



# IN THE EMPEROR'S SECRET SERVICE

## *Legacy of Shadow for Shadow of the Demon Lord*

That the Kalasans have maintained the Empire for nearly one thousand years is no small achievement. Before them, other empires rose and fell, torn apart from within or overrun by invaders. Through sheer force of will and overwhelming military strength, the Empire held together a variety of disparate and often clashing cultures from one side of the continent to the other. From the dour and rugged landholders scattered across the Northern Reach, to the crusading zealots of the Holy Kingdom, and the cynical, hard-bitten soldiers guarding the March Lands, the Empire kept itself together throughout outbreaks of plague, civil uprisings, pirate attacks, conspiracies, corrupt and incompetent emperors, and countless other threats, always able to find some way to ensure the rule of law remained preserved and order maintained—often at a high cost—which has allowed this vast and powerful nation to exist as long as it has.

While many think the strength of the Empire has been largely dependent upon the orc soldiers who, until their recent bloody rebellion in the imperial capital of Caecras, enforced the emperor's will, some believe otherwise. Neither the orcs, nor the emperors, could

### ~CREDITS~

#### WRITING AND DESIGN:

JUSSI MARTTILA

#### ADDITIONAL DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, AND ART DIRECTION:

ROBERT J. SCHWALB

EDITING: TOM CADORETTE

PROOFREADING: JAY SPIGHT

LAYOUT: KARA HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATIONS: BIAGIO D'ALESSANDRO

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SCHWALB ENTERTAINMENT, LLC



PO Box #12548, Murfreesboro, TN 37129  
info@schwalbentertainment.com  
www.schwalbentertainment.com



have maintained this great nation without the secret efforts of the clandestine spy network known as the Compact. Founded centuries ago to ensure the health of the state by ferreting out and eliminating potential threats before they could materialize, the Compact—hidden and mysterious—has been a stabilizing force for the Empire, its spies and agents spread throughout all of Rûl.

For as long as the Empire has existed, it has engaged in wars of conquest and expansion against lands on its borders, defensive wars against invading beastmen, jotun raiders, and undead, as well as the bloody suppression of internal dissent and uprisings. This near-constant state of violence due to seemingly never-ending threats from without and within has forced the Empire to maintain its military superiority so that it could crush any threat it faced.

Despite the nation's might, it often found itself caught unprepared, its resources stretched, and operating with false information gained from unreliable sources. So even though the Empire would eventually triumph, its victories came at a terrible price of blood and treasure, expenditures Emperor Myran, who ruled six hundred years ago, grew tired of having to pay.

### LEGACY OF SHADOW

The *Legacy of Shadow* series explores the secrets of the continent of Rûl, presenting people, organizations, and lands that have, for one reason or another, escaped the attention of most people. Given the secretive nature of these topics, whether or not you introduce them into your *Shadow of the Demon Lord* games is entirely up to you. The Compact, described in these pages, might be present in your game, or not, as you decide.

Fed up with being blindsided by his enemies, Myran ordered the creation of a secret service to defend against spies, discover and root out unseen threats, and gather information about the Empire's enemies, whether actual or potential. Initially lacking the trained human personnel to make this happen quickly, Duke Iren, the man tasked with creating the service, found the means to carry out his patron's orders in an unexpected place: the criminal underworld.

For years, Red's Brethren had been a problem for Caecras. A criminal organization with incredible reach, connected to other groups as far away as the Nine Cities, Red's Brethren had a hand in just about every scam, conspiracy, and racket running in the imperial capital, and throughout the Empire as well. Through his on-and-off efforts to wipe out the organization, with no real success, Iren had developed several relationships with various members among

the Brethren, adversarial or otherwise. Strangely enough, he established a certain rapport with the Brethren's leader, Harry the Red, despite—or perhaps because of—their long duel over the years. Every so often, one or the other would ask for a temporary truce in order to meet and share a drink, usually to resolve matters of common interest or exchange prisoners, or even pass along a bit of information unrelated to their war that the other might find interesting or useful.

