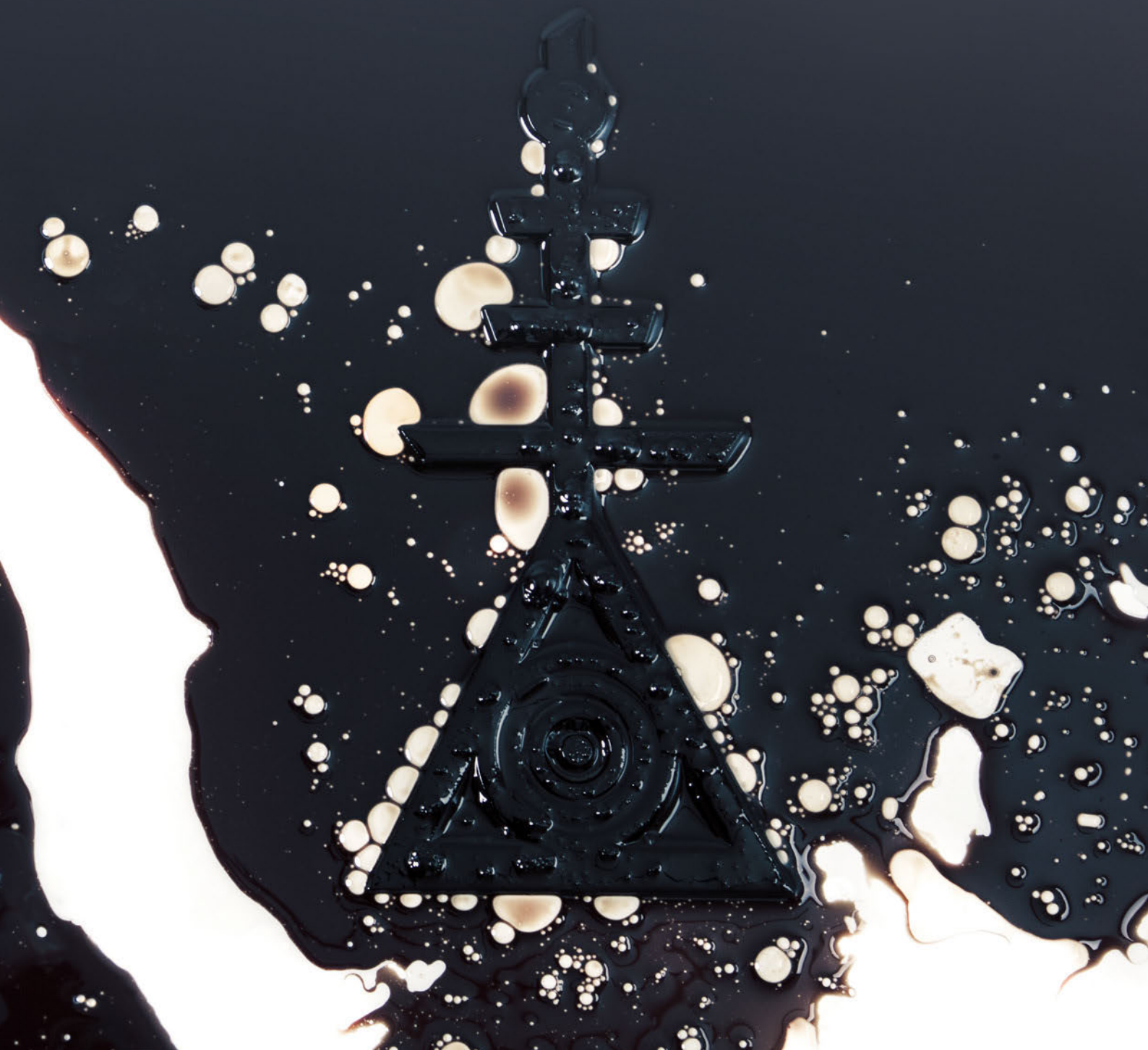




ORIGENESIS

BLACK ATLANTIC





BRITAIN

UNCHARTED
TERRITORY

THE CELTIC SEA

THE ATLANTIC

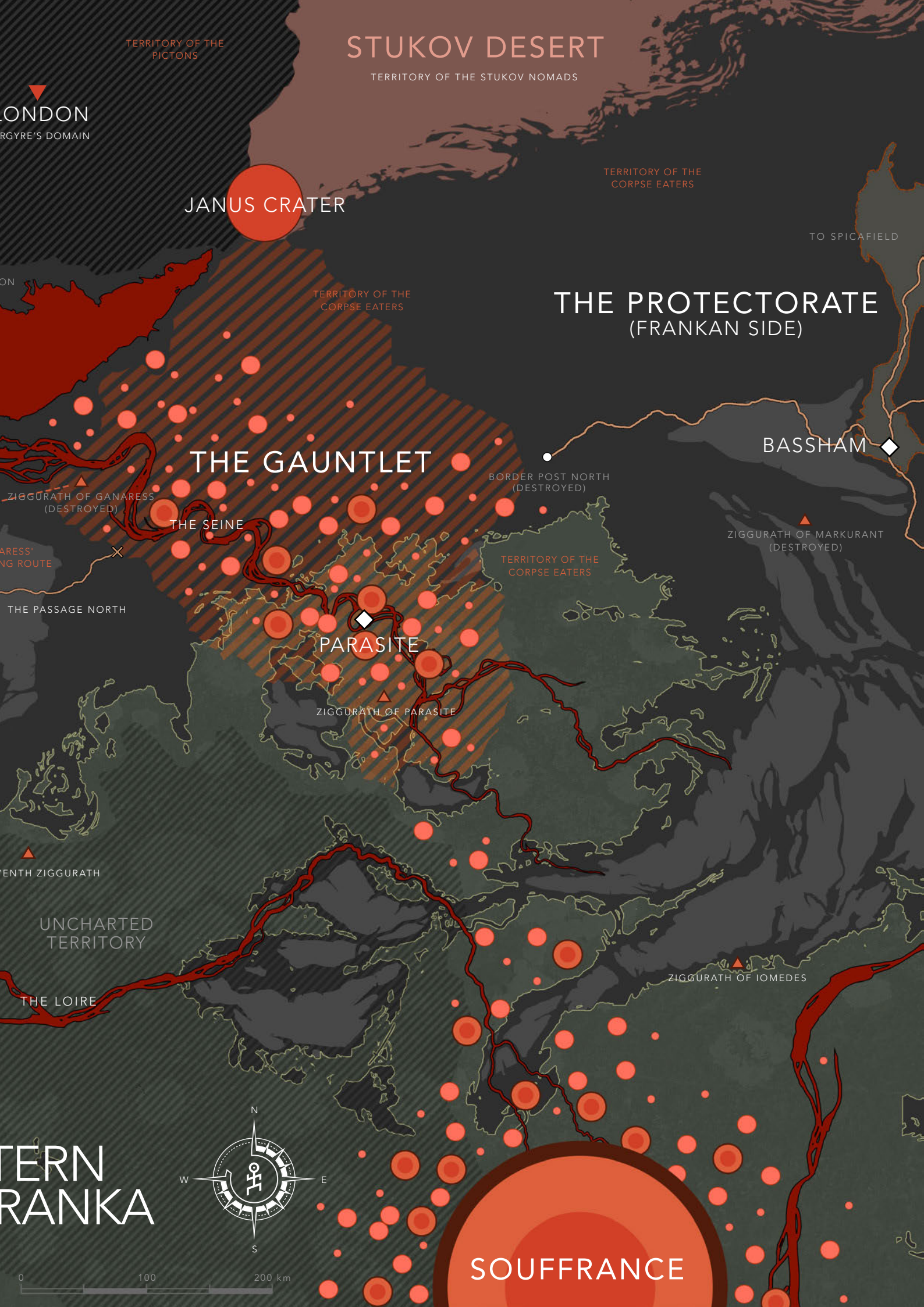
THE DEAD CHANNEL

BRITON

FOREST OF
THE DRUIDS

NORTHWEST
COAST OF FRANCE
2597 A.D.

-  CITY
-  TOWN
-  OUTPOST
-  ROAD
-  TRADE ROUTE
-  RUINS
-  OIL RIG
-  ZIGGURATH
-  SPORE FIELD
-  MOTHER SPORE FIELD



TERRITORY OF THE
PICTONS

STUKOV DESERT

TERRITORY OF THE STUKOV NOMADS

ONDON
RGRYE'S DOMAIN

JANUS CRATER

TERRITORY OF THE
CORPSE EATERS

TO SPICAFIELD

THE PROTECTORATE
(FRANKAN SIDE)

BASSHAM

THE GAUNTLET

BORDER POST NORTH
(DESTROYED)

ZIGGURATH OF GANARESS
(DESTROYED)

THE SEINE

RESS'
NG ROUTE

THE PASSAGE NORTH

TERRITORY OF THE
CORPSE EATERS

ZIGGURATH OF MARKURANT
(DESTROYED)

PARASITE

ZIGGURATH OF PARASITE

ENTH ZIGGURATH

UNCHARTED
TERRITORY

THE LOIRE

ZIGGURATH OF IOMEDES

TERN
FRANKA



0 100 200 km

SOUFFRANCE



BLACK ATLANTIC

NU NINDA - AN
EZZATENI,
WATAR-MA
EKUTTENI

[HITTITE WRITING]

MARKO DJURDJEVIC

EDITORIAL

PUBLISHER
SIXMOREVODKA

CONCEPT &
IP DEVELOPMENT
Marko Djurdjevic

PRODUCTION
Marko Djurdjevic
Adrian Fekete
Seb Downie

AUTHOR
Marko Djurdjevic

TRANSLATION
Monique Lee
Oliver Hoffmann

EDITING AND PROOFREADING
Monique Lee

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Marko Djurdjevic
Adrian Fekete
Jerzy Ferdyn

QA & PROFILES
Seb Downie
Matthias Edelmann
Jens Kürten

DEGENESIS BY
Christian Günther & Marko Djurdjevic

ART DIRECTION & ARTWORK
Marko Djurdjevic

ADDITIONAL ARTWORK
Gerald Parel
Michal Ivan
Andrius Matijosius
Högni Jarleivur Mohr
Chris Kintner
Claudiu Magherusan
Monika Palosz
Alessandro Poli
Valentin Gloaguen
Hugo Wei Lam Ho

MAPS
Adrian Fekete
Chris Kintner

CROSS SECTION PAREL'S ISLAND
Chris Kintner

CROSS SECTION BLACK ATLANTIC
Kemp Remillard

COVER DESIGN
Marko Djurdjevic
Adrian Fekete

SPECIAL THANKS

Adrian Djurdjevic, Monique Lee, Andy Azbah, Greg Kotler, Carmel Spivak Divon, Dennis Nußbaum, Volker Steinmetz, Michael Duttenhöfer, Russell Binder, Martin Behrendt, Mathieu Filipic, Erwan Roudeaut, Renart De Maupertuis, Roliste TV, Julija Valkūnienė, Jose Manuel Rey, Gilles Garnier, Curro Marin, Sandy Julien, Stephane Bogard, Matteo Casali, Magnus Lenz, Tomasso Alderighi, Duccio Lucattelli, Roberto Irace, LUCCA Comics & Games, Paul Habersstock, IFCC, Jörg Holder, Alain Solheid, Jens Kürten, Thomas Choyer, Neville La-marche, Jonte Minh, Asame Hikari, Antoine Kirdinn Nobilet, Alberto Toro, Marc le Merdy, Simon Moskala, Juan Preciado, Tomasso Gollini, Steffen Schnurpel, Frank Barner, Steve Snow, Greg Faillace, Scot Tumlin, Jeff Jew, Den Yang Ho, Blake Midstokke, SCALE 75 & & all DEGENESIS fans worldwide.



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SUBLIME

Grey clouds race across the indigo sky, their quick movement appearing as if in a time lapse. The surf breaks ashore with a roaring noise. Splintered spires jut from the water; the stone slope is draped in the dress of the forest's trees. An eerie wind blows through the treetops of the nearby birch forest and they sway as if in a trance and shed their leaves. A veil of yellow and orange foliage is carried upward by the breeze, tumbles through the air and rains down on the Anabaptist packs on the beach.

It's October.

"They are coming!" Barringer looks at his leader, awaiting his order.

Vicarent nods. "Now!"

Four Orgiastics come running, a heavy wooden trestle in tow. An iron pan attached to it by chains dangles below. The men pant with effort, as their boots sink ankle deep into the brown mud.

Vicarent stares into the iron pan, then at Barringer and then back again at the metal container's contents. Every look is hasty, every movement quickened. It is as if time is being kept at an accelerated pace. The gang surrounding them is restless – a viscous, unintelligible gruel of words fills the beach. Hundreds of pairs of eyes stare at Vicarent questioningly. Fear of their own mortality oozes from every pore of the warriors, a cold sweat clings to their foreheads. A distant murmur comes from the birch forest on the slope. Vicarent approaches the pan. From the left, Barringer hands him his bidenhander. The Sublime takes its hilt and grabs the sword. His eyes scan the smoothly polished blade. For a heartbeat, he observes his reflection in it. It is the moment he has been preparing for all his life. The final battle is approaching, and only the most holy of Anabaptist relics can save Briton from utter destruction.

The Starfire.

The eternally burning black stone is in the pan, surrounded by a cloud of ebony-colored streaks that obscure its true form – the fingernail of the Demiurge.

Vicarent sharpens his blade on the stone, jerkily grinding the metal across the black crystal, bathing the sword in the cloud of cosmic ashes.

A booming sound from the birch forest interrupts the ceremony. A shrill noise, as if the wind was blowing through

a hollow tree trunk. Everyone turns and looks at the slope. The signal.

"War horns!" A muscle on Barringer's jaw trembles.

Vicarent nods knowingly. "Do it!"

Following his order, Barringer jumps towards a small campfire, tears the iron pliers from the embers and runs back to his leader. Vicarent clings to the hilt of his sword like the Touched cling to their faith in the Broken Cross. His head tilts back and hands come from all sides in order to keep the Sublime upright. A bald Ascetic smears Vicarent's face with a colorless paste. Irritated, the Sublime shoves the man aside, his eyes fixed on Barringer. Vicarent nods at his brother-in-arms and Barringer reacts without a sign of hesitation. He thrusts the glowing points of the pliers deeply into Vicarent's nostrils. The Sublime writhes in pain and his whole body trembles with rage. Dozens of arms hold the leader in place. The red hot iron scorches Vicarent's mucosae, singeing his nose hairs and filling his throat with smoke. The small veins in Vicarent's eyes burst into fans of blood and tears run across his twitching cheeks. Black smoke billows from his mouth.

Barringer rips out the pliers.

All hands let go of Vicarent. The Sublime manages to stumble three steps forward before a cry of pain tears through his scorched throat.

But his cries are drowned out. Another roar sounds from the birch forest across to the beach.

"GANARESS! GANARESS! GANARESS!"

Outlines emerge from out of the groves. Naked bodies and hollow faces. A human bow wave of spears, axes and bifaces disentangles itself from the undergrowth and calmly walks down the slope towards the Anabaptists. They are followed by Fosters, their bodies pale and bloated with sagging breasts and drooping rings of belly fat.

Vicarent cannot taste or smell anything. His throat is ablaze. He raises his hand. It's trembling. "Stop!" he yells in agony to the henchmen trailing behind him. "He is not here yet!" The Orgiastics raise their swords as Spitfires howl and clouds of fire rocket skywards.

"There!" Barringer's shout cracks, his finger pointing left towards the slope. A staggering tree trunk appears between the birches, carried by dozens of drones. An Idol. The

grimace of their master has been chiseled into it. He walks beneath it. Ganaress, the Lord of the Legions. His arms are spread as if trying to take the whole world into them. His stature is monstrous, a giant maggot swollen with lard and encased in a lacteal skin. His head is adorned with a crown of glands the size of fists.

"He's gigantic!" Barringer whispers stunned. The first wave of Ganaress' scent hits like a flood, inundating the front line of the Anabaptists who are standing to the right and left of Vicarent. The swords fall from the hands of the warriors as they smell the king's aroma. Tears of salvation roll down their cheeks. Some fall to their knees, sinking into the wet sand and crying in a state of bliss.

Vicarent ignores them. With his sword raised, he starts walking, holding the blade in front of his chest like a shield. He marches straight up to Ganaress.

The forest of human bodies gives way creating a path in front of him. The drones march alongside creating a barrier and watch with lifeless eyes as the Sublime makes his ascent. The sun is at Ganaress' back. It blinds Vicarent who can only make out the silhouette of the Demiurge's herald.

"GOOD HUMAN. COME TO ME!" Ganaress says suddenly. Every word is sweeter than mother's milk, every syllable, like the caress of God upon Vicarent's heart.

The Sublime's senses are numbed, all smells driven out by the smoldering fire in his nose. Ganaress' affliction is overwhelming. The drones buzz in unison.

"BE PEACEFUL. GIVE SWORD!"

Peacefully, Ganaress extends his bloated arms to Vicarent. His face is full of love - an infinite calm is reflected in his eyes, which have retreated like black snails into the bulging sockets under his brows. The thoughts of the Sublime are in a free fall. Vicarent is one year old, his mother is feeding him at her breast. Vicarent is twelve years old, the birds are chirping an unparalleled love song. Vicarent is eighteen, for the first time, he kisses the woman of his dreams. Vicarent is 23 and he looks his newborn child in the eye. Vicarent is here. It is now. A single step separates him from Ganaress. The low hanging autumn sun crowns the knotted skull of the Pheromancer King like a halo. Vicarent humbly lowers the blade, his eyes searching for forgiveness in the moss at his feet.

"DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR BETRAYAL, PROGENY OF MAN!"

The voice of the Pheromancer King is like a bell, every syllable an indictment for the last judgment. Vicarent is ashamed of even the slightest thought of resistance. Ganaress lays his wormy fingers gently around the blade. A sickly smile reveals a series of tiny teeth partially buried in his charcoal-colored gums. The glands on his head swell with greed. Black smoke rises between the fingers of the Pheromancer King. Vicarent risks looking at the colossus. His eyes rest upon his face.

Suddenly, a red spot, the size of a plate, appears on Ganaress' forehead. Then, another one on his throat. The Pheromancer's eyes widen in astonishment, as if realizing that something unforeseen has come to pass. Still holding the blade, his hands suddenly become covered in pustules and Ganaress' skin begins to melt - with the scream of a wounded whale, the king lets go of Vicarent's two-handed sword.

This is Vicarent's moment. Without a thought, the Sublime attacks with his bidenhander. The tip of the sword pierces Ganaress' abdominal wall with a loud hiss.

The steel slides through a layer of fat as thick as a human arm, severing innards and exiting the Pheromancer King's back. The flurry causes Ganaress' glands to burst. Salmon-colored pheromone clouds explode from his skull, concealing his look of desperation. His flesh quivers.

Tens of thousands of termite eggs gush out of Ganaress' pores in waves and rain down on the floor. With a merciless jerk, Vicarent tears the bidenhander from the body of the colossus. Ganaress staggers on. Teeth break free from his jaws and oily blood flows from his nose and mouth. The spot on his forehead has grown to the size of a pumpkin. His legs give in and his stomach bulges; Ganaress' entrails spill out onto the ground.

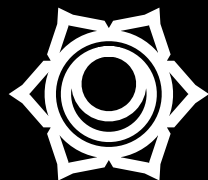
A high whistle drowns everything as if a hole had been shot into a huge oxygen tank. "POISONED!" Ganaress gurgles. The demon is on his knees, gasping for breath. Vicarent takes aim. With a single blow, Ganaress' head is ripped from his body.

Triumph!



CHAPTER
STARFIRE





HOLY LAND

Free land. Holy Land. Briton is invincible. This piece of land at the end of the world has written history. It has defied the machinations of the Demiurge. With a single stroke of his sword, the Sublime Vicarent slew the Pheromancer King Ganaress and delivered a whole people from the curse of Franka. This is the legend that has spun the yarn of Briton's invincibility for twelve years now. A fabled final battle, into which numerous other tales have been woven, leaving no one able to decipher what really happened on the 11th of October in the year of 2585.

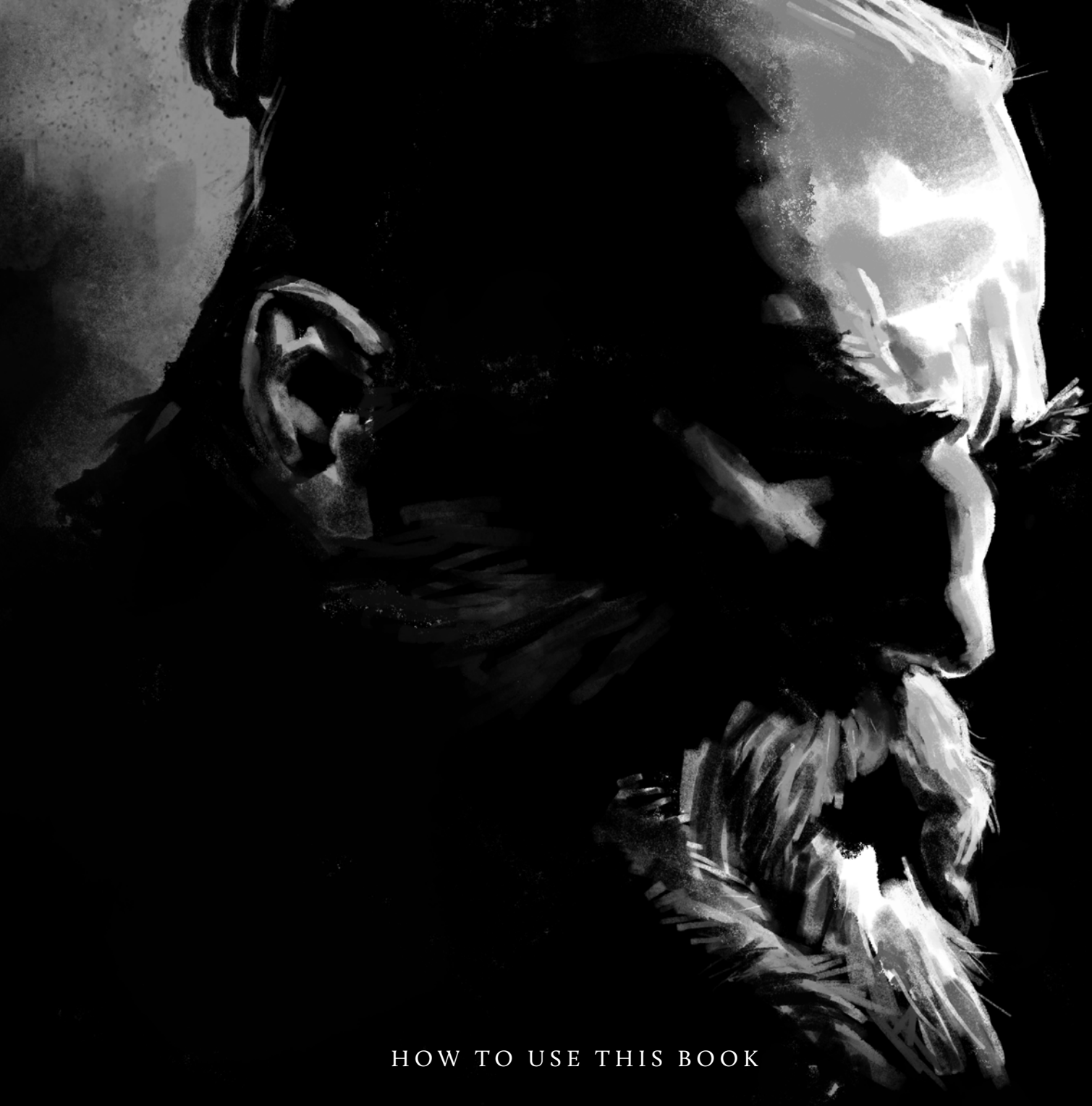
Autumn is returning to the country, and thus, the holiday in honor of the Sublime. The Anabaptists pay homage to their hero Vicarent, for he has achieved by his own power what no one else was able to before him. He is the Chosen One, the conqueror of the Demiurge. Heroic epithets and exploits widely attributed to his greatness alone fill entire books now. His mind is stronger than the power of the Pheromancers; pure Pneuma flows through his body. Under his watch, Briton shall remain invincible. While many reach such heights only after their mortal demise, he has already become a legendary figure within his lifetime. Everywhere he sets foot, people bow in awe.

For years, however, there have been rumors of an alleged Starfire, considered the most holy of Anabaptist relics. The Starfire supposedly helped Vicarent attain his victory and the Spitalians are anxious to get to the core of these rumors. The Border Post North has been destroyed and the Cult of Doctors has lost one of its main bridgeheads in Franka to swarms of parasites. Where two years ago, the North Passage linked Briton to Borca, one finds today a marshy death zone, making it impassable.

If a miracle like the Starfire actually exists, the Anabaptists must reveal it. Bargaining is not an option for Vicarent. He challenges the Spitalians of Rennes, threatening them openly and warning them not to mix themselves in the affairs of the Anabaptists. If the snooping should however continue, he is more than willing to dismantle the brotherhood of arms. After all, it was his Cult that freed the land from the Pheromancers and wiped out the Demiurge. Anyone who is not a member of the Broken Cross has no right to come into close proximity of the Starfire. Even the knowledge of the relic's location is not known outside the circles of the Anabaptists.

This alone is reason enough for the Spitalians to become suspicious. They dispatch a secret elite unit of the Red Pack to explore Briton. Preservists. Kranzler's people. The local Epigeneticist Dr. Vega is the brain of this clandestine operation, which bears the code name "Mission Concorde". Their objective is to reveal the mystery of the Starfire. If need be, with brute force. But the Spitalians are about to lose sight of their objective at hand. An oily substance has washed ashore causing previously undocumented mutations. The doctors are convinced that there is only one conclusion to be drawn: The sixth Chakra is about to bloom. As these events unfold, another danger is spreading in the slipstream of Mission Concorde. Brest, Briton's capital, has become a haven for something powerful, and it attracts the attention of two Marauders.

Argyre and Aries.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Briton. The end of the world. A rugged coast, a free people. Anabaptists and their chapels, as far as the eye can see. Wheat is in full bloom and peace hangs over the land like a benevolent veil. The influence of Souffrance is but a distant echo. It is a place defined by its legends.

But whosoever wipes away the dust of the story, quickly discovers that underneath a web of unhealed scars lays hidden.

An invisible threat is on shore leave. For five hundred years it has been waiting, relentlessly biding its time, snaking along the coastline. Now the moment has come and it can finally leave the water.

