

WARHAMMER
FANTASY ROLEPLAY

TM

TERROR IN TALABHEIM



AN ADVENTURE IN THE EYE OF THE FOREST





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TERROR IN TALABHEIM

AN ADVENTURE IN THE EYE OF THE FOREST

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INTRODUCTION

Terror in Talabheim is a city sourcebook and stand-alone adventure for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. The adventure portion of the book is intended for characters in their first or second careers, but adjustments can be made to increase the peril as needed. Some *WFRP* adventures are about investigations, dark plots, and the ever-lurking danger of Chaos Cults. *Terror in Talabheim* is more like a disaster/survival epic that eventually gives way to a war story.

THE EYE OF THE FOREST

The first half of this book details the history and environs of the great Empire city of Talabheim, also known as the Eye of the Forest. Founded over two thousand years ago, Talabheim is sacred to the nature God Taal and rests at the very heart of the Empire, encircled by the walls of a massive crater. The mighty Talabec River flows past the docks of Talabheim, a small town known as Taalagad, before making its way to Altdorf and on to the sea, making Talabheim a centre of commerce for the Empire.

The government of Talabheim is widely known for its fondness for both laws and taxes. The fact that Talabheimers are fairly accepting of this makes other citizens of the Empire deem them a strange lot in general. This sourcebook describes the power structure of Talabheim, along with a few of those laws and taxes they're so fond of. The many neighbourhoods of Talabheim, along with some detailed locations in each are put forth, as well as information on the docks of Taalagad, where the widely famed Ten-Tailed Cat sits along with many other dens of iniquity. Adventure hooks and detailed NPCs abound. In addition, some other locales residing within the Great Crater are also discussed, for the mighty Taalbaston's walls hold multiple farming villages alongside the Eye of the Forest, as well as a lake and even an entire forest, the Taalgrunhaar, sacred to Taal.

TERROR IN TALABHEIM

The second half of this book details the plot of a powerful Grey Seer, one of the Wizard-Priests of the insidious race of Ratmen known as the Skaven, to seize the Eye of the Forest and bring the Empire to its knees. GMs who own the *WFRP* sourcebook *Children of the Horned Rat* will get a great deal of use out of it in conjunction with this adventure, but reference material is provided in the back of this book for those lacking it. We advise rewarding all PCs who survive the adventure 500 XP and grant a bonus 100–300 XP for good roleplaying.

The following Chapters make up the adventure portion of the book.

Chapter I: The Crowded Docks of Taalagad

Wherein our principals are offered lucrative, if distasteful, employment; old hatreds are renewed, fresh blood is spilt, a foulness takes root, and hints of that which is to come are placed for the discerning eye.

Chapter II: The Port & the Plague

Wherein our principals discover that good health is beyond price. A harbour in turmoil, a commander in quandary, a barrier to be breached, while rodents, Human and otherwise, abound.

Chapter III: You're in the Militia Now

Wherein our principals at long last enter the Eye of the Forest, only to enter the service of same, for true knowledge is scarce, but able hands are often scarcer.

Chapter IV: The Desperate & the Dead

Wherein our principals are introduced to some worthies of the Clan Pestilens and their matchless ideas on neighbourhood administration; a delight surpassed only by meeting the shambling experiments of the crafty Doctor Gugula Skell.

Chapter V: They Have Guns

Wherein our principals discover that the Ratmen have mastered a few of warfare's secrets, including the use of gunpowder and overwhelming force.

Chapter VI: Opposition in the Eye

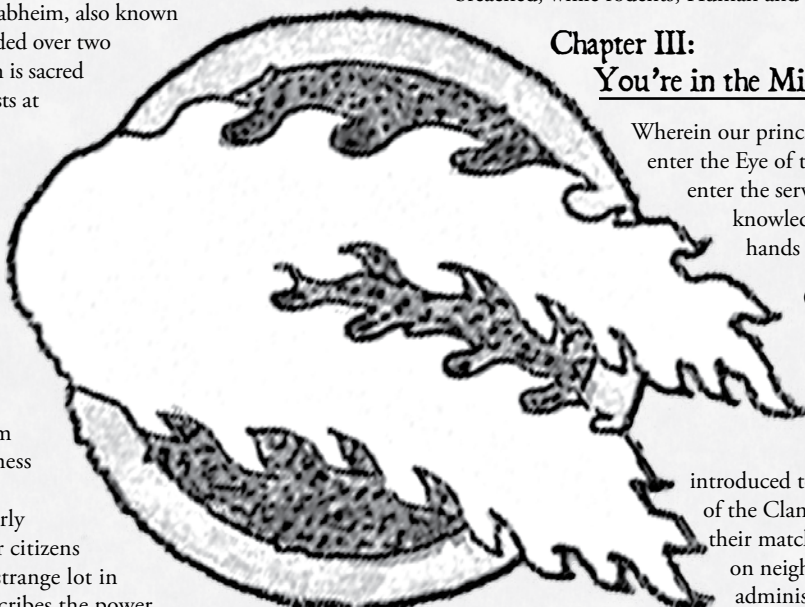
Wherein our principals need practice the art of stealthy resistance and opportunistic assassination, whilst ominous hints of Steeleye's plan are revealed. They must turn enemies into allies and madmen into resources or all may be lost.

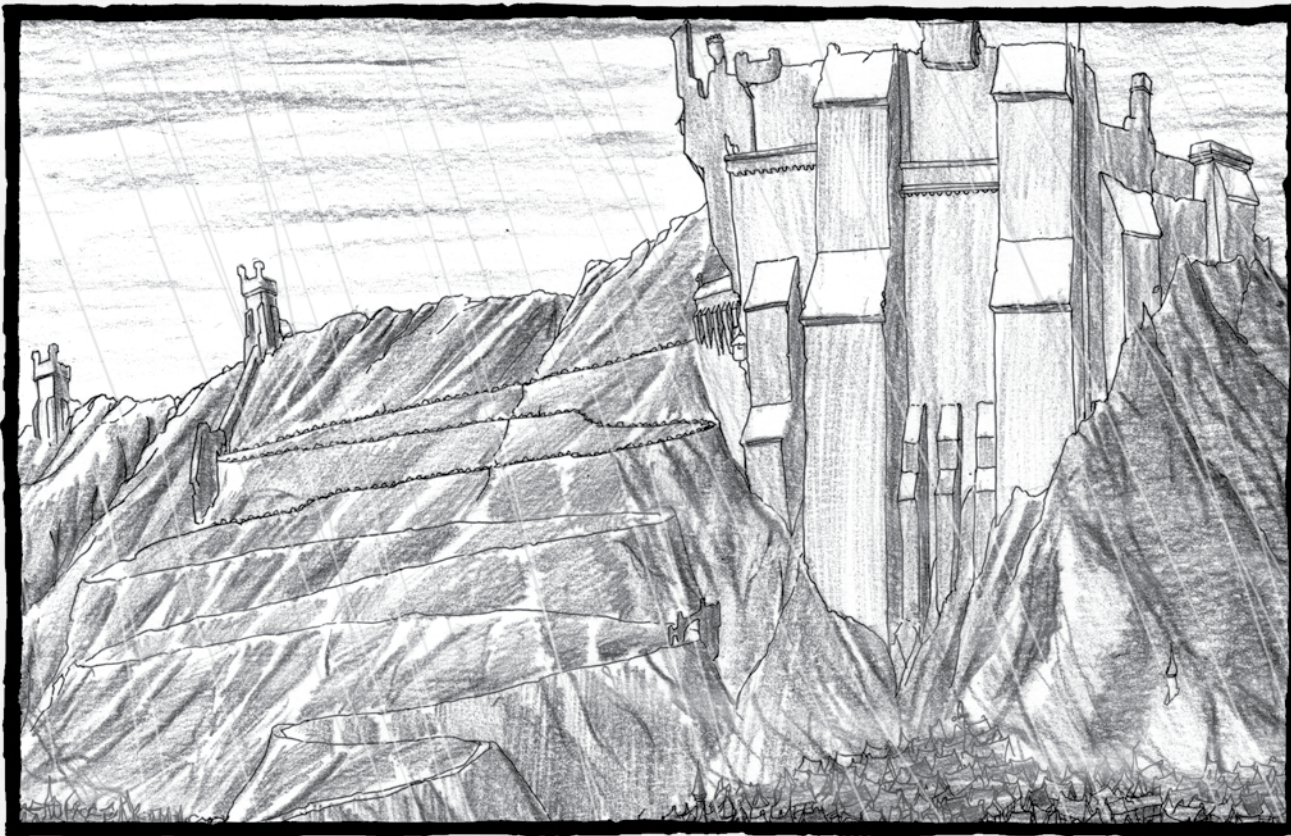
Chapter VII: The Heart of the Matter

Wherein our principals must at last confront the architect of Talabheim's fall, else the Forest's Eye shall never rise again.

ADVENTURE AWAITS!

Even now the Ratmen seethe beneath the streets, ready to unleash their foul plan on the streets of Talabheim. Come then, the Eye of the Forest awaits you!





THE CITY OF TALABHEIM

This section describes the city of Talabheim, where most of this adventure takes place. Like Nuln, Altdorf, and Middenheim, Talabheim is one of the great cities of the Empire, though the

recent Chaos Incursion has left an indelible mark on this place. It also covers Taalagad, the largest settlement claimed by Talabheim, and its port on the River Talabec.

— A BRIEF HISTORY OF TALABHEIM —

After Taal gifted his brother Ulric with the flat-topped mountain that would one day become Middenheim, he ventured deep into the woodlands to the east in search of a place where his own worship could flourish and thrive. The legends say Taal encountered a gigantic Wurm as he searched, and the enraged creature attacked him. The two fought for several weeks, their battle shaking the foundations of the world. At the very last, Taal grabbed the beast by its tail and lashed it against the ground again and again, carving out the western reaches of the Talabec River as he did so. With a mighty heave, he flung the dragon high into the air and watched its fiery corpse plummet to the ground.

When it struck the earth, it formed a great crater several miles across. Taal came to see what had become of his enemy, but he found little remained. The Wurm's flesh had spread across the crater bottom, mixing with the earth and making it incredibly fertile. In addition, the scales of the creature found their way into the soil and rock of the crater. Pieces of this magical material are occasionally found by Talabheim's farmers as they plough their fields, and it is much prized by blacksmiths in the creation of weapons and tools.

Taal saw the crater and was pleased with his work. He called it *Taalabim*, "Taal's Victory," and proclaimed that, in time, his faithful would come and make the land their own. He bore a great tunnel through the crater wall to allow his people access the fertile bowl within. After hundreds of years, Taal's prophecy came true. The Talabec, descendants of the ancient Taleuten tribe, happened upon the crater and the tunnel that led within. Kruger, chief of the Talabec, ordered his folk to venture within the crater and construct a great city to honour Taal.

The city of Talabheim was not realized within Kruger's lifetime. Instead, in I.C. 40, Kruger's son, Talgris, founded the city his father had demanded built. It would carry the name *Taalabim* for centuries, but over the years, the place came to be called Talabheim, and it is now known as one of the most defensible cities in the Old World.

OF SIGMAR AND TALABHEIM

As is well known, Sigmar left the throne and travelled into the east. Before he reached his final destination and dismissed what

remained of his retinue, Sigmar chose to pass through Talabheim. It is said he rode through the Wizard's Way upon his white stallion and looked out upon the budding city below him in wonder. In a loud voice, Sigmar proclaimed, although it would weather many storms, Talabheim would never fall so long as it remained true to its patron deity, Taal.

Sigmar and his men only remained in Talabheim for a day, but they left their mark on the city's founder. Sigmar dined with Talgris, son of Kruger, and the two shared tales of their youth. Talgris was impressed with Sigmar, who had known and fought alongside his father. Though he asked Sigmar to remain for a few days longer, Sigmar declined. Instead, the Emperor granted Talgris his white horse in exchange for his hospitality. With a fraternal nod, Sigmar left Talabheim behind, leaving Talgris' lands, never to return.

About 20 years later, a new religion bloomed in the Empire. A mad preacher in Nuln proclaimed he had a vision of Sigmar being crowned by Ulric himself, thus implying Sigmar had risen to join the Gods. Whilst the new Sigmarite faith spread north into the Reikland, the people of Talabheim remained staunch adherents to Taal. But Sigmar's Cult caught fire, gaining legitimacy and attention from the new Emperor, and Sigmar's proclamation—or as some said prophecy—that Talabheim would not fall began to carry more weight, and the people feared this upstart new religion. The Talabheimers largely held to the worship of Taal, and though the Sigmarites founded a temple in their city, Taal remained the dominant religion.

TALABHEIM AND THE AGE OF WARS

Though the Cult of Sigmar would grow unchecked for centuries, with it came an increasing resentment from those in the Empire who believed and followed the older Gods. Those who followed Ulric and Taal saw the burgeoning Sigmarite movement as a threat to their way of life. The situation only worsened when the question of religion entered into the political arena. In I.C. 1359, the Grand Duke of Stirland, a staunch apologist and puppet for the Cult of Sigmar, was elected Emperor. This was the final straw, and the Grand Duchess Otilia of Talabecland refused to recognize his title. To make matters worse, The Elector Count of Stirland imposed a series of taxes upon the Cult of Ulric. In response, Otilia crowned herself Empress in I.C. 1360 and banned the Cult of Sigmar from Talabecland.

Religion, now used as a political tool, had come to be central to the wars of the Empire. The Cult of Ulric in Talabecland, supported by the worshippers of Taal, took up arms against their Sigmarite enemies. For two hundred years, the squabbling continued, one Emperor in Talabecland and the other in Stirland. In I.C. 1547, Grand Duke Heinrich of Middenland sought to garner enough votes to legally establish himself as Emperor. He took his case to Frederik V of Talabheim, the so-called "Otilian Emperor," who soundly rejected Heinrich's claim.

Heinrich returned to Middenheim in a rage and pronounced himself Emperor nonetheless. He then declared war on Frederik V, as well as the whole of Talabecland, in I.C. 1550. Frederik, not one to be undone, declared his own war against the self-proclaimed Emperor in Nuln, while simultaneously defending his own province from Middenheim's armies. In I.C. 1557, Middenheim sent an army to destroy the city of Talabheim, but the crater wall was never breached by the invaders. However, the port of Taalagad

was razed and subsequently occupied by the invading army. An abysmally unsuccessful siege of Talabheim, which lasted almost twenty years, followed.

Talabheim felt few repercussions from these incidents. Because of the verdant interior of the Taalbaston, the city was able to support itself almost indefinitely. Whilst times were often tight for the citizens of Talabheim, they rarely suffered. The results of these wars were to have a lasting effect on Talabheim, especially in regards to its complex series of laws and edicts. As the rest of the Empire seemed to slide ever deeper into confusion, the Lords of Talabecland rejected the growing anarchy by implementing an overabundance of stringent regulations and rules.

Talabheim came to show its own penchant for independence during the Age of Wars. In I.C. 1750, the Emperor of Talabecland, Horst the Cautious, was asked to help repel an invading army that was approaching Talabheim. When Horst refused to send his troops to the city's aid, the city revolted, seceding from Talabecland entirely. Talabheim went so far as to crown its own Emperor, Helmut II. Unable to assail Talabheim's walls, Horst could do little but issue idle threats. The estrangement of Talabecland and Talabheim would continue for several hundred years, until Emperor Magnus of Nuln acceded to their formal reunification in I.C. 2304.

THE GREAT WAR AGAINST CHAOS

When the Kislevite Tsar sent requests for help to the provinces of the Empire in I.C. 2302, none returned to him with the aid he had requested. Talabheim's response was no different than any of the other provinces or city-states. It had managed to gain a great many enemies since the Age of Wars, and the city parliament was more concerned with the city's own defence than with that of Kislev. Chaos Cults surfaced in Taalagad, revelling in the imminent arrival of their twisted masters, but these were quickly and fiercely rooted out and destroyed.

It took the actions of Magnus of Nuln to reunite the Empire after centuries of distrust and war. As Praag fell to Chaos in the north, Magnus came to Talabheim to request the city's aid. Just as an apparent miracle had earned Magnus the loyalty of the Ar-Ulric of Middenheim, so too did Magnus convince the leaders of Talabheim to join his cause against Chaos. Upon Magnus' arrival in the city, it is said the wolves of the Sacred Forest loosed a howl that echoed between the crater walls like thunder, and that a single stag with a hammer-shaped mark on its forehead appeared at Taal's temple in Talabheim. It seemed the God of the city had spoken in support of Magnus.

Talabheim mobilized its troops and joined Magnus' formations. They marched to the north, and the armies of Chaos fell before them. The Talabheimers, at home in the forests, proved to be invaluable to the war effort, using their woodland skills as trackers and scouts to maintain the security within their own ranks, as well as to harass the Warherds of Beastmen roaming the countryside. Following the war in the north, Magnus was unanimously declared Emperor in I.C. 2304. Talabheim's Elector Count surrendered his own Imperial crown, and the line of Otilian Emperors came to an end.

Plague and pestilence descended upon Talabheim. Brought by Skaven in the wake of the war, the diseases decimated the people of Talabheim. Taalagad was especially hard hit by the virulent epidemics that spread through its poorest neighbourhoods. Plague-

ridden refugees from the north did not help matters, and many were turned away from the city at the business end of a crossbow or pike.

THE STORM OF CHAOS AND THE WAR'S AFTERMATH

Though Talabheim sent forces led by Elector Count Halmut Feuerbach, who had long sought to extend his influence more strongly over this independent city, to aid Emperor Karl Franz during the Storm of Chaos, the role played by the city's army during the conflict was relatively small. Less than half of Talabheim's military remained behind to man the Taalbaston in anticipation of the coming Chaos horde. Archagon's forces never officially attacked Talabheim in force, but increases in the activities of Cultists and Mutants, often hidden amidst masses of refugees from the north, put the city on the defensive.

In addition to its role as a refugee camp, Taalagad was instrumental to the war effort as a stopping point for military supplies that were being ferried up and down the Talabec River. A number of soldiers from Talabheim were assigned to support Taalagad's militia, which had been stretched thin by the arrival of over one thousand refugees from Hochland. For the most part, the soldiers were used to secure the docks from Mutant saboteurs and Chaos Cults. On more than one occasion, they aided Taalagad's militia in suppressing riots as food supplies into the port dwindled to a trickle.

Of the refugees fleeing to Talabheim, Count Ludenhof of Hochland was likely the most influential. Ludenhof had fled from Hergig just prior to the city's fall, exiling himself to the relative security of Talabheim for the duration of the war. Now, with Chaos in retreat, Ludenhof has returned to Hergig to rebuild in an attempt to reestablish his rule over Hochland. Talabheim's parliament supports Ludenhof, in part because they seek payment on the many debts he owes the city, but also because they want to ensure the Hochlander refugees crowding the streets of Taalagad have a home to return to.

Taalagad, which has always been a cesspit and haven for the lower classes, is in the worst shape it has been in since the armies of Middenheim sacked it in I.C. 1557. The streets are packed with refugees from Hochland, who are constantly at odds with the largely Kislevite population. The two groups vie for everything from food to employment in the squalid town, and the militia can do little but try to keep things from boiling over.

Unlike the citizens of Taalagad, the folk of Talabheim have suffered only a little since the Storm of Chaos began. Crime has seemingly run rampant within the City of Laws, much to the parliament's dismay. The disappearance of Halmut Feuerbach has also served to disrupt the city-state's government, even as Countess Kreiglitz-Untern has risen to take control of things in his absence. Several citizens have been burned alive for the crime of heresy, but no one in the city-state's government is sure how far the cancer has spread.

— THE POWERS THAT BE —

As an independent city-state, Talabheim possesses a unique method of ruling and a style of politics that can bewilder outsiders. It's a huge city, and many different factions vie for power or simply struggle to keep it slowly moving forward on a day-to-day basis. The following individuals and groups are among Talabheim's movers and shakers. Recent events have disrupted business as usual, so there is considerable potential for new factions to take control or upset the status quo.

ELECTOR COUNT HALMUT FEUERBACH

Halmut Feuerbach, the Elector Count of Talabecland, is currently missing in action. When the Storm of Chaos visited the Empire, Halmut, along with a large contingent of the army, went to fight alongside Karl Franz. But in the closing moments of the conflict, Feuerbach went missing. Rumours immediately blazed through the troops—Beastmen ate him, a cloud of Chaos energy swept him up and whisked him away, traitorous generals murdered him in his sleep, he was poisoned, Ratmen kidnapped him, and dozens of other far-fetched theories.

Naturally, the Count and his temperament provide more fuel to the rumours. He was notoriously foul-tempered, and he garnered great ire from his parliament of nobles, the Merchant's Guild, and the various temples. His commands sourced from capricious turns and whimsy, and he was noted for his particularly heavy-handed style of ruling. His poor judgement combined with his irritating personality resulted in a long list of people who would much rather see the Count disappear, lending credence to the rumours of a coup. There are persistent whispers of the Count being in Talabheim, in the woods outside the Taalbaston, and even as far as the city of Kislev, though none of these sightings have been verified.

In truth, no one knows what happened to Count Feuerbach. His loss opened up a power vacuum in provincial politics and, by default, within the ruling elite of Talabheim. The count left no heir, and a successor has not yet been named. So the Countess Elise Kreiglitz-Untern of Talabheim extends her political reach in his absence, and the nobles of Talabecland rule in his stead, proving even more fractious and backstabbing than anyone suspected.

THE KREIGLITZ-UNTERN FAMILY

The Kreiglitz-Untern family was wealthy and powerful even before the curious disappearance of Halmut Feuerbach. To an outside observer, the Countess's rise to power was quick and with little debate. However, for those aware, her increased power was not without considerable gnashing of teeth and threats of murder. Indeed, the machinations to have Elise nominated seemed to occur the moment the Count left Talabheim to fight against the hordes of Chaos. She and her courtiers deny any wrongdoing, but those who accuse too loudly have been the target of terrible smear campaigns or seem to come down with a mysterious, lethal illness.

The Countess is a short, portly woman with homely features—formerly the butt of many jokes before her assignment to the highest post in the city. Despite her appearance, the Countess possesses a shrewd mind and a deep understanding of how politics really work in the city. She's content to allow her detractors to malign her looks, letting them believe her to be stupid, naïve, or merely incapable of ruling a large city. This has worked to her advantage, allowing her to see through insincere compliments and obsequious behaviour.

The Countess replaced most of the former ruling elite with capable individuals she trusts—a move that angered noble houses

to no end. Unmarried, the Countess has so far declined all offers she has received, though there are rumours of liaisons with Joerg Hafner—the current Hunter Lord of the city militia and commander of the Chosen of Taal. Much to the nobles' chagrin, the commoners adore the Countess and praise her sensible attitude and decent public policies. Peasants shout her name in praise during boisterous toasts, and her rare sightings in the streets evoke cheers from watching bystanders.

THE PARLIAMENT

The Parliament consists of the most powerful and influential nobles in Talabheim. New members are nominated by those already with seats in this esteemed assembly. As a result, most Talabheimers sneer that this institution is fraught with rampant cronyism and corruption. The nobles represent a wide swath of the rich and wealthy—powerful landowners and merchant lords. Certain high-ranking members of the churches of Sigmar, Ulric, and Taal are allowed to make their arguments and sway the policies of the Parliament, but they are not allowed to vote. The Parliament meets in a separate wing of the Grand Courthouse of Edicts. Sessions are supposed to occur twice per month, though Talabheim's numerous festivals, holy days, and secular holidays regularly interrupt this schedule. "Keeping a noble's hours" is a common joke among the lower class about being lazy or absent from duty.

THE HUNTERS' COUNCIL

The Hunters' Council controls Talabheim's militia, City Watch, and even its levies for the army. The Hunter Lords, all of the ranks of General, include Mannfred Schultz, Christoph Stallmaier, Detlef Kienholtz, and Joerg Hafner. Schultz commands Talabheim's army and was severely wounded during the recent struggles. Still recovering from his grievous injuries, he leaves the day-to-day affairs to his various commanders. Stallmaier commands the Taalbaston Guard, and Kienholtz commands the City Watch. Joerg Hafner is in charge of the Militia and serves as the commanding officer of Taal's Chosen.

To become a Hunter Lord, one must not only prove martial prowess and political savvy but also prove skill as a hunter by tracking down and killing a dangerous creature of the forest. Targets include bears, lynxes, or wild boars. The animal skin is worn as a drape and is a symbol of honour once blessed by the Priests of Taal.

In Count Feuerbach's absence, the Hunter Lords jockey for power. So far, Stallmaier is the boldest and most blatant in his grab for power. His open ambition makes it clear he has designs on becoming the next Elector Count, but before he can gain this coveted post, he must first renounce his position and treat with Karl Franz in Altdorf. But if he leaves Talabheim, he'll risk toppling his careful political advantage and give room to his rivals to usurp him. So for now, he's content with improving his already strong name and grasping whatever additional power he can.

THE STANDING ARMY

The battle against Archagon severely taxed the armies of Talabecland, and Talabheim was no different from any of the other communities in the land. Whilst most remain in the field hunting down the remaining pockets of Chaos Marauders and Beastmen, a few have begun to trickle back to the city. Each man who comes

home shoulders the burdens of war, scarred by the ordeals of war in body, mind, or both. Rumours abound of mass desertion even though such behaviour is punishable by ten lashes in the Field of Absolution in front of the Grand Courthouse of Edicts. Repeat offenders are thrown into The Hollows for a month or longer.

The Talabheim army is notable for its sizable proportion of bowmen to regular foot soldiers and its ability to move quickly through forested regions. The bulk of its soldiers are recruited from the woods and glens both within the Taalbaston and outside its reach. Footmen prefer the axe or spear to the sword. The army has a small contingent of cavalry, which are used for fast lightning strikes rather than massed charges—they leave that task to the Knightly Orders.

THE TAALBASTON GUARD

The Taalbaston Guard is responsible for the defence of the Crater Wall and, most importantly, the fortress protecting the Wizard's Way. They consider themselves superior to all the other military units, including the rest of the army, with the possible exception of the Taal's Chosen. Taalbaston guardsmen take their jobs very seriously but are known to accept bribes from the right people. They boast a heavy emphasis on artillery and crossbowmen to protect the gate—the fortress atop the Wizard's Way has nearly a hundred cannon, ballistae, and catapults that can be brought to bear on the enemy. The turrets of the High Watch are also lined with vats of boiling oil, lye, and other caustic substances.

Tunnel Brigade ("The Terriers")

Within the ranks of the Taalbaston Guard is a special unit that roams the numerous tunnels and warrens within the walls of the crater itself—known as the Ratholds. Though officially known as the Taalbaston Tunnel Brigade, most (including themselves) call



these guardsmen “the Terriers” for their mission is to “find and kill the rats in the walls.” The Terriers patrol the best-known tunnels and are constantly on the search for new ones. It’s not illegal to be, or even live, inside the wall, but numerous illegal acts occur within them. Their biggest concern is finding tunnels leading outside of the Taalbaston, where people can slip in and out of the city without being seen (and more importantly, not pay their entry taxes).

Terriers are selected from the shortest of the Taalbaston Guard—the source of innumerable taunts and jokes by the rest of the troops—but they are fierce and capable fighters. Few are noted of having much in the way of a sense of humour. Dwarves and Halflings are far more common in the Terriers than in the other branches of Talabheim’s military.

THE MILITIA (“DRUNKEN GANG”)

The militia is a hodgepodge of trusted citizens, woodsmen, and hunters that band together in times of need. When necessary, horsemen ride out into the Taalwelt, blow a trumpet with a unique call, and hold aloft a green banner depicting an upside-down drinking horn. Ancient law dictates all able-bodied men must muster when this occurs, though how many come depends on the amount of Rotfire moonshine consumed the night before. For this reason, the army commonly refers to the militia as the “Drunken Gang”—more than a few brawls have occurred when a soldier quips with this remark to an assembled group of militiamen.

Despite its malign reputation, the militia is capable, made up of rugged and dependable Talabeclanders. Most men consider it an honour to serve the militia when summoned and they take their duty seriously. However, the Hunter Lords have learned not to impose strict discipline, much less require them to wear uniforms or the like, on the independent-minded folk within

the Taalbaston’s borders. A commander that imposes too many restrictions or “dandy” rules on his troops had better sleep with one eye open at night.

THE CITY WATCH (“THE DOGFACES”)

Talabheim’s City Watch is known as “the Dogfaces” for the rather poor wolf’s head heraldry they sport. Should they go into battle, they are known to cry “For Taal! For Elise!” The city guard were gifted the wolf’s head heraldry by the Cult of Ulric during a short interregnum in the second millennium, that saw Ar-Ulric uproot himself from Middenheim to Talabheim after a spat with the Graf. The Cult of Ulric has always been influential in Talabecland and is not different in Talabheim, being the second most influential Cult in the city, after Taal of course. A large Temple and a statue of the God stand in the City of the Gods.

The City Watch is responsible for enforcing the city code, maintaining order, and acting as a reserve in times of siege. They are known for arresting individuals for the slightest infraction, rationalizing there must be some law buried in the massive tomes at the Grand Courthouse of Edicts that applies to the given situation. However, Talabheim is unusual in that a citizen arrested by the City Watch may attempt to charge the arresting officer with illegal incarceration if they can bring the case in front of the judges at the Grand Courthouse of Edicts—but only the wealthiest and most influential can attempt such a task.

THE KNIGHTLY ORDERS

Whilst all the main Knightly Orders have a presence in Talabheim, none can rightly claim dominance over each other. With the Storm of Chaos in its death throes, and the missing Elector Count’s own personal bodyguard, the Order of the Red Shields still missing in action, and Talabheim’s defences in disarray as armies return, the various commanders of the other Knightly Orders hope to expand their strength and sphere of influence. Public sentiment to this plan runs the gamut—some welcome an increase of capable fighters, while others see it as nothing more than a power grab.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE WHITE WOLF

Most of the Knights of the White Wolf remain in the field. Those that stayed behind in the city were charged with shoring up its fortifications. Unfortunately, they found themselves with little to do—something that angered such hardened warriors. Their loyalty lies with Talabheim’s current High Priest of Ulric. The order has gotten more insular and zealous over the years, as the Cult of Ulric remains lesser to that of Talabheim’s patron deity—Taal.

THE KNIGHTS PANTHER

The Knights Panther have long had a presence in Talabheim, though their loyalty and resources lay mostly in Middenheim. It’s said their chapterhouse in the Eye is the second largest in the Empire. The knights are viewed with a great deal of suspicion and most believed their continued presence is a means for Middenheim to expand its sphere of influence where it isn’t wanted. The Storm of Chaos drew away most of these knights to defend Middenheim, giving the city a small reprieve. But now that the storm has broken, the survivors trickle back into Talabheim. The Graf is



contemplating sending additional Knights to Talabheim to bolster their small numbers and to help him monitor developments within the city.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE STAG

Proud and regal, the Knights of the Stag are a relatively new order. Shunning the open guerrilla-style of warfare best known by most Talabeclanders, the Knights of the Stag pride themselves on fighting in dense, highly disciplined units. Some accuse them of being more concerned with parade drills rather than fighting ability, though they have proven themselves time and time again when they take to the field of battle.

The Knights Stag are highly disdainful of the other Knightly Orders and consider themselves the true sons of Talabheim. With the recent disappearance of the Count, the ranks of the Knights of the Stag are in deep debate as to whom to show their loyalty. Whilst the Countess seems to be emerging as the successor, there are those that feel Count Feuerbach is alive and to divide attention would be harmful to both the order and the city as a whole.

TAAL'S CHOSEN

Taal's Chosen are an exclusive group of elite woodsmen that patrol the interior of the Taalbaston, particularly the Taalgrunhaar. They are vigilant in protecting pilgrims from the predations of bandits and hunt down the rare Mutant or dangerous beast that finds its way inside the interior of the crater. On rare occasions, they span outside the Taalbaston and patrol the Old Dwarf Road to the south.

In war, Taal's Chosen serve as scouts and commandos for the main army, though a detachment is left behind to ensure the safety of the sacred woods. They are masters of hit-and-run tactics, trap setting, and tracking. The members of Taal's Chosen disdain any sort of uniform but wear a stag hide draped over their shoulders to indicate their status.

The current leader of Taal's Chosen is Joerg Hafner, a fearsome warrior and tracker without peer. He prefers the trackless wilds to city living, but his duties as commander for both Taal's Chosen and the city militia keep him embroiled in politics more than he likes. Hafner maintains good relations with the Knights Stag and considers them true brothers in arms.

THE PRIESTHOOD

The Priests of Taal are easily the largest contingent in Talabheim. Indeed, the city boasts a higher number of Priests per capita than most other cities. The clergy claims this is because of the large number of faithful present—critics claim it's because the Priests are exempt from paying the exorbitant taxes on alcoholic beverages that form an important part of their rites. The Priests of Taal split their time between the city and the Taalwelt to the east, where the true Temple of Taal sits. Their rites are conducted in secret, except for the occasional practitioner of Taal's creed.

The Temple of Verena, located in the heart of the Law Quarter, is the second largest in the city. They help manage Talabheim's immense legal bureaucracy and ensure the laws are just. So far, they are fighting an uphill battle.

Much to the dismay of the Emperor, the Cult of Sigmar does not have a strong hold within Talabheim. Its temple is relatively small

NEW CAREER: HORNED HUNTER

The rites of Taal demand great physical, emotional, and mental fortitude for its practitioners. Some see the trappings of civilization—cities, courts, and the like—as a failing in the interpretation of Taal's will. The Horned Hunters are deeply zealous and shun the city. Unlike Taal's Chosen, the Horned Hunters give up much in the way of a material life. They shun normal clothing and armour and wear animal skins, loincloths, or less. Part of their initiation into this group is to undergo extensive tattooing, covering their chest and face. Horned Hunters prowl the woods both within the Taalbaston and throughout Talabecland and claim allegiance only to Taal. While they lack the fiery rhetoric of most zealots, they are still fervent in their beliefs and believe that conversion comes from actions, rather than words.

—Horned Hunters Advance Scheme—

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|----|----|-----|---|----|-----|-----|-----|
| +5 | +5 | +10 | — | +5 | — | +10 | — |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| — | +3 | — | — | — | — | — | — |

Skills: Concealment, Follow Trail or Set Trap, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Secret Language (Ranger Tongue), Secret Signs (Ranger), Silent Move

Talents: Frenzy, Hardy, Fleet Footed or Very Resilient

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Axe)

Trappings: Anti-toxin kit

Career Entries: Initiate (of Taal), Scribe

Career Exits: Hunter, Militiaman, Outlaw, Scout, Vagabond

and tucked away in an obscure corner within the God's Row. However, those that follow its tenants are known for their utter devotion and fervent behaviour. In order to bolster their numbers, the Priests of Sigmar from Middenheim and Altdorf send more proselytisers to gain more converts.

THE WIZARDS

The Jade Order is easily the most powerful magical faction in Talabheim, and unlike most cities, it works closely with the Priesthood. An appointed Magister Lord advises the Countess and Parliament and preserves the abundant wilderness within the Taalbaston from over development. In times of war, the Magister Lord coordinates Magister reinforcements for the militia to shore up defences, though the currently appointed Magister Lord, Dieter Vogt, dislikes getting too involved in the machinations of the Hunters' Council.

The Amber Order runs a close second in representation of Magisters in Talabheim. Few spend time within the city proper, instead practicing their arts in the Taalwelt where wild beasts still run free. A tale persists of an elderly, and crazed, Amber Magister that commands the rats of the city by means of a flute.

During the Storm of Chaos, many of the city's Magisters left to help stem the tide. Like the soldiers, they are slowly trickling back into the city. Among those who have returned, the scars of the invasion are quite pronounced, and more than a few have retreated into the Taalgrunhaar for treatment and solace by their fellow Magisters.

THE BOATSMEN'S LEAGUE

The Talabec River is a vital part of Talabheim. The broad, slow streams of this mighty river bring pilgrims, trade, and food in and out of the city. The Boatsmen's League is a powerful lobbying group that represents various captains, ship owners, and businesses that ply the waters of the Talabec. They fight for the reduction of tariffs and taxes imposed on cargo. They establish new sources of trade with settlements up and down river and settle disputes between boat captains and land-based middlemen.

— TALABHEIM'S BIZARRE TAXES —

The nobles and statesmen of Talabheim want to keep their coffers full, regardless of the state of things in the world outside the Taalbaston. One way they keep the Shillings flowing is by taxing almost every conceivable thing. In a city famous for its adherence to law, the overabundance of taxes is not particularly surprising. Most common transactions see some manner of taxation, much as they do in other cities throughout the Empire; yet, that is where the similarities between the tax codes of the rest of the Empire and Talabheim end.

A good many of the city's taxes seem frivolous to outsiders, and they make trade and travel within Talabheim especially expensive for merchants. Despite this, the Talabheimers have grown used to the way things are done, and they rarely make a fuss—even when their precious alcohol is taxed. The majority of the most expensive taxes affect outsiders, or such is the general consensus in the city. This, of course, is untrue; the manner and mode of taxation on imported trade goods means they are likely to be much more expensive than they would be otherwise.

The Talabheimers, especially the wealthiest burghers, have grown adept at exploiting loopholes in the local tax code. Even the lowliest farmer knows the ins and outs of some of the city's more esoteric fees, and so they are paid less often than would normally be the case. Outright tax evasion, though uncommon, is still known to happen. Those caught depriving the city of its coin, however, are subject to brutal penalties. To the lords of Talabheim, failing to pay taxes is akin to sedition.

THE HAT TAX

In the year 2468, Talabheim passed a tax on entertainers. At the time, it was felt entertainers, from street corner minstrels to stage actors, were layabouts who failed to contribute anything of worth to the city. As such, entertainers were expected to contribute a separate tax on any income they made through the practice of their craft. Any income based on the charity of others, such as donations dropped into a fiddler's hat, were also subject to this taxation.

Most merchants, however, consider the League to be nothing more than a front for criminals. The League has been accused of everything from piracy to extortion—a League strike could bring traffic and the flow of goods into the city to a near grinding halt. The current leader of the Boatsmen's League, an enormous Ostlander named Jens Leonhard, is known to rule his organisation with an iron fist. Lieutenants and business rivals that displease him are often found roped to the bottom of a random flatboat.

THE JUDGES

Talabheim is mired in thousands of laws, some of which are ancient beyond compare. Although the city swarms with litigants that help interpret these laws, it is up to the judges to enforce them. Talabheim boasts a large number of roving judges, the kind commonly found wandering the wilds of the Empire. These city judges patrol the streets and are empowered with making rulings and punishments on the spot. The general populace rightly fears them. Though every citizen is allowed a chance to argue their case before the courts, most lack the political clout to convince the roving judges of this right.

Though several decades have passed since the tax was imposed, it remains on the books to the present day. Many of Talabheim's councilmen have put forth motions to expand the tax to include revenue from pit fights, and action is expected on this matter in the coming months. There have also been arguments that taverns and gambling dens are places of entertainment and that their profits should also be subject to the tax. Such a levy would be in addition to the many taxes already imposed on establishments in relation to the libations they serve to customers, making them very unpopular with tavern owners and carousers alike.

LIGHTHOOF LEVY

Visitors who enter Talabheim through the Wizard's Way can expect to pay extra coin for mounts that are not being ridden. For each extra mount past the first, travellers must pay a Penny. The official reasoning for this is that grazing land within the crater is limited, though most folk view the tax as an excuse to gouge visitors for more money. Draft animals are exempt from the tax, as are pack animals.

ORPHAN TAX

In order to subsidise Talabheim's three public orphanages, the city has continued to levy a small tax on poultry that is bought or sold within the city or in outlying Taalagad. The tax only applies to the sale of living animals, and most merchants get around it by twisting the neck of the fowl in question just prior to making a sale (often while uttering, "For the orphans!").

THE SHORT SHRIFT

Halfings are not particularly welcome in Talabheim, nor are imports from the craftsmen of the Moot. Halfings are considered to be indolent, gluttonous, and crooked, and Talabheim's citizens have always viewed shipments from the Moot with suspicion. The Short Shrift was established during Pie Week of 2504, making this a relatively recent addition to the city-state's tax code. It establishes that

any items being imported from the Moot are to be taxed between five and twenty percent more than normal, depending on the usefulness of the items to the average (*i.e.*, Human) inhabitants of Talabheim.

For example, the small size of clothing manufactured specifically for Halflings means the average Talabheimer will have little call to purchase it; thus, the import taxes on these kinds of goods is increased. While this keeps Halfling merchants from plying their trade in Talabheim, the tax has the secondary effect of making the lives of Halflings in Talabheim much more expensive than the lives of their Human neighbours. Consequently, the Halfling population of the city-state has decreased a great deal since 2504, and the average citizen is happy for it.

THE POTTERY TAX OF 2286

This tariff, which is unofficially referred to as the “toilet tax,” applies to all ceramic goods that are imported to Talabheim. Even though it is a tax with especially broad coverage, it is remembered specifically as a tariff on chamber pots. The story goes that Talabheim’s own artisans, who utilized the plentiful clay from the swamp at the south eastern end of the crater to create their own ceramic goods, were being choked out of business by plentiful imports of crockery and stoneware from Middenland and Reikland. The Crocker’s Guild of the time threw such a fit that the city imposed a tax on all ceramic imports.

As it would happen, a large order of earthenware from Reikland arrived in Taalagad shortly after the tax had been imposed. The passage of the law was so recent that there had been little time for word to spread to neighbouring cities. The ceramics merchant from Reikland, aptly named Rupert Pottsman, was carrying a large supply of chamber pots, handcrafted steins, and drinking bowls. When he learned of the tariff, Pottsman was incensed. A brief scuffle broke out between the city guard and his caravan escorts, wherein a great number of chamber pots were smashed. Pottsman and his surviving escorts were arrested, and his stock was confiscated. What became of him is surely written of in Talabheim’s court records, but few citizens show much concern given the comical nature of his tale.

THE SCRIBE’S TITHE

Given the amount of paperwork done in the city of laws, scribes and their services are in high demand. In order to gain a little extra income, the city of Talabheim has instituted a tithe that is applied to the services of any merchant that copies, writes, or records information for a client. Additionally, the sale of parchment, paper, ink, sealing wax, and writing implements are also taxed. The less fortunate in Talabheim see the Scribe’s Tithe as a tax on illiteracy, since the poor of Talabheim have always been forced to seek more educated folk to write their letters for them.

CUP DUTY

The sale of all alcoholic beverages within Talabheim is taxed in one way or another. Talabheimers are famous throughout the Empire for enjoying their liquor, and they make no small noise about the taxes that the city-state has placed on their favourite pastime. Despite “the drink snatch,” as most commoners call it, Talabheimers continue to consume alcohol in large quantities. Businesses and establishments that make alcohol available to patrons are required to register with the city government, and city inspectors and tax collectors regularly visit such businesses.

NEW CAREER: EXCISEMAN

All cities require taxes and tariffs to function. The constant flow of money ensures public works and servants receive the funding they need, whilst also lining the pockets of the politicians. But no matter how good the cause or how noble the deed, no one likes to pay taxes. Since this is unpopular reality, most lawmakers distance themselves from the collection of monies, relying on specially hired Excisemen to do their work instead. Of all the people in the city, the Exciseman is likely the most unpopular, right alongside the dyers, beggars, and the rest of the rabble. Though they face hostility at every turn, most Excisemen know their duty is a necessary one. Still, these individuals are rarely well paid for their thankless job. As a result, few of them enjoy what they do and look for the fastest route to improve their lot, either through skimming the coffers and double-dealing or working extra hard in the faint hope of securing a better position in the government.

Note: If you’re rolling for your starting career, you may substitute Exciseman for Burgher with your GM’s permission.

—Exciseman Advance Scheme—

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|------|----|---|---|------|------|-----|-----|
| +10% | — | — | — | +10% | +10% | +5% | +5% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| — | +2 | — | — | — | — | — | — |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Law), Blather, Charm, Evaluate, Gossip, Haggle, Read/Write

Talents: Dealmaker, Savvy or Suave, Schemer, Super Numerate

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon

Trappings: Abacus, Writing Kit, 1d10/2 gc

Career Entries: Messenger, Scribe

Career Exits: Agitator, Litigant, Merchant, Militiaman, Outlaw, Roadwarden, Thief

Unregistered food halls and inns often set aside a back room where illegal alcohol is sold and consumed. There are few folk within the city that don’t know the location of at least one of these illicit taverns, but because the market for underground spirits is so pervasive, little is done to assuage the spread of such establishments. Tax inspectors are used to arriving at these businesses during surprise inspections only to find dozens of drunken patrons with no visible signs of alcohol. Those taverns that do choose to register with the government are most often located in the Merchant District, yet they rarely pay their liqueur tax due to their patrons being members of the Litigant’s Guild.

Several other methods are used to dodge the taxes on alcohol within Talabheim. Notable amongst these is the so-called Priest's Exemption, a law that allows Priests of locally recognized deities to drink tax-free, so long as they can prove their temple affiliation. Related to the Priest's Exemption, but much more devious, is the condition of "religious libations." Specifically, drinks that are consumed as part of a prayer or devotional service are not subject to taxation. The only requirement for such a situation is the presence of a Priest who blesses the drinkers and their hard-won spirits. Weddings, wakes, and Stag Nights—where men celebrate their communion with nature by taking part in a sacred hunt—are also exempt from the tax, as are certain holidays.

THE WAX TAX

As implied by its name, the wax tax is applied to products that are manufactured from, or otherwise incorporate, beeswax and paraffin. Talabheim produces a good deal of wax, primarily from the beehives kept by the farmers of the crater's southern tracts. This wax is some of the finest produced anywhere, and it is processed and melted down into milky ingots, which are marked with the city seal and sold at market to a number of industries. The most common items affected by the wax tax are candles, certain kinds of leather armour, and wax-lined barrels, canteens, and washtubs.

— THE CITY OF TALABHEIM —

Talabheim is a distinctive city, and those who explore its streets and shops always leave impressed and a little poorer.

Constructed inside a great crater formed from some ancient catastrophe, the City of Talabheim is but one settlement inside Taalbaston. Talabheim has long struggled against its city bounds, and every inch of available space is used by the people living here. Though Talabheim's population was relatively stable in ages past, it has since spilled over with the flood of refugees fleeing the ruined provinces to the north-east.

Talabheim is crowded with people. There is always something going on, some activity or spectacle to lure the attention of travellers. This is true even in the more sedate districts, for there are more people here than what the living space should allow, at least in the heart of the city. The streets, rarely wide enough for people to walk side-by-side let alone accommodate a cart or wagon, are always congested with merchants, beggars, labourers, and nobles all scurrying like ants to their next pressing engagement. Such traffic slows movement, and Talabheimers always give themselves extra time when they need to be somewhere.

Like everywhere else in the north, Talabheim struggles in the Storm's aftermath. Between the constant influx of refugees from Ostland, Hochland, and even Kislev, and the city-state's prohibitive prices and taxes, this community faces an uncertain future. Swollen as it is, the clash of cultures is creating tension, and the people are becoming discontent. The streets are alive with Agitators and Demagogues who invoke the people to rise up against the immigrants, the government, or even each other. And when the law captures one of the malcontents and string them up from the gibbets, riots sometimes break out, lasting for days on end. And so, whilst a dangerous place, Talabheim is energized by the interactions of outlooks and cultures, making this city, if anything, exciting.

THE TAALBASTON

The Taalbaston is the greatest of Talabheim's defences. Formed from the natural walls of the massive crater, the rim of the Taalbaston has been reinforced and constantly improved for centuries by the militaries of Talabheim. The perimeter of the crater is traversed by a narrow treacherous road known as the Spierrestrasse. A mixture of large and small watch posts are placed along the Spierrestrasse at regular intervals.

The minor watch posts are referred to as "Lashes." Small garrisons of thirty men man the Lashes, and each is equipped with nearly a dozen cannon and ballistae. Though capable of harassing enemy

forces both outside and inside the Taalbaston, these watch posts are expected to provide early warning of an enemy's encroachment upon Talabheim. Signal rockets of various colours and intensities are launched from these posts, different combinations providing instant information to the soldiers and citizens living within the Taalbaston.

The three major watch posts are positioned at the northern, eastern, and southern extensions of the Taalbaston. Whilst not nearly as formidable as High Watch, each is nonetheless a daunting obstacle for any enemy daring to mount an assault against them. All are equipped with signal rockets, as are their smaller brothers, but the defensive artillery available to each one consists of a combination of forty cannon and ballistae. One hundred men and support personnel occupy each of these keeps. Access can be gained by winding paths that climb the treacherous interior wall of the Taalbaston.

THE WIZARD'S WAY

The only legal way to enter into Talabheim is to take the Wizard's Way. As the Old Forest Road approaches the towering walls of the Taalbaston, it begins a winding path of switchbacks as it rises nearly two hundred feet up the side of the crater wall. The road is wide enough to allow several wagons side-by-side to traverse its length without impediment. The road is extremely busy during the day, and the lines grow long as the guards check each and every person's pass to enter the city. At the top of the road sits a massive fortress that casts long shadows onto the shanties below it.

HIGH WATCH

Known as High Watch, it is the first and best defence of the city. The gates are kept open except during times of crisis—High Watch has four separate black-iron portcullises, well greased and connected to a series of levers that can release the gates to slam shut with a single command. The walls and ceiling inside this tunnel are lined with murder holes, offering a great field of view for crossbowmen and soldiers to dump boiling oil in case an army actually makes it that far. The tunnel extends nearly 200 feet through the black walls of the Taalbaston and is illuminated by massive torches every 10 feet and huge candelabras that dangle from the ceiling. Although street sweepers work to keep the tunnel clean, the stench from people and animals, especially in the summer, can be unbearable.

A special branch of the City Watch mans High Watch at all times. The Taalbaston Guard consider themselves the elite branch, though most have grown bored and complacent due to the droll

TALABHEIM AND SURROUNDS

LOCATIONS

THE WIZARD'S WAY

1. High Watch
2. Talagaad Garrison
3. Municipal Entry Office

LAW DISTRICT

4. *Grand Counthouse of Edicts*
5. *The Field of Absolution*
6. *The Hollows*
7. *The Temple of Verena*
8. *Obelisk of Laws*
9. *Freeman's Court*
10. *The Stonehome*

THE TALLOWS

11. *Holler's Corner*
12. *The Black Lantern*
13. *Fishmonger's Alley*
14. *The Shields*

MERCHANT DISTRICT

15. *Threeapples Inn*
16. *The Merchant's Guild*
17. *Snorri's Pawnshop*
18. *Office of the Purse*

GOD'S ROW

19. Reliquary Road
20. The Shallyan Sanatorium
21. The Shrine of Manann
22. The Temple of Morr
23. The Temple of Myrmidia
24. The Temple of Shallya
25. The Temple of Sigmar
26. The Temple of Taal
27. The Talabheim Asylum
28. The Temple of Ulric

THE TAALGARTEN

29. The Sea of Roses
30. Brother's Lodge
31. Knoll of Doctrines

SCHWARTZ HOLD-NORDGATE

32. The Rusty Market
33. Wernhauer Stables
34. Yavandir's Blacksmithing
35. The Red Checker Theatre
36. Taal's Fountain



MANOR DISTRICT

37. *The Grand Manor*
38. *The Royal Academy of Talabecland*
39. *Avenue of Heroes*
40. *The Quill*

GUILDROW

41. *Hargrinson's Brewery*
42. *Emelia's Waxworks*




GELTWOLD

43. *One Man's Treasure*
44. *The Faithful Lender*

EARTHWORKS

45. *Farmer's Market*
46. *The Pig's Ear Tavern*

MAP KEY

-  River Ferry
-  Gate through the Old City Wall
-  Settlement Centre

TALAGAAD

47. *The Blackened Tooth*
48. *The Worker's Wall*
49. *The Fish Market*
50. *The Eel*
51. *Skully's*
52. *The Hammer & Tongs*
53. *Griswold and Son*
54. *Market Square*
55. *The Ten-Tailed Cat*
56. *Street of Thieves*
57. *The Balalaika*
58. *Madame Yaga*



nature of their job. To keep themselves entertained, the Taalbaston Guard are notorious for the intensity of their questioning and searches of travellers as they pass through the gates.

Assuming one possesses the correct paperwork to pass through High Watch, they find a breathtaking view before them—the entire city of Talabheim sprawls beneath their feet, and the interior of the Taalbaston stretches out to the horizon. The Wizard's Way then begins another series of switchbacks down into the Merchant's Run below.

