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WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY**

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It has taken a long time getting this issue printed. Unfortunately real life has again interrupted Warpstone in a big way. Hopefully issue 28 won't be so long in coming. Apologies to all our readers for the delay in getting this to you, and especially to those whose articles have taken so long to appear - a very long time for a couple of articles. But that is another story!

This issue again contains a number of scenarios. Warpstone scenarios have traditionally been popular. However, there is a sizeable minority that appears to really dislike scenarios, especially on various online forums. While I understand that some GMs prefer to run their own scenarios, pre-written scenarios have a lot to offer. In addition to plot and encounter ideas, there are NPCs and locations that can be used elsewhere, either in their entirety or as a template. Scenarios can also give GMs new to a system a good introduction to the style and atmosphere of a game's background.

Drawing on ideas from a range of sources is fundamental to roleplaying games. At its best the exchange of ideas among players shows how much creativity is present in the gaming community. A conversation in the pub results in loads of new suggestions and alternatives for a game that has just been played, sending games in new directions. This is an absolute strength of RPGs and one often overlooked as it just so inherent.

The exchange of ideas links neatly with our review of non-WFRP games found in this issue. These are games that for one reason or another have caught our eye recently. Some of these clearly owe something to WFRP but all can provide inspiration for WFRP games. I have long thought that the Warhammer world is ripe for a Steampunk makeover and Iron Kingdoms look like a good half way house.

Anyway I hope you enjoy this issue and head over to the new Warpstone forum to discuss it further. We are always pleased to hear your views and we always consider them as we continually review what we do with Warpstone.

Competition

The nice folk at avatarart.com (see their advert on page 25) have offered Warpstone readers the chance to win a unique prize. All you have to do is tell us how your WFRP character met their untimely end - whether it was heroic, ignominious, or just strange. The Warpstone team and the guys from AvatarArt will then decide which death scene is the most WFRP-like. The winner will then be asked for details of said character from which Avatar Art will provide a custom-made portrait of them alive and then another of their death scene. Send your entries, in less than 200 words, to johnfoody@warpstone.org marking them "How my character kicked the bucket" in the subject line. The closing date is the 1st April 2008, but please, no April Fool's entries.



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www.warpstone.org

SUBMISSIONS

Version 1.6 - November 2007

Warpstone is happy to receive submissions of both written work and art. We will *always* respond to submissions, even if they are not suitable for publication in Warpstone. If you send a submission do not hear back from us in good time, please drop us a line to remind us. Failure to reply is simply a symptom of the chaotic nature of the Warpstone organisation. If you take the time with a submission we will take the time to respond.

Payment: A published contribution earns you a free copy of Warpstone.

How? We are happy to receive submissions by post or e-mail. Articles should be in RTF (Rich Text Format) or MS Word format.

Art Submissions: We are always looking for artists. You must have an understanding of "Warhammer style" (which covers a broad range of styles, as our current artists will testify!), but we are happy to look at all kinds of work, whether your speciality is maps, caricatures, portraits or anything else. Just send us a picture you think should be included in Warpstone, and some examples of any other work you have done. Please remember not to send originals, but only copies.

Article Submissions: Warpstone tries not to include articles that rewrite game rules or are themselves rules-heavy. In the same vein we are not looking for new monsters, careers, skills, etc. (That said, if you have something good send it in.) We are looking for articles that expand the world of Warhammer, filling in the gaps that are present. We also look at how the game is played, discussing issues relevant to all gamers. If you have an article but you are not sure whether suitable, send us an outline. We will tell you if we are interested in seeing it developed. If you can include a sample of some other work you've completed at the same time, this would be useful (but not essential).

Regular Articles: Comment Articles: We are always looking for articles where you put across your point of view on a particular subject. Cameos: Brief encounters and adventure outlines. Don't include character profiles, only descriptions. Scenarios: Full length, detailed adventures. Short stories: We are currently not accepting fiction.

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REPORTS FROM THE HEART OF CORRUPTION

Reviews

2

Some WFRP reviews. We still have a bit of a backlog to get through...

"Karak Azgal would provide a harsh and tough challenge to any group."



Broken Scales

40

The village of Eidechse has been cursed. As the crops rot in the fields and people die, the PCs must track down who is behind it all.

"When the Player Characters encounter him at the front desk he is puking his guts up into a bucket."



The Same War

8

Some thoughts on using WFRP and WFB in the same campaign.

"With regard to the outcome of the battle, the GM must realise that PCs can lose battles even if expected to win."



The Aganauts

51

A disappearance finds the PCs on the trail of a secret that many do not want to be revealed.

"She is loath to involve the watch but says that someone else told them."



Storm of Chaos

9

A look at how the Storm of Chaos campaign can be incorporated into WFRP.

"We always knew that a new incursion of Chaos was coming. The question was simply a matter of when."



The Good, the Bad and the Hangmen

59

A look at the role and history of the Executioner in the Old World.

"He is not only responsible for the incarceration of those awaiting trial, but also for the execution of the sentence."

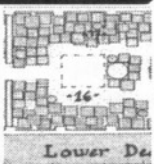


Rites Of Passage

15

A scenario where the players find themselves all at sea with dark deeds below decks.

"Essentially, all that is required is two rival factions fighting it out on a neutral stage."



Breaking the Seal

65

Some ideas of how seals can be incorporated into WFRP games. Not, we must empathise, the kind of seals that wear hats and balance balls on their noses. Impressive though that is.

"A number of people have noticed that in the art of WFRP2 there is a preponderance of seals."



The Dogs of War

26

A look at mercenaries with background on how they work and ideas of how to incorporate them into a campaign, including a detailed look at a mercenary company.

"It comes as no surprise that most mercenaries rarely find it difficult to find work."



Weaving a Web

70

A look at different kinds of secret societies of the non Chaos variety. (Additional material on the Warpstone website.)

"Beware! They come wearing masks of friends and colleagues, speaking in whispers, yet wielding daggers behind their backs."



The Best of the Rest

37

Reviews of some other RPGs.

"There are no magic items or monsters, and like a modern horror game everything is very mundane except for the existence of the malicious Other Side."



Back Issues & Subscriptions

All back issues are steadily going, so if you are missing some then now is the time to get them.



A	Number of Attacks	FP	Fate Points	IP	Insanity Points	SB	Strength Bonus	WFB	Warhammer Fantasy Battle
Ag	Agility	gc	Gold Crown	M	Movement	SL	Secret Language	WFRP	Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (Second Edition)
AP	Armour Points	GM	Game Master	Mag	Magic	SS	Secret Signs	WFRP1	WFRP First Edition
BI	Black Industries	Gu	Guilder (Marienburg Coinage)	NPC	Non-player character	SW	Specialist Weapon	WP	Will Power
BS	Ballistic Skill	GW	Games Workshop	PC	Player Character	T	Toughness	WS	Weapon Skill
CI	Cool	IC	Imperial Calendar	R	Range	TB	Toughness Bonus	xp	Experience Points
Fel	Fellowship	Int	Intelligence	S	Strength	W	Wounds		

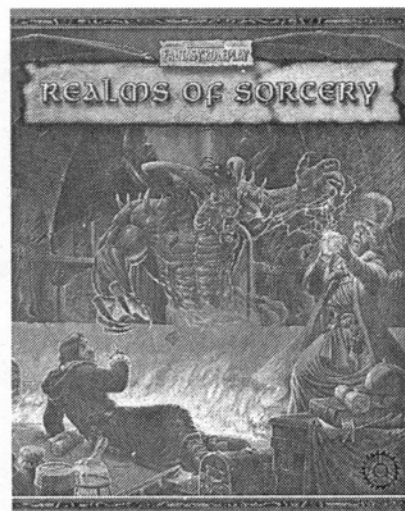
REVIEWS

Realms of Sorcery

By Various Authors

Published by Black Industries

Reviewed by Wim van Gruisen



In December 2005 Black Industries published *Realms of Sorcery* - the third supplement of that name for WFRP. After Ken Rolston's rejected work and Ken and Jo Walton's book for WFRP1, this is the third completely different system for magic in the Warhammer world. What we get is a full colour 256 page hardback, the largest

supplement to date, with lay-out and art following the standard set in earlier WFRP books.

Despite what the title suggests, this book does not cover all magic in the Warhammer world, or even all magic in the Empire. Instead, it concentrates on collegiate magic - the colour magic that is officially sanctioned in the Empire. No word about Elven magic, divine magic, Chaos magic, and so on. There are some rudimentary chapters on hedge magicians and Dwarven runemasters, but these feel like appendices or add-ons, rather than part of the main text.

On collegiate magic the text is encyclopaedic, although a bit wordy. The setting is described in the first part of the book. We get a thorough overview of the history and physics of magic, which includes such things as warpstone and leylines. The book then describes the uneasy position of magic in Imperial society, before devoting a large chapter (more than sixty pages) to the colleges of magic. This chapter details the life of a wizard, from the early stages as an apprentice onwards, and gives detailed descriptions of the different colleges. This chapter has a lot of information both for wizard PCs and GMs who want to bring wizard characters and wizard society to life.

The setting information is all very thorough and complete, but I still have problems with it. It all gives a rather cartoonish impression to me, more hack fantasy than I like. This comes to the fore most clearly in the descriptions of some of the college buildings. One of the colleges is hidden in a separate dimension. Another one has invisibility of a different kind - people just happen never to look in its direction. This is all very fine, were it not that this college has sixteen towers that rise higher than any other tower in Altdorf. Surely someone looking out over the city from a high vantage point could not fail to notice those

towers, and likewise for a traveller who sees the city lying before him? But no, those people keep looking away from the city while they travel towards it, apparently.

Another element of hack fantasy is the use of (historically) important characters, in the history as well as in the setting. The lives of the heads of the colleges of magic are described with some significant detail, but no mention of normal, generic mages of a college or characters that could be used as NPCs in an adventure. Similarly, for two millennia there was no progress in the development of magic, until Teclis visited the Empire two hundred years ago. On that occasion the knowledge of magic increased significantly, but progress since then has again been non-existent.

The hack fantasy element that I like least of all is the cookie-cutter mages. Mages of a college are expected to look and behave in one particular way. The book even introduces optional rules that will make mages grow more and more like the stereotype of their college; fire wizards will become more prone to anger and their hair will turn red; Amethyst wizards (who deal with death) become corpse-like, and so on. I would say that the prize for forcing PCs to act according to the stereotype goes to Shadowmancers. The text for that college says that all Shadowmancers travel the Empire, fighting Chaos whenever they meet it. Should any Grey Mage ever consider taking a step down, living a more comfortable sort of life, all his colleagues, the whole college, will hunt him down and destroy him.

For all the description of the setting, I miss ideas on how to use any of it in the game. So leylines transport magic to some Elven-built artefact somewhere on an island in the ocean, but how can we use this in adventures? So Teclis single-handedly created the colleges of magic and trained the magisters there, but how does that affect our campaigns? So Balthasar Gelt is the head of the College of Gold, but why do we need an excerpt of his life's story? And why do we not get some good information on how to roleplay him? The strangest part of this is the whole page devoted to battle mages, which concludes with the line that these creatures cannot become PCs, and will never be encountered by PCs.

Another problem is that facts in the text are not reflected in the rules. We learn that a wizard's apprenticeship lasts many years, but only at the end of that do they start to follow what the rules say is the Apprentice Wizard career. However, checking the career in question, we find that among the entry careers for Apprentice Wizard, there is none that resembles a junior apprenticeship. We learn that Shadowmancers are competent fighters, have a talent for disguising themselves and spend most of their life travelling. One would then expect them to have talents, skills and advances related to that, but the only extra skill that Shadowmancers get is Concealment. No Disguise, no extra Weapon Skill bonus, no Common Knowledge, no Linguistics.

Mechanics are covered in the second part of the book. We get

new spells, rules for rituals, and for familiars, potions and magic items. The number of colour spells has increased, now giving thirty spells for each colour. This is nice, as the new spells bring more variations to each career. Further, each college has three spell lists. When buying the Arcane Lore skill the mage selects one of these lists and gets the ten spells in there. The other two lists of ten spells can be bought separately for 100 XP each. However, we get no new petty magic or lesser magic and those areas stay underdeveloped.

The real power of magic is not in these spells, though; we find that in ritual magic. *Realms of Sorcery* gives five more examples of rituals. The idea, however, is that the GM and player should create new rituals on their own. We get rules for creating rituals which simulate the trial and error method of magical research. The repetitive, cyclical nature of this research is very well caught in the rules. Each cycle takes months and it usually takes a few cycles before research is successful. These rules are really written for a PC who wants to create new rituals. However, given the length of the process involved and the pace of a standard WFRP adventure, I wonder if this is the right mechanic for WFRP. The whole *Paths of the Damned* campaign, which takes PCs through three careers, can easily be finished in half the time it would take to create one ritual. The mechanic is of limited use to GMs too; it is not meant for quickly creating a ritual from scratch to use in a scenario.

The random nature of determining what items are used in a ritual feels a bit silly. To determine what ingredients a character thinks of using when researching a ritual, the player rolls on a few tables in the book. When we consider that it takes months, possibly years, to create a new ritual, it would have been much nicer to let the player decide what ingredients the character is trying with each iteration of the research cycle.

Further, there is no guideline on how to quantify the power of a ritual; the book states that it is up to the GM and player to determine the target number and magic level (among other things) of a new ritual. The rules offer no help in determining this, except for the handful of rituals in the books that can be used as examples. More examples, allowing the GM to imagine a consistent cost scale for different sorts of rituals, would have been good. Such a scale itself would have been even better. Games like *Ars Magica* and *Mage* use freeform magic, but they provide good guidelines for the cost of spells that PCs can create.

After the rituals, we get rules for familiars, potions and for magic items. These are all not very inspired or evocative, I am afraid, and the tables where one can roll for different aspects of familiars and potions do not make it better. The magic items section is better. While it is basically a shopping list, the descriptions stress that magic items are unique and all have their own history. That one has to check knowledge skills like History in order to recognise a magic item, instead of something like "Magic Lore" or such, is very nice. On the other hand, what is missing is an idea of how to create new items or potions and such. Particularly for potions, a system similar to rituals would have worked well.

Okay, I lied. There is a notion on how to create one sort of magic item. There is a chapter on runemasters, which gives four runemaster careers and rules for creating rune items. As I stated

before this chapter is a bit misplaced in a book that is virtually all about collegiate magicsince it gives many rules and not much background for runemasters - it would work better in a Dwarf sourcebook.

Equally misplaced is the information on witches and warlocks. These are new careers as well, and higher levels of the Hedge Wizard career. They get a new talent, Witchcraft, with which they can buy any collegiate magic spell with a Casting Number of 15 or lower for 200 XP per spell. They also get the shaft. Witches cannot learn the Curse spell as that spell has a Casting Number of 16. They also cannot brew potions because they do not have the required Read/Write skill. In short, they get nothing that witches are normally identified by.

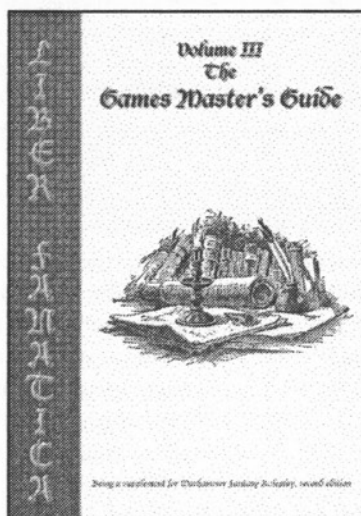
The book finishes with an adventure, *A Brutal Finish*. The backdrop is a wine festival, and we get enough information to make this a rousing, atmospheric setting. The mysterious events that the PCs have to figure out are spectacular enough as well. However, investigations do not lead very far. The scenario suffers from a heavy-handed *Deus ex Machina* and railroad finish. A pity, since it would not have taken much effort to avoid this ending and to give the PCs enough leads to allow them to find out what is going on and to let them decide how to end it.

All in all there is a lot of good stuff in here, but many of the good bits have flaws diminishing their value. If your campaign is magic-heavy, I do not think you can afford not to get this book. Flaws or not, this book sketches the default magic setting for WFRP2. If your WFRP2 campaign is not magic-heavy, it is still worth getting the book; it enriches the game and you can probably ignore the flaws. Even if you do not like it and want to modify WFRP magic to something that suits your game better, this book details the point from which you have to start your modifications.

Liber Fanatica III: The Games Master's Guide

By Various Authors, Edited by Henrik Grönberg

Reviewed by Andrew Law



The beauty of online fanzines is that they can expand the gaming experience in ways traditional publishers cannot, or will not. With their unlimited space – and often a lack of deadlines – gamers can feverishly create material that may not suit roleplaying houses, but is certainly appreciated by the fans. This is exactly what *Liber Fanatica* (LF) does for WFRP, and it has done it to some acclaim.

Where LFI dealt with Characters, and LFII covered Combat and Magic, LFIII tackles the Games Master (GM), and provides articles to help run games and create worlds. The pdf is split

into three sections. The first, Articles, provides five articles for GMs on varying subjects. The second, The Tool Shed, has a selection of tools to help GMs build their world. Lastly, Appendices, covers GMing online games. Not the most inspiring titles, perhaps, but certainly clear, and well-explained in Grönberg's introduction and the pdf's table of contents.

The Articles section opens with Wim van Gruisen's 'Writing a Campaign', which aims to supply ideas and guidelines for helping a GM create a long-term campaign. Unfortunately, it suffers from problems typical of fan supplements – grammatical errors, odd sentence structure, and a sprawling, uncontrolled format – but it does include solid material, and will be of use to some. However, a simple step-by-step guide with examples may have done the job better. But, if you intend to create a campaign, it is worth taking a look.

Next, 'Handling Horror and Insanity', by James Walkerdine, is a tighter article, and deals well with its subject matter. Although aimed at the WFRP2 reader, in parts it seems to have been written with WFRP1 in mind (for example: the 'Fear Factor' optional rule does not fit the standard 'Test Difficulties' from page 89 of WFRP2, nor does it account for 'The Role of Circumstance' from the same page, which shows that the 'Fear Factor' is not actually optional, but is already part of the established rules), but this does not inhibit its utility. Some of the options are less valuable than others (disorders taking three months to develop will not suit all games of WFRP, as many PCs does not last that long, potentially making the Insanity rules useless), but the article certainly has many good ideas.

Third up is Alfred Nuñez Jr., who explains how he tackles the con scene with WFRP in 'Convention Scenarios'. This article is really only of use to GMs intending to play at, and create adventures for, conventions, so it would have been, perhaps, more appropriate to site it in the 'Appendices', where non-typical GMing is tackled. However, the article contains a wealth of handy hints and tips for GMs running and creating WFRP convention games, so if you intend to do this, it is recommended.

Next, we have 'On the Table' by Jude Hornborg, which adds extra rules and suggestions for GMs using miniatures in their WFRP sessions. This article is rules-heavy, but these rules are well-considered and clearly written by someone who understands the game. This is a concise article that provides an array of useful options, whether you use models or not, so is good reading for any GM.

Lastly, we have Hornborg's second article 'Win, Lose or Draw', and, for me, this is the pick of the Articles section. It takes every Skill from the game and exhaustively details new rules for degrees of failure and success for each, whilst simultaneously sneaking in other interesting snippets, such as new methods for tackling the Winds of Magic and a selection of simple traps. It may be presented as thirteen pages of uninspiring tables and somewhat dry text, but there is no denying how useful this article is to any GM, making it an excellent conclusion to the first section.

The second section of the pdf, The Tool Shed, is entirely written by Henrik Grönberg, LFIII's editor. Here we have six articles – 'Character Traits', 'Settlements of Sigmar', 'Changing Seasons', 'Inns of the Empire', 'Ex Libris Imperialis' and 'Tales

of the Rover' – which provide thirty-six pages of random tables and suggestions to help the GM build characters, settlements, inns, books and randomly generate weather and encounters. The first and last articles are probably the most broadly useful to GMs. The first, 'Character Traits', supplies ten tables for each of the ten Questions from pages 21-22 of WFRP, each filled with in-depth details to help quickly expand the backgrounds of NPCs (or PCs). The last, 'Tales of the Rover' provides percentile tables to generate interesting encounters on the fly. The other articles will probably see less use but are certainly worth referencing if a GM is seeking help or ideas in those areas. In all, the second section furnishes any GM, inexperienced or experienced, WFRP1 or WFRP2, with a great deal of useful material, and justifies the download of the pdf by itself.

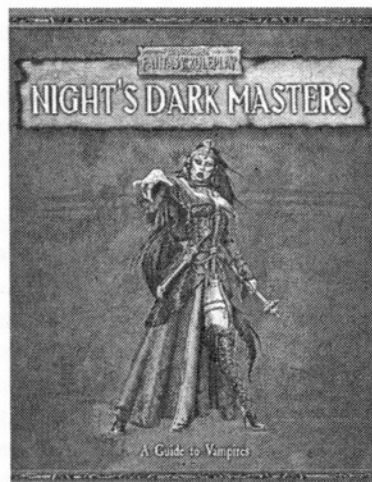
Lastly, the Appendices section presents three articles for gaming online, tackling email, chat, and message-board games. Each of the three cover their respective topics well enough, and will be of use to GMs playing such games, but are too limited in scope to be worth reading by most.

Night's Dark Masters

by Steve Darlington and Jody Macgregor

Published by Black Industries

Reviewed by Dan Wray



The portrayal of vampires in the first edition of WFRP tended to fall on the iconoclastic and ironic side, more Bela Lugosi than FW Murnau. They have been used as figures of fun, sometimes as red herrings. There is good reason for this as the Empire's gothic setting makes them an obvious part of the background, perhaps too obvious. Nonetheless, by the same token, vampires

remain a useful and appropriate alternative to the ubiquitous hordes of Chaos and really should be taken advantage of. Cliché busting retains an important role in the game but, with this book, the time is ripe to see what lies on the other side of the blade where the image of the vampires as a setting-appropriate menace can be reflected in all its gory glory.

The book's format is similar to *Children of the Horned Rat*, though in softback with 144 colour pages. A brief introduction is followed by some reflections on how Nosferatu are viewed. Some suitably macabre myths and legends about them are followed by descriptions of several vampire-hunting organisations. A couple of tracts written from the perspective of unfortunates who have encountered various bloodsuckers ensue. These could easily be slotted into a campaign to both guide and mislead players about the threats they face.

The following chapters provide the meat of the background,

naturally based on the WFB material. A run through the origin and history of vampires from Neferata in ancient Nehekharra through to the present is followed by more detailed descriptions of the five bloodlines, the archetypes of vampirism in the Old World. This variety is not to all tastes, but it is also a strength as the scatter gun approach enables GMs to dredge the full range of literary and cinematic depictions of vampirism and select their favourites. Stoker and Sheridan Le Fanu are well represented as are more modern visions, notably Anne Rice with the Lahmians. There are also plenty of nods to regional folklores. Jack Yeovil fans will be pleased to see Genevieve Dieudonne (with full stats) and Melissa d'Aques mentioned, and material from William King's *Vampireslayer* is also included. Descriptions of each bloodline are concluded with some sample vampires (some with stats, notably Mannfred von Carstein) and lairs that should provide material for different styles of game. I doubt that everyone will like all of the descriptions but everyone should like some of them. Lists of battles and incidents that have appeared in Warhammer products over the years are thankfully shunned, instead a condensed synthesis of material useful for the RPG is provided.

As representative of the Dracula-style vampire, the von Carstein bloodline justifiably takes centre stage for slightly more of the book than the others, with a chapter describing their home province of Sylvania. The prospect of a vampire-ruled state within the Empire remains provocative. Sidestepping this issue, the wider Empire is described as only recently discovering the vampires' restored rule of Sylvania. Brewing hostility, with the electors plotting to destroy the vampires' rule, is thus depicted. The von Carsteins, of course, have other plans. This provides plenty of opportunity for WFRP's characteristic intrigue. The gazetteer for Sylvania's localities may be a little over-cooked. The province is described as unremittingly grim and chock full of undead and necromancers. The overt nature of this threat does not foster the atmosphere of mystery and dread lurking beneath the surface of normalcy that makes WFRP, and indeed Dracula or Carmilla, so powerful to many. For this reviewer it was the book's only major flaw. Additionally, a little more Hungarian and Wallachian influence might have added character to the region rather than the continuance of Germanic styling. Despite these disappointments there is Andy Law's magnificent map of the province that really fleshes out the geography and should prove definitive.

The ensuing chunk of the book tackles rules and mechanics. There are several additional vampire-hunting careers and some extensive rules for designing vampires for your campaign. Vampires get a flat advance upon achieving undeath and can supplement this with careers. Specialised vampire careers are also available. Additionally there are the Blood Gifts which provide the really new part of the rules. A wide variety of these traits is available, defining a vampire's strengths and weaknesses, and enabling GMs to tailor them to their taste and their campaign. Some vampires can use the additional necromantic Lore of Nagash which is detailed, though this adds little. There is some ritual magic too. Rebirth in Blood allows GMs to recreate some of their favourite Hammer horror moments, and though Rain of Blood is of little practical use to those lacking an army of

vampires in WFRP it could certainly lend atmosphere. The material on greater necromancy is particularly interesting as rules for re-animating Carrion and the like were notably absent from first edition WFRP.

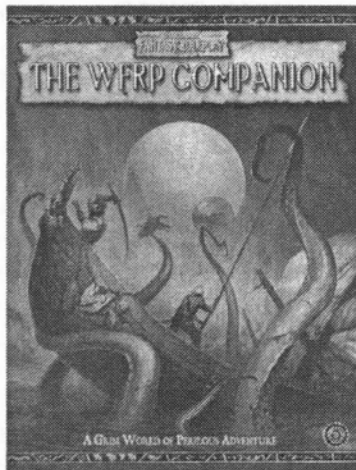
The book concludes with some tips for using vampires and other undead. Playing vampires as PCs in regular gaming is strongly discouraged, but should a GM wish to run an all vampire campaign advice is proffered. Whether the bestiary expansion provided is useful seems questionable; the inclusion of an animated Wicker Man seems somewhat inappropriate for a vampire sourcebook.

The general tenor romanticises vampires as immortal and invincible in descriptive passages, but the mechanics sometimes belie this. It could be seen as showing its subject in the light they themselves prefer to be seen in, but that is not the fine light of day. The book is written with verve and humour ensuring an entertaining and lively read whilst a few minor errors and contradictions (notably regarding Tsarina Kattarin) fail to dim the book's overall contribution. This will definitely supersede the internet's fan material on vampires and GMs should find enough fact and fancy to help crystallise their own vision. Night's Dark Masters succeeds in its purpose; with this book GMs can now ensure that vampires take their place as an important part of the background, one whose threat is no longer toothless.

The WFRP Companion

Published by Black Industries

Reviewed by Steven Lewis



The *WFRP Companion* follows the tradition of the companions of WFRP1 and as such is a mixed bag of articles that may or may not be of interest to GMs and players alike. The book is split into four main parts: A Guide to the Known World, Life in the Empire, A Larger World and Organisations and Encounters. The Companion is written by a selection of different authors, including several new writers.

The first section consists of seven pages that expand upon the setting of the Warhammer World. While the core rulebook centred upon the Empire and its close neighbours, this section sends the reader on a tour to the north, south, east and west of the Empire. This gives the reader a complete overview of the Warhammer World, in much the same way as WFRP1, but in lesser detail. There are small extras intermingled with the descriptions of the lands, such as 'How to Hire an Ogre' and 'Elven Maps', which help to bring the descriptions to life. Overall, although this section is relatively short, it does give GMs and players more of a feel for the setting of the world, something that was lacking within the core rulebook itself.

The second section is very useful. An article on carnivals gives us a detailed look at the way they are run in the Old World, and several ideas on how to use them. Waterways of the Empire is again a very useful article, since travel by water is most likely the quickest and safest way of moving around the Empire. It also fits well with the third article, a detailed look at Trade and Commerce, since it enables players to begin to set up their own trading operation, something that older players will remember doing in *Death on the Reik*. These two articles breathe life into the Empire's day to day running and allow PCs to be more involved, if you like playing such detailed games.

The next article in the section is quite unusual in its subject and contents, with no rules as such being covered; it is more for players to get a feel for their characters. In our modern age I'm sure we've all, at some point, glanced at our star sign's prediction or commented on how a friend is "a typical Gemini". This article allows the player to give their character more of an attitude and temperament based on the star sign given during character generation. If players are willing to give it a try this article could provide some inspiration for how to roleplay their character.

The fifth article covers ground that WFRP1 covered in a previous companion. It is an advanced look at medicine with background information and history on medicine's development with rules for treatment, and a short look at so called 'Quack Medicine'. This makes taking PCs to a doctor a whole lot more fun. Lastly in this section we have a detailed look at Social Conflict and Criminal Trials. The charts within may be of some use for those who are not sure how to use the Degrees of Success/Failure rules, with several ideas and examples on how to use the system. I do feel, however, that in order to be of more use it would have been better as a free download pamphlet from the Black Industries website. Social interaction is something that many GMs revolve their games around, and while a visit to the doctor, a chance to trade or even a trial is worth looking up in a book during play, rules for social conflict need to be more at hand, especially with so many charts.

The third part is devoted to bringing life to two well known cities in the Old World, Sartosa (City of Pirates) and Tobaro (City of Sirens/City of Fools). Both the cities lack maps of their locations and layouts, which for me is the biggest let down of the two articles. I feel that it is an excellent idea to include location details within companions, especially as the release of region sourcebooks is most likely going to be only one per year. In this case Black Industries has brought to life areas that the PCs might visit by ship. The details on both cities are well written and give a good foundation to anyone who wishes to run a pirate themed game, but maps would have made these articles outstanding.

The last section of the book starts with a detailed look at the cult founded by the Great Enchanter himself, Drachenfels! There are several short descriptions of different inns and taverns, a look at the Imperial Gunnery School of Nuln, a shop that sells guns and blackpowder, and lastly a selection of creatures written in the same style as *The Old World Bestiary*. All but the last article contains adventure ideas on how to use the cult and locations provided, giving GMs the tools to create scenarios around them. The shorter bestiary provides a mixed selection

of both mythical creatures (Triton and Mermaids) and those that are more common (Reik Eels and Bloodsedge), making for an interesting read.

Overall the *WFRP Companion* is very useful for any GM or player that wishes to breathe more life and detail into their game. It seems to have something for everyone. My only real disappointment, as such, was that I would have preferred to see the Social Conflict article dropped in favour of more information on the Tilean Sea, with maps on the two cities and the island of Sartosa itself. This would have made the book an absolute must and could have started a trend for future companions, to explore areas of the Warhammer World that Black Industries are not likely to cover for some time. This would have had fans rubbing their hands in anticipation. As such the *WFRP Companion* is only really worth including in your collection if you like to have more in-depth rules and some background on new locations, creatures and cults. The book does give fresh variety to the Warhammer World, which is really what companions are all about.

Karak Azgal: Adventures of the Dragon Crag

Published by Black Industries

By William Simoni

Review by Steve Moss



Judging by some negative posts from WFRP fans on the forums I expected this book to be little more than a glorified WFRP dungeon crawl. I feared it would be similar to the early Doomstones adventures and I did not have high expectations.

Karak Azgal is a 96 page black and white hardcover book with a very effective colour cover of a stylised, metallic Dwarf's head on a green marble background. The majority of the interior artwork is drawn by Tony Parker, the same artist as was used in *Ashes of Middenheim*. His artwork is much better in *Karak Azgal*. The illustrations all offer good examples of the type of environments and creatures to be found in Karak Azgal and there is a real sense of massive space in the vaulted holds. One picture of a corrupted Dwarf is truly gruesome and reminded me of *Call of Cthulhu*. The book also features work from two other artists. I think these additional pieces were originally produced in colour and the black and white format of the book makes it harder to determine the details. These additional illustrations would not look out of place in a WFB army book. There are over fifteen maps and they are consistent, well laid out and informative. They range from small maps of a few centimetres to full-page maps. They include maps of tunnels, reservoirs, a cross section of the world below and aerial views of the city of Karak Azgal and Deadgate.

The book is divided into two main sections: The City of Karak Azgal and The Ruins of Karak Azgal. The first main section is split into the City of Karak Azgal, the walled Skalf's Hold and the shanty town of Deadgate. The first chapter features advice for GMs on using the book for different types of games. It states that it is a toolbox and that *Karak Azgal* is not designed to be run straight off the shelf but it provides the tools for the GM to run any type of adventure they want. This could be ferreting out corruption at the heart of the city of Karak Azgal or delving deep into the dungeons to fight the greenskins. The introduction also includes a page on the history of the Dragon Crag from the days when the world was young and the Dwarfs were a powerful race, until the present day when the once mighty Dwarfs are weakened and allow adventurers to hunt in the world below for treasure and artefacts.

Chapter Two details Skalf's Hold which was crafted by Dwarven craftsmen and within its twenty foot high walls it is divided into four city quarters. I particularly enjoyed the description of a Dwarven cult which offers an interesting twist on the Dwarven greed for gold. Chapter Three describes the shanty town area known as Deadgate, which was inspired by the TV series *Deadwood*. It definitely has a wild west feel to it and has many features of a frontier town such as ramshackle wooden buildings, inns with double doors, dancing girls, and gambling dens. The Dwarfs tolerate this area of the city as a necessary evil because it houses economic migrants and they realise that Deadgate is the best place for these undesirables. The City of Karak Azgal section has lots of details on a wide variety of NPCs and plenty of interesting and varied locations.

The Ruins of Karak Azgal section is the largest part of the book and is divided into four sections. Chapter Four is packed with advice for a GM on using the World Below. It covers mining in Karak Azgal, Dwarven architecture and mapping adventure sites. It also offers several encounter tables, a section on treasure, underground challenges and five new monsters. This section makes a useful companion to the *Old World Bestiary* and *Old World Armoury*. My only minor complaint is a lack of the Slaughter Margin that featured in the *Old World Bestiary*. Chapter Five focuses on two rival clans of Skaven who dwell in the underworld of Karak Azgal. The lairs and warrens of both Skaven clans provide plenty of nasty ratty surprises to spring on unsuspecting adventurers. Chapter Six concentrates on the Undead who haunt the world beneath. Goblinoids are featured in Chapter Seven which describes a fairly standard dungeon with very little intrigue. The final chapter is four pages long and describes a monster's lair and an altar to a Chaos god. This blasphemous altar is one of the creepier locations in Karak Azgal, a warpstone veined chamber deep within the bowels of the earth.

Unfortunately there are several typos in this book including one on the back cover. Typos remain a disappointing feature of Black Industries books. The authors also use real days of the week instead of the Old World equivalent. I was very surprised to read that Dwarfs held meetings on Saturdays! One of the maps detailing the Skaven section of the area below Karak Azgal was missing a location and an entry in one of the encounter tables was missing a footnote. The font size used in Karak Azgal is quite small. Although this means that there is a lot more text

packed into the 96 pages than was the case with *Plundered Vaults*, I did find myself bringing the book closer to my eyes on occasion. But these are minor niggles.

I really enjoyed this book and I hope to use it in my games. It is not a single, complete adventure with a beginning and an end but a sourcebook which is ideal for a GM who wants to pick and choose elements. The modular nature of *Karak Azgal* is its greatest strength. Most of the dungeon areas could be incorporated into a Dwarven hold and Deadgate could be used as a lively and dangerous mining town. There is also some intrigue to be found in the city section. A GM could use the area above ground as it is written or they could pick and choose the NPCs and locations they like and insert it into their own adventures. I plan to use several parts of the book in a few of my future adventures and campaigns and I have already used parts of the book in my *Enemy Within* campaign.

Fortunately my initial expectations were wrong and I was pleasantly surprised with *Karak Azgal*. This book could have been too hack and slash in tone but the locations and creatures are definitely Warhammer. Most of the sections are true to the grim and gritty atmosphere of WFRP. *Karak Azgal* would provide a harsh and tough challenge to any group whether they stay above or dare venture below. If the horrors down in the darkness do not get them the greedy Dwarfs that reside above surely will.

FRAGMENTS

BRIEF REVIEWS AND NEWS

Legion 7

The latest issue of our occasional fanzine is now available for download from the Warpstone website. Inside you find thoughts on Halfling Names, Doc Otto: A Talabheim NPC, a review of Tibet RPG, an interview with Basil Barrett - designer of the original Doomstones and the truth behind those ever changing maps of the Old World.

Apology

The Lowebräu banner in Issue 26 (page 25) was incorrectly credited. It was drawn by Mike Rooth.

Empire at War

Congratulations to Daniel Chayvialle. He is the lucky winner of our competition in issue 26. A copy of Alfred Nuñez Jr's *The Empire at War* is on its way to Daniel now. Thanks to all those who entered.

Dragon and Dungeon

Paizo Publishing and Wizards of the Coast announced, as of September 2007, the end of *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines. They ceased with issues number 359 and 150 respectively.

Ennie

Congratulations to Black Industries for a successful time at the Ennie Awards. They won a number of honours including Gold Awards for Best Adventure (*Lure of the Liche Lord*) and Best Supplement (*WFRP Companion*).

THE SAME WAR

Using WFB in WFRP Campaigns by François Dubé

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (WFB) and Warhammer Fantasy Battle share the same background but we hear few stories of players using the two game systems in the same campaign. However, there can be great potential when you use the two together.

Why mix the two systems? For me, the obvious reason is simply that both games are fun. WFRP brings meaning to huge battles while WFB can give WFRP players the pleasure of leading hundreds of men in great clashes of steel.

There are three different situations where WFB can be added successfully to WFRP campaigns. The first is simply to play WFRP scenarios as they come and, when the need for a large battle arises, to use WFB rules to play the battles.

The second situation appears when the PCs reach advanced careers in which leading others should be part of the life of their character. The best example of this is the Captain career. For this and similar careers you can let the characters build their warband, army or crew and use WFB rules for the resulting battles.

The third situation comes when campaigns are designed with WFB in mind, perhaps with PCs deciding to be 'dogs of war'. Those PCs will join or lead a group of mercenaries and go where war and money take them. There are plenty of roleplaying opportunities as leading an army is more than crushing Orcs in a battlefield: traitors can join your ranks, alliances may have to be negotiated or PCs may have to show leadership to stop a rout. PCs can also work for powers such as an Elector Count, a guild or a temple. It can be as varied as protecting a town against raiders or leading an army to a foreign country to bring back a great artefact.

The WFB rules say the game 'is a simplified way of playing very complex events' and this is important to using WFB in WFRP. For instance, in WFB each round does not have a precise duration. The same applies for distances and the number of men each model represents. Even the general model can be seen as representing the general and many of his strongest warriors. Also, the choice of actions or spells every character has access to is limited. For me this freedom of time, space and events is a positive. It is good not to have to worry about the actions of a thousand men every ten seconds.

To use WFB, GMs and players will have to translate opposing armies into two army lists. This can be done in various ways. Perhaps the easiest is to evaluate the relative

power of both armies and then decide the value in terms of WFB army points without focusing too much on the exact number of men and the exact account of all weaknesses and strengths of every individual character. With this in mind, and a few extra rules specific to every battle, details can be more or less put aside for one evening and WFB rules can be used as described in WFB's rule and army books. What is important is to respect the ratio of power and to limit the choice of units and heroes to those the WFRP scenario suggests.

I recommend that players discuss all actions and rules not covered by WFB's rules before and not during the game. For example, is it possible for players to set traps on the battlefield before the battle? If so, what is their effect and efficiency? (If they are secret, players could draw them on a map to show only when activated).

The role of the GM should also be defined prior to the battle. Probably the best solution is to give full control of forces friendly to the PCs to the players while the GM (or a friend) plays the enemy. A GM should also make it clear before the game that he can take back the control of any unit he wishes. This can allow traitors to come into action in the middle of the battle or maybe to correct tactical mistakes

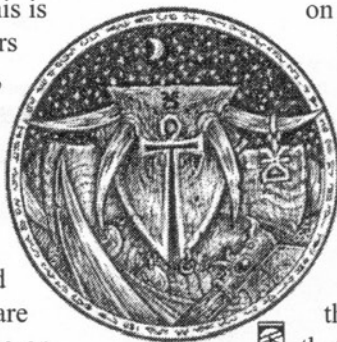
that a cunning sergeant used to warfare would not make.

With regard to the outcome of the battle, the GM must realise that PCs can lose battles even if expected to win. If such an outcome is not wanted then narrating events may be a better option.

Is it also possible to include role-playing during a battle? It could be interesting to add a role-playing phase after the movement phase. This could allow the PCs to talk or a time to bargain a cease-fire or to bribe some enemy units.

After the battle there is also plenty of scope for role-playing. Losers will have to stay alive while the victor will most likely get the opportunity to rescue some wounded soldiers, take prisoners and loot the battlefield. If the PCs survive, they will surely gain experience in warfare and leadership and perhaps some glory or shame.

WFB can be an amazing tool for your WFRP campaigns. Keeping the role-playing aspect of a WFRP campaign central, running a mass battle should be a rare occurrence but when used it can be dramatic. WFB is great to replace the 'final bad guy' ending of a campaign with 'a great battle to be told by minstrels for years to come'.



STORM OF CHAOS

Bane or Boon to WFRP? By Toby Pilling

Context

It seems so long ago now, reading Tim Eccles and other illustrious writers extrapolate upon the future of the Old World, post *Empire in Flames* or otherwise, in *Warpstone* issues 18 and 22. Of course, since then WFRP2 has arrived, confounding the soothsayers, and providing a new script - the official one at least. That script ignores *The Enemy Within* campaign and its finale: the coronation of a new Emperor. It also opens the first scene in the post-apocalyptic situation of an Empire that has just survived a vast incursion of the ruinous powers - the Storm of Chaos.

'*Plus ça change!*' thus might pronounce, with an imperious shrug, a supercilious Bretonnian. But the natives of that rotten land are notoriously too decadent to be relied upon for good advice. Does it matter, this change? Does it alter the feel or atmosphere of WFRP? How do we as role players deal with the Storm of Chaos? I hope to address these issues presently.

Canon

I would encourage a flexible attitude towards canon, as opposed to rigid adherence. Continuity to me is a more important element. My own campaign contains a Half-Orc PC. Should I morph him into a human overnight, because a moderator on a Black Industries forum has decided mixed races are no longer part of the Games Workshop world? Of course not - my GM world takes precedence.

The Storm of Chaos as an event is, I hope to demonstrate, a useful plot device. Its birth from WFB is perhaps unfortunate, but that is after all how WFRP was developed in the first place. The name of the Emperor opposing it, or any of his nobles, is irrelevant. As for the non-Germanic or daft sounding names, if you do not like them, just change them: *Schloss Messing* rings far truer than Brass Keep.

Regarding the previous *Warpstone* musings on the future of the Empire, all of course assume that Heinrich Todbringer is Emperor, given the events that occurred at the end of *Empire in*



Flames. That being the case, it is interesting to see that Graeme Davis came out closest to the eventual outcome. He mentions the triple threat of a new incursion of Chaos, resurgent Skaven, and organised Orcs. He also predicts Elven aid from Ulthuan, and the influence of the Vampire Counts of Sylvania. Full marks to him then, but let me explain why I believe the Storm of Chaos, or at least a modified version of it, is a logical development from the events, both of *The Enemy Within* and the *Doomstones* campaigns.

Preparing the Storm

We always knew that a new incursion of Chaos was coming. The question was simply a matter of when. Magnus the Pious turned the last one back around 220 years ago; I prefer to see that as an uncoordinated assault by the bloated armies of the Ruinous Powers. Given the various hatreds between those Gods, competition and rivalry often led to outright bloodshed. Indeed, the only reason the Empire and her allies could turn back the attack, was wholly due to the Chaos Gods acting individually.

