

VOLUME 05



CRY HAVOC!

THE CHRONICLES OF THE WORLD OF RACKHAM



NEWS

July - August Releases & Previews

Interview with Nicolas Tissier, two-time winner of the French *Confrontation* Championship

RACKHAM WORKSHOP

Scenery: Goblin Toriis

STRATEGY

Confrontation 3: Tutorial & Skirmish Report

In which the Assassins of the Black Woods ambush the Heliast's Escort

UNIVERSE

Portrait: Isabeau the Secret / The Guild of Blades / The Trackers of Bran-Ô-Kor
The Trinity of the Abyss / Kel, or the Origins of a Civilisation (Part Two)

GAMING AIDS

Official Missions: 4th Paris Open / S'Erum, Ophidian Sydion: Missions and Incarnation
Rules: The Howling Pack / The Guild of Blades
...

11 EXCLUSIVE CARDS

“

“It’s almost eight o’clock in the evening in the City of Cadwallon. A warm and heavy rain is falling onto the three towers of the garment district and its hanging gardens. The atmosphere is humid and filled with the scent of the flowers bending under the weight of the fat raindrops. Perfumers are scurrying along the pathways to gather their raw materials under the protection of their hooded raincoats. [...] They have always been there, ever since the first roots thrust up between the paving stones and began climbing up the towers all the way to the terrace to establish this exceptional garden.”

- The Ashes of Wrath

”



“The influence of Darkness was becoming so strong that the replica of the Arkäll had already flickered twice, like a candle in the wind. Syd tried his best to decipher the enemy’s intentions. Disregarding the etiquette, he had removed his mask to push back the locks of hair stuck to his brow by the sweat. His eyes were blinking repeatedly, tired as they were by the glint of the replica. His gaze struggled to encompass everything to better understand the whole. He picked up the fluctuation of a given spark as well as the vast ebbs and flows of the opposing army. The dark stain representing the dark legions in front of the replica had stepped on a single front line that oscillated less than fifty yards before the castle, in front of the gigantic statues of the Pride.”

The Fault of Käiber – Chapter XI



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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.

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CRY HAVOC !

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GAMING AIDS BOOKLET

The Gaming Aids booklet cannot be sold separately from Cry Havoc ! volume 5.

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CARDS

The miragrye (Cynwäll)	Howling predator (Howling Pack)
Ophidian slave (Hybrid)	Repentant great fang (Howling Pack)
S'Ynaqia, renegade psyche (Ophidian)	Goblin shigobi (Ûraken)
Orphan of Avagddu (Blades)	The goblin shigobis (Explanatory card)
Fury of Avagddu (Blades)	Cynwäll quarterstaffer (Cadwallon)
Fire support goblin (Blades)	

These cards cannot be sold separately from Cry Havoc ! volume 5.

editorial



“CRY HAVOC! GIVE NO QUARTER!”

INITIALLY PLANNED TO BE A COMPILATION OF THE *Confrontation* RULE BOOKLETS (CODE NAME: *Compendium*), THE THIRD EDITION HAS EVOLVED INTO A NEW SYSTEM OF RULES THAT USES THE CURRENT REFERENCE PROFILES. BECAUSE WE SHARE YOUR IMPATIENCE, *Cry Havoc!* GIVES YOU A SNEAK PEEK AT THIS NEW GAME, WHICH IS NOW CALLED *Confrontation 3*. ON THE PROGRAMME: A TUTORIAL AND THE REPORT OF A GAME IN WHICH ONE OF OUR DEVELOPERS CLASHED FORCES WITH A PRESTIGIOUS TESTER, NICOLAS TISSIER, THE TWO-TIME WINNER OF THE FRENCH *Confrontation* CHAMPIONSHIP! THIS IS ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUBLISH AN INTERVIEW WITH THIS FORMIDABLE GAMER.

THE *Gaming Aids* booklet OF THIS VOLUME OF *Cry Havoc!* PROVIDES NUMEROUS ORPHICANT THEMED SCENARIOS AND MISSIONS, WHICH ALLOW YOU TO PLAY S'ERUM (THE FIRST OF OUR SERPENT MINIATURES) AND HIS ALLIES IN *Confrontation*, *Rag'Narak* AND *Hybrid*.

NO ONE HAS FORGOTTEN THAT THE WORLD OF *Confrontation* DEVELOPED THANKS TO SHORT TEXTS PUBLISHED ON VARIOUS CARDS AND TO STORIES DISTRIBUTED BY MAIL OR ON THE WEB. IN THIS FIFTH VOLUME OF *Cry Havoc!* THE UNIVERSE PAGES CONTINUE THIS TRADITION AND INCLUDE LONGER ARTICLES. THUS, THE SECOND PART OF DOCTOR ABRONSIUS'S CASE STUDY (SEE *Cry Havoc!*, VOL. 01) ACCOMPANIES THE TALES OF THE ADVENTURES OF THE TRACKER CLAN AND OF THE FOUNDER OF THE COLONY OF EPHORATH, AND MANY OTHER REVELATIONS (ESPECIALLY ABOUT *Cadwallan*).

Enjoy!

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THE ALCHEMISTS OF DIRZ

WAR-STAFF OF THE SCORPION



T

he clouds of sand of the Syharhalna desert are clearing to reveal the terrifying army announcing the Rag'narok. The clones of the Scorpion, born of Darkness and a counter-natural science, are created for only one goal: the subjugation of Aarklash. Clone 66UI84, called Kheris, leads his soulless brothers to victory in the name of the Scorpion.

Accompanied by alchemical veterans, this Unit is ready for play in Rag'Narok. Its numbers can be complemented by a box of clones of Dirz.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

6 MINIATURES AND 6 CARDS:

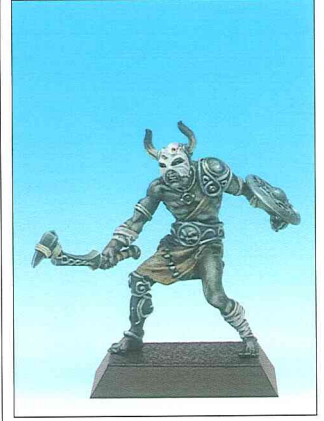
- ALCHEMICAL VETERAN (REFERENCE CARD),
- KHERIS, CLONE 66UI84 (REFERENCE CARD),
- MUSICIAN OF DIRZ (REFERENCE CARD),
- STANDARD-BEARER OF DIRZ (REFERENCE CARD),
- THE BLADE OF SHEKARA (ARTEFACT, 12 A.P.),
- ALCHEMICAL STORM (TACTIC CARD).





THE KELTS OF
THE DRUNE CLAN

WARRIORS OF CAER MAED



F

Feared for their deranged minds and their gruesome customs, the warriors of the Drune clan prowl the plains of Avagddu in search of Cernunnos, the Horned King. They leave no hope to those standing in their way! This box contains all you need to assemble a Unit of 8 Kelt Mercenaries (Regulars) or members of the Drune clan (Regulars and Veterans). It also contains all the accessories needed to turn one of them into a Leader. Two types of weapons and three profiles are provided. This Unit is ready for play in Rag'Narok.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

8 MINIATURES AND 3 REFERENCE CARDS:

KELT MERCENARY (REFERENCE CARD),
DRUNE WARRIOR (REFERENCE CARD),
AND DRUNE VETERAN (REFERENCE CARD).



◆ HUNTSMAN OF VILE-TIS 2 ◆



UKDVTR 04



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 1 CARD:
HUNTSMAN OF VILE-TIS
(REFERENCE CARD)

RANK: DEVOURER ELITE.
LIGHT ARTILLERY.
50 A.P.

Saphon the Preacher struck up a fervent litany in the company of his disciples armed with rifles. Those in the first rank placed a knee on the ground and raised their weapons in the Devourers' direction. In front of them a huntsman of Vile-Tis pulled a razor-sharp arrow from his quiver and, while running towards them, shot it at them. The projectile, which was as big as a man, sliced through the air with a sinister wail and beheaded its first victim before getting stuck in the chest of its second one. Other arrows then burst from the scattered ranks of the Devourers and slaughtered the children of the one god.

The huntsman of Vile-Tis is a flesh eater armed with an impressive bow. Endowed with AIM 4, a bow of Vile-Tis/STR 10, range 20-50-75, and the "Instinctive firing" ability, he represents a serious threat for the opponent's most valuable fighters.

◆ CYNWÄLL EQUANIMOUS WARRIOR 2 ◆



UKCYMG 02



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 4 CARDS:
EQUANIMOUS WARRIOR
(REFERENCE CARD), THE
EQUANIMOUS WARRIORS
(EXPLANATORY CARD), PAINFUL
TRUTH (MIRACLE, 9 A.P.),
ELUSIVE TRUTH (MIRACLE, 10 A.P.)

RANK: CYNWÄLL DEVOUT
35 A.P.

Nothing seemed to be able to stop the Crâne warrior of Acheron. The blows were bouncing off his accursed armour, and those that tore his rotten flesh never brought him down for very long. The equanime stood in his way and concentrated to find the Truth that would reveal the undead fighter's weak points to him. These were soon revealed to his mind and to that of all his brothers-in-arms.

The Cynwäll army is being reinforced by a second equanimous warrior. Like his predecessors, he has Loyal/I and Concentration/I (INI, ATT, DEF, DIS). His miracles and special capacities allow him to be deployed as a lone fighter or as support for regular troops.

◆ BALKRÒN, DRUNE FORMOR CHAMPION ◆



UKDRCH 04



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURES & 4 CARDS:
BALKRÒN (REFERENCE CARD),
BALKRÒN, FORMOR CHAMPION
(EXPLANATORY CARD), MORAKH,
THE BLOODY MACE (ARTEFACT, 17
A.P.), BALRION, THE SKELETON
WHIP (ARTEFACT, 15 A.P.).

RANK: KELT ELITE CHAMPION.
FORMOR.
150 A.P.

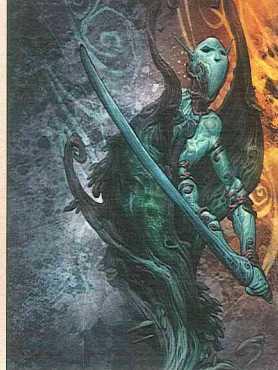
Balkròn is the symbol of the Drune formors' perverse brutality. In his eyes, nothing is more pitiful than a war chief who counts on ruse to compensate for his weaknesses. War is just like natural selection: only the strong survive. And Balkròn is strong... very strong.

Impressive combat values (INI 5; ATT/STR 7/12; DEF/RES 6/10) combined with the most brutal of abilities (War fury, Authority, Implacable/2...) make Balkròn a beast of war, in the true as well as figurative senses of the term.

◆ SYLVAN ANIMAE ◆



UKELDE 01



Sylvan animae are Immortals of Destiny: they can therefore be enlisted as Allies in any army of this path of alliance (Devourers, goblins, dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor, orcs, Wolfen). They are supplied with a miracle that allows them to be summoned on the battlefield. Sylvan animae can be used in accordance with the "Alliance of Blood" rule of the Wolfen predators of blood.

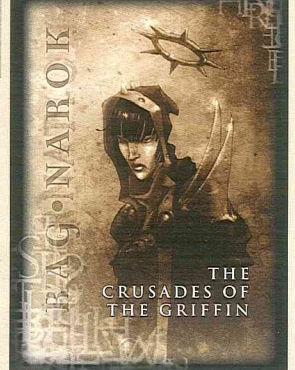
THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:
3 MINIATURES & 2 REFERENCE CARDS:
SYLVAN ANIMAE (REFERENCE CARD), SYLVAN
ANIMAE SUMMONING (MIRACLE, 12 A.P.).

RANK: REGULAR IMMORTAL OF DESTINY.
16 A.P.

◆ THE CRUSADES OF THE GRIFFIN ◆



UKGRAR 01

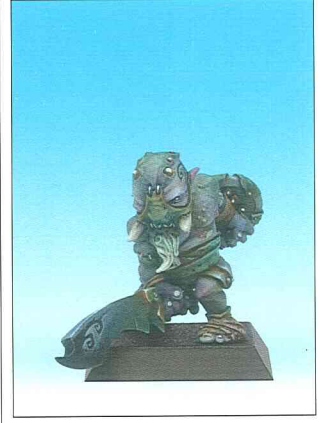


The *Crusades of the Griffin* pack is an endless source of inspiration allowing the creation of themed armies with the Griffins of Akkylannie.

THIS PACKET INCLUDES:
16 cards: Illustrated presentation card; The Crusades of the Griffin (explanatory card); Crusade: Imperial Army (explanatory card); Crusade: Inquisition (explanatory card); Crusade: The Lodge of Hod (explanatory card); Crusade: The Temple of the East (explanatory card); Crusade: The Temple of the West (explanatory card); Crusade: The Temple of the North (explanatory card); Crusade: The Temple of the South (explanatory card); Templar Brother (reference card); Guardian of the Temple (reference card); The Guardians of the Temple (explanatory card); Sister of the Inquisition (reference card); Klayne (reference card); The Defender of the Faith (explanatory card); Battle Censer (artefact, 15 A.P.).



DWARVES OF MID-NOR WAR-STAFF OF THE ABYSS



R

ather than letting entire armies surge from their chasms, the dwarves of Mid-Nor have spread all over the continent of Aarklash and have founded countless sinister colonies. After having spread chaos, Nilarakh and his possessed fighters are gathering to strike the final blow.

Accompanied by veterans of the Abyss, this Unit is ready for play in Rag'Narok. Its numbers can be complemented by a box of warriors of the Abyss.

THIS BOX INCLUDES:

VETERAN OF THE ABYSS (REFERENCE CARD); NILARAKH THE EVILDOER (REFERENCE CARD); STANDARD-BEARER OF THE ABYSS (REFERENCE CARD); MUSICIAN OF THE ABYSS (REFERENCE CARD); THE DEVOURING SCYTHE (ARTEFACT, 13 A.P.); HOWL OF THE ABYSS (TACTIC CARD).

VETERAN OF THE ABYSS
RANK: VETERAN OF MID-NOR
16 A.P.

NILARAKH THE EVILDOER
RANK: REGULAR CHAMPION OF MID-NOR
42 A.P.

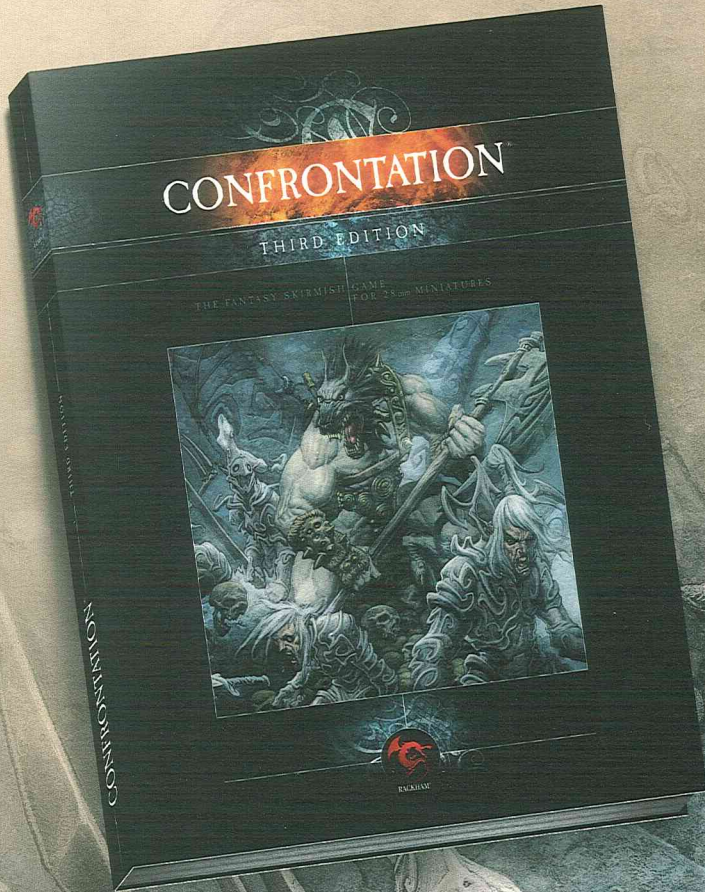
STANDARD-BEARER OF THE ABYSS
RANK: REGULAR OF MID-NOR
15 A.P.

MUSICIAN OF THE ABYSS
RANK: REGULAR OF MID-NOR
15 A.P.



S UKNMEM 01

AT THE DAWN
OF THE LAST AGE,
EVERY
CONFRONTATION
COUNTS!





THE 208 PAGES OF THE THIRD EDITION OF CONFRONTATION INCLUDE:

- Revised and improved *Confrontation* rules with loads of graphic examples.
- The rules of the *Incantation*, *Divination* and *Fortification* supplements.
- A full list of all abilities.
- A review of the game effects of the previous editions.
- New spells, miracles and artefacts.
- The official tournament rules of the "Confédération du Dragon Rouge".

CHAPTER 4 • INCANTATION

SORCERY

POWERS OF BREATH

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: Target: VSB
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The targeted fighter breathes from the "breath of life" ability. The target has the ability to breathe from the breath of life for the duration of the spell.

FORCE OF THE FOUR WINDS

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

Make a casting roll, and the spell causes the release of a powerful force of wind. This force causes the release of 400 grams of wind per round. The spell is considered to be successful if the targeted fighter breathes from the breath of life for the duration of the spell.

THE SIBYRANT'S WILL

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be under the control of the sibrant's will. The targeted fighter has the ability to be controlled by the sibrant's will for the duration of the spell.

MUSCULAR ATROPHY

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to suffer from muscular atrophy. The targeted fighter has the ability to suffer from muscular atrophy for the duration of the spell.

EXAL ANIMY

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be exalted. The targeted fighter has the ability to be exalted for the duration of the spell.

TEAR OF THE WINDS

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be affected by the tear of the winds. The targeted fighter has the ability to be affected by the tear of the winds for the duration of the spell.

CHAPTER 5 • INCANTATION

CHTHONIAN

DRAGONIC WILL

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be under the control of the dragonic will. The targeted fighter has the ability to be controlled by the dragonic will for the duration of the spell.

TOXICANTAL OUTBURST

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to suffer from toxicant. The targeted fighter has the ability to suffer from toxicant for the duration of the spell.

CHRONIC REGENERATION

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be under the control of the chronic regeneration. The targeted fighter has the ability to be controlled by the chronic regeneration for the duration of the spell.

HEARSHMENT

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be under the control of the hearshment. The targeted fighter has the ability to be controlled by the hearshment for the duration of the spell.

CELESTY OF THE SHADOWS

Range: 15 cm
 Difficulty: 6
 Incantation: Limit of use: once per round
 Area of effect: One friendly fighter
 Frequency: 1
 Duration: 1
 AP: 10

The spell causes the targeted fighter to be under the control of the celesty of the shadows. The targeted fighter has the ability to be controlled by the celesty of the shadows for the duration of the spell.



CHAPTER 7 • THE INFLUENCE OF FEAR

The ones were created by the alchemists of *Disc* to be their slaves and soldiers. After only a few years they breed their humanoid strength against their masters and break their chains in a bloody revolt. Their fight soon turned into a clash towards the cause of *Disc-O-Ken*, an and region headed by humanistic spirit. *Fackal*, the god of strength, rage and thunder, gave his blessing to the ones, who became the heroes of the sacred land and already prepared all the while having their own in

... a calm, overall aim. The ones are now numerous enough to form a true army. Which of the rats, the one lords, will be worthy of becoming the *hal-walk* and lead his people on the path of the great war?

The ones, original to wage war, stand not due to their extraordinary strength. They are capable of striking extremely violent blows. What more, they benefit from the blessing of the *helen-spirit*, who are called by the mysterious intricate magic.

CHAPTER 7 • THE INFLUENCE OF FEAR

COURAGE TESTS

When an assault involving at least one fear-inducing fighter is announced, the following rules apply. The term "initiator" designates the minimum launching the assault. The fighters targeted by the assault are called "defenders".

DEFENSE

When a defender is hit by a fear-inducing fighter, the defender must make a *Courage Test*. The *FEAR* is determined by the *Courage (CST)* value.

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When a defender is hit by a fear-inducing fighter, the defender must make a *Courage Test*. The *FEAR* is determined by the *Courage (CST)* value.

CHAPTER 11 • MACHINES DE GUERRE

CAPTURE OF A WAR MACHINE

A war machine can be captured by the enemy if no minimum of its camp is within 10 cm or less of it. To do so, one just has to bring a number of fighters equal to the machine's *Crew* value into contact with it. All of these fighters must meet the conditions required to become substitutes. When a war machine is captured, it becomes part of the camp of the fighters who captured it. The machine can then be taken back in the same conditions.

MOVEMENT

For their movement, war machines follow different rules depending on if they are mobile or immobile machines.

MOBILE MACHINES

Be they powered by their own source of energy or pulled by a team of animals, mobile machines use the *MOV* printed on their reference card.

The lightest and most elaborate mobile machines are not subject to *Weight*. They can move like any other fighter. For the others this value causes certain restrictions, for they cannot move around obstacles as easily as other fighters.

The movements of such machines are made eventually in a straight line forwards; they cannot move backwards, yet they can make curves in order to change trajectory.

A curve is a continuous made while moving thanks to the momentum gathered by the vehicle. When making a curve, a war machine can be reoriented by a maximum angle of 45°. A machine can make one curve in the every full 30 cm that it moves (it is equal to the machine's *Weight*).

GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START:

- Easy-to-find definitions
- Diagrams to explain the rules
- Illustrated examples
- Appendices organised by topic (including the official tournament rules!)

RANK

A war machine's rank indicates if it is a chariot or a piece of artillery. There are various classes of artillery. A piece of artillery can be part of the "light artillery" or "heavy artillery" class. The difference between these two types of weapons lies in the damage that they cause. Be it light or heavy, a piece of artillery can either performing properties as ammunition "with one effect" (since it inflicts damage within a given perimeter).

If a machine's rank simply includes "light artillery" or "heavy artillery", then it is performing artillery. On the other hand, if its rank includes "light artillery/zone" or "heavy artillery/zone", then it is artillery with zone effect.

The rules concerning these various types of machines are detailed further on in this chapter.

DISINGAGEMENT

Mobile machines that are subject to a *Weight* value cannot disengage by using their *MS* to do so, they must use the rule on disengagement by force (see p. 39).

CHAPTER 5 • THE COMBAT PHASE

SECOND EXCHANGE



The Scorpion player is the attacker right. Close to L. Having been killed, only the dwarf warrior still has an attack die available. He is therefore automatically designated to be the attacker.



Because no fighter has any attack dice left, the combat ends.



PURSUIT MOVEMENTS

At the end of a combat, if the fighter has killed all his opponents (meaning all the enemy miniatures involved in the same combat as him), he can make a pursuit movement. There are then two possibilities:

1. If the fighter is already in contact with one or several miniatures (the warrior involved in the same combat as him), there are two choices:
- He can move half of his MOV (in cm) and rounded up to the higher integer to leave the fight. No disengagement test is required and this movement can bring the fighter to engage an opponent (even one he was already in contact with).
- He can remain where he is. It is then considered to have engaged the opponent or opponents who are in contact with him.



In this joy the combaters are split in the following way: small guardians versus mortal pupae, conditioners versus giant of Aklash versus combat warriors and practitioners of Sabaki.



The dwarf guardian has just eliminated the mortal pupae. No longer having an opponent available in the same combat as him, he can make a pursuit movement. Because he is in contact with the giant and the combat warriors, he can either move 5 cm or remain here.



2. If the fighter is free of any opponents, then he can move half of his MOV (in cm) and rounded up to the higher integer. This can bring him to engage an enemy miniature. Charge when due to a particular game effect, a pursuit movement does not cause any charge penalties.



The combat on the left between the Dwarf guardian and the giant opponent is resolved first.



The guardian having eliminated the pupae, he can move.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WITH CONFRONTATION 2 ?

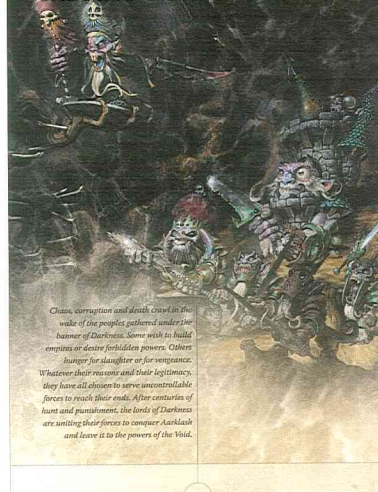
THE CARDS FOR CONFRONTATION 2 ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHANGES INTRODUCED IN THE THIRD EDITION. THESE CHANGES ARE:

- Each player now has an activation sequence that he determines by choosing the order in which his reference profiles are drawn.
• The way combat is played has been revised and streamlined. There are no longer penalties on the results of die rolls.

Confrontation, Third Edition, requires Confrontation or Rag'Narok miniatures, as well as a metric measuring tape and several six-sided dice.

AARLASH • THE MEANDERS OF DARKNESS

THE MEANDERS OF DARKNESS



Chaos, corruption and death exist in the wake of the peoples gathered under the banner of Darkness. Some wish to build empires of dark, formidable powers. Others hunger for slaughter or revenge. Whatever their reasons and their legitimacy, they have all chosen to serve unaccountable forces to reach their ends. After centuries of hate and punishment, the lords of Darkness are uniting their forces to conquer Aarlash and leave it to the powers of the Void.

THE LIMBO OF ACHERON

More than three centuries ago the history of Acheron was subverted to the Crown of Aklash. Under the influence of the Order of the Sun, an evilest, an ill-revered book-let denouncer were composed little by little by their desire for immortality and power. When the knowledge present in the book-let was done to run the recommendations of the book-let against a specific Portal of Darkness in the Netherworld, Night and half of the tenement sky of Acheron and legions of living-dead poured out of it into the now accursed hours. No less than three armies and the sacrifice of thousands of mortals were needed to prevent the invasion of Aarlash by the undead horde.

THE ALCHEMISTS OF DIRZ

Dirz, a visionary scientist, once used Darkness to try to open the perfect being in his mind. Heeded by the Akkyshian Inquisition for heresy, Dirz and his alchemists wandered for a long time before settling in the mountainous Sabakhalia desert. Hidden by the dunes and by their intrigues, they founded the alchemists of Dirz, also known as Shihars, have built a civilization whose foundations are based on the mastery of life and matter. Inspired by Ash-Talka, a god that came from elsewhere, they have perfected their scientific knowledge and have mastered the powerful magic of Darkness to create legions of clones and counter-natural creatures.

THE KELTS OF THE DRUNE CLAN

In the northeast of the plains of Aarlash, at the heart of the forest of Cam' Mand, lives a clan named by all. A very long time ago all Kelts were united. Aisa, Corromon, the High King of Kel-A-Traah, was day became the victim of divine machinations and left for other horizons. His people split in two: those who wished for peace remained faithful to Druan and became the Scourge. The others obtained the names of the gods and also left the search of the only true King of the human tribes. This was the terrifying clan of the Drunes.

AARLASH • THE DWARVES OF MID-NOR

THE DWARVES OF MID-NOR

In ancient times the dwarves were the dwarves' slaves. When they rebelled, the dwarves had sent for warriors to the depths of the earth to exterminate the god-Elf and his brotherhood who were responsible for the golden age. These dwarves failed. Their mission and only that of those returned to see the light of day was over. Mid-Nor had remained in the depths.

THE AKKYSHIAN ELVES

The Akkyshian elves have prospered for centuries in the plains of their sister domain, the forest of Acheron. The Age of Darkness has come and with it, that of blood and of sacrifice. Presently, the Akkyshian witches, accompanied by formidable spider warriors and Black Willows with macabre bodies, are getting ready to offer Aarlash as a sacrifice to Lilla, the goddess of blackness.

THE OPHIDIAN ALLIANCE

The measures of ancient times tell of the history of civilizations, the Empire of the Sphinx and the Ophidian Alliance, which could have conquered Aarlash if they had not mutually destroyed each other. The ancient empire of the Ophidian Alliance found refuge in the network of the deepest high places of Aarlash. There they transformed the networks of caves into sanctuaries. These lairs are guarded by their most powerful mages: the original Serpents.



CHAPTER 4 • THE ACTIVATION PHASE

ACTIVATION PHASE



The Scorpion player is the attacker right. Close to L. Having been killed, only the dwarf warrior still has an attack die available. He is therefore automatically designated to be the attacker.

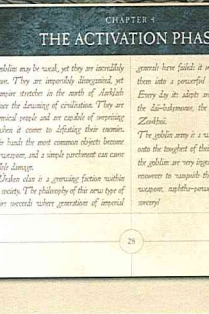


CHAPTER 5 • THE COMBAT PHASE

SECOND EXCHANGE



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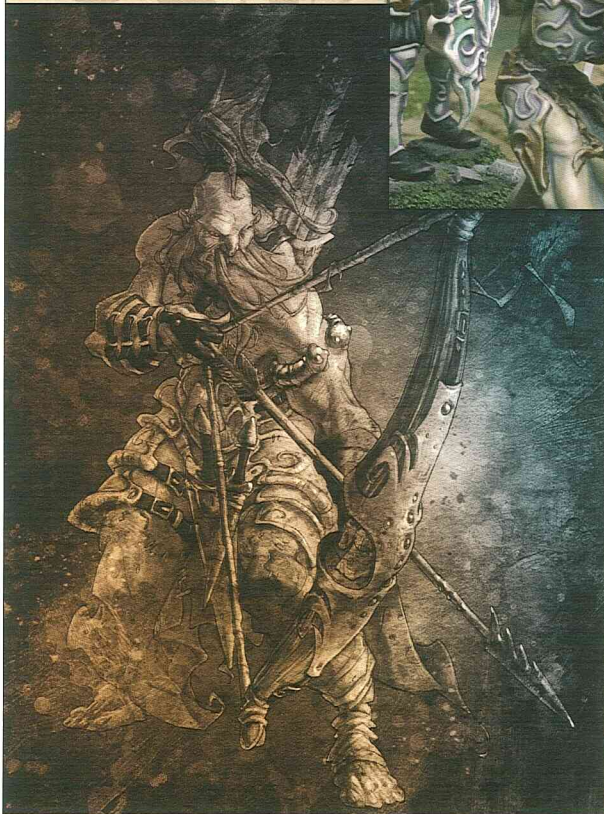
CHAPTER 5 • THE COMBAT PHASE

SECOND EXCHANGE



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VARGHAR, THE LIMITED EDITION WOLFEN CREATED ESPECIALLY FOR THE RELEASE OF CONFRONTATION, THIRD EDITION.

Two blister packs are all you need to become familiar with the basic mechanisms of Confrontation thanks to the booklet supplied for free with Characters or at your favourite gaming store. Each blister pack includes one or several miniatures, cards that present their specific rules, as well as counters that make playing the game easier.

The third edition lets the enjoyment of the first games grow thanks to richer advanced rules that meet the players' expectations: more strategy or more magic, war machines or larger numbers of troops...

Confrontation, Third Edition, is a beautiful, 208-page, full-colour book explaining the most innovative skirmish game rules of the past ten years.

The first printing of this new edition has a hard cover. A limited edition Wolfen miniature has been created for this occasion. The following printings will have a soft cover.



◆ GARGOYLE OF ACHERON 2 ◆



UKMVCR 05



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

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

RANK: ACHERON CREATURE
39 A.P.

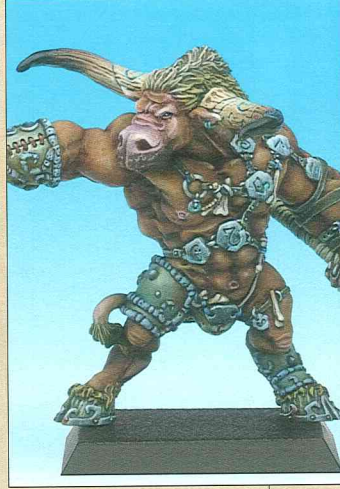
Lost in the crowd of strollers hurrying to return to the warmth of their homes, I stop every evening at the foot of the cathedral's walls and gaze at the starry sky, the realm of our Lord, Merin. Yesterday I noticed a gargoyle that I had never seen before. Its strange appearance made my blood chill. This evening it was gone. May the One protect us! Little by little, creatures born of Darkness are taking over the heavens.

A second gargoyle blister pack is coming to strengthen the army of Acheron and allow players to build Units without using the same miniature twice in Rag'Narok. These flying creatures (MOV 10/20) endowed with Hard-boiled get exclusive special capacities when they are bound to the House of Sarlath or of Vanth (The Obscure Houses of Acheron pack). This miniature is supplied with a nexus card that lets the gargoyles be played as elements of the scenery with magic powers.

◆ SESSAIRS MINOTAUR ◆



UKBACR 03



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 1 REFERENCE CARD

RANK: KELT CREATURE
60 A.P.

The Sessairs caravan was accompanied by a minotaur covered with a huge cloak of hide. When a band of Devourers burst from a thicket to feed on the Kelts' flesh, the horned creature grabbed his massive weapons and charged at a head hunter. The earth rumbled under his hooves while the fury took hold of him. The Devourer was literally ground to bits, like a wisp of straw in the path of a boulder rolling down a hill.

With a fully revised sculpture and reference profile, the most emblematic Creature of Avagddu returns to the battlefield. This minotaur of the Sessairs clan is a specialist in devastating assaults: MOV 12.5; ATT/STR 5/11; War fury; Brutish charge and Implacable/I. The enemy gives way to a wave of brutality!

◆ CERBERUS OF ACHERON ◆



UKMVCR 06



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 2 CARDS: CERBERUS OF ACHERON (REFERENCE CARD); THE CERBERUSES OF ACHERON (EXPLANATORY CARD).

RANK: ACHERON CREATURE
149 A.P.

Ganzhyr d'Hestia, the Father of the House of Hestia of Acheron, could hardly hide his impatience. He longed to join the fray and to feel the warmth of blood on his immortal body. Next to him, two undead cerberuses were scanning the battlefield with their opaque eyes. The cavalry of Alahan charged and broke through the flanks of a horde of zombies, leaving the mages of the Chimera in a vulnerable position. Ganzhyr spoke a word of power and unleashed his hellhounds at his enemies.

Endowed with impressive abilities (Born killer; Sequence/1; Living-dead and Regeneration/5), the cerberus is a formidable Creature that can cause serious damage to any enemy formation. The capacities described on the explanatory card allow the cerberuses' tactical potential to be improved by binding them to the House of Hestia or the House of Lazarian.

◆ WOLFEN HUNTER 3 ◆



UKWFRG 08



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

2 MINIATURES AND 1 REFERENCE CARD

RANK: WOLFEN REGULAR.
88 A.P.

Among the wild beasts of the moon-goddess, the hunters harass the enemy armies using unpredictable and deadly lightning strikes. After having executed several opponents by surprise, they retreat out of retaliation range and wait for the right moment to attack again.

Presented in a blister pack of two miniatures, the Wolfen hunters have a brand new sculpture and a reference profile that is better adapted for guerrilla tactics in Confrontation, as well as in Rag'Narok (MOV 17.5; INI 5).

◆ WAR-STAFF OF THE PLAINS ◆



UKNAEM 01



THIS BOX INCLUDES:

6 MINIATURES AND 6 CARDS: VETERAN OF THE PLAINS (REFERENCE CARD), BROGNIR, DEFENDER OF THE PLAINS (REFERENCE CARD), STANDARD-BEARER OF THE PLAINS (REFERENCE CARD), MUSICIAN OF THE PLAINS (REFERENCE CARD), THE HAND OF BRONZE (ARTEFACT, 14 A.P.), SPLITTING MOUNTAINS (TACTIC CARD).

VETERAN OF THE PLAINS
RANK: DWARF VETERAN
15 A.P.

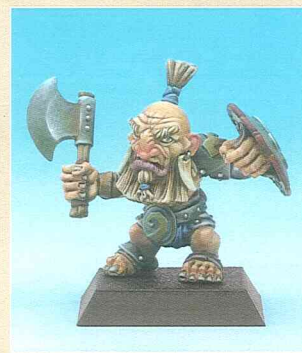
BROGNIR, DEFENDER OF THE PLAINS
RANK: DWARF REGULAR CHAMPION
50 A.P.

STANDARD-BEARER OF THE PLAINS
RANK: DWARF REGULAR
15 A.P.

MUSICIAN OF THE PLAINS
RANK: DWARF REGULAR
15 A.P.

The dwarves of the plains of Naël-Tarn are all craftsmen and warriors. The Rag'Narok doesn't scare them: they gather around the defenders of the plains, such as Brognir, and take up their weapons to protect their lands. They are dwarves and are proud of it!

Accompanied by Veterans of the plains, this Unit is ready for play in Rag'Narok®. Its numbers can be complemented by a box of soldiers of the plains.



◆ DAMRAHL, DRUNE WYRD ◆



UKDRMA 02



THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

1 MINIATURE AND 5 CARDS: DAMRAHL, DRUNE WYRD (REFERENCE CARD), THE HORN-SPIRITS (ARTEFACT, 21 A.P.), THE SHAMANISTIC SKINS (ARTEFACT, 11 A.P.), RED ORACLE (RESERVED SPELL, 5 A.P.), CAGE OF SPIRITS (RITUAL, 28 A.P.).

RANK: KELT ADEPT. WYRD.
83 A.P.

The Griffin preacher came round again in suffering. A tormentor was pouring salt into his wounds. He was a prisoner of the Drones, bound to a stalagmite covered with dry blood. Damrahl, his face hidden behind a ritual mask, let him scream and then broke his jaw with a bludgeon. "You should cherish the pain. It's the symbol of life. Now I will take away your pain, rip out your heart, and steal your power."

An Adept of shamanism and cabala (POW 6), Damrahl can quickly become a nightmare for his opponents. He masters the four primordial Elements (Air, Water, Fire and Earth) and thus has access to numerous spells. Damrahl is supplied with "Red Oracle," a spell that allows him to raise his POW when enemy Leaders die, and with the "Cage of Spirits" ritual for Rag'Narok®.

◆ SESSAIRS ARCHER ◆



UKBATR 02



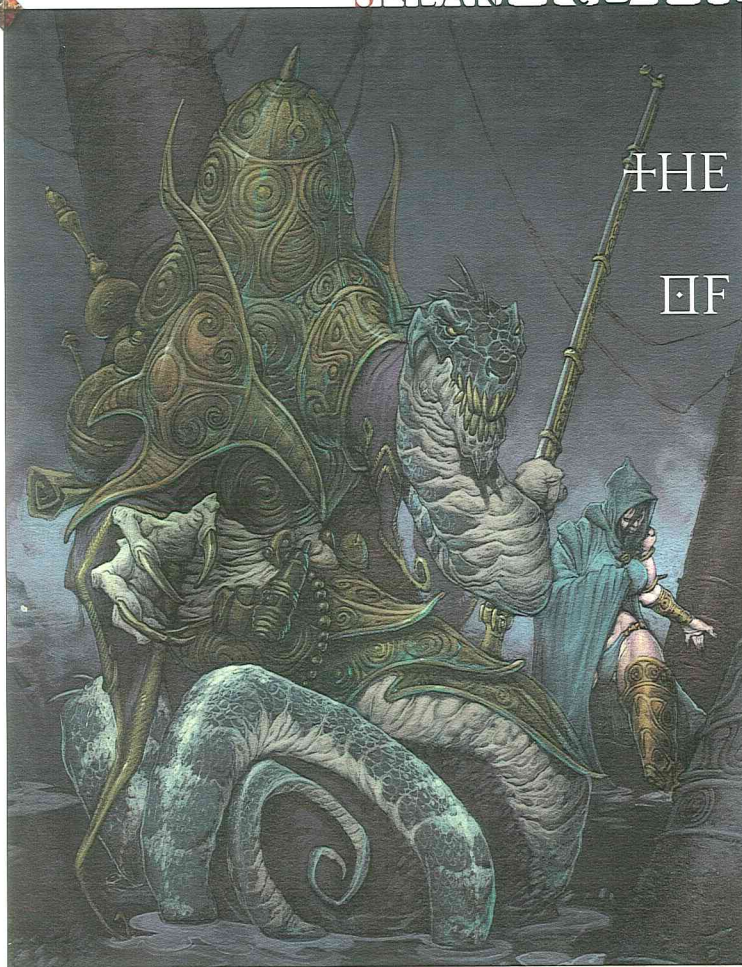
THIS BLISTER PACK INCLUDES:

3 MINIATURES AND 1 REFERENCE CARD

RANK: KELT REGULAR.
15 A.P.

The bow, which was once reserved for the hunt, is now a weapon of war among the Kelt of the Sessairs clan. Some of their warriors still consider it to be a coward's weapon. The others painfully remember their brothers being shredded to bits by volleys of bullets before the battle had even begun. The Sessairs have a strong sense of honour, yet they know to adapt: only those who remain alive can worry about things like honour.

For 15 A.P. the Sessairs archers provide a good combination of range attack and strike force in hand-to-hand combat. Indeed, they are endowed with AIM 3, INI 3, a bow/STR 3, range 20-40-60, and the "War fury" ability. They can therefore cover their brothers' charge and then join them once the fray has been engaged.



THE ASHES OF WRATH

THE FIRST OPHIDIAN TO APPEAR ON THE GAMING TABLES IS ACCOMPANIED BY A NEW NEVEL BY WILLIAM HAWK. THIS EXCERPT FROM THE ASHES OF WRATH IS ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE LODGE OF HOD.

