

Symbaroum



Adventure Pack 3

TWO ADVENTURES FOR SYMBAROUM

Adventure Pack 3

JÄRRINGEN:

Martin Grip, Mattias Johnsson,
Mattias Lilja

AUTHOR:

Mattias Johnsson

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Johan Nohr
Mattias Johnsson

EDITOR:

Mattias Lilja

ADDITIONAL ART:

Aline Gladh

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Martin Grip

PROOFREADING:

Brandon Bowling
Niklas Lundmark

MAPS:

Lars Strömqvist

AN EXTRA WARM THANKS TO:

Paul Baldowski, Jocke Bergström, Martin Englund, Aline Gladh, Ulrika Haake, Garry Harper, Andreas Marklund, John Marron, Johan Normark, Kina Nyman, Krister Persson, Pelle Pettersson, Isak Ström, Sigita Varniené, and our friends at Rollspel.nu

Symbaoum



JÄRRINGEN

VERSION:

1.00

ISBN:

978-91-87915-47-5

COPYRIGHT:

Nya Järnringen AB 2018

Thus spoke Aroaleta

*... and the people bowed to different gods,
with different names and different figures,
with different tones and different legacies,
with different tastes for style and shape.*

*The People fought to honor the gods,
with similar spite and similar weapons,
with similar goals and similar methods,
with similar love and similar hate.*

*But none of the gods acknowledged the people,
not the mother, nor the child,
not the guard with axe, with spear.
They only spoke to King and Priest.*



THE HOWLING OF DAMNED GODS

1	INTRODUCTION	8
	Background.....	8
	The Player Characters	10
	The Adventure Structure	11
2	PRIOS PASS	13
	Adventure Locations	15
3	ACT I: SILENT NIGHT	19
	Game Opening	19
	Outbreak	20
4	ACT II: OUT OF THE ASHES	22
	Investigations	22
	Into the Mountains.....	26
5	ACT III: THE NIGHT LADY	32
	The Bandit Camp.....	32
	Strategies	36
	Face to Face	37
	Aftermath	38



WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE

6	INTRODUCTION	42
	Background.....	42
	The Player Characters	45
	The Structure of the Adventure	47
7	RAVENIA	49
	Overview.....	49
	Adventure Locations	52
8	ACT I: SHADOWS OF THE FLAME	55
	Game Opening	55
	Murders & Burglary	58
	The Young Gods' Chapel	61
9	ACT II: THE HERETIC'S PLEA	66
	Missing	66
	Kidnapped.....	71
10	ACT III: LOVED BY THE SUN	74
	Preparations	74
	Strategies	77
	Aftermath	80



APPENDIX

11	APPENDIX	82
	New Rules	82
	The Young Gods	83
	Handouts.....	88
	Map: Prios Pass	90
	Map: Ravenia	92

The Fight for the Sun God...

... IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE to the adventures in this book. Ever since the Exaltation, when Prios became the One, the Ambrian people have been divided between the Curia Loyalists who adhere to the commands of the Lawgiver, and the Reformists who want to revive the Sun God's former identity, the Lifegiver. This schism has many different expressions in today's Ambria; expressions which grow more and more violent as the desperation of those involved increases.

AT ITS CORE, *The Howling of Damned Gods* is about the relocation of a convicted heretic, from a prison in old Alberetor to the dungeons beneath Templewall. The heretic, Mother Elsana, is one of the priests who refused to accept the Exaltation and the dictate outlawing the other deities in the pantheon of the Young Gods. Willingly or not, the characters get involved in the tense situation which arises when other factions try to get their hands on Elsana, to liberate or execute her.

The second adventure takes place in Ravenia and is called *What's Bred in the Bone*. What starts off as a murder inquiry is soon revealed to have clear connections to the conflict between the Curia and the Reformists. At the center of the story is young Duke Ynedar, who has performed an overly drastic act in the name of the Reformists. When the characters finally come to grips with the situation, and

understand who is about to catch up to the ignorant noble, they will face a difficult choice - will they submit the heretical Duke to the Sun God's justice, or come to his defense against the Knights of Dead Prios, who are determined to cleanse Ravenia of the darkness spawned by the Eternal Night?

The player characters are given ample reason to engage in the two adventures. However, the suggestions presented in the book should be regarded as nothing more than inspiration, as it is important that each Game Master adapts the stories to his or her particular gaming group. Just like in other roleplaying games, the motivation may come from wanting to help the needy or gain glory, but the incentive for characters in *Symbaroum* can also be rooted in faith, morals or loyalty to various factions. How to handle this is not for us to dictate; in the end, *Symbaroum* is what you and your friends want it to be.





NIGHTTIME DESCENDS like a deep blue veil over the River Veloma and the village of Prios Pass. The snow no longer falls, the wind no longer blows, and a grim calm settles in the shadows of the Titans. Somewhere on the other side of the river is the refugee camp, occupied by Alberians hoping to be welcomed into Queen Korinthia's Promised Land.

Creaking and squeaking, the raft is reeled south across the flowing waters, toward the points of fiery light glimmering along the northern shore. The boatman grunts a brusque farewell as he pushes you up on the slushy pier. Now, all that remains is waiting and hoping – waiting in the shadows of the mountains and the towering cliff which raises Baroness Karolia Meleon's Keep high into the sky; hoping that the incoming caravan has not gotten stuck in the snow. Or worse.

Though you would rather not think about it, you have all heard accounts of what can happen on the journey across the Titans. Predators, bandits, even trolls and elves. Other tales warn of the infectious darkness which many travelers bring along from Alberetor, the diseased south, to the hopeful refugees at Prios Pass.



ADVENTURE 1:

THE HOWLING OF DAMNED GODS

Introduction

AT THE FOOT OF THE TITANS, near the headwaters of the River Veloma, lies Prios Pass. For almost two decades, the border crossing's restored stone bridge has been the gateway into Ambria. While the flood of refugees fleeing the south has diminished somewhat, the need to control their status grows ever greater as Alberetor darkens, blackens, and dies. Prios cannot protect or heal all his children, and the future looks particularly bleak for those who are branded enemies of the Sun God – in Queen Korinthia's realm, none one has more enemies, or more powerful ones, than the alleged heretic.

THE HOWLING OF *Damned Gods* is an adventure revolving around the Sun Church's attempt to relocate one of Alberetor's most notorious heretics – Elsana, once the Earthmother's high priestess – from her prison in Alberetor to the dungeons beneath the Templewall Cathedral. News of this attempt has reached a number of other factions: the Sun Knights want the heretic dead, the Sun Church Reformists wish to see her pardoned, and agents from the Realm of the Order want to free the prisoner and bring her to safety.

This initial chapter presents the adventure's background and course of events, and offers tips

on how the player characters might be drawn into the story. Then follows three chapters describing the acts of the adventure – a first one that sets everything in motion and gives the characters reason to delve deeper into what has happened; a second that describes investigations which might shed light on the mystery; and a third and final act in which the characters' position on a difficult issue determines who will stand between them and a happy ending.

Lastly, at the back of this book there is an appendix with new rules, an introduction to the Young Gods and a number of handouts.

Background

In order to really understand what is taking place at Prios Pass these early winter days, one must look to history. The events are deeply rooted in the barren soil of Alberetor and relate to what became known as the Exaltation (year –5), when the Sun God Prios was proclaimed the One and the Giver of Laws, to the detriment of the pantheon known as the Young Gods.

THE MAKING OF A HERETIC

Prios' exaltation did not go unchallenged. True, most people were indeed willing to obey Queen

Korinthia's decree, realizing that the power of the Sun God would be their greatest weapon in the war against the Lords of Darkness. But at the same time, many refused to abandon the faith of their ancestors – either out of devotion to one particular Young God, or because they worshipped the pantheon in its entirety and feared that the unrighteous exaltation of Prios would anger them all.

Within a month, thousands of people had left Alberetor and travelled west, where they

eventually established the Realm of the Order. Over the years more would follow, as they could no longer stand having to keep their religious practices secret. But there were some who stayed behind to defend their gods against the new and, as they saw it, distorted version of Prios – once the god of warmth, mercy, and all-embracing love. One of these was Mother Elsana, High Priestess of the Earthmother.

She refused to leave her temple in the capital, Kandoria, and for a time the authorities tolerated her behavior. Soon her open criticism and heretical exhortations became a problem, especially when Korinthia was captured and the need to unite against the darkness grew even stronger. At a public trial in the largest square in the city, Elsana was given a chance to see reason and repent. Instead, she made her loathing for the Lawgiver perfectly clear; she would not even say his name, calling him “*the False God of War*” and “*The Black Sun*.”

The crowd roared and called for the heretic to burn, but Abramelin, First Father at the time, did not want to make a martyr of her. Thus, he decided to show mercy: he sentenced her to imprisonment and ordered that, once a year at the summer solstice, she would be given a new chance to renounce her blasphemous delusions. Elsana was put behind bars about a year before the Victory, and has spent her days in the darkness of the dungeon ever since. A player character with the *Loremaster* ability knows Elsana’s name and that she is a heretic; with a successful *Cunning* test, he/she can also recall the aforementioned story.

A SYMBOL OF SIN

Kandoria was long ago devoured by the Gray Death which slowly turns Alberetor into an ashen wasteland, but people still linger in a few places, to prevent others from looting noble homes or destroying holy sites. Now, these too are abandoning their posts, one after the other, due to the lack of clean water and other necessities.

Some months ago, the Curia reluctantly decided it was time to leave Kandoria. The twenty or so heretics still held beneath the temple which before the Exaltation had been dedicated to the Executioner were all sentenced to cleansing by fire – save one. The First Father ordered that Elsana should be taken to Templewall and given yet another chance to repent; with the Templars’ departure from the Curia and the Queen’s growing efforts to distance herself from the church, the people had to be reminded of what awaits those who turn their backs on Prios’ radiance!

The task of bringing the heretic to the First Father’s stronghold fell upon a group of four black cloaks, led by Father Mogdas, who had all made the journey across the mountains on several occasions. The Queen was informed of the transport, but was for political reasons unwilling to publicly support or protect it, which meant that the operation had to be kept secret from known threats: the renegade Sun Knights who would love to see the heretic purged by holy fire; the leaders of the Realm of the Order who wish to free their martyr; and traitors within their own ranks who want to get their hands on Elsana for sinister political purposes.

But despite the secrecy, information about the operation leaked to the church’s enemies. When the adventure begins, the Templars, the Reformists, and agents of the Order are all present at Prios Pass, but have not yet been detected by the black cloaks who just arrived with their prisoner. The latter are the first to make a move in the fight for the heretical priestess.

THE AGENTS’ PLAN

Father Orun of the Executioner’s Order leads the two-man effort to free Elsana and bring her to safety. Thanks to a mole within the Twilight Friars’ organization, they have managed to obtain detailed information regarding the transportation of Elsana (see the handout on page 88).

Their plan is as simple as it is cruel: to provoke such a dangerous situation at the refugee camp that the guards escorting the prisoner must leave and seek shelter in the nearby monastery, and then stage an ambush by the road along with two fellow agents in the area. This will be accomplished by poisoning the soup which is being served at the camp, thereby turning one or more of the already blight-stricken refugees into raging abominations.

After Elsana has been freed, the three of them will lay low for a few days while the situation settles. Their hiding place is one of the rebel leader Maridja’s campsites just north of the border, secured in a negotiation between her and the head of the Order, the Theologist. Maridja, commonly known as the Ice Witch, has really nothing to gain from the agreement, except that it causes problems for the Ambrians.

THE TEMPLARS

The Knights of Dead Prios learned of the prison transport from a spy cell still operating in the old capital of Alberetor. While they lack details such as its destination and whether the Queen has approved it, they know that the prisoner is being transported

in an enclosed carriage and that the guards are posing as a master weaver and his apprentices.

Because of their secession from the Curia, the Templars cannot act openly in Ambria, even though many support their cause. Commander Iakobo Vearra has sent three young but bold and loyal knights to Prios Pass, disguised as Alberian refugees, with orders to slay the prisoner. What happens to them after the mission has been accomplished is of less importance – if they manage to escape with their lives, the pursuit of vengeance will simply continue somewhere else; if they are killed or captured by the Queen’s lackeys they will spend an eternity kneeling by the side of Dead Prios.

THE REFORMISTS

The faction promoting change within the Sun Church also obtained information regarding the prisoner transport, as well as its written orders (see

the handout on page 88). Father Sarvola and Deseba the Old want Elsana freed, and eventually pardoned; a senior representative of the Earthmother would be invaluable in healing the spiritual wounds of the kingdom.

They notified the Queen, but though she welcomes the idea, she still does not dare to openly oppose the Curia in ecclesiastical matters – the time is not yet ripe. However, the reformists are under the impression that they have Korinthia’s implicit permission to act.

Their plan is to identify the transport at Prios Pass and keep an eye on it until it approaches Yndaros. Then they will strike, free Elsana, and bring her to the reformist Count Hastorio Arobel. The mission to locate and tail the prison transport has been assigned to Brother Huberdo. He is their only man at Prios Pass, but if necessary, he may seek shelter (though not receive any public assistance) at the local sun temple.

The Player Characters

AS USUAL, WE hope that this adventure will be playable with any player characters, regardless of their experience, background, opinions, or ambitions. Sure, the theme of the story makes it particularly interesting to use characters with clearly stated views on spiritual matters, and it becomes even more exciting if the gaming group’s characters have taken more or less divergent positions in the conflict between the various factions of the Sun Church. But this is certainly not a requirement. Rather, any character who has previously ignored all theological conflicts will, because of how the adventure is designed, most likely be forced to take a stand – something that will enrich and add further depth to his or her personality.

EXPERIENCE & ABILITIES

The Howling of Damned Gods is meant for characters who have amassed roughly 70 to 100 *Experience* points, in addition to the starting level. However, the opposition may be adjusted to suit characters with more or less *Experience*. Feel free to change the number of enemies present during the encounters and/or the listed abilities for each of the enemies to vary their difficulty.

As for specific abilities, it is (as always) good to have at least one character with the *Loremaster* ability at adept level or higher. Other important assets are the *Medicus* , *Alchemy* , and *Poisoner* abilities, as well as the *Bushcraft* and *Bloodhound* boons, since many challenges involve searching for clues and following tracks. We also recommend the *Contacts*

boon, as the right contacts can make it easier to link the characters to the adventure’s drama.

INCENTIVES

Before starting the game, you must think carefully about how to make the characters (and players) of your gaming group feel engaged and invested in the adventure. Our main suggestion would be that they come to Prios Pass to see a close friend or relative (see *A happy reunion* below), but there are obviously many ways to spark their curiosity and strengthen their resolve. It takes reflection, planning, and adjustments for an adventure, which is designed for a wide variety of players with different play styles, to work well for your particular gaming group.

A HAPPY REUNION

We propose that the player characters have come to Prios Pass to visit a close friend, colleague, or relative, who until now has chosen to remain in Alberetor. We also suggest that this person has sent one (or more) of the player characters a letter, by courier, delivered in a metal cylinder along with a vinegar ampoule meant to render the text illegible if the container is opened incorrectly. Besides the usual pleasantries, the message contains the following points:

- “I have discovered grave misdeeds within [appropriate faction/organization].”
- “I fear for my life; they may come after me at any moment.”

- “Meet me at Prios Pass, and please bring some capable and trusted friends.”
- The date on which the caravan is expected to arrive (no more than a few days after the message is delivered).

This gives the characters a reason to visit the border crossing, and later also to look for the relative’s/colleague’s journal (which describes some interesting observations). Another advantage of this premise is that the characters do not need to know what the adventure is really about (i.e. the transportation of a convicted heretic) beforehand; instead, they get to discover the backstory through their investigations.

Furthermore, it is likely that the players and their characters will think, at least initially, that what is happening at the refugee camp is somehow linked to the relative’s/colleague’s discovery. This has two desirable effects – it creates an urge to find out what really happened, and makes the unveiling of the adventure’s true plot a kind of dramatic turning point in the story.

The friend/colleague is killed in the beginning of the adventure, before he or she can tell the characters about what was discovered. They should then have enough reason to start investigating the circumstances of that person’s death, but if they should require further incentives, the Game Master could add one of the items listed below.

ENEMIES OF THE DARKNESS

Characters who regard abominations, cults, and the darkness of the world as their natural enemies will not need any persuading to take an interest in the adventure. Humans becoming blight-born are bad enough; it being the result of deliberate poisoning is even worse. Obviously, the characters must find and stop the villains before they do something even worse and more innocent lives are lost!

PROBLEM-SOLVERS

After the start of the adventure it becomes clear that the local authorities are in need of assistance – an excellent opportunity for characters who like taking jobs as problem-solvers. Guard Captain Egusta, Field Marshal Beniam Starak or the Queen’s Legate, Neiem Kirte, are all possible employers. No matter who contacts (or is contacted by) the characters, their mission will be to identify what caused the tragic events and bring the perpetrators to justice.

MOVING UP THE LADDER

Player characters who are involved, or want to be involved, in a certain faction or organization may

see the adventure as a chance to prove themselves. In the beginning of act two, local representatives of the Sun Church (Father Koramei), Ordo Magica (Loria Argom), and the Army/Rangers (Beniam Starak) will arrive at the refugee camp. They all have different reasons for wanting the perpetrator caught, and might recommend the characters for both rewards and promotions, should they agree to help.

Naturally, the Iron Pact and the witches are not present at Prios Pass, but characters who are allied to them could realize that their leaders would want the case to be investigated and the culprits punished.

A more significant adjustment would be to leave out the happy reunion and the friend/colleague from Alberetor entirely, and instead link the characters mission directly to the prison transport. Characters who are allies of the templars could be offered the job of killing Elsana; allies of Deseba/Sarvola could be sent to free the “heretic” and bring her to safety; alternatively, someone within the Sun Church could “sense” that the transport is in need of further protection and send the characters to provide just that.

The Adventure Structure

THE HOWLING OF *Damned Gods* is divided into three acts. The first two are quite linear, while the third presents a small adventure landscape for the player characters to navigate if they want to get their hands on the heretic.

ACT I: SILENT NIGHT...

The player characters arrive at Prios Pass and soon learn that the passage to the refugee camp has been



A grave discovery

The relative’s/colleague’s discovery is irrelevant to this adventure; he or she just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. But perhaps the player characters could figure out what actually happened? Suggestions on the matter can be found on page 39.



The Relative’s/Colleague’s Letter

As a suggestion, the Game Master could create a handout of the letter delivered by the courier, adjusting it to which character (or characters) the message is addressed to and who the relative/colleague is. Keep it short and make sure to include the four suggested items, as well as a hurried greeting, and end with an appropriately dire closing phrase. It can be made rather elaborately or simply with pen and paper – regardless, it is sure to enrich the gaming experience.

temporarily blocked off; a caravan approaches from the south, and the gate will not be opened until the situation has calmed down and the Rangers announce that the village is no longer under threat. It could be up to six hours before they do so, which is why the player characters are advised to wait in some tavern until the gate bell tolls three times. The Queen's Threshold, the Trout, and other establishments are packed with guests, most of them waiting for someone to arrive. The player characters may take a seat wherever there is room, for example by Brother Huberdo's table, or that of some other relevant NPC. When the Game Master deems it appropriate, the bell suddenly tolls. But not three times. It tolls frantically!

They soon learn that an abomination runs wild at the refugee camp. The gate by the bridge to the camp is still sealed, and the village guards have been joined by a troop of rangers who will not let anyone through. The player characters may choose to wait until the situation is under control or try to reach the other side of the river. With some skillful persuasion, or reckless courage, they might make it in time to help the guards fight off two disoriented, blight-born humans. However, they are unable to save the relative/colleague, who is killed by an abomination – one that seems to have been spawned deliberately. But how? Why? And by whom?

ACT II : OUT OF THE ASHES...

Act two opens with a number of places to investigate. In the relative's/colleague's tent is a journal containing interesting information. The characters may also (either for the Rangers or on their own accord) investigate a pavilion that was set on fire during the abomination attack, and figure out what caused those people to become blight-born (the poisoned soup).

Near the pavilion are some tracks which, if followed, lead to three Templars (one dying and two

wounded) who seized the opportunity to attack the heretic's pavilion as the chaos erupted. They ask the characters to help them hunt down the prisoner, but do not reveal who she is, other than "a heretic with blood as black as tar." Even without this information, the characters can figure out that a heretic was held in the burned-down pavilion and that two guards fled south with the prisoner, leaving behind a pair of corpses, most likely black cloaks.

With the help of two terrified children claiming to have seen the Arch Witch, the characters can track down the guards by following their trail along the road to the Twilight Friars' monastery, in the mountains some 20 kilometers southeast of Prios Pass. About half-way there they encounter three beasts feasting upon two seemingly lifeless bodies. These turn out to be two black cloaks; one is still alive and manages to wheeze a few last words to the characters: "The Night Lady, you must find her, take her to the monastery; by Prios, darkness falls..."

The prisoner and her liberators can be tracked directly from the scene of the attack to the narrow valley where the Ice Witch has one of her campsites, but that path goes through a challenging ambush. A less risky alternative would be to follow clues back to the village and one of the Order's agents who participated in the attack (something that could also result in a meeting with Brother Huberdo). That way the characters will have less difficulty finding the hideout and not risk walking into an ambush.

ACT III : THE LADY OF THE NIGHT

One way or another, they eventually reach the valley where the Ice Witch's rebels are encamped, and where the heretic and her escort are hiding. The player characters are outnumbered, there are watchdogs roaming the area, and the hideout itself seems to be protected by some kind of ritual.

The player characters must decide how to proceed. They are presented with four alternatives: negotiation with the rebels, stealthy maneuvers, direct attack (possibly with the help of allies), and simply waiting out their prey. If all goes well, they will eventually come face to face with Elsana and have to make another difficult decision – should they let her flee to the Realm of the Order (along with the two warrior monks responsible for the relative's/colleague's death), or put her in irons and turn her over to someone else?

The latter alternative obviously involves fighting Elsana and the monks. On the other hand, should they decide to let her go, they may first have to help her get past a hostile group which attacks, or possibly waits outside, the rebels' hideout.

Before the Templars' Secession?

This adventure is written to be played after *Karvosti – the Witch Hammer*, which means that the Templars have pledged allegiance to Dead Prios and seceded from the Sun Church's Curia. If the adventure is played before this has taken place, Segri and her fellow knights have been expelled from their order for persisting in their belief that Prios is already dead and that all that remains is revenge. In that case, they receive information about the prisoner transport from a secret sympathizer among the Templar cell in Kandoria.

Prios Pass

THE BORDER CHECKPOINT by the bridge over the River Veloma was established in the same year the Ambrians arrived in the region. General Karlogoi Meleon was charged with restoring the old fortress and stone bridge found on an island near the southern shore. The village that developed on the island started as a builders' camp, but evolved as the surrounding lands were cultivated and the fortress became the residence of the exalted Baron Karlogoi of House Meleon.

AS THE SOUTHERN gate of Ambria, Prios Pass has suffered all kinds of hardships, the most frequent being the outbreaks of disease in the refugee camp which, at worst, can reduce its population by as much as half. The threat of kotka cats, jakaars, and bands of robbers is particularly great when the freezing cold comes creeping from the north. And though it is less common, the danger of the southern darkness should also be mentioned – it is not unusual for refugees to be tainted by corruption, and small hordes of dragouls have twice wandered through the mountain passes, starving and thirsting. On all these occasions the bridge was closed off and the guards were ordered to kill anything that moved on the southern shore.

Baron Karlogoi died in year 19, on a hunting trip in the mountains, leaving his keep and estate to his daughter, Karolia. Like her father, she leaves the management of the village and the checkpoint to Queen Korinthia's agents, unless the authorities in Yndaros orders otherwise. The only exceptions are the border patrols which she is obligated to maintain and the search for rebel encampments in the mountains. Furthermore, her standing force of thirty riders and fifty archers can be called upon to aid the rangers and the border guards in battle.

OVERVIEW

Prios Pass lies on an island in one of the mountain streams which further north converge into the River Veloma. In the area where the village is located, the stream is about 250 meters wide.

The original suspension bridge was soon replaced by a sturdier structure, thirty meters long, built on foundations whose oldest parts are thought to have been built in Symbarian times. The five meters closest to the northern base of the bridge are made of wood and can be lowered, if necessary, by removing the stanchions using chains attached to a winch in one of the watchtowers.

The four meter tall wall of stone which runs along the island's southern shore is placed by the waterline, which means that those crossing the bridge must go through the gates to proceed into Ambria. Whenever a threat arises, the gate is shut and metal bars lowered in front of it, as archers man the towers and battlements. In truly dire situations, the last section of the bride is also lowered.

On the northern side of the island are some jetties, the largest acting as a wharf for the ferry which people use to travel the hundred or so meters between the wilds of the Titans and the kingdom of Ambria. Private boats and vessels are anchored by the smaller jetties, alongside two Ranger triremes and a larger galley belonging to the mistress of the fortress.

THE VILLAGE CENTER

Thanks to the border checkpoint, the Baroness of Meleon's fortress, and its proximity to the Twilight Monastery, Prios Pass is relatively well-off. It now has roughly a hundred permanent residents, most of them belonging to one of three distinct factions: builders and merchants who supply the village with basic necessities; people who own or work at the inns and taverns welcoming newcomers to

Alternative
Bandit Chief

Van-Rogan is introduced in the adventure *The Promised Land*. If he is still living in the mountains does not correspond to the previous experiences of your gaming group, he can easily be replaced with some other undead robber baron.

Perhaps it is the robber baron Nightblade from the *Blight Night* scenario who now resides in the mountains? Or could it be that the rumors of Baron Karlogoi's death are exaggerated; that he was murdered on orders from his daughter, but rose again to seek vengeance?

the Promised Land; and various public officials whose primary function seems to be restricting the number of refugees who are allowed to cross the River Veloma.

Prios Plaza is the hub of the community, surrounded by the Queen's Legation, the Queen's Threshold inn, and two taverns called the Blue Goblet and the Mill. The rest of the village comprises a mix of various buildings, with a few exceptions: in the east, by the river, is the relatively modest tower of Ordo Magica, next to the equally plain sun temple; by the South Gate, the Rangers keep their barracks, stables and officers' quarters; and much of the village's western parts are dominated by The Golden Swan – an inn only open to nobles, either as a first stop upon entering Ambria, or as a comfortable place in which to wait for friends or relatives to arrive.

THE REFUGEE CAMP

By the bridge's southern head lies the refugee camp. Its size varies greatly according to the season, and there has also been a slight, general decrease in the number of travelers venturing through the mountain pass.

The camp's only permanent buildings are the fortifications around the bridgehead and three Ranger watch towers, each normally occupied by four sentries. Other than that, the camp consists entirely of tents, pavilions, and wagons. These are usually positioned outward from the central watch tower, as instructed by the duty officer.

There are two soup kitchens serving hot, flavoursome, and free meals three times a day. Bread is included, but those who want their goblets filled with something other than water must pay a small sum. It

is customary for newcomers to buy a pint (or more) of Zarekean blackbrew to celebrate their arrival.

SURROUNDINGS

North of the River Veloma, billowing farmlands stretch as far as the eye can see. House Meleon's crofters and farmers are known for producing good crops and processing them with considerable skill and taste. Their stout, the Titan's Bitter, is widely recognized by connoisseurs throughout the capital, and the region's new signature dish – a trout pâté called Meleon's Temptation – is served in taverns across the kingdom.

South of the river there is nothing but wilderness, apart from a few fishermen's wharfs and hunting lodges. The monastery of the Twilight Friars can be found about a day's march south-east from the village, and about as far to the south-west is an outpost where the Baroness's scholars and a handful of adepts from Ordo Magica are investigating an abandoned mine. The rest is naught but mountains and dales, ravines and groves, predators and plunderers.

Two major bandit groups dominate the mountain road between Alberetor and Ambria. The undead robber baron Van-Rogan torments the west, with his growing horde of enslaved rabble – mostly women and men who have been cowed into submission and, in their desperation, follow the former noble's orders with feigned gratitude. The group of settlers led by Maridja, the barbarian woman also known as the Ice Witch, is by far the larger and better organized of the two. But from their own perspective, neither Maridja nor her followers are plunderers; while they admittedly help themselves to Ambrian wealth from time to time, they are basically rebels who violently oppose the intruders' rule.

What happens to those who are rejected?

More than half of all hopeful refugees coming in from the south are denied entry into the Queen's new realm. While the reasons for their rejection vary (see the Queen's Legation on page 17), they are all struck by the same terror and desperation that arises from being turned away by the border guards. Roughly a third join the caravans returning south, to seek a new home in Freetown, the Realm of the Order, or one of the city states. The rest choose to stay where they are.

Of those who do stay, some join the rebel or bandit groups encamped in the mountains, others

establish small and often short-lived settlements in the valleys of the Titans, but most try to sneak themselves into Ambria without the Queen's blessing. Many are killed on the way there, by predators, border patrols, or cold and starvation. Those who succeed face a perilous existence, in constant fear of being discovered, and must be willing to do anything for food and shelter. In the best-case scenario, they are taken in by some unscrupulous landowner who feeds them in exchange for backbreaking labor while constantly threatening to report them to the Queen's Rangers.

Adventure Locations

THE FOLLOWING PLACES and establishments in Prios Pass and its surrounding area may be relevant when playing *The Howling of Damned Gods*. The Game Master is of course free to add more locations, and must, as always, be ready to improvise whenever the players act in unexpected ways – which should be expected.

THE QUEEN'S THRESHOLD, INN

Having been in business for seventeen years, Febeo and his wife Eda run the oldest inn in the village, in one of its oldest buildings – a rectangular stone house first built to accommodate construction workers. The kitchen and dining room are located at its center, while a total of twelve rooms can be reached through corridors running towards the short ends of the building. Each bedroom has two bunkbeds, except the four in the corners – more luxurious chambers with only two well-feathered beds each.

Like all innkeepers in the village, Febeo and Eda are obligated to keep a record of what happens at their establishment and report suspicious people and events to the Queen's Legate. But at the Queen's Threshold, it might actually be possible to conduct dubious affairs without being caught, whether it concerns the smuggling of sensitive goods, hidden diseases, or meetings with questionable individuals – the landlady has a taste for fine spirits, and will often try to extort such guests before reporting them to the Legate. By doing so, she has amassed a long list of secrets to be used, if necessary, against an equally long list of prominent Ambrians; a list she keeps in a small, lavishly pearled notebook beneath a loose floorboard in the kitchen.

THE SOUTH GATE OF AMBRIA

North of the bridge is an open space, about ten meters deep and twice as wide, surrounded by a four meter high stone wall with four towers. In times of danger, the five meter wide double gate is bolted, the portcullis is lowered, and the battlements are manned with guards, ranged weapons at the ready. There are also two ballistae mounted on top of the northern towers.

With all this in mind, it would take a lot for predators, bandits, or desperate refugees to attack the village from that direction – nothing but a large and highly organized military force could do so successfully. There have only been a handful of serious attempts over the years. Twice it was dragouls who came swarming across the bridge, and on three occasions the desperate masses at the camp have attacked (probably spurred by someone representing the enemies of the Queen), when the Istaros winter was so harsh that the strait had frozen solid.

To head south through the gate during a crisis, one must either be well-connected or glib-tongued. The only way out is through the large gate, which will never be opened. However, the duty officer may allow people to rappel down the south side of the wall, provided that no enemies are occupying the bridgehead and that the person asking for permission seems capable of dealing with the approaching threat.

THE SUN TEMPLE

The head of the sun temple at Prios Pass is a man named Father Koramei. He is the younger brother of the late Karlogoi, and hence the current baroness's uncle. He is also a gloomy and reclusive individual who early on renounced his claim to the barony. Koramei is assisted by two liturges and three initiates, and all six are members of the faction within the Sun Church which questions the Curia's interpretation of the Sun God's will and nature. While they keep their skepticism to themselves, Koramei is actually in sporadic contact with Deseba the Old (see the adventure *Wrath of the Warden*). The Curia's black cloaks suspect as much, and keep the temple under surveillance.

The temple itself is not very large, with room for no more than thirty or so people in its light yard. There are also five prayer alcoves and living quarters for the staff. The real jewel of the temple is found in Koramei's private chambers – a bottle containing six drops of Water of the Dusk; a gift from Templewall, to be used in combating the darkness which seeps north from Alberetor.

THE TOWER OF ORDO MAGICA

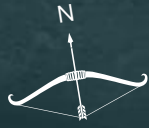
UA month ago the senile Master Marfal, who until then had managed the order's modest operations at Prios Pass, was replaced by a newly-appointed master named Loria Argom. Having studied under Seldonio himself, she certainly has her qualities, but the Grand Master believed that she needed to "toughened up" a bit, which is why he made her Chapter Master. She is still not entirely comfortable with her new job – barely thirty years of age, she displays great uncertainty and a fiery temperament whenever she is pressured or challenged.

The other masters stationed at Prios Pass are a young ritualist by the name of Toreo and an aged Medicus named Ginda. The latter studies the various diseases carried by refugees from the south, along with two adepts and a group of novices who work in direct contact with the sick. She is always looking to hire new novices – at least one is killed each year, by infections, rashes, or violent outbursts.