This book contains the truth about northwest Franka, the sixth Chakra, as well as the machinations of the Marauders. It offers new possibilities for seasoned players to unravel the mystery of Jehammed's Will.

The chapter "STARFIRE" introduces Briton's epic history, describing the country, its people and their conflict with the Primer spawn. It also provides the scene and starting point for the present story.

"BURNT IDOLS" unleashes the destructive forces hidden in Briton and sheds light on the dramatic events unfolding in the background.

The adventure "BLACK ATLANTIC"

sends players on a merciless odyssey through Briton, where they are confronted with dangers of past, present and future.

"THROWN TO THE GODS" provides a brilliant end to the campaign and details what is to come.

BLACK ATLANTIC combines the strengths of a regional source book with a variety of background information for a scenario that can instantly be played. It lays the foundation for one-of-a-kind gaming sessions on the northwest coast of Franka. At the same time it ties up loose ends of previous narratives and foreshadows approaching events in the world of DEGENESIS.

HALO

The creaking motorboat veers out across the silent sea. Dark night. Pale stars and a barren new moon crown the endless sky. Plymouth collapses in the darkness behind them. They are safe on the waves.

"Paler! Which year is it?"

Arnika looks at the navigation disk in his palm.

"2596."

"Too early! Fuck!" Helios feels his neck. His fingers stroke the pricks left behind by Argyre's yoke. The blood sticks to his gloves. He licks it off.

Every drop is precious.

"2597! We are one year too early!" Helios curses to himself.

Arnika has no idea what he is talking about. Helios squints his eyes. With the tip of his knife, he removes a broken arrowhead from his abdominal wall. Gotcha. He examines the bloody flint stone in his palm briefly before putting it in his mouth. He sucks it clean and spits it out into the sea.

"The code, Paler! Two and five are seven, nine and seven makes sixteen. One and six also result in seven. 1616.

That's the code."

Arnika sighs softly through the filter covering his mouth. The Paler still cannot believe who he is sitting across from.

"Where should we go?"

"We have to hide from him, Paler. He will come for us. We need to get somewhere where he can't find us."

"Brest?" Arnika asks.

Helios nods silently, his eyes fixed on the infinite void of the ocean. Arnika locks the navigation disk and steers the boat into southwestern waters. His eyes dart from the navigational symbols to his feet, up to the nets attached to the boat and finally to Helios. Without a word, he studies the Sleeper Prophet. His love for him is shoreless. "I've been waiting for you all my life." Helios is at a loss for words. Disoriented, he stares at the black sea.

"Your name, Paler?"

"Arnika. Petigrad bunker. 21. Guardian generation," he replies as if on command. He feels like a dog that lacks training.

How could he forget to reveal himself to his master?

The answer falls on deaf ears.

Arnika looks at his hands. He is garbage. A monstrosity. His God sits opposite him, the embodiment of perfection. He searches to find the right words, but Helios's next question cuts through his thoughts.

"If you had the choice to be born as the sun, which has the power to gift life but must shine forever, or to perish like a distant star, unknown to all, which destiny would you choose?"

"Star," Arnika says. He hesitates a moment. "There can only be one sun," he adds.

Helios smiles. "The same nonsense that Jehammed spewed," he sneers. He reaches for a rod that is wrapped in leather. Helios loosens the leather covering and pulls a spear out. Arnika, ashamed of having given the wrong answer, does not dare to look his God in the eye.

"You, Arnika, have been chosen. You will burn brightly like the sun when the age of mankind dawns."

Arnika gulps. His throat is bone dry and his heart yearns to understand the purpose of his mission. Helios points to the head of the spear. Arnika notices a peculiar engraving on it. The symbol is strangely familiar.

"The Grindworks?"

Helios answers with another nod. The golden pupils of the Sleeper Prophet sparkle in the dark.

"We will put an end to the rule of Marauders. We will lead humanity back into the light."

Helios puts his hand on Arnika's shoulder, then slowly touches his cheek and forehead. "Just look what they have done to you and your people. They have tainted you, taken away your dignity."

Tears form on Arnika's eyelids. Never before has anyone laid hands upon him without inflicting harm. A shiver washes over the Halo.

"We will wait for the new year. We must prepare." Helios looks up at the spearhead. "When the hour comes, Jehammed will show us the way."

Arnika's eyes wander along the shaft and up to the engraving.

"We'll use his power to save humanity from its yoke," Helios whispers.

Arnika understands.

"No more stars."



THE NORTHWEST

A magnificent boar trots out from the undergrowth. It enters the pale clearing, grunting with heat rising from its body. It lazily scrapes its flank against an oak tree. With its snout, it hunts for truffles under the leaves as quiet rain rustles upon the foliage. It listens closely. A sound comes from the thicket. Its ears are erect and it tries to sense the danger. Too late. A harpoon pierces the neck of the boar, tearing its hooves from the ground and nailing the bulky body to a nearby tree trunk. The swine kicks its legs through the air as if running away were a possibility but the harpoon holds it in place. Heaving, it finally succumbs to the throes of death. Six hunters emerge silently from out of the bush, their heads shaved and their blond beards plaited. They wear finely carved bone jewelry and capes made of seal and walrus skin hang from their broad shoulders. Blue and yellow paint covers their faces, characteristic of the Clanners of their homeland Briton. These are the people of the North. Their country is crude, uncouth and wild. Its coasts are rugged and rainy, the cliffs scarred from the stormy sea. The ocean delimits its territory like an enraged animal, hawking and spitting out gray waves, without cease.

Upon first sight, the land appears untamed, but it is the legacy of a great people who have resisted subjugation by the Pheromancers. To belong to the Britoni, the largest free Clan in Franka, fills one's breast with pride. Far away from the front lines where the Resistance slaughters Frankan soldiers and also, at a distance from the Rhône swamps and the delirium of the artifact mining along the southern coast, lies this small, impregnable patch of earth. A symbol of Franka's will to fight.

It provides protection to Clans and Cults alike. For the Anabaptists, the Northwest is a hotbed of faith. It is here that they forge their war machines and keep guard over their homeland with great diligence. For the Spitalians, it is a camp, a place where their platoons are waiting, prepared for battle at a moment's notice. Their eyes are constantly fixed to the east, to Parasite.



BRITON

Green meadows stretch across the expanse. The sky is heavy and cloudy, the ground still wet from the last spring rain.

A forest of megaliths rises like an apparition from the damp grass. The overgrowth of succulent moss masks the stone steles. Remove the moss and underneath it, Scrapper runes that were carved into the granite generations ago are revealed. In addition, there are other symbols: walrus skulls and interwoven circles and spirals. Triskelia. In between the lines there are dates: 2373, 2412, 2577 and once again, 2585. The year that Ganaress fell.

However, one symbol is repeated at a greater frequency than all of the others: the Broken Cross. The Anabaptists

have come to Briton. Their settlement took place in several waves. The most recent one is known as the Great Exodus. Thousands from the Broken Cross who had hitherto inhabited the southern coast set out to join their fellow believers in Briton.

They consecrated the land and the earth. They irrigated the fertile soil, extracted wheat and tilled the fields. Their families intermarried with the residents of Briton, and now side by side they defend their new home against any external threat.

The cities and settlements of the peninsula are only a stone's throw away from each other. A dense network

of roads and trails connects the villages and hamlets with the hinterland. Brest, Saint-Brieuc and Rennes are trade hubs, while smaller villages such as Morlaix or Carnac provide the region with additional supplies. Those who travel over land often encounter a fog that hangs drearily over the hills in the early morning hours. In the fall, the days are wet and windy, but the winters are considerably milder than in grotesque Borca. Warm sea air from the Atlantic Ocean blows across the rugged coastal areas, preventing the ports from freezing. From time to time, icebergs, the size of a village, break off from the Ice Barrier to the north and drift south past Brest. On the horizon, they glisten for a few days in the pale morning light. Then, they are gone.

BRITONI: THE NORTHERNERS

People are one with the sea here in the Northwest. The Atlantic Ocean is the source of life and only those who venture out into its waters are worthy of respect. Whaling and fishing are deeply rooted in the tradition of the Britoni and have come to define the ranks within their culture. For centuries, settlements have been taking root here, secluded from the rest of the world. They trade with Cults and hire themselves out as seasoned hunters and sturdy sailors. The entire region is nourished by what they are able to retrieve from the seas. The brotherhood of arms between the Britoni and Anabaptists has existed since their initial encounters. The Cult of the Broken Cross sees the Britoni Clan as equals in both spirit and physique, recruiting amongst them with fervor. It is their coarse humor, valor, and life at sea that has made the Britoni into sworn companions of the Anabaptists.

Many Northerners, in turn, send their sons and daughters to be initiated into the Broken Cross. They are tattooed and sent out into the fields to work.

Some even claim that the nickname of the Anabaptists as the Children of the Fishermen can be traced back to Briton.

THE WALRUS

In the legends of the Britoni, the walrus symbolizes virility, obstinacy and a keen survival instinct. Its meat is a source of nourishment, its fat, one of strength, and its skin provides warmth. The Britoni fashion hunting horns from their tusks and carve idols and jewelry from their bones. The walrus has become a symbol for their people and its likeness adorns their shields and boats. Walrus hunting is one of the biggest events in the North. The best-known hunters in the region travel to Brest every autumn, when the population of marine mammals is at its highest. They can be found on the many small island chains dotting the Atlantic Ocean. Jet skis, overhauled by Scrappers and equipped with high-pressure harpoons, roar out of the harbor and chase after large herds that mate in the nearby coastal waters. The spectacle reaches its culmination when a hunter manages to drive a bull ashore and face off with the animal using only their bare hands. A rather bloody matter.

IVORY

The hunting horns of the Britoni are known throughout all the peninsula. Hollowed walrus teeth are the most highly regarded. The ivory is immaculate. The best craftsmen in the Northwest carve the finest works of art out of their teeth. Craftsmanship, for which Neolibyans would let Dinars fall from their pockets with abandon. In the Britoni tradition, it is considered a great honor to receive a walrus tooth as a gift. The more hunting horns one has in their possession, the greater their reputation. In Brest, in the trophy hall of Oppolus, the King of Britoni, it is said that there are hundreds of horns which line the walls. They are the emblem of his regency, though the Britoni haven't the faintest idea of what a king is. For them, it is the title that they give to the best hunter among them, whose hunting instinct they let guide them.

LIFELINES

The roads and seaways of Briton are its lifelines. Wherever they cross or branch, transactional opportunities present themselves to merchants, fishermen and hunters. Homesteads and inns dot the road network, providing fresh meat and a roof to those traveling overland.

Not too far from the beaten path, there

are shortcuts that can be taken through birch forests and small patches of woodland. Dolmens and other abandoned stone dwellings are situated in rainy thickets and provide shelter to anyone passing through. Lumberjacks pace along the paths that trace the rugged hills. They fell the overgrown pines and sturdy oaks, preparing

them for transport to the East.

Along the water, the encounters are just as numerous. Harpooners set sail from Brest, workers unload the cargo coming from Aquitaine en route to Rennes in Carnac, and the Bay of Saint-Brieuc teems with Scrap divers atop tottering pontoons.

THE LAWS OF THE BRITONI

Britoni and Anabaptists share the land with each other. Their laws and customs have coalesced over the years and are obeyed and enforced throughout the peninsula by both parties. The rules are simple and easy to grasp, but those who do not comply will quickly be sent to eternity.

I

MURDER

Murder as a result of greed, vindictiveness and depravity is punishable by death throughout all of Briton. Executions are usually carried out publicly and their nature is determined by the severity of the crime in question. While one may be force fed sea salt until they vomit to death, another may be sewn in walrus skin and then ripped to pieces by fighting dogs. Rough country, rough manners.

II

BLASPHEMY

Those who defile the faith of the Anabaptists must reckon with the worst. The blasphemer has but a single chance to renounce their absurdities and convert immediately. If they so choose, they will be baptised at the next sunrise in a flood chapel. A three-point tattoo is then punctured into their forehead, and a copper ring pulled through their nose. A spade is pressed into their hand and they are to plow the next best field. The Broken Cross welcomes a new convert to its ranks. Adieu, old life.

Anyone who resists compulsory recruitment will have their tongues split or torn out with pliers. The possibility also remains of having their mouths washed with hot iron, thus leaving the blasphemy lodged in the throat of the blasphemer.

III

DEPRAVITY

Britoni value their tribe. Becoming involved with someone else's wife can have serious consequences. A lecher's shoulders may be dislocated; ears or even the nose cut off in order to deface him. In rare cases, where the seducer is a repeat offender, stones are sewn under the skin of his belly and he is hung naked like a wet sack on the nearest defensive wall. For the amusement of others. For days on end.

IV

PACT WITH THE DEMIURGE

Burn, both its consumption and trade are fatal. The Anabaptists don't shy away from those who are entangled in it. At the hands of the Anabaptists, Burners are tortured with iron pliers until there is no tooth left in its socket. Beaten green and blue, and left with broken shins and shattered heel bones, they are thrown onto the next cart and carried off in the direction of Vannes. There, they seek atonement in the house of the Emissary Yasen. They learn the truth about a very special form of asceticism that is reserved specifically for the henchman of the Demiurge: one enters into the gates of hell screaming from starvation. Salvation.

GANARESS

Some Pheromancers evolve into queens. Their bodies, colossal in their corpulence, leave no trace of their human origins. They're creatures from hell. Elephantine frames with faces covered in swollen glands and jaws crowded with baby teeth. Whoever lays eyes upon them immediately falls under their control. They cast themselves at their feet, licking the juices flowing down their legs, only to inevitably degenerate into a brainless drone. But not only humans are at the mercy of their powers, other Pheromancers serve them as well, carrying out their orders as workers, warriors and ambassadors. For decades, the Spitalians have been collecting every bit of information about the queens seeping out of Franka. One thing is clear, they are the nerve center of the pheromantic rapture and pose the gravest of dangers. This is the reason their names are spoken with dread: Markurant, Machiawen, Ganaress, Iomedes, Balkirk and Vulmikon. These are the ones that are known.

But the Spitalians doubt that their number is limited to six. Every queen seems to have given birth to a Ziggurath. If one, however, looks at the queens whose identities are already known and compares it with the number of Zigguraths, three remain to be identified. The research groups in the Spital are investigating a theory that the missing ones aren't in full bloom, and therefore, have not yet mounted their Ziggurath. Others beg to differ, concluding that they still have yet to be born. The Preservists, who compete in the field with sword and Splayer against these Primer hellions, seethe at such mind games. Theories are of little help on the front lines of a war against an enemy whose motives and patterns of action lack any semblance to those of humans.

Two of the Pheromancer queens have already perished. The defeat of Markurant, King of Bassham, came with great sacrifices and an exhaustive amount of resources. Eighteen years ago, a crusade of Anabaptists, Spitalians, Judges, Resistance, and Scrapers stormed the Ziggurath in Bassham. Thousands died in the carnage that lasted weeks, but the Baptist Amos along with Vincent, the Breaker of Bassham, emerged victorious from the battle. It was the first big defeat for the Pheromancers. To date, Bassham is considered a symbol of Frankan resistance and the alliance of the Cults. At the same time, the victory brought about massive territorial gains for Justitian. The Protectorate was able to expand to Franka and redefine its borders. Today, a triumvirate of Spitalians, Anabaptists and Judges reigns in Bassham. They have secured the border town and keep an eye on the swarm's every move.

On the other side of Franka, a different tale unfolded in Briton. The Pheromancer King Ganaress had a rather lackluster departure: a single stroke of a sword, dealt by Vicarent the Sublime. Not a single Orgiastic lost their life, not a single Ascetic shed a drop of blood. The Spitalians raise their eyebrows, deeming the story preposterous. To this day, countless legends remain entwined in this unsurpassed heroic deed, leaving the truth impossible to distill. Vicarent the Sublime! Vicarent, the Slayer of Ganaress! Vicarent, the Vanquisher of the Demiurge! Epithets that echo from the rooftops and towers of Briton. Briton's Anabaptists offer no explanation; they worship their liberator. Their lips are sealed, and their silence is leaden.



IDOL OF GANARESS

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

2583. Four years after the Spitalians discovery of the Ziggurath at Bassham, the Anabaptists come across the foundation of a similar structure in the lost city of Rouen. For decades, the Britoni have mounted considerable resistance against the attacks of the heinous Primer spawn. But the Pheromancers have unleashed their greatest one yet. Ganaress. A child of Parasite, bred and cultivated in the Frankan Earth Chakra. His rapture produces a blinding beacon, emanating from within the Chakra's ether. Swarming with both insects and drones, he is the eye of the cyclone.

One neighboring village after another surrenders to him. Even Spitalians and Anabaptists cling to him, begging for the salvation that his kiss promises. Thousands of disciples gather around the Pheromancer to complete the construction of his Ziggurath and to pay homage to their king. Then suddenly everything stops. Ganaress remains motionless for a whole year; the Vocalizers don't register a single impulse. In Rennes, the Spitalians wait for a sign, all the while preparing their defence. The news spreads across all of Briton, and cities and settlements entrench themselves. It is the calm before the storm.

SWATH OF DESTRUCTION

Ganaress begins to move, his path of destruction following no particular pattern. He appears to be heading for villages

and towns at random, with the intention of incorporating them into his army. Caen is the first outpost to fall victim to his call. He reaches Alencon within two weeks and a mere three days later, the town of Lemans. By this time, reconnaissance patrols are already sending in reports of a drone army — tens of thousands of cramped, contorted bodies, orbiting like a spiral galaxy around a black hole. All tracking calculations point to Ganaress' next target: Rennes.

The Spitalians desperately morse requests for reinforcement from Borca while within the city, their platoons prepare for the decisive battle. The youthful Registrar Ruytman, who in his days as a Famulancer survived the Battle of Bassham, takes command. He has the Eastern Wall set to fire — a firewall explicitly built in the event an incident like this should arise. Tar missiles, flaks equipped with pesticide bombs and machine guns all face eastwards in an attempt to stop the Pheromancer armies whilst allowing the Famulancers to carry out a sortie. Resistance cadets and Grenouilles shoulder their weapons, nervously awaiting the approaching invasion.

But it does not come. Ganaress' campaign suddenly changes directions and begins heading northwest, straight toward Mont Saint-Michel. Ruytman sends a warning to their brothers-in-arms. The Anabaptists request reinforcement from the Spitalians. They demand the platoons to

AND I DON'T WANT YOU AND I DON'T NEED YOU,
DON'T BOTHER TO **RESIST**, OR I'LL BEAT YOU
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT
THAT YOU'RE ALWAYS WRONG
THE WEAK ONES ARE THERE
TO **JUSTIFY** THE **STRONG**

[MARYLIN MANSON]

be ordered to fall into the flank so they can attack them together from both sides. Ruytman, however, refuses to engage in any cooperative effort. The arsenal of the Spitalians has been mounted to the defensive wall and set up in the surrounding area; it can no longer be moved. Without Rennes' armament, the doctors have nothing to combat the Pheromancer King and his army with on the open field.

Mont Saint-Michel must fend for itself.

THE FINAL BATTLE

Vicarent is convinced that there is only one way to stop Ganaress. He must summon the powers of the Demiurge. The Starfire - guarded by the Anabaptists for centuries - is his last hope. Deep in the walls of Mont Saint-Michel, it lays resting in an iron pan. On the eve of the final battle, the Sublime is torn from his sleep by an emanation. Disturbed by this event, he orders the Ascetics of the fortress to bathe him in Elysian oil until dawn. It is early in the morning on October 11, 2585; the time has come. Vicarent and six hundred battle-hardened Orgiastics stand on the gray beach of Mont Saint-Michel, awaiting Ganaress' superior strength. Vicarent plunges his sword into the smoke of the Starfire, baptizing the blade in the ethereal cloud and sharpening the bidenhander over the black stone.

He orders his men to dull his senses by searing his nose and throat, allowing him to brave Ganaress' pheromones, if only for a brief moment. The drones break out of the forest. Thousands have come with their master in order to overpower the Anabaptists.

Vicarent locates Ganaress in the thicket of bodies and scales the slope to face the Pheromancer King.

Ganaress cannot taste the fear of the Sublime; he is unable to sense the true intentions that lie concealed under the layer of Elysian oil. Convinced of his supremacy, he allows the Anabaptist to approach him so he can embrace him. Ganaress is oblivious to the fact that Vicarent can not smell him. As a gesture of peace, the Pheromancer King moves to take the sword from Vicarent, grasping the blade sharpened in the Starfire.

Suddenly, every action is quicker than the last. The Demiurge passes onto Ganaress' hands and his skin catches fire; excruciating pain floods the Pheromancer. Vicarent's moment has come. He thrusts the poisoned sword into the body of the colossus, driving it through his viscera. Ganaress becomes overwhelmed and his glands burst with utter agony. One last blow beheads the king. Pheromones of fear and alarm waft in strange veils over the hill. Like a flash, Ganaress' army disperses resembling a cloud of fireflies. All the drones and Fosters in his pack suddenly take



flight. Thousands of them plunge panic-stricken into the birch grove, overwhelmed by their master's fear of his final moments. The Anabaptists on the beach take the side of the rocky slope by storm, chasing after the fugitives. With lances and swords, they strike down fear-ridden drones. They surround the Fosters, subjecting them to flames until nothing is left but charred bones.

But there are too many. The remnants of Ganaress' army scatter themselves in every direction. Thousands of abandoned drones flood Briton.

AFTERSHOCK

Vicarent sets out for Brest with Ganaress' corpse the same day. The curse has been exorcised and all Briton must bear witness. He reaches the city within a week — men, women, children, the elderly and the sick come to take part in the triumphal procession. Ganaress' tremendous cadaver is hung at the city wall. It is here that they flay the dead Pheromancer King, burning his flesh until only a blackened skeleton remains. Vicarent has the bones preserved in Brest. In the Chapel of the Anabaptists, Ganaress' frame are nailed to a massive broken cross so that the whole world can see Briton's indomitableness.

The Sublime knows that it will only take a few days for

the news of his victory to reach the Spitalians. The doctors will do everything in their power to uncover the location of the Starfire. Vicarent has only one chance to preserve the secret of his Cult. He importunes his old comrade Oppolus, King of the Britoni, to bring the relic to safety. Oppolus can not refuse his wish for Vicarent's courage was his people's deliverance.

They hide the Starfire in the middle of an ancient stone circle on the small island of Ushant off the coast of Brest. With the help of his pack, Barringer, an Ascetic and Vicarent's companion since childhood, is tasked with keeping watch over the relic. Only the most loyal among Vicarent have been entrusted with this matter.

GANARIDS

Ganaress' Phenomena were so intense that within months a huge drone army had fallen under his control. Week after week, he conquered one village after another. His rule was indestructible. His stench was so overwhelming that it formed a film of mildew on the ruins of Rouen and crept westward from there. Those who became ensnared lost their mind and their consciousness within just a few days. They had transformed into the willing servants of their absurd god, drinking his sweat, which gathered like puddles in



his footprints. They mated with Ganaress, swirling around him in a wreath of wedged bodies.

After the death of the Pheromancer King, the army dispersed into a thousand pieces. Some drones ran naked through the woods of Briton, searching for commands and traces of their king's pheromones. Others wandered in circles - caught in a coil, always following the same course of action. They had been separated from the Earth Chakra. Forlorn and cast out of a supreme consciousness, their existence was without purpose.

The Spitalians sent Famulancers to hunt down the drones. Ruytman wanted to catch as many of them as possible in order to observe their behavior. What happened to drones that had been disconnected from a queen? An experiment like this had never been conducted before. The Gnarids, the name given to them by the Spitalians, offered no resistance. Week after week, dozens of these lost souls found themselves in the clutches of the Spitalians.

Within a year, the Spitalians had recovered over two thousand Gnarids from the woods of Briton. A detention center was hastily constructed in Rennes in order to isolate and study the prisoners. Would they regain human consciousness again? Would the spores naturally diminish if kept away from the spore fields long enough? How would they react to Ex? Was there perhaps a salvation for the people who had fallen victim to the Pheromancers?

The Spital granted Ruytman the resources to conduct

his research and sent two Hippocrats — specialists in the field of hypnosis — to Rennes. Their job was to try to break the spell of Ganaress and access the subconscious of the drones. Epigeneticists were summoned from Hybrispania to study the prisoners and Montpellier showed their support by providing the food and medicine necessary to keep the Gnarids alive.

Months passed and the Spitalians witnessed the first changes. Some Gnarids regained consciousness for a few hours and were able to communicate. Others responded to the desporulation and were able to eject the clumped mycelia from their lungs during coughing fits.

Years of research went by and the Spitalians began to release Gnarids that they had deemed as healed back into society. Under close monitoring, of course. They wanted to explore the movement patterns of the former drones when left to interact with the outside world. Would they revert back to their previous patterns of behavior and try to find their way back to the spore fields in the East? Would they be able to adapt to the world outside of the research centers?

The studies proved unsatisfactory to Ruytman. Ganaress seemed to be able to influence the thoughts of his former drones even after his death. No sooner had they been set free, did they flock seemingly at random to invisible field lines. They hauled boulders into forest clearings, forming crude stone circles reminiscent of the pheromantic Chakra symbol. Hours later, they awoke from their trance

STONE CIRCLES

Ganaress is silent. The Ganarids' memories of their past as part of the Earth Chakra have faded; the promises of their master nothing more than foggy fragments of an erstwhile life. Their stigmata no longer receive orders. Not because they are not able to, but because there is no stigma left, from which to send Ganaress' orders.

Although the Ganarids have supposedly been healed and are no longer under the influence of their Ganaress, some of them have fallen back into old behavioral patterns. They move along field lines and

pheromone tracks as if being pulled by invisible strings. The meaning of their actions has not been revealed to them. A strange trance has taken possession of them. When the new moon is upon them, they seek out the stone circles that they previously constructed and carve Ganaress' idol into the megaliths.

Even though they have been separated from the Earth Chakra, the Ganarids still seem to be able to communicate with each other through their stigmata. Communication is not a conscious endeavor, but rather

happens spontaneously. Revelations occur suddenly, haunting them in their everyday lives. They see speech patterns in the way that flies align themselves in the form of mandalas on the ceilings of cowsheds. They recognize the pheromantic Chakra symbol in the foam bubbles that crown a glass of beer. Others hear a loud whistle in the back of their heads, as if something from beyond is still passing through their consciousness. Is someone trying to regain control of the Ganarids?

