



VOLUME 04

THE CHRONICLES OF THE WORLD OF RACKHAM

MERIN HAVIC!



NEWS

May & June releases and previews
Sneak peak: *Confrontation: Compendium*

RACKHAM WORKSHOP

Painting: Shields of Aarklash / Wolfen fang warrior
Scenery: Between Heaven and Earth

STRATEGY

Battle report: *The Tears of Yllia*
Where the pack of the Silver Eye encounters the vanguard of the Temple / Strategy: Divination

UNIVERSE

Portrait: Sophet Drahas / Akkylannie: An Empire to the Glory of Merin
Mercenaries: The Brothers of Kashem

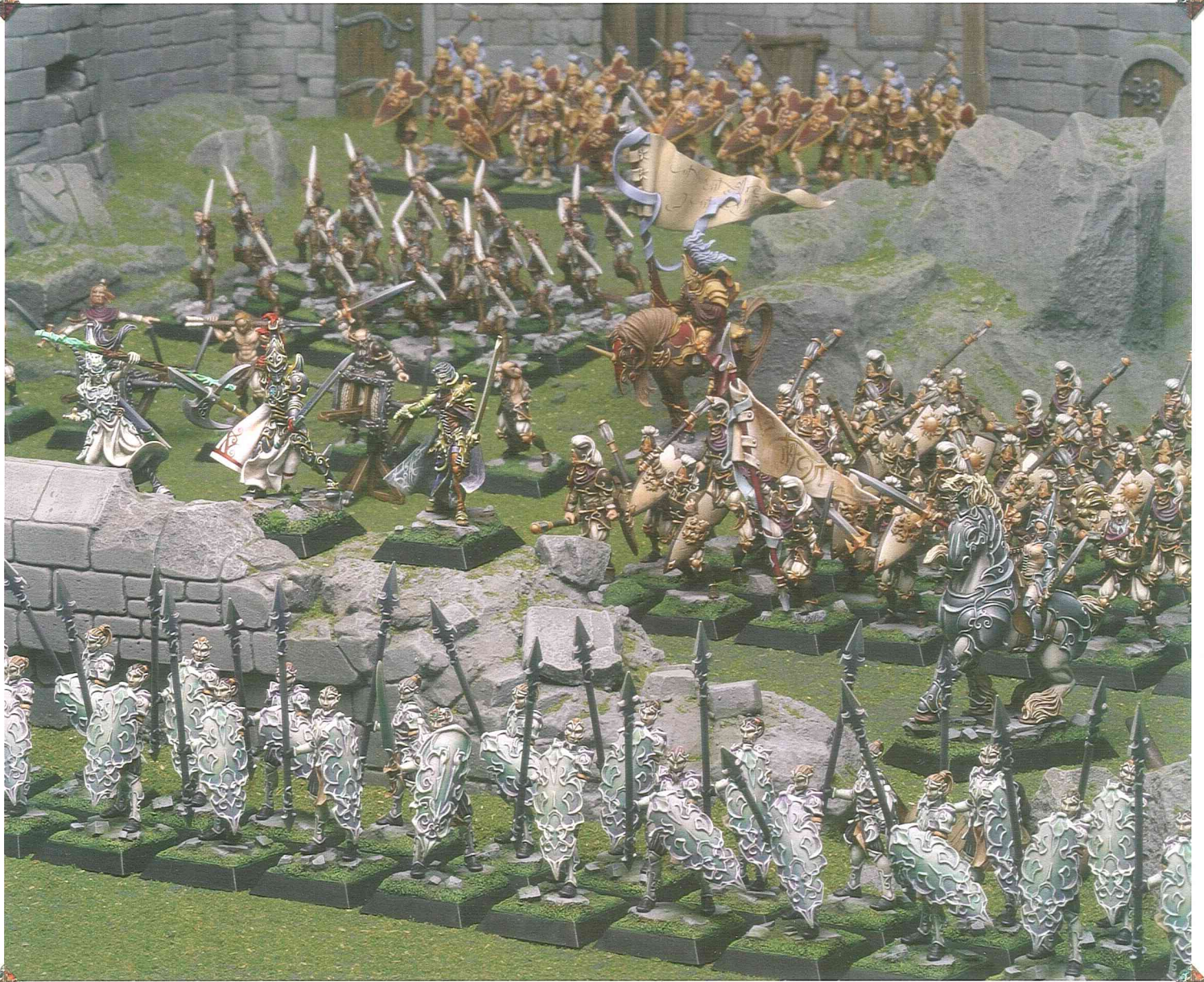
GAMING AIDS

Cards: New editions / *Hybrid* campaign and mission
Rules: Objectives / The Horde of Dun Scaith / The Colony of Ephorath

11 EXCLUSIVE CARDS

“In the Barrier, the advance of the dark paladins had been checked. Waving his cross of Merin like a flag, Ortho had gone against them with his praetorian guard and the support of the templar. In the Griffin quarters, on the benches of the great cathedral where the wounded came to seek refuge, the name of the imperial legate was on all the lips, and his deeds were already becoming a legend.”

- The Fault of Kaiber



Syd filled his lungs and shouted a cry he had been choking down for years. A cry his father had taught him, a cry every dragon-squire had to learn if he hoped one day to become a knight, a cry not one but a Cynwail elf was able to utter. Amplified and heard by the Echyrion in cover the echo of the battle, the call reached the ears of Caer Malith. A few seconds later, her gleaming body parted from the melee and dived to the ground in the land beside the belvedere.

Syd climbed onto the saddle and gripped the red leather halter. The dragon and her rider immediately soared back up toward the clouds, gathering the other peak dragons in their wake.

The Fault of Kaiber, chapter XXII



PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Jean Bey.
EDITORIAL PROJECT MANAGER: Philippe Chartier.
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Sébastien Célerin.
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Nicolas Hutter.
GRAPHIC DESIGN & INFOGRAPHY:
 Franck Achard, Mathieu Harlaut.
LAYOUT: The Flu.
PICTURE RESEARCHER: Gwendal Geoffroy.
ASSISTANT EDITORS: Ivo Garcia.
TEXTS: Jean Bey, Vincent Fontaine, Martin Grandbarbe, Raphaël Guiton, Julien Lissarrague, Pascal Petit, Nicolas Raoult and Jérôme Rigal.
HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE: Arnaud Cuidet, Vincent Kaufmann, Alexis L'Huillier, Willem Peerbolte et Olivier Roullier.
ILLUSTRATIONS: Florent Maudoux, Nicolas Fructus, Édouard Guiton et Paolo Parente.
COVER ILLUSTRATION: Kevin Walker.
COVER ENHANCEMENT: Franck Achard.
MINIATURE SCULPTING: Michaël Bigaud, Benoît Cosse, Yannick Fusier, Alexandre Aragorn Marks, Nicolas N'Guyen, Olivier Nkweti Lafitte, Nicolas Normand, Elfried Perochon and Stéphane Simon.
MINIATURE PAINTING: Frédéric Bisseux, Vincent Fontaine, Martin Grandbarbe, Guillaume Hemery, Julien Lissarrague and Sébastien Picques.
SCENERY: Vincent Fontaine.
PHOTOGRAPHY: Jean-Baptiste Guiton.
TRANSLATION: Peter Patzak.

Thanks to Raphaël Guiton, David Preti and the RACKHAM® team.
 The miniatures were created by RACKHAM®.
 They come from the world of CONFRONTATION and RAG'NAROK®, two games published by RACKHAM®, CADWALLON®, CONFRONTATION®, HYBRID®, the HYBRID® logo, HYBRIDES®, the RACKHAM® logo, RAG'NAROK® and WOLFEN® are all registered trademarks owned by RACKHAM®.
 All rights reserved Copyright © 1996-2005 RACKHAM®.
 All the illustrations, photographs, miniatures and miniatures names are exclusive RACKHAM® creations owned by RACKHAM®.

The information in this publication, including but not limited to the texts, names, prices, packaging, illustrations and photographs, is given with reserve. It is given exclusively as reference and may be subject to modification without further notice. RACKHAM® miniatures are not toys. They contain lead and must not be chewed or swallowed. This product is not suitable for children under the age of 14. Some miniatures come in separate parts and need assembly. Scenery, paints and glue not included. Non-contractual pictures. RACKHAM® miniatures are made in France. CONFRONTATION, RAG'NAROK, HYBRID and CADWALLON are games published by RACKHAM®.

RACKHAM 44, rue de Lagny, 93 100 Montreuil-sous-Bois. FRANCE
 Tel : + 33. (0) 1.55 86 89 20. Fax : + 33. (0) 1.55 86 89 25
 www.confrontation.fr www.rag-narok.com
 www.rackham.fr www.rackham-store.com
 © Copyright RACKHAM®, 1996-2005. All rights reserved.

CAUTION!

Some articles in this issue mention accessories that must be handled extremely carefully: the modelling knife with which one can cut oneself, the cyanoacrylate glue that bonds very quickly... We recommend that the youngest players and collectors only do the following activities under adult supervision and always carefully read and follow the instructions supplied with this material.

Copyright registration : mai 2005
 ISSN : 1772-371X

Cry Havoc is published by RACKHAM LIMITED with a capital of €76,210
 Registered in BOBIGNY (France) under no. 2002B00124
 44, rue de Lagny 93100 MONTREUIL-SOUS-BOIS, France
 Legal representative: Jean Bey

Printed by Saint-Paul imprimeur (55 000 BAR-LE-DUC)
 Printed in France

CRY HAVOC !

EDITORIAL	03
NEWS	04
PREVIEWS	10
SNEAK PREVIEWS	13
The Ophidian Alliance	14
Compendium: A new edition of Confrontation	18
WORKSHOP	
The Colours of War: Shields of Aarklash	14
Painting Guide: The Fang Warriors	18
Fantasy Architecture: Between Heaven and Earth	24
STRATEGY	
Battle Report:	
The Tears of Yllia: The Silver Eye protects	
one of its sanctuaries from the Griffins	28
The Calling of Faith	50
UNIVERSE	
Portrait: Sophet Drahas	52
Life in Akkylannie	54
A Land Blessed by Merin	56
An Expanding Empire	60
In the Name of Merin.....	68
The Brothers of Kashem	76
GALLERY	
The winners of the painting contest at the 2004 World of Gaming Show in Paris	81

GAMING AIDS BOOKLET

The Gaming Aids booklet cannot be sold separately from Cry Havoc ! volume 4.

CARDS

Legionary of Repentance (Griffon)
 The Legionaries of Repentance
 Bashkar, pack leader (Wolfen)
 Asturath the Destroyer (Mid-Nor)
 Tyramon (Dun-Scaith)
 Karnagh of the horde (Dun-Scaith)

Ranghor, war chief (Dun-Scaith)
 Lethal she-wolf (Dun-Scaith)
 Chagall, the Dog of Darkness (Hybrid)
 Ghoul of Acheron (Hybrid)
 Wolfen zombie (Hybrid)

These cards cannot be sold separately from Cry Havoc ! volume 4.

editorial



EVER SINCE ARCAVIUS SAW THE VISION OF A FIERY ANGEL, MERIN'S DISCIPLES HAVE MULTIPLIED. ALAS, THE PROPHET'S DREAM IS IN DANGER. THE COMING OF THE RAG'NAROK HAS CAST A DARK SHROUD OVER DARKLASH. THE WARRIORS OF AKKYLANNIE HAVE GONE ON A CRUSADE IN FARAWAY LANDS IN THE EAST TO LOOK FOR THEIR PROPHET'S TOMB AND TO FIGHT THE ENEMIES OF THE TRUTH. INQUISITORS AND DARKNESS HUNTERS TRACK DOWN TRAITORS AND HERETICS IN AN ENDLESS WITCH-HUNT. BURNING STAKES ARE RISING EVERYWHERE. THE FLAMES OF HOPE ARE LOST IN THE INFERNOS OF REDEMPTION. THE FINAL AGE HAS ARRIVED, AND ONLY THE TRUE BELIEVERS WILL SEE THE BIRTH OF A BETTER WORLD.

RARE ARE THE PEOPLES THAT AREN'T EXPOSED TO MERIN'S SOMETIMES REASSURING, SOMETIMES BURNING FIRE. ALL ARE WONDERING ABOUT MERIN. WHERE DOES THIS PROUD GOD COME FROM? WHO WAS ARCAVIUS? WHERE IS THE PROPHET'S TOMB? THESE ARE ALL QUESTIONS WHOSE ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND IN THIS FOURTH ISSUE OF *CRY HAVEG*. THIS IS ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCOVER THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE AKKYLANNIANS, AS WELL AS THE ALLIES AND THE ENEMIES OF THE TEMPLE.

THE GAMING AIDS BOOKLET PROVIDES A MISSION FOR 40 MINIATURES AS WELL AS A LONG CAMPAIGN FOR *HYBRID*. IT ALSO INCLUDES MODIFICATIONS FOR CERTAIN CARDS, RULES THAT ALLOW THE HORDE OF DUN-SCAITH, AN ALLIANCE OF WOLFEN DEVOURERS AND DRUNE KELTS, TO BE PLAYED, AS WELL AS EXPLANATIONS AND ADVICE CONCERNING THE COLONY OF EPHORATH.

WE WISH YOU GOOD READING.

AND DON'T FORGET: "GIVE NO QUARTER!"

OUR MAIL-ORDER SERVICE ALLOWS YOU TO ORDER THE FULL RANGE OF RACKHAM PRODUCTS AS WELL AS SPARE PARTS OF MINIATURES AND SEPARATE CARDS. THE ORDERS ARE SENT OFF AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

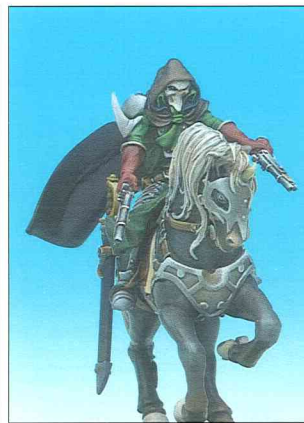
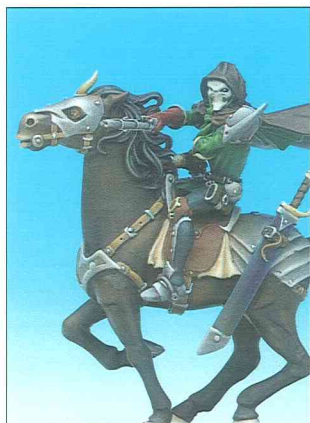
RACKHAM - SERVICE VPC / 44 rue de Lagny 93 100 Montreuil-sous-Bois FRANCE
Telephone: +33-1-55-86-89-28 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:45 PM GMT).
Fax: +33-1-55-86-89-25

E-MAIL: vpc@confrontation.fr
SECURE MAIL-ORDER WEBSITE: www.rackham-store.com

- LOADS OF EXCLUSIVE ITEMS
- SALE OF SPARE PARTS AND INDIVIDUAL CARDS
- FAST DELIVERY
- "THE DRAGON'S GEMS" FREQUENT BUYER PROGRAMME
- 10% DISCOUNT FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONF'FEDERATION DU DRAGON ROUGE



GRIFFINS OF AKKYLANNIE THALLION RIDERS



A

t once vigilantes, judges and executioners, the Griffin thallions are charged by the courts of the Inquisition to hunt down and chastise heretics. Ready for any sacrifice in Merin's name, the thallions and their mounts roam Arklash to mete out righteous punishment.

This box contains the elements required to assemble a Unit of 3 thallion riders of the army of the Griffins of Akkylannie (three profiles possible). This Unit is ready for play in *RAG'NAROK*.

This cavalry has three different reference profiles. All three have the "Fanaticism" and "Loyal / I" abilities, as well as one of the following strategic themes:

Vigilante: Instinctive firing, Scout.

Judge: Instinctive firing, Harassment.

Executioner: Sequence, Implacable / I.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES AND 3 REFERENCE CARDS.

THALLION RIDER
RANK: GRIFFIN ELITE.
42 A.P.



GOBLINS OF NO-DAN-KAR

GOBLIN ASHIGARÛS



T

he ashigarûs of the Ūraken clan serve the god Rat and their shogun with unequalled devotion. They know that at an individual scale, strength is nothing: domination is the privilege of those greater in numbers!

This box contains the elements required to assemble a Unit of 10 goblin Regulars (with a choice of two different weapons). It also contains the accessories needed to turn one of them into a Leader. This Unit is ready for play in Rag'Narok.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

10 MINIATURES AND 3 REFERENCE CARDS.

GOBLIN ASHIGARÛ
RANK: GOBLIN REGULAR. ŪRAKEN.
6 A.P.



• DRUNE WRAITHS •



UKDRRG 01



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES AND 1 REFERENCE CARD: DRUNE WRAITH

RANK: KELT IRREGULAR.
16 A.P.

The Drunes hate the gods and their lackeys. When one of their clan's warriors dies, his body is brought to Mount Silence. There his soul is called back from the dead. It thus escapes the divine greed and is once again bound to its carnal envelope. Ancient evil spells then suspend the warrior between life and death, making him a wraith of the Drune clan. In the bowels of the necropolis of Gwyrd-An-Caern, the dead don't rest in peace... they lie in waiting while dreaming of the return of Cernunnos, the horned god.

The wraiths, the living-dead of the Drune clan, finally have their own miniatures! These warriors can be deployed with the soul snatcher Warrior-mage (UKDRGM 01) as well as with Ardokath, a zealot of the Drune clan (UKDRFI 01). These Irregulars have the "Living-dead" and "Regeneration / 5" abilities.

• CYNWÄLL ASADARS •



UKCYEL 01



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES AND 1 REFERENCE CARD: CYNWÄLL ASADAR.

RANK: CYNWÄLL ELITE.
39 A.P.

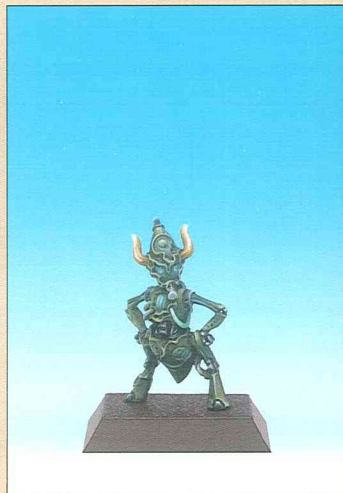
Raging mad, the troll was literally throwing the Cynwäll warriors around him. The swords and the spears were unable to pierce his thick hide. Three asadars positioned themselves around the creature. Their armour, albeit massive, seemed to be weightless on their shoulders. The troll, made furious by their repeated and mortally precise strikes, could grasp nothing but thin air and ended up biting the dust with a groan of exasperation.

High characteristics (INI 4, ATT/STR 4/7, DEF/RES 4/8) combined with formidable abilities (Concentration / 2 INI/ATT/STR, Sequence, Feint and Righteous) justify the asadars' reputation as an elite corps of the warriors of Light. Thanks to their "helianthic" armour and weapons, the asadars can furthermore benefit from powerful spells such as "Forge of the heliasts" (available in the set of the Cynwäll adept Galhyan).

• AKHAMIÄLS •



UKCYFR 02



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES & 3 CARDS: CYNWÄLL AKHAMIÄL (REFERENCE CARD), THE CYNWÄLL AKHAMIÄLS (EXPLANATORY CARD), LUMINOUS STRANGLEHOLD (EXPLANATORY CARD).

RANK: CYNWÄLL AKHAMIÄL.
14 A.P.

The akhamiäls represent the first stage in the quest undertaken by Galhyan and his companions: to give a soul to the Cynwäll constructs. The results are encouraging so far, and though the akhamiäls have a very limited capacity of learning from mistakes, it is enough for them to react to simple situations. Alas, their construction is very costly, so they are usually used as guards or as auxiliary command modules for tactical constructs.

Akhamiäls are small mechanical Constructs. They are equipped with an integrated range weapon (AIM 3, STR 4, range 10-15-20) that is very useful in CONFRONTATION, seeing their low value in A.P. In RAG'NAROK these small automatons can become Leaders of any Unit of friendly Cynwäll Constructs. The akhamiäls also have the "Devotion / 2" ability, which is ideally used before a spell or ritual is cast, or even better when used to generate luminous stranglehold that is indispensable to control Units of Constructs.

• MASTER OF CARNAGE •
2



UKDVGM 02



The first master of carnage was made to do a maximum of damage in a minimum of time. The second one, endowed with different characteristics and abilities, is made for more tactical yet just as lethal combat. He has the "Born killer," "Sequence" and "Warrior-mage" abilities (allowing him to perform counter-attacks) combined with MOV 15, INI 4, ATT/STR 5/7 and DEF/RES 6/7.

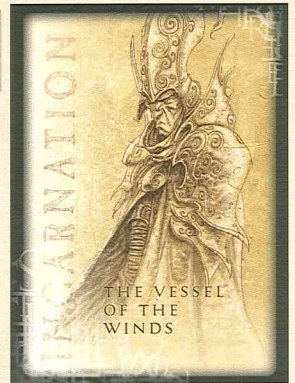
THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE & 4 REFERENCE CARDS: MASTER OF CARNAGE (REFERENCE CARD), THE PATH OF PERFECTION (EXPLANATORY CARD), THE ART OF FURY (SPELL, 10 A.P.), BLOODY GUARD (SPELL, 6 A.P.).

• THE VESSEL OF THE WINDS •



UKSPAC07



Go back to the origins of the most powerful magic of Aarklash. Unveil the terrible secret concealed by the Brotherhood of the Swordsmen of Lahn. Discover the two faces of Light and pierce the mystery of the barony of Allmoon. Will your Adventurer be worthy of the Vessel of the Winds? The Vessel of the Winds is a long campaign made for Lions of Alahan. Its adventures can easily be adapted for an Adventurer of another people or a campaign that has already been started.

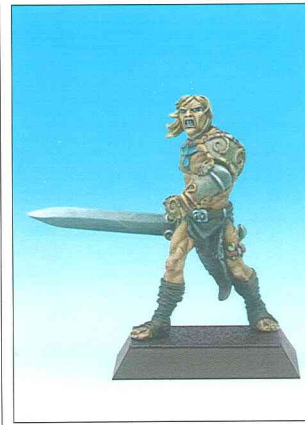
THIS PACKET INCLUDES:

16 CARDS: 1 illustrated cover card, The Vessel of the Winds (explanatory card), 11 adventure cards: Act I: A Soft Whisper; Act II, Scene 1: Night of Horror; Act II, Scene 2: The Mad Magician; Act II, Scene 3: The Hunters; Act II, Scene 4: The Sword of Lahn; Act II, Scene 5: The Madman's Bridge; Act II, Scene 6: Down Phase; Act II, Scene 7: Lady Iziria; Act II, Scene 8: First Snow; Act II, Scene 9: The Secret of Allmoon; Act III: The Vessel of the Winds; Exaltation (experience card), The Cullinahn (artefact, 28 A.P.), The Vessel of the Winds (artefact, 46 A.P.).



THE KELTS OF THE SESSAIRS CLAN

THE WARRIORS OF AVAGDDU



F

or the fierce Kelt barbarians, war is an integral part of life. When a peril threatens the sacred lands of Avagddu, every valid man grabs his weapon and joins his companions to defend the goddess Danu.

This box contains the elements required to assemble a Unit of 8 Kelt Mercenaries (Regulars) or of 8 Sessairs warriors (Regulars or Veterans). Two types of weapon and three profiles are provided. It also contains the accessories needed to turn one of them into a Leader. This Unit is ready for play in RAG'NAROK.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

8 MINIATURES AND 3 REFERENCE CARDS.

KELT MERCENARY
RANK: KELT REGULAR.
9 A.P.

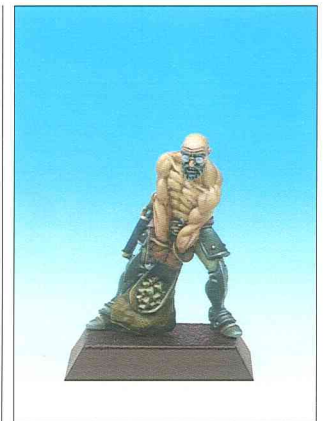
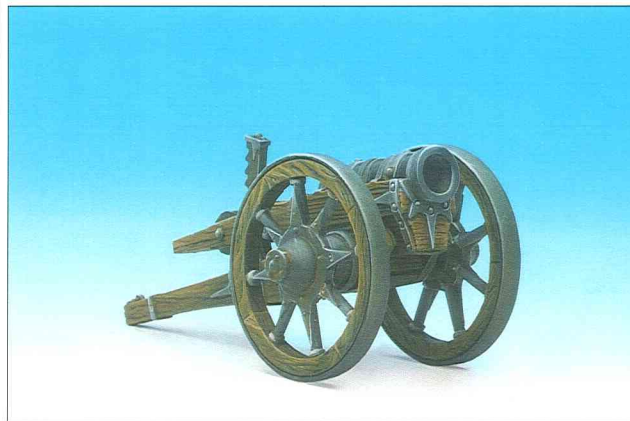
SESSAIRS WARRIOR
RANK: KELT REGULAR
10 A.P.

SESSAIRS VETERAN
RANK: KELT VETERAN.
14 A.P.





GRIFFINS OF AKKYLANNIE GRIFFIN CANNONS



M

Merin's thunder is rumbling on the horizon, heralded by the acrid smoke of gunpowder, the long whistle of cannonballs and the blast of grapeshot. The song of a new age of conquest can be heard in Akkylannie, played to the rhythm of the cannons of the imperial army and written in the name of Merin's destructive fire!

This box includes everything needed to assemble 2 Griffin cannons (culverin/long cannon and veuglaire/wide cannon), 4 Griffin cannon servants and 1 Griffin artillery officer. Accompanied by its servants, each cannon is ready for play in RAG'NAROK.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

7 MINIATURES AND 6 REFERENCE CARDS.

GRIFFIN CULVERIN
RANK: GRIFFIN SPECIAL.
HEAVY ARTILLERY.
42 A.P.

GRIFFIN VEUGLAIRE
RANK: GRIFFIN SPECIAL.
HEAVY ARTILLERY.
42 A.P.

GRIFFIN ARTILLERY OFFICER
RANK: GRIFFIN SPECIAL.
21 A.P.

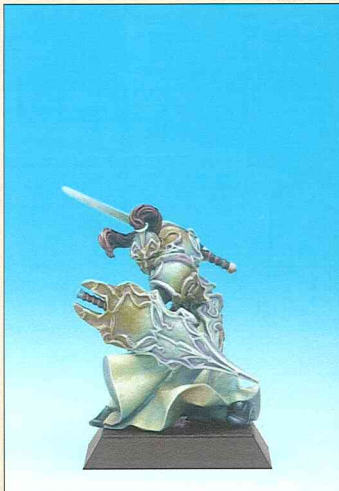
GRIFFIN CANNON SERVANT
RANK: GRIFFIN SPECIAL.
16 A.P.



◆ CYNWÄLL ASADARS ◆



UKCYEL 02



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES AND
1 CARD: CYNWÄLL ASADAR
(REFERENCE CARD).

RANK: CYNWÄLL ELITE. 39 A.P.

The three asadars quickly intercepted the Dawn warriors who had broken away from the fray to attack the Cynwäll war-staff. The copper cylinders plugged into the Scorpions' armour emptied themselves, freeing high doses of combat drugs. The confrontation lasted longer than expected as the elven warriors contained the alchemical rage with flowing movements. The Dawn warriors' fury didn't seem to be able to touch them.

Finally, the drugs' effect wore off and the asadars went on the offensive.

Their deadly sequence of moves soon finished off the enemy.

This second blister pack of asadars reinforces the army of Cynwälls on the battlefield and allows diversified Units to be created for RAG'NAROK. Like their predecessors, these asadars have excellent combat characteristics (INI 4, ATT/STR 4/7, DEF/RES 4/8) and complementary abilities (Concentration / 2, Sequence, Feint and Righteous). They are equipped with helianthic weapons and armour, whose efficiency can be strengthened by the "Forge of the Heliasts" spell held by the Adept Galhyan.



UKCISP 01



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

2 MINIATURES AND 2 CARDS:
CYNWÄLL VARSÝM (REFERENCE
CARD), THE CYNWÄLL VARSÝMS
(EXPLANATORY CARD).

RANK: CYNWÄLL SPECIAL. 29 A.P.

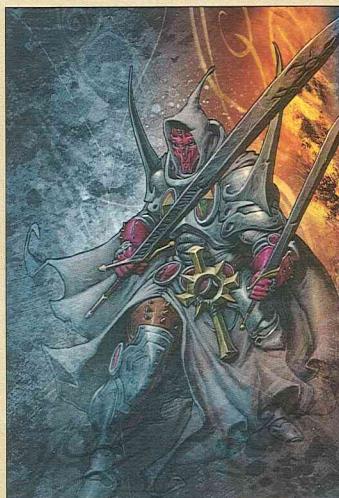
The varsýms are often the first Cynwäll warriors to hit the enemy. Some of the battles waged by the republic of Lanever have remained famous thanks to these scouts specialised in surgical strikes. As soon as the first charge has been launched, the varsýms appear from their cover and rush at the most important opponents in a deadly assault. Deprived of its war-staff, its artillery, or its support forces, the enemy army already has one knee to the ground. The war-chiefs barely have time to understand what is happening when the varsýms vanish, just to prepare their next strike.

Endowed with the "Concentration / 2" (ATT, RES, COU), "Master strike / 0" and "Scout" abilities, the Cynwäll varsýms are like daggers pointed at the enemy's flanks. If the latter lowers his guard, then the blow is fatal!

◆ ESCHELIUS THE ARDENT ◆



UKGRCH 06



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 7 CARDS:
ESCHELIUS THE ARDENT (REFERENCE
CARD), ESCHELIUS THE ARDENT
(EXPLANATORY CARD), THE BLADE
OF LAST JUDGEMENT (ARTEFACT,
21 A.P.), THE HELMET OF ARDOUR
(ARTEFACT, 17 A.P.), BLADES OF
REPENTANCE (RITUAL, 29 A.P.),
THE WITCHES' STAKE (SPELL,
8 A.P.), THE INQUISITION'S
GRACE (SPELL, 12 A.P.).

RANK: GRIFFIN WARRIOR-
MAGE CHAMPION. 149 A.P.

Many demons had fallen in front of the barricades and before the resolve of their defenders. True pillars of the faith, the inquisitors had stood like standards in the smoked out corridors. Eschelius had seen them push back the black hordes without fear of being surrounded or of yielding under their numbers. He was thoroughly convinced that Merin had consecrated his servants, and even though he had no inkling about what the fate of Kaiber would be, he knew the Counterfort of the Ponent would become a holy place where the children of those fallen on this day of grace would come to pray in memory of their forebears.

- The Fault of Kaiber

Those who have read the novel *The Fault of Kaiber* already know Eschelius, the champion who confronted the hordes of Acheron at the head of a handful of brave warriors. He is now coming to the battlefields of the Rag'narok! Eschelius is first and foremost an excellent commander for the troops of the Griffin (COU 7, DIS 9, Leadership / 15, Authority). Just like the inquisitors, he combines the advantages of a good warrior (INI 5, ATT/STR 7/8, DEF/RES 7/10) with those of a war magician (POW 5, Adept of Fire and Light).



UKNMFI 02



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 7 CARDS:
KELZARAL THE DIABOLICAL
(REFERENCE CARD), THE STONE
OF GWALGÁL (ARTEFACT, 18 A.P.),
TALISMAN OF THE HYDRA-GOD
(ARTEFACT, 20 A.P.), ODYSSEY OF
THE SHADOWS (COMMUNION, 26
A.P.), CHAPLAIN OF THE CHASMS
(MIRACLE, 10 A.P.), THE DEMON'S
CLAWS (MIRACLE, 8 A.P.), THE
DESPOT'S GAZE (MIRACLE, 12 A.P.).

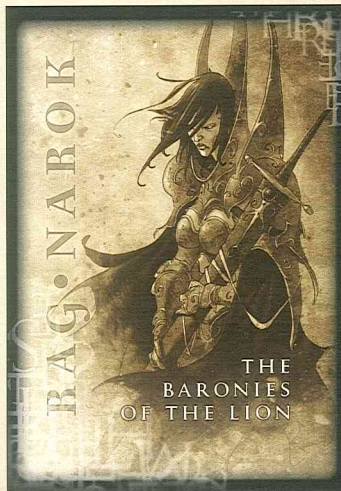
RANK: ZEALOT OF
MID-NOR. 82 A.P.

The Possessed were falling one after the other under the repeated onslaughts of the Khor warriors. The dwarves of the fortress of Fom-Nur were slowly surrounding Kelzaral. He flashed them an evil grin and spoke to them in an ancient form of their own language. "Come with me, children of Tir-Ná-Bor. Let us offer a sacrifice to Darkness that is worthy of being called one."

Kelzaral, a zealot of Mid-Nor (82 A.P.), has an aura of faith of 15 cm and the "Possessed," "Regeneration / 5" and "Thaumaturgist" abilities. Furthermore, he has a DIS of "5" and respectable combat characteristics (INI 4, ATT/STR 4/4, DEF/RES 5/7). This faithful has more than one trick hidden up his sleeve: the Talisman of the Hydra-god allows him to call miracles after having run; the "Chaplain of the Chasms" miracle lets him become an Iconoclast for a round at a time; "The Despot's Gaze" permits him to share his lines of sight with Mid-Nor dwarves in his vicinity... and there are other surprises he has in store.

• THE BARONIES OF THE LION •

UKLIAR 01



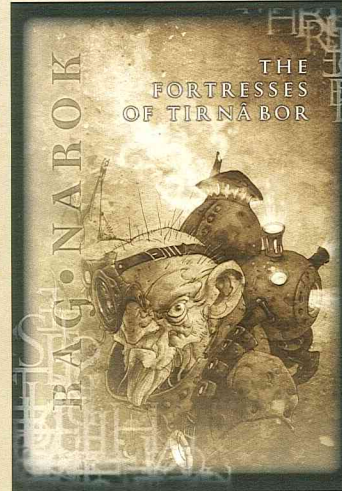
THIS SET INCLUDES:

16 CARDS: AN ILLUSTRATED CARD, THE BARONIES OF THE LION (EXPLANATORY CARD), 9 BARONY CARDS (ALGERANDE, ALLMOON, DANERAN, DORIMAN, ICQUOR, KALLIENNE, LAVERNE, LUISHANA, MANILIA), AGENT OF THE CHIMERA (REFERENCE CARD), ROYAL GUARDSMAN (REFERENCE CARD), AVENGER OF ALAHAN (REFERENCE CARD), ELAD'S AID (MIRACLE, 13 A.P.), TORQUE OF THE LAHNARS (ARTEFACT, 8 A.P.).

The Barones of the Lion set of cards lets various thematic armies be built based on the nine barones of the Kingdom of Alahan. Each one of them has its own special rules, thus providing a unique gaming atmosphere! The set also includes new reference profiles that can be played with the various barones, as well as a healing miracle and an artefact whose power is proportional to its bearer's Courage.

• THE FORTRESSES OF TIR-NÂ-BOR •

UKNAAR 01



THIS SET INCLUDES:

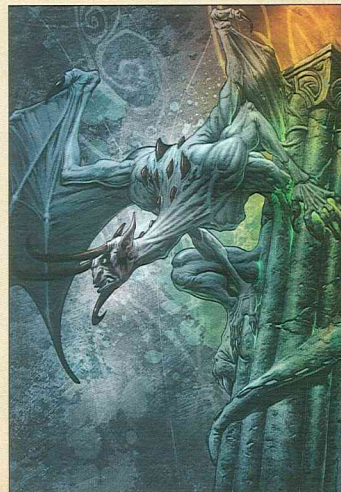
16 CARDS: AN ILLUSTRATED CARD, THE FORTRESSES OF TIR-NÂ-BOR (EXPLANATORY CARD), 7 FORTRESS CARDS (FOM-NUR, KÂ-IN-AR, KÂI-NAM, KAR-AN-TYR, LOR-AN-KOR, NAEL-TARN, OGH-HEN-KIR), KÛLZARAK, ALCHEMIST DWARF (REFERENCE CARD), BLACK-BLOOD AUTOMATON (REFERENCE CARD), HUNTER ON RAZORBACK (REFERENCE CARD), VETERAN FORGE GUARDIAN (REFERENCE CARD), HEALING SERUM (ARTEFACT, 8 A.P.), TELLURIC PREMONITION (SPELL, 10 A.P.), WEAPON OF THE AEGIS (MIRACLE, 8 A.P.).

The Fortresses of Tir-Nâ-Bor set of cards develops particular rules that let thematic armies be built for the dwarves of Destiny. From one fortress to the other, discover the dwarves of the plains and those of the mountains, the steam engineers and the champions of the gods of the Aegis... This set also includes reference profiles reserved to certain fortresses, as well as an artefact, a miracle and a spell.

PREVIEWJUNE

• GARGOYLE OF ACHERON •

UKMVCR 04



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 3 CARDS: GARGOYLE OF ACHERON (REFERENCE CARD), THE GARGOYLES OF ACHERON (EXPLANATORY CARD), IDOL OF NIGHTMARES (NEXUS, 15 A.P.)

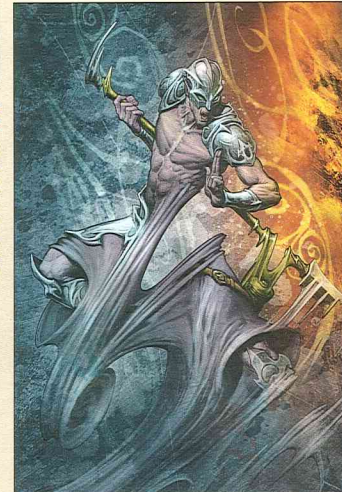
RANK: ACHERON CREATURE. 39 A.P.

By dawn, Jhorel will have committed his 66th theft, the most dangerous one ever: taking a phylactery of power that belonged to a necromancer of Acheron. For the moment Jhorel was at the gates of the dark magician's dwelling. Thrilled by the sense of danger, the thief didn't notice the gargoyles that were keeping watch over the courtyard from high above. One of them slowly started moving its claws...

Gargoyles are flying Creatures (MOV 10/20, Flight) that are especially tough (Hard-boiled). The explanatory card describes the powers reserved to them. The third card is a nexus that uses the rules explained in the first issue of Cry Havoc and whose influence increases the difficulty of the enemy's Courage tests.

• EQUANIMOUS WARRIOR 1 •

UKCYMG 01



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 4 CARDS: EQUANIMOUS WARRIOR (REFERENCE CARD), THE EQUANIMOUS WARRIORS (EXPLANATORY CARD), INVISIBLE TRUTH (MIRACLE, 9 A.P.), PROPHETIC TRUTH (MIRACLE, 12 A.P.).

RANK: CYNWALL DEVOTE. 35 A.P.

The equanimous Cynwalls devote their lives to the quest for Noesis, the truth on which harmony rests. They have made the choice of exploring the physical and spiritual aspects of Noesis together. These warrior-monks, who usually don't get involved in political affairs, have played a major role in the Cynwall nation's engagement in the RAG'NAROK. Who else could have better predicted the menace that Darkness represented for the universal balance?

Endowed with Concentration/1 (INI, ATT, DEF, DIS), Loyal/1 and an aura of faith of 10 cm, the equanimous warriors can be used just as easily in Confrontation as well as in RAG'NAROK. Their presence supports friendly fighters by giving them the "Sequence" ability. The miracles provided in this blister pack allow the simulation of the miniature's extraordinary dynamics and of the invisibility of the equanimous warriors described in the novel *The Fault of Kaïber*.