It would be Tzeentch, the Changer of the Ways, who would be best placed to plot and plan some devious scheme for the overthrow of the Empire. Could he fashion an alliance with some other powers? Certainly not his hated foe, Nurgle. Khorne would be the simplest to persuade of the advantages of alliance. Alas, such an union would earn them the enmity of Slaanesh. So, be it. The cause of Khorne and Tzeentch could be linked – at least for now – in the greatest union of Chaos the world has yet witnessed.

On to the events of the WFRP campaigns I mentioned then.

If we examine the main plots of the Purple Hand cult, we discover they aim to destabilise the Empire. The governance of Middenheim is to be subverted, and a civil war provoked through the assassination of the Emperor, with possibly the subsequent installation of a Chaotic mutant. Once the latter fact becomes known (or deliberately unveiled) a civil war will hopefully rack

the Empire, with secular divisions exacerbated by religious ones.

Regarding the Doomstones campaign, the united crystals of power (constructed, remember, with the influence of Tzeentch) will cause a warp gate to open just beyond the Empire's southern border. Not only that, but we hear that a war of succession has broken out amongst the Imperial Dwarves.

It is my contention that all these events are linked as part of a co-ordinated scheme. Their intent is to weaken the Empire and its main ally, the Dwarves. Such subversion can have only one eventual aim: the invasion and destruction of the Empire.

Alongside the nefarious activities of cultists and the unfolding of the Doomstones saga, a parallel campaign of recruitment and diplomacy is under way; the Chaos Gods are marshalling their strength. Petty kings amongst the Norse have joined the cause of Khorne and Tzeentch, for a variety of reasons, as have a growing number of Chaos Marauder clans, known as the Kurgan. Emissaries are even thought to have been sent to the Skaven, and Orcish warlords are being wooed by promises of plunder and bloodshed. If it had not been for the efforts of a few itinerant adventurers, foiling several of these plots, the Empire's destruction would have been assured. At least now it has a chance.

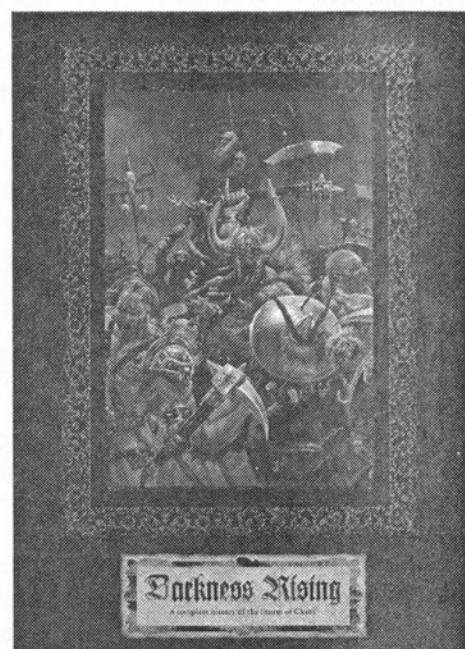
For Tzeentch has a choice facing Him. He had hoped that His plots, after which He had planned to strike, would provoke at least several years of war. His preparations, and those of His allies, are not yet ready. Should He wait until those measures have ripened, then strike with all His vast, mustered strength? To do so would allow Heinrich to tighten his grip on the Empire, and would forego the temporary advantages that the twin, but brief, civil wars have accrued. Or should He strike now, whilst the enmities and divisions He has worked so hard to encourage amongst His enemies are still fresh? Alas, it would mean doing so without the strength He had intended. A quandary then. Thankfully for the Empire (though it does not seem so at the time) He gambles on the swift strike.

Storm of Chaos

The Storm of Chaos began life as a vast Warhammer Fantasy Battle campaign run by Games Workshop. Ten new army lists were developed and players were encouraged to post the results of their wargames to the campaign website, with each result affecting its development and eventual outcome. Special events were also held depicting specific battles.

The campaign itself began with the incursion of Surtha Lenk, who passed through Kislev into the Empire, then managed to sack the city of Wolfenburg before he was defeated. After that, it was Archaon's turn to ravage Kislev, taking Erengard as a starter, and defeating an Imperial army under Volkmar the Grim, the Sigmarite Grand Theogonist. Moving into the Empire, his armies devastated the north-eastern Empire, heading towards Middenheim. Outside its walls, he was finally defeated, but not destroyed, retreating to Brass Keep to lick his wounds.

With the development of WFRP2, the broad results of the Storm of Chaos were incorporated into the background of the game. A Black Library book, *Darkness Rising*, outlines the history of the campaign.



The Breaking of the Storm

Even if we accept that the onset of the Storm of Chaos is a logical progression from the campaigning of the WFRP1 world, there are several modifications that can be made to it. Are some elements too 'high fantasy'? Some claim that the Conclave of Light evokes a Tolkienesque 'White Council' feel, out of line with WFRP. I had similar misgivings, until I read the account of it in the excellent Black Library publication, *Darkness Rising*, that outlines the campaign. There it is treated with irreverent humour, ending up more like a boring local council meeting, with the attendants bitching and bickering, than a sombre meeting of wise minds. All the Emperor is doing is inviting his nobles, church leaders and allies to a council of war, after all - an eminently sensible precaution. If the arrival of Teclis from Ulthuan sticks in your craw, a simple remedy is to substitute an Elven Princeling representing Laurelorn Forest, pledging their (temporary) allegiance to the cause. Sea Elves from Marienburg can similarly promise aid.

A few other alterations will be necessary to make the incursion fit more logically with what has gone before. One reason I prefer imagining an alliance of two of the ruinous powers, rather than all four as implied by the official narrative, is that I find it hard to imagine such an overwhelming force ever being turned back. Neither can I see the timeless hatred and enmity between those Gods being simply overcome by the amassing of a few magical baubles by Archaon.

This is why I favour the initial assault by Surtha Lenk and Aelfric Cyenwulf being an attack that is not co-ordinated with the one that follows. It is implausible that Nurgle and Slaanesh, separately or themselves in league, would not be aware of at least some of Tzeentch's scheming. In the aftermath of the short battle of Wolfenburg, which sees Heinrich crowned Emperor, I foresee that they too would aim to take advantage of the Imperial disunity by mounting an attack, sending word to their cultists to rise up. Perhaps they have done so to forestall or pre-empt Tzeentch and Khorne. More likely, the arch manipulator has coaxed or tempted them in to shooting their bolt too soon. The overall effect of the first attack - which causes almost as much damage on its own as that incursion turned back by Magnus, remember - is to weaken all the enemies of Tzeentch and Khorne, just in time for them to follow it up and reap the benefits. It may well have seemed to Imperial eyes as a co-ordinated campaign, but was in reality anything but.

The other amendments I recommend depend upon the GM's view of canon. I will say now that I have never particularly been a fan of the Hammer House of Horror vampires of Sylvania. Manfred von Carstein's arrival before Middenheim, to virtually save the Empire, smacks of an implausible *deus ex machina* to me. I feel there is a much better rescuer available, who has almost been forgotten. A loose end from what has gone before, though a controversial one. I speak of none other than Sulring Durgul from *Something Rotten in Kislev*.

The super powerful NPC evokes mixed emotions amongst most WFRPers, as does *Something Rotten in Kislev* itself. There are many gamers who view that part of the Enemy Within campaign as an unfortunate aberration, preferably one that should be expunged. Others, myself included, view it as an innovative, challenging and exciting chapter of the campaign.

Regardless of your viewpoint, Sulring is still out there in Bolgasgrad, raising the dead and defending against chaos. Who better than this arch-necromancer, the pragmatist *par excellence*, to come to the rescue of the Empire? At least he is a link to the Enemy Within campaign, and has plausible reasons to do so. He has the means and the motive, so to speak. How could he get so involved? I'll come on to that later.

Of course, if you include Durgul, the identity of the Kislevite soldiers who also turn up around that time can become Prince Alexis III from Bolgasgrad, with a band of Chaos warriors of Zuvassin and Necoho (or, as originally intended, Malal, whom those Gods substituted for). It is reasonable for them to sally forth, if we assume that with Durgul's help they have fought off all comers. This is far more believable than Kislev sending aid when its own lands have already been overrun.

Be'lakor is the Demon Prince who is aiding Archaon. I wonder if another tie in with the Enemy Within campaign can be made though; this could be the same Demon that Teugen was attempting to raise in Bögenhafen. Or, depending on when you time the *Paths of the Damned* campaign, he could become Xathrodox the Red Flayer.

The unfolding of the campaign and its main personalities deserve consideration, especially the role of Valten as a kind of Sigmar reborn. Personally, I like the idea of two Grand Theogonists, with arguments over which has legitimacy. I also like the idea of Rudolph Hoss as a hugely popular demagogue, but one viewed as little better than a heretic by the Church of Sigmar. Valten's role is more problematic, but only in an Empire with Heinrich at its head. After all, Heinrich is recognised virtually as the heir of Sigmar. I would have to say that in such a case, Valten could safely be done away with completely. The only other option would be to see him advocated by Hoss as the 'true' heir of Sigmar. Perhaps the knowledge that Sigmar left heirs in the southern Empire on his last journey, prompted Hoss to investigate the bloodlines down there. Whatever. The problems of Heinrich as Emperor are not insurmountable. Indeed, I even see him as more likely to fend off an incursion than Karl-Franz: Valten is really only a plot device to allow Karl-Franz to stay in power.

The last main alteration I believe is required is to the role of the Skaven in the Chaos incursion.

I am constantly astounded at how Games Workshop still maintains that this race are the great secret of the Old World, whilst at the same time re-writing game history to give them an increasingly larger role. We are now supposed to believe that they came close to conquering the Empire around the Year 1111, but that all knowledge of the near calamity has been successfully repressed. Hard to swallow, I'm afraid - I'll stick with the historical timeline of the original background. As such, though I may allow the Skaven a role in the Storm of Chaos (one bought at high cost by the Ruinous Powers, I have no doubt), I assign it them from the sewers - secret assassinations, the planting and encouragement of plague, and the like. If Chaos is to be unveiled, a phenomenon I discuss next, we want to leave at least one of its nasty adherents lurking beneath the bed.

'Despair, for the Storm of Chaos has begun.'
from the prophecy of Archaon.

Many WFRP gamers do despair at the onset of the Storm of Chaos, but not for the same reasons as Imperial citizens. There is a fear that, to put it bluntly, the unique atmosphere that sustains WFRP is being destroyed. Tim Eccles again speaks for many when he states in *Warpstone* 18: “Chaos is best left as the enemy within...” and “Corruption forms a major part of the world, but it is much more interesting when used with discretion.”

I suppose opinion on this will always be divided because the tone or atmosphere of campaign worlds is a matter of taste. Those areas of the world scarred by the Storm of Chaos certainly are different places now: a city adventure in bustling Altdorf is far removed from one in ruined Wolfenburg. The face of chaos may now be revealed, but has this irredeemably changed the world for the worse?

I believe not.

The fact is that much of the Empire, and indeed most of the Old World, has escaped the ravages of the invasion. If you prefer role-playing where all corruption is hidden, there are plenty of opportunities to do so. The southern and western regions of the Empire, including Nuln, Altdorf and Carroburg, are virtually untouched. There may be some refugees and traumatised veterans wandering around, but I feel the addition of such individuals adds more flavour to even ‘low fantasy’ campaigning. Plenty of plot lines present themselves, as cultists infiltrate cities posing as war stricken refugees, or despairing survivors turn to the Ruinous Powers after witnessing horrors first hand. Paranoia will likely be far more rife, as will extremes

of religious belief and behaviour. Such phenomena enrich campaigns more than they cheapen them.

Adventuring in the rural regions of those lands should change even less. Looking at the published scenarios from the past, there was never a lack of Beastmen or mutants in the woods anyway.

Slightly further afield in Marienburg life goes on largely as before. The Sea Elves may have seen some harrowing sights, but they aren’t telling. The merchants of that city will be more interested in securing profit from the war, hoping that a weakened Empire still poses a counterbalance to Bretonnian territorial ambitions.

What I am saying is this: one does not have to deny the existence of the Storm of Chaos to keep playing a certain type of WFRP campaign. It can actually add some interesting plot developments. As I have previously stated though, I would agree to retaining the Skaven as a hidden threat.

Apocalypse Now

The starting adventure contained within the WFRP2 rulebook is *Through the Drakwald*. Its initial premise for beginning characters finds them standing within the war ravaged ruins of Untergard, their hometown. Not much subtlety perhaps, and they are certainly being thrown in at the deep end. Still, a lot better than the old ‘meeting in a tavern’ start, at any rate.

I wonder though, whether there might not be a better way? The reason some post-apocalypse role-playing games set in our contemporary world succeed is because we can compare the desolation they present with the current reality. We have a context through which we can view the alternative.

Starting players in a fantasy setting that has suffered a recent catastrophe is more difficult however. The reason is that they may have little experience with which to compare the pre and post-apocalyptic worlds. Middenheim is shattered, but so what? They’ve never known it as anything else.

The best way to inspire the shock, horror and loss of the Storm of Chaos setting is actually to start characters some time before it breaks upon them. How much more feeling will be evoked if, scant weeks before, they were carousing amongst Untergard’s broken walls? What emotions could be provoked, if the bodies of loved ones, friends and acquaintances, that the PCs have had a chance to interact with, are amongst the fallen? The greater the familiarity that has been built up, the greater the contrast the Storm of Chaos will have with what has gone before. Any campaign set around it will therefore become more effective.

I have some other tips and campaign ideas about the Storm of Chaos, which occur within three different time frames.

The Gathering Storm

Any campaign set before the Storm of Chaos can benefit from the gradual accumulation of signs and portents regarding its coming. The *Empire in Flames* ending of the Enemy Within campaign contains plenty of suggestions for these, so I will not expand on them here. What they do is add a growing sense of menace and doom. Indeed, through visions or otherwise, you could provide the PCs themselves with information about the inevitability of attack. Enjoyment could be had watching their increasingly fanatical attempts to have their knowledge of impending disaster taken seriously, whilst they are continuously



ignored as madmen by the authorities.

Interestingly, one small published campaign, with minor adaptation, works very well in the gap between *Empire in Flames* and the onset of the Storm of Chaos: the Paths of the Damned series (or at least the first and last parts of it). I always found it rather doubtful that Ar-Ulric's deputy would wait until after the siege of Middenheim to show his hand. The events within *Ashes of Middenheim* make more sense to me taking place whilst the Graf, Ar-Ulric and many of the soldiers of the city are away fighting the battle of Wolfenbürg.

The Storm Breaks

In my view, Black Industries missed out on a very rich vein of campaigning material by setting all their adventures after the Storm of Chaos has already been blunted. Any group of PCs who began their campaigning before the invasion began can become part of the efforts to turn it back, which may well lead to participation in some pitched battles or desperate sieges. If such combat is too open and obvious for your tastes, there will be plenty of cultist plots that need thwarting, as their fiendish

preparations finally come to fruition.

There are two particular suggestions I have to make though, which may include the PCs in some in-game historical events.

Deus ex machina

Three major events occur during the relief of Middenheim, which effectively lead to the blunting of Archaon's offensive. These are: the arrival of von Carstein's undead horde; the rebellion of Archaon's Orcish allies under Grimgor Ironhide; and the destruction of Be'lakor's daemonic host by Teclis. All seemed to come from out of nowhere, which has led some critics to surmise that they were instigated by Gav Thorpe alone (who ran the campaign for Games Workshop), in order to save the Empire from destruction.

But how can one man, unless he is Sigmar reborn, save the Empire? If we assume that Mr. Thorpe is not of that bloodline, there must be another answer to explain these otherwise inexplicable events.

It may be heretical to even whisper such musings, but some question the value of worshipping many of the Gods in the Empire's pantheon. It can appear that, compared to the excesses of the Chaos Gods, their own efforts to protect the Empire seem rather, well, lacking. Such dark pondering has led many to question their faith; some have even embraced the worship of the Ruinous Powers.

But the influence of the Gods does not have to be through such crass phenomena as lightning bolts or earthquakes. Perhaps the key events that seem merely fortunate or contrived to our minds were instigated by the Gods themselves to save the Empire. In which case, who better to act as their instruments, than those remarkable individuals who have been graced with Fate Points? I speak of Player Characters.

Whether you go with von Carstein from Sylvania or, as I prefer, Sulring Durgul from Bolgasgrad, there is a role for a group of PCs to play in enlisting such aid. How they were given such a mission is for your imagination. Someone high up in the Empire may well entrust the PCs with such a task because of the unique advantage they have over teams of liveried warriors or templars – deniability. It would be very hard to diplomatically justify an official mission to Durgul or von Carstein, a Necromancer and a Vampire. Let such overtures or entreaties be made by disposable riff raff instead. Perhaps the original Enemy Within PCs might even be tempted out of retirement to do so?

The same argument holds true for the defection of Grimgor Ironhide's Orcish host. Who knows what role a group of PCs had behind the scenes, whether prompted by powerful patrons or no? Perhaps they had to take a message into the Orcish camp, promising some vast future reward? Or maybe they uncovered a cult of Khorne or Tzeentch within some Orcish tribes, finding evidence of a plot to assassinate Grimgor and turn his bloodthirsty crew towards the worship of darker Gods? A good role for the Bloodaxe Alliance survivors of the Doomstones campaign methinks.

As for Be'lakor, even if the individual who sends him back to hell is not Teclis, the knowledge or artefact to enable him to do so may well have been provided by a group of PCs. If you want a 'high fantasy' slant, this can involve a quest to provide some hidden, high-powered magical device. In fact, if you utilise the

Wayward Son

This is a small cameo event that can be utilised, either at the start of the Enemy Within or Doomstones campaign.

The PCs hear the clash of swords and screams of battle ahead on the road. What they eventually espy is a ragged Templar of Sigmar on plunging steed, beset by a group of Orcs. Several bodies of his foes lie strewn around, but the battle is in the balance. Whether or not they intervene (and hopefully they will), the Templar prevails eventually, though he bears several wounds. He tells them his name and thanks them for any assistance rendered, but perceptive PCs will notice that he appears rather dishevelled, and indeed has a strange gleam in his eye. He heads off north after a few parting words.

'Farewell, and my thanks. Our paths shall one day cross again, methinks. You have done a great service to the Gods this day.' And with an enigmatic smile, he is gone, riding northwards.

Some time later, a thunder of hooves heralds the arrival of a whole company of Sigmarite templars. They question the party about whether they have seen a lone man, who may be bearing the arms of their order. If the PCs tell the truth, the templar leader will scowl.

'For once, I wish the Orcs had fought better. It is a pity the scoundrel we pursue escaped their ambush. The foul Gods he now worships have protected him once again! What strange tools they wield.' It turns out that the original templar is a renegade who recently murdered several of his erstwhile brethren, escaping with an artefact – though the nature of the latter will not be divulged. With a last glare at the PCs, the company heads off in pursuit once again.

The identity of the lone templar? The man who will later become infamous as Archaon, of course. Hopefully the PCs, at some time, long in the future, will realise that they inadvertently saved the life of the scourge of the Empire!

Of course, any campaign that begins before the incursion, can lead onto efforts to turn it back.

Paths of the Damned campaign just before the Storm of Chaos breaks, Claus Liebnitz's initial summoning could have freed Be'lakor/Xathrodox, with the players initial action merely preventing him from manifesting in the centre of Middenheim itself. They can then carry the final artefact from Nuln up to the battle at Middenheim, to allow some Elven sorcerer to finally dispel it.

On the low fantasy scale, if the Bögenhafen link is established, perhaps a party shall have to re-investigate some of the goings on there, to discover notes or books that the Daemonologist hid and have yet to be recovered. If you really want a dark slant, perhaps dispelling the demon will require the blood or organs of someone initially involved with the summoning. If they are all dead, their relatives may have to do.

There is plenty of scope to involve adventurers in these world-changing events. One outcome must be certain though – they must never receive the credit they deserve for success.

A Catastrophic Failure

The Storm of Chaos presents the GM with a very rare option. We could call it the nuclear option.

The fact is that, too often, if a plot against the Empire is large enough to do it some serious damage, it cannot be allowed to succeed. This is because such a disastrous outcome can unbalance the game world. Some published adventures, to their credit, do advance alternative endings should the efforts of the PCs not prove effective. *Shadows over Bögenhafen*, for example, explains the consequences of unleashing a major daemon in that town. However, on the whole, GMs are forced to be merciful towards the idiocy of PCs, giving them help to succeed where, often, they don't deserve it.

With the Storm of Chaos, you are free as a GM to devise plot lines that lead to whole towns being wiped out if the PCs do not succeed, the consequence of which will not unbalance the game world a jot. Indeed, if you are really mean, their efforts to avoid catastrophe could be doomed from the start. Such events are useful because they drive home to players that their actions matter. Their idiocy matters too, and it is simply not the case that they will always be allowed to fudge a way through.

The Storm Recedes

This is the period where WFRP2 starts. Whether you begin campaigns in this period, or start them earlier and continue them here, there are some factors to bear in mind.

Especially in those areas that were hardest hit by the invasion, this is a period of opportunity as well as deprivation. There is a lot of land that will require new masters or stewards, and where shortages may accrue in certain resources; the shrewd can make a fortune. As developed in *Sigmar's Heirs*, there are also some interesting religious rivalries brewing, beyond the usual Sigmar/Ulric divide: Myrmidia is becoming more popular in the southern Empire as an alternative to the 'old' God of War, Ulric.

There are obviously going to be plenty of Beastman-bashing opportunities in the forests, but as that development is seen as a backward step by many WFRP veterans anyway, let us look at some interesting alternatives.

The Menace Beneath

I advise the Skaven should forego their place in the forefront of Archaon's armies and remain as shadowy adversaries. Acute observers of events may then realise that the one power that has avoided losses during this vast war has been the Horned Rat. Perhaps the Council of Thirteen are even now plotting to rise up and smite a weakened Empire, safe in the knowledge that other enemies amongst the Dwarfs, Orcs and Chaotic powers are all exhausted?

The time of the rat approaches, and a campaign could be devised to foil it, Enemy Within style, with the very fate of the Empire at stake. The cult of The Yellow Fang outlined in *Sigmar's Heirs* could be the vehicle for this. For a more 'in your face' confrontation, the published *Terror in Talabheim* could herald the emergence of the sewer-lurkers into the sunlight.

The Lord of End Times

Though in the WFB world, Archaon may have been around for centuries, gathering armfuls of high-powered Chaotic artefacts, I prefer to see him as a more recent convert to the Ruinous Powers. He works well as an evil counterpart to Heinrich. Perhaps they share the same date of birth?

As well as the cameo I suggested earlier, I can see a campaign being devised which aims to explore his roots. It is rumoured that this Champion of Chaos used to be a Sigmarite Templar. Certainly, the Cult of Sigmar may attempt to cover up such an embarrassing fact. Ar-Ulric might hire the PCs to investigate the source of this



Archaon. Does he have surviving family? It

is whispered that he uncovered a great secret regarding his cult, which shook his faith so utterly that he turned to Chaos. What manner of secret could cause such an immense betrayal? Indeed, what effect will it have on the PCs should they uncover it for themselves? They could spend a whole campaign finding out.

The Empire Reels

I have tried to show in this article that the Storm of Chaos is a logical event for the WFRP world, post Enemy Within or not. Minor tinkering can banish many of its internal inconsistencies, or link it better with what has gone before. I hope I have suggested ways to make it more effective as a plot device, with some useful campaigning suggestions. Mostly though, my wish has been to persuade those who would dismiss its onset out of hand as being detrimental to the ethos of WFRP. It changes the atmosphere, yes, but only as much as the GM wishes. I think it adds a lot, even to Lovecraftian adventuring. It gives a GM more options regarding the type of adventures to run. And more choice is a good thing, isn't it?



RITES OF PASSAGE

A scenario by
Clive Oldfield

Being a shipboard adventure for WFRP

The characters in this scenario should be on board an ocean-going ship for several days. The ship in question, the *Spirit of St. Olovald*, is travelling from Marienburg to l'Anguille, but pretty much any two ports can be substituted.

It is probably not feasible to railroad a party onto a ship just to run this adventure. It would be best to keep it until the party happen to be on a ship and you have a four or five day voyage to fill. On the other hand, the (credible) prospect of a job with high pay in some far off port should be enough to get most parties onto the open seas.

The adventure could be run during a river journey, too. However, this would change some central aspects. Characters, especially Niels and perhaps Piotr, would always have the ready option of making their escape over the side of the boat. On many river stretches the ship would likely weigh anchor for the night, and often at convenient boating inns. All this might lose the feel of unsettling isolation that an ocean-going trip would bring. Also, for many river journeys, the boat will be much smaller.

The political relationships between l'Anguille, Couronne and Marienburg play a role in the scenario. When using different locations a similar relationship might need to be found. Essentially, all that is required is two rival factions fighting it out on a neutral stage. Whether this involves l'Anguillois and Couronnais spies in Marienburg or the official Chartered Guild of Fromagiers and the unofficial Quality Cheesemakers' Independent Alliance in Hergig is not important.



THE STORY SO FAR



Thing One

Baroness Maie du Farrier and her daughters Maria-Claire and Louise are travelling back to l'Anguille from Marienburg. The late Baron Gilles du Farrier was on the staff of the l'Anguille embassy to Marienburg. The baron died suddenly a few days

ago; he choked on a Tilean chocolate at the Ambassador's party. The baroness wished to take his body back to their estates in l'Anguille to have him buried.

Maria-Claire did not want to return home; she was having much more fun in the Paleisbuurt social whirl than she ever had back in Bretonnia. She was also madly in love with a Kislevan called Piotr Zabback. Piotr was a bodyguard to a high ranking Kislevan diplomat. No doubt, he would have been in trouble with both the Bretonnian and Kislevites should his relationship have become known.

Maria-Claire decided that Piotr should desert (for which the punishment is death), and go with her to l'Anguille. Piotr, being besotted, agreed to Maria-Claire's demand. Maria-Claire devised a hare-brained scheme to get Piotr back without being discovered by her mother. She told Piotr to dump the body of her father into a canal so he could hide in the coffin. This way Piotr got on board the *Spirit of St. Olovald*, and soon he will be with his beloved in l'Anguille.

Maria-Claire got Piotr to open the coffin and by sawing through the nails so that it looks as if the lid is still nailed shut. He constructed a lightweight catch that can be used from the inside to keep the lid closed. It would not be difficult (**Average (+0%) Strength Test**) to force the lid open if you had a mind to.

N.B. For the purposes of this adventure it is assumed that coffins are closed and sealed, and that it is not a tradition for friends and family to view the deceased, at least during the journey.

Thing Two

Baron Gilles was loyal to his homeland and a trusted spy for the duke of l'Anguille in Marienburg. Baroness Maie was also trusted and aided her husband in his endeavours. She has been given a secret, encrypted message by the l'Anguille ambassador in Marienburg. The message informs Duke Taubert of the

identity of a high-ranking member of his staff, who has been spying on him on behalf of the duke of Couronne. Baroness Maie does not know the content of the message. She has hidden it inside the lining of one of her hatboxes.

The Couronnais faction in Marienburg has got word that the Baroness is carrying a message of vital importance and has sent one of its agents after her, in order to steal it. The agent is a Marienburger called Haansie Niels. He has taken a job as general seaman on the ship. It does not give him access to the nobles, but it was all he could get in the short time he had to arrange a cover.

Niels has orders to stop at nothing to get hold of the message. His priority is to obtain the message entirely undetected. If this fails he can kill who he likes and cause whatever disruption is required. This will tip off rival agents, however. As a last resort he has orders to blow the ship up and stop it reaching its destination. To this end, he has already hidden a barrel of gunpowder among some crates of soap in the central hold. The fuse is set; all it requires is someone to light it. Niels, of course, would rather he completed his mission in a less drastic way, but if necessary, he will quietly launch the ship's long boat, light the fuse, then throw himself overboard, leaving everyone else to a fatal bubble bath.

The Spirit of St. Olovald

The ship on which the scenario takes place is the *Spirit of St. Olovald*. She is a large three-masted caravel with a crew of sixteen, 50 years old and in generally good repair. Built in Brionne, she has seen a good working life and is well built and well run.

At the moment she is carrying a mixed cargo of Glassware, Imperial Leather and Soap to the great port of l'Anguille. The ship has three cargo holds. The fore hold contains the leather and soap, the middle hold, soap and glassware and the aft hold a small amount of leather and the coffin. The aft hold is somewhat out of the way, affording the quiet resting-place the family requested. Open doorways link all holds and all can be accessed through trap doors and ladders from the deck above.



So we were making our way through the jungles of Lustria. Gradually I came to the uncomfortable realisation that we were not alone, Princess Amazi and I. Many small orange eyes began to peer at us from the undergrowth and our every step was dogged by the howling of invisible predators.

Soon we were surrounded by little lizards, hundreds of the blighters. I thought they might eat us there and then, but they took us to their leader, a huge fat frog, who cast strange invocations from golden tablets. And of course, I was very, very drunk.

Gerard Pelout

THE CREW

OFFICERS

Captain Paal Aarthaas

The captain is an experienced old sea dog, having worked his way up the ranks. He likes nothing more than to be aboard his beloved ship, and will doubtless die before he leaves the sea.

Aarthaas is a sensible sort, but with not much tolerance of those landlubbers that do not understand shipboard life. He takes his obligation to his crew very seriously; he is mostly well liked by them in return.



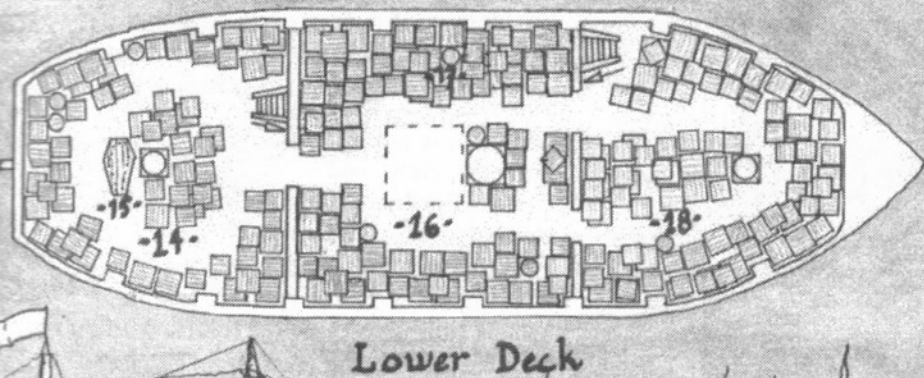
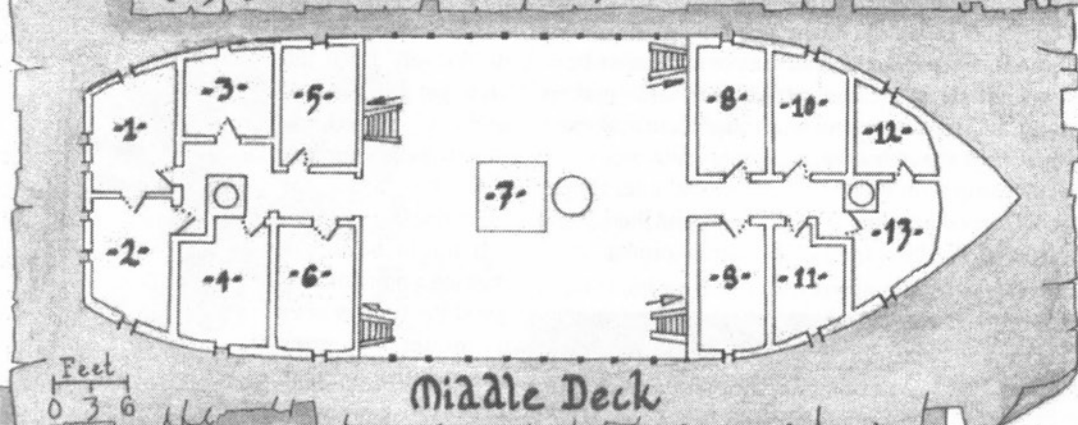
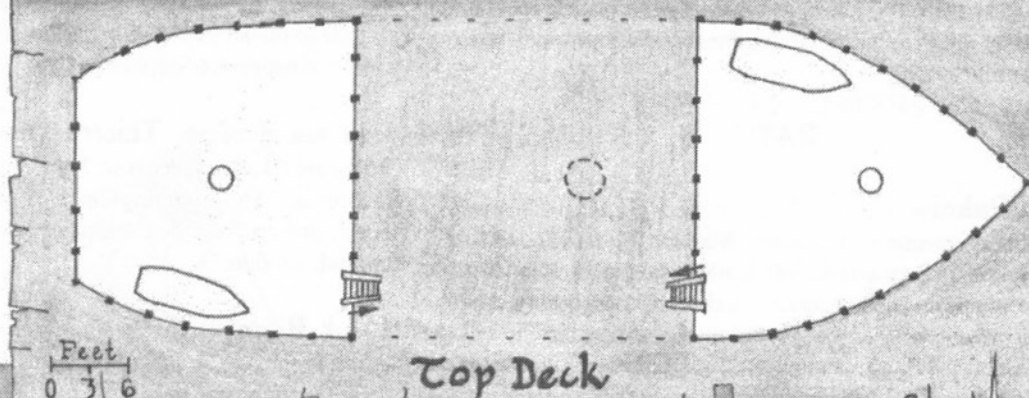
The captain is a devout worshipper of Manann and leads the crew in regular (thrice daily) prayers to that god. He sees himself as Manann's envoy on the ship and divinely charged with keeping the crew safe.

Navigator Gerard Pelout

The Navigator is good enough at his job but has little interest in it. What he enjoys most is drinking brandy or Bordeaux and enthralling dinner guests with roaring tales of his adventures in Lustria, Cathay and Ind. The more he drinks the more outrageous his tales become. His stories are exciting and entertaining.

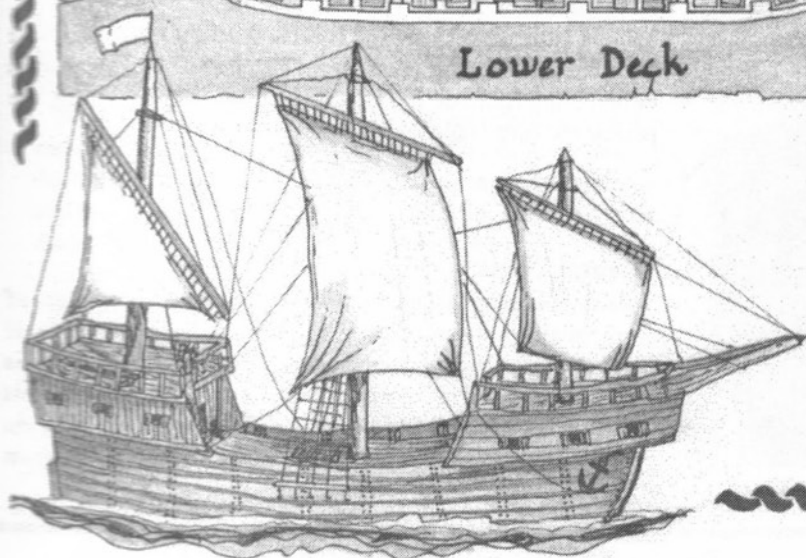
Unfortunately, he only has enough material for one night. He tells the same tales every single night as he works his way through the ship's wine. Aarthaas retires early so he does not have to put up with the interminable stories any longer. He only tolerates Pelout because they go back a long way together.

THE SPIRIT OF ST. OLOVALD



MAP KEY

- 1-Dining Room
- 2-Captain's Quarter
- 3-Gunther
- 4-Baroness Maie
- 5-Passenger
- 6-Maria Claire & Louise
- 7-Hatch
- 8-Passenger
- 9-Pelout
- 10-Van Der Vander
- 11-Von Laad
- 12-De Jong
- 13-Galley
- 14-Leather
- 15-Coffin
- 16-Soap & Glass
- 17-Gunpowder
- 18-Leather & Soap



First Mate Henrik von Laad

The first mate is a large and intimidating man with shark-teeth scars across his upper arm (he rarely wears sleeves). He is very loyal to his captain. He has a tendency to treat the crew as beneath him, and perhaps is an over-harsh disciplinarian. He is not much loved by the men but respected for his many years experience and competence.

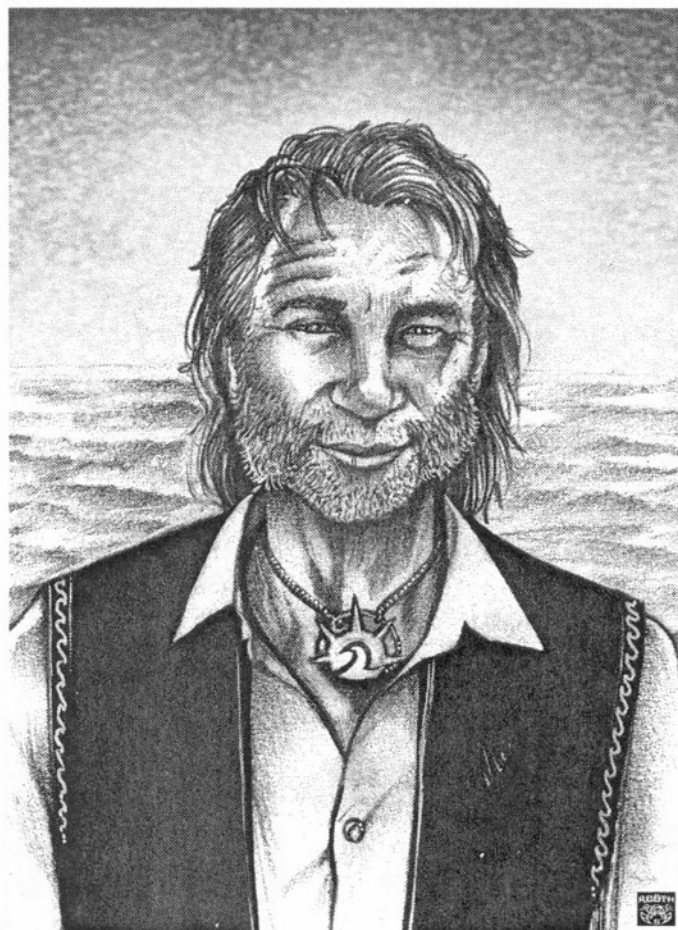
RATINGS

Luc Dubois

Dubois is considered a priest of Manann by many of the crew. They see him as a spiritual leader and leads them in their inspirational and invocational shanties. He knows many effective Manannite rituals. He is a good man and has nothing but the well being of the crew and the worship of Manann at heart.

His devotion has led him into conflict with Captain Aarthaus. The captain considers he should be the sole link to Manann on board the ship and resents Dubois' interference in these matters. The Captain is unaware of Dubois' expertise in these matters considering him a self-taught amateur like himself (only inferior). Dubois now just stays out of his way.

Dubois' relationship with Manann is a personal one. He has never undergone formal training in his devotion and thus would never be considered eligible to any of the formal orders.



Jacques Tranquer

Tranquer is well enough liked by the whole crew. He is always known to pull his weight and treat his fellows fairly. No one will be able to think of any motivation for his murder. It is much more likely, they will say, that he did fall over board. As unlikely as that is for an experienced seaman like Tranquer, everyone knows it happens occasionally.

Jaap van Schlaap, Thierry Lomas, Alaric Dumonde

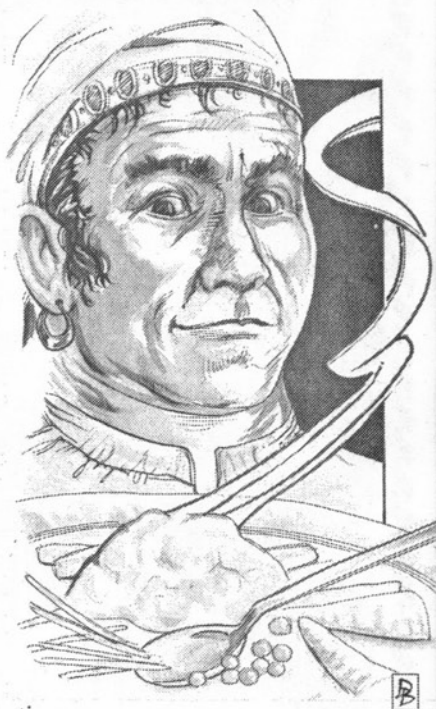
These are three sample crew. They can be the crew that supports Dubois in the Summoning Circle event. The crew is generally a happy one and it is the consensus that they have a mostly good and fair captain.

Cook Bjorn de Jong

Bjorn is the ship's cook. His meals are very good. He knows how to cook and he has the ingredients to do the job. Even the crew get good meals, and Aarthaus generously supplies decent fare for everyone.

It might be worth making a point of how good the food is after Tranquer goes missing, just to pique paranoid Player Characters. Most of the meals taste a bit like chicken, anyway.

Bjorn is a big fat happy lad who likes his work, is popular with the crew, and sings Bordeaux bawdy songs to pass the time.



Tabitha

Tabitha is the ship's cat. She is a big friendly tabby. She will often be seen hanging around by the captain's table at meal times or bothering Bjorn de Jong. Otherwise, when not sleeping, she patrols the cargo hold looking for mice and rats.

SPY

Haansic Niels

This Marienburg ex-housebreaker is under the employ of representatives of the Duke of Couronne. He has proved himself to be a competent spy and some-time assassin on previous missions for the Couronnais organisation. All he knows of this particular mission is that he must relieve Baroness Maie du Farrier of an encrypted missive and deliver it to as yet unknown accomplices in l'Anguille.

Niels bought his convincing garb from a drunken seaman in Marienburg. But his pack and his equipment are not so genuine. He created a cover story that involved his “old ma bein’ taken ill all of a sudden, like,” which meant he missed his old ship *The Florian*, and had to find a new one. The story is not a particularly bad one; ships generally need to pick up new crew constantly. On board the ship he will do his best not to stand out and bluffs his way t h r o u g h misunderstandings and his lack of familiarity with things nautical.

Niels is a skilful and ruthless operative. He realises that this task is a difficult one, but the pay is excellent. He is determined to succeed but will not take too many risks; it is his life that will be lost if he messes up, after all. As the voyage goes on and the ship approaches l’Anguille, however, he may be forced to act more recklessly than he would like.

Niels has also been told to keep his eyes out for anything unusual surrounding the du Farriers. Depending on how the Player Characters act, he could decide that they qualify in this respect and he may want to hang around them and see what they are up to, and/or report them to his contacts in l’Anguille.

PASSENGERS

Baroness Maie du Farrier

The baroness is a tall, thin handsome woman. As she is in mourning she dresses in nothing but black, including a black hat with a lace veil. Her hair is naturally white with age and she wears white powder on her face liberally as is the fashion among the Bretonnian nobility.

Lady Maie can be impeccably polite and charming, but she can also be savagely cutting in her subtle insults to those she deems unworthy of her respect. She has an interest in botany and astronomy and anyone who can hold her attention on these subjects will see the better side of her nature.

One reason that Maie is glad to be leaving Marienburg is that she can put her elder daughter on the straight and narrow again; she did not approve at all of the kind of lifestyle she was living in the city. If she were to find out about Piotr she would be livid. She would be even more livid of course, if she were to learn that they dumped her husband’s body into a canal to accommodate their crazy scheme.

At the behest of her late husband, Maie carries a tiny (one-

shot, Damage 1) hold out pistol in her black fur muff.

She also carries a flask of some strange concoction prescribed for her by an eminent physician of Paleisbuurt. She might occasionally take a shot of the stuff when she is feeling down. It is a deep red in colour and is a mixture of Estalian tomato juice and various medicinal herbs.

THE PALE SISTERS

Lady Maria-Claire

Maria-Claire is eighteen years old. She dresses much like her mother. She is tall, too, but not as tall as her mother, and her hair is very dark, almost black. She also wears bright red lipstick. She is a very good-looking lady. One of her Marienburg It-crowd affectations is that she will refuse to look in a mirror; she says she cannot stand the sight of her own face. In reality this is simply a device she uses to fish for compliments (and it usually works very well).