AFTER A REMARKABLE DEBUT AS AN AUTHOR OF RELE-PLAYING GAMES (ECRYME, WITH ITS EFFSHEET NEVEL BEHEME), WILLIAM HAWK WROTE A TRILEGY: THE CREPUSCULAR CHRONICLES. THIS FIRST LITERARY SUCCESS ALLOWED HIM TO CREATE OTHER WORLDS TO READ ABOUT, AND ALSO TO PLAY IN. WILLIAM HAWK HAS INDEED WORKED ON VARIOUS RELE-PLAYING GAMES. HE HAS ALSO PARTICIPATED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIDEO GAMES.

Prologue

“The Lodge of Hod is a reality. Tales and testimony concur: this secret organisation wants to undermine your foundations and destroy the laboratories of your glorious empire of Syharhalna. The enigmatic Old Master who leads it is a templar named Masselius. For us, as for you, his death must become a priority.”

Letter written to the Syhar Trueborn
by the archivists of the Erratum.

I

The odour that reigned in the ship's cabin made the ophidian feel sick. He didn't like coming here and having to force his way through the narrow gangways that led to the back of the vessel. His head hidden under a wide, fur-lined hood, he grimaced and became restless.

The humans around him smelled like sweat and humidity. Their nervousness was palpable. Among some of them he could also sense fear.

Their chief, an Akkylannian with a pale complexion, remained unshakably calm. The templar and the ophidian were worlds apart, yet fate had brought them together.

It was a strange alliance of circumstance. Both of them knew that a struggle to the death had begun, and that one day they would have to put an end to this pact in a bloodbath. The ophidian hissed between his fangs. The templar rose and walked to his desk, an ebony table on which stood a silver casket. He opened it carefully, got out a vial, and held it up to the light coming through a porthole.

II

Inside it shimmered an amber liquid that the ophidian desired.

It was an antidote, a means to fight the evil that was devouring him from inside. The Akkylannian gave a faint smile and looked at the other four templars who were there for the exchange. The creature felt that he was seeking witnesses, that the simple fact of giving away the antidote disgusted him and put his faith to test.

The ophidian noticed with interest that the templar's hand was trembling, though his scent didn't have the taste of fear.

"We must forget our gods..." whispered the creature, "for the duration of the exchange."

The Akkylannian's scruples were perceptible. The fanatic sparkle that shimmered in his eyes didn't fit to the faint smile deforming his lips.

"Since the beginning of time there has always been a one and only god: Merin," said the templar with a soft voice.

He had quoted the first law of the Codex of Merin

III

Akkylannian ship. It was she who had guided him here; it was she who had saved him.

He remembered the first time he had been there, the tension that reigned on that moonless night on the ship's bridge. They had used his mother as bait.

He couldn't remember exactly when he began considering treason to be a possible way out. This was surely triggered by seeing her being held prisoner in the hold, terribly weakened by the years of captivity. If this poison that made him a renegade hadn't prevented him from turning to his kind, he would have come back here with them and would have loved to have attacked the ship to slaughter the handful of templars and free his mother.

Yet the evil was condemning him; the evil was gnawing at him from inside. The antidote was a reprieve, a way to buy time and to find the right moment to give the templars what he had promised them.

He thought about what he was going to sacrifice to save them both, his mother and himself.

V

without losing his smile. The ophidian grabbed the vial with an eager gesture and slipped it inside his coat.

"The time is nigh," said the creature.

Under the hood, his head turned from right to left. The templars nodded in agreement.

"We are ready," announced their chief.

The ophidian hesitated. He could leave this ship and get away from the confined atmosphere to return to his own kind. The Akkylannian with the pale complexion noticed his guest's indecision.

"Do you want to see her?" he asked.

The ophidian's split tongue sprung from the depths of his hood.

"No," he hissed, "not this time."

The templars weren't to suspect his immense distress, the weight that bore down on his shoulders as soon as he returned to his kind and which forced him to remain silent. No one was to know that his mother was being held here, in the hold of an

IV

He would surely go down in History for that. He would be the one who caused the Ophidian Alliance's prestigious library to fall into the hands of Light.

Yet he didn't care any longer. Not now. Evil had become his struggle, and his mother his redemption. He knew that he would have to live with his remorse, that he would no longer be able to consider ophidian sanctuaries to be refuges, that he was condemning them both to a life of pariahs. He also knew that the library and its tens of thousands of forbidden works, which had been stolen or purchased in the four corners of the continent, would disappear and reveal their secrets to Light. It could happen that his treason undermines the foundations of the Ophidian Alliance, that such knowledge threatens the existence of the serpent people, and that it turns the course of the Rag'Narok around.

Yet this didn't matter.

There was only her; there was only him. And Darkness.

VI

The chief of the templars broke the heavy silence that had been bearing down on the cabin for a long minute.

“When will you come back?”

“In two weeks.”

This visibly didn't please the templar. His lips tightened and he placed his hand on the silver casket.

“Soon there won't be any antidote left,” he said. “You must make haste.”

“I'm offering you the Erratum, the Alliance's library,” hissed the ophidian. “You can afford to wait a few more days.”

The templar's shoulders contracted.

“As soon as the Erratum has fallen, I won't owe you anything any more,” he said.

“I'll be far away.”

“Yes, you better be.”

A snigger was heard from the depths of the hood.

“You are insolent,” said the ophidian with a

VII

muffled voice. “As arrogant as only Light can be. Beware, templar. Strange phenomena are shaking the Alliance. The loss of the Erratum could trigger changes whose amplitude you could never imagine.”

The Akkylannian rumbled his eyebrows and retorted.

“I can't understand a thing. Go ahead, speak, explain yourself.”

Under his coat the ophidian unwound his coils and made the whole cabin shake.

“Learn to remain quiet,” he said. “Learn to measure what it costs to strike the Alliance in the heart. If you manage to reach your ends, if the Erratum falls into your hands, then you will awaken a sleeping beast. And you don't know, oh no, you really don't know what you're going to lose.”

A nervous whisper ran through the templars' ranks. Their chief imposed silence with a hand gesture and questioned the creature.

VIII

“Are you trying to scare us? Do you want to give up?”

“Me, no... but you, one day you'll give up. Light will give up.”

“Enough. Content yourself with coming back and opening the Erratum to us.”

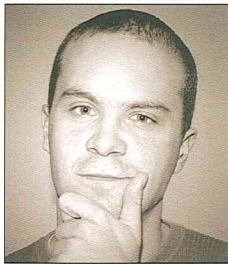
The Akkylannian couldn't see the ophidian's face twisting or the hatred glowing in his dilated pupils. The creature left with the rustle of cloth and vanished into a gangway.

A few seconds later, the whole ship shook as he slithered across the bridge and down the gangplank leading to the pier. A long moan could be heard coming from the hold.

And the templars began to pray.

IX





CHAMPION OF FRANCE!

THE IMMINENT RELEASE OF THE NEW CONFRONTATION RULES IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CRY HAVOC TO DO AN INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS TISSIER. WHY HIM? BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS HE ONE OF THIS NEW EDITION'S TESTERS, HE IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC PLAYER WHO HAS WON THE LAST TWO FRENCH CONFRONTATION CHAMPIONSHIPS.

THE RED DRAGON: *Hi Nicolas. We know you especially as a general of an Acheronian army, but you also have a real life. Can you tell the Cry Havoc readers a bit about yourself?*

NICOLAS TISSIER: I'm an engineer in information technology. Most of my extraprofessional activities are related to gaming: mainly role-playing games and card games (classical, not collectible ones), and also some board games. Actually, I play a bit of everything, but I try to avoid anything that's done on a computer.

RD: *Have you been playing Confrontation for a long time?*

NT: I started playing about four years ago, which is a long time for a single game. In my group of gamers we usually tend to change activities often.

RD: *What drew you in Confrontation?*

NT: The strong personality of the miniatures, visually speaking, of course, but also in terms of playability. Confrontation is a game in which one really has the impression of embodying the troops one is handling. That's what's needed to please a role-playing fanatic like me.

RD: *Do you make your miniatures speak?*

NT: If I'm not under too much pressure, it can happen that I make my zombies or ghouls growl when I move them. And my dwarves often insult their opponents.

RD: *What are your games with friends like?*

NT: Usually our games at home are the opposite of tournament games: we invent weird scenarios like "find the ingredients for a magical recipe in the four corners of the table while avoiding goblin bandits, and then convince the sorceress to cast the terrifying spell," which we play with as many players as possible, and most often it's every man for himself.

RD: *I think you've Darklash mixed up with Discworld, no?* (Laughs.)

NT: Yeah, there must be some of that... The Confrontation system is really great for just "letting go," so it would be a shame to let the background become a constraint.

RD: *Indeed, that's not its goal. By the way, what do you think about the backstory?*

NT: Fluff doesn't bring me very much as regards a game of miniatures. What's important to me is that the armies have style and personality.

RD: *Do you play any other wargames?*

NT: Yes, Rag'Narok.

RD: *And are you more Confrontation or Rag'Narok?*

NT: That's like asking me if I prefer a steak with fries or blueberry cake. It just isn't the same thing! They are rather complementary. I'm more Confrontation in the sense that I play it a lot more often. A good game of Rag'Narok requires a bigger effort, but it really is worth it.

RD: *Some gamers are wary of playing Rag'Narok because they have the impression that the rules are too complex. What is your opinion on this?*

NT: The more I play, the simpler my army lists become: nice and big units accompanied by a handful of Independents with equipment that isn't a pain to use. By playing this way one can concentrate on what counts most: the battle!

RD: *You have won the French Confrontation championship twice. What's your secret? Do you cheat?*

NT: It's impossible for me to take such a risk; I'm supposed to be a role model. What would they say if I was caught cheating like a loser?

RD: *You'd probably be skinned alive or something like that.*

NT: Of course! There are some real fanatics in the Conf'fédération du Dragon Rouge.

If I have a secret, then it's simply that I have spent much time thinking about the principles on which this game is based. The only known way to tame luck is by applying mathematical logic: it's just as important in poker as it is in Confrontation, though it is far from being the only element to master. When I threw myself headlong into Confrontation, I went through all the calculations that could help me build my army lists and play them. It helps a lot to know what one can hope to do with this or that miniature.

Apart from that, one shouldn't dream either: with one or two strokes of bad luck at the bad moment, I wouldn't have won anything at all.

RD: *You won the championships with the Limb of Acheron. Is that your favourite army?*

NT: Actually, I have played my dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor in competitions just as often as my Living-dead, but before the first championship finals I had just won three consecutive tournaments with Acheron. The choice of which army to use for the finals was therefore quickly made. And then last year it seemed normal to me not to change armies to defend my title... Which means that I'll be playing Acheron again during the 2005 finals. That'll change as soon as I have lost.

I also have Drones, but this is obviously more recent. In any case I need lots of affinity to be able to play an army. You'll never see me playing with the alchemists of Dirz or the Lions of Alahan, for example.

RD: *You don't like their cultures?*

NT: Once again, it's the influence of role-playing games. My favourite characters are rather antiheroes: I feel comfortable playing the part of grumpy and stingy dwarf, not that of a valiant knight. Among the bad guys I prefer the necromancers' treachery to the frank brutality of the alchemists of Dirz. I don't feel like seeing armies that I can't relate to win, even if I'm the one playing them.

RD: *Don't you worry that your opponents will end up figuring out your tactics?*

NT: By that time I'll have found some new tricks to include in my compositions. In any case, the basic idea is to play a very versatile group of fighters, so even if one knows my army list, one doesn't necessarily know how I will use it. And there's a good chance that the 2005 finals will be played using the rules of the third edition, in which case everything will change. Like all championship freaks, I'll have to question and review many things...

RD: *What do you like about participating in tournaments?*

NT: Stakes are needed for me to get totally into the game. To face a player who is really determined to beat me, to feel the tension grow when it's very important to remain calm

THE CONF'FÉDÉRATION DU DRAGON ROUGE

The Conf'fédération du Dragon Rouge was founded by players, and gathers all those who play in official Confrontation tournaments. We have it to thank for the elaboration of the rules used during these meetings and for the establishment of a national classification of the players. Moreover, it provides stories, fluff and scenarios for Confrontation, Rag'Narok and Hybrid. For more information, check out its website:

www.conf-federation.org

and cool-headed... That's what often creates unforgettable games. The other important element is that the more one plays with the same championship fanatics, the more one gets to know them. It's always nice to meet up with these good old opponents in the four corners of the country!

RD: *How do you choose your armies' composition when preparing for a tournament?*

NT: At first I simply tried to find compositions that could adapt to all the scenarios and all the various armies. But now I especially choose to enlist miniatures that I feel like playing or to find rather outlandish compositions. I know that it's a bit annoying to always meet the same army lists during tournaments, and playing against beginners with an optimised list is neither fun nor glorious. Of course, for important meetings such as the Paris Open or the championship finals, I go back to my good old and efficient lists.

What more, one goes to a tournament with 400 A.P. but only uses 300 A.P. in each game. The 100 A.P. in reserve are used to be able to adapt one's army to the enemy people and the scenario. I generally change my list for every game.

RD: *Are there players whom you have encountered several times and whose strategies you fear, or armies with which you have a hard time?*

NT: We all have our "black beasts" or our "arch enemies"! Regularly bumping into them is part of the pleasure of tournaments. The more we get to know each other, the more fun we have. Actually, which players I fear mainly depends on the army that I'm playing, for in Confrontation some have a bit of an advantage against others. When I play an Acheronian army, I fear all experienced Sessairs and goblin players, and when I play Tir-Nâ-Bor, it's rather the Scorpions and Wolfen that give me a hard time.

RD: Have you ever made mistakes that nearly cost you victory?
NT: Of course! And some really did cost me it... I especially remember a very painful game during the second Paris Open, in which a horrible psychomutant was about to dive down from the sky onto the hostage I was supposed to protect. I moved Azaël without thinking about the fact that she might need to absorb a spell. When the goblin charged, he had no trouble slaughtering the poor hostage with a Mana Bolt... I lost the game, while I could have avoided this defeat without even rolling a die. But that's the kind of dumb mistake that I haven't made for a long time. (Laughter.)

RD: Is bluff important in a tournament?
NT: It can be a way of playing. Most bluff is based on spells and artefacts, since these are the only elements that can't be seen at deployment. For example, it often happens that I place a small magician without any magic equipment who is just bait. If the opponent spends energy to eliminate him, then he turns away from the game's essential goals.

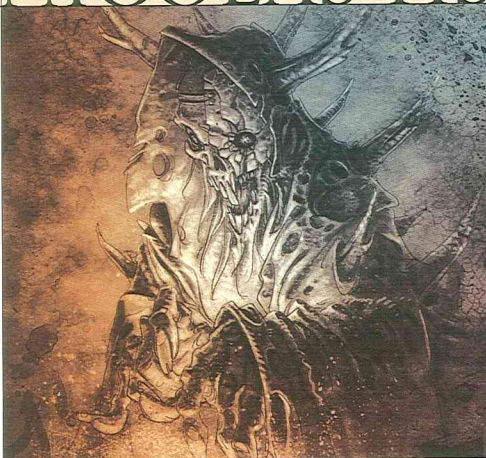
RD: Are there "traps" in which beginners often fall?
NT: Yes. They forget that the most important thing is not to eliminate the opponent, but to win the scenario. Some veteran players still make this mistake.

RD: What do you think of how the championship system works?
NT: I think it's excellent since the 2004 season. The system of the previous years favoured Parisian players (of which I am one) too much by giving advantage to those who participated in a great number of tournaments. Now things are much more balanced. And there are also more and more restrictions put into place to limit annoying army compositions. Championships are so pleasant because the federation is beginning to have lots of experience and never stops improving things. We can never thank them enough for all the time they devote to all this.

RD: You took part in the revision of the Confrontation rules. In which aspects did you work?
NT: I arrived among the testers after the main principles of the new system had already been established. I then played games and gave my opinion and advice as the rules developed. I especially had things to say about several killer combos: after meeting them tournament after tournament, one gets to know them pretty well! One of the specific things that I really helped develop is the new Wound Table. It took lots of time and calculations to give it its current form.

RD: What were the objectives and the restrictions while developing this new table?
NT: The main goal was to find a system that put more weight on Strength and Resilience, yet without making things hopeless for those who have neither one nor the other. In *Confrontation 2*, it wasn't a miracle when a small miniature slew a big one: one just had to play a few games or do some calculations to figure this out. So one was quickly annoyed by the fact that an army got most of its strength from the number of miniatures on the table. With the new version it's still possible to kill a Wolfen with a morbid puppet, but a player who manages such a feat will have very good reason to shout for joy!

RD: During demo games played with the new rules at the Paris Open, several gamers had the impression that the new rules will give an advantage to orcs and dwarves. What are your thoughts on this?
NT: Well, yes, it's true that these rules will strengthen these two armies. But one must admit that they needed that, as one can tell by looking at the results of tournaments. The new combat and wound rules will help them much more than the evolution of the abilities alone: from now on one will really be able to count on the orcs' muscles and the dwarves' armour.



The Wolfen, the Devourers and the Griffins also benefit pretty clearly from these changes.

RD: Others think that the goblins will lose a lot because of the rule saying that an army must include at most three miniatures for every 50 A.P. What's your opinion?
NT: In tournaments we are limited to 15 miniatures for every 300 A.P. (which is even more restrictive than the third edition rules), yet this doesn't prevent waves of goblins from flooding the gaming tables. Three miniatures for every 50 A.P. isn't that bad. The real reason for the goblins' loss of power can again be found in the new combat rules: the goblin marauders now have the power of a four-point miniature. What can be more logical for a four-point miniature?

This being said, nothing is lost for this army, for the goblins have very good and cheap elite miniatures. What more, strength in numbers still has certain advantages.

RD: All in all, what do you think of these new rules?
NT: Beside the game system, what pleases me most is to be able to get out and use miniatures that weren't efficient enough, such as Kelt minotaurs, Darkness hunters and Gorth the Massive, just to name those that made a very good impression during test games. Not to mention the faithful, who become just as interesting as magicians. Concerning the system itself, I think it's much more flowing and enjoyable. The importance of luck is reduced and that of strategy increased. The vast majority of players should like it.

Δ CHAMPION'S ARMY

In 2003

MAIN LIST:

- Δzaël the Unfaithful with the "Marbid anqel invocation" spell
- 1 Wolfen zombie
- 2 heavy centaurs
- 1 quaeſtar of Δcheran with the "Distartian" spell
- 1 Cerberean zombie
- 2 φhaults of Δcheran
- 3 skeletons in armour
- 2 skeleton warriors

305 Δ.P.

RESERVE:

- Chaqall, First Incarnation
- 2 marbid anqels
- Δlternative spell for Δzaël the Unfaithful: Mask of the Felan

TOTAL: 398 Δ.P.

In 2004

MAIN LIST:

- Δzaël the Unfaithful
- 2 heavy centaurs
- 2 scavengers of Δcheran
- 3 φhaults of Δcheran
- 2 zombies in armour
- 3 skeletons in armour

303 P.Δ.

RESERVE:

- 1 quaeſtar of Δcheran with the "Distartian" spell
- 2 marbid anqels
- 2 marbid puppets with axes
- Spells for Δzaël the Unfaithful: Mana Ball, Marbid Puppet Invocation or Primal Attack of Darkness

TOTAL: 395 P.Δ.

WOUND TABLE

ld6 + STR - RES (+Wound)	LEGS	ARMS	BELLY	CHEST	HEAD
< 0	NO DAMAGE				
0/1					
2/3					
4/5					
6/7					
8/9					
10/11					
12/13					
14/15					
16/17					
18 and +					

When making a Damage roll, a result of is not an automatic failure and a cannot be rolled again.

Stunned
 Light Wound
 Serious Wound
 Critical Wound
 Killed Outright

FANTASY ARCHITECTURE AT THE GATES OF THE REALMS

The Rag'narok is in full swing. The mysterious Úraken clan has now also joined the war. In this issue of *Cry Havoc* we take the opportunity to finish the work with wood that was started in the previous one. This Workshop article will guide us through the construction of a wooden torii.

Torii means “bird perch” in Japanese. It is a structure made of stone, wood, metal and concrete, and whose shape resembles the Greek letter Pi. It is a gate through which one passes as if it were an arch. Sometimes painted red, a torii marks the entrance to a sanctuary's inner sanctum.

These symbolic thresholds sometimes open a road. More surprising still, yet not less common, torii can be found standing in a lake or in the sea. They then symbolise gateways between the world of gods and that of mortals.

The curved plank at the top of a torii is called the *kasagi*. Decorations and ornaments are hung from the beam just below, called the *nuki*.

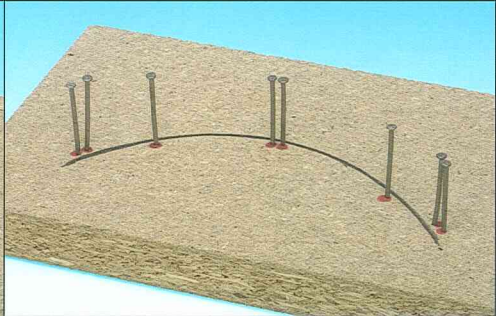




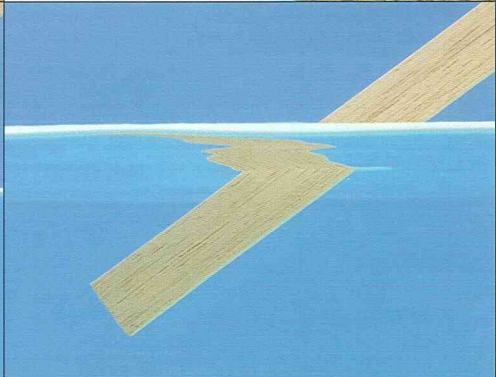
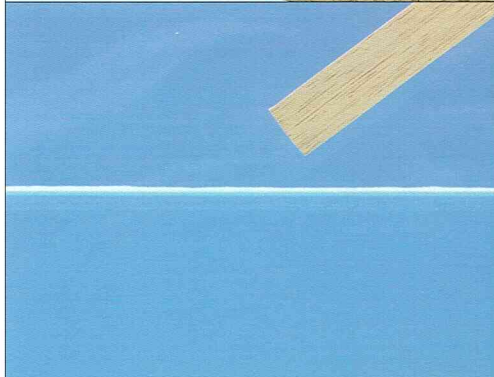


TECHNIQUE

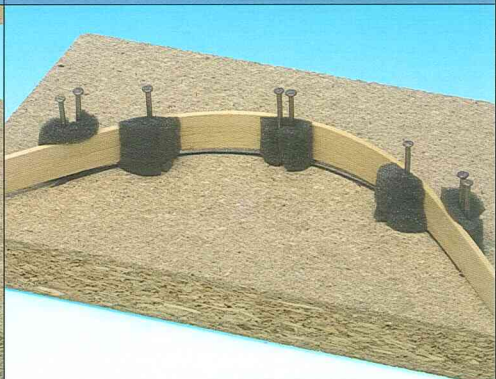
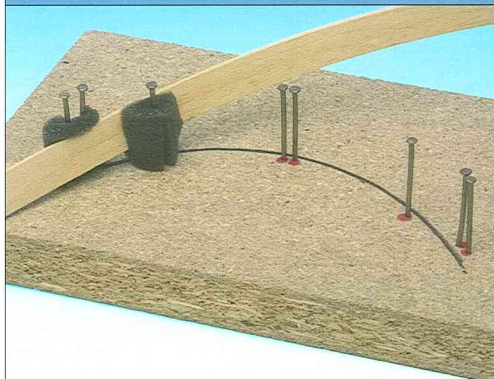
At the top of the torii is a curved plank: the *kasagi*. This is the technique used to create this essential part.



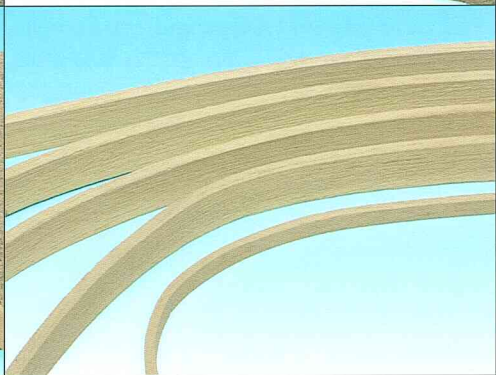
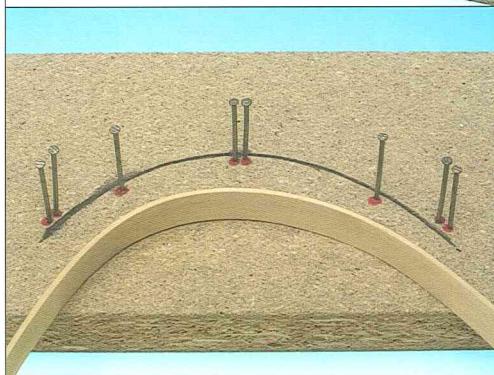
The tool used to bend the strip of wood is made by hammering a series of nails along both sides of a curved line drawn on a board of wood. The bend is more or less marked depending on how the nails are positioned.



The strip of wood is soaked in hot water for 24 hours. The wood swells and becomes more flexible. Its fibres can then support the bending forces without breaking.

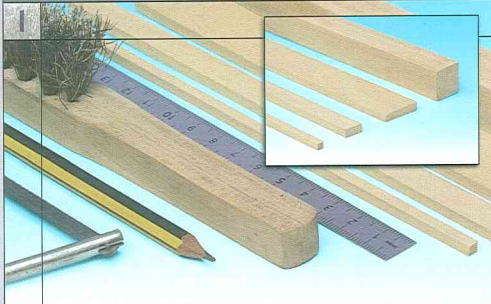


The water-soaked strip of wood is placed between the nails stuck in the board. To avoid causing marks on the wood, pieces of sponge from blister packs are placed between the strip and the nails. The wood is then dried for 15 minutes with a hairdryer, and then left to dry completely for at least 24 hours while remaining wedged on the board between the nails. It is essential that the wood is completely dry before being removed from the board for it to keep the shape it was given.



If necessary, this operation can be repeated to get the desired bend. This technique can be used to build other architectural elements out of curved wood, such as doorframes, arched beams or the framework of a boat's hull.

BUILDING Δ TORII

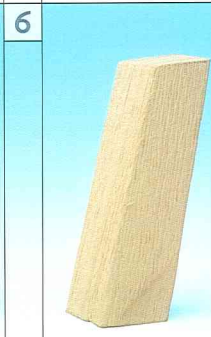
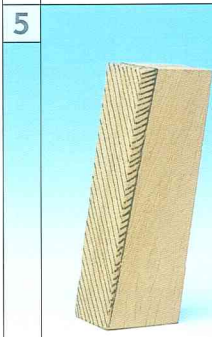
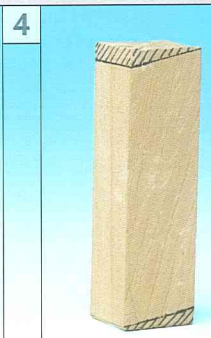
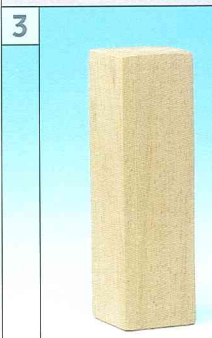


1. The torii is very simple to make using material that is easy to find: rectangular strips and pieces of wood of various thickness, carpenter glue, a board, nails and sponges taken from blister packs (to bend the kasagi), a modelling knife, a ruler, a pencil, sandpaper, a small saw and a metal brush.

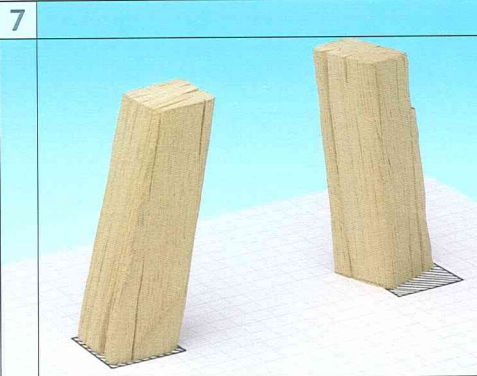
The sizes of the strips and pieces of wood that we used are 0.4 x 0.4 cm, 0.4 x 1.0 cm, 0.4 x 2.2 cm and 1.7 x 1.7 cm.



2. A rough model of the torii is made out of cardboard to visualise its shape and to balance the size of its various parts. A miniature is used as reference to make sure that it is to scale and that its dimensions are adapted.

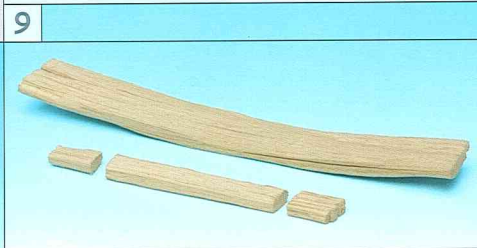
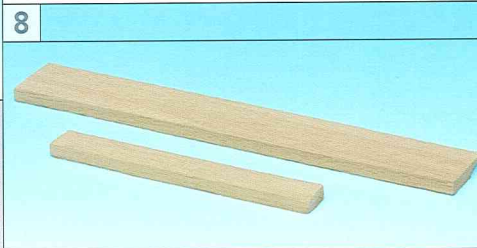


3.4.5.6. The two pillars are made at the same time. Their tops and bottoms as well as their external faces are sanded to give them their leaning aspect. The sanding is done by holding the two pillars together while rubbing them on a piece of sandpaper placed flat on a tabletop. This ensures that the two pieces are identical. The pillars are then textured using the metal brush (see *Cry Havoc*, volume 4).

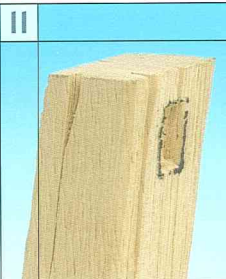
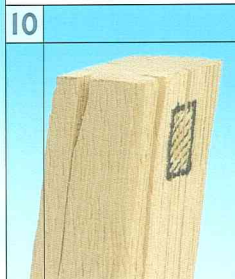


7. On a piece of paper the pillars' positions are marked with a pencil to define the distance between their bases and thus be used as a template for the horizontal parts.

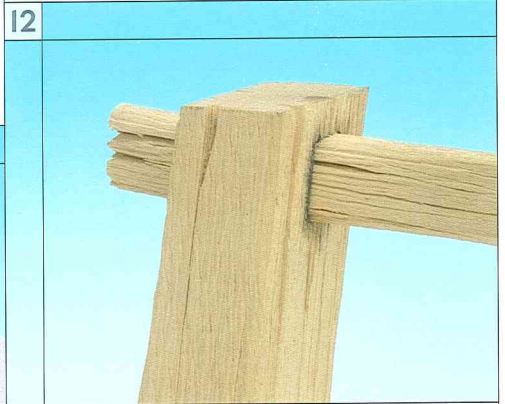
The pillars' texture is accentuated using the modelling knife so as to emphasise certain cracks and highlight the wood's imperfections and knots, always in the direction of the veining.



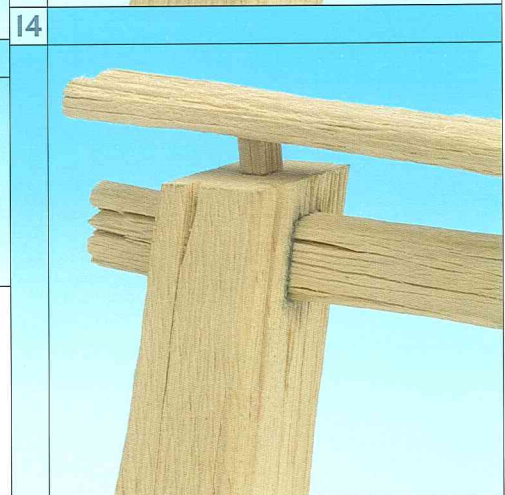
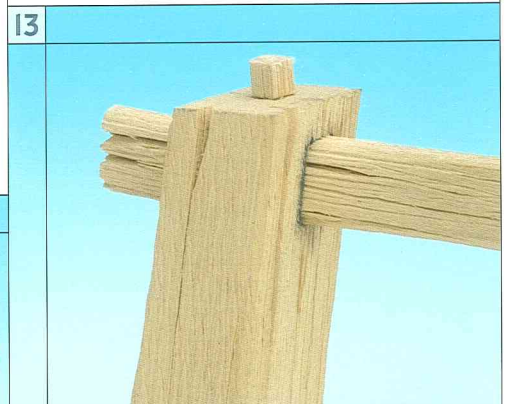
8.9. The horizontal beams are made (the lower one, called nuki, and the upper one, called kasagi). The nuki is cut into three pieces as shown to simulate the beam passing through the pillars. The kasagi is bent using the previously described method.



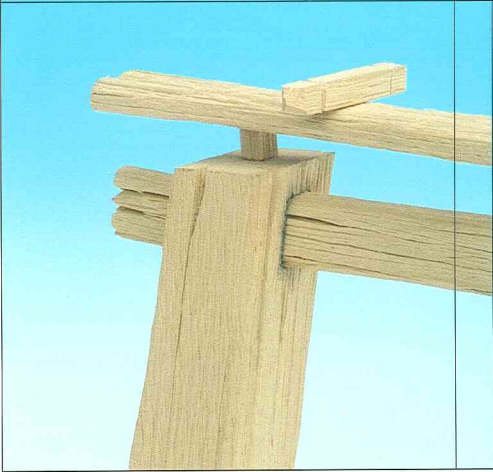
10.11. The position of the spot where the nuki's beam is to pass through the pillars is marked and then carved out up to a depth of two to three millimetres to make it look like the beam is going through and to create a shadow.



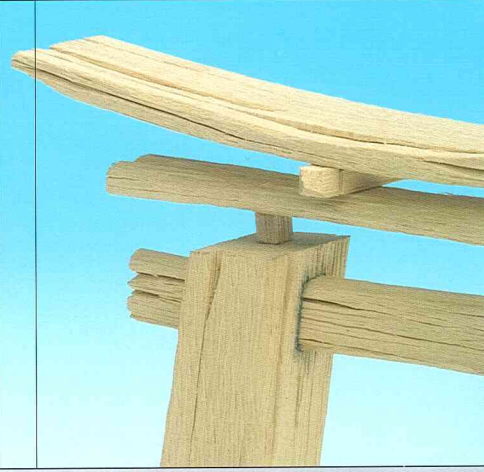
12. The three pieces of the nuki are assembled in the carved out holes while taking care to maintain their alignment. If one has the time and a good drill bit, one can make holes that really go through the pillars and slide a whole nuki into them.



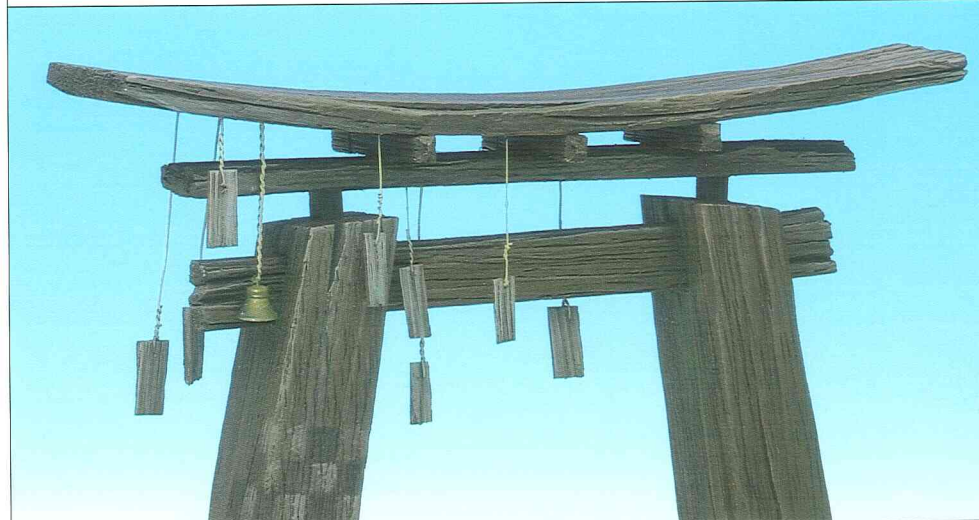
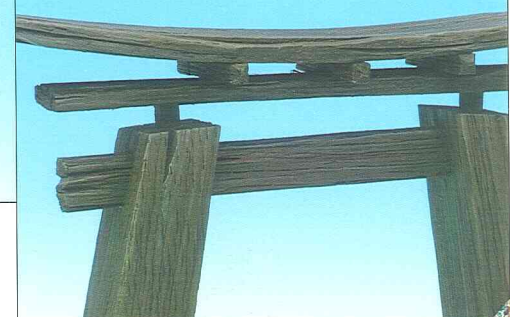
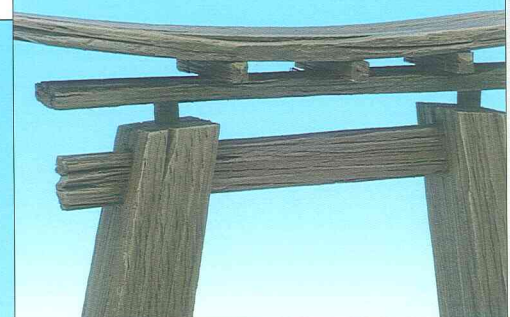
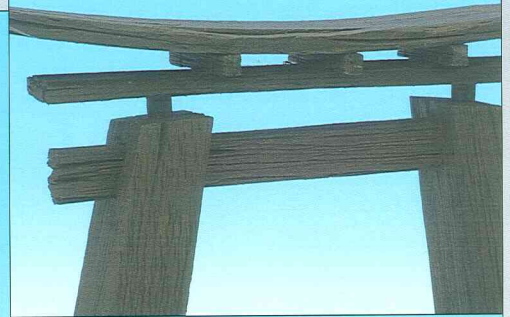
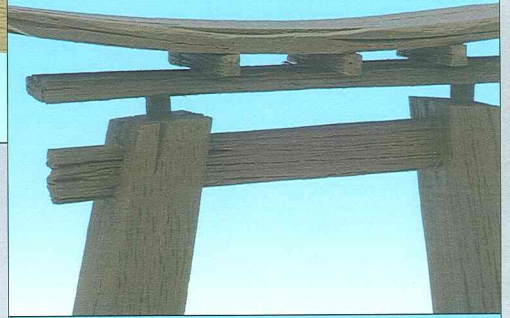
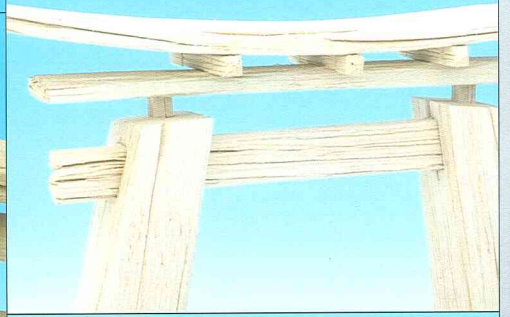
13.14. The kasagi's support blocks are glued to the top of the pillars and then the kasagi's lower plank is glued to them. The template can be used to determine how high the blocks should be.



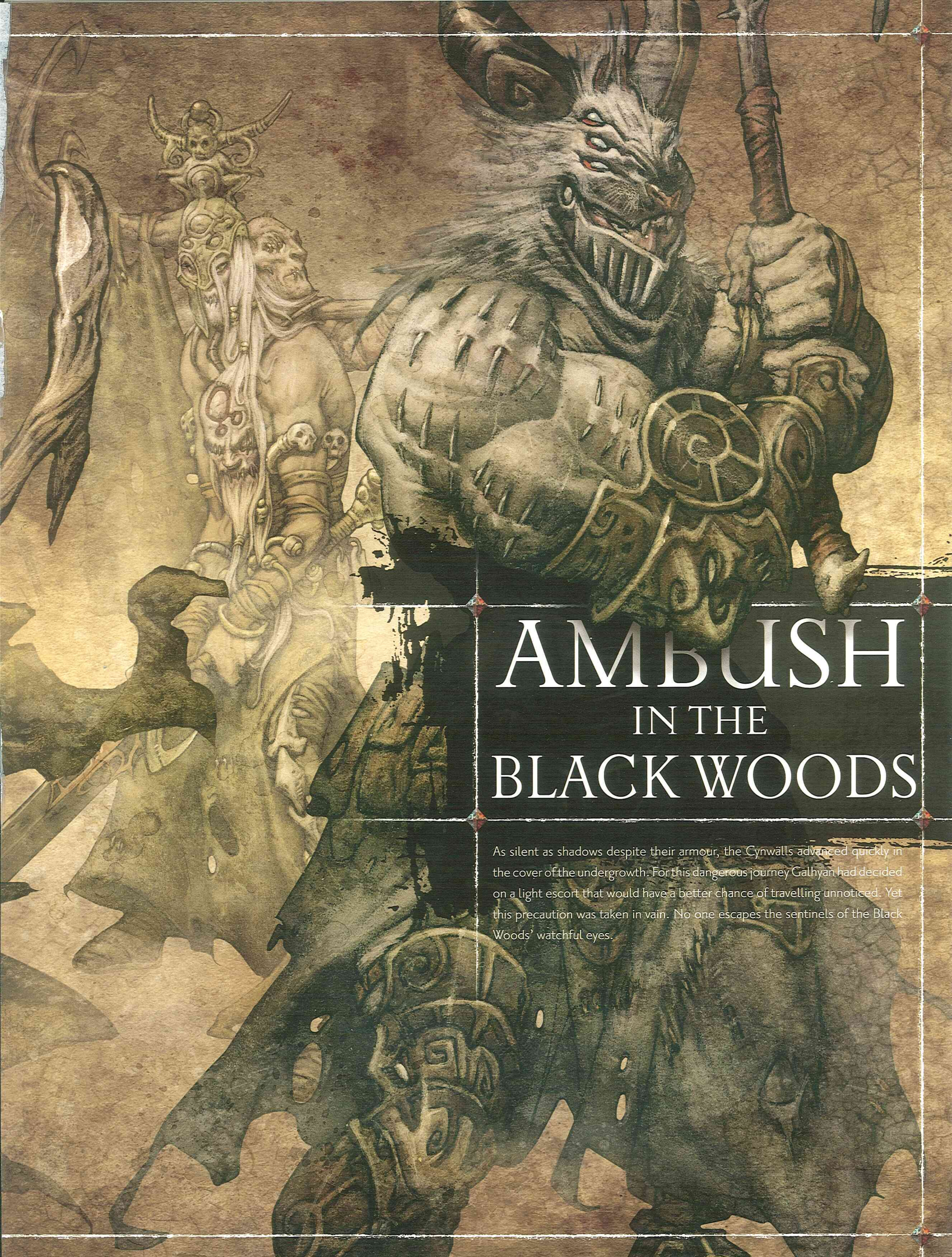
15. Supporters are placed on the kasagi's lower plank to raise the curved one. One can give a kasagi several levels by adding more supporters and then another plank, and so on.