◆ ASHIGARŪ WAR-STAFF ◆

S



The Ūraken clan of the goblins of No-Dan-Kar would be nothing without its officers who lead its warriors into battle. Kūmité, a champion of the Shogun, and his war-staff are the kind of fighters who clash with the enemy at the front lines for the glory of the clan! Accompanied by hoheitais, this Unit is ready for play in Rag'Narok. Furthermore, its numbers can be complemented by the box of goblin ashigarūs. The hoheitais are veteran ashigarūs. They have different heads and bodies than those supplied in the goblin ashigarūs box.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

6 MINIATURES AND 6 CARDS: KŪMITÉ, ASHIGARŪ CHAMPION (REFERENCE CARD), ASHIGARŪ STANDARD-BEARER (REFERENCE CARD), ASHIGARŪ MUSICIAN (REFERENCE CARD), ŪRAKEN IDEOGRAM OF PROTECTION (ARTEFACT, 6 A.P.), HONOUR TO THE SHOGUN! (TACTIC CARD)

KŪMITÉ, ASHIGARŪ CHAMPION
RANK: GOBLIN REGULAR. CHAMPION. ŪRAKEN.
35 A.P.

ASHIGARŪ STANDARD-BEARER
RANK: GOBLIN REGULAR. ŪRAKEN.
10 A.P.

ASHIGARŪ MUSICIAN
RANK: GOBLIN REGULAR. ŪRAKEN.
10 A.P.

HOHEITAI
RANK: GOBLIN VETERAN. ŪRAKEN.
13 A.P.



◆ DAĪ-BAKEMONOS ◆

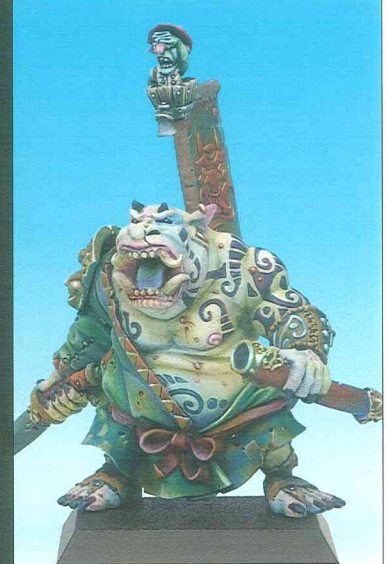
S



THIS BOX INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES AND 4 CARDS: DAĪ-BAKEMONO (3 REFERENCE CARDS), KHAWAI SPY (ARTEFACT, 12 A.P.)

DAĪ-BAKEMONO
RANK: GOBLIN CREATURE. ŪRAKEN.
37 A.P.



The daī-bakemonos devote their strength to the masters of No-Dan-Kar. In exchange they receive the teachings that make them formidable warriors. Accompanied by tiny spies called khawais, the daī-bakemonos flush out and crush the enemy before the arrival of the clan's many warriors.

THE OPHIDIAN ALLIANCE

Emblem: Serpent**Capital:** Naherys (continent: Belqarn)**Alignment:** Meanders of Darkness**Alliances:** Alchemists of Dirz and Limba of Acheron**Cult:** Varfiris, the reptile-god**Magicians' primary element:** Darkness.**Army ability:** Consciousness

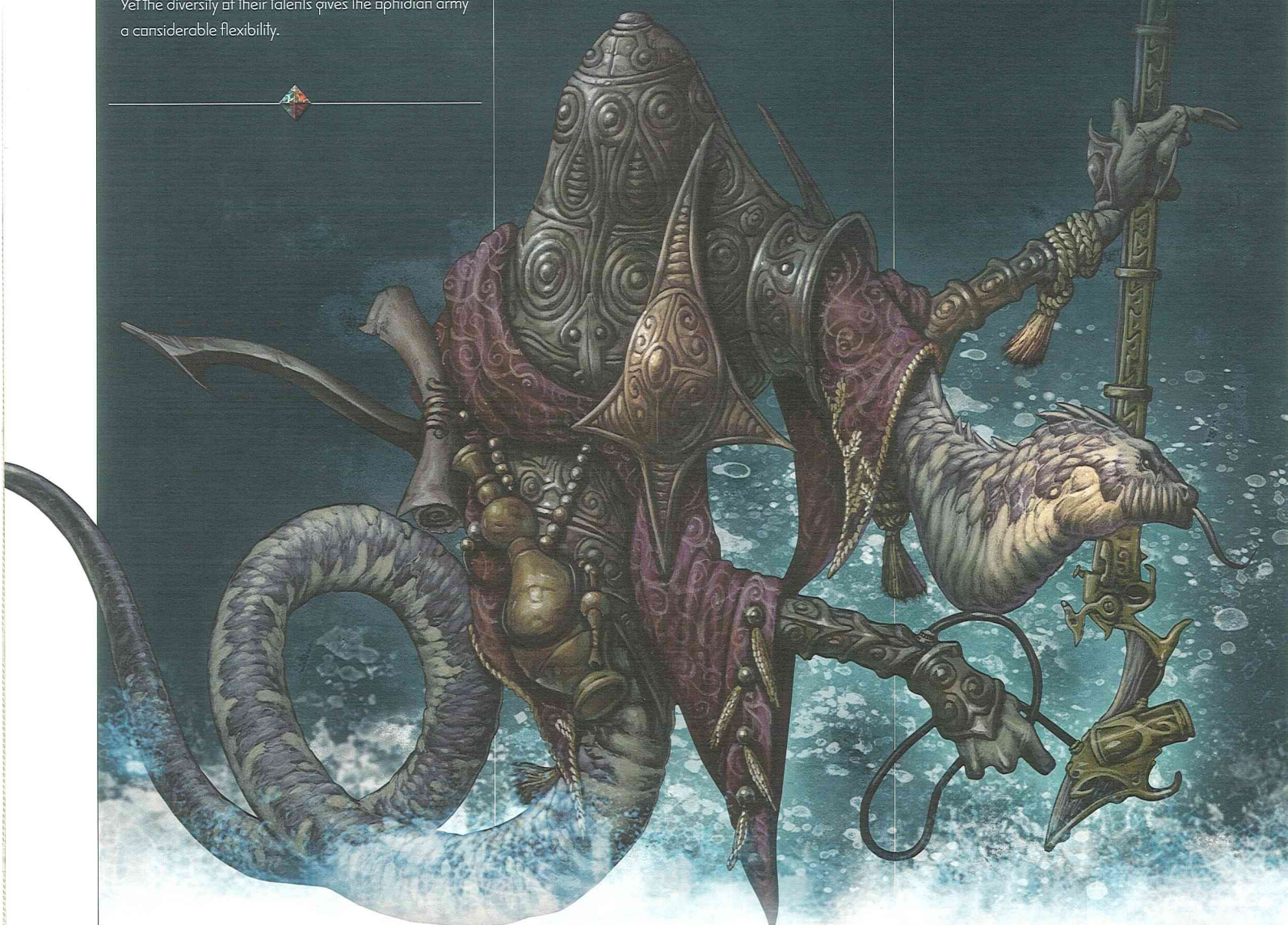
The "Consciousness" ability represents the ophidians' extremely sharp sensory acuity, which is often described as being supernatural by representatives of other races. The Serpents are also distinguished by their high individual strength and have excellent Initiative and Attack values. And their Discipline isn't bad either: indeed, the ophidians have rare mental capacities, the dark fruit of their ancient culture and their mystical nature. The Serpents are accompanied by many slaves subjugated to their will. These slaves don't necessarily share their masters' Consciousness. Yet the diversity of their talents gives the ophidian army a considerable flexibility.

THE OPHIDIAN ALLIANCE

THE OPHIDIANS ARE THE SUBJECT OF DARKLASH'S MOST TERRIBLE RUMOURS. WHAT IS LEFT OF THEIR ALLIANCE'S POWER? WHERE ARE THEY HIDING? HOW DO THEY SEE THE AGE OF DARKNESS? WHILE WAITING TO FIND THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, CRY HAVOC REVEALS THE FIRST TRUSTWORTHY ELEMENTS CONCERNING ONE OF DARKLASH'S ELDEST AND MOST EVIL RACES: THE OPHIDIANS.

The first ophidian Character can be enlisted by any army of the Meanders of Darkness. He will be equipped with two artefacts: "18," a rifle that can shoot poisoned projectiles of rare power (up to

STR 24, light artillery), and a dreadful blade that raises the chances of seriously injuring any opponent. This representative of ophidian justice will also be provided with a *HYBRID* profile.



Since their first version in 1997, the *CONFRONTATION* rules have undergone many changes. First they were complemented by the *INCANTATION* supplement, which introduced magicians to the game, and were then quickly enriched by the *INCARNATION* game mode. These improvements weren't the only modifications made to the game.

CONFRONTATION 2 (2001) marked the concept's next stage: a new booklet, new cards and new supplements. With the arrival of *DIVINATION* and *FORTIFICATION*, *CONFRONTATION* is now a fully complete game.

A NEW ERA

Before going into the details of this new version of *CONFRONTATION*, one must first measure the impact of the coming changes on the gaming material. Our oldest enthusiasts can rest assured that they won't have to acquire new reference cards. All *CONFRONTATION 2* cards can be used for *CONFRONTATION: COMPENDIUM*, excepting certain spells, miracles and artefacts whose corrections will be included in this new release. Thus, all the game's rules will be modified while taking into account the values of the fighters who are already available for the armies of Aarklash.

This new edition will be presented in the form of a single manual that gathers all of the rules needed to play all the miniatures of the *CONFRONTATION* range, including warriors as well as magicians, faithful and war machines. A far cry from the small format of the rule booklets supplied in the blister packs, this manual explains the rules of the game in great detail with numerous examples and diagrams for ease of understanding. This manual, like all RACKHAM publications, will of course be illustrated with loads of drawings and photographs.

IN WAR AS IN WAR

Much more than just a new presentation of the rules, *CONFRONTATION: COMPENDIUM* will introduce many modifications of which some will radically change the way the game is played. RACKHAM's goal is to offer a new version that is more accessible to beginners, with rules freed of certain tiresome calculations and a strengthening of the strategic factor to the detriment of the influence of luck, especially during the fighter activation phase.

While keeping this in mind, the rules have been completely overhauled. When it was deemed necessary, certain crucial points were profoundly changed. Without going too much into the details in order to preserve the surprises in store, here is a quick overview of the main changes that are planned.

Attention! At the time that these lines are being written the *CONFRONTATION: COMPENDIUM* rules are

COMPENDIUM: A NEW EDITION OF CONFRONTATION



CONFRONTATION 2 now includes no less than four extensions. The time has come to gather these rules in a single volume. More than just a simple compilation, it is now a question of clarification, streamlining and a greater balance of the game's rules. In short, the time has come to move on to *CONFRONTATION 3*!

still being developed and tested. Therefore all points mentioned in this article may still end up being modified before the new edition's official release.

Where a random drawing of cards determined the order the fighters were activated in, *CONFRONTATION: COMPENDIUM* introduces a new system inspired by the "Strategic Deck" optional rules presented in the first issue of *Cry Havoc*. Thanks to this procedure the players can plan the activation order of their fighters and thus develop more elaborate tactics. Furthermore, the movement, divination, firing and incantation phases will disappear: all actions relative to these phases are now carried out when the fighters are activated. This way of proceeding gives more freedom of action to marksmen, magicians and faithful, all the while simplifying the way the round unfolds.

The hand-to-hand combat phase has also been completely revised to come up with a simpler combat system requiring fewer calculations to be made and which evens out the balance of power by reducing the impact of outnumbering. The way Wounds and

penalties are applied has also been revised for the sake of simplification.

While the incantation rules have been modified very little, this is not true for the divination rules. The way the faithful calculate their Temporary Faith and the manner in which they call miracles have been changed in order to let them perform more miracles during a round, in the same way that magicians can cast several spells.

The influence of fear has also been the object of various clarifications and simplifications. Among the most important changes is that fear-inspiring miniatures can now be frightened by fighters with a higher FEAR than theirs. At the same time leadership no longer transmits FEAR, only Courage. Living-dead commanders are given a capacity called "Lord of the Dead" to compensate for these changes.

These are just a few of the most noteworthy modifications in *CONFRONTATION: COMPENDIUM*. Many other points have been revised and corrected with more fluidity and pleasure in mind.



THE COLOURS OF WAR: SHIELDS OF AARKLASH

Shields are the reflection of each army's style and iconography. Their highlighting can be done in many ways. From simple emblems to complex intermingling of textures, they provide the perfect support for your colours.

Shields are a common part of the soldiers of Aarklash's equipment. Of various sizes and shapes, they are a defensive element that also allows units to be identified within their army.

Because shields are used as protection against projectiles and attacks in hand-to-hand combat, they are usually badly worn, dented by blows or riddled with arrows. Their external face, the "field," can be decorated with a coat of arms or symbols that represent the belonging to a noble family, a tribe or an army. A shield's shape and colours can also reflect a unit's mindset, and can even testify to feats carried out in a glorious past.

Regiments of Alahan that have shown extreme bravery or performed particular feats of arms usually add symbols to the field of their shields, beneath their unit's emblem. The warriors of Mid-Nor, like the orcs, enjoy decorating their shields with morbid trophies removed from their victims (though in the sons of Jackal's case these are generally exotic pieces of equipment salvaged here and there). The Khor warriors are renowned for their habit of embedding the bones of their vanquished enemies into their shields. Thus, in addition to its protective function, the shield takes on a symbolic dimension.

Some of Aarklash's most powerful artefacts are shields of great value, of which the most famous ones come from the baronies of the Lion and are carried by the barons themselves.

Hence, shields reflect the culture and the martial doctrines of the peoples wielding them.

PINNING AND PREPARATION

The casting marks are removed using a modeller's knife.

The shield is pinned for ease of handling while painting and to provide solid fixing to the miniature. Pierce a small hole in the shield's fixing point with a very thin drill bit while taking care not to drill all the



way through. This operation must be done very carefully while often checking the hole's depth in order to avoid any problems.

The affixing stud is removed from the miniature's forearm, which is then pierced in the same way as the shield while taking care not to drill all the way through the wrist.

A metal pin of the same diameter as the hole is fixed to the shield (using cyanoacrylate glue). A certain length is left of the pin to allow it to be held by a manual drill bit holder for ease of handling while painting.

Once the shield's paintjob is done, the pin is cut down to the length required to attach it to the hole

in the miniature's wrist. The assembly thus obtained is precise and solid.

SHIELD OF TIR-NÂ-BER

Here is a paintjob example for a shield included in the Soldiers of the Plains box.

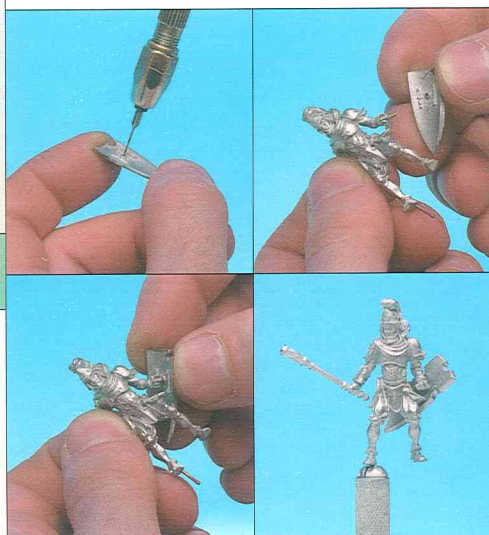
After it has been trimmed and undercoated, a combination of pastel blue and golden brown is applied to the shield as a base.

The lower parts of the shield are then shaded with a warm orange brown wash followed by a golden brown one.

The shield's field is then gone over again with the base colour, and is then made lighter on its upper parts by adding pastel blue and then white.

A base of yellow green mixed with a drop of earth brown (to make the colour cover better) is applied to the clan's symbol. It is then shaded with a transparent earth brown wash and gone over with yellow green and then white.

The leather rim is given a dark red brown base and then made lighter with red brown followed by orange brown.



WAR PAINT

Oxidation

Oxidation acts a lot like rust, a matter that was covered in an article in *Cry Havoc*, volume 2.

The greenish colour develops in the hollows, in patches or in spots. The effect spreads to the edges of the field but doesn't affect the symbol, which thus seems to be made of precious and inoxidisable material.

Starting with a bronze green to trace the edges of the patches, they are made lighter as one gets nearer to the hollows by adding bright green to the bronze green and then a bit of white in the hollows. This is kind of like inverse lightening.

Looking at ancient statues of bronze teaches a lot about the way oxidation develops on material.



CHEQUERS



TRACES OF BLOWS



doing this to the first squares that were drawn so that the paint's intensity remains coherent and that the chequers' faded effect is preserved.

And finally the squares are made lighter and then darkened.

Open field

The patterns sculpted on the shields can be removed in order to get a blank surface that allows one's creativity to flow freely.

First the symbol is removed using a flat file. The surface is then smoothed with very fine sandpaper. One

Damaged shield

To get a very damaged effect, the shield can be transformed using a box cutter, pliers or a small hammer. The box cutter can be used to create scratches and gashes caused by swords. With pliers one can damage the edges of the shield in a realistic way (as if they have been struck by an axe), and the hammer is used to simulate the impacts of maces or flails.

However, in order to preserve the piece's readability and aesthetic quality, this method should be used sparingly.



OXIDATION



BLOOD



OPEN FIELD



DAMAGED SHIELD



Blood

The violence of combat is never represented as clearly as with a nice splatter of blood. This is gotten by mixing black with bright red (a drop of shiny varnish or glaze can be added).

A first stain of blood is painted onto the shield with a single mastered yet spontaneous stroke of the brush. Before this stain dries, the brush is very quickly cleaned and is then used to play with the paint to spread the "blood" around a bit more (the time it takes to clean the paintbrush lets the paint dry a bit, and then returning to it allows one to get a realistic transparency effect).

The most important thing is that the paint and the brushstrokes remain fluid.

Chequers

A chequered pattern can be adapted to any type of surface (wood, metal, fur, skin, etc.) and is added on top of the miniature's paintjob.

The chequers are integrated and blend into the paint. They undergo changes bound to light and wear, and can be faded in certain places.

Starting in a corner, the chequers are painted (without previously tracing the pattern). The squares become more and more transparent as the brush runs out of paint.

The contours of the squares are then gone over again so as to clearly define them. One must start

must take care not to damage the edges of the shield or to remove too much material from the field.

Such a surface is ideal for painting an arabesque or a symbol to personalise an army.

Freed from its sign of allegiance, the shield can also be used to customise a miniature from a different people.

The various decorative effects described in this article can be combined, especially when one has a large surface to paint.

Traces of blows

Shields suffer the opponent's blows and bear their marks. These marks can be made using the trompe l'oeil technique.

First a thin dark line (very marked at the start and then becoming thinner and thinner) is painted to represent the impact of the blade that then slashes the shield's field. This line is made lighter by painting a line with a lighter colour at the bottom part of the gash (clear at the base and then progressively fading).

A bit of earth brown is then added in the hollows in such a way as to accentuate the illusion of the gash's depth.

Small cracks caused by the impacts are painted with fine lines of diluted white.

The same technique can be used to represent holes or missing parts on certain weapons and armour.

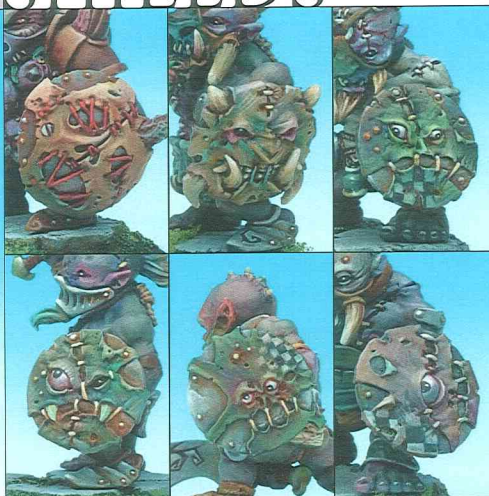
All these decorative techniques can be applied to many other elements, such as weapons and armour. The combination of several of these effects is often interesting as long as they aren't in overabundance. Like when painting a miniature, harmony and balance must be kept in mind when applying these various techniques.

DECORATING BASES

Shields are interesting for use as base decoration. Left behind on a battlefield and damaged, they are the testimony of epic clashes. A shield evokes the death of an enemy. It can be accompanied by a helmet, a piece of armour or a broken weapon.



THE DWARVES OF MID-NOR



The fields of Mid-Nor shields are made of skins stretched over wooden or metal frames. The origin of the hides used to build them is easily recognisable: the characteristic chequers of the goblins, the greyish skin of a Drune or the bluish one of a half-elf. Some of these hides have eyes or are infested with horrifying diseases while others are slowly rotting away, waiting to be replaced by freshly cut strips of skin.

THE GRIFFINS OF AKKYLANNIE



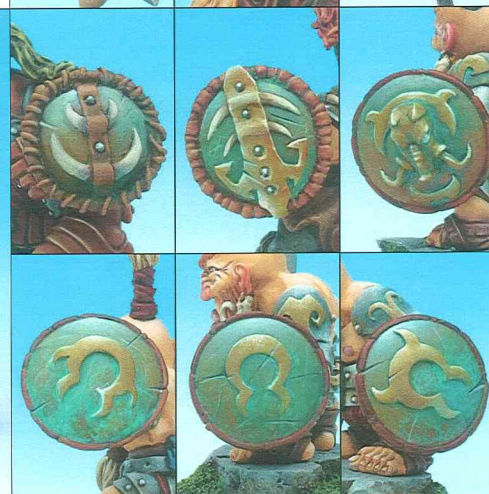
The legions of the Griffin have strict codes that allow their regiments to be identified (each one has its own combination of colours). The Commanderies of the Temple also have specific colours that distinguish them from the other Griffin units and evoke the regions where Merin's soldiers are based. The standardisation of the Akkylannian shields attests to an advanced level of military organisation.

THE LIONS OF ALAHAN



Each barony of Alahan has its own coat of arms that decorates the pavises and shields of its soldiers. The knights wield shields with more complex designs that underscore their belonging to an elite corps. Furthermore, specific symbols attest to the bravery of certain exceptional regiments. The renowned Shields of the Baronies are legendary barriers that protect the invincible heralds of justice.

THE DWARVES OF TIR-NÂ-BOR



The dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor are organised into clans. The heavy shields carried by the dwarven warriors show their allegiance to a clan or a family and are usually decorated with trophies taken from the enemy, such as tusks or precious materials.

The mountain-warriors carry enormous shields that can block a catapult's projectile. These antique artefacts are true treasures of craftsmanship.

The war clones of the Scorpion, be they of Skorize class, Keratis class or any other, are often equipped with shields despite their lack of instinct for self-preservation.

The fields of the Syhar shields are often soaked with mutagenic substances and other chemical fluids. Their rims are sometimes decorated with insectile or chitinous outgrowths.

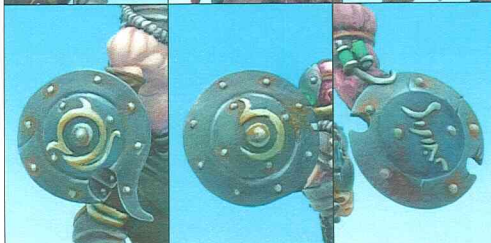
The shields of Acheron most often come from the equipment of fighters of other peoples who have returned from the dead to fight in the name of the Ram.

Damaged and rusted, the protective gear of undead soldiers is not maintained and is quickly deteriorating.

Certain shields are, however, built in Acheron. These shimmer with a wicked glow. The baroque style of their designs and the fine shapes of these unholy objects are testimony to the past of the former barony of Acheron.

The militia of Cadwallon is equipped with shields decorated with the coat of arms of the Free City. Those of simple militiamen are made of ordinary materials, but those of high-ranking officers are finely crafted out of precious materials.

The noblemen and mercenaries of the guilds are equipped in a mixed way and the simplest of shields mingle with genuine works of art that are custom made for exceptional warriors.



THE ALCHEMISTS
OF DIRZ

THE LIVING-DEAD
OF ACHERON

CADWALLON



WOLFEN



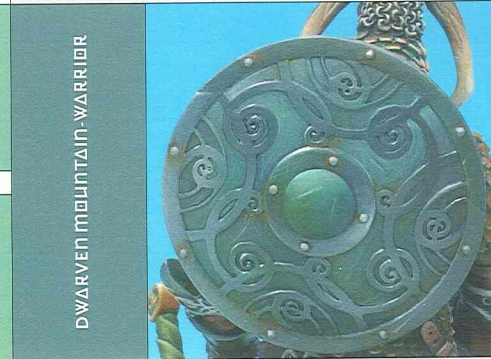
GOBBLINS



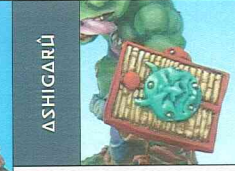
GOBBLINS



GOBBLINS



DWARVEN MOUNTAIN-WARRIOR



ASHIGARU



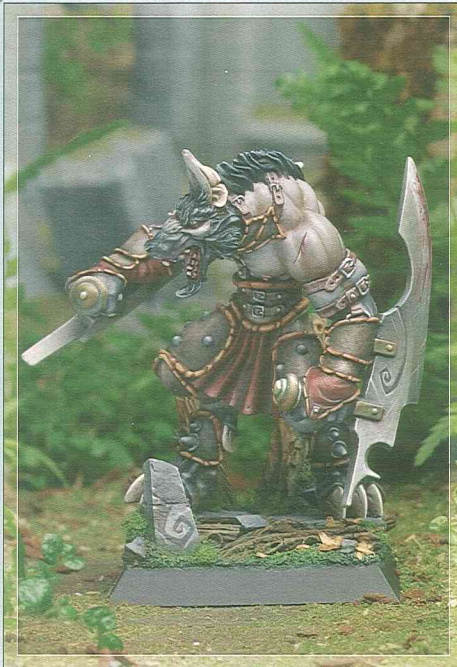
ORCS



GOBBLINS



ORCS



The shaman tightened the strips of whispers around the young Wolfen's chest. The trials were reaching their end.

"You have endured the rite of passage. You are now a warrior of the pack, a soldier of Yllia."

The pack was gathered around them in a circle beneath the moon. A solemn silence dominated, barely broken by the crackling of the flames that lit the scene.

"For you the hunt will begin. Be proud of your clan and of your brothers; fight with anger and honour."

While reciting ritual words, the shaman unfolded a leather covering, slowly revealing a pair of huge blades. Reapers.

"These are the sacred weapons of our people; they are the symbol of our strength. Learn to master them and become the scourge of the enemies of the moon-goddess."

The young Wolfen let the shaman attach the heavy reapers to his forearms.

The shaman gazed intensely at the young warrior. He gauged him one last time, his expression remaining completely neutral.

Finally he turned away and let another Wolfen enter the circle straight in front of the fang warrior. An enormous Wolfen, taller and stronger than the biggest of predators, planted his feet before the young fighter, forcing him to lift his head in order to look at him. His immense shape stood out in the pale moonlight.

Intimidated by this presence, the young Wolfen lowered his head as a sign of submission while the powerful warrior drew the symbol of Yllia on his forehead.

"Be brave and obey our laws!" spoke the pack leader.

Turning around to face the assembly, the huge Wolfen began howling at the moon, soon to be followed by the whole clan.

The rite was fulfilled. A new warrior had joined the pack.

PAINTING GUIDE THE FANG WARRIORS

The Wolfen are aggressive and powerful creatures whose paintjob should reflect their savagery. The Fangs of the Moon-Goddess box (UKWFRAG1) allows a great variety of assemblies and provides the perfect support for a painting guide devoted to the fiercest predators of Aarklash.

Δ VIOLENT NATURE

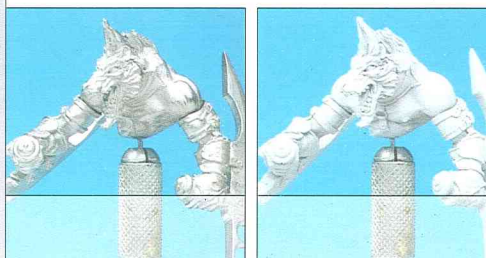
The Wolfen people is enigmatic, both bestial and bloodthirsty, and has an intensely close bond with the forces of nature.

The Wolfen's palette of colours is bound to the forest, to raw materials such as wood and stone, as well as to leather, a certain grime and the presence of blood.

Living in symbiosis with their environment, the Wolfen wear very few clothes and almost no armour. Their protection is rather provided by their accessories. Giving privilege to speed and brutality in hand-to-hand combat, the Wolfen prefer light and practical equipment.

The fang warriors being largely without clothes, the biggest part of the paintjob must be concentrated on their skin, fur, claws and fangs.

So the choice of colours for these parts should evoke nature.



SKIN



The most visible part of the miniature is the skin. It therefore deserves especially careful and elaborate treatment that plays with the variations of the shades.

The idea is to make the soft highlights of natural grey contrast with the brown, more brutal dark parts that suggest grime and the Wolfen's violent nature.

A base of fairly light medium grey is applied, and the paws, the forearms and the muzzle all get a dark grey base. The fur gets a black base and a dark brown wash is applied inside the mouth.



The shading of the lightest parts of the skin is done in progressive layers while adding a bigger and bigger amount of fairly warm dark brown to the base colour.

Adding dark brown (rather than black or dark grey) allows the colour to be made richer, to give the skin a dirty appearance, and to make the muscles stand out more.

The muzzle, as well as the darkest parts of the paws and forearms, are shaded with a very dark brown.



Once the shading has been done, the bulging parts are gone over again with the base colour in order to erase any stains caused by the dilution of the paint. In this step the limits between the areas of light skin and the darker paws, forearms and muzzle are blended by shading the two colours in such a way as to harmonise them.



The lightening of the lighter part of the skin is done by adding light grey to the base colour. The bulging parts are shaded with ever lighter layers of paint as one moves up to the parts lit by an overhead light. All lightening is done as if the source of light were right above the miniature.

The lightening must smoothly follow the curves of the bulging parts to reach light grey on the most exposed parts.

The parts with a dark grey base are made lighter with the fairly light medium grey that was used as a base colour for the rest of the miniature. Using this same colour mixed with a different one helps maintain the coherence of greys.

The fingers are then detailed by painting thin, irregular light grey lines that represent the folds at their joints (this is also done for the elbows and knees).

This trick gives a subtle touch of reality to the paint-job and makes the miniature more alive.



THE ACCESSORIES ARE UNDERLINED WITH A THIN LINE OF FAIRLY DILUTED DARK BROWN FOR MORE SHARPNESS AND READABILITY.

FUR AND MANE

The Wolfen move around and fight in the undergrowth; their manes and the fur of their tails can get caught in the branches or become dirty, so they won't be made to seem as shiny as on other pieces. The neglected, even shaggy, aspect of a Wolfen's fur highlights his wild character.

After having been given a black base, the fur is made lighter by progressively adding medium blue to the black.



A warm brown wash is applied in certain hollows to suggest dirt and tufts of grimy fur. The washes are accentuated in the deepest hollows, but some are left completely dark in order to strengthen the illusion of the strands' thickness and density.



The last highlights are made by adding a bit more medium blue to the mix. The shading follows the curves of the strands according to the overhead light.



THE WOLF'S MOUTH

The essential part of a Wolfen's paintjob is his mouth. The way the expression and the realism of the details are treated will determine the piece's visual impact.

The mouth's interior is painted dark brown red, and the eyes and the nose are painted black. A flesh-colour base is applied to the ears' membranes.

A black wash is applied in the mouth and a warm brown one in the ears to suggest depth.

The tongue and the gums are painted before the teeth are done. The tongue is given another layer of dark brown-red. It is then made lighter by adding old pink and then white.

The gums are also gone over again with dark brown-red before being made lighter with brown-red.

The teeth are first given a base of medium grey, then they are lightened with beige followed by ivory.

The chops are painted black and made lighter by adding bright red to the black. Observing a dog's chops (and its mouth in general) lets one grasp the nuances of these various textures and colours.



A black base is applied to the nose and then highlighted with neutral grey followed by light grey on its extremity in order to simulate a certain humidity.

The eyelids are painted in the same way, which makes their gaze more intense and gives the face a more realistic aspect.

The eyeball is repainted white (while leaving a thin black line) and then bright orange-yellow made lighter with white like a metallic zone.

The iris is painted with black and gets a white dot at its centre to make it seem wet and shiny... realistic and aggressive. It's important to give the gaze a coherent direction (in accordance with the miniature's pose). A gaze directed downwards is often a good choice because the Wolfen then appears to be eyeing his prey scornfully from high above.

(becoming more and more opaque as one nears the tip of the claw). The claws are made lighter with ivory in thin transparent layers.

At this stage the claws can be given cracks using the trompe l'oeil technique. These cracks either start at the base of the claw or at its extremity. An irregular black line, which gets thinner and thinner, is drawn. A bit of brown is then added inside the line in order to accentuate the illusion of depth. Then a thin light line is added along the lower edge of the crack so as to represent the reflection of light.

The claws' final sheen is given by adding off-white to the parts jutting out the most.

THE CLAWS

The challenge of painting the claws is to succeed in getting an aspect that is dirty and damaged yet which remains readable and "clean" in painting terms. As usual, apart from the effects of colour and matter, a good blending between each colour remains essential.

A beige base is applied to the claws and they are then shaded in the hollows or indirectly highlighted by the overhead light using a fairly warm earth brown. A fairly transparent dark brown-red wash is applied to the shaded areas to represent dried blood and grime. These effects are gotten by almost completely covering the claws and then applying a very diluted base beige onto the parts exposed to the overhead light

THE EQUIPMENT

The colours of a Wolfen's equipment should evoke nature with brown, green and orange tones.

The loincloth and the leather of the mitts are treated first with a dark brown-red base made lighter with brown-red and then bright red in small amounts. A nice effect can be gotten by adding thin perpendicular lines using orange lightened with yellow to one or two places, as if dust and wear were revealing the cloth's texture.

Stains and holes can be added using the trompe l'oeil technique to accentuate the loincloth's worn aspect.

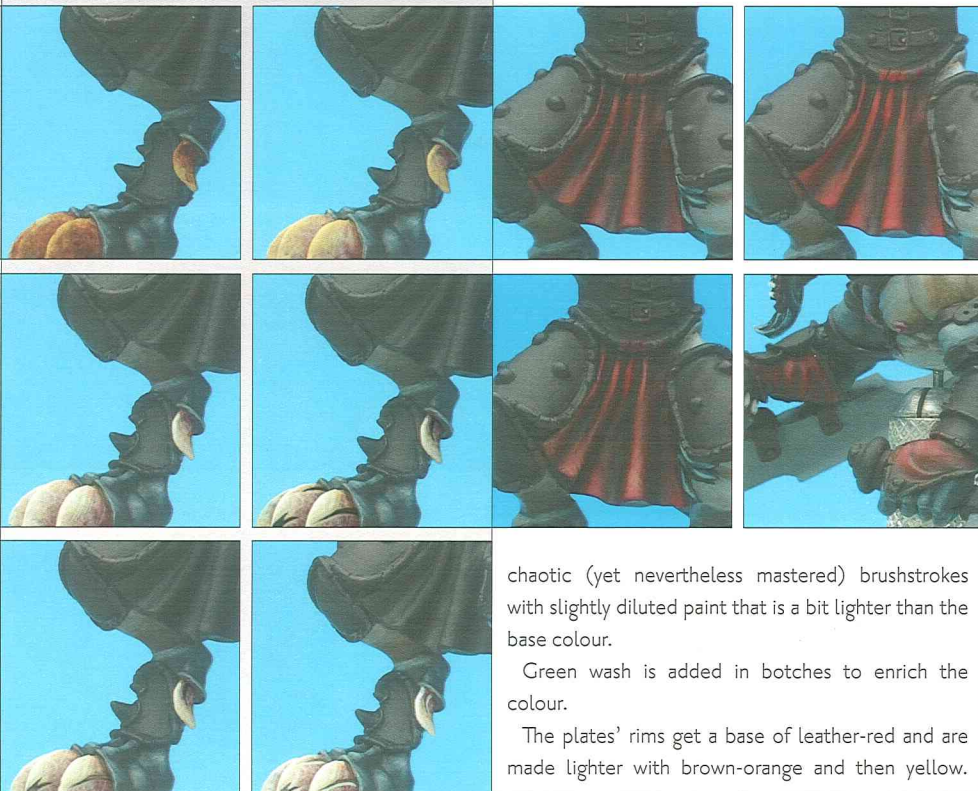
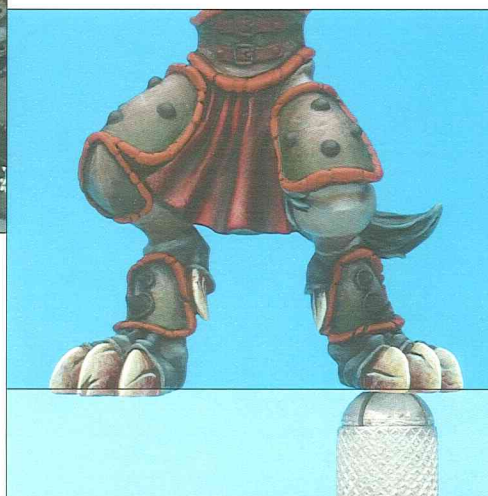
The armour plates are given a dark brown base. On these surfaces one can get a worn effect by applying

These warm colours contrast well with the colder colour of the plates of armour.

The brown and green of the plates harmonise with the red of the rims, which lets one get a good overall coherence for the miniature.

The leather straps are painted in cold tones and are given the effect of cracked leather.

All metallic equipment, such as the buckles, buttons and bolts, are made to look like iron with a neutral grey base that is then lightened with light grey and white.



chaotic (yet nevertheless mastered) brushstrokes with slightly diluted paint that is a bit lighter than the base colour.

Green wash is added in blotches to enrich the colour.

The plates' rims get a base of leather-red and are made lighter with brown-orange and then yellow.

THE REAPERS

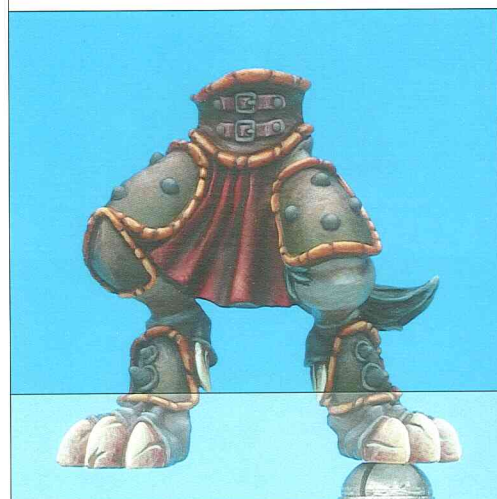
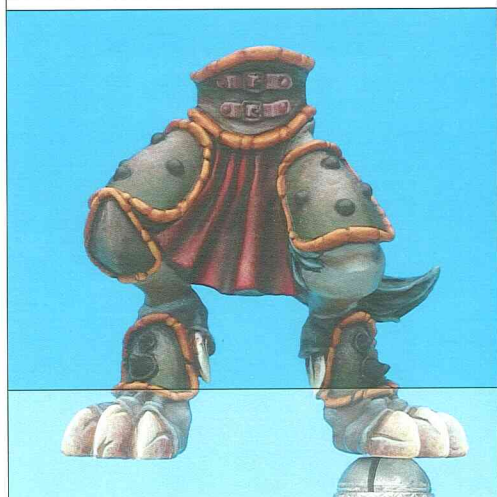
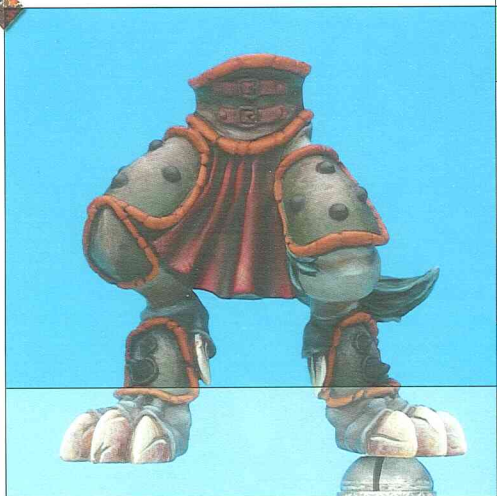
The reapers are painted in such a way as to get a texture that animates large metallic surfaces.