PASSING THROUGH THE TAALBASTON

Visitors from somewhere other than Talabheim are in for a rude surprise if they think they can waltz down the Wizard's Way and into Talabheim. In fact, they will be stopped at the gates of the Taalagad Garrison and asked for their proof of citizenship or their letter of passage. Those without either are directed to apply for a city pass appropriate to their reason for visiting Talabheim at the Municipal Entry Office, which is a block over from the garrison. The first hurdle a prospective visitor to Talabheim faces is literacy or lack thereof, for inability to fill out the appropriate forms results in one having to join a list to apply for an "entry interview," which can take several weeks (or forever if one's name happens to have a foreign sound to it.)

Those who can fill out the forms have to pay a fee, depending on the type of letter they've requested. The cheapest letter of passage is the standard visitor's pass, colloquially called a "Pilgrim's Pass" as it is the one that the faithful of Taal and Rhya most often buy when on a pilgrimage to Taal's holy city. The pass used to cost more, but pressure from the Cult of Taal has lowered the price to 1 s—effectively the cost of the parchment it is written on. Truly devout followers can sometimes even get this fee waived if they are well regarded by the church.

Once the papers are filed, the prospective visitor will have to wait anywhere from three days to a week for approval. This enables the clerks of the office to check the applicant's name and appearance against various Imperial wanted lists. It is the applicant's responsibility to show up each day and check the lists posted on the Municipal Entry Office's outer wall to see if his pass has been approved. Presuming there were no difficulties, and he wasn't flagged for arrest, the applicant will be granted his pass.

The standard pass gives visitors access to the city for three days, the dates of both entry and departure clearly marked. The Dogfaces regularly check the papers of any troublemakers they catch and often spot check obvious outsiders on principle. Having an expired pass results in anything from a stiff lecture or a small fee and ejection from the city if the pass recently expired, to arrest, imprisonment, and torture for long-expired passes.

There are a number of other passes, the most common being the "Itinerant Pass," which is common with well-to-do sailors (as the poor ones stick to Taalagad) and adventuring types. The Itinerant Pass costs 10 s and is renewed yearly. It allows its bearer to come and go regularly, staying as long as they like at a stretch, though it doesn't allow the purchase of long-term properties or businesses in Talabheim. There are Merchant's Passes that allow property ownership, though those wealthy enough to afford it can usually afford to purchase citizenship. Imperial soldiers, Witch Hunters, and Priests that have come to take office in a Talabheim church or shrine all have to be able to prove their identities upon demand, but they aren't required to have a pass.

As with all bureaucratic entanglements in the Empire, friends in high places and bribes make the entire process of getting a pass go more smoothly. There is also a brisk business in forged passes of various kinds, as well as smuggling operations that are willing to pass "hot" individuals in and out of the city. See **Chapter Two** for more details on that sort of arrangement.

All persons legally passing into or out of Talabheim have their names meticulously recorded. A dispute in 1567 with a Dwarf Runesmith caused the Records Office of Talabheim to henceforth retain all names for five centuries before disposing of the records. Thus, the Taalbaston Pass Log Office is enormous.

THE LAW QUARTER

The Law District, known to thieves and scum as the Richter or Law Town, sits in the centre of Talabheim. It is a place bereft of humour or joy, as barristers, judges, and clerks bustle to and fro from their places of business, focused on carrying out the letter of the law without question. Licensed runners, wearing the city livery, scurry about, carrying important documents. Wealthy nobles and merchants are commonly seen striding through the district with their entourage and litigants in tow.

The Law Quarter is an immense span of ancient, foreboding buildings constructed from the dull grey granite of the Taalbaston. Within its confines, numerous litigator firms, guild headquarters, temples, banks, and other vital services line the streets. The houses of the wealthiest inhabitants are tucked away behind imposing stone walls, keeping a distance between those that create the laws and those that must suffer beneath them.

While the wealthiest of litigants and judges make their homes in the Manor District, most lower-level scribes, aspiring young litigants and clerks, live in or close to this quarter. Prices are inflated and demand is high for accommodations among the many boarding houses.

GRAND COURTHOUSE OF EDICTS

"The 'Ol Court," as it's known to the locals serves as the main building where the laws and rules of Talabheim are written, debated, and enacted into law. Squat and ancient beyond compare, it is said the building was one of the first in the city and crafted by Dwarfen hands. Although it's known that at least one tunnel leads from here to the prison across the street, rumours persist of a labyrinth of additional basements, tunnels, and long-forgotten cells beneath its impressive form.

The courtyard in front of the Courthouse is the notorious "Field of Absolution." Row upon row of stockades and cages are found here, where the guilty serve out sentences for petty crimes. The Field also boasts three huge poles for whippings and a raised platform where beheadings are performed for the most egregious crimes. The infamous "Dancing Man Tree" is an enormous gallows where up to four people can hang at a time from its 40-foot-tall pillars. Horses pull ropes that hoist up criminals to their demise—it's considered good luck for a hangman's horse to eat an apple from your hand before a sentence is carried out.

THE HOLLOW

Directly across the street from the Grand Courthouse of Edicts sits The Hollows, Talabheim's enormous central prison. It's speculated

that thousands of prisoners are incarcerated behind its walls and underground, though no one is certain. After the City Watch, The Hollows is the second largest employer of guards and hired muscle in the city.

Warden Leopold Hadschieff is an utterly devout Sigmarite at heart and sees his job as an extension of his God's will. He commonly exhorts his prisoners with fiery sermons from his office's tower, proudly proclaiming Sigmar's path to redemption. Hadschieff despises foreigners, non-believers, and non-Humans and often sticks them in the worst conditions possible, regardless of their actual sentence. Despite his pious nature, Hadschieff is thoroughly corrupt and is more than willing to release prisoners or make their lives more comfortable with the proper bribe.

The prison runs the gamut of accommodations, from utterly squalid hellholes to cellblocks that are almost akin to a decent inn. The best cells are obviously reserved for the rich and powerful who have been incarcerated for some minor crime and do not "deserve" to stay in the same sort of cells used to house common criminals. Five years ago, an intrepid prisoner managed to carve a hole through his cell wall and found himself in a warren of tunnels that had previously been uncharted. The prisoner was later found when he returned to his cell utterly insane and spouting nonsense. His hair had turned white and amongst his babble, the terms "creeping horror" were occasionally discerned. The hole was sealed off and the prisoner was sent to the Eavesdown Sanatorium where he remains to this day.

Prisoners are commonly used as slave labour for the city government, such as cleaning sewers or stables, and other less savoury jobs. These work gangs are common sights throughout the city and are always under heavy guard.

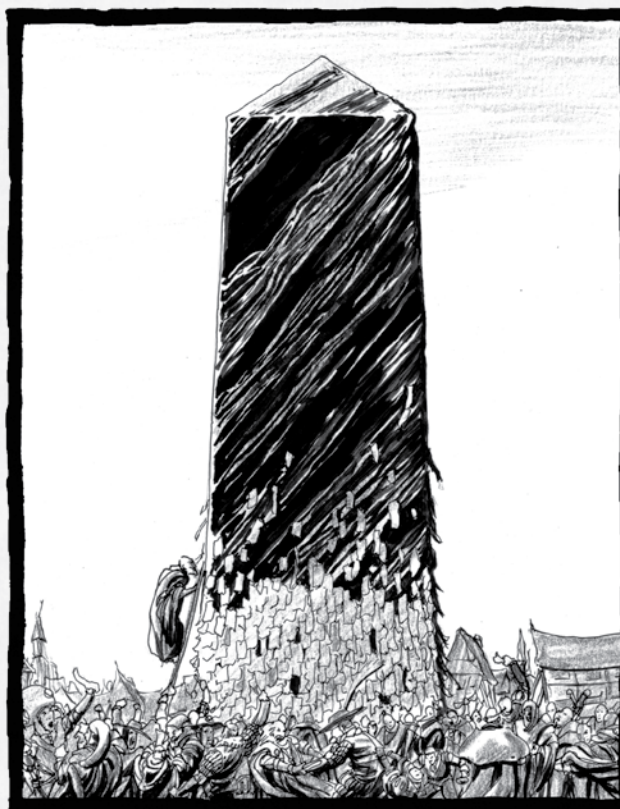
THE TEMPLE OF VERENA

Unlike the rest of the temples in the city, the Temple of Verena does not reside in the God's Row; instead, it can be found in the Law Quarter. Easily the largest temple in the city (barring the Grove of Taal, of course), the Temple of Verena stands as a testament to the pervasive presence of law and order within Talabheim.

The Priests of Verena are both pleased and dismayed at the state of legal affairs within Talabheim. They see great merit in the codified laws keeping the city prosperous, but they despise the corruption pervading the government. The head of the Temple, Mother Astrid Oehler, is extremely vocal in her displeasure, but she is relatively powerless to stop it. The Feuerbach-Untern family views her more as an annoyance than a true threat but nonetheless keeps close tabs on Mother Oehler's words and actions.

OBELISK OF LAWS

Located in the heart of this quarter, the Obelisk of Laws is a towering spire of veined, black marble surrounded by a wide-open courtyard. New laws, bills waiting to be passed, political dialogue, and other important civic rules are posted on the Obelisk with the stated purposes of allowing the entire populace to know what these new rulings are. In practice, however, the Obelisk has little practical effect, as no one removes the old postings (thanks to an ancient law), and a person must look long and hard to discern what is new and important. Throughout the years, madmen have attempted to rip down or burn the laws



pinned to the Obelisk, but the offenders are quickly captured and torn to pieces by mobs.

The Obelisk serves as a meeting point for the city's barristers, clerks, judges, and other law professionals, where they discuss important rulings, gossip, and network in an informal setting. Food vendors wheel their carts nearby and street urchins hawk several different newspapers and periodicals to the professionals that congregate here.

FREEMAN'S COURT

While the Courthouse of Edicts holds the city and province courts, even its enormous size cannot handle the massive number of day-to-day cases that occur within Talabheim. Four hundred and fifty years ago, the Freeman's Court was founded. It was designed to hear the grievances of the common man, handled by public litigants and judges.

As one could imagine, the Freeman's Court has become just as much a nightmare as it was supposed to prevent. Every day, mobs of common folk wait in long lines to have their cases heard. Those with enough money (but not enough to have their case heard at the Grand Courthouse) are hustled ahead of the line by their litigant. Though the lines are incredibly long, rulings are surprisingly swift as judges hand down judgment with a combination of knowledge of the law and an overwrought sense of justice. Commoners rightly fear getting an irritated judge who may hand down an extremely harsh sentence with little provocation because they are in a surly mood.

THE STONEHOME

Although Dwarfs living in Talabheim are considered citizens, the numerous and convoluted laws sometimes run afoul of

NEW CAREER: LITIGANT

Litigants are common sights both in Talabheim and all the major cities of the Old World. They write up legal documents, interpret the law, and represent individuals in court who are able to afford their fees. Litigants are almost universally reviled, except when someone is in legal trouble and needs assistance. Litigants need to be well versed in both the laws of the Empire and the region they plan to practice law, plus have a great deal of knowledge about day-to-day affairs. Even the lowest-born litigant is considered a "person of letters" to the general populace and may be asked to do things far beyond their training.

Note: If you are rolling randomly for your Starting Career, you can substitute Litigant for Scribe with your GM's permission.

—Litigant Advance Scheme—

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|----|----|---|---|-----|------|------|------|
| — | — | — | — | +5% | +10% | +10% | +10% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| — | +2 | — | — | — | — | — | — |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Genealogy/Heraldry or History), Academic Knowledge (Law), Blather or Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Gossip or Haggle, Perception, Read/Write, Secret Language (Guild Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Dealmaker or Etiquette, Public Speaking, Savvy or Suave

Armour: None

Weapons: Hand Weapon

Trappings: Book of Empire Laws, Writing Kit.

Career Entries: Burgher, Envoy, Exciseman, Scribe, Student, Watchman

Career Exits: Agitator, Demagogue, Guild Master, Merchant, Politician

Dwarf laws. The Stonehome serves as an "embassy" for Dwarfs to advance their rights and is where grievances between two or more Dwarfs can be resolved without going through the city's courts. Established in 2245 by Count Markus von Wagner IV to quell a potential boycott of workers, the Stonehome is a thorn in the side of the judges and litigants of the Grand Courthouse of Edicts. By law, the city government must abide by the rulings of the Stonehome Elders but only if they do not violate major edicts of Talabheim's Code of Laws. To compensate for this lack of control, both parties must pay an additional fine, which is then passed along to the Talabheim treasury. If the Elders feel that a case lies outside their jurisdiction, they hand it over to the city court instead, which can cause great anger among Dwarfs looking to avoid Human-dominated law.

THE TALLOWS

Pressed close against the towering heights of the Taalbaston and buttressed by the massive, sun-blocking towers of the Law Quarter, the Tallows is a squalid, rat-infested slum where the bulk of the city's poor (outside Taalagad, that is) live and conduct their business. The district's name is derived from the lack of sunlight that filters into its streets. The numerous towers of the Law District block most of the morning's eastern sunlight, and the crater wall blocks the sun as it sets in the west, meaning that the area is only slightly illuminated at high noon. The streets are shrouded in shadows most of time, lending them a sinister quality.

The Tallows consists of slums, filthy inns and taverns, slaughterhouses, tanners built into the rock of the Taalbaston itself, and other businesses that most people find disgusting and beneath them. The streets are a twisted maze of shanties, dilapidated houses, and dead end alleys. Criminals of all stripes claim the Tallows as their home, and some band together into small gangs, claiming portions of the neighbourhood as their turf. Sometimes these gangs engage in open warfare with one another, and hundreds of combatants march down the streets screaming for blood. One such event ten years ago resulted in a portion of this district erupting in flames that threatened the rest of the city. A combined effort of the Dogfaces, city militia, and a few Magisters quashed the skirmish and put out the fire before too much damage could be done. The torched remains of these buildings still stand—no one has the means or will to rebuild on that spot.

The roving judges of the city often enter the Tallows in hopes of cleaning up the streets, but so far, none have succeeded in doing much of anything. In the absence of much in the way of law enforcement within this district, the street gangs act as the de facto judge and jury, imposing rulings considered extreme to even the judges of the Grand Courthouse.

HOLLER'S CORNER

Holler's Corner is the place to go to find cheap labour and hired muscle or place ads and notices. It gets its name from the numerous criers that yell (holler) out their requests. The walls of the buildings adjacent to the corner are plastered with written notices and ads. When the crowd reaches its peak numbers at high noon, the din from the dozens of criers and the crowd screaming back their responses can be deafening. Criers stand on boxes, wagons, or anything letting them rise above the gathered crowds. Those looking for work, and substantial numbers of worthless layabouts, wander the corner during the day. River pirates and unscrupulous flatboat captains often scan the crowd for potential victims to press-gang, making the area dangerous for newcomers or the naïve.

THE BLACK LANTERN

Set along the imposing rise of the Taalbaston, the Black Lantern is a sprawling building that gets even less sunlight than the rest of the Tallows. A huge, ancient lantern made of black iron provides the tavern's name. Long ago, a drunken and slightly insane Magister cast a spell on the lantern after a ludicrous bet—a perpetual flame now burns inside it, and patrons can still see the blackened mark in front of the tavern where the Magister self-immolated.

The Black Lantern is a notorious haven for thugs, conmen, and scum of all kinds. Its owner, a Tilean named Lorenzo, often turns

a blind eye to all but the worst offences within his business and spends a healthy portion of his profits on bribes to keep the local Watch out. He maintains several large "banquet rooms" where wealthier members of the local underworld can conduct business in private. The basement of the Black Lantern has a secret door that leads into the warrens of the Ratholds to the west. Lorenzo stores all manner of illegal contraband in this tunnel and, for a substantial fee, can be convinced to dispose of a body or two with no questions asked.

FISHMONGER'S ALLEY

Fish, crayfish, and other food harvested from the Talabec River are brought to this outdoor fish market. As most of the best catch is sent to other parts of Talabheim, the selection is poor and spotty, though affordable for the poor inhabitants. In addition, some stalls sell odds and ends dredged from the river—the bulk is worthless trash, though sometimes valuables can be found, making it a common stop for antiquarians and treasure seekers. Pickpockets and petty thieves roam the stalls watching for easy marks.

THE SHIELDS

Located on the edge of the Tallows, the Shields make their clanks by providing protection for those roaming the dangerous streets of this district. The owner, Wulfgang Blocher, is a former soldier who saw a need and brought in several of his compatriots as business partners. The Shields provide protection and act as guides for anyone willing to offer up his rather exorbitant rates. Thanks to their reputation as being ruthless and stalwart, most criminals shy away from any target protected by the Shields, though some consider it a right of passage to pick the pockets or rob a victim with such protection. Wulfgang is completely unbiased in his clientele so long as they have the coin. Even better, he keeps his patronage a secret. For an even greater fee, his bodyguards can guide a client into the mean streets of Taalagad.

THE RATHOLDS

Some of the oldest and foulest portions of Talabheim are actually located within the walls of the Taalbaston itself. Scattered throughout the massive cliff face are holes, tunnels, and warrens carved into the living rock of the crater wall. It was once said that any poor man with a pickaxe and determination could make himself a home in Talabheim. Some of these cave-homes are surprisingly large three- or four-room affairs, having wood flooring and even plaster, but these are rare. Most of these homes are little more than caves branching off from the crude tunnel-alleys that riddle the upper wall side near the Wizard's Way.

Some legitimate businesses occupy the caves, such as tanneries and dye works. These foul industries only add to the miasmic atmosphere in the caves. There are various tunnels and pathways used by criminal gangs to smuggle goods and people inside the city. Although the City Watch makes frequent attempts to close these down, they seldom keep them shut for long. Few watchmen are comfortable going into the reeking dark of these tunnels, for not only are the maze-like warrens the home of many criminal gangs, they are also said to hold disease, Mutants, and worse in their nightmarish depths. Few trouble over wild tales of wall dwellers snatched by creatures in the dead of the night. Given the reputation of these rookery tunnels, the city has banned the further excavation of any more of these slum caves, instead

LAWS OF TALABHEIM

Talabheim is known as the City of Laws for good reason. In its long history, the judges and lawmakers of the city enacted a mind-boggling list of laws that filter down to almost every aspect of life. Needless to say, enforcing all these laws is a daunting task, and most of the illiterate masses have no clue if they have violated some rule as they go about their business.

Many of the customs in Talabheim are so enshrined they are almost law. Meetings between guilds, the city parliament of nobles, days of dedication to Taal, memorials to ancient sieges, and much more are all encrusted with pomp, ceremony, and inexplicable details whose origins are lost in the mists of time.

Successive rulers have also made the habit of recording city ordinances in large, well-preserved books. Unlike many city-states, these have never been lost, stolen, burnt, altered, thrown away, pulped, or plain ignored—thus the civil life of the city is awash with laws. Ancient in origin, these laws are often conflicting and confusing, especially to newcomers. The Litigant's Guild makes much of its living interpreting these laws for merchants and the like. They record their interpretation of the law in large tomes that are certainly larger than the original law books themselves. Young litigants must learn both the laws and the lore of the law if they are to make it big in legal interpretation. They are shameless self-promoters; thus, an apprentice litigant may well approach a new band of travellers inquiring as to the status of their cat license or the like.

Presented here are some of the stranger or more draconian laws that players may encounter during their time in Talabheim.

- "In times of civil strife, citizens may carry weapons no larger than their forearm." *The Zweig Act, drafted after armed thugs took advantage of a siege and carried immense swords and polearms to bully and steal from other citizens.*
- "Dwarves are allowed free entry through the Wizard's Way on the 5th day of every month." *Passed in 2115 after successful lobbying by the Dwarfen Iron Guild of Karaz-a-Karak.*
- "Fish caught in the Talabec River are considered the property first of the Office of the Purse. Fish over three pounds must have one-quarter of its flesh allotted to the Minister for assessment." *Issued in 2240 by then High Counsellor Johansberg, former Minister of Taxation. Rarely enforced.*
- "Consumption of alcohol within the Field of Absolution is limited to one tankard of ale or its equivalent per person, with an additional Witness Tax of 1 s per drink." *Part of the Hard Spirits Bill of 2105. Used as a measure to reduce potential rioting during executions.*

extending the south-west boundary of the city to allow cheap housing to sprout up. Nevertheless, new tunnels sometimes appear. Who or what creates them, no one will admit.

The inhabitants of the Ratholds are the lowest of the low. Inbreeding, disease, and poor ventilation make the average Ratholder more pathetic than even the scum that roam the streets outside. Ratholders speak a debased dialect that is difficult for even the populace of the Tallows to understand.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

Talabheim's Merchant District is the first place people enter after they pass through the massive gates guarding the Wizard's Way, and unless they possess the proper paperwork, it is the only district they will see during their visit. The Merchant's District is comfortable enough for short visits, but it is designed to get people in and out quickly—visitors need special papers to move to the city beyond its walls.

The Merchant District comprises three neighbourhoods—Old Market, Nordgate, and Dragon's Home. In addition to numerous merchant houses, buyers, craftsmen, and vendors, the Merchant District boasts both top-notch and affordable inns, taverns, and other services that cater to visitors.

Old Market is the oldest neighbourhood and sits just past the fortress of the Wizard's Way. It is diverse and bustling with business, even late at night. Guides hawk their services immediately as one enters the gates—most are legitimate, though some are conmen and thieves that lead the unwary to back alleys where they are robbed. To help prevent this, the Old Market swarms with Dogfaces and private guards employed by the wealthier merchants.

Nordgate is crowded but prosperous. It is home to most of the city's Merchant Lords, and it is where they conduct their business. The wealthiest avenues, Iron Lane, Apple Row, and Street of the Emperor's Grace, are lined with stately homes and thick with private guards that keep them safe. Fine taverns and restaurants can be found here.

Dragon's Home serves as a gateway to the rest of the city. Most of the fresh fruit and vegetables grown within the confines of the Taalbaston are bought and sold here. The area is well known for its numerous bakers making excellent fruit pies and treats and is a favourite place for street urchins to steal a quick meal.

THREEAPPLES INN

Situated immediately across from the main gate, Threeapples Inn is considered a vital first stop for any visitor wanting to quench their thirst. Threeapples Inn is a three-story building crafted from dark wood, with wide, open rooms that can fit almost a hundred people at a time. The staff is noted for being courteous, patient, and capable of speaking several languages, letting visitors feel more at home. The owner, a Halfling named Wanda Threeapples, prides herself on welcoming everyone into her business, regardless of station, ethnicity, or race.

Conmen, thieves, and the like sometimes weasel their way into the Threeapples Inn, seeing it as prime territory to fleece newcomers. Wanda is extremely savvy and perceptive and spots most of these criminals before they cause too much harm. She's known to lend helpful advice about how to get about the city to the most desperate cases. However, once someone leaves the safety of the Inn, there is little that can be done, and those criminals cast out simply lurk in the alley and streets close to the building, waiting for their opportunity.

THE MERCHANTS' GUILD

Located in the heart of Dragon's Home, Talabheim's Merchants' Guild more closely resembles a courthouse than a business headquarters. In addition to merchants and their representatives,

throng of litigants come and go from the Merchants' Guild, handling trade disputes, setting prices, and the like. Talabheim was thankfully spared from the worst of the recent war, so business is brisk, as goods are sent out to other cities at inflated prices.

With the Count missing in action and the Countess assuming more power, local merchants are worried about the changes that are bound to occur. They continue with business as usual, but most merchants squirrel away cash and assets to weather a potential financial storm. They are pleased, however, at the Countess' policy of heightened trade (and inflated prices) with the other city-states in the Empire.

Foreign merchants visiting Talabheim are required to register at the Merchant's Guild and provide a manifest of their cargo as well as the names of everyone in their caravan. This commonly results in massive traffic snarls in front of the guild house during busy times.

SNORRI'S PAWNSHOP

The hidebound bureaucracy of Talabheim requires all citizens to carry documents allowing them passage through its streets. On the surface, Snorri's Pawnshop is just that. However, for those in the know, Snorri can provide false documents of all kinds. Snorri is a surly, paranoid Dwarf. He prefers to deal with regular customers, and being ever fearful of being caught by the City Watch, he only deals with newcomers that are vouched for by a regular. Snorri has so far kept his record clean and is perfectly willing to employ thugs to threaten, or dispose of, troublesome customers or anyone that pries too deeply into his side business.

Snorri's forgery materials are kept in a small, dilapidated shed behind his main building, so as not to draw attention to his second business. He never performs any forgery work in front of any customer, trusted or not.

OFFICE OF THE PURSE

Located unnervingly close to the Merchants' Guild, the Office of the Purse sets taxes on everything from passes into the city to shoe leather. The workers in this building are a sorry, harried lot and shuffle in and out quickly so as not to draw too much attention to themselves.

The Ministers of Taxation are a small band of city bureaucrats that make surprise visits to businesses to ensure the proper taxes are being collected and returned to the city. The Ministers are notoriously corrupt, and most business owners consider them nothing more than a gang of extortionists wearing the livery of Talabheim. To guarantee taxes are collected, Ministers rarely venture forth without a handful of Dogfaces accompanying them. Business owners that refuse to pay bribes, along with the normal taxes, are subject to closure, seizure, or worse.

THE CITY OF GODS

The God's Row, Talabheim's temple district, rests to the northeast of the Law Quarter. The two districts are often seen as siblings: one representing the laws of man and the other representing the laws of the Gods. The district is built amidst a series of man-made ponds and reflecting pools. Intricate hedgerows and topiaries mark the boundaries between the various temples established here. The roads are laid at right angles to one another,

and the lines of these avenues are impeccably straight. Every feature of the district, from the grass to the cobblestones, has been deliberately placed. There is no disorder here, except that which people bring into the district with them.

Traffic in the God's Row is restricted to folk travelling on foot. Neither draft nor riding animals are permitted inside the district's borders. Likewise, dogs and other pets that might cause damage to the landscape or leave droppings upon the district's lanes are forbidden. An atmosphere of peace pervades the City of Gods, punctuated only by the sounds of prayer, the singing of hymns, and the chirping of songbirds. The faithful of Talabheim, of which there are many, flock to the district in large numbers to give the Gods their due. Even at night, worshippers come to pray and make offerings to their Gods. Holy days are especially eventful.

With the exception of Verena, whose temple sits in the Law District, nearly all the Gods of the Empire are represented here. Even Taal, whose primary area of worship is the sacred forest itself, has a satellite church to serve those worshippers who cannot make the trip outside the city. It is little surprise that the worship of Ranald is scorned in Talabheim, the so-called city of laws, so there is no publicly accessible temple for the trickster God's adherents. Those folk who choose to worship Ranald are doubtless accustomed to this and privately revere him in their own unique way.

Next to the Merchant District, the God's Row is probably the most heavily patrolled of Talabheim's districts. Not only do the local authorities keep a tight reign on the streets that tie the district together, but the guards and Priests of the various cults also pose a substantial risk to anyone who might consider plundering the temples. Even minor crimes are prosecuted vigorously, and pity the fool who is caught by a temple's guards rather than the more forgiving Dogfaces. Indeed, religious fervour has led to the deaths of more than one would-be vandal at the hands of enraged Priests.

RELIQUARY ROAD

The eastern end of the City of Gods is home to a wide footpath of crushed stone referred to as Reliquary Road. Reliquary Road butts up against the western edge of the Taalgarten, near the site that becomes the Knoll of Doctrines, and there is little but the road itself to distinguish it from its neighbouring district. The sides of the street are lined with a number of permanent and semi-permanent structures, which are crafted from wood, brick, and stone. It is the shops that occupy these structures that give the road its name, for the majority of them sell religious artefacts and paraphernalia of one sort or another.

Even though the majority of the businesses on Reliquary Road are not expressly sponsored by the various temples, its existence is tolerated for the significant tax revenues that it generates. Even so, the temples are keen to profit from the presence of this divine flea market. All but the smallest of temples keep a small emporium on Reliquary Road, where religious items are sold at discount prices. Holy symbols, religious texts, idols, and vestments are available. The Priests will even bless items in exchange for a modest donation.

The rest of the shops are staffed by secular folk, many no better than antique dealers. The stalls are rented from the city on a weekly basis, the sturdiest structures being the most expensive. The length of the waiting list for Reliquary Road's shops is constantly in a state of flux. Unsuccessful merchants rarely maintain a good location on the Road for very long. Merchants who do commerce here range from devout worshippers who seek to use their business



in order to proselytize, to shifty conmen and charlatans who are looking to make a quick Schilling off naïve devotees.

Of those few merchants who have managed to remain in business for a long period of time, Jakob Steinschiller is probably the most well known. He keeps a respectable stock of genuine (or so he claims) relics, as well as all manner of good luck charms, holy unguents, and spiritual paraphernalia. Once a Priest of Morr, Jakob turned away from the faith for reasons that he has never been compelled to make clear. Jakob is a font of religious knowledge, which he also provides to customers for a reasonable fee. From time to time, he has also been known to hire adventurers to investigate rumours and legends that pertain to the locations of relics.

THE SHALLYAN SANATORIUM

Though attached to the Temple of Shallya via an elevated walkway, the Shallyan Sanatorium is a separate structure. Constructed of white marble that seems to glow in the rays of the rising sun, the Sanatorium is a place of healing and convalescence. The best physicians in Talabheim, aided by the Priestesses of Shallya, practice the medical arts within. Those people who seek to cure their ills once and for all are often admitted for weeks or months at a time. Such care is not cheap, however, and only the wealthy or influential can afford the fees that the physicians demand in exchange for their seemingly divine curative skills.

The central wing of the Sanatorium is five stories high. It is adjoined to the east by a clinic catering to the poorest of Talabheim's citizens. Most of the folk who staff the charity wing are Priests and initiates of Shallya, as well as students from the Royal Academy who seek to learn more about the medical arts. Free treatment of minor ailments is offered free of charge to anyone who appears to be impoverished. Destitute citizens who require extended treatment of major injuries and maladies are

admitted to the charity ward, which consists of an overcrowded chamber at the centre of the wing. The atmosphere in the charity ward is unpleasant. Half of the patients who are admitted for serious conditions rarely survive longer than a week, despite the prayers of Shallya's Priests.

The Sanatorium's administrator is Heinrich Saltzman, an imposing nobleman from Middenheim who was originally hired by the Shallyan temple to see to the workings of the Sanatorium. Despite his cool demeanour and seeming lack of empathy, Saltzman has done an excellent job of keeping the entire operation running smoothly. There are disturbing rumours that Saltzman and his colleagues participate in illicit dissections on the cadavers of terminally ill patients, but all investigations into these allegations have failed to reveal evidence of such ghastly behaviour. Such rumours have resulted in Saltzman initiating duels against his accusers, and he has yet to lose in the defence of

his honour.

THE SHRINE OF MANANN

Manann's shrine in Talabheim is far too small to claim the moniker of "temple." In fact, it consists entirely of a series of interconnected waterways and pools that swirl around a central elevated platform. Large numbers of colourful fish swim languidly within the depths of these channels. The platform, where services are held, rises above the water, providing a breathtaking view of the shrine below. Constructed of polished wood and furnished with canvas streamers that flutter in the wind like the sails of a ship, the platform's apex seems to be gifted with a perpetual breeze.

Marine motifs are carved into the stone and wood that make up the shrine, each one in honour to the God of the sea. Foremost amongst these is a likeness of Manann himself, and it is said to be the finest representation of the God east of the Talabec River. River-born merchants and sailors are the most common folk to worship Manann in Talabheim. Local farmers also come to pray for rains in times of drought, and fishermen and their families seek the sea God's favour by offering him the largest of their catch.

THE TEMPLE OF MORR

Morr's Temple in Talabheim is laid out like a cemetery, with the God's traditional black roses growing thickly around the high iron fences that surround what is known as the Todespark. No bodies are buried in the Todespark, yet markers and statues of skeletal figures with scythes and raven-like wings stand in perfect rows around a central mausoleum. The mausoleum appears smaller than it should be from outside and for good reason: much of the temple complex is underground. Morr's Priests live within their underground temple, spending their days in prayer and silent contemplation.

Though bodies are never interred on the grounds of Morr's temple, the Priests of the Lord of Dreams prepare the dead for burial in their subterranean vaults. Viewings and services for the dead are traditionally held in the Todespark after the sun has gone down. On the morning following this service, the dead are taken in a procession to the Garden of Morr, where final arrangements are made prior to their burial.

THE TEMPLE OF MYRMIDIA

Myrmidia's Temple is a place of valour and glory. Tales of heroes are told at length within the stone halls of the temple, and soldiers and warriors come from all corners of the Taalbaston to pray for victory in battle. The temple's edifice is carved from granite blocks and features half a dozen statues of the warrior Goddess in various states of readiness. The rear area of the complex is dedicated to training warriors and Priests, and it features a confidence course that tests the mettle of any warrior that attempts to complete it.

The temple is protected by the Knights of the Verdant Field, an offshoot of the Knights of the Order of the Blazing Sun that founded the shrine many centuries ago (more about the Knights of the Blazing Sun can be found in *Sigmar's Heirs*). These Templar Knights are sworn to protect Talabheim unto death, and they spend their lives training in anticipation of the day when Chaos will once again threaten the welfare of their city. Their number is small, however, and, unlike their itinerant parent Order, they rarely journey forth from the confines of the Taalbaston. Those that do venture from their temple are often on missions of great importance

NEW CAREER: KNIGHT OF THE VERDANT FIELD

The Knights of the Verdant Field are an order of Templars dedicated to the protection of Talabheim in the name of their militaristic Goddess, Myrmidia. They are warriors in the true sense of the word, trained to wage war in the forests and wild areas of their homeland. Though they rarely leave the confines of Talabheim, their skills serve them equally well from the Great Forest to the Drakwald. Although the Knights of the Verdant Field come from all walks of life, they share a single motivation: to serve their Goddess and protect their people.

—Knight of the Verdant Field Advance Scheme—

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|-----|
| +20% | +20% | +15% | +15% | +10% | +5% | +10% | +5% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|----|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| +1 | +4 | — | — | — | — | — | — |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Strategy/Tactics), Charm Animal, Command or Intimidate, Dodge Blow, Follow Trail, Outdoor Survival or Scale Sheer Surface, Perception, Ride, Search, Secret Language (Ranger Tongue) or Secret Signs (Ranger)

Talents: Fleet Footed or Keen Senses, Orientation, Rover, Specialist Weapon Group (Longbow), Strike Mighty Blow or Sure Shot

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack, Leather Leggings)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 1

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), Longbow with 10 Arrows

Career Entries: Hunter, Initiate (of Myrmidia), Mercenary, Militiaman, Outrider, Soldier, Woodsman

Career Exits: Priest, Scout, Veteran

or have been sent to atone for sins or perceived cowardice.

THE TEMPLE OF SHALLYA

The temple dedicated to Shallya adjoins the Shallyan Sanatorium and is connected to its sister building by an elevated walkway. Though both buildings are constructed from the same white marble, the architecture of the two is dissimilar in many ways. The most notable is with the temple. Only two stories high, it is far smaller than the Sanatorium.

Frescos capturing the healing powers of the Mother of Mothers decorates the temple's exterior, and countless bed of bountiful flowers reinforce the Goddess's life-giving character. The interior is serene, immaculate and maintained by a score of acolytes. The central gallery is circular and surrounds a raised dais, which is said to contain a fragment of granite from Heiligerberg.

A flock of white doves resides in an open aviary built upon the temple's roof. These holy birds are treated with reverence by Shallya's Priesthood, who see them as reminders of their Goddess' mercy. As with most of her temples throughout the Empire, Shallya's temple in Talabheim is staffed almost entirely by women. Those that do not work directly within the Sanatorium venture out into the city, seeking to aid the ill and infirm as best as they can. The few men who take up the cause of the Goddess of Mercy are looked upon with much favour by their sisters since they are such a rare breed.

Against the advice of many of the city-state's legislators, a contingent of Shallyan Priestesses venture into the Tallows on a weekly basis to bring succour to anyone who wishes to accept their aid. The people there are only too happy to have the healing hands of these brave women at their disposal. The leader of the Shallyan Missionaries, as they have come to be called, is an older Priestess named Karin Weber. Karin was once one of the Tallows's consorts, but she threw off the shackles of her former life when Shallya came to her in a vision. Since, she has risen high in the Shallyan Order, and there are whispers that she may eventually be ordained as the High Priestess of Talabheim's Shallyan temple.

THE TEMPLE OF SIGMAR

After Taal and Verena, the Temple of Sigmar is the third largest in Talabheim. Despite this, the Sigmarites still hold a great deal of sway in the politics of the city-state. The control of their temple in Talabheim has been entrusted to none other than High Priest Farador. He resides in a fine mansion in the Manor District, coming to the temple twice weekly to lead services amongst the Priests and see to his administrative duties. The remainder of the time he spends at home and abroad, living an unapologetically opulent lifestyle.

The majority of Sigmar's Priesthood in Talabheim belongs to the Order of the Torch. They act as Priests are expected to act, seeing to the needs of the city-state's faithful and managing the day-to-day affairs of the cult. The Order of the Silver Hammer has a small-yet-varying population within the city. Most of these warrior-Priests only come to the temple in the pursuit of their duties elsewhere in the Empire. Finally, the Order of the Cleansing Flame maintains a strong presence in Sigmar's temple, always watching diligently for heresy within the cult's ranks.

Built from marble and steel, Sigmar's temple is the tallest of all the churches that are present in God's Row. The spires of the building rise so high above the ground they can be seen from nearly

anywhere within the city. The Sigmarite Priests keep the time, ringing the temple's great bells every hour to signify the passage of one more blessed minute of Sigmar's mercy.

THE TEMPLE OF TAAL AND RHYA

The largest of Talabheim's temples is dedicated to Taal and to a lesser extent Rhya. Even though the primary place of Taal's worship continues to be the Sacred Forest, worshippers who live within the confines of the city value an opportunity to seek spiritual enlightenment without making a trip to the other end of the crater. Taal's temple can easily accommodate a thousand adherents in a single, massive service, yet this happens only rarely. More often, services are staggered throughout the day, allowing folks who work at odd hours to maintain a connection with their deity and his clergy.

Taal's temple is natural in appearance. Surrounded by ancient rowan trees, the temple and all within it is formed entirely of gnarled wood. Rumours persist the temple is built from the living trees surrounding it and that the power of Taal, which pulses up from their roots, shaped them into the likenesses of walls, doorways, and windows. Inside, the temple floors consist of fresh earth. Plants and flowers spring up, seemingly at random, and grass provides a cool, green surface no carpet can duplicate.

Behind the temple, and of slightly lesser importance, is the Shrine of Rhya. Little more than a few menhirs surrounding a natural spring, it seems small and neglected. Indeed, priestesses of Rhya attend this place for special, and often sporadic, rites and ceremonies, preferring to spend their regular meetings in open fields and meadows. Despite its small size, Rhya has a sizeable following in the villages surrounding Talabheim.

TEMPLE OF ULRIC

Long ago, the Cult of Ulric was centred in Talabheim alongside the Cult of Taal. Thanks in part to the Talabheimers skill at warfare, Ulric has always enjoyed a strong following in the city, even after Ar-Ulric restored the seat of power back to Middenheim.

The temple of Ulric is an imposing structure, dominating the end of a side-street. Its whitewashed walls and wolf imagery displayed on its stained glass windows makes the Temple a popular stop for visitors interested in architecture. Out front, a statue of the God of Winter looks towards the Taalbaston, one hand clutching a hammer and the other resting on the head of a large wolf. Though spattered with bird droppings, the white marble statue remains every bit as impressive as it was when first erected.

THE TALABHEIM ASYLUM

The Talabheim Asylum is a nondescript building that sits innocuously at the north-western corner of the City of Gods. If not for the high, iron fence surrounding it, or the armed guards and dogs that constantly patrol the grounds, the place would seem to be just another large building built on the edge of the God's Row and the Merchant District. In the silence of the night, muted screams and shouts can sometimes be heard from within the asylum's walls. People passing by quicken their pace a little, though most do not notice, nor will they admit, the extra spring in their step.

The asylum was established in 2304, following the end of the Great War against Chaos. Most of the asylum's patients at the time were men and women who had survived the nameless

horrors of the war, yet were driven to madness by the things that they had seen. In the two centuries since it was established, the asylum's purpose has changed from one of rehabilitation to one of containment. Only the most dangerous maniacs are sent to the asylum, and most of these are confined to their cells on a permanent basis. It is rumoured that harsh critics of the current establishment have been sent to the asylum on trumped up charges of insanity, but few are willing to present such a theory lest they risk being committed themselves.

Though not a religious facility, several members of Morr's temple pay regular visits to the asylum. Much of what these Priests seek to learn involves the dreams and visions experienced by a number of the patients. It is reasoned the Lord of Dreams may attempt to communicate through the dreams of the insane. With the rise of Chaos in the Old World, it is also postulated that cases of insanity have become more and more common. Morr's Priests seek to unravel these mysteries, and they do so with the express permission of the asylum's administrator.

THE TAALGARTEN

Although most neighbourhoods and even individual manors sport gardens and parks, the Taalgarten is the largest and most magnificent within Talabheim. The streets are broad and lined with ancient oaks and rowan trees. Normally the gardens are clean and well tended. However, with the massive influx of refugees from other lands, some have created squatter camps within the Taalgarten's glens and fountains.

Before this occurrence, the city watch paid little heed to events that occurred in the park. They have recently stepped up patrols to stop the most egregious crimes. For the most part, they leave the refugees alone, but they have been known to crack a few skulls out of spite and for sport.

A small army of workers prune trees, harvest fruit and nuts, and keep the Taalgarten in good order. Occasionally, work gangs from the Hollows can be found here under heavy guard, forced to clean up garbage, the occasional corpse, and other disgusting debris.

THE SEA OF ROSES

Considered one of the finest treasures of the city, Talabheim's Sea of Roses is a conservatory without compare in the rest of the Old World. Established almost 500 years ago by a talented horticulturist and Priest of Taal, the Sea of Roses started out merely as a labour of love but has since blossomed into a magnificent city garden. The Sea of Roses is obviously known for its collection of roses, but it also hosts hundreds of different exotic plants from all over the world. Some of the most rare specimens include the Darksilk Lotus from Araby and the fragrant Three Kings Iris from Cathay. The current curator is a Magister Lord of the Jade Order who spends more time tending to the conservatory than getting embroiled in politics.

Unknown to the common folk, the Sea of Roses has a secret hothouse that grows different strains of poisonous plants. Although ostensibly kept for the advancement of science and medicine, plants sometimes disappear, followed by reports of mysterious, poison-related deaths. It's unknown whether these thefts are the result of outsiders breaking in, or if the conservatory's director has some illicit business on the side, selling dangerous ingredients for virulent poisons.

BROTHER'S LODGE

The Brother's Lodge is one of the oldest sweat lodges within the city proper. It's technically a private lodge for Priests of Taal and followers in good standing; almost every noble worth his salt has spent time within its oaken walls. The main steam room is massive, and its low-slung beams and wooden benches are carved with exquisite artwork depicting Taal, hunters, and other aspects of simple, forest life. The cedar wood used to heat the fires is heavily dosed with purifying oils and perfumes. In addition, the Lodge has several baths—from searing hot to icy cold—the water coming from a well beneath the building.

The Brother's Lodge is exempt from the taxes and laws banning certain forms of alcohol. Many rituals to Taal are performed here, culminating in the consumption of powerful moonshine and ales. The Lodge has its own impressive still and sometimes mixes hallucinogens with the brews to heighten the experience and provoke visions in the participants of the rites.

KNOLL OF DOCTRINES

The highest portion of the Taalgarten is a small rise known as the Knoll of Doctrines. For generations, this modest hill has served as a place where religious agitators, holy men, and zealots exhort passers-by and proselytize their faith. Small altars, banners, and other religious accoutrements blanket the top of the hill, but rarely for long, since enthusiastic members of rivals faiths never pass up the chance to knock down or burn that which they detest. Most of the time, the demagogues simply try to out-yell each other, but occasionally, things turn violent, until blood spills. In particular, the Priests of Sigmar are the most outspoken and vehement in their faith, commonly bullying and abusing other speakers. The less religious members of Talabheim consider it great entertainment to place bets on the outcome of these fights, while they watch from safety at the foot of the hill.

Recently, a fiery demagogue with no known religious affiliation has shown up at the Knoll of Doctrines, spouting an even more vitriolic sermon to the masses. He believes the Storm of Chaos was actually just the precursor for an even larger incursion bound to target Talabheim. While not unusual in itself, the agitator has gone as far to accuse key members of the Parliament of harbouring Mutants and consorting with the Ruinous Powers. All attempts to question or even stop him have failed—he manages to slip off into the crowd and out into the darkness of the Taalgarten before he can be caught. Some suspect he is a Wizard, ghost, or even a minion of Chaos sent to spread confusion and discontent.

SCHWARTZ HOLD-NORDGATE

The Schwartz Hold-Nordgate sits to the east of the Merchant District. The populace consists of hard-working folks and has a practical, no-nonsense attitude. The area possesses a high concentration of warehouses, craftsmen, blacksmiths, and other working types. Once the work is done, the food halls and taverns fill up with workers looking to relax and forget their rough lives. The area is relatively safe at night, though thugs sometimes prowl the streets, watching for drunken merchants or craftsmen.

The Schwartz Hold neighbourhood is mostly filled with large warehouses, stables, and cattle pens. Blacksmiths, stonecutters,

masons, wheelwrights, and other skilled craftsmen congregate in the Nordgate neighbourhood. A friendly rivalry exists between Schwartz Hold and Nordgate, commonly expressed through games and during holidays that emphasize civic pride. However, if the district is ever under threat, the two neighbourhoods band together immediately for the common good.

Unbeknownst to most inhabitants, a recent project that plumbed for a new well opened up a passageway to a Skaven warren. The Skaven, small in number, decided to remain hidden for the moment but have begun lacing the water of this new well with small quantities of Warpstone in hopes of spreading mutation and despair.

THE RUSTY MUSKET

Considered “home turf” by the locals of the Nordgate neighbourhood, the Rusty Musket is a rough-and-tumble tavern that caters to warehouse workers, blacksmiths, and other people that “work for a living.” Unless vouched for by a regular, newcomers are viewed with contempt and suspicion and are asking for trouble when they order a tankard. Bar brawls are common at the Rusty Musket, which sometimes escalate to full-fledged duels. It’s not unusual to see two or more drunken combatants wielding swords or taking aim at each other with pistols in the street in front of the tavern, while the other patrons make bets and yell drunkenly. Unless things get out of hand, the City Watch typically watches these duels out of amusement, breaking things up only when one or more duelists lay unconscious or dead in the street.

WERNHAUER STABLES

The Wernhauer Stables are the largest, and easily among the finest, in Talabheim. Horses, pack mules, and other beasts of burden are bought and sold here. If you need a reliable mount, Wernhauer Stables should be the first place to go to. The stables do the bulk of their trade with various merchants and caravan team leaders that need large numbers of horses and mules.

The owner, August Wernhauer, is a quiet, thoughtful man who seems more at home with his livestock than with other people. Despite his quiet demeanour, Wernhauer is a shrewd businessman and possesses an encyclopaedic knowledge of horses. In addition to selling mules and horses to travelling merchants, Wernhauer raises and trains warhorses and fine steeds for knights and noblemen alike. The stable boasts impressive breeds from lands as far away as Araby and Tilea.

Recently, however, several of the animals within the stable have contracted mysterious illnesses and died horribly. Wernhauer has secretly slain and disposed of the bodies of several foals that showed signs of mutation. If word ever got out that his horses were tainted in some way, he’d be ruined—he’s desperate to locate the source of the disease.

YAVANDIR’S BLACKSMITHING

Yavandir is unusual for a blacksmith—as an Elf, his work is treated with a different set of standards among the tradition-bound Humans (and Dwarfs) of Talabheim. Originally from the Laurelor Forest, Yavandir relocated to Talabheim fifty years ago in order to learn new techniques and spread the knowledge of Elven craftsmanship to others. Yavandir lacks a great deal of the



arrogance common to most Elves but has replaced it with the typically gruff attitude of a blacksmith. However, no one can dispute his craftsmanship. Yavandir’s swords are true wonders to behold, and many young nobles strive to pay the exorbitant prices to own one of his rapiers or longswords. A few years ago, armed thugs with a beef against Elves assaulted his shop—Yavandir keeps their pierced and bloodied armour hanging above his door as a warning against any similar intrusions.

Yavandir excels in working with the strange meteoric iron that is occasionally dug up by farmers inside the Taalbaston. This metal produces staggeringly sharp and hard blades and is highly coveted by Magisters for its easy acceptance of enchantments. Yavandir is willing to pay handsome prices for substantial portions of this metal, but its scarcity makes it in high demand.

THE RED CHECKER THEATER

This large, dingy theatre is a favourite of the working class to see bawdy plays, watch lowbrow comedy, and knock back a tankard or three. The Red Checker towers nearly four stories, and seat prices rise the higher one goes up the stairs. The Red Checker is considered the place to go for young playwrights, comedians, and performers to try out their acts, though most try to get out once an assessment is made. The theatre is filled to capacity on most evenings, and the crowd is known to be both brutal and catty if the performance is not up to their (rather low) standards. The theatre’s house troupe has a staple of songs, thinly veiled morality plays and lewd acts it trots out in case a new act isn’t available. The drunken masses are usually lulled back into complacency with popular folk songs or raunchy jokes. The place is shunned by the upper class; although, the occasional young nobleman and his entourage will make an appearance as they slum their way through the city’s nightlife.



Taal's Fountain

This fountain boasts an enormous statue of Taal, wielding a titanic spear and gazing towards the Wizard's Way. The water that flows from this fountain is crystal clear and, oddly, never freezes during the winter months. Standing a full thirty feet tall, the statue is carved from the gleaming black granite of the Taalbaston. The inhabitants of Talabheim consider it a blessed place and anoint themselves with its water before undertaking important events. Weddings are concluded with the betrothed drinking a chalice filled with water from the fountain.

The fountain has a few oddities about it. Birds never alight on the statue, avoiding it completely, in fact. Plus, the soot and grime of the city never dirties the statue—it's assumed to be just as clean today as it was when the statue was first set in place. In times of civil strife, eyewitnesses swear that the statue's eyes drip tears of blood; although, the black stone and condensation from the fountain make this difficult to verify.

Manor District

The Manor District is a sprawling neighbourhood on the eastern side of the city, spreading out into the verdant fields within the crater. This district is the home of the wealthiest and most influential members of Talabheim and gains its name from the large number of manor houses with extensive gardens and well-groomed grounds. Both the homes of Countess Elise Kreiglitz-Untern and the now-missing Count Feuerbach are located here. In addition to stately homes, the Manor District also houses expensive shops, the Royal Academy of Talabecland, and the Avenue of Heroes. The architecture of these estates is noted for its beauty, having wide windows and skylights—this stands in stark contrast to most

wealthy homes throughout the Empire, which are designed more like miniature castles. It's obvious the nobles of Talabheim are less concerned about defence than their peers in other cities.

The Grand Manor

The Grand Manor is actually a half dozen buildings where the ruler of Talabheim resides. The walls surrounding the Grand Manor are twenty feet high, made of rich black basalt carved from the walls of the Taalbaston, and covered in impressive friezes depicting notable moments in Talabheim's history. The grounds also include a sizeable armoury and a small private shrine to Taal. A massive fountain adorned with a huge, bronze stag sits in the middle of the grounds and is considered one of the finest of such castings in the Old Empire. The Countess spends relatively little time at the Grand Manor—her days take her to the Grand Courthouse of Edicts most of the time, though her extended family lives inside its walls.

The Royal Academy of Talabecland

The Royal Academy of Talabecland is considered a second-rate university when compared to other schools of learning in the Old World. It covers all the basic sciences and philosophies taught at most large universities, but most scholars from other lands consider the Academy's teachings both staid and rather backwards. The one place the Academy stands out is agronomy and other plant lore. Members of both the Jade and Amber Orders commonly teach classes at the Academy and keep an eye out for potential Acolytes.

Young noblemen that aren't in immediate line for succession and aren't inclined towards the Priesthood are commonly admitted into the Royal Academy—typically for a substantial donation to the school. This acceptance of "lesser minds" lends more credence to the Academy's poor standing among the other universities in the rest of the Empire.

