

Symbiaronum

KARVOSTI

The Witch Hammer

THE SECOND EPISODE IN THE CHRONICLE OF THE THRONE OF THORNS

*"I fell like a leaf through the eons,
from the branch of creation towards the here and now.*

*Below was a desolate mesa,
cut from the crust, from bedrock and dust,
the home of a ravenous god.*

*Like me he succumbed to the autumn,
sank beaten to rest by the heart of the stone."*

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Spindulio spaustuvė
Kaunas, Litauen 2017

Symbaroum



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ISBN:

978-91-87915-29-1

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The fight for the Throne of Thorns continues!

EVER SINCE AMBRIA and Davokar first emerged in our sketchbooks, more than four years ago, we have ached to write, illustrate, and finally introduce this book to you. The game world of *Symbaroum* is vast and diverse, despite its geographical limitations. Yet, no matter how immersed one may be in the political maneuvering throughout the palaces of Yndaros or the conflicts between fortune hunters in Thistle Hold, as an adventure setting, Davokar is clearly of particular importance.

With KARVOSTI - THE WITCH HAMMER we have the opportunity to really explore Davokar, which is not without risk. Though we might seem safe, sitting by our keyboards and drawing tablets, the bewitching songs and wild dance of the forest are not easily resisted. They whisper of innumerable tales to be told; featuring an array of characters and places and historical events that must be brought to light. Only thanks to persistence and good fortune have we managed to keep our bearings among the foliage, and so here it is: the second episode in the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*. Hopefully the joy we felt during production will shine through, so that you may turn this book into long hours of entertainment around the gaming table.

Happy gaming!

TEAM JÄNRINGEN



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The dark of Davokar...

... CLOSES IN ON HIGH CHIEFTAIN THARABAN'S KARVOSTI.

Everyone has heard it said, all who set foot under the foliage can sense it, and only those who profit from claiming otherwise will deny it – the forest is growing darker. It is as if its emerald mosses are slowly losing their luster; as if the clear spring waters are turning stale; as if the shadows of the vegetation grow thicker and blacker. Common sense would have it that darkness is merely the absence of light, but travelers journeying through Davokar – at least those who take note of the surroundings – will inevitably begin to question the soundness of such notions.



WHATEVER THE TRUTH may be, the cliff of Karvosti rises like a lonely island from the ocean of trees. For centuries, if not millennia, its plateau has been a sanctuary for people fleeing the horrors below. For the last five hundred years, it has also been considered neutral ground – a place where people from all corners of the world may engage in conversation, negotiation and commerce, and where the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath will guarantee their safety. The question is, for how long will the wrathguards be able to carry out the duties that demand more of them with every passing day?

This book focuses on the cliff of Karvosti and its immediate surroundings, and offers a far more detailed description of its people and wildlife than the *Core Rulebook*'s brief introduction. Furthermore, it contains the adventure *The Witch Hammer*, the second part of the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*. The book is divided into three main sections – the first is for players and Game Masters alike, the second is intended for Game Masters only, and the concluding section comprises the adventure.

The opening section is meant for players whose characters have previously visited Karvosti and spent at least a few days on the plateau. The rather superficial description is intended to make the players and their characters feel at home and give them tools to take the initiative in problem-solving situations. It is also important for Game Masters to familiarize themselves with this facade, as the knowledge will prove vital when revealing the truth behind various misconceptions and lies to the players and their characters.

The book's second section offers the Game Master some insight into what goes on below the surface. It uncovers the history of Karvosti, describes important conflicts, and presents a great number of plot hooks, ready to be developed according to the tastes and interests of the gaming group. Furthermore, it includes a chapter on how to quickly create interesting and varied ruin complexes, and a substantial rules section including new creatures, abilities, traits, elixirs, optional rules and more.

The last section contains *The Witch Hammer*. Beginning and ending on (or inside) Karvosti, the story will take the player characters to many areas of the surrounding region. However, their road will not be without peril; whether they find themselves on a haunted island in the enormous Lake Volgoma or crouching by the palisade of the free settlers' village New Earthmoor, the shadows are both on their trail and lurking ahead. The hunt has begun – the hunt for directions to Symbar, the tantalizing and terrifying heart of Davokar.



HE TRANSFORMATION IS slow enough for most people not to notice. But Okramal does. For nearly two decades she has been tasked by the Huldra to listen to the forest and breathe its wild scent. She will not be deceived by the idle darkness, nor by the occasional resurgence of light and warmth. No,

where others see happenstance, she sees design; where others see spontaneous fluctuations, she sees a carefully calculated plan. There is one question neither she nor the Huldra have yet been able to answer: Who devised this scheme?

The newly arrived southerners are gathered at their temple, passing judgements in the last light of the setting sun. They accuse Davokar, the woods that for centuries have nourished Okramal and all her brothers and sisters. She rejects the possibility of them being right; they must not be! Yet she cannot accept Yeleta's suspicions, derived from the deep Halls of a Thousand Tears, that what is happening is merely a reflection of the Ambrians' ambitions. For behind the howling of abominations and the stench of corruption, Okramal detects the sound and smell of something else, something strange yet very familiar. What it might be she cannot say, but in her dreams it takes the shape of a bleeding heart – a heart beating faster and faster, strong enough for the blood to splatter...



SECTION 1:

THE EXPLORER'S HAVEN

Thargban's Domain

FEW PARTS OF THE DAVOKAR REGION are the subject of as many rumors and legends as the cliff of Karvosti. Yes, songs are sung of Symbar, Saroklaw and the mythical Dakovak. Yet, unlike these fabled places and others like them, Karvosti is very much alive – and what is more, it is the home of many renowned individuals.

MANY PEOPLE, BARBARIANS and Ambrians alike, fantasize about what life is like up there amongst the wrathguards, sun priests and witches; how it would feel to stand on the plateau and behold the mighty forest below. Very few ever get the opportunity to actually set foot on the cliff. Usually, such a visit would require a difficult and perilous journey through monster-infested woods, and a lengthy absence from one's crops or whatever means of livelihood one might have. Hence, apart from its small number of permanent residents and members of the delegations sporadically sent by the clans, Karvosti is visited almost exclusively by people with nothing to lose or live for.

Sure, there are exceptions – meticulously organized expeditions made by explorers or fortune hunters who are using Karvosti as a base of

"Before the days of the High Chieftains, there lived a dragon on Karvosti, or... Well, some say it was a giant, others that it was a great bear, but I think it was a dragon ... Aravax, it was called. Unbelievably powerful!"

operations, or have planned a brief stay on the cliff to rest and reprovision. These may be groups led by Ordo Magica, the Black Cloaks, or possibly some ambitious noble. Such visits tend to aggravate the already tense atmosphere on the cliff, for though the High Chieftain and the witches must accept the Ambrian presence, they do not look kindly on fortune hunters who violate the barbarians' well-founded taboos. All too often their fears are confirmed when the expeditions bring with them the darkness of the forest below – as a result of shameful intrusions into some abominable creature's territory, or the theft of its treasures.

This chapter is intended to reflect the first impressions of Karvosti, as experienced first-hand or recounted by Ambrian explorers. In other words, it is reasonable for players whose characters have





spent time on the cliff, or who have socialized with seasoned fortune hunters in Yndaros or Thistle Hold, to have access to the following information. All players should study the material before embarking on *The Witch Hammer*, as it will make it easier for them to understand what is going on and begin exploring. Any which way, they will face great challenges on Karvosti, the cliff of High Chieftain Tharaban!

First Impressions

THOSE WHO HAVE made their way up the cliff and reached the sturdy wall at the end of the slope are intercepted by a group of eleven wrathguards, who share little in common beyond the arms they carry and their red-tinted chainmail. Newcomers should

The Gate to the Witches' Dwelling

The arched gateway leading to the witches' dwelling appears to be wide-open, but those who try to enter uninvited will most likely get themselves bruised. There are rumors suggesting that the gate is simply invisible, while others believe it to be guarded by powerful spirits stopping intruders in their tracks.

For whatever reason, it seems that neither people nor thrown objects may pass the witches' threshold without first having been welcomed by Gadramon, Eferneya, or the Huldra herself.

Endo Evelin sparring with Alonar, a Zarekian wrathguard, in the shade of the fault scarp.

"The wrathguards are ancient, honestly! The ones patrolling the area now did the same five hundred years ago; the witches keep them alive, with their potions and witchcraft."

not be surprised to be met by just a few guards, probably accompanied by Lumedo, the aged Ambrian who has been the wrathguards' interpreter these last four years. The remaining wrathguards are likely to throw them quick glances before redirecting their attention to the forest, looking for any movement that might signal an approaching threat.

After having answered questions about the nature of their visit, and having their packs searched, the travelers are given some time to let the impressions sink in - the High Chieftain's mighty fortress looming on the eastern edge of the plateau; the fault scarp, a couple of hundred meters further away, with its entrance to the witches' dwelling; the shiny copper dome of the sun temple perched on the upper ledge near the western precipice. Then there are the people. There seems to be only a few of them moving around, at the nearby marketplace and the pilgrim camp below the sun temple. More of them are posted along the edges of the plateau, on the walls and towers of the stronghold, and by the sun temple. They are all looking outwards, at the forest, that dark and waving sea of leaves. Or is it that they look for what is moving beneath the foliage? Karvosti may be an impressive cliff, but compared to Davokar it is both tiny and terribly exposed. It is imperative for people on the cliff - residents and visitors alike - to get along and assist one another.

Initially, this feeling of solidarity is the predominant one. On Karvosti, everyone stands united against the darkness of Davokar, despite various disagreements and historical animosity. This is taken for granted, more out of necessity than anything else, and all present on the plateau are expected to do whatever it takes to avoid open conflict. Of course, this is easier said than done - especially when situated on an isolated cliff deep within the forest, along with a colorful collection of rash and violent individuals with unwavering confidence in their convictions...

One soon realizes that just about everyone on Karvosti must constantly bite their tongue with regards to the many perceived injustices - some more serious than others. Suppressed, destructive feelings such as jealousy, suspicion, dislike, and pure hatred can be recognized on most faces - in the exchange of glares between wrathguards and sun knights; in the hand reaching for the hilt of a sword when a merchant refuses to haggle; in the whispers behind the backs of newly arrived members of a successful expedition; even in the growing silence as a loving couple sneak into their tent. An inquisitive person may be told plenty of grisly stories about times when such feelings could not be subdued - often ending with the aggressive party being imprisoned, waiting



Edrafin, unofficial leader of the pilgrim camp, is usually the first person newcomers encounter on the plateau.

to be judged by either the chieftain of his/her clan or the Queen's legate.

Other blemishes on the peaceful surface are the individuals suffering from physical and mental afflictions; something particularly apparent in the pilgrim camp. At night, the silence is often broken by anguished moans, hysterical screams, or mindless babble - like a ghastly chorale; the spiritually diseased sometimes incite each other and the physically afflicted cry out their suffering, thinking their wails to be drowned out by the screams, laughs and chants of the insane. The recently deceased Master of the Order, Eulia Vearra, described the phenomenon as "*the Karvosti Midnight Choir*," a phrase more or less deliberately misinterpreted in Yndaros and made synonymous with the wild feasts of the barbarian folk.

Finally, there are the disappearances. After having arrived at the cliff, it will probably not be long before someone asks whether the traveler has met a certain person or two on the journey through the forest. It is difficult to estimate how many have disappeared, but rumors around the pilgrim camp and marketplace suggest the number to be at least a handful every moon. No one really knows the cause. It appears that most of the lost ones were infected by some disease, and most likely threw themselves off the cliff, later to be dragged away by some hungering beast. There are also whispers claiming that the witches might have something to do with it, while others suspect that the ancient being Aloéna is responsible.

At any rate, one cannot fail to marvel at the fact that such a great number of people have managed to disappear without a trace from a place like Karvosti.

Memorable Events

IT IS SAID that people were living on Karvosti long before Davokar took root and eventually swallowed the cliff. There are only a few recorded accounts from its early history, and the paintings and mosaics one sometimes finds can all be interpreted in many different ways. People interested in history are therefore referred to the songs and tales kept alive by the clans or advised to limit themselves to the last five hundred years, when the High Chieftain's chroniclers have been more meticulous - if not systematic - in recording important people and happenings.

The events described below are tales which newcomers on Karvosti will soon come across; some are so widely spread that they are even told by bards and minstrels in the towns of Ambria. They all mention various dangers threatening the cliff, either from the depths of the forests or its own residents and visitors.

THE ELF PRINCE (ABOUT 400 YEARS AGO)

Elves are rarely seen on Karvosti. However, some years ago the aggressive autumn elf Terael-Kael convinced both himself and his minions that the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath was guilty of having mutilated a powerful spirit, Ranan the Bear Herder. A small force of elves ascended the cliff, sheltered by the nighttime darkness, without setting off the alarm. But as they reached the top, every last one of them was slaughtered by an assembly of wrathguards and templars, as well as Yeleta and her Keepers - none of whom would show the injudicious elves any mercy.

However, the infrequency of elven attacks on Karvosti is said not to be the product of fear or caution on their part, but of the legendary parley between High Chieftain Agadan, the Huldra Bovosin, and the elven prince Eneáno. According to myth, the prince arrived unaccompanied, dressed in simple wayfarer's attire, but glowing with an otherworldly light as he requested an audience with the High Chieftain and Huldra. Some stories claim that he stayed for an entire moon, others that it was just a few moments, and in the wildest of tales time itself was suspended during his visit - while everything proceeded as usual on the cliff, the outside world froze in the midst of an autumn storm, with lightning fixed in the sky and the clouds forming a dark and motionless ceiling.

Only those involved know what was said at the parley, but its consequences were obvious to all. The Huldra summoned the witches, and soon all taboos were revised and made even stricter. It is

said that peace can only be preserved on Karvosti for as long as the High Chieftain and the Huldra fight to enforce the taboos - leading many to wonder how the current duo's tolerance of the Ambrians will be perceived by Eneáno and other powerful elves.

KARLABAN'S RETURN (ABOUT 200 YEARS AGO)

Karvosti is under constant threat from attacks by woodland creatures, as it has been since the first High Chieftain claimed the area as his domain. Nowadays, common predators have learned to avoid the cliff, although exceptionally harsh winters may compel desperate jakaars, mare cats and fey beasts to make the attempt. While the attacks are less frequent, they are far more dangerous than they used to be - carried out by packs of blight-born monsters or even primal blight beasts, with no regard for anything but their own hunger and lust for destruction. Should such a foe get past the alarm system and reach the plateau, it could cause great devastation before being neutralized.

The incident that made High Chieftain Dormegor construct the alarm system of thin wires attached

"You know Aniabar, that bald man always sneaking around the plateau? He is a staff mage! He could wipe out anyone ... anyone at all... with just a gaze."

The Law of Karvosti

The last stretch of the steep slope leading to the plateau passes between a mountain wall on its west side and a precipice on the east. The former is about the height of five men, while the path itself is blocked by a stone wall, ten paces thick, with a pair of double gates of iron-fitted oak. The gates are usually open, with three wrathguards posted in the gateway. Another eight sentries are located either along the edges of the ravine or on the crenellated top of the wall, cast in shadow by the statues of two wild boars towering over them.

The wrathguards on the ground proclaim, sometimes through an interpreter, that Karvosti is neutral ground. No creature is denied entrance, except those who are blight-marked or carry objects deemed dangerous to the other residents. Should there be any confusion on these issues, the witches are notified and one of them (usually the male witch Gadramon) comes down to inspect the person or object in question.

Those who pass this inspection are granted free movement on the plateau. Neither Tharaban nor the wrathguards are authorized to pass judgement on visitors who cause trouble or commit crimes - they are all to be judged by the laws of their respective ruler. However, the wrathguards may use force to maintain peace on the plateau and have the right to detain suspects until they can be extradited to (if not judged on site by) the appropriate authority. Allegedly, they are happy to exercise these rights whenever possible, and the vast prisons below the High Chieftain's stronghold are sometimes bursting with inmates.

*List of
High Chieftains
and Huldras*

Since the exact dates are uncertain, the High Chieftains and Huldras are simply listed chronologically, grouped by the century in which they reigned. Furthermore, these lists are not guaranteed to be exhaustive, as some individuals might have been forgotten.

Chieftain | Huldra

-500

Serembar	Obala
Agadan	Ebrana
Odorog	Bovosin
	Ianbel

-400

Avedon	Aroaleta
Maiesticar	Ygba
Ragradeon	Kthelba
Vogmar	
Boherg	

-300

Kvahar	Odrel
Saaroan	Mareb
Gothomer	Yavoba
Kaar	Yagbal
	Soalem

-200

Karlaban	Fulba
Dormegor	Maragba
Roel	Bagdal
Banthal	Areol
Darg	Unna
Ygval	

-100

Omorman	Helabag
Saarathar	Boelba
Sotorek	Eaba
Faodan	Moal
Ergmer	Bahakal
Tharaban	Oryela
	Yeleta



There are many varied descriptions of the High Chieftain, but one particular trait is always mentioned: solemnity.

to eight bells is often referred to as Karlaban's Revenge. Dormegor's predecessor, High Chieftain Karlaban, was – for reasons unknown – corrupted by darkness, and fled to the woods as wrathguards and the Huldra Fulba came to arrest him. Two years later, the former high chieftain returned with a horde of predatory blight-born beasts. The abominations swarmed up the edges of the cliff, and with them an impossibly strong and seemingly invulnerable Karlaban, come to reclaim his throne.

It is not entirely clear what eventually saved Dormegor and his people. According to some legends, the Huldra used a mighty artifact called the Hammer of Fulba, the Iron Flame, or the Witch Hammer; other tales state that the witches unleashed a creature previously held captive, or possibly living, in their caves – a creature of purest light that drove the abominations off and who sank its jaws into their leader. Whichever version one chooses to believe, the artifact or creature is said to remain somewhere deep below the surface of the plateau.

ALOÉNA'S CLAWS (ABOUT 90 YEARS AGO)

The uncrowned queen of the southern edge – the towering, horned she-giant called Aloéna – is rarely seen by anyone. But every two or three years she wanders the plateau, and everything stops. For many moons, people talk of nothing but her – what she looked like, in what direction she was headed, whether she was carrying anything, and to whom (if anyone at all) she paid attention. The latter is a particularly hot topic, as it is said that a look from Aloéna will cause a person to either suffer the worst misfortune imaginable or be blessed with extraordinary luck.

On one of Aloéna's strolls across the plateau, something happened that will not soon be forgotten. A crowd of speechless and paralyzed spectators watched her stop next to three people and pierce their throats with her long, sharp claws. These people – a young Karitian woman and two men of clans Zarek and Baiaga – died instantly. There was nothing to suggest a connection between the victims or that they had even met each other before their executions.

The witches have affirmed that they know nothing about Aloéna's motives, and since the executioner has not spoken of it, the mysterious incident is as incomprehensible as it is terrifying. For without knowing why this happened, it is of course impossible to predict if, or when, Aloéna will choose her next target.

THARABAN'S CORONATION (YEAR 5)

Due to the nature of the position, the election of a high chieftain is usually quite an orderly affair. Certainly, there are often two or more candidates nominated by different clans, and disagreements between clan chieftains will occasionally put the pretenders to the test with a varying degree of violence. But with few exceptions, the elections rarely threaten the peace between the clans.

A particularly notorious exception was when Gorema, the vain and hot-blooded daughter of clan Yedesá's chieftain, lost the election in favor of Oroman. In an outburst of violent rage, Gorema slew her father and gathered her newly acquired warriors for an attack against their southern neighbors, the Baags (Oroman's clan), before her own witch killed her with a spear-thrust in the back.

Tharaban's election also caused great commotion. The northern clans favored another candidate, the Saar Iaholas, and when the new high chieftain was nearly assassinated not long after his coronation, many blamed the northerners. As the chieftains Razameaman, Rabaíamon, and Karona denied any involvement whatsoever, and since there was no proof as to who had fired the poisoned arrow, the situation eventually calmed down. There are still suspicions floating around, but perhaps it is true as many people say – that the attack was entirely Iaholas's doing.

THE KEEPER'S DEMISE (YEAR 9)

Thirteen years ago, four years after Tharaban's coronation, the current Huldra, Yeleta, arrived on Karvosti under turbulent circumstances.

It is widely known that Yeleta came to see Oryela, the Huldra at the time, and brought with her an artifact that had been found somewhere in Zarekian

territory. People could hear screams and turmoil from the witches' dwelling; a fight that ended with the death of Deadorna – one of Oryela's Keepers and a very promising young witch. According to the shocked and wounded Huldra, Deadorna had turned into an abomination and been killed by Yeleta in self-defense.

It was widely speculated that Yeleta, who was immediately chosen to succeed the popular keeper, had in fact planned it all as a way of getting close to the Huldra. These speculations gained further credence a few moons later when Oryela too was killed, battling a vile pack of spiders that had managed to enter Karvosti through the Underworld.

Whatever the truth may be, the witches themselves pay these rumors little notice, as was made perfectly clear when they almost unanimously appointed Yeleta as the new Huldra. To be sure, Yeleta has done her part in silencing the skeptics; both the High Chieftain and most of his subjects consider her to be one of the most prominent Huldras in history.

THE AMBRIANS' ARRIVAL (YEAR 14)

In year 14 the first Ambrian explorers arrived on Karvosti. Back then, the Ambrians had not had much contact with the barbarian folk, apart from their conquest of Kadizar and obliteration of clan Jezora. They received a bloody welcome – all members of the ten expeditions that arrived between year 14 and 16 were either executed or enslaved. Rumors of the stronghold on the cliff began to spread among the Ambrians and were finally confirmed when the Queen's people formed an alliance with the Odavs.

The first Ambrian to ascend the cliff and return with her life was an anonymous explorer calling herself Sunflower – most likely a descendent of one of the noble families that were disgraced during the war. With the assistance of a docile Odav named Morak, she smuggled herself onto Karvosti and examined the High Chieftain's stronghold, the entrance to the witches' dwelling, and especially the temple ruin. It was Sunflower who informed the Church of Prios of the sun symbols carved into the ruin, which sparked both the Queen's and the First Father's interest in the deeper parts of the forest.

The missionaries who arrived in the early winter of year 16 were spared. The reason for this is unknown – perhaps their wish to visit and pray at the ruin was considered harmless by the two leaders of Karvosti; perhaps said leaders were afraid to anger the god of the newcomers. Either way, as soon as the snow began to thaw, the Curia



Sometimes even barbarians refer to Yeleta as the true ruler of Davokar.

proclaimed that Karvosti was to be incorporated into the Lawbringer's realm.

THE BATTLE OF KARVOSTI (YEAR 16)

The spring rain fell serenely over the trees and evaporated into a damp morning fog as Commander Iakobo Vearra gave the order to attack. There had been no attempt at diplomacy, no request for the High Chieftain to surrender. No, the champions of the sun thought themselves superior in both arms and righteousness – the barbarians had defiled the cliff for long enough, and Prios demanded satisfaction!

Just as the morning sun burned through the somber clouds, engulfing the eastern slope in light, a hundred templars marched on Karvosti. Witnesses describe it as a massacre; the Curia prefers to emphasize the cowardice of the defenders and their alliances with dark forces. In any case, the sun knights were clearly both arrogant and misinformed – they died like flies as the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath launched its counterattack, firing projectiles from above and charging the aggressors on their way up the cliff.

After a swift retreat, the Ambrians made a second attempt, this time with a strategy better adjusted to the actual opposition. Priests and templars prayed for Prios's protection, but could never summon the strength to reach all the way to the plateau, perhaps because so many of them had already fallen in the first attack. There are indications that not a single wrathguard was slain, and while this information can hardly be accurate, there is no doubt whose gods were greater that day.

The alarm system of bells along the rim

Designed by High Chieftain Dormegor's master builder, the alarm system has proven effective to this day. Almost the entire cliff is encircled by a three meter wide cluster of extremely thin wires, about thirty meters from the top, all attached to one of the eight bell towers positioned along the edge of Karvosti. It would take a lot for someone to climb all the way up without releasing the weights which make the bell towers signal their arrival – especially for packs of beasts or large abominations.

The areas near the wall and below the grove of Aloéna by the southern tip are the only ones free from wires. The witches have made it clear that Aloéna will not have any bells or wires near her domain; something the High Chieftains have approved, believing the ancient creature to be perfectly capable of dealing with intruders herself, should they try to sneak into her grove.

People & Locations

KARVOSTI IS NOT a particularly large settlement, about nine hundred paces between its northern tip and the fault scarp, and only five hundred paces across. Nor is it heavily populated – taking into account the more permanent guests of the pilgrim camp, there are only a few hundred people living on the cliff. But despite its limitations, there is little Karvosti does not offer, especially if one includes the surrounding camps and outposts.

Accommodation

FEW PEOPLE WOULD ever consider sleeping under the trees of Davokar if they had any other choice. The few worthwhile alternatives found on and around Karvosti are very expensive, and none can match the straw mattresses of inns such as The Ruin or The Seamstress' Rest. On the other hand, it usually does not take much to satisfy those who have spent some nights on the hard roots and rocks of the woodlands.

In addition to the pilgrim camp and the places mentioned below, there is a tent camp directly below the northern tip. There, all who are denied entry onto Karvosti are welcome; one could call it

a miniature Blackmoor – but with a larger number of corrupted people and objects. Smaller predators such as mare cats and jakaars will usually leave the camp alone, making it relatively safe from outside threats. However, depending on who occupies the tents, it may well be as Iasogoi Brigo once wrote: “Safer to sleep in a bog alone, than sojourn with a villainous wretch.”

THE STRONGHOLD

The mighty stronghold of the High Chieftain is not only home to Tharaban and his family, but also to the Queen's legate and the entire Guard of the



"The girl who died last week, that newcomer from the north... They say she was jabbering something about the Emperors of Symbaroum having returned, that they had sworn to destroy the world. Creepy."



The Tent Camp Massacre

Whether one spends the night on the cliff or by its foot, it will probably not be long before one hears the gruesome story recounting the night when the entire camp below the northern tip of Karvosti was wiped out. There is dispute as to who exactly orchestrated the bloodbath – many blame vengeful, man-eating elves; others assert it was raging abominations or some undead lord looking for objects stolen from his crypt.

Regardless, there were plenty of witnesses able to describe what the butcher left behind: fifty torn bodies, shredded canvas and gear, and a ground literally soaked in blood.

Slumbering Wrath – yet there is still plenty of room for guests, both invited and paying ones. But the beds and cuisine are not available to just anyone. You must either be of noble birth, be well-connected among the Ambrian elite (Contacts: Nobles or equivalent), or be able to spend a small fortune to enjoy such comforts.

Those who manage to procure a bed in the stronghold are lodged in a sparsely furnished chamber situated in one of the outer wings, where three meals a day are also served. A staff of four Odavs, supervised by the stern Mistress Brana, act as servants and guards, ordered to prevent the guests from entering other parts of

Table 1: Price of accommodation on and near Karvosti

NAME	DESCRIPTION	1 NIGHT	1 WEEK	1 MONTH	OWNERSHIP
Pilgrim camp	Spot on campground	3 ortegs	1 shilling	4 shillings	—
Marketplace	Spot for tent/caravan	5 ortegs	2 shillings	8 shillings	—
The Victorious Hawk	Dormitory or room for two	1 thaler	5 thaler	15 thaler	—
The Stronghold	Room for two or four	2-9 shillings	1-6 thaler	4-15 thaler	—
The Cave	Pelt on the ground	1 shilling	—	—	—
Braddokkugru	Place in hut	2-5 ortegs	—	—	—

~~~~~ ♦ ~~~~

**Rules: Peep through the curtain**

All participants blurp (i.e. simultaneously cover their eyes and ears). The chieftain (or equivalent) taps the shoulder of someone who must then rise and slip behind the curtain. The blurping stops. The participants must now try to guess who is missing. This is done by hurling blunt objects at the curtain, hoping to identify the person behind it by the groans he or she makes. The more guesses (hits) the hidden one endures, the more praise he/she will receive. The current record is 411, but as Ruut sadly died just after having revealed herself she never got to enjoy her great accomplishment.

~~~~~ ♦ ~~~~

the stronghold. It is said that the master thief Doriano Dresel ended his days in Brana's grip, after she caught him trying to use the guest room as a base for his planned break-in into the High Chieftain's cellar vault.

THE VICTORIOUS HAWK

The only proper inn in the region can be found behind the palisade surrounding House Vearra's trading post, about an hour's walk east of Karvosti. Named after the Vearra sigil, the diving hawk, the inn is mainly intended for Ambrian merchants wishing to trade with the clans. Staying at the Victorious Hawk is certainly not cheap, but you do get what you pay for – it is a new and lavish establishment, and cook Erella was taught by the great Elindra Aroma herself.

The outpost and the ten buildings within its palisade were raised only a year ago, with the permission of Chieftain Embersind of Clan Odaiova. Several prominent family members – including Count Demetro and his niece Lesena – have contributed finances towards the enterprise, hoping that it will give House Vearra an advantage on the battlefields of both trade and exploration.

The question is, for how long will the palisade and the outpost's bailiff, young Lenela Vearra, be able to stand their ground when beasts, elves, rage trolls, or some rival House decide to undo all they have achieved?

THE CAVE

Those who are not able or willing to enter the plateau, and would pay to avoid the tent camp by the northern tip, can head for the west side of Karvosti. About fifty feet up the slope are some caves of varying sizes and comfort (though the word "comfort"

may be misplaced in this context). They have long been utilized by travelers in the area, but four years ago, the aged – or at least ragged – ogre trio Gruff, Lugger and Swinga decided to occupy them.

For a fee, the seasoned warriors will provide a place to sleep and keep watch in the night, so their guests may rest safely. They also offer two bowls of porridge a day – the evening meal often accompanied by Swinga's lengthy accounts of their many adventures in Davokar (for example how they supposedly joined Gorakai the Younger on his trip to the Clearwell ruins). The only reason not to guest at The Cave would be the rumors stating that many fortune hunters have been found robbed and killed shortly after their stay. Of course, it might be nothing more than a malicious rumor or a series of unfortunate coincidences.

BRADDOKKUGRU

Another alternative for those who do not mind paying for a bit of extra security is the goblin tribe Braddokkugru. The settlement lies just west of Karvosti, and is happy to welcome smaller groups to stay. In exchange for some food, a weapon, or an alluringly shiny object, you may sleep in one of their huts and share both morning and evening meals with the chattering bunch.

However, some may be deterred by the fact that guests are expected to participate in the tribe's games before bedtime. The Braddokks have an affinity for traditional pastimes such as Hide the Cow and Crack and Crush, but have also invented a game of their own: Peep through the curtain. This has been the end of many expeditions, as important members ended up behind the curtain and the goblins found it more amusing to be wrong than right.

Food & Drink

FOR PEOPLE SEEKING culinary experiences, Karvosti is most definitely a poor choice of destination. In the

forest of Davokar, one eats and drinks to survive – not to tickle taste buds or cultivate palettes! Of

course, exceptions are made during certain holidays and festivals. And there are certainly some people who by sheer accident just happen to cook good, or at least interesting, food without even trying.

As to beverages, the most common ones are the deliciously fresh forest water and the nourishing Vesa (a mix of cow's milk and goat whey, served cold or warm). Though popular among Ambrians, Blackbrew is only consumed on special occasions, and excessive drinking is generally frowned upon. Exempted from this moral rule are the elderly and those who have suffered spiritual or physical trauma, to whom intoxication provides some much-needed relief. The rest stay sober, ready to fight the next pack of beasts or rage trolls attacking the settlement.

IARLO'S CAULDRON

Of the two people selling food and drink at the pilgrim camp, Iarlo is both the cheapest and most pleasant. Outside his modest tent, from early morning to late at night, he keeps a sooty iron cauldron suspended over a burning fire. He claims to have lived among the northern clan Enoai for over a decade, where he learned the basics of their barbarian cuisine. Whether or not this is true, there is no denying the amazing smell and exquisite flavor of his root vegetable stews.

They say that there have been two attempts on old Iarlo's life during his four years on Karvosti. On both occasions he managed to defeat the assailants and throw their bodies over the edge of the cliff before anyone had time to give them a closer look. Thus, who has it in for him remains a mystery; one that Iarlo himself will not discuss. However, he does enjoy telling other stories while serving additional portions and pouring some more brew into the cups of his delighted customers.

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Today's stew | 3 ortegs |
| Spring water | free |
| Cup of Brutebrew | 2 ortegs |
| Cup of Blackbrew | 5 ortegs |

SALVIA'S KEBROGS

The fortune hunter Salvia is one of those who have retreated up Karvosti and never again dared return to the deep woods. She arrived about a year ago, clawed to bits and thoroughly exhausted, without hope or courage, crying over her fallen friends. Yet, within the span of a moon she had pulled herself together and started selling herbal kebros - a dish from eastern Alberetor, consisting of pastries filled with meat and vegetables.

Salvia is not rude, but avoids eye contact and rarely makes conversations with her customers. This shyness, combined with the mystery of her last trip into Davokar, has brought her many admirers - men wishing to protect her from the dangers of the world and especially from other admirers. Sometimes brawls break out between guests on the plateau, as they accused each other of having bothered or intimidated Salvia, but the situation is usually settled by other visitors or the wrathguards.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Herbal kebrog | 1 shilling |
| Lamb kebrog | 2 shillings |
| Fortune hunter's kebrog* | 1 thaler |
| Cup of Blackbrew | 1 shilling |
| Mug of wine | 5 shillings |

* Extra-large kebrog for the extra hungry, filled with meat, onions, and roka berries

THE LONGHOUSE

In one of the few permanent buildings at the marketplace, spouses Ov and Teresma serve simple dishes and cold beverages. Barbarians may have their meals for free, courtesy of the High Chieftain, while other visitors must pay a small sum to partake in what is offered. The water is free for all customers, but even barbarians must pay to have something stronger - and there are always several barrels of fine Zarekian Blackbrew stored in the cellar.

One of the regulars at the longhouse is an ogre called Crueljaw, who about six months ago set up a permanent monster-hunter's shop at the marketplace. The burly merchant generates a large part of the establishment's revenue, but has an unfortunate tendency to bother other guests. Not that he is a troublemaker! Quite the opposite. No matter how much Blackbrew is poured down the ogre's gob, he only grows more sentimental, more cuddlesome, and more eager to tell someone his life's story - preferably one-on-one, eyeball to eyeball, so the listener is sure to fully understand the immense sadness of his tragic fate.

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Soup with bark bread | 2 shillings |
| Grilled meat with turnip mash | 4 shillings |
| Jug of Brutebrew | 5 ortegs |
| Jug of Zarekian Blackbrew | 5 shillings |
| Pint of the Duke's Relief | 3 shillings |
| Bottle of Vearra's red | 5 thaler |

LAKE GREAT WATER

Not far from Karvosti are a handful of different settlements - two barbarian camps, the goblin tribe Braddokkugru, and the free settlement of Jakaar.

*"That hammer the
witches keep hidden
somewhere, imagine
if you had it - you
could squash every
abomination in Davokar.
Why Queen Korinthia
has not demanded that
they hand it over is
beyond me."*

"Salvia is actually married, to an elven prince! But he mistreated her, so she had to leave, even though she loved him. Tragic, so very tragic..."

Every one of them has their own traditional cuisine, and people with culinary interests would surely enjoy visiting them all – the shell-cooked turtle in Jakaar and the Bradokk's elver-stuffed long-eel are not just exotic, they may even be perceived as tasty. But the thing one should make sure not to miss is visiting the Baiaga settlement by Lake Great Water.

All present clan members join each other for the evening meal, which is roasted over an open fire

down by the lake. Huberol, the exceptionally skilled master of the grill, keeps whatever the hunters have caught in a chilly root cellar, where the meat hangs for a couple of days before it is seasoned, coated with oil, and roasted over the fire.

For 3 shillings (in coin or objects/services of equal value), guests are welcome to join the feast and may of course also help themselves to the barrels of Softbrew.

Entertainment

NO ONE COMES to Karvosti to be entertained. That being said, it is not uncommon for people to remain there for long periods of time, perhaps waiting for a companion's wounds to heal. And sooner or

later, anyone will tire of just sitting around and sharpening swords.

Many stories are told around the pilgrim camp and marketplace – everyone has at least one spine-tingling



tale from their travels in Davokar, and visiting barbarians will happily tell you about the plains and woods of their faraway land. Another popular pastime is watching the wrathguards and templars hone their fighting skills, especially when they agree to face each other in bloodless, but definitely violent, combat. Guests may also participate in these exercises, provided that they have something to offer in the form of weapons technique or tactical maneuvers.

GAMES AT THE PILGRIM CAMP

On Karvosti, the average guest spends his or her waking hours eating, telling stories and playing games – often all three at once. People play cards, dice, and board games; compete in arm wrestling contests and duel each other to the first drop of

Barbarians and southerners alike may take pleasure in watching justice be served on the notorious Pole.



blood or bruise. However, one must be careful not to end up like fortune hunters Levana and Leda. While Leda was recovering from a bad case of swamp fever, her sister Levana squandered all their hard-earned riches on dice. Although blood may be thicker than water, it makes little difference when it flows on the ground – a lesson Levana did not live to appreciate.

As its bored visitors have a reputation for being easy targets, the cliff sometimes attracts professional gamblers. These masters never stay for long, but often leave with a small fortune in their packs. They say that Mogio Garakel, the unscrupulous card-jakaar, could live like an emperor in Yndaros for years after having ruined Levana and two other fortune hunters during his two days on Karvosti.

STORY NIGHT

From time to time, the High Chieftain arranges a story night at the Marketplace, often as a way of calming residents and guests after some upsetting incident. Karvosti's chroniclers have always been spectacularly talented storytellers, but the current one, Monagona, is truly extraordinary. When she walks up to the podium and begins to weave her magical tales to the tunes of strings and flutes, it is as if time suddenly stops and nature itself settles down, not to spoil the moment.

The audience is always large and diverse; sometimes even sun priests and off-duty templars allow themselves to be spellbound by Monagona's stories. All is quiet and peaceful during the performance, but later at night, when the listeners gather in the Longhouse to discuss the details of what they just heard, things tend to get rough – visiting barbarians or Ambrians resent their particular people having been portrayed as villains; someone else finds it perfectly appropriate, and soon a brawl has broken out. Nevertheless, Tharaban must be pleased – at least people are focusing on something other than the incident from which he wanted to distract them.

MASS AT THE SUN TEMPLE

Many Ambrians on Karvosti spend a lot of time in or around the sun temple, seeking solace and tranquility. The temple's Light Yard has only enough room for about twenty people, but the theurg Piomei, the liturg Aranitra, and their three initiates make time for those gathered outside as well.

Every evening at sundown, people attend mass at the sun temple. It is usually Aranitra who delivers the sermon, preaching harshly about Man's duty to the Church's dying god. Sometimes, Piomei will take the podium. To the anguish of wrathguards



VEARRA'S OUTPOST

1. The Victorious Hawk
2. Stables
3. Orola's warehouse
4. Storage
5. Lenela's house
6. Guard's barracks

and visiting barbarians, he raises his high-pitched voice and lets his hateful rhetoric echo over the plateau, reaching its crescendo as the sun sets on the horizon. His closing remark is always the same:

“Grant us strength, O Prios, Father of our Laws; cleanse us so that we may reflect your light in all its glory; flog the soot off our souls, carve the rot from our skins; for our torment is just and can never be too great, if only it may save the One!”

THE MIGHT FIGHT

At every full and new moon, there is an athletic tournament taking place at clan Odaiova's settlement by the Arch Bridge. The tournament has a long history and is meant to test the contestants' abilities in various ways. It is a highly prestigious competition and has always attracted challengers from Gaoia in the north to Karohar in the south, and nowadays even from Ambria. Soldiers and

gladiators would love to add such a great victory to their list of accomplishments:

The tournament is comprised of five events:

- **Precision:** Five javelins are thrown at a target with colored scoring rings.
- **Strength:** A large and heavy rock is lifted from the ground as many times as possible, with back and legs kept straight.
- **Stamina:** Contestants must swim as far as they can against the strong currents of the Malgomor.
- **Perception:** Contestants compete to locate the highest number of twenty three objects hidden in varied parts of the forest.
- **Speed:** The six most successful challengers so far must repeatedly run the same, short distance; the last to finish each race is eliminated, until only the victor remains.

The barbarian clans

For a listing of the barbarian clans currently living in the Davokar region, see the header *Factions* in the *Symbiarum Core Rulebook*.

Trade

SHOPS AND STORES like the ones found in Ambria do not exist on the High Chieftain's cliff. Still, those in need of various items, gear, and supplies are not likely to be disappointed. There are always a handful of wagons parked around the marketplace,

most of them owned by traders from clan Odaiova, or even the southern plains, who have come to peddle their goods.

Bartering is a common practice on Karvosti. Fortune hunters may well use their finds as

currency when trading with merchants or each other; in fact, many Ambrian merchants go there explicitly to trade cheaply acquired necessities for exotic crafts and curiosities. Needless to say, this has a way of aggravating their customers, and said merchants do well to keep bodyguards nearby – at least if they have the nerve to demand exquisite antiques in exchange for a single (though much-desired) bottle of Ambrian stout.

THE FORGE

In the west wing of the stronghold, where the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath has its quarters, the barbarian blacksmith Jorlamar and his aides are hard at work. In addition to forging and repairing the wrathguards' battle gear, Jorlamar offers similar services to paying customers, with the High Chieftain's blessing. Due to the lack of competition and, in equal measure, his tremendous sense of self-worth, the blacksmith's wares are 20% more expensive than normal.

Many stories are told about old Jorlamar. Everyone agrees that his weapons and armor are of the highest quality, but as to where he first learned his craft, and what influenced the rough, yet beautiful patterns he engraves into his masterful work, there is little consensus. Jorlamar himself will not comment on the rumors of him having been taught by elves, trolls, or even the frost ghouls of the Ravens.

EFERNEYA

The Keeper Eferneya and her apprentice, Sefa, are both proficient drug makers, equal even to the master alchemists of Ordo Magica. Those in need of healing drugs, waybread and such are more than welcome to visit the witches' dwelling and seek an audience with one of them. But one should think twice before doing so...

If Eferneya suspects her buyer of planning to violate the barbarians' taboos (or that person is foolish enough to admit to such intentions), he or she will, at best, not be allowed to buy anything – or at worst, suffer Eferneya's wrath. On several occasions, fortune hunters have contracted a terrible flu just before (or after) leaving Karvosti, and in a suspiciously large number of these cases, the afflicted had previously been in contact with the witches' drug makers.

CRUELJAW'S TRAPS

When Crueljaw, the aged ogre, finally had to retire because of his bad knees, he chose to settle down on Karvosti. It would surely have been impossible for him to stay there, had the former monster



Whether he is bellowing or blubbering, Crueljaw's name is certainly justified.

hunter not – on at least two famous occasions – helped the barbarian High Chieftain hunt down and destroy some particularly dangerous beasts, one of which was the blight-marked aboar who attacked Tharaban's eldest son, causing him permanent injury.

Crueljaw has established a shop at the marketplace, where he sells various tools and weapons related to monster hunting. The big-jawed, one-eyed ogre is always cheerful, and can spend hours listening to his customers' grandstanding stories, until he has a bit of Blackbrew or Ambrian stout. Then he is the one doing the talking. And often also the weeping.

VEARRA'S OUTPOST

By setting up an outpost near Karvosti, the House of Vearra hopes to entice Ambrian explorers and fortune hunters to spend thaler and treasures at their establishment, rather than on the High Chieftain's cliff. The former innkeeper Orola manages the stock and is also in charge of sales, along with Madar, an Adept of the Order who is tasked with assessing the value of items and artifacts offered in trade.

One can purchase both gear and provisions at the outpost, albeit at a higher price than normal (+50%). As for the value of the items one wishes to trade, it depends completely on Madar's assessments, which are likely to be on the low side. These circumstances are the reason why many people are reluctant to do business with Orola and her adept. Nevertheless, there is a rumor that tempts customers to accept these prices – a rumor of the duo paying good money for corrupted objects.

"Oh, the witches this and the witches that! The real treasures and secrets are kept below the stronghold. The High Chieftain has more gold than troll-mother Vouax; that I can promise you!"

"That goblin tribe out west, Brado... Baradou... Br... Oh, you know, the goblins! Anyhow, they are cannibals. Well, not cannibals – man-eaters!"

Knowledge & Information

ONE OF THE staples of both the explorer's and treasure hunter's professions is doing research and gathering information. However, in Davokar one soon learns that all information is subject to interpretation – something easily forgotten in Ambria, where authorities such as Ordo Magica and the Sun Church often present their particular interpretations and conclusions as "truth" or "facts."

In the deep woods, one almost inevitably ends up seeking information in many different places, adding all the pieces together and drawing one's own conclusions. The available knowledge seldom appears in the form of writing, but rather as stories and images – sources that mean very little until one knows who made them and something about the circumstances leading up to their creation.

THE CHRONICLER'S ARCHIVES

For an outsider to be allowed to enter the archives in the stronghold, the circumstances must be very special indeed. Besides, if one is to believe the few people who claim to have actually seen them, the term "archives" is somewhat misleading. Rather, they are a series of underground vaults, full of stone tablets, embroidered textiles, parchment scrolls, and various objects deemed to hold historical significance.

The rumors of what exactly is down there are many, most of them absolutely hair-raising. They speak of the Symbarian Emperor Merébaron's statute book, written on (and bound in) the skin of human offenders; troll-mother Vouax's legendary, doom-brewing cauldron; ancient mechanisms salvaged from the stone ships resting on the shores of the Eastern Sea; and things even more fantastic. Whether or not these rumors are

true, there is no doubt that whoever is granted unrestricted access to the vaults will make some astounding discoveries...

OLD MARGANDA

The pilgrim camp is still home to Marganda – one of the first three missionaries to pray by the temple ruin on Karvosti. She was already old back then, and time has not been kind to her hearing, eyesight, teeth or mind. But if you have questions regarding the Sun Temple, the Ambrians' time on Karvosti, or events which have transpired on the cliff since her arrival, it will only take a hot meal for her to start talking.

According to Marganda, she has remained on Karvosti due to a combination of laziness and age-related frailty, but the content of her absentminded ramblings has led many to suspect that she may in fact have ulterior motives for staying on the cliff. Some say she found something in the ruin, something that scared her, but which was glossed over (or at any rate ignored) by the Sun Church; others claim that she, for reasons unknown, has developed a profound hatred for Prios and his representatives. When asked about it, Marganda simply snorts in response.

LERULG THE SHAMAN

Lerulg, the shaman of the Braddokkugru tribe, is not versed in either the Ambrian or barbarian tongues, but she is said to possess great wisdom and deep knowledge about the region surrounding Karvosti. In order to gain an audience with her, one must either have noble intentions (that is, aim to do something beneficial for the tribe or Davokar) or manage to catch a specimen of the mudskipping Bottom Eel – a type of oily fish that lurks on the murky bottom of Lake Volgoma and happens to be Lerulg's favorite food.

There are also many stories about fortune hunters who, in exchange for information, agreed to perform certain tasks on the goblin tribe's behalf – such as hunting down some monster with an appetite for goblin flesh, or carrying out attacks against their arch enemies, the clan Odaiova or the Gurrmurrlg tribe. It may sound extreme, but in Davokar fortune hunters often have no choice but to do whatever is required in order to obtain the information they so desperately desire.

THE WHISPERER IN THE WATER

About halfway between Karvosti and the Earth Towers of Black Leech Rift, one finds The Whisperer's

Lumedo the Interpreter

Cranky old Lumedo who for the last four years has served as the wrathguards' interpreter, is something of an enigma. Every morning he saunters down to the wall, and then returns to his stronghold chambers by sundown, ready to work nights as well if his services are needed. No one knows who he is or why he resides on Karvosti, as he keeps his mouth shut whenever he is not working. There is no doubt that Lumedo knows a tremendous amount about everyone who visits or has previously visited the cliff – but since his peevishness is only matched by his pride, extracting this information from him is virtually impossible. On the other hand, should it be necessary, there are of course both mystical rituals and methods of violence that just might loosen his tongue ...

Rapids – a three hundred pace long stretch of river where the Malgomor surges and splashes and froths. According to the barbarians, the rapids are in fact a living entity called The Whisperer. After much research, the scholars of Ordo Magica have concluded that there is some truth to this, but reject all ideas of the river itself being animate. Instead they have declared it haunted, and recommend that all sensible Ambrians stay clear of it no matter what.

Whomever one chooses to believe, it is more or less recognized that those who enter the Whisperer's Rapids, cut open their palms and let their blood mix with its water, will soon hear a hissing voice rise from the waves. People claiming to have heard the Whisperer are rarely willing to share his words, but most describe him as an oracle – one they say has the power to foresee the bleeder's death.

Authorities

IT IS PERFECTLY obvious to everyone that Karvosti is the High Chieftain's cliff, and that the Huldra also has legitimate reasons to call it hers. Although neither of them have, nor want, the lawful right to pass judgement on barbarian or Ambrian offenders – it is the extended arm of said leaders, the wrathguards, who uphold law and order – they are completely authorized to remove visitors from the plateau and detain whoever disturbs the peace in any way. Apparently, the High Chieftain may also banish people from Karvosti, although he only exerts this right in exceptional cases, like when a clan chieftain fails to punish someone who is clearly guilty of a serious offense.

However, Tharaban and Yeleta are not the only powerful figures on Karvosti. Even if they cannot act independently of the formal authorities, there are others who hold a great deal of influence on what does, and does not, happen on the plateau. These people can probably put some pressure on the High Chieftain, as he is required to maintain good relations with the factions they represent. To be sure, there are political tensions on Karvosti; it is always best to treat people with a soft hand, though sometimes combined with a pair of shiny brass knuckles ...

LOTHAR GRENDEL

Forty-year-old Lothar Grendel is rarely seen without a frown on his face, and in an ill-tempered pout to boot. It is said that he commanded the defense of Kadizar when Korinthia's troops arrived at the village, and was determined to fight the invaders to the last drop of blood. But while his older sister chose exile – a rebel's life in the Titans – Lothar surrendered, along with his father Manvar, ceding their land to the kingdom of Ambria.

The Queen's Legation on Karvosti is reluctantly, but so far commendably, run by Lothar. He is assisted by three colleagues: his barbarian aide Undi, Notary Karlas, and Emon Garlaka – a retired military strategist who lost his left eye in a battle against the Dark Lords.



Lothar does not look much like the noble he is, something many attribute to him being a bachelor.

Their primary responsibility is representing the Queen and speaking on her behalf, but also to deal with Ambrians who find themselves in trouble on the cliff, for example by offering food to people heading back to Thistle Hold. Furthermore, the legate decides the fate of those who end up in the stronghold dungeons – as long as they have only committed a minor offense, such as theft or assault. More serious offenders are taken to the Thistle Hold penitentiary to undergo investigation and await final judgement.

FIRST GUARD FARVAN

The current leader of the Wrathguard is a Karit named Farvan. He is a seasoned warrior, whose grit has been tested during both Ambrian invasions and internal conflicts within his own clan. In his eight years on Karvosti, he has proven his mastery of both spear sling and battle claw on numerous occasions. And though he is a head shorter than many of his subordinates, and keeps his head and cheeks unusually clean-shaven, the

"Did you hear about Father Piromei, the head of the temple? Apparently he has bastards in every barbarian settlement. From his days as a missionary, I mean."

"There are lots of elves on Karvosti, probably nine, ten, maybe more. But they are all disguised with elven magic. And not only are they spying on people; they are murdering them too, in their sleep!"

wrathguards' respect for their taciturn leader is undeniable.

The stories of Farvan's exploits are many, most of them emphasizing the courage, skill, and unforgiving disposition of the First Guard. But there are other, less flattering tales suggesting feelings of resentment between Farvan and Tharaban, and others even questioning his loyalty to Karvosti. Clan Karohar has suffered badly by the Ambrian's arrival in the region, so perhaps it is quite understandable if the First Guard harbors a deep hatred for the Queen's people and reproaches the High Chieftain for having done so little to support the Karits in their struggle.

FATHER PIROMEI

It could be argued that Father Piomei Lethona, theurg and inquisitor, is unfit to be head of Karvosti's sun temple. His fanaticism and immense love for Prios is certainly an asset in many respects, but the very same traits often have a way of exacerbating tensions between the church and other authorities on Karvosti. Moreover, his unpleasant appearance is repellent enough to make both Ambrians and barbarians recoil whenever he comes near – he is tall as an ogre, with the jaw



Many describe Alisabeta as the sun knights' most zealous warrior, when she is so inclined...

of a troll, hair as white and wild as his beard, and small, deep-set, pitch-black eyes.

Generally speaking, radical tendencies have a way of mellowing with time, but if it is true what they say about Father Piomei, this does not apply to him. His views have only grown more extreme, and he does not refrain from weaving provocative insinuations into his fiery sermons – insinuations about the witches being in league with the evils of Davokar and the barbarians carrying a latent darkness inside; one that will surely bloom if not properly subdued by whip and cane.

ALISABETA OF VEARRA

The sun knights on Karvosti are commanded by Alisabeta Vearra, daughter of Knight Commander Iakobo. Although she was too young to serve in The Great War, she has proven her quality many times over in the Queen's new homeland. She certainly did during the purge of the sun temple to the east of Karvosti, which is now being restored, when she slew the Blight Beast guarding the famous prophecy of Sarkomal.

Alisabeta has a reputation for being nothing but kind to loyal followers of Prios, but ruthless when fighting the hordes of darkness. On Karvosti, she is often seen wandering the plateau, stopping to chat with anyone who dares to approach her. She sometimes spends entire evenings and nights at the pilgrim camp, sitting by some guest's camp fire – simply to enjoy the company and have a good laugh, she says. Others claim that she only does it in order to learn as much as possible about the forests of Davokar and the darkness spreading through them.

Alisabeta's Exploits

Among the Ambrian people, The Knights of the Dying Sun are probably the warriors most associated with the triumph over darkness. A striking number of paintings in the Legacy Gallery portray templars battling the advancing hordes of the Dark Lords; when children play war games it is sun knights who eventually come to save the day; and there are hundreds of ballads and sonnets about lone templars fighting against overwhelming resistance. But there are also more recent tales describing the knights' heroic feats, and many of them feature Alisabeta Vearra.

One song, composed by the acclaimed sun bard Danio, has become particularly popular among the Queen's people: the Ballad of the Sun Princess and the Blood Dancer. The story is about Alisabeta's hunt for an abomination that had long terrorized the countryside south of Mergile. She found the beast – a great ram with curved horns which (according to the bards) had been reshaped into meter-long, tusk sharper than swords – in a valley, where they fought for eight days and seven nights, before the "Sun Princess" finally struck a killing blow.

One does not hear quite as much about the many brutal attacks launched by Alisabeta and her brother against free settlements throughout the border regions of Ambria. However, within the Church she is just as famous for punishing human heretics as she is for her relentless fight against the forces of darkness, and many assume that she will one day put an end to Father Sarvola and his followers.