Maria-Claire is used to getting her own way. If she cannot, she will invariably throw a tantrum. She comes across as a spoiled teenager more interested in the latest fashions and conspicuous consumption than morals and considered opinions.

Lady Louise

Louise is just twelve years old. No matter, taught by her sister and mother, she has already perfected the faux-ennui of a noble Bretonnian lady. She could possibly out-brat Maria-Claire in a few years time. She dresses the same as the other two du Farrier ladies and has dark hair like her sister.

Nothing is good enough for Louise. The food will be too hot or too cold or too bland or too spicy, as will the weather and the ship and the fellow diners, etc. She is also apt to come out with pessimistic phrases at inappropriate moments, such as, “It doesn’t matter, we’re all going to die, anyway,” and “I wish I was dead. I’m going to kill myself right now.”

The three du Farriers have jewels and riches aplenty. Though they take reasonable care of them, some unscrupulous members of the party might consider them as potential rich-pickings. If they are caught thieving on board the ship, the captain will have them thrown straight over the side.

Maria-Clair and Louise share a room, while their mother and most of the riches stay in the next room.

Information on Gilles du Farrier

It is likely that the Player Characters will ask questions about Gilles du Farrier at some point. Although not enchanted by their company Maie will have some information to impart.

- He worked for the Duc de l’Anguille at the embassy in Marienburg.
- She doesn’t know exactly what he did; something important (she does know but it is secret, of course).
- He died suddenly choking on Tilean chocolates (she will not appreciate anyone finding this amusing).
- Their estate is about twenty miles south of the city of l’Anguille.
- She does not recall having met any Sylvanians in



Paleisbuurt. "Hold on, there was that one fellow. He was a bit of a night owl, all dark and broody. We only met him once at the Talabecland ambassador's shindig (terribly dull), if I recall correctly."

Klaus Gunther

Klaus has nothing to do with either plot but he's a paying passenger so gets a mention. He is a merchant from Altdorf. He owns a third or so of the ship's cargo and he plans to open shop in l'Anguille. His brothers run a successful glassware business in Altdorf, and their plan is to ship directly to l'Anguille bypassing the Marienburg agents and their mark up, allowing for greater profits.

Klaus is fond of this plan; it was his idea, and he talks interminably about it, and the great potential for riches. If the truth were told, his brothers agreed readily to this scheme because it gets him out the way.

Klaus is large and fat headed. He eats like a pig and drips food down his shirt. And he does not change his shirt often enough. He is enough to put anyone off their food. Klaus is also a bachelor and fancies himself with the ladies. He will see no reason why Maie, or Maria-Claire should not be attracted to him and he will flirt with them sickeningly.

Rijkhard van der Vander

Rijkhard is on his way to the Temple of Shallya in Couronne (via l'Anguille) to pray for healing from the goddess. He will spend much of the voyage in his room. He does make a small effort to turn up to meals, but eats very little. Sea travel does not agree with him (doctors thought it would be good for his constitution) and he always seems to be rushing off to be sick over the side.

It is unclear what (apart from a greenness around the gills) is medically wrong with him; he claims anything and everything. Rijkhard is a hypochondriac. His family has finally decided to send him off to the healing waters of Couronne, hoping this might cure his many ailments, or that he might at least catch a real illness while he is there.

Among Rijkhard's possessions are a few medical dictionaries that he reads avidly. He will be in little mood to pass the time of day with the Player Characters unless they demonstrate any medical knowledge, in which case he will be delighted to trade stories with them.

STOWAWAY

Piotr Zabback

Despite being a tall muscle-bound Kossar bodyguard with a long plaited beard, Piotr is utterly dominated by Maria-Claire. If she suggested something as ludicrous as deserting his post and stowing away inside her father's coffin for five days so that they could stay together, Piotr would go along with it. In fact he did.

The further the *Spirit of St. Olovald* gets from Marienburg, however, the safer Piotr will feel and the less inclined he will be to put up with skulking about below decks. On the other hand,

Maria-Claire has told him he has to remain hidden, and he would not want to disappoint her.

If discovered, Piotr will be more relieved than anything. He will be glad not to have to hide anymore. Of course he will have to feel he will be safe from being executed for deserting. If he thinks the Kislevites have discovered him, then he will have no choice but to run, or fight his way to freedom.



SP

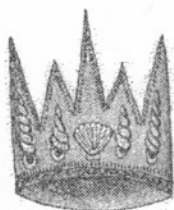
Life at Sea

The journey should take four or five days. It is assumed that the party (or at least some of them) have some sort of grace or favour that means they get to eat at the captain's table. If this is not the case then they will view events around the de Farriers at more of a distance. Some sort of device should be used that means the Player Characters ingratiate themselves with someone of influence on board.

Perhaps before the voyage begins the Player Characters might save one of the ship's officers or Klaus Gunther from a mugging. Or a Player Character may discover he has a mutual and well loved friend of the captain. If the party are paying customers and not looking too disreputable then there is no reason why the captain should not treat them as fellow gentlemen until it is proven otherwise.

During the voyage the party should meet the other passengers at every meal, and also bump into them during the course of things (it's a large ship by the standards of the Old World, but it's still very small). No one wants to stay in their cabins if it is good enough weather to take in the air.

Paying passengers get a cabin. The Player Characters should get one to share between them all. Some Player Characters might have to eat with the crew (the food is surprisingly good, actually) and sleep in a corner of the cargo hold.



EVENTS

A number of things should happen on the voyage. The Player Characters will intervene at some point to change the course of events and what happens thereafter will need to be determined by the Game Master, but most of the following should occur in some form.

Some of the events are given a rough order to occur, but this can always be changed to suit the actions of the party. Many can occur at almost any point in the voyage and should be used by the Game Master when he sees fit.

Prayers to Manann

Captain Aarthaus is devoutly dedicated to Manann. Three times a day the crew will stop to offer praise and sacrifice to the god of the seas. The passengers will be expected to join in, or at least show a respectful silence at these times.

Baalls

A common pastime on Sea of Claws boats is a game called Baalls. It involves tossing cannon balls as close as possible to a target ball. The crew will be pleased at the opportunity to play

this for money against the Player Characters. Some of them are experts (i.e. have three skill levels in the skill Baalls (Ballistic Skill)).

Cards

If the crew think they can win money off the passengers they will invite them to a late night card game. This might be a good way to keep the Player Characters up at night, if the Game Master needs them awake. It will also prove to be a good way for them to get to know the crew and learn things from them.

Doggy Bag

Suddenly during one meal, after picking at her food for a time, Maria-Claire will announce she is tired of the conversation and will instead eat in her cabin. She will take all her food with her and leave.

She will then proceed down to the hold to give the food to Piotr. She will make some effort to make sure no one is following her, but will not be impeccable in this.

Cat Death

One of the Player Characters stumbles across the body of Tabitha the ship's cat. She has been torn apart and partly eaten. If inspected more closely it can be seen that the cat was savaged by what looks like some other cat-sized animal.

This needs to occur before the Giants Rats event because the cat was actually killed by the Lustrian Swamp Rats and, once they are discovered, it should be pretty obvious what happened to the cat.

Bird Song

A rook perches on some rigging and sits there for several hours. The seamen will consider this unusual, so far from land, and will see it as some sort of sign from Morr. They will be too respectful to chase the bird away, and if the Player Characters try this the crew will not look kindly upon them.

If a Player Character is stupid enough to kill the rook, then the captain will reluctantly agree to let his superstitious crew throw the offender overboard.

A Button

If the Player Characters search around the lower decks near the coffin at any time then they will discover a button that has fallen from Piotr's breeches. It is shiny and silver and depicts a stylised bear. Anyone with knowledge of the Kislev military will know it is from any of a number of Kislevan army uniforms. Otherwise it will be very hard for someone to place.

The Gun Powder

If searching the middle hold, there is a chance that a character will discover the gunpowder keg that Niels hid among the crates of soap. This should strike them as odd. No one will be able to offer an explanation as to how it might have got there.

On the discovery, Captain Aarthaus will order his crew to make a thorough search of the entire ship. No more kegs will be found. A small store of gunpowder is kept in the ship's locker (to which

the captain has the key), but this cache clearly is not part of that.

Giant Rats

A loud crash is heard coming from the cargo hold. If investigated further, dark shapes will be seen in the corners of the hold and skittering noises can be heard. These look too large to be rats. The noises occurred when the things knocked over a precariously placed crate of Gunther's Glassware. About half the contents are now destroyed.

If one of these critters is caught it will turn out to be a large rat-like thing about two-foot long with oversized front teeth. The thing is a Lustrian Swamp Rat (or giant coypu). A family came aboard on a previous voyage and has since been driving off the ship's smaller rats and starting to dominate life in the hold.

If the party is nonplussed, one of the crew will be able to recognise the animal as something he has seen before in Lustria, "They're just big rats".

A Storm

The boat is hit by a sudden violent storm. Everyone must quickly go below decks and ride it out. The ship will toss and turn most unpleasantly, and Toughness tests will have to be taken to avoid throwing up. After six hours or so the weather will subside.

Fight

Perhaps spurred by tension on board the ship, Pierre de Lyon and Claes Bosman, suddenly engage in a vicious punch-up following a disagreement over some work duty or gambling incident. They fight for several minutes while the crew gathers round and cheers. They adhere to the unwritten rule of 'no knives among shipmates,' so no one gets badly hurt.

If the Player Characters investigate, neither party will wish to discuss the details of their dispute. But it really has nothing to do with the Player Characters in any case. If they must know, it's over a big-hearted serving maid from the Suiddock.

White Water

The *Spirit of St. Olovald* has to navigate some notoriously treacherous waters between a small island and the rocky Bretonnian coast. Bad timing means that the tide is particularly low. Also, Gerard Pelout is very, very drunk. The stretch could be avoided altogether, but this would mean a drastic loss of time. Captain Aarthaus has decided to risk it, and has every faith in his navigator.

Passengers are politely asked to join the crew manning the gunwales. They must keep their eyes out for the white-water tale-tell signs of rocks below the surface. The tense, dangerous part of the passage lasts for an hour or so. The Player Characters should make some *Perception* Tests and be led to believe that they might actually run aground. It might even be worthwhile leaving this part until the end of the scenario, and actually sinking the ship.



DAY ONE

The first day should be plain sailing. Time can be spent getting to know the other passengers and milling about on deck or acquiring one's sea-legs.

NIGHT ONE

Bump in the Night

Piotr is sleeping during the day so he will carefully get up at night and stretch his legs. This first night he is unsure of where he is, and blunders around in the hold. He stumbles and makes some sort of heavy noise.

A watchman, Thierry Lomas, will go to investigate. If the Player Characters are awake then they may have a look also. Before he is discovered, Piotr will climb back into the coffin and shut the lid. There is really no reason at this stage for the Player Characters to think anything particularly strange is going on.

If the Player Characters do not investigate this, Lomas may mention this in the morning. He will say he heard a strange noise coming from the aft hold. He went down to look but found nothing. He thought no more about it until the discovery that Tranquer was missing.

Man Overboard

Much later on that night, Haansie Niels is prowling about trying to locate the secret missive he has been told to intercept. A sailor on watch, Jacques Tranquer, spots him behaving suspiciously. The pair of them struggle and Niels manages to dump Tranquer overboard. Then Niels returns to his bunk before he is missed.

It is possible that the struggle is overheard by the Player Characters (if they are awake) and that they might investigate, but no sign of either party will be found.

DAY TWO

The second day is sombre. Everyone is shocked by the disappearance of Tranquer. Some of the crew are visibly sad, although they all try to be stoical and put it down to the will of Manann.

Funeral

In the morning it is quickly noticed that Tranquer is missing. Jacques Tranquer was a popular and long serving crewman. The crew and the captain are stunned that he could just fall overboard. There is other speculation as to the cause of his death, including that the Seaweed Man came to get him, but all of it is fanciful.

The captain leads a brief ritual to Morr and Manann, where it is entrusted to Manann that he will bring the deceased safely to Morr's realm.

An attentive Player Character might notice that shortly after the funeral, a group of five or six crewmen seem to hold their own brief service, led by Luc Dubois. Dubois and the crew are

careful to keep their worship away from the captain's attention.

NIGHT TWO

Summoning Circle

The night after he falls overboard, Luc Dubois decides to perform a Manannite ritual on behalf of Jacques Tranquer. The purpose of the ritual is to ensure that his body, lost at sea, finds its way home and is protected by Manann on its way.

Independently of the captain's authority, Dubois calls three loyal shipmates to the forward hold to perform the ritual at midnight. The forward lookout is part of the summoning group, so there will be no one looking out here for the duration of the ritual.

The ritual requires that Dubois finds Tranquer's spirit. As it happens, the circumstances of Tranquer's death and his strength of will means that he is able to use ghostly power to send a message to Dubois. If the ritual is finished successfully then Dubois will get an inkling that a tall dark figure deliberately threw Tranquer over the side. He will be able to dismiss any talk of vampires or the supernatural on board. This seemed to be a physical and visceral struggle that Tranquer simply lost.

However the ritual may never get finished. The Player Characters should hear something going on, movement and talking, and may wish to see what is up. It might be better to have the ritual coincide with the Player Characters actively searching the decks for interesting clues (as is their wont).

If they come across Dubois and his men the seamen will certainly look suspicious. Dubois will be singing shanties in a strange language before a small fire. The other three will be repeating the odd phrase and throwing water and other things on the fire to make a cloud of colourful steam.

The Player Characters can come out of this encounter having gained sympathetic crewmembers and with some important information about Tranquer's death. Or they could make a real mess of things, attacking innocent crew members in the dead of night for no reason. The Game Master should probably give the Player Characters a chance or two to realise that the Manannites are not as sinister as they might first appear (perhaps a **Routine (+10%) Academic Knowledge Test (Theology)** or an **Easy (+20%) Intelligence Test** for anyone with a sailing related career).

A Quiet Night

Nothing much else will happen on the second night. Piotr will get up and look around quietly for a bit. If the party have the place staked out then they will see him. Otherwise he should not cause any bother.

After the previous night's incident, Niels will stay below in his bunk, hoping for things to quieten down before he makes another attempt to get the letter.

DAY THREE

Day three should pass largely uneventfully. A few of the **Events (above)** could be used to fill the time. It might be a good idea to

create some sort of tension on board before Baroness Maie is attacked and killed.

NIGHT THREE

Some time in the night, Niels will creep into Baroness Maie's room and begin searching for the letter. Before he can find it, she awakens and they struggle. She will shoot him, grazing his side as he stabs her fatally in the neck. Niels will flee and Maie will bleed to death before anyone can reach her room.

Niels will disappear into the darkness, wash the blood off and treat and bind his bullet wound. He will then turn up later than the main bulk of the crew, arriving with a couple of stragglers, all of who want to know what is going on, and trying not to look like he is in great pain. No one will really notice that he was not in his bunk.

DAY FOUR

What happens after this is to be determined by the party's actions. Maie's daughters will be distraught and not much help with anything. If she thinks of it Maria-Claire might decide it will make things much easier to simply reveal Piotr's presence. But, on the other hand, in her grief she might not even think this could be relevant to an investigation.

The party might think to search Maie's quarters. This will be a reasonable course as it should be clear that the room was being searched or the murderer was in the room for a reason. If they do decide to do this, the Player Characters would have to get permission from Maria-Claire or Captain Aarthaas by persuading either of them that they can help the situation.

The ship's crew will build a makeshift coffin for Maie, and it will be assumed that she will be buried in l'Anguille alongside her husband.

The captain will be determined to bring the murderer to justice. He could well suspect any of the Player Characters and if he orders an arrest his crew will back him up with cold steel.



ENDING IT ALL



Finding the Letter

If the Player Characters search Baroness Maie's room they could find the secret message, although it is well hidden, in the lining of a hatbox. It will be very hard to decrypt and this will take a long time anyway. See Player Handout 1. The message could gain the Player Characters influence, or just a lot of trouble, when they get to l'Anguille.

Finding Niels

If the Player Characters do not act then they will not be handed any solutions to the killings. Niels will keep a low profile and manage to do his duties despite his wound. He will probably decide that although he did not find the message he has killed a rival agent and so has done enough. He was hoping never to have to use the gunpowder in any case.

Niels will be attentive enough to keep an eye on the Player Characters and unless they are discreet, he will know if they get hold of the letter. When the ship lands at l'Anguille he will disappear, probably never to be seen again.

The Player Characters might have the bright idea of checking to see who was taken on at Marienburg. All the passengers, is the short answer. If they think of checking the crew too then they will discover Haansie Niels, Phillipe Rousseau and Barnie Vlok are the three new additions.

If Niels' possessions are searched then they might be vaguely incriminating. He does not have the self-sufficient kit of a typical mariner (though the Player Characters might not realise this). His blanket is brand new and not cheap. He also has some small pieces of paper and a pen hidden in his bag. After the incident with Baroness Maie, his knife will also have some traces of blood on that he failed to clean off properly.

If the Player Characters (with or without Captain Aarthaus) interview Niels as part of an investigation he will keep quite cool. Very skilled characters might see signs of his unease, however. His cover story is convincing enough and he has picked up some of the ways and lore of the crew, but an expert will definitely be able to find him out.

If the Player Characters confront Niels with any evidence, or a guess, of his guilt, he can deny everything, hoping the case against him is not strong enough to convince Captain Aarthaus.

If the Player Characters have been controversial during the voyage, he will build a case against the Player Characters to deflect the guilt. The problem with this strategy is that he is posing as a simple seaman, not a defence attorney.

One sure way to find Niels out is to discover his gunshot wound. He will attempt to excuse it, claiming he caught it on a boat hook, but it should be obvious to anyone who has expertise (and Aarthaus does) that this is from a gunshot.

If the Player Characters find the coded letter then it might be possible for them to set a trap. They could make it well known that they have found it and where it is, and then lie in wait. More than likely, if done well, Niels would fall for the ruse.

If the Game Master wishes to be exceedingly nice to his players then at some point, one of the Player Characters gets in to a fight with Niels during which a small patch of wet blood seeps through Niels' shirt.

Finding Piotr

With her mother dead, Maria-Claire will not think it a priority to keep Piotr's presence a secret. The longer the voyage the more likely that he is caught. It might be good if the Player Characters find him first, but Captain Aarthaus is likely to hear about him. When he does, he will assume that Piotr is guilty of two murders. (This would be a reasonable assumption for the Player Characters to make, also.)

Aarthaus' instinct, and his right, is to have Piotr thrown overboard. Maria-Claire will be upset about this and probably beg the Player Characters to help her. Persuasive Player Characters may convince Aarthaus to simply arrest the Kislevan and hand him over to Bretonnian authorities when they reach port. (He will spend a week in l'Anguille prison before getting guillotined.) Piotr will be doomed unless the Player Characters can uncover Haansie Niels in the next day or so.

Opening it Up

If the Player Characters do open the coffin they will find Piotr lying inside. He might sit up with a start, shocking everyone or he can be somewhere else at the time, hiding midst some crates in the cargo hold, for example. If the coffin is empty this will add an air of spookiness and lead to rumours of risen dead.

If the party try to open the coffin before Maie's death then Maria-Claire will do what she can to stop them, if she gets wind of their plan. If they try afterwards, and she hears of this, then she will either not care, or simply admit what she did.

Throwing it Overboard

Some of the crew may be wary of the coffin. Talk of vampires and undead could have spread throughout the lower decks. Some may decide that throwing the coffin overboard and giving the corpse a good Manannite burial will be best for everyone. Maria-Claire will not stand for this, and she will not take kindly to the hoi polloi sticking their oar in at all.

Despair

Lady Louise might despair and throw herself overboard in her grief for her mother. This should only happen if the Player

Know my Lord Duke of l'Anguille that a most base and terrible spy has entered your camp that wishes dire harm upon your Grace's person. I herein name him as Alain de Bertin-Dordogne. I trust that your Grace's mercy shall be ineluctably swift.

- A loyal servant of your Grace's benevolent Embassy to Marienburg.

Characters are around to save her. By doing so they could earn the gratitude of the remaining de Farriers; Maria-Claire is now head of the household and will become the baroness on her twenty-first birthday.



AFTERWORDS

If the Player Characters manage to decrypt the message from the l'Anguillois ambassador then they will have some idea of its intended recipient. It is up to them how they might go about bringing the Duke of l'Anguille's attention to their bit of paper. Maria-Claire would be in a position to help.

If the Player Characters help her out then Maria-Claire can be an excellent contact for them to have. On the other hand, she is fickle and flighty and extremely selfish. Possibly, she might want to run away, back to Marienburg, and thinks the Player Characters would be the perfect escorts on such an adventure.

If the Player Characters manage to find the letter and Neils

knows about this then he will inform his contacts in l'Anguille. The party will be visited by a burglar; and if he fails to get hold of the letter, then the Couronnais will use less subtle methods to acquire it.

If the Player Characters did well by Klaus Gunther then he might wish to employ them. Some l'Anguille glassmakers are not keen on the competition he brings and may start to lean on him and mess up his business. He might require the Player Characters as guards.

If he was saved and the party stays around l'Anguille they might encounter Piotr Zabback again. He will soon be dumped by the capricious Maria-Claire and will be on his uppers trying to find work as a bodyguard in l'Anguille's rougher districts. He will not be helped at all in that he does not speak any Bretonnian. He could hold a serious debt of gratitude to the Player Characters.

*There is a house in Bordeleaux
And they call it the Rising Bun
It's been the ruin of many a pastry
And Shallya I know I'm not a qualified
sous-chef.*

Bordeleaux bawdy song

Think of it as character insurance...

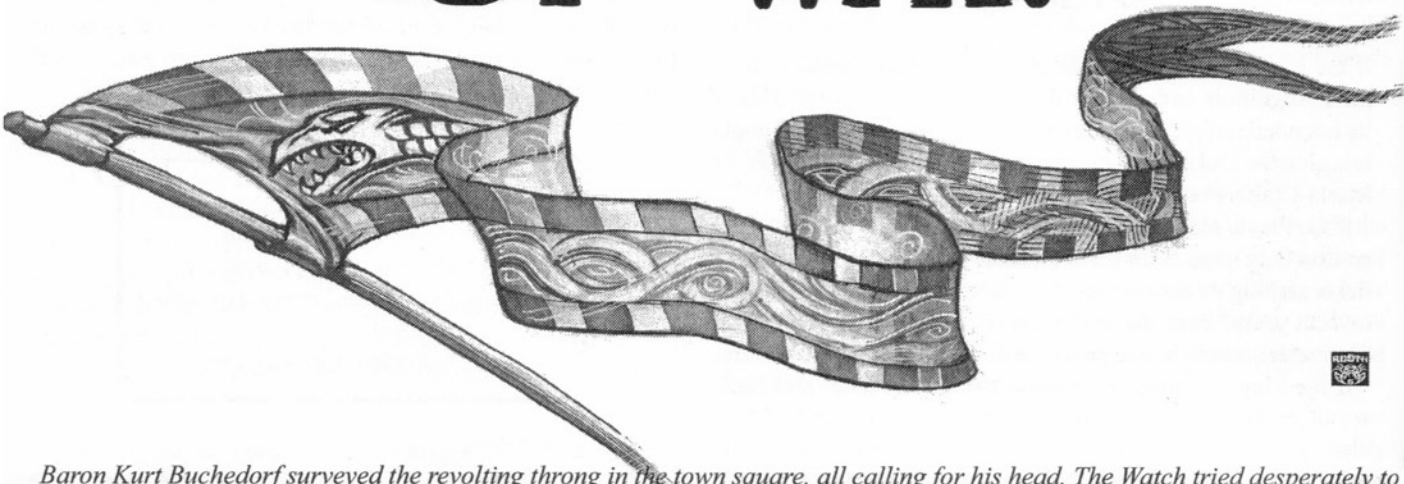
OK. We know it's a grim & perilous world. But still, you shouldn't accept crappy art for your PC; using generic stuff off the web is only slightly better than that genitalia-less Armour Points sketch. Plus it annoys the GM. Instead, you could have a professional custom-made character portrait that would excite Slaanesh. Go to **www.avatarart.com** to bring 'heroes' to life with stunning visuals, not just those ten questions on page 21 of the rulebook. The GM will then have one less reason to feed your PC to those Skaven, so maybe that Advanced Career can really happen. Maybe.

AvatarArt

Because you can't buy Fate Points.

Mercenaries by Andrew Fawcett

THE DOGS OF WAR



Baron Kurt Buchendorf surveyed the revolting throng in the town square, all calling for his head. The Watch tried desperately to hold them back with their clubs but eventually, Buchendorf knew, those girls would flee like the ineffectual cowards they were. "My lord!" The baron turned round to see his seneschal had entered the room. "Yes I know. Another revolt. Bloody peasants." The seneschal was quite alarmed at Buchendorf's unconcerned tone of voice but then he never had any respect for the people, which was why for the umpteenth time they were revolting against him. "The commoners," the seneschal began, "are beginning to overpower the Watch and many have weapons. I fear..."

"Soon," the baron cut in, "I will have men who fear nothing."

Four men entered the room and their sudden appearance startled the seneschal. Their skin was brown and weather-beaten and their armour had probably seen better days but their weapons were clean; mercenaries, the seneschal guessed, and the worst kind probably.

"Macadeire!" The baron said joyously. One of the men, a good-looking, moustachioed man with a scar that ran down the left side of his face, nodded in recognition. "You have a problem?" His Bretonnian accent was unmistakable.

"I want my town back."

Macadeire grinned and donned his helmet.

Mercenaries are soldiers of fortune – sell-swords. They are employed to fight a war on behalf of nobles or similar wealthy individuals where violence is the only way to settle their problems. As the Old World is awash with conflict, against the ubiquitous Beastmen and Goblinoids, not to mention the various warring Human realms, it comes as no surprise that mercenaries rarely find it difficult to find work.

THE BIRTH OF THE MERCENARY MOVEMENT

The Tilean Condottieri

Mercenaries have fought in the wars of the Old World for many years, but nowhere is the system of hiring, paying and organising mercenaries as sophisticated as it is in the Tilean city-states. Tilea is divided into various independent states that have for a

long time been highly urbanised and economically developed, far longer than most other parts of the Old World. As a result towns have dominated the Tilean way of life and feudalism has never really taken root except in some peripheral regions. Urban militias were inevitably mustered for war, led by the town aristocracy, yet as time passed the role of the militia declined in effectiveness, and political aggressiveness between the states led to the need for standing armies. Rising income among the powerful merchant classes meant that professional soldiers (not all of Tilean origin) could be hired and fired reasonably quickly and so the sophisticated system of recruiting and organising mercenaries came about. The result of this system is the *condottiere*, or mercenary, whose name derives from the *condotta* or contract between himself and his employer.

Conflicts between the wealthy, independent Tilean city-states

were (and still are) economic in nature. To the Tileans war is business, as today's enemy could be tomorrow's trading partner, and to the mercenary captains, men are their capital. With this in mind there is little point in prolonged, bloody war which severely diminishes a captain's assets. So pitched battles are avoided if possible. As a result one of the favoured tactics of Tilean warfare is to burn crops, vineyards and orchards, and restrict trade by besieging an enemy port, thus crippling the ability of the enemy to make money and maintain a mercenary army. Allies can become enemies quickly in Tilean warfare and vice versa.

Today, Tilean *condottieri* can be found in all the nations of the Old World in one form or another. Of particular value are Tilean arquebusiers and crossbowmen, who are noted for their marksmanship and professionalism, are in the pay of the Emperor and several of the Electors. In turn many foreign mercenaries can be found in the armies of Tilea, drawn there by the endless conflict between the rich city-states and the generosity of the paymasters.

The Condotta

A typical Tilean *condotta* or contract specifies troop numbers, types, units and the equipment of soldiers. It lays down the duration that the mercenaries will serve. Some contracts also include an optional extension, which can lead to almost continuous service. The most important thing as far as the mercenary is concerned, is the rate of pay, which also normally includes an advance. Shrewd mercenary captains also insist that a contract includes a guarantee of payment during periods of peace as well as other details.

Commissioners, or *provveditori*, typically supervise the mercenaries' adherence to the contract and rarely are they much appreciated for their meddling. Employers generally wish for quick and cheap victories while the mercenaries prefer safe and long-term employment.

The *condotta* has gradually been adopted by other Old World countries. The days of simply paying substantial amounts of money to a band of soldiers in the hope that they would fight a battle for you have passed. However, the *condotta* is in no way perfect and mercenaries do sometimes break the articles contained within. Still it is certainly an advantage to have a written contract.

MERCENARY REGULATION

All Old World countries (bar the Border Princes) insist on inspections of mercenary forces, with the regularity of such inspections depending on the reputation of the mercenaries and the employer in question. Inspections are mainly to ensure that the army is of contracted size as there is always a temptation for a captain to declare more men than he has in order to receive greater payment. It also comes as no surprise that some mercenary armies prefer to delay or postpone inspections in order to make up their losses and recruit more men with the costs levied onto the employer. In the Empire, and most other Old World countries, it is generally the case that mercenaries are inspected once a month or once every two or three. However, in Tilea, where mercenary armies form the bulk of a

government's defence and are akin to permanent standing armies, inspections are generally carried out twice a year.

The commissaries who are appointed by their masters to oversee the contracts also attempt to monitor the activities of the mercenaries in the field. They pass on instructions from the employer, send back reports on the progress of a battle, and give advice to the commanders. Sometimes their advice is not appreciated as they are often seen as meddling lawyers and in such cases clashes are inevitable. However, some commissaries may be former soldiers themselves (perhaps even former mercenaries) and their advice could be keenly sought, although they could be just as easily hated. Some commissaries can become too close to the mercenaries for their employer's liking and the commissary's reports more often lead to rewards rather than sanctions or executions.

To induce desirable behaviour employers resort to cash bonuses, gifts (from arms and armour to land), and penalties such as fines, dismissal, and execution on the part of their mercenaries. Incentives are also given for decisive victories. For example, a mercenary captain who accepted the opportunity to double his money by annihilating a particular foe could end up very rich, or have his regiment taken away from him if he fails. If an employer is powerful he can levy the full weight of the law on his mercenaries and punish them accordingly. But if an employer is weak then little can be done to right the wrongs of his mercenaries.

It is often necessary during long protracted wars for an employer to appoint a judiciary with attendant provosts and executioners whose sole purpose it is to keep the mercenaries, as well as the many camp followers, in line. Generally a judiciary is only appointed for major conflicts where thousands of mercenaries are involved. Otherwise captains punish their own for any crimes they have committed or hand them over to the local authorities to deal with - the latter, however, could make a captain unpopular. Sometimes a judiciary attached to a mercenary force is quite ineffective and is prone to bribes and intimidation by the mercenaries. In this case a judiciary has to rely on the strength of the captains to give them credibility otherwise trials of accused soldiers are nothing short of a farce. Serious crimes are often punishable by death by hanging. Executioners sometimes like to walk freely around a mercenary camp with a hangman's rope tied round the waist to remind the troops of their duty. Needless to say they are the most unpopular individuals in the force.

Despite the best efforts of employers to control their mercenaries, the temptation to supplement their income by raiding can become too much, making them little more than bandits. Indeed it has been known for mercenaries to demand payment from looting and burning in difficult times, much like a racketeer might demand protection money from an inn. The penchant for some mercenary bands to do this has led to the creation of many leagues throughout the Empire to guard against this threat. One of the most recent and most successful examples of this is the League of the Griffon, which was founded by several nobles in the town of Geschburg in Wissenland in 2502 to counter a large force of mercenaries who were suddenly disbanded by the Nuln authorities after a disagreement over pay.

The mercenaries threatened to wreak havoc in the province as a result and one of their most infamous atrocities happened at the Sigmarite Monastery of the Comet. The mercenaries sought to get what was owed to them by demanding a substantial sum but the abbot refused to pay, and so the place was sacked resulting in the theft of many precious artefacts and the deaths of many of the monks. The mercenaries were finally destroyed when the League mustered their own force, supported by their own mercenaries, to meet them at the Battle of the Soll. The League still stands as a defence against rampaging mercenaries and, much to the chagrin of the Nuln authorities, outside its influence.

HIRING MERCENARIES: THE BENEFITS

"Very good Macadeire," said Baron Kurt Buchendorf as he surveyed the scene from his horse in the town square. But the baron's immediate enthusiasm was tempered by the number of bodies lying on the ground; most were dead although some were wriggling and crawling in the mud to get away. Yet, he thought, a stud farmer cannot make a profit out of lame horses and revolting peasants had to be put down in the same way. His resolve stiffened as he recognised a familiar face: Johan the smith's son and one of the chief rabble-rousers. "Bring that villain to me before he slithers back to his hole!" Two blood spattered mercenary horsemen bent down from their mounts and wrestled him from the muddy ground. The baron gently nudged his mount towards them. One of the mercenaries grasped

Johan's mud-caked hair and wrenched his head back. The smith's son whimpered in response and the baron smiled. "You call this law?" Johan strained to say. "The only law," Kurt replied and delivered a strong kick into Johan's midriff.

Professional Muscle

Throughout the Old World the system of calling up men from the populace to form them into an army as and when required for battle still persists, led of course by the nobility and their retainers. These troops, however, are seldom well equipped or trained and can be prone to quarrelling amongst themselves making the army difficult to control as a unified body. Furthermore, the peasant levy usually has no enthusiasm or appetite for war. Mercenaries on the other hand know their leader and have evolved both tactics and discipline. To this end an Old Worlder army will generally consist of its elite cadre of nobles and their own household troops, a firm and reliable force of mercenaries, and the peasant militia. The nobles rarely equip the militias well, preferring instead to arm themselves, especially when there are mercenaries, as well as their own retainers, to pay for. However, this is not always the case as far as the rich urban centres of the Old World are concerned, especially the city-states. The populaces of these cities generally have a greater sense of identity than the oppressed poor of the countryside and are determined to maintain their privileges from outside influences and in this sense they are patriotic. For example, the



Graf of Middenheim maintains a small and highly efficient force of elite watchmen and though they are technically militiamen they are paid, full-time professionals. Even so, Middenheim still maintains a permanent garrison of troops, many of which are mercenaries.

Expertise

Some mercenaries have expertise in fighting a particular foe. Some mercenary captains do not relish the prospect of facing Beastmen even for money due to their reputation for unbridled savagery.

Campaigning

In theory mercenaries are available to fight all year round unlike native troops who cannot stay long away from their lands. This means that rulers can hire mercenaries to launch prolonged campaigns though they can expect to pay extra should they require them for winter.

Politics

The Old World has its fair share of cruel, paranoid, and incompetent rulers and to them using mercenaries is much more favourable than arming their own people. Such rulers believe that if they mobilised, equipped and trained an army from their own populace it would not be long before they staged a coup to overthrow them. It is far easier to hire foreign mercenaries because they are not party to the local political situation and, as long as they are paid, can be relied upon. But mercenaries can be a thorn in the side of these rulers if they are not careful. In the 24th century the Principality of Verezzo in Tilea became a republic after a long period of famine and plague. The mercenary force that supported the ruling prince revolted along with the people when payments eventually dried up. Descendants of this mercenary force now occupy positions on the ruling council.

Survival

Mercenaries are vital to the very existence of some regions of the Old World, most notably Kislev and the Border Princes. Both are in a state of almost constant war with the forces of Chaos and Goblinoids. Native manpower is not enough to meet the demands of defence. The Tsar of Kislev is perhaps in a better position because of his country's historic links to the Empire. Although the Tsar is not a rich man he gives grants of land to facilitate the payment of mercenary companies. However, the lands on offer are invariably those in disputed regions and are likely to become battlefields. The lords of the Border Princes also adopt this method of payment and some go a little further by offering their daughters' hands in marriage.

Draft Dodging

To avoid their obligation to a suzerain to provide troops for an army, some wealthy settlements hire mercenaries instead. There are very few disadvantages with this because the inhabitants of the settlement in question spare themselves the bother of equipping their own force and of course they save their own skins into the bargain!

Expendable

Not only do mercenaries offer a ready supply of battle hardened and sometimes brave and reckless troops, many see them as expendable. As long as there is enough money, they can be counted on to do jobs that other troops would never consider or do lightly; a hundred foreigners getting slaughtered in the act of purging a forest of Beastmen are hardly going to be missed compared to the native militia force. But it would be foolish for an employer to treat his mercenaries like cannon fodder just in case they come back for revenge.

MERCENARY PITFALLS

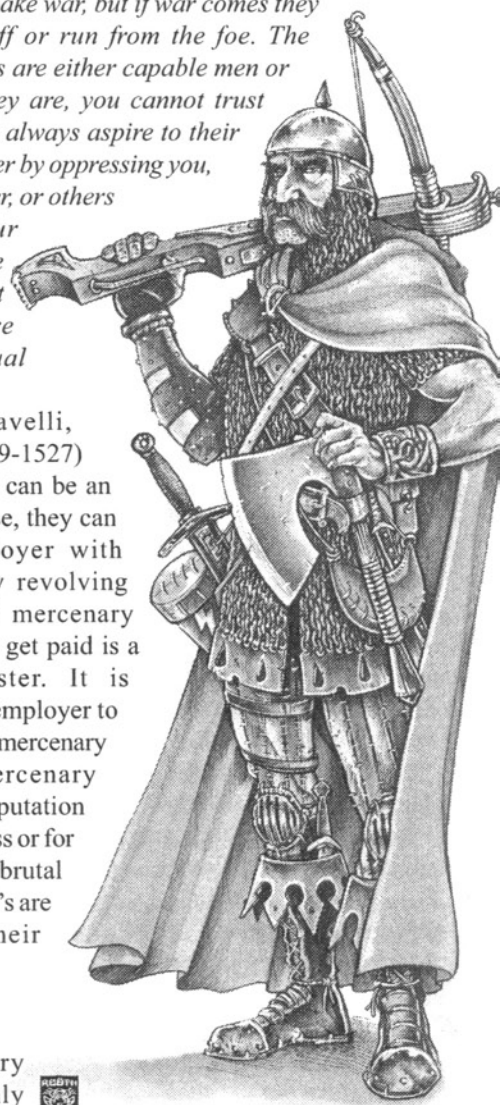
Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous; and if one holds his state based on these arms, he will stand neither firm nor safe; for they are disunited, ambitious, and without discipline, unfaithful, valiant before friends, cowardly before enemies; they have neither the fear of God nor fidelity to men, and destruction is deferred only so long as the attack is; for in peace one is robbed by them, and in war by the enemy. The fact is, they have no other attraction or reason for keeping the field than a trifle of stipend, which is not sufficient to make them willing to die for you. They are ready enough to be your soldiers whilst you do not make war, but if war comes they take themselves off or run from the foe. The mercenary captains are either capable men or they are not; if they are, you cannot trust them, because they always aspire to their own greatness, either by oppressing you, who are their master, or others contrary to your intentions; but if the captain is not skilful, you are ruined in the usual way.

Niccolo Machiavelli,
The Prince (1469-1527)

While mercenaries can be an attractive tool to use, they can present an employer with problems, usually revolving around money. A mercenary army that does not get paid is a recipe for disaster. It is worthwhile for an employer to research a potential mercenary force. Some mercenary captains have a reputation for untrustworthiness or for being particularly brutal while other Captain's are noted for their professionalism.

Ambition

Some mercenary captains are highly



ambitious and territorial especially those with a noble background. A weak ruler could end up being overthrown by the very people he hired to help him. The temptation for some captains to do this is very real. During the *Age of Three Emperors* and the *Dark Ages*, mercenary captains became rulers as a matter of course, and not always at the behest of their employers. After Gorbard Ironclaw sacked the province of Solland in 1707 the brother of the last Count of Solland (who fell at the hands of the Orc Warlord) entrusted the capture of the town of Wissenburg to the Middenland mercenary Captain Ulfwin von Esselfurt; the count was attempting to revive his family's fortunes by securing the capital from other potential claimants. Although the mercenaries captured the town, Ulfwin did not give it to the count as was originally agreed. Instead he would only agree if he were paid twenty thousand crowns. In a fury the count mustered another army. Promises were given and pacts were made with other nobles if they joined him in re-capturing Wissenburg. Unfortunately for the count, Ulfwin's army withstood the siege and to rub salt into his wounds the count, as well as several other nobles, were captured and even held to ransom.

Brigandage

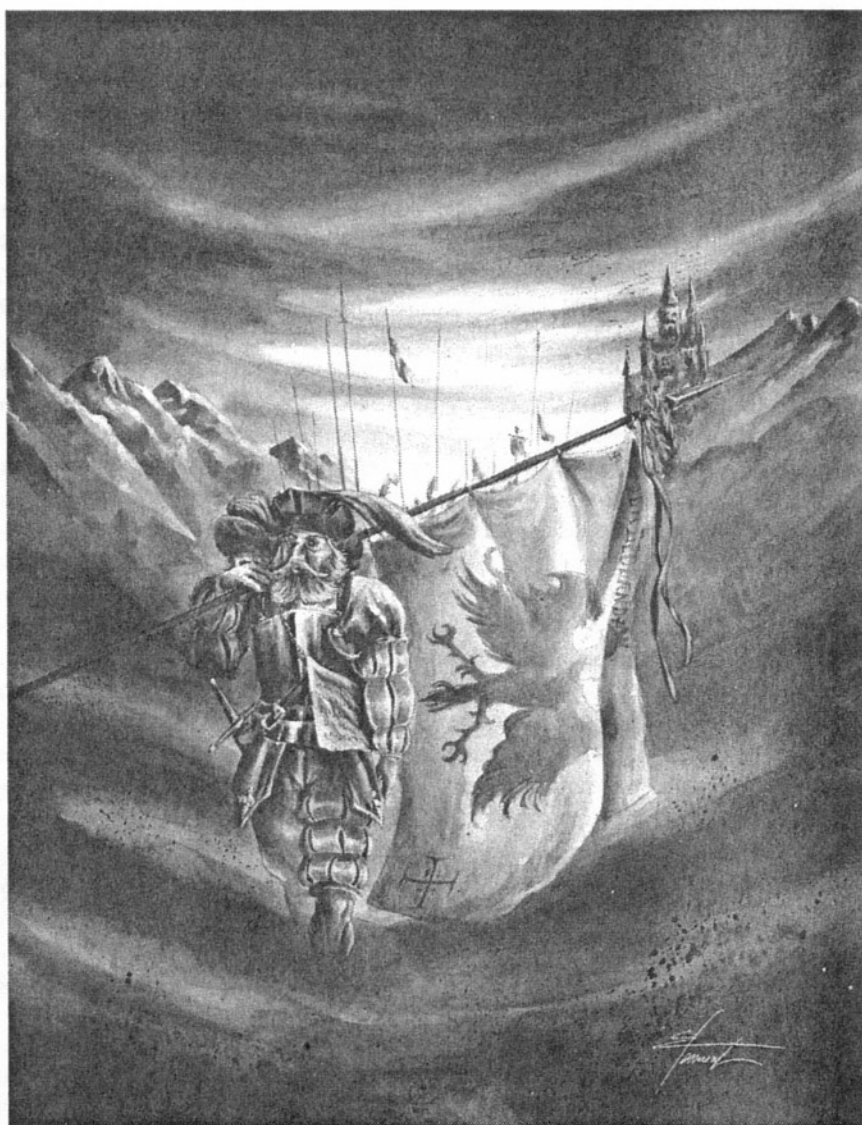
While mercenaries can easily be disbanded this can sometimes turn a large mercenary force into a large force of well equipped and battle hardened bandits. The noble must then try to buy them off, hire more mercenaries to get rid of them, or grant the brigands concessions (such as land or even titles) in the hope of staving off any future bouts of brigandage. The same can happen if a mercenary force is not paid and in this case the mercenaries might even lay siege to the noble's town and seek to remove him if they feel particularly hard done by.

Effort

Employers generally want short and decisive campaigns as this lowers costs substantially. However, mercenaries tend to prefer achieving their objectives with the least amount of effort and loss of life. Too many dead mercenaries reduce a captain's labour force and there is more prestige and money in commanding a large army. Therefore, mercenaries tend to favour wars of attrition in order to conserve life and to lengthen the campaign.