Avenue of Heroes

The Avenue of Heroes is the main thoroughfare through the Manor District. It's so named because of the dozens of statues of Talabheim and the Empire's heroes lining the streets. Whilst most statues are in good shape, some bear the scars of vandals who have damaged a statue of someone they deem a traitor or heretic. During the city's celebrations and parades, the statues of the Avenue of Heroes are commonly decorated with flowers and offerings.

It is a favourite place for nobles and wealthy merchants to strut their stuff in the latest fashions. Unfortunately, it's also the location of choice for hot-headed young noblemen to start fights and test their skill with a blade. Duels are common, though they rarely result in the death of the combatants. The rules for duelling on the Avenue of Heroes are complex, especially so to outsiders. It's not uncommon to see duellists blindfolded and spun around while reciting a hymn to the Emperor and then throwing coins at the feet of their opponents before the fight begins.

The Quill

A fancy, high-priced salon, the Quill is the current favourite of the elite scene. The owner of the Quill, a Reiklander named Albert Dorzapf, considers himself a gourmand and orders exotic

food items from all across the Empire to create unique meals for his patrons. The menus lean towards the bizarre and disgusting to the common folk—fried goose brains in fish sauce and the like. The Quill also serves the finest in *aquavit* and other strong, yet exquisite liquors. Unlike most other establishments, Dorzapf forbids weapons of any kind within his place of business. Most accept this for what it is, but the occasional spat occurs when a visiting nobleman attempts to bring in his finely crafted sword and is expected to give it up at the door.

The Quill also hosts poetry and book readings, dances, and other intellectual pursuits for the highbrow crowd. It's considered a social coup for a noble to be a patron for some up-and-coming poet or other artist and have their work premiered at the Quill. Competition to find the next rising star is fierce, and many noblemen look far and wide throughout the Empire for talented individuals.

DARKROOK DOWNS

Located on the fringes of the Manor District, the Darkrook Downs is a large, open field where horse and dog races are conducted, as well as jousting and other knightly displays. Bleachers and boxed seating line the field, which are reserved for nobles and paying customers—the rabble are relegated to the narrow ends. During the spring and summer, the Darkrook Downs hosts events nearly every other day, and the masses throng there in the hopes of seeing blood spilt. Foreign knights are the biggest draws, invoking city pride on a grand scale. Gambling is the order of the day at the Downs, and everyone, from the High Priest of Ulric to the lowliest guttersnipe, places bets on every event. On rare occasions, exotic, dangerous animals or unusually large specimens of bears, wolves, or boar are tethered in the middle of the field where they are slain for the enjoyment of the masses. In addition, the Talabheim Cavalry commonly use the Darkrook Downs to practice maneuvers.

GUILDROW

The southern end of Talabheim is dominated by a low-lying residential district known as Guildrow. Largely rural in appearance, the houses and cottages of the district lack the clustered and claustrophobic feel of other cities. Trees and thick hedgerows abound here. The tops of the largest hedgerows act as elevated roads leading towards the crater's interior, as well as the settlements and farms therein. Much of Talabheim's artisan population has taken to living here.

Much of Talabheim's industry takes place in Guildrow. Skilled labourers, such as blacksmiths, brewers, carpenters, coopers, goldsmiths, and stoneworkers, dominate the area. More odious industries, such as tanning, are restricted to the Tallows. Most of these artisans are members of regional guilds, and membership in a guild is, in large part, one of the prerequisites for establishing a business here. Due to a series of complicated zoning laws, anyone wishing to establish a business in Guildrow must first satisfy several strict requirements.

HARGRINSON'S BREWERY

Hargrinson's Brewery is owned and operated by a Dwarf brewmaster named Bellok Hargrinson. Though Bellok's cantankerous demeanour is well known, he is possibly the finest

brewer of ales and beers in Talabheim. His powerful ale, made from locally grown hops and barley mixed with the blessed water of the Crater Lake, is distributed throughout Talabheim at premium prices. Occasionally, Bellok's brew makes its way out of the city-state, where it is snatched up and sold at exorbitant prices to upscale bars and taverns across the Empire.

Bellok attributes his success to a mixture of Dwarf know-how and the quality of the locally grown ingredients used in his ales and beers. Demand for his product constantly outstrips his ability to produce it, but he doesn't seem to mind. His indifference is for good reason, and he is more than happy to set his own prices. This comes as little surprise, especially when one considers that Bellok is among the wealthiest Dwarfs in Talabheim.

EMELIA'S WAXWORKS

One of the most successful businesses in Guildrow is Emelia's Waxworks. Emelia Waxmann, a truly industrious chandler, made her fortune selling fine candles and scented soaps to merchants all across the Empire. The methods and recipes used by Emelia have been passed down through several generations of the Waxmann clan's chandlers, and her family fortune is said to be immense. Rumours persist that Emelia is unwilling to marry, and as the last remaining Waxmann in Talabheim, it seems certain her knowledge will die with her unless an acceptable suitor can be found to win her heart.

Despite her loneliness, Emelia has yet to find a paramour who can meet her rigid expectations. Though she is not beyond childbearing age, long years of hard work in the chandlery have given Emelia a hard and haggard look most men find unappealing. Her frame is frail, and her face is drawn to the point of being gaunt. Most of her suitors are obviously interested in her money alone, and this fact ensures Emelia keeps her distance from all but the most promising of men.

In addition to her fortune, Emelia is said to be in possession of an ancient relic of Rhya known as the Candle of Love. When burned in the presence of a potential bridegroom, the candle reveals whether or not his love for Emelia is genuine or merely motivated by greed for her purported fortune. The Candle has obviously served Emelia well, since all who have attempted to court the woman failed to win her hand in marriage. As for Emelia, she sometimes wonders if the candle has cursed her to a lonely, childless life.

GELTWOLD

Southwest of the Law Quarter, nestled near the south-eastern border of Talabheim's Merchant District, is the Geltwold—the Gold Forest. Claiming the ambiguous status of a low-end financial district, this quarter is rife with pawnshops, moneylenders, coin changers, and small-time financiers. The narrow, winding streets and alleyways are crowded during the daylight hours. Messengers run errands for their masters, while merchants haggle with lenders over the value of their collateral or negotiate for the best return on an unwise investment.

Though small in size, the district's economic influence, especially amongst the lower and middle classes of Talabheim (who refer to the place as Clankstreet "where the ground is cobbled with Karls!"), is beyond question. Serving much of the city's lower- and middle-class citizens, the gears of the Geltwold are driven by desperation and

greed. An undercurrent of corruption permeates the area and for good reason: a number of the so-called pawnshops are merely fronts for fencing operations that subsist on buying and selling stolen or ill-gotten merchandise. The market for stolen goods is lucrative in Talabheim, despite the harsh punishments meted out on anyone found guilty of theft or possession of stolen property.

ONE MAN'S TREASURE

One Man's Treasure may not be the largest or most successful pawn shop in Talabheim's Geltwold, but it certainly has one of the most eclectic selections of used goods available anywhere within the Taalbaston. The shelves are stocked with all manner of items, many of which were pawned for mere pennies but now sport tags marked with prices as much as ten times higher. Though cluttered and overstocked with an abundance of junk, the shop is well organized. Loose items are held in clearly marked wooden bins. Larger items, including furniture and objets d'art are kept off to the side, where potential customers can easily see them.

Ewald Beyer, the owner of One Man's Treasure, is a one-man operation. He is an older, stodgy, balding fellow with white hair and perpetually bloodshot, bespectacled eyes. Ewald is well versed with his stock, from the smallest hatpin to the largest wardrobe. It is his preference that people ask him for specific items, as he has little patience for window-shoppers (or "*Fensterkaufers*," as he calls them) or folks who come into his shop with the intention of just browsing.

Though One Man's Treasure puts forth a legitimate front—indeed, business is good and the stock on display does on occasion move—Ewald is actually one of the premier fences in the Geltwold. After hours, his edgy demeanour is replaced by a spiderlike patience most people do not expect. His clients, whom he sees by appointment only, must be referred to him by trusted customers unless he has previously worked with them in the past. His prices for stolen goods are fair, for the most part, but he prefers to refrain from dealing in magic of any sort.

THE FAITHFUL LENDER

To hear Nobbler Crumbuckle tell it, he's the richest Halfling in Talabheim. If true, this dubious honour is due in large part to his willingness to do anything to collect a debt, as well as all interest due, using any means necessary. After all, Nobbler loans money to just about anyone who can meet his exorbitant interest rates, and he'll even hand the gold over with a smile and a firm handshake. Even though most people know of his somewhat sinister reputation, few believe that a Halfling poses much of a threat. Nobbler relies on this naïveté to ensure a steady stream of customers. As with most lenders, he appreciates customers who pay on time, yet he prefers those who don't.

Nobbler's place of business, dubbed The Faithful Lender, is a well-appointed shop at the southeast end of the Geltwold. Passing through the Human-sized door, one encounters the musty smell of old paper, the sweet scent of flavoured pipeweed, and the chirping of Catkins, Nobbler's pet finch. Nobbler prefers to remain in his office, while his plump Halfling secretary, Suppia, and his Human bodyguard, Gismar, deal with potential customers. Those who pass the scrutiny of his underlings are admitted to his chambers. There, he listens to their sad tales, gives simple advice, and offers his "best" interest rate for their potential loans.

The rigid and convoluted financial laws of Talabheim give Nobbler a great deal of leverage in his day-to-day dealings with debtors. Even the smallest loans are subject to these intricate rules, and few in the city are as adept at navigating them as Nobbler is. He points to obscure laws and exceptions, which are written into every contract he offers, practically providing him with permission to collect his due in whatever fashion seems most convenient at the time. Short of killing a debtor, which is still illegal in Talabheim, Nobbler will do anything to cash in on overdue payments on his loans, often with Gismar in tow.

EARTHWERKS

Laying like an emerald on the far north-eastern border of Talabheim is the Earthwerks, a semi-rural district that is home to several hundred agricultural families and clan-owned farming communities. Small plots of tilled land are tended by households that share in both the work and reward of the earth. Larger parcels of land are given over to herds of sheep and goats, as well as flocks of geese and chickens. Central to the Earthwerks is a bustling farmer's market where many of Talabheim's residents come to purchase everyday goods and impeccably fresh meats and produce.

Gnarled oak and willow trees of indeterminable age are plentiful here. Along with low stone walls, these ancient trees have been used for centuries to mark property lines between different homesteads. Angry residents who discover poachers thinning their flocks or stealing their produce sometimes hang the thieves from the heights of these trees. On holy days, Priests of Taal come to the oldest of these trees and pray for successful harvests on behalf of the various farming communes that work the land.

In the past ten years or so, a new commune, Eastadt, has sprung up on the far edge of the Earthwerks. The folk who live and work within this new commune are suspicious of outsiders and rarely venture into central Earthwerks except to sell their produce at market. Though xenophobic, the Eastadters have done little to earn the ire of their neighbours. Despite this, they are rumoured to be a mixture of Chaos Cultists, Mutants, and other unsavoury things by the rest of the Earthwerks' residents. None of this has been proven, of course, but the Eastadters are nonetheless blamed for anything and everything that goes wrong anywhere else in the district.

EASTADT

The community of Eastadt is far enough away from central Earthwerks that it is hardly a part of the district. Yet, due to a series of strict ordinances and zoning laws put into effect several decades ago, it is considered to be within the district's borders. The laws in question were originally written in order to reconstruct districts for financial reasons, allowing Talabheim's excisemen to claim tax revenue from outlying villages. The side effect is that isolated settlements such as Eastadt are folded into nearby communities within which they may not fit.

In the case of Eastadt, the fit is a bad one, indeed. Few of Earthwerks' residents venture in Eastadt's direction unless the need is dire, and even then, they never travel there alone. The commune has a sinister reputation amongst the folk of the district. Tales abound of strange lights that flash and shine from the direction of Eastadt on moonless nights. Every so often, dead livestock are found on the border of Eastadt and Earthwerks, their entrails pulled from their corpses and strewn about. The Eastadters

are blamed for these mutilations, yet no true evidence has ever surfaced to prove them, one way or the other.

Were the folk of Talabheim to know the truth of things, they might have risen up to destroy Eastadt long ago. As it is, the twisted folk who inhabit the commune have done a splendid job of keeping to themselves. Most are Mutants and have formed the commune of Eastadt in an attempt to maintain their own safety. They are, one and all, thralls to Tzeentch, and each has given his body and soul to the Lord of Change. They put forth a respectable front, especially on tax days, and only the most mundane of them are permitted to travel to the farmer's market in central Earthwerks. Even then, they rarely speak to anyone, and their neighbours couldn't be happier for their silence.

THE PIG'S EAR TAVERN

Just across from the Earthwerks farmer's market sits a large brick structure with a shingled roof and an adjoining stable. A pig-shaped sign dangles above the front stoop of the building, proclaiming to visitors that they have found the Pig's Ear Tavern. As far as pubs go, the Pig's Ear is a humble place that caters to the rural folk of Earthwerks. The menu features farm favourites, including hearty stews, fresh breads, goose girl pies, and cottage cheese. Locally distilled spirits are also available, the Pig's Ear's firewater being some of the most potent within the Taalbaston.

The Pig's Ear has been around for so long it is practically a historical landmark. It originally served as an inn for folk passing between Talabheim and the many farms dotting the crater's interior, but as Talabheim grew, the Pig's Ear became a popular stop for soldiers and mercenaries. In addition to the folk of Earthwerks, the Ear (as it is affectionately known by locals) still serves a number of military types who come to partake of the pub's famous moonshine.

Though family owned, it has not always been the property of the same family or clan. Over the centuries, the establishment has changed hands on many occasions, through fair and foul means. Most recently, the Ear was purchased at an exorbitant sum by a mysterious out-of-towner named Viggo Schultz. Schultz is an imposing fellow with greying hair, steely eyes, and a noticeable limp. While Viggo continues to keep the former employees on staff, he maintains the business aspects of the place by himself, and he allows no one to look at his ledgers.

The regular customers haven't noticed much change in the service, though they do comment on the strange visitors that occasionally frequent the pub. Men, Dwarfs, Elves, and other foreigners arrive in Earthwerks seeking to speak to Schultz and then leave as suddenly as they came. Many feel Viggo appears to be a man who is running from his past, but no one has been brave enough to broach the subject with him. In fact, Viggo Schultz is none other than Jonas Becker, the infamous Murderer of the Midden Moors. A successful assassin and murderer, Jonas has finally decided to put his life of blood behind him, at least for the time being.

OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN THE TAALBASTON

The crater that makes up the Taalbaston is immense—a full 30 miles in diameter. Although Talabheim is easily the largest settlement within its walls, other towns and notable locations can be found in its fertile expanse.



THE ROAD AND GARDEN OF MORR

Many Talabheimers choose to be buried in the Taalwalt when they die. Those that do are taken in funeral procession along a particular road, sacred to Morr, and pass through a large gateway formed of a black pillar and a white pillar—the same as those that mark the entrance to any Temple of Morr. The body is then placed in one of the small resting houses for a number of days (depending largely on the weather) where they lie in state. Mourners visit the corpse, and ceremonies occur until the spirit of the deceased is deemed to have passed to Morr. After that, the body is taken from the Garden of Morr through a gate dedicated to Rhya. (This marble structure is known as “The Endstone,” and of it people say “as you come in, so you go out”). There are various customs unique to Talabheim that result from this unusual practice.

The debts of the deceased are often claimed by creditors (or their agents) on the way to the Garden of Morr from the family as they lead the funeral procession, which can lead to embarrassing scenes of blocked gates and hired thugs if the family is particularly poor or unlucky, or the decedant was particularly profligate in life.

Legally speaking, a person on Morr's Road, or resting within the Garden is not considered truly dead, only sleeping. Thus any will, inheritance rights, titles, and the like, are only considered once the deceased has passed the Endstone. This law was put in place after a rash of sleeping sickness resulted in many nobles waking in the Garden, wound in their shrouds and looking like the Undead. Those who survived surprising the Priests of Morr kicked up such a fuss about their sons already claiming their fortunes that the Litigant's guild was persuaded to amend the law—after substantial legal wrangling and fees.

THE SOUTH QUARRY

The South Quarry is located several miles south of the city limits. Day after day, hundreds of miners, stonecutters, and labourers chisel and haul huge blocks of the black granite from the wall of the Taalbaston. The operation is massive and dangerous—at least one person is killed every other day from accidents, typically falling rocks. Kegs of gunpowder are occasionally used to blast out particularly hard veins of rock, though its cost keeps this from being a common occurrence. As a result, the gang bosses are constantly looking for replacement workers. The pay is terrible, but for anyone desperate enough to earn a few Pennies, the Quarry is always hiring. There is a constant stream of horse-drawn wagons that haul the cut stone to new construction within the city.

Every once in awhile, long-forgotten tunnels are discovered winding through the wall of the Taalbaston. No one knows who created them, and rumours persist of slumbering evils that are angered if their sleep is disturbed and hidden treasures. For this reason, the quarry workers are a curiously superstitious lot, and most believe that the entire operation is cursed in one way or another.

The office and stores of gunpowder are guarded at night by a small contingent of hired thugs to ensure that no one steals it. However, the guards have built a secret still and indulge frequently, making the area ripe for a potential theft.

THE TAALGRUNHAAR FOREST

Located on the opposite side of the Taalbaston from Talabheim sits an ancient wood called the Taalgrunhaar Forest. Also known as the Taalwelt, this massive copse of oak, maple, and birch trees is where Priests of Taal, the Forest God, roam and practice secret rites. Dotting the forests are several sweat lodges used by the locals and Priests.



There is supposedly an enormous temple to Taal within the Taalwelt, though those looking for an edifice of stone are likely to be perplexed. Taal has no need of bricks and mortar. Rather, his Priests work their rites under the trees, atop tumescent earthworks and barrows, and within leafy groves. Numerous stone-lined sweat lodges pepper the forest, and on holy days, many are crowded with semi-clad men worshipping the Forest God. The most sacred area of the forest is to the north of the Taalwelt, where the trees grow particularly thick and plentiful. Here, a series of low ridges and natural clearings form a grove known as the Horn of Taal, where the most sacred and solemn rites of Taal are performed, and it's the home of several of the most powerful of his Priests. In the old days, folk stumbling upon this grove—perhaps on a Stag Night or vision quest—would have their eyes put out and be cast from the forest. These days, however, the Priesthood is more inclined to turn a blind eye to these incidents.

The woods are technically the home of a suspicious, simple, and rather backwards people. Its sole town, a tiny hamlet called Vateresche, is noted for producing numerous strange and potent strains of moonshine. They guard their stills jealously and hang anyone they catch sampling their wares without consent.

CRATER LAKE AND THE CRATER MARSH

Situated on the easternmost side of the Taalbaston, Crater Lake is a small stretch of crystal clear water. Reputed to possess both healing and fertility powers, it is also rumoured to be bottomless, and indeed any attempts to plumb its depths have turned up no results. The water of the lake is considered blessed by Taal—some consider it his tears—and is used by his Priests to bless amulets and relics. While unusually pure, the actual healing properties of the water are unknown; although, conmen and quack doctors often sell it as a cure-all to the unwitting masses. Priests of Taal consider this a gross blasphemy and severely punish anyone that they discover selling the sacred waters.

South of the Crater Lake stretches the Crater Marsh—a broad meandering wetland that flows up to the vaulting walls of the Taalbaston. It is a favoured nesting place for ducks, geese, and other game birds, making it an ideal hunting spot for those nobles with permits.

DANKEROOD

Dankerood is a retreat and spa for the wealthy inhabitants of Talabheim, nestled along the banks of Crater Lake. There, nobles, prosperous merchants, and high-ranking Priests drink in its waters and treat themselves to exotic cures, such as mud baths, scented steam rooms, and other curative activates.

Low-slung villas of exquisite craftsmanship, meticulous gardens, and neatly trimmed hedgerows make Dankerood stand out from the rustic dwellings of the nearby peasants. Nobles from Talabheim consider it mandatory to spend at least a week at the Dankerood each year as part of the social calendar—those that can afford to stay there for a month or more at a stretch are considered truly wealthy and powerful. A tremendous amount of business, illicit affairs, and social-ladder climbing occur behind the gilded walls of this spa. Thieves sometimes dare to make forays into its walls to steal from the rich in this casual setting where protection is relaxed.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Talabheim is ripe with potential adventures of all kinds. The city's convoluted laws and unique setting can serve as the basis for any sort of campaign. This section provides a list of adventure ideas you can use to make adventures of your own design.

- The Skaven located beneath Wernhauer Stables continue their plan to poison the city's water supply. They soon discover the source of the water that flows into Taal's Fountain, turning this sacred site into one of blasphemy.
- Something strange is occurring in the Taalwelt. Wild animals of all kinds are fleeing *into* the city and must be killed on the spot. When examined, the dead animals all

bear strange bony protrusions all over their bodies, and some have infected lesions and pustules. Is foul magic intruding the sacred woods?

- Homesteaders carving a new home within the Ratholds breach an ancient tunnel, releasing a noxious, toxic green gas. Despite efforts to stop the flow of this gas, nothing can be done. Dozens of people have died with no end in sight.
- Upon arrival to the city, one of the characters is mistaken for a debtor that recently fled the city. Arrested and thrown into the Hollows, the others must find a way to get him out. During their investigation, they discover the debtor was a vassal of the now-missing Elector Count. Is there a connection between their disappearances?

— TAALAGAD —

Taalagad is perhaps the largest and most important settlement claimed by the city of Talabheim. It is, in effect, Talabheim's port, and all river trade to the city-state passes through Taalagad's docks. A wide variety of traffic passes through Taalagad, and this includes commodities passing up and down the Talabec on boat and barge, as well as merchants and goods that seek to utilize the city's ferries to cross the river's breadth as they travel along the Old Forest Road.

Given its position on the River, Taalagad has a long history filled with refugees and shanty towns. During times of war, plague, and famine, unfortunates from as far as Kislev and Ostermark have sought shelter in Taalagad's muddy, rat-infested streets. This migrant population has swollen as peasants from Kislev have sought their fortunes aboard the barges that ply their way along the upper Talabec. Many of these hopefuls arrive in Taalagad and wind up working for a pittance on the city's docks.

The slums of Taalagad are choked with nearly 1,200 refugees from Hochland. As a result, a semi-permanent shanty town has sprung up along Taalagad's northern border, and the city's struggling labour market is flooded with immigrants willing to work for much lower wages. These events have done nothing but frustrate the largely Kislevite labour force that existed in Taalagad up until that time, and tensions between the two ethnic groups are as high as the wages are low.

THE DOCKS OF TAALAGAD

Taalagad's docks are one of the city's busiest quarters. All river trade, from Altdorf in the south or Kislev in the north, requires loading or unloading upon the rotting wooden platforms and quays that jut out from both banks of the Talabec. Most of the docks are protected from the powerful current by a series of breakwaters that barely hold the river's flow back when the winter snows melt. Construction and renovation of the docks is a constant process, and it is a rare day when some manner of repair is not being performed. Because of the poor or nonexistent training of the labourers that the city employs for these tasks, casualties are a daily occurrence.

The docks line both sides of the Talabec. Those on the southern bank of the river are in high demand, as they are closer to the Wizard's Way and entry into Talabheim. Captains who are forced to tie up on the northern bank of the Talabec must still transport

their goods across the river either via ferry or by Wizard's Crossing. Either method is costly. Taalagad's ferrymen are purported to be some of the most crooked businessmen in the city, and the toll to use the Wizard's Crossing depends in large part on the size and value of the cargo that crosses it.

Since much of the city's labour force shows up at the docks in a vain search for work each morning, the atmosphere is as taut as a drawn bowstring. Kislevite immigrants work shoulder to shoulder with refugees from Hochland. Brawling and the occasional stabbing are common events on the already treacherous waterfront. Riots are common along the Worker's Wall, a section of town where labourers gather in the hopes of earning an honest Schilling. Crime is also widespread along the docks, as smugglers tie up their boats at night and use the pandemonium of the daylight hours to their advantage.

THE BLACKENED TOOTH

The Blackened Tooth is a barbershop situated across from Taalagad's docks. Frequented by travellers in need of haircuts, shaves, and minor medical attention, "the Tooth," as locals call it, is also renowned for the number of tooth extractions its proprietor attends to each week. Helmut Heftung, the Tooth's owner, is a Middenlander who prides himself on his ability to quickly remove rotten or damaged teeth with any one of a number of specialized tools of his own design. Given the state of oral hygiene in Taalagad, as well as the Empire in general, it's a safe bet that Helmut will have an abundance of business for the remainder of his career.

Aside from Helmut's affinity for dentistry, The Blackened Tooth is also a place for shaves and haircuts. While Helmut is far more adept with pliers, he keeps several pairs of razor-sharp shears on hand so he can attend to the tresses and beards of his regular customers. A small contingent of ailing and unemployed dock workers have begun to haunt the stoop in front of the Tooth, content to pay a Penny for a shave before settling down to an afternoon's worth of gossip and rumour. Helmut is happy for the business, but he does grow visibly annoyed when the gossipers overstay their tenuous welcome.

THE WORKER'S WALL

Taalagad's main thoroughfare, referred to by residents as the Wizard's Road, winds through the city's centre before joining with

the Wizard's Way as it zigzags up the crater wall. The Wizard's Crossing, an old stone bridge spanning the Talabec along the road's course, offers a quick way for merchants and residents to traverse the river—so long as they can afford the toll. On the southern bank of the river, extending out and away from the bridge is a low, crumbling stone wall. It was once a part of the city's defensive breastworks, but the wall has since become overgrown with ivy and fallen into disrepair.

Called the Worker's Wall, it now acts as a meeting place for folk seeking work on the docks and quays of Taalagad. Prior to the Storm of Chaos, the wall was a busy part of town where labourers from both banks of the river arrived on a daily basis to offer their skills and strong backs to potential employers. The function of the wall has changed little since those days, but the number of workers that show up looking for a quick way to earn a Penny has risen sharply. There have been riots on more than one occasion, as tensions between the Kislevite dockworkers and the Hochlander refugees have ignited into violence.

THE FISH MARKET

Several small fishing villages line the shores of the Talabec, and many of these are claimed to be a part of the city-state of Talabheim. A small fish market has sprung up in Taalagad to accommodate the fisher-folk and their families, who seek to turn their hard-caught fish into money. Prior to the recent struggles, fish were plentiful and business was good. In the aftermath of the war, refugees flooded into Taalagad, and fish, not to mention other sources of food, were suddenly in high demand.

As stocks of fish were depleted in order to fill the bellies of hungry refugees, the volume of palatable fish being pulled from the depths of the Talabec dropped significantly. Initially, over-fishing was considered to be the root cause of the problem, but dark sorcery was also suspected when malformed creatures were pulled from the river in droves. The flesh of these abominations was foul tasting, and even the starving masses of refugees in Taalagad would not surrender precious coin to buy them.

Palatable fish in Taalagad's fish market are rare, expensive, and often caught downriver. By the time they reach market, several days have passed, and freshness cannot be guaranteed. The taint of rot does little to make the fish affordable to the common folk, but the mongers have no trouble selling their product to those few who can afford to buy it.

THE EEL

The Eel is a two-story tavern that crouches at the southern edge of the Talabec, two blocks south of the Wizard's Road. The bar's wooden edifice has been bleached to a dingy grey by years of exposure to the elements. A single shoddy sign depicting a winding, snake-like creature dangles from a pair of rusty hooks above the door. Bits of maritime flotsam are stacked haphazardly along the building's sides, covered by random patches of fraying fish net. A single copper bell, the words "Der Aal" cast into its side, hangs near the tavern's door, a prize from the ship that gave the Eel its name.

Business during daylight hours is scant, as most of the Eel's regular clientele are either hard at work on the docks or laying low away from the prying eyes of the city guard. When the sun goes down, the Eel's doors open wide, admitting all manner of river folk into its dingy and ill-lit interior. Sailors, boatmen, fisher-folk,

and dockworkers enjoy the Eel's cheap ale, and fried potatoes accompanied by strong local vinegar are a house specialty. The Eel's favourite customers, however, are the many smugglers who ply the Talabec River in search of illicit profit.

Anything can be bought or sold in the Eel, so long as the buyer or seller isn't too straight-laced. The Eel's reputation as a haven for smugglers is well known in Taalagad. In a city that is known for its rough and degenerate qualities, such a place is even valued by the powers that be. The local authorities choose to ignore the Eel much of the time, though they will occasionally raid the tavern in an attempt to keep the proprietor on his toes. Arrests are rarely made during these raids, unless the patrons are incited to violence by an unhealthy combination of rebelliousness and malt liquor.

SKULLY'S

Skully's is a gambling den and beer hall that caters to the less distinguishing members of Taalagad's lower classes. Card and dice games dominate in the bar's smoky interior, whilst the back yard is reserved for pit fights of such violent intensity that Skully's has nearly been shut down by the local authorities more times than most common folk can count. An eight-foot stone wall, topped with jagged glass shards, has recently been erected around the rear of the building at great expense. The wall is ostensibly to keep non-paying spectators from freeloading, but it also serves to keep recalcitrant gamblers from escaping their incurred debts.

The proprietor, a lecherous Halfling known only as Skully, takes an active role in the administration of his establishment. Most days, he spends his time lounging about, with any one of a dozen bored young women with haunted eyes feeding him boiled mice and millet with their filthy fingers. When not indulging his strange habits, he makes his rounds, seeing to the guests. He also acts as master of ceremonies for particularly high profile fights, personally awarding the prizes to victorious gladiators. He keeps several capable brutes on his staff, and many of which are ex-Pit Fighters with formidable reputations as effective as their swords when it comes to keeping the clientele in line.

Skully's gladiatorial events have become more exotic in nature. The public's thirst for ever more violent distractions from the humdrum of their despicable lives has driven Skully to find new and interesting ways to entertain his guests. There are rumours that the Halfling will pay good coin for Chaos creatures, including Mutants and Beastmen, though it is unclear if he intends to pit these monsters against one another or against his sizeable stable of Pit Fighters.

Skully is reasonably well respected in Taalagad, at least amongst the folk who frequent his gambling den. Considering the local feelings on Halflings, and the Moot in general, this is especially remarkable. While his taste for Human women is considered to be deviant behaviour by most respectable citizens, and despite his wealth being built on the blood of fallen Pit Fighters, Skully has proven to be a generous benefactor. He often gives freely to charities and sends shipments of food and ale to the poorer citizens of Taalagad, which has done much to improve his standing with the common folk.

THE DEPOT DISTRICT

Beyond the docks, on the southern side of the Talabec, lies Taalagad's depot district. Home to a series of large warehouses and merchant shops, the Depot District is where much of the port's money changes hands. Most business occurs during daylight

hours, though a good number of shady deals take place after dark, despite the conspicuous presence of guard patrols throughout the district.

THE HAMMER AND TONGS

The Hammer and Tongs is a shop that sells locally manufactured and imported arms and armour. The owner, a merchant blacksmith named Tomas Gussel, prides himself on the stock he carries. He prefers to cater to the city's legitimate authorities but will sell to anyone with enough coin to afford his wares. Much of his stock consists of light armour and hand weapons, though he can procure anything if offered enough time and gold. For the most part, his sales are modest, but he lives well enough considering the high price of the merchandise he sells.

While Gussel rarely takes up the hammer and tongs these days, he does accept commissions for special items. Foremost amongst these are expertly crafted zweihanders, constructed by Gussel in the Imperial style. Rumours abound as to Gussel's past prior to his coming to Taalagad. The most common tale casts him in the role of an Imperial soldier in the ranks of one of the famed Greatsword regiments. Gussel will neither confirm nor deny these claims, preferring to use his ambiguous past as a selling point for his goods.

GRISWOLD AND SON

Gregor Griswold came to Taalagad with a dream: to make his fortune selling a selection of fine garments imported from the galleries of Reikland, Wissenland, and Averland. Though his initial advances in Talabheim bore fruit, the fortune he hoped to achieve was far from assured. After losing much of his wealth to a series of particularly damaging bandit raids, Gregor decided to settle in Taalagad. Stark necessity, rather than personal choice, drove him to make such a decision, and he has regretted it ever since.

With the failure of his clothing imports, Gregor took stock in a dry goods shop in Taalagad's Depot District. While his clothing was marketed towards Talabheim's elite, the dry goods business serves to offer goods to folk of all social standings. He found a modicum of success in this line, though the growth of his business only spiked after the Storm of Chaos. In times of war, even the most mundane items become prohibitively expensive. Gregor, not above a little profiteering, put his worst foot forward and earned sacks of coin as a result.

Griswold and Son offers a wide variety of tools, dry goods, and necessary items for sale, as well as luxury imports from lands as far away as Araby and Estalia. The prices are noticeably inflated, but Gregor explains that the reliability of the Empire's trade routes is not what it used to be. Though his estimation is correct, his prices are still well above the norm. Since he is the largest purveyor of goods in Taalagad, however, he can charge whatever price he wishes to.

MARKET SQUARE

Taalagad is possessed of a single open-air market where farmers and merchants from near and far come to sell their goods. The market is held three times each week in the town's market square, which is centrally located in the Depot District. Those who can afford to erect stalls and tents do so, but the majority of business is carried out from carts or wheel barrows. Nearly anything can be



purchased in Market Square, though the necessities of life, such as food and clothing, have been premium items since the Storm of Chaos ravaged the Empire.

Unlike the fish market, Market Square is almost always busy on market days. Throngs of citizens flock to the square to see what new things are up for sale and to scrounge and haggle for the best deals they can find. Crime is also rampant, theft being the most common of the lot. Pickpockets are as common as cockroaches on market days, despite the visible presence of the city guard. Brawls occasionally break out between overzealous hagglers, too, causing distractions that cutpurses and shoplifters use to their advantage.

THE TEN-TAILED CAT

Perhaps the most famous of Taalagad's venues is the Ten-Tailed Cat, a tavern run by an ex-Pit Fighter named Sluro. The Ten-Tailed Cat is known far and wide for its policy of providing patrons with free ale in exchange for a tale or two. Some stories are humorous, some are disturbing, and others are downright bizarre. Regardless of the yarn's outcome, the crowd's reaction judges its worth. If the crowd voices its approval, free ale is awarded immediately, and Cup Duty does not apply.

All manner of characters patronize the Ten-Tailed Cat. Of all the taverns in Taalagad, it is perhaps the most cosmopolitan. Local customers rub elbows with patrons from all over the Empire, as well as those folk who hail from strange nations far beyond the Empire's borders. For a modest fee, access to private rooms is available. These facilities are popular and allow groups to converse amongst themselves without exposing potentially sensitive information to the gossips that frequent the common room. Additionally, games of chance spring up on a nightly basis, and fortunes are won and lost on the flip of a card or the tumble of the dice.

THE JAKES

The area of Taalagad known as the Jakes, named after the filth and scum found here, displays the abject poverty of the city's transients and refugees. Originally dominating the north-western section of town, the quarter has since expanded into a huge sprawling camp filled with shanties, huts, and tents. The majority of the quarter's residents are Hochlanders who fled from the fighting during the Storm of Chaos, as well as a handful of families from Ostermark who had no where else to go.

Walking the streets of the Jakes reveals the desperation and despair of the folk who call it their temporary home. Crimes such as theft and murder occur here everyday, and the refugees are constantly exploited by the city's criminal elements. Despite the Cup Duty, alcohol is common. When they aren't working (which is most of the time), the refugees drink cheap rotgut as they commiserate with one another around low-burning fire pits.

The Hochlander refugees see Taalagad's Kislevite population as their primary competition in gaining a step up in Talabheim. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant; anyone who appears to be of Kislevite descent would be wise to avoid the Jakes altogether. Several people have already been found dead because they ventured to the wrong side of the Talabec River, and this has done nothing for Hochlander/Kislevite relations in Taalagad.

STREET OF THIEVES

When compared to its parent city, Taalagad is practically lawless. While the average city guardsman in the port town is relatively honest, most are inclined to look out for their own skins when patrolling the unruly streets. This is not to say that law has no place in Taalagad, nor does it mean that it is never enforced. On the contrary, arrests are made every day in the town for a variety of crimes, from minor infractions (such as evading the toll on the Wizard's Crossing) to major offences (such as murder or heresy). Trials are swift and largely decided by public opinion, especially in the cases of high-profile or politically inflammatory crimes.

Assuming that the accused is not lynched outright, he will stand trial in Taalagad's open-air court on the stretch of road known as the Street of Thieves. This road lies on the border of the town's northern docks and its impoverished Jakes. The avenue is paved with black cobblestones, each one engraved with the names of one or more criminals and whatever crime (or crimes) they were convicted of. As new criminals are charged and sentenced, their names are chiselled into random cobblestones. Central to the avenue is an elevated dais where criminals are tried and sentenced. Trials occur at least once a week and are heavily attended events, featuring vendors, food, and a carnival-like atmosphere.

Lining the Street of Thieves are platforms, each equipped with one or more devices of contrition. The most common of these devices are stocks, constructed of thick wood and bound in heavy iron bands. Criminals who are convicted of minor crimes are shackled into place, their hands, heads, and/or feet confined to the stocks. The term of this punishment ranges from several hours to several days. While on display, law-breakers are subject to the derision and abuse of their fellow citizens, as well as the elements. The law is blind to the season, and prisoners that are convicted in the winter have been known to freeze to death before their sentences are

complete. Other platforms are equipped with posts, where convicts are whipped or beaten for their crimes.

In addition to relatively minor punishments, like restriction to the stocks or flogging, executions are also performed here. Two platforms along the road are furnished with gibbets, and folk who are hung dangle from them for days or weeks at a time, depending on the severity of their crimes. The most visible of the execution platforms, however, is known simply as the Block, where the most heinous crimes are punished by one, two, or, sometimes, even three blows from an executioner's axe. Prisoners who somehow survive three blows from the executioner's cleaver are pardoned for their crimes, though such a thing has never happened in recent memory.

LITTLE KISLEV

One of Taalagad's oldest districts is known only as Little Kislev. The Kislevite population of Taalagad has made the district their own, and the sights, sounds, and smells of the place are largely reminiscent of Praag and Erengard. Though small, only encompassing a central avenue and a half-dozen connected alleys, the district is always bustling and full of energy. Lively Kislevite music, often accompanied by improvised singing, adds to the district's exotic feel.

With the coming of refugees from Hochland, the mood of Little Kislev has become subdued and troubled. Prior to the Storm of Chaos, Kislevite immigrants performed much of the lower-class labour in town. The Hochlanders, desperate as they are, are willing to perform the same sorts of jobs for far less money. Unscrupulous merchants and burghers have taken advantage of the situation, pitting the Kislevites against the Hochlanders in a constant struggle for economic survival. The fact that the Hochland refugees outnumber the town's Kislevite population six to one makes the future even more uncertain in these troubled times.

THE BALALAIKA

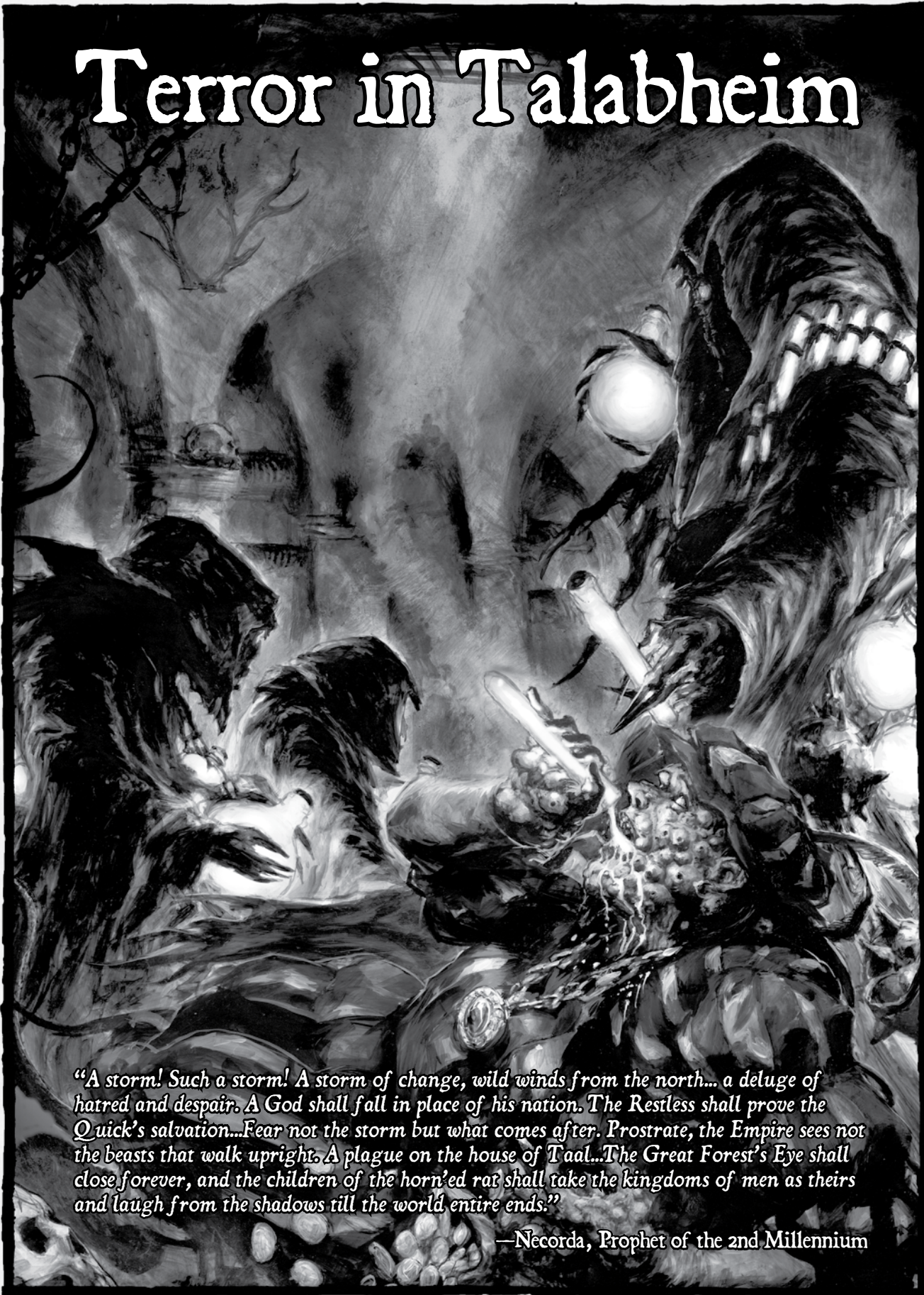
Named after a popular musical instrument, the Balalaika is the favoured drinking spot of hard-working Kislevite men. The menu features a dozen hearty ethnic foods, as well as vodka, which is brought down the Talabec River from the Kislevite motherland. As indicated by the tavern's name, music is one of the Balalaika's main attractions. Though lively, the tone of the songs has become increasingly sombre in recent months, given the current situation involving the refugees from Hochland.

Drinking has always been a popular pastime amongst the folk of Kislev, and the Balalaika has always been the favoured place to gather for both Kislevite and Talabeclander alike. Though the prices at the Balalaika have remained consistent, the lack of available jobs in town has made it difficult for the locals to afford the amounts of vodka that they were once accustomed to drinking. People still show up regularly to gossip and grumble about the state of affairs, however.

MADAME YAGA

The tiny home of Madame Yaga is nestled between two rows of dingy housing at the east end of Little Kislev. Yaga is a fortune-teller of some skill, and she continues to amaze folk with her uncanny insight and ageless wisdom. She takes customers by appointment only. Because she rarely leaves the confines of her home, a young boy known only as Yuri sits upon her front steps and maintains her schedule. No one knows how Yuri is related to Yaga or if the two are even kin.

Terror in Talabheim



"A storm! Such a storm! A storm of change, wild winds from the north... a deluge of hatred and despair. A God shall fall in place of his nation. The Restless shall prove the Quick's salvation... Fear not the storm but what comes after. Prostrate, the Empire sees not the beasts that walk upright. A plague on the house of Taal... The Great Forest's Eye shall close forever, and the children of the horn'ed rat shall take the kingdoms of men as theirs and laugh from the shadows till the world entire ends."

—Necorda, Prophet of the 2nd Millennium



CHAPTER I: THE DOCKS OF TAALAGAD

At the heart of the Empire stands the great city of Talabheim—The Eye of the Forest, seat of both Electors and Emperors over the course of its long history. For millennia, the Taalbaston, the vast, impregnable crater wall that surrounds Taal's sacred city, has intimidated every opponent, making the very idea of a siege ludicrous. The greatest Dwarf engineers of multiple generations have declared Talabheim unassailable.

The wall is about to become a trap.

A PLAGUE ON THE EYE OF THE FOREST

In ancient times, the Kingdoms of the Dwarfs stretched across the mountains of the Old World. The Undgrin Ankor or “Underway”—a magnificent underground highway hewn from the bones of the earth, interconnected many of their holds. But as the Dwarfs’ empire declined, many of their Karaks were lost to darkness, and the Dwarfs’ many enemies seized large portions of the Undgrin Ankor. The valiant Dwarfs, heavy hearted, destroyed large portions of their great work so that it could not be used against them or others in the future.

The Children of the Horned Rat, the twisted rat-like men known as the Skaven, have long used portions of the Undgrin Ankor in their assaults on the world of men. Over the centuries, they

Wherein our principals are offered lucrative, if distasteful, employment; old hatreds are renewed, fresh blood is spilt, a foulness takes root, and hints of that which is to come are placed for the discerning eye.

have found passages reaching many places Humans think unassailable. The Skaven bided their time, waiting for their hour to come, waiting for the Empire to falter so they could

deliver its deathblow. In the aftermath of the Storm of Chaos, a few among them believe that long awaited time has come at last.

Nelrich the Suppurater, Plague Priest of the Skaven Clan Pestilens—a tribe of Skaven dedicated to the spread of disease and decay—has targeted Talabheim with a subtle yet virulent plague. He and his vile compatriots brewed up a disease that would gestate slowly, in the hopes this would allow it to disseminate throughout the population of the Empire before anyone was truly aware of it. He chose Talabheim because of its central location on both the Old Dwarf Road and the widely used Talabec River. In this, as in several other key pieces of information, Nelrich is deceived.

His plans are not his own, and his disease has been tampered with.

Among the Skaven, infighting is common, even expected. But only one of the Grey Seers, the wizard prophet of the Skaven's Dark God, the Horned Rat, would presume to manipulate a Plague Priest. Asorak Steeleeye, a Grey Seer, has far more ambitious plans for Talabheim than the mere cultivation of a new epidemic. He mystically influenced Nelrich's new disease so its potency could be greatly increased, or readily cured, with the right substances.

Once Nelrich delivers his new “gift” to the people of Talabheim, Asorak intends to greatly augment the disease’s virulence outside of the city and murder The Suppurater and his followers, so they cannot disrupt his plans or destroy his soon-to-be workforce with their diseases. Asorak allied himself to the cunning mystical engineers of Clan Skryre, the deadly innovators of the Skaven. As the Talabheim authorities seal off the city from the Empire to contain the new plague, Asorak and his Skryre allies will attack the city in force from the Undgrin Ankor. After the city falls, the Grey Seer will not only allow word of his victory to spread, he will purposefully send messages forth concerning both the Skaven attacks and the deadly new plague, for his ultimate goal is far more insidious.

As the Empire gathers troops about the city to liberate it, the Seer and his allies will be working on a monstrous weapon—a Warpstone-powered abomination that will be able to rain hideous destruction down on all those outside the “unassailable” walls of Taal’s city. Once whatever pathetic forces the Empire can muster in the wake of the Storm of Chaos have been disposed of, the road to Skaven dominance in the Old World will be assured. The Grey Seer and his Skryre allies will forge a grim empire out of the carcass of Talabheim, and the Empire will fall, unless someone can stop them.

— WELCOME TO TAALAGAD: DON’T STAY LONG —

Your PCs are unlikely to be impressed by Taalagad the first time they see it. The rulers of Talabheim have always been far more concerned with what goes on within the city than outside it. As long as trade continues to flow regularly, Taalagad has been allowed to go its own way, which has lead to a succession of rulers more concerned with lining their pockets than paving the streets. While a great deal of money has been spent on the docks themselves, the rest of the town outside of the streets that lead to the Wizard’s Way has been allowed to degenerate. Even if Taalagad were a far finer burg than it is, it would still appear somewhat mean compared to the massive Taalbaston and its lofty fortifications that loom over the port through the trees.

Pirates have always used Taalagad as a place to scout out riverboat targets and victims they can pressgang. The recent influx of people who won’t be missed has been an immense boon for “recruitment.” An **Easy (+20%) Common Knowledge (Empire) Test** reveals that not getting drunk with “friendly strangers” in Taalagad is a very good idea.

If your PCs are native to Talabheim or the surrounding region, they are probably already somewhat acquainted with Taalagad. Even those most familiar with the port, however, are having a great deal of trouble recognizing it lately. The docks were refurbished less than a year ago to accommodate the flow of troops to the north, and now there are even more than the usual run of refugees lining the streets. Even the meanest hovel is overflowing with desperate people. PCs new to the region will discover, doubtless to their dismay, that getting into Talabheim usually requires at least a short stay in Taalagad. (See **Passing through the Taalbaston** on page 14 for details.) Due to the Empire’s recent troubles, there are a great many restrictions on city passes, making the already tedious process even more difficult than usual. Finding a place to stay is relatively easy if PCs have money to spend.

Most folks that pass through Taalagad are looking for some sort of employment, and the PCs are unlikely to be an exception.

STARTING OUT

Our saga opens on the mud-strewn streets of Taalagad, the ramshackle port that slouches between the Talabec River and the northern foot of the crater wall encircling the great city of Talabheim. Despite being the entrance to one of the richest cities of the Old World, Taalagad is a bit of cesspool. The rulers of the city make a point of discussing how to clean the place up every century or so, but inevitably, any projects undertaken fall by the wayside. “Taalagad has always worked just fine as it is,” or some other such sentiment generally serves as the epitaph to such civic endeavours.

In the last year, however, change finally came to Taalagad, and little for the better. To meet Archagon’s host in the north, soldiers from all over the Empire march north, by any and all roads, but soon after, the first refugees came, fleeing the horrors of the front for succor in the south. Hundreds of desperate citizens, rightfully fearing that their villages are not safe, swelled Taalagad’s standing population of loggers, fishermen, and sailors to bursting. A massive camp of over 1,200 fitfully squatting refugees from Hochland sprang up, virtually over night, around the outskirts of the port.

And whispers of a plague have begun.

Characters new to the area will doubtless not wish to appear of the “refugee” variety, whereas many locals, including the pre-generated characters, are all very low on funds, as the various avenues of employment that the area has traditionally offered, e.g. trade, timber, government, etc. have all been seriously disrupted by the war. While there are a great number of other citizens in a similar position, the PCs’ competence, or perhaps their arms and willingness to use them, could work to their advantage here, especially considering the Countess Elise’s recent announcement.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Rumour has it that vagrants on the docks besmirched a particular shipment of precious furs earmarked for the Countess herself, and in a fit of anger, she ordered all the rabble gone. True or not, the authorities in Talabheim have declared the majority of refugees in and around Taalagad have got to go. Those that belong to local villages are to be repatriated to their homes. Fortunately, the noble council has decided, in its wisdom, that the two villages belonging to the Grand Freistadt of Talabheim beyond the crater walls, Breitblatt and Gründach, could both do with some expansion. Talabheim wishes to see the refugees settled nearby, possibly accepted into the city proper if they have useful skills, or repatriated to anywhere other than here.

A successful **Gossip Test** reveals a far more insidious reason for the city’s recent declaration. It seems a new disease has recently surfaced on the docks of Taalagad, and the majority of the locals, including Talabheim’s leading physicians, are placing the blame on the horde of refugees encamped in Taalagad. Nobody seems to know much about the disease yet, other than it causes some coughing, and those deep in its throes have long bouts of shivering fits.

In order to expedite the process of moving the refugees away from the city, Talabheim sends a respected Assuror, Magistrate Sorland

THE GRAND TIMELINE

Chapter One

The characters seek employment among the docks of Taalagad.

PCs meet Magistrate Hohenlohe who offers them employment.

The characters escort refugees to the village of Breitblatt, a journey that should take just over three days.

Ogre Mercenaries accost the travelers on the second day of travel.

A beastly attack occurs sometime during the night before the third day.

One or more PCs contract the Grey Ague.

Taalagad is seeded with a deadlier version of the Grey Ague during the PCs' absence. The gates to Talabheim are sealed to help slow the spread of plague from the docks.