The idol bearer Malinesse is the key.

and trudged confusedly over the rainy hills of Briton. No exact conclusion could be drawn as to what was responsible for their bizarre behavior. Rather, it seemed as if recurrent memory loops triggered their temporary mental derangement and an external force was in control of their actions.

REAPPEARANCE

The breakthrough came six years ago. Doctor Vega, an Epigeneticist who had fought her way to the apex of the Cult with her research in Hybrispania, arrived in Rennes and took over the experiments. She analyzed the previous studies and identified the problem: the idol bearers of Ganaress. The Spitalians had captured an idol bearer. Malinesse. She was kept in a soundproof cell in Rennes. Whenever Malinesse was released from her cage for an extended period of time, the Ganarids present in the camp as well as the released subjects would respond to her presence.

At that moment, Vega surmised that it could be connected to the full-fledged stigma on Malinesse's chest. Hypnosis had no effect on her and she did not respond to the desporulation attempts with Ex. Doctor Vega consulted with the surgeons before reaching a final decision. In a complicated operation, they would try to remove the spore tissue of the stigma from the body of the Ganarid. The idol bearer was put under with an anesthetic injection to the neck and then taken to the operating room.

Two months passed and then came the first sign of success. Malinesse was allowed outside of her cell without the Ganarids in the camp falling into a frenzy. Likewise, the test objects that were under observation in the area of Rennes were not compelled to gather at the stone circles. Doctor Vega had discovered the 'off switch'.

Against Ruytman's wishes, Vega decided to close the prison camp and release the inmates from their overcrowded living quarters. She argued that the experiment could only be considered a success if the Ganarids were able to live freely among the people of Briton.

For weeks, prisoners were sent to various locations throughout Briton. Thousands who had fallen into the hands of the Spitalians over the years were suddenly moving about unrestrained. Like newborns, the Ganarids tried to remember their homeland, setting out to find their way back to the farmsteads where they had been born and raised.

Mothers who had lost their children to the Fosters decades before found themselves suddenly standing in front of their adult children who had been neglected for years. They sobbed tears of happiness while fathers looked into the faces of those returning with suspicion, banishing them from the field without a word. Some did not have the heart to send their offspring away, instead hiding them in the stable, or giving them work. Husbands, sons, daughters, and sisters that had long been presumed dead flooded the land.

IT'S A CRUEL,
CRUEL WORLD TO FACE ON YOUR OWN
A HEAVY CROSS TO CARRY ALONG
THE **LIGHTS** ARE ON
BUT EVERYONE'S GONE
AND IT'S **CRUEL**

[GOSSIP]

Everywhere in Briton news of revenants made the rounds. More than a few, however, were discovered at dawn in the gutter at the edge of the village. Skull split and neck broken. Not every Britoni welcomed the past with open arms. Anabaptists saw remnants of the Demiurge in the Ganarids and branded them with iron as outcasts and lepers.

Ganarids, who had escaped the Spitalians and wandered aimlessly throughout the country for years, suddenly awoke to new life, no longer under Ganaress' spell. Some wandered along the beaches up to the flood chapels to get baptized and become one of the Touched. Others settled near the villages and hamlets in the hinterland and hired themselves out as farmhands and maids. Some still live outside in the dense forests, breaking chestnuts, hunting hares, and dwelling in ancient dolmens and tunnels. Their exact number is unknown.

THE FIELD REPORT

The Ganarids are back. They are living secretly among the Britoni, scattered all across the country. They are part of the population, albeit as lepers and outlaws.

Doctor Vega's experiment has proven to be a remarkable success. Drones separated from the influence of a

Pheromancer queen can be saved. Ruytman, however, is not convinced by the results. He orders Dr. Vega to submit to an aptitude test administered by the Hippocrats in Rennes. Meanwhile, the Registrar takes this opportunity to break into the Epigeneticist's lab. He tries to get a look at her experimental procedures. He rummages through her notes, reads her logbooks and copies the reports. Ruytman's blood runs cold at his discoveries.

Everything he can record, he smuggles out of Rennes in hopes of alerting others. He issues a field report to be delivered to the Spital via Montpellier on the Southern Coast. The Red Pack in Cremant intercepts Ruytman's letter of warning. Commando Prime Charcutier consults with Kranzler. The legendary leader of the Preservists gives a sign: a stealth unit of the Red Pack is to be dispatched to Briton to assist Doctor Vega. A Preservist named Bascule mobilizes the elite troops and guides them via Toulon to Montpellier. From there, they continue to Toulouse, then through Aquitaine, and over the ruins of Nantes. In the summer of 2597, they reach Rennes.

In July 2597, Ruytman commits suicide. The Hippocrats discover him in his office hanging from the ceiling. A week later, Doctor Vega is promoted to Chief Commander of Rennes.



THE DAY OF GANARESS

The Day of Ganaress is celebrated everywhere in Briton. For twelve years now, people have abstained from work on October 11 in order to gather at village squares, markets and in chapels for the great procession. The celebration pays tribute to Vicarent the Sublime, and his legendary triumph over Ganaress.

At all celebrations, the same reenactment can be seen. A huge effigy made of straw, sewn together with walrus skins is carried through the villages. It is made in the image of the Pheromancer King. The

villagers trail behind, imitating the drone warriors of Ganaress. The procession reaches its climax as a young man stands armed with a sword face to face with the demonic figure. He beheads it as those in attendance watch with delight. The drone warriors awaken from their mental derangement. The spell has been broken and the people embrace each other.

After the procession, they symbolically flay the straw doll and hang it on the highest wall, where it is later burned at nightfall in a purifying fire. Music,

banquets, shows, and copious amounts of alcohol accompany the spectacle into the early morning hours. The largest celebration takes place in Brest each year. Hundreds of Anabaptists from all over Briton pilgrim to the West to worship in Vicarent's chapel and cast their eyes upon what remains of Ganaress. The bones of the Pheromancer King have been laid out for viewing. Vicarent himself left them within these walls so that his heroism could be preserved for posterity. They are his legacy.



THE ATLANTIC

The ocean. Vast, gray and uncharted. The Britoni have many names for the Atlantic: Maleficent Mother, Raging Whale and Wet Grave. For centuries, their fishing boats break against its waves as they hunt swordfish, orcas, narwhals and sharks out on the high seas. They are indebted to the Atlantic for the survival of their people and their traditions.

Tons of crustaceans arrive in their nets' tow to the harbors of the coastal cities. On rainy beaches, the Britoni crack crab shells, cooking the meat from their claws and drinking train oil. They flay seals and process their skins, remove tusks from walrus skulls and carve the idols of their forefathers and heroes into the bones of their catch.

Two hundred, three hundred nautical miles from shore, but never more. The Northerners do not trust the ocean. Too often ships that have ventured too far out into the open sea have not returned. Stories of sea monsters have woven themselves into the fabric of sailors. Colossal beasts that dwell in the depths, the dead who call upon the living, sirens and other figures populate the imagination of the Britoni; these are just a few of the tales told in the taverns of Briton on stormy nights.

THE CELTIC SEA

The Celtic Sea stretches across the north of Briton. Cargo ships packed to the rafters, sunken transport vessels and possibly even artifacts scattered on its frigid floor, all wait for the arrival of the dauntless Scrappers of Saint-Brieuc. Indeed, it is they who are willing to take the risk to uncover the secrets of the Celtic Sea.

The current here is much calmer than on the Atlantic, which makes hunting much easier for the sailors. Sea lion pups nurse on small chains of islands while dense swarms of mackerel spawn in nearby coastal waters. Herring schools disperse into nervous underwater clouds as whales cross their path. Large crabs, krill, sea eels, barracudas and sharks share the Celtic Sea; they are the sustenance of the region.

Britoni children play during the day on the empty beaches and near the flood chapels. Shortly before high tide as evening approaches, they sprinkle salt into the spiracles of razor clams and lugworms; both having emerged from the depths of the sand in the hopes of finding something to feed upon. With one swift movement, the children have secured their food for the evening fire.

THE DEAD CHANNEL

The bleak stew that divides the mainland of Franka from Britain is contaminated and lifeless. The water that is trapped in the basin sloshes around languidly. Clumped spore packs from Parasite, discharged from the Seine, have



BLACK WATER

In Saint-Brieuc and Carnac, stories of Scrappers who have seen strange algae slicks and islands, black in color and floating out on the Atlantic, continue to be told. Clumped together with bubbles on their surface and riddled with nettles and fractal streaks, they drift far out into the open sea. It is said that upon seeing them, the Scrappers made a detour, steering clear of these mysterious

floating islands.

This account probably would have been relegated to a shelf of tall tales, if it weren't for the arrival of a few Spitalians three months ago. They inquired about the black patches of water amongst the resident Scrappers of Saint-Brieuc. They told the Scrappers to keep their eyes peeled. Along the beaches as well. If they spotted a

Mandala somewhere in the sand, they were to inform them immediately.

Mandala? Dandala? Blandabla? Nonsense! Most Scrappers do not even know what a mandala is. That, however, did not stop the Spitalians from offering Drafts and medicine to anyone who reports a sighting; the Scrappers have been on the lookout ever since.

collected on its oily surface, unable to find a land where they can dock and unload their spores. It reeks of poison and decay. Hardly anything survives in this ecological impasse, which is why the boats of the Britoni are never seen in this area. The only ones who end up here are daring Scrappers with Leopards at their side. They are the architects of lightning-fast plundering raids. When they land on the shores of the razed coastal cities of Britain at night, their every move is crucial. They often have only a few hours and one false step is enough to deliver them into the hands of the guards. Pictons. Britain's cannibals that lurk on the coasts, waiting for reckless artifact hunters to venture into their territory.

OIL PLATFORMS

Three secret oil platforms are situated farther off the coast of Briton in the Atlantic Ocean and the Celtic Sea. Constructions of the Bygones. Their code names are Atlas, Ogen and Tethys.

Only a handful of selected Scrapper teams are aware these rigs exist. Men and women from Aquitaine who are considered to be competent and loyal beyond the shadow of a doubt are sponsored and trained by the Chroniclers. They are given access to the platforms where they extract oil. Valuable petroleum passes from here to the Cluster in Aquitaine, which like the rest of the northwestern peninsula of Briton, is dependent on the black gold.

Via Carnac, the Atlas platform can be accessed by boat. To reach Ogen and Tehthys the teams depart from Saint-

Brieuc. Only those who know the codewords issued by the Chroniclers may board the ferries that secretly transport workers to the platforms.

The Scrappers work on the drilling rigs for six months at a time, completely cut off from the outside world. The grueling work is, however, excellently rewarded. The Scrappers receive valuable information on likely caches in the Atlantic, on the northern coast of Hybrispania, and other places where the Neolibyans have not yet made their presence known.

On top of that, they receive Drafts, which the Scrappers can use to purchase equipment for complicated diving expeditions. Iron discipline holds the Scrappers together. If one of them should have loose lips and begin to boast about the work on the oil rigs, the entire crew will be punished with an embargo. Secrecy is essential. The Neolibyans are still unaware of the oil sources and the Cluster wants it to stay that way.

However, three months ago, radio contact with the Atlas oil platform was completely lost. Nobody knows what's going on out there. Under any other circumstances, the Chroniclers would have sent out a Shutter long ago to check on the situation, but at the moment all of their military reserves are needed on the premises. Operation Mirage and the resulting political debacle has forced the Chroniclers to devote their attention to the Southern Coast of Franka instead of investigating the Atlas platform. The Scrappers will have to fend for themselves.



LAND OF THE FISHERMEN

Briton and its inhabitants are caught between the coming and going of the tides. Nestled on the edge of Franka, the land of the fishermen offers a new beginning to every settler and believer who braves the arduous journey up to the Northwest. The soil is fertile, ears of wheat are plentiful, and the oceans are rich in fish. The people of the North are free of the Pheromancers. It feels almost as if one has reached the end of the world.

This, however, is not the whole picture. Briton is encircled and surrounded by danger. Argyre's Britain in the North, the unpredictable Atlantic in the West, the Gauntlet along the Seine in the East, and civil wars and looting in the South-- the great wide open has company on every side.

THE NORTHERN PASSAGE

Border Post North has been destroyed. The way to Briton over the Northern Passage has been lost forever. Where just three years ago, the Spitalian platoons and Anabaptist packs regularly crossed the Seine, the swarm has taken over. The former supply road leads to nowhere. Gray undergrowth covers old milestones and trail markers have been buried under moss and foliage. The entire pathway has been consumed.

Death zone. Corpse Eaters roam with ravenous appetites, gnawing on any bone they can pull out of the muddy water. Huge swarms of wasps rush like dusky thunderclouds over the canopy of the swamp forests. All of a sudden they stand motionless in the sky, as if peering into the interior of the land. They slowly begin to form a fractal pattern that resembles the Pheromancer's Chakra symbol, only, a moment later, to collapse into an amoebous cloud, atomizing in all directions.



THE GAUNTLET

All the poison in the world seems to agglomerate in this area. Every step here is deadly. The concentration of Pheromancers exceeds measurable units. The acoustic signals of a Noumenon Vocalizer bend, creating an erratic crescendo, much like listening to a distorted canon of shrieking children. In the southern and western swamps, the ring systems of young spore fields rise out from the morass. Backpack-sized spawn buds extend across galaxies of insect eggs. Colonies of wasp nests hang like rotted fruits from trees.

Expatriates start from here to get to Borca and drop their spores along the way. They are accompanied by Fosters, swarms of pests, and black swaths of flickering grasshoppers whose crackling and chirping can be heard for

miles. The Spitalians named this wildly sprawling part of Franka the Gauntlet. Resting under a green veil of marsh moss and water lilies, the Seine is no longer recognizable. It has become a natural bridge between the termite roads that have erupted on both banks, where new mounds are constantly being constructed. The vermin of Parasite spill out northwards and seals off the Gauntlet. No getting through here. Corpse Eaters follow the footprints and scent of faceless drone squads, eating their fill of weakened Leperos and bringing their worms closer to the borders of the Protectorate. The Border Post North has been overrun and is now nothing more than a spawning ground for the legions of the Primer.



MONT SAINT-MICHEL

The sea has retreated, leaving behind an empty, dusty plain. From behind the mist that hangs over the tidal flats, stands a unique fortress like a mirage. The Broken Cross is resplendently situated atop the tallest tower, sixty meters above the ground. From afar, it reveals its creed to all who can see. Mont Saint-Michel, armory and largest war camp of the Anabaptists in Franka. Two thousand Orgiastics are stationed here, guarding this sacred place with their life, always prepared to face the Demiurge in the field.

For eighty winters, the fortress has been in the power of the Broken Cross. During this time, the Anabaptists have built forges inside the abbey and fortified the outer walls with salvaged cannons and fire catapults. Every stone and every sheet of metal that the Anabaptists could get hold of has been used to expand the defensive walls and improve the masonry. In the crumbling sand around the fortress, they dug rings peppered with pitfalls and fire canals, which can flood with tar in seconds and transform the dry sunken mudflats into a wall of fire.

In 2577, the second wave of settlers reached the fortress. Anabaptists, who had left the south of Franka during the Great Exodus, came with building materials, weapons of war, and determination, anticipating a fresh start. How unfortunate that the days of the Sublime Lacroix should repeat themselves. Here, in the North, they would gather their strength, fill their ranks and pre-



pare for their final battle. Little did they know at that time that only seven years later, Ganaress would descend from his Ziggurath, his path of destruction heading straight for Saint-Michel.

Today, the abbey is the headquarters of the Sublime Vicarent. He manages the fate of his Cult in Briton from Mont Saint-Michel. It is here that he receives Anabaptists of every rank. Emissaries from Purgare and Pollen travel to the northwest of Franka to admire the architecture of the abbey and behold the Sublime Vicarent while he still graces the Earth. New arrivals are left speechless upon seeing the fortifications for the first time. Mont Saint-Michel is a bastion that remains unrivaled in Franka. A tortoise shell upon which every potential attacker's teeth would shatter.

Without massive artillery fire, one hardly has a chance of penetrating the walls of scrap, pitch, stone and steel ca-

bles. The storerooms of Saint-Michel are filled to the brim with supplies, reserves that would withstand even a month-long conflict. Serving as both a camp and haven, the fortress is shelter to Orgiastics, Touched, Ascetics and Emissaries alike.

Inside, the Anabaptists work closely together. In the forges, they upgrade their Spitfires, grind blades of biden-handers and weld pieces of armor. The bakeries provide the abbey with fresh bread at all times of day, and fish is brought here along the Saint-Brieuc sea route and transported across the mudflats to the fortress.

The Orgiastics jest that should the Demiurge dare to harm Mont Saint-Michel, he'd better bring a pair of iron teeth. They laugh, raise their glasses and drink to Briton's invincibility.

MORLAIX

A brief flash. The sea heaved a deep sigh and recoiled. Ten heartbeats. Then the ocean flooded over Morlaix, washing over the city in the valley and filling the land beyond with salt water. Nothing remained except its monumental viaduct. 500 years later, Morlaix has been resurrected and generates energy for Brest and Saint-Brieuc. Power lines stretch out from the viaduct, extending to the South and the East. They were erected by a diligent group of Scrappers that call this place their home.

Their design and engineering reflect their temerity. Between the arches of the bridge, the master builders have installed scrap sluices — oversized water wheels made of sheet metal, iron and steel, which open and close a set of gates that regulate the Atlantic floodwaters. A movable rail car, operating on the tracks of the viaduct, aligns the water wheels, which can be locked in position depending on the ebb and flow.

The water foams through, akin to a giant watermill. Generators collect the wattage that has been produced, pushing it through the power transformers and finally out through the distribution network.

The two dozen Scrappers who are responsible for this massive installation clap enthusiastically. They belong to the Salt Wolves, a group of manufacturers from Saint-Brieuc notorious for their inventions and engineering skills. They've spent years making their ideas reality and they have been rewarded with fame and fortune.

In Briton, every kid knows the story of the Salt Wolves, and how they managed to make the coastal cities glow. They are always welcome guests in the homes of Brest and Saint-Brieuc. The resident Scrappers listen to their legendary stories and ambitious plans for the future. But the maintenance of the bridge binds their hands. Morlaix and its viaduct have become their home.

CARHAIX

Carhaix has nothing to offer except thirteen shabby cabins, a dusty workshop and a rancid inn, referred to by the locals as "LE TROU DU CUL DU MONDE". It offers a roof to up to twenty travelers at a time. Nobody knows why this dismal whistle-stop is listed on the map at all.

In a deserted cattle shed at the edge of the settlement, there is a false floor which can be opened with an anchor chain that is fastened to a beam in the roof truss. In the area below, there is a secret cache. A Fuse named Factor created it in order to deliver goods to Shutters.

Since Operation Mirage's disastrous end, the Aquitaine Cluster has withdrawn all Fuses and Shutters from Briton in order to remove any remnant of their failed operation in the South. The cache in Carhaix is deserted, and the Fuse who put it together never returned. None of the Chroniclers left in Briton know its location or of the remaining sanctioned technology waiting to be rediscovered.



FLOOD CHAPELS

To the Anabaptists, the Atlantic is sacred. Baptism in its waters is a ceremonial part of the Cult. Where the coast allows, stone footbridges have been built that lead out into the stormy sea. Large wooden crosses stand at the end of these piers and it is to them that the worshipers and the Touched pray, sinking into silent contemplation. These so-called flood chapels form a line

like a chain that extends along the entire northern coast; every dozen kilometers, one juts out from the land into the water.

An Ascetic enters the flood chapel at low tide and spends hours meditating until the Pneuma fills him. When the tide comes in, he clings to the cross waiting until he is surrounded by water on all sides. Just before the Ascetic nearly drowns, he lets go of

the Broken Cross and swims to the surface. The cleansing is complete and his mind is freed of impure thoughts.

Whoever decides to join the Anabaptists will visit the flood chapels, receive a tattoo, and have a nose ring inserted by a resident Ascetic or Elysian. After the first initiation, they are part of the Cult, a member in the ranks of the Anabaptists until death.

SWEET **DREAMS** ARE MADE OF THIS
WHO AM I TO DISAGREE?
I TRAVEL THE **WORLD**
AND THE **SEVEN SEAS**,
EVERYBODY'S LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.

[EURYTHMICS]

VANNES

Vannes is known for two things: wood and the House of Atonement. The story about the wood can be told in no time. A rich forest covers the rugged hilly landscape with birch groves abound in their autumn red. Grand pines and oaks provide the best wood, making excellent construction material for both ships and houses. In the valley, there is an old sawmill flanked with barracks, where two hundred lumberjacks live and work. Logs are sawn here and shipped to Rennes or transported to the coast to Carnac, where they are then sent to the other cities of Briton over water. So far so good.

The House of Atonement on the other hand, is not located on the paved road. An inconspicuous dirt trail leads into the depths of the forest. The Vannes of the Bygones is buried here, sunken into the earth and overgrown with trees. A fragmented church tower and a broken, sagging wall are the last remaining witnesses of the original city. Roots grow over the abandoned walls, pushing the ruined remains deeper and deeper into the belly of the earth.

Suddenly, Anabaptist crosses protrude out of the ground like gravestones. A charred stone wall covered with thick moss peers out of the thicket. A distant whimper can be heard coming from inside the bunker-like building that is camouflaged in the forest foliage. Below is a bottle dungeon, for all those who have entered into a pact with the Demiurge. The Emissary Yasen, had the structure rebuilt into a sobering chamber for Burners. It is his hope to open their eyes to the blessings of asceticism; a last gift of mercy before they embark on their ride to hell. Only one breath separates them from absolution. Pneuma.

The torture and pain behind these walls remain unknown to the outside world. Never has a condemned man left alive. Yasen is the only one who has a key to the steel-reinforced bunker door that leads to this crypt of misery.

Every two weeks, the Emissary sets off from Rennes with a handful of bodyguards and a truckload of alms to spend a Sunday with the prisoners at the House of Atonement.

Not a single word about what transpires is uttered by the bodyguards.



CARNAC

An emanation from the end of the Earth Age. A seven-eyed jackal is standing in a cemetery and a golden crown glows above his head. His stomach is bloated and his mouth bloody. He has gorged himself on the dead. His ears are taut and he gazes westward towards the burning horizon. Then, he vomits and the four rivers of paradise come spuming out of his throat.

It is a recurring vision. It has been reported by many: the Emissaries who enter the megalithic field of Carnac to meditate amongst the stones, the shamans of the Britoni, and stray Ganarids and Apocalyptics. The images and symbols are consistent in all of their retellings, and equally disturbing and graphic in their nature. But there is no logical explanation and it is therefore dismissed as a figment of

their imagination or whisperings of the Demiurge. So far, no one has been found who takes the vision seriously or would even attempt to interpret it.

Away from the ancient stone steles, the residents of Carnac have built a shallow port along the beach. Two dozen boathouses, cargo cranes for loading goods and anchorages are all in place to ensure that shipments from Carnac are rerouted to inland Briton. The Scrappers that do their work on the Atlas oil rigs have a community center in Carnac, located right on the shore. There, recruits are tested and enlisted for the crossing. If the workers have shore leave, their first stop is the town hall, after which they continue about their business in Saint-Brieuc, Rennes or Aquitaine.

THE RUINS OF NANTES

The Loire overflowed its banks long ago, becoming a raging stream that separates the southern part of Briton from the rest of Franka. The river flooded the ruins of Nantes and drowned the entire urban area, washing the remains far out into the Atlantic. To pass through this dangerous area requires more than your basic survival skills. The rapids are a perilous endeavor to anyone who tries to cross them unsecured. Fragments of bygone architecture can still be seen in some places, protruding from the turbulent waters.

Underneath, bubbles and entrapments form that could pull a reckless swimmer under within seconds. The towers of the white cathedral of Nantes can be seen rising just above the surface of the water. Like other roofs of buildings long gone, they serve as a base for stable platforms in the midst of the untamable current. Over the decades, Scrappers have gone to work to make the crossing of the Loire possible, constructing tin-plated stilts, mounted superstructures and suspension bridges that connect to these platforms. The Scrappers demand a hefty toll for the use of their bridges. The exorbitant fees have left them unpopular with merchants and travelers alike. Their bridge constructions are mockingly referred to as *Petit Hellvetica*, a moniker that has stuck for quite some time. But Drafts are urgently needed, because artifact mining in Nantes isn't proving profitable. Sometimes, the Scrappers spend months rummaging along the banks of the Loire, only to sift out a measly circuit board or rusty radio parts. Far too little. As if the strong current and the meager yield of the area weren't bad enough, incidents along the roads from Nantes to Briton have been increasing over the last months — night raids, caravan attacks, and damages to the bridges. These acts of sabotage can most likely be traced back to a single Clan. They call themselves the Druids and live in the dense forests along the Loire.

So far no one can figure out what to do about their looting and even more of a mystery is how they have managed to live east of the ruins of Nantes and remain unaffected by the Pheromancers.

A reconnaissance mission outfitted by the Cluster in Aquitaine was sent to investigate the Forest of the Druids. Their mission proved fruitful, shedding light on some matters. One of the first things they noticed were trees decorated with deer runes, evenly spaced from one another. The Scrappers also encountered numerous traps. However, the workmanship of the traps and the materials used were not suggestive of a primitive Clan. They found tripwires made of Bygone carbon steel, arrowheads and pegs partly wired with bugs, and others equipped with light sensors.

Far too much technology for a bunch of forest dwellers.

However, before the Scrappers were able to advance further, they heard a bloodcurdling scream. It was followed by a bow wave of static feedback that swept the foliage away from the trees, driving fear into the bones of the muck-rakers. The group immediately withdrew to the bridges of Nantes and have since refused the Chroniclers' orders to return to the Forest of the Druids.

THE FOREST OF THE DRUIDS

The hunters of Briton know the Forest of the Druids much more intimately than the Scrappers of Nantes. In this region, they have never shot a deer, nor killed a boar or caught a squirrel. It is impossible to track wild animals. They escape the hunters every time. Traps are set off, but they contain no prey; traces in the thicket lead to empty dens.

In Briton, legend has it that the forest is cursed. Something keeps watch over the animals here, protecting them and warning them against any hunter who is here on the prowl. The Northerners have long since given up hunting in the region, avoiding the cursed place altogether.

Druids, the human forest dwellers, however, know the inner workings of this place. They know the incarnation that protects all of the forest's creatures from danger. Cernunnos, the Horned God, is their ruler. He keeps the virgin woods of the Loire pristine, defending them from outside threats and communicating with the animals.