Clan Lands

PEOPLE TRAVELLING BETWEEN Thistle Hold and Karvosti are, sooner or later, bound to come across members of clan Odaiova. Having done so, one is sure to hear stories about clan Baiaga and their settlement near Lake Great Water. These are two very different barbarian cultures, and together they (supposedly) present a good example of how the woodland folk live and operate.

Odaiova

CLAN ODAIOVA CLAIMS to be the largest clan in Davokar in terms of population, which would also be in accordance with Ordo Magica's estimates. The more than fifty thousand Odavs have always valued spirituality and culture as highly as the art of war, which is why they throughout history have often subjugated themselves to clans with a greater capacity for violence. Chieftain Haloban was the most recent warlord to protect and exploit Odaiova's lands and people, until Queen Korinthia's troops obliterated both his fortress and clan. Ever since, Odaiova has slowly come to accept and conform to the Ambrian presence - a change that would not have been possible without the diplomatic brilliance of Chieftain Embersind, but which also has caused serious divisions among his subjects.

HISTORY

Like all barbarians, the Odavs are a proud people, but they have always seen greater honor in cleverness and cunning than in brute force. According to legend, the Odavs come from a region that was relatively autonomous from the emperors of Symbaroum; a status they maintained through diplomacy and political scheming, rather than by resorting to violence. The clan's original ancestor,

Odamagála, was allegedly both physically and spiritually enormous - an ideal for all Odavs to this day, regardless of gender and social standing.

After Haloban's defeat there were many rumors, from within and without the clan, saying that the Odavs helped coordinate Queen Korinthia's attack on the Jezite stronghold. However, such speculations are refuted by the fact that Odaiova and Ambrian explorers and colonists waged total war on each other until year 14, when Lasifor Nighthpitch and the witch Eferneya came up with a plan which made both sides lay down their arms. A great deal has changed since that day - much too quickly, and in the wrong way, according to some of Embersind's subjects.

The first step to ensure lasting peace was the establishment of trade relations - Ambrian knowledge, technology, everyday objects, and silver thalers poured into Davokar, and from the woods came timber, pelts, herbs and handicrafts. Further progress was made after the Battle of Karvosti in year 16, when the Queen and the Chieftain of Odaiova signed a treaty granting Ambrians safe conduct on the route between Thistle Hold and the cliff. A year later the treaty was expanded, allowing Ambrian soldiers to patrol the route, in exchange for their assistance in fighting any rebellious tendencies within the clan,



The Odav's ancestor, Odamagála, is often depicted as a luscious woman.

thereby reducing the risk of full-scale civil war.

A final major development was Chieftain Embersind's decision to move the clan's main settlement from the shores of River Eanor to their new home by the Arch Bridge. The official story was that Embersind returned his people to the place where Odamagála once founded the clan, but the actual reasons for doing so were probably to get closer to Karvosti and position the settlement on the road between the cliff and Thistle Hold.

SETTLEMENTS

Clan Odaiova currently has two major settlements and another ten or so small villages. They are all predominantly comprised of longhouses, with mortared stone walls and wooden joists and roofs; the latter often sealed and covered with moss. Most of these houses are built in two sections – one for the residents and the other for pets and livestock (domesticated hogs, goats, and sometimes workhorses).

The clan's oldest settlement is found on the northern shore of the River Eanor, about a day's march east of the road between Thistle Hold and Karvosti. It is completely dominated by the three-hundred-and-fifty-year-old Odama Citadel – a five-story fortress, surrounded by a wall of birch stakes erected on a massive rock base. There is a lower wall encircling the settlement, and though it is not high enough to hold back all woodland monstrosities it does give the defenders a much-needed advantage. All trees outside the wall, as well as south of the river, have been cut down to make place for crops – mostly turnips and root vegetables, but also a variety of utility plants and herbs. The jewel of the region is the so called All-Tree growing in the settlement's center. The berry bush was supposedly planted on top of Odamagála's tomb many centuries ago, and according to legend, its dark yellow fruit brims with her ancestral power.

Chieftain Embersind's new stronghold is located on the Malgomor's southern shore, built around the ancient Arch Bridge which, in Symbarian times, stretched across the river. Since then, the riverbed has moved a few hundred meters to the north, but the bridge itself remains where it has always been. It is almost two hundred paces long, supported by massive stone pedestals sunk deep into rocks and dirt. The houses near the bridge, and the marketplace located beneath it, were built in the traditional stone and wood fashion, with one notable exception: the Chieftain's stronghold. The all but completed structure was designed and built by Master Aspelo, the Royal Architect of Ambria, who borrowed techniques and styles from the great palaces of his homeland and embellished





Market day beneath the Arch Bridge; an event which nowadays attracts an equal number of Ambrian and barbarian merchants.

"Do you know why the Ambrians have not conquered Karvosti yet? No? Well, I do: the High Chieftain has been replaced by one of the Queen's cousins. Honestly! It is the only reasonable explanation, right!?"

his creation with details from both barbarian and Symbarian architecture. When finished, the fortress is supposed to be impossible to penetrate without razing the wall or breaking through the gates, as demanded by the ever more paranoid and incredibly wealthy chieftain.

KNOWN CONFLICTS

The Odavs should be grateful for everything their current chieftain has accomplished; it is an irrefutable fact that the alliance with Ambria has significantly improved the lives of most clan members, even if no one has benefited more from it than Embersind himself. And indeed, a majority of Odavs have come to accept, or even embrace, this new era. But there are some who have not...

There are at least two rebel factions operating in Odaiova. They are seen as bandits and rogues by both Ambrians and other Odavs, and very little is known about their numbers, how coordinated they are, and what they actually wish to achieve. One of those notorious groups is led by the witch Serbaga, also known as the Robber Crone, and the other by Embramer - Embersind's own nephew. These raiders move around the vast area called Odovakar, attacking Ambrian caravans and settlements along the borders of the forest. Though the Chieftain denies it, most people are convinced that either Serbaga or Embramer was behind last year's two attempts to assassinate Embersind in his stronghold on the shore of River Eanor.

The increased trade has also resulted in people losing some of their communal loyalty in favor of smaller, more immediate groups such as family, relatives, or colleagues. Everyone wants a share of the Ambrian wealth - hunters have, for example, started to compete with each other over who can offer the finest pelts at the lowest prices, which sometimes leads to quarrels or even violent clashes.

And lastly, one must mention the age-old conflict between the clan's principal lineages. To the Odavs, transcendental entities like Uron, Oroke and Eox are not Gods to worship, but spirits to learn from and communicate with. Instead, they revere their three original ancestors - nearly two thirds of the population adheres to Odamagála, while Yesalom and Embayal are embraced by a fifth each. Put simply, in order to clarify the nature of these conflicts, Odamagála is said to have been a peaceful and pragmatic woman, always striving for cultural and technological refinement, whereas Yesalom advocated a materially simple life devoted to spiritual growth, and Embayal urged the Odavs to conquer the woods through military force and seek dominion over all of Davokar.

There is obviously much overlap between these conflicts - Serbaga claims to be a descendant of Yesalom, and many of the smaller groups fighting for the attention of Ambrian merchants are more or less linked to the aforementioned lineages. However, it appears that the Ambrian presence in the region has had a mitigating effect on the historical animosity within the clan. For example, some of Embayal's descendants make a good living by guarding storehouses and transports belonging to an Odamagálian family, and similar collaborations are becoming more and more common.

PROMINENT ODAVS

As in all barbarian clans, the Keeper of Odaiova is highly regarded and has considerable influence over the Chieftain's actions. Embersind's witch is called Lobaya, and is old enough to have kept her position under three Huldras, Yeleta included. She openly states that, had she only been younger and seen any hope for the future of the clan and humanity itself, she would object to much that has happened in the last decade. But, being neither young nor hopeful, she obliges her chieftain as best she can while grumbling about the good old days - sometimes adding comments like "that Robber Crone woman sure has grit, and some wit to add..."

The leader of the Chieftain's guard is a woman named Yoroun. Despite being descended from Embayal, she seems to be unwaveringly loyal to Embersind and allegedly supported him against the much older and deeply critical Theodar (also of Embayal's line). The latter has never accepted his lineage's lower status; even back when the Odavs were vassals of Haloban he threatened to leave the clan, along with all his fellow Embayalans, if the Chieftain would not fight for an independent Odaiova. So far he has not followed through on his threats, but still, there is great dissent among Embayal's descendants about what their future should be.

When Serbaga's mother died, having eaten berries from a poisonous bush, the daughter replaced her as unofficial head of the Yesalom line - a position she would not occupy for long. After a grievous and public confrontation with the Chieftain regarding clan taboos, she was forced to flee the settlement. Most remaining Yesalomites now occupy two remote villages in the woods, where they keep to themselves. Their ill will towards Embersind grows ever stronger, not least because of Ambrian rangers appearing unannounced to search their homes for Serbaga. The village chieftain, Arnomer, will apparently tolerate just about anything, though one can assume that he too has his limits.

Other well-known Odavs are Valagar, the highly

successful jakaar breeder whose pups are sold to Ambrians as well as to other clans, and Golthor, a merchant who quickly realized the importance of learning the Ambrian language and establishing contacts in Thistle Hold. This made him an incredibly wealthy man, and some say he has paid to assume ownership of the Chieftain's citadel by the River Eanor when Embersind leaves. Other Odavs are bothered by his close relationship with Yoroun, a woman of his own lineage, despite Golthor's endless proclamations that this whole bloodline business is no longer relevant to the clan.

DARKNESS FALLS

Stories about the growing darkness of Davokar are told every day around woodland camp-fires and in taverns across Ambria. Odaiova is probably the clan who has suffered least from the forest's sinister powers - they live far to the south, where woods are sparse and deciduous, and it is said that Yesalom's descendants maintain strong relations between the clan and a handful of powerful forest creatures who have not yet succumbed to corruption. Still, they are not completely unaffected.

The smaller settlements north of the Malgomor have reported an increasingly large number of attacks by wild beasts, while southern villages and hunting parties have suffered brutal raids by the so called Beast Clan. Then there are two particularly unsettling stories describing something altogether different...

About fourteen moons ago, an entire village northeast of Karvosti was corrupted overnight.

Two young siblings were the only ones to escape this gruesome transformation, and fled south to tell their story - how they awoke to horrifying screams, just before dawn, and soon witnessed their deformed parents ravage neighboring children with their sharp claws and bloodstained jaakar fangs. The wrathguards and witches who arrived a few days later found that at least half the village's population had been torn asunder, while the others simply disappeared. The abominations had also taken the village chieftain's treasured rune axe, Anthem - an artifact allegedly forged by trolls, and which is still missing.

The other story recounts a situation which would have ended just as badly, had it not been for the swift actions of an adolescent hunter. Young Oran sat perched on a rooftop, heartbroken, as his beloved had left him for another man. His quiet lamentations were interrupted by a disturbing noise - a rising, polyphonic hum. Realizing that it must have come from some unnatural creature, he put an arrow to his bow, and released it. The following morning Oran was found dead next to his victim: a grotesquely bloated woman, completely naked under a swarm of both crawling and flying insects.

Oran's father was brave enough to approach them, but came no closer than three steps from his son before falling to his knees, regurgitating repeatedly. The others soon threw jars of oil at the three bodies and used flame arrows to set them ablaze. To this day, no one has been able to identify the creature or determine its origins.

"Listen, I saw a sun knight and a priest fight. With their fists. Last week. They screamed at each other like mad, yelling "heretic" and "blasphemer" back and forth. It was over pretty quickly, though, when the knight landed a punch..."

Baiaga

THE BAIAGS ARE constantly moving around. The clan is thought to comprise about thirty to thirty-five thousand members; the exact number is difficult to determine due to the clan's scattered and nomadic nature. To the Baiags, home is where their families are. Often consisting of four generations, every family is led by its oldest member, who - through spiritual conversations with their god, Arex the Bloodwolf - decides where next to hunt, fish, gather berries and mushrooms, or just rest. However, it is not considered strange for some people to leave their families, even for long periods of time; sometimes Arex reveals trails that are meant to be followed by one person, and that person alone.

Arex is the reason why these nomadic families are referred to as a clan. They regard the Chieftain as chosen by the Bloodwolf, the clan witch as the voice of god, and their lands as Arex's domain. All Baiags are obliged to defend their territory

while awaiting Arex's return from his hunt in the Yonderworld. They have waited and fought for centuries, patiently, for the most part in harmony with each other. But the arrival of the Ambrians and the darkening of Davokar have put their solidarity to the test. This has become particularly evident since the death of Chieftain Hohax.

HISTORY

It is said that clan Baiaga's ancestor, Areman, was the son of Grabando and Gohalfu. Apart from being husband and wife, they were governor and general of the Khalasaar province during the final years of the Symbarian Empire. When Symbaroum began to fall apart and people's fear bordered on hysteria, the couple took drastic action to maintain order in their province - alleged instigators, deserters, and protesters were tortured or executed in the hundreds. According to legend, it was Areman



The Baiagan god, Arex the Bloodwolf, in one of his many forms.

who ended his parents' tyranny. He killed them in their sleep and led the people of Khalasaar to safer lands in the south, where they remained for over a hundred years before returning north.

Davokar has been the Baiags' home ever since. Before the threat from Angathal Taar, known as the Spider King, forced the clans to unite and agree to certain arrangements, the descendants of Areman were involved in many prolonged and brutal conflicts – with other clans, elves, beasts, and finally with the Spider King's ravaging hordes. The establishment of rough borders by no means put an end to these conflicts, but certainly made them less frequent, and thus easier to deal with.

Furthermore, the clan is haunted, if not cursed, by a lingering menace: the vindictive and extremely powerful Grabando who sporadically returns to life in spectral form. There are stories about a number of occasions when the undead horror left its crypt and proceeded to claim tens, if not hundreds of Baiag lives, before being driven back (or returning willingly) to its tomb. There have been attempts to identify some kind of pattern to the wraith's awakenings and, with great effort, seal his crypt by mystical means – all without any real success.

The clan's violent past is obviously vital to understanding their current situation and way of life, but so is the incident which befell the Baiags about six months ago – the murder of Chieftain Hohax at a clan meeting by Lake Great Water. It is still unclear who swung the axe at his neck, and as his potential successors in many cases had both motive and opportunity to do so, Arex has been without a human representative ever since. All Baiags would like to believe that the killer came from another source – from Ambria or some other clan – but considering the circumstances it is difficult for them not to suspect each other. In fact, they would probably need the help of

an outsider to clear things up once and for all, provided that the Baiags can bring themselves to trust someone who does not follow the trail of the Bloodwolf.

SETTLEMENTS

There are about a hundred campsites scattered around the Baiaga forests, most of them small with between one and five simple (but well made) log huts. Neither settlements nor individual buildings have permanent residents – apart from solitary elders who no longer have the energy to move around and thus have settled in their favorite spot. Instead, a vacant hut may be occupied by whoever is first to claim it. If a certain camp is too crowded to house every single visitor, the most recent arrivals must sleep in their own tents until some indoor space becomes available.

Two campsites are much larger than the others, as they have evolved into important meeting places for the people. The largest one is located near Lake Great Water, with a hundred log houses for lodging and many additional buildings well-equipped for various kinds of crafting – there is, among other things, a smithy and a water-powered mill which anyone is free to use. By the lake one also finds most of the clan's stationary members. To name a few, there is Altrod, the storyteller who lost his legs to a raging aboar, the butcher and grillmaster Hubero and his family, and Bera, the Elder chosen by her fellow clan members to represent them before Arex (that is, before the Clan Chieftain and Keeper) and who is bound to the artifact known as the Drum of Gohalfu.

Strangers are welcome at the camp site, but are expected to offer goods and services in exchange for food, accommodation, access to the smithy, and so on. The Baiags are a curious and inquisitive people, and there are usually some with a good enough grasp of the Ambrian language to act as interpreters. They are also cautious and suspicious. Many outsiders are said to have died by Lake Great Water after having behaved in a threatening or worrying manner – from the Baiags' perspective, it is better to be safe (violent) than sorry (use words).

The second largest settlement is found along one of the forest's smaller rivers, known to the barbarians as Morankor, about a day's march north from the northern tip of Vologma. The Whitewater settlement is practically uninhabited for most of the year, but during the summer months, when trout are playing upstream, hundreds of Baiags come to feast, socialize and gossip about what they have seen and heard while travelling the woods.

The Drum of Gohalfu

They say that Gohalfu, the warlord, had this mighty copper cauldron made so that she could issue orders to her subordinates from afar. The drumming on its lindworm skin is received and passed on by almost two hundred shell-shaped earrings which nowadays are worn by the heads of clan Baiaga's most important families. This way, Bera can reach more or less the entire clan with simple messages – convene council meetings, warn people of danger, or call for the children of Arex to defend his territory.

Furthermore, the summer months are when the Whitewater Maid – an ancient being inhabiting the river, seemingly protecting it from all perceived threats – is at her most serene.

Legends describe the Whitewater Maid, sometimes called Daughter Manaud, as a female being the size of an arch troll, with toad-like features and milky white skin. She has not been seen for a long time, maybe because the Baiags have learned not to anger her. Her victims are always found in the woods near the river – tainted and blight-born creatures, sometimes even primal blight beasts, who have suffered the claws and acidic bite of the Whitewater Maid. Ordo Magica and the Sun Church call her an abomination, but the Baiags see her quite differently: as long as one does not mention her by her true name and has not been tainted by corruption, the Whitewater Maid is not a threat, but rather a guardian spirit.

KNOWN CONFLICTS

The Baiags have no concept of personal ownership. The land they roam belongs to Arex, and all who participate in defending it may share in its rewards. It is true that individual clan members are responsible for personal equipment, and families often have a selection of weapons, tools, and household objects at their disposal. But should any of their brothers and sisters be in greater need of them, it is not uncommon for people to give such items away. At any rate, Baiags simply do not fight over possessions and belongings – the very notion would seem absurd to them.

When they ever fight and argue amongst themselves, it is usually in regards to one of two matters: the enactment of new taboos (and the revision of old ones), or how the clan as a collective should deal with strangers. As for the former, many young Baiags – Keeper Makaba among them – believe that the darkening of Davokar calls for stricter enforcement of their taboos and the addition of some entirely new ones. Traditionally important regions are no longer safe; many border areas are being raided by dark creatures; strange and troublesome tracks have been spotted around certain ruins; more game and fish are being plagued by disease.

The older folk, however, will not be persuaded, and propose a different course of action. Bera the Elder maintains, and many agree with her, that clan Baiaga must fight the oncoming darkness, not retreat behind taboos. What would Arex say if he returned from his hunt to find his territory diminished and riddled with corruption!? Both factions are slowly succumbing to impatience

and desperation.

The question of how to treat strangers is rather more complex – or so it may appear when described to an outsider. The Baiags' sentiment towards the Ambrians ranges from hospitable amiability to distrust, loathing, and in some cases even murderous hatred. Their relations with foreign barbarians vary from family to family, depending largely on marriages and/or personal friendships between people of different clans. Hence, it is very difficult to predict how one will be received when meeting a group of Baiags. Outsiders approaching a clan settlement may well be welcomed with bowls of berry stew, or in other cases by axe wielding warriors ready to spill their blood.

Both of these conflicts become apparent as the clan prepares to elect a new chieftain, and though Baiags rarely fight among themselves, they are a people of strong convictions, ready to fight for what they believe is right. None of Hohax's three potential successors enjoy majority support, and many Baiags consider someone else (if not themselves) to be more worthy of the position. Sources on Kavosti, and in some of Thistle Hold's taverns, are confident that clan Baiaga is on the verge of civil war – all it would take is a catalyst to unleash the repressed anger and desperation in all its destructive glory.

PROMINENT BAIAGS

There is no greater honor for a Baiag than to valiantly defend Arex's territory. Their finest warriors, especially those who fight alongside the baiagorns, enjoy a high standing within the clan, and heroes like Ranokrag and Eradana can expect to be well taken care of wherever they go. But prowess with the axe is not the only skill lauded by the clan members; they are Arex's people, after all, and value proficient trackers and pathfinders just as highly.

As for individual Baiags, Makaba is probably one of the youngest Keepers in barbarian history. She came to power less than a year before Hohax's murder, no more than nineteen years old at the time. The Chieftain chose her over the older apprentice of the previous Keeper, and many Baiags would like to see this “mistake” rectified once a new Chieftain is elected. But Makaba is apparently unfazed by their threats – perhaps she would not mind being replaced; perhaps she deems herself more powerful than her challenger, Garagor, and is not afraid to prove it in a mystical duel, should it come to that.

The Elder, Bera, has a reputation for being stubborn and harsh, and lacking capacity for tolerance

“The last Baiag chieftain was murdered, you know that right? Well, now they know who did it: Tharama, the tracker, who many would like to be the new chieftain.”

or mercy. The previous chieftain despised her, and the common folk are losing faith in her as well, not least since the views she represents (“defend Arex’s territory at all cost!”) are slowly losing ground. It would hardly come as a surprise to anyone if a future chieftain immediately called on his people to elect a new Elder to represent them, or if Bera was defeated in that election.

The three nominees most likely to succeed Hohax have little in common. The bear warrior Eradana demands that clan Baiaga adapt to the forest’s altered conditions and form alliances with other clans, mainly Zarek and Godinja. Like Makaba, she wants to establish new taboos to stop people from visiting certain ruins and border regions, and prohibit the consumption of various plants and animals.

Her main opponent is Karloar, a former wrathguard and fanatic traditionalist who wants the clan to cut all ties with the outside world and drive the darkness from Arex’s territory by any means necessary. But even though many clan members share his isolationist views, it might not be enough to win him the title of chieftain. Like many homecoming wrathguards, Karloar is forever scarred by his time on Karvosti – his trembling hands and voice, his violent mood swings and sometimes unquenchable thirst for drink cause some people to hesitate. His greatest chance of winning is said to lie in the third candidate’s ability to sway large numbers of Eradana sympathizers. The tracker Tharama has a very similar vision for the clan, but has lived in Ambria for more than a decade and believes that the Baiaga should follow the Odav example and open their arms to their southern neighbor.

DARKNESS FALLS

In the east, the clan’s territory borders to what the Ambrians call Wild Davokar, and is made even more vulnerable by the proximity to Karvosti. Many horrors – elves, abominations, and tainted beasts – must cross Baiag lands on their way to the cliff. But there are three locations

where the dark transformation is particularly evident and menacing.

On the outskirts of the territory lies Jerak’s Sinkhole, which has always spawned all sorts of trouble – goblin tribes, predator packs, disease-spreading insects, and ravenous abominations. But the threats emerging from Jerak’s deep are clearly increasing in numbers and severity. Some say that the part of the Underworld to which the sinkhole is linked has changed; that something has awakened down there, something that drives other Underworld creatures towards the surface. Whatever it is, the clan has agreed that five families with a minimum of two bear warriors each must be stationed in the settlement near Jerak at all times, to keep a close eye on the sinkhole, and avert or report all threats they encounter.

The vast ruins known to the Baiags as Rhan Mahaar are another cause for worry. Explorers who claim to have visited the ancient city sometimes describe it as a temple complex, sometimes as a graveyard of magnificent mausoleums. But they all mention how its wildlife is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Instead of withering from corruptive darkness, the ground seems to have sprung back to life: the thin, gray vines and hawthorns which long ago covered the ruins are growing rapidly once more, blooming in white and pink. Explorers also claim that all animals have fled Rhan Mahaar. Birds have abandoned their nests, voles no longer scour the ground for worms – even the insects have left the area, making the flourishing thorns all the more extraordinary.

Lastly, the Black Plague Termites must be mentioned. It has been five years since the first reports of these nasty pests reached Karvosti and, shortly thereafter, Thistle Hold. Back then there had only been a few incidents near clan Baiaga’s eastern border, but now the plague has spread, even though every nest found is set aflame. The red and black, thumb-length insects attack both living and dead trees, and in addition to hollowing them out, they bring corruption to everything they touch – the trees they devour, the ground they walk on, and the earth in which they nest. For once, the barbarian witches and the scholars of Ordo Magica are in agreement: the well-coordinated termites possess some form of hive-mind intelligence, and are most likely controlled by at least one cunning Queen, hiding somewhere in the wilds. If she is not found, and the vermin continue to spread at the current rate, Arex’s territory may be completely lost in just a few years...

Rumors

Many rumors can be found between the covers of this book. They reflect what can be heard in taverns and markets, often in a whispering tone. Half of them are, in all likelihood, completely made-up, and the other half are marked by misinterpretations and exaggerations. But who knows, perhaps there is a grain of truth in them as well ...



Even though its surrounding vegetation
has sprung to life, the cursed inhabitants
of Rhan Mahaar still walk among the
ruin's monuments and megaliths.



weapons drills outside the witches' dwelling all lower their axes, spears, and battle claws. The noise from the Longhouse abates, as the window shutters are closed to keep out the autumn cold.

A troop of eleven wrathguards move out from the Chieftain's stronghold. They march south along the edge of the plateau, towards the fault line's towering wall, then west, passing the gaping entrance to the Huldra's caverns. Soon they reach the pilgrim camp. Some twenty fires are burning among the tents. Roaring laughter is heard from where Iarlo serves his meals, someone is sobbing in a tent near the log bridge; otherwise, it is a calm evening, with quiet songs and conversations accompanied by mellow strings.

Just as the patrol leaves the camp and continues north, just as its leader smiles, expecting a peaceful night, an ominous clank cuts through the silence – a faint, almost hesitant chime which makes the patrolling wrathguards look up at the bell tower only twenty paces away. The bell tolls a second time, more firmly than before. Then another bell is heard from across the plateau.

Before long, all the alarm bells are ringing, continuously and with force. The wrathguards grasp their weapons, glance at the sun temple and the Templars assembling outside, and see the panic spreading among the guests of the pilgrim camp. Then the horde comes swarming over the edge of the cliff – a horde of creatures with souls as black as their ragged furs.

N THE WEST, the last rays of the setting sun caress the azure sky, and the priest's hateful sermon comes to a close; silence and darkness sweep over the High Chieftain's plateau. With few exceptions, either merry or angry, the voices around the fires of the pilgrim camp drop into murmurs and whispers. The wrathguards engaged in



SECTION 2:

GAME MASTER'S SECTION



In Darkness

AS GAME MASTER YOU are expected to know more about the game world's many creatures, characters, and locations than your players do. The information in this chapter can be used as a basis for creating your own adventures, even entire campaigns, and is in many respects important when planning for and running the adventure *The Witch Hammer*. Your task is to use this exclusive body of knowledge to give the two-dimensional maps of the game world additional depth – in a geographical and historical sense.



Tharaban with his back resting against the stone tower of his predecessor, Serembar.

AS ALWAYS, DEAR game master, it is important to remember that it is you and your group who ultimately decide the shape and feel of your particular Ambria and Davokar. With *Symbaroum* having existed for several years, there are already thousands of parallel versions of the game world – which is exactly as it should be! True, this module, and future ones produced by us at Järnringen, assumes that the world's events develop along a certain path, since we cannot possibly be aware of or take into account the various experiences of all gaming groups. However, this only means that you (alone or together with your gaming group) must make the appropriate adjustments and modifications so that the world described in the book matches the one you recognize from your own game sessions.

This opening chapter contains detailed information about the matters addressed in the first section of the book, meant to be a basis on which to build your own stories and adventures. Among other things this information includes the truth

behind historical events, which obviously are much more complicated than they first appear, and the general development in the region, focusing on the game world's most prominent and powerful factions. Lastly, a large number of minor plots or conflicts are presented, for you to develop into adventures that fits the style and tastes of your gaming group.

The second chapter of this section provides guidelines and inspiration for creating interesting and exciting ruin complexes. In fact, this content can be used as a randomizer. In that case, you must be prepared to improvise so as to bring additional life and color to the ruins.

The final part of this section describes new and additional rules. Most of them are directly connected to the adventure *The Witch Hammer*, but certainly useful in other ways as well. The main focus is on presenting guidelines for scheming – something the player characters will have plenty of opportunity to engage in during their time on the High Chieftain's cliff.

Garavarax's Mother

BEFORE THE FALL of *Symbaroum*, long before Davokar had taken root and captured the cliff in its green embrace, Karvosti towered over lush plains, very similar to today's Ambria. One might think that the cliff would have been much sought after by the rulers of the region due to its easily defended plateau, the perfect location where River Malgomor flows into Lake Volgoma, and the authority that comes with literally looking down on one's enemies. But Karvosti was not man's to conquer; Karvosti belonged to Garavarax, the Giant.

Garavarax was the last of his kind, and had been lord of the region for as long as he could remember. He regarded Karvosti itself as his mother, and when humans arrived on the western slopes of the Ravens and began to spread across the plains, he reacted with fear and anger. Garavarax slaughtered hundreds of haggard refugees, thousands even, until they kneeled before him, begging for their lives.

More injured than he would admit, Garavarax decided to show mercy and incorporate the newcomers into his realm, and capitalize on their relative wisdom and subservient disposition. The leader of the humans, Cidriana, swore to respect the sanctity of the Mother Rock, to continuously provide the giant with offerings worthy of a god, and to never gather weapons or power for the purpose of challenging him. Cidriana welcomed this arrangement – better to have peace and a chance to thrive,

than to fight further battles against a seemingly invulnerable foe. Not everyone agreed with her decision, but the water, winds, and animals of the world helped Garavarax keep an eye on the humans, and he struck with full force whenever he suspected someone of violating the agreement.

As the centuries passed, Garavarax became increasingly trustful of the humans, convinced that the petty kings constantly fighting each other (sometimes over wrongs or smears conceived by the giant himself) were not willing or able to oppose him. This, of course, was a mistake. While they continued to honor the agreement, the humans made great advancements in places hidden from the giant's gaze. They refined their arts and acquired a deeper and deeper understanding of the laws of reality – partly out of innate curiosity, partly to gain an advantage over local enemies, but also in the hope of freeing mankind from Garavarax's watchful gaze; a gaze that was no longer threatening, but restricting and oppressive.

Perhaps the latter was the main incentive for their combined efforts? Perhaps it was this deep longing for freedom that made it possible for people to unite under *Symbaroum*'s banner; that inspired humanity to strengthen their bodies and minds by mystical means, beyond the limits of nature, and to ultimately seek power by pursuing alliances with the fell forces of the Yonderworld? Perhaps Garavarax was the root of it all?

From his towering plateau, Garavarax witnessed the fall of Symbaroum and watched the survivors scatter and flee. Some few were welcomed on his cliff, to toil and die defending it. With that exception, he would not interfere as the storm raged on - purging the lands of humanity and its remnants; restoring the natural purity of his domain. Then came the elves.

The western folk were intruders of a completely different kind. They would never bow down to him, never bend the knee; they could rob the giant of his lands and conquer his Mother. Garavarax entered the fray and fought alongside primal blight beasts and monstrosities, butchering elves as he had once butchered humans. But where the humans had been intimidated into submission by his terrible wrath, the elven commander Eneáno sent for help. And help he would receive, in the form of the eternity elf, Aloéna.

It was the ancient Aloéna who, through great cunning, mighty hymns, and brute force, single-handedly brought Garavarax down. Thanks to her, the elves could begin to sing the darkness back to sleep; thanks to her, they could plant the forest of Davokar and make its seeds strong enough to take root in the malignant dark, to bind it and fetter it to the ground. Garavarax was never slain - perhaps because he is truly immortal, or because Aloéna, for some reason, decided to spare his life. He was, however, plunged into a deep sleep, his colossal body lowered deep within the Mother Rock, to rest in her bosom, in the nocturnal currents of the Underworld. Aloéna remained on the cliff to keep watch over the giant, ready to fight, should he ever break free from his slumber.

With the exception of Aloéna, Eneáno, a few leaders of the Iron Pact, and the residing Huldra, what is divulged in this chapter is completely unknown by today's cultural beings. There are legends of giants, and an arbitrary tale claiming that Karvosti was once home to a monstrous creature called Arvarax, but present day barbarians regard these as nothing more than stories with little basis in reality.

The same goes for many events that have befallen, or at least occurred on, Karvosti throughout the years. Most people have superficial knowledge of the following incidents, but very few know the whole truth of what actually caused them in the first place.

DAWN OF THE IRON PACT

It can hardly be true that time was suspended during Eneáno's visit on Karvosti, but he really did come alone to parley with the High Chieftain and the Huldra. Despite many violent encounters

and countless ambushes, the elves' attempts to stop certain clans from entering the deep woods had failed. But while the barbarians clearly could not be intimidated, perhaps they could be reasoned with.

The Huldra Bovosin and High Chieftain Agadan heeded the warnings, and after lengthy negotiations they convinced all clan chieftains to comply with the agreement - largely because Bovosin persuaded her Keepers, who in turn managed to sway the more hard-nosed chieftains. The details of the treaty were laid down shortly thereafter, during a meeting between ten clan chieftains and the Elven lords Eneáno, Lirealéa and Ka'eroan (an aged autumn elf at the time). The treaty, today known as the Iron Pact, stated that all barbarians must stay away from the ruins of Symbaroum, the Underworld, and the particularly dark parts of Davokar. In return, the lords swore that there would be peace and harmony between humans and elves.

It is important to note that the barbarian people, even their leaders on Karvosti, have deliberately been violating this treaty for many years. Not only do they aid Ambrians in their expeditions into Davokar, by carrying luggage or acting as guides and bodyguards, but many of them have also done their fair share of pillaging and looting. This has not gone unnoticed by the elves' younger leaders, who have responded in different ways - some by putting pressure on their elders in the Halls of a Thousand Tears; others by going into exile to combat the Ambrians with violence and sabotage, even infiltrating the Queen's realm in order to influence those in power.

The elders, on the other hand, are less engaged in the matter. Most of them would avoid conflict at all cost, and some are too old to keep up with the rapid changes of the world. And nothing is made easier by the fact the Eneáno, their Prince and leader, seems to be losing his mind...

KARLABAN'S BANE

The reason for Karlaban's transformation into an abomination was his inability to curb his curiosity. At the top of the first High Chieftain's residence - the tower which was later built into the stronghold and now looms at the back of the Great Throne - is a chest, the content of which was lost in legend. Like his successors, all Karlaban knew was that the chest must never be opened; that it contained an artifact of immense power, which must be guarded and kept hidden at all costs. Karlaban, who was under constant attack by the Saars and the third incarnation of the Blood-Daughter, concluded that the warnings surrounding the chest were false and

that the artifact inside could be used to defend the cliff. He was mistaken...

Inside the chest lies one of the world's most powerful sources of corruption: a seed capsule, dark as night, given to High Chieftain Agadan by Lord Eneáno during the meeting which would give birth to the Iron Pact - a symbol for humanity and elven-kind's shared responsibility in watching over Davokar. The chest was shielded by mystical runes and harmonies sung to repel corruption, and luckily the lid quickly slammed shut; Karlaban had barely opened it before Wratha's fury swept over him. While this did not save him, the rest of Karvosti's residents were spared the capsule's darkness.

Another interesting detail is that Karvosti was saved, indirectly, by Aloéna's intervention. She granted the Huldra access to a transformation ritual known as *Catching Fire* (see page 60); the Huldra and her Keepers tracked down a young Karit woman who was prepared to give her life for the High Chieftain's people. The ritual was performed successfully, and raging flames flowed through the woman, giving her enough strength and protection to defeat the blight-born Karlaban. But in the end, she was doomed to die by her own flames. It took almost an entire day for the fire to consume her, and the woman spent much of it screaming in agony before she finally crumbled into ashes.

ALOÉNAS SENSATIONS

The description of Aloéna as a passive observer is, in fact, not entirely accurate. With time, and the relentless darkening of Davokar, she has actually become increasingly active. She does not behave in what humans would consider a rational manner, and strikes without regard for age, family situation, illnesses or injuries. Instead, she is guided by her feelings, simply sensing who does and does not pose a threat to Garavarax's slumber. Those who do are shown no mercy.

The first time Aloéna experienced this sensation she could not restrain herself and killed three people in the full light of day, in front of hundreds of witnesses. Since that day, she has - as recommended by Helabag, the Huldra at the time - refrained from acting publicly. Instead she enters her victims' dreams and manipulates them into taking their own lives, either with weapons or by hurling themselves off the cliff. Sometimes, when her targets are protected by mystical means or have the spiritual strength to resist her, Aloéna resorts to physical violence. In such cases, she will wait until the victims have left Karvosti and hunt them down in the woods.

It should be noted that these impulses are quite random, probably linked to the increased tensions caused by the growing darkness - even though a creature such as Aloéna is above things like fear and anxiety, she is not completely unaffected. Many people who should be perceived as threats can visit the cliff without her reacting; conversely, she may kill individuals who have (so far) lived completely innocent lives. In any case, if the public ever found out that she acted this way, it would make her life, and the lives of many others, very complicated.

THARABAN'S SISTER

The attempt on Tharaban's life, a few hours after his coronation as High Chieftain, came as no surprise to the man himself. Nor did he ever believe the claims that the northern clans were behind it, even though he, for appearances' sake, pretended to do so. No, Tharaban knew exactly who the assailant was - his own older sister.

Tirba was born under an evil moon and raised by a family who, because of her mark of corruption, kept her hidden from public view and subjected her to all sorts of ordeals, hoping to purge the darkness from her body. No one was more zealous in this effort than her younger brother Tharaban, who as his parent's favorite child could do just about whatever he wanted. While the brother grew strong and gained renown for ferociously slaughtering abominations and blight-born beasts, Tirba lived her life as a public secret. The entire clan knew of her existence and how she was being treated, but no one - neither those who pitied her, nor those who would happily have participated in her cleansing - did anything about it.

Tirba escaped about ten years before Tharaban was chosen to succeed High Chieftain Ergmer. Officially she was assumed dead, but her family members were not alone in suspecting her involvement in the various "accidents" which sometimes befell her brother and parents. In any case, Tharaban expected her to attack him during the coronation. He had hunters surrounding the entire cliff, and as she tried to leave the scene of the crime, Tirba was captured. To this day, she has been locked away in the catacombs beneath the stronghold, always looking for a way out. Always plotting her revenge...

ORYELA'S COVENANT

Another person imprisoned on Karvosti against her will is the previous Huldra, Oryela. However, she is held captive by the witches, and it is unclear whether she is still herself. Thus, the story of the

The guardians of the wall

The statues of two wild boars perched on top of the wall, overlooking all who seek entry onto the plateau, are in fact possessed by fettered spirits. One of them wields the *Witchsight* ability at master level, and if anyone wishing to pass the wall is severely corrupted (i.e. has a total corruption value of 5 or more), it warns the wrathguards by summoning a whirlwind which tugs at the person's hair and clothes. The other spirit makes sure that the area is shielded at all times by the *Sanctifying Rite* ritual. Tainted people must pass a [Discreet -Total Corruption] test in order to hide the fact that the place is making them feel sick. Thus, the wrathguards have two chances to detect possible threats.

former Arch Witch is strictly fictional, and so is the one about Keeper Deadorna.

The truth is that Oryela at a young age entered a covenant with an elf calling himself Iel. She failed to recognise the ominous signs - the tightly wrapped garb and the heavy scent of perfume which hung over him - and never realized that the mad creature had chosen to become undead, so that he would be immune to corruption and have an advantage in the battle against Wratha's forces. The covenant made it possible for Iel to see and hear whatever Oryela was doing, and influence the witch's actions by speaking to her from afar. When he learned of the artifact Yeleta had brought to Karvosti, his profound fear made the Huldra strike out at the object with all her might. Alas, she also hit Deadorna, who was holding it close to her face.

In the months following the Keeper's death, it became clear to Yeleta that Oryela was losing herself. Finally, she felt compelled to act. She overthrew the Arch Witch and locked her in a cell from Symbarian times which is found deep within Karvosti, shielded by powerful runes to ward off all mystical energies.

Yeleta has yet to figure out who it is that sometimes speaks through her prisoner's lips. She understands that the creature is an ally in the fight against corruption, but also that it possesses such a burning hatred that its actions, and the plans it whispers to her, would only make matters worse.

Much worse. Yeleta has often considered granting Oryela the final rest, but has so far always changed her mind, hoping to learn what her predecessor did with the statue which caused Deadorna's death.

SUNFLOWER

The anonymous explorer calling herself Sunflower never existed. It was actually the Odav chieftain Embersind who provided the Sun Church with information about Karvosti and its temple ruin, as part of a secret treaty which also granted the Curia's troops safe conduct through Odaiova's territory. All the Curia had to offer in return were two promises: to withdraw the Templars and Black Cloaks who were attacking the clan's southern settlements in pursuit of heretics, and to never reveal where the information had come from. If word ever got out that Embersind had betrayed the barbarian people to save himself and his settlements, he would soon be branded a traitor and brought before the chieftains' council on Karvosti.

There is really nothing odd about why the first missionaries were welcomed on the cliff - they were unarmed, untainted by corruption, and expressed a sincere wish to honor their god by the old ruin. Perhaps Tharaban and Yeleta would have acted differently, had they known what was to come. On the other hand, turning these pious people away would probably just have precipitated the Sun Church's decision to attack.

Tensions are Rising

EVER SINCE SEREMBAR'S election as first joint leader of the clans, Karvosti has been the High Chieftain's cliff. With the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath at his command, he defends and maintains order on the plateau, and though he lacks the authority to judge individual clan members, the wrathguards may detain anyone who exhibits threatening behavior, and use lethal force if they deem it necessary. The same agreement has now been made between Tharaban and the Queen of Ambria, which the Sun Church has reluctantly come to accept.

On a few occasions, a number of clan chieftains have banded together and granted the Lord of Karvosti the power to actually govern them. The most famous example was during the decades of war against the dreaded Spider King, which began with the first High Chieftain and ended with the fifth - a war that involved all clans, except the steppeland folk of Saar-Khan. Presently, there are some who argue that a similar union is necessary; that the barbarian people must once more unite under a common banner in order to meet the threats of this new era.

The darkness spreading through Davokar is one evident reason for joining forces. But unlike the above-mentioned example, this sinister development is a slow and abstract one, without a clear enemy. This explains why the clan chieftains and large parts of their respective people are opposed to taking such drastic action, despite advocates of the proposition claiming that they are behaving like toads in a slowly warming cauldron - splashing about without a care in the world, while the water grows hotter and hotter, and will eventually scald them to death.

Another perceived threat are the Ambrians. Their queen has already subjugated and destroyed a second clan, and will surely not stop there. There is also much to suggest that the darkening of Davokar is linked to the Ambrians scavenging its ruins - that their intrusions have at least accelerated its expansion. Thus, many barbarians are heard grunting and mumbling that the children of Davokar must unite in the face of this menace; some speak of taking up arms, while others would rather

strengthen their negotiating position. However, many are skeptical about this, particularly the Zareks, Odavs, and Vajvods, who get along quite nicely with Korinthia's people and have benefited greatly from newly established collaborations.

Finally, the growing activity of the Iron Pact must be mentioned, as it affects all clans to some extent. The elves and their allies are attacking barbarian settlements with increasing frequency, particularly those which are located near ancient ruins and often host Ambrian explorers and treasure hunters. Few people know that the Iron Pact is plagued by internal conflicts, although the witches have begun to suspect as much. Those aware of the connection between the clans' taboos and the once peaceful relations between barbarians and elves call for the High Chieftain to do something about the greedy Ambrians and the locals aiding them.

This section describes the relationships between powerful factions on Karvosti, and their views on previously mentioned threats. The main focus is on what the leaders of these factions wish to achieve, what allies they have (or think they have), and who they regard as enemies. Game Masters should familiarize themselves with this before playing *The Witch Hammer*, but are also encouraged to use these plots as the basis for homemade scenarios, to be played before or after the adventure in question.

THE HIGH CHIEFTAIN

When Tharaban closes his chamber door at night, he lets his shoulders slump, his chest deflates, and his forehead creases into a deep frown. Sometimes he even sheds tears; not ones of grief, but of helplessness and despair. The High Chieftain knows that the Ambrians are to blame for the Iron Pact's intensified activity, and is confident that the looming awakening of Symbaroum is their fault as well. As much as four years ago, during the annual autumn gathering at the Thingstead, he suggested that the clans should coordinate their approach to the Queen's people, but the chieftains would not listen – they were more interested in discussing border disputes and individual threats. The decision to join forces can only be made by the clan chieftains, and it must be made soon! For if the Ambrians are not forced to obey the barbarian taboos, the world will fall into darkness.

The people who Tharaban feels he can trust are very few indeed. First Guard Farvan is one of them, and he is fairly sure that Yeleta shares his goals as well – however, it is unclear whether they could agree on the means to achieve them. He has known the Zarek Chieftain Monovar and

Leonod of Yedesa since before he became High Chieftain; they are good friends, but it is far from certain whether they would be willing to grant him dominion over their people – especially as Monovar seems to have found a new friend in the duke of New Berendoria, Alesaro Kohinoor. And he has no real ally among the Ambrians. So far he has gotten on very well with the Queen, or so it seems based on communications with her Legate on Karvosti. But what she really thinks, feels, and plans remain unknown to him.

No, Tharaban is on his own, although he has found some comfort with Lugander Galeia, member of the Queen's Legation and son of social climber and patron Laguboi. The young noble has shown great interest in barbarian history and culture, and is also quite outspoken about his insights into Ambria and its ruling class – which is why they have spent much time together by Tharaban's hearth. At the same time, the High Chieftain does not have many obvious enemies, apart from his incarcerated sister. The paradoxical role of the High Chieftain is not to rule, but to maintain friendly relations with everyone and mediate between them, and so far, Tharaban has always done what is expected of him. His friends and enemies will surely show their true colors when he loses patience and executes his plan – summoning all clan chieftains and giving them an ultimatum: grant him absolute power over the people of Davokar, or die!

HOUSE KOHINOOR

Korinthia and her allied relatives aim to establish an empire north of the Titans, strong enough to withstand all outside threats. For symbolic reasons, she speaks of restoring Symbaroum and fulfilling the prophecy of Sarkomal, and asserts that Ambrians have as much claim to these lands as the barbarians. But these are actually secondary issues; what matters most is that the lush and affluent forest of Davokar is incorporated into her kingdom and that most of the region's populace is persuaded to join her cause.

As for Karvosti, the cliff is important to Korinthia for two reasons. First, it would ease the exploration and cultivation of Davokar considerably if her people could use the cliff as they pleased. Secondly, there is a vast treasure trove of ancient knowledge to gain from the witches and the High Chieftain's stronghold. But since her advisors all agree that Ambria needs the barbarians, particularly the witches, to help them interpret and understand said information, the situation is more complex than it might seem at first glance – the Queen could certainly take Karvosti by force, but not without

making enemies of those who hold the keys to the real riches of Davokar.

House Kohinoor, Korinthia included, is still extremely busy making sure that the Ambrian kingdom runs smoothly and satisfactorily – a task that has turned out to be far from simple, as many of the structures and traditions which were the very foundation of Alberetor no longer exist or have yet to be restored. Regarding Karvosti, the Queen has so far been content just to improve Ambrian relations with the High Chieftain and the Huldra, mostly through her Legation. Lothar Grendel is her only formal ally on the cliff, but if the situation demands more active efforts, she can rely on the groups of Rangers who take turns on the plateau, disguised as explorers, missionaries, or treasure hunters.

As to enemies, Karvosti is something of a thorn in House Kohinoor's side. The Sun Church's representatives on the cliff are all fervently loyal to the First Father and the Curia, and House Vearra – who throughout history has made many attempts to dethrone the Kohinoors – has established a growing outpost in close vicinity to the cliff. Moreover, the Iron Pact and its representatives are present all over the plateau, snooping around and meddling in Ambrian interests. There might also be some truth to the Legation's reports suggesting that neither the witches nor the High Chieftain are likely to ever enter an alliance with Ambria; that they firmly believe in the elves' horror stories and doubt humanity's ability to vanquish the darkness. If this is really the case, the Queen must resort to harsher methods, eventually following through with clenched fists and sharp steel.

THE SUN KNIGHTS

A division has emerged within the Curia, and within the Sun Church in general. The Templar commander, Iakobo Vearra, has long since concluded that Prios is dead, and now he has had enough of the priests' and Black Cloaks' reluctance to face the truth. The Lawgiver must be avenged, and it is the sacred duty of the Sun Church to drop the axe on His killers.

The conflict between these two factions escalates in the months leading up to the beginning of the adventure *The Witch Hammer*. On Karvosti, this is particularly noticeable in the Templars' reactions to father Piomei's sermons – they turn their backs to the temple, with their jaws clenched in anger. Furthermore, Alisabeta Vearra is seen on the lower ledge of the cliff more often than before, talking to mysterious newcomers at the pilgrim camp (envoys from her father), while father Piomei visits the stronghold with increasing frequency. Locally, the

conflict culminates with the Knight Commander sending troops to retrieve “*the map to Symbar*” and the eventual banishment of all theurgs, liturgs and Black Cloaks from Karvosti (see page 89).

The Templars have no friends and are not interested in far-reaching alliances, but regard all who fight against Davokar's wildness as potential, short-term partners. As long as one never suggests negotiating with the darkness, as long as one supports their quest to deliver righteous vengeance and punishment, some sun knights can make common cause with infidels (though not with heretics such as witches, sorcerers and blight-marked people).

Their enemies are very easy to identify: abominations and undead, cultists and sorcerers, witches and Ironsworn, and all who stand in their way or do not acknowledge their duty to Dead Prios. According to Templar doctrine, the world is already doomed to darkness, twilight has fallen and the Eternal Night approaches; all that remains is to punish the godslayers – there will be ample time for mourning in the emptiness of the afterlife, kneeling by the ashes of the lifeless Lawgiver.

THE PRIESTHOOD

The Templar's departure will not change the ambitions of the Curia. To First Father Jeseebegai, Anabela Argona and Brother Eumenos, Davokar and its barbarians are not the most important issue at hand. Their main focus is on turning Ambria into a Kingdom of the Sun – a theocracy where the clergy are superior to the nobles in power and reverence. It is true that their brothers and sisters are persecuting heretics in both Ambria and Davokar, but this is all secondary, and mostly done for propaganda purposes. The same goes for the Sun Church's spreading of their alternative interpretation of Sarkomal's prophecy, which states that the “mistress” who will one day sit upon the throne of Symbaroum could just as well be a man. It also emphasizes the phrase “*a peer of the divine*,” read by the Curia as “*God's representative*,” meaning First Father Jeseebegai.

The Priesthood's only formal allies on Karvosti are Father Piomei and his staff at the sun temple. However, one can usually find competent people among the pilgrims visiting the cliff; pious souls who may aid the theurg in shadier affairs – such as obstructing the efforts of Queen Korinthia and her delegates. And there are always two or three groups of Black Cloaks on missions in Davokar, hunting down heretics, abominations, or dark artifacts. These groups are sometimes available on Karvosti, as they return to the plateau to recuperate and gather provisions.

Outwardly, darkness and corruption are the Priesthood's greatest enemies – the ultimate enemies – and the primary targets for sun priests and Black Cloaks. But under the surface, things are quite different. As previously mentioned, the Curia is secretly plotting to seize power in Ambria, in order to pursue heretics and the forces of darkness with greater efficiency. Until this ambition is realized, the nobles of Ambria – particularly House Kohinoor – are the Church's most pressing adversaries, possibly along with the so far harmless, yet growing problem of the heretic Sarvola and his blasphemous preaching. In any case, the Priesthood must do whatever they can to make the nobles appear weak, selfish, and incompetent to the Ambrarian people – not only throughout the kingdom, but on Karvosti as well.

THE SOVEREIGN'S OATH

The two most northern clans, Saar-Khan and Gaoia, have formed an alliance called the Sovereign's Oath – named after the ceremony through which chieftains Razameaman and Rábaiamon pledged allegiance to the Blood-Daughter.

The election of Tharaban as High Chieftain, instead of the Saar Iaholas, created a rift between the northern and southern clans; a rift which has since grown wider, although the Karvosti loyalists have failed to notice it (except that they hear less and less from the Saars, Gaois and Enoais). But now the Sovereign's Oath is ready to act. With cunning and force of arms, they are secretly trying to coerce Clan Enoai into joining their alliance, and have sent agents south to gather intelligence and sow discord between Ambrarians and barbarians. The Sovereign's Oath strives to unite the clans under the red-stained banner of the Blood-Daughter and reestablish Symbaroum, which cannot be done without a clear common enemy: Korinthia!

There are a few groups of Sovereign agents present on and around Karvosti, and some of them will play a part in the adventure *The Witch Hammer*. Apart from that, they are mostly gathering information and engaging in sabotage – the latter meant to trick Ambrarians into suspecting barbarians, and vice versa. The person pulling the strings is Faark of clan Gaoia, who is permanently stationed at the pilgrim camp. He claims to be a paraplegic, and lives entirely on charity. He also pretends to read people's futures, which is really just an excuse for talking to (or questioning) Ambrarians and other barbarians.

As for enemies, the Sovereign's Oath is of course in conflict with everyone, but has thus far kept a low profile. The Huldra is probably the one closest to

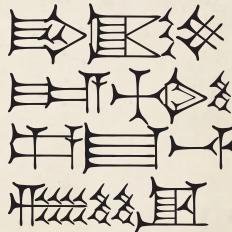
realizing what is going on, as both clans have executed all witches except the Keepers, who have been taken prisoner and are forced to respond briefly and dismissively when Yeleta tries to contact them. Tharaban is another high priority target. Ideally, both of them would be killed in a way that made it look like Ambria's doing, but not before a few more chieftains have taken the Sovereign's Oath, and the mere fourteen-year-old Blood-Daughter is ready to overthrow the High Chieftain.

THE WITCHES

The barbarian witches, led by the Huldra Yeleta, will do just about anything to avert the disaster about to befall the world. They are convinced that the darkness spreading through Davokar is a result of both the Ambrarians' and barbarians' growing efforts to cultivate the forest. However, they cannot agree on what should be done in order to turn this dire situation around. There are simply not enough witches to stop all expeditions from venturing into the woods, and they are well aware that their actions have consequences for all barbarian clans. Should they use force against Ambrian fortune-hunters, Korinthia would most likely consider it an act of war and send her armies into the forest, resulting in a massacre which must be avoided at all costs.

Instead, the witches must choose one of two paths. One is the path they are already on, which means influencing the Ambrian government through diplomacy and fighting the awaking darkness as best they can, or lulling it back to sleep. The second path, which is gaining in popularity, would be to unite the clans and seek an alliance with the elves. That way, the Queen's people could be driven out of the forest, never to return. This is a path Yeleta will not walk until the situation in Davokar has become completely unsustainable and there is no longer even a glimmer of hope.