Chapter Two

The characters return to Taalagad a week after having set out with the refugees only to find that conditions at the docks have badly degenerated, the Grey Ague is rampant, and the gates are closed.

The PCs may have dealings with the Shallyans.

The fate of the Apothecary Widenhoft.

The desperation of Captain Rudolph Nierhaus.

Within a few days, the characters should realize that they must get out of Taalagad or die.

PCs enter Talabheim by traveling under the Taalbaston.

Chapter Three

The characters seek out the Apothecary Ulthvas Daubler.

Three days after the PCs enter the city; all able-bodied men in Talabheim are drafted into the militia. They get to spend a few days collecting bodies, patrolling the sewers, etc.

The PCs find a cavern full of butchered Skaven.

Chapter Four

Ulthvas Daubler unravels part of the mystery of the Grey Ague (if the characters gave him Widenhoft's notes) a week after the Conscription is called.

A night later, the forces of Nelrich the Suppurater seize the Tallows and the Old Market but are stopped from advancing further into the city by barricades.

Two days after the Infestation begins, bizarre Zombies appear on the streets of Talabheim.

Tackling the wiles of Talabheim's bureaucracy takes the PCs a day if they investigate the mark that all the Zombies' bear.

The characters easily find Dr. Gugula Skell's manor and possibly confront a Wight in her "art room."

Chapter Five

A day later (or two nights after the first appearance of the Plague Zombies) Morrslieb waxes full and the Skaven forces of the Grey Seer Asorak Steeleye invade Talabheim en masse. Talabheim falls in a single night of brutal fighting.

Chapter Six

Two days after Talabheim's defeat, the Steeleye addresses the enslaved populace and work begins on a number of projects throughout the city.

The characters help found a resistance movement to combat the Skaven occupation.

Over the course of several weeks (approximately one month) the Talabheim Resistance gathers information and equipment and undertakes raids on the Skaven.

Just over a month after the fall of Talabheim, the Skaven begin making ranging shots at the Taalbaston with their siege engines and whatever it is that they've built in Dragon's Home.

The PCs learn that the Skaven intend to unveil their master plan on the thirteenth of the month, a night Morrslieb waxes full.

The PCs, in need of any allies they can get, may decide to approach the Suppurater.

Chapter Seven

The characters have just over a week to plan and execute an assault to stop the Grey Seer.

The Second Battle for Talabheim.

The PCs assault the Dragon's Home and/or the Grey Seer Asorak Steeleye, presumably on the twelfth.

Hohenlohe, to oversee matters. Assurors are a vaguely respected branch of Talabheim's infamous Litigant's Guild. Individuals of a scholarly bent and supposedly impartial judgment, they are frequently sent to examine difficult cases and arbitrate unusual disputes. In this case, Magistrate Hohenlohe is to assess the worthiness of those that have applied for permanent housing in the city proper, as well as direct the majority of applicants to other destinations that would be more suitable to their varied skills or lack thereof.

MAGISTRATE SORLAND HOHENLOHE

On first impression, Hohenlohe seems to be an almost stereotypical bellicose giant of a man. Closer inspection reveals a sharp and kindly mind resides within the good Magistrate; however, several decades spent as an Assuror have worn

Hohenlohe's tolerance of lies down to the barest thread. His gruff bluster is a well-practiced front that he uses to put people off their guard in order to more easily catch them if they're dissembling. Hohenlohe's once fiery red hair has faded to a sharp grey at the temples, but he shows little other signs of being in his fifties. His wide shoulders and ruddy expression would seem to be more at home on a woodsman than a scholar. Indeed, he is a devout follower of Taal and frequently takes long trips into the wilderness to meditate on particularly thorny points of law.

Plague or no plague, he is not particularly happy about the city's decision to send people away and intends to do his best to ensure that those who come before him are fairly assessed. Nevertheless, he is pragmatic and reasons that those who have enough money to bribe him will certainly do fine in the city, making him amiable to any number of offers.

Magistrate Sorland Hohenlohe

Career: Politician (ex-Litigant)

Race: Human

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 27% | 25% | 32% | 33% | 36% | 54% | 42% | 60% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 1 | 13 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Genealogy/Heraldry), Academic Knowledge (Law) +10%, Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Evaluate, Gossip +10%, Haggle, Perception, Read/Write +10%, Secret Language (Guild Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Dealmaker, Etiquette, Public Speaking, Savvy, Suave, Super Numerate

Armour: Light Armour (Best Quality Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Best Crafted Hand Weapon (Sword)

Trappings: Good Quality Clothing, Book of Talabheim Laws, Pamphlets, Writing Kit

The official purpose behind the Magistrate's visit swiftly becomes common knowledge throughout Taalagad, and a long line soon forms beside the The Eel tavern, where Hohenlohe has decided to "hold court" during his stay. A successful **Challenging** (–10%) **Gossip Test** or **Challenging** (–10%) **Charm Test** with any members of the local militia or employees of the Municipal Entry Office reveals the Magistrate will likely have need of some able hands.

PCs not in need of funds or new to Talabheim may very well end up before Hohenlohe just because they wish to enter the city quicker than the norm. As mentioned above, with Hohenlohe, money does talk, but he is discreet. PCs that intend to bribe him need to make a successful **Charm Test**, as his dignity can't stand more than a subtle hint at his corruption.

— BREITBLATT OR BUST —

PCs will know they're in the right place by the cacophony that greets them as they stroll down the early morning streets of Taalagad. A crowd of over a hundred adults, plus a fair number of children, mill about half a block away from the The Eel. Several oxen stand with them, along with several wagons loaded with provisions and supplies. A fair number of wary-looking Talabheim Dogfaces who've been called to Taalagad to assist in clean up duties stand watch over the group. A clerk trots up to the PCs, hands them a small parcel, and states the Magistrate sends his regards, good journey, and so on. The parcel consists of a map of the Talabheim region (their destination clearly marked) and a dated letter of passage signed by the Magistrate stating its bearers work for Talabheim and not to obstruct them in their duties.

A Dogface sergeant named Arvid nods to the PCs and tells them they should take the Old Dwarf Road north round Talabheim. "Take yer less than a half day longer. I've heard as there's been some Greenskin mischief down south o' Waldfährte. Sides, if there's trouble, you might be able to hail a passing ship or some

MEETING HOHENLOHE

Hohenlohe has the Eel's doors open every day just past dawn. Part of the tavern's bar has been added to and formed into a raised dais from which the magistrate gazes down on petitioners. Hordes of clerks bring him various appropriate documents as he rapidly assesses those before him in a blunt manner. He takes an hour break each noon before resuming his duties till sundown. Characters that approach Hohenlohe will be stopped by members of the Taalagad militia and asked to state their business with the Magistrate. Whatever their answer, they're likely to be told to wait in line, unless they enquire after the job they've heard of. Hohenlohe will wave aside his bodyguards and give the PCs a sharp once over with his discerning gaze. He'll then grill them a bit about their pasts, especially if they're not native to Talabheim. The Magistrate has been authorized to pay a rather handsome wage to a few brave souls willing to escort a group of refugees to a new home in the village of Breitblatt, a small community a few miles into the Great Forest beyond the south-eastern rim of the crater. The job pays 2 *gc* upon acceptance and an 8 *gc* purse to each man upon successful completion of the task. This may very well raise the hackles on any old adventurer as the journey will mostly occur along the Old Dwarf Road and really shouldn't take more than a week at most. Hohenlohe explains the need for an escort by saying a few reluctant travellers may need "assistance" along the way, not to mention the dangers of the forest these days. He will, of course, make no mention of any disease. He sweetens the deal for PCs new to the region by implying that he may be able to significantly speed up their letters of passage into the city.

If the PCs take him up on his offer, Hohenlohe tells them to make themselves ready for their journey starting at dawn in two days' time. He gestures to one of his assistants who approaches the PCs with a few small bags, but the Magistrate stops him just before the clerk hands the money over stating, "If you deceive me in any way, I will have you hunted down and flayed. Still want the job?" If the PCs agree, the bags change hands, and each PC gets his money.

Incidentally, if the PCs take the money but don't show up, Hohenlohe is as good as his word. He circulates sketches of the PCs' throughout the militia and to the local Roadwardens. They'll never again be safe in the Talabheim region.

such along the river." The Talabec River parallels the branch of the Old Dwarf Road that runs north of Talabheim for a good portion of the way to Breitblatt. Presuming no undue delays, the journey to Breitblatt should take about three and a half days, one way.

When you have all gathered yourselves and indicated your readiness, Sergeant Arvid turns to the crowd and bellows in a seasoned campaign voice, "Listen up, people. These lads will be taken yer to yer new homes. You mind 'em and keep them kids close. I don't 'spect my men or I will be seeing any of yer any time soon, right?" He nods to you all once and steps aside. Perhaps a speech is in order?

Time for the PCs to face their charges. The crowd before them mainly consists of peasant families native to the Talabheim region that fled to Taalagad when the trouble up north began, as well as some woodsmen. There are, however, a few Hochland refugee families as well. Characters not native to the region will need to

A FEW BREITBLATT BOUND

- A cheerful young blacksmith named Meinhard travels to the village to set up his first forge. A small but sturdy mule carries his anvil, which he guards with his life.
- A pinched-face woman named Eboe and her monosyllabic sister Irmgard are both deeply resentful of being sent back to Breitblatt. They complain loudly about their feet, the road, the weather, the air, and just about everything else at every opportunity which sounds like so—*Eboe*: This damn wind just won't let up. *Irmgard*: Nope. *E*: I desperately need a drink. *I*: Yep.
- An old woodsman named Aivars travels with an equally old hound named Katja. Aivars knows a number of good ghost stories about the Great Forest, which he tells about the fires at night.
- A Hochlander family, Matthias Keller and his wife Susi, along with their four children. Matthias saw too much of his beloved home province burned and has become a shell of a man. Susi continually tries to wake him from his reverie, pointing out various sights and noting what the children are up to. Matthias looks right through her.

make a **Routine (+10%) Common Knowledge (Empire) Test** to figure out why a few of the families are so segregated from the rest, as their differences in clothing and accent are fairly subtle. One or more of the PCs should address the crowd to get the trip underway. How they choose to go about it will colour a lot of the journey ahead. Have the PCs give short speeches and judge whether they're going with the "we're friendly guides" or the "step out of line and we'll hurt you" approach. The peasants, especially the ex-Hochlander

families, have been through so much that trying to **Intimidate** them will be **Hard (-20%)** at best. If they have the right Skills and Talents they may even be able to make a **Challenging (-10%) Charm Test**. However the PCs manage to come off, the crowd still gets underway heading out Taalagad's north-eastern gate onto the Old Dwarf Road.

THE FIRST DAY

The first day is mostly trouble free as the Old Dwarf Road makes for relatively easy travel. The imposing wall of the Taalbaston continually brackets the south just as, hills permitting, the River Talabec can be seen to the north. The PCs can get to know a few of their charges to pass the time and make what is to come more meaningful to them. The most significant event the day will bring, though it may not seem so to the PCs at the time if they haven't heard rumours of a plague in Taalagad, is that a fair number of the children and some of the old folks have come down with a hacking cough. Road dust is the generally accepted reason for it. Characters need to make a **Challenging (-10%) Perception Test** to notice that none of the Hochlanders have the cough (they haven't been as exposed as the native Talabheimers who've been staying in and around Taalagad—see The Grey Ague on page 41 for details). Note they can only take the Perception Test if they've successfully figured out which refugees are Hochlanders and which are not.

The majority of the peasants have limited equipment and blankets but little else. A few of the more well-to-do (for refugees) families have a tent they pitch at night, but the majority sleep under the stars by fireside. The PCs can delegate a few people to help keep watch at night; none of the peasants actively volunteer to do so the first night.

THE SECOND DAY

Morning of the second day brings some potentially serious trouble wandering down the road. A trio of gaily clad Ogres swagger along the Old Dwarf Road from the east. Each of the three is a riot of colours, wearing large voluminous shirts that show a great deal of wear, despite their bright shades. The Ogres stop when they see the PCs and their enormous party to study them for a time. The refugees are immediately on the verge of panic as they stare fearfully at the huge creatures. Presuming the PCs don't immediately attack them, the Ogres confer for a bit before one of them steps forward.

The very ground of the Old Dwarf Road noticeably shakes with each step the colossal brute takes towards your camp. He continues to approach closer and closer, until he is a mere dozen steps or so from you. His hat is almost as big as he is; with a wider brim than most men stand tall. The hat bears several brightly plumed feathers, which snap in the morning wind and he doffs it briefly to make a slight bow. "Oi, slims. Lads and I reckon you all have a right fine herd here. We was wondering if you might be willing to help fix us up a breakfast." He looks about at the peasants, smiles with his fanged maw at a group of children (who promptly burst into tears, soil themselves, or both) and then looks back at you expectantly.

Basically, the Ogres wish to be bribed, and a couple of children will do nicely. The PCs find the well-plumed one, who introduces himself as Thurgredd Heartseizer, fairly affable for an Ogre. A successful **Routine (+10%) Charm Test** can talk the Ogres into



taking an ox instead. Anything else that doesn't strike you as somewhat clever will lead to a nasty fight; although, note that they aren't interested in money. "Ows that gonna fill me? Can't get that down now, can I?" If no deal is made, Thurgredd shrugs once, walks back to his compatriots, confers a bit more, and then they all attack. The Ogres charge into the peasants, hacking away at random until they've killed a half dozen or so each, while not even bothering to attack the PCs unless the PCs attack first. Otherwise, after the slaughter they pick up one or two "choice morsels" and depart westward. If the PCs manage to kill one of them, they promptly stop fighting, pick up their comrade's body stating, "Thanks for breakfast then, eh?" and depart, breakfast in tow.

Thurgredd Heartseizer, Negull Bloodystumper & Worzot the Wall

Career: Mercenary

Race: Ogre

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 36% | 21% | 46% | 45% | 24% | 22% | 35% | 20% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 3 | 24 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (Kislev), Common Knowledge (Ogres), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Drive, Gamble, Haggle, Perception, Search, Secret Language (Battle Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel), Swim

Talents: Disarm, Fearless, Frightening, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-handed), Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun

Armour: Medium Armour (Leather Jack, Leather Leggings, Mail Shirt, Helmet)

Armour Points: Head 2, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 1

Weapons: Great Weapon

Trappings: Healing Draught

OUTCOMES

If the PCs managed to talk their way out of the fight, the peasants regard them with a fair amount of respect. If the PCs fought and lost, the surviving refugees still find them incredibly courageous for even taking the Ogres on. If they won, they can do no wrong from that point on. Of course it's possible that particularly heartless PCs might have just decided to give a few children over to the Ogres. If so, none of the refugees willingly speak a single word to them for the rest of the journey, and the events described in the next section should be appropriately penalized. The first chance the peasants get, they send word to Magistrate Hohenlohe of the PCs base cowardice and treachery.

A GRIM MORNING

Dawn of the third day brings a keening wail throughout the small refugee camp that surely awakens any PC not already up. At the southern edge of the camp, a grisly sight awaits them: A small group of peasants stand around a blood-spattered tent. Slashes in the canvas reveal a family of three: man, woman, and girl child, brutally slain, their bodies mauled as if by a wild beast.

The first order of business is to calm the crowd and move them back if the PCs want to have any chance at all of investigating what happened before the area gets trampled flat. This takes a **Routine (+10%) Charm or Intimidation Test**. The excited peasants will doubtless be yelling various phrases, depending on how well the PCs are regarded. "Protect us good sirs!" versus "Some good you lot are!" and "Sigmar/Taal save us!" regardless. A **Very Easy (+30%) Follow Trail Test**, which drops to an **Average (+0%)** if the crowd was not properly handled, reveals a set of beastly tracks reminiscent of a wolf's heading south, away from the ruined tent and camp. PCs that successfully made a **Follow Trail Test** should also attempt a **Challenging (–10%) Perception Test**. Success indicates they notice the tracks have been faked, which is why they are so easy to follow.

A **Routine (+10%) Search** of the ruined tent and its late occupants reveals a small purse filled with 23 s and 20 p. There is also a small silver pendant of Sigmar's double-tailed comet worth about 10 s. A character making a **Hard (–20%) Perception Test** notices the pendant's chain was cleanly cut, not broken or chewed, which immediately suggests an assailant wielding a blade of some sort. Any PC with appropriate skills such as **Outdoor Survival** or **Animal Care** can attempt an **Average (+0%) Test** as they study the bodies. Success indicates that whilst the bodies appear to have been mauled, nothing has been removed for consumption, which is unusual considering the seeming ferocity of the attack and the fact that an animal would normally have to be very hungry to attack a large camp.

Questioning the families camping nearest to the deceased's tent reveals they were a kindly Hochlander family who mostly kept to themselves. The man was a hunter named Klaus; nobody present can recall ever having heard the woman or girl's name. Everyone swears they didn't see anything out of the ordinary, no matter how pressed. A very perceptive PC might double-check the tent at this point—Klaus was a hunter, but his longbow and arrows are missing. Further questioning of witnesses immediately confirms Klaus had a magnificent hefty bow the previous day, which he had shown to interested parties in the camp.

So what happened? Well, one of the PCs' charges is a rabidly patriotic Talabheimer woodsman named Regimius Janicke. Janicke detests Hochlanders beyond all reason and has barely been able to keep his hatred in check upon the trip. Learning some of the Hochlanders were not just farmers but hunters that were going to not only be allowed but encouraged to become citizens of Talabheim and encroach on "his" woods was difficult for him to swallow. Klaus showing off his outstanding bow and rubbing in Janicke's face how much better Klaus' kit was than Janicke caused the woodsman to finally snap. He used his skills to slip unseen to the family's tent, nominally just to steal Klaus' bow, at least that's what he now tells himself. Klaus awoke and Janicke killed him along with his whole family. He used his knowledge of the woods to make the attack seem like an animal's and then faked some tracks away from the camp. He is now filled with a kind of righteous anxiety—some part of him knows what he did was wrong, but that part is losing the war with the part that feels completely justified. Indeed, he is beginning to contemplate how he may just have to teach more of the Hochlanders a lesson in the future.

REGIMIUS JANICKE

Janicke is a wiry man with weathered skin that resembles jerked beef. He wears a close-cropped beard, which has gone silver before its time due to his hard life. Wide and faintly disturbing watery blue eyes



stare out from under the hard depths of his craggy brows. Janicke speaks seldom, and when he does, he uses words sparingly. The only point on which he'll elaborate is to rail against the Hochlanders who he claims will dilute the purity of Talabheim's people.

His hatred is simple, really. His father was a Hochlander hunter who abandoned his mother, a Talabheim peasant woman, to raise a young son on her own. Janicke grew up on tales on the wicked unfaithfulness of Hochlanders. He became a woodsman, in part, to prove he could do it better than any of those "shifty no accounts" from up north. He grew up hunting in the woods around Breitblatt, but in the last year, the Great Forest had grown so dangerous he fled to Taalagad till better times came again.

Regimius Janicke

Career: Hunter (ex-Woodsman)

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 41% | 34% | 50% | 42% | 35% | 28% | 39% | 24% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 15 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (the Empire), Concealment +10%, Follow Trail, Gossip, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Secret Language (Ranger Tongue), Secret Signs (Ranger), Silent Move +10%, Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Excellent Vision, Hardy, Rover, Specialist Weapon Group (Longbow, Two-handed), Very Resilient, Very Strong

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon (Two-handed Axe), Longbow with 10 Arrows, Klaus' Bow

Trappings: Antitoxin Kit, 2 Animal Traps, 8 s

FINDING THE KILLER

Whether the PCs can catch Janicke or not depends on just how thorough they were in their investigation. They may decide, for the sake of convenience if nothing else, that it was a beast and simply press on with a promise to double all watches the coming night to allay the fears of the peasants. But if they've discovered enough evidence, letting a murderer get away with slaying a family under their watch may not sit well with them. The key is Klaus' bow. Janicke couldn't bring himself to get rid of or destroy the outstanding weapon. He's wrapped it loosely in rags and hidden it among his possessions. If the PCs order everyone in the camp to show their gear, especially if they're clever enough to concentrate on individuals they suspect might have the skills to accomplish such a crime, they'll be able to force Janicke to reveal the bow. Janicke, at first, will try to tough it out claiming the bow is his. Asking around about Janicke, though, immediately reveals his hatred of Hochlanders, and all within hearing range go quiet when the PCs ask the Woodsman why a man that hates Hochland would carry a bow with the symbol of the Elector Count of Hochland engraved into its body. If so confronted, Janicke fights to the death rather than be punished for actions he doesn't consider criminal.

If Janicke gets away with his bloody transgression, he will, in time, strike again and again, slowly growing to become a terrible menace to the many Hochland refugees who are trying to settle into new lives in and around Talabheim. Eventually, the Blood God may well take an interest in Regimius Janicke. But the PCs will have likely long moved on before that day comes.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The morning may bring another grim revelation as well. If the PCs have been respectful and are well regarded by the peasants, one of the PCs will be approached by a worried-looking elderly woman who takes their arm gently and whispers, "*There's a thing you need to see, lad.*" She takes the PC to a nearby fire, where an apprehensive family stands, looking around nervously. The family moves about to shield from the rest of the camp what they want to show the PC. A peasant woman sits next to a young boy, her eyes red from crying. With a fearful glance up at the PC and at the gentle prodding of her husband ("*Greta, please...*") the woman pulls the blanket back from her son. Grey blotches mark the boy's arm and chest. He coughs once, feebly, and then shudders violently, his whole body shaking as his mother's tears begin to flow again.

A PC with the skill can attempt a **Routine (+10%) Academic Knowledge (Science)** to know what they're looking at, everyone else just sees a plague. Success, oddly enough, indicates that whilst it certainly looks like a disease, the PC is certain he's never heard of such symptoms before (other than the rumours in Taalagad). Whereas, failure indicates the PC thinks he's read about something similar long ago, but he can't remember any details. The best the PC can recommend is to bundle the boy up and keep him warm. He'll probably want to quietly separate the family from the rest of the group—but it doesn't matter, and it's far too late for that anyway, though he will not realize this at the time.

A CHEERFUL ARRIVAL & AN OMINOUS RETURN

The refugees and their minders should arrive in Breitblatt just past noon on the fourth day of travel. Whilst some would consider the recent journey but a small distance, you may wish to remind them that the majority of Empire peasants live, grow old, and die within a day's march of their home village. The peasants are happy to have finally arrived at their new home. Flutes are produced, songs are sung, and a general sense of festivity blooms amongst them. The few villagers left in Breitblatt turn out to meet the mass of new arrivals (and probably to inspect the incoming goods), as does the small militia of six men that are posted to the village, all of whom are eager for news from the city.

Breitblatt isn't much to look at. A small peasant farming village a mile off the Old Dwarf Road and several miles from the Taalbaston's south-eastern rim, Breitblatt is presently a vassal of Talabheim and Countess Elise Krieglitz-Untern. Breitblatt has, in the course of its history, frequently had its allegiance traded between Talabheim and Talabecland for various political reasons. The PCs are certainly welcome to stay; however, if they know of the disease that seems to be lingering with the refugees, they may wish to be gone immediately to alert some physicians and to put some distance between it and them.

The militia commander strongly recommends going back the way they came as all the news from Waldfahrte and the south is bad. Depending on the PCs' actions and how they've treated their now former charges, they may be cheered on their way or pointedly ignored as they head out.

The journey back to Taalagad is marred by two events—both ill omens. After the first day of travel, one or more of the PCs develops a strong cough and occasionally shudders involuntarily, though they don't feel particularly cold, see The Grey Ague sidebar on page 41 for details. Note that the PCs do not have the enhanced version of the plague.

The second occurs the last night before they reach Taalagad. An hour or so before dawn, the PC on watch spots a furtive movement in the distance. Some hunched figures race across the road from the north and head off at great speed towards the dark wall of the Taalbaston in the distance, illuminated by Mannslieb's pale light. A **Routine (+10%) Perception Test** reveals that the figures are running faster than any Human can, and they swiftly move beyond sight. A **Challenging (–10%) Follow Trail Test** near the road where the figures passed reveals rodent-like footprints, which look like they belong to a man-sized creature. Curious PCs may make another **Challenging (–10%) Follow Trail Test** to trace the trail back northwards. The trail leads to the banks of the Talabec River. There are large clusters of the unusual prints in the riverbank mud over one small section. A **Perception Test** shows several parcels of some sort were dropped on the ground near a cluster of rocks. One of the rocks has a strange powdery substance on it, which a suspicious PC may wish to collect, but there is little else to see.

ALTERNATE COURSES

If your PCs are fairly experienced or moderately well off, guiding peasants may not appeal to them in the slightest. They may decide that attempting to quickly bribe their way into the city may be the

best way to go. That's fine—the purpose of this first chapter is to show them that not all is well in Talabheim and to give a few of them the plague. Bribes won't work as the city clerks are well aware there is a disease about the docks, and no amount of money will speed up the paperwork.

If they stay in Taalagad, not only will a few of them pick up the Grey Ague, but they'll get the enhanced version as well. Proceed directly to **Chapter Two**—and feel free to be quietly amused at their misfortune.

THE GREY AGUE

Description: This disease is new to the Empire, so those contracting it have little idea what to expect. It starts with an itching at the back of the throat that slowly develops into an intermittent cough. Along with the coughing comes bouts of shivering that grow steadily more severe as the disease progresses. In the final days, the afflicted develops pale gray blotches across their neck and chest, dying or recovering soon thereafter. Those that survive find the marks slowly turn white but never entirely go away. The few that know of the disease also refer to it as the Pale Shivers.

Duration: 10 Days/Special

Effects: The first three days after contracting the disease bring nothing more than an occasional cough. On the fourth day, when the shivering starts, the character suffers a –5% penalty to all characteristics on his Main Profile. Each day thereafter, the character must make a **Toughness Test** or lose an additional 5% from his Toughness Characteristic. If Toughness is reduced to 0 or less, the character dies. After the 10th day, the character's stats immediately return to normal. Survivors can never again catch the Grey Ague.

Nelrich the Suppurater's disease was meant to cause a long period of relatively light illness followed by a swift death. Actually, the Grey Ague is not entirely a disease, nor does it cause the majority of the listed effects. The Ague is, in fact, a magical affliction that causes a body to generate a subtle organic poison. The Grey Seer Asorak Steeleye carefully influenced how the Grey Ague worked, so he could readily manipulate those with the disease. By giving those afflicted the correct "enhancers" early in the course of contracting the disease, the above listed effects instantly double, e.g. a –10% penalty to all characteristics, a Toughness Test or lose an additional 10% from Toughness each day, and so on.

The "cure" the Grey Seer and his allies have in their possession instantly eliminates all traces of the poison the Ague generates—which seemingly cures the afflicted, but it does nothing to halt the disease. Anyone drinking the Skaven's cure that is afflicted by the Grey Ague has all of their characteristics return to normal levels within an hour. But the cured person still has the Grey Ague, and every time they stop taking the Skaven's cure—they start at the beginning of their ten day stretch, meaning that they need a continual supply of the Skaven's cure in order to not fall sick again.

A skilled apothecary that has deduced the nature of the Grey Ague can help to permanently cure it, but they need to treat both the disease and the effects of the poison. A Priestess of Shallya can instantly cure the Grey Ague only by successfully casting both Cure Poison and Cure Disease—a fact that they will be completely unaware of.



CHAPTER II: THE PORT & THE PLAGUE

Taalagad is in a bad way. Rumour has given way to stark reality—a pestilence runs rampant in the port of Talabheim. The grieving wails of the living ring out from every hovel as the youngest and oldest pass on first, but many others will be joining them soon. The numbers of the dead are still manageable, but many fear bodies shall soon line the streets, for the sick are already too many to care for, despite the efforts of some valiant Shallyans.

Already preparing for the worst, the garrison commander of the Wizard's Way has sealed off the road through the Taalbaston. Until the situation in Taalagad can be brought under control, no one gets into or out of Talabheim.

Wherein our principals discover that good health is beyond price. A harbour in turmoil, a commander in quandary, a barrier to be breached, while rodents, Human and otherwise, abound.

Word has gone forth—the majority of ships respectable and otherwise are already avoiding the port. There is, however, a steady steam of pilgrims pouring into the forsaken town—like

carrion to a battlefield, the zealots and the flagellants are coming to Taalagad, preaching their dark creeds and prophesising imminent doom. They roam the streets in roaring mobs that grow larger with every night, setting a “cleansing fire” to any they can catch whom they deem tainted. Rats of great size and ferocity are swarming over the docks, presently attacking only the weak or sickly, though they grow bolder every day.

Plagues do not come singly, it seems.

— TAALAGAD UNRAVELLING —

What a difference a week makes. The PCs can doubtless hear the cries of the anguished even before they first sight the buildings of Taalagad. Just about anyone on the street can inform the PCs of both the Grey Ague and the closure of the Wizard's Way. The plague probably won't come as a surprise, but native Talabheimers will likely be upset about being locked out of their home city-state. A **Routine (+10%) Gossip Test** reveals that groups of flagellants have been roaming the streets at night setting ablaze any they catch who seem to be sick, which will be a worrisome bit of news for any ailing PC. An additional degree of success on the Gossip Test also discloses that a large number of unusually big rats are beginning to infest the port.

The PCs' first priority will almost certainly be getting paid. The barkeep at the The Eel directs the characters to the Municipal Entry Office a block or so from the Wizard's Way. The office is sealed and barred, but if the PCs pound on the door hard enough, several crossbow-bearing figures eventually appear on the roof and demand the PCs state their business. Surprisingly, the clerks of the Municipal Office do indeed have the PCs' money, once they explain themselves; however, Magistrate Hohenlohe has fled back to the city, any additional promises of aid forgotten. The clerks toss the money down to the PCs, 8 gc each in small leather pouches—they do not open the doors under any circumstance.

If appropriate, it may be entertaining to have one of the clerks say, “*Oh, wait a minute you chaps.*” He disappears for a while, and then reappears with a long sheet of parchment. He reads off names till he mentions one or more of the PCs’, then tosses down their now-approved letters of passage for the Taalbaston. “*Erm, I upgraded them to a two week stay. See the little blue griffons? All I could do for you. Best of luck.*”

— OUT ON THE STREETS —

The streets of Taalagad have always been a bit dangerous, but now they’ve become downright nasty. The following encounters serve to enforce the brutal reality of the situation that the PCs are in, as well as gradually steer them to the conclusion that staying in Taalagad will, eventually, be the death of them.

The PCs may see or run into any of the following as they move about the town. The only set event is the last one—the Hochlander Riot occurs on the third day after the PCs have returned to the port.

BIG DAMN RATS

As the PCs pass down a street, they see a small boy dragging a bucket of dirty water down a narrow side alley get attacked by what looks to be a mangy dog. If they move to assist, the grey-furred beast turns on them, and they realize it is, in fact, a particularly large rat. Instead of fleeing, it hisses at the PCs. Characters should make a **Perception Test**. Success indicates they notice the swarm of red eyes glaring down at them from the rooftops above, whereas failure indicates a round of being ambushed. A pack of six Giant Rats + 1 for every PC leap down onto the characters, biting and scratching wherever they can.

| Giant Rats | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 25% | 0% | 31% | 30% | 42% | 14% | 18% | 5% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Concealment, Perception +10%, Silent Move, Swim +10%

Talents: Keen Senses, Natural Weapons, Night Vision

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Teeth

The rats fight until more than half their number have been slain; then, they swiftly flee. If any character should happen to suffer a Critical Hit from one of the rats, they automatically contract the Grey Ague.

The boy’s name is Janko, and he has little to offer the PCs other than his gratitude. A **Routine (+10%) Common Knowledge (Empire) Test** marks the boy’s accent as faintly Kislevite. If the PCs accompany him home, he brings them into a pathetic little hovel that barely has a roof and two walls to proudly introduce the “heroes” to his mother who has clearly been dead for a day or two. “Ma has been sick.” What the PCs do at that point is up to them.

Great. Now What? The PCs have been abandoned on the streets of Taalagad, and several of their party are just starting to show signs of the plague. No ship will take them on from the stricken port, and no city, save the Eye of the Forest, Talabheim, is close enough to provide any succour in time. The PCs are swiftly running out of options—but several of the ones they have left are detailed in the following sections.

Janko, Pathetic Peasant Boy

Career: Peasant

Race: Human

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 24% | 26% | 23% | 29% | 32% | 28% | 26% | 31% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 1 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Skills: Charm, Common Knowledge (Reikspiel), Concealment, Drive, Gamble, Gossip, Outdoor Survival, Set Trap, Silent Move, Speak Language (Reikspiel), Swim, Trade (Cook)

Talents: Flee!, Fleet Footed, Hardy, Strong-minded

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Knife)

Trappings: Bucket filled with filthy Water

NO WATER EGRESS

While passing near the docks, the characters see a group of travellers crying out to a slowly passing riverboat. Several of them leap into the Talabec, possessions in tow, and proceed to swim out towards the boat. When they get about half way to the ship, shots ring out as several men on the riverboat’s deck open up on the swimmers with firearms. Their bodies float off down river. This encounter should make it pretty clear that the River Talabec offers no way out.

FIERY ZEALOTS

One night while the PCs are either resting or guardedly drinking, they hear a murmur in the distance that is eventually identifiable as a man shouting out some sort of speech or harangue. If they investigate, they easily locate a charismatically ranting (and obviously quite mad) zealot, who has gathered a horde of like-minded fanatics to him and has driven them to a fever pitch with his grim sermon. At the height of his oration, he proves his dedication to his nihilistic points by setting himself ablaze. Awestruck by this spectacle of pure “holy fervour” the crowd of lunatics immediately runs amok, trying to set everyone and everything they can on fire.

The zealots charge about in groups of four or five men. Once engaged, they fight to the death. A quick-thinking character can redirect any given group with a successful **Hard (–20%) Charm Test**. “*Look over there! Mutants! Let’s get ‘em!*”

Crazed Torch Wielders

Career: Zealot

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 38% | 26% | 42% | 33% | 32% | 25% | 36% | 25% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Theology), Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire) +10%, Gossip, Intimidate, Read/Write, Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Acute Hearing, Hardy, Public Speaking, Specialist Weapon Group (Flail), Very Strong, Warrior Born

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Flail or Morning Star*)

*They've dipped their weapons in pitch and set them on fire. Characters struck by such a burning weapon must make an **Agility**

Test each time they're struck or catch on fire (see Fire on page 136 of *WFRP* for details). Note that the burning flails are also harming their owners who couldn't care less. If your PCs are hard pressed, you could have one of the fanatics combust at an appropriate moment.

THE HOCHLANDER RIOT

The terrible conditions in and around the port were bad enough, but the plague is the last straw for the desperate refugees from Taalagad. Just after dawn on the third day after the PCs return from Breitblatt, a veritable army of over 400 Hochlanders charge through the streets and up the Wizard's Way, determined to force their way into Talabheim. When they reach a hundred paces or so up the first couple of switchbacks of the Wizard's Way, the fortresses lining the Taalbaston open up on the Hochlanders. Dozens of cannon balls explode into their disordered mass, ripping them and the streets behind them to pieces. Everything for fifty yards to their rear is either levelled or reduced to pulp. Wherever the PCs are, they can both hear the cannon and feel the impacts of the shot through the ground. It takes less than a minute to be over. Any PC that actively tries to watch the Hochlander's futile attempt at storming the city must succeed at a **Will Power Test** or gain 1 Insanity Point.

— FINDING A CURE —

Since falling down dead generally puts a crimp in the adventuring lifestyle, the PCs will doubtless be very interested in finding some sort of remedy for the Grey Ague. Far easier said than done. An **Easy (+20%) Academic Knowledge (Science) Test** reveals this disease is certainly new to the Talabheim region, as well as the Empire—and may just be new, period.

THE SHALLYANS

The first place many will most likely turn is the Cult of Shallya. The Priestesses of Shallya are some of the most universally well regarded in all the Empire. Their willingness to bring comfort and aid where it is most needed, regardless of personal danger, is legendary. It will probably not come as a surprise to the PCs then, that a small group of Shallyans has set up a makeshift hospital and are attempting to aid victims of the Grey Ague. Despite the fact that a merchant has loaned them an entire bare dock warehouse, they are still completely overrun. Shivering bodies cover the entire upper and lower floors of the warehouse, with more coming all the time. The weary Priestesses can barely make it down the narrow aisles separating the rows of afflicted without tripping. A few solemn Priests of Morr also walk the aisles, giving last rites to the dying and helping to remove the bodies. The smell of burning flesh is near omnipresent as groups of corpses are hauled off a few hundred feet and burned every few hours. Any character that has ever seen the aftermath of a large battle will find the Shallyans' crude hospital all too familiar.

If the PCs go to the hospital in search of aid, or when they first pass by the docks on their way elsewhere, the first thing they see is a young Priestess of Shallya sitting on a cobbled-together chair formed from an old barrel. She sobs hysterically, hoarsely whispering, *"Hopeless, hopeless. Not a disease. A curse. It's a curse. I'm lost. Lost."* Several of her fellows swiftly come to comfort her and remove her from the view of witnesses. If the PCs try to accost her or ask about the "curse," she just shakes her head and moans pathetically. The PCs need to make a **Routine (+10%) Charm Test** to get further

questions answered about the girl. A Priest states that her name is Kristiane, and she is new in from the city. *"Poor thing. Locked out and facing all this... though I fancy her father could get her through, right enough."* Who is her father? A commander at the High Watch garrison. There is little else that the Priest will say about her.

PCs seeking out the Priestesses of Shallya in hopes of a quick magical fix are in for a disappointment. Besides the fact they've likely done nothing lately that makes them worthy of "stepping to the front of the line" as it were—the Shallyans are finding the Grey Ague resistant to their normal prayers. While they are doing their best to comfort the afflicted, they are all frustrated and somewhat at a loss for what to do. If the Characters offer to aid the Shallyans or ask what they can do to help, the Priestesses will be very grateful. They ask the characters to go to a house in the best part of Taalagad, a few blocks from the Wizard's Way, to the home of a scholar named Widenhoft and enlist his aid. Widenhoft is an expert apothecary and noted herbalist. The Shallyans feel confident he can help them.

Characters that didn't seek out the Shallyans may also hear of Widenhoft on an **Easy (+20%) Gossip Test** by asking about town for noted apothecaries. Finally, characters native to the Talabheim region may have heard of the herbalist Widenhoft on a successful **Challenging (-10%) Common Knowledge (Empire) Test**.

THE HOUSE OF THE HEALER

The herbalist's home is at the end of a small alley just off the main road leading to the Wizard's Way. A small sign depicting a curling ivy plant wrapped around an unblinking eye swings above the apothecary's reinforced door. Whilst the PCs may look a bit out of place, the majority of the Taalagad militia have abandoned their posts, and unless they directly assault the Taalbaston, they will pretty much be ignored.

No one answers the door, no matter how hard the PCs knock, and they can hear no sounds from within. The front door can

be opened with a successful **Pick Locks Test**. There is also a small, walled garden in the back. A **Routine (+10%) Scale Sheer Surface Test** gets a PC into the backyard. The doors in the backyard are not nearly as hard to pass, and only an **Easy (+20%) Pick Locks Test** is required to gain entry. Characters lacking any such skill can probably break in through one of the small windows on the second story, though they'll look somewhat ridiculous standing on another PC's shoulders while performing said act.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

The apothecary's residence is simple, consisting of two stories. The upstairs has several small guest rooms, one master bedroom, and a large, airy room crammed with wooden bins overflowing with various plants and herbs. The downstairs is divided into a kitchen, a dining room, and a large, book-filled study, where the body of Gotthard Widenhoft is slumped over a desk, though the PCs are unlikely to be absolutely certain of his identity. A single throwing blade is buried in the base of his neck. Removing it carefully, so as not to get cut with its edges, requires an **Easy (+20%) Agility Test**. A character that fails the test must immediately pass a **Toughness Test** or suffer 3 Wounds from poison, as a searing pain rips through his hand, and he drops the blade in agony. The throwing star resembles three blades that have been overlaid at the edges. Characters making a **Hard (-20%) Academic Knowledge (Runes) Test** tentatively associate the shape with the legendary Skaven—otherwise, it just remains an unusually shaped blade. From Widenhoft's position, it's fairly obvious he died almost instantly, falling across his desk immediately after he was hit with the odd blade, as there are no signs of any kind of struggle anywhere in the room.

Characters with the ability to read Reikspiel find amongst the clutter on the desk some papers that refer to the "Pale Shivers," which have notes in their margins written in Classical. The pages are excerpts from a Tilean book called *The Plague & the Principality*. They refer to a disease that supposedly ravaged the Tilean city Miragliano several centuries ago. The Pale Shivers referenced in the excerpt were non-fatal, a fact underlined with a note in Classical that reads, "*Enhanced how? To what purpose?*" There is also what looks to be a hastily written note at the very end of the page that reads, "*In the water it was, but why? Only tempor...*" followed by a long ink blotch. PCs making an **Easy (+20%) Perception Test** realize the final note was likely the last thing Widenhoft wrote before his death.

THE LETTER & THE SAMPLES

An **Easy (+20%) Search Test** reveals the apothecary was analysing several samples in his study. On a swivelling stand beneath an engraved wooden case sit what looks to be a bowl of water, a very small wooden box with gummy, silvery powder, and a small, glass tube filled with a faintly bluish fluid. There is also an opened envelope addressed to Gotthard Widenhoft that still has a letter inside it (Widenhoft put it back into the envelope for safekeeping). The letter reads as follows:

Good Sir,

Here is the sample of which we spoke. Tell no one, Widenhoft. I cannot emphasize this enough: tell no one—their eyes are everywhere. Work with all speed.

Taal preserve us, R. Nierhaus



There are notes written in Classical with each of the samples, but it takes an **Academic Knowledge (Science) Test** to properly decipher them. They're a series of notations representing temperatures and times as well as the substances' interactions with other herbs that were applied to them. The bowl of water is labelled: *Talabec—I Bell after Dawn*. The notes about the silvery powder start with the note: *River Extract*. If any of the PCs happened to follow the tracks all the way to the Talabec in **Chapter One** they recognize the silvery powder as the same substance that was on the rocks near the river. The notes regarding the blue fluid have a final notation in Reikspiel: *Not an inoculant—an antidote*. A poison antidote? There isn't enough left of the blue fluid to do a sick character any good, though there is no way they could know that.

Widenhoft's home has little else to offer, other than his notes, which in the right hands may very well be priceless. PCs from the "loot everything" school find a variety of different rare herbal substances, none of which they'll be able to sell easily. There are, however, three clearly marked doses of Mad Cap Mushrooms, which can easily be taken.

A BRAVE AND DESPERATE CAPTAIN

Captain Rudolf Nierhaus is the commander of the High Watch garrison guarding the Wizard's Way. Any character local to the Talabheim area knows this immediately, and newcomers can find it out without too much trouble. A successful **Routine (+10%) Gossip Test** also reveals that the Captain's daughter is a well-regarded young Priestess of Shallya—apparently blessed as she supposedly fell ill recently and was miraculously cured, but such things are expected in those favoured by the Goddess of Healing.

Her name is Kristiane, and the PCs may very well remember her as the disturbed young Priestess that they encountered in front of the Shallyans' crude hospital. Sadly, rumour has it Nierhaus' wife has also recently caught the Grey Ague.

The PCs may wish to confront Nierhaus with what they know, or at least what they suspect, in the hopes they can learn more. Nierhaus is not the most popular man in town at the moment—he is widely known to be one of the individuals directly responsible for convincing the Countess and the Parliament to close off Talabheim. Correspondingly, the already tight security surrounding him has been increased significantly. Formal requests to see the commander are being turned down automatically without explanation until such time as the situation in Taalagad is in hand. The number of schemes the Characters could conceivably come up with to gain access to Nierhaus illegally are infinite. Any plan they put forth will probably require copious uses of **Blather**, **Charm**, **Concealment** and/or **Disguise Tests**. Characters with Imperial credentials of any sort can request immediate access, but such a manoeuvre could draw the wrong sort of attention—though the PCs may not know that.

Ironically, the best ways are often the simplest. If the characters still have their letter from Magistrate Hohenlohe and can manage a small bit of forgery in order to change its effective dates, they can present it at the base of the Wizard's Way and request to see the Captain at once. They may also wish to follow the equally straightforward, but ultimately risky, tactic of claiming they are friends or colleagues of Widenhoft's, which in fact gains them immediate access to Captain Nierhaus.

MEETING THE CAPTAIN

The Captain meets the characters in a small room connected to an offshoot of the Wizard's Way. Built with slabs of dark slate taken from the Taalbaston, the room strongly resembles a jail cell. It is also fairly private and well hidden from prying eyes. A guardsman leads the PCs to the room where Nierhaus is already waiting for them. Two huge guards stand outside a doorway that appears to be made of heavily reinforced and iron-banded oak. Both guards give the PCs menacing looks for a bit before one of them turns and pounds on the door with a series of varied beats—some kind of code. The sound of sliding bolts emerges from the door, and it opens just enough for the PCs to enter one at a time. Nierhaus stands in a small alcove behind the door, a pair of finely engraved pistols already drawn and pointed at the PCs as they enter the room. He gestures with his pistols towards the other side of the room and waits to speak till they're all inside along the far wall. Regardless of how the PCs have managed to get this audience with the Captain, he keeps the pistols levelled at them. If one of the PCs happens to be a Wizard, one pistol will perpetually stay on him while the other slowly roves. He looks at each character in turn and states:

"I don't know you. Any of you. You're no agents of Talabheim. Who are you and what do you want? Be quick about it."

Captain Nierhaus takes in the PCs' answers, regardless of what they are, without twitching a muscle or betraying anything until

BEHIND THE SCENES: THE COMMANDER'S QUANDARY

In order to advance his plans according to schedule, the Grey Seer Asorak Steeleye has been setting various devious plots into motion for some time now. When he first decided he was going to seize Talabheim for his own, he knew sealing the city off from the outside world was an essential component to his plans. Long ago he concluded the best way to do so was to convince the city a plague in Taalagad was raging out of control, as he believes Humans are overly fearful of disease. He manipulated Nelrich the Suppurater into making a new version of an old disease, one the Grey Seer tampered with extensively. The Skaven have been seeding Taalagad and its many refugees with the Grey Ague for some time now in preparation for the next phase of the Grey Seer's plans.

In order to ensure the plague was taken very seriously within the city, the Grey Seer decided he needed to co-opt Nierhaus into doing his bidding when the time was right. An agent from the Skaven Clan Eshin gave Kristiane Nierhaus the Grey Ague and informed Nierhaus he would only be given an antidote if he complied with their wishes. His daughter believes her father made deals with Dark Gods in order to save her, which is part of the reason she is slowly going insane, as she believes her ongoing health is at the cost of those around her. Nierhaus secretly took small portions from several of the vials of antidote for his daughter until he thought he had enough to pass to Widenhoft for analysis.

Several nights before the events of this chapter, while the PCs were returning to Taalagad or elsewhere, a group of Eshin agents delivered a chemical agent into the Talabec River that grossly enhanced the effects of the Grey Ague (see page 41 for more details on the plague's more unusual properties). This compound is the gummy silvery substance the Characters may have seen and that Widenhoft successfully discovered during his investigations. It is also why the plague seems so virulent in Taalagad and why so many people are dying that would've normally survived the less virulent form of the Pale Shivers.

Once people started dropping en masse, the Skaven ordered Nierhaus to convince his superiors to close the city. Nierhaus tried to defy them, in order to buy time for Widenhoft, but they immediately inflicted the plague on his wife and told him that from now on he would only be getting a single dose of antidote each day—forcing him to choose between wife and child. The Captain regretfully complied and sealed the Wizard's Way, still hoping that Widenhoft's research might bear fruit. The PCs informing him Widenhoft is dead tells him they have probably discovered what he was up to and that time is likely running out for Talabheim. After the Captain sends the PCs on their way, he sends a letter to his superior on the Hunters' Council, Christoph Stallmaier and then turns his pistols on himself.

As all this has been going on, Nelrich the Suppurater, and his Clan Pestilens followers under Talabheim, have discovered something has gone awry with their disease. The Suppurater confronted the Grey Seer, right on schedule in fact, and Steeleye's Skryre troops are presently driving Nelrich and his followers up into Talabheim, some of which may become evident to the PCs in the events of Chapter Three.

they state that the herbalist Widenhoft is dead. His eyes widen, and he goes visibly pale, sagging slightly against the wall. *"They know. Taal's blood, they know,"* he mutters. The PCs doubtless ask, *"Who are they?"* or some variation thereof. Nierhaus whispers, *"The rats who walk as men,"* before snapping around to look closely at the PCs. *"Do you have Widenhoft's notes?"* If the PCs answer in the affirmative he nods swiftly and says, *"You must get into the city, but I cannot let you take the Way. There is a man named Eladio, an Estalian. Ask for him at the docks. Tell him Nierhaus says, 'These must ride the Dragon's tongue.' In the city, seek out the apothecary Daubler."*

Without waiting for the PCs reply he yells, *"Guards!"* The door opens, and his men immediately poke their heads in. *"These gentlemen are leaving."* Nierhaus looks at the PCs, tears forming in his eyes. *"Go! All our lives are forfeit if you don't do as I say. They will know or at the least suspect something. May Taal have mercy upon you all."* The characters will not see him alive again.

CAPTAIN RUDOLF NIERHAUS

The Captain is an average-sized man, but his penetrating blue-grey gaze can make any but the strongest willed look away and feel very small indeed. His light blond hair is close cropped and thinning at the top, but little else betrays his age. A meticulous commander with a precise eye for detail, Rudolf Nierhaus was chosen from among many qualified applicants for the honoured position of commanding the High Watch garrison—a post that carries enormous responsibility for Talabheim's safety, as the commander of the garrison is in charge of policing the Wizard's Way.

The Captain is a man of principle and honour, who never thought he would betray his post. However, the Skaven have cruelly used

the Captain's great love for his wife and daughter against him in order to forward their plans for Talabheim. See the **Commander's Quandary** sidebar for more details.

Captain Rudolf Nierhaus

Career: Captain (ex-Sergeant, ex-Soldier)

Race: Human

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 61% | 56% | 47% | 48% | 49% | 52% | 48% | 60% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 3 | 18 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Strategy/Tactics) +10%, Animal Care, Command +10%, Common Knowledge (the Empire) +10%, Common Knowledge (Kislev), Dodge Blow +10%, Gamble, Gossip, Intimidate, Perception +10%, Read/Write, Ride, Secret Language (Battle Tongue), Speak Language (Kislevian, Reikspiel, Tilean)

Talents: Coolheaded, Lightning Parry, Menacing, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Savvy, Sharpshooter, Specialist Weapon Group (Gunpowder), Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun

Armour: Medium Armour (Full Mail Armour)

Armour Points: Head 3, Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), two Pistols with enough powder and ammunition for 10 shots, Sword-breaker, Shield

Trappings: Uniform, 13 gc

— TWO WAYS UNDER THE WALL —

When the PCs decide the time has come to get out of Taalagad, they have little choice but to go through the Taalbaston itself. Attempting to go over it is effectively suicidal, so under and through it must be. PCs in a hurry to leave Taalagad from the beginning may have skipped following through on the Shallyans' request and therefore never discovered Widenhoft, and even if they did, they may have not confronted Captain Nierhaus. This is relevant only because this section details two ways through the Taalbaston—one being a bit smoother than the other.

Smugglers have been moving both goods and people into Talabheim for many, many centuries—ever since the taxes were raised high enough to make it profitable to do so, to say nothing of individuals that cannot enter the city legally. The Taalbaston Guard even has a special unit called the Taalbaston Tunnel Brigade, more commonly known as the "Terriers" who hunt the passageways beneath the Taalbaston for smugglers and worse. See page 7 for some information on the Terriers.

There are a few well known routes that are allowed to remain, in part because the forces of Talabheim put them to use on occasion and in part because various groups of criminals pay hefty bribes into the right coffers to make it so, as well as a fair number of other lesser known routes that have been made or discovered by accident. What the PCs need is a guide that knows the way.

THE DRAGON'S TONGUE

PCs that dealt with Nierhaus were told to seek Eladio at the docks. This is the only way the characters can have heard of the Estalian, for he does not advertise, and he has systematically squelched every rumour of his true profession. He can do this and continue to make a profit, for he is one of the rare "unofficial" smugglers Talabheim has on retainer. He is the man the authorities quietly turn to when they need to get certain nobles or other important religious or political figures into or out of the city unnoticed.