A long time ago, he revealed his Existence to his Clan, allowing people to look into his eyes, which tell the story of a time before time. The giant did not speak, yet the people understood. Deer came to the clearing and drank from Cernunnos' palm. Birds landed on his crown made of horns and antlers and squirrels climbed up his mossy legs.

Cernunnos has nothing but kindness for his followers. He gives no orders, and destroys only those who wish to inflict harm upon his flock.

His Clan dresses like him, painting themselves in a rusty brown color and duplicating the mechanical patterns that cover Cernunnos' body. In order to appease him and keep sleep at bay, the Druids provide their god with the things he needs to avoid slumber. He opens his chest, allowing them a glimpse inside to show them what is required to keep his eyes unburdened.

He must stay awake, for Cernunnos is immune to the whisperings of the Pheromancers. When Expatriates or Fosters enter his territory, he hunts them down and tears them into pieces. No Abberant has been able to sow their seed here, let alone steal a child from the Forest of the Druids. Single-handedly, he ensures the survival of the tribe.



THE SEVENTH ZIGGURATH

The location of the seventh Ziggurath, which according to all calculations should be active, is dormant. No spore field. No termite road. No trace of methane. Nevertheless, the Noumenon Vocalizers in Rennes are emitting an abnormal noise with a signal strength comparable to that of any other Ziggurath. Despite all of the measured data indicating otherwise, the

Spitalians find nothing. Six different selected Spitalian expeditions have detected and examined the site, which they suspect to be generating the measurements. Nada! Even the excavations of the area produce no evidence of underground movement. Either the location is wrong, or something is preventing the Pheromancers from setting up the Ziggurath. Are the sounds and

deflections of the vocalizers nothing more than phantom signals? Is the seventh Ziggurath possibly a false alarm? For months, the doctors have been urgently trying to identify a hunter among the Britoni who is familiar with the Forest of the Druids to accompany them on a seventh expedition. Every Northerner they have approached so far has politely declined.



RENNES

An armoured lizard, clad in a robe of steel scales. This is what the Britoni call the headquarters of the Spitalians in Briton. The eight-legged cross on the blackened city walls can be seen from a distance by approaching travelers.

Famulancers hurry to the morning roll call. From the entrance of the city, they must go to the outskirts where the trenches that encompass Rennes like a labyrinth are located. The commanders' roar is a thunderstorm of curses and obscenities. Every cannon must be checked, every corner of the trenches must be cleaned. Rennes is the last border town to the east, and the first line of defense in the case of an attack coming from the direction of Parasite. Vigilance and preparation are everything.

Mistakes lead to being immediately assigned to a punitive expedition. Spitalians don't mess around. The Eastern Wall is the gem of Rennes. It stinks of oil and can be ignited in situations of imminent danger. The wall itself is a serrated, spiky colossus with mounted gun carriages and turrets similar to those found on top of bunkers. They keep an eye on the eastern forests; no Foster makes it through the surrounding area riddled with traps, landmines and fire lancers that have been programmed to target and strike automatically.

In Rennes, everyone is prepared for the worst. Since the loss of the Northern Passage, nerves are raw and the Spitalians have increased their ranks. Every month, new recruits come to the city from the South. They are immediately sent to the barracks for the newly enlisted, where they are assigned tasks and patrols.

CITY LIFE

Upon entering the entrails of Rennes, the picture changes quickly. Life within the city walls is a combination of Borcan efficiency and Britonian pragmatism. The work is closely tied to the Anabaptist's routine. Spitalians expel pesticides for Ascetics, take soil samples, and check pH levels. No spores detected. People still have their doubts. Older Scrappers are given food and shelter for digging out clutches of insect eggs and burning out every last trace. The Gendarmes of the Resistance recruit throughout the city at all of the marketplaces.

The polestars of worldly happenings are the Rennes Cathedral, which has always been in the hands of the Anabaptists, and the old opera house directly opposite, which was recently taken over by the Spitalians, and now serves as a military operations camp.

The square between the buildings is used for parades and is also Briton's largest market for goods of all kinds. Whether wood from Vannes, artifacts, weapons, armor, game, skins or metalware, here is where everything valuable flows together.

The residential quarters are nestled around the two headquarters, filled with a large rural population of farmers, hunters, traders and self-proclaimed city administrators. The latter align themselves with both the Anabaptists and the Spitalians, alternating between the two as relations between them have worsened over the last decade.

It has been downhill between these two groups ever since the Spitalians refused to help the Anabaptists in their battle against Ganaress. The Anabaptists are the largest cult of the Northwest, at least nominally. Endowed with enormous clout, they restrict the autonomy of the Spitalians to the city limits. The jurisdiction of the Cult of Doctors extends only to the borders of Rennes; outside the city walls their word is meaningless.

Spitalians are more than suspicious of their former brothers-in-arms. The story about the Starfire is nonsensical and the bullheadedness of the Broken Cross in this matter only helps to fuel their resentment. Negotiations have become tougher than ever. Expeditions now have to be done without the aid of the Anabaptists. To make matters worse, the collapse of the Northern Passage has made the

FACT SHEET: RENNES

CITY: Rennes, Tech-Level IV

PROVINCE: Briton

INHABITANTS: 29,900 / registered population according to the Spitalians' count

POPULATION STRUCTURE: Spitalians / dominant, Britoni / dominant, Anabaptists / dominant, Resistance / numerous, Chroniclers / present, Ganarids / few Scrappers / isolated, Apocalyptics / rare

LEADER: Emissary Yasen the Merciful

GOVERNING FORCE: Formerly Registrar Ruytman, Dr. Vega since summer 2597

FEATURES: Cathedral of Rennes, under the control of the Anabaptists. Opera House, military operation camp of the Spitalians. The East Wall: fire wall, trenches, built-in anti-aircraft artillery, bunker defense, machine gun towers. Former Ganarid camp, now under the control of the Resistance and serving simultaneously as a Cadet school.

TRADE / GOODS: Medicine and medical supplies (Tech IV-V), Ex, ballistic weapons, grenades, field howitzers, armor and helmets. Distilled water, distillate, coal, Petro, bandages, wheat products, radio equipment

CITY GUARD: The Storm Watch: Six platoons of Famulancers, Preservist Corps consisting of 12 members who are under the command of Doctor Vega. 40 Gendarmes and 200 Chasseurs who belong to the Resistance, 90 Grenouille combatants and trap makers under the command of Bernat le Basques, a Hybrispanian freedom fighter who trains the Resistance in Rennes. Three packs of Anabaptists, each pack's strength equivalent to that of 150 Orgiastics, all under the command of the Emissary Yasen.

ARTIFACT TRADE: Medium; mainly the processing and repair of military finds: mines, warheads, priming charges and field guns. In addition, artifacts containing sentimental value: recordings of traditional music, old maps, antiquarian books that have been restored and chemical recipes.

COMMUNICATION: Relay nodes and a network that connects Brest to Aquitaine, telegraph (Opera House) and radio masts. A squadron of dispatch riders (Spitalian recruits), Gyrfalcons (Anabaptists), four postriders (Resistance).



Spitalians dependent on their hosts yet again — a position that is far from advantageous for the doctors.

STRAW FOR THE FIRE

Emissary Yasen the Merciful, despises the Spitalians. He tolerates them, but he does not shy away from openly expressing his discontent every chance he gets. Tirelessly, he drills into the heads of his people that when the day of the last judgment comes, they will have no use for them. The Demiurge will rip the souls out of the nostrils of the baldies and spit into their dying eyes.

Yasen is a fanatic even among his peers: Ascetic, preacher and a man of the law all in one. While Vicarent builds up the Anabaptist army at Saint-Michel and bolsters the ranks of the Broken Cross with fame and glory, Yasen directs the fate of the Cult with words, indictments, and incendiary speeches. His epithet is a title he bestowed upon himself, but nothing is gracious about Yasen. He is a merciless advocate of his religion, an agitator who can infect people with blind hatred and whose judgment is nothing less than devastating.

No one would dare to call him the decrepit madman he really is. His heart has been blackened with vengeance and he has never felt compassion. If it were up to him, he would initiate a forced mass conversion, punishing the Britoni of the peninsula who chose not to confess and become baptized into the Broken Cross within a week's time.

Vicarent restrains Yasen's fervor. The legend of the Sublime and his victory over Ganaress makes him the most powerful representative of his Cult in Briton. But if anything were to happen to Vicarent, all power would suddenly fall into Yasen's hands.

THE STORM WATCH

Rennes' combat units are superbly trained and deployable at all times. The Storm Watch consists of platoons with field experience, veterans as well as adept newcomers. A corps of a dozen Preservists trains and drills them on the art of war. The education here is among the best you can get, next to the Spitalians, and many of the older Famulancers who are serving here fought as young soldiers in Bassham. They have been molded by a life of hardship on the front



lines. Now, they are here to prepare for a possible assault on Parasite. The moment has not yet come, but belonging to the Storm Watch is undoubtedly a special distinction which the members wear proudly.

NEOPHYTES

The Resistance just recently decided to start using Briton as a training camp. For a long time, the Liberation Army lacked a leader up here in the North who could train the cadets and communicate the importance of a free Franka.

Ironically, a Hybrispanian freedom fighter named Bernat le Basque has filled this role. The Guerrero, who spent half his life in the jungle war against Scourgers, took over the disused Ganarid camp in Rennes and developed it into a Cadet school.

Here, he trains adolescents in guerrilla tactics, asymmetric warfare and survival skills under even the most extreme conditions. His methods are expedient but brutal. Anyone who is fit for training as a Chasseur is prepared to be sent to Parasite and also to fend for themselves in the field. The Chasseurs of Rennes are known as true hogs of war and

lone wolves. They are highly regarded by the Spitalians as scouts, trackers and expeditionary forces.

RED PACK

A foreign Preservist corps from Cremant has set up shop in Rennes. They are known as the Red Pack, and its members, as guests of Chief Commander Dr. Vega, enjoy all privileges. To date, the Storm Watch hasn't received any work reports on the pack, nor any information about the intentions of the trainers. The timing of Registrar Ruytman's suicide, the promotion of Dr. Vega, and the arrival of the Red Pack has drawn the attention of more than a few.

What are Kranzler's men looking for in Briton? Vile tongues claim that their appearance has something to do with the death of Vasco in 2575. They ought to look into the case again, starting with the secret research bunker outside in the hills. Once Vasco's sealed records are recovered, they can be reexamined. The claim that the Consultants' final report was erroneous is a rumor that won't die. It has been circulating amongst the Hippocrats for years and the recent return of the Red Pack only lends further credence.



SAINT-BRIEUC

Saint-Brieuc attracts Scrappers like a magnetic field. The Rhône swamps in the South are in the hands of the Africans and thus, lost. Other corners of Franka have been completely grazed or taken over by the Pheromancers.

But up here in Saint-Brieuc, there is still something left for the Frankan Scrappers. Britain, this hidden patch of earth, is just a stone's throw away.

In some places, the Dead Channel separates the cliffs of Briton from Argyre's domain, located only forty miles away. The desolate coastal towns that lay there lure the hopeless with their promises of better days. Under silt, sand and rubble, an Arcadia of hidden treasures of unspeakable value lies waiting to be discovered. The same is true at the bottom of the Celtic Sea.

This is why the Scrappers of Saint-Brieuc spend their days welding all that they can find into diving equipment and wet bells; these crude forms enabling them to scavenge the seabed for sunken artifacts.

Pontoons loaded with oxygen bottles and equipped with bulky breathing tubes float all along the harbor. They carry the Trash Whales — a nickname the Scrapper divers gave themselves — to the open sea. There they try their luck underwater, hoping to recover containers that have been resting upon the seafloor for ages.

THE HARBOR

A dizzying array of Scrapper bars and workshops piles up along the beach of Saint-Brieuc, neither rhyme nor reason just ash heaps and junkyards. This is the backdrop to the social world of the Scrappers. This is where they haggle, organize competitions and brawls, stake out their claims, and drink themselves into oblivion. The same reckless abandon night after night.

The port is the heart of Saint-Brieuc, alive, loud and relentless.

The chroniclers have planted a bustling Alcove between the tilted boathouses. Every day, several mediators scurry around among the Scrappers, examining what has been retrieved from the water or brought in from Britain. The asking prices, miscalculation or not, often lead to wild brawls with the Chroniclers. A small but competent city militia regularly intervenes at the last moment, preventing such conflicts from descending into bloodshed and thus, winning the respect of Scrappers and Chroniclers alike. The powerful Britoni of the militia are known as Les Clébards and they ensure the peace in Saint-Brieuc. To an extent. They deliberately stay out of disputes between Scrappers; those dirt diggers know how to take care of themselves.

RAPTURE OF THE DEEP

The dive to the ocean floor is full of dangers. Sharks cause problems for the Scrappers, forcing some of them to seek protection from the attacks in rusty steel cages. Breathing tubes jam or rupture underwater, and the bends catch up to even the most hardened ones at some point. Pulmonary lacerations are not uncommon among Saint-Brieuc's Scrappers. With the help of the Village Doctor Kirdinn, the Salt Wolves were able to repair a hyperbaric chamber recovered from the Celtic Sea some years ago. They had the rusty eyesore set up as a rescue capsule for diving accidents on the beach.

FACT SHEET: SAINT-BRIEUC

CITY: Saint-Brieuc, Tech-Level IV

PROVINCE: Briton

INHABITANTS: ca. 22,000 / No census

POPULATION STRUCTURE: Scrappers / dominant, Britoni / dominant, Anabaptists / numerous, Chroniclers / present, Ganarids / present, Leopards / present, Resistance / few, Spitalians / infrequent, Apocalyptics / scattered

LEADER: The Triumvirate of Saint-Brieuc

GOVERNING FORCE: Good old vigilante justice

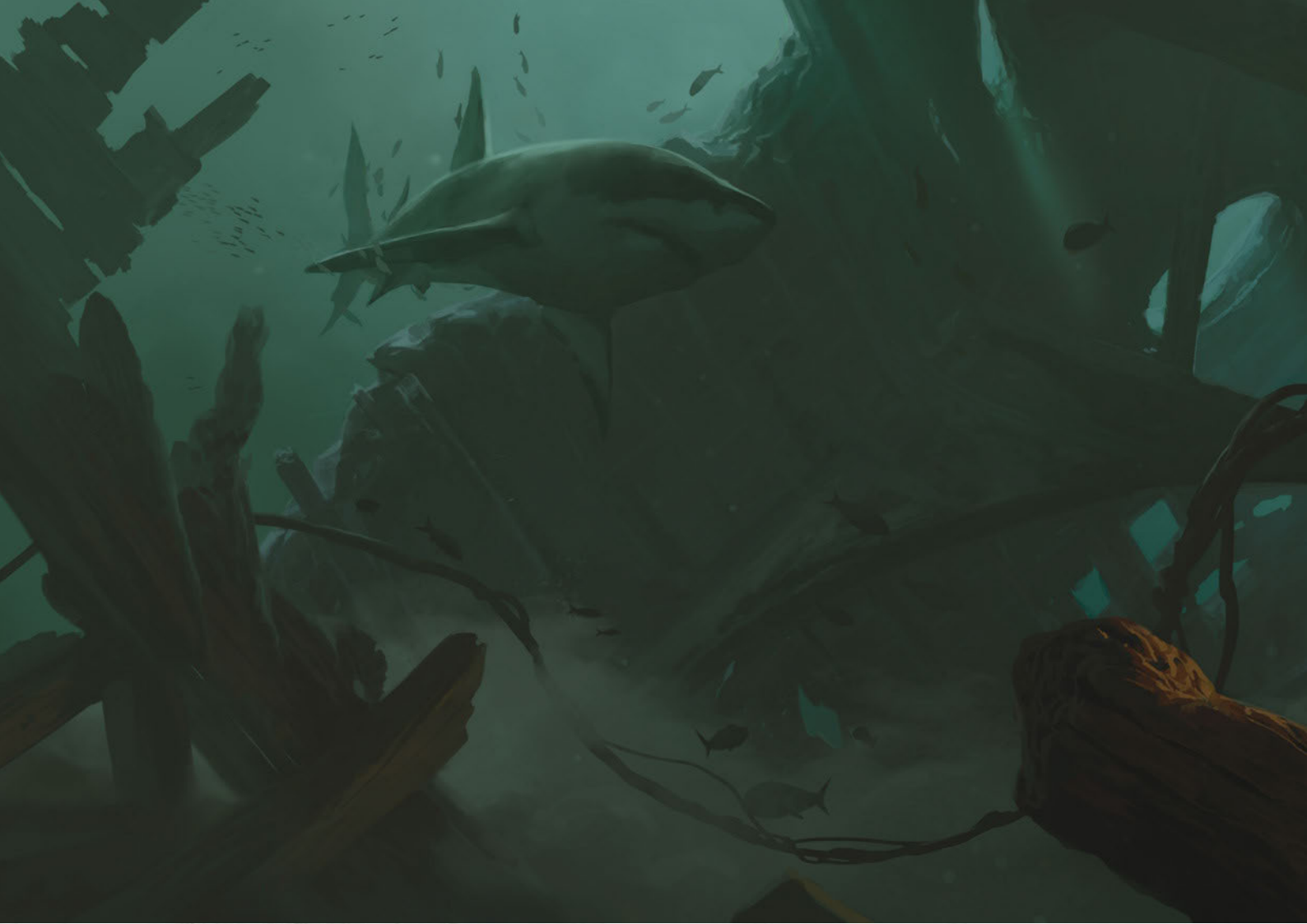
FEATURES: Submersibles, water supply system, sewage treatment plant, hyperbaric chamber, harbor pubs, repair shops, smithies and furnaces for chemical smelting processes.

TRADE / GOODS: All kinds of scrap and metal products, from rusted steel ingots to molten platinum ounces; almost every metallic resource is available in Saint-Brieuc. In addition: nails, bolts, screws, nuts, sheet metal, studs/pegs, electronics cables, nautical gauges, compasses and all kinds of bric-a-brac that reach the surface of the water from the seafloor.

CITY GUARD: None. The Scrappers solve their problems with their fists. Les Clébards, a city militia numbering 40, maintain order within the city, stopping public squabbles from turning into stabbings.

ARTIFACT TRADE: High; resident alcoves. Finds are sorted and their value is determined following their recovery. Resale and processing take place immediately. The best goods are sent directly to Aquitaine. Chroniclers control the market here; Saint-Brieuc is one of their last secure repositories in Franka.

COMMUNICATION: Within Saint-Brieuc, the Scrappers use an extensive network of pipes to produce acoustic signals. Certain tone sequences have different meanings and are easy to learn. A radio mast connects the Scrapper city with Rennes and Morlaix and enables communication between short distances. In the alcoves, a router provides a direct connection to Aquitaine.



SCRAPPERS' FACTIONS

Strange things are under way in Saint-Brieuc. Scrappers have organized themselves into groups and camps with clear goals and tasks, often working together for a lifetime within a chosen camp. The three largest groups that have formed over the last few decades are the Salt Wolves, the Mud Crabs and the Trash Whales.

The camp of the Salt Wolves bustles with the activity of manufacturers, inventors, architects and technicians. They build valuable machinery or repair old power plants. The Saint-Brieuc sewage treatment plant, which supplies drinking water to the city, is just one of their countless inventions. Ascetics bless the water purified in the salt filters and then transfer it into barrels. These barrels are then delivered to the whole of Briton and used as reserves for the cities in the hinterland.

The Mud Crabs spend their workdays on the long sandy beaches of Briton, combing through the dried banks at low tide with homemade metal detectors. They sift the mud from the raw materials and finds that have washed ashore. Trash Whales venture far down onto the dark sea floor. With their bulky diving armor — equipped with servomotors, grippers and oxygen tanks — they reach unfathom-

able depths and are able to salvage wedged containers or cut open rusty ship walls. Trash whales are known for being hard-nosed, but anyone can enlist their services for the right price.

RECKLESS

Commissioned by the Cluster of Aquitaine, the fearless and foolhardy among the Scrappers of Saint-Brieuc sail to the southern coast of Britain and plunder the beaches of Plymouth, Brighton, Exeter and Southampton at night. A daunting endeavor. There is always the threat of being caught and devoured by Pictons.

Argyre's territory should not be underestimated. Countless scumbags have already lost their lives trying to carry out such raids.

The African Leopards have also joined in. They come to Saint-Brieuc in their impressive barques and recruit men for murderous operations on the other side of the Dead Channel. They want to get there before the Neolibyans land in Briton with three surge tanks and one of their transport ships. Time is running out.



OUT FOR A DIVE

Save for the artifacts rotting in the swamps, everything else was discovered by the Neolibyans long ago; all the finds shipped across the Mediterranean coast in the direction of Africa. If you want to uncover treasures in Briton, the water is the only way. However, the cargo containers that lay sunken between the cliffs have long since been cleared out. Only the countless shipwrecks out in the open waters have anything to offer in the way of thinking machines, communication modules and other scrap metal from the control bridges.

But to do that, a Trash Whale must squeeze into a heavy suit, sink fifty or a hundred paces, and wind their way through the tattered front walls of the ships. Inside, a labyrinth of coral-covered tables, chairs, cladding panels, and cable harnesses awaits them.

The Scrappers at the harbor offer trips on their pontoon platforms. They rent diving suits, which come equipped with a breathing hose. 50 Drafts per day. To be paid upfront. However, for such a measly price, nobody is ever driven to the truly profitable Scrap sites, unless one specifically demands to be taken there. The price increases, of course. Tenfold.

UNDERWATER: A diver moves underwater with AGI+Mobility. The number of challenges that they will encounter depends on the quality of the finds.

The oxygen lasts for ten actions, then the Scrapper must return to the surface. Failed actions can be repeated. If the Scrapper botches his roll, his breathing hose will be damaged and his helmet will fill with water. He is running out of air. He has to return to the surface immediately. If the situation turns critical, the Trash Whales will be there to rescue him.

If a diver dives more than twice a day, their skin will begin to itch. Joint pain, purple discoloration and swelling are signs of the beginning stage of the diving disease. Each additional dive causes 1 Trauma.

- ◆ **TECH III:** One action roll AGI+Mobility (1); Find: D6 kilograms Tech III
- ◆ **TECH IV:** Two action rolls AGI+Mobility (3), then BOD+Force (2) to extract the artifact; Find: D6 kilograms Tech IV
- ◆ **TECH V:** Three action rolls AGI+Mobility (4), then BOD+Force (4) to extract the artifact; Find: D6 kilograms Tech V



AQUITAINE

Seething unrest. The political aftershock of the failed Operation Mirage sends tremors through the Cluster of Aquitaine; daily barrages of information overwhelm the databases of the static Stream. The Chroniclers' flank in Franka is an open target and the Neolibyans have publicly declared a trade war against the Tech-Cult.

Perpignan, Montpellier and Toulon have begun blocking shipments, boycotting artifact auctions and buying huge sums of Drafts in an attempt to devalue the currency. Packs of Scourgers position themselves in front of alcoves along the southern coast and demand Scrappers to trade exclusively with Neolibyans. If need be, these orders are to be reinforced by placing the ice-cold barrel of a shotgun against the temple of anyone who needs convincing. The Scorched Path is also blocked. Goods destined for Aquitaine are diverted, confiscated and shipped to Africa on the next departing freighter.

The Cluster requests support from the Alps, but the Neolibyans have already beaten them to it. Free Petro deliveries for the Alpine fortress should ensure the Hellvetics' loyalty to the Africans. The message from Tripol is simple: interference is not welcome; the Hellvetics should adhere to their much vaunted neutrality. Meanwhile, Aquitaine's districts are worried about possible shortages. Toulouse and Briton still cover the daily demands for goods, but it has already become clear that Aquitaine will have to seek new trade relations in order to provide for its large population. Lisbon offers help, sending Leopards to Franka via the western route to look after Aquitaine.

The political chaos, however, has led to a much bigger problem: Palers. Three shock troops crept across the Pyrenees during last year's turmoil and have planted themselves in the shadows of the Cluster. Phantoms have hacked through the firewall into the static Stream and are leaking secrets. Meanwhile, Cyclopes are monitoring every movement in the Cluster and analyzing their power structures. They only want one thing: access to data about the strange ships that washed up on the west coast of Franka. They have been informed by their Demagogues that it is a sign of their slumbering gods.

SIGNS FROM AFAR

Off the coast of Aquitaine, there are ships that have been lying idle for years. All of their hulls bear the same symbol. For a long time, a rumor persisted amongst the Scrappers that the freighters were a sign of another group of people who lived on the other side of the Atlantic. These ships were their attempt at making contact with Franka.

The Chroniclers, however, had always known about the true origin of the ships. The programmed target coordinates guiding the unmanned ships lured the Tech-Cult to Aquitaine. The Cluster located the navigation systems of these leaderless ships —

with one simple override command, the freighters changed course in the open sea and ran aground in the harbor of Aquitaine.

The Chroniclers ordered Scrapper gangs to invade the ships and seize anything that could be of value. Cargo holds were filled to the ceiling with supplies, server electronics, power modules, and weapons. All salvaged equipment was immediately taken and shipped to the Cluster. The aerial lift that connects the docking station at the port with the aircraft hangar of the Cluster groaned for months under the weight of the finds. It was the largest and most impressive artifact heist in Franka's history.

Scrapers trying to discover anything about the cargo or the origin of the ships were threatened with embargoes or otherwise silenced. The Chroniclers demanded absolute secrecy with regard to the finds. Only the symbol on the hulls of the ships could reveal anything about their origin. The same image was found as a digital display inside the cargo holds, engraved on weapon heads and imprinted on various supply containers. Its shape matches the design on the entrance portal to Exalt's Grindworks.

Free Spirit.

TOULOUSE BOUND

Toulouse is Aquitaine's last ally. The Resistance wouldn't be able to decrypt their old databases without collaborating with the Cluster. The Savants rescue books and relics of Franka's past, translating them with the help of Chroniclers into modern dialects and sustaining the legend of the Grande Nation. In return, the Resistance provides the Chroniclers with protection for their travels to the South. The People's Army of Franka forms a defensive ring in order to block any off-trail forays made by Scourger packs or Neoliberal trade caravans that are travelling to the Northwest from Perpignan or Montpellier.

The situation is precarious. Toulouse hasn't been able to keep track of all the access roads and waterways on the Southern Passage for quite some time now. The Neoliberal trade embargo only makes matters worse. In order to keep the local population sympathetic to its rulers, Aquitaine increasingly demands supplies ranging from raw materials to food from its ally. Problem is, Toulouse itself is dependent upon donations. The capital of the Resistance is trying to satisfy the demand, but soon the reserves here will also be exhausted.