PRIOS PASS

1. The Keep
2. The Golden Swan
3. The Garrison
4. The Legation
5. The Queen's Threshold
6. The Trout
7. The Sun Temple
8. Ordo Magica
9. Watchtowers
10. Soup Kitchen

0 |-----| 50 M



THE QUEEN'S LEGATION

The Legation at Prios Pass has a staff of ten people, supervised by the former general Neiem Kirte. Due to injuries sustained in The Great War, the general had to look elsewhere for work, but as he sees it, his transfer to Prios Pass was a promotion – in these troubled times, nothing could be more important than stopping old enemies from infiltrating the new realm! Neiem has a well-founded reputation for being incorruptible, loyal, and unforgiving.

The Legate and his staff decide who does, or does not, become full-fledged Ambrian citizens. Their subordinates conduct thorough interviews and health examinations of all who arrive at the refugee camp, unless they already possess, and are able to present, a document (known as a Queen's Permit) certifying that they are loyal subjects of Queen Korinthia. These days, only skilled craftsmen, farmers, and intellectuals are welcomed into The Promise Land. Apart from nobles, very few are exempted from the screening process. Sometimes a decision can be made in just a few hours, but it may just as well take a week or even a month. Until then, the applicant must remain in the camp, ready to answer any questions that may arise or undergo further examinations.

Basically, the only chance for contaminated and/or unskilled people to enter the kingdom is the notaries, and brothers, Laras and Demed. For the past two years they have, along with a handful of subordinates, made a profit from selling Queen's Permits to certain carefully selected refugees. They have so far managed to avoid any suspicion, but who knows how long it will be before one of their "clients" suffers a serious case of honesty, or succumbs to a tainting illness they carry?

THE TROUT, TAVERN

The Trout is a tavern near the docks on the north side of the island, and serves some of the best food in the village. Their menu consists mostly of various fish dishes, based on recipes from the port towns of Alberetor. Though the salmon has been replaced by trout from the local river, the fish sticks, pâtés, soups, pies, and cakes still taste very much like their southern equivalents.

The owner, a widow called Madam Flora, may seem like a thoroughly amiable and tender-hearted person, but appearances can be deceiving. Beneath the good-natured surface, she is the leader of a smuggler organization with branches from Alberetor in the south to Karvosti in the north. Most of the smuggled goods – which can be anything from Alberian antiquities to corrupt artifacts from Davokar – will at some point pass through her three-level basement. The buyers are just as diverse, ranging from

unscrupulous barbarian chieftains, via nobles in the capital, to wealthy individuals who have remained south of the mountains. She even has clients in the Realm of the Order and the City States, which means that her racket not only violates the laws of the Lawgiver – it also constitutes high treason.

THE WATCH TOWERS

The Queen's Rangers are responsible for maintaining order and security at the camp south of Prios Pass. They have three watch towers at their disposal, each usually manned by four guards, including the scouts posted at the top of the towers. The central tower has an annex where the Legation staff conducts their interviews and physical examinations, always with at least one ranger present.

The guard force is commanded by Field Marshal Beniam Starak, with the help of his subordinate officers: Captains Elan, Domio, and Egusta. One captain can always be found in the main tower, but when larger caravans are on the way all of them are in place, while the number of ordinary rangers is doubled. Captain Egusta, easily recognized by the scar which runs across her left eye and continues over her mouth and chin, is the most verbal and authoritarian of the three.

THE SOUP KITCHENS

The two soup kitchens providing the camp's residents with three meals a day are managed by the Legation and financed by the Queen. The food is good, nutritious, and free of charge. Those who desire beverages other than water can often find something else to buy, but no more than one bottle or jar per meal – partly because of the meager supply, partly because the rangers wish to avoid any drunken disorder.

The cook Arela served as an army chef during the war and knows how to make good food in large quantities. But she is not as cheery as she once was; the tunes she used to hum among the pots of the field kitchen have been replaced by a constant grumbling and swearing. This is partly due to old age, but also to her infuriating assistants: while the Legate does not skimp on ingredients, he is quite cheap when it comes to paying for labor, which explains why Arela is currently in charge of more than a dozen messy, constantly chattering goblins scurrying about her kitchen.

THE TWILIGHT MONASTERY

That the headquarters of the black cloaks ended up in the mountains was something of a coincidence. The ruin in which the monastery is located was already there, and in such great



The Twilight Monastery in snow-laden splendor, echoing with sublime hymns, retaining the darkness of the Eternal Night.

condition that it must have been built by some lord from Lindaros, possibly as a pleasure palace. In any case, the structure suited their purpose perfectly, not least because of the many, vast cellar levels where the black cloaks now keep their prisoners (and test subjects). The ruin's proximity to Alberetor was also advantageous, as it eased the relocation of books, relics, and already captured victims of corruption from the monastery outside Berendoria.

Visitors are not allowed to see much of the building's interior; even many of those who live and work at the monastery are denied access to certain floors and wings. Behind the imposing gate is a hall where guests are greeted and registered by a clerk. Those who seek shelter from the cold or just want to have a look around are immediately turned away, politely at first, whereupon a squad of black cloaks is summoned to eject the persistent guest. Should the clerk deem the matter serious enough, the visitor is shown to the adjacent audience hall to await a more senior brother or sister. Most people will never see more than that,

as whoever they meet next will most likely be acting as an intermediary between them and the leaders of the monastery.

As one of the Sun God Prios' strongholds on earth, the monastery is surprisingly dominated by darkness. Of course, it is the black cloaks' job to study and understand the dark. In halls deep within the mountain, behind massive iron gates, hideously disfigured humanoids are imprisoned: captive elves, trolls, and ogres in different stages of blight; strange, sentient natural phenomena seemingly teeming with hatred and aggression; even a primal blight beast which the Curia calls the Dragon.

Other parts of the halls contain corrupted artifacts; parchment scrolls and stone tablet describing dark practices or written with symbols which corrupts whoever lays eyes on them; and chambers where the Whip of Prios extract truths from heretics and tainted wretches. The contrast between all this and the magnificent, almost shimmering, hymns heard each day from the chapel is truly breathtaking.

ACT 1:

Silent Night

THE FIRST ACT of the adventure addresses the player characters' arrival at Prios Pass and the panic that arises as one person, and then another two, are blight-born right in the middle of the refugee camp. The characters can do nothing to change the course of events, but must obviously decide whether to get involved, and if so, in what way. In order to have the slightest chance of helping the residents, they must first make their way through the *South Gate of Ambria*.

Game Opening

AS THE SUN is setting, the player characters arrive on the northern shore of the Veloma River. It has just stopped snowing, and the crisp, cold air has been replaced by a clammy fog. The ground is muddy beneath the melting snow; the wind has turned south-east, but its gusts are still strong enough to make the flags flap and the oil lanterns flicker.

There is not much of a line by the shore, and the characters may immediately board the barge-like ferry, along with a dozen other passengers (cost: one shilling per person, double for horses and the like, and double again for carts and wagons). The youngsters working the winch look exhausted. They have probably been hauling the vessel back and forth across the river all day, full of people who have come to meet the awaited caravan.

As they finally reach the other side of the river, they learn that the so called South Gate of Ambria has been closed off. Whether they go there and talk to one of the ten guards, or ask some villager for more information, the situation is explained to them: a caravan is arriving at the refugee camp, and whenever that happens, the gate is sealed until the Rangers have made sure that there is no danger. None are allowed to pass, for their own safety as much as the village's. Besides, it is impossible to find specific people or supply transports before things have calmed down.

The player characters are politely told to wait in one of the inns and taverns. The person they

are talking to believes that it may be up to six hours before the gates are opened, which will then be announced by three strokes of the gatehouse bell. All establishments are packed with customers, so the characters must be prepared to share a table with someone.

If the Game Master thinks it appropriate, there could be some empty seats by Brother Huberdo's table. There will not be any in-depth conversations, of course; mostly small talk about the weather, life in the village, and the journey through the Titans. But in case there will be any future encounters with Huberdo (see page 31), it could be good for them to have met him once before.

Meeting with Huberdo

If the player characters should end up at Huberdo's table, it is important that the Game Master portray him as any other visitor – he is just one of many travelers who have come to meet the arriving caravan. He introduces himself as Huberdo and claims to be a notary from Yndaros, sent by Lord Manselm to collect a bundle of legal documents from his relatives in Alberetor. He also complains about the weather and recalls with horror his own perilous journey through the mountains – that was almost ten years ago, and they suffered everything from avalanches and predators to murderous bandits.



Even the Queen's Rangers struggle when facing newborn, famished abominations.

Outbreak

WHENEVER THE GAME Master thinks it appropriate, the high-pitched roar of a woman cuts through the noise: "Silence!" A woman is standing by the open door, and when everyone has gone quiet, they can all hear the reason for her shouting. A bell tolls in the distance. But not three times; it tolls frantically and relentlessly.

TO THE RESCUE

The player characters are obviously free to do whatever they like. However, they will probably start with trying to find out what is going on.

None of the civilians know anything about it, but the somewhat inebriated Captain Turgal of the village guard and the rangers who have gathered around the bolted South Gate can tell them the following: "An abomination came with the caravan; it is on the loose, attacking anyone in sight; the gate must remain sealed until the situation is under control!"

In order to acquire this information, the characters must first make their way to Turgal, and then persuade him to reveal what he knows ([*Persuasive +1*] test). Note that his information is not entirely accurate, as the abomination did not in fact come with the caravan.

No matter what the characters say, the gate will remain shut. To get past it they must get in touch with the rangers' ranking officer on site, Lieutenant Androna. Collected and poised, she tells the characters to calm down, ensuring them that her fellow rangers are used to dealing with situations like this. The characters must pass a [*Persuasive -3*] test to gain her permission, or Androna will adopt a harsher tone: if they try to cross the bridge, she will order her men to shoot them down, for disobeying a direct order and to stop them from getting in the way of her brothers and sisters in arms!

Characters who fail the test but still want to get to the refugee camp have two options. One is to disobey Androna's order, in which case she will let them go (while hurling a few loud profanities their way). However, this could cause problems later on, as they will be wanted for insubordination - if the characters ever return to Prios Pass, they will risk being thrown in jail and sentenced to twenty lashes each (this does not apply to nobles, who get off with paying a 10 thaler fine).

A second option is to procure a boat of some kind and row across the strait, or go where the wall ends and swim to the other side (without weapons or

armor). Either way, the characters will not reach the camp until all three abominations have been killed (see below).

THE ABOMINATIONS

As mentioned previously, the chaos south of the bridge is the result of the Order’s agents’ plan – to make the black cloaks and their prisoner flee to the Twilight Monastery by causing mayhem at the camp. Knowing that many of the Alberian refugees are on the verge of becoming blight-born, they tricked two of the cook Arela’s goblins into pouring large quantities of crushed krusean berries into the soup. The effect was almost instantaneous.

First an abomination is born near the eastern soup kitchen. It causes great damage before people start to flee and the creature can be surrounded by rangers who stay on the defensive while waiting for the captains to join them. The relative/colleague is one of those who cannot escape the abomination’s fury and is fatally injured by its claws.

Player characters who persuade Lieutenant Androna to lower them onto the bridge (or simply ignore her order) can reach the camp just as the two captains who are still alive (Domio and Egusta) manage to flank and decapitate the beast. But the danger, it seems, is far from over: screams of panic and blood-curdling roars are heard from the west.

Should the characters choose to accompany the two captains to the western soup kitchen, the terrified cries of fleeing people will soon indicate that two more abominations are running amok at the camp. And sure enough – two battered ranger squads are each fighting a humanoid abomination, roughly fifty meters from each other. The captains charge towards one of them; what the characters do is up to them. If they decide to help, we recommend that they focus on one abomination, and that the outcome of that fight also determines the fates of the captains and their men.

Some gaming groups may want to ignore the abominations entirely and try to locate the relative/colleague instead. If so, they will find him or her dying on the ground near the eastern soup kitchen, beyond saving, but strong enough to utter a few last words: “My dear. Beware! It is her! I saw her. Shackled. The darkness enchained. The darkness, the darkneee ...”

If the characters choose not to fight the abomination, or if they should all fall in battle, others will rush forth to slay it – war veterans, hunters, and others who realize that the horrid creature must be fought. It will be a long and bloody affair; one of the worst massacres of Alberians/Ambrians since The Great War.

Blight-born human

Those who suffer the tainting effect of the krusean berries were already blight-marked when they arrived – they had stayed too long in Alberetor’s darkness. As they are blight-born, they grow almost two meters tall and are deformed beyond recognition.

Man 1: Bloodshot skin with large, black blisters; cleft, flickering snake tongue; long claws.

Woman: Skin that blackens and falls off in large pieces; bare cranium with horn-like growths; right forearm transformed into a curved bone sword.

Man 2: Albino skin with throbbing, black veins; bright red eyes; abnormally long arms/legs; foot-long, razor-sharp bull horns.

Manner	Raging, howling
Race	Abomination (ex-human)
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	<i>Acidic Blood</i> (I), <i>Natural Weapon</i> (II), <i>Robust</i> (I)
Accurate 15 (-5), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 7 (+3), Resolute 13 (-3), Strong 11 (-1), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Berserker</i> (novice), <i>Natural Warrior</i> (novice)
Weapons Accurate	Claws/Bone sword/Horns 10
Armor	2 (<i>Robust</i>)
Defense	+7, acidic blood 3 damage for 3 turns
Toughness	11 Pain Threshold 6
Shadow	Utterly corroded copper (thoroughly corrupted)
Tactics: The abomination wants to extinguish life, all life; it does not care about its own.	

THE FIRE

Regardless of whether it happens during the fight against the abomination or as the player characters are kneeling around the dead relative/colleague, they may all make a *Vigilant* test. Those who succeed can smell the smoke of a fire, and with another successful test they see tiny sparks dancing into the sky from a place further south among the wagons and tents.

It is the prison escort’s pavilion that is on fire, set ablaze by the templars after their failed attempt to secure the prisoner (two of the black cloaks had already left with Elsana). Guests at the camp hasten to extinguish the fire. Beneath the scorched canvas are a number of clues which the player characters may discover as they start to investigate what has caused all this mayhem, and hopefully learn who is responsible for the relative’s/colleague’s death.

ACT 2:

Out of the Ashes

THE SECOND ACT of the adventure starts when the abominations are defeated and things are settling down at the refugee camp. Now it is time for the player characters/players to take the reins, either on their own initiative or on behalf of Captain Egusta.

Investigations

WHEN THERE IS no longer any immediate threat, the player characters are given a chance to look around and assess the situation, possibly after having seen to their own wounds. The scene of the battle now seems eerily desolate. Apart from those who helped fight the abominations and are now more or less wounded, all guests at the camp have fled south in sheer panic, leaving behind half-raised tents and scattered belongings. A few rangers stagger to their feet to help their battered comrades; the two captains who killed the abomination by the eastern soup kitchen falter slowly towards the central watch tower, the woman practically carrying the man.

Ten people lie wounded or dead around the fallen abominations, with very few to help them. This could be an opportunity for the player characters to make themselves useful while at the same time gathering clues about what happened. If they do, use the information listed under the Soup Kitchens heading below.

THE WATCH TOWER

Player characters who want to get to the bottom of what happened will probably start by trying to find people who might have some answers. They will not learn much from the surviving rangers who are now busy helping the wounded, comforting the mourning, and soothing those in shock: no one seems to know what caused the massacre. If they persist, the characters are told to ask the commanders, who can most likely be found at the central watch tower.

Sure enough: Captain Egusta is standing outside the tower gate, grunting at the few junior officers who are still fit for duty; Domio is inside, hovering between life and death due to severe acid burns. A successful



Captain Egusta does not show much of the grief and fear she feels, not until all is under control

Vigilant test with the *Medicus* ability reveals that Egusta is pale, in a cold sweat, and probably more badly wounded than she would like to admit.

When the last of the junior officers has left, the characters can take their place. The Captain is definitely not in a talkative mood, but if the characters helped kill the abominations or if one of them explicitly offers his/her services, she can spare a moment – she too is wounded, and her fellow captains are incapacitated, as are many of their rangers; she could certainly use a helping hand.

With trembling voice, occasionally swaying with dizziness, Egusta are able to reveal the following information:

- It appears that the abominations did not come with the caravan. Three unrelated guests were blight-born almost simultaneously; only one of them came with the latest caravan.
- More than twenty people died; twice as many were wounded.
- Apparently there was a fire somewhere in the camp, but the damage to tents, wagons, and property was otherwise negligible.
- Nothing like this has ever happened at Prios Pass. It cannot be a coincidence; someone is responsible for the abominations' emergence!
- Should the player characters request or demand compensation for their services, she is prepared to pay each of them the standard wage of a ranger: 5 shillings a day. The sum can be doubled with compelling arguments and a successful [*Persuasive +1*] test.



Boa and Tott are terrified of Arela's ladle, but just as scared of being sent away from the camp

Shortly after the fight has been won, more people will gather at the central watch tower. Among these are Father Koramei, Loria Argom, and Field Marshal Beniam Starak; all of them willing to speak with the player characters and ask for their help in a) shedding light on the current situation and b) bringing the culprits to justice. Furthermore, Egusta will demand that all newly-arrived caravan leaders gather in the building next to the tower, to be thoroughly questioned about who came with them on the journey.

In other words, the central watch tower becomes a place to which the characters may return as they conduct their investigations, to ask questions about matters they do not understand or request help with things they cannot do themselves (performing certain rituals, for example).

THE SOUP KITCHENS

If the player characters start to question or interrogate the camp's residents about what happened, the chance that the interviewee has eaten of the soup is 1–3 on a D6. If so, a successful *Cunning* test with the *Medicus* or *Poisoner* ability, alternatively a [*Cunning -5*] test, can reveal that the person seems to be under the influence of some drug. Should the test succeed with a difference of 3 or more, characters with one of said abilities can also identify the drug in question: Krusean Berries (see below).

People's accounts of what happened just before the massacre also suggest a link between the recent calamity and the evening soup. Everyone the characters talk to mention the following points, though not in the same order:

- The wagons of a large caravan started to arrive by nightfall.

- A group of jesters were performing outside the central tower.
- The soup lines were long; everyone looked forward to the carrot and mushroom soup.
- The newcomers had begun to park their wagons, raise their tents, and make themselves comfortable.
- Those who witnessed the blight-births also add: "Suddenly he/she just started screaming, threw the bowl to the ground and... transformed, dar- darkened... like a nightmare..."

Those who taste and smell the soup and have either the *Medicus* or the *Poisoner* ability must pass a *Cunning* test to identify a) that the food has been poisoned, and b) what poisoned was used.

If any accusations are hurled her way, Arela responds with a severe tongue-lashing: the cook is livid, calling the characters everything from idiots to shameless worms: how can they be so stupid as to think that she poisoned her own soup?! When asked if she has any suspects, it does not take long before she turns her hateful gaze to a couple of goblin boys standing nearby. They act innocent, but not very convincingly – constantly looking around, their eyes flickering, while unsuccessfully trying to whistle. As soon as Arela raises her voice, they immediately spin around and start running.

If the players decide to pursue them, use the rules for *Flight & Hunt* in the *Advanced Player's Guide* (page 102); the goblins Boa and Tott have *Quick* 10 (0). Another option is to track them to their hideout – an abandoned wagon at the southern end of the camp. But even if they are found, the goblins have little to say:

- “It was just a prank; he said it wasn’t dangerous, like swallowing itching powder.”
- “He looked perfectly normal, a bearded human. Brown or black clothes, no weapons.”
- “He came up to us in the middle of the day. We’ve never seen him before, or since.”

THE COLLEAGUE’S TENT

The characters might want to go through the relative’s/colleague’s equipment. Finding his or her tent is not very difficult: all newly-arrived caravan owners have been summoned for questioning at the central watch tower’s annex, and characters who are on good terms with Captain Egusta or other authority figures will be allowed to ask them about the relative/colleague.

A woman named Ilva steps forward and says that the relative/colleague travelled with her caravan, but for some reason chose to set up his or her tent far away from the other passengers. The relative/colleague stayed close to the eastern soup kitchen (see the explanation below) while Ilva and the others parked their wagons by the western one. She thinks she knows what the relative’s/colleague’s tent looks like, and with the rangers’ permission she would be happy to take the characters to it.

Aside from one trunk of clothes and another filled with jewels, valuables, and a few family heirlooms such as rolled-up paintings, candlesticks, letters, journals and so on (total worth: 400+1D100 thaler), there is only one object of interest among the relative’s/colleague’s belongings: a logbook.

In it are accounts of both the preparations for the journey and the journey itself. The character who takes the time to look and passes a *Vigilant* test finds a passage written a few days earlier, in much shakier handwriting:

It is as I feared; the Master Weaver and his apprentices in the wagon behind Ilva’s are lying.

They are guards, escorting a prisoner. A woman. Old and hunched. Pale as sugar. And she saw me. She pierced me with her bloodshot eyes. Just for a second, like the stab of a knife. Or a cut. An intense expression, but what it meant I do not know. Perhaps it was hatred. Perhaps a warning, a threat. For a moment I thought she wanted to eat me. Or maybe it was a cry for help.

I will not get involved. Not tell anyone. Keep my distance. I do not want to know what her eyes were really saying. Death. That is the prevailing feeling: death.

THE PAVILION

Hopefully, the player characters will realize that they should investigate the fire which started during the abominations’ rampage; if not, Captain Egusta or some other NPC they speak to could bring it up.

The circular pavilion is about five meters in diameter and torn down, with most of the western side completely destroyed by the fire. By talking to people in the area, the characters can get an idea of what happened there.

- There were four people living in the pavilion: a Master Weaver and his aides. Some can recall that the master’s name was Mogdas.
- No one knows what started the fire; there was too much chaos because of all the people trying to escape the abominations.
- When the fire started, some capable residents were quick to act. They took down the pavilion and smothered the fire with damp blankets.
- No one has entered the pavilion since the fire. But there seems to be at least one, possibly two bodies lying motionless beneath the canvas.

There are several discoveries to be made:

A successful *Vigilant* test by someone examining the ground outside: Someone lost a lot of blood a few meters from the northern entrance; the ground is soaked and sticky. What could be the start of a blood trail is leading west.

A successful [*Vigilant* –5] test by someone examining the ground outside: There is a small medallion trampled into the ground, and a ripped-off chain a bit further away. It is a simple, round plate of blackened iron. The *Loresmaster* ability or a successful *Cunning* test reveals it to be the new symbol of the Templars: the symbol of the Church of Dead Priors.

Krusean Berries

The berries from the Krusean bush can be eaten both fresh and dried, and give rise to a long lasting buzz which may be compared to that of alcohol consumption. The one eating the berries also suffers 1D4 in temporary corruption, which tends to linger in the body (if relevant, the corruption fades with one point every two hours). For this reason, the berries have become popular among people who are charmed by Davokar’s darkness and the powers of *The Eternal Night*. According to rumor, they are also used during torture – the buzz combined with the amassing blackness can get just about anyone to talk...

A successful Cunning test with the Medicus ability, directed at the corpses beneath the canvas: A man and a woman, both in their thirties, killed by sword blows to the neck and torso. Their bodies are muscular and scarred, as if they were warriors rather than weavers.

A successful Vigilant test with the Loremaster ability, or a successful [Vigilant -5] test, directed at the corpses beneath the canvas: Their clothes are actually armor; the kind of concealed armor that is very difficult/expensive to make and therefore only worn by three groups of people: wealthy sorcerers, spies of the Queen, and black cloaks on covert missions.

The Witchsight or Ritualist ability, directed at the shackles found beneath the canvas: They are filled with holy energy. A successful *Cunning* test provides more details – both the *Sanctifying Rite* and the *Judging Bonds* rituals have been weaved over the metal.

The Bushcraft trait/boon and a successful Vigilant test, or a [Vigilant -5] test, inside the pavilion: Marks on the ground suggest that two people have dragged a third one between them; they left through the southern exit; the trail cannot be followed more than five meters, as it vanishes among countless others.

THE TEMPLARS

In a patched tent at the western end of the camp (3x5 meters and high enough for someone to stand upright), the templars Segri Elderra, Arlon Mirelda, and Jelia Oralak have set up base. The tent is also shared by the aged squire Gromeo, who works very hard to serve the three nobles.

Their reason for disguising themselves as refugees has nothing to do with political discretion; the Templars could not care less about whether their actions will anger the Curia, the Queen, or any other faction – the heretic will die, everything else is secondary. No, they are disguised simply to improve their chances of getting close to the Night Lady without giving her escort time to prepare a defense or escape to some hideout.

It is fully possible for the player characters to follow the templars' blood trail from the collapsed pavilion. A successful *Vigilant* test with the trait/boon *Bushcraft*, or a [Vigilant -5] test, is all it takes to find the ragged tent in the west. Moreover, if the test succeeds with a difference of 3 or more, the tracker realizes that the blood must have come from more than one person.

The Templars are in no condition to fight: Jelia has yet to regain consciousness, Arlon has lost too

much blood, and Segri has deep stab wounds on her upper arms. In other words, the player characters have every opportunity to approach them, but they must do so on their own, as Captain Egusta cannot spare any men. One strategy could be to wait until the graying old Gromeo exits the tent to fetch some drinking water. If captured and interrogated, he will swear that "his friends" had nothing to do with the abominations, but that is all he will say on the matter – the characters will have to come with him and take their questions to the leader of the group.

Realizing that fighting is out of the question, Segri assumes a diplomatic approach; perhaps the player characters could even be of use to her. She invites them to sit by the fire pit in the middle of the tent, ready to answer their questions:

- Her name is Segri, and she is a servant of Prios; that is all she will say about herself and the people sharing her tent. If the characters show her the medallion they found trampled into the mud outside the pavilion, she just shrugs: "*it must have been dropped by someone else.*"
- There was a prisoner and her escort in the burnt-down tent; and not just any prisoner, but a "*heretic with blood as black as tar; an enemy of the sun and an ally of darkness, who must not be allowed to live.*" She does not mention the heretic's name, nor the offenses she has committed – "*The hag is the Daughter of the Eternal Night, and that is all she is!*"
- When asked if she had something to do with the poisoned soup and the ensuing blight-births, she responds with a dark glare. She and her friends simply waited for the right moment to strike at the heretic; the abominations emerging, and the mayhem they caused, seemed like a golden opportunity.
- But the prisoner was already gone, as were parts of her escort. Segri and her comrades killed two guards after a brief but fierce battle; enraged by the heretic's absence she then smashed an oil lamp, hence the fire.
- If she had to guess, she would say that some other faction wants to free the heretic, and that they are the ones who poisoned the soup. If that is the case, there is a significant risk that one of the greatest apostles of The Eternal Night will soon be at large.
- Finally, she asks the characters to track down the heretic and report back to her (without intervening). With some rest and proper care, she expects that her wounded friends will be up and about within twenty-four hours, ready to resolve the matter.

The Templars

"God is dead, the killers must burn."

All three of the knights are highborn; they are proud, eloquent, and imposing. But there is also fire in their eyes, a passion most nobles do not possess.

If the characters seek them out directly after the battle, one of them is knocked out and the other two have only 4 *Toughness* left.

Manner	Calmly fanatical
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	<i>Contacts</i> (Sun Knights)
Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 10 (0), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 11 (-1), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 7 (+3)	
Abilities	<i>Beast Lore</i> (novice), <i>Berserker</i> (novice), <i>Iron Fist</i> (adept), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Steadfast</i> (master), <i>Witch Hammer</i> (adept)
Weapons	Bastard sword 9 (precise), +3 if <i>Berserker</i>
Armor	Studded leather 3 (reinforced)
Defense	-3 (+5 if <i>Berserker</i>)
Toughness 15	Pain Threshold 8
Equipment	1D10 thaler, flagellant whip, symbol of Dead Prios
Shadow	Golden yellow with streaks and blotches of crimson (corruption: 3)

Tactics: The knights of Dead Prios fights with restrained fury and stay together to avoid being flanked; they will unleash their berserker rage and attack with full force if the battle turns against them.

Into the Mountains

THE PRESUMABLY HUNGRY and exhausted characters now face the prospect of having to track their prey up into the Titans. They might head back to the central watch tower, to report their findings or hoping to pass the responsibility to someone else. Whatever their intentions are, whoever they talk to, the characters are encouraged to continue their pursuit - all rangers are needed at the camp, to restore order and assist the town watch in manning the South Gate of Ambria; there is great unrest among the refugees, and the guards fear that they might try to force their way into Prios Pass.

And so the characters must leave the troubled refugee camp behind, right away or after a quick meal. Depending on what information they have,

TRACKING DOWN THE HERETIC

The players (and hence, their characters) will most likely be able to guess that the prisoner has been taken to the Twilight Monastery - where else would two threatened black cloaks escorting a dangerous heretic go in this part of the world?. However, for players who are not fond of guessing, there is a way to verify this and determine exactly which route they took.

Their tracks lead south from the tent, before vanishing amidst numerous boot, hoof, and wheel marks in the mud. If the characters follow the road to the southern parts of the camp and pass a *Vigilant* test, they can hear a child crying hysterically in the distance.

It is coming from a roofed wagon. A faint light shines through the gaps in the walls, and the wailing of a child is heard from inside, followed by a father's attempt to comfort the youngling.

The siblings Arnas and Anata, eight and four years old, saw the black cloaks dragging Elsana. Anata was terrified and ran straight home, convinced that she had just seen the notorious Arch Witch and that the witch would now come for her. Arnas was just as frightened, but paralyzed. He just stood there, watching, his gaze fixed on the strangers, until his mother came to fetch him. Arnas can therefore confirm that the black cloaks were following the road south-east, but then turned east, proceeding along a path by the river.

With this information, the characters are able to track the black cloaks and their prisoner without having to pass any tests. Without it, doing so requires two successful *Vigilant* test with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon (or a [*Vigilant* -5] test) - first to rediscover their trail at the southern end of the camp, and then to notice where they suddenly left the road (see the map on page 30).

they will probably take one of two routes: either they follow the trail off the road, along a mountain path, or stick to the road all the way to the Twilight Monastery, convinced that the prisoner will be there.

In the latter (less likely) scenario, the characters learn that there are no newcomers at the monastery, but also that a "smaller, quicker path will take them north toward the river". Whether they follow the winding path from the monastery or come from the north, sooner or later, they are bound to come across the scene of an ambush.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Just as planned, Elsana's escort was attacked on the path between Prios Pass and the monastery.

Aided by two fellow agents, one stationed in the village and the other at the refugee camp, the two warrior monks from the Realm of the Order had set up an ambush.

They overpowered the black cloaks, who put up a short fight before being restrained and strangled. Elsana's handcuffs were removed, and the warrior monks brought her along towards the agreed hideout at one of the Ice Witch's bandit camps. The other agents returned to Prios Pass. Knowing that someone could be trailing them, the monks did not stay to search the black cloaks' bodies or ensure that they were actually dead.

Now, the question is what conclusions the player characters will draw after having investigated the blood-soaked scene of the attack...

THE SCENE OF THE AMBUSH

In a place where the path is bordered by dense bushes lie two seemingly dead people; an older man (Mogdas) and a younger woman. And they are not alone: three female kotka cats whose pack is hunting nearby have been lured by the smell of blood, and are now feasting on the humans. From a distance, a successful *Vigilant* test reveals that the man is still alive (faint groans of pain and a chest that moves up and down with every panting breath).

The koktas will definitely not give up their prey without a fight! The player characters can back away and wait for them to leave, in which case both of the black cloaks will be killed and dragged into the wilderness. But the players would do better to take an offensive approach; if so, the mountain cats will keep fighting until two of them have fallen.

If the characters manage to defeat the beasts (or drive them off), Mogdas is able to wheeze a few last words before he dies: "The murderers ... The Trout ... at Prios Pass. You! The Night Lady, you must find her, take her to the monastery; by Prios, night falls ...". He cannot be saved; one of the koktas sank its fangs into his neck and took a few, large bites of his thigh and torso.

With a successful *Cunning* test and the *Loremaster* ability, the character recalls having heard about "the Night Lady" - who she was, and the yearly ritual in which she was given a chance to repent (see page 9). Moreover, the following discoveries can be made at the scene of the ambush:

A successful Vigilant test by someone who searches the bushes: Handcuffs matching the shackles found in the pavilion have been thrown in to the bushes. These too have been blessed with the *Sanctifying Rite* and the *Judging Bonds* rituals.

Kotka

The mighty kotka is one of the Titans' most fearsome predators. It has thick winter fur of yellowish white with black streaks across its back, terrible fangs, and claws sharp enough to cut through even the toughest of ogre skin.

Manner	Confident, bold
Race	Beast
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	<i>Armored</i> (I), <i>Natural Weapon</i> (II), <i>Robust</i> (I)
Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Natural Warrior</i> (adept)
Weapons	Claws 7, 2 attacks at the same target
Armor	Thick hide 4
Defense	+1
Toughness 15	Pain Threshold 8
Equipment	None
Shadow	Bright green like the leaves of a birch (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Kotkas tend to hunt in pairs or groups of three adults; they usually sneak up on herds of prey and work together to isolate a single target. They do the same when facing a group of enemies - they focus on one target at a time, trying to gain an advantage through flanking movements. Naturally, they will attack the largest, most tough-looking opponent first.

A successful Vigilant test with the Bushcraft trait/boon, or a [Vigilant -5] test: Aside from the prisoner and the dead black cloaks, at least three people have recently passed this way; there are signs of fighting, or rather wrestling. Three people have continued east from here, most likely two victors of the fight along with the freed prisoner.

A successful Cunning test with the Medicus or Strangler ability, directed at the corpses: Both were strangled with a garrote. Markings on the wrists indicate that the victims were also held in a tight grip, which means that there must have been at least four attackers.