The Duke realized that the Red Brethren had everything he needed to create the secret service the emperor demanded. Knowing Harry the Red eventually hoped to shift toward legitimate undertakings at some point, Iren called for one of their truce meetings and made him an offer. In exchange for a title and lands, Harry would put the Brethren at the Empire's disposal. Harry and Iren would run the operation jointly, with Harry handling the clandestine branch and Iren running the uniformed service. Seeing both profit and promise in the deal, Harry agreed to the terms and the organization known as the Compact was born.

Over the next centuries, the Compact's influence and role in the Empire waxed and waned. Some emperors, out of a desire to maintain their own deniability, or simply from a lack of interest in the secret service's operations, distanced themselves from the organization. Other emperors sought to gleefully exploit the power the Service offered, using the Compact to spy on their enemies, internal and external, and to conduct operations of dubious legality on their behalf to advance their personal agendas. From these early experiences, the Compact formed its own ethos: stay out of court politics, fight for the Empire in peace as in war, and never undertake any irreversible actions—usually assassinations—that weren't absolutely necessary.

Those emperors who tried to turn the Compact into an instrument of terror found that the organization had placed many safeguards between themselves and their overly ambitious leaders. The Compact did its best to remain an inconspicuous part of the military, and certainly was not a branch where glory could be found or even sought.

After several generations of emperors, the Compact eventually became a shadow institution largely forgotten by the upper strata of the imperial court, drawing most of its agents from the lesser nobility and exceptional commoners. Working out of anonymous locations within the Empire and out of embassies and safe houses abroad, they had little connection to the larger Imperial army organization, instead feeding information through their own network, up the contact chain to the Service's headquarters, based in an old manor house just outside Caecras.



These reports might or might not find their way to the Alabaster Throne as the Compact's command staff saw fit.

Drudge's orc uprising devastated Caecras and effectively toppled the Empire. Despite the massive amounts of death and destruction, the Compact was prepared, with contingency plans that had been in place for centuries, intended for any event in which the capital fell. As the orcs rampaged through the city, pillaging it as they massacred most of its human population, the Compact secretly evacuated their headquarters and archives to a hidden refuge: an old, "abandoned" temple just outside of the small town of Ballard in the Northern Reach, far from the fires raging throughout the Caecras region, and it is here the Service now works to regroup and rebuild.

With the death of the Emperor, and the subsequent collapse of unity among the Imperial provinces, the present disposition of the Compact's overall mission is uncertain. In the past, they have answered either directly to the Emperor, an Imperial minister, or even the Supreme Commander of the Imperial Army. As far as the Service's command staff can tell, there is no one left who has any authority over them or to whom they wish to pledge their support—and they certainly have no interest in swearing fealty to the orc king Drudge, who has declared himself the new Emperor. In fact, that's quite the opposite.

For the commanders of the Compact, despite the uncertainty of their fealty, their current objective remains very simple: bring down the usurper Drudge by any means possible. What might happen afterward with regard to succession to the Alabaster Throne is the concern of other people, although there are a few highly placed officers within the service harboring secret desires to play kingmaker to those who will likely vie to become Emperor once order is restored.

## STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Apart from staff functions at various Compact headquarters, there are two major branches of the service: the Imperial Stewards and the Agents Itinerant. The Stewards handle all functions where members appear as military officers in uniform, such as liaison duties with various armies in the field and attaché duties in embassies, managing the Emperor's affairs and interests as openly designated agents on his behalf.

The Agents Itinerant, the clandestine branch, appear mostly in civilian dress, handling discreet affairs and covert operations, answering directly to the command staff of the Compact. Lately the organization has started recruiting civilians into the

ranks of the Agents Itinerant, often straight out of refugee camps, as the chaotic times require more personnel than the Compact has ever needed before.

In addition to those directly employed by the service, there is also a category of operatives called the Candles: individuals who are contracted from time to time to carry out assigned tasks and missions for the Service, without being considered regular members of the organization itself. Like the item for which they are named, they are usually used to gain information in areas where the Compact's ability to see or act is limited—and once they are used up, they are often discarded. Usually, Candles are compensated by the Compact in some way for their services, but there are a few who have been blackmailed or even pressganged into service against their will.