And there is reason for hope. Whether or not it is due to the witches' efforts is irrelevant; what matters is that some Ambrarians have begun to heed the warnings of witches and elves. Yeleta has arranged secret meetings with a priestess and lightbringer named Deseba the Old, and though the priestess did not say much, she implied that there are groups within the Sun Church willing to cooperate. The fact that the Iron Pact has begun to take action is also a good thing. Sure, only a small part of Davokar's elven population is active, and some of them have such a rabid hatred for humans that not even the witches are safe in their presence. But if the witches, the sun priests and the more sensible elves could come together and reach an



Symbols on a stone tablet kept at the Saar-Khan stronghold, which tell of the original Blood-Daughter, referred to in the text as the offspring of the witch Seyerain.



understanding on how to proceed, it might still be possible to avoid large-scale war – there might even be hope of a brighter future.

On the other hand, there are many forces working against such progress, deliberately or indirectly. The current leaders of the Sun Church describe the witches as “*harbingers of The Eternal Night*,” and large sections of the Ambrian people have embraced this view. Queen Korinthia and her representatives show decency, but do very little to help, and would like to seize Karvosti for themselves. Then there is the situation in the north. The witches of Saar-Khan and Gaoia, especially their Keepers, have always been a rather difficult and reserved lot, and Yeleta has never been particularly concerned by their absence. Now it is beginning to trouble her, on the rare occasions when she has nothing else to worry about. Something does not feel right...

THE IRON PACT

The goal of the Iron Pact is quite simple: to stop the raging forces of Wratha, and in extension Symbaroum, from being brought back to life. How to achieve this is more difficult, or at least complicated, to describe. In the Halls of a Thousand Tears, the elven Elders (with Lord Eneáno as their leader) are slow to act, as they have witnessed the fluctuating state of the world for centuries. And while some of them acknowledge the current threat, it will take a lot for the occasionally unstable and unfocused Eneáno to spring into action.

The younger leaders’ opinion of humanity ranges from friendliness to pure hatred. The hostile ones have long regarded humankind as a disease, existing only to subjugate and cultivate Wyrrha, which consequently provokes Wratha to action. Some even say that the disease of humanity is not of this world; that it has no place among elves and



Elder Folk, as it came to their lands from a place beyond. The less hostile elves are not necessarily friends of humanity, but believe all life to be sacred, and that it is the duty of the elves to help every living being find its place in existence – as they see it, they do not have the right, nor are they obligated, to destroy some of Wyrtha's children in favor of others.

As for allies, members of the Iron Pact get on well with both the witches and the Ambrians who have realized what dangers their people's violation of Davokar might bring. Humans who aid the Iron Pact, by providing information or operating on their behalf in places where elves cannot, are called Ironsworn. There are not many of them – a couple in Thistle Hold, a handful in Yndaros, and a few more in the minor cities – but their numbers are growing. And then, there are of course the changelings.

The ritual used to create changelings was developed by the Morphantics of ancient Symbaroum. It is a process teeming with corruption, and entails grave violations against Wyrtha's laws. Nonetheless, the elves of the Iron Pact have reluctantly embraced it, thinking that the goal justifies the means. Deep within the Halls of a Thousand Tears sit seventeen winter elves who would have been thoroughly corrupted a long time ago, had it not been for the protective runes covering their bodies, and the hymns being chanted around them. These elves are the ones who deformed fairies into Siraphs, known to humans as Changelings, and they have the power to control and influence their children – see what they see, hear what they hear, even speak through their throats. In this way, the elves have kept an eye on the humans since long before the clans were formed. (Read more about Changelings under the *Create Siraph* heading on page 60.)

The last sight of many a treasure hunter: a band of Iron Pact warriors looking down on their poorly concealed camp site...

Wyrtha, Wielda & Wratha

The elves tell many stories about the natural order of the world, and some of them have been adopted by the barbarians. One such story revolves around three godlike beings, called Wyrtha, Wielda and Wratha by the witches. Wyrtha represents creation, Wielda symbolizes the purposeful utilization of creation, and Wratha stands for the furious force with which creation strikes back when said utilization turns into unrestrained exploitation – a phenomenon better known by the Ambrians as “corruption.” Obviously, in a natural sense, these principles have no names, no bodies or form – they are not gods. But the principles themselves are very real, and over the centuries, countless people and creatures have acted as more or less unequivocal representations of them. Read more about Wyrtha, Wielda and Wratha in the document The Throne of Thorns – Campaign Overview, which is available for free download from various download stores.

All whose actions might awaken Wratha – those who through their actions bring about severe corruption, whether locally or regionally, temporarily or permanently – are considered enemies of the Iron Pact. It is quite possible to live in harmony with nature, as demonstrated by the elves and the barbarian clans.

Unfortunately, the Ambrians' expansionist nature puts them directly at odds with this mindset. And then there is the threat growing in the north, which so far has remained hidden from the leaders on Karvosti. The situation looks increasingly bleak, and the worse it gets, the more members of the Iron Pact abandon diplomacy in favor of violence and war.

THE SACRED OF THE OLD BLOOD

By the age of twenty-four, Lugander Galeia had already fallen out of favor with the Queen. He had not done anything to offend her, but Korinthia was far from happy when she learned that her frisky half-sister was spending lots of time with the lowborn half-noble son of a newly-rich vulgarian who did not win his knighthood until the final stages of The Great War. However, had the Queen known the truth about Lugander and Esmerelda, her reaction would no doubt have been even harsher.

The cult of nobles known as The Sacred of the Old Blood operates in obscurity. Lead by Korinthia's stepfather, Duke Sesario, and his daughter Esmerelda, the group seeks to harness the dark powers of Davokar for two specific reasons: ennobling the already noble blood of Ambria, and bringing the undead Queen Mother Abesina back to actual life. To achieve this, they recruit nobles from all corners of the kingdom and convince them that noble blood

can never be corrupted; mildly tainted at worst, and only if one's blood is not noble enough.

These ambitious, unscrupulous people never get to meet anyone besides Esmerelda, and are kept unaware of one another (which, for instance, means that Lugander and Agramai Kalfas, also known as the Prince in Thistle Hold, do not know each other). They all contribute in various ways to exploring the powers of corruption. They also provide Esmerelda and Sesario with dark gifts, either stolen, bought or uncovered deep within the forest.

Lugander is one of the cult's youngest and most ambitious members. His banishment to Karvosti was no doubt most unfortunate, but also provided him with a great opportunity to study the effects of the dark powers and pick up what he can from the clans' vast stores of ancient knowledge. By divulging a great deal about the Ambrian elite, he has also found a close friend in the High Chieftain, and it will not be long before he is able to persuade Tharaban into letting him enter the vaults beneath his stronghold. Surely, that would make Esmerelda think even more highly of him, and his dream of being her dark archduke might finally come true!

As a secret member of a secret cult, Lugander has no allies to call upon, nor are there any particular enemies standing in his way. First Guard Farvan seems to be suspicious, if not jealous, of his close relationship with High Chieftain Tharaban, but other than that, Lugander does his best not to make enemies. When he needs something done, he recruits agents to do his bidding – preferably without giving away his true identity; otherwise he makes sure to dispose of them once the mission is complete. That way he can remain in the shadows and still accomplish his goals.

Adventure Beeds

FOR MOST PEOPLE, being on Karvosti means anxiously holding your breath at all times – even if in good health and well fed; even if birds are soaring in a clear blue sky, the anxiety, it seems, is always present. It is as if their muscles and minds can sense the threats of the forest and the friction between the people on the plateau. And when relaxation is out of the question, why not take the opportunity to make some extra coin or satisfy your curiosity?

There are two often recurring topics of conversation at the pilgrim camp. A pious few have come to Karvosti to actually visit the temple, to discuss spiritual and theological matters, and worship Prios. The rest are fortune hunters or explorers,

who barely speak of anything but treasures and where to find them.

Countless rumors of ancient ruins, sinkholes leading to the Underworld, and unscrupulous barbarians collecting artifacts circulate the camp from the break of dawn till late at night. But people rarely hand out directions without being paid, and those who do are best assumed to be liars. In order to avoid such charlatans, one should only purchase information from people who have proven themselves trustworthy in the past, or (and this might be the preferable option) only trust informers who wish to join the expedition in exchange for a fair share of the treasure (see page 185 in the Core Rulebook).

Below are a dozen or so ideas for Game Masters to develop as they please. The upcoming chapter about the ruins of the forest could be of help in doing so, as would the eBook entitled *Adventure Pack 1* which can be found at various download stores or in print, bundled with the 2016 *Symbaroum Game Master's Screen*.

DISAPPEARANCES

It is not at all uncommon for people to disappear from Karvosti – some simply leave without telling anyone, some end their suffering by throwing themselves off the cliff, and others are assassinated by competitors, duped business partners, or Aloéna. But when an entire group of three young Ambrian adventurers disappear overnight, along with their goblin guide, it causes many to react. Maybe the player characters were already acquainted with this group and decide to unravel the mystery themselves. But if they have a reputation for being competent, they might also be hired to do so, perhaps by the unofficial leader of the pilgrim camp, Edrafin (see page 66 in the *Core Rulebook*), or even by the High Chieftain himself.

The reason for these particular disappearances is that two wrathguards – both from clan Godinja and members of a faction with close ties to the Iron Pact – are in league with the murderous autumn elf Loerael. When people who are hunted by the elf's warband for having violated clan taboos seek refuge on the plateau, Loerael notifies the wrathguards Deneia and Nogiod, who hand the offenders over to the warband as quickly as possible. The player characters could uncover this collaboration.

Perhaps there was some commotion as the two wrathguards tried to pacify four people at once, making it hard for them to cover their tracks (a ripped-off belt buckle, an ornamented dagger, or something along those lines). Perhaps the characters hear of a merchant's cart having been loaded with several large bundles in the middle of the night, and later track the merchant down at Vearra's Outpost? Perhaps they eventually discover incriminating evidence at the wrathguards' barracks, in the form of messages brought to Deneia by Loerael's gyrfalcon (requires breaking in or persuading First Guard Farvan)?

RESCUE MISSION

A fortune hunter named Safeia arrives on Karvosti alone and empty-handed, with her clothes torn to shreds and blood gushing from deep lacerations. Two wrathguards bring her to the pilgrim camp, where she is left in Edrafin's care. As soon as she regains consciousness, she bursts into tears and

begs for help – two of her friends are trapped in the ruin they were exploring, in a chamber Safeia could not open. She had to leave them behind as the ruin's inhabitants began to awaken. Player characters who have gained Edrafin's trust, through action or reputation, could be summoned to the pilgrim camp – to care for the wounded woman, or at a later time as potential saviors of her friends.

In return, Safeia can promise the characters half of the treasure which can be found in the chamber along with her friends. The Game Master could use the upcoming chapter as inspiration when creating the ruin – its layout, inhabitants, traps, and the mechanism which keeps the door locked – but may of course base it on his or her own ideas instead.

SHELTERED BY DARKNESS

Lenela Vearra is growing extremely irritated, if not downright desperate. Small groups of elves are attacking the outpost, as well as arriving and departing caravans – they are setting shipments ablaze and firing flame arrows at the outpost itself. Lenela's guards, led by the seasoned Captain Jeulio, are competent enough, but can hardly stand guard and hunt down elves at the same time. She needs reinforcements; preferably people who know the forest better than Jeulio does.

The player characters could be offered the job, or volunteer after having witnessed a shower of fire arrows during a visit at the Victorious Hawk. Lenela could also send her captain to Karvosti for help – the High Chieftain turns him down and the characters can meet him at the Longhouse or the pilgrim camp.

The "elves" can be found by tracking them from a burned down caravan (which, for example, could have attracted a pack of jakaars), or the characters

The Staff Mage Aniabar

For some months, the staff mage Aniabar has resided on Karvosti. He came to learn more about Ambrians, barbarians, and the relationship between the peoples of the region, but also to look for potential recruits for his own holy order.

The reclusive and quietly curious Aniabar can be found at the pilgrim camp, at the Longhouse, or outside the High Chieftain's Stronghold. Sometimes he is also seen meditating near the grove of Aloéna. Should the staff mage consider any of the player characters to be suitable recruits, he can act as a quest giver and send them into the woods to perform various tasks – for the sole purpose of testing their mettle, both in terms of moral fiber and combat proficiency.

can set a trap by disguising themselves as travelling merchants or caravan guards. In any case, the “elves” turn out to be a band of rangers acting under direct orders from the Queen, wearing elven garb and counterfeit elven weapons (can be revealed with the *Loremaster* ability (adept) and a successful *Cunning* test). If the group is slain, other members of the Queen’s Rangers will claim they were deserters and deny all involvement. On the other hand, the characters may choose not to use violence; in fact, they could even offer to take part in some sabotage mission, hoping to gain the Queen’s favor.

SAGNAXARGA’S CAULDRON

In a burrow beneath the Braddokkugru settlement, Sagnaxarga, arch troll and self-declared mother of the tribe, lies writhing in agony. For almost a century she has lived in symbiosis with the Braddokks, but not because of some soft-hearted or motherly nature – no, she needs them to stay alive. But now, it seems, not even the goblins can save her.

Freshly awakened from her third dormancy, Sagnaxarga nearly beat the ancient forest spirit Illelia to death in a spontaneous outburst of hunger and repressed anger. Illelia, who had watched over the troll as it rested in its cocoon, reacted first with amazement, and then with fury. She placed a curse on Sagnaxarga – every day the treacherous troll was not offered a meal from the spirit’s cauldron, she would slowly waste away. At first, Sagnaxarga tried to enslave rage trolls and have them feed her, but it did not stop her decline – the meal had to be given freely, not served by someone who had been forced to do so. What finally saved her was the goblin tribe of Braddokkugru, and in exchange for keeping her alive, Sagnaxarga has protected and aided the goblins ever since.

The trickster Iarlos noticed the age-old cauldron as it simmered over the shaman Lerulg’s fire. Believing it to be a mighty artifact, he stole the cauldron and fled to Karvosti, pursued by the goblins. And there he has remained, too afraid to leave the plateau. Meanwhile, Sagnaxarga has grown weaker and weaker, increasingly enraged by the tribe’s apparent inability to bring back the cauldron.

The player characters can be drawn into this conflict if they visit the tribe to trade or spend the night. Perhaps it is Lerulg who requests their help, or maybe the arch troll contacts them in their dreams? Taking the cauldron from Iarlos by force might be difficult, as he will defend it with his life, and both wrathguards and others at the pilgrim camp are likely to support him – as far as they know,

the cauldron belongs to Iarlos, and it is not at all corrupted. Even if the characters succeeded they might regret their brashness. Sagnaxarga is thirsting for vengeance, and will order the Braddokks to attack Karvosti from the west, as a diversion, while she herself strikes from the east – ready to slay Iarlos and all who stand in her way!

THE ELVES DRAW NEAR

The High Chieftain has received credible reports of a large elven warband spotted north of Karvosti. The Guard of the Slumbering Wrath is unable to deal with the situation themselves, as many wrathguards are out on other assignments and the remaining ones are needed to guard the cliff. Hence, Tharaban and Farvan must seek help from other residents on the plateau. And so, they go to the temple and the pilgrim camp, looking for brave volunteers.

Apparently, the elves have already massacred a group of rangers (only one survived to tell about it), and the area will not be safe for Ambrians or barbarians until the warband has been scared off or annihilated. The characters are asked to join the effort, along with Farvan’s lieutenant Danonya, a sun knight named Kaspar, and another group of fortune hunters. As payment they will receive the equivalent of 50 silver thaler and the High Chieftain’s eternal gratitude.

The elven “warband” is indeed composed of members of the Iron Pact, but as diplomats – it was the rangers who attacked them, not the other way around. With a successful *Vigilant* test, the characters can suspect that the surviving ranger is not being entirely truthful in his account of what happened, but there is no time for further questioning. The people setting out on this quest have very different inclinations towards elves – Danonya can sense the ranger’s deceit and wants to contact the elves before attacking, the sun knight thinks that all “creatures of darkness” must die, and the fortune hunters look forward to “beating the crap out of the pointy-ears.”

The player characters may choose to support the wrathguard’s wishes, or side with the others. Regardless of how it ends, the truth is finally revealed – by talking to the leader of the elves, or listening to the final words of a dying elf warrior.

THE DEATH OF THE LITURG

When the aged sun priest Eraklon is found murdered in the shadow of the fault scarp, utter chaos erupts on Karvosti.

As the pious pilgrim who first discovers the body shrieks in horror, witches, wrathguards, and two

templars accompanied by the liturg Aranitra, all come running. Those who go near Eraklon's corpse (and pass a successful Vigilant test) can see a spider the size of a fist lying dead on his chest – a throwing spider like the ones used by the warriors of clan Gaoia. Suspicion is immediately directed to Parax, the wrathguard who has become known for his great skill with the weapon in question.

The situation is very tense indeed. The Huldra is there, quietly watching as wrathguards and templars exchange hateful glares. Additional sun knights arrive at the scene, as do more wrathguards, led by the First Guard. Farvan orders everyone to leave, and assures them that the High Chieftain will get to the bottom of what happened; Aranitra refuses, implying that there would be a barbarian cover-up. Then the Huldra proposes that the investigation be conducted by a third, impartial party; if the characters are known to be competent and have not antagonized any of the groups, she points at them.

The truth is that the murder was committed by two agents of the Sovereign's Oath, in order to cause hostility between the Ambrians and barbarians. Examining the dead body and the spider might reveal clues leading to the pilgrim camp, where further evidence points to the abandoned tent in which the agents spent a few nights. They left behind a small urn full of maggots (spider food), and a wooden bowl stained with dry blood (the agents bled into the bowl and used the blood to paint mystical runes on their bodies).

There might also be an indication of which way the agents fled, though it is more likely that the pursuit ends there, leaving the characters to try to convince the Sun Church of Parax's innocence. Any which way, they will never learn the true identities of the assailants – at best, they might identify them as barbarians from one of the northern clans.

THE PALE DEATH WREAKS HAVOC

Karvosti suffers an outbreak of the dreaded Pale Death. The player characters may be infected as well, should they fail their Strong tests. The Pale Death is a degenerative disease which strikes hard at the weak and can cause death in just a few days. For more information on how to deal with the disease in terms of rules, see page 65.

The witches are in possession of a cure. Unfortunately, there is barely enough for themselves and those at the High Chieftain's stronghold (including the Queen's Legation, for diplomatic reasons). Moreover, a primal blight beast has been sighted in the area where one can find the cure's most important ingredient: the sap of a dwarven

Wrathguard

The Guard of the Slumbering Wrath is comprised of hardened warriors who all carry out their mission on Karvosti with great pride and sense of duty. They are chosen partly for their skill in combat, partly for their proven loyalty and level-headed disposition. It is also important that they are not too hostile towards other barbarian clans.

The wrathguards carry a variety of weapons, but they all wear different versions of the reinforced chainmail known as Wrath Armor. Once every morning and evening, all members must also have a drink of what the witches call Wrathbrew – a tincture which grants them yet another advantage as they face the horrors of the deep woods.

Note that the Attribute values below take the Wrathbrew elixir into account (see page 64).

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| Race | Human (barbarian) | | |
| Resistance | Challenging | | |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> | | |
| Accurate 15 (-5), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 11 (-1), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 8 (+2) | | | |
| Abilities | <i>Blood Combat</i> (adept), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Recovery</i> (novice).
Also:
Generic <i>Shield Fighter</i> (adept)
Karohar <i>Natural Warrior</i> (adept)
Gaoia <i>Steel Throw</i> (adept)
Baiaga <i>Two-handed Force</i> (adept)
Saar-Kahn <i>Polearm Mastery</i> (adept) | | |
| Weapons | Axe 9 (13 when <i>Toughness</i> is below half), Shield Bash 2 ([<i>Strong</i> -5] test to avoid knock-down), Throwing spear 4
Karohar 2 Battle claws 8/6 (12/10 when <i>Toughness</i> is below half), Spear sling 4
Gaoia Axe 9 (13 when <i>Toughness</i> is below half), Throwing spider special (see page 65)
Baiaga Double-axe 11 (15 when <i>Toughness</i> is below half)
Saar-Kahn Halberd 9 (13 when <i>Toughness</i> is below half), Bola special | | |
| Armor | Wrath Armor 5 (retributive) | | |
| Defense | -2 (shield)
Karohar 0
Gaoia -1 (shield)
Baiaga 0
Saar-Kahn 0 | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | 1D4 doses of Wrathbrew (see page 64), Gaois have 1D4+1 throwing spiders | | |
| Shadow | Scarlet, like an autumn sunset (corruption: 1) | | |

Tactics: Of course, the wrathguards' fighting style varies depending on what weapons they carry, but they always fight ferociously and without restraint – convinced that the fire in their blood shall save them, even against overwhelming odds.

Lugander as a quest giver

Should the players hunger for more “dungeon crawling,” they could be enlisted by the nobleman and cultist Lugander Galeia. He approaches one of them as he or she wanders Karvosti unaccompanied; stopping at a distance and speaking from underneath a large hood, his face shrouded by darkness. The character receives directions to a ruin and information regarding a certain object for which Lugander is willing to pay a handsome sum. The object (powerful and/or teeming with corruption) is to be delivered to his intermediary, Orola’s assistant Madar, who will see to it that the characters are paid. Whatever else they might find in the ruin is theirs to keep.

maple tree. And even though people at the sun temple are ravaged by the disease and cannot help their own visitors, Tharaban will not risk the lives of his bodyguards to save those at the pilgrim camp.

The witches’ aide, old lady Okramal, is ready to die to help those in need, but she requires assistance – men and women brave enough to face a primal blight beast. The templar Degdo Loramon has volunteered, but more are needed – if the player characters wish to join him, they are more than welcome.

It will be a long and perilous journey through Davokar, but whether or not there really is a blight beast where the dwarven maple grows is for the Game Master to decide. There might be some other foul creature – a blight-born aboar, perhaps, or a giant spider similar to Xanathâ from the adventure *Tomb of Dying Dreams*?

OROVANGAR

The main reason behind Crueljaw’s gloom is “*the one that got away*.” He speaks of her often, advising people never to hesitate when they have a chance at happiness, but he will not go into details. However, if one manages to gain his trust, and there is no one else around, he may be willing to share his oh so tragic story.

The lady in question is no she-ogre. No, what really pains Crueljaw is that, when the opportunity finally arose, he failed to slay his nemesis, the creature he had long lived to hunt – the blight-stricken elk who the barbarians call Orovangar. Worst of all is that he managed to track her down in the woods, but was utterly stunned by her bestial beauty, and did not trigger his trap until it was too late.

Now he is too weak and out of shape to resume the hunt. But if the player characters offer to do so in his stead, Crueljaw will weep with gratitude

and promise them free access to all his merchandise for as long as they live. Rumors will lead the characters from Karvosti to barbarian settlements, past massacred camps deep within the forest, and eventually to the base of the Ravens, where Orovangar is waiting – a hunt which, if successful, will be sung of by barbarians and Ambrians alike!

THE ORB OF ARAKAN

Lately, an eerie wave of suicides has swept House Vearra’s outpost. The visiting fortune hunter Kareon was the first to cut open his veins, followed by Vemela, who waited tables at the Victorious Hawk, then the caravan guard Ugero, and finally Slugger, an ogre gladiator turned merchant.

The player characters could be sought out on Karvosti as renowned problem-solvers, or be drawn into the story while visiting the outpost. Regardless, those who fail a *Resolute* test will suffer terrible nightmares; the kind one would rather not talk about – dreams of committing lustful murders, betraying their queen or chieftain, stealing ortegs from wretched beggars, or sacrificing innocents to the dark forces of Davokar. Every morning, those afflicted by these nightmares must make a test against [*Resolute* -5]; with every failure their minds grow darker and a negative modifier of -1 is added to all their success tests. When the modifier reaches -5, they must pass an additional *Resolute* test not to attempt suicide. The effect remains active for as long as they are situated at (or anywhere near) the outpost; if they leave, the depression wears off after a good night’s sleep.

The source of these horrific dreams is a corrupted artifact which Orola keeps hidden in the outpost’s warehouse – a smoky crystal orb containing the spirit of the great spider creature Arakan. There are likely to be other suspicious people at the outpost as well (e.g. a fallen theurg beguiled by the dark powers, a shady Ambrian merchant, and a changeling on the run from Ambrian justice). There could also be rumors of an abomination or some primal creature roaming the nearby woods. In any case, the truth will probably not be uncovered for some time; maybe not until Orola’s buyer, the cult leader Liena, arrives with her followers...

TAINTED

One of Salvia’s former explorer associates arrives on the plateau. Sevean, as he is called, manages to restrain himself as the wrathguards greet him on the way up. But when he reaches the pilgrim camp, he starts running around like a madman, screaming for Salvia, frothing at the mouth and sweating with

fever. When he finally sees her, a group of Salvia's admirers jump at Sevean and beat him, over and over and over, until the timid Salvia makes herself heard and puts an end to their savage battery.

Salvia begs for someone to help the poor man and will gratefully accept the player characters' aid, provided that none of them participated in the beating. If Sevean does not receive urgent medical attention/healing, he will die, and those tending to him soon realize that the fortune hunter was struck by more than fists and feet - he has a high fever, bloodshot eyes, and large red and black rashes covering his chest. The only way to save him is to identify what caused the illness, and then, if possible, find a cure.

If the player characters offer their services, Salvia will tell them her story. The Game Master might find the contents of the next chapter quite useful in designing the ruin which she and her friends last explored, as well as the ruin to which Sevean fled, where he first contracted the horrid disease.

Our suggestion would be that Sevean was never infected to begin with, but cursed by the ghost of a long-dead witch; a curse the undead witch refuses to lift until the player characters have killed or driven out all members of the expedition currently digging their way to her crypt.

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

For some months now, a band of Ambrian plunders has terrorized the road between Thistle Hold and Karvosti. The Queen's Rangers have not been able to hunt them down, and their raids have been extremely costly in terms of both lives and property. However, all this might soon change.

A few days ago, a young pilgrim came to the Queen's Legation claiming to be absolutely certain that the notorious leader of the group, Ebelgoi Blackhand, could be found on Karvosti. Lothar brought the news to Tharaban, who had his wrath-guards put the bandit in chains. The problem is that the Queen's Legate lacks the authority to pass

judgement over such a major criminal; Ebelgoi must be brought to Thistle Hold right away!

The player characters could be offered the job of escorting Blackhand through Davokar because of their good relations with the Legate, or after having been recommended to Lothar by someone else (the High Chieftain, the Huldra, or Edrafin). On their way to the Hold they are likely to encounter all sorts of dangers. Perhaps they run into some of the plunderer's former victims, who demand that he be handed over for swift justice? Perhaps the prisoner manages to escape, which leads to a nightly chase through Davokar, complicated by beasts or other foes? One thing is certain - Blackhand's henchmen will do whatever it takes to free their leader!

THE BLACK PLAGUE TERMITES

The Huldra is deeply troubled by the ravenous insects known as the Black Plague Termites. Gadramon and Eferneya have been visiting the part of clan Baiaga's territory which has suffered the most from these vermin, and Baiaga's Keeper, Makaba, has sent two groups of bear warriors to locate its source. At first, the warriors reported in on a regular basis, but now they have been silent for over a moon.

If they have proven themselves trustworthy to the Huldra, the High Chieftain, the Legate or the head of the sun temple, the player characters could be asked to take on the case. This could result in a long series of adventures in which the characters must search the border regions of Wild Davokar for the termite queen.

Eventually, they find her resting in a Symbarian burial cairn swarming with termites. The queen herself is actually a reclusive night elf calling herself Mother Merial, who has deliberately corrupted the insects and formed them into her own personal army. By her side she also keeps ten or so barbarian slaves, whom she has transformed using the *Flesh Craft* ritual, giving them termite-like limbs and features.

Night Elves

There is a group of elves who long ago sacrificed themselves in order to close a chasm which was spewing corruption deep within Davokar, in what was once the great city of Dakovak. They were thoroughly corrupted in the process and are now bursting with hatred and bloodlust, although they have retained some capacity for reason and thought. They are all pale and emaciated, with deadly fangs and eyes red as blood - nothing more needs to be said about the night elves (or blood elves) for the time being, but they will definitely play a more important role in future parts of the campaign.

New Mechanics

THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS new rules, some pertaining to the Karvosti region in general, others directly related to the adventure *The Witch Hammer*. The first section describes how to create your own ruins, through design or randomization. After that, rules for managing player characters' scheming and plotting amid the powerful factions of Ambria and Davokar are introduced. Section three presents new traits, abilities and other rules-related details. At the end of this chapter are the artifacts mentioned in the book, and a segment describing a variety of new creatures, weapons, diseases and elixirs.

Exploring ruins

THE RUINS OF Davokar tend to be of interest to player characters, sometimes as the destination for a treasure hunt, sometimes because their enemies are using them as a base of operations. Below you will find a generator to be used in the creation and exploration of such ruins.

ORIGINAL PURPOSE

The Game Master could use the original purpose or function of the ruin as a guideline when describing it. By "ruins" we mean Symbarian ones, but with certain adjustments, the generator could also apply to structures left behind by trolls, elves or others.

REMAINING LEVELS

Each ruin has a number of intact levels above and below ground; separate rolls are made for each of these.

Above ground: 1D20-10. A result of 0 or lower indicates that the ruin is completely destroyed above ground.

Below ground: 1D10

Table 2: Original purpose

| 1D8 | FUNCTION (D4) |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Prison (1: Mighty individual, 2: Dangerous artifact, 3: Hungry monster, 4: Shackled deity) |
| 2 | Labyrinth (1-2: for entertainment, 3-4: for experiments) |
| 3 | Mine (1: Precious metal, 2: Gems, 3: Alchemical component, 4: Crystalized corruption) |
| 4 | Temple (1: Ancestral worship, 2: Spider worship, 3: Serpent temple, 4: Hero cult) |
| 5 | Seat of power (1-3: Petty king, 4: Imperial pleasure palace) |
| 6 | Tomb (1-2: Lord or lady, 3: Petty king, 4: Member of the imperial or royal family) |
| 7 | Museum of curiosities (1: Cultural relics, 2: Dangerous artifacts, 3: Historical objects 4: Animal specimens) |
| 8 | Place for summoning daemons |



The excavation of the sun temple found east of Karvosti is still underway, supervised by templars and pious wizards of Ordo Magica.

OVERALL FEATURE AND TRAITS

The ruin's overall feature indicates what condition it is in. The feature pertains to the ruin in its entirety and is purely descriptive. The ruin's trait refers to more substantial effects which affect all who visit the area.

Table 3: Overall features

| 1D6 | FEATURES |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Water damaged |
| 2 | Dusty and desolate |
| 3 | Overgrown |
| 4 | Untouched and ominously clean |
| 5 | Inexplicably cold/hot |
| 6 | Darkened (sunlight/lanterns are diminished) |

Table 4: Traits

| 1D6 | TRAITS |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Corruptive: Temporary corruption gained inside the ruin is one Effect Die higher; 1 becomes 1D4, 1D4 becomes 1D6, and so on. |
| 2 | Sparse with treasure: All rolls for finding treasure have a second chance to fail. |
| 3 | Crowded: All rolls for the number of creatures in a room are made with 1D8 instead of 1D6 |
| 4 | Desolate: All rolls for the number of creatures in a room are made with 1D4 instead of 1D6 |
| 5 | Rich with treasure: All rolls for finding treasure have a second chance to succeed. |
| 6 | Lesser corruption: Temporary corruption gained inside the ruin is one Effect Die lower; 1D8 becomes 1D6, 1D6 becomes 1D4, and so on |

INHABITANTS

The ruin's inhabitants – or visitors – are living (or not...) agents which the players can interact with or be forced to fight.

Table 5: Inhabitants

| 1D8 | INHABITANTS |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Treasure hunters |
| 2 | Goblins |
| 3 | Undead |
| 4 | Beasts |
| 5 | Elves |
| 6 | Trolls |
| 7 | Abominations |
| 8 | Make two rolls and keep both races; ignore results of 6 or higher |

Treasure hunters: a group of treasure hunters are camped inside the ruin, scouring it for riches.

Goblins: a group of goblins have made the ruin their home, or have been forced into servitude by something else.

Undead: the ruin's previous inhabitants arise from their tombs.

Beasts: a beast, or a pack of them, has sought shelter or is nesting inside the ruin.

Elves: a group of elves has made the ruin their base, or guard it from intruding plunderers.

Trolls: a group of trolls has their den inside the ruin, or sneak around looking for lost troll artifacts.

Abominations: the ruin is corrupted and attracts – or spawns – abominations.

If two groups inhabit the ruin, they relate to each other in the following way. The Game Master is, of course, free to make changes if this does not suit his/her particular scenario.

Table 6: Relation

| 1D6 | RELATION |
|-----|---|
| 1 | They keep to themselves, each in their particular part of the ruin |
| 2 | Each group controls a part of the ruin, and fights over the remaining areas |
| 3 | One group has been subjugated by the other |
| 4 | The groups are unaware of each other |
| 5 | The groups work together, to some extent, but there is tension between them |
| 6 | The groups work together to a great extent, harmoniously |

ENTRYWAYS TO OTHER LEVELS

On every level there is at least one entryway to the level directly above and below it (separate rolls for each of them). If there are several entryways, they all go through different rooms, provided that there is more than one room on the level in question.

Table 7a: Entryways to other levels

| 1D8 | ENTRYWAYS TO OTHER LEVELS |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Intact stone staircase: difficult to destroy (Protection 20, Breakpoint 5, Toughness 10)* |
| 2 | Intact wooden staircase: can be destroyed (Protection 10, Breakpoint 5, Toughness 10)* |
| 3 | Damaged staircase: easy to destroy (Protection 5, Breakpoint 5, Toughness 10)* |
| 4 | Destroyed staircase, replaced by rope ladder/rope bridge |

* See Damage on buildings, the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Table 7b: Entryways to other levels

| 1D8 ENTRYWAYS TO OTHER LEVELS | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 5 | Completely destroyed staircase |
| 6 | Hole in the ground/ceiling |
| 7 | Hole in the ground/ceiling, with a ladder which can easily be pulled up/down |
| 8 | Roll twice |

As these are the only ways to reach the other levels, they are natural positions for guard posts, barricades, and traps. Groups of inhabitants who dominate certain levels usually set up safeguards at one or more of the entryways leading to their turf. However, between levels within said turf, such safeguards are less common (-1 modifier to the roll).

Table 8: Safeguards

| 1D6 DETAILS | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1–2 | No safeguards |
| 3 | Barricade only |
| 4 | Guard post only |
| 5 | Guard post and barricade |
| 6 | One trap only |

Barricade: attackers must spend an entire turn climbing in order to enter close combat. If in a hurry, a *Quick* test is required to get past it. Otherwise, doing so silently requires a *Discreet* test – in that case, no *Quick* test is required. The defenders can fire projectiles through or over the barricade without penalties, while attackers firing back at them do -3 damage.

Guard post: manned by a beast or (PC -2) cultural beings, abominations or undead.

Trap: can be detected with a [*Vigilant* -3] test, deals 1D12 damage plus poison (1–2: weak, 3: moderate, 4: strong). Requires a [*Strong* -3] test to break loose, and triggers an alarm which is heard across the entire level. Disarming it requires a [*Cunning* -3] test and a [*Discreet* -3] test in order to do so quietly.

ROOMS PER LEVEL

Each level consists of 1D8 rooms (where 1 = a single, vast hall). The exact layout is for the Game Master to decide. Each room has at least one door or doorway leading to another room.

THE DETAILS OF THE ROOMS

The following tables determine what each room contains, such as inhabitants, traps or other dangers, or treasures in the room.

Table 9: Entryways

| 1D8 DETAILS | |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | Opening, no door |
| 2 | Wooden door, broken. Opening it unnoticed requires a <i>Discreet</i> test |
| 3 | Wooden door, intact, unlocked, broken lock |
| 4 | Wooden door, intact, locked. Picking the lock quietly requires a <i>Cunning</i> test; can be kicked in with a successful <i>Strong</i> test |
| 5 | Reinforced wooden door, intact, unlocked, broken lock |
| 6 | Reinforced wooden door, intact, locked. Picking the lock quietly requires a <i>Cunning</i> test; cannot be kicked in, but can be destroyed with the right tools (Protection 5, Breakpoint 5, <i>Toughness</i> 10)* |
| 7 | Copper or iron door, unlocked. Opening the door without it creaking loudly requires a successful <i>Discreet</i> test |
| 8 | Copper or iron door, locked, and rusted/corroded shut. Picking its lock requires a successful <i>Cunning</i> test; then the door can be opened with a [<i>Strong</i> -5] test. The ensuing noise cannot be avoided |

Table 10: Details regarding the room

| 1D8 DETAILS | |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | Nothing of interest |
| 2 | Creature: 1D6 creatures of the group which dominates the level |
| 3 | Trap: can be detected with a [<i>Vigilant</i> -3] test, deals 1D12 damage plus poison (1–2: weak, 3: moderate, 4: strong). Breaking loose requires a successful [<i>Strong</i> -3] test |
| 4 | Danger: 1–3 risk of the ceiling collapsing (deals 1D12 damage, pass a <i>Quick</i> test to halve the damage), creates a hole in the ceiling), 4–6 risk of the ground collapsing (5 meters down, creates a hole in the ground) |
| 5 | Remains: Fresh or old corpse/skeleton of a cultural being, wearing jewelry and/or coins worth 1D10 thaler |
| 6 | Wealthy remains: Fresh or old corpse/skeleton of a cultural being, wearing jewelry, items and/or coins worth 2D100 thaler |
| 7 | Items: The Game Master decides, or lets the players roll on the tables 2.1 or 2.2 in the eBook titled <i>Adventure Pack 1</i> , which is available from various download stores |
| 8 | Roll twice on the table |

Scheming

THERE ARE DEFINITELY tensions between the game world's various factions and their leaders -their relationships range from strained to downright hostile. In one way or another, the player characters and their actions will almost certainly affect, and be affected by, these tensions. Whatever they do, their deeds will be applauded by some groups and criticized, or outright condemned, by others.

The basic mechanic governing all interactions is the *Persuasive* test, often modified by the target's *Resolute* value. There are often faction-specific modifiers to consider as well, and a certain status which the players can earn during their adventures. Also, note that *Persuasive* can often be replaced by another attribute, as different factions praise, seek out, or are impressed by different characteristics.

GLOSSARY

Table 11 indicates what the various factions like, dislike, and are impressed by. The column headings should be interpreted as follows:

Leader: The faction's most powerful and influential individual/individuals. Other members are likely to share their views, but may also deviate from the faction's official line - no faction is without internal conflicts.

Impressed by: All representatives of a faction can be influenced with a successful *Persuasive* test, but most of them also have another attribute which they admire and appreciate in their allies. This attribute can replace *Persuasive* in interactions with faction representatives.

Likes: Indicates whether the faction is particularly fond of a certain race or occupation. Obviously, they usually have an affinity for their fellow faction members, but also for other close allies. Those who fit the description gain a positive modifier of +1 when interacting with the faction.

Dislikes: Indicates whether the faction has a particular loathing for a certain race or occupation. Those who fit the description, possess the relevant attributes, or are heard praising them, suffer a negative modifier of -1 to all Success Rolls when interacting with the faction.

It should be noted that people are often thought to be members of a faction because they "look and sound like it." Individuals claiming to belong to a certain category are usually believed, and those who openly express strong support for one category risk being thought of as one of them, and labeled with epithets like "witch worshipper" or "elf lover."

The following categories are relevant to what the factions like/dislike:

Ambrians: People of Ambrian heritage

Ordo Magica: Members of Ordo Magica

Barbarians: People of barbarian or mixed heritage

Non-humans: Elves, changelings, dwarves, ogres, goblins and trolls

Witches: People who share the witches' attributes, abilities and views

Table 11: Factions of the Game World

| FACTION | LEADER | IMPRESSED BY | LIKES | DISLIKES |
|-------------------------|--|--------------|----------------------|---|
| House Kohinoor | Korinthia Nightbane, Beremo Herengol | Cunning | Ordo Magica | Barbarians, Ironsworn, the Blight-marked |
| Ordo Magica | Grand Master Seldonio | Cunning | Ambrians | Varies |
| The Priesthood | First Father Jeseebegai, Brother Eumenos | Resolute | Worshippers of Prios | Witches, Ironsworn, Heretics, the Blight-marked |
| The Templars | Iakobo Vearra | Strong | — | Witches, Ironsworn, Heretics, Non-humans, the Blight-marked |
| The Witches | The Huldra Yeleta | Resolute | Witches | Sun knights, Explorers, the Blight-marked |
| The Iron Pact | Elori, Prince Eneáno | Vigilant | Ironsworn | Sun knights, Explorers, Nobles, the Blight-marked |
| The Sovereign's Oath | Razameaman, Odralintos | Strong | — | Witches, Ambrians, the Blight-marked |
| Sacred of the Old Blood | Duke Sesario, Esmerelda | Discreet | Nobles | Ordo Magica, Worshippers of Prios |

Worshippers of Prios: People who look like Worshippers of Prios

Heretics: People who hold heretical views, or seem to have a bad influence on others

Blight-marked: People who exhibit physical stigmas

Explorers: People who, for one reason or another, probe the ruins of Davokar

Nobles: Ambrians of noble blood

Ironsworn: Members of the Iron Pact

PLAYER CHARACTER SCHEMING

The Game Master should keep a record of the player characters' status with each faction and update it as they go about their lives and adventures. If the characters have already been in contact with representatives of the various factions, the Game Master must (preferably together with the players) assess their previous encounters and determine a starting value, which could be positive or negative.

Whether they start at 0 or have an already established relationship, each player character will have an individual status value for each faction. This means that one character can enjoy a positive status with one faction, while others might have a neutral or even negative status – which, needless to say, ought to be taken advantage of as the players interact with the factions.

Below are examples of deeds which can affect a player character's status with a faction, either positively or negatively. Note that the change in status requires that the characters are recognized by the factions, make themselves known to them, or that they can take credit (convincingly!) for what happened.

Sides with: Is often heard praising or expressing support for the faction:

Maximum +1 and must be maintained by making public remarks, or the modifier will expire after 3 months.

Complete mission: Successfully completes a specific mission for the faction:

Maximum +1 and must be maintained by completing further missions, or the modifier will expire after 6 months.

Complete adventure: Brings about an outcome that benefits or pleases the faction:

+1 per adventure (maximum +3), and must be maintained, or the status decreases by 1 every 3 months.

Eliminate enemy: Kills or otherwise disposes of a high-ranking representative of the faction's enemy:

+1 or +2, depending on the victim's rank.

Side against: Is often heard denouncing or denigrating the faction:

Maximum -1, and must be maintained by making public remarks, or the modifier will expire after 3 months.

Complete adventure: Brings about an outcome that is detrimental to, or angers, the faction:

-1 per adventure (maximum -3) and must be maintained, or the status decreases by 1 every 3 months.

Eliminate ally: Kills or otherwise disposes of a high-ranking ally/friend of the faction:

-1 or -2, depending on the victim's rank.

Eliminate representative: Kills or otherwise disposes of a high-ranking representative of the faction:

-2 or -3, depending on the victim's rank.

Fraternize with enemy: Frequently fraternizes with the killer of a high-ranking representative of the faction:

Maximum -1, expires when there has been no fraternization for 3 months.

The player characters might suffer/enjoy the effects of the schemes whether they want to or not, but they can also take active part in it. Such participation could involve making careful decisions as to who will speak for the group, having someone wait outside, concealing or acquiring symbols for deceptive purposes, smearing enemies by spreading false rumors, or even disguising themselves in order to sabotage relations between enemy factions. This devious game is being played by many, in all kinds of contexts, and if the characters do not put in some serious effort, a faction might choose someone else to carry out their missions – someone who has made sure to discredit the characters in the eyes of the faction.

Hiding one's affiliation with a certain faction normally requires a successful *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test, while posing as a member of another group is more difficult and requires a *[Persuasive←(Vigilant+3)]* test. Usually, it is not possible to convincingly impersonate a specific individual, but it could be, if one possesses the relevant Abilities, Traits, Boons, or equipment. That is for the Game Master to decide.

EFFECTS OF THE SCHEMING

The player characters will be faced with a number of situations where they have to interrogate or negotiate with NPCs. Usually, this is done by having the characters flatter, threaten, or argue with an individual, whereupon the one with the highest *Persuasive* value makes a *[Persuasive←Resolute]* test. If the test is successful, the characters receive the



Variations within factions

It should be noted that individual members of a faction may hold different views than the organization at large.

The faction's senior representatives always toe the line, partly because they themselves have worked to establish said line, partly because they would never have attained their positions in the first place had their highest leader not trusted them to put the good of the faction before all else!



information they are looking for or achieve their negotiation goals

If the rules for scheming are applied, the player character's relations with the faction must also be taken into account, by adding a modifier to each character's *Persuasive* based on what faction the opposite party belongs to (see table 11) and what status they hold within that faction.

Example: Grumpa the Ogre (with 7 in *Persuasive*, 11 in *Strong*, and 15 in *Resolute*) is known for speaking

highly of witches and for having destroyed a Temp-lar-administered excavation on one of her adventures. If she was to negotiate with the Huldra on Karvosti, her effective *Persuasive* (replaced by *Resolute*) would be 17 [*Resolute* 15, +1 for praising witches, +1 for a pleasing outcome of the adventure = 17]. On the other hand, if she negotiated with Alisabeta Vearra, her effective *Persuasive* (replaced by *Strong*) would be 9 [*Strong* 11, -1 for a displeasing outcome of the adventure, -1 for being non-human = 9]. In that case, perhaps Grumpa should stand back and let someone else speak for the group ...

New Rules

THIS RULES SECTION introduces a number of new rituals and traits. They are all linked to the contents of this book, but may of course be used more generally, in creating and developing the player characters or as a basis for home-made adventures.

CATCHING FIRE, RITUAL

Tradition: Witchcraft

In the final days of Symbaroum, it was not uncommon for careless humans to summon and lose control of powerful daemons. These could threaten to destroy entire regions before they were banished or willingly returned to the dark abyss – eventually forcing the humans to develop extreme countermeasures.

One such measure is the *Catching Fire* ritual. It is a suicide ritual that makes it possible for an individual to sacrifice his/her own life to save hundreds or even thousands of others. The values below replace or are added to the martyr's own, but he or she will only live for one scene after the ritual has been performed. The martyr then suffers a terrible death, as the protection from his/her own flames diminishes and the poor soul slowly burns to cinders in tremendous agony.

| | |
|--|--|
| Trait | <i>Fire Breather</i> (III), <i>Manifestation</i> (III), <i>Natural Weapon</i> (II), <i>Spirit Form</i> (III) |
| Strong 18 (-8), Resolute 18 (-8) | |
| Abilities | <i>Berserker</i> (master), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Feat of Strength</i> (master) |
| Weapons | Glowing claws 11 (Flaming), <i>Fire Breather</i> , (see page 61) |
| Armor | None, is only harmed by mystical powers/ magic weapons, which deal half damage. |
| Toughness | 23 |
| | Pain Threshold 9 |

CREATE SIRAPH, RITUAL

Tradition: Sorcery

This ritual is performed on a newborn child, who then undergoes both physical and mental changes. Physically, it acquires the *Shapeshifter* trait, and the mystic may lock its appearance for a long time; the effect begins to wear off after $10+1D4$ years.

The ritual also weakens the child's vitality. For spring elves, this means that they will never reach the next stage of their elven life cycle, while humans would have their lifespan shortened to $30+1D10$ years.

As for the mental changes, a mystical link is established between the siraph and the mystic, who can later use it to take control of his/her creation. The victim of the ritual is not aware of this link, not even when it is activated. Technically, *Create Siraph* works the same way as the *Possess* ritual, except that it requires no [*Resolute*←*Resolute*] test. Another difference is that the victim remains under the mystic's control indefinitely, so long as the mystic allows the host enough rest.

There is no protection against such a brutal ritual as *Create Siraph*. Each time the ritual is performed, the mystic suffers one (1) point of permanent corruption, and each time mystics take control of their creations, they suffer $1D4$ temporary corruption, regardless of traditions or other forms of protection.

THE RAVEN'S DOOM, RITUAL

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic summons the dark spirits of retribution and binds them to an object, punishing anyone trying to steal or meddle with it. In doing so, one determines the conditions for triggering the effect – usually the object being moved or damaged. The mystic himself/herself is exempt from triggering the punishment; as are other people who were present when the ritual was being performed.

If the effect is triggered, everyone within a Movement Action's reach suffers 1D10 temporary corruption. Only the mystic who performed the ritual and those who are immune to its powers can dispel it, using the *Break Link* ritual.

MELODIC SUMMONING, RITUAL

Tradition: Troll Singing

In ancient times, the trolls used this slow, wailing tune as a summoning call, to muster their kin in the face of danger or gather them for important festivals. Other trolls would often join in the singing as they walked toward the place where it first begun – that way, the song's message could reach a greater number of individuals.

The singing mystic must decide which tune to sing. There is a song for each family of creatures: Elves, Winged creatures, Undead, Humans, Reptiles, Spiders, Abominations, Trolls or Predators (see table 30 on page 209 in the *Core Rulebook*). All creatures of the selected family who are within a day's march from the singer are called to his or her location. However, those who hear the song are perfectly free to ignore it, if they have more pressing matters to attend to.

FIRE BREATHER, MONSTROUS TRAIT

The creature can release a burst of fire from its mouth – flames so hot they can completely incinerate an enemy, or at least leave the target severely scorched.

- I **Active.** The creature breathes a cascade of fire at a target. If the target fails a [Quick←Accurate] test, the cascade deals 6 damage. Should the test succeed, it deals 3 damage.
- II **Active.** The creature spews a steady stream of fire. If the target fails a [Quick←Accurate] test, the cascade deals 6 damage. Should the test succeed, it deals 3 damage. If the target takes full damage, the creature can try to direct its flames toward another target, and continue that way until a target passes its [Quick←Accurate] test.
- III **Active.** The creature emits a veritable firestorm. If the target fails a [Quick←Accurate] test, the

cascade deals 6 damage. Should the test succeed, it deals 3 damage. But even if one target passes the test, the massive torrent of fire continues – only after two passed tests does the fire come to an end.

PARALYZING VENOM,

MONSTROUS TRAIT

The creature's venomous bite, stinger, or claws have a paralyzing effect. At best, the victim is dazed by the venom; at worst, it is completely incapacitated and unable to protect itself from incoming attacks. The effect remains active until someone administers an antidote to the victim and passes a *Cunning* test.

- I **Passive.** For each damaging attack, the victim makes a *Strong* test. If the test is successful, the victim is dazed and has two chances to fail all Success Tests and Reactive Actions for one turn; if the test fails, the poisoned victim can only perform Reactive Actions, with two chances to fail.
- II **Passive.** Like I, but if the victim fails the test, it can only perform Reactive Actions for the next 1D4 turns, with two chances to fail.
- III **Passive.** The victim must pass a [Strong –5] test. If the test is successful, the victim can only perform Reactive Actions for the next 1D4 turns, with two chances to fail; if the test fails, the victim is completely paralyzed for 1D8 turns.

PIERCING ATTACK,

MONSTROUS TRAIT

The attack deals no normal damage. Instead, the damage value determines whether the attack manages to pierce the victim's armor. If the armor value is equal to or higher than the damage value, the attack fails; if the armor value is lower, the victim suffers an effect such as poison or corruption, depending on what other traits the creature has.

- I **Passive.** The attack has a damage value of 4
- II **Passive.** The attack has a damage value of 5
- III **Passive.** The attack has a damage value of 6

Artifacts

THE ARTIFACTS PRESENTED in this section all feature in the adventure *The Witch Hammer*, or in other parts of this book.

Should any of the items not come into play, the Game Master is of course free to use them in other contexts – except for those which are owned by non-player characters, and therefore are likely to figure in future adventure modules.

ANTHEM

Legends tell of a troll warrior named Oramox and her battle against the wolf chieftain Fergos. Fergos' unnatural intelligence had been a gift from the Spider King, who wished to punish Oramox's tribe for having aligned themselves with a human settlement. It is said that Oramox succumbed to the corruptive powers of Anthem, but not before the

mighty double axe had sung her people to glorious victory and cleaved the skull of the devious wolf.

Inspiring Echo: When the artifact's master spends a Combat Action on striking Anthem repeatedly against something hard (rock, tree, or mountain wall), a deep clang echoes across the battlefield. For one turn, all the master's allies have +1 to *Strong* and *Resolute*.

Action: Active

Corruption : 1D4

Strengthening Harmony: Requires that the master has the *Combat Hymn* mystical power. After having sounded the clang of Anthem as described above, the master can combine it with a song of his/her own, the enhanced effects of which last for 1D4 turns. During these turns, the master and his/her allies gain +2 to *Quick*, *Strong* and *Accurate*. Furthermore, the master and any allies regain 1D8 *Toughness* when the effect is activated.

Action: Active

Corruption : 1D6

ARVALAM'S BLINDFOLD

They say that Arvalam, Steward Grabando's court mystic, was one of the greatest demonologists during the late Symbaroum era. He was able to both summon and tame monstrosities which no other mystic ever could. However, Arvalam's exceptional power was not due to talent or extensive training, but to the blindfold he always wore when contacting the Yonderworld - which, allegedly, he acquired by making a pact with the daemon Lukofei.

To harness the powers of the blindfold, it must cover its wearer's eyes, which significantly impairs his or her perceptive abilities. For as long as the artifact is being used, the master has two chances to fail all Success Tests that are not related to mystical abilities (regardless of type of action).

See Through Daemon: Whenever the artifact's master summons a daemon, he or she can see its weakness or dark appetites, and will thus be able to subdue it with greater ease: +5 to the [*Resolute*↔*Resolute*] test, which applies to both tries if making a blood sacrifice.

Action: Active

Corruption : +1

Abyssal Premonition: If the artifact's master has the power *Exorcize*, the blindfold can offer a glimpse of what dwells on the other side of the rift to the Yonderworld. This means that the master can decide whether or not a daemon will enter through the rift, and that the victim takes 1D6 damage per turn instead of 1D4.

Action: Active

Corruption : +1

SPIDERBANE

The artifact that Elmendra mistook for the so called Witch Hammer is actually nothing less than the weapon High Chieftain Maiesticar thrust into the heart of the Spider King. Ever since Angatal Taar was slain, the weapon has been in the witches' custody, as they wait for the next hostile spider creature to emerge. Spiderbane is, whatever form it takes (see below), a mastercrafted item with the qualities Balanced, Deep impact, and Precise.

Transfiguration: The artifact can take different forms, according to its master's will - becoming a Short weapon, Single-handed weapon, Long weapon or Heavy weapon. It takes one turn to complete the transfiguration, but then the form is set until the master wishes otherwise.

Action: Active

Corruption : 1

Cleansing of the Blood: By cutting or pricking his/her own flesh, and letting Spiderbane come into contact with the blood, the master can lessen the effects of poisons (works as a moderate antidote).

Action: Free

Corruption : 1D4

Scourge of Spiders: If its master has the adept-level *Beast Lore* ability (specialization: beasts) and passes a *Cunning* test, Spiderbane deals +1D8 damage against creatures of the Spider family. The effect lasts for the rest of the scene.