A successful Cunning test with the Loremaster ability, or a [Cunning -5] test, directed at the piece of cloth found in the female black cloak's clenched fist: It is a thick, cotton cloth, white but heavily bloodstained - probably not by the woman's blood,



A Helping Hand

If the player characters fail to realize that they should try to pick up Elsana's trail by the southern edge of the camp, Egusta could come to their aid. It would obviously be more fun for them to figure it out on their own, but a little bit of help is better than being completely stuck.

In that case, Egusta (or some other quest giver) seeks out the characters to inform them that she has received some potentially significant information: a startled father came to the watch tower saying that his children were beside themselves with fright; they claimed to have seen the Arch Witch.



as she has no wounds near the hand. The amount of blood should be enough to create a mystical link (for rituals such as the *Heretic's Trail/Summoning*) or for a bloodhound to locate/identify the wounded.

A successful Vigilant test directed at Mogdas: A thin leather cylinder has been sewn into the hem of the man's cloak; it contains a letter with instructions from Brother Eumenos, the leader of the Twilight Friars. However, note that he has not signed the document. A handout of the letter can be found on page 88.

On orders from the Curia

- *The prisoner is to be taken to the Templewall cathedral*
- *Do not gaze into the heretic's eyes; avoid physical contact; do not speak to her*
- *Non-lethal use of force is authorized*
- *Our Queen and her administration have been informed; they will neither stop you, nor provide any assistance or support*
- *Avoid contact with the fallen knights, Sarvola's renegades, and the general public*
- *In the event of imminent peril, bring the heretic to safety; trust no one but the brothers and sisters of our order.*

THE MONASTERY

The player characters might decide to visit the Twilight Monastery. As long as they do not make a really bad impression (for example by accusing the monastery of having caused the blight-births) they may enter the audience hall. After an hour of waiting, Mother Dealia comes to answer their questions. She has very little to say, but listens attentively:

- She is not aware of any prisoner being transported, and sternly insists that no member of her order would ever use corruption as a weapon, not even in the sacred battle against the darkness.
- She is, of course, familiar with the Night Lady, and can offer the same information as is revealed by a successful *Cunning* test with the *Loremaster* ability.
- When told about the wounded templars, she simply shrugs: "*the welfare of the fallen knights is no longer our concern*".

If the characters tell her about the Night Lady and what has happened, Dealia will ask them for a favor. All capable black cloaks, except those needed to keep the monastery safe from external and internal threats, are out on assignments. If the Night Lady is indeed at large in the region, and the characters manage to track her down, Mother Dealia demands that the heretic be brought to the monastery.

She closes with an ill-concealed threat: "*Failure to comply will have consequences; we are the black cloaks, we see all, hear all, and sooner or later, we know all; and we never spare the agents of The Eternal Night.*"

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The player characters may try to track the prisoner and her new escort through the mountains. Thanks to the snow, this is not particularly difficult. It takes three successful *Vigilant* tests with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon, or as many [*Vigilant -5*] tests, to find the way to the bandit camp. The first two of these are each followed by a challenge, as described below:

The first stop: The tracks lead past the cave of the solitary liege troll Raharax. The warrior monks snuck past undetected, about ten paces from the entrance, but the scent in their wake caused the furiously famished troll to go outside. Raharax is now crouching in the entrance of the cave, sulking over the wasted opportunity, rubbing the head of his powerful artifact: the long-hammer Thunder.

A successful *Vigilant* test is all it takes for the characters to detect the smell of his fire from a distance; a difference of 5 or more also reveals a tinge of something acrid in the smoke (Raharax). A successful [*Discreet +3*] test allows someone to sneak close enough to see what awaits them - an enormous, curled-up, black shadow against the red glow of the fire.

The characters must make a decision. They can follow the trail, but unless they have plenty of food to offer in return for safe passage, the reckless, ravenous troll will attack. Another option is to simply go around the cave in a large circle. They will not have any problem rediscovering the tracks, but then again, that is something the Game Master could choose not reveal beforehand.

Raharax

"You give food, or you are food!"

Until thirteen days ago, Raharax was the master of four rage trolls, six goblins, and eight enslaved humans. It was a glorious time. His minions brought him food, instilled respect in the local beasts, and let themselves be dominated as all minions should. But one day everything was lost; an avalanche buried all of his followers, and Raharax was the sole survivor - not counting the two human slaves who have since lost their lives to still his terrible hunger.

The liege troll is determined to rebuild his following, but cannot shake the feeling that the mountains want him to fail. Moreover, starvation has made him dizzy. He only fights when victory seems certain, or when he is completely overcome with rage.



Manner	Menacingly indecisive
Race	Troll (Liege troll)
Resistance	Strong
Traits	<i>Armored (I), Long-lived, Natural Weapon (I), Regeneration (III), Robust (II)</i>
Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 11 (-1), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 18 (-8), Vigilant 7 (+3)	
Abilities	<i>Alchemy (novice), Berserker (master), Exceptionally Strong (master), Two-handed Force (adept)</i>
Weapons Accurate	Thunder 12 (bastard weapon, massive, precise)
Armor	Troll skin 7 (regenerates 4 <i>Toughness</i> /turn, except damage from fire or acid)
Defense	+4
Toughness	18 Pain Threshold 9
Equipment	Crude alchemical equipment, the long-hammer Thunder (see page 83), jar of assorted coins (worth: 369 thaler)
Shadow	Crimson with faint streaks of rust (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Liege trolls without weaker creatures to command often lack their usual arrogance, and that is certainly the case with Raharax. On the other hand, he is absolutely famished. If the characters stand their ground he will hesitate and use gestures to demand tribute (i.e. food). But if the troll is offered too little, or nothing at all, his appetite gets the better of him; the same happens if the characters turn their backs on him or start to back away.

The second stop: The trail continues north from the cave, and when the player characters have passed their second tracking test they reach the River Veloma. In the mountains, the river is narrower and its currents stronger, but luckily the trail leads to a ford where the characters can wade through calm, knee-deep water. What they do not know is that some of the Ice Witch’s rebels are posted on the other side of the ford, to warn the camp up north of hostile bandit groups, ranger patrols, and packs of predators. The five guards are also capable of attacking (and defeating) smaller groups of threatening creatures.

Four of the five have the stats of a Robber, page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*, with the addition of *Shield Fighter* (novice): *Damage* 5, *Defense* +2. The fifth, who is the leader, has stats as a Robber Chief, page 211 in the



Raharax with company

Should Raharax not pose enough of a challenge on his own, a number of goblin minions could have survived the avalanche (2–4 depending on the desired resistance). If so, they have the stats of a Fortune Hunter (page 215 in the *Core Rulebook*).





AREA MAP

1. Prios Pass
2. Path
3. The Twilight Monastery
4. Ford
5. Bandit camp

0 15 KM



Core Rulebook, but with (corruption: 1) and *Ritualist* (novice: *Faraway Writing*) instead of *Dominate*.

If the characters expressly state that they pause on the southern side of the river to scan the far riverbank, they may detect the threat. Those who pass a [*Vigilant* -3] test will notice a well-concealed hut in one of the trees forming a grove about ten paces from the river. There are several ways to overcome this challenge.

Sneaking: Under cover of darkness it is possible to cross the river without being detected. If the characters do so individually they must all pass a [*Discreet* -1] test; if they move as a group only one test is required, from the character with the lowest *Discreet* value. If they are detected, the guards will fire their crossbows.

Attacking: The players could of course let their characters attack the guard post. They might even find a way to shield themselves from enemy projectiles for the two turns it takes to reach the tree hut – allow them to be creative and reward all good ideas!

Running: Another feasible (but possibly less attractive) alternative is to rush straight across the river and find shelter on the other side. It is a distance of roughly 40 meters, which means that they could make it in two turns, if they spend both their actions on movement. During the first turn, one crossbow bolt will be fired at them; during the second there will be 1+1D3 (=D6/2 rounded upwards) bolts.

Keep in mind that if the characters choose this option, and continue forth without neutralizing the guards, the people at the Ice Witch's camp will be warned of their arrival (through the *Faraway Writing* ritual, known by the leaders of all bandit groups).

Swimming: If the characters go a few hundred meters upstream, a person with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon may swim across the twenty-meter-wide river and attach a rope on the northern side, making it possible for the others to cross. Because of the currents, a successful [*Strong* +5] test is required by both the swimmers and those using the rope. Those who fail are swept away by the currents and take 1D8 damage, before they can clamber up on the northern riverbank (*Armor* protects as usual).

THE TROUT

The Realm of the Order has long had a handful of secret agents stationed at Prios Pass. Their main objective is to seek out refugees and persuade them to travel west to “the free Realm of the Order” rather than becoming “slaves to the will of the heretical House *Kohinoor*” – preferably capable and vigorous individuals, but all whose applications for a Queen's Permit have been denied are welcome. They also stand ready to participate in other kinds of operations, armed or otherwise.

The agent who has been in the village the longest without being discovered or killed is a woman named Marella, working as a kitchen maid at Madam Flora's tavern, the Trout. The player characters can trace her there thanks to the bloody cloth found at the scene of the ambush, in the female black cloak's clutched fist – it is a piece of the apron which Marella wore underneath her coat during the attack, bloodied from a cut on her thigh. For the next few days she will be limping in a way which is detectable with a successful *Vigilant* test.

There are two ways for the player characters to find Marella: either by using rituals such as

Summoning or Heretic's Trail (note that she crossed water twice on her way back to the Trout from the scene of the ambush), or by borrowing one of the rangers' bloodhounds (with or without involving a ranger). A bloodhound that smells the cloth and is guided through the village will pick up Marella's scent, provided that it comes within twenty paces of the Trout. As for the *Summoning/Heretic's Trail*, the ritualist master Toreo is willing to lend his expertise for only 12 thaler.

If the characters can identify Marella and take her aside for questioning, she just might crack - her weakness, if anything, is that she really likes being alive and finds it difficult to withstand psychological pressure. With credible threats, an equally credible promise of safe passage, and a successful [*Persuasive +3*] test, the whimpering agent divulges the following:

- She works for the Realm of the Order.
- Normally, her job is to persuade suitable people to choose the Realm as their new home, rather than Ambria.
- She is sometimes ordered to execute certain refugees from the homeland who try to enter Ambria.
- Two days ago she was contacted by a Father Orun of the Order of the Executioner. He had a letter from the Theologist, asking for her cooperation.
- She, Orun, and two others she did not know set up an ambush for two black cloaks and their prisoner; the attack was successful, apart from the fact that she was stabbed in the leg.
- She do not know the identity of the prisoner, but knows where to find her and Orun; they have been allowed to hide at one of the Ice Witch's bandit camps, about a day's march east of Prios Pass. Orun told her how to get there, in case he felt the need to summon her (how he would do that he did not say, but probably by using the powers of the Executioner).

BROTHER HUBERDO

If the player characters stop at the Trout before they head for the Ice Witch's camp, they will be contacted by Brother Huberdo. He simply walks up to them in the street, stops them, introduces himself as Huberdo, and asks if they have time to talk.

Being the only reformist operative on site, with his mission about to fail, Huberdo needs help. With faith in the grace and guidance of Prios, he turns to the people he saw rummaging around the burnt-down tent after the abominations' attack, well



Brother Huberdo's face never reveals what he is thinking, except when he wants it to.

aware that they could be his death. His trust in the Sun God does not stop him from looking nervously about as they talk - something that can be detected with a successful *Vigilant* test.

Unless the characters have other suggestions, he takes them to the village sun temple. He enters the antechamber, turns left into a corridor, and continues through the third door on the left. They reach a bare prayer alcove, no more than 3x3 meters, meant for two meditating people at the most. But there is room for more, as long as they remain standing.

Worried that Mother Elsana will soon be out of reach, or that her abductor means her harm, Huberdo tells the characters everything he knows:

- He starts with the background - the exaltation of Prios, the resulting protests, Elsana's imprisonment and the call for her public repentance.
- He then tells them about himself, and stresses that there are many others like him: people within the church who fight to reestablish the old interpretation of Prios' will, and thereby let "the Prios of War" pass into oblivion. The only person he will mention by name is Father Sarvola.
- His mission is to make contact and secretly trace the prison transport. Using a mind stone he reports back to his brothers and sisters in Yndaros; the plan was to have Mother Elsana freed near the capital and brought to safety until she is pardoned.
- Finally, Huberdo asks the characters to help him; to find and free the falsely accused heretic, and join him in escorting her to Yndaros.

ACT 3:

The Night Lady

WHETHER THE PLAYER characters rely on their ability to track the prisoner through the mountains or take the detour through Prios Pass, they will eventually arrive at the Ice Witch's camp where Elsana and the monks are hiding. How they proceed from there is completely up to them; as usual, the Game Master must be prepared to reward clever plans/initiatives, and punish the foolish.

The Bandit Camp

THE ICE WITCH and her rebels have ten or so campsites, some larger than others, scattered across the mountains south of Ambria. This particular base is their most advanced one, actually established within the Queen's borders.

The camp is situated in a nearly round mountain basin, formed by a stream which for hundreds of years has eroded the limestone. The bottom is between 140 and 160 meters in diameter, and at ground level, the only way in is through the tree-laden ravine where the stream flows south toward the River Veloma. The surrounding cliffs are more or less steep, but can certainly be climbed. The only exceptions are the northern ravine and the practically vertical cliff to the east, in which caves were carved centuries ago, their entrances about ten meters from the ground.

There are about twenty permanent residents, mainly old people who no longer have the energy to move between different campsites and prefer to live in actual houses rather than tents or huts. Mountain goats are kept in a large, fenced-in area in the north, and in summer smaller crops are grown in the basin, especially on its southern slopes.

Aside from the fortified posting by the ravine in the south, the camp is guarded by four battle-trained jakaars who roam free among people's homes and along the perimeter. Of course, they are particularly alert at night.

Ravine and guard post

The ravine in the bisected cliff which the locals call The Kid Horns is almost five hundred meters

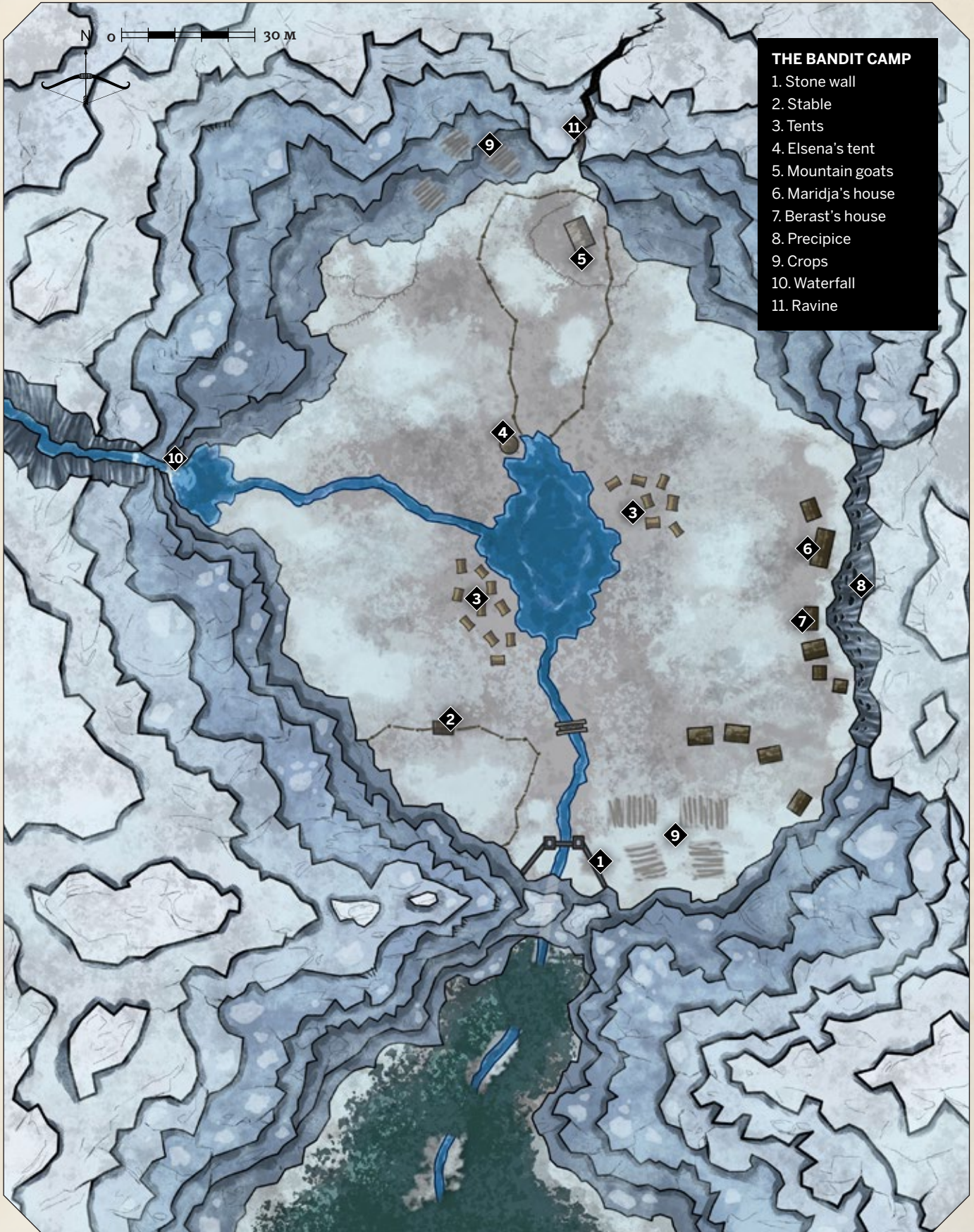
Jakaar, battle-trained

Battle-trained beasts are quite common among the clans in the region, and none more so than the wolf-like jakaar.

The barbarians have tamed these large canines for centuries, and for members of clan Odaiova it is common practice for every family to have at least one jakaar, to safeguard them at night and keep them company during the waking hours.

Race	Beast		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	<i>Natural Weapon</i> (II), <i>Armored</i> (I)		
Accurate 11 (-1), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 10 (0)			
Abilities	<i>Bodyguard</i> (novice), <i>Iron Fist</i> (novice), <i>Natural Warrior</i> (adept)		
Weapons Strong	Bite 5, 2 attacks at the same target		
Armor	Wolf hide 2 (flexible)		
Defense	-3		
Toughness	15	Pain Threshold	8
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Lush green (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The jakaars roaming the ravine are trained to mark anyone they do not recognize, by barking and trying to stop the intruder from escaping. They do not attack until they themselves are attacked, or one of their human masters orders them to.



The Ice Witch

More information on the Ice Witch and her followers can be found in the third part of the *Throne of Thorns*, which focuses mainly on Yndaros. For the time being, know that Maridja is beginning to lose control of her rebellious robbers, primarily because she is starting to lose herself...

deep and overgrown with trees and underbrush, with flat slopes in both the east and the west. With a starting width of a few hundred meters, the ravine narrows until it finally ends in a cliff – or so it seems. Down by the ground there is a three-meter-high (and equally wide) tunnel leading into the basin where the rebels are encamped.

On the far side of the tunnel is a stone wall, three meters high, with a sturdy, two-meter-high double gate. The posting is manned at all times by five sentries, two of them up on the balustrade which runs along the inside of the wall. They have the stats of a Robber, page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*, with the addition of *Shield Fighter* (novice): Damage 5, Defense +2.

Stable

A small stable and a pen where visiting rebels can leave their horses.

Tents

Visiting rebels pitch their tents, made from hides and pelts, around the pond in the middle of the basin. Fires for cooking and social gatherings are lit spontaneously, depending on the current number of guests and where they make their provisional homes.

When the player characters arrive, 26 of the Ice Witch's followers are gathered there (along with 14 children and elderly people), most with stats as describe above. However, five of them have the stats of a Robber Chief, page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*, but with (Corruption: 1) and *Ritualist* (novice: *Faraway Writing*) instead of *Dominate*.

Crops

In summertime, crops are grown in the basin, mostly the kind that can survive in the shade – cabbage, onions, beets and turnips. Those that require more sunshine are instead planted on the northern slopes.

Wooden houses

At the eastern end of the camp are ten modestly sized houses, made from wood with roofs of turf. Most are inhabited by the basin's permanent residents, while the others are used entirely for storage.

The largest one is the longhouse where Maridja and her followers stay whenever they visit the camp (during the adventure they are busy elsewhere). The smaller building next to it is the home of the camp's chief, Berast, and his family.

The precipice

There is a 70-meter-long section in the east where the mountain wall is extremely steep and up to a hundred meters high. Roughly ten meters from



Chieftain Berast tries to maintain a stern facade; in reality he is tired. Dead tired.

the ground are a number of cave openings, leading into a large network of tunnels and grottos – some created naturally, others with pickaxes and sled-gehammers. Sturdy wooden ladders lean against the openings, to be used as an escape route in case of emergency. The caves are easily defended, with enough food and water supplies to withstand a longer siege. In truly dire situations it is possible to raze the entrances and flee downwards, into the Underworld – dangerous, precarious, and largely uncharted, but better than awaiting certain death.

No one knows who created the tunnels, or why, and the basin's current inhabitants do not care. Whoever they were left behind several mosaic walls and floors, now ravaged by time, and other walls with cuneiform symbols which would no doubt interest the wizards of Ordo Magica, not to mention treasure hunters in search of ancient riches and knowledge.

Elsana's tent

As outsiders, the agents of the Realm of the Order are only welcome at the camp because Maridja has given them permission to hide there. They have been assigned a spot by the pond, near the goat enclosure; they keep to themselves and plan on doing so for their entire two-week stay. The tent is protected by the *Sanctifying Rite* ritual, which blocks the use of rituals like *Clairvoyance* and *Summoning*.

The round tent has a diameter of five meters, a single entrance (toward the pond), and inside a curtain divides its interior into two sections. Elsana lives in the one to the left from the entrance, and the warrior monks Orun and Adelena in the other.



Mother Elsana has a hard time trusting people, but she knows she must, to preserve her life and freedom.

Their agreement with Maridja allows them to share the other residents' food and supplies; nevertheless, they try to make do with what they have to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

One monk is always on watch throughout the night, guarding the others while they sleep and keeping the fire alive inside the tent, in a pit roughly a meter from the entrance (the curtain starts yet another meter further in).

Elsana, priestess

"You reap what you sow."

After more than twenty years in the dark, one would expect Elsana to be a broken woman. But she is a daughter of the Earthmother, and as such, she spent her captivity in her mother's embrace. Sure, her body may be weak, her skin as pale as snow. But in her mind she is still the same - a priestess who, with unshakable faith, is ready to fight for the restoration of Prios. For that is her conviction: the sun priests and the theurgs of today are the true heretics; their interpretation of Prios is a false god and a breeder of evil.

Elsana wants to go with Orun to the Realm of the Order, but if someone convinces her that the Reformists exist and are working together with Queen Korinthia, she may be persuaded to stay in Ambria. Going back to prison is not an option; she would rather spend eternity in her mother's embrace.

Manner	Grim and suspicious
Race	Human (Ambrian)

Resistance	Strong		
Traits	<i>Privileged</i>		
Accurate 9 (+1), Cunning 11 (-1), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 15 (-5), Quick 5 (+5), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 10 (0)			
Abilities	<i>Anathema</i> (adept), <i>Blessed Shield</i> (master), <i>Blessings</i> (master), <i>Earth Shot</i> (master), <i>Earthbinding</i> (adept), <i>Exceptionally Resolute</i> (adept), <i>Loremaster</i> (master), <i>Ritualist</i> (adept: <i>Exorcism</i> , <i>Sanctifying Rite</i> , <i>Purging Fire</i>)		
Weapons	None		
Bepansring	Blessed robe 2 (flexible)		
Försvar	+5		
Toughness	10	Pain Threshold	4
Equipment	None		
Shadow	Various shades of golden brown, like fire reflected in a gold nugget (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: Elsana is no stranger to combat; she spent years at the front during the initial stages of The Great War. If there is time, she surrounds herself and nearby allies with a *Blessed Shield*, after which she tries to *Earthbind* as many enemies as possible before crushing them with her mother's *Earth Shots*.

The Warrior Monks

"Rest in peace."

Both Orun and Adelena belong to the Order of the Executioner and were sent by the leader of the Order's Land, the Theologist, to free Elsana. They are willing to die to complete their mission, convinced that Elsana's freedom will please all the Young Gods, including the Executioner, as well as the long-suffering population of their realm. The only person who could persuade them to lay down their axes is Elsana herself.

Manner	Serious, vigilant
Race	Human (the Order)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	<i>Contacts</i> (the Order of the Executioner)
Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 11 (-1), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Bodyguard</i> (adept), <i>Feat of Strength</i> (novice), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Recovery</i> (master), <i>Steadfast</i> (master), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (adept)

Weapons	Executioner's Axe 7 (deep impact, unwieldy, massive)	
Armor	Blessed robe 3 (flexible)	
Defense	0	
Toughness	20	Pain Threshold 8
Equipment	Field equipment, food, 5+1D10 silver coins (equivalent to thaler but carrying the symbol of the Young Gods, the Aureola)	
Shadow	A dull, pale yellow, like unpolished brass (corruption: 0)	

Tactics: The monks will focus on protecting Elsana. If one of them is badly injured, he or she may withdraw from the battle to recuperate (*Recovery*).

Strategies

HOW THE CHARACTERS approach the camp depends on whether they have tracked the fugitives through the wilderness or pressured Marella into revealing the camp's location. If they go through the ravine, those who sneak close enough to notice the tunnel and the guard post must pass a *Discreet* test to avoid being detected; if they come from up on the slopes a [*Discreet* +3] test will suffice, as long as they explicitly state that they are being careful.

Note that the latter alternative gives them a chance to do some reconnaissance before they act. If they watch the camp for at least an hour, they may all make a *Vigilant* test. For each character that succeeds, one of the following pieces of information is revealed:

- Watchdogs (*Beast Lore*: Jaakars) are prowling the perimeter, two groups of two beasts each.
- A person (Orun) whose earth-brown robe differs from what everyone else is wearing, emerges from the isolated tent north-west of the pond, near the goat enclosure.
- Two young men are each carrying a crate of supplies from one of the wooden houses in the east toward the isolated tent. They spit repeatedly into contents of the crates, smirking maliciously.

When the characters have gained an overview of the camp's activities they must decide how to proceed. Below are four alternatives; should your gaming group come up with something else, you must try to keep up and adapt to whatever situation arises!

ATTACKING

Characters who appreciate a good fight may suggest an all-out attack against the camp. This could actually succeed – with the help of the enemy's enemy!

One option is to contact the Rangers and Captain Egusta at Prios Pass. Reinforcements have already arrived at the village in the form of returning patrols; a larger force is on its way from the capital's garrison. She may even let the characters decide the fugitive's fate, if she is given information regarding the Ice Witch's whereabouts and allowed to arrest the criminals who poisoned the soup with krusean berries.

The second obvious choice is the Twilight Monastery. Mother Dealia can, on short notice (24 hours), summon a force of forty black cloaks and ten theurgs to apprehend the fugitive. However, this would give the player characters very little control over what happens to Elsana.

The players might think of other suitable allies. For example, the three templars have recovered well enough to hire a group of veterans among the people at the refugee camp and, at the very least, create a diversion by charging through the ravine, while the player characters find another way in. But the knights have one condition: the heretic dies, or the characters will have made enemies for life.

We suggest that the allies, whoever they are, take on the robbers while the characters deal with Elsana and the warrior monks. The Game Master gives a summary of the larger battle, and the characters' failure or success determines the outcome of it all.

Veterans

"I have fought for my place in Ambria!"

Segri Elderra persuades 15 newly-arrived war veterans to join her in battle against the heretics, by promising to vouch for them as they apply for a Queen's Permit. Given the Templars' secession from the Curia this will hardly make any difference, but the veterans do not know that. They will do everything they can to earn the noble woman's recommendation!

Manner	Excessively proud
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	<i>Contacts</i> (the Ambrian army)
Accurate 15 (-5), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 13 (-3), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Recovery</i> (novice), <i>Shield Fighter</i> (novice)

Weapons	Sword 5	
Accurate		
Armor	Chainmail 4	
Defense	-3 (shield)	
Toughness	13	Pain Threshold 7
Equipment	Jug of liquor (for the nerves), 1D6 shillings	
Shadow	Scratched and dented copper (corruption: 0)	

Tactics: The veterans have seen plenty of combat and will not back down from a fight. But they lack finesse, and might well surrender – cursing bitterly – if they believe the opposition to be too great.

NEGOTIATING WITH THE CAMP CHIEF

Camp Chief Berast is not thrilled with having freeloaders around – they put further strain on the already scarce winter supplies, without pulling their weight at the camp. And while he himself finds it tolerable, many of his people do not, which could become a problem.

The clan may be led by Maridja, but it is certainly not a dictatorship; the camp chiefs are quite free to govern their settlements as they see fit. Moreover, Berast is already displeased with Maridja for having restricted their freedom to plunder along the River Noora and sending them less supplies than previous winters. But he is a greedy negotiator, which the player characters will soon learn.

If the characters approach the camp through the ravine without appearing threatening, the guards at the posting will seize their weapons and take them to Berast’s house; if they also explain the reason for their visit and ask to be kept away from Elsana and the monks, the guards will lead them in a quarter circle along the mountain wall.

As long as they offer him something valuable in return, the Camp Chief will let the characters do whatever they want to Maridja’s guests. He simply

Face to Face

WHAT WILL HAPPEN if and when the player characters find themselves in a negotiation with Elsana and her escort?

Such a situation could arise regardless of the strategies described above: following a negotiation with Berast, after one or more player characters have snuck up to the tent, or in the area outside the basin where the characters are lying in wait. Conversation could even be an option during a full-scale attack, for example if one of the opposing parties is (for the most part) defeated.

orders the rest of the camp not to interfere with what happens on the north-western shore of the pond. Their bargaining chips may include a large sum of thaler, an artifact, or information regarding (and help to attack) a place full of something he wants or needs.

Should Berast’s stats become relevant, use those of a Guard Warrior on page 216 in the *Core Rulebook*, but with *Vigilant* 7 (+3), *Persuasive* 11 (-1), and the addition of *Leader* (novice).

SNEAKING

People who are good at moving stealthily can enter the basin at night and head straight to Elsana’s tent – advisably by rappelling down the crack in the far north and subsequently sneaking through the goat enclosure. The Game Master will have to decide what *Discreet* tests the characters must pass depending on how they choose to approach the camp. As a suggestion, the example above would first require a successful *Quick* test not to fall while climbing (1D6 damage) and then a *Discreet* test not to agitate the goats into making noise and drawing the attention of the four jaakars roaming the area.

Should there be screams, turmoil or fighting as the characters enter the tent, it will take 1D4+1 turns for the jaakars to arrive, and another 1D4+1 turns for four guards to come running. 1D6+1 turns later, the tent is completely surrounded by the Camp Chief and his warriors.

WAITING

Another viable option (albeit a less epic one) is to sit back and wait for the fugitive and her escort to leave the camp site. This will take about ten days, and should not be entirely uneventful – although they are in Ambrian territory, the border regions are not without dangers, particularly in winter when packs of predators are sometimes seen as far north as on the southern shore of the River Doudram.

THE NIGHT LADY

How the player characters’ conversation with the Night Lady develops is largely up to them, but it is also important to keep in mind what Elsana hopes to accomplish and to what extent she is willing to compromise. The Game Master may assume the following:

- Elsana wants to live; having been imprisoned for more than two decades she wants to spend her final years in freedom, doing everything she can to vindicate herself.

- Vindication means crushing the image of Prios which now dominates Ambria; the one she refused to accept and still considers a heretical distortion devised by warmongers and power-hungry nobles (especially House Kohinoor) to subdue the people.
- Going back to prison is not an option; she would rather fall into “*the Mother’s embrace*” (i.e. die).
- She likes the idea of contributing to the development of the Realm of the Order, but more than anything she wants to see the Prios of War and all his apostles fall. This she will work towards, either through the agents of the Order or by working directly with Deseba and, eventually, the Queen.

A FINAL BATTLE

If the player characters meet with Elsana under peacefully circumstances and allow the heretical priestess to choose her own fate, the Game Master should consider presenting the gaming group with a final challenge: a hostile military force that comes between Elsana and her freedom.

Whether this is even possible, and if so, who the attackers are, depends on the player characters’ previous actions. If the characters attacked the bandit camp along with allies who have their own plans for the heretic, it is of course those very same allies that have come for her now. The black cloaks and the templars want her captured/killed, while the Rangers hold her and her escort responsible for the massacre at Prios Pass, or regard them as

foreign spies (in other words, they will not honor any previous agreement).

Otherwise, the characters could have been trailed after having met with representatives of a certain faction and happened to rouse suspicion – the snow-covered ground makes it possible to track someone over long distances, thereby avoiding the risk of detection. For example, the black cloaks could have followed them after a visit to the Twilight Monastery or the Sun Temple. Other possibilities are that the templars had Gromeo, the Rangers or some other scout, follow their trail; if so, the templars will be coming for the heretic and the Rangers will be determined to wipe out everyone living in the camp.

How such a scenario transpires and develops must be determined on a case-by-case basis, but as a suggestion, the characters and Elsana could receive a timely warning – Berast’s scouts have spotted the approaching (or awaiting) threat, and are kind enough to notify them. In the battle that follows, the characters must fight the enemy leader and his/her closest warriors, and the outcome of their battle determines what happens to Elsana and the warrior monks. Appropriate resistance for the characters could be:

- One Templar and PC number of Veterans (page 36)
- One Ranger Captain and PC number of Rangers (page 212 in the *Core Rulebook*)
- PCx2 Black Cloaks (page 214 in the *Core Rulebook*)

Aftermath

THE HOWLING OF *Damned Gods* is an adventure where the player characters must take a stand on issues that concern many of Ambria’s powerful and influential factions. It is up to the Game Master to decide what consequences their choices and actions will have, perhaps based on the rules for Scheming described in *Karvosti – The Witch Hammer* (see pages 58–60).