Mutiny and Betrayal

Mercenaries fight for money rather than principles. While they can be bought by an employer for a particular job, this does not stop them from being bought again, usually by the opposing side. In that breeding ground of factionalism known as Tilea this happens quite regularly. An astute employer will draw up a



contract that secures the mercenaries extra money on the completion of various goals to prevent them from accepting bribes. Some companies have been known to demand redundancy pay before quitting and moving on.

One of the most notable acts of mutiny was perpetuated by Tilean mercenaries in the employ of the Emperor of Middenheim in 1550 IC. They had orders to assault the city of Talabheim but in the end refused, complained about their food and pay, mutinied, and disappeared from the camp.

Kurt Buchendorf glared at the angry mob outside his opulent house. "Where's Macadeire?" he demanded. "I... I" the seneschal stuttered, "I don't know my lord."

"Damn your eyes! Find him!" The baron reached into his chest of drawers for the pistol he always kept hidden there. "The day's fox gentlemen," he muttered to himself cheerfully despite the chanting of the mob outside calling for his head.

Just then the seneschal entered the room in a fit of panic.

"They've gone!"

"What?"

"Macadeire! The mercenaries! They've all gone!"

"Treacherous, mercenary bastards! Damn!" The last exclamation was due to a large stone that had smashed through the window, hurled by one of the angry mobsters outside.

"He left this." The seneschal passed the baron a small piece of parchment, which he snatched from his hand and put his reading glasses on. "Have accepted a contract with the Lord Baron of Weiderheim and have taken the liberty of taking your silver cutlery as redundancy pay. It has been an honour to serve the baron. Sigmar keep you." Buchendorf screwed the parchment into an increasingly tiny ball as his anger grew. "That garlic-eating, Bretonnian piece of filth! My father always told me never to trust Bretonnians, along with Ulricans..."

The two men jumped as the door to the manor suddenly burst open and the angry mob poured in with burning torches, clubs, pitchforks, bad tempers, and a burning desire for vengeance...

THE LIFE OF A MERCENARY

"Join the army, visit faraway places, meet interesting people, then kill them."

Mercenary proverb.

People from all walks of life are attracted to the mercenary career. Those who have accumulated debts may view it as an ideal chance to escape those they owe money to. Poverty, persecution, plague, famine and pestilence are other reasons to escape. Nobles also see it as a chance to make a name for themselves and perhaps carve out an empire of their own; mercenary life is certainly attractive to the younger sons of nobles who do not wish to enter the religious orders. The prospect of swinging from a gibbet in the market square is also enough to send society's usual collection of thieves and vagabonds to the mercenary muster parade. Soldier regiments disbanded after a war offer a good source of recruits too.

The life of a mercenary may seem like one big party to some: the prospect of fighting, plunder, drinking, gambling and brawling, ransoming prisoners, and gaining lucrative contracts. However, those who join a mercenary army expecting the good life are wrong. Mercenaries are soldiers and as soldiers they must be drilled and trained hard. Discipline must be learnt as much as using a sword or a crossbow and the recruit must learn tactics and obey orders. A well disciplined force is one that will be more successful and as a result secure more employment and earn more money. For this reason most mercenary captains severely punish miscreants and mutineers are usually hanged.

When times are hard even disciplined troops will resort to raiding if there is no other way to feed themselves. They might also kidnap a noble, or person of similar importance, in the hope that a large ransom will be paid. Mercenaries can just as easily hop from hired swords one minute to ruthless brigands the next. Good mercenary captains will try to ensure that his men get paid during periods of unemployment, operating a kind of welfare system, to prevent them from becoming brigands.

Some mercenary companies have interests other than fighting. For example, the Nuln-based Company of the Fox, as well as providing soldiers for anyone who can afford them, operates a money lending business, backed as it is by several wealthy nobles and merchants. Some mercenaries have also been known to operate protection rackets.

Player Character Mercenaries

Given a mercenary's penchant for brigandage when unemployed it is quite possible that any player character mercenary might be a thief or a thug of some kind. The unemployed Mercenary PC could also become a Protagonist and break legs for a while until the next glorious campaign turns up. But a PC is just as likely to become an adventurer where the rewards can be more lucrative.

Mercenaries who have deserted from their company can only expect harsh punishment if caught, from beatings and floggings to death by hanging. If the issue of deserting is not addressed then company discipline suffers and with it their livelihoods. A PC on the run from his unit could form the basis of a scenario.

There is also the relatively minor issue of the Captain (Mercenary Captain in WFRP1) career. It is quite unlikely that a PC is going to actually be a Mercenary Captain or Sergeant in the literal sense, i.e. leading regiments of men into battle, although it should not stop one from trying to attain that position. It is generally taken for granted that the Mercenary Captain career merely represents a more skilful and battle-experienced individual than denoting a rank.

MERCENARY COMPANIES: COMPOSITION

Numbers

Mercenary companies vary in size with some consisting of several dozen individuals to as many as several thousand. In times of hardship and economic decline mercenary numbers often increase. Larger companies demand more for their services. Sometimes larger companies are amalgamations of smaller units drawn together to survive a period of hardship or shortage and it is perhaps for this reason why it is common for the captain of large companies to be elected.

In the Empire mercenary companies were at their largest from the fourteenth century, heralding the beginning of the *Age of Three Emperors*. There were few opportunities for peasants as the wars raged on. This forced many young men to abandon their farms. One of the largest mercenary companies that fought in this era was the Wolf Company. At its height it consisted of four thousand cavalry and one thousand five hundred crossbowmen and was employed by Empress Ottilia of Talabheim to ravage and decimate Stirland.

Numbers declined during Magnus's reign as the political climate began to stabilise and there was a need to divert money towards rebuilding the Empire's economy. Under Magnus the Empire's former glories were restored and except for a brief increase in bandit activity, which was inevitable after the disbandment of so many men after the incursions of Chaos, there was a measure of prosperity as the agricultural economy began to boom. With the passing of Magnus the Empire has become increasingly fragmented, a fact compounded by Marienburg's independence, which led to larger numbers of mercenaries being employed by the various Electors to "protect their interests". The increase in attacks by savage Beastmen since Karl-Franz's succession to the throne is another reason why large companies of mercenaries are becoming popular again. Nuln, a city famous for its trade in mercenaries, currently employs the two thousand strong Marksmen of Miragliano.

Camp Followers

It is not uncommon for mercenaries to take their wives and children with them to launder and darn clothes, polish weapons, carry water and take care of the wounded. A few of these are trained to use weapons especially as the army's supplies can sometimes come under attack from the enemy. After battles they gruesomely loot the dead to supplement their family's income. As always there are also camp followers who are eager to make a shilling or two from the mercenaries. These invariably include pedlars, traders, merchants, prostitutes, charlatans and thieves. This train of people can often be of considerable size and disarray.

A League of Nations

As mercenary armies fight all over the Old World they can contain many different nationalities; it is quite normal to have Bretonnians, Imperials, Estalians, Tileans, and Kislevites in the same army. Any nationalistic rivalries are usually forgotten in the field of battle and when there is loot to obtain. Unsurprisingly, mercenaries often know at least a smattering of several other languages

Wizards

Because magical study can be very expensive, especially for those in the Imperial Colleges of Altdorf, some wizards attach themselves to mercenary groups, evidently keen to take a share of the money. There is also the chance for the wizard to track down rare spell ingredients in places that would otherwise be impossible for him to go to alone. While there are many mercenary captains who do not trust wizards, probably due to their own superstitions or religious beliefs, there are invariably

many captains who embrace their talents and utilise them for warfare. Although it is very rare, some wizards have been known to even lead mercenary bands.

Non-Humans

While mercenary armies are for the most part overwhelmingly Human there are some Dwarfs to be found in their ranks. Many Dwarf warriors, including ex-pats from the Empire, are lured by the riches offered by Imperial Dwarf Kings to recover lost strongholds in the mountains. Currently the High King and the nobles of Karaz-a-Karak are using their vast wealth to raise enough mercenary troops to aid King Belegar in his efforts to recover the rest of Karak Eight Peaks, as well as the repossession of Karak-Varn, and support for Prince Ulthar's campaign to recapture Karak-Ungor. If you are a Dwarf mercenary then there are plenty of opportunities to make your fortune in the seemingly endless wars waged by the Dwarf Kings to reclaim their empire. Dwarf Kings and clan warlords prefer Dwarf mercenaries to other races.

Ogres have been known to serve as mercenaries in the employ of some nobles, though they are very rare indeed. The fact that Ogres are unruly, unintelligent giants who will eat anything is enough to put most people off from employing them! Ogres are more likely to be found in Kislev and the Border Princes where the environment is more suited to them.

Desperate employers, or those with more sinister plans, can hire Half-Orc mercenaries. Half-Orcs are both despised and feared by Human society. Although they are regarded as untrustworthy they can be counted on to fight like maniacs, especially against Human opponents, but they can be very vicious and brutal at the same time. Humans who are found to have hired Half-Orcs could be in serious trouble. Certainly the dominant Sigmarite religious authorities in the Empire would deal harshly with anyone who had dealings with Goblinoids. The Border Princes is probably the only region in the Old World where Half-Orcs are openly hired but even then they are usually kept away from Human communities and not employed for longer than is necessary.

THE BLACK COMPANY

"The life of a Mercenary is not bad at all. I slave from employer to employer, doing jobs that are sometimes against my own ethics, but there is always plenty of plunder!"

The Black Company's origins date back to the last incursions of Chaos when the need for fighting men was at its height. Back then it was just another regiment of peasant soldiers raised for the wars in Kislev. But as the regiment progressed from one conflict to the next the soldiers became battle hardened and began to acquire a character all of their own when they began the custom of blackening their armour with fire to avoid rusting. People began to refer to them as the 'Black Soldiers' or the 'Black Regiment' because of their garb and thus the Black Company was born.

After Magnus the Pious triumphed against the forces of Chaos much of the huge army was broken up. The Black Company became a mercenary force led by Anton Mistausen and there were plenty of offers for their services especially with the rise

Captain Hartwig Schwindler began life as a small-time thief in the slums of Altdorf before turning to embezzling. Eventually he was caught and forced into the army of a minor noble who wanted soldiers to deal with a bandit problem in his barony. Once the bandits were dealt with the noble disbanded the soldiers and some of them decided to form a band of mercenaries. Hartwig was one of them and after three years he became their leader. The mercenaries, called the Red Swords, are really little more than thieves masquerading as hired swords. Not only do they regularly demand, or threaten, redundancy pay literally days after accepting a job (usually if they feel they are not up to it or can not be bothered) but they also steal from their employers. Currently they are rumoured to be somewhere in the western Reikland and the jilted Count Wolfershausen of Talabecland (their most recent employer) is paying for their blood after they made off with the family heirloom, a priceless golden drinking horn, attributed to the Wolfershausen family's Norscan lineage. The Count is desperate to get it back.

of banditry after the incursions of Chaos which created thousands of unemployed soldiers. Sometimes they fought against the very soldiers they had been fighting side by side with during the incursions. Since those days they have fought in the theatres of other Old World nations. They have not always been successful campaigns. One notable blot was the Battle of Vittoria Viccia where the Black Company fought with the forces of the Tilean principality of Trantio against Miragliano in 2497 and was defeated. This did not signal an end to the company. Far from it. Impressed by their fighting ability and their courage, Miragliano duly hired them.

Today, the Black Company is in the employ of Graf Boris Todbringer who wants to use them to purge the Drakwald Forest of Beastmen and they are always on the lookout for good fighters or anyone with special skills.

Recruitment

The Black Company has quite a good reputation, one that the current Captain, Waldemar Stockhausen, has tried to maintain. Under the recruiting commission contained within their contract

with the Graf, the Black Company is allowed to recruit in Middenheim, and its dependencies, and from the eastern settlements of Middenland. The recruitment drives consist of drummers beating for recruits accompanied by a company ensign who carries the company banner and a sergeant who enthusiastically shouts that the Black Company is in town and then goes through some of the company's battle honours to inspire people to join. Anyone who is obviously incapable of serving or too ill-equipped is rejected; new recruits must possess a hand weapon in good working order, a leather jerkin/jacket or shield, and a helmet. The upshot of this is that a motley collection of individuals is often mustered, all inspired by the chance of adventure, family honour, and pay and loot.

At the muster parade the recruits are formed into two columns facing each other with the gap between them at one end consisting of an arch made up of two halberds thrust into the ground and a pike lying horizontally across them. It is through this arch that those chosen into the ranks of the Black Company by the recruiting officer, walk. Once recruited a new mercenary is given one month's pay and he joins the rest of his comrades in an assembly around the captain who then swears them in and reads them their rights, restrictions, duties and privileges.

Organisation

Captain Stockhausen tries to ensure that the Black Company has around five hundred fighting men and he has declared this in his contract with Graf Boris of Middenheim. In reality he has fewer, probably by about one or two hundred, and he has been delaying inspections by the Graf's commissioner in order to make up the shortfall. Once at full strength the Black Company has five regiments of one hundred men each commanded by a lieutenant. Attached to each regiment are several sergeants, corporals, an ensign, drummers, fifers, and cooks.

UNIFORM AND WEAPONS

The Black Company does not conform to any particular uniformity save for the blackened breastplates that the elite, or longer serving, members of the company wear. Like many mercenary armies their garb mostly depends on money and resources. Generally the mercenaries wear flamboyant clothes (much like many Imperial soldiers) with large, seemingly oversized, shirts gathered at the neck and over this is worn a puffed-out leather jerkin or a mail shirt. They also wear hose which are slit at the knees and hips for ease of movement. To complete this colourful appearance, ribbons are tied around the arms and the legs. Some of the polearm-trained troops often sport a bare left leg to allow for greater dexterity and mobility.

The elite of the Black Company are trained in the use of two-handed swords, pikes and halberds. Other principal weapons include crossbows and arquebuses. The Company did own four cannon but three were sold to help raise funds for passage to the Empire from the last campaign in Estalia.

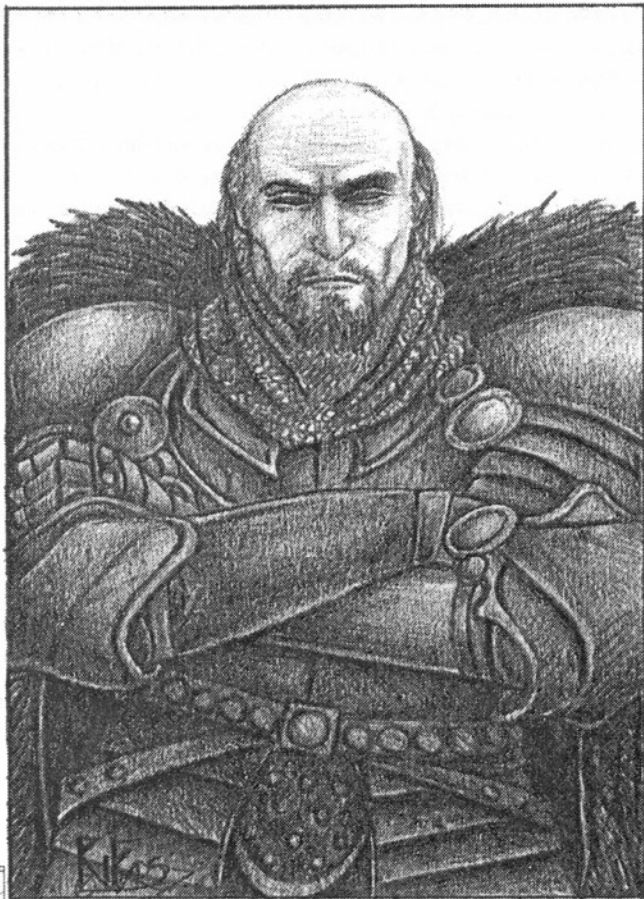


BLACK COMPANY PERSONALITIES

Waldemar Stockhausen, Captain of the Black Company Mercenary Captain

"Fighting is almost as profitable as praying."

Waldemar, known to some, chiefly his enemies, as the 'Butcher of Tilea', was born in a little village in the Freistadt of Kemperbad some 56 years ago and has been the leader of the Black Company for twenty years.



His first major campaign was with the Trantines (the people of the Tilean principality of Trantio) under the pay of the Prince of Trantio in the ill-fated Miragliano campaign of 2497. Although this defeat rankles him to this day he maintains that it was the Trantines who let his force down: "There was no cavalry support as was promised! The damned condottieri of the Verrezo Company were bought at the last minute! What was I supposed to do? My men fought with distinction and there is no scar on their honour. But I'll be damned if I work for Trantio again!" Waldemar led one more campaign in the Tilean city-states in the pay of the Doge of Miragliano but eventually grew tired of the factionalism inherent there and took his army to Estalia where he was employed by Queen Juana la Roja of Bilbali to help in their campaigns against Brionne. Waldemar hopes now to undertake a few more campaigns in the Empire and retire rich, perhaps moving back to Kemperbad and have a seat on the governing council.

Captain Stockhausen is a pragmatic man and religion or race does not concern him, especially when looking for new recruits. When he was young he was a devout Sigmarite but 40 years of

mercenary life has softened some of his views. As a sergeant in the Black Company he was known to be very hard on soldiers who worshipped Ulric, such as giving them extra guard duty, digging the latrines, or even beating them. But experiences in battle changed that habit over the years especially as victory ultimately depended on unit discipline and cohesion.

Although Waldemar is approaching his sixtieth year he is still a very good fighter, an excellent leader and tactician. Physically he is still tall and slim with brown, weather-beaten skin that tells of a life spent mostly outdoors and warmer climes. He wears a short beard and his hair is mostly grey with streaks of black which has now receded to reveal a shiny crown. He also owns a suit of plate armour which was made for him in Miragliano: "I do have but one admiration for the Tileans. They make such fine armour!" Waldemar is quite quick to anger, is very stern on anyone who transgresses the Company's regulations, but is generous to those who do well and impress him.

Reinhold, Chaplain Cleric of Sigmar

"My enemies flee as the sand spineth from the whirlwind."

"As dogs to their vomit so do fools return to their folly."

Waldemar, and some of his senior officers, are suspicious of Reinhold. He was installed as the Black Company chaplain on the insistence of Werner Stoltz, the High Priest of the Cult of Sigmar in Middenheim. The Graf agreed despite the reservations of Ar-Ulric who felt that Werner only wanted to spy on the mercenaries, which is exactly what Stoltz was intending.

While Reinhold will keep his eyes and ears open to anything



that would interest the High Capitular he never neglects his spiritual duties. He is a puritan, and is something of a witch hunter when the fancy takes him, and regularly addresses the troops as to the need for vigilance against Chaos. Although the troops do mostly respect him they do not agree to any abstentions from alcohol, which he believes is a fluid that weakens the mind and opens it to the temptations of Chaos. *"Purge thyself of filthy liquor! For the victor of the drunken man are the bearer's of the eight-pointed star! And did Sigmar smash the unholy bottle of rum on the eve of battle."*

Sergeant Jakob Zucken Mercenary Sergeant

"You ain't never gonna be a lieutenant lad. You ain't bred right. Blue blood runs in the veins of lieutenants and captains. It's the way it is and that's the way it always will be and should be." Probably the most hated and feared man in the company is Sergeant Jakob Zucken. He preys upon the lower ranks, stealing, embezzling and blackmailing, and if he does not get what he wants he hands out beatings. He gains great pleasure from beating men and having their wives or girlfriends pleading for him to stop. Naturally in these cases he wants more than just money to make him stop. He also enjoys getting members of the lower ranks punished for something they did not do.

To the higher ranks Sergeant Jakob is the model soldier, although some of the lieutenants are afraid of him. He fawns and licks the ground when he meets a member of the nobility. He always obeys orders and he always has his units standing to attention and marching in straight lines. Jakob is also the only

one, save for the senior ranks, to have his own tent, which is just as well as his personal habits leave a lot to be desired.

Sergeant Jakob Zucken is also known as "the twitcher" but no one will say this to his face because the last man who did was almost beaten to death by him. The reason for this nickname is because Jakob's head involuntarily twitches at times and now no one finds it amusing. Physically he is an ugly man with a pock-marked face and evil little blue eyes that have nothing but malevolence in them. It just seems that each and every day all that goes on in that mind of his is causing misery to his fellow man. Perhaps the reason why he talks a lot to himself is because he has no friends and has no desire to have them.

Some have tried to kill Jakob either in battle or elsewhere, but have always failed either through their own incompetence, his good luck (which he seems to have a lot of), or his ability to sniff out danger. In battle Jakob proudly leads the line one minute and then disappears, perhaps under a pile of bodies (usually his own comrades), only to reappear and take more than his fair share of plunder from the enemy. He is a rat, a truly evil rat.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

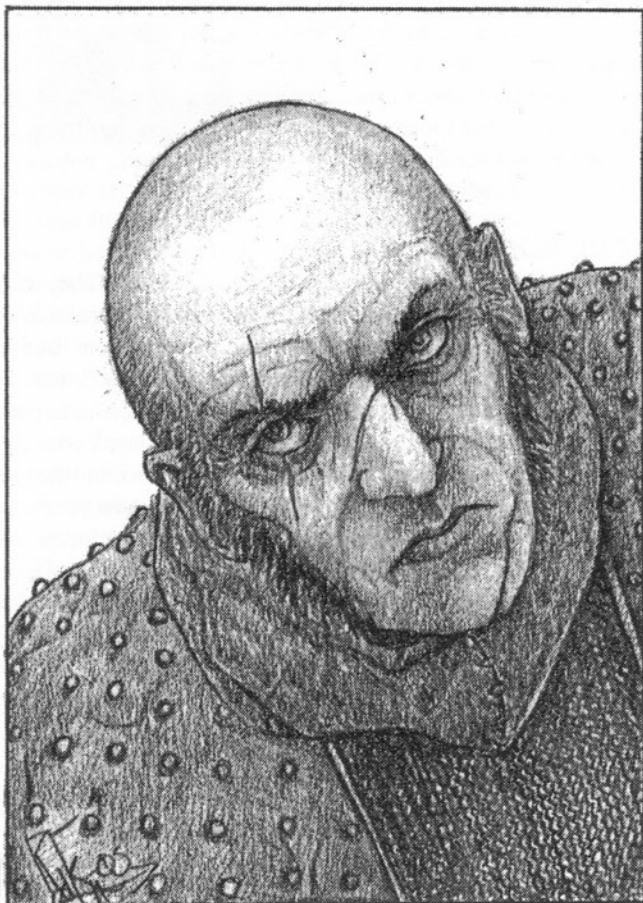
The Assassin

Waldemar is always conscious that someone, somewhere wants him dead. He has made innumerable enemies over the course of his career from nearly all walks of life including some of his own men. Something happens that makes him think that at last one of his enemies has caught up with him. At night in the mercenary camp, somewhere near a village on the boundaries of the Drakwald Forest, Waldemar succumbs to a fever. He is positive that his meal was laced with poison and his doctor confirms this suspicion when he examines him. But who could have done this? Whatever the case Waldemar is still alive and the assassin might be back to finish the job.

Waldemar has made many enemies in Tilea and a merchant or noble there has paid an assassin a substantial amount of money to kill him. The assassin could have poisoned Waldemar's meal himself or he could have bribed the cook to do it. On the other hand Waldemar's regular cook has mysteriously gone missing and a man offered his services to take his place, unknown to the captain, of course. But the replacement cook turned out to be the assassin and now he has gone.

The PCs could be drawn into this by accident. They could find the body of Waldemar's cook bobbling up and down in a stream. He wears the insignia of the Black Company and if the PCs return the body for burial they could get drawn into events once they discover what has been going on. Or they could save a small unit of mercenaries from almost certain annihilation against a large band of Beastmen and the grateful lieutenant recommends that the PCs join the Black Company.

Once Waldemar recovers and declares himself fit, despite the protests from his doctor, he organises a large force, which he will lead, into the Drakwald Forest to kill some Beastmen. The assassin will strike again and in the confusion of battle it is going to be hard to spot him. Is he indeed one of the mercenaries? Or he or she could be one of the many camp followers. The PCs must endeavour to find out, or sooner or later Waldemar will not live to see another dawn.



Payday

The Graf of Middenheim has taken out a loan from the cult of Ulric to help pay for the employment of the Black Company. The company's pay for the first week lies in an Ulrican monastery outside Middenheim ready for collection. The PCs are chosen for this task accompanied by the company's paymaster as well as a wagon and horses to carry the dosh. Unfortunately when the PCs arrive at the monastery the money has gone! The priests tell them that it has already been collected and all above board: the Black Company's seal was used to sign the contract and that was that. What has happened to the money? It is vital that it is found otherwise the Black Company mercenaries will be without pay and that could cause terrible problems.

The money could have been taken by a group of highly proficient charlatans, some of which were Black Company camp followers, and knew that the pay would be collected at the monastery. One of them was a woman who seduced a senior officer and unknown to him stole the company seal. It was copied and then secretly returned to the officer in question.

The situation could in fact be an elaborate plot by corrupt members of the Ulrican monastery. They kept the money for themselves and lied when they said that it had been collected. Or the loan was nothing of the sort and a corrupt monastery clerk 'converted' it to a donation: the Graf is well known to be a devout Ulrican so why not? The Graf of course will not be happy but it still means that the mercenaries do not get paid.

Another alternative is that the PCs are decoys for the gold, i.e. the money is collected by another group who take a different route to the mercenary camp while all the PCs are carrying is a load of rocks. This is purely to fox any bandits. But unfortunately the wagon with the gold was waylaid by the bandits and stolen. Or the mercenaries with the gold decided to take the money elsewhere for themselves!

OTHER MERCENARY COMPANIES

The Alcant Fellowship was founded by Roderigo Delmonte, a former Tilean farmer, after his crops were ravaged by the rampaging mercenary armies that are so common in Tilea. Destitute, he gathered about him others who had suffered and rather than face starvation they became mercenaries. To begin with their jobs were far from glamorous - escorting a consignment of dung was their first job - where payment was in food and drink rather than real money. Wealthy merchants and princes were not willing to hire such a ragtag band of men who looked no better than peasants. But gradually Roderigo and his small company gained a reputation for reliability and he found ready employment in the villages of Tilea where they took on bands of Orcs, bandits and even other mercenaries. Roderigo has a natural affinity for the common folk, as he was one himself, and only accepts what they can afford for payment. In the last few years, however, the Alcant Fellowship has fought for far wealthier employers as its captain's reputation for reliability has spread. The pike is their chief weapon and although their theatre of war is mainly Tilea they have also fought in eastern Estalia, southern Bretonnia, and the Border Princes.

The Marksmen of Miragliano is a mercenary company consisting

entirely of crossbowmen. Their origins date back to a century ago when the founder members were among many to be disbanded by Miraglianese merchants to cut costs. After forming into a band of mercenaries the Marksmen of Miragliano have not looked back. Having a reputation for being excellent shots they have found ready employment all over the Old World and they can demand high wages for their services. Anyone wanting to join this famous company will probably be disappointed because they only recruit from their native Miragliano and the applicant has to already be competent with a crossbow.

The Company of Laquec was founded five years ago by Luc Macadeire, a former soldier of the retinue of a minor knight's household. He always dreamed of great wealth and leading men of his own and so he led a revolt against his liege lord. With a small number of mounted men-at-arms he sacked his former master's estate, stole all his valuables, and left it as a smoking ruin. For a while Macadeire was nothing but a brigand in Bretonnia, looting and burning those places that refused to pay him. After fighting off several attempts by various rulers to have him hung, drawn and quartered, he was finally "bought" by the Viscomte de Quenelles; who was evidently impressed by Macadeire's ruthless reputation. Thus the Company of Laquec was born (named after Macadeire's home) and the Viscomte used it to quell revolts in his realm as well as fighting battles. But the Viscomte had failed to reckon on Macadeire's cunning and independent spirit. The Company of Laquec were required to escort a merchant's wagon train, loaded with consignments of valuable ceramics and tapestries, through Montdidier Pass. Macadeire did what he was ordered to do: escort the wagons through the pass so that they could be sold to an Imperial merchant in Nuln. Unfortunately he murdered the Bretonnian merchants and kept the money from the transaction and used it to buy more weapons and armour. Since then the Company of Laquec has been in the employ of various Imperial nobles. They fight primarily on horseback.

THE DOGS OF WAR

Mercenaries are an interesting part of WFRP. They can be directly involved with politics and wider intrigues, always bringing a threat of imminent conflict, whether from the enemy or even the mercenaries themselves. The true loyalties of mercenaries and their commanders are often unclear, as perhaps are their intentions. Games Masters can use this uncertainty and tension to set scenarios. A mercenary company offers the Games Master an opportunity to give Player Characters a more structured approach to a campaign, whether as the basis for an entire campaign or as a temporary setting for certain events. A mercenary background can also make an interesting history for a Player Character or a group of Player Characters - mercenary companies contain a varied range of trades and characters within their ranks and are an excellent community in which to set games. Player Characters can join mercenary companies as troops, local advisors, undercover agents undertaking clandestine operations for or against them, or even tradesmen following their mundane occupations. So, mercenary companies are not simply yet more soldiers, but vibrant societies and complex power players in the rich tapestry of the Old World.

RPGs

A Reviews special

Chances are if you read *Warpcastle* then you might be a fan of gritty dark fantasy settings filled with doom and gothic conspiracy. Therefore we would like to introduce a few games that share some of the themes and ideas of WFRP but which take very different directions and offer alternative approaches to the genre. Such ideas can offer a change of game or provide extra material for your WFRP campaign.

Conspiracy of Shadows

Published by Bob Goat Press

Reviewed by Robert Rees



Conspiracy of Shadows is an American indie game combining a fantasy Medieval world with apocalyptic conspiracy. The game has a very dark feel to both its art and its fantasy recreation of the Dark Ages.

Player characters are drawn from the setting's various cultures. Statistics and backgrounds are constructed via a point-build system. The player can also choose a "cover" for the character – if

the character sticks to his cover (the day job) then he can use his earnings and connections made in daily life to help in his crusade against the darkness. If the character goes "underground" or fully dedicates his time to battling the conspiracies threatening their world then they have to roleplay how they make enough money to live.

The characters are assumed to have already had their first encounter with the unknown and to have made the decision to battle it. Players are therefore expected to write up this pivotal moment and allow the GM to use it to kick off the campaign. There are also rules about the way the characters can pool their resources to form a cell, an in-game description of the party.

The threat the PCs battle against is decided by GM for each campaign. There is a lot of advice and guidance as to how to create a suitable conspiracy and villains. Cleverly, rather than trying to create one meta-story or a single master villain the game simply sets out a variety of abilities and weaknesses that can be combined to create the enemy the PCs will battle against.

Magic is extremely rare in the setting with no good or divine magic. Magic-using PCs will either be Witchbloods tainted with strange abilities of dubious origin or they will have to study demonology. Demonology is well-thought out. The ability to bind and cast out demons will help the group in their struggle

immensely, but it means having to learn ever more diabolic knowledge. There is also a nice mechanical element whereby the demonologist must pit her research abilities against the demon's Cunning rating. The more Cunning the demon, the less likely it is to have allowed its weaknesses, foibles or True Name to be discovered and written down by some enterprising human.

In general *Conspiracy of Shadows* is very low fantasy. There are no magic items or monsters, and like a modern horror game everything is very mundane except for the existence of the malicious Other Side and the various horrors it contains. The game is very much about a secret and desperate battle between demons and men for the future of the world.

Cursed Empire RPG (Second Edition)

Published by Chris Loizou

Reviewed by John Foody



Cursed Empire (previously known as *Crimson Empire*) is a dark fantasy RPG, perhaps best known, and not always flatteringly, for its goth/bondage imagery. The *Cursed Empire 2nd Edition* rulebook, at near 500 pages, is a beast of a book. It is smartly laid out in black and white, with a large and easy to read font and largely sharp, effective art (some by regular *Warpcastle* artist Richard Martin). There are also multiple maps and a

comprehensive index.

Cursed Empire grew out of the author's home campaign and it is clearly a labour of love. It is well supported with scenarios, sourcebooks, graphic novels and more; an atlas is among the forthcoming releases. Does this support make *Cursed Empire* a game worth looking at, with rules that work and a campaign world that holds together going beyond someone's own game?

The game's setting is the world of Thargos, a post-apocalyptic medieval world. Thargos is a land recovering from the effects of the Great Cataclysm, where a civil war rages between the two great powers of the New Empire and Karnarcos. The gods are seen to be dead and magic is largely outlawed and at the very least greatly feared, blamed for bringing about the Great Cataclysm. The New Empire, sans Emperor, struggles to hold together. In Karnarcos in the south various factions, including the fanatical Darkuns, look to extend their influence.

Humans are the dominant race but Elves and Dwarves are

also present, all of whom were slaves in the ancient Thargian Empire. Throwing off their oppressors, they eventually formed the Empire. Years later there are also a number of crossbreed races. For example, the Mandorians are fifth to sixth generation Condorian-Wood-Elf crossbreeds. There are a few familiar creatures (Orcs) mixed with others unique to *Cursed Empire* (the flying manta-ray-like Targs and Ogre/Troll crossbred Trogre among them).

The rules themselves are based on ten characteristics, scored between two and twenty, offering positive and negative bonuses for scores above or below ten. Skills are based directly on these characteristics. Characters then choose Class (Knight, Ranger, Mage etc), possibly Subclass (Warriors choose from Archer, Raider, Soldier etc.), Alignment, Cult and other options. The rules, combat and others, are comprehensive, although many are optional. In most instances they feel simple and well balanced, but are often fiddly. Also, the layout often makes using them more difficult, with rules and tables spread over multiple pages. For a second edition it feels like it hasn't really been simplified and streamlined. The character sheet, the full version of which spreads over six pages, often has text so small that you need a very sharp pencil to make changes.

Combat is brutal, certainly at lower levels. One problem with this is that it becomes a pain with the time taken to generate PCs. One idea here, however, is that experience earned by characters goes towards their faction and then is used by characters taken from the same faction. Character death is balanced in that great deeds also benefit the character's faction, so a future character from the same faction can benefit from these. Another interesting part of the game is that the idea of some PCs working against the others is encouraged.

The basic magic system is straightforward - each spell has a casting cost that is deducted from a Mage's Magic Points Pool. There are also rules for creating spells that look like they might be interesting, based around mixing different runes together. The sample scenario is good, giving a flavour of the background with a nice central concept, although more guidance for new players would have been welcome.

While parts of the world of Thargos are not particularly original they do come together to give the world a feel of its own. The game is pitched at a much more heroic level than WFRP and it does not really have a high fantasy edge. The game is certainly more serious in tone, perhaps too much so for some. Some of the ideas and background might prove inspirational for higher-powered WFRP campaigns but may be too tied to the setting to use wholesale. However, *Cursed Empire*'s rules could do with tightening up and presenting in a more user-friendly style. Overall, *Cursed Empire* does offer an alternative to those who want a different type of dark fantasy game.

Agone

Published by Multism

Reviewed by Roberts Rees

Agone is a French game that has been translated into English, and, although the game has a certain cult following, it never really met with the success the publishers had hoped for. Consequently the game can be both hard to find in some places

and overflows the bargain bin in others. The book is very beautifully illustrated and the original separate booklets are brought together in a sympathetic hardback edition. On the other hand I feel the translation is unsympathetic and fails to present the game in the best light. In fact at times the translation provides an almost incomprehensible description of what is going on.

In the world of Agone the evil that seeks the destruction of the world is the Masque. Unlike the Chaos Gods (prior to Storm of Chaos) the Masque is no slouch in the world destroying stakes. In fact he has already managed to corrupt the Season of Autumn and to have smashed the sun thus clothing the world in a perpetual twilight. The apparent corruption and destruction of the world gives the setting a feel similar to other "end time" fantasies such as the Dying Earth stories. However while the characters of the world know that bad things are definitely happening and their world is on the wane there is a neat trick in that the Masque is not some tangible villain hanging over all the evil in the world. He is a character who is dedicated to destroying the existing order, but he has to do this through others abilities and mistakes. His success so far means that the former order cannot be restored. The PCs are therefore part of a conspiracy to effectively renew the world through a rebirth and recreation. The Masque and his minions are attempting to destroy the last elements of divine inspiration in the world and create an unchanging and spiritually empty universe. To an extent it is the good guys who really want to destroy the world as they have accepted that it is no longer possible to restore it. There is no-one truly dedicated to the status quo, unlike most fantasy RPGs where the game heroes tend to be forces of moderation or conservatism in the face of radical change.

Although characters can be humans the game does not stint on non-human races, offering nine in total, three each for the seasons of Summer, Winter and Spring (Agone draws a lot on real world numerology and myth so numbers like three seem to occur quite often). Non-humans are defined to an extent by their Season and their purpose within the Season and the world in general. This means that as normal they are better than humans but less versatile.

Mechanics are fairly simple with a d10 roll plus Attribute plus Skill plus Modifiers versus a target number. The difference between the player's total and the target number determines the degree of success or failure. Character generation is a bit involved and it looks like there is a lot of effort up front, but the pre-calculation makes play easier. Still, there looks like more detail than a modern American game might have.

Magic is definitely unusual in *Agone*. Spells and other enchantments are created through patterns of magical energy created by magical imp-like creatures (known as Dancers) responding to the directions of their masters. As the creature moves through the air it leaves a magical trail that can transform reality. Or alternatively you can torture the Dancer and create magical effects as a result of their suffering. Magical abilities can be considered in terms of the number of Dancers you can co-ordinate at one time and the grace and accuracy of their moments. All of which is quite strange and quite novel except that in the rules all this preamble is then followed by a very mundane set of spells arranged in lists. Perhaps it is nothing more than a sign of age in the rules but I would have thought that some sort of

freeform magic system should have been provided.

Agone is a really complex and deep game with a lot of philosophical ideas that add a certain weight to the game and its setting. It has an engaging high fantasy, twilight of the gods feel that is Gothic Romantic in its nature. In terms of system complexity it is somewhere between WFRP1 and D&D3e, having a simple basic mechanism but then falling into the trap of introducing too many special rules and cases rather than just letting the principle flow through the game. In some areas it is almost impossibly imaginative while at others falling into the clichés and tropes of most fantasy games. It is almost a game that every fantasy gamer should read but it is horribly hamstrung by the translation. The richer the background, the clearer the explanation the newcomer needs to follow what is going on. As it is, while I would thoroughly recommend ransacking *Agone* for ideas, playing the game is more of a challenge than it should be.

The Iron Kingdoms

Published by Privateer Press

Reviewed by Martin Oliver



To review the Iron Kingdoms setting, it is important to do more than just outline the adventures and materials produced to date. You need to know a little about the back-story - both in the game, and of the company. The latter, at least, is going to sound remarkably familiar.

Privateer Press is based in Seattle, and its main business is a miniatures-based wargame. The setting for this - the Iron Kingdoms - has also produced a role playing game. Presently, the wargame is set a few years ahead of the role playing game. It is inevitable where things are heading, which in the meantime means lots of tension, politics and subterfuge are on the cards. It is a promising start.

The setting is also unusual for d20 games. Lots of magic has been stripped away in an attempt to get rid of the high fantasy connotations. There is history, and it's important; the continent was invaded and over-run some centuries ago, and rumours suggest that the occupying forces were only driven back as a result of a dark pact, the price of which has yet to be paid. There are dragons, but only a handful of them, and they are actually threatening; one of them rules god-like over an island all too near the coast, and he has the kind of presence in a game that provides mystery and menace rather than a target.

The obvious selling point for the game is mechanika - a steampunk-like fusion of magic and technology, justifying trains, guns and the hulking Steamjacks that adorn the covers of the books. But this is not really the most interesting feature. The continent is divided into nations, several of which are gearing up for conflict, and at present its politics and skirmishes rather than

out-and-out battle that makes a difference. All of this makes for a rich setting; add to it embellishments like the widespread paranoia about sorcerers, cities you can actually adventure in and fairly high production values on the releases, and it starts to become clear why the setting has won several awards.

It's not all great, however. Some of it is still distinctively d20 (in the worst sense). There's a tendency to feature dungeon-like settings (although at least they are quite novel), a menagerie of monsters and for every character to be a hero. But this doesn't set the tone. Perhaps the most important release to date - the *WitchFire* trilogy - gives plenty of opportunities for players to be impotent pawns, to stumble ineptly into conspiracies and, if they do really badly, to destroy rather than save a city. The adventures follow a story of vengeance, in which the party will develop an ambiguous relationship with the protagonist (partly through some *deus ex machina*) and into which contemporary political events intrude. Overall it makes a fair stab at capturing the social settings that make WFRP so intriguing.

More information about the game, including some fiction and sample rules, can be accessed from

www.privateerpress.com/ironkingdoms/.

The Moons of Arksyra

Published by Hypernova Games

Reviewed by John Foody

This is the core rulebook for *The Moons of Arksyra*, a fantasy RPG. Among the primary designers is Graeme Davis, long-term WFRP writer. At 111 pages long it, and the supplements, are available as PDFs.

The Moons of Arksyra completely avoids a Tolkien-based fantasy world, instead looking at something a little more exotic. Arksyra is the sun around which nine moons circle. The book focuses on Inswar, linked to three other moons by Ghiharan Towers, teleportation devices built by an ancient civilisation. The technology is now broadly medieval although gunpowder weapons are making an appearance. Inswar and the other moons have a long and troubled history. Among its people are humans and the lion-like Ky-Brill. More recently an ancient evil, the Eledin, has been unleashed on the world, provoking some to try to ally against them.

The Moons of Arksyra is a D20 game but the rules take a backseat. Where these are present they are incorporated well into the background. All the Player Handbook classes are here plus some new prestige classes. Twenty creatures are detailed including various Eledin forces.

The bulk of the book is largely dedicated to the mythology, history and geo-political structure of Inswar. One nice touch is how astrology impacts on characters. This is well written and gives real depth to the background - certainly giving an indication of more to come.

The rulebook does not, as promised, provide every thing you need to play. There is a lack of depth about how things work in everyday life. However, it does provide an excellent introduction to the game. The campaign world has an interesting take on fantasy, avoiding many of the usual stereotypes. Recommended for those who want a look at a fantasy game with a rich, well-written background.

BROKEN SCALES

A Scenario by Robin Low

The Player Characters are travelling to, through or towards the town of Eidechse located at the foot of the Grey Mountains roughly halfway between the city of Nuln and the dwarfhold Karak Norn. Eidechse and its inhabitants are apparently victims of a curse. The crops are decaying in the fields; animals, children and adults alike are sickening and dying.