Candles are, in many cases, in great danger of being killed if discovered, especially abroad, since they lack the protection that official military attachés of the local Imperial embassy possess, nor would any Imperial official claim any association with them even if they were discovered—in Service parlance, such a Candle has essentially been "snuffed out." Even within the Empire, there are organizations, such as the Cult of the New God, that do not appreciate conflicting loyalties, and remain suspicious of any meddling in their affairs by the Emperor's spies, and Candles are often the best assets the Compact has in dealing with these groups.

Also worthy of mention is the group of agents responsible for internal security, officially called the Wardens, but most often referred to simply as "the Eyes." While the Compact is responsible for rooting out traitors within the military, the Eyes are responsible for policing the Compact itself. The Eyes are overseen by the High Commander's deputy, with no other command staff having any authority over them. Full cooperation is expected from anyone they investigate; failure to comply is punished by immediate dismissal from the Compact, even if found innocent. Treason is punishable by summary execution and an unmarked grave.

All the information collected by the service goes into the Central Archive, which is now located just outside of the town of Ballard, inside an old run-down temple the organization appropriated. The Central Archive was most commonly known within the Service as the "Stacks," due to the innumerable, piles, reams, and sheaves of unbound documents and letters—albeit all meticulously indexed and catalogued—contained therein. The Stacks hold a multitude of information about various subjects the Service has investigated over the years: the personal lives of nobles, the sexual habits of foreign dignitaries, magical research, demonic cults, and so on.



Unfortunately, because the Stacks are currently so disorganized after their hasty evacuation to the Northern Reach, it has been extremely difficult to find anything quickly in them. While they are almost entirely intact, the Service's archivists are busy reconstructing the complex indexing system, but the nature of the work is necessarily slow.

Most of the staff, especially at the higher ranks, are human. Orcs, who would be privy to the horrors subjected to their kind by dint of their access to secret information, would find themselves immediately compromised on learning this information. For this reason, the Compact, until now, has never recruited orcs to serve as agents. Some adventurous halflings and some more socially acceptable goblins have found employment in the Service, too. Goblins don't have many career opportunities in polite society, but the Compact has always been willing to accommodate them since goblins live all over Rûl and most humans ignore them, which makes them nearly perfect spies.

### THE COMPACT BADGE

The undercover agents of the Compact inside the Empire often carry a badge of office that identifies them as members of the Service but leave it behind if it could potentially endanger them. The badge shows the branch insignia of the Secret Service: crossed telescopes over a dagger, with an identifying number assigned to a particular agent. The Compact frequently issues new badges and destroys old ones so they cannot be tracked or compromised in any way. The Internal Service Unit agents carry a similar badge, but one with an eye above and below the telescopes.

## IN THE OPEN, BEHIND THE SCENES

The Compact has always operated both out in the open and behind the scenes. Imperial Army units have had liaison officers from the Steward branch on hand to obtain information about the enemy, to hunt down spies and traitors, and carry out other duties of a similar nature. Likewise, Imperial embassies in other states tend to have military attachés belonging to the Compact, operating out in the open and in uniform. However, since many threats the organization faces operate in secret, so does the Compact through its Agents Itinerant. Many of these Agents hold some military rank but rarely if ever wear a uniform, unless specifically working undercover inside a military unit to investigate and root out suspected corruption or treason.

One of the more legally interesting aspects of the Compact is that it largely operates entirely outside

Imperial law. Emperor Myran chose not to define the Compact's mandate in law, which has allowed the organization an incredible amount of autonomy over the centuries. The Compact always claims, with a straight face, that they do nothing outside the law, which might or might not be true, depending on how narrow one chooses to argue the point.

For the Compact, a frequent motto is "a bloodless venture is a quiet venture, and a quiet venture is a successful venture." A colonel who has been offered coin by foreign rivals in exchange for passing along secret information might get an unexpected but mostly polite visit from a Steward, who kindly reminds them of the possible repercussions of treason—along with an implied threat that there will not be a second warning. Likewise, various spies working for foreign nations tend to get warned off initially, and if they cease their activities, nothing bad typically happens to them. Other measures might be sterner, if still shy of the ultimate penalty; a foreign merchant aiding in espionage against the Empire might suddenly have all their imports stuck in customs and all their funds confiscated on a technicality. A noble in the Imperial court who has been too friendly with foreign agents might have their dirty laundry revealed to the court by their bitterest rival, who mysteriously received the compromising information from an anonymous source.