PCs heading down to the docks and asking for Eladio find him quickly. He is one of the only Estalians in town, and he presently plays the part of a simple fishmonger, a role that suits him for the moment and he'll keep until he grows tired of it. When the PCs approach him, he gestures at his sporadically flopping wares and makes a sales pitch. Upon hearing the code phrase "These must ride the Dragon's Tongue" his manner changes only slightly (PCs might also mention Nierhaus sent them). He says something along the lines of: *"Ah-ha Signore, I know just the thing. How many of you intend to dine?"* He needs to know the number of people he's taking through the Taalbaston. Upon receiving an answer, he says, *"I'll deliver them to you tonight, eh? I'll meet you outside the Crooked Shoe Tavern, at*

WE MUST GET OUT!

As the party moves through the events of this chapter, the dangers of the street grow steadily worse as does the health of one or more of the characters. The rabid flagellants soon begin breaking into taverns where plague victims are thought to be, drag whoever they suspect to be sick out onto the streets, and burn them. Swarms of rats start attacking healthy men on the street. Fights to the death over food stores are rapidly approaching. If the PCs never dealt with Captain Nierhaus or the Shallyans, it should still become abundantly clear to them that staying in Taalagad is a death sentence, and they need to find some way to leave while they are still able.

It is widely known that there is a cure for the Grey Ague in Talabheim. Even if the PCs are suspicious of that bit of knowledge, the Eye of the Forest is undeniably the closest source of medicine, food, and protection from the raving lunatics that are besieging the port. In other words, it should become abundantly clear that passing under the Taalbaston is the greatest chance of surviving that the characters have.

ten bells, right?" The Crooked Shoe is a small drinking joint on Taalagad's south side. Any discussion about anything other than fish immediately leads to him loudly saying, "*No more, you foul ruffians! Get away from my shop!*" though he will still be at the Crooked Shoe on time.

ELADIO SOLORZANO

Eladio Solorzano has a bright and winning smile, which frequently shines out from the dusky recesses of his fine features. His shaggy black hair and dark skin mark him as clearly not being of Reiklander descent. He is of medium build, but he moves with the grace of a cat, lightly hopping on the balls of his feet. Eladio likes to play the part of the fiery Estalian to the hilt, as he knows most Reiklanders find it entertaining, and since they've come to expect it, they ask him fewer questions for fear of his "quick Estalian temper." Thus, despite the fact he can speak perfectly fluent Reikspiel and is totally in control of his emotions, he purposefully puts on an Estalian accent and occasionally goes off on wild rages at ridiculously trivial concerns, such as mud on his boots.

When he is working as a fishmonger, he gives off no indication to anyone of what he does at night. Those that encounter him in his element meet a very different Eladio. Poised, assured, and efficient, he swiftly delivers his charges through the tunnels of the Taalbaston. If trouble looms, he fights at the forefront without hesitation, as he deems that he is honour bound to deliver his cargo safely—and Estalians prize their honour highly.

Eladio Solorzano

Career: Smuggler (ex-Rogue, ex-Estalian Diestro)

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 48% | 33% | 36% | 37% | 50% | 48% | 37% | 44% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 2 | 13 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Science), Blather, Common Knowledge (Estalia), Common Knowledge (the Empire), Dodge Blow, Evaluate +10%, Gossip, Haggle, Perception +10%, Performer (Actor), Read/Write, Search, Secret Language (Thieves' Tongue), Secret Signs (Thief) +10%, Silent Move, Speak Language (Estalian, Reikspiel), Swim

Talents: Dealmaker, Lightning Reflexes, Public Speaking, Quick Draw, Savvy, Sixth Sense, Specialist Weapon Group (Fencing), Streetwise, Strike Mighty Blow, Swashbuckler

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Pistol with enough ammunition and powder for 10 shots, Rapier

Trappings: Best Quality Clothes, Cologne, Deck of Cards, Healing Draught, two Torches, 8 *gc*

LAYING IN WAIT

The trip to the Crooked Shoe can be as hazardous as necessary to keep the mood grim, for many of the worse elements roaming the streets of Taalagad come out in force at night. The PCs should see bodies left to rot in the street, packs of Giant Rats that eye them hungrily before moving on to easier prey, and so on. No matter how early the characters arrive, Solorzano is already there, hidden behind a false wall. When all the PCs arrive and the time is right, he steps out of the shadows to level a cocked pistol at the head of the PC he spoke to the most.

"You will speak and you will speak swiftly. Who are you and why do you wish to enter the city?" Characters can make an **Easy (+20%) Perception Test** to realize that, for the moment, his accent has completely vanished. The PCs can answer as they choose, though it is difficult to lie to an accomplished liar. If the PCs answer relatively honestly, he nods slowly and lowers his pistol. Any mention of the rats who walk as men or similar gets an immediate reaction out of Eladio—his eyes widen, then narrow sharply, and he spits once, *"Ptoo! Skaven."*

"We must go at once. The Capitan is dead; he turned his pistols upon himself. If the Skaven are hunting for you, we must be swift as shadows. Come, we go." Solorzano is wrapped in a dark cloak, over darkened clothing and gear. He hands several black cloth bags to the PCs. *"For later."* He sets off at a fast pace to the south, moving as swiftly as he can without losing the Characters. He shakes off any questions. *"No time, now. Later, in the tunnels."*

Two hours afterward, Eladio runs the PCs through a dense copse of trees that goes right up to the walls of the Taalbaston. He pauses at a particularly big oak and produces a pair of Storm Lanterns from his packs. He lights both, handing one to the PCs, "to the rear with that one." He winks at the PCs and then walks right into the tree! Actually, he slips through a crack in the roots and down a cunningly carved spiral staircase. PCs that can make an **Easy (+20%) Trade (Stonework) Test** to realize the stairs are clearly Dwarfen craftsmanship.

The tunnel Solorzano leads the characters into is particularly smooth, as if many feet have passed through it over centuries (which they have). Eventually, branches lead off from the main tunnel—some Dwarf-work, others natural—to some darkened place, possibly to the old Undgrin Ankor of the Dwarfs. After an hour or so of travel, Eladio pauses for a brief rest in a natural cavern and encourages the PCs to have some water. The Characters undoubtedly have some questions for their guide. The Estalian fought the Skaven in his youth and can pass along a few choice bits of information. After the PCs have had a chance to speak to Eladio for a few minutes, have everyone in the group (including Eladio) make **Challenging (-10%) Perception Tests** to hear a scrabbling sound like claws on stone. Those that hear aren't surprised on the following round as three ragged figures dive into the cavern. Read or paraphrase the following text:

The pale lights of your lanterns illuminate three wretched figures, cloaked in torn rags. The first one blinks, its eyes flicker red in the darkness. The second has milky orbs that must be sightless, and the third has no eyes at all, just ragged strips of leather bound over its face. All three sniff the stale air of the cavern and hiss in union. Their rat-like muzzles pull back, revealing yellowed teeth as they brandish rusty weapons towards you. The Estalian gasps and whispers, "By the Gods, my tales come to life!" as he draws pistol and rapier forth with blinding speed.

Then the Skaven are upon you.

The group has had the misfortune of running into three Clan Pestilens Plague Monks who are in the midst of fleeing from the Skryre purge. This fight should be vicious and memorable, but with Eladio's help, the PCs should be victorious. Remember any Humans present will have some difficulty seeing in the shifting lantern light. The Pestilens Monks are both Frenzied and hopelessly insane—all three will fight to the death.

Clan Pestilens Plague Monks (3)

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 34% | 25% | 30% | 41% | 40% | 25% | 29% | 20% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Theology) +10%, Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Dodge Blow, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

Talents: Fearless, Frenzy, Night Vision, Resistance to Disease, Tunnel Rat

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Two Hand Weapons

After the party has dispatched the Skaven, Solorzano studies the bodies briefly while scratching his head. "They didn't expect us to be here. They were running from something." He grins briefly, pointing the way the Skaven came from. "Fortunately, that is not our road," his hand swivels to point at another tunnel, "that is." If



any of the PCs decide to loot the bodies, Eladio shakes his head. "I wouldn't, Signore." PCs that proceed anyway roll **Routine (+10%) Toughness Test** for exposure to the Grey Ague.

Your group travels for another half hour before the Estalian stops you all to hunker down in a small alcove. He indicates the packs he gave you all at the start of the journey. "Put the clothes on you find in there." Each pack contains what looks to be a workman's smock covered with dark stains. "You are all dye workers now; congratulations on your new professions." He grins. "This is where we part ways, my friends. A short trip down this tunnel will bring you to the rear of Dorner's Dyes, where you all will blend in with the evening shift who should all just be getting off work. Dorner's is in the Ratholds. Welcome to Talabheim." Solorzano stands, takes a few steps, and pauses to throw back over his shoulder, "I shall pray to Myrmidia for you all." Then he disappears into the shadows of the tunnel.

The PCs have either entered Talabheim for the first time or just returned home; either way, this chapter is concluded for them.

THE SMUGGLER'S GAME

PCs that didn't become involved with Captain Nierhaus have to find a different way through the grey slate of the Taalbaston—a way known to the wily lads of the Aderhold Gang. When the characters get around to deciding that going through the Taalbaston is pretty much their only option, they must canvas the docks of Taalagad for some willing smugglers. PCs with a criminal history that have either of the skills **Secret Language**

(**Thieves' Tongue**) or **Secret Signs (Thief)** will easily be able to make the right enquiries. Others will have to spend a few Shillings and make a successful **Easy (+20) Gossip Test** to be directed to one of the most famous spots in the Talabheim region—the Ten Tailed Cat. The Cat lies a stone's throw from the Taalagad docks and is widely infamous for both the diversity of its clientele and the varied tales they tell. Run by an ex-Pit Fighter who asks no questions, the shadowy recesses of the Ten Tailed Cat are witness to scores of agreements, legal and otherwise. The PCs will be told to present their problem to a chap named Finch, widely known as a go-between for a powerful Talabheim crew known as the Aderhold Gang, who for a not-so-modest fee should be able to solve it.

What the PCs will not discover, as it is most definitely not common knowledge, is some of the younger Aderhold lads, including Ewald Finch, are cutthroats who would sell their mothers for a few Pennies if they thought they could get it. Whilst they do know a very reliable way or two through the Taalbaston, several of the gang's junior members have decided it's both easier and far more profitable to guide the gullible to a suitable spot they've discovered in the tunnels, and then rob and murder them. This wouldn't sit well with their higher ups, the majority of whom are all devout followers of Ranald and strongly disapprove of killing, but the bosses don't need to know about it, do they? The recent troubles in Taalagad and the closing of the Wizard's Way has been an absolute boon for their illicit sideling. They actually let one in every several parties they guide through, in order to belay suspicion from their superiors, but profits are certainly up.

Clearly, the PCs aren't going to be among the lucky ones.

The PCs should be able to find Finch readily enough; he isn't in the business of hiding. Finch makes a habit of drinking at a table near the back door of the tavern, just in case he has to make a hasty exit.

EWALD FINCH

Finch bears a strong resemblance to an upright weasel, though he seems pleasant enough in conversation. His brown eyes continually dart about as he talks, and he continually makes quick furtive movements with his hands. Though he doesn't seem much to look at, Finch has ambitions, and big ones at that. He joined the Aderhold Gang in order to increase his fortunes, paying lip service to what the old guys wanted to hear from him as he manoeuvred into the trusted liaison position he presently occupies. When Finch decided he could make some extra money his bosses didn't need to know about, he asked a brute by the name of Hartmut if he would



be interested. The Norseman readily agreed, and Finch arranged to bring him into the Aderhold Gang, noting how useful such a thug would be. His bosses approved, and the pair soon began cautiously recruiting some likely lads of similar mindset to help in Finch's schemes. Finch doesn't realize just how dangerous Hartmut really is.

For the moment, Finch has exactly what he wants: a trusted post he knows will lead to greater things and a steady source of extra income. The Grey Ague is a bit worrisome, but if he feels that he needs to leave Taalagad in a hurry, he already has several viable options worked out. Finch doesn't take pleasure in the killing, as Hartmut does—but neither does Finch hesitate in the slightest when the time comes to murder his clients.

Ewald Finch

Career: Thug (ex-Protagonist)

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 41% | 28% | 42% | 36% | 49% | 40% | 41% | 37% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 2 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (the Empire), Dodge Blow +10%, Gossip, Haggle, Intimidate, Ride, Secret Language (Thieves' Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Acute Hearing, Lightning Reflexes, Menacing, Quick Draw, Savvy, Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun, Suave

Armour: Medium Armour (Mail Shirt, Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Cudgel), Knuckle-dusters

Trappings: Pouch with 3 *gc*, 5 *s*

When the characters first approach him, Finch sticks to small talk. Eventually, though, he gets around to acknowledging any questions about travel arrangements with a slight nod. Dipping a finger into his ale, he draws a circle on a table and then puts a quick slash under it. When talk of money gets underway, Finch asks for 20 *gc* a head to start. One of the PCs will have to engage in an **Opposed Haggle Test** with Finch, though the PC gets a +20% bonus to his rolls as Finch isn't trying particularly hard. Other PCs not engaged in the haggling can make a **Challenging (–10%) Perception Test** to notice Finch is subtly trying to let the PC win, which should certainly arouse their suspicions. Once an arrangement is concluded, Finch tells the characters to meet him at a specific warehouse on the docks an hour or so before dawn. *"It's got big antlers painted on the side, you wont miss it."* He also tells them he has a partner who will join them on the trip, as he

CIRCLES IN TALABHEIM

The circle underlined by a slash that Ewald draws with his finger is loosely referring to "going under the wall." Talabheim is often represented by variations of round circles due to the circular nature of the Great Crater; the slash under it represents "under the wall." Anybody with the Secret Signs Skill would recognize the significance of his gesture immediately. Everybody else will probably think "Cultist!" or some other such nonsense. Feel free to heighten your PCs' paranoia if they do not understand what the symbol means.

wouldn't want to give the wrong impression before the journey had even started.

The Aderhold warehouse is a small affair; noticeably absent are the huge rats that are besieging the rest of the town. A stylised image of two black elk antlers twined with leaves is painted along one wall. When the PCs approach, the doors open to reveal a huge, heavyset man with a small shuttered lantern who quickly waves them inside.

SEIGLIEF HARTMUT

There are oxen in the world with less bulk than Seigrief Hartmut. He stands close to seven feet tall and has bright platinum blond hair and piercing blue eyes that clearly show a Norscan heritage. No emotions ever reach his face save two: a slight smile of pleasure when he is about to kill and wild joy while he does so. His taste for bloodshed isn't what drove him from the north—it was his taste for inflicting death on even the weakest foes around him. Hartmut quietly worships Khaine, the God of Murder. The cutthroats he enlisted into Finch's plan and more to the point, Hartmut's service, are every bit as bloodthirsty as he is. What Finch doesn't know is that a number of their victims have been not just been killed—they've been sacrificed to Khaine. Then again, it's quite possible Finch wouldn't care even if he did know.



Seigrief Hartmut

Career: Mercenary (ex-Norseman Berserker)

Race: Human

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 56% | 29% | 48% | 52% | 36% | 28% | 43% | 24% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 2 | 14 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (the Empire, Norsca), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Gamble, Gossip, Intimidate, Performer (Storyteller), Speak Language (Norscan, Reikspiel), Swim

Talents: Frenzy, Menacing, Quick Draw, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-handed), Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun, Very Resilient, Warrior Born

Armour: Medium Armour (Mail Shirt, Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Crossbow with 10 Bolts, Great Weapon (Two-handed Sword)

Trappings: Bottle of Spirits, Healing Draught

Finch waits in the back of the warehouse for the characters and greets them with a smile. He makes a big show of counting whatever money the PCs give him, which is entirely for appearances, as he intends to kill them and take all their possessions. Hartmut busies himself readying equipment, checking maps, and so forth. After a half hour or so, Finch looks about and says, "It's time." He leads the group to a stack of crates, which Hartmut removes, revealing a trap door with an iron pull ring.

The trap door opens to reveal crudely cut stone stairs, which lead down to a dank tunnel. Flickers of torchlight shine forth from wall sconces set down the tunnel.

Finch insists on going first and Hartmut bringing up the rear. Their plan is to lead the Characters an hour or so along into the tunnels to a large cave with several openings that lead to dead ends. The rest of their gang waits in the side tunnels to ambush the PCs mid-way through the cave. Finch really doesn't expect any trouble from the Characters. He already noted several of them clearly show all the signs of having the Pale Shivers, and his gang has done this many times. What Finch & Co. have not taken into consideration is that the majority of the people they've murdered have been desperate lowlifes with little to no fighting skill—even the resistance an average PC can put up will surprise them.

Finch soon leads the characters into the cave, which seems to have three tunnels leading out of it. An **Easy (+20%) Trade (Stonework) Test** or similar reveals this cave was once part of a waystation on the Undgrin Ankor. In this case, that fact becomes relevant because a Dwarf character will likely instantly realize that the passages leading from this cave, other than the one they entered by, are storage ways that only go twenty feet or so. PCs already suspicious of Finch and Hartmut are unlikely to be surprised when they draw weapons and dark clad men leap out of the shadows of the caves.

The thugs are after the characters lives and fight giving no quarter. If the PCs manage to kill two or more of their opponents, all but one of the rest decide their prey is fiercer than they thought and swiftly retreat to kill and loot some other day. Hartmut fights in a Frenzy and will not stop until dead, regardless of what his weak-willed lessers do. This could lead to some brief dark comedy, as the retreating thugs have to dive past the frothing Norseman, who swings at everyone that comes near him, so they can get to the only true exit from the cavern.

Murderous Toughs (3)

Career: Thug

Race: Human

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 35% | 28% | 43% | 37% | 32% | 25% | 36% | 30% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 1 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Acute Hearing, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Gamble, Gossip, Intimidate, Secret Language (Thieves' Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Disarm, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Resistance to Poison, Strike to Stun, Very Strong, Wrestling

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword)

Trappings: Dark Cloaks, Pouch, 7 p

After the fight, the PCs quickly realize the predicament they're in. While they do have a lantern, they're likely lost in a huge tunnel structure somewhere under Talabheim, with little idea which way,

if any, will lead them towards the Taalbaston. Fortunately, Ranald smiles on fools and PCs. As the Characters are gathering their wits about them after the fight, they hear a muffled noise coming from one of the storage caves. Following the sound leads them down to the end of the farthest storage tunnel, to a barrel that seems to be wobbling of its own accord and mumbling. The barrel opens to reveal a bedraggled Halfling named Bogie Crumpot.

BOGIE CRUMPTOT

In better circumstances, Bogie is a fairly jovial little man with dancing green eyes and a fondness for pranks—which sets him apart from the majority of his fellows in the Taalbaston Tunnel Brigade. The Crumpots have lived in Talabheim for generations, along with a few other defiant Halfling families, all of whom can trace their ancestry back to when their ancestors first moved to the Eye of the Forest. Bogie has always had a penchant for adventure and ended up joining the militia. His sharp eyes and steadfast courage soon saw him transferred to the Terriers where he has excelled. Hartmut managed to get the jump on Crumpot after he discovered some bodies that had been dumped into a different cavern and managed to trace them back. He was destined to be a sacrifice to Khaine when the Norseman found the time.



Bogie Crumpot

Career: Militiaman

Race: Halfling

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 31% | 49% | 30% | 29% | 51% | 32% | 35% | 42% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Genealogy/Heraldry), Animal Care, Common Knowledge (Halflings), Dodge Blow, Gamble, Gossip, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Search, Speak Language (Halfling, Reikspiel), Swim, Trade (Cook)

Talents: Night Vision, Rapid Reload, Resistance to Chaos, Specialist Weapon Group (Sling), Strike Mighty Blow, Strong-minded

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack, Leather Skullcap)

Armour Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), Crossbow with 10 Bolts

Trappings: Uniform

Bogie has been in the barrel for two days, and he is absolutely starved. No fool by any stretch, he takes one long look at the PCs and can pretty much figure out their story. He puts it thusly: “*Looke, lads. Done saved me hide ya did, and I reckon I owe ya. So here’s the bargain—I show ya to Hellend, and we part ways square and clear. What say the lot of ya?*” The PCs are not exactly in a position to bargain and doubtless take the Halfling up on his deal. Bogie is true to his word, and after he wolfs down some food, he rapidly trots his way through the tunnels. After a half hour of quick and bewildering turns, the PCs smell sewage. The scent grows stronger until the party comes to a small overhang that looks down into what is clearly a sewage tunnel. The Halfling points to a small alcove. “*That ladder will lead ya upwards to a small alley in the Tallows. Now we’re quits. Good fortune, lads.*” Presuming they don’t stop him, Bogie swiftly disappears. Welcome the characters to Talabheim.

ALTERNATE COURSES

Characters that skipped the first chapter may get to be around for Taalagad’s degeneration, and you can play up the day-by-day deterioration if you wish. The second day after the plague is publicly acknowledged, the merchants stop coming to town and food swiftly gets scarce. That night, the Wizard’s Way is sealed.

If one or more of your players already knows about Skaven, you can have fun using that knowledge against them. To incite paranoia, occasionally mention that there are big rats on the roofs, watching them. Eventually, note one is really huge and has a white patch that resembles a star over one eye or some such. Then start having that same rat show up over and over again as long as the PCs stay in Taalagad. Have them make random **Perception Tests** before telling them about the rat, regardless of what they actually roll. Always watching is the star-eyed rat—always from too far away to do anything about.

If the PCs end up contacting the Shallyans early, you may wish to have them meet Widenhoft while he is still alive, before he has discovered whatever is in the water. Then, the **House of the Healer** section on page 44 will have even more impact, as they will have already interacted with the apothecary. Making Nierhaus far more paranoid and suspicious of the PCs’ intentions can dramatically change this chapter as well. He could accuse them of murdering Widenhoft for the Skaven, shoot at them, or force them to either flee or kill him—turning them into wanted criminals and forcing them into a position where they will have to approach Finch.





CHAPTER III: YOU'RE IN THE MILITIA NOW

Talabheim seethes with questions but few answers.

The streets are restless as agitators roam, questioning why the populace has been trapped inside the Taalbaston.

One rumour holds that a captain of the elite Taalbaston guard was killed while trying to aid the sick, another, that he took his life in protest against what he was ordered to do to the refugee families living outside the walls.

Despite the best efforts of the authorities, the Grey Ague slowly spreads throughout the city. The most deprived neighbourhoods have been hit the hardest, which has led, of course, to accusations

Wherein our principals at long last enter the Eye of the Forest, only to enter the service of same; for true knowledge is scarce, but able hands are often scarcer.

that the nobles are just going to let the poor die off, while they remain safe in their fortified townhouses in the richer districts or the more affluent crater villages to the west.

Worse still, Skaven are starting to trickle into the city from ancient tunnels beneath the Taalbaston. With the Standing Army reduced to a shadow of its former strength after the Storm of Chaos, able-bodied men have been inducted into the militia, and other less official organizations, to fight against the growing number of incursions of the diseased Mutant scum.

Welcome to Talabheim, indeed.

— LAYING LOW IN THE EYE OF THE FOREST —

The PCs managed to gain entrance to one of the great cities of the Empire—a city sealed due to plague concerns, the very same plague some of them are carrying. Getting caught is not a very good idea. Depending on the speed with which the PCs faced the last Chapter's events, those with the Grey Ague should be about a week into the course of the disease, give or take a day, which means not only are they shivering, but grey blotches have begun to appear on their neck and chest. Fortunately for the PCs, they weren't exposed to the Skaven's disease enhancers in time to upgrade it to the more virulent version of the Pale Shivers—but since they don't know that, they may be getting a little desperate.

The marks the disease causes are readily covered by any clothing or armour that covers the neck, and many of the residents of the poorer areas of Talabheim are ghastly pale anyway. Coughing and shivering, on the other hand, are dead giveaways—perhaps literally, if the characters aren't very careful. PCs that are sick have to succeed at a **Routine (+10%) Will Power Test** to suppress the shivers in front of suspicious witnesses, like a patrol of Talabheim's City Watch, the Dogfaces. The Countess has ordered all Talabheim citizens who are sick with the Grey Ague to stay within their homes on penalty of imprisonment in the Hollows. Plagued visitors will, at the very minimum, be sent to the Old Market neighbourhood of the Merchant District, though they may also be subject to immediate

imprisonment in the Hollows, or worse, depending on the mood of whoever caught them. Characters that fail their **Routine (+10%) Will Power Test** in front of a witness in an area they're not supposed to be, like most of the rest of the city, had better have friends that can rapidly back them up with a good cover story, e.g. fits, insanity, etc. If the PCs role-play their excuses well, give it to them, though a **Blather**, **Charm**, or **Intimidate Test**—or perhaps a simple bribe, may be required. Otherwise, they had best be prepared to run and hide, or as many resources as the Dogfaces can muster, which are considerable, may soon be turned against them.

Depending on how the characters managed to get under the Taalbaston and enter Talabheim, they'll either find themselves in the maze of small, densely packed streets that make up the Tallows or wandering through the cramped "avenues" of the Ratholds. PCs native to Talabheim will have a good idea of the dangers inherent in both places and react accordingly. Newcomers can figure out pretty quickly with an **Easy (+20%) Perception Test** that the Tallows is not the kind of place that a city militia would ever patrol—and no law, save the Terriers, wanders the confined maze that is the Ratholds.

Regardless of where the PCs first entered the city, they are going to need to find some place to stay and soon. Fortunately, the PCs are either native to Talabheim or have blue griffon-stamped letters of passage, which pretty much grant unlimited access to the city for two weeks—allowing them to travel about and find accommodations where they will. The trouble herein is that the PCs are just now looking for housing in a city that has been sealed for several days, which means they need an establishment that's unlikely to ask too many questions—the type of place that has proprietors that figure as long as the coins are good, they don't care where they came from.

Non-natives will need to make a **Routine (+10%) Gossip Test** to be pointed towards the sort of concern they're looking for, whereas the natives will already have a good idea where to go. Failure means the party ends up bound for a seedy inn somewhere in the Tallows, where any goods they leave in their rooms disappear, and a single public lapse into coughing or shivering will have an informant running for whatever constitutes the local authority, usually a street gang, wherever they are. Success will direct the PCs to a likely tavern in the Old Market district, such as the Threeapples Inn (see page 18) or if they seem to be a bit more affluent, a modest hotel in Dragon's Home.

FATE POINTS & THE PLAGUE

A lot of the dramatic tension of this adventure will be lost if the players ever decide they can just spend a Fate Point to survive the plague without any repercussions. You may wish to remind the players that the GM ultimately decides the consequences of what occurs after a Fate Point is spent.

If any of the PCs do indeed lose all Toughness and die of the Grey Ague, tell the rest of the party that the character died and have their corpse get tossed out for the collection detail. Before their body is properly collected by the city, the lackeys of Doctor Skell steal them for her project. See **Chapter Four** for details. The once-sick PC awakens from his brief coma on a cold granite slab, feeling fine and stats fully restored to normal. Of course, he's surrounded by a bunch of cadavers, several of which are slowly starting to move as they reanimate as zombies...and he's naked.

Of course, if they're feeling suicidal, the PCs can forego all of the above and find a nice hole in the Ratholds to squat in.

Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs head out into the city for the first time:

Taal's sacred city comes to life about you as you take your first steps out onto the streets of Talabheim. While broken shale and mud make up the streets of the Tallows, the majority of the city's roads are paved with dark stone quarried from the walls of the Taalbaston itself, as are many of the more affluent buildings. Indeed, the looming walls of the Taalbaston dominate much of the city's life—for the closer you live to the wall, the poorer you're likely to be. In fact, the poorest live within the wall itself inside a series of crudely hacked out caves and passageways known as the Ratholds. The richest live in the eastern portion of the city, dwelling in richly decorated manors with extensive private gardens. Most folks live somewhere between the two extremes.

As you begin to take in the city, you cannot help but notice the hordes of liveried servants that regularly scurry past you carrying sheaths of documents back and forth from the centre of the city, the Law Quarter. It squats like an ominous grey toad at the heart of Talabheim. A veritable army of clerks, litigants, barristers, and judges make their way to this district from nearly every other neighbourhood of the city every day—for Talabheim cherishes law as you would a lover. The citizens of the Eye of the Forest are known to favour certain obscure laws as if they were pets. Itinerant city judges roam the very streets of the city, making rulings and judgments as they go.

It's hard to believe there is a plague just outside the gates. In fact the city seems to be functioning without undue pause, despite the Wizard's Way being sealed. The merchants of the three neighbourhoods that make up the Merchant's District: Old Market, Nordgate and Dragon's Home, all act as if it was business as usual. They seem to be plying their trades with a will, for they all still have goods to sell and fresh vegetables that have come in from the many farms and villages residing within the Great Crater itself.

Still, there is tension in the air. On a street corner, you hear a man declaim loudly he has business in Taalagad that must be doing poorly without him until a friend bushes him. A pair of Dogfaces stands in front of a shuttered inn forcibly closed because too many of its patrons were diagnosed as having the Grey Ague. The Sabine Rose, a bloom sacred to Shallya, is pinned over nearly every doorway.

And there is no laughter to be found that doesn't die quickly.

After the Characters have found a place to stay, they still have some hard choices to make. The PCs have no way of knowing exactly how long the Grey Ague will last, though a successful **Routine (+10%) Academic Knowledge (Science) Test** indicates from what they know so far of the onset times and when people started dying, the sick ones probably make it through the worst of the disease or drop dead within the next few days. Thus, sick Characters can stay in their rooms and tough it out—which may be the safer course as they can easily avoid being arrested, or they can wrap their limbs and try to help the healthier members of the party hunt down a remedy or, at the least, something to bolster their defences against the plague.

The following sections aren't in a specific order; they are simply different key events that occur as the PCs begin interacting with the citizens of Talabheim and move about the city. Keep in mind if any of the sick characters wish to be out and about, they have to

continually keep an eye out for Dogfaces, and they should most definitely avoid talking to any NPCs for any extended length of time, or they'll have to start making **Routine (+10%) Will Power Test** to not give themselves away.

— AGITATORS, CONS, & WORRIED SHALLYANS —

Characters wishing to flex their Gossip Skill and hear the word on the street will not lack for news. A night spent buying drinks in a tavern or a successful **Gossip Test** reveals one of the following pieces of information:

- Within the last week or two, squads of Dogfaces have removed or suppressed a fairly sizable number of doom-wailing fanatics on the streets of Talabheim, and there is still a fair amount of concern over recent events.
- The city's many preachers have been strongly encouraged to dwell on more hopeful themes and uplift spirits rather than dash them.
- The Countess has recently made the unprecedented move of lowering the Cup Duty, more commonly known as the "drink snatch," so libations are flowing far more freely than normal in the city's taverns, which has certainly set tongues to wagging.

A fairly large number of Agitators are roaming the streets, stirring up the populace with conjecture about what is "really" going on outside the Taalbaston. There is talk of a coup in the Empire, of Karl Franz being assassinated, of the rise of a new army of Chaos and its march from the north. The entire city heard the guns of the

fortresses on the Taalbaston go off (during the Hochlander Riot from **Chapter Two**), which has certainly fuelled such speculation. Talabheim has also hired its own agitators to spin counter rumours, stating there is a plague beyond the walls, and there isn't anything to worry about, as everyone is safe under the gaze of Taal.

Reliquary Road has been seeing brisk business as Talabheimers flock to pick up a new lucky charm or a religious icon just to be on the safe side. PCs low on cash and with flexible morals may very well wish to start up a dishonest venture of some kind, hawking "genuine" artefacts and the like.

The Cult of Shallya of been besieged by Talabheimers of every class and station, alternately pleading for or demanding their assistance. PCs that manage to corner a follower of Shallya will find them overwhelmed and more than a little frightened. A successful **Challenging (–10%) Charm Test** reveals that a highly placed Shallyan Priestess has declared the Grey Ague is the work of their greatest enemy, the Lord of Decay, known by scholars as the Chaos God Nurgle. The Shallyans are doing their equivalent of arming themselves for battle—several pilgrimages have travelled to the Crater Lake to bring back dozens of barrels of the reputedly holy water for a great ritual blessing of the city.

— THE APOTHECARY DAUBLER —

If the PCs interacted with Captain Nierhaus, they will recall his final request was that they seek out the apothecary Daubler in the city. Characters that had nothing to do with Nierhaus may still end up at Daubler's door, as he is widely reputed to be an excellent apothecary, though the poor can ill afford his services. An **Easy (+20%) Gossip Test** puts his shop on the border of the Nordgate and Dragon's Home neighbourhoods of the Merchant District. This makes it easy for Daubler to acquire the right herbs in Dragon's Home, which he then sells to his affluent clientele from Nordgate.

Daubler's shop rests at the far end of one of Nordgate's main thoroughfares called Iron Lane. Daubler, who has a lively sense of humour, named his shop Rusty Remedies, though most locals just refer to it as "Daubler's." Rusty Remedies is a squat building covered in ivy and Sabine Roses. Any PC with the skill **Academic Knowledge (Theology)** will know the Sabine Rose is one of Shallya's flowers—a white rose with light red veins—and supposedly carries the favour of the Goddess. Daubler's shop also has a large, round, stained glass window in the front, which should immediately tell the PCs that he is well off. There is a near-continuous stream of customers into and out of Rusty Remedies, as even the smallest sniffle present makes everyone nervous. The PCs likely have a short wait in a small sitting room just inside the front door. Eventually, a healthy, middle-aged man walks up to the PCs and asks if they are all together or visiting separately. Rusty Remedies bears more than a faint resemblance to Widenhof's home, though it is clearly set up with an eye to entertaining patients, whereas the former was directed towards research. Daubler takes the PCs to his study and asks how he can be of assistance.



ULTHVAS DAUBLER

A robust man in his late forties, Daubler is swift to laugh and poke fun at himself. His bright blue eyes often seem a little too wide, as if he was perpetually surprised, and he frequently smokes a long-stemmed pipe filled with tobacco imported from the Moot. Daubler is a merry soul who genuinely enjoys helping people, though the money is nice, too. He travelled extensively in his youth, training in an Altdorf university as well as studying with one or two knowledgeable old peasant women. Daubler is a rare soul for an Empire citizen: a cosmopolitan individual who tries to see the world as it is, not as the deluded make it out to be, making him an excellent potential ally for the PCs.

Ulthvas Daubler

Career: Physician (ex-Barber-Surgeon, ex-Student)

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 32% | 29% | 36% | 43% | 44% | 61% | 42% | 54% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 13 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Philosophy), Academic Knowledge (Science) +10%, Charm +10%, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Drive, Gossip, Haggle, Heal +10%, Perception, Read/Write, Speak Language (Classical, Reikspiel, Tilean), Trade (Apothecary) +10%

Talents: Etiquette, Resistance to Disease, Savvy, Seasoned Traveller, Strong-minded, Suave, Surgery, Very Resilient

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Dagger

Trappings: Four Healing Draughts, Library of Science and Philosophy Books, Shop, Trade Tools (Medical Instruments), Writing Kit,

PCs just searching for a healer find Daubler a kind man. If they go the “we have a sick friend” route, Daubler eyes one of the sick PCs while asking questions about the “friend’s” ailment. He is well aware of the Grey Ague and has already begun trying various remedies to

help fight it off. He will recommend bed rest and hot water baths for any sick individuals, as well as keeping a small piece of leather to bite on if the shivering gets too forceful. After the consultation, he passes the PCs a sweet smelling extract in a small urn, which allows a sick PC to make one re-roll of a failed Toughness Test against the Grey Ague. The consultation and the medicine cost 12 s.

PCs that mention Captain Nierhaus or produce Widenhoft’s notes for his perusal immediately gain his full attention. In fact, he shoos any other patients out of his house, telling them to come back in an hour no matter how they squawk. His first question to PCs who brought up Nierhaus is to ask, “Do you know that the Captain is dead?” He rapidly scans over Widenhoft’s notes before saying, “This is Gotthard’s hand. Where did you come by these?” The scholar’s death takes him aback. “Gotthard was murdered? Ach, this is terrible. Who would do such a thing?” PCs that tell him that they think the Skaven did it may be surprised by his reaction. Instead of blatant denial, he nods slowly and asks why they think so? “I think the vermin have tried this before, many times in fact. The history of our Empire is rife with plagues that come unexpectedly and weaken us at the worst possible time. I fear the rat folk have set their sights on Talabheim.” Daubler falls silent for a moment, and then suddenly looks around at the PCs. “You have slipped in under the Taalbaston, haven’t you? No, don’t answer. I would be obligated to report you to the Dogfaces.” He laughs briefly while shaking his head. “What do you wish of me? I will help you as much as I am able.” Daubler takes any of the PCs’ requests into consideration. He will certainly work on a cure for the Grey Ague—he already was. Any PC that can remember the name of the book that Widenhoft had been studying, *The Plague & the Principality* will help Daubler immensely. His eyes light up, and he rushes to his bookshelf. After a brief search, he triumphantly produces a copy of the book. If the PCs tell Daubler about their sick brethren, he sends them on their way with the medicine he has devised free of charge. He asks where they are staying, so he can send word as needed.

Development

Nierhaus didn’t name Daubler by accident. He is the most likely man in Talabheim to be able to find a cure for the Grey Ague, though without Widenhoft’s notes it could’ve taken him months. With the notes and the hints provided by the PCs, he deduces a significant portion of the nature of the Grey Ague over the next few days. Five days after the PCs contact Daubler, his experiments prove the Pale Shivers are both a disease and a poison—a piece of priceless knowledge to the Shallyans and others trying to treat the disease.

— RECRUITMENT DRIVE —

After the PCs have been in Talabheim for three days, a proclamation goes throughout the city. If timed correctly, the calls of the town’s criers may, in fact, be the first sounds the PCs who have just managed to survive through the effects of the Grey Ague hear. The Duchess Elise, with the full and unanimous support of the Parliament, has declared all able bodied men are to offer their services to the City Watch, effective immediately. Individuals capable of making sufficient enough donations to the city’s coffers, or those willing to prove their talents are better utilized elsewhere, can get out of service. Everyone else must join on penalty of being tossed out onto the streets of Taalagad—which common rumour now holds to have gone cannibalistic. All inns are required to submit the number and type of guests they have. The government has made it very clear that they will harshly deal

with anyone who harbours able-bodied men from their civic duty to Talabheim.

The masses of men that show up for work detail with the Dogfaces promptly start getting referred to as “Pups” throughout the city. Most are broken into small squads with a proper Dogface to lead them and given sundry unpleasant duties to attend to. PCs obediently showing up can be assigned to any of the following tasks as the various squads change their duties daily. The Dogfaces are well aware that men who trust one another are more effective than those that don’t, so they at least make an attempt to put friends or acquaintances together—meaning all the PCs who decide to show up serve jointly on a squad. Of special note is any PC that has survived the Grey Ague who publicly shows the

distinct white blotches that scar a plague survivor. His fellows, Dogface or otherwise, look at such a one with awe, and he will be quietly referred to as being favoured by Shallya. They're also favoured for making Morr's Round.

MORR'S ROUND

The City Watch has always been responsible for the collection of bodies and passing them on to the Priests of the Death God at the Garden of Morr. The Grey Ague has increased the workload, as has the fact that a number of Dogfaces are on other duties, such as searching for Skaven in the tunnels of the Taalbaston, and they aren't available to cart the dead. Thus, the PCs could spend a day or two hauling bodies—a task all of the new Pup squads do their best to avoid. PCs on Morr's Round hear something disquieting—the Priests of Morr believe there aren't enough bodies coming in. They state unequivocally that it isn't that they want anybody to die; all will come to Morr in good time after all, but there are just less bodies being collected from the city than the norm. Various theories get offered up as to why there are fewer bodies, ranging from those that think some unscrupulous guards are lobbing the remains over the Taalbaston to lessen the chance of infection, to Beastmen eating the corpses. See **The Curious Art of Doctor Gugula Skell** section on page 64 in Chapter Four for details on just where exactly those missing bodies are going.

SEWER DETAIL

Welcome to the day-to-day life of a Sewer Jack. In this case though, the City Watch knows the rats are pretty damn big. A sewer detail travels armed and ready for trouble, which likely makes the PCs good candidates for making the rounds, as they are used to that sort of thing. The sewer systems of the various neighbourhoods of Talabheim vary greatly, and not all of them are easily traversable by men. There is a spacious Dwarf-carved sewer beneath the stately streets of the Law Quarter, which is wide and easily patrolled, making it the favoured duty. There are also a fair number of tunnels beneath the Tallows and the Merchant District that have more or less been turned into a sewer system. These tunnels are dangerous in many ways. A fair number of them are ancient beyond reckoning, and every so often, portions of their roofs collapse without warning. New and unexplained tunnels sporadically appear overnight, and few have the courage to question where they came from, much like the Ratholds within and below the Taalbaston. Indeed, some of the longer tunnels overlap the lower caverns of the Ratholds.

PCs on sewer detail should at first be made to feel something could come at them at any moment. With a few patrols under their belt, though, they'll realize it is a relatively dull, thankless, and malodorous duty—but seldom particularly dangerous. After a couple of days of boring sewer trawling, just when the PCs have decided there won't ever be anything to see, have them encounter the following scene.

THE LONE SURVIVOR & THE SLAUGHTER

The PCs are patrolling down beneath the Merchant District when they hear the sounds of running from the tunnel in front of them. They have just enough time to prepare themselves when a ragged



figure charges around the corner. Cloaked in dark and bloodied rags, the rat-faced beast doesn't even pause in its flight, it merely scampers part way up the stony walls and attempts to dive past the PCs. It is obviously fleeing from something, and all but the densest PC realise the Skaven isn't at all interested in fighting—which is not to say they won't try to kill it anyway.

The Injured Plague Monk

| Main Profile | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| 34% | 25% | 30% | 41% | 40% | 25% | 29% | 20% |
| Secondary Profile | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| 1 | 4(11)* | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Theology) +10%, Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Dodge Blow, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

Talents: Fearless, Frenzy, Night Vision, Resistance to Disease, Tunnel Rat

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword)

Trappings: Filthy rags

*The Skaven is heavily wounded; the number in parenthesis is its standard Wounds total. It is not Frenzied.

The Skaven tries to flee, most likely causing the PCs to have to cut it down from behind if they wish to stop its headlong flight down the tunnel. PCs inspecting the body find it cloaked in filthy rags,

BEHIND THE SCENES: THE PESTILENS' SLAUGHTER

The Skaven have always been quick to eliminate those standing in their way, no matter what race they belong to, and Grey Seers are particularly notorious for eliminating "tools" that have outlived their usefulness. To Asorak Steeleye, the time has come for Nelrich the Suppurator to complete his final task, which the Pestilens Plague Priest is completely unaware of, though he now suspects he has been used. Steeleye ordered his Skryre troops to eliminate the majority of the Suppurator's followers, make him desperate, and then press him so hard the Plague Priest will have no choice but to retreat to the surface with the last remains of his once-mighty strike force. The resulting panic among the man-things of Talabheim is exactly what the Grey Seer wants.

The Plague Monks the PCs discovered were blown apart by a Skryre invention called a Ratling Gun—a portable Skaven weapon consisting of multiple rotating gun barrels and capable of unleashing a hideously destructive rate of fire. They frequently explode after extensive use, but that's a small price to pay for the Skaven commander who's ordering the gun crew into combat from a safe distance. The lone survivor was left for dead and woke up hours after his comrades had been eliminated. The rune-robed Skaven was named Worthok Bilerot—Nelrich's (former) second in command. The Skryre troops wanted to take no chances with a Plague Priest. A Warplock Jezzail, an elegant weapon similar to the Hochland Long Rifle, took him down. Warplock Jezzails fire shot made from Warpstone, hence the removal of the fragments from the wound.

carrying a single rusty blade. A **Routine (+10%) Perception Test** reveals it was shot with a firearm before it met the PCs.

PCs continuing down the tunnel smell something foul on the air long before they enter the low cavern at the end of it. A successful **Perception Test** marks the scent as a mixture of discharged gunpowder, spilt blood, decay, and an unidentifiable musky scent. As the PCs enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:

A massacre lies before you. The bodies of slaughtered Skaven stretch out across the cavern floor as far as your lantern's light reaches and beyond back into the darkness. They were surely foul creatures in life, many of the corpses you can see show signs of disease and had limbs bound in a manner reminiscent of lepers. But it was no plague that killed them. The majority of the Ratmen's corpses have been punctured, many times over, as if an entire legion of Imperial troops had turned their firearms on them. Other patrols have been in this cavern within the last day but none spoke of any such sight. The bodies have grown cold, but this butchery was recent.

An **Easy (+20%) Perception Test** reveals most of these Skaven were shot down as they ran. Many of them have small holes in their backs with gaping exit wounds in the front. There are many easily found steel balls embedded in both their wounds and the stone of the cavern that are clearly firearm shot. A successful **Search Test** notes one figure in particular is different from the others. The unusual Skaven has black robes with ornate markings that appear to be some sort of runic text, though the marks bear no resemblance to the runes of the Dwarfs. The robed Skaven is actually very near where the PCs first enter the room and was killed with what looks to be a single stab wound to the head, which pierced its right eye. A PC that makes a successful **Routine (+10%) Perception Test** realizes the wound wasn't caused by a cut, but a blade deepened it, i.e. someone used a blade to dig out whatever caused the wound. None of the bodies appear to have anything worth taking. PCs that insist on looting must make a **Routine (+10%) Toughness Test** or pick up any disease you feel like inflicting on them—after all, they're looting the corpses of an entire contingent of Pestilens Plague Monks.

Presuming the PCs report what they've seen—no Talabheim unit claims responsibility for the killing. PCs unwilling to just let the matter go have to search in the Ratholds for witnesses. It takes a lot of searching and a successful **Hard (–20%) Gossip Test**, but the characters eventually find some urchins who swear they heard what sounded like machinery and high pitched shrieking echoing through the tunnels several nights before. Nobody gives the poor children's tale much credit, and various other theories are continually offered until Hunter Lord Ketlef Kienholtz, commander of the City Watch, declares, in lieu of any other "reasonable" explanation, the foul Skaven must have slaughtered one another. The bodies are ordered burned where they lie, and the matter is quietly covered up.

WALL CRAWLING

Drafted or no, the city authorities are well aware that a mutiny would ensue if they tried to force their recent inductees to patrol into the depths of the Ratholds within the Taalbaston itself. Anyone on the Pup squads can volunteer to assist the Taalbaston Tunnel Brigade in making their rounds. The Terriers prefer Dwarfs and Halflings, though a Human of shorter stature or great agility can also find a place among them. The Terriers absolutely have their hands full. If any of the PCs like combat, they will see it with the Tunnel Brigade. Every patrol for the last week or so has run into at least one or two small bands of Skaven during their rounds, and more than half of the Terriers have been wounded. The Ratmen tend to be either psychotic or panicked—with no middle ground. For statistics on Plague Monks, see page 91.

A couple of days of the various duties listed, as well as any other nasty tasks that come to mind, will carry the PCs who reported for duty into **Chapter Four**.

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

In the Empire, as everywhere else in the Old World, there are those who believe they are above the law, or at least, sly enough to avoid the law's attention. While Talabheim has placed grave penalties on those who avoid their civic duty, there are some folks that would

sooner be dead than willingly do anything an upstart noble tells them to do, and one or more of the PCs may be in that number. PCs staying in the Tallows have a legitimate point if they suggest that by just remaining where they are, they won't be dragged into the City Militia. This is true as the Dogfaces refuse to even attempt to patrol the twisted streets of that dismal neighbourhood, regardless of the Parliament's order.

But there are other powers than the nobles.

Two days after any PC declines to show up for militia duty, regardless of how well they are hidden or whom they bribe, the "authorities" of the Tallows will approach them. Maybe someone knocks on their door early one morning, maybe they are confronted on the street, or maybe they wake up suspended by a thin rope from a tall building staring at the muddy ground several stories below—gauge by just how dangerous they happen to be and whatever will best serve to get their attention.

Regardless of how it happens, they are bluntly told that as long as this crisis lasts they can either work for the militia or they can work for the gangs, who may be scum, but they're still loyal

Talabheimers. The man who discusses their options with the PCs is a short, burly fellow who gives his name as Worlen Aderhold. The PCs may have had some very unpleasant dealings with Aderhold lackeys in the past, though Worlen makes no mention of this.

Any PC that has stayed in Talabheim for more than a few days recognizes the name Aderhold as belonging to the most powerful gang in the Tallows, one with ties throughout the city and beyond. If the PCs have a spurt of civic responsibility and state they'll join the Dogfaces, lovely. Various unseen figures keep an eye on them for a while to make sure they do. Failure leads to a rapid loss of Fate Points as the PCs are alternately poisoned, stabbed, beaten, and so on. If the PCs indicate they would rather keep out of the eyes of officials, no problem. Worlen or one of his "officers" gives them assignments each morning ranging from, "*Keep an eye on this street, and report any unusual folk moving about*" to "*slip downside 'tween Grosbeak's and the Black Lantern—stay there for the five hours or so, and if any Ratties come your way, shiv them good, eh?*"

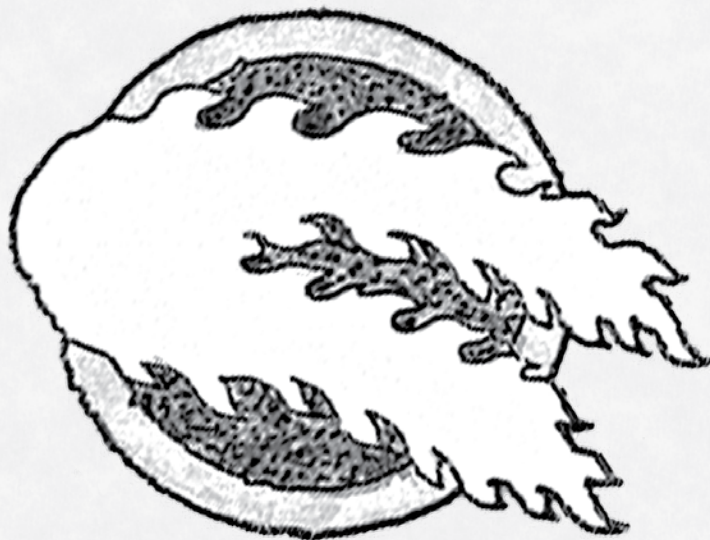
This will continue for a few days, until the events of **Chapter Four** begin.

— VARIOUS COURSES —

Chapter Three offers the PCs their first real look at the Eye of the Forest if they've never been to it before. Even Characters native to the Talabheim region can have players that are unfamiliar, and this is their first time hearing about the city as well. Make certain to play up the assorted oddities of Talabheim life for foreigners. The relatively slow pace of this chapter should serve to let the Characters wander around a bit and even get into a spot of non-campaign-related trouble. However, this is also the last calm before the storm of trouble that is about to deluge Talabheim.

It is possible the PCs may leave Talabheim before the draft is stated. The medicinal properties of the Crater Lake are well known, and PCs with the Grey Ague may reasonably believe the waters could help them. The characters are likely to hear about

the draft from messengers travelling to the outlying villages within the Great Crater. What may surprise them is the great loyalty the locals feel to Talabheim. As many men as can be spared all head into the city to help out as best they can. Cynical PCs may do their best to avoid such eager conscription, but unless they're willing to live in the Taalgrunhaar Forest, they will eventually run out of options. The flexibility of the events of this chapter allows them to be stretched out as long as you deem necessary. Thus, no matter how long the PCs avoid Talabheim, you can choose to advance events at any pace you wish. You could have the PCs return only to be recruited and sent on Sewer Detail, or you could skip straight to the events of **Chapter Five** or **Six**. The PCs may finally return to Talabheim only to find that the Skaven now control it!





CHAPTER IV: THE DESPERATE & THE DEAD

Not even the lifting of the Cup Duty has helped the citizens of Talabheim to forget their troubles. The city rots and festers with uncertainty. What little news there is from Taalagad is bleak; rumours hold that the plague runs rampant, and raging flagellants have torched large portions of the port. Despite the Parliament's best efforts, the Grey Ague has taken hold in the poorer neighbourhoods and is slowly working its way throughout the city.

While there is still food to be had, talk of rationing has begun. The Knights of the Stag had to put down a mob that attempted to force the nobles of Parliament to open the city again. Whilst the Duchess publicly claims she knows none of her subjects would ever hurt her, the remains of the standing army of

Wherein our principals are introduced to some worthies of the Clan Pestilens and their matchless ideas on neighbourhood administration, a delight surpassed only by meeting the shambling experiments of the crafty Doctor Gugula Skell.