16. The torii is finished. One can decorate it with statuettes, ropes, bells, rings, skulls or any other accessory that adds details and strengthens the atmosphere.







AMBUSH IN THE BLACK WOODS

As silent as shadows despite their armour, the Cynwälls advanced quickly in the cover of the undergrowth. For this dangerous journey Galhyan had decided on a light escort that would have a better chance of travelling unnoticed. Yet this precaution was taken in vain. No one escapes the sentinels of the Black Woods' watchful eyes.

Before proceeding with the actual battle report, this tutorial's goal is to give an overview of the most important changes that the next version of Confrontation provides to the rules of our skirmish game.

THE STRATEGIC PHASE

One of this new version's goals is to strengthen the strategic aspect of the game by giving the players more control over certain phases that were subject to the whims of chance until now.

The first innovation concerns the draw pile. From now on the players no longer shuffle their reference cards together into a single pile. Each one arranges his cards into a pile (or places them in front of him) according to a chosen order called the **activation sequence**. The players take turns revealing their cards and thus develop their strategy while adapting it to choices made by the opponent.

Like in the previous versions, each player makes a **Tactical roll** (a Discipline test made for the fighter of his choice) at the beginning of each round. This rule has nevertheless been modified a bit.

In *Confrontation 3*, if this test is made with a commander (a fighter with the "Leadership/X" ability), then the player rolls 2d6 instead of just one and uses the higher result. The one who wins the Tactical roll benefits from the following advantages:

- He chooses which player gets the lead and is thus the first to reveal the card he placed at the start of his activation sequence.
- He splits the frays to his liking at the beginning of the combat phase.
- He chooses which combat will be resolved first during the combat phase. His opponent then chooses the second one (unlike in *Confrontation 2*), and they then take turns choosing the combats until they all have been resolved.



THE ACTIVATION PHASE

Once each player has determined his activation sequence without showing it to his opponent, the winner of the Tactical roll decides which of the two players will reveal his first card and announce the actions that he will carry out with the fighters designated by this card. Once his actions have been carried out, the player gives his opponent the lead and then it's his turn act. The players thus continue taking turns.

There are, however, options that allow players to react to their opponent's decisions and to reorganise their strategy.

As in the previous version, the players have the right to place a card **in reserve** instead of activating miniatures. The maximum number of cards a player can place in reserve depends on the final result of the Tactical roll. Once a player has reached this limit, he can no longer place cards in reserve.

Example: At the beginning of a round, the final results of the Tactical rolls indicate that a player has the right to place two cards in reserve. He can therefore use this option only twice in the round being played. Furthermore, the player cannot free one or two of these cards to be able to place a third one in reserve in this round.

If a player has fewer cards in his activation sequence, as well as fewer or as many miniatures (on the battlefield), than his opponent has, then he can **pass his turn** as often as the difference in number of cards between the players.

Example: In a game round a player has one miniature less than his opponent and two reference cards less. He can therefore pass his turn twice during the activation phase.

All of the fighters' actions (except attacks in hand-to-hand combat) are resolved **during their activation**. Some have to be resolved in priority and don't allow any other action. These are mainly those that are now known as **assaults**: charging and engaging.

Other actions can be combined while respecting certain limitations. These actions are walking, running, firing, casting spells and calling miracles.

Example: An archer can walk and then fire or vice versa. Combining running and firing is not allowed.

As before, Warrior-mages and Warrior-monks benefit from certain exemptions and can, for example, combine the casting of a spell or the calling of a miracle with running.

THE COMBAT PHASE

Among the innovations, a new parameter that is already used in *Rag'Narok* makes its debut: the fighters' **force**. This concept is taken into account to determine if a fighter suffers a penalty or not when he is being charged.

The rule is a simple one: to inflict an opponent with a **charge penalty**, the fighter must have a force that is equal to or higher than the target's. However, when carrying out a combined charge, then the fighters' forces are added together.

The force of fighters of Small and Medium Size is equal to 1, that of fighters of Large Size is equal to 2, and that of fighters of Very Large Size is equal to 3.

Example:

- A dwarf charges a human. Since he is of Small Size, his force is equal to 1. His opponent is of Medium Size: his force is also equal to 1. The dwarf therefore inflicts a charging penalty.
- A goblin (Small Size: force 1) charges a Wolfen (Large Size: force 2). He therefore does not cause him any penalties.
- Two goblins (Small Size: force 1) charge a Wolfen (Large Size: force 2) at the same time. The goblins' forces are added together. Thus, their combined force is equal to the Wolfen's, who therefore suffers charge penalties.

Charge penalties are equal to -1 applied to the final result of all Initiative, Attack, Defence and Aim tests until the end of the round.

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

Three major changes have been made to the rules of combat.

- The winner of the Initiative roll no longer carries out all his attacks first. The combats follow a system of **exchanges**, which lets the fighters take turns attacking.

During an exchange the number of attacks made by a fighter is determined by the number of attack dice he has available and by the number of opponents involved in the same combat as him. In short, during an exchange a fighter must attack each one of his opponents if he has enough attack dice available.

- The second change is that now every attack must target a specific **opponent** before being attempted. Also, a parrying attempt can only be made by the targeted fighter.

- From now on the attacking player no longer chooses his attack's level of difficulty. To determine

the latter he simply rolls a die and adds the result to his fighter's ATT. One must also note that the defending player must announce if he will attempt to parry an attack before it has been resolved, and therefore before the level of difficulty is known.

WOUNDS

The **Wound penalties** remain unchanged:

- Stunned/ -1;
- Light Wound/ -1;
- Serious Wound/ -2;
- Critical Wound/ -3.

On the other hand, these penalties are no longer applied to the result on the die, but to the final result of Initiative, Attack, Defence and Aim tests as well as to Damage rolls. Due to this, the only automatic failure on a characteristic test is a .

ABILITIES, SPECIAL CAPACITIES, ARTEFACTS, SPELLS AND MIRACLES

Because there are numerous and important changes in the rules, many abilities have been modified to remain coherent with the new version of *Confrontation*. Similarly, certain artefacts, spells, miracles and special capacities have been revised.

FEAR AND LEADERSHIP

The rules on the influence of fear and on commanders have also gone through major changes.

Now, to pass a Courage test, a fighter must get a result that is equal to or greater than his opponent's FEAR, and no longer strictly greater than it.

Fear-inspiring fighters are no longer automatically immune to the effects of fear. They can also be frightened by opponents with a FEAR that is higher than theirs. Some creatures, such as the Living-dead or Beings of Darkness, are, however, exceptions to this rule.

Furthermore, the "Leadership/X" ability no longer allows commanders' FEAR to be transmitted. Now fear-inspiring commanders transmit their FEAR as if it were Courage to all fighters of their people in their camp who have a Fear or a Courage value.

Here again, commanders of Acheron and certain Drones are exceptions to this rule and transmit a bonus to the Living-dead in their camp.

Finally, combined charges no longer provide bonuses in Fear or in Courage. When several fear-inspiring fighters charge the same opponent, then only the highest FEAR among theirs is taken into account for the Courage test.

On the other hand, if several courageous fighters simultaneously charge the same fear-inspiring fighter, then each one of them must make a Courage test using his own value (unless he can benefit from a commander's) and without any bonus due to the presence of his companions-in-arms.





THE HELIAST'S ESCORT

- Galhyan, Cynwäll heliast, with the “Chain of automatons” and “Forge of the heliasts” spells
- 1 Cynwäll synchronime with the “Desynchronisation” spell
- 2 Cynwäll asadars
- 1 Cynwäll Construct warrior
- 1 Cynwäll azure hunter
- 3 Cynwäll akhamiäls
- 3 Cynwäll selsýms

Army's cost: 400 A.P. for 12 miniatures.

Jerome: “This first battle report using the new *Confrontation* rules is a double challenge for me. First of all I will have to confront Nicolas, a more than formidable opponent, and, especially, I will have to do so with an army that is completely unknown to me since I have never had the opportunity to play with the Cynwäll elves. Yet in spite of this I remain confident. This army's organisation perfectly fits the playing style that I like best: troops who are costly in A.P. but are reliable in any situation.

Because the new *Confrontation* rules give more importance to commanders, I chose Galhyan without second thoughts, which almost surely should allow me to win the Tactical roll thanks to his Discipline (DIS 6) and his ‘Leadership/X’ ability.

COMMANDERS

Now, if the tactical roll is made using a commander's DIS, then the player rolls 2d6 and keeps the better result.

I'm giving Galhyan two spells. The first one, Forge of the heliasts, will increase the efficiency of helianthic armour and weapons. The second one, Chain of automatons, will let certain bonuses be given to the Constructs I'm planning on enlisting in this group.

For the rest of my army, curiosity causes me to take a bit of every one of the miniatures available.

Two asadars and a Construct warrior will form the hard core of my group. I'm especially keen on trying the asadars, for these elite fighters provide a combination of characteristics and abilities allowing a great number of tactical possibilities in hand-to-hand combat. What more, their helianthic weapons and armour let them benefit from the ‘Forge of the heliasts’ spell.

As for the Construct warrior, he will be able to benefit from the improvements bound to the Chain of automatons and thus acquire the ‘Fierce’ ability.

To strengthen this small group of elite fighters I'm adding a synchronimous Warrior-mage to my list. Endowed with the ‘Desynchronisation’ spell, which lets the target's INI be reduced to increase his RES (or vice versa), and with a special capacity that lets him give his Concentration/X point to another Cynwäll, the synchronime will be a most efficient support for my troops in hand-to-hand combat.

Once these choices have been made, I have to think about support from a distance. I'm therefore adding an azure hunter to my group. Equipped with a helianthic crossbow, he will be able to benefit from the ‘Forge of the heliasts’ spell to increase the STR of his projectiles. Moreover, thanks to his AIM of 4 and his ‘Sharp shooter’ ability, he can take advantage of this bonus without risking failing his shots (as long as he is within short range). The azure hunters' high cost doesn't allow me to take more than one, so I take three akhamiäls to complete my contingent of marksmen. Yet this isn't a choice made for lack of better. These little beings, albeit not as efficient as azure hunters, have the huge advantage of being Constructs, which allows them to charge fear-inspiring fighters without having to make a Courage test. This will be especially useful facing a Drune army that will surely include one or two formors in its ranks, and maybe even a few wraiths.

And finally, I make my group complete by adding three Cynwäll selsýms who will allow me to avoid suffering too much from being outnumbered, if need be.”





THE ASSASSINS OF THE BLACK WOODS

- Feylhin the Savage equipped with the “Mask of the crow”
- Morgwen the Bloody equipped with the “Mask of the owl”
- 1 former fiend with an “Aura of the Horned-one”
- 1 soul snatcher with the “Immolation” spell
- 1 Drune karnagh
- 3 Drune persecutors
- 3 lanyfhs of the Black Woods (profile with Survival instinct)
- 2 Drune archers

Army's cost: 400 A.P. for 13 miniatures.


Nicolas: “Playing a 400 A.P. army of Drones against an army that doesn't cause fear is the perfect opportunity to get out two of my favourite Characters: Feylhin and Morgwen. By making this choice I practically renounce any chances of winning the Tactical roll against the Cynwälls. I hope that the twins' strength in hand-to-hand combat will let me make up for this handicap. By playing the two sisters, I can give Scout to Feylhin and deploy these two fragile Characters sheltered from enemy fire. I already know that the chances are low that I take the risk of deploying them in Jerome's camp. To back them up I'm planning on deploying the various Drune profiles available.

The choice of Elite fighters is the trickiest one. I need at least one former. I have had the opportunity

to play them in test games of *Confrontation 3*... They are even more destructive than before! I will also use one or two karnaghs, who are the only rather defensive fighters available among the Drones. After having thought about it, I'm only taking one of each and am adding a soul snatcher. This Warrior-mage is an excellent compromise: thanks to his counter-attack he defends himself even better than a karnagh, and with a carefully chosen spell he can also have an offensive impact. I decide to give him Immolation, so the soul snatcher will act as support for my basic troops.

I have quickly dropped the idea of deploying wraiths. Unless a miracle happens, the Cynwälls will always have the tactical advantage. My army must therefore be fast-moving to prevent them from completely controlling the battlefield.

So that the former doesn't just do things halfway, I'm giving him an Aura of the Horned-one, which provides him with the ‘Brutish charge’ ability.

So I still have to select my troops among the archers, the lanyfhs and the persecutors. Thanks to their capacity of re-rolling a  on their Aim tests, the Drune archers are indispensable. They are dangerous even when they are far from the action or if they are

BRUTISH CHARGE

The additional die acquired thanks to this ability is kept even if the fighter is separated from his charge's target after fray splitting.

wounded (especially the one whose shots are toxic). With the new rules this ability's effects are devastating. I decide to deploy two archers and place one on each side of the battlefield to be able to attribute my Toxic/X die wherever it will cause the most pain.

And last but not least, I must choose my foot soldiers, which I decide to balance evenly by taking three persecutors and three lanyfhs. The former are tough and will form the group around which my other fighters can gravitate. As for the lanyfhs, they have Survival instinct and not Scout since I'm not planning on deploying them in the enemy's camp. And a successful Survival instinct roll can completely change things.

I have 19 A.P. left for objects reserved to my champions. Morgwen gains a 360° field of vision thanks to the Mask of the owl, which will help her use the “Assassin” ability. Feylhin gets Bravery thanks to the Mask of the crow, which gives her +1 on the result of her attacks when she doesn't have any defence dice, which she will surely make the most of when using War fury!”

TOXIC/X

To get a Toxic/X Damage roll one must inflict a Wound. However, this additional roll is made while considering the target's RES to be equal to 0.

STRATEGY CONFRONTATION 3

The board is divided into three main sections:

- Top Section (Unit Selection):** Features circular icons for various units. On the left, Cynwäll units include CYNWÄLL SELSŶM, CYNWÄLL ASADAR, CYNWÄLL SELSŶM, CYNWÄLL AKHAMIAL, CYNWÄLL SYNCHRONIME, and CYNWÄLL AZURE HUNTER. On the right, Drune units include DRUNE PERSECUTORS, DRUNE ARCHER, LANYTH OF THE BLACK WOODS, DRUNE KARNACH, and SOUL SNATCHER.
- Middle Section (Map):** A green map with a central stone structure. It is divided into three zones: 'Cynwäll deployment zone' on the left, 'Neutral zone' in the center, and 'Drune deployment zone' on the right. Various game pieces, including letters and numbers, are placed on the map to indicate unit positions and movement paths.
- Bottom Section (Unit Selection):** Features circular icons for additional units. On the left, Cynwäll units include GALHYAN • CYNWÄLL HELIAST, CYNWÄLL ASADAR, CYNWÄLL CONSTRUCT, CYNWÄLL SELSŶM, and CYNWÄLL AKHAMIALS. On the right, Drune units include DRUNE ARCHER, FEYHIN THE SAVAGE, LANYTHS OF THE BLACK WOODS, MORGWEN THE BLOODY, and FORMOR FIEND.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The game is played on a battlefield measuring 120 x 60 cm. The chosen mission is one of the generic scenarios in the third version of *Confrontation*, titled "Conquest of the Terrain." The battlefield is divided into three sectors: each camp's deployment zone and a neutral zone in between them. The objective for each player is simple: to control as many zones as possible at the end of the battle.

SPECIAL RULES

Two parameters are taken into account when determining which camp is in control of a zone: strength in numbers and value.

Each camp's **strength in numbers** is calculated simply by adding up the fighters' force values.

A camp's **value** is gotten by adding together each fighter's cost in A.P. (including artefacts, spells and miracles). This total is, however, reduced for

wounded fighters.

A camp is in control of an objective if its strength in numbers and its value within the defined zone are both strictly greater than those of the opponent. Any other situation is a draw between the two camps for the concerned objective.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

This game will be played in six rounds, at the end of which calculations are made to determine which camp controls each objective zone.

- Control of one's own deployment zone: 1 victory point.
- Control of the neutral zone: 2 victory points.
- Control of the opponent's deployment zone: 3 victory points.

In addition to these control objectives, we have decided to spice up the game by giving each player a bonus in victory points for every eliminated enemy Character. The Cynwälls can thus win 3 points for killing Feylhin and 3 for Morgwen. The Drune camp can win 6 points for eliminating Galhyan.



DEPLOYMENT

The "Battle lines" deployment mode is used for this mission; all fighters must therefore be deployed at more than 15 cm and less than 50 cm from the median line.

THE STRATEGIC PHASE

Nicolas and Jerome must determine in advance in which order their fighters will act.

DETERMINATION OF THE APPROACH SEQUENCE

Nicolas and Jerome organise their reference cards as they wish, thus determining the order in which their miniatures will be placed onto the battlefield.

Nicolas has eight cards in his sequence and 13 miniatures on the terrain, versus seven cards and 12 miniatures for Jerome. The latter can therefore pass his turn once (the difference in number of cards) during the approach phase.

THE TACTICAL ROLL

Nicolas and Jerome both proceed with a Discipline test: the **Tactical roll**. Jerome has a huge advantage because, in addition to having a higher DIS than his opponent (6 against 3), he gets to roll 2d6 thanks to Galhyan's "Leadership/X" ability. As one could have expected, the Cynwälls win the Tactical roll with a final result of 11 versus 8.

THE APPROACH PHASE

- Preferring to see how his opponent places his troops, Jerome gives the lead to Nicolas.
- Nicolas reveals the first card in his sequence and places his lanyfhs on the sides of his deployment zone.
- Jerome gets the lead and he stalls again by passing his turn.
- Nicolas takes back the lead and places his karnagh on his right flank, behind a lanyfth.
- The lead returns to Jerome, who can no longer pass a turn. He must therefore play a card or place one in reserve. He decides to place his selsýms and deploys them all along his zone.
- Nicolas places his soul snatcher practically in the middle of his zone.
- Jerome places an asadar at each end of his zone.
- Nicolas deploys his former fiend to his left.
- Jerome places the Construct warrior a bit to the right of the middle of his front line.
- Nicolas positions an archer on each of his flanks.
- Careful to place his marksmen with the best possible lines of sight, Jerome places the card of his akhamiäls in reserve. Having won the Tactical roll, he still has the right to one more reserve card.
- Nicolas places his three persecutors next to each other in the middle of his zone.
- Jerome places the card of his azure hunters in reserve.
- Nicolas places Morgwen's card in reserve.
- Jerome deploys the synchronime on his left flank.

- Nicolas places Feylhin in the neutral zone as a scout.
- Jerome places Galhyan behind the Construct warrior to be able to use the "Chain of automatons" spell on him.
- Nicolas plays his reserve card and places Morgwen as a scout next to her sister.
- Nicolas not having any cards left, all Jerome still has to do is play his reserve cards. He first places the azure hunter in the middle on a vantage point that gives him a clear view over the battlefield. And finally, he deploys two akhamiäls on his right flank and one on the left.



TWIN LANYFHS

The twins Feylhin and Marqwen both being present in the army, one of them can benefit from one of her sister's abilities. Nicolas has chosen to give the "Scout" ability to Feylhin.

ROUND 1



THE STRATEGIC PHASE

As during deployment, Nicolas and Jerome start by organising their respective activation sequences. However, before making the Tactical roll, they both carry out certain special actions:

- Nicolas benefits from a Toxic/X die that he attributes to the archer on his right flank.
- Galhyan successfully casts the “Chain of automatons” spell on the Construct warrior as well as on the akhamiäl closest to him.
- The synchronime calls on his “Spiritual synchronisation” special capacity and sacrifices one Concentration/X point to acquire a gem of Light, which he immediately adds to his mana reserve.

Nicolas and Jerome then proceed with the Tactical roll, which is once again easily won by the Cynwälls.

THE ΔCTIVATIÖN PHASE

Despite the presence of Drune archers within range of his troops, Jerome prefers giving Nicolas the lead to be able to observe his movements before acting.

- Nicolas, also being careful not to expose his troops too quickly, places Morgwen’s card in reserve.
- Sticking to his strategy, Jerome passes his turn.
- Nicolas must play, but he has organised his sequence

in such a way as to be able to do so without revealing his plans to his opponent. He plays the archers’ card. The one on the right doesn’t move and fires at the azure hunter with the hope of quickly getting rid of the threat that this elite marksman poses. His arrow unfortunately misses its target and gets lost in the thickets. The other archer then attempts a shot at the same target, but is equally unsuccessful.

- Still following his wait-and-see policy, Jerome places the Construct warrior’s card in reserve.
- Nicolas plays the soul snatcher, who runs before casting the “Immolation” spell on the lanyfh furthest to the right and then on himself. The two incantations are successful and Nicolas decides to give a +1 in ATT to both of them.
- Jerome places the akhamiäls’ card in reserve.
- Nicolas plays the card of the persecutors, who all run forwards.
- Jerome finally orders his troops to start moving. He plays the card of the selsyms, who walk to get nearer to the Drones while remaining within support range of their comrades.
- Nicolas plays the card of the former fiend, who walks to position himself between Morgwen and Feylhin.
- Jerome plays the asadars, who walk.
- Nicolas plays the karnagh, who runs to get into a more central position.
- Jerome plays Galhyan, who walks towards the azure hunter and casts the “Forge of the heliasts” spell on him. The incantation is successful and Jerome invests two additional gems of Light to grant a total bonus of +5 in STR to the helianthic crossbow’s

DESYNCHRONISATION



Path: Chronamancy.

Range: 15 cm.

Difficulty: 3 + target’s INI.

Duration: Until end of round.

Area of effect: One friendly Cynwäll.

Frequency: 1.

Once this spell has been successfully cast, the magician can immediately spend additional gems of Light. (Max.: the POW printed on his card.) Each gem thus spent either:

- Increases the target’s INI by 1 point and reduces his RES by 2 points.

OR

- Reduces the target’s INI by 1 point and increases his RES by 2 points.

Neither of these two characteristics can become less than 0 due to this spell’s effects.

bolts until the end of the round.

- Nicolas plays the lanyfhs and has them run.
- Jerome plays the akhmiäls he was holding in reserve. The first of the three runs, which brings him to within less than 10 cm of Morgwen and Feylhin. Undetectable until now (thanks to Scout), the two Drune warrioresses have now been spotted. The second akhmiäl walks and fires at Feylhin, but he misses his target. The third akhmiäl walks and tries to shoot at the soul snatcher, but his target is out of range.

Nicolas: "At this stage all I can do is play the twins, and I have an important choice to make. I can play it safe by slaughtering the wretched akhmiäl who came to uncover the two sisters; no enemy miniatures are in a position to prevent this execution. But I can also attempt a much riskier action: if Feylhin and Morgwen charge the asadar in front of them, then only the Construct warrior could intervene. With the twins' Initiative values, Feylhin's ATT when she is in a War fury, and Morgwen's 'Assassin' ability, I have a good chance of injuring or even eliminating two elite fighters right in the first round.

Unless I win the Tactical roll, there will probably never be another so favourable situation..."

- Nicolas plays Feylhin's card and she charges the asadar in front of her.
- Jerome plays the Construct warrior, who charges Feylhin.
- Nicolas plays his reserve card: Morgwen charges the

Construct warrior.

- Jerome reveals his second reserve card. The azure hunter walks and fires at the persecutor closest to him. The Cynwäll being within close range, Jerome doesn't have to make an Aim roll thanks to the "Sharp shooter" ability. The unlucky Drune suffers a Damage roll (STR 6 + 5 thanks to the "Forge of the heliasts" spell = 11), which leaves him with a Serious Wound.
- Nicolas doesn't have any cards left to play, so Jerome plays the last card in his sequence. The synchronime is activated and runs towards the middle where it seems that most of the combats will be taking place.

THE COMBAT PHASE

Jerome: "Darn, why was I in such a hurry? All the joy of being able to increase the STR of the azure hunter's projectiles by investing additional gems when casting the Forge of the heliasts made me forget to keep a few gems for the Construct warrior benefiting from the Chain of automatons. Two gems of Light would have allowed me to give him the 'Fierce' ability, which would have been decisive when fighting Morgwen."

Only two combats are being fought. Having won the Tactical roll, Jerome chooses which one is resolved first. If more than two combats had been in process, then Nicolas would have chosen the second one, then Jerome the third, and so on.

Jerome chooses the combat between the asadar and Feylhin.

CHAIN OF AUTOMATONS



Path: Reserved.

Range: 10 cm.

Difficulty: 6 + target's INT.

Duration: Until end of round.

Area of effect: One friendly Construct.

Frequency: 10.

For the casting of this spell, Galhyan's field of vision is of 360°. Before a tactical roll, Galhyan can cast this spell onto a friendly Cynwäll Construct equipped with heliasthic mechanisms. If the incantation is successful, then the target is bound to Galhyan until the end of the round.

At the beginning of a game phase, Galhyan can attribute one or several of the abilities below to each of the Constructs bound to him, no matter their position on the battlefield. To do so, he must spend mana gems. The indicated cost is that for one Construct. The abilities are acquired until the end of the round.

- 1  (Akhmiäl only): Instinctive firing.
- 1  and 1  : Passed.
- 2  : Fierce.
- 2  : Regeneration/5.

IMMOLATION



Path: Elemental.

Range: 25 cm.

Difficulty: 6.

Duration: Special.

Area of effect: One miniature.

Frequency: Unlimited.

Once successfully cast, this spell provides either ΔTT +1 or STR +1. It ends when the beneficiary suffers a Wound. If the incantation fails, the magician suffers a Wound (S+R 0).

Immolation can be cast several times per round on the same miniature.



AN ASADAR VERSUS FEYLHIN

Nicolas announces that Feylhin is using the “War fury” ability as well as the “Rage of the sorceresses” special capacity.

Feylhin being equipped with the Mask of the crow, she benefits from Bravery. In addition to its effect on Courage tests, this ability also gives its beneficiary a +1 on the results of his Attack rolls when he places all his combat dice in attack.

Against all odds, the asadar wins the initiative.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
FEYLHIN	3	0
ASADAR	1	1

FIRST EXCHANGE

The asadar having won the Initiative test, he attacks first. Because Feylhin doesn't have a defence die, Nicolas cannot announce a parrying attempt. The Cynwäll's Attack test is successful and the test required by Survival instinct for Feylhin fails. Since Jerome hasn't distributed the asadar's Concentration/X points yet, he can increase this fighter's STR. Yet he is prudent and decides to keep these points to increase his DEF during upcoming attacks. The Damage roll inflicts Feylhin with a Serious Wound.

Now it's the lanyfh champion's turn to retaliate. Before Nicolas does his Attack test, Jerome increases the asadar's DEF by two points and, knowing that Feylhin's Attack tests will be decreased because of her Wound, he announces sustained defence.

Nicolas proceeds with Feylhin's Attack test and gets a natural result of 6, which is added to Feylhin's Attack value (ATT 6) for a total of 11. This result is subject to three modifiers in this specific case: -2

RAGE OF THE SORCERESSES

The conditions for using this capacity are the same as those for War fury, with two exceptions. Instead of benefiting from an additional attack die, the lanyfh using it can re-roll once a Damage roll whose result, even when modified, doesn't inflict at least a Wound or a Killed Bluright. During the same combat the lanyfh can re-roll only one single Damage roll thanks to this capacity.

Rage of the sorceresses and War fury can both be used in the same combat.

due to Feylhin's Serious Wound; -1 because of the charge penalty; and +1 thanks to Bravery. The roll's final result is therefore equal to 9.

To succeed his sustained defence, Jerome has to get a final result that is greater than Nicolas's by two points, meaning 11. Jerome does the asadar's Defence test and gets a 6. When added to the Cynwäll's Defence value (DEF 6) and after the charge penalty has been subtracted (-1), the final result is equal to 9, which is not enough. So Nicolas makes a Damage roll against the asadar, but it has no effect. However, thanks to the “Rage of the sorceresses” special capacity, he rolls the dice again and this time inflicts a Light Wound.

SECOND EXCHANGE

Nicolas announces that Feylhin is making a master strike. Her two last attack dice are therefore concentrated to strike a single blow. Nicolas passes his test: he thus adds Feylhin's ATT to her STR for the ensuing Damage roll. This time he inflicts a Serious Wound.

At the end of this first duel, Feylhin and the asadar both have a Serious Wound.

MORGWEN VERSUS A CONSTRUCT WARRIOR

Morgwen wins the initiative.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
MORGWEN	2	0
CONSTRUCT WARRIOR	0	2

Jerome: “The ‘Ambidextrous’ ability allows counter-attacks if the Defence test's final result is greater than the attack's difficulty by two points or more. In fact, this is a risk-free counter-attack. Indeed, if the difficulty is equalled or surpassed by only one point, then the attack is nevertheless defended against. This ability is extremely useful against Characters because this prevents them from reducing their ATT and DEF to acquire additional combat dice (for fear of suffering a backlash). By placing the Construct's 2d6 in defence I make sure that my opponent won't crush me with his attacks, and I can even hope to repay him in kind.”

FIRST EXCHANGE

Morgwen proceeds with her first attack with a final result of 7. The Construct gets a final result of 8, which is enough to parry the attack, but not enough to counter-attack.

Because the Construct doesn't have any attack dice, the second exchange starts right afterward.

SUSTAINED DEFENCE

A fighter who hasn't placed more dice in attack than in defence can attempt a sustained defence with his last defence die. The difficulty of all Defence tests is then increased by two points until the end of the combat, but he keeps his defence die far as long as he manages to parry the opponent's attacks.

SECOND EXCHANGE

Nicolas gets a final result of 8 for Morgwen's attack, but once again Jerome gets a result of 8, which allows him to resist the Drune warrior's assault.

Nicolas: “The result of my offensive is rather disastrous... Feylhin, whose death is one of my opponent's objectives, has a Serious Wound and the Construct managed to parry Morgwen's two attacks. What more, I have left an akhmiäl in a position to block my former in the next round. I should have stalled a bit, but tough luck, I'll just have to deal with this bad start.”

THE MYSTIC PHASE

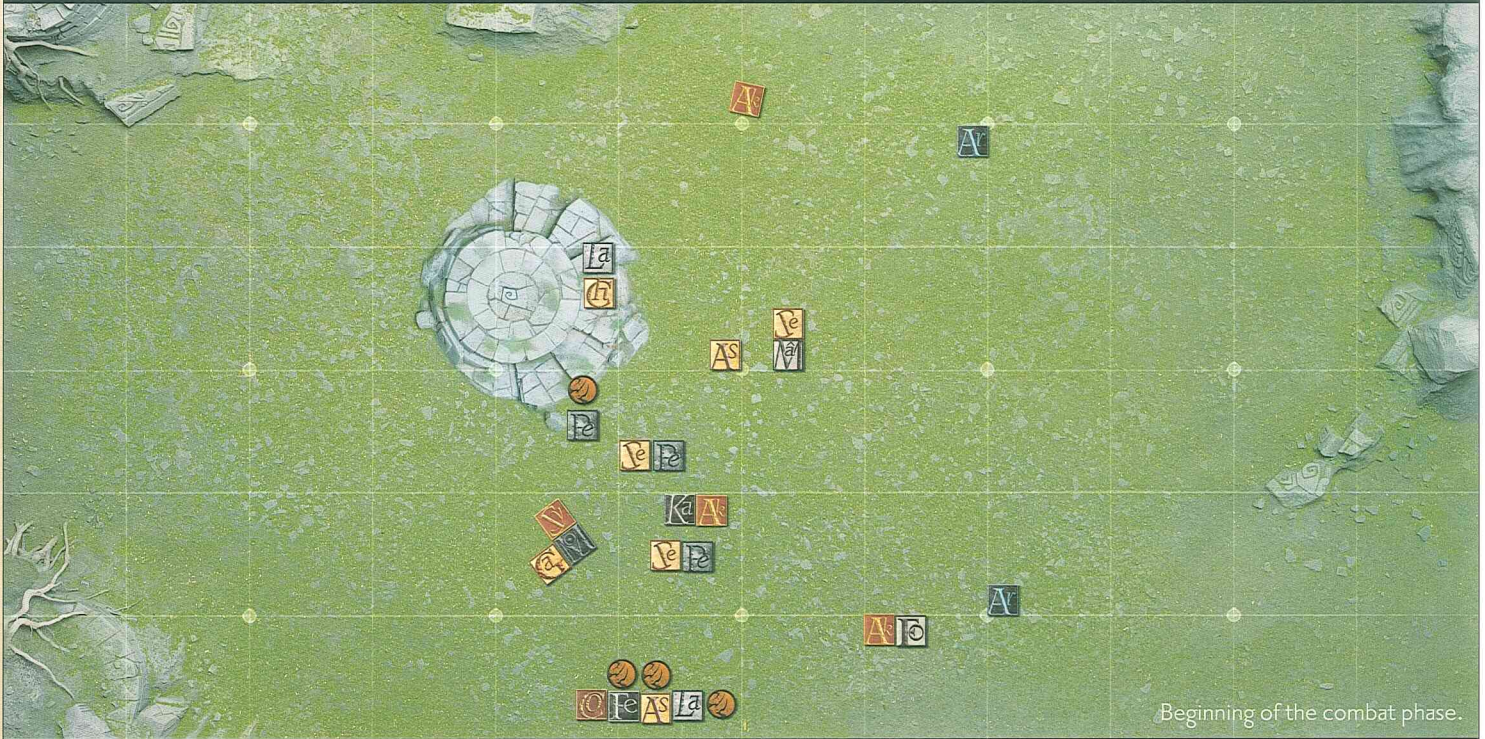
Nicolas and Jerome do their magicians' mana recovery rolls. The soul snatcher recovers two gems of Fire, the synchronime, two gems of Light, and Galhyan, five gems of Light.

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE

Because neither of the two players has an action to carry out during this phase, the first round ends.



ROUND 2



Beginning of the combat phase.

THE STRATEGIC PHASE

After having organised their respective activation sequences, Nicolas and Jerome get ready to make a new Tactical roll. Before this, they have certain choices to make.

Nicolas again attributes his Toxic/X die to the archer on his right flank. Galhyan being too far from the Constructs, he cannot cast Chain of automatons. Finally, Jerome decides not to use the synchronime's special capacity, for he is planning to send him into combat, so the Warrior-mage will need his Concentration/X point.

Once again Galhyan proves his value as commander by allowing the Cynwälls to win the Tactical roll.

THE ACTIVATION PHASE

All of this round's activations are not described in detail. It's time to stop beating about the bush: victory will belong to the one who knows to take the initiative!

Nicolas: "Now's the time to rush ahead, but not just in any way! I'm sure that Jerome will start by playing his akhmiäls to neutralise my former, so I have placed his card pretty late in my activation sequence, preferring to begin by playing my persecutors. By directing their assault toward the left, I'm able to leave an asadar without an opponent within his range, which is one thing less to worry about."

- Jerome gets the lead and activates the akhmiäls. He announces a charge against the former fiend for the first one. Not that he has any hope for the combat's outcome, but this will bog down the creature for at least one round. The second akhmiäl doesn't move and fires at a lanyfh. The Aim test is passed; Nicolas fails his Survival instinct roll and the lanyfh suffers a Serious Wound. The third akhmiäl attempts to fire at the soul snatcher after having walked, but fails.
- Nicolas plays the Drune persecutors' card. Two of them each charge a selsym while letting out a war cry; the third one runs and crosses the enemy lines. The Cynwälls don't give in to fear while facing this assault.

Nicolas: "By separating my persecutors' charges I'm giving myself two small chances of making a selsym flee by using War cry/X. The third Drune veteran has a Serious Wound and doesn't have an opponent worthy of him within changing range, so I am sending him off to run around among the Cynwälls. In the next round he'll be able to attack a wounded fighter or slow down a dangerous opponent."

- Worried that the azure hunter is charged before being able to fire, Jerome activates him and targets the lanyfh. The sharpshooter strikes true and unlucky Nicolas once again fails his Survival instinct roll. The Drune warrior dies on the spot.
- Wanting to avenge his sorceress's death, Nicolas activates his archers, who don't move and target a selsym and the azure hunter. Yet fate is against them and none of their arrows hit their targets.

- Nicolas activates his lanyfhs. The one on the left charges the asadar who is already in base-to-base contact with Feylhin, and the second one charges the azure hunter, taking advantage of the "Leap" ability to reach his vantage point.

Nicolas: "The main goal of the attack on the asadar is to inflict him with charge penalties, which can make a difference when facing such a powerful opponent. Everything must be done to save Feylhin!"

- Seeing the asadar on his right in a tricky situation, Jerome activates Galhyan, who walks and casts the "Forge of the heliasts" spell. The asadar's STR increases from 7 to 12! This is enough to make Nicolas think twice.
- Magic is answered with magic. Nicolas plays the card of the soul snatcher, who runs and casts Immolation on the persecutor in base-to-base contact with a selsym: ATT +1.

Nicolas: "Despite the importance of STR in the new *Confrontation* rules, I decided to use Immolation to increase my troops' ATT to compensate for the Cynwälls' good Defence values."

- Nicolas then activates Morgwen, who manages to disengage before engaging Galhyan.



Nicolas: “My biggest mistake during this game... Morgwen would have been a lot more useful by staying engaged with the Construct, but when I saw Galhyan within reach of her claws I couldn't help attempting an attack on the heliast. This was a much too risky action, even more so since the synchronime is in a position to intervene.”

- Not thrilled by the idea that his commander should confront a fury such as Morgwen alone, Jerome immediately sends the synchronime to charge the Drune sorceress.
- Jerome then plays the selsyms' card. Only one of them is still free of any opponents and charges the soul snatcher.
- Nicolas plays his last card and has his karnagh charge an akhamiäl.
- And finally, Jerome attempts to bring his second asadar into base-to-base contact with the soul snatcher, but the latter is too far away.

THE COMBAT PHASE

Because Jerome won the Tactical roll, he chooses which combat is resolved first. He selects the one between an asadar and a lanyfh.

AN ASADAR VERSUS A LANYFH

The two fighters are Seriously Wounded. Nicolas decides not to use Rage of the sorceresses. This is a wise choice since the asadar wins the initiative.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
LANYFH	0	2
ASADAR	2	0

FIRST EXCHANGE

Jerome is getting ready to proceed with the asadar's first attack and Nicolas announces that he'll attempt to defend himself with only one die. Jerome gets a natural result of 1 on his roll. The attack fails and Nicolas keeps his defence die.

SECOND EXCHANGE

The lanyfh now has two defence dice to attempt to parry the asadar's last attack. This time Jerome succeeds his Attack roll, but Nicolas also does so with his Defence roll: the lanyfh blocks the Cynwäll's deadly blade.

Jerome: “How frustrating! I have just failed an opportunity to take a decisive advantage. If I hadn't

gotten a 1 on my first roll, then I could have succeeded at least one attack that would have had good chances of killing the lanyfh thanks to the asadar's heightened Strength (STR 12). I then could have turned against Feylhin, who would have ended up being alone against a Construct warrior and an asadar with a Wolfen predator's Strength.”

Nicolas then chooses the combat between the karnagh and an akhamiäl.

THE KARNAGH VERSUS AN AKHAMIAL

Though Nicolas thought that he'd win an easy victory, the two fighters end the encounter with Serious Wounds. The little Cynwäll Constructs prove to be devilishly efficient.

Nicolas: “The karnagh would have been in a position to support Morgwen if he managed to eliminate his opponent. Once again I'm taking too many risks to succeed a tricky action and this combat's unexpected result just makes this situation even trickier.”

Jerome gets the lead for the choice of the combats to be resolved and chooses the fray pitting Morgwen against Galhyan and the synchronime.

GALHYAN AND A SYNCHRONIME VERSUS MORGWEN

Nicolas decides not to use the “Rage of the sorceresses” capacity.

The Cynwälls win the initiative.

