, and the view before them when the boat shoots between the two long spits of land that form the gap and out into the ocean is enough to make even the strongest Jacker tremble. Miriall hugs the northern coastline for a bit before steering for shore, towards what can only be a man-made harbour. This mountainous island is known as Fonland, and is the easternmost outpost of the Sanjon Keepers.

RAMPART OF CIVILIZATION

Upon arrival at Sigil Hill, the PCs are introduced to Cabot and the Keepers who live in the complex. The initial meeting with the Sanjon Keepers should be one of suspicion on the part of the Keepers, which quickly moves, should the PCs use the proper charm and diplomacy, to one of friendly greetings and genuine offers of hospitality. It should be evident that the Keepers are interested mostly in getting the PCs out of the way for a few hours, so that they can speak to Miriall in private. Cabot is in charge of the group, and brooks no interference from the uppity barbarians (the PCs). Though he's not openly hostile, he also doesn't bother to edit his language.

After they have been fed a sumptuous feast of fish, breads and vegetables, the PCs are shown to rooms, and given some time to rest from their travel. That night, one of the PCs is plagued with dreams and visions that seem to reflect the moves the group is about to make against Hattan. The Weaver is encouraged to give this dream to one of the less combat-inclined Characters, as the remainder of the Quest tends towards the combat-heavy, and non-combat oriented PCs may end up being inadvertently marginalized if care is not taken.

In the vision, the sun stands high in the sky, as an enormous man — at least eight feet in height — staggers from blows delivered by an Oneida Warrior. The many scars upon his back are easily visible as the whip strikes his back again, causing blood to ooze from further wounds. Chained at the feet and hands, it is all that he can do to maintain his balance. Though he is being punished, the man's pride shows through as, jaw locked, and tears running freely down his face, he simply waits. His eyes meet those of the Dreaming PC, and she gets the distinct sense that he is waiting for her arrival. The dream begins to dissolve into darkness, and the final image is that of the blood from the slave's back running over the side of the ship, and into the river. A sense that this man is intimately connected to the ship should also be evident during the conclusion of the dream.

Once the PCs are rested, the Sanjon Keepers take them to a far-viewer, which allows them to see across the vast expanse of the water. Here they have their first glimpse of a Hattan ship, making its way up the coastline towards the mouth of the Great River. This ship appears to be of similar style to those used by the Caravan of the Morning Star. As the ship is still a good distance away the Characters can only make out vague shapes moving about on the deck. The Sanjon Keepers have no interest in helping the PCs to mount a sea offensive, and the Characters must therefore wait for the ship to come closer before raiding it. They have ample time to decide how to proceed, although the

Tusks with the PCs are very insistent that they should stop the ship from returning to Hattan. Nathan explains his reasoning, saying that they must give Hattan ample reason not to continue trade with Capal, and a missing ship might be a good step towards this goal.

The Sanjon Keepers explain, if asked, that they have been observing these trade ships from Ile Danticost, an island closer to the mouth of the river; the same island passed by the PCs on their trip in. Should the PCs decide to raid the Hattan ship, the Keepers grudgingly agree to provide them with a small boat but do not allow the PCs to use Danticost as a staging ground. Boyle indicates that as they use the place to watch the river, they do not wish to bring enemy attention to the island. The PCs are informed that if they wait two nights, the ship will be close enough for the Keepers to get them there by boat. Weather projections that the Keepers can generate suggest that the night will be foggy, which could be of use to them for sneaking aboard the ship. Once the Sanjon Keepers have delivered them to the ship, the PCs will be on their own, and should understand that it is a rather long swim back if things go wrong. The Tusks may come up with some suggestions, but are under orders to take control only if the PCs seem truly incompetent.

The taking of the ship is no small undertaking. The far-viewer can be used to gain information on the ship, as can Synthesis or rituals of various sorts. Encourage creativity in your Players! The Sanjon Keepers provide the PCs with information as well, although many of them seem not to welcome the intrusion. There are fifteen guards on this ship, all Oneida warriors. They seem to be paying a number of visits to the hold, suggesting that an important leader — possibly even one of the elusive Mistresses — may be on board. The Sanjon Keepers have next to no information regarding the Mistresses, but seem to have a healthy amount of fear of them nonetheless. They speak about the oddness of the Oneida ships; it feels as though something is



3. The Mistresses

missing, but the Keepers are unable to put their finger on it. Also, the ship itself seems to be sentient, as one of the Sanjon Keepers says, "it was like the ship was watching us. It wasn't until we passed it by that the feeling faded away." The number of guards alone should be sufficient to give the entire group pause. The PCs and their allies may not be able, depending on the number of combat Characters and the size of the Tusk group, to take this ship by outright force, but may have to rely upon cunning and stealth instead.

STRIKING FROM THE SHADOWS

The boat is immense in size, larger than any of the riverboats seen around Hom. The sides are slippery with seawater, and any plan which involves climbing up them will be made more difficult due to the slickness of the boards (Climbing, Threshold 5). The top deck contains a great number of ropes and pulleys, used to adjust the immense sails. Between six and ten Oneida are on the deck at any given time, and PCs take a -1 modifier during combat on the top deck, due to the cluttered surface and unfamiliar footing.

Steps descend into the hold from the top deck, but the hold is also accessible from the ports along the side of the boat, through which massive oars jut into the water. The portals are about eight feet up from the waterline, and measure half the height of a man. PCs with BLDs of 1 or less will be able to squeeze into one of these portals, providing that the oar is not being used at the time.

Should the PCs decide to make their way into the hold first, instead of taking the more direct method of attack, they will have to make their way to the top deck through very cramped quarters. The hold is filled with long benches, about two thirds of them bearing two Serfs each. The majority of the Serfs are drastically warped, their bodies ending in wide and flat stumps directly below their hips, their upper bodies muscular beyond all reason. They have been mutated for the express purpose of rowing, and seem not to have seen daylight in years. The hold smells foul, of unwashed bodies and excreta, and two Oneida warriors sit in watch over the Serfs. In the midst of all of this can be seen a familiar figure who easily towers over the other slaves, apparently doing the work for the other two serfs at his bench. The galley serf from the PC's dream watches the Characters carefully as the Oneida attack, attempting to gauge their purpose.

Should the PCs dispatch the Oneida, an alarm will be sounded by one of the Serfs nearer to the stairwell. Once the PCs have proved themselves no friends to the Oneida, however, the immense man — Emmanuel — aids them as much as possible, and lays in to the Oneida with long-pent-up fury. Once freed from his chains, Emmanuel will rally the other Serfs to aid the PCs in the taking of the ship. Many will be unable to do more than help hold down the Oneida Warriors, however, due to their strange physiques. There is no sign of anything or anyone who could be the 'Mistress' discussed by the Keepers.

Once combat is over and the ship is successfully in the hands of the party, Foller organizes his group to take control of the

rudder and sails, and steer the ship towards the Keeper enclave in Sanjon. Emmanuel thanks the PCs for their aid, and asks them why they have helped him and his people. Should the PCs indicate that they are preparing for war against Capal, he informs them that an overland caravan is also making its way to Capal, with foodstuffs for the serfs. This caravan should reach Capal within the next dozen days or so. He refuses to speak about the Mistresses, even to answer the most innocuous of questions, and neither bribery nor torture will change his adamant stance.

A decision has to be made as to what to do with the supplies — including some very odd weaponry unusable by human hands — being shipped to Hattan, as well as the augmented Serfs that are on board. All of these Serfs have been manipulated so that they are heavily open to suggestion. The PCs have to decide on a course of action before disposing of the ship. If the Characters have dealt kindly with Emmanuel, he requests transport to shore and a wagon, where he will take the other galley Serfs to meet up with the Tribal army and give them what information about Capal that he can. Before any of the Oneida corpses are disposed of, the Tusks take the clothes from the bodies, saying that they could come in useful later.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

The dream at the beginning of the Quest can be given to either the PC with the highest Dreaming score, or can be divided up among various PCs, each getting a portion. The dream should be urgent enough to get the Characters' attention, but the meaning should not become clear until the Tusks approach them. At that time the talk of trade between Capal and Hattan, and a great ship, should spark the PCs' interest. Though the PCs may want to leave immediately, they should be reminded that they are part of an army now, and should at least let their commanders know where they are going.

More information about Sanjon can be found on page 95. Expanded details about the land between Vimary and the Eastern Sea can be found in *Into the Outlands*, pp. 7-23.

Miriall is a Keeper from Sanjon, and the local dialect of Keepspeak will seem to many as if it is a different language altogether. Any PCs within the party who have Vimary Keepspeak as a language will find it very difficult to understand her, until they have had a few days to adjust to her accent and idioms. Though, it should be noted that the Tusks have no difficulty understanding her, nor any of the other Sanjon Keepers they might meet.

Once the Hattan trade ship has successfully been disposed of, the PCs have the option of either pursuing the overland caravan, which is approximately two weeks' travel from their current location, or beginning a campaign of confusion within the ranks of the Z'bri. By posing as Oneida warriors and attacking, they should be able to keep the forces surrounding Capal confused and chaotic.

Given the nature of the Z'bri weaponry, some pieces of which seem to have Heartstones included in their design, the PCs will have to either take the destructive pieces with them, or hide them somewhere until they can be destroyed properly. Though

the Sanjon Keepers might be willing to take the trade ship of their hands, they will have nothing to do with the weapons, which seem to many to have a distinctly aware, dark and brooding presence about them. The matte black metal blades are designed in such a way as to make it impossible for normal human hands to wield them, or normal human strength to swing them, although strangely enough they can be carried with ease.

Stats for **Nathan** are on page 91, **Foller** is on page 92 and **Miriall's** write up is on page 106.

Stats and write-ups for the **Hattan Trade Ships** and their crews are on page 105.

DECEIT

Should the PCs decide to follow up on the information provided by Emmanuel in this Act, they will have approximately one week to travel from the coast off of Sanjon to an intercept point where they can stop the caravan before it gets to Capal, another week's journey away again. To bypass the roving packs of Koleris Iv'chet, the Tusks will produce the Oneida clothing they took from the Hattan trade ship. The PCs' tattoos, Tribal and Fallen, will have to be disguised somehow, replaced with the markings of the Oneida. If the PCs cross paths with a pack of Koleris, they will be looked over, though they should not be attacked unless one of the PCs acts in a suspicious manner.

The PCs have an opportunity to assault the Hattan caravan just before the Oneida are able to reach the shelter of the woods. The land has slowly shifted from the banks and lowlands beside the Great River through to tall grasses that come almost to the Characters' shoulders, and is making a slow transition into the twisted woods that ring the city of hate. The caravan comprises five Oneida warriors, riding at the head, twenty Serfs pulling the carts that are piled high with food and trade items, and another group of five Oneida at the rear for security.

Assaulting the caravan from the front or the rear directly means that the remaining Oneida warriors will have to cover the full distance to aid their comrades, taking approximately ten rounds. The Serfs remain stock-still, as though frozen in place, while the battle occurs, and the Oneida use the Serfs as human shields as the situation allows. Also, the Oneida pair off to deal with threats, always ensuring that they have the advantage over those they are engaged with.

Those who show the most threat become the focus of the warriors' attention. Much like a pack of dangerous animals, they subconsciously focus all their attention on one individual. Such a combat scene should seem to cover a great deal of distance, as the Oneida are in continual motion, dodging many attacks while moving ever closer to the one identified as the main threat.

The Weaver is encouraged to have the PCs make Combat Sense rolls with the Threshold augmented by the number of combatants that the PC is engaging. At the conclusion of the battle, the remaining Serfs continue to stand in their places, waiting for some indication as to what they should do.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Use the template on page 106 for any of the Koleris that the PCs are unable to circumvent.

Stats for Oneida Warriors: AGI +1, BLD +1, CRE -1, FIT +1, PER +1, PSY -1, STR +1, STA 25, AD 7, UD 4. Skills: Athletics 1/+1, Archery 1/+1, Boating 1/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Intimidate 1/+1, Lore (Dark Mistress) 1/+1, Melee 2/+1, Music 1/-2, Survival 2/-2, Ritual 2/+1, Swimming 1/+1, Throwing 1/+1. Equipment: Short Swords (AD + 8), Bows (x8), Hatchets (AD + 6).

BEHIND THE LINES

If the decision is made to attack roving Z'bri while dressed in the clothing of the Oneida, Foller stresses that they have approximately two weeks in which to wage this campaign, before word spreads throughout the ranks of the Capal Z'bri. Therefore, they should make each strike count. The Weaver is encouraged to make this undertaking as stressful as possible; the PCs have a limited amount of time, they already have the pressure of the time frame given for the arrival of the army, and should be wondering whether the next attack will be their last. They are alone, deep in the lands of the Z'bri, with no help to be found. The Z'bri they are likely to encounter in the outlying regions of Capal, where the grasses become the forests, are bands of Koleris with Gek'roh under their control.

The numbers of such bands differ greatly, though there should be two Koleris for every Gek'roh in each group. As the PCs will have the advantage of surprise, the initial round of combat should be the moment in which the Z'bri adjust to the fact that they are being attacked by their "allies." After which the Koleris unleash the Gek'roh, taking this moment to gain some cohesion in their ranks. The attacks should be neither routine nor easy; the Z'bri are still, for all their losses thus far, immensely powerful enemies that only the most skilled human fighters will be able to defeat. Their Atmospheres warp the world around them, changing hearts and minds to suit their own purpose. The Beasts should never be treated as mere faceless enemies to be cut down four at a time, nor should the encounters be carried out by rote. The Koleris are vicious, brutal and utterly inhuman, all traits which must be emphasized during this segment of the Quest. Should the Z'bri be given enough time to organize themselves, they immediately move to use the terrain to their advantage. Having fought all throughout the surrounding lands, the Z'bri have a distinct advantage, and press this opportunity to the utmost.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Stats for Gek'roh traveling with the Koleris: AGI +3, APP -4, BLD +4, FIT +2, INF -2, PER +1, PSY -1, STR +3, STA 45, UD 13. Skills: Combat Sense 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Intimidate 1/+4, Notice 3/+1, Survival 1/0. Equipment: Claws (AD +8), and a toughened hide (AR 7)

ACT TWO: AN UNLIKELY ALLY

In the here and now, we have to realize that in order to survive we must be willing to do whatever it takes. We march now to war, a war that many feel would be better left to the future, but leaving the sickness to fester is not an option. The sickness will only spread, and will become even more difficult to cure the more time passes.

I say that the success of this, our survival as individuals in this war and the survival of our people, will depend upon how we choose to wage this war. We will win this war if we do everything necessary to ensure our victory. No sacrifice is too small if it means that we are ultimately successful in the end!

Those who fell at the battle of the H'I Kar did so that this day would be realized. Those who fell at the battle of the H'I Kar did so that we would one day know what it means to be free of the Z'bri. It is for all of these reasons that we must do everything necessary to ensure that we succeed. Whatever it takes, we must be prepared to pay that price.

- Hoya, Jacker, during the march towards Capal

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

An Unlikely Ally has only one scene, and only takes place if the PCs kept the weapons that were being carried on the Hattan trade ship. Here the PCs meet with an Oneida, Taain, and his band, the Chosen. Taain and his people have been watching the actions of the PCs since they took the Hattan trade ship, and have come to retrieve the Z'bri weapons that they took. Taain is willing to deal with the PCs in return for the weapons, and will even support the PCs' story about Capal's responsibility for the raid. With the return of the weapons, Taain believes that the Mistresses will finally appoint him to the position of Chieftain. Should the PCs choose not to bargain with Taain, he threatens to take his people back to Hattan with the news of the Tribal and Fallen trickery. The Mistresses will be informed, send the information along to the Z'bri, and all of the work done to date by the PCs will be lost. Convincing Taain not to go means dealing with him fairly, and resorting to violence — especially if the party has already been weakened by encounters with Koleris bands — will prove painful.

MUTUAL SATISFACTION

As the PCs begin their march back to meet up with the army, a distinguished looking Oneida Warrior steps out from the high grasses. Hair beginning to gray at the temples, Taain is older than any of the other Oneida they have probably seen to date. Gesturing for the group to stop, Taain raises his hands indicating that he carries no weapon. In rough but understandable Tribal, Taain describes, in detail, all of the actions that the PCs have taken since they left Sanjon. He indicates that it was his job to ensure that such actions did not occur, but decided that they could be of benefit to both the PCs and his people. He continues, indicating that it is not his wish for the Mistresses of

Hattan to learn what has happened here in the Outlands, and that he is even willing to return to the Mistresses and inform them that the Z'bri of Capal were behind the loss of the ship. For his silence, Taain requests that they provide him with the weapons that were taken from the ship.

If at any point the PCs threaten or make a threatening action towards Taain, he makes a small gesture, and a number of warriors show themselves in the surrounding grasses. The numbers should be sufficient to deter even the most battle-capable PC. Taain says that he cares not what they do with the Z'bri of Capal, as they are nothing in comparison to the Mistresses, and that as such, the PCs should also have a healthy respect for the Mistresses of Hattan as well. Taain is only afraid of the Mistresses, and any threats from the PCs are met with a laugh, followed by the demand that the weapons be handed over. Should the PCs fail to do so, he will return to the Mistresses, and inform them who is truly responsible for the actions as of late. That information will be met with an army of Oneida Warriors and Mistresses, who will come to the aid of Capal. He again indicates to the PCs that he cares not what their ragtag army does to Capal, but that such an army would be unable to survive a battle against both the Z'bri of Capal and the Mistresses. Nathan, of course, is insistent that they simply give Taain what he wants, and send him on his way.

Should the PCs decide not to take Taain's offer, the group turns to leave. Should they not be challenged effectively by the PCs, they return to Hattan, and inform the Mistresses of the army that marches upon Capal, as well as the Fallen and Tusk attacks on their caravans. No Oneida army is present during the battle against Capal, but word will have been sent informing the Z'bri of the pending arrival of the army. The army suffers severe casualties, and will have made an enemy of Hattan.

TIPS & RESOURCES

Taain's write up is on page 96. The stats for his Chosen are on page 95.

THE GREEN LORD

This Seed can be used as a highlight between this Quest and the next. After rejoining the army, Nathan insists upon meeting with the PCs. He demands a private meeting, and proceeds to pass on the following information. In a hushed tone he says that a powerful warrior by the name of Foris (a Hunter, a Z'bri who kills other, 'unenlightened' Z'bri; for more information, see *Horrors of the Z'bri* p. 70), or the Green Lord, has been of great help to the Tusks in past skirmishes with the Z'bri, and is rumored to be near the Leve, a great cliff which holds the ruins of an ancient fortress, and overlooks the city of Capal. This powerful warrior could be of aid to the Fallen in the war. Nathan

will push the subject of recruiting Foris to the cause, but will not continue if the PCs show no real interest in the matter. Any PC Jackers within the group may make a Lore roll, Threshold 5. Success means that they recall once hearing the name of Foris, and that he has been of aid to the Jackers when hunting down Z'bri near Vimary in the past.

THE HUNTERS HUNTED

As the PCs make their way to the Leve, they are set upon by a number of near-mindless Gek'roh, who burst forth from the shrubbery and bushes. This is a hunting party in flight from Foris. The Gek'roh are so maddened with fear that they attempt to go through the PCs instead of around the group, killing any who would attempt to stand in their way. The Weaver should feel free to use a number of Gek'roh to make this scene a real challenge. Once the PCs have been fully engaged, Foris arrives in time to aid them. He does not reveal himself, however, until he has had time to change his appearance. Instead, he attacks from the trees and shrubbery with his bow. Once the battle has been won, Foris takes a few moments to use Synthesis to alter his appearance to his adopted human guise.

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Once in Foris' presence the PCs will have to make a PSY roll against a Threshold of 5, modified at the Weaver's discretion to mesh with a PCs' specific past actions. Being in the presence of a Hunter, Z'bri who have repented their dark and bloody ways, causes humans to remember overwhelming feelings of grief and

sorrow from their pasts. Those who fail their roll become consumed with grief or guilt over a past crime they have committed, and suffer a -1 penalty on all actions while in the vicinity.

Foris appears as a homely young man with startling green eyes, shoulder-length black hair and dressed in a form-concealing cloak inscribed with mystical runes and patterns in various shades of green and brown. A bow made of bone is slung on his back, and a quiver of arrows hangs at his side. Foris' use of Synthesis gives him a +2 to his appearance, raising it from a -4 to a -2.

PCs who use one of the Eminences of Inspiration, Life or Truth realize that Foris is not exactly what he appears to be, or in the case of Recognition, break through the illusions he has created and see his true appearance.

CLIMAX

If the PCs request his help, Foris informs them that he has heard their words but can make no promises of aid at this time. He indicates that their welcome has been overstayed, suggesting strongly that they should return to their people. Foris then moves off into the woods in pursuit of any Z'bri who might have escaped. While it may appear that the PCs have had little to no success in this Seed, their actions have ensured that Foris will, at a later date, become involved in the war.



Quest Four: Legacies

Her road will be a difficult one — forgive Her,
Sisters, where I could not.

- Words of Mary



QUEST FOUR: LEGACIES

When Mary's broken body grew cold, Her sisters took us in with open arms. In particular, the Mother Eva held us to Her bosom in our time of mourning. But eventually She grew weary of our divided loyalty and demanded we put Her before the memory of our Mary. Some of us complied, but many of us held firm in our one, true birthright: the Forgiven.

The Seven Sisters then called a great convocation, casting out one of our own. They called her insolent and lazy; petty and unwilling to accept the rich life Eva offered her. She was the first to Fall, and all because she could not love another as much as her own true Mother.

From that point on we went into hiding, taking on the masks of the other tribes much as Dahlia might. We hid our heritage under the bright colors of Magdalen, manipulated our own gifts to mimic those of Eva and even took on the sins of our Joanite soldiers. We hid our temple and worshiped our lost Fatima by caring for Her cold shell. We have never forgotten our mother, or our purpose, despite the trappings of others.

- Cana Nan'on, Martyr

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The Quest begins with the Characters stationed at Fort Ridge, a defensive hard point protecting a large encampment to the south. Weavers may play through the Prelude below, or simply describe the events of the preceding battle. The lingering Atmospheres and taint of the Z'bri who once inhabited the building at Fort Ridge seeps into the PCs' minds, gradually driving them insane. A Black Marian arrives with his cell to relieve the Characters and recognizes their growing taint. He offers to cleanse them of their corruption, but can only overcome the Z'bri's damage by working directly within the River of Dream. His ritual goes awry, and the Characters must face the spiritual reflections of their own corruption. Unfortunately, the battle leaves the PCs too weakened to return to the World of Flesh.

The pollution in the River of Dream turns the Characters' own rituals against them, sending a horrific vision of failure at the gates of Capal. The Agnite totem Teddy is attracted to the disturbance in the River of Dream, and offers his help to the PCs. Knowing that the army will destroy itself before the gates of Capal, the Characters must seek out the Marians, the only ones capable of purifying the army of the ever-present corruption. They must convince the Marians to come out of hiding, and then support them before the War Council. Agnes offers the Marians Her protection, and under Her patronage Marians reveal themselves throughout the camp. Together they perform a great ritual that prepares the army for the offensive against Capal.

PRELUDE:

THE STAND OF SANT FOY

Hurt by the loss of supplies from Hattan, yet confident in their ability to crush any army sent against them, Capal waits too long to bring a full scale battle to the Liberators. The major field battle of the war occurs at Sant Foy, just barely out of sight of the walls of Capal. The Koleris, disregarding the advice of the Melanis of Capal, march with an army of modified serfs and Iv'chet, nearly mad with the need for blood and fear. Giving in to their bestial natures, the Z'bri attack in a horde with little thought for tactics and control. The Lords, certain of their own strength, decide to crush the Liberators and the Fatimas once and for all. They know that if they can crush the Army today, taking Vimary will be child's play. As a result they are very eager for a victory, and willing to accept high numbers of casualties to achieve their end goal.

The Army of the Liberation, on the other hand, makes no such mistake. Having learned hard lessons from past battles, Mek and the other leaders send out advance troops to find and seize good ground. When the scouts find a near-castle, forward troops from the army rush forward to seize and guard it until the main army can come up and join them. The majority of the army then digs in, while small skirmish units go out to harry and enrage the Koleris Serfs, making them rush into the waiting wall of the Army. For nearly a full day the horde breaks upon the shields of the Liberators in a long, bloody meat grinder. Finally, with the day ending, reserve Liberators, who had been hidden in a wooded area over a hill, strike the Z'bri from behind, killing an important Lord and starting a rout. The Liberators and Fatimas then pursue the Koleris nearly back to the walls of Capal, decimating the Serf and Iv'chet ranks along the way.



SCENES

Seize the High Ground: Once word of the approaching Koleris horde reaches Mek, his first order of business is to send several trusted companies out to find and seize tactically important positions for the army to fortify. PCs can help in this either by scouting out locations, or by leading their company forward of the main army to secure locations the scouts have already found. Either job is very dangerous, as there are advance elements of the Z'bri army striding ahead of the main body, and PCs trying to find and secure a tactical location are going to face attacks from overwhelming numbers of the enemy.

PCs who go scouting will find several good locations, including a hill topped by a large A-framed building from the World Before, a series of ruins leading up to the Great River, and several clearings within the forest itself, perfect for hiding troops for flanking maneuvers. Those who persist beyond even those discoveries, however, find the best site for their purposes — a veritable castle formed by the collapse of a sky-raker from the World Before. The first two floors of the building, which is large enough to enclose most of the Army of Liberation, still stand and are relatively clear of debris, while the rubble from the fallen upper stories has been packed up against the standing walls to form a steep, difficult slope against the four sides. The result is a fortification that can be easily manned, with only a few points of entry that *don't* require the enemy to climb over an extremely steep gravelly slope in order to attack a low wall. After making this discovery, the PCs must then make it safely back to the Army to report their find. Along the way they're attacked by a group of Koleris Iv'chet, equal in number to the PCs, who try to get between the scouts and the Army in order to keep them from reporting.

If the PCs go as advance troops then the scouts will lead them to the fort, which they've dubbed "The Hol of Foy," based on a sign found on the inside wall. The scouts return to their duties, leaving the PCs to hold it until the main army can reach them. At the same time that the Characters move in to secure the location, a group of Koleris Iv'chet, leading Serfs roughly equal in number to the men under the PCs' command, will arrive and attack (Use the stats on page 106.) The PCs must beat them off, secure the location, get a message to the officers about the incursion and then hold their ground until reinforcements can arrive.

Reel them In: Most of the Army will move to whatever location the PCs seize to be their battle ground, although about one-third of the army sets up camp in the wooded areas around the Great River (or just to the north of the low hills) in order to get into a flanking position. The army then digs into its fortified position, setting up and waiting for the Z'bri army. In order to keep the Z'bri maddened and off-balance enough to maintain the Army of Liberation's upper hand, Mek calls for a small group of raiders to ride out against the Koleris Serfs and Iv'chet and harry them until they chase the group back to the fort. While the Koleris Lords might be smart enough to resist the bait, Mek is fairly sure the horde will be angry and hungry enough to come. The Lords, he feels, will be drawn along by their arrogance and eagerness for slaughter.

PCs who take part in this baiting ride out with two full companies, and move up the blacktop towards Capal. There they find the horde still moving forward, but its progress slowing as Koleris and Melanis Lords move among the troops, trying to reign in the madness. The PCs and the troops with them face a difficult balancing act — they must strike the horde hard enough to draw their attention, but without striking so deeply



that they themselves get cut off and overwhelmed. Use of Synthesis is one of their best bets, but becomes difficult once the Z'bri are engaged. If the PCs can kill or wound several Z'bri, especially if they manage to wound a Lord, then the horde will start to turn on them. At that point they should run, leading the Z'bri back to the fortress. If they stand, they will be quickly overwhelmed by the Atmosphere and the power of the Z'bri.

On the flight back to the fortress the PCs have to deal with another menace — the Koleris Chariots (p. 105), which break from the main body of the horde and try to run the PCs down. With their speed and aggressive temperament, the PCs should be hard-pressed to avoid the Chariots. Stopping to fight them for any length of time will let the rest of the horde catch up, and the PCs engage in a rapid running battle with the Chariots, trying to fight the symbiotes without slowing enough to be caught by the rest of the horde.

CLIMAX

Once the horde has been maddened enough to throw itself against the army's entrenched position, the battle begins in earnest. The Army of Liberation is outnumbered more than two to one, and many of the nominal leaders of the Horde are Koleris Lords of significant power. However, the Liberators are in a defensible position (how defensible depends on the PCs' success during their scouting mission and/or securing the discovered location. If the PCs didn't scout, Weavers can assume the "castle" of the Hol of Foy is used), and are backed by Fatimas and the several thousand muskets of the Tusks. The Z'bri are also distracted by the guerilla attacks made on them, and attack with raw savagery and anger but very little tactical sense. The Lords who are present fight intelligently, but are unable to fully control the fury of the horde. Mek counters the Z'bri fury and shocked Liberator morale by moving through the lines, encouraging his men to stay calm, focused and dedicated to the job at hand.

Weavers should play out as much or as little of the battle as seems fun for their own groups. The battle continues through the rest of the day, with the Koleris attacking in an endless, unceasing wave. For most of the Army the day is an endless nightmare of killing, spearing or shooting attacking Serfs, preventing them from coming over the walls, and then doing it again, and again. To avoid forcing reluctant Players go through the endless meat-grinder of the battle, Weavers can have the PCs act as a special relief unit within the fort. The PCs can then respond to reinforce areas where the Z'bri start to break through. They could, for instance, have to save a group of Keepers who run out of ammo, lead a group of Tusks to a strong position where they can fire into the Z'bri flank, have to plug a hole in the wall, or stop a charge against Mek led by a Z'bri Lord. If the PCs do not meet these challenges, then the Z'bri will be able to start punching through the wall, resulting in higher casualties for the Army of Liberation. How many such holes the PCs must plug is up to the Weaver, but it should be enough to challenge the PCs and make them feel the terror and exhaustion of the battle.

Alternately, the PCs could be part of the strike force stationed outside the walls. This group stays hidden in a stand of trees until the Z'bri assault on the fortress starts to flag (in the late afternoon), and then the group attacks the Z'bri along a weak flank. Casualties are high, but when a hero in the group (such as the PCs, or Troy Fenys, if they are not present) manages to kill the Koleris Lord Beracha (see p. 99) the flank breaks and starts to flee back to Capal. PCs who are part of the outside strike force should have to fight through several maddened Serfs, and then a group of Iv'chet who are fighting with some use of strategy, to get to Beracha. The Lord himself fights with cunning and uses Sundering whenever possible.

Mek then deploys groups of Templars, Tusks and Jackers to strike at the retreating horde, and Joan and Dahlia both join the attack. The battle goes on until true night falls, with Koleris Lords struggling to keep control and mount a rear-guard action while the Liberators and Fatimas savage the routing army. PCs who are part of the pursuit should face the Iv'chet and Lords who are setting up the rearguard. By breaking their attempts to regain control, the PCs allow the rest of the Liberators to inflict more damage on the Z'bri army. It can be more fun for the PCs to come up against some organized resistance, as well, since fighting against small, determined groups of the enemy is more challenging than taking down fleeing Serfs from behind.

AFTERMATH

The Stand of Sant Foy leaves the Army of Liberation with 18% casualties, 8% from the Joanites and Jackers who formed the strike force in the woods and the remainder from the defenders in the tower. Though the Liberators are bloodied, they are unbeaten and ready for more. Veterans of the War of the Crusade from Revanche remember the days of that war, and start to speak of the killing that is ahead. All too many of them start to develop a maniacal gleam in their eye when they speak of burning and slaughter; whether the targets are Z'bri or Serfs makes no difference. Though some of the army, especially the Lightbringers and Templars, speak out against such atrocities, the blood madness is starting to sink deeply into the minds of many of the Army. The poisonous Koleris Atmosphere is pernicious and not easy to dislodge.

The Koleris horde is broken by the battle, and their losses exceed 45%, most taken during the rout. Driven to the point of self-destruction by their mindless fury, the Koleris ground themselves to meat against the Liberators' fortifications, and then were mopped up by the pursuing soldiers and Fatimas. The vast majority of the casualties were Serfs and Iv'chet, as the Lords were smart enough to keep from being drawn completely into the meat grinder. Nevertheless, Joan, Dahlia and Agnes were on the field and the Army managed to kill several Lords. The PCs may well have upped the tally as well. During the rout thousands of Serfs mutiny, and flee to the North — away from both Capal and the Liberators. The result is that the Koleris army is in tatters, and is unable to take the field for a second major offensive. The Lords realize they made a mistake, and try to reverse the situation by taking up the defensive and waiting for the Army of Liberation to commit the same mistake as they did, grinding themselves into the mud outside the walls of Capal.

ACT ONE: REMAIN THE PUPPET MASTER'S STRINGS

There is madness here, true madness. It seeps into your mind and drives your limbs, making the dream seem real; fantasy reality; nightmares something to be walked through casually. There is blood on my hands and bone under my feet. I've forgotten how I acquired either.

My own mind is something I no longer understand.

- Kyrt the Free

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The PCs are assigned to defend Fort Ridge, a lone tower once used by the Z'bri overseers of the nearby Serf Fields. The Z'bri left their imprint on the building, which is still infused with their Atmospheres. The Characters' slide into madness is halted by the arrival of Efrem, a Black Marian, who takes them into the River of Dream to purify them with the Marian Aspect of Blessing. In the River, Efrem peels away the corruption from the Characters, creating Shrouds of dark shadow. The erratic currents of the polluted River cause Efrem to lose control of the Shrouds, which lash out at the most obvious targets — the PCs.