Talabheim are now encamped about the Grand Manor.

The conscripted militia is hard pressed, for difficult days, long nights, and troublesome omens make for bitter morale even in willing troops. One of the

staunch Dwarf Sergeants of the Taalbaston Tunnel Brigade went insane, slaying his own squad before leaping off the top of the crater wall to his death on the Wizard's Way below. Witnesses claim that the Terrier ranted of "a chittering in his mind" before he leapt. Morr's Priests are quietly insinuating to the authorities that some of the bodies of the dead are being stolen, though no investigation has managed to prove their charge or find even a hint of whom the culprits, if any, might be. And the rats of Talabheim no longer fear people.

— WHERE THERE'S SMOKE —

Regardless of whether they have been working for the city militia or a crime family, a week or two of "volunteering" should be more than sufficient to blunt the PCs' enthusiasm for the Eye of the Forest. Many of the characters from elsewhere are probably asking themselves why they ever thought sneaking into Talabheim was such a great idea, conveniently ignoring the regular snippets of disturbing hearsay slipping in from Taalagad. Natives to the city can tell Talabheim is on edge, and the possibility of rioting in the streets has made the rich and powerful very anxious.

A successful **Gossip Test** reveals one of the pieces of information from the following. Note that a greater degree of success is more likely to discover the veracity of any given rumour.

Rumours

- A number of young Litigants, and even a few of the more liberal judges, have begun pouring through the old law books to cite ancient laws regarding Talabheim's appropriate

behaviour under conditions similar to those the city now finds itself under. (**True**) Supposedly, an old law holds the city must pay all volunteers a Schilling a day. (**False**—It's actually a Penny.)

- Fires set by flagellants have destroyed two of Taalagad's neighbourhoods. (**False**—though one was badly damaged.)
- The great Orator-Judge Ranier Hindemith has announced all nobles who own property in Talabheim are required by law to assist in protecting their possessions by bearing arms or risk forfeiting their holdings to those who do defend them. Several noble families have collectively spent well over 10,000 *gc* on barrister fees in order to disprove Hindemith's declaration, but so far, it looks like the families' patriarchs are preparing to dust off their swords. (Amazing but both **True**.)
- Taal's Chosen have been pressed into service to the Dogfaces. They have been ordered to hunt down and execute volunteers that desert. (**False**. The Chosen did, however, agree to help the militia of their own volition. They have no such orders.)
- The Standing Army of Talabheim is camped about the Grand Manor because the Duchess fears an assassination attempt. (**False**, that is a cover story. The troops are present because of information the city has about a Skaven attack coming soon.)

HURRY UP & WAIT—DOWNTIME

There are a number of points throughout the Chapters of *Terror in Talabheim* where the adventure states something along the lines of "a few days pass" or "a week passes without incident." A soldier's life is often filled with long weeks of sheer boredom, followed by days of high tension, and ending with hours of intense battle, which this adventure often reflects. Adventurers tend to be restless souls though (as do players) and there is little need to role-play whole days spent doing nothing but wandering about, drinking, playing cards, wenching, etc. We refer to such hours as "downtime" in roleplaying game circles. If you wish to have something occur during these times, by all means do so. There are many adventure hooks in Talabheim to explore in the gazetteer section of this book and a number of other published adventures that could be slipped in during what would otherwise be a long period of downtime.

- A cure for the Grey Ague has been discovered, but the nobles are keeping it to themselves. (**False** unless the PCs helped Daubler, in which case partially **True**.)

— A SINGLE BRIGHT SPOT —

PCs who assisted the apothecary Ulthvas Daubler are far more aware of what is going on with the attempts to cure the Grey Ague than the majority of their fellows. A week or so after the PCs are pressed into service, a message arrives stating, "*The matter that you lot have set me upon has turned out quite well. Come at your earliest conveniences.*" A positively glowing Daubler swiftly ushers the PCs into the Rusty Remedies, pressing cups of potent moonshine into their hands as they enter, regardless of the time of day. "*I've done it lads. Wouldn't have been possible without your help. The damn thing isn't just a disease; it's a poison as well.*" Daubler gives each one of the characters a small bottle filled with a syrupy fluid smelling of mint. "*This should hold you lot fast against the Ague. I wish I could make more, but this batch took me days already. I've turned my findings over to the Shallyans. Hopefully, they'll be able to speed up the process.*" Daubler's mixture is, effectively, a booster of sorts, as well as a poison cure.

Daubler's potion fortifies its drinker, giving them a +40% bonus Toughness Tests made to resist contracting the Grey Ague for the next few months. A sick person drinking the potion immediately stops shivering and has their stats restored to normal within hours, effectively curing them of the disease. Daubler is jubilant about the city's prospects and the possibility of now helping "those poor sods at the port." When the PCs finally depart, he asks that they still remain in touch.

While Daubler's breakthrough will eventually benefit all, it has, sadly enough come too late to benefit any but the PCs in the immediate future. The Shallyans don't have enough time to do anything extensive with Daubler's information before the events of the following section.

PCs that never acquired or used Widenhof's notes have to go without a remedy against the Pale Shivers.

— VERMINTIDE —

After a night of drinking to drown their sorrows, the Characters return to whatever rooms they've managed to acquire and bed down for the night. Depending on the PCs' housing arrangements, this could be anywhere from the Tallows to one of the neighbourhoods of the Merchant District. If their accommodations are in a really bad area, they may justifiably have someone on watch, and you'll need to slightly modify the following description.

Presume they are all asleep unless you have a definite reason to believe otherwise. Have all the PCs make a **Perception Test**; the time has come to rattle your players' cages. To the PC that gets the greatest number of degrees of success, ties re-rolled to whoever rolls highest but still succeeds, read or paraphrase the following:

You awaken from a troubled dream, night sweat still clinging to your skin and coating the bedding about you. Your memories of the dream fade quickly, but a soft rustling sound lingers until you realize it is coming from the street outside. You rise stiffly and move to the window, expecting to see a few prowling cats or maybe some tired Dogfaces. But that isn't what you see. What you see is a flood of Skaven, hundreds strong, pouring down the streets and over the roofs of the buildings about you.

You have less than twenty seconds before the Skaven are upon you. Make the most of them.

Have the PC that woke up immediately describe his actions. Give him no time to think; he has to *immediately* decide what he's doing. Presuming the light sleeper states something along the lines of "I wake up the others while I grab my gear" he alone has the ability to collect all of his equipment. Otherwise, he and all the other players only get to grab one or two items before they have to flee or risk being completely overrun by the Skaven. Remember as well that the PCs were bedded down for the night. They are likely to be in night clothing at best or naked at worst. It is totally implausible that any of them would be wearing armour. If any player insists on being in armour, tell them that they must be stinking drunk to have been able to sleep so and immediately roll on the chart on page 115 in *WFRP*. If you're feeling really cruel, you can force any Humans in the group to make **Agility Tests** to find specific items in the dark. To help them along, you may wish to have a frothing Ratman leap in the window and start laying about the room with a rusty flail.

As the characters flee their building, screams are erupting throughout the neighbourhood. The PCs hear Talabheim awaking in terror. On the streets behind them, they can see people stumbling into the street only to be cut down by the advancing Skaven, who slay without pause as they move into the city. These Skaven are nasty-looking, diseased beings, bound in leather wraps and rotting rags. The last of Nelrich the Suppurator's troops are pouring out of the Ratholds (ironically enough) and into the streets of the two Talabheim neighbourhoods nearest the Taalbaston and the Wizard's Way: the Tallows and the Old Market. Depending on where the PCs are escaping from, their experience will either be dodging through the twisting streets and dead end alleys of the Tallows as Skaven skirmishers leap down upon them or running over the cobblestones of the Merchant District with fast-moving Pestilens Plague Monks snarling at their heels. A couple of Weapon Skill rolls may be in order as the PCs slice at one or two Ratmen that have chosen to run out ahead of the main horde, something that seldom happens among Skaven unless they are Frenzied.

This scene isn't about the PCs fighting—it's about them running for their lives. Stopping for too long to fight with the Skaven horde is suicide. As the poor neighbourhoods awaken and their panicking citizens run out into the street, flight rapidly becomes even more difficult. The narrow streets of the Tallows swiftly become near impassable, and while there are wider roads in the Old Market, that just means there are larger mobs surging down them. How long it takes to escape the main thrust of the Skaven attack is largely a function of just how close to the Taalbaston the characters started. Assume it takes ten panicked minutes to get from the base of the Wizard's Way to one of the better neighbourhoods. Characters running with the crowd must make a **Routine (+10%) Agility Test** each minute or fall to the street. Characters that fall must make an **Agility Test** to get up. Failure means they must succeed at a **Toughness Test** or take 4 damage as the crowd tramples them. PCs may decide to take to the rooftops. It will take three **Easy (+20%) Scale Sheer Surface Tests** to get to a suitable rooftop if they start from the ground. Leaping from roof to roof requires an **Agility Test** each time—running over rooftops and three successful leaps will take them out of the endangered area. Failure on any of the jumps causes 5 damage as they plummet to the streets below. Whilst the rooftops may be the more dangerous course—PCs taking them will easily circumvent the city's street barricades in the next section.

The following are examples of the various images the characters may see as they flee towards one of the better neighbourhoods of

Talabheim. Feel free to tailor a few in such manner that they'll really mess with your players.

- A massive Ratman swathed in ornate black and green cloth so his features are covered stands at the midpoint of the Wizard's Way, surrounded by a body guard of frothing troops who bear what appears to be smoking flails of some kind. The huge Skaven's robes are covered in vile-looking runes that glimmer in the darkness, making him easy to see from even a great distance. From his posture, he is clearly overseeing the battle.
- The Halfling innkeeper Wanda Threeapples roams with her staff over the various balconies and the roof of her inn, pelting the oncoming Ratmen with rotting fruit.
- A big group of Dogfaces around twenty strong stand in the midst of the street, weapons drawn. "Hold, hold! They're just rats!" They cry as the running crowds surge past them.
- A man wrapped in some kind of fur stands on a low rooftop with arrows all about him. He calmly fires arrows into Skaven that have come close enough to strike at the Humans running on the street until he is, at last, swarmed by dozens of the Ratmen who scale up the walls of his building with ease.

THE BARRICADES

As the PCs approach the better neighbourhoods, they find to their dismay there have already been barricades erected along the streets, cordoning off the two poorer neighbourhoods. While they are still registering that the street is now impassable, a massive flight of arrows arcs over the barrier, striking Humans and Skaven alike. Militia troops with spears stand at the barricades, stabbing anyone that comes near, regardless of the crowd's pleas. Clearly, they need to find another way out of their predicament. Note in the confusion of their flight, the PCs may have been separated, meaning each man is on his own for surviving the night.

PCs that had already taken to the rooftops are in a better position for avoiding the attentions of the troops at the barricade. Such characters can make an opposed **Routine (+10%) Concealment Test** against the troops average Perception (38%) to slip down and quietly fade into Talabheim. No Silent Move is necessary as the mass of screaming people is doing a fine job of concealing any sounds the PCs may make. Each PC who fails is immediately subject to a Longbow attack (BS 44%) and must find a different way or soon becomes a pincushion.

Their militia duties over the last few weeks may stand the characters in good stead, for one of their options is to go underground, passing through the sewer tunnels under the barricades. The city has anticipated this (they're fighting Ratmen after all) and placed troops in a few key tunnels, but if the PCs swiftly move directly east or west for a mile, they can make it out. Running through sewage tunnels ill equipped, likely without a light source, and expecting Skaven troops at any second is a harrowing experience requiring a **Routine (+10%) Will Power Test**. A PC who fails can't bring himself to run heedless into the dark that the Ratmen normally claim as their own.

Finally, the PCs can choose a building near the barricades and make a stand of sorts. The flights of arrows from the Talabheim troops eventually drive the Skaven back, as well as kill a great

number of men, women, and children. PCs taking this course survive the night, but all of them must make a **Challenging (-10%) Will Power Test** in the morning or gain 1 Insanity Point, as well as making an **Easy (+20%) Toughness Test** or contract the Grey Ague.

Consider any other plan the PCs come up with as having a reasonable chance of success, other than trying to appeal to the troops who have very strict orders to not speak to those beyond the barricade on penalty of being tossed over themselves.

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

PCs with ready cash may have acquired housing someplace other than the poorer neighbourhoods. Their experience of this harrowing night is very different. A Dogface Sergeant they know pounds on their room doors and tells them to get dressed at once. They are hustled through the streets to a series of hastily erected wooden barriers. Around them are representatives of all of Talabheim's forces, from a large body of Standing Army soldiers, most of whom look just as tired as the PCs' feel, to a small contingent of mounted Knights of the White Wolf, whose leader is apparently arguing that they should be let beyond the barriers to fight.

PCs that make an **Easy (+20%) Gossip Test** hear from the soldiers that spies informed the city authorities some time ago that the Ratmen were soon to attack en masse. Questions regarding the spies' identities are met with shrugs. Talabheim prepared the materials to make the barriers at a moment's notice and hoped for the best. General Mannfred Schultz of the Hunters' Council is brought before the milling troops on a palanquin (he is still recovering from his injuries sustained in the north). He gives a short speech, extolling the troops and telling them they stand for Talabheim. The barricades must be held; the Ratmen cannot be allowed to pass any farther into Taal's sacred city. Anyone beyond the barrier is likely to have the plague, and if they don't, they soon will. With that, masses of archers take up positions. The PCs are handed spears and told various troops will be taking turns at the barriers. Their orders are to kill anything or anyone attempting to break through, without exception, because of the great risk of infection from the plague.

It's a grim night for the PCs—one they will remember for many nights to come. Any PC that stood on the barricades has to make a **Will Power Test** in the morning or gain 1 Insanity Point as he looks upon the carnage of his fellow citizens he helped create.

But the barricades hold.

THE AFTERMATH

The Diseased Ratmen seized two of Talabheim's neighbourhoods, portions of the Ratholds and part of the Wizard's Way. Flagged messages from the Wizard's Way garrison indicate the Skaven didn't manage to breach the upper layers of the fortress, but they apparently control the portcullis gates and below. The general populace of the rest of the city, however, does not know this. When hysterical citizens besiege the Grand Manor the following day, demanding that the Countess do something at once about the Skaven problem, liveried messengers disseminate the new official position. The heralds reveal a number of gangs of Ratmen did indeed creep up from the city's sewers and won a lucky victory



against the poor denizens of the Tallows and the no-account travellers in the Old Market. But what can you expect from such untrained, ill-equipped, and cowardly folk? It's not as if the City Militia even bothered to patrol the Tallows, there weren't any troops to stop the Skaven, really. Now though, the situation is different. Already, members of Taal's Chosen have been selected to go over the Taalbaston and seek aid from Talabecland and Altdorf. The Countess and Parliament are specifically requesting the support of several famed elite units of Dwarf Shieldbreakers to help scour the tunnels under the Taalbaston once the Ratmen have been taken care of above ground. Even now, the forces of the city are planning a massive counterattack to drive the vermin back where they belong, and so it goes.

It isn't all lies—help has been sent for. But the forces manning the barricades don't look like they're going to be involved in any counterattack any time soon, especially since the houses of the rich and powerful were not compromised by the Skaven attack. The few citizens outside of the poor areas who have relatives, friends, or businesses in the affected neighbourhoods still complain, demanding something be done immediately, but since they are a relatively small minority, they're mostly ignored. There is, however, a lot of talk about what should be done by all parties. One of the leading Knights of the Stag named Reinhold suggests retrieving gunpowder from the South Quarry and blowing up portions of the Tallows, which he feels nobody would miss anyway in order to mount a surprise assault—a suggestion you should make certain the PCs hear as it becomes relevant in the final chapter of this adventure. While blowing the town apart is shouted down at first, suggestions of a controlled fire soon start making the rounds. All such plans for an assault, though, are curtailed over the next day as a foul wind arises in the city and the air grows thick with the faint smell of rot. The greater bulk of Talabheim's military forces and no small number of civilians soon

show the signs of having caught the Grey Ague (the non-enhanced version). Within two days, the PCs find they are some of the only healthy members of the armed forces left in Talabheim, a point that matters significantly in the following section.

The PCs are likely to need new accommodations, which are actually relatively easy to come by. The Talabheimers open their hearts and homes to their fellows, allowing the desperate to stay with them till the city can get the present troubles sorted out.

— THE CURIOUS ART OF DOCTOR GUGULA SKELL —

When the various armed forces of Talabheim start succumbing to the Grey Ague, Parliament desperately enlists the aid of every able-bodied person they can find. The government gives out blanket pardons for past misdeeds, such as avoiding the draft, so if the PCs have managed to evade being inducted so far, such as by hiding out in the Tallows, now is probably the time to come forward. The nobles pool together to offer the unprecedented sum of 2 *gc* a week to any warriors who are sound of limb and offer lesser-but-equally generous wages commensurate with other useful skills. A number of street urchins get recruited to run messages, freeing up the city's criers to perform other duties. Presuming the Characters take the city up on the offer, they soon find themselves out on patrol. While keeping the peace is certainly desirable, Detlef Kienholtz, the commander of the Dogfaces, makes it clear the PCs' gravest duty is to keep an eye out for Skaven infiltrators. PCs that choose to ignore Talabheim's need just don't get paid for any of the services they performed previously.

In the evening, two days after the Infestation (which is what the citizens of Talabheim have swiftly taken to calling the Ratmen's seizure of the poor neighbourhoods), the PCs hear screams

A number of taverns and inns allow guests to stay for vastly reduced rates. No one bothers to question anyone that managed to slip out of the lost neighbourhoods before the barricades went. Everyone pretty much figures if an individual managed to get out after the streets were blocked, he is either very lucky or very, very dangerous, either way, not the sort to meddle with. Allow the PCs a day to settle in and start taking stock of their situation before the Plague Zombies start showing up.

echoing over the cobblestones. They round the corner to a gruesome sight: three mostly naked men mauling a young, well-dressed bravo who is clearly trying to defend a young girl standing behind him. The girl is screaming as loud as her lungs allow because one of the attackers is chewing great bloody chunks out of the elegantly attired youth's arm. When the PCs do something to indicate their presence, two attackers turn to face them, whilst the third continues to gnaw on the young man. If the PCs announce themselves by hacking down one of the assailants from behind, they get in a free round of attacks without reprisals.

When the figures turn, have all the PCs make an **Easy (+20%) Will Power Test** or gain 1 Insanity Point due to the mind-jarring appearance of the Zombies. All three are clad in white linen loincloths and nothing else. The first of the three has no eyes in his skull, he does, however, have a wide set of blinking eyes in place of nipples on his chest. His eye sockets have both been filled with elaborately carved blue glass of some sort. The second Zombie has a dull red glow instead of eyes—in all six of his eyes, in fact, both of his hands have been replaced with leering skulls that gnash their teeth and chatter as he advances. The third Zombie, presently chewing on the unfortunate fashion plate, is covered with elaborate markings of some kind and a series of slowly undulating fingers that run from the bottom of his left foot up his leg and over his chest to end at his right shoulder. All three have elongated nails that have been sharpened into wicked claws.

BEHIND THE SCENES: PAWNS IN MOTION

The Grey Seer Asorak Steeleye has nearly broken his arm patting himself on the back for his own cleverness. Nelrich the Suppurater performed on cue, seizing part of the city, enough to frighten the man-things and get them to send for aid but not enough to unduly panic them.

To sow further confusion, Steeleye has activated a key agent of his in Talabheim, one he has prepared for years for the coming days. Gugula Skell came to the Grey Seer's attention years ago when a Clan Eshin assassin in his employ brought news to him of a young woman who was secretly buying cadavers for dissection and performing experiments on them. Steeleye set his agents to regularly supplying the budding young artist with materials for her work and was, in fact, the one who made certain she received an unexpurgated copy of Van Hel's infamous masterwork on Necromancy, the *Liber Mortis*. By the time she realized she had fallen in with the legendary Skaven, it was far too late for her to get out of the deal. At this point, she no longer cares. Steeleye has known for years that a Necromancer would be useful, and the day has finally come to call in old favours. The Grey Seer ordered Skell to unleash her masterworks on the unsuspecting Talabheim, and she regretfully complied. It's just one more way to keep the man-things distracted as the Grey Seer prepares the crucial next phases of his assault.

Artful Plague Zombies

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 30% | 0% | 35% | 35% | 10% | — | — | — |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: None

Talents: Frightening, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Undead

Special Rules:

Diseased: Those reduced to 3 Wounds or below by Plague Zombies must make a Toughness Test or become infected with the Grey Ague.

Mindless: Plague Zombies are animated corpses with no mind or spirit of their own. They have no Intelligence, Will Power, or Fellowship and can never take or fail Tests based on these Characteristics.

Shambling: Plague Zombies are relentless but slow. They cannot take the run action.

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Claws

Trappings: Loincloths

The Plague Zombies give no quarter but are obviously not very imaginative combatants. Once the PCs dispatch the Undead, the young lovers they rescued are very grateful, though eager to leave the scene as swiftly as possible in search of medical attention. The young bravo is named Sebastian Ottweiler. He says he was out on a stroll with his fiancée, Marlies, when the Zombies lurched out of the shadows and attacked them. Neither of the lovers has any idea where the Zombies came from.

It takes neither Priest nor Wizard to tell the Zombies' bodies have been modified. A successful **Academic Knowledge (Science) Test** reveals that an expert has sutured on the various extra parts, though any PC with the **Surgery Talent** realizes this without a roll upon studying the corpses. On the off chance that one of the PCs has the skill and a willingness to thoroughly examine the bodies, a **Routine (+10%) Academic Knowledge (Necromancy) Test** divulges that the markings on the corpse and the blue glass eyes are quotations from the infamous *Liber Mortis* of the legendary necromancer Van Hel. A **Hard (-20%) Academic Knowledge (Magic) Test** also reveals this.

Further, there seems to be a raised rune of some sort on each of the Zombies' right ankles. The rune resembles a stylised G with perhaps another letter and a flourish. None of the PCs recognize the symbol, regardless of their skills. Finally, an **Easy (+20%) Common Knowledge (Empire) Test** indicates the linen loincloths that the Zombies are all wearing are, strangely enough, of a quality that even the most exacting noble would approve of. PCs that could care less about the problems of others hear more than the normal screams coming from various neighbourhoods throughout Talabheim and probably strongly consider planting themselves behind a solidly reinforced door till morning.

A **Hard (-20%) Follow Trail Test** reveals a few hints of bare footprints in the dust of the road. The track leads the characters towards the east of Talabheim before fading to obscurity. Whilst the PCs are walking the trail or deciding what to do next, one of the city's newly employed street urchin runners comes dashing up to them with a message that he swiftly tries to divulge, but fails because he's out of breath. After a few tries, a little encouragement, and some frantic pointing on his part, he manages to blurt out, "Zombies! (gasp) Lots! (gasp) Knoll of Doctrines!" The PCs can hear screams and the muffled sounds of battle once they make it to the edge of the Taalgarten. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters reach the Knoll:

The scene that greets your eyes as you clear the trees of the garden and look upon the Knoll of Doctrines is one of anarchy. Varied Zombies, no two alike, wander over the brightly lit hill, attacking and being attacked in turn by a myriad of individuals in Priestly form. There, a Priest wearing the twin-tailed comet of Sigmar smashes a warhammer down onto an outstretched leg, dropping a four-armed Zombie to the ground. Here a trio of Initiates bearing Taal's insignia are being driven back by an Undead monstrosity formed from two legless torsos stitched together at the waist. A squad of Dogfaces hack a Zombie to pieces, even as one of their fellows is being torn limb from limb.

As you reach the foot of the hill, a young man clad in sombre black robes walks over the rise of the Knoll. Even

from a distance in the dark, you can see the gleaming blue of his sapphire-coloured eyes. He wanders down the mound, absentmindedly touching Zombies as he passes. Each silently falls to dust in his wake.

The PCs can dive in and fight off a few more Zombies if you wish, but by the time they enter the fray, the living have the upper hand. There is a round of cheers when the last of the Undead falls, and the PCs have time to take stock of the situation. The young man, clearly a Priest of Morr, walks up to the characters and introduces himself as Paul van Soleck. Characters capable of making an **Easy (+20%) Academic Knowledge (Theology) Test** instantly recognise that name as belonging to the greatest living member of the Augurs of Morr in all the Old World, despite his tender age of 15. One by one, he silently fixes the characters with his unblinking gaze, ignoring any questions for a time before abruptly stating: "This is nothing. A display. A distraction. The true test will come soon enough. Run when you must, fight when you can. These bodies are marked. A proud sigil. An artist's mark. She takes Van Hel's dance too literally, I think. Though she, in turn, dances for Steeleye. Perhaps we all will." He laughs, once, a harsh discordant sound, then turns and swiftly walks away. He ignores anything else the Characters say as he retreats. PCs that attempt to go after him immediately have a premonition that it would be a very bad idea, though they don't consciously know why.

The Zombies on the Knoll are similar in all respects to the Undead the characters fought earlier. None of the other combatants has much to add, though the Dogfaces do mention that there have been Zombies spotted throughout Talabheim. "The Infestation, now this. It's as if Taal has abandoned us." If none



of the PCs have pointed it out yet, one of the Dogfaces mention something along the lines of “*At least we have an idea where all those bodies have been going, eh?*” With nothing else to be learned that evening, the PCs can finally head off to bed.

In the morning, the PCs hear that even in the daylight, Zombies bearing the plague are still roaming the streets of Talabheim. A **Routine (+10%) Gossip Test** reveals that the majority of the reported Undead have been encountered in the northern and eastern neighbourhoods of the city. PCs that decide to follow up on the strange markings on the Zombies’ ankles and the cryptic remarks of van Soleck need to ask a scholarly noble. Hopefully, they made a passable copy of the mark to show around. Fortunately, the grim state of Talabheim’s military and a fortuitous old law has placed a fair number of the nobility under arms, not to mention the various Knightly Orders. Characters asking around near the barricades are directed by an affable young Knight of the Stag to try their luck at the Law Quarter. “*I don’t know of any such artist’s mark. But I do know there is supposed to be a registry somewhere in the city’s books. Finding it maybe a struggle worse than facing the Undead though, lads. Good luck.*” The characters don’t have to follow up on the marks, the result being that they will spend another evening holding off a few more creatively modified Zombies.

HAS YOUR FORM BEEN STAMPED?

The Law Quarter resembles nothing so much as a sombre beehive. Darkly clad barristers, judges, and clerks bustle to and fro, the most influential trailed by trains of liveried runners who occasionally peel away to run off on an appointed errand. Solid grey buildings formed from huge blocks of granite carved from the Taalbaston loom over the PCs. The Law District was designed and built to make men feel small and insignificant before the power of the law. Most agree the architects were spot on.

Asking around gets the characters directed to the Central Registry, at the heart of the Law District, located across from the courtyard that houses the Obelisk of Laws. The Central Registry consists of a very large office, in which a pale little man sits behind a massive desk. A line some thirty persons long stands in front of the man’s desk. As the PCs look about, they immediately notice the majority of those in line are street urchins. As they’re digesting this, a couple of youngsters walk up to them. “*Morning, Sirs. Fine day. ‘Old yer place fer a pence each we will.*” The PCs will doubtless wish to know just how long the wait is likely to be. The oldest of the pair eyeballs the line and then returns, “*Oh, five hour or so.*”

And so begins the PCs’ odyssey into the horror of Talabheim law. Whether they wait or have the urchins do it for them, a short four hours later sees them to the front of the line. The clerk asks how he can help them in a voice indicating he is literally not capable of being more bored. Asking to see the artist’s registry produces a raised eyebrow and the reply. “*I believe that there are over 70 volumes in that particular registry stretching back to Talabheim’s founding. Which volume do you wish to see?*” No matter what response the PCs give, he nods, hands them a piece of parchment and says, “*You need a signature authorizing this request from your superior officer. Make certain he signs here and here. Then get this form stamped in the Hall of Records before returning here.*” Any

outbursts will be met with a raised eyebrow and a shrug. “*There’s nothing I can do, Sirs; it is the Law.*”

No matter what the PCs do, it will never be enough to satisfy the exacting clerks of the Law Quarter. Gauge your players’ frustrations levels accordingly, and push them to the brink of insanity with continual requests for better documentation. If they get everything right, forged or otherwise, the clerk says one of the signatures is too smudged for appropriate identification and demands a new one or maybe he declares they have the wrong form—even if it is the form that he gave them. Just as the PCs prepare to gut the law clerk, have the PC with the best perception notice a stylised G that is exceedingly similar to the Zombies’ mark on the base of a statue depicting the torture of a wracked miscreant that stands outside the Central Registry. Asking about the statue will gather an immediate answer from a passing judge, “*Ah yes, that’s a piece by Doctor Gugula Skell. Not her best work, but it serves. What? Oh yes, she lives in Talabheim. Manor District I should think.*”

IS THE DOCTOR IN?

Doctor Skell does, indeed, live in the Manor District. Her large estate is strategically placed on the main road that leads to the Garden of Morr. Over the last few years, a number of cadavers that were originally on their way to a proper rest made a slight detour into the large caverns below her basement. At first, it was never enough to be noticeable and no one that would be missed. In the last few months, the operation has stepped up significantly. It is highly likely that the Priests of Morr or one of their agents would’ve caught her eventually, but she was willing to throw caution away: Her patron, Asorak Steeleye, assured her that time was running out for those that would disturb her work, and he would control Talabheim long before they could catch her.

The PCs need only ask a few individuals in the Manor District to be pointed towards Skell’s place. A successful **Routine (+10%) Gossip Test** reveals that Dr. Skell, after years of administering to the richer nobles of Talabheim, is no longer a practicing physician. She is, however, a patron of the arts, known for supporting local artists. She mostly keeps to herself these days. An extra degree of success on the Gossip Test also brings up that whilst she is fairly well thought of in the neighbourhood, she seldom socializes anymore except at one or two of the bigger art events each year. Apparently, she has some kind of skin condition that keeps her out of the sun.

Skell’s manor is not noticeably different on the outside than any of the other manor houses in the district. It appears to be a plush two-storied building with a walled garden. The backyard has several gates allowing passers-by to look in. The garden isn’t as well kept as the majority of the others in the neighbourhood, and there is a faint smell of pungent flowers about the walls. A **Very Easy (+30%) Perception Test** reveals the scent as the strong aroma of rotting lilacs, which could easily cover the smell of a few corpses. Nobody answers at the door, no matter how hard the Characters may pound. An **Easy (+20%) Academic Knowledge (Law) Test** indicates that the Characters, due to the suspicious marks on the Zombies, can legally enter Doctor Skell’s manor in a forceful manner. Prudence may suggest going to get some back-up, maybe attempting to find a Witch Hunter or two, but the PCs should be well aware at this point that the city has very few able-bodied troops to spare, and their evidence at the moment, while highly suspicious, is circumstantial—and Talabheim is a city of laws.

Presuming the PCs proceed, getting into Skell's manor is pretty easy—a couple of solid blows open the front door. The interior is spacious and filled with tasteful furniture, but there is nothing to be found that the characters wouldn't expect to find in a physician's home. A small study holds a number of books on medicine written in either Classical or Reikspiel and a few on the Arts written in Tilean, but nothing on the occult. A **Hard (-20%) Search Test** in the Doctor's main hall, however, reveals a false-backed closet. The back panels have been cleverly designed to roll out and away, revealing a crudely hacked staircase leading down. The staircase is pitch-black, and the PCs are unlikely to have any torches. After they've sorted out a light source, they can proceed. The dark corridor leads down, far below the level of the street by a good 30 feet and into a circular room. Unlike the coarse tunnel that led to it, the room seems to have been formed whole from the rock itself. It's blindingly obvious that the room is Dwarf work, but a **Trade (Stoneworker) Test** or other suitable skill reveals the room is ancient, so old it can only belong to the Undgrin Ankor.

A single table formed from a large piece of white stone, perhaps alabaster or granite, rests in the centre of the room. It is covered with old stains that are clearly blood. A massive candle-bearing chandelier is suspended above the table by an iron chain wrapped about a post near the entrance. Several other tunnels lead off into the darkness about the room. A large series of cabinets sit on the far side of the room. The cabinets are filled with an array of scrupulously clean medical instruments as well as a number of saws. One box is filled with a wide variety of string, twine, and sinews. Another holds dozens of needles, ranging from small pins to large sewing needles. As the PCs are realizing just exactly what it is that the good doctor does with her spare time, a voice echoes down one of the corridors, "Have you gentlemen found what you came for?"

An average-sized figure that, at first, seems to be entirely clad in armour made of bone slowly walks into the room from one of the side corridors. He silently advances into the room, and the PCs will swiftly realize that the bone armour is, in fact, part of his body. His exposed rib cage is interwoven with a darkly beautiful series of moulded bone plates and intricately engraved lengths of steel. The blazing blue pits of fire that once held his eyes regard the characters for a moment before his weirdly echoing voice continues.

"You come too late warriors, she has already answered her master's call. I am, or was, Christoph Baumer." A **Challenging (-10%) Academic Knowledge (History) Test** recalls the name Christoph Baumer as being one of the great heroes of Talabheim during the Time of Three Emperors. "I am bound to this place." His body shudders. "But I would have it otherwise. I loved this city in life; some part of me loves it still. I offer you the only bargain I can. Swear in holy Sigmar's name that you will release me if I will tell you that which you need to know."

- What do we need to know? "Who it is that would blind the Eye of the Forest forever."
- What will it take to release him? "You must defeat me and have a Priest of the Death God consecrate my remains. Otherwise, I will rise again at her call."
- Whose call? "The corpse artiste. The thrice-damned necromancer, Gugula Skell."

If the Characters refuse, he pulls forth his sword and attempts to kill them without speaking further. He immediately tries to

manoeuvre over to the entrance to the room so they cannot flee. If the Characters agree and swear to do as he asks, he nods and speaks quickly as he slowly draws his blade.

"Skell is a pawn of the Ratmen. She is bound to a powerful Skaven Wizard named Asorak Steeleye. The plagued troops that hold the poor quarter of the city are not the Steeleye's though. They belong to a rival of his named Nelrich the Suppurater." He shudders again, visibly attempting to restrain his hand. "The true battle comes soon... I know Steeleye wanted the Countess to send for help, but I don't know why. Defend yourselves, I can give no quarter." With that, he attacks until dismembered.



Christoph Baumer—Honourable Wight

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 50% | 35% | 45% | 45% | 38% | 35% | 55% | 35% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 2 | 18 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Perception, Speak Language (Classical & Reikspiel)

Talents: Frightening, Night Vision, Undead

Special Rules:

Wight Blade: Baumer's sword is formed from an interwoven mesh of bone, horn, and ivory. In his hands, it counts as a magical weapon and inflicts SB+2 Damage. When he causes Critical Hits, he rolls twice on the Critical Hit chart and inflicts the deadlier result. In another's hands, Baumer's sword is merely a strange and beautiful Hand Weapon.

Armour: Medium Armour (Full Bone/Mail Armour)

Armour Points: Head 3, Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3

Weapons: Wight Blade

Trappings: None

After the characters defeat Baumer, they may decide to swiftly investigate the tunnels beyond Skell's "art room" before heading away from the cursed place. There are three corridors to be explored. One of the tunnels heads steeply up, ending at a small wrought iron door that opens onto a stinking corridor—part of Talabheim's sewer system. One appears to be further Dwarf work, and it leads off in a westerly direction, towards the Taalbaston. A successful **Follow Trail Test** notes that a fairly large number of barefoot individuals, and at least one creature walking on hands, took that tunnel within the last day. The final tunnel goes a short way before opening onto a large cavern. A cavern filled with grey slate slabs loaded with corpses, as well as several piles of various body parts—a few of which have been animated in some horrid fashion and twitch feebly in the light. Characters that "died" of the plague in the previous chapter will awaken here. Any PC that looks around in Skell's "storage locker" must make an **Easy (+20%) Will Power Test** or gain 1 Insanity Point.

The tumultuous events of **Chapter Five** await them on the city streets above.



CHAPTER FIVE: THEY HAVE GUNS

Undead stalk the streets and diseased Ratmen infest the poorer quarters. No one walks abroad unless they are heavily armed or accompanied by bodyguards. The tension in the air is palpable, and all but the most basic city structures are breaking down. The Grey Ague is everywhere, and the city's troops are rife with it. An entire squad of

Wherein our principals discover that the Ratmen have mastered a few of warfare's secrets, including the use of gunpowder and overwhelming force.

the Taalbaston Tunnel Brigade has disappeared without a trace, and all communication with the guards in High Watch has suddenly ceased.

Under Mórrslieb's full and daunting green light, the end of Talabheim begins.

— SPLINTERS IN THE FOREST'S EYE —

If the PCs investigated the manor of Doctor Skell, they return to the streets armed at best only with the words of a Wight. No matter how charming or convincing they might be, there is no one to take them seriously about warnings of a greater Skaven attack than the one that has already occurred—though reporting Gugula Skell is the Necromancer responsible for the Plague Zombies immediately gets the full attention of the armed forces. A warrant is issued for her immediate arrest, and the city authorities seize her manor until a full investigation can be completed. The characters have only a single day to prepare themselves, as Steelee's attack happens that evening. If the characters decided against entering Skell's manor, they are in the same position as the rest of the city, having little to no warning of that which is to come.

The majority of this chapter describes the various battles throughout Talabheim as the Skaven troops of Asorak Steelee's Clan Skryre allies, along with some mercenary Clanrat Warriors

belonging to the Rictus Clan and a few of the specialized beasts of the Moulder clan, sweep into the city. No matter how valiant the characters may be in their defence of the city, Talabheim's sickened forces are outnumbered twenty to one. In addition, as you may have discerned from the title of this chapter, there is a subtle psychological truth here to consider: the citizens of the Empire cannot believe the Skaven could be so technologically advanced. In point of fact, they are barely willing to acknowledge the existence of the Skaven—when an entire army of fictional enemies packing serious firepower shows up from seemingly nowhere, they are completely unprepared for it and spend a great deal of time in denial. Talabheim's fall is inevitable.

PCs may participate, or perhaps the better word would be "survive" through any of the various battles throughout the city, depending on where they are and where they decide to flee to. At first, it still seems as if the forces of the city can hold the Skaven back—but as more and more of the Grey Seer's forces pour

into Talabheim, the grim truth soon dawns on the characters. There will be a number of pockets of resistance the Skaven won't manage to breach with their initial assault—these too are

discussed, and the PCs may try to reach one of them. The various Skaven troops that make up the attack are all summarized in **Appendix One**.

— THE FIRST BLOWS FALL —

Late in the evening, as Mórrslieb waxes full yet sickly, citizens in the Merchant District and the troops manning the barricades about the Old Market smell something strange on the wind. An **Academic Knowledge (Science) Test** reveals the scent is similar to those caused by powerful caustic reactions, *e.g.* a strong acid. Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs.

There is a foul smell on the wind this night. It clings to the back of your throats and sets the few soldiers who haven't succumbed to the Grey Ague to coughing. It is an ill night to begin with, as the full face of the Chaos moon Mórrslieb illuminates the streets of Talabheim with its sickly green light. A soft rumble shakes the cobblestone streets, and in the pause that follows all awake and some abed feel a second violent ripple shudder through the ground. Several columns of dust arise to the north of the city, along the base of the Taalbaston. And then you hear it—a cry like that of thousands of angry birds or perhaps, rats, shrieking as one.

A large portion of the Taalbaston along the Old Market has collapsed with an enormous rumble, and the ground throughout Talabheim shakes with its fall, causing the characters, wherever they are, to feel it. A vast horde of Skaven Clanrat Warriors lead by Skryre skirmishers charges up into the city from a staging area they adapted from one of the old Dwarf stations of the Undgrin Ankor. Simultaneously, elite squads of Rictus Stormvermin supporting Skryre weapon teams attack from staging points located under the sewers in the east of the Manor District and the south of the Law Quarter.

MAIN FORCE

The main force quickly slaughters its way through the remnants of the Pestilens troops left in the Old Market and charges the barricades. Their orders are to immediately secure High Watch and then move through Dragon's Home and Nordgate, subduing as they go, until they can ultimately seize the Row of the Gods as the Skaven believe that this will best demoralize the mostly Human populace. This immense force is lead by Steeleye's strongest ally, Eckmorkast Sparker—a powerful Clan Skryre Warlock Engineer.

Read or paraphrase the following to PCs near the Old Market Barricades:

A wave of diseased Ratmen charge down the street towards you, blindly fleeing from some enemy you cannot see. They are clearly terrified; few of them bear weapons, and they run without hesitation through the storms of arrows the city's troops rain down on them and directly onto the spears of the men at the barricades. Shots ring out, and men about you start pitching over, off the barricades. Out of the darkness in the Old Market marches a vast horde of Skaven in polished armour cuirasses, moving with

precision, hundreds strong. Ratmen with odd-shaped braces of pistols walk alongside them, firing as they come. Taal preserve us, rats with guns!

Even as you absorb this terrible sight, a new one greets your eyes—the Skaven part as they draw near the barricade and a single figure walks forward through their ranks. A Ratman that looks like nothing you've ever seen before strides to the front of the Skaven line. His eyes are hidden by a bizarre set of goggles, which shimmer oddly in the light cast by a strange device that whirrs and shrieks on his back. Cables run from the device, over and directly into his body at different points. He thrusts forth a wickedly bladed spear and shouts foul words in his debased tongue. A purple-green bolt of lightning surges from the spear to blow a smoking hole through the barricade, and the troops about him charge into the breach.

The PCs may stand against the main force anywhere along their projected path, but fighting them is like trying to stand against the tide and the battle will, at best, be a steady retreat till the characters can secure a defensible position elsewhere in the city. The Skaven finally overrun Dragon Home and Nordgate, but the forces of the Row of the Gods hold them until the second phase. The entire Merchant District is under their control within three hours of their entrance through the Taalbaston. The few Pestilens troops they don't kill flee to the Tallows or are slaughtered by the city's forces.

TROOPS PRESENT

Clanrat Warriors, Clan Skryre Skirmishers (Warplock Pistols), Clan Skryre Warfire Thrower Teams (Fleeing Pestilens Plague Monks), and Eckmorkast Sparker (see page 81).

FLANKING FORCES

The flanking force consists mainly of two bodies of extremely competent troops. The first group has orders to seize the Grand Manor and secure as many nobles as possible, but their specific target is the Countess Elise. The second group has been tasked with taking the Row of the Gods. While the Law District seems at first a poor target, its place at the heart of the city and its solid granite buildings made the Grey Seer decide it would make an excellent place for his base of operations.

Read or paraphrase the following to PCs near the Manor District:

In the distance from the north of Talabheim, you can hear the din of many voices. Even at this distance, the faint echoes of the sounds of battle still come to you, albeit dimly. As you consider what it is you intend to do, a figure emerges from a small sewer drain some twenty yards away from you. A large Ratman with black fur slips up from beneath the street, and he is quickly followed by a dozen more. Each one

bears a wicked looking glaive and polished armour, nothing like the diseased Ratmen you've fought so far. The Skaven chitter amidst themselves for a moment in their foul high-pitched tongue and then swiftly run east along the Avenue of Heroes towards the Grand Manor.

PCs in the Manor District have encountered a large force of black-furred Skaven running over the Avenue of Heroes towards the Grand Manor. A huge fight ensues between the Ratmen, soldiers from the army, and various members of the Knightly Orders. Talabheim's forces do well at first, but eventually, several Clan Skryre teams join them to bring their Warfire Throwers and Ratling Cannons to bear, decimating the Grand Manor's defenders. The PCs can participate in the fight and assist the Countess' getaway by giving her bodyguard of Knights time to help her flee. Without the PCs help, the Skaven capture the Countess and immediately take her into the sewers below.

The Grand Manor is a large series of stately buildings in which the ruler of Talabheim typically resides. They are not remotely defensible. Describe the battleground as if it was occurring in a nice park gone horribly awry. Thus, hedgerows sculpted into rabbits and stags look on as knights and Skaven charge about them, hacking at each other as they move. There's nothing quite so incongruous as fighting to the death with a Stormvermin in the midst of the Countess' prized rose bushes to make a battle memorable.

Read or paraphrase the following to PCs near the Law Quarter:

The sombre streets of the Law Quarter are typically quiet by sunset, but not so this night. The din of battle echoes from the north along the narrow cobblestone streets and shakes the granite buildings of the courts. As you pass

one of the many barristers' offices that line the road, a force of black-furred Skaven carrying wicked glaives runs into your view. With them comes a pair of brown-furred Skaven carrying a strange apparatus. Even as you watch, a squad of Dogfaces charge them. The biggest of the black-furred Skaven gestures with his pole arm, and hellish green-black flames pour from the device the Ratmen are carrying, devouring the watchmen before your eyes.

PCs near the Law Quarter see multiple groups of Skaven, each one consisting of a few Stormvermin and some Clan Skryre troops, attempting to secure the various buildings of the Law District. They try to kill anyone that puts up a challenge of any sort. The Law District's struggle should prove to be a vicious skirmishing battle, as multiple veteran Dogfaces fight alongside the Characters for every yard of ground the Skaven take. Characters fighting are in for a harrowing game of cat and rat as they fight in cramped, close-quarters conditions, surrounded by the imposing buildings of Talabheim's Law Quarter. Remember the solid granite construction of the buildings and streets of the area. Warfire pours over the street and roars around corners. Many of the buildings are fairly defensible, but staying in one place for too long allows the Skaven to bring their superior numbers to bear. The fight is not yet over when the second phase begins.

Characters in either fight should be allowed to observe a key point about the Skryre weapons—whilst they are devastatingly potent, they are also highly unstable. At least one team of Warfire Throwers should explode into a massive green fireball within the PCs' view.

TROOPS PRESENT

Skryre Skirmishers (Warplack Pistols), Skryre Weapon Teams (Ratling Cannon and Warfire Throwers), and Stormvermin.

— SECOND PHASE —

The main force of Skaven troops fights in and around the Row of the Gods. Their rearguard sweeps out into the Schwartz Hold neighbourhood and moves to bolster the troops fighting in the Law Quarter. Many of the city's forces gather for a counter attack in Guildrow and the Geltwold, as well as the western portions of the Manor District. New troops move up to support the main force, and small squads of Skryre Skirmishers begin filtering throughout the eastern Manor District, seizing defensible manors with high towers.

MAIN FORCE

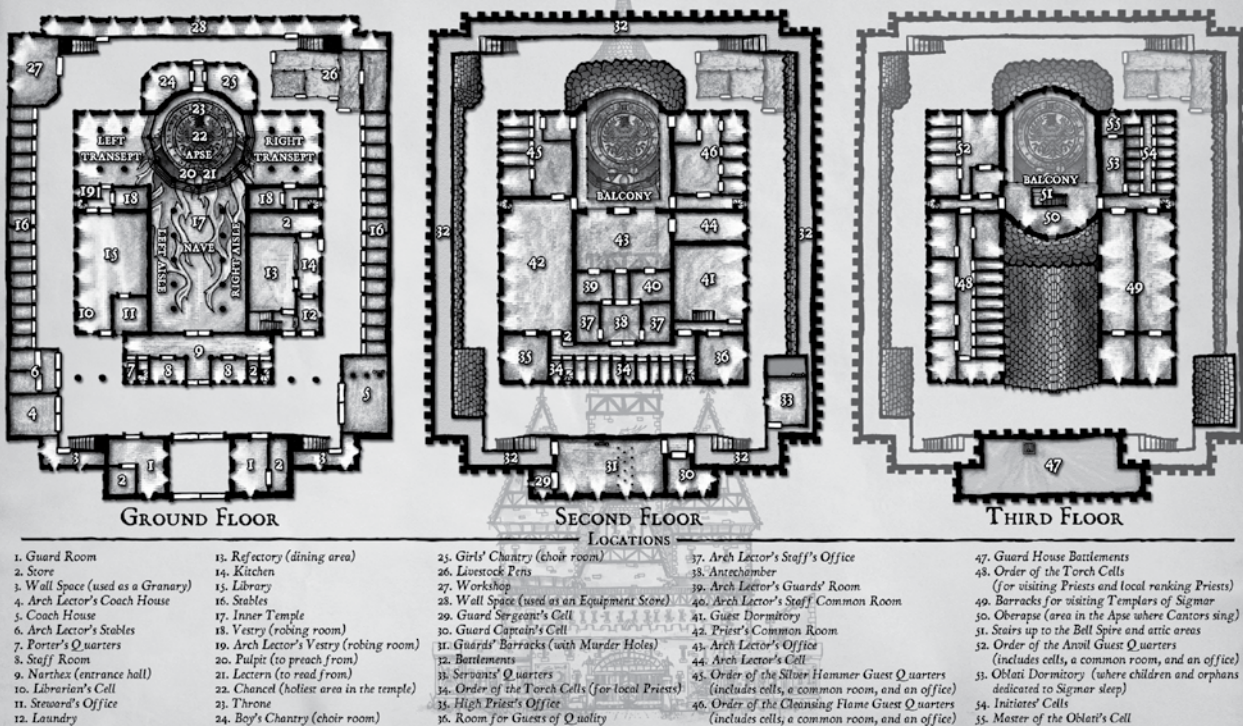
The Row of the Gods fight is exceedingly fierce due to the large number of religiously motivated warriors affiliated with the various Gods clustered there, along with no small number of Priests and a few Magisters. The PCs may have retreated into the Gods' Row if they were near the barricades, or faithful PCs may have headed there of their own volition. If a brave last stand appeals to you, have some of the orphan criers of the city reach the PCs (wherever they are) with a, "Quick! To the Gods' Row, we're regrouping there!" Or some other such nudge.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Waves of Skaven flow over the streets, straight onto the hastily erected barricades that now line the streets of the Gods' Row. As the battle begins, flocks of translucent ravens descend from the sky to tear out the eyes of hundreds of Skaven. Flames of unnatural hue and green-tinged lightning surge about on both sides of the line as mystic forces are brought to bear. Your skin tingles with the raw power you feel surging about the streets of the Gods' Row, and Skaven die by the hundreds till the night air is split with a horrendous roar that shakes you to your very bones. A squad of huge, misshapen Ratmen the size of Ogres are soon whipped to the front of the Skaven line. Limbs replaced with massive cutting shears tear through the soldiers that hold the front ranks as if they were paper, and the Rat Ogres swiftly break into the streets. As you prepare to retreat, an enormous bear rushes from behind you and tackles the first Rat Ogre, giving Talabheim's forces the time to retreat.

The Skaven's losses are phenomenal, bodies coat the ground so extensively that it can't be seen, and their troops eventually have

THE HELDENHAMMER TEMPLE



to fight over the backs of their dead. The Amber Magister that gives the PCs time to retreat grapples with the biggest Rat Ogre in a violent wrestling match that smashes a half dozen buildings before the Magister triumphs—only to be incinerated by Warpfire Throwers. PCs in the Gods' Row or those that retreated there from another neighbourhood should get the dubious pleasure of fighting one of the Rat Ogres as they retreat towards one of the temples.

THE FIGHT FOR THE HELDENHAMMER TEMPLE

As the PCs are driven back by the sheer weight of the Skaven's forces, they'll eventually realize they need a defensible place to hold against all comers. The Temple of Sigmar Heldenhammer in Talabheim was made with such a fight in mind. While the architects truly thought that the temple would never be besieged, it was built as if it was a particularly ornate Way Temple, in acknowledgement that the Eye of the Forest was one of the last places that Sigmar was known to have travelled through before leaving his Empire.

The temple is three stories and built with thick walls. It has but one grand entrance, a massive imposing oak door wrapped round with iron wrought by the Dwarfs. The inner temple is carved from granite, and intricately shaped marble pillars line the main hall. At the end of the temple proper sits an empty, oversized throne. The floor is a wonder that has drawn pilgrims from across the Empire—an intricately worked inlay of the twin-tailed comet inlaid in gold and gromril by Dwarf artisans covers the majority of the main temple's floor. As is customary in Way Temples, the

kitchens are on the ground floor, and accommodations for Priests and visiting dignitaries are on the second and third floors. The exterior is granite and covered in plates of finely worked steel. Murder holes and cunningly wrought balconies to open up on a besieging enemy dot the outside walls of the temple and the arched ceiling above.