After a few initial words on the allocation of *Experience*, we offer some suggestions on how different outcomes might affect the fates and future adventures of the player characters. Last but not least, we want to share some ideas for further adventures, based on the characters, locations, and events featured in *the Howling of Damned Gods*.

EXPERIENCE

If one assumes (as suggested in previous adventures) that each header in the adventure text constitutes one scene, *the Howling of Damned Gods* should provide the player characters with between 14 and

17 *Experience* points. However, the outcome may vary depending on what route the characters take in the second act and how they tackle the challenges at the bandit camp. The amount of *Experience* earned may also be adjusted according to the preferences of your gaming group, should you want to speed up or slow down the characters’ progression.

ELSANA’S FATE

As long as there are witnesses to spread the word, the characters’ actions during this adventure will most likely affect their relations with many of Ambria’s powerful factions. This mainly depends on what happens to Mother Elsana at the end of the story.

Killing the priestess will certainly please the templars, but anger almost everyone else, though for different reasons and to varying degrees. No one will be more outraged than the leaders and agents of the Realm of the Order, followed by the Reformists within the Sun Church (Deseba, Sarvola, and by extension the Queen). The Order will put a price



on the characters' heads, while the other factions become significantly more difficult to deal with in future meetings and negotiations.

On the other hand, should the characters arrest the heretic and turn her over to one of the Ambrian factions, this will obviously evoke different reactions depending on who gets her (except for the Realm of the Order, which reacts as mentioned above). Leaving her with the black cloaks will infuriate the templars and the Reformists, and vice versa. Note that characters who have encountered the sun knights at the refugee camp, but still deliver Elsana to someone else, will become their mortal enemies for life.

Finally, the characters might choose to let Elsana go. Should this become known, it could make their future lives in Ambria much more complicated. The Sun Church will call them "*the sons and daughters of the Night Lady*" and brand them heretics. The templars agree with this judgement. The Reformists (including Korinthia) understand and accept the characters decision, but are still disappointed to have lost such an important ally. The only ones celebrating are the people of the distant Realm of the Order, which will probably be of little benefit to the characters.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

In the wake of the adventure, there are several seeds that can be cultivated into adventures of their own. The abovementioned reactions to the

characters' handling of Elsana could result in them being hunted or wanted in a way that forces them to act. There is not much to be done about the templars, but perhaps the Sun Church can be appeased into retracting their accusations of heresy if the characters perform some task "*in the name of Prios*" - for instance hunting down a wanted cult leader or a raging abomination.

The caves at the bandit camp can also be used as a basis for further adventures. The characters may want to head down and explore the Underworld, or interpret the paintings and mosaics on the mountain walls which could lead to an interesting treasure hunt, in the mountains or further north. Perhaps one painting describes the grand palace from which the lord of the region fled during the fall of Symbaroum?

Last but not least: if the player characters have come to Prios Pass to meet a relative/colleague, they could obviously dig deeper into the "*grave misdeeds*" he or she claims to have discovered. Perhaps a more thorough examination of his or her belongings reveals clues about the misdeeds in question? Perhaps the characters are approached by people who know that they were contacted by the relative/colleague - to ask for help, or to silence them? They could even travel across the mountains, to the relative's/colleague's former home in the withering Alberetor, in the hope of uncovering the mystery.



~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~

**HERE THE TORRENTS** of the rivers Doudram and Rava merge into a calm yet powerful stream which flows across the plains, lies Ravenia - the place in the Queen's realm which best embodies the joining of the Ambrian and barbarian people. But while the waters come together with

no after-effects other than some foam and whirlpools, the unification of the two peoples creates more serious problems - between different clans, between Ambrians and clansfolk, and between the various factions of the Promised Land.

Not all Ambrians welcome the foreign elements; many feel worried, or even threatened, after having heard the priests and the authorities depict them as intruders or as evil creatures carrying the darkness of the Eternal Night in their flesh. It is unclear whether the murders which have now put a damper on the festive spirit of the Ravenian people can be attributed to the city's diverse nature, but it certainly seems like a reasonable conclusion - one victim being an Ambrian priest, the other a witch from the forest of Davokar, both murdered with fire and in great suffering...

~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~



ADVENTURE 2:

WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE

Introduction

ALL AMBRIANS HAVE THEIR VIEWS on Ravenia, especially those who have never visited the Duke's seat in New Beretor. God-fearing people tend to take a negative position, ranging from suspicious aversion to hostile loathing. The reason for this is of course young Duke Ynedar's lenient (even welcoming!) attitude toward barbarians, and the fact that the local authorities seem to allow the strangers to practice their barbarian traditions without punishment or even the slightest reproach. The few people who dare to point out the positive effects of it all usually suffer a good beating, or at the very least a life-threatening warning, often ending with suggestions such as: "*If you love barbarians so much, why not move yourself to that shithole Ravenia!?*"

IN OTHER WORDS, the adventure *What's Bred in the Bone* is set on a stage which, to some extent, could be described as a meeting place between clansfolk and Ambrians. But Ravenia is not a melting pot whose ingredients are blended together. No, it is more like a cultural three-course meal, with stone walls separating the "barbarian" from the Ambrian, as well as from the culture and living standards of noble or affluent Ambrians. The city's social structures will mainly act as a background for *What's Bred in the Bone*, but may well be used by Game Masters wishing to create their own adventures in the principal town of New Beretor.

Background

THE YOUNG AND quite inexperienced Duke Ynedar of New Beretor has done something foolish, something very foolish. He acted in panic, but still had the calm to try and hide his own involvement. Now there is a serious risk of him taking a bad situation and making it worse; that the crisis he hoped to avert will not only happen, but cause he and his allies to slip off their wave of success and drown in a maelstrom of holy outrage. The situation is desperate; the Duke needs help.

This opening chapter focuses on the background and structure of the adventure, and describes how the player characters may be drawn into the story. Then follows the adventure's three acts, each in a separate chapter - a first chapter devoted to the prelude and the characters' initial investigations; a second about the hunt for a kidnapped prisoner; and finally a third in which the characters, along with the local authorities, must defend the Duke and his city against the wrath of the Lawgiver.

The text, and hence this book, concludes with an appendix containing new rules, a number of handouts, and some player maps.

What's Bred in the Bone is designed to be played in a time when the conflicts within the Ambrian Sun Church are escalating, and the strained relationship between the church and Queen Korinthia reaches its breaking-point. Gaming groups using the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns* as a basis for their adventures could play this one just before or soon after *Yndaros - The Darkest Star*, when the Curia is about to be dissolved and the Templars have long been on the path of pure vengeance. The resistance

awaiting them in Duke Yndar's city should also be well-suited for characters who are ready to take on *The Darkest Star*, although the Game Master must always think twice about the difficulty of the challenges.

The sections below present the history behind the situation which the characters will have to deal with. The adventure's central conflict is the one between the Sun Church's two factions: the Reformists and the Loyalists. The city of Ravenia and the duchy of New Beretor may seem rather remote, but maybe that is precisely why they have come to play such a pivotal role in the internal struggles within the church of Prios; something Game Masters can read more about in the eBook *The Throne of Thorns - Campaign Overview*, which can be downloaded for free at Järnringen's webshop [butik.jarnringen.com].

PAVE THE WAY...

Ynedar of Kohinoor is the son of Korinthia's twin brother, Korian, a war hero who met his demise during the offensive which resulted in the Queen's liberation. Ynedar was five years old when he was graced with the title of Duke; three years later he was forced to move to Ravenia, which at the time was little more than a military camp. He came with only his guardian Gadiro Brigo, the brother of his grandmother Abesina, and a caravan full of objects and furniture from the family residence in Alberetor. His mother died soon after his father, from (as they called it) a broken heart; meanwhile, his sister Korthena was put in a convent (where she would eventually join the still secret members of the Reformists).

For the first ten years, New Beretor was ruled by Korinthia and Field Marshal Eliana Nidel, while Gadiro, who had a keen interest in history and religion, took the Duke on trips in the woods and mountains. For long periods of time they stayed with Clan Chieftain Zoltar of Vajvod, and Ynedar made many friends among the youngsters at Vojvodar. The link between the barbarian religion and the one which characterized Alberetor before the Exaltation of Prios soon became clear to the young nobleman, as did the link between the Curia's Prios and the competitive, war-mongering lifestyle of the Ambrian people. He secretly grew more and more disappointed and angry with his aunt's failure to recognize (or unwillingness to deal with) the clearly villainous deeds of the priests, theurgs, and templars - feelings which were made darker still by the thought that both of his parents had died to put Korinthia on the throne.

Now Ynedar is all grown up, the same age as the Ambrian calendar, and has slowly but surely

maneuvered his way to the considerable power vested in him as a Duke of the Ambrian kingdom. Before Gadiro passed away in year 18, the teacher introduced his protégé to Father Ombardo, a priest in Ravenia with secret sympathies for the heretic Sarvola, who in turn had recently established his mission house in Thistle Hold. Their relationship grew deeper with time, and Ynedar is now in constant contact with both Sarvola and his close friend and ally, Deseba the Old. It has not been articulated, but the Duke is sure that Deseba plans to overthrow the Prios of War in favor of the pantheon of the Young Gods, and that she also wants to see the ambitious Korinthia dethroned and replaced, by him.

But roughly a month before the start of the adventure, something happened that shook Ynedar's world. During an audience at the Duke's fortress, First Theurg Armanda - Curia Loyalist and high priest at Ravenia's sun temple - claimed to have irrefutable evidence of Ynedar's heretical connections, with Sarvola as well as local "cultists" in the form of barbarian priests and the leaders of the Young Gods' chapel. She threatened to send her proof to the Curia, the Queen, and the Church of Dead Prios in Templewall if he did not immediately and publicly declare himself faithful to the Curia. She also had a more personal demand: that she would receive a donation of ten thousand thaler and the Duke's help to legally (albeit with fabricated evidence) dispose of two liturgs, whom she suspected of sympathizing with the heretic Sarvola - including Father Ombardo.

Suddenly, Ynedar's dreams of dethroning his aunt and leading his country toward a future of peace and collaboration, rather than conflict and competition, were seriously threatened. Something must be done, quickly and without risk of compromising his allies within the Sun Church, who, by the way, would never approve of the strategy which Ynedar thought absolutely necessary.

THE DEATH OF THE THEURG

First Theurg Armanda fought with the knights of the Dying Sun during the Great War, and kept swinging the glistening sword of Prios even after arriving in the Promised Land - aimed at barbarians, heretical settlers, and the region's untamed wilderness. She would never betray the Curia and its interpretation of the Lawgiver's ordinance; the only way to avert the threat she posed to Ynedar was to eliminate her. But the operation had to be conducted in a way that directed suspicion to someone other than himself, particularly because Sarvola and Deseba would seriously disapprove of him choosing the path of violence.

The News Spreads

Player characters who are interested in what is happening in Ambria could very well have heard of Armanda's murder shortly after it occurred. The Sun Church's representatives claimed that she was killed by "apostles of the *Eternal Night*" (i.e. the witches of Davokar) for being one of Prios' most prominent champions; rumor had it that she was even about to be elevated to Lightbringer at the Curia's next gathering. Other sources are more explicit in their assessments. They also blame the witches, but with the addition that the murderer was most likely a Karit, considering Armanda's participation in the cleansing of their clan's territory.

Five months earlier the Duke had been contacted, through friends in Barbarian Town, by the witch Algaya who was on the run from a local Karit chieftain. Her only crime was having communicated with the witch of another part of the fragmented clan Karohar, but the chieftain suspected a hostile conspiracy. Algaya asked for the Duke's protection and offered her services, contacts, and knowledge in return – something Ynedar did not hesitate to accept. Thus, the witch became the perfect tool to get rid of Armanda: she had personally experienced the ruthless sun warrior's ravages in southern Davokar, and welcomed the chance to avenge her slaughtered kin.

Algaya assumed her bird form, landed outside the wall to Armanda's bedchamber, sank into *Nature's Embrace*, and was soon standing inside the house by the foot of her target's bed. She filled the theurg's body with starving larvae and watched as the victim died a loud, writhing death. When people started banging on the bolted door she got out the same way she came in.

THE WHIP CRACKS

Had Armanda not been so greedy and conspiratorial she would have shared her evidence against the Duke with the Black Cloaks, especially with Brother Galdam, leader of the group responsible for investigating and reporting the heretical activities which have been allowed to continue in Ravenia. Then Ynedar would have had no chance to escape the claws of the Curia.

That New Beretor's tolerance of heretics was due to the young Duke's diplomatic genius is something the Curia's agents have long found difficult to believe. Instead, they have become increasingly convinced that Ynedar is in fact a heretic himself. The purpose of their systematic intelligence operations in Ravenia is to find proof of this; proof so strong that the Queen will

no longer be able to protect her nephew without incurring the wrath of the people.

When Prios' chief representative in New Beretor, First Theurg Armanda, was murdered, many priests and black cloaks refused to believe that the incident was not related to the church's internal conflicts. But the head of the Twilight Monastery, Brother Eumenos, glossed over the incident and asked his subordinates to trust in Ravenia's law enforcement and the Queen's agents in the region. Everyone knew it was a political decision, that he feared offending the Queen who was already on the warpath, and just about everyone bowed to his authority.

But behind closed doors another strategy was formed. Eumenos ordered Sister Losadra of the Whip of Prios to investigate the murder and discover the truth of it all. He also gave her an unofficial mandate to contact the Templars – while Iakobo Vearra had severed ties with the Curia, as First Avenger, he could hardly tolerate heretical beliefs and deeds among Ambria's earthly elite.

Sister Losadra immediately sent word to the black cloaks lurking in the shadows of Ravenia, ordering them to bolster their efforts to search for proof of the Duke's association with cultists and heretics. Losadra herself traveled to Templewall, where she, after a long wait, initiated talks with the First Avenger. At first Iakobo was not interested; he was convinced that Prios' killers and the greatest supporters of the *Eternal Night* were to be found in Davokar, Thistle Hold, and Yndaros, which is why his troops already had their work laid out for them. Losadra walked a tightrope. She saw that he weighed her every word carefully, searching for a hidden agenda. But finally, he agreed that a heretical duke should be a priority target for the Knights of Dead Prios.

An agreement was made, that Sister Losadra would produce irrefutable proof of the Duke's guilt and present it to Iakobo's son, Ervano Vearra, who was already hunting heretics in New Beretor along with the knights of his large and well-trained sun – a military force so strong that, in a surprise attack, it would have a good chance of fighting its way into the palace of Yndaros and claiming the head of the Queen herself.

THE FIRES OF PRIOS

Brother Galdam of the Twilight Brothers received Sister Losadra's message with a big smile on his face. He too is convinced that the heresy in Ravenia can be traced all the way to Duke Ynedar's bedchamber, and he has longed for a chance to crack down on the sinners.

His theory is that someone within the duchy's top leadership, most likely the Duke himself, had ordered the murder of the former High Priest and that it was later carried out by an allied witch or Ambrian cultist. He is equally confident that there is a heretical traitor among the city's priests; one who sympathized with Sarvola and others who have chosen to turn their backs on the Lawgiver. The already existing suspicions about Ynedar's spiritual adviser - due to his forgiving attitude and friendliness toward Ravenia's barbarian population - made him Galdam's first target.

An initial break-in into the solitary Father Ombardo's study provided clear evidence that he regularly visited the Young Gods' chapel in Barbarian Town, and that a "friend" usually accompanied him. They returned the following night to extract the friend's identity from him - an interrogation which due to the priest's unbreakable resolve led to increasingly brutal, fruitless methods, and ended with the cleansing fire of Prios.

The next person to be interrogated was the witch Yarmar, as he had previously been seen visiting said chapel and, moreover, had friends among the Ambrian locals. They lured his sister away and could then spend hours extorting a confession, which still never came. This interrogation also ended with the heretic being set on fire.

Growing more and more desperate to achieve results before Sister Losadra's arrival, they decided to get a better picture of Barbarian Town's population, in their hunt for other suspects. They did so by breaking into the home of clan Vajvod's envoy in Ravenia, the chieftain's daughter Molgara, the day before the player characters arrive in town.

So, when the characters become involved in the story, Brother Galdam and his black cloaks have committed murder twice along with two break-ins. Moreover, Sister Losadra is on her way, determined to punish the person or people responsible for First Theurg Armanda's death. In other words, they are about to find themselves in boiling hot water...

The Player Characters

THIS ADVENTURE SHOULD be playable with any player characters, possibly after a few adjustments or additions by the Game Master. Theurgs and others with strong ties to the Sun Church may seem like inappropriate members of the gaming group, but as long as they are not adamantly loyal to the Curia and what has become known as the Prios of War, their participation will probably be more interesting than problematic.

The adventure's background

5 months ago :

Algaya arrives in Ravenia and gains the Duke's protection.

5 weeks ago:

Armanda threatens Duke Ynedar.

2 weeks ago:

Algaya murders First Theurg Armanda at the Duke's request.

10 days ago:

Brother Eumenos gives Sister Losadra secret orders to punish the High Priest's killer.

7 days ago:

The Black Cloaks break into Father Ombardo's study and find evidence of heretical activity.

6 days ago:

Sister Losadra initiates talks with the First Avenger; Father Ombardo is interrogated and burned to death.

4 days ago:

The witch Yarmar is interrogated and burned to death; the new High Priest Leandro is suspected by the exasperated populace, and subsequently arrested and brought to the Duke's fortress (actually into protective custody, neither suspected or accused).

2 days ago:

Sister Losadra and Iakobo reach an agreement; Losadra heads for Ravenia.

1 day ago:

The Black Cloaks break into the home of clan Vajvod's envoy, Molgara.

In any case, the characters are caught right in the middle of the two opposing factions within the Sun Church - the Reformists who are personified by Duke Ynedar, and the Curia, represented by Sister Losadra and the black cloaks. Before the adventure is over, they will have to choose sides, or at least decide whether or not to aid the Duke when the wrath of Dead Prios appears in the form of an advancing troop of fallen sun knights.



The Whip of Prios arrives in Ravenia to find convincing proof of the Duke's heresy.

EXPERIENCE & ABILITIES

What's *Bred in the Bone* is created for player characters who have amassed roughly 100–120 *Experience* in addition to their starting level. However, the resistance should be adjusted so that it poses suitable challenges for the characters of your particular gaming group. Therefore, do not be afraid to alter the numbers, strength, or skill profiles of the enemies presented, if you think it would make the gaming sessions more exciting and/or dramatic.

As for specific abilities, it is (as always) good if one character has the *Loremaster* ability, at adept level or higher. Other important assets are the *Medicus*, *Alchemy*, and *Poisoner* abilities, as well as the boons *Bushcraft* and *Bloodhound*, since several challenges involve finding clues and following tracks. *Contacts* should also be mentioned, as the right contacts could make it easier to link the characters to the adventure's drama.

INCENTIVES

Obviously, no one knows what will motivate the players and their characters to engage in the story better than their Game Master. Below is a list of suggestions to choose from, but you may think of an entirely different entry point that would suit your gaming group even better.

Friends of the priest

One possibility is that a player character is already acquainted with Father Ombardo. In that case, he could be a relative, or perhaps a former teacher or spiritual counselor. Another option is that Ombardo and the character crossed the Titans together and had adventures during which a lifelong bond was forged between them; maybe the character saved the priest's life, or maybe it was the other way around?

Regardless, this character receives the following letter a few days prior to the start of the adventure (the Game Master decides the number of days based on where the characters are currently situated). What the recipient fails to realize is that, by the time he or she reads the message, Father Ombardo has already fallen victim to the shadows of which he speaks...

*Dear friend,
Sorry for being so brief, but if my fears are true, time is short. Hopefully I will see you soon, so that I can tell you about all the fantastic things about to happen, with my beloved Ravenia as the source of goodness.*

No change ever comes without resistance, and neither will this one. You once said that I can always count on your help. Or was it your protection? Anyway,

I'm afraid my time of need has come. Shadows follow my every step; shadows that I am sure mean me harm. Duke Ynedar is doing everything he can, but I would prefer to keep him out of this, for reasons best discussed eye to eye.

If you cannot help me, I understand completely, but if you are willing and able I hope that you will come to Ravenia as soon as possible. And if you have any reliable friends with hearts in the right place, please bring them along. I have the means to pay your expenses, and more, should it be needed.

*In the light of the Lifegiver,
Father Ombardo*

A member of the Sun Church or someone who passes a *Cunning* test with the *Loremaster* ability recognizes the Lifegiver as an older name for Prios, from the time when he was but one of many gods. According to the Curia, the Lawgiver is the correct designation, while mentioning the Lifegiver is considered an act of blasphemy. The fact that the writer dares to end his letter with that phrase is, in other words, most remarkable.

Problem solvers

If none of the player characters could possibly be acquainted with Father Ombardo, there are other people who could call for aid. Depending on who the characters are and which faction or factions they are aligned with, they may have contacts within Ordo Magica, the Ambrian Army, the Sun Church, or some barbarian clan that knows them to be capable problem solvers.

If so, the person who contacts the characters is concerned about what the two murders (Ombardo and Yarmar) mean, and fears that they are merely the beginning of a violent offensive against Ravenia's barbarian population and the Ambrians who associate with them. The person also has little to no faith in the local authorities' ability to resolve the situation, especially after the Duke had the newly appointed High Priest Leandro arrested without further explanation.

The Structure of the Adventure

WHAT'S BRED IN the Bone takes place at a time when Duke Ynedar has not yet come forth as the earthly figurehead of the Reformists within the Sun Church, and when relations within the church as well as between it and the crown are very strained indeed.

To save his own skin, and as a side-effect prepare his duchy for the new spiritual order, the Duke

In any case, the characters are offered a reward in the form of thaler, favors, or information if they can identify the murderers and stop them from striking again.

Moving up the ladder

Of course, both of the above-mentioned suggestions could instead be linked to the player characters' desire for advancement within one of the game world's factions. Perhaps it is not one of the characters but a senior representative of the Sun Church (Reformist or Loyalist), Ordo Magica, the Ambrian nobility, or even the Iron Pact, who is acquainted with Father Ombardo and receives his plea for help (i.e. the letter)? Or maybe the old priest is kept out of the incentive structure, and one of the character's contacts within some faction is sent a similar plea from a fellow faction member in Ravenia?

Either way, the characters are summoned to the leading representative's office (or equivalent), where they are offered the job of answering the call for help in exchange for something the faction is able to provide. It could be something as simple as a promotion within the faction's hierarchy, or the task may be a test for possible future missions.

Friends and family

When it comes to stirring player characters into action, one should never rule out utilizing personal relations. If Ombardo and Yarmar do not make appropriate potential relatives, friends, or former partners of a character, the Game Master is welcome to introduce additional victims – such as a completely innocent Ravenian bystander who just happened to see the black cloaks leave the scene of a murder and got stabbed to death as a result?

It is also conceivable that the characters, for one reason or another, have already spent a few months in Ravenia and during that time have gotten to know both the city and several of the adventure's central characters. In that scenario, it could even be the Commander of the City Watch who requires their assistance, provided that they have already made a name for themselves as capable problem solvers.

has Ravenia's Loyalist High Priest murdered. This causes the already suspicious black cloaks to react, but neither the First Father nor Brother Eumenos dare to openly challenge Queen Korinthia and her nephew, the Duke.

However, Sister Losadra of the Whip of Prios is given a secret mission to solve the murder. She orders the black cloaks stationed in Ravenia to

investigate the incident and find evidence of the Duke's involvement. Meanwhile, Losadra contacts the Knights of Dead Prios in the hope that they can be persuaded to act where the Curia cannot ...

ACT I: THE SHADOWS OF THE FLAMES

The characters are hired, or take it upon themselves, to uncover the truth behind the recent murders in Ravenia – the victims being the liturg Ombardo and the witch Yarmar. An initial talk with the city's Commander can give them a clear enough picture of the victims and murders.

After their initial investigation, three insights can be uncovered, together leading to the end of the first act – the murdered priest had made secret visits to “the chapel” along with a nameless “friend”; the burned man-witch was busy discussing the differences/similarities between the barbarian gods and the pantheon worshipped by the Ambrians before Prios was declared the One; after a break-in into the archives at the home of clan Vajvod's envoy in Ravenia, three books are missing, one of them being a report of activities in the Chapel of the Young Gods.

Thus, the player characters head for the chapel, where they eventually meet Algaya – the witch who killed the former High Priest (after making a deal with the Duke). She confesses unequivocally, but does not mention the Duke's involvement. The conversation is interrupted when Brother Galdam and his black cloaks come to punish Algaya. The witch immediately sinks into *Nature's Embrace* and escapes; the characters are left to fight the black cloaks, who assume everyone in the chapel to be heretics and allies of the late High Priest's killer.

ACT II: THE HERETIC'S PLEA

The player characters have barely caught their breath after the fight when they hear a disconcerting rumor: Duke Ynedar is missing. A servant can reveal that Sister Losadra of the Whip of Prios visited the Duke, demanding to see the arrested High Priest. It was agreed that the Duke and two bodyguards were to take the prisoner to a storehouse in Barbarian Town.

When the characters arrive at the storehouse, they find no one but the Duke's murdered escort. Further investigation suggests that a wounded person has fled the scene. The trail leads toward the edge of the district, to an abandoned ruin from the days of Symbaroum. The characters can choose to immediately attack the members of the Whip of Prios who are also following the trail, or wait until they find the Duke. Either way, combat ensues.

If the characters manage to save him, the Duke collapses in tears of relief and decides to trust them.

They now have a choice to make: will they side with the Reformists or with the Curia, or simply walk away? If they choose the first option, they must track Sister Losadra and the abducted High Priest to a farm roughly an hour's walk east of the city. Sister Losadra will of course fight to defend herself if the characters attack, but otherwise she surrenders the prisoner without causing any trouble. She says they are too late anyway: the information extracted from the High Priest was enough to convince Ervano Vearra that Ravenia deserves the retribution of Prios!

ACT III: LOVED BY THE SUN

The third act is really all about what the player characters will do with the knowledge that a group of 20–30 murderous templars are about to attack Duke Ynedar and his supporters.

As they return to Ravenia, it is revealed that the witch Algaya is with the Duke. Ever since her flight from the chapel, she has followed the developments in her bird form. She helped the Duke escape from the storehouse; she then followed Sister Losadra to the farm where Ervano Vearra was waiting for evidence, after which she tailed Ervano to his camp.

There seems to be four feasible approaches, all with certain complications. Unwise players/characters may think it a good idea to negotiate with Ervano; if so, they should be strongly advised to reconsider, but not prevented from giving it a try.

Defense: The player characters, the Duke, and their allies lure the enemy onto the Mound and fight them there, between the Fortress walls and the district walls.

Open battle: The city's defenders line up on the rolling fields north of Barbarian Town, hoping that their elevated position will take the edge off the knights' initial cavalry charge.

Ambush: The player characters and their allies discreetly try to position themselves in an ambush, either by the edge of Barbarian Town or somewhere else on the road between Ravenia and the knights' camp.

Attack: Led by the player characters and the Duke, the defenders of Ravenia march north to take the fight to the enemy, preferably surprising them.

Whichever strategy they choose, the player characters will have to fight the leader of the Knights of Dead Prios, Ervano Vearra, and possibly Sister Losadra, if she is still alive and free – other opponents are dealt with by their allies. The selected strategy could make their part of the battle easier or harder, which they must weigh against the potential risks for the people of Ravenia.

Ravenia

THE PRINCIPAL CITY of New Beretor was built around a restored castle ruin, situated on a hill where the river Rava merges with the thundering Doudram. Scholars say that the fortress has been there since the days of Symbaroum, and that it seems to have been razed, rebuilt, and expanded many times. The latest renovations were completed in year 8, shortly after Duke Ynedar's arrival. Since then, Ravenia has undergone a remarkable transformation.

WHEN THE DUKE arrived, the city was comprised of the fortress and a few permanent structures on the flat slope known as the Mound, which at the time lacked outer walls. The rest was little more than a large army camp for the soldiers who constituted the Queen's eastern army division in the war against clans Jezora and Karohar. Today's Ravenia really started to emerge when Chieftrain Haloban was defeated and the river Doudram's importance to the realm became clear, for trade and transportation of resources from the woods and mountains.

The collaboration between New Beretor and clan Vajvod has grown over the years, slowly but

surely. Clansfolk are of course present in all major Ambrian settlements, but not in the numbers and with the natural integration which characterizes Ravenia. There might be some truth to the claim that large parts of the refugee camp in Yndaros could be emptied, if only Ravenia's barbarians would return to the woods and make room for honest, hard-working Ambrians. But neither the Queen nor her nephew seem to agree – the permit barbarians need to rent or buy property inside Ravenia's outer walls is likely nothing more than an attempt to appease the critics – not least the church's representatives, who claim that *"the evil of the wilds is taking over New Beretor."*

Overview

RAVENIA IS ONE of the Ambrian settlements that has grown the most in the last decade, if Barbarian Town is also taken into account. And it should be – the individuals living and working in the area do so without any particular restrictions. There are plenty of Ambrians there as well, especially after working hours, when it is time for people to eat, drink and socialize.

The rapid growth could for the most part be described as harmonic, but everyone who has been part of the effort can point to one shining exception. During High Priest Armanda's eight years of service, the population grew increasingly divided in their views of the Sun Church in general and the local sun temple in particular. She was quite open about detesting *"the Duke's indulgence toward barbarian cults and heretical idolatry,"* and her rhetoric hardened over time. It became more

and more common for her sermons to focus on *"the contagious evil bred in barbarian bones, infecting the Ambrian spirit"* – a message that soon spread throughout the city and sparked anger in the populace; anger due to discontent in some cases, or self-righteous agreement in others.

But now Armanda's time has passed, and she left behind a city which in other respects is relatively well-off. Most of its inhabitants are employed, the crime rates are low, and the sun priest who replaced her is much more tolerant of things that in other parts of the realm would immediately be considered heretical. Sure, there is some grumbling here and there, and yes, the districts inside the wall are characterized by a lifestyle much like the one in other Ambrian settlements, but overall Ravenia seems to be headed toward a bright future.



- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Barbarity | 8. The Chieftain's Axe | 16. Sun Temple, Old | 23. Weary Legs |
| 2. Daemon Temple | 9. Karvosti | 17. Sun Temple, Great | 24. The Owl and Night |
| 3. The Enchanted Glade | 10. The Crab and Shrimp | 18. City Watch Offices | 25. Vajvod's Envoy |
| 4. The River Hunter | 11. The Masquerade | 19. Tandem | 26. The Wanderer's Staff |
| 5. The Raft Camp | 12. Master Tailor Norlio | 20. Tharaban's Cellar | 27. The Wild Game Grotto |
| 6. Light House | 13. The Octagon | 21. The Hawser | 28. Ynedar Street |
| 7. The Promised Land | 14. Ordo Magica | 22. Chapel of the Young Gods | 29. High Priest Residence |
| | 15. The Oval Plaza | | 30. Fortress |

Adventure Locations

- A. Blue Moon Storage
- B. Galeia's Trading House
- C. Ombardo's home
- D. The Ruin
- E. City Watch HQ
- F. Yarmar's home

BARBARIAN TOWN

The district north of Ravenia's city walls currently has about five thousand permanent residents, living in log houses with one or, in rare cases, two floors. Its streets and alleys form a muddled maze, having emerged naturally as new buildings were constructed rather than as a result of careful planning. Also, there are plenty of public squares both large and small, all with their own fire pit around which people tend to gather after dark. The northernmost section comprises a campsite where guests can park their wagons or pitch their tents. This area is often occupied by up to a thousand people of the more adventurous

professions - mostly merchants, explorers, and treasure hunters on their way to or from Davokar.

Newcomers will find that there always seems to be a reason to party, and should the reason not be so obvious, the residents simply come up with one. It should be noted that the feasts in Barbarian Town are different from those in Yndaros, Agrella or Thistle Hold. Sure, a lot of drink is consumed, mostly in the form of softbrew and berry juice, but here the festivities are dominated by singing, music, wild tales, and the stilt dance practiced by clan Vajvod, which today can also be seen in other parts of the realm. And then, there is of course



the food. Every other fire pit north of the wall is equipped with some form of stationary grilling apparatus, either grates or skewers. It is often the tavern owners who take turns managing the nearest fire pit, which gives rise to comparisons and discussions that sometimes go on for days. The Zarekian tavern known as the Wild Game Grotto near the West Gate and the Vajvod-run Tharaban's Cellar on Karvosti Plaza usually emerge victorious from such comparisons, even if the cook at the inn of the Enchanted Glade also has plenty of admirers.

Also worth mentioning are the ten ruins which over time have become part of the district's residential area, probably belonging to a larger settlement located here when the fortress was first raised. Most of them are no more than a wall section or a cellar that has been incorporated into the district's current buildings, such as the dungeons under the local City Watch station. However, there are two striking exceptions: a robust, quarter-spherical bleacher section which has been retrofitted and incorporated into what is now simply known as the Arena, and the towering ruin called the Daemon Temple.