WHEN THE SHADOWS LEAP

The long voyage to Capal is marked not by one long, growing swell of battle, but rather by rising crests, as though on waves, which constantly try to beat the Army down. The attacks are short and brutal, often messy engagements where Fallen and Tribal throw themselves against alien forces that only vaguely resemble human beings. Cells quietly consider themselves lucky when they run through the completely inhuman; the intelligent eyes of the mutated Serfs and agonized Gek'roh are almost too much for the mind to bear.

Between these encounters, some Cells in the Army establish safe houses, forts and bases. These provide comparatively safe spaces and a bit of quiet time for the Liberation forces to rebuild their strength and prepare for the next move. Soldiers are placed at these installations in order to keep the paths clear of enemy forces and ensure no counter attacks from the rear. It is necessary to secure the land already won before going on the reclaim more.

The Characters, involved in the Stand of Sant Foy, along with several other cells, are assigned to secure Fort Ridge. The air is thick with apprehension and tension, emotions still raw from the cold realities of war and bodies left bloodied by their enemies' hands. Those too wounded to go further do what they can in perimeter defenses, but only the fit hold watch at the Fort. They have been at Sant Foy about four days when their perceptions begin to bend: the horrors of battle are almost missed, the warm spray of enemy blood seems to be a delightful memory. Some are able to resist these twisted appreciations (PSY 2 and up roll vs. Threshold 5, all others get no roll), but some have given

themselves over fully to the cravings. It's an unsettling phenomenon that occurs with increasing regularity the longer they encamp here and the closer they move to Capal.

FORT RIDGE

Seen clearly from a solitary building in its surrounding serf fields, Capal stands like a fresh bruise against the horizon. The lone building, now called **Fort Ridge**, takes advantage of its elevated position as a vantage point, monitoring all traffic up and down the Great River. Both the fort and the hillside itself give current occupants the chance to reconnoiter ahead as well as protect themselves from a rear attack. While not a true fortress, Fort Ridge gives the army a sizable defensive advantage.

Small and easily fortifiable, this two-story structure sits on a medium-sized hill near the forest's edge. The first floor is sturdy enough to withstand the tromping of armored feet and is partitioned into several rooms. The second floor is of questionable stability, however. No one has taken the gamble to see exactly how strong it may or may not be after the first Agnite scout fell to her death through the staircase's top landing. There is also a basement, partially caved in, accessible down a collapsing staircase. It houses a collection of small vermin and other assorted insect life, but proves a useful storage area despite the occasional whiskered intrusion.

Boarded from the outside, both the first and second story windows have been obstructed. Only the first floor has space allowed for peep and keyholes, giving their bowmen and Keeper riflemen clear visuals towards the approach. Constructed from local rubble and a few hastily felled trees, a secondary camp has been established within walking distance downriver. Off the main thoroughfare, this wooded site is where the fire pits are dug and those not on direct active duty stay. Sentry duty back at the Fort is done in three shifts, overlapping each other by an hour to ensure complete coverage.

Should this military arrangement not be appropriate for a group's desires, ongoing plots and backstory, the Weaver is encouraged to make changes, whole cloth or otherwise, to the layout and setup of Fort Ridge. This is only the default example of how the army could arrange their forces, and PCs can easily recommend and implement changes to the arrangements.

A LINGERING OF HATE

Unknown to the assigned cells here at Fort Ridge, this building once housed the Z'bri overseers who managed the surrounding organ fields. The dilapidated state of the building isn't from age, but as a direct result of its hastily-removed flesh and blood supports, walls and fortifications. The Overseers, a pair of Flemis and a pair of Koleris, abandoned the structure in fear, hearing of the approach of the Nation's forces. While the walls no longer pulse with the borrowed blood of Serfs, the Atmospheres of these two Z'bri houses still sing their masters' praises, and in fact, affect those on sentry duty as well as the surrounding area.

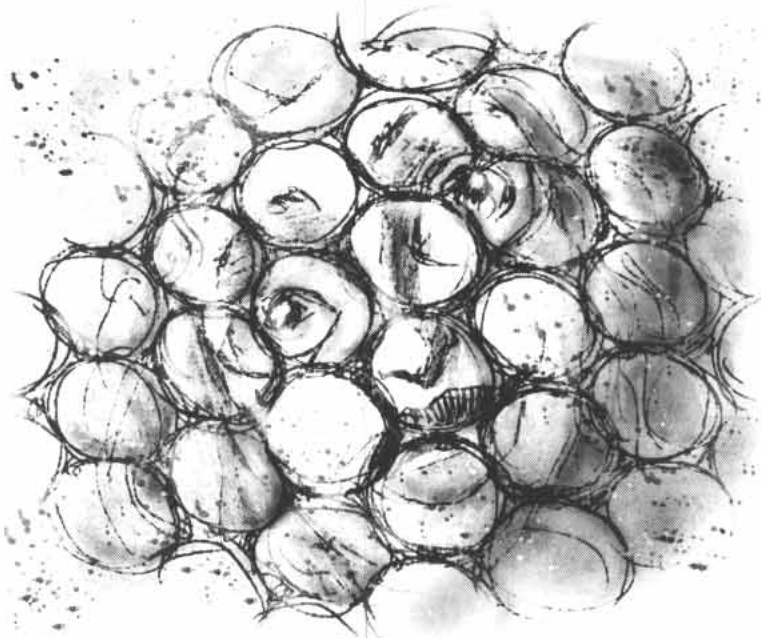
The Weaver may use the following seeds to illustrate the insidious Atmospheres of the Fort's former residents, but is encouraged to create more or fine-tune these to resonate with her Players' specific Characters.

Insect Eyes: A subtle yet jarring first indication of the creeping malaise, flashes of many strange sights and sounds assault the Character's senses all at once. At first these episodes last only half a second, and the PC is uncertain whether or not they really happened at all. As time progresses, the flashes come more and more often, removing the Character's ability to distinguish between reality and these strange intrusions into her senses. Eventually, through investigation or introspection, she realizes that she is witnessing life through several pairs of insect eyes, perhaps by receiving an image of herself from a particular angle where she knows a nest of insects is living.

Temperatures Rise: Tempers are short at the Ridge; even the slightest infringement of the tentative protocol is grounds for duels of honor, fully sanctioned by the ranking officers, who are also affected. Slowly, these conflicts progress from simple ego-driven chest thumping into bloody excuses to slaughter those who were once brothers in arms. Sleeping arrangements, perceived favoritism in food rationing, watch duties and weapon repair are all common grounds for whipping a blade across someone's throat. Even those who were known for their calm rationale are changed, sometimes even more than the others as they give in to emotions so often suppressed within themselves. Soon the inhabitants of the entire tower have moved away from the expected tension of a battle-ready unit of soldiers, replaced with a wild-eyed frenzy and insidious paranoia. The presence of one or another of the Fatimas in the camp greatly reduces this burning tension, but as they are usually with the main body of the forces at the front line, their calming presence is rarely felt for longer than an evening's stay over as they pass back and forth between the camps and outposts.

Unified Vision: Perhaps more disorientating than *Insect Eyes*, the phenomenon of *Unified Vision* slowly extends the Character's perceptions beyond her former physical limitations. She opens doors for comrades before she can possibly know they wish to come in, she turns corners and sidesteps, knowing instinctually that someone else is coming from the opposite direction. Tools are thrust unconsciously into the air so that a second unconscious hand can take them for implementation. All these occurrences happen with the fluidity of water and are so "natural" to the affected individuals that they at first go unnoticed. If asked, the affected Character won't even understand the question. She simply did what she did because she "knew." It is like watching a beautifully choreographed dance depicting everyday life — except that it was never planned and is executed unknowingly by the armored ballerinas. It will take the truly perceptive Character to recognize this occurrence for what it is — the influence of the old Flemis hive mind at work.

Synchronicity: Training continues daily at the second camp. Warriors with long experience and those still learning the deadly art practice together at their varying stages of expertise. The skilled train the novices, their lightning-quick footwork and slashes juxtaposed with their students' slower, unsteady drills. As the days progress, their movements begin to match up like pieces of broken glass; their arms sway together, their hips twist in sync, the sounds that leave their throats identical. This could perhaps be the most deceptive of the Atmosphere's manifestations. To someone passing by, the training warriors are simply a unit so conscious of each other they move in unison. Someone who truly pauses and watches the exhibition, however, will notice the eerie synchronization of the soldier's movements. It goes beyond drilled upper thrusts or knee blocks: they display total and complete singularity, with any individual style slowly being blended away. As their assignment to Fort Ridge stretches on, it slowly encroaches into their everyday lives, forcing them to eat, live and even sleep in a synchronized manner, tossing and turning in unison.



Rape and Pillage: As all those stationed at Fort Ridge spiral into insanity, the undefended Serf Fields to the north become an open invitation for slaughter. Burning and killing for no other reason than the enjoyment of destruction, the Cells fall upon the Serfs like maddened Beasts. Self-control and morality are forgotten in an insane bacchanalia of blood, rape and fire. The Weaver is advised to tread cautiously here, and respect the comfort levels of her Players. While some Players will be comfortable with playing out the terrible impact of the Z'bri Atmospheres, others will prefer to leave such actions implied instead of explicit.

YEA THOUGH I WALK

Reinforcements move into the area, relieving those Cells stationed at Fort Ridge so that they can join the main forces ahead, closer to Capal. The entire process of switching out a full compliment takes three days, arranged so that no location is left without proper coverage. Once all the reserves have moved up to the front lines, those at the front lines, including the Characters at Fort Ridge, move forward.

The Cell relieving the Characters is the **White Guard**, remnants of Nostra Guy'on's war party from **Broken Pact**. These hardy souls have been tempered against the ravages of war by the endless rounds of battle they've seen in recent years. Some have fallen bravely in battle, but their numbers have been replenished with fresh faces eager to earn Nostra's attention. One such newcomer is Efreem Guy'on, a distant relative of the Joanite patriarch himself. The young warrior leapt into service when this new movement towards Capal began, and volunteered to serve as close to the front lines as he could. Many commented that Efreem's zeal went beyond the Devotion of Joan and bordered on suicide. What Efreem's critics do not know is that he is a Black Marian, and secretly worships his dead Fatima by taking on the sins of his comrades, suffering purgation for them that their souls may be eased.

Immediately upon arrival, Efreem's Eminence of Recognition identifies the Taint infecting the Characters and their colleagues, whom he has been assigned to work with during the transition. It is only through his close association with the Characters that Efreem begins to truly understand the depth of the corruption taking place within the encampment. Carefully, so as to not upset the edgy Fallen, he tries to approach them privately to offer his help in removing the Atmosphere's effects. He believes that if he can cleanse the hearts of the PCs, they can help him gain access to the other sin the Fort who so desperately need his help as well. If the Characters do not yet realize the danger, Efreem may have a hard time convincing them that anything is even wrong. Patiently, he explains that the long-term Z'bri presence in the building left its mark, something that the Characters have suffered from. As a "Templar," he says, he can perform rites to cleanse their souls, returning them to their previously uncorrupted state. From this point, he explains, they as a group can then tackle the larger project of the camp itself.

BROKEN REFLECTION

The black Taint threading through the Characters presents a problem for Efreem. The Flemis Atmosphere has connected the PCs so powerfully that he cannot address them separately. Taken altogether, however, the taint is too much for him to confront at once. Knowing that his **Blessing** will be more effective within the River of Dream, Efreem proposes that he and the Characters perform a ritual to go there. Once within Dream, Efreem plans to use Blessing to take on the Taint from the Characters and purge it from himself. Cleansed, he and the PCs will return to the Material Orb.

Efreem leads the Characters in a Joanite kata, using the smooth, unified movements to slip into a trance state and enter the River of Dream. The unfamiliarity of the kata forestalls the Flemis Atmosphere from overtaking the ritual's movements. The surroundings waver and dissolve into the primeval landscape of the River of Dream, a broken reflection of the Serf Fields they came from. Spidering dark veins strangle the trees, and the Great River's water is sluggish and viscous. Insects with thousands of eyes and legs swarm across the land, weaving between the staggering shapes of Serf souls dispatched from the living world but not yet dragged into the Sea of the Lost. Characters making a Dreaming roll (Threshold 4) will realize that the excessive and needless death in the war is causing the River of Dream in this area to become polluted.

SHADOW DANCE

Seemingly undaunted by the landscape, Efreem arranges the PCs in a circle around himself in preparation for the next ritual. Clasp his hands together and touching them to his forehead, he murmurs a prayer that carries no further than himself. Trails of ivy are pulled to the forefront of the intricate symbols and patterns of the tattoos that cover his body, obvious now where before they were hidden. The vines crawl off of Efreem's skin, reaching towards the Characters. Delicately, the vines wrap around the PCs' wrists and arms. The vines then tug backwards, and draw a dusty shroud from the body of one Character. As the shroud is pulled off her, she seems to blaze with light and color; the other Characters realize that they had not noticed that her features had been blurred and natural color dimmed. If they look down at themselves, they can see the shadows that cling to their own bodies like fell veils of gray.

The first shroud comes away easily, but on the second, signs of effort are evident in Efreem's face. The second Character can feel the vines grasping at her spirit-skin. The vines begin to weave erratically, and the two Shrouds caught up in the vines waver as if alive. Removing the third shroud causes the Character lingering pain; by the fourth (if necessary, given the size of the cell), the PC can feel her soul scratched and painfully twisted by the effort. Efreem falls to his knees and calls out in pain, yanking his wrists down and painfully wrenching any remaining Shrouds from the Characters. A keening wail built from Efreem's prayer begins, a whirling mockery of his sacred scripture. At first it comes from no particular direction, bashing itself upon the PCs' senses until the Shrouds themselves take voice and burst free of

their spiritual bindings. Their inhuman screams rip from their dusty throats as they descend on the Characters.

A spiritual combat ensues between the Characters and their Shrouds. Efrem has collapsed onto the ground and remains there for the duration of the battle. The Shrouds tear and dissolve when destroyed, and as each is dispatched, the Characters feel an instant elation, as if a weight on their soul was lifted. But their moment is short-lived as the floating fragments of Shrouds coalesce into a whirlwind around the PCs, with Efrem in the eye of the storm.

Without warning, the dark Shrouds converge on Efrem, forcing him painfully to his feet. The numerous vines trailing from his wrists project outwards, arcing off to the horizon. For half a moment, the column of Shrouds above Efrem's head recognizably resembles the form of Mary the Forgiver (Lore: Tribes, Lore: Fatimas, Lore: Mary, etc. Threshold 4; Marian and Agnite PCs succeed automatically). Ensnared by the web of vines that radiates out from the phantasm, heads appear and turn inward, facing the Characters through the mists that form the shape of the Lost Fatima. The face of every Marian that appears, each marked with the sigil of Mary or patterned vines, is permanently burned into the Characters' memory. Characters may even recognize one or more of the two hundred or so faces; each PC, to a degree appropriate to her understanding of Marian Lore and the Prophecy of Joshua, realizes that the Marians are alive, hiding among the Tribes, and that Efrem is one of them. The true significance may be lost to some Characters, while the implications stop others in their tracks. Reactions and depths of understanding will vary from character to character, but Weavers

should leave their PCs with the distinct impression of the importance of the Lost Tribe's desperate hold on survival.

The vision fades away, leaving Efrem crumpled on the ground, barely conscious. After a long moment to catch his breath and regain his composure, Efrem shakily stands, with the Characters' help if offered. He hesitantly answers questions, knowing that he can no longer hide the truth, but he is careful not to speak for the Marians in total. If the PCs suggest it, he tries to convince them that the other Marians will not want to be found, but can eventually be convinced that it is necessary to cure the rest of the tainted soldiers.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

More information on Efrem Guy'on can be found in *Weaver's Resources* on page 91.

The battle with the shrouds is a metaphorical battle, and should not be used as an excuse for just more fighting. When facing their darker "selves," the Characters should be faced with the depths of their own fears and weaknesses. Visions should assault their senses, confusing the reality of the River with the reality their shrouds present. By defeating their shrouds, the metaphysical manifestation of their corrupted souls, they cleanse themselves of the Z'bri taint. Shrouds have the same Attributes and Skills as the Characters they came from. Instead of weapons, their fingers can elongate into claws that have a Damage Modifier of 10. They suffer no action penalties, but they dissipate once the penalties they suffer exceed their System Shock.



ACT TWO: DOORS INTO TOMORROW

What you see is not necessarily what has to come.

You could stop it, if you're willing to step blindly into faith.

The Child has long craved to know Her mother. Will you stand beside Her?

She stands beside you.

- Teddy Bear, Agnite Totem

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The scene opens after the Characters have finished their conversations with Efreem and decide to return to Fort Ridge. Wounded and weakened, they are unable to bridge the gap between the River of Dream and the World of Flesh, leaving them trapped in the polluted River. The harder they try to overcome the Z'bri Shallows, the more their actions turn against them, and the PCs suffer a terrible vision of the army going mad before Capal's walls.

Teddy Bear, one of the Agnite totems, is attracted by the maelstrom in the River of Dream, and explains to the Characters that their vision is not what must be, but what will be unless they intervene. Weakened by the Shallows himself, he offers the PCs what assistance he can to get them back to the World of Flesh.

REVELATIONS

Efreem has the Characters form a line and begin the Joanite kata once more, although no matter how long, exacting, or focused the katas become, the Characters cannot seem to return to their bodies in the Material Orb. After the party is covered in sweat and sore from exertion, Efreem finally calls them to stop, and explains that the Z'bri Shallows, coupled with the spiritual wounds that they took during the fight with the Shrouds, are making it impossible to return. The distance is too great, and the Characters are too weak.

At this point, the Characters might try any number of options, but in the end, they are stuck fast in the River of Dream. Below is a list of possibilities and their probable outcomes.

Repeated Dreaming Attempts: If the Characters simply try to cross to the Material Orb again and again, they will create a disturbance in the River of Dream. The fragments of power from the Characters' rituals will create a backlash, described below.

Synthesis Use: Any Synthesis use will carry with it a distinct distortion, as the power of Dream is perverted by the saturation of Z'bri Atmospheres. Characters with any level of Dreaming will recognize the feeling, and know that continued Synthesis use in the area is dangerous. Dreamers can 'drop' the Synthesis effect before completion; more than two minor effects will begin to create a backlash.

Calling other Dreamers: If the Characters are not strong enough to make it back to the Material Orb, others not with them right now might be powerful enough to come in and carry them back across. The Shallows make communication with the Material Orb almost as difficult as crossing over, and once established, the Characters can feel their messages being garbled and twisted until they are unrecognizable. The Dreamers they contact will suffer terrible and confusing nightmares, and some may recognize that the PCs need help, not knowing where they are or what help they need. Repeated attempts will create a backlash.

Calling the Spirits: As above, the Characters might call on spirit allies, such as totems, to help them back into the Material Orb. Most spirits avoid the corrupted River of Dream in Z'bri lands, where they find their senses dulled and powers weakened. The only exceptions are Helots, spirits corrupted by the resident Z'bri, and the threat of their unwanted attention is great. Calling across the breadth of the Shallows around Capal would require a significant ritual performed by a strong Dreamer, but will undoubtedly summon more than what she was bargaining for. Running will carry the PCs out of the Shallows; see below.

Travel out of the Shallows: With Synthesis and Dream both unstable within the Shallows, perhaps the most reasonable solution is to travel out of the Shallows and back into an uncorrupted portion of the River of Dream. The Characters must deal with marauding Helots and other Dreamers from the army, gone mad under the influence of the inescapable Z'bri Atmospheres. Eventually the Characters will come across the spiritual reflection of a battle in the Material Orb. Time, often fluid in the River of Dream, will skip forward, and show the Characters a scene from the future. This vision is described below.

Backlash: Through a variety of means, the Characters might create a backlash within the River of Dream. Elements of the dreamscape begin to contort and melt, pulled into a maelstrom around the Characters. The swirling images take on a nightmarish cast, taunting and threatening the PCs. Out of the maelstrom comes the vision, below.

The Vision: The walls of Capal stand tall against the gray sky, black walls slick with blood and adorned with great spikes of steel. The twisted forms of Z'bri line the ramparts, whipping their troops into a frenzy. In the terrible wake of an inhuman shriek, Serfs roil out of the massive doors to collide like a force of nature against the troops of the Nation and Eighth Tribe. The battle is fierce and the fighting bloodthirsty as wave after wave of Serfs clash against the ever-approaching line of the invaders.

As the Characters watch, a gleam of madness kindles in the eyes of the attackers, and grows stronger with every advancing step. The scene turns from battle to carnage and the advance slows as Fallen take their time to enjoy each and every kill. Tribals and Fallen turn on each other, and blood flows so thick it coats every warrior with red. The once-great army reduces itself to a meager collection of insane berserkers standing alone above piles of bodies. The gates of Capal open again, but instead of defenders pouring out, the Z'bri on the ramparts welcome the maddened soldiers inside, not as invaders, but as equals.

The Weaver is encouraged to include other omens and portents appropriate for the specific PCs. Including the Characters as either the 'victors' or the slain makes the vision all the more powerful. Foreshadowing the PCs' roles in the upcoming battles, insight into Character development, or even flashbacks to past events are all appropriate.

SIGN OF THE BEAR

The vision fades, to be replaced with a gray and lifeless dreamscape. The very surroundings seem to leach emotion and motivation out of the PCs as they reflect on the vision they received. A voice calls across the barren hills, warm but bittersweet, and the sound of it seems to breathe a trickle of life into the deflated world, but only for a transient moment. It is the voice of the Agnite totem Teddy Bear, explaining that what the Characters have seen is the future, but not the future that must be. The totem lopes across the hills and sits down with the PCs, removing his pith helmet to talk.

Teddy explains that he is taking part in the war, too, ever since Agnes asked him to 'help out'. He patrols the River of Dream to keep the local spirit world safe for the army, but the Shallows weaken him and the Atmospheres present a never-ending drain on his strength. He knows that one lone spirit totem cannot defend the army against the Z'bri's spiritual pollution, and nearly bubbles over with enthusiasm when he talks about finding a Marian to help him. As he says repeatedly, "We've been very long without a Mother."

He repeats this phrase several times, his enthusiasm bubbling through his child-like demeanor. While the life of a vagabond orphan may suit many Agnites, there is still an even greater number who desperately want to know the comforting touch of a "mother," even if their desires are not understood in so many words. This desire, subconscious or otherwise, has given the Marians to a cult status among a few small groups of Agnites, building them to a larger than life ideal; a form of childhood hero-worship. Teddy Bear, the representation of eternal potential, reflects the needs of his Children. Teddy rambles on merrily until he is reminded of the present situation by the PCs.

Teddy is more than willing to help the PCs, but the Shallows have taken their toll on even his power; he is a comforter, and when necessary, a soldier, but he is not a healer as the Marians are. The divide between the River of Dream and the Material Orb is difficult for Teddy to bridge under normal conditions; in the Shallows, the totem cannot even touch the World of Flesh. The best he can do is to carry the Characters through the River of Dream and out of the Shallows, into an area where he can cross over; unfortunately, the nearest place untainted by the Z'bri is many miles behind the front lines. Alternately, he can lead the Characters in a ritual to take on the wounds they suffered in their battle with their Shrouds, "healing" them. Whole again, the Characters should be able to return to the Material Orb themselves. Details on either option are covered below.

OPTION ONE:

ON THE BEAR'S BACK

Teddy dons his helmet once more and steps away from the Characters. Despite the perspective that has held in this area of the river up to this point, his image does not shrink from their point of view. With each step he takes backwards, the totem grows larger until he is the size of a house. One by one, he lifts all the Characters onto his back before trundling westward through the River of Dream. Though the trip on the bear's back takes little more than an hour, when the Characters emerge from the River of Dream they are nearly a day's march down the Great River from the Fort. Teddy's parting words are a reminder that he cannot protect the army for much longer: he needs help. The march back to Fort Ridge is mostly uneventful, as the Characters are traveling through territory already secured by Tribal and Fallen forces. When they arrive at the forward camp, they learn that the final offensive against Capal will happen in a matter of days.

OPTION TWO:

BY THE BEAR'S SACRIFICE

Teddy has the PCs close their eyes as he moves among them, stirring the currents of the River of Dream. Slowly, like a bubble rising through thick syrup, comforting memories come to the forefront of the Characters' minds. Teddy has selected the time when the PCs felt safest and most comfortable, whether it be a mother's touch, a lover's caress, or a single moment of contentment. These need not be childhood memories, just instances of deep, abiding comfort and peace of mind.

As the images float behind the PCs' closed eyes, the furred arms of Teddy wrap around their shoulders. Teddy's touch invokes all the feelings connected to the memories, and the Characters experience them again as though for the first time. The bear whispers words of comfort into each Character's ear; the Weaver may make these personal or abstract as appropriate. The spiritual wounds in each of the Characters ebb away for the moment, leaving them feeling truly whole for the first time in weeks.

When the Characters open their eyes again, Teddy stands before them, their own wounds transferred onto his body. One eye hangs by a thread and blood tinted stuffing is showing through slashes and rents in his hide. Warily, Teddy acknowledges the wounds, and tells them, "Now you see why I cannot do this for every soldier in the army. Go now; I must rest. Do as you're destined to do." The totem turns and lumbers away, leaving the Characters and Efreem to return to the Material Orb without incident. This option takes less time than **On the Bear's Back**, and by the time the Characters return to Fort Ridge, the offensive looms almost a week ahead.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

The prolonged presence of the Z'bri in this area has not only tainted the buildings, but left its mark on the River of Dream itself. The Z'bri's very existence is the antithesis of Dream, and has pushed the Spiritual Orb away from the Material, creating a region known as a Shallows. The border between the River of Dream and the Material Orb is thicker here, and presents a heightened difficulty returning to Fort Ridge. Weakened by the spirit battle, Efreem and the Characters are trapped within the River of Dream.

Statistics for Teddy Bear, if necessary, can be found in **Word of the Dancers**, page 93.

ACT THREE:

Feel free to denounce us, Nostra Guy'on, most noble of your clan. Take us, shackle our wrists and free our souls from these mortal husks. We three stand before you as voices for the whole; we are but the tongue. The head — the body — will still move through your tribes, doing the work they were born to do; the work that Mary called them to do.

Strike us down, try to scrub our faces from your heritage. We are ready to rejoin our Fatima; our hearts have been empty of Her love for too long. We would welcome it! But you will lose our support, and with that, you will lose the Nation. Call the bluff, Nostra. Can you survive this madness without us?

- Sibyl Jansey, Marian Martyr

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Back at Fort Ridge, the PCs find that the final offensive against Capal is scheduled to take place in a matter of days. They have little time to contact the Marians and speak with their Sisterhood, the Martyrs. To make matters worse, a Marian maddened by Z'bri Atmospheres misunderstands the Characters' intentions and plots to kill them before they can destroy her Tribe.

The Martyrs send a representative with the PCs to speak to the War Council. The Characters describe their harrowing experiences and dark visions of a possible future, but Nostra Guy'on remains unconvinced, and threatens the Marians with death. Agnes appears and offers the Marians Her protection against reprisals; Mek and Benjamin Aria'on accept the Marians. Together with the PCs, the Marians conduct a massive ritual to cleanse and purify the Tribal and Fallen forces before the final battle against Capal.

FORT RIDGE CAMP

Nearly half the army has assembled at the camp around Fort Ridge, preparing for the final battle against Capal's walls. What began as a defensible resupply stop has become a bustling hive of activity. The camp is divided into circles and groups of tents, each one the temporary home of a Cell. Joanite Cells have

erected carefully-measured perimeters of rope or short fences; others sprawl across the trampled ground with little rhyme or reason. A haphazard collection of unnamed thoroughfares has formed between the tents. Directions are given in terms of landmarks, such as the Winter Wolves' impressive palisade or the Spear of Lilith, displayed outside the camp of the Liberators.

Mek and the War Council camp near the center of the mess of tents, just off the blacktop that bisects the camp. The nucleus of the encampment is a little bit further up the blacktop, comprising the first Cells to camp beneath Fort Ridge. This camp holds a combination of Fallen and Tribal; the Cells arriving later began to separate, with Fallen on the southern side of the blacktop, near the banks of the Great River. The Tribals who came later set up their camps on the north side of the blacktop, against the trees. Despite the divided encampment, individuals flow freely throughout the camp. Many visit friends in other Cells, and a few take this last opportunity to make peace with family members long separated by banishment. Others, however, try to settle old scores before the Capal defenses settle things for them.

Joan, Magdalen and Agnes have followed the army, taking up residence in the Fort Ridge Camp. It is perhaps only their influence that has kept the Z'bri Atmospheres at bay so far, although the Characters can easily see their lingering effects. The camp is on edge and tense, with brawls and arguments sparking everywhere. At the same time, many soldiers feel lost and alone, no longer certain why they are involved in an insane war against unstoppable enemies. The PCs begin to recognize many faces from the vision of the attack on the Capal walls; the emotions etched on those faces underscore their dark fate.

THE MARTYRS

The five surviving members of the Martyrs, Mary's Sisterhood, have been haunted by visions and portents that urged them to travel with the army to Capal. At first they traveled with many different Cells, all on different routes, trying to determine why they were needed. Now in the days before the final push, the Martyrs have secretly gathered in the Fort Ridge Camp to discuss what they have found and decide what they must do.



Cana Nan'on: The regal matriarch of the Martyrs, Cana is also aging and frail. The loss of both Daniel Wild'on and Cecilia Yeth this last year has considerably weakened the woman, spiritually. It has been difficult for her to follow the army into the Outlands, but her stolid devotion to Mary has fueled her weakened frame. Cana knows that she will not live to see Vimary again, and seeks a way to safeguard the Marians once her guidance is gone. Once convinced, she sees the PCs' request as the Marians' best chance for survival.

Additional information on Cana Nan'on can be found in the **Tribe 8 Companion**, page 20.

Darrah Pal'on: The eldest daughter of Sinead Baal, the loss of both Mary and her mother have given Darrah an unflinching, if jaded, devotion to the Marian cause. Her failed attempt to teach the Evans how to perform Mary's purifying rituals has only contributed to her passive-aggressive views both of life and the Marians' unavoidable slide into obscurity. In her heart she wants to believe in the Characters' plan, but she has seen too much of the world to hope that much. Her own loss of faith troubles her, which only fuels her harsh criticism against the idea of revealing the Marians.

Sibyl Jansey: One of Magdalen's trusted Diplomats for many years, Sibyl has taken on many of the traits of her adopted Fatima. Eloquent and diplomatic, this aging beauty's demeanor is so polished that it becomes disconcerting. Her skills have made her Cana's choice for successor. Sibyl believes exposure presents the Tribe's best hope and enthusiastically supports the Characters. She even volunteers to be the Martyr who speaks to the War Council.

Grizel Morth'on: When Mary died, Grizel saw Joan's silent pain and sought to provide solace for the Broken Pillar. She became a warrior, and then a Templar, and then a Hermit Blade after Joan defied Tera Sheba by honoring Lilith's memory. Utterly pragmatic, she demands the Characters answer hard questions and points out dangerous holes in their plans. She does not necessarily dislike the idea; she merely wants to be sure this is truly what is best for her people.

Bronwen Yeth: In stark contrast to the other four wrinkled and gray-haired women in the Martyrs, Bronwen cannot be older than forty. She, in fact, never knew Mary's touch and is the daughter of a previous Martyr who fell during the Baron's attack on Vimary. Bronwen lived among the Yagans before being banished to Hom and becoming a Doomsayer. Her vivid and disturbing visions of Mary are frequent, and powerful enough to gain the other Martyrs' recognition. She is the first new member to step into the Martyrs' Sisterhood since Mary fell. Bronwen has seen a vision of the Martyrs performing a great ritual before all the assembled armies of the Nation and Eighth Tribe. She not only supports the PCs; she knows that they will succeed. They present her with the first ray of hope she has had since realizing her heritage.

MAD MARIAN

Unknown to the Characters, they were not the only ones privy to the vision exposing the Marians. Miriam, a Wreathed among the Dahlians, was nearby in the World of Flesh on a scouting mission when Efreem and the PCs faced their shadowy reflections. Caught in the spiritual storm, Miriam was given a crazed glimpse of the Characters, their features left rendered perfectly in



4. Legacies

her memory. Already corrupted by exposure to Z'bri Atmosphere, the vision simply broke Miriam's mind. She now seeks to destroy the Characters before they can expose her Tribe, an action she believes will destroy the last remnants of Mary. Sadly, Miriam believes her actions to be Mary's wishes, remaining a devoted, if depraved, servant of the Forgive.

Miriam represents both the Nation's fear of the isolated Forgivers and the Marians' reluctance to call persecution upon themselves once again. She is a paradox, coiled in on herself. To the Nation, she and her people represent their soiled past, a time when Forgiveness could be had and then was taken from them. In their search for redemption, they cast the Marians out as heretics. To the Marians, she is the harvest of a bitter field. Living her entire life in secrecy, lies and deceit, she is the embodied fear of the unknown, and would rather keep her Tribe locked behind its broken doors than set them loose in a new and changing world.