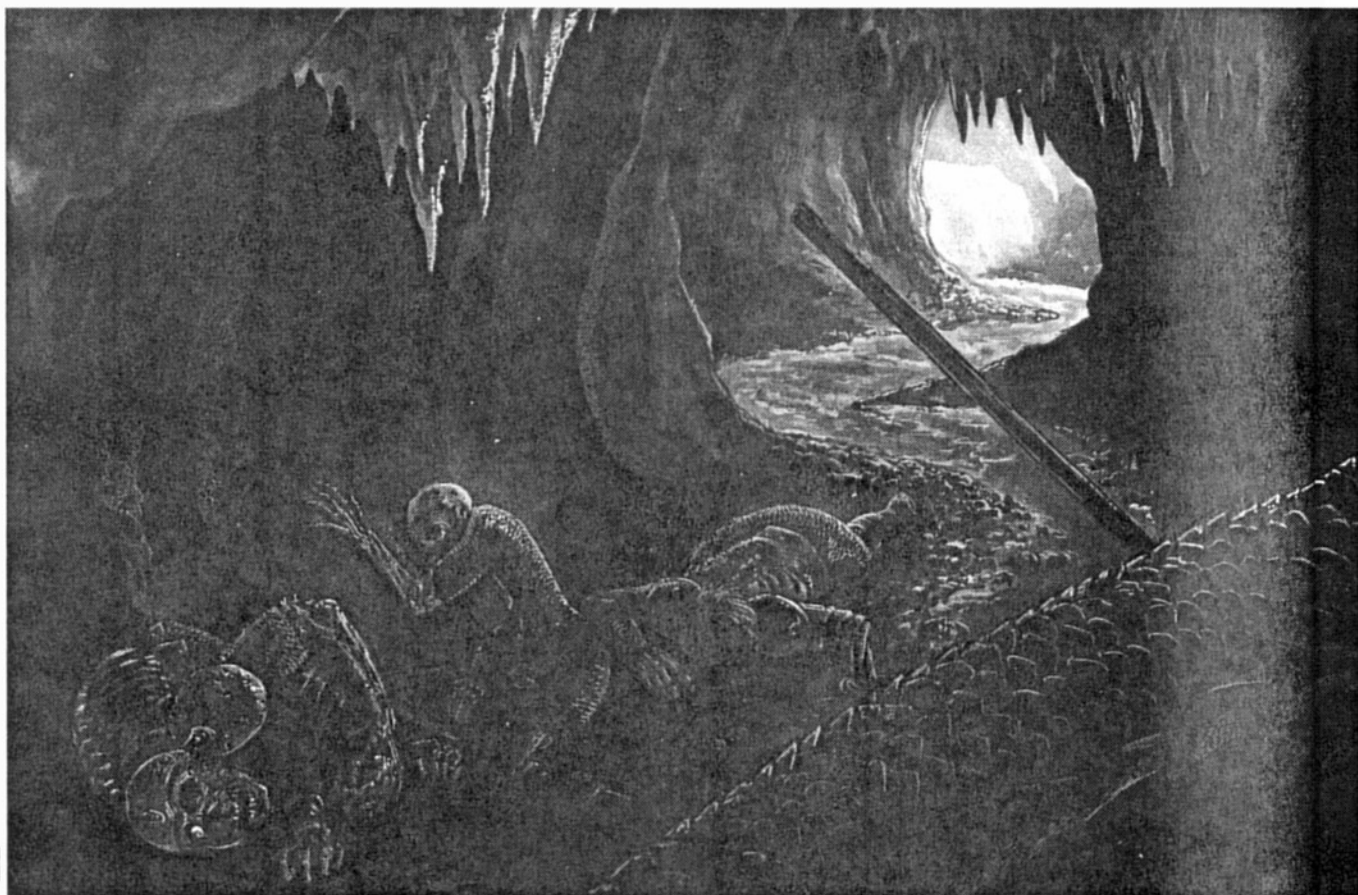
The initial focus of the scenario is introducing the Player Characters to the location and Non-Player Characters of particular interest (who may be significant later), and providing a variety of clues as to the cause of the problem. Sooner or later, the Player Characters should realise that the river coming down from the mountains is poisoned or tainted in some manner, leading them up into the mountains to find the river's source. The higher they travel, the more obvious the poison in the river becomes, and eventually they are forced to follow the waters into the mountain itself.

After further delving, the Player Characters find the cause: an

ancient sleeping Dragon. The Dragon has an old wound in its side. A broken wooden spear (actually an arrow - see **Ancient History**) protrudes from the Dragon, partly crusted over with an old scab. The scab has recently been picked - the skeletal remains of those responsible lie where they were sprayed with the venomous and corrosive black blood. Blood still seeps from the wound into the mountain stream that poisons the land below.

The Player Characters have to find a way of dealing with that terrible wound.

The scenario gives the Games Master and players considerable freedom. There is no definitive way of resolving the problem, so it is up to the Games Master to respond to the ingenuity (or lack thereof) of the Player Characters. However, the conclusion is unlikely to require a fight, so Games Masters can allow other fights along the way without fear of weakening the party before the end. Subplots are suggested throughout, so Games Masters are free to expand the scenario as they see fit, but any significant



dithering should result in more victims of Eidechse's curse. No stats are given, allowing Games Masters to set the challenges of the scenario to the Player Characters' abilities.

Ancient History

Around three thousand years ago, the region surrounding Eidechse was heavily forested right up to and into the mountains. It was the site of one of a number of outposts that the Wood Elves of Loren maintained on the eastern side of the Grey Mountains. The outposts were destroyed and abandoned as a result of the depredations of a dark Dragon from the mountains. What grudge the creature held against the Wood Elves or the forest was unclear, but its black fire was responsible for the gouge scooped from the forest's edge that remains to this day as a broad swathe of rough farmland.

The Dragon would no doubt have continued its destructive rampage were it not for a great Treeman, a Yew, who took one of his own branches and fashioned himself a great bow. He took other branches and made arrows the size of spears, feathered with his needles, sharpened and hardened in magical fire and poisoned with the sticky sap of his own red berries. Strung with the gut of a great forest cat, the bow was a Dragon slaying weapon... almost. The arrow the Treeman put in the great beast was enough to wound it greatly, but not kill it. The Dragon fled into the mountains to its cave where it lay down to sleep and heal. It has remained there to this day, still sleeping. However, the great arrow still lies buried in its flank, and the wound has only partly healed. Now, thanks to the actions of a few dead fools, the people of Eidechse are discovering why you should never pick at scabs.

Whether this background is relevant to this or future scenarios is left entirely to the whim of the Games Master. However, it seems likely that players and their characters will be curious about the Dragon and who put the spear in its side. However, the events described happened a very long time ago. Indeed, it is unlikely that even the great grandchildren of the Treeman are still growing, but if you like the idea of a 3,000 year old Yew Treeman slumbering at the heart of a forest somewhere then go for it. Wood Elf folk tales are likely to be the thin on the ground and heavily distorted to say the least, but Games Masters might like to plant some clue either in Eidechse or the Dragon's cave that will take the Player Characters over the mountains into Loren in search of legends.

Finally, WFRP may not be over-burdened with magical items, but a few peculiar ones are always worth a look. The Treeman bow probably rotted away long ago, but the spear-like arrows made for it were toughened by magical fire. A staff with a fire-blackened point and grooves in the end (where yew needles in place of feathers once went) might be found hidden in the woods, could become the focus of a quest set by the Wood Elves of Loren or might simply be used to prop up the washing line of an Eidechse miner's wife until recognised for what it is, perhaps

by a wizard sensitive to its true nature. If you wish, one of the arrows might have gone on to become the legendary Spear of Marius (see *Fimir: Ruinous Inheritance* in *Warpstone* 25), and an old story about the spear could be the trigger for the Player Characters to travel to Eidechse in the first place in search for it or its kin.

Reasons for Travelling

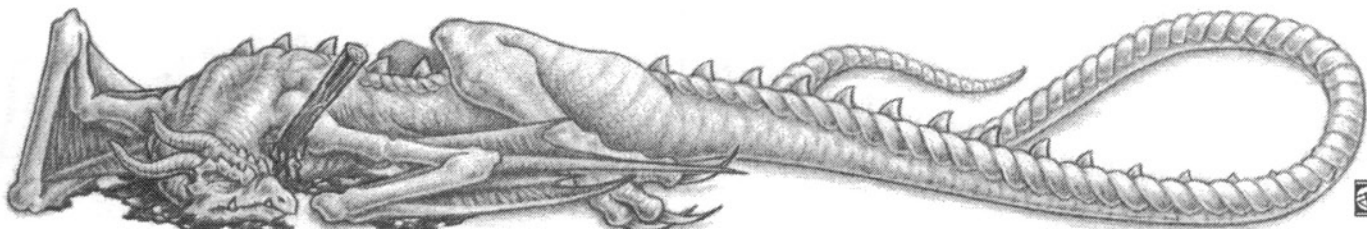
The town of Eidechse is not an official one and Player Characters will need a reason to hear of the place and go there. Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ The Player Characters may already have heard vague rumours of the town's problems, either from those fleeing the town or from merchants who have recently done business there, and are going to investigate.
- ◆ There are rumours of a hidden pass through the Grey Mountains leading into the Forest of Loren; Eidechse has been suggested as a good base to explore from.
- ◆ The Player Characters are following hints in an old legend regarding the Spear of Marius (see **Ancient History** above).
- ◆ The Player Characters are caravan guards for a merchant travelling to buy ore, textiles or jam.
- ◆ Stories of Greenskin bandits attacking the town draw the Player Characters' attention. (Actually, the town has minimal problems with Orcs and Goblins.)

During one playtest, Player Characters guessed Eidechse's problem lay in the river and decided to go around the town. This situation could be avoided by giving them something to do that requires them to enter Eidechse, such as delivering a package, letter or verbal message, or having to seek out an individual for questioning. Perhaps they are in pursuit of a fugitive.

The Road to Eidechse - Setting the Scene

The scenario is set during the height of summer and it is warm to say the least. The Player Characters will feel the steepening landscape in their calves rather than see it, as the broad road to Eidechse passes through woodland, but the trees serve to keep them reasonably cool. Eventually they emerge from the forest onto a broad plain with a view of the mountains beyond, shimmering in a heat haze. Much of the plain is farmland or pasture, watered by several rivers coming down from the mountains; numerous drainage ditches channel the waters and add to the farm boundaries of fence and hedge. The walls of Eidechse, watery in the heat, can be seen in the distance. The largest river in the area flows from the town itself into the forest; halfway between town and forest is a broad, reasonably well maintained wooden bridge. The road they have followed through the forest is on the southern side of the river, towards which it slowly curves. As the Player Characters get closer to the river, or when they pass the irrigation ditches, they will see the water



levels are relatively low due to the recent hot weather. Much of the plant life is looking a little withered, but this is not too unusual given the heat.

There is opportunity for brief encounters along the main road to Eidechse:

- ◆ One or two of Eidechse's wealthier families and individuals are leaving the town. They might talk to the Player Characters if addressed directly, take it upon themselves to warn the Player Characters, or just ignore the Player Characters in their hurry to get away.
- ◆ A shepherd or farmer, lamenting the death of livestock or the withering of crops. Dead animals appear gaunt or wasted, but vegetable crops have blackened, rotten patches on them.
- ◆ An ore merchant who has recently acquired a shipment. The Games Master could use a conversation with the merchant or one of his mercenary guards to mention how sick the miners he traded with were (and what a good deal was struck as result). This encounter clearly indicates the source of the town's problem lies in the mountains, so could be saved until the Player Characters are in town in case they have difficulty working out where the problem is coming from.
- ◆ One significant encounter is with an Alchemist named Jann Vinter and his hefty bodyguard-cum-assistant, Albrecht. Their sturdy but heavily-laden covered wagon has broken a wheel and run off the road, but the pair's response has been to raise a tent, start a fire and get cooking; Albrecht plans to go into town later and get a new wheel and some assistance if he can. Jann is a friendly fellow who will invite the Player Characters to join him if they wish. Albrecht frowns and is wary at first, but is also pleasant company. If the Player Characters haven't learnt much about what has been happening in town and hereabouts, Albrecht will fill them in regarding the unexplained sickness in the town, heralded by vomiting and diarrhoea and increasingly intense stomach pain, which has been causing deaths for about two months now. Mostly children and old folk have been affected, but otherwise healthy adults have died too and many others continue to suffer the symptoms. Jann will gesture at the surrounding lands, pointing to crops rotting in the field and the carcasses of sheep, goats and cattle that are being burnt in the distance (Games Masters might want to foreshadow this by mentioning the smell of burning meat earlier, instead of an encounter with a farmer).

"Some folk looked to me for a cure," adds Jann, "But I'm interested in the metal ores from the mountains, and know nothing of sickness and disease, I'm afraid." He will explain that he left town at Albrecht's behest: "Albrecht felt that sooner or later, someone would accuse me of being responsible.

Alchemy is far from the most trusted of lores." Albrecht will add: "People are becoming desperate in that town, and they think themselves cursed, not just sick; it's only a matter of time before they look for scapegoats."

The Player Characters might continue on to Eidechse alone or in the company of Albrecht, who can point them in the direction of places they may express interest in. If they ask about inns, he immediately recommends *The Basilisk's Head*: "Good rooms, I'm told; good bar, I know!"

Jann and Albrecht do not feature in the rest of the scenario as written, but it might occur to Player Characters to call on Jann's skills (for identification or cure) when they later discover that poison is at the root of Eidechse's problems. When they eventually discover the Dragon, they may hope that Jann can heal its bleeding wound (the Dragon's scales are metallic, Jann's area of interest) or even help slay the beast. The Games Master is free to find reasons for the pair to have remained close by or to return at a convenient moment.

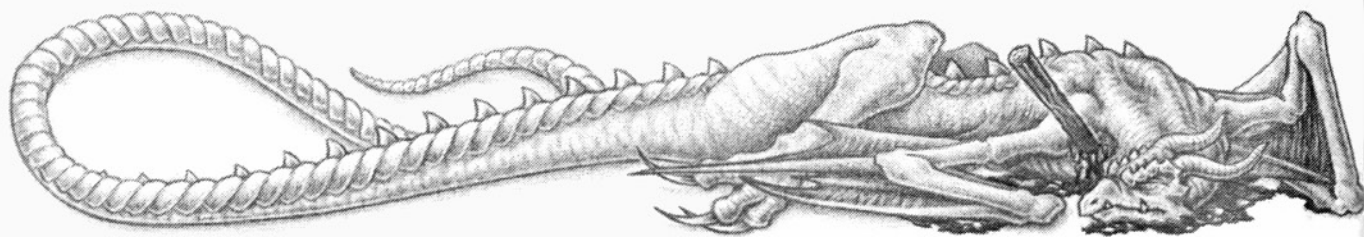
Whatever you do, don't drink the water!

The people, animals and crops of Eidechse are being poisoned by Dragon's blood trickling into the river flowing down from the mountains through the town, seeping into the wells and land around. It is a peculiar toxin, slightly magical in nature by virtue of the twisted and powerful creature it bleeds from. It takes about a month of imbibing normal amounts of water from drinking and cooking stews and soups to be killed by it. However, symptoms such as nausea and bellyache appear after a week or so, followed by steadily increasing pain in the liver and kidneys, with weakness and hot sweats. The spell *Cure Poison* from the Lore of Shallya can nullify the effects of the toxin, and Werner the local Priest of Shallya could save the lives of many people. Unfortunately, Werner is convinced the problem is a disease or possibly even a curse of some sort; he is also going through a personal crisis, so convincing him of his power may not be easy (see **Werner, Priest of Shallya** for more details). Note that *Cure Poison* will only deal with the Dragon's blood that has accumulated in the victim's body; the physical damage will require conventional healing or Wound-restoring magic, and the poison will soon build up again unless the source is identified.

The game effects of the Dragon's blood poison are as follows:

- 1 After seven days of imbibing the water, the victim loses 10% from his Toughness
- 2 Each day after the first seven, the victim loses 1% from each percentile Characteristic
- 3 Each day after the first fourteen days, the victim loses 1 Wound
- 4 Once all the Wounds are gone, the victim is very, very ill and must roll for a Sudden Death Critical Hit, Critical Value +1, everyday.

So, if the Player Characters drink the water or eat food made with it, they will not experience the first symptoms until a week



or so has passed. Chances are they'll discover the problem sooner than this anyway, but if it does get this far then start applying the poison's effects. Any reductions in Characteristics will disappear after a week or so of drinking non-poisoned water, although Wound losses must be healed. Anyone who suffered Wound losses has a damaged liver, so will experience pain if they start drinking too much alcohol and must make any Consume Alcohol Tests at -20% until fully healed.

Games Masters should remember that various individuals will react differently, being affected to different degrees or at different rates. Likewise, proximity to the river also has a part to play - water drawn from sources closest to the river, such as wells or irrigation ditches outside the town, are potentially more toxic than those further away.

Clues

The Player Characters should be offered clues to the problem lying in the river water. The symptom-free regulars of **The Basilisk's Head** who seem to live on ale, cheese and salted meat are one clue. The Player Characters may ask if the deaths around the town show a pattern. The best person to address this question to is **Markus Velkinson, Priest of Morr**, who will direct them to Martha Shank who leads the body collectors. Martha should indicate that she and her teams have been busiest at the heart of town, up and down the river. The fact that the chirpy and healthy Markus has access to a sacred spring unconnected to the river can be another clue.

A more blatant clue can be offered by the poison itself. Although the Dragon's black blood becomes diluted in the river water, it has the peculiar property of briefly coalescing into small stringy-looking masses before suddenly dispersing again. The Player Characters might witness this in the river itself or in a bucket of water they are asked to fetch for someone. It should happen swiftly enough for them to doubt what they've seen, but the hint will almost certainly be taken - this approach can be used as a last resort if no other clues have been spotted.

Player Characters and players may well leap to the conclusion that the baleful effects of warpstone are at work. Similarly, anyone with knowledge of the textile industry and dyes may wonder if chemicals from the local industries are at fault. If either possibility is pursued by the Player Characters, Games Masters should improvise new locations and characters as they see fit. Inserting red herrings like this are useful if the players quickly work out the problem lies in the river, but get them to engage with the town and its inhabitants before they trail off into the mountains.

Some playtesters thought it unlikely that the people of Eidechse would not realise the problem lies in the water. In the modern world, we are aware of the association between water and disease, but even in the 1800s many people did not make a connection - people still thought of disease arising from bad smells and 'miasma' associated with rotting matter and stagnant

water. Certainly, some enlightened members of the medical profession were starting to prove the connection, but during the sort of period in which WFRP is set, people still did not understand the link.

Eidechse

The stonewalled town of Eidechse is a relatively prosperous place, home to some 684 people. The town and the farmlands around it are split by a river that flows down from the mountains and eventually into the forest. The surrounding region is composed of a number of farmsteads separated by hedges, fences and ditches, growing crops and rearing a significant number of cattle and sheep. Many earn their crust through wool and leather and an associated textile and clothing industry. A couple of reasonably successful mines operate up in the mountains, where seams of ore too small to interest Dwarfs are successfully exploited by Humans. Additionally, rowan trees grow quite thickly on the lower slopes of the mountains, and the local jam has become the town's main claim to exoticism.

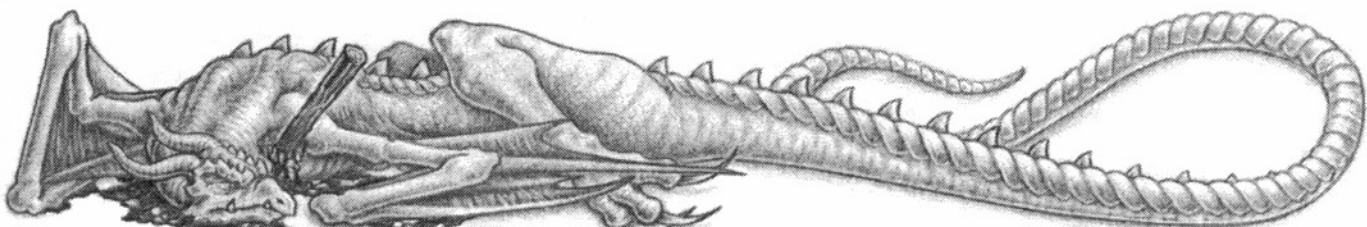
Eidechse means lizard (in Reikspiel), although nobody in town or up at the mines is aware of the sleeping Dragon. Most people think it is something to do with the rock lizards that live round about or is connected to the ancient stuffed Basilisk head found hanging over the bar in *The Basilisk's Head* inn. Who named the town and when is not known.

Into Town

The road leads to Eidechse's south-eastern gateway; there is a similar gateway to the north-east on the other side of the river.

If possible, arrange for the Player Characters to arrive in Eidechse around midday. Although the town is still fairly active in the mornings, with people out shopping, the heat combined with fear and despondency has driven people into the shade and security of their homes. The Player Characters (with or without Albrecht) will be able to walk through the open town gates unchallenged and find the streets quiet and deserted (if the Player Characters decide to investigate the unattended gatehouse, they find a hanging body - see **The Watch**). The sun is hot and glares brightly off every whitewashed wall. The air is still, with no hint of a breeze. The ground is dry and dusty underfoot. Emphasise and maintain the atmosphere (and, if you can, run the game on a hot, bright day!) and extend the introduction to the town according to how the players respond. It is possible the Player Characters will have offered (or the Games Master suggested) to help Albrecht find a wheelwright and then go back to help him fit it before they do anything else. Here are some possible events as they wander the hot and dusty streets; Games Masters can develop as they see fit, or treat them purely as atmosphere:

- ◆ Occasionally, a dog is heard barking in the distance. If the Player Characters follow this up, they will encounter a dog, barking for no obvious reason.



- ◆ The sound of a hammer striking an anvil periodically echoes a few hot streets away. If the Player Characters seek him out, the blacksmith has little to say and closes the doors to his forge with a lazy rudeness.
- ◆ A suspicious-looking character lurks on a street corner, but she disappears down an alley when the Player Characters notice her; they lose her even if they give chase.
- ◆ A rook or crow or raven (**Common Knowledge (Animals)** to know which) caws loudly from atop a gabled roof, then flaps its wings when the Player Characters lookup and flies into the bright sky. Some might view this as a bad omen.
- ◆ As they turn a corner, they find a body lying face down in the street. It is dead and already beginning to smell.

The Basilik's Head

Whether they have already been told about it or not, the first inn the Player Characters find is *The Basilisk's Head*. It is a large, three-storey building with cellar and attic. The front door opens into a broad room with a bar and reception, with several long tables with benches, and smaller round tables with chairs. The ceiling is low, and despite the brightness outside, candles are lit to supplement the light coming through the meagre open windows. Various doors lead to various places, and a single stairway leads to the upper levels. The shadowy coolness of the interior contrasts heavily with the hot sunshine outside, and it may take a moment for the Player Characters' eyes to adjust.

Above and behind the bar hangs the reason for the inn's name: a large, stuffed and somewhat battered Basilisk's head. Stood beneath it is the landlord, Erick Gaille (his father was Bretonnian, but he is firmly Imperial), a thick-necked bull of a man with a thick blond mane in a tight ponytail. He greets anyone who comes through the door warmly and has ale ready by the time they reach the bar. Business has been slow of late and Erick aims to woo potential guests, though he is never fawning or sycophantic.

Erick has not succumbed in any way to the tainted water, because he tends not to drink the stuff. His inn is well stocked with imported wines and local ales brewed before the Dragon began bleeding, and the menu is biased towards cheese, salted meat and tough, chewy biscuits that keep well in the cool of the cellar, and encourage the purchasing of more ale. A few regulars who spend most of their day sitting around the tables playing games have avoided being poisoned for the same reasons.

Erick and the regulars of *The Basilisk's Head* are primarily information points for the Player Characters, and know much that is useful and useless about Eidechse and its environs. However, if the Games Master makes reference to their eating and drinking habits they can become a clue to the water being the source of Eidechse's curse: clever players might figure this out themselves, or the Games Master can call for **Perception Tests** after the Player Characters have been around them for a

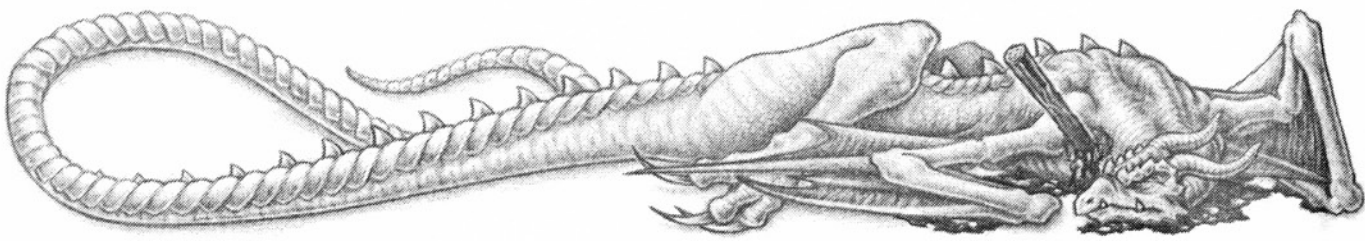
while. Erick and his regulars' gossip can also provide starting points for subplots and other avenues of investigation:

- ◆ Old Allen notes that he hasn't seen his upstairs neighbour, Very Fat Molly, for several days and wonders if she's lying dead in her garret room; the Watch really should do something to check.
- ◆ Neptune Trump, a Halfling of independent means, observes a lot of Ravens have been gathering, which can't be a good sign; perhaps **Markus Velkinson** (see below), the Priest of Morr, can say if this is natural or a bad omen for the town.
- ◆ Anton Fencklemunn, an alcoholic ex-Watchmen, may comment (perhaps in response to Old Allen, above) that his former colleagues have been dropping like flies recently (see **The Watch**). Anton keeps himself in ale by selling cheap jewellery, essentially nuts on a string, which he will try to sell to the Player Characters, even going so far as to claim they are medicinal nuts that have kept him safe from the sickness. Most of the regulars have a nut necklace or bracelet.
- ◆ Gilda Gerber, a mean chequers player, says **Werner** (see below), the Priest of Shallya, hasn't been right since he came home from Nuln and found his sister had died of the curse; he says he won't hand her body over to Markus Velkinson; the authorities in both cults will have words to say about his behaviour.
- ◆ Erick could do with someone going to Pieter the butcher to find out why a delivery of salted pork hasn't arrived; he hopes Pieter is still well, and that it's just a spot of bother with that difficult daughter of his, or something.

The Watch

From their initial entry though the unguarded town gate, the Player Characters may have realised the Watch is pretty thin on the ground. In part this is because the central Watch-house at the heart of the town is very close to the river – the part-time Watchmen on duty there draw their water directly from the river, rather than wells further away. Also, the full-time Watch Captain, Felix Abstinenzler, likes his men sober and enforces a strict ban on drinking alcohol – the Watchmen grudgingly agreed as Abstinenzler squeezed a little extra pay out of the town council in return for their abstinence. A couple did quit and one, Anton Fencklemunn (see *The Basilisk's Head*, above), was booted out for his habitual drunkenness.

If the Player Characters seek out the Watch-house they find the front door wide open. Only Felix Abstinenzler is here, and when the Player Characters encounter him at the front desk he is puking his guts up into a bucket. He is clearly not a well man, but he is an ex-soldier and tough, with a deep sense of duty and responsibility. He has his remaining men patrolling the town, but they are thin on the ground. He will be particularly concerned to hear that at least one of the gates into town is not manned; his



concern is as much for the welfare of his men as for the security of the gates. After dealing with any questions the Player Characters have, he will attempt to recruit them to do a few jobs he would normally have assigned to his men.

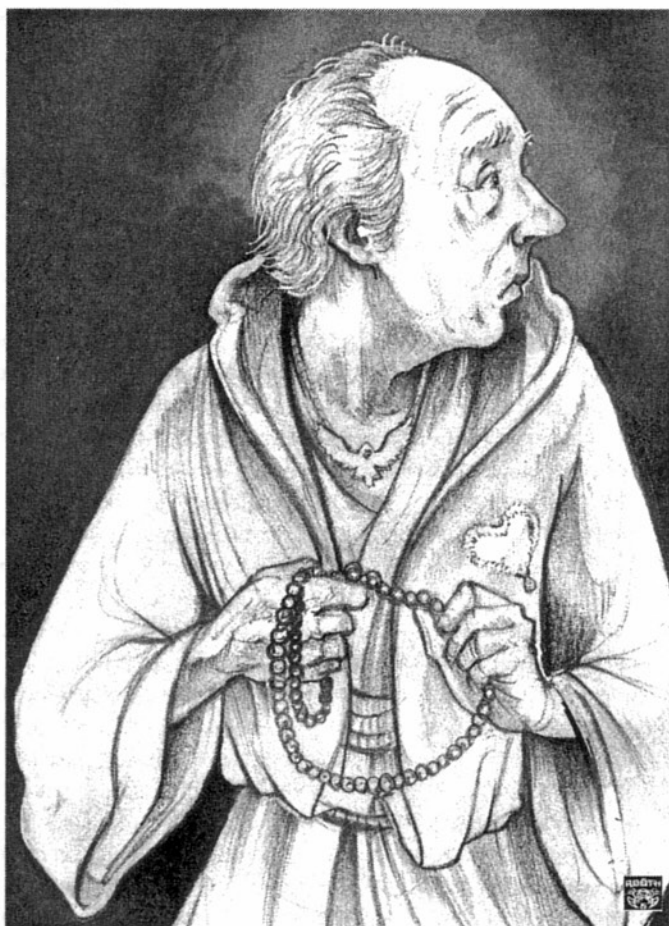
- ◆ Felix would be grateful if someone could go and empty his bucket of vomit into the river; this may be an opportunity for a Player Character to witness some Dragon's blood briefly coalesce then disperse, either in the water or in Felix's vomit.
- ◆ Upstairs is the body of Karl, one of the few Watchmen who came into work today, but who died after the others had been sent out; Felix needs someone to take the body to Markus Velkinson for burial.
- ◆ If the Player Characters have mentioned the unmanned gate they entered through, Felix will ask them to check out the guardhouse there - a Watchman, Josef Vanken, was sent out this morning to relieve the night-man Heinrich Vanken (his brother). If the Player Characters investigate (they may even have done so when they first arrived), they will find the body of Heinrich who has hanged himself; Josef is missing. (The Games Master is free to turn this into a subplot, use it as a red herring or leave it as a background event.)

As noted, Felix Abstinenzler is a tough man - if the Player Characters realise the river water is tainted then, given time, Abstinenzler will likely recover. If the Player Characters eventually deal with the source of the poisoning, Abstinenzler will be impressed and may refer them to ex-army friends of his who can always do with a few good men and women; he also has a few vacant posts for Watchmen.

Werner, Priest of Shallya

Werner has only recently returned to Eidechse after a month-long visit to Nuln to complain about the activities of Markus Velkinson. As described below, Velkinson has been given authority by senior priests of Morr to perform *post mortems* in certain circumstances. Werner is appalled by this (it borders on Necromancy as far as he is concerned), but his desire to put a stop to it was not supported by his seniors in the cult of Shallya in Nuln (there are issues of inter-cult politics and friendships in Nuln, although details were not given to Werner). The upshot of this is Werner has only been drinking the tainted water for a few days.

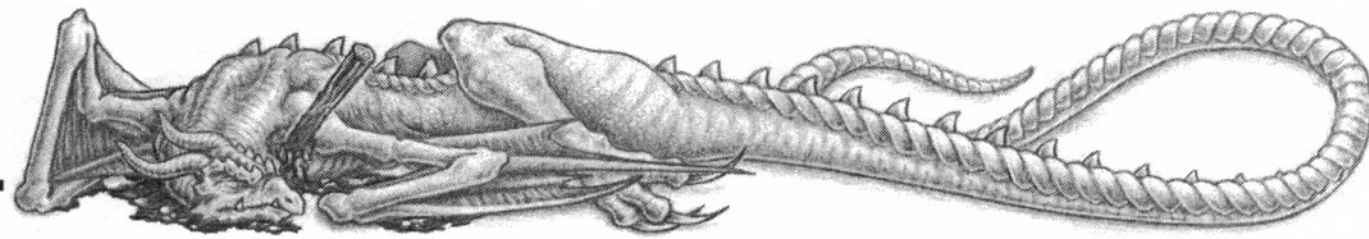
On his return, Werner was shocked to see the state of the town and its people. However, he was *devastated* when he discovered his sister, also a Shallyan priest, had just died. Werner has refused to allow her body to be removed from their modest temple in town to the temple of Morr. Her body lies wrapped in white cloth in the cool basement of the temple, and Werner spends most of his time with the body, praying to Shallya. If the goddess of mercy and healing is answering, his grief is blocking out her



words. He is convinced the town is either afflicted by a disease brought on by the heat (although even magic has not helped) or under a curse; the idea that a poison might be at work has simply not occurred to him. Any attempt to remove his sister's body, especially if he thinks she'll be taken to the temple of Morr and Markus Velkinson, will result in serious conflict (people living close to the temple of Shallya will certainly come to his aid). Even verbal suggestions about her removal will result in a serious argument, which will make any further dealings with Werner much harder.

It is quite likely the Player Characters will seek out a Priest of Shallya at some point. In Werner, they find a man whose grief has rendered him largely incapable of acting effectively, even though his use of the right magic (see **Don't drink the water!**) could save many. If the Player Characters realise the problem is a poison, then they can begin the task of persuading Werner that there *is* something he can do. This is a good opportunity for roleplaying, and players who roleplay well and come up with strong arguments to rouse Werner should be rewarded.

Werner could be used to create a major red herring, if he suggests the town is under a curse from the activities of Markus Velkinson. The local priest of Morr *has* been collecting and



interfering with corpses, Werner will say, and Player Characters may take a dim view of this as well.

Markus Velkinson, Priest of Morr

Fifteen minutes south of Eidechse, the local temple of Morr is carved into a high and broad outcrop of rock below the mountains, its walled graveyard before it. The priest who oversees the temple and conducts funerals for the area is one Markus Velkinson, a cheery chap whose gleeful schoolboy face belies his middle years. Blond-haired, with wire-framed glasses, he is chatty and always ready to explain and teach anyone about his special interests (Morr, healing, the human body) if they care to ask him; he invariably asks questions as he explains, not to catch people out, but so he knows what information he needs to impart and that the information he gives is understood.

Markus was once a physician, but embraced religion over a decade ago. Perhaps surprisingly, he did not turn to Shallya, but to Morr. Although he was and still is a very caring and capable doctor, Markus was particularly interested in the processes leading to disease and death. His primary aim as a physician and a priest of Morr has been to understand these processes so as to make the passing of the terminally ill a gentle one, *without* actively assisting the process. He has argued, persuasively, that Morr is a not a cruel god and there is nothing fundamentally wrong with trying to understand the god's methods - what Morr wishes to be understood can be discovered, what he wishes to keep secret will be concealed. His arguments have found favour with senior priests within the cults of both Shallya and Morr in the city of Nuln and, combined with certain friendships and obligations, have enabled Markus to get written authorisation for conducting *post mortem* examinations of the recently deceased. At present, however, he is only authorised to examine bodies of those who have died of unknown causes or in cases of suspected foul play, or those of executed criminals. Up until recently, he has had relatively few bodies to examine; now he has many, but he is far from happy about the situation.

Due to the flexibility of the scenario, it is difficult to know when the Player Characters will go looking for Markus - there are potential links from **The Basilisk's Head**, **The Watch** and **Werner, Priest of Shallya**. With regard to the first link, Markus will agree that the increased number of ravens around Eidechse is no doubt connected to the deaths, but he believes the birds represent Morr's interest and are not the cause. With regard to the second link, Markus will be grateful to them for bringing him the body of Karl the Watchman and/or that of Heinrich Vanken - Martha Shank and her body collectors are very busy at the moment.

The Player Character will undoubtedly ask Markus for his opinion regarding the cause of the deaths. His response will be to invite them to see a few bodies he has previously conducted *post mortems* on, or perhaps conduct one on a fresh body if they have just brought one to him. If they are willing, he will

take them into the temple and down into the catacombs where it is very cold. He will ask them to leave their weapons and conduct themselves in a dignified manner with due respect for the dead; he will remind them that Morr does not look favourably on those who fail to show due reverence.

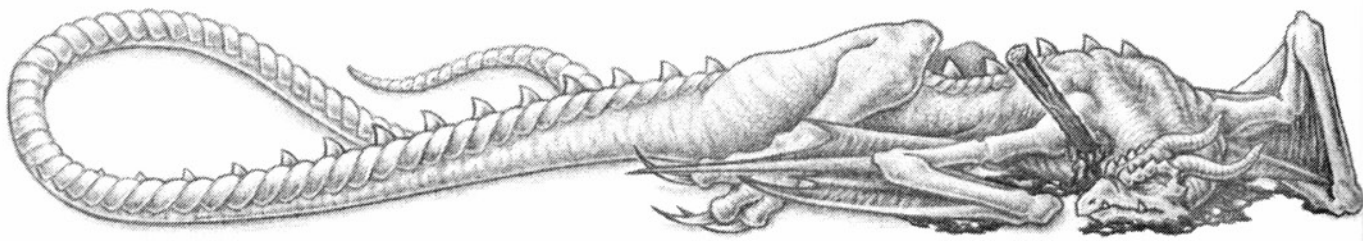
Down in the catacombs (which are carved out of the natural bedrock) there is a stream that flows from a crack in one wall, runs along a deep carved channel large enough to take a body, and then disappears into a natural fissure in the floor. This water is good and pure, unconnected with the tainted river, and is used in the local ritual cleansing of a body before burial. Markus also uses it to wash away the blood from his *post mortems*.

Games Masters are left to describe a *post mortem*, or the results thereof, with as much or as little detail they see fit. However, it is vital to remember that Markus is a dedicated Priest of Morr and a caring man who will not take kindly to sniggering or unpleasant jokes. If he feels one of the Player Characters is being offensive or flippant he will simply tell him to leave; if the Player Character refuses, take it to a contested **Will Power Test** (and on this issue Markus's Will Power is *extremely* high).

The important feature Markus will point out in a cadaver is the liver, which is heavily swollen and blackened; he has seen this in the body of every victim he has examined so far. He will explain that he has examined the bodies of alcoholics and he has come to the conclusion the liver is somehow damaged by too much alcohol, and he thinks the organ plays some role in clearing alcohol from the body. ("After all, emptying your bladder is not enough to sober you up, is it?") From this observation, Markus has come to the conclusion that the liver somehow deals with poisons. He will announce with confidence that Eidechse is not under a curse or a plague, but is being

Attitudes to Post Mortem Examinations

Different Games Masters may have made different rulings on whether *post mortems* are legal practices in the Empire. In some Games Masters' worlds, it will be considered tantamount to Necromancy (as Werner, the Shallyan Priest, believes), but in others public autopsies by flamboyant doctors will be well-attended spectacles. If you have taken the latter approach, then Markus Velkinson will not be doing anything particularly outrageous, especially as he conducts the process with a sincere reverence for the deceased befitting his role as a Priest of Morr; in this case the Player Characters will regard Werner as being the one with the problem. If *post mortem* examinations are generally considered dubious, then the Player Characters may well be more hostile towards Markus. Games Masters will have to decide how cautious to play Markus depending on the way they may have depicted the issue in previous adventures.





poisoned. If any Player Character suggests this before he does, he will not be upset at having his thunder stolen, but be pleased that someone agrees with him.

However, a more interesting complication arises if Markus comes to a slightly different conclusion, and says the liver damage shows alcohol must be the source of Eidechse's problems. If the Player Characters then tell him about the apparent health of *The Basilisk's Head's* patrons, Markus or the Player Characters may have to rethink his conclusion and come back to the original poison idea. Of course, if the Player Characters accept the conclusion that alcohol is the source of the problem, then the health of *The Basilisk's Head's* patrons suddenly makes them look suspicious! This could seriously confuse matters.

Whether the Player Characters have considered the possibility of poison before meeting Markus or not, they now have something solid to go on. It should be obvious (says Markus if they do not realise) the next step must be to locate the source of the poison. If the Player Characters (or players) are struggling, Markus will suggest looking for Martha Shank, his gravedigger and body collector - she might be able to say where the majority

of the dead are coming from. Martha can be found back in Eidechse or perhaps on the path as the Player Characters return to town from the temple, and after some careful thought she will decide that she and her team have been busiest along the river. Once the Player Characters have this information they can start looking at the river, and you can give them some proof in the form of the mysterious, briefly coalescing black fluid (see **Don't Drink the Water!**).

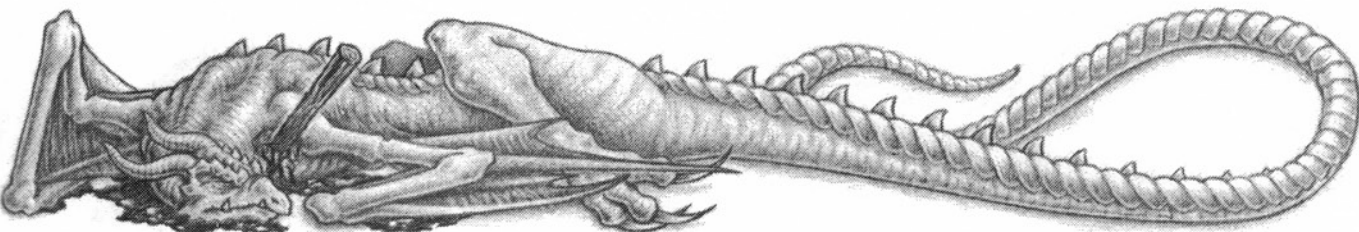
One last thing: if the Player Characters have made Markus aware that Werner is keeping his deceased sister's body at the temple of Shallya, the Priest of Morr will ask them to try to persuade Werner to release her body to him for proper burial. Markus is willing to give whatever assurances are necessary to encourage Werner, even to the point of tearing up his authorisation to conduct *post mortems* - Markus is more concerned with sending a soul on its rightful path to Morr than satisfying his own quest for knowledge. He is a very decent man.

Alerting the Town

If the Player Characters try to spread the word that Eidechse is being poisoned they should find it an easy task - as soon as they tell half a dozen people or shout it in the streets, word will spread. It is entirely up to the Games Master how this plays out. The townspeople might react reasonably sensibly, and the eerie calm remain in place, or erupt into a riot of panic, rumour-mongering and scapegoating; the middle ground sees a handful of heat-crazed idiots try to lynch some folk who looked at them funny once. It all depends on whether the Games Master wants to keep the Player Characters in town and having fun, or pack them off into mountains as soon as possible. They may have to stay in town to identify the source of the poison or resolve some other issues, so a little bit of a riot will add interest and contrast with the earlier peacefulness. They may even be deputised by Watch Captain Felix Abstinenzler to assist him if things get out of hand, or just to find and organize alternative water supplies. Another possible major event would be defending the temple of Morr from people who want access to the sacred spring below it - Markus Velkinson would be happy for it to benefit the town, but sick, over-heated and scared people could end up rioting over it with dangerous consequences.

The Grey Mountains

The Player Characters may feel that having discovered the river is poisoned, the problem is over, as other sources of drinking water can be found. However, the river is tainting the farmland all around Eidechse, and if the town is to survive it needs its crops and livestock. It is essential the origin of the poison is discovered and dealt with. To do so, Player Characters have to follow the river up into the Grey Mountains to discover the source of the poison; they may reach this conclusion quickly or



it may take them a while to exhaust other possibilities.

Following the river is not a difficult process. Many other mountain streams flow into the main channel (although some have dried up in the heat) which might lead the PCs off course into unrelated events (Games Master's call). It is also hot and tiring, so without clean water and breaks along the way a few Toughness Tests should be imposed (say two per day), failure leading to loss of a single Wound. As the party travels further up the river, incidences of the coalescing/dissolving black fluid in the river become more frequent. Similarly, its toxic and corrosive effects become more pronounced and fast acting.

This section of the scenario is very much an on-the-road piece, and Games Masters are free to do what they like for as long as they like. However, the Player Characters should feel under some pressure to discover the source of the poisoning quickly. Some possible events and encounters are suggested below.

Natural Hazards

The Player Characters are in the mountains and plenty of things can go wrong. Rock falls are a possibility, with Player Characters having to make an Agility Test of varying difficulty or lose a Wound or two. The Player Characters could have to make successful Agility Tests from time to time, or twist an ankle and lose a point off their Movement and 5% off Weapon Skill and Agility. Perhaps at one point the river waterfalls down a rock-face, and some Climbing Tests are in order. Do not throw tests at the Player Characters every five minutes - the three examples given are sufficient to be spread over the whole trek.

Miners

The Player Characters may be aware there are mines run by local Humans up in the mountains. You do not need to place any along the river route unless you wish to distract the Player Characters. If you do, the miners should really all be dead, but one survivor on his last gasp will tragically croak, "Don't... drink... the water!" If the Player Characters get Jann Vinter involved later (see **Stopping the Blood**), a mine might become more relevant as a source of ore.

Rock Lizards!