Foreign operations also strive to be as bloodless as domestic operations. An agent disguised as a merchant might quietly make tallies of how much food a border garrison buys so the Compact can estimate if the foreign nation is preparing an invasion. A military attaché in one of the port cities of the Confederacy of the Nine might be tasked with tracking the comings and goings of various ships, or to simply keep tabs on the number of warships currently in port.

One should not mistake these approaches for weakness or skittishness at the thought of violence—the Compact simply believes it is easier to achieve its aims without unnecessary bloodshed. When it's necessary, however, the Compact is unrelentingly swift and utterly ruthless in doing whatever it takes to resolve a problem. If crucial information can't be gained in any way, Compact agents will track down, waylay, and murder a courier in order to obtain whatever messages they are carrying. The aforementioned colonel previously warned about selling information to hostile interests who did so anyway would most likely be quietly kidnapped in the dark of night, carried out of town into a nearby empty field with a bag tied around his head, informed that he had been tried in a military tribunal in absentia and found guilty, and sentenced to death. The next morning, he would be found dead in the field, his throat slit and his tongue removed. The Compact



also has little compunction in threatening someone's family, and carrying out those threats if needed, in order to safeguard Imperial interests—but, again, will undertake these actions only if there are no other options.

One standing order since the fall of Caecras is that any Steward, Agent, or Candle who sides with the orc uprising or any of the breakaway provinces are to be immediately eliminated with extreme prejudice, no questions asked, no quarter offered. The High Commander is extremely worried about certain officers who have disappeared in the last months, and has decided they are better off eliminated if there is any questions about their loyalty, if doing so would stop damaging information from falling into the hands of Drudge, or any of the rulers of the provinces who have declared independence from the Empire.

#### THE COMPACT AND THE BLACK HAND

When it comes to assassinations, the Compact has never been as good as the Black Hand. At times, the organization has either clashed with the Black Hand or has even hired them. Both organizations realize it is no one's interest to engage in conflict, because it would be a costly affair for both, and neither would gain anything from it. So, whenever possible, both organizations keep a polite distance from each other's operations. Of course, as the Empire burns, there's no telling if this "arrangement" will last.

## PERSONALITIES

Of the many men and women who serve in the Compact, three figures stand out from the rest.

### COLONEL BIRGER, HIGH COMMANDER OF THE COMPACT

A minor noble from an impoverished family, Mikken Birger joined the Compact as a young man and has since enjoyed a distinguished career as an agent both in the field and out. His successes eventually led to his appointment to the post of High Commander of the Compact, a position given to him by Antimony, father to Eras IX. Birger had worked closely with the old emperor, but found his heir completely lacking in any of the essential qualities of leadership to be anything more than a seat-warmer for the next-in-line. For this reason, Birger kept much from the Alabaster Throne, keeping the Service at arm's length from the fickle and capricious ruler. Birger had planned to retire, passing along the responsibilities to a trusted underling, but the uprising and the subsequent evacuation of the

headquarters for the Northern Reach made that decision impossible. Thus, Colonel Birger remains at the head of the agency, where he has resigned himself to remain until the Empire's affairs can be put back in order.

Birger holds himself accountable for the uprising. Although he had no hand in the Empire's undoing, he believes he did not do enough to prevent the tragedy from happening. He opposed the treatment of "retired" orc soldiers, arguing they deserved better than the horrid death they got, but he eventually learned to keep his disgust to himself when his complaints fell on deaf ears and his vocal opposition began to put his own position into jeopardy.

So, when the orcs finally rebelled, Birger was prepared and had plans in place for this eventuality, able to get his people out with few casualties. Since then, Birger has opened the Compact up to orc recruits, though he and his underlings remain very mindful of the natural loyalties orcs might have to Drudge and thus screen them carefully before ushering them into positions greater than Candles.