She first approaches the Characters when they come into the Fort Ridge Camp, masking her identity with her Dahlian Eminence of Illusion. Using her Marian Eminence of Recognition and her understanding of human nature, she gauges the relative strengths and weaknesses of the PCs, as well as discovering any fears or idiosyncrasies that can be exploited. She then disappears, only to return to interfere with the Characters' plans. Her goal is to stop the Characters, divide them with suspicion and jealousy, and eventually kill them one at a time.

Miriam will stop at nothing to ruin the Characters, believing herself to be the 'Unforgiving Hand of the Forgive.' She uses Illusion to plague them with waking nightmares of their worst fears; she manipulates the PCs and their perceptions of each other to divide their loyalties; she fouls their inquiries with deception and lies. Her actions extend beyond the Character cell, laying her hand against the rest of the camp, turning them against the Characters, who soon find themselves harassed or attacked by Tribals and Fallen alike.

Miriam's interference will only end with her death, as her fanaticism will not allow her to surrender. The Characters need not kill her, however; they may overcome her obstacles and convince the Marians despite her best efforts. Miriam should be a direct example of both the Nation's reaction to the Marians, as well as the Marians' reaction to their secrecy dissolved. She is the Characters' first taste of the new world to come. If Miriam is not appropriate to the Weaver's campaign, the Weaver is encouraged to substitute in a more suitable NPC. This section can also be stricken completely, and is suggested for use in more introspective campaigns.

CONTACTING THE MARIANS

There are many ways in which the PCs can find and contact the Marians. A few possibilities are described below. No one option must be used exclusively; the Characters might go through channels until they meet Cygnus, and then do a Synthesis ritual to jump directly to the Martyrs.

Channels: Despite what the Characters may ask, Efre cannot take them to 'the Marians.' Efre only knows a handful of Marians himself, and fewer now than he did before Joan's Crusade. He directs the Characters to his own mentor, Marlee, who is able to explain the difference between the Black Marians and the rest of the Wreathed. Once she is convinced that the Marians should come out of their seclusion, Marlee introduces the Characters to one of her colleagues in the Wreathed, Ifagena, who has more connections than she. The chain continues, and the Characters can slough through ranks of Marians, each of whom must be convinced before she will reveal her own superiors and connections. Eventually, the characters are shown into the presence of Cana Nan'on, who does not immediately identify herself as a Martyr. If the Characters can convince her of the importance and truthfulness of their information, she calls the other Martyrs to hear the arguments themselves.

Synthesis: With the faces of the Marians burned into their memory, the Characters may perform Synthesis to find the Forgivers, using the images as an anchor. Empathy, Fate, Inspiration, Mystery, Recognition, Truth, Unity and Wisdom can all be appropriate. The specific effects of the Synthesis are left to the Characters. They might identify all the Marians in the camp with a white aura that only they can see, or spread vines leading to the nearest Marians, or even give the Marians a compulsion to come speak to them. The Characters do not know which of the faces in the vision are the elusive 'Martyrs' Efre speaks of, requiring them to deal with members of the Wreathed first. Direct mental contact with all the Marians at once is also possible, although the incredible influx of thoughts and emotions will be overwhelming. Speaking to all the Marians in this way will bring the instant attention of the Martyrs, many of whom are powerful Dreamers themselves.

Cygnus the White Swan: If an elaborate ritual is carried out to summon the Marian totem, a graceful swan spirit approaches the Characters. Her voice is the tinkling sound of thousands of raindrops and her elegant appearance is awe-inspiring. "I have long waited for someone like you," she tells the Characters. She explains that she served as the Marians' totem until the Forgive left and the totem hid herself from the world. Cygnus was told of their intentions by Teddy, who traveled to her Hermitage after he left the Characters. The Swan supports the PCs' quest, long waiting for the Nation to recognize those whom they once forgot in their shame. Cygnus remembers the Martyrs, who venerated her when Mary walked among the Tribes, and can help focus the Characters' attempts in the River of Dream or the World of Flesh. Approaching the Martyrs with their long lost totem will earn the Characters instant respect.

Chance Encounter: The Characters recognize any Marian they come across. They might turn this to their advantage and scour the Fort Ridge Camp until they find one of the Forgivers, or they may stumble across one quite by accident. It is doubtful that they will find the Martyrs by employing this haphazard method, but this option may serve as a valuable starting point or a means for the Weaver to redirect the Players' attention.

INTERIM HOOKS: LOVE TRIANGLE

The Fort Ridge Camp is a bustling place, with thousands of soldiers all pursuing their varied desires. The Weaver is encouraged to flesh out life in the camp, and may introduce the following as interesting Characters, encounters or full-fledged subplots within the game.

Mother's Embrace: Samuel, a Fallen Joanite, has just come back to the camp after scouting ahead to the walls of Capal. Seeing the impressive defenses that ring the city, he knows like few others that many who participate in the attack will not survive. Shaken by the notion of his own mortality, he desperately wishes to contact his mother, a Blade of Joan living somewhere in the camp, and resolve their difference before one or the other dies in battle. His mother, Fiona Kil'on, wants nothing to do with him, having cast him out of the Nation herself after seeing him flee from his first battle. Samuel asks the Characters to help him contact his mother and convince her to speak with him one more time.

Last Laugh: Troy Fenys stalks the camp, dealing out her own brand of justice to those who oppressed the Fallen. Her targets have included both Tribals and 'traitorous' Fallen, and now she has set her sights on Fiona Kil'on, once a ruthless member of Tera Sheba's Watch. Troy knows too many people who were beaten, maimed and killed by the warrior, and wants nothing more than to see the woman dead. Troy can recruit the Characters (who may have suffered Fiona's justice before) into her plot, or the Characters may discover Troy's plans while involved in other circumstances in the camp — a murder investigation, perhaps, or while helping Samuel.

Spitting Image: Lashi Hevkin, once a Concubine and now a soldier, was once Troy Fenys' lover while she still lived among the Magdalites. Accompanying him is Clarise, a strong-willed fifteen-year-old warrior, his daughter with Troy whom she was forced to abandon upon exile. Clarise demanded to be allowed to fight, and Lashi has never been able to deny her anything. Lashi knows that Troy is among the soldiers on the march, and wants Clarise to meet her mother — it's doubtful either woman will survive the assault against Capal. Lashi has been told that the Characters are acquainted with Troy, and contacts them in the hopes that they can tell him where she is.

Troy may be distracted from her attack by meeting her daughter; Samuel may finally earn his mother's respect defending her against Troy's attack. The tangle can be resolved in any number of ways, and is left open for the Weaver to tailor to the Characters.

THE SUMMIT

Sibyl summons one of the Wreathed among the Evans, and asks Efreem to join her in representing the Marians before the War Council. She asks the PCs to accompany them, in order to describe their experiences and the visions they received.

Together and without any further delay, Sibyl leads them to the War Council's encampment at the center of Fort Ridge Camp. Hal Ninva and Joan are present when the Characters arrive. With little ceremony, Sibyl reveals their true affiliation to Hal and the Warrior. Joan demands proof from Efreem, which Hal gives Her by invoking Truth and questioning the Marians. Joan grows silent, and the other members of the War Council are immediately called together.

The Council quickly convenes within a tall, wide tent, both majestic in its structure and commanding in its position. Hal repeats Sibyl's claims to the others and demands she explain herself. Sibyl in turn calls on the Characters to speak of the insanity at Fort Ridge, the harrowing pollution in the River of Dream, and their visions of horror at the walls of Capal. Of the Council, only Nostra Guy'on is not silent, and demands clarification on many points, trying to distort the Characters' story into a Fallen plot or delusion.

When the PCs are finished, Sibyl steps forward and offers the services of the Marians in purifying the army before the final offensive. Nostra bursts out of his chair and threatens to execute them immediately for their heresy. Sibyl waits for the room to settle before blandly replying that Nostra can kill her and her companions, but the Marians will go on. Without their help, however, Nostra and his army will not.

Before Nostra can muster a retort, the tent's massive entrance is drawn open to admit Agnes the Child. The Fatima steps inside, demanding silence with Her simple aggressive presence. As She approaches the War Council, passing the characters, She hands one of them a pith helmet. The Character easily recognizes it as Teddy's. "I extend my protection to my sisters, the Children of Mary," the Child intones, and inclines Her head to Sibyl, "if they desire it." Turning to Nostra, She cows him into silence and back into his seat with a glare.



4. Legacies

Haltingly, Sibyl accepts Agnes' patronage and thanks Her on behalf of the Martyrs and the rest of the Marians. Mek stands and accepts the Marians in the name of the Eighth Tribe; Benjamin Aria'on does the same in the name of the Nation, shooting a look at Nostra to keep him from interrupting. As Joan and Magdalen nod in approval, Sibyl turns to the PCs with bright, victorious eyes. Citing that they will need people who have experienced the worst of the Z'bri taint and still overcome it, she asks for their help in leading the great ritual to purify the hearts of the army.

Joan makes Her way to the door, and pauses before leaving, saying, "We take these first steps towards becoming whole again, so that we may stand proud before the Beasts. May the All Mother bless this union and bring us victory."

TIPS AND RESOURCES

If the PCs are not certain of the necessity of the Marians' coming out of hiding at the beginning of this act, the approach and entry into Fort Ridge Camp provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce that need. Encounters with tainted soldiers as well as recognizable faces from the vision of the battle at Capal's gates are both appropriate.

For Miriam, use the Player template in **Word of the Dancers**, page 80, or the Dahlian Dancer template in the **Tribe 8 Companion** with the following modifications: Eminences Illusion and Recognition, Synthesis 2, PSY -1, Combat Sense 2, Human Perception 2, Melee 2.

AFTERMATH

Reactions to the Marians' reappearance are complex and varied. Tribals are continually surprised at who reveals themselves as a Marian. Many Marians choose to remain in hiding for the moment, only revealing their true affiliations if forcibly 'outed.' The most conservative Tribals are aghast at the Marians' perceived heresy and obsolete devotion, but few are willing to oppose Agnes and risk the Child's anger. In counterpoint to the Tribals' surprise, the Fallen are mostly unruffled by Marian revelations, as they are more familiar with the Nation's many lies and deceptions. Scholars of Joshua's Prophecy see these events as inevitable; some now wait for the appearance of the Joshuans. Many among both the Tribals and Fallen recognize the need for the Forgivers; the oldest look forward to the return of confession and purification that only a handful still remember. Others in the army are too numbed by the war's endless shocks and surprises that one more cannot even merit a response; they simply muster on.

The Fatimas are divided as well; their tribes often reflect these biases. **Agnes the Child** is eager to learn about Her mother Mary and tests the limits of the Martyrs' failing stamina with talks that last long into the night. **Joan the Warrior** has also spent long nights with the Marians, and seems to be more confident, in control of Her own destiny. **Dahlia the Trickster** finds the Marians' reappearance to be a fine jest, and laughingly supports their actions, but Her laughter has a strange, cruel ring to it. Of

all the Fatimas with the army, **Magdalen the Lover** is the least genuine in Her public support; She recognizes the need for the Marians, but hides a wounded pride that they would defy Her without Her knowledge for so long. **Baba Yaga the Crone**, **Tera Sheba the Wise** and **Eva the Mother** are not with the forces of the Nation and Fallen, and if they know about any of these events, it is through Dream or intermediaries. Their reactions, if any, are unknown to the members of their Tribes who travel the road to Capal.

THE FLIGHT OF CYGNUS

Together with the Characters, some thirty Marians gather in a clearing outside of Fort Ridge Camp. The four Fatimas present take up positions at the cardinal points around the assembly, watching as the ritual begins. The Wreathed form a wide circle and begin to chant the nearly forgotten hymns to the Forgive. The Martyrs invite the Characters into the center of the clearing and form an interior circle of their own. As the singers in the outer circle begin to take measured steps clockwise, the inner circle moves counterclockwise.

Each of the Martyrs takes and purifies an object, lifting it to the sky. Cana Nan'on lifts a bowl of clouded water that turns clear. Darrah Pal'on scoops up dry earth from the ground, turning it rich and dark as she lifts it above her head. Sibyl Jansey releases a cloud of butterflies into the air, the beating of their colored wings stirring the air. Bronwen Yeth bears a smoldering torch; as it rises in the air the flames burst into life, releasing white smoke. Grizel Morth'on displays a bow, warped from misuse, straightening it in her strong hands and nocking an arrow. Together, the Martyrs' offerings are cast into the air as the outer circle's chanting rises to a crescendo.

As the offerings arc through the air, they take on a life of their own, swirling together above the circles. Cana raises her voice, calling on the memory of Mary and the Characters' new purity found through the trials of experience. She calls for the Tribal and Fallen forces to be cleansed and purified, stripped of the taint of the Takers and absolved of their sins of war. The offerings shine above the clearing, blending into one object, spreading wings and extending a sinuous long neck. Cygnus the White Swan appears before the assembled, much to the surprise of the Martyrs. The swan circles the ritual, trailing white light behind her, and croons to the Martyrs, "I will bear your blessing to the masses. Let your balm heal their hurts." Cygnus soars up over the trees towards Fort Ridge Camp, the dark forest lit by her graceful presence.

When Cygnus is gone over the horizon, Cana sighs and says, "It is done," collapsing to the ground. She smiles through her tears, content, finding peace at last as the other Martyrs encircle her. A single white feather falls to settle on Cana's breast as she breathes her last.

HOOK: TIME TO REST

With so few Marians left, the Martyrs are loathe to lose even one. If the Characters did not kill Miriam, Sibyl will seek to bring her back into the fold. Knowing that the PCs have dealt with her before, she asks them for help. Cygnus believes that she can heal Miriam if the girl can be taken to the White Swan's haven, the Hermitage. The crystal lakes and sweet air will provide Miriam with a sanctuary in which to recover, under Cygnus' care.

When the War Council accepted the Marians, Miriam went underground to avoid the destruction that she feared would follow. She vowed that even if every other Marian died, she would survive to pass on the heritage of Mary. Stealing provisions from her caravan, she set off into the forest north of the Fort Ridge Camp, missing Cygnus' flight overhead by less than an hour. She plans to hike overland back to Vimary, where she believes the tatters of the army will return after being decimated at Capal's gates.

Miriam is paranoid and careful, and knows the Outlands from caravan experience. Her route parallels the blacktop, far enough north to avoid any Tribals or Fallen defending the way to Capal. Unfortunately, she runs into the remnants of a Koleris horde,

and while she manages to escape, the Beasts hound her way south. The Characters will have to confront her pursuers, or even rescue her from them, in order to collect Miriam.

The Mad Marian is not happy to see the PCs, and thinks they, like the Koleris, are hunting her down. She actively resists any attempts to placate her, and must be dragged, kicking and screaming, into Cygnus' spirit realm. Cygnus leads the Characters on the difficult journey to the Hermitage, but the Characters must overcome obstacles that the White Swan avoids by flying over them. These challenges should be tailored to the abilities of the Characters, but might include chasms that must be crossed, Helots who once served the H'I Kar Z'bri and now wander without masters, or dealing with other spirits who demand honor, gifts, or proof of skill before allowing the Characters to pass. All these must be overcome while preventing Miriam from escaping and fleeing into the River of Dream.

Once at the Hermitage, Miriam immediately relaxes, and Cygnus takes her to a quiet glen and tells her to rest. The White Swan thanks the PCs and allows them to stay and rest among the gardens of the Hermitage before returning to the World of Flesh. Characters who spend more than an hour resting at the Hermitage gain a +2 to all Dreaming rolls. This bonus lasts until the next full moon.



Chapter Five: The Forlorn Hope

"Yes I know her. She is my sister. In the Breach she became blood-of-my-blood. That is what you can never understand, you who were not there, every man and woman who entered the Breach is blood-of-my-blood. There we died and were reborn as a new Tribe."

- Alya The Knife, speaking of Yasmin Luther'on.



QUEST FIVE: THE FORLORN HOPE WEAVING THE FORLORN HOPE

The Forlorn Hope begins a few days after the end of *Legacies*, as the Army of Liberation breaks free of the Z'bri taint and marches on the walls of Capal. Morale is high in the Army, as the Marians work quietly and quickly to dispel the guilt, pain and hate that had been building up among the hearts of the Liberators. Despite some interference from conservative Tribals and betrayed-feeling Fallen, the Marians are able to do their work through the support from Agnes and Mek. Though there is a great deal of grumbling and hard words, the tangible good that the Marians do brings most to accept their reemergence. Knowing that Capal is weakened by the combined actions of spies, Serf defections, the loss of supplies from Hattan and the devastation of the Koleris horde at the Stand of Sant Foy, Mek and the other commanders decide to strike hard and fast at Capal rather than softening it up with an extended siege. The fact that autumn is half over and that a bitter winter is facing the army, along with the less practical fear that a long siege could return the army to the madness of the Crusades in the H'I Kar, seals the decision. Mobilizing their full force and getting as many of their spies and defectors out of the area as possible, the Liberators march on the City of Hate.

SYNOPSIS

The Forlorn Hope is not a long Quest. It is, however, a very intense one. In the space of three Acts the Z'bri of Capal are crushed and driven into the wilds, and the Army of the Liberation, led largely by Fallen leaders and sympathetic Tribals and Tusks, takes Capal for their own — proclaiming it the home of the Eighth Tribe and the Nation of the Fall. This whirlwind of events starts in *Act One: Cracking the Shell*. In this Act the Army of the Liberation moves against Fortress, the center of Koleris power in Capal. After setting up a perimeter to isolate the southern edge of Capal, the army's siege engineers go to work on the wall just at the edge of the Great River. Breaking through, and into Fortress beyond, the Liberators storm Fortress and manage to kill several Koleris Lords. The remainder, however, manage to flee to Cht'aux. When the Liberators pursue them, the desperate Lords in the Cht'aux set Wormwood free, a monstrous War Machine beyond their ability to control. It takes the whole army, Fatimas included, to stop Wormwood, and even then Joan is badly injured.

Knowing that most of the remaining Z'bri Lords are holed up in the almost impenetrable Cht'aux, Mek works with the Fatimas, priests and siege engineers work together to blow a hole through the citadel's defenses. A Z'bri counter-strike stops the assault before it is able to work completely, however, and only a narrow hole, steep and choked with rubble, is opened in the walls. Knowing that the army is now in an exposed position, and with winter coming on quickly, Mek calls for a Forlorn Hope to storm the Breach and take Cht'aux in *Act Two: The Hope*. The 500 volunteers for the Forlorn Hope then join with Mek and in a suicide mission fight their way up the mound of rubble and into Cht'aux. They are successful, but only at great cost, managing to throw open the gates and doors of Cht'aux. The Army of Liberation then storms into the citadel and through the streets of Capal, routing the Z'bri and breaking their power.

The Forlorn Hope is the end of an era and the beginning of something new. The whole story of **Tribe 8**, from **Children of Lilith** onwards, has led to this point. The Fallen have been spat upon and tricked, tried and killed. They have been tested by enemies and allies, they have cut through the land like fire, they have been covered in blood, and they are now emerging, strong and feared. When Mek took command of the Army of Liberation many of the Fallen, and even many of the Tribals, saw the writing on the wall — the time of the Fallen as outcasts was over. By the time they get to the walls of Capal the Fallen have done nearly everything they need to in order to claim the next part of their legacy. All they have left to do is ride the wave that brought them to the Wall, and not be crushed by it in turn.

Events in *The Forlorn Hope* happen very quickly. The War of Liberation is the culmination of every sacrifice, every growth, every gain of wisdom that the Fallen have been through. As a result Weavers should attempt to keep things moving, to keep the action fast and furious. Players should not feel bowled over, and every group should have time to fight as much or little as they like, but the pace should keep moving. This is the time of destiny, and everything is coming together as a massive avalanche hurling the Fallen, and thus the PCs, towards their future.

At the same time *The Forlorn Hope* brings closure to much of the past. Many ideas, themes and even the lives of NPCs who have been about since the beginning, will come to a close in the Breach. Weavers should consider letting the Characters have time to say goodbye to those who are leaving, and to realize that the world is changing — and changing because of them. Though it needn't be obvious who is going to die, PCs should have a chance to have one last scene with beloved NPCs.

CHARACTER DEATH AND MEANING

Though there are only a few major conflicts in *The Forlorn Hope*, they are all uniformly brutal and deadly. Weavers should decide ahead of time how they want to handle the sticky issue of PC death. No one wants their Character to die without accomplishing anything, while on the other hand many people find Characters dying a heroic and meaningful death to be one of the most enjoyable moments of roleplay. Both of these elements must be balanced with the fact that if Character death is seen as an impossibility, most of the sense of urgency in this Quest will be completely lost.

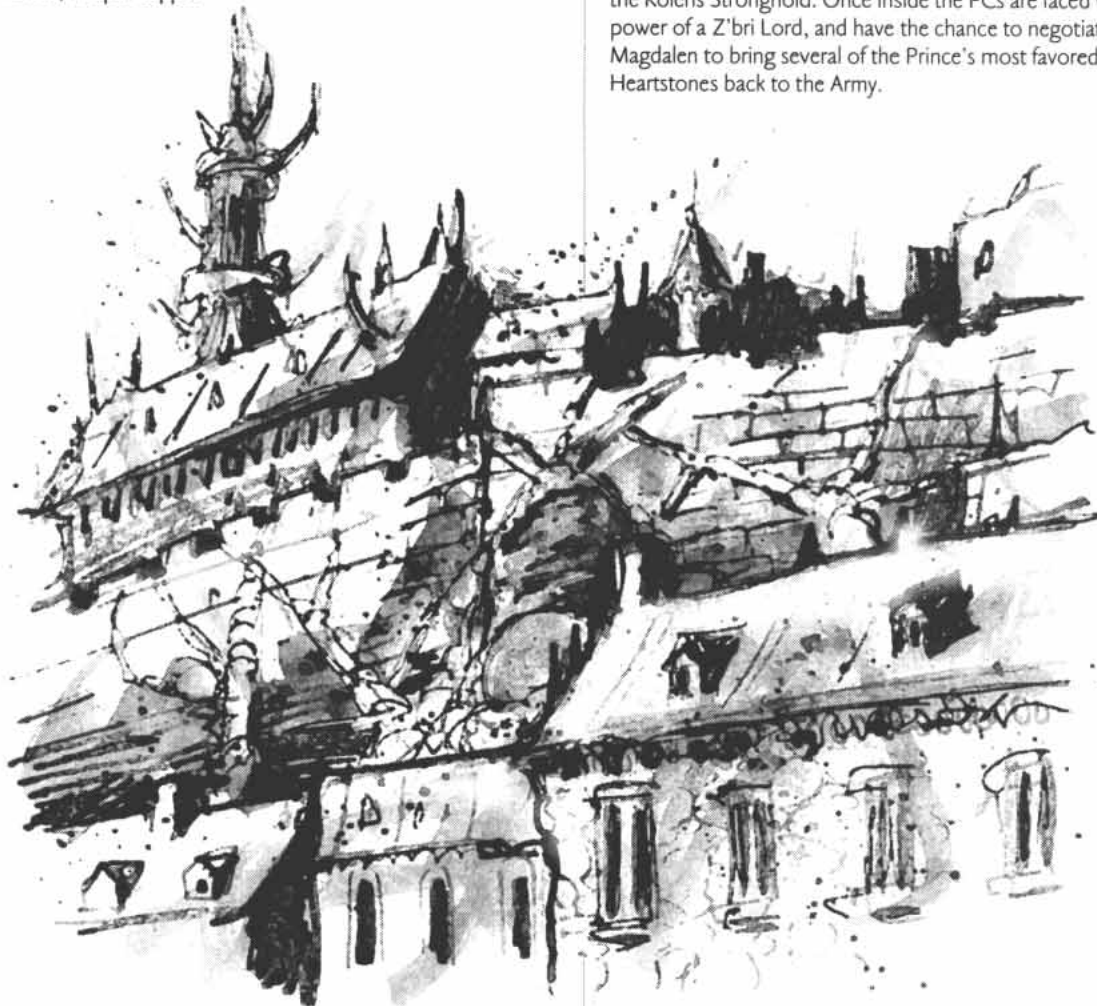
5. The Forlorn Hope

There are a few tips that Weavers can use to help them in dealing with the issue. The first is that a Character who dies without having made an obvious difference does not necessarily die without issue. A Character dying could spur other Characters, PCs and NPCs alike, to greater effort. Seeing their beloved friend fall might be the spark that drives them over the edge. The second is that there is a difference between heroism and foolishness. A Character who throws herself thoughtlessly into the thick of every fray has little chance of surviving, and Players putting their Characters in that situation should be told as much. Finally, if a Character does die, and dies well, don't rush past the moment. For many Players this will be one of the few times they lose a Character that they've played for years — let them have some closure.

CRACKING THE SHELL

Yes, their walls are thick and high, and yes, they're all tucked safely away inside. So what? Do you moan and fret because a walnut's meat is inside a shell? This is no different; first we crack the shell, then we eat the nut inside.

- Randal, Keeper Sapper



WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Cracking the Shell covers the first three weeks of the siege of Capal. The first two weeks and several days are covered only lightly, as they mostly involve settling the army in and setting up siege. This time, however, is perfect for Weavers to use running seeds from previous adventures, or adding complications of their own design. If the PCs had difficulties bringing the Marians out, for example, Weavers could deal with the ongoing issues between the Lost Tribe and the Army of Liberation. Weavers who want to skip to the "good stuff," on the other hand, can simply quickly narrate the time leading up to the storming of Fortress. The PCs can then jump right into the thick of the action again. The time leading up to the attack is covered in scene one, *The Perimeter*.

The actual taking and sacking of Fortress comprises the second scene, *Taking Fortress*. When spies inside Capal bring word that the Lords of Capal have gathered for an extended ritual (the waking of Wormwood, although the spies do not know this), Mek decides to make a lightning strike into the breached Z'bri stronghold. Characters have a chance to either go over the wall, or make a daring strike out of Thunder Canoes into the heart of the Koleris Stronghold. Once inside the PCs are faced with the power of a Z'bri Lord, and have the chance to negotiate with Magdalen to bring several of the Prince's most favored Heartstones back to the Army.

The act then moves to the Army of Liberation storming out of the newly captured Fortress to take Cht'aux in *A Goddess At Arms*. The Z'bri unleash the War Machine Wormwood, and the entire Army is nearly crushed beneath the beast. Only the PCs' bravery and leadership can save both the Army and Joan's life. Afterwards, the Army falls back to regroup, facing the power of the Z'bri Lords dug into the nearly impenetrable Cht'aux on one side, and the coming of a bitter winter that could break the Army of Liberation on the other. Seeing no other option, Mek orders the preparations for the assault on the Cht'aux, in *The Round Table*, which leads into the final Act, *The Hope*.

THE PERIMETER

Upon arriving outside Capal, the Army of Liberation sets up their main camp to the west of the city, along the banks of the Great River. After setting up defensive works stretching along the bank of the river, the Army begins a controlled razing of any Z'bri structures outside the walls, working closely with the Marians to remove the taint of the area. PCs can take part in this activity, helping to destroy the living buildings and organ fields outside the walls. Unlike earlier sorties, however, this foray is highly controlled and disciplined, and Serfs that surrender are taken captive rather than slaughtered out of hand. The main danger to the razing parties doesn't come from the buildings they attack, but from the walls of Capal itself. The Z'bri have set up batteries of Bile Cannons and catapults made of bone and sinew that fire resin spheres filled with hordes of Ripper Ants. The weapons, mostly controlled by the patient Melanis, fire on parties when they are at their weakest moments, rather than laying down a constant barrage.

Mek and the commanders respond to these attacks as soon as sufficient space has been cleared for the Liberators to set up their own weapons. PCs with skills in Tactics and siege warfare can help here, setting up and directing the fire of the trebuchets. The Keepers, meanwhile, place and fine-tune a rare and long held treasure — a pair of working mortars with nearly 100 shells donated by the Sanjon, which are used to pound the walls into oblivion. Working together, the Tribal and Keeper engineers manage to clear the walls of the Z'bri weapons, although lingering Ripper Ant colonies remain a problem.

Some of the Koleris in the city try to make preemptive raids, largely led by Chariot serfs and Koleris Iv'chet. PCs could be involved in keeping these very mobile and hard-hitting units from laying waste to the siege weapons. Joan, Dahlia, Magdalen and Agnes stay close by, and the PCs could well find themselves fighting side by side with the Fatimas. Dahlia in particular is involved in countering the raids, as She seems to take personal offense that the Koleris would dare think that they could outflank Her. PCs who use mobile tactics may draw Her eye, and find themselves with the mixed blessing of becoming the center of Dahlia's attention for a time.

TAKING FORTRESS

In the middle of the night, two days after the Army starts its bombardment of the walls, the PCs encounter a Serf trying to sneak into camp. How the PCs come across the Serf depends on their position in the army. PCs who have been guarding the siege weapons, or acting as lookouts, are in an obvious position to find and intercept the Serf. Those who have been acting as commanders may have one of their soldiers come and report that she thought she saw something creeping about the perimeter, and requests the PC to come and help check it out. Other PCs could be drawn in when they step out of the center of the camp to relieve themselves, or possibly to meet someone away from the eyes of the troops.

However the apparent infiltrator comes to the PCs' attention, they get their first clear sign of her motions when they get out just north of the siege lines (a bit north and west of the Gate of the Damned). Once there the PCs see a human shape moving about just outside the radius of the fire's illumination. It is quick and skittish, but alert PCs, or those with a high Human Perception (2+), may notice that it does not seem to be trying to sneak farther in the camp. In fact, it seems like it is not sure what to do.

The shape is actually Isa, a Capal Serf who has been acting as a spy inside the walls since before the beginning of the war. Having found out that the Lords of Capal are meeting in Cht'aux that night and all the next day — leaving Fortress and the Walls guarded only by Iv'chet and Serfs — she has risked her life to sneak out of Capal in order to bring word to the Army. However, on her way to the Army she realized that a lone Serf coming to the lines in the middle of the night would probably be killed before she had a chance to offer an explanation. So she hides just outside the light, hoping that someone with authority will come and listen to her.

How Isa reacts to the PCs' arrival depends entirely upon their actions. If she is attacked she will flee, though unless she is wounded she will try again at a later time. If the PCs seem to be important people (others address them as commanders, or they are well armed, or strong in Dreaming), then Isa may call out to them and try to convince them of her benevolent intentions. Finally, if the PCs move cautiously and slowly they may either capture Isa, or get her to talk to them. Once Isa has a chance to speak, her story is quite convincing, and she can even tell the PCs personal details about Kyr't the Free, who has been acting as her main contact with the Army.

If the PCs listen to Isa, even if they don't buy her story completely, they will probably want to take her to Kyr't, or even Mek, in order to check out her story. After all, the information she carries is vital, and if it is true, simply ignoring it would not be a wise course. Mek and Kyr't can be found at Mek's tent, talking through the night, and if sent for will have the PCs bring Isa to them. There Kyr't will confirm that she is a trusted spy, and will listen to her report eagerly. He is so eager, in fact that he scares Isa, and the PCs may have to reassure her and help her get everything out.

AIMING THE THRUST

Once the PCs have helped Isa deliver her message, Mek will send for the rest of the command staff, summoning them to an emergency meeting. All of the upper commanders, along with Joan, attend, although Agnes, Magdalen and Dahlia are all out of camp at the time. Mek, who is busy poring over plans and maps, asks the PCs to relate their new information to the command staff, and then says, "We cannot let this opportunity pass. We must take Fortress first, or it will be a knife at our back the whole war. If we can take it while the Lords are gone we can secure our foothold in the city. Now, how do we do so?"

With that, Mek opens the floor to ideas about the attack. Almost everyone present agrees that a breach in the walls will have to be made; there is almost no way to go "over the top" of Fortress, it is one giant, sealed fortification. Halburn, a shy Keeper who is one of the men in charge of the mortars, fidgets through the meeting, but does not speak up unless the Characters prompt him. If the PCs draw him out, he tells the command staff that his men have found what looks like a weak spot, but it is where the River runs right to the edge of Fortress. It could be blown, but the assault on it would have to be made by boat. Though the Army does have some boats, they do not have enough to launch a full marine assault. The rest of the command staff, if the PCs do not seize the idea of a marine assault, go back to discussing where a land based assault can be made, coming up with another area just north west of the River, very near to their encampment, where the wall is weak. If the PCs decide to back the idea of a marine assault, a successful Tactics roll (Threshold 5, or Player creativity) could propose a double assault, one against the land wall and one against the water wall. If the PCs suggest the idea, Mek decides to run with it. He then helps to set up the final details of the assault, and sends word to the siege engineers to begin the pinpoint assaults on the walls.

ASSAULT

The Keepers manning the siege weapons start their attack while it is still night, Tribal and Fallen soldiers using Synthesis to allow the Keepers to target their weapons despite the darkness. The Keepers, assuming the PCs were able to convince the command staff to go ahead with the plan to knock a hole in the water wall, shell their weak spot with mortars, blowing an unexpectedly huge hole in the brickwork there. The Tribal trebuchets, meanwhile, start to decimate the land wall, reducing a large chunk of it at the edge of Fortress to rubble.