The Marechal sees only one possibility. The Chroniclers must regain the favor of the Neoliberals and accept responsibility for the failed civil war in Toulon. He offers to mediate between the fronts, but the Fragments in Aquitaine refuse, simply stating that they had nothing to do with the failed operation.

FACTSHEET AQUITAINE

CITY: Aquitaine, Tech-Level V

PROVINCE: West Franka / Free Franka

INHABITANTS: 89,000

POPULATION STRUCTURE: Chroniclers / dominant, Scrapers / dominant, Anabaptists / dominant, Aquitanians / dominant, Spitalians / numerous, Resistance / numerous, Jehammedans / present, Apocalyptics / present, Palers / scattered

LEADER: The Eight Fragments of Aquitaine

GOVERNING FORCE: The Aquitainian Council

FEATURES: The Cluster of Aquitaine, aircraft hangar, functioning power grid, aerial lift, oil rigs controlled by Chroniclers, massive fortifications, cathedrals, ship graveyard, static Stream server

TRADE / GOODS: Petro, radio equipment, information, E-cubes, generators, motors, copper, cable guides, circuit boards, calculators, thinking machines

CITY GUARD:

- ◇ 300 Orgiastics,
- ◇ 150 combatants of the Resistance
- ◇ 120 armed Aquitanians
- ◇ a platoon of Famulancers
- ◇ 12 active Fuses disguised as Streamers, 44 operative Shutters disguised as Mediators within the city.

ARTIFACT TRADE: High-quality Tech IV-V artifacts. The Cluster examines everything that is recovered from the ocean and also checks all loads that come into the city from Saint-Brieuc. The three alcoves in the city of Aquitaine are known throughout the area for their industriousness.

COMMUNICATION: Wide-ranging router communication network that is connected to the southern coast of Franka, the Alpine Fortress and Justitian. Radio connection with the oil rigs and Briton.



BRITAIN

The line between life and death, ascension and madness is neither fixed nor forgiving. The Stukov Desert separates Borca from Britain. Salty dust hangs in the air, every breath, a taste of agony. Lips chap and mucous membranes run dry. A drop of water does nothing to ease the harsh journey through this wilderness. Instead Stukov scorpions rustle through the dust dunes, closely following behind every step. To the west, the Dead Channel separates the mainland of Franka from the unknown coast in the North. Acid jellyfish and trapped spore clumps are harbingers of the horror that lurks on the shores on the other side of the water.

Welcome to Argyre's Britain. A land that gives birth to dreams and nightmares alike. A Marauder reigns supreme here, his authority irreproachable and uncontested. With an iron fist, he crushes every intruder. His word is law, spreading itself over thousands of square kilometers. How the tyrant keeps his cannibal tribes of Pictons in good spirits remains a mystery south of the border; how he manages to have his eyes and ears in every corner of his domain as well. The Chroniclers and Spitalians have long abandoned expeditions to Britain. Nobody tests the waters of the autocrat.

Nobody except Scrappers. Why do they venture into this territory? Legends of riches fuel their imagination, adventurous tales of undiscovered caches and artifacts. Some are convinced a land of milk and honey lies beyond the Janus Crater, others a cornucopia of ideas, a hyperborea of unexpected possibilities. Some, however, are simply searching for a way out of their miserable earthly existence. Britain's attraction is overwhelming. Who resides there? What secrets are buried beneath the frozen ground?

Arrogance and pride drive some to take the dangerous step. When they surmount the core shadow of the Janus Crater, the sky collapses behind them. Their end is near. No one ever returns from the Land of the Scavenger.

I'D LISTEN TO THE WORDS HE'D SAY
BUT IN HIS **VOICE** I HEARD DECAY
THE PLASTIC **FACE** FORCED TO PORTRAY
ALL THE INSIDES LEFT **COLD AND GRAY**
THERE IS A PLACE THAT STILL REMAINS
IT EATS THE FEAR IT EATS THE **PAIN**
THE SWEETEST PRICE HE'LL HAVE TO PAY
THE DAY THE WHOLE WORLD WENT **AWAY**

[NINE INCH NAILS]

JANUS CRATER

It's sinister up here in the North. No birdsong. No cricket chirps. An icy wind whips across the wasteland, bending crippled trees to the ground. It crawls through every hole left unpatched, gnawing mercilessly at the bones. The cold is infinite, as is the frost, which covers the ailing land like a blanket of white powder. Here and there, tawny patches of grass stubble sprout from the encrusted earth. The steel skeletons of a buried building appear atop a layer of permafrost. In the distance, an emaciated arctic fox pricks its ears, listening for prey. But the area has been laid barren. Here, there is nothing to eat.

Argyre's territory is deserted; a region that guards as many secrets as its self-declared ruler. In the last decades, countless Borcan Scrappers have disappeared behind the

border of the Janus Crater, their remains scattered for hundreds of miles across its northern edge. Thousands of human skulls dangle from wooden poles and iron posts, painted in a strange green light. In the darkness of night, they shine like phantasmal writings on the wall.

Beyond the eerie humming of the Janus Crater, a battered wilderness rises: cliffs of rubble covered in snowdrifts and unwieldy fields of debris obstruct the way to London. The frames of charred cars and other Bygone means of transportation lie strewn along cracked asphalt roads. Collapsed bridge piers and tankers that have been hurled ashore rise up to the sky. Formidable obstacles. On occasion, terrible screams ring out over the ruins. Another reckless Scrapper has fallen prey to the Pictons.



LONDON

London. The burned city of the Bygoners. Black towers baked in snow and ashes. Abandoned streets lead into the bowels of the city. Reindeer herds trot through deserted ruins of molten asphalt and granite. Polar bears skulk around behind house fronts with smashed windows, through roadblocks and in the refuge of dead ends. The animals have chosen the upperworld of London as their home. They are the silent inhabitants of this desolate wasteland.

Out of nowhere, the ground begins to vibrate. The reindeer become startled. A stream of light glows from an underground crevice, accompanied by the screeching wails of a machine. The noise is unbearably loud. Suddenly, Maglev stations in the entire city come to life.

Trains race along the Bygone magnetic rails, carrying their occupants far beyond the city limits. Pictons, Argyre's slave warriors, are aboard the wagons. Like every night, they go out hunting for prey in order to appease their god. But they do not hunt animals. They hunt Sleepers. The Marauder is waiting for his Ambrosia.

DESCENT

London's upper world has been abandoned, but its underground is raging. Elevator platforms lead down to Argyre's Sanctum. According to legends, there is an endless web of tunnels and shafts spinning itself through the heart of the wounded city. A network of meandering tunnels serves as an abode for thousands of his followers. Much more than living quarters, this underground realm contains ballrooms, laboratories and halls full of projection screens. Meme Chambers, the place where adolescent Pictons are calibrated, can also be found here; prison cells for captured Sleepers as well. Hundreds of these RG soldiers are said to have already fallen into Argyre's clutches. Not nearly enough. The Marauder wants them all. He wants to punish them for what they did to him, for their betrayal. He wants revenge. He wants Getrell's head.

PICTONS

The Pictons are Argyre's army. A group of cannibals and wild lunatics at his mercy; the watch dogs of a rotting god.



They are the fangs of the Marauder, his bloodhounds and henchmen. Their eyes see every enemy, and they defend the Vulture's territory with their very lives. For generations, Argyre bred them from the enslaved clans of Britain, cultivating them for his own purposes. Their ancestors were also conditioned in the Meme Chambers of the Marauder. Here, he planted passwords into their subconscious and burned image sequences onto their retinas, turning them into his own submissive and compliant slaves.

Argyre's word is law and it is the only thing the Pictons fear. It's the only thing they know. He interprets the stars for them and provides them with food and equipment. When challenged, he wastes no time turning them into dust. They obey his every order, chasing after any intruder who sets foot on the soil of Britain.

All over Britain, Pictons have rooted out RG bunkers, ripping Sleepers out of their dispensers and dragging them to London, where they are milked for their blood. With a crude mechanical neck brace known as the Yoke, the Marauder controls his prisoners, forcing them to take part

in his revenge. It is Argyre's way of retaliating against the Recombination Group. But now one of them has escaped. Helios, the Sleeper Prophet.

The Scavenger is furious with anger. Once again, the Maglev trains howl, transporting Pictons to the borders of Argyre's realm. They are to bring the fugitive back to his dungeon. But Helios has already left Britain. The Pictons must search for him on the other side of the water. In Briton.

LUMINOUS SIGNS

For years, reports of light pillars rising above Britain towards the sky have been piling up. Even in distant Saint-Brieuc, the rays are visible to the naked eye, raising questions that remain unanswered. Something big is going on in Britain, repeating itself month after month.

Palers watch the developments from the cliffs nearby. They know its meaning. The Scavenger is trying to bring his diabolical work to fruition. They have to stop him before it's too late.

STREAMCONTACT: N.A.172.EARTH

EDINBURGH, OCTOBER 22ND 2066

TO DEEVA ALMAKOVA
RECOMBINATION GROUP FACILITY MALMÖ
JAN WALDENSTRÖMS GATA 35
20502 MALMÖ

Dear Ms Almakova,

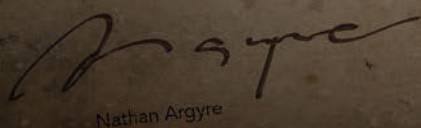
I made it back safely to my beloved Scotland. My wife Martha greeted me with homemade shortbread and tea. The weather was rainy with a breeze, as one would expect from the north of the island.

My trip to Aspen was splendid, thank you for leaving a message via Stream. I cannot thank your organization enough for bringing me out and having me participate in the talks. What a group of bright minded individuals you have. It felt like being among kindred souls, as if I had known them all my life. I have to admit that I am deeply impressed by your advancements in cryosleep. What Doctor Gusev showcased on stage was extraordinary. The parameters by which you stimulate the spinal vertebra during stasis, and the injection of a protective nanite membrane into the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex were simply awe-inspiring. Using the sinuses to continuously affect brain matter from a protective source reminds me of ancient Egyptian proto-medicine and mummification, the care given to prepare the body to go through afterlife and return to the crown in a thousand years' time. Under these conditions, even deep-space travel doesn't sound like fiction anymore. Your council has accomplished truly outstanding work. I'm sure you agree that you've collected the most brilliant people this planet has to offer under one roof to work towards a common goal.

As for my participation, and I know I promised to get back to you about this earlier, I have to unfortunately decline. At least for the moment. The field of memetics is young and lacks testing. I feel it is too early to share my findings with such a large corporation. I am hesitant, since this program can be used in ways which I consider both unethical and unfortunate. I am not trying to suggest that this would occur within your organization, but as we discussed on stage, the core of Memetics is the total visual, acoustic, and receptive conditioning of the brain. An entire reprogramming of a patient can happen in mere hours. From what Mr Thorn said in the meeting on Saturday, the Recombination Group wants to use a programmed induction of sounds, images, smells and keywords to prevent a human in stasis from losing sanity. On paper, this looks brilliant. Current brainwave manipulation can only prevent the dissolving of grey matter in coma patients for a short number of years. With Memetics, these borders would have to be redefined entirely. An individual would be capable of learning in their sleep but at the same time they would also, like an automaton, be susceptible to conditioning.

I hope you understand my concerns and I don't come across as rude. Your offer and the hospitality you've shown me have exceeded my expectations. I am in no way trying to dishonor your organization or your intentions, but I am convinced that the field of Memetics needs to go through a longer and more extensive testing phase. We're talking a good 10-15 years of solid fieldwork and observational experimentation, before we can implement it as an aspect of long term cryostatic suspension.

I will start packing and moving to our new laboratories in London in the upcoming months. As it stands, I would like to invite both Ms Aspenson and Mr Karminov to meet me there in early January of next year so we can discuss how to proceed. I am sure that with long-term commitment and proper planning, we will be able to devise a plan that will yield much better results for the Recombination Group.



Nathan Argyre

TERROR IN LONDON

By S. DOWNIE

LONDON - A new wave of terror has hit London and the district of Westminster, bringing the total number of attacks this year up to three. As confirmed by authorities, several hijacked police drones were detonated last night at 1.00 a.m. around Greycoat St. and the adjacent hospital, 35 people were killed in this heinous criminal act and another 190 severely wounded.

The laboratories of Dr. Nathan Argyre, Britain's most acclaimed researcher in the field of coma treatment and brainwave manipulation, were completely destroyed by the massive fires following the attack.

The Apocalyptic sect has claimed responsibility for the bombings. The Seagull, a spokesman for the group, overrode several public news outlets with his Stream feed early this morning, stating "There can never be enough bloodshed for the lack of a cause." This aimless, untraceable assault follows the pattern of recent bombings happening all across the globe. From the terrible suicide attacks in Dallas, New York and Oslo to the more recent massacres of Berlin and Warsaw, this series of terror features the strategy established by the Mother of Ravens, the undisputed leader of the Apocalyptic sect. To this day the authorities have no leads on her.

```
//entering security console...
0.127346327846473774 0.2721890842184241294 0.371973481964461410
0.327483257892357895
/waiting for response...
/STREAMLING: secure connection established
/enter password: *****
/STREAMLING: access granted
/STREAMLING: obfuscation protocol?
/ARIES: enter
/accessing stream log...
```

chernobog: Last night's activity was bullshit! The attack wasn't supposed to be trackable! Why the fuck did your idiots claim credit for it!?!
/Y: Shut up Victor. This was approved. My guys set the fires, you do the clean up.

chernobog: You have no idea what you're talking about. You've never been involved in the real stuff. Stop behaving like you had any control over what needs to be done.
chernobog: You're not making the calls! Got it? Things need to go by protocol, not your hogwash.

/I have everything you guys asked for. All the files, data, and recordings. Can you just appreciate that for a second? The publicity does us good. The Apocalyptics will gain more followers and momentum. GG will like it.
chernobog: And Nate?

/Y: He is devastated of course. Christine is visiting him to renegotiate our offer. He'll have no choice but to join, or his life's work is over.
chernobog: I give fuck all for his feelings. We need him on board! Nikolai is too stupid to pull things off by himself.

/Y: You're by far the most impatient fool I've ever come across. It's really no wonder that GG has been favoring your brother so much lately. <3
chernobog: You better stop acting like a spoiled brat. I've seen others just like you. GG burns through whores faster than you can even imagine. Don't think for a second that you're entitled to anything.

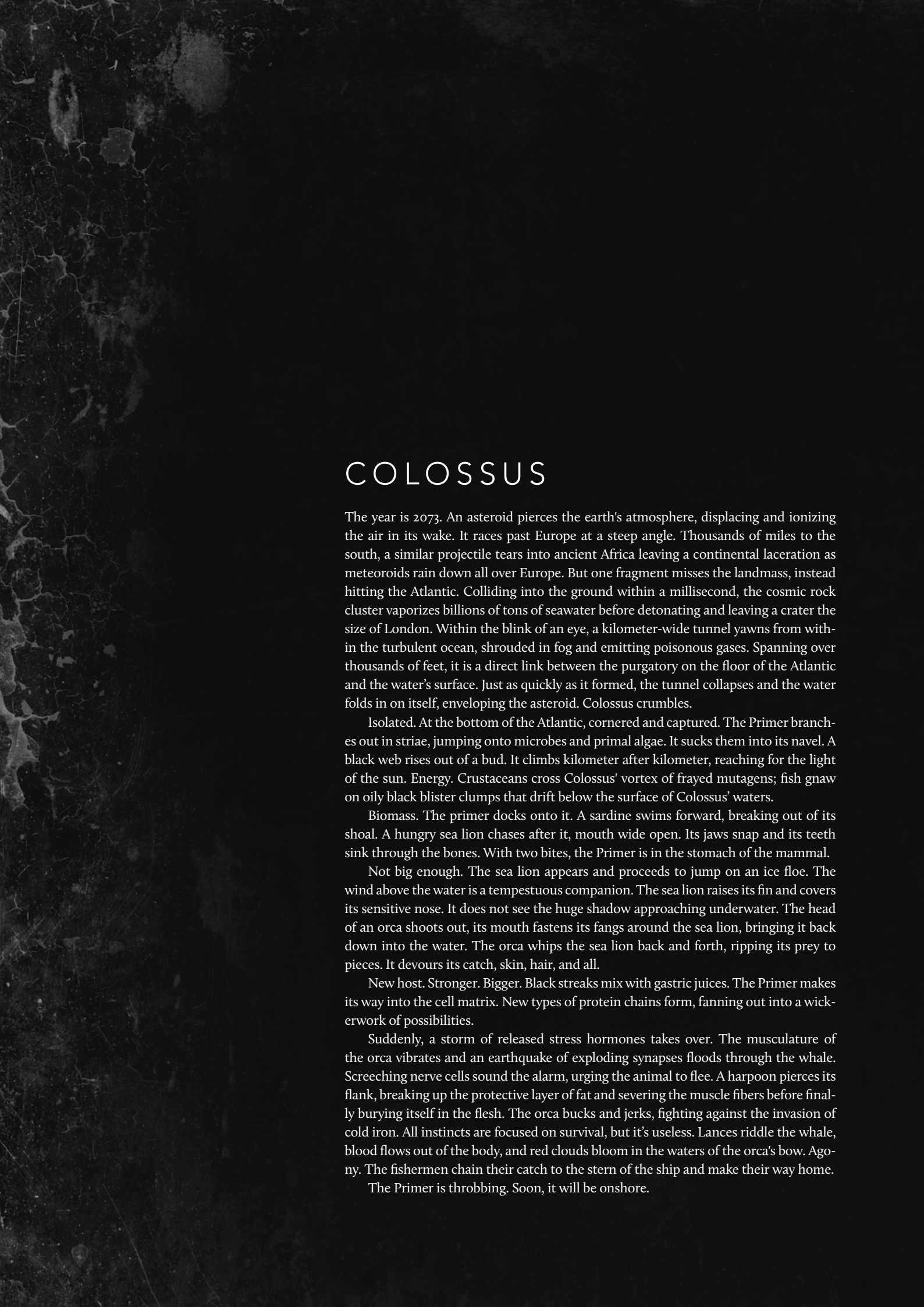
/20:38:23 /// login in progress...
20:38:25 /// user **aspera** logged in

/20:39:17 **aspera:** Great work last night Y! You now have the press trailing your beautiful ass. Someone in your crew has gone public, claiming he has records connecting you to the Apocalyptics. GG is fuming. If Nate smells a rat, the whole project is compromised.
20:39:54 **chernobog:** Fucking hell. Do we have names? Can we silence him?

/20:40:19 **aspera:** Yes. Thorn will put him out. He already confirmed with me.
20:40:40 Y: So it's under control? Why the drama then?

/20:41:08 **aspera:** Because you are still in Britain. Get the hell back to base in Warsaw and don't leave a single trace behind. Do you copy?
20:42:01 /// user **Y** logged out...

/20:42:06 **chernobog:** Unbelievable...
20:42:18 **aspera:** She's becoming a liability.



COLOSSUS

The year is 2073. An asteroid pierces the earth's atmosphere, displacing and ionizing the air in its wake. It races past Europe at a steep angle. Thousands of miles to the south, a similar projectile tears into ancient Africa leaving a continental laceration as meteoroids rain down all over Europe. But one fragment misses the landmass, instead hitting the Atlantic. Colliding into the ground within a millisecond, the cosmic rock cluster vaporizes billions of tons of seawater before detonating and leaving a crater the size of London. Within the blink of an eye, a kilometer-wide tunnel yawns from within the turbulent ocean, shrouded in fog and emitting poisonous gases. Spanning over thousands of feet, it is a direct link between the purgatory on the floor of the Atlantic and the water's surface. Just as quickly as it formed, the tunnel collapses and the water folds in on itself, enveloping the asteroid. Colossus crumbles.

Isolated. At the bottom of the Atlantic, cornered and captured. The Primer branches out in striae, jumping onto microbes and primal algae. It sucks them into its navel. A black web rises out of a bud. It climbs kilometer after kilometer, reaching for the light of the sun. Energy. Crustaceans cross Colossus' vortex of frayed mutagens; fish gnaw on oily black blister clumps that drift below the surface of Colossus' waters.

Biomass. The primer docks onto it. A sardine swims forward, breaking out of its shoal. A hungry sea lion chases after it, mouth wide open. Its jaws snap and its teeth sink through the bones. With two bites, the Primer is in the stomach of the mammal.

Not big enough. The sea lion appears and proceeds to jump on an ice floe. The wind above the water is a tempestuous companion. The sea lion raises its fin and covers its sensitive nose. It does not see the huge shadow approaching underwater. The head of an orca shoots out, its mouth fastens its fangs around the sea lion, bringing it back down into the water. The orca whips the sea lion back and forth, ripping its prey to pieces. It devours its catch, skin, hair, and all.

New host. Stronger. Bigger. Black streaks mix with gastric juices. The Primer makes its way into the cell matrix. New types of protein chains form, fanning out into a wick-erwork of possibilities.

Suddenly, a storm of released stress hormones takes over. The musculature of the orca vibrates and an earthquake of exploding synapses floods through the whale. Screeching nerve cells sound the alarm, urging the animal to flee. A harpoon pierces its flank, breaking up the protective layer of fat and severing the muscle fibers before finally burying itself in the flesh. The orca bucks and jerks, fighting against the invasion of cold iron. All instincts are focused on survival, but it's useless. Lances riddle the whale, blood flows out of the body, and red clouds bloom in the waters of the orca's bow. Agony. The fishermen chain their catch to the stern of the ship and make their way home.

The Primer is throbbing. Soon, it will be onshore.



2575: THE YEAR DOCTOR VASCO DIED

A secret research bunker is located out in the wild thicket of Briton's rough backcountry. The massive entry door has been sealed for years, the interior of the bunker emptied. Only the laboratory instruments are still preserved and intact — left behind in the same condition as when they were found in 2575.

At that time, a group of Famulancers from Rennes were rummaging through the woods in search of Dr. Hernez Vasco. The fugitive doctor was wanted by the Spital. Oddly enough, the tip that led to the hidden research lab where Vasco was supposedly staying came from among the Anabaptists.

The Famulancers, who eventually located and opened the bunker, found Vasco's body in the chaotic den. Europe's most wanted Spitalian lay lifeless on top of his notes, an empty vile in his stiffened hand. The Famulancers transported the corpse to Rennes; from there, it was taken to the Spital via the North Passage. The autopsy failed to yield any results concerning the cause of death. Consultants had the body preserved for later investigations, deciding instead to focus on Vasco's notes.

In addition to a series of drawings — their conspicuously naive nature suggesting the artist could have been a child — there were notes of increased sightings of previously undocumented mutations. Vasco classified them as Leviathanics, relating to the blooming of the sixth Earth Chakra, whose position he suspected was in the Atlantic. According to his conclusions, this new rapture is a parasitic pathogen

that enters the human host body through infection. Instead of having only an influence on the genetic composition of the offspring of a spore-infested individual, the Primer in its new form is capable of immediately modifying the human genome of an infected person. A virus that is able to spread rapidly.

Vasco states in his remarks that Leviathanics is still bound to the water and has not yet made it on land. The doctor leaves no explanation for its reluctance to embark on a terrestrial existence.

In addition, the documents also make reference to the fact that Vasco was at some point in time in possession of pure Primer matter, the original form of the extraterrestrial material trapped in the asteroids. How he came in possession of the substance is as about as easy to deduce from the records as their current location. The only clue is a note in the margins that appears repeatedly in his papers. Vasco regularly drew a Broken Cross. It is found in various writings on Primer matter and as a footnote between dates and times. Did the Spitalian have supporters among the Anabaptists?

To date, the Consultants keep most of the salvaged manuscripts from Vasco's research bunker under lock and key. The explosive material it contains would be a source of panic in the ranks of the research groups and serve to fuel conspiracy theories. The Spital relies on its tactics of silence. As long as Leviathanics hasn't been conclusively proven, let the mystery around it prevail.

FIELD ANALYSIS.

01.

Petrova and the research groups cannot see the forest for the trees. Souffrance, Usud, Mirar, Nox and Pandora, they are all just epicenters of Earth Chakras. The patterns that form around the craters complete a continental soundbox. The Zigguraths in Franka are just one example of the massive terraforming that is happening everywhere in Europe. Shell grottos in Hybrispania, echo stelae on the Balkans, Rifts in Purgare, fractal forests in Pollen. They all emerge from energy nodes, slowly completing epochal Chakra symbols around their respective craters. For too long, the Spitalians believed that Zigguraths were only there to steer swarms and lure Homo Sapiens into pheromone traps. Instead, these structures develop at the central points of entropic fields. Within these fields, the phenomenon of time as we define and perceive it as Homo Sapiens can no longer be subjected to the methods of statistical measurement that we have prescribed. According to my calculations, the energy exchange between the nodes serves to increase entropic principles, which accelerates the evolution that takes place within a Chakra symbol. The Primer can let its wild growth run its course, unbound from the laws of nature. Obviously, the substance seeks to speed up its mutagenic properties — or subjugate cosmic laws that are beyond our understanding — and adapt them to a planetary hemisphere different than ours. This theory would explain the smoking vents and methane clouds all over Franka. The greenhouse gas is necessary to prepare our atmosphere for the arrival of something new.

02.

The stigmata on the sternum of Leperos, or drones as we call them in Franka, are resonance amplifiers that can communicate with each other through the supreme consciousness of the Primer. A stigma in full bloom creates acoustic waves that can interact with the waves of the other stigmata. Where waves intersect, communication channels form between drones and Psychonauts. The communication must be interrupted in order to tear a carrier of the seed from the Chakra Ether. If a transmitter, in this case a Homo Degeneration, is switched off, the wave does not subside. In order to halt the communication, it is also necessary for the receiving stigma to be shut down completely.



$$4 \times 0.5 = 2.0 \text{ (gms)}$$

$$M = 3.31.5 + 2.08.75$$

03

The Idol Bearer Malinesse - the most mature drone in Ganaress' polity was identified as the strongest surviving resonant body following the death of the Pheromancer King. According to my research results, the stigma of this Ganarid was removed from the breast tissue. All surviving Ganarids were torn from the Chakra Ether as a result and regained their human consciousness. Ganaress' influence over his drone state finally ended. If we can identify idol bearers, who are able to receive and relay the communication waves of deceased Homo Degeneration, we can rescue others who have been lost to the Chakras.

04

Queens are born in Parasite. From there, they make their way to their destination point and build a new Ziggurath along field lines. It is safe to presume that already destroyed Zigguraths will be resurrected in the same places. Likewise, it is highly probable that Parasite will spew out replacements for the deceased queens, namely, for Ganaress and Markurant. We know neither when nor how. One thing is clear though: We have to destroy Parasite.