Seeing Nicolas place his three dice in Defence, Jerome accordingly attributes his fighters' Concentration/X points. He increases Galhyan's Defence (DEF +2) and gives him an additional die. Because the Cynwäll has the “Sequence” ability on his

ABOUT THE ADVANTAGE OF CHARACTERS

“Pure” magician Characters such as Galhyan all benefit from the “Sequence/1” ability by default, which allows them to acquire one additional combat die by lowering their Attack and their Defence by two points each. However, if they have the “Sequence” ability on their reference card (as is the case for Galhyan), then this combat die only casts them one point in each characteristic.

reference card, this die only costs him one point in ATT and in DEF. Jerome then declares two attacks and one defence for Galhyan in case Nicolas attempts a counter-attack. He increases the synchronime's ATT by one point and places his two dice in attack.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
MORGWEN	0	3
GALHYAN	2	1
SYNCHRONIME	2	0

FIRST EXCHANGE

The synchronime's first attack is parried by Morgwen. Galhyan's first attack fails, thus allowing the Drune warrior to keep her defence die.

SECOND EXCHANGE

The synchronime's second attack is again parried. Nicolas fails his Defence roll against Galhyan's second attack, but the Adept only manages to inflict a "Stunned."

In this round's other combats a persecutor manages to inflict a Serious Wound on a selsym without being wounded himself. The other combat opposing a persecutor and a selsym ends with neither of the two

fighters being injured.

The last combats are in the Cynwälls' favour. The azure hunter inflicts the lanyfth with a Serious Wound, thus causing her to lose the benefits of the "Immolation" spell. And finally, the akhamiäl causes the surprise of the round facing the former fiend. At the end of their combat the little Construct is still alive (though he is Critically Wounded) and has even managed to inflict the demon with a Light Wound.

The last combat is between Feylhin and the Construct warrior.

FEYLHIN VERSUS A CONSTRUCT WARRIOR

Nicolas announces that Feylhin is using War fury and Rage of the sorceresses. Unfortunately for him, Feylhin doesn't win the initiative.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
FEYLHIN	3	0
CONSTRUCT WARRIOR	1	1

FIRST EXCHANGE

The Construct succeeds his first attack. Feylhin's Survival instinct roll fails and she suffers a Critical

Wound!

Nicolas is about to proceed with Feylhin's first attack. Jerome could declare a sustained defence that would allow the Construct to defend himself against the warrior's three attacks with his single defence die. But this would force him to renounce the "Ambidextrous" ability. The opportunity is a golden one and Jerome decides to try his luck with a regular defence.

Nicolas does his Attack test and the worst thing that can happen happens! He gets a natural result of \square , meaning an automatic failure. Worse yet, Jerome now has a choice. Since the Construct has the "Ambidextrous" ability, he can choose either to keep his defence die or to counter-attack immediately without having to do a Defence test.

Jerome obviously doesn't hesitate and chooses to counter-attack. Nicolas watches powerlessly as his champion meets her tragic fate: Jerome succeeds his Attack test and the Construct finishes off Feylhin without meeting any opposition!

THE MYSTIC PHASE

During the mystic phase the soul snatcher recovers two gems of Fire and Galhyan recovers four gems of Light. Because the synchronime's mana reserve is already full, he doesn't get any further gems.

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE

Nicolas does the former fiend's Regeneration/X roll, but fails.

Jerome: "The situation at the end of the second round can only satisfy me. Not only have I managed to prematurely eliminate Feylhin, one of Nicolas's major fighters, but this also let me win three precious victory points. In addition to this my akhamiäl has managed the feat of surviving his encounter with the former, who thus risks being blocked for another round. The only letdown is the combat in which Morgwen encountered Galhyan and a synchronime; I was hoping to at least wound the second accursed sister."

Nicolas: "At this stage I don't have much hope left of winning the game. Only a persecutor did what I was expecting of him while my other troops miserably failed their actions. The only bright spot was provided by Morgwen, who made up a little for my mistake by remaining unharmed in face of two opponents.

Giving up is out of the question. My archers won't spend their lives failing their shots, and the former, Morgwen, and the soul snatcher are three miniatures that can have great influence on the things to come!"





THE STRATEGIC PHASE

Nicolas assigns his Toxic/X die to the archer on his left side. Galhyan casts the “Chain of automatons” spell on a Construct warrior and an akhmiäl. The Cynwälls once again win the Tactical roll.

Nicolas: “I’m choosing this option in advance for the following rounds. If the soul snatcher isn’t injured, he’ll keep this bonus.”

- The last persecutor who is still free of any opponents engages the asadar on his right to prevent him from charging the soul snatcher.

- Jerome activates the azure hunter and increases his INI thanks to his Concentration/X point, hoping that the Cynwäll will manage to disengage to be able to fire at the lanyfh. A result of \square or more is enough to successfully disengage, but Jerome gets a \square . The azure hunter therefore remains in base-to-base contact with the lanyfh and must place all his

THE ACTIVATION PHASE

All of this round’s activations are not described in detail.

- Jerome gets the lead and plays the akhmiäls’ card. Until now Nicolas has failed all his Aim tests, but his bad luck won’t last forever. Jerome therefore tries to eradicate this threat and lets the last akhmiäl who is free of any opponents fire at an archer, who is inflicted with a Serious Wound.
- The Construct warrior engages the Drune karnagh.

Jerome: “By sending the Construct against the karnagh I hope to save my akhmiäl, for in the last rounds, when many fighters have Critical Wounds, the marksmen can be decisive by eliminating an opponent at the last moment.”

- The soul snatcher attempts to disengage... but fails! During the combat phase his dice will have to be placed in defence. Yet this doesn’t prevent him from using the “Immolation” spell on himself and thus giving himself +1 in ATT.



combat dice in defence.

- Despite this stroke of bad luck, Jerome again attempts to disengage one of his selsÿms engaged against a persecutor. He also uses the Cynwäll's Concentration/X point to increase his INI. This time the test is passed. The selsÿm leaves the persecutor without an opponent and engages the lanyfh who is fighting against the asadar.
- Morgwen disengages from Galhyan and the synchronime and returns to engage the synchronime in a position in which she has only him as opponent.
- To prepare himself for the rough combat awaiting him against Morgwen, the synchronime casts the "Desynchronisation" spell on himself: INI -1 and RES +2.
- The wounded Drune archer fires at an akhamiäl, but fails his shot. The second archer succeeds a decisive shot by hitting Galhyan, who was exposed by Morgwen's disengagement. The Damage roll causes a Serious Wound, and that's not all. Because the archer has the benefit of the Toxic/I die, another Damage roll (STR I) is made while ignoring the target's RES, and succeeds. Galhyan is Critically Wounded!

Nicolas: "Finally a successful shot, and what a shot! That's the little nudge that I needed to start hoping again!"

Jerome: "With Galhyan being Critically Wounded the game will take on a whole different aspect. Luckily for me Nicolas has no more troops left to activate and engage Galhyan."

THE COMBAT PHASE

At the start of the combat phase Jerome sacrifices four of Galhyan's gems of Light to give the "Fierce" ability to the Construct and to the akhamiäl benefiting from the "Chain of automatons" spell.

Jerome having won the Tactical roll, he chooses the combat between the unwounded asadar and the persecutor with a Serious Wound, thus hoping to take advantage of a pursuit movement. Unfortunately the Cynwäll only manages to carry out one attack, so the Drune finishes the combat with a Critical Wound yet nevertheless alive.

Nicolas: "That's almost a miracle! This suicidal persecutor's performance hugely makes up for those of the dreadful akhamiäl who is blocking my formor."

It is up to Nicolas to choose the second combat to be resolved and he chooses Morgwen and the synchronime, hoping to send the sorceress to finish off Galhyan if she manages to get rid of the Warrior-mage.



MORGWEN VERSUS THE SYNCHRONIME

Morgwen wins the Initiative test.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
MORGWEN	2	0
SYNCHRONIME	0	2

FIRST EXCHANGE

Nicolas is getting ready to proceed with Morgwen's first attack. Jerome increases the synchronime's DEF by one point thanks to the "Concentration/X" ability and announces that he will try to defend himself with only one die. Nicolas gets a \square on his Attack test and Jerome keeps his defence die.

SECOND EXCHANGE

Nicolas attempts Morgwen's second attack but Jerome announces that he's attempting a counter-attack with the two defence dice that the Warrior-mage still has. Unfortunately for him, Nicolas is lucky and gets a $\mathbb{3}$ on his Attack test and chooses not to roll the die again, thus getting a final result of II. To succeed his counter-attack Jerome has to get a final result of I3 or more on his Defence test. He fails and the synchronime suffers a Serious Wound.

During the other combats the Construct warrior and an akhamiäl slay the karnagh without being wounded themselves. A persecutor inflicts a Critical Wound on a selsÿm, who doesn't manage to return the favour. The lanyfh in base-to-base contact with the azure

hunter manages to eliminate the latter. Her fellow lanyfh, on the other hand, is mercilessly put to death by an asadar and a selsÿm. The formor finally manages to rid himself of the annoying akhamiäl, who nevertheless managed to bog him down for two rounds. And finally, in the combat between the soul snatcher and a selsÿm, the Drune Warrior-mage ends up being inflicted with a Serious Wound after a failed counter-attack attempt.

THE MYSTIC PHASE

The soul snatcher recovers three gems of Fire, the synchronime, three gems of Light, and Galhyan, four gems of Light.

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE

Chance still doesn't want to smile upon Nicolas and he once again fails the formor's Regeneration/X roll.

Jerome: "The third round was a lot less to my advantage than the previous one. The inflicted losses and Wounds were relatively evenly distributed, but Galhyan now has a Critical Wound, thus forcing me to be extremely careful."

Nicolas: "That's how things can change from one round to the next! The combats went rather well: Galhyan is at the gates of death and threatened by Morgwen and a free and uninjured persecutor. There are several enemy fighters ready to act, but the terrifying formor will also be joining the dance..."



THE STRATEGIC PHASE

Nicolas assigns his Toxic/X die to the archer on his left side. The Cynwälls win the Tactical roll.

THE ACTIVATION PHASE

All of this round's activations are not described in detail.

- Jerome gets the lead and immediately activates Galhyan's card. He increases his Movement value (MOV +2) and lets him run to put him out of any opponents' range.

Jerome: "That's a manoeuvre without much pizzazz, but though my honour will have to take a blow, the end justifies the means. I can't afford to lose Galhyan, for it is he who ensures that I win all the Tactical rolls, and his death would give Nicolas six victory points. And since I have no way of neutralising all the Drones that might come and try to give him trouble, my only way out is to play him first and carry out a strategic retreat by using his high movement potential to place him out of harm's way."

Nicolas: "That heliast really has no class..."

- The former fiend charges the asadar.
- A persecutor engages the Construct warrior.
- The archer with the Toxic/X die fires at a selsým, but misses his target. The second one fires at an akhmiäl and inflicts him with a Light Wound.

- A selsým charges Morgwen. The one in base-to-base contact with a persecutor attempts to disengage, but fails.
- The soul snatcher manages to disengage. He walks and then casts the "Immolation" spell twice in a row* on the persecutor in base-to-base contact with the Construct warrior: ATT +2.
- The two remaining akhmiäls are activated. The first one walks and fires at the soul snatcher without hitting him. The second one does the same and

manages to inflict the Warrior-mage with a Light Wound, thus making him go from Serious Wound to Critical Wound.

- The last lanyfh left alive charges the selsým who just failed his disengagement attempt.
- The synchronime remains in base-to-base contact with Morgwen and again casts the "Desynchronisation" spell onto himself to increase his RES to the detriment of his INI.



* Normally a same spell cannot be cast more than once onto the same target in the same round. The "Immolation" spell is, however, an exception to this rule.

THE COMBAT PHASE

Jerome chooses the combat between an unwounded asadar and a Critically Wounded persecutor. The asadar easily manages to finish off his opponent and carries out a pursuit movement that brings him into base-to-base contact with the persecutor facing a selsým. The combat between the asadar and the persecutor is therefore immediately resolved. The struggle is fierce and the persecutor defends himself valiantly, only suffering a Light Wound that nevertheless causes him to lose the benefit provided by the "Immolation" spell.

Yet the asadar's intervention in this fray isn't enough to save the selsým, who is put to death by the furious lanyfh. Despite this success, Nicolas decides not to chase the second selsým though he is in the warrior's range. Because he considers Morgwen to be able to fend for herself, he just repositions the lanyfh to allow her to charge in the following round.

Nicolas: "The lanyfh has a Serious Wound. It is out of the question to lose her stupidly by sending her to fight an unwounded fighter. I prefer letting Morgwen take advantage of the additional die she gets when outnumbered, especially since one of her opponents is in bad shape."

The combat in which Morgwen is fighting the synchronime and a selsým is then chosen.

Δ SYNCHRONĪME AND Δ SELSYM VERSUS MORGWEN

Morgwen remporte le test d'Initiative.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
MORGWEN	1	2
SYNCHRONĪME	0	2
SELSYM	2	0

FIRST EXCHANGE

Morgwen attacks first. Nicolas announces that he's attacking the selsým. Because he doesn't have any defence dice, Jerome cannot attempt to parry the attack and the Cynwäll suffers a Serious Wound.

The selsým's first attack is parried by Morgwen.

SECOND EXCHANGE

Morgwen doesn't manage to parry the selsým's second attack and suffers a Serious Wound.

Nicolas: "Ouch. Another combat that is turning to my disadvantage despite my two parries... Luckily Morgwen has acquired the 'Possessed' ability due to

her sister's death. Let's hope that it'll help her hold out."

In the other combats the persecutor fighting the Construct warrior manages the feat of inflicting him with a Critical Wound without being wounded himself. In face of the former fiend, the seriously wounded asadar defends himself with the energy of despair. He manages to bring the demon from a Light to a Serious Wound, but the former's beastly strength ultimately gets the best of him.

ABSENCE OF DEFENCE

Now an attack must be targeting a specific opponent before the Attack test is made. If this opponent doesn't have any defence dice, then he cannot parry the blow. Δ fighter cannot attempt to defend himself from an attack that doesn't specifically target him.



Nicolas: "Immolation helped beat the Construct's defences! Now that's an unexpected result. And in the meantime the former is moving ever closer to where the action is."

THE MYSTIC PHASE

The soul snatcher recovers two gems of Fire, the synchronime, two gems of Light, and Galhyan, four gems of Light.

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE

Nicolas still doesn't manage to successfully pass the former's Regeneration/X test.

Jerome: "The battle's outcome is more than unclear. Galhyan is still alive, but if I deprive myself of his support by leaving him far from the action, I could end up regretting it. On both sides many important

fighters are seriously wounded or worse. Among the Cynwälls, the Construct warrior's life is dangling on a thread, but so is that of the soul snatcher. The synchronime, a selsým and an akhamiäl all have Serious Wounds, just like a Drune archer, a lanyfh, the former, and, especially, Morgwen. The advantage can therefore swing in either direction at any moment."

Nicolas: "Another game round that is rather to my advantage and things have evened out a bit more. Seeing the situation, I still have a hard time believing that I'll be able to be in control of the central zone at the end of the game, but if Morgwen holds out and I keep my deployment zone, then I'll still have the possibility of killing Galhyan. I'll have a hard time catching up with him by running after him, but my Drune archers are experts at long-range shots, and a well-placed arrow would be enough to win the game! Concerning Morgwen's survival, this seems to depend mainly on my ability to prevent the surviving asadar from getting near her."



THE STRATEGIC PHASE

Nicolas assigns his Toxic/X die to the archer on his right. The Cynwälls win the Tactical roll.

THE ACTIVATION PHASE

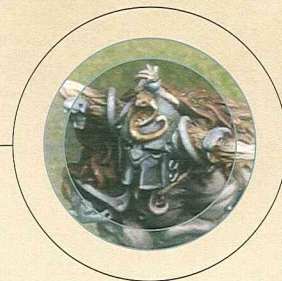
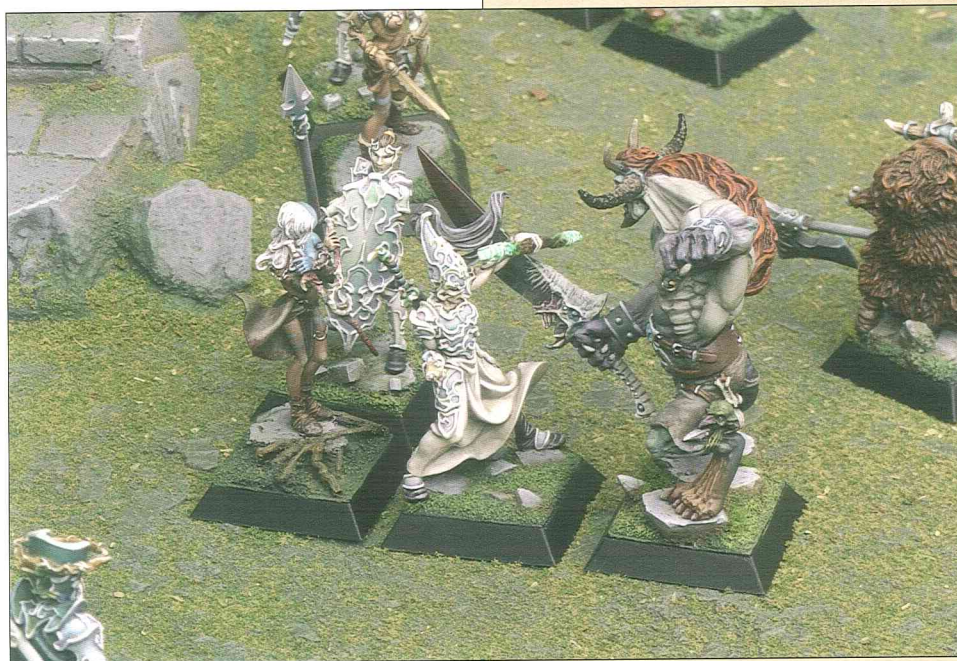
• Jerome gets the lead and activates the akhmiäls. The first one engages an archer to prevent him from shooting at Galhyan. The second one walks and fires at the soul snatcher. This time the projectile hits its

target. Simply a Light Wound would be enough to send the soul snatcher back to his necropolis... as a wraith. Unfortunately for Jerome, the Damage roll doesn't cause any wounds.

- The former charges the synchronime.
- The unwounded selsým charges the last lanyfh still alive.
- The soul snatcher runs and casts the "Immolation" spell on the archer who was just charged by an akhmiäl. The incantation is successful and the archer gets +1 in ATT.

Nicolas: "By adopting the same strategy as the chief of the enemy army, my soul snatcher will attempt to protect his life while ensuring the control of my deployment zone. However, one of the tiny akhmiäls seems bent on chasing him 'til the end..."

- The synchronime casts the "Desynchronisation" spell on himself and lowers his INI to increase his RES.
- Morgwen attempts to disengage, but fails.
- Galhyan runs towards Morgwen.
- The last Drune archer free of any opponents attempts a shot into the fray at the asadar in base-to-base contact with a persecutor. The shot is successful, yet it is the persecutor who is hit! Luckily for Nicolas, the Damage roll's result is just "Stunned."
- And finally, the persecutor in base-to-base contact with the asadar tries to disengage, but fails.



THE COMBAT PHASE

Worried about seeing the formor finish off the synchronime and then come to Morgwen's rescue, Jerome decides to start by resolving the combat between the latter and a selsým.

Δ SELSÝM VERSUS MORGWEN

The two fighters have Serious Wounds. However, due to her sister's death, Morgwen has the "Possessed" ability. No Initiative test is required. Morgwen having failed her disengagement attempt, she must place all her combat dice in defence.

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
MORGWEN	0	2
SELSÝM	2	0

FIRST EXCHANGE

Jerome adds one Concentration/X point to the selsým's ATT and gets ready to make his first Attack roll. Nicolas announces a counter-attack with one die by Morgwen. The attack is successful, but the counter-attack fails. Morgwen suffers a Light Wound that makes her go into a state of Critical Wound.

SECOND EXCHANGE

This time Nicolas is more careful. He announces a normal defence with Morgwen's last die... and Jerome gets a \square on his Attack roll. If Nicolas had announced a counter-attack, then it would have automatically been successful.

Nicolas: "I must say, it seems like everything I try with Morgwen fails pretty miserably. She will have been the symbol of all of my bad decisions during this game..."

Nicolas then selects the combat between the persecutor and the Construct warrior. Though he has a Critical Wound, and despite the failure of his two parrying attempts, the Construct miraculously survives two Damage rolls.

Nicolas: "What a catastrophe! Two disastrous Damage rolls, and the hero of the previous round has buried my greatest hope! And to make things worse, I realise that with one point more in STR I would have slain that accursed Construct... and I could have gotten that point if I had devoted one of my Immolations to it instead of increasing the persecutor's ATT. This free veteran could have made the difference in the last round. Things don't look too good for Morgwen."



Not far away, the surviving asadar is fiercely battling a persecutor. Nicolas having lost the Initiative, he has placed the Drune's two combat dice in defence. Jerome increases the asadar's ATT thanks to two Concentration/X points and gives him an additional combat die thanks to Sequence. The persecutor nevertheless manages to survive the Cynwäll's three attacks and ends the combat with a Critical Wound.

The synchronime isn't quite as lucky. The formor's (brutish) charge doesn't leave him much hope. Though he managed to block the first blow, and despite his magically increased RES, the two following attacks are enough to finish him off.

At almost the same time, Death strikes again, this time among the Drones. The selsým fighting the lanyfh makes her pay for the loss of his companions-in-arms by getting a result of "Killed Outright" with the first double \square of the game.

Jerome: "That lucky roll may prove to be much more decisive than it seems. Having eliminated his opponent, the selsým can go block the formor before he charges Galhyan in the next round. That's why I'm using the selsým's pursuit movement to get him as close as possible to the fiend."

Nicolas: "Oh well... The asadar will have been kept at a distance from the main combats until the end by a heroic persecutor, but this unexpected feat is made up for by the selsým's success against my last lanyfh. Another hope has vanished."

Finally, in the last combat between an akhamiäl and a Drune archer, the two players decide to attack with

everything they have. The akhamiäl ends the combat with a Critical Wound, not without having inflicted his opponent with a Light Wound.

THE MYSTIC PHASE

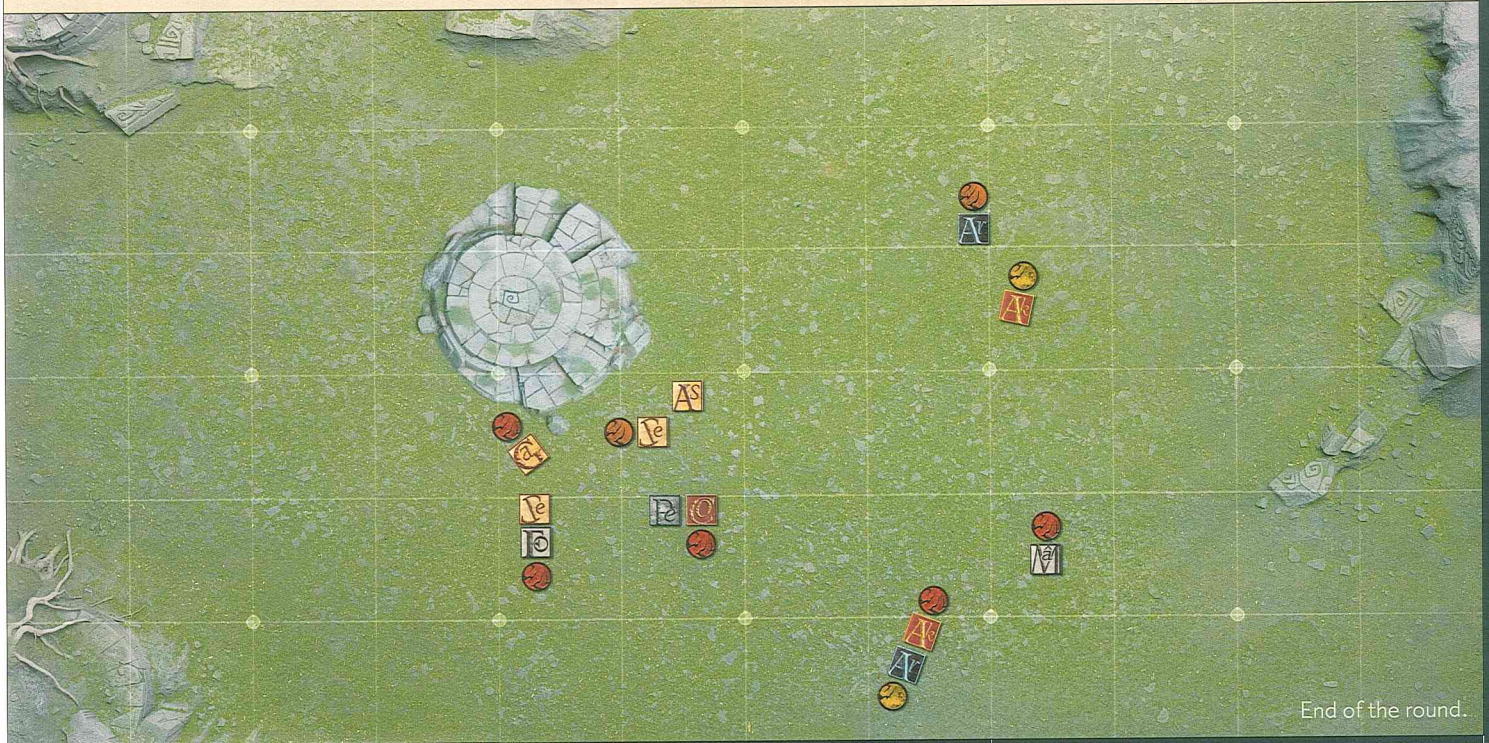
The soul snatcher recovers two gems of Fire, and Galhyan, four gems of Light.

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE

The formor's Regeneration/X roll fails once again.

Jerome: "This isn't an easy decision to make. If Galhyan dies (and if Morgwen survives), then victory will surely escape me. Galhyan is within the formor's charging range and I absolutely must find a way to prevent this monster from charging. My only hope lies with the selsým who just killed the last lanyfh. Before that I will nevertheless have to win the Tactical roll one last time and, above all, not fail the selsým's Courage test."

Nicolas: "Exactly. Practically everything should be determined right at the beginning of the next round. If the formor is intercepted, then I'll still have two things that I can try: my archers can risk a last shot at Galhyan, and my unwounded persecutor can give Morgwen a hand if he manages to disengage from his combat against the indestructible Construct."



End of the round.

THE STRATEGIC PHASE

Nicolas assigns his Toxic/X die to the archer on his right. The Cynwälls win the Tactical roll.

THE ACTIVATION PHASE

- Jerome gets the lead and announces that one of his selsÿms is charging the formor. The Cynwäll's Courage test is successfully passed.

Jerome: "It goes without saying that I'm openly relieved to be able to send my brave selsÿm to the slaughter to prevent the formor from charging Galhyan."

Nicolas: "That wasn't too hard, having Galhyan's leadership. These Cynwälls really are very resilient! The solution can now only be provided by my archers or my persecutor."

- An akhamiäl walks towards the soul snatcher and shoots an arrow at him, but doesn't manage to hit him. Set on finishing off the Drune Warrior-mage, Jerome tries to disengage the second akhamiäl to be able to fire again, but in vain.
- An identical situation happens on the Drune's side. An archer unsuccessfully tries to shoot at Galhyan and the other one fails his disengagement attempt.

Nicolas: "There goes my first wild card..."

- Nicolas is getting ready to cast the "Immolation" spell with the soul snatcher once again, but he changes his mind at the last moment, remembering that if he fails, then the Warrior-mage would suffer a Damage roll that, seeing the state he is in, could very well be fatal.

- Jerome activates Galhyan and lets him charge Morgwen.

Jerome: "The situation is still too undecided to beat about the bush while hoping that everything will go well. My Construct warrior is about to fall to pieces, the formor is perfectly capable of finishing off the selsÿm in one round, and Morgwen, even with a Critical Wound, can very well survive facing the selsÿm thanks to the 'Possessed' ability. I don't have much of a choice: I'll have to go for Morgwen's head!"

- Nicolas decides to give it all he has and tries to disengage his two persecutors with the hope of coming to Morgwen's rescue. Unfortunately, his two attempts fail.

Nicolas: "... and the persecutors aren't any better. Morgwen remains alone against Galhyan and his selsÿm bodyguard."

THE COMBAT PHASE

Worried about seeing the formor finish off his opponent and make a pursuit movement towards Galhyan, Jerome decides to start by resolving the combat involving Morgwen, Galhyan and a selsÿm.

Jerome: "To heck with suspense!"

GALHYAN AND A SELSÿM VERSUS MORGWEN

Morgwen wins the initiative.

Nicolas: "I no longer have a choice. Even without any support, Morgwen can still be victorious. Yet to do so, she will have to survive and kill Galhyan. Obviously, the heliast does two parries... I can just hope for a miraculous Attack roll and loads of luck to let me parry the selsÿm's two attacks."

	ATTACK	DEFENCE
MORGWEN	1	2
GALHYAN	0	2
SELSÿM	2	0

FIRST EXCHANGE

Nicolas announces that Morgwen's attack will be directed at Galhyan. Jerome increases the Adept's DEF thanks to two Concentration/X points, and announces that he'll try to defend himself with both

of Galhyan's dice. Morgwen's attack is successful, but the Cynwäll manages to deviate the blow.

Jerome increases the selsým's ATT by one point. Nicolas announces a defence with only one die. The attack is successful. Unfortunately, the Defence test is failed and Nicolas watches with dismay as Morgwen meets her tragic fate.

Jerome: "At last! That wicked witch will have caused me much trouble, but this time victory is mine. Whatever the outcome of the other combats, nothing can still threaten Galhyan and, as a consequence, Nicolas won't be able to catch up with me."

Nicolas: "Argh! After playing with fire for six rounds, Morgwen finally succumbs... At least I believed that victory was possible until the very end. But I must admit that the Cynwäll machine is the stronger one today."

- Galvanised by his victory against Morgwen, the selsým performs a pursuit movement against the persecutor in contact with the asadar. The Drune being forced to place all his combat dice in defence because of his failed disengagement attempt, the two Cynwälls don't leave him the slightest chance and he joins the wraiths under an avalanche of blows.
- Infuriated by seeing Galhyan escape him, the former unleashes his fury at the selsým who, despite the unbalanced combat, manages to strike back blow for blow. At the end of the combat the Cynwäll is seriously wounded and the former has gone from seriously to critically wounded.
- The two last combats don't change anything. The critically wounded Construct doesn't manage to injure the last persecutor. The archer and the akhamiäl both having failed their disengagement, they don't carry out any attacks.

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE

Because the fighters' Wound level has an influence on the calculation of their value when determining the control of the objectives, Nicolas does the former's Regeneration/X roll... and fails it once again.



CONCLUSION



To control an objective, a camp's numbers and value must both be strictly greater than those of the opposing camp.

CONTROL OF THE OBJECTIVES

CYNWÄLL ZONE	CYNWÄLLS	DRUNES
NUMBERS	2	1
VALUE	124	34

This objective gives the Cynwälls 1 V.P.

CENTRAL ZONE	CYNWÄLLS	DRUNES
NUMBERS	5	3
VALUE	94	47

This objective gives the Cynwälls 2 V.P.

DRUNE ZONE	CYNWÄLLS	DRUNES
NUMBERS	0	1
VALUE	0	32

This objective gives the Drones 1 V.P.

ELIMINATION OF CHARACTERS

Cynwälls

- ♦ Feylhin: 3 V.P.
- ♦ Morgwen: 3 V.P.

Drones

- ♦ Galhyan: 0 V.P.

SUM OF V.P.

Cynwälls: 9 PV.P.

Drones: 1 V.P.

The Cynwälls are victorious.

Jerome: "Woe to the vanquished, for History usually only remembers the name of the victors. Yet, though the score seems to be unequivocal, I must admit that very little was required for the outcome to be different. If Morgwen had survived, then not only would I not have won the victory points bound to her elimination, but in addition I would have lost control of the central zone. The final score would then have been 4 to 1. Galhyan also came very close to meet-

ing a tragic fate: a successful Aim test for Nicolas and a failed Defence roll for me could have made the battle a disaster for me. Nevertheless, I think that we both had our portion of good and bad luck. Though bad luck befell Nicolas in a more visible way by refusing to let him succeed any of his Survival instinct or Regeneration/X rolls, I reached my quota of automatic failures. Yet I think that my strategy suffered less because of this, thanks to the Cynwälls' good reliability.

First of all, Galhyan's Discipline, and especially his 'Leadership/X' ability, let me win every single Tactical roll. This is an advantage that proved to be decisive, so crucial were the first charges. The troops also showed the same level of reliability. The azure hunter automatically hits his target up to 20 cm thanks to the 'Sharp shooter' ability, and the akhamiäls are perfect for blocking large, fear-inspiring Creatures because they can charge them without having to test their Courage.

As for elite and special fighters, they are a real pleasure to play. The Construct warrior is a totally unpredictable opponent who can counter-attack without taking risks (thanks to Ambidextrous) or can cause a hail of blows thanks to Sequence. The asadars show great versatility thanks to their two Concentration/X points, which they can assign to their ATT, STR or DEF. When combined with the 'Sequence' ability,

this bonus lets them adapt to all imaginable types of opponents.

So I wasn't wrong in the opinion that I had made of this army, whose reliability and versatility largely compensate for its troops' high cost."

Nicolas: "This is a straightforward defeat that gives much cause for thought... Jerome met my forces with a formidable barrier, but I know from experience that it was perfectly possible to smash it to smithereens. Instead of doing so, I had the impression that I was fighting for survival practically right from the start of the game.

In reality, I think that I simply took too many risks with an army that isn't extremely solid. My assault in the first round was worth a try, but its failure put me into an unfavourable position whose consequences I suffered all along the game. To be able to turn the situation around I depended too much on luck: archery fire, counter-attacks, disengagements, Survival instinct... and the dice weren't on my side in these difficult moments. On the other hand, I was lucky in a field in which the Drones aren't specialists: defence! It's the unexpected survival of certain miniatures in dangerous situations that helped me keep hope alive until the end.

Concerning the troops' efficiency, we'll remember the formors', Morgwen's, and the persecutors' good performance. Morgwen's defensive capacities

especially made her shine, whereas the formor and the persecutors proved to be tough and filled their quotas of damage.

The lanyfhs have to be handled with great caution and their Rage of the sorceresses is to be reserved for very favourable situations, such as an azure hunter who just failed his disengagement! Generally speaking, it is best to just use them to block annoying opponents. As for Feylhin, I think that she could have caused havoc if she hadn't lost the initiative in the two combats that she was able to fight. The soul snatcher also did his part of the job: he never failed an Immolation and some of them were useful to counter Cynwäll defenders. Unfortunately, he ended up with a Serious Wound after the failure of his first counter-attack, and the only real feat that he finally performed was simply surviving.

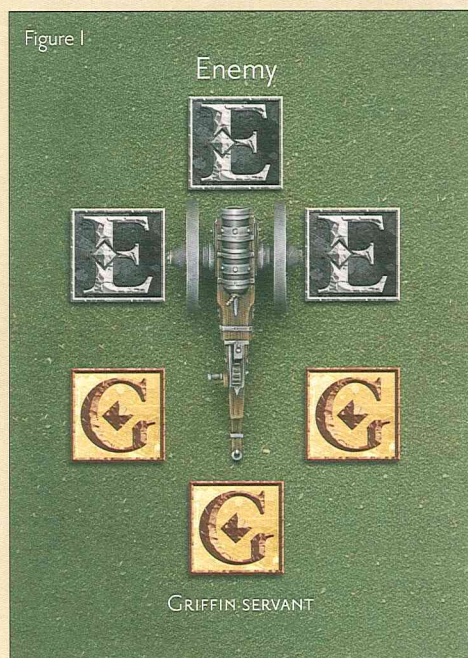
If one bases oneself only on this battle report, one can have the impression that the karnaghs and the Drune archers are rather inefficient fighters. Yet this would be a big mistake: the archers could have allowed me to steal victory if they had hit Galhyan once more, and the karnagh was the victim of the huge risks that I took.

All things considered, I renew my confidence in this army list. Then again, it's probably the last time that I play it in such an impulsive way! I was too much of a Drune while Jerome reacted like a perfect Cynwäll and



FIGHTERS IN BASE-TO-BASE CONTACT

When determining the number of fighters that can be placed in base-to-base contact with them, the cannons of the Griffin are considered to be standing on cavalry bases (25 mm x 50 mm). They can therefore be in base-to-base contact with a total of six miniatures (one in front, one in back, and two on each side).



NEUTRALISATION

The rules in the new edition of *Confrontation* state that a war machine continues functioning as long as it hasn't been destroyed and has the required crew available. This rule applies even if the machine is in hand-to-hand combat with an opponent.

In other words, a cannon of the Griffin can keep on firing as long as it has at least one servant (or substitute) who is free of any opponent (see figures 2, 3 and 4).

DEPLOYMENT

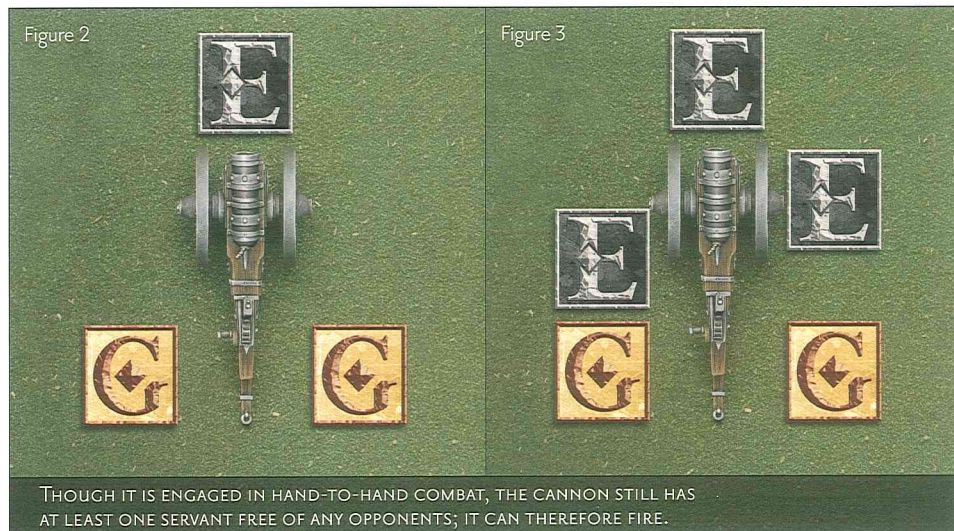
DEPLOYING THE CANNONS

There are two types of Griffin cannons: culverins and veuglaires.

Culverins are long cannons used to reach heavily protected targets and to neutralise enemy artillery. They use cannonballs/STR 20, range 25-50-150, heavy artillery. Culverins can be deployed at the flanks to fire several deadly shots before the frays are formed. They can also be placed at the rear of the

THE CANNONS OF THE GRIFFIN

THE CANNONS OF THE GRIFFIN, THE CROWN JEWELS OF THE ΔKKYLANNIAN ARTILLERY, ARE DESTRUCTIVE PIECES AS LONG AS THEY ARE DEPLOYED CORRECTLY AND MANEUVERED WITH FORESIGHT.



battlefield to shell pockets of resistance, in which case the best firing positions are on elements of the scenery that overlook the battlefield.

Veuglaires, which have a shorter and wider barrel, fire grapeshot/STR 10, range 25-35-45, heavy artillery with zone effect. Their natural position is at the frontline to mow down enemy infantry.

Both types of cannon have the "Rampart/10" ability that protects them from flying opponents.

DEPLOYING THE ARTILLERY OFFICER

The artillery officers have an AIM of 4, which is the maximum authorised value when firing a Griffin

cannon (see explanatory card). Furthermore, the difficulty of the cannon shots made with them is reduced by 1 point. No other marksman knows how to use the cannon as well as an artillery officer, not even the most powerful Characters.

What more, these officers can become Leaders of Griffin cannon Units for free. They have Mechanic/4, which always comes in handy to repair damaged pieces. As a last resort they can use a pistol/STR 6, range 10-15-20.

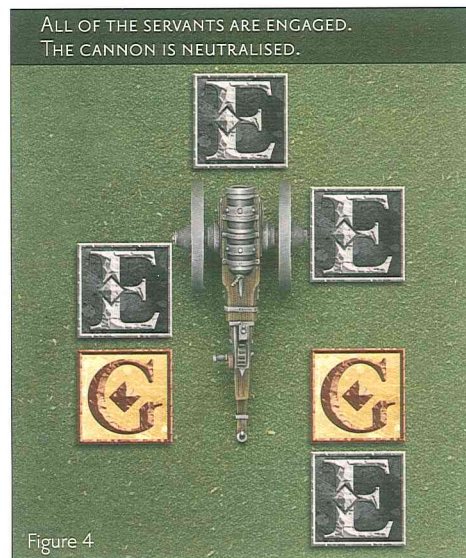
An artillery officer is a priceless asset that should be placed wisely and protected at all costs. It's best to deploy him far from any sources of danger and with a strong escort.

CHOICE OF SERVANTS

A cannon of the Griffin requires at least two servants for it to be used in the best conditions. The cannon servants are distinguished by their Fortification abilities.

The first profile has Minelayer. This ability allows a cannon that is placed at the rear to be protected from enemy scouts. It can prove to be deadly when facing armies with small numbers such as the Wolfen.

The second profile has Sapper/5, which lets makeshift barricades be raised to hinder enemy movements around the cannon. When used at the frontline, this ability protects the cannon and its servants from head-on charges and enemy fire.