NORTH TOWN

The buildings between the outer and inner walls are in many ways similar to those in other Ambrian cities. Roughly three thousand people are huddled together north of Ynedar Street, in houses whose lowest stories are made of stone, with one or two wooden ones stacked atop, often with bay windows or balconies casting shadows over the district's narrow streets.

Storage buildings line the river bank. Most of the goods passing through the city are headed for Yndaros or Agrella, which is why the storage buildings mostly contain wares and materials produced in New Beretor. While moored boats are being loaded or unloaded, their crews take the opportunity to visit popular entertainment facilities such as the Masquerade and the River Hunter, both located just east of the storage buildings; some also spend the night at one of the district's inns, of which the Owl and Night and the Promised Land are thought to offer the best value for money.

In North Town one also finds the Oval Plaza, where a market is held around the statue of the boy duke Ynedar in full armor, his sword raised in a victory gesture and his face turned toward the heavens of Prios. The plaza is surrounded by taverns and gambling dens, except for its south-western side which is dominated by the Great Sun Temple.

The area east of the plaza is the city's most important artisan district. It is also the home of many of the barbarians who have been granted residency inside the outer wall, or who settled there before the permit application system was implemented. It is said that

among these barbarian residents, two of the city's most infamous criminal elements are hiding: the smuggler known as Black Bear, and the members of the blood cult which, at monthly intervals, leaves behind blood-drained bodies in public places.

The existence of Black Bear and the cult – commonly known as the Midnight Men, the Bloodsuckers, or the Starved – has not yet been proven; to outsiders they can easily be perceived as tall tales and delusional fantasies, rather than actual people. But then again, the highly corrupted smuggled goods sometimes encountered in the city or on passing vessels, and the nine bloodless bodies with ripped-off tongues that so far have been found, are all painfully real...

SOUTH TOWN

The districts west of the Mound are occupied by a thousand of the city's wealthier residents. Many of them have come from other parts of the realm, often lowborn nobles aiming to profit from Ravenia's advantageous position on the trade routes between the mountains and eastern Davokar on the one hand, and cities like Yndaros, Agrella and Mergile on the other.

Another group is comprised of successful, retired explorers who feel at home among Ravenia's relatively tolerant and diverse population. The explorer of Bargoalg's burial ground, Anelea Boldheart, and Orleo the Plunderer who first discovered Haganor, even found their spouses among the clansfolk; others simply seem to prefer the barbarian way of life over the Ambrian one.

The Octagon, the district's public square, is where one finds the city's finest taverns. The owner of the Crab and Shrimp, Master Alsgalm, is renowned, even in Yndaros, for his traditional Ambrian seafood dishes; the same can be said of Chefs Pero and Larso at Tandem – a tavern specializing in finger food such as cheeses, sausages, canapés and (allegedly) sixty-three types of cold cuts. The Octagon is also where Master Tailor Norlio has his workshop, known for making the most exclusive explorer's apparel in the realm; highly durable and practical, to be sure, but nevertheless disliked by many explorers and fortune hunters, who associate such apparel with affluent individuals who, in their opinion, should never set foot in the forests.

THE MOUND

Roughly three hundred souls have the privilege of living inside the walls of the Mound, in what is also known as Old Ravenia, even though there is hardly a single building more than twelve years old. The nickname refers to the fact that the entirety of the Duke's city initially fit within the space. Since year 14, the city has grown explosively; a growth which in large part is due to migrant workers from Vajvod, Odaiova and Karohar, who decided to stay

The Murder at Cliff

The competition between Tona and Anabelora has driven them to lower their prices to such an extent that Cliff is starting to have a negative effect on trade in Ravenia. The murder of Karal was orchestrated by a secret society of merchants from the Duke's city, to fuel the conflict between the two families. An assassin called the Noose was hired to kill the victim and plant false evidence to frame Tona's goons.

and thus formed the groundwork for what is today known as Barbarian Town.

The district closest to the fortress is home to the city's most influential individuals - in addition to the Duke himself, there is the highly regarded Commander Burlio of the City Watch, the aged but still very capable Field Marshal Eliana, Chapter Master Leviana of Ordo Magica, and a handful of wealthy merchants. The Sun Church also owns a villa in the area, intended for the city's High Priest, while another two houses are available for nobles who for one reason or another have decided to visit the duchy's principal city. Last, but far from least, is the large, enclosed property which the Duke has allocated to clan Vajvod's envoy and her aides. The envoy is none other than Molgara, daughter of Chieftain Zoltar, and hardly a day goes by without one overhearing, or partaking in, a discussion about the probability of her soon becoming the duchess of New Beretor.

The Mound is guarded by a force of thirty battle-hardened soldiers who, in three shifts, take turns patrolling the area, manning walls and gates, and resting. There is also Ynedar's personal bodyguard, consisting of four war veterans, each with a lowborn girl or boy acting as squire. Aside from all this (and the forty or so men and women of the City Watch), the duchy's standing army, including the Duke's personal regiment commanded by Elna Parfas, are garrisoned in Melion and Starak. This is because it is assumed that any future threats to New Beretor will arrive from the forest.

SURROUNDINGS

Almost a hundred and fifty thousand citizens can call Ynedar Kohinoor their duke, a fifth of whom are based in the royally controlled region

Adventure Locations

THE PLACES, PEOPLE, and establishments described below are all likely to appear in the adventure *What's Bred in the Bone*. As Game Master, you have every right to come up with additional locations and develop

surrounding Ravenia. Like in the rest of the realm, an overwhelming majority of the population are farmers, stockbreeders, or both.

Three larger villages are worth mentioning. Aram's Isthmus is located on the bank of the river Rava, about halfway between Ravenia and the barony of Parfas. The village strongman, fisherman Romar, also known as the Whopper, stands accused of supporting, harboring and possibly even leading the robbers who sporadically attack transports along, and on, the river. But since he has not yet been arrested, it is probably a lie; unless he is extremely good at hiding the truth from the Duke's agents.

About the same distance north along the Doudram lies Cliff. The village is controlled by two merchant families, led by matriarchs Tona and Anabelora. Each family runs its own inn, brothel, and trading house - each attempting to lure travelers from the river who would prefer to avoid Ravenia's crowded berths. The competition between the families is ruthless and manifests itself in sabotage, public allegations, and sometimes outright fist fights. The situation could be getting out of hand, since Anabelora's oldest son has been found murdered. Aunt Tona swears that her family is innocent, but unless another perpetrator can be identified, such assurances will probably fall on deaf, furiously blushing ears.

Last but not least, there is the village which has formed near the Duke's own estate, located a slow three-hour ride from Ravenia, on the way to Baroness Eloria Mirelgo's seat. The village is called Ynedar's Legacy and is really only known for one thing: the largest mass burning in Ambria's brief history. It was the black cloaks (along with the Royal Sekretorium, according to some) who three years ago uncovered an underground temple dedicated to the Hostess, or more specifically, one of her forms known as the Lover. Nearly fifty people were caught committing "*unspeakable acts in a sickening manner for three days,*" most of them having come from Ynedar's Legacy, others from Ravenia or its surrounding countryside.

Rumor even has it that the Duke himself was there, but that he managed to escape before the Black Cloak's cultist hunters, the Whip of Prios, raided the temple, or that he was captured but spared the fire because of his rank.

Ravenia into a dynamic city, full of color and contrast. Of course, you must also be prepared to improvise based on the players' whims and the resulting choices and strategies of their characters.

THE RAFT CAMP

No bridge has yet been built over the almost hundred-meter-wide Rivers Doudram or Rava. Plans have been made, and bridgeheads are currently being installed where Doudram narrows, roughly a kilometer north of Ravenia. But the project has been put on hold due to the emergence of the Sovereign's Oath (see the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*); the troops of New Beretor's 2nd Army who did much of the work are now posted at the border of Davokar.

For now, the two raft-like, hand-pulled ferries passing back and forth across the river will have to suffice. People must often wait in line, at least those traveling with one or two wagons, and many pass the time at one of the two nearby taverns: the Hawser and the Wanderer's Staff - the former located at the western raft camp, the latter on the city side. On the west side one also finds an inn called Weary Legs and a growing number of storage buildings, for those who do not need to store their goods on the east side.

The trip across the river is a slow one; even though the operators work themselves into a soaking sweat, it usually takes a quarter hour, at least when the currents of Doudram are strong. The fee is only meant to pay the wages of the twelve workers, and is therefore as low as an orteg per creature (person or animal) and a shilling per wagon (regardless of size).

THE OLD SUN TEMPLE

The small temple at the Mound is only ever visited by nobles, for social reasons as much as religious ones. It was completed in year 9, and its only liturg at the time is still the only priest there, elderly Father Manos. Old age makes it difficult for him to walk, and has recently started affecting his speech, memory, and his mental faculties in general, but the visitors do not mind. The current conflicts within the Sun Church do not bother him; all Father Manos cares about is the welfare of his flock.

THE GREAT SUN TEMPLE

The holy building which almost everyone simply calls the Temple has since year 13 been the Sun Church's seat in Ravenia - this is where the High Priest works and delegations and missionaries come from other parts of the realm to visit. Mass is held every night at sundown, but the doors are open throughout the day to those in need of advice, healing, or help to ease the pain of a tortured soul.

With Armanda dead, the Great Sun Temple is entirely dominated by priests and initiates aligned with the Reformists. High Priest Leandro, and liturges Sondro and Torun (barbarian) are, along with their brothers and sisters, determined to regain the people's trust; they can still be met at the temple,

but also spend lots of time among the residents of Barbarian Town. This is of course upsetting Loyalist worshipers of Prios all over the realm, but there is no indication that the Queen or her nephew have any intention of intervening. It may be that they are in fact silently supporting the Reformation. Perhaps a group of the Lawgiver's true believers will soon make reality of the loose assertion that when authorities are powerless to combat evil, the people must rise up against all who threaten to plunge the world into the darkness of the Eternal Night...

THE CHAPEL OF THE YOUNG GODS

The fact that the Chapel of the Young Gods exists and operates in Barbarian Town is an open secret. It was established four years ago by a group of Vajvods who had taken a liking to the Young Gods - a pantheon they could easily identify with after having lived in Davokar. What almost nobody knows is that this liking arose after a series of very secret prayer sessions with the sun priest Father Ombardo.

The former seamstress Torga is the informal head of the chapel, but it has no actual priests. Instead, everyone is regarded as equal when it comes to interpreting the message, will, and desires of the Young Gods; the visitors help each other find ways to deal with the hardships and problems of everyday life, guided by the icons in the chapel's seven alcoves - paintings of the Lifegiver, Earthmother, Executioner, Pathfinder, Wildling, Guardian, and Hostess.

All are welcome to visit the Chapel. It is not difficult to find, even though the building lacks any outward signs of being a holy place. Everyone in Barbarian Town knows where the chapel is, as do most of the people living in Ravenia - including all the city's watchmen and sun priests. The building usually has between five and twenty visitors at any time, crouching in the alcoves of the gods or sitting at the chapel's table, talking and drinking honeyed herbal water.

BARBARITY

Rarely has an establishment had a more misleading name than the Barbarity Inn. Well, obviously that depends on who you are asking. Clansfolk may very well associate the word with the quiet conviviality which characterizes evenings at the tavern, but many Ambrian visitors are likely to expect something else entirely. In any case, the Ambrian owners, spouses, Doralg and Moira, and their motley crew of regulars are doing their best to make Barbarity feel friendly and welcoming, rather than drunkenly rowdy. Guests who do not act accordingly soon find themselves shoved into the streets by a very determined mob.

A night at Barbarity costs two shilling per person, regardless of whether it is spent in the dormitory or in one of the seven four-bed rooms, but then a steady breakfast of porridge is included in the price. The food is simple but well-cooked, and every day there are at least two traditional Ambrian dishes and two more rustic ones to choose from. Thirsty customers can also (besides berry juice and soft drinks) order stout as well as various forms of Veloum and vesa.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Mutton pâté with yellow beets | 5 shillings |
| Roasted muskrat med sauerkraut cream | 6 shillings |
| Mix of roasted nuts | 4 ortegs |
| Tankard Duke's Relief | 1 shilling |
| Tankard Veloum | 2 shillings |

CLAN VAJVOD'S ENVOY

The chieftain's daughter Molgara is the head of what the Ambrians would call a Legation - a diplomatic office representing Zoltar's interests in terms of trade, politics and security. But in this case the envoy has assumed a more important role, partly at the request of the High Chieftain, who is both informed about and interested in Ravenia's development. Molgara's staff keeps a record of all barbarians, regardless of clan affiliation, who choose to take up residence in the Duke's city. They also do their best to help everyone who comes to them with various problems, whether they are hunted, exiled or simply financially destitute.

In addition to the residence where the staff live and work, there are a number of buildings on the enclosed lot. The most notable of them is the Vajvod Tower which, at almost twenty meters tall, rivals the Fortress' battlements in height despite being positioned a bit downhill. From its top, one can see all the way to the edge of Davokar, but above all, one has a clear view of Barbarian Town and its inhabitants. On the lot there is also a stone house, where Chieftain Zoltar stays during his increasingly infrequent visits to Ravenia, as well as two smaller guest houses and a storage building. Persistent rumors suggest that the latter is full of valuables - among other things a collection of artifacts salvaged from Symbarian ruins, waiting to be presented as gifts to Ambrian dignitaries. Such tales have no doubt tempted many a thief through the years...

THE DAEMON TEMPLE

At almost the exact center of Barbarian Town lies an unusually well-preserved ruin with so many nicknames one might think that people hold it dear. They are not names of endearment, however, but of fear - names like the Daemon Temple, the Night Cradle, the Blight Gate, or simply the Abomination.

It is a 25x50 meter rectangle of thick, dark gray stone columns, standing on an equally gray-black, meter-high foundation which is shaded by a massive roof of the same material. The stone must once have been smooth and polished, and apart from certain cracks and cavities, it seems to have withstood the gnawing teeth of time quite well; perhaps unnaturally so. The floor between the columns is perpetually covered with trash and debris; peeking between the columns, one can also see a structure rising above the flat surface: a cube of what seems to be gray-streaked stone, polished to a shine and as tall as a grown goblin.

Anyone who sets foot on the elevated floor experiences a chilling shiver along with strong feelings of unease; the person must pass a *Strong* test every minute, or suffer 1D4 temporary Corruption. Exactly what causes said effect is subject to Master Engurst's studies, but since he refuses to discuss the matter before having obtained "*irrefutable knowledge*," everyone else must make do with speculation. What is clear, however, is that everyone keeps their distance from the ruin, and that it is assumed to be the source of all inexplicable sounds heard across Barbarian Town, especially if they are considered scary and occur at night. This, combined with the rumor that anyone who stares long enough at the cube of the Daemon Temple can see it quiver, is enough to haunt the dreams of children and adults alike...

ORDO MAGICA

Ordo Magica's chapter in Ravenia is small for being in the principal city of a duchy. The reason for this is a combination of the city being situated quite far away from both Davokar and interesting mountain regions, and the local nobles having other priorities than making donations to Ordo Magica. The largest chapter in New Beretor is actually found in Miel, the provincial capital of County Melion.

But this is of little concern to Ravenia's two Order Masters. Master Engurst receives funding from the Queen, the Duke, and Ordo Magica's leadership to study the Daemon Temple; enough to engage two adepts, two senior magistrates, five novices, and all the daythalers who are needed from time to time (for instance, if he decides to implement his plan to have a tunnel dug under the ruin's foundation).

Levania is usually so busy with her job as Chapter Master that she never has time for any research, but perhaps she will request to be transferred when she finally decides to go through with the expedition of her dreams - to the Cobalt Temple; the Azure Temple's legendary sister on the other side of the Ravens. Until then, she spends most of her time teaching basic pyromancy and fulfilling the chapter's duties toward the city's authorities and people in need.

ACT 1:

Shadows of the Flame

THE FIRST ACT OF THE ADVENTURE deals with the player characters' initial investigations into the two murders by fire, and concludes with a surprise attack when they have entered the Chapel of the Young Gods. The players may choose what to investigate, and in what order, but all roads eventually lead to the chapel and the insight that the motives of the killer are most likely linked to conflicts within the Sun Church.

Game Opening

REGARDLESS OF WHAT entry point the Game Master chooses for the adventure (see Incentives on page 46), it should begin with the player characters trying to understand exactly what has happened. They arrive, or are already situated, in Ravenia, preparing to celebrate the founding of the duchy. It is clear that the inhabitants have mixed feelings - it is not unusual for people to die in the city, or be murdered, but the events of the past weeks have shaken visitors and residents alike.

The most widespread theory is that the three murders are linked and the two burnings were reprisals for High Priest Armanda's death. The great concern is primarily caused by two circumstances: that one of the burned victims was yet another sun priest, and the feeling that this is simply the beginning of something bigger, something related to conflicts that the people of Ravenia have not been affected by thus far - the conflict between Ambrians and barbarians, and the notorious schism within the Church of Priors.

In other words, it is an unusually quiet and serious crowd that prepares the Oval Plaza, the Octagon, and Karvosti (the large plaza in Barbarian Town) for the day's festivities - long tables are brought and set out; pennant strings in yellow, green and red are put up between the buildings; song and dance groups are rehearsing, and scenes or podiums are being built for the evening's plays and speeches. Most people are especially looking

forward to the Duke's speech, but not with their usual, unreservedly positive expectations. The question of the day is whether Ynedar Kohinoor will be able to dispel the growing fear, or simply make things worse.

The openings suggested below are based on the assumption that the player characters have come to Ravenia in response to a letter, addressed to them or to their quest giver/faction leader. If some other premise seems more appropriate for your particular gaming group, certain adjustments will have to be made; what matters is that the information the Commander has to offer somehow reaches the player characters.

THE DEATH OF THE HUNTED

The player characters reach Ravenia at dawn, along the river or some country road, depending on where they were when they decided to help Father Ombardo. Presumably, they begin by asking around for the priest's address, but whoever they ask, they are met with a surprised look and a question: "*Why do you ask? Have you not heard? He is dead. Burned to death.*"

The characters might insist on knowing where the priest lived. If so, they are pointed toward a narrow, two-story building in the eastern part of North Town, right next to the wall. The window to the left of the door is boarded up, and its frame is scorched and sooty at the top, as if damaged by fire.



Alternative holiday

Depending on at what time of year the Game Master wants the adventure to take place, the founding of the duchy may not seem like an appropriate holiday. In that case, it could be replaced by the Duke's birthday, the commemoration of an important battle against clans Jezora or Karohar, or the signing of a treaty between New Beretor and Chieftain Zoltar of Vajvod.



Getting in is not a problem, but there are lots of people moving around, so unless the characters are very careful someone will probably alert the City Watch – a patrol of four bold soldiers will then arrive within five minutes, demanding to know what is going on, and taking them to their headquarters by the Octagon.

An encounter with the city’s law enforcement notwithstanding, there is little to see in the house. If they have time for a thorough investigation, the Game Master can have a look at the section titled *The Priest’s Home* (page 58); if the City Watch is on its way, the characters do not have time to see more than the charred floor and window boards which reveal how the house’s owner met his demise.

THE COMMANDER

Whether they are escorted by grim-faced watchmen or ask around for someone who knows more about Father Ombardo’s death does not matter: they will soon end up at the City Watch’s headquarters in South Town, where Commander Burlio is waiting.

First they meet Captain Ealna who refuses to answer any questions – she does not want, nor is she authorized, to share any information with outsiders, especially not in this case. It takes good arguments and a successful *Persuasive* test to make her agree to bother the Commander. Ombardo’s letter and *Contacts* within a suitable faction adds +1 to the test, +3 if the group is in possession of both.

Shortly after the first murder, Commander Burlio was told that the Duke wished to assume personal control over the investigation; the City Watch was ordered to stay out of it or be ready to



Burlio thought life would be better if he rose through the ranks. It is dawning on him that he was wrong.

assist the Duke’s agents if called for. Burlio has still not heard a thing about the progress of the investigation, which is why he begins to suspect that something is up, possibly a cover-up at work. He is very keen to keep digging into the case, but is prohibited from doing so himself. Perhaps the characters could do it for him?

The Commander greets them in his office; two characters are invited to sit on the chairs in front of the table, while the others must remain standing. At first he is rather quiet, and asks his guests to tell him about a) their errand, b) what they want, and c) what they plan to do. As long as they appear somewhat reasonable, he has the following to say about the murders:

- Formally he cannot talk about or investigate what happened to Ombardo and Yarmar; the case is handled directly by the Duke and his agents, due to its “sensitive nature.”
- He does not know what progress has been made or what has been learned, which clearly irritates him: “*You would think that our duke would want to make good use of my Captain Ealna’s expertise in cases such as this, but no. I haven’t heard a word.*”
- If the player characters want to help the Duke, neither Burlio nor his guards will stand in their way, but he does not have much information to offer.
- Father Ombardo had long been Duke Ynedar’s personal priest, and was liked by everyone. That someone first assaulted the man, and then burned him to death, makes absolutely no sense at all.
- Perhaps there is a connection with the burglary which Ombardo reported the day before his death. Nothing was stolen, but it is hardly a coincidence: perhaps the thieves returned because they had not found what they were looking for?
- The witch Yarmar does not seem to be a very likely murder victim either – nice, sociable and helpful, according to his neighbors and friends. Sure, a complaint was filed against him roughly a year ago; someone who claimed that he was selling useless, fake elixirs. But it could never be proven.
- Both were burned to death in their homes – Ombardo in the eastern part of North Town, Yarmar in a log house near Karvosti Plaza. There were clear signs (pinch marks, scratches, and cuts) that they had been tortured before being set ablaze, probably in search of information.

That is all the Commander has to say for now; he cannot write them a letter of safe conduct or anything like that, since he is not officially on the case. But if the player characters ask specific questions, they may be able to extract more interesting details regarding subjects related to the murders. This can happen at their first meeting or later on, based on what they discover over the course of the adventure.

Furthermore, both Burlio and Captain Ealna can be used to help the characters if their investigation flounders, either when they first meet at the headquarters or by having them seek out the characters to receive status updates.

Other recent reports of burglaries?

- After a trip to the archives, Burlio can inform the characters that ten burglaries have been reported during the past month, including the one at Father Ombardo's house. In five cases the culprits were caught (common thieves), in three of the unsolved ones only loose valuables were stolen, but the last two may be of interest.
- Three weeks ago, the trading house Galeia reported a burglary – nothing was stolen, and the only things touched were the accounting ledgers; perhaps they had been studied or copied?
- Only the day before the characters began their investigations, Molgara, clan Vajvod's envoy in the city and daughter of Chieftain Zoltar, reported that her office wing had been robbed of valuables and its archives searched.

The murder of First Theurg Armanda

- Armanda's murder also ended up on the Duke's table, but Burlio had time to inspect the crime scene before the City Watch was ordered to focus on other matters.
- The High Priestess lay dead in her bed, in a bedroom where the door and all the windows were bolted from the inside.
- The corpse was not a pretty sight, partially devoured from within by gluttonous larvae.
- In the short time that Captain Ealna had to examine the room, she saw no damage to its door or windows; however, there were boot prints on the rug by the end of the bed – and only there.

AUDIENCE WITH THE DUKE

It is not entirely unlikely that the player characters will try to gain an audience with Duke Ynedar. To be allowed through the gates of the Mound, they must

The Whip of Prios

At some point during the initial investigations, the characters should witness the Whip of Prios' arrival in Ravenia, perhaps on their way between some of the places they are investigating. Sister Losadra and the four agents who are always by her side arrive from Templewall in a carriage, cross the River DouDRAM on a raft, and continue through the streets toward the fortress, via the Oval Plaza. The symbol of the Whip of Prios is seen on the carriage doors and on the coats of the driver and the two mounted agents, Theurg Aldoro and Sun Knight Emelia Dardall – the former's face covered by a golden sun mask, the latter's by a shining great helm.

state their business in a way which the gatekeeper will accept – to seek an audience with the Duke or check into the famously exquisite inn of the Queen's Crown is acceptable; to “*have a look around*” is not.

They must then get past the fortress walls, which is not as easily done. The guard captain will not let anyone through who has not been invited. The characters are told to state their names and their purpose for wanting to meet with the duchy's regent, after which they are ordered to await a decision from the fortress. It might take a while, so unless they want to loiter by the gate, the answer can be sent to their inn or some similar establishment.

The response will most likely be a clear and unequivocal “*no*” – the Duke is busy, and it will be two or three weeks before he has time to see them. But if the characters explicitly state that they wish to contribute to the investigation of the two murders,



With time, Belalia has learned to unnoticeably control her Lord; in many respects, she is the true ruler.

and/or one of the characters is an influential person with contacts among the nobles or within the army, they are granted an audience. Not with Ynedar himself, however, but with his adjutant Belalia, former Captain in New Beretor's infantry.

The adjutant welcomes them into the building closest to the right just inside the gate, a simple building where simple visitors, with no errands to the fortress, are received. After going through a narrow hallway where guests are expected to leave their coats and weapons, they enter a salon dominated by a long, dark table flanked by bench seats and set with a tray of dried fruit, nuts and smoked meat. The adjutant will take the characters' drink orders as soon as they have seated themselves.

It soon turns out to be an interrogation, rather than a meeting. Belalia questions them about who

they are, why they have come to Ravenia, and also wants to know why they have taken an interest in the "deaths" (she does not call them murders). She will not answer any questions. When she has been told everything she needs to know, Belalia concludes the conversation with a request which, due to her tone of voice, sounds more like an order:

"The two (possibly "three" if the High Priestess is also mentioned) deaths we are now discussing must be handled with great discretion, in light of the unique circumstances which exist here in New Beretor. I must therefore ask you to leave the investigation to the Duke, who is doing everything in his power to shed light on what happened - this I assure you. Stay in Ravenia, by all means, but engage in entertainment, rest and other activities which do not risk exacerbating an already difficult situation. Farewell."

Murders & Burglary

BASED ON WHAT is learned about the murders during the game opening, there are a handful of leads to follow up on. To progress to the second act of the adventure, the characters only need information from three of these, while inquiries into the burglary at the trading house Galeia and the death of the former High Priest merely add to the intrigue.

THE PRIEST'S HOME

As mentioned earlier, Ombardo's house is located near the wall in the eastern district of North Town. The narrow two-story building has a single room on the bottom floor (library and study), with a bed chamber and a kitchen/dining hall on the second.

There is nothing to find up there, and the bottom floor also seems more or less cleaned out after someone (the Duke's agents) emptied all the bookshelves, drawers and filing cabinets. But if the player characters keep at it, they may uncover the following information:

A successful Vigilant test with the Witchsight ability by someone entering the room on the bottom floor produces the following vision: *"The shadow of a man sits tied to a simple armchair in the spot where the floor and walls are now charred and black; a silver-shimmering liquid flows over him, soon covering him from head to toe; the shadow remains defiantly motionless, even as the liquid flares up with a blinding light."*

If the test succeeds with a difference of 5 or more, the psychic can also detect a chanting song surrounding the scene. It is a well-known hymn to Prios called The Apostles of Light, composed by First Father Jeseebegai himself when he first arrived

in Ambria. But whether the song comes from the victim or the killers remains unclear.

The ritual Tale of Ashes performed at the place

where Ombardo was burned: The vision starts just as an oil-drenched Ombardo catches fire; four figures dressed in inconspicuous gray and brown clothes pause to watch the fire blaze - three with their faces covered by hoods, the fourth a grim man in his fifties with grizzled hair and a large, hooked nose. The latter (Brother Galdam) makes the sun sign before they all leave the scene with great haste.

A successful Vigilant or Cunning test aimed at the pile of blank paper sheets lying on the pulpit:

Indentations in the top sheet should make it possible to recreate the last text written by Ombardo, by scraping a bit of charcoal back and forth across the surface. If the characters do just that, the following passage appears, ending abruptly with the arrival of the murderers.

"Yet another beautiful day under the radiant face of the Lifegiver. Perhaps my fears are unfounded? A day like this, when the light of life shines strong and bright, should expose all shadows in Sola's pastures, even those made flesh and set into action. But I have seen nothing, except the darkness I already know."

We ventured a visit to the chapel again, both my friend and I disguised as wanderers, our faces hidden in deep hoods. We received a warm welcome from the congregation, who undoubtedly know us by name and position but nevertheless play along with our charade. We are both delighted to see the warmth of the chapel spread thro"

THE WITCH'S SISTER

The man-witch Yarmar lived with his sister in a newly built log house in the northernmost part of Barbarian Town. Their home was so ravaged by fire that only its framework remains; the sister, Yara, is still in a state of paralyzed shock and grief, and has been taken in by a neighboring family – something the characters can easily find out by asking around.

At first the neighbors are suspicious and defensive, but if the characters seem honest and say that they wish to investigate Yarmar's death (*Persuasive test*), the family may let one of them in, provided that any weapons are left outside. Yara is curled up in the fetal position on the kitchen couch, under several layers of blankets, motionless and mute.

It takes a delicate touch and a fair bit of patience to wake the woman from her apathetic state. But Yara really wants to see justice done, and if the player characters manage to convince her that the Duke might have political reasons for not wanting to dig too deep into the torture and burning of her brother, she will start to listen, and soon answer questions as well – but without ever moving or taking her eyes off the wall behind the backrest of the couch.

This is what Yara has to say, though not necessarily in the following order, as her information is governed by what questions the player characters are asking.

- Her brother was a witch, but also young, and had not been taught very long before their settlement on the border between clans Vajvod and Karohar was destroyed – “by a huge, many-armed, terrifying creature of ice and darkness, devouring everything and everyone, except Yarmar and I” (i.e. a Primal Blight Beast).
- Yarmar was a decent and well-liked man; no one had reason to hate him, let alone kill him. He offered his services where he was needed, sometimes for money, sometimes just to help. Mostly physical labor, but he was a competent healer as well.
- He had long felt a yearning to return to Davokar, but less than a moon ago his mood changed. He claimed to have met a Greenweaver who was willing to lead him further down the green path.
- Since then he was consumed by religious questions, almost euphorically so. He constantly wanted to discuss the similarities between the gods which Ambrians venerated

before their great war, and the gods worshipped by the clanfolk. Yara let him talk, but never paid much attention, which she now regrets.

That is all Yara has to offer, and if the player characters perform the ritual *Tale of Ashes* inside her burnt-down home, it produces the exact same vision as the one in Ombardo's library.

VAJVOD'S ENVOY

On an enclosed plot of land just east of the Old Sun Temple stands the buildings belonging to clan Vajvod and its envoy, the chieftain's daughter Molgara. The main villa is of Ambrian design, except that it consists of one elongated floor rather than several smaller ones. The other buildings are all log houses with sod roofs, except for the tower south of the residence, which rises roughly twenty meters into the air – tall enough to see, weather permitting, all the way to the edge of Davokar.

Since the Duke and his underlings have not yet found any connection between the burglary of the envoy's home and the recent murders, no one has so far put a gag on Molgara. The player characters may therefore be granted an audience, as long as they present their errand in a way that stirs the envoy's curiosity – either that they know something about the burglary or suspect there is a connection between the burglary and the recent murders.

In such a case, the axe-and-shield-wielding soldiers of the envoy's personal guard will escort them to the residence's southern entrance, where Molgara is already waiting. She offers them something to drink and invites them to sit down on the beamon pelts laid out on the floor. Naturally, she wants to know who they are and what they are up to, but understands if there are certain questions they cannot, or will not, answer. She is happy to help them in any way she can, if it could ultimately lead to the burglars being caught and her three missing books returned.

This is what she has to say:

- The night before the start of the adventure, someone (or several people) got over the fence and into her residence. Neither the City Watch nor her own people have found any trace or leads.
- The thieves ran off with a lot of valuables – mostly trinkets of silver and gold – but also left many valuable items behind, probably because they were in a hurry.



The Sun Sign

The gesture known as the sun sign, with which all worshipers of Prios end their prayers, salute senior priests and theurgs, and bolster themselves in times of danger, has remained unchanged for centuries: an open hand with extended fingers is held straight up toward the sky and then moved to one's face, then to the heart with the palm facing inwards. The same sign is used by the Church of Dead Prios, but with a closed fist.



- They also raided her archives, pulling books and scrolls from the shelves, many of which were knocked down.
- At first she assumed the thieves had thought that her archives contained some kind of hidden compartment for precious items, but now that the room has been cleaned and its content listed, three books seem to be missing:
 1. The latest report on the trade in Vajvod goods on the markets of Ravenia.
 2. A report on the number of people visiting the Chapel of the Young Gods in Barbarian Town.
 3. A record of members from other clans who have moved to Ravenia, on a more or less permanent basis, in the past three years.

The second of these is obviously interesting to the characters, since it can make other pieces of information fall into place. But it was the third one that the black cloaks wanted the most, as it (among other things) lists Algaya's arrival and that she is a witch of clan Karohar...

GALEIA'S TRADING HOUSE

The manager Eberio and his staff of four occupy the third floor of a building near the South Harbor. That is also where they were burgled, roughly three weeks ago. The business is run from the capital, which makes Eberio more of a steward and administrator than a captain of industry. But whenever he

introduces himself, it sounds more like he is the man who both owns and runs Master Laguboi's company.

The City Watch dropped the investigation long ago, which is why the manager is very happy to see the player characters, if only to complain about Captain Ealna's incompetence and Commander Burlio's lenience toward the local trading houses. Eberio is convinced that a coalition of minor competitors are bent on outdoing Galeia in terms of trade along the river Doudram, particularly trade in pelts, antlers and meat from clan Vajvod. The truth, however, is something quite different (see the text box *The Curse of Greed*).