05

The Anabaptists are in possession of pure Primer matter. It is said to derive from the glorified Starfire, or the so-called "Fingernail of the Demiurge". All attempts at obtaining the Starfire for analysis have failed. The Anabaptists balk and are unwilling to engage in any form of cooperation. According to my research, the location of the Primer matter can be found within the city limits of Brest. I need to assemble a task force.

06

It is now clear that the leadership of the Spital is a mere pawn in trivial power struggles. Information has to be circulated freely and always accessible. Research results cannot be discussed in detail behind closed doors. The Consultants must be dismissed and research groups closed. The Hippocrats must infiltrate the Spitalians. Senior positions as well as military units need to be filled with Preservists. All resources must be pooled instead of having the Cult operate simultaneously on all fronts. For the time being, all Zigguraths in Franka must be located and destroyed. An absolute shift of priorities is the only hope for the Spitalians, if not for all of humanity.

VEGA 24/08/2597 RNS



B R E S T

A king sits enthroned in Brest. His name is Oppolus, and he watches over his people. The Britoni are his children, he is their greatest hunter. The king depends on the Anabaptists, his brothers-in-arms, and the Broken Cross relies on his wisdom. Clan and Cult coalesce in Brest, the capital of Briton. Here is where the union was forged, a union that serves as a source of strength for this tenacious people.

It is the cradle of Briton. They set out from Brest and inhabited the eastern side of the peninsula, continuing to spread out from there and growing together. One tribe, one Clan. Moulded by fire and water, tempered by the forces of a riotous ocean and a wild land. Their homeland, the place where they originated, is the apple of their eye, held dearly in the hearts of hardened children, ornery veterans and coarse men and women. The Anabaptists fill their ranks with them, cultivating the best of them into Orgiastics who spit unflinchingly in the face of the Demiurge.

Everything that Briton has to offer flows into Brest. Wealth, hunting, fish, meat, love, lust, song, iron, horn, whale blubber, oil and the fire of life.

Isolated from the rest of the world, there stands a place characterized by its singularity: sublime and untamed, grim and yet pious, graceful and lonely. No place compares. It is a dualism of white heat and inner calm. Anyone who tries to drink the Britoni and the Orgiastics under the table is bound to lose their mind in the taverns here.

Those looking for peace or views limited only by the horizon lose themselves in serenity along the beach's flood chapels. Brest pulls one in. It is bursting with power, and in all its splendor it offers refuge to outside powers, whose affinities lie elsewhere. Brest's hour has struck. Blinded by its brilliance, it does not see the danger that is approaching.

THE ROADSTEAD OF BREST

The bay on which Brest is located has calm waters, free of storms and ice and without tides and severe floods. The Penfeld, a rather tame river, cuts through the city and flows into the bay. The roadstead is responsible for the rise of Brest; its countless straits and waterways are full of spawning grounds for fish.

Cliffs and rugged chains of hills span the bay, curbing storms and in winter, deterring devastating hurricanes that sweep across the land at a distance.

A dense wilderness of birch and pine sprouts along the banks, providing the best wood for shipbuilding and the houses of the city. The forests are rich in fauna. Wild boars and elks roam through the dense undergrowth of the hinterland, lynxes stalk through the birch groves and beavers nest along the creeks.

Beyond the roadstead, heading in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean, thousands of seals frolic along the stone beaches. Here is where the great hunting grounds of the Britoni begin.

ALONE, ALONE

Brest's uniqueness lies in its geographical position. Paths do not go through Brest, they end here. While other cities developed at the crossroads of trade routes or share a common region, Brest was able to confine itself and grow. Isolated and at the literal edge of the known world, it doesn't lie on any route that could arouse the desires of foreign powers. In the times when other cities were falling, Brest continued to thrive, shielded by its location and its alliance with the Anabaptists.

But this alliance has its drawbacks and Brest has yet to form allies with independent territories. Brest is on its own. If anyone were to attack or attempt to bring the city under its rule, Franka would neither shed a tear nor sacrifice any cadets, for Brest's only beneficiaries are the Anabaptists. The Broken Cross wouldn't have it any other way. As a result of this dependency, the Britoni provide a steady source of new converts to fill the ranks of the Anabaptists in Franka. The Broken Cross has long since done away with the waves of proselytizing that are typical of Purgare. In the northwest of Briton, the Cult has no competition. Instead, it is the only alternative to being a fisherman or hunter. Those who want more from life commit to the faith.

That is why Briton is a fertile ground for the Cult. After Cathedral City and the Adriatic lowlands, Briton, with Brest as its headquarters, is the third largest stronghold of the Anabaptists. Unlike Borca and Purgare, however, they have no external enemies here.

There are no Jehammedans and the Pheromancers have been driven out. Briton's invincibility has been established. Instead of seeking out converts, the Emissaries sit back and wait for the population to come running to the Cult on their own.

In a few years — at least according to the dactylonomy of an optimistic Counsellor in Domstadt — all of Briton could be praying to the Broken Cross.

FACT SHEET BREST

CITY: Brest, Tech Level III

PROVINCE: Briton

INHABITANTS: ca. 23,000 / seasonal fluctuation. In the fall, the walrus hunt and the Day of Ganaress cause the city to swell to over 30,000. Inns, streets and markets are all overcrowded at this time.

POPULATION STRUCTURE: Britoni / dominant, Anabaptists / dominant, Scrappers / present, Ganarids / scattered, Apocalyptic / covert

LEADER: Oppolus, King of the Briton

GOVERNING FORCE: Vicarent the Sublime. Holds court in the city only a few days a year. His headquarters are in Mont Saint-Michel.

FEATURES: Harbor, storm-free / ice-free bay. Icebreakers, jet skis, whaleboats. Day of Ganaress. Annual walrus hunt. Inns, fish market, fur market, fortress

TRADE / GOODS: Fish, walruses, whale oil, Petro, grease, lamp oil, soap, skins and clothing, ironware and items forged by blacksmiths, jewelry, wheat

CITY GUARD: The Brest Guard: 400 Britoni. Primarily hunters, sailors and warriors who serve as a reserve to ensure the defense of the city, but do not constitute a standing army. In the event of a war, they are under Oppolus' command.

THE CHAPEL GUARD: 200 Orgiastics, who are subordinates of Mont Saint-Michel and act on the direct orders of Vicarent.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE STARFIRE: Barringer's pack - 60 Orgiastics. Stationed at Ushant, 20 kilometers off the coast of Brest

ARTIFACT TRADE: Low. No alcoves. Chroniclers usually do not trade in Brest.

COMMUNICATION: Radio connection to Rennes. Beacon on Oppolus' fortress. Two postriders connect Brest with the surrounding villages. News comes with the daily catch at the fish market.

THE KING'S LEGACY

For decades, Oppolus has ruled over his people and his city. He is known for his foresight and wisdom, and the Anabaptists do not question his decisions. Rather, they support him politically and with armed forces. His close relationship with the Broken Cross has shaped the history of Briton, although most know nothing of the origin of this relationship. In addition to a dozen biological children, the king has two wards, Vicarent and Barringer. He found them as newborns out in the deep thicket of the forest and raised them as his own. He taught them to hunt and how to use a sword. At thirteen, he brought his protégés to Mont Saint-Michel

and gave them to the Anabaptists. Counsellor Phrike, who was watching over the abbey at that time, examined the boys. Her heart was startled as she looked into the eyes of the two adolescents.

The Counsellor screamed in response to the emanations she saw, dying a few days later. But before she passed away, she dictated her vision to an Elysian. Vicarent was a Sublime and would bathe in the four rivers of paradise. The Anabaptists in Mont Saint-Michel would choose him as their leader. Then she pointed to Barringer and gasped, "Jackal!"

OPPOLIDS

Oppolus feels a deep affection for Vicarent and Barringer. His consanguineous offspring, however, are like strangers to him. In his most fruitful years, he fathered a dozen sons and daughters, but in his eyes, they are all a disappointment. The Oppolids, as the children of Oppolus are commonly called, sense their father's aversion and know all too well what it means to live in the shadow of the wards. Secretly, they wish for the death of Vicarent and Barringer so they can finally gain the attention of their father.

But they lack the resolve to commit such a treacherous murder and they don't have the courage to face the king. Instead, Oppolus secured their rise in the hinterland where they became chiefs of small settlements and married with the neighboring clans.

Some still reside in Brest, sneaking around the courtyard of Oppolus' fortress, bursting into council meetings with the

hopes of gaining the recognition they've spent decades longing for.

But Oppolus ignores his children, not wanting to waste even a thought on them. None of them will ever be able to fulfill the king's wishes. None of them is worthy of receiving his inheritance.

The Oppolids have only their name and their royal origin, nothing more. They are not cast in the heroic light that emanates from great deeds and they often go unrecognized on the street. In inns, they are bossy and boisterous, annoyed at the disapproving attitude with which they are met.

Are they not of noble lineage? Are they not owed the respect that one pays a king?

How much they would like to bathe in the same light as Vicarent. If they were in power, they would usher in Brest's golden age. They would turn the Britoni away from the Anabaptists and instead make their origins a source of veneration; they would put

an end to the personality cult of the Sublime.

As a dynasty, they could reform the country. Twelve siblings, united by blood, each one king or queen of their own city. The whole of Briton would be their empire, their power and influence extending beyond Brest. On the day that their father departs this world, only Vicarent will be left standing in their way. The Oppolids put their heads together and deliberate. Would it be possible to orchestrate a popular uprising against the Anabaptists? Could they finance, arm and control it?

The money is there, but the Oppolids need men. Ringleaders, agitators, and rebels. They have to cast a large net across Briton, making sure to give their plan enough room to unfold itself. Only if all the pieces are put correctly in place, can such a shift in power work in their favor.

UNIR

The largest district in Brest spans the entire northeast of the city and is simply called Unir. This was the place where the alliance between the Britoni and Anabaptists was established. As if huddled together, the houses of the hunters, fishermen, the Ascetics and their descendants now stand closely side by side.

The architecture is a mixture of clay, brick, and timber frameworks, whose thatched roofs extend down to the ground, providing shelter for rainy days. The windows are covered. Mats made of woven reeds and blinds hammered out of sheet metal obstruct views into the interiors of the warm parlors.

There is lively movement between the houses as families go about their daily work, preachers bless the entrances to houses, maids wash their furs, and craftsmen carve walrus idols out of bones. Children carry heavy baskets full of assorted nuts across the street. From a nearby bakery, the warm scent of rising dough and burnt bread crust drifts onto the streets.

One door down, a worker breaks up a supply of sugar cane from distant Hybrispania and prepares the extracted juice for refining. In big tubs on an open fire, the sugar bubbles up until it caramelizes, forming the basis for the sweet caramel sauce famous all over Brest.

At an intersection, an Ascetic washes the feet of an aging Orgiastic before anointing his forehead. A handful of Britoni listen to his soft chants. Behind them, a ten-man patrol of Furors marches past. They have returned from a long march on the borderland of Briton and are on their way to the Balsam House to be cared for by the monks. Their eyes are tired, some are wounded. They fought Expatriates and drones in the field. A pale Elysian sprinkles them with water from a baptismal font, blessing the men and wishing them peace.

At a round plaza, which opens into Pioneer Road, a cluster of astonished children jump around excitedly. Three hunters have shot an elk and are trying to lift the bull with the help of a pulley.

The gantry hoist creaks threatening to collapse and the ropes stretch and shake as the hunters hoist the mighty animal. Two Anabaptists rush and come to the aid of the men. With a jerk, the animal is hung vertically and is ready to be eviscerated.

PIONEER ROAD

An arrow-straight street of cobblestones leads from the East to Brest. The big boulevard does not wind once, instead the surrounding architecture gives way to the extravagant lane. The Anabaptists completed the construction of Pioneer Road a decade ago - built with the intersecting avenues of Justitia in mind. All of the prominent shops, blacksmiths, slaughterhouses and bakeries line Pioneer Road, one after the other. Wind chimes hang from broken crosses attached to gables, and the walls of the houses are covered in traditional Gnostic prayers. Here and there, megaliths and stone tablets decorate the front doors. They were brought from the hinterland of Briton and carted to Brest. The engraved inscriptions and symbols on the stone relics bear testimony to the Anabaptist rule over this area and the heritage of its original settlers, who came from the South.

The boulevard, twenty steps from one side to the other, is mainly used for parades and the festivities on the Day of Ganaress. It also serves as an introduction to the powers that be in Brest, alerting newcomers who has the first and last word here.

SAINT VICARENT

An unadorned chapel is perched at the end of Pioneer Road, a beacon of sullenness. Over the years, the rain has left black streaks on its old, gray walls, leaving it to resemble the furrows in the fields. The narrow honey-colored windows are thick and opaque. A heavy wooden plaque hangs above the entrance. Britoni runes have been carved into it: "Every generation knows their heroes. Ours only knows one."

Throughout the year, the chapel is only open to Anabaptists. Those who do not bear a three-point tattoo on their forehead or have a ring in their nose are rejected at the gate. Only on the Day of Ganaress and the week thereafter are infidels allowed to enter the sanctuary.

The air inside the chapel stands still, the smell of incense lingering heavily under the ceiling. Candles and oil lamps illuminate the room, offering a place of prayer for almost a hundred believers. Ganaress lurks in the shadows at the end of the chapel, the light just bright enough to provide a glimpse of his bones. The size of the skeleton but an intimation of the actual dimensions of the Pheromancer King's body.

The Aberrant hangs with his arms outstretched on a broken cross of wood and iron. His remains function as a

warning of the burgeoning power of the Demiurge.

Outside the chapel, two sparrows chirp as they fly under the roof to seek refuge from the incoming showers. Below them, a man sitting on a wooden bench smiles to himself. He raises his fur collar and breathes into his work-worn hands.

It is Tronte, the master of the chapel. The Furor lost his left leg in Bassham years ago. Since then, the wounded veteran has been the head of the Chapel Guard, a pack of two hundred Orgiastics stationed in Brest and operating as the city militia. He is also responsible for guarding the portal, cleaning the stone forecourt and handling other tasks around the chapel.

The master of the chapel is a sociable old man with a leathery face and a warm voice. He knows how to draw listeners in with his stories from the front. Often, he loses himself in tales of the conquest of Bassham, the storming of the Ziggurath of Markurant, and the battle fought against a superior drone army.

He also knows quite a bit about the troop movements of Anabaptists throughout all of Franka. Feel free to fire away with questions, only after leaving a small donation in his bowl, of course.

THE WHALE SHRINE

In the middle of the residential district, a circular house with mud walls clad in reeds sits like a relic, a gift from another era. The roof is vaulted like a dome and the only window in the house is set in the squat doorway.

Inside, it is dark and a handful of candles placed in stained glass give off a faint light. Monstrous skulls, some as large as a grown man, hang from the support beams of the vaulted ceiling. It's a trophy hall filled with whale bones.

The whale shrine is at least as old as the settlement itself, if not older. For generations, fishermen have brought the remnants of their largest catches inside and hung them up for drying.

In Britoni tradition, the ghosts of the ocean must receive a resting place that is worthy of them. It is the only way if one hopes to avert tragedy while hunting out on the waves. An unburied skull left unhung in the whale shrine is akin to a bad omen.

In the harbor neighborhood of L'Arc, stories of the vengeful nature of the Atlantic can be heard in the inns.



Stories of whales attacking ships and beasts rising out of the water to punish fishermen.

The sailor yarn is awash in anecdotes and half-baked experience reports, but it is here that the Britoni's relationship with the ocean has taken on a religious form.

BROTHERHOOD SQUARE

The Brotherhood Square, located at the end of Pioneer Road, is both the religious and secular center of the city. Apart from the daily market, where yields from the field — wheat, vegetables and herbs — are sold, the Britoni have also cast a monument of their Sublime in bronze here. The statue of Vicarent, the Redeemer rises to the sky. The larger-than-life bust is twelve meters high, propped up on a block of basalt, looking grimly to the East.

At the western end, the Brotherhood Square opens into a sunken arena. The steps leading into it form a natural raised platform for spectators. This stage is home to competitions. If two Britoni are embroiled in a dispute, they can settle it here in front of an audience. Most disputes are resolved here with a fist fight, but before the conflict escalates to the point of no return, an umpire separates the opponents. The spectators declare the victor, expressing their approval or disdain in the form of cheers and boos.

But the arena is also a venue for executions and public humiliation. This is where attack dogs mangle killers, Burners are tortured with iron bars and the tongues of blasphemers are split on a wooden block. Over the years, the crevices of the arena have been soaked with the blood of those who have not respected the law, earning it the nickname "The Blood Pit."

BALSAM HOUSE

No one likes Spitalians in Brest. Rennes is already full of them, and the eggheads would do best to stay there. The Britoni rely on ancient healing rituals and traditional practices for treating diseases. The ocean and the land provide everything necessary for a healthy life.

The Balsam House is Brest's haven of recovery. Ascetics and old medicine women of Britoni work hand in hand here. They nurse the sick, heal the wounded and take care of the embalmment of the dead. They are, however, anything but gentle. They place medicinal herbs on open wounds and cuts, cauterize wounds with hot iron, and rip teeth out using distillates as narcosis.

People drag themselves through the door, a high fever in tow. For some, a bath filled with ice-cold water awaits them, where they are scrubbed with soap derived from train



oil; others must resort to having their blood let. Sometimes, however, a little bit of fish oil is all that is needed to do the trick.

The Balsam House welcomes anyone in need. In contrast to the hospitals of the Spitalians, treatment here costs nothing. The Ascetics and medicine women are cared for by the Britoni and receive both donations and food, leaving them with the sole task of doing their work. In addition, they are under the protection of the Chapel Guard. The Orgiastics ensure that troublemakers who run riot and threaten the Balsam House are expelled from the city.

Burners should stay as far away as possible from the Balsam House. The slightest hint of red coming from a potential stigma is enough to arouse the suspicions of the Ascetics. Out of nowhere, one quickly finds oneself in the Blood Pit, surrounded by a dozen Anabaptists armed with sticks and clubs.

An Anubian woman arrived recently and has been working in the Balsam House. She is said to have taken the Southern Passage from Montpellier to Brest. Few inhabitants of the city know her name, but in the streets people talk of a peculiar woman who has come from Africa and is sharing her knowledge with Ascetics and medicine women.

THE FIELD OF VICTORS

Brest knows many victors. Men and women who sprang forth from the bosom of the Britoni and performed great feats. The cemetery north of Unir is their final resting place.

Wooden masts decorated with runes and cast-iron broken crosses protrude out of the graveyard like stubble — mementoes of the deceased tied to them. Headbands of fallen Orgiastics flutter in the wind, bones and walrus icons jingle. Carved into stone tablets which have been set in the earth are the stories immortalizing them.

The women of Brest visit the cemetery every Sunday, removing moss and cleaning the graves. While tending to this ritual, they sing an old Britoni war song they learned in their childhood. It is a song that tells of the remoteness of Brest, of the people's ill will, and of a time when all life was still in the water.

Oppolus, the King of Britoni, and Vicarent the Sublime, visit the Field of Victors together on the morning following the Day of Ganaress. It is a tradition for the rulers to put wreaths of cornflowers on the grave of each person who has passed away the previous year. They bless the earth in which the deceased have been buried, using Elysian oil from Mont Saint-Michel to baptize the soil.

During the ceremony, the Chapel Guard seals the Field of Victors off, guarding it from all sides. The danger that both men could fall victim to an attack is far too great.

L'ARC

The noise from the inns and taverns in L'Arc buzzes until the wee hours of the morning. Along a winding street that leads downhill to the Harbor district, there is one taproom after the other. They all offer, in addition to libations, sleeping accommodation and lodging to countless travelers. The neighborhood is known all over Briton for both its wild nights and its harbor, from which the sailors set sail at dawn.

L'Arc is the lifeblood of Brest. While Unir and Godasse devote themselves to rituals and work, life pulsates down here on the water, along the piers and in tucked away side streets.

Both L'Arc's position at the southern end of the city and its terrace-like terrain act as buffer between the neighborhood and the rest of the city.

The noise and hustle and bustle on the streets in front of the taverns are already no longer audible a street away — the echo is thrown out to the bay. Musicians gather in front of a taproom, drumming on rain barrels, shaking rattles and castanets, and inviting those standing around to join in and dance.

In a narrow alley next door, an Anabaptist and farmer's daughter are pressed against the wall. He digs his fingers into her thick hair, kissing her neck wildly all the while. He is happy, drunk, and in love — and she is, too. Three hours ago, they hardly knew each other. They met each other for the first time tonight in the dance hall. A warm incandescence forms in their mutual embrace.

The next day, the Orgiastic will be moved to Mont Saint-Michel, where he will spend the winter on the front in the marshes near Parasite. His dearest companion on his march to the East are the memories of the bright-eyed farmeress and he wants to bring as many as he can carry. Who knows if he will ever return from there.

When the lights in L'Arc go out, Unir and Godasse wake up from their slumber. The silence of the morning after hangs over the harbor in the daytime, the fishing boats having long since set out onto the waters. Travelers and merchants sleep off the alcohol from the night before as cooks chase after fresh catches at the fish market. A fog bank climbs over the piers and floods into the side streets. In the dense gray of the morning, the drunks sneak around with those left maimed by the wars, looking for valuables gone lost and forgotten cups full of stale distillate.

THE HARBOR

Jet skis, catamarans, fishing boats and vessels are moored to the piers in the port of L'Arc. Sailors prepare their sails while hunters inspect their cannons and load black powder onto the ships. Children have their own tasks as well, carrying nets and baskets on deck and checking fishing rods and bait.

The harbor is by far the most vibrant part of Brest. Not only do the local fishing cutters dock here, ships from the whole region are brought to moor at this waterfront. Small merchant freighters arriving via the Leopard's route from Hybrispania can be found here; Scrapper ferries from Saint-Brieuc, as well. Hunters cross the Brest Roadstead with canoes in order to go hunting in the wilderness. Throughout the day, rafts and pontoons leave the harbor and take passengers to the rough corners of the bay in exchange for a small toll.

THE GUESTHOUSES

L'Arc has over fifty guesthouses lined up along the harbor. They provide shelter to sailors, merchants, travelers, pilgrims and those who have been left stranded. Altogether, the inns are able to accommodate thousands of visitors, who arrive on the Day of Ganaress and stay the following week to attend the walrus hunt or conduct their business in the city. During this time, L'Arc is bursting at the seams. The streets along the taverns are crammed, and the tenants make enough in a few weeks to live from for six months.

L'Arc's charm is well known far beyond the borders of Briton, and every autumn, Scrappers come from Saint-Brieuc, Leopards from Hybrispania and Cadets from Toulouse come to celebrate with the Britoni and the Anabaptists alike, raising their glasses to Briton's unrivaled prowess.

Nothing is impossible during the holidays. Among locals, the week of October is, above all, known for the large number of children born in July of the following year; many a traveler lose their heart up here in the North and decide to take root in Brest.

THE FLASK

The Flask is the largest inn and its primary guests are Anabaptists who are returning from all over Briton. For them, it is a meeting point. Nearly sixty rooms offer over three hundred beds, although the sleeping chambers are more like a monastery cell than a cozy living room. Nevertheless, or perhaps because of its simplicity, the Flask is exceptionally popular. Travelers do not come here because of the straw mats, they come here for the exquisite cuisine.

The best roast from all of Briton is served in the function hall, located on the lowest floor of the Flask. The rich scent wafts from the kitchen striking the noses of visitors as they enter the ground floor: wild boar stew, roasted chestnuts, gravy, pheasant pie, marinated mackerel, fried pike. The smell is heavenly.

In addition, mead, tea rich with saffron petals, and strong distillate from the "Three Cousins" distillery in Bassham are served. For dessert, dumplings soaked in caramel sauce and candied apples. Pickled herrings as well, so as to stay apace with the rising alcohol levels.

Anyone looking for an Orgiastic from Briton will find them quickly in the Flask. The table kept for the regulars is filled by those who hold rank or have a name that garners respect; even the Sublime Vicarent occasionally graces this haunt to share in a toast with his men.

Getting a room or a table requires enormous luck and a stack of Drafts. Word has it that Norveigh, the tenant of the Flask, can be paid off — for a hundred Drafts, a table in the back corner of the function hall is secretly made available during the holidays. But don't forget the money for the feast: it is another hundred Drafts per head.

THE TUSK

Britoni tend to their traditions, and the Tusk is a symbol of that. The oldest inn in Brest is filled with souvenirs, emblems of the Northerners' ancestry and origins. Portraits of walruses adorn the wooden support beams, hunting trophies hang on the walls, and the harpoons used to take down mighty whales are framed in the wood paneling. The names of the former hunters who used to carry these weapons are written underneath in runic script.

On a long bench, men sit stripped to their waists. They are having their heads shaved, beards braided, and loose strands of hair plaited into pigtails. The broad-shouldered tattoo artist Lavender walks in between the men, wiping blood from their upper arms and shoulder blades in order to examine the tattoos he has freshly inked into their skin.

His business is going well. Too well. He is booked months in advance and is desperately looking for people to train. But his efforts prove futile. He can be heard cursing loudly about how stupid and incompetent the youth are today — they couldn't pee a stick figure in the snow if they tried. The Britoni laugh at Lavender's crude humor, which is biting yet always rings true.

Three Apocalyptics abandoned their flock and have chosen the Tusk as their base of operations. They do not



deal in Burn, their fear of getting busted and landing in the House of Atonement is far greater than the lure of any profit that the business could bring. They specialize instead in smaller shops, errands, intimidation, and protection racketeering — trivial pursuits that keep them afloat. In the meantime, they lay low and try not to attract attention as they wait for a chance to sail to Hybris-pania. They have heard that the ships of the Leopards moor in Brest. As long as they can get out of this hole!!

THE EMPTY JUG

A thin, dry piece of flatbread, a small bowl of oil and a glass of filtered water taken from the source in Saint-Brieuc. This is a typical plate at the Empty Jug, a barren dosshouse at the northern end of L'Arc. This is where many of the destitute peasants, tramps and Ganarids living in hiding stay. Anywhere else is beyond their means.

The Empty Jug is a community center. The dormitory is a musty basement where cots are lined up close together. For those who can not afford a cot, there are rock-hard benches. People sleep on them crouched like chickens on a roost. A long rope is stretched in front of their chests, so they do not tip over whilst dreaming.

Ascetics swear by the Empty Jug. For them, the inn is a

place of purification.