After applying a very opaque medium grey base, a light shading is made by adding a bit of black and earth-brown to the grey base colour so as to mark the direction of the lighting.

Traces of brushstrokes can be used to give texture to the metal and suggest an irregular surface that is dented and dirtied in certain parts.

In this example the texture sought is that of stone (by adding veins of dark blue and brown to the grey).

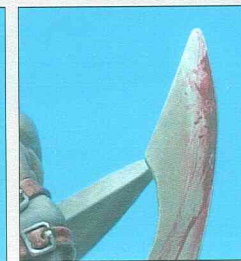
The shadows are worked with a dark blue-green wash, and the highlights are brought to off-white and then white with a shiny effect.



The medium grey is gone over again to blend the shadows through transparency by playing on the paint's consistency. Highlighting is then done by adding a fairly warm light-grey going on yellow or green to the grey base colour.

The evolution of the reapers' colour towards a warmer grey is required to ensure the miniature's good readability and to avoid that the skin's grey matches that of the blades.

Some details are added, such as traces of mud, as well as elements using the trompe l'oeil technique (marks of scratches and blows, tears in the loincloth, etc.) to "age" the miniature and integrate it into its forest surroundings.



THE SACRED LAND OF YLLIA

The base is customised using elements that evoke the forest of Diisha. On a foundation of cork cut to size, small pieces of branches are selected and trimmed, and then added to the base. A decorated stone adorns the foreground and evokes the long existence of this mythical country.

His first hunt as a fang warrior changed the way he saw the world. He felt stronger, faster, and sensed every detail of his surroundings with an extreme sensitivity.



His paws hit the forest floor in rhythm while the pack advanced at a fast pace towards the enemy camp... and towards war.

The elders had recognised his talents; the young wolf had been given the mark and the attributes of Yllia. Today the goddess's opponents would learn to fear the fury of the children of the moon!





Your place is among my prey.

”





FANTASY ARCHITECTURE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

The battle report in this issue of *Cry Havoc* is the opportunity to introduce a new material in our Workshop column with the construction of a modular wooden bridge. The combination of the various techniques used for working plaster (covered in previous issues) and wood offers new ways of building elements of the scenery.

Wood, which is introduced here for the first time in *Cry Havoc*, provides new setting opportunities. It's a basic construction material that is easy to work and with which almost any type of structures and edifices can be built.

A bridge is a remarkable and aesthetic element on a gaming table, but it also has many advantages bound to the game itself. It represents an obvious strategic objective: the crossing of a gorge or a river (see *The Tears of Yllia*, p. 28).

Its modularity allows the appearance of the setting to be changed and thus makes the form of the battlefield seem less rigid. A gaming table can have hollow spaces into which modular elements can be inserted. Furthermore, a modular bridge can be replaced by a destroyed version of the same structure, thus allowing its collapse be simulated spectacularly in real time.

MORE REAL THAN NATURE

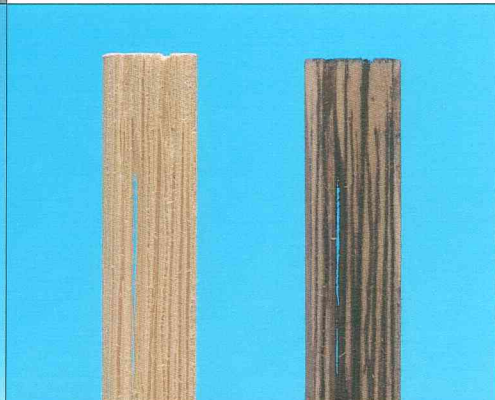
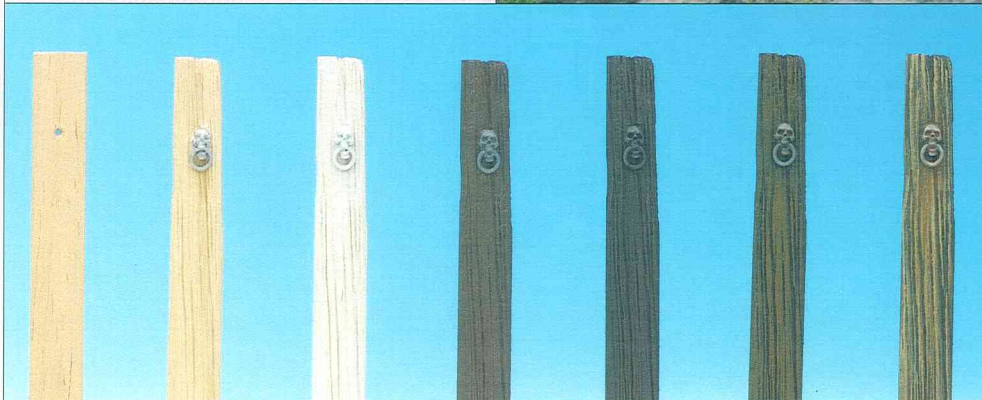
Wood can be painted in many ways depending on the type of wood one would like to represent. There is, however, a generic technique to get a satisfactory result on a setting as well as on a miniature: a black undercoat is applied followed by a dark brown base. A black wash applied to the whole piece fills the hollows and shades the veining.

A first lightening is applied (by adding yellow-brown to the dark brown base) with the flat part of



the paintbrush so as to leave the hollows and veins dark. The lightening is directed towards the ridges in order to orient the light and create volume. This step is repeated while adding a bit more yellow-brown every time until reaching pure yellow-brown. A second lightening is done by adding a bit of off-white to the yellow-brown while still following the same direction of the light.

Another quicker and just as efficient solution is to paint the wood using a simple thick brown wash. The pigment settles in the cracks and hollows while the excess water is wiped off with a paper towel, thus allowing the wood's natural light colour to be preserved. This is enough to reveal the wood's contours and texture.



TEXTURE AND QUALITY

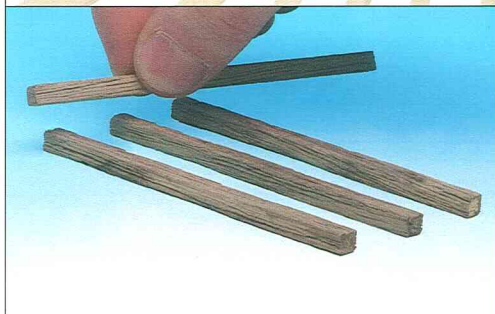


The wood's veins are usually too thin to be correctly noticed. More marked veins are gotten by rubbing the piece of wood with a metal brush with a movement that is always in the same axis and only in one direction, never back and forth. These strongly marked veins are easy to paint and give a very recognisable texture. Small sticks and pieces of wood can easily be salvaged from packaging material or be bought in hardware and art supplies stores. Balsa wood is not recommended because it shreds when being brushed.

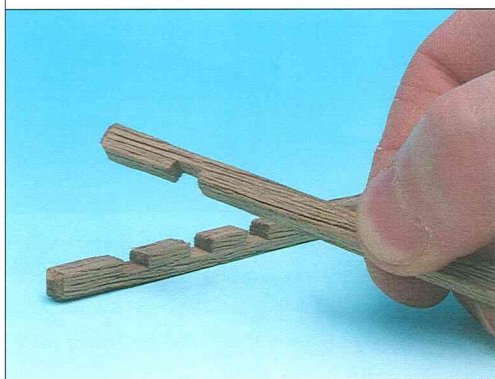
The other aspect required for the realism of a wooden construction is the respect of a minimum of logic in the choice of the size and thickness of the pieces used. A beam must be thick enough for its role as the structure's support in order to be realistic, yet thin sticks of wood are enough to form a railing.

TECHNIQUES

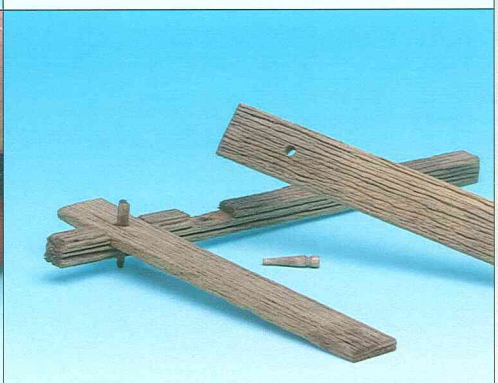
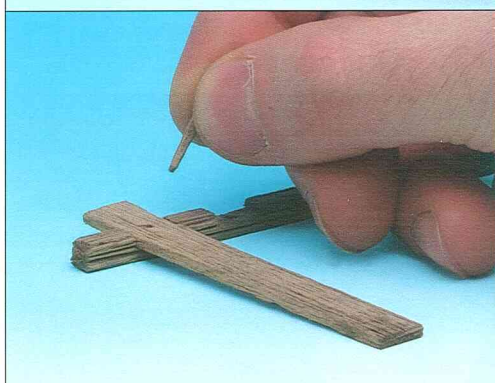
The techniques described below can be combined to meet the demands of the construction of a wooden structure.



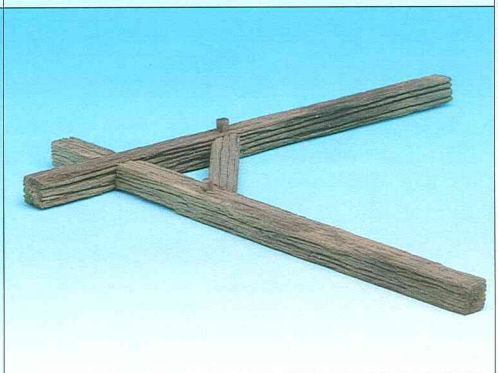
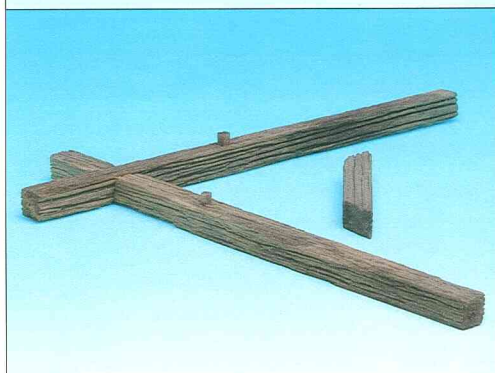
Gluing: The simplest way to assemble pieces of wood is to glue them together. This gives a rather fragile-looking result because the elements seem to be placed on top of each other without anything there to bind them solidly.



Cross lap joints: Dados are cut into the two pieces of wood using a modelling knife or a small saw. These are then assembled like the pieces of a puzzle. This assembly looks solid and realistic. The dados are adjusted little by little to allow precise assembly. A drop of glue is then added to get a solid bond.

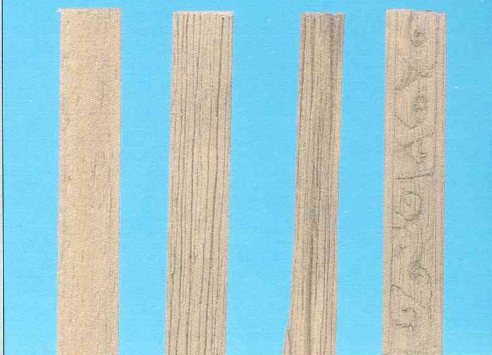


Pegging: The two pieces of wood can be pegged to one another. To do so, a hole is drilled through both parts and a wooden or metal peg is inserted and left visible. Wooden pegs usually being hammered in with a mallet, their head is often blunted and cracked at its extremity. A bit of glue helps strengthen the joint, for the peg remains very thin at this scale.



Brace: In a post-beam structure, braces are added to ensure good stability at the points of assembly and they distribute the weight of the beams. Though simply gluing them together can be enough to assemble the parts, the construction can be made to look realistic and coherent with the setting by referring to real building techniques.

BUILDING THE BRIDGE



Finishing: Once assembled, the wood can be painted, varnished, dyed, burnt or made to look older. It can take on a worm-eaten, humid, cracked or patinised aspect. Paints and products that are available in stores (such as walnut stain) can let one get many interesting results. Since glue can prevent some products from adhering to the wood, it's best to work very carefully and cleanly or to paint the pieces of wood before assembling them together.

Time and weather have an impact on constructions and it is fun to imagine how the structure would react and deteriorate under the influence of these phenomena.

Wood can also be sculpted; arabesques or patterns can be carved into the mass or added as bas-reliefs made of modelling clay or wood paste.



1. Its position on the gaming table. This hollowed space sized 10 cm by 20 cm allows the various modular bridges to be inserted, they all being built based on the same template. The bridges must include the missing pieces of rock at their extremities. This method allows the modular element to be perfectly integrated into the setting.

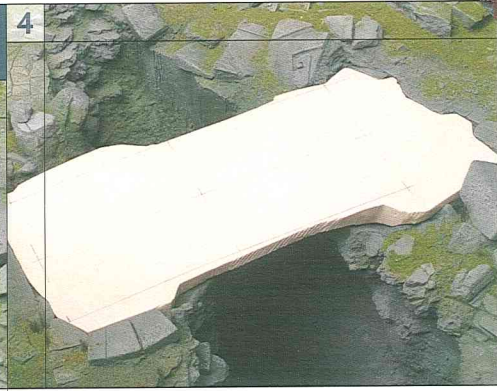


2. The first bridge made for this gaming table. It is made of a simple timeworn stone surface strengthened by a wooden framework. The sculpted stone base that is attached directly to the bridge can be seen.



3. The finished new bridge. The decoration and details have been taken a step further, especially with the presence of a railing and bas-reliefs sculpted into the mass.

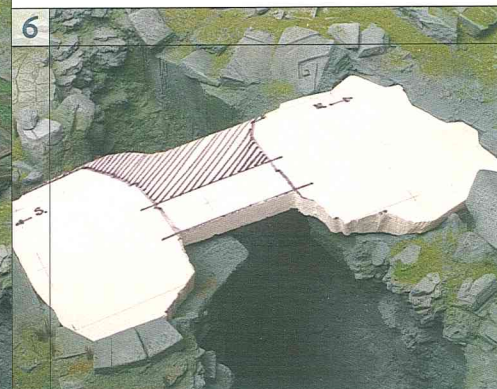
The bridge integrates into the setting and changes the gaming table's appearance.



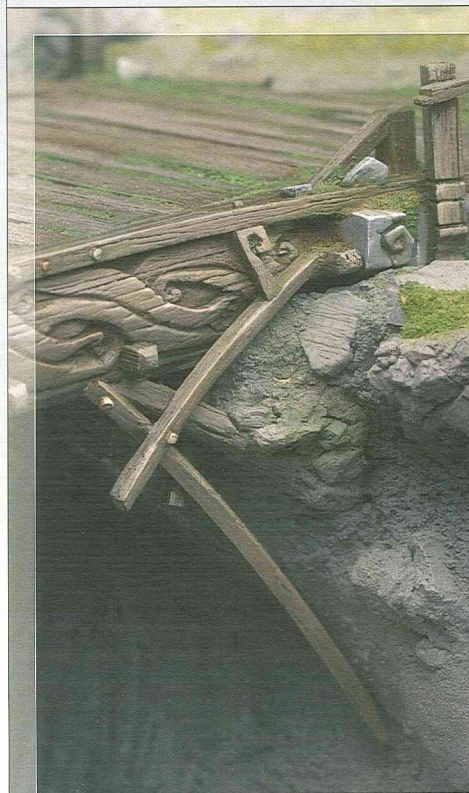
4. The new bridge's foundation. This is a plaster slab adjusted with a rasp to fit into the space on the gaming table. This slab is the construction's support and is progressively cut apart in order to just leave the parts at the bridge's ends.

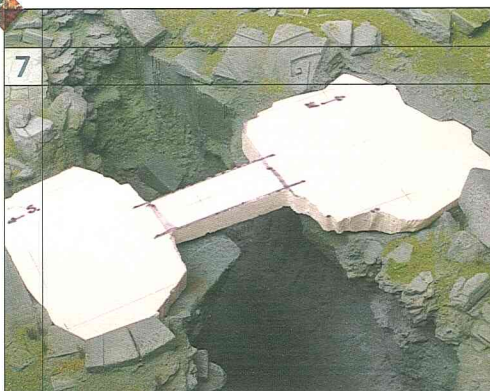


5. A preview of the project is done at this stage. This allows one to check if one has the right number (and the right size) of pieces of wood and if the general appearance is satisfactory. The planks are fairly wide at the miniatures' scale, which strengthens the structure's solidity and the readability while accentuating its fantasy character.



6. The cutting templates are drawn directly on the plaster slab (the hatched area) to roughly define the parts that correspond to the overhanging rocks and the bridge's ends - the "natural" parts of the setting.

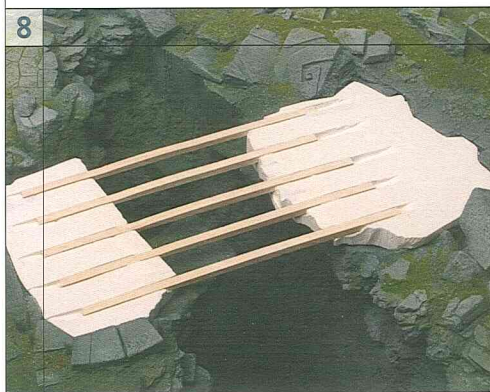
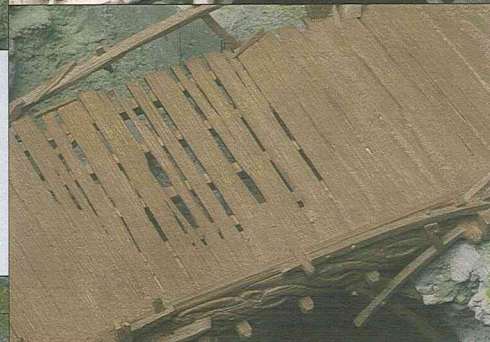




7. The hatched areas are cut off, thus leaving space for the first crossbeams to be attached. The central part of the slab is then removed little by little as the timber is set into place and the distance between the two ends of the slab is maintained by the crossbeams.



10. The vertical elements of the railing are attached. The bridge takes on volume and shape. Sand and plaster fill the spaces at the ends of the bridge for a better integration into the gaming table.



8. The crossbeams are in place; the whole central part of the plaster slab has been removed. This procedure allows the right size of the bridge to be preserved so that it fits into the space provided in the gaming table. The grooves into which the crossbeams are inserted were carved into the plaster using a gouge.



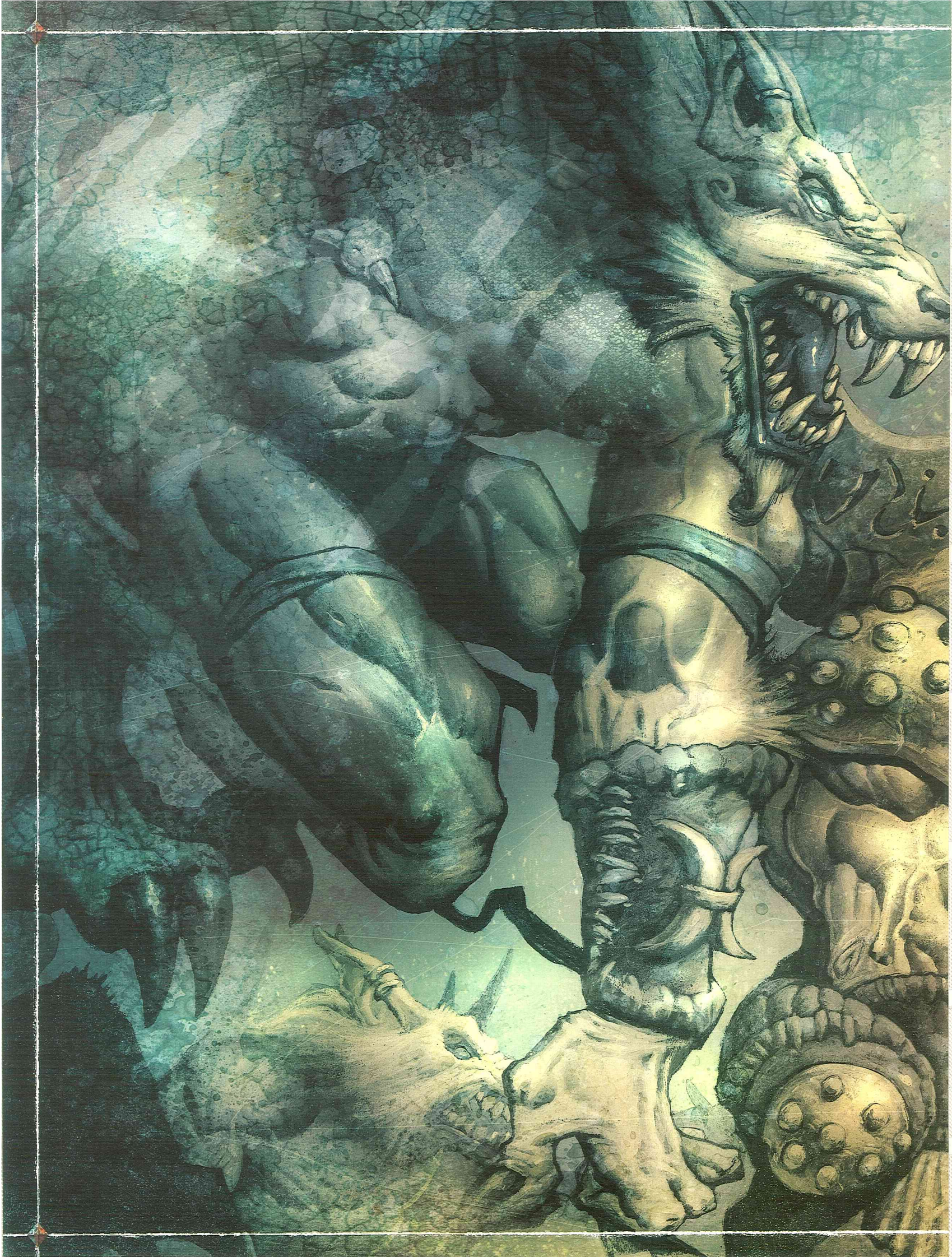
11. Sculpted and partially broken strakes are added to the sides, level with the surface of the bridge. In addition to its decorative aspect, this addition gives the bridge thickness. Visible cracks in the wood help give it its timeworn appearance.



9. The planks are glued perpendicularly to the crossbeams.



12. Railing and support scaffolding are added. The bridge has been visibly strengthened. Many beams and breaks in the structure evoke the history of this place, the theatre of ancient battles. Some debris can be added to the sides so as not to hinder the miniatures' movements while playing. The bridge is now ready to be painted.





THE TEARS OF YLLIA

In 996 an expedition of Akkylannians landed east of the forest of Diisha near a ruin where, it is said, Arcavius had stayed during his journey across Aarklash. Straight away the Akkylannians started building an outpost, unaware that they were in the territory of the pack of the Silver Eye. They discovered a source of water to the west of their position and built a bridge to be able to reach it. Unfortunately the Wolfen consider this source to be sacred: according to them it holds the tears shed by Yllia when some of her children turned to Vile-Tis.

A few days later the pack of the Silver Eye, led by Bashkar (whose profile is supplied with this issue of *Cry Havoc*), launched an assault on the outpost to rid Diisha of these ironclad parasites.

This new battle report presents the encounter between two 2000 A.P. armies. This scale allows a great number of miniatures to be deployed and shows the true measure of RAG'NAROK's strategic and tactical aspects. With army lists of such A.P. value, the size of the battlefield and the large number of fighters in each Unit accentuate the problems bound to transmitting leadership. Thus, the playing of Leaders, Fear and Courage becomes an issue, just like the capture and control of an objective. Furthermore, the use of such contingents gives magicians and the faithful the opportunity to express their powers through rituals and communions.



THE PACK OF THE SILVER EYE

UNIT 1: THE BLOODY GUARD

- Bashkar, pack leader (Commander-in-Chief; proxy: Killyox)
- 1 guardian of the runes (Leader) with the "Yllia's Breastplate" miracle
- 9 predators of blood

UNIT 2: THE FANGS OF DIISHA

- 4 grave guardians of which one is Leader

UNIT 3: THE HEART OF THE PACK

- 1 guardian of the runes (Leader) with the "Yllia's Breastplate" miracle
- 10 great fangs

UNIT 4: THE GUARDIANS

- Ophyr the Guardian with the "Veil of mist" spell and the "Wind of discord" ritual
- 5 great fangs of which one is Leader
- 2 familiars of water

UNIT 5: PAIR OF LONEWOLVES

- 2 Wolfen lonewolves (of which one is Leader) with the "Rapidity" spell

UNIT 6: THE EYES OF YLLIA

- 2 Wolfen sentinels of which one is Leader (proxy: Wolfen with crossbow)

ARMY'S COST: 38 miniatures for 1998 A.P.

SEBASTIEN: "For this 'historic' battle the Wolfen must have a considerable strike force. The Griffins being tough opponents, I prefer placing my bets on brute force and magic to shred them to bits. Bashkar is a competent Commander-in-Chief, but also a formidable warrior. With his guard of nine predators of blood he can crush any opponent. I'm adding a guardian of the runes to his Unit, for this warrior-monk provides good support for Characters and valuable troops (he can give a +2 in RES to one friendly Wolfen in every round and can call the 'Yllia's breastplate' miracle).

Concerning marksmen, I have chosen the 'sentinels' profile supplied in the Wolfen Packs set of cards. I'm counting on this light artillery to harass the enemy Units whose numbers impose a formation of several ranks.

The grave guardians also seem to be indispensable for this game. Their 'Leap' ability allows them to carry out movements that may bewilder my opponent or take his troops by surprise.

The scale of the battle (2000 A.P.) lets me call on Ophyr the Guardian. I'm adding two familiars of water as well as two Wolfen lonewolves so that he can form a council during the game. With the 'Wind of discord' ritual and the 'Veil of mist' spell he will be able to hinder the enemy's movements and fire.

And finally, for the main part of the pack I have chosen great fangs instead of fang warriors. Indeed, for 32 A.P. the former have two Wound levels available and a more 'brutal' profile."

A thick fog was hanging over the forest. In the menacing silence Lahn's first rays timidly pierced the veil that masked the tops of the trees. Nature seemed frozen while waiting for something unusual to happen.

Ophyr was bent over the symbols that his worn out claws had traced in the humid soil. The warriors who had gathered in the clearing were watching him and respectfully listened to his whispers. They were proud to have been chosen for the battle to come. Among them some were having a hard time controlling the anger that was burning their insides. The men with the metallic skin have disturbed the rest of the spirits and have violated the sanctuary of the Silver Eye. Now only vengeance could appease the children of Yllia.

A huge Wolfen with a steely gaze entered the clearing. The warriors made way for him to pass while hunching their shoulders as a sign of submission. Bashkar climbed onto a rock to dominate his pack. Two great fangs briefly quarrelled for their place in the first row of warriors gathered around their chief.

His mane bristling and the severed head of an Akkylannian scout held in his hand, Bashkar suddenly spread his muscular arms and howled in anger in order to stoke that of his brethren. Soon the grave guardians joined their cavernous voices to his, followed by those of the other warriors of the pack...





THE VANGUARD OF THE TEMPLE

UNIT 1: THE TEMPLARS

- Arkhos, Templar Commander, with the "Seal of the Temple" artefact
- 24 Griffin templars

UNIT 2: FIRST COHORT

- Abel the Ill-tempered equipped with the "Chastisement" artefact
- 1 Griffin musician
- 1 Griffin icon-bearer
- 19 veterans of the crusades
- The Priestess of Steel with the "Ardent icon" artefact and the "Subversion" communion

UNIT 3: SECOND COHORT

- 1 Griffin musician
- 1 Griffin icon-bearer
- 19 veterans of the crusades of which one is Leader

UNIT 4: FIRST FLAME OF MERIN

- 9 Griffin fusiliers of which one is Leader

UNIT 5: SECOND FLAME OF MERIN

- 9 Griffin fusiliers of which one is Leader

UNIT 6: JUSTICE

- 2 thallion riders (vigilante profile) of which one is Leader

ARMY'S COST: 89 miniatures for 2000 A.P.

WILLEM: "I think that my army is well-balanced. RAG'NAROK is a battle game and Units with consequent numbers are all assets for managing the outcome of combat (thrust, rout, etc.). The 'veteran of the crusades' profile provided with the Griffin war-staff seems formidable to me. In high numbers these fighters can certainly pose a serious threat to any army. Indeed, who wouldn't tremble when faced with a cohort of Fierce fighters? Moreover, the efficiency of the Griffin fusiliers is indisputable. They are very good marksmen and relatively efficient in hand-to-hand combat (ATT 1; STR 6), and form versatile Units that are full of potential! Concerning divination, I am very confident: this is one of the great strengths of the Griffins of Akkylannie. However, I maybe should have added one or two miracles (such as Burning of the Infidels) to harass enemy Characters, and a magician to be able to counter or absorb spells. And finally, with 2000 A.P., one should choose a theme for one's army, and I have chosen a Veteran profile, which is more costly than that of Griffin conscripts."



Couriers were running in all directions, zipping between the conscripts who were putting on their armour and the templars who, with a knee on the ground, were praying Merin to grant them strength and bravery. The rude awakening, the cold, and the howls that were echoing in the forest barely dampened the Akkylannians' morale. Arcavius himself had walked this land before them and this certitude was enough to encourage them.

The roars of Abel the Ill-tempered and the prayers of the veterans covered the war cries of the Wolfen. This wasn't the first campaign for these men. The crusades had strengthened their soul and marked their flesh. They feared neither death nor pain, for the One was guiding their hands.

The thallions straddled their mounts and quickly disappeared into the last wisps of fog that were caught in the trees. The fusiliers got into position and readied their ammunition.

The commander appeared from his tent. Right away the leaders lined up their men for prayer. Holding the ardent icon in front of her, the Priestess of Steel began reciting a psalm to the glory of Merin. Each one of its verses was repeated with fervour by the entire army.

"May the One protect us from Darkness and guide the souls of our dead to His eternal kingdom!"



THE BATTLEFIELD

The battlefield measures 180 x 120 cm. There are tree stumps (purely decorative obstacles), wooded areas, the Temple's fortifications under construction and a gorge that is crossed by a bridge. There are three objective zones.

SPECIAL RULES

This scenario introduces several particular rules.

The **wooded areas** block lines of sight. Furthermore, a fighter who is in one cannot fire without leaving his position. These woods are considered to be encumbered ground for the Ways of Light and the Meanders of Darkness, but not for the Paths of Destiny.



The control of **objectives 1 and 3*** has an effect on the fighters of both armies (this does not concern any Allies or Mercenaries). At the beginning of each round, during the rallying phase (phase I), the control

of these objectives must be determined using the rules provided in the *Gaming Aids* booklet (p. 19).

OBJECTIVE 1

This **ruin** may have sheltered Arcavius himself. The Griffins could never abandon such a place of pilgrimage to the region's wild beasts. The Wolfen must take control of it to sap the invaders' morale. If they manage to do so, then the Griffins' combativeness is diminished: INI -1 for all fighters of their army until the end of the round. If the heralds of Merin are in control of this objective, then their morale is at an all-time high: INI +1 for all Griffin fighters.

OBJECTIVE 2

This **bridge** (RES 8; 6 S.P.) is the only way to reach the source of water. The Griffins must prevent its destruction. The Wolfen must destroy it. This bridge doesn't block lines of sight.

OBJECTIVE 3

This watering place is a **sacred source** for the Wolfen. They must therefore prevent the Griffins from contaminating it. Merin's soldiers must secure this area or resign to drinking salt water... If the Akkylannians are in control of this objective, then the Wolfen's morale is diminished: INI -1 for all fighters in their army until the end of the round. If Yllia's children are occupying the site of their sacred source, then their predator instinct is exalted: INI +1.



VICTORY CONDITIONS

This scenario must be played within six rounds, at the end of which the victory points are counted in the following way.

GRIFFINS

Control of objective 3	3 V.P.
Control of objective 1	3 V.P.
Objective 2 saved	2 V.P.
Bashkar killed	2 V.P.
Ophyr killed	2 V.P.

WOLFEN

Control of objective 1	3 V.P.
Control of objective 3	3 V.P.
Objective 2 destroyed	1 V.P.
For every even incomplete 300 A.P. of enemy fighters killed	1 V.P.



* The control perimeter is a 20 x 20 cm square with the objective at its centre.

THE APPROACH



Sebastien and Willem proceed with the Tactical Roll. They have an equal number of Units. There are therefore no refusals at the start of this game. Willem wins the Tactical Roll (14 against 8) and surprises Sebastien during deployment by deciding to place one of his Units in reserve. Sebastien decides not to do the same.

WILLEM: "I have chosen to place the fusiliers of the Second Flame of Merin (GR5) in reserve. I fear a rapid destruction of the bridge, which would prevent me from moving troops to the other side of the gorge. The Griffin fusiliers seem like the best choice, for none of my Units is fast enough to outrun the Wolfen. However, thanks to the range of their shots, the fusiliers can cause a lot of damage among the enemy ranks, wherever their point of entry may be. What more, this reserve gives me the right to a refusal... at least for the next round."



SEBASTIEN: "That's one refusal for Willem, and especially an advantage for his army. I think that the capture of the sacred source won't cause him much trouble and that this reserve may very well allow him to earn victory points at the last moment. However, I can't imagine parting with one of my Units when I will be fighting at almost one against three (in terms of numbers). Not to mention that having Wolfen reserves enter the game wouldn't be a piece of cake (Discipline test of 7, then 6 on the following attempt, etc.)."

Deployment is done in turns. Willem uses his refusal in order to preserve the surprise effect for as long as possible. He then places his Scouts, the Justice Unit (GR6), on the other side of the bridge. Sebastien doesn't have any Scouts. He throws a mean glance at Willem's cavalry of thallions.

WILLEM: "I have divided my army into four groups. The first one is made up of the Unit of templars and the Second Cohort. This one will be charged with taking control of the ruin. The First Cohort must protect the bridge and prevent the Wolfen from crossing it. These two groups will be covered by the First Flame of Merin, which will open fire at anything that

moves, beginning with enemy marksmen. Then I will try to eliminate the Characters. Speaking of which, Sebastien has placed Bashkar at the front line, so maybe I'll let myself be tempted... And finally, Justice will have to calm the Fangs of Diisha, whose warriors will certainly cross the gorge thanks to Leap. It is out of the question to have them engage hand-to-hand combat. On the other hand, I am counting on making much use of Move and Fire."

SEBASTIEN: "Morale, that's all that really counts! I have placed Bashkar at the front line in front of the predators of blood accompanying him in order to make the veterans of the crusades tremble in their armour. He does, after all, have four Wound levels and the 'Hard-boiled' ability, with a RES of 8!

I will make the thallion riders boil with anger with my grave guardians by not having them jump over the gorge right away. I don't know yet what I'll do with my predators of blood: either they'll rush at objective I or they'll give a couple of scratch marks to Willem's other Units. Whatever it may be, six rounds should be more than enough for a rapid army such as mine to calmly decide on what to do. Until then I'll concentrate on Ophyr and the lonewolves following in his footsteps."

At the beginning of the round Sebastien uses the subjugation of Ophyr's familiars. The latter give the magician +2 for his Mana Recovery Roll.

Willem wins the advantage on the Tactical Roll: he gets four additional Orders against three for Sebastien. No Units are to be rallied and Willem doesn't call on his fusiliers in reserve.



WILLEM: "I'm going to wait a bit..."

The Orders are attributed. The first firing and incantation phase is calm: the Orders are revealed in turns.

WILLEM: "The first rounds will be devoted to movements. I will move my Units towards the sides, except the First Cohort, which will advance straight ahead. I'm counting on Subversion (see following

page) to block a great number of Units. The Conclave of Merin must keep a wide enough field of vision for it to target my enemies. I will therefore start with the Bloody Guard, and then take care of the Fangs of Diisha. I must act fast, for the Wolfen can move long distances. Then I'll move the Second Cohort straight ahead to attract the Heart of the Pack. If this Unit goes around the boulders, then I won't see it again before it is in the ruins."


SEBASTIEN: "I'm wondering if I should move around the boulders on my left flank with the Heart of the Pack. I'll decide depending on the enemy's movements. After all, I wouldn't mind testing this Veteran profile for the Griffin conscripts... claws versus maces. What more, I will carefully advance in this round in order to place my Units correctly at the centre of the battlefield to be able to counter any eventuality. This will allow me to choose the targets of my predators of blood and spells. After having hesitated as to the order in which I should play the Bloody Guard and the Eyes of Yllia, I have decided to bring my sentinels out of the woods to send a couple of 'beams' flying towards the veterans of the crusades. They will strike the bridge later on when there are people on it."