Anyway, it should become clear that this burglary has nothing to do with the murders. If the player characters give a competent impression, Eberio might offer them the job of investigating the incident, but that becomes a whole different story (which must be created entirely by the Game Master).

THE HIGH PRIESTESS' DEATH

The murder of Armanda is not easily investigated. However, there are two people who knew her well and can provide some illuminating information.

Armanda lived in one of the Mound's most beautiful residences, which is now being inventoried. Some of the inventory will be sold, some shipped to the High Priestess' sister in Kurun. One of the people doing the cataloging and appraising is an elegant lady named Joral – the late High Priestess' chambermaid. She does not mind sharing the observations she has made on her mistress' death:

- Lady Armanda was as pious as one can be; she loved Prios more than anything, and was zealous about making the most of His gifts – something she demanded from her servants as well. It was important to take pleasure in life, but also to show gratitude while doing so.
- A successful *Vigilant* test reveals that she is holding back. If the characters then pass a *Persuasive* test, she tells them the whole truth: *“Well, the Mistress may have had a... less charming side; she could be cruel as well as ruthless, even greedy at times, but only because she knew better than anybody how the gifts of Prios must be managed and... enjoyed.”*
- In recent times, Armanda had been unusually cheerful, humorous even, especially during the week leading up to her death. She did not say why, but often insinuated that her future and that of her staff was looking very bright indeed; that she had won a great victory for the Lawgiver, and that he would surely grace her with his favor.

The Curse of Greed

Count Arnon Melion already controls more than half the trade on both the Doudram and the Rava, but that is not enough to satisfy him. He is the richest person in Ambria, but his greed compels him to seek more – especially as he believes that his immense wealth will soon make him powerful enough to buy complete control over the entire kingdom, to remove all political leaders he does not like, dictate treaties and agreements, and even determine Ambria's relations with other realms. It was his agents who broke into the office building, precisely to study Galeia's ledgers in preparation of his pending rise to power.

The player characters do not really have time for this right now, but maybe the escalating conflict between New Beretor's trading houses (including the two at Cliff) could be the basis for future adventures? If so, three factions are bound to emerge: the Duke of Melion with his private army of sellswords; an alliance of Yndaros-based trading houses, aided by houses like Galeia, Vereo and Harl; and a coalition of less influential locals, supported by robber gangs and individual barbarian chieftains.

- On the night of the murder, Joral awoke to terrible screams, or rather howls of pain, coming from the Mistress' bedchamber. She rushed over there, but the door was (for once) bolted from the inside. The screams continued, but she heard something else as well – a deep, coarse chuckle, followed by what sounded like a short hymn sung in the barbarian tongue.
- When other servants came to help, and they finally got the door open, the screams had long since stopped. There was an awful stench inside. Moreover, Joral can confirm the Commander's description of the corpse and the scene.

The player characters could also go to the Great Sun Temple to speak with its liturgs and initiates. As already stated, the new High Priest, Leandro, has been arrested by the Duke, allegedly for his suspected involvement in the two murders and the murder of his predecessor. Neither his deputy, liturg Sondro, nor the others at the temple (all of them aligned with the Reformists) think that Leandro was involved, though none of them mourn the former High Priestess' passing. Sondro is secretly convinced that the Duke also

believes in Leandro's innocence, but keeps quiet about it so as not to expose Duke Ynedar's strong ties to the so-called "heretical" faction within the Sun Church.

The following information can be obtained by characters visiting the Great Sun Temple:

- First Theurg Armanda struggled with a dark past. She was always a servant of Prios, but war and violence left their mark on her soul.
- Her past deeds are presumably also the reason why she is now kneeling by the Sun God's side – the dark forces she had once fought finally caught up with her, and took their black revenge.
- Leandro is innocent, no doubt about it. It was the former High Priestess' attitude toward the clanfolk and their religion that caused tensions between Ambrians and barbarians. With Leandro in charge, Sondro hopes that relations between the church and the two peoples will improve significantly – not that the new High Priest has any particular love for the clans in general, but because he understands that conversion can never be achieved by force.

The Young Gods' Chapel

ON THE BASIS of the leads above (Ombardo mentioning a chapel, Yarmar's interest in the Ambrian and barbarian gods, and the stolen report on the Young Gods' Chapel), the player characters surely have a clear idea of where they must go to learn more about the murders.

In addition to the earlier description (see page 53), it should be said that the chapel, as one of few buildings north of the outer wall, has an underground level that can be reached by a ground level stairway and an exterior cellar entrance. The cellar was dug mainly to provide an alternative route of escape, in case the authorities should decide to crack down on the "heretical cultists." But it has also served other purposes through the years, such as hiding fugitives whom the chapel-goers believe to be innocent. This is currently the case with the witch Algaya.

Chapel manager Torga and Algaya have both been warned by the Duke that a group of hostile curia agents seem to be operating in town. Their intentions are not entirely clear, but most likely they have come to avenge First Theurg Armanda, and there is a significant risk that they will turn their attention to the Chapel. Torga does not know

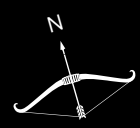
that Algaya did in fact commit the murder, but understands that the guest is in danger since she is a witch.

ARRIVING AT THE CHAPEL

This feast day, there are few visitors at the chapel. Torga is there of course, talking to a tall and handsome barbarian crying and sniffing himself into a shaking mess. There are also a couple of people squatting in the alcoves of the Hostess and the Executioner.

Torga looks up, visibly frightened. Provided that the player characters do not look like a group of heretic-hunting Black Cloaks, she soon relaxes and welcomes them with a nod. However, she does not abandon her attempt to comfort the sobbing visitor, at least not until the characters make it clear that they need to talk. At first she simply shakes her head, but if they insist, she leads the handsome young man, almost half a meter taller than her, to the Executioner's alcove and asks the woman sitting there to take care of him.

Exactly what the player characters will ask or tell her is hard to say, as it depends on what conclusions they think can be drawn from previous leads.



THE CHAPEL

- 1. Table & chairs
- 2. Storeroom
- 3. Stairs down
- 4. Alcoves
- 5. Shed
- 6. Cellar Stairs
- 7. Stair outside
- 8. Stair up
- 9. Secret Door
- 10. Algaya

Torga does not know anything about the murders; she is happy to answer whatever questions she can, except that she does not comment on Ombardo and the Duke's frequent visits, or the guest in the cellar. To proceed, the characters must tell Torga enough for her to understand that there is a connection between the murders and the chapel, and possibly that the people responsible for the deaths could very well be a threat to her congregation.

The Game Master decides whether they manage to really alarm her. If they do, she asks them to wait and heads down into the cellar to inform (and question) Algaya about what she just heard.

CONVERSATION WITH ALGAYA

According to Algaya's agreement with the Duke, the witch is to protect her accomplice in the event that someone tracks her down, by simply never mentioning his involvement. She has no problem with this: the High Priestess was a vicious murderer, evil to the core of her being, and Algaya believes it was nothing less than her duty to avenge the friends and relatives Armanda helped slaughter. She is ready to face the consequences of her actions, should she ever be caught by the people chasing her.

When Torga tells her about the player characters, their questions and assertions, Algaya immediately asks her to fetch them. Her plan is, first and foremost, to confess to the murder of Armanda, so that these snoops will not investigate the matter any further. She then hopes they will prove to be reasonable people who can be convinced that the High Priestess deserved to die, and that her elimination was really a favor to Ravenia and the entire duchy. Should she succeed in convincing them, she also hopes that the characters will help her stop the avengers' advance; or possibly escort her to a new hideout in the city. On the other hand, if they cannot be convinced, she will try to escape, despite the risk of encountering the person (or people) pursuing her after leaving the hiding place.

The player characters are led down the stairs, through the desolate cellar, to what seems to be a brick wall. Their guide knocks hard on the wall, and before long the outline of a secret door emerges; Torga pauses for a moment before she pushes it open, steps aside, and gestures for the characters to enter.

The only light in the cramped, dark den behind the hidden door comes from an oil lamp, with a short, flickering wick, standing on a simple table just inside the doorway. At the far end of the room is a chair, on which a stooped,



Algaya longs for home, for Davokar. The knowledge that she may never be able to return pains her to the bone.

cloaked figure is sitting. The face is partially hidden behind pearl and feather decorated braids, hanging like a sparse drape from an embroidered headband. Before the characters have even lined up before her, the clear and steady voice of a woman says, in broken Ambrian: *"It was I, I who took the priestess' life."*

Depending on the player characters' questions, she can relate the following information:

- Until eight winters ago, Armanda took part in several massacres on Karits, Jezites, and other barbarians, in the hunt for people whom her Sun God had declared heretics and evildoers - that is, even after the Queen had won dominion over the plains.
- Algaya came to Ravenia five months ago. Two months have passed since she first saw the priestess and concluded she had to pay for her crimes against the clans.
- On the night of the murder, Algaya landed outside the bedroom wall in her raven form, wandered through earth and stone to get in, bolted the door, and filled the sleeping victim's body with ravenous larvae. She left the same way she entered.
- She has heard of the other murders and admits that they might have been committed by someone looking for her - Yarmar was a witch and had recently (after much badgering) been accepted as her apprentice; Ombardo was a particularly clear-sighted sun priest who often visited the chapel, but whom she met only once, quite briefly.

When the characters have no more questions, she asks them what they intend to do with their newly acquired knowledge, but before they have time to reach a decision, the silence is interrupted by an outcry from the level above – a shriek that ends as suddenly as it started.

Algaya, Karit witch

“Your law, my law... Not the same.”

The greenweaver Algaya is close to sixty years old, and has seen her people transform from proud and free humans to divided, hunted beasts, which she blames entirely on the Ambrians and their Queen. They brought war, greed and ruthlessness with them from the south; they coerced the clans, and spread doubt and selfishness among the people of Davokar.

Until six months ago she strived to reunite the Karits, and make clan Karohar whole and strong again. But her chieftain saw her mediation efforts as an act of treason, and she lost everything. But when she came to Ravenia, her hope was reignited. She sees in Duke Ynedar a leader seeking unity rather than division, reconciliation rather than war. That he is an Ambrian is irrelevant; Algaya is determined to protect him against all who mean him harm.

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Taciturn, monotonous voice |
| Race | Human (barbarian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 11 (–1), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 13 (–3), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 16 (–6), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Alchemy</i> (master), <i>Beast Lore</i> (adept: <i>beasts</i>), <i>Entangling Vines</i> (master), <i>Exceptionally Resolute</i> (novice), <i>Larvae Boil</i> (master), <i>Lay on Hands</i> (master), <i>Loresmaster</i> (novice), <i>Nature's Embrace</i> (master), <i>Ritualist</i> (master: <i>Borrow Beast</i> , <i>Quick Growth</i> , <i>Turn Weather</i> , <i>Witch Circle</i>), <i>Shapeshift</i> (novice), <i>Thorn Cloak</i> (master), <i>Witchcraft</i> (master) |
| Weapons | Thorn Cloak: Whipping thorns 5, ignores <i>Armor</i> |
| Armor | Witch gown 2 (flexible), +3 if Thorn Cloak |
| Defense | +1 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 4 |

Equipment Feather veil (provides a +1 bonus and one re-roll per scene to success tests for the powers and rituals of witchcraft)

Shadow Kaleidoscopic, glossy green, like sunlit foliage with waxy leaves. (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Algaya stands firm in combat, preferably completely still in order to take full advantage of her Thorn Cloak, and preferably amid allies who then share its protection. Usually she begins by trapping enemies with *Entangling Vines* and filling them with hungry larvae; if she is forced to prioritize, she always chooses to heal her allies over inflicting damage.

THE BLACK CLOAKS ARRIVE

The group of black cloaks who are responsible for the murders, and now think they have traced the root of evil to the Chapel of the Young Gods, are led by Brother Galdam and his squire, Sister Miela. They have always been ruthless champions of Prios, and the schism within the Sun Church and the Curia's endangered position have scarcely improved their attitude toward idolaters and other forms of heretics.

As far as they are concerned, all who visit the Young Gods' Chapel are heretics, or even cultists – allies of the Eternal Night. After knocking Torga unconscious, they quickly do the same to the visitors; the sad youngster puts up a bit of a fight, keeping two of the Experienced black cloaks occupied for two turns. The others head straight down the cellar stairs, searching for the murderous witch they expect to be hiding inside. Note that the black cloaks locked the exterior door to the cellar with chains and padlocks before they entered; however, it is so weak that it can be forced open by someone who passes a [*Strong* –3] test.

Algaya flinches as the scream is heard from the ground level, but soon pulls herself together, looks into the eyes of the person she is talking to, and says: “*May the spirits favor you.*” She then sinks into *Nature's Embrace*, walks up to the ground level outside the chapel, shifts into her raven form, and flies away.

The player characters are left to deal with the vengeful black cloaks. They may choose to bolt the secret door and hide; it cannot be opened from the outside unless the entire wall is razed. It takes a few minutes for Galdam to locate the hideout; he presses his hands against the wall, testing it, but soon decides on a different approach: he fetches the unconscious Torga and threatens to cut her throat unless “*the gutless heretics cowering in their lair come out, unarmed!*”

The Game Master must decide how the situation develops based on the player characters' actions, but Galdam's plan is to slay everyone who does not look like a witch or a heretical priest. People who do not match that description are instead to be captured and taken to Sister Losadra.

Competent Black Cloak

"Prios is the law; you are tried and condemned!"

Brother Galdam and Sister Miela have worked together for over a decade, mainly with the dangerous and often quite publicized task of hunting cultists within Ambria's borders. A few years ago weariness started to set in, and they asked Brother Eumenos for a more permanent post, preferably outside of Yndaros, where after many successful missions they were becoming known in both name and appearance. That is how they ended up in Ravenia where they, with deep frustration, have seen the seduction of the city's inhabitants by the dark without the Curia acting on their reports. They received Sister Losadra's informal orders with great gratitude and warmth in their hearts, a warmth blazing from the fire of the Lawgiver - they will do everything in their power to scatter the shadow which has descended upon Duke Ynedar and his city!

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Haughtily condemning |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | Contacts (Sun Church) |
| Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 15 (-5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 11 (-1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Beast Lore</i> (adept: <i>Abominations</i>), <i>Dominate</i> (adept), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Leader</i> (master), <i>Loremaster</i> (master), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Recovery</i> (master), <i>Ritualist</i> (novice: <i>Command Confession</i>), <i>Steadfast</i> (adept), <i>Witchsight</i> (master) |
| Weapons
Persuasive | Master crafted sword 9 (deep impact) |
| Armor | Studded leather 4 (reinforced) |
| Defense | -4 (shield) |
| Toughness | 10 Pain Threshold 4 |
| Equipment | Sun symbol, 1 dose Elixir of Life, copy of the Lightbringer, 1D20 thaler and 1D8 shillings |
| Shadow | Orange, like the rays of a rising or setting sun (corruption: 1) |

Tactics: The competent black cloak is a fearsome warrior, dominating the enemy and striking with the might of the Sun God. When surrounded by allies, his power becomes even more evident, as the black cloak's leadership can make weaklings fight like ogres and the weak-minded resist the enemy's influence.

Experienced Black Cloak (PC -1)

"Expect no mercy, heretic!"

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Scrutinizing look |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (Twilight Friars) |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 15 (-5), Persuasive 11 (-1), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 5 (+5) | |
| Abilities | <i>Acrobatics</i> (master), <i>Feint</i> (master), <i>Loremaster</i> (novice), <i>Witchsight</i> (adept) |
| Weapons
Discreet | Fencing sword 5 (precise, deep impact) |
| Armor | Leather armor 2 |
| Defense | -4 |
| Toughness | 10 Pain Threshold 4 |
| Equipment | Master crafted fencing sword (precise, deep impact), 1D4 ortegs, 1D10 thaler and 1D6 shillings |
| Shadow | Dull silver with black slits (corruption: 3) |

Tactics: In combat the experienced black cloaks split into groups, each commanded by a competent leader, who in turn chooses an enemy. The group members may then use the *Persuasive* of their leader instead of their own *Resolute* during the scene (e.g. to resist mystical influences), and they also deal +2 damage against the target chosen by their respective leader.

Avoiding Combat

Even if Brother Galdam and Sister Miela are frustrated and would rather condemn than forgive (especially in order to prove their worth to the Whip of Prios), it should always be possible to avoid combat. The characters may for instance flee the place, before the black cloaks get to them or by trying to sprint past them while accepting any incoming free attacks. Skillful liars should also be rewarded, even if the situation calls for an added negative modification to the success test.

If the black cloaks survive the encounter in the chapel, they will likely appear later on - maybe with Sister Losadra in her provisional headquarters...

Weapons and Abilities

Note that we have made an addition to the values describing various monsters and creatures. There is now an attribute, sometimes two, specified under Weapons, in order to clarify which value the creature uses when performing its main attacks. However, remember that all creatures may fall back on their *Accurate* value whenever they are forced to use tactics that do not correspond with their abilities.

ACT 2:

The Heretic's Plea

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SECOND ACT is more linear and straightforward. The player characters hear that the Duke is missing, and that is not all: the newly appointed High Priest Leandro has disappeared from his prison cell. The pair are fairly easy to find, but rescuing the terrified Ynedar from the Whip of Prios, and then tracking Sister Losadra and her prisoner, are rather more difficult. The second act concludes with the knowledge that a large troop of the Knights of Dead Prios has decided to “clean up” Ravenia.

Missing

TO FULLY GRASP what has happened, you must understand that the Whip of Prios and Duke Ynedar are both keen to keep their activities secret – the former because their actions have not been sanctioned by the Queen or the Curia, the latter out of fear of being exposed as a heretic and murderer in front of his people, both allies and enemies.

Soon after she arrived in Ravenia, Sister Losadra visited the fortress. Ynedar dared not deny her an audience, but had his valet, the unswervingly loyal Elam, oversee the meeting from a hidden alcove, with orders to summon the Duke’s guard if the situation turned hostile. Losadra calmly explained that she had come to find First Theurg Armanda’s murderer, and that she was sure the killer (or the person who ordered the murder) could be found among the heretics within the Sun Church’s own ranks. She therefore demanded the right to question the victim’s successor, Liturg Leandro; not in his cell at the fortress, however, as the public could never know about the interrogation.

Relieved that he was not a suspect himself, and terrified of appearing suspicious in any way, the Duke agreed to arrange a meeting at the Blue Moon trading house’s storage building on the outskirts of Barbarian Town – a venue he had often used for informal meetings of both a private and commercial

nature. But first he made Sister Losadra swear to come alone, and to allow both the Duke and his bodyguards to attend the interrogation, which she was happy to do.

Thus, the young duke put himself in a very dangerous position. In guilt-ridden desperation, combined with his belief that the Sun Church’s representatives would never dare to harm the Queen’s nephew, he let the Whip of Prios manipulate him into a deadly ambush.

THE FORTRESS

When the player characters in one way or another have left the Chapel of the Young Gods, they soon hear a rumor that is spreading through the city and putting a damper on the festive atmosphere: for the first time in twelve years, Duke Ynedar has canceled his speech to the people! The rumormongers also have many ideas about the underlying cause. Some think he has fallen ill, others that he has started to become like other nobles and stopped caring about his subjects, but according to an equally prevalent theory, “*based on information from the Fortress staff,*” the Duke has disappeared without a trace.

Given that the player characters have just fought (or possibly negotiated with) the people most likely

responsible for the murders, they might want to inform the Duke of this, since he oversees the investigation of said crimes. Perhaps they have even managed to take Galdam, Miela, or one of the black cloaks alive? Another possibility is of course that they will take their information and any prisoners they might have to Commander Burlio – who in that case directs them to the Fortress.

As with previous visits to the fortress (if any), the player characters must wait outside the wall while their request for an audience is passed on to Adjutant Belalia. Provided that they have said something about the purpose of their visit, they will not have to wait long; the page quickly returns, after which two guards escort the characters to the building just inside the gate (see page 58). When they have stated their business (and possibly turned over a prisoner or two), she has the following to say:

- Both the Duke and the new High Priest Leandro are missing; the latter was never suspected of the murders, but stayed at the fortress as Duke Ynedar's guest to wait while the situation in the city calmed down.
- The disappearance was discovered a few hourglasses ago, and it has recently been revealed that the Duke's valet, Elam, knows where they have gone. Elam had been sworn to silence, but his fear for their safety made him break his promise to the Duke.
- The Duke and Leandro went to a storage building in Barbarian Town to attend a secret meeting with the Whip of Prios, about two hourglasses ago.
- Belalia immediately sent a troop of soldiers to the area, but according to the report she received just before the characters arrival, there was no one there except for the corpses of two of Ynedar's bodyguards.
- The adjutant fears the worst. If the characters give a competent impression, she offers them the job of helping the soldiers find Ynedar – she promises them a reward of twenty thaler each, and guarantees that the Duke will be even more generous if they contribute to his safe return. A successful negotiation [*Persuasive -1*] doubles the amount.

She will not agree to answering any questions at this point, but stresses that the situation is urgent and that she would never speak about Duke Ynedar in his absence. If they want information they will have to ask the Duke himself, once he has been found.

THE BLUE MOON'S WAREHOUSE

The Yndaros-based Blue Moon trading house has in recent years concentrated much of its business in Thistle Hold, which is why their storage building by the bank of the River Doudram has long stood empty – something the Duke has exploited by using it for romantic encounters as well as secret business dealings.

The somewhat secluded building is located by the partially wooded riverbank – a simple one-story structure of stone, with its own berth. Its two entrances are both facing the river. One is a simple wooden door, the other a double gate; both are normally locked with metal bars and padlocks. When the characters arrive, the smaller door is unlocked and the larger one broken open by the ten soldiers who are still there. Provided that the characters have spoken to Belalia, they also have a letter to show the commander on site as proof they can be trusted.

Inside the building there is very little of interest, at least at first glance. It consists of a single large room that is completely empty, except for the furniture in the inner north corner. On what is clearly an expensive rug stands an oval dining table with room for four, draped with a white lace tablecloth underneath a four-armed silver candlestick with lit candles. Beyond the table, against the wall, stands a simple but elegant feather bed. Near the table, the lifeless bodies of Ynedar's bodyguards are lying, face down.

A successful Cunning test with the Medicus ability aimed at the corpses: Both appear to have been attacked from behind; one killed with a garrote, the other stabbed four times in the back.

A successful Vigilant test while searching the room: Three black feathers are found on the ground. A burn mark and an arrowhead (broken shaft) can also be found, lodged in the wall to the right inside the smaller doorway.

The Time of the Speech

The Game Master has every right to determine exactly when the Duke was supposed to make his speech, and to adjust the time so that it coincides with the player characters' visit to the chapel. Another option is to let rumors about the canceled event begin to spread before the characters go to the chapel, or to announce that the speech has been postponed to later in the afternoon/evening/night. The Game Master decides, based on what he or she believes will have the most dramatic effect.

The Beast Lore or Loremaster ability aimed at the black feathers: They were shed recently (by Algaya, who distracted the kidnappers so that the Duke could escape).

A successful Cunning test with the Loremaster ability, or a [Cunning -5] test aimed at the burn mark and arrow head: People standing by the dining table clearly fired arrows at someone by the door. A subsequent *Vigilant* test reveals tracks on the dirt floor, suggesting that someone skidded and hurried through the doorway – someone who managed to escape!

By now, tracking the escapee through Barbarian Town will not be easy, and requires two successful [*Vigilant* -5] tests in the places where Ynedar passed along busy walking and riding paths. But there is another way to find the Duke's new hiding place, in one of the area's most well-preserved ruins.

A bird caws (*Beast Lore/Loremaster*: a raven) repeatedly. If a character looks up at the tree where it is sitting, the raven beats its wings a few times before taking off and flying to a tree further away, where it lands, looking at the characters. The raven is of course Algaya, trying to lead them to the ruin – something she would prefer to do without revealing who she is, since she still wants to protect the Duke from being linked to the witch who killed Armanda.

Should the characters bring the bird to the soldiers' attention, the commander will answer that he would rather rely on physical tracks than some winged fiend (ravens are often depicted as the messengers of the Eternal Night). And what is more: if the bird is not just an ordinary raven, it might belong to the enemy and be trying to lure them into a trap!

Tracking the Horses

Should the player characters dawdle about for so long that the Duke is found, and if they then hesitate to intervene as the agents mount their horses, their only remaining option will be to follow their trail east. How such a situation develops is for the Game Master to decide, but perhaps the characters will reach the farm while Ervano and another two fallen templars are still on site.

In that case, the characters will be facing an enemy too strong for them to handle, but perhaps they have time to bring reinforcements, since the Whip of Prios and the Knights of Dead Prios now have two people to interrogate. One thing is certain: unless the characters intervene, Ynedar Kohinoor will die on that farm, decapitated by Ervano Vearra.

In other words, if the characters want to follow the raven, they must do so on their own. It flies ahead of them, between trees, rooftops and chimneys, until it finally lands on the ruin. Also note that when the characters seem to have realized that they have come to the right place, Algaya takes off into the sky (more details below).

THE RUIN

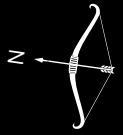
The ruin's facade is so well-preserved because it was buried inside a hill until five years ago. When Ordo Magica first started excavating it, the only thing protruding from the ground was part of the second-story walls; the roof is long gone. Now, fully excavated, the building is between ten and twelve meters tall depending on where the measurement is taken, as the second-floor walls are partially collapsed. In the middle of the ground-level floor is a hole from a cave-in a few months ago, and in the cellar can be found rubble as well as several deep cavities.

When the ruin comes into view, the player characters immediately notice the horses tethered outside its gaping entrance. Four members of Sister Losadra's hand-picked task force have been there for a little while – two competent black cloaks (see page 65) in addition to the two characters described below. The theurg Aldoro and one of the black cloaks are currently in the cellar, looking for secret doors or other nooks and crannies where the escapee may be hiding; the remaining two keep watch from the damaged upper floor. As for the Duke, he knows the ruin well and has crawled through one of the cracks in the cellar floor, into a chamber that is hard (but not impossible) to detect from above.

It takes a successful [*Vigilant* +5] test to notice the former templar Emelia Dardall, peering through a crack in the western wall of the second floor; the test for detecting the black cloak overlooking the south side is rolled against *Vigilant*. Player character who attempt to sneak into the building from either of these sides must pass a *Discreet* test modified by +3 or -1, but if they choose to close in from somewhere else no *Discreet* test is needed until they enter the ruin.

If detected, the characters hear a quiet, high-pitched whistle, and all four enemies will be prepared for their arrival. Bringing reinforcements is of course possible, but hardly advisable – from the moment the characters arrive at the scene, they have about two minutes before Sister Losadra's underlings find the Duke and ride off with him toward a farm temporarily occupied by the Whip of Prios.

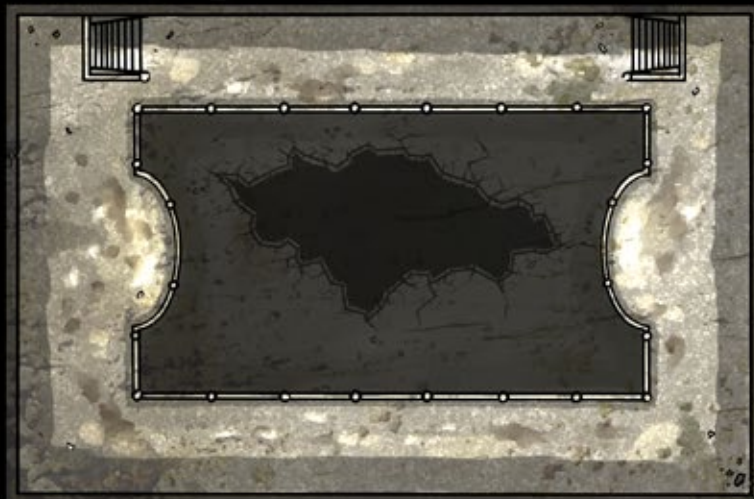
BASEMENT WITH RUBBLE AND SINKHOLES



GROUND LEVEL WITH THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR



UPPER LEVEL WITH BALUSTRADE



No, if the characters want to stop the agents from getting their hands on Ynedar Kohinoor, they must attack with haste! Let them gain an overview of the situation and plan their attack, and when they strike, good ideas should (as always) be rewarded and bad ones punished.

Aldoro

"Confess, sinner, and receive your punishment."

Not even thirty years of age, the theurg Aldoro was chosen to join the Whip of Prios as much for his ruthless stance against heretics as for his talents. He received the news with great joy; nothing could be more important than destroying the diseased pests threatening to bring the kingdom and its people to ruin. After only two years he was awarded a place in the legendary Sister Losadra's unit, and they have now spent three successful years together.

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Proud, pious |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | Contacts (Sun Church) |
| Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 11 (-1), Quick 7 (+3), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 5 (+5), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Anathema</i> (master), <i>Blessed Shield</i> (master), <i>Holy Aura</i> (adept), <i>Loresmaster</i> (adept), <i>Medicus</i> (master), <i>Prios' Burning Glass</i> (master), <i>Ritualist</i> (master: <i>Bonds of Judgment</i> , <i>Sanctifying Rite</i> , <i>Heretic's Trail</i> , <i>Holy Smoke/Piercing Gaze</i> , <i>Purging Fire</i> , <i>Command Confession</i>), <i>Steadfast</i> (adept), <i>Theurgy</i> (master), <i>Witchsight</i> (adept) |
| Weapons
Accurate | Quarterstaff 3 (long, blunt) |
| Armor | Blessed robe 2 (flexible) |
| Defense | +3 |
| Toughness | 10 Pain Threshold 3 |
| Equipment | Sun mask (+1 to effect tests for holy and banishing powers), copy of the Lightbringer, 3 Herbal cures, 15 thaler and 4 shillings |
| Shadow | Fiery red, like red gold under a blazing sun (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: After having surrounded himself and two allies with a *Blessed Shield*, Aldoro discharges the light of his soul at the enemy. If he ever lets the burning light go out, it is to break the enemy's ongoing powers (*Anathema*) or to aid any wounded comrades by performing first aid.

Emelia Dardall

"For Prios, the living, the One!"

When Commander Iakobo Vearra proclaimed the secession from the Curia and founded the Church of Dead Prios, Emelia was one of the templars who chose to leave the organization; her faith told her that the flame of the Lawgiver still flickered with life – that it was not too late. This decision was never due to any general religious doubts or any kind of love for the Lifegiver praised by the Reformists. No, she still wants to fight for the Curia, convinced that the Lawgiver can still be saved.

She applied for a position with the Whip of Prios, where she was welcomed and immediately given a place in Sister Losadra's unit, replacing a twilight friar who had sworn allegiance to the First Revenger. To not only put obvious idolaters to the sword, but also help expose the ones hiding behind seemingly virtuous facades, suits her perfectly – it requires conviction, but also great faith in the Sun God's ability to unmask darkness.

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Serious, cruel |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | Contacts (Sun Knights) |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 13 (-3), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 7 (+3) | |
| Abilities | <i>Beast Lore</i> (adept: <i>cultural beings</i>), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (master), <i>Steadfast</i> (master), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (master), <i>Witchhammer</i> (master) |
| Weapons
Strong | Bastard sword 11 (deep impact, precise), ignores <i>Armor</i> , +4 against Cultural beings, +5 against Abominations |
| Armor | Templar full plate 5 (holy), +2 with Holy |
| Defense | -1 |
| Toughness | 15 Pain Threshold 8 |
| Equipment | Master crafted Bastard sword (precise, deep impact) |
| Shadow | Bright silver with a few streaks of pus-like yellow (corruption: 1) |

Tactics: Emelia engulfs her holy bastard sword with the fire of Prios and attacks the most heavily armored enemy with fearsome blows. Convinced that the One is fighting by her side, she never backs away from a confrontation with heretics or idolaters.

Kidnapped

SHOULD THE CHARACTERS defeat Losadra's agents, they may rightly call themselves the saviors of Duke Ynedar Kohinoor. When the dust has settled, they hear a trembling voice cautiously calling "Hello," from inside one of the cracks, "who... who's there?"

CONVERSATION WITH YNEDAR

If the player characters respond in a reassuring manner, the Duke will soon come crawling over the steep edge of the hole. He is cold and dirty, and judging by the lines in his otherwise grimy face he has recently been crying. Once on his feet, he soon gets his act together – straightening his back, raising his chin, and letting his eyes harden while inspecting his saviors. He then begins the conversation with three, for him, important questions:

- "So, to whom do I owe my life?"
- "What is your interest in this matter; what do you want?"
- "What is your position with regards to the schism within the Sun Church?" (If they do not give a clear answer, he rephrases the question: "The First Father or Father Sarvola, whom do you choose?")

If the Duke is to confide in the characters, the last two questions are both important – either they declare themselves completely uninterested in the church's internal conflicts and the Duke's predicament (all they want is the reward), or place themselves in the same camp as him. If the Game Master judges that the rather anxious nobleman dares to trust in their morals, capabilities and discretion, he presents the following pieces of information:

- The former High Priestess, Armanda, was a Loyalist fanatic. He does not quite admit to having ordered the murder, but stresses that her death was necessary to pave the way for "the Lifegiver, the true Prios."
- The successor, Leandro, is a Reformist, but was not involved in Armanda's death; he was arrested to protect him from the angry atmosphere which had started to spread through the city, aimed at the Sun Church in general.
- The black cloaks, and the Whip of Prios in particular, seem to suspect that he opposes the Curia and its interpretation of the Sun God's laws; if they manage to break the kidnapped Leandro, they will KNOW so, and other things that could make his situation very difficult.



Duke Ynedar is both proud and ashamed of what he has done.