Action: Free

Corruption : 1D6

THE SPEAR OF TERAEL-KAEL

After having convinced himself and his warriors that they must seek vengeance for the crimes committed against the forest, the autumn elf Terael-Kael was slain on Karvosti by First Guard Farvan. His spear was given to the witches for safekeeping, and has rested in their reliquary ever since.

The Spear has the qualities Long and Deep Impact, and the following powers:

Return: If the artifact's master has the *Steel Throw* ability, the spear can be thrown as a regular throwing spear, with one addition: it will return, automatically and instantly, to the thrower's hand.

Action: Free

Corruption : 1

Earthquake: The master can cause the ground to shake by striking the shaft of the spear against something hard. All within melee combat distance from the master must pass a *Quick* test; if they fail, they will fall to the ground (giving the master an *Advantage* over those who fell).

Action: Free

Corruption : 1D4

THE COWL OF DORGVALG

According to myth, Dorgvalg was a symbolist and beastmaster who followed the first waves of refugees from the ashen deserts of the east to the plains west of the Ravens. It is said that he lived an ascetic life in the mountains, shunned by other humans because of the company he kept – a number of wraith owls, which had agreed to hunt for him in return for his care and protection. The witches attribute this cowl to Dorgvalg, as it is made from the white feathers of the wraith owl and painted with powerful runes. But whether he really was its original owner and creator is hard to say.

The Cowl of Dorgvalg is a light armor with the qualities Flexible and Reinforced. It also has the following powers:

Shield: As a free action, the master of the cowl can activate its protective rune. The power gives the wearer 1D6 reactive protection, but also 1D4 corruption for each hit. Deactivating the rune is also a free action, but can only be done when it is the master's turn to act.

Action: Free

Corruption: See above

Friend of Birds: If the symbols on the back of the cowl are activated, it will grow a pair of huge wraith owl wings, endowing its master with the gift of flight. However, the ability to fly must be learned through much practice and painful failure; the player character can purchase the monstrous trait *Wings* as if it was an ordinary ability, but obviously it can only be used as long as he or she is wearing the cowl.

When activated, the wings will remain until the master decides to let them remerge with the symbols.

Action: An entire turn

Corruption: 1D6

THE URN OF NATANA

Describing this matte black, forearm-length ceramic urn as an “artifact” might be rather misleading. It is actually the prison of an impish spectral creature named Natana; a creature that not only spreads corruption wherever she goes, but also – out of sheer spite – has caused the downfall of several petty kingdoms.

If one removes the patinaed copper lid or breaks the urn without first having bound oneself to it, a dark shadow quickly escapes and disappears, as the giggling of a girl echoes through the air. Nothing else happens; not until the Game Master decides to let the players encounter Natana a second time, perhaps in the ruins of a village or outpost she has destroyed with her lies.

On the other hand, if one does bind oneself to the urn before opening it, Natana will not be able to get out. In that case, she will reveal herself to the player character as a woman-shaped cloud of smoke, twisting and writhing, reaching out telepathically to offer her services. She cannot attack or otherwise harm a living creature, but claims to be an excellent spy.

Initially she will try to gain the master's trust by giving honest reports of her observations from wherever the master has sent her (she does not understand a word of Ambrian or the barbarian tongue, but makes up words that sound appropriate to her).

Soon after she will start to lie about what she sees and hears, so as to cause the greatest possible discord, misery or calamity – she says that a place is deserted even though it is swarming with monsters; she says that the master's best friend or lover conspires against him/her; and she says that her power would increase manifold if only the urn was destroyed (which would, in fact, simply free her from her prison).

In addition to the above, Natana radiates corruption. Whenever she is not in her urn, all within one Movement Action's reach of her suffer 1D4 corruption each scene/hour; corruption that will later wear off in the same way as regular temporary corruption.

| NATANA | |
|--|--|
| Race | Spirit |
| Resistance | Weak |
| Traits | Spirit Form (III) |
| Accurate 7 (+3), Cunning 11 (-1), Discreet 10 (0),
Persuasive 18 (-8), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 9 (+1),
Strong 5 (+5), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | Exceptionally Persuasive (master) |
| Boons/Burdens | Con Artist (III), Fleet-Footed |
| Weapons | None |
| Armor | None, only harmed by mystical powers or magical weapons (which deal half damage) |
| Defense | -3 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Shadow | Like dancing, black smoke (thoroughly corrupt) |
| Tactics: In case of combat, Natana will hide in her urn, hoping that someone will break it and free her from it. If the urn is shut, she will simply flee and keep her distance until the fight is over, while whispering telepathically to her master throughout the night: “Forgive me, my love, forgive me...” | |



Miscellaneous

Untrained use of alchemical weapons.

The Mistball, Lightning Dust, Boom Stone and Acid Orb are all alchemical weapons, and can only be employed safely by people with either the *Alchemy* or the *Pyrotechnics* ability (at novice level or greater).

For untrained users, they come with a certain degree of risk; rolling 20 when attacking (1 when defending, if used against characters) means that the user suffers the effect of his or her own weapon, without being allowed to make any

Defense test.



RULES-RELATED MATTERS WHICH do not fall under the New Rules or Artifacts headers can be found below. They include everything from new elixirs and creatures to rules regarding a truly awful disease.

The player characters may come across most of said elixirs as they encounter the troops of the Sovereign's Oath. These are simple forms of alchemical weapons, devised by the herbalists of the northern clans. Normally, they cannot be purchased in Ambria, unless the gaming group decides otherwise.

SLEEPING DROPS, ELIXIR

The sleeping drops consist of a syrup-like liquid which can easily be mixed with another beverage without significantly affecting its taste. Brewing it is a time-consuming process, so difficult that only a master alchemist can manage it. But many of them would never even attempt it, as the powerful elixir will not only induce sleep, but corrupt its victim.

Those who ingest the sleeping drops will inevitably pass out the next turn. With a successful *Strong* test, the person wakes up after 1D4 turns, so woozy that he or she can only perform a single action for the next 1D8 turns. If the test fails, the person is fast asleep for an entire scene (or an hour, if the exact time is relevant). The sleeping individual can be woken up before then, but will not be able to act, speak, or even walk.

Regardless of whether the test succeeds or fails, the victim suffers 1D6 corruption – enough to blightmark the feeble-minded.

TRUTH SERUM, ELIXIR

It takes an adept alchemist to create a potent truth serum. Those who (more or less reluctantly) 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.

MISTBALL, ELIXIR

The Mistball is small enough to fit in the palm of one's hand, and consists of dried leaves wrapped around a dazing powder made from drone spores. It is thrown at a single target with a Success Test,

like a throwing weapon. If it hits, the target makes a *Strong* test. If the test is successful nothing happens, but if it is not, the victim is dazed and gains a penalty to all Success Tests for 1D4 turns.

The penalty's value is determined by the maker's *Alchemy* level: -1 for novice, -3 for adept, and -5 for master.

LIGHTNING DUST, ELIXIR

Lightning Dust consists of unstable substances encased within the thin shell of the alum nut. It is thrown at a target with a Success Test, like a throwing weapon, and when it breaks, the dust explodes in a blinding flash of light. If it hits, the target makes a *Quick* test. If the test is successful nothing happens, but if it is not, the victim is blinded for a number of turns.

How long the victim is blinded is determined by the maker's *Alchemy* level: 1 turn for novice, 1D4 turns for adept, and 1D6 for master.

BOOM STONE, ELIXIR

The Boom Stone is best described as a smaller, weaker, more primitive version of the alchemical Thunder Ball. Unstable substances are formed into a paste and placed inside a hollow sandstone roughly the size of a fist. It is thrown at a single target with a Success Test, like a throwing weapon, and deals explosive damage upon impact.

The amount of damage is determined by the maker's *Alchemy* level: 1D4 for novice, 1D6 for adept, and 1D8 for master.

ACID ORB, ELIXIR

The alkaline liquid of the Acid Orb is contained within a spherical flask of acid resistant porcelain. The flask is thrown at a single target with a Success Test, like a throwing weapon, and if it hits, the target suffers its corrosive effect.

The strength of the acid is determined by the maker's *Alchemy* level: 1D4 for 1D4 turns for novice, 1D6 for 1D6 turns for adept, and 1D8 for 1D8 turns for master.

WRATHBREW, ELIXIR

Every morning and evening, the wrathguards on Karvosti share a keg of Wrathbrew. They drink in silence, with somber expressions on their faces. Then they all give the nearest person a firm nod – a ritual which reminds them of their shared burden and responsibility.

If one ingests it regularly, the elixir will take effect after a couple of months: +2 to *Strong*, -2 to

Table 12: Price of new elixirs

| ALCHEMICAL ELIXIR | PRICE |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Sleeping drops | 8 thaler |
| Truth serum | |
| Moderate | 6 thaler |
| Strong | 9 thaler |
| Mistball | |
| Weak | 2 thaler |
| Moderate | 4 thaler |
| Strong | 6 thaler |
| Lightning dust | |
| Weak | 2 thaler |
| Moderate | 4 thaler |
| Strong | 6 thaler |
| Boom stone | |
| Weak | 2 thaler |
| Moderate | 4 thaler |
| Strong | 6 thaler |
| Acid orb | |
| Weak | 2 thaler |
| Moderate | 4 thaler |
| Strong | 6 thaler |
| Impure Wrathbrew | 1T6+5 thaler |

Vigilant, but also +2 to all *Resolute* tests made when trying to resist mental influence, fear, or pressure.

Those who leave the guard before the elixir has taken effect will suffer no long-term damage. The rest are not so lucky. Nothing will happen as long as they keep drinking Wrathbrew, but if they stop, they must make a *Strong* test at the end of each year. Failing the test means that the elixir has taken its toll on their bodies, and their *Strong* value is reduced by -1. When the *Strong* value reaches 0, the person will die.

Pure Wrathbrew is only made by the Huldra and her aides, and it is not for sale. However, since the recipe was first developed, a few people have managed to learn its secrets. In some corners of Thistle Hold and Yndaros, barbarian alchemists sometimes appear with small amounts of Blackbrew. One must have the *Contacts* boon (drug-makers or equivalent) and pass a *Cunning* test in order to find a seller, who will only sell a month's consumption of Wrathbrew, at the staggering price of 1D6+5 thaler per daily dose. Furthermore, as this infusion is less pure than the Huldra's, those who drink it will suffer 1D4 temporary corruption.

THROWING SPIDER, WEAPON

Much can be said about the northern clan Gaoia's relationship with the various spider creatures of Davokar. They worship the spider god Oroke, both etterherd and tricklestings are central to their diet, and their witches and spider priests consume spider poison to get closer to the power and spirit of their eight-legged deity. Moreover, they breed a certain kind of spider to be used as a throwing weapon.

The throwing spider is slightly smaller than a man's palm, covered with rough hairs, and can curl its legs into a small ball. In the wild, in their natural woodland habitat, they drop from the treetops and spread their legs just before landing on their prey. But if one knows how to handle them correctly, they can also be caught and thrown at oncoming (or retreating) enemies.

Those with the *Beast Lore* ability (adept level, specialization: beasts) are not required to make any tests when handling the throwing spider. Everyone else must pass a *Cunning* test to avoid being bitten and poisoned.

The Attack test is made as if it was a regular throwing weapon. A hit deals no weapon damage, but the spiders have the *Piercing Attack (I)* trait, and if they pierce the target's armor, he or she suffers the effect of a moderate poison (3 damage for 3 turns).

THE PALE DEATH, DISEASE

It is said that the disease known as the Pale Death was created by Symbarian lords as a means to eradicate all weakness from their realms and subjects. As horrible as it sounds, it may well be true: all who come in contact with, or even go near, an infected person must pass a *Strong* test for every day he or she remains exposed to the illness. Failing this test means that the person contracts the disease.

Infected player characters make a *Strong* test per day, and every failure lowers their *Strong* value by -1. When their *Strong* value is less than 5, the characters get a second chance to fail at everything they do; if their *Strong* reaches 0, they must make a Death Test once a day (if the result is a 1, reroll). The only thing that can cure the victim is a dose of Life Elixir mixed with the sap of the dwarven maple tree (costs 12 thaler, and works the same way as regular Life Elixir).

Infected people who have passed three of their *Strong* tests (not necessarily in a row) begin to recover and regain their *Strong* points at a speed of 1 per day. Those who recover from the Pale Death can never be infected again.

Fey Beast

Purring contentedly as it devours its living prey

The Fey Beast is one of the most ferocious, unwavering predators in the region. In terms of physical shape and constitution, it resembles a jakaar or a large dog, but its grey or brown speckled fur is definitely feline. Like mare cats, the Fey Beast has a venomous gland right above its fangs, but while the mare cat's venom is lethal, the Fey Beast's will only paralyze the victim. And that is precisely what makes it such a fearsome beast: you can hardly spend a day in Thistle Hold without hearing stories of people who have been eaten, alive and conscious.

| | |
|---|---|
| Race | Beast |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | <i>Natural Weapon (II), Paralyzing Venom (III)</i> |
| Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 11 (-1), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Steadfast</i> (adept) |
| Weapons | Bite 4, paralyzing (see page 61) |
| Armor | None |
| Defense | 0 |
| Toughness | 11 |
| Shadow | Brownish yellow, like the dry grass of a meadow (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: Fey beasts hunt in packs, and would rather not attack unless they outnumber their prey by at least two-to-one. Together they hunt down the victims, and when all victims have been paralyzed, the feast begins.

Beamon

Roaring confidently, or grunting contentedly

The black-furred bear creature known by the barbarians as the beamon is a solitary soul that takes its dominance for granted. It certainly has many enemies, both beast and human. The beamon is prized by the barbarians for its meat, and for many northern clans its slaying is a coming-of-age rite. Any person who has successfully hunted a beamon is considered to be an adult, and those who manage to bring the beastly bear down single-handed are regarded as fully-trained warriors.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Race | Beast |
| Resistance | Challenging |

| | |
|---|---|
| Traits | <i>Armored (II), Natural Weapon (II), Robust (II)</i> |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 13 (-3), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 11 (-1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Natural Warrior</i> (adept) |
| Weapons | Two paws, 2 attacks per turn, 12/7 damage |
| Armor | Bear pelt 6 |
| Defense | +3 |
| Toughness | 15 |
| Shadow | Brown, almost black, like oiled leather (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The beamon relies on its strength and toughness, but it is not stupid. If the enemies are great in number or tougher than expected, it will avoid conflict.

Garoug

Completely silent

The giant bear known as the Garoug can mainly be found on the islands of Lake Volgoma, or hunting in its waters. Its bluish white fur befits a predator of such icy temperament - its piercing gaze is enough to make even the bravest wizard take flight. If its enemies persist on fighting, the Garoug will not back down; if needs be, the great bear will die protecting its cubs and/or mate!

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Beast |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | <i>Armored (III), Natural Weapon (II), Robust (III)</i> |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 15 (-5), Quick 7 (+3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 13 (-3), Vigilant 11 (-1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Dominate</i> (master), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Natural Warrior</i> (master) |
| Weapons | Bite, 2 attacks per turn, 16/10 damage |
| Armor | Bear pelt 8 |
| Defense | +7 |
| Toughness | 13 |
| Shadow | Bluish white, like mid-winter ice (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The Garoug targets the largest of its enemies, and attacks while trying to instill doubt in the victim's mind.

Hornet

A faint but furious buzzing

No one knows how many fortune hunters have fallen victim to the hornets of Davokar, but if one is to believe the tales told in the taverns of Thistle Hold, these patriotic stingers are some of the forest's most effective killers. They are found everywhere, but seem to be particularly fond of the magnificent ruins of Symbaroum.

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Winged creature |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Piercing Attack (I), Poisonous (II), Swarm (III), Wings (I)</i> |
| Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 11 (-1), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | None |
| Weapons | Sting 0 (piercing 4) |
| Armor | None |
| Defense | -5 |
| Toughness | 11 |
| Shadow | Orange like the afternoon sun (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: A swarm of hornets will instinctively defend their queen and nest; they have no survival instinct whatsoever and will keep attacking until their enemies run away or the swarm is destroyed.

Wraith Owl

There is nothing but the swishing sound of mighty wings

The wraith owl was named for its plumage, which remains bright white throughout the year, except for the brown or black circles around its eyes and the similarly colored tips of its feathers. They usually make their nests in the Ravens, but some have also settled in the ruins of Davokar, high up in broken towers or other places where they have a clear view of creatures moving around below.

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Winged creature |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | <i>Natural Weapon (III), Robust (I), Wings (III)</i> |
| Accurate 15 (-5), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 11 (-1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Natural Warrior (adept)</i> |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Fleet-footed</i> |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Weapons | Talons (Long), two attacks at the same target, 8/6 damage (free attack: one attack, 5 damage) |
| Armor | Robust feathers 2 |
| Defense | -1 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Equipment | None, but collects objects, which is why their nests contain trinkets and jewelry worth 1D100 thaler. |
| Shadow | As bright white as its plumage (Corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The wraith owl watches its surroundings from elevated positions. Having spotted its prey, it relies on its exceptional flying skills to launch sweeping attacks without putting itself at risk. If the victim does not have a long weapon at his/her disposal, the wraith owl also gets a free attack each turn. If there is a danger of being caught in melee combat, the owl will choose another target or simply not attack until the situation has improved.

The Black Plague Termites

Thousands of chattering mandibles

The red and black, thumb-length termites attack trees, both living and dead, leaving them hollow. And they are said to corrupt everything they touch – the trees they devour, the ground they tread, and the earth in which they nest. They will also attack any living creature that ventures too close to their nest or poses a threat to the colony. The victims left behind by the termites are awful to behold...

| | |
|---|---|
| Race | Abomination |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Corrupting Attack (I), Armored (I), Swarm (II)</i> |
| Accurate 11 (-1), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 5 (+5) | |
| Abilities | <i>Natural Warrior (adept)</i> |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Slow</i> |
| Weapons | Mandibles 4 (deep impact), two attacks per turn plus 1D4 temporary corruption |
| Armor | Chitin shell 2 |
| Defense | -3 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Shadow | Glossy black like soaked charcoal (thoroughly corrupt) |

Tactics: A swarm of termites will instinctively defend their queen and nest; they have no survival instinct and will keep attacking until their enemies flee or the swarm is destroyed.



IGHT FALLS OVER the Longhouse.

Teresma's guests instinctively lean closer to the candles on the tavern's rickety tables, conscious of the fact that the faint glow merely accentuates the deepening darkness.

Most of the visitors are treasure hunters; some are experienced, others have just taken

their first tentative steps into the shadows of the forest.

Ambrrians often say that there are only two kinds of creatures in Davokar: hunters and prey. Most guests at the Longhouse believe themselves to be the former, but they are sorely mistaken, every last one of them. Like so many before them, they will soon learn the truth – in Davokar one is indeed either hunter or prey, but what you are can change in a heartbeat. As the barbarians say: hunter today, hunted by nightfall.

Out in the woods, a breathless shadow moves away from Karvosti in tremendous haste. She, if anyone, knows what it means to be hunter and prey, for she is both. She is hunting her dream, and its scent grows stronger with every step she takes. But she is also hunted, by doubt and despair, and by a sinister few who know about the secret she carries.

At the Longhouse is a friend of hers, with whom she has shared her discovery. The way this friend is drinking, it will not be long before the shadow in the woods becomes one of the world's most wanted prey...



SECTION 3:
THE
WITCH HAMMER

Introduction

THE TIME HAS COME to truly delve into Davokar! While previous adventures have offered shorter trips through the woods, *The Witch Hammer* lets the player characters experience the full horror and wondrous glory of the forest. The relationship between, and within, the game world's factions are also central to the story. As the characters will no doubt learn, directly or indirectly, much has happened since the sinkhole opened up in Thistle Hold. For though *The Witch Hammer* is a stand-alone adventure, it is also the second part of *The Throne of Thorns*, the adventure chronicle in which the region slowly moves toward its hour of destiny – the final battle for the verdant throne of Symbaroum.

THIS ADVENTURE TACKLES the overarching themes of Symbaroum: the conflict between the Ambrians' wish to cultivate Davokar and the Elder Folks' unwillingness to let them do so. Queen Korinthia is losing patience with the barbarians' refusal to support her efforts, and when she learns that the information she desires the most – directions to Symbar and its Throne of Thorns – has been kept from her by the witches, she reacts with force. Meanwhile, other powerful factions are drawn to Karvosti; searching for Symbar, or hoping to stop those who do.

But though the theme of the story is political in nature, the adventure itself is full of suspense, action, and epic settings. Depending on who the player characters are and what they decide to do, they may not even notice the plots and schemes of the factions, except as obstacles on the way toward their own goal – whether it be finding the “map to Symbar” or preventing others from finding it. In the end, all gaming groups will probably know more about the ambitions and internal struggles of the factions than they did at the beginning. But how much they understand, and to what extent they get involved, are mostly up to them.

The Witch Hammer consists of five chapters, the first of which presents the background to the adventure and the overall progress of the story. It offers suggestions on how the player characters can enter the story, and gaming groups who prefer to have their characters guided by a quest giver are also given more detailed suggestions on how the adventure may unfold.

Then come the three acts of the adventure, each in a separate chapter – a first act that gradually intensifies the situation on the plateau; a second act describing three adventure locations and the groups involved in the treasure hunt; and a third act that will lead the characters into the cliff of Karvosti itself, through the Underworld.

The final chapter addresses what happens after the adventure has reached its conclusion, and things the player characters could do before they leave for Yndaros and the third part of *The Throne of Thorns*. At the end of the book you will also find player handouts, but no appendix with new rules and such, as all information of that nature can be found in the Rules supplements section on page 60 to 67.



A group of Ambrian merchants approach the gate on the way to the plateau. Woe betide any blight-marked creature who tries to blend in with the crowd...

Background

SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the start of the adventure, a truly historical event took place on Karvosti. Late at night someone burst into the ogre Crueljaw's tent, right next to his shop at the marketplace. As the visitor removed her hood, the ogre recognized her as his friend Elmendra, often called "*Elmendra the Senseless*" by her fellow fortune hunters, out of both respect and ridicule. Many Ambrians know her story: the great explorer who became obsessed with making the greatest find in the history of fortune hunting – Symbar. It was clear that something had happened to Elmendra. Apart from looking completely worn out, she had a thin layer of yellow puss covering her eyes, and Crueljaw's nostrils were immediately assailed by her rancid stench.

Elmendra fell to her knees before the ogre and handed him an object: an ornamented war hammer, its head glimmering with gold. "Take it, bring it to the priests," she hissed. "*To the priests, Crueljaw! Only to the priests, promise me that.*"

When the speechless ogre nodded and accepted the hammer, Elmendra grabbed his shoulders and pierced him with her puss-coated gaze:

"Prios bless me, I did it, deep within Karvosti... Symbar, Crueljaw, I found Symbar!"

A moment later she left his tent and vanished into the stormy night.

The next morning, Crueljaw kept his word and brought the ornamented weapon to Father Piromei. When the priest wanted to know how he had acquired the weapon, the ogre asked him for help: he told Piromei about Elmendra's marks of corruption and what she had said about having found Symbar, and he begged the priest to look for her. The ogre spoke with a booming voice, and when Piromei finally swore him to silence, it was too late – an Ambrian spy at the temple, posing as one of Aranitra's initiates, had heard everything and quickly sent word to his liege.

The Curia took immediate action, as did House Kohinoor. The Queen's Rangers dispatched two special units to locate Elmendra and/or her great discovery, while the First Father ordered his cousin to join in the hunt. Shortly thereafter, the news also reached Knight Commander Iakobo Vearra. He too decided to send troops to Karvosti. As soon as the Sun Church learned of this, it sparked a terrible feud between the templar commander and First Father Jeseebegai.

The day before the start of the adventure, the Rangers' and the priesthood's forces both arrived on the plateau, ready to get to work – as the player

characters will discover as soon as they become involved in the story.

THE TRUTH

Elmendra left the High Chieftain's cliff immediately after her visit to Crueljaw, and people will have little luck finding her on or around Karvosti, as she is on her way to Yndaros.

It is true that she made it into Karvosti, hoping to find the way to the lost city of Symbar. Instead, she found something else – a stone tablet describing how the sarcophagus of the last Symbarian emperor, named Symbar, was found by his descendants and brought to their new home in Lindaros. Apparently, this was in the days of High Chieftain Gothomer, some fifty years before a terrible, contagious bleeding disorder laid waste to the whole of Lindaros.

The reason why she shows up on the plateau at all is an artifact she grabbed on her way out of the cliff. She had obviously heard of the "Witch Hammer," used in the legendary battle against Karlaban. When she saw the weapon resting in the reliquary, Elmendra could not help herself – even though she knew it was probably protected by powerful rituals. She paid a high price for taking the artifact (the previously mentioned marks of corruption), but initially, she was very pleased with her magnificent find.

However, it was not long before she came to regret it: perhaps the witches had woven spells over the artifact, runes making it possible for people to track it over long distances (a risk she was unwilling to take, now that she had come so close to reaching her goal). She felt it trembling with power, so leaving it in the woods was simply not an option. Instead, she decided to leave it with the priests – indeed, who needs a corruption-killing weapon more than the champions of the Sun God?! She chose Crueljaw as her intermediary, even though she had many closer friends on the plateau, knowing that everyone else would probably keep the artifact for themselves.

With the hammer handed over, Elmendra intends to visit her old friend, the Spiritualist Herangoi, who may be able to help her locate the ancient sarcophagus somewhere in the catacombs beneath Yndaros. Her plan is to have Herangoi question the late emperor for more specific directions to Symbar. Whether they succeed or not shall be revealed at a later time, in the third episode of *The Throne of Thorns*, when the time will come for the player characters to have great adventures in (and beneath) the Ambrian capital of Yndaros.

The Structure of the Adventure

THE WITCH HAMMER is divided into three acts, all different in terms of both structure and content. How the adventure is played will no doubt differ from gaming group to gaming group, due to adjustments made by Game Masters and the player characters' considerable freedom to do as they please. Nevertheless, the overarching story comes with a few major turning points (also serving as act transitions) which practically everyone playing the adventure will get to experience.

ACT I: THE SEARCH FOR SYMBAR

The adventure begins at the Longhouse, where the player characters (for whatever reason) find themselves. Crueljaw is sitting at another table, next to the liturg Aranitra, and the ogre is clearly becoming increasingly inebriated and upset, eventually flying into a drunken rage. As others come running to avert a brawl, a crying Crueljaw blurts out the whole story about Elmendra, the Witch Hammer, and Symbar.

The information has barely begun to sink in when the door slams open and a young man staggers into the tavern. He keeps one hand pressed against his slit throat, blood gushing between his fingers. The man collapses onto the floor, croaking: “*The High Chieftain! The stronghold is under attack!*” The characters may decide if they wish to get involved in the assassination attempt. Regardless, the attack fails and Tharaban lives, albeit in a weakened condition.

Then, for one reason or another (see the Player Characters section on page 74), the characters may start investigating what happened to Elmendra. They have little difficulty identifying her most frequent associates, two of whom can be found murdered on Karvosti in ways which implicate the Queen’s Rangers and the Black Cloaks. Her third colleague, Brother Bartho, has fled the plateau, but a friend of his can be persuaded to reveal his current whereabouts: Vearra’s outpost. The player characters arrive at the outpost just before it is attacked by warriors of the Sovereign’s Oath. They must decide whether to help defend the outpost, or try to escape along with the frightened fortune hunter. Either way, they will obtain the information which leads to Act II.

While the player characters conduct their investigations, ominous rumors will reach Karvosti. The first tells of an army being assembled on the fields west of Thistle Hold, while subsequent rumors provide further details regarding this military force. Finally, there are whispers of a heavily

armored column marching from Yndaros, led by none other than the Queen of Ambria herself: Korinthia Nighthane.

It is a serious situation, that much is clear, especially as the High Chieftain triples the number of sentries guarding the way up the cliff and the Huldra isolates herself in her dwelling.

ACT II: TRAILING THE EXPLORER

Thanks to Elmendra’s former associate, Brother Bartho, the player characters manage to map out her movements before she disappeared, and identify three locations which together should make it possible for them to track her. The only problem is that others have done so as well.

Two groups of Rangers, one group of sun knights, one group of theurges and Black Cloaks, and three groups of fortune hunters have obtained the very same information as the player characters, and will all visit the same three locations, but in a different order. In other words, which route the characters take will determine what potential allies and adversaries they will encounter at the sites.

One of these places is Yeferon Isle in Lake Volgoma, known among seafarers as “*the island on the brink of the Spirit World*.” There, the characters’ task will be to go beneath its great Ziggurat, while fighting the wraiths of the isle and dealing with competing treasure hunters. If all goes well, they will leave the isle with information on how to reach the roots of Karvosti through the Underworld.

The second place Elmendra visited before making her famed discovery is a ruin which the barbarians call Faarah Moroun. The characters must explore the ruin, once again competing with other groups and dealing with local threats. Faarah Moroun is home to the liege troll Orangaar, who surrounds himself with rage trolls and various pets and who, mildly put, is not very fond of intruders. The characters must be clever, and triumph in battle, in order to get their hands on the ruin’s treasure – information regarding an ancient locking mechanism identical to the one sealing the gate between the Underworld and the caverns of Karvosti.

Finally, the player characters must find the healer Elida, who has recently returned to the free settlement of New Earthmoor and reconciled with her family. The palisaded village is inhabited by religious and deeply xenophobic fanatics. When the characters arrive, it is also under attack by Fundiber, a warrior of the Sovereign’s Oath, and by some of the characters’ competitors. Through



Area Map

At the end of this book is a map pinpointing various locations that are relevant to the adventure and the book as a whole. You will find it on page 149.



Why on Karvosti?

There can be many reasons for the player characters to visit Karvosti at the start of the adventure. Should your gaming group need inspiration in this area, you are welcome to use the following list. The characters have come to Karvosti...

... to rest/gather provisions before, during, or after an expedition into the woods.

... to deliver/fetch a person or object on behalf of someone in Thistle Hold.

... as messengers or negotiators on diplomatic or business related errands.

... to trade with the clans, or purchase something from the witches.

... as bodyguards/assistants to a merchant, diplomat, or explorer.

diplomacy or use of force, they must get to the timid Elida, who has essential knowledge about the underground tunnels of Karvosti.

It is quite possible that the player characters will fail to obtain important pieces of information, but that does not mean that all is lost. Instead, they can try to negotiate with the other factions, provided that they know things their competitors do not. Such negotiations will take place near, or on, Karvosti, which is now under siege by an Ambrian army of almost ten thousand soldiers.

When the Game Master deems it appropriate, the thunderous voice of the Queen's herald delivers Korinthia's ultimatum: the witches have until sundown to show their willingness to cooperate; if they do not, Karvosti will be annexed by the Kingdom of Ambria.

ACT III: INSIDE THE MOTHER ROCK

In the final act of the adventure, the player characters – possibly along with one or more rival groups – will try to enter Karvosti in search of what Elmendra actually found down there. This quest is complicated by the fact that the lower regions of the cliff now belong to someone else – the spider Karathran, with her vast hordes of spiderlings, is the new mistress of the deep, and the witches have sealed all upward passages to give themselves time to negotiate a peaceful resolution with the intruder.

The player characters must first find the entrance to the Underworld, then go to Karvosti and open the gate, which is now sealed. Other more or less successful groups will, naturally, try to stop them and learn what they know. On the other side of the gate the characters find Elmendra's footprints, which are easily followed across the tunnel's dusty stone floor. However, they must be careful not to touch any strands of spider web, or Karathran will be alerted, and so will the deranged former Huldra Oryela (actually the blood elf Iel) who tricked the spiders into freeing her.

After many great perils, the player characters finally reach a cracked stone tablet. The symbols on its weathered surface, some of which have been destroyed, were inscribed in such an irregular style that not even a master scholar can decipher them all (except for true experts like Elmendra, who has spent half her life studying ancient inscriptions). But the sign for Symbar is easily distinguished, as are those which supposedly mean "city" and "destruction."

The player characters will probably not take the tablet with them, but there are ways for them to copy it. They are then faced with the interesting question of what to do with their newly acquired information. Time is running out on Karvosti, and through their actions, the player characters could determine whether or not the cliff is annexed by the Ambrians.

The Player Characters

AT THE START of the adventure the player characters are, for some reason, visiting Karvosti.

It does not really matter who they are, how experienced they are, or what abilities they have – as always, the Game Master should adjust the difficulty of opponents and challenges to the capabilities of the gaming group. However, it might be useful to know that we created the adventure on the following premise:

- The characters have amassed roughly 100 experience from previous adventures, and spent at least 80 on abilities which increase their combat proficiency.
- At least one of the characters can speak the barbarian tongue, as a result of possessing the *Loremaster* ability or having been raised by one of the clans.
- They have a certain reputation (accurate or not) for being bold and capable; faction leaders may not know them by name, but are familiar with their deeds.

If the players decide to create new characters especially for this adventure, we suggest that they receive an extra $70+1D20$ Experience to be spent on abilities, traits, and boons. They must also be provided a suitable backstory – perhaps one (or all) of them knew Elmendra, or maybe they start the game as members of a specific faction? Whatever you decide, the incentives below may serve as inspiration for suitable backstories.

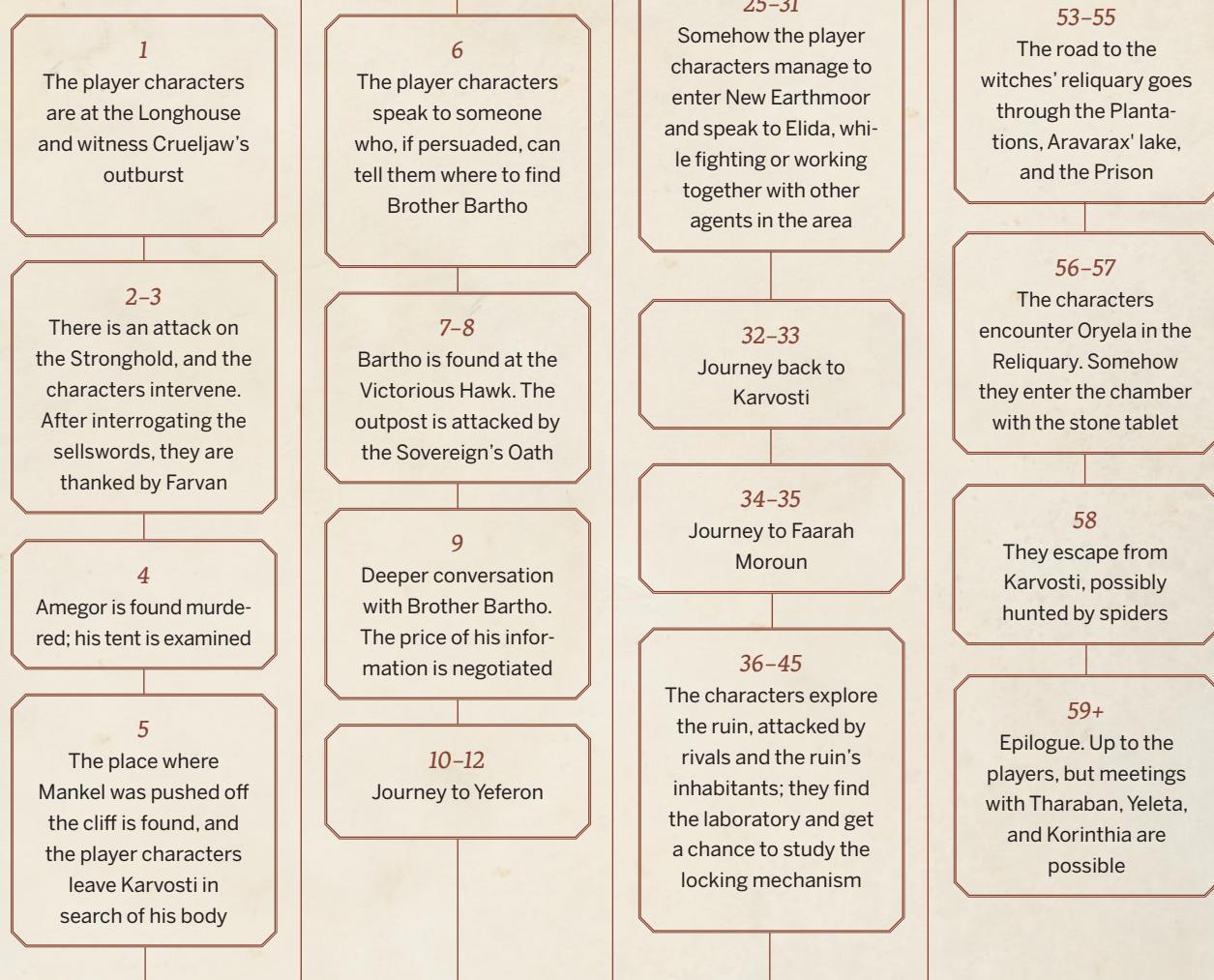
Incentives are always important when role-playing. The players must feel engaged in the story, for one reason or another – if not, their sense of immersion will most likely suffer and the game will be boring. When writing an adventure like this one, we are mindful of the fact that all players and characters are different, but in the end it can be difficult to take all possible personalities and ambitions into account. Hence, if the suggestions below do not suit your particular gaming group, you will have to give it some extra thought, and perhaps even ask other Game Masters for advice.

Adventure Timeline

The following time line is intended for gaming groups who are used to having the actions of their characters steered by quest givers, and shows a possible order in which the scenes of the adventure may take place. This flow chart can never be more than an estimate, as it is difficult to predict exactly which (and how many) scenes will occur as the characters visit the adventure landscapes in Act II. But hopefully, the timeline can still be of some use to the Game Master.

As for quest givers, Crueljaw would probably be the most obvious choice during Act 1 (the search for Elmendra), after which Brother Bartho takes over. But there are other central characters that could serve the same purpose. High Chieftain Tharaban, for example, could ask the player characters to investigate Elmendra's doings and what she has found, in the hope of appeasing Queen Korinthia.

If the Game Master wants the characters to be able to ask their quest giver for advice/support during their expeditions, they could be provided with a Mind Stone (see page 111 in *Thistle Hold – Wrath of the Warden* for inspiration; each use inflicts 1D4 temporary Corruption).



Regarding the Advanced Player's Guide

As we created the adventure *The Witch Hammer*, we worked on the basic assumption that those playing it have access to and use the *Advanced Player's Guide*. If you do not, you will have to make certain adjustments to the stats of the non-player characters – it can be done, even though it might detract from their unique personalities.

A TREASURE HUNTER'S DREAM

The player characters are inveterate explorers or treasure hunters whose dream is to find the ancient city of Symbar. This premise should make it quite easy for them to get involved in the story.

The most likely allies for such a group would probably be the other fortune hunters, but the Queen's Rangers may also be a feasible choice.

BAD OMENS

There are many people in the region who are willing to heed the warnings of witches and elves, who are convinced that further intrusions into the ruins of Symbaroum will bring death and destruction to the world. If the player characters share this belief, they could very well get involved in order to prevent other groups (such as the Queen, the Sun Church, or thieving fortune hunters) from acquiring directions to Symbar. After all, the witches describe the city as "*the Mother of Darkness*" – who knows what horrors the humans might awaken as they trample around the ruins!?

Characters with goals of this nature would find a natural ally in the Iron Pact. The theurg Argaton may also be persuaded into taking their side, but not all Black Cloaks will join him (see more on page 94).

PEACEMAKERS

The Queen wants to know the way to Symbar, but the witches will not share their knowledge. With everything else going on, the conflict could soon escalate into full-scale war!

Perhaps the player characters realize that the best way to defuse the situation is to give Korinthia what she wants; and needless to say, it would not hurt to have done the Queen of Ambria such a tremendous favor...

This premise would make the Queen's Rangers their most probable ally.

MOVING UP THE LADDER

Player characters who are, or wish to be, members of organizations such as Ordo Magica, the Sun Church, or the Ambrian army, could take on the challenge in the hope of furthering their careers. Finding directions to Symbar and presenting them to the faction leaders would probably open many doors for the characters.

Alternatively, someone within the organization could give the characters a direct order. Refusing the order would be a sure way of losing the organization's trust; accepting and completing the mission could be exactly what is needed to advance up the hierarchy!

In this case, the matter of forging alliances becomes more complicated. A careerist character would obviously not want other members of the organization to share his or her glory. On the other hand, forming alliances when needed should not be a problem.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

If none of the incentives above are deemed strong enough, it might be time to get personal. Perhaps a dear friend or relative of a player character went missing while searching for Symbar? Perhaps the player character is a noble who has been disowned by his/her family and now seeks a way to earn their forgiveness? Perhaps the player characters are close acquaintances of Elmendra and want to follow her trail to figure out what has happened to her?

With personal connections as their incentive, it is possible for the characters to collaborate with more or less anyone, for short or long periods of time.

Travelling in Davokar

DURING THE COURSE of the adventure, particularly in Act II, the player characters will travel between various places in Davokar. Inspiration for what transpires during these journeys can be found in previously published material. Basic information is introduced on pages 183-184 in the *Core Rulebook*, and the adventures *Tomb of Dying Dreams* and *Wrath of the Warden* offer an array of applicable events. In addition to this, the eBook Adventure Pack 1 is available from various download stores. Should this not be enough, perhaps the suggestions below might be to the Game Master's (and the gaming group's) liking.

In this adventure, all journeys go through so called Bright or Open areas. Deeper expeditions will

have to wait until part four of *The Throne of Thorns*, when the time comes to visit Symbar.

THE MONSTER HUNTER

A long-shafted arrow suddenly impales the ground near a player character's feet. Looking up, they see a person crouched in a nearby tree, holding a longbow – a middle-aged woman, dressed in what looks like a cross between a hunter's attire and the armor of a warrior. She looks annoyed, to say the least.

She slides down the tree trunk, introduces herself as Ingril, and informs the player characters that they are about to walk right into her monster trap. It turns out that Ingril is a monster hunter

who has not only managed to track her game, but also identified its movement pattern: each night, the beast visits a creek not far from there.

The characters could offer to help Ingril, who will accept – as long as they stay back and keep quiet, she will happily let them witness her masterful catch. When the beast (for example an aboar, page 221 in the *Core Rulebook*) later arrives, things immediately get out of hand – the monstrous creature tears the hunter's trap to shreds, and if the player characters do not intervene, it will do the same to Ingril.

THE HUNTING PARTY

As the characters travel through Davokar, they suddenly hear a coarse laugh from up ahead. A successful Vigilant test reveals that there are at least five people, conversing in the barbarian tongue (a *Cunning* test with the *Loremaster* ability: they speak with a northern accent).

The characters can try to sneak up on them, but must pass a *[Discreet -1]* test not to be detected – if they are, they must either fight or flee. Those

who speak the barbarian tongue can make out the following exchange:

Speaker 1: "... that we've been too soft on children."
Speaker 2: "You mean we should make reality out of the Ambrians' lies?"
Speaker 1: "Why not? Let the kids suffer the same as their parents."
Speaker 3: "Aye, that should get the Bitch Queen's attention!"
Speaker 2: "But... Not without the chieftains' say-so, right? I mean..."
Speaker 1: "Oh, shut up Olor! If everyone was as soft-hearted as you, nothing would ever get done!"



The mark of the Sovereign's Oath, in one of its variations.

The group is composed of one Guard Warrior and a number of Village Warriors equal to the number of characters (page 216 in the *Core Rulebook*). They all have the mark of the Sovereign's Oath (a crown entwined with thorns) tattooed on the inside of their wrists, and they will fight to the death!

Scheming on Karvosti

THE FACTIONS, AND the characters' relations to them, form a kind of social playing field in *The Witch Hammer*. The adventure presupposes that the meta-game is used, as it adds another dimension to the game world, making it a place filled with intrigue beneath the seemingly uncomplicated surface. For the players, these relations become a tactical game where social scenes can determine whether they succeed or fail.

That being said, this element of scheming is purely supplemental and can easily be removed.

Gaming groups who prefer a simpler game can treat the factions as quest givers or opponents, without rules regarding their reactions to the player characters' deeds. In that case, the Game Master decides what is reasonable from the faction's point of view or, when in doubt, lets *Persuasive* tests settle the matter.

Those who want to make full use of the intrigues can find comprehensive rules, as well as a glossary, on pages 58-60.

Table 13: Leading Individuals in *The Witch Hammer*

| NAME | FACTION | IMPRESSED BY | LIKES | DISLIKES |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|--|
| Tharaban | The High Chieftain | Cunning | — | Nobles, Ironsworn |
| Captain Marvello | House Kohinoor | Strong | Ambrians | Witches, Ironsworn, Blight-marked |
| Captain Lindra | House Kohinoor | Vigilant | Ambrians | Barbarians, Ironsworn, Blight-marked |
| Leohan Mekele | Sun Knights | Resolute | Worshippers of Prios | Barbarians, Non-humans, Heretics, Ironsworn, Blight-marked |
| Argaton Soleij | Sun Church | Cunning | Worshippers of Prios | — |
| Dagesto | — | Strong | Explorers | Barbarians, Nobles |
| Ioséfia Dresel | — | Discreet | — | Non-humans |
| Cleaver | — | Quick | Ambrians | Blight-marked |
| Fundiber | Sovereign's Oath | Strong | Barbarians | Ambrians, Ironsworn |
| Malahai | The Iron Pact | Resolute | Ironsworn | Blight-marked |
| Adreanea | The Iron Pact | Discreet | Ironsworn | Ambrians, Blight-marked |
| Farvan | The Wrathguard | Strong | Barbarians | Ambrians, Ironsworn |

ACT ONE:

The Search for Symbar

THE FIRST ACT of *The Witch Hammer* begins at the tavern known as the Longhouse, and ends with the player characters meeting and receiving information from Brother Bartho, the fortune hunter Elmendra's former associate. Alongside the player characters' investigations, a number of predetermined events will occur, increasing the suspense. All the while, distressing rumors tell of an army encamped near Thistle Hold, an army, they say, headed for Karvosti.

Game Opening

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS have come to the Longhouse to eat and enjoy the stories, or maybe because the Game Master has "tricked" them into meeting someone who will offer them a job. Since there are an unusual number of fortune hunters currently present on the plateau, the tavern is packed with customers, and by the table next to the characters are the ogre Crueljaw and the sun priest Aranitra.

No test is required for the characters to realize that Crueljaw is upset – they can tell by his sullen expression, and by the haste with which he quaffs his Blackbrew. Characters who actively try to eavesdrop on what he and Aranitra are whispering to each other must make a [Vigilant -1] test. If successful, the character overhears the following exchange:

Crueljaw: "He promised! You were supposed to find her and take care of her!"

Aranitra: "We did all we could. When someone like Elmendra doesn't want to be found..."

Crueljaw: "But she was marked! She reeked of... sulfur, or..."

Aranitra: "Be quiet, and calm..."

Crueljaw: "But she may die! All alone, sick and hurt! Die!"

Aranitra: "Lower your voice, or I'm leaving."

Crueljaw settles down, and their words are drowned by the noise of the other customers. With a successful *Cunning* test, the characters recognize the name Elmendra: "An Ambrian fortune hunter, often called Elmendra the Senseless out of both respect and ridicule, who after many years of exploration became obsessed with making the greatest find of all: Symbar."

Suddenly, Crueljaw springs to his feet. He grabs the liturg and raises his fist, roaring with rage. If the characters do not intervene immediately, which requires a successful *Quick* test, the punch will land, knocking Aranitra unconscious. Regardless, the ogre unleashes all his anguish and frustration, screaming at the either terrified or unconscious Aranitra, or possibly at the characters (if they managed to stop him). He blurts out the following pieces of information, responding to direct questions or simply to get it off his chest:

- Father Piromei promised to find and help Crueljaw's friend Elmendra.
- Elmendra has been blight-marked and looked emaciated when she visited Crueljaw.
- This was seven days ago.
- She gave him an artifact, a war hammer she had taken from the caverns deep within

Karvosti, and asked him to give it to the priests.

- Her real reason for going down into the tunnels of Karvosti was of course to find directions to Symbar. And apparently she did: *"I found Symbar,"* she said.
- Then she disappeared, and now she probably lies dead somewhere in the woods, half-eaten by jakaars or goblins.

As Crueljaw falls back on his chair, the player characters realize that the entire tavern has gone quiet. Everyone is staring at the ogre in utter amazement. Someone grunts: *"Symbar ...,"* while others shake their heads in disbelief.

A player character who turns to face the crowd may make a *Vigilant* test, which if successful reveals two people (a Queen's Ranger and a Black Cloak, both disguised as fortune hunters) standing relatively far from each other. The expressions on their faces are unlike the others': grim, calculating, and fiercely observant – just like the character, they are watching their surroundings carefully.

After a long moment of silence, the room erupts in heated argument. Three factions are easily distinguished: one entertaining thoughts like *"what if it is true?!"*; one assuming the rumors to be false or that Elmendra has lost her mind; and one claiming that there are other rumors regarding the way to Symbar which would be less dangerous to verify: *"Breaking into the heart of Karvosti is about as easy as bedding the Queen!"*

The discussion is becoming increasingly vitriolic, as personal conflicts begin to surface between those claiming to know best. Many try to elbow their way toward Crueljaw, and soon fists are flying. The player characters can choose to join the brawl, try to put an end to it, or back off.

Before long, the tavern door slams open and a young man staggers into the Longhouse. He keeps one hand pressed tightly against his throat, but cannot stop the blood from gushing through his fingers. It takes a while before the situation calms down enough for the dying young man to be heard:

"The... The High Chieftain," he hisses. *"The stronghold is under attack!"*

Under Attack

THE SOVEREIGN'S OATH will stop at nothing to achieve their goal – to sow dissent between Ambrians and barbarians. While the player characters contemplate what they have learned about Elmendra and Symbar (or beat up troublemakers), the northern clans make a serious attempt to murder High Chieftain Tharaban, with the help of hired Ambrian cutthroats. The leader of the group is a notorious assassin (see below), and her warriors are all former soldiers who were discharged from the Ambrian army after having sustained serious disabilities from fighting barbarians.

RECENT EVENTS

The attempt on Tharaban's life will not succeed; in fact, the assassin and her accomplices have already started their escape by the time the player characters get involved (if they do). They managed to enter the stronghold as planned, but were detected by grumpy old Lumedo, who came walking after having stopped for a few pints of Blackbrew on his way home. His startled scream was loud enough to alert the wrathguards posted at the outer gate.

The assassin sent half of her warriors to stall the guards, while the others followed her to the throne room where Tharaban was dining with his family. Unfortunately for the assassin, another

group of wrathguards had heard Lumedo's cry. She fired a poisoned dart at the High Chieftain and ordered her sellswords to attack, but only half of them did – the rest fled the scene along with their charismatic leader.

The warriors' escape plan is to run towards the way down, and scale the cliff to reach the road on the outer side of the wall. The assassin lets her minions go first; not out of kindness, but hoping that they will draw attention to themselves so that she may escape unnoticed.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

If the player characters head for the stronghold, they will soon see two warriors running away from it, towards the northern tip of the plateau. A successful *Vigilant* test reveals that they are wearing red and black coats similar to those worn by the Ambrian army; if the character then passes a *Cunning* test, he or she realizes that the coats are of an older model which has not been used for almost ten years.

If the player characters decide to block their path, the aged sellswords will try to fight their way past them. They will focus on characters who are clearly of Ambrian descent, while furiously hurling profanities at them, calling them *"traitorous scum,"* *"savage-humpers,"* and *"darkness-lovers."*

Veterans

"For Ambria! For Nightbane!"

A group of former soldiers in the Ambrian army who were all discharged due to injuries (physical or mental) sustained in battle with barbarians – especially the Jezites and the Karits. They are overjoyed to have been given a chance at revenge and to be serving their country once more, and have done their best to clean themselves up after many years of debauchery and drug abuse.

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|---|
| Manner | Excessively proud | | |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) | | |
| Resistance | Ordinary | | |
| Traits | Contacts (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) | | |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Addiction</i> , <i>Elderly</i> | | |
| Weapons | Sword 5 | | |
| Armor | Chainmail 4 | | |
| Defense | -3 (shield) | | |
| Toughness | 13 | Pain Threshold | 7 |
| Equipment | Flask of liquor (for the nerves),
1D6 shillings, uncut ruby (value:
50 thaler) | | |
| 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. | | | |

THE ASSASSIN

After having fought the two卖剑者, the player characters have a chance to spot the enemy leader. If they explicitly state that they are looking for more attackers and pass a [Vigilant -1] test, they may catch a glimpse of a shadow heading north, dashing nimbly from bush to bush along the eastern edge of the plateau.

They have no problem cutting her off, and by passing their [Discreet -3] tests they can take her by Surprise. This encounter can unfold in several ways. If the characters attack her immediately, the assassin will fight for one turn in order to assess the strength of her opponents. If she has no hope of beating them, she will commit suicide – either by hurling herself off the cliff or swallowing the poison capsule already resting in her mouth.

If the characters wait for her to react, and some of them appear to be Ambrians, the assassin will try to persuade them to help her. She claims to represent "Ambrian interests" and suggests that it is the duty of all Ambrians to aid her. The characters must answer right away. If they hesitate for too long or turn her down, she will try to escape by firing her crossbow at and assaulting whoever seems to be the easiest target; if she fails, she commits suicide as described above.

On the other hand, should the player characters agree to help her, they must act quickly – getting her to safety, keeping her hidden, and when the situation has calmed down, smuggling her off the plateau.

The Night Cape/Violing

"You die, or I die. That is all."

The soon to be thirty-year-old Karenia saw her parents die, arise as undead, and try to murder her as the war against the Dark Lords was coming to an end. She carried this experience with her as she crossed the Titans, alone, eventually ending up at a refugee camp in Yndaros where she was taken in by the bandit queen Merandra. She went from maid to pickpocket to assassin – her career was going ever so smoothly, until the aged Merandra grew jealous of her protégé and drove her out of the capital.

After a few jobs in Agrella and Kurun, Karenia settled down not far from Thistle Hold, where a skilled assassin is always in demand. That is where she was contacted by the Sovereign's Oath and offered the job of killing the High Chieftain – a mission she accepted for the challenge as much as for the reward.

Should the player characters have encountered and killed the Night Cape during a previous adventure, she can simply be replaced by the less famous (but just as skilled) assassin calling herself The Violing.

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Taciturn, watchful |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (Yndaros' criminals) |
| Accurate 7 (+3), Cunning 15 (-5), Discreet 11 (-1),
Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 10 (0),
Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 13 (-3) | |
| Abilities | <i>Alchemy</i> (adept), <i>Marksman</i> (master), <i>Poisoner</i> (novice),
<i>Sixth Sense</i> (novice), <i>Quick Draw</i> (novice), <i>Strangler</i> (adept) |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Weapons | Crossbow 6, Fencing sword 4 (precise) |
| Armor | Leather armor 2 (flexible) |
| Defense | 0 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Equipment | Garrotes, 1D6 doses poison (moderate), 1D4 Choking Spores, Suicide ampoule (strong poison with accelerant, 2D8 in damage for 1D4 turns), master craft leather armor. |
| Shadow | Flame-colored as polished copper (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The Night Cape almost exclusively attacks lone victims from a distance. If bogged down in melee she tries to run, and if she has allies for support she tries to stay in the background. She is patient and if she has agreed to a mission she will see it through or take her own life trying.