ISABELLA THE SECRET

PORTRAIT

The setting sun was lighting Cadwallon's horizon ablaze. The City of Thieves' sky was suspended between day and night, between light and darkness. The amber glow of the dying star was reflected on the walls and in the windows of the fiefdom of Soma. The hill of Mountheaven, located on a flat part of the fiefdom, owed its name to this illusion of gold and vermeil that made noblemen and outlaws, as well as merchants and crooks, dream. In the light of day the streets of Mountheaven were the domain of numerous bohemian artists. In the sidewalk taverns penniless talent conversed with the patrons of the arts from the upper city who were there to mingle with the riffraff.

But at night the streets of Soma became the prowling grounds of extravagant raptors and of Cadwallon's dangerous youth.

These two worlds mingled together, like a cross between dog and wolf. Mountheaven had the atmosphere of a carnival.

Isabeau was standing in front of a brandy distillery, her face turned towards the stars coming out. Her expression, which was usually so severe, had found its past sweetness again. While the Rag'narok threatened to destroy Aarklash, dreams had become her sanctuary.

The Ormer was by her side. He was watching the street as if he had lost an object of great value, as if an arch-enemy would soon spring from an alley.

He had been accompanying Isabeau since always. He had cradled her childhood, played cards and dolls with her, and then listened to her troubled adolescent emotions. Now he was the weapon bearer of one of Cadwallon's most dangerous duellists. Beneath the costume of a man struck by dwarfism was hidden an implacable assassin. He was very proud to watch over the beautiful heiress of the Soma dynasty, and he was twice as alert when she wandered in her imaginary realms. These moments had become as rare and precious as diamonds.

What could she have been dreaming about? The Ormer asked himself this question very often. Without a doubt she thought about the days when her father, Anon, led the family and the fiefdom wisely. At the time a balance reigned that was so subtle that no peers of Cadwallon could measure it. The Somas had always had a taste for secrecy.

Aghovar, Anon's twin, was the bad son of the family, yet no one really worried about him. His scoundrel's charm had opened the doors of the guild of Thieves to him and nothing seemed to be able to stop his rise in its ranks. The Soma twins, who were so different in personality, knew to get along for the general good of the fiefdom.

This lasted until the day that Aghovar, against his brother's advice, became the master of Thieves. His first larceny as sovereign was the theft of an enchanted artefact, a tarot card, which was in Anon's care at the time. Aghovar had always considered the Devil card to be his property; after all, the enchanted card had chosen the face of the Soma brothers as its figure, and Anon couldn't be the Devil!

Aghovar's insolence had earned him Sophet Drahas's deadly enmity. After several months of secret warfare, the master of Thieves was vanquished by the King of Ashes.

The fifteenth major Arcanum had fallen into the claws of the Dark-ones, which was a blasphemy for the Somas, whose ancestor was an old serf of Acheron and a hero of the battle of the Wall of Earth. Anon, and all the Somas with him, then swore to avenge the affront. The secret war was taken up again to free the guild of Thieves from the clutches of Sophet Drahas and his Usurers.

At dawn on a summer morning, while the sky was divided between shadow and light just like the one this evening, the young Isabeau found her father's corpse lying at the bottom of the stairs leading to his bedroom. After having killed Bressain, the Usurers' best assassin, Anon the Wise had succumbed to his injuries. That morning Isabeau brutally entered the world of adults, of hatred and of death. She closed in on herself and soon was given the nickname of Secret.

Vanho, Anon and Aghovar's younger brother, became the head of the dynasty. This enchantingly handsome magician gave up his nights of partying to take on the huge responsibility of a Cadwëan peer. He gave his niece the Last Dance, the prestigious tavern in which he had made his reputation. "So that she forgets," he had said... In reality, Vanho was giving Isabeau the means to get revenge. Thanks to this establishment she would be rich enough to be independent and would be able to meet all of Cadwallon's inhabitants.

Isabeau entrusted the tavern's management to her father's moneymen. She devoted her free time to maintaining her alliance with the Thieves and invited Aarklash's greatest duellists to stay at her place in exchange for their knowledge. When she went to the guild of Blade's syndicate to become a professional assassin, she was an exceptional warrior, but hadn't ever risked her life in combat yet.

The Ormer watched as Isabeau's fierce facial expression slowly returned. She was surely reminding herself of bad memories to feed the flames of her anger. For without anger, Isabeau would never have been able to come such a long way. All the fencing lessons in the world would never have prepared her for the vices of the lower city. She was wounded, humiliated and beaten again and again, yet her will was stronger. For the Ormer this period of learning had surely been the most active one; Isabeau herself wasn't aware of the dangers she had escaped thanks to her loyal chaperon.

The Secret soon went from victory to victory. Her noble education, her beauty and her discretion made her a very

prized bodyguard by the lower city's dignitaries, and then by those of the upper city. Isabeau was always generous with the servants of her employers. Within a few years she had woven a network of informants that was as widespread and as efficient as those of the diplomats she protected. She saw to which point the Usurers were corrupting Cadwallon and were oppressing the common people.

The Ormer saw a burgher and his retinue coming down the avenue.

"There they are, milady."

Near the dignitary stood a Devourer with a frothing maw.

The public duel that would take place in a few moments had been authorised by Duke Den Azhir. The notary Avenance had been accused of corruption in the first degree by the guild of Blades. He had accepted the duel instead of being judged for the crime. The Blades had sent Isabeau and the Ormer, alone. Avenance was surrounded by his personal guard and had generously paid a disciple of the Beast to defend his cause.

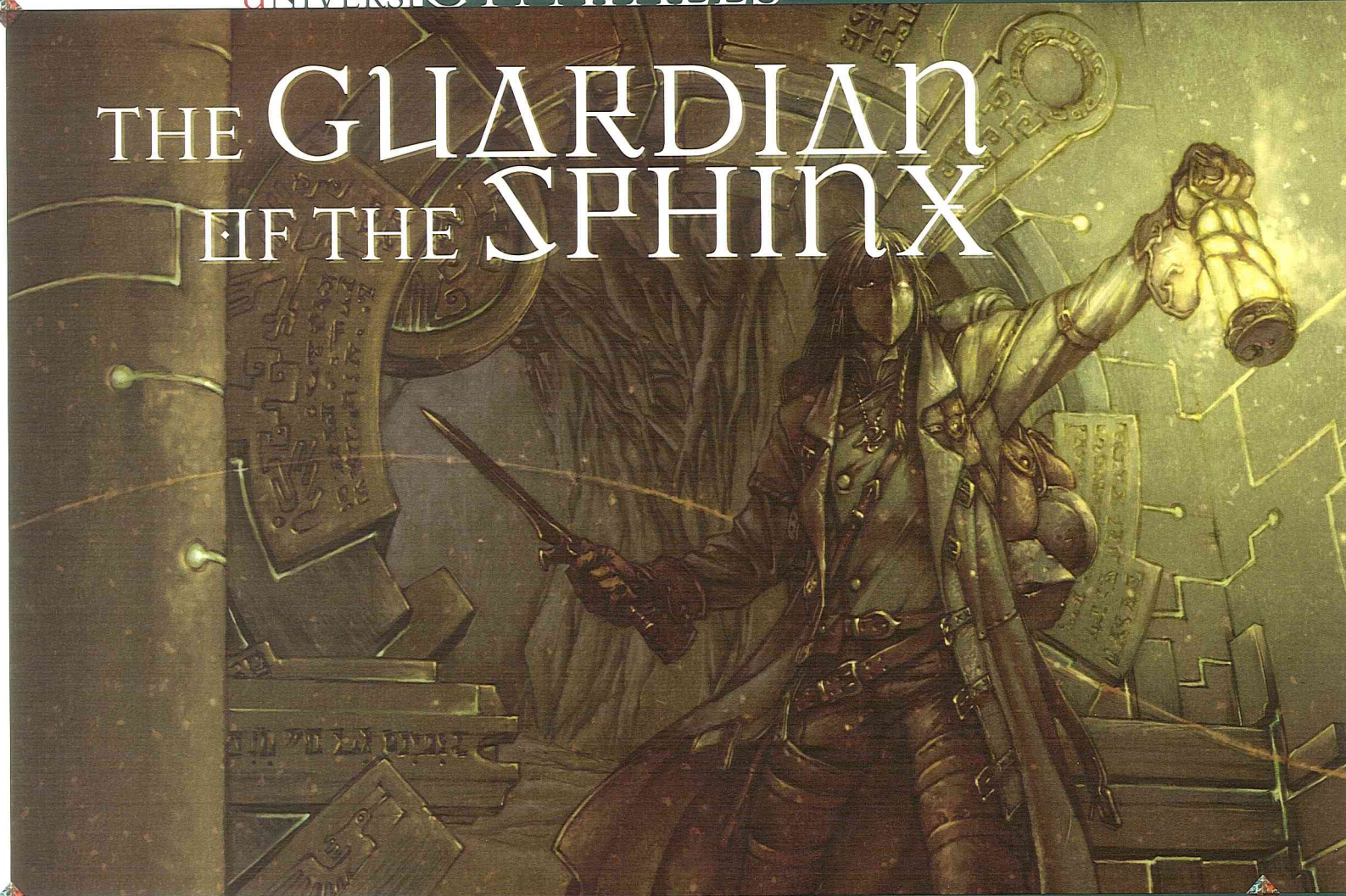
Isabeau had supplied the proof of Avenance's corruption. She had shown the masters of her guild that the notary had defrauded them, while leaving out the fact that he was a member of the guild of Usurers.

The young woman eyed the Wolfen scornfully for a few seconds before setting her dark gaze on Avenance, her true adversary. The Devourer might survive his wounds, but not the Usurer. Isabeau the Secret would break the law of duels by killing the accused at the same time as his champion. Many others would follow after him...

Night was falling; the time for revenge had come.



THE GUARDIAN OF THE SPHINX



“

Foreseeing the consequences of the horrible war that was opposing them to the Ophidian Alliance, the Sphinxes left behind sentinels, experts capable of resuscitating their civilisation should it happen to disappear. These men and women accepted to exchange their bodies for a machine in the name of Light. The clues leading to the sanctuaries of these captive souls are scarce. Nowadays, only the greatest of scholars would be able to decipher them. Beings that are pure at heart also have this power: Light knows to make itself understood by those who believe in it.

”

Lahn was just appearing from behind the foggy mountains, his rays timidly warming an early spring morning. Two figures were walking in the heaths that stretch to the east of Cadwallon in the direction of a wooded mound on the top of which stood imposing stones reaching towards the sky. The child stopped at the foot of the hill and exclaimed without even catching his breath:

“It’s right under this big, flat stone, master-mage. That’s where the light sometimes comes from at night. There are engraved drawings like the ones you showed me. Normally we’re not allowed to climb up here; it’s the burial mound of the ancients.”

He threw a careful glance around while saying the last words. The one accompanying him remained silent for a moment, his eyes closed, and seemed to be soaking up the place’s atmosphere. Then he suddenly became active with a little shiver and pulled a few coins from a pocket.

“I’m not a master-mage, Ueb, not any more than you are a warrior. I’m just a traveller who is interested in the past age, and I thank you for helping me satisfy my curiosity.”

With a smile he placed the coins into the kid’s hand. He must have been 14 at the most and was wearing solid clothes and a pelisse lined with hide like the local

stockbreeders. A bow made of bone was slung on his back and a rudimentary quiver hung on his belt. He scowled for a moment, and then his face lit up when he examined the coins while whistling between his teeth.

“I knew it, you really are a mage with ‘cabanistic’ objects, as my uncle says, and plus you have draconic coins. Where’s your dragon? I won’t tell anyone, but I would so much like to see one. C’mon, please, I can keep a secret.”

“Very well, young man. You’re smart, so I’ll offer you a deal: you’ll keep a lookout while I take a closer look at these inscriptions. If someone comes along, you’ll warn me with this.”

He held out a small and finely crafted whistle decorated with a bluish stone.

“You whistle twice if they are people from the village and three times if they are strangers. Do you understand?”

Ueb took it while nodding, his attention completely absorbed by the object.

“Take good care of it, it is bound to me by magic... Good. Now, you should know that I didn’t come here riding on the back of a dragon. They are very rare and are busy fighting Darkness. But if you carry out your



Golden Age. At the moment he was making haste towards the stone pointed out by the child, excited by the thought that he would maybe – finally - make a major discovery.

The stone, which was grey and spotted with lichen, was engraved with a series of designs that converged towards the ground. When he got nearer, Mehöl realised that the rock was arched into an overhang. At its base a crevice plunged towards the heart of the hill. The Cynwäll rummaged in his bag and carefully pulled out a small leather case in which he chose two light-green lenses among a series of cut crystals. He slid them into slots in his ivory mask that was devoid of any ornaments and then placed it onto his face before bending down to peer into the darkness. With his vision thus improved, the elf could clearly make out a partially collapsed wall of stone. Without waiting, Mehöl entered by crawling into the narrow tunnel. He stopped for a few moments to examine the rock, which was marked with deep grooves as if it had been lifted with tools.

Not tools. Claws, on second thoughts.

Holding back a shudder at the thought of what could have had the strength to move the stone barehanded, Mehöl again searched in his bag with many pockets.

“I’m going to need you, my little one,” he muttered while opening a small metal casket decorated with a single symbol.

Inside it was an oval object the size of a fist, which slowly began to move when Mehöl caressed it while saying ritual words of empathy.

The construct stirred when he touched it and unfolded its six finely crafted legs. It took hold of his hand and climbed up his arm like some kind of a strange beetle. It remained motionless for a few seconds, only making some quiet clicking sounds. Then its back split into two golden wing cases and it unfolded a pair of crystalline wings. The inside that was thus revealed enclosed a gem inserted in the heart of a complex mechanism. The crystal started glowing with a blue light that surrounded the little insect-like form like a halo. A last gear slid into place and small openings in the metallic carapace opened to uncover three emeralds that shimmered like tiny eyes. The graceful machine finally lifted off into the air with a slight humming sound.

“I have a reconnaissance mission for you, *asnodule*.”

Mehöl searched in the case and got out a golden lens fitted with an emerald and inserted it in his mask. The construct shot a soft ray of light toward the elf, and then flew toward the opening and into the shadows.

Mehöl now concentrated on analysing the images and information that the *asnodule* was beaming back to him, while remaining aware of his own sensations.

A cold corridor. No movement. Smooth walls. No smells. An even and paved floor. No noise.

An image sent by the construct made Mehöl startle, for it was accompanied by a red halo, which was a sign of danger.

A shape lying on the ground.

The elf continued observing while holding his breath as the analysis continued.

Bone and metal, burns, ashes. No vital signs.

The *asnodule* focused on a spot lost in the mass of bones, the source of the danger signal that it had transmitted: a gem of Darkness that was nearly extinguished. The construct continued on its way and reached a closed door engraved with complex symbols.

Mehöl readjusted his mask and now also entered the passageway, holding his dagger in one hand. He bent over the corpse and sniffed in disgust. The body, which must have been about two and a half metres long, had monstrous claws and plates of armour grafted directly onto its vertebrae.

An abomination of Darkness, no doubt. I must be careful, for the magic that destroyed this thing could very well do the same to me.

The elf looked at the door and recognised the metal decorated with mostly familiar symbols.

May Light guide me. This is truly a sacred place and the symbols are those that were used by the Sphinxes.

The Cynwäll sent a short mental order to his construct:

Find the energy source feeding this room.

While waiting, Mehöl studied the symbols that would allow him to move further on. After several moments, when he thought he had found the way to get in, the *asnodule* sent him a signal, a light glow to his retina: it was ready. An image appeared of silvery fibres that ran along the corridor and covered the door like a spider web. Derivation channels. The links, made of precious iridium, conducted the mana to receptors. Yet no residual energy could be detected.

On examining one of the partially melted copper cones, Mehöl understood what had happened. The creature of Darkness had tried to force its way through the second door and triggered the place’s defences. But the charge needed to destroy the intruder had used up the energy of the gem that fed this part of the sanctuary.

“Give me a detailed image of the iridium network.”

The construct hovered a few centimetres from the door and slowly inspected every part of the metal structure. Mehöl controlled his breathing and emptied his mind. He finally found the source that fed the locking channels and directed the *asnodule* towards this part of the door. The hardest task was about to begin...

Closing his eyes, he imposed his will on the construct and took control of its motor organs.

mission, then I’ll reveal several secrets about them to you. Do we have a deal?”

Ueb stood straight and proud, stretched out his arm in front of him with his palm held forward, and solemnly pronounced an ancient formula of brotherhood of the tribes of Kel:

“My blood for yours, brother of the hunt.”

The man returned his salute with a serious manner and then started walking towards the hill, soon to disappear in the thick undergrowth. As regards the man, even though he hid his face behind a tangle of brown hair, a keen observer would have quickly guessed from the finesse of his features that he was, in fact, an elf. For now, Mehöl was far from home and he was well aware of the dangers of proclaiming one’s belonging to the Cynwäll people in these troubled times.

Very early on, his curious temperament and his strong personality had made him be seen as an eccentric among a people accustomed to calm and introspection. Though he had studied the basics of the magic of solaris, he spent more time in the workshops of the heliastic craftsmen than in the hall of gems. He then finally found his path: sarcastically nicknamed “dust-picker” by some, he preferred to define himself as a seeker of wonders, roaming Aarklash since several years on the traces of the artisans of the

With its gears grinding with effort, the asnodule positioned itself in front of the door and adjusted its polarity until it stuck to the metal surface. His forehead tense with concentration, Mehöl delicately directed each of its legs to place them into contact with the iridium fibres covering the door. Finally, the construct's abdomen constricted and revealed a crystalline stinger that connected itself to the channel linked to the energy matrix. Mehöl opened his eyes again and placed his fingers on the opening symbols while reciting the craftsman's litany.

The worst thing is that I might end up dying by providing the energy for my own destruction!

Setting this thought aside, he transmitted an order to the asnodule. The humming became louder while the construct transferred the energy supplied by its gem to the door. For a long minute, nothing moved and Mehöl removed his hands from the symbols with a sigh. But finally the door began sliding open with a low rumble to reveal a dimly lit room that had another closed door at its other end. Mehöl quickly removed his construct before it was damaged, let go of his mental grasp, and let the metallic insect fly off into the air before entering the room.

The walls were empty and made of the same metal as the door. The room was square and measured about 20 paces per side. At its centre stood a circular well with an edge of bronze decorated with inscriptions. Mehöl got nearer to decipher the symbols, but froze when a dull thud was suddenly heard. The door had closed again. From the well sprung a metallic globe that rolled towards him.

Mehöl grabbed his dagger and quickly put down his bag while the sphere started shaking. It suddenly seemed to break apart and transformed into some kind of monstrous centipede. Then the creature charged with its mandibles held open. The elf dodged the first attack by moving backward and shouted at his construct.

"Analyse the inscriptions on the well..."

He interrupted himself to clumsily parry a strike by the mandibles that broke off the tip of his dagger.

"This machine and how it works. Quick!"

The assailant stopped for a moment, its head moving side-to-side between Mehöl and the construct that was flying towards the middle of the room.

So you react to movement.

Mehöl rushed towards his belongings. Instantly a rapid clanking sound let him know that the creature was on his heels.

He let himself fall to his knees, grabbed his oil lamp, and threw it as hard as he could at the creature's head. It arched upwards and easily cut it to pieces, thus freeing a thick liquid that flowed all over its bulging head.

That ought to disorient you for a while.

An instant later the elf shook his head in dismay. The creature had quickly spun around and was now facing him with its other end at which there also was a head with powerful mandibles. Inscriptions suddenly flashed over this discouraging vision.

Symbols deciphered. The guardian is the key. Destroying him is to die. Guiding him means getting out. Creature identified as a construct of Ychtion class. Capacities unknown.

Mehöl muttered a curse. The Sphinxes had always had a sense for formulas, but he would have preferred to avoid a riddle at this critical moment. He transmitted his instructions to the asnodule.

Focus on the door and position yourself as high up as possible.

The Ychtion now seemed to be advancing towards him more slowly, the sensors placed on its massive head glowing while it moved forward with an ill-boding clinking sound.

Time has come for me to verify my theory.

Mehöl forced himself to concentrate.

I must form one with this place, become as cold as the stone, as smooth as the floor. I'm nothing more than a silent shadow...

Within a few centimetres from the elf, the guardian construct was poised to strike. The asnodule finished its analysis and sent an image of the door. A series of symbols set in a circle around a hollow imprint that was complex and fairly deep.

Deep enough for... By Light! But of course: deep enough for the Ychtion's head to be inserted!

Mehöl sent a silent order to the asnodule.

Activate your matrix of protection and free some Eyniels. Channel your gem's energy towards the kinetic network to manoeuvre in vibrating flight. Let's hope it's slower than you are...

The asnodule's humming became louder as it accelerated its speed, its form becoming blurry. It ejected three small particles of light that began gravitating around it. The Ychtion reacted immediately to this flurry of movement and turned away from Mehöl. It soon remained fixed in the middle of the room, its two heads alternatively following the little construct's circular movements.

Mehöl cautiously got up with drops of sweat dripping from his mask. He advanced carefully while reciting the precepts of Noesis. He finally reached the door, which he examined for a moment.

Yes, that must be it: this thing's head can surely be inserted and adjusted...

A shower of sparks and a violent impact interrupted his thoughts. The Ychtion had suddenly sprung forward and attacked. It just barely missed the asnodule and went crashing against the wall nearby.

The little construct, shaken by the near miss, flew around erratically for a few moments before finding its bearings again. With a sigh, Mehöl gave it his next instructions. The asnodule flew to the mouth of the



imprint and hovered right in front of it with a hum. The Ychtion followed it closely and pounced at it to strike again.

“*Eltorm!*” shouted Mehöl at the same time.

The asnodule, which was suddenly deprived of its energy by this order, fell to the ground. Carried by its momentum, the Ychtion crashed head first into the door. The rest of its body coiled up to again form a sphere decorated with a lone symbol that glowed in the gloom.

Mehöl carefully picked up the asnodule and inspected it. Two bent legs and a dent in the ventral plate was the only visible damage. Mehöl made a face while reactivating the gem, for he noticed that the wings’ fragile crystalline webbing was badly damaged.

I’ll give you to the master of the workshop; he’ll surely be able to repair you.

After having placed the construct back into its case with extreme caution, the Cynwäll turned towards the door with a determined mien and touched the rune whose luminosity had become stronger. The door silently opened and behind it lay a huge circular room a few metres below. A flight of steps led to a crescent-shaped altar. The roof was so high that it got lost in the obscurity.

Mehöl had already walked down several steps when the room lit up softly to reveal a finely crafted dome on which the night sky was reproduced. Each star and planet was shown and positioned with precision. While admiring this marvellous piece of work for a few moments, the elf noticed that the entire object was animated by practically imperceptible movements letting the replicas of the heavenly bodies revolve. It seemed to him that this sky was much bigger than the one he observed at night.

Now he could better make out the altar, a huge crescent of stone on which a single object was placed : a rectangular casket made of the silvery metal of which only the Sphinxes held the secret.

Advancing prudently, Mehöl couldn’t detect any movement but noticed that the place was perfectly preserved. When he reached the foot of the stairs he went towards the altar. After having examined the casket from all sides, he slowly opened it. From it he carefully got out a gearwheel of bronze set as a pendant hanging on a simple metallic chain.

The Cynwäll was inspecting it when everything suddenly turned upside down. First there was a blinding white light, and then his whole body seemed to be stretched to the sky, and finally an indescribable pain made him pass out.

A moment later Mehöl opened his eyes. He was lying all curled up on the floor. He got up and instinctively reached for the back of his neck, but cried in pain before he could touch it.

“You will suffer for a few days.”

A voice from nowhere had just spoken. Feeling the back of his head, Mehöl found a bulbous implant.



“Who are you? What have you done to me?”

The elf shook his head to try to clear the fog that blurred his thoughts, but only managed to increase the sharp pain.

“No need to shout to make yourself heard; your thoughts will do.”

Then, after a pause, the voice continued speaking.

“I am your host from now on, and we are bound together.”

Mehöl suddenly realised that the voice, which seemed strangely disembodied, actually was inside his head. He sat down on the floor and began sobbing, broken by the pain and fatigue, and finally fell asleep. He remained there for hours, maybe even days, alternating between dreams and consciousness.

At one moment he heard a faraway whistling sound that awoke a vague feeling of urgency in him. Then came back dreams filled with incredible images, terrifying creatures, and merciless wars. Familiar faces and places often appeared, as well as gigantic machines that crossed the skies or dove deep into the oceans. A white frost inexorably covered the living and the dead with a silent coat.

Finally, the voice was heard again, calling him by his name, urging him to get up. Mehöl stiffened and opened his eyes, slowly gathering his senses.

“

The messenger presented himself to Selith Tanit, the Mother of the House of Tanit of Acheron. “Your Vanity, the agent from Cadwallon sends you this,” he said while revealing a piece of cut quartz. The necromancer picked it up and placed her hands together in what looked like a prayer. Using her magic, she heard the message that was stored inside the mineral like an echo. So the sentinel of Cadwallon has been awakened. The Sphinxes were announcing their return. D’jabril, Selith’s rival, mustn’t get his hands on their treasures before her...

”

Mehöl, get up; it's time to get back on the road!

The elf licked his parched lips while standing up and answered with a hoarse voice:

"With what right do you give me orders and why have you made me suffer in such a way?"

He realised that he was still weak, but the pain had given way to a light tingle. The object was still there, stuck in the back of his neck.

I already told you: you can speak to me without opening your mouth. I will share your body with you for a while, for I have information that can't be transmitted by a simple message.

Mehöl stiffened.

"So I'm just a vulgar receptacle that you have taken possession of. You didn't have the right. I won't be your thing, I... I'll destroy you!"

The voice grew stronger and roared inside his head.

Do you think that I was happy to abandon my carnal envelope and leave behind all those I loved? Do you think that I didn't regret being trapped in this construct, cut off from the rest of the world for years, probably centuries, with only my memories for company? Hundreds of times I thought I'd go mad, gnawed at by solitude. If I had had the means, I would gladly have killed myself despite the importance of my task!

It then continued on with a softer tone.

I'm sorry that I haven't left you a choice, but you are the first being to have entered here since the sanctuary was closed. I couldn't take the risk of remaining in oblivion or being recovered by the brood of Darkness, and in you I sensed the mastery of solaris, albeit a weak one. Your heart is serene and your mind is curious. I will respect your freedom, but you should know that I am determined to fulfil my role, with or without you.

Stupefied, Mehöl then felt a force that compelled him to get up and walk. It's only at the foot of the steps that he again found his freedom of movement.

I have transferred much of my knowledge to you while you were asleep, but it will take you some time to assimilate it. I won't be a hindrance for you and I'll give you all the help I can. And here is a token of my good faith.

A hum announced the arrival of the asnodule that landed in front of the Cynwäll, who, astonished, examined the construct and couldn't find the slightest trace of the damage it had suffered. Mehöl knew from experience that the combined efforts of a heliast and an artisan would have only allowed a summary repair job of the fragile construct, without being able to erase the damage to its structure. He held out his hand, took hold of it and placed it back into its case.

"So you really are one of the master craftsmen of the Sphinx, one of those who awakened matter."

After a long silence the voice spoke again.

I am indeed a guardian of the Utopia, chosen to transmit certain secrets about our creations to the Disciples of Light. I was called Kulden, the master of legends. I ask you: can you take me to your people's wise men so that I can teach them?



Mehöl thought for a moment, then gathered his belongings and headed for the door. It closed behind him, sealing in the sanctuary's secrets. Outside, the sun blinded him and he took off his mask, breathing in the salty air with delight. He then slowly went down the hill.

He was nearing the spot where he had left behind the young Ueb when a moan caught his attention. The elf grabbed his dagger, noticing that it had been repaired, and slipped into the undergrowth in the noise's direction. He soon reached a clearing, at the centre of which he could make out the remains of a fire and a figure rolled into a blanket with its back turned to him.

"Ueb?" he called hesitatingly, feeling an instinctive uneasiness.

"You abandoned me, master-mage, I was all alone at the mercy of the monsters..."

"But what are you talking about, Ueb? There are no monsters."

Mehöl knelt next to the figure, which rolled over to the side and revealed the rigid body of the young hunter who was still holding the whistle decorated with precious stones. His face, which was animated

by a parody of life, turned towards the Cynwäll with empty eye sockets.

"I whistled, I called you, but you abandoned me and they found me."

A fetid smell reached the elf while the words came out of a motionless mouth that was frozen in an expression of terror. Horrified, Mehöl sprang backward while his heart skipped a beat. Another voice then spoke behind him.

"I fear that you have come to late. But he really wanted to tell you a few last words, so I gave in to his wish. It's true that my protégés found the kid to be very entertaining. You have to understand them, they have waited for so long without being able to act. When I think of all the time spent stoking rumours to finally see someone manage to enter this place that was forbidden to me. I think that I would also have taken great pleasure in... relaxing."

Mehöl turned around and saw a grotesque creature with steel claws grafted to its wrists moving towards him. Forgetting all caution, he rushed at the hybrid and thrust his dagger into its groin and then into its neck. Its features twisted by having been taken by surprise, the clone wavered for a moment and then collapsed without a cry. The Cynwäll got up again while looking around for a new opponent.

"Have I vexed you?" said the voice with a suave tone to the wrathful elf. "What can I say, I, who has lost the flesh of my flesh? You surely must have seen him, my Centurus, his strong body reduced to ashes... He had opened the way and I thought we were about to reach our goal when this confounded magic was unleashed and almost managed to destroy us all."

A man appeared from the bushes to the left of Mehöl, nonchalantly holding a sword enhanced with a Syhar stinger. Covered in a cloak with complex patterns, he was wearing a smooth mask.

"But it's time for you to give me what you found inside this construction."

The Scorpion made a quick gesture and two other figures moved forward a few steps to get between Mehöl and their chief. These two warriors were equipped with light armour, scimitars and round metal shields. Their muscular bodies were covered with a strange network of cables linked to a dreadful mask. They advanced together at the same time and positioned themselves to be able to strike their opponent simultaneously.

Mehöl feigned an attack and then swerved to the left to force them to confront him one after the other. His lack of reach and his state of fatigue would soon get the best of him, so he quickly had to take the upper hand. He had recognised their leader to be a formidable foe: a necromancer. The Cynwäll sealed his mind and concentrated on his breathing and his heartbeat.

And you, isn't there a way you could help me? he bitterly asked his "parasite," who remained silent for the moment. A whistle followed by a sting in his

back abruptly interrupted his thoughts. He fell to his knees, paralysed. A third clone appeared from the thickets behind the elf while reloading the desert crossbow attached to his forearm.

The neuromancer slowly moved toward Mehöl and forced open his right hand, which was tightly gripping the pendant decorated with the gearwheel. He seized it while a clone took away the Cynwäll's weapon and bag. Then the Syhar moved back and gave a sharp order in his language.

The biggest warrior grabbed the elf by the hair and was about to unceremoniously decapitate him. Mehöl weakly struggled to free himself, but to no avail. The neuromancer suddenly held back his follower's arm. He let out a whistle and the green glow of his eyes became stronger as he probed the back of Mehöl's neck and found the implant.

"Seeing how much the tissue has regenerated, this object was grafted onto you while you were in the complex. This will greatly interest my creator, especially if it's a new form of technology. Slave, I think that your life has been spared... at least until I can remove this object with taking any risks. Risks of damaging the object, that is."

May light forgive me; violence is the last resort.

Mehöl suddenly felt a surge of energy take possession of his body. Dumbfounded, he watched the events that followed as a spectator. Within a few seconds he got up again and hammered the clone holding him with blows and then seized his scimitar. He then began dancing a dance of death, spinning

around between the two other warriors, who soon collapsed, their bodies covered with deep gashes. And finally, Mehöl cast the Syhar weapon to the ground and calmly walked toward the neuromancer. From his mouth came words in a language unknown to him, yet whose meaning he nevertheless understood.

"Thus your people has perverted the gift that it was given, using technology to degrade and mock the living. For this, you shall die."

The neuromancer, who was taken by surprise by this sudden reversal of the situation, unhooked his cape and got on guard without saying a word. Mehöl watched himself open his arms and continue moving forward, his hands glowing with a golden light. When the Syhar lunged at him with his sword, the elf pivoted on his right leg and dodged the attack. He then struck his opponent with several blows. Every time he hit him, a piece of the neuromancer's armour shattered or fell to the floor, its bindings broken.

The neuromancer moved back, his pale naked skin exposed. His mask seemed to crackle, and then he charged the Cynwäll while screaming. Mehöl fell to one knee at the last moment and, passing under the Scorpion's guard, struck him straight at the heart. His hand was stretched out like a blade and easily sliced through the Syhar's muscles and ribcage. Within an instant Mehöl was standing again, holding a heart radiating a dark aura in the palm of his hand. He crushed the dreadful amalgam of flesh and metal as the neuromancer's lifeless body collapsed.

Soon afterwards, the elf got back control of his body, which was trembling with exhaustion, while the voice could weakly be heard in his mind.

I had sworn to never again take a life, but Destiny seems to have decided otherwise. Now lead me to the one who guides your people in the city that I have seen in your mind and which you call Laroq. I still have much to teach you, but you will have to be patient.

Exhausted by the effort, the Sphinx's mind went to sleep while the gem in Mehöl's implant began its rebirth.

The next day, while Lahn's first rays chased away darkness, Mehöl began his return journey. He had burned the creatures' corpses, and on the hill there was a new mound in memory of his young guide.

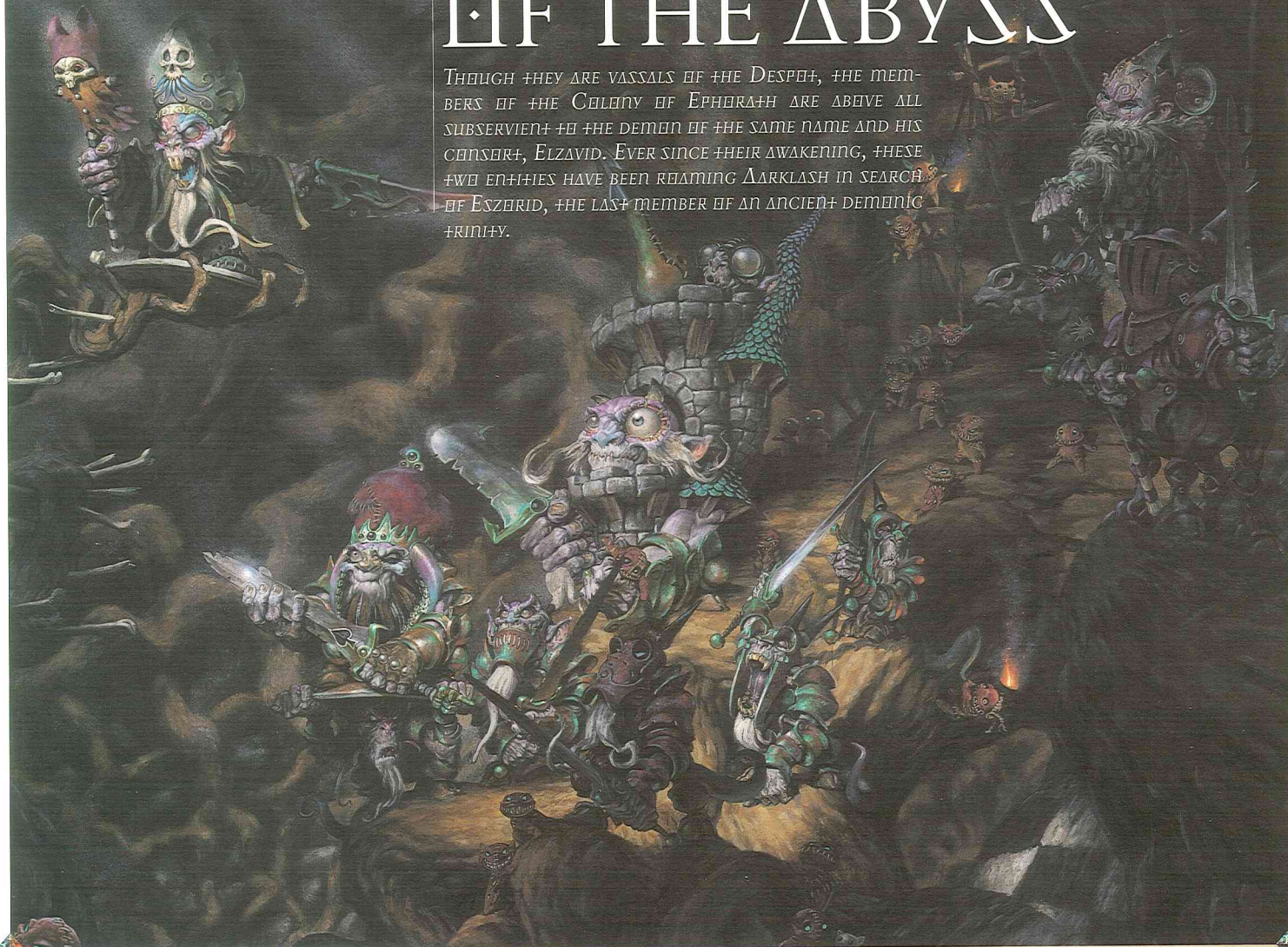
The elf was hoping to reach Cadwallon a day later. There he could find a ship that was willing to bring him closer to Laroq by sailing up the Gulf of Syrlinh. He had to bring his message to the Guide at any price... the images of creations of immense power, but also an imperious warning anchored in his memory. Deep down inside him, Kulden's last words about an underground fortress located to the north of the Behemoth Mountains still echoed. In this fortress was hidden an ancient knowledge of which Mehöl held the primary key.

The Cynwäll adjusted his travel cloak, stroked the gearwheel of bronze hanging at his next, and sped up his pace.



THE TRINITY OF THE ABYSS

THOUGH THEY ARE VASSALS OF THE DESPOT, THE MEMBERS OF THE COLONY OF EPHORATH ARE ABOVE ALL SUBSERVIENT TO THE DEMON OF THE SAME NAME AND HIS CHIEF, ELZAVID. EVER SINCE THEIR AWAKENING, THESE TWO ENTITIES HAVE BEEN RECLAIMING DARKLASH IN SEARCH OF ESZERID, THE LAST MEMBER OF AN ANCIENT DEMONIC TRINITY.



Many a history is made up of battles, hope and treason. That of the Colony of Ephorath is no different.

THE DESTINY OF KARAS

The Colony of Ephorath's history begins, as is often the case on Aarklash, with a confrontation: the bloody clash between the Possessed of Mid-Nor and the dwarves of Karas Ironfist. This battle was fought in the year 980 on the northeastern flank of the Peaks of Dust, near an old dwarven mine that had been rediscovered several months earlier...

It had been nearly 600 years that this mine no longer was exploited. Was this due to an epidemic? To a curse? The cause for its abandonment was unknown, but one thing was certain: the mine was full of copper and iron of incredible purity.

Because the territory was at the edge of Wolfen hunting grounds, scouts were first sent to find the mine's location and check if it could still be exploited. A month after their return to Fom-Nur in the spring of 980, about 50 miners and engineers escorted by just as many fighters (warriors, boors and crossbowmen supported by several thermo-priests of Uren) began their journey towards the Peaks of Dust. Karas Ironfist, grandson of Thorval Ironfist, the destroyer of abominations, led the expedition. From his ancestors he had inherited their great skill with the glaive, their unflinching will, as well as their exceptional memory. Yet nothing had prepared him for what was awaiting him...

The voyage went without a hitch. The first few days spent in the mine also went well. The most superstitious among them became alarmists after the discovery of glyphs (most probably an ancient form of the dwarven alphabet) that were engraved in the

walls at the entrance of the complex. No one listened to their ramblings and work started without delay.

The engineers changed the support beams of the old tunnels and the miners began their excavation using pickaxes and explosives.

Most probably attracted by the noise, a pack of Wolfen howled for several nights in a row within a few leagues of the camp, yet without ever showing themselves openly hostile. The dwarves thought, with good reason, that the children of Yllia wanted to remind them where their territory began, and they didn't give it any further thought.

Only 15 days after their arrival the dwarves began exploiting the mine, and three weeks later the first load of ore left for Fom-Nur escorted by 15 fighters. That same evening, less than an hour after nightfall, the Possessed of Mid-Nor attacked.

Without a sound the sentries' throats were slit and the putrid flood washed over the camp. Tents burst into flames, cries filled the night, bodies were slashed and heads rolled to the floor. Karas scarcely had time to organise his men. Barely had he skewered one of his assailants that the battle's outcome became clear to him: defeat was inevitable. He was then faced with a dreadful choice: either to fight and die or to abandon his fellows and hope to avenge them. His instinct, his pride, his education and his culture pushed him to stay and fight on, yet reason was stronger: he chose to flee and remain alive.

Hidden in the shadows, unable to look, Karas Ironfist listened to the end of the confrontation, the moans of the last fighters, and then the silence that was only disturbed by the crackling of the flames that were still burning the camp. Gnawed at by his lust for life and the shame of having abandoned his fellows, he didn't move all night, trying to understand what the assailants were doing. He didn't hear a victory cry, only scraps of sentences. The words were Dwarfish, but the voices made chills run down his spine. There were footsteps, scraping sounds, and then silence.

At daybreak Karas Ironfist looked at what was left of their camp. Only the charred remains of tents and a few traces of blood stood witness to the massacre that had taken place. There wasn't a single corpse, weapon or piece of armour. Everything had disappeared. Stupefied, Ironfist crossed the camp and went towards the mine. There he heard sounds coming from it: the striking of pickaxes and the bursts of voices. The assailants were still there... and Karas fled once again.