- He believes however, just as Losadra pointed out when they met, that the agents' deeds are not sanctioned by the Curia – for that would harm their already poor relations with the Queen. In other words, there is now a chance to stop the course of events!
- The Duke asks the characters to track down Sister Losadra and her prisoner, Leandro. What they do with Losadra is up to them; the important thing is that the High Priest is returned safely and that any written confessions (or similar documents) are destroyed.

The player characters must make a decision, and make it fast! If they hesitate, the Duke stresses that he has vast resources at his disposal, and that both his welfare and that of the realm depend on Leandro's safe return and the Curia's agents being denied the opportunity to publicly accuse the Duke of being a heretic. In other words, he can offer a princely reward if they contribute to such an outcome.

TRACKING THE HIGH PRIEST

After having helped Ynedar escape, Algaya stayed long enough to hear Sister Losadra order her agents to track down the escapee while she herself returned to the "farm" with Leandro; from high above she could then follow the Duke's movements and at the same time see how Losadra steered her horse east. So, it is to locate this farm that Algaya flies off as soon as the characters have reached the ruin.

The Curia's Faithful

If your gaming group's characters are loyal to the Curia, or think they have more to gain from turning Ynedar over to the Whip of Prios, they are of course free to do whatever they want. As Game Master you must try to keep up and think about how the Duke's death may come to affect the game world's other people and factions. That being said, Korinthia (Reformist sympathizer as she is) will in all likelihood appoint a new duke/duchess who shares her and Ynedar's views on religious matters, so that when "Ynedar" is mentioned in future adventures/modules the situation can easily be remedied by simply changing the character's name.

And once she manages to identify the temporary headquarters of the Whip of Prios, she finds another trail to follow (see below), which means that the characters must locate the farm on their own. There are essentially three ways to do so.

It would be easiest if the characters managed to take one of the agents alive. None of them would normally divulge anything to the creatures of the Eternal Night (i.e. anyone who opposes the Curia). But perhaps a successful [Cunning←Resolute] test can provoke them into giving something away, by using the Reformist rhetoric: for example, the characters could argue that the Prios of War was invented by Alberetor's elite to subjugate and motivate the people during the Great War; that the Prios which the Curia represents is a delusion, that it emerged because of the Dark Lords' aggression and was hence created by darkness; and that this is confirmed by the fact that the Curia and its followers do not have the Lifegiver's support - they are losing! After such a tirade, the roaring prisoner may very well challenge the characters to seek out Sister Losadra - "and you will see whom Prios loves!" A quick follow-up question makes the agent defiantly point out the whereabouts of his or her leader.

Another possible way forward is to use rituals or elixirs on one of Losadra's agents. For example, a clever use of *Command Confession*, *Enslave*, *Necromancy* or *Telepathic Interrogation* might do the trick; likewise, the use of a Truth Serum (see page 83) can allow for a more conventional interrogation. If the player characters do not have such an elixir or rituals at their disposal, perhaps the Duke could requisition help/items from Ordo Magica or the Sun Temple?

Finally, it may be possible to track Sister Losadra's horse from the Blue Moon's warehouse. After the Duke's escape, she rounded the north corner of the building with the tied-up Leandro in tow, draped across the back of a mule. Following the

trail through Barbarian Town and further along the smaller country roads requires three successful *Vigilant* tests, the first of them with a modifier of -5. Should the first test fail, the Duke could lend them his bloodhounds, after which the test may be rerolled without the modifier.

LOSADRA OF THE WHIP OF PRIOS

No matter what they do, the player characters will not reach the farm in time - Father Leandro has cracked under Losadra's and Ervano Vearra's concerted interrogation, which means that the latter has finally acquired the proof he needs to take action: Ravenia must be baptized with the cleansing fire of Dead Prios!

As the characters arrive they are greeted by Sister Losadra, standing in the doorway like a silhouette, leaning casually against the doorpost. She waves for them to come inside, turns around, and leaves the door open behind her. When the characters enter the building, she has already taken a seat by the dining table; Leandro is sitting on another chair, tied-up and unconscious, in the middle of the room.

"Of course, I had hoped to welcome Aldoro and Emelia," she sighs, "but I suppose I will have to celebrate with you instead." She looks up at them, smiling, her eyes stone cold. "The dark blight which the Duke of New Beretor carries in his bones has been exposed; soon Ravenia will burn!"

Sister Losadra will not engage the characters in combat other than to defend herself, in which case she fights with a smile that does not fade even after she is killed. As long as the characters do not attack, she will respond contemptuously to all their questions, without trying to stop them from freeing the High Priest - "his days are numbered anyway, his life forfeit ..."

Regarding the threat against the Duke and Ravenia, she has the following to say:

- When the Curia and the Twilight Friars' leadership do not have the backbone to stand up for the light against the worldly authorities, one must find other ways to vanquish the darkness.
- The Church of Dead Prios may be fallen and degenerate, but its knights still regard the hordes of the Eternal Night as their main target.
- Deputy Commander Ervano Vearra leads the second largest of Dead Prios' suns (i.e. combat units); he is now preparing an assault on Ravenia, aimed at eradicating the black disease which has been allowed to fester and spread in the city.

- She does not know their exact number, but each sun she has previously seen in action consisted of ten or so knights, and was capable of laying waste to an entire barbarian settlement.
- In terms of tactics, she thinks they will first strike at the heart of the darkness, i.e. the Duke and his fortress, but they will no doubt cause great damage even on their way to its gates.

If the player characters ask other kinds of questions, Losadra is quite happy to answer; the longer they stay with her, the less time they will have to prepare for the templars' attack. The Game Master is free to improvise her answers – always with Sister Losadra's supercilious and contemptuous attitude in mind.

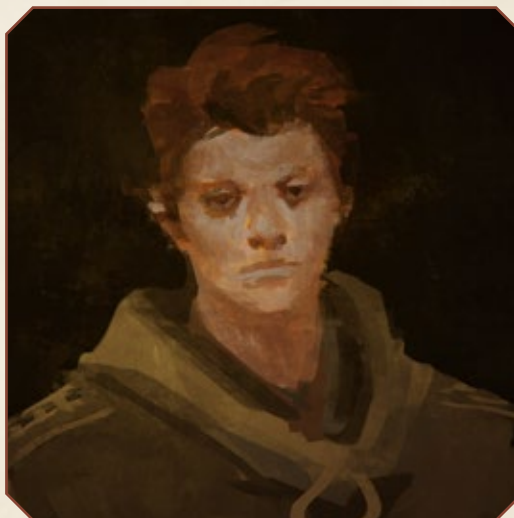
Sister Losadra

"Prios dictates my faith, and it condemns you."

Losadra has devoted her life to the hunt for the Lawgiver's enemies. In the final stages of the Great War, she assisted in the interrogation of suspected collaborators and learned all about the Eternal Night – how it can hide within anyone, even those who do not know their own darkness; and how it can always be exposed, brought to light, and if not banished then at least burned from the flesh.

Now, at forty years of age, despite her modest background, she has emerged as the undisputed leader of the Whip of Prios. No one has exposed more heretics or darkness-worshiping cults than she has. Her recipe for success is simple: to never let oneself be fooled by the deceptions of the Eternal Night; to trust in one's faith, regardless of desperate appeals, tears and pleas of innocence! And should one's faith be in error, it is a price worth paying – better an innocent sent to Prios than a deceitful heretic living under His heaven.

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Contemptuous, self-righteous |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | Contacts (Sun Church) |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 11 (-1), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 15 (-5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 5 (+5), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | Acrobatics (master), Dominate (master), Flailer (master), Loremaster (master), Ritualist (adept: Holy Smoke, Judging Bonds, Oracle), Theurgy (novice), Whip Fighter (master) |



| | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Weapons | Flail 4 (jointed, ensnaring), Long whip 3 (jointed, ensnaring, blunt) | | |
| Armor | Studded leather 3 (reinforced) | | |
| Defense | -3 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | Sun symbol, copy of the Light-bringer, interrogation tools (+1 to <i>Persuasive</i> during interrogations), pipe and tobacco, 13 thaler and 10 shillings | | |
| Shadow | Glaring white like annealed steel (corruption: 0) | | |

Tactics: Losadra fights expertly with a whip in one hand and a flail in the other. She uses the whip to pull an enemy toward her for an automatic hit which deals +3 damage; when fighting multiple enemies in melee combat she instead swings the flail at everyone within range. She will only use her subduing ability in situations where she is outnumbered and feels a need to level the playing field.

Losadra as Arch Enemy

Should Losadra survive the events in Ravenia, she may very well become one of the characters' most persistent arch enemies. She will probably remain within the Whip of Prios, meaning that she has access to vast resources in the form of contacts and allies. Another alternative is that she is ousted because of her failure – which would reduce her assets, but increase her vindictiveness to the point of insanity.

Another thrilling thought is to have a killed Losadra awaken as undead. In this case, she will hardly be welcomed back into the Sun Church, even if she herself regards the rebirth as evidence of her saintliness: Prios has given her life anew, so that she will be able to strike down on all who contributed to her death.

ACT 3:

Loved by the Sun

THE ONLY THING THAT can be said beforehand about the adventure's third act is that there will be some form of battle, with the Knights of Dead Prios on one side, and the Duke and his allies on the other. When, where and how this fight takes place depends largely on the player characters, as advisers to the indecisive Duke.

Preparations

REGARDLESS OF HOW their meeting with Sister Losadra ended, the player characters will not have much choice but to return to the Duke and explain what is about to happen. Perhaps they will try to pick up Ervano's trail, hoping that it will lead them to his camp, but they will have no such luck. Sure, there are fresh hoof prints in the farmyard, but many of them were made at roughly the same time and they spread in all directions. A successful tracking test (*Vigilant*) indicates that the most promising trail leads north, but it cannot be followed far before it is lost among other tracks on the country road. No, back to Ravenia they must go.

DELIBERATION


The fortress guards have orders to escort the player characters directly to the building they visited earlier and fetch the Duke, Adjutant Belalia, and the commander of the Mound's guard force, Colonel Morego. With Ynedar comes another person as well: Algaya.

The Duke was just informed of the meeting between the Whip of Prios and Ervano Vearra, and the latter's troop of almost thirty well-armed, well-trained and, in all likelihood, utterly fanatical knights. But he does not know everything, and has not had time to brief the adjutant and the colonel, which is why he begins by asking the characters to explain the situation. Meanwhile he rolls out a city map on the table.

When the situation is as clear as it can be, Duke Ynedar establishes the following:

- Algaya knows where the knights are encamped: less than an hour's ride north of Barbarian Town. According to her assessment, they are ready to move out at any time, if they have not already.
- He will call in reinforcements from the garrisons in Melion and Starak, but the chance of Colonel Elna Parfas and the others making it to Ravenia in time for the battle is practically non-existent.
- The forty men and women of the City Watch will not stand a chance against such a foe, and the same can of course be said for most of the population. This means that the city's armed forces consist of the thirty soldiers of the Mound Guard, each of them far inferior to a templar. The only exceptions are the two surviving members of the Duke's personal guard, who together might be able to match one of the enemy's knights.

The matters that must be resolved are therefore what strategies are available, and what potential allies, if any, might be found closer to home. The characters are welcome to contribute on both of these issues. Regarding strategies, Colonel Morego can present additional alternatives if the characters should overlook some of those mentioned below under the heading Strategies. As for potential allies, Belalia has a good understanding of the city's inhabitants and their capabilities.



Döde Prios riddare välkomnar döden, men vill först straffa så många av Den eviga nattens odjur som möjligt.



Described below are five possible allies and what is required for them to aid in Ravenia's defense. The Game Master decides whether the characters will deal with one, two, or all of these contacts – the others are handled by Morego, Belalia, or the Duke himself.

ORDO MAGICA

Persuading the two Masters at the local Ordo Magica chapter to put aside their personal projects is a challenge, especially if the argument is that they must participate in open battle against a group of fanatical fallen templars.

Player characters who themselves are members of the Order or have contacts within the organization can quickly gain an audience with Chapter Master Leviana; others must present credible arguments and pass a *Persuasive* test to convince the officious novice in the entrance hall to bother her.

The Chapter Master listens with a grave face, and then asks in what way their predicament would be Ordo Magica's concern. The argument that the knights threaten the city's inhabitants will probably not be very effective; it is the Duke's job to protect the people, especially from threats he himself helped create. The only way to secure the chapter's help is to offer something valuable in return, and sign a contract to that effect. Leviana's suggestion is that the Duke promises to finance an expedition to the Cobalt Temple – the Azure Temple's famous sister that is said to be located somewhere east of the Ravens – and that the player characters will commit to come along as escorts.

If an agreement is reached, both Masters, two adepts, and a few able novices will join the Duke's (and the player characters') defending forces.

Giving and Taking

If the player characters agree to hand over the artifact Othelda desires, the Game Master should sooner or later give them a chance to retrieve it, or perhaps to get it back in exchange for something else. The old fortune hunter knows a great deal about the treasure grounds of Davokar, and if only she could ride on someone's back (or be otherwise carried) she would love to go on a final treasure hunt in Davokar!

CLAN VAJVOD

Ravenia's barbarian population does of course include a large number of able-bodied warriors and witches. A player character descended from one of Davokar's clans is quickly granted an audience with Envoy Molgara; others must present credible arguments and pass a *Persuasive* test in order to convince the guards at the residence's gates to relay their urgent request for a meeting.

Listening to their account of the current circumstances, Molgara realizes that an attack by the knights would affect large parts of Barbarian Town's population, and that the Duke is in dire need of her help. She can assemble a fighting force, but only under the condition that Molgara herself is given a permanent position on the Duke's council and that a third wall is built around Barbarian Town. In addition, she demands that Ravenia's barbarian migrants are taken into consideration when planning the city's defense, as much as possible. Perhaps she also needs the characters to assist in some matter in Davokar (something clan Vajvod's taboos stop her own people from accomplishing)?

If her demands are met, it takes Molgara one hour to place thirty-three experienced clan warriors and two young but competent witches at the Duke's disposal.

THE SUN CHURCH

The representatives of the city's crestfallen Sun Temple can be invited to participate in the battle against their fallen brothers and sisters. If High Priest Leandro has been freed from Losadra's clutches, it is him the characters (or someone else) must talk to; if he has not, they must turn to the acting High Priest, the liturg Sondro.

After Armanda's time as their leader, the local congregation has every reason to prove themselves helpful, especially to the people of Barbarian Town. Like Molgara, the church's negotiator would like to see a strategy that explicitly seeks to reduce civilian casualties and suffering as much as possible; even asking for a written contract which clearly shows that this is what the congregation demands. Other than that, they have no further conditions – on the contrary, the new head of the Sun Temple sees the coming battle as a chance to regain the people's trust.

After Armanda's death, Ravenia's Sun Temple cannot boast any battle-ready theurgs, but they are all competent healers, with or without mystical powers. With Leandro alive they can contribute eight healers to be distributed amongst the defenders (e.g. the characters), otherwise there is only seven.

THE FORTUNE HUNTERS

Unless the characters come up with the idea themselves, Belalia could mention the city's fortune hunters as a potential group of allies. Most of these live in Barbarian Town, as lodgers or at one of the smaller inns – the Chieftain's Axe, the Enchanted Glade, or the Barbarity Inn. The latter is the largest of them, and its tavern is something of a focal point for the region's most hardened explorers, treasure hunters and monster slayers. A character with contacts within one of these groups is aware of this; otherwise Belalia or someone else could inform them.

The informal leader of the city's fortune hunters is the retired monster slayer Othelda. Given the opposition that awaits them, she knows a dozen people who could assist in the fight – a mix of mystics, archers and warriors, as well as the rugged ogre Nogood who (despite the name) could certainly match a knight on his own. But of course, her help does not come for free. She demands fifty thaler for herself, twenty each for the others, and a one-year Treasure Hunting License for everyone involved. She also takes a liking to an artifact or item carried by one of the characters; the object must be handed over immediately, or any agreement is out of the question!

THE TRADING HOUSES

Finally, one must not forget Ravenia's many trading houses. They are rich, and their owners always keep a competent group of bodyguards on hand. If the player characters take it upon themselves, as advised by the Duke, to persuade the city's merchants to contribute to the defense effort, he suggests that they first seek out Eberio at the Galeia trading house. Otherwise the Duke could handle this negotiation himself.

Whoever he speaks with, Eberio claims that he could muster between fifteen and twenty-five competent warriors and archers, but his price is high: duty-free status for goods which Galeia and other participating trading houses transport through (but do not sell in) Ravenia for the next five years. And he requests a personal favor as well. A barge will soon leave Ravenia and sail for Vojvodar to collect a precious cargo, which will then be shipped all the way to Agrella – the shipment needs the additional protection of a group of reliable (and therefore expensive) sellswords. If it is the player characters who conduct the negotiation or if he has met them before, Eberio demands their assistance; otherwise the Duke will ask whether they could be of service, for a reasonable fee. Exactly what is to be transported and what happens on the journey is entirely for the Game Master to decide.

Strategies

EXACTLY HOW MUCH time the player characters and their allies have before Ervano Vearra and his group of fully armored Enforcers arrive is up to the Game Master, with the aim of making the final act as dramatic as possible. However, it is important that they can receive an early warning that the enemy is coming, for example by Algaya performing the *Borrow Beast* ritual and circling north of the city in the form of some fast-flying bird; maybe she borrows one of the Duke's gyrfalcons.

Below is a presentation of the four main strategies available to the characters and how they may be portrayed, but first a few words about how the Game Master could approach the upcoming battle.

THE SETUP OF THE BATTLE

The core rules of *Symbaroum* are not particularly well-suited for handling large-scale battles, simply because they were never designed for such situations. When they do arise, however, the gaming group ought to focus on their characters' part in the fight, and let their success or failure determine the outcome of the battle as a whole. In this case, the stakes are high. The player characters have a lot to gain – friendship with the Queen's nephew, who might also become one of the leading figures of the reformed Sun Church. But there is much to lose, too, besides the fact that they are putting their very lives on the line.

Regarding the battle against Ervano Vearra and his sun of templars, we suggest that the characters must face Ervano himself and one of his Enforcers, regardless of what strategy they choose (see below). It is also recommended that said Enforcer is replaced by Sister Losadra, if she was not killed or incarcerated by the characters.

Furthermore, the characters fight should be affected by how many groups of allies the characters and the Duke managed to recruit in time. This is symbolized by Ervano and his side-kick being joined by additional Enforcers during the course of the battle, as the other groups on the characters' side are not strong enough to keep all enemies occupied. For every group the characters did NOT recruit, another Enforcer will join the fray; the first one arrives at the scene after 1D4 turns, the second after yet another 1D4, and so on (let the players roll the die, preferably without revealing the meaning of the outcome).

Finally, we recommend that Duke Ynedar stays close to the characters during the battle. He sticks to the background, but has two Herbal Cures and the *Medicus* ability at novice level (*Cunning* 13) which could be of use if a character is badly

injured. In short: if the characters win their part of the battle and kill Ervano Vearra, their side will also win the entire battle, having suffered severe casualties but with the Duke still alive. If the characters should fall, the rest of their force, including Ynedar Kohinoor, will also die by the flaming sword of Dead Prios.

DEFENSE

The Duke is reluctant to leave the protective walls of the Mound. It is easy to see why, but it also means that large parts of the city would be left vulnerable to the attacking knights – something clan Vajvod's envoy and the Sun Church do not appreciate.

Two measures must be taken if this proposal is to be approved. First of all, they must immediately issue a warning so that the defenseless residents of Barbarian Town have time to leave and seek shelter south of Ravenia. Many may still not be able to go, or simply choose to stay, but the important thing is that they are not taken completely by surprise.

Secondly, the outer gates of the Mound must be left open – something the attackers would be able to see from far away, coming from the north. This way it might be possible to lure the enemy inside the walls, to trap and fight them there, with archers and mystics posted up on the inner balustrade.

In that case, the knights' strategy will first be to clear out all enemies on the ground and, if they are victorious, use *Levitate* to reach the top of the inner wall. Even if the characters' part of the battle takes place on the ground, we encourage the Game Master to let a few knights ascend into the air, toward the archers up on the wall – if only for effect. By combining the powers *Unnoticeable* and *Levitate*, a couple of knights could also show up among the mystics and archers completely without warning.

Compensation

The people and groups who can help the Duke defend the city will all demand something in return. As Game Master, you are of course welcome to adjust these demands. Perhaps Chapter Master Levia-na's future expedition is bound for some other destination than the Cobalt Temple? Or maybe she is not interested in such support at all, but wants a significant donation to the chapter's general operations, if that seems more appropriate for your story and gaming group.

Blight Birth

The Knights of Dead Prios are set on vengeance at any cost, which means that they are no longer afraid of contracting corruption; all means are permitted in the struggle to avenge the Dead One. If the Game Master so desires, this could be portrayed by one of the Enforcers being blight born in the midst of battle. If the characters are very experienced and the odds are in their favor, this could happen to one of their enemies; otherwise we suggest that it occurs on another part of the battlefield or somewhere among the buildings. Game Masters who find this idea appealing should prepare values for the blight born templar before the gaming session begins.



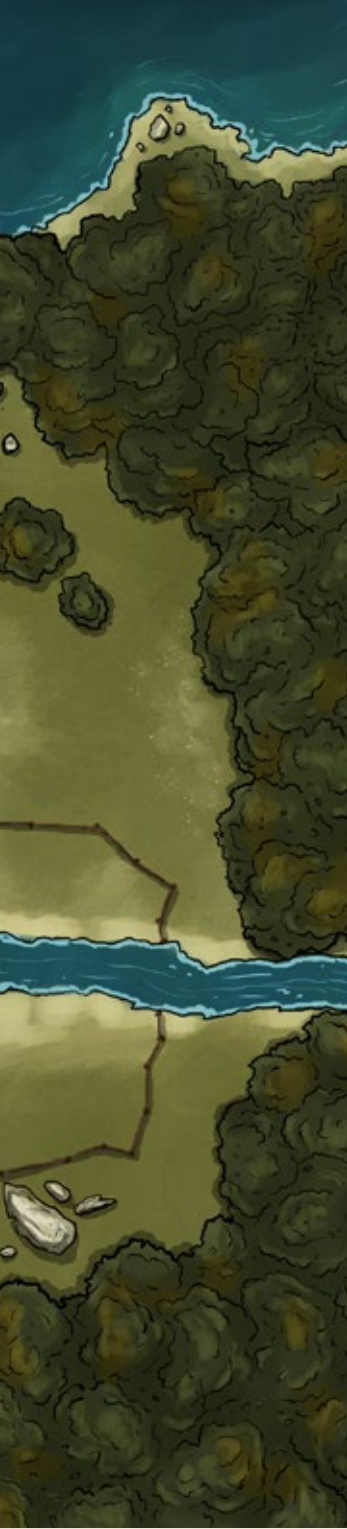
PITCHED BATTLE

Provided that at least three allied groups have been recruited, Colonel Morego suggests that they confront the knights on the rolling fields north of Barbarian Town. Sure, even with the advantage of higher ground the defenders will suffer heavy casualties during the initial cavalry charge, but to him it is a price worth paying to keep the civilian population safe.

Should the characters agree, the Duke will also let himself be persuaded. As an effect, the characters' part of the battle will include an additional

Enforcer, who shows up after 1D4 turns according to the model described above. If the gaming group uses the rules for Reputation (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*) or Scheming (see *Karvosti - the Witch Hammer*), their heroic choice of strategy should also bring some appropriate social rewards.

Perhaps the battle ends with the characters (after having won their part of the fight) finding the Duke on his back, injured and terrified, flanked by two Enforcers with their flaming swords raised? This final fight should be quite easy to handle



- maybe because the enemy has lost most of their *Toughness* - and added mainly to ensure an exciting and epic end to the battle.

AMBUSH

Another alternative is to stage an ambush, either in some grove or crevice on the route between the knight's camp and Rivenia, or among the houses in the north part of Barbarian Town. This becomes a more complicated affair, since one must assume that the Knights of Dead Prios have agents stationed in the city. Which they do.

The characters and Colonel Morego must devise a strategy for moving their troops (e.g. in disguise, hidden on boats from the South Harbor, or by riding in a long, eastern semicircle), after which the character with the highest *Cunning* value must pass a test modified by -5 (we suggest that the Game Master does not say anything about the modifier and keeps the outcome secret).

The advantage of this is that the characters and their allies might take the enemy by surprise, in which case the characters will face one less Enforcer during their part of the battle. On the other hand, if the above-mentioned *Cunning* test fails, the fallen knights are alerted and will chose another route - forcing the would-be defenders to hurry and catch up before the templars have time to do great damage in Barbarian Town.

If the game group is using the rules for Reputation or Scheming, the latter should probably result in significant punishment, especially if it was the characters who advocated this strategy...

ATTACK

Then there is of course the option of taking the fight to the enemy. However, this approach requires the same discretion as above in order to avoid alerting the enemy and consequently face a thundering cavalry charge, without having the high ground. If that should happen, the characters must defeat two additional Enforcers to win their part of the battle.

On the other hand, if the characters and their allies manage to surprise the knights, the strategy will not affect the characters' battle in any way - it becomes the same as if the forces collide inside the Mound.

Ervano Vearra

"I am your death, apostate!"

As the son of Commander Iakobo Vearra and brother of Alisabeta, Ervano has been molded into a fierce champion of the Lawgiver since he was a toddler. He wears his scars, both spiritual and physical, with overflowing pride, and is of course

extremely serious about avenging the death of Prios. Barbarians, goblins, ogres and other non-Ambrians who worship the darkness out of ignorance must be punished; those of the Queen's subjects who deliberately contributed to the Lawgiver's death and the spread of the Eternal Night deserve also to suffer!

Ervano will hear no pleas and show no mercy. He no longer cares about his own soul: the First Revenger, his father, has proclaimed that all means are permitted in the quest for vengeance, even if they darken one's soul. Retribution is all that matters, and that is the path he will follow until the time comes for him to kneel by the dust of the murdered god.

| | |
|---|---|
| Manner | Calmly furious |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Mighty |
| Traits | <i>Contacts</i> (Church of Dead Prios) |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 10 (0), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 13 (-3), Strong 18 (-8), Vigilant 9 (+1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Beast Lore</i> (master: <i>Abominations</i>), <i>Berserker</i> (master), <i>Blessed Shield</i> (adept), <i>Equestrian</i> (master), <i>Exceptionally Quick</i> (adept), <i>Exceptionally Strong</i> (master), <i>Feat of Strength</i> (master), <i>Holy Aura</i> (novice), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (master), <i>Witchhammer</i> (master) |
| Weapons
Strong | Executioner's Sword 15 (precise, unwieldy, massive), +2 when <i>Toughness</i> has been halved, ignores <i>Armor</i> |
| Armor | Sooty templar full plate 7 (holy), +5 with <i>Blessed Shield</i> and Holy |
| Defense | -3 |
| Toughness | 23 Pain Threshold 9 |
| Equipment | 17 thaler and 4 shillings, and nothing more (the Knights of Dead Prios own nothing but the instruments of their revenge) |
| Shadow | Streaks of faint yellow against a darkening background, like the last rays of sunlight across the evening sky (corruption: 3) |

Tactics: Ervano rides straight into battle surrounded by the lingering light of Prios, his sword burning with wrath. Whether he gets off his horse or fights from its back depends on the situation, but when the enemies are many he prefers to rip through their line with a charge or two before entering melee. He does not care about injuries, fully aware that he grows stronger with every wound.

About the

Massive quality

Since NPCs do not roll any effect dice, the Massive quality works a bit different for them. Instead of them rolling two damage dice and picking the highest result, it is the players who must roll two armor dice and pick the lowest one.

Enforcer

"Die, murderer!"

With few exceptions, the Enforcers in Ervano's sun are lowborn nobles. They know how to conduct themselves properly, but no longer care about manners or etiquette. Their eyes burn with a fire which is never seen in other nobles, possibly as a result of the corruption they have willingly contracted to be more effective in their quest for vengeance.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Manner | Calmly fanatical |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | <i>Contacts</i> (Church of Dead Prios) |

Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 13 (-3), **Resolute** 11 (-1), **Strong** 15 (-5), **Vigilant** 7 (+3)

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Abilities | <i>Beast Lore</i> (novice), <i>Berserker</i> (novice), <i>Equestrian</i> (adept), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (master), <i>Mystical Power</i> (adept: either <i>Unnoticeable</i> , <i>Levitate</i> or <i>Curse</i>), <i>Steadfast</i> (master), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (adept), <i>Witchhammer</i> (master) |
|------------------|---|

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Weapons | Bastard sword 9 (precise), +3 if <i>Berserker</i> |
|----------------|---|

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Armor | Studded leather 3 (reinforced) |
|--------------|--------------------------------|

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| Defense | -3 (+5 if <i>Berserker</i>) |
|----------------|------------------------------|

| | | | |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|---|
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|---|

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Equipment | 1D10 thaler, flagellant whip, symbol of Dead Prios |
|------------------|--|

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Shadow | Golden yellow with streaks and blemishes of dark red (corruption: 3) |
|---------------|--|

Tactics: The Knights of Dead Prios fight with controlled fury and move in groups to avoid being flanked; only when they seem to be losing will they unleash their berserker rage and attack in full force.

Aftermath

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER the battle against the Knights of Dead Prios is quite an open question. It depends not only on how the battle transpires, but also on what the player characters decide to do with Ervano Vearra (dead or captured), as well as on their actions earlier in the scenario. The Game Master must think hard, particularly if the gaming group also intends to take on the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*, which may be affected by the outcome of this adventure.

This chapter begins with suggestions regarding the distribution of *Experience*, followed by some thoughts on the development of the Ravana region and the player characters' relations with

the adventure's central figures. Lastly, we present a few ideas which the Game Master is welcome to develop into future adventures in Ravana and its surrounding area.

EXPERIENCE

Aside from the headings which are purely intended as interludes, *What's Bred in the Bone* should offer fifteen or so challenging scenes and as many *Experience* points for the player characters. But never forget that your gaming group may agree on increasing or decreasing this amount, depending on how quickly you want your characters to progress.

DEVELOPMENTS

Regardless of what happens to Duke Ynedar, much will stay the same in Ravana. If he should die, the Queen could persuade his sister, Korthena Kohinoor, to leave the Twilight Monastery in the Titans and take her late brother's place. Whoever is in charge, the construction of a third wall will begin immediately, since everyone in the city is convinced that Iakobo Vearra will never let his son's murderers go unpunished, just as he refuses to sit idly by as "*the Eternal Night descends upon Ravana*." At the moment, Iakobo has other things on his mind - exactly what depends on when the adventure takes place in relation to the *Throne of Thorns*; either the wedding between Esmerelda and Thabor, or the search for Symbar. But if the gaming group happens to like it in Ravana, the vengeance of Dead Prios could very well be developed into a series of future adventures.

Heroes of the Curia

Some gaming groups may choose an entirely different path in this adventure, by siding with the Lawgiver/Curia and surrendering Duke Ynedar to the Whip of Prios, or putting the Duke in chains and taking him back to Yndaros with a report of his heretical treachery. This would be a terrible blow for the Reformists and an equally great victory for the Curia's supporters, regardless of whether the Queen has already dissolved the Curia or if that step is yet to be taken. While it seems very likely that the Duke quickly ends up with his aunt in the Sunrise Palace and that his deeds are covered up, if the Game Master so desires, it could actually lead to First Father Jeseebegai and his allies winning greater support, while the people's regard for both Sarvola and the Queen diminishes - something which should then be kept in mind when playing future episodes in *the Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*.

The Sun Church's various factions will of course react to, and be affected by, the events in Ravana. The Curia (or the dwindling group of remaining Curia supporters) claims it was not involved, but does not officially denounce the Whip of Prios and its hunt for heretics – something that causes relations between Korinthia and the First Father and/or Brother Eumenos to deteriorate even further. All who appear to have helped the Duke, including the player characters, are formally branded as heretics and champions of darkness.

The Reformists also take notice of who was involved and on what side they fought, not least in the hope of identifying future allies.

Should your group play *What's Bred in the Bone* before *The Darkest Star*

it might even be the

Duke's confrontation with

the Curia that convinces

Sarvola and Deseba

the Old to relocate to

Ravana. In any case,

the Reformists use

the Whip of Prios' advance to exert

pressure in their communications with the

Queen – the Curia should

be dissolved as soon as possible, if it has not already; and

if it has, Queen Korinthia should

seriously consider an attempt to link

the leader of the Twilight Friars to Sister

Losadra's treasonous deeds.

We could not conclude this adventure

without also saying something about how the

Church of Dead Prios reacts to the news that

one of its largest and strongest suns, including

Deputy Commander Ervano, has been massacred

by heretics in Ravana. One thing is certain: the

characters have made a group of very powerful

and hateful enemies; future negotiations with the

fallen templars must be handled through intermediaries, or under secret identities. It is also clear that



The Whip of Prios

Commander Iakobo's grief and anger will drive him even closer to the edge of madness, though not over it. No, Templewall will remain the seat of the Revenger and his Enforcers until after the fourth part of the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

The adventure has already offered some hints of adventure seeds which the Game Master is welcome to develop and fill with whatever content suits the gaming group. Helping the Blue Moon

transport sensitive goods from Vajvod to Agrella is one option; accompanying Chapter Master Leviana to the Cobalt Temple across the Ravens is another. But there may also be reason to delve into the story about Duke Ynedar's (or Duchess Korthena's) path toward being appointed the Reformist's alternative to Korinthia Nightbane.