During the night Mek, and the PCs, if they serve as commanders, bring the Liberators to arms. Assembling under cover of darkness, they prepare to make their assault on the breached wall and Fortress. If there is a double assault, then the larger group crosses the narrow spit of land between the southern wall and the Great River, and attempts to move through the hole there and into the courtyards of Fortress. At the same time the second group takes a collection of Tusk canoes, Dahlian boats and Keeper Thunder canoes, making a marine raid through the hole in the wall directly above the river itself. If there is no second hole, then the whole Army will have to attack the landward gap, making the assault much harder.

Mek personally approaches the PCs and a handful of others before the general muster. The grizzled old veteran asks the PCs to lead their command (as long as it is smaller than a legion; if a PC commands a legion he will ask her to pick her best company) against the wall as part of the first wave. He lets the PCs choose which prong of the attack they want to lead, and describes the dangers of each, as well as the possible rewards of victory. He makes no bones about the fact that while both routes are dangerous, the river route is far more difficult but also far more likely to lead into a key position inside Fortress. He explains that the Fatimas will not be participating directly in the



attacks. Agnes, Joan and Dahlia intend to fly to the roof of Fortress and start pounding away there, trying to draw attention away from the main attacks and using Synthesis to keep the Lords in the Cht'aux from casting their souls to bodies inside Fortress. While Mek speaks with the Characters he occasionally seems almost wistful, as though wishing he was leading a charge into the claws of the enemy, rather than sitting behind the defensive line and ordering younger men to their deaths.

Dreams of War: Assuming the PCs take a leadership position, they will then have to gather and ready their troops. While they go about doing so, Valida, a young Jacker under the PCs' command, begins to act strangely. She is normally a very steady, solid soldier and has never been prone to fits of nerves before. Now, however, she avoids the PCs, gets the shakes, and vomits repeatedly. If the PCs confront her or get her to talk, she tells them that she had a dream, a powerful one, that she was going to die today, at the hands of one of the PCs. On the verge of tears she tells them that she is neither a coward nor a deserter, and will see her part in the raid completed. If the PCs encourage her, or try to lift her spirits, she slowly straightens up and faces the day with a grim resolve. If the PCs try to send her to the rear, she sneaks back in to her former position when the raid commences. PCs who try to use Synthesis or Dreaming to probe her dream get few tangible answers, but find that Valida has great natural potential, and her dream could be prophetic.

Though Valida has the strongest reaction to the upcoming battle, many of the PCs' troops are nervous and on edge. Weavers should not let this scene pass without giving the PCs a chance to roleplay their leadership styles and their relationships with their soldiers. Giving some of the troops the PCs lead names and faces, making them human beings, will make the upcoming fight all the more real. Minor NPCs who have played a part in the past cycles of a campaign can return to join the PCs, trusting them to bring them through the battle alive.

GROUND POUNDERS

If the PCs choose to lead, or simply take part in, the ground-based assault, then Mek has them form up their troops halfway between midnight and dawn. It's starting to get into the middle of autumn, and the cold combined with the fear of battle, the constant thundering of Keeper mortars and the crash of the Tribal catapults makes it a long, miserable night. PCs in command positions, or who are good in social situations, should be encouraged to move among their troops, giving words of comfort and keeping everyone primed and ready for the charge. Weavers are encouraged to toss a few familiar faces at the PCs, to remind them that the lives of people they know are in their hands. The PCs may even have to reassure and keep the other commanders (as a good half of the Army of Liberation is taking part in the charge) focused and ready.

If the PCs have accepted command of the lead company, then it is up to them to order the exact time of the charge. The marine branch of the attack has orders to wait for the charge against the land-wall to begin before they attack, so the PCs have to time the assault carefully. Mek tells them to charge when there is enough light to see, but before the sun is completely over the

horizon. Characters who make Tactics rolls (Threshold 4) should know that they want their troops to be in the shadow of the wall before the sun comes fully up, or they'll end up fighting with the sun in their eyes.

Once the charge begins, the Keepers' siege weapons make one final salvo, and then fall silent. The charge is about 500 yards, and the first half of it is a fairly straight and direct run. As the Liberators draw closer to the walls, however, the Z'bri (who knew very well what the all night bombardment meant) get their weapons up and working. Bile, Ripper Ants, Lust Serpents and any other nastiness the Weaver can cook up start to rain down on the charging army. PCs should face a couple such attacks, but should also have to deal with the effects of the attacks on the morale of the troops they lead. Tactics, Leadership and Healing rolls can be combined with good roleplay to save members of the company, while still keeping everyone else moving. The PCs are in the lead, and if their company stops or retreats the entirety of the army will as well. The PCs must keep their men moving, and it will mean leaving some behind to die.

Once the PCs reach the wall, Shield-Wall Serfs who have moved into position to block the breach in the wall engage them. The Z'bri bile cannons and ripper ant bombs continue to drop during the fight, as the Koleris care very little for casualties; there are always more Serfs. At the same time several Koleris Iv'chet move up behind the wall, bringing the PCs' company, and any other companies close to them, under the effect of their Atmosphere. PCs again have to fight while at the same time keeping their troops under control. Leadership, Intimidation and Synthesis rolls can be used to give the troops a fighting chance against the pervasive Atmosphere.

When the PCs get through the breach, they wind up in a large courtyard leading into Fortress. They're surrounded by the wall on three sides, and the bulk of Fortress on the fourth. The Z'bri weapons keep attacking them from the walls, turning inwards to strike at them, and the PCs should either get up the stairs on the south face of the wall to take out the weaponry, or direct another company to do so. Once there they can engage the Z'bri manning the guns and force them to stop attacking the army. At the same time, the PCs see the gates of Fortress starting to swing closed while the Lords retreat from the courtyard.

The PCs and their company, being in the lead, must stop the gates from closing. To succeed, the PCs and their troops must defeat at least two dozen Iv'chet. Weavers should let the PCs play out their own battles, but can determine how well the PCs' troops do by having PCs in command make Tactics rolls (opposed by the Z'bri's tactics of 2/+1). Any MoF will mean that the PCs' troops take high casualties, and the PCs have to fight most of the Iv'chet themselves. A MoS of 1 to 3 means the PCs' troops do well, and the PCs only have to face one Iv'chet each. A MoS of over 5 means that the PCs are able to outmaneuver and circle the Iv'chet, cutting them down with full help from their troops.

5. The Forlorn Hope

If the PCs get into too much trouble, Agnes notices their plight from Her position on the roof and will drop down to fight along side them. Agnes alone, however, cannot win the battle. While She can give the PCs a chance to regroup and refocus, they will still have to fight their way into the Fortress themselves. Once the PCs get into the gates and block the closing mechanism (which is made of sinews and can be stopped by hacking through them) they can either stay to hold the gate while the other troops pour through, or fight deeper into Fortress, going to *Heart of the Rock*.

MARINES

If the PCs chose to join the marine assault they will face the same problems keeping their troops' morale high through the night as those described in *Ground Pounders*. Of course, this scenario has the added complication of the distribution of the troops between several dozen different boats, making it harder for the PCs to move among their troops.

The Marines form up in the canoes, which are brought up along the bank of the Great River once night has fallen. If the PCs have accepted the lead position, they and their company take the seats in the ten Thunder Canoes that various Keeper groups (both Vimary and Sanjon) have contributed to the war. The boats, even the Thunder Canoes, are then paddled out into the

river under cover of darkness. They are to wait there, camouflaged with nets covered in river reeds and leaves, until they hear the ground assault start their charge. If the PCs try to rush the wall before the ground-pounders, they will find their boats under the assault of the Z'bri weapons — which could very well mean death. Waiting for the ground assault to begin before launching the attack, however, gives the marines an easier time of it. The Z'bri weapons focus primarily on the ground assault, and those on the boats only have to deal with attacks by Lust Serpents until they get close to the walls, which crown the cliffs that rise from the river.

Once the PCs get to the cliffs, they and their troops face three immediate problems. The first is that, unbeknownst to the Army, the riverweeds that grow along the cliff under the breach are an aquatic variant of Vicweed, primed to attack both the boats and any character who gets too close. The riverweed appears as long, trailing water plants that snake vines up the Wall, and it occasionally mimics the motions of a drowning person in order to draw a victim closer. In addition to the normal dangers of fighting Vicweed comes the danger of drowning; this form of Vicweed holds an entangled Character's head under water while it crushes them. Fighting the Vicweed is difficult, with a -1 to -2 to all rolls to physically attack the weeds due to the difficulty of fighting from boat (or deep water — as the Great River is over six feet deep where it flows against the cliff).

Once the Vicweed is cleared (or while it is being cleared, if the PCs come up with a good plan), the PCs must use the camouflage nets, ropes and grappling hooks to make an impromptu ladder to the breach, a good nine feet above water level. PCs trying to climb the cliff and wall without getting a rope or net in place must make an Athletics test (Threshold 8) to go up the slick, smooth and slimy stone. Doing so, however, lets the PCs get the ropes and nets secured before Koleris Iv'chet arrive and try to start cutting the ropes. If no one climbs the Wall, the PCs must use grappling hooks to get the ropes set up, while dealing with Iv'chet throwing spears and trying to cut the ropes as quickly as the PCs can get them rigged.

Once the PCs get through the breach, they find themselves in a dark room filled with vats of waste and bile (ammunition for the Z'bri weapons), and a small horde of Koleris Iv'chet pouring through to seal the breach. Whomever gets into the room first will have to hold the breach until reinforcements can come up the ropes and nets, and then arrange a counter charge (using Tactics and Leadership) to drive the Iv'chet back. Though there are no Lords present, the tight, cramped conditions, and difficulty of fighting one's way into a heavily-defended room up a net swinging over Vicweed, should be played up. Also, there is no real hope of Fatimal aid arriving if the



PCs get in over their heads. Weavers should remember that the PCs aren't alone, however; they have both the support of and responsibility for the troops following them.

THE HEART OF THE ROCK

Once the PCs push into Fortress, no matter which route they took to get there, they will find themselves fighting through corridors packed with Koleris serfs and Iv'chet. Many of the serfs, if given a chance, will surrender and can be sent back through the ranks to be herded out of the walls. The Iv'chet, however, attack in relentless waves and use every trick that the Weaver can think of — including luring PCs into traps, collapsing sections of corridor, trying to get among the troops to subvert them with their Atmospheres, or using Exsanguination to cover steps, steep corridors and the like with blood (-1 modifier due to unstable footing). In addition, Fortress itself attacks the Characters, spikes coming from the walls and mouths full of teeth opening below their feet to consume them. Weavers may not want, however, to make this scene one endless combat. Breaks in the fighting make great opportunities for roleplay, as the PCs must deal with wounded subordinates, their own grief and horror as they realize whom they have lost, and even possible attempted mutinies as soldiers give into the Koleris Atmosphere.

Once the PCs have had as much of the hall to hall fighting as the Weaver deems appropriate, they come out of the endless halls and armories and into a vast hall under a great domed ceiling. Gleaming in the sallow and unhealthy light of the room are nearly a dozen Heartstones, all of them on display in various gut-wrenching ways. The PCs have come to the heart of Fortress, where Prince Thak'ich'at keeps the Heartstones of his most powerful former foes as a visible reminder of his power, and of what happens to those who cross him. Though the PCs may look for Joshua's Heartstone, it is not here.

As the PCs look about the room, Valida begins to cry and twitch. She drops her sword and starts trying to grab the Heartstones and swallow them. Ignoring anything the PCs say, she attempts to swallow the stones, which range in size from an egg to an adult's head, her throat stretching obscenely, until the PCs move to stop her. At that point, crying helplessly, she launches herself into a full attack on anyone who comes near, using her short sword and fighting with strength borne of insanity. It will probably be obvious to the PCs that she is possessed, but her crying and struggling also indicates that the possession is not complete. She is being puppeted by a Koleris Lord, Teth'ier, who is reaching through the Heartstones to control her.

Unable to leap into her body directly, due to the Fatimas' blockage of the River, Teth'ier is attempting to force his partly-controlled puppet to steal the Heartstones. How the PCs deal with the situation is up to them. Valida is a good fighter, and the rage and pain driving her makes her a tough opponent, but the PCs together can probably slaughter her if they make a combined effort — and she did dream that such was her fate. There are other ways, however. Using Dreaming, Synthesis, or Z'bri Lore would allow the Characters to figure out what is

going on, and use of Synthesis, or a ritual designed to block the influence of the stones, might help Valida regain control of herself. Successful Lore and Ritual checks would allow the PCs to know a ritual, but it requires a great deal of effort and precision, which is difficult with Valida possessed. Freedom or Purity would allow the PCs to drive Teth'ier's influence off for a time. In the end, however, the only way to permanently remove his control is to remove the Heartstones from the vicinity. That includes any Heartstones that Valida may have swallowed — and getting them out of her will be a task of its own.

Once Valida has been dealt with, one way or another, the PCs find themselves in danger. As long as the Heartstones are in close proximity to each other, and to a human host, Teth'ier can continue to reach through them and try to dominate mortal minds. He tries to target the PCs, forcing them into a resisted roll of Sundering vs. WIL (though he rolls at -3, due to the difficulty of the task). The PCs can suppress the attacks with the methods mentioned above, but they should know that the power of so many Heartstones so close together will make them a very attractive target.

Once the PCs have dealt with the situation as well as they are able, Magdalen comes into the chamber with several of Her priestesses, drawn by the interaction of Teth'ier's Sundering and the Heartstones. She asks the PCs to give the stones to Her, promising them that they will be well used. Speaking softly and reasonably, She tells the PCs that She can deal with the stones as humans cannot, and that they are needed outside — for Joan has killed the Prince and the army has a chance of storming Cht'aux if they act now. Though the Lover is pleasant and reasonable, trying to calm the PCs after their long exposure to Sundering, She will not let them leave with the Heartstones.

The PCs may try to negotiate, claiming the Heartstones belong to Mek and the Army and not to the Tribes. If they speak well enough, Magdalen may listen to them, and might even be persuaded to hold the stones for the Army for the time being while agreeing to turn them over to the High Command once the current battle is over. Convincing the Fatima to make any such promises, however, would require tact, subtlety and carefully-chosen words. Threatening Her will only anger Her, but negotiating in the name of the Army, or Mek, or even the Eighth Tribe, might buy a Character some room. Though She is a Fatima, the Lover is also politically astute, and is aware of the tensions, dangers and possibilities that the Army of Liberation and the Eighth Tribe present. Characters who speak intelligently of future concessions, the unity of the Army, or the position of Vimary relative to the Eighth Tribe and their Tusk allies may win concessions even from the Fatima.

However the PCs choose to deal with Magdalen, She will not speak to them forever. If things start to drag on, She reminds them, subtly at first and with increasing bluntness, that there is a very important battle going on outside, and that the PCs should be leading their troops into battle, not fighting for possession of things they cannot control anyway. Eventually the PCs should leave the Heartstones with Magdalen (and possibly a guard of their own troops) and go to rejoin the battle as it spills out of Fortress.

A GODDESS AT ARMS

When the PCs come out of Fortress, they see a battle raging through the narrow and twisted streets of Capal. The half of the army that did not take part in the Fortress assault stormed through the breach near the Gate of the Damned, and is now struggling through the streets to join with the soldiers pouring out of Fortress. Farther up the streets, moving towards the inner wall surrounding Cht'aux, Joan and Dahlia fight alongside Tusks and Fallen against several massive Koleris Lords. Sharp-eyed PCs, or those with a good vantage point (such as high up on the side of Fortress) can see that in the distance the gates of the inner wall of the city are still open. PCs might rightly suspect a trap, but either way it should be obvious that they are needed forward, and should be encouraged to rally their troops and press on to aid the Fatimas. If they do not, then they will still be at Fortress when the following events occur. They should still have a chance to participate, however; Wormwood's rising is hard to miss.

Either once Joan covers about half the distance between the outer and inner walls, or once the PCs start to catch up to Joan, the earth starts to tremble violently. The shaking's epicenter is about 200 yards away from Joan, in the direction of Cht'aux. It quickly escalates from a slight trembling to a full-scale earthquake, strong enough to make staying upright difficult. (Running Characters with an AGI of less than 1 should make an Athletics test to keep their footing.) Just as the quake hits its highest pitch, the ground in the center of the road leading towards Cht'aux explodes upward as Wormwood rises from the depths. The monstrosity, a creature that appears to be some foul cross between a snake and a worm, explodes upwards, sending chunks of rock flying like shrapnel for hundreds of yards in every direction. It rises up, fifteen meters into the air, and then slams down into a building, shattering it to rubble. With a roar of pain and fury it then rushes at Joan with shocking speed, its body writhing and undulating obscenely. Joan, seeing the beast rushing Her and knowing that it will surely destroy the Army if She does not stop it, gives a battle cry and charges the monster, trying to angle around to keep it from coming directly at Her.

Wormwood measures over fifty meters long from end to end, and is about eight meters thick. It is a monster made of the bodies of thousands of serfs, dozens of Iv'chet, and even several Lords. PCs should quickly realize that a head-on assault against Wormwood is suicide; it is unlikely that they have weapons that can actually do enough damage to the beast to even slow it before it crushes them. This, however, does not mean that the Characters should simply sit and watch Joan fight the beast. If the PCs do nothing, let them see Joan get hit by the beast's acid spittle, screaming as it burns deeply into Her body. She fights on bravely, cutting deeply into Wormwood's skull and neck, but it quickly becomes obvious that even She cannot defeat it alone.

Weavers should let the PCs come up with their own plans for taking on Wormwood. Synthesis use is a likely first try, but Wormwood represents a powerful concentration of Sundering, and all Synthesis effects directed against it are at a -3 penalty. (This penalty can be countered by getting close enough to Joan to strengthen the PCs' Synthesis abilities, or by getting Dahlia and Agnes close enough that they can lend some aid.)

Characters may also go looking for a bile cannon or a mortar, either of which could damage Wormwood, but which would be hard to use against the beast unless it was trapped. If the PCs can get Joan's attention, they can try to get Her to lead Wormwood into one of the narrow lanes that is surrounded by well-built stone houses, or even get it between the wall and the outer defensive works, limiting its mobility. Also, while it is very difficult for any single person to damage Wormwood, the Characters can get two or three companies with spears to try and surround Wormwood's flanks and stab at any soft place they can find.

If the PCs manage to implement a solid strategy, then the companies can attack Wormwood as though they were a swarm (or a horde if they can get multiple companies, though no more than two companies can attack Wormwood at once) that has an aggressiveness of 2/+1, and a damage/turn of 35. The "swarms" of Liberators have a Damage Threshold of 70, but if a company is dispersed by Wormwood it takes 75% casualties and cannot be reformed. If the companies make their swarm attack after Wormwood is trapped (against the wall or between buildings) the beast suffers a -2 to all attacks against the company. Players who get stumped should be allowed to make a Tactics roll (Threshold 6) to get 'flashes of insight' about the above strategies.

If the PCs are unable to think of a strategy to stop Wormwood, or if they are not combat ready after the assault on Fortress, then Troy and Kyrt work together with Evangel Black and Altara Ven to coordinate the assault against the War Machine. The PCs need not fall completely out of the action, however. Medics and runners are desperately needed to tend to the wounded and keep the groups of soldiers in communication. PCs can make a great difference by moving through the destruction in Wormwood's wake and digging the injured out of the rubble.

Eventually the Army should be able to start wearing Wormwood down. The more wounds it receives, however, the more destructive it becomes. After it takes four Flesh or two Deep Wounds it starts to thrash about wildly — effectively making an attack against every one within melee range of the beast. The PCs should realize that Wormwood is dying, and have a chance to react. Rushing it one last time will kill it, but will also get many more troops killed. Letting the beast bleed to death is also an option, though it would also require that the PCs lead an organized retreat to keep the army from being separated and left vulnerable. Joan Herself rushes the beast, hacking away at its head, and heroic PCs may follow. Joan, however, pays for Her bravery when the beast dies, as its head ruptures and spills acid over Her, wounding Her badly.

In the wake of Wormwood's death, Joan lies gravely injured, much of Her body melted, scorched and stained. Her spirit is likewise injured, due to Wormwood's Sundering. Agnes and Dahlia take Her to camp, and ask the PCs who were involved in the final rush against the beast to carry Her sword or shield. The PCs can either join the Fatimas, or can work at rallying the Army. The destruction caused by Wormwood has left many shell-shocked, and Cells are scattered around much of the south end of Capal. PCs can do a valuable service to the army by helping get everyone back to Fortress, keeping it secure.



THE ROUND TABLE

Though Wormwood was defeated, the cost of its defeat was high. Even if the PCs performed very well against the beast, the Army was still hurt and its drive towards Cht'aux stopped dead. The gates of the inner wall close, and the Z'bri Lords dig into the nearly inaccessible fortress-heart of Capal. Mek recalls the troops to Fortress and the camp outside the walls. With the PCs' help Fortress is quickly secured, and the unwounded troops gather there. The PCs are called to a meeting at Mek's tent, asked to attend even if they don't have a command.

The meeting includes all the Captains of the army, both Generals, Mek and the four Fatimas. Joan is wounded, Her whole right side immobile, and even Dahlia seems somewhat tired, though She laughs often. All the humans in the tent are standing around a large round table that Mek brought from Fortress, its surface covered with maps of Capal. The purpose of the meeting is to determine the strategy for taking the rest of the city. There are still several areas thick with Z'bri, as well as the Temple of Flesh and Cathedral to be dealt with. Mek is unsure whether the army should move on Cht'aux and attempt to capture the heart of the city, or try to take the rest of the city and only then lay an extended siege to Cht'aux. The other commanders argue both sides, pointing either to Cht'aux's near impregnability or to the coming winter and the difficulty of taking the city while Cht'aux stands. The more spiritually minded commanders point out that Cht'aux is the heart of Capal, and say that the city cannot fall while the heart still stands, and if it were to fall then so too would the whole city. The PCs should have a chance to add their voices to the discussion.

Once everyone has had a chance to speak, Mek leans over his table, looking down at a map of Capal there, and says, slowly. "Winter is coming, and I fear our ability to fight through it, especially in hostile territory in a city we don't control. We can struggle and scrimp and bleed and burn for who knows how many months, even years, before we take this city. Or we can end it now. In one stroke we can crush the heart of the Z'bri of this city, slay their Lords and break their will. We can end it now, and everything in my gut and heart says we should. One last strike, and then we can rest and watch our children grow." At the end of his words, he looks up at Kyr, who nods, resolutely supporting Mek's words.

The PCs should have a chance to argue with Mek or to lend their voices in support. Whatever they say, however, Mek is adamant, and Joan and the other Fatimas back him fully. Mek is the High Commander, and the final assault will take place when he determines it. If Mek has to pull rank on the PCs, let them deal with it as they wish, but at this point the rest of the commanders will not back them if they try to put Mek aside. PCs who argue against storming Cht'aux have a hard choice: follow the commander and turn their own decisions over to a commander, or follow what they think is best and risk harming the efforts of others.

Once all is said and done, Mek leads the discussion of the plan to attack Cht'aux. He favors an attempt to reduce the Inner Wall, the houses around Cht'aux and the foot of the monstrous building itself, into rubble, allowing an assault directly against the

main fortification. He listens to anything the PCs have to say, however, and tries to work with them to make the best plan possible. When that is done he dismisses the commanders, except for Kyr, and tells everyone to get some rest. It has, after all, been a very long and bloody day.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Weavers should play as much of the conflict in Fortress as is fun for their group. At least enough should be played for the PCs to get a sense of how difficult the fight is, but there is no point in pushing the endless toil to the point of drudgery. Weavers can also use Tactics and Leadership rolls to abstract the combat, letting the PCs determine the success of their troops based on the quality of their leadership. In general, a failed roll means that they lose both troops and ground, with the severity determining how many (15% x MoF as a guideline). A successful roll, on the other hand, means that the Characters' troops take only light casualties (10% or less) and manage to gain and hold ground.

The fight with Wormwood should be handled carefully. The PCs alone don't have a chance of defeating Wormwood, but that does not mean that they should feel useless in the fight. Using smart tactics, and working with Joan and Dahlia should allow the PCs to feel that they had a part in swinging the outcome of the battle. In fact, how well the PCs do can be used as a gauge of how badly Joan is wounded. If the PCs do little but watch, Joan may well be crippled for a while. If, on the other hand, the PCs act quickly and intelligently then Joan may only be moderately injured.

Vicweed can be found in *Horrors of the Z'bri*, page 111, or the following statistics can be used: AGI +1, FIT +4, PER +3, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 8. Camouflage 3/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1. Attacks: Grabbing Attack (x8 damage), Crush/Digest (automatic Flesh Wound every turn).

Ripper Ants can be found in *Horrors of the Z'bri*, page 112, or the following statistics can be used: Aggressiveness 3, Damage/Turn 3, Damage Threshold 20, Random Horde Size 5d6, Basic Swarm Size 200.

Bile Cannons are found in *Horrors of the Z'bri* page 119, but the Capal Cannons are modified to use the following stats: Firearms 4/+1. Acid Attack x 15 damage, range 100 meters, 15 shots/day).

Valida's stats are on page 103. Weavers may want to introduce her before the raid on fortress, either having her work with the Characters to stop the raids against the siege lines, or even having her at their backs in the Stand at Sant Foy.

Koleris Iv'chet use the stats on page 106.

Wormwood is detailed on page 95.

Isa is found in *Word From the North* pages 30 and 55, or use the following statistics: AGI +1, APP -4, BLD +1, FIT +1, KNO +1, PSY +2, WIL +1. Athletics 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/0, Dodge 2/+1, Dreaming 1/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Intimidate 1/+1, Melee (bone weapons) 2/+1, Navigation (Capal's Inner Wall) 2/+1, Survival (Capal) 3/0.

THE HOPE

There are times when a commander's life is worth nothing at all. Seeing their leader before them gives an army hope, and there are times when hope is all that matters.

- Mek to Kyr, the night before the Forlorn Hope

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The Hope covers the last battle of the War of Liberation. In one brief day the war is ended, and Capal and the North are set free from Z'bri control. The day will long be remembered as one of the most glorious and terrible in the history of the Eighth Tribe. In years to come those who would otherwise be bitter enemies will greet each other as sisters, saying, "I remember, you stood beside me on the Wall."

The Hope starts with *The Breach*. In this short scene the Army of Liberation, using Keeper firepower, Tribal siege weapons and Fallen Synthesis manages to blow a narrow hole through Cht'aux's defenses. Before the gap can be widened, however, a Z'bri counterstrike lays waste to the Tribal siege weapons, leaving the Liberators unable to widen the gap enough to send in the whole army, as they had hoped.

The Call covers Mek calling for the 500 best soldiers from the Army of Liberation to come forward and form a Cell — the Forlorn Hope — to storm Cht'aux and open its doors and gates so that the rest of the army can follow and overwhelm the citadel. He makes no pretenses about the Forlorn Hope — it is a suicide mission.

Involving the Characters discusses ideas for Weavers to draw reluctant Characters into participating in the Forlorn Hope. It also covers options for Weavers and PCs who really have no interest in going into the Breach, allowing the Characters to be involved in the great events of the day in a more roundabout fashion.

The story then moves to the battle itself in *Into the Breach*. In this scene the 500 of the Forlorn Hope go to the weakest spot in Cht'aux's defenses and buy the hope of the future with blood and sacrifice.

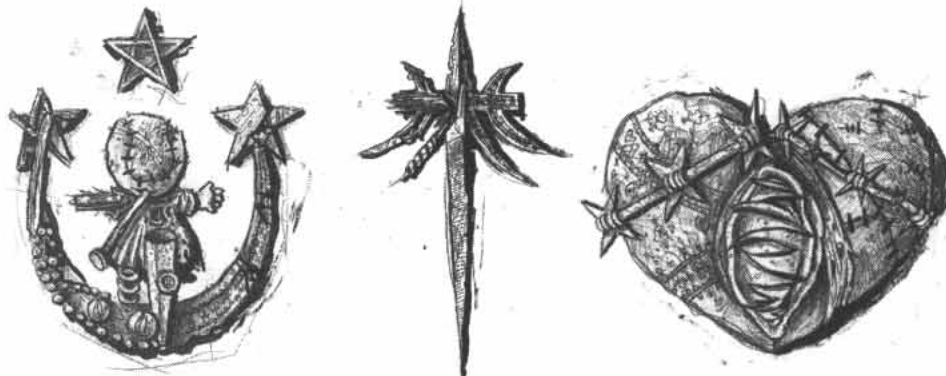
The act then concludes with the short scene *Mopping Up*, when the Forlorn Hope opens the gates and doors of Cht'aux, allowing the Army of Liberation to sweep into the citadel and crush the Lords inside before spilling out into the city and seizing it from the Z'bri.

THE BREACH

The day after the meeting in *Round Table*, the Liberators move the siege weapons up from the lines outside the wall and into the area in front of Fortress. As Wormwood most likely demolished much of the area, the army takes advantage of the space, clearing away the rubble and setting up the war machines. It takes most of the day to do so, but by evening the Keeper guns and Tribal trebuchets are firing again, pounding at the Inner Wall, the sides of Cht'aux and the hill it sits on, and the houses that ring the base of the hill. Once again, PCs who have skills relating to the siege weapons are given an opportunity to help, or even lead, the assault. Doing so, however, will place them directly in the path of the Z'bri counter-attack.

The siege weapons pound away for the whole day following, and that night the second arm of the siege is drawn up. The most powerful Synthesis users of the Army of Liberation are called to the front steps of Fortress, where they can see the Cht'aux in the distance. PCs who have a reputation of being strong in Synthesis are asked to join. Once everyone is assembled, Joan, Agnes and Magdalen come forward; Dahlia is nowhere to be found. The Fatimas bring with them the Heartstone of Prince Thak'ikch'at, the Heartstones the PCs captured in the Heart of Fortress, and the Hammer of Joshua.

Once all the stones that are going to be used have been assembled, the Fatimas divide the participants into groups led by the most powerful or most respected of their faction (Tribe or Outlook). If a PC is particularly potent or respected, she should be chosen to lead her faction. The leaders then join Joan in the center of a circle, while the followers array themselves behind their leader. Standing just to Joan's left is the Agnite leader (defaulting to Puck), and the leaders of the other Tribes then are arrayed clockwise around the circle. The Fallen leaders take up the four positions after the Tribes, and the circle ends with Jaky Maque standing to Joan's right. It is unclear whether Jaky stands for Joan or for the Guides, and neither she nor the Fatimas answer if asked about her position. Each faction leader is given a sledgehammer, with the mark of Joshua engraved



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upon the head. Jaky is given the true Hammer of Joshua, and holds it in strong, confident hands. Magdalen bends down to kiss the woman upon the forehead before the ritual starts.

When everyone is in position, Joan begins to intone the Prophecy of Joshua in a soft, sorrowful voice. After She speaks two sentences, the Agnite leader steps forward and strikes a Heartstone with the hammer he was given, smashing the stone to splinters. Joan then speaks another two sentences and another leader steps forward and strikes. It continues thus around the circle, until Jaky Maque steps forward after the words, "They will create freedom for all, but it will be born of blood and sacrifice," and crushes the Prince's Heartstone with a mighty swing.

The moment the Prince's Heartstone is crushed, several things happen at once. Jaky Maque drops Joshua's Hammer, which is caught by another leader before it hits the ground (the PCs, if they try, Puck if not), and falls to the ground. She is dead before her body comes to rest, and has a peaceful smile on her face. A moment after she falls a great ripping rumble comes from the Cht'aux, the sound of a great deal of earth collapsing in a sudden avalanche. While that sound still echoes in the air sudden explosions rock the siege engine's line and a moment later mortars start to explode near the platform on which the ritual took place.

The ritual was successful in weakening Cht'aux, destroying many of the defenses that it had taken the Melanis a century to build. When it did so, however, it also triggered a Melanis counterstrike that the dark monks had been setting up for several days. Two Melanis Lords, feeling the shock of the Heartstones being crushed, leap from their current bodies into the bodies of two of the Keepers running the mortars. Having learned how to use the weapons, the Melanis Lords then turn the mortars on the other siege engines, and then on the assembled Dreamers as the ritual ends.

Any PC in the areas attacked must make a PSY test (Threshold 3) or else be hit by the shrapnel from a mortar shell, taking damage as though a grenade had landed (3 meters - 1 meter per MoF) away from them. The others in the areas attacked take heavy wounds, with a significant number of those manning the siege weapons killed. The Dreamers take slightly less punishment, as Joan uses Devotion to take much of the damage onto Her already-wounded form. The Lords continue to fire at the Army of Liberation until someone starts to move against their position. They then drop grenades down the mortars and leap out of the Keeper bodies, leaving them and the mortars to be blown to bits.

THE CALL

By the next morning (or sooner, if the PCs are on the ball) the losses and gains of the night become clear. About 85% of the Tribals' siege weapons have been destroyed or damaged beyond immediate repair, and the Keepers lost all of their mortars. Losses among the fighters manning the siege engines were high, but more were wounded than killed, and most are expected to recover with time. The Dreamers working on the

ritual took only light casualties, mostly moderate to light wounds. Joan, however, is nearly incapacitated, and retreats into a private room in Fortress to recover.

The gains were far less than Mek had hoped, but with some fortuitous surprises. The hole blown in the Inner Wall was fairly narrow, nowhere near wide enough for a significant portion of the army to storm through at once. On the other hand, the ritual was more successful than anyone had originally thought; it caused a section of Cht'aux to collapse, sliding down over the shattered houses below it. The result is a ramp of rubble leading from the breached wall to the open side of Cht'aux.