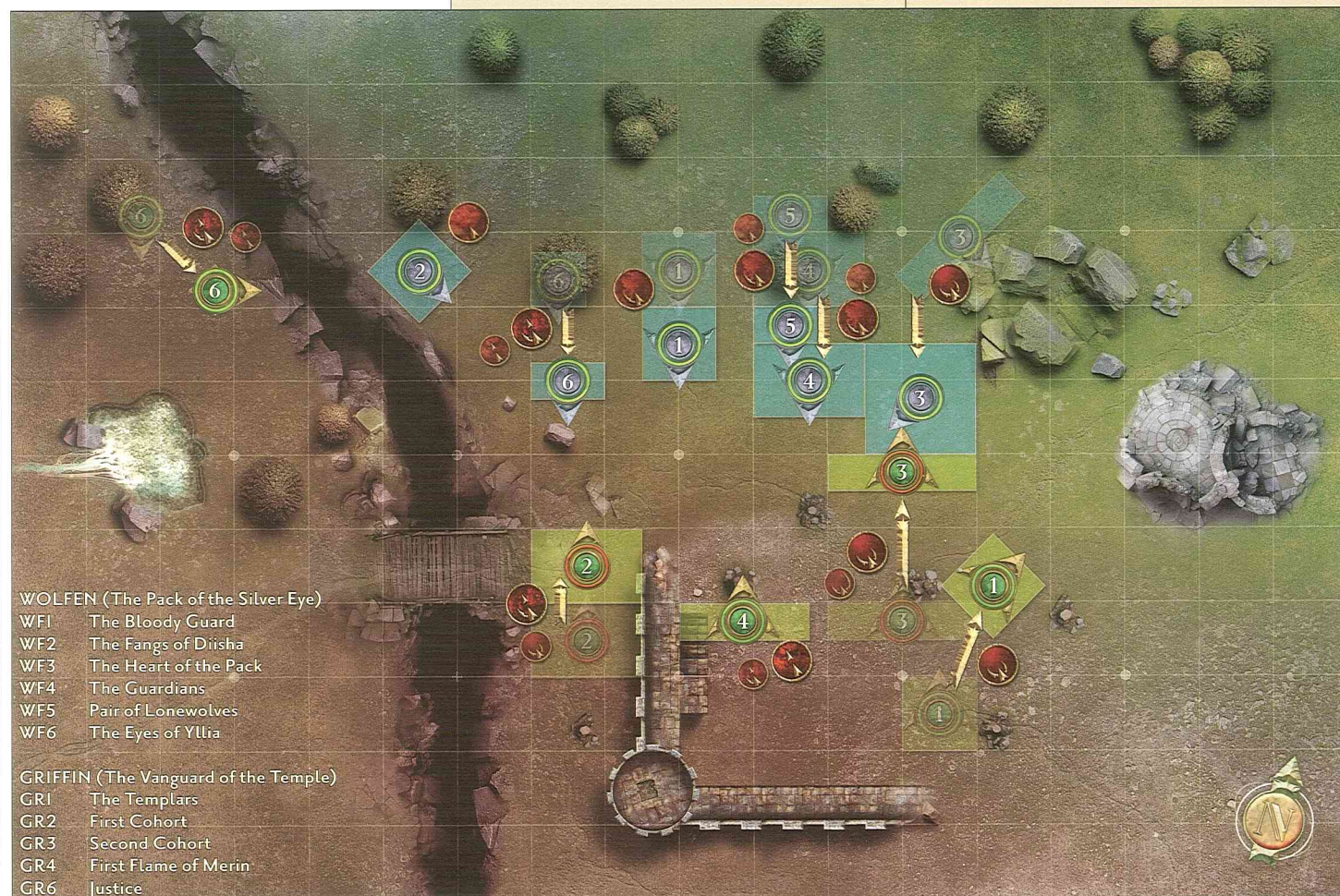
THE RED DRAGON'S OPINION

Sebastien has a ritual (Wind of Discord) that is pretty easy to cast. He should have chosen the previous effect of subjugation, as allowed by the rule specific to familiars. Like this he would have benefited, right from the start of the round, from two additional gems of Water to attempt the Veil of Fog (with an additional mastery die thanks to the surplus of mana) or Wind of Discord (with mastery improved by four points thanks to the presence within less than 10 cm of the two lonewolves completing the council).



The wolves are coming out of the woods! The Griffins take position near the objectives, all in good order.

Following a Run, the Heart of the Pack (FEAR 7) engages the Second Cohort! The latter, prey to the fear caused by the opponent, must pass a Courage test with a difficulty of 8. Getting a , the Second Cohort is made immune to the terrifying roars of these warriors of the woods.



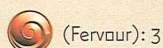
The divination phase begins. The chants of the faithful of Merin rise towards the sky while the Priestess of Steel and Abel the Ill-tempered (who has become a warrior-monk thanks to his weapon, Chastisement) utter the prayers of a Subversion (communion) targeting the Bloody Guard.

SUBVERSION



Cult: Universal.
Difficulty: Special.
Area of effect: One enemy Unit.
Range: 50 cm.
Duration: Special.

This communion's difficulty is equal to 6 + the targeted Unit's DIS. The value taken into account can have been transmitted by a commander (including Leaders). When affected by this communion, the targeted Unit cannot Run, Charge or Counter-charge during the following round. If the communion's call is successful, then the conclave can attempt to call it again onto another enemy Unit. This new call must be made immediately after the first one by using the conclave's new amount of Temporary Faith after the Fervaur has been subtracted. Other enemy Units can then be targeted in this way as long as the previous call was successful and each of the conclave's members has at least 1 T.F. point left.



(Fervaur): 3

The Priestess of Steel and Abel the Ill-tempered each have 8 T.F. points. The call's difficulty is equal to 12 (6 + 6 for Bashkar's DIS). The Priestess of Steel strengthens the bond by spending 3 points of Temporary Faith (for a total of 4d6). The Divination Roll is then resolved by opposing the difficulty (12) to the sum of the two faithful's T.F. (8 for Abel and 5 for the Priestess = 13). The call is crowned with success; the Bloody Guard (WF1) cannot run, charge or counter-charge in the next round!

Subversion's first call having been successful, the conclave repeats the communion onto the Fangs of Diisha (WF2).

The second call is also a success and the Fangs of Diisha (WF2) suffer the same restrictions as the Bloody Guard (WF1).

WILLEM: "Whew! This will let me gain a round! Luckily the warrior-monk of the Bloody Guard is in the third rank of his Unit (in close formation) and therefore cannot censure me for lack of line of sight.



Without this I surely wouldn't have been able to call Subversion a second time. Now this communion prevents the Fangs of Diisha from jumping over the gorge."

SEBASTIEN: "Darn! When I think that I hid my warrior-monk to keep a Leader with a future division of the Unit in mind. If I hadn't decided on this change of position within the Bloody Guard, then the guardian of the runes could have censured Merin's faithful."

The Heart of the Pack's guardian of the runes calls on the moon-goddess who is giving the protection of an Yllia's Breastplate to one of the Unit's great fangs.

The second firing and incantation phase begins with announcements, which are made in the inverse order of INI. The First Flame of Merin announces a shot at the Eyes of Yllia (WF6), while Justice fires at the Fangs of Diisha. The Eyes of Yllia target the First Cohort. The shots are announced in the increasing order of Initiative and are then resolved in decreasing order: the Wolfen therefore open fire first!

A sentinel's shot fails, but another one hits and kills a Veteran. The projectile of the Wolfen light artillery (WF6) flies straight through the first unlucky victim and continues on its trajectory to hit Abel the Ill-tempered, who suffers two Wounds.

SEBASTIEN: "I was right: this ammunition is really like beams of wood. Too bad that it didn't finish off this Character."

WILLEM: "By Merin! Revenge!"

The thallion vigilantes (GR6) aim their pistols at the grave guardians and wound one of them. The fusiliers then open fire at the Wolfen sentinels and annihilate the whole Unit in one go! A howl fills the air... Yllia is crying for her proud children.

SEBASTIEN: "Yllia!"

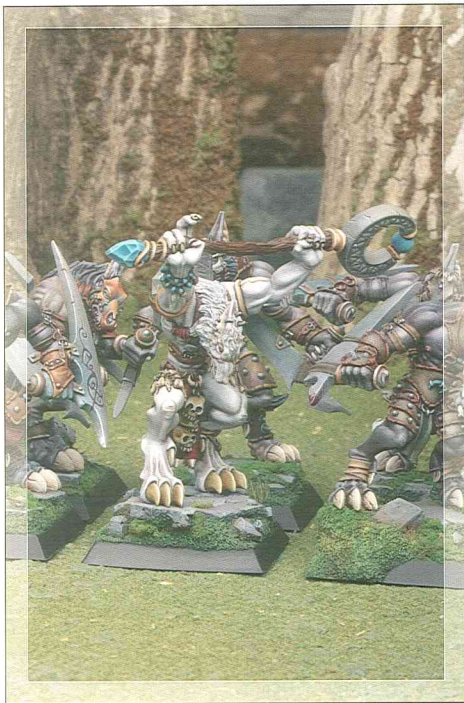
During the hand-to-hand combat phase only one fray takes place. It is described in detail on pages 41 to 45.

During the mana recovery phase the first Wolfen lonewolf wins two gems of Water. He is then at the maximum limit of his reserve (increased by one point due to the proximity of his fellow fighter). However, the second one is not as lucky and fails his recovery test. As for Ophyr, he wins seven gems thanks to his familiars and keeps only five of them, for a total of six gems of Water and four of Air.

WILLEM: "I'm happy with this first round! The advance of dangerous Units is limited thanks to Subversion. I was able to place my Units on the battlefield as I was hoping to: my marksmen have done wonders and the first fray began well for my Veterans. Let's hope it lasts!"

SEBASTIEN: "The loss of my sentinels in the first round is a hard blow. I should have moved this Unit towards my right flank for it to take care of the thallion cavalry. It would then have intervened on the bridge while the fusiliers were looking elsewhere."

ROUND 2



Before proceeding with the Tactical Roll, the familiars provide Ophyr with a +4 on the final result of his Mana Recovery Roll.

The Tactical Roll is won by the Griffins: they get four additional Orders against three for the Wolfen. No reserves enter the game.

WILLEM: "This has started well. I continue taking control of the battlefield. Sebastien has to choose his objectives. The thallions will harass the subverted Fangs of Diisha. Now that Sebastien is deprived of artillery, the First Cohort will move onto the bridge and my fusiliers will harass the Wolfen. I hope that Sebastien sends another Unit against the Second Cohort so that my templars have the time to strengthen their positions."

SEBASTIEN: "Subversion... The Wolfen's anger is taking hold of me! Now is the time to use a ritual. For this to happen in the best possible conditions, I will immobilise the Units required to form a council. I will take the risk of leaving several Units immobile in order to confuse Willem, who must be expecting me to rush ahead with the Units that can still do so. I think that four rounds should be enough for the predators of blood to cross the battlefield and take back control of the Temple ruins."

It's amusing to see that, being disconcerted by Subversion's effects, Sebastien hasn't even bothered handing out additional Orders. This is a totally unexpected "game effect."

Ophyr and his lonewolves, gathered in a council, begin the "Wind of Discord" ritual. The sky darkens

and a terrifying wind hits the Griffins in the ears. Ophyr and his lonewolves pool their gems together to pay the ritual's cost (Ophyr invests 3 gems of Air and each lonewolf 1 gem of Water).

The thallions take the grave guardians by surprise with rapid fire: one dead and one wounded among the Wolfen. Satisfied, Willem looks at the gorge splitting the gaming table in two.

WIND OF DISCORD



2



3

Path: Elemental.

Difficulty: 10

Area of effect: Special.

Range: 50 cm.

Duration: Special.

This card is placed next to the magister's miniature after the incantation. It represents the spirits of the wind that await an order from the magister before acting. During any of the following rounds, at the end of the Order attribution phase, two enemy Units standing within 50 cm or less of the magister are selected. The Orders attributed to these two Units are then swapped. If a Unit gets an Order in this way that it cannot carry out, then it remains immobile.

Constrained by Subversion, the Fangs of Diisha (WF2) decide to slip back into the woods. Proud and determined, the Bloody Guard advances towards the fusiliers at a steadfast pace! The other Wolfen remain immobile.

WILLEM: "Hey, Bashkar! You here to fight or to have a picnic?"

Meanwhile, the First Cohort occupies the bridge while the templars place their ironclad boots on the edges of the ruins, thus following in Arcavius's footsteps. The First Flame of Merin moves back cautiously while reloading its rifles. The Second Cohort valiantly holds its position facing the Heart of the Pack.

SEBASTIEN: "How cute, our templar friends will be playing hide-and-seek in the ruins from round 3 on... This must be due to the smell of fear!"

The guardians of the runes take advantage of the fact that Merin's faithful are busy manoeuvring to receive Yllia's gift during the divination phase: two Wolfen are given Yllia's Breastplate. The moon-goddess watches over her children. The Griffins not having any Units left to subvert within their line of sight, they end up being powerless.

During the second firing and incantation phase the Wolfen's imprecations become breathless as their council finishes its ritual. Ophyr spends 2 gems of Water to improve his mastery (which allows Sebastien to roll 3d6 for the Incantation Roll). The ritual ends in success. A card is placed at the magister's feet to symbolise the wind spirits.

WILLEM: "One of the following rounds will be difficult to manage, but which one?"





The moans of the dying and the cries of the wounded fill the undergrowth, yet the combats are dominated by the warriors' howls of anger! (See page 42.)

The ritual has drained the magicians' mana reserves. During the mana recovery phase, one of the Wolfen lonewolves doesn't manage to channel the flow of magic that animates Aarklash. Yet his companion recovers three gems of Water. Thanks to his familiars, Ophyr gets seven and fills his reserve (six gems of Water and four of Air).

At the end of the round the Griffins are in control of the ruins: they all gain +1 in INI in the next round.

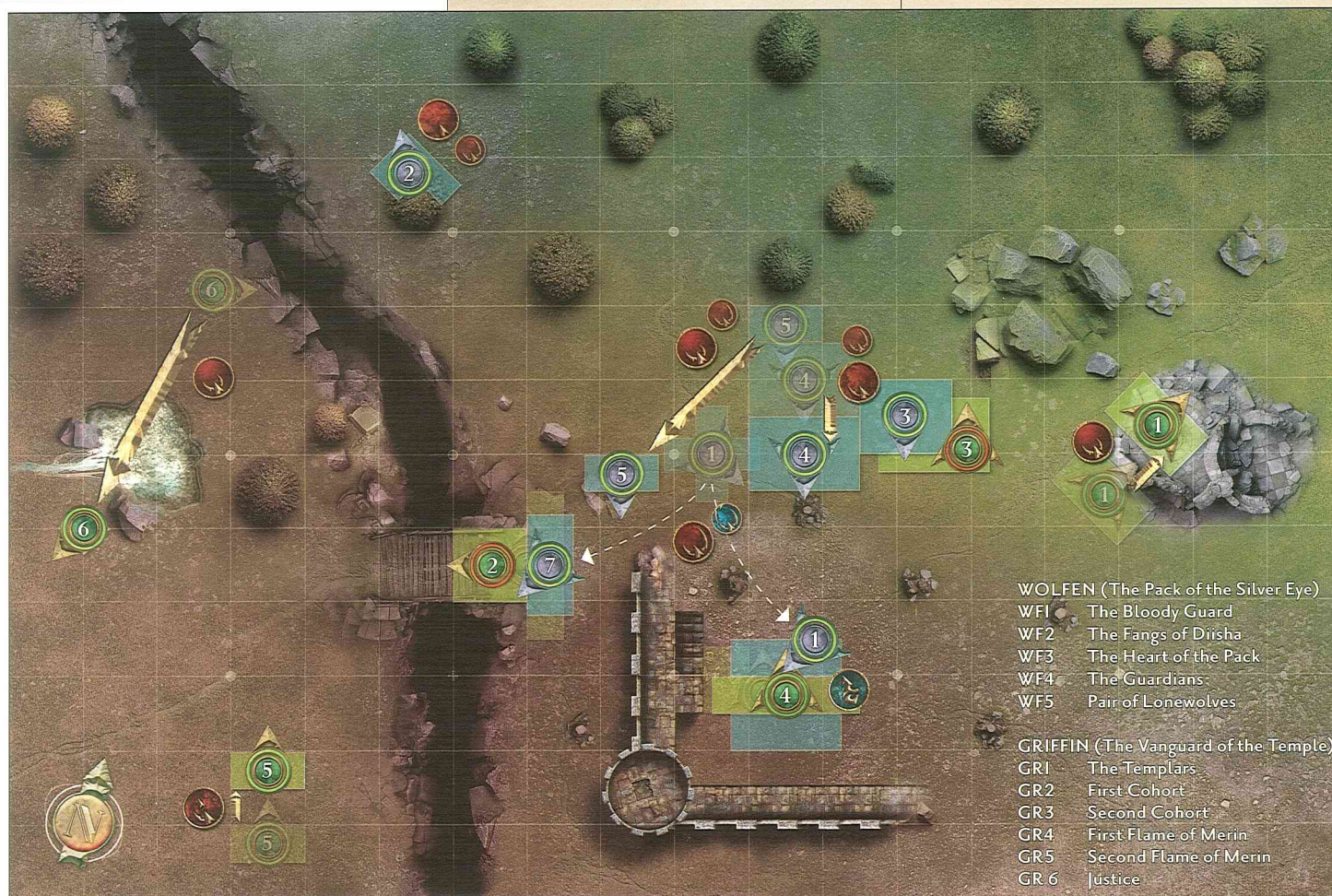
WILLEM: "The second round is positive overall. I took advantage of the Wolfen's temporary incapacity to place my troops as good as possible on the battlefield. Now I will have to suffer their assaults for four rounds!"

SEBASTIEN: "He who laughs last laughs best... Don't forget that a predator of blood can run real fast!"



STRATEGY THE TEARS OF YLLIA

ROUND 3



At the start of the round Ophyr subjugates his familiars: the same result as in the previous round (+4 on the Mana Recovery Roll). No Unit is concerned by the rallying phase.

Willem then decides to let his reserve Unit enter the game. He does a Discipline test with a difficulty of 7 for the fusiliers. True to the Griffins of Akkylannie's reputation, the Second Flame of Merin makes its entry on the battlefield on the Griffin player's left flank! Willem rolls the dice for the Griffins' Tactical Roll... a ☐! For the first time in this battle the Wolfen get the advantage, with four additional Orders!

SEBASTIEN: "Looks like the winds are shifting."

WILLEM: "Failure on the Tactical Roll... This was not the right moment! I won't have enough Orders for everybody and my Units are scattered in all directions... with the Wind of Discord about to crash down upon my troops! I'm really going to suffer in this round. Luckily my reserves haven't failed me."

The tension is at its highest: everyone is frantically arranging his Order counters.

WILLEM: "I'm in a tricky situation! Wind of Discord may allow Sebastien to perturb my Orders, and in the previous round I wasn't able to call Subversion. This round is going to be pure torture. I will standardise my Units' Orders so as not to suffer too many disappointments. I will have my reserves enter on the side of the sacred source. I'm holding the bridge and my thallion cavalry is showing the grave guardians what Griffin bullets are made of! Those of the Second Flame may very well be decisive in the protection of the bridge or the control of the sacred source."

SEBASTIEN: "My great fangs are fighting the Second Cohort. I'm hesitating to have the grave guardians jump over the gorge... I'll decide on that in the heat of the action, if I may say so. On the other hand I'm already planning my progression for the next three rounds: Ophyr and his great fangs will march on the enemy, and then the lonewolves will place themselves so as to have the choice between objectives 1 and 2; and finally, the Bloody Guard will split into two Units. One of them will rush towards the bridge, the other towards the First Flame of Merin (at least at first). I'm wondering: should my warrior-monk play his role of Leader in the first Unit of predators of

blood or should he give support to Bashkar thanks to his special capacity (he can grant a +2 in RES to a friendly Wolfen until the end of the round)? To make my assault on the First Cohort easier, I'm swapping its Orders with those of the Second Cohort. Like this I'm sure that the latter will remain on the bridge."



THE RED DRAGON'S OPINION

Sebastien shouldn't leave the thallions time to breathe. It would have been better to attribute a Run to the grave guardians so that they threaten the Griffin cavalry as long as the Second Flame of Merin is still within long range.



There is no rapid action. Willem sees the Wolfen's anger unleashed during the movement phase. The Bloody Guard is split into two Units and charges the First Cohort, which firmly holds its position on the bridge thanks to the Ardent Icon. Indeed, the latter makes the Griffins in this Unit immune to all levels of FEAR! This isn't the case for the First Flame of Merin, which, also being charged by the Bloody Guard, fails its test and goes into a state of "Rout!" It attempts to escape the enemy charge, but the predators of blood catch up with it. The latter being neither in scattered formation nor a detachment, they couldn't redirect their charge.

WILLEM: "Ouch! An additional Order would have come in handy to let them run as far as possible before the arrival of these monsters."

SEBASTIEN: "Go ahead, laugh! Just wait and see what's coming up..."

On the other side of the bridge the thallions retreat towards the sacred source, thus occupying the objective before the Fangs of Diisha (WF2) rush to charge them (which would force the riders to remain immobile). The templars settle in the ruins while the Veterans of the Second Cohort and the Heart of the Pack (WF3) continue slaughtering each other.



During the second firing and incantation phase the Unit of fusiliers that was initially in reserve comes to relieve its brothers who are in a bad position. These fresh troops fire at the predators of blood engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the First Cohort. Not a single failure: Willem breathes a sigh of relief; no Griffins are hit! On the other hand a predator of blood is riddled with bullets and killed.

WILLEM: "When I write my memoirs I'll leave out this passage, for no one will believe me!"

Then comes the hand-to-hand combat phase, with three frays. Sebastien rubs his hands and decides to start by resolving the fray involving the predators of blood and the First Cohort. Willem attempts to use the same technique as with the great fangs and places all his dice in attack. Sebastien, being more reserved, places 4d6 in attack and 2d6 in defence.

The predators massacre two veterans of the crusades and parry their pitiful attacks. This doesn't prevent the veterans from getting between the predators of blood and the bridge.

WILLEM: "Go ahead, push! There will always be something left! We'll see in the next round!"

Sebastien then chooses to resolve the fray involving the Bloody Guard and the First Flame of Merin. Four of the nine fusiliers miraculously survive. They are still in Rout at the end of the combat.

SEBASTIEN: "I'll finish them off before moving on to the main course. Their rifles will make good toothpicks!"

WILLEM: "May Merin protect them!"

The last confrontation takes place between the Heart of the Pack and the Second Cohort (see pp. 41-45). At the end of the round, in addition to the ruins, the Griffins are controlling the sacred source: INI -I for the Wolfen.

WILLEM: "Despite the failed Tactical Roll, the swapped Orders, and the lost combats, the result of the round nevertheless remains positive! Hold out, I must hold out... another three rounds. I'm in control of the three objectives. Slaughtering my Units won't be enough to win."

SEBASTIEN: "Oh yeah? Well, my dear Willem, take a look at the Wound Table and see that your templars will have to roll 8s to wound my predators of blood. Not to mention Bashkar who, with Implacable/I, will prove his power when his Unit proceeds to crush the armour of your Griffins."





During the second firing and incantation phase, only Justice lets gunpowder do the talking! The thallions fire at the Fangs of Diisha (WF2). They inflict them with two Wounds, finishing off a grave guardian who was already injured and badly harming one of his companions.

While the shots echo in the distance, the fights of the hand-to-hand combat phase rage on. The predators of blood “blow out” the First Flame of Merin.

SEBASTIEN: “So be it!”

WILLEM: “Well, at least I have gained another refusal.”

The second fray is described in detail on pages 41 to 45. The result is in favour of the veterans of the crusades, who bring the Heart of the Pack into Rout. A bit further away the “Fierce” ability of the First Cohort’s members allows them to take the advantage by killing a predator of blood!

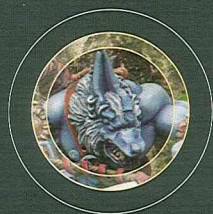
During the mana recovery phase Ophyr recovers all his capacities by accumulating ten gems. The lone-wolves manage to recover three gems each in the same way.

At the end of the round the Griffins control the two main objectives and are efficiently protecting the bridge from an aggression by the predators of blood! The fighters’ bonuses and penalties remain unchanged.

WILLEM: “Until now everything is going well! There are still two rounds left. There is nothing left to prevent Bashkar, Ophyr and their gang from challenging the templars for control of the ruins. Many Griffins are dead since I have played in a very aggressive way. I don’t know exactly how many victory points Sebastien has for now, but this will quickly become close. I made a few mistakes in my Orders during the round, so I’ll have to concentrate!”

SEBASTIEN: “The fray on the bridge isn’t going as well as planned. I should have concentrated more troops on this objective. I built this strategy at the start of the game while counting on my sentinels. I think that their loss has affected my view of the game in an unreasonable way. This being said, I will comfort myself with a couple of templars for dessert.”

Continued with Round 5 on page 45.



HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT!

Here we will follow a fray lasting four rounds of the most intense combat in this battle. After a Run of a distance equal to its maximum Movement, the Second Cohort has advanced so far as to almost be in contact with the Wolfen council. The Heart of the Pack has failed its Run and has come into contact with the veterans of the crusades. Right from Round 1 on, the fray is already raging!

SEBASTIEN: “The Griffins are many. Their Domination Factor, which is higher than mine, doesn’t allow me to distress them with my FEAR. This being said, it’s clear that the presence of a war-staff in this cohort helps weaken my army’s strong point, after Born Killer...”

ROUND 1

The great fangs (INI 4) win the Initiative. Each player places his combat dice (see table below), beginning with the Griffins, who are the defenders in this round.

During this combat Willem uses a die of a different colour for the attack of the Second Cohort’s Leader. This lets time be saved when resolving frays in which a camp’s profiles are identical.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
WOLFEN	3	0
GRIFFIN	6	0

WILLEM: “I don’t have the Initiative, yet I have decided to place all my dice in attack. My conscripts are Fierce warriors thanks to the profile of the Griffin war-staff, and I intend to prove their formidable efficiency to Sebastien. I have a tactical advantage, for the great fangs have only one combat die and must each combat two opponents. I want to cause a great number of deaths quickly in order to thrust first and create a situation of decisive outnumbering.”

SEBASTIEN: “In this case it’s useless to set a difficulty: let’s strike hard and fast!”

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	3/3
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
WOLFEN	3	2

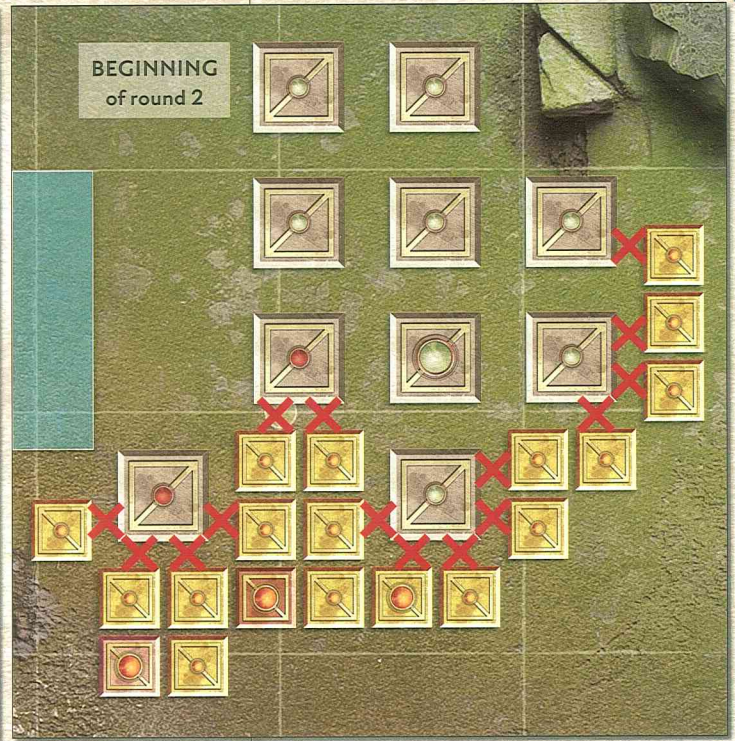
	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	0	6/6
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	6	2

Similarly, Willem has used dice of various colours to be able to distinguish the veterans of the crusades’ attacks on the Wolfen bearing Yllia’s Breastplate.

BEGINNING of round 1

LEGEND

- GREAT FANGS
- GUARDIANS OF THE RUNES
- VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES
- VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES (LEADER)
- GRIFFIN MUSICIAN
- GRIFFIN ICON-BEARER
- WOLFEN UNIT



An equal number of Wounds (2) in either camp: this combat round ends in a draw. Hence the winner of the Tactical Roll decides who, either he or his opponent, thrusts his fighters in the fray first. It is therefore Willem who gets this privilege. He chooses to thrust first and thus prevents all Wolfen movements. All great fangs who can are now involved in hand-to-hand combat.

ROUND 2

The fray continues without any other Unit joining in. The Wolfen are in a tricky situation: they're outnumbered three to one!! They nevertheless win the Initiative.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
WOLFEN	5	0
GRIFFIN	15	0

Sebastien and Willem decide on the same strategy: a very subtle one.

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	1/5 > 3/5*

SEBASTIEN: "It's raining ☐•s!"

	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
WOLFEN	3	1

SEBASTIEN: "Like in *CONFRONTATION*, Born killer compensates for being outnumbered."

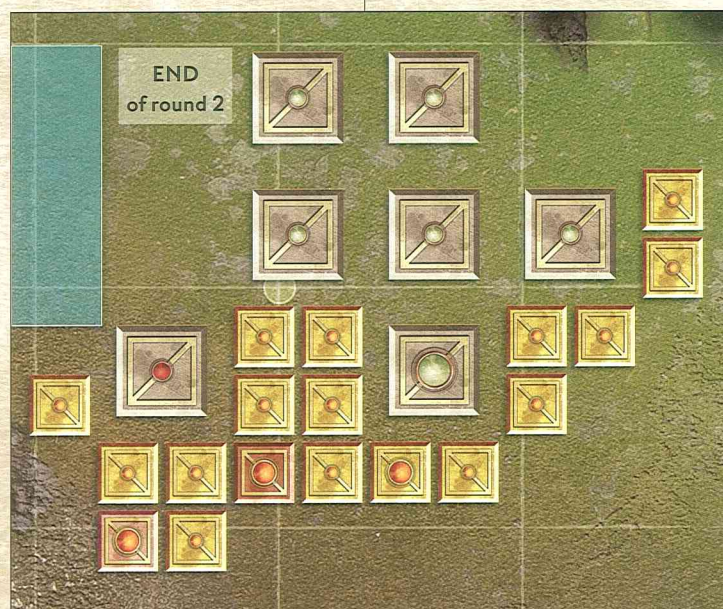
WILLEM: "This 'bad luck' will nevertheless have no influence on my attack; my troops are Fierce!"

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	0	13/15
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	12	6

The Yllia's Breastplate of one of the great fangs causes Willem to lose one Damage Roll. However, the Wolfen lose three of their brethren. The Griffins therefore win this fray and Willem selects the losses to maximise his thrust movement and profits from the terrain's advantages: the veterans of the crusades back the great fangs against a rocky outcropping.

The Griffins' Domination Factor is higher than the Wolfen's. The latter must pass a Courage test with a difficulty of 6.

Furthermore, thanks to the "Born killer" ability, the ☐•s are not considered to be failures.



* In RAG'NAROK the "Born killer" ability allows failed Attack Rolls to be rolled again.




ROUND 3

Things are getting complicated! The Griffins of Akkylannie are confronting various fighters: a guardian of the runes, two great fangs and a great fang protected by Yllia's Breastplate. Sebastien, who won the Tactical Roll, decides to split the fray into three combats. The Initiative is taken by the Wolfen.

TWO GREAT FANGS VERSUS FIVE VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
WOLFEN	2	0
GRIFFIN	5	0

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	2/2
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
WOLFEN	2	4

Sebastien gets and succeeds two devastating attacks by getting double s on his Damage Rolls!

BEGINNING of round 3





	ATTACK	DEFENCE
GRIFFIN	5	0
WOLFEN	1	1

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	0	3/5

	DEFENCE DIFFICULTY	ATT. PARRIED / DEF. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	1/1

	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	2	2

The warrior-monk's Yllia's Breastplate doesn't protect him from the Griffins' maces. He has only one Wound level left. Sebastien decides to attack the Leader of the Second Cohort.

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	1/1

	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
WOLFEN	1	1

The Leader perishes under the blows of the faithful of Yllia's cruel claws. The Griffins, who dominate the situation thanks to their numbers, and thus their Domination Factor, again win the fray. This forces Sebastien to test his Wolfen's Courage. These great fangs are really bent on fighting, but the veterans of the crusades are driving them back into a corner.

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	1/2

SEBASTIEN: "I hope that this storm will soon come to an end..."

	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
WOLFEN	1	0

Willem can breathe again; only two of his Veterans perish.

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	0	4/5

	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	4	2

Now it's a great fang's turn to die!

ONE PROTECTED GREAT FANG VERSUS FOUR VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES

The Wolfen gain the Initiative. The losses on both sides are heavy but the great fangs are less in number than their opponents.

SEBASTIEN: "Fierce, eh? Maybe it's time to think twice about it. Let's see what a defence will give."

WILLEM: "A defence?"

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
GRIFFIN	4	0
WOLFEN	0	1

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	8	4/4

	DEFENCE DIFFICULTY	ATT. PARRIED / DEF. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	8	1/1

	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	3	2

Yllia's Breastplate ends up having no effect; the Griffins finish off the great fang.

GUARDIAN OF THE RUNES VERSUS FIVE VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES

The Griffins keep their momentum and win the Initiative.

SEBASTIEN: "The guardian of the runes is Possessed, so I can easily afford to place one of my two dice in attack. Indeed, in RAG'NAROK Possessed allows half of the planned attacks (at the least one) be carried out if the fighter dies."



ROUND 4

The great fangs are surrounded by their enemies... The Wolfen lonewolves are nearing the ruins (objective I) as well as the council led by Ophyr. The Second Cohort must finish off the Heart of the Pack or else it won't be able to help the templars protect the ruins.

There are two combats in this fray.

Willem can't hold back a smile of satisfaction.

SEBASTIEN: "For honour's sake!"

FOUR GREAT FANGS VERSUS SEVEN VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES

Willem is in control of the ruins and the sacred source: INI +1 for the Griffins and INI -1 for the Wolfen. It's becoming difficult for the children of Yllia to take their enemies by surprise.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
GRIFFIN	7	0
WOLFEN	2	2

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	0	6/7
	DEFENCE DIFFICULTY	ATT. PARRIED/ DEF. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	2/2
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	4	4



	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	2/2
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
WOLFEN	2	1

Two great fangs are killed. Close behind, one veteran of the crusades follows them to the grave.

GUARDIAN OF THE RUNES VERSUS FIVE VETERANS OF THE CRUSADES

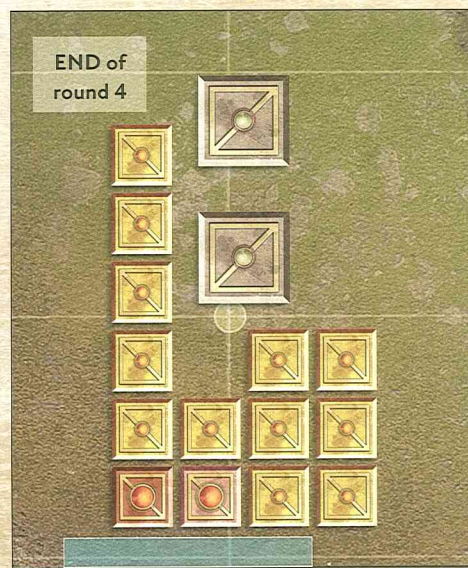
The Griffins of Akkylannie are dominating the encounter. They get the Initiative once again, which comforts Willem in his aggressive strategy.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
GRIFFIN	5	0
WOLFEN	0	2

	ATTACK DIFFICULTY	ATT. THAT STRIKE / ATT. ANNOUNCED
GRIFFIN	0	4/5
	DEFENCE DIFFICULTY	ATT. PARRIED/ DEF. ANNOUNCED
WOLFEN	0	2/2
	DAMAGE	WOUNDS
GRIFFIN	2	1

The veterans of the crusades finish off the guardian of the runes. The great fangs let out howls of distress that chill the blood of the other Wolfen engaged in the battle.

The Wolfen losses are heavier than those of the Griffins. This causes Merin's servants to dominate: the Heart of the Pack is in Rout after having failed its Courage test.



During the thrust Willem reorganises his Unit, leaving a minimum number of fighters in contact with their enemies.

The Heart of the Pack gets a free Disengagement Order for the next round. If it fails its Rallying Roll, then this Unit absolutely must carry out this Order.

WILLEM: "I hope that the Heart of the Pack will succeed its Order, which would allow me to engage the lonewolves and block them."



CONCLUSION

WILLEM: "This new profile for the conscripts is frightening! With such Resilience (RES 8) one can really afford aggressive tactics. Equipped with maces, these Veterans are able to finish off creatures of Large Size while suffering acceptable losses. Like this I blocked a Unit of large numbers for four rounds, and I even managed to impose my domination. I don't think this would be as efficient against creatures of Normal Size."

SEBASTIEN: "I have learned my lesson. Not only do the Wolfen need Units made up of a bit more fighters to be sure to frighten their opponents, but also to stand up against Fierce troops, for example."

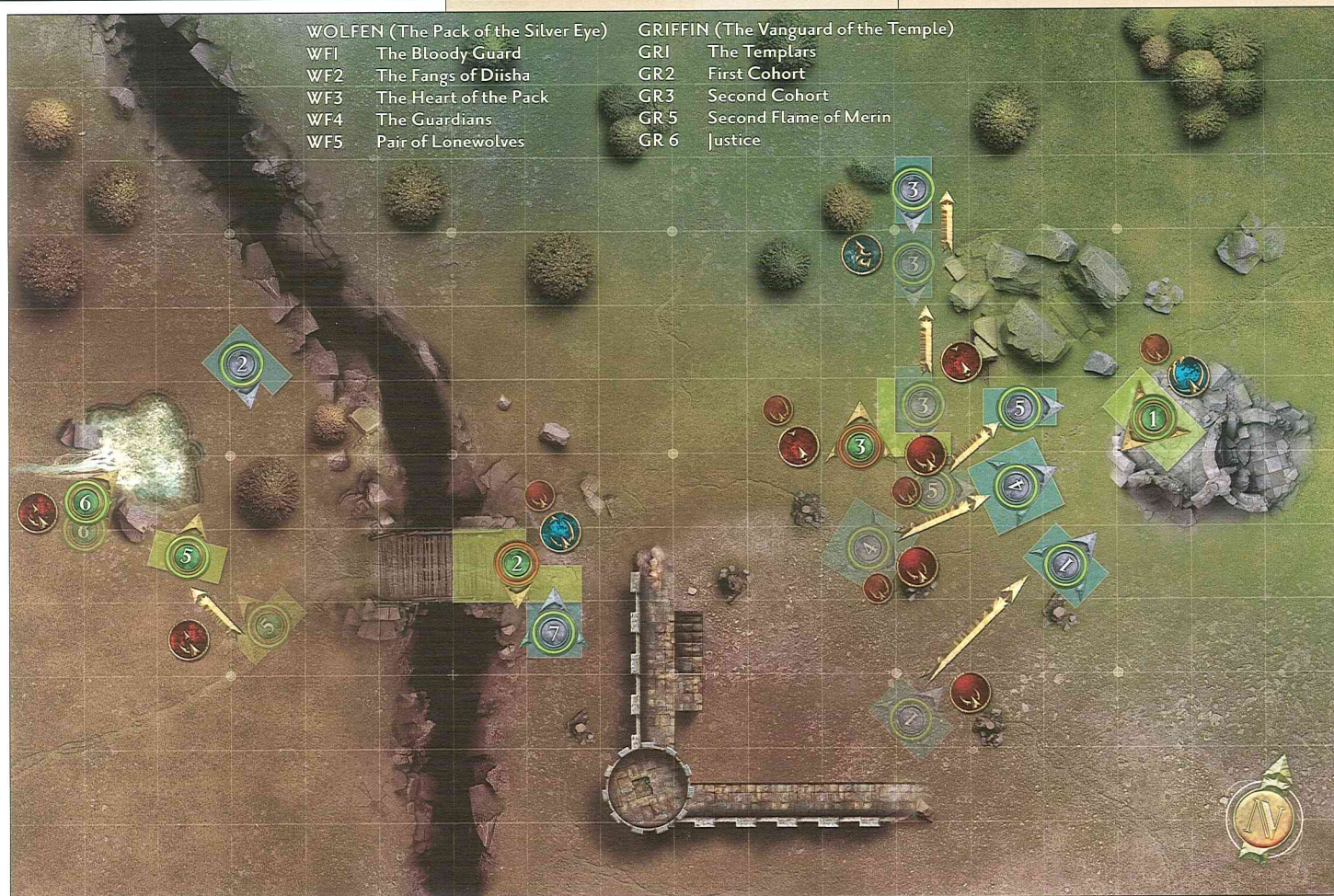
THE RED DRAGON'S OPINION

Willem successfully used the same technique against the predators of blood in a different fray on the bridge. Sebastien made the mistake of underestimating the profile provided by the Griffin war-staff.