Unlike many other officers in the military, Birger had no designs to improve his station beyond what he has already attained. He is loyal to the Empire and wishes to see it restored, and has made his distaste for those provinces who have declared independence well known. He would be happiest, though, if old Horus, the dead Emperor's uncle, would march upon Drudge from the Borderlands of Tear and claim the throne—at least until a credible (and younger) successor to him could be found. Otherwise, whoever sits on the Alabaster Throne after Drudge matters little to him, so long as the Empire is restored and made whole again.

Birger has resigned himself to the fact that he will spend the remainder of his life fighting to restore the Empire but he does not relish the idea. He would have rather retired to his farm outside Caecras and tended his apple orchards, but duty and loyalty compelled him to see the damage undone and his nation saved.





An unimposing figure, Birger is slightly overweight, balding, and, all in all, an unremarkable man with round features and intelligent eyes. Behind his unimposing looks, however, hides a sharp intellect and complete ruthlessness.

## MAJOR SIMMONS, CHIEF OF AGENTS

One of the rare clockworks to belong to the Compact, Major Simmons joined the organization a few years ago, quickly climbing the ranks due to her considerable skill at arms and organization. Now, as the Deputy Commander, she manages the Wardens, aka “the Eyes.” Approachable and capable, she has earned the loyalty of her agents by cutting through the bureaucracy and making sure they always have what they need to complete their missions. As the head of internal security, Simmons has to personally sign off on every operation the Eyes undertake. Over the years, this work has had an effect on her, making her merciless and inflexible when it comes to ferreting out any suspected treasonous members in the organization.

## BISHOP FRANCIS, CANDLE

When the Compact settled in the Northern Reach, Bishop Francis caught wind of the Service’s arrival and played a key role in getting them settled. Francis was never a great priest, and never will be, and would probably say he doesn’t even believe in the New God, if that wouldn’t cost him his position and possibly his life. His flaws are numerous: he is an alcoholic, an adulterer, and prefers the company of courtesans. He has succeeded despite himself due to his rather significant political contacts and his competence in managing the Cult of the New God in the Northern Reach, which has traditionally been considered a difficult and challenging region for any efforts made to spread the faith.

The reason he works with the Compact is simple. While most true believers would not prefer to say it out loud, the Cult is overstretched and has found it difficult to maintain its tenuous hold in the Northern Reach. While the Cult has enjoyed great success in making converts in the more civilized east, the west remains out of reach and the people living there cling hard to the Old Faith. Some of their old ways are harmless, at least in Francis’s somewhat jaded eyes, but others are dark, dangerous and forbidden, and the Inquisition frequently can’t tell them apart. Plus, the less that Francis has to deal with the Inquisition, who might pry into his own affairs, the better. So, it’s better

to tip off the Compact to deal with these dangerous elements without dragging the faith deeper into a quagmire, especially with the orc armies mustering on the Holy Kingdom’s borders.

The bishop looks more like a longshoreman than a clergyman. He is tall and has significant muscles hiding behind his flab. He shaves himself bald and sports a huge, red handlebar moustache. He spends most of his nights out in the slums of Sixton, where he secretly owns several apartments in discreet locations, for the conduct of his various activities and entertainments. These apartments are frequent meeting spots for Service agents, since they are hidden from scrutiny by a collective disinterest in the bishop’s well known nightly vices.

## JOINING THE COMPACT

The Compact is always looking for new agents, especially those with unusual skills and abilities who could be of service to the organization’s larger objectives. For this reason, the characters might attract the Compact’s attention and become Candles or even fully employed Agents, depending on how they acquit themselves on assigned missions. Characters who serve the Compact as Candles might be called to provide information to their handlers or carry out certain tasks. Once they prove themselves useful over the course of several assignments, Candles are sometimes invited to become Agents. Those who do will receive a modest stipend enabling them to afford a comfortable lifestyle and whatever materials they might need to complete their missions.

Characters belonging to the Compact might benefit from taking the Agent expert path described in *Kingdom of God*.

If the players create a new group of characters with ties to the Compact, they can use the following tables to come up with how they were recruited and what they gained upon signing on.