It is entirely possible the scenario has run to this point without any combat; some Games Masters and players may be itching for a fight, in which case here is a perfect opportunity. The mountains in this area are home to a fair number of aggressive rock lizards, a number of which will be enjoying the blazing sun and be quite active as a result. Rock lizards are similar to very large iguanas and you can treat them as Wolves from the WFRP2 rulebook, but lacking the Follow Trail and Perception skills, and Keen Senses Talent. Since they can remain extremely still and their body colouring is so similar to the surrounding rock, Player Characters must make a **Challenging (-10%)**

Perception Test to notice them, or be surprised. Remember, there is no climactic battle to this scenario, so you can risk hurting the Player Characters a little, but beware of hurting them so badly they decide to go all the way back to rest and heal.

Big Birds

Really just scenery, some extremely large birds of prey can be glimpsed in the sky from time to time. These might be Great Eagles, but you can hint at riders, perhaps suggesting Wood Elves on Warhawks to Player Characters making a test on an appropriate Knowledge. This may be useful if you want to encourage the Player Characters to call on the Wood Elves later (see **Looking Further Abroad** and **Waking the Dragon**).

Nasty Corpses and Dead Trees

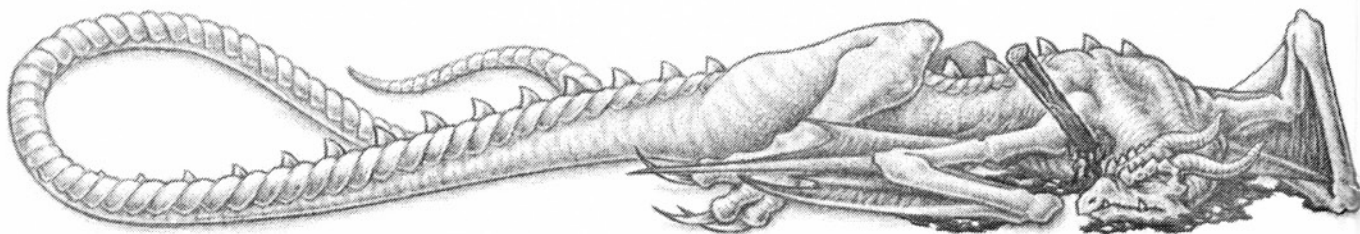
The closer to the source of the poison, the more toxic and corrosive the darkening water becomes. At some point, the Player Characters should find remains of a mountain goat or rock lizard that has stumbled into the river. The part that is in the water is a vile sticky-red mass with corroded bones protruding through. Similarly, the branches of a dead fallen tree that extend into the water are blackened and crumbling away as the water flows past. If the Player Characters start doing tests, they will find only materials with an organic origin are affected. This fact may be helpful to them later (see **Stopping the Blood**).

Dragon's Blood

The original entrance to the Dragon's cave was covered centuries ago by a rock-fall. Only the Dragon is strong enough to dig itself out in the short term. However, there are other cracks in the rock through which the Player Characters can access its cave. A passage through which the contaminated stream passes is a possibility, but it is narrow and there is a risk of slipping in. One thing they will soon notice is how wonderfully cool it is in here compared with outside in the blazing sun. However, it is dark and if they have not thought to bring torches or lanterns, make life difficult for them for a while before falling back on luminescent fungi. The river gets darker and darker the further they go in.

How deep inside the mountain the Player Characters have to go is up to the Games Master. Once again there are opportunities for distractions and sub-plots, but the Games Master should take care not to let on in other encounters that a Dragon lies asleep somewhere along the river. Discovering the bleeding Dragon should be a dramatic and shocking moment.

The Player Characters should have no warning before they first see the Dragon (although Games Masters will be forgiven if they wish to foreshadow it with faint, slow and deep breaths whispering down the tunnels). They should emerge from a dark tunnel into a huge cavern only dimly illuminated by glowing crystals (a weird side effect of the long presence of the



slumbering magical beast). The Player Characters preferably emerge some distance from the Dragon, so they can have a clear view of just how big it is - this should make it clear very early on they will not be in a position to try to kill the thing. The poisoned river (more of a large stream by now) snakes past the beast into another tunnel, but by its side is a dark pool; upstream the water is clear (the ultimate source of the water can remain a mystery). When you describe all of this, try to do so in a quieter voice than usual - it may help emphasise the Dragon is sleeping and might possibly awaken.

The low light and the black scales and blood of the Dragon mean that the Player Character will have to get close to it to discover the wound. However, before they get up really close they should spot the spear (arrow) protruding from the Dragon's side and several rather gory-looking heaps of skeletal bodies close by, reminiscent of the animal bodies seen outside on the mountain slopes. There are three bodies, mostly corroded bone but still with distressing quantities of stinking meat and rotting clothing on them; Player Characters should notice that metal objects like armour and buckles have not been affected. A broad spray of dried black blood across the ground suggests that a gout of blood erupted from the wound and covered the three (allow an **Intelligence Test**). A successful **Heal Test** when examining the wound suggests that it is old, but has recently been reopened - the dried old scab is clearly cracked. Clever players or another successful **Intelligence Test** will suggest that those now dead attempted to either remove the spear or drive it further in.

No explanation is necessary for who these dead people were, but players/Player Characters may well be curious. In a satchel that escaped the spurt of corrosive acid the Games Master can place any clues as to their identity and what they were doing here as fit the needs of the campaign. This could be something as simple as evidence that the bodies are those of prospectors from the local mine, or intriguing items that lead into a subsequent adventure. One possibility is that they were associates of the alchemist Jann Vinter seeking samples of the Dragon's metallic scales, which would provide an interesting twist on why Vinter was really leaving Eidechse.

At various times, you can have the Dragon's breathing become more noticeable; it might even snore from time to time, echoing round the cavern. Similarly, its tail might twitch. This need not happen often, just often enough to suggest the Dragon is a little restless.

The Spear

Anyone examining the spear should be told it is at least three feet long and an inch thick (a further three feet are embedded in the Dragon). There are four short grooves cut lengthways from the end of the shaft. Clever players might realise the spear is actually a very large arrow with the feathers fallen out, but an **Intelligence Test** +20% for any character who uses a bow) will

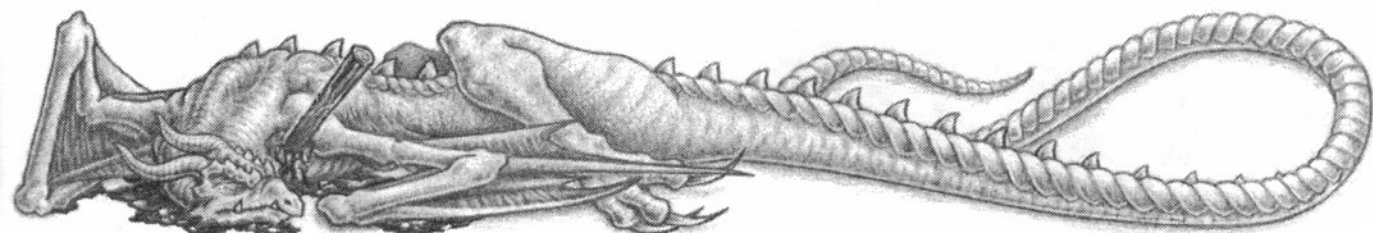
also identify this fact. A Routine use of an appropriate Academic or Common Knowledge will identify the wood as being Yew; characters with rural or woodworking backgrounds can also make an **Intelligence Test**. Given earlier observations suggesting only organic material is damaged by the blood, this should suggest that the wood, identified or not, is not entirely natural. A **Hard (-20%) Magical Sense Test** will determine that the spear/arrow is magical - the test is hard because the magical nature of the Dragon overshadows that of the weapon.

Some Player Characters may attempt to either drive the spear in further or remove it. Hopefully, they will have realised the three messy bodies are a good indication of what could happen if they try. Driving it further in is a virtual impossibility as they will have to get close and risk a spurt of blood over them - and that means spend a Fate Point or die screaming in agony. They might be able to avoid this by wrapping clothes round the spear to absorb the spray. This is a good idea and it will work, but they will have no luck forcing the spear in more deeply; if they keep trying, make some secret rolls and they will start to worry about the Dragon waking up. If they try to pull the spear out, perhaps by tying a rope round it and pulling from a safe distance, have them make a **Strength Test** or two. If they are successful, the spear is removed with a sudden spray of blood. The spray is brief, but the wound bleeds more profusely than before. The Player Characters may wait and hope the blood will clot and the wound scab over, but they will become very bored waiting for this to happen. It should be clear that to save Eidechse they will have to stop the bleeding somehow.

Stopping the Blood

There is no definitive solution to this problem and Games Masters should respond to Player Character/player ingenuity or stupidity. However, here are some of the more obvious options considered.

- ◆ The Heal skill might be used. However, this should be complicated by the necessity of the Surgery Talent (**Markus Velkinson** can be called upon). Given the problems of the corrosive blood and the Dragon's thick scaly hide, at the very least any healer will require a large steel needle, steel wire and steel gauntlets. If these can be obtained (and it will probably require a trip back to Eidechse), **two Hard (-20%) Heal Tests** and a **Challenging (-10%) Strength Test** will be required. Also, the spear will have to be removed first before any stitching can be done. Do not worry about how many Wounds should be healed; success on the rolls is enough.
- ◆ Magical healing is a likely tactic. If the Player Characters want to try to administer healing draughts to the Dragon, they will need to haul a barrel-full up the mountain and get it down the Dragon's throat (it does yawn occasionally, so if the Player Characters/



players really want to try it let them as it is a wonderfully mad idea). Healing poultices on the wound are not going to cut it. Spells are the other option. If a Wizard or Priest tries this, give her the impression that it is working, but only slowly, no matter how many Wounds would normally be healed. The repeated use of healing spells *will* heal the wound, but the requirement for total success is that the caster earns at least one Insanity Point, or experience Tzeentch's Curse or their God's Wrath, and any such effect should linger for some time or even be permanent - there absolutely *must* be a price to pay. If none of the Player Characters can cast healing spells, then they might try to persuade **Werner**.

- ♦ It might occur to ask **Werner** and **Markus Velkison** to work together to heal the Dragon's wound. Markus will be easy to persuade to work with Werner, but Werner will be extremely reluctant to combine forces (though depending on earlier events, things might be easier between the two men). If the Player Characters manage to get the two working together, then the requirements described above should be made a little less difficult. Trying this approach should earn some or all Player Characters extra experience points, as it is an extremely positive resolution.
- ♦ The Dragon's scales have a metallic look about them, and the Player Characters may remember Jann Vinter the alchemist and his interest in metals. If they think he can help and decide to go all the way back looking for him, then find an excuse for him to have either returned or not left - perhaps others (legitimate authorities or paranoid commoners) have heard of Eidechse's curse, decided it is plague and blocked the forest road (another problem for the Player Characters to deal with later!). They will have to help him get his equipment up the mountain into the cave. He may send them off to a local mine looking for a particular type of ore he needs to create an alloy for sealing the Dragon's wound. Then there is the fun of applying molten metal to an open wound.

Players will no doubt have many other ideas. If they seem reasonable, come up with some requirements and let the Player Characters try to fulfil them.

Looking Further Abroad

The Player Characters may decide they are out of their depth and consider enlisting outside help. If so, you can allow them an **Intelligence Test** to remember that on the other side of the Grey Mountains lies the Forest of Loren, the home of the Wood Elves. If any group has the knowledge and power to deal with this problem, surely it is the Elves. This could involve a fairly long journey through the mountains into another country, but

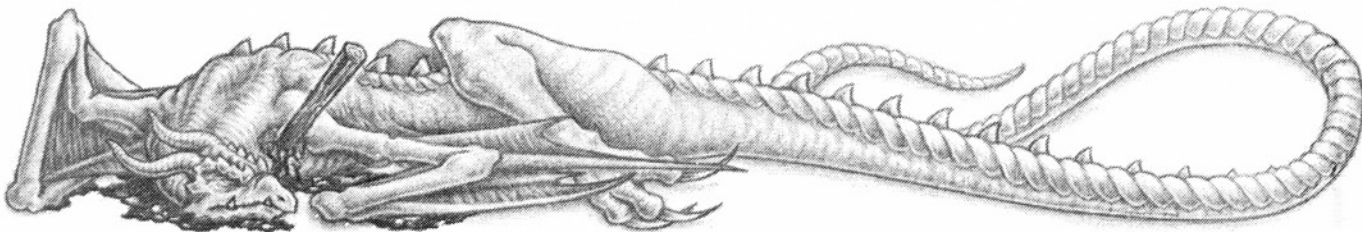
you can shorten it with an encounter in the mountains with a Wood Elf patrol flying Warhawks. The Elves can be persuaded to help, but will no doubt require the Player Characters to undertake some quest for rare healing herbs while they go and collect a specialist healer from Loren. This is also an opportunity to introduce the material described in **Ancient History** earlier in the article - when the Player Characters tell the Elves of a black Dragon with toxic blood, the Wood Elves may recall the legends from when their people still lived on the eastern side of the Grey Mountains.

Waking the Dragon

This is not advised, as the aim of the scenario is to have non-combat resolution. However, if you are running a campaign with very powerful Player Characters, and they have brought in outside help such as the Wood Elves, you may wish for something quite dramatic. If you are this mad, then really go for it. You can have the Dragon wake up when the spear is removed (you can argue its magic was keeping the Dragon asleep) or more annoyingly you can have it wake up just after its wound is successfully healed! The Dragon immediately digs its way through the blocked cavern entrance (flying boulders should have the Player Characters and allies running for cover). Eidechse is hit hard, but will survive because the Dragon finds it needs to rest as millennia of slumber have weakened its muscles somewhat (it will recover just in time for the Player Character to make their move).

This will give the Player Characters time to prepare. Ideally, the Player Characters should be inspired to go to the Wood Elves, if they are not already involved. Ultimately, there should be a climatic high fantasy sky battle, with the Player Characters with limited training on flying magical beasts - if you are going to fight a Dragon, you might as well do it in style. Of course, this high fantasy approach owes a lot more to WFB than to WFRP and will not be appreciated by all groups.

In a more traditional game, if the Dragon wakes and attacks then Eidechse is likely to be destroyed. The Player Characters can either flee or assist in an evacuation, perhaps acting as an heroic distraction to allow others to escape. Word might get out that they are responsible for waking the Dragon up, which will not make them popular and someone will want to tie them to a stake to appease the beast. The Dragon will continue to menace towns and villages across the region. The local nobility, cults and civil authorities will all say Dragon slaying is someone else's responsibility. It will not be until a significant number of powerful people are directly affected that they will group together and petition the Emperor to do something about it, perhaps using the Player Characters to take the request. Somewhere along the line, the Player Characters should end up acting as guides for a small army of Knights and Battle Mages, unless they have already run away to Kislev, that is.



THE AGANAUTS

A Scenario by John Foody

This scenario is set in Middenheim and is suitable for characters of any experience, although those with influence may have things a little easier. There are few opportunities for combat, but if this is required GMs can opt to have the various groups involved act more aggressively than portrayed here.

The main part of the scenario hangs on the invention of a (relatively) cheap and easily manufactured cooking stove. While not particularly historically accurate, it is used here to try to show various attitudes present in the Old World. The scenario assumes the poor still largely cook with open flames, a real danger to women who wear long dresses, as these often catch alight causing severe burns or death. Over the years smoke from the fires also causes respiratory problems.

If you do not like the idea of the stove, then you can replace it with another object, or the whole scheme could have been dreamt up by Priest of Ranald, Helena Roubleroy, as a scam to fleece her fellow investors out of their money.

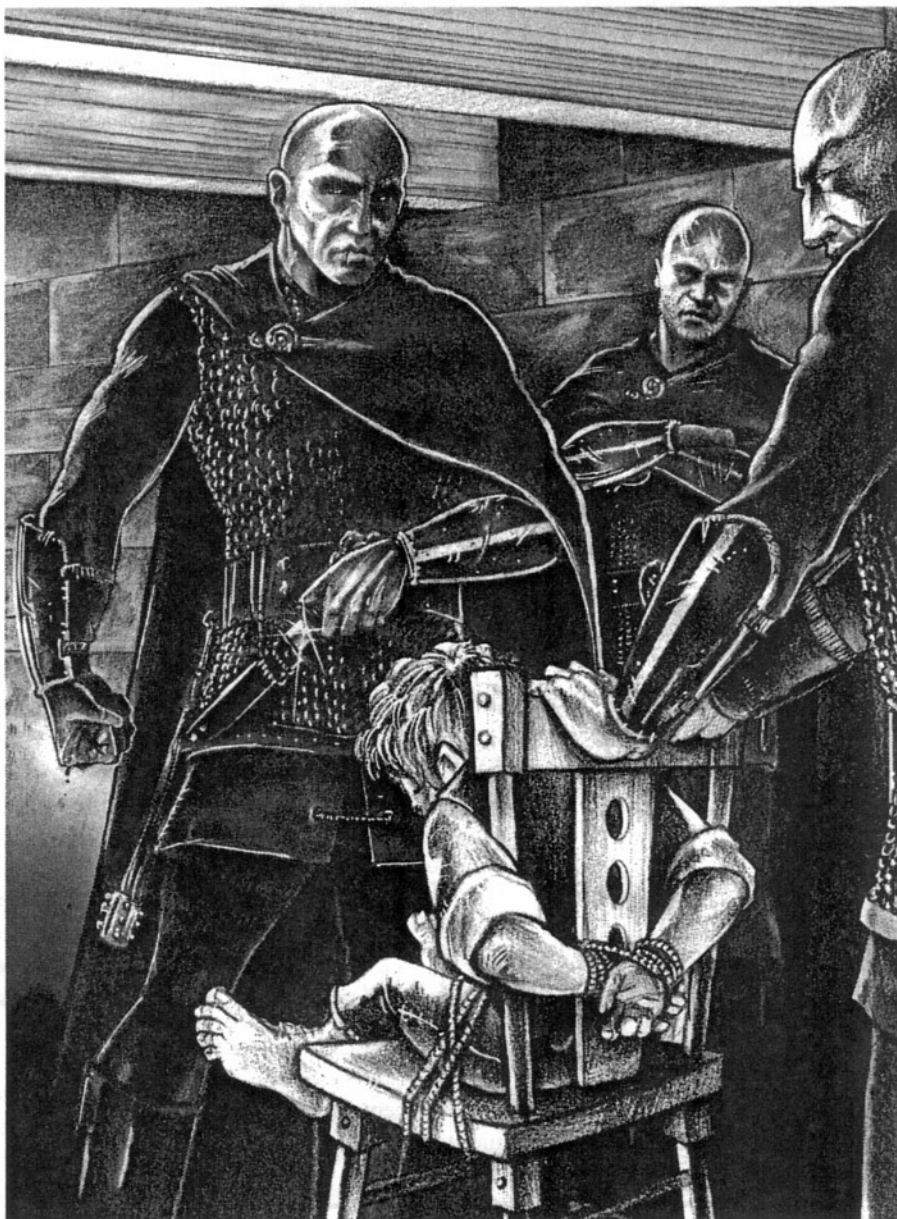
Into the Frying Pan

Alphose Agaheim, a Middenheim Alchemist, invented and spent years working on a prototype for a cheap, safe stove. Near to a breakthrough he has been backed by a number of interested local investors; a Priest of Shallya (Hans Bernt), a Merchant Priest of Ranald (Helena Roubleroy), and two halfling restaurateurs (Zammo and Freida Hobbs). Another investor, the house builder Boris Pascal, invested through the Shallyan Priest while Armin von Drakwald, an artisans' guildmaster, invested through the Ranald Priest. All of them have gambled heavily on the success of the project.

A few days ago Zammo Hobbs, after too much to drink, boasted about soon-to-be-gotten wealth. Unfortunately the wrong

people were listening. Now all of the primary investors are dead, kidnapped or in hiding.

Meanwhile a number of groups are hunting for "the artefact", although they do not really know what it is. First among these was the Ulrican Priest, Johann Tefalheim. One of his comrades overheard talk of the stove and Johann, with a couple of heavies



(including a woodman named Axel, who had also informed the wood trader Grendel), went to see the halflings. A fight broke out and Freida Hobbs, one of the restaurateurs, was killed while the other, Zammo, was kidnapped. Making his escape, Johann was arrested and thrown in jail. Legal wrangling has kept him there rather than being returned to the temple for punishment – an unusual event in itself.

At the jail Johann tried to convince the watch captain, Albertus Kronkite, that he should be freed. However, Kronkite is a senior member of The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl, a Solkanite cult. Convinced that an artefact was being created that could change civilisation, Albertus decided that this could not be allowed to proceed. He kidnapped Zammo himself and took him to the cult safe house. There the halfling was tortured and though he tried to resist he revealed the involvement of Alphose Agaheim, Hans Bernt and Helena Roubleroy.

The Law Cultists went to kidnap Alphose Agaheim but he resisted and during the struggle the house was ripped apart by an explosion, caused by his alchemical material. Most of the plans for the stove were destroyed in the explosion. The cultists then moved to capture Bernt and Roubleroy. Bernt was grabbed from the street but Roubleroy went to ground, escaping through an open window in a milliner's shop.

Scenario Summary

The PCs will be hired to investigate the disappearance of Hans Bernt. They will discover that he is well liked but recently been behaving a little oddly, falling out with his superiors at the Temple of Shallya. Further investigations will lead them to his co-conspirators who have been looking to develop the stove. However, they have also disappeared or been killed. The murderer of Freida Hobbs is in prison, while the alchemist

Alphose Agaheim was killed in an explosion. The more people they talk to the more they hear about the mysterious “artefact”. They will also come to the attention of the Law Cultists from The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl, currently holding Zammo Hobbs captive. If they manage to find the body of Hans Bernt then they will have learnt the location of the stove in Morrsark, hopefully ahead of the law cultists.

Timeline

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 7 days ago | Sepp Engels meets with Helena Roubleroy. Meeting between main investors at The Hungry Hole restaurant. Later Zammo Hobbs boasts in local tavern and is overheard by Axel. |
| 5 days ago | A local trader, Grendel, approaches Armin von Drakwald. Von Drakwald kills him. Zammo Hobbs is kidnapped and Freida Hobbs killed. Johann Tefalheim is arrested and Hobbs taken to watch house. Helena Roubleroy visits the temple of Shallya asking for Hans Bernt. |
| 4 days ago | Watch come to temple asking for Hans Bernt. Hans challenged by head priest. Hobbs moved to Law cult's safe house at the mill. Watch visit Alphose Agaheim. |
| 3 days ago | Alphose Agaheim killed. Two smartly dressed visitors come to the Temple of Shallya asking for Hans. Woodcutters come to Hans' home. Watch visit Helena Roubleroy. |
| 2 days ago | Hans kidnapped. Frau Grasser comes to temple looking for Hans. Attempted kidnapping of Helena Roubleroy – she goes underground. |
| Today | PCs hired. |

Hired

An old friend or acquaintance approaches the PCs asking for help. Their patron says that an old and close friend has gone missing. Her friend, Hans Bernt, a Priest of Shallya, was working in the Ostwald district but the temple denies his very existence. If pushed then they will say that he Hans had been secretive lately but in a good mood. The PCs will be offered money to investigate Bernt's disappearance. Their new patron knows where Hans lives.

If there is no-one to fulfil this role then one option is Klaus Stinski, a friend and neighbour of Bernt. He will tell the PCs he is worried for Hans who has not returned home for two nights. If Hans goes away then he usually tells Klaus. He became really concerned once he had been to the temple.

The Attic, Corner Building, Aubelstrasse, Ostwald

Bernt's home is located in the poor side of town. A small draughty attic at the top of a town house, there is little to steal from the various rooms and the front door of the house is

Solkan

For older WFRP fans, Solkan was probably the best known of the Law Gods who are not currently part of the Warhammer world. Solkan was a god of vengeance, inflicting retribution on those who offend the Gods of Law. Solkan was frequently worshipped by witch-hunters, and his followers are viewed with fear and mistrust across the Old World. The worship of Solkan is viewed with absolutism and fanaticism, not to mention bigotry.

If you do not want to use the Solkan as a Law God then he could be treated as a Sigmarite saint. Another option would be to have the cultists follow an extreme aspect of Sigmar. A third possibility is to draw on a more obscure Law god. Despite being found in the original WFRP1 rulebook, Alluminas is rarely mentioned. It is said that the Lord of Light controls a light that renders all it touches immobile and unchanging, fixed in time and space. Although he is said to be an unpopular god because the concepts surrounding his worship are hard for human minds to grasp, he does seem an appropriate god for any cult seeking to resist change.

unlocked. The door to Bernt's room takes an **Easy (+20%) Pick Lock Test** to open.

In the attic, one of the floorboards is loose and underneath is a small wooden box. Inside is a small leather pouch containing 7gcs and a small piece of slate. The slate has three balls scratched on to one side. On the other is scratched an eye and the number 45. A successful **Routine (+10%) Common Knowledge (the Empire) Test** will reveal this to be a marker for a pawnbroker (the three balls is a common sign). The eye indicates the pawnbroker Isiah Volk and this can be found through a successful **Gossip Test**. Also in the hole is a rolled up piece of parchment (available from Warpstone website as player handout), containing a list of names, mostly women's. This lists the names of women that have been killed around Ostwald over the last year. On the corner of this has been written "E, 7, 5".

Talking to the neighbours will reveal various pieces of news based on Degrees of Success in a **Gossip Test**. If they were approached by Klaus Stinski, he can tell them some of this.

- 0 DoS** The neighbours have not seen Hans in recent days.
- +1 DoS** A few days ago two rough looking men came looking for him. Another says Hans appeared tired and unwell recently.
- +2 DoS** The two men were both dirty with big beards, one with a badly scarred face. Each had a small axe hanging from their belts. One neighbour says he had seen the pair in the Old Ostwald tavern.

The landlord at the Old Ostwald tavern remembers the pair as they were looking for Hans Bernt. They said they had an ill friend they needed looking at. He thought it odd as they were woodcutters from one of the surrounding settlements. They are usually to be found around Southgate and not this far over in town. He pointed them in the right direction. If told Hans is missing he will be genuinely concerned and promise to ask his regulars if they have heard anything.

The Woodcutters

Asking around Southgate, they will find various woodcutters drinking or going about their business. They all recognise the description of the men, but are clearly nervous. Money will be needed to make them tell and they whisper that the scarred man is Axel, a lunatic who works for Herr Grendel. Grendel was killed five days ago, stabbed to death in his timber yard.

The Grendel yard is closed except for a clerk who is tidying the books and happy to gossip. He says that the watch believe that Herr Grendel had been murdered during a robbery. However, the clerk believes that Grendel was involved in various illicit activities and probably got involved with wrong people. He had overheard an angry conversation between Grendel and Axel where the merchant was seriously worried about a threat to his business. Grendel was found stabbed to death in an alley shortly after arguing with a well-dressed man. The man was said to be tall with a bearskin hat.

Axel had heard the rumours of the stove, via the boasts of Hobbs, and had gone to see Grendel. Grendel approached an old acquaintance Armin von Drakwald, a guildmaster in the Guild of Craftsman. Grendel was one of a number of contacts von Drakwald had listening out for new ideas and inventions. In this case von Drakwald knew that Grendel, opposed to such a development, would cause trouble and coldly stabbed him to death.

The Ostwald Chapel

There are two priests here treating the local sick and they are overwhelmed. Neither will talk to the PCs unless they mention that Hans is in some sort of trouble.

Hans was a dedicated and talented priest. A few days ago the high priestess visited them and ordered the pair not to talk about Hans as he had brought disgrace on the temple. They say that Hans has been very excited recently, once saying that he "could finally make a difference; not just help a few," and that, "it would make so many lives better."

If they are shown the list of names, they will recognise some of them as women who have died in recent months. If prompted they say they think they died in fires. If asked if Hans was specifically studying a particular topic, they will say they do not know, although he was an expert in treating burns.

Investigating the Names on the List

The names on the list are those that have been killed or badly burned over the last ten years by an open fire in their homes or where they worked. It will take some legwork to track down those who knew the victims but it will be possible. The stories the PCs hear will be a variety on the same theme. All will say the victims were burnt to death when their house burnt down or they caught fire, probably as a result of a fallen candle or open fire. No one they speak to is particularly surprised at such deaths. It is a fact of life in the Old World.

The High Temple of Shallya

Again, the priests will refuse to acknowledge Han's existence but insistence will lead to the high priestess. She is very angry with him and believes the PCs will be bringing bad news. She says that Hans was expelled for stealing money from the temple. When challenged he admitted his crime but said it was for the greater good but would say no more. She confined him to a room in the temple while she consulted the senior priests. However, he ran away shortly afterwards.

A few days ago, a woman and a man came asking for Hans. Both were smartly dressed but left after talking to junior priests. These were a pair of potential investors.

She is loath to involve the watch but says that someone else told them. They were also here looking for Hans some days ago. She believes they were led by a Corporal "Krantz" or similar. They were rude and surly.

Later that day the merchant Helana Roubleroy came to see her. Roubleroy and her husband are wealthy merchants who have donated to the temple in the past. She was clearly nervous and did not seem surprised that Hans had not been seen recently. She has no idea how they could be linked.

If the PCs talk to the other priests they will get the impression that Hans was a dedicated, loyal priest. However some believe that Hans had lost his faith recently. A successful **Challenging (+10%) Gossip Test** will lead to a priest who remembers an old lady asking after Hans recently. She was very upset and left after being told Hans was not at the temple.

Helana Roubleroy

The Merchants' Guild will point PCs towards the Freiburg offices of the Roubleroy's. They trade in wines from the west of the Old World. Their office is a well-kept and decorated three-story building. The clerks at the door will not allow entry unless PCs are persistent or offer a bribe.

Peter Roubleroy will be worried to hear that there is reason to suspect his wife is in trouble. She went missing a few days ago, packing a bag, but she often does this. Peter does not worry about such things as Helena is a priest of Ranald and he knows that her duties call her away at short notice. However, something has been nagging at his mind recently. Helena had received strange visitors recently. A trio of particularly humourless members of the watch came to see her. Two of them had an unusual white strip sewn on the forearm of their coat. He did not recognise this but for reasons he is unsure of, it caused him concern. The second visitor was Armin von Drakwald of the Artisans' Guild. She had dealt with von Drakwald before but never really trusted him.

Both of these spoke with his wife in private. He cannot say for sure what they spoke about but he suspects that it involved an alchemist by the name of Alphose Agaheim who lives by the city wall in Southgate.

Peter will not allow the PCs to search his wife's office. If they do so covertly, then they may discover a hidden (**Search Test**) shrine to Ranald. On the desk is a pile of papers containing a list of orders to blacksmiths across the city. It does not detail what the order is, but each is for a single item.

If the PCs appear to be reasonably competent and discreet then he will tell them that he does have a contact for his wife if ever there was trouble. This is Sepp Engels, a resident of Ostwald. He has never met the man but Helena said he could be contacted through the barman at the Happy Magpie tavern. If he does not tell the PCs this he will leave shortly afterwards to see Sepp Engels himself. However, he will appreciate the help.

The Happy Magpie

This tavern is a seedy single-room dive, located under a Dressmaker's shop. There are a few patrons here throughout

the day but priests of Ranald use it in their business. Engels is a fellow priest who spends his time gambling and cheating those better off than himself. He will appear in the tavern shortly after they tell the barman they are looking for him.

Engels has not seen Helena for a few days. He did walk with her to the Hungry Hole restaurant in Sudgarten, where two men were waiting for her. One he guessed was a priest of some sort, "not the warrior type, if you know what I mean". He heard there was some trouble there a few days later but there was nothing to indicate Helena was involved.

Engels has heard of watchmen wearing white stripes on their forearms. He is not sure what it truly signifies but suspects it is some sort of symbol indicating a particular point of view, probably one not quite legitimate.

Smoking Ruin

When Alphose Agaheim's house blew up, the neighbours were not surprised. As with any alchemist they half-expected it to happen one day. The house is a charred ruin. The roof, windows and doors have all gone and parts of the walls have collapsed inwards. A number of empty flasks of oil have been thrown by



the back door. If they risk going inside then a successful **Search Test** will uncover a blackened sword amongst the debris and alchemist's paraphernalia.

Meanwhile, a **Hard (-20%) Perception Test** will reveal the PCs are being watched. Results are based on Degree of Success:

- 0 DoS** See a man watching from shadows who disappears immediately.
- +1 DoS** See a man watching who disappears but they see that he is wearing a fur hat and coat.
- +2 DoS** They see a man watching them. He does not realise he has been spotted.

The man is Armin von Drakwald, the guildmaster and investor. He is keeping an occasional watch on the ruins to see if there is any interest. He will run if seen, afraid of being linked in any way to what has gone on.

Talking to the neighbours will not reveal much sympathy for Agaheim but they say that before then he rarely bothered anyone and on Geheimnstag would bring presents of soap to his neighbours. They were surprised to hear that three (or more depending on who they talk to) bodies were found in the rubble. Thankfully, his housekeeper Frau Grasser was not there at the time. She is an old widow who lives nearby.

The Housekeeper

Frau Grasser has worked for Herr Agaheim for five years and, while he pays her, she does it to look after Agaheim who she has come to see as a son. She is very upset at his death. She believes it was not an accident. The day before the explosion he was very nervous. Something had happened to friends of his but he would not say who or what. He believed it was deliberate. She suspects that his friend had died and he must have been close as a priest of Mórr had visited. In recent weeks he had emerged from his laboratory less than usual. More unusually he had received visitors from time to time, guiding them in to the laboratory before locking the door. She does not really recall who these visitors were although she remembers a smartly dressed lady and a pair of Halflings.

The watch came knocking at the door that morning but he refused to let her answer and then he sent her home early. He said that if anything happened to him she was to find Hans Bernt, a priest of Shallya and tell him. She tried but could not find him at the temple.

Whatever he was working on he kept hidden from her, throwing a sheet over a box in the middle of the room. The day before his death this was put in a crate and placed on a cart and taken away.

The Hungry Hole

The Hungry Hole is run by the Hobbs family, headed by Zammo and Freida. Halflings of four generations standing in Middenheim, they are wealthy and influential. Humans of good social status frequent the restaurant and the prices reflect this.

"Lambchop" Hobbs, a muscled and foul-mouthed artist of a chef, cooks the food. Lambchop is currently in charge after the events of the last few days.

After closing a few nights ago, three men came to see Zammo and Freida. One was dressed in a long cloak, but Lambchop saw a robe underneath. Voices were raised and when Lambchop entered the kitchen, Freida was lying bleeding on the floor, while the other men dragged Zammo outside. Lambchop grabbed a cleaver and attacked. He managed to wound one man who ran off after the others. The alarm had been raised by then and two of the men were arrested. One died of the wounds inflicted by Lambchop. At first they were told that Zammo had been found well and taken to the physician's but later they were told the third man had escaped with him. The other two men were big men with big beards. One had a badly scarred face. Both carried small axes on their belts. The watch later said the man was a woodcutter.

If asked what was being said Lambchop says he is not sure but he thought he heard the word "artefact".

If they ask if anyone else has been around, Lambchop says that every day since the news got out a man has been around threatening to take over the restaurant. The man says that if he does not get his money then he will take what is due to him. He comes around midday and Lambchop throws him out every time as "he's talking rubbish". He has no idea who he is and does not care.

If they ask if they had been meeting with anyone recently, Lambchop says they were doing business with Helena Roubleroy and a priest of Shallya named "Borstor something".

Boris the Builder

If the PCs wait at the Hungry Hole, the man Lambchop spoke of will arrive at midday. Boris Pascal is a housebuilder of some influence and wealth. Some years ago, after the death of workers at one of his sites, he fell into depression and alcoholism. His fortune in ruins, he promised the gods that if he became successful again he would dedicate his life to helping the unfortunate. Now a successful builder once more he was convinced to invest in the stove by Hobbs. Trusting the well regarded restaurateur he placed a small fortune in the project. Hobbs, in a gesture to placate Pascal, signed across a share of the Hungry Hole in the event that Pascal did not make his money back in five years. That was five months ago and Pascal has worried about it ever since. Now that the Hobbs are no longer there he is panicking, believing he has been ripped off. He was told that an artefact had been discovered that would lead to great benefit to mankind and provide great riches. However, research was needed to get it working.

Boris had also heard a rumour that a senior member of the Artisans' Guild was an investor and he thought that added weight to the reason for investing.

The Pawnbroker

The piece of slate belongs to “Isiah” Volk, an Ostwald pawnbroker. He is named Isiah as one of his eyes is higher than the other. Volk’s offices have an ordinary shop front, but are guarded by at least three men at all times. He will not talk to the PCs as “confidentiality is my middle name”. However, if he is threatened with holding goods stolen from the temple, as are the goods Bernt pawned, then he will be willing to deal, claiming innocence. This is clearly a lie, as the goods are obviously religious in nature. Volk will not give them up but will say that he only dealt with the priest as Zammo and Frieda Hobbs vouched for him. Volk believes Hobbs “is as honest as his-feet-are-long” and Volk felt safe to deal.

The Caged Priest

Johann Tefalheim is being held at the Ulricsmund Watchhouse. The temple of Ulric has demanded his return but lawyers, publicly on behalf of the Hobbses, have managed to delay this. In fact the Hobbses know nothing of this, instead the lawyer is a member of The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl and has been asked to delay things by Captain Albertus.

Tefalheim is spitting mad and angry he has not been released. He will not say why he was after the Hobbses but that the halflings are enemies of mankind, unknowing lapdogs of The Great Changer and he wished he had killed them both. He further rants that those who look for forbidden knowledge should be killed. If the PCs can convince them they are on his side then he will tell them that the halflings were looking to uncover an item linked to dark power and corruption.

Captain Albertus

The PCs will be pointed towards Albertus as the arresting officer. He has a white stripe sewn on his sleeve and is lean, mean and vicious looking. He says he was on patrol when he heard calls for the watch. His patrol came across the kidnapping and rescued Zammo Hobbs, bringing him back to the watch house. After a while he was allowed to go home. They say the man in jail has yet to prove his claim that he is a Priest.

If the PCs visit Albertus and seem suspicious of him then when they leave he will visit Alexander Wagner, a senior lawyer in the firm Wagner, Siegfried and Valkyrie. Wagner is a member of the cult and Albertus’ senior. Wagner will tell Albertus to keep an eye on the PCs and make sure they do not get too close to the cult, but to see if they can uncover anything more.

The Blacksmiths

A number of blacksmiths were hired by Roubleroy to produce various items. They received very specific measurements but nothing that made any real sense individually. Each was supplied with a small barrel of metal filings that was to be added to the metal when melted.

The reason the blacksmiths were chosen to undertake the work, in addition to being skilled enough to produce the items, was to ensure the stove could be re-produced easily.

A local cart driver, Fritz Castel of Ostwald, collected the items. Castel was hired by Roubleroy to pick up the items from two blacksmiths and deliver them to a warehouse. He heard another driver say that he had done a similar job recently, but he knows the driver was hired last week on a merchant caravan heading south. Castel was also due to leave recently on a caravan but was unwell - “ate a bit of dodgy pie at the market – if you get my drift.”

We are the Law

At some stage two serious young men will approach the PCs. Both are dressed in simple black clothes with a single white stripe sewn on the left arm. These are members of The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl. The lead one talks while the other watches closely, hand on his sword. “Brothers, you have strayed from the single path. Leave your investigations aside and you will be spared trouble.” They will not cause trouble and make no further threats at this time.

Warehouse 17

This warehouse belongs to a business associate of the Roubleroy and they make frequent use of it. At the moment it is empty and locked and guards check it daily, leaving if the doors are secure. Inside, by a table and fallen chair, the body of Hans Bernt lies spread on the floor, a pool of dried blood around



his head. His pockets are turned inside out and a bloodied dagger sticks out of his skull. On the floor nearby is a screwed-up parchment, an unfinished letter to a fellow Priest (Player Handout 1).

Around Bernt's neck is a key on a chain. The end of the key is a raven. This is the key to a Mausoleum in Morrpark. The numbers in his apartment, "E, 7, 5" mark its location.

Many of the crates have been broken open revealing various goods that have been pulled out but largely left untouched.

Hail Tzeentch

Armin von Drakwald is a guildmaster in the Guilds of Craftsman. He says that he was approached by the merchant Helena Roubleroy with an offer to invest in a business opportunity. They are old friends and he trusts her judgement in business. She said that she had a sure-fire venture that needed investment but would provide benefit to his members and society as a whole. He believes that this came from a valuable artefact that had been discovered. If the PCs return this to him, then he will be willing to pay a large finder's fee. However, he is unable to say what this artefact is, although he thinks its use will not be immediately obvious.

Von Drakwald is a follower of Tzeentch, although a benevolent one. He believes that mankind benefits directly from change and the main churches deliberately impede this change in the

Narin,

You will be shocked to learn that I am guilty of the thefts of which I was accused. However, I feel justified. Shallya blessed me with the chance to make a difference. I have discovered a way in which thousands of lives will be saved. How could I say no! Would you?

Still, I was sworn to secrecy for there are those that would wish to impede us.

However, it is clear that others in the know are working to their own agenda. I suspect AoD is follower of T.

Player Handout 1

status quo as it would challenge their authority. He murdered Grendel to keep it secret but things got out of hand. He has kept his head down since.

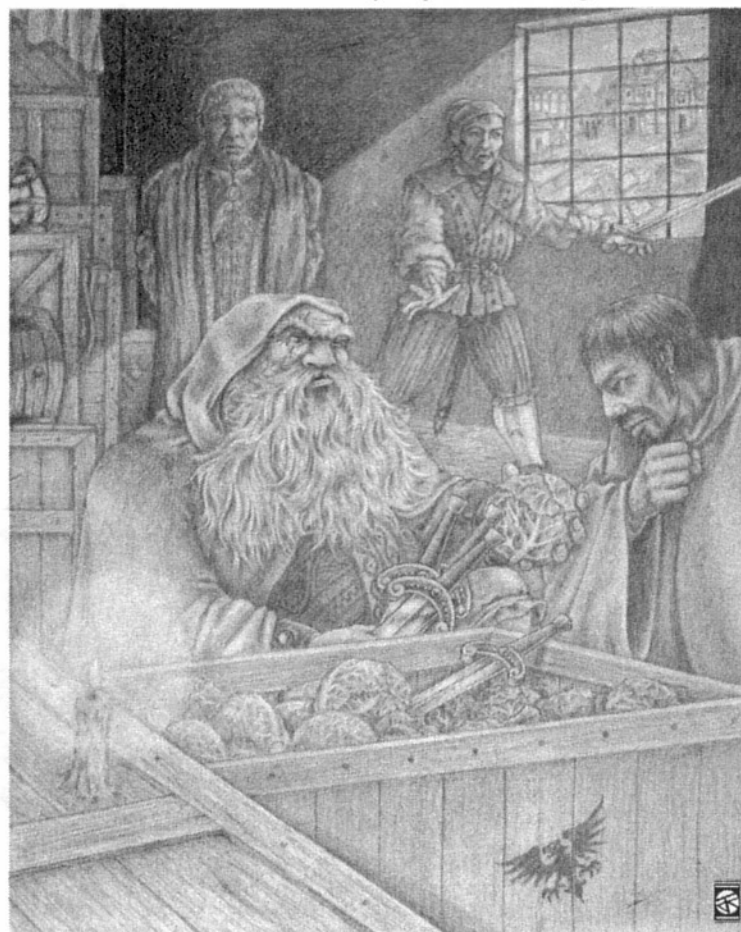
If challenged about being a worshiper of Chaos he will deny it. If threatened with being exposed to the authorities then he will try to convince others of the righteousness of his cause.

Von Drakwald is well dressed and there is a bearskin hat on his coat-stand. He works from his family home, where he lives with his wife and three young children. Two servants are always present. Von Drakwald does not belong to any cult and has kept his allegiance to Tzeentch secret from everyone.

The Mill

Situated on the edge of Ulricsmund, the Forest View Mill is a large building always busy during the day. At night various members of The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl stand guard. It is they that can be followed here. Hobbs is being held here by the cult.