On the road to Fom-Nur he crossed two other survivors of the slaughter. The joy of their reunion didn't last long. Their hearts were all heavy with the shame of having abandoned their companions and with what they had seen. In the light of the flames that were destroying their camp they had clearly seen who their assailants were: morbid parodies of dwarves, fleshless beings with a mad gaze who gave off a putrid smell.

At this time not many were aware of the existence of the Possessed... and those who were never spoke about them. The Coppersmiths were keeping an eye out for problems. That's why, when they entered the hall of the city council, the survivors were convinced that the accursed barony of Acheron was behind this attack and that the event announced an invasion of Tir-Nâ-Bor.

The survivors' story made the council go silent and retire behind closed doors to debate what to do. The decision was made to send a messenger to the ambassador of Akkylannie in Kâ-In-Ar to confirm, or deny, the possible presence of necromants in the region. Of course, it was also decided to send troops to eliminate the menace. Logically, Karas Ironfist and his companions volunteered for this mission. Their

sense of honour demanded the noise of the clash of weapons to pay for their shortcomings.

The Coppersmiths obviously weren't far away. Two of them sat at the council. Having recognised the Possessed in Ironfist's description, they had to organise themselves as quickly as possible.

THE COPPERSMITHS

The Coppersmiths are a secret society made up of high dignitaries of Tir-Nâ-Bor that saw the light of day in the 7th century, shortly after the discovery of the existence of the Possessed. Their goal: to hide from the eyes of the dwarven people all information on the Despat and his fiends. To do so, a non-aggression pact was made between the two mysterious factions.

Since 994 and the open revelation of the presence of the Possessed in Tir-Nâ-Bor, the Coppersmiths have no more use. Yet they still gather...to protect the secret of their very own existence. For though they can be given credit for having avoided several massacres, they can also be accused of knowingly having sent numerous dwarves to their death, of which some were among the most valorous. And one must also take into account that their actions probably did nothing more than delay the inevitable.

The existence of the fiends of Mid-Nor couldn't be revealed; Karas and his two companions therefore had to die. Assassinating them too early was risky, so the Coppersmiths decided to warn the Possessed. Yet this nevertheless caused them another problem: if all of the warriors who were sent perished, then the council risked mobilising the army. So there had to be survivors. A Coppersmith would therefore have to infiltrate their ranks. Furthermore, despite its cynicism, the secret society couldn't let the best of Fom-Nur's warriors be slaughtered, so it arranged for the troops to be made up of elements that were considered to be "replaceable" or even "perishable": repeat offenders who were promised grace and fighters who were judged to be agitators or rebellious. And finally, the Coppersmiths convinced the council's other members to keep quiet about the news. According to them, informing the population risked causing an uncontrollable panic.

That same evening, Karas's wife noticed that her husband was tormented. His gaze had changed; he was sad and had lost his sparkle. She questioned him, but Karas couldn't answer. When he and his companions had left the council, they were given the order not to reveal anything about what they had experienced. So Karas Ironfist remained

silent, but since he wasn't forbidden to write, he wrote and drew. While going over the details of the massacre again and again, he remembered a detail that he and his companions had forgotten: the symbols engraved in the stone at the mine's entrance.

His night was fitful. The next day he went to the grand library of Fom-Nur with the hope of understanding what these inscriptions meant.

Texts dating from before the Winter of Battles confirmed his first impressions: the writing truly was an ancient dwarven alphabet. His first translations didn't make his worries go away, on the contrary. Though he didn't manage to understand everything, there was no doubt that the inscriptions were a warning. The mine hadn't been abandoned without a reason. He then remembered other details, especially a conversation between two engineers who were surprised by the good state of the galleries and were comparing them to others further away. According to them, the deepest tunnels hadn't collapsed naturally.

At the time the subject didn't seem to be important, mining engineering never having interested Karas. But now, in the light of the elements he had just found, the engineers' remarks took on a whole new meaning. He began to make out the outline of a complex puzzle of which he only had the first pieces.

Absorbed by his research, he only noticed belatedly that he was being watched. The Coppersmiths, being wary, had ordered spies to keep an eye on each one of the survivors. At first they had thought of letting them in on the secret, but they quickly decided that the council would be against it.

At the end of the morning, on his way back home, Karas Ironfist noticed that he was being followed. He turned around and threw a glance at his follower before entering a grocery shop. There he bought some herbs and came back out. A bit further on he did the same at a bakery. Doubt was no longer permitted.

He knew the face of one of the spies. He had seen him talk with one of the council members. His brain began boiling. Why was the council having him followed? Hadn't it believed him or was it worried about the fact that he had survived? Karas hadn't concealed his flight. Did that make him a traitor? Not knowing what to do, Ironfist let himself be followed and went home.

That afternoon he returned to the library as if nothing had happened. He wandered among the rows of books for a while before sitting down at a table with a book on working leather. The dwarf who was following him sat down at a table nearby and pretended to be consulting a book. Karas made a few quick drawings of corsets and got up again to continue roaming the bookshelves while leaving his sketches behind on the table; he kept his notes on the inscriptions at the mine. After having taken the

book that had let him start translating the engravings, he stopped near a bookshelf that wasn't visited often, for it was devoted to Barhan culture, from which he could observe his follower.

After a while the spy went to Karas's table and looked at the stack of books, puzzled. Guessing that he had probably been uncovered, he quickly looked around himself and rushed between some shelves to search for Karas, who quickly hid his notes in one of the books on the shelf and returned to his table. What he had the time to discover didn't please him very much. Even though he was a long way from having translated everything, the beginning was far from being reassuring. More than just a warning, it was an interdiction or an epitaph: "Here lies the demon of domination, locked up at the price of the sacrifice of many."

Were the creatures that had attacked them dwarves slain by the demon who had returned to prevent the mine from being exploited? Probably not, for Karas had clearly heard the sound of pickaxes the day after the massacre. Had these "things" been brought back from the dead by the demonic entity to free it? Should Karas see the council about this even though it had debated behind closed doors and was having him followed? His head full of questions, he left the library.

Since the expedition was set to leave the next morning, Karas Ironfist told his wife that he had discovered things and that she should never mention them unless it was absolutely necessary. She would find his notes in the grand library in "a place that smelled like violets," he told her with a cheeky expression. Because they had the feeling that they would never see each other again, Karas didn't answer any of his wife's questions, preferring to spend a night filled with passion together. They had the impression that the gods wanted to bless their union. That last night was the origin of the birth of their only child, a girl who would be named Ezalyth.

The Coppersmiths' plan almost went as they had planned... The dwarven troops were trapped inside the mine. The Coppersmiths' spy, Franir, slipped away among the Possessed and fled while his brothers were being massacred, their cries echoing to the rhythm of his footsteps... Once he got out of the mine, Franir stabbed himself in the shoulder and in the thigh with a dagger, smeared his face and body with blood and dirt, and made his way back home.

When he reached Fom-Nur he told of how the troop had had to confront a whole army of skeletons and that all his warriors had perished, but that they had shown themselves worthy of the greatest heroes of Tir-Nâ-Bor. Franir added that the mine had partially collapsed and was most certainly no longer exploitable.

The council accepted his story and turned the page on this sad episode in their history, not without

ing honoured the warriors who had fallen for the protection of Tir-Nâ-Bor.

Though this was never publicly announced, it's interesting to note that Franir, hating himself so much for what he had done, exiled himself to a cave in the Aegis Mountains, thus hoping to be forgiven by the gods. He never spent a moment without regretting his acts. After spending two years living as a hermit, he decided to tell his story on the walls of his new dwelling. By a strange irony of fate he died shortly after having finished it. Was this a sign that the gods



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had forgiven him? They are the only ones to know, and anyhow, his written confession hasn't been discovered yet...

In reality, though the Coppersmiths' conspiracy almost went as they had planned, its consequences weren't the ones expected. When Franir fled, most of the fighters were still alive. Caught between the dozens of Possessed who had been lying in ambush in the tunnels and the 200 others who had arrived through the main entrance, they were forced to scatter and fight in small groups with all the tenacity characteristic of the dwarves. They felt neither fear nor pain. Their acts were of rare heroism, yet this didn't save them. They fell one after the other.

Karas fought with the fury of despair. The more enemies he killed and the more he saw coming towards him, the stronger he felt. There was a presence in this mine that seemed to be giving him support. After more than four hours of combat

there was a moment of respite. Frays were still being fought elsewhere, but Ironfist had managed to rid himself of his opponents. He felt that his body wouldn't be able to resist for much longer. It had been a while already that his muscles no longer reacted and that only his willpower allowed him to resist.

Yet he then made an error, a tiny error. For a fraction of a second he thought he'd be able to survive and imagined his return to Fom-Nur. This spark of hope caused his demise. It was exactly what Ephorath had been waiting for (see The Six Aspects of Domination). The demon took advantage of this to break down his victim's last defences.

Weakened by the battle, the dwarf's will gave way but didn't break. The Sovereign of the Six Aspects of Domination didn't care, for he didn't need to crush in order to dominate. Thus Karas Ironfist became his first host in over 1000 years...

The dwarf's anger and strength were instantly increased tenfold. His body, filled with new energy, again answered to his will. The battle could go on. More than 100 of the Possessed fell under the blows of his glaive in the hours that followed, yet the battle was lost in advance, for in spite of Ephorath's strength, Karas remained a being of flesh and blood, a living being that could be hurt and killed.

Just a few minutes after having breathed his last gasp, Karas Ironfist opened his eyes again. Invested by Ephorath, possessed by the Despot, yet still endowed with his own will, he had become Yh-Karas. For him a new era had begun.

YSILTHAN'S QUEST

Karas Ironfist's wife didn't know who she could talk to or how to find her husband's notes. She had gone to the library several times, but nowhere could she smell the scent of violets...

Six months after Ephorath's awakening, she crossed paths with a faithful who would become her friend and her confidant.

A long time before becoming the bishop of the Ymsur, Ysilthan was a faithful of Gheim. He was one of the most upright and most noble devotees that Tir-Nâ-Bor had ever known. His unwavering faith had earned him the respect of his peers. So it's fairly natural that Karas's wife confided in him.

The story about the scent of violets nearly made him die laughing. It referred to an old dwarven joke about the Barhans and the smell of their underwear. After several hours the faithful found Ironfist's notes.

Ysilthan immediately began his research, looking for the slightest bits of information on the mines and on the time at which they were abandoned. He then cross-referred everything he had learned with all mentions of the demons. His life was turned upside down and would never be the same again. The information held in the library of Fom-Nur was limited, so

Ysilthan left the fortress while promising Karas's wife that he'd keep her informed of his discoveries.

For the next 15 years Ysilthan visited the greatest libraries of Aarklash. He regularly wrote letters to Ironfist's wife. Unfortunately, she never received any of them. The poor woman hadn't survived childbirth. However, the baby was in good health and was named Ezalyth, which meant "hope" in the ancient dialect of Gheim.

Ysilthan's letters didn't remain undelivered. They ended up in the hands of the council, and more specifically of the Coppersmiths. Rather than worry about the devotee's revelations on the Trinity of the Abyss, the conspirators feared being unmasked and decided to take action against this cleric who had decidedly become too annoying.

Ysilthan was so absorbed by his research that he slowly abandoned his job and his duties, and thus the Coppersmiths had no trouble stripping him of his functions and his titles. Abandoned and cast out by his society and his culture, Ysilthan unknowingly became the perfect host for one of the members of the Trinity of the Abyss: Eszorid, the Messiah of the Lost.

Ysilthan's efforts ended up being worthwhile. At the University of Kallienne he discovered the last pieces of the puzzle in a book titled *The Verses of the Trinity*, the holy book of a religion dating from before the Winter of Battles. It told of how demonic immortals had joined forces to become the Trinity of the Abyss, how they had subjugated numerous peoples and how they had decimated others. The text also described the two main places of worship of the Trinity: the mine where it had all begun (dedicated to the Sovereign of the Six Aspects of Domination), and a rocky peak to the north of Syharhalna in the Valleys of Steel, the sacred place of the faithful of Elzavid, the Queen with Two Faces.

Without remorse he destroyed the book, but harm had already been done. Now holding forbidden knowledge, his mind had taken another step towards insanity...

The fallen devotee then went to Akkylannie to look for further information on the tomb of Elzavid. By pure chance he made another discovery that was just as important in a travel journal titled *The Book of Vedath*. This work told of how, a century earlier, an Akkylannian expedition on its way to Syharhalna was caught in a storm and was stranded on an island of the Fangs of Fire. The journal also reported that the crusaders met a population "devoted to the worship of a machiavellian deity" and that after a short attempt at converting them to the faith of Merin, the Akkylannians preferred eliminating the infidels. And finally, the book told of how a monastery was built on the principal altar of the bloodthirsty god and that a guardian was charged by the Temple to keep watch over Eszorid's accursed reliquary.

Ysilthan's combat wasn't as desperate as it seemed after all, and it was with renewed hope that he destroyed *The Book of Vedath*.

Instead of going directly to Elzavid's tomb, Ysilthan returned to that of Ephorath. He had already been there twice before, but with the new knowledge he had acquired he was hoping to understand how the immortals had been trapped and how to repeat the process. Unfortunately for him, his first visits hadn't gone unnoticed by the Despot, and a detachment of the Possessed was waiting for him in ambush. The cleric fought with all his might, but as is often the case with the dwarves of Mid-Nor, he was greatly outnumbered.

“

Without remorse he destroyed the book, but harm had already been done. Now holding forbidden knowledge, his mind had taken another step towards insanity...

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For a month Ysilthan remained locked up and gagged. He wasn't given any food and wasn't asked any questions. The reason for this treatment was simple: the Despot was aware that only Yh-Karas, or rather Ephorath, could ask the faithful the right questions. What more, he feared that making him join his army's ranks would alter his memory, which is something that regularly happened. The Despot therefore didn't have much choice; he had to inform Ephorath.

One month after Ysilthan's imprisonment, Yh-Karas finally arrived. The encounter only lasted six hours, yet they were the worst ones of the faithful's life. Yh-Karas interrogated him, tortured him, drugged him, and then tortured him some more. Yet to no avail, for Ysilthan didn't talk. Even the manifestation of Ephorath himself didn't break his will. Infuriated, the Possessed parted and left the devotee all alone.

Probably due to overconfidence, Yh-Karas had made a mistake during the interrogation: he had

unchained his victim. Free of his movements, Ysilthan could again call on his litanies and had no trouble escaping.

His joy of having found his freedom again didn't last long. He always felt like his former jailers were watching and following him. He tried to shake them off, but to no avail. Their methods weren't natural. The cleric understood that Yh-Karas had let him escape, surely hoping that he'd lead him to the tombs of the other immortals... Of course, Ysilthan could have just remained where he was and waited. But he wasn't like the Coppersmiths; he knew that with or without his help, one day or another Ephorath would find his allies again. *The Verses of the Trinity* and *The Book of Vedath* that he had found and taken care to destroy were only copies... and there were others.

During the next three years Ysilthan prayed Gheim as he had never done before. His last hope was to find a way to chase Ephorath out of Karas's body. In 998 he understood how to do so. Now he had a chance of chasing away the demon or even of destroying him, but he needed help. He needed someone who could make the real Karas react to help him fight the demon. Only one person came to his mind: Ezalyth, the child that Ironfist had never known.

When he arrived in Fom-Nur it didn't take Ysilthan a long time to find the young woman. She was, after all, an Ironfist, and many knew her name. He spared her the tale of his painful encounter with Karas, but he told her everything else: his first clash with the dwarves of Mid-Nor, his flight and his return to Fom-Nur, his translation of the symbols at the mine and the council's treachery. He told her everything that he had discovered so far, and about the miracle he was hoping to perform with the help of Gheim.

The young woman was only 15 years old, yet she already had the temperament of an Ironfist. She carefully listened to what Ysilthan told her. Deep in the cleric's eyes, where everyone else would have seen madness, she saw the light of the truth. Her instinct pushed her to trust the old dwarf and to believe his story. In addition, the latter matched the visions that she sometimes had. Her father was still alive; she could feel it. His soul had been mistreated and tortured, yet his will was still intact and his efforts were all made to reach a single goal: to kill a bodiless entity that was darker than the night, a demon who was called Ephorath.



Ysilthan and Ezalyth began their journey toward Elzavid's tomb.

CHECKMATE

The old cleric's miracles helped them reach Syharhalna and then the Valleys of Steel without hindrances. Ysilthan knew that Ephorath's fiends would arrive at the latest the next day. They therefore had to make haste. Fortunately, the temple of Elzavid had been abandoned for eons and the Syhars seemed to avoid it like the pest. Moreover, the devotee had carefully thought out his plan. He had brought along explosives to booby-trap the place and kill as many of the Possessed as possible. Only then

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Since silence was all he got for an answer, he brandished his glaive and chopped off the heads of the skimmers that had survived.

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would he take care of Ephorath. If his plan failed, then he hoped that the tomb's destruction would slow down or even prevent Elzavid's liberation...

As soon as they had reached the top of the rocky peak, Ephorath's followers entered the tunnels beneath the Temple's ruins. On seeing this, Ysilthan thought that things would be easier than planned and began preparing his explosives, but he hadn't counted on the bond linking Ezalyth to her father. This bond was the vestige of one of the immortal's many powers and it had the property of becoming stronger the closer the subjects were. Though Ephorath easily chased away the parasitic images that were creating the link, they struck Elzavid at full force. When she saw Ysilthan setting the explosives, her blood churned. She could feel her father's soul deep within herself and she couldn't let him die under the rubble.

She got up and rushed to follow the colony into the tunnels.

Elzavid's presence could be felt. Once the seal of protection was broken, he just had to find a host... which was done as soon as Ezalyth entered the catacombs. The young woman felt a cold shadow invade her mind. She attempted to resist, but her opponent was too powerful. Her will wavered and Elzavid opened her eyes. Ephorath smiled.

"Welcome, my sister! Or should I say my daugh..."

The Queen with Two Faces interrupted him. She had just absorbed her host's memory and discovered something that was utmost annoying.

"The old fox! He has booby-trapped the ruins. Let's get out of here..."

A first explosion covered the end of her sentence. The 15 others blew up the ruins. The tunnels collapsed and crushed the Possessed inside them.

Only Yh-Karas, Ezalyth, and a handful of wingless reapers* managed to escape from the tunnels. Ephorath was raging mad.

"I know you're here. Come on, old fool, show yourself!"

Since silence was all he got for an answer, he brandished his glaive and chopped off the heads of the skimmers that had survived.

"There, Ysilthan, now only you and I are left. Move your last pieces and let's get over with it!"

The devotee's reaction came quickly. He came out in the open while reciting a litany. For once he agreed with the demon: it was time to get over with it. He called on Gheim and on his strength. His gaze set on young Ezalyth, he felt Elzavid's presence that was trying to block him. Using his will like one uses a spear, he stabbed the immortal and suddenly the young woman's gaze changed. She seemed to be awakening from a long sleep. When she saw the corpses of the skimmers around her, she became scared. Then she heard Ysilthan and a glimmer of hope appeared in her eyes.

The old cleric understood that his miracle had worked. Yh-Karas's eyes darted from Ysilthan to Ezalyth and back, not understanding what was happening. The devotee lost no time and continued chanting. He still had to bring Karas towards the Light and this promised to be difficult, for the warrior had been subjected to the demon for many years.

Between his partially shut eyelids Ysilthan saw Ezalyth running towards him. He was concentrated, yet could not hold back from giving her a smile. Happiness was filling him, but he knew that he shouldn't give in to euphoria, not yet. Ezalyth returned his smile, but her smile was a hungry grin filled with hatred and madness.

The oldster barely had the time to see the dagger's metallic shine. It was too late. The young woman sunk the blade between the cleric's ribs and pierced his lungs. With a sharp jerk she pulled out the blade and stabbed him again. The old messenger of the

gods fell to his knees, blood gushing from his mouth that was twisted in pain and despair... He had failed. He lifted his face to the sky and cursed Gheim with all his might before collapsing in a puddle of blood.

Ezalyth cocked her head and looked at him.

"Poor Ysilthan. He was so sure of himself, so... naive. A simple smile and he was in heaven."

The two immortals broke into cold laughter that could be heard all the way to the valley below.

The Queen with Two Faces continued.

"If he had insisted for a second more, he would have defeated me... Fate really does sometimes hang on a bare thread."

"What you're saying worries me," scolded Ephorath. "This means that others can vanquish us!"

"No. He was the only one who knew this litany. His faith and his hope are what allowed him to acquire it. And there are very few mortals of his calibre."

"Let's hope so, my sister, let's hope so..."

"What should we do with him?"

"He's coming with us. He knows where Eszorid is."

"So what? We do too."

"Well then, where is he?"

"I... I can't remember."

"Those who have locked us up haven't only changed our names. They have also deteriorated the knowledge we had of ourselves. I don't know how, but I have forgotten many things, knowledge and powers. But they'll pay dearly for this!"

"So he's coming with us. He'll be an entertaining companion! Won't the Despot try to crush his will?"

"Not a chance! While he was dying, this old madman cursed the god he had devoted his life to. He could have insulted us, and especially you. Yet he chose to curse his god, believing that he had abandoned him. He'll make a perfect host for Eszorid and there is no risk that his memory will be altered by his resurrection. So everything is just perfect."

Thus the bishop joined the Colony of Ephorath. To avoid awakening the Despot's mistrust, the devotee's and Ezalyth's bodies also were subjected to the ritual of Mid-Nor. The pieces would soon all be gathered. The game was almost over.

ESZERID'S TOMB

Thanks to Ysilthan (more specifically to his knowledge of *The Verses of the Trinity* and *The Book of Vedath*), the Colony of Ephorath had no trouble finding the position of Eszorid's tomb on one of the islands of the Fangs of Fire.

Yet there were two problems. The first one was that the Messiah of the Lost was the first of the three to have been defeated and his name had been forgotten earlier than that of the others. So despite the survival of some of his cults, his awakening looked like it was going to be more difficult. Thus, for the five next years the Colony of Ephorath under-

(*): The skimmers of the Colony of Ephorath.

took a huge task: it created several religious centres to the glory of Eszorid.

In 1003 Ephorath decided that it was time to awaken him and the colony began its journey to the Fangs of Fire, all the while knowing that it would have to deal with the second problem: the famous guardian mentioned in *The Book of Vedath*.

When they reached the monastery's basements, the colony's members were met by the guardian who was no other than Vedath, knight of the Temple. Merin had preserved his vitality and, though the man was extremely old, neither his arm nor his faith could fail! The templar spoke to the Possessed in their own language, thus revealing the scope of his knowledge.

"I won't allow you to free your brother, accursed creatures. Because stone cannot hold Eszorid's sleeping will for much longer, I am giving him a prison of flesh. May Merin give me the strength to contain the demon!"

Ysilthan was about to rush at the templar, but Ezalyth held him back with a sudden gesture. If they killed him, then they had a good chance of destroying Eszorid! Vedath's face betrayed the terrifying battle that he was waging to stay in control of his acts. Even weakened and enchained, Eszorid remained a formidable foe. Made stronger and more vigorous by this power that wasn't his, Vedath ran off into the depths of the temple and escaped the colony.

Until this day the templar remains unable to be found, yet Ephorath isn't worried. No matter how strong he may be, Vedath's will cannot contain Eszorid's power forever. Sooner or later the templar will give up the struggle and the Trinity of the Abyss will be at a whole again. Then the immortals will get back their original strength and nothing will be able to hold them back!

EXPLANATIONS

Gathered here are several fragments of answers to questions that can be asked on the Trinity of the Abyss and its history.

THE TRINITY OF THE ABYSS

The Trinity of the Abyss is the name given to the three leaders of the Colony of Ephorath (Yh-Karas, the king, Ezalyth, the queen, and Ysilthan, the bishop). It is also the name given to the demonic trinity (Ephorath, Elzavid and Eszorid) in *The Verses of the Trinity*.

WHAT DOES THE TRINITY WANT?

The first thing to understand is that the demonic trinity walked on Aarklash before the arrival of the men of Kel. Since then the world has changed a lot. Mortals have become the masters of the continent, religions have changed, and so have fears. The trinity therefore has to rebuild everything to get back its former strength.

The demons' first objective is not to spread Evil or even to conquer Aarklash. No, what they want most is the rebirth and growth of their cults so that their names again become synonyms of fear and power.

ONLY ONE BISHOP?

Eszorid, the Messiah of the Lost, has the power of ubiquity or, to be precise, of dual-location. In other words, he can be in two places at a time. His

future host will be endowed with this power. So in a way there truly will be two bishops in the Colony of Ephorath.

This power is bound directly to Eszorid's origins. Being the Messiah of the Lost, he belongs neither to a land nor to a people. He cannot be subjected!

HOW DID THE POSSESSED COME TO BE IN THE MINE THE FIRST TIME?

The Possessed were waiting for the right moment to attack the explorers. If they had known the Wolfen language, then the dwarves would have anticipated the attack, for the pack that was howling in the distance wasn't defending its territory; it was warning them of the danger.

This, of course, only partially answers the question.

Magicians have known for a long time that the immortals, to whom they owe their powers, are progressively resettling Aarklash every time their names are pronounced correctly. The magicians have therefore deformed the forbidden names to weaken their power and avoid a new cataclysm. The prodigious demons that the mystics invoke are therefore known by various names and just as many appearances.

There is a being for whom the discovery of the true names is of capital importance: the Despot. He has already located the tombs of several fallen immortals. This isn't enough for him; he has to discover their real names, which are hidden in the limbo of time and of oblivion. As soon as he will have used their power to awaken the fallen and enslave them, no obstacle will be able to stand between him and the control over Aarklash. Ephorath's tomb was the first one onto which he set his heart.





BETWEEN DEGS AND WELVES

Lahn's last rays were bathing Bran-Ô-Kor in a red glow. In this light the ochre colour of the earth became crimson, giving the canyons and mesas the appearance of an alien landscape.

That is how Kal Shadar loved his land - mysterious and majestic. He enjoyed these last moments of the day, when a part of life retired to give way to the creatures of the night. These moments of calm and peace were like no other.

From the top of a hill he watched his orcish brothers. In small groups they were returning to their camp after a day spent roaming the arid gorges on the lookout for game or any possible intruders.

That evening, however, the breeze brought him a message. An unusual smell reached his nose. A fetid

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The trackers of Bran-Ô-Kor are orcs who have abandoned their tribe to form an army that roams Aarklash. They know every crack and cranny of the border regions of orcish territory where no one can take them by surprise. From there they lead raids on enemy outposts accompanied by Amok slayers. Their adventures let them gather all kind of useful information for their brothers in Bran-Ô-Kor.

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THE WRATH. OF THE RAIK

THE DRUMS ARE SPREADING ALL OVER AARKLASH. RARE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HAD THE CONFRONT THE MADNESS OF THIS MYSTERIOUS KILT CLAN. RARER YET ARE THOSE WHO HAVE SURVIVED ITS SAVAGERY. THE TRACKERS OF BRAN-Ô-KOR ARE AMONG THEM. MAY JACKAL'S WRATH FALL UPON THESE WHO CLAIM TO SEE CLEARLY!

smell, the smell of death that made him growl. It wasn't the stench of the chemical vapours of the Syhar scouts who sometimes came prowling near the camp. No, this smell rather resembled the rancid fumes of a carcass that has been lying in the sun for too long. The imposing warrior had a bad feeling about this. He squinted his eyes to dim the fiery glow of the setting sun and scanned the thickets and rubble. He suddenly noticed movement below. A fleeting shadow could be seen between two huge boulders. Several dozen metres from there, Kal Shadar could make out a figure. He stood up as tall as he could and waved toward the sentry positioned a little further below. The orcish warrior thought that he was sending him a friendly greeting and was about to wave back. Kal Shadar suddenly stared wide-eyed in stupor. He tried to shout to warn the guard of the danger, but it was already too late. Surging from a crevice, a masked man wearing animal hides rushed at the sentry without making a sound.

From his promontory Kal Shadar didn't hear a thing. The dusk's silence gave the scene an unreal appearance. The attacker's huge axe silently drew an arc in the air and landed on the orc's neck. The guard's head was partly chopped off and he collapsed in what seemed like slow motion. The killer again raised his axe and finished his dreadful task. Then, having picked up his trophy, he brandished it in Kal Shadar's direction while howling in defiance.

Pulling himself together, Kal Shadar brought his horn to his lips and blew with all his might. The sound of his call could be heard for leagues around, endlessly echoing off the walls of the canyons and gorges.

It could still be heard when Kal Shadar, having rushed down the rocky slope as quickly as his legs would let him, reached the bottom of the gorge. The mysterious warrior had opened his victim's chest and was now holding his heart in his hand covered with blood. With his other hand he lifted his mask of bone and revealed his tattooed face. A sparkle of mad fury was burning in his eyes. With a carnivorous smile the killer brought

the still warm heart to his mouth and bit into it with all his teeth bared.

Petrified by the horrendous spectacle being played out before him, Kal Shadar didn't see the figure that was approaching him from the right. The whistle of a projectile that just barely missed him suddenly brought him back to reality. He spun around to face the direction from where the shot had come from and saw an orc frantically gesturing at him with his crossbow in his hands. He spun around again and instantly gauged the situation. Near him a man on the ground was trying to get up again despite a crossbow bolt being stuck in his hip. A few metres behind him two other warriors were rushing towards him with their weapons held high. With a violent kick in the face, Kal Shadar finished the wounded fighter off for good. Then he ran towards the other two opponents. He would have to deal with them quickly, for others would surely be joining them soon. Crouching like a wild beast, the huge orc charged at the first of the





two barbarians while getting ready to receive the second one. Yet this preparation was superfluous since the second one never managed to reach him. Running down the slope at full speed, an orc warrior rammed into him at full force and the two fighters rolled around in the dust.

Good, thought Kal Shadar, at least the alarm was heard and help was on its way.

The first impact of the charge having passed, he was now facing his opponent who was also wearing thick animal skins under which Kal Shadar could make out bronze armour decorated with Kelt symbols. Though he looked like a child in comparison to the orc, the man was powerfully built. With one hand he was wielding a huge axe whose handle he had jammed under his armpit. In the other hand he was holding a glaive, a formidable weapon in close combat.

The barbarian suddenly launched his attack and his axe came flying down at Kal Shadar's shoulder. This was a feint that the battle-hardened orc easily thwarted. Instead of trying to avoid or parry the blow, he simply moved a bit to the side and let the axe hit his heavy shoulder piece made of wrought iron. So when the barbarian launched his second attack and cast the weight of his body forward to thrust his glaive at the orc, his blade only met thin air. Being too close to his opponent and encumbered by his huge scimitar, Kal Shadar pushed the man back with a kick of his knee and then struck him in mid-air while he was flung backwards. The blow cut the warrior deep in the flank and broke several of his ribs. Yet this didn't seem to calm him down at all. He smiled and stared at Kal Shadar with a gaze that expressed savage joy.

For an instant he turned this gaze away from his opponent to focus on something behind him. The orc then remembered the first attacker, grabbed his flail and spun around to strike blindly. Did Kal Shadar have luck or his instincts to thank at that moment? He would never find out and didn't even bother thinking about it. The ironclad weight of his weapon hit the attacker straight in the head and pulverised his helmet and skull with the same ease. Knocked to the ground by the force of the impact, the man was dead before he even hit the floor. His body twitched with several convulsions and then became motionless.

In spite of his wound, the other barbarian took advantage of this diversion to attack. He thrust his glaive between the orc's armour and shoulder blade, trying to reach his heart. But the blow wasn't strong enough and the warrior of Bran-Ô-Kor's powerful muscles prevented the blade from sinking in deeply. Kal Shadar let out a cry of pain and anger. He spun around and sent his enormous elbow into the aggressor's sternum. The wind knocked out of him, he fell to his knees with his mouth opening and closing in convulsions while trying to catch his breath. Raging mad, Kal Shadar brought his flail down on the man and mercilessly killed him. A single blow was enough to put an end to his existence.

Blinded by his anger, the orc struck again and again until there was nothing left of his attacker but a pile of mangled flesh and bones. When he finally calmed down he quickly gauged the situation. Eight barbarians were dead. Many orcish warriors had come running and quickly submerged their aggressors. Only two of them were injured.

All this seemed strange. This attack on this side of the gorge seemed too much like a diversion. At the head of his warriors, Kal Shadar made haste to return to their camp.

There he found the answer to his premonition.

According to the survivors, everything happened very fast, too fast for them to react. Barely had the camp's defenders left to come to Kal Shadar's aid when about 20 masked warriors burst into the camp. Several young orcs had tried to resist them, but they were pitilessly slaughtered. Anyhow, the barbarians hadn't even attempted to follow those running away. They had apparently come for a specific reason and left as soon as their goal was reached.

"Did they take something with them?" asked Kal Shadar.

"Shaka Gohr has disappeared," answered one of the orcs.

"What?" shouted Kal Shadar. "What's the meaning of this? Why would the Sessairs have come all the way over here to capture our shaka?"

"Not the Sessairs, Kal Shadar..."

The shaman who had just spoken had trouble walking and was being helped by a warrior. A long scarlet gash crossed his chest. Without further consideration for his wound, Kal Shadar looked at him questioningly. Then the shaman began to explain.

"It's true that those who attacked us were Kelts, but they weren't carrying the symbols of the goddess of the Sessairs."

"So who were they then? And why did they attack us?" Kal Shadar asked impatiently.

"It's not us they were targeting. By capturing Shaka Gohr they were targeting Jackal himself. And I know of only one people capable of such hatred towards the gods. Gather your best warriors; we must leave now before it's too late."

"Leave? Where to? Too late for what? And what people are you talking about? I'm warning you, Oruk, I won't take your mysterious demeanour much longer!"

"Save your anger for later, Kal Shadar. We're leaving for the forest of the Drones!"

THE BLACK WEEEDS

The Forest of the West. How many legends, how many terrifying rumours have spread across Aark-lash to give this place such a reputation? The orcs simply call it the Forest of the West, but for many other peoples this accursed place goes by the name of the Black Woods.

Many days and just as many nights have gone by since the Drones attacked the orcs and kidnapped their priest. Kal Shadar, accompanied by a dozen of his best warriors and the shaman Oruk, has left in pursuit of the ravagers. Together they have crossed the Aegis Mountains, hoping that the dwarves would intercept the Drones or at least slow them down. Alas, the people of Tir-Nâ-Bor generally don't take much notice of intruders as long as they only cross the mountains and don't attempt to enter their tunnels.

The orcs have now reached the edge of the Black Woods without having caught up with those they were chasing.

So Kal Shadar and Oruk held a council. The former wanted to turn back. He had already risked the lives of too many good warriors for the life of a single one. Oruk, however, was worried. The Drones hadn't travelled so far for nothing, and they had gone to the trouble of keeping Shaka Gohr alive. All this didn't bode well.

Kal Shadar finally let himself be convinced to continue searching and the small troop entered the disquieting gloom of the forest. The warriors remained alert,



keeping an eye on the undergrowth and crevasses that filled this place. The orcs were expecting an arrow to come flying out of the thickets at any moment.

Oruk was watching. Even far from his land the shaman maintained a close link to the forces of nature. Before venturing into the forest he took the time to cast a spell that heightened his senses. Within a radius of about 20 metres around him every tree and every stone became a relay of his consciousness.

This precaution proved to be useful. Soon the shaman felt a presence. It followed the orcs at a good distance for a while. Oruk thought it wise not to warn his companions, for any change in their behaviour could have sped up the course of events. A second presence soon joined the first one before moving away again. The enemy would soon be informed of the orcs' intrusion.

Oruk then ordered a halt. The place was suitable for them to defend themselves. A wide and deep gorge opened in the ground to their right and an enormous

rock gave the shaman the perfect promontory from which he could see the whole battlefield.

Kal Shadar and his warriors turned their backs to the gorge and positioned themselves on both sides of the rock onto which Oruk had climbed. A crossbowman got next to the shaman to get a good line of sight as well as to protect the old orc's life.

Always at the ready, Oruk squatted and placed several amber-coloured stones in front of him. He waved his hands and fingers above these gems for a few seconds, tracing complex arabesques in the air.

He suddenly raised his head and peered into the undergrowth. Something was coming nearer. This time he could feel several presences. Some of them were very agitated and seemed to be held back by others. Oruk could sense great suffering in them.

Kal Shadar and his warriors also noticed their presence, for cries and moans could now be heard. The tension had grown by another degree and the confrontation was now inevitable. Oruk suddenly understood that the enchained beings had been freed; they were now approaching at high speed.

"Here they come," he simply said.

First the orcs could distinguish dark shapes that were running on all fours in their direction. One would have said wolves or dogs, yet they seemed to be moving in a bizarre, almost clumsy, way.

When the first one was near enough, the crossbowman took aim and shot his bolt. Hit in the shoulder, the creature reared up in pain and they all saw that it was in fact a man wearing a dog's hide on his back. Barely slowed down by the projectile, the dog-man continued running towards the orcs.

These beings were scraggy and the only weapons they had were their teeth and claws of wood and flint



attached to their wrists. Yet they didn't hesitate at all to jump onto the massive orc warriors.

One of them rushed at the rock on which Oruk was sitting and began climbing up. Before he could reach the top, the shaman took two gems in his hand and uttered a short incantation. The stones began to glow in his fist when he hit the rock. For an instant his hand seemed to disappear into the heart of the rock.

In the second that followed, pointy and razor sharp shards of stone burst from the rock and slashed the attacker's chest, arms and legs. With a cry of pain he fell down to the ground where he remained lying, unconscious.

The battle between the other dog-men and the orcs was short. All the assailants were dead and a claw scratch on a Jackal warrior's shoulder was the only wound that they were able to inflict at the price of their lives. Neither Oruk nor Kal Shadar were fooled. This first attack was just to test them or to distract their attention.

A noise in the leaves of a nearby tree suddenly caught the crossbowman's attention. He barely had the time to make out the figure standing on a thick branch, yet he instinctively got between it and Oruk. The shaman turned around just in time to catch the orc who was collapsing, a thin spear stuck straight through his throat. In the second that followed, the figure jumped from the tree and landed gracefully on the rock. It was a woman as far as Oruk could tell. Her almost naked body was covered with grey ashes and symbols drawn with black soot. Her tousled and tangled hair gave her a savage mien that was reinforced by the glow of defiance burning in her eyes. She was holding a rudimentary weapon that looked extremely dangerous: a stag's antler that was as sharp as a razorblade. Squatting before Oruk, she was ready to leap again, but the shaman didn't give her time to do so. With his shoulder he pushed the crossbowman's lifeless body at her. She would surely have been able to avoid it had the rock been wider, but she had no choice but to catch the enormous, motionless mass and get rid of it as best she could. Oruk quickly use the time thus won to call on his occult gifts. He grabbed two more gems and smashed them together while saying a word of power. At his feet the rock split and a spray of stone shards flew into the air. The Drune threw herself at Oruk just when he was finishing his incantation. Before she could reach him, the stone fragments began spinning faster and faster around the shaman. Hit all over her body, her bare skin lacerated by hundreds of gashes, she lost her balance and fell off the rock.

Oruk immediately ended his spell to take measure of the situation. Other warrioresses had appeared on the branches above the orcs. They were harassing them with their spears while some jumped to the ground to fight them in hand-to-hand combat.

Several orcs had been injured, but none of them seriously. The shaman suddenly became aware of

another menace. A powerful form of magic was at work among the enemy, a form of magic against which he couldn't do much, for it was very different from the one used by the orcs.

The Jackal warrior who had been lightly wounded by a dog-man suddenly began to scream. The thin cuts caused by the claws were growing bigger and bigger, tearing his skin open all over his body. The scene was horrifying, yet the Drune warrioresses were watching the spectacle with a hungry desire glowing in their eyes. Soon the unlucky orc was nothing more than a mass of bared flesh and Kal Shadar himself decided to put an end to his suffering.

Oruk had to act quickly. He probably wasn't as talented as the enemy magician, yet he was an orc, and an orc always knows to make the most of the qualities that his creators have given him. Oruk jumped down from his rock. With his two hands planted on the ground, he didn't stand up right away. Concentrating on the channels of force that crisscrossed the earth, he drew from the primordial magic energies to recharge his mana gems with power. Then, still squatting, he concentrated on the source of magic being used by the enemy. He couldn't see it yet, but he now knew exactly where it was located. He tightly gripped two gems in his fist, so tightly that his knuckles turned white, and he slowly felt the animal spirit creeping into him. He felt each of his muscles overflowing with renewed strength while an intense anger began growing in him. At the climax of this rite

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The Amok slayers are Jackal's chosen ones. These sacred warriors, who were born under the blaze of the twin suns, bear the divine anger in their hearts, a present given to the orcish people to let it free itself of the yoke of its creators. For the orcs, the Amok symbolises the divine trance of the warrior who can feel the fury of his god boiling inside of him. In combat the Amok slayers simultaneously use a huge scimitar and their caste's traditional weapon: the terrifying Amok flail. Right before hand-to-hand combat they make these dreadful weapons whirl as a promise of death that's as violent as it is certain.

They then strike blows that are so powerful that they are impossible to parry by common mortals.

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he stood up as if possessed and began running while letting out a hoarse bellow.

Ignoring branches and bushes, he crashed through everything in his way. His mind was fully focused on his target and it suddenly appeared before him. The man, who was wearing a cloak and furs stained with dried blood, had an aura of death and of rancour. Despite the noise caused by Oruk's charge, the Drune shaman, concentrated on his incantations, only noticed the danger too late. His eyes widened with stupor when he saw the creature rushing straight at him. The impact was dreadful and the Kelt was extremely violently thrown against a rock. It took both magicians several moments to get over the shock.