INSIGHTS

Should the player characters have bested the first two sellswords, the bodies can be examined.

If the characters failed their *Cunning* tests to identify the outdated coats, they may now try again, but this time those with the *Loremaster* ability or experience of serving in the Ambrian army gain +5 to the test.

A successful *Vigilant* test with the *Medicus* ability reveals that both men are in their late fifties, each with plenty of battle scars and a permanent injury – one of them has a crooked spine, the other an indentation on his skull which must give the man constant, blazing headaches.

A character who goes through their pockets and passes a *Vigilant* test will find two identical leather pouches. They are black and tiny, each containing a small ruby (value: 50 thaler), whose surface looks completely raw and uncut.

Investigations

REGARDLESS OF HOW the player characters react (or do not react) to the attack on the High Chieftain's stronghold, they will probably want to know more about Elmendra and her activities on and around Karvosti.

Many claim to have seen and spoken to her in the past year, and can testify that she often returned wounded from her expeditions in Davokar. Three people – the ogre Crueljaw, Teresma at the Longhouse, and Edrafin – have seen her meet with specific individuals, who might know more about what she has been up to:

A successful *Cunning* test with the *Loremaster* ability or the *Bushcraft* trait/boon reveals that similar rubies have been used as currency by the northern barbarian clans when visiting the markets of Thistle Hold or trading with travelling merchants.

It is possible to take one or both of the sellswords alive, but when interrogated, they will probably just shower their captors with more insults and profanities. Even if the interrogation succeeds (requires *[Persuasive -3]* or mystical powers/rituals), they know very little:

- They were hired in Thistle Hold to assist in the murder of the barbarian High Chieftain.
- Their employer was the same woman who led the attack; she never mentioned her name.
- They were to be rewarded with 500 thaler worth of gems, but would happily have done it for free – the barbarians serve the witches, and the witches are creatures of The Eternal Night; moreover, the barbarian savages ruined their lives by making them cripples.

OUTCOME

If the player characters helped hunt down the fleeing attackers, and perhaps turned a few beaten-up sellswords over to the wrathguards, First Guard Farvan will visit them personally to express his gratitude.

Should the characters have drawn any conclusions as to what happened, he would like to hear them, though he does not offer much information in return. He tells them that Tharaban is injured, but alive, and that the assailants arrived on Karvosti disguised as merchants and fortune hunters, in small groups, probably over the course of several days.

If the political scheming is used, all characters who helped defend the stronghold will gain +1 to their relations with the High Chieftain and the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath.

Crueljaw: The retired monster hunter would like nothing more than to join the search for his friend Elmendra, but he simply cannot. He blames old age and other ailments, and the fact that he has angered the Sun Church's representatives on the plateau. In reality, Crueljaw's greatest problems are his drunkenness and the crushing guilt eating away at him. Should the characters go to him for guidance and advice, he suggests that they ask the barbarian sellsword Amegor, who was very close to Elmendra – in fact, Crueljaw suspects that they were lovers.

Teresma: The hostess of the Longhouse does not like to talk about her guests. It takes a successful *Persuasive* test for her to admit that she sometimes saw Elmendra share a booth with Mankel, an independent explorer, schooled by *Ordo Magica*. A successful [*Persuasive* -5] test will then make her confess to having seen them hunched over a map which clearly depicted the northern archipelago of Lake Volgoma.

Edrafin: Money talks, as they say. Edrafin has seen Elmendra with Brother Bartho on several occasions, and he is certain that they went on at least one expedition together, a little over a moon ago. But this information will cost the characters ten thaler, or possibly a favor (the nature of which is for the Game Master to decide). If it becomes a matter of coin, some clever haggling and a successful [*Persuasive* -1] test may cut the cost in half.

AMEGOR'S TENT

The barbarian Amegor raised his tent at the outskirts of the pilgrim camp, in part because most of his customers were Ambrians, and also because he had “*a serious appetite for southern she-folk*.” His tent is easily found by asking around, but when the player characters come calling for the owner, no one answers.

The dome-shaped hide tent is not high enough to stand in and roughly four paces in diameter. Despite the darkness inside, no light is needed to realize what has happened. With a successful *Vigilant* test, anyone can smell the iron and urine in the air – the foul stench of the recently deceased.

Amegor is lying on his back, arms stretched to the side, his throat slit. He was contacted by one of the Black Cloaks present at the camp, who was willing to pay for information about his expeditions with Elmendra. When Amegor had told the stranger everything, the anonymous buyer offered him a cup of wine spiked with a sleeping elixir, before cutting his throat.

When asked, Amegor’s neighbors will say that they have seen nothing out of the ordinary. The barbarian was often visited by people wishing to hire him for various missions, and he probably was these past few days as well. Still, no distinct visitor comes to mind.

The following observations can be made inside the tent:

- The *Medicus* ability and a successful *Cunning* test: Amegor died about a day ago. The deceased shows no signs of struggle; he must have been unconscious when the killer slit his throat.

- The *Medicus/Poisoner* ability and a successful *Vigilant* test: His tongue is red and his breath smells of mint – clear indications that the master elixir *Sleeping Drops* was used.
- The *Poisoner* ability and a successful *Cunning* test: Sleeping drops are expensive, illegal to sell, and therefore only used by real professionals, such as the Black Cloak’s witch hunters and the Queen’s spies.
- The *Medicus* ability and a successful *Vigilant* test, or a successful [*Vigilant* -5] test: It seems that the deceased was holding a cup or a glass in his right hand as rigor mortis set in. None of the goblets found in the tent show signs of recent use.

MANKEL'S RESTING PLACE

The former Novice of the Order, Mankel, is not as easy to find. If they ask around persistently among the pilgrims and fortune hunters, the player characters will learn that he has been seen by many these past days, and that he was cheerful and generous, insinuating that a brilliant future lay ahead. Apparently, he was last seen roughly one day before the beginning of the adventure, by two witnesses – the wrathguard Ranata of clan Karohar and a fortune hunter named Lisel. Both will say that Mankel left the camp accompanied by two people dressed as Ambrian merchants, headed north-west towards the edge of the cliff.

If the characters follow these directions and keep their eyes open, they will soon find traces left behind by Mankel – but to do so, they must not only search the plateau itself, but also the mountain wall. With a successful *Vigilant* test, one of the characters discovers a piece of cloth flickering in the wind, stuck on a protruding twig further down the face of the cliff (*Cunning*: it must have gotten there recently, or it would have blown away by now).

With another successful *Vigilant* test, this time with a modifier of -5, the characters discover a fairly fresh footprint by the edge of the cliff. The *Loremaster* ability and a successful *Cunning* test (or experience of having served in the Ambrian army) reveals that the footprint was made by a standard army boot.

Should the characters leave the plateau to investigate the ground below, they will find the place where Mankel landed, but no body. They must pass two successive *Vigilant* tests in order to track down the corpse, which has been dragged away and feasted upon by a pack of jakaars. This is what happens to those who, like Mankel, always think the best of the Queen’s lackeys – in this case two Rangers who, after he had told them all he knew about Elmendra’s activities, pushed him over the edge.

When the jakaars (PC x 2) have been driven away, the following conclusions can be drawn from examining the corpse:

- The *Medicus* ability: Mankel died from the fall. There are no signs of any poisons or wounds inflicted by weapons.
- A successful *Vigilant*: In a pocket inside his tunic is a freshly-made money pouch containing 20 pristine silver coins.

BROTHER BARTHO'S HIDEOUT

When Bartho returned from a trip into the woods the other day, he went straight to his friend Amegor hoping to share a flagon of wine. He found Amegor dead in his tent; his throat slit and his hand clutching a goblet. Recognizing the scent of sleeping drops, the Black Cloak deserter feared that his former brethren had come to Karvosti looking for him. Bartho took the goblet to have a closer look at it, and then he left Karvosti. He fled to House Vearra's Outpost and sought refuge with his lover, Erella, who works as a cook at the Victorious Hawk.

Edrafin, or someone else, can show the player characters to Brother Bartho's tent. It is empty, of course, and the neighbors say that its owner has not been seen since yesterday, when he returned from a brief expedition into Davokar.

The characters can figure out where Bartho is hiding by speaking to the wrathguards at the wall – one of the patrols saw him leave the plateau by himself, without any camping gear – or revisiting their previous sources: Edrafin, Teresma, and Crueljaw all know that Brother Bartho frequently visits Vearra's Outpost to enjoy the food. If asked, the cooks Iarla and Salvia can also be of some use: Bartho constantly compared their food with the “*Sun God's cuisine*” served at The Victorious Hawk.

The guards and staff at the outpost know nothing of Brother Bartho's whereabouts; the only ones who do are his lover Erella and her son Arold, who, as part of the outpost's guard force, was able to smuggle him inside. Erella will not tell the player characters anything until they convince her that Bartho's life is in danger, and that they only wish to help him (requires convincing arguments and a successful *Persuasive* test). Alternatively, the characters may of course ignore the cook's protests and search The Victorious Hawk anyway. However, in that case, Erella will scream and summon a squad of four guards led by Arold.

Bartho is hiding in the establishment's attic, accessible from the storage room through a hatch

in the ceiling. He is suspicious and scared, and wise enough to realize the importance of what he knows (see below). Before the characters have had more than a few words with him, they are interrupted by the palisade's alarm bell – the outpost is under attack!

The outpost guards have the same stats as the Veterans on page 80, but also carry a bow (4 damage) and they do not suffer from the *Addiction* and *Elderly* burdens.



Brother Bartho

“Elmendra was my friend! MINE!”

Brother Bartho is a black cloak who on his missionary travels through the woods fell in love with a barbarian woman and, when faced with the decision of returning to the Titans or staying in Davokar, chose the latter. He spent many years in the woman's settlement by the shore of River Eanor, hoping to one day win her affection. But eventually he gave up, and has since put his acquired knowledge into practice as a treasure hunter – angry and bitter, at first, until Erella restored his fondness of life.

The chubby yet agile Bartho has but one great fear in life: that, because of his life choices, he has been branded a heretic by his former colleagues; that they would put him in chains if they had the chance, or perhaps even kill him on sight. For this reason, he keeps quiet about his past and does his best to avoid contact with the champions of Prios. He has lost all faith in the Sun God; all that matters to him now is leading as good and comfortable a life as possible.

Bartho's stats are presented as those of a player character, in the event that he joins the characters on their travels through Davokar (see suggestions on page 86).

Summoning Brother Bartho

Note that a mystic able to perform the *Summoning* ritual can find several personal items in Brother Bartho's tent, and thereby stop the gaming group from being drawn into the Sovereign's Oath's attack. If so, an anxious, soon-to-be angry Bartho will demand that the player characters escort him back to the Victorious Hawk's attic – he will not tell them anything until they have left Karvosti: "Do you realize what you have done?! I could be killed! Murdered!"

This will spice things up even further if it means that the characters arrive at the outpost just as the Sovereign's Oath launches its attack (see below). In that case, Brother Bartho demands that they save Erella in exchange for the information he can provide.

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Manner | Rubs his bald head | |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) | |
| Traits | Contacts (Explorers) | |
| Accurate 7 (+3), Cunning 14 (-4), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 11 (-1), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 10 (0) | | |
| Abilities | <i>Beast Lore</i> (adept; Abominations), <i>Exceptionally Cunning</i> (novice), <i>Loremaster</i> (master), <i>Medicus</i> (adept), <i>Steadfast</i> (novice), <i>Tactician</i> (master), <i>Twin Attack</i> (novice), <i>Witchsight</i> (adept) | |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Archivist</i> (II), <i>Nightmares</i> | |
| Weapons | Sword 1D8, Parrying Dagger 1D6 (balanced), both with +1D4 against Abominations | |
| Armor | Studded leather 1D4+1 (reinforced) | |
| Defense | -3 | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold 5 |
| Equipment | Clay pipe and Longbottom tobacco, Healing Spider, Camping Gear, 8 thaler and 4 shillings | |
| Shadow | Silver, with a few stains of black, like an old dinner plate (corruption: 2) | |

Tactics: Bartho was once a skilled and eager warrior, but while the skill is still there, he now does his best to avoid combat. If bloodshed is inevitable, he will take the offensive, targeting the opponent he dislikes the most.

THE OATH ATTACKS

Just as the player characters have started speaking with Brother Bartho, the Sovereign's Oath launches its assault on Vearra's Outpost. The purpose of the attack is to hit Ambrian interests in the forest and increase tensions between Ambrians and barbarians. They wear a type of studded leather/ring mail armor common among many of the southern clans, and use none of the special weapons for which the Saars and Gaois are known (bolas and throwing spiders).

The attacking force comprises a large number of clan warriors and five guard warriors, divided into five groups. A "witch" (see below) and the lindworm Adraselva will also enter the fray if/when the palisade falls. Adraselva's stats can be found in the *Core Rulebook* on page 223.

The player characters may choose between three main strategies:

Continuing the interrogation: If the characters decide to keep interrogating Bartho, the Sovereign's Oath will have entered the outpost before they are

finished. In that case, we recommend that they encounter a group of barbarian warriors (PC +1 clan warriors & 1 guard warrior, page 216 in the *Core Rulebook*) inside the Victorious Hawk, and a "witch" and the lindworm on their way across the courtyard. The defenders will prevail if the characters defeat their opponents.

Should they win, all characters will have earned +1 to their relations with the factions House Kohinoor, the Priesthood, and the Sun Knights. Characters who become known to the Sovereign's Oath get a modifier of -1 in future negotiations with its agents, and another -1 if they slay Adraselva.

Aid the defenders: If the characters head for the palisade to assist the guard force, they might stop the attackers from breaching the gates. A group of barbarian warriors (PC +1 clan warriors & 1 guard warrior) gets past the wall and heads for the gate. Should the characters manage to defeat them, the assault is called off and the remaining attackers retreat.

All player characters will have earned +1 to their relations with the factions House Kohinoor, the Priesthood, and the Sun Knights. Characters who become known to the Sovereign's Oath get -1 in future negotiations with their agents.

Escape: If they act quickly, the characters can flee across the palisade in the south, along with Bartho (and possibly Erella). A group of barbarian warriors (PC +1 clan warriors & 1 guard warrior) block their path, trying to enter the outpost from that direction. But if they are defeated the characters can escape successfully.

If the characters leave Erella behind at the outpost, and she knows who they are, they all get -1 to their relations with the factions House Kohinoor, the Priesthood, and the Sun Knights.

During the attack, especially if the characters choose a strategy that involves melee combat at the outpost, the following insights can be drawn about the attackers – insights which might be of interest to Ambrian factions, as well as the High Chieftain and Huldra:

- A successful *Vigilant* test focusing on the attackers' witch (during combat): The woman has adopted the garb and manner of a witch, but weaves no mystical spells; instead she throws or administers elixirs.
- A successful *Vigilant* test focusing on a fallen barbarian warrior: They all have a symbol tattooed on the inside of both wrists: a crown entwined by thorns.
- The *Medicus* ability and a successful *Cunning* test focusing on a fallen guard warrior:

Anyone can tell that all warriors have the same red scar tissue on various parts of their bodies (arms, neck, chest). With a successful *Cunning* test, a Medicus can conclude that the scars are the result of burnt-off tattoos.

- The *Loremaster* ability and a successful *Cunning* test focusing on the scar tissue: It is common among many northern clans to wear a tattooed symbol of one's god or guardian spirit.

Sovereign Witch

Laughing deliriously while hurling fire bombs

The Sovereign's Oath blames mystics and their twisted practices for the darkening of the world, which is why almost all Saarian and Gaoian witches have been executed. They do not mind alchemy, however, and knowing that Ambrians view the witches as fearsome symbols of the barbarian people, they have had their skilled alchemists dressed up like actual witches.

The Sovereign Witches wear masks of natural material; wide, flowing, many-colored dresses or robes; and various talismans, animal skulls, and braids. Unused to the horrors of battle, they often use drugs to bolster themselves to extreme – not to say mad – levels of courage and confidence.

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Manner | Sweeping, dancing movements | |
| Race | Human (barbarian) | |
| Resistance | Ordinary | |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> | |
| Abilities | <i>Alchemy</i> (master) | |
| Weapons | None (see equipment) | |
| Armor | Witch gown 2 | |
| Defense | +2 | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold 3 |
| Equipment | 1D6 Mistballs (see page 64), 1D4 doses of Lightning Dust (see page 64), 1D6 Boom Stones (see page 64), 1D4 Acid Orbs (see page 64) | |
| Shadow | Dark gray, like shale on the bottom of a river (corruption: 1) | |

Tactics: The Sovereign Witch stays in the background. Should someone attack her, she will simply try to dance away, laughing. If she is about to be captured, she will try to blind the enemy with Lightning Dust before hiding behind her allies.

THE ROAD IS REVEALED

Regardless of when and under what circumstances the player characters learn what Bartho knows about Elmendra's travels, he will not share his information without being given something in return. If he is pressured during the Sovereign's Oath's attack, Bartho demands that he and Erella are brought to safety (her son does not matter to him); if he is interrogated under less chaotic circumstances, the characters must make him a promise: that whatever they find on their expedition will first be shown to him – and that everything related to Elmendra's disappearance will be left in his care.

At first Bartho can reveal the information below, but he has more to offer when asked about the specific locations; pieces of knowledge which are described under the sub-headings beginning "The way to ..." (pages 99, 110, and 117).

- Considering Karvosti's history, Elmendra was convinced that the cliff must hold clues about where to find Symbar – possibly even its exact location. For the past three years she has been obsessed with finding a way into the caverns, preferably some type of back door.
- Brother Bartho only accompanied her on one expedition, to the ruins which the barbarians call Faarah Moroun. They went there to study the locking mechanism of an ancient gate, but ran into a pack of rage trolls; Bartho was injured and had to stay at the camp. Elmendra entered the ruin on her own and returned two days later, breathless and white as a ghost. She had found what they came for, but said that she had also "disturbed something which should

The importance of Brother Bartho

The Witch Hammer presupposes that the player characters meet and speak with Brother Bartho. However, if they for some reason should not, there are other ways into the adventure. The leaders of the various groups competing for the map to Symbar, as well as their superiors, all know about the three places visited by Elmendra (see Act II). Perhaps the player characters are contacted by one of these leaders (representing the Rangers, the Priesthood, or the Sun Knights), and enlisted as a reserve force? Or perhaps some greedy member of a certain group wants the map for himself/herself, and pays the characters to assist? It is highly unlikely that this would become necessary, but as Game Master, it would not hurt to prepare for all eventualities...

Brother Bartho as a NPC

If the Game Master so wishes, Brother Bartho could offer (or even demand) to accompany the characters on their journey, which may be particularly appropriate if the gaming group is a small one, or the characters lack some of his abilities. In that case, we suggest that Bartho is played by the Game Master, but that one of the players takes over during combat and other situations that require die rolls.

An interesting alternative would be to let Bartho use the characters for gathering clues, and later betray them in the beginning of Act III. For example, he could contact his good friend Cleaver, who would settle for a considerably smaller part of the treasure, or collaborate with the Queen's Rangers in exchange for a small fortune?

have been left sleeping." What it was she never said, perhaps because she eloped before the creature showed itself.

- As they travelled to and from Faraah Moroun, Elmendra told him about a previous expedition. She claimed to have visited Yeferon Isle in Lake Volgoma, as it had once been home to religious fanatics who were at war with the High Chieftain of the time. She described the journey as "*the bloodiest, most gruesome one she had ever experienced*," but also claimed to have met someone who had shown her a hidden passage into the cliff.
- He also recalls that Elmendra wished to speak with a girl named Elida. Bartho told her that

the girl was most likely with the witches. But that was then. More recent rumors suggest that Elida left Karvosti, mumbling something about going home to seek forgiveness. This probably means that she has returned to New Earthmoor – the extremely religious free settlement in which she was raised.

- If the player characters ask about Amegor, Bartho will admit to having taken the goblet from the dead man's hand. He examined its content, and according to a reliable source (the Adept of the Order, Madar), the beverage had been spiked with Sleeping Drops – which indicates that "*higher powers*" were involved in the barbarian's murder.

The Course of Events

WHEN SHE LEARNED about Father Piromei's meeting with Crueljaw, Queen Korinthia reacted with white-hot fury. She was particularly enraged by the fact that the directions to Symbar can be found in the witches' dwelling. If this is true, it means that the Huldra has repeatedly lied to her Legate and envoys.

She ordered Lothar Grendel to demand a statement from Yeleta about Elmendra's alleged discovery. Not only did the Huldra refuse to answer; she clearly demonstrated her lack of respect by sending one of her Keepers to meet with the Legate!

Now Korinthia's patience has worn thin. Even if the reports of a map to Symbar are incorrect, the barbarian Arch Witch has gone too far, and the High Chieftain has proven to be no more than a docile lackey on Yeleta's leash. Obviously, she hopes that the leaders on Karvosti will bow to her show of strength, but if they do not, she is fully prepared to wage war on them – annexing Karvosti would certainly ease Ambria's exploration of Davokar, and would also be a great symbol of Korinthia's supremacy, to barbarians and elves as well as her own people.

As the player characters conduct the investigations described above, distressing rumors have already started to reach the people of Karvosti. The characters can learn of this information themselves or from someone else; either way, they cannot fail to notice the ever-growing tensions on the plateau.

RUMORS FROM THE SOUTH

We recommend that the Game Master distributes the rumors according to the rough schedule below, in which Crueljaw's outburst at the Longhouse counts as day 0. Should the player characters be on the move, they could of course be brought up to speed upon returning to the cliff.

Day 1: Something is about to happen! Two merchants arrive from Thistle Hold, claiming to have spotted soldiers on the fields west of the city. They were raising tents and pavilions; a handful of large tents were already in place when the witnesses passed the area.

Day 2: A group of pilgrims brings news of military activity in Narugor. They travelled by boat from Kurun towards the Arch Bridge, and as they were leaving port, they noticed that several barges had arrived during the night. The ships had come from the south, carrying equipment and soldiers – most likely archers from Agrella.

Day 3: Several newcomers can tell of a military encampment having been established east of Thistle Hold. They say that there were roughly five hundred men, with more on the way. The purpose of the army remains unclear, but there is much speculation on the subject. Some think that Korinthia and her uncle, Duke Alesaro of New Berendoria, have finally had enough of each other. But most believe that the army is headed elsewhere: to Karvosti.

When the characters have visited their first adventure location in Act II: The army outside Thistle Hold continues to grow. Most recent to arrive was a cavalry unit of roughly one hundred men from Seragon. The total number of soldiers must be close to five thousand.

When the characters have visited their second adventure location in Act II: A hot rumor begins to circulate the plateau, even though no one really knows who first brought the news. The army outside Thistle Hold is now more than seven thousand men strong, and a column of more than two hundred Pansars is apparently marching north from Yndaros. What is more, at the head of the column rides Queen Korinthia herself!



The aged Lobaya of clan Odaiova arrives on Karvosti, carried by her tattooed bodyguard...

THE WITCHES WITHDRAW

Yeleta and her aids must deal with two separate threats. At roughly the same time as Elmendra visited Crueljaw, the witches learned that the lower parts of their caverns had been colonized by spiders; shortly thereafter, the Ambrian Legate presented Queen Korinthia's threatening demands.

Through dream sights and divination, the Huldra realized that the situation would only get worse, so when the stronghold was attacked she had already isolated herself inside the mountain. She did this for several reasons. The spider situation must be handled delicately, as it is never wise to make enemies of the ancient forces of the forest, but also because people on the plateau would panic if they felt threatened from outside (Ambria) as well as from below. Furthermore, she has little hope of being able to negotiate with a hostile Korinthia; no, better to stay away and not give the southerners the opportunity to stab her in the back – not until after the problem with the spider princess is resolved.

In short, from the beginning of the adventure it is impossible to contact the witches. The Arch Witch can sometimes be seen standing in the entrance to her dwelling, wearing a white mask painted with red symbols (see the cover of the book). But no matter how much they beg, no matter their relations with Yeleta or her aides, neither the characters, the High Chieftain, nor anyone else, will be allowed inside.

THE KEEPERS ARRIVE

A few days after Crueljaw's outburst at the Longhouse, the Keepers start to arrive on Karvosti, summoned by the Huldra who needs all the help she can get in dealing with both the spiders and Ambrians. There are only eight of them, since the witches of Saar-Khan and Gaoia are missing and clan Enoai is preoccupied with the situation in the north.

The player characters could witness the arrival of a Keeper or two – preferably Yarofal and/or Miralba – and hear of the others whenever they visit Karvosti between their expeditions.

THARABAN'S ACTIONS

It will take several weeks for Tharaban to recover from the assassin's poison, and the witches having shut themselves away from everyone does not make him feel any better. His agents in Thistle Hold keep him informed of the development; they give regular reports of newly-arrived troops, and bribe informants within the army to gain valuable insights into their plans.

A few weeks into the adventure, it is confirmed that the Ambrian army is mobilizing to annex Karvosti. Tharaban realizes that his only viable option is to submit to Korinthia's demands – Karohar is plagued by internal conflicts; Baiga is without a leader; Odaiova, Vajvod, and Zarek are practically allied to Ambria; and the warriors of the northern clans would hardly arrive in time, if they would answer his call at all. And since Yeleta – the only person who might be able to avert this crisis – will not leave her dwelling, there is only one thing left for the High Chieftain to do: save face.

When it becomes clear that Karvosti is under threat, the High Chieftain sends carrier-pigeons to the clan chieftains to explain the situation and request military assistance, thereby shifting some of the responsibility to them. Apart from the exceptions mentioned below, he receives exactly the answers he was expecting – some do not answer at all; others can (regrettably) only spare a few hundred warriors, which would hardly make any difference; a few chieftains advise him to flee and buy enough time to prepare a counter-attack when winter comes.

Table 14: The Keepers Arrive

| CLAN | NAME | MODE OF TRAVEL |
|---------|----------|---|
| Godinja | Amanmaar | Rides a deer with fur red as fire and antlers resembling the sparse and leafless crown of a tree |
| Yedesha | Yarofal | Is carried up the mountain wall by her coloss, who later withdraws to Aloéna's grove |
| Baiaga | Makaba | Walks unnoticed past the pilgrim camp, follows the fault scarp, and reveals herself before entering the mountain |
| Zarek | Miralba | Shapeshifts into an eagle and flies; assumes human form as she lands just outside the entrance |
| Varakko | Mardok | Walks across the plateau in <i>Nature's Embrace</i> ; emerges from the ground right next to the entrance |
| Odaiova | Lobaya | Arrives in a litter, carried by four barbarian warriors |
| Karohar | Yerola | Uses the elixir Transforming Draught to grow wings and comes flying. |
| Vajvod | Kathman | Walks across the plateau flanked by two grim-looking, elderly symbolists who are completely covered with tattoos. |

Reinforcements: About three weeks into the adventure, two hundred barbarian warriors arrive to help defend the cliff. They were sent by Chieftain Leonod of Yedesa, Tharaban's old clan. Having marched through the gates, they encamp on the plateau west of the stronghold.

Expulsion: Some time later, when the size of the Ambrian army becomes evident, High Chieftain Tharaban decides to expel all Ambrians from the cliff, except for the Queen's Legation (through whom he must negotiate with Korinthia) and the residents of the sun temple, whom he does not wish to offend.

Other Ambrians (including player characters) who are on good terms with the witches, the High Chieftain, or the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath, may also be allowed to stay on, or reenter, the plateau.

The gates are sealed: When Tharaban hears that Korinthia's army is marching north from Thistle Hold, he orders his men to seal the gates to the plateau – something the player characters will discover when they return from their third expedition in Act II.

One may still be allowed through, but not without good reason, especially if one happens to be Ambrian (as described above). It will normally take a successful [Persuasive -3] test for First Guard Farvan to open the gates, but the negative modifier can be discounted if the player characters already have good relations with Farvan and/or convince him that they are trying to prevent an Ambrian annexation.

THE SUN CHURCH'S SCHISM

At some point during the adventure, a templar will come to the sun temple – preferably before the expulsion of the Ambrians. Shortly thereafter, the theurgs, liturgs and black cloaks on the upper plateau come walking down, one after another, carrying what seem to be all their personal belongings.

They remain on Karvosti for a few days before setting off for Thistle Hold. They are accommodated in the guest wing of the stronghold, and some spend their days at the Longhouse. The player characters can go there to have a chat with some black cloak, Aranitra, or her initiates. A successful *Persuasive* test will reveal the following information:

- Either Alisbeta Vearra is misinformed, or her father has gone mad: she claims that the Sun Knights have left the Curia and aim to establish their own church.
- She claims that all templars have been summoned to Templewall to pledge allegiance

before the Knight Commander; a sacred oath to someone called Dead Prios.

- Alisbeta says that Karvosti's sun temple now belongs to the Templar Church, and will act as a base as they take vengeance upon the darkness of the forest.

VOLUNTEER DEFENDERS

If the Game Master so wishes, he or she can emphasize the gravity of the situation by having former residents return to Karvosti – barbarians who have lived in Ambria and are convinced that Queen Korinthia plans to attack their people. If so, these would be people with good reason to dislike, or even hate, Ambria.

Perhaps they tried to establish a business in some town or village, but were ruined by xenophobic locals? Perhaps they hoped to find work, but were rejected in favor of refugees, or were abused like slaves? Perhaps they simply wished to learn more about, and from, the Ambrians, but were taken for spies and forced to endure many years in some freezing dungeon?

This motley crew begins to arrive roughly one week after Crueljaw's outburst at the Longhouse, one by one or in larger groups. Many claim to have useful information regarding the Ambrians' activities, and they are all armed and ready to defend Karvosti – as warriors, healers, or scouts. They think they have a pretty clear picture of how the barbarian clans would be treated as subjects of Queen Korinthia, and most would rather die than let that nightmare come true.

Sun Knight Player Characters

All templars will be summoned to Templewall to swear a new oath of allegiance before the Knight Commander, this time to Dead Prios. All sun knights must make a decision – either to take the oath, or be excommunicated by the newly-formed Templar Church. Both the Priesthood and the Twilight Friars will welcome defectors with open arms, but many will leave the church entirely and find other ways to practice their faith.

Player characters who are faced with this decision may put off their visit to Templewall until the adventure *The Witch Hammer* has been completed. Until then, they have a bit of leeway: they can make their stance clear, or lie when asked about it. Eventually, the players should seriously consider having their characters leave the templar organization – the level of fanaticism which will be expected from him or her will most likely make it difficult to be part of a group of heretics (i.e. other characters).

A C T T W O :

Trailing the Explorer

THE FAMOUS FORTUNE HUNTER Elmendra has clearly made a tremendous discovery, probably in the caverns of Karvosti; most likely something that reveals where one may find the throne of the last Symbarian emperor. The player characters can hardly be anything but determined to get to the bottom of it all – and they are not alone in that ambition.

ONE OF THE greatest treasure hunts in the history of the region, if not the very greatest, is about to begin. In addition to the characters, there are seven groups involved in the hunt, all led by competent and ruthless individuals who will do whatever it takes to succeed.

Luckily, the members of these seven groups are far from the best of friends, so the characters have a good chance of playing them against each other and forming temporary alliances when the hunt becomes particularly intense. Cunning and sneaky maneuvers will probably be at least as important as strength of arms – something that, hopefully, the players and their characters will be very quick to realize. Making allies is key, and so is playing the rival groups against each other.

The Factions

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS' competitors are definitely no amateurs and should not be taken lightly, especially the leaders of the Ambrian factions.

All of them are determined to win, and will not hesitate to call upon their subjects and allies to achieve this goal. They are not merely in it for the reward which supposedly awaits the winner, but also for the glory and prestige, and of course the status such a success would bring to their organization or faction.

This chapter begins with a description of the seven competing groups and their members, followed by presentations of three adventure landscapes which contain local challenges and one or more rival groups to fight or join forces with. Before embarking on Act III, the characters should have acquired the following:

- Information regarding an entrance to the Underworld somewhere near Karvosti and how to navigate the Underworld in order to reach the roots of the cliff.
- Information on how to open the Undergate and enter Karvosti.
- Information regarding the caverns of Karvosti, especially where not to go.

HOUSE KOHINOOR

Korinthia and her kin are neither convinced that Elmendra has really found directions to Symbar, nor that she has managed to enter Karvosti. Still, this is the best lead they have come across in their search for the Symbarian Throne of Thorns, and besides, they do not mind displaying their military might in front of the witches and the High Chieftain – on the contrary: it is time the barbarians learned their place in Korinthia's growing realm.

The two groups hunting in the name of the Queen have orders to trail Elmendra and figure out what her discovery was and where she made it. Should it prove to be something of great value, they are ordered to secure the treasure; that is, bring it back to Ambria or to the nearest Ambrian military garrison (the one besieging Karvosti, for example).

The leaders of these groups are two seasoned officers. They are commanding squads of carefully selected rangers, along with two mages with experience from woodland expeditions and profound knowledge of the region's history. Reinforcements in the form of more rangers are available on Karvosti, but if the leaders or the mages are killed, there will not be time to replace them later during this adventure.

The two groups will split up and assume a wait-and-see approach. They prefer to stay hidden in the background and let others handle the challenges waiting at the various adventure locations, and then show up to take the uncovered information by force. But they are also open to forming alliances; should two or more groups clash with each other at the location the rangers are surveilling, they may reach out to one of them and extend an offer of collaboration. However, they will most likely dispose of their partners later on, if it can be done without significant risk.



Captain Marvello

"I act in the name of the Queen."

When the sinkhole opened up in Thistle Hold, spewing out beastly warriors, Captain Marvello excelled in the defense of the town. He became widely acknowledged as a great soldier, a reliable leader, and a man of action, which is why he was

later chosen to command a company of rangers. When it was time for Ambria to join the hunt for Elmendra's treasure, Marvello was handpicked to lead one of the groups and got to choose his own men, with the exception of the brash and cheeky master of the order Loreanda, who he could have done without. The rest are well-trained rangers who have earned his trust in the past.

The roughly fifty-year-old Marvello is prepared to use just about all means at his disposal to complete his mission, but he is not completely heartless. If the player characters already know him, it will take a lot for him to resort to violence instead of negotiation. In other words: if Marvello wants something from the characters, he will first demand it, then use threats of force, and finally follow through with his threats.

Note that if Captain Marvello died when your gaming group played the first part of *The Throne of Thorns (Wrath of the Warden)*, or if there are other reasons for him to be absent, the Game Master can simply change the name of the man leading House Kohinoor's first group of treasure hunters.

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Manner | Grumpy, hot-tempered | |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) | |
| Resistance | Challenging | |
| Traits | Contacts (the Ambrian army) | |
| Accurate 15 (-5), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 9 (+1), Persuasive 11 (-1), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 5 (+5) | | |
| Abilities | Iron Fist (master), Man-at-arms (adept), Marksman (master), Recovery (novice), Twin Attack (adept) | |
| Boons/Burdens | Commanding Voice (II) | |
| Weapons | 2 fencing swords (precise), two attacks dealing 8/6 damage; Longbow 5 (precise) | |
| Armor | Laminated armor 5 (reinforced) | |
| Defense | -4 | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold 5 |
| Equipment | 2 doses of a moderate Antidote, 4 Herbal Cures, 1 Elixir of Life, 5 Flame Arrows, 5 Whistler Arrows, 6 thaler and 4 shillings | |
| Shadow | A dull gray, like an unpolished iron bar (corruption: 0) | |
| Tactics: | Marvello stays back whenever possible, assisting his companions with well-targeted arrows. If he deems it necessary, he does not shy away from joining the melee himself, armed with his two fencing swords and all the experience he gained during The Great War | |

The factions' sources of information

All groups gain information about Elmendra's activities from the dead fortune hunters on Karvosti, firsthand or through someone else. The Priesthood interrogated and killed Amegor, and House Kohinoor did the same with Mankel. The information was then brought to the Sun Knights by a black cloak who happened to share their world view.

As for the fortune hunters: one of the groups (Dagesto) got to Mankel before the rangers did, but never considered killing him; another (Ioséfia) approached and bribed a young ranger at the Victorious Hawk. The third group will only come into play if the player characters spare Brother Bartho's life, and if they refuse to share their treasures and information with him (see The road is revealed on page 85).



Captain Lindra

"No one escapes me. No one!"

Despite being relatively young (38 years old), Captain Lindra has become famous for hunting down robbers in the Titans and around Yndaros. But as the situation in the south is beginning to stabilize, and all forces of good are needed in Davokar, she was relocated to the Kastor garrison two years ago. There she became renowned as an excellent strategist, utterly fearless before the darkness of the forest.

Her greatest strength is her tactical brilliance and an icy composure bordering on intrepidity – she will always choose the most effective strategy, even if it is also the most dangerous. And she has no moral compass to speak of; all that matters is getting the job done, no matter who stands in her way or what agreements have been made!

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Staring gaze, relaxed gestures |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (the Ambrian army) |
| Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 10 (0),
Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 5 (+5),
Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 15 (-5) | |
| Abilities | Beast Lore (adept, Cultural Beings), Iron Fist (adept), Man-at-arms (adept), Poisoner (adept), Shield Fighter (adept), Sixth Sense (master) |
| Boons/Burdens | Bloodhound (III), Pathfinder |
| Weapons | Sword 8 (deep impact, balanced); Shield bash 2 and [Strong +1] not to be knocked down; Repeating Crossbow 5; +2 damage against Cultural Beings |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Armor | Laminated Armor 5 (reinforced) | | |
| Defense | -8 (shield) | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | Mastercrafted sword (deep impact, balanced), 3 Herbal Cures, 1 Elixir of Life, 2 doses of a moderate Poison, 4 doses of a moderate Antidote, 3 thaler and 8 shillings | | |
| Shadow | Dazzling like sunlight reflected off newly-sharpened steel (corruption: 0) | | |

Tactics: Lindra fights swiftly and relentlessly. She trusts her ability to evade enemy attacks, and that her shield and armor will protect her from the few that actually hit. If she knows that the opposition will be tough, she will not hesitate to apply a thin layer of poison to her already deadly blade

The Wizards of the Order, Loreanda and Alessina

"Move aside, or I shall move you."

Loreanda comes from Ordo Magica's chapter in Kurun, where she studied under the prominent Davokar expert Argoi – something that made her boastful as well as arrogant. She thinks, with some justification, that she knows best in all matters related to the forest, which would not be a problem, did she not also assume everyone else to be as stupid as they are ignorant.

Alessina is one of the younger Masters of the Order, but few have as much experience of travelling through Davokar. She is covered in scars from head to toe (caused by cuts, acid, and fire) from countless encounters with wild beasts and abominations. That she is even alive is a testament to her power, and one can tell by the simple pearl necklace around her neck that she has lost many friends – each of the seventeen pearls represents a fallen comrade.

| | |
|---|---|
| Manner | Cautious, condescending |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (Ordo Magica) |
| Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 13 (-3), Discreet 10 (0),
Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 15 (-5),
Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 11 (-1) | |
| Abilities | Anathema (adept), Brimstone Cascade (adept), Flame Wall (adept), Loremaster (master), Ritualist (adept: Break Link, Clairvoyance, Magic Circle), Wizardry (adept) |
| Weapons | Quarterstaff 3 |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Armor | Order Cloak 2 (flexible) | | |
| Defense | -3 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 4 |
| Equipment | Spark Stone, Field Library, Excavation Tools, 1D6+2 thaler | | |
| Shadow | Shiny bronze with streaks of gold (corruption: 1) | | |

Tactics: The wizards stay in the background and support their allies with fiery brimstone cascades. If an enemy still manages to reach them, they will surround themselves (preferably along with a melee-proficient ally) with a wall of flames.

THE TEMPLARS

The Templars' biggest dream is to find Symbar, but not to claim its Throne of Thorns. No, where others seek treasure and symbolically significant castles, the Knights of the Dying Sun are trying to find "*the Mother of all Darkness*." When they do, their sole purpose will be retribution: Prios' killer will be crushed, annihilated, ground to dust! Even if the rumors of a map to Symbar are false, they expect to gain a great deal from following Elmendra's trail, not least by punishing the darkness standing in their way.

The sun knights in question are commanded by Leohan Mekele, and with him are several young but experienced templars, all previously stationed at the temple ruin east of Karvosti. Reinforcements are standing by in both of these locations, but will not be summoned until more than half the group has fallen in battle.

As for their strategy, the avengers of Prios care little for subtleties and finesse. They demand (and expect to be given) whatever they want, and all who refuse or obstruct them are branded cultists, or worse. But the sun knights are not stupid; when encountering overwhelming odds, they will wait for the power balance to shift or look around for acceptable allies. If they have already entered a partnership, they will honor that agreement, until it becomes evident that the partner in question is an agent of darkness...

Leohan Mekele

"There is nothing but the laws of the Lawgiver."

Leohan lost his mother and two sisters on the journey through the Titans, and now his two brothers have been taken by the dark. His hatred for Davokar and its darkness has burned like a beacon ever since his mother was slain by elves, and he often weeps, long and bitterly, over his dead god, over his failure as a defender of the sun. Leohan's brothers



Leohan Mekele

died honorably in battle, and now they are with Dead Prios, as he too shall be one day. That day is probably, and hopefully, coming soon.

If the player characters encountered Leohan and his brothers during *Wrath of the Warden*, it will obviously affect their relations. If they are on reasonably good terms with each other, Leohan will be open to cooperation, as long as he has nothing to lose by such agreements. But honestly, it is more likely that Leohan has every reason to detest, or even hate, the player characters...

If Leohan was killed when your group played *Wrath of the Warden*, he can be replaced by one of his brothers. And if they too are dead, or if the Game Master would rather have someone else leading the group, he or she may simply change the name of the templar commander.

| | |
|---|---|
| Manner | Smiles menacingly, baring his teeth |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (the Sun Church) |
| 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 | Beast Lore (adept, Abominations), Iron Fist (master), Man-at-arms (adept), Steadfast (adept), Theurgy (novice), Witch Hammer (novice) |
| Boons/Burdens | Enterprise, Musician (!), Code of Honor |
| Weapons | Mastercrafted bastard sword 10 (precise, deep impact) +2/3 (witch hammer) |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Armor | Full Plate 5 (hallowed) | | |
| Defense | -3 | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | 2D6 thaler, templar symbol, the book The Lightbringer | | |
| Shadow | Shimmering gold with stains of black, as if burned by acid (corruption: 3) | | |

Tactics: If possible, Leohan fights back to back with his companions; otherwise his only concern is destroying the darkness, always with his master-crafted bastard sword wreathed in holy fire

Templars (as many as the PCs)

"I am the Light in a dying world."

Leohan is accompanied by a group of young, hot-blooded templars eager to prove themselves in battle against the hordes of darkness. They have all been stationed on Karvosti or at the new temple east of the cliff for a long time, and they all know what awaits them – filled with grief, but with burning hearts, they are ready to avenge their dead god.

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Manner | Sad eyes |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (the Sun Church) |

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

| | | | |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Abilities | Beast Lore (novice), Holy Aura (novice), Iron Fist (adept), Man-at-arms (adept), Steadfast (master), Theurgy (novice), Witch Hammer (adept) | | |
| Weapons | Bastard sword 6 (precise) +2/4 (witch hammer) | | |
| Armor | Full Plate 5 (flexible) | | |
| Defense | -1 | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | Sun Symbol, The Lightbringer | | |
| Shadow | Tawny, like unpolished gold (corruption: 4) | | |

Tactics: The templars fight shoulder to shoulder or back to back to avoid being flanked, always with their bastard swords wreathed in holy fire.

THE SUN CHURCH

First Father Jeseebegai is just as eager as Korinthia to find Symbar, for exactly the same reason. The people of Ambria love their queen and are

probably not ready for the upheaval the First Father intends to bring about. But if he was the one who fulfilled Sarkomal's prophecy... Well, it would change everything!

The group of hunters he has sent comes from the Twilight Monastery in the Titans, and is led by his cousin, the black cloak and theurg Father Argaton Soleij. Argaton's orders are crystal clear: find the way to Symbar and eliminate all enemies of the Sun Church. What Jeseebegai does not know is that his childhood friend is having doubts, to such an extent that he (and the black cloaks following him) may start acting against the Curia's interests.

The black cloaks have always preferred to work in the shadows, rather than engage in open violence. They are quite open to collaboration, and Argaton, being a man of his word, will not lightly betray an ally. As the hunt progresses, he becomes more and more convinced that the heretic Father Sarvola is right in saying that humans should stay clear of Davokar. Eventually, this causes him to have a change of heart: any directions to Symbar must be destroyed, and all who have seen them must be disposed of – even if it means stabbing an ally in the back.

Also worth mentioning, is that the First Father has provided his cousin with a mighty artifact – the weapon which Elmendra gave to Crueljaw, who then handed it to Father Piomei. The theurgs have examined the artifact closely and been able to determine its powers (see the artifact Spiderbane on page 62).



Father Argaton Soleij

"I believed I knew; now I know that I believe..."

The Confessor Argaton experienced The Great War from the medical tents; he witnessed horrendous

suffering, and often had to intervene when his patients arose as ravenous undead. He believes in the Ambrian project – the kingdom's goal of growing so strong that no external threats would dare approach its borders. At the same time, he is increasingly worried by the internal threats which seem to grow by the day. And if truth be told, he secretly longs for the loving Sun God of his childhood.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Manner | Mumbling, often coughing |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | Contacts (the Sun Church) |
| Accurate | 9 (+1) |
| Cunning | 13 (-3) |
| Discreet | 10 (0) |
| Persuasive | 11 (-1) |
| Quick | 7 (+3) |
| Resolute | 17 (-7) |
| Strong | 5 (+5) |
| Vigilant | 10 (0) |
| Abilities | Exceptionally Resolute (adept), Lay on Hands (master), Medicus (adept), Prios' Burning Glass (master), Ritualist (master), Command Confession, Exorcism/Atonement, Holy Smoke, Judging Bonds, Purging Fire, Sanctifying Rite, Theurgy (master), True Form (adept) |
| Boons/Burdens | Storyteller (!) |
| Weapons | Spiderbane in sword form 5 (Balanced, Deep impact and Precise) |
| Armor | Blessed robe 2 (flexible) |
| Defense | +2 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 3 |
| Equipment | Prios Symbol (mystical focus), the book The Lightbringer, 14 thaler |
| Shadow | Whitish yellow, like the broiling summer sun (corruption: 0) |
| Tactics: | Argaton surrounds himself with allies, while letting the might of Prios incinerate his enemies (Prios' Burning Glass) and heal his friends (Lay on Hands). He carries Spiderbane in the form of a sword, but will not use it unless he has no other choice. |

Seasoned Black Cloak (PC+2)

"May Prios have mercy on you, heretic!"

As his companions, Argaton has chosen a group of seasoned black cloaks with experience hunting both witches in Ambria and abominations in the Titans. They are certainly loyal, but to Prios rather than to their human leader. So when the priest begins to lose his conviction, half of them will leave the group, declaring the others to be heretics.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Manner | Scrutinizing eyes |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | Contacts (the Twilight Friars) |
| Accurate | 10 (0) |
| Cunning | 13 (-3) |
| Discreet | 15 (-5) |
| Persuasive | 10 (0) |
| Quick | 11 (-1) |
| Resolute | 9 (+1) |
| Strong | 7 (+3) |
| Vigilant | 5 (+5) |
| Abilities | Beast Lore (novice), Feint (adept), Loremaster (novice), Ritualist (adept: Heretic's Trail, Holy Smoke, Judging Bonds), Shield Fighter (novice), Witchsight (novice) |
| Weapons | Fencing Sword 6 (precise, deep impact), Crossbow 5 |
| Armor | Chainmail 3 |
| Defense | -4 (shield) |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 4 |
| Equipment | Mastercrafted fencing sword (precise, deep impact), 1D4 Herbal Cures |
| Shadow | Matte silver with streaks of black (corruption: 3) |

Tactics: When needed, the black cloaks use rituals to reveal abominations. Once an enemy's inner darkness becomes clear, they will first fire their crossbows, then draw their fencing swords. They would rather kill an innocent than let an abomination live.

FORTUNE HUNTERS x3

The wild cards in *The Witch Hammer* are three groups of independent fortune hunters who, for different reasons, have decided to follow Elmendra's trail. In short, they are after the map to Symbar, and two of them are quite willing to share the treasure with others – if the legendary ruined city of the last emperor is found, there should be more than enough for everyone.

The third group only exists if the player characters did not make a deal with Brother Bartho (see The road is revealed on page 85). This group is also open to cooperation, but not with the player characters: Bartho has made it perfectly clear to the ogre Cleaver that the characters are his primary enemies!

These fortune hunting gangs are not very strong on their own, but might tip the balance in fights between other groups. Furthermore, the leaders of each group have special skills which other factions might benefit from, through negotiation or by force.

In addition to the leaders, each group consists of PC +1D4 Fortune Hunters with the stats described on page 215 in the *Core Rulebook*.

Game Master Material

A document entitled *Game Master Material for the Witch Hammer* will be available for free download at Järnringen's webshop [butik.jarnringen.com]. In it you will find all portraits, maps, and handouts included in this book – to be printed or, of course, viewed on electronic screens.



Dagesto

"Out of my way, that one is mine!"

Up until the battle against the Jezites in year 10, Dagesto was employed by the Ambrian army to construct and operate siege machines. During the attack on Haloban's fortress, everything seemed to go wrong – his catapults missed their targets, the breaching pots would not explode, and the fog from his Smoke Bombs dissipated within seconds. Dagesto went berserk and broke the jaw of one of his assistants.

Facing demotion, he resigned from the army and has since made his living as a fortune hunter in Davokar, with some success. Dagesto is ready to give his life for a chance of finding Symbar; he tried once before, and was nearly killed as his group walked straight into a monstrous, blight-born hunger wolf. He does not care much for the Queen's representatives, the Rangers in this case, and would love an opportunity to give them a rap on the knuckles. Or break them.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Manner | Boisterous, bobs his shoulders |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Contacts (fortune hunters) |
| Accurate | 13 (-3) |
| Cunning | 11 (-1) |
| Discreet | 16 (-6) |
| Persuasive | 5 (+5) |
| Quick | 7 (+3) |
| Resolute | 10 (0) |
| Strong | 9 (+1) |
| Vigilant | 10 (0) |
| Abilities | Berserker (adept), Exceptionally Discreet (novice), Siege Expert (adept), Trapper (adept) |
| Weapons | Alchemical grenade 5 (burning, area effect), Alchemical Firetube 6 (burning, area effect), War hammer 8 (blood-letting, massive, unwieldy) |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Armor | Studded leather 3 (+2 for Berserker) | | |
| Defense | +7 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | 4 Alchemical Grenades, 3 Firetube Charges, Locket with a portrait of a young Korinthia, Trapper's Manual, 8 thaler and 4 shillings | | |
| Shadow | Grey as lead, with streaks of fiery copper (corruption: 1) | | |

Tactics: Dagesto's first move is usually to trigger his firetube. Then, if he manages to keep his distance, he will throw a grenade or two before going berserk and throwing himself into melee combat, wielding the firetube as a two-handed weapon.



Ioséfia Dresel

"Taste my crimson kiss..."

The barely thirty-year-old Ioséfia of the House Dresel comes from a family who, despite its lowborn status, has many representatives at Korinthia's court. But there is something odd about House Dresel and its tendency to breed individuals of dubious character. Ioséfia grew up idolizing her much older cousin, Dorian, and was one of a few people with whom he shared his secret – that the notorious burglar known as "the Silver Lily" was in fact him.

Ioséfia listened to her cousin's tales, learned his tricks, and eventually began to follow in his footsteps. Instead of leaving a silver lily at the places she robbed, she left a kiss mark of red lipstick, which is why she would soon be called "The Red Kiss." But for Ioséfia, burglarizing Yndaros was not enough. When Dorian disappeared, she decided to take on another challenge, and has since spent all her time and resources trying

to find Symbar. She will not rest until she has proved to her fawning relatives that there are other ways to power than kissing the Queen's feet.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Manner | Always smiling menacingly |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Privileged |
| Accurate | 10 (0), Cunning 11 (-1), Discreet 13 (-3), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 5 (+5), Vigilant 10 (0) |
| Abilities | Acrobatics (master), Knife Play (adept), Poisoner (adept), Twin Attack (novice) |
| Boons/Burdens | Cat Burglar (III), Con Artist (III), Dexterous (II), Heirloom (mastercrafted Silk Cuirass), Shadow Spawn (III), Wanted |
| Weapons | 2 Stilettos 4 (deep impact) |
| Armor | Lacquered Silk Cuirass 4 (reinforced, flexible) |
| Defense | -4 |
| Toughness | 10 Pain Threshold 3 |
| Equipment | 8 doses of a moderate Poison, Marlit Cape, Excavation Tools, 35 thaler |
| Shadow | Dazzling like sunlight reflected off a shield of white gold (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: Isófia never goes to battle without first having rubbed poison on her stilettos. And when the fight begins, she makes full use of her acrobatic ability – dancing in and out of melee combat, while using her enemies as shields to avoid being hit.



Cleaver

Cleaver

"You're not friends! You're enemies!"

In Thistle Hold, Cleaver is known as a capable and reliable leader of woodland expeditions. So far he has mostly run missions for Ordo Magica and Ambrian nobles, often to establish outposts or investigate ruins along the outskirts of Davokar. He might have bitten off more than he can chew when he accepted his friend Bartho's mission to follow Elmendra's trail, but the thought of one day getting to see Symbar makes his usually hazy eyes glitter with excitement.

Cleaver has the utmost respect for Bartho's wishes; if he says that the characters are the enemy, then that is what they are! He will not attack them on his own, but is happy to form alliances with others who wish them gone.

However, his companions are more concerned about their own skin than their leader's promise to some former monk – if Cleaver falls, it is unlikely that they will stay and fight.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Manner | Blinks too often |
| Race | Ogre |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Long-lived, Robust (II) |

Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 11 (-1), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 13 (-3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 17 (-7), **Vigilant** 10 (0)

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Abilities | Exceptionally Strong (adept), Iron Fist (master), Natural Warrior (master), Wrestling (master) |
| Boons/Burdens | Pack-mule, Pariah |
| Weapons | 2 knuckle daggers (deep impact), two attacks against the same target, 12/7 damage |
| Armor | Leather 2 (+3 Robust) |
| Defense | +2 |
| Toughness | 17 Pain Threshold 9 |
| Equipment | Excavation Tools, 2 doses Elixir of Life, Mind Stone (linked to Bartho), 3 thaler and 14 shillings |
| Shadow | Reddish-brown, like ferrous soil (corruption: 1) |

Tactics: Cleaver despises ranged weapons, and regards mystics as outright cheaters. The enormous ogre rushes straight into melee combat and likes to demonstrate his awesome power and speed by hurling enemies across the battlefield. Should the enemies be outnumbered, he will instead grapple one target at a time and let his allies stab them.