Gathering the command staff one last time, Mek decides to follow through with his plan and finish Cht'aux off in one stroke. Without the siege weaponry it would be difficult to impossible to seize the other Z'bri strongholds, and Cht'aux is already breached. With winter coming in there may not be time to take the city as long as the Lords still live. Before noon, the day after the ritual, Mek has the commanders bring the army together.

Once the army is gathered, Mek comes out to address his troops. In clear, no-nonsense language he lays the situation out for them, telling them about the loss of the siege weapons, the danger of oncoming winter, and his gut feeling that the war has to be ended now. He then lays out his strategy for the whole army. The Forlorn Hope, a suicide squad, will be formed up to assault the narrow breach of Cht'aux. The rest of the army will gather before the gates that lead from the Inner Wall directly to the doors of Cht'aux. The Forlorn Hope will storm the defile and open the gates and doors, allowing the rest of the army to come in and crush the Z'bri inside the fortress.

Mek then says, "I need 500 of you, the best and the strongest, to volunteer for the Forlorn Hope. No one will be asked; you step forward on your own or not at all. I want you to understand this: I expect most of those who go into that breach to die. If you join up you had best say goodbye to everyone you love before you go." He stops, and shrugs. "The only good reason I can give you to join is this — the Forlorn Hope is the prayer of the future. It and it alone will win this war for us. We can gain freedom for all, but it will take blood and sacrifice; personal sacrifice. Any of you who join the Forlorn Hope should know that I shall be at your side. I will lead the Hope myself. Now go, rest and ready yourselves for tomorrow. I will need volunteers for the Hope to meet outside my tent at sundown."

With that the army is dismissed, and every soul among them asks themselves if they have what it takes to join the Hope.

THE RESPONSE

Sundown on the field in front of Mek's tent brings just over 1000 volunteers for the Forlorn Hope. Nearly every Jacker, and no few Herites and Templars, show up to offer their lives for the future. Most are grim and determined, though several are obviously nervous, close to running in fear. When Mek comes out he is mildly surprised to see such a large turnout (he had secretly feared that there would not be enough volunteers to make the Hope feasible), but he hides it well. The Jacker then calls out the

names of fifty of the toughest, and most trusted, Liberators there, including any PCs present. He names those called as the commanders of the Hope, and tells them they need to reduce the group's size by a little more than half. He divides the remaining volunteers into groups of twenty and has each commander go through them and pick the ten they think will be the best to have at their backs in the breach.

The PCs get to hand-pick their units for the Forlorn Hope, and they should be careful about doing so. The men and women they choose will be their only lifeline in a brutal, bloody conflict. Weavers can play this scene up by having the PCs speak with all their possible recruits, or have the PCs be joined by soldiers that stood with them at Fortress or against Wormwood. In the end, however, the PCs should have a troop ready to attack the following dawn.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

If the PCs are all gung-ho about joining the Forlorn Hope, then all for the best. No matter how they feel about it, however, they should be given a chance to discuss it in-character. This is a big event, even for battle hardened troops like the PCs. In addition, the Weaver can help the PCs figure out how they feel about it, and get a sense for the rest of the army's reaction, by having friendly NPCs stop by to discuss events with the Characters. There are many among the Fallen, from Alexis of Blade to Alya the Knife to Colette the Hopeful, who half want to join the Hope and half fear doing so. Having the PCs talk with their friends about the issue, and deciding what to do together can both help draw the PCs out and can help show the growing unity of what has become the Eighth Tribe.

Characters who are reluctant to join the Hope should not be forced to do so. They, like those who are more eager, should have a chance to talk to others about their fears and worries. Speaking with Kyrt, Troy, or Kymber could help the PCs focus, though all three of those Fallen will urge the Characters to join, saying that the Eighth Tribe needs their strength to win the day. More cautious and concerned friends might give the opposite advice, telling the PCs that they are needed as living leaders rather than dead heroes.

Whatever the PCs decide, they should not be forced to join the Forlorn Hope if they do not want to. While Weavers can subtly suggest the course of action, the PCs must have the absolute final say in what their Characters do. Presented below are some optional scenes for Characters who do not join the Hope. Just because they do not take the center stage in the attack does not mean that they cannot still remain a focus of the story.

MEDICS

While the 500 of the Forlorn Hope will be the first up the wall, they will not be the only ones going into danger. Kymber and several of her close associates put together a group of combat medics at the same time that the Forlorn Hope forms up. These brave women and men, all highly skilled in Healing and Herbalism, and most with healing-oriented Synthesis, vow to

keep those who can be saved alive. When the Forlorn Hope goes up the wall, the medics will go in a short while behind them, trying to bring the injured down off the wall alive. When the second wave storms the gates, the medics will be there as well, helping get the wounded behind the lines, and even tending to them in the middle of battle when there is no other option.

PCs who join the medics will not have to face the horrors of the frontline charge of the Forlorn Hope, but neither will they be safely behind the lines. PCs acting as medics will face some combat, as they have to get close enough to the front line to save the injured. They also have the additional difficulty of treating the wounded and those driven mad by Z'bri Atmospheres while fighting off occasional Z'bri strikes. In general, medic PCs will face less than half the combat of those in the Hope, but will have chances to use their Skills of Healing and Synthesis to save the lives of their fellows. Medics who show extreme courage will be regarded almost as highly as those who join the Hope.

SNIPERS

While most of the Army is readying itself to charge into the gates once the Hope gets them open, a few of the best marksmen — skilled either with bow or gun — are chosen to hang back and help cover the members of the Forlorn Hope as they climb towards the breach. PCs who are good with longbows, crossbows (short bows do not have the range) or firearms can join the snipers and lay down cover fire.

Snipers face the challenge of shooting at long range, and sometimes into a melee as well. A poor shot can hit an ally or kill a friend, and that makes most inexperienced snipers nervous. In addition, several of the Gargoyles spot the snipers and try to attack their position. As the Forlorn Hope is depending on the snipers to help keep them covered, this means that snipers have to fight off the Gargoyles while struggling to provide cover fire.

SYNTHESIS SUPPORT

No one has any doubt that the members of the Forlorn Hope are going to be attacked with heretofore unheard of amounts of Sundering as they try to attack the fortress currently containing every major Z'bri Lord in Capal. The members of the Hope do plan to take an hour before the raid to prepare themselves, setting up Synthesis effects in group rituals in order to be ready to meet the Z'bri assault. However, once they join in combat, the time required to take part in more powerful Synthesis effects simply isn't available, and the heavy use of Sundering in the area makes it even more difficult. For that reason, several powerful Dreamers, especially those too old or wounded to take part in the Forlorn Hope, intend to stay behind and provide Synthesis support to the Army. Their role is very similar to that of the

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snipers, save that they will face two additional dangers. First, they will be using powerful Synthesis in a tainted area and under considerable stress, which means that disconnection, loss of Equilibrium and madness are more likely than normal to result. Second, the Melanis Lords in Cht'aux see the Dreamers as their most direct threat, and so will use all of their powers, Sundering and rituals in order to disrupt and destroy the Dreamers. Any PC who is very successful in her Synthesis use finds herself locked in a battle of magic and will with a Melanis Lord intent on possessing or destroying her.

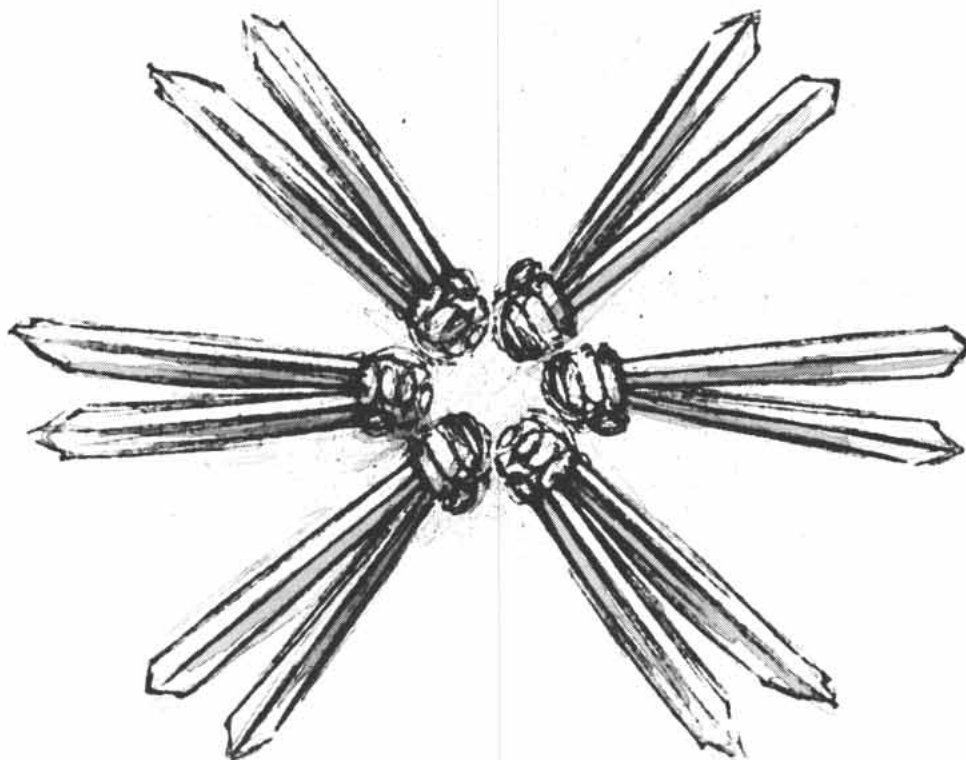
SECOND WAVE

Finally, if the PCs are willing to fight, but are unable or unwilling to join the Forlorn Hope, then they can always join the Second Wave that is set to attack the inside of the Cht'aux and seize the city afterwards. PCs choosing this option face some of the same challenges as those in the Hope, but with less numbers and more support at their backs. While PCs in the Hope may end up fighting a Lord one on one, PCs in the second wave are more likely to be one of a hundred soldiers attacking a Lord, not unlike wolves taking down a bear. On the other hand, the fact that the PCs joined the second wave rather than the Hope could well mean that the Hope founders at the last moment and the PCs have to lead their group against the gates before they are fully opened — bringing them under the same level of attack as the members of the Hope. Weavers should play the scene as hard as possible — this is the big fight, and the PCs' actions must count. More information on the Second Wave is given in *Mopping Up*.

INTO THE BREACH

Just before dawn, the Forlorn Hope assembles some distance from the breach in the Inner Wall. Agnes is there, and Teddy is nearby in the River of Dream, but Joan and Dahlia are not. Joan is too wounded to participate in this, the hopefully final strike, and Dahlia has vanished (unbeknownst to any in the Army, She has sneaked into Cht'aux, planning to weaken it from the inside). Many Dreamers in the Hope work on rituals, some having arrived several hours early in order to have time to work their Synthesis. Mek arrives as the rituals draw to a close, dressed in his old Jacker armor, and briefly goes over the plan of the day. He has given the rest of the commanders orders to pass down to their cells, telling them what they are to do at Cht'aux and which sections of the city they are to seize and hold against all comers after the citadel falls.

None of that will be able to happen, he reminds the Hope, unless they are able to breach the wall and open the gates. Their mission will be simple: they must go through the breach in the Inner Wall and up the narrow and slightly unstable rubble ramp to the wall of the great building. There they must either fight around the perimeter of the building, or through the narrow hole in the wall and through the front rooms of Cht'aux, to the doors of Cht'aux and the gatehouse that controls the gates of the Inner Wall. They must then seize and secure, holding the gates and doors open until the main body of the army can come to reinforce them.



Mek then turns and looks at the horizon, watching the sun start to rise. The breach is in the southeast, meaning that the sun will be in the Z'bri's eyes, but Mek does not comment upon that. Rather, he turns back to the Hope and says, "We, the Forlorn Hope, are no longer a standard division of the Army. We are something different, something special. I've had a banner made for us, to show our strength and pride." As he speaks, Kyr't the Free brings the banner up, moving through the ranks from the back until he reaches the front at Mek's side. The banner, fixed atop a long straight shaft of oak, is white on blue and has a glyph no one has ever seen before — a circle of blades held together by human hands. Pointing to the banner Mek cries, in a growing voice, "This is us — the future born on our swords, at the cost of the blood of all those who have come before, and all those who come after. We are one, and together we are free!"

A shout rises up to meet Mek's words, and the banner flies in the morning breeze. Drawing his sword, Mek turns towards the breach and points with his blade. Drawing a deep breath he calls the charge, and the Hope surges forward, screaming "Blood and Sacrifice!" Dreamers can feel a massive wave of Dream rush through the Hope at those words, and any Dreamer who wishes can make a Synthesis effect roll at an incredible +7 modifier. Aspects such as Battle can be activated with the roll, without the Characters having to do the normal ritual preparation. Many NPC Dreamers take advantage of the opportunity, and the PCs can see the forms of many of the Hope taking on dreamlike qualities, seeming to grow to giant size, their skin hardening like bark, their eyes becoming hard and sharp as blades, and lightning crackling about their temples. At the front of the charge it seems that Mek has a star upon his brow, his face nearly glowing with power.

FIRST BLOOD

The Hope's charge takes it almost all the way to the breach before the Z'bri counterstrike begins. It starts with a wave of Exsanguinations, flung by Koleris Lords watching from Cht'aux (who, due to the emotions and the pain and fear both in and out of the Cht'aux roll at anywhere from +1 to +4, though those Liberators close to Agnes have some protection). Those nearest the front are targeted first, so that their bodily fluids make the footing slippery and treacherous for those following behind. At the Weaver's option PCs could make a PSY roll to determine if they are targeted or not.

The Exsanguinations continue for the scant few minutes it takes the Hope to gain the breach and start ascending the ramp. At that point the Gargoyles of the Cht'aux, many of whom are stationed along the Inner Wall above the heads of the Hope, go on the offensive. Flying Gargoyles rain boulders down on the Hope, and those on the wall leap into the flanks and rear, swinging their pole-axes like scythes. Serfs with Bile Cannons and crossbows rush into the areas under and surrounding the ramp, firing into the Hope from the flanks. While the Hope reels from this attack, Shield-Wall Serfs start to issue out of the hole in the wall of Cht'aux. Near the top of the ramp (about 500 yards from the front of the Hope) the vile servants form up into squares around various Z'bri Lords. The Lords, protected by the Shield-Wall, then start down the slope towards the Hope. Using

the advantage of height they try to jam up the Hope, stopping their charge at the middle of the slope. The Shield-Walls fight defensively, giving the Lords a chance to use their Sundering and Atmospheres without being subject to melee assault. At the same time several Koleris and Melanis Lords, having undergone a ritual in the depths of Cht'aux, start to possess bodies of members of the Hope, attacking the other Liberators and leaping out before they can be killed.

Mek and Kyr't stay near the front of the assault, fighting with the efficiency of long years of practice and the brutality of desperation. Mek gives what orders he can to the troops, trying to ensure that shield walls are formed and those with missiles or thrown weapons attack the Lords, and that Dreamers try to counter the Sundering with Synthesis. The melee is chaotic, however, and within moments of the first engagement resembles nothing so much as a giant, bloody free-for-all. Only those fighting in his immediate vicinity can hear or understand Mek's orders. The PCs have to take responsibility for their own Cells, and will have to come up with strategy of their own. Creative Players and those who make Tactics rolls can come up with ideas for shield walls, causing avalanches of rubble to drive away the archers on the ground below, uses of Synthesis to block the body-jumping Lords, and so on. Leadership rolls can be used to help followers resist the Atmospheres of the Z'bri Lords, to stay calm (to make Sundering more difficult), and to make coordinated attacks to crack the serf Shield-Walls and kill the Lords.

The PCs should be pushed near to their limits in this scene, faced with attacks from all sides, outnumbered and possibly trapped. They are facing Z'bri Lords in open combat, and should feel the fear and nausea that such combat inspires. They should not, however, be slaughtered or crushed out of hand. While many NPCs die without a chance to fight back, the PCs are at the moment of their destiny, and have a chance to make good on their potential. Agnes can stand near the Characters, giving them breathing room when they need it, but the tide of battle should eventually separate them. This is the time of the PCs and the Fallen, not the Fatimas. On the other hand, if the PCs seem to be having too easy a time of it, the Weaver can pile up the difficulty. The PCs, after all, are on hazardous and bloody footing, fighting uphill while under constant fire and surrounded by enemies. The Z'bri are not being reckless or foolish this time either, and are just as capable of using tactics and intelligent maneuvers as the PCs are. This battle will be remembered in the world of **Tribe 8** for centuries, and it should be as bloody and hard as it can be within a group's limits.

THE LEGEND FALLS

Unbelievably, the Forlorn Hope manages to gain ground even in the face of the inhuman opposition. How much ground, however, depends largely on PC success. PCs who do well can help lead the Hope forward; those who do poorly still move forward, but not as far or as fast. The smells of death and blood hang in the air, and the ramp is a nightmare of Sundering and Synthesis swirling out of control while Z'bri and humans tear each other to shreds. Bodies fall like hail, bleeding and broken to the ground below.

5. The Forlorn Hope

At a dramatically appropriate moment when the PCs are about three-quarters of the way up the ramp, they find themselves in a brief lull, momentarily out of the thickest part of the battle. Looking up the ramp they see Mek, followed closely by several Jackers, Kyrt the Free (still holding the banner) and Troy Fenys break apart a Shield-Wall. The Liberators then rush the Lord at the center of the wall, attacking in a furious combined assault.

Then, in a moment that seems curiously quiet and still, the Koleris Lord Teth'ier steps forward with his massive black sword. Swatting away Mek's blade with the back of his hand, he steps forward and thrusts the blade through the old warrior's heart. Mek, The Jacker, the Leader of Liberation and Captain of the Hope, falls dead at Teth'ier's feet. Kyrt, mad with grief and rage, rushes forward, only to receive a brutal backhand chop from the Lord. Kyrt's body is shattered, falling in a broken heap, and the Banner of Hope falls on top of Mek's body. The moment that Mek and the Banner fall, the PCs can feel a shudder go through the Hope, something inside the unit breaking. They can see it in the faces of those around them — the Dream that has been sustaining the Hope through the inhuman carnage is torn away, and the Hope starts to collapse.

Agnes is down the slope, fighting a half-dozen Lords Herself, and is powerless to stop the slaughter or to reform the Hope. Joan is at Fortress, wounded. Mek and Kyrt are dead, and Troy is badly wounded and about to be killed by Teth'ier. The PCs are the only ones who have a chance to save the Hope, and with the unit's mission, the war of Liberation. In the moments after Mek's death the whole future of humanity rides upon the shoulders of the PCs. If they crumble, if they give in to fear or helplessness, then so too will the Hope. On the other hand, if the Characters rise up, take charge and claim their destiny, the Forlorn Hope unit will follow them unquestioningly, winning freedom for all.

It should be obvious to any spiritually sensitive PC that the morale of the Forlorn Hope is now focused on the Banner that lies across Mek's body. Any PC with Leadership can also see that getting and raising that banner would be a powerful symbol to the Hope, and could help give them back their fighting spirit. To save the spirit of the Forlorn Hope, the PCs must fight the short way up to Mek's body, and raise the Banner of Hope again.

In order to raise the Banner the PCs must rush Lord Teth'ier's position and either kill him or beat him back long enough for the Banner to be raised. PCs could raise it while still fighting him, but Lord Teth'ier knows the importance of the Banner as well as the PCs, and does everything in his power to kill anyone trying to raise it. While raising the Banner the PC would be at -2 to any defense roll. On the other hand, it would make a spectacularly heroic death for a PC to die while handing the Banner to another — giving her life to rally the army. Lord Teth'ier calls up reinforcements while the PCs charge him, which arrive between 1 and 3 rounds after the PCs engage the Lord. The reinforcements consist of a mixed group of Shield-Wall Serfs (who attempt to seize and carry away the Banner of Hope) and Gargoyles (who simply try to kill the PCs). Lord Teth'ier himself fights defensively, holding the ground above the Banner, until reinforcements arrive. Then he turns his full power upon the PCs,

attempting to crush them as spectacularly as possible. The Lord fights intelligently, using the terrain and all his talents to bring about the end of the Characters. He knows that with their deaths the spirit of the Hope would die.

If the PCs can defeat Lord Teth'ier and raise the Banner, or raise the Banner while still fighting him, the spirit of the Hope returns. When the Banner goes up, lifted by the hands of the PCs and waved before the Hope, those fighting feel a strength and surety wash over them, a feeling of absolute confidence. The rising sun cuts through the pallor of battle, and the Sundering of the Z'bri Lords is swept away. For the rest of the battle, any Z'bri attempting Sundering does so at -4, and the Thresholds for resisting Atmospheres are reduced by 2.

HOLDING THE DOORS

The sudden surge of Dream when the PCs lift the Banner simultaneously crushes the morale of the Z'bri and reinforces that of the Hope. The remainder of the Hope surges forward, fighting with new strength and courage, and pushes its way up the slope to Cht'aux's walls. Weavers can either run this fight as before, or can narrate it quickly. If the Weaver runs the battle, then it should stay a hard fight, but the trends are reversed. Suddenly the Liberators have the advantage, and it is the Z'bri who are outnumbered, harried and surrounded. If the Weaver doesn't run the battle as straight combat, then the group should work together to build a narrated scene of the Hope sweeping up the wall with dreamlike intensity, riding the wave of history, fate and destiny accepted.

Either way, once the Hope reaches the Cht'aux, they must then go around the narrow ledge at the outside of the Cht'aux, or through the hole in the wall and across the interior ante-chamber, to get to the front doors. There they find Z'bri Lords, who had apparently been waiting in defense, being attacked by hundreds of their own Serfs. Dahlia fights with one of the Lords, laughing madly and singing to the Characters to open the gates and "let loose the dogs of war." The PCs must fight alongside the Serfs, whom Dahlia has stirred up in rebellion, to drive the Lords aside and open both the Gates of the Inner Wall and the doors of Cht'aux. Once the doors are open, they need only to hold and keep them open long enough to let the Second Wave arrive (about 10 rounds). Once again, the Weaver can either play this fight out round by round, if it does not seem anti-climatic, or can move through it in narration.

MOPPING UP

When the gates are opened, then the second wave of the army will come pouring in. Led by mixed cells of Jackers, Tusks with muskets and the few Keeper members of the army with their amalgamated weaponry, this wave's job is to capitalize on the opening made by the Forlorn Hope to seize Cht'aux. Their job will be considerably easier than they had anticipated, however, because the strength of most of the Lords in Cht'aux was expended fighting the Forlorn Hope. Members of the Hope itself may help the Second Wave, but most are too tired and too

badly wounded. Of the 500 of the Hope fewer than 100 have survived, and every single one of them has suffered at least one major wound.

Once the Second Wave is able to storm the Cht'aux, they face the Iv'chet retainers of the exhausted or dead Lords, for the most part, and the built-in defenses of the building itself. Neither is a light threat, but compared with the assault on armed and ready Z'bri Lords that the wave was expecting, it comes as something of a relief. Though there is still fighting to be done, the truth is that the expected battle becomes more a mopping-up operation and less an extended conflict. Most of the casualties of the Second Wave are felled by traps and the side effects of the Melanis experiments still living in the basement.

Once Cht'aux has fallen, the will to fight goes out of the Z'bri. Many of the Iv'chet simply flee, hoping to survive in the wilderness. Others stay to fight, but lack zeal and focus in doing so. Without the Lords to guide them, they simply cannot maintain focus and organization, and the fact that their leaders were slaughtered makes them afraid and demoralized. Army of Liberation takes the advantage while they can, and begin the clean-up operations one house at a time.

After the fall of Cht'aux each Cell follows the orders that Mek issued before the Forlorn Hope went into the Breach, moving to a specific section of the city, securing and holding it. The fighting is never easy, though it lacks the bloodthirstiness of the fight at Cht'aux. Many of the Iv'chet, though demoralized, are still more than capable of setting ambushes, poisoning and leaving traps for the conquering army. Few of the conflicts are direct, and almost none are long lasting, but the degree of subtlety involved causes a low-grade paranoia among the Cells that leads them to capture and hold their assigned territories with more ferocity than strictly necessary. This leads to some conflict between various cells, as they struggle over exactly which area is the protectorate of whom.

Weavers whose Players are left wanting more combat after *The Hope* may want to play out the PC Cell's participation in the mopping up of Cht'aux, and the taking and fortifying the section of the city that they were assigned (most likely a section near the heart of the city, or at the walls near the Serf fields). However, Weavers should also be careful not to be anti-climatic. The taking and holding of the city is best handled as a series of lower-grade seeds after the excitement of *The Hope* has worn off. After all, once the PCs have gone up the Wall and led the whole Nation in a charge, cleaning out a basement full of cowering Iv'chet may not be a large thrill. If, on the other hand, the PCs did not participate in *The Hope* then the Weaver should assume that the Forlorn Hope was not able to destroy all the Lords, and the PCs have to take Cht'aux room by room from powerful and angry Z'bri Lords. Use the challenges presented in *The Hope* and relocate them to the inside of Cht'aux.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

If, during the ritual shattering the Heartstones, one of the PCs wants to take the position to Joan's right they should be allowed to. However, it needs to be made clear to them that who ever holds that position will die at the culmination of the ritual. There is no soak, no roll to avoid — it is a sacrifice that must be given willingly and cannot be eliminated.

When the Melanis Lords attack the siege lines, PCs who are very quick and lucky may be able to get to them faster than anyone else. If the PCs can figure out what is happening and react speedily, they can stop 20% of the casualties from occurring. They cannot, however, save the mortars or the possessed Keepers.

When the PCs are deciding whether or not to join the Hope, Weavers should have them speak with NPCs they know, canon and game-specific, who have been friends or rivals of the PCs for a long time.

Weaving *Into the Breach* can be difficult, as the PCs face massive opposition, and could easily be slaughtered. The point of the scene, however, is not to kill all the PCs. It is to bloody them, and make them earn every foot of ground. As a result the Weaver must tailor the level of opposition to her group. Every party has different strengths, and so the opposition presented may be to easy for some groups and too much for others. Weavers should run the scene so that the surviving PCs feel that they have truly earned something through their own strength and effort.

Cargoyles are found on page 105.

Shield-Wall Serf statistics are found on page 106.

The Lords who possess the bodies of Liberators can only be killed if the body they are currently in suffers an instant kill. In that case their soul is slammed back into their body in Cht'aux, and is left insensible for 1d6 hours. The Lords can also be driven back with Synthesis use, especially use of Purity, Devotion, Conviction and Rage.

Templates for the **Z'bri Lords** can be found on page 106. Weavers are encouraged to modify these basic templates both to fit the power level of their groups, and to make individualized and memorable opponents.

Lord Teth'ier can be found on page 100.

Aftermath

"Never forget that this Nation was born in blood,
raised up by exiles and dreamers. We woke from the
nightmare of slavery and found ourselves free."

— Altara Ven, at the First Convocation



CAPAL AND THE NATION OF THE FALL

When the Fatimas withdraw and leave control of Capal in the hands of the Army of Liberation, the Liberators find themselves at a loss. Though some visionaries have been able to see what could happen when left to their own devices, most of the members of the Army have gotten used to focusing on the immediate future, not taking pause to examine the full potential of their actions. As a result Capal is currently not a unified city, or a Nation. It has no head, no government, no direction and no real sense of itself.

In the winter after the fall of Cht'aux much of the Army of Liberation remains in Capal. It is a long march back to Vimary, after all, through a series of hard blizzards and seemingly endless fields of waist-deep snow. Though it is a lean time no one starves, as the Squats have been able to provide enough food stores for the Army to eat throughout the winter. The food distribution network, however, is almost all that remains of the formal structure of the Army. Very few realized how central the Command Staff were to the unity of the Liberators until the bulk of them died in the Forlorn Hope's assault on the walls. Without that strong central presence, the Army starts to fragment into Cells; the informal arrangements that Fallen and Tribals are most comfortable with.

Most Cells were given orders just prior to Mek's death to seize and hold certain parts of the city. Seeing those orders as still standing, at least until someone officially replaces Mek, the Cells take their sections of the city and hold them. This is often a difficult job, as though the Z'bri stronghold is broken many of them still know the city well enough to haunt the waste places and strike against Tribal positions in guerilla raids. Because of this pressure, and because of the lack of command structure, many of the more radical Cells, especially those comprised heavily of Jackers and Herites, become very possessive of their territory, even threatening or chasing away other members of the former Army. Most of the Cells still work together in a loose alliance, but it is just that, an alliance and not an actual government. Throughout winter Capal is ruled by a group of small bands holding together, surviving and waiting for some direction to emerge.

The Cht'aux, as the literal and spiritual center of the city, is held by the survivors of the Forlorn Hope. As the current heroes of the Liberation, those who stood tallest in the hardest fight of the war, they have a good deal of influence throughout the rough winter. Most of the members of the Hope, however, though brave and strong, are fighters more than leaders, and give the other Cells limited direction. They do claim some of the best and least tainted areas of the city as their own, and start new Cells under their own leadership in those areas.

THE FALLEN

Despite the fact that Fallen were outnumbered by the Tribals in the Army of Liberation, it was the Fallen who fought the hardest. There were more Fallen members of the Forlorn Hope than any other group, and the leader of the Army itself was one of the Fallen. Combined with the fact that most Tribals still see Vimary as their home, the Fallen's position of strength leaves the former outcasts, now the Eighth Tribe in truth, the dominant force in Capal. The most deeply entrenched Cells, the best leaders and speakers of Capal, are all members of the Eighth.

The Eighth Tribe has found itself in a position to be generous, and to show mercy and restraint for once. Though not all members of the Eighth Tribe are up to walking the noble path, many start extending the hand of sisterhood to the other residents of Capal. Part of this, of course, is sheer pragmatism; outnumbered by the other factions in Capal and facing both an ugly winter and continued skirmishes with the remaining rogue Z'bri, the Eighth needs friends and allies. As a result, many Cells of the Eighth start accepting Squats, disaffected Tribals and even Serfs who can prove their loyalty, as full members. Those that do so often claim their new sisters to be true members of the Eighth, but more traditional Cells dislike the idea, feeling that the new members are Fallen-come-lately and do not deserve to take part in the heroic destiny of the Eighth.



CHILDREN OF LILITH

A good number of Children were involved in the Forlorn Hope, and many of them fought bravely to clear the streets of Capal, leaving them with moderately heavy losses (about 15%). Their courage under fire, however, as well as their ability to build Cells comprised of members of different factions, earned them the respect of most of the Liberators. Several Cells led by Children of Lilith captured important positions in the city, but unlike most, they are also willing to work together and share resources to keep the areas fortified and secure. Of all the Fallen the Children are the most willing to take in new members, and between former Tribals, New Bloods, and adopted Tusks and Squats, the Children of Lilith manage to more than double their once-dwindling size to somewhere around 250 members by the end of the winter. The downside of this rapid growth is the scorn of more traditional members of the Eighth, who see the Children as impure bastards of mistaken prophecy.



DOOMSAYERS

Having taken relatively few losses in the war, the Doomsayers remain a strong and active part of the Eighth Tribe. Many find themselves being called on to lead the spiritual life of their Cells, as their formerly Tribal sisters have difficulty adjusting to the independent ways of the Eighth. Some Doomsayers take to it readily, setting themselves up to replace the priests and shamans of the Tribes in the new order that is starting to form in Capal. Most, however, are too schismatic or independently minded to act as spiritual caretakers, and remain focused on determining the mysteries of the future.

The issue of Capal and the future of the Eighth itself becomes a dividing line for the Doomsayers. Many optimistic Doomsayers, as well as those that were around during Lilith's reign, start claiming that Capal is the Third City, and that the Eighth needs to rise up and claim its place of glory before they lose it through negligence. The other faction, however, believes that Capal is the Second City, and issues dire warnings of gloom and woe to everyone, trying to caution them of the pain they see coming.



HERITES

No one has ever honestly accused the Herites of cowardice, and they proved their mettle in the war, taking casualties second only to the Jackers (24%). The Herites also lost most of the very few authority figures they had — both Kyr and Troy Fenys died in the last days of the war. As a result there is little coordination, agreement, or even communication between most of the Herites of Capal. The one thing they all do agree on, however, is that the Eighth Tribe is free and should form a Nation of their own, and that the former Fallen must not bow down to anyone else. It is time to build a new Nation, one based on... well, none of them can agree exactly what it should be based on.

The Herites develop the most isolationist of the Cells. Though some Herite-led Cells accept individual Tusks who showed great courage during the war, many are very hesitant to accept non-Fallen members, and some are so radically against the idea that they attack Cells that do so. Despite their prejudice, however,

the Herites do still attract converts. Their passionate insistence on freedom and personal choice draws a good number of Squats and a truly astonishing number of Dahlia-freed Serfs. Only time will tell how the Herites will deal with these new additions to their Outlook.



JACKERS

Mek led the Jackers in heart, and in spirit, and in many ways in death. The Jackers took the heaviest losses of any group in the war, nearing 30%. The sheer number of Jackers who took part in the Forlorn Hope and managed to survive, however, along with the number of Jacker-led Cells that took strategically important sectors of the city left the surviving Jackers in a very strong position in Capal. The respect that Mek's success brought to the whole Outlook only helped them more. Many former Tribals voluntarily left their birth Tribes to join the Jackers, and half of the Tusks that agreed to stay in Capal and join Cells joined up with the Jackers.