Despite his fractured bones, the Drune shaman remained alert. While still lying on the ground, he already began mumbling an imprecation as he made cabalistic hand gestures. Oruk advanced towards him, determined to silence him, but he suddenly froze, prey to an intolerable pain. He had the impression that his flesh was being torn apart beneath his skin and that all of his bones were breaking. With an evil grin on his lips, the Drune continued his incantation while relishing his victim's suffering. Yet an orc's strength knows no limits, especially not those caused by suffering. Dominating his pain, Oruk advanced to the rock and placed his hands onto it. He called on all his energy and managed to pronounce the formula of a last spell. His hands became surrounded by a magic halo and, with a supernatural effort, he tore an enormous boulder from the rock. Without bending under his burden he turned to the Drune.

The latter's smile was wiped off his face and he didn't even have time to scream before the stone shattered his ribcage.

That's the way the orcs' magic is. Primitive, direct, and dreadfully efficient!

THE TORMENTERS

Oruk's magic got the best of the Drune shaman's evil spells. After this confrontation, Kal Shadar and his warriors didn't suffer the slightest attack. Once their leader had been killed, the Drones scattered, never to reappear. The small group of orcs then continued following the tracks left by Shaka Gohr's abductors. They felt trapped, condemned to continue moving on while constantly being watched. The tracks that they were following were too obvious. Yet they didn't have much of a choice.

After two days of marching the orcs reached the edge of a hill that rose in the middle of the forest. There was no doubt that this place was sacred to the Drones. This was made clear by the hundreds of wooden stakes topped with a mummified head that stood there. The flanks of the hill were dotted with countless natural caves. The tracks the orcs were following led straight to one of them.

The entrance wasn't guarded and braziers placed at regular intervals lit up the passageway that led straight into the earth. Kal Shadar grumbled.

"So, now what do we do? We enter the tunnel or we kill each other right over here? They know we're here, they've been following us for days, and if they haven't killed us yet it's because they know that we're going to walk straight into their trap!"

"Stop ranting!" Oruk answered dryly. "Yes, we're going to go in here, but we're not going to follow the path they have planned for us."

Kal Shadar wanted to answer back, to oppose the shaman once again, but deep down he knew that he could trust him. So he remained silent.

Oruk entered the cave alone and came back out several minutes later.

"It's OK, you can come. They're still watching us, but there's no danger for now."

So the small group followed him into the tunnel, but after only several dozen metres Oruk ordered them to stop with a hand movement. He then placed his hands on the cave's cold and humid wall and began uttering an incantation in a low voice. Slowly the limestone began crumbling and fell to the floor as dust. Oruk continued on like this, digging on until they reached another tunnel that was parallel to the first one. Then he repeated the operation in the other direction to cover their tracks. Kal Shadar admitted that the ruse could help them, yet he had an objection to make.

"OK, there's a chance that they won't know where we are anymore, but we don't know where to go either."

"Yes, that's true, we don't know," admitted the shaman. "But Shaka Gohr does."

Kal Shadar's expression betrayed his incomprehension. Oruk enjoyed maintaining the mystery.

"Have trust in Jackal," is all he said.

Shaka Gohr could have broken his wooden cage's bars without too much difficulty, but this wouldn't really have helped him. His "hosts" would have quickly recaptured him. Yet he was aware of the fate the Drones had in store for him. He knew their reputation of being merciless torturers. He was sure that by making him suffer they wanted to affect Jackal.

For the moment Shaka Gohr knew that his god hadn't abandoned him. He had had several visions. His companions were looking for him and were now very close by. He was calling on the full strength of his faith in Jackal to guide them to him.

Several cages identical to his were lined up in the vast hall in which he was being held. The begging and moaning of the other captives relentlessly rose to the top of the vault, which amplified the sounds in a sinister way. The prisoners were mainly Sessairs Keltts who had probably been abducted from their village judging by the number of women, children and old people.





Their moans suddenly became even stronger. The children were screaming in terror and the women were begging their ravishers for mercy. Shaka Gohr left his thoughts for a moment and looked towards the men who had just entered the vast underground room. Seven Drones were walking in procession. They were wearing painted masks of bone and were sporting the symbol of Cernunnos, a headdress of skin topped with the antlers of a stag. An eighth man was walking at their head. He also wore the Horned-One's costume, but his face was not masked and revealed an unambiguous gaze. The captives' begs remained in vain. Chenyfhfar was his name and his hands were red with the blood of hundreds of innocent victims.

Eight huge stalagmites rose at the centre of the cave and an impressive limestone column, which must have taken hundreds of thousands of years to form, connected the floor to the ceiling. On Chenyfhfar's order the Drone warriors, whose bodies were covered with paint made of red earth, went to get eight prisoners. They were careful to first choose the youngest ones so that their parents would have to witness their suffering.

Petrified by fear, the children let themselves be led to the pillars. When they were close enough to see the stains of blood covering them, they began screaming again. Then it was Shaka Gohr's turn. The Drone warriors made him get out of his cage and pushed him towards the biggest pillar.

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In his time, Hakem was one of the most powerful Commodores of Dirz. He was responsible for countless exactions in Bran-Ô-Kor, and his accidental death had dire consequences on Syhar society.

Put to death by his aide de camp, a deficient clone, Hakem unwittingly caused his army's defeat and one of the most resounding victories for Jackal's forces. His corpse was dismembered and then burned, and his weapon was given to Kal Shadar, a young Amok slayer who had illustrated himself during the battle. In just a few years this orc became one of Bran-Ô-Kor's most dreaded warriors who counted victories against all the various peoples of Aarklash. In the hands of the Amok leader, the legendary sword continues to give its bearer the desire for carnage.

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Chenyfhfar ordered his men to hurry up. He seemed to be nervous and constantly threw glances around him. Shaka Gohr noticed that the three entries to the cave were being guarded. He had to find a way to gain time. He stopped and looked straight into Chenyfhfar's eyes.

“Why did you come from so far away just to get an old orc like me?”

Shaka Gohr spoke in the language of the Sessairs. Chenyfhfar grinned cynically and answered.

“Because breaking the faith of a people is destroying this people halfway.”

“Well, then you're stupid. I'm only Jackal's voice. His true strength lies in each and every one of my brothers,” replied Shaka Gohr. “You'll never be able to break that.”

Chenyfhfar grinned again.

“There seems to have been a misunderstanding. It's not a question of destroying this power. On the contrary. For any force can be turned against the one using it.”

The faithful of Jackal suddenly felt a slight tingling in the back of his neck. His senses weren't tricking him. The magic of his people was being used not far from him. Little by little he felt a strange sensation take hold of him. His body seemed to become lighter and his feet lifted from the ground. Two Drones tried to hold him back, but the force that was raising him from the earth was too strong for them. He was now

levitating at a height of about ten metres. Powerless before this magic, Ghenyfhar was fulminating with rage. Shaka Gohr closed his eyes and began to concentrate. His brothers were close, but not close enough yet for him to be able to call on the strength of their faith in Jackal. A deafening noise suddenly made everyone startle. One could have thought that the whole room was caving in on itself.

Above one of the hall's three entrances an enormous block of rock had broken off from the wall. It fell down, crushed the three Drones standing there, and blocked the entrance. In its place there was the opening of another tunnel that not even the masters of the place knew about. With a savage bellow the sons of Bran-Ô-Kor burst from this opening. Kal Shadar was leading the attack and the Drones who tried stopping him were swept aside like dolls of straw. Taking advantage of the surprise effect, the orcs gathered around their shaka who was gently returning back down to the ground. He now felt strong, for he could feel Jackal's spirit within every one of his brothers. But the Drones were reacting. Alerted by the noise, other warriors were rushing towards the cave. Kal Shadar and his warriors fought valiantly while trying to retreat, metre by metre, towards the opening created by Oruk, but the Drones were too many. Two orcs had already been overwhelmed and put to death. Their retreat would soon be cut off. The time had come to call on the strength of Jackal. Opening his soul to divine contemplation, Shaka Gohr drew from the flames of faith in each of his brothers and got ready to make his call. Suddenly he frowned. An antagonistic force was trying to reduce his efforts to nothing. Under Ghenyfhar's gaze, the fervour of his prayers weakened and prevented him from attracting Jackal's attention to him.

An invisible struggle then began. The orc's faith was trying to defeat the Drone's power of negation. For a short moment Shaka Gohr managed to break the barrier that Ghenyfhar had raised to block him. For



just an instant he was in perfect osmosis with the ways of his god, and this was enough for him to be able to call Jackal's blessing onto his brothers. Their weapons began glowing with a supernatural halo and, feeling the divine presence by their sides, Kal Shadar and his warriors fought with twice as much ardour.

Their blades split the air leaving a trail of light behind them and slew their enemies with disconcerting ease. For several seconds the Drones hesitated before this divine manifestation. The orcs took advantage of this respite to climb up the rubble towards the opening that was their only hope of salvation. It didn't take long for their opponents to pull themselves together again. Made furious by the affront represented by this divine intervention within their very own sanctuary, they ran after their enemies in hot pursuit. Shaka Gohr was aware that if they didn't manage to stop their pursuers for once and for all, they would be chopped to pieces before they could reach the exit. His gaze then landed on a huge Jackal warrior who was covering their retreat. He had no reason to hesitate. A heroic sacrifice was now their only chance of getting out of here alive. The Jackal warrior felt the shaka's presence more intensely. All of his brothers' energy and fervour was now burning inside of him; he felt stronger than ever. Then he realised that he would never see his land again, but that his death would save his fellow orcs. His war cry suddenly filled the whole tunnel and froze the Drones in their tracks for an instant. Then the orc rushed towards them, determined not to die before his companions had reached safety.

Kal Shadar and the others continued their climb

“When the Orcs freed themselves from the yoke of the Alchemists of Dirz, they found refuge in the rocky foothills that border the Desert of Syharhalna. For decades they hid in the caves and ravines to escape the Scorpion warriors sent to eliminate them. This hostile territory is now called Bran-Ô-Kor, the land of the brave, for the sorcerer apprentices of Dirz have not managed to eradicate their “error.” Today they must suffer the consequences of their negligence.

towards daylight, and when they finally reached the open, the Jackal warrior's cries of rage were still echoing in the depths of the earth.

HUNTERS AND PREY

Avangorok hated leaving his land. He was the raik of the trackers, the guardian and protector of Bran-Ö-Kor, but the old Tamaor would never forgive him for just remaining there and doing nothing. Yet seeing how long it had been since Kal Shadar and Oruk left to look for Shaka Gohr, the chances of finding them alive were almost zero. However, the shaman had had a premonition and was harassing Avangorok to make him take the lead of an expedition.

"And if we don't come back, will you again send someone else to go looking for us?" grumbled the raik while preparing his gear.

"Trust me. If you don't come back, then I'll admit that you were right and I'll stop searching, I promise," answered the old shaman.

Avangorok looked at him menacingly for a moment before replying.

"You, if you weren't so decrepit, I'd give you a good taste of my right hand."

Tamaor contented himself with flashing a wide smile that revealed his yellow teeth.

For how long had they been hiding there? Kal Shadar was unable to tell. After having left the Drones' underground necropolis, they had thought for a moment that their pursuers had given up on catching them, but in reality this wasn't so. The Drones knew these woods much better than the orcs did. They had overtaken them and blocked their advance at a half-day's march from the edge of the forest.



Caught in a trap, the fugitives had found refuge in a ravine and had pushed back the first assault. Then they had discovered a cave that led to a network of tunnels. They had entered it while hoping to find an exit, but the tunnel quickly became narrower and prevented any further advance. This time even Oruk's magic couldn't help them dig a way out. They truly were trapped like prey. The Drones had tried to force them out, but faced with the fierce resistance of Jackal's sons, they decided to simply keep an eye on the tunnel's exit. They would wait until the orcs were too weakened by hunger to be able to defend themselves. And indeed, hunger did make itself cruelly felt.

Yet during the first night luck had smiled upon them. The cave proved to be the lair of a bear that returned from the hunt with a doe. The orcs killed the animal, and its flesh as well as that of its prey had allowed them to hold out for several days. But now hunger was gnawing at them.

Kal Shadar was furious. If he had to die, then he had the intention of taking as many Drones as possible with him. Yet Oruk and Shaka Gohr insisted on waiting. This time Kal Shadar wasn't going to let these two tell him what to do. He got up and stood firmly in front of the shaman and the shaka. Sitting with their legs crossed, they were reading the future by scattering small bones. Both of them lifted their faces to Kal Shadar, but neither of them said anything.

"Listen up, you two!" he growled. "I'm not going to starve to death over here. If we wait any longer, then they'll come and capture us as easily as when they abduct women and children! And if they take us alive, then all of this will have been for nothing. So this time we're going, all of us together, and either we get out of the forest alive or we all die fighting! Am I clear?"

Without showing any particular emotion, Shaka Gohr gave him a simple answer.



"OK, let's go."

Kal Shadar had expected one or the other to again voice an objection and had already opened his mouth to snap back. Surprised, he closed it again as his eyes popped wide open. These two were once again hiding something from him. And, as usual, there was no way for him to get them to speak.

There were now only ten of them left. They silently gathered at the mouth of the cave. Oruk, who had readied a spell, counted about 30 Drones posted at various spots. He then took a gem and spoke a word. The stone turned into a yellowish vapour that floated in the air towards the trees.

"That'll distract them for a while," he said. "Advance to the left without making any noise."

The orcs progressed as discreetly as their huge bodies let them. When they had covered about 30 metres, Shaka Gohr ordered them to halt.

"When they're upon me, charge," he whispered to Kal Shadar.

Then he bent down and grabbed a handful of dirt. With his eyes closed, he whispered a prayer to Jackal while he let the dirt sift between his fingers. Kal Shadar expected some kind of spectacular effect, but nothing happened. Shaka Gohr then took one step forward and vanished. A second later he reappeared about 15 metres away. He was no longer hiding himself and Oruk's spell had worn off. A dozen warriors burst from the thickets and jumped from the low branches to intercept the shaka. Hunched over his stick, he seemed to be at their mercy. Yet when the first enemy fighter was only two metres away from him, the orc stretched his arm in his direction with his palm held out towards him. The Drone was stopped

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Avangorok has vanquished the alchemical henchmen more often than he can remember. His name is feared and respected by all. Even the raïks dread his wrath. A pitiless and ferocious warrior, he is no less a formidable tactician who can count numerous victories among his assets. When several trackers join him for a larger operation, this army's scouts, including the alarming raptors, see Avangorok as their unquestioned chief. In their company, he clears the way for the Jackal trackers and the Amok slayers. This army is getting ready to swamp the forests infested with bloodthirsty Drones. There, no one will ever forget Jackal's wrath!

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dead in his tracks as if he had been struck in the chest by a mace. The others then suspected some kind of trick and stopped to throw worried glances around themselves.

“Now!” roared Kal Shadar and rushed off at the head of his warriors. A furious fray then followed. The Drones were a bit more than 20. At two against one, Kal Shadar and his troops didn't have much of a chance of surviving, but hope wasn't forbidden. However, the shaman had spotted just as many Drones who were going to arrive at any moment.

At the heart of the battle a tall Drune warrior was shouting orders and calling the other lookouts to arms. He brought his heavy axe of bronze down onto the head of an orc and then left the fray. Despite the clash of weapons and the shouts of the fighters, he managed to hear the sound of feet running. At last, reinforcements were about to arrive. With a voice that betrayed his anger, he shouted several words at them in his language. An object suddenly burst from the trees and landed at his feet. The chief remained speechless for several seconds, his eyes staring at the head of a Drune. A deep, rough-sounding voice then was heard through the trees.

“Sorry, buddy, but your friends aren't going to make it.”

Appearing from the shadows of the undergrowth, Avangorok came forward with resolve, and before the Drune recovered the use of his voice again, he gave his trackers the order to charge. They were only six, but the two armoured Jackal warriors who were running at the front each counted for three men. A bit behind them a goblin was holding a strange weapon that was able to shoot a flaming liquid over a distance of more than ten metres. For the moment he had the order not to use it. “If I must die here, then it may as well be in combat and not in a forest fire,” is what Avangorok had told him.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, the Drones panicked and many of them fled. It looked like the battle was going to turn into a massacre. Kal Shadar and Avangorok were sowing destruction to such a point that it seemed like each one had made it a question of honour to kill more enemies than the other. The sound of a horn was suddenly heard and others answered. Shaka Gohr then intervened.

“That's enough, we don't have time to finish them off. They let themselves be taken by surprise, but they're already reorganising.”

“He's right. Let's get out of here!”

Kal Shadar didn't like seeing Avangorok take command of operations, but he had risked his life to come to their aid... So they let the last Drones run away and moved as quickly as possible towards the edge of the forest. If they could keep the pace, they'd finally be out of these accursed woods in just a couple of hours.

Less than two kilometres separated them from safety when they ran into another ambush. A hail of assegais and stones fell on them. They took cover to be able to check where the danger was coming from. They quickly realised that the projectiles were rudimentary and were being cast with little strength. Avangorok risked going out into the open to try to spot their attackers. A high-pitched cry suddenly pierced his eardrums and something fell onto his broad shoulders and grabbed him by the neck. Taking hold of the thing with his huge hands, he flung it without restraint at the trunk of a dead tree. He was about to give it the final blow when he saw that it was an adolescent. He was unconscious and no older than 12 years.

The raïk couldn't keep himself from laughing.

“Come on out! They are reduced to sending us their children!”

“Or maybe they're just trying to slow us down,” said Oruk with a worried look.

“Bah, if they had wanted to fall upon us, they would already have done it,” answered Avangorok with a condescending tone.

“Or maybe they needed time.”

“To do what?”

“Time to let their allies get over here...” retorted the shaman in a grave manner.

“Can't you ever stop speaking in riddles for once, in your life?”

Kal Shadar was beside himself with anger. Yet neither the shaman nor the shaka would have to explain, for the answer once again came on its own. A powerful bellow filled the woods. Something was approaching fast with a loud noise of breaking branches.





“What are we waiting for?” growled Avangorok. “We’re close to the edge of the forest. If this thing doesn’t follow us out of it, then we have a chance of shaking it off.”

So they started running like never before, for the aura of terror that the creature radiated reached them in spite of the distance. But the monster was nevertheless quickly catching up with them. What more, Avangorok was already realising that his words had been nonsense: there was no reason that this thing stop chasing them outside of the woods.

While fleeing, the orcs crossed a shallow gully that was filled with bushes and dead trees. Crossing this gulch made them lose a bit of time, but Avangorok suddenly had an idea.

“Carbone!” he shouted. “Get over here!”

The goblin, equipped with his strange machine, came forward nimbly.

“Set all this on fire for me,” the raik ordered him.

The goblin engineer nervously switched on his machinery. The creature was only several dozen metres away. A small blue flame lit up at the muzzle of the machine and Carbone energetically started pumping. A terrifying cry was heard just when he pulled the trigger to release the pressure. A tongue of red flames burst forth and rained upon the tangle of dead wood. Within a few seconds the fire had spread all along the gorge and was devouring the dry branches with incredible voracity. From the other side of the curtain of flames another bellow could be heard, but this time it expressed bitterness and frustration.

Avangorok peered through the inferno to try to spot the creature. What he then saw he never told anyone

about, but that image would haunt his nightmares for a very long time after their escape from the Black Woods.

Sitting with his face to the red sun of Bran-Ô-Kor, Shaka Gohr was meditating on dark thoughts. Kal Shadar neared him and remained silent for a few moments. Then he asked:

“Will you let me know one day for what reason we risked our lives?”

He was expecting a cryptic answer from the shaka, so he was surprised when he gave him a clear one.

“The Drones just wanted to get to know their opponent. They know that our greatest strength lies in our beliefs. They’ll do anything to deprive us of them or to use them against us. For though they hate the gods,

they believe in them, and know how to twist the faith of those who are faithful to them.”

“But why us?” asked Kal Shadar.

“I don’t know. Maybe we have something that they want without knowing it. Or maybe their forest is no longer big enough for them.”

“That doesn’t make sense. Our land is poor and there are other territories that are closer to their accursed woods. Why don’t they go settle the plains or the mountains of the dwarves?”

“They are too accustomed to living in the shelter of the trees and their tunnels to settle the plains. As for the dwarves, their fortresses are defended too well.”

The old shaka sighed.

“We’re going to have to get used to it. We have a new enemy.”





KEL, OR THE ORIGINS OF A CIVILISATION

EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE SAME NAME BY DECHER ABRENSIUS, DEAN OF THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF KALLIENNE.

ALL HUMANS DESCEND FROM THE COURAGEOUS VOYAGERS WHO CAME FROM A FARAWAY AND MYSTERIOUS LAND. THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF THE PEOPLE OF KEL ARE AT THE SOURCE OF ALL HUMAN CIVILISATIONS. THEY IMBUE THE POPULAR WISDOM OF MOST OF THE HUMAN KINGDOMS. THE LEGENDS IN THIS ARTICLE ARE THE CONTINUATION OF THESE PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST ISSUE OF CRY HAVOC.

THE ANGER OF DANU

When Murgan went to her mother to report the events that had just taken place, Danu became extremely angry for the first time in her existence. First of all she accused Murgan of having acted in a thoughtless way. But greater yet was her anger at the invaders who had slaughtered the Ogmanans and were now hunting her animals.

"I am this earth and no living being shall benefit from my blessings without my permission. My springs shan't quench the thirst of the men who came from the sea. These men shall emit a pestilential odour so that my animals always smell them coming and they cannot nourish themselves from their flesh. The wood of my trees shall fall to dust when struck by their axes, and thus they shan't be able to build shelter or light a fire to protect themselves from the cold that shall fall upon them."

These were the words of the Goddess. Then she had Ogmios come to her and she ordered him to make and bring her a clay statuette of every one of his kind who fell in combat. This was done and Danu again gave her blood to give life back to the Ogmanans thanks to the original Crucible.

And the Kelts endured Danu's curse. Wherever they went, the springs went dry beneath their feet and game ran off well before the hunters could see it. The cold made them suffer cruelly, for they had neither animal hides to protect themselves, nor wood to build shelter or make fire. Hunger and thirst gnawed at them, yet not once did they even consider fleeing again.

That's when a man of the tribe asked Avagd for an audience. When he received him, this man, who went by the name of Senatha, claimed to be able to find

a solution to every one of the evils that affected the people of Kel. Avagd then made him two promises. If he was telling the truth, then the king would grant him the first of his wishes, no matter what it be. If, on the other hand, he was making a fool of him, then he'd be banished from the tribe. Then Avagd asked Senatha how he was planning on doing so. His answer was as follows:

"The Goddess has turned nature against us. I shall also subjugate the elements to be able to counter this curse."

Senatha then pulled four transparent stones from a leather pouch.

"Thanks to this gem I shall force the springs to rise to the surface. With this other one I shall order the wind to disperse our scent to let us near our game. With this third one I shall build huts of stone and earth that are more solid than those of wood, and I shall bring the warmth of fire into each one of them thanks to this last gem."

And Senatha kept each one of his promises. The Kelts could then quench their thirst and eat to their fill. They also built a city surrounded by solid walls of stone. And in every home an inextinguishable fire protected its inhabitants from the rigours of the cold.

Senatha then returned to Avagd to claim his due.

"I shall keep my word," said Avagd, "you can ask me for anything you wish. But before that, tell me from where you got these magical stones and the knowledge of such secrets."

So Senatha agreed to tell Avagd the story of his voyage.

After the battle of the Red Shores, Senatha ended up far away from the camp. He had spent hours treating the wounded and his whole body was covered with

blood. Yet his heart was bleeding even more than all of the wounds that he had had to heal because he hadn't managed to save half of the warriors that were brought to him. So many young and vigorous men had left for the world of the dead during this battle... And for what? For the gods? For freedom? Kneeling near the river where he had just washed himself, Senatha wept for his fallen brothers and he wept for his people that misfortune never stopped pursuing.

Then he was taken by a sudden burst of anger and he shouted at the gods, cursing them for everything they made his people suffer. When he finally was out of breath, a calm and serene voice spoke to him.





"Demanding mortal. Intransigent mortal... Why don't you grant the gods the right to commit errors?"

Senatha spun around and saw a man standing a few metres from him. He wasn't an Ogmanan, but he wasn't either of the people of Kel, there was no doubt about that. Yet Senatha was too exhausted to be curious and the man's words hurt him too much for him to delay his answer any longer.

"Because the consequences of their errors ravage our lands and slay my brothers by the hundreds. Because they are so proud and obtuse that they refuse to admit that they are wrong and pursue us wherever we may go!" he exclaimed in a tone that didn't hide his bitterness.

"But it sometimes happens that mortals are so blind that they pass right by the hand that the gods are holding out to them," answered the man in the same calm manner.

"What do you mean? And who are you, you, who speaks as if he were a messenger of the gods?"

"I am one of those that you hate and I have come to prove to you that the help of the gods is equal to the suffering that they have caused."

At these words Senatha moved back, expecting some form of treachery. Yet something in him pushed him to trust the stranger.

"Why would you do that?" he asked.

"Because I know certain things that even the Goddess isn't aware of yet. Because I know that your people is destined to carry out grand designs on this earth. Before that, it must endure a thousand and one

torments. That's the way it is and I can't do anything about it. However, I have the power to give your kind the means to accomplish its fate. And you shall be the one through whom hope will rise again."

"Why me?" asked Senatha.

"Why not you?" the stranger simply answered. "Close your eyes and open your mind to me. I will guide you and will reveal a part of the gods' secrets to you."

Without really knowing why he obeyed, Senatha closed his eyes and forced himself to clear his mind. First he saw the blurry but reassuring presence of the stranger, and then he suddenly felt himself fall as if he had been thrown into the void. He instinctively tried opening his eyes, but his body no longer obeyed him. Actually, when he thought about it, he realised the obvious: he no longer had a body. And this falling sensation was due to the separation of his body and his soul.

What then happened is impossibly hard to recount, for the words used by mortals can only describe what their senses allow them to feel. Senatha didn't feel anything, not any more than he saw anything. But he travelled to the heart of knowledge. The stranger guided him through the complex web of the arcana of Creation, and, little by little, Senatha understood the profound nature of all things, be they living or inanimate. More and more clearly, his mind could distinguish the subtle layout of the elements that made up the world, and he even managed to grasp how to master this power to use it to his advantage.

At this exact moment he felt as if he were being pulled downwards and he knew that his journey was reaching its end. He knew that he was going to return to his body. Yet he somehow felt that there were still thousands of secrets for him to discover, that only an infinitely small part of the truth had been revealed to him. He would have wanted to resist, to quench his thirst for knowledge at this endless source, but he inexorably felt himself return to the world.

When he finally opened his eyes again, he was torn between wonder and frustration. The stranger was still standing in front of him, watching him with his benevolent gaze. Senatha wanted to speak, but before he could open his mouth, the man handed him a leather pouch and simply told him this:

"Now you know. It is now up to you to use this knowledge and to teach it."

Without saying a word, Senatha took the pouch and opened it. It held four stones, each one the size of a pebble. The first one was hot and glowed red like embers. The second one was smooth and transparent, like a solidified drop of water. Senatha was dumbstruck when he took out the third one, for it was lighter than the finest down. And the last one looked like a vulgar brown rock. And in each of these gems Senatha felt the power of the elements as he had seen them during his spiritual journey.

When he finally finished contemplating the gems, Senatha felt thousands of questions fill his head. But the stranger was no longer there to answer them.

When Senatha finished telling the tale of his uncanny encounter, Avagd asked him what he wanted in exchange for his services. Senatha bowed humbly before his king and this is what he answered.

"I now know and have made use of these powers. What I must now do is teach them. What I'm asking for is simple. Every year I shall choose a child that has seen ten summers and I shall make him my disciple."

"Which king would refuse his people such an offering?" answered Avagd. "I shall give you what you ask, but I am now twice as indebted to you."

"So then accept my voice to be your counsel and we shall be even," said Senatha.

"So be it," declared Avagd. "From this day on you shall be the only one who may speak before I do and it shall be so for your disciples and my descendants."

Thus was sealed the pact that binds the kings to the druids of the tribes still to this day.

THE BATTLE OF KEL AN TIRAIDH

The Kelts call their city Kel An Tiraidh, the City of the People of Kel. They thought that they had definitively won the right to settle this land after the battle of the Red Shores where the Ogmanans had lost two thirds of their kind.

That's why worry filled them when they saw the Ogmanans gather in front of their city in numbers as great as during their first confrontation. And fear turned into terror when they saw other creatures coming from the nearby forest. These beings – half man, half horse – were almost as big as the Ogmanans and twice as numerous. They were armed with dreadful axes and seemed to be animated by a fierce desire to finish off the men of Kel for once and for all.

Between the two groups stood Murgan and Danu. Lahn, always being haughty, had never shown any

interest for these events right from the start. As for Cianath, he remained in the sidelines as if, for him, the battle's outcome were already decided and unavoidable.

This time the assailants didn't hurl themselves into the attack like in the previous battle. Turning to face the centaurs, Murgan lifted his spear to the sky and spun it around. The centaurs trotted towards the walls of Kel An Tiraidh where the defenders, taken by surprise, were gathering.

When they were within 100 metres of the city they began to gallop in a thunder of hoofbeats. The Kelts first thought that the centaurs would try to jump over the ramparts, but they started running around the city while throwing their axes at the defenders. The Kelts tried hurling their spears at the centaurs, but the latter were moving so fast that the spears rarely hit their target.

Then Danu advanced a bit towards the combat zone and ordered the earth to obey her. A huge fault opened up beneath the walls of Kel An Tiraidh, of which a part caved in and was swallowed up with many Kelts. Terrified by this magic, the defenders saw their will waver. Yet Senatha suddenly appeared and moved to the edge of the chasm. He placed his two hands on the ground and said a few words before throwing a brown gem into the depths of the earth. A rumble was then heard, and at the same time that Senatha lifted his arms to the sky, a multitude of rocks and stones rose from the fault. These projectiles levitated for several moments between heaven and earth until Senatha brutally lowered his arms in the centaurs' direction. With incredible speed and violence the boulders struck the proud creatures with all their might.

It then seemed that the centaurs were about to retreat when Ogmios's war cry was heard over the plain. Once again the Ogmanans' charge made the sky and the earth shake, and gave the man-horses their courage back.

This time, however, the ramparts held better than the first time and the first attack was pushed back. Several centaurs tried to enter the city through the breach that had been opened in the ramparts. Yet though they fairly easily managed to jump over the fault, they were exterminated by Kelts armed with long hunting spears.

Raging mad, Murgan led the Ogmanans' second attack himself. His flaming lance instilled terror in the Kelts' hearts and, spurred on by it, Ogmios and some of his warriors managed to enter the city. Once inside, the Ogmanans knew to remain grouped together this time to be able to resist the more numerous defenders. Slowly but surely Murgan and Ogmios fought their way towards the city gates. If they managed to open them, then the centaurs could rush into the city, meaning the end of Kel An Tiraidh.

On seeing this, Avagd went to meet them and challenged the chief of the Ogmanans. Accepting the challenge, Ogmios hurled himself at him, his weapon held up high.

At the same time Senatha was facing Murgan.

Everywhere else it seemed that time had stood still. Everyone was holding his breath, for all were aware that the battle's outcome would depend on these two duels.

The son of Danu's lance burned everything that it touched and no warrior dared get near him. Senatha shattered a blue gem between his hands and was surrounded by a misty halo that shimmered in the sunshine, and then advanced towards Murgan with a determined sparkle in his eyes.

Avagd was a colossus, yet to Ogmios he seemed like a child. The Ogmanan brought down his huge halberd, but the Kelt, who was quicker, dodged the dreadful blow and struck back with his two-handed axe.

Ogmios let out a groan of pain when Avagd's axe sunk deep into his thigh. Yet he didn't waver. On the contrary, he was made furious by the wound and let an avalanche of blows fall onto his opponent.

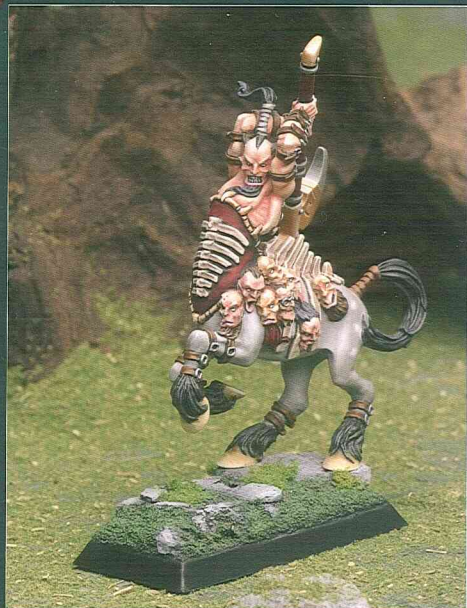
Sure of himself, Murgan hit Senatha who, despite the promise of death borne by this attack, didn't try to avoid the lance.

Avagd was being pushed back by Ogmios. He was having a hard time parrying the Ogmanan's blows and his axe risked breaking at every attack. Suddenly, with a cry of anger, Ogmios struck at him with a blow that could have shattered a mountain. Miraculously, Avagd's weapon held strong, yet he was knocked to the ground.

The flaming tip was heading straight for Senatha's heart. But, to Murgan's great surprise, when the lance entered the halo, the attack seemed to have lost all its strength.

Lying on his back, Avagd watched Ogmios's blade coming down at him like a bird of prey. With lightning reflexes, he rolled over to avoid the blow. Carried by his momentum, Ogmios slammed his halberd deep into the ground. Avagd didn't let this opportunity escape him. In a continuous, sweeping movement





he got up and swung his long axe at the back of the Ogmanan's neck.

With a dull thud Ogmios's enormous head hit the ground.

Pushing the now inoffensive lance to the side, Senatha advanced again and placed his hands on Murgan's chest. The mist surrounded the terrifying warrior who then felt his thirst for combat leave him little by little. The power of water had put an end to the ravaging fury of fire.

This time again the Kelts' cries of victory could be heard all over the plains.

THE HANDSOME HORNED-ONE

After the second battle between the Ogmanans and the Kelts, the inhabitants of Kel An Tiraidh barely had time to recover from the fighting. They soon saw the Ogmanans come back again, as numerous as on the first day and with Ogmios among them despite having been beheaded by Avagd.

"So their goddess has the power to bring them back from the dead," said Avagd. "Never shall we vanquish them, for even if we push them back, they shall return again. And again we shall lose more warriors."

His son Eladh then intervened.

"I shall go to the Ogmanans to pierce their secret. And, if need be, I shall kill their goddess."

The Ogmanans and the centaurs returned to harass the Kelts. Yet they no longer launched massive attacks, contenting themselves with small raids, killing a few men before returning to the forest and mountains.

Eladh joined a group of hunters and ventured deep into the dark forest. There, as they had expected, the centaurs soon ambushed them. The hunters defended themselves well and killed one of the creatures before retreating.

As for Eladh, he pretended to have been killed and remained on the battlefield. He then saw the centaurs carry away their fallen companion. He followed them through the woods to a vast clearing where there was a circle of standing stones at the centre of which stood Danu. To her right was a jar filled with humid clay. To her left stood a huge earthenware receptacle.

Eladh watched the centaurs lay their fallen brother at the goddess's feet. She then took a bit of clay and, with surprising skill, sculpted a figurine that was an exact replica of the deceased. She then placed the statuette into the crucible, pulled a dagger from her belt, and cut her hand to let several drops of her blood fall into the sacred receptacle.

A few moments later the forest fell silent. Not the slightest noise could be heard, not even the song of a bird. Suddenly a bellow that seemed to be coming from the depths of the earth arose from the crucible, and, helped by his companions, the centaur who had been lying at the goddess's feet a few seconds earlier, pulled himself out of it, very much alive. Where his corpse had been lying there was nothing more than a fine brown dust.

When he returned to Kel An Tiraidh, Eladh reported what he had seen.

"This wonder isn't just the goddess's doing," he concluded. "It's this urn that is the source of our enemies' great power. I won't have to kill Danu; I'll just have to shatter the instrument of her magic and then our enemies will no longer be able to return from the dead."

Avagd shook his head in a sceptical manner.

"Never will you be able to get near enough, not to the goddess or to the urn."

Then Senatha spoke.

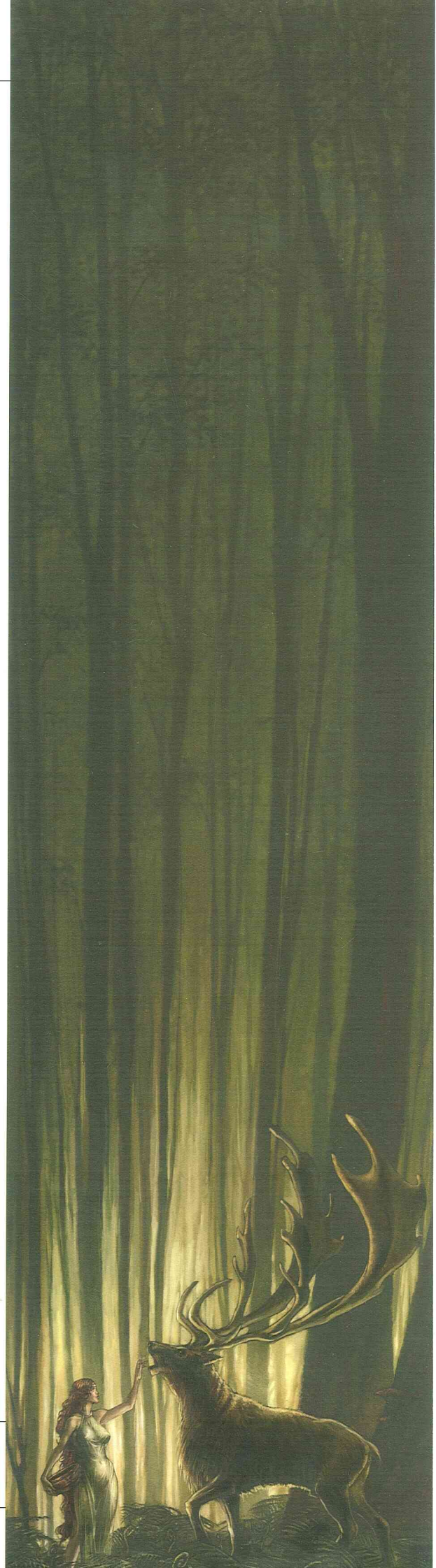
"On the contrary, it's very simple. I'll make your son take on the appearance of a huge stag and he'll then be able to freely roam the forest. When he's alone with the goddess, he'll turn back into a young man. Enchanted by this wonder, Danu will let herself be seduced and will share her bed with him. He'll then easily be able to break the crucible while she is asleep."

And Eladh was thus turned into a stag by Senatha's wonders. His antlers were more imposing than those of any other male of the forest. And Eladh liked being what he had become.

When he reached the circle of stones he let out a roar so loud that its echo could be heard all the way to the mountains inhabited by the Ogmanans. When she heard this cry, Danu wanted to know which beast it had come from, for never had she heard a more powerful one. So she went to the clearing, taking the crucible from which she never parted with her.

On discovering Eladh she told herself that she had never seen such a magnificent animal. She went up to him and placed her hand on his forehead.

As he had been told to do by Senatha, Eladh returned to his human appearance. Danu was



stupefied by this marvel and asked him who he was.

Eladh lied, claiming that no one had ever given him a name, he who was neither man nor beast. So Danu decided that from then on he'd be named Cernunnos, which means «the Handsome Horned-one.»

"I like that name and I like thanking you for it," answered Eladh before pulling her to him.

Danu didn't resist and they bonded with each other in this clearing.

When they had had their fill of carnal pleasure, Eladh pretended to fall asleep and waited for Danu to do the same. As soon as she did, he got up and grabbed a stone to shatter the crucible. But at the last moment, without anyone being to explain why, he couldn't bear to do it. A soft laugh was then heard behind him. Eladh spun around and saw Cianath looking at him in an amused yet kindly way.

Eladh opened his mouth to speak, but it was Danu's son who spoke first.

"Do you really believe that you can share the Goddess's bed and then leave it as you were before?"

"Who are you? And what do you mean?" asked Eladh cautiously.

"I am Cianath, and by bonding with my mother you have become her equal. Thus our two peoples will finally be able to know peace."

Eladh turned to look at Danu, who was still asleep, and then understood why he hadn't been able to break the crucible. His heart grew in his chest while he contemplated her and all that he desired was to lie down next to her again. He had become Cernunnos.

"If you speak the truth, then I shall await her waking and together we shall bring peace to the plains," he said to Cianath. Then he fell asleep again with Danu by his side. But his sleep was troubled by a strange dream.

CERNUNNOS'S DREAM

In his dream Cernunnos again took on the appearance of a stag and travelled through the forest to tell the people of Kel that they would soon be able to live in peace.

But when he reached Kel An Tiraidh he couldn't return to his human form and no one understood what he had to say. Yet he was recognised and his father welcomed him back without sorrow.

A beautiful young brown-haired woman then presented herself at the city gates and said that she had a message for the chief of the people of Kel. She was led inside and when Avagd asked her her name, she

said that she was called Scathach, which means both "brunette" and "shadow," and claimed to be a storyteller and a poet.

"If I perform my art in your house, will you offer me your hospitality?" she asked straightforwardly.