STRATEGY THE TEARS OF YLLIA

ROUND 5



At the beginning of the round Ophyr subjugates his familiars and gets +4 on his Mana Recovery Roll.

WILLEM: "This is becoming hilarious!"

Sebastien then attempts to rally the Heart of the Pack (with a difficulty of 6 and a DIS of 2, this remains possible)... Failure! The Unit will have to carry out its Disengagement Order. If it succeeds the latter, then it will have to move at **twice** its MOV towards the nearest edge of the table.

SEBASTIEN: "Wolfen in Rout. That's the last straw! There's nothing to say, I should have ignored this cohort of Fierce fighters and gone around the obstacle right at the start of the game. This would have allowed me to wear down the templars before finishing them off with my predators of blood."

The Akkylannians win the Tactical Roll by only one point.

SEBASTIEN: "That was close! What a shame..."

WILLEM: "Second to last round! The first objective is in danger; I will therefore have to plan the best

strategy possible to block the Wolfen's advance. To manage to do so, I will attempt to disengage the Second Cohort in order to engage the lonewolves. At the other end of the battlefield the Fangs of Diisha have finally shown themselves, but I don't know where they're going. I think that Sebastien will prefer killing my thallions to take control of the sacred source (which is worth three victory points, compared to only one for the bridge). I will have to use rapid Fire with my thallions, but I want to be sure to hit in case the grave guardians attack the bridge. Many Griffins are on it and are easy prey."

SEBASTIEN: "Let's take some risks! I'd like to believe that the grave guardians have a chance against the thallion riders. We'll see. In any case my other Units will launch grand manoeuvres. Bashkar's Unit will continue advancing towards the ruins while Ophyr's Unit, as well as the lonewolves, will be sent off with the same goal in mind: a slaughter for the sake of it."

The result of the Order attribution phase shows that the two opponents wish to position themselves as good as possible for the last round.

The Wolfen are getting ready for the final assault during the movement phase. Combined charges can be expected in the next round. The Second Cohort's disengagement is a catastrophe. The Heart of the Pack (WF3) succeeds its Disengagement and takes advantage of this to flee. On the bridge the combat continues. The Fangs of Diisha (WF2) engage the thallions, who cannot fire. This is not so for the Second Flame of Merin, which advances in order to better adjust its shots at the grave guardians.

During the divination phase the guardian of the runes' prayers give Yllia's Breastplate to a predator of blood.

During the second firing and incantation phase the Wolfen lonewolves use the "Rapidity" spell. One of them does not manage to benefit from this enchantment.



RAPIDITY



2

Paths: Lamentations, Whispers, Howls.

Difficulty: 5

Area of effect: One friendly Wolfen.

Range: 10 cm Duration: Special.

Frequency: Unlimited.

Thanks to this spell the magician can temporarily increase a Wolfen's MOV at a cumulative rate of +2.5 for every -1 in RES. This game effect lasts as long as the Wolfen player wishes. However, the variations in the characteristics are valid for only a round, so these modifications must be specified in each round, at the moment that this is useful. If the spell is dissipated, then the characteristics return to those of the reference profile at the end of the round being played.

Intensity: 1

16 Δ.P.

WILLEM: "There's one who won't be pouncing on my templars!"

Determined to finish them off, the Second Flame of Merin fires at the Fangs of Diisha (WF2)! Willem is lucky and none of his thallions are hit, but the Unit's last two Wolfen are killed, their bodies riddled with bullets! Their blood mixes with the water of the sacred source!

SEBASTIEN: "Let's hope that this will dissuade the Griffins from drinking from it for some time."

In the hand-to-hand combat phase two predators of blood confront the First Cohort led by Abel the Ill-tempered. The clash is terrifying; the blows exchanged manage to slay a Wolfen. The Veterans were quick to attack and have shown to be efficient. Though he was badly wounded by a Wolfen projectile, Abel strikes back at his opponent. However, despite a skilled counterattack, the Griffin doesn't manage to find the weak spot in the predator's defences.

At the end of the round the Griffins are in control of two objectives: the ruin and the sacred source.

The latter can no longer be taken by the Wolfen, whose morale is affected by this. The veterans of the crusades are still protecting the bridge from the last predator of blood who is trying to destroy it!

The mana recovery phase gives two gems to each of the Wolfen lonewolves.

WILLEM: "No comment. I pray Merin to come to my aid. See you in the next round."



SEBASTIEN: "Could it be that I overestimated my grave guardians' capacity to slip between bullets? No, I should have rushed at the thallions much earlier on; with a bit of luck I would have brought them to flee. Now it seems that victory is out of my reach. The slaughter of the templars should at least let me make it a draw..."





The first phases are ignored. Willem and Sebastien concentrate on the heart of this decisive game round.

The Griffins win the Tactical Roll.

WILLEM: "I won!"


Sebastien looks at Willem, stupefied.

SEBASTIEN: "You'll see that I'll manage to make it a draw."

WILLEM: "If we play a return game, no doubt. In the meantime I'll divide my Unit of templars into three groups and order them to charge your Wolfen. My Commander-in-Chief's Courage, Bravery, Discipline and Fanaticism guarantee that this manoeuvre will be successful and that my Order will be carried out, this in spite of the Bloody Guard's FEAR."

The Units charged in this way cannot disengage in this round. A Counter-charge in reaction to Willem's Order won't help Sebastien take the objective. Indeed, the Units are too close to each other for the Wolfen's movements to let them enter the objective's control perimeter. If he decides on a Charge

reception, then Sebastien increases his chances of inflicting losses on the Temple.

The Wolfen player analyses the situation. Willem is about to roll the dice to make sure that no  comes and threatens his situation, when Sebastien stops him.

SEBASTIEN: "A gamer should know to be a good sport. This situation was predictable. When the opponent has every chance to systematically win

the Tactical Roll, then it's presumptuous to think that one can take him by surprise in the last round. Willem has won, there's no doubt about it. I won't force him to play a fray that might (for this isn't sure) allow me to draw. Only one regret: that I didn't have the opportunity to finish off Abel even though he was seriously wounded right in the first round."

WILLEM: "Merin is watching over the Temple."



CONCLUSION

Ruin (objective 1): Willem's strategy has led him to abandon the ruin. Indeed, an Order can only be cancelled before announcing a manoeuvre one might make. Thus all templars left the objective after their Unit was divided.

Bridge (objective 2): The veterans of the crusades have prevented the predators of blood from reaching the bridge. The Wolfen didn't have the slightest opportunity to inflict damage on this structure. Willem scores 2 V.P.

Sacred source (objective 3): The Griffin cavalry is in control of the sacred source. Willem gets 3 V.P.

Breakdown of the Griffin losses:

Unit 1: No losses.

Unit 2: 5 veterans of the crusades, worth 90 A.P.

Unit 3: 7 veterans of the crusades, worth 126 A.P.

Unit 4: 9 Griffin fusiliers, worth 181 A.P.

Unit 5: No losses.

Unit 6: No losses.

397 A.P. of losses. Sebastien gets 2 V.P.

Wolfen: 2 V.P.

Griffins: 5 V.P.

The army of the Griffins of Akkylannie is victorious!

WILLEM: "Victory! A victory that is due to my army's advantage: leadership. There are several things to be learned from this encounter. First of all, the Veteran profile provided with the Griffin war-staff is very efficient. In numbers and against fighters

of Large Size it can be played without second thoughts. Furthermore, I have noticed that a Wolfen can move very, very fast. The predators of blood made several detours before reaching the ruins, but they nevertheless managed to reach them! As I have said before, I have a strong army. I made up for my lack of mobility by deciding on my Units' positioning right at the start of the game and sticking to it. If Sebastien had been more aggressive, I would have had a much more difficult time."

SEBASTIEN: "Willem is right. I should have pushed harder and used Rapidity right from the first round on, and I especially should have used Veil of Fog when I had the opportunity to do so. This would have forced my sentinels to move more, but they would have made the difference in the fray on the bridge. Subversion is an excellent communion. If Willem hadn't used it, then I might have reached the ruins before round 6. In any case, next time I won't just rely on the Wolfen's natural celerity; I'll make the most of it in every round."

This battle was played again. This time Willem played the Wolfen for a change. The Wolfen army list was modified. Two Units of hunters (profile with AIM) led by prowlers were deployed as scouts between the sacred source and the gorge. The Griffin player couldn't save the bridge and the source was taken by the hunters. At the end of this new game the Wolfen had beaten the Griffins.

THE RED DRAGON'S OPINION

Indeed, Willem placed his Units well right from the start and knew to make the most of the advantages specific to the Griffins: Discipline, firepower and sturdiness. He was careful in his movements and aggressive in the frays.

In the face of resilient armies with skilled marksmen (Griffins, dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor), the Wolfen are choice targets. Their average RES, their Large Size and their high cost in A.P. can push one to be excessively prudent. Yet it is precisely his hesitating that led Sebastien to his defeat. He should have been more belligerent and have exploited the Wolfen's offensive capacities ("Born killer" ability; high MOV, INI and STR), even if this meant taking risks. Furthermore, keeping several dice in defence is often useful when playing the Wolfen (devastating attacks generally make up for the disadvantage caused).





The faithful draw their faith, and hence their strength, from the number of fighters surrounding them. Relying on these “believers,” in *CONFRONTATION* as well as in *RAG’NAROK*, entails that the movement of the miniatures (or Units) must be made in relation to the faithful or Warrior-monks. Forgetting this basic rule can only lead to a bad strategy.

THE FAITHFUL

The aura of faith is generally 10 cm for a Devout. This may seem like little, yet this isn’t so. This limit guarantees the Temporary Faith needed to call miracles, as well as a personal guard. Every good strategist will move his fighters in accordance to the miracles that he is planning to call using his faithful. The latter are therefore at the heart of the game, and not just support for the actions required in order to reach the scenarios’ objectives.

A faithful’s rank influences the number of fighters to place around him. Thus it can be useless to deploy 14 miniatures around a Devout in order to benefit from five points of Temporary Faith. An escort of 12 fighters is enough as long as no losses are suffered. If 14 miniatures are nevertheless bound to a Devout (for more security), then this means that two of these fighters can move out of the aura of faith in order to block enemy troops or control an objective, for example. It’s important to remember that the faithful’s miniature is included in the calculation of the Temporary Faith he has available. Hence, a faithful always has a minimum amount of Temporary Faith points corresponding to his rank and the rules bound to it.

THE CALLING OF FAITH

DIVINATION, in CONFRONTATION as well as in RAG’NAROK, requires especially skilful execution. Endowed with an innovative gaming system, it demands thorough knowledge of the rules to be used to its full potential in any situation. Here is a review of these principles so that the faithful become the heroes of the RAG’NAROK.

ICONOCLASTS

Iconoclasts require a different approach. In order to have a maximum of Temporary Faith, an Iconoclast must reach the heart of the enemy positions. His army’s fighters must therefore surround their opponents to prevent them from moving away from the faithful and depriving him of his Temporary Faith.

Since the fighters’ rank doesn’t influence the calculation of Temporary Faith, the elimination of the most dangerous enemy troops is not detrimental to the Iconoclast. It’s important to remember that these faithful do not benefit from the “Loyal/X” ability of enemy fighters. Therefore their elimination isn’t either detrimental.

All fighters, except Loyal ones, have the same value when calculating Temporary Faith. Thus, the most powerful troops can be assigned to the objectives while the others supply the faithful with his Temporary Faith.

WARRIOR-MONKS

The special capacities alone of non-Character Warrior-monks are a good reason to deploy this type of faithful in an army.

CENSURE

The call of a miracle can be countered. Though absorbing a spell requires many mana gems, censure is a simple and effective way to counter the opponent’s divination strategy.

Warrior-monks are just as useful to perform censure. Combined with the advantages described above, their presence in an army provides inexpensive (in A.P.) and efficient security.

RAG'NAROK

Divination differs a bit in RAG'NAROK. Though the basic rules are the same, the limits bound to the movement of Units make the establishment of a strategy based on faith easier. A faithful who joins a Unit has the Temporary Faith required for his miracles throughout the game. The other Units are therefore not forced to remain within range of his aura of faith.

CENCLAVES

RAG'NAROK allows faithful fighters to use more powerful miracles (called communions) that require the gathering of groups of faithful (called conclaves) in order to be called.

It's most practical for a conclave to be made up of a faithful and two Warrior-monks. Yet one Warrior-monk can be enough if there are many troops. It's important to keep in mind that a faithful can only move at his regular Movement rate if he wishes to be able to call a communion.

The army's movements should not be penalised by the presence of a conclave. Therefore it is best to deploy it in the vicinity of marksmen. Because the latter can only move at their regular Movement rate in order to fire normally, they can advance at the same pace as the conclave while ensuring its security. Two Units of marksmen deployed on each side of the conclave are enough to generate the Temporary Faith required for any miracle. The addition of Consecration (see box) to each miniature allows the number of fighters in these Units to be reduced without lowering the amount of Temporary Faith available in each round.



CONSECRATION

Δ miniature benefiting from Consecration counts for two in a friendly faithful's aura of faith.

The number of Consecrations within an army is limited to one for every full 100 Δ.P. Non-Character troops may benefit from Consecration, but not faithful or miniatures with the "Loyal/X" ability, be they Characters or not. It is impossible to have a miniature benefit from more than one Consecration at a time.

Consecration is not counted in the total number of artefacts from which a Character may benefit.

3 Δ.P.

WARRIOR-MONKS

In RAG'NAROK the addition of a Warrior-monk can increase a Unit's efficiency. The capacity of such a faithful to call miracles while moving distances greater than his Movement helps avoid limitations on the Units' movements during the game. The number of fighters accompanying the Warrior-monk must be big enough to let him call his miracle(s) without difficulties. Adding a few extra miniatures is important to compensate for any losses suffered.

Warrior-monks, no matter their rank, can also serve as Unit Leaders. This advantage comes in handy when the amount of A.P. doesn't allow a Character to be chosen, yet one wishes to strengthen the Unit. This option is also usually a wiser choice than a costly Character or giving one of the Unit's fighters Leader status.

VIRTUES

Virtues are capacities that can only be used by the faithful. They are provided in the Liturgy set of cards. They influence the way the faithful call on their faith and are subject to the rules concerning spells, miracles and special capacities. They do not count as artefacts. A Devout can acquire only one virtue, a Zealot can get two, a Dean, three, and an Avatar, four.

Each virtue must be "bought." It is impossible for a faithful to buy the same virtue more than once. Warrior-monks can buy them, yet they are limited to minor and major virtues (the price of each one is increased by 4 A.P.). A Warrior-monk Character can buy virtues at their normal price.





SOPHET DRACHAS

THE KING OF ASHES

PORTRAIT

Night was falling on Cadwallon. Thin rays of light were escaping through the closed shutters of a house near Soma. Here lived Venthius Lazarian, the heir in exile of a sinister family of Acheron. He claimed to have renounced his fatherland, yet no one was fooled. A good number of notables have let themselves be seduced by the manners of this dark angel with a scandalous reputation. Instead of the undead hordes, Venthius preferred the company of artists, the wealthy, and above all, women. Since several months he has been sharing his residence with Ahsa Ruyar, a courtesan. Ahsa, who already mastered vice, was Venthius's student in the dark arts.

That evening, both of them were preparing themselves for a most macabre celebration. Sophet Drahas, the ambassador of Acheron in Cadwallon, had invited them to his underground domain. The one they called "the King of Ashes" was gathering his court. While putting on the secret attributes of the Ram, the two lovers spoke about their host. Ahsa had never met him before.

"Rumours concerning Sophet Drahas abound," said Venthius. "He is said to have a terrifying appearance and a soul that is darker than the Abyss. The King of Ashes is a cruel sovereign whose gaze burns the soul. Believe me... it's true. Even though he and I don't have much liking for each other, one would be a fool to underestimate him. Through puppets who have sold him their soul, he reigns with an iron hand over the Guild of Usurers. Most of the assassins and spies of the 'guild of the obscure' have never seen the true face of their master."

"What do you know about him?" asked Ahsa after several seconds of silence. "What kind of man was he before he became the tyrannical King of Ashes?"

A downpour broke over the city, making the passer-bys in the dirty streets run for cover. The glow of the candelabums was reflected in the gold of Ahsa's attire, glorifying her tanned beauty. Venthius settled on a couch to admire his mistress's splendour and tell her the story of Cadwallon's most powerful necromancer.

"Before Acheron's uprising, Sophet Drahas was the lord of Tar-Haez, a sumptuous domain lying on the border between Alahan and the forest of Caer Mnà. At the time his subjects already said he had magic powers that could slow down the grasp of time on his carnal envelope and on that of his wife, Evaël. He had surely succeeded himself over generations, following the branches of an illusionary family tree."

"Why did he use such a trick?" asked Ahsa. "Revealing his immortality would have brought him fortune and glory!"

"In order to stifle all suspicions or to hide the full extent of his power. At the time, necromancy didn't exist. Unless one used some evil trick, only Light allowed one to survive for such a long time, and Sophet Drahas wasn't one of its most fervent worshippers.

Though he had the title of king and his domain was located outside of Alahan's borders, Sophet Drahas had pledged vassalage to the crown of the Lion. He also had a certain influence on the Kelts of the surroundings. A delicate balance reigned and King Drahas was guarantor. The coffers and lofts of Tar-Haez were well stocked."

To style her hair, Ahsa preferred using a thin window instead of a mirror. Like this she could reveal her sensuality and her wealth to the poor and ugly streets in which she was born. She smiled when, beyond her

reflection, she spotted a cat burglar sneaking around on the rooftops, taking advantage of open windows to steal whatever he could.

Venthius carried on.

"While the Black Togas were taking control of Acheron, Sophet Drahas was visited by Rhéa de Brisis, Feyd Mantis's muse. The divine baron of Acheron had heard about the king of Tar-Haez's supposed immortality and desired his power. The sublime Rhéa's mission was therefore to rally Sophet Drahas to the conspiracy of the Black Togas, or at least to discover the key to his mystery. Sophet Drahas, unmoved by her beauty and her charisma, refused her offer and sent her back at sunrise."

"Was he so faithful to Evaël to let such an opportunity pass?"

Venthius broke into a little laugh.

"Believe me, the opportunity wasn't lost. It wasn't Drahas, but Queen Evaël, who Rhéa de Brisis had managed to seduce. How many unmentionable secrets did they share in the boudoirs of the palace of Tar-Haez?

Feyd Mantis's heart must have been filled with longing and jealousy, for he travelled in person to Tar-Haez to persuade Sophet Drahas to give him his secrets. That's when their ever-so-destructive relationship began, forged in friendship and hatred.

When he returned to Acheron, Mantis was in possession of a vial holding a mysterious elixir. According to what landorias, my master, has said, the liquid's properties were of capital importance for the discovery of immortality as it is known by the undead lords.

Shortly after Acheron's secession and the Battle of Kaïber, the templars of the North and the forces of the barony of Laverne besieged Tar-Haez. The Kelts of the surrounding tribes were bound to Sophet Drahas by ancient pacts. They therefore took up their weapons to defend the city, yet without great conviction. After a few battles the clan chiefs turned against their master. They were glad to rid themselves of this a bit too powerful lord to whom they owed countless favours. Leading his personal guard and a handful of elementals subjected to his will, Sophet Drahas was killed in the final battle for his secular city. Tar-Haez became prey to massacre, pillaging and ruin.

After several years in Limbo, the necromancer woke up in Evaël's arms. She had survived the fall of Tar-Haez and preserved her youth thanks to the evil magic that Rhéa de Brisis had taught her. Sophet Drahas, who had become a liche, now reigned over a city in ashes. Several decades more passed during which he gathered the fragments of his past power. All those who tried to kill him a second time, be they assassins or generals, found death at the claws of his damned legions and of the creatures that haunted the ruins of his sepulchral city."

"So Sophet Drahas rose from the dead at the same time as his fiefdom. From what you're saying, they seem to be inextricably linked to each other."

"When Feyd Mantis ordered him to leave Tar-Haez to conquer Cadwallon, the King of Ashes couldn't refuse. He left Evaël and travelled westward toward his dire fate. You know the rest of the story; the troubadours of our good city are constantly singing about it: the invasion, the arrival of the Dogs of War and the Battle of the Wall of Earth. This defeat earned Sophet Drahas punishment worthy of his pride: he was accursed by Feyd Mantis and bound to his throne for all eternity."

"Sophet Drahas really can't get up from his throne?"

"He was always able to get up and walk a few metres. Nowadays the curse seems to be weakening, and every day he can move a bit further away."

Venthius looked at his pocket watch. The coachman would soon be arriving, so he began snuffing out the room's candles and lamps one after the other.

"Evaël was killed a few years ago by a band of greedy adventurers. Cadwallon knew a short period of respite while the ambassador of Acheron returned to his land, gnawed at by a nameless hatred and by the remorse of having abandoned his only love. His revenge was merciless."

Venthius's gaze got lost for an instant in the heavy rain that was crashing onto the City of Thieves as if to cleanse it of its sins.

"Even today I couldn't say who, between Evaël and himself, our King of Ashes loved more. The death of his queen must have been a heartbreak like no other.

Ever since then, he splits his time between Cadwallon and Tar-Haez. He's stronger than ever. Invested with his fiefdom's power again, the King of Ashes is spreading his influence over our city. He has won the war that opposed him to the Guild of Thieves. The talisman of shadows, the most renowned artefact of the thieves, is hanging at his neck. It allows him to open all of Cadwallon's doors.

I'm convinced that this is the first step of a plan that is ripening in his corrupted mind. Remember. The magician king's immortality, the elixir of eternity with which Feyd Mantis returned, Evaël's death - all this just barely a few months before the beginning of the Age of Darkness and the King of Ashes' newfound and growing vigour. Yes, I believe that the source of eternal life flows in Tar-Haez.

How beautiful you are, Ahsa. Let's hurry, the moon is already high in the night sky and His Majesty shouldn't be kept waiting."

LIFE IN AKKYLANNIE

INHABITED BY AN UNWAVERING FAITH, THE GRIFFINS OF AKKYLANNIE ARE KNOWN ALL OVER AARKLASH FOR THEIR MONOTHEIST RELIGION THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO PRE-
MATE. THEIR FAITH IN MERIN, "THE ONE," AS HIS FAITHFUL CALL HIM, RHYTHMS
THEIR LIVES. THIS FERVEUR HAS LET THEIR YOUNG EMPIRE ESTABLISH A STRONG IDEN-
TITY AND IMPOSE ITSELF AS ONE OF THE PILLARS OF THE ALLIANCE OF LIGHT.

AKKYLANNIE

Emblem: The Griffin

Capital: Arcavia

Alliance: The Ways of Light

Allies: The Lions of Alahan, the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor and the Cynwäll elves

Cult: Merin, the only god

Magicians' primary element: Fire

A PROSPEROUS COUNTRYSIDE

"Albeit having confronted heavy downpours and terrifying storms, it's obvious that we live in a relatively temperate climate. Though the winters are harsh, the summers are hot without being stifling and the rest of the year is comfortable. Wherever my footsteps have taken me I saw green prairies, vast fertile fields and forests full of game. Even when I ventured into the Akkylahn Mountains I was the witness of Merin's generosity: our mines are filled with iron, silver and gold. Every day the miners, whose faces are sometimes marked by the hard work, extract more than enough to supply the

All inhabitants of Aarklash, or just about, worship a god. Each country has its succession of religious ceremonies, holidays and commemorations. However, in Akkylannie only Merin rhythms the life of its men and women. Very often this is unnoticeable. What can be more natural than a town's population going to church at noon on Sunday to the sound of the bells ringing? What can be more normal than a religious procession in a city with tens of thousands of inhabitants?

Yet there are days on the calendar on which the Akkylannians' religious fervour has nothing in common with that of other peoples. During these holy celebrations, when the streets are filled with jubilant Griffins or welcome the grim processions of the Inquisition, the traveller understands the full extent of the terrifying cement forming Akkylannie's foundation. When the faithful rise to chant a prayer, then a whole people stands up and lets its voice be heard. When a holiday is celebrated in memory of Arcavius, then the whole Empire stops working.

One god, one faith, one people.

"It's been almost a year that I accepted to become a preacher. At the time I was aware of the rumours about this caste of priests: the nomadic lifestyle and the danger of dying at the blade of a highwayman or a heretic. Yet every day that I spend on the roads of the Empire only makes my faith in Merin grow, for only the hand of the One could have created such a welcoming land!"



country's craftsmen. And isn't it said that Akkylannian metal is superior to that of any other country?

However, it is also true that our villages are far from axes of communication and are sometimes even abandoned by the Church and the Empire... I have witnessed this many times. Too often I was welcomed like a symbol of hope. These villages need roads.

As an old templar has explained to me, the Empire doesn't have any mid-sized towns. I have never visited Arcavia, Denda Cartho or Carthag Fero, but they are said to be gigantic. The Akkylannian roads are wide, paved and patrolled by the Inquisition and the imperial army. They connect the cities to each other, but they neglect the villages that must content themselves with trails or paths. Made of dirt and badly maintained, these paths often cannot be used by wagons. They even slow the pace of a walking person or trotting horse.

Luckily the Church, in its immense wisdom, has created the preachers! That is why I travel the roads: to finish Merin's work where the builders have failed."

From a preacher's travel journal
Spring 999

CITIES TO THE GLORY OF THE ONE

"By the holy fire! What an incredible day I have lived today! The preachers I have been lucky to cross paths with had described Arcavia to me as being a city worthy of Merin, but, may He pardon me, I was far from thinking that our capital was so magnificent. My hands are still shaking.

At first I saw the city in its entirety. From the neighbouring hills I was able to contemplate the astounding regularity of its road grid: the wide avenues cutting the streets and the tall buildings rising between them. Only the gigantic churches broke this regular pattern. I can't imagine that there could be a bigger city on the continent.

Near the city gates, in the shadows of the barbican, I was able to admire the solidity of the fortifications and the pragmatism of their builders. I feel no pity for the Empire's enemies, but I don't wish any soldier the burden of finding himself at the foot of these walls. If the first line of defence should happen to fall, then there are four others, the silent witnesses to the city's relentless growth.

In the streets of Arcavia I thought that I was going to suffocate. Nothing had prepared me for the crowds that filled them and for the deafening noise of the markets.

Despite my fear of being discomforted by the smell (a Barhan voyager had told me about how the people in his country threw their waste water out the window), this didn't happen. It nevertheless took me nearly all morning to get used to the majesty and size of our capital.

“

“My brothers, little by little Darkness is submerging our world...

Every day that Merin creates I see doubt and corruption growing. All the way to the Empire's highest spheres I see faith wavering and Evil seducing ever more fiends.

It's time to come out of the shadows to proclaim the truth.

We are marching in Merin's light. Let us call for a crusade! Let us brandish the scarlet standard and the flaming sword, let us carry steel and faith beyond our borders. May Aarklash be engulfed in ardent flames And may all submit to Merin's creed or perish!”

Sermon secretly held by Cardinal Herminius in the catacombs of the cathedral of Denda Cartho.

”

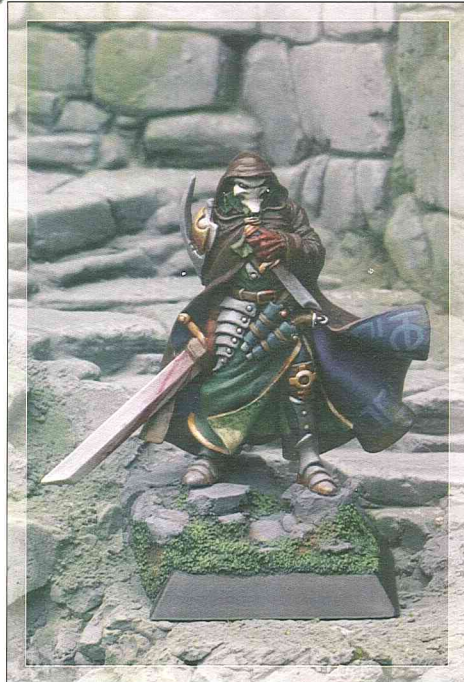
At noon I ate a dish whose name I have a hard time remembering, but which tasted very good.

It's only in the afternoon that I realised the inspiration that the Prophet had shown. By visiting dwellings I understood that water and heating circulated freely thanks to an ingenious system of metal pipes. Not only do all Arcavians have potable water, their waste water is not thrown out the window but rather

recycled through a network of underground galleries. Isn't this Arcavius's most beautiful miracle? A miracle that transforms the life of a whole people and definitely makes Akkylannie the most advanced nation of Aarklash?”

Taken from a preacher's travel journal
Winter 999





A LAND BLESSED BY MERIN

THE AKKYLANNIANS KNEW THAT MERIN IS PROTECTING THEIR EMPIRE. HOWEVER, THE ONE CANNOT SEE EVERYTHING OR WATCH OVER EVERYTHING. FOR THIS, THE PEOPLE TURN TO THE CHURCH AND ITS REPRESENTATIVES.

THE CHURCH'S ROLE

EDUCATION

Father Justinian quickly searched the garden next to the church with an angry glance.

"Rosarius, Antoine, come here or I'll tell the Inquisition!"

Rosarius appeared from the bushes, scared. The priest sighed. Having to threaten children in such a way was regrettable.

"Where's Antoine?"

"He made me promise not to tell."

"It's good to want to keep your word, but you must come to church. Both of you."

"We already go with our parents!"

"Yes, but on that day it's to pray. You must also come to church on another day to be educated."

"To learn to read and write? Antoine says we don't need that."

The priest could no longer take it. Rosarius's blasphemous insolence had pushed him to his limits.

"We all need it, for that is also what makes us Akkylannians. And that's not all."

Rosarius looked at the priest with curiosity and fear. With a severe expression the man of the church got on his knees to be at eye level with the young Akkylannian.

"If I make you recite passages from the Codex of Merin, it's not only to teach you to read and write; it's also to open your heart to something bigger and more important than books."

"Merin!"

The priest's face became more serene. This answer proved that this child's soul could still welcome the Light.

"Yes, Merin. It is He who guided Arcavius to Akkylannie; He is always with us. He accompanies every one of our footsteps and protects the righteous."

Rosarius, suddenly worried, looked around himself.

"He sees me when I get into mischief?"

"Yes, He sees everything, hears everything and knows everything. He created the world around us and has returned among us to watch the inhabitants of Aarklash and choose those who will be worthy of entering His new Creation. He judges everything we do."

"Even what Antoine does?"

"Yes, but Antoine doesn't see Him... He doesn't want to learn to see Merin. Yet he must."

"Or else the Inquisitors will come and get him?"

The priest's face darkened, not out of anger, but out of sadness: he had seen too many faithful, too many former students, burned by the folly of the Inquisition.

"Yes, Rosarius, they will come and get him."

RED TAPE

Lucilla suddenly felt very stupid standing in front of the presbytery door. Yet she had no choice and knocked.

"Come in!"

"Good morning, mother. I'm sorry to disturb you, but..."

Lucilla hesitated.

"Speak, I have known you ever since you were a little girl. What's on your mind?"

The nun put away her glasses and her Codex of Merin, and turned to the young woman.

"You are aware that I want to open up a print shop?"

"Yes, Lucilla, and you know that I will give you all my support while doing so."

"Praise the One. Because I'm having a bit of a problem."

Hesitatingly, Lucilla pulled out the papers bearing the imperial seal and, more terrifyingly, that of the Inquisition. The nun put on her glasses.

"What's this, Lucilla?"

"The papers to be filled out in order to get the authorisation. I didn't think there would be so many. I don't understand a thing."

"Have you forgotten my reading lessons?"

"No, mother, but the magistrate asks me so many things... And why did he give me these papers of the Inquisition? I'm not a heretic!"

Lucilla looked frightened, as if a Darkness hunter were on her tail.

"Of course not, my daughter, but the Inquisition must know what works you are planning to publish. The printing machine is a marvellous invention, but heretics can misuse it to spread lies and blasphemy in our empire, as they did with *The Arcavian*."

"Are you sure? I've spoken with other people and it's the same for everyone. If one is a printer, butcher or blacksmith, we all have more formulas to fill out than there are pages in the Codex of Merin."

"Be careful, Lucilla, you're straying."

"Forgive me, mother... Why are they asking where the money for my workshop comes from?"

"To check if it was earned in an honest way. These are your savings, right?"

"Yes. When I think that I've been working since I was a child and now they're treating me like a thief!"

"Heretics are everywhere, my daughter. They take advantage of our slightest weaknesses and abuse of honest people like you. The Inquisition isn't hounding you; it's protecting you."

"By preventing me from becoming a printer?"

"Don't blaspheme!"

They had become teacher and student again.

"Listen, I'll help you fill out this paperwork and I'll hand it to the magistrate myself. I think he'll see them in a favourable light. As for you, you will recite three Ave Merins to atone for your blasphemy."

"Very well, mother."

Lucilla returned home without being fully convinced that the Inquisition needed to know so many things about Akkylannie's craftsmen. Then again, she had utter trust in the nun who, like herself, was a woman of strong willpower.

PRINT SHEEPS

"My dear parents,

I know that I don't write you often enough. Don't worry, everything is going fine, but my work at the print shop doesn't leave me much time for other things. I'm not used to writing any more. Aunt Lucilla makes me work hard, but she treats me well. I live at her place in the city. Life there is amazing!

I get up early. Every morning I have to clean the printing machines since the ink tends to get into the cracks and crannies, and if it isn't removed, then the next book is smudged. I also have to maintain the metal pieces used to print each letter. Then I help aunt Lucilla print books. I put the paper into the machines. Aunt Lucilla tells me to be very careful with my hands; apparently her last apprentice got his fingers caught and torn off, but I think she says that just to scare me, the way you used to with the Inquisitors.

At noon we have a quick lunch in the workshop. It's my cousin who prepares our food. Then we continue working until very late in the evening.

Nights are magical. There are lampposts everywhere and the city remains lit until morning, but aunt Lucilla doesn't let me go out. She says that only trouble is to be found at this hour of the night. And I trust her.

I have seen Inquisitors. They often come to the print shop with conscripts to make sure that aunt Lucilla's books don't say anything bad about Merin. Once they were even accompanied by thallions. These men frighten me. Aunt Lucilla doesn't seem to like them very much, but she says that I have nothing to fear if I listen to her and go to church every week.

I miss you a lot,
Your loving son."

THE IMPERIAL CONSCRIPTION

THE TRUTH

"Uncle, tell me about the imperial army, please!"

The child was bouncing up and down on the old man's knees, as if he could be forced to talk like that.

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything!"

"OK... At first it was good. The army gave me a roof over my head and we had running water. I had a weapon, armour and a shield. I learned to fight."

The child's eyes lit up.

"But I especially learned to read and write. In my village I cut school. In the army I made up for my lack

of education. And I learned both stupid and important things: to make my bed every morning, to be groomed, polite, receive orders... and to give them too."

"Did you fight?"

The old man's gaze darkened.

"After my basic training I chose to join the conscripts of the Temple. I left for the desert to battle the Heresiarch..."

"And then?"

"I saw my best friends being devoured by mutant tigers. I saw stronger men than me cry like babies. I thought I saw my time come so often that I had no more remorse to kill. I saw the sands turn red."

The old man was weeping.

"I don't know how I managed to survive those four years. Maybe thanks to Merin? When I returned I used my soldier's pay to open up a shop. I had met some goblins in Kashem and did business with them. But I wasn't doing well. Almost every night I woke up screaming, the image of the tigers still haunting me. I couldn't go on working in my shop."

"I don't want to go to the army any more!"

"Yes you do, you have to go."

"But... you saw horrible things there!"

"Yes, but I also experienced a wonderful event."

"What?"

"While everything seemed lost and the Syhars were about to slay us, a miracle happened. I saw conscripts get up a last time to strike their opponents with a final blow; I saw fusiliers struggle against creatures three times their size using the butts of their rifles. There, in the middle of the forsaken desert, I heard an angel of fire whisper encouragement to me and I felt something that no priest could ever teach me."

"What's that, uncle?"

"That Merin is always with us. He accompanies each one of our footsteps and protects the righteous. In the heart of the desert I understood that I preferred to die a hundred times, to suffer the worst torture or to burn my own family than to let Him down."

On a winter's eve in a veteran of the crusades' home

FAITH

In the courtyard of the imperial garrison the young Akkylannians were waiting in the rain. An old legionary, cramped in his battle-worn suit of armour, came towards them with a menacing appearance.

"Attention!"

The rookies stood as straight as they could, their hands nervously planted to their thighs.

"At ease!"

The recruits left their awkward posture. Some wigged discreetly to try and stay warm. Others tried to

avoid dirtying their boots in the mud of the parading ground. The old legionary paced back and forth at a few centimetres from the front row, his hands behind his back.

"I'm legionary instructor Valkerus. From today on I'm your father and your mother. Obey my orders to the dot and I won't send you to Kaïber. Am I clear?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good. You are now conscripts of the Empire. Today the Akkylannian army will give you armour, a shield and, depending on the centuries, a sword, a spear, an axe or a mace. This material will become your most precious belongings. Take good care of it or you'll end up in a tiger's stomach. Am I clear?"

"Yes, sir!"

You will be in your military service for five years. The first year you will be placed under my command. You will pass all exams or you will die trying. Depending on your results and on the Empire's, the Temple's or the Church's needs, you will be assigned to the imperial conscripts or the conscripts of the Temple. There you will remain for the four following years. Some among the best of you will sometimes be assigned to the Inquisition. Then the imperial army will send you back to your huts and you will have become full-fledged, adult and responsible citizens before Merin and his Church. Am I clear?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Until then, those who will serve in the army will be in charge of protecting our borders and keeping public order. Those who will have chosen the Temple will leave on crusades and those who serve the Inquisition will struggle against heretics. Am I clear?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Perfect! Now go get your material. And don't forget: a soldier has never won a war by dying for his country; a war is won by making the enemy die for his."

Welcome speech by a legionary instructor

FRATERNITY

The night was cold in the Aegis Mountains. Illuminated by torches and campfires, the garrison could be seen from far away. Three conscripts grudgingly got out of one of the tents, reluctant to go on what looked like was going to be a very tiring patrol. And the keg of powder seemed heavy.

Rosarius turned to one of the two conscripts accompanying him.

"You, give me your spear and take the keg."

"I'm sorry, but no one has ever spoken to me like that. And I won't carry that keg. At home only a servant would stoop down to do such a job."

"Well, OK."

Rosarius was about to give his spear to the third conscript when he changed his mind.

"Sorry, buddy, but here we aren't on your family estate. We're in the imperial army, and you're a conscript like me. Tonight I'm the patrol leader. So, conscript Proximo, you will carry this keg, or else... I'll kick you in the butt all the way to Kaiber!"

Proximo and the other conscript exchanged an astounded glance. Rosarius grabbed the spear and handed the keg to his fellow soldier.

The path was steep, yet Rosarius and his companion advanced at a good pace. Far behind them Proximo was following as quickly as he could. Conscript Antonin couldn't hold back a smile.

"You really made him shut up earlier on! Where did you get the idea of kicking his butt all the way to Kaiber?"

"From my first day in the army."

The two conscripts took a break. Rosarius looked at his companion.

"Where are you from?"

"From a mining town lost in the Akkylahn Mountains. And you?"

"From a small village, not far from Denda Cartho."

The two soldiers sighed. Rosarius slapped Antonin on the back.

"You must feel pretty much at home up here in these mountains!"

"Well, not really. At home I know all the paths; over here I get lost all the time."

"What did you do over there?"

"I helped my father. It was hard, but I still miss the mine."

"I feel the same way. Since I didn't want to go to church I was constantly being scolded by the priest, but at least I didn't risk ending up with a sword in my belly."