No worldly trifles to obscure one's thoughts, only the essentials are available. Yassen the Merciful, Emissary of Rennes, is the most finely-dressed guest of the Jug. Every year, he stops by with his entourage. His bodyguards abhor this flophouse, but alas they have no other choice but to accept it. Yassen uses this place for his sermons. In the unadorned dining hall on the upper floor, he launches into tirades against everything and everyone. Jehammedans? Rotten to the bone! Spitalians? A colonizing force without faith or a soul! Britoni? Not pious enough! Scrappers? As useless as a sixth toe! Orgiastics? Blinded by Vicarent's Triumph!

And so it continues for the entire night. Yassen's bodyguards bury their faces between their hands, but the Emissary's ranting and raving does not stop. Instead, the Empty Jug fills up with listeners every night: the aimless, the devout, and those who keep an eye on the Emissary to make sure that a revolt doesn't ensue.

THE WEST WIND

All kinds of people meet in the West Wind. Famulancers from Rennes, Mud Crabs from the coast of Carnac, displaced Apocalyptic, spent mercenaries of the Resistance, farmers from Carhaix and the surrounding area, natives

and so many other lost souls whose sole wish is to go unnoticed. The food may be mediocre, but the music is excellent. On a small stage, young musicians play Briton's most famous war songs.

The atmosphere is fertile ground for sharing secrets and information. Covered with straw mats and raffia walls, the tiny niches for sitting create a shield against prying eyes and ears. Agreements, messages or the sale of smuggled goods can be easily made here.

The downside: Top ups and food are only available at the bar. It's self-service here at the West Wind.

If the taproom fails to offer enough privacy, a key for the cellar can be purchased at the counter. Sixty Drafts for three hours of absolute seclusion.

A side door goes out to a rear courtyard, where a staircase leads to the basement of the West Wind. Behind the latched steel door is a small storage room where gambling and betting take place. Both are frowned upon by the Anabaptists and considered diversions of the Demiurge. Down here, however, players have nothing to fear.

THE FURRIERS

A seal hangs upside down from a hook. A thick-browed man with an angular face makes an incision along the tail fin and pulls the knife over the flank of the animal. He buries his fingers under the skin of the seal and removes the entire coat over its head in one swift move.

Only a bleeding piece of meat remains hanging on the hook, disfigured beyond recognition. The man throws the skin over to a girl, who brings it to a pit, spreads it out, and rolls it in salt in preparation for the dehairing.

One station further, the skins are stretched in large wooden frames and hung up to dry. Seamstresses sit at work benches, tending to the tanned skins. They tailor capes and heavy winter coats, which, according to the Britoni, can even protect against the strike of lightning.

A cobbler sits with his son under a shed, lining boots and gloves with fur remnants. Behind them, old women weave carpets and blankets. On a canal leading to the bay, the blood drains out of a mighty walrus bull. Two hunters struggle to roll the heavy carcass on its side so they can poke the thick walrus skin in the right place.

The area of the furriers is an open manufactory with dozens of workstations, which are hardly visible from the outside. Anyone who is hired here has no need to worry; the business runs throughout the entire year, the demand never slowing down. The clothing made by the furriers are

sold all over Franka with customers amongst the Spitalians and Anabaptists in Rennes, as well as the Neolibyans on the Southern Coast.

THE COMPOUND

Britoni love their hunting dogs. For decades, they have been breeding tough and resilient animals that are capable of coping in the hinterland. While Gendos have spread all over Europe and displaced dogs in the food chain, Brest still has nearly three hundred of these rare specimens.

They live in the Compound, a large kennel with sufficient room to roam. Corentin and Maelle, a graying, childless couple, take care of the Compound, breeding and training the dogs.

Acquiring a hunting dog requires two things: the trust of the married couple and a generous sum of Drafts. Many hunters collect money from their entire family for years in order to get a hold of one of these precious animals.

Merchants from Southern Franka travel to Brest and often spend months in the inns of L'Arc, with the hope of being able to snag one of these puppies so they can resell it elsewhere. Hunting dogs from Brest can be sold at a generous profit in other parts of Europe. Some Neolibyan trophy hunters are willing to put up to ten thousand Dinars on the table just to own one of this prized species.

DANCE HALL

The dance hall belongs to the youth of Briton. Touched Ones in their adolescence, peasant girls from the surrounding area and milk-faced Orgiastics meet here every Saturday for parties, music and possibly, their first kiss.

Hearts beat in unison with drums and bagpipes, the air vibrating with the tension between the sexes. The hope of finding a future bride or groom turns the cheeks of the adolescents a bright red. They are nervous, shy, but also rude and aggressive, especially when two alphas meet who have fallen for the same girl.

Fistfights are not uncommon. Blood boils over quickly, because the boys know that in just a few weeks they will be consigned to a military camp they have never seen before, perhaps, unable to see their homeland for years to come.

Others try to drown their heartache with distillate, drinking until they break down in tears, only to end up vomiting over a railing into the bay. On Saturday nights, two women from the Balsam House come to make sure that none of the drunk youth fall into the water and drown.

GODASSE

The western part of Brest is so old that everyone has forgotten when the settlement of it began. Houses stand on sinking foundations, which suggests that their origins can be traced back to the Bygones.

The old town lies beyond the bridge that goes over the Penfeld; it is called Godasse, by no means meant as a term of endearment. The houses are rotten and rickety. They are constantly having to be repaired, sometimes reappearing altogether elsewhere because of the gradual decay of the building fabric.

Distant thunder breaks over the rooftops of Godasse. A thunderstorm is rolling in from the ocean. It's morning. An old man steps out in front of his house and breathes deeply, taking in the fresh breeze. He stretches his tanned hand out and catches a few lonely raindrops sailing down from the sky. "It's about to start," he grumbles.

All of a sudden, it starts pouring down buckets and a screeching group of women fishers searches for shelter from the pouring rain.

"Fucking hell. Gotta be tough!" gripes the old man, pulling a hood made of walrus leather over his head and trudging into the storm. He makes his way down the road to the fish market.

As he passes by, he greets his neighbors, who are desperately trying to heave burdensome bags of flour to somewhere dry. Suddenly a sack bursts. The flour powders the road and floats, forming creamy piles of porridge on the surface of puddles. The neighbors scream rings down the street.

"Idiots!", The old man groans to himself. Anyone who lives in Brest has to reckon with this weather; neither rain nor storm keeps the old man from getting his glass of pickled herrings at the fish market and catching up on the latest news from the region.

Godasse is crammed with loners, fishermen and millers. They are members of long-established families that have interwoven themselves into the fabric of Briton's oldest traditions. They have little in common with Unir, the Anabaptists and their religion. Frugal and hardy, they have already seen many a day. Their long lives leave them filled to the brim with truisms.

MILLER'S LANE

Along the Penfeld, the narrow waterway that separates Godasse from Unir, mills can be seen lining both sides of the river. Water wheels of sheet metal and wood extend into the river and move in the stream, generating power to move the millstones inside the mills, and the hammers up and down in the forges.

In Miller's Lane, swords are forged and the shell plating of ships are repaired. All of the ironware used in the farms of the surrounding area is manufactured here. Wheat is threshed and flax is pressed. Miller's Lane is the supplier of everyday goods for the region.

Each mill specializes in the production of a specific product - flour, metal, woven fabric. Parel, the resident Salt Wolf of Godasse, dispatches his hired Scrappers once a month to check gears and make repairs in Miller's Lane. Parel's Mice moan; this work makes up the most boring part of their education.

OPPOLUS' CASTLE

The castle on the southern shore of the bay has always been there, perched for ages on the rocky ledge that juts out into the roadstead. The walls are sturdy and steadfast. For a thousand years, they have defied the forces of nature, stood up to wind and weather and even survived Eshaton.

The politics of the entire region are shaped inside of this solid structure. Brest's castle is the king's ancestral home and the oldest town hall in Briton.

The chiefs of all the Britoni families and tribes regularly pay visits to Oppolus' court to discuss their concerns, divide fishing grounds, and renew alliances. Marriages are performed, disputes are dealt with and the rulings of the high court are handed down. The Hall of Laws is full of wood panels with rune engravings. Written on them is a summary of all the secular customs of the Britoni.

Oppolus' throne room is a trophy hall. Hunting horns, whale bones, furs, maps, harpoons and symbols depicting the Britoni's greatest hunter as king hang all along the walls, stopping just shy of the ceiling.

On the Day of Ganaress, Oppolus hosts a feast here with honored guests from all over Briton. It is a unique opportunity to see the trophy hall and make connections with other Cults in the region.

THE FISH MARKET

Strips of freshly cut pike hang from wooden stands to dry, twisting in the wind. Buckets of blood stream through the grooves of the cobblestones and flow down into the bay. Sharks lie chopped up on the slaughtering block as mackerels fidget in baskets and crabs try to free themselves from the nets with their claws.

A long chain pulls a narwhal ashore. A fisherman cuts

into the whale with his cutlass and pulls the steel straight through its belly fat. Another fisherman takes a hook to remove the innards before puncturing the whale's bladder. Milky fluid bursts out and mingles with the pool of blood. Piskier than the whale's stench, however, is the squadron of seagulls, who screech over the fish market, looking for any opportunity to pursue prey.

Between bird droppings, blubber and herring pickled in brine, fishermen exchange stories of intrigue, the latest rumors and news from all over the region. Banter worthy of the stage can be heard here every passing minute. The Britoni, known for their coarse humor, insult each other and the rest of the world at the same time. Anyone looking for information will quickly find what they are looking for at the fish market.

WHALE OIL REFINERY

A rancid stench blows from the Whale Oil Refinery and settles over the fish market. Huge vats of boiling blubber hang over an open hearth as four men, armed with long copper spoons, stir the oily soup. A fifth drudge uses a large ladle to scoop up the oil that has separated and pours it into a metal duct that leads to a sieve.

The hot oil drips through the sieve, filling canisters that sit in a cooling bath below. A sixth worker takes the cooled oil out of the water and fills it into barrels ready for transport.

An average whale delivers ten thousand pounds of blubber. Cooked and skimmed, the whale oil refiners get five tons of oil per animal. The raw material is used throughout Briton as lamp oil, anointment and fuel for generators.

Behind the vats, there is a secluded part of the Whale Oil Refinery where the most valuable raw material of all is separately handled: gray ambergris that the fishermen have found in the sea. They heave the heavy lump into a melting pot to extract aphrodisiacs and fragrances.

An Ascetic is standing next to a workbench, pounding a dried piece of ambergris into powder. He is making healing paste for the Balsam House.

The ocean gives the Britoni everything they need to live, and the fishermen know how to make use of it.

PAREL'S ISLAND

The Salt Wolf Parel is known all throughout the city. His workshop is located on the Penfeld on a small island in the northern part of the city. Six Mice have taken up residence here, giving him a hand in his workshop or handling minor repairs on his behalf. He took the teenagers under his wing when they were orphans and molded them into Scrappers. Parel is fond of losing himself in recollections of his past, a habit that leaves the young Scrappers vulnerable to death



by boredom. He is supposed to be teaching them about V-groove welds and shaft splines not subjecting them to his stories of all the ones that got away.

The Salt Wolf shakes his head in disbelief. Children always want to know everything, but listening is a request beyond their capacity. In his stories, the truth surfaces between the lines. The Mice should heed the parables and the lessons concealed within! Poli and Monia groan in the background.

Parel has brought the workshop to prosperous heights. In addition to the Mice, he also employs Scrappers who are passing through, trades with Leopards and monitors the Brest power grid, which is connected to the power lines in Morlaix. Everyone from Brest is familiar with the little Scrap Island and the Salt Wolf, albeit some Britoni would love to get their hands around his neck. Parel's sophisticated style and gifts makes him rather popular among women. They long for the charm and wisdom of a refined man, something which always causes a stir amongst jealous husbands.

THE CHARCOAL KILNS

The charcoal kilns are located far from the settlement of Godasse. Dozens of charcoal stacks rise from the burnt-out

hollow. The field is four hundred paces wide. Martell scurries about between the shoulder-high hills, kindling fire to carbonize wood into charcoal.

The collier's eyes are wide open, sleep a word without meaning. Covered in soot from head to toe, he rushes from one end of the trough to the other, gauging the temperature and adding logs to regulate the heat inside the kiln. There's not a moment to rest. His coughs are like a grater and his eyes are steady with concentration; he chews on his fingers until blood drips from the bed of his nails.

He places his hand on a kiln. Damn, not warm enough! He blows and fans the area, running around as if being stung by a swarm of hornets. Burning charcoal has made Martell crazy. Carbonization is an art form that requires constant monitoring. Burn scars and sleep deprivation have left their mark. His arms are covered in blisters, and his bones lift the skin of his haggard figure.

The people of Brest do not trust the charcoal burner. Some Ascetics believe he is in league with the Demiurge. Rowdy teenagers love to use Martell to let off some steam. Sometimes, groups of them come and attack him in the middle of the night, beating him until he is unconscious. The gaunt man does nothing to defend himself.

And the next morning, he is on his feet again, kindling the fire.



PAREL'S ISLAND

- 01. THE WAREHOUSE
- 02. DRY DOCK
- 03. THE BRIDGE
- 04. WORKSHOPS
- 05. PIER
- 06. THE JUNKYARD
- 07. TOOL SHEDS
- 08. SWITCH HOUSE
- 09. OBSERVATION TOWER
- 10. MACHINE HALL
- 11. TRANSFORMER STATION





USHANT

Twenty kilometers off the coast of Briton in the Atlantic, Ushant, the island of the Starfire, protrudes from the wild floodwaters. The waves break meter high against the sharp ridges of this unruly rock, making the arrival by boat impossible.

The only possibility is the southern side. It has a narrow bay and the draught there is deep enough so that boats mustn't fear wrecking or having a ship wall ripped open. The ferry house of Barringer's pack is also located here. Barringer is an Ascetic, who at the behest of the Sublime Vicarent, watches over the island and its most important secret: The Starfire.

Barringer is Vicarent's most loyal man. Twelve years ago, the Ascetic vowed to guard the fire and never let it fall into wrong hands. Barringer's pack is made up of a core of sixty Orgiastics who have sworn to protect the island. They live here, patrolling the beaches, day in, day out, and guarding the iron pan that contains the fire burning within the ancient stone circle.

Barringer's Orgiastics are self-sufficient. A small field behind the boathouse contains a garden with vegetables and there are six cows that provide milk. Chickens, eggs and fishing ensure their survival on this remote island. Once a week, a boat arrives from Brest bringing flour, oil, smoked bacon and seafood.

Life on the island is grim, and the men do their best not to fall prey to cabin fever. There are some spots where they dig pitfalls, lining them with jagged slate. Other places, they bury mines, or set up rusty barbed wire trip traps, in order to capture potential intruders.



The loneliness has made them inventive. Over the last twelve years, they have turned Ushant into a veritable obstacle course, whose perils only Barringer and his pack are aware of. Piece by piece, they have mapped the entire island, dividing it into plots. The Orgiastics have given each trap a name and quiz each other over them in the form of riddles. Their knowledge of how many traps they know by heart is revealed in their ability to solve these verbal puzzles. Even if the Orgiastics use games to keep themselves in good spirits, they are fully aware of the seriousness of their task.

The Demiurge lurks up there in the stone circle. His omnipotence is felt by all who have peered for too long into the black smoke. Three years ago, Ansgar, a red-bearded pack leader from Barringer's troop, lost his patience and wanted to prove once and for all that the Demiurge's fingernail was nothing more than hot air.

Barringer pleaded with him not to reach for the stone, but after almost nine years of serving to protect it, Ansgar was no longer convinced. He wrapped his bare hands around the rock and within moments, he died a painful death.

With Ansgar laid to eternal silence, peace returned to the pack. His death was the terrible proof of their mission's purpose.

Once a year, on the Day of Ganaress, the majority of the pack is allowed to leave the island and go ashore for a week. Barringer and six of his men stay on the island as the last vigil. The rest of the pack takes a break from their service on the island and goes to the harbor to hobnob with the people, get drunk and dance in the sheets.

Each of them pledges a vow of silence to Barringer. They are not allowed to share anything about their lives and work on the island. Not with their monks, not with their parents and not with their loved ones. No exceptions.

The Ascetic and his remaining comrades prepare their winter quarters and check the traps during the holidays. They carve board game pieces and repair the jetty planks. The dark winter on the island is wet and merciless, chilling to the bone. Prayers, meditation and weapon practice are the only things that keep the men's sanity intact.

THE STARFIRE

The Anabaptists know many relics. Unlike the other Cults, they bunker the weapons that were once worn by the generations of Baptists before them. They pray to the garments of deceased Emissaries, and seek the divine Pneuma in the bones of decaying Counsellors. Their chapels are crammed with frills and clutter that only hold meaning for the Neognostics.

The Starfire, however, is not simply magic found in a fairground. It is real. Buried in the crystalline structure of this asteroid fragment is the quintessence of the Primer in its purest form. The Anabaptists can sense the Demiurge inside of it. The black, fist-sized stone was part of the asteroid that struck Franka, leaving the Souffrance crater in its wake. How it got into the hands of the Anabaptists and who was able to bring it to Briton remains unclear. The story of these events has been left untold.

The pilgrimage to Mont Saint-Michel to look upon the stone with one's own eyes was once one of the greatest rites of worship amongst the Anabaptists. Altair, Orphid, Amos, they have all looked into the pitch-black cloud that shrouds the stone. Upon trying to discern its true form, they were confronted with its power, which left them in a reverent silence.

The Starfire must be guarded. It must not fall into the wrong hands. For decades, it was kept within the walls of Mont Saint-Michel. Vicarent's victory over Ganaress, however, attracted attention. The Spitalians ears were pricked as rumors of the Starfire began to circulate. It was no longer safe in the monastic fortress.

Vicarent brought it to a place where no one would be able to find it, making it the greatest mystery of the Anabaptists. Out on the roaring Atlantic Ocean, twenty kilometers from the harbor of Brest, lies a bare, craggy island ridge that can't be found on any map. The coastal sea level of the Atlantic fell, revealing this cliff. Vicarent had a temple built and assigned his best men to keep watch over the Starfire.

For twelve years, it has been awaiting its destiny. Anabaptists serve on the island, keeping the fire safe from discovery. Only those who belong to the Cult are allowed near it.



TOUCHED

The Starfire is riddled with Primer. It wandered through the algid universe in this idiomorphic structure before crashing into the Earth during Eshaton and ushering in the end of the world.

Wrapped within its mass is the formula to reset evolution to zero. Anyone who gets close to it can feel the heat radiating from it. Those who look into the smoke for too long lose themselves in an infinite abyss of black streaks and the extraterrestrial stone's inconceivable form. Those who dare to touch the Starfire have a death wish.

A slight graze is all that is needed; the Primer paves the shortest path to the basic building blocks of the human body. Within seconds, extracellular fluid boils, turning into steaming clouds of carbon. Proteins are shattered and molecular chains are blasted apart.

The Primer penetrates deeper, smashing the genetic foundation of the organic material. It rips apart bases, destroying acids until there is nothing left but a bubbling primordial soup. Fuel for new life.

In this state, the Primer is pure mutagen, a puddle of potentially unlimited possibilities, shrunk together onto the surface of a nuclear seed.

If the Spitalians were to acquire the Starfire, they would discover the origin of evolution — at least, as it may have been 500 million years ago on Earth.

THE VERY BEGINNING

The smoke that surrounds the stone is known to a few on the inside. Spitalians discovered it a few years after Eshaton in the Souffrance crater and were the first to document it. The oldest historical documents and tomes are a testament to this. Time and again, Preservists throughout Europe have searched for remnants of the smoke. Unsuccessfully.

The jet-black smoke penetrates skin cells effortlessly. It enters the nucleus and snakes itself around the double helix of the DNA, where it transposes building blocks, arranging them anew. This is the origin of the Psychonautic condition.

The stone, however, does not alter anything. It destroys biomass, crushing it and tearing it apart until there is nothing left but a degenerate microorganism from which theoretical life can arise once more.

THE CULTS

SPITALIANS



Rennes is the headquarters of the Spitalians in the Northwest. Its castle is armed to the teeth and it serves as a training camp and a field laboratory. Anyone who takes a post here has already circumnavigated Franka at least once, acquainting themselves with the uncertainties that have come to characterize the land. When a Spitalian reaches Rennes, they can by all means claim to have survived the trials of the long journey. Indeed, a memory not so easily forgotten.

But that was the prologue. Now the hard part of the training begins. In Rennes, the Epigeneticists of tomorrow are being cultivated, the most capable selected and trained as field doctors for Franka. The exercises are grueling and only the best make it to the end. Those who don't make the cut are sent on an expedition with the next carrier. Eastward, toward Parasite.

CHRONICLERS



Aquitaine is the true navel of Franka's Chroniclers, but their operations extend as far as Briton, albeit without having a political agenda there. Of considerably more interest to the Chroniclers is the news that makes its way from Britain to Saint-Brieuc. They pay good prices for any information coming out of the Scavenger's domain. Maps and site plans salvaged in Britain are especially sought after. For this reason alone, the Chroniclers maintain a working alcove directly at the port of Saint-Brieuc. Here, they are able to immediately assess and evaluate all of the cargo brought onto land.

The population, however, merely tolerates them. The reign of the Anabaptists over Briton plays its own part, and the rifts between the Cult of Technology and the Broken Cross run deep. Mistrust dictates their every interaction.

HELLVETICS



The alpine brothers-in-arms are a rarity in Briton. Hardly anyone who swears an oath to Hellvetica has stepped foot on the remote peninsula. However, those who do end up coming here do so only as the highest-paid mercenaries. They have a clear mission and sufficient ammunition. Replenishment is not an option. Life here can't hold a candle to the benefits and amenities offered by the Neolibyans on the southern coast.

JUDGES



A judge who travels to Briton only does so as a Chronicler's henchman or bodyguard. The protectorate and its champions of the law have nothing to report on here. Anyone who tries to impose external laws, will quickly find a harpoon jammed up their nostril. It would be best for Judges to keep their mouths shut and simply fade into the background.

CLANNERS



Clans have been blossoming in Briton for ages. The Britoni are the largest among them and are notorious for their blood brotherhood with the Anabaptists. The walrus hunters are fierce men and women who have adapted to the challenges of the northern seas. The ocean is their home, the hunt on the waves their life's purpose.

But the Britoni are not alone. A variety of tribes, about whom little is known, live rooted in their mysteries in the hinterland. Druids pray to their god Cernunnos and plunder merchant caravans on his behalf. Ostracised Ganarids — the former drones of the Pheromancer King Ganaress — have disguised their true origins and secretly live amongst the Britoni.

In the countless farmhouses and villages, one can easily go underground and take on a new identity.

SCRAPPERS



Saint-Brieuc is the Scrapper nest supreme. Franka's last great treasure trove is here, and nearby Britain is, with all of its promises, rather alluring. For the mechanics and tinkers in Briton, the work never ends. These limitless opportunities make it possible for Scrappers to earn a few extra Drafts wherever they turn up in Briton. Salt Wolves, Mud Crabs, and Trash Whales share the Northwest with each other, and members of this Cult can be found in almost every town.

There are also the oil platforms out on the Atlantic. Scrappers who find work there have successfully proven their loyalty to the Chroniclers. As a result, they are highly regarded and find themselves in good favor when exchanging artifacts.

NEOLIBYANS



Aquitaine acts as an invisible border, which the African Cult of Traders, time and time again, cannot seem to slip across. The Frankish Cluster vehemently fights against any Neolibyan movement from the South and tries to sabotage the Lion's business on the northwestern coast. The aftermath of the failed Operation Mirage is palpable, and the political interaction between the two cults manifests itself in an ongoing trade war.

Once again and stronger than before, the Chroniclers rally against the Neolibyans and their urge to expand. Only a few are able to make it to Briton where they set up trading posts.

SCOURGERS



Scourgers are on the front lines, guarding black Scrapper crews coming from the South and providing them with covering fire when things get serious. Staking out territory defended by both the Resistance and the Chroniclers proves impossible for them. Beyond Toulouse, the power of the Scourger pack is nothing more than a distant yelp.

ANUBIANS



The Jackal's followers travel over Lisbon to the northwest coast of Franka. They have discovered the Leopards' route and arrive as stowaways in a realm where the sound of Psychovores fades away into the distance. Something has lured them here. They've heard of the strange megalithic fields up here in the North and the visions received in Carnac. Are these signs that the fulfillment of the Jackal's prophecy is approaching?

JEHAMMEDANS



The ram has no power in the Northwest. No tent towers reaching up towards the sky, no pastures where sated herds graze. The Jehammedans lag behind. Their best chance of getting into this region is as scouts. They have to disguise themselves, so as not to get caught between the fronts. Even though the conflict between Anabaptists and Jehammedans is nominally over, the hatred persists with no sign of wavering any time soon.

APOCALYPTICS



The migratory birds have difficulty building nests in Briton. On top of being surly, the Britoni are also loyal to the Anabaptists. The flocks in the backcountry are often just loose formations, each having fewer than a dozen members. Anyone who deals in Burn is challenging death to a game that can rarely, if ever be won. The laws are tough and the land has been overrun by Spitalians. If anything, the business here is limited to harlotry and gambling. Apocalyptic have also found a market for their muscle power.

ANABAPTISTS



Briton is teeming with Anabaptists. It is the sacred ground of the Cult. Each village and each outpost has its own chapel. The wheat, cultivated by diligent Ascetics, is vital for the population. Franka's granary — the lifeline for cities such as Aquitaine, Toulouse, Brest, Saint-Brieuc and Rennes — is located here. Without the cult of the Broken Cross, the city would cease to function. Orgiastics have formed a militia, maintaining order in almost all of the villages in the area and driving unwelcomed travelers from the streets. Since Vicarent's victory over Ganaress, they are the undisputed patron saints of Briton and a warm reception awaits them at every door.

PALERS



The Northwest is full of secrets that whet the appetites of every Paler. A devil has closed Britain's borders. Argyre. Every Paler in Hybrispania knows his name. It echoes with absolute evil. The Scavenger sits on the throne, a throne which is reserved for true gods. Again and again, the cave dwellers crawl out of their bunkers in the Southwest and set off on the arduous journey across the Pyrenees. They make their way to the North to stand up to the Marauders.



RUMOR MILL

Each trade route, hunting post or fish market is a smorgasbord of the latest news. A network built on rumors and information, providing knowledge about the region, the land and its people. Their goals and motivations. In a world, where news travels by word of mouth, these hubs are essential for navigating the political intrigues and figuring out which side best serves one's interests.