### COMPACT BACKGROUND

| d6 | Background   |
|----|--|
| 1  | You were recruited from a refugee camp.  |
| 2  | You were a soldier whose unit was decimated by the orc uprising. The Compact recruited you.        |
| 3  | You were a mercenary hired by the Compact before, and now you have been offered a permanent place. |
| 4  | For past favors, you were given a new identity and a position in the Service.                      |
| 5  | Your family has deep ties to the Compact and you are the latest of them to join.                   |
| 6  | An idealist, you believe working for the Service is the best way to serve the Empire.              |



## COMPACT RESOURCES

| d6 | Resource   |
|----|--|
| 1  | A safehouse in the slums, above a tanner's shop.                         |
| 2  | A bag full of false identity papers.                                     |
| 3  | A normal messenger bag with a hidden compartment that holds a pistol.    |
| 4  | Compromising information for extorting a noble.                          |
| 5  | Plans to escape safely.  |
| 6  | Maps for infiltrating a place that is normally impossible to infiltrate. |

## COMPACT MISSIONS

Whether the characters are Agents, Candles, or just occasional allies with the Compact, you can use the following ideas to help you build adventures involving the organization.

### LOST SUPPLY LINES

Travelers have been disappearing infrequently on a quiet stretch of a highway, but local patrols have seen nothing nor have they found any trace of the disappeared. This route is crucial to the Compact as agents use it to move supplies and information to their headquarters-in-exile in Ballard. A group recruited to deal with this problem discovers that the people in a nearby village live under a curse that turns them into bizarre monsters who hunt prey along that road.

### STRANGE BEHAVIOR

A captain from a cavalry regiment has been seen leaving his barracks at night. Every time, he heads outside town and up into the desolate hills nearby. Who is he meeting and what does he do there? Is this a simple affair or something far darker?

### LOST ARCHIVES

A case of files from the Compact's Central Archive was somehow lost during the evacuation from Caecras. The case contains a great deal of sensitive information that cannot be allowed to fall into the wrong hands. They must be found before Drudge's spies, rival agents from the breakaway provinces, or mercenary spies from the Confederacy get their hands on them.

### DOOMSDAY WEAPON

Archaeologists unearth a terrible weapon in the Freeholds of Nar. Smugglers are trying to bring it into the Empire, but knowledge of the weapon has reached dangerous elements in Old Edene who would

use it to liberate their lands from what they see as the oppressors. For this reason, the Compact has deemed it imperative that the weapon never reach Old Edene and moves to both destroy the weapon and eliminate those smuggling it.

### TURNCOAT

The Compact discovered that one of Drudge's generals has had a change of heart and is willing to trade secrets for safe passage out of Caecras. The characters have to infiltrate the war-torn countryside and rescue the valuable asset.

### BEHEAD THE SNAKE

With war imminent and potentially disastrous, the Compact decides to assassinate Drudge. The characters are sent into the heart of Caecras to kill the orc king before war breaks out. Complicating the matter is the Black Hand, who, while carrying out a series of contracts with Drudge to eliminate all the human rulers opposing him, has become aware of the Compact's plans...

## COMPACT COMPLICATIONS

Although the Compact presents itself as a force for stability, if not outright good, the characters could quite easily cross paths with them as antagonists. You can use the following table to quickly generate reasons for the characters to run afoul of the Service.

### COMPACT COMPLICATIONS

| d20   | Complication  |
|-------|---|
| 1-2   | Someone you killed was a Compact Candle.  |
| 3-4   | Extremely volatile information has fallen into your hands and the Compact wants it.                   |
| 5-6   | The Compact has mistaken you for someone else.  |
| 7-8   | Someone has mistaken you for a Compact Agent.   |
| 9-10  | Whoever is paying you committed treason and is under investigation by the Compact.                    |
| 11-12 | The people you were hired to work against are in fact members of the Compact.                         |
| 13-14 | The Compact is extorting you to get you to act against your own interest.                             |
| 15-16 | The Compact does not want you to complete whatever task you have at hand for their own reasons.       |
| 17-18 | An ally has served as a spy for a foreign nation and the Compact is moving to assassinate him or her. |
| 19-20 | The Compact believes you are a threat because of recent actions you have undertaken.                  |