Table 15: The competitors' routes

| GROUP LED BY... | STOP 1 | STOP 2 | STOP 3 |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Captain Marvello | Yeferon | New Earthmoor | New Earthmoor |
| Captain Lindra | Faarah Moroun | Faarah Moroun | New Earthmoor |
| Leohan Meleke | New Earthmoor | Faarah Moroun | Yeferon |
| Father Argaton | Faarah Moroun | Yeferon | New Earthmoor |
| Dagesto | New Earthmoor | Yeferon | Faarah Moroun |
| Ioséfia Dresel | Yeferon | New Earthmoor | Faarah Moroun |
| Cleaver | Faarah Moroun | New Earthmoor | Yeferon |

THE COMPETITORS' MOVEMENTS

The Game Master is of course free to use the competing groups as he or she pleases; still, we would like to offer a bit of guidance. The rest of this chapter describes three adventure locations where the player characters will go looking for information. Each section includes the subheading Competitors in the Area where you will find suggestions on which rival groups are present in each location, depending on when the characters arrive – that is, on whether the site in question is the first, second, or third waypoint on their journey. There are also descriptions of

what has happened to each group so far – if they have suffered losses or injuries, or if they have managed to call for much-needed reinforcements.

Table 15 gives a first overall view of the groups' suggested movements, so that the Game Master, even at this early stage, can get an idea of what they could be like. However, the player characters' actions might cause unexpected changes, which is why the Game Master must be ready to improvise – for example, if the group led by Ioséfia Dresel is vanquished during the characters' visit to Yeferon, they are out of the running and will obviously not show up at New Earthmoor or Faarah Moroun.



Yeferon Isle

YEFERON ISLE IS famous to all who travel the waters of the region. Known as “*the island on the brink of the Spirit World*,” it is said to be a place where wraiths howl and the undead hold court. According to legend, the island’s unnatural state is explained by ruptures in the fabric of the world, or by deep tunnels to the Darkness Below, but this is not really the case. Actually, the people of Yeferon crafted their own doom and current predicament.

This adventure landscape is about gathering information regarding a way down into the Underworld and how to navigate its caverns in order to reach the roots of Karvosti. The information can be found in a cave beneath a temple, with the old High Priest whose body has merged with his toad-like master. There are many ways to the priest, and the characters may have to face their competitors in the darkness below the island’s towering ziggurat.

BACKGROUND

At the time when the barbarians crowned their first High Chieftain, Yeferon and its surrounding islands were ruled by Queen Iasmial. While most of the other rulers in the region supported Serembar, Iasmial merely pretended to, while secretly trying to form a profitable alliance with the enemy, the Spider King Angathal Taar. For Iasmial and her people worshipped the god Oroke, or rather his self-proclaimed descendant – the toad creature Manaud, whose hunger for power and other appetites were insatiable.

Things did not turn out quite as the Queen had expected – the Spider King, while grateful for her services, had no interest in forging alliances. Iasmial kept her part of the bargain: her warriors and mystics found a way into Karvosti through the Underworld, stormed the cliff, and nearly slew Serembar. They did so empowered by Angathal’s gift. He called it “Oroke’s blessing,” but in reality, the ancient scroll contained a powerful curse – one of the Symbarians’ many failed attempts to “elevate humanity.” Everyone present at the ritual was indeed strengthened in body and spirit, but then their bodies began to undergo a slow and unstoppable transformation. Those who returned from the attack on Karvosti were no longer human; little by little, they turned into monstrous abominations whose mere touch would kill their victims and raise them as undead.

From the top of the Yeferon ziggurat, Iasmial watched her people fall as a result of her greed. When the undead came swarming up the pyramid, she entered the crypt of her ancestor, Yefer, sealed

the doors behind her, and took her own life on top of his sarcophagus. In the depths of the ziggurat was her high priest, Garathve – unaffected by the “blessing” he had bestowed on the warriors, and desperate with guilt. He kneeled before Manaud and begged him to hide and shield the world from the abominations he had created. The creature heard his request, and answered: “*There shall be a tear in the world, and in it the children of Garathve and Iasmial will be hidden. But at great cost; it requires sacrifice, and that sacrifice shall be Garathve’s.*”

The High Priest, consumed with guilt and shame, had no objections. He let himself merge with Manaud, and his life force fueled a ritual which concealed Yeferon Isle from the world, and vice versa. The place has remained isolated ever since, and only a few know of its exact location. Over the centuries, a number of plunderers have managed to reach the island and some have even returned with their life. But these were mostly barbarians who, having violated sacred taboos, never spoke of their expeditions.

THE WAY TO YEFERON

The effect of the ritual which Manaud weaved over Yeferon Isle is much like that of a *Witch Circle*, except that it affects a larger area and works both ways. As with the *Witch Circle*, those approaching the island will not notice it in any way, nor realize that something is missing – their eyes will simply look past the part of reality where Yeferon is hidden. Moreover, those who penetrate the barrier are unable to perceive the outside world; only water, as if the horizon was but some hundreds of boat lengths away.

Brother Bartho knows the following about why Elmendra went to Yeferon and how she managed to get there:

- According to the barbarian chroniclers, about five centuries ago the High Chieftain’s cliff was attacked from below, by the raging hordes of the warrior queen Iasmial.
- As a result of her failed attack, the Queen brought a curse upon herself and her people, and the gods banished all of Yeferon to the spirit world (GM: not true). However, certain scriptures in the High Chieftain’s vault indicate that the island can in fact be reached, as long as one does not trust one’s senses.
- One must travel by boat, directly east through the passage between the islands called Vaer and Heanan by the Zareks. Set the course, bind the rudder, and have faith.

Since the island's glory days, only a few groups of treasure hunters have made their way to the inlet of Yeferon Bay. Fewer still have returned.



- Elmendra was reluctant to talk about her stay on the island, saying only that she lost four travelling companions to its less than hospitable inhabitants.
- She claimed to have met Iasmial's High Priest. Once again she did not say much, but apparently he told her about a way through the Underworld, leading to the roots of Karvosti.

The easiest way to reach Yeferon Isle is to first head for one of the Zarekian fishing camps on the western shore of Lake Volgoma, either by foot along the shoreline or by boat across the bobbing waves of the lake (from the free settlement of Jakaar, for example). There one can receive further instructions or pay someone to show the way to the passage between Vaer and Heanan, from which – as mentioned earlier – one must head directly east.

On the far side of the passage is a small stretch of open water, surrounded by islets in the Volgoma archipelago – a stretch which seems far too small for an island large enough to hold the palace of a queen. But if one has not strayed too far off course (requires the *Bushcraft* trait or the *Loremaster* ability and a successful *Cunning* test, or just a successful [*Cunning* -5]; several tries are permitted), one will eventually

pass through the barrier where one's perspective changes. The islets increase in number and suddenly seem very remote, and in their place, Yeferon Isle emerges before the sailor's bewildered eyes.

COMPETITORS IN THE AREA

If the player characters choose Yeferon as their first stop, they will encounter the groups led by Marvello and Ioséfia. These two may very well team up against the characters, but in that case, Marvello will try to dispose of Ioséfia's group as soon as the information has been obtained. On the other hand, it is also possible for the characters to form a temporary alliance with one of these groups.

Should Yeferon be the characters' second stop, Argaton's and Dagesto's groups will be present on the island. These groups are unlikely to collaborate with each other, but the characters might be able to join forces with one of them.

If Yeferon is the last stop on the characters' journey, they must confront Leohan and his sun knights, and possibly Cleaver as well if he has not already been eliminated. Collaborating with the ogre is obviously impossible, and there is a strong possibility that he will approach the sun knights for a chance to really give the characters a serious beating.

YEFERON OVERVIEW

1. Eliael
2. The Plunderer
3. The fortune hunter
4. The Ziggurat
5. Galdag's Isle
6. The Crack



OVERVIEW

Yeferon Isle spans almost 2.5 kilometers from east to west, with a maximum width of about 1 kilometer. The main island is comprised of two parts, one eastern and one western, separated by a ridge in the north and a deep bay in the south. The western peninsula is dominated by what was once the Queen's city, Yeferia, now a vast ruin haunted by forlorn wraiths – most sung to rest by the winter elf Eliae; some still desperate for warmth and comfort.

The eastern part of the island used to be the religious center in the Kingdom of Yeferon; a kingdom whose population lived in relative safety and prosperity due to their pact with the ancient Manaud – the revered creature brought vigor to the people and their lands, in exchange for regular human sacrifices (usually foreign slaves or prisoners of war). Today, all that remains is the massive ziggurat with its partially wrecked wall. Manaud has long since fallen into hibernation, but the peninsula is still inhabited. Queen Iasmial has been raised as undead by a weak but constant aura of corruption – an effect of Manaud's protective ritual. Sitting on the top of her ziggurat, she commands the undead legions which were created when her corrupted warriors returned from Karvosti.

The character's task will be to enter the ziggurat where High Priest Garathve still lives, merged with his sleeping master. There are three ways in, which they can learn in the ruins on the western peninsula – through the horde of undead in the courtyard, through a tunnel from Galdag's Isle, and through a crack in the innermost coast of Yeferon Bay (connected to said tunnel). On their way there, and during their investigations, they must watch out for both affection-seeking wraiths and competitors hunting for the map to Symbar.

Wraith

Moaning, sighing, and wailing with hunger.

The black, shadow-like figures drifting around Yeferon Isle, alone or in groups, are drawn to living creatures like flies to rotting meat. They seek affection, sympathy, help, or just someone willing to listen, without realizing that their desperate touch is lethal for the living.

As long as the player characters are on the island, they risk catching their interest. Every hour, a $1d10-4$ is rolled to determine how many wraiths are attracted to them; a negative result equals zero.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Manner | Like cloth swaying in the wind |
| Race | Undead |
| Resistance | Ordinary |

The Power of Corruption

What Manaud did to Yeferon constitutes, without a doubt, a crime against the natural order. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the place is plagued by lingering, corruptive energies. Every hour, everyone present on the island must make a **Strong** or **Resolute** test (the player may choose). Failing the test means that the character gains (1) temporary corruption, which will not go away until he or she has gone through the barrier and returned to the outside world.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Traits | Alternative Damage (II, Strong),
Spirit Form (II) |
| Accurate | 13 (-3), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 11 (-1),
Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 15 (-5),
Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 10 (0) |
| Abilities | None |
| Weapons | Touch of death 4 (ignores Armor, damages Strong) |
| Armor | None (half damage according to Spirit Form II) |
| Defense | 0 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | None |
| Shadow | Glossy black, like oil (corruption: thoroughly corrupted) |

Tactics: The wraiths attack people at random. There is a 50% chance that an individual wraith will flee if the damage sustained exceeds its pain threshold.

YEFERIA

The once magnificent city of Yeferia is better preserved than many other ruin complexes from the same era, since it cannot be touched by rain or wind. Also, it is not particularly overgrown due to the island's dry and meager soil. The city was once home to Iasmial's most privileged subjects and their servants, and there they have remained – wraiths, awakened by the corruptive energies keeping the island hidden from the world outside.

Among the ruins are a few places of relevance to the adventure. However, the Game Master should give some thought to what the other buildings are like, perhaps with inspiration from the rules supplements on pages 54-57. It should be mentioned that some plunderers have actually reached Yeferon through the centuries. This means that there are remnants of dead fortune hunters scattered across the island, and that most of the treasures have already been snagged by

someone else (this becomes particularly evident if the player characters arrive to Yeferon after Ioséfia's and/or Dagesto's groups).

During their stay in the city, the players must make a test every half hour (instead of every hour) to determine whether they encounter any wraiths).

Eliael: In the middle of the city, at the base of a great toad monument of withered, red-speckled, black granite sits the winter elf Eliael. She sings a billowing, melancholy tune, while hundreds of wraiths dance and whirl around the statue, as if hypnotized by the song.

It is possible to reach her, but the wraiths cannot be avoided. Any who try to go through them must pass two *Resolute* tests before reaching the monument. Should either of these tests fail, the sweating character must retreat to the edge of the square, and cannot make another attempt within an hour of the failure.

Eliael is almost three meters tall, emaciated, and dressed in a simple, knee-length, off-white tunic. She sits at the base of the statue, her hands resting on the stone, and those who come close will notice thin mycelium strands stretching from her lower arms and naked legs to the ground beneath her. She keeps her eyes shut until someone approaches, but she will not stop singing unless a character with the *Loremaster* ability, at Adept level, speaks to her in elvish.

She begins with a clarification, and a question: "*The song must go on, the pain must be eased, or Eliael shall suffer its torment, and then, so shall the world. Tell me, can you be persuaded to leave Yeferon, now, at once?*" Realizing that they cannot, she whispers: "*Do not disturb the Queen; choose the underground path, from Galdag's Isle; from where the sun rises to where it sets. But be warned - if blind,*

you will fall victim to unseen snares; if foolish, your road will be short and incomplete. My advice: leave the kingdom of Manaud, or remain forever." Then she starts singing again, and the wraiths, no longer moving, their faces contorted with rage, resume their dance.

Note: Captain Marvello (stop 1) and Dagesto (stop 2) will speak to Eliael. She will not comment on this or answer questions (for every moment she does not sing, she risks losing the wraiths' attention), but the footprints from their shoes and boots are clearly visible on the dry and dusty ground around her.

The plunderer: On the shore of the stream which runs through Yeferia lies the skeletal remains of a plunderer who died on the island almost a decade ago. There is not much left of his clothes, only a dried and shrunken cuirass of studded leather and an equally age-worn knapsack. But in order to get close enough to examine the corpse, one must first deal with the wraiths circling it (as many as the characters).

A parchment scroll can be found in one of the knapsack's pockets. The lines drawn on the parchment have almost faded, but can be detected with a successful *Vigilant* test. In order to fill out the lines so that the map can actually be read, one must also pass a *Cunning* test (+3 for characters with the *Cartographer* boon). If both of these tests succeed, the players gain access to the handout about Yeferon, where the crack in the innermost coast of Yeferon Bay, through which one can reach Galdag's tunnel, is marked out (see page 150).

A character with the *Medicus* ability who examines the skeleton and passes a *Cunning* test will notice that many of its ribs are broken, as if the deceased received an incredibly heavy blow to the chest, or fell from great height and landed on a rock. If the test succeeds with a difference of 5 or more, the character also manages to identify what looks like great claw marks on the ribs; the injury is definitely the result of a brutal blow from a clawed and abnormally large hand or paw (a Garoug, see below).

The fortune hunter: In a cellar below one of the ruins hides the fortune hunter Serema, who was left behind by her colleagues less than a week before the first of the groups following Elmendra's trail arrives on the island. She is absolutely terrified, will not trust anyone, and is slowly starving to death. With a successful *Vigilant* test, player characters walking through Yeferia can notice her footprints - someone has moved, repeatedly and hastily, between a nearly dried-up well and one of the better-preserved ruins.

Manaud-cross



The Toad Monuments

The city's architecture gives an indication as to what awaits inside the ziggurat's caverns. Both outside and inside the pyramid, there are monuments, statues, statuettes and little figurines in the shape of toads - some fat and stubby, others more frog-like; some with curled horns, others with near-human features; some with menacing fangs, others expressing serene authority. These variations came about as artistic styles changed over the centuries, along with Manaud's temperament.

It should also be noted that Manaud-crosses (see the illustration above) in various sizes can be seen on most of the monuments; some separate, others carved into or painted on the sculptures.

If the characters treat her gently, and especially if they offer her something to eat, Serema may be talked into lowering her loaded crossbow and sharing the information listed below. But getting her to leave her hiding place is much more difficult – good arguments and a successful [Persuasive -5] test are required to save her from meeting a horrible end.

Note: if Yeferon Isle is the second or third stop on the character's journey, Captain Marvello will already have found Serema, talked to her, and replenished her food supply. However, he could not persuade her to leave with him.

- She came to the island with her newly-wedded husband and his gang of treasure hunters; they had purchased information about the place from a penniless Zarek in Thistle Hold.
- After having unearthed some trinkets in Yeferia, they set off for the ziggurat; her husband, Darask, and one of the others approached it from the north. They ran the last stretch and were seen by the "stiffs", but as they finally got inside the pursuers backed down.
- Serema let out a terrified scream so that she and her group were detected as well. They fled, hunted by at least fifty undead. Running through the hills, she fell into a crack, and the undead hunters kept going after her friends.
- When she had finally mustered the courage to continue, she headed for their ship, but it was gone. She went back into the ruins and found the cellar, where she has stayed ever since.

THE ZIGGURAT

The almost one hundred meter high step pyramid of red-speckled black granite has a rectangular base, each side almost two hundred paces wide. It was raised in Symbarian times, when Yeferon was a flourishing province in the kingdom, formed around their ancient deity, Manaud. The structure itself has begun to crumble, as has the four meter high wall surrounding the ziggurat and its courtyard – many cracks mark its surface, some large and deep enough for someone to squeeze through.

At the top level of the ziggurat are about a dozen crypts where some of Yeferon's greatest rulers had the honor of being buried. The most striking element is the throne placed by the southern edge of the plateau, at the top of the stairs which are carved into the pyramid. Upon the throne sits Queen Iasmial, anxiously waiting for a reason to defend her kingdom. Her troops are perfectly lined up by the foot of the stairs, awaiting instructions – a thousand or so dragouls whose creators are long dead, who have volunteered to join the queen's army.

The courtyard: The area inside the cracked wall spans about 500×400 meters. The dragouls are standing in twenty rows with fifty individuals in each, the foremost row positioned about 50 meters from the base of the pyramid and, more importantly, from the two openings located on both sides of the bottom stairs. The dragouls will not follow the characters into the ziggurat; the challenge is to get inside.

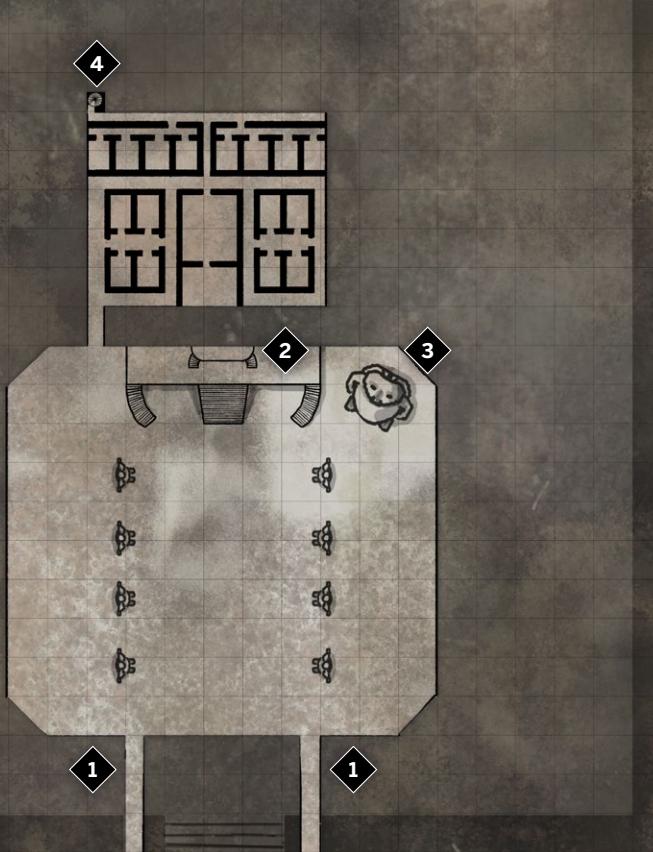
The best way is to jump over the northern wall and sneak along the base of the pyramid. Reaching one of its southern corners without being detected requires whoever is the worst at sneaking to pass a *Discreet* test. If it fails, the undead guards will suspect that something is wrong, and an extra 1D4 will be added to the number of dragouls standing in their way. As the group runs from the corner to one of the openings (approx. 100 meters), every character must pass a *Quick* test; for each failed test, 1D4 additional dragouls will block their path.

Alternatively, if the group jumps over the eastern or western wall, there will be about 200 meters between them and the openings. In that case, they must all succeed with a *Discreet* test when passing the wall. He/she with the lowest *Discreet* must then pass two additional tests for the group to get close enough to make the final dash as described above (each failed *Quick* test now adds 1D6 enemies instead of 1D4). Should any of the *Discreet* tests fail, the group would do best to turn back, as there will be a horde of dragouls standing between them and the pyramid.

Should the player characters be detected, or try to lure the undead warriors away from their posts, Queen Iasmial will send ten groups of PC×2 dragouls to hunt them down. One possible solution to this problem could be for a character (or an ally!) to sacrifice himself/herself by standing in the southern gate of the courtyard and drawing Iasmial's attention. That would cause her dragouls to turn around and march south, allowing the other characters to enter the ziggurat unnoticed. Alas, the brave person acting as bait will have a tougher time trying to evade the undead pursuers.

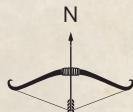
Note: If Yeferon Isle is the second (or later) stop on the player characters' journey, there will be gaps in the dragoul ranks, as Captain Marvello has already passed that way and used two of Ioséfia's fortune hunters as bait. Ten or so undead warriors lie slain in the courtyard, by the openings and near the western wall, along with some of Marvello's and Ioséfia's fallen companions.

The temple hall: On both sides of the bottom stairs are openings leading into a vast marble hall (100×100 meters), with 12 meter high pillars sculpted into naked, sexless people with toad-like



THE ZIGGURAT'S INTERIOR

1. Tunnels in/out
2. Podium with a hatch
3. Manaud-statue
4. Stairs to Manaud's cave



10 m²

faces and arms stretched upwards. In the back of the hall is a podium on which Garathve once stood, informing people of Manaud's will. In the middle of the podium is a hatch through which human sacrifices were sent to appease the ancient one.

A player character who gets up on the podium must pass a *Vigilant* test to notice the edges of the hatch on the dusty floor. If the test fails, whoever goes first must pass a *Quick* test or fall 10 meters straight into Manaud's chamber. Other characters within melee distance may try to help their unfortunate companion by grabbing him or her: a successful *Quick* test will prevent the fall.

A rope or rope ladder is needed to safely reach the lower levels through the hatch. Another way is through a rear alcove, found by going through an arched opening in the inner western corner of the hall. There is a short corridor leading to the priests' quarters, completely bare, as all furniture has moldered into dust. Among the large number of open doorways is a corroded copper gate; behind it is a zig-zagging staircase leading to the cellar. However, due to corrosion, the gate is sealed shut and can only be opened with a successful [*Strong -10*] test, with +2 to *Strong* for each level of the *Robust* trait. Also, before the gate lie two corpses – Serema's husband and his associate agreed to stab each other

with their swords, rather than go back through the main exit to face the undead horde.

Note: If Yeferon Isle is the second (or later) stop on the player characters' journey, they will detect the hatch automatically, as Captain Marvello's group has already been there. If it is their third stop, there will be a broken spear on the ground and marks on the copper gate, indicating that someone tried to bend it open (Argaton's men did just that, before rappelling down the hatch).

GALDAG'S ISLE

For hundreds of years, the little islet north of Yeferon, once part of the main island, was home to a witch named Galdag. It was Manaud who kept her from dying, as she was his most treasured servant, charged with the care of his body and soul. She sang to her master, listened to his deepest thoughts and dreams, and rubbed ointments on the self-inflicted wounds he received during his many fits of rage. Needless to say, Galdag was tormented by her duties and took it out on her surroundings – to such an extent that one of the early rulers of Yeferon eventually sacrificed two of his more than thirty children to Manaud, urging him to separate Galdag's home from the rest of the island.

There is nothing on Galdag's cliff, except for a small ruin – a modest villa surrounded by a wall. The place was stripped of all treasures a long time ago, but the old witch is still there, sitting in her rocking chair, exactly as she did when Manaud fell into hibernation and his life-supporting powers finally abandoned her. Galdag's body is well preserved, albeit yellowed and withered, and her fiery mane still sprawls around her head.

In the cellar is a corridor with runes around the entrance and a toad statue the size of a moose's head hanging above it. The runes can be deciphered with a successful *Cunning* test and the *Loremaster* ability (master): *"You who enter, know that no one under the heavenly sun governs Manaud."* The tunnel is a steep slope which goes under the bay and leads to Manaud's chamber. But in order to get that far, one must overcome the following obstacles:

The saw blade trap: There is a trap just where the slope levels out; one that players of the adventure *Tomb of Dying Dreams* might be familiar with. The tunnel is divided by an arched portal with runes carved along the top of its frame. The signs can be deciphered with the *Loremaster* ability (master): *"Worship mighty Manaud, your protector."* A successful [*Vigilant -5*] test reveals that the signs for "Manaud" are somewhat broader and deeper, as

if they have been subject to more wear than the others (namely, from Galdag's finger, which she ran along the lines every single day for many centuries).

Another successful [Vigilant -5] test is required to detect six narrow slits in the ceiling and on the floor north of the portal. The person noticing them may try to block the trap with proper tools and a successful *Cunning* test. If not, the trap must be deactivated by having everyone who passes run their finger along the runes representing Manaud's name.

Should the trap be triggered, the person who goes through the portal, and the two people after him/her, must pass a [Defense -5] test against two separate attacks when the long saw blades emerge from the floor and ceiling. Each blade deals 8 damage; armor protects as usual.

Note: Captain Marvello's group will trigger the trap; hence, if the player characters arrive after them, there will be bloodstains on the walls and floor, and the slits will be easier to detect (Vigilant test). If they arrive after Dagesto, he has run his finger along the Manaud runes and also set a trap of his own on the other side of the portal – a tripwire connected to a moderate Alchemical Mine (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 127). The trap is triggered if whoever goes first fails a [Vigilant -6] test, and affects everyone within one Movement Action (10 paces) of the portal.

The pit: About halfway through the tunnel waits another trap – a simple pitfall concealed by a mystical illusion. Those who go near the trap can suspect that something is wrong by passing two consecutive tests, one *Vigilant* and one *Cunning* – the air appears to be flowing in a way that seems odd for such an isolated tunnel. Identifying the exact location of the pitfall requires a successful [Vigilant -5] test, unless the players expressly state that they are watching the ground before them as they go.

If the characters fail to notice the trap, the one going first will plummet five meters into a crack in the mountain; a crack with a number of sharpened stakes at its bottom. The unfortunate one must pass a *Quick* test to grab and hold onto the edge of the pit, preventing the fall. Should it fail, the character will not only take 5 meters worth of falling damage, but also land on 1D4 stakes dealing 4 damage each. *Armor* protects as usual.

Note: If the characters arrive after Marvello, his group's footprints will give a clear indication as to the location of the trap. Someone has already walked straight into it (footprints in the middle of the corridor end abruptly), while others, as revealed by their tracks, advance through the tunnel by keeping to the western wall. A dead ranger can be found in the pit.

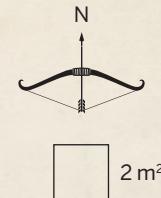
The gate: There is a massive double gate at the end of the tunnel, made from black, red-brindled granite. It is completely bare, except for sixteen stone plates on the right half of the door, each about the size of a person's palm and carved with Symbarian symbols. A successful *Vigilant* test reveals a tiny hole in the middle of each plate. If one is pressed, it will sink a decimeter into the door.

The door can only be opened by pressing four of the plates in the correct order. The solution is found in the writing above the entrance to the corridor in Galdag's cellar – first you press the symbol for "heaven," then "sun," followed by "ruler/governor" and finally "Manaud." While it would be fun if the players figured this out on their own, a successful *Cunning* test with the *Loremaster* ability can give them a hint – "There should be some sort of clue nearby..." – and the entire solution if the *Cunning* test succeeds with a difference of at least -5.

If someone presses the wrong plate, or the correct ones in the wrong order, there is a deep clicking noise and the locking mechanism is blocked for a full day. Furthermore, when pressing the wrong plate with a bare hand, the character will be stung by a poison needle protruding from the plate as it slides into the door. The poison is a strong one and deals 1D8 damage for 1D8 turns.

With a successful [Vigilant -5] test, one can determine which four blocks are the most worn. Then there are 24 combinations to choose from. The players must either make a guess or roll 1D20. In the latter case, a result of 1 will open the door.

Note: If the characters arrive after Captain Marvello, a successful *Vigilant* test will reveal that a group has moved around the area for quite some



GALDAG'S YARD

1. Villa
2. Storage
3. Barn



time (they pressed the wrong plates and had to turn back). If they arrive after Dagesto, there will also be tracks in the dust which clearly show that the door has recently been opened.

THE CRACK

In the innermost coast of the Yeferon Bay is a crack, which connects to the tunnel between Galdag's Isle and the ziggurat south of the gate. The only problem is that the cave closest to the opening is inhabited by a pair of Garougs - huge, amphibious bears (see page 66). They ended up on Yeferon by an unfortunate accident ten years ago, when the spring ice gave way and left them stranded on an ice float which drifted straight through the barrier.

Should the characters try to go that way, they will most likely have to fight their way through. It would be wise to approach the opening with caution, by scouting from a distance or sneaking closer to assess the situation. During daytime, there is a 20% chance that the bears will be hunting the waters around Yeferon (roll 1D10 for each creature, 1-2 means that they are out). At night they are asleep and can be taken by *Surprise* if the characters manage to sneak up on them.

furthest in are the Garougs' cubs - six playful creatures with fur as white as snow. They are not large enough to pose a threat to the characters, but some will snarl threateningly at them if they come too close, while the others let out heart wrenching calls for their parents. If the characters do not silence the cubs within 2 turns, and one of the grown Garougs is out, there is a 50% chance of it hearing the cubs' call. Finally, it should be mentioned that characters with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon who pass a *Cunning* test can appraise the cubs' rare and beautiful fur at 50 silver thaler a piece.

Note: No other group will be taking this route, as only the characters can find the dead fortune hunter and his map.

MANAUD'S CAVE

Creating the barrier which surrounds Yeferon required more effort than Manaud's body and mind could bear. The ancient creature has now spent five hundred years in hibernation, still alive thanks to the power he draws from the spirit world and the fluids his body soaks up from the moss around him. And all this time, High Priest Garathve and a handful of other unfortunates have been awake, their bodies merged with their slumbering deity.

Manaud's almost circular cave is approximately 100 meters in diameter and borders on an underground pond, in turn connected to the waters of Lake Volgoma. The cave walls and

ceiling, as well as the bottom of the pond, are covered with blue and green shimmering algae that provide enough light for the characters to see clearly. The air is very humid, which explains why large parts of the ground are overgrown with lush, dark-green moss.

The southern parts of the cave are all desolate. The High Priest mentioned by Elmendra is nowhere to be seen, but in the north, on a bed of emerald moss, lies the great Manaud. The enormous, toad-like creature is about ten meters long from nose to tail, and nearly four meters tall, even while lying flat on the ground. His reddish skin looks almost black in the green-shimmering light, and the slow movements of his body show that he is breathing. Manaud will not wake up, no matter how much noise the player characters make - but, of course, the players do not know that. Nor are the characters supposed to fight him, but should they consider it, you could have them all make a *Cunning* test to realize the foolishness of doing so. Should they insist on fighting him, use the stats of a primal blight beast in the *Core Rulebook*, but with *Acrobatics* (master) instead of *Corrupting Attack*.

Between the characters and Manaud are four extremely well-sculpted statues of blackened silver, standing in a half circle, each on a plinth of granite - a gift from King Yefer, which was hardly needed when the toad creature was active, but now serves a defensive purpose.

Looking at the guardians, one will clearly see that they are not really statues, but rather full suits of plate armor. With a successful *Vigilant* test, one will also notice two interesting details: their armor displays many cuts and gashes, as if hit by bladed or pointed weapons, and the eyes of their masks are not blackened at all; on the contrary, they seem meticulously polished.

Since the magic which was once infused in these Ice Guardians has lost some of its potency, one might actually get past them. They react to sound and movement, but all who pass a *[Discreet +5]* test can sneak past without activating them. Should any of the tests fail, all four will come to life, determined to slay the intruders. In that case, the characters must either fight or flee; the guardians never leave the cave, and will return to their plinths after an hour, when a second attempt can be made.

Ice Guardians

The occasional snapping or cracking sound, as if from pack ice in the spring

The four guardians patiently wait to defend Manaud from any threat. When the creatures are



activated, the eyes of their masks begin to glow with ice-blue light, while frost emerges on the armors and spreads towards the spears.

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Manner | Relentless, mechanical movements | |
| Race | Elemental | |
| Resistance | Ordinary | |
| Traits | None | |
| Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 9 (+1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 11 (-1), Vigilant 10 (0) | | |
| Abilities | <i>Staff Fighting</i> (adept), <i>Polearm Mastery</i> (adept) | |
| Weapons | Frost spear 5 (long) | |
| Armor | Full plate 4 (flexible) | |
| Defense | -3 | |
| Toughness | 11 | Pain Threshold 6 |
| Equipment | None | |
| Shadow | Bluish-black, like congelation ice near the bottom of a lake (corruption: 3) | |

Tactics: The Ice Guardians attack the nearest intruder until that person is dead. They split up according to the number of enemies, but are otherwise uncoordinated and act mechanically.

Once the player characters have gotten past the guardians, they may examine Manaud more closely. The first thing they notice is that what appeared to be large warts are in fact something else entirely – human faces, pressed tightly against the inside of Manaud’s thin, moist skin; as if at least twenty people had merged back-first with the creature. Soon a muffled, hissing sound is heard. A successful *Vigilant* test reveals that the sound was the hush of a human, and the characters can see one of the faces twitching under the skin, high up on Manaud’s side.

In total, there are four faces moving under the skin and one that is not covered by it. Garathve’s face is completely exposed, as is the headband he is wearing – an exquisitely engraved gold headband embellished with gems, with a Manaud cross at its front. The ancient High Priest glances sluggishly at the characters from a place near his deity’s right shoulder. If they make a lot of noise or raise their voices, he will hush them yet again, and say, in an old barbarian dialect: “Wake not the god that sleeps.”

Those with the *Loremaster* ability at master level may address Garathve without any die rolls; adept *loremasters* must pass a *Cunning* test. To be given the same information as Elmendra, the characters must assure the priest that they mean to attack the abhorrent cliff of Karvosti – a successful



Persuasive test is required from the one speaking to him. Should none of the characters possess the *Loremaster* level required to communicate verbally, gestures and the word “Karvosti” will suffice, but then they must also pass a [*Cunning* -3] test.

The character who is deemed worthy of help will receive an answer; not with words, but in the form of a mental image. What the character sees is the actual map which Yeferon’s Commander presented to Iasmial and her priest a few days before the attack, and it can easily be reproduced, if the character is quickly provided with some sort of writing instrument. The Game Master can hold up the map on page 151 in this book and instruct the player to draw a copy of it; perhaps setting a time limit, without specifying the exact amount of time available.

After a while, the image begins to fade. Garathve hisses a few words (“Avenge me! Destroy Karvosti!”) and, sighing sleepily, he shuts his eyes and dozes off.

Note: If this is the character’s second stop, there are two dead fortune hunters next to the entrance, struck down by swords (Marvello betrayed Ioséfia’s group after sneaking ahead and acquiring the map himself). If Yeferon is their third stop, Dagesto’s group has smashed one of the guardians to pieces – three of his fortune hunters were killed before the rest fled. However, there are tracks left by Father Argaton, who reached and spoke to his “colleague”: On the cave wall in the direction where Garathve is looking, someone has painted the setting sun of Prios with brush and ink.

Despite repeated attempts, Fundiber’s warriors have serious difficulties getting past the palisade of New Earthmoor.



Righttime in New Earthmoor

TWELVE DAYS WALK upstream from the mouth of River Malgomor lies one of the most isolated free settlements in the region. New Earthmoor was established in year 5 by a group of families from Earthmoor – a village in the Ravens whose remaining residents were later massacred by sun knights and theurgs for their heretical ways.

Today, New Earthmoor is populated by almost two hundred men, women and children. Life in the village is characterized by strict obedience to the laws of the Earthmother, which after contact with Davokar were tightened to deny individuals the right to express, or even have, any feelings or urges. The only exception is the urge of self-preservation; it is the duty of all villagers to safeguard their own lives, as they are the rightful property of the Earthmother.

The player characters will face a number of challenges in New Earthmoor. The village is beset by the fearsome warriors of the Sovereign's Oath, led by the war hero Fundiber who is determined to send Ambrian corpses floating down River Malgomor. Reaching the palisaded core of the village will not be easy, nor will the task of getting to see the mad and anguished Elida. But if they succeed, the characters stand to gain a detailed description of Karvosti's interior, including its lower levels.

BACKGROUND

Elida was the first child ever born in New Earthmoor, and it soon became clear that she

had been chosen by the Earthmother to perform miracles. As a mere toddler she already had a calming effect on her surroundings. Destructive feelings like anger, anxiety and general unease seemed to vanish in her presence and, naturally, her family became the very heart of the community. While her parents accepted and relished their status, Elida was increasingly burdened by being "chosen," even though her powers diminished over the years. At fourteen years of age she escaped the village and headed west along the river, eventually ending up on Karvosti.

On the High Chieftain's cliff she was taken in by Edrafin, who sensed that she was special. She helped a number of residents at the pilgrim camp – including the much weakened and angst-ridden Elmendra – before rumors of her ability began to spread. Piomei, the head of the sun temple, immediately sent a squad of templars to "apprehend the heretic," but Yeleta got to her first and brought Elida to the witches' dwelling. And when she realized what powers the girl possessed, she decided to ask her for help.

Elida was alone and afraid, and dared not refuse the Huldra. She was taken deep inside the cliff, where her task awaited – try to help the deranged former huldra Oryela regain her sanity, or at least keep her calm.

Elida spent a year in the darkness, but when her desperation finally exceeded her fear, she fled



Elida's gift

Thanks to the fluctuating, magical node located in the marshes south of New Earthmoor, the newborn Elida was blessed with a powerful mystical gift; a gift that was spontaneous during her childhood, but as the years passed became increasingly difficult to activate. The gift works like the *Inherit Wound* power, except that Elida inherits the target's destructive feelings instead. This has darkened her own soul, and she now balances on the edge of madness, especially right after having treated someone.



back to New Earthmoor, traumatized by what she had seen in the depths of Karvosti. She only agreed to share her knowledge with Elmendra because they knew each other from before, and because the fortune hunter lied about her intentions. The question is: what must the player characters do to obtain the same information.

THE WAY TO NEW EARTHMOOR

The easiest way to reach New Earthmoor is obviously to go by boat along the Malgomor River. Still, it will be an arduous journey. While the wind can at times be strong enough to fill the sails, travelers will mostly be rowing upstream through swirling waters. Also, where the river is too shallow or too rapid, the vessel must be dragged on land. Travelling the river is about as time consuming as going on foot along its shores: roughly 12 days without any lengthy stops.

If they prefer to walk, there are shortcuts which could save a few days, but it might not be worth the risk. There is a good chance that those taking shortcuts through the forest will encounter packs of predators and other dangers, and without the river as an escape, they will have no choice but to stay and fight.

Should the player characters wish to learn more about New Earthmoor before setting off, Brother Bartho or some of their other acquaintances on Karvosti can reveal the following:

- Elida spent a long time in the witches' dwelling, and except for the witches themselves, she is probably the one who knows most about its layout and what lurks down there.
- The settlers of New Earthmoor worship a strict and unforgiving version of the Earthmother, which explains why they decided to leave Ambria.
- No one knows the size of New Earthmoor, but its population would have to be quite large to defend itself against predators, elves, and other threats – probably more than 200 people.
- Free settlements tend to be hostile towards strangers, and rumor has it that New Earthmoor is no different – more or less everyone who claims to have gone there for help or shelter says that the settlers would not let them through the gates.

NEW EARTHMOOR

The free settlement is located a few kilometers from the river Malgomor, north of a vast wetland where the settlers grow rice and breed

Inspiration for the journey

On the way to New Earthmoor, the characters will pass the area thoroughly described in the adventure *Tomb of Dying Dreams*. The Game

Master could take a closer look at this adventure and use it as inspiration for the journey. It would of course be particularly interesting if the player characters have already experienced the events of *Tomb of Dying Dreams* and thus had an impact on the location's current status.

amphibians. A log palisade, high as five men, surrounds the village center except where it borders on the swamp. The palisade has two gates, in the east and in the west, as well as an opening blocked by wooden bars, through which a small creek flows from the fault line in the north, through the village, into the wetland.

Life in the village is completely ritualized, and consists of hard work interspersed with communal meals and prayer. Strangers are not welcome inside the palisade, regardless of hunger or need.

1. Palisade & gatehouse

The almost ten meter high log palisade has two gatehouses, one in the west and one in the east. Along the inside of the wall runs a balustrade, from which patrolling guards can fire arrows at attacking enemies with an Advantage.

2. Barred opening

The creek which comes crashing down the fault and flows through the village passes the palisade through a grate of sturdy, wooden bars.

3. Chapel

The chapel is the largest building in the village, with enough room to accommodate the entire population. There are no benches inside, nor any podium; visitors kneel directly on the raked earthen floor, with Karala leading them in prayer from her spot amongst the others. The only indication that the building is a place of worship is the full-size, wooden statue of a tubby woman suspended from the ceiling in the back of the room; in summer it is covered by greenery, in winter by leafless, withering stalks.

The Earthmother

According to the villagers' interpretation, the Earthmother is a strict and unforgiving goddess, who is disappointed with mankind's failure to manage her gifts and now expects them to do all they can to right the wrongs of previous generations. Everything in nature has a god-given function, and it is up to the humans to unlock each object's potential. This task requires total submission and a willingness to put the objects (material, plants, and animals) before their own urges, feelings and desires. The mare cat's cubs are not supposed to be petted or cuddled, but to be bred and eaten. Stones and trees are not meant to be carved into sculptures or other so called artworks, but to be used as firewood or building material. Meat and plants are not there to bring pleasure, but to fill bellies!

NEW EARTHMOOR

1. Palisade & gatehouse
2. Barred opening
3. Chapel
4. Elida's family home
5. Pigsty
6. Frog farm
7. Stilt houses
8. Guard post 1 & 2
9. Fundiber's camp



4. Elida's family home

The village's most prominent family lives in a two-story building near the chapel. The furniture is simple and functional; there are no decorations whatsoever. Elida spends her days and nights in her room on the second floor. The door can be bolted from the outside, if needed, but these days it is no longer considered necessary.

5. Pigsty

A rectangular building where the villagers keep their domesticated wild boars, which are constantly grunting and screaming. If the player characters try to get hold of Elida through stealthy maneuvers, the boars can be used to create a diversion. In that case, no tests are required to reach her house unnoticed.

6. Frog farm

Apart from the boars, the people of New Earthmoor get their protein from the frogs reared inside this fenced-in pen.

7. Stilt houses

With no room for more buildings inside the palisade, people started raising stilt houses in the swamp. Simple, creaky plank bridges connect the houses with each other and with the shore.

Villager

"Go away, there is nothing for you here!"

The village's deeply religious population lived in isolation even before they crossed the mountains. Most of them are physically deformed due to inbreeding, with abnormally high foreheads; hollow eyes; wide, gap-toothed mouths; and short, stubby arms and legs. They all wear the same earth-brown pants and tunics, the men with matching hats, the women with matching coifs.

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Manner | Sullen-faced, staring suspiciously |
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Weak |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 5 (+5), Discreet 10 (0),
Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 11 (-1),
Strong 13 (-3), Vigilant 15 (-5) | |
| Abilities | <i>Sixth sense</i> (adept) |
| Weapons | Axe or Spear 4, Bow 4 |
| Armor | Leather 2 |
| Defense | -3 (-4 if shield and axe) |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Toughness | 13 | Pain Threshold | 7 |
| Equipment | None | | |
| Shadow | Rust-brown with streaks of green, like a bronze plate overgrown with vines (corruption: 1) | | |

Tactics: The villagers stick together. When fighting in open field, they will do so in pairs, usually men with shields and axes along with spear-wielding women. But they prefer to use their bows from a distance.

THE SIEGE

Whether New Earthmoor is the character's first, second, or third stop, they will find the village under siege. The Sovereign's Oath do not differentiate between Ambrian outposts and free settlements; their mission is to hit the Ambrians hard and sow discord between Ambrians and barbarians, and for that purpose, New Earthmoor will do just as well as any other village.

The person targeting the settlement is none other than the legendary Fundiber; he intends to raze New Earthmoor to the ground and send its people floating down the river. He does not have enough men to surround the entire palisade, and they have not yet been able to breach the gates. But as reinforcements arrive, he continues to launch assault after assault, and the villagers will hardly be able to hold him off forever.

Note that if Fundiber is defeated or driven away, something interesting can be found in his tent - small pieces of paper which have been carried by birds from clan Gaoia's territory. The messages contain demands for reports and express a growing anger at Fundiber for not following orders. They are all signed with a single R - both the High Chieftain and the Huldra would recognize the handwriting as belonging to the Gaoian chieftain, Rábaimon.

Another interesting detail is that both Fundiber and his warriors wear the Sovereign's Oath tattoo - a crown entwined by thorns - on the inside of both wrists.

Fundiber

"Now you diiie!"

Fundiber - a red-bearded, long-hammer-swinging, heavily scarred giant of a man - has fought countless battles on behalf of his clan, without ever wishing to be chieftain himself. He loves to fight, and to bask in the admiration of his Gaoian brothers and sisters when the battle is won. His opponents are usually beasts of a more or less



blight-stricken variety, but after having spent a few moons in the south, he has come to appreciate human prey – in many ways, their cleverness and outbursts of emotion make defeating them so much more satisfying.

Fundiber has not come to the south to make friends, and consequently, he is virtually impossible to reason with – and in order to succeed, one better bring along an interpreter as his Ambrian vocabulary is limited to a few words, all related to killing. Maybe, just maybe, he would consider entering an alliance if it would increase his chances of crushing New Earthmoor. But in that case, he is likely to turn the hammer on his allies as soon as the battle is won.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Manner | Arms folded across his chest |
| Race | Human (barbarian) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> |
| Accurate | 11 (-1), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 10 (0), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 16 (-6), Vigilant 7 (+3) |
| Abilities | Exceptionally Quick (adept), Exceptionally Strong (novice), Feat of Strength (adept), Hammer Rhythm (master), Iron Fist (master), Rune Tattoo (adept), Two-handed Force (adept) |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Poison Resilient, Enduring March, Bloodthirst</i> |
| Weapons | Long-hammer (long, bastard weapon, unwieldy, massive, precise), two attacks at the same target, 10/8 damage |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Armor | Double chainmail 4 (reinforced) +2 (Rune tattoo) | | |
| Defense | -2 | | |
| Toughness | 21 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | Wooden spider figurine (Oroke), belt garnished with the fangs of slain beasts | | |
| Shadow | Brown with stains of black, white, and yellow, like granite gravel (corruption: 2) | | |

Tactics: Fundiber runs at the forefront of his troops, utterly convinced of his superiority. He attacks the biggest, most fearsome enemy around – anything else would be unthinkable.

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.

Grap

"I fight, I kiiiiill!"

The rugged rage troll Grap was a gift to Fundiber from one of clan Enoai's troll tamers, whom the hero saved from a newly woken liege troll. Grap has been whipped to perfection; he is just as loyal and obedient as a battle-trained jakaar, at least when his master is watching.

Fundiber still prefers to keep him on a leash, and when the master stops, the rage troll sits down beside him, grumbling until he is scratched on the head.

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Manner | Submissive like a dog | | |
| Race | Troll (rage troll) | | |
| Resistance | Ordinary | | |
| Traits | <i>Long-lived, Natural Weapon (I), Robust (I)</i> | | |
| Accurate | 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 9 (+1) | | |
| Abilities | Berserker (adept), Natural Warrior (adept) | | |
| Weapons | Claws (short), two attacks at the same target, 9/7 damage | | |
| Armor | Troll skin 4 | | |
| Defense | +7 | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | None | | |
| Shadow | Bright red, like arterial blood full of life (corruption: 0) | | |

Tactics: Grap fights by his master's side and attacks whoever is at hand. Having learned many painful lessons from previous battles, he will not attack the enemy Fundiber is fighting, even if he seems to need assistance.

Gaoian warrior (PC×4)

"We shed our blood for the Blood-Daughter."

The elite warriors under Fundiber's command are as scarred and experienced as their leader, to whom they are utterly loyal. To them, war is not only a duty, but a pleasure. Karline, a Master of the Order from Kurun who has visited the clan on many occasions in the hope of meeting Uncle Lint, once said about its warriors: *"They would rather die than stop fighting, which says a lot about their behavior in battle..."*

Over the course of the adventure, more and more warriors will join Fundiber, but since many will die trying to storm the settlement, the Game Master can assume their number remains constant – whenever the characters arrive at the village, there will be PC×4 Gaoian warriors present. They all wear the mark of the Sovereign's Oath – a crown entwined by thorns (see page 77).

| | |
|---|---|
| Manner | Quiet, grim |
| Race | Human (barbarian) |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> |
| Accurate 15 (-5), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 10 (0),
Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 7 (+3),
Strong 13 (-3), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Axe Artist</i> (master), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Rune Tattoo</i> (adept),
<i>Shield Fighter</i> (novice) |
| Weapons | Axe 7 (or two attacks 6/4);
Throwing spider (special, see page 65) |
| Armor | Leather 3 (+2 with <i>Rune Tattoo</i>) |
| Defense | -3 (shield) |
| Toughness | 13 |
| Equipment | 1D6-1 Throwing spiders |
| Shadow | A bright shade of reddish brown, like an autumn bog (corruption: 1) |

Tactics: When entering battle, or moving towards a new target, a Gaoian Warrior will first throw a spider. Then he or she sets upon the enemy with an axe – usually stunning them before striking them with a powerful blow.

COMPETITORS IN THE AREA

If New Earthmoor is the player characters' first stop, Leohan and Dagesto will already be there. Dagesto will probably offer to construct a ballista for the villagers in exchange for information from Elida. Leohan is not likely to collaborate with the barbarians, nor with the settlers, and will try to

fight his way into the village during one of the Sovereign's Oath's attacks.

Should New Earthmoor be the player characters' second stop, Marvello, Ioséfia, and possibly Cleaver, will have arrived at the scene. The first two are no doubt hostile to each other after what happened on Yeferon Isle, but it might be possible for the characters to enter a pact with one of them. Marvello's strategy is probably the same as Leohan's, while Ioséfia will try to sneak inside and look for Elida on her own.

If New Earthmoor is the last stop on the characters' journey, Marvello will still be there after a failed attempt to contact Elida, and he has been reinforced by Lindra's group. Argaton and his black cloaks will also have come to the village. Perhaps the characters could form an alliance with all of them for the purpose of defeating Fundiber? Alternatively, they could of course help defend the village (possibly along with Argaton) when it is attacked from two sides – by the Sovereign's Oath from the east and the Queen's Rangers from the west?

ENTERING THE VILLAGE

In order to speak with Elida, the player characters must obviously find a way to reach her. This task is complicated by the ongoing siege and the anxious atmosphere it has caused inside the palisade. The characters will have to be creative, and the Game Master must make sure to reward all good ideas (and, of course, punish the bad ones).

Below are five suggested challenges to start with. For them to be viable at all, the player characters must get past the guard posts which Fundiber has stationed around New Earthmoor, marked X on the map. Each of these guard posts has a garrison of two Gaoian warriors, ordered to signal if someone approaches and stop anyone from reaching the village. After having fired their whistlers (arrows that emit a high-pitched noise when fired), they will try to stall whoever approaches until reinforcements arrive from the main camp or other guard posts.

As usual, sneaking past them requires a successful *[Discreet–Vigilant]* test. An alternative could be to have some characters (or allies) attack a guard post so that the others can rush inside as the other guards abandon their posts to help their colleagues.

Negotiation: Once they have reached the palisade, the player characters will most likely receive a cold welcome. A successful *Persuasive* test is required to convince the guards on the balustrade to fetch whomever the characters wish to speak to – whether they ask for the village leader, Elida, or her parents.

Karala, Elida's mother and the true leader of the village, refuses to let some unknown outsider meet her frail daughter, but she might be persuaded to make a deal (see Trade below). A player character who passes a *Vigilant* test will see the father, Morio, gesturing discretely to them, as though he wishes to meet them outside the palisade, if they only move a bit further away.

Should the characters follow Morio's instructions, he will show up at their camp a few hours later, accompanied by four villagers armed with spears. He apologizes for Karala's hostile attitude and asks what interest they have in his daughter. If they are honest about their intentions, he will present a proposal: if they help defend the village during the next assault, they may have a brief chat with Elida. He can smuggle them into the village through the swamp and hide them in a shed near the eastern gate, where they must wait for the attack to commence – everyone except the stubborn Karala will be in on the plan and appreciate their aid.

Trade: Standing above the western gate, Karala makes the player characters another offer. Like her husband, she wants to know why they are so interested in her daughter, and like him, she could not care less about the caverns of Karvosti. So, she suggests a trade: if the characters kill the leader of the barbarian warriors and bring her his severed head, Karala will let them see and speak to Elida.

Getting to Fundiber is certainly difficult, but not impossible. As mentioned previously, he has $PC \times 4$ warriors at his disposal; six of these are stationed around the village, and the rest are at their camp (half of them asleep). Consequently, should the characters manage to sneak up on those awake and take them out, they will have a couple of turns to attack Fundiber and his domesticated rage troll before reinforcements arrive – first those who were sleeping, then those who come running from their guard posts. The situation should be manageable, especially if the characters bring some allies.

Through the swamp: It is also possible to sneak past the palisade at night, for example via the swamp. $PC+2$ armed villagers are posted near the areas where the palisade ends. In order to get past them, they must first pass a *Vigilant* test to detect and avoid the tripwires deployed across the swamp, then find a way to distract the guards and pass a *[Discreet -3]* test to remain undetected.

A small group of stealthy individuals could slip between the stilt houses instead. In order for them

not to be detected by the guards on the balustrade, they must first pass a *Discreet* test to leave the swamp and get up on dry land, and then another one as they begin to sneak from house to house.

Through the bars: Breaking the bars where the creek flows under the palisade, and doing so without being detected by the guards on the balustrade, requires two successful tests: first a *Cunning*, to understand exactly where to break them, and then a *Strong* to actually do it (the tests can be made by different people if they are working together). Then they will have to pass at least one *Discreet* test as they move between the houses.

Attack: A last and desperate option could be to fight their way into the village, preferably while Fundiber is attacking from the other side. This could be done via the swamp, through the bars, or through the western gate if it could somehow be opened.

In this case, the characters will not have to pass any *Discreet* tests, as the villagers are busy defending themselves against the Sovereign's Oath. However, there are still $PC+2$ guards by the gatehouse, and another $PC+2$ by the wetland at the end of the palisade.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Elida can always be found on the second floor of her parents' house, in the middle of the village. But in order to find her, one must know where to look. This will not be a problem if the characters have made a deal with one of her parents; if not, they must extract the information from one of the villagers – either through intimidation and a successful *[Persuasive +1]* test, through the use of mystical powers, or by means of elixirs like the Truth Serum (see page 64).