He is located in the cellar, in a series of rooms carved out of the rock. He is strapped to a table, in a locked room. After six days he will break and tell his captors where the prototype stove has been hidden. This has been hidden in a box in an alcove in Morrpark.



Morrspark

The stove has been placed in the von Dissell mausoleum, an extinct noble Middenheim family. The only clue to the location is the clue in Hans Bernt's home - "E, 7, 5". It is stored within a heavy wooden crate. The stove is made of iron, with a large hole at the back, two round covers on top and a door at the front.

If members of The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl are following the PCs then they will make their move now. Their aim is to obtain the stove and do not feel they need to silence the PCs unless forced to.

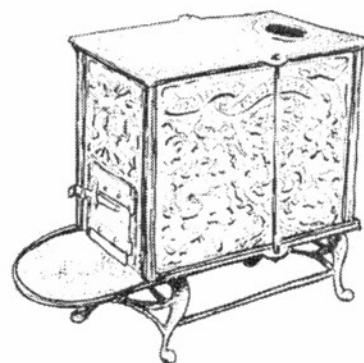
Letting it Stand

The outcome of the scenario largely depends on the PCs' actions. Without their involvement Hobbs will break and reveal the location of the stove. He will be freed but die a few months later, weakened by his ordeal. Helena Roubleroy will resurface and move with her husband to another Imperial city. The stove itself will be destroyed and such a development delayed for many years.

If the PCs have seen the stove or at least come to some understanding about how it works then they could pass on what they know. This may be enough for a talented inventor to develop

their own version. PCs could be involved with the funding of this and perhaps make their fortune. However, on the way, they would again have to deal with all those who oppose its development and others who would like to steal the idea. If it is developed then it will, in time, save many lives.

If the PCs have crossed The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl, then it could haunt them in future. The cult has fingers in many parts of the Middenheim legal system and has a long memory. However, it could also prove an ally to the PCs in the right circumstances.



Those in the Stew

Johann Tefalheim

A fanatical and rigid priest of Ulric. He believes that change is weakening the Empire and fears anything different. His superiors have blocked his career recognising that, while he has his uses, he is too unreasonable for dealing with most situations. He is currently in Middenheim recuperating from battle injuries. Once freed from prison he will return to the northern borders.

The Unchanging Memory of Daedulus Kohl

A Solkanite cult dedicated to the memory of a long dead martyr. They are largely made up of lawyers, judges and members of the watch. They are dedicated to maintaining order in the city and working towards implementing stricter law and punishment.

Investigating Daedulus Kohl himself is largely fruitless. Outside of the Cult's oral tradition there are no records of his existence.

Artisan's Guildmaster

Armin von Drakwald is a senior member and guildmaster in the Guild of Craftsman. He invested in the project through Helana Roubleroy, as they had undertaken charitable work on many occasions. In fact, Armin von Drakwald is also a worshipper of Tzeentch. However, he follows a very benevolent aspect of the Chaos God. Armin von Drakwald believes that the future of mankind will be safe through radical change. The invention of a cooker that would save the lives of many attracted him immediately.

The Hobbs

Taking part in the funding in honour of Zammo's aunt who died in a kitchen fire. Although, they have money they are actually in debt to a local moneylender.



THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE HANGMEN

Executioners in WFRP by Dr. Leif U. Schrader

The article deals with the executioner in general. Game mechanics play no role. It is not my aim to provide new careers or rules for this profession. Instead the article aims at providing ideas for background to the career and its place in society, some of which act as alternatives to current background.

The earliest records can be found from ancient times in Tilea, where they were called 'carnifex' meaning 'flesh maker'. There are no records of the origin of the carnifex, but it is interesting that they appeared around the same time as the first records of the church of Morr were being set down. This connection can

The Position of the Executioner

The executioner quite simply stands between the courts and the accused. He is not only responsible for the incarceration of those awaiting trial, but also for the execution of the sentence. This includes corporal punishment, as well as fines. It should be noted that incarceration as a punishment is hardly known and rehabilitation is a quite novel idea. Incarceration however is used before trial to avoid flight and as a substitute punishment when someone is unable to pay a fine or damages. Instead of rehabilitation the prevailing concept is revenge. Someone has done something wrong and he should 'pay' for it. The only exception to this view is, unsurprisingly, the church of Shallya. Although not all of them have 'liberal' views on the treatment of convicts, many do and in those places where they have enough political power, mainly Bergsburg and the surrounding region, they have even begun to introduce incarceration as a standard form of punishment. Most other regions consider this, to use the words of the Grand-Theogonist, 'stupid charity, done by old women in funny clothes, who need someone to mother'. It should be noted that this exclamation did very little for the relations between the churches of Sigmar and Shallya. The Grand-Theogonist had to apologise soon afterwards, but he surely is not the only one with such views.

The profession of an executioner is closely linked to judicial organisations. This is not limited to courts, but to anyone with judicial power, such as the ecclesiastical courts. This gives the executioner a semi-official status, at least.

The Historical Development of the Profession

The profession of the executioner is a very old one.



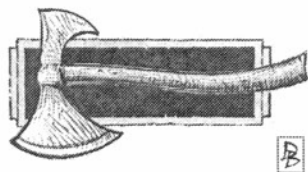
still be seen in Puccini, where the executioner is a priest of Morr, although his identity is hidden from the public. Whether the church of Morr introduced the profession or the church itself originated in the profession is unknown. Some scholars believe that executioners started to form small groups that eventually became the church of Morr. This hypothesis is still debated but almost never in the presence of a priest of Morr.

The profession itself had not officially developed in the Empire before the time of Magnus. Although the tribes united under Sigmar practiced the death sentence and other forms of corporal punishment, these were not undertaken by a trained person. Instead they were either done through the militia of the local chieftain or ruler, by the community as a whole or by feuds. Sentences were often carried out by more than one person, such as stoning or beating. The southern parts of the Empire were the first to develop the profession of a hangman, with many tracing the influence to Tilea.

With Magnus the Pious, the Empire was reunited and many new laws imposed. These included laws for a coherent system of courts. Judges were given power, and feuds and other forms of self-justice were forbidden, although they can still be found throughout the Empire, especially in the eastern and northern parts.

From what we know, the ancient kingdoms of Tilea had a profession that served as a court's servant, as well as a bailiff. While this profession was generally held in high esteem, the carnifex was not, although he was not necessarily a slave. This system existed in the south of the Empire until the time of Sigmar. Next to the executioner stood the so called 'vronbote', who delivered court orders and was responsible for the presence of the accused and the witnesses, and served as a bailiff. The execution of sentences was only rarely and under specific circumstances his task. The earliest imperial records we have of the profession 'executioner' are in Nuln. The city laws include the obligation of every new citizen to pay 4gcs to the 'after-judge' (a frequent euphemism for hangman) and the 'vronbote'. Just a few decades later the vronbote is no longer mentioned. This obligation implies that the hangmen belonged to the clerks of the city. When the town of Kleinstetten on the Imperial/Bretonnian border fell under the rule of Bretonnia during one of the many border conflicts, the city's mayor demanded the right to retain the executioner. Other records clearly state the executioner as being a clerk of the city and include a register of income of hangmen from Altdorf and Averheim.

Originally the tasks of an executioner were diverse. They included the protection of silos and the supervision of the milk trade. Neither tally with the image we have of the executioner today.



An Outsider by Profession

Wait a little while

Then he comes to thee

With his axe he kills

While you're on your knee

Children's rhyme (as heard on the streets of Altdorf)

Once more or less respected, the image of the executioner today is totally different and they are avoided. Although even the carnifex was considered to be dubious, the social standing of the members of this profession was considered to be a necessary evil. The mistrust towards the executioner is most likely to have been developed out of the simple fact that he kills other people. The mistrust in the beginning was strengthened because many of his other tasks were seen as unclean. These included the collection of dead animals and the cleaning of the prison tower. During the centuries, social prejudices originating in this mistrust put the executioner firmly in the role of an outsider. This was also supported by the churches and the guilds. Even the lowest class of society felt the need to look down upon someone else.

As well as killing other people, an unpleasant act at the best of times, the mistrust of executioners is often linked to their association with Khaine (and sometimes Khorne). While most executioners act under the jurisdiction of the Cult of Morr that is not always sufficient to stop the common folk linking them with Khaine. This is especially so when some executioners seem to take perhaps too much pleasure in their work. While the cult of Morr is confident that no link can exist, this has not stopped the executioners being linked with even more nefarious powers. This was exacerbated in 2456 when an extended family of Talabheim executioners were exposed as followers of the Bloody Red Gauntlet dedicating their work to the murder god.

When the first executioners appeared in the Empire, they were separated from wider society. The earliest record of this comes from the city of Nuln. Its city law states that the executioner should not sit on the same table as pious people and should not enter the house of a citizen of the city. This did not change when the executioner became a clerk of the city. Most cities today do not give executioners citizenship. Among the few that do are Bergsburg, Middenheim and Altdorf. The latter is probably only because the Emperor himself appoints executioners.

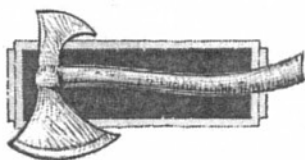
Besides this legal separation, the social separation is even stronger. An executioner is considered to be impure and even touching him passes on the impurity. This stigma is particularly pronounced in the southern provinces and cities like Averheim. It is so strong that many citizens dare not to call the executioner by name instead referring to him as 'Shortener', 'Mauler', 'Mangler' or 'Bodybender' (The Reikspiel translations of these words are: "Abkürzer", "Fleischer", "Fetzer" and "Rumpfbrecher"). The merchant Bodo Würpffennig of Averheim when travelling in the North was surprised by the difference in customs and noted in his diary that "the afterjudge is allowed to live with the other people in Middenheim, he can enter the guild halls and sit with pious people at the same table, which would be unthinkable in our city".

The most commonly found social restrictions are that the executioner cannot eat and drink with other citizens, neither he

nor his children are allowed to enter guild houses and he must buy all goods that he touches. Contact between a guild member and the executioner is often considered a guild offence, leading to fines or exclusion.

Frequently, the house of the executioner stands outside a city's walls or when inside the city, directly next to the wall. The most famous executioner's home is in Middenheim where the executioner and his family live on top of one of the city gates.

The social separation and prejudice rarely take the form of open violence as that is a punishable offence. There are only a few instances known where an executioner was actually attacked, and in all of these cases there were aggravating circumstances. Famously, one executioner of Talabheim was lynched because he had touched the unmarried daughter of the head of the Smith's Guild. Bullying on the other hand happens more frequently. Contrary to the common caricature the executioner generally does not wear a hood or a mask when executing people, and the cities and towns are small enough so that his identity is known anyway. This can make the life of an executioner very dangerous. To prevent such attacks, local authorities usually keep a close eye on their executioner and may even give him bodyguards. Another infrequent danger is that the relatives or, more often, the comrades of a convict try to assassinate the executioner. However, without an executioner the convict simply stays longer in prison, a situation generally considered worse. Secondly the authorities spare nothing to find those responsible.



The Daily Life of an Executioner

"Beware, beware, honest citizens! Step out of the way and let him do his grisly work."

Announcement before an execution in Averheim

The daily life of an executioner has many strictures, most derived from folklore and social prejudices. Only the most important are mentioned here. Of course it is hard to distinguish an executioner from other people, unless he wears his official clothes or is publicly known.

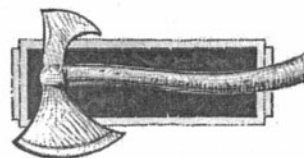
The executioner is often not allowed to touch goods, unless he buys them. Should he not do so the merchant can often sue. In some parts this goes as far as forcing an executioner who stumbles into the goods to pay for them all. Some cities rule that the executioners are only allowed to buy in specific shops.

Just as important is that executioners are often in one way or the other restricted in their access to taverns and inns. Some cities may not even allow him to enter these establishments – although this stricture does not exist for hostleries on the Empire's roads. In urban centres it is common for the executioner not to be allowed to sit on a table with other citizens and has his own plate and utensils or has to bring them himself. These strictures are seen as protection for ordinary citizens. Many guilds charge hefty fines should a member be found sitting with an executioner,

even if the guild member was unaware. In many places the executioner, upon entering a tavern or inn, has to indicate his status by announcing himself.

Prostitutes that 'serve' executioners have to indicate this so that every citizen knows. Therefore most will never conduct their business with an executioner unless they have no choice. This can turn to catastrophe should it become publicly known later. When the tailor Johannes Feinschnitt had visited the 'lewd woman' Elora Stauber and later learned that an executioner was one of her previous customers, he went back and killed Elora before disappearing.

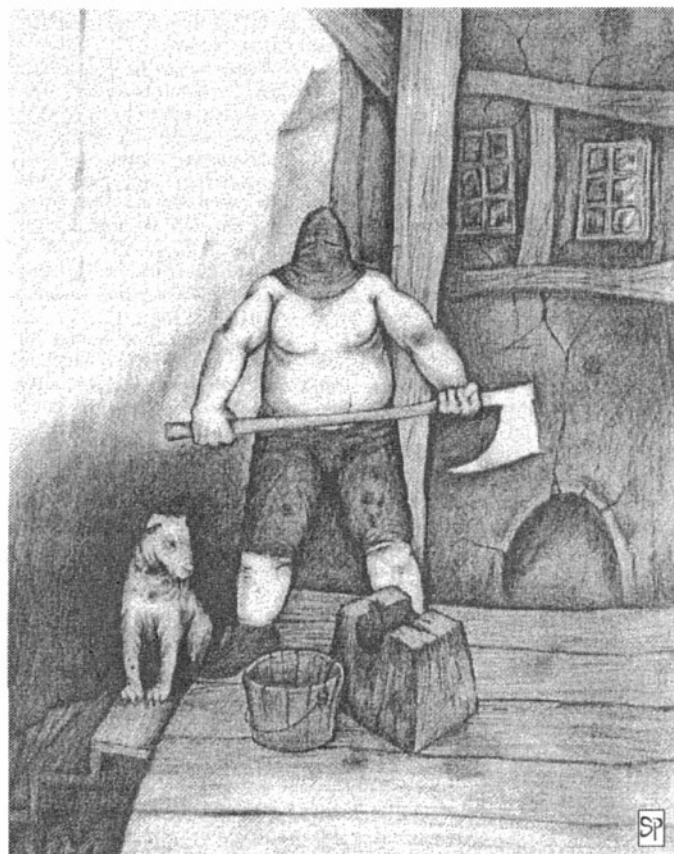
Executioners may visit the bathhouse in most cities. They are however not allowed to sit in the same water as other customers and the water has to be spilled away. Therefore the keeper of a bathhouse generally charges them more than other customers.



Travelling

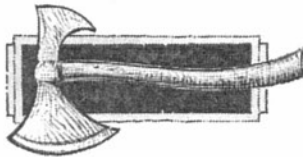
In general, to prevent a city being without an executioner they cannot leave their city without the authorities' consent.

The mayor or council however can decide that the executioner can travel quite freely. This very much depends on personal relations, past behaviour of the executioner and 'donations' to the city or the individuals. The executioner is also allowed to leave the city to conduct executions. Only towns and cities



generally have their own executioners. Smaller towns and villages have to send a request for an executioner. When this happens, it is common for the city to send guards to protect the executioner.

Should an executioner die without an heir a message is sent to other towns to find out if they have an apprentice executioner willing to come or if they are willing to loan their executioner. Should a town be without an executioner for too long it risks social unrest. The prisons become crowded and the inmates may revolt, while the executioner's other typical tasks are not done, which not only makes the place stink but also increases the risk of disease. This can be quite welcoming for more sinister groups. A group of Nurgle cultists once had the executioner of Bögenhafen (and those sent to replace them) killed. Bögenhafen was without an executioner for more than two years and when riots broke out during the summer, troops had to be sent from Altdorf. The city was placed under the direct command of Altdorf for a while, during which it was cleaned and repaired – much to the unhappiness of the citizens of Bögenhafen this was not done by the soldiers, but by the people of Bögenhafen irrespective of title and position under military supervision. (Of course the usual suspects were able either to avoid their duty completely (most by leaving the city) or paid others to do this.)



Profession of an Executioner

"I swear to obey the orders of the honourable judges and honourable members of the council of the city of Talabheim and show no mercy to those handed over to me. To do my work as ordered, without delay and by the good standards required. I swear never to accept money from anyone except the council of the city of Talabheim for executing those persons that were convicted of a crime. I swear only to execute, incarcerate or torture those that were officially sentenced to the according punishment or treatment. I swear not to sell or give away the remains of the executed other than to the members of the cult of Morr, the members of the council of the city of Talabheim or people instructed by these. I swear this oath in the knowledge that any violation is a capital offence and that I shall die by the wheel should I disobey it."

The executioner's oath in Talabheim

In most parts of the Empire the executioner swears an oath before he can work. Although the oaths differ from location to location, some elements are commonplace. These include swearing to not accept money from the convicted with the aim of getting a swifter death, to obey the orders of the court or judicial body and to wear clothes that mark him as an executioner (mostly deep red or black). The oath in Averheim, for example, orders the executioner to give way to any 'righteous citizen' when he meets them on the street, forbids them to enter any building other than the prison, the barracks and his own house unless ordered.

Some of the rules apply not only to the executioner, but also to his family and servants.

The main task of an executioner is, of course, executing people. Although this may seem simple and straightforward, it is not. During executions the citizens of a city usually meet to observe the proceedings. If the executioner fails to conduct the execution properly he can face a lynching mob. Even though only the convicted suffer from botched executions, the people will often not tolerate it. The risk of getting lynched is imminent when the accused is sentenced to death by beheading. Rarely is the executioner given more than two strikes to sever the head.

Besides the task of executing convicts, the executioner originally also worked as a knacker, collecting dead animals to strip the fur and leather off and disposing of the corpses outside the city. The profession of a knacker is also considered unclean, but they can live reasonably well by it as most cities allow the knacker to sell the fur and leather in addition to charging for each animal collected. Other typical tasks originally included the collection of stray dogs and cats, the cleaning of prisons, the emptying of the sewers and sometimes the catching of rats. All of the latter often made up the major part of an executioner's income. Over the years this has changed as at least all big cities have begun to employ other people for these additional tasks. The workload has become too much for a single person and the fact that money can be earned at these has played no insignificant role. The city's sanitation has often, thanks to the influence of the church of Shallya, become more of a subject for the city itself. This development was supported by rather unpleasant occurrences in the past when executioners neglected these tasks. While cities like Altdorf have installed new departments within the city administration to do this work, others like Middenheim have left the executioner to supervise.

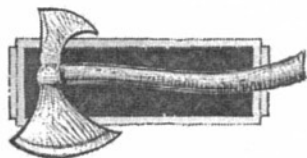
Executioners can often be found working as animal physicians, quacks or brothel keepers, especially in the north of the Empire. In eastern parts of the Empire people who commit suicide are often not buried in consecrated ground. In these cases the executioner is often responsible for collecting the bodies and burning them. Many different customs and practices depend on the question of whether the executioner is allowed to keep all the possessions of those who have committed suicide. In those parts of the eastern Empire where they are allowed to do so, the executioner becomes very rich which leads to increased dislike and mistrust.

All of the executioner's instruments are bought and maintained by the city. The only exception to this is the sword or axe. These belong to the executioner, who will often pay large sums to get the best quality available to avoid an improperly conducted beheading. Axes are more common in the rural areas. However, it is up to the executioner which he prefers. Executioners' weapons have very broad blades and are tip heavy to allow a clear cut. None are made for combat as they are too unbalanced to be very efficient (I suggest a modifier of -10 to the WS and -20 when used in small rooms). The most famous executioner's sword is in the hands of Gerhard Schwartmann, the Imperial Executioner in Altdorf. This is an enchanted weapon made by dwarven runesmiths. The sword, commonly referred to simply

as the Executioner's Blade was given by the Dwarves as a present to the Emperor, although they were enraged when they heard that the sword was being used to perform executions. The sword has been in the possession of the Imperial Executioner for twelve generations.

Due to the rigid strictures imposed it is hard to believe that anyone enters the profession at all. However, most executioners are the sons of executioners. They are generally not allowed to enter any guild nor be employed in other functions in a city. Other dubious professions like rat catcher, shepherds, entertainers or sewer cleaners on the other hand, are open, but the income is generally lower. The daughter of an executioner does not have the choice of marrying the son of a 'pious' citizen. Marriage to them means that the husband immediately bears the social stigma. Those that marry the offspring of an executioner, find their family is often allowed (and socially forced) to disinherit them. Due to these strictures, an executioner's children generally marry the children of executioners from elsewhere. This often means that whole provinces have executioners from families related in one way or the other and there is often a close social network across towns and cities.

A rather unusual and rare form of recruitment to the role of Executioner comes from those convicted of a capital crime, but later pardoned. It happens most frequently when a city or town is, for whatever reason, without an executioner for a long time and not expecting to get a new one. However, the person has to be the most trustworthy person in prison, which is like finding the driest drop of water in an ocean.



The Cults

"Honourable members of the council: I bring forth the matter of the executioner of Altdorf, Thomasius Hengeler, who, without consent, neither explicit, nor implicit, applied torture to the pious and righteous priest Albert von Diekmann from the righteous and glorious Church of Manann. Your honours, you know better than I do that such behaviour must not be tolerated by the members of any righteous religion. It is a clear violation of all procedures and good manners the Churches of the Empire have agreed upon."

Opening speech in a canonical court

While generally allowed into temples of Ulric and Shallya, executioners have only limited access to other temples. Temples of Sigmar either have the executioner sit apart from the rest of the congregation, sometimes even behind a curtain, or standing behind the benches. None would allow him to come to the altar or near holy artefacts.

Executioners are regularly given the right to be married in their own homes. Executioners are buried in graveyards, but their graves are often separated from the other graves. A bigger problem is often that no one can be found to carry the coffin

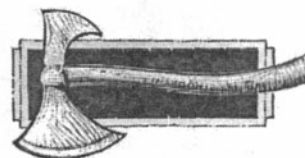
and it has happened more than once that the corpse of an executioner had lain for weeks before the priests of Morr could arrange to carry the corpse to the grave. Folklore tells that corpses of executioners can be raised from the grave more easily than other corpses and that the corpse of an executioner will bleed even years after burial if pricked.

Most executioners are devout followers of the official cults of the Empire and often erect their own shrines at home. Most do this, to show their piety and because not only witch-hunters suspect them all to be worshippers of Khaine.

Should a priest be convicted of a crime, he is not put into the hands of the usual executioner. Instead, many bigger temples employ their own executioners. Should no such executioner be available, he has to come from the next temple with such an executioner. These church executioners hold the rank of initiate and are not separated from society. In general these are initiates who have muscles, but lack the brains to become priests.

Executioners have a special relationship with two churches: Morr and Shallya. In some parts of the Empire the temple of Morr unofficially supports the executioners and some temples even accept their children as initiates.

The church of Shallya disapproves of executions in at least some circumstances. Instead, some members of the church advocate rehabilitation. Because the church has little political influence this idea has not yet found any hold. However, the church of Shallya has begun to grant wrongdoers and suspects sanctuary in their temple, should they be able to make it there. This sanctuary is however only granted for misdemeanours and, at least so far, never for felonies (even charity has its limits). A rather unusual idea came from sister Margarete from the temple of Shallya in Altdorf. A local custom of Altdorf says that any unmarried convict can go as a free man should he find a free woman to marry him. Sister Margarete exploited this rule widely, before the officials of the city found out that Altdorf had no law against polygamy. Before this law was enacted, Sister Margarete was killed and robbed by a convict she had just married to save from death.

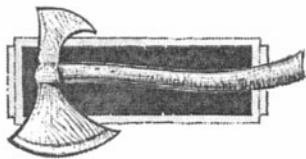


The Executioner and the Nobility

Executioners are not allowed to execute a nobleman or his relatives. They can be executed but this must be done either by their champion or the Imperial Executioner. Both do not fall under the strictures mentioned before and are never considered executioners by the common folk.

The Imperial Executioner is a typical leftover from the time of Magnus and fills a special role in the hierarchy of the Empire. Although strictly speaking an executioner, he is also a nobleman himself and always accompanies the Emperor when he leaves Altdorf. Since he is allowed to execute any other noblemen and, at least theoretically, the Emperor, he is often met with mistrust. The Todbringer family of Middenheim and other noblemen of

the northern provinces greatly mistrust the current Imperial Executioner Gerhard Schwartzmann, because he is rumoured to be a close friend of the Grand-Theogonist. For the last few generations the title has been in the hands of the Schwartzmann family. All of them were trained by the priests of Verena, which is a custom steeped in history, but they are never priests or initiates.



Sentences

"By virtue of the power vested in me by our noble lord of this duchy and the decision reached by this court I sentence you to be hanged until death. The body shall not be removed from the gallows before two days have passed and the corpse shall be put outside the walls of the city to be eaten by wild beasts."

Sentence for repeated burglary

A number of different kinds of punishments are carried out in the Empire but they can be broken into two broad categories: fines and corporal punishment. Only the latter is relevant here.

Generally the executioner is also responsible for applying torture although this does not mean that the executioner always applies the torture himself. Instead it varies from region to region. Especially in the south, the executioner employs the torturers and supervises them, while in the north torturers and executioners have little to do with each other.

Torture takes many forms from hot irons, to the breaking of bones; the more pain the better. Before being tortured, the accused is shown the instruments of torture in the hope that he will confess.

The least serious crimes lead to mutilations. Thieves have their fingers or hand cut off, adulterers have a sign branded on the forehead and so forth. The punishment always reflects the crime. In general those parts that played a role in the crime are cut off or mutilated.

Should the punishment be the death sentence, various forms are possible. The most 'noble' method is beheading. This is either done by axe or sword. Some provinces in the west have begun to use something called a wedge. This consists of a block and a moveable blade above. The convict's neck is put between the two and the executioner uses a hammer to cut off the head. Beheading is the sentence in some cases of manslaughter, robbery, rare cases of breach of the peace, rape and abortion.

Hanging simply means that the person is hung by his neck until he is dead. It is a more serious form of death sentence and sometimes referred to as the disreputable death. An aggravated form of hanging is that the convict is put on a hook that is driven through his jaws into the forehead. Hanging is also used for those that commit more serious crimes more than once.

Breaking someone on the wheel is used for criminals who are convicted of murder and poisoning. The executioner ties the

guilty party to a pole and takes a large wheel with which he smashes the bones and joints. The almost lifeless body is then tied on the wheel, which is displayed outside the city walls on large poles.

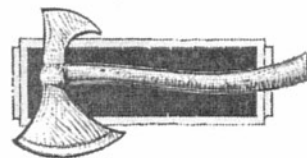
Burning is most frequently practised by the churches and to those who have committed religious crimes. Arsonists are also burned, as are those convicted of theft from a temple and counterfeiting. In this case the convict is either tied to a pole then wood at his feet is ignited or the convict is lowered into the fire with the help of a small crane.

Being drawn and quartered is a punishment reserved for those who commit treason. There are variations on how this punishment is carried out. Usually it means that the convict is tied between four poles or four horses. The body is then cut in quarters by the executioner. These parts are drawn through the streets and displayed in different places. Some courts allow the convict to be strangled before he is drawn and quartered, so that the sentence remains mainly symbolic. In other places the convict is hung but cut down just before death and then drawn and quartered.

Drowning is mostly done by tying the convict to a pole or crane that is then lowered into the water until the person is dead. Some regions bind the convict and put stones in his pocket before throwing him in the water. A convict is never drowned in a fountain or well. Should no water be close by, the punishment is done with the help of a barrel. Drowning can replace the other sentences if the convict is a woman and is also applied to those guilty of adultery.

When someone is sentenced to be buried alive, she is sometimes put in a coffin, which is nailed closed and then buried. A day or two later the coffin is dug out and a clerk confirms the death. Sometimes a person is simply thrown in a hole, which is then covered with earth. To be buried alive is a punishment only limited to mothers who kill their children.

Should the convict have committed some aggravated form of crime, the court can order that the corpse be maltreated. This can take various forms. The most common are drawing the body until the flesh hangs from its bones or rolling carriages over it.



Roleplaying an executioner

Roleplaying an executioner should be a difficult task. He must follow many strictures and have a hard time in everyday life. However, it can be a lot of fun since they occupy a socially peculiar position. When played with the strictures given here, anyone playing an executioner will feel that the Old World is not just a low-tech version of our world, but one full of prejudice. Another option is to play the offspring of an executioner; this provides a ready background and a good reason to turn to adventuring.

BREAKING THE SEAL

Seals in WFRP by Robin Low



A number of people have noticed that in the art of WFRP2 there is a preponderance of seals - pieces of ragged material with writing on them attached with sealing wax to items of clothing, armour and other objects. It has been suggested that this is partly due to the influence of John Blanche. For some people, this is enough to automatically criticise their presence. However, I am an unapologetic admirer of Blanche's art (though predominantly his earlier work) and am inclined to think of ways to use seals creatively rather than immediately dismiss them.

Seal Creation

Many seals are made of parchment, animal skin prepared for writing or painting. The skin is predominantly that of sheep and goats, although the skin of other creatures can and is used, and may increase or decrease the price (assume that the 1s cost and rare availability given on the WFRP2 rules is for a single sheet of parchment prepared from sheep or goat skin). Vellum refers specifically to parchment made from calfskin, which is more expensive. Paper is sometimes used, but it is very rare, five times as costly as ovine parchment and not as durable; paper seals have very special purposes and are rarely openly displayed or exposed to the elements. Strips of undyed leather left over from making shoes and clothes can also be used, but these are usually homemade efforts, although they are significantly harder. Canvas, particularly trimmings left from making sails, tents or canvases for painting are also robust; the followers of Manann particularly favour sail remnants for obvious symbolic reasons.

Parchment production is most common in towns and cities or places where large numbers of animals are routinely slaughtered. Towns in regions where sheep and goats are commonly reared, typically upland areas not suited to arable farming, may become recognised for the quality (or lack thereof) of their parchment. The monasteries of various cults, particularly those of Verena, are commonly situated in upland areas and boast their own flocks

and herds to provide wool, meat and milk for their own use and to generate income. Unsurprisingly, the creation of parchment and vellum is another of these industries, and the product is, again, both used and sold by these monasteries.



Games Masters may like to create or select a suitable settlement to become a centre for the creation and use of parchment and vellum (and even paper), producing quality manuscripts, records and documents, maps and, of course, seals; some of these articles are produced to order, others are traded on. This place would become a focus for education and knowledge, with a significant number of scribes, scholars and lawyers working in schools and libraries. Artistic types are



also drawn to such towns. A large monastery with a slowly developing community would be a good alternative to a cosmopolitan town or city, and could become the destination for Player Characters looking for information about unusual seals (associated with the

monastery's patron saint, for example).

Although the largest part of a seal is the written parchment, the term 'seal' is derived from the red blob of sealing wax adhering to the upper end. When heated in a candle flame the sealing wax becomes molten, but cools fairly quickly, allowing a symbol to be impressed into it using a die (a metal object engraved with a symbol). Arguably, this part of the seal is the most important as it usually indicates its provenance, and therefore its legitimacy and value. For example, all noble families, and even individuals within those families, have personal dies bearing heraldic devices, which they use to put seals on letters, warrants and other official documents. Similarly, the various religious cults general dies bearing official cult symbols and important individuals within those cults (Ar Ulric or the Grand Theogonist, for example) have personalised dies for putting their seal to edicts and such. The same is true of any number of mayors, town councils, guilds and other organisations. All these different symbols can be difficult to keep official records of, and it is very hard to tell what is legitimate and what is not. Dies can be in the form of a small rod of metal that can be held in the palm of the hand, on a ring (very common amongst the nobility and priesthoods) or on the pommel of a decorative dagger, and are usually made by jewellers or specialist metalworkers.

Sealing wax is not cheap. It is made from shellac, a material from certain insects found in faraway Ind, and turpentine, which is purified from the resin of pine trees. It is the relative expense and rarity that makes seals impressive; the idea that the seal cost so much to make that it *must* be important is persuasive to many commoners. Likewise, good dies are not cheap to produce either. The same logic dictates the larger the blob of wax and the larger the symbol (and hence the die) stamped in it, the more important the seal.

Sealing wax is mostly red, but there is also a rarer and more expensive dark green variety. Sealing wax can be brittle, so it has a limited life expectancy if not treated with care. An additional blob of

sealing wax is often used to attach the seal to an item of clothing or armour, and this is equally brittle, so anyone bearing a seal this way is always at risk of losing it - any critical hit will automatically destroy a seal if it hits a part of the body where one is attached (the shoulder should be considered part of the arm).

What do seals represent?

Outlined below are several common forms of seal and some of them confer advantages to the bearer. If Player Characters (or rather their players) want to buy official seals or make seals of their own to gain these advantages, then fine; in some cases it might be completely in-character and even kick off an interesting plot. However, do not make it cheap or easy to produce homemade seals. Parchment may not be that expensive, but sealing wax should be costly and not easy to get hold of either. Good dies, with clean sharp edges, cost a fortune too - a poorly made die often shows in the wax. And if the Player Character is one of the majority unable to write, he will have to pay a scribe to write it for him.

In the vast majority of cases, seals are one of the following:

Seals of faith

In the Old World, belief is a powerful thing. Many people, even the illiterate, feel the need to carry some item that demonstrates the depths of their beliefs or symbolises their reverence for a god, an individual or a cause. Seals of faith may carry quotations from religious texts or military heroes, or even a record of an event or a saying from the personal experience of the individual carrying the seal. Initiates and priests, especially those of Verena and Sigmar, regularly bear seals of faith carrying quotations or religious symbols, but equally there are mercenaries who carry dictums of famous military leaders or symbolic representations of classic military tactics.

Those who bear seals of faith with genuine (Games Master's call) sincerity may take courage and a sense of purpose from them. For this reason, a Games Master can allow a character a +5% bonus to his Willpower for any roll that

could be influenced by faith in whatever the seal represents. For example, a seal written with the words of a hero of Middenheim, "Stand with your pack and the White Wolf will stand with you!" might give a soldier of the City of the White Wolf a bonus to resist fleeing in fear from a monstrous enemy or giving up his secret orders when under torture. This should not be cumulative, so multiple seals of faith are no more effective than one. However, the devout, the zealous and the insane often like to demonstrate their devotion publicly and adorn their clothes with numerous seals.

Citations

These are seals that are awarded to individuals by military or religious orders or the ruling nobility; they are effectively



the Old World equivalent of medals. They are statements indicating achievement of something special or extraordinary, although lesser citations are increasingly awarded to soldiers who were simply present at particular military campaigns or engagements. These lesser citations usually just carry the soldier's (or other participant's) name, the name of the battle and its date; they are often mass produced, with space for individual names to be added later; their wax seals are made from ordinary red candle wax. Citation seals recognising more significant events usually carry the details of why it was awarded; generally, the longer and wordier the seal, the higher the honour it represents.

Citations are not just awarded to military types, but also priests of all ranks

who uphold their faith in some way, and watchmen who successfully foil crimes and protect citizens. Citation seals can improve the social standing of the bearer... most of the time. In the Old World, many folk are impressed by those who have received citations, as they are often indicators of strength (physical or moral), bravery and fighting talent. Generally, lesser citations carry little weight if they are for skirmishes of little renown, but a citation for a great battle or heroic achievement can give a +5% bonus to Fellowship to the one who bears it - The Battle of Bertram's Pond (fought over fishing rights in the Moot) just does not excite people as much as the slaughter at the Siege of Middenheim. Up to three citations of note can be combined to give a maximum Fellowship bonus of +15 (at the Games Master's discretion), and the same would be true for citations awarded to priests or watchmen; on balance the people of the Old World are impressed by (or fearful of) the physically and spiritually powerful and they have considerable influence. However, a citation can also inspire envy and distrust, and be provocative to some. For example, a soldier with a citation seal for standing his ground against a pack of Beastmen could easily become the target of thugs out to get themselves a reputation; if his citation was for his conduct in defending the Talabecland border following a skirmish against Stirland, he may not be a popular man if he waves the citation around Stirland taverns.

If in-game events offer good reason, Games Masters might like to award citation seals to Player Characters. In part, this makes a success more interesting and gives the Games Master chance to run a little award ceremony, which could be an opportunity to introduce new characters and plot. The award of a citation seal should offer some small benefit, and some small problem to keep life interesting.

Licences

Hogshead's *Realms of Sorcery* introduced the idea that wizards in the Empire require a licence to practice magic. Some people liked the idea, others hated it.

However, the idea as a whole is a useful one: it allows the Games Master some measure of control over what the Player Characters can get up to without bringing trouble on themselves from any number of authorities, and provides ample opportunity for roleplay, usually in the form of a Kafkaesque bureaucratic nightmare.

Which organisations and authorities issue licences permitting specific activities and practices are entirely up to the Games Master. Some suggestions are as follows:

- Colleges of Magic licensing wizards to practice magic
- Colleges of Magic licensing wizards to take on an apprentice
- Colleges of Magic licensing wizards to teach magic
- Guilds of all kinds licensing individuals to practice their craft within their jurisdiction (usually a town or city, but they may try to stretch their boundaries for many reasons)
- Religious cults licensing witch hunters to act in their name
- Religious cults licensing priests to establish new shrines
- Individuals such as nobles or local authorities licensing merchant houses to exploit resources within their jurisdiction (commonly mines or timber) in return for a share of the profits
- Individuals such as nobles or local authorities licensing mercenary groups to take small-scale military actions against specific targets (for example, a village suspected of being a stronghold of 'criminal elements')
- Individuals such as nobles or local authorities licensing bounty hunters (may be general or for specific targets only)
- Individuals such as nobles or local authorities licensing individuals or groups to 'continue to exist and practice their lives and/or crafts' after payment of taxes

Of course, all licences are initially issued as single sheets with a wax seal stamped of them and are usually rolled and inserted safely into a tube, rather than

put on display. However, some people like to pay extra for an additional licence seal to be put on obvious display. Many witch hunters, for example, like everyone to know that they have real authority and power. Wizards have mixed feelings about public display; some feel it is safer to let everyone know they are officially sanctioned to practice magic, whereas others feel it is better to keep one's head down and only pull out the licence after it is become necessary to cast a spell. Bounty hunters are split, like wizards, on the issue. Some people are, however, innate show-offs, and will parade licence seals on their clothes, homes and tools, even if nobody really cares (a cobbler with a seal hanging from his collar, a brewery with a licence seal stuck to its swinging sign).



License seals offer no rules benefits, but they can stop characters being harassed or worse by organisations, groups or individuals with official powers. On the other hand, they can be like tentacles to witch hunters if people have specific grudges towards what the licence represents.

Spell Seals

The many and varied items that can assist the casting of spells can often be awkward and clumsy to carry. However, wizards have discovered a technique to incorporate an ingredient into a seal and slightly enhance its power to boot.

The method is very simple. Initially, the verbal components of any spell or ritual must be written onto the strip of material that will form the seal (in some instance, that fabric might even be the

ingredient itself). It is not as simple as just hurriedly scribbling down a note, but is something the wizard (or his apprentice; it is good practice for the lazy little devil) must actively invest time in - it is a day's work of at least seven hours. Obviously, the written words are not enough in themselves to cast the spell by just reading them out loud; magic is more complex than that.

The second part of the process involves incorporating the appropriate spell ingredient into the wax of the seal. Blessed water can be mixed into it (true, water and wax will not mix, but it is the symbolic process that counts). An iron nail or glass bead can be filed to powder and mixed in. In some cases, an ingredient will be simply be too big to incorporate entirely into a small wax blob, but as long as the wizard possesses the whole item he can take a small portion of it and just use that: a few strands from the noose of a hanged man or an eggcup-full of iron filings from an iron weather vane. This should not take more than a couple of hours. However, wizards cannot use this technique to break down a single spell ingredient into many little bits to enhance multiple castings. At the same time the spell seal is consumed in a casting, the rest of the item used in its creation is also consumed, no matter how distantly separated the two are. Some magical theorists at the Wizards and Alchemists' Guild in Middenheim claim excitedly that this proves Quantum Warp Entanglement Theory, but most wizards just grumble that the gods are stopping them from cleverly exploiting an apparent loophole in the rules of magic, like they used to do with *Glowing Light*. Bastards. (Another option is to require the ingredients to remain within a certain distance.)

There are wizards who make a good living by producing spell seals for other wizards; however, they are expensive (Games Master's call) and very rare. Furthermore, as every wizard tends to cast spells slightly differently, any wizard using a spell seal he or his apprentice did not write must familiarise himself with the writings on the seal or it simply will not work. This is as simple as just reading

it, but it can take anything from fifteen minutes upwards (a Read/Write Test every fifteen minutes until success with a -5% modifier per casting per 5 casting points) to comprehend poor handwriting and ink splodges. Wizards with good handwriting (or at least apprentices with the same) sometimes charge more, advertising their spell seals as buy-and-cast. Normally, no die is required to stamp the sealing wax as spell seals are not official documents, but the creators of spells seals for sale usually stamp their seals as a mark of quality.

A wizard uses a spell seal the same way as he would use any other spell ingredient. However, due to the time and money invested in creating the spell seal, the spell ingredient's normal bonus is increased by +1.

Another advantage of spell seals over spell ingredients is that they can be stuck on a staff, hat and robe, rather than lost at the bottom of a bag or pocket. However, the Wizard does need to identify the correct spell seal for the spell he wants to cast, and Wizards with spell seals stuck all over the place may have to spend a half action finding the right one to focus on.

Spell seal creation should be treated as a new Talent. **Magic Seal** may be bought for the price of 100 Experience Points by any Wizard, from Apprentice to Lord, and it is not essential to buy **Magic Seal** before advancing up the Wizard career ladder.

All of the above is also applicable to priests, especially those following more urban gods such as Verena, Sigmar and Morr.

Seals in Practice

People can wear as many seals as they want, but that does not mean they will always have the desired effects. A soldier in the Emperor's army may earn a dozen citation seals for bravery, but that does not mean that *everyone* is *always* going to be equally impressed by them, nor does it mean that he's a great swordsman, only a very brave one. That angry mob does not care how many licences the wizard has if it is convinced that he's responsible for the heavy rains that have rotted the

crops in the fields. A Talabecland noble will still have the bounty hunter bound in chains, even if he does have a seal from the Graf of Middenheim licensing him to apprehend one of the noble's political cat's paws. Games Masters: let your players arm their characters with seals. Let them work most of the time; and then pull the rug out from under them when they least expect it.

Non-player characters will have seals, too. Just because that priestess of Rhya is not carrying a gong, does not mean she cannot pull a spell seal off her robe and shatter the air with a *Thunderclap*. Those miners on one side of a provincial boundary are fully licensed to divert the river, and it is just tough luck for the villages below on the other side of the boundary.



Seals carry a whole raft of other problems. They can be stolen (*But it was on my pauldron a moment ago*). They can be forged (*How much did you pay for this? You've been had, mate*), as discussed further below. They do not last forever, whether physically or in terms of validity, with many licences requiring annual renewal (*You are aware this hunting licence is only valid in late summer? And only for "squirrelles and over veerminus besties", apparently, though whether that means 'verminous' or 'venomous' is open to debate*). Most people cannot read and many of the symbols used by organisations to stamp the wax are unfamiliar to others, leading to all sorts of confusion, debate and uncertainty over what counts and what

does not (*Twin-tailed comet of Sigmar? Looks like a pair of rabbit's ears to me*).

The illegal creation and carrying of seals are relatively common practices. Illegal seals range from the dreadful (nothing more than inked squiggles and a wax blob that would only ever fool the illiterate and utterly gullible) to excellent (sealed with well-forged or stolen dies, with beautiful calligraphy on vellum). Production of fake seals is almost always a group effort: an artisan to craft the seal die, a scribe to write on the parchment, a thief to obtain authentic examples to work from (as well as sealing wax and parchment), and a confidence trickster to sell the goods.