"Look at the good side of things: you're being fed, housed and equipped; you have travelled across half the continent, and you were able to treat a rich kid as if he were your servant!"

"That's not what I'm most proud of."

"Why not?"

"I've been thinking about it ever since we left our camp. It's not very fair to speak grandly of equality among conscripts and then to let Proximo carry the keg by himself. In any case, that's not what the legionary instructor has taught us."

The two soldiers exchanged embarrassed glances. With much hardship and out of breath, Proximo managed to reach the two other conscripts. With a last effort he put down the keg, a knee on the ground. Rosarius looked at him while thinking. Finally, he went up to him and placed his hand on his shoulder.

"It's OK, I'll carry it now."

"No way! I'll never accept your pity!"

"It's not a question of pity."

Rosarius tightly gripped the keg. Proximo put his hand on his arm.

"What is it then?"

"We conscripts are all brothers."

On a cold night somewhere in the Aegis

MERIN'S JUSTICE

THE TEMPORAL POWER

"Magistrate Flavius, acting as impartial judge of Just Punishment in a public hearing;

Magistrate Iscariot, acting as representative of the Empire of Akkylannie;

Mister Basil, accused of banditry and assault.

Seeing that three imperial conscripts testify to having recognised the accused the evening of the events on the road leading to Carthag Fero menacing unfortunate travellers with his weapon;

Seeing that when these same conscripts attempted to take the accused in for questioning, he and his four accomplices fled;

Seeing that the conscripts certify on the Codex of Merin to having chased the accused from the place of the crime to the place of arrest without having lost sight of him for even an instant;

Seeing that, on reaching the ruins where the arrest took place, the accused and his accomplices resisted arrest and aggressed the conscripts;

Seeing that, when reinforcements brought the number of conscripts present to eight, the accused and his accomplices continued resisting and only surrendered after the arrival of a magistrate and two thallions;

Seeing that the accused refuses to reveal the identity of his accomplices as a sign of his repentance;

Seeing that the accused refuses to serve in the Legions of Repentance of the Order of the Temple;

For these reasons the Order of Just Punishment sentences:

The accused to ten years imprisonment in the imperial jails of Denda Cartho;

The accused to reimburse all fees by payment made to the Temple's treasury or community work;

The victims to settle a carelessness fine by payment to the Temple's treasury or community work."

THE FLAMES OF THE INQUISITION

"Forgive me, father, for I have sinned."

"Speak, my son, the One is listening."

The young man thought for a long time and then gulped.

"It was really strange. It was nighttime but I could see as if in broad daylight. Torches had been lit in the whole quarter. With all these flames I should have felt warm, yet I was shivering as if I were being assaulted by the most terrifying of icy winds..."

"Were you scared?"

"No... Well, yes. I didn't understand what was going on. I couldn't stop looking at this armour-clad shape wearing a hood and holding an enormous sword that was bigger than me. We were dozens, maybe even hundreds to watch the scene, hungering for I don't know which perverse pleasure, but this lone figure seemed to be stronger, heavier and more imposing than all of us together."

The memory coming back made him tremble.

"Who was it?"

"An Inquisitor. He was standing in the square that was usually used for the market. Conscripts in his service had cleared the paving stones, the ones that we walked on every day, and had set up a huge stake."

"Is that what all of you had come to see?"

"Yes."

"Why do you think this was a 'perverse pleasure'?"

"I don't think it's right to gather with such eagerness to see a man die."

"This wasn't a man but a heretic, executed by the Very Holy Inquisition of the One God. You should have cheered this victory in the name of our cause."

"I know, but... I knew him, father."

The priest changed positions on his chair. This was a difficult case.

"What happened then?"

"After a while the crowd parted as if pushed apart by an invisible hand. Four other Inquisitors appeared, each one as impressive as the first one, dragging a figure in chains behind them. I was terrified."

"What terrified you so much?"

"But father, five Inquisitors! It is said that their power grows in numbers, and that for heretics, five is an accursed number!"

"Certainly, but the faithful of Merin have nothing to fear of the Inquisitors, no matter how powerful they may be. Do you have anything else to be ashamed of, my son?"

"No! But if they were five, then Clovis must have committed a horrible act."

"Clovis, that is your friend's name?"

"Yes, father."

"And it was really him that the Inquisitors were bringing to the stake?"

"Yes, father."

"If the Inquisitors had decided to do so, then it means that Clovis was a heretic and that Merin required his purification by fire."

"But..."

"Speak, my son. Merin is listening."

"What if they were wrong?"

"Do you think this is possible?"

He remained silent, troubled by the priest's question.

"Tell me what happened then."

"The five Inquisitors stood in a circle around the stake. One of them chained Clovis to it while the conscripts held back the crowd. Once Clovis was attached, an Inquisitor placed the tip of his sword onto the pile of wood and it burst into flames. At first Clovis was screaming... as if he were damned. Then everything became silent, like in a church during mass. The Inquisitors watched Clovis burn without blinking an eye."

The young man was sobbing.

"And you, what were you doing in the meantime?"

"I was thinking of Clovis... of the time when we were children, of everything that we had gone through together. Our military service had separated us, but we hooked up again in Arcavia. I knew that he had changed."

"Which means?"

"He was more closed in on himself, darker. His mother told me that he sometimes got up in the middle of the night and screamed all over the house."

"Yet you doubted that he could be a heretic?"

No... well... I wasn't sure. I thought about it until the flames died out, and then I told myself that Clovis must have been a heretic. But there was worse!"

"What?"

"I was scared that one of these Inquisitors would turn around and point his finger at me!"

"Why would he do such a thing?"

"I was a heretic's friend!"

"If you had known that he was a heretic, would Clovis still have been your friend?"

"No!"

"So then you have nothing to feel guilty about, except having doubted the Inquisitors' judgement. Merin is with us; He guides every one of our steps and judges us. Doubting the Inquisitors is doubting Him. Doubting Merin is a heresy."

"I'm not a heretic!"

"I know. If you were, then the Inquisitor would have turned around and pointed his finger at you."

Heard at a confessional





AN EXPANDING EMPIRE

DESPITE ITS MILITARY HEGEMONY AND THE RELIGIOUS FERVOUR BORDERING ON THE INTOLERANCE SHOWN BY ITS PRIESTS, AKKYLANNIE HAS FORMED SOLID ALLIANCES OVER THE CENTURIES WITH MANY OF THE CONTINENT'S OTHER PEWERS. MAYBE IT IS EXACTLY THIS INTRANSIGENCE THAT MAKES THE AKKYLANNIANS SUCH TRUSTWORTHY, SURE AND LEYAL ALLIES.

THE WAYS OF LIGHT

The most important treaty is the one binding the Empire to the other members of the Alliance of Light (see *Cry Havoc*, vol. 2). Akkylannie has unquestioningly placed itself on the side of the Barhans and the Cynwälls to contain the menace represented by Acheron. This pact, born in bloodshed at Kaiber, is still as sturdy today as it ever was.

The Empire's most steadfast ally remains the Kingdom of Alahan. The secession arranged between Arcavius and King Heian was a true diplomatic miracle, and ever since, the relations between the two nations have always remained good despite any periods of trouble that may have affected either one. In all Barhan cities there are Akkylannian communities. The biggest among these administer their own quarter apart from the local power. This is especially true in Icquor, where the Temple of the West is located. These emigrants have almost all left the Empire for religious reasons; they are therefore usually less fanatic than elsewhere. Conversely, the presence of the Inquisition has dissuaded many a Barhan from settling in Akkylannie. These rare Barhan immigrants, merchants for the most part, are mainly found in the port city of Carthag Fero, which is more cosmopolitan and open to the world than the rest of the country.

The relations with Lanever are more ambiguous. The Cynwälls often treat the Akkylannians as if they were gifted but temperamental children. In this nation these elves find a youth and a vitality that moves them. In the first hours of this Empire they saw hope for the Alliance of Light. It is doubtlessly for these reasons that they gave their allies the priceless secret of gunpowder. The Cynwälls have never shown

their disapproval of the way the Akkylannians use this gunpowder. Yet it seems obvious that their conquering and murderous ways go against their ideals and principles. Similarly, the aggressive and repressive policies of the Inquisition's prelates couldn't be further from the Noesis. This doesn't prevent commercial trade or military cooperation, and maintains a relative neutrality between the two peoples. Now that the Dragons are coming out of their isolation, who knows how the relation between these two peoples will evolve?

"Living in the middle of the moors of Avagddu reminds me every day of Merin's power. This immense wilderness gives an idea of the true size of His Creation. The idolatrous barbarians that I mingle with in this place continue to worship the earth like a divinity and see the reflection of their pagan divinities in every tree and rock. I nevertheless haven't given up trying to bring the Truth to these savages. It isn't the world, the gift given by Merin to accommodate His children, which is to be worshipped, but rather its Creator."

Extract from the journal of a missionary based at the edge of Caer Mnà

The coalition with the Sessairs Kelts is even more complex. They not having a real supreme authority, it is sometimes hard to tell exactly how this alliance applies. Unlike the Barhans or the Cynwälls, the barbarians haven't signed any commercial or military treaties with Akkylannie, for they prefer maintaining relations based on the mutual trust in a word that was given (sometimes several centuries earlier) by a clan chief or a priest of Danu. What more, Akkylannians and Sessairs respect each other on the battlefield, for they know that the blood of the people of Kel flows in their veins. The existence of numerous common enemies has strengthened their bonds.

A problem nevertheless remains: the colonies. The Akkylannians consider the plains to be virgin territory

that is barely occupied by a few semi-nomadic tribes. It is therefore not uncommon to find a fortified village occupied by Akkylannians in the middle of Avagddu. Formed by a couple of farms built around a church devoted to Merin, these colonies are more or less welcomed by the Kelts. Though the Sessairs accept their presence out of respect for the bonds that link the tribal chiefs to the Empire, the other clans of the plains only tolerate them. Many of these colonies have been established in the vicinity of the Temple of the North, but the presence of Drones in this territory makes their survival harder every day. Today, several of these colonies are in ruins, either having been devastated by the barbarians or abandoned by their inhabitants.

More surprising still is the lasting alliance maintained with the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor. The pact binding the latter to the Akkylannians isn't justified by military reasons or border troubles, but rather by true cultural affinities. Dwarves and humans share the same values of order and discipline. They also have a common liking for smithery and craftsmanship. The monks of the Order of High Works and armourer dwarves thus share many of their techniques. Dwarven diplomats are regularly welcomed within the imperial palaces of Arcavia, and Akkylannian delegations are often received within the halls of the fortresses of Tir-Nâ-Bor. Hundreds of dwarven families have even settled in the Empire, mainly in the foothills of the Akhylañ, to work in the mines as well as the smithies, and there are valleys in the Aegis where the faithful of Merin have been living ever since their ancestors were converted by Arcavius.

In these troubled times, however, this alliance takes on an increasingly military aspect. The Akkylannian commanders show very much interest for steam's potential uses, but the thermo-priests of Uren jealously guard the secrets of this technology. The Akkylannian army's corps of engineers dreams of building heavily armed warships propelled by steam in order to enforce an efficient blockade of the Syhar shores. Ever since the Dawn Ritual, these engineers haven't given up hope of convincing their allies to help them in this undertaking.

DREAMS OF CONQUEST

The area of the Akkylannian territory is sizeable, yet it is barely bigger than a barony of Alahan. It is therefore far from being able to rival the immense desert of Syharhalna. Hence, the Empire feels a bit constrained and its desire for conquest becomes stronger day after day.

IN THE NAME OF MERIN

Akkylannian imperialism is carried out mainly on a religious level. Many foreign cities (with the exception of Syhar ones) have communities that devote their cult to Merin. Some of these are obviously forced to live their faith in secret. Missionaries and wandering preachers relentlessly roam the most remote corners of the continent to more or less successfully spread the good word.

The two crusades, which were initiated jointly by the Church and the imperial powers, are also witness to this wish for expansion. They combine proselytism with military and commercial conquest. The lands neighbouring the Temples of the East and of the South (see *Cry Havoc*, vol. I) are thus true protectorates. The city of Kashem, albeit a free one, would quickly come under Syhar domination if it weren't for the support and influence of the templars. This occupation doesn't come without clashes, especially in the vicinity of the Commandery of the East. And the orcs only moderately like this foreign presence in their sacred lands.

THE FANGS OF FIRE

These dreams of conquest are also manifested in more concrete ways. Several colonies have thus been established on the coasts of the archipelago of the Fangs of Fire. Most of these volcanic islands are simply masses of cooled lava, rocky and arid islets where only lichens grow, yet some of them have proven to be surprisingly fertile. With huge amounts of work the slopes of the most hospitable islands were turned into terraces. There fruits and vegetables are grown in abundance, as well as vineyards of black grapes from which a wine is made that is sold for a small fortune in the markets of Cadwallon. Some of the archipelago's villages are therefore particularly prosperous, and in these towns lost in the middle of nowhere it isn't rare to find a level of technological comfort that rivals the one in the fanciest parts of Arcavia.

Though most of the Akkylannians who have settled these lands are farmers or shepherds, a great number of faithful are also present. The volcanic origins of these islands, the still frequent eruptions, and the lava flows all make the Fangs of Fire a highly symbolic place for the worshippers of the fiery god. An imposing monastery, called Lava's Retreat, was built inside

the crater of a dormant volcano on one of the archipelago's smaller islands. Every year several thousand pilgrims travel there to isolate themselves behind the hermitage's walls of black stone, to confront their faith with blazing infernos, to meditate in the middle of sulphur vapours, or simply to bathe in the numerous hot springs that dot the island. A couple of visionaries tirelessly roam the islands, convinced that these lands of lava and ash hide the last survivors of the race of phoenixes. No one has managed to prove yet that these legendary birds still survive in the wild...

"Your Highness,

To my great regret, I must vigorously reject the idea of establishing colonies on the continent located off the shores of Syharhalna. We know nothing about the fate of its previous inhabitants or of the evil curses the Ophidians may have left in these lands.

There is, on the other hand, another trail worth exploring. Many tales tell of an unknown land lying to the north. No one has gotten near enough yet to map it, so we don't know if it's an island or a whole continent. However, the multitude of testimony signalling the existence of this terra incognita proves that it isn't just a legend. To me it therefore seems necessary to send an expeditionary fleet of several vessels to the northern sea to verify the truth of these stories."

Report by Octavius Quintus
Master geographer at the Imperial
University of Arcavia.

The harshness and isolation of this place doesn't only attract believers looking for peace and tranquility. In the greatest of secrecy, the Arcavian authorities have built a penal colony made to accommodate criminals of a special kind. In Akkylannian justice may seem summary: heretics usually end up burned at the stake or in the Inquisition's jails, common criminals are given the choice between forced labour and enlistment in the Legion of Repentance. The penitentiary of the Fangs of Fire holds those who menace the Empire's security, but whose status doesn't allow them to be treated like simple criminals. Rebellious nobles, prelates with rather unorthodox behaviour or renegade commanders are all confined to isolation on this island, where they are watched by the Imperial Guard yet treated with a certain respect. This prison's existence is no longer a secret in Akkylannia, and it frightens less than the sentences of the Inquisition.

And finally, the presence of many goblin and Syhar pirates in the Migol Sea forces the Akkylannian fleet to frequently patrol the coasts in order to protect merchant vessels. Several fortified ports, often hidden from the eyes of the pirate lookouts, have been built on the reefs to be able to wage this maritime war more efficiently. The captains and crews assigned to this task are among the Empire's best sailors and seafaring fighters, capable of the most daring manoeuvres and the most violent boarding of ships. Even the Black Tooth of the legendary Captain Krill is being hunted by these patrollers. This motley crew of filibusters has only escaped them thanks to the skill of its helmsman and to its famous telepathic squid.



Who knows where the Empire's expansionist policies will stop? Some of the most virulent clerics speak in veiled terms of a third crusade that would set Aarklash ablaze to subject it to the word of Merin. Though this insane project currently isn't supported by the Pope, and even less so by the Emperor, many members of the clergy and young, fanaticised conscripts are attracted by this idea. This current can be found in all the big cities of Akkylannia, as well as on the fronts of the first and second crusades. The Temple doesn't suspect the existence of this conspiracy within its Commanderies yet, but one day the confrontation will become inevitable... and violent.

"My brothers,

Little by little Darkness is submerging our world... Every day that Merin creates, I see doubt and corruption growing. All the way to the Empire's highest spheres I see faith wavering and Evil seducing ever more fiends.

It's time to come out of the shadows to proclaim the truth. We are marching in Merin's light. Let us call for a crusade! Let us brandish the scarlet standard and the flaming sword, let us carry steel and faith beyond our borders. May Aarklash be engulfed in ardent flames, and may all submit to Merin's creed or perish!"

Sermon secretly held by Cardinal
Herminius in the catacombs of the
cathedral of Denda Cartho.

THE TEMPLE OF THE WEST

"Milord,

In conformity with your orders, it's been several months now that I travelled to the barony of Icquor to observe the Temple's activities. I only met very few obstacles during my first investigations. Unlike the prelates of the Basilica of Ashes who officiate for the small community of Akkylannians who live in the city, the Temple masters are very open. The Commandery of the West has the particularity of granting asylum to all those who ask for it. No matter the origins of those who knock at their door, the templars offer their hospitality to anyone who accepts to submit to their discipline. Pretending to be a poor wretch who was thrown into the streets by ill fate, I was taken in by the brothers of the Temple. It wasn't very hard for me to integrate this community.

The buildings of the Commandery of the West have nothing to do with the strong fortresses erected in Avagddu and Syharhalna. They actually seem more like a monastery than a casern. The edifice's five main buildings occupy a large area in the heart of the city. At the centre of the structure is a cloister and gardens. There are many entries to this building (of which some are secret, as I discovered during my explorations), yet only one of them is open to everyone. The inhabitants of Icquor have named it 'the Beggars' Gate.' Indeed, the whole first level of the Temple is occupied by a dispensary where the miserable and the poor can find refuge and eat a warm meal. The templars also treat patients in exchange for a small donation, or for a helping hand in the gardens or the kitchen. This hospital's existence largely explains the popularity and prestige the Temple enjoys in Icquor and beyond, throughout the barony.

The commandery is also a place of knowledge where a library and scriptorium can be found that would make many scholars envious. It also has its own printing works, to which Tarkhyn the Wise, the commander, seems to grant great importance. The library's administrators are former templars who are too old to fight, but there is no doubt that they would pick up a sword again if their precious spellbooks should ever be threatened!

I haven't been able to venture into the commandery's basements yet, but they stoke my curiosity. While one can move about freely in the rest of the building (except in the commander's quarters), the access to the underground parts is constantly guarded by two templars. I don't know what's hidden there, but I'm intent on finding out. Jails or a network of secret tunnels? I haven't pierced this mystery yet.

The upper levels are reserved to the templars and to the quarters of the hospitaller sisters. The latter's



existence is another particularity of the Commandery of the West. With very few exceptions and because of its military functions, the Temple very rarely accepts women. Yet in Icquor they are admitted and gathered in the Sorority of Hospitallers. They also wear the white robe emblazoned with the Temple's cross, but they are not expected to bear arms and armour. These women respect the same rules as the men, though they replace the warrior's oath with an oath of assistance and care. It is therefore they who make sure the hospital is run correctly. They are assisted in this task by lay brothers. The latter, who are mostly former tramps, maintain the gardens and vegetable patches, take care of supplies and the kitchen, and help the sisters in their medical functions.

In principle, if one goes by the Rule of the Temple established during the first crusade, all templars consider each other as brothers and normally don't have a hierarchy (except the supreme authority wielded by the commanders). In reality there are many ranks made to reflect a status or a function. Thus, the hardened soldiers responsible for a small unit of fighters are called seneschals, a heritage of the Temple's military roots. Valour and seniority rather than rank determine the difference between two brothers. Like our paladins and our knights, the templars distinguish themselves above all through their bravery and their merit. Thanks to this I was able to blend into their community so quickly. Always willing to work hard and give a hand, I have become a respected layman and the sisters and templars give me more and more of their trust. I can thus spy on them without any trouble.

The commandery may seem like a haven of peace, far removed from the military preoccupations of its sisters in the East and the South. Yet this isn't so. By travelling up the gulf of Leak Shear and the mountain torrents, the Akkyshan warriors can quickly enter our territory. Despite the patrols, the barony of Icquor has already suffered many raids, and when it's a question of defending the territory that harbours them, the templars always answer present. I have seen several veterans return from these battles and their con-

dition betrays the violence of these encounters. The proximity of the Behemoth Mountains represents another menace. Many magical and military protective measures have been taken to prevent the dark legions from flooding over the kingdom, but they don't prevent raids by the marauding orcs, Wolfen or humans that the mountains are teeming with. Worse still, it seems that the Behemoth Mountains are not as uncrossable as thought. If alarming rumours are to be believed, the mountains are crossed by tunnels and galleries.

Yet the war waged by the Temple is above all an occult one. The commandery shelters many soldiers, and all are not inactive. Many times I saw armed templars, often injured, return discreetly to their barracks while Lahn's first rays were barely coming over the horizon. Once, while hiding behind an arch, I watched these men hastily cross the courtyards and rush to the commander's quarters. They were carrying one of their companions who fell in combat. His face had been ripped off, no doubt by an explosion, but this wound wasn't what frightened the most. On his left arm I could see bite marks of terrifying size. I can't imagine that creatures capable of inflicting such wounds are prowling in the vicinity... I don't know yet who or what this invisible enemy is, or if this war is being waged in secret or with the baron of Icquor's approval, but I will soon find out.

This is only one of the many mysteries that the Temple seems to be hiding. The first among them is its commander, Tarkhyn the Wise. This man has everything of a scholar, yet he is also known to be one of the most brilliant strategists of his time. He likes to say that one doesn't win a battle with weapons, but rather with a good strategy. A templar has told me that a whole room has been transformed in order to be used for the commander's passion. There he analyses history's great battles using figurines representing the various units on military maps. There he also keeps a good number of military treaties. This passion is not the only one that Tarkhyn the Wise has. He is also said to have a profound interest for the arcana of magic.

One rumour even claims that he practices Theurgy and the hermetic arts, but I cannot confirm the truth of this yet. In any case he has many allies among this kingdom's mages.

And last but not least, I won't be teaching you anything new by telling you that the commander acts like a true unofficial representative of the Empire in Alahan. His political influence is far greater than that of ablegate Leonte, the Pope's emissary in Kallienne. The question is now to find out who he really represents: the Emperor or the Temple?

I haven't found the answers to all my questions yet, but I think I will manage to do so. The templars now trust me and I therefore have greater freedom to wander all over the commandery. You will soon receive a new report with, I hope, further information."

Report by Estebahn the Agile, secret agent of Alahan, to Gdraan Dynasin, seneschal of the baron of Kallienne and master of intelligence of the Crown.

"Proteus, my old friend,

Do you ever feel our weakness in this struggle against Darkness? We are so little in number... and our enemies are ever stronger. Albeit weary, it isn't time to give in to despair. Even though no one knows this, the fate of Creation depends largely on our will.

I have left the burning sands of Syharhalna to settle in Alahan. The Inquisition is on my tail and I prefer fleeing than taking the risk of revealing the lodge's secret existence. We haven't managed to locate and destroy all the region's laboratories, but we have eradicated a certain number. In any case Shamir is beginning to show too much interest in these alchemical complexes for us to be able to continue our work unhindered. We can only hope that the servants of the Trueborn and the Heresiarch's creatures kill each other...

Tarkhyn has offered the lodge his hospitality, and I accepted it with pleasure, hoping to turn the Temple of the West into our headquarters. Unfortunately the respite will not have lasted long. I had barely arrived in Luishana when I already had to leave again to battle the alchemical spawn! Despite his madness, Dirz had succeeded in hiding his laboratories in the four corners of the continent. We have destroyed two within the borders of the baronies themselves, one within a few days march from Kallienne and the other near Kaïber. While exploring the latter one we just barely escaped a trap set by our guide, a young Barhan. Darkness knows to show its most seductive side, my friend. It irremediably attracts those with weak minds and those who are ambitious. Virtue is a path that is very hard to follow...

To wage this war we have luckily found new allies. King Gorgyn and his closest advisors know the face of the evil that we are confronting every day. This powerful monarch's support will be of great use in the future. Is this the first step towards a new Alliance of Light?

I unfortunately fear that we aren't sheltered from a new order of the Black Togas. I have been in Icqur for only a couple of days and I have already noticed several disquieting facts that confirm my fears. For several weeks now the city has been terrorised by a dreadful assassin that the Watch can't seem to find and arrest. The killer strikes without distinction and leaves his victims drained of their blood. All this frighteningly resembles sacrificial or necromantic practices. I immediately sent my purifiers to patrol the streets, but I'm not sure if this will be enough to hold back this scourge. It is so easy for an evil sect to implant itself in our cities, and it is so hard for us to root them out again!

Yesterday evening Tarkhyn was visited by an emissary of the Chimera. The man didn't really fit the image that I had of a hermetic magician. Tall and broad-shouldered with a sword by his side, he looked more like a warrior but for the many talismans and symbols that adorned his attire. From what I gathered, the mage's mission is to seek and destroy the Atrocities, creatures born of the original Darkness. Are we bound to discover a new peril every day? The meeting was very rewarding since the man asked for the Temple's aid and assured the commander of his order's support in our own struggle. Though our enemies have never seemed to be so numerous, the same can be said of our allies.

Pray the lodge never falter, for the task before us is immense.

May Merin protect you.

Venerable Ambrosius"

Encrypted missive sent to the supreme commander, intercepted by the Inquisition

"Your Lordship,

As you know, since several weeks now we have been tracking a killer that the people have named 'the skinner.' This assassin with demonic mores slashes his victims and empties them of all their blood before abandoning their corpse. Terror has taken hold of the popular quarters and we have already had to intervene several times to prevent lynchings or riots. The Order of the Chimera has appointed a bard to help us, but

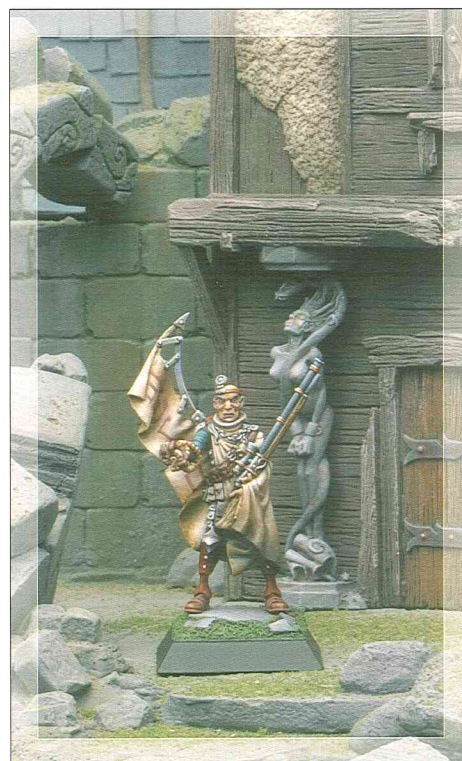
the magician seems to be leading his own investigation and only reluctantly collaborates with us. We are losing hope of ever catching the assassin.

It is by chance that we even managed to find a trace of the killer, or I should rather say killers. A night patrol heard shots coming from the cemetery. It rushed there and my men saw deformed figures enter a crypt and escape by some secret passage. Their arrival also brought a group of four men dressed in dark leather and equipped with pistols to flee. Their identity remains unknown. All that was left at the scene were two corpses.

The first one was that of a tramp, his throat slit and drained of his blood like the previous victims. The other one, riddled with bullets, wasn't human. Dressed in bloodstained rags, the creature had a disproportioned head and a long, fleshless body. There is no doubt that this is one of the 'skinners' that have been terrorising our city for the past several days.

This discovery leads to several conclusions. First of all, it has become necessary to explore the catacombs stretching beneath the cemetery, and maybe even further, in order to drive out this monster's fellow creatures and put an end to these murders. We must also find the mysterious warriors who are fighting against these creatures. Their equipment seems to be of Akkylannian make. For this reason I ask your permission to go to the commandery in order to question those in charge."

Report made by an officer of Icqur's watch



THE TEMPLE
OF THE NORTH

"Come on, kid, get closer to the brazier and take this blanket. But of course! I know that you're shivering because of the cold! And even so... Do you think that wearing the armour of a Temple brother makes one insensible to fear? Do you think you're the only one who trembles when he hears one of those howls in the night? I don't know anyone who can take that without reacting. So swallow your pride and come sit down by the fire.

When I arrived here three years ago I couldn't shut my eyes for a week. Because of the endless attacks, of course, but especially because of the cries! The first time I heard one I was scared so much that I jumped into the air. I really thought that someone's throat was being slit. Which may actually have been the case; the Drones enjoy this kind of entertainment. But one gets used to everything, even to these howls. Now I sleep whenever I can, standing, wearing armour, sprawled in snow and mud, even in the middle of the worst din. Yet as soon as there is any danger I wake up just as quickly, always ready to defend my life and that of my brothers if needed. You'll see, you'll also get the hang of it. Soon your daily routine will become eating, praying, and sleeping whenever you can. And, especially, fighting. I'd like to be able to tell you not to become too fond of your companions because Death strikes relentlessly, but brotherhood is sometimes the only thing you have left to help you take the shock. Over here, everyone knows the price of blood.

How long have you been here now? Two or three days? That's what I thought. And you have already fought in more battles than you could have wished for, right? You'll have to get used to it, that's the rhythm over here. Not one day, not one night goes by without these madmen assaulting the ramparts. Don't worry, the walls are solid; they won't give in that soon. Yet this shouldn't prevent you from being careful! The worst is being hit by one of their poisoned arrows. Even if it just scratches you, you suffer horrible fever for several days... if the poison doesn't kill you first. They stick the tip of their spears into some kind of mix based on elyr, a pretty little red berry that grows abundantly in the Black Woods. You would never imagine on seeing it that a small drop can kill a horse...

Was that wound of yours inflicted by a persecutor's axe? It's ugly but not very serious. You're in for a nice scar. But that bump on your forehead worries me. It sure is a big one! Blows like that one usually give you bad headaches, and a distracted sentry is a dead sentry. Take a bit of snow in your hand and hold it to your forehead. The cold'll calm the pain a bit and will keep you awake.

Darn climate! I don't know what gave our glorious elders the great idea of establishing a commandery

in this region. They must have found the place perfect, midway between our Sessairs allies and those of Tir-Nâ-Bor. They must have thought that they could keep an eye on and protect the roads that cross the moors and the fortified farms in the area. I no longer know who we're protecting from marauders nowadays... They could have chosen a less hostile place. Here there are only two seasons: the good one, when it rains all the time, and the bad one, with snow and blizzards. And then there's always this damned fog that the wind brings from the Plain of Tears. That swamp is an unhealthy place, almost as bad as the moors.



Your quarters are in the south wing? You're lucky, that's the only one that still has a working wastewater drainage system. The others have all burst due to the cold. It's always that less to do when on cleaning duty. When it comes to comfort... a block of stone for a mattress and a flea-infested fur to keep you from freezing to death is all you get. In any case, I already told you that you'll quickly get used to sleeping in your armour. I hope you like the architecture. It's not really exuberant. High walls several metres thick, barracks built next to the ramparts, and a dungeon. Simple but functional, military style. The dungeon is the commander's territory, but everybody here calls it the tower of crows. With the number of corpses that are rotting away in the vicinity, all the region's scavengers have made their way here. It is said that the Old Man has managed to tame some of them and uses them to carry messages. It's sure that if it isn't shot down by an arrow, a bird has better chances of escaping the Drones than a human does. But still, seeing all these birds perched on the tower, just waiting for us to die so they can eat our eyeballs and everything else, is not the most uplifting spectacle I have seen.

Come on, have a swig of this hysneh alcohol, it'll give you strength. Yeah, it's pretty harsh on the throat, but you'll see, it warms you up as good as a nice hot bath. I always buy a keg or two from our dwarven friends when they come and visit us. Once or twice a month a caravan supplies us with food and weapons, if the Drones and Devourers let them pass, that is. These mountain dwellers are tough little guys, and they aren't the worst when it comes to fighting. You can wipe that smirk off your face right away. I've met others who thought that they were better, who took themselves for warriors chosen by Merin and refused to speak to infidels. Yet they were always happy to be

able to count on two or three alphas blades when a horde of barbarians was rushing at them screaming... You should see them in combat, these boors. Sure, they're not very fast but they hit with all their might. They seem like lumberjacks who are chopping down a tree. And boy, are they tough! I've seen some take blows that would have knocked out a bull. So respect your allies like you respect your brothers. Believe me, one of these days it's a mountain dweller who'll save your neck...

Those torches on the ramparts, that's the Old Man and his personal guard doing their night patrol. Commander Thubard and his Black Guard... Though I respect these veterans so much I almost worship them, they still make me feel a bit jittery. These guys have come within a hair's breadth of death more often than I've gotten plastered in my whole damn life. Don't expect to see them smile; the only thing they enjoy is the death of their enemies. But don't take them for maniacs. They would never sacrifice their men in a combat that's lost in advance. They're more likely to cover their soldiers' retreat on their own. They are true old-style men of honour, carved from a block of black marble. The commander is of the same calibre: tough yet just. He is the size of a bear, but he is a brilliant speaker and one of the most outstanding swordsmen I know. It's thanks to him that we can count on the unwavering support of the dwarves. One really needs courage and authority to be obeyed by a band of soldiers on the brink of madness. It's been years that he rules this commandery, and never has he failed. We call him the Old Man, but when it comes to vitality, he could show young guys like you a thing or two. He's always able of staying awake for several nights and then leading a charge without ever weakening. In any case, don't ever call him his nickname in front of him, or else you'll get to feel the caress of his metal glove.

Ah, the howlers are back. Keep cool, kid, that was just a warning. I don't think they'll attack again tonight, but who knows... They sometimes wait until dawn makes us lower our guard to launch a new assault. Another cry. I don't know what makes our enemies constantly scream like animals. You know, I have fought at the sides of Sessairs once, and they also let out war cries while rushing into combat. But these cries are made to give them courage and to show their opponents that they aren't scared of them. The Drones, on the other hand, don't try to intimidate their enemies, but to truly terrorise them, to strike them with fear. At first it seems like a whisper, a moan. You think that it's only the wind. Suddenly the night starts howling and the air is filled with the yelping of mad beasts, which chills your spine and makes your heart skip a beat. Sometimes the cries suddenly stop and silence returns, the calm after the storm. But most often it is like a storm unchained. There is no respite. Some can no longer take this constant dread and throw themselves from the top of the ramparts...

Me, I've understood that they use these cries to communicate, like an animal calls its pack. With time I think I've managed to understand their meaning: they are always omens of death. When the howls are nearer and stronger, when you have the impression that they're all around you, that's when the Drones are about to attack. That's probably the only thing you can ever be sure of over here.

Also, tell yourself that we aren't the worst off. I hate having to leave the commandery for several days to go on patrol. Not that I fear bumping into a band of marauders; I know war, that's what I was born for and what I'll die for. What I fear is bumping into other things, such as the half-eaten corpse of a brother who disappeared in combat hanging from a tree... The remains of a bloody feast, with rotting flesh and gnawed human bones scattered all around... Or coming to the aid of farmers but getting there too late, after the slaughter. You can't imagine the feeling of powerlessness and disgust that takes hold of you when you enter a destroyed village and you discover the first corpses. Men, women, children, the elderly, no one escapes the fury of these barbarians. These madmen take pleasure in making people suffer, in mutilating and dismembering them. To provoke or scare you, they then arrange the remains like morbid sculptures. And the smell of blood and ashes... You can be as hardened as you like, you never really get over such a sight.

But the worst is for those assigned to one of the watchtowers scattered in the surrounding plains and forests. Over there, there is no thick and solid wall to protect from an attack, and they are often only a dozen to defend against an enraged pack of Drone warriors and Devourers. They can count on no one but themselves and their faith in Merin. One day or another you'll also be sent there, but I can only wish that this happens to you as little as possible. Just imagine remaining several days and nights alone with a few comrades in the middle of hostile territory. Sometimes nothing happens and you just suffer long hours of fear. But most of the time the Drones attack. If you're lucky, it's just a handful of warriors and you can survive if you know how to fight. Or else... not even your corpse will remain to testify to your existence.

Have you heard about these barbarians' cannibalistic customs? Well, it's all true, and even worse than what you may have been told. I was stationed at Kaiber before becoming a templar and coming here. Yes, I know what you're thinking: I have spent most of my life in the worst parts of this earth. Maybe I'm damned, or maybe just a bit crazy... Anyway, today I believe that defending Kaiber was a less horrifying adventure than being here. I prefer fighting the undead than these possessed barbarians. Despite their depraved rituals, despite the hatred I feel for them, I can understand the lords of Acheron's motivations: they want to dominate the world. The Drones, on the other hand,

don't care about power or prestige; they just live for violence. It seems like they wilfully embraced Darkness and no longer know anything else but death and revenge. Have you ever seen a karnagh at work? They have no survival instinct. No matter the wounds one inflicts them with, no matter the pain, as long as their demonic axes continue chopping flesh, they'll keep on fighting. I hope for you that you never cross paths with their chief, Tyramòn. He's gigantic, a genuine brute animated by such hunger for battle that I think that he has former blood in his veins. He has killed so many of us that he could build a palace just using his victims' skulls.

The Drones are even more dangerous ever since they allied themselves with the Devourers. I don't know what evil pact binds these two peoples - maybe simply their taste for the hunt and for blood - but these barbarians have never been as active as since they started fighting alongside the warriors of the Beast. It seems like they have only one thing left on their minds: to annihilate each and every one of us. Or else, how to

explain these suicide attacks, all these horrible nights of combat in which they lose as many men as they kill, without ever really managing to break down this fortress's walls? Maybe they don't care about death. Their dead fight by their sides: it is said that their sorcerers can snatch your soul, take possession of your corpse, and force it to fight forever after. In fact, I have the impression that to them we represent everything that they hate: an unwavering faith, a bastion of Light in the middle of chaos. We attract them, just like the glow of a lantern attracts moths. Except that the Drones and Devourers cause a bloodbath before burning their wings.

Anyway, I'm going to take advantage of this period of calm to get some rest for an hour or two. You can keep the bottle; it'll help you sleep. But I can't promise you a night without nightmares..."

Conversation between Sternis, a templar, and Estus, a new brother



THE TEMPLE OF THE EAST

"Sered, my brother,

I don't know if I'll be able to spare the legions whose support I promised you in your struggle against the swarms of Danakil. The situation in Bran-Ö-Kor is ever more delicate. The rumours concerning the discovery of Arcavius's tomb attract a growing number of pilgrims. My numbers aren't enough to deal with this flow of believers. My commandery being engaged at two fronts, it is impossible for me to simultaneously help the one of the South in its fight against the alchemists of Dirz and protect the pilgrims from the orcish tribes and the marauders in the region.

Many times I have written to Cardinal Aerth, the general of the Empire's armies, to inform him of my situation, and suggest he send more troops and engage more conscripts in the crusades. Without results. The authorities in Arcavia continue to ignore my requests, but never will I stoop so low as to beg them.

Instead of sending us more soldiers, the Inquisition prefers to send its spies. I know that such an accusation won't improve my already compromised reputation in the prelates' eyes, but this isn't the time for diplomacy. Every day we uncover another emissary of the Church among the pilgrims, whose mission it is to spy on the way that I run this commandery. It's sometimes difficult for me to prevent my men from beating these spies to death when they are unmasked. Even I had to call on all my willpower to keep myself from sending one of these agents, the ever so arrogant Saphon the Preacher, back to the Pope with this message branded into his skin: 'Trust is a virtue.' How can we hope to win this war if our own leaders don't believe in our integrity? Though it's true that our methods differ, our faith and our goals are the same. We are engaged in the same crusade.