Today foreshadows the events of tomorrow. The sentiments and drivel of the locals is the key to preparing for imminent dangers and invaluable when it comes to making the right decisions. Briton is like any other place. A cauldron of unshakable impressions that can only be sorted out with a bit of social acumen and a few glasses of mead. Both mixed together allows for a more accurate picture to be painted. As elsewhere, not every piece of information is reliable, not every rumor has the truth at its core. People tend to exaggerate. Personal touch eclipses factual content, inflating stories into sensations.

Characters from outside of the region who are coming here for the first time have to learn to separate fish stories from facts. The game master should use the rumor table to give the characters the opportunity to compare informa-

tion they have overheard and check its validity.

Each player should secretly be given some of these rumors before the game begins so they are able to develop the personal background of their character. This will also encourage them to follow clues on their own hook.

It does not matter if some players know the same rumors. This only substantiates their potential truth. The rumors can be helpful (1) for fueling character motivation, (2) for developing your own adventures, or (3) as a prelude to subsequent campaigns.

RULES: Let every player perform an action roll on INT+Legends before the game begins. Characters from Briton receive +1D on this roll. Anabaptists, Clanners, Spitalians, Palers and Chroniclers can credit their background "network" to it. Clanners of the Britoni, Anabaptists, Spitalians, Palers and Chroniclers may choose whether they want to add the bonus dice from "Network" or from "Secrets" to the roll. Every successful roll is rewarded with 1 piece of information from the rumor mill category "Success". Players get a special rumor from the following trigger lists to be determined by the number of triggers they have rolled.

SUCCESS

- ◆ Briton is the land of the Anabaptists. There are no Pheromancers here; the Orgiastics made sure of that.
- ◆ The entire northwest flank of Franka is chock-full of artifacts buried in the Atlantic Ocean. Scrappers have been discovering valuable finds. They build primitive submersibles and small submarines in order to reach the bottom of the sea and get a hold of artifacts.
- ◆ The Spitalians have several platoons stationed in Rennes. Something big is supposedly on its way, which is why more and more new recruits swash their way from the South to the northwest coast.
- ◆ A Chronicler had a restless three weeks in the inn in Carhaix.
- ◆ The House of Atonement in Vannes is the gateway to hell.
- ◆ The final battle between the Anabaptists and the Demiurge is approaching and it will take place in Briton.
- ◆ The Salt Wolves, Briton's Manufacturers, generate electricity in Morlaix.
- ◆ The Anabaptists killed all of the Apocalyptic in Briton.
- ◆ Vicarent the Sublime is immortal.
- ◆ Vicarent the Sublime washed himself in Ganaress' blood. While bathing, a linden leaf fell on his shoulder, leaving one spot on his body vulnerable to attack.
- ◆ The Spitalians have experimented on people. The survivors of their tinkering are called Ganarids.
- ◆ The caramel sauce in Brest is exceptional.
- ◆ Monsters and creatures who emerged from the depths of the earth live in the Atlantic.
- ◆ Dogs can be purchased in Brest, but the price is steep.
- ◆ Stay away from Burn, or you'll find yourself in the afterlife faster than you can inhale the devil's brew.
- ◆ The Day of Ganaress is the largest holiday in the land. A massive parade takes place in Brest, and the festivities attract thousands of visitors from all across Briton. If you are looking for contacts, you will immediately find them there.

1 TRIGGER

- ◆ In the megalithic field of Carnac, people are struck by strange visions. Anubians try to uncover the meaning of these visions.
- ◆ Yasen the Merciful, Emissary of Rennes, is a dangerous man and the spiritual leader of Briton's Anabaptists.
- ◆ Oppolus, King of the Britoni, has ruled Brest for forty years. He is said to be in exceptional health and a man of tremendous foresight.

2 TRIGGERS

- ◆ Leopards in Lisbon look after Aquitaine. In return, they hope that the Chroniclers will provide them information about the sea route to Gaelic and an assessment of potential Artifact sources. The Leopards want to forestall the arrival of Neolibyans and their Scrapper troops from the South. They are trying to stake out territory before the raiders take over everything and incorporate it into their realm.
- ◆ Several oil platforms still produce Petro on the high seas. The Chroniclers in Aquitaine keep this information under wraps, relying solely on a loyal core of European Scrappers that they hire for drilling. Their greatest fear is that the knowledge could fall into the hands of greedy African raiders.
- ◆ The Druids, a clan of forest dwellers in the Loire forests, make life difficult for the trade caravans traveling between Aquitaine and Briton. Robberies occur on a weekly basis. The chief of the Druids is said to be an AMSUMO renegade, protecting his followers from drones and Fosters. In need of reconnaissance.

3+ TRIGGERS

- ◆ Palers scurry all over Briton. They are searching for Helios, the Sleeper Prophet. At the same time, a spy operation is underway in Aquitaine. The Palers try to unravel the mystery behind the strange symbols on the ships that washed ashore on the West Coast.
- ◆ The Anabaptists guard their greatest mystery of their cult in Brest: the legendary Starfire.

TIMELINE

2390: Argyre takes Britain by storm. Within a month, all chiefs of Britain have lost their power or been beheaded. Argyre demands that the survivors submit to him completely, ordering them to come to London and rebuild the scorched city. They become his Pictons.

2412: Two nameless Emissaries drag a heavy iron pan to Briton and beg the Orgiastics there for help. They are seriously ill. The Demiurge entered their bodies when they recovered his fingernail from the ground. It lays, stewing in the pan. The mere sight of him alone causes unease. The Emissaries die during the night.

2430: Britons' Clans become more powerful as they come under the influence of the Anabaptists. The Britoni emerge as the strongest tribe and spread from their hometown Brest to the East.

2466: The Anabaptists repair the Cathedral of Rennes and declare it a site of pilgrimage. In the south of the city, the Spitalians open up a camp and connect Rennes to the Northern Passage.

2503: Rennes becomes a cultural center and an apple of discord between Spitalians and Anabaptists. During arduous negotiations, the cults agree to a division of powers. The Anabaptists control the spiritual affairs of the city, while the Spitalians oversee the fortification of the surrounding land and focus on matters of defense.

2518: Ordinateur founds the Cluster of Aquitaine. His calculations lead him to the west coast. Something that is of particular interest to the Chroniclers is floating out there in the Atlantic.

2522: Anabaptists capture Mont Saint-Michel and expand it, making it their largest camp in Franka. The fortress should counter the military dominance of the Spitalians in Rennes. Counsellor Phrike has the Starfire, which had hitherto been hidden in Rennes, brought to Mont Saint-Michel.

2537: Swarms continually carry out attacks along the Northern Passage. Skirmishes with the invading Pheromancers are commonplace. Spitalians and Anabaptists work together to fortify the Passage and keep the lifeline to Borca accessible for troops.

Support amongst the population is growing, especially for the Anabaptists, whose numbers are increasing. Chapels and prayer houses are being built throughout Briton bringing settlers from Borca to the northwestern coast.

2559: Oppolus, a hunter of the Britoni Clan, makes a portentous discovery in the dense forests surrounding Brest. Two emaciated newborns lay abandoned on the ground of a forest clearing without a stitch on. The

hunter doesn't have the heart to leave the boys to their fate and takes them with him. He names them Vicarent and Barringer and returns with them to Brest, where he raises them as his own.

2561: The first of six freighters with strange symbols on their bows lands in Aquitaine.

◇ Oppolus ascends to the throne of Briton after successfully killing a sperm whale on the Atlantic and hauling the carcass to Brest. The hunter moves into the Brest Castle, where he continues to rule his people to this day.

◇ Massive movements of swarms on the Northern Passage take their toll on the Spitalians. Expatriates set out west to cultivate the spore prints for new fields. With an iron will, the Britoni defend themselves against the Sepsis and its intruders. Burners are tracked down and executed. Britoni warriors stand on the side of the Orgiastics in battle. With sword and speargun, they are ready to fight against every single last Aberrant.

2563: More and more, the Britoni marry their daughters off to Anabaptists. Cult and Clan gradually grow together into a singular unit, elevating the Broken Cross into the ruling power of the peninsula over the course of a few years.

2572: Oppolus brings Vicarent and Barringer to Mont Saint-Michel. He expects greatness from his chosen sons and wants to see them grow up in the womb of the Anabaptists. Counsellor Phrike examines the orphans and is visited by emanations. After three days, she dies, but not before proclaiming Vicarent as the Sublime and ordaining him dominion over the monastery fortress.

2573: Helios wakes up according to plan. The Free Spirit knows immediately what he has to do. He assesses the situation. He aims at the ships, but the command bridges do not answer. Something has gone wrong. Helios must go north to find out what has happened. He is still receiving a strong signal, but it comes from somewhere far beyond Britain, somewhere out on the ice barrier.

He rallies a group of Halos and sets off. Helios knows the importance of his mission and how much is at stake. If the freighters do not answer, then it's probably because someone has hijacked them. But who?

2575: The Spital places a bounty on the head of Hernez Vasco, a fugitive Spitalian. According to information from the Preservists, he is hiding in the hills of Briton. Famulancers comb the thicket in search of his secret research bunker. They discover Vasco's corpse and his notes on Leviathanics. The deceased and all of his writings are brought to Borca.

2577: The Great Exodus. After the disastrous Wachsmann-Lacroix expedition, the Anabaptists on the southern coast of Franka retreat and move to Briton. The last wave of settlers reaches the Northwest. No one challenges the superiority of the Anabaptists anymore.

2579: The first Ziggurath is discovered in Bassham. The Tarot of the Apocalyptics provides crucial information. Spitalians, Anabaptists, Judges and Scrappers form a coalition and battle the Pheromancer King Markurant with an unprecedented loyalty to each other. The death toll rises as thousands perish. All reserves are mobilized to take the Ziggurath and smash Markurant's army of drones.

2583: The Anabaptists in Briton make a sinister discovery. Nearly one hundred kilometers northeast of Mont Saint-Michel, a new Ziggurath swells from the ruins of Rouen. Thousands of drones are at work digging up the ramparts and ditches. Ganarids. The faceless army worships and bears the idol of their eponymous Pheromancer King Ganaress.

◆ Arnika discovers the bunker of Helios, but he is too late. His God is no longer in the chamber, as the Halo had hoped. His search begins.

2584: Ganaress ravages the land. Ganaress devours the people. The hopes of the Anabaptists to quell Ganaress before the Pheromancer King casts even more under his spell, fade, vanishing into thin air. Instead, a drone army moves into Briton, paving the way for its master. Village after village falls victim to the aspirations of the Demiurge.

2585: A clash of the titans. After the Spitalians of Rennes refuse to send help, the Anabaptists are left to face Ganaress alone. But instead of entrenching themselves in the fortress, Vicarent decides to confront the Pheromancer King out on the open field. He confides in his stepbrother Barringer, revealing his stratagem to him: The Sublime must make use of the Starfire.

2592: Argyre lures Helios into the trap. The Sleeper Prophet ventures too far into Briton in search of the Black Atlantic. Pictons waylay the Free Spirit and slaughter his Halos. They place Argyre's yoke around Helios' neck and bring him to London where they deliver him to their master.

2593: The signal that Argyre has been waiting for. Karakhan activates the Corresponder and Chernobog leaves East-Borca. The way is clear for the Needles and they can now start the Carbon. The Scavenger must stop the Needles.

2596: Arnika rescues Helios. They flee, going over the ruins of Plymouth to Brest where they seek shelter.

◆ In the autumn of the same year, Argyre places Pictons on Helios' trail. East of the Janus crater, a group breaks off from the rest and enters Protectorate territory. Preservists wipe out the Pictons.

◆ Dr. Vega discovers copies of Vasco's experiments in a locker in Rennes. She compares the notes with her own research results and realizes that the Consultants knowingly withheld information about Leviathanics.

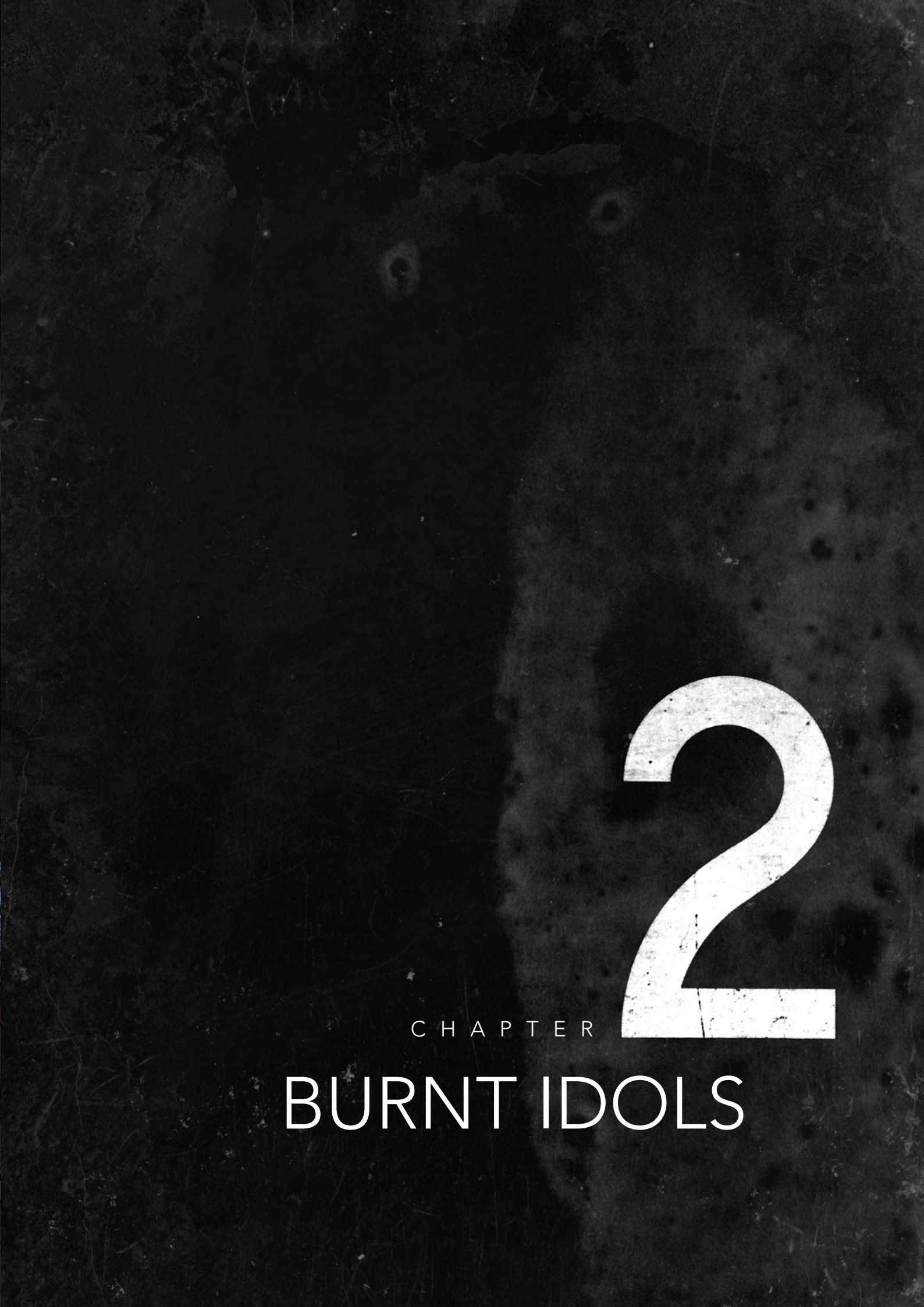
2597: Registrar Ruytman has Dr. Vega undergo an aptitude test and renders the Epigeneticist powerless. He breaks into her lab and becomes privy to the situation. His fears have been confirmed. Dr. Vega is planning a coup. He sends an urgent letter to the Spital, but in Cremant, Preservists of the Red Pack intercept Ruytman's report. Charcutier, the Commando Prime, is inclined to support Vega in her machinations.

◆ On behalf of the Central Cluster, Ampere goes to Briton to get to the bottom of the conditioning of the Pictons and solve the mystery of Jehammed's Will.

◆ Ifrit follows the signal emitted by the Spear of Jehammed, which leads him all the way to Briton. His helmet triggers a near-field phenomenon. Argyre thinks he has located Helios and sends his watchdog Balor along with his Pictons to Brest to capture the elusive Sleeper Prophet.

◆ Code "1616" appears as a signature on all of the internal networks in the Cluster of Aquitaine. The Fragments can not make heads or tails of it. Is someone trying to hack into the static Stream?





2

CHAPTER

BURNT IDOLS



SEED

A flash tears through the night. Vasco rises from his crude charcoal drawings that have consumed him for the last hours. He listens closely. With ten quick steps, he crosses over to the opposite wall of the cramped research bunker, slides open the slotted peephole and scans the area for his guest. A rider dismounts and approaches the bunker through the torrent. The cloak that covers his body is soaking wet. Agitated, Vasco bites his lower lip. He hastily enters a code into the cylinder lock. The massive cast concrete door opens, and the rider enters.

The stranger stands in the doorway, a shadowy silhouette with a cast-iron Anabaptist cross dangling from his neck.

"They are searching the roads for you."

The hooded man steps into the research bunker. His wet boots leave dirty puddles on the dusty lab floor.

"I know." Vasco responds, with a tone of indifference. "It's only a matter of time until they find you here", the man continues.

"Time has no meaning at all, Altair. Did you bring it with you?"

The Baptist nods wordlessly and takes off his wet hood. He opens a button on his leather neck pouch and pulls out

a small, sealed vial. Altair takes two steps towards Vasco. He holds the vial between his thumb and his forefinger up to the warm light of the oil lamp. Black streaks pulse within the vial, swirl across the glass, contract and disperse again. Vasco's pupils follow the black smoke's each and every movement.

"Demiurge." Altair says, stressing every syllable.

Vasco tries to grab the vial, but it disappears into the closed fist of the Baptist.

"Remember the deal!"

With a grin, Vasco leans back and nods. He reaches for a rusty casket on his desk and pulls it jerkily towards himself. A quick flick of the wrist unlocks it. Vasco takes out a smoothly polished piece of amber. Mimicking Altair's earlier gesture, he holds the honey-colored gem up to the light of the oil lamp. A tiny, glittering seed is trapped inside of it. "Czar", Vasco whispers. The Spitalian searches the eyes of the Baptist to see if he has understood.

"This is our only hope."

Carefully, Altair opens his fist and moves the vial closer to the amber.

The black streaks wriggle nervously, swirling about in the glass as if trying to escape. The vial touches the amber,

making a low, clicking sound. The black substance begins to vibrate. Tremulous, it retreats to the other side of the glass completely.

"Your Demiurge is afraid," Vasco scoffs.

The men exchange what they have in their hands.

"When the time comes, you must bring it to another location where its purpose can be fulfilled." With this sentence, Vasco draws himself up and puts the vial into a massive safe located at the other end of the room. Three heavy bolts thud one after the other into the lock.

Altair stares at the amber. "How will I know when the time has come?" the Baptist asks.

"I will give you a sign," Vasco answers.

Skeptical, Altair narrows his eyes to slits. "Your people are searching for you all over Briton. Within three days, they will have found you, and you'll be nothing more than a corpse hanging from the city wall of Rennes."

Vasco says nothing. He looks at the back of his hand, then turns his wrist and studies the palm of his hand. Slowly, his fingers start to make a fist.

"Yes," he says, not impressed in the slightest.

"Take the road to Montpellier. Go and speak to the Jackals there. Tell them I sent you. Get the recipe for the

Marduk oil from them." Then, he raises a warning finger. "Under no circumstances are you to show them the seed."

Vasco looks at the amber in the Baptist's hands. "It ... It cannot cross the water alone. Discordance."

Altair does not understand. He knits his brow.

"Cairo." Vasco's answer is one of brevity.

The Baptist is annoyed and mumbles to himself. He pulls a piece of cloth from his belt and carefully wraps the amber in it. Then, he puts it into his leather pouch, walks past Vasco and approaches his desk.

The Baptist carefully runs his fingers over the charcoal drawings scattered on its surface. The warm light of the oil lamp casts dark shadows on dozens of pictures of a hideous woman screaming.

"The Wretched Hag?" Altair asks absentmindedly.

Vasco nods in silence.

"I have seen this picture a hundred times in Pollen." Altair's gaze roams over to Vasco as the Baptist reads the face of his counterpart trying to search for an answer.

"Who is she?"

Vasco gulps. He breathes in through his nose and his chest rises to answer.

"Mother."

BLACK AUTUMN

The holidays are drawing near. Brest has been in a state of pandemonium for weeks as every morning, ships with fresh catch and caravans from all over Franka arrive to the northwestern coastal town. The preparations for Briton's largest celebration are in full swing, and many merchants from the countryside see the spectacle as a profitable opportunity. The gates of Brest are wide open, and the roads are crowded with ox carts and braying mules.

The Chapel Guard has long since stopped searching every newcomer, instead simply waving the influx of people through. Traders, itinerant preachers, and merchants selling devotional objects are all coming to town. A harmless sort. What could go wrong?

MISSION CONCORDE

The name of the mission is cynical in itself. Harmony. Unity. Doctor Vega's goals are anything but peaceful. She wants the Starfire, and she's willing to get it at any cost. For years, she has been following trails of rumors and questioning people in an attempt to penetrate the secrecy of the Anabaptists.

Her goal is almost within reach. All evidence points to Brest; the Starfire must be hidden somewhere within the city. But where? Brest is far too large to search every basement and rifle through every shrine. Outside of Rennes, her Cult has no authority. The rooms of the Anabaptists and Oppolus' castle are off limits. She cannot even mobilize the Storm Guard. Any movement of platoons on the roads in Briton would serve as a warning to the Anabaptists to get the relic out of Brest and take it to safety.

The Day of Ganaress is approaching and brings with it a stream of thousands of visitors, pilgrims, curious onlookers, merchants and day laborers. The holidays are the perfect time to smuggle a Preservist corps into Brest. Vega is convinced that, sooner or later, some drunk will sink ships with their loose lips.

Vega and the Red Pack have moved into an inconspicuous fisherman's house in Goudasse. They have turned his backyard into their headquarters. From here, they follow up on all the rumors they hear concerning the Starfire.

THE RED PACK

The Preservists assisting Doctor Vega on her mission are a cold-blooded elite corps. They specialize in covert operations. They have survived missions in Borca, Franka and Purgare. Their war experiences are a collection of grotesque affairs. They've waded through seas of bodies together and fought Pheromancers and Psychokinetics alike. At the behest of their commander, they have killed, burnt down villages of Leperos and massacred captive drones.

They are fiercely loyal to their Commando Prime Charcutier and are the embodiment of his vision of what it means to be a Preservist. They employ extreme precision while engaged in their task of procuring the Starfire.

Bascule is the leader and strong arm of the corps. While he acts as Vega's personal bodyguard, the other three Preservists lay low and avoid being seen in the city together.

BASCULE'S CORPS

The three veterans who serve as the rearguard for Bascule and Vega operate in the background and are connected via radio. Their names are Vatenguerre, Grâce and Trancheur, and all three of them are assassins and snipers par excellence. If their leader were about to walk into a trap, they would show up to warn him or extricate him by force.



INVISIBLE

On the other side of Brest, in L'Arc, an invisible power has implanted itself. The Sleeper Prophet Helios and his Halo Arnika stay in an inn and try to make out the lay of the land. For months, they have been staying in town, waiting for the signal that will reveal the way to Helios' goal: salvaging the Black Atlantic. The Sleeper Prophet knows that time is of the essence and Argyre is already closing in on him. One instance of negligence is enough and then the Marauder will send his Pictons over to Briton to catch the fugitive Sleeper.

Under cover of the night, Arnika stakes out the city for his master, trying to detect any suspicious movements. Meanwhile, Helios hides in plain view, moving through the crowds in disguise. Through conversations with traveling merchants and peddlers in the city, he tries to gain information on a special artifact: Jehammed's Will. Helios has Jehammed's spear, one part of the artifact. He needs, however, the disc and the star in order to complete Jehammed's Will.

GANARESS' BLIGHT

Ganarids secretly living amongst the populace of Briton have been suffering from feverish nightmares for weeks. Their thoughts overrun by whispers that keep getting

louder and louder. Some sense a faint echo of their former master or see his shadow in throes of fitful sleep. The Ganarids have no idea what causes this subconscious feeling. They cannot figure out the connection between the tingling of their neck and the whistling sound in the back of their minds, much less, what causes them. However, they all sense that something's happening. That perhaps, a spark of Ganaress' majesty has not been laid to rest. Instead it is lurking out there somewhere, trying to get in contact with his former drone nation.

THE WRATH OF THE RAM

Aries has picked up the scent of his prey and gazes toward the Northwest with smoldering eyes. The Marauder is shaking with rage, his black fleece fumes with hatred. They have stolen his most precious artifact : Jehammed's Will, the star map showing the way to paradise.

Aries' horned minion Ifrit roams the hinterland of Briton in search of the artifact, tracing its unique signature. With each passing day, he gets closer to Brest. The pulse becomes stronger. The Ram has reached his destination, and his revenge will be nothing short of devastating.



BASCULE

PRESERVIST OF THE RED PACK

The mission in Purgare failed. Bascule was subjected to Olgovid's Phenomena for two minutes. Two minutes, which seemed to last an eternity. The Psychokinetic pummeled him with his bare fists, smashing his entire body. Next, Olgovid took the Preservist's head between his claws. Power surges electrified Bascule's body, his jaw shuddered and his teeth broke like glass. The Preservist felt the last spark of life flee from him. He took the only chance he had. Bascule shoved his pistol through the Psychokinetic's force field, the barrel of the gun placed on Olgovid's temple. Then, he pulled the trigger.

Months passed before Bascule regained consciousness. An odyssey lay behind him. He was back in the Red Pack's headquarters in Cremant. Commando Prime Charcutier patched up his best Preservist. Bascule's shattered jaw had been put in splints and reinforced with steel. An iron set of teeth in place of his natural ones. A hydraulic prosthesis jutted out from his elbow, where once his right forearm was. Bascule came back from the dead as a patched-up war machine, riddled with seams and buckles that gave his scarred body a new form.

Time did not permit a recovery, however. Service with the Red Pack knows no other life than one on the front. Charcutier had new orders for his best soldier. Bascule was to round up a corps to join the Epigeneticist Dr. Vega in Briton and assist her in reaching her goals.

The aim of her operation was to recover the Anabaptists' Starfire for the Spitalians. Casualties, par for the course.

Charcutier is aware of his soldiers