Depending on when the adventure takes place, the characters could for example be asked to escort Father Sarvola, Deseba the Old, and the boy Aluin to Ravana. In other words, if *What's Bred in the Bone* is played before *The Darkest Star*, they will be the ones

helping the Reformist leaders escape from Thistle

Hold; if it is played afterward, the three

of them have left the Hold after

repeated threats and stay

hidden on a farm west of

Karabbadokk. They will

probably encounter both

Black Cloaks and fallen

templars on the way,

or perhaps some influential

Curia supporter

has enlisted a group

of freelance witch

hunters (for a more

varied opposition).

Maybe the characters

are not alone in escorting

the leaders, and perhaps it

becomes increasingly evident

that there is a traitor in their midst?

Perhaps Sarvola demands that they make

a stop at the barony of Gorinder, whose

leader, the fervent Curia supporter Baron

Gorolai, keeps his Reformist daughter locked up – she could be a valuable ally and must be freed, through negotiations, force or stealthy maneuvers!

Another interesting mission could involve

being sent to a free settlement in the Ravens, one

whose inhabitants often worship the Young Gods, including the Lifegiver. The job is to invite their

leaders to a meeting in Ravana, but of course complications ensue: it turns out that one village

has converted to daemon worshiping and tries to sacrifice the characters to their monstrous god;

another village is caught up in a feud with a band of robbers that have kidnapped the village elder's son,

who must be returned; a third is eerily deserted,

and the characters must try to find its kidnapped/displaced/corrupted inhabitants.

Whatever the characters decide to do after *What's Bred in the Bone* reaches its conclusion, the events will affect them, as well as Ravana and the entire

Ambrian kingdom, for the foreseeable future.

Appendix

THIS CONCLUDING CHAPTER includes new rule elements relevant to the adventures, but also a closer look at the pantheon of the Young Gods. The Game Master is welcome to use the latter in order to develop homebrew adventures, or as inspiration when creating heretical non-player characters. Adding to this, the information is of course relevant for anyone who wants to understand Ambrian history and today's conflicts within the Sun Church.

New Rules

ABILITY: BLESSINGS

Blessings represent the mystical tradition taught and practiced by all mystically inclined priests from the faraway Realm of the Order. In essence, it combines powers from both *Witchcraft* and *Theurgy* with a variety of blessings unique to the clergy of the Young Gods.

Note that the tradition itself will be described in more detail in future books.

- Novice **Action: Special.** The priest no longer suffers permanent Corruption when learning blessings at Novice level, nor when learning the rituals of the tradition. Despite this, the character has no protection against the temporary Corruption that comes from performing the blessings and rituals of the tradition.
- Adept **Action: Special.** The priest no longer suffers permanent Corruption when learning blessings at Adept level. The Adept has also learned to use the holy powers and rituals according to the will of the gods, and now only suffers one (1) temporary Corruption when performing them.
- Master **Action: Special.** The priest's profound insight into the divine increases the effect of all healing and holy powers by 1D4, including damage dealt against Abominations and Undead. The priest suffers no Corruption when learning blessings at master level.

MYSTICAL POWER: EARTH SHOT

Material: A holy symbol

With wild gestures and chanting song, the mystic can make the earth itself attack those who threaten a servant of the gods - rocks are pulled from underneath soil and grass, and hurled forcefully at the unrighteous target.

- Novice **Action: Active.** The mystic pulls a sharp-edged boulder from the earth and hurls it at a target. With a successful *[Resolute←Quick]* test the attack hits, dealing 1D8 damage.
- Adept **Action: Active.** Like Novice, but the mystic pulls 1D4 boulders from the ground, which may be hurled at either one or multiple targets. Each rock counts as a separate attack.
- Master **Action: Active.** Like Adept, but instead of boulders, swarms of smaller rocks are hurled forcefully at the victim/victims. The projectiles are small and sharp enough to hit their target through tiny gaps, creases, and cracks, thereby ignoring *Armor*.

MYSTICAL POWER: EARTHBINDING

Material: A fistful of soil

Stone, soil, plants and ore can bind those who threaten a servant of the gods. The mystic can let the unrighteous sink into the ground, deep enough to prevent all movement, possibly in such a tight grip that it harms the target.

- Novice **Action: Free.** Once per turn, with a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic can let a target sink into, and get stuck in, the ground. The bound creature is unable to move, but may use ranged weapons and mystical powers. The creature remains bound until the mystic loses concentration or fails a [*Resolute*←*Strong*] test.
- Adept **Action: Free.** Once per turn the mystic can establish a chain of earthbinds. If the mystic manages to bind a target with a *Resolute* test, he or she may attempt to bind another one, and so on until an attempt fails. Affected targets remain bound until the mystic loses concentration or fails a [*Resolute*←*Strong*] test.
- Master **Action: Free.** Like Adept, but the ground is clamped so tightly around the victim's legs that he or she also takes 1D6 damage per turn (ignoring *Armor*).

ABILITY: WHIP FIGHTER

It is not uncommon for witch hunters and black cloaks to fight with a sword in one hand and a whip in the other. It is an effective combination; with proper training, it can be used to vanquish even the most well-armored opponent.

- Novice **Action: Active.** Attack with a whip in one hand and a Single-handed Weapon in the other. If the whip attack hits, the character gains a Free Attack with the other weapon, whether or not the whip deals damage.
- Adept **Action: Active.** As Novice, but the whip hinders the target's movement; the Free Attack hits automatically.
- Master **Action: Active.** As Adept, but the whip fighter pulls the enemy towards him or her; the Free Attack also deals +1D6 damage.

ELIXIR: TRUTH SERUM

It takes an adept alchemist to create a potent truth serum. Those who (willingly or not) inhale this powder, or drink a solution of it, are robbed of their mental clarity, giving them -5 to *Resolute*

as they try to resist interrogations where the other person uses *Persuasive* or the *Telepathic Interrogation* ritual. With a successful *Strong* test, the modifier becomes -3.

If the serum was made by a true master alchemist, the modifier becomes -8, or -5 after a successful *Strong* test. The effect lasts for an entire scene.

ARTIFACT: THE LONG HAMMER THUNDER

No one knows the origin of the long hammer named Thunder by its current owner. Raharax found it shortly after having woken from his latest hibernation, in the nearby cocoon of a troll who clearly had not survived its transition from rage troll to liege troll. Perhaps the hammer comes from Küam Zamok, but if so, it must have been forged in Symbarian times and brought to the dwarven realm by its founders as they fled the downfall of the empire.

Like other weapons of its kind, the massive, yet flexible Thunder has the qualities Bastard Weapon, Massive, and Precise, but the negative quality Unwieldy has been removed (value: 500 thaler). In addition, the hammer comes with two special abilities for its wielder to make use of:

Armor Breaker: The master who has bound the hammer to himself/herself may after each attack, successful or parried, attempt to crush the enemy's metal armor or shield. The attempt is performed like an extra attack - damage is rolled as usual; if the outcome is higher than the armor's *Armor* value, the *Armor* value is permanently decreased by 1D4. If the outcome is 6 or higher the attack renders the enemy's shield completely useless, forcing its user to throw it away.

Armor Breaker can be used repeatedly against the same target.

Action: Reaction

Corruption: 1D4

Synchronization: If its master has the *Hammer Rhythm* ability, Thunder can adopt perfectly to the user's movements and hit with maximum effect. The synchronization deals +1D6 damage and lasts until the scene ends or the master changes target.

Action: Free

Corruption: 1D6.

*Before the Young*

No one ever talks about what existed before the Young Gods. In the public mind it was a time of chaos, destruction, and perpetual torment; a time when survival was all that humans could hope for. To the theologians of Ordo Magica the question is irrelevant. But if one pushes them and demands to be told why the Lifegiver, the Pathfinder, and the others are called the "Young"; they will probably answer that the gods were named in relation to the raging creatures who dictated humanity's early existence, eons ago, before the cultures of Symbaroum and the one by the eastern sea flourished and died.



The Young Gods

THE GREAT WAR brought about a radical change in the Alberians' attitude toward religion and spirituality. Before the war, people worshipped a pantheon of godlike principles called the Young Gods, whom they believed could help them through the challenges of everyday life. Sometimes the gods would demand something in return - a small

offering, a prayer (sung or spoken), or a promise of future deeds - but they were not worshipped, and were generally regarded as sympathetic to their human devotees.

Most of this changed with the war. Just after King Ynedar's death the sun priest Abrammar had a revelation. He never doubted that it was the

Lifegiver who visited his dreams, even though the god referred to himself by one of his older names: Prios – the First/Highest/One; a name that had already been reestablished by the nobles of the congregation called the Vestals of Prios. Inspired by his revelation, Abramar wrote the Lightbringer – a book that describes Prios’ nature and sets out the laws of the sun.

Five years later, in the middle of a meeting with her war council, Queen Korinthia of Kohinoor collapsed. As she regained consciousness, the Queen announced that Prios had come to her with word of Father Abramar’s writings and offered his assistance in their righteous battle against darkness. But the Lifegiver also let her know that he was dying, and that he needed the humans’ help to grow well, free, and strong. Most importantly, the people had to abandon the Young Gods (except Prios); for according to the Lightbringer, these were merely aspects of the Eternal Night, sent to steal the power that comes from human faith and belief. In short: Prios seemed like humanity’s only chance to defeat the creatures of the night, but in order for him to aid in their battle against the Dark Lords, all Alberians would have to submit themselves to his laws, fulfill their duties with diligence and zeal, and put their trust in the priesthood of the Sun.

Before long, their society as a whole had been reformed. The bond between the Sun Church and the crown was strengthened manifold; for instance, the Queen and her administration adjusted the laws of the land in accordance with Prios’ decrees. And what is more, she established an order of warriors to serve his church: the Knights of the Dying Sun, also known as the Templars.

However, on a personal level, the enthusiasm with which the Exaltation was received varied greatly from person to person. The vast majority wholeheartedly welcomed the Sun God’s promise

of assistance, and did everything they could to contribute to his recovery and strength. Many others did their best to appear obedient, while secretly remaining devoted to the Young Gods. But there were also those who refused to submit and chose to flee what they considered a lie devised to enslave the people. Some even went so far as to publicly denounce the Queen as a heretic and a mistress of evil.

This section presents the greatest of the Young Gods, more thoroughly than the introduction found in the adventure *The Bell Tolls for Kastor*. Aside from describing the character, domain, and symbols of each respective god, we provide examples of places in Ambria where their presence remains strong. Worshipping one or more of the Young Gods is a crime, in both a legal and ecclesiastical sense, but since notorious heretics like Sarvola and Baron Mergai Dekanor have still not been punished, more and more people are following their example. Unfortunately (for them), it is often much more difficult to escape the stake if one lacks both powerful friends and massive public support...

PRIOS

Symbol: Sun or a bundle of sun rays

Name variations: The names Lifegiver and Sol/Sola are often used by those who still worship the older version of Prios.

Domain: The spark of life, the hearthfire, and universal love

Practice: People worship the Lifegiver in the hope of increased fertility (both in humans and livestock), answered love, and relief from spiritual and physical ailments. To this day, many believe sunshine to be the best cure for all sorts of maladies. The Lifegiver is also regarded as a just defender of the sanctity of life, often worshipped by poor people praying for their daily bread and improved health.

Present-day worship: Father Sarvola at Thistle Hold is obviously the Lifegiver’s most famous representative in contemporary Ambria, but his revived doctrine has spread to other parts of the kingdom as well, and gained ground within the Sun Church itself. Even Queen Korinthia has secret plans to renounce the Lawgiver in favor of the Lifegiver – if only to get rid of the ambitious First Father Jeseebegai. It should also be mentioned that Duke Ynedar of New Beretor is growing increasingly convinced that “*the Prios of War*” no longer has a place in the Ambrian realm; the Exaltation was a necessary evil during the war, but the time has come for the Sun to once again shine upon all its children.

The Punishment for Heresy

In today’s Ambria, to publicly worship the Executioner or the Pathfinder is to be a cultist. The law, the Church, and most of the country’s population agree that such actions contribute to the weakened condition of Prios and the spread of darkness. Children may get off with a severe caning; everyone else who proves guilty of idolatry must face the purging flames of the sacred stake. Officially, this applies to nobles and common folk alike, but in the nobles’ case it is remarkably common to have been tricked or seduced by some lowborn heretic – who must therefore take the noble’s place at the stake.



THE EARTHMOTHER

Symbol: Goblet or a well

Name variations: Aside from the variation Mother Earth, the Earthmother is sometimes referred to by her older names; Mylla and Torva.

Domain: Nature, harvest, and safe childbirth

Practice: The Earthmother is worshipped in times of sowing and planting, as well as during pregnancies and childbirth. It is also believed that she can still earthquakes, heal sickly or unfruitful lands, and correct disturbances in the seasonal rhythm.

Present-day worship: Large parts of the Ambrian population are farmers, either working their own lands or those of wealthier landowners. It must be very rare for such people, even those living in Prios Domain, not to give the Earthmother a thought while sowing their crops. Since the templars razed the free settlement of Earthmoor to the ground

in the year 17, there have been two major cults in Ambria - one in Kurun and the other centered around Count Hastorio Arobel and his estate, located near the river Noora's inlet into the Doudram. Both are unknown to the public and strongly (and secretly) opposed to the Curia's interpretation of Prios' nature and laws.

THE EXECUTIONER

Symbol: The double-axe as a stylized rune

Name variations: The Executioner is sometimes referred to by older names such as the Punisher, the Hangman, or simply Death.

Domain: Punishment, honesty, and just or natural death.

Practice: The Executioner is worshipped in times of turmoil and war, by warriors hoping for a glorious death and by civilians hoping to survive. Elders and

their relatives pray when someone is dying, and the Executioner can supposedly help victims of crime to hunt down the culprit, and bring vindication to the wrongly accused.

Present-day worship: Aside from quiet prayers, whispered out of habit or precaution, there are currently a handful of groups exclusively devoted to the Executioner. One such is the Yndaros-based Headsmen – a secret society of twenty or so like-minded individuals, led by Captain Andonio of the city watch. Its members always wear full executioner’s robes when attending gatherings or performing assignments, and therefore do not know each other’s real identities; should someone be captured, or the group infiltrated by spies, the others need not fear being exposed. The group’s mission is twofold: to counteract the Sun Church and its heretical interpretation of the Executioner, and deliver justice where the law cannot. The latter often involves punishing nobles who have escaped justice because of their status – either through physical beating or destruction of property.

THE PATHFINDER

Symbol: A triangle of twigs

Name variations: As one of the most beloved of the Young Gods, the Pathfinder has been given many names over the centuries: the Seeker, the Gamekeeper, the Trapper, to name a few.

Domain: Luck, hunting, and safe travel

Practice: The Pathfinder is worshipped in all things belonging to his domain – when embarking on journeys of any length, hunting game or birds, and in all situations where the outcome can be attributable to chance (for example during different kinds of games and contests).

Present-day worship: In the shadow of Sarvola and his attempt to reestablish Prios as the god of universal love, Thistle Hold is the place where the Pathfinder’s following is at its strongest. Many merchants are secretly selling triangle symbols to gamblers and fortune hunters, and with the right contacts (and attitude), one may be invited to one of the feast-like masses which are sometimes held in Davokar. The fact that the Rangers have occasionally raided such gatherings only seems to have increased their popularity – even though a handful of mass participants have been arrested and burned at the stake.

THE WILDLING

Symbol: A braid

Name variations: The Wildling is sometimes referred to as the Artist or the Dreamer, depending on which aspect is cherished the most.

Domain: Passion, inspiration, and visions

Practice: The Wildling is mostly worshipped by artists in need of inspiration, but sometimes one can also hear authorities at different levels whispering prayers to the god of inspiration, asking for guidance and help in solving difficult situations, whether social or practical in nature.

Present-day worship: The feasts sometimes held to honor the Pathfinder are nothing compared to the parties of the Wildling. In Agrella, a large group of artists and freethinkers arrange so called Wildling Feasts, behind closed doors and shutters. Vast quantities of intoxicants and recreational drugs are consumed, tales are told, songs are sung, and the nature of existence is dissected. Rumor has it that many of Ordo Magica’s scholars often attend these events; even that the former archmage Elionara Yellowcat is one of the organizers. The First Father has recently ordered tougher measures to be taken against gluttony and promiscuity, and the burning of a heretic archmage would of course please him enormously.

THE ARCH-BUILDER

Symbol: An arch or an open gate

Name variations: Craftsmen of different kinds sometimes give the Arch-Builder names with the epithet “the Greatest”: The Greatest Mason, Potter, Builder, Seamstress, and so on – or simply the Great Creator.

Domain: Creation, building, and forging

Practice: In Alberetor, the symbol of the Arch-Builder could be found in every craftsman’s workshop, but ordinary people also prayed to the Great Creator before tackling the day’s reparations, constructions, and handicrafts. The Arch-Builder arch is never seen in contemporary Ambria, but the whispers can still be heard in smithies, bakeries, and at construction sites.

Present-day worship: The elitist craftsmen’s order known as the Higher Academy was dismantled as a result of the Exaltation, at least officially. The members who remained in Alberetor repented publicly and declared the order dissolved, but their passion for free creation never waned. According to Prios (of War), the craftsman’s task is to cultivate nature in a way that benefits humanity; the Higher Academy claimed the right to cultivate for the sake of cultivating, and perfect the raw material irrespective of utility or worth.

Today the Higher Academy is legendary among craftsmen, and its aim often a secret ideal. And of course the organization does live on, in the shadows. For most people its existence remains an unsubstantiated rumor, but for one or two craftsmen a year the rumor is confirmed. They are invited to the order’s headquarters in Mergile, where they

must pledge allegiance to the Arch-Builder and condemn the “*laws of the Curia*” before twenty or so members and the current head of the order, the Master Seamstress Alma.

THE SEAFARER

Symbol: A ship or an anchor

Name variations: Older names like the Mariner or the Helmsman are sometimes used by Ambrians who remember the coasts of Alberetor; younger people use the Seafarer.

Domain: Sea travel, fishing, and storms

Practice: Usually, the Seafarer has to make do with a quiet prayer before the boat or ship goes to sea, but sometimes he is also presented with offerings in the form of pastries, flowers, or a few drops of blood. Longer prayers and promises of future gifts might help when trying to calm a raging storm (on both land and sea).

Present-day worship: All Ambrian vessels are marked with at least one discreet Seafarer symbol – the Sun Church can hardly accuse someone of heresy because of an anchor carved into the hull. But some sailors are still fully convinced that their welfare depends on the Seafarer’s favor. One such example is the crew of the two-masted river boat Esmeralda, led by Captain Mendero. Mendero is one of those who think that the Lawgiver was invented by the crown to force people into submission, and his (carefully selected) crew always gather in the captain’s cabin before embarking on a longer journey, to pray to the Seafarer and his brother Sol for favorable conditions. As soon as the Esmeralda leaves the dock, a ceremonial goblet of blood is poured over the railing – something that, were it ever discovered, would definitely constitute heresy.

THE GUARDIAN

Symbol: A wall or a tower

Name variations: The Mason is sometimes used when defenses are being built, while those who keep sensitive secrets or engage in secretive activities may appeal to the Veiler or the Shadow.

Domain: Protection, safety, and secrets

Practice: It was common practice in Alberetor to carve the Guardian’s symbol into the bases of walls and towers, and honor him with work songs during the construction. Secret items or documents were thought to be extra safe when covered by a veil embroidered with one of the god’s symbols.

Present-day worship: One could always go to the Guardian’s temple in old Alberetor for help with hiding objects, documents, and other things best kept secret. This tradition lives on through secret temples in Yndaros and Thistle Hold. In the latter

case, the aged Father Marald runs a hidden chapel in his basement inside Haloban’s ring, near a tavern Brew. And below the basement are three more levels, full of items that have been left in his care. Their owners never contacted Marald directly, but through one of his three initiated followers – two women and a youngling who are very careful about whom they offer the Guardian’s services. The question is how long it will be before the chapel is discovered.

THE HOSTESS

Symbol: An eye or a butterfly

Name variations: Alternative names such as the Lover, Desire, and the Temptress are mainly used by those who focus on giving and receiving pleasure.

Domain: Cookery, beauty, and pleasure

Practice: A pinch of salt or sugar, an extra flower in your hair, or a careful breath in your lover’s ear is all it takes to receive the assistance of the Hostess.

Present-day worship: In Yndaros a group of young men have rallied around a distorted interpretation of the Hostess. They all come from humble backgrounds, and most of them spend their days as builders, waiters, and dockworkers. But twice a year they gather in a shrine devoted to the Temptress (actually a decorated warehouse) to prepare for “the Night of Conquest”. Their goal is to sneak into some fancy event and find themselves a wealthy man or woman to lead astray; as they reunite the following day, the one who can boast of having received the most extravagant lover’s gift has earned the right to call himself the Temptress’ Ward. So far, all victims have kept quiet about what happened (probably out of shame), but that luck is bound to run out sooner or later.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The examples of present-day worship mentioned above all refer to groups that are focused on one particular Young God. In old Alberetor the gods were often worshipped as a family, rather than as individuals. Their holy places were not called temples, but temple cities, regardless of whether there were several buildings or just one – the largest ones in Kandoria and Berendoria consisted of a magnificent building for each of the gods. In fact, such communities also exist in today’s Ambria, though rarely in its largest cities.

One example is the Temple of the Many, a congregation in Kastor whose members gather underground to hold mass. The Temple of the Many, once common in the south, can be found in other places as well – mainly rural villages in the duchies of Kasandrien and Narugor. In many cases even the local sun priest has joined the congregation, which would of course never be tolerated if the Curia ever found out about it.

It is as I feared: the Master
Werner and his apprentices in
the wagon behind them are going.
They are guards, escorting a
prisoner. A woman. Old and
hunched. Pale as sugar. And she
saw me. She pierced me with her
bloodshot eyes. Just for a second,
like the stab of a knife. Or a cut.
An intense expression, but what it
meant I do not know. Perhaps
it was hatred. Perhaps a war-
ning, a threat. For a moment I
thought she wanted to cut me.
Or maybe it was a cry for help.

I will not get involved. Not tell
anyone. Keep my distance. I do
not want to know what her eyes
were really saying. Death. That
is the prevailing feeling: death

On orders from the Curia

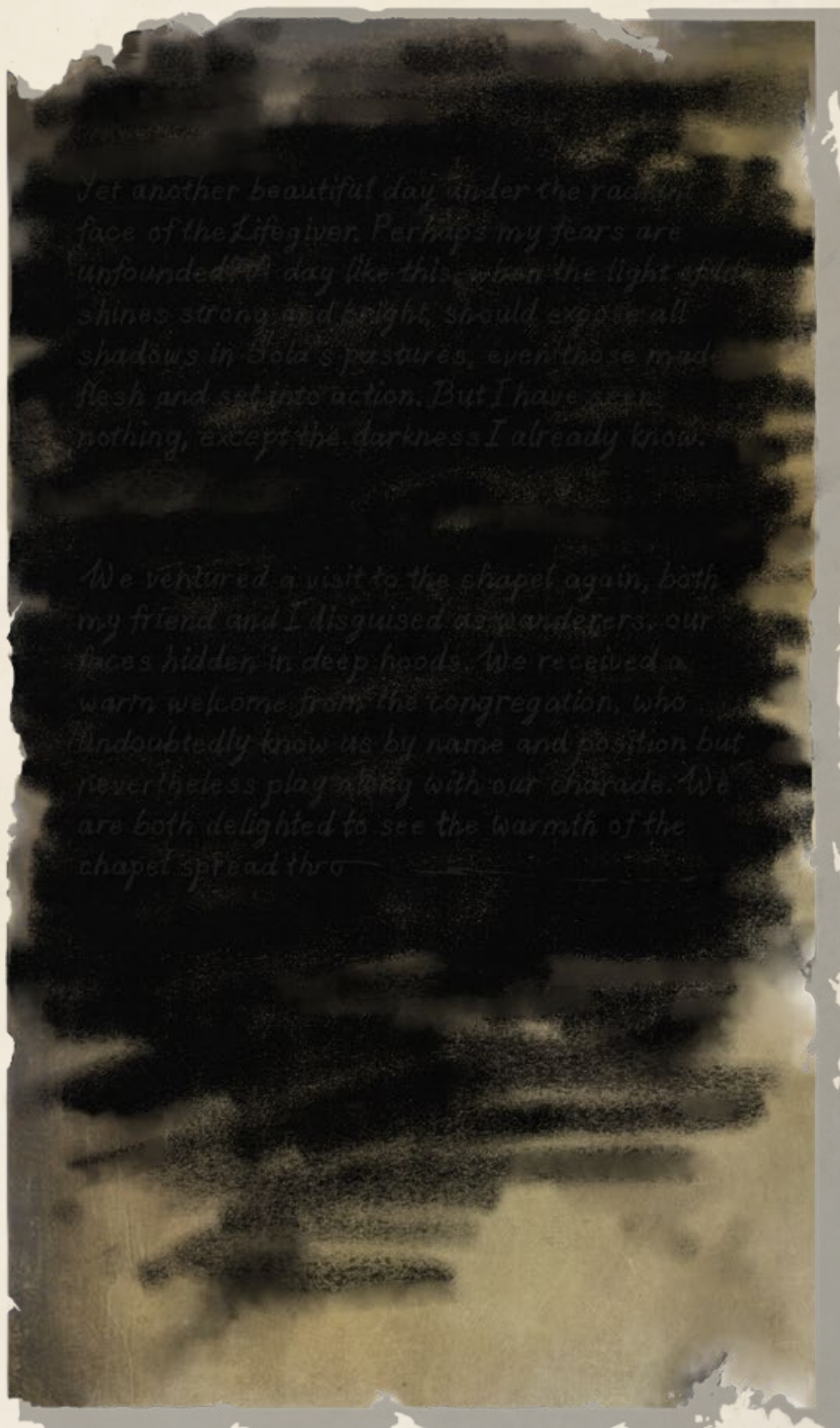
- The prisoner is to be taken to
the Templewall cathedral
- Do not gaze into the heretic's eyes; avoid
physical contact; do not speak to her
- Non-lethal use of force is authorized
- Our Queen and her administration
have been informed; they will neither
stop you, nor provide any assistance
- Avoid contact with the fallen knights,
Sarvata's renegades, and the general public
- In the event of imminent peril, bring
the heretic to safety; trust no one but
the brothers and sisters of our order

To the left:

The Colleague's journal,
page 24

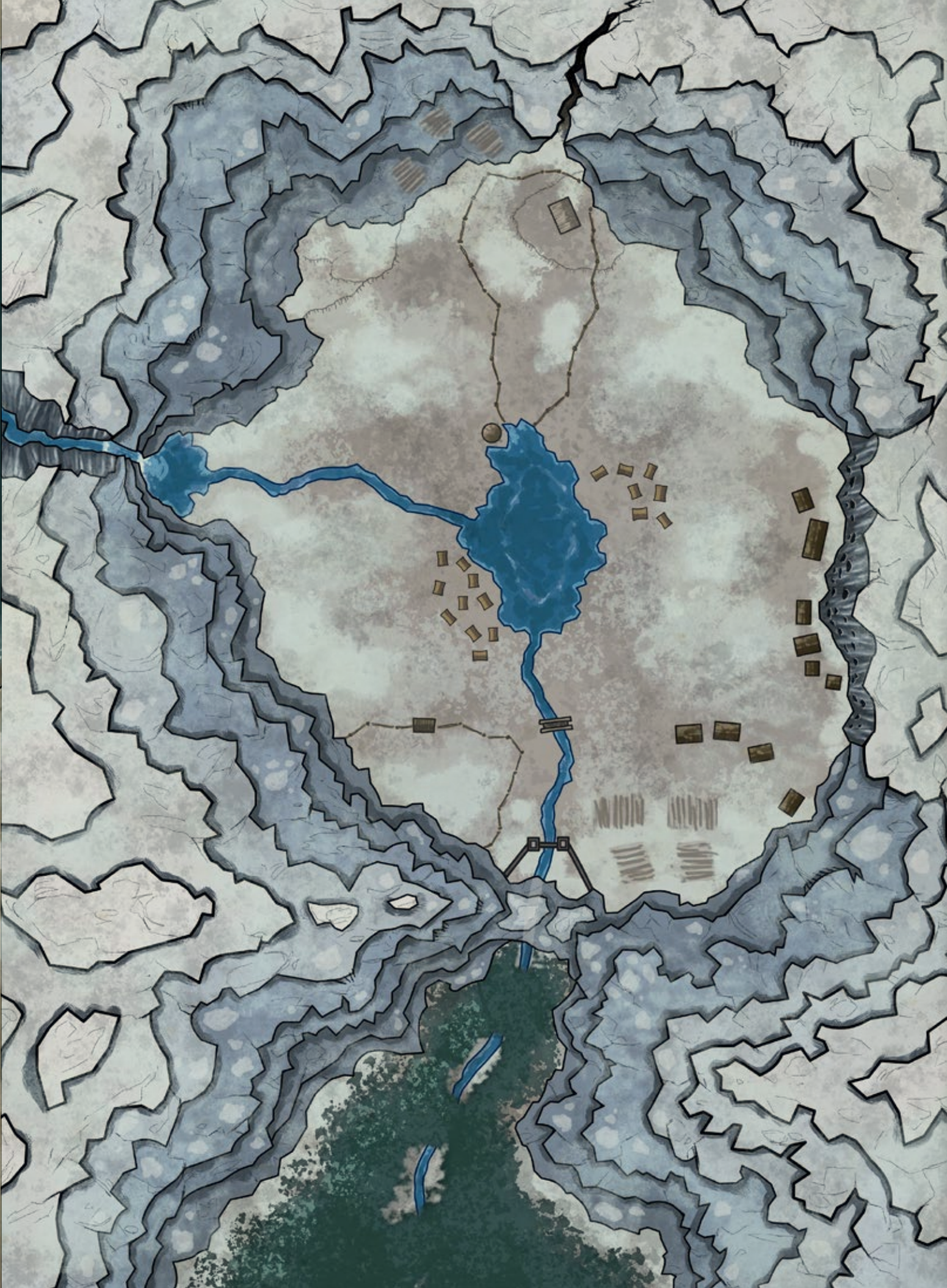
To the right:

Ombardo's notes,
page 58

**To the left:**

The Black Cloaks'
instructions, page 28

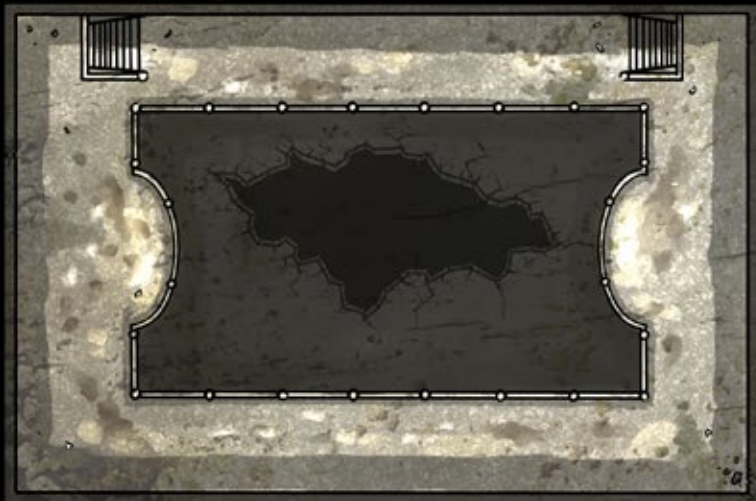












Nighttime descends like a deep blue veil...

... over the River Veloma and the village of Prios Pass. The snow no longer falls, the wind no longer blows, and a grim calm settles in the shadows of the Titans. Somewhere on the other side of the river is the refugee camp, occupied by Alberians hoping to be welcomed into Queen Korinthia's Promised Land.

Creaking and squeaking, the raft is reeled across the flowing waters, toward the points of fiery light glimmering along the northern shore. The boatman grunts a brusque farewell as he pushes you up on the slushy pier. Now, all that remains is waiting and hoping – waiting in the shadows of the mountains and the towering cliff which raises Baroness Karolia Meleon's Keep high into the sky; hoping that the incoming caravan has not gotten stuck in the snow. Or worse.

Though you would rather not think about it, you have all heard accounts of what can happen on the journey across the mountains. Predators, bandits, even trolls and elves. Other tales warn of the infectious darkness which many travelers bring along from Alberetor, the diseased south, to the hopeful refugees at Prios Pass.



ADVENTURE PACK 3 INCLUDES two scenarios that in different ways deal with the Sun Church, and the spiritual conflicts of the Ambrian people. *The Howling of Damned Gods* is set in the border village Prios Pass, where a caravan is about to arrive, laden with desperate refugees and the darkness of the depraved south. The second adventure, *What's Bred in the Bone*, takes the player characters to young Duke Ynedar's city Ravenia, where the mingling of barbarians and Ambrians creates both excellent partnerships and agonizing conflicts. The characters have a great chance to influence the outcome of the stories, but must be prepared to go up against very tough opponents and make equally tough moral choices.

FEATURED CONTENT

- The village of Prios Pass and the city Ravenia as detailed adventure landscapes.
- Close to twenty sites and establishments where the characters can eat, trade, sleep, acquire information or visit local dignitaries.
- Color maps of both settlements.
- The mystical tradition Blessings, along with other powers and rule supplements.
- A thorough introduction to the pantheon of the Young Gods, and the history behind the Exaltation of Prios.

Symbaroum

 JÄRRINGEN