For now I have only one thing on my mind: I need more fighters. I'm aware that the canyons of Bran-Ö-Kor aren't the only strategic points where the Empire is engaged and that we cannot afford to weaken Kaiber nor the front of the first crusade. Nevertheless, several additional centuries would help face the threats weighing on my protectorate.

The orcs have never accepted our presence in their lands. We were unable to establish a non-aggression pact with their raiks or even to build up true commercial trade. A few tribes accept to barter with us or give us the right of passage through their territory in exchange for some trinkets, usually weapons. Unfortunately, most of them are more and more hostile towards us. It is now difficult to travel through the canyons without falling into an ambush. When this happens, there isn't much we can do. The orcs know the region much better than we do; their warriors

always elude the attention of our men. I have already lost hundreds of men in these lightning strikes, whereas our opponents only count a couple of victims in their ranks.

Using reprisals against the surrounding villages would only set the region ablaze. I don't want to declare war on the orcs, but with just a few hundred men more I'd be able to crush these marauders! Then we'd be able to devote our forces to ridding the desert of the alchemical spawn.

The toughest opponent we have to deal with is named Avangorok. You may already have heard of the exploits of this war chief who was a nightmare for the Syhar swarms for a very long time. Being slyer than he is brutal, and preferring speedy action, he has managed to escape the numerous punitive expeditions of our enemies. The reward promised for his capture keeps on growing and the gangs of bounty hunters rival in ingenuity to get their hands on this orcish hero.

The Syhars are no longer the only ones who dread the trackers' attacks. The raik now harasses us relentlessly and scoffs at our patrols. These orcs have already ransacked several of our caravans and the number of attacks is on the rise every week. The strength of these nomads lies in their knowledge of the terrain and their skill at hiding in it. The trackers are able to bury themselves in the sand or to spring from a crevasse and disappear at lightning speed once their crime has been committed. Their second asset is their ability to steal their enemies' weapons. Some of these warriors even use Syhar combat drugs to enhance their physical capacities.

Merin knows how, but one of the raik's lieutenants has even managed to train tigers of Dirz, which he uses as attack creatures. These are just a few exam-

ples of the orcs' many resources when it comes to the art of war. When they attack a caravan, they burn the wagons using jars filled with flaming naphtha. This black substance, which is very sought after by the goblins, burns better than oil! I have been able to witness the damage caused by this liquid fire, and it is terrifying. Once the naphtha has caused panic among the men and the animals, the trackers take advantage of the confusion to quickly steal all they can from the caravan. Recently, during one of these raids, they managed to take several long rifles and also gunpowder. I don't know how much time it will take before they turn these weapons on us, but it won't be very long...

The orcs aren't the only threat that we have to fight. A Devourer named Shankansa has raised a true hunting party that prowls the canyons while committing the worst acts of violence.

My greatest worry, however, concerns Avangorok's success. He must not be taken lightly, for he is an idol who is being emulated. For a young orc warrior, nothing is more prestigious than joining the trackers' ranks. I fear that in the end the region will become inflamed. I have heard alarming rumours about the raik of the Red Lands, the warlord Shaka Morkhaï. If he joins forces with Avangorok's pillagers, then we'll be forced to wage a full-scale war against the orcish tribes.

If I don't get reinforcements very soon, my support for your struggle against the Syhar armies will become weaker. Such a situation would be terrible for the Empire's future in the southern lands. May Merin give us the strength to crush our enemies!

Faith and Honour,
Commander Arkhos"



"I had a rather bad start in life. Raised in the streets of Arcavia, I wasn't promised a very bright future. I lived off of my shrewdness, petty theft and trafficking of all kind. Nothing very glorious.

Everything got worse when I committed the unpardonable, the mistake of my life: I killed a man.

He had aggressed me in a tavern and I had to defend myself by turning his weapon against him. Our struggle then caused a brawl between tired alcoholics.

Alas, there were no witnesses in my favour. Since I couldn't deny the crime, I was thrown into a cell without any kind of trial. When a preacher came to hear my confession I insulted him, which earned me fifty lashings. My back still bears the marks of this chastisement.

It's in the capital's jails that my destiny changed. Several of us were waiting fearfully for the Just Punishment's verdict. The guards made us come out of our cell, me and a few other of my unfortunate companions. They led us to a huge room with whitewashed walls. I remember the light, so bright that it was blinding. It was the first time in days that I saw Lahn's shine again.

A man was waiting in the middle of the room. He wore an austere, pure white robe marked with the cross of the Temple. The jailers lined us up against a wall and the man came towards us. He didn't hold a long speech. His expression showed such willpower that I almost lowered my eyes. He asked each one of us only one question, always the same one: 'Do you want to return into Merin's heart and take up weapons for his crusade?' We all knew what these words meant... They meant leaving our land of birth for a land of sand and dust to fight the orcs and alchemical creatures, maybe to die, without ever seeing the green plains and game-filled forests of Akkylannie again.

Some hesitated. Others refused. Three of us accepted to follow the templar. Thus I joined the ranks of the Legions of Repentance. I could have chosen to break rocks in the quarries of the Akhylahn instead of risking my life in Syharhalna or Bran-Ô-Kor. Well, believe it or not, I have never regretted my decision.

We weren't the first ones to join the templar's escort. There were already a dozen men recovered from other Akkylannian prisons. In the first few days I got to know my companions a bit better. We were quite a gang of scoundrels! Among us there were highwaymen, clandestine printers, and me, an assassin. Even though we were only outlaws, we were aware of the chance that the Temple was giving us by rallying us to its cause.

As surprising as it may seem, we were no longer considered to be prisoners. No chains on our legs, no shackles on our wrists. Of course, the frock of brown frieze marked with the Temple's cross designated us as repentants, and the templars who accompanied us watched that we didn't cause any trouble, yet we were no longer captives.

After several days' march, we left for the East. The man who had gotten us out of Arcavia's jails was brother Gregor, a veteran of the crusades. He could be tough and quick-tempered, but was never unjust or disdainful. He didn't consider us to be vermin and treated us like any other soldier.

During the journey he spent much time talking to us about our mission. He taught us how to use our weapons, and also the alphabet, geography and history. It was a difficult task. Many of us were born in misery and hadn't received the teachings of the Church. Yet Gregor didn't give up. During the two or three weeks that our journey lasted, he gathered us every morning to learn the words of the Codex of Merin.

On the boat that brought us to Kashem and the crusade, I finally understood Arcavius's message. Faith, fire and steel: ardour, truth and brotherhood. The true meaning of these words suddenly became clear. My faith was born and kept on growing throughout this journey.

We finally reached the commandery and were dumbstruck by the imposing fortress. How couldn't one be struck with awe when standing in front of this white building, with its high walls that rose from the desert where there normally was only sand? How not to be impressed by its massive defence towers, the enormous iron cannons and the standards bearing the Temple's cross that were fluttering in the wind? The men who built such an edifice in the middle of nowhere must have been animated by an immense faith!

The first time I met the commander was very impressive. While instructor brother Gregor imposed respect through his fair and unwavering attitude, Arkhos glowed with an amazing aura of authority. When his voice echoed in the courtyard, everything went silent naturally. He welcomed us with simple words and let us know what he expected of us: duty and obedience.

A leader like him could surely lead his men all the way to hell. His soldiers were genuinely devoted to him and never stopped vaunting his exploits. According to the templars, Arkhos was one of the Empire's most valorous warriors!

Inside the fortress the Legions of Repentance didn't mingle completely with the templars. We prayed and ate together, but our quarters were separate. Yet I never felt disdain or arrogance on their part. We simply didn't belong to the same world. The templars wear the frock by choice. Their engagement in the crusade is a calling.

Us repentants were there above all to avoid a terrible punishment. Nevertheless, we were aware of the usefulness of our knowledge and skills inherited from our previous 'jobs.' A war isn't only won in honourable ways; sometimes one has to make use of ruse and treachery. Infiltrating an enemy camp, assassinating a leader, poisoning water reserves...



These are tasks that wouldn't turn off former criminals like us, tasks for which we were more talented than a templar.

Earlier on you were surprised that I wasn't in chains. You must have heard those rumours about desertions and pillaging that are told about the Legions of Repentance. Believe me, most of those are not true.

Some of us don't accept the Temple's rules and prefer to return to their old life as marauders. As soon as they can, they flee into the desert. Some manage to join the bands of pillagers that have formed over the years, but most of them die. Between the heat and thirst, the tigers of Dirz and the orcish scouts, the chances of survival are slim. As I have said, most of us remain loyal to the Temple that has given us a new life.

Unlike what the Inquisition wants to make you believe, pyres and executions have nothing to do with redemption. These are just morbid spectacles made to scare the people so that they don't stray from the right path. Dying has never helped anyone repent.

Redemption is what I live every day ever since I'm over here: the blistering sand, Lahn's heat, these war wounds that have marked my body like stigmata...

Believe me, the chains that I carry are much heavier than those made of steel."

Confession of a fighter of the Legions of Repentance



IN THE NAME OF MERIN

ARCAVIUS THE PREPHET AND HIS LEYAL APSTLE JEN ARE INDISSECIABLE FROM MERIN AND HIS CHURCH. THEIR EPIC IS TOLD TO ALL AT A VERY YOUNG AGE AND IT IS CELEBRATED BY THE ADULTS. THE AKKYLANNIANS THEREFORE THINK THEY KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS SUBJECT. THE TEMPLE'S DIGNITARIES AND THE LEDGE OF HED MAKE SURE THAT THIS IS SO. AND YET, IN THE PAST FEW YEARS TWO HERESIES WERE ON THE BRINK OF MAKING AKKYLANNIE TUMBLE INTO CHAOS.

“Merin is not a merciless god. Merin is not a jealous or cruel god.

He doesn't punish those who do not believe in Him. He doesn't punish those who make an error of judgement. Yet at the same time Merin is not merciful.

He punishes those who stray from the Light and those who abandon reason for instinct. He punishes those who abandon all hope and those who destroy another's hope.

Merin is the Fire, yet he is not a destroyer. He is the Fire that creates and purifies. He protects the artists, the smiths and the craftsmen, the inventors, the diplomats, the travellers, and the defenders of the Light and the Truth. He hates those who are lazy, cowards, selfish, liars, thieves, assassins and destroyers.”

*Codex of Merin
Book of Arcavius 8, 12-15*

“

“Since the beginning of time
there has been only one and
unique god, Merin.”

CODEx OF MERIN, FIRST LAW

”

THE DAWN OF CREATION

“At the dawn of Creation, Merin gave birth to a world in His image, a world where Fire reigned as master. There Merin raised mountains and volcanoes, sculpted rock and minerals, made plants grow and peopled it with animals. He gave the latter the gifts of instinct and adapting, of growth and of procreation, but He didn't give them conscience, for He feared that such a gift would be fatal for such fragile beings. Thus was born the first Realm of Fire.

Merin rapidly realised that something was amiss. This world was not perfect and this made Him sad. So Merin decided to create another Realm. A Realm that would be the opposite of the first one and that would make it complete (...). Thus was born the Realm of Water.

Once again He noticed that something was missing. So Merin created the first Realms of Earth and of Air (...).

Merin still wasn't satisfied. In order to reach perfection, His worlds would have to be peopled by beings endowed with intelligence and a conscience, beings with which He could converse. But Merin also knew that His creations could never rival Him as long as they were only fragments of His conscience. No discussion and no debate would last very long. So He decided to create beings that each embodied one and only one of the many principles that He was composed of (...). Thus were born the angels. Powerful and immortal, these new-borns quickly felt constrained in the worlds created by Merin.

So the One decided to build bridges between the closest Realms. Thus were born many other worlds that formed paths between the first Realms. For an infinity of eons Merin erred in these worlds, alone or accompanied by His first children (...).

Yet His task wasn't finished. His Creation still wasn't perfect. He had to build a more complete world. So He created Aarklash, a world based on a blend of the four Elements. This alchemy allowed the One to give

birth to new creatures that weren't elementals but made of flesh and blood. Thus Merin created numerous species. Some were gigantic, others tiny (...). One of them was given more attention than the others, for the One had created it in his image. This being was man.

Merin gave this species Conscience and Instinct, Wisdom and Desire, Vice and Virtue. And, because he was born alone and had to learn to mould his environment, the One gave man no other weapon but his mind. He learned to defend himself against wild animals and against nature. He learned and he multiplied.

Merin was happy; His first task was finally finished. So He went to sleep, leaving His children alone on Aarklash. He knew that the central continent, the heart of Creation, would become a land of hope and future for mankind. He also knew that he would wake up as soon as His children laid their feet on it, for this would be the sign of their maturity. The time would then have come for them to meet their maker (...).

Several angels felt rejected by Merin. Jealous of the love that their father bestowed upon His last born, some of them took advantage of His sleep to incarnate themselves among men. Their powers were such that they became heroes and they were worshipped like gods. Others stole some of the One's power and created new beings (...).

The angels that remained loyal to Merin also incarnated themselves in order to fight their fallen brethren. The gates to the other Realms were opened to let huge armies flood out. Aarklash was soon covered in blood. This was the beginning of the Age of Battles (...).

Since neither of the camps could glimpse victory, the renegades developed a terrifying ritual that would announce the coming of a new age. Its consequences were such that Merin's Light was eclipsed on many worlds. And the principle of Darkness emerged. New Realms were born. Aarklash remained at the centre of Creation, yet it was now made up of six elements,

“

“The enemies of Light will try all means to seduce and trick us; they will use all charms and all subterfuges to make us stray from the right path. We must never let ourselves be misled by beautiful promises. We must always remove the veil to be able to see beyond appearances.”

CODEx OF MERIN,
BOOK OF ARCAVIUS 20, 4

”

and no longer only four. The ritual had an unexpected consequence: it awakened Merin.

On seeing what His first children had done to His creation, the One became extremely angry. He banished the angels from Aarklash and imprisoned some of them in unfinished Realms.

His anger only calmed when He saw that His last born, mankind, was still walking on Aarklash. Some had succumbed to Darkness, but most of them had remained faithful to Light. And because they hadn't managed to conquer the central continent yet, Merin decided to wait. He built new Realms for His children.

Men crossed the seas, settled these new lands full of promise, and evolved (...). When they decided to name this new continent Aarklash, Merin knew that it was time to approach them. He saw that despite their exile some angels had managed to influence Aarklash's destiny, but He knew that mankind was mature enough to choose between Light and Darkness.

So the One began looking for a man capable of receiving knowledge and becoming His prophet.”

Excerpt from the Codex of Merin

THE PASSION OF ARCAVIUS

“Everyone knows the circumstances in which Arcavius met an angel for the first time: a hunting party, a bad fall from a horse, a charging boar, an angel of Fire saving the prophet from certain death before revealing his destiny to him. ‘You are the chosen one. You have been chosen by Merin. You have inherited His Knowledge. It is your reward and it shall be your burden.’

Few people know what happened then. On his return home, Arcavius refused to speak to anyone. He shut himself in his apartment and remained there for four days. Even his wife couldn't manage to make him come out. Cloistered in silence and in solitude, Arcavius thought about the angel of Fire's words over and over again.

His soul, his mind, every one of his organs and each part of his body were telling him that the creature had told him the truth, but why trust an angel of Fire when elemental beings were walking on Aarklash? Why accept a revelation that put into question other peoples' beliefs? And especially, why was he chosen, him, a Barhan lord? Why not have chosen the King or a great scholar? Why him, Arcavius de Sabran, who was feeling so tired?

In his great humility, he couldn't see why he was the chosen one. With his strong knowledge of charms and subterfuge, he preferred to remain wary, think, and seek the flaw in the angel's words.

He threw himself headlong into his books and studied the details of the Barhan religion and of Kelt and

THE DWARVEN HERESY

“I know that doubt has taken hold of you. I know that some of you fear that Merin has forgotten us. I can assure you that this is not true. It's not because the Akkylannians think that mankind is the One's chosen people that you must believe them! If I asked you to sacrifice one of your children, which one of you would be able to choose? Which one? Merin is like you. He loves all His children, but some, more than others, need to be reassured.

You think that I'm wrong because He has chosen his prophet among humans? Have you asked yourselves what would have happened had he chosen him among our race? Do you think He would have been able to accomplish the same things? The answer is no. Not due to lack of courage or lack of faith, but because men wouldn't have listened to him, and maybe they would even have killed him. If He chose a man, it's because He knew that we were wiser and that we would listen. The dwarven race is older than that of man; we were born on Aarklash! We are its guardians but we forgot this, just like we forgot Merin. And it is because of this oversight that Darkness has flooded onto Aarklash. But we shall no longer forget! The time has come for us to take back our rightful place and rekindle Merin's flame in our hearts!”

Speech made by Kahrel, provost of Merin, before a battle against the fiends of Mid-Nor



dwarven mythology. On the sixth day of his isolation, Arcavius understood that the angel couldn't have been lying to him. Everything fit together perfectly. The way it had recounted the creation of the world to him explained and justified it all. Unlike what he had thought, it didn't question his beliefs, but rather justified them. For a long time Arcavius had been asking himself how it was possible that the priests of the various religions could all call miracles. Now he had the answer: there was only one single god, Merin!"

The Confessions of Arcavius, by Zelios the Wise, Prime Alchemist and Grand Archivist of the Empire

"Arcavius wished that all the peoples of Aarklash hear the words of Merin. He wanted to unite them all under the banner of Light in order to send Darkness back to the void from where it should never have escaped. Arcavius died without being able to fulfil his mission, but his words didn't die with him. It is now up to us to continue his work and to transmit our faith, for this is what Arcavius wished for and this is what Merin wants.

If we should end up being alone and backed into a corner by the enemies of the faith, then we would fight, and if we should die, then so be it, but never, never shall we renounce the One, for Arcavius never renounced Him. For four days they tortured him and not once did I hear him shout. He used his last strength to burn my bonds so that I could bring you his last words.

If we can't rally the other peoples to our cause, then we shall impose Merin's will onto them by using force..."

Speech made by Jen during the mass held after the announcement of Arcavius's death



DIRZ THE HERESIARCH

Before Dirz's heresy there was an order of scientist-priests in Akkylannie called the *alchemists of Merin*. These academics had been taught in the best universities of Akkylannie and their studies included medicine and biology as well as architecture and mathematics. Of course, being clerics, they also received a most complete religious education. Yet in the end the only thing they had in common with priests was their title. They didn't officiate in churches or in temples and they didn't preach among the masses.

Directed by the Prime Alchemist, who was elected by a council of venerable Akkylannians (the Emperor, the Pope, some prelates and several academics), the alchemists of Merin had the task of doing research in all possible fields in order to "raise" Akkylannie. They notably were the source of many decoctions, of innovations in the fields of naval construction and architecture, as well as of the discovery of akkyl, the famous alloy that makes Griffin weapons incomparably strong and light.

A FIRST TRIAL

The Arcavian is the first daily newspaper to have been established in Akkylannie (and is the only one to have lasted). The following article was published at a time (673) when the Inquisition didn't exist yet.

"The Prime Alchemist accused of heresy!"

The day before yesterday, at nightfall, a priest and three thallions in the service of the See of Internal Affairs burst into the Prime Alchemist's laboratory.

After a search whose brutality was testified to by many witnesses, Cardinal Lazarus's men took Maldegen Dirz and two of his assistants with them for questioning.

Yesterday morning the See of Internal Affairs announced that the Prime Alchemist has been placed under arrest for heresy. No explanation was given concerning the nature of the aforementioned heresy or the charges being held against Maldegen Dirz. This isn't the first time that Cardinal Lazarus uses methods like these, but it seems intolerable to us that he should be able to treat one of our greatest fellow citizens like a common criminal.

Let us remind that Maldegen Dirz made himself noticed for the first time at the age of 11, when he showed that most of the diseases that were rife in Carthag Fero were caused by a flaw in the wastewater treatment system and suggested a simple and inexpensive solution to decontaminate the sewers. At the age of 22, after brilliant studies and many discoveries in the field of remedies, he was named alchemist of the Empire, and three years later he was elected Prime Alchemist. More recently, we have him

to thank for having allowed us to avoid the famine of 671. Furthermore, his knowledge of poisons let the Emperor be saved in the same year. Maldegen Dirz is of those who make the greatness of our nation and the radiance of our faith.

While remaining convinced that this case will be quickly closed, we would again like to express our worries as to the ease with which the See of Internal Affairs allows itself to make such accusations."

Excerpt from The Arcavian

The Arcavian is not the only newspaper to have covered the Heresiarch's trial. *The Prophet's Gazette* is written by preachers. It was founded in the year 603 for the Empire's 30th anniversary. Unlike *The Arcavian*, it is distributed all over Akkylannie and even at Kaiber and in the regions where the four cardinal temples are located. Its political orientation has often changed over time: sometimes pro-Pope and critical of the Emperor, sometimes pro-Emperor and critical of the Pope. This newspaper has even been very virulent towards the Inquisition. Today it is controlled by the latter, yet it remains an excellent reflection of Akkylannian society.

"Opening of the Dirz trial: the See of Internal Affairs calls for the stake!"

(...) The prosecution has brought forth two pieces of evidence found in the Prime Alchemist's laboratory: a large quantity of gems of Darkness and notes that clearly indicate the defendant's will to 'vanquish death.' The arguments used by the prosecution weren't very surprising considering the nature of these elements (...).

Though the question of death has been debated frequently within the Church, the Prophet has never officially expressed himself on this subject. Nevertheless, the thoughts of Zelios in *The Confessions of Arcavius* clearly indicate that physical death isn't an end in itself. Thus, attempting to vanquish death is going against the natural cycle of things, and therefore against the will of the One.

In the end, it is especially the combination of these two elements that makes a worrisome shadow hover over the path taken by the Prime Alchemist, for even though he defends himself by claiming that 'if Merin gave us intelligence, logic and rigour, then it is to make use of them,' he forgets that these gifts allow us above all to discern between Good and Evil and to know when or where to stop. In other words, it isn't because we can do something that we must do it... and that is exactly what defines conscience and differentiates us from wild animals."

Excerpt from The Prophet's Gazette

THE ALCOVES OF POWER

The following conversation took place in 676 between Pope Demetrius and Cardinal Lazarus.

"Demetrius, you know very well that when he created the See, Jen himself wished to give it more powers."

"Of course, my friend, but he also feared that the people disapprove of such an organisation and, in the end, become less... docile."

"Times have changed, Very Holy Father. Today our Empire is solid. The people can understand. And anyway, we just need one case of heresy at the highest levels for them to fully support us."

"Are you still thinking of Maldegen? I don't know why you hate him so much, but he has already proven his innocence to all. If you attack him again and fail..."

"I won't fail. He still uses Darkness for his experiments, and even the Emperor is worried about his work. Dirz has great influence in the countryside ever since he eradicated the bovine pest, and many parents believe that without him their children would have died from one sickness or another. A dozen reports filed by preachers indicate that medals in Dirz's effigy have been made to protect from bad luck. A priest has supposedly even ordered a statue of him for his church!"

"I know all that. But you are alone in this affair. If you fail, then you will be the one to end up on the stake. Condemning Dirz because people take him for a saint would only fire up passions... and hatreds. As for the use of gems of Darkness, you already know his argumentation; it cannot be countered by the writs."

"I can prove his connections to the Black Togas."

"If you manage to do so... But I'm not sure that the people have heard of the Black Togas. They don't know what's going on in Acheron."

"We'll just have to inform them. I'm having a meeting with the editor of The Prophet's Gazette this week. I'll let him know a thing or two."

"Maybe you're right. I'll see what the Emperor thinks. After all, with all that's happening at Kaiber, the imperial army is lacking men to ensure internal security."

The Prime Alchemist declared innocent

"The See of Internal Affairs' false accusations haven't fooled the magistrates of the Order of Just Punishment who have declared the Prime Alchemist 'innocent of the crime of heresy.' As we suspected, Cardinal Lazarus wasn't able to prove any illicit use of gems of Darkness by Maldegen Dirz, and the latter defended himself perfectly by reminding that the Prophet himself was a great scientist and a great inventor (...).

We can only express our joy for Maldegen Dirz, his family and his close friends, as well as our deep respect for the Order of Just Punishment. There truly is justice in Akkylannie."

Excerpt from The Arcavian

A SECOND TRIAL

"Dirz again a heretic!"

Three years after having been nonsuited by the Grand Tribunal of Arcavia, and taking advantage of its new powers, the See of Internal Affairs, recently renamed the Inquisition, is attacking the Prime Alchemist once again. Even though the direct accuser is not Cardinal Lazarus this time, we aren't fooled as to his role of grand organiser in this new affair and we hope that he catches the disease for which the Prime Alchemist has been actively looking for a cure for several months now."

Excerpt from The Arcavian

The following imperial decree was signed by the Emperor and the Pope in 676.

"Taking into consideration the rise of acts of banditry, I, Octave the Second, Emperor of Akkylannie, in agreement with Pope Demetrius, authorise the granting of new powers to the See of Internal Affairs and rename it, from this day on, the *Inquisition*.

The Inquisition keeps the personnel and the possessions belonging to the See of Internal Affairs. In respect of our laws and conform to its previous status, it answers to the Pope and only to him.

The priority of its agents, named inquisitors, is to arrest and judge the enemies of the faith, notably traitors and spies in the service of enemy powers. The inquisitors can also treat common law crimes if no magistrate of the Order of Just Punishment is able to intervene.

The inquisitors will be assisted in their task by the thallions. From now on the latter are bound to the Inquisition and no longer to the Church. Furthermore, they must aid the magistrates of the Just Punishment wherever and whenever they solicit their help, notably in cases of serious breach of the peace.

The inquisitors can, moreover, requisition conscripts when required by the circumstances.

“

"The cycle of birth and death is the only immutable thing in Creation."

"And what if Merin had given the gift of clairvoyance to Arcavius not to guide us, but to let us avoid our extinction?"

"Power is nothing as long as we remain mortal."

NOTES BY MALDEGEN DIRZ

”

And finally, the priests, though they remain the official representatives of the Church in their parish, must give any help they can to the inquisitors."

"The Dirz Affair: heresy takes hold of Arcavia's streets

'They want to kill the new prophet!' This is the kind of blasphemy that could be read on the banners carried by the partisans of Dirz in front of the hall where his trial began. The latter had to take place in camera following clashes between the thallions in charge of the tribunal's security and the followers of the one who is already nicknamed 'the Anathema.'

Dirz's discoveries have earned him the sympathy of many Akkylannians, but what we witnessed this week didn't just look like sympathy, but rather like true fanaticism. An inquisitor was beaten and left for dead in his own house, several churches have been vandalised and covered with injurious inscriptions aimed at the Pope and the Grand Inquisitor. (...)

During the first weeks of the trial, the Inquisition insisted on proving that Maldegen Dirz maintained suspicious relations with the Black Togas, the order of the necromancers of Acheron. The accused contented himself with defending himself in the same way as in his first trial."

Excerpt from The Prophet's Gazette

"The Inquisition and the Army responsible for the massacre in Arcavia

'The day that men replace faith with ambition and preaching with oppression, the world will fall into darkness.' Thus spoke the Prophet. Yesterday marked the beginning of what will probably be one of the darkest periods in our History. Not only was the Prime Alchemist condemned to death for heresy, but also our highest institutions made themselves guilty of a horrendous massacre.

After the verdict was announced, the crowd that was gathered in front of the tribunal since the start of the trial broke through the lines of thallions to express its discontent. The inquisitors then ordered their elite troops as well as the fusiliers of the Imperial Army positioned around the square to retaliate.

Panic took hold of the crowd as soon as the first shots rang out. A large part of the crowd ended up being trapped in the courthouse. The thallions, who were supposed to ensure security, decided to have the courthouse evacuated using force and struck at random. This blind violence pushed the demonstrators to defend themselves. Those who managed to escape returned armed with makeshift weapons to help their trapped companions. That's when ferocious beasts - dogs and wildcats according to eyewitnesses - were released at the crowd by the Inquisition...

While these lines are being written, street combat is still being fought and the Imperial Army is divided on how to proceed to re-establish order. The number of victims is unknown, but there are supposedly at least 20 casualties and several dozen critically wounded victims.

And finally, and this is the only good news that we have to report, the Prime Alchemist is said to have escaped the tribunal during the first hours of the confrontations."

Excerpt from The Arcavian

"The Heresiarch has shown his true face

Loyalists of the Anathema then released ferocious creatures, described as being enormous fleshless dogs, wolves or wildcats, at the thallions in charge of the place's security. The panic thus caused allowed the heretics to push a part of the crowd to break through the barriers and enter the tribunal. The Heresiarch then used the human tide like a shield to cover his escape.

The sad toll of this massacre is of 36 dead, among which there are two inquisitors, two magistrates, eight thallions and six conscripts of the Imperial Army."

Excerpt from The Prophet's Gazette



"The Arcavian condemned!

Following its shameful and heretical campaign against the Inquisition, *The Arcavian* was condemned for slandering Grand Inquisitor Lazarus and for repeated and abusive use of the term 'prophet.'

Its publication is suspended while awaiting the appointment of new editors by the Emperor. A public trial will determine the responsibility of those implicated in this affair."

Excerpt from The Prophet's Gazette

A year after the "Dirz affair," *The Arcavian* is again published with a team of new editors. Akkylannian archives hold no information on trials concerning the previous editors.

"Carthag Fero: another massacre by the Heresiarch!

Twenty-three dead and 72 injured: that is the sad toll of the slaughter caused by the Heresiarch only 25 days after the one in Arcavia. Indeed, Dirz and his disciples have managed to cross the roadblocks set up by the Inquisition. (...)

The testimony is the same as that of the massacre of Arcavia. Monstrous, fleshless creatures appeared from nowhere and attacked everything within their reach. Taking advantage of the confusion, the heretics made their way to the port where they set several ships ablaze before fleeing aboard a vessel.

Cardinal Lazarus announced that Dirz's escape had been planned a long time in advance and that he must have had accomplices in the highest ranks of the Imperial Army and the Church. An investigation has been opened in order to unmask his loyalists.

The Grand Inquisitor has added: 'An expedition will soon be sent in pursuit of the Heresiarch. We cannot permit such an affront while our soldiers are dying by the dozens at Kaïber to defend our freedoms!'"

Excerpt from The Prophet's Gazette

**KALISHAA
NADA SHAKARE**

The following documents currently lie in the secret archives of the Temple. Only a few old templar copyists have access to this information.

"I inform you that so far our search for Arcavius's tomb has been in vain. I personally travelled to the cave in which my sister claims to have seen the Prophet's body, but we didn't find anything: neither lake nor altar... and no trace of Arcavius.

I am aware that my judgement may be blurred by the family bonds that bind me to Mirà, but I remain convinced that she really saw what she claims to have seen.

I am equally convinced that she didn't take the sword Hauteclaire by chance; the conjunction of events is too troubling to be a simple coincidence.

I know that this doesn't make her act any more legitimate, and I also know that she will have to answer to the order's authorities.

Non nobis domine non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam."

Letter/report by Commander Arkhos to Proteus, Grand Master of the Temple (1002)

The following document is held by the commander of the Temple of the East. A copy has been transmitted by Arkhos to the Grand Master.

"As you ordered us, we escorted Saphon throughout all his research. You are surely already aware that he failed to find anything concrete, though he remains convinced of having found the tomb's location. A troubling coincidence is that the cave in question is one of those that we searched last week.

I must also report an incident with the sarkai orcs.

When we came back out of the aforementioned cave, we ended up face to face with group of orcs that was blocking the entrance. Of course my men immediately sheathed their weapons and raised their palms to chest level as a sign of peace, as they have been taught. But Saphon aimed his rifle at the shaman. Before I even gave them the order, two templars blocked and disarmed him. But unfortunately a shot rang out.

The orcs became menacing. I tried to calm them, but was unable to do so due to lack of mastery of their language. Yet the shaman knew a bit of our language and demanded that I hand over the 'anger-man.' I refused categorically while continuing to excuse myself for Saphon's attitude.

In the end the shaman agreed to let us go, but I had to promise him that in the future no man would enter this cave without his permission. He also asked me to

salute the *Calisha nada chacare*. I'm not sure about the spelling, but I was very careful to remember the sounds. I don't know what this means, yet I hope to find out so I can keep my promise.

Saphon will surely ask the Temple for explanations. I take all responsibility for the actions of my men. I didn't order them to act in this way, but I would have done so had I noticed the threat that the Preacher's hostile behaviour represented. What more, had my men not acted so swiftly, then combat would have been unavoidable and our efforts to pacify the region would have gone up in smoke.

Non nobis domine non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam."

Letter/report by templar Quintus Tiro to Commander Arkhos (19/07/1002).

A copy of the following document was made for Grand Master Proteus.

"Subject: translation and meaning of the words 'calisha nada chacare.'

The term *Calisha* is surely *Kalisha*, derived from *Kalish*, which means 'man,' in the sense of 'belonging to the human race.' In reality the term is translated by 'hairy man.' *Kalisha* is the feminine, thus meaning 'woman' in the sense of 'female of the human race.'

Chacare is a reference to *Shakar*, jackal, the thing they worship like a god. Their priests are the *Shakas*, and *Shakamalog* is one of their celebrated heroes... The term is sometimes used for climatic events attributed to jackal. Thus, a storm is called *Shakari* and lighting is called *Urshakar*. And finally, one must understand that the ending in *-e* can indicate an adjective, which would here be associated with *nada*.

Nada means 'what is above' or 'what is high up,' it is the term used both for 'roof' and for 'sky.' So *nada shakare* can mean 'stormy sky.' This could be translated by 'that which is above jackal,' yet this is highly unlikely. I have never heard of someone or something that is above jackal in the beliefs of the orcs.

In my humble opinion, *kalisha nada shakare* should be translated by 'the woman who is like a stormy sky.'

Report by the scholar Valius to Commander Arkhos

The Grand Master recommended Arkhos to burn the following letter.

"Commander,
I would like to congratulate you for your handling of Saphon the Preacher. This comforts me in my having

placed you at the head of the Commandery of the East.

You have known to calm his anger while remaining firm. As you have surely expected, he demanded that you be removed from your functions and judged by a tribunal of the Inquisition. I obviously refused and threatened to have him appear before the Just Punishment for having abused of his prerogatives. I have also informed the Emperor and the Pope of this incident, which should protect us from future annoyances of the kind.

And finally, I thank you for the information on *kalisha nada shakare*. I was sure that she hadn't told me everything."

Letter from Grand Master Proteus to Commander Arkhos (Summer 1002).

A BIT OF ORCISH LINGUISTICS

Valius's translation is fairly close to the true meaning. He has logically translated *kalisha* as "woman," but for the orcs the term also conjures the idea of hair on the head, so that in reality *kalisha nada shakare* means "woman who has hair of stormy sky (colour)."

In addition, the exact term used by the orcs isn't *kalisha* but rather *kalishaa*, which means "young woman" or "girl." *The girl with stormy sky coloured hair* is how the orcs have named Mirà the Reckless.





THE GIRL WITH STORMY SKY HAIR

How long ago had she left the commandery? One or two hours? Maybe less. Or maybe a lot more. Arkhos must have been furious, but he would forgive her... as always. What she was doing was more important.

Mirà was trying to gather her thoughts. Everything was red and ochre as far as the eye could see. In Bran-Ô-Kor everything looked the same. She must have been lost. Where was this darn crevasse? She saw a high rocky mound that she could climb and started walking towards it.

Lahn and Jackal's Eyes were high in the sky and burned her face. The dust parched her throat. Her fingers hurt from tightly gripping Hauteclair. For hours on end. Her armour, which was too heavy for this type of expedition, put a lot of strain on her back. The templars' equipment was decidedly not designed for women.

Mirà sensed that she was being watched. By whom? The orcs? No, they had given her water and food. She had left them at sunrise while they were still asleep.

A rock rolled on the ground right behind her. Mirà instinctively spun around, on her guard. Just in time. A blade crashed down heavily onto Hauteclair. Without thinking, she mechanically performed the movements that she had practised so often. High parry, lunge, redoublement... Her opponent managed to deviate the blow, but Hauteclair's blade nevertheless cut him in the thigh. He cried out. Or rather, she cried out. A woman?

A second of distraction, a second too many. The attacker took advantage of it to strike her in the face with the pommel of her sword. Mirà collapsed, her head spinning and blood flowing into her eyes. Her opponent threw her hood back and rushed at her. With a last effort Mirà thrust her arm forward. The shock of the impact ran down the sword all the way to her shoulder. She thought she saw blue hair and then felt a weight crash down onto her body. Her

opponent had impaled herself on Hauteclair. Mirà passed out.

When she woke up she was alone. The only signs of the battle were the blood on her blade and on her face, and a deep cut... in her thigh.

The old orc stopped gazing at his tribe's totem and turned to his eldest son.

"Listen, son, I'm going to tell you the story of *kalishaa nada shakare*. Like all those of her race, she was proud and impetuous.

One night she managed to take a *sarkai* patrol by surprise. She was alone, but the blade of her sword was as hot as her temper. The warriors were sitting around a fire. Since she didn't have the odour of those-of-the-desert, they presented their palms and gazed steadily at her. They could see her fear as well as her determination. Slowly she advanced towards them. And when she was illuminated by the fire, they understood that she wasn't there by coincidence. Her hair was a dark blue colour, the colour of a stormy sky. Jackal had sent her, no doubt because he knew that the *Sarkai* had made a peace deal with those-whose-armour-shines. A different tribe would probably have killed her."

"She was also of those-whose-armour-shines?"

"Yes, but she was the first *kalishaa* that ever came to our lands. The warriors decided to lead her to the shaman. But the *kalishaa nada shakare* was wild and they first had to coax her by giving her water and berguagna roots. The shaman spoke with her for a long time, and, because he was the only one to understand her language, all I know about their conversation is what he was willing to tell us. We already knew that those-whose-armour-shines were seeking the tomb of one of their heroes who fell somewhere in Bran-Ô-Kor. The *kalishaa* thought she knew exactly where this hero was lying. She described a place that the shaman recognised: the cave-of-the-dead-man."

"He's her people's hero?"

"No doubt, but let me finish. As you know, the *shakas* avoid this place because of the bad visions that it causes. The shaman therefore tried to discourage the *kalishaa nada shakare*, but she was stubborn and it was obvious that she was going to go there, with or without our help. That's when the shaman understood why Jackal had led this human woman to the tribe. The orcs were supposed to open the gates between the worlds for her. So, for the first time a human tasted the potion of the *shakas*, the *shakar-ô-sar*, but the shaman didn't tell her what it was. As soon as she was in a trance three warriors carried her to the cave-of-the-dead-man."

"And what did she see during the trance?"

"That's her secret, my son. Later on the watcher heard horsemen approaching and, since they were of those-whose-armour-shines, the warriors left the

kalishaa nada shakare. We never saw her again, but those of her people have returned several times to the cave-of-the-dead-man. I don't know exactly what they're looking for, but they'll never find it."

"Why not?"

"Because they don't have the right key."

Mirà got up and began climbing the rocky mound. Ten minutes later she was on top. She scanned the surroundings and found what she was seeking: the famous cave from which a pure light appeared. She made her way towards it, more determined than ever.

In the distance Mirà heard the thunder of hoofs hitting the dry soil of Bran-Ô-Kor. She was still being followed. She rushed into the shadows of a crevasse.