There is a vibrant black market for seals, with prices depending not only on the quality, but also on what is actually being stamped in the sealing wax: the seal of the Arch-Lector of Talabheim on a seal of faith costs notably more than the seal of Archibald Friedreich, Secretary of the Bringelhode Bakers' Club licensing the bearer to sell ring doughnuts. The reason for this is the associated risk of punishment if caught: forging the seal of the Arch-Lector is a death sentence; forging Achibald Friedreich's seal may only result in a thorough kicking in the pantry. Of course, the same is true of merely carrying illegal seals, but for many the risk is more than worth it. The obvious piety of a man who has received a seal of faith from the Arch-Lector would be enough to get him into the libraries of any number of temples of Sigmar. The renowned quality of the Bringelhode Bakers' Club will add a copper to the price of a ring doughnut. The temptation is there for the small trader, as well as those seeking ancient secrets and those merely out to impress others. Masters of disguise consider a few good seals to an almost essential part of any high quality disguise kit.

Finally, in addition to all the legitimate seals and all the forged or stolen seals, there are any number of zealots and madmen festooned with long and ragged home-made seals bearing their own insane scrawling. Maybe, even there among all the meaningless gibberish, real truths are to be found.

WEAVING A WEB

Secret Societies and Conspiracy in WFRP by the Reverend Lepper

"Beware! They come wearing masks of friends and colleagues, speaking in whispers, yet wielding daggers behind their backs"
Concealed letter discovered on the body of a murdered Imperial official.

Chaos cults are predominantly the centre of attention in Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, and much of the published material revolves around these groups. They make excellent adversaries, but by no means should they prove the only hidden menace within society. There are times when a GM may wish to explore other alternatives.

Such groups, referred to here as "secret societies", are clandestine and most likely possess a hidden agenda of which outsiders are ignorant. Such societies may initially be mistaken as Chaos cults by the suspicious, the paranoid, and the uninformed but their motivations and goals may be dramatically different.

This article is a companion article to the Chaos cults titled *The Road to Damnation* published in *Warpstone* 13.

Secret Societies

"This meeting is called to order."

Secret societies litter the Old World, sometimes acting as shadowy conspiracy groups throughout regions or countries, but for the most part they are localised and primarily concerned with issues intrinsic to the members and area.

A GM can employ such organisations as adversaries, allies, patrons or groups of the players' own founding. Before a campaign starts he may want to detail any secret societies he wishes to use and then develop them further as the campaign progresses and their schemes cross paths with the PCs. A mere sketch of the groups' designs could suffice, although the GM could describe in detail the leadership of the groups and perhaps note the ardent supporters, possible betrayers, powerful and influential members, and those whom the secret societies depend upon to carry out their dirty work.

It is important to note that there are some ambiguities regarding secrecy among these societies. Although some groups may be called secret societies, they may be partly public, or could be more viewed as exclusionary or private societies, though ones possessing a secret agenda. Some societies may not be public knowledge though they may employ another organisation like a thieves' or merchants' guild as cover for their own designs. Some secret societies jealously guard the secret of their existence and those betraying them or close to discovery are in mortal danger.

Legality and Secrecy

"Yes sir, we found the missing man. It seems others in the group found out he was going to talk to us. No, he's not dead but they've cut out his tongue and eyes, deafened him and chopped his hands off. Seems they didn't want him to talk."

Middenheim Watch Sergeant

Outsiders view secret groups with suspicion but they may not be illegal. Many of the wealthy in the Old World have secret societies related to their own political and economic agendas, and the existence of such groups is widely accepted amongst the nobility. Any secret society comprised of the poor, such as rural tenant farmers or poor urban youth is deemed highly suspicious by the authorities, and its members may be accused with little or no evidence of the crimes as serious treason or worship of Chaos.



Another factor in determining the legitimacy of a secret society is its motivation. A society seeking to overthrow the Emperor is most assuredly illegal and members risk execution upon discovery. However, for those groups on the border of legality, their power, wealth, and influence of its members *and* their enemies determine whether or not they are vulnerable to investigation or persecution. A group of conspiring merchants in a contested market may find themselves facing legal or covert action by equally powerful and desperate rivals.

These groups look to avoid prosecution by maintaining a high level of secrecy. As such, membership is discrete, and initiation designed to ensure high levels of solidarity and secrecy among them.

Why Join a Secret Society?

The most common motive for joining a secret society is that the group shares a similar goal or ideology to the individual and that it is in the individual's best interest to join. Over time the society slowly seeks out and contacts those who share similar interests. Those who seem favourable to the group's agenda are slowly "brought in from the cold" and indoctrinated. The society may spend considerable time influencing, educating, and manipulating prospective members to make them susceptible to membership. (Further information on this topic can be found in *The Road to Damnation in Warpstone* 13.)

AWAKE!

*There is a menace that seeks to
destroy us all. Servants of Chaos
walk the land and fear none! And
the name of this CULT is one all
would recognise:*

THE ARISOTOCRACY!

ACT now!

Burn out the CANCER!!!

**Each mansion and estate a
BONFIRE!**

A Bretonnian Flyer

Ideology

At the heart of any secret society is its ideology, the interest or agenda that unites, motivates, and brings its diverse membership together. For this reason a group's ideology should be developed in detail. Not all members are likely to view or interpret the ideology in the same way and this allows for schisms, disagreements, and conflict. Such ruptures can lead to the dissolution of the group, the exile of members, division of the society into competing groups, to even murder and the purging of a secret society or its leadership.

Initiation

A red wave gushed from the man's throat and he collapsed twitching to the ground. The hooded initiate stood in shock, blood dripping from the ceremonial knife. The older man came

across and took it from his hands, "You are one of us now."

The initiation of new members is a critical part of any secret society, since by introducing their members they are increasing their wealth, power, influence, and strength. Yet initiation of members is also extremely dangerous, because it exposes the secret society to the attention of others. For this reason initiation to secret societies can be elaborate. One way to convince the candidate of the solemnity and significance of their initiation is to emphasise the importance and power as well as the initiate's good fortune.

These initiation rites always entail an oath of secrecy to emphasise the importance of discretion and require the new initiate to acknowledge the punishment for betrayal. It is possible that some of these rites of initiation are bound up in "magical" ceremonies and the breaking of an oath may be reputed to have magical consequences. Some societies demand a display of dedication, such as a rite of endurance where the initiate must suffer through pain or torment, or to administer pain and torment (or worse) to an outsider. Most if not all require a large donation of wealth and time, with some demanding their members somehow become marked by branding or tattooing. Initiates may have to undergo later initiations to ascend through the organisation.

Membership

There are many reasons to intentionally or unintentionally break a vow of secrecy. If discovered they will face the full consequences of their actions – ranging from exile to torture and execution at the hand of their fellow members. If the act was unintentional the member is expected to take action, if in their power, to undo the damage and at least to inform their colleagues. If the damage can be halted or remedied this member may not face severe sanctions. Those betraying their secret society intentionally can expect to experience the most severe penalties their society has to offer.

Besides maintaining their vow of secrecy, members find

Benefits of Being in a Society

Allies – If the players need any assistance, someone to keep watch, someone to bribe guards, they may be able to draw upon the aid of their society, and their society has different members with a range of skills and talents that may be of use to the player characters.

Base of operations – The secret society may have a castle, an estate, an underground complex or other interesting location for the players to hide out in, store their supplies, and rest.

Equipment and Funds – Characters can get funding for projects as well as additional income if their society is wealthy. The secret society may have access to books, laboratories, artefacts, vessels, estates, and other items beyond the usual scope of individual ownership.

Training – The GM may choose a group of skills related to that secret society that its membership heavily relies upon. Due to the society's knowledge and skills, the players should be able to purchase the skills as if they were career skills.

themselves undertaking a whole new set of tasks assigned to them. These tasks can range from gathering information on their peers or superiors outside the organisation, diverting funds to the secret society coffers, to clandestine meetings with shady characters in waterfront taverns. Such tasks are carefully calculated to assess the relative value of the new member to the group. Over time the workload may lighten, but the tasks become more critical.

Although there are obligations placed on new members there are benefits that make the risks worthwhile: access to knowledge, additional money, promotion, and other means of aid and assistance are all available in ever increasing amounts as the member climbs through the ranks. The member makes a number of new connections and members are usually eager to assist each other.

Leaving a secret society can be problematic depending on the nature of the group – for some societies it is perfectly fine to stop all future associations but talk of the society to outsiders will result in a loss of old friendships and the creation of new enmities. Other groups demand absolute secrecy and hold some sort of incriminating information. More secretive groups may hold all their ex-members wealth and parcel it out in payments to ensure ex-members remain loyal. Then there are those groups that one can never leave and can be called upon at any time to provide a service. Those who outright refuse such demands by their fellow members are seen as a liability and treated as a grave threat to the security of the group and usually discretely disposed of.

Conflict amongst Conspiracies, Cults, and Secret Societies

Beneath this veneer of life's normality is a hidden world of secret agendas and acts of dubious legality. Groups vie secretly for influence and resources, and it is inevitable that these grasping groups compete with one another. It is only a matter of time before conspirators and members of secret societies note others meeting surreptitiously in hidden alcoves in the Emperor's Palace, in smoky back rooms in pubs or on the docks of the waterfront at night.

When two similar groups encounter each other, there is the possibility of negotiation or mutual avoidance, but this reveals one society to another. More likely upon the discovery of another secret society the discovering society decides whether to resort to greater measures of secrecy or to do away with their rivals. Should a secret society become so compromised, they can be undone in a single night – a night of abductions, murders, torture, arson, and theft.

However, fighting between secret societies is rarely so decisive. Struggles between societies may last for decades, being a war of whispers and rumours in the parlours of wealthy noblewomen, acted out secretly through jousts, subtly waged through politics or fought out by proxies and hired thugs in the winding alleys of the poor quarters, a campaign of bribery and corruption (extracted through a series of kidnappings, blackmail, and torture, won through duels and hired champions), or culminating in a few bloody weeks of disappearances, arson, and bodies floating in rivers with daggers in their backs. Whether through words or the naked blade, the stakes are high and the greatest risk for

both groups is that their actions will reveal them to the outside world.

Weapons of Secret Societies

The most important weapon and defence is a group's secrecy and the last asset to be surrendered. Those attempting to part the veil are subject to whatever means are in that society's disposal to mislead or deal with those too curious for their own good.

First and foremost, a secret society should never even be *anticipated* or *imagined* as existing to outsiders. If a secret society can maintain this level of concealment it risks little chance of discovery. Such ideal circumstances are rarely maintained for long however, and most secret societies are constantly at risk of being discovered.

Deflection and deception are useful tools to distract the curious. An effective means of misdirection is to deny the existence of the group, pointing out other groups as the source of the problem, or better yet, deny the existence of any sort of secret societies and rather point the finger at more mundane groups or individuals. Many secret societies are capable of setting up decoys or patsies who will take a fall or divert attention thus providing more time to resolve a situation.

More direct alternatives exist: discredit the work of investigators by undermining their credibility or framing them as criminals. Else a pattern of harassment may dissuade some. A secret society can rely upon extortion, best executed through the use of a third party or cronies to halt an investigation, and failing that, the inquisitive can be threatened, beaten up, or murdered by any range of hired help. Accidents can be arranged, inns burned down, barges sunk, falling masonry – all peculiar incidents that claim a disproportionate amount of young and prying people in the prime of their lives...

Good Societies?

Not every secret society has to be a menace. Take into account the Mittsommerfest in Altdorf. Every year a group of businessmen and religious leaders give generous donations to a secret group known as the Hooded Fools, a group of seven notables whose identities have never been revealed. The organisation was started by a merchant who came from the slums of Altdorf and were influenced by Shallyan humility refused to be publicly recognised for his acts of charity. Over the years he has invited a few like minded merchants to join him in his venture and now there is a three day festival celebrated in the slums of Altdorf for the locals who have few such pleasant diversions normally.

During the Mittsommerfest the area is festooned in flowers, local entertainers paid handsomely to perform, and donations of food and clothes are made to the needy. At night dances are held outdoors and at the culmination of the event a Crown of Fools is awarded by the Hooded Fools to acknowledge a worthy celebrant. This festival gives the poor of the city something to look forward to, with an economic boost for the community as well as providing the needy with food and clothing and a sense of community and celebration in one of the most dangerous and suspicious of areas in Altdorf.

The secret society can always choose to go into hiding, suspending its activities, or offering up a few minor members or other “sacrificial lambs”.

Types of Secret Societies

There are numerous secret societies, and the list below provides just a sample of possibilities. It is possible for a secret society to share a number of characteristics of different societies, being political, religious, and ideological for example.

Cannibal/Ghoul Cults

If the rumours are to be believed, it is reputed that habitually feasting on human flesh endows the devourer with unnatural powers, while others insist that it requires more than just feasting on flesh, for arcane and terrifying rituals are necessary to complete the transformation. The process for the transformation of ghouls is a secret one believed to have come from the lands to the south or the east, but over time there have been secret societies that have savoured the taste of human flesh and delight in their grim acts. Needless to say those with peculiar diets are secretive about their eating habits, especially if accompanied by necromancy. Witch hunters have reported necromancers feeding flesh to the unknowing to create ghoulish servants, but such talk is restricted to the inner councils of religious orders.

Chaos Cults

When secret societies are mentioned Chaos cults are most likely to come to mind. Many of the other secret groups can provide cover for Chaos cults: a conspiracy within a conspiracy. It is possible as well that many of the secret societies below can be usurped or be controlled from within by Chaos and used for their own nefarious purposes. Of course the reverse is true as well but any who would choose to do so are engaging in folly.

Criminal Secret Societies

With a long creak the lid of the chest opened and Gunnar could finally see. Dazed he took in a deep breath of air and looked about from his cramped position inside the large chest. His eyes, long accustomed to the darkness within the chest quickly noted the details around him. He recognised the scent of the river, his body having long noted the gentle rocking of a boat.

The Conspiracy behind the False Conspiracy

Every few years the same tired rumours rush through Marienburg: the Empire is plotting to retake Marienburg. Each time there is a new twist, new evidence discovered such as a new confession or recent documents uncovered. These rumours often result in increased tension between Marienburg and the Empire.

Many of the rumours that are spread and the “evidence” for the most recent “impending Imperial invasion” are fabricated by a group of Bretonnian merchants who seek to weaken Imperial ties and keep Marienburg closely allied with Bretonnia. Consequently even the Bretonnian diplomatic legation assists in producing false evidence for their Bretonnian merchant allies.

He clamped his eyes shut as a lantern was thrust forward to illuminate the interior of the chest in which the bound and gagged Gunnar was stuffed.

Gunnar timidly looked up at his captors. No surprise - it was the man he had tried so long to hunt down, the master of the local smuggling trade Arturo Ambrogio, who stood grinning as his hired thugs looked on menacingly.

Gunnar was resigned to his fate. He knew the dangers of his trade, hunting down those breaking the law of the Emperor. Ambrogio had been smuggling in proscribed items, texts, people and creatures, and Gunnar, acting out the will of the Emperor had sought to infiltrate his shadowy organisation.

Ambrogio spoke: “It’s such a shame that the curious are so accident prone...”

With a strange sense of detachment Gunnar wondered, as they closed the lid with an air of finality, how anyone could think that his chained and gagged body curled up into a chest with bricks and sunk in the river could ever be construed as “an accident”...

Of the conspiratorial groups, criminals are the most common, demanding a high level of secrecy. Such groups work out of self-interest and do not pose too great a danger to the structure of society.

Thieves’ Guilds - The most familiar example of criminal secret societies are Thieves’ Guilds, loose associations of criminals attempting to divvy up an area between themselves, sharing knowledge, co-operating, and maintaining a division of labour and standards of professionalism. Loyalty within the group is usually weaker than that of crime families, and exists as a means of distributing (or hoarding) power and wealth. Due to its politicised nature there can exist considerable competition for the best areas and jobs. Some guilds have a hierarchy of thieves, where those pursuing one trade have greater priority over others and this can lead to internal dissent.

Crime Families - Organisations similar to Thieves’ Guilds where a group of kinfolk or members of a close-knit community conspire together to maintain their hold on criminal activity in their area, as well as trying to expand. Due to the family structure, the group is strongly dedicated to each other and loyalty is highly prized and expected.

Smuggling - Smuggling groups can be large organisations spanning considerable distances since trade networks are far-reaching and complicated. Smugglers may simply smuggle in goods with high tariffs, or they may trade in illegal items, such as artefacts or slaves. Networks may be short-lived, but many span generations and provide alternative trade routes and markets.

Discriminatory Secret Society

“We make our own pies!”

Anti-Halfling graffiti

It is inevitable that people will embrace racial stereotypes and blame others for their current standing or status in society, and the scapegoats and targets of such prejudicial hatred are often those who look different. In human society there exists resentment towards non-humans such as Elves, Dwarfs and to a lesser extent Halflings. Some groups work together to drive other

races or nations from the area, a trade or profession, and lobby for policies against non-humans or foreigners. Some pursue a direct policy of violence. Some of the most extreme acts of such groups are race riots, particularly common in Bretonnian cities. It is important to note that other races can form discriminatory secret societies against humans as well.

The *Frederick-kin* are a secretive society within the nobility of the Empire. When the Moot was granted to Halflings, the nobleman von Frederick who had petitioned for the land became embittered. Since his death, his family has continued his claim proving to be subversive in Imperial politics. Eventually the family's secret prejudices have spread so that many nobles not even in this society now question the place of a Halfling in the Electoral body. Its more extreme members point out the inefficiencies and shortcomings of Halfling management and their unassertive nature. The *Frederick-kin* desire to see the Halflings removed from their land and the Moot under human lordship. This group is extremely cautious in their plans, and is dedicated to a long-term plan goal that will see fruition long after the current members are resting in their family plots.

Economic/Trade Secret Societies

*"Our gold in my left hand,
Our sea at our feet,
My brothers surround me,
The circle is complete."*

Ceremonial rite as spoken by the now defunct Order of Marius, a group of merchants dedicated to Marienburg Independence.

It should come as no surprise that merchants use secret societies as a means of increasing their wealth. This sometimes involves secret pacts between trade families to gather capital to flood or starve a market, or the construction and maintenance of a monopoly. Such behaviour may or may not be legal, but these groups tightly control secrecy to ensure that rivals do not counter their plans. Such groups last for as long as it is financially expedient, but over time abuses or deceptions by one family or business dissolve the alliances. Such secret societies are usually formed within the membership of existing merchant or professional guilds.

Gendered Secret Societies

Societies comprised of only members from a single gender are fairly uncommon. Their purpose is to pass on secret gendered knowledge. In the Old World these groups are mostly composed of women in rural areas, where knowledge of their bodies and its cycles, midwife secrets, and herbs that can induce or terminate a pregnancy are shared amongst women and concealed from men. In some rural areas these groups take on religious significance as well, viewing women and pregnancy in relation to fertility and the special powers of women. In these groups the midwives and other purveyors of secret feminine knowledge are viewed as having supernatural powers of healing and divination and these women have long been an accepted part of the Old Faith and rural religions, in particular the worship of Rhya. Many urban and noble authorities view these with concern, as do males, and many members have been accused and

persecuted for the practice of witchcraft.

Older male examples of gendered secret societies were the early fertility cults. Related to the Old Faith, such societies were expected to maintain the spiritual health of the land. This often entailed the voluntary or involuntary sacrifice in the spring of a young man or woman. These fertility cults reputedly still exist in some of the more isolated areas of the Old World, and when discovered have been prosecuted for murder, heresy, or witchcraft.

Guardian Secret Societies

"My son. I will be dead soon but now is the time to tell you of The Brethren and the secret we protect."

Guardian secret societies view themselves as caretakers of a particular tradition, location, or object. What they are guarding is deemed so important or valuable that members will carry their secret membership to the grave.

Artefacts - Holding custodianship over an artefact of power, they may be part of a religious order or a group concerned that an unholy artefact may fall into the wrong hands. The latter are likely to be amongst the most militant of orders, fanatic in their guardianship due to their need to remain pure in the presence of something evil or polluted. The artefact (if even active) itself might be hidden in an even more secret place, which the guardians themselves are unaware of.

The rumour of the possession of the Law god Arianka in a coffin by a Chaos cult is a well-known example of a guardian cult, but there are others. The Cult of Solkan has a monastery guarded by the *Wardens of the Dread One*. A few hundred years ago a Solkanite Witch Hunter and Priests interrupted a summoning by cultists. While they attempted to close the portal an incredibly powerful entity tried to rip open the closing gate and emerge from it, but was partly trapped. The servants of Solkan were compelled to contain the entity in a specially built receptacle. Believed to be a daemon prince or even a manifestation of a god, the vessel was housed in a ritually prepared vault below the basement in a Solkanite monastery high in the mountains. The priests of Solkan continue to seek out a way to destroy the entity, but until that time they select their bravest and most loyal to guard the vault. Even the Warden's fellow Solkanite monks in the monastery above are ignorant of the monster trapped beneath their feet, or of the brave handful guarding it.

Knowledge - Although an artefact can be used, knowledge can be shared and once it escapes it is impossible to contain.

There are secret societies designed to guard and control knowledge, whether they be holy texts or proscribed writings that none should see. These groups function in a fashion similar to those societies guarding artefacts. Any differences will be in the nature of the knowledge: is it a single text with mind warping revelations, or a library of sacred writings? It could be a book that is to only be opened at the end of the world, a secret history of the church, or proscribed books of necromancy or daemonology. The information may be too precious to write down and only oral in nature.

It is rumoured in Ulthuan that a powerful seeress, one of the greatest of Elven worshippers of Morai-Heg, received vivid

dreams over forty days and nights. It was believed that Morai-Heg, the Elven goddess of fate and death, was possibly channelling revelations through the body of the dreamer. Scribes and priests huddled around the sleeper and transcribed all that was said by the Elven god of destiny. In the morning following the last night of dreams, priests returned to gather the book when it was discovered that all the attending scribes, priests, and the seeress herself were dead with no apparent cause for their demise. A letter was left by the deceased, which only the High Priestess of the Cult read. Upon finishing the letter the Priestess took custody of the material which was never seen again. It is whispered that a group of worshippers of Morai-Heg are guarding the book in a secret location, and that the future of both the Elves and the world is contained within these tomes.

A Location - Some Guardian cults have the responsibility of protecting a location from violation. The location itself may house or hold artefacts or knowledge, but the location is usually invested with significance as well.

In the middle of the Empire, at the heart of its forests it is believed that a secret group of Druids watch over a natural spring. This spring is reported to flow straight from the centre of the earth, and its waters are reputed to have all manner of powers, including the power to reverse the effects of Chaos. It is also a nexus connecting to the other places of druidic power. Only the

oldest, wisest, and most powerful of druids are chosen to be the guardians of the spring, and it is said that the greatest of Druids meet here every ten years to discuss issues of the gravest significance. Folklore has it that only Druids and the animals of the forest could ever hope to find this location, for the forest defends its sacred spring from the curious, the lost, and evil alike.

Ignatius descended down the stone stairway deep into the under cellars of Nuln. His steps were slow and sure, lit by the flickering candle he held aloft. His one hand held aloft the candle, his other gently but tightly coddled the vessel. He completed the last step, paused, and stepped through the archway into the room beyond.

The occupants in the room stirred from their position around the round table, arising to honour their visitor. They too were dressed in similar robes and wore masks as well, lending the shadowy room a more sinister air.

The figure at the centre of the table arose, his gold trimmed robes accenting the authority that exuded from him. The figure spoke in a deep voice, "Brother Ignatius has arrived bearing that which we have waited for – Let this meeting begin!"

Brother Ignatius strode forward speaking the blasphemous words and as he did he felt the stirring of the entity in the copper



vessel that he now held aloft to the chanting host.

Ideological Secret Societies

The term *ideological* secret society is a broad one. Such groups exist solely for the sharing and discussion of a particular ideology.

Correspondence/Literary Secret Societies - Among the least exciting of secret societies for the most part they are tight networks of academics, writers, scholars, or artists who correspond with each other, sharing opinions and ideas. Due to their liberal perspectives they choose to keep their activities private. Some may form secret societies simply for the novelty of the experience.

Philosophical - Much like the correspondence societies except that their writings and thinking are far more suspect since philosophers have been known to question and challenge existing conventions and theories. In the past philosophers have strayed into areas traditionally the realm of the religious or civic, and have been censured and persecuted. This has led many to be less open in their discussion and they carry out their discourse in small intimate circles of like-minded academics.

Lycanthropic Cults

Lycanthropes are not necessarily common throughout the Old World, and due to their obvious differences with the societies from which they once hailed, gather together in socially exclusive groups. Nowhere is this more common and accepted than in Norsca where the Ulfwerenar (shapechangers) live in small villages with secrets of their own. Outside of Norsca, lycanthropic secret societies are far less common, since most weres are hunted down due to their inability to control the beast within. Those lycanthropes that do manage to live for some time inevitably meet others and sometimes co-operate. Some become guardians of an isolated village for example, while others hunt in packs and drag down the lone traveller in a mad frenzy of claw and fang.

From the north come rumours of an Imperial coastal village near the Kislev border. A score of more years ago, a pair of Norse sailors were washed ashore and nursed back to health by the townsfolk. One evening the sailors left unexpectedly and without thanks. Since this time, the village has been safe from the depredations of dangerous animals and beastmen, and the people believe that the Norse sailors left a blessing upon their village, claiming that the village has since been guarded by a group of bears that appear at night to protect them. A handful of villagers however have disappeared only to be reportedly seen later in the forest, and they are believed to return at night to leave gifts at their families' doors. The village knows these former villagers as the "Children of the Forest". A priest of Taal once came to investigate the area, and left close-mouthed only telling the villagers that they are indeed blessed, and cryptically mentioned that they should continue to "honour the bear".

Magical Secret Societies

Magical secret societies have long been present throughout the Old World, effectively functioning as guilds controlling the

practice and teaching of magic. With the formal foundation of the Colleges of Magic many lost a reason to exist, but others chose to remain secret. Inevitably, Wizards have formed secret societies within the Colleges themselves, out of a desire to experiment magically beyond Teclis' teachings, to keep findings away from both rivals and imitators, and sometimes just to feel distinct from other Wizards in a College. In rural areas magical secret societies are still the chosen means of exchanging knowledge. Rather than work as a guild, rural practitioners (known disparagingly as "hedge wizards" by their urban kin) use the secret society structure to educate apprentices, share spells, and exchange ingredients and research.

Most of these groups skirt issues of legality, but there are some magical secret societies existing that are clearly illegal. Individuals or small groups usually practice proscribed magics such as Necromancy and Daemonology, but over time these individuals may network to share their knowledge or co-operate on elaborate rituals. Similar magical secret societies exist within the bounds of the Wizards' Colleges, where a small group has become seduced by secrets of a darker nature. These groups are highly secretive and ruthless since membership will lead to execution if discovered.

Political Secret Societies

"It is agreed then. A small sum from the Order's funds will be handed to the councillor. That, and the other evidence we have, should ensure he votes our way."

Politics is an ideal environment for intrigues, alliances, hidden agendas, and of course, secret societies and conspiracies. Most alliances and conspiracies in politics rarely take the form of secret societies due to the fluid nature of politics and a constant realigning of power and influence. Some groups are able to maintain some cohesion in goals and approaches over time and wield significant power.

Conservatives - Interested in maintaining the status quo and their own position within society. These groups are comprised of nobles who work closely with each other through the auspices of noble or knightly orders to suppress dissent in their lands, limit the social mobility of merchants, and curtail the ambitions of lesser nobles.

The *Pride of Nuln* and its cover group *The Honourable Gentlemen and Ladies Advocating Civic Pride of Nuln* are a group that seek to return the capital from Altdorf back to Nuln not only for their own political gain, but because *that is where it used to be*. That is not the only goal of this group however, they have also sought to limit entry into the University of Nuln to only those of proper pedigree, and many also seek to limit the liberties allowed students in response to the occasional wave of radicalism that sometimes spreads through the school.

Opportunists - Cunning political manoeuvring can allow the sly noble considerable social betterment. For this reason groups of nobles look to undermine those nobles above them. Such opportunists form themselves into loose associations of conspirators, occasionally using the cover of a knightly order or a gentlemen's club. Some of these upstarts discover much to their chagrin that many of the older nobles can be remarkably tenacious when politically cornered.



Revolutionaries - Politics is not simply the domain of the wealthy and lately the poor and disenfranchised have become increasingly politically aware. The presence of agitators and demagogues in the streets and corners of the cities and towns has no doubt played some part in this increasing awareness. After centuries of oppression, onerous taxes, and absurd demands, some people have decided that the time for change is now. A number of unsuccessful organisations have appeared advocating some form of radical change or social revolution. The aims and desires of these groups are broad; some merely want the representation of the common people on the electoral vote while others want the Emperor overthrown along with his noble lackeys.

The nobility carefully watch such groups, and betraying one's fellow conspirators can be highly profitable. Leadership of such groups is usually punishable by death, while membership usually entails heavy fines and long periods of incarceration.

Professional Secret Societies

Professional secret societies are a combination of economic secret societies, social societies, or even gendered societies. These groups are comprised of members of an elite profession such as doctors or scholars. They may gather together for a number of reasons: to protect their trade under the auspices of a guild, provide a forum for interaction, or to provide a source of

secret (and jealously guarded) information.

Classic examples are the various Fraternities of Runemasters. Blending the professional society together with a magical society, the Fraternities are a number of Orders, Assemblies, Unions, and Brotherhoods of Dwarven Runemasters who build up relationships with each other. They are in no way organised but based on the friendships and exchanges of reciprocities between individual Runemasters. Over time, Runemasters will grudgingly share runes with others through a long and ritualised exchange of wealth and correspondence.

Warrior Secret Societies - A common type of professional society, where warriors join together for employment and social reasons. In areas outside of the Old World such as Cathay or the Southlands, these warriors join together to share ancient secrets, pass on magical beliefs and perform rituals that will give them strength over their enemies.

In the Old World, the closest groups that resemble warrior secret societies are a handful of knightly orders and mercenary bands which are exclusive, possessing a sub-culture of their own where members are privy to symbolic rituals and secrets that are not shared with outsiders.

Puppet Secret Societies

Some secret societies are themselves a front for another secret society or outside group, a relationship which the puppets'

members are woefully ignorant. The controlling groups could be Chaos cults, cults of Khaine or servants of the Horned Rat. The cover secret society provides additional income or power, and allows the controlling group to gather information and extend their influence into human society.

Religious Secret Societies

The armoured man entered the chamber, fearsome in his wolf-cloak. Others greeted him as he walked through their midst, shaking his hand or nodding. He looked pleased, there were more here than ever. Reaching the small altar he kissed the stone wolf and then stepped to the nearby alcove. The two-tailed comet sewn into the standard was more faded than he had first seen it. "A good sign!" he thought as he spat upon it.

Religious secret societies need not be exclusively religious for they may also have ideological or political dimensions, or be chaos cults. The range of religious secret societies is large, some may be accepted and critical to a particular religion, while others deemed heretical. The list below is just a sampling.

Apocalyptic - Flagellants and zealots are not uncommon sights in the Old World. Some lash and deprive themselves seeking redemption from their sins, while others envision an apocalypse and seek either to stave it off or gain converts in an effort to save souls before the disaster. The latter are the *apocalypse cults*. A religious leader who either received a vision or interpreted some text that indicated a forthcoming apocalypse leads these societies. For Sigmmites the Apocalypse is to be heralded by a comet, while for other faiths it can be flood, war, famine, or any number of catastrophic events. Some groups are public about their beliefs and wander the lands preaching, while others are secretive, believing that the existing religious leaders are apathetic and hostile to their cause, so they themselves must secretly act to prevent this dreadful and impending event.

Doomsday - While for the most part seeming synonymous with apocalyptic societies, there exists a distinction. While apocalyptic secret societies have knowledge of an impending disaster and the possible means of halting it, doomsday societies have a more ominous agenda: to *create* an Apocalypse. They may plot to spread disease or perform some magical ritual that will invite disaster upon the local area if not the entire world. The group will probably not have the means for such an act, but they can still be a menace to everyone around. Such groups may be secretly manipulated or assisted by a cult of Nurgle or the servants of the Horned Rat.

Heretical - Due to reinterpretation or difference of opinion, ambiguities and conflict arise within religious groups and the dogma of that faith is contested. The group with the greatest numbers and authority tend to emerge victorious, the losers denounced as heretics. Heresy is a serious offence and those accused may face execution. The history of every religion has its own history of schisms and heresies, as well as inquisitions and burnings. The irony is that in some cases the heretical group was closer to the traditional teachings or highlighted an important paradox in a faith.

Worshippers of Law - Worshippers of Law adhere to an extreme set of dogma, one uncomfortable if not oppressive to the majority of people in the world. For the adherents of Law,

Druidical Societies

At times the worshippers of the druidic faith have been the subject of suspicion and even persecution by many of the other cults. Consequently, some of its membership has become insular and suspicious. Thus the Creeping Vine was created, a broad network of Old Faith worshippers who seek to help and assist each other. Knowledge is passed along from homestead to homestead, traveller to traveller, and druid to druid. The Creeping Vine seeks to keep outsiders from getting involved in local affairs. The Vine will rid forests of bandits lest nobles and the authorities intervene, while those locals who are victims of urban and noble excesses can often flee and receive aid from the Vine, including a few charitable souls who commit crimes in the name of the local people.

It also serves as a network for transmitting messages between communities and druids. In little over a few weeks, messages can traverse the Empire as news is carried by pigeon, boats, word of mouth, and some even claim the wind itself. Thus an infestation of weres or beastmen is reported by the Creeping Vine and the nearby communities can assist in whatever means are deemed appropriate for the crisis at hand.

the measures taken by the authorities, religious and secular are insufficient, and deprived of political and social power the worshippers of Law create secret societies. These secret societies may act as vigilantes dispensing religious justice or its goal may be something as extensive as overthrowing the weak leadership of an area and installing a fervent believer as the new leader.

Worshippers of Law do not see acting against the existing status quo constructed by the authorities and laws as a contradiction, since both are most likely tainted by Chaos as evidenced by their lack of adherence to the doctrines of the Law gods.

The *Right Hand of Solkan* in northern Tilea has a large membership comprising monks, witch hunters, and lay people, whom at night don robes and visit those they deem tainted by Chaos. Houses are burned, people are staked, and any that speak out are targeted as lackeys of Chaos. The authorities have been powerless to determine who exactly is responsible, a fact made all the more difficult because one of the rural nobles is a member of this group and uses this cult to rid himself of elements seeking social change and equality, ideas that smack of Chaos to him.

Social/Social Networking Secret Societies

"Bring forth the ceremonial ale."

Lodge of the Stone Hammer Ceremonial Chant

Not all secret societies have some secret awe-inspiring agenda. Some exist simply as social clubs who use the secrecy to heighten the appeal and solidarity of the group. These groups centre on absurd oaths, elaborate ceremonies, and secret handshakes and languages as a means of identifying the group with a unique tradition. Underneath the pomp and circumstance however is feasting, drinking, and socialising.

The *Lodge of the Stone Hammer* is comprised of a large

number of Dwarfen professionals from the center of the Empire. Due to their distance from their traditional lands and their loneliness, they meet once a month at a chosen city. Here the Dwarfs spend two or three hours renewing their society vows and performing rituals that symbolically tie them to the Dwarfen Realms to the east. The rest of the evening is spent in a prolonged struggle to scarf down as much alcohol, food, and pipe weed as Dwarfenly possible in the remaining time.

“Socially Deviant” Secret Societies

Society is not always understanding of more unconventional behaviours and beliefs. A small group may have different views on marriage such as the practice of polygamy or sharing spouses, while others seek alternative means of living, such as a rejection of the killing of animals or a desire to live beyond the bounds of feudal lords. These different groups and their bewildering array of beliefs can all be classified as social deviants, since their practices and beliefs are alternatives to tradition and the established order. Such groups are likely to meet the animosity of the community whose beliefs they are challenging, and be persecuted by religious and secular authorities, retreating to areas on the fringe of society. Many of these deviant groups keep their different views secret, adhering to their beliefs in the privacy of their homes.

However, deviant does not however mean degenerate. The Chaste is one such secret society that deviates from normal standards. Located in Eastern Bretonnia and the Western Empire, they are a loosely organised group of many faiths that has developed a strict notion of purity to their lives and religious practices, a view compatible with the members’ various religious beliefs. They have a firm belief that certain things are pure while others impure. Before eating they must take ritual precautions to purify their food, and they are cautious about how they dispose of their waste. Their houses are immaculate and orderly, and they spend considerable time cleaning and ensuring that everything around them is spotless. Their medical practices demand that everything be sterilised of pollutants as well. This loose society has started to come to the attention of the authorities, and religious figures have started to question their notions of purity, while physicians’ guilds are aghast at their self-reliant medical and surgical practices. As such the group has attempted to deflect from themselves this most recent unwanted attention.

Vampiric Cults

A few resourceful vampires have formed secret societies to shield them from their weaknesses. Although vampires can blend in with society, their vulnerability in day and their feeding habits demand that they employ human agents to do their bidding. Their magic, their ability to mesmerise, and the rituals to turn humans

into Vampiric Minions make it easy for Vampires to surround themselves with servants, willing or unwilling.

Many of these vampiric secret societies are not even aware of whom they serve since they employ another cover organisation. Only the upper membership may be aware of the nature of their founder. Such groups do the bidding of the vampire, working as its agents in the day, taking care of legal matters, buying and maintaining possessions and taking care of other important tasks.

Some Vampires are unwilling to give up their influence in society and tenaciously hold onto their power to influence others, and dispose of rivals and those close to the truth. After watching politics from behind the shadows over a hundred years or so, a Vampire can exert an incredible degree of influence.

There have been occasions when secret societies comprised of Vampires have formed, but due to their selfish nature and the demands resulting from their feeding habits, such groups fragment. Some small groups may still meet on the odd occasion to exchange information and assist each other, but these are loose and informal. It is reputed that this tradition stretches back into antiquity to an ancient land in the south, but few have looked further into these rumours.

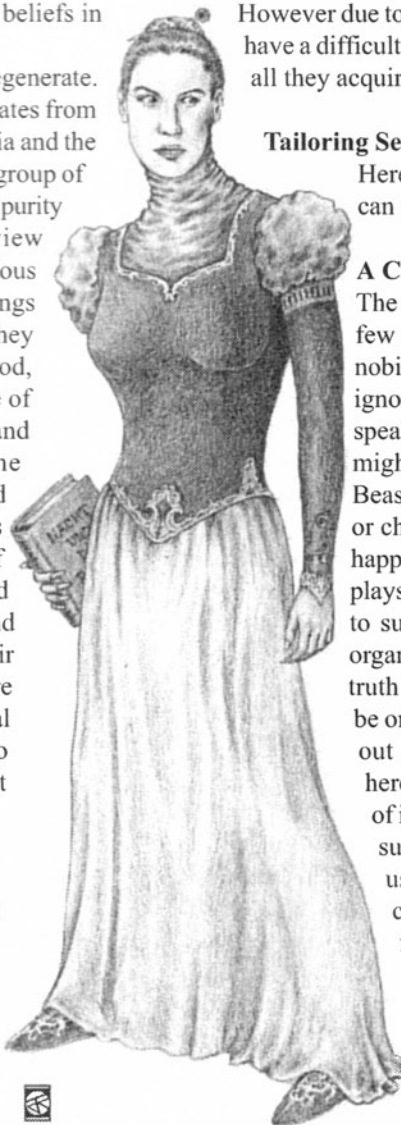
Another variant of this cult are those controlled by Liches. However due to the Liche’s completely inhuman nature they have a difficult task of gathering followers around them, and all they acquire are ghouls, necromancers, and the insane.

Tailoring Secret Societies to your Campaign

Here are a few ideas elaborating on how GMs can use conspiracies and secret societies.

A Conspiracy of Silence

The world *seems* like a normal place, and only a few people know better. The powers that be, the nobility and the churches strive to keep people in ignorance. In regard to the supernatural, nobody speaks about anything out of the ordinary. People might whisper about mutants and possibly even Beastmen, but few would know the names of evil or chaotic deities. There are two ways for this to happen, one is that the world is low magic, Chaos plays a subtle role, and most people are struggling to survive. Another alternative is that there are organisations hard at work conspiring to keep the truth from people. The Sons of the Emperor could be one such group: travelling the Empire seeking out anything with the stench of supernatural, heretics, witches, unauthorised printers, wizards of ill-repute, seers, and any others. They actively suppress Skaven accounts, hunt down magic users, and some sow misinformation. As a consequence little is known; confusion, folklore, and superstitions abound – some spread by the group to conceal the truth. This group act like Witch Hunters, with the support of the Emperor, the Cult of Sigmar, and a massive yet secret organisation at their disposal.



One Part Truth, One Part Lies

People are aware that evil exists, but there is endless speculation and superstition regarding this. Conspiracies may exist, but they are by no means widespread and petty in nature. There is no organised force out to suppress information, yet various organisations and individuals follow their own and oft times competing agendas yet still manage to maintain some semblance of order.

To make this campaign work, the GM should seed the campaign with a sprinkling of falsehoods: Lies regarding who actually controls the Emperor, the churches, and lies about Chaos, to ensure that the players are subject to the same misleading claims that others are in the world.

Awash in Print

Regardless of whether or not it is true, the Old World could be awash in flyers, brochures, pamphlets, broadsheets, newspapers, serial novels, and other lurid accounts of the “secret” world. Seers and prophets recount vivid revelations while agitators clamour about the secret organisations that control the lives of the common person. The public is both fascinated and horrified by this information, and greedily gulps it down. Most of the information is fictional and sensationalised, nonetheless Skaven, Chaos, intrigue, and conspiracies are topics of everyday conversation.

Conflicting books and other sources exist; PCs seeking the information will have to sift through dubious sources. Old World inhabitants will typically attribute supernatural or conspiratorial causes to everyday events.

Shadowy Foes and Unknown Benefactors

Unlike Chaos cults, secret societies can have more ambiguous relationships to player characters, the common people, and the powers that be. Characters may find themselves cooperating with such groups, joining them, or possibly even founding them. Secret societies can be employed to add history and atmosphere to the background of the world, imbuing it with hidden depth and mystery, as well as providing a new set of foes possibly more calculating and dangerous than even Chaos cults.

There is no reason that Chaos cultists should be the only shadowy menace in the Old World. On the contrary, the acts and consequences of Chaos cultists may well expose them long before they gain power and influence. Secret societies may prove even greater adversaries for players than Chaos cults for they can be more stable than Chaos cults and more likely to accumulate experience and knowledge, particularly those groups that have been around for centuries with legacies that would stun outsiders. Consider the dangers of hunting a Chaos cult of a dozen cultists with a taste for leather and orgies to that of an ancient and secret order wielding incredible occult power whose membership is composed of the noble descendents of ex-Templars - an order that stretches not only through time and memory, but across borders. Players could eventually learn that some evils are entirely human in nature, but then again these secret societies may just be fictions of overactive imaginations! Or is that what *they* want you to think?



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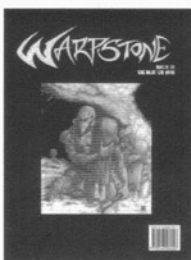
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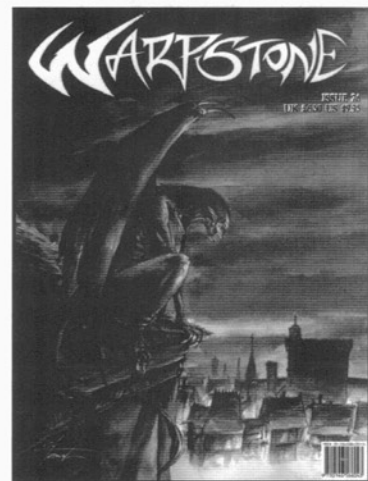
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