Unfortunately the Jackers are without a leader or a center. Mek's death took the focus of command out of the Outlook, and so far no one has risen up to replace him. Thus the Jackers concentrate on the two things they are sure of — holding the territory they took after the battle ended, and killing the rogue Z'bri that haunt the outskirts of Capal. Many Jacker Cells are not content to just hold ground, and throughout the winter they tirelessly lead bands of hunters after any sign of rogue Z'bri, intent on finishing off every last one.



LIGHTBRINGERS

Never have the Lightbringers been in a better position to accomplish their goals, and never have they been so unable to reach them. Suffering light casualties in the war (less than 10%) and having only a few surviving members who took part in the Forlorn Hope, the Lightbringers as an Outlook find themselves lacking political power and respect for the first winter in Capal. Of course the political savvy of men like Hal, and the oratorical skills of Deus and Altara, are changing that, but painfully slowly.

The truth that even most of the Lightbringers have to acknowledge is that the Liberators have to secure Capal and survive the first winter before they can start making large scale plans for the future or the birth of a new Nation.

In the meantime the Lightbringers keep the food and supply lines going, making sure that everyone stays fed (and that everyone remembers who it was that fed them). Working with any Cell that permits it, they slowly start to build alliances and plant the seeds of ideas for ways that a new Nation could be shaped when spring comes. It is frustratingly slow, as the members of the new Eighth are stubborn, but it is slowly making a difference. In the meantime the Lightbringers, along with the Marians, are working heavily with the freed Serfs of Capal, trying to teach them ways other than those learned from their bestial masters. Many Serfs come to look on the Lightbringers as saviors, and some even go so far as to set up cults worshipping various higher-status Lightbringers as living goddesses.

THE TRIBES

The vast majority of the Tribals are safe and snug back on Vimary. Of course, they are safe and snug on an island that is still largely a burnt-out shell and whose life is slowly being sucked away by the Firmament. Many Tribals on Vimary are starting to worry about the future of their island, and many of the New Bloods speak of expanding and migrating to Capal — working with the Eighth to build up both cities into something more than either could be alone. While the conservatives still oppose any such debate (sometimes violently) no one can deny that Vimary is proving difficult to rebuild, especially with the dwindling numbers still living there, and that the ability to expand would be useful. Come spring many of the young members of the Tribes start looking North.

Of the Tribals who marched in the Army of Liberation about half decided to remain in Capal. The rest returned to Vimary during the early snows. Those who stayed in Capal have found a mixed welcome, and often have just as mixed feelings about the new Eighth Tribe. A difficult combination of fear, conventionalism respect, and necessity have kept the Tribals at their posts, but their relations with the Eighth are far from certain.

AGNITES

By far the smallest group of Tribals in Capal, the Agnites are also the best treated and most accepted. Their constant aid during the war, combined with the support their Fatima gave to both the Marians' return and the Army of Liberation's formation, has left the Agnites in near-universal high esteem. For their part the Agnites have a fascination with the Eighth Tribe that reminds many onlookers of a moth and a flame. The Children of Agnes are starting to grow up, and their current role models are not the Tribals of Vimary, but the former outcasts and criminals of the Eighth. Even the Agnites in Playground hear tales of the courage of the Fallen, and some have been heard to declare that when they grow up, they want to be Jackers.

Agnes Herself is entering a very difficult period. While She supports the Eighth in their attempts to hold Capal, She is unsure what She wants it to do, or how She stands in relation to the idea of a new Nation. Even harder on Her is the reappearance of Her Mother's people and the strained relationship She is forming with them. Agnes desperately wants to know Her Mother, but is unsure how much She can trust the Marians, or how much She can open her heart to them. Agnes is also worried that the Marians might want Her to become Her Mother in every detail, rather than growing into Her own legacy. Like a teenager rebelling against her parent's ideals, this may lead Agnes into trouble in the near future.

DAHLIANS

The Dahlians have always had a more open relationship with the Fallen than most of the Tribes, and that combined with their help keeping Capal and its supply lines up and running has earned them a place of respect in the new city. Dahlians also view the official forming of the Eighth as a grand play, and are every bit as helpful as they can be in the staging of such a vast epic. Of course they, even less than most, have no idea what the Eighth is going to be once it matures, and as a result they often end up creating anarchy and confusion. Most of the Eighth deals with it well, however, as the Dahlians make the bleak winter in Capal livable with their plays and pranks.

Dahlia Herself vanishes soon after voicing support for the Eighth's leadership in Capal. She instructs Her Little Tricksters to start rearranging their caravan routes to run all the way from Westholm in Vimary to Capal and even down to Lake Etchim and Boarhead's Confederation. She gave them two years to make the change, and told them to be bold and happy. Then She vanished. What only Her very favorite Little Tricksters know is that She has become intrigued with Hattan, and has gone to learn more of the mysterious and isolated Mistresses.

EVANS

Many Evans are still hiding inside the Firmament, and even those that have left have a tie to the soil of Vimary that is hard to break. Of the twelve hundred Evans who left Vimary with the Army, over six hundred return home, leaving less than a hundred who chose to stay. As a result Evans are scarcely represented in Capal, and those that remain are viewed as a valuable resource to be exploited more than potential members of the Eighth. Though the Marians are the masters of Purity, it is the Evans who will have to reclaim the tainted farmlands around Capal if the city is to support itself. As a result many Cells, especially those led by veterans of the Forlorn Hope, bribe, browbeat and coerce the Evans into staying with (though not necessarily joining) their Cells. The Evans are not happy with this, but with their Fatima still absent deep within Firmament they do not know what else to do. They are rather lost and alone in the world, and are having a hard time without their beloved Fatima and their fertile farms.

JOANITES

Joan Herself remains in Capal throughout the winter, though She stays distant from the birthing pains of the Eighth and their struggle to control Capal. Most of Her time is spent hunting Z'bri, ranging farther and farther afield. Only a few among Her Templars know that She is searching for Joshua's Heartstone, the ancient pull of which She had felt in Capal, then lost track of during Wormwood's attack. Now She cannot find it, and is slowly losing Herself to fear that it might have been destroyed or consumed somehow.

With their Fatima staying in Capal, few Joanites who were in the Army of Liberation feel an immediate need to return to Vimary. The fact that they fought hard, have the second largest number of veterans of the Forlorn Hope, and that their Fatima was openly supportive of the Eighth has made them on a par with the Agnites as some of the most widely accepted Tribals in the Nation. The fact that many former Fallen are among the Joanite ranks and some Fallen hold dual Fallen-Joanite membership since [[Warrior Unbound]] also makes it seem natural for the members of the Eighth to return the favor for the Joanites. Many Joanites accept, and only the most conventional spurn the offers of fellowship in Cells. By the end of the winter it starts to become difficult to tell where the Jackers leave off and the Joanites begin.

MAGDALITES

Though few Magdalites choose to stay full time in Capal, the Diplomats are realistic enough to immediately set up a corps of Diplomats and Courtesans to 'liaison with' with the Fallen in Capal. While few of Magdalen's Tribe believe the Eighth's control of Capal will last, they do think that this new alliance could be spectacularly dangerous before it destroys itself. As a result, they put on a good public face and cozy up to the members of the Eighth. The fact that Magdalen leaves Capal in apparent anger no more than a week after the final battle works heavily against them, but their mastery of social graces, sensuality and easy use of deception allow them to insinuate themselves into several Cells as full or part members.

Magdalen Herself returns to Vimary and, after a short stop at Mortuary to speak to Baba Yaga, vanishes into Xstasis. She remains in seclusion, issuing orders only through Her most trusted priestesses.

SHEBANS

Tera Sheba remained in Vimary, tending to the Firmament, and watching over Her progressively more insular Tribe. As a result there are only a handful of Shebans in Capal, and they are poorly treated by most. Too many of the Eighth remember years of abuse at the Shebans' hands, and now that the shoe is on the other foot they are only too willing to start stomping. Those Shebans tough enough, or stupid enough, to remain in Capal manage to earn grudging acceptance for their ability to help hunt Z'bri, but little more than that. Tera Sheba speaks little to any of Her people over the winter, but is often seen brooding over Eva, or looking to the North for hours at a time.

YAGANS

As with the Shebans, few Yagans came to or remained behind in Capal. Most felt lost so far from their Fatima, and returned to their grave fields and herds as soon as possible. Those who stayed in Capal did so because they saw work to be done; as in the H'l Kar, there are mass graves and fields of bone and bound souls that they must free. Without the presence of their Fatima, however, they are unable to transport the souls they free to the Fold. As a result many Yagans end up feeling lost, needing to do work for the salvation and honor of the lost, but unable to actually complete it. As Baba Yaga had little to do with the war, and the Yagans mostly fought in the River of Dream, few of the Eighth give them much welcome or respect. Due to their still fearsome reputation, however, few Yagans are mistreated either.

On Vimary, Baba Yaga spends longer and longer periods of time unmanifest and walking the deep reaches of the River of Dream. As with the other Fates She is largely silent, pondering over answers to questions that only they seem able to see.

OTHERS

While the Eighth, along with the other Tribes, have the dominant position in Capal, for the first time they start to truly share their community with others. The Tusks and other Squats who fought with the Army of Liberation proved their courage and worth, and many are adopted into Cells as full or part members. The Serfs are a more troubling issue, and the Eighth is still unsure what to do with them.

BOARHEAD AND THE TUSKS

Boarhead is shocked by the Eighth taking power in Capal, and is very worried about what their sudden power means to his Confederation and his personal power. The fact that many of his loyal Tusks have spoken of joining the Eighth to form a new Nation makes him angry and even more afraid. For now Boarhead is unwilling to move against Capal, but he does immediately start scheming for ways to undermine the Eighth's power; either so that he can force them to join his Confederation under his power, or destroy these dangerous upstarts.

Most of the Tusks returned home after Capal was taken. However about 35% of the survivors — around 1400 men and women — remained behind, having found honor, fellowship and worthy brothers and sisters among the Eighth. As the Tusks are well-trained warriors, many of whom have muskets, and show honor and courage, the members of the Eighth are very willing to accept them as members of their Cells.

OTHER SQUATS

Though the Tusks fought in the most central conflicts of the war, there were thousands of other Squat warriors from the Confederation and from the tribes near Vimary (such as the Lumites who survived **Revanche**) who fought and died

alongside the Fallen. A great number of the surviving Squats are invited to join various Cells and are given more equality with members of the Eighth than many Tribals are. Those who are not taken into Cells are treated as second and third class citizens, however, useful only for the massive amounts of grunt work that will be needed to transform Capal. All too many of the Squats are willing to accept that treatment in order to be fed and kept safe by the warriors of the Eighth.

SERFS

Between the Serfs that defected from the Koleris army and the Serfs that were liberated when the Z'bri were broken, the Liberators found themselves with almost 20,000 prisoners of war. The Serfs that were strong enough in mind and will to break with the Z'bri are not trusted, but are not persecuted either. Those that show themselves to be clean of taint (or who go to the Marians for cleansing) are even slowly accepted into Cells. Most of the Serfs, however, present a larger problem. Many of them have been physically warped beyond the point where they can be called human, and even the relatively normal ones often have corruption or disease deeply imprinted in their bodies. Due to the work of the Lightbringers and the Marians few people actually murder Serfs out of hand (though several thousand are killed over the winter during Z'bri hunts or in self-defense), but no one is comfortable with them. The fate of the Serfs will be one of the great trials of the future.

THE GUIDES

Though they played little active role in the War of Liberation, the Guides were there in the background, offering support and encouragement. By the middle of the winter following the end of the war most of the Guides, including both Halos and Den Hades, have relocated (apparently permanently) to Capal. They keep a low profile, however, only speaking to those they trust. Word, however, starts to spread that the Guides speak of this new set of Fallen-Tribal-Squat-Keeper-Serf alliances as 'the Nation of the Fall,' and Capal as the rightful and true home of the Eighth.

MARIANS

Much of Mary's Tribe comes to Capal either just before the *Forlorn Hope* or before winter sets in. The fact that many of the conservative elements in Vimary are not friendly to them, combined with the relative acceptance they have found in Capal and the amount of work to be done there, lures them North. They find a mostly open welcome in Capal, as even the most stubborn members of the Eighth know that they need help from the Forgivers to cleanse the land and the people. The Marians' hard work and constant sacrifices for others make them popular quite rapidly, and by the end of the winter almost every Marian in Capal has been offered a place in a Cell.

THE Z'BRI

As a power, the local Z'bri are finished. While there are still the Z'bri of Rhanto far to the southwest, between the Silent Ones and the Great River, the Ocean and Vimary, there are no more major bastions of Z'bri power. There are still lesser Z'bri strongholds in the forests and mountains, but none of them could stand before the Nation of the Fall and both the Z'bri and the Nation know it. Many of the Z'bri's most powerful and potent Lords have been killed, and those that remain are not the unstoppable beasts that pulled down the World Before. The time of the Z'bri as the ruling force in the world is slowly passing.

That, however, is not to say that individual Z'bri cannot be dangerous. While the Beasts as a whole cannot muster enough force to seriously threaten the Nation of the Fall, many Z'bri are still personally capable of killing or destroying any individual member of the Nation. It is to that fact that most of the surviving Z'bri turn their attentions. Rather than being the overlords ruling the camps, they become the terror in the night. Stalking through wasted and barren places, they come out to strike at individuals, corrupting and taking small groups who stray too far from protection. While the Nation is safe from Z'bri attack, everyone still fears the beasts that they cannot see. Capal is heavily hit by these midnight strikes, as the Z'bri know the city far better than any Liberator, and they use its labyrinthine streets and secrets constructed during their rule in order to move through the shadows of the walls.

These individual Z'bri are faced by the Cells of Jackers and Marians that remain from the Army of Liberation. Several shadow wars and inquisitions move through Capal as the Eighth tries to find its way, and though many Z'bri are hunted out and destroyed, some innocents do perish with them. At the same time, in the wilderness, Gek'roh and Hunters destroy any rogue Z'bri they can find, and jealously collect and guard the Heartstones of those they fell.



Weaver's Resources

Yaga's bleeding bones! How am I supposed to run this pox-damned war without maps, troop numbers and food! Courage is all well and good, but without information and supplies it just gets you courageously dead.

— Mek, to his command staff.



BOARHEAD'S CONFEDERATION

At the opening of **Liberation**, the Confederation is an expansionist, client-state empire. All peoples on the ever-moving borders of the Confederation are given two choices: join the Confederation, or be conquered by it. Small tribes are not even given a choice, but are crushed by Boarhead's warriors. Due to this unflinching policy of expansion, Boarhead's Confederation has possibly become the largest political organization (the Confederation cannot quite be termed a 'nation') in the known world. The Confederation's unstoppable growth has brought them up against the coast to the east, the Black Lake and Valley of the White Death to the west, the Tuscarora's mountains to the south and Capal to the north. The Broken Coast to the south holds little interest to Boarhead, as he does not want to come into conflict with Hattan as well as Capal and Vimary. His recent acquisition of a map showing a safe pass through the barriers to the west has opened new opportunities for conquest: the Leox and Vimary are his newest targets.

ELDERS' COUNCIL

Those tribes powerful enough that straight-out conquest would be too costly are instead 'invited' to join the Confederation and given seats on the Elders' Council. The Elders' Council advises Boarhead on decisions which affect the entire Confederation; Boarhead in turn informs them of the reports he receives from his Tusks, who are posted throughout the lands held by the various tribes. The Elders' Council is at once the most powerful body within the Confederation and also a mere puppet organization. Boarhead controls a vast majority of the Council's voices: the three Irinakiow Elders take their lead from him, and his family ties to Ariann of the Nodagga and Conlan of the Mowak only strengthen his power. This leaves Aren of the Tuscarora and Ignac of the Kayoo to maneuver quite uselessly against Boarhead's coalition. While Aren looks on placidly, Ignac has begun to tempt Conlan with offers of more and better muskets for the Mowak if he supports the Kayoo in strengthening trade throughout the Confederation.

THE MAALIN

Witch-women of the Confederacy, the Maalin practice rites and rituals that allow them to contact the spirits who guide the Confederacy. Only women are admitted into the Maalin, as they are considered to possess a greater affinity with the lifepulse they use to commune with the spirits. Maalin never speak of their secret rites to outsiders, preferring to retain an aura of mystery and fear. They demand resources and space for their rituals, and return to the Council with the word of the spirits. The advice of the Maalin is rarely ignored for fear of angering the spirits, which would blight the land, dry up game and open the door for Z'bri conquest. What the Maalin demand, the Maalin get; even Boarhead bows to their wishes.

As the Confederacy grows, the Maalin have found new challenges and tasks demanding their time. More and more often they find themselves playing a complex game of compromise to placate the spirits and keep them working together with

the Confederacy. The Maalin are well aware of the spirits' dislike of certain elements within the Confederacy, but have not yet seen a way to resolve these conflicts. Until now they have relied on temporary fixes to placate the spirits, a stratagem that is working less and less. Many Maalin see the conquest on Capal as the end solution that they have been looking for, an action they hope will please all the spirits at once.

While Conjunctional Synthesis is well beyond their powers, they are still familiar with a number of potent rituals that summon and channel the might of various spirits. By tapping into the pulse of life within each practitioner, a pulse which the witches believe that the spirits share, the Maalin can extend their perceptions into the River of Dream. The lifepulse is most evident in blood and in sex, and these are common elements in their rites, which usually end with the Maalin coated in blood and sweat, eyes ablaze in ecstatic visions. Human sacrifice is the pinnacle of their art, releasing all the lifepulse of the sacrifice in one overwhelming flood of power. The sacrifice may be a willing member of the Confederation, commonly warriors too old to fight, or Squats or Serfs captured by the Confederation in battle. The spirits respond either way.

LANDS AND PEOPLE

Boarhead's Confederation is composed of nearly twenty tribes, although most of these were subjugated by Boarhead's warriors and consequently subsumed into the five tribes who hold seats on the Elders' Council. These five were powerful enough that instead of conquest, Boarhead offered them seats on his Council. On the next page is a listing of the five member tribes of the Confederation, their status, lands and position within the Confederation.



IRINAKOIW

The Irinakoiv are Boarhead's tribe, and the most powerful tribe within the Confederation. No other tribe boasts the numbers or land that the Irinakoiv hold, a fact which the Irinakoiv never tire of reminding them. Irinakoiv are wide-shouldered and tall, and produce many strong warriors and Tusks, all of whom strive to emulate the noble savagery of King Boar, their totem. The Irinakoiv value battle prowess and brute strength above all other virtues, and award veterans and their greatest warriors with positions of leadership.

Many years ago the Irinakoiv worshipped a circle of Koleris from Capal; this background is often cited as the genesis of their bloodthirsty natures. The Irinakoiv admired the Koleris' power and ability in battle, and traded both slaves and stories of their prowess with the Z'bri, who found the Irinakoiv amusing and occasionally useful. When the Koleris attempted to subsume the Irinakoiv into their ranks of warrior Serfs, however, they met with resistance. The Z'bri turned to strong-arm tactics, which only angered the Irinakoiv's new chieftain, Luther Boarhead. Soon the Squat tribe was facing a small army of Z'bri and their Serfs. Together with their allies, the Irinakoiv decimated the ranks of Serfs and slew the Iv'chet Z'bri. The Lords were vanquished by Boarhead himself, and even though they took up new bodies and lived on, the loss of their Serfs had made them poor and powerless among their fellow Koleris. Boarhead had turned aside the Z'bri, making himself a living legend among the Squats.

Luther Boarhead won his position of power with his skill and daring on the battlefield, but his abilities as an able leader have allowed him to keep it. Boarhead strives to maintain his image as a great warrior (an image he needs to retain power) even as he recognizes the necessity of alliance with other tribes against their greater enemies, the Z'bri. Capal sends harrying attacks into Confederation lands constantly, and Boarhead knows that the Z'bri will not forget the insult of losing to mere humans. He has fortified every village along the Great River, and has allied himself with the Sanjon Keepers for their muskets, but he knows that even this maneuvering will not stand against Capal when it chooses to attack in full force.

NODAGGA

The Nodagga and the Irinakoiv have a long history of alternating cooperation and conflict, and many Irinakoiv men have taken Nodagga women as mates. While the Nodagga are fearsome warriors, their reputation is that of eldritch witches and secretive mystics, worshipping Manylegs, the hoarder of knowledge at the center of her web. The history of Nodagga-Irinakoiv interactions is a constant see-saw of shifting power, as the Irinakoiv lever the Nodagga into cooperation, only to have the Nodagga respond with trickery and magic to force the Irinakoiv's hand. Consequently, Nodagga argue that it was not Boarhead, but rather a trio of Nodagga Maalin who began the Confederacy. While Nodagga and Irinakoiv are the closest of all the tribes, few Irinakoiv dare to travel through the Nodagga lowlands to the east without a native guide. Boarhead has taken

a Nodagga woman, Ariann, as his mate and installed her as the Nodagga Elder on the Council. Ariann supports Boarhead on most issues; with Irinakoiv and Nodagga unified, the rest of the Council generally follows suit. Ariann is also one of the Maalin, and her connections amongst the witch-women are valuable enough that Boarhead overlooks the time she spends with her sister-lovers. His self-control cannot, however, suffocate the fires of jealousy in his soul forever.

MOWAK

Populating the hills to the west of the Irinakoiv are the untamable Mowak, vicious warriors who were for some time the Irinakoiv's most potent rivals. After the tribes separating the two had been conquered and subsumed, the Irinakoiv and Mowak faced off in what was expected to be a bloody, endless war. It was at this time that the Capal Koleris attempted to absorb both Irinakoiv and Mowak, not bothering to make any distinction between the two. Together with the Nodagga, these tribes united against the Z'bri and pushed them back across the Great River. Through the war, Mowak and Irinakoiv fought side by side, and came to recognize many similarities between their tribes. The Mowak revere their totem, the Onto, much as the Irinakoiv worship King Boar, and award battle prowess with positions of authority. After the Z'bri offensive was broken and turned back, the tribes remained allied against further incursions. The Mowak chief's son, Conlan, came to Etchim as an advisor and took one of Boarhead's daughters as a wife. When the Confederation was created, Conlan became the Mowak Elder.

TUSCARORA

Introspective and forward-looking, Tuscarora are a loose coalition of mountain-dwelling people, typified by small and isolated communities who value forethought and contemplation over action. When the Tuscarora do act, it is with meticulous planning, with every potential outcome expected and a response prepared. Runners between communities, as well as their totem, Far Sight, help keep all the Tuscarora communicating with each other, stimulating further conversation. The Tuscarora were not unified by a single leader, but more by this loose consensus, until Boarhead's Confederacy loomed in the lowlands to the north. After much consideration and discussion, the Tuscarora chose one of their number to serve as their chieftain, and sent emissaries to Boarhead, heavily and impressively armed, to seek a place on his Council of Elders. Boarhead, proud that tribes now came to him rather than being coerced into joining, granted the Tuscarora their request. Today the Tuscarora interact little with the rest of the Confederacy, and few have proven themselves in battle or become one of Boarhead's Tusks. Their Elder, Aren, is less of a leader and more of a representative of the Tuscarora consensus. Having secured their safety, most Tuscarora prefer to remain in their mountainous homes, looking forward to the future.

KAYOO

The Kayoo are the most recent addition to the Confederacy, and have the singular honor of being sought out rather than subsumed by force. Boarhead had made minimal contact with the Keepers of Vimary and coveted their weapons that could kill from afar. Shortly thereafter he heard of Squats far to the east who possessed these weapons, and sent messengers to uncover the truth. The rumors were only partially accurate; the Kayoo people traded with the Sanjon Keepers, even further to the east, and some few of them had been awarded muskets after many years of service. Nevertheless, Boarhead offered the Kayoo a place on his Council, hoping to inherit their good relations with the Sanjon.

As Capal grew greater in power and the sea lanes around the Sanjon's islands saw more and more Z'bri ships, the Keepers hastily gave the Confederation more muskets (but kept the secret of gunpowder production to themselves). The Kayoo quickly found themselves traveling throughout the Confederation as experts and advisors in the proper maintenance and use of the valuable weapons. The Confederation's trade with Keepers flows through Kayoo lands and Kayoo boats, making them rich, as well. Kayoo are looked upon as fresh-faced and unproven, but they insist on receiving respect as knowledgeable and useful members of the Confederation, touting the fact that the Confederation came to them, not the other way around.

TOTEM SPIRITS OF THE CONFEDERATION

Each of the five member tribes in the Confederation honors a totem spirit that guides the tribe and provides game and prosperity. When each tribe was accepted into the Confederation, their totem was recognized and respected by the other tribes, brought onto a level with their own totems. Each tribe continues to worship their own totem, but allow that the totems of the other tribes are (almost) the equal of their own spirit benefactor. Statistics for the spirits are found in the NPC section, pp. 102-104.

SANJON KEEPERS

To those PCs who have had little exposure to Keeper factions outside of Vimary, the dynamic and friendly Sanjon will shake up notions about the nature of the Keepers as a whole. Located mainly on a large island at the mouth of the Great River, the Sanjon are a diverse and lively crew with well-established trade routes, active defense lines and a knack for co-operation with the Squats that sets them aside from other kinds of Keepers. This section is intended to provide Weavers with enough information to set scenes in Sanjon and its outlying areas as well as provide background and substance to Sanjon Non-Player Characters.

LOCATION

The Sanjon constitute not one, but several small settlements around the perimeter of the island of Fonland as well as the mainland north of the Great River's mouth. Despite the distance between these settlements, they are remarkably unified in both in outlook and knowledge. News of events travels faster around the island than a Dahlian Envoy could courier them. The locality of the island and its positioning gives its inhabitants a distinct defensive advantage, and allows them to tap into the vein of events along the coast and at the entry to the Great River.

When the End came, the ancestors of the Sanjon took refuge in a complement of underground bunkers beneath a well-preserved old fort. It took less than ten years for the island above to be abandoned. When the Sanjon crawled their way out of the bunkers, they found nothing but the bones of those who had refused to hide away. The Z'bri, craving fleshier ground, had moved their way west to Capal.

Since the surfacing, the fort — which is since known only as Town — serves as the central gathering place for the main settlement of Sanjon. Well defended by a star of stone battlements, Town contains a fully stocked armory, a freehold barracks, a market and warehousing for provisions. Loud and lively, the central area of Town rarely quiets in daylight hours, nor does it get much better at night. From the gates of Town downhill to the Harbor, an ancient blacktop known as Adventure is almost worn through from the travel of frequent carts and feet. Where it meets the harbor, the blacktop gives over to weeds and cold salt water. Nearby a dry-dock and crumbling ship works building still stand stubbornly — and productively — at the water's edge.

Between the Harbor and the ocean, the waterway tightens into the Narrows. On either side, rocky hills rise high above the waterline, dotted with ramshackle housing under a long line of large muzzle-loading cannons that keep watch over the entry to Sanjon Harbor. Where the Narrows meet the ocean, the tower at the top of Sigil Hill stands sentinel over all sea bound activity. From traffic hailing from the north of the island, the Narrows and down the southern coast that leads to Hattan, all can be seen from its clear vantage, and with the help of the far-viewer erected in its topmost room.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Although the Sanjon seem friendly enough, Tribal and Fallen characters should have a difficult time relating to them. A distinctive Keeper dialect and manner of speaking makes communication somewhat difficult, even to the most practiced of Keepspeak speakers (a Keepspeak Specialty: Sanjon can be bought as a dialect after prolonged exposure). Their open-armed welcome and good nature may seem startling after prolonged exposure to the Keepers of the West, and will most likely be greeted with much suspicion and for good reason. The Sanjon are truthfully more guarded and suspicious of outsiders than any Keepers that the Players have encountered to date. However, unlike the Keepers of Vimary, they have learned

7. Weaver's Resources

to greet and treat outsiders — the ones who come in small groups, anyway — with breathtaking hospitality and generosity in an effort to lull hostile visitors into a false complacency that will render them more easily dispatched should they prove to be a threat.

If made into allies, the Sanjon's hospitality will prove true, however, when large parties arrive unannounced, the Sanjon display an atypical brutality in dealing with their uninvited guests. The fortifications of the Battery make quick work of ships coming through the Narrows, and overland invasions are met with a surprisingly well-armed and trained militia.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

The Sanjon Keepers have a wealth of resources available to them. Iron, nickel and copper mines from the World Before are plentiful in the north mainland, and are fairly well preserved. However, in recent times, expanding Z'bri and Serf activity from Capal has made transport over land and water far more perilous, slowly sealing off the stream of raw materials. The Sanjon have enough in stock, combined with salvaged materials, to keep the Foundry east of Town in business, but Cabot, the nominal leader of the Sanjon, is worried that they will not be able to keep themselves, or the Boarhead Confederacy, in firearms for very much longer. Without the muskets that Boarhead's Tusks have learned to rely on, the demand for gunpowder and bullets will dwindle as well, weakening both the economic structure of the Sanjon and the strength in their alliance with the Confederacy.

Even without the Foundry's goods, the Sanjon have several profitable enterprises related to the sea. Fisheries and ocean farming out of Sanjon Harbor and the coast of the island keep them well stocked in their staples of fresh and salted fish, seafood and dried seaweed. As well, the Sanjon are extremely apt at naval architecture, shipbuilding and boat repair, both sail and motor. Should the supply of iron, nickel and copper completely filter out, these additional items could keep the Sanjon indefinitely in traded grains and fresh produce from the Confederacy, as well as furs and sundry resources from the Nuit.

The other technology of note that the Sanjon Keepers have within their grasp is a useful one indeed. Detailed instructions and a plethora of telegraph equipment are stored in the Tower on Sigil hill, and are used by the Sanjon for instant relay between their settlements. In recent years the Sanjon have been trying to convince the Lock Keepers to learn the language of telegraph code in order to expand the net of communications over the length of the Great River, but as of yet, the Lock Keepers have been resistant to these efforts. Like many other Keeper factions that have been in contact with the Sanjon, the Lock Keepers regard them with distrust and distaste because the Sanjon seem more interested in building a new world than resurrecting the world that once was. Too quick to embrace outsiders and too irreverent of what was lost at the End, the Sanjon have been kept at arm's length.

FRIEND AND FOE

The Sanjon have been more successful and politically savvy when dealing with external forces than other Keeper Sects. They have a long-standing trade alliance with the Boarhead Confederacy, keeping Boarhead's warriors afloat in metal goods and arms in exchange for grain, produce and relics from the World Before. As a result of their years of good trade, the Sanjon are wary but willing to deal with any outside group that Luther Boarhead will vouch for, and provided that the PCs do not come on too strongly, or with too many numbers in *The Mistresses*, should prove to be valuable allies to the Eighth Tribe in Capal.

The Sanjon may be able to provide some valuable information concerning the elusive Nuit (*Into the Outlands*, p. 83). Although the northerners are known as the Silent Ones, the Sanjon seem to have little trouble communicating with them. When they encounter one another, the Sanjon speak to the Nuit, and seem to intuitively understand the Nuit's non-verbal form of communication. An odd interaction to witness, it is unclear to even the Sanjon why they understand. If asked, the Keepers posit simply that the Nuit want them to understand, so they do.

The Sanjon steer as clear from the Oneida and the Mistresses as they possibly can. In the past, confrontations occurred between the Mistresses' barges and the Sanjon over rights of transport, and these confrontations are largely responsible for the presence of the Figureheads. The tactic has sufficiently stymied the Sanjon attacks. Unnerved by the "hocus pocus" of the Mistresses' ships, they will not come anywhere near the barges, but would not hesitate to unleash the fury of the Battery at any of the barges that tried to take passage in the Narrows.

THE BANNER OF HOPE

After Mek's death the Banner of Hope becomes one of the most potent symbols in Capal. It stands for everything that was lost as well as for everything that was gained. As such it becomes a potent focus of dreams and Dream, and the powerful Synthesis that washed over it during the Forlorn Hope forever marked it. As such it acts as a major Fatimal Artifact, giving +2 to all Synthesis rolls in which it is involved. The import of this, that it has become such a potent artifact, but was never so much as touched by a Fatima, is not lost to the Fallen æ especially the Herites.

NPCs AND TEMPLATES

Here are the collected stats for the major NPCs of *Liberation*. In addition to the major personalities of the Cycle, templates for generic enemies, such as Koleris Chariots, are presented. Weavers are encouraged to modify these stats to fit the power level of their own campaigns.

THE NATION: EFREM GUY'ON, BLACK MARIAN

From childhood, Efrem sought to live up to the ideals of the Guy'on clan. No matter how much he trained, how well he fought, or how honored he was after every battle and hunt, he was left with a feeling of hollow success. Nothing he did could give him the surge of pride that he could see elevate his siblings and cousins. At puberty he began to experience strange and haunting dreams of abandoned, twilight halls filled with disembodied chanting. As the dreams grew in length, clarity and power, he was confronted with the image of Mary the Forgiver, the Fatima he had only experienced through story and legend. The details of Her appearance in his dream were exacting and incredible, but more disconcerting was the realization that Her husk was dead, the light of Her eyes absent.