At the time it was every Kelt chief's duty to fulfil the wishes of bards and minstrels in his house, and Avagd gladly accepted Scathach's offer.

The storyteller then broke into a happy song and everyone felt in an excellent mood. Then she told them a story that was so sad that many wept and felt their heart ache.

When she had finished entertaining them, Avagd asked her what she wanted as a reward. Scathach answered that a simple meal would be enough to pay her. So Avagd asked her what she wanted to be served for supper. Without hesitating, Scathach turned to Cernunnos and demanded that this stag be put to death for her meal.

"I cannot give you this stag, Scathach," Avagd answered gravely, "for he is in fact my very own son and I am forbidden from ordering his death."

Infuriated, Scathach then spoke these words.

"Because you refuse to fulfil your duty of hospitality towards me, your land shall be plunged into darkness and your kind shall know the terror of a world without light."

With these words the sky suddenly went dark and the solar disc was replaced by a pale and heatless silver moon.

Thus the world knew its first night.

For Scathach was no other than Lahn. Being jealous of Cernunnos because until now he had been the only one to know the Goddess's embrace, he had decided to get revenge by punishing the people of Kel.

When Cernunnos woke up again, he saw that he still had his human appearance. At first he thought that he had just had a bad dream, but he then realised that the darkness around him wasn't caused by the shadows of the forest. The sun really had disappeared and he then understood the meaning of his dream. Once again he and his kind had been abused of by the gods. He went into a fit of anger and the thought of killing Danu even crossed his mind. Yet his anger didn't make him forget the love he felt for her. Out of spite he shattered the crucible before returning to his people.

THE FINAL BATTLE

When he reached the edges of Kel An Tiraidh the vision that opened up before his eyes made chills of horror run down his spine. The city looked like a gigantic brasier from which terrifying cries were rising. Hundreds of torches were burning around the city's walls and in the glow of the flames Cernunnos could make out bloody struggles being fought on the ramparts.

Just as terrified by the darkness as the Kelts, the





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Lahn's blazing eye, which had never ceased to illuminate the land of the goddess's children, suddenly darkened and abandoned the world to Darkness. Like the sea retreating from the shore at low tide, light gave way to the advancing shadow that announced an age of ill-fortune. And darkness enclosed every being and every thing, like the cold hand of a ghost. Night had just been born, and no one could tell that day would follow it.

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Ogmanans and the centaurs blamed the sun's disappearance on the presence of the invaders. So they decided that that night would see either the annihilation of the Kelts or their own destruction. This time retreat was out of the question. They would fight to death and to the last man.

Filled with anger and sadness on seeing this massacre, Cernunnos rushed into the fray, hoping to die with his people more than anything else. But he was now an equal of the gods and it is said that he flattened over 100 opponents all on his own.

Thousands of valiant warriors died that night in both camps. Avagd himself was killed, his head split in two by a centaur's axe. It seemed like death would never be satisfied. Blood was spilled until the earth no longer could soak it up and the fighters were killing each other on top of heaps of corpses.

Danu then appeared on the battlefield. Haggard and pale, she was carrying two infants at her breast. She was followed by Cianath who was carrying a third one in his arms.

"Enough," she whispered under her breath. And her voice was heard by everyone.

Her presence was so strong that the clashes ceased immediately and all eyes turned towards her.

"Enough killing," she continued, "I'm tired of seeing my land being soaked with blood and covered with bones. It is made to be rained upon and for wheat to grow.

People of Kel! You have rejected me out of fear that I betray you, but one of your sons has come to me. And by uniting our bodies we have united our peoples, for I have given him the immortality of gods. Thus you no longer have to apprehend us, for one of your kind is now our equal. And if this isn't enough, then may you give your love to the fruits of our union."

Cianath then raised the child he was carrying to the heavens. Danu continued.

"Here are the three daughters of the one you called Eladh. Their names are Siobhan, Fiann and Neraidh. Like me, they will never stop trying to preserve this land and the peoples born in it. Like their father, they will protect and guide the sons of Kel."

Not knowing what to make of all this, the Kelts remained silent, waiting for a sign from their chiefs.

Cernunnos, still covered in blood from the battle, then came forth from the crowd and moved towards



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When the gods have a feeling, they don't just content themselves with feeling it. They are this feeling, to such extent that their emotions take on a body without them really being able to control them. So when the duality of their feelings becomes too strong, they have no other choice but to separate themselves from this facet that has become too much of a burden, just like an animal caught in a trap that gnaws off one of its limbs in order to free itself.

”

Danu. When he reached her, he took one of the girls in his hands and looked at her for a few moments. Then he spoke to Danu.

“My heart is filled with love for you and these children, Danu. But it is also full of sadness for those who fell today and of fear for my people. That's why I ask one more thing of you. Lift the darkness that covers the sky and I swear that my people will live in peace with yours.”

Danu was about to answer when Cianath began to speak. Facing Lahn, his father, he addressed this petition to him.

“Look!” he shouted while holding forward the child. “Look at the gift that the sons of Kel have brought us! Danu, who once only gave you sons, has now given birth to three daughters. Why let calamity befall those who have given us such a promise of fertility?”

Lahn listened to his son and his words troubled him deeply. For he was forced to admit that Cianath was right. Yet the flames of jealousy towards Cernunnos were still burning.

And this was such an ordeal for him that his being ended up splitting in two. Thus was born Scathach, the embodiment of Lahn's desire for revenge. And from then on they would both have to fight over the Heavens for all eternity.

For now, on the battlefield, the fighters could watch the first dawn of Creation.

Turning to face his people, Cernunnos spoke with a strong voice.

“Sons of Kel! I, Cernunnos, son of Avagdd, swear on this new day to forget the hatred that has opposed me to the children of the Goddess just as I have renounced my former name.

But our dead shall not be forgotten and from now on this plain will bear the name of Avagddu. Thus every one of us will remember that the chief who led us to this land fell here while fighting for his people!”

A great clamour saluted Cernunnos's words. Then, lifting the child above his head, he continued speaking.

“May this child and her sisters be the symbols of a new age, for our blood flows in their veins as well as that of the gods.”

THE LANGUER OF CERNUNNOS

After the second battle of Kel An Tiraidh the sons of Kel made peace with the people of Danu, and all recognised Avagddu to be the new name of their land.

Cernunnos reigned over the new Kelt nation at Danu's side. They rendered justice during the day and became lovers again every night under Scathach's rancour-filled gaze.

One moonless night Scathach prepared two herbal concoctions that she mixed into the royal couple's dinner. The first one caused Danu to fall into a deep sleep. The second one allowed Scathach to take the Goddess's place in Cernunnos's bed without him noticing. Thus Cernunnos coupled with the one who desired his downfall more than anything else. And this happened every night for several cycles.

Every day Cernunnos was weakened a bit more. The young king slowly lost his taste for wine and merrymaking. His vigour left him and soon he no longer went hunting with his people. His kin saw him fade away and remained powerless to do anything... And every night Scathach came to him to steal his strength and manhood from him.

Senatha was the only one who suspected that Cernunnos's languor might be due to some kind of evil. One night he took on the appearance of a raven and went to sit on the windowsill of Cernunnos and Danu's bedroom. From there he could see with his own eyes the strange events that happened every night. Danu was lying on a thick bed of furs,



sleeping so tightly that one could think her dead. As for Cernunnos, he seemed to be in a state of trance. Kneeling on the floor, he stared at a big basin filled with clear water. When the moonlight was reflected in it, a feminine form came out of it. Senatha immediately recognised Scathach, but Cernunnos embraced her passionately as if he would have done with Danu.

The next day Senatha went to see his king to report what he had discovered. But Cernunnos couldn't remember a thing and refused to believe him. So Senatha asked him not to touch his food that day, for he suspected it to be the source of his sickness. Remaining sceptical, Cernunnos nevertheless accepted to follow the druid's advice.

That evening Cernunnos found his mate's sudden torpor to be very strange, and when he saw Scathach appear naked before him, he knew that Senatha had spoken the truth.

Scathach saw right away that Cernunnos wasn't under the influence of her drugs. So she gave him a contemptuous smile.

"Thus my ruse has finally been uncovered. No matter, the harm has been done!" she said before breaking into a cruel laugh.

The dark gaze with which Cernunnos was staring at her didn't seem to impress her at all, despite the barely contained anger that it revealed.

"No," he suddenly answered with assurance, "it's over with your witchcraft. Never again will you cause us harm!"

On hearing these words Scathach laughed even harder.

"Fool! What do you think will happen when Danu finds out that you have betrayed her love and that you have planted your seed in another?" Scathach paused to relish the disbelieving expression on Cernunnos's face. "Yes, I bear your bastard son. And he shall be the proof of your infamy."

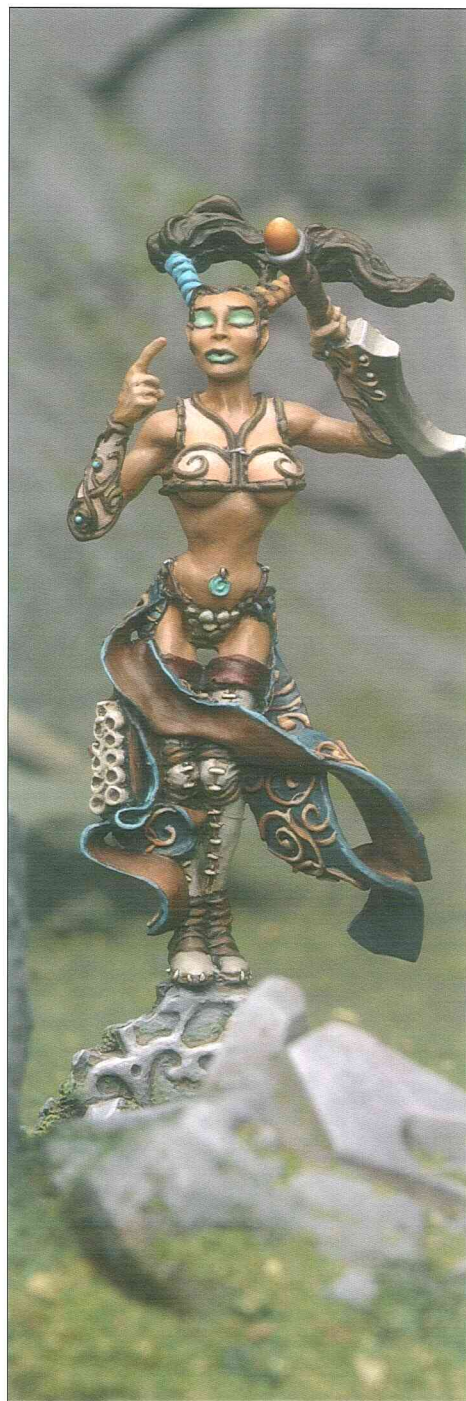
"Your hatred makes you as blind as you are stupid, Scathach. When she learns the truth, Danu will pardon me, for she loves me more than she ever loved you when you were still Lahn. And never again will she be yours."

When she heard this, Scathach flew into a desperate rage, for Cernunnos's words caused her great pain. Submerged by her desire for vengeance, she seized the king's sword and, with a backhand swing that he couldn't fully dodge, she slashed his face.

The wound was horrible to look at. His face was disfigured with a bloody gash that went from his forehead to his cheek, and his right eye socket was just a scarlet and frightening hole.

Looking at what she had done, Scathach seemed to calm down and regain her poise and her contemptuous pride. Then she spoke a prophecy that would forever turn the lives of the peoples of Aarklash upside down.

"The Handsome Horned-One is no more. When she wakes up, Danu will only feel fear and disgust on



seeing your face. Your people will end up considering you with dread and horror. You will be chased from your throne and from your tribe. From now on you will be Cernunnos, the Wandering Beast!"

The words were strong and the anathema was cast.

That's when Danu woke up.

When she saw her lover's mutilated face she let out a cry of fear that stabbed Cernunnos in the heart like an arrow of ice. He then knew that Scathach's curse would come true and he preferred the solitude of life in exile to the humiliation awaiting him.

Outside, Scathach's realm was still covering Avagddu in darkness. Avoiding the lights of Kel An Tiraidh, Cernunnos fled into the shadows to hide in them forever.



THE GUILD OF BLADES

EVER SINCE THE DOGS OF WAR FOUNDED IT, THE CITY OF CADWALLON HAS NEVER STOPPED ASSERTING ITS INDEPENDENCE, FIRST FROM THE NATIONS, THEN FROM THE RAG'NAREK. IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES, THE JEWEL OF LANEVER IS LIKE A BEACON IN THE HORIZON FOR ALL THE REFUGEES FLEEING FROM THE WAR AND ITS RETINUE OF BLOODSHED AND MISERY. HOWEVER, IN CADWALLON ITSELF, SEVERAL ORGANISATIONS HAVE DECIDED TO ESTABLISH AMBIGUOUS ALLIANCES WITH THE NATIONS, AND TO GET INVOLVED IN THE EVENTS CURRENTLY RESHAPING DARKLASH. THESE ARE THE GUILDS.

For people all over the continent, the mention of the guilds of Cadwallon evokes only the seven most famous ones: the guilds of Architects, Fortune-Tellers, Blades, Ferrymen, Goldsmiths, Usurers, and Thieves. In Cadwallon itself, they are called the free-handed guilds, and indeed they possess phenomenal resources, an influence that goes far beyond the scope of their parent city, and private troops prepared to defend their interests at all times.

PRINCIPLES

The Guild of Blades is one of the seven most powerful guilds of Cadwallon. It is involved in both mercenary activities and the sale of weapons. Like all guilds, and unlike the free leagues, the Blades don't limit their activities to Cadwallon. They also ensure the shipment of weapons and troops to give support to or form the regiments of foreign nations. This sometimes puts the guild in a tricky situation in relation to the free leagues (who also operate escort or surveillance missions in Cadwallon) and the guilds that manufacture weapons (Architects, Smiths and Alchemists). For reasons of integrity, the Guild of Blades goes to great lengths to remain neutral in the conspiracies and plots of the City of Thieves.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ever since its founding by Vanus, Cadwallon has attracted many refugees and pariahs who hoped to find fortune or to simply start a new life. Among them there notably were mercenaries who were beckoned by the reputation of the Dogs of War and the rumours of riches hidden in the city's catacombs.

With the establishment of the leagues (see *The Free Leagues*), independent mercenaries became rare. It's only in the 880s (which saw the fall of the leagues after the free leaguers abused of their rights) that mercenaries offered their services again within the

city's walls. Their business quickly flourished, thanks mainly to a legal loophole that allowed them to avoid Cadwallon's tax laws.

This situation obviously didn't last very long, for the duke wasn't going to tolerate it. All commercial activity carried out by professionals had to be done within the framework of a guild, both to keep price levels fairly balanced and to allow the city to collect taxes on their profits. Several guilds lobbied the duke to try to integrate the mercenaries among their ranks, claiming that a guild of fighters would cause security problems for the city. Far from being a fool, the duke gathered the most reputed companies of mercenaries and offered them to create their own guild. Actually, he forced them to do so. The only other choices they had were to leave Cadwallon or to be prosecuted for illegal commercial activity... Thus was born the Guild of Blades.

Only recently has the guild acquired the monopoly of the arms trade. Contrary to certain rumours, this isn't the result of some kind of conspiracy. The guild has never even asked for anything at all. To be able to understand, one has to go back to the middle of the 960s. The arms trade had become a flourishing business in the independent city. In this activity the duke at the time saw a great way to fill the city's coffers and created a new tax on the sale of weapons. This marked the beginning of a long period of industrial dispute between the duke and the Guilds of Architects, of Smiths and of Alchemists, the latter not accepting the fact that poisons and their derivatives – which is what most medication is – be classified as weapons. Due to its knowledge of weaponry and to its status, the Guild of Blades imposed itself as the best one to arbitrate between the two parties. The latter two managed to reach an agreement: the sale of weapons - of all weapons - would from now on be managed by the Guild of Blades. This allowed the guilds that produce them to avoid having to worry about the sales tax, and let the duke collect this tax much easier.

This agreement nevertheless has a negative side effect: the clients are no longer in direct contact with the manufacturers, which has a tendency to standardise the merchandise. The smiths see their imagination bridled and their craft lose its prestige. As a result, the quality of the weapons and armour is becoming worse and worse, which is good neither for business, nor for Cadwallon's security!

DIPLOMACY

It's a question of reputation and of ethics! Considering its activities, the Guild of Blades is required to have friendly relations with all nations, including those of the Wolfen and orcish peoples, even though the latter have never used the guild's services.

Nevertheless, Duke Den Azhir has recommended (or rather, imposed) that they no longer do business



THE FREE LEAGUES

The free leagues are the heirs of Vanius's Dogs of War. Ever since their creation, they have known periods of glory and others of misery. Their speciality and their reason to be have always been to explore the catacombs of Cadwallon to search for relics of the city's forgotten past.

Nowadays there are a great number of free leagues, but all of them aren't active. Indeed, to become a league, a group can only revive a free league that has existed in the past. Thus, unlike the individuals forming them, these groups of adventurers last over the ages.

The leagues and the guilds don't have the same rights or the same prerogatives.

- The free leaguers are Cadwëan citizens. Becoming a free leaguer is the only way for an individual not born in Cadwallon to get this status.
- The free leaguers are the duke's vassals. They must assist the militia in case of a major crisis. The sacrifices they made in 983 against the assaults of the elves of Ashinan allowed the leagues to get back their place in the Cadwëans' hearts.
- Once in a while the free leaguers can do business, which is normally reserved to the guilds. Thus, as if competing with the Guild of Blades in matters of mercenary services weren't enough, the leagues have also had brushes with the Ferrymen (for transportation) and the Usurers (for loans), etc.
- The leagues have a certain birthright: any object that isn't inside a dwelling or being carried by an individual potentially belongs to the leagues. (Be careful not to drop your wallet near a free leaguer, he could perfectly legally make it his property.) In reality this especially concerns all treasures buried beneath the city. Therefore, being a treasure hunter in Cadwallon is a risky job is one isn't a leaguer. Some leagues have very radical methods when it comes to dealing with those who encroach on their activities. And in these matters the ducal justice is usually on their side...

with the Akkyshan nation, which has often attacked Cadwallon, and the law prohibits the guilds from doing anything that may have harmful consequences for the city. Similarly, the sale of weapons to citizens of Acheron who aren't Cadwëan residents is forbidden, which is very hypocritical seeing the links between certain guilds and Sophet Drahas... yet the laws of Cadwallon are thus made, always balanced between reasons of state and reasons of business. In no way do these bans prevent the use of Cadwëan middlemen to place an order...

In Cadwallon the guild is bound to neutrality in its relations with the other forces present. The only exceptions are the free leagues with which the Blades, and especially the mercenaries, have very hostile relations. The militia no longer keeps track of the brawls triggered by a bad joke about either of the two camps. Yet fights that end in bloodshed are luckily rare. Broken noses and black eyes are, however, a part of everyday life. And finally, the sale of siege weaponry depends partly on the will of the Architects, who have managed to keep the right to veto clients who wish to buy their creations.

ORGANISATION

The Guild of Blades is directed by an assembly whose main tasks are to draw up balance sheets, decide the guild's fundamental laws, and judge those who break them.

The 50 members of the assembly elect its new members for life. However, to be a candidate, one must have been a member of the guild since at least five years and have several feats of arms to one's credit. Seniority and merit are what counts among the Blades.

Other than that, their hierarchy is rather flexible. There are three professional divisions within the guild, or rather three main categories, and several titles.

- The **mercenaries** are the most known and include the majority of the Guild of Blades' members. Their titles are very simple: soldier, lieutenant, captain, and commander. These titles are only ranks within their companies (see further) and are used mainly to judge the mercenaries' valour. Thus, a title gives an indication of the price of their services. The titles are regularly updated by the guild at the mercenaries' asking.
- The **managers** take care of the guild's business. They receive and consult clients, collect money, and pay the mercenaries and the weapon manufacturers. They administer the guild and make sure that the guild's rules are respected. The managers' titles are as follows: apprentice (client reception, messengers), assistant (secretary who can replace masters), accountant and masters (shop owner). Though most of them are former mercenaries, some of them are converted merchants or diplomats.
- The **counselors** are the least numerous among

them. These experienced former mercenaries, who are "retired" (due to their age or to handicapping wounds) or convalescent, form the diplomatic gears between the masters, the mercenaries, and the arms producing guilds. They are called on by the managers to give their advice on certain customer demands (for the sale of weapons as well as mercenary services) and to make price estimates.



MERCENARY, A PROFESSION

Contrary to preconceptions, not all mercenaries are faithless and lawless bandits or bloodthirsty maniacs who have found a legal way to satisfy their impulses in this activity ("not all" doesn't either mean that this kind of individual is not present within the guild). Like all commercial organisations, the Guild of Blades is structured and has a strict set of rules.

THE FUNDAMENTAL RULES

- Rule number one: **ethics**. A Blade is employed by financial means. The client's goals and motivations aren't the Blades' concerns as long as the mission doesn't cause any other fundamental rule to be broken. Accepting or refusing a mission for ideological reasons is a transgression of this rule.
- Rule number two: **respect for Cadwallon's integrity**. A Blade must never undertake an action that can threaten the city's or its inhabitants' security. This rule doesn't force the guild to defend the city in case of an attack (yet it can be hired by the duke to do so).

• Rule number three: **respect for Cadwallon's laws.**

A Blade doesn't have the right to break Cadwallon's laws to carry out a mission within the city limits.

This rule is regularly broken, but always to defend the guild's or the city's interests (for example, when collecting debts for a fiefdom's peer). Some leagues have often gathered evidence to prove this breaking of the laws, and have pressured the duke to purely and simply outlaw the Blades' missions within the city. Unfortunately for them, the duke has never listened to them. That would mean questioning the status of the guilds as a whole (a very bad idea if one wishes to live for more than another week). Furthermore, the duke is convinced, for good reason, that the prices would explode and that the leagues would be unable to ensure all the missions requiring mercenaries.

PHALANXES AND COMPANIES

Every member of the guild can be employed individually, especially for merchandise and diplomat escort missions. When a client wishes to hire a whole group, then in priority the guild calls on one or several phalanxes. These are generally made up of three to eight hardened mercenaries who have already fought side-by-side. Confidence is of utmost importance when survival depends on one's companions. Special missions are given to phalanxes: creation of commotions, reconnaissance, extractions, and also command and training of troops.

The phalanxes have made the Blades' reputation all over the continent. Each shop therefore keeps an updated list of existing phalanxes which specifies their members, their specialities and their feats of arms.

The guild can also provide whole regiments. Indeed, there are six companies of about 100 men that function as an army corps. All the regions of Aarklash have been walked upon by at least one of these companies, and all those who have fought them and survived have never forgotten their unequalled determination and efficiency. These companies are generally employed for campaigns lasting several weeks or even months as specialised troops or reinforcements in conflicts with rather undefined limits (such as a new outbreak of attacks by Devourers or orcs in remote regions, etc.), in planned assaults, or to secure a zone or an outpost while organising the arrival of regular troops.

CHARACTERS

The four following characters are members of the Phalanx of Steel, which is specialised in offensive action and the training of novice troops. All of them have the title of lieutenant of the guild. This phalanx often includes a fifth member: Gaiius, commander of the guild, a former Griffin fusilier being hunted by the Inquisition for having questioned Merin's



existence during a game of cards in a smoky tavern in Denda Cartho. An expert in firearms, he is, above all, the guild's best instructor (and is thus often abroad to train foreign troops). Like in many phalanxes, its members don't use ranks amongst themselves. They work as a team, each knowing exactly what his tasks are, and can change tactics at the simple word of one of its members if the need arises. Only Kranog, the ogre, and his brats aren't "authorised" to modify the tactics, much to the satisfaction of all members.

NARHEL, CYNWALL WARRIOR

Narhel didn't become a mercenary by choice. His brother, the only surviving member of his family, is affected by a rare disease that weakens him and literally causes him to rot from the inside. His only hope is a remedy, or rather a potion, to be exact, whose secret recipe is known only by the Architects. Like all things that are rare, its price is extremely steep and Narhel has to gather the money quickly (after a period of two years his brother's survival becomes uncertain).

Narhel is a cold and efficient fighter specialised in handling a quarterstaff who holds the secret of the production of vials of Cynwall healing water. His will is as strong as hardened steel and his soul is that of a leader. Nevertheless, because his only motivation is his brother's survival, he has until now refused to become an officer in one of the guild's companies of mercenaries (which would give him the benefit of better pay, yet would require him to enlist for at least

three years), or to join a free league (for becoming a free leaguer is a lifelong commitment).

KALIA, SESSAIRS IN EXILE

Kalia's destiny was turned upside down during an encounter with the Drones. Her clan had just won a battle when Kalia, who was still taken by spasms of fury, disembowelled a fianna and a warrior of the moors. According to Sessairs customs she should have been condemned to death, yet Danu had chosen her, and the goddess cannot have been wrong. The victims' tribe therefore chose to send Kalia into exile.

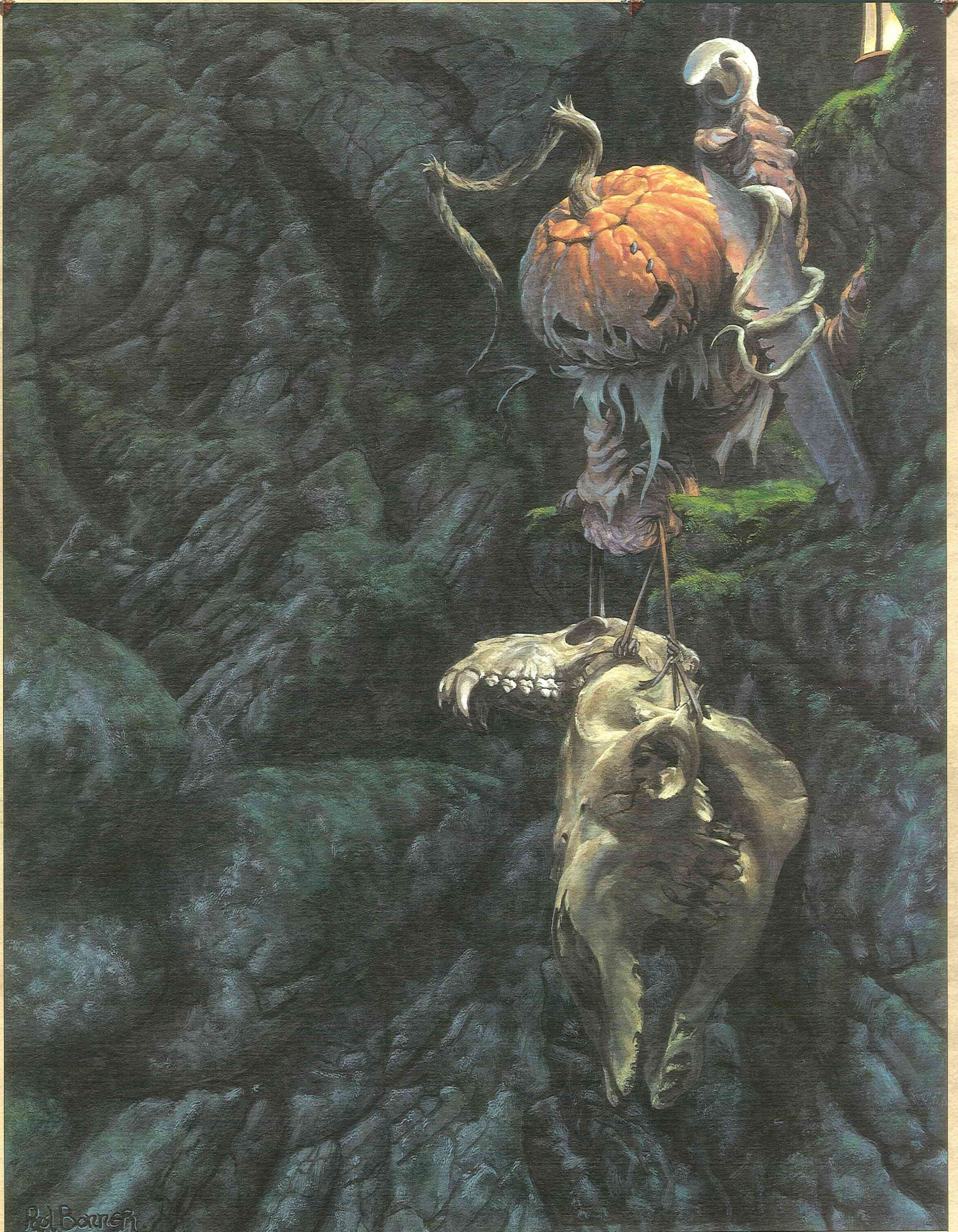
Her footsteps brought her to the unsubdued Cadwallon. As soon as she arrived she joined the Guild of Blades. Being quick and strong, she rapidly made herself a reputation within it. Ever since then, thanks to the companions of her phalanx, Kalia has slowly been building her self-confidence back up and is trying to better control her spasms, hoping one day to return among her people.

KRANOG, LOVER OF JEWELLERY

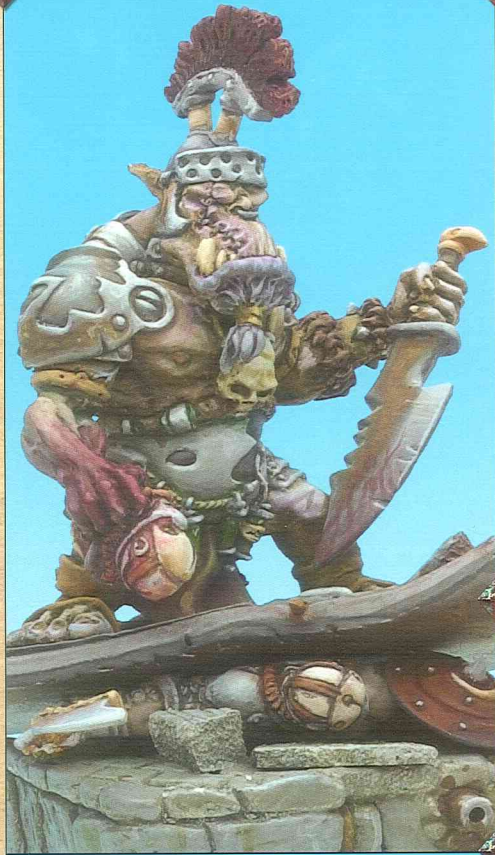
Kranog is the bastard son of a maid and a dignitary of the Ogrok family. To avoid complications in his lineage, his father has never recognised him. As is custom among ogres, he was nevertheless entrusted to a godfather, a goblin generously paid for his silence. The secret should have been well kept seeing that Kranog ate his godfather on his twelfth birthday. Because the goblin was a widower, his two children had become orphans, and, unaware of their father's fate (the militia registered it as a disappearance), they "adopted" Kranog for their protection. They were lucky, because the ogre didn't like the taste of goblin flesh at all and was therefore never tempted to gobble up his younger "brothers." After their father's fortune was split by their family members, the young goblins ended up in the streets without a penny. Their innate sense for business, their mischievousness and a certain carefreeness led them to join the Guild of Blades. Kranog isn't very bright, but he is extremely loyal and would do anything to protect the two goblins. Unlike his brothers, he prefers shiny jewellery to jingling and bouncing coins. He tends to get annoyed when one offers to pay him with money...

GABUZOV, INDEBTED GIBELIN

Gabuzov has never had a sense for business, which obviously brought shame to his family. Already at a very young age he wanted to become a great scholar and teach in a school of magic. That's the reason why he moved to Cadwallon (his departure from No-Dan-Kar was a great relief for his parents). Unfortunately, studying at the university wasn't free of charge and Gabuzov had to take out a loan from the Guild of Usurers. It's now been four years that he joined the Guild of Thieves to pay back his debts. He remains convinced that his mercenary status is just temporary.



Paul Barrett



4th Paris Open

PAINTING AND CONVERSION
CONTEST



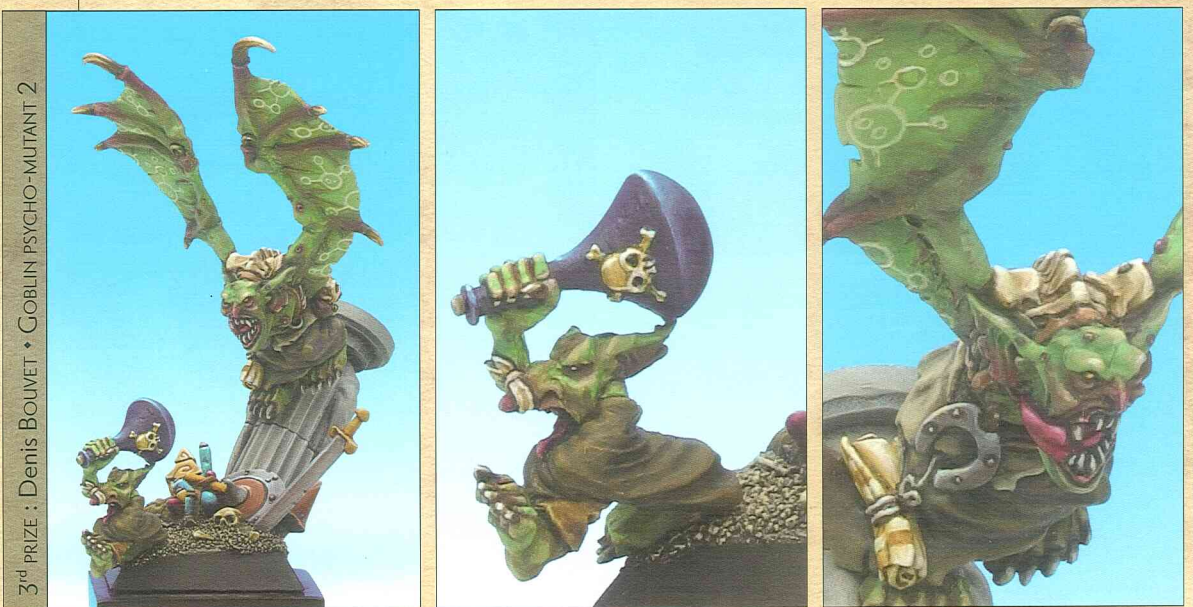


1st PRIZE : Mikael LAVANDIER • ORC RAPTOR

CATEGORY A ORIGINAL PIECE EN INFANTRY BASE.

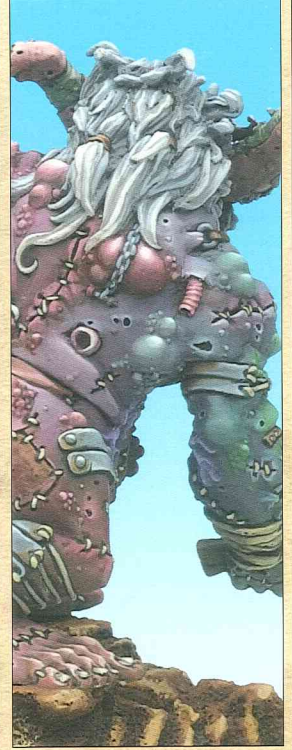


2nd PRIZE : Guillaume VALLÉE • YH-IBENSETH



3rd PRIZE : Denis BOUVET • GOBLIN PSYCHO-MUTANT 2

1st PRIZE : Fabio ZEPPELLA • CYCLOPS OF MID-NOR



CATEGORY B ORIGINAL PIECE ON CREATURE OR CAVALRY BASE.

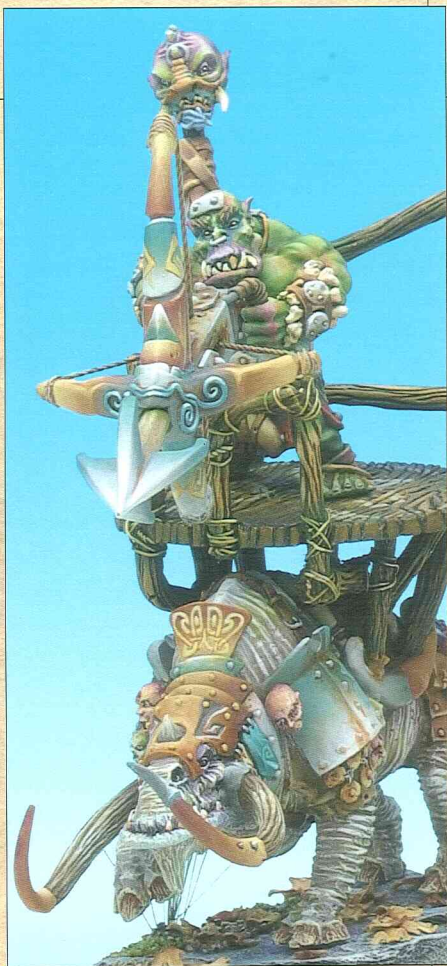
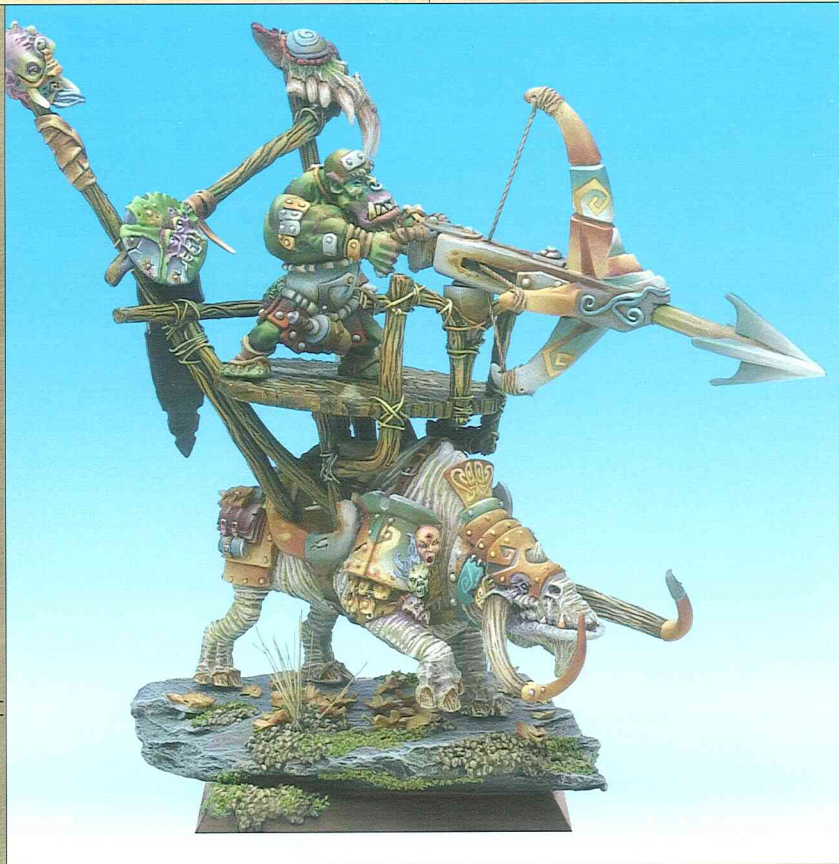


2nd PRIZE : Laurent HOU • HEAD HUNTER



3rd PRIZE : Huat HAY • ELEMENTAL OF DARKNESS

1st PRIZE : Philippe RENAUDE • BRONTOPS-MOUNTED BALLISTA



CONVERSION.

CATEGORY C



2nd PRIZE : Alexis BONILLO • DRUNE WITCH



3rd PRIZE : Denis BOUVET • GOBLIN MUTANT



RULES

OF THE PAINTING AND CONVERSION CONTEST OF THE PARIS WORLD OF GAMING SHOW, OCTOBER 2005

THREE CATEGORIES ARE PROPOSED FOR THE PAINTING CONTEST: A, B AND C. ONE CAN PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THESE THREE CATEGORIES OR IN TWO CATEGORIES OF ONE'S CHOICE. THERE IS JUST ONE EXCEPTION: ONE CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN BOTH CATEGORIES A AND B WITH THE SAME MINIATURE.

CATEGORY A: ORIGINAL PIECE ON INFANTRY BASE.

The selected miniature absolutely must be from the *Rackham* range of miniatures. No modifications may be made to the piece. Only the quality of the paintjob will be taken into account by the jury.

CATEGORY B: ORIGINAL PIECE ON CREATURE OR CAVALRY BASE.

The selected miniature absolutely must be from the *Rackham* range of miniatures. No modifications may be made to the piece. Only the quality of the paintjob will be taken into account by the jury.

CATEGORY C: CONVERSION.

The presented miniatures can have been modified using parts from other miniatures or even elements that have been sculpted. Except for any sculpted elements, all parts must be from the *Rackham* range of products. For this category the jury will take into account the quality of the paintjob and of the conversion, as well as its originality.

BASES: For the three categories only *Rackham*

brand bases may be used. They can nevertheless be painted, decorated and customised freely. For the Conversion category, the base's size is freely chosen and an Infantry miniature can be presented on a Creature or Cavalry base.

All miniatures must be entered between Friday morning and Sunday at noon. The entries will be judged and the prizes will be given on Sunday afternoon.

The jury reserves the right to refuse the participation of a candidate who doesn't conform to these rules. *Rackham* reserves the right to photograph the participating miniatures and to use these images on its website or in its publications. The miniatures are entered in this contest at the participants' own risk. *Rackham* cannot be held responsible for any damage caused to the miniatures during their transport and their display. Participating in this contest entails the tacit acceptance of the rules listed above.

Additional information will be provided at a later date on our website:
www.rackham.fr.



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