The more powerful Priests of Sigmar are either off fighting elsewhere or more likely already killed by the time the PCs arrive with some soldiers in tow. As long as the PCs start giving sensible orders, everybody listens. A suitable **Easy (+20%) Command Test** or some such will get everybody moving. The Skaven initially besiege the front gate and then pour over the sides and roof looking for a way in. All of the Priests and Initiates present fight to the last. The fight for Sigmar's Temple should be so fierce that eventually Eckmorkast himself arrives to lead it. Eckmorkast's powers are great enough to shatter the doors of the temple in a colossal detonation. You should grant any PCs that bravely state they will fight to the death for Sigmar's Temple (or any similar "last stand" throughout the city) a Fate Point so they can be left

TO THE DEATH!

If the PCs never participate in the Gods' Row battle, the concept of them fighting to the last may still appeal. A similar fight could occur at many buildings in the Law District because they are built of similarly imposing materials, though they will tend to be less defensible. If any of the PCs are Dwarfs, the Stonehome in the Law District provides a suitable place for such a valiant death.



for dead amidst the corpses when the Skaven eventually retreat in dread of the place.

Elsewhere in the Gods' Row, the Temple of Myrmidia never falls. The Myrmidian Priesthood and the Knights of the Verdant Field fight the Skaven to a standstill, eventually forcing the Skaven to withdraw and lay siege to the War Goddess' temple.

TROOPS PRESENT

Eckmorkast, Clanrat Warriors, Rat Ogres, Packmaster, Skryre Skirmishers (Warplock Pistols), and Skryre Weapon Teams (Ratling Cannon and Warfire Throwers).

FLANKING FORCES

Skryre Skirmishers with Warplock Jezzails secure positions throughout the Manor District in high locations with a wide and clear field of view. They have orders to wait till the forces of Talabheim come within range of their rifles and then start sniping officers and generally sowing fear wherever they can. The bulk of the force that was to secure the Countess, succeed or fail, swiftly moves in to help the troops fighting in the Law Quarter.

Talabheim's forces have rallied and now move out. A large force of Dogfaces, soldiers, militia, and anyone else they can drum up charge into the Law Quarter from the Geltwold. Simultaneously, several troops of the different Knightly Orders advance down the streets of the Manor District with the intention of swinging north as they pass the Grand Manor.

The Law Quarter fight is still anyone's guess at this time, as more and more troops from both sides enter. The knights seem to go unchallenged until they pass the Grand Manor, when a number get knocked off their horses, dead before they hit the ground or anyone hears the report of the Warplock Jezzails that killed them. One knight survives a hit to the chest that punctures his armour. When one of his fellows goes to help him, tentacles sprout from the Warpstone-infested wound and throttle his comrade. This all but breaks a number of the less-seasoned knights and halts the column as they all go for cover. A few groups manage to break north and head for the fight in the Row of the Gods, but the majority are pinned down.

PCs that helped free the Countess have the choice of either advancing into the vicious fight in the Law District or helping out the knights along the Avenue of Heroes with their sniper problem. If the PCs were already fighting in the Law Quarter, they are bolstered by a wave of fresh Talabheim forces, even as the Skaven are similarly backed up.

TROOPS PRESENT

Clanrat Warriors, Skryre Skirmishers (Warplock Pistols & Warplock Jezzails), Skryre Weapon Teams (Ratling Cannon and Warfire Throwers), and Stormvermin.

— TALABHEIM'S FALL —

The embattled Knights and the various troops of the noble families finally manage to move out of the Manor District only to find the Row of the Gods is already lost to the Skaven. Realizing the true fight still lies at the heart of Talabheim, they charge stright into the massive battle in and around the Law Quarter.

The fight in the Law Quarter is still undecided. Portions of Talabheim's troops have been pushed back into the narrow streets of the Geltwold, but they have made the Ratmen pay for each inch of territory. Countless Skaven lie slaughtered on the streets surrounding the Grand Courthouse, and many of the Ratmen have retreated back into Dragon's Home.

It has been approximately five hours since the greater bulk of the Grey Seer's forces first entered the city, and the time has come at last for Steeleye to enact the last stage of his invasion plans. The Grey Seer, along with a handpicked guard of Stormvermin, enters

the battle in the Law District from Dragon's Home with Doctor Gugula Skell in tow, as well as a number of new-to-the-fray Skryre Poison Wind Globadiers. As Asorak begins levelling troops with his potent sorcery, Skell raises them and sends them against their frightened comrades.

A second contingent of Rat Ogres and Moulder Handlers come up out of the sewers near the Geltwold to slaughter everything they can see. Finally, if Eckmorkast is still alive, he brings all the remaining Skryre troops, save a few of the Warplock Jezzail-bearing skirmishers that stay hidden in the Manor District, into the fight for the Law Quarter. The battle is literally on every street and throughout the majority of the buildings in the Law District. It rages for over an hour until the Grey Seer can bring his might to bear.

If the PCs were part of the fight in the Law District, read or paraphrase the following at the fight's climax:

The cobblestone streets around you are slick with the blood of Skaven and Men. Hundreds of war cries in a half dozen tongues echo about the granite buildings of the Law District, their din only exceeded in volume by the screams of the wounded and the dying. The smell of burning flesh permeates the air and clogs your nostrils. The fight has been going on for hours it seems, though at this point you've lost all track of time. Even now, the struggle still rages all about you, yet you have no idea which side, if either, is winning and yet...

There are moments when a battle turns, when a great struggle is decided. You can feel it on the air, sense it in the tension of your comrades. As you pause to gather your bearings, a brilliant light illuminates the sky to the north of you; an ominous green glow that rends the air and leaves an afterimage dancing in your vision. New noises begin to reverberate down the streets, not the sounds of battle but the cries of men dying in terror. The courtyard some hundred feet from you suddenly erupts with menacing light, and at last, you see its cause. A slender Skaven with pale fur and the curling horns of a ram stalks into the square, clutching a staff of bone and metal. Black-furred Skaven, some of the largest you've seen yet, flow in about him as does, unbelievably, a gaily-attired Human woman. As several soldiers move to face him, the pale Skaven shrieks and bolts of green electricity leap from his fingers, making a smoking ruin of the men that tried to stand against him. He throws back his head and laughs up at the sky, a foul chittering sound that sets every nerve

you have on edge. As a fell blue light kindles in their dead eyes, the corpses about you stir and begin to rise.

And in that instant you know, this battle will soon be lost and with it, Talabheim.

The PCs, unless they are feeling fairly suicidal, will likely flee from the Grey Seer. A quick-witted PC with a missile weapon may take a shot or two at Skell, but this invites immediate retribution from Steeleye. A **Very Easy (+30%) Academic Knowledge (Strategy/Tactics)** **Test** tells the characters the fight is soon to be over. Even without a successful roll, it's a pretty easy guess. As their comrades started rising as Undead, not to mention facing the potent magic of the Grey Seer, the majority of Talabheim's forces began to rout. All around the PCs, men are running in terror. While there are pockets that hold out valiantly, like some of the Knights in the eastern portions of the Law District, the rest begin to flee. Those that try to stand are soon assailed with Poison Wind Globes and Warfire flames, which will include the PCs if they choose to make a stand somewhere. Retreating into either the Manor District or Guildrow swiftly become the only viable options, as Rat Ogres and various other Skaven skirmishers are now roaming the narrow streets of the Geltwold.

TROOPS PRESENT

Asorak Steeleye (see page 86), Clanrat Warriors, Eckmorkast (if alive, see page 81), Doctor Gugula Skell (see page 81), Clan Moulder Packmasters, Rat Ogres, Skryre Poison Wind Globadiers, Skryre Skirmishers (Warplack Pistols), Skryre Weapon Teams (Ratling Cannon and Warfire Throwers), Stormvermin, and Zombies (see stats on page 64).

— EVENTUAL FIGHT OR IMMEDIATE FLIGHT? —

PCs on the run from the Skaven have to make a hard choice: go to ground in the city or abandon Talabheim for the moment to flee eastward into the interior of the Great Crater. Actually there is a third choice: become a Skaven slave, but they're probably not interested in that course of action at the moment. Depending on the Characters' deeds during the battle, the choice may have already been made for them.

GOD'S ROW

PCs that fought in the Gods' Row have already faced one of the most terrible battles of their lives. If the characters chose to fight to the death in the Temple of Sigmar, they awoke to a neighbourhood ravaged by war and now loosely held by the Skaven. Fortunately, the Ratmen give the Heldenhammer's temple a very, very wide berth, which obviously acts to the PCs advantage as they begin taking stock of their situation. There are provisions to be had and basic equipment stored in the temple's basement. PCs that wish to start cautiously scouting the streets need to make **Silent Move Tests** opposed by the Skaven's **Perception Test**. The majority of the troops watching the streets are Clanrats, though there are also some Skryre Skirmishers acting as overseers who have a better Perception. A failed roll requires some fast thinking and a successful follow up **Concealment Test**, also opposed by the Skaven's **Perception Test** or they're in for a fight. The Clanrat patrols generally consist of five Clanrats and a Skryre Skirmisher

with a brace of Warplack Pistols to lead them. The Skryre leader, in typical Skaven fashion, leads from the rear, shooting over, past, or even through the Clanrats at the PCs. The watchful Knights of the Verdant Field in the Temple of Myrmidia are likely to notice the PCs explorations and attempt to make contact with them. The Skaven are watching their temple very carefully (+10% to Perception) but communication is still possible. PCs wishing to bring the fight to the Skaven from the shadows can do no better than to eventually start coordinating with the Myrmidians. See **Chapter Six** for more details on the Talabheim resistance. PCs that wish to head east from the Gods' Row have an easier time of it, as the Skaven haven't yet bothered to move east of Reliquary Road, nor have they yet sent troops out into Earthwerks, though that is only a matter of time.

LAW QUARTER

PCs that fought in and fled the end of the titanic battle for the Law Quarter could've ended up in one of the neighbourhoods in just about any direction but north. The Guildrow and Geltwold neighbourhoods offer different styles of hiding but remain in the city. The Guildrow is a rural area, spread out over a great distance with many copses of trees and isolated buildings. The Skaven are not overly fond of open areas, and while they do send troops through the region to secure slaves, they are fairly sloppy about it. Characters choosing to remain in the Guildrow will have to keep

an eye out for Skaven patrols and need to make the occasional **Silent Move** or **Concealment Tests** to remain hidden while they plot their next moves, see **Chapter Six** for more details. The patrols in the Guildrow are similar in composition to those in the Gods' Row. The tight streets of the Geltwold area offer a vast number of hiding places. Unfortunately, they are also far more comfortable for the Skaven. Many of the Ratmen's forces within Talabheim start occupying the buildings of the Geltwold. PCs can stay there for a maximum of three days before the sheer volume of Skaven moving into the area forces them to relocate or risk detection every hour they remain.

The Manor District is impractical for staying in for longer periods if one wishes to move about, as the buildings are so far apart. PCs that wish to go to ground for a time, though, can do worse than to pick a noble's dwelling to secretly occupy for a time. The patrols in the Manor District are smaller but far more dangerous. Pairs of Skryre Skirmishers bearing Warplock Jezzails walk the streets and occasionally perch on the top of particularly tall buildings,

randomly shooting at Humans they see on the streets or any they notice fleeing to the east.

BEYOND THE CITY

PCs that slip beyond the Skaven's noose and journey east can either head for the Taalgrunhaar Forest or make for one of the small farming villages that dot the Great Crater's interior. While the characters doubtless expect the Skaven to come after them at any minute, they learn over the next few weeks, doubtless to their surprise, that the interior of the crater seems to hold little interest for the Skaven at the moment. However, a few days after the Skaven take over the city, groups of Clan Moulder Packmasters start having fun by taking their Rat Ogre charges on "hunting trips" to keep them sharp. A week after seizing Talabheim, the Skaven send a large force of troops, over two hundred strong, throughout the interior to demand "tribute" in the form of foodstuffs from the various interior villages, on pain of immediate slavery and/or execution.

— THE AFTERMATH —

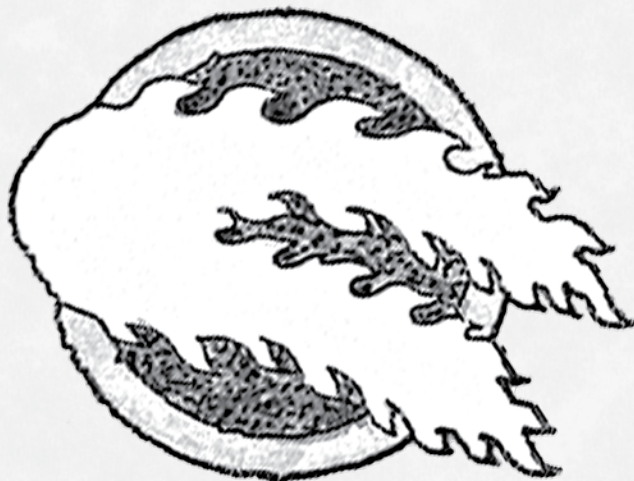
As dawn rises on the Eye of the Forest, the Grey Seer Asorak Steeleye's forces hold the majority of Taal's sacred city in their clawed grasp. After the rout at the Law Quarter, the Skaven swiftly move to secure the bulk of the Manor District and Guildrow. By noon of the following day, they begin systematically enslaving the populace of the city one neighbourhood at a time. The Grey Seer is amused to let the Suppurater stew impotently in the Tallows and never bothers to launch an assault on the poor neighbourhood.

FREE ZONES

A number of spots throughout the city remain outside of Skaven control. Since the majority of Talabheim's manors are rather open, unlike the style favoured by nobles in the rest of the Empire, they are difficult to defend. The very few noble families that defied custom for one reason or another end up walled in their homes with Ratmen set to watching their houses for any signs of activity.

More ranklesome to the Skaven's sensibilities is the Dwarfs' Stonehome—their ambassadorial building in the south-western Law Quarter that was built, in typical Dwarf fashion, like a fortress. Though the Skaven tried for long hours to get inside, the Stonehome remains unbreached. So too, the Temple of Myrmidia in the Gods' Row never falls to the Skaven. The Grey Seer eventually contents himself with setting up a large guard about both buildings and writes them off as two of the many things he'll need to deal with after his great plan has been enacted. Within two days, the enslaved population of Talabheim is set to working on curious and unexplained construction projects throughout the city, the largest one commencing in Dragon's Home. Steeleye takes several of the buildings of the Law Quarter as his personal domain and is seen to wander the streets holding strange instruments, which he constantly points towards the Taalbaston. None can explain what he intends and asking is grounds for immediate execution, usually via Warp Lightning.

The stage is set for **Chapter Six**.





CHAPTER VI: OPPOSITION IN THE EYE

The great city of Talabheim has fallen to the once legendary Skaven, and the bulk of the populace has been enslaved. The foul Ratmen have extended the uncertain favour of a cure to the Grey Ague for those that work willingly and have implied a place at

Wherein our principals must need to practice the art of stealthy resistance and opportunistic assassination, whilst ominous hints of the Steeleye's plan are revealed. Enemies must be made into allies and madmen into resources or all may be lost.

is in short supply. What Talabheim needs are heroes.

— UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT —

Two days after the invasion, the enslaved populace of Talabheim is prodded out onto the streets and forced as close as can be to the Law Quarter. Above the Obelisk of Laws, which sits at the heart of the Law Quarter, a strange device resembling a giant mirror has been erected—it serves to give more slaves a better view of the coming proceedings.

An audible gasp slips throughout the streets of Talabheim as the image of the scene below the mirrored screen is thrown up a dozen times larger and visible from many blocks away. Two hooded Skaven stand with vicious-looking glaives on either side of the Obelisk's courtyard. If the PCs didn't manage to help the Countess Elise flee the city, she is brought out in chains and thrown to the ground beside the black marble pillar. If she escaped, another prominent figure, such as one of the Hunters' Council or a powerful judge is brought forth instead. After a suitably dramatic pause, Asorak Steeleye stalks across the courtyard to stand over the chosen noble. His sole red eye glares out at the slaves, and even

those in the surrounding crowds miles away feel like he is looking right at them. With an appropriately theatrical snarl and a curt gesture of his hand, the Grey Seer levels the ancient Obelisk of Laws. The black marble pillar shatters, with the shrapnel cutting into the chained noble. The Grey Seer pauses for a moment, then speaks in clear, if accented, Reikspiel which echoes, somehow amplified, out over the city:

"Man-things, harken! Your rule-law is ended, over-over. There is only Skaven rule-law now. Listen-obey and live-live. Fight us, man-things, and you will die quick-quick." He gestures and the guards drag the Countess to her knees. Her face is blackened and bruised from several blows. She finally whispers, in a similarly amplified voice: *"I hear and obey, Lord."* The image flickers away and the slaves are quickly prodded back inside.

Over the next few days, the Ratmen force their new slaves to create fortified areas throughout the city that are closed off as slave pens.

Slaves that promptly obey their Skaven masters get to remain within a Human domicile. Those that do not are very lucky if they are only whipped or beaten until senseless and tossed into the nearest slave pen. The Skaven promptly consume the unlucky, for their appetites are eternally voracious. This particular trait is reflected in their doling out of food as well. Large groups of slaves get only token amounts of foodstuffs, never enough to feed all present. The Skaven hold that forcing their slaves to fight one another for their sustenance helps kill off the weak and make the strong even more so.

The Ratmen regularly mark property they consider theirs by soaking such belongings with urine. Slaves are regularly called upon to step into the street and be hosed down by whatever Skaven is in charge of their dwelling and the property within it. Defiance leads to death, or worse—the Skaven like to cruelly punish the particularly bold as

an example to others a few days before killing them. They have no idea why man-things like their squalling young so much, but the Horned Rat prefers young sacrifices, so disobedient families often get to see their children sacrificed before their eyes in the name of the Horned Rat before being slain in turn.

The Skaven swiftly turn their slaves to a brand new endeavour, and the streets of Talabheim are soon abuzz with a new and enforced kind of industry. Groups throughout the city begin working on what seem to be enormous wooden devices of indeterminate kind. One neighbourhood in particular rapidly gains a disturbing reputation among the enslaved Talabheimers. The hushed talk is that Steeleye is personally surveying the building of some secret project in Dragon's Home. True or not, slaves that go into the neighbourhood from elsewhere never return.

— FOUNDED A RESISTANCE —

Once the dust of the city's fall has cleared, the PCs will need to have some very hard discussions about what exactly they intend to do. Whilst some of the characters may wish to help their fellow citizens because it's the right thing to do, PCs are nothing if not individualists. One or more of the following motivations for starting a resistance of some kind to the Skaven's occupation should appeal to just about every PC as well as their potential allies. Of course, they may still just wish to run for it.

FAITH

Remember that Talabheim is the holy city of Taal—any Empire citizen, including the lowest of scum, with the slightest scrap of faith will find the thought of Taal's sacred city being overrun by

foul Chaos-worshipping Skaven completely intolerable. The beliefs of the Empire hold all of the major deities as sacred, thus a Priest of Sigmar or even Shallya would be as strident in insisting that the Skaven must be fought. While not every clergy member can wield arms in Talabheim's defence, a fledgling resistance movement will need all the help it can get. The influence of Priests and Priestesses may compel many to help with the struggle who would otherwise try to avoid getting involved.

DUTY

All citizens of the Empire have a duty to their country, though not everyone regularly acknowledges it. Patriotism is a powerful force, though, and the Heldenhammer's people have fought for the fractious unity of their lands many times over the long centuries since the Founding. Talabheim is one of the great cities of the Old World. It is the duty of every true citizen of the Empire to stand against the forces that now besiege the Eye of the Forest.

MONEY/GOODS

Being the forerunner of a resistance movement puts the characters first in line for looting. Whilst coinage and valuables may not be as immediately useful as regular food, there are some opportunists who are eternally looking ahead. Just imagining the rewards in store for those who free an entire city-state from the forces of the legendary Skaven will set the greedy to drooling.

LOVE

Natives to Talabheim will have friends and loved ones who have been enslaved by the Skaven, and abandoning them to the cruel whims of the Ratmen is unlikely to sit well with them.

BRUTAL PRACTICALITY

There is no safe way out of the Great Crater until the Skaven are removed. Better by far to encourage some other fools to die for the cause than to risk death in a solitary ill-conceived escape attempt. This motivation can apply to even the worst sorts—a hidden Chaos Cult, for example, may very well feel compelled to honestly assist in stopping the Skaven from destroying Talabheim, even if they fully intend to topple it themselves on a different occasion. "Hail, Tzee-, er, um, Taal!"

RUNNING FOR IT

PCs in *WFRP* adventures are not always the most altruistic of people. Some of them may argue, especially those from outside the Talabheim area, that they've already given more than enough for the Eye of the Forest, and it's time to leave. Such characters, whilst not exactly long on conscience, have a legitimate point. Exiting the Great Crater by any road other than the Wizard's Way is dangerous. With the Skaven near, only the insane would contemplate taking the tunnels under the Taalbaston, so over it must be. The best way to get to the top of the crater wall is to climb up through one of the twisting tunnel works leading to one of the major fortresses along the Taalbaston. Of course, all the guards manning the fortresses have disappeared without a trace, and at present, nobody that goes to one of them comes back, but maybe the PCs are feeling lucky. Supposing they do get past whatever obstacles Steeleye placed in their way (as he certainly expected the man-things to try fleeing in such manner) they have to scale down the outside of the Taalbaston. The walls of the Great Crater are notoriously smooth, the drop fatal. If they manage to live to reach the ground, Imperial Troops hold them at a distance, as they believe the PCs are carrying a virulent plague and so seize them immediately. The Empire's forces have a great many questions for them before they hang them for desertion. That's right, desertion. The Countess enlisted every able-bodied man in the city until the crisis was over. Perhaps sticking it out is the best course, even for the non-heroic.

HEROISM

The motivation of those rare souls who feel compelled to do what's right without expectation of reward. Probably non-existent in the Old World, but it's included for the sake of completeness.

STARTING OUT

Where the PCs find themselves doubtless greatly influences their first moves. If they remained in the city at the end of **Chapter Five**, there are only two truly practical areas they could've ended up staying in for long—the rural province of Guildrow or the Temple of Myrmidia in the Gods' Row. There are advantages and disadvantages to both locations.

The Knights of the Verdant Field are sworn to protect Talabheim and were all but trained to fight this kind of war, making them amazingly useful allies. However, the Maiden of War's Temple is always being watched by a large number of fairly alert Ratmen, making it useless as a practical headquarters for any large-scale resistance movement. The tactical advice the Myrmidians can provide any group serious about disrupting the Skaven is priceless though.

The Guildrow is a spread-out, rural area and its openness, in contrast to the other neighbourhoods of the city, make it distasteful to the Skaven, who prefer the crowded conditions of the inner city. Thus, eventually setting up a headquarters of sorts here is an excellent idea. The problem with it, though, is that it lies on the city's south-western end. To get anywhere else of importance in the city, one has to cross through either the Geltwold, the Law Quarter, or the Tallows neighbourhoods, all of which are filled with both Skaven and slaves, or head south to swing out and around through the more loosely watched and patrolled Manor District, a long journey at the best of times. Obviously, PCs starting out in either location are unlikely to know about the other at first—such knowledge will require scouting and, eventually, rumour mongering with slaves.

PCs that fled the city at the end of **Chapter Five** will have probably made for any one of the small villages that dot the inside of the Great Crater. Within a day or so, messengers travel to the various villages and settlements to deliver the news that Talabheim has fallen to Skaven, and the government is in exile in the village of Dankerode. Characters can easily discover that the bulk of the nobility who fled the city as well as the remnants of many of the Knightly Orders have also established themselves in the resort village. If the PCs helped Countess Elise escape, she is in charge at Dankerode and remembers the brave lads who helped her withdraw to a safer location. Otherwise General Joerg Hafner, the leader of Taal's Chosen and the commander of the Militia is in charge. If the PCs travel to Dankerode, they find it bursting with refugees, the majority of which are bedraggled nobles. Depending on the PCs' actions during the night of Talabheim's fall, their words may carry far more weight than they might expect. PCs that helped save the Countess are immediately afforded favour by the nobles, and Elise listens to anything they have to say. Characters that fought to the last at the Gods' Row battle or in the Law Quarter are regarded with a great deal of respect by the Knightly Orders after they've told their tale. Either way, in what may be a first in the PCs' lives, the nobles in the resort village are actively prepared to listen to what they have to say and actually take it into consideration before making their plans.

Unfortunately, the general consensus among the nobles is to wait. Whether Elise is present or not, all in attendance are aware that her request for aid was carried forth from Talabheim by several of the finest of Taal's Chosen. The Parliament correctly reasons that the Empire will immediately respond to one of its greatest cities being attacked; they need but wait. Pointing out Talabheim has been considered inviolate for thousands of years precisely because it is near impossible to siege and that the help that shows up will be outside the Great Crater beyond countless thousands of Ratmen, publicly brings about a chorus of hopeless denial. "*The Modern Imperial Army has never had cause to siege Talabheim before*," and other such nonsense will be uttered. Sending further messages beyond the Great Crater is a near impossible task at this point, as all communication with the fortresses of the Taalbaston has suddenly ceased; all are ominously silent. After being invited to several pointless meetings on the problem at hand, the PCs soon realize that if the people of Talabheim are going to get any help, they're going to have to be the ones who do it. If they've been outspoken about this, Elise or Hafner will secretly approach them and promise whatever aid they can muster. Both nobles recommend the odd hamlet of Vateresche in the Taalgrunhaar forest as the best place to start recruiting outside of the city for a resistance movement. Whilst the people of Vateresche are traditionally considered somewhat backward and a little off, they are also completely loyal to Talabheim and, more importantly, renowned for their stealth. PCs starting from outside of Talabheim will no doubt have to find a base of operations closer to the city than the far side of the crater.

DANGEROUS CONSCRIPTION

Finding recruits is easy; finding the right recruits is hard. PCs fond of irony may note they are now involved in a draft for the city's defence they may have earlier tried to avoid. There are



RESISTANCE FIGURES

Jirl Gladisch

Jirl is a former spice merchant, now slave, living in the slums of the Old Market. The Skaven killed his brother's family for defiance: his nephew kicked the shin of a local Clawleader. The only reason he survived was a combination of his being elsewhere at the time and the Ratmen being unaware that he was related. Jirl wants vengeance, and he wants it badly, but he is smart enough to wait for the opportunity to cause the most damage.

Silke Arendt

Silke is a Knight of the Verdant Field who only recently took her vows to defend Talabheim. She feels personally guilty for the city's fall. In her thoughts, she knows such thinking is ridiculous, but in her heart, she believes it. She constantly agitates for bigger and more daring strikes against the Skaven and backs this up by always volunteering for the most dangerous missions.

Honorius Kippenberg

Honorius is a slave prized by the Skaven, and first contacting him would've been no small feat. Kippenberg is both a scholar and an engineer. Clan Skryre immediately tapped him as a slave foreman for several of their construction projects. He brings ongoing snippets of knowledge to the resistance and reveals that the slaves are building massive trebuchets as well as other large pieces of siege equipment, though he has no idea what for.

Jorn

Jorn is a criminal with a long list of crimes to his credit, not the least of which is multiple homicide. He was in the Hollows awaiting execution when a Dogface sergeant released all of the prisoners on his wing and told them a pardon was in the offing if they fought the Ratmen. This suited Jorn just fine, and he's been killing Skaven ever since. Jorn likes knives. Sharp ones. Provoking him is not a wise idea, but if there is a dangerously well-placed Skryre Skirmisher with a Warlock Jezzail that must be taken down quietly, Jorn's the man for the job.

Carsta Scheidt

Carsta was a baker's daughter and looking forward to continuing in her parents' footsteps when the Skaven invaded. They baked her father in his own oven. Carsta has managed to ingratiate herself with a large number of Skaven by being a submissive slave and skilled cook. Rare amongst resistance members, it was Carsta who contacted the Resistance rather than the other way around and started passing them whatever information she had overheard. The Ratmen deem her a model slave. She manages to keep a pleasant smile on her face by constantly imagining what will happen to all her customers the day the Resistance lets her lace a huge batch of bread and pastries with poison.

Tobal Rounderbend

Tobal was a Halfling lecturer at the Sea of Roses. Once a gentle quiet little man, Tobal fought through much of the struggle for the Gods' Row. Witnessing the many acts of staggering courage that occurred there awoke something fierce within him. He is determined that the sacrifices he witnessed will not be in vain. Tobal is phenomenally stealthy and has swiftly learned the art of staying downwind of Skaven patrols to such an expert degree that he can unerringly follow one without any danger of being noticed.

able-bodied volunteers to be had in Vateresche and from among the Knightly Orders outside the city. The Knights of the Verdant Field certainly volunteer their services inside the city—though they can only slip past the Skaven's notice, and the temple can only safely spare a handful at a time.

Regardless of where the PCs start from, they eventually have to secretly approach slaves in key areas of the city. Fortunately, the Skaven's brutal treatment readily provides the PCs with many potential allies. The tricky part is getting a slave to remain enslaved to further the cause, as most of them, obviously, want to be anywhere other than Talabheim. Persuading a slave to join the resistance but stay where they are requires a **Challenging (–10%) Charm Test**. A fair number of would-be resistance fighters agree but only with conditions such as, *"I will help you, but you must promise to take my daughter out of the city"* or *"I get to skin the Ratmen who killed my brother."* Asking a resistance fighter to go undercover as a slave requires a **Hard (–20%) Command Test**. Good roleplaying, in either case, should trump any roll. After playing out a couple of recruitments, you can leap forward in time and assume the PCs have gathered a fair cadre of slave volunteers, such as, *"After a week of carefully approaching enslaved Talabheimers, the Resistance has enlisted some twenty souls from different neighbourhoods to the cause."* During recruiting will be the first time that the PCs hear that no Human who goes into Dragon's Home ever leaves.

The following are some example members of the Talabheim Resistance. You'll note they don't have stats, and this is deliberate. The majority of the members of the resistance, other than the PCs, are basically tools for advancing the adventure, not supplanting the characters as the protagonists of *Terror in Talabheim*. They provide information, look to the PCs for guidance, succeed or fail in their missions if they are beyond the PCs' eyes as you deem appropriate given the level of planning and preparation the PCs put in before they sent them off, and fight NPCs in the background with only a die roll or two from you. Basically, they're character window dressing, which doesn't mean that you shouldn't make them likeable—as that will make the PCs that much less likely to throw their lives away and righteously angry if (when) the Skaven kill them.

A SUBTLE ADVANTAGE

Organizing a resistance to the Skaven occupation is no easy task. Normally, it's fairly hard to sneak past a race of skulkers. In this case though, the PCs have a number of advantages, some of which they're unlikely to ever be fully aware of or understand—because many of their advantages are actually based in the Skaven's own natures working against them. Very few Skaven know anything about the surface world. Occupying a Human city en masse instead of just carting portions of a small village's population away for enslavement or snacks is a new and difficult proposition for them, possible only because of the ruthless will and power of Asorak Steeleye. In fact, a single Grey Seer, no matter how powerful, wouldn't have been enough to drive such an operation at such a scale. There are over twenty thousand Skaven in Talabheim at the moment, but Asorak Steeleye has the ear of a number of the most powerful Skaven in Clan Skryre, even, it is whispered, the Grand Engineer himself—Skryre's representative on the Council of Thirteen, who believe Steeleye's devious and twisted plan might actually work. So far, Steeleye's plan has been an unmitigated success, which has made a number

of other Ratmen, especially those not directly under the Grey Seer, envious and spiteful, as is the nature of the Skaven. Whilst this has had a number of effects, the most important to those trying to fight the occupation is that it has made the bulk of the Skaven troops in Talabheim not directly under the supervision of the Grey Seer, or one of his trusted subordinates,

resentful and correspondingly lazy. All opposed **Silent Move** and **Concealment Tests** made by anyone trying to slip past or hide from Skaven troops in Talabheim within a few days of their taking the city are made at a +20% bonus as long as the Ratmen in question haven't been specifically put on alert and don't have a superior officer near them.

— MISSIONS —

The PCs have a considerable number of targets and will have to determine where best to direct their efforts. The following missions are all fairly broad, while each has some specific examples, you should certainly feel free to come up with your own. The timing of Steeleye's plan is somewhat nebulous on purpose. He wants as many Empire Troops as possible outside of the Taalbaston before he unveils the true scope of his ambitions. If your Players are enjoying being resistance fighters, you can draw out this stage of the adventure for quite a while.

GATHERING INFORMATION

All the PCs and their allies hope to achieve hangs on getting their facts right before they act. Gathering useful information about the Skaven's movements and what they're up to is an ongoing task. Each specific piece of information the PCs wish to learn requires several days, representing the time it takes to canvas the resistance and start them looking for the answer to the query, and a successful **Gossip Test**—a failure means they'll have to hunt the information down for themselves. The starting Difficulty to learn any given piece of information is **Very Hard** (−30%). For every advantage the PCs can justify in why they should've been able to learn the information, the Difficulty lowers by one step to a minimum of **Easy** (+20%). Examples of advantages would be a Resistance operative installed in a relevant neighbourhood, personal knowledge of an area from the past, torturing a Skaven (who happens to speak Reikspiel) they captured from that area, etc. Thus, the better established the Talabheim Resistance becomes, the better they get at quickly finding out what they need to know. The following pieces of information are some of the most useful to the resistance:

- *Who is leading these Ratmen?* The majority are lead by a powerful Skaven Wizard with grey-white fur and spiralling horns called Asorak Steeleye. His second in command is implanted with horrible devices and named Eckmorkast Sparker. There is another leader of some kind in the Tallows, but he has no contact with the others.
- *Where are they based?* The Steeleye has taken over several buildings in the Law Quarter and seems to move exclusively between there and Dragon's Home. Sparker wanders about with a bodyguard checking on the various building projects about the city at various times of the day and night. Apparently, he never sleeps.
- *What are they up to?* Nobody but Steeleye seems to know the answer to that one. Even captured Skaven cannot say. A successful **Gossip Test** brings up the answer: Building siege engines.
- *What is going on in Dragon's Home?* Nobody knows. However, strange greenish fumes have been seen to arise from that neighbourhood from time to time. The odd vapour glows in the dark.

- *What is going on in the Tallows?* Some sort of rival of Steeleye's is there. Nobody goes in, nothing has come out. The Skaven have a watch set about it, though, and have maintained the barricade the city erected.
- *Where are the largest concentrations of Skaven troops?* Many have withdrawn into either the Old Market or back down into the tunnels below the Taalbaston. Those that have stayed elsewhere are mostly in the Law Quarter, Dragon's Home, and the Geltwold. Patrols wander through all the other neighbourhoods, though they seem to favour the Manor District, and there is a fairly heavy guard watching the Temple of Myrmidia on the Row of Gods, which apparently never fell to the Skaven.
- *What is their composition?* The black-furred elites are mostly in the Law Quarter. A number of whip-wielding Skaven and their huge, monstrous rat-thing abominations now call the Geltwold home when they aren't out hunting in the Great Crater. The patrols mostly consist of brown-furred "common" Ratmen soldiers, lead by Skaven armed with strange pistols.
- *Where is the Necromancer?* Doctor Gugula Skell has established herself within the Grand Manor. Steeleye occasionally sends dead slaves to her deliberately, as the Skaven eat the rest. Her Zombies are seldom seen in the city anymore.

THE "MAD MAN" GOPFERT

Not too long after the PCs have established the Talabheim Resistance and made a few contacts, an Initiate of Shallya named Irmgard approaches them. She has a very interesting tale to tell them.

Sister Irmgard worked in the Shallyan Sanatorium before the coming of the Ratmen. One of her charges was a man who seemed relatively sane, other than the fact that he was convinced that the legendary Skaven were out to get him because he knew too much about them. He claimed he had crossed the bulk of the Old World to flee them, coming at last to the Eye of the Forest where he hoped they could not find him. He also told her he had once been one of their slaves and proved it by speaking to her in a bizarre chattering voice. What she once wrote off as lunatic's fancy, she now believes to have been all too real, having seen the Skaven for herself. She begs the PCs to rescue him if they are able. The man's name is Walther Gopfert.

The PCs will have to slip into the Gods' Row (no great difficulty if they're already allies with the Myrmidians) and past the alert Skaven forces there. The Skaven treated the Shallyans' Sanatorium as one big larder. But Gopfert knew that was coming and managed to hide. It will take a lot of searching and some convincing to get him to reveal himself.

WALTHER GOPFERT

Walther is a wiry, weather-beaten man of indeterminate age. His hands shake a bit, but his steel-grey eyes are too steady for a mad man. Walther told Sister Irmgard the truth. Not only was he once a Skaven slave—he escaped from Skavenblight. He has horrible nightmares about his experiences among the Skaven, and he has been on the run since escaping over fifteen years ago.

Gopfert will prove to be an invaluable ally to the Resistance. His knowledge of the Skaven and their ways is desperately needed. More importantly, his presence allows the PCs to forcefully question Skaven captives.

Walther Gopfert

Career: Scholar (ex-Slave, ex-Student)

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 32% | 31% | 37% | 43% | 40% | 69% | 52% | 43% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 16 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (History) +10%, Academic Knowledge (Science), Blather, Common Knowledge (Dwarfs), Common Knowledge (the Empire), Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Consume Alcohol, Gossip +10%, Heal, Perception +10%, Read/Write +10%, Search, Speak Language (Classical, Reikspiel), Speak Language (Queekish) +10%

Talents: Coolheaded, Excellent Vision, Flee!, Fleet Footed, Linguistics, Savvy, Seasoned Traveller

Disorder: Knives of Memory

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: None

Trappings: None

RESOURCES

As the PCs set up a support structure of allies and information, they'll need material goods as well. PCs with connections outside of the city have a far better pipeline of supplies than those who are operating exclusively inside. Food can become a major issue without outside support, as the Skaven voraciously consume just about anything edible. Regardless of their situation, the PCs may find themselves on food runs, either just to acquire food for themselves, or shepherding a shipment into town from beyond the city. Weapons for those that need them are a priority, as the Skaven quickly strip their slaves of any armaments. The Guildrow is an excellent place to mass-produce simple weapons. The PCs may just find themselves beating ploughshares into swords. If they've been paying attention, they may remember to take a trip out to the South Quarry, where a dozen kegs of Dwarf gunpowder sit behind a securely locked door, waiting to be taken: firearms, bombs, and potential distractions all in one cache.

A desire to rescue specific individuals with skills vital to the resistance will probably take up some of the PCs' time. PCs who

were friendly with him may wish to rescue the apothecary Ulthvas Daubler, as a skilled healer would certainly be welcome. Finding out the fate of any specific individual since the occupation is exactly like the procedure for finding out hidden information, starting at a **Very Hard** (–30%) **Gossip Test**.

FOR TAAL!

The true goal of any resistance—thwart the enemy, however you can. The PCs may not have any idea what the Skaven are up to, but they'll still want to stop it, whatever it is. The Talabheim Resistance will want to disrupt the Ratmen's construction projects, assassinate key personnel, and ultimately seize the Taalbaston to allow the Empire army outside the crater access to the city. Obviously, the Skaven are well aware that control of the Wizard's Way is the key to holding Talabheim, and the troops at the Taalbaston consist almost entirely of Stormvermin and Clan Skryre Skirmishers. The PCs' best chance at ever controlling the Wizard's Way consists of orchestrating enough disturbances that the elite troops guarding the fortress have to be pulled out and sent to deal with them, for no single act will be enough to bring about such a result. Only then will they have a decent chance of taking the Taalbaston long enough to make a difference.

CONSTRUCTION SITES

There are four significant construction sites and any number of lesser ones. The Old Market, Nordgate, and Law Quarter neighbourhoods all have large construction projects going on within them. Dragon's Home appears to as well from the sounds emerging from it, but the streets of that neighbourhood remain closed. The first two weeks after the Skaven's invasion, the construction sites all receive raw lumber from the Taalgarten as groups of slaves and overseers are sent to cut down trees there. Soon after, the majority of the streets leading into or out of Dragon's Home are sealed off and placed under heavy guard. There are typically around 50 slaves working at each site at any given time, with tasks varying from cutting or shaping wood, to hammering parts together with dowels, to varnishing various finished pieces. The Skaven replace slaves daily; those that don't show an aptitude for the work at hand are often made sport of and then consumed. There are typically 10 Clanrats on guard duty, as well as a Skryre overseer at each project.

PATROLS

When the Resistance first begins operating, Skaven patrols throughout the majority of Talabheim will typically consist of five Clanrats and a Skryre Skirmisher with Warplack Pistols to lead them. In the Geltwold, the patrols are more often two or three Clan Moulder Handlers with a few Rat Ogres instead. Once the Skaven start expecting trouble though, the patrols move up in number to 10 Clanrats with two Skryre Skirmishers, possibly toting a Warfire Thrower or Ratling Cannon, and the Moulder troops start wandering through the city at random with their charges.

KEY TARGETS

The Grey Seer appears on the streets at random, and his whereabouts are always uncertain. The PCs eventually discover that Doctor Skell is holed up in the Grand Manor, occasionally foraying to the Law Quarter to consult with Steeleye. Sparker travels randomly between construction sites, including the one in Dragon's Home.

DOCTOR GUGULA SKELL

Skell once chafed at her role as a Skaven lackey, but she has since come to embrace it as the price she must pay in furtherance of her art. She appears to be a slender woman in her early 40's with increasingly corpse-white skin. She typically wears bright colours, to better offset her new complexion and maintains a pleasant demeanour regardless of the unpleasantness going on about her. She has a dozen or more of her projects shambling about within call at all times. Skell has forbidden any Ratmen from coming within twenty paces of her new home, as she caught a pack of them eating one of her favourite "works." All of the Skaven in Talabheim, with the exception of the Grey Seer and the Warlock Engineer, are absolutely terrified of her and with good reason. More info on the good Doctor can be found in **Chapter Four**.

Doctor Gugula Skell

Career: Necromancer/Master Wizard (ex-Journeyman Wizard, ex-Apprentice Wizard, ex-Physician, ex-Student)

Race: Human

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 33% | 42% | 38% | 47% | 45% | 73% | 80% | 43% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Arts, Necromancy, and Science) +10%, Academic Knowledge (Magic) +20%, Channelling +10%, Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire) +10%, Common Knowledge (Skaven), Gossip +10%, Heal +10%, Intimidate +10%, Magical Sense +10%, Perception +10%, Petty Magic (Arcane), Prepare Poison, Read/Write +10%, Ride, Search, Speak Arcane Language (Magick) +20%, Speak Language (Classical) +10%, Speak Language (Queekish) +10%, Speak Language (Reikspiel) +10%, Trade (Apothecary)

Talents: Aethyric Attunement, Coolheaded, Dark Lore (Necromancy), Dark Magic, Fast Hands, Lesser Magic (*Aethyric Armour*, *Dispel*), Linguistics, Meditation, Petty Magic (Arcane), Resistance to Disease, Savvy, Seasoned Traveller, Strike to Stun, Strong-minded, Surgery, Very Resilient

Special Rules:

Aversion to Sunlight: Skell suffers a -10% penalty to Will Power and Fellowship Tests if she is confronted in the sunlight.

Cadaverous Appearance: Without her bright clothing, Skell could pass for one of her own Zombies, albeit without any "artistic" additions. Skell suffers a -10% penalty to Fellowship in all social situations, but she gains a +10% bonus to Intimidation.

Disturbing Presence: Skell's aura is so malign that children and animals refuse to go near her, and she suffers a -10% penalty to Fellowship in all social situations.

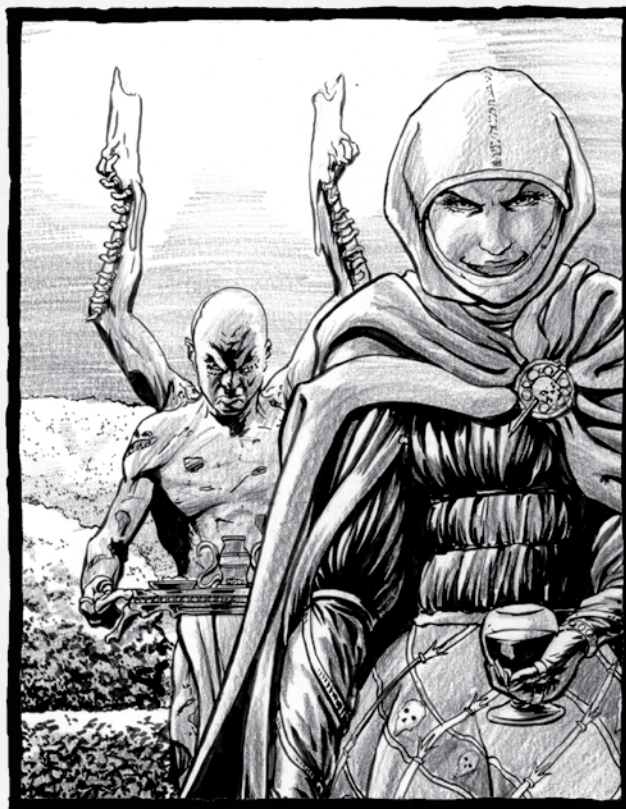
While Dr. Skell has no Insanities, she is completely mad.

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Staff

Trappings: Best Quality Clothing



WARLOCK ENGINEER ECKMORKAST SPARKER

Sparker is a disturbing sight, even for those familiar with Skaven. He is of average build for a Ratman but has grey-black fur that constantly bristles with electricity. A Warp battery of his own design

TIME ISN'T ON OUR SIDE

Steeleye is purposely letting a fair amount of time pass before he acts, as he wishes to let enough Empire troops move into the area before he launches his scheme. Thus, the period between the Skaven's attack and the revelation of the Grey Seer's true plan is realistically long considering how slow armies move in the Old World. This also gives the PCs enough time to organize an effective resistance. However, the long period may not suit you or your playgroup—and a sense of immediate urgency of action can be lost if it seems as if the PCs have plenty of time to act.

If the period between the Skaven's attack and the revelation of the Grey Seer's true plan seems too long, you can speed up this entire section of the adventure by saying that Steeleye timed his takeover to coincide with a massive force of troops returning to Altdorf from the Storm of Chaos. Thus, a great number of troops will get to Talabheim far more quickly than would normally be the case. The events of the **Ominous Shots** section would then occur within three days of the Skaven's seizure of Talabheim—meaning the PCs will have very little time to mount their resistance, and the final confrontation with Steeleye will come far swifter than the characters would like.

rests on his back, connected to his body by a series of strange hoses and cables. Sparker created a device that pulls energy from the air about him to power his body's basic functions while he gets on with more pressing matters, such as inventing better ways to take over the world. In other words, Sparker does not eat, sleep, or breathe. He is like a living lightning rod and dangerously strong with the power of the Warp. He follows Steeleye not out of fear like the rest of the Ratmen in Talabheim but because he believes the Grey Seer's plan has merit. Actually, Sparker doesn't really feel fear anymore, or too many other emotions for that matter. Emotions were too distracting, so he removed them, along with his scent glands. In battle, he is a calculating and ruthless opponent—surviving a fight with Sparker is something no PC should soon forget.

Warlock Engineer Eckmorkast Sparker

Career: Warlock Engineer (ex-Engineer, ex-Tradesman)

Race: Ordinary Skaven (Clan Skryre)

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 45% | 65% | 38% | 44% | 70% | 66% | 42% | 24% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 2 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Engineering) +10%, Academic Knowledge (Science), Common Knowledge (Skaven, Tilea), Drive, Evaluate, Gossip, Haggle, Perception +10%, Read/Write, Scale Sheer Surface, Secret Language (Guild Tongue), Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish, Reikspiel, Tilean), Swim, Trade (Gunsmith) +10%, Trade (Weaponsmith)

Talents: Marksman, Master Gunner, Night Vision, Savvy, Sharpshooter, Specialist Weapon Group (Engineer, Gunpowder), Sure Shot, Warlock Engineering*

*See *Children of the Horned Rat* for details.

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), Warlock Jezail (as Hochland Long rifle but Damage 5)

Trappings: Battery, Engineer's Kit, three pounds of Warpstone, three (regularly revolving) Stormvermin

— OMINOUS SHOTS —

After a month or so, depending on how long you wish the resistance phase of the adventure to go on, and regardless of the success or failure of the PCs activities, something very unusual occurs. All slave activity is stopped for a day for the first time since the invasion. Resistance operatives report something in the Dragon's Home threw glass spheres at the Taalbaston. There were four spheres thrown, at an interval of several minutes between each. The last shattered at the very top of the Taalbaston. The next day, the siege engines at the various constructions sites will be similarly tested, unless the PCs managed to disable or destroy one or more of them.

Any character with the skill **Academic Knowledge (Strategy/Tactics)** knows what ranging shots for a long distance weapon look like. The Skaven intend to shoot something over the Taalbaston. Any Skaven that the PCs question after this event know that the "big-huge plan-plan happens soon-soon." Gopfert tells the PCs that the Skaven traditionally enact their biggest plans on nights when Morrslieb is full or the thirteenth day of the month. An **Easy (+20%) Academic Knowledge (Astronomy) Test** reveals that the

thirteenth of the present month may very well see the full sickly green face of Morrslieb.

The PCs are running out of time, as is the Imperial Army beyond the crater walls, though they don't know it. In fact, the Empire may just have the capacity to break into the Wizard's Way, as the Skaven aren't too skilled at holding onto fortifications, but the troops outside have been loath to enter the city because they are under the impression that it is held by virulently plagued Skaven. The horrors they witnessed in Taalagad upon their arrival convinced them this was probably true.

Let the PCs come to the conclusion on their own that they soon need to take desperate chances if they've any hope of stopping the Skaven. If they've managed to establish an effective resistance, they can probably draw on troops from both within and without the city—but they'll know they don't truly have enough fighters to do more than harass the Ratmen as a whole. They need to either slip into Dragon's Home to destroy whatever is there, kill Asorak Steeleye, or preferably, both. They need help from any quarter that will give it.

— THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY —

If the PCs have put all the clues together, they realise there are a sizable number of Ratmen trapped in the Tallows that absolutely despise Asorak Steeleye and the rest of the Skaven present in the city. At this point, they have probably discovered the name of the Skaven leader there, Nelrich the Suppurater. Perhaps the time has come to fight fire with, er, plague.

Slipping into the Tallows will be relatively easy, the Skaven are only actively looking for those trying to break out. Gopfert, if he is present, strongly recommends only Humans go, as the Skaven have greater issues with the other races. As the PCs navigate the dense streets of the Tallows, Clanrats affiliated with Clan Pestilens approach them within minutes. The PCs need to immediately drop their weapons and declare that they "seek an audience with the

Suppurater" or some other such phrase. Having Gopfert present, or having figured out some other way to speak Queekish will be a big boon, though a few of the Skaven in the Tallows, including the Plague Priest, speak Reikspiel. The Clanrats chitter at one another in surprise, and one will quickly run off (for orders). At last, a clearly diseased Skaven wrapped tightly in leather strips approaches the PCs and simply states, "Follow."

The Plague Monk leads the PCs through the streets, all the way to the base of the Taalbaston and into a large warehouse that abuts the rock of the crater. He points with one claw into the dark entrance. The warehouse will, at first, be pitch-black to the character's eyes. A deep voice, far deeper than what the characters now associate with Skaven, comes out of the shadows: "You have

BETRAYED!

Depending on how your PCs set up the Talabheim Resistance, it might be worthwhile to hit them up with a classic eleventh-hour betrayal. Anybody can have sold them out for just about any reason. Perhaps one of their contacts bargained the PCs' lives for his family's. Perhaps Walther Gopfert finally snaps and gives them away, or he was an insidious plant of Steeleye's all along! Regardless, the Skaven come after the PCs, perhaps by sending a pack of Rat Ogres to hunt them down, or maybe an Eshin Assassin.

come here man-things, knowing-thinking that you might, die-die?" Whatever answer the PCs give, the speaker considers for a moment, before replying, *"Strange-strange always are your ways."*

Soft lantern light glows from within the warehouse. In the faint light, the PCs can see they are surrounded by dozens of Plague Monks, all of whom stand at a distance. In front of them sits a massive figure, wrapped entirely in black and grey cloth. Eerie runes shimmer on the surface of his cloak and seem to move when observed from the corner of the eye.

The Plague Priest turns his head as he regards the PCs, obviously studying each in turn, though they cannot see his features. He crooks a clawed finger at one of the PCs who has survived the Grey Plague. *"Come closer, man-thing."* The PC so chosen must make a **Routine (+10%) Will Power Test** or retch on the floor from the overpowering stench of rotten flesh that arises from the Skaven Priest. The Skaven seems to take no notice, either way. *"Tell me of it, my sweet-sweet shivering. How did it feel-feel? Did your insides fire-burn or were they icy-cold?"* After the Suppurater has filled his curiosity, he leans back into his throne, which, the PCs will realize once they've adjusted to the light, is made of bones and stretched skin.