He went to his mother with his fears and dreams; recognizing that her first child had inherited her Marian blood, she taught him about their hidden heritage. For the first time, Efrem felt he understood the hollow feeling in his soul and knew why no Joanite victory would be as sweet for him as for his cousins. For a brief moment, he felt whole. Then, he realized that Mary the Forgiver, the Fatima he had yearned for his whole life, his true Mother and the only thing that gave his life meaning, was dead. His instant grief cast him into a meaningless world filled with a forsaken people. He became a Black Marian, doing what little he could to ease the souls of the lost among the Joanites, knowing that it would never be enough.

Joan's Crusade against the H'I Kar and the subsequent battles with the Z'bri have hardened and depressed Efrem. He can see the insatiable disease that haunts the invaders, but despairs that he is far too weak to turn the tide of madness.

Highlights: Resigned, Dedicated, Wary

Eminences: Recognition and Devotion

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +1, CRE +1, FIT +1, INF -1, KNO +1, PSY +2, WIL +1, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 30, AD 6, UD 3

SKILLS

Archery 1/+1, Athletics 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/0, Dodge 2/+1, Dreaming 2/+2, Human Perception 2/+2, Intimidate 1/0, Lore (Marian) 2/+1, Lore (Joanite) 1/+1, Melee 3/+1, Notice 2/0, Ritual 2/+1, Survival 2/0, Synthesis (Blessing) 2

EQUIPMENT:

Boiled Leather Armor (AR +6), Shortsword (Parry +1, AD+8), Buckler



7. Weaver's Resources

THE NATION: JOHANNES
TINKER, LITTLE TRICKSTER

The Little Trickster of the Tinkers, Johannes holds a difficult position. The Tinkers are known to be the most irascible caravan in Vimary and he must maintain his image as the greatest trickster of them all, performing japes and pranks that put the rest to shame. At the same time, however, he has had to keep his Caravan in line, making sure they did not go too far and bring down the wrath of Tera Sheba's Judges.

If nothing else, the war with the Z'bri has made his job much easier, as he no longer needs to fear Sheban reprisals. He still keeps an eye on his Caravan, if only out of habit, and is calmly waiting to see what the future will hold for them.

The Tinkers' legendary ability to mend what is broken earned them the job of conducting the Diplomats to Boarhead. Unlike Maura, Johannes does not see the trip as a punishment, but as an opportunity to be away from Vimary, which he assumes will come under attack again soon. Dahlia's recent vanishing-and-reappearing acts have him puzzled, but that only adds a little bit of spice to this new adventure.

Highlights: Skeptical, Disrespectful, Practical Joker

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +1, CRE +2, INF +1, FIT -1, WIL +2, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 25, AD 4, UD 3

SKILLS

Animal Handling 2/0, Boating 1/0, Craft (Carpentry) 2/+2, Disguise 2/+2, Dodge 1/+1, Dreaming 2/0, Human Perception 3/0, Leadership 2/+1, Melee 1/+1, Navigation (Land) 2/0, Riding 1/0, Ritual 2/0, Sneak 2/+1, Speak (Leox) 2/0, Streetwise 2/+1, Survival (Outlands) 2/+2, Theatrics 3/+2, Trade 2/0, Synthesis (Dance of Masks) 3

Equipment: Various stolen trinkets, rusty and rarely used shortsword (Parry +1, AD+8)



THE NATION: MAURA IBENKIN, CHIEF DIPLOMAT

A daughter of the prestigious Ibenkin family, Maura's fortunes were set before she was born. She received the best education and training available, and when she expressed a desire to enter the Diplomats, she was welcomed into their ranks. The Ibenkin had as many enemies as it had contacts, however, and her first assignment dismayed her: she was sent into the Outlands to serve as a Diplomat to the barbarian Leox tribes to the south. The vain young Magdalite added another skill to her repertoire: the ability to hold a grudge for years. When she finally returned to Vimary, she made sure those responsible for sending her out of the light of civilization paid for it. She used political connections and favors to humiliate a number of ranking Diplomats. When she was invited to take one of their places, she accepted.

Throughout the conflicts with the Z'bri and Fallen, Maura kept her head above water by strategically betraying friends and foes so that she remained safe. When the dust settled, she was one of Magdalen's few trusted Diplomats, a position she enjoyed. When the caravan to Boarhead was formed, someone remembered Maura's time among the Leox and suggested she lead the delegation. Whoever it was, when she returns to Vimary, Maura will make sure they pay for sending her away from Magdalen once again. In the meantime, she will vent her frustrations on the Fallen, who she sees as subhuman and hardly worth the notice of the faithful members of the Nation.

Hal Ninva was right to doubt the intentions of Maura Ibenkin. Not only does Maura plan on cutting the Eighth Tribe out of all negotiations, but she intends to manipulate the Confederation, persuading them to enter into an agreement that will put Squat troops under Tribal leadership so they can be thrown into the front lines, taking the highest casualties and leaving the Confederation weakened. Permission to pass through Boarhead's lands is her fallback position, a request she will make only when she must admit that she cannot secure their aid.

Highlights: Manipulative, Demanding, Heartless

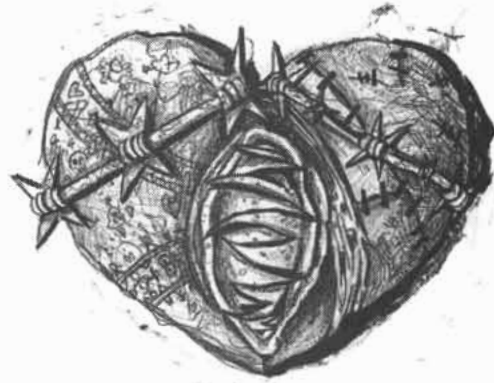
ATTRIBUTES

APP +2, AGI +1, BLD -2, INF +2, PSY -1, WIL +1, STR -1, HEA 0, STA 15, AD/UD 1

SKILLS

Dance 2/+1, Dreaming 1/-1, Etiquette 2/+2, Grooming 2/+2, Haggling 2/+2, Human Perception 3/-1, Leadership 1/+2, Read/Write (Tribal) 2/0, Seduction 2/+2, Speak (Leox) 1/0, Theatrics 2/+2, Synthesis (Passion Play) 2

Equipment: Treaties, scrolls, pens and a collection of potent potions and poisons



THE FALLEN: VALIDA

Born a Joanite, Valida was one of the generation just barely too young to take part in the Crusade that ended the H'I Kar's hold on the Nation. When her people came back from war, she saw the price they had paid, and found out that she had lost all of her immediate family. Torn by guilt and helplessness, she voluntarily left the Tribes to join with the Jackers. When the war with Capal came, she joined the Army of Liberation instantly, partly hoping to die. The long road to Capal, however, taught her the value of living. She has made friends, a new family with her Cell, and has learned that she is not helpless anymore. It is also very likely that she has fallen in love with one of the PCs, especially any who show a love of life and hope for the future.

Highlights: Growing, eager.

Eminences: Devotion and Bravery

Attributes: AGI +1, APP +2, CRE +1, FIT +1 (+4*), WIL +1 (+4*), STR 0 (+2), HEA +1 (+3*), STA 30 (55*), UD/AD 6 (*9).

Skills: Athletics 2/+1 (3/+4*), Combat Sense 3/0, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1 (4/+1*), Intimidation 3/0 (4/+2), Melee 3/+1 (4/+1*), Notice 2/0, Seduction 2/+2, Sneak 2/+1, Survival 2/+1.

Equipment: Longsword (AD + 11), Shortsword (AD + 8), Chain armor (AR 12).

* Marked Attributes and Skills apply only when Valida is being controlled by Teth'ier.

THE CONFEDERATION: DESKAHEH, MUTINOUS TUSK

Born the son of a man who could have been Chief, had he not bowed down to Boarhead, and a mother who would never let anyone forget that their father had surrendered, Deskaheh has always had something to prove. His impressive physique, massive build and talent for knowing just what to say in order to get others to follow him combined with that chip on his shoulder to make a truly nasty piece of work. Deskaheh is convinced that he should be the leader of the Tusks, and because of that the leader of the Army of Liberation. While he is wary of Mek æ the old Jacker scares him a bit æ he will not let it show. If he has to kill the nasty old bastard, then so be it.

Highlights: Proud, angry, power-hungry.

Attributes: AGI +1, APP +1, BLD +2, FIT +2, INF +1, KNO -1, PSY -2, WIL +2, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 40, UD/AD 10

Skills: Athletics 2/+2, Combat Sense 3/0, Dodge 2/+1, Firearms 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1, Intimidation 3/+2, Leadership 2/+1, Melee 3/+2, Notice 2/0, Seduction 2/+1, Sneak 2/+1, Survival 2/0.

Equipment: Studded Leather Armor (AR 8), Musket (DM 24), Relic Riot Shield (Acc -2, Parry +3, AD+5, Shd (20)), Flail (Acc -1, AD+11).

THE CONFEDERATION: FOLLER, TUSK

As the leader of the Tusks sent to Hom with the PCs, Foller plans to ensure that the Fallen live up to their side of the alliance. In his mid-thirties, Foller is finding it more difficult to keep up with the younger members of the Tusks, and uses his age to keep them in line. None have challenged his authority yet, though should any, he will be quick to assert his control. At present he is unsure if it is the best plan for his people to wage war upon Capal, but trusts in Boarhead wholeheartedly. Foller has been with the Tusks a number of years now, and will ensure that they bring pride to the Confederation in their actions. With his aims to become the next leader of the Tusks, Foller follows all orders to the letter in the hopes that such adherence to his orders, and his success, will ensure that he is named to such a position.

Highlights: Outspoken, proud, determined

Attributes: AGI +2, APP -2, BLD +1, CRE +1, PER +1, PSY +1, WIL +1, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 6, AD 7

Skills: Athletics 2/0, Combat Sense 3/+2, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Intimidate 2/+1, Melee 3/+2, Notice 3/+1, Survival 4/+1, Tactics 2/+1, Throwing 2/+1, Speak (Keeper: Sanjon Dialect) 2/0

Equipment: Studded Leather Armor (AR 8), Musket (DM 24), Relic Riot Shield (Acc -2, Parry +3, AD+5, Shd (20)), Flail (Acc -1, AD+11).

THE CONFEDERATION: NATHAN, TUSK

Nathan is the youngest member of the group of Tusks that journeyed to Hom, and the quietest of the lot. Still unsure of the role he will play in this endeavor, Nathan has decided to let others lead the way, while he still finds his own path. This is his first year with the Tusks, and Nathan is in awe of Foller, keeping as close to him as possible. Nathan will stand by Foller regardless of any decision he makes, and will defend his leader to any that would say anything about him. Nathan happily volunteers for any of the work that others have no interest in, and is sure to do such work diligently.

Highlights: Quiet, unsure, kind

Attributes: AGI +2, APP -1, BLD +1, CRE -2, FIT +1, INF -1, KNO -2, PER +2, PSY +1, WIL +1, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 6, AD 6

Skills: Athletics 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Melee 2/+2, Notice 2/+2, Survival 2/-2, Tactics 1/-2, Throwing 2/+2, Speak (Keeper: Sanjon Dialect) 1/-2

THE CONFEDERATION:**LOURIE, TUSK OF THE MOWAK**

Lourie's childhood was full of wonder and dreams of glory, his father telling him stories of the creation of the Confederation and of the heroes known as Tusks that protected the tribes from the monsters to the north. As he grew into a large and powerful young man, Lourie pestered the Tusks who traveled through his village, helping them and training with them when they would allow it. He volunteered to fight in every battle against the Z'bri, and when he became the most skilled warrior in his village, he decided it was time to challenge the Gauntlet of Spirits and become a Tusk.

He told Far Sight that he saw the hills of his motherland, hills that would nurture and protect him throughout his life; he removed and replaced the bear cub without the she-bear ever waking; he confided to Manylegs that his quest to become a Tusk was in order to prove himself to his father; and when he hunted the boar, he eschewed the spear offered him and felled his prey with only a knife. Boarhead welcomed him into the Tusks and allowed him to enter the next war party against the Z'bri fortress on the south side of the Great River from Capal, to great success.

After the fortress was reduced to smoldering rubble, Lourie was assigned to one of the furthest villages, and entrusted with its defense. He yearns for the opportunity to battle Z'bri once again, and hopes the Elders' Council will support the campaign against Capal.

Highlights: Stolid, Loyal, Pragmatic

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +2, APP -1, BLD +2, CRE -1, FIT +2, KNO -2, WIL +1, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 40, UD/AD 10

SKILLS

Athletics 2/+2, Combat Sense 3/0, Dodge 2/+2, Etiquette (Confederation) 2/0, Firearms 3/+2, Hand-to-Hand 3/+2, Intimidation 2/+2, Leadership 2/0, Melee 3/+2, Notice 2/0, Sneak 2/+2, Survival 2/-1

EQUIPMENT:

Studded Leather Armor (AR 8), Long Bow (DM 10), Hatchets (AD+7), Great Axe (AD+11), and his prized Musket (DM 24).



7. Weaver's Resources

HATTAN:

TAAIN, ONEIDA WARRIOR

Taain has spent most of his life seeking to prove himself superior to those around him. From the games of children, to those of the young warrior, Taain has excelled at all tasks set before him. Taain thought that he would rightfully find himself on the council of Elders, a chieftain who would lead his people to great victory, people who would sing his praises to the heavens and send him wives to minister to his whims.

Taain has found that this is not the fate the Mistresses would have in store for him. Instead he has been sent to watch the trade route with Capal, and ensure that it is not compromised. Instead of becoming despondent at this low-circle position, however, Taain though, has seen it as his possible salvation.

Still seeking to be a chieftain, Taain has bided his time on the trade routes, waiting for the opportunity that will allow him to seek his proper reward. About him, he has gathered a loyal band of followers who feel that Taain will be the one to lead their people to greater glory.

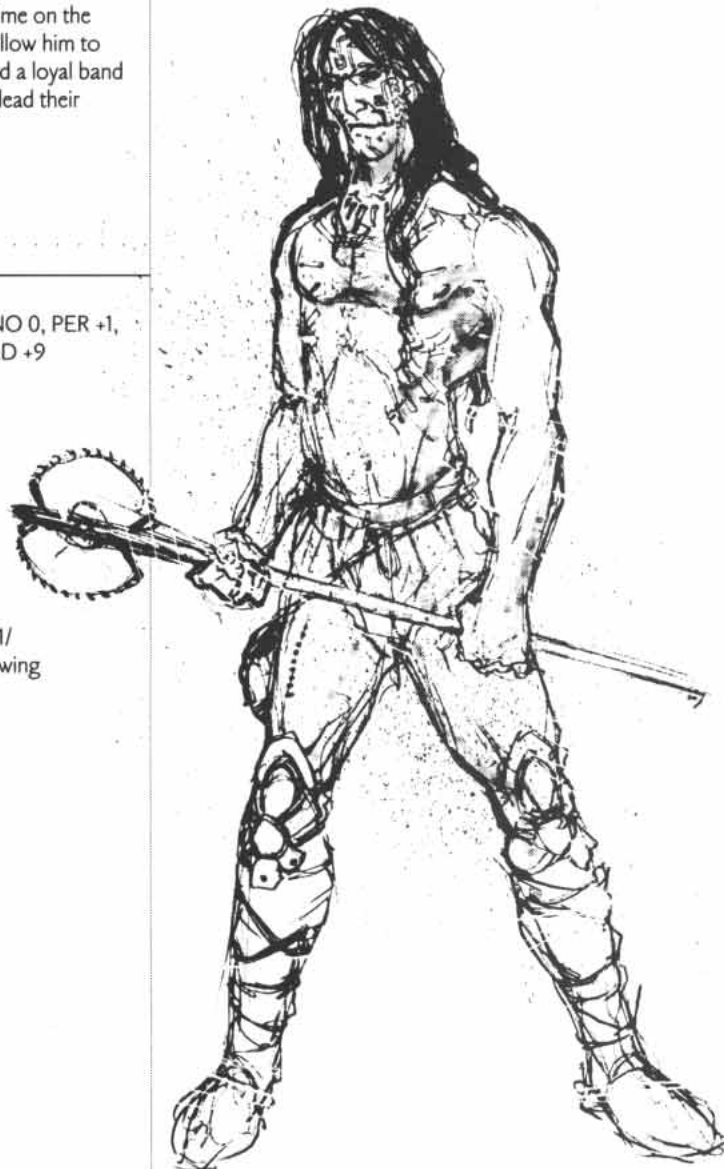
Highlights: Determined, Relentless, Driven

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +1, APP 0, BLD +2, CRE +1, FIT +1, INF +2, KNO 0, PER +1, PSY 0, WIL +2, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 40, UD +8, AD +9

SKILLS

Archery 2/+1, Athletics 1/+1, Camouflage 2/+1, Combat Sense 3/+1, Cooking 1/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Interrogation 2/+1, Intimidate 2/+2, Investigation 1/+1, Leadership 3/+2, Lore (Dark Mistresses) 2/0, Melee 3/+1, Notice 3/+1, Ritual 2/0, Sneak 1/+1, Speak (Tribal) 1/0, Survival 3/+1, Swimming 1/+1, Tactics 2/+1, Throwing 1/+1



KEEPERS:**CABOT, SANJON LEADER**

An ancient figure of a man, no one, not even Cabot himself, knows exactly how old he really is. Although he is slowly dwindling down towards infirmity, he is — precisely because of his incredibly advanced age — the de facto leader of the Sanjon Keeper sect. Full of anecdotes and stories, Cabot is the personification of the Sanjon's history, and in recent times he has been taking up the task of dictating everything he knows to Mummer, a historian and prominent figure among the Sanjon.

Cabot is the man who has made the Sanjon Keepers what they are today. Free spirited, friendly and liberal in his thinking, he has done surprisingly well at organizing his followers to follow the path to knowledge and self-sufficiency. It was his mandate that each man and woman of the Sanjon learn, and eventually teach in, multiple disciplines; it was his voice that encouraged prolific child bearing and communal living so that the Keepers of Sanjon would grow prosperous, and great in number.

Cabot's life has been dedicated to the growth and prosperity of his people and his homeland, but he worries that when his death comes, there will be no one to stand in his place.

Highlights: Visionary, decrepit, wry.

ATTRIBUTES

BLD -2, CRE +1, FIT -3, INF +2, KNO +3, PER +1, PSY +2, WIL +1

SKILLS

Boating 2/+1, Drive 1/0, Etiquette 2/+2, Firearms 2/0, Gunnery (Land) 3/+1, Haggling 2/+2, Human Perception 2/+2, Lore (Sanjon) 3/+3, Leadership 2/+2, Speak (Keepspeak, Squat, Telegraph) 3/+3, Survival 2/+1, Swimming 1/-3, Teaching 2/+1, Techlore (Life Sciences, Mechanics) 2/+3, Trade 1/+3, Navigation (Water) 1/+3



KEEPERS:

MUMMER, SANJON HISTORIAN

Cabot's right hand, Mummer has been slowly working to become indispensable to the leadership of the Sanjon. Although he has convinced himself that he will be selflessly stepping up to the task to follow in Cabot's footsteps, his concepts of leadership are somewhat skewed from that of his mentor. He volunteered to record Cabot's knowledge because he anticipates that it will become a doctrine of the future, and plans to lead the Sanjon by Cabot's word, drawing on the love the Keeper sect holds for the old man.

Turning Cabot's sociological philosophy into something resembling a religious text, he plans to usher in the new age of the Sanjon, which will see the people of the island rise into a Nation that holds the power of the eastern coast — a Nation with Mummer as its head and the trading power of the river in its grasp. He has taken it upon himself to edit parts of Cabot's history to ensure it carries the weight of prophecy that his followers will require to understand what must be done.

Highlights: Ambitious, shrewd, charismatic.

Attributes: APP +1, CRE +1, INF +2, KNO +1, PSY -1, WIL +1, STR 0, HEA 0, STA 25, UD/AD 3

Skills: Combat Sense 1/0, Firearms 1/0, Leadership 3/+2, Read/Write (Keepspeak) 3/+1

KEEPERS:

BOYLE, SANJON TEACHER

Cabot's youngest daughter, Boyle would make an excellent candidate to follow in her father's footsteps. She is pragmatic and even-keeled, learned, temperate and liked by everyone. She spends her time traveling between the settlements of Sanjon fostering the development of its many learning networks. She encourages the communities to work together and share their knowledge, preaching her father's message of empowerment through knowledge and community dependence.

Although Boyle would not consider herself a leader, she opposes Mummer's efforts to canonize her father and make himself into the Sanjon's heavy-handed leader. Should it become an issue, she will have many followers, but the division may serve a major blow to the unity æ the greatest strength æ of the Sanjon Keepers.

Highlights: Pragmatic, patient, devoted

Attributes: AGI -1, BLD +1, CRE +2, FIT -1, INF +1, KNO +2, PSY +1, WIL +2, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 35, UD/AD 3

Skills: Craft (Bookbinding) 1/+2, Leadership 2/+1, Teaching 3/+2, Techlore (Life Sciences) 2/+2

HATTAN: TAAIN'S CHOSEN

This is the band of Oneida Warriors that have gathered under Taain, in the hopes that he will be the one to lead them to greater glory. Dissatisfied with the way in which the council of Elders has chosen to lead the tribe, these young men have pledged their loyalty to Taain, and are in many cases willing to die for him.

Determined to find their rightful place as conquerors of the other Squat tribes, Taain's Chosen are willing to do whatever it takes to see this dream fulfilled. All have spent much time in the wilderness with Taain, and understand that some decisions have to be made there without the consent of the Mistresses. To this end, the Chosen will blindly follow any path that Taain sets before them.

Attributes: AGI +1, APP 0, BLD +1, CRE -2, FIT +1, INF -1, KNO +1, PER +1, PSY -1, WIL -1, STR +1, HEA -1, STA 20, UD 4, AD 7

Skills: Athletics 1/+1, Archery 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Intimidate 1/+1, Lore (Dark Mistress) 1/+1, Melee 2/+1, Music 1/-2, Survival 2/-2, Ritual 2/+1, Swimming 1/+1, Throwing 1/+1

CAPAL:

TRALL, GEK'ROH SAPPER

Trall was created by the Koleris and Flemis working together, chaining the soul of a rogue Iv'chet and several Serfs into a travesty of claws, powerful limbs and a blind instinctual urge for digging. Trall does not think, nor does it want much other than food and the ability to tear into the ground. Unlike many Gek'roh, Trall has no real interest in killing; its primary urge is to destroy structures by digging unstable tunnels under them. When the tunnels collapse so do the structures that rest on top of them.

Left alone, Trall destroys whatever it can find, which is why its Flemis controllers normally keep it well in hand. Using their psychic link with the beast they are able to guide its instincts and use it as an effective siege weapon. Trall rarely surfaces, staying in the dark below the ground unless it needs to come up for food or is forced up by its masters.

Attributes: BLD +11, FIT +5, INS +2, PER -2, WIL -1, STR +7, HEA +2, STA 80, UD 18.

Skills: Combat Sense 1/-2, Hand-to-Hand 2/0.

Special: Sapper (by digging tunnels under walls, Trall is able to collapse the wall. How long this takes depends on how hard the ground is, and how well built the wall), Tunnel (Trall can move under the ground at a rate of 5 meters per round in loose soil. In the bedrock near Capal, it is only able to move about a meter per hour).

CAPAL:**BERACHA, KOLERIS LORD**

One of the few Koleris commanders during the battle of the Stand of Sant Foy who urged caution and organization, Beracha found himself a laughing stock among the other Koleris lords, who craved the hot blood of the kill more than anything else. His status diminished the more he urged caution, and much to his dismay he found himself stripped of many of his Serfs, the warriors which granted him status among his own kind.

The warleaders put him in charge of a small band of Chariots and battle serfs, and told him not to humiliate the House or he would find himself among the Chained. Having no choice, seeing his own doom clearly laid out before him should he argue or acquiesce, Beracha went.

Beracha fights desperately, for he knows that he has nothing left to lose, and only a brave showing on the battlefield will help to rebuild his once-glorious prestige. However, when it becomes obvious that the battle is doom for the Z'bri, he pulls his forces back and starts using them to organize the remnants of the Koleris Horde. Killing him would stop the last gasp of the Koleris army before it had time to start.

ATTRIBUTES

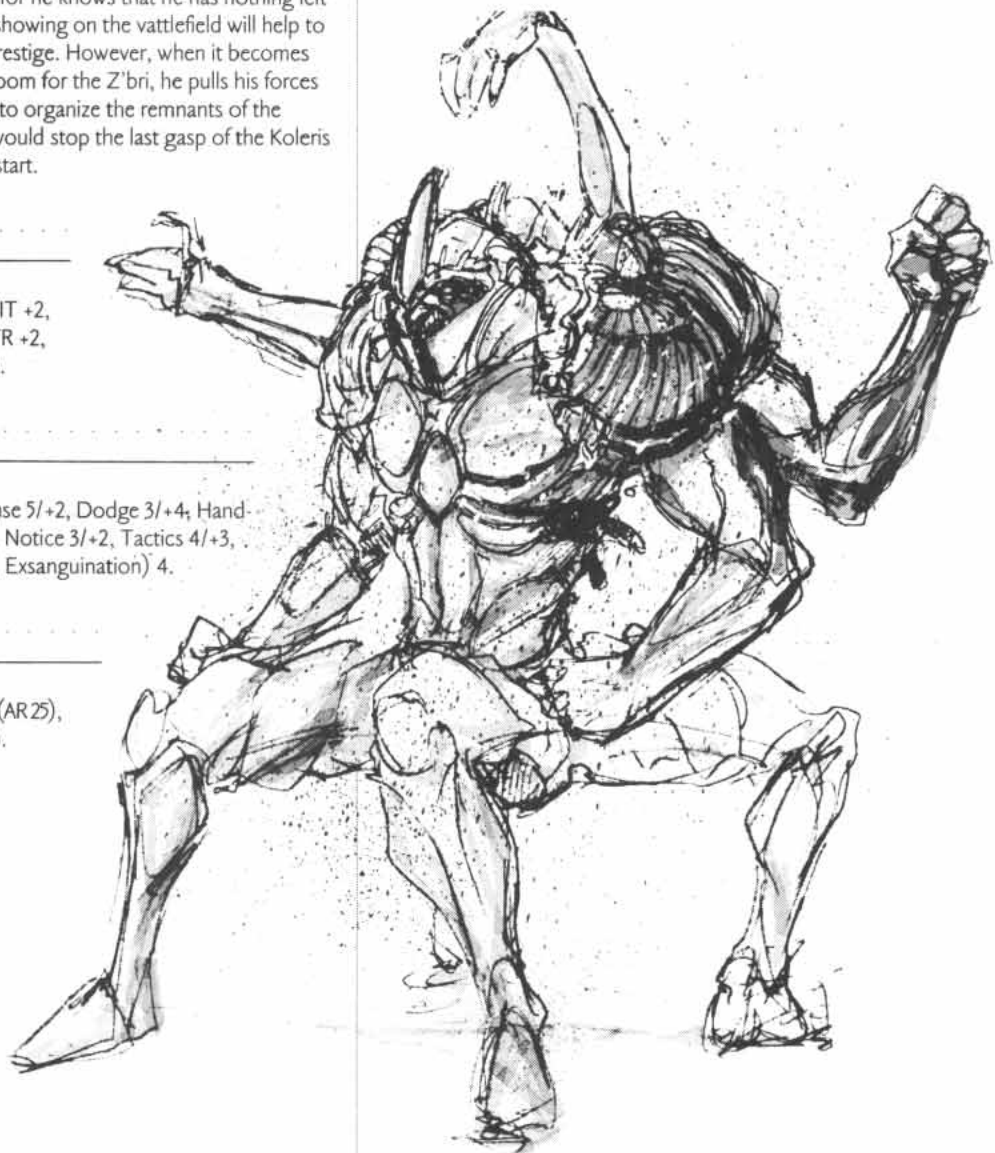
AGI +4, BLD +2, CRE +3, FIT +2,
INF +3, PER +2, WIL +3, STR +2,
HEA +1, STA 40, UD/AD 11.

SKILLS

Athletics 4/+2, Combat Sense 5/+2, Dodge 3/+4, Hand-
to-Hand 4/+4, Melee 4/+4, Notice 3/+2, Tactics 4/+3,
Sundering (The Shattering, Exsanguination) 4.

EQUIPMENT:

Beracha's Plate - Living Armor (AR 25),
Clever - Greatsword (AD + 20).



7. Weaver's Resources

CAPAL: TETH'IER, KOLERIS
LORD AND MEK'S BANE.

Teth'ier has waited, patiently, for his time to rise. He waited while the camps were set up and more powerful but less wise Lords ruled. He waited through the long winter of Prince Thak'ich'at's rule, making alliances with the Melanis and learning many of their secrets. Now, with Capal teetering on the edge of falling to the flesh puppets and his people on the verge of being driven into oblivion, Teth'ier is ready to rise up and claim leadership of the Z'bri of the North.

Though he lacks the raw physical power of abominations like Wormwood or the Prince himself, he is far more cunning and knowledgeable than they ever could hope to be. He understands the human psyche, and he understands something of the River of Dream and how the meat-children use it. As a result he is able to clearly and cold-heartedly plan the attack on Mek and the Banner of Hope, knowing that in slaying the Hope's leader and felling, then seizing, their standard he would be able to break the Hope's morale and their strength of Dream.

He will fight coldly and rationally, using the ground and his followers, while trying to make sure that no new leaders can raise the banner and renew the strength of the Hope.

Highlights: Cold, determined, certain.

ATTRIBUTES

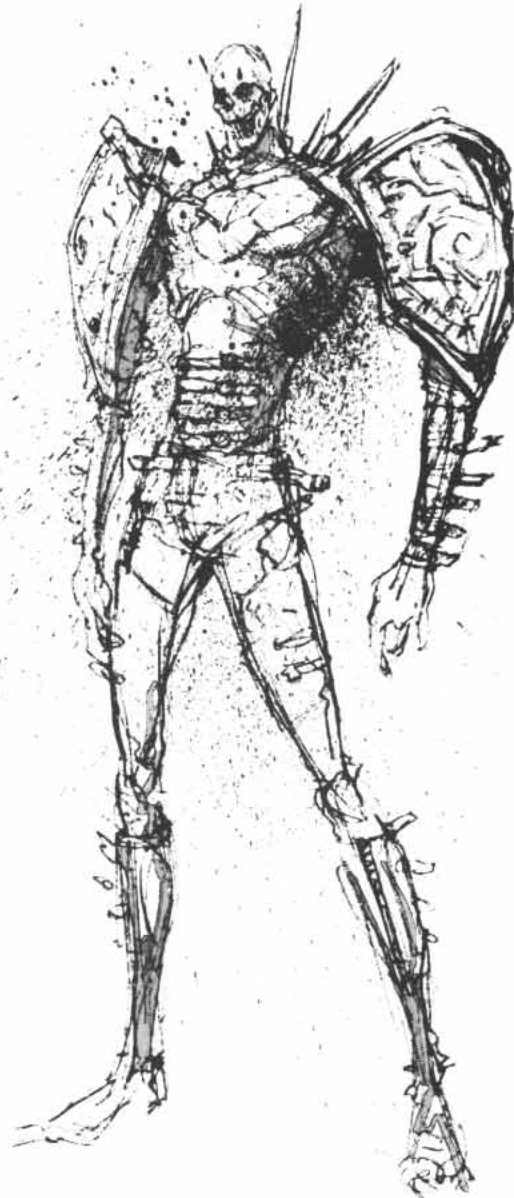
AGI +3, BLD +2, CRE +3, FIT +3, INF +3, KNO +3, PER +3, PSY +3, WIL +3, STR +2, HEA +3, STA 50, UD/AD 13.

SKILLS

Athletics 4/+3, Combat Sense 5/+3, Dodge 4/+3, Hand-to-Hand 6/+3, Leadership 4/+3, Lore (Human) 3/+3, Lore (Capal) 5/+3, Lore (River of Dream) 5/+3, Melee 6/+3, Notice 3/+3, Tactics 5/+3, Theatrics 3/+3, Sundering (The Shattering, Exsanguination, Chaining, Soul Stealing) 4.

EQUIPMENT:

Bane - Greatsword (AD + 15, a successful attack triggers a Shattering attempt), Living Armor (AR 20), 3 Heartstones of fallen Hunters.



CAPAL: WORMWOOD

Perhaps the Melanis of Capal knew that they were doomed when they started to create Wormwood, or perhaps their bitterness and anger deluded them into believing that such a creature, once unleashed, could ever be brought back under control. Whatever they thought, they joined together with the Lords of every House in Capal and created a monster from the souls of a Lord of each House, and the bodies of over 2,000 Serfs. Guided by the will of its creators, the body of Wormwood is a vast and writhing thing, compressing and expanding as it moves.

The Melanis intended Wormwood to be the ultimate War Machine, a weapon before which nothing could stand. Instead, when they woke Wormwood they found that they had created an entity beyond control and beyond reason. Unable to hold fast to the thousands of minds within the vast hulk, the creature broke free from their bonds of Sundering almost instantaneously, running wild in its pain and rage.

Wormwood knows nothing but hate and pain. Poison runs in its veins, burning it alive from the inside out. Thousands of minds and souls scream at the core of its being, turning into a mad babbling that cannot do anything other than lash out, destroying everything in its path.