She felt her way through the darkness. Jagged rocks cut her hand and legs. Far away she could hear the horsemen. They shouted, "*kalishaa nada shakare!*" Why didn't they follow her? No, she shouldn't think about it. She had to move on. She was no longer very far. She could feel it in her soul. It was here, just after the darkness.

The passage opened up into a wide cave whose ceiling was pierced with several holes through which shone beams of light, giving the place a strange and magical atmosphere. A sacred atmosphere.

In the middle of the cave was a small lake surrounding an islet on which a rectangular stone was raised. Mirà waded through the water and approached the altar. The body of a man was lying on the stone. Holding her breath, Mirà placed her hand on the prophet's chest.

"My men told me that when they found you, the first thing you said was that you wished to speak to me. About what?"

"I have discovered Arcavius's tomb! I can show you where it is!"

"What do you mean?"

"I saw his body lying in a cave!"

"Let's start at the beginning. You disappeared from the Commandery of the East... Start by telling me why."

"During a patrol I saw a strange light coming from a crevasse. I can't explain why or how, but it felt like a call coming from this cave. I fled from the commandery to answer this call. I searched for the crevasse and ended up finding it."

"You disappeared for a whole day."

"Yes, I got lost. I didn't have any water and I think that I fainted."

"And then what did you do?"

"In the cave there was an altar. And he was there... The Prophet's body was lying on the altar. He looked

very peaceful... I neared him and placed my hand on his chest. I don't know why I did it, but I felt that it was what I had to do..."

"Go on."

"I wasn't really there, yet I felt, heard and saw everything. Arcavius and Jen were arguing. Actually, Jen was criticising Arcavius for not wanting to return to Akkylannie."

"This Jen, he was Jen I?"

"Yes, the first Pope of the Empire. I recognised him from the paintings in the University."

"Go on."

"They didn't agree with each other. Jen thought that Arcavius should return to Akkylannie to guide us. But Arcavius wanted to continue on his way and spread Merin's word all over Aarklash."

"So he left him in the cave?"

"No, he simply returned close to the fire and lay down. Then Jen came out from the shadows. He was holding a knife and he... he..."

"He threatened the Prophet?"

"No..."

Mirà found herself at the mouth of a cave. The only source of light was a campfire around which two men were sleeping. Mirà got nearer to the flames. Strangely, they didn't seem to radiate any heat. She thrust her hand into them... No burns. While she was wondering about this her attention was caught by voices coming from the back of the cave. She advanced towards them.

Two men were speaking. One of them seemed to be scolding the other. Mirà got nearer until she could make out their faces. She recognised them. In front of her were standing Jen, the first Pope of the Church of Merin, and Arcavius, the Prophet himself.

"Until where do you want to go, Arcavius? You have created a new nation, an Empire! Now it has to be governed. You know that a people without a guide declines faster than a twig burns."

"That's not my problem."

"Really? You trampled their beliefs and tore them from their people! You led them to where they are now and you think that this no longer concerns you? You always say that we should never let ourselves be misled by sweet words and beautiful attire, but what have you done differently? What have you done except for seducing and abandoning them?"

"I'm just a guide, not a chief."

"Well, then guide them!"

"You should stop shouting, you'll wake the others."

"The others? Now you worry about them? They have been worrying for weeks. They are worrying about you. They're wondering where their Prophet is. You must speak to them."

"To tell them what?"

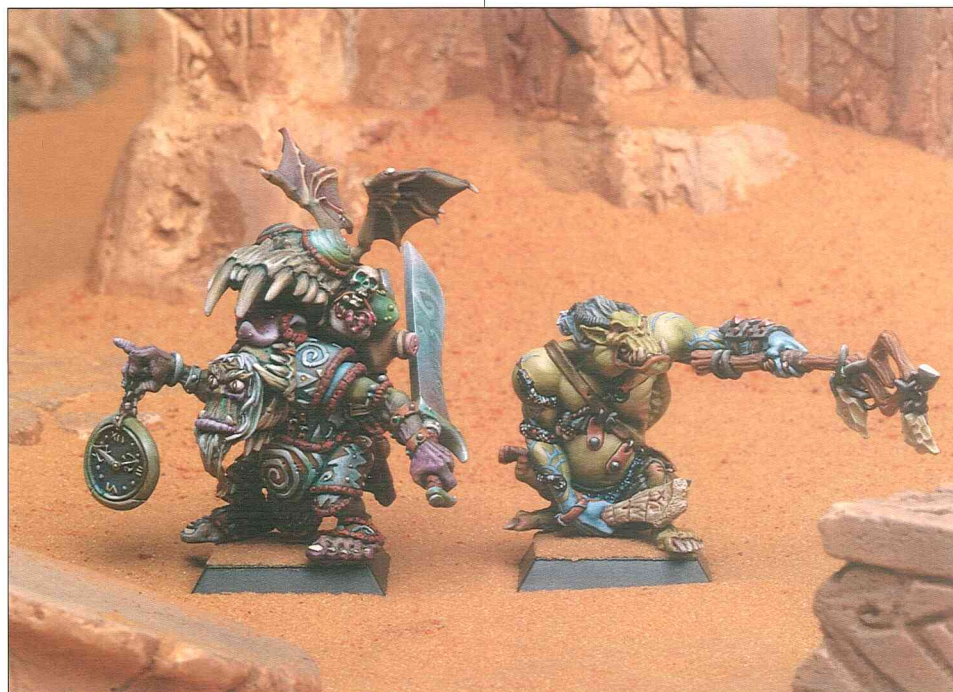
"In the name of Merin, stop! We wandered in a desert of sand for four months and now are wandering in this desert of rocks... There's no one here. You want to speak to this red rock? Go ahead, talk to it, it's right there! We have crossed the plains of Avagddu, we went to No-Dan-Kar and to the Aegis Mountains. We have been all over Aarklash. Where do you want to go now?"

"When will you understand that I will go wherever there are conscious beings? And when I'm finished

Mirà was thinking. What she had just told the Grand Master of the Temple had sealed her fate. Proteus took a deep breath before taking his decision.

"Are you aware of what you are saying?"

"Yes, Master. Jen lied. Arcavius and his companions were never taken prisoner. The Church is built on a lie..."



with this world, then I'll go to others. I'll cross worlds of Fire and those of Earth! And when I'm done with the Elemental Realms, I'll go to the deepest corners of Creation... And I'll flood Darkness with His Light!"

Tears were streaming down Jen's cheeks.

"You don't know what you're saying. We must return to our land. You mustn't abandon us now. Your people are waiting for you. You must carry on guiding them. Let's go back, I'm begging you."

Arcavius's tone became harsh and irrevocable.

"I don't owe them anything. I didn't open their eyes just to imprison them. If you want to go back, go ahead, you're free to do as you like. I won't hold you back, Jen, go ahead, leave! Leave while you still have the strength to do so!"

Arcavius began to move away. Jen tried to hold him back, fell to his knees and grabbed the Prophet by his clothes. The latter pushed him away without consideration.

Back to the fire. Three shapes are lying on the ground around it. A shadow approaches them from the back of the cave. The screech of metal, a flash of light. One, two, three stabs of a dagger. Three stabs and three corpses.

Jen was now alone, and he was crying.

"Only if what you say is the truth. What you saw may have been an hallucination caused by a sunstroke. Who have you told this to?"

"No one, Master."

"Good. Don't tell anyone about this, not even your brother... One last thing, Mirà. What happened with the orcs?"

"Orcs? What..."

"The report says that when my men found you, you were tightly gripping a small pouch of 'typical trinkets.'"

"Er, yes, they gave me food and water."

"Is that all? You didn't speak to them?"

"No, Master, I don't speak a word of their language and they don't know a word of ours."

"Very well. You may leave now, that'll be all. Tomorrow you will have another talk with Venerable Ambrosius."

"Thank you, Master. Am I to understand that you won't report me to..."

"It's he who will decide if we should hand you over to the Inquisition. Guards! Escort this lady to her quarters and keep watch in front of her door."

THE
BROTHERS OF**KASHem**

The dates are not very precise, but it seems that, according to the company's chronicles, the Brothers of Kashem saw the light of day around the year 700. At the time, a bit more than 30 years after the discovery of Dirz's heresy, Emperor Silkar, prodded on by Pope Demetrius to hunt down heretics, set up a punitive expedition to be sent to Syharhalna.

Until then the Akkylannians knew only the city of Tarsith, in the south of the desert. Yet no military operation had ever been led against it, a big part of the imperial army being mobilised at Kaïber to contain the forces of Darkness. New information would, however, push the Emperor to act without waiting. His spies had reported the discovery of a second city to the north of Tarsith. This city, named Shamir, was growing at disquieting speed. According to the agents, the ziggurat rising at its centre already reached an incredible height.

Worried at seeing the disciples of Dirz enlarge their domain so quickly when he thought them prisoners of the desert, Silkar decided to call back a part of his army to put an end to the Syhars' expansionist impulses.

Four cohorts of the 3rd Legion, 2400 soldiers under the command of Deacon Ephites, were ordered to move towards the port of Kilaë. Once they were there, they embarked onto transport galleys. To the Akkylannian war-staff this expeditionary corps seemed to be more than strong enough, for no major military force had been reported in the vicinity of Shamir.

After a difficult crossing troubled by storms that caused the loss of several vessels, the fleet landed at about 100 kilometres to the east of Shamir. A fortified camp was set up, which would be their rear base. Then around 1800 legionaries began marching towards Shamir with Ephites leading them.

After six days of an exhausting march through the desert, the Akkylannian troops came into sight of the alchemical tower.

The city itself was only at an embryonic stage and it wasn't protected by any real kind of fortifications. Ephites was, however, concerned about the tower. The scouts that were sent ahead in reconnaissance had confirmed that no strong opposition could be seen... Yet who could tell for certain how many soldiers might be hidden in the tower? Ephites prudently decided to test the city's defences without exposing his men beyond reason.

The next day at sunrise a group of 300 lightly equipped veterans launched an assault on one of the construction sites around the city. Five hundred more legionaries followed this vanguard at a good

THE BROTHERS OF KASHem ARE ONE OF THE ELDEST COMPANIES OF MERCENARIES OF THE CONTINENT OF DARKLASH. FOUNDED 300 YEARS AGO BY AKKYLANNIAN LEGIONARIES, IT HAS EARNED ITSELF A SOLID REPUTATION THAT PRECEDES THEM TO WHEREVER THEIR MISSIONS LEAD THEM.

distance. The rest of the forces remained hidden at an easily defensible position in case of an enemy counterattack.

Taken completely by surprise, the workers were cut to pieces by the legionaries. The Syhars' reaction

legionaries' camp. A bit before dawn, terrifying cries had been heard coming from the tower, splitting the silence of the desert. These cries weren't human at all and instilled a pernicious fear in the hearts of the Emperor's soldiers.

He also being affected by his men's fears, Ephites had makeshift fortifications raised between his camp and the tower to guard against any breakout attempt by the besieged. The day was punctuated by more and more atrocious cries that were barely drowned out by the noise of the fortifications' construction. As dusk neared, Ephites had the watch strengthened, but no man was able to sleep that night.

At the darkest part of the night the tower's gates opened.

The legionaries, who had all the same fought the undead at Kaïber, saw monstrosities rush at them whose existence they could never have imagined, not even in their worst nightmares. These creatures were twice as big and massive as the Wolfen and so deformed that they looked like they came from another world. Unaware that these were the technomancers' first creations (clones called Xeneths whose genotype later gave birth to the monstrous Arteths), the Akkylannians thought that the heretics had made a pact with the demons.

But the soldiers' faith held strong and they courageously fought this horrendous enemy. Yet their bravery and abnegation weren't enough and each creature that was killed took 20 legionaries with it to the grave.

Faced with such a massacre, Ephites had to admit the obvious: even if his men managed to vanquish these monsters, they would no longer be numerous enough to resist a breakout by the Syhars. With a heavy heart he sounded the retreat. The 1st and the 3rd Cohorts regrouped; the 2nd one was charged with covering the retreat and ordered to withdraw from combat as soon as possible.

Unfortunately this was never possible. Deprived of their brothers' support, the legionaries slowly lost the advantage of outnumbering their opponents and were slaughtered to the last man. Their sacrifice nevertheless allowed their companions to get a small head start. But the Xeneths weren't about to let them get away. Hungering for blood and carnage, some killed

« May I die for
my brother. »

Motto of the
Brothers of Kashem

came quickly. About 600 armed men appeared from the tower and engaged the assailants. Right away, the vanguard withdrew from the engagement and fell back towards the first line of support. Confronted with opponents who were more numerous than they thought, the Syhars broke off their pursuit and turned back. Ephites then attacked again, this time with 800 legionaries. Demoralised, the defenders only resisted weakly and then retreated to the tower.

Convinced that these 600 Syhar warriors were the only garrison protecting Shamir, Ephites established their positions at the foot of the tower. He didn't like the idea of a siege very much. However, the surrounding construction sites provided an advantageous terrain for this type of operation. His men found the workers' food reserves and the buildings that were already finished provided good shelter and protection from the blazing sun and the chilly nights.

The first night went by without any incidents, but in the morning worried whispers ran through the

each other, yet the others went into hot pursuit of the Akkylannians.

For three days and three nights Merin's soldiers advanced in a forced march to reach their vessels. Once in a while they were caught up with by a creature that was faster than the others and lost some more of their men before finishing off the Xeneth.

When they reached their fortified camp, the legionaries were no more than 500. Ephites gave the order to immediately prepare the vessels and assigned three centuries of the 3rd Cohort to defend the fort. While the troops were embarking, the soldiers had to push back the fierce assaults of the Xeneths and many of them met death at the claws and fangs of these monsters. Yet they held fast and were getting ready to join their brothers aboard the galleys when other ships appeared in the distance.

From his vessel's bridge Ephites recognised the massive shape of Syhar war galleys. In just a few seconds the deacon gauged the situation. His own vessels weren't armed for naval warfare and if he gave the last legionaries the time to embark, then the enemy galleys would surely catch up with them. For the second

time in this disastrous campaign Ephites was forced to abandon his soldiers. While the legionaries who were still battling the last Xeneths looked on in disbelief, the imperial vessels raised anchor and sailed away.

Realising that they would soon be attacked from behind from the shore if they remained in the fort, the survivors of the 3rd Cohort doubled their ardour and managed to escape the claws of the Xeneths at a great price. By the time the enemy vessels landed they had already retraced their tracks towards the west, praying Merin that the garrison from Shamir hadn't followed them.

Exhausted but carried by their faith in Merin, they marched on and on, only to rest when they were sure that they were not being pursued. A long journey then began for these survivors of hell.

Lost in the sands of Syharhalna, they avoided Shamir and were soon blocked by a river. They followed the river's flow towards the south and travelled for whole weeks, using the scarce resources provided by the river and the surrounding vegetation.

They then reached a confluence and travelled up the other river towards the northwest for nearly two

months. They then marched around a mountain chain and ended up reaching the Migol Sea.

By following the coast towards the north they reached the location of the present-day port of Kashem. By this time they were less than 100, extremely exhausted and famished. Further to the north the arid and hostile lands of Bran-Ô-Kor awaited them... Yet by fate, or by luck, the site of Kashem was inhabited by a human community.

The first chronicles of the Brothers of Kashem go back to this encounter. Though the original manuscripts were lost or destroyed, the consecutive chroniclers always took the time to make copies so that their history is never forgotten.

The following text is an excerpt from the book of Arios, the company's first chronicler.

I wouldn't be able to describe what the discovery of this village made us feel. After walking along the river for weeks we had reached the end of our strength. If the natives had been hostile, I don't think we would have been able to stand up to them. They were only



fishermen, yet we could barely walk, let alone defend ourselves.

These people were welcoming and even showed a surprising absence of mistrust towards strangers in arms. They provided us with food and clothes, treated our wounded, and housed us in buildings that seemed to have been built in a different age.

I have spoken of a village, yet this term is not fitting. Though this community isn't very big – no more than 300 people – the buildings have nothing in common with those of a village as we usually expect them to be. The natives occupy the site of an ancient city that can shelter a hundred times more inhabitants.

At the centre of these vestiges rises an imposing structure that is about 20 metres tall and surrounded by a vast square on which at least 3000 people would be able to gather. Around this square there are several buildings of smaller size yet bigger than simple houses. Some look like temples, others could be military caserns. It's in the latter that our hosts put us up. Most of the surrounding buildings are not occupied. Most of the villagers live by the shore, and the port is the only facility that is truly maintained.

Communicating with the fishermen isn't easy. They don't speak any known language and theirs doesn't even seem to be derived from the dialects generally used by the Kelt clans. They call themselves "Ishim're"

and the man who seems to be their chief, though his fellow villagers don't show him any kind deference, is named "Asraa." From what I gathered, the city bears the name of "Kashem." Despite the language barrier, our hosts show utmost benevolence toward us. We are free to go wherever we wish, but being the last officer alive, I have forbidden the men from entering the temples and the mausoleum. We don't know yet what lies there and it could be seen as a profanation.

[...]

Today I noticed something strange. It didn't strike me on our arrival, but now it intrigues me. All the buildings around those that we occupy are abandoned. Vegetation grows outside as well as inside of them. Ours, on the other hand, though they are just as far from the quarter inhabited by the fishermen, have been maintained with great care and seem to have been ready to accommodate us even before our arrival.

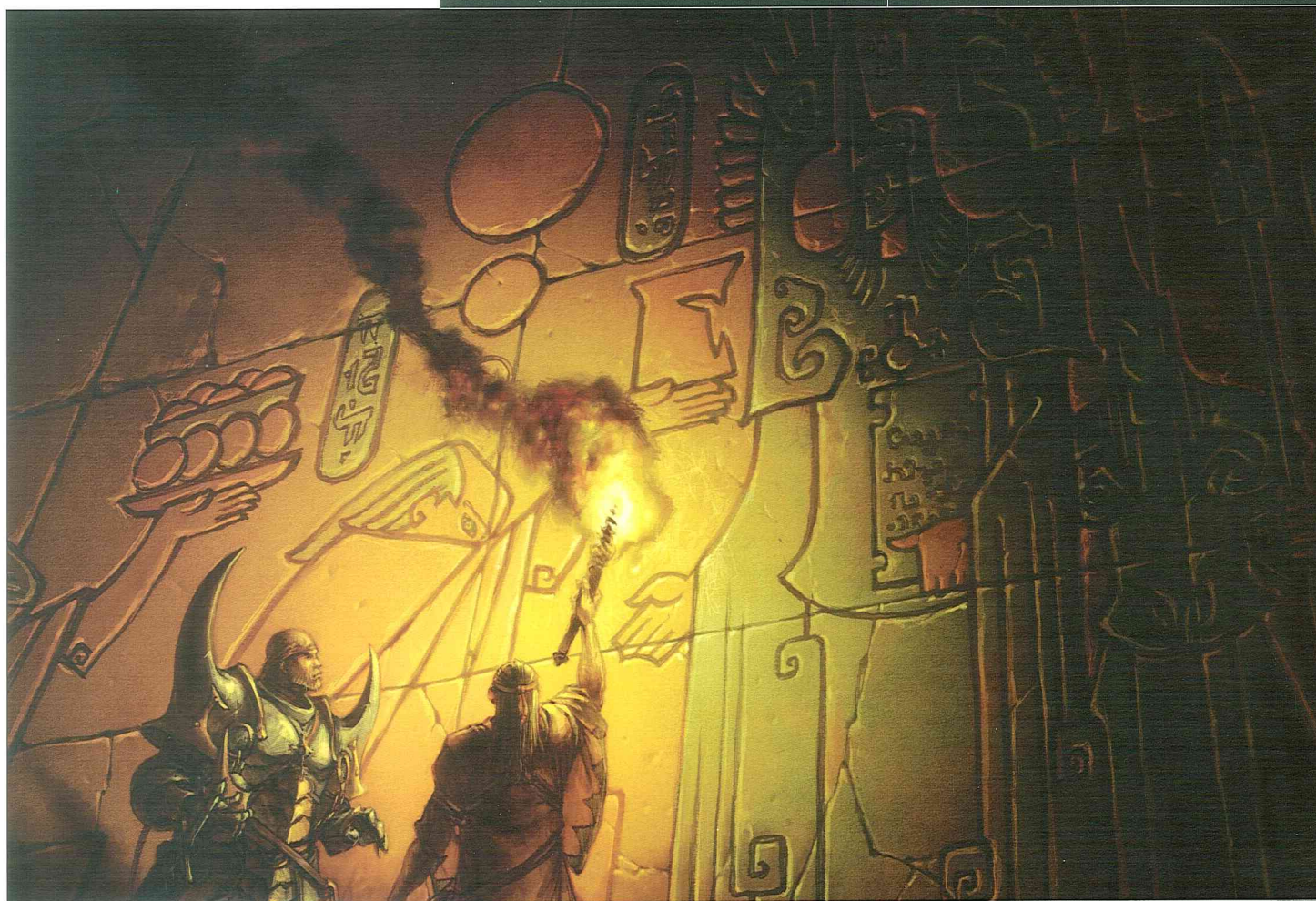
[...]

I have just been given the explanation for our hosts' mysterious attitude. Asraa took me on a visit of the edifice and what I saw there has left me puzzled. At the top there is a kind of chapel whose walls are decorated with magnificent bas-reliefs. Some represent ceremonies that seem to be taking place at the top of this

construction. One can make out a priest facing a huge eye that is blocking the sky. Others relate of battles and show fighters equipped with strange weapons.

I was contemplating one of these works when Asraa led my attention to a particular scene. On one section of the wall one can clearly make out men who resemble the fishermen welcoming armed soldiers with their hands full of offerings. I first thought that the villagers considered this fresco to be a prophecy and that they took us to be these soldiers. This would have explained their attitude towards us, as well as the upkeep of the barracks for our use. Asraa showed me a detail that confirmed my hypothesis, but which made a chill run down my spine. He held his torch close to the bas-relief and pointed out one of the soldiers whose paint had survived the trials of time. A symbol was painted on his plastron: the cross of Merin.

There is no doubt about it. After having stared at this fresco for over an hour, I have found too many similarities between these soldiers and ourselves. I spent the rest of the day studying the other bas-reliefs and trying to get explanations from Asraa... in vain. He noticed my frustration, but he just showed me a friendly smile that seemed to be saying, "you'll understand when the moment comes." I haven't told the men of this discovery yet; I fear their reaction. Some of them might be tempted to take advantage of the situation.



[...]

Asraa went with me to the mausoleum again. This time he showed me a passage that led from the top of the temple to the heart of the edifice. While going down we crossed many lateral tunnels that led into the monument's flanks. I made Asraa understand that I wanted to know where these galleries led. By making signs with his hands he explained that the mausoleum's flanks held mortuary chambers, but that those lying in them were not Ishim'res. So we were in a tomb that was most probably made for the elite of the city's previous occupants.

We finally reached a vast eight-sided room with walls decorated with frescoes. Yet my attention was first caught by figures that seemed to be awaiting us in the shadows, perfectly motionless. Dozens of man-sized statues were lined up straight like a battalion ready for review. When I neared one of them I saw that its weapons and armour weren't sculpted in the stone but were actually forged. Right away I recognised the strange equipment shown in the temple's bas-reliefs, but Asraa didn't give me the chance to examine my find more carefully. He took me by the arm and led me to another fresco. It represented soldiers of Merin equipped with the same weapons as the statues and battling giant serpents. They were fighting beneath a black sun inside which an eye was painted.

The message was clear: Asraa was asking us to confront the enemies of his people symbolised by these serpents.

When we came out of the mausoleum, I no longer had a choice...

In the evening I gathered the men to inform them of my discoveries. Being an officer, I could have attempted to impose a decision on them: to either stay or leave. Yet I knew that many of them saw Ephite's departure as treason. I had also felt my faith waver during our long and difficult journey. As a consequence I didn't really feel that I had the right to make use of my rank's prerogatives.

I spoke to them as brothers and not as subordinates. To begin, I dropped my officer's insignia at their feet to show them that they should now consider me to be their equal. Some of them saw this gesture as renouncement of my allegiance to the Empire. Others protested, but their voices were quickly drowned out by the much more numerous ones of those who, like me, had lost their faith. Within minutes the floor was strewn with imperial insignia...

I then described what I had discovered and the choices that we had. We could either leave and try to return to our homeland for which so many of us had died, but whose representatives hadn't thought twice about leaving us behind... or stay, join these people who have accommodated us, and fight by their side if need be.

There was no vote; every man took his decision freely. Of the 92 men present, 23 have chosen to leave. As for me, I prefer to stay. No one is waiting for me in Akkylannie and I'm burning to pierce the secret of this prophecy.

[...]

Among those who decided to stay, some changed their minds during the night. The group that was getting ready to leave included 27 men. No one tried to hold them back, yet I noticed that Asraa looked at them with his eyes filled with sadness. After having packed the supplies provided by the Ishim'res, they marched off towards the north at the first rays of dawn.

[...]

A villager came to wake me and take me to Asraa, who was waiting for me near a stone arch at the northern edge of the city. He looked me in the eyes with the same dismayed and resigned expression as when my companions who remained loyal to the Empire left the city two days earlier. He bid me to go through the gate with him. On the other side, impaled on stakes lined up in a semi-circle in front of the arch, the severed heads of my 27 brothers were staring at me with their lifeless eyes.

Asraa was unable to tell me who could have committed such a crime. If it had been Syhars, they wouldn't have bothered giving us such a macabre warning. Was this the work of the mysterious enemy that the prophecy condemned us to confront? As answer to my questions, Asraa only pointed towards the sun and raised two fingers. He then drew the sun in the dust and drew another circle around it before drawing an eye inside it. Then he again lifted two fingers while pointing at the sun.

Two days...

Asraa seems convinced that something is going to happen in two days. But what?

[...]

We gave a decent burial to the remains of our brothers and performed the last rites. Our faith has been weakened, yet when faced with harsh trials we still draw our strength from the greatness of Merin. I informed the others of what little I knew, meaning that we risked having to confront our companions' killers in two days. They didn't ask any questions. They still remain legionaries.

Asraa wasn't seen all day, probably out of respect for our dead, but I am sure that he will be at my doorstep tomorrow morning.

[...]

As expected, Asraa had me summoned at dawn. He was waiting for me at the top of the mausoleum and several Ishim'res were busy carrying up the weapons and armour that I had seen on the statues. Barely had I arrived when Asraa made a sign to two men. Right away they began equipping me from head to toe. To my great surprise I realised that the pieces of armour were extremely light and could be perfectly adapted to my physique thanks to an ingenious system of overlapping plates that could slide on top of each other. The helmet could also be adjusted. Just like the armour, the sword and the shield were made of a metal that was much lighter than steel or bronze. I

was still marvelling at the quality of these weapons when an Ishim're unexpectedly struck me in the chest with a blow of a mace that could have killed a cow. The strength of the impact should have knocked me to the ground, yet it simply made me move back a step without even knocking the wind out of me! The breastplate had almost completely absorbed the impact and didn't bear the slightest mark of the blow. I couldn't believe my eyes. Asraa looked at me with an amused expression. He signalled me to follow him. We went back down.

The Ishim'res had gathered my brothers in the square. Coruho, a cohort sergeant, was in regular battledress. I went to him for an exchange of swordplay, but Asraa got in between us. I tried to make him understand that this exchange would not be dangerous. He didn't pay any attention to my hand gestures and signalled two villagers to take Coruho's shield. The two men positioned themselves in front of me, each holding one end of the shield. Only then did Asraa move aside.

I got ready to strike and when I raised the sword I felt as if it had "awakened" in my hand. I wouldn't know how to describe this feeling in any other way, so strongly could I feel the weapon react to my intentions. I thrust the sword at the shield without using all my strength and the blade cut through it as if it were made of cloth.

A murmur swept the assembly. After having struck the blow I felt unable to let go of the sword. Or was it the sword that refused to leave my hand? I felt very excited and a growing desire for combat. After a few seconds, however, this feeling left me.

Asraa signalled Coruho to come back to face me. The sergeant got on guard and even though we had gone through this kind of training hundreds of times, his gestures revealed that he was worried. I admit that for a moment even I was scared that I wouldn't be able to master these strange weapons.

Coruho attacked first. I immediately felt the sword react and block the attack much quicker than I would have been able to with my usual weapon. Surprised by my vivacity, Coruho moved back while looking at Asraa questioningly. Asraa bid him to attack once again and signalled me to parry with my shield. What happened then left us both awestruck. The shield reacted with the same speed as my sword, and when Coruho's blade struck it, the overlapping metal plates it was made of moved at lightning speed and jammed it. I felt my weapon getting ready to retaliate and had to use all my willpower to hold it back.

After this demonstration the Ishim'res brought enough weapons to equip my brothers and we spent the rest of the day training. If the prophecy is right, then we will soon be making use of these weapons.

May Merin give us His blessing, even if we doubted Him.

[...]

The prophecy wasn't lying. A black disc hid the sun, darkness fell in the middle of the day and the serpents arrived.

The bas-reliefs that I had taken for stylised representations of the Ishim'res' enemies were in fact precise and realistic depictions of the creatures that we had to confront. On seeing these beings that had the body and head of a serpent but whose arms seemed human, we first thought of the monsters that the Syhars had released against us during the siege of Shamir. Yet these things bore weapons and wore armour that were just as unknown to us as those we had discovered in the mausoleum. What more, unlike the Syhar monsters that were just stupid aberrations, these serpents communicated with each other.

When they entered the city they found only us: 64 legionaries willing to die for a community that wasn't theirs. To this day I still can't explain why we stayed while the Ishim'res had left in the morning towards the south. There are so many things that I can't understand... Ever since our arrival everything seemed to unfold as if every event had always been planned.

They were many, at least 30. Yet we didn't try to hide or to set a trap. We waited for them on the levels of the mausoleum, aware that this was where the battle had to be fought. When they saw us standing there, as motionless as the statues inside the monument, they took on an aggressive attitude as if they were facing an old and hated enemy. As for us, we all felt that our weapons knew these opponents. We were burning with the desire to see them dead.

The serpents launched their assault while whistling and spitting. Never had we confronted such strange opponents, and we would surely have succumbed if we hadn't had these weapons that increased our strength and our reflexes. Our blades chopped off their ophidian heads and pierced their armour without us feeling the slightest fatigue.

Several brothers died by the enemy's lances and knew a quick death. On the other hand those who succumbed to the serpent's venomous bites had to endure a long and agonising death. Yet little by little we took the upper hand. In addition to our weapons, we were also more agile on the mausoleum's steps where the reptilian creatures had a hard time moving. Eventually they retreated back down to the bottom of the staircase of stone where they gathered. Galvanised by our weapons and feeling that victory was within reach, we continued fighting. I was as if possessed and couldn't stop striking, prey to a morbid ecstasy. I couldn't and didn't want to stop fighting...

Suddenly I saw the compact group of our opponents open up right in front of me. A huge serpent moved towards me. He wasn't carrying any weapons, but four other creatures rushed at me. I decapitated one of them and one of my brothers killed a second one. The two others grabbed me by the arms and coiled their long bodies around my legs. My helmet was then torn off and I felt an icy hand with long, clawed fingers take hold of my head. Right then I was sure that I was going to die. I felt no pain but only had the impression that I was falling into a void and was being carried off in a

whirlwind. Then I felt as if a presence, a consciousness, were probing my mind, imposing visions on me and searching my memories.

Suddenly I felt a sharp pain but it wasn't mine. The intruder was suffering. He was going to die and I knew this just as well as he did. A flood of confused images and thoughts invaded me as if my host were pouring his own memory into me. And then everything went black.

When I woke up I noticed that my armour had been removed. I had remained unconscious for two days.

Despite the Ishim'res' return I didn't go see Asraa. I don't feel I'm ready for one of our tedious conversations using sign language. So here I am writing these lines. I feel exhausted, drained of all energy.

[...]

I have slept a whole day again. Yet this time I had a strange dream. I was standing at the top of the mausoleum and, like in the temple's fresco, a huge eye was darkening the sky. Actually it wasn't really an eye but rather a sphere whose consciousness I could feel. Then the edifice opened up and the sphere descended into it. I felt anger, frustration and also fear. Then I looked into the distance and from all sides I saw armies marching towards Kashem. Above them spheres were floating in the sky.

When I woke up I asked Asraa to let me go down into the mausoleum. For the first time I sensed him reluctant, yet he didn't dare refuse. We returned to the hall of statues and I spent many hours studying the frescos. I was sure that the serpents hadn't come for us but for something that was inside the mausoleum. On the bas-relief I finally found a part of the answer. It represented the room in which I was; the lined up statues and the stele at the centre left no doubt about it.

That's when I had a revelation: on the fresco a sarcophagus was lying on the stele. By carefully studying this image, though it was stylised, I realised that this sarcophagus was familiar to me. It was among the images that had flooded my mind when the serpent-being placed its hand on my face.

And today the sarcophagus was gone.

[...]

The more I think about it, the more I'm convinced that my dream and the eye represented in the temple are bound to this sarcophagus. I'm utterly persuaded that it isn't the tomb of just any king. The serpent-beings weren't simple grave robbers and they gave their lives to the last one to try to enter the mausoleum. This sarcophagus is the key to a secret for which armies have clashed. I'm sure that Asraa knows a lot more than he likes to admit. It's time for me to learn his language.

The rest of Arios's book tells of how, after the battle against the serpent-beings and the revelations he made to his brothers, the veterans of the 3rd Cohort definitely renounced serving the Empire and named themselves the Brothers of Kashem. They remained in the city of the Ishim'res and mingled with the local population, all the while conserving their military organisation. The Brothers of Kashem's ranks grew over the decades as many villagers joined them to defend their independence in the face of the expanding Scorpion Empire. The city developed rapidly to become the commercial port it is today.

To this day, despite the pressure and attacks, neither the Syhars nor the Akkylannians have been able to threaten Kashem's growth and neutrality. As for the Brothers, they didn't just content themselves with defending their city. All along the three centuries since their birth, their presence has been reported in many places on many occasions. They took part in great battles at the sides of various factions, and their presence has almost always ensured victory for their camp.

Over time the city of Kashem was given a militia and a private army that was independent of the Brothers, yet the latter are still bound to the city by an inalienable pact. They are the only ones authorised to enter the mausoleum that still rises at the centre of the city. The monument is guarded by a small contingent of Brothers, the only one to remain in Kashem. The rest of the company, which is currently made up of about 2000 men, roams Aarklash, lending its services in the various conflicts that are tearing the continent apart.

If his book is to be believed, Arios spent the rest of his life learning the language of the Ishim'res and trying to decipher the inscriptions that accompany some of the mausoleum's frescos. In his lifetime the Brothers of Kashem set up several expeditions to find the mysterious sarcophagus, yet none of them managed to locate it. For several decades after Arios's death the Brothers continued searching.

Today, after three centuries of existence, the company has long ago given up the quest for the sarcophagus and concentrates exclusively on its military vocation.



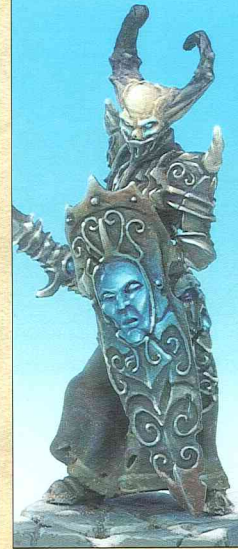
PAINTING AND CONVERSION CONTEST

IT TOOK US TIME (A VERY LONG TIME...) TO DECIDE BETWEEN THE PARTICIPANTS OF OUR PAINTING AND CONVERSION CONTEST AT THE 2004 WORLD OF GAMING SHOW IN PARIS. THE CHOICE WAS DIFFICULT SINCE THE CONTESTANTS RIVALLED IN CREATIVITY AND QUALITY TO GIVE THE GAMERS AND VISITORS A SPECTACLE OF SUCH AN UNEQUALLED LEVEL.

THEY TRULY DESERVE TO HAVE THIS ISSUE OF CRY HAVOC'S GALLERY DEVOTED TO THEM.



1st PRIZE: Manuel SANCHEZ • BLACK PALADIN

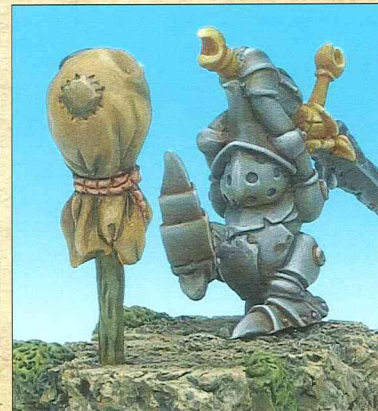


CATEGORY A ORIGINAL PIECE EN AN INFANTRY BASE



2nd PRIZE: Etienne DANCOINE • SETHIN

3rd PRIZE: Bernard Malfay • THE CROW



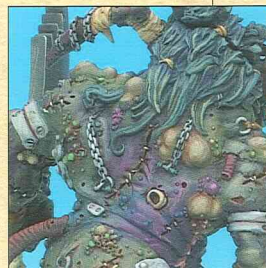
1st PRIZE: NICOLAS DJAMDJIAN • NEKHAR THE ECSTATIC



CATEGORY B ORIGINAL PIECE ON A CREATURE OR CAVALRY BASE



2nd PRIZE: LUCAS LIEBELLE • PREDATOR OF BLOOD



3rd PRIZE: HUAT HAY • CYCLOPS OF MID-NOR

1st PRIZE: Jérôme OTREMBA • NELPHAËLL



This category was the opportunity for the Studio to meet a particularly talented modeller: Jérôme Otremba. His conversion of Nelphaëll was unanimously acclaimed by the visitors as well as RACKHAM's staff to such a point that the latter proposed that Jérôme use his talents as a member of our team. Based on Jérôme's concept, the Studio created the miniature of Nelphaëll that was handed out as a pre-release gift to all visitors of the 4th Paris Open that took place on February 4th and 5th, 2005. This miniature will be available sooner in your country.

CATEGORY C CONVERSION



2nd PRIZE: Mikael LAVANDIER • YH-SADHRAPALH, THE PROWLER OF A THOUSAND DOLLS



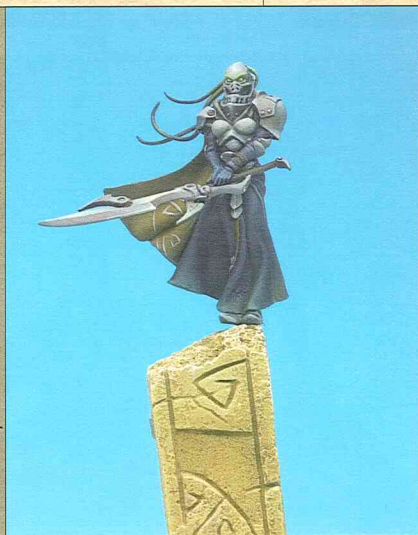
3rd PRIZE: Raphael DURAND • SHOGAI, WALL BREAKER

1st PRIZE: Stéphane NGUYEN • ABERRATION



CATEGORY D HYBRID

2nd PRIZE: Jérôme OTREMBE • SETHIN



3rd PRIZE: Olivier BENECH • PHIDIAS DE BASARAC



1st PRIZE: Denis Bouvet • THE COLONY OF MECHANISTS



CATEGORY E GROUP OF FIGHTERS



2nd PRIZE: Philippe RENAUDE • THE COLONY OF EPHORATH



CATEGORY E GROUP OF FIGHTERS



3rd PRIZE: Cedric LACACHE • IN THE BLACK WOODS



CATEGORY E GROUP OF FIGHTERS