"To look-see the Suppurater, you have come and here-here he is. What do you want-wish man-things?"

This is entirely about role-playing, let the PCs ask for the help of Clan Pestilens and make the best pitch they can why the Suppurater should help them. The Plague Priest is very intelligent and fairly perceptive; lying to him will be extremely difficult, not to mention dangerous, if that is the PCs' intent. Blatant flattery in the Skaven fashion pleases him greatly. The Suppurater wants vengeance on the Grey Seer and to escape the city with the bulk of what is left of his followers. He has no interest whatsoever in fighting Steeleye personally; he's seen what the Grey Seer does to his enemies. He also is very amenable to any plan that stands a good chance of making Clan Skryre look foolish. What he is most inclined towards doing is leading his troops against the Taalbaston, allowing the PCs to attack Dragon's Home and the Grey Seer. Presuming the PCs survived said event, they will then be on their own to open the gates whilst he and his followers flee down through the Ratholds and away. Like all Skaven, the Plague Priest is treacherous, but he also really, really wants the Grey Seer to suffer and die. If he betrays the PCs too quickly, that may not happen.

If the PCs botch the negotiations or stubbornly demand anything you consider unrealistic, Nelrich shrugs once then gesture to one of his subordinates. A Plague Monk bearing a tray with one mug for each PC present is brought forth. *"I will help you, man-things. Drink-drink."* The PCs are completely outnumbered. If they refuse, they are held down and the liquid is forced into them. The characters, upon



drinking, will promptly pass out. They all awaken the next night in the Guildrow, seemingly unharmed. Within a day or so, they will all show signs of having the Grey Ague, even the ones who already survived it. However, the full Pale Shivers never seems to manifest... but for the next few months, all of the PCs are now vectors for a triple strength version of the Grey Ague that only affects Skaven.

Nelrich the Suppurater

Career: Plague Priest (ex-Plague Deacon, ex-Plague Monk)

Race: Skaven (Clan Pestilens)

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 56% | 36% | 43% | 60% | 57% | 42% | 57% | 35% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 2 | 16 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Magic), Academic Knowledge (Theology) +10%, Channelling +10%, Common Knowledge (Skaven, the Empire), Concealment, Dodge Blow, Magical Sense, Outdoor Survival, Perception +10%, Read/Write, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Arcane Language (Magick), Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

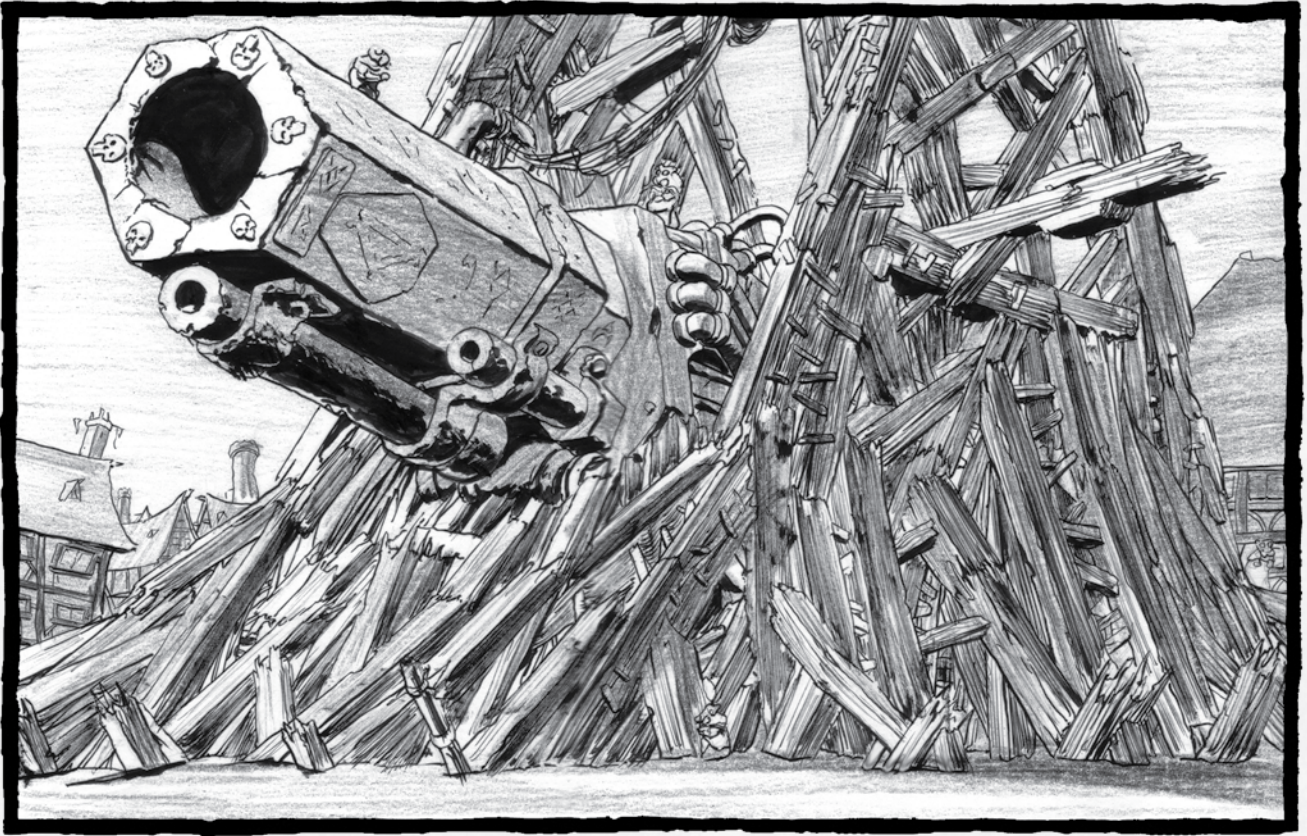
Talents: Fearless, Frenzy, Night Vision, Petty Magic (Warp), Public Speaking, Resistance to Disease, Specialist Weapon Group (Flail), Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun, Tunnel Rat

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Flail, Hand Weapon (Sword)

Trappings: Maggots, Flies, and seven Warpstone Tokens



CHAPTER VII: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The next days pass quickly—far too quickly for some, though not perhaps for the many wretches enslaved by the Ratmen, as the thirteenth approaches. The slaves' forced construction projects throughout the city are near completion.

Wherein our principals must at last confront the architect of Talabheim's fall, else the Forest's Eye shall never rise again.

The battered Talabheim Resistance feverishly prepares all of their exhausted allies and meager resources for a final assault on the occupying

Skaven, hoping to strike before the Grey Seer can put his diabolical plan into motion.

— THE LAST DAYS —

Time is swiftly running out for the PCs and their allies. If they have managed to find allies outside the city, one or more of the PCs will have to go personally to convince them the time has come to commit to a grand assault. As they have both limited resources and time, they will be forced to make hard choices as they prepare. Do they expend greater efforts on making and distributing more weapons in the hope of causing a massive slave revolt to go along with their attack? Do they direct their efforts at making certain they eliminate the Grey Seer's subordinates? Do they risk playing their hand too early by trying to wipe out more of the siege engines that the Skaven have built?

The PCs must come up with a grand battle plan of some sort. Though if they've made allies of the Myrmidians, they'll have plenty of competent help on that score, which they will then have to pass along to their allies. This, of course, immediately offers up the possibility that the Skaven might discover their plans, causing them to have to improvise as they go. A vast

amount depends on the PCs' efforts over the last few weeks, which will have made their position weaker or stronger. If the PCs have not managed to kill Doctor Skell, they will have Undead to deal with. If the PCs managed to kill a number of patrols and generally made the Skaven miserable, the Ratmen will be slightly fearful and on edge, which works to the PCs' advantage. The Suppurator and his followers make for uncertain allies, but if the PCs feel they can count on their support, their inclusion too must be considered in any attack.

Since the general belief is that the Skaven will enact their plan on the thirteenth, the PCs and their allies will wish to move on the twelfth, which would afford them the most preparation time possible. Planning for the final assault should be fun for your Players, but really, the personal actions of the PCs is what matters most to the fate of Talabheim. Whilst they have a number of hard choices to make, in the end, the PCs' road will lead them into the mysterious streets of Dragon's Home, against the Grey Seer himself, or both.

— THE SECOND BATTLE FOR TALABHEIM —

Whether it begins with a massive slave revolt, a series of coordinated explosions, or both, the battle for the fate of Talabheim is likely to catch the Skaven by surprise. If the PCs planned well, their forces catch the Skaven off guard from many positions at once. The Myrmidians storm out of their temple to attack the forces guarding it. The remaining knights from multiple orders thunder into the city through the streets of the Guildrow, while swift-moving militia run through the Manor District. If one of the PCs was a Dwarf, perhaps he convinced the denizens of the Stonehome to surge forth into the streets of the Law Quarter. Slaves throughout Talabheim snatch up weapons from secret caches and attack their overseers in fury. If it was meant to be a sustained attack, the Skaven would eventually bring up enough troops from beneath the Taalbaston to crush the revolt, but that isn't the goal.

Give the Players a general overview of their allies' efforts before zooming in on the PCs, who doubtless lurk in the shadows of one of the neighbourhoods surrounding Dragon's Home waiting for what soon happens: the Skaven troops occupying the barricades are withdrawn and sent to quell the uprising.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

The streets of Dragon's Home have remained shielded from outside scrutiny since just after the initial invasion. But some of the PCs' contacts will have reported that it looks like several buildings were converted into some sort of factory, and it is from that location that the strange green gas occasionally vents. Getting past the barricades is fairly easy with the guards gone, but as the PCs journey down the streets, they have to make **Silent Move Tests** opposed by **Perception Tests** of the Clan Skryre Skirmisher patrol leaders (32%) and their troops who have not left the area. The patrols have been reduced to three Clanrats and a leader. A failed test brings a patrol to investigate. Fortunately the sounds of battle coming from other portions of the city are soon likely to start obscuring whatever noises the PCs may make. This ruckus doesn't give the PCs any bonuses, but it does mean that if a patrol discovers them, the sounds of their fighting will be obscured. At least once during their journey, the PCs should have to dive into cover and make a **Concealment Test** as a mass of Skaven Stormvermin rush past, headed off to a different battle. Failure means a few Stormvermin stop to investigate the strange scent they just detected.

It takes about thirty minutes of cautious movement to get to the centre of Dragon's Home. What greets their eyes is a mind-jarring sight: a massive device that resembles an elongated cannon crossed with a catapult squatting in the courtyard in front of the former Merchant's Guild building. The cannon is covered with Skaven runes that hurt the eyes if gazed at too long, and even as it sits still, it seems to move in place. A successful **Routine (+10%) Academic Knowledge (Magic or Science) Test** reveals the weapon is almost entirely forged from Warpstone. A number of figures, all vaguely Skaven in shape but covered in what look to be all-encompassing suits of some kind, roam over and around the device, constantly making adjustments at various points on its surface. The solid building that once housed the Merchant's Guild has been converted into a bizarre factory. A series of vents and pipes have been rammed through the building's sides and roof. Some of them

go directly into the street or curve once or twice before descending into the sewer below. A series of Skaven scuttle into and out of the factory, some carrying parcels, others carrying corpses from a fairly large stack of bodies piled up in a nearby room. All of them have large masks of some sort obscuring their features.

All Characters witnessing this scene must make an immediate **Terror Test**. Once the PCs have gotten hold of themselves, they can proceed to investigate the factory if they choose to. All the Skaven working in the area have the equivalent stats of a Clan Skryre Skirmisher. Fortunately, all the Ratmen present are highly preoccupied with their work (as well as having their senses obscured by their protective equipment), and the characters can make **Easy (+20%) Silent Move Tests**. Failing the opposed test indicates one of the milling workers notices something amiss and starts looking about for the source of the noise. If the PCs confront the searching Skaven and cannot quietly eliminate him within a single combat round, he immediately runs to set off a deafening claxon alarm, which instantly alerts all present, as well as bringing the Grey Seer and Sparker, if he is still alive, within one minute.

A successful **Academic Knowledge (Science or Engineering) Test** indicates the former Merchant's Guild has been set up as a processing plant of some sort. One end of the factory has a series of what looks like large furnaces, whereas the other side has all of the makings of a glass works. Characters slipping inside swiftly learn the monstrous truth—the Skaven are feeding cadavers into one end of the plant, which are somehow being converted into a noxious gas. The gas is then captured in globes of glass at the far end. As the PCs watch, Skaven workers gently place a finished, large sphere filled with swirling greenish gas into an open padded crate. There are a series of similar closed crates carefully stacked nearby. The globes look to be just about the right size to be ammunition for the hideous cannon, as well as whatever trebuchets the Resistance hasn't managed to eliminate. Now you know how Poisoned Wind Globes are made, and the PCs should instantly grasp what the Grey Seer's monstrous plan is.

Hopefully, the PCs have hauled a keg of gunpowder with them—otherwise, they're going to have to improvise. The Skaven here are mostly unarmed, and many flee to find troops or arm themselves if the PCs attack, but they inevitably set off the alarm as they go. The cannon (whose name is Man-Thing Army Breaker) has a Toughness Bonus of 6 and 30 Wounds. Every round the PCs are near the cannon, such as attacking it or setting explosives about it, they must make a **Routine (+10%) Toughness Test** or gain a mutation. Roll on **Table 2-1: Expanded Chaos Mutations** in the *Old World Bestiary* or **Table 11-1: Chaos Mutations** in *WFRP*.

Each of the large Poison Wind Globes shatters after suffering 3 or more damage, causing a flood of potent poison gas to seep out. Use the large template for each globe. The gas remains for 1d10/2 rounds before dissipating. Any creature caught in such a cloud must make a **Challenging (–10%) Toughness Test** or take 5 damage, ignoring Armour and Toughness. Unlike the poison gas that Skryre normally employs, this gas is more destructive but heavier and quicker to disperse. Each round the gas is potent, it drifts 1d10/5 squares in a random direction. Furthermore, roll 1d10. On a roll of 1–3, the cloud remains where it is. On a roll of 8–10, it evaporates.

STAFF OF THE RAT LORD

Academic Knowledge: Magic

Powers: The wielder of the Staff of the Rat Lord may cast an additional Lesser Magic Spell of his choosing. Once selected, he cannot change the Lesser Magic Spell invested in the staff. If the item changes owners, the new possessor selects a new Lesser Magic Spell.

Description: Modelled after the Staff used by the infamous Grey Seer Thanquol, the Staff of the Rat Lord is made of pale wood and fitted with a Skaven skull at the top. Chunks of Warpstone serve for its eyes, and they give off a sick luminescence.

Damaging the internal structure of the factory causes poison gas to flood out in all directions from the Dragon's Home for several minutes before it runs out of fuel. The gas billows along streets and through the sewers, slaying Humans and Skaven alike as it spills across the cobblestones. The gas directly from the factory is raw; failing a Routine (+10%) Toughness Test inflicts 3 Damage, ignoring Armour and Toughness.

THE HORNED RAT'S PROPHET

If the Skaven readying Man-Thing Army-Breaker raise the claxon, the Grey Seer comes at once, far faster than the PCs could imagine he would've responded (he uses a spell called Skitterleap). To say he's angry that some man-things are



endangering his grand plan is a massive understatement. He comes prepared to kill. No fool, he starts off by moving to one of the roofs in the area and studies the scene for a moment before blasting the PCs from a distance with his potent Warp Magick. Steeleye has near-white fur with a few small patches of grey. A pair of curling ram-like horns grows from either side of his head, just behind his ears. His namesake was given him courtesy of a rival that clawed out one of his eyes when he was young. He replaced his eye with a smooth chunk of steel carved with Skaven runes. If he must fight physically, he uses an elongated staff studded with Warp Blades, a gift from his Skryre allies.

If the PCs decided to confront the Grey Seer as he travelled from the Law Quarter instead of entering the Dragon's Home, he has a bodyguard of six Stormvermin with him. Skaven to the core, Steeleye is far more concerned about survival than the failure of any one plan. If the PCs look like they might have the upper hand, Steeleye flees to confront them another day, convinced one of his underlings betrayed him to the man-thing resistance. The death or flight of the Grey Seer completely demoralizes the Skaven and many of them flee, shrieking word of his fall in Queekish as they run. The Musk of Fear soon spreads throughout Talabheim, beginning a rout among the Skaven.

Asorak Steeleye

Career: Grey Seer (ex-Apprentice Grey Seer)

Race: Chosen Ratman

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 38% | 38% | 37% | 48% | 62% | 67% | 70% | 32% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Magic), Channelling, Common Knowledge (Skaven), Magical Sense, Perception, Read/Write, Search, Speak Arcane Language (Magick), Speak Language (Queekish), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Aethyric Attunement, Coolheaded, Dark Lore (Warp), Dark Magic*, Fast Hands, Lesser Magic (*Aethyric Armour*, *Dispel*, *Move*), Meditation, Night Vision, Petty Magic (Warp), Public Speaking, Savvy, Suave

*See Appendix II: Skaven Magic for details.

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Staff of the Rat Lord

Trappings: Grey Robes, eight Warpstone Tokens, Staff of the Rat Lord

VIRULENT ALLIES

What of the Suppurator and his followers? That depends on how the PCs dealt with him. If they managed to make a favourable impression, then the forces of Clan Pestilens wait for the Talabheim Resistance to attack before they launch a devastating assault on High Watch. They don't wait around for any man-things though, upon slaughtering their way through the troops at the Taalbaston, they immediately flee down into the Ratholds and away from Talabheim. If the PCs have all become carriers for his new Skaven plague, Nelrich and his followers seem to quietly withdraw from the

WHAT IF WE FAIL?

There is, of course, the very real possibility the Grey Seer butchers the PCs or they don't manage to entirely destroy Man-Thing Army-Breaker in time. What happens then entirely depends on what you wish to do with your game. If the idea of guerrilla warfare throughout the Empire suits you, maybe Steeleye succeeds with his nefarious scheme. If you want him to ultimately fail, in keeping with Skaven tradition, the forces of the Suppurater may attack Dragon's Home, or the weapon was already sabotaged, meaning in what should be the Grey Seer's moment of triumph, the badly wounded PCs see the cannon explode, ripping Steeleye's body to pieces.

That way he can return as a Warpstone-twisted monstrosity to confront them another day.

THE OTHER SIDE

GMs who own the *WFRP* sourcebook *Children of the Horned Rat* may wish to run *Terror in Talabheim* from the Skaven point of view. Just a thought to consider, man-thing.

Tallows and simply disappear only to return to plague Talabheim another day. On the bright side, all of the PCs' efforts leading up to the Second Battle are aided by the fact that everywhere they pass, the Skaven troops fall deathly ill the next day.

TAAL'S GRACE & THE BATTLE'S END

The PCs are up against a number of dangerous foes, and the odds are not in their favour. If it looks like the Grey Seer's victory may be imminent, you may wish to give them a respite by having a pack of wolves with tongues of lambent silver flame come running

out of the shadows and fearlessly charge into whatever Skaven are attacking. The wolves only appear once to save the PCs, and they go as quickly as they came.

If the Plague Priest and his followers didn't take the Skaven at High Watch, officers from the Imperial Army later swear they saw wolves in the Wizard's Way, which is one of the reasons they felt they could breach it, as it was surely a sign from Taal that the time had come to free his sacred city from the Skaven that held it. Regardless of their reason, troops from the Empire flood into Talabheim from the Wizard's Way, promptly charging into the milling and confused hordes of Skaven. The battle rages for a day, the Empire always holding the upper hand, and at last, Talabheim is free.

RIPPLES FROM THE EYE— THE END OF THE ADVENTURE

The PCs may expect a hero's welcome if one or more of them haven't become Mutants and their actions haven't caused a flood of poisonous gas to slay hundreds of citizens. Sadly, this is not the case. There are indeed a number of individuals that are very interested in talking to them, but few of them have the PCs' best interests at heart. There is a small cadre of Witch Hunters attached to the Imperial Army who want to know how they made allies of the Skaven, a vast horde of Litigants representing clients who wish to take the PCs to court to collect on property damage claims, a group of Taal's Priests who wish to ask about their sighting of the sacred wolves, and so on.

The PCs barely have enough time to consider the ramifications of all this before one of their friends from the Resistance approaches them with a hurried message. "*You have to get out before someone tries to kill you.*" Why so? (Other than being Mutants.) Well, the laws of Talabheim are clear—as some of the most prominent defenders of Talabheim after the bulk of the nobles fled, the PCs now "own" the Eye of the Forest, which the moneyed powers of

the city will of course, not let stand for long. Some of their allies will help to secretly hustle them out of the city, with a few of the nobles or knights pressing small sacks of gold into their hands before speeding them on their way. "*May the blessings of noble Taal and mighty Sigmar be with you always.*"

The Eye of the Forest gets back to business as usual as quickly as possible. The damage caused by the Skaven is swiftly repaired with hard work. The many citizens lost during the Infestation are replaced with a number of Hochland refugees and others who are interested in permanently immigrating to Talabheim. Many of the citizens of Talabheim begin wilfully re-writing their own history, insisting that it was merely "rat-like men" who invaded their city, ignoring all trace of the Skaven's technology—much of which was swiftly appropriated by Imperial Engineers.

And in the Temple of Myrmidia, where only the bravest are allowed to venture, a statue depicting the PCs is reverently placed with a small plaque that reads simply: "We Remember."

APPENDIX I: PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Use these pre-generated Characters as ready-to-play, as replacement Characters for those who fall over the course of this adventure, or as extra resistance fighters.

• ADALHAM "CHUCKLES" NIEDERLITZ, HUMAN THIEF •

Career: Thief (ex-Rogue)

Race: Human

| MAIN PROFILE | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|-----|-----|-------|------|------|-------|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 30% | 28% | 31% | 36% | 27% | 32% | 30% | 32% |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +5%✓ | +5%✓ | — | — | +15%✓ | +5%✓ | +5%✓ | +10%✓ |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 35% | 32% | 31% | 36% | 42% | 37% | 35% | 42% |
| SECONDARY PROFILE | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| — | +2✓ | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

Skills: Blather, Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Concealment, Evaluate, Gossip, Haggle, Perception, Performer

(Actor), Pick Lock, Search, Secret Signs (Thief), Silent Move, Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Alley Cat, Luck, Public Speaking, Streetwise, Strong-minded, Very Resilient

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jerkin)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), Dagger

Trappings: Backpack, Blanket, Cloak, Best Quality Clothing, Common Clothing, Lock Picks, 10 yards of Rope, Sack, Wooden Cutlery Set, Wooden Tankard, 10 gc, 1 s

Background

A child of Talabheim's streets, Adalham grew up in the Tallows, where food and light are always in short supply. His mother died when he was five, and lacking any other family, he was forced by circumstance to make do with his own talents. Unfortunately, he didn't have many. He was small, not very athletic, and didn't know the first thing about pinching purses. What he did have was wit, and people who met him both liked and trusted him immediately. Bigger street children started watching out for him, taking him under their wing and teaching him the ropes, until he was just another one of the bravos that prowled the streets.

In the weeks leading up to the current outbreak of the plague, a rival gang descended on Adalham's gang, almost wiping them out. Since it's survival of the fittest in the Tallows, no one blinked. Once again, Adalham was on his own, but this time he was armed with a few more skills than he had in his youth.

• MEINOLF LIESS, HUMAN PIT FIGHTER •

Career: Pit Fighter (ex-Thug)

Race: Human

| MAIN PROFILE | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|------|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 33% | 32% | 36% | 29% | 36% | 34% | 40% | 28% |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +15%✓ | — | +5%✓ | +10%✓ | +10%✓ | — | +10%✓ | +5%✓ |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 48% | 32% | 41% | 39% | 46% | 34% | 50% | 33% |
| SECONDARY PROFILE | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +1✓ | +2✓ | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (the Empire), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow, Gamble, Gossip, Intimidate, Secret Language (Thieves' Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Coolheaded, Disarm, Lightning Reflexes, Night Vision, Quick Draw, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-handed), Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun, Very Strong

Armour: Medium Armour (Mail Shirt and Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon (Two-handed Sword), Hand Weapon (Sword), Shield, Dagger, Knuckle-dusters

Trappings: Backpack, Blanket, Cloak, Common Quality Clothing, Wooden Cutlery Set, Wooden Tankard, 4 gc

Background

Meinolf Liess never knew his mother because she died in childbirth. His father, a poor cargo handler, looked out for him. His early childhood experiences hardened him, made him resistant to the suffering of others. As he grew, he, along with many other children in Taalagad, was part of a gang, running the streets and ruling them. When he grew older, he ran an extortion racket for a time until he was eventually caught and thrown into the fighting pits, where he remained for two years. Though exposed to horrible violence, he learned his lesson there, and he has sworn off crime in the hopes of settling down and starting a family. Until then, he earns his coin in the weekly bouts in Taalagad's seediest rings.

• LAVINIA NEUMANN, HUMAN VAMPIRE HUNTER •

Career: Vampire Hunter (ex-Tomb Robber)

Race: Human

| MAIN PROFILE | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 34% | 44% | 35% | 31% | 31% | 31% | 32% | 29% |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +20%✓ | +20% | +10%✓ | +20% | +15%✓ | +15%✓ | +20%✓ | +5%✓ |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 44% | 44% | 40% | 31% | 41% | 41% | 42% | 34% |
| SECONDARY PROFILE | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +1✓ | +4✓ | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (History), Common Knowledge (the Empire), Concealment, Evaluate, Gossip, Perception, Read/Write, Scale Sheer Surface, Search, Secret Signs (Thief), Silent Move, Speak Language (Classical, Reikspiel)

Talents: Hardy, Luck, Marksman, Specialist Weapon Group (Crossbow), Tunnel Rat

Armour: Medium Armour (Full Mail Armour)

Armour Points: Head 3, Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), Dagger, Repeater Crossbow with 10 Bolts

Trappings: Backpack, Blanket, Cloak, Common Quality Clothing, Crowbar, Lantern, Lamp Oil, 10 yards of Rope, two Sacks, four Stakes, Blessed Water, Wooden Cutlery Set, Wooden Tankard

Background

Born in Stirland, Lavinia Neumann was always fascinated by old stories about the von Carsteins. To the horror of her parents, she haunted the old graveyards and tombs, making rubbings of the headstones and learning the history of her land. As she grew older, she grew bolder in her exploits, breaching the doors to the old vaults, at first to look around, but later to see what she could find. Her curiosity eventually caught up with her when she stumbled into the tomb of something that still moved. Fearing the worst, she fled back to her village, vowing never to rob a tomb again. She strung a few extra strands of garlic and daemonbane over her door and prayed for dawn. At first, nothing happened. Over the next few months, people in her village began to disappear. One by one, they vanished until only a few folks remained. She was certain it involved her wayward searches. And so she took up her sword and stake and returned to the vault she had opened, only to find it full of her former townspeople, now transformed into Ghouls. She fled her village that day, leaving Stirland and her past behind her, but vowed one day to return and make right the wrong of her youth.

• IGOR SCHERER, HUMAN SCOUT •

Career: Scout (ex-Charcoal Burner)

Race: Human

| MAIN PROFILE | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 33% | 28% | 43% | 31% | 31% | 28% | 31% | 25% |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +20%✓ | +20% | +10%✓ | +10%✓ | +15%✓ | +20%✓ | +15%✓ | +5%✓ |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 43% | 33% | 48% | 41% | 46% | 33% | 36% | 30% |
| SECONDARY PROFILE | | | | | | | |
| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
| Starting | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Advance | | | | | | | |
| +1✓ | +6✓ | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Current | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 14 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (the Empire), Concealment, Drive, Follow Trail, Gossip, Haggle, Outdoor Survival, Perception,

Scale Sheer Surface, Search, Secret Signs (Ranger), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Flee!, Sixth Sense, Sturdy, Very Strong

Armour: Medium Armour (Mail Shirt and Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Hatchet), Hand Weapon (Axe), Dagger, Shield

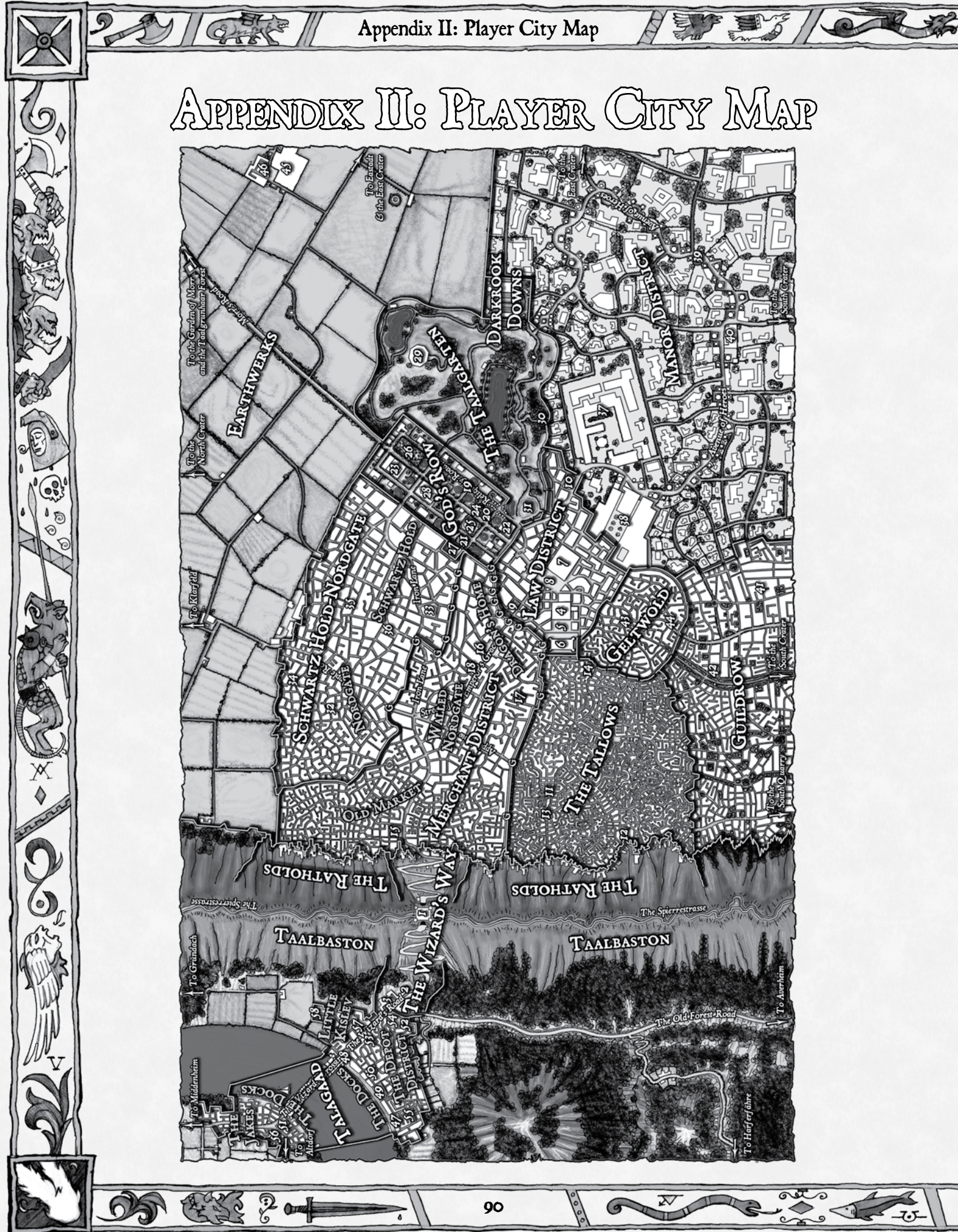
Trappings: Backpack, Blanket, Common Quality Clothing, Cloak, Horse with Saddle and Harness, 10 yards of Rope, Tinderbox, Three torches, Wooden Cutlery Set, Wooden Tankard, 4 gc

Background

Like many adult males in the Empire, Igor Scherer was conscripted by Talabecland to fight the invading Kurgan. Before he signed on, he was a simple charcoal-burner that supported his small family with this undesirable profession. But the need was great, and as a patriot, he had to fight the good fight. So Scherer left his old life and began a new one as a soldier of the Empire. Since he had no formal training, the Empire put his wood crafting talents to use, attaching him to a scouting unit. Before he was able to do much, Archao's hordes had encircled Middenheim and laid siege to it. He and his unit were sent to ambush the Kurgan supply lines. On one particular foray, Igor realised he was near his home village. He slipped off from his unit to see his wife and two sons, but to his horror, he found his home burnt to the ground and no sign of his family. He never returned to the army and has spent the last few months searching for his wife and children, though in his heart, he knows they are dead. Worse, he's now labelled a deserter and faces the rope. He's settled in Taalagad in the hopes of earning a few coins to resume the search for his loved ones.

APPENDIX II: PLAYER CITY MAP

The map is a detailed black and white illustration of a city, oriented with North at the top. The city is divided into several districts, each with its own name and characteristics. The districts include Earthworks, Schwartz Hold-Nordgate, God's Row, Darkbrook Downs, Manor District, Law District, The Tallovs, Guildrow, and The Ratholds. The city is situated on a riverbank, with a large forested area to the south. The map includes numerous streets, buildings, and landmarks, such as the 'To the Garden of Morn' and 'To the East Center' paths. The map is framed by a decorative border featuring various symbols and icons.



APPENDIX III: SKAVEN FORCES

The following stat-blocks are for the Skaven troops that invade the city starting in **Chapter Five**.

Clanrat Warriors

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 30% | 25% | 30% | 30% | 40% | 25% | 25% | 15% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|---|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish)

Talents: Night Vision, Specialist Weapon Group (Sling), Tunnel Rat

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack, Leather Skullcap)

Armour Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon, Dagger or Sling, Shield

Trappings: None

Clan Moulder Packmasters

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 32% | 25% | 32% | 33% | 40% | 27% | 29% | 22% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Animal Training +20%, Command +20%, Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Outdoor Survival, Perception +10%, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

Talents: Night Vision, Specialist Weapon Group (Entangling), Tunnel Rat

Special Rules:

Masters of the Lash: Packmasters are experts at controlling Rat Ogres, Giant Rats, and other creations of Clan Moulder. When leading a pack of such creatures, they gain a +20% bonus to Animal Training and Command Tests.

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack and Leather Skullcap)

Armour Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon, Whip

Clan Pestilens Plague Monks

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 34% | 25% | 30% | 41% | 40% | 25% | 29% | 20% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Theology) +10%, Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Dodge Blow, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

Talents: Fearless, Frenzy, Night Vision, Resistance to Disease, Tunnel Rat

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Two Hand Weapons

Clan Skryre Skirmishers

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 30% | 35% | 30% | 30% | 44% | 32% | 28% | 15% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Engineering), Common Knowledge (Skaven) +10%, Concealment, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

Talents: Master Gunner, Night Vision, Rapid Reload, Specialist Weapon Group (Gunpowder), Tunnel Rat

Special Rules:

Warplock Weapons: Clan Skryre Skirmishers use gunpowder weapons that fire a Warpstone shot. These Skaven are armed with Warpstone Pistols, functioning as Pistols with Damage 5 and Range 10/20.





Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jerkin)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon, Two Warplock Pistols with enough Powder and Ammunition for 10 shots.

Trappings: None

Rat Ogre

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 36% | 0% | 54% | 47% | 25% | 12% | 17% | 10% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 3 | 28 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Dodge Blow, Intimidate +10%, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface

Talents: Fearless, Frightening, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure

Special Rules:

In Need of Direction: Rat Ogres have been systematically bred for a single purpose: fighting at the command of a Clan Moulder handler. Without a clear set of orders, or a commanding Skaven to lead them, they mill about uncertainly. Rat Ogres attack and attempt to kill anything that harms them, but their behaviour otherwise is highly erratic if they've lost their handler or finished following their last order. A Rat Ogre that wishes to engage in any other sort of behaviour other than standing around drooling must make a **Will Power Test** or stare aimlessly at nothing.

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Claws

Stormvermin

Main Profile

| WS | BS | S | T | Ag | Int | WP | Fel |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 65% | 30% | 55% | 50% | 45% | 25% | 40% | 20% |

Secondary Profile

| A | W | SB | TB | M | Mag | IP | FP |
|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| 1 | 17 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Skills: Common Knowledge (Skaven), Dodge Blow, Intimidate, Perception, Speak Language (Queekish), Swim

Talents: Coolheaded, Hardy, Menacing, Night Vision, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-handed), Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Sturdy, Very Resilient, Warrior Born

Armour: Medium Armour (Mail Shirt, Leather Jack, and Leather Skullcap)

Armour Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon

Trappings: None

CLAN SKRYRE

WARFIRE THROWER TEAM

One of the most feared weapons employed by the Skaven is the Warfire Thrower. Another mad innovation by the Warlock Engineers of Clan Skryre, these "cannon" release a stream of sticky

burning gel made from Warpstone that incinerates nearly anything it touches. Too large to be used by just one Skaven, these weapons are handled by two or three Skaven.

Use the cone template. All creatures caught in the cone take 4 damage, regardless of Armour. In addition, they must succeed on an **Agility Test** or catch fire (see *WFRP* page 136). However, because of the nature of this weapon, the fire can only be extinguished by smothering it completely, such as total immersion in water, sand, dirt, and so on. The victim can put himself out by scraping the stuff off and succeeding on a **Challenging (-10%) Agility Test**.

Living creatures struck by the flames of a Warfire Thrower who survive face a special horror. After 24-hours, they must make a **Routine (+10%) Toughness Test**. If they fail, their race changes to Mutant, and they gain 1 mutation. For more information on playing Mutants, see the *WFRP* sourcebook *Tome of Corruption*.

A Warfire Thrower requires two Skaven Skirmishers (see stats on page 91) to man it.

Warfire Thrower: *Group Engineer; Damage 4; Range Special; Reload 10 Full; Qualities Experiment, Special*

POISONED WIND GLOBADIERS

Use statistics for Clan Skryre Skirmishers, except that they each carry three Poison Wind Globes.

Poison Wind Globes

A Clan Skryre innovation, these small hollow glass spheres contain a noxious gas. When thrown, the sphere shatters, dispersing the poison. Used extensively by Clan Skryre Clanrats, these weapons are devastating to both Skaven and their enemies.

To use a Poisoned Wind Globe, select a square within range. Make a Ballistic Skill Test as normal. If you fail the test, roll 1d10 and consult the following chart to see where it shatters.

Roll 1: You drop the Poisoned Wind Globe at your feet, but somehow, it doesn't break.

Roll 2-9: The Poisoned Wind Globe falls 1d10 yards short of the target. See diagram as to where.

Roll 10: You drop the Poisoned Wind Globe at your feet, and it shatters.

When the globe shatters, it releases a cloud of poisonous gas. Use the small template. The gas remains for 1d10/2 rounds after which time it loses potency. Any creature caught in the cloud must succeed on a **Challenging (-10%) Toughness Test** or take 4 damage, ignoring Armour and Toughness Bonus.

Each round the poison gas remains potent, the cloud drifts 1d10/5 squares. Roll 1d10, and consult the diagram above to see which direction it moves (though the GM may override the result if it's windy). On a roll of 1, the cloud stays where it is. On a roll of 10, it suddenly disperses.

RATLING GUN CREWS

The Ratling Gun, one of Clan Skryre's newer innovations, is a large, multi-barrelled repeating firearm. Unlike other gunpowder weapons, the Ratling Gun can spray a number of Warpstone bullets, decimating entire formations of troops. This weapon requires a crew of two to use: a gunner and loader. Use statistics for Clan Skryre Skirmishers.

Ratling Gun: *Group Engineer; Damage 3; Range 10/30; Reload 10 Full; Qualities Experimental, Shrapnel*

| | | |
|---|--------|---|
| 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | TARGET | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 |

APPENDIX IV: SKAVEN MAGIC

PETTY MAGIC (WARP)

Regardless of the type of spellcaster, Skaven who dabble in magic must learn to master these spells first. Anyone with Petty Magic (Warp) can attempt to cast the following spells. Further details on the foul magic of the Ratmen can be found in *Children of the Horned Rat*.

FAVOUR

Casting Number: 5

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Bit of Human Flesh (+1)

Description: You gain a +5% bonus to your next test.

As an alternative, if you are using the Favour of the Horned Rat rules, described in **Chapter Seven: Skaven Characters**, this petty spell steals the Favour of the Horned Rat from another Ratman within 16 yards (8 squares). You need not know which Skaven had the Favour. If there are no Skaven in range with the Favour, this spell automatically fails.

GHOSTLY FLAME

Casting Number: 6

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Pinch of Warpstone Powder (+1)

Description: You conjure a small blob of glowing green fire out of thin air. It drips viscous fluid as it burns. You may hurl this fiery mess at a target within 8 yards (4 squares), in which case *ghostly flame* functions as a *magic missile* with Damage 1. Otherwise, this petty spell generates light equivalent to a torch and remains for one hour before sputtering out.

MARK OF THE HORNED RAT

Casting Number: 3

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Rotten Tooth (+1)

Description: A target creature of your choosing within 16 yards (8 squares) must succeed on a **Will Power Test** or gain an unsightly blemish, taking the form of an open weeping sore on their forehead or the back of their hand. The blemish remains for 1d10 hours and imposes a -5% penalty to all

Fellowship Tests for as long as it remains. Grey Seers use this spell to mark their messengers.

RAT THRALL

Casting Number: 3

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Bit of Mouldy Cheese (+1)

Description: You summon an ordinary brown rat. For the next 1d10 hours, the rat must obey all of your commands even if it would cause its own death to do so. Rat thralls can fetch small objects, gnaw through ropes, and other general tasks that an ordinary rat should be able to do.

VECTOR

Casting Number: 4

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Wad of Dung (+1)

Description: One target within 16 yards (8 squares) must succeed on a **Toughness Test** or take a -20% penalty to all tests made to resist disease for twenty-four hours. Targets with Resistance to Disease may apply that talent's bonus to tests made to resist this spell.

WRACK

Casting Number: 5

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Tear from a Human Child (+1)

Description: You cause a single target within 12 yards (6 squares) to experience a jolt of searing pain. The target must succeed on a **Toughness Test** or take a -5% penalty to Weapon Skill, Ballistic Skill, and Agility Tests for 1d10 rounds.

WARPSTONE TOKENS

Though used as currency in the Under-Empire, Warpstone Tokens can be used to empower a spellcaster's ability to work magic. Grey Seers, and other spellcasters, can augment their Casting Rolls by consuming one or more tokens. Each token devoured grants a +3 bonus to the Grey Seer's next Casting Roll. However, each use also increases the danger of Tzeentch's Curse. Treat doubles and triples as quadruples on Casting Roles.

THE LORE OF WARP

The province of the terrible Grey Seers, the Lore of the Warp comprises elements of all Skaven belief and power. From crossing vast distances to generating devastating bolts of Warp lightning, Grey Seers are regarded as the most powerful and influential Ratmen in the Under-Empire. The older and more practised the Skaven is, the longer his horns grow, and often his dependence on Warpstone.

Lore Skill: Academic Knowledge (Theology)

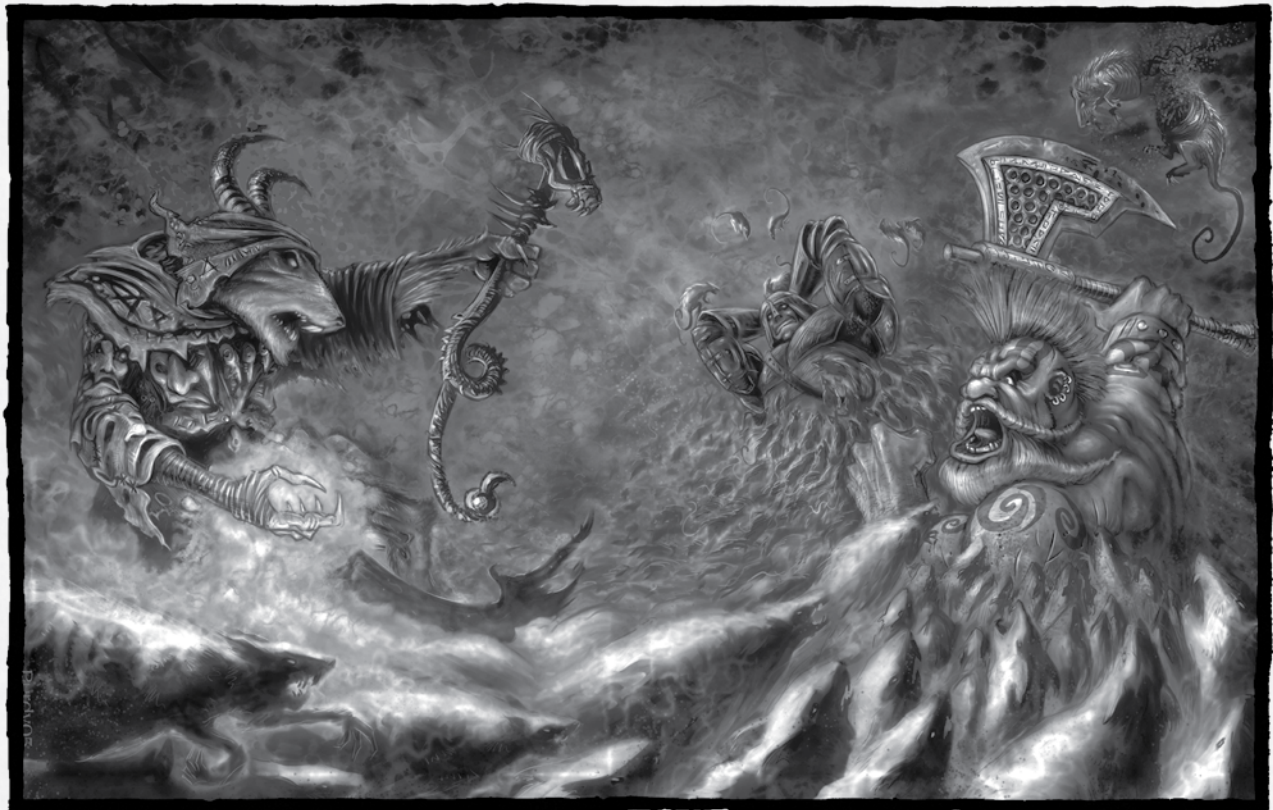
ARMOUR OF DARKNESS

Casting Number: 10

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Piece of Blackened Leather (+2)

Description: You solidify the shadows around your body. In addition to making you harder to see in low light conditions, this shadow armour also protects you from harm. You gain 1 Armour Point to each location, and you gain a +20% bonus to any **Concealment Skill Tests** you make in dim conditions. The effects of this spell last a number of minutes



equal to your Magic Characteristic. You cannot cast this spell if you are wearing any normal armour. Should you don armour while the spell is in effect, the spell ends.

CRACKLING DOOM

Casting Number: 7

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Coil of Copper Wire (+1)

Description: You send a single, crackling arc of green energy at any opponent within 12 yards (6 squares). *Crackling doom* is a *magic missile* with Damage 2. In addition, anyone damaged by this spell must succeed on a **Routine (+10%) Toughness Test** or become stunned for 1 round.

DEATH FRENZY

Casting Number: 18

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: Two Drops of Blood from a Rabid Animal (+2)

Description: You fill an ally with a horrible ravenous hunger, causing foam to fleck his mouth and his eyes to roll madly in his head. Select one allied character within 18 yards (9 squares). That creature gains the Frenzy Talent (if you have Children of the Horned Rat, replace Frenzy with Black Hunger) for 1d10 rounds plus a number of rounds equal to your Magic Characteristic. The subject of this spell must enter the Frenzy as soon as the spell is cast.

FLENSING RUIN

Casting Number: 25

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: A Piece of Tanned Skin from a Human, Elf, or Dwarf (+3)

Description: By drawing on the power of the Warp, you cause the flesh of a single target to tear free from its bones. Select a single target within 10 yards (5 squares). That target takes 5 damage, regardless of Armour or Toughness Bonus, each round for a number of rounds equal to your Magic Characteristic, as the flesh is torn from its body by green ribbons of Warp energy.

PESTILENT BREATH

Casting Number: 16

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: A Stick of Warpstone Incense lit at both Ends (+2)

Description: You exhale a pestilent, poisonous cloud at your enemies. Use the cone template. Anyone within the cone must succeed at a **Challenging (–10%) Toughness Test** or take 4 damage regardless of their Toughness Bonus or Armour. You are immune to your own *pestilent breath*.

PLAGUE

Casting Number: 26

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: A Sprinkling of several Dead Fleas (+3)

Description: You infect one or more characters within 18 yards (9 squares) with the Green Pox. Use the small template. All affected characters must succeed at a **Toughness Test** or suffer the immediate effects of the disease, losing 5%

from every characteristic on their main profile. Characters in close contact (melee range) with anyone affected by the plague must perform a successful **Toughness Test** in subsequent rounds, or they will also become infected with Green Pox. Anyone who succeeds on this **Toughness Test** cannot be affected by other castings of the *plague* spell, even if cast by other Wizards, for 24 hours.

SKITTERLEAP

Casting Number: 8

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: The Hind Leg of a Rat (+1)

Description: With a popping sound and the smell of smoke, you teleport yourself or one ally within 12 yards (6 squares) to any location that you have line of sight to. If teleporting an ally, he must be of average Human-size or smaller. You must be able to physically see the location that you are teleporting yourself or your ally to, and this location must be free of obstructions and at least 2 yards (1 square) removed from any objects, characters, or creatures.

VERMINTIDE

Casting Number: 14

Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: A Wheel of Good Quality Cheese (+2)

Description: You summon a mass of voracious rats to swarm over and attack your foes. Centre the large template on yourself to represent the rats. All creatures (except you) within the area of this spell take 1 damage each round they remain in the swarm. On the following round, the swarm of rats moves 12 yards (6 squares) in a direction you specify. Once they move, you lose control over the swarm, and each round, the swarm moves in a random direction. The swarm retains its cohesion for a number of rounds equal to your Magic Characteristic.

WARP LIGHTNING

Casting Number: 11

Casting Time: Half action

Ingredient: A Slender Copper Rod (+2)

Description: You send a sizzling bolt of Warp lightning at a single foe within 48 yards (24 squares). This is a *magic missile* with Damage 5. For every 1 that comes up on your Casting Roll, you take a 1 damage as you lose control of the warp energy you try to harness.

WARP STORM

Casting Number: 18

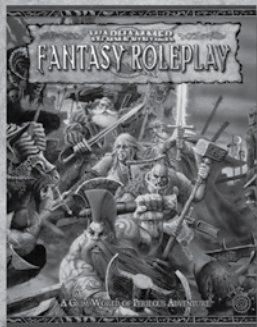
Casting Time: Full action

Ingredient: The Likeness of the Horned Rat carved from Copper (+2)

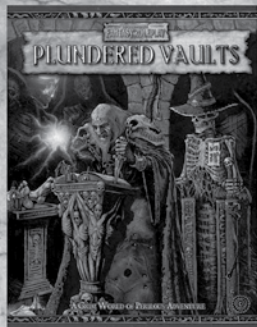
Description: You summon a storm of *warp lightning* anywhere within 48 yards (24 squares). This storm is formed of pure warp energy, fuelled by the malignant power of the Horned Rat, and may appear in any locale. Use the large template to represent the *warp storm*. All those affected take 5 damage. For every 1 that comes up on your Casting Roll, you take 3 damage as the power of the warp careens out of your control.

WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

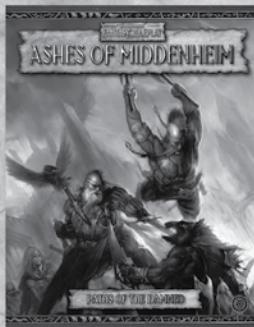
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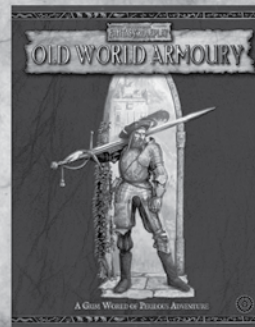
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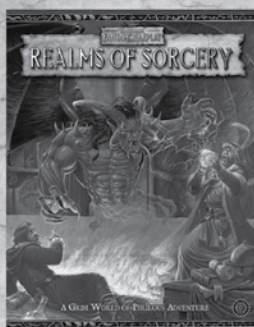
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