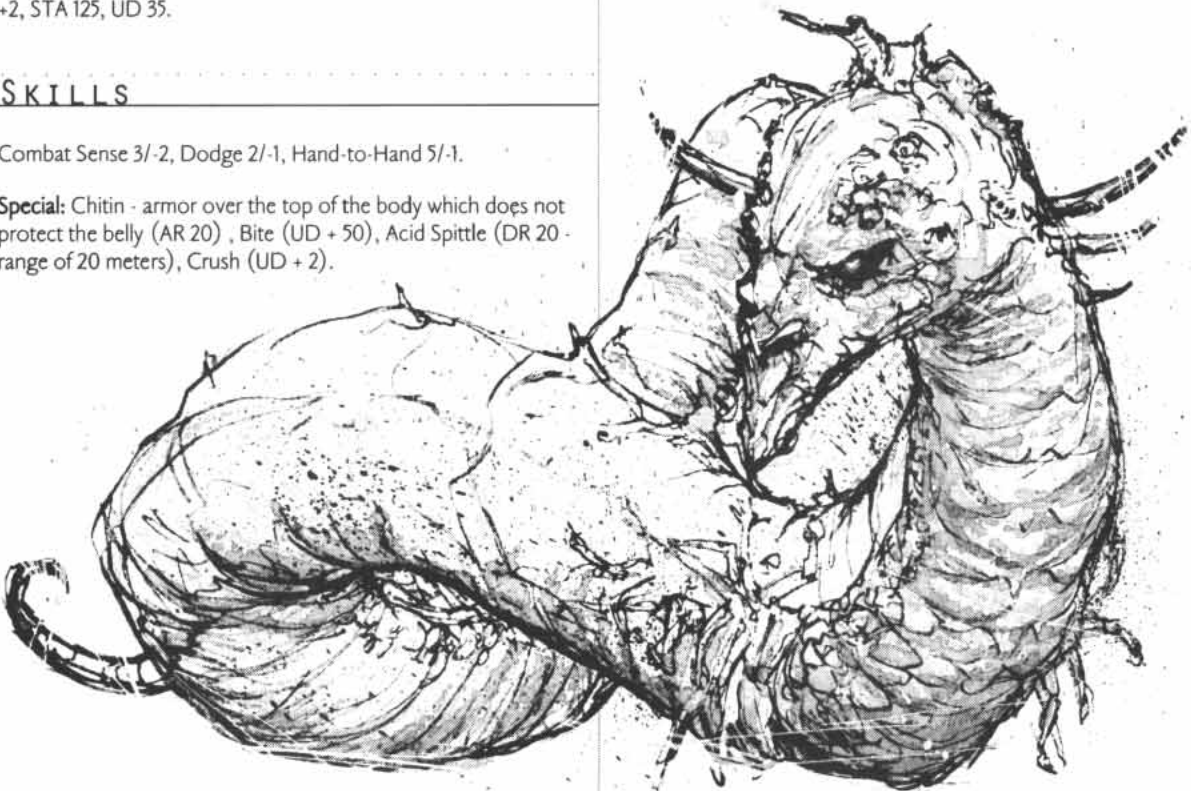
ATTRIBUTES

AGI -1, BLD +18, FIT +5, INS 0, PER -2, WIL +2, STR +12, HEA +2, STA 125, UD 35.

SKILLS

Combat Sense 3/-2, Dodge 2/-1, Hand-to-Hand 5/-1.

Special: Chitin - armor over the top of the body which does not protect the belly (AR 20), Bite (UD + 50), Acid Spittle (DR 20 - range of 20 meters), Crush (UD + 2).



TOTEM SPIRIT: FAR SIGHT

Watching from his mountain aerie, Far Sight has seen the rise of the Confederation and the growing threat of the Capal Z'bri, even if the Beasts have not yet penetrated far enough south to harm his tribe, the Tuscarora. The spirit eagle long ago took the Tuscarora under his wing, appreciating their contemplative natures and dedication to informed action. Far Sight soars among them, whispering their words to each other, knitting the disparate villages and settlements together to form a community united by understanding instead of force. Everything he has built is now threatened by the Capal to the north. He has also seen south, to Hattan, and worries that both cities will fear the power that the Squats have created between them. Of all the totems, Far Sight favors alliance with the delegation from Vimary the most. He sees that only with their help — and only with the Confederation's assistance — will Capal ever fall. Far Sight is closest to the Eminence of Recognition, his boundless vision taking in all the knowledge of the world.

Highlights: Calm, Watchful, Exacting

Attributes: CRE +3, KNO +2, PER +5, PSY +4, WIL +4, STR +4, HEA +4, STA 65, UD 11.

Skills: Dodge 4/+3, Dreaming 4/+4, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Human Perception 5/+4, Lore (Dream, Spirits, Confederation, Outlands) 4/+2, Notice 6/+5

Special Abilities: Talons (UD+15 damage), Beak (UD+5 damage), Wings of Flesh (can possess a mortal eagle for up to an hour), See the Far Hills (can examine with exacting detail anything within his line of sight), Eagle's Cry (on a successful contested WIL roll, can freeze a victim for MoS rounds)

TOTEM SPIRIT: CYGNUS THE WHITE SWAN

A vision of grace and beauty, Cygnus has long been missed by the Nation. The White Swan came with Mary from the East, and while Mary blessed and forgave the fledgling Nation, Cygnus showed them how to stand tall and proud now that their souls were clean. Her quiet strength and graceful power were held up as an example to be emulated, and many called themselves Mirrors of the Swan.

As Mary lay dying, She spoke to Cygnus only once. The Swan immediately fled, stretching her wings to fly far into the River of Dream. The Nation and the Marians never saw her again. The White Swan created a haven for herself, a Secondary Orb she named the Hermitage. It was a place of tranquil gardens and lakes, where she could rest and grieve the loss of the Forgive. Teddy pleaded with her to come join the Marians as they came out of hiding themselves. The White Swan agreed, hoping to lend her example to the Marians once again.

Highlights: Majestic, Tranquil, Calming

Attributes: APP +6, INF +2, PSY +12, WIL +2, STR +2, HEA +7, STA 95, UD 9

Skills: Dreaming 4/+12, Healing 4/0, Human Perception 4/+12, Lore (Marian) 5/0, Notice 2/0

Special Abilities: Swan's Balm (once every month, she can heal any Character of two flesh wounds or one deep wound), Peace of Mind (can assuage a character of guilt and madness, returning them to a stable frame of mind), Manifest (can appear in the World of Flesh until the next sunset or sunrise).



TOTEM SPIRIT: KING BOAR

With his broken tusk marking the battles that he has fought and his other, whole tusk proving that he can still take on more opponents, King Boar is the apotheosis of savage dominance and stubborn, brute power. He has taught his tribe, the Irinakoiv, that strength is the only thing truly worthy of respect, whether it be physical or martial. Those he favors grow large and strong, displaying their adoration of the totem by performing feats of strength and cowing their lessers into obedience. King Boar has little time or patience for the weak, who cannot live life to the fullest due to their physical inadequacy. The initial attacks by Capal Z'bri angered King Boar, but their continuation have goaded him into a fury of impotent rage. If Capal is not attacked soon, King Boar will demand someone's blood. . . and it doesn't particularly matter whose. Rituals for King Boar center around Bravery, for when a man is strong and has the power of the Boar behind him, there is nothing to fear.

Highlights: Savage, Powerful, Demanding

Attributes: INF -2, CRE +2, PSY +4, WIL +6, STR +6, HEA +3, STA 55, UD 15.

Skills: Athletics 4/+4, Combat Sense 4/0, Hand-to-Hand 5/+2

Special Abilities: Gore (UD+20 damage), Hooves (UD+10 damage), Cower (with a contested WIL roll, King Boar can force a character or another spirit to follow one simple command per MoS), Eyes of the Wild (by making an opposed WIL roll, it can freeze a victim in place for MoS rounds)

TOTEM SPIRIT: FIRE-ON-THE-WATER

Vain and flashy, Fire-on-the-Water is a salamander of fiery temperament, demanding attention and fuming when he does not receive it. Fire-on-the-Water appears as a creature of living flame even as he drips a trail of water wherever he goes. Theoretically, the salamander values the power of fire — both physical and emotional — channeled into productive effort, but even the totem often falls short here. He is prone to emotional outbursts and destructive rampages, but when his philosophy works, his actions are fueled by the impressive fire in his heart. Fire-on-the-Water is constantly looking for recognition, and despairs of the disrespect his tribe, the Kayoo, receive from their 'equals' in the Confederation. Rituals for Fire-on-the-Water are often Capricious in nature, powerful but erratic in focus.

Highlights: Erratic, Spontaneous, Vain

Attributes: CRE +4, INF +3, KNO +2, PSY +2, WIL +4, STR +4, HEA +3, STA 55, UD 11.

Skills: Camouflage 4/+4, Combat Sense 2/0, Demolition 3/+2, Dodge 3/+4, Dreaming 4/+2, Lore (Outlands, Keepers) 2/0, Tinker 4/+4

Special Abilities: Immolate (can wrap a victim in flames of Intensity 10), Ignite (can set any flammable substance on fire), Inspire (can help the Character see a new way to approach a problem).





TOTEM SPIRIT: MANYLEGS

Creeping in the shadows and striking when least expected, Manylegs is a creature of pervasive and alien hate, capable of lingering grudges that span generations. The Nodagga confide with each other that Manylegs hates as many things as she has legs, which is far more than the eight of a terrestrial spider. Manylegs teaches her children that the way to destroy one's enemies is to wait and discover their secrets, and then to wait longer until those secrets can be used to best advantage. It is uncertain whether Manylegs cares for the Nodagga as the children she claims she loves, or if she values them merely as pawns against her enemies. At present she despises Far Sight, whom she suspects of prying into her secrets. Her hatred of the Eagle is only overtaken by the hate she reserves for the Capal Z'bri who have slain so many of her 'children.' Rituals for Manylegs usually emphasize Shadows, knowing the secrets of an enemy's heart and hiding one's own intentions.

Highlights: Frightening, Elusive, Enigmatic

Attributes: INF -2, CRE +2, KNO +5, PER +4, PSY +2, WIL +4, STR +3, HEA +2, STA 50, UD 9

Skills: Combat Sense 2/+4, Dreaming 4/+2, Hand-to-Hand 4/+2, Human Perception 4/+2, Lore (nearly all) 5/+5

Special Abilities: Claws (UD+15 damage), Venom (treat as a sedative with Potency 8 and Onset Time of 5 rounds), Daughter of Shadows (can disappear into any shadow, and come out of any other shadow), Secrets of Ages (can deduce any Character's secret with a successful KNO roll, contested by the victim's WIL)

TOTEM SPIRIT: THE ONTO

The totem of the Mowak is a powerful whirlwind of lean muscle and sharp claws, moving sinuously through darkness and light. The Onto is not devious, but he is wise, and knows the virtue of attacking only from advantage; he and his followers therefore always seeks the higher ground and best position from which to strike. The Mowak do not value strength so much as they value advantage, of which strength is only one variety. Battle is viewed as the greatest exemplar of the play and interaction of advantage, and the Onto encourages his tribe to practice it as often as possible. The Onto's eyes are set on the west, where he sees the Leox as a pitiful force waiting to be conquered, and the ruins of Vimary as a wealth of advantages to be had with little resistance defending it. The Capal Z'bri are a concern of the Onto, but only because the advantage is theirs, and not the Confederation's. Of the Confederation itself, the Onto is skeptical æ it is quite plain that King Boar and his tribe have all the advantage there. The Onto knows that his Mowak warriors will never stand against the rest of the Confederation. . . unless they can conquer the valley to the east first. Rituals for the Onto focus on Fury, the application of advantage against one's enemies.

Highlights: Merciless, Violent, Cagey

Attributes: CRE +4, KNO +2, PER +4, PSY +3, WIL +3, STR +3, HEA +3, STA 55, UD 9.

Skills: Combat Sense 6/+4, Dodge 5/+4, Hand-to-Hand 4/+4, Sneak 5/+4, Tactics 4/+4

Special Abilities: Claws (UD+20 damage), Bite (UD+10 damage), Call of the Wild (can roar and be heard anywhere within a mile; all those not allied to the Onto must roll WIL against a Threshold of 6 or be frozen for MoF rounds), Drop from the Trees (can appear out of nowhere, gaining the element



HATTAN TRADE SHIP CREWS

Due to the nature of the goods being traded between Capal, and Hattan, the trade ships are only entrusted to the most elite of the warrior caste. All members of a trade ship crew will fight to the death rather than let the ship be taken. The crews of the trade ships show considerable restraint in leaving the oar Serfs alone, and not killing them for pleasure or sport. The figureheads of the ships (see below) do not affect the crew.

Attributes: AGI +1, APP 0, BLD +1, CRE -2, FIT +1, INF -1, KNO +1, PER +1, PSY -1, WIL -1, STR +1, HEA -1, STA 20, UD 4, AD 7

Skills: Athletics 1/+1, Boating 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Intimidate 1/+1, Lore (Dark Mistress) 1/+1, Melee 3/+1, Music 1/-2, Ritual 2/+1, Swimming 2/+1, Throwing 2/+1

HATTAN TRADE SHIP

Larger than the barges found in use on the Great River, Hattan Trade ships are used for the transportation of goods. Hattan Trade ships have two levels, the main deck, where the goods are kept under guard, and the lower level, which houses the Serfs. In the lower deck, two Oneida warriors will be found watching over the Serfs. All Hattan ships seem to lack all of the natural sounds associated with a ship. This eerie quiet should cause some discomfort in those not used to this, causing the appearance that the ship is not even moving. Propulsion systems include sails and oars.

Size:	+10
Crew:	10 min./25 max.
Speed:	20 meters/round, 20 kph (sea)
Maneuver:	-4
Range:	Unlimited
Damage Rating:	130/260/520
Special Characteristics:	If traveling on a river, double the maneuver to -8, and halve the speed. Load 8000 kg.

Maiden of the Sea: Hattan ship figureheads

At the front of all Hattan ships is fixed the Maiden of the Sea. The secret of the construction of these magical items is one that is only known to the Mistresses, the dread rulers of this forbidden city. These figureheads cause those within 15 feet to feel an overpowering sense of dread should they make any attempt to change the course of the ship in any fashion. The figurehead of a woman in a long flowing dress, with the sun in her left hand, and the moon in her right hand, solemnly contemplating some mystery, represents in some fashion the magic of the Mistresses. The figurehead is carved from red wood, not of any kind that any Characters have seen before. Any attempts to change the course of the ship in any fashion requires a PSY roll versus a Threshold of 6. Failure results in the individual being incapacitated with fear. Those Characters near the other end of the ship merely get a foreboding sensation, as though a cloud of bad luck had descended upon the ship. Due to the nature of this figurehead, it is not possible to outright destroy it, but it can be removed with some hours of work.

CHARIOT GEK'ROH

While the H'I Kar Z'bri largely limited themselves to chaining soul to flesh, the Z'bri of Capal have tried a wider range of possible combinations. One of the more successful was in chaining together a battle-trained Serf, a strong horse and a chariot. The result was a twisted amalgam of flesh and steel that is able to move with shocking speed, hitting with hooves, scythed wheels and weapons wielded by the Serf body that rises from the center of the abomination. Unlike normal chariots, Chariot Gek'roh are relatively stable and difficult to spill or flip as the whole is actually one living being and is able to control itself with the finesse of a trained warrior.

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +10, CRE -1, FIT +4, PER +1, PSY -2, WIL +1, STR +7, HEA +1, STA 90, UD/AD 15.

Skills: Athletics* 3/+4, Combat Sense 3/+1, Dodge 1/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Melee 3/+1, Intimidate 3/+10.

*Athletics is used whenever a Drive roll would normally be called for, to reflect the Chariot's self control.

Special: Speed is 40 meters per round. The Chariot may make up to 3 attacks a round against 3 separate targets: 1 with hooves, 1 with a weapon and 1 with the scythe blades on the wheels.

Equipment: Armor (AR 10), Spear (AD + 11), Long Bow (DM 10), Axe (AD + 13), Hooves (UD + 6), Scythe Blades (AD + 8)

GARGOYLES

The Melanis who helped the Koleris create the Chariots did not stop their experiments into combining animate flesh and insensate material. Having seen the Fatimas, and wishing to explore the nature of those enigmatic beings, the Melanis worked on animating statues. They were unable to do so, however, without combining flesh with the stone. One of the results of their experiments was the Gargoyles, the stone and flesh guardians of Cht'aux. These beings are made by removing the living internal systems and musculature of specially bred Serfs and chaining them into a prepared stone housing. Some of these creations have truly massive wings that allow them to glide clumsily, though not really fly. These fliers are less heavily armored than the others. All gargoyles, however, tend to attack with heavy blow and full attack maneuvers, trusting in their heavily armored bodies to protect them from damage. Gargoyles that can fly like to carry heavy boulders aloft to drop on their targets.

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +5 (+3*), FIT +2, PER +1, WIL +1, STR +3 (+2*), HEA +1, STA 55 (45*), AD/UD 14 (12*)

Skills: Athletics 2/+2, Combat Sense 3/+1, Dodge 3/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1, Intimidate 4/+5 (+3*), Melee 3/+1, Throwing 3/+1

Equipment: Stone Carapace (AR 25, AR 20*), Stone Arm Bracer (Shield, +2 parry, SR 20), Claws (UD + 6), Pole Axes (AD + 13), Boulders (Thrown 15*).

(*The marked numbers are for flying Gargoyles.)

KEEPERS:

MIRIALL, SANJON KEEPER

Miriall has always had difficulty keeping her opinions to herself, and speaks her mind no matter what the consequences might be. She feels that an exchange of thoughts is the only way to ensure that one is always learning, but tends to go overboard, especially if she does not agree with another's opinions. Due to her way with words, Miriall was sent by the Sanjon Keepers to Hom with the request from the Boarhead alliance, in the hopes that such travel would give her time to reflect, and teach her that opinions have their place and time to be expressed. So far, the experiment in patience has been an utter failure.

Highlights: Free spirited, opinionated, tactless

Attributes: AGI -1, BLD -1, CRE +2, KNO +2, PER +1, PSY +1, WIL +1, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 20, UD , AD

Skills: Camouflage 1/+2, Survival 1/+2, Tinker 2/+2, Swimming 3/0, Water Navigation 2/+2, Read/Write Keeper 1/+2, Speak Squat 1/+2, Techlore (Earth Sciences) 1/+2, Techlore (Mechanics) 1/+2, Boating 3/+1, Notice 1/+1, Technosmithing (Jury Rig) 2/+2

KOLERIS IV'CHET

The Koleris of Capal are powerful, angry, and arrogant. As a result they fight offensively, relying on their bestial rage and raw power to overcome their enemies. Though they are tough opponents, they are at a significant disadvantage against enemies who think tactically and are able to withstand their first mad rush or their corrupting atmosphere. As a result Weavers are encouraged to give a +2 to the Tactics rolls of any Character trying to devise a defensive counter strategy against the Iv'chet.

Attributes: AGI +2, BLD +2, CRE -2, FIT +3, KNO -1, PER +1, PSY -1, WIL +2, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 40, UD/AD 10.

Skills: Combat Sense 3/+1, Dodge 3/+2, Hand-to-Hand 3/+2, Intimidate 3/+2, Melee 3/+2, Throwing 2/+2, Sundering 2 (The Shattering or Exsanguination).

Equipment: Armor or Tough Hide (AR 10), Two Handed Weapon - Great Sword, Axe, or Flail (AD +12 to AD +15)

SHIELD-WALL SERFS

The creation of a Shield-Wall is a horrid operation in which the minds of between one and three dozen Serfs are bound together and then stripped of any purpose other than the directive of group combat. The Serfs' bodies are modified, with huge shields and the massive muscles needed to use them added to, and replacing, the right arm of every Serf. The Serfs are then all armed with long spears, and have group shield wall and phalanx tactics burned into their minds. The result is that all Shield-Wall Serfs always know their exact position in relation to every other member of their wall, never panic, and never lose formation.

In combat the Shield-Wall Serfs fight as a perfect unit. They form into ranks, shields outwards and spears forward. In perfect unison most of the Serfs in a wall will use their spears to keep the enemy at bay (using the Keep at Bay maneuver, **Tribe 8 Companion** page 105), while one or two will then use the cover provided by the wall to make a heavy blow (Heavy Blow maneuver, **Tribe 8 Companion**, page 105 — save that there is no defense penalty due to the protection of the rest of the shield wall). The group fights patiently and methodically, grinding down opponents rather than going for a quick kill.

Highlights: Patient, Coordinated, Singular Mind.

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +2, CRE -2, FIT +2, INF -3, WIL +2, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 40, AD 10.

Skills: Combat Sense 2/0, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 1/+1, Melee 3/+1, Notice 1/0, Tactics 2/-2.

Special: Shield-Wall Serfs always attack in groups of at least 1 dozen. If reduced to less than that number the remaining Serfs will retreat and attempt to join the nearest Shield-Wall. When fighting in a group, Shield-Wall Serfs gain a +2 to all Combat Sense and Tactics rolls.

Weapons and Armor: Scales and Chitin (AR 12), Long Spears (x12), Metal Tower Shields (+3 parry, x5, AR 20)



KOLERIS LORD

The incarnation of rage and anger, the fury of the Z'bri and the reigning power in Capal, Beasts of the Koleris House are violent and aggressive. Bursting boils and countless wounds cover their bodies, shifting and changing, reabsorbed and bursting anew with every movement. The Koleris Lords exude anger and rage to a point where no human can stand their ground and be untouched by the wall of pure emotion that rolls from this dark creatures.

Attributes: AGI +4, BLD +2, FIT +1, INF +3, PER +1, WIL +3, STA 40, UD 8, AD 8

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+4, Athletics 3/+1, Combat Sense 3/+1, Dodge 3/+4, Hand-to-Hand 3/+4, Melee 3/+4, Notice 2/+2, Tactics 2/0, Sundering (The Shattering, Exsanguination, Holding, The Burning) 4

MELANIS LORD

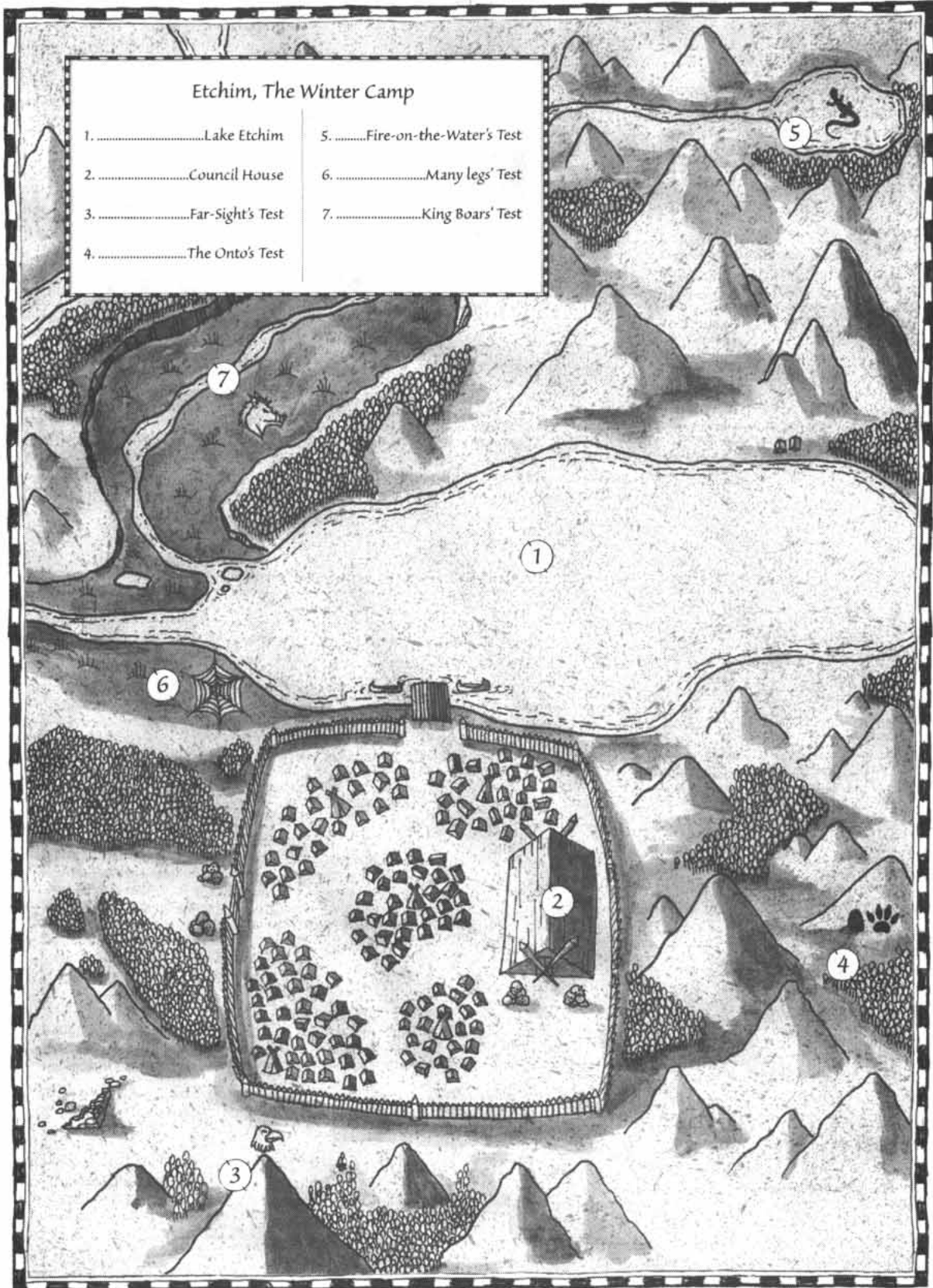
Fascinated by knowledge and understanding, the reclusive Melanis of Capal have welcomed their surviving brothers from Vimary with open arms, more for the knowledge of the Fatimas they possess than anything else. They spend their time in foul experiments, creating vast war machines and defenses to protect their homes from the war they know must soon come to their own doors.

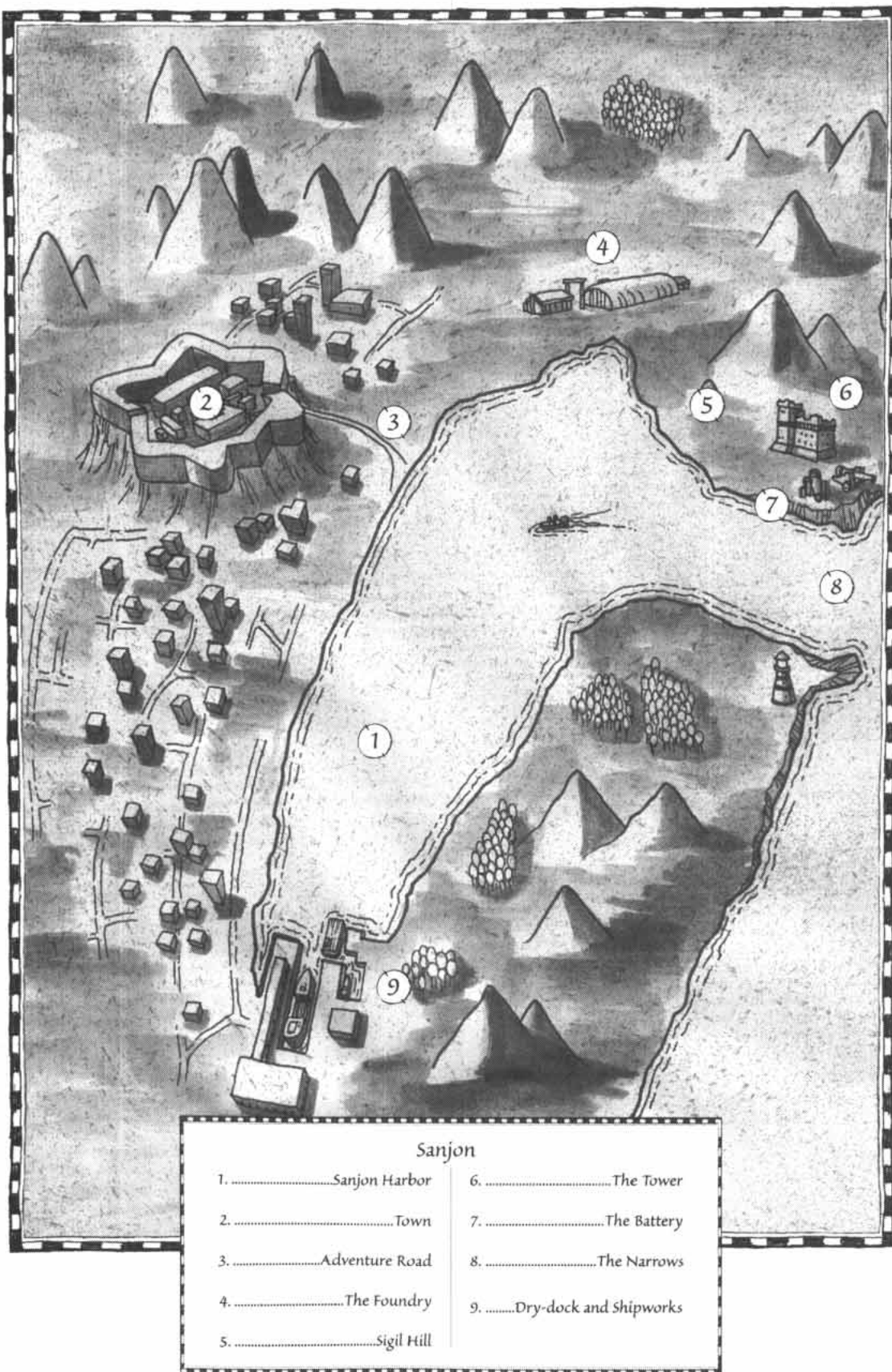
Attributes: AGI -1, BLD -1, CRE +3, INF +1, KNO +4, PER +2, PSY +4, IL +1, STA 30, UD 3, AD 2

Skills: Craft (choose one) 3/+3, Dreaming 2/+4, Etiquette (Capal) 2/+1, Herbalism 2/+4, Lore (pick three) 2/+4, Notice 2/+2, Read/Write (pick one) 2/+4, Ritual 3/+4, Teaching 2/+2, Sundering (Animation, Chaining, Inspiration, Shaping) 3











TRIBE 8

NEW YEAR'S TRIBE

Tribe 8 enters its second year with a bang in Children of Lilith, but there's lots more stuff out now or on the horizon. Tribe 8 continues to be one of the most exciting game lines in the industry. Don't miss out!

TRIBE 8 PRODUCTS

Weaver's Screen and Assistant

DP9-802; 48 pages + 2-panel screen; \$18.95; AVAILABLE NOW

The Weaver's Assistant includes detailed advice on creating and running a cycle, a fully detailed quest to start things off, outlines of several subsequent quests (forming a four part mini-cycle), statistics for useful Non-Player Characters and several game aids. The Weaver's Assistant also comes packaged with the Tribe 8 Weaver's Screen, a full-color three-fold screen featuring gorgeous artwork on one side and all the useful game tables on the other.

Vimary Sourcebook

DP9-803; 144 pages; \$22.95; AVAILABLE NOW

The Vimary Sourcebook is the core supplement for the entire Tribe 8 game line. It details the full scope of the game's base setting, and provides countless ideas and resources for quests and cycles. It provides full coverage of history, prominent characters and areas, including tribal lands, Hom, the mysterious Rust Wastes and the dreaded H'l Kar, home of the Z'bri (with over a dozen evocative maps).

Tribe 8 Companion

DP9-805; 112 pages; \$19.95; AVAILABLE NOW

• The Tribe 8 Companion (DP9-805): The perfect complement to the T8 Rulebook. The Companion includes source material on Keepers, Joshua, Mary and Tribal Quest Circles, along with advanced rules, magical artifacts and a complete scenario.

Adrift on the River of Dream

DP9-820, 144 pages, \$24.95 AVAILABLE NOW

The River of Dream unites and divides the two planes of reality, its waters flowing through both the world of the physical and the world of spirit. The River is the place where amazing things happen, where the world as we know it begins to melt away. Adrift on the River of Dream is a comprehensive book covering all aspects of the River of Dream, from working Synthesis to the Spirits who wander the dream-realms; extensive advice for Weavers completes this indispensable sourcebook.

UPCOMING PRODUCTS

• CAPAL: DP9-822, 128 pages, \$22.95; AVAILABLE IN FEBRUARY 2002. The sourcebook for the new age of the Nation, Capal is the definitive resource for the second city of Joshua's prophecy. Learn about the Nation of the Fall, the rise of the New Bloods and the twisted lands formerly held by the monstrous Z'bri. The Eighth Tribe have begun to rebuild the world in their own image, but their pride can only lead to a troubled future.

• WORD OF THE KEEPERS: DP9-824, 96 pages, \$19.95; AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER 2002. Enigmatic and reclusive, the Keepers are those who hid themselves away during the Fall of the World Before, and now devote themselves to the preservation and recreation of ancient technology. Holding fast to history, they are the only surviving link between the Tribes and the world of their ancestors. Word of the Keepers is both a Sourcebook and a Player's handbook for using and playing members of this important group.

On-Line Support

Still can't get enough T8? Check out the Dream Pod 9 Funhouse at <http://www.dp9.com/funhouse/> for scenarios, legends and other articles relating to T8.

For more information on Tribe 8, visit Dream Pod 9's web site at www.dp9.com.