Once the characters have found her, they must get her to talk. This can be achieved with a successful *Persuasive* test, with a +5 modifier if her father is present. Elida feels no loyalty towards the witches and tells the characters everything she knows as quickly as possible, just to make them leave her alone.

Aside from general information about the inside of Karvosti she has the following to say, provided that the characters reveal that they will use the Undergate (if not, the info may be disclosed in a different order):

- “I have never seen the Undergate, but I know where it is.” And if the player characters specifically ask for information about Symbar: “Perhaps in the Reliquary; perhaps among the tapestries, or in the Sculpture Hall.”

Unless there is something near the witches' power node, of course..."

- If they ask her to clarify: "I don't know. I told Elmendra to seek out the former Huldra, Oryela. She is locked inside a chamber above the Undergate - the gate between the Underworld and Karvosti's tunnels. I am sure she can help, as long as she is... herself, if only to punish Yeleta. If she isn't herself, leave; she is possessed by something. Something powerful and terribly dangerous."

- "Follow the wider tunnels, avoid the cracks. There are markings at most of the intersections, triangles pointing up, down, left or right. Up and down means just that, right means north, left means south."
- "Should the air in a tunnel feel unsound, pungent, or sickly, turn back. Also, I was warned of the deepest, northern parts of the cliff - everything beyond the plantations. Why, I do not know."

Faarah Moroun

THE GREAT PALACE ruin which the barbarians call Faarah Moroun is located in an area rarely visited by the clans, bordering on the deeper and wilder parts of the forest, about three days' march north of the temple where Sarkomal's prophecy was found. Only a few Ambrian expeditions have ever reached it; none of them had time to dig very deep, and none of them returned to Ambria alive.

In this adventure landscape, the player characters' task will be to explore and map the labyrinthine ruin, with lots of unpleasant surprises lurking behind every corner. Elmendra accidentally awoke the liege troll Orangaar when she visited the ruin, and the old troll singer has since summoned numerous beasts and lone-wandering rage trolls

to his side. Added to these threats are the two or three competing groups present in the area, as well as an elvish warband prowling nearby.

BACKGROUND

The Palace of Fehara, as the ruin was once called, was built by Prince Herbelag in the twilight years of the Symbarian Empire. Allegedly a gift to his wife, its true purpose was quite different. Herbelag, who worshipped the gods of the Yonderworld, was convinced that the dark arts outlawed by Emperor Symbar could in fact save humanity, tame the darkness, and enslave the abominations that plagued their lands. Down in the palace catacombs, his foremost mages and morphantics worked to



physically and mentally unite their prince with Jeberaja, a daemon from the Yonderworld, to give him the power to dominate all. They succeeded, and so another immensely powerful abomination was born. It clawed itself out of the vaults, slaughtered everyone living in the palace, and proceeded to spread death and destruction wherever it went.

About a thousand years later came Elmendra. She had reached the roots of Karvosti and found a gate of Symbarian design. Having broken into the vaults beneath the High Chieftain's stronghold, she concluded that Karvosti's Undergate had been made around the time of Symbaroum's demise, to defend against the growing darkness of the Underworld. She also found songs mentioning the Palace of Fehara, described as grand, built during the twilight of Symbaroum, and as a place where a raging god had escaped its prison. Since she had already searched three other ruins for gates with similar locking mechanisms, she decided to give it a try.

She found the place overgrown and infested with a great number of various beasts, but none that posed a serious threat to her. In the catacombs she located the gate, but she did not have time to study it for long before the light of her torch awoke something huge and roaring. Elmendra fled without looking back, and since then, the Palace of Fehara has been Orangaar's domain. And

every day, the liege troll summons new minions in the form of wild beasts, solitary rage trolls, and goblin outcasts.

THE WAY TO FAARAH MOROUN

Going straight from Karvosti, it will take about a seven days' march to reach the ruin, but Brother Bartho claims that the place is easier to find if one takes a detour by the second sun temple. In that case, one can follow a relatively well-beaten path for the first five days, before reaching the temple and turning to proceed north for three days. Early the third day, one should arrive at a vast swamp. Following its rim, one will find Faraah Moroun a little further into the woods north of the swamp.

Bartho has the following to say about the area, which is not much, since he did not follow Elmendra all the way into the ruin:

- The goal of their journey was to examine a Symbarian locking mechanism. Sometimes Elmendra spoke about finding the gate of a prison, sometimes the one of a laboratory; perhaps the gates she was referring to were one and the same.
- Faarah Moroun is a gigantic palace ruin, one of the largest ever found in Davokar, but the bottom floor is practically all that is left of it.

Parts of Faarah Moroun's northern façade still rise majestically from Davokar's grasp.



- On the way home, Elmendra complained about the place having been swarming with beasts; she reflexively looked towards the sky whenever she heard a noise, as if expecting an attack from above.
- The only concrete thing she mentioned was a temple or shrine that she had passed. *"Prius may be wrathful and demanding, but there is no doubt that what the Symbarians worshipped were... unsound. True monstrosities..."*
- And then there was that verse... Elmendra recited it to herself throughout the journey, so he could not fail to learn it. But whether it has any real significance he cannot say: *"The horseman canters two paces east; the moon crescent follows him once and again. The ship glides six leagues the other way, shadowed half-way by the eagle. The dog then tails its riding friend, till it swivels and doubles the distance."*

THE IRON PACT'S WARBAND

The group of elves that becomes involved in the treasure hunt is actually situated near Faarah Moroun on another mission: to inspect the recently awoken liege troll Orangaar and assess the situation. The group is led by the gentle and diplomatically inclined Malahai from the Halls of a Thousand Tears. He is accompanied by a group of warriors commanded by the anything but gentle Adreanea, who has launched many raids against Ambrian outposts in Davokar. The number of elven warriors is equal to that of the player characters, and they have the stats of a Late Summer Elf (page 205 in the *Core Rulebook*).

During the first part of Act II, Malahai is in charge of the warband. He will approach the leaders of the other factions and urge them to return to Karvosti, but he is not prepared to take up arms. Meanwhile, Adreanea becomes increasingly frustrated, and by the end of the second act, she and her warriors will break with Malahai – all who do not obey the laws of the Iron Pact and leave the woods of their own accord must pay with their lives!

Technically, this means that if Faarah Moroun is the third stop on the player characters' journey, they will have to deal with a group of murderous elves. If they are clever, this could actually work to their advantage, provided they can get Adreanea to focus on Dagesto and Ioséfia. It should also be mentioned that Malahai will remain in the area, disappointed with his sister in arms. With some clever negotiation, perhaps there is a way for the characters to gain his protection.



Malahai has been part of the Iron Pact for hundreds of years, and the flame of hope still burns in his chest.

Malahai*"I share your pain..."*

The elven spiritualist Malahai suffers with the world, yet he remains stoic. The only way to cope with the pain is to accept it; fighting it will only worsen the wounds. And none who have not yet been thoroughly corrupted is beyond saving; with the proper care, it is possible to breathe new life into the dark and the dead. It must be. The alternative is unthinkable...

If the characters meet Malahai after Adreanea has gone her own blood-soaked way, he is in desperate need of a silver lining. Should the player characters admit that they are looking for Symbar, they will, of course, never get any help from him. But if they can trick him (*[Persuasive -5]* test) or express sincere intentions to stop others from finding the city, he might take their side. In that case, the elven warriors will leave them alone after Malahai has loudly explained that they are allies in the battle against darkness.

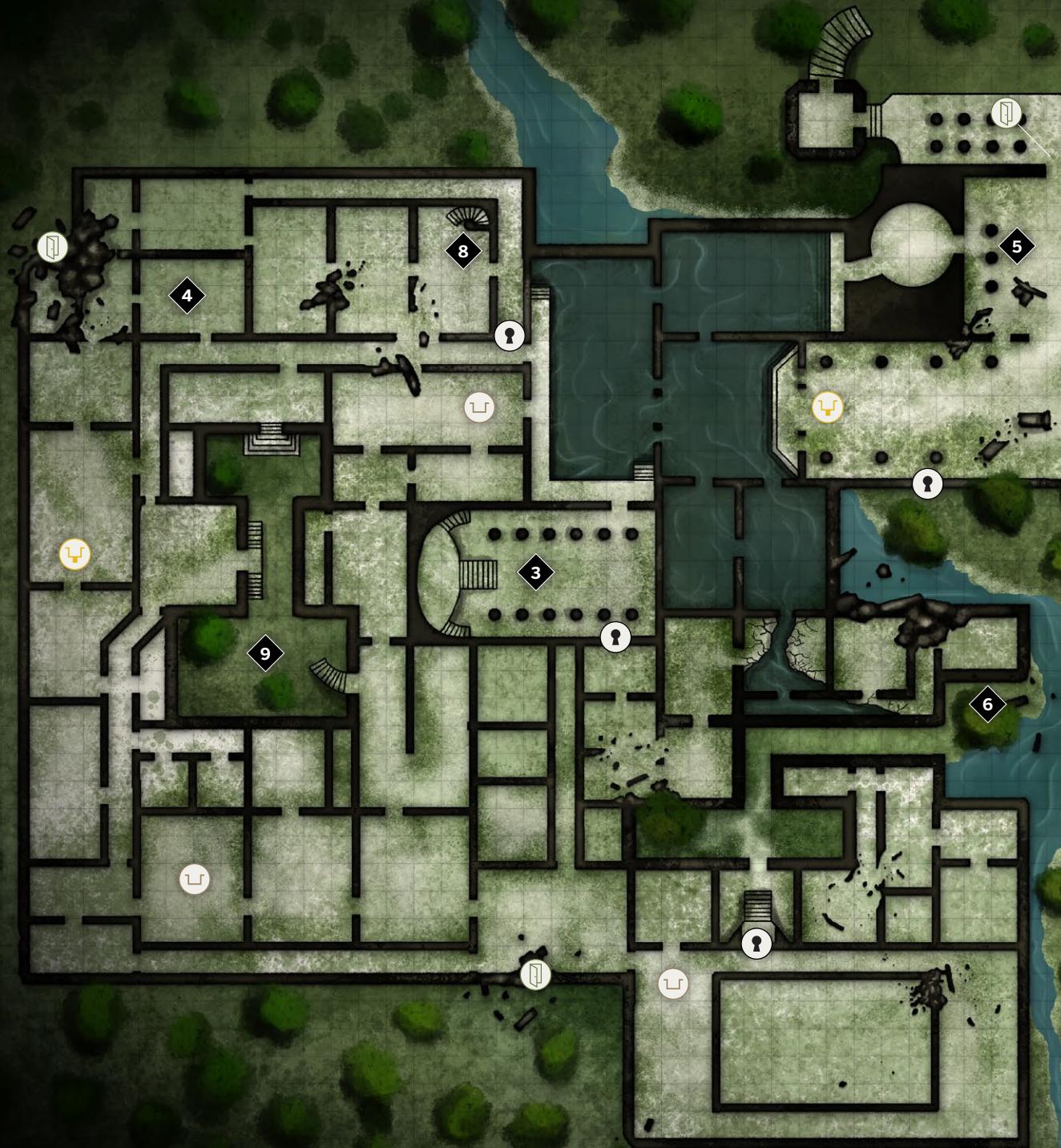
| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Manner | Neutral face, expressive eyes |
| Race | Elf (autumn elf) |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Wisdom of the Ages</i> (III), <i>Long-lived</i> |
| Accurate | 5 (+5) |
| Cunning | 13 (-3) |
| Discreet | 10 (0) |
| Persuasive | 10 (0) |
| Quick | 7 (+3) |
| Resolute | 17 (-7) |
| Strong | 9 (+1) |
| Vigilant | 11 (-1) |
| Abilities | <i>Entangling Vines</i> (adept),
<i>Exceptionally Resolute</i> (adept),
<i>Inherit Wound</i> (master), <i>Ritualist</i> (master: <i>Borrow Beast</i> , <i>Break Link</i> , <i>Death Divination</i> , <i>Nature's Lullaby</i> , <i>Tale of Ashes</i> , <i>Witch Circle</i>), <i>Staff Fighting</i> (adept), <i>Tormenting Spirits</i> (adept), <i>Witchcraft</i> (master), <i>Witchsight</i> (adept) |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Pariah</i> |
| Weapons | Quarterstaff 3 (long) |
| Armor | Skald's Cuirass 3 (reinforced, flexible) |
| Defense | -3 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | 2 doses <i>Spirit Friend</i> , 3 doses <i>Elixir of Life</i> , <i>Flask of Blueberry Juice</i> |
| Shadow | Greenish yellow with brown spots, like autumn leaves struck by the oncoming winter (corruption: 3) |
| Tactics: | Should Malahai find himself in battle, he will first try to ensnare as many enemies as possible before trying to make them see the error in using violence against creation. If the opposition seems tough, he will inhale a dose of <i>Spirit Friend</i> . |

**Adreanea***"The world is diseased, you are the plague."*

Adreanea is not the most unreasonable warrior of the Iron Pact, but not far from it. She views humanity as a disease of which the world must be cleansed, and is confident that all who doubt it will soon realize the truth. At the same time, she is loyal to the organization, which is the only reason why she puts up with Malahai for as long as she does.

Once she decides to ignore his orders, the group turns from diplomats to avengers. Player characters (humans included) wishing to stop the information about Symbar from spreading could very well form an alliance with her, but only if she considers herself in need of reinforcements.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Manner | Aloof, condescending |
| Race | Elf (autumn elf) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | <i>Long-lived</i> |
| Accurate | 10 (0) |
| Cunning | 7 (+3) |
| Discreet | 10 (0) |
| Persuasive | 5 (+5) |
| Quick | 13 (-3) |
| Resolute | 11 (-1) |
| Strong | 9 (+1) |
| Vigilant | 16 (-6) |
| Abilities | <i>Acrobatics</i> (adept), <i>Arrow Jab</i> (master), <i>Exceptionally Vigilant</i> (novice), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (adept), <i>Marksman</i> (master), <i>Rapid Fire</i> (master), <i>Sixth Sense</i> (master) |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Fleet-footed</i> , <i>Pariah</i> |
| Weapons | Elven Longbow 6 (precise, deep impact), fires three arrows per combat action, ignores armor |
| Armor | Lacquered Silk Cuirass 4 (flexible) |



FARAH MOROUN

1. Orangaar
2. Courtyard
3. Chapel
4. Mare Cats
5. Fey Beasts
6. Kanaran (x4)
7. Hunger Wolves
8. The Wraith Owls' stairwell
9. Verrogobakk
10. Ambush
11. Stairs to the Laboratory



- Entrance
- Locked door
- Fall down sinkhole
- Fall towards cellar floor



| | |
|--|---|
| Defense | -6 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | 20 arrows, 5 Homing Arrows, Braid from her friend Dalial who was killed by Ambrians, 3 doses of Truth Serum |
| Shadow | Shimmering cyan, like clear water flowing over the overgrown bottom of a brook (corruption: 0) |
| Tactics: Adreanea only uses her mastercrafted longbow in combat, and usually begins by firing three arrows at different targets, hoping to soften them up. Then she will move backwards while focusing on one target at a time. | |

COMPETITORS IN THE AREA

If the player characters make Faarah Moroun the first stop on their journey, they will encounter the groups of Captain Lindra and Father Argaton, and possibly Cleaver. As always, the latter would rather work against the characters than with them, but the others' positions are less clear – except that they would find it very difficult to collaborate with each other.

If the palace ruin is their second stop, the characters must deal with Captain Lindra (who has not yet found what she seeks) and Leohan's sun knights. The Templars will most likely go their own way, while Lindra has become more willing to form alliances, after having spent a long time in the ruin without any progress.

Should Faarah Moroun be the characters' last stop, the ranger captain will have moved on and been replaced by the groups of Dagesto and Ioséfia. It is possible to collaborate with any of them, but one must act quickly, or they will join forces with each other instead – standing all alone against Adreanea and her warriors could be very difficult indeed.

ORANGAAR

As far as the liege troll Orangaar is concerned, he is the rightful ruler of Faarah Moroun. He will happily share it with beasts and other trolls bound

by his command, but is furious about constantly being disturbed by prying elves and snooping little humans. The only upside is that he loves the taste of both elven and human flesh, yet, in the end, all he really wants is to be left alone to sing and continue building his realm.

He spends most of his time in the glade where a ballroom used to be, with mosaics on the walls and huge window openings to the courtyard outside. If the ruin is the player characters' second or third stop, Orangaar will have figured out what all these nosy groups are after, and ordered one of his two groups of rage trolls to stage an ambush in room 10. If Faarah Moroun is their first stop, the rage trolls will alternate between resting in the courtyard (#2) and patrolling the ruin. The Game Master could simply decide when the characters should encounter the patrol, or ask the players to roll 1D10 each time they enter a new room; 1 means that the patrol is in an adjacent room and can be detected with a successful Vigilant test.

Orangaar

"My larder is completely bare; wanna see?"

Orangaar only recently awoke from his hibernation. All he wants is to fatten up and entice servants to make his life more comfortable. He is infuriated by the intrusions of the characters and their competitors, but he is not stupid, and will try to turn the situation to his advantage. He would prefer to see both humans and elves added to his larder, but if they come across as worthy adversaries, he might be willing to negotiate. The worst thing one could possibly do in Orangaar's presence is show weakness, to beg and plead; it will always lead to combat – which a successful Cunning test with the Beast Lore ability will indicate.

Orangaar loves to rule, to dominate and make others dance to his tune, preferably in a way that goes against their own will and ideals. If the player characters request access to the Laboratory, he will first demand a living or recently slain elf in return – he is obviously more than capable of taking lives himself, but forcing a group of humans to do so brings him as much satisfaction as the delicious gift itself. Should the characters refuse his offer, he will instead propose that they rid his ruin of the blight-born hunger wolves who have occupied its north-eastern parts (in that case, the liege troll will watch the violence from a distance, out of curiosity and simply to be entertained).

Finally, he may accept one or more artifacts as payment, but those would have to be objects which the characters really do not wish to part with.

Troll Song Across the Land

The troll singer Orangaar spends at least four hours a day trying to lure new minions with his song. With a successful Vigilant, the player characters can conclude that the tune, sung in a minor key, is coming from the eastern parts of the ruin – but because of the echoes and the troll's movements, they cannot pinpoint his exact location.

| | |
|---|---|
| Manner | Underbite grin, chuckles |
| Race | Troll (liege troll) |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | Armored (I), Long-lived, Natural Weapon (I), Regeneration (III), Robust (II) |
| 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 | Berserker (master), Combat Hymn (master), Exceptionally Strong (master), Heroic Hymn (master), Natural Warrior (master), Ritualist (adept: Enslave, Melodic Summoning, Restore), Troll Singing (master) |
| Weapons | Claws (short), 2 attacks at the same target, 13/10 damage |
| Armor | Troll skin 7 |
| Defense | +4 |
| Toughness | 18 Pain Threshold 9 |
| | Regenerates 4 toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid |
| Equipment | 10 thaler worth of trinkets and jewelry |
| Shadow | Deep red with faint streaks of rust (corruption: 2) |
| Tactics: Orangaar sings a mighty combat hymn and sends forth his minions to assess the strength of the enemy. Then he usually attacks the weakest target – he prefers to fight mystics, especially elven ones. | |

Rage Trolls

"Oh!? Eeeeeee ... Ah! Arrrgh."

More and more wandering rage trolls are enticed by the liege troll's song and come to join his guard. Regardless of when the player characters arrive or how many they are, an equal number of sharp-toothed troll guards will be waiting for them.

They obey Orangaar's every word, out of fear as much as respect, and will never back down from a fight once it has begun. However, a person with the *Loremaster* ability at Adept level may speak to them and make them come to their senses, or possibly even persuade them to guide the player characters to their master.

For stats, see Rage Troll, Group-living, on page 207 in the *Core Rulebook*.

NAVIGATING THE RUIN

The enormous, overgrown ruin complex is in bad shape; except for some parts of the façade, all that

is left are the walls on the bottom floor, sometimes with the ceiling intact. The eroded inner walls are about 4.5 meters high, and though they are covered with vines and moss, they are quite difficult to climb. In many areas, there are also locked or otherwise sealed doors of steel and bronze.

Entering Faarah Moroun is not difficult; many places on the map are marked with the symbol , where archways, windows and other such entryways allow the player characters to get past the outer walls. But as they move through the ruin, the Game Master must keep an eye on the map – especially on the symbols indicating where there is a risk of collapse and where the doors are still intact. The following paragraphs describe how the various challenges in the area can be handled.

Locked doors: All wooden doors (like those described on page 56 in this book) are long gone, but Faraah Moroun was once a magnificent palace, and some of its gates were made of bronze and steel. There are several ways for the player characters to get past the locked doors: they could unlock, kick in, or climb past them.

Picking the locks requires the proper tools and a successful *Cunning* test; however, there is a 50% risk of the locking mechanism being broken and impossible to pick. How difficult it is to kick the door in depends on the degree of rust/corrosion and what state the walls are in. It can be done with a successful *Strong* test, modified by a difficulty level determined by rolling 2d6. Note that even a failed attempt is likely to be heard from far away, alerting both beasts and competing groups of their presence.

Should the player characters try to climb past the door, see Dangers for Climbers below.

Risk of collapse: While Faarah Moroun has no cellar per se, there are a number of underground vaults which were once utilized for storage purposes. There are also a few smaller sinkholes which have opened up in the ruin and undermined its vast, overgrown floors.

The symbols  and  mark locations where the player characters risk crashing straight through the ground, falling 6 meters to the cellar floor below, or $10+1D6$ meters into a tapered sinkhole. The character going first must pass a *Quick* test to avoid falling, modified by -2 for each level in the *Robust* trait (if any).

Dangers for climbers: Should a player character attempt to climb the inner walls of the ruin,

Table 16: Dangers for climbers

| 1d20 | EVENT | EFFECT |
|-------|------------------|--|
| 1-9 | Nothing happens | — |
| 10-13 | Loose stones | Successful <i>Quick</i> test or fall back down, along with the stones. 1D6 damage, armor protects; new attempts must be made somewhere else and the player rolls again. |
| 14-15 | Poisonous vines | Can be detected with the <i>Loremaster</i> ability and a <i>Vigilant</i> test. Otherwise the person suffers their poison (weak) and must pass a <i>Quick</i> test to avoid falling. 1D6 damage, armor protects. |
| 16-17 | Venomous spiders | 1D4 venomous spiders attack the climber; roll <i>Defense</i> (unmodified) against all attacks, then <i>Armor</i> against 4 in penetrating attack; failure means that the victim is injected with a Moderate Poison and must pass a <i>Quick</i> test to avoid falling, 1D6 damage, armor protects. |
| 18-19 | Venomous snake | A lightning-fast venomous snake strikes at the climber, who must pass a <i>Vigilant</i> test in order to defend himself/herself. <i>Defense</i> is tested with a -5 modification; if it fails, roll <i>Armor</i> against 4 in penetrating attack. Failure means that the victim is injected with a Strong Poison and must pass a <i>Quick</i> test to avoid falling, 1D6 damage, armor protects. |
| 20 | Hornets | The climber is attacked by a swarm of hornets (see page 67 for stats) |

there is a great risk that he or she will be in for an unpleasant surprise or two. Also, note that a person who reaches the top of the wall risks being detected by the wraith owls nesting in Faarah Moroun.

When someone starts to climb, roll 1d20 and see table 16 to determine what lurks in the vegetation. Obviously, the characters following the first climber will not have to roll again. However, they will have to deal with the challenge if it is not neutralized after being discovered.

BEASTS

Orangaar and his trolls are not the only ones who have made Faarah Moroun their home, which is just what the liege troll wants. Two packs of mare cats and fay beasts, four kanarans, a wraith owl couple, and a pair of blight-marked hunger wolves all occupy various parts of the ruin.

When they are not hunting in the nearby woods, these creatures tend to stay within their territories. Normally, they do not hunt inside the ruin, but they are willing to make an exception for the right prey. And if someone comes near their respective homes, they will certainly defend them.

Mare cats: Four females and one male have settled in the northwestern parts of the palace, along with PC+1 cubs who are old enough to hunt and defend their pack. With a successful *Vigilant* test, player characters who approach the lair can find fresh animal droppings; if they also have the *Bushcraft* trait/boon or the *Beast Lore* ability, they can make a *Cunning* test to identify the beast in question.

Stats for the adult mare cats can be found on page 220 in the *Core Rulebook*.

Mare Cat Cub

Hisses angrily

The young mare cats have not yet developed their venom glands, but can still be dangerous to an unwary group of opponents. Like their older relatives, they are completely and utterly fearless.

| | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Manner | Bares its teeth | |
| Race | Beast | |
| Resistance | Weak | |
| Traits | <i>Natural Weapon</i> (I) | |
| Accurate | 11 (-1) | Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 15 (-5), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 10 (0) |
| Abilities | <i>Acrobatics</i> (novice) | |
| Weapons | Bite 3 | |
| Armor | None | |
| Defense | -3 | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold 4 |
| Equipment | None | |
| Shadow | Green like the lush grass of a meadow (corruption: 0) | |

Tactics: The mare cats sneak up on their targets to *Surprise* them, and will then try to maintain the *Advantage* in combat by flanking their victims

Fey beasts: A large pack of fey beasts has just arrived at the palace and settled in its once magnificent entrance hall (room #5). Player characters watching the northern gate will notice their presence without needing to make any tests, but with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon or the *Beast Lore* ability and

a successful *Cunning* test, they are (after an hour's observation) able to determine how many there are – three times the number of player characters, with two thirds of the pack guarding the cubs and the territory at all times.

Fey beast stats are described on page 66 in the rules section of this book.

Kanarans: Four fully grown kanarans inhabit different parts of Faarah Moroun. Like the other beasts, they usually hunt in the woods, but if the player characters split up or set up camp inside the ruin, they will gladly make an exception.

Kanaran stats can be found on page 223 in the *Core Rulebook*.

Hunger wolves: The liege troll's song has attracted a couple of blight-marked hunger wolves. They keep to themselves and use Faarah Moroun as a base while hunting in the woods.

Hunger Wolf

Growls deeply

The ragged and scarred hunger wolves have stuck together since they were pups and grew even closer when the rest of their pack was killed while fighting a frenzied abomination.

They were once magnificent young creatures the size of ponies, with thick, sleek fur and their heads held high. But with the attack, everything changed. Now they reek of sulfur, their eyes are yellow with puss, and parts of their fur are sticky with goo from festering wounds which never seem to heal.

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Manner | Snickers like a hyena | |
| Race | Beast | |
| Resistance | Strong | |
| Traits | Armored (III), Natural Weapon (II) | |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 5 (+5), Discreet 13 (-3), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 11 (-1), Vigilant 10 (0) | | |
| Abilities | Acrobatics (master), Feint (master), Natural Warrior (master) | |
| Weapons | Bite 8 (short), two attacks at the same target | |
| Armor | Wolf skin 5 | |
| Defense | -5 | |
| Toughness | 11 | Pain Threshold 6 |
| Shadow | Pale yellow with black spots, like meadow grass attacked by mold (corruption: 5) | |

Tactics: The wolves rely entirely on their speed and cleverness, and will not hesitate to attack larger groups of enemies. If they are badly injured, they will use their acrobatic ability to retreat and lick their wounds. But they will not forget, and are sure to seek vengeance upon those who harmed them.

Wraith owls: Two wraith owls nest at the top of the broken stairwell which towers over the rest of the ruin. With three eggs about to hatch, the parents are gathering food for the intense period that lies ahead.

As long as the characters remain on the ground, the wraith owls will leave them alone, but climbing on top of the inner walls will immediately make them targets for the owls' sweeping attacks. Characters who expose themselves in this way must pass a *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test every turn; failure means that they are detected.

Wraith owl stats can be found on page 67 in the rules section of this book.

VERROGOBAKK

The surviving members of the goblin tribe Verrogobakk have occupied the western parts of the ruin. They remain in Orangaar's favor by presenting him with daily offerings in the form of small animals, berries, and mushrooms. Chieftain Gelumm regards the liege troll as an ally, and hopes to rebuild his tribe under the troll's protection.

Nine adult goblins managed to survive the plague which ravaged their tribe, and now there are a handful of children and as many aged tribesmen to feed. The Chieftain (who is versed in the tongue of trolls) will never betray Orangaar, but could be an ally in the fight against the character's competitors, in exchange for objects which can later be used to appease the liege troll.

It is also possible that the devious Gelumm will try to trick the player characters, for example by gaining their trust and then claiming to have arranged a meeting with Orangaar – a meeting they must attend unarmed. Alternatively, he could trick the player characters into splitting up, giving his fellow goblins the opportunity to attack and capture the weakest ones, as a gift to their mighty ally.

Verrogobakks

"You scratch me, I scratch you."

The nine adult goblins have had a tough life in Davokar and know how to use their weapons. They also possess a well-developed survival instinct, which they make use of in combat, and wear leather armor made of fur from various animals, the heads pulled up as hoods.



The recently woken troll singer Orangaar is busy building his new realm, and does not like to be disturbed...

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Manner | Grim and afraid | |
| Race | Goblin | |
| Resistance | Weak | |
| Traits | <i>Pariah, Short-lived, Survival Instinct (II)</i> | |
| Accurate 11 (-1), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 15 (-5),
Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 10 (0),
Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 7 (+3) | | |
| Abilities | None [Gelumm has <i>Leader (adept)</i>] | |
| Weapons | Spear 4 (long), Bow 4 | |
| Armor | Leather 2+2 (<i>Survival Instinct</i>) | |
| Defense | -1 | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold 5 |
| Equipment | None | |
| Shadow | Dark green and brown, like an overgrown tree stump
(corruption: 1) | |

Tactics: The goblins follow orders. They will use the extra movement action and protection granted by the survival instinct to take full advantage of the long reach of their weapons. Should most of them fall, the rest will retreat.

THE CHAPEL

At the center of the palace there was once a chapel, where Herbalag and his family would worship the daemon Jeberaja. The actual prayer room is dominated by the weathered and overgrown statue of a monstrous figure. Cleared of vegetation, the creature will emerge in all its fiendish horror – leaning forward menacingly, with half-developed bat wings, terrible fangs and a long, snake-like tongue slithering from its gaping jaws. Four outstretched arms, two of them with massive grippers, the other two with foot-long claws for cutting and slashing seem to reach for the characters.

Those who care to look, and pass a *Vigilant* test, will notice the edges of a hatch in the stone floor. The block of stone can be pried out with the proper tools. Beneath it are some stairs leading into the darkness, to the chapel catacombs. There is room for ten or so coffins, but all of the alcoves are empty, save one. In the lone sarcophagus rests Herbalag's father, along with some of his most prized possessions: a jewel-encrusted gold ring (value: 20 thaler); a ceremonial dagger with a wavy blade of bluish metal (value: 25 thaler); a golden, ruby-eyed statue of Jeberaja (value: 17 thaler); and finally, a headband of black stone (see the artifact Arvalam's Blindfold on page 62).

Prying up the stone is bound to make a lot of noise. The Game Master decides whether Orangaar's

rage trolls, or possibly some of the character's competitors, take notice.

Note that if the characters come to Faarah Moroun after Cleaver, the catacombs will already have been cleared of treasure. Otherwise, no one will visit the Chapel until stop 3, when Dagesto and/or Ioséfia arrive.

THE LABORATORY DOOR

There is a stone stairway, full of twigs and moldering leaves, leading to the cellar. Utter darkness awaits at the bottom of the stairs, and the air smells somewhat sour, like the fumes of some toxic, acidic substance.

What it looks like down there is largely for the Game Master to decide (see textbox to the right). But there, in the back of the old laboratory, is the reinforced vault where Orangaar underwent his second hibernation, and where Prince Herbelag became one with the daemon Jeberaja. Its bronze door is huge; about twice the height of a man, almost as wide, and two feet thick. The corroded exterior is exquisitely ornamented, like a painting of a landscape with mountains, plains and water, and with figures as well – a rider on his horse; a couple walking hand in hand; a prowling hunter; animals in the form of a dog, a bear, and some birds. There is also a ship at sea, a crescent moon, and a cart pulled by oxen.

The door is open enough for a human to slip through. Inside, there is nothing but remnants of Orangaar's shriveled cocoon. The really interesting details are not found in the room, but on the inside of the door itself. Someone has slashed tears in the metal and pulled them open, exposing the door's interior and the locking mechanism which Elmendra came looking for.

Examining the door: Understanding how the mechanism operates requires either the *Blacksmith* ability or a successful *Cunning* test. Some of the figures on the front of the door are attached to rods protruding from it. When someone pulls the figure, a connected gear is positioned so that its cogs mesh with those of the lock. Apparently, one must pull the figures in a certain order, and then turn them either left or right a certain number of clicks.

If the blacksmith passes a *Cunning* test, or if the non-blacksmith does so with a modifier of -5, he or she realizes that the lock can be set up in many different ways. In other words, should one find a similar door somewhere else, one will most likely need a code key specific to that particular door.

If the player characters have remained on good terms with Brother Bartho, they already have the code needed to unlock the Undergate at the roots of Karvosti – it is the verse which Bartho heard Elmendra recite over and over during their expedition.

The Cellar

Whether the cellar is a vast maze of chambers and corridors, or if it only contains the former laboratory and the holding cell depends on if the Game Master wants to add further challenges before reaching the gate or not. In the latter (suggested) case, this part of the basement level only has three rooms: the huge, hall-like workroom, a smaller ritual chamber and the prison – all empty except for some cracked stone tables and (possibly) what can be found with a roll on table 2.2 in *Adventure Pack 1?*

The key to the Undergate

If the characters have somehow angered Brother Bartho, they will have to find some other way to learn the verse. For more information, see page 129, under the heading Who Knows What?

ACT THREE:

Inside the Mother Rock

RETURNING TO KARVOSTI after a more or less successful hunt for information, the player characters find the cliff under siege by a vast Ambrian army. Although they have already faced a number of tough challenges, the greatest one is still ahead of them: to navigate the Underworld, reach and enter the High Chieftain's cliff, and confront the new mistress of the tunnels: the former Huldra, Oryela. If they are not careful, the challenge might be greater still, as the spider princess Karathran holds court near Karvosti's power node.

OBVIOUSLY, THE THIRD act will be affected by what happened in the first two. If the player characters have not obtained all the necessary clues, they may first have to negotiate with their competitors. Then the journey itself might be affected by which factions are still in the running. What happens in the tunnels and chambers of Karvosti also depends on previous events – what allies/enemies the characters have made, what items they have at their disposal, and, of course, what abilities and knowledge they possess.

Back on Karvosti

THE CHARACTERS WILL probably want to make a stop on the besieged Karvosti before setting off into the Underworld, to gather provisions and learn more about how the situation on the plateau has developed – something that could be an exciting experience in itself, with the enormous Ambrian army surrounding it. If they would rather go on the last stretch of the journey right away, parts of what is described below could take place in the woods around the Rift (see page 131) or near Vearra's Outpost (or what is left of it).

The chapter describing the third act is divided into sections which will probably be played more or less in sequence. First, the chapter addresses potential negotiations with other factions, then the journey to, and opening of, the backdoor into the cliff (the so called Undergate), and finally what awaits the player characters on the other side of the door.

Last to be described is Karvosti's reliquary, where one can find the stone tablet that started the treasure hunt, along with Oryela, the former Huldra with a severely split personality.

UNDER SIEGE

When the player characters return from their third expedition, the Ambrian army has arrived and encamped in the woods east of the cliff. Their exact number cannot be determined, but the characters may of course take the opportunity to ask questions about that and other matters when they are stopped by one of the cavalry units constantly patrolling the camp perimeter.

As long as the characters are not wanted and do not appear threatening in any way, the rangers

will let them pass. They must then reach the area below the northern part of the cliff where the Ambrians have established a route for civilians trying to leave or enter the plateau. But the rangers strongly advise the characters not to proceed: "The Queen is losing patience and the attack could begin any time now."

Moving along the edge of the camp, one learns that the army consists of more than just archers and infantry. Mages move back and forth between tents, and one can often see at least a few Pansars sitting by the fires in full armor, perhaps there to serve as officers or to bolster the regular troops. There is also a group of siege technicians arguing around a towering pine. With a successful *Vigilant* test, the characters are able to make out what they are discussing – which kind of mechanism and what material should be used to construct trebuchets powerful enough to hurl fire bombs at the plateau.

AN ULTIMATUM

When the Game Master thinks it appropriate, the Queen's patience finally runs out. A herald, escorted by ten Pansars, rides up the cliff, stops in front of the wall, and shouts in a booming voice:

"Korinthia Nighthane of House Kohinoor, Queen of Ambria, rightful holder of the Throne of Thorns and the Slayer of Darkness, wishes to inform the chieftain of the barbarian clans that he has two days to grant her people full access to the cliff of Karvosti, including its underground chambers and those concealed by mystical means. Failure to comply with these terms will not be tolerated, and will result in the immediate and uncompromising annexation of what the barbarian folk call the High Chieftain's cliff."

The two-day time limit is only meant as a suggestion; the Game Master may increase or decrease it as he or she pleases. Player characters who are already on Karvosti can hurry to conclude their affairs on the plateau and then follow the crowds who are still there – including Crueljaw, Ov and Teresma, and both cooks from the pilgrim camp.

No matter how much time remains until the deadline expires, everyone (except the Sovereign's Oath) can feel the panic creeping up on them – a large-scale war between Ambria and the people of Davokar could be the end of an entire generation, on both sides.

Although he is still unwell, Tharaban will do everything in his power to avoid confrontation, for example having his representatives (the characters?) offer Korinthia and Seldonio access to the

Getting past the alarm system

Player characters who for some reason wish to avoid Queen Korinthia's army could try to climb the western side of Karvosti. This would mean between 50 and 70 meters of climbing up an almost vertical surface.

Player characters with the *Acrobatics* ability do not have to pass any tests to do so, but they do when trying to get past the alarm system as described below. Other characters must pass a [*Vigilant* +3] test every ten meters. A failed test means that they have put their weight in the wrong place and must pass a *Quick* test to avoid falling. Should that also fail, the character will slip and sustain falling damage depending on how far up they had come (in other words, it might be wise to let an acrobat go first and put safety wedges in place...).

Getting past the wires of the alarm system without ringing the bells is more difficult in some places than others. If the characters climb abreast, they must all roll 1D6-1; if they climb in line, only the first one will have to roll. The result of the roll then becomes a negative modifier to the *Discreet* test which all climbers must pass to avoid setting off the alarm.

stronghold vaults. But Korinthia will not budge. The Queen of Ambria is convinced that the witches will come around, if only because of appeals and threats from the clan chieftains (read more about this in the section titled Calming the Storm, page 144).

WHO KNOWS WHAT?

What information the various hunting parties have depends entirely on which way the player characters went during Act II and what happened at the adventure locations. The following table shows a suggestion to start with, but the Game Master is of course free to ignore it and come up with something else.

However, we recommend that the information should be somewhat scattered, so that not all groups have all the information. This way, there would still be opportunities and need for negotiations, even if the player characters already have the information they need.

A few extra words must be said about the verse which is needed to open Karvosti's Undergate. Apart from the missing Elmendra, Brother Bartho is practically the only one who knows the verse. If he is dead, and the player characters have not yet learned it, there are a few ways to solve their dilemma:

The stronghold archives: The scrolls in which Elmendra found information regarding possible locations of doors similar to Karvosti's Undergate

Entry Rules

The Ambrian guard post by the foot of the cliff will let civilians pass, but there are restrictions in place. Save what can be carried in a standard backpack, no provisions may be brought to the plateau. Weapons are okay, but they will refuse entry to all who look like barbarian warriors, guards or witches. Also, there is a risk that the soldiers will confiscate equipment, treasure and artifacts – not because they are ordered to, but because they can.

Appearing before Nighbane

If the player characters are given the opportunity to appear before the Queen, as the High Chieftain's envoys or during the adventure's epilogue, the Game Master would do well to truly emphasize her authority. She wears full armor, her face covered by the white porcelain mask, with a mighty broadsword at her side (successful *Vigilant* test: the sword is well-used and has probably seen countless battles). Next to her are Seldonio, Grandmaster of Ordo Magica, and the leader of her guard, General Jomilo. Furthermore, there are six dark-eyed pansars lined up between their liege and the characters, swords drawn but pointed at the floor.

Note that if the characters helped Korinthia get hold of the copper tablet during the adventure *Wrath of the Warden*, she will probably recognize their names. If so, they will receive a modifier of +1 if the scheming rules are employed, and she will thank them personally for their great efforts and achievements.

can be found in the High Chieftain's vaults. Two of the scrolls also recite the verse, describing it as "a key." Getting access to the vaults requires a break-in or very good relations with Tharaban (or a considerable favor offered in return); finding the scrolls requires assistance from the High Chieftain's chronicler, Monagona; interpreting them requires the *Loremaster* ability at master level.

Erella: Elmendra's verse was etched into Brother Bartho's brain, and he would often hum it to himself. If encouraged, his beloved Erella can recall every single word of it – but since she has no idea that it is actually a key code, the player characters will have to ask the right questions.

"Did Bartho have some special key?" will probably not get them very far. "Do you remember if there was something different about Bartho when he returned from his expedition with Elmendra?" will lead to something like: "No, nothing, nothing

at all. Or ... Well, I think that was when he started singing that annoying verse..."

Other factions: Their competitors may well have learned the verse, either in one of the ways mentioned above or directly from Brother Bartho (e.g. Cleaver). In that case, the characters could either ally themselves with the group in question, or kidnap and interrogate its leader under more or less violent circumstances. Another option could be to prepare an ambush near the Undergate and wait for someone else to open it...

NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations on Karvosti, or in the surrounding woods, are the player characters' last chance to compensate for previous mistakes. Even if the characters have managed to acquire the information they need, there might still be cause for negotiation. Groups who have failed to obtain all the necessary clues will try to learn whatever they do not know, and if the characters refuse to help them, they will turn to each other instead. Using the suggestion above, this would mean that an extremely problematic alliance could be formed between the Sun Knights and the Queen's Rangers, or between the former and one or two groups of fortune hunters.

Another reason to negotiate is that the groups representing House Kohinoor, the Templars and the Sun Church are well connected and have enormous resources at their disposal. If the characters play their cards right, they could benefit greatly from cooperating with their rivals – they could be promised a small fortune, properties, career opportunities, secret information, or perhaps a much sought after artifact. But not without offering something in return: their negotiating partner will either request their help in the final stages of the treasure hunt, or demand that they stop hunting the "map to Symbar" entirely. And once the negotiations are done, the player characters have the choice between compliance and deceit.

Table 17: Who has obtained which clues

| | YEFERON | NEW EARTHMOOR | FAARAH MOROUN |
|-----------------|---------|---------------|---------------|
| Ranger Captains | x | x | — |
| Leohan Meleke | x | — | x |
| Father Argaton | x | — | x |
| Dagesto | — | x | — |
| Ioséfia Dresel | — | x | x |
| Cleaver | — | x | — |

Through the Underworld

TIME HAS COME for the player characters to pack their bags, sharpen their weapons, and stock up on elixirs before setting off for the Undergate of Karvosti. The journey itself will most likely be as dangerous as the destination, particularly if the characters' competitors are still trying to get their hands on the cliff's rich stores of knowledge.

THE RIFT

Finding the entrance to the Underworld which Iasmial's warriors once used should not be very difficult – provided that they have the map. Of course, the characters will face other obstacles along the way.

The entrance is a virtually overgrown rift near the shore of Lake Volgoma. According to Garathve's indications, it is located four hundred and thirty paces east and three hundred and four paces north of the Blue Altar Stone – a huge rock of blue-grey granite worn down to an egg-like shape by the crashing autumn waves (see the left side of the map on page 151). At its widest, the rift is no more than two meters wide, and it stretches some fifteen meters, curved like a crescent moon.

Heading down into the rift, one will find it narrow at first, before it widens again, eventually leading to a small underground chamber from which one small and two larger cracks run in different directions. There are about thirty meters from the surface down to the bottom of the rift, and five meters from the opening in the chamber ceiling to the chamber floor. On the ground lie the skeletal remains of ten or so animals and two humans who, through the centuries, have fallen to their deaths.

Locating the rift: If any of the player characters have the *Bushcraft* trait/boon, no test is needed to follow the map's instructions and, after gauging the terrain, pinpoint the exact location of the entrance. If no such person is present, they must first pass a *Cunning* test to read the map correctly, and then a *Vigilant* test to spot the rift.

Failing the *Vigilant* test means that someone risks walking straight into the gap and sustaining falling damage. The unfortunate character is chosen at random (or the one going first, if they stick together), and must pass a *Quick* test not to fall.

The climb: Only those with the *Acrobatics* ability are able to climb down the rift without the help of a rope. Even with the rope, all player characters must

pass two [Vigilant+3] tests as they climb. Failing a test means that they put their weight on a loose stone and must pass a *Quick* test not to fall. Also, player characters who are currently positioned below the falling one must pass a *Quick* test to avoid being dragged into the fall.

A player character who fails the first test will tumble 10+1D10 meters and sustain the corresponding amount of damage, as will those who are dragged down with him/her. If the second test fails, the fall will only be 1D10 meters. *Armor* protects as usual.

Enemies near the rift: The landscape between Karvosti and Lake Volgoma consists of large rocks covered with vegetation – the perfect location for someone setting up an ambush...

Should any of the player characters' competitors still lack information needed to enter Karvosti, they could well be waiting close to the rift, hoping to trap someone who does. In that case, they will try to take at least one of the characters alive and have him or her lead them to the Undergate.

Another possibility is that the members of a certain group (alternately an alliance of groups) already have the information they need, but hope to stop or slow down anyone who might be following them. Then, the enemy's goal would simply be to eliminate the player characters.

Should the idea of an ambush seem reasonable to the Game Master, he or she should prepare a map of the area surrounding the rift, mark where the enemies are hiding, and give some thought to their strategy. They will probably not attack until some of the player characters have started climbing into the deep...

THE JOURNEY BELOW

The Underworld is vast and diverse in nature. The area through which the player characters will be travelling consists mainly of small grottos, two to three meters from floor to ceiling, connected by cracks whose width ranges from half a meter to two meters. The tunnels slant both upwards and downwards, and so do the grottos; sometimes one will need a rope to climb up or down steep bedrock slopes and masses of cobblestone. Some of the deepest grottos are warm and humid, with luminescent moss covering the floor, walls, and ceiling.

There are creatures living down there, but we would suggest that the player characters manage to avoid them, if they only follow the path marked

Table 18: Encounters in the Underworld

| 1D20 | ENCOUNTER | DESCRIPTION |
|-------|--|---|
| 1–7 | — | |
| 8–11 | PC+2 fey beasts rejected by their pack | <i>The Witch Hammer</i> , page 66 |
| 12–14 | A family of PC+1 Vearons | <i>The Wrath of the Warden</i> , page 111 |
| 15–17 | Group-living rage trolls, as many as the PCs | <i>The Core Rulebook</i> , page 207 |
| 18–19 | A roaming necromage | <i>The Core Rulebook</i> , page 232 |
| 20 | A ragged, blight-born aboar | <i>The Core Rulebook</i> , page 228 |

The Undergate of Karvosti, so damaged by the passing of time that its figures and ornaments can barely be seen from a distance.

on the map. Two successful [Cunning -5] tests (the modifier does not apply to characters with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon or the *Cartographer* boon) are required to navigate the tunnels and reach the

Undergate. Those who fail a test or deliberately deviate from the path must roll on the following table, unless the Game Master would rather decide on something else.



Into Karvosti

AT THE END of a more or less eventful journey through the Underworld, the player characters finally reach a massive gate, which probably looks very familiar. It is almost identical to the one in Faarah Moroun – severely corroded, twice the height of a man, almost as wide, two feet thick, and highly ornate – but the figures are slightly different. Now, all that remains is to open it.

THE GATE IS OPENED

In order to open the Undergate of Karvosti, one must either have memorized Elmendra's verse or written it down. Should the players have difficulty deciphering its meaning, the Game Master can let the characters have a go at it, preferably after some discussion; a successful *Cunning* test should be all that is needed to give one of the player characters a decisive hint regarding how it is done.

To open the door, one must pull out five specific figures and turn them, clockwise or counterclockwise, a certain number of clicks. Those particular figures are the only ones that are not stuck to the door, since Elmendra has already loosened them using a chisel and alchemical substances purchased on Karvosti. To be perfectly clear, here is a reiteration of the verse, along with explanations of each segment:

| | |
|---|--|
| The horsemanship canter two paces east... | Pull the rider, turn 2 clicks counterclockwise |
| the moon crescent follows him once and again. | Pull the moon, turn 4 clicks counterclockwise |
| The ship glides six leagues the other way... | Pull the ship, turn 6 clicks clockwise |
| shadowed half-way by the eagle. | Pull the eagle, turn 3 clicks clockwise |

| | |
|---|--|
| The dog then tails its riding friend... | Pull the dog, turn 2 clicks counterclockwise |
| till it swivels and doubles the distance. | Turn the dog 4 clicks clockwise |

Actually pushing the unlocked gate open when in a stressful situation will require characters with a combined *Strong* value of at least 20. If those pushing it pass a *Strong* test, it takes 2 turns to open the door enough for a person to slip through, or 3 turns for someone with the *Robust* trait to do the same. Should anyone fail their test, the time it takes to open the door will increase to 4 and 5 turns respectively.

AMBUSH!

There is a considerable risk that the player characters will be attacked as soon as the door starts to open, if not earlier. It could be Argaton (perhaps in alliance with Adreanea) who wishes to stop the door from opening at all. Or maybe the characters are being followed by the same alliance that had some of its forces lie in wait by the rift?

It would be particularly dramatic if the attacking force is more than the characters can handle. Then they must either take their chances in combat or try to hold the enemy off while some of their fellow characters work on pushing the door open.

The rules for opening the door apply when pushing it closed as well, and it is obviously crucial that no person or object is in its way. On the other side of the door is a circular handle of corroded bronze, large as an ogre's headband, which can be used to open it from the inside. If one would rather keep it sealed, one could wedge the door shut with pointy stones or steel weapons (requires a successful *Cunning* test).

Sealing/Opening Rite

Although it is extremely difficult, the Undergate can actually be opened with the *Sealing/Opening Rite* (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 92). Since its lock cannot normally be picked, its *Difficulty* is -8. Furthermore, every step of unlocking the door counts as a lock in itself. The character (or NPC) must therefore perform the ritual successfully six times in a row – otherwise, the mechanism resets and they will have to restart from the beginning.

Trailing Elmendra

IT IS NEITHER possible nor necessary to describe in detail the twists and turns of the tunnels which run through the inside of Karvosti. This section begins with a description of the area in general, followed by a closer look at nine of its sections, which are more or less internally homogeneous. And lastly, the focus is on a number of specific halls or chambers where the player characters may acquire certain information, confront enemies, or both.

NAVIGATING INSIDE KARVOSTI

First and foremost: with a few exceptions, there is no light inside Karvosti, either from lanterns or from any luminescent vegetation. It is dark.

Pitch-dark. And as soon as one steps through the door, one is hit by a feeling of unease. Something is wrong, terribly wrong.

Two details immediately stand out:

- The ground is covered with fine-grained stone dust, which makes it impossible not to notice the footprints – tracks from the soft boots of quite a small person, in all likelihood Elmendra. There are tracks leading away from the door, and others that lead back towards the Underworld (see the dashed line on the map, page 135).
- There are also other tracks in the dust, lots of them, but their shape is difficult to identify.

Some are small and almost round; others are a decimeter long, thin, with smudged outlines. The *Beast Lore* ability or the *Bushcraft* trait/boon and a successful *Cunning* test is required to draw the right conclusion: these are the tracks of spiders, some running, others hopping. The biggest one must be truly enormous.

The characteristics of the various sections are described in greater detail under the next heading, but generally speaking, the inside of Karvosti consists of winding passages, cracks, and tunnels. Most of them were first created by the rain and meltwater which for thousands of years seeped through the cliff, and later sculpted by the witches to fit their needs. Others were made entirely by humans, most often to connect the different parts of the network.

Some passages lead to halls and chambers: some large, others small; some natural, others of human making; some damp, others dry. Most of them are completely empty and seem never to have served any particular function, but the higher up one gets, the more one finds chambers built for practical use (for examples, see the headings below).

The feeling of unease: If the player characters are in section A, a [Vigilant -5] test is required to accurately identify the sensation; in section B an unmodified Vigilant test will suffice, as long as everyone stands still and keeps quiet.

If successful, the player character will notice two distinct sounds – one is the soft flow of waves sweeping over bedrock; the other is a powerful throbbing sound, so low-pitched it can hardly be heard, but rather felt. Every fifteen breaths there is another throb, sending shivers down the spine and causing the very bedrock to tremble.

Tomb of Dying Dreams

We decided to include Karathran in this adventure after having asked Game Masters to let us know how it went when they and their gaming groups played the adventure *Tomb of Dying Dreams*. The vast majority said that the spider Xanathâ emerged victorious, as owner of The Vile Water, which she now intends to use to execute her plan.

Should your gaming group's experiences from *Tomb of Dying Dreams* differ significantly from the majority, some adjustments will have to be made. If Xanathâ is already dead, we suggest that Karathran is acting on her own, with the aim to resurrect both her brother and the vanquished spirit of her mother.

It is the sound of Garavarax. As the characters move closer to the underground lake in section C, the flowing of the waves becomes louder, but the throbbing does not.

Cobwebs: As the player characters travel deeper into the cliff, they sometimes come across thick cobwebs, often positioned at ankle-height near tunnel openings and intersections. Moreover, there are individual strings, sometimes bundles of them, running along the walls and ceiling. A successful *Cunning* test leads to the conclusion that it must be some kind of warning system.

There is a good chance that the player characters will give away their presence every time they go from one section to another. Whoever goes first must make a Vigilant test [-5 if the character does not expressly state that he or she is watching out for spider webs]. If the test succeeds, the character manages to get past the obstacle without complication; if it fails, the string of webbing will break. In the latter case, the risk of the spiders being alerted increases the closer they get to the power node (such a vast web inevitably has its flaws). Entering section B and C, the risk is 1 on 1D10; 1 on 1D4 for section D; 1-2 on 1D4 in section E and F; and 1-3 on 1D4 in section G.

The symbols: Player characters who have spoken to Elida in New Earthmoor already know about the direction indicators which can be found in each of the larger corridors and intersections – triangles the size of one's palm, pointing upwards, downwards, left (south) or right (north). The characters will probably keep following Elmendra's trail, but in that case, the arrows could at least raise intriguing questions, such as: "Why did she head north from here? Elida made it perfectly clear that north was a bad idea."

The main function of the arrows is to give the players an alternative to the path taken by Elmendra; they can pick a direction (south and upwards) and stick to it, even if the footprints lead somewhere else.

KARATHRAN

The deeper parts of Karvosti have a new ruler – the spider princess Karathran, daughter of Xanathâ, mother of many. Her children have been watching the Undergate for decades, waiting for a chance to get past it; a chance they got as Elmendra left the door half-open on her way out. The princess hurried inside along with many of her spiderlings, slew a couple of witches who had business in the deep, and sealed the passages between section H and F with numerous layers of cobweb.

1200 meter



What Karathran wants is the power of Karvosti's node; not for herself, but for her mother, Xanathâ. She has decided that it is time for the Spider King to return and resume his battle against the humans and their relentless efforts to destroy the world. However, this information will not be revealed to the player characters, even if they should somehow manage to gain an audience with Karathran. Both they and the Game Master will have to wait until the fourth episode of the chronicle to delve in to that particular subject, when the Spider King will rise again, in the city of the last emperor: Symbar.

Should the player characters alert the spiders to their presence, they will first be pursued by PC+2 Hunting Spiders. It is possible to hide from them in the dark nooks and crannies of the tunnels [*Discreet*←*Vigilant*, as usual], but in that case, the hunters will not stop looking for them until they have left Karvosti.

Should it come to combat, the situation turns even more precarious. The player characters could of course win, but when the hunters do not report back, three more patrols (PC+1 hunters, each led by a Fray Spider) are dispatched, which better be avoided.

Should any of these groups also be defeated, Karathran will consider the intruders a serious threat. She withdraws her forces and positions them around the Power Node chamber, leaving the way to the Reliquary open for the characters. However, when they get there, Oryela will be much more difficult to handle.

Karathran

"I am Karathran, daughter of Xanathâ, mother of many."

Karathran is the daughter of the monstrous spider Xanathâ, one of the oldest creatures in the region, once hunted by the great princes of Symbar. The mother has recently returned from a long stay in the Spirit World, which has given many of her daughters a new purpose in life – to do whatever they can to help the mother give new life to their brother, the Spider King Angathal Taar.

Karathran gratefully accepted her new role. During Xanathâ's absence, she watched the humans with growing concern, and she completely agrees that something must be done. That being said, she has come to both respect and understand the barbarians and their witches over the centuries, and would rather not see them hurt. She intends to absorb the power of the node and leave Karvosti as she found it, preferably without further bloodshed.

As for her appearance, Karathran is black as night, with a body the size of an ogre and long, jointed legs. Normally her compound eyes are about a meter from the ground, but her long legs enable her to rise up and look down on even the tallest of adventurers. She communicates via telepathic imagery, removing the need to overcome any language barriers. She can express herself verbally as well, but only in creaking hisses and, at best, in an ancient barbarian dialect long since forgotten.

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| Manner | Completely motionless | | |
| Race | Spider | | |
| Resistance | Strong | | |
| Traits | <i>Armored</i> (III), <i>Natural Weapon</i> (II), <i>Poisonous</i> (III), <i>Poison Spit</i> (III), <i>Robust</i> (I), <i>Web</i> (III) | | |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 15 (-5), Discreet 11 (-1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (-3), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 10 (0) | | | |
| Abilities | <i>Acrobatics</i> (master) | | |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Fleet-footed</i> | | |
| Weapons | Bite 6 and poison 4 for 4 turns | | |
| Armor | Carapace plates 6 | | |
| Defense | -1 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | None | | |
| Shadow | Sparkling white like sunlit snow (corruption: 0) | | |
| Tactics: Karathran leaves the fighting to her offspring, but will aid them with her web and poison spit. She does not enjoy killing, not in the least, but in this case backing down is not an option – she will not leave the node until the eggs she carries on her mother's behalf are filled with power. | | | |

Hunting Spider

The hunting spiders look like smaller version of their mother – about the size of a large dog, with glossy, black, hairless bodies and long, thin legs. They only obey their mother's commands, and will do anything to protect her.

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Race | Spider | | |
| Resistance | Ordinary | | |
| Traits | <i>Natural Weapon</i> (I), <i>Poisonous</i> (I), <i>Web</i> (II) | | |
| Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 11 (-1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 10 (0) | | | |
| Abilities | <i>Acrobatics</i> (adept) | | |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Fleet-footed</i> | | |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Weapons | Bite 3 and poison 2 for 2 turns |
| Armor | None |
| Defense | -5 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | None |
| Shadow | Bluish grey, like the beard lichens of the forest (corruption: 2) |

Tactics: The hunting spiders use their sticky web to entangle their prey. With that done, they proceed to flank and kill one victim at a time.

Fray Spider

The larger, stronger fray spiders are the offspring of Karathran and Ark, the forest god of Odaban. Brownish-gray and covered with thick, short hairs, these large spiders lack the ability to spin webs. Instead, they catch their prey like most four-legged predators: with speed, strength, and cunning.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Race | Spider |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | Armored (III), Natural Weapon (II), Poisonous (II) |
| Accurate | 15 (-5) |
| Cunning | 7 (+3) |
| Discreet | 9 (+1) |
| Persuasive | 5 (+5) |
| Quick | 13 (-3) |
| Resolute | 10 (0) |
| Strong | 11 (-1) |
| Vigilant | 10 (0) |
| Abilities | Acrobatics (novice), Natural Warrior (master) |
| Boons/Burdens | Fleet-footed |
| Weapons | 2 Bites 8 and poison 3 for 3 turns |
| Armor | Chitin shields 4 |
| Defense | -3 |
| Toughness | 11 |
| Pain Threshold | 6 |
| Equipment | None |
| Shadow | Dark brown with streaks of gray, like a speckled mountain wall (corruption: 1) |

Tactics: Against stronger prey well-suited for melee combat, the fray spider will begin with a quick poison attack and then keep its distance while the poison weakens the victim. Against weaker enemies, and those with ranged weapons, it relies on its powerful bite and thick shell.

THE SECTIONS

As mentioned earlier, the inside of Karvosti is a maze of tunnels, corridors, halls and chambers. The sections cannot all be described here, and drawing three-dimensional maps is also quite the challenge. But if the Game Master feels the need for more detailed plans of the area, our suggestion

would be that each section should consist of two levels and that the network should be as wide as the cliff itself (400 meters/paces). Just remember to mark the passages leading up and down between levels.

Section A: The chambers in section A, where the characters enter Karvosti, are only visited by the witches when they have reason to venture into the Underworld. A wide, man-made tunnel leads from the Undergate to the plantations in section B, and the footprints indicate that Elmendra went that way, back and forth.

There is another passage which also leads to B, and two smaller tunnels leading to D. The latter ones are completely blocked by many layers of thick web. The player characters could either cut or burn their way through, but then the risk of alerting the spiders would be 1 on 1D4.

Section B: In section B, the air is warmer and damper, and the ground is increasingly porous the further north one goes. The number of cave halls also increases, and near section C is a series of rooms where the witches grow lichens, mushrooms, and algae (see the Plantations on page 138). At an intersection in the middle of B, Elmendra first continued north, then came back the same way to follow a slanting tunnel toward E instead. The trail north leads straight through the section, past the plantations and into C.

There are two passages between A and B, and as many between B and E, but only one from B to C – a natural crack which runs from the plantations all the way to Garavarax's lake. The opening near the plantations is partially covered by spider webs. It is easily detected, and with a successful Quick test one can get through without disturbing it. If the test fails, there is a 1 on 1D10 risk that the spiders are alerted.

Section C: The northernmost section of the cave complex consists entirely of natural cracks, tunnels, and chambers. The witches only go there to help Aloéna keep a watchful eye on Garavarax when the giant seems restless in his sleep. Elmendra's trail goes all the way to the opening into the vast hall with the underground lake (see below), but not a step further – the sight of Aloéna put an end to her curiosity. She reminded herself of why she had come, and turned around.

Section D: Section D is located directly above the Undergate, and it was here Elida spent most of her time as the witches' "guest." The footprints – which



*About the map
and the sections*

It is difficult for a two-dimensional map to do the insides of Karvosti justice. Not all its tunnels, cracks and halls are marked out; the focus is on the path taken by Elmendra. Should the player characters ignore her trail and wish to explore the rest of the underground complex, the Game Master is most welcome to add or remove whatever seems appropriate. Just remember to convey the constant threat of the spiders – if the characters linger for too long, they will soon go from hunters to being hunted!



go from E, through the Hall of Sculptures, and on to the Prison – are not as easily distinguished, since Yeleta and her witches visit both the plantations and Oryela at least once every other day. At the intersection where Elmendra first went to the Prison, then turned back and proceeded upwards, a successful *Vigilant* test is required to notice her detour.

As mentioned earlier, there are two tunnels between D and A, both covered with webbing. The same goes for those between D and F, and also for four of the five tunnels between D and E. Should the player characters cut or burn their way through the latter, the risk of alerting the spiders is 1-2 on 1D4.

Section E: Except for the large tunnel leading to and from the plantations, the witches rarely visit section E. The air is fresh and dry, which makes the section well-suited for storing textiles, parchment and paper, and some of the natural chambers are used for that exact purpose. But the player characters will no doubt be more interested in the collection of tapestries described on page 139.

Next to the main tunnel is another passage between E and B, and two between E and G, both completely covered with webbing (risk of detection: 1-3 on 1D4). There are also five passages between E and D – one is the main tunnel, the others are smaller and covered with webs (risk of detection: 1-2 on 1D4).

Section F: One could say that section F is the cellar of the witches' dwelling. In addition to the Reliquary (see below), there are laboratories, a smithy, and storehouses for alchemical substances. The hunting spiders have destroyed most of it, but there are still treasures to be found. The Game Master could determine the number of finds in advance, or let the players roll 1D6 on table 2.2 in the eBook *Adventure Pack 1*.

Sections F and D are connected by two passages, one of which is completely covered with spider webs. Of the five passages between F and G, only one is free of webbing. The two passages between F and H are blocked by numerous layers of webbing, and PC×2 hunting spiders are posted near each passage, to warn the others if the witches should attempt to break through.

Section G: Section G could be described as the heart of Karvosti, as this is where one finds the mystical node used by the witches whenever they need more power than their own bodies can channel. Here can also be found one large and six smaller ritual chambers – stone halls that are

completely bare, except for the patterned rugs on the floor. A long time ago, Oryela hid the artifact that corrupted her, Natana's urn, deep inside a crack in the wall of a grotto directly behind the Power Node chamber.

All passages into and out of G are covered with spider webs, except the larger corridor which leads to F.

Section H1-2: The two passages leading to the witches' dwellings, guest rooms, and meeting rooms are blocked by webs. And what is more, the witches have sealed the bronze doors located on their side of the spider webs, as they wait for the negotiations with Karathran to bring about a peaceful solution.

The character's chances of reaching these sections are slim – they would first have to kill the PC×2 hunting spiders posted in the area, then get through many layers of web and a massive bronze door before Karathran sends her entire horde to stop them. And even if they somehow manage all of this, the witches will immediately put bags over their heads, escort them to the entrance hall, and make them leave through the opening on Aloéna's plateau.

THE PLANTATIONS

In the porous stone at the bottom level of Karvosti's tunnels, the Huldra and her aides are growing alchemically potent algae, mushrooms, and lichens. Rock formations and stalagmites divide the almost 200 meters long, slightly sloping cave into a number of sections, each with said ingredients growing on the floor and walls.

With repeated *Cunning* tests and the *Alchemy* or *Poisoner* ability, the characters can recognize many common components of various poisons and alchemical remedies. But there is one mushroom and one type of algae that none will have seen before. In order to find them, one must study the plantations closely. After looking around for half an hour, and passing a *Vigilant* test, the character finds a mushroom the witches call *Yellow Mist Cap*; doing so twice reveals the lichen known as the *Weeping Wind Lichen*.

Yellow Mist Cap: Adding mist cap when creating Choking Spores will give them +1 to both damage and duration (i.e. 1D4+1 damage for 1D4+1 turns). There are enough mushrooms for 2D6 doses, and each dose of raw material is worth 4 thaler.

Weeping Wind Lichen: Mixing the wind lichen into an ordinary Herbal Cure will increase the amount of *Toughness* it heals to 1D4. When used with the

Medicus ability, the Effect Die is increased by one step, to 1D8 (novice), 1D10 (adept), or 1D12 (master). There are enough lichens for 2D4 Herbal Cures, and each dose of raw material is worth 2 thaler.

GARAVARAX

If the player characters follow Elmendra's trail north from the plantations, through a crack in the rock, they will reach the other side after about 150 meters. The further they go, the air grows damper and the waves louder. Soon, another sound emerges from the dark - the faint, melodic singing of birds.

They can tell from the sound alone that the hall ahead is extremely vast. Then they glimpse a cold, grainy light coming from the ground further in.

With a successful Vigilant test, the characters can also see a figure standing completely still in the dark between them and the strange light; an enormous figure, over three meters tall. If the characters have seen Aloéna before and pass a [Vigilant -5] test, they will recognize her immediately.

Aloéna is standing on the brink of the underground lake, at the bottom of which the giant Garavarax is kept in perpetual slumber. The slow beating of his heart is what makes the lake surge and the ground tremble. And thanks to the faintly glowing algae at the bottom of the lake the characters may actually catch a glimpse of him. They cannot make out any details, just a huge, dark shadow against the light of the algae. The birdsong is now heard quite clearly, coming from somewhere further in.

Should the player characters dare approach her, Aloéna will slowly turn around and put a finger to her lips, hushing them. Her focus is entirely on Garavarax, and she is not interested in why the characters have come, who they are, or what they bring with them. As long as they keep quiet and stay away from the water, she may give brief answers to some of their questions - in perfect Ambrian, no less. If they ask her about something not listed below, she simply shakes her head and nods toward the exit:

What are you doing?

"Helping the lulling singers sustain Garavarax's slumber. These are perilous times for the little people, even with no storms on Lake Volgoma."

Are you not needed on Karvosti?

"I watch and listen and assess, there as I do here. I am where I must be, always."

We need your help; can you help us?

"No, that I need not do..."

Davokar is about to awaken, the forest grows darker; why do you not intervene?

"I act in accordance with my calling. It was I that put Garavarax to rest, and I must see that he does not awaken. That is all..."

THE TAPESTRY COLLECTION

In a dry natural cave, some thirty rods have been hung horizontally from the ceiling, attached with wires and hooks. On these rods, fifty or so tapestries and patterned rugs are mounted in row after row. Most of them are tattered, probably salvaged from Symbarian ruins, and many depict abstract patterns rather than images. However, there are two interesting exceptions:

The Throne of Thorns: Five by three meters large, the tapestry was weaved with thick threads which over the years have lost much of their color and luster. It depicts a throne, perched on a high stone podium - but the throne itself is not of stone or wood, but of thick, writhing thorns, stretching toward the ceiling and drooping over the podium like a billowing cape. And on the throne sits a faceless, sexless ruler dressed in white and red, with some kind of crooked wooden staff resting across its lap.

The Last Battle of Symbar: A thin, panoramic tapestry, four meters high and almost eight meters wide. Cuneiform writings have been embroidered near its upper edge and can be interpreted by someone with the Loremaster ability at master level: *"The last battle of Symbar."* A great city towers in the background, with a battle raging in the forefront. In the center rides a steel-clad knight, swinging his sword. More human warriors come rushing from the left, toward their enemies - slim, spear-wielding humanoids, some as tall as the warriors, others much taller. And among them swarms a horde of spider creatures. A successful Cunning test with the Beast Lore ability, alternatively a [Cunning -5] test, leads to the conclusion that Symbar (according to the tapestry) was crushed by an army of elves and spiders...

THE HALL OF SCULPTURES

In one of the larger halls of section F, the witches have amassed a large collection of sculptures which over the centuries have been found amongst the ruins of Symbaroum. They are all related, in one way or another, to the mystical and/or dark forces of the world. Most of them are relatively small, human-sized at best, but some are gigantic, brought to the hall in pieces and later reassembled.

The collection consists of almost a hundred and fifty sculptures. Sixteen of them were once alive, before being turned into stone, iron, copper, or jade. Notable examples are the arch troll Bobarax, who angered the god Alor; Queen Aganda's slave, Galg, who was forced to sample his mistress's poisoned wine; and the lindworm Orselenda, whose insatiable desire for gold finally became her undoing.

Player characters who have been to Faraah Moroun will also recognize two statues like the one in the ruin's chapel (the worship of Jeberaja was widespread), among other sculptures of abominations and daemons – one bears a striking resemblance to Princess Fangafa, who can be encountered in the adventure *Tomb of Dying Dreams*.

THE PRISON

Scattered across a natural cavern, between fifty and a hundred meters in diameter with a height varying between five and fifteen, are fourteen steel cages in various shapes and sizes. They are all from the Symbarian era, and the runes carved into their bars shield them from mystical energies – in other words, the person inside the cage cannot use mystical powers or perform any rituals.

The air in the tunnel leading to the cavern is pungent and unsound, which can be detected upon approach with a successful *Vigilant* test (see *Forbidden Knowledge* on page 115). Inside the cave, each breath makes the windpipes burn with pain. Two distinct sounds can be heard from different

parts of the cavern: the wretched whimper of some beast, and the tapping of bone against iron.

Oryela is no longer in her cage; she was set free by Karathran in exchange for information about Karvosti, the witches, and the power node. Three cages contain the corpses of creatures who recently died from starvation: a barbarian man with abnormally long arms, skin coarse like the bark of a tree, and horns growing out of his bald head; a female goblin with monstrous fangs and pale skin covered with black streaks; and a wolf-like creature whose fur has in many places been replaced with moss and whose head looks more like that of a wild boar, only with ten tusks and a long, wriggling snake-tongue.

The whimper comes from what seems to be a small, ragged canine, huddled in its cage: a jakaar pup. It looks no more than a few weeks old, with a fluffy tail covering its eyes. But whoever breaks the lock (requires the proper tools and a successful *Strong* test) and lets it out will suffer the consequences – it leaps rapaciously at whoever freed it, suddenly not as cute and tiny as it first appeared (has the stats of a Blight-born Jakaar, page 226 in the *Core Rulebook*).

Should the player characters follow the tapping sound, they will soon find a cage whose naked prisoner looks wearily up at them. It is an elven woman, a summer elf by the looks of it, seemingly unmarked by corruption. She is sitting down with her knees to her chin, knocking her knuckles hard against the bottom of the steel cage. Her knuckles are bruised and bloodied.

The elf does not get up; she does not beg to be released or initiate a conversation. However, she will answer questions if they are asked in Elvish (requires the *Loremaster* ability at adept lever or higher and a successful *Cunning* test). She reveals that Oryela was freed by “*The Spider Princess who now rules these caverns*,” but mentions nothing about herself, except that her name is Eol-Mir. If the player characters offer to let her out, she will thank them somberly and get to her feet. She leaves by herself and will wait for them by the Undergate (without opening it), whether the characters tell her to or not.

Karvosti's Power Node

It is highly unlikely that the player characters will gain access to Karvosti's power node. Even if they should somehow manage to eliminate the entire horde of spiders, including their mistress, one of them would have to bind himself/herself to the crystal, which neither the witches nor the wrathguard will allow. But if the unlikely should occur, the following applies:

The individual who has bound himself/herself to the node and is situated within a hundred paces from it...

- ... will not receive any corruption from using powers and performing rituals
- ... may learn new powers and rituals without being corrupted
- ... doubles the effect of all powers and rituals (if the power/ritual uses no effect die, the node affects something else, such as its duration; the Game Master decides)
- ... gains additional protection which decreases all damage suffered by 1D6 *Toughness*
- ... may add +5 to *Resolute* for all tests when attempting to influence the minds of others, or resist being influenced.

THE POWER NODE

The chamber of the Power Node is not a natural one; the rock surrounding the node has simply been removed, resulting in a square room, each side about twenty paces long, with an arched ceiling and six smooth pillars preventing the cave from collapsing. At the center, partially lowered into the floor, is the node – a massive indigo crystal the size of a crouching arch troll.

Karathran is perched on the node, as if she is incubating a gigantic egg. She is accompanied by a number of fray spiders equal to the number of PCs, and twice as many hunting spiders. It should also be mentioned that one of the ways into (and out of) the chamber is entirely blocked by a thick layer of spider web; whether one uses fire or axes, it will take two turns to get through.

OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST

In addition to the above, the Game Master could make the journey through Karvosti even more intense by using the following events and incidents.

Ygval's Daughter: When entering a larger chamber, the characters get to make a *Vigilant* test. Whoever succeeds notices someone sitting on the floor in front of them, at the very edge of their light source. The person is completely still, with her back to the characters, dressed in a simple blue cowl. Approaching her, they can see the face of a young woman inside the hood. The girl stares at the floor; she appears to be alive, but will not answer when spoken to. Should they touch her, she will hiss at them angrily, without making eye-contact.

For the Game Master: This is the third daughter of the late High Chieftain Ygval. For some reason she stopped aging when reaching nineteen and has lived in the tunnels ever since, withdrawn into herself, with no interest in anyone else.

Dead Witches: Three dead witches, all killed by the invading spiders, can be found in various parts of the tunnels. One of them is a Zarekian man who was on his way back from the plantations with a basket of mushrooms; the other two, both from clan Karohar, were attacked while meditating in section G.

Finally, the player characters could find the lifeless body of Eferneya, the Huldra's closest assistant besides Gadramon. She was going to see Oryela when Karathran attacked, and she slew three hunting spiders before falling victim to a fatal bite. Note that the Game Master is free to replace Eferneya with some other senior witch, if he/she so wishes.

The Rain of Fire: The player characters can see a faint light coming from up ahead. Approaching it, they soon reach the entrance of an ordinary grotto, no more than five meters in diameter with about two or three meters from floor to ceiling. But there is one remarkable detail: fiery embers seem to be raining down from above. A closer look will reveal the embers to be glowing red drops oozing from the ceiling, evaporating before hitting the ground.

For the Game Master: The glowing drops are an aftereffect of an incredibly powerful ritual weaved long ago by the Huldra Areol, who died in the process.

The Reliquary

THE WITCHES' RELIQUARY contains a large collection of powerful or remarkable objects which the Huldra and her predecessors thought to be of particular importance. All objects in the reliquary are protected by the *Raven's Doom* ritual (see page 60), triggered if someone tries to move or damage an item – which explains Elmendra's marks of corruption.

One of the objects is the stone tablet which started this entire hunt. Unfortunately, the characters will have serious difficulties getting hold of it, for between them and the tablet stands the former Huldra, Oryela, and she will not let them through – not without being offered something in return.

OVERVIEW

The reliquary consists of seven small chambers with smooth, chalked walls and arched ceilings, connected by short corridors (also arched). Karathran ordered all passages to be spun shut, as she could sense the energies of the protective

rituals and did not want her children running around among the artifacts. The main entrance is still open since Oryela burst through the web looking for Spiderbane (see below). Note that there are torches on the wall, which could be lit by the player characters.

The chambers contain some thirty objects, placed on stone podiums, mounted on the walls, or standing directly on the ground. There are weapons and shields, books and scrolls, stone tablets, cloth banners, vases and urns, large statues and tiny figurines. And they are all protected with the *Raven's Doom* ritual, which can be revealed with the *Witchsight* ability and a successful [*Vigilant -3*] test.

Oryela has only been in the chamber where Spiderbane is normally found. The reliquary floor is much less dusty than those in the lower sections of the complex, but with enough light and a successful *Vigilant* test, one can see Elmendra's footprints where the former Huldra has not set foot. Apparently the fortune hunter went into the chamber on the right, and then out again.



Iel's strategy

When the player characters show themselves to the night elf, he immediately casts *Bend Will* on one of them. Let the player make a *[Resolute -8]* test, but do not tell him/her why; even if the test fails, Iel will not assume control of the character until someone attacks him.

ORYELA

As they reach the entrance to the reliquary, the player characters hear the voice of an old woman roaring in elvish: “*Stop! Stop or die!*” Ignoring her warning makes combat inevitable; Iel has taken command of Oryela’s body and will not be defied. On the other hand, if they do as they are told, they may actually negotiate with the elf.

Iel is not leaving Karvosi without the artifact that slew the keeper Deadorna and darkened Oryela’s soul. After being freed, he went to the reliquary to fetch the weapon known as Spiderbane, but as the weapon was missing he remained there out of fear of Karathran. Now he sees the characters as a second chance.

Listed below are some ways in which characters unwilling to fight Iel/Oryela could access the chamber with the stone tablet. Should they want to try a different approach, the Game Master is encouraged to reward all good ideas:

Trade: If the characters are carrying Spiderbane, Iel will recognize it regardless of its current form. He then suggests a simple trade – the artifact for safe passage to the reliquary.

A favor: Iel is willing to grant the characters access to the reliquary on the condition that they first bring him a certain artifact: Natana’s urn. He tells them where to find it; in a natural cave just past the power node chamber, hidden in a crack in the wall.

The characters ought to realize that attacking the spiders is a bad idea. If they are to oblige Oryela/Iel, they must use stealth and cunning. Characters sneaking through section G must pass a *[Discreet -1]* test on the way to the artifact, and another one on the way back. They will also have to pass the same number of *Vigilant* tests to detect the webs which are part of the spiders’ warning system: if the tests are successful, the player characters can easily step over or crawl underneath the strands; if failed, a group of hunting spiders (PC+2) will come running 3 turns later.

If someone goes to distract Katharan, or tries to negotiate with her, the sneaking characters get +5 to all tests to avoid detection.

Remember, if the player characters have previously been detected by and killed two of Karathran’s groups (see the Karathran heading), this solution will hardly be possible, as section G will be swarming with hunting and fray spiders.

Oryela/Iel

“My price is blood or deeds; you decide.”

Since Oryela was set free by Karathran, Iel has taken complete control of her body, obsessed with finding

Natana's Urn and taking it to the glade where his own body sits entranced. He is less concerned with the body of the former Huldra, and will not hesitate to sacrifice it in battle – if he cannot get Oryela's hands on the urn, she is of no use to him anyway.

Since Iel has already been thoroughly corrupted, he has nothing to lose from equipping the Spear of Terael-Kael and the Cowl of Dorgvalg. Hence, the characters face an extremely wrinkled, shriveled old woman with bushy grey-black hair, dressed in a bright white cowl and leaning on an ornamented spear.

| | |
|---|--|
| Manner | Grumpy, croaking voice |
| Race | Human/Night Elf |
| Resistance | Strong |
| Traits | <i>Regeneration</i> (III) |
| Accurate 9 (+1), Cunning 15 (-5), Discreet 5 (+5),
Persuasive 11 (-1), Quick 7 (+3), Resolute 18 (-8),
Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Bend Will</i> (master), <i>Berserker</i> (master), <i>Exceptionally Cunning</i> (adept), <i>Exceptionally Resolute</i> (master), <i>Larvae Boil</i> (master), <i>Nature's Embrace</i> (master), <i>Staff Fighting</i> (master), <i>Tactician</i> (master), <i>Witchcraft</i> (master) |
| Boons/Burdens | <i>Dark blood</i> (<i>Regeneration</i>) |
| Weapons | The Spear of Terael-Kael 8 (long, deep impact) |
| Armor | The Cowl of Dorgvalg (flexible, reinforced) 6 +2 for <i>Berserker</i> |
| Defense | -6 |
| Toughness | 10 Pain Threshold 5 |
| Regenerates 4 Toughness/turn | |
| Equipment | None |
| Shadow | Glossy black with a hint of red, like a pool of blood in the moonlight (corruption: thoroughly corrupted) |

Tactics: As soon as the characters appear in the doorway, Iel uses *Bend Will* on whoever is the largest warrior, and if they attack, he casts *Larvae Boil* on either a mystic or a marksman. From then on the elf relies on his spear, and if things are going badly, he will sink into the rock (*Nature's Embrace*) and remain there until he has recovered.

THE STONE TABLET

Elmendra's trail leads to the inner right chamber via two passages covered with spider web. There are five objects inside: on the walls, a weathered stone tablet, a simple wooden shield and an oil painting depicting an ocean which seems to be moving; on the floor, a black, life-sized stone statue

of an androgynous human and a sealed urn with something tapping and scratching inside. Judging by her footprints, Elmendra went up to the stone tablet and walked around for a bit before leaving the way she came.

Strange signs are inscribed on the tablet; signs which characters with the *Loemaster* ability (master level) will recognize as late Symbarian, but with some deviations. Furthermore, the ravages of time have left large parts of the inscription illegible, at least without closer examination. But master Loemasters who pass a *Cunning* test can still identify at least three of the symbols – the one for "Symbar," which is written in at least four places; the one for "seat" or "city," and finally, one that almost certainly means something like "great loss," "destruction," or "death."

Draw or trace: The question is, how will the player characters be able to bring the tablet with them for analysis? The easiest way would be to hold one or more pieces of paper against the tablet and trace over them with a piece of charcoal (perhaps from a torch). A good result requires a successful *Cunning* test, and each try takes two turns to complete.

Another option could be to draw a copy of the signs, which takes five turns and requires a successful *Cunning* test. Should the players/characters come up with good ideas for alternative solutions, they should of course be allowed.

Note that player characters with the *Absolute Memory* boon (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 54) will be able to recreate the signs at a later time.

The spiders arrive: As the characters go through the web-covered passages to the stone tablet, the risk of the spiders being alerted is 1-2 on 1D4. If they are, it will take 7 turns for the first group of hunting spiders (PC+2) to reach the reliquary.

Wise player characters will realize that they may have been detected, hurry up with what they are doing and head for the Undergate as quickly as possible. The hunting spiders have the *Fleet-footed* boon and will (probably) catch up with them before long, but they will not attack right away. Instead, they will send for reinforcements and try to stall the fleeing intruders by going around them and setting up roadblocks; feel free to let the player characters run into freshly spun webs and pass effect tests to cut them down (at least 3 damage, no success test required). Eventually, when there is enough room for them to take full advantage of their speed, the spiders attack. If the player characters cannot end the fight quickly, they better run before more enemies arrive.



In the spiders' web

If the player characters have already angered or threatened Karathran in any way, she will react strongly to their intrusion into the artifact chamber, as well as their continued presence within the tunnels. This means that two additional groups of hunting spiders (PC+1) and two fray spiders will show up 1D6+2 turns after the first one, with orders to (if at all possible) sedate the intruders and bring them before the spider princess. How such a scenario unfolds is up to the Game Master to decide.



Destroying the tablet

If the player characters are allies of the Iron Pact, or have other reasons for wanting to destroy the tablet, it can certainly be done – all it takes is a mighty blow with an axe or hammer. When the blow lands, everyone within a movement action from the tablet will suffer the effect of the *Raven's Doom* (immediately gain 1D10 temporary corruption). But after that, the tablet may be smashed to smithereens.



Aftermath

WHETHER THE PLAYER characters come flying out of Karvosti as if launched from a catapult or exit the cliff under less hectic circumstances, they must still be on their guard. War is imminent on the plateau, and the player characters are probably still hunted or wanted by the competing groups and their leaders. In other words, one must tread carefully in the wake of *The Witch Hammer*.

THIS CONCLUDING CHAPTER (except the Alternative Endings paragraph on page 147) is based on the premise that the characters reach the reliquary and copy the inscription on the stone tablet. The text below offers suggestions on what could happen in the game world and what the characters could do

while waiting for the next episode in the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*. Even if the gaming group would rather take on the adventure in Yndaros with other characters, these suggestions could still be of use, as ideas for new adventures and as a background when describing large scale developments.

Calmng the Storm

WHEN THE PLAYER characters have returned to the surface, the most pressing question is what (if anything) they should do about the escalating conflict between the Ambrians and barbarians. What they know could probably help calm the storm, if presented in the right way to the right people.

In that regard, these two pieces of information are of the greatest importance:

- Much of what happened during the adventure indicates that something strange is going on with the northern clans, and that the attacks (against outposts, free settlements, caravans, etc) were coordinated from Gaoian or Saarian territory. Reports of burnt-off clan tattoos, new Sovereign tattoos

on the warriors' wrists, and the written messages found in Fundiber's tent would be particularly decisive.

- There is indeed a stone tablet inside Karvosti, and it does mention Symbar, perhaps even specifically "*the devastation of the city of Symbar*." Whether it contains actual directions to the lost city remains unclear, but it is possible. The actual tablet or a copy of its inscription would of course be particularly interesting.

AUDIENCE WITH THE HIGH CHIEFTAIN

These days, very few are granted a meeting with the High Chieftain. The player characters would have to be on good terms with the people around him (such

as First Guard Farvan or the witch Okramal) and somehow get them to persuade Tharaban to grant the characters an audience.

The High Chieftain does not comment on their claims about the Sovereign's Oath's, but the more evidence they present, the more interested he becomes. As long as they actually have something to offer, he demands that they present the same information to Queen Korinthia.

When they tell Tharaban about the stone tablet, his eyes suddenly darken. If he believes their story, he says, in a calm and steady voice: *"I should have you killed where you stand..."* Regardless of the character's reactions, he interrupts them by raising his hands in a gesture of peace and says: *"Wait!"* As things currently stand, Tharaban realizes that it would probably be best to tell Korinthia the truth, particularly if the northern clans are trying to turn the entire forest against him.

Tharaban tells his guards to leave, walks up to the player characters, and lowers his voice to a rumbling whisper: *"Go to Nightbane, tell her everything. But if you repeat my words to Yeleta, I will call you liars, accuse you of sedition, and banish you from Karvosti. Is that clear?"*

AUDIENCE WITH KORINTHIA

With the right contacts, the player characters might actually be allowed to appear before the Queen of Ambria herself. Depending on who their allies are, these contacts could be a pansar captain from Yndaros named Rania, the ranger captain Morlas who once operated near Thistle Hold, the liturg Aranitra or perhaps even the High Chieftain (as described above). Whoever it is, the player characters will first have to tell their story to General Jomilo in his tent.

Provided that the characters present strong arguments and convincing evidence regarding the Sovereign's Oath and the existence of the stone tablet, General Jomilo, having listened silently to their story, will inform the Queen of what he just heard. But not before asking *"Is that all?"* – repeatedly, if necessary.

Their meeting with Korinthia Nightbane is brief. The Queen will see them in her pavilion, with Seldonio by her side. She repeats the most essential parts of their story and asks them to confirm their veracity.

If the player characters did not show the tablet's inscriptions to the general, Korinthia will ask for it. If they refuse (truthfully or otherwise), she says, in a tense voice: *"I ask you again, and know that withholding the information I seek will be considered an act of treason against crown and country: do you*

Traitors

Should it become known that the player characters lied to the Queen (e.g. if they have already shown their copy to Tharaban) she will definitely make good on her threat. The characters become wanted (dead or alive, reward: 100 thaler each) and must assume new identities in order to move freely through Ambria.

This could be a starting point for an entire series of adventures, in which the characters must first escape pursuing rangers and bounty hunters, and then perform challenging tasks to regain the Queen's favor – for example by carrying out missions for one of her dukes; missions which would prove them to be loyal and valuable subjects.

have in your possession, or are you able to present, a reproduction of the tablet?"

Whatever their answer may be, the Queen concludes the audience with a simple *"Ambria thanks you"* and nods to the general. The characters are escorted out, gently but firmly, and given a leather document tube marked with House Kohinoor's sigil (the Flaming Pine). It contains a Writ of Debt worth 200 thaler.

AUDIENCE WITH THE HULDRA

The player characters might want to meet and speak with Yeleta, perhaps to explain or justify their intrusion, or perhaps to inform her of the spider infestation and offer their services in solving the problem.

The Game Master must decide whether the Arch Witch will see them and, if so, what her reaction will be, based on what the characters have done so far and how they present their motives. In any case, the fact that they trespassed into Karvosti will not be to their advantage. But Yeleta is practical and may forgive them, for example if they meant to stop others from finding Symbar or prevent a war between Ambria and the clans.

No matter how much they beg or threaten her, Yeleta will never offer the slightest hint on how to interpret the symbols on the tablet – since they should never have seen the text in the first place, they have no right to know its meaning. With dark eyes and threatening voice, she demands that they immediately destroy any copies they might have made and forget everything they saw in the tunnels of Karvosti. Needless to say, this is no time for arguing.

Finally, Yeleta will never, under any circumstances, admit that anyone has ever managed to open the Undergate, and those who claim otherwise will be publicly denounced as liars.

Developments

How things develop in the wake of the adventure depends largely on the player character's actions. For that reason, it is important that the Game Master takes some time to contemplate and summarize what has actually happened. Only then will it be possible to present a fair and accurate picture of what consequences and repercussions the player character's deeds will have.

On a more personal level, Game Masters could ask themselves what impression the player characters (individually and as a group) made on the people they met along the way. How will they be remembered in New Earthmoor? What reputation have they gained among the residents at Vearra's Outpost? Have the leaders of the Sovereign's Oath heard of their deeds, and if so, how do they react? The answers to these questions might determine whether the characters become famous or infamous, rewarded or wanted, invited to parties or ambushed by assassins. For more inspiration, see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 108-109.

AMBRIA AND THE CLANS

The characters may come to play a decisive role in the conflict between Ambria and the barbarians. If the Queen is made aware of the Sovereign's Oath and receives a copy of the stone tablet, she will lift the siege; fifty pansars and as many rangers remain on the cliff to strengthen its defenses, while Korinthia and Seldonio march south with the rest of their troops.

Should the player characters act differently, or lack the necessary knowledge, Korinthia's time limit

eventually expires. She declares Karvosti annexed by the Kingdom of Ambria, and gives the High Chieftain two hours to accept her decision; refusal to do so will be considered an act of war. After much anguish, the High Chieftain leaves the plateau along with his wrathguards, without shedding blood or uttering a word but burning with bitter rage. Other barbarians are allowed to stay, but may not bear arms on the plateau (this includes characters, if their barbarian heritage is known).

Korinthia and Jomilo soon return to Ambria, while Seldonio moves into the High Chieftain's stronghold and starts cataloging its great stores of knowledge. Lothar Grendel is appointed bailiff of Karvosti. Since the witches refuse to leave their dwelling, a mix of pansars, rangers, and wizards are posted at every exit, even at the sealed Undergate.

Wretched and miserable, High Chieftain Tharaban settles down just outside the Odav settlement near the Arch Bridge, along with the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath, his servants from the stronghold, and other former residents of Karvosti. He will do everything in his power to convince the southern chieftains of the threat that is growing in the north, but his efforts will have very little effect.

THE SUN CHURCH

Until the next part of the campaign, the templars will have broken away from the rest of the Sun Church and formed a new one with Commander Iakobo Vearra as its head. He calls himself the First Revenger, his followers Enforcers, and his congregation "*The Church of Dead Prios*."

Their main target is not the barbarian people per se, but Davokar and the Iron Pact. The templars are divided into smaller groups, called Suns, who are sent to destroy certain targets in the woods or strike against suspected sorcerers and Iron Pact agents within the kingdom. They do not seem to follow any particular strategy. According to the First Revenger, there is nothing left to fight for – all that remains is vengeance.

The First Father leaves Templewall, along with the rest of the Curia, to establish a new seat in Yndaros, partly because of the templars' betrayal, but also to gain greater control of the church's overall development. The faction who (with the Queen's silent support) wishes to reform the church and reestablish Prios as the god of warmth, love and forgiveness is slowly gaining ground. Jeseebegai can sense it, but has yet to identify any individual troublemaker other than the heretic Sarvola in Thistle Hold.

Reading the Tablet

Deciphering the meaning of the stone tablet's symbols will require more than just a die roll and a bit of luck. First, the player characters must restore the symbols which are partially weathered, then fill in the blanks left by those that are missing entirely, and finally, they must find a way to interpret symbols that are unknown even to the scholars. In other words: the process of interpreting the text will take months, if not years; right up to the beginning of the third part of *The Throne of Thorns*.

If the Game Master so desires, he or she could create an entire series of minor adventures based on the different stages of the process. The characters must find someone who can restore the tablet to its original state, and then someone as versed in the cuneiform of late Symbaroum as Elmendra. The question will not only be where such individuals can be found, but who of them can be trusted. Confiding in the wrong people could be downright fatal...

In time, the Curia will begin to take action, forcefully, and often without any incriminating evidence. Consequently, the reformation gains new momentum, as more and more people begin to question the terrible deeds done in the name of the god whom many are now calling the “*the Prios of War*.” But that is a development for the next adventure module.

THE SOVEREIGN’S OATH

The sun is shining on the champions of the Blood-Daughter. Whether *The Witch Hammer* ends with Korinthia annexing Karvosti or “only” leaving a garrison on the plateau, the developments are sure to benefit the Sovereign’s Oath. Except for the chieftains and witches, more and more Enoais, Goeds, and Yedes are becoming convinced that Tharaban, the Huldra, and all the southern clans are under Ambrian control.

One by one, the clans join the alliance; chieftains Karona and Vikomer are executed, while Leonod of Yedesa recognizes the danger in time and flees south; the Keepers live on, cloistered inside Karvosti along with the Huldra, but all their disciples are slain.

The growing forces of the Sovereign’s Oath move closer and closer to Karvosti, and arrive as the next adventure begins. The Blood-Daughter makes her intentions known: to reestablish Symbaroum, as it was before witches and warlocks brought the empire to ruin. In order to accomplish this, all witches must be purged by fire and all traces of the last thousand years of misrule must be wiped out. In other words: the world must be rid of all

mystics, and every barbarian creation built since the fall of Symbaroum (including the stronghold on Karvosti and all knowledge stored both there and in the Huldra’s dwelling) will be destroyed, burned, and lost to the world.

ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

So, what happens if the player characters fail to achieve the main goal of the adventure, or if they choose a different path and pursue their own ambitions? Never fear! It is perfectly okay. Regardless of how *The Witch Hammer* ends, the gaming group will be able to play the next part of the campaign, using the same characters or entirely new ones. That is what makes roleplaying great – the flexibility and freedom of the gaming groups to improvise and adjust the developments according to their own specific wishes and experiences.

Should the player characters ignore the stone tablet or actively try to stop other groups from reaching it, it will most likely result in an Ambrian annexation of Karvosti. And in the latter case, they will probably become known as traitors, heretics, or worse. But that does not stop them from going to Yndaros, where many dubious individuals can move more or less freely (albeit with false identities and under great caution). Nor will they find themselves completely without allies, as everyone from Iron Pact agents and barbarian spies to heretical priests live and operate in the simmering cauldron that is the capital of Ambria, Korinthia’s high seat – Yndaros.

What Comes Next?

OBVIOUSLY, THERE IS no need for surviving player characters to idly await the next part in the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns* and the translation of the stone tablet. Whether it is the High Chieftain or Lothar Grendel who rules the plateau, much is still the same up there, which is why many of the intrigues and adventure seeds presented in the first sections of this book are still relevant.

Furthermore, there may be reasons for the characters to get involved in situations which have occurred as a result of what happened in *The Witch Hammer* – to keep investigating the adventure locations, act as diplomats in conflicts between various factions, or gather more information about the new enemy in the north.

This section begins with a few words on the distribution of *Experience*, after which we present a number of ideas for you, the Game Masters, to develop as you see fit.

EXPERIENCE

For each scene that contains at least one challenge, the player characters will have earned one (1) *Experience*. The Game Master has the power to decide what counts as a scene, but the adventure’s subheadings would probably be a good basis to build on.

Depending on what happens, each player character should earn between 50 and 70 *Experience* over the course of the adventure. However, the gaming group is free to change this, should they want their characters to progress faster or more slowly than that.

PROFESSIONS

On and around Karvosti are a number of people who could be the player characters’ chance to attain the Wrathguard, Iron Sworn, or Staff Mage profession. As long as the characters meet the requirements specified in the *Advanced Player’s*

Guide, First Guard Farvan could, for example, be looking to recruit additional wrathguards – now that the northern clans have turned their backs on the High Chieftain, perhaps he might even consider Ambrian candidates?

Another possibility is that one of the elves, Malahai or Adreanea, shows an interest in teaching someone the deeper secrets of the Iron Pact; an education which would differ greatly depending on who makes the offer. And if a character should seem like a suitable recruit to the staff mages' keep deep within Davokar, he/she could be approached by Aniabar (see page 49), who is always looking for impressive candidates.

TRACKING ELMENDRA

One adventure (if not more) could very well center around the player characters attempts to locate Elmendra, of their own accord or on behalf of a friend or relative of hers. There are many rumors about her having been seen in Ravenia, Mergile, Agrella, and of course in both Thistle Hold and Yndaros. Another game opening could be that some people in Kastor claim to have seen her at the Red Dragon Inn, and heard her mention all sorts of destinations.

But whatever happens, it is important that these scenarios end in failure. Elmendra has covered her tracks quite well, keeps to the shadows, and will not reappear until the next part of *The Throne of Thorns*.

DIPLOMATS

The events on Karvosti, the division of the church, and the emergence of the Sovereign's Oath have greatly affected the relations between the region's powerful factions. Player characters who have risen through the ranks within a certain faction could be sent to deliver a message or negotiate with the leaders of other groups. If not, there will certainly be diplomats and couriers in need of protection on their travels.

This could be developed into a series of exciting adventures, in which the player characters must go straight into the enemy's headquarters and play their cards right in order to return at all. For example, they could accompany Tharaban's negotiator/spy on a meeting with some representative of the Sovereign's Oath, or be the eyes and ears of Sarvola or Deseba the Old as a group of priests loyal to the Curia is meeting in Thistle Hold...

SPIES IN THE NORTH

Speaking of the Sovereign's Oath... Almost all the southern factions should be willing to pay a handsome sum for information regarding the



To keep in mind...

Game Masters may of course do whatever they want with the game world of Symbaroum. But keep in mind that if characters are given a chance to meet and kill people who are central to the chronicle at large (e.g. the Blood-Daughter, Odralintos, or even Korinthia), the Game Master must be ready to replace these with other characters when they appear in future parts of the campaign.



situation in the north. The Queen (with or without her Rangers as intermediaries) would be a likely employer in this context; so would Tharaban, possibly in collaboration with Embersind of Odaiova. The witches and Ordo Magica will also try to gain a better understanding of what is going on.

For the player characters, this could mean infiltrating the ancient fortress of Saar-Khan, to gather information or maybe even assassinate some important individual. And if the player group would rather stick to the woods, the target could instead be clan Gaoia's main settlement, or the lair of the lindworm oracle Odralintos.

WORK TO BE DONE

Another possible "pastime" is to revisit Yeferon Isle, Faarah Moroun, and/or New Earthmoor. In all likelihood, there will still be adventures to be had in these places, and even if the player characters left them completely cleared of items and creatures, there could always be more treasures to uncover or new creatures inhabiting the area – naturally, the Game Master is free to make any adjustments he or she wishes.

If the liege troll Orangaar is still alive, this could be the time to get rid of him and organize a larger excavation of the old palace. It is also likely that the people of New Earthmoor will need help, or that they, starved and desperate from sieges and attacks, begin to attack ships travelling along the river Malgomor. As for Yeferon ... well, who knows what would happen if the protective barrier surrounding the island suddenly vanished, or if the mighty Manaud happened to wake from his slumber...

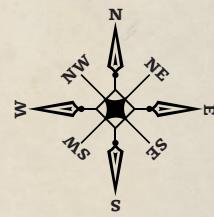
FORESHADOWING

The next part of the chronicle has yet to be written, which makes it difficult to suggest exactly how to foreshadow its events. Many suggestions concerning the overall developments – such as the turmoil within the church and the rise of the Sovereign's Oath – have already been mentioned, but when it comes to Elmendra, her treasure hunt, and the sarcophagus of Emperor Symbar, things are less clear.

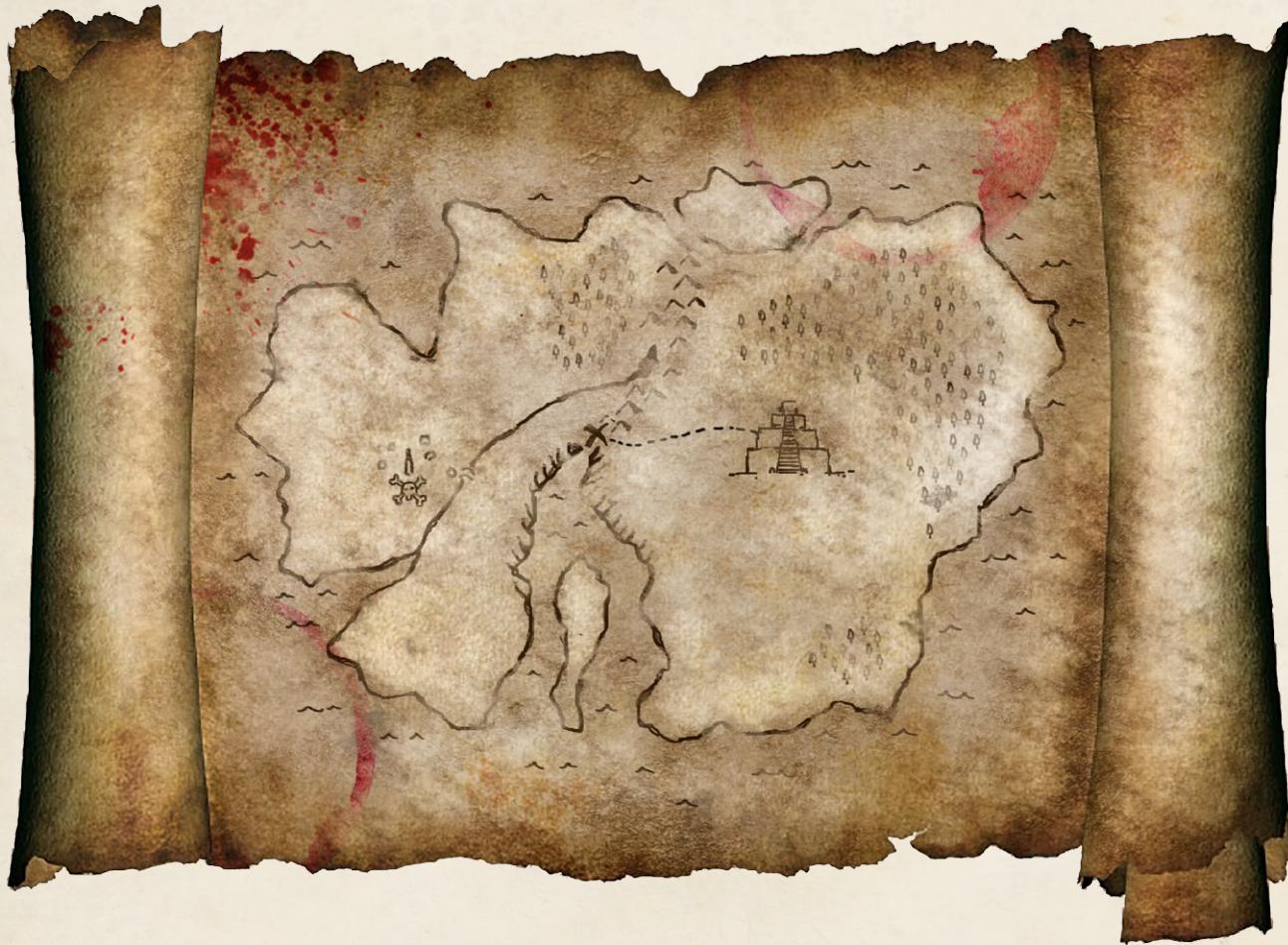
However, the premise of the upcoming adventure has already been established: while most eyes are focused on the siege of Karvosti, the characters are drawn into a story which will lead them to the ruins of Old Kadizar, and down, to the roots of Lindaros. And they will not be alone, for in the Queen's capital, all the prominent factions are very much present.



- 1. Farah Moroun
- 2. Jakaar
- 3. Jerak's Sinkhole
- 4. The Rift
- 5. Karvosti
- 6. New Earthmoor
- 7. Odaban
- 8. The Odama Citadel
- 9. Rhan Mahaar
- 10. Serand's Pyramid
- 11. Sun Temple
- 12. Lake Great Water
- 13. Earth Towers of Black Leech Rift
- 14. The Arch Bridge
- 15. Vearra's Outpost
- 16. The Whisperer's Rapids
- 17. Whitewater
- 18. Yeferon



0 100 KM



Above:

The plunderers
parchment scroll

To the right:

The symbols on
Galdag's Gate





Heartfelt thanks to the Huldras!

Andrzej Miszkurka, Cato Vandrar, Christer Malmberg, Claus Bo Christensen, Dr. Donald A. Turner, Eric Wellens, Harry JJ Gardner, Jesse Ross, Mattiaz Fredriksson, Phil Frances

Many thanks to our backers!

Aaron J. Schrader, Aaron Smithies, Abner Rodrigues, Acererak, Adam Whitcomb, Adrian Price, Adriano Alberti La Marmor, Æthereal Flux, Alchemyst, Alec Beller, Alex DiGiacomo, Allan Rodda, Alninio, Ambika Kirkland, Amy Vorpahl, Andrea "Pagonel" Capoluongo, Andreas Walter, Andrew Bleecker, Andrew Dacey, Andrew J Princep, Andrew Smith, Andy Baird, Andy Evans, Andy Jones, Andy Lloyd, Andy Sangar, Angel Garcia, Anne Spicklemire, Anonymous, Anthony Barclay, Anthony Robinson, Antonio García Ortiz, Antonio M. Martorell Ferriol, Any Morton, Aoren, Ara, Armiran, Arwel Griffith, Asadrakian, Aubrey Knight, Barthélémy 'Skender' Alezandaru, Bartosz "Stoperssonn" Stopczyk, Beestmeester, Ben "phantomwhale" Turner, Ben Allen, Ben Chojnacki, Ben Meiklejohn, Benedikt Simon, Benjamin A Hoyt, Benjamin Rew Van Atta, Benoit Castilloux, Big Al, Bilbo Greene, Bill Charleroy, Birk Hauke Wildhirt, Björn "iaktsaka" Ehler, Błażej "Rals" Kosiński, Bo Hasle Buur, Bob Lukic, Brad D. 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Mist blanketed the plateau, chilling and damp,

causing Selisa to shiver as she and a dozen other newly arrived treasure hunters stood before the Huldra. The witch's firm eyes glared at them from behind her mask, assessing them one by one.

"What's going on?" Galar whispered. "We haven't done any—"

Selisa silenced her fellow explorer with a discreet kick to his shin. This was hardly the time for arguing. One barely dared to even breathe. The feeling of uneasiness grew stronger as the Arch Witch's gaze fell on Galar, and darkened.

"You..." The voice was hateful and as accusatory as the bony finger that pointed at Selisa's friend. "You are the prey." The witch turned to the wrathguard accompanying her, whose hands rested easily on the handle of his axe. "Take him away. And his companions too."

Before Selisa or Galar had time to react, before the wrathguard had taken so much as a step towards them, the clear clang of a lonely bell cut through the air.

The witch flinched, then glanced at the tower balancing on the edge of the plateau, ten steps away.

"Too late", she hissed, turning to those gathered before her. "Now plunderers, fight or die! The darkness you have awoken is upon us!"



KARVOSTI – THE WITCH HAMMER invites you to join the treasure hunt of a lifetime! Between these covers you will find not only the epic and action-packed adventure *The Witch Hammer*, but also nearly a hundred pages of campaign material describing the cliff of Karvosti and its surrounding area, including an extensive section with new rules and guidelines pertinent to the setting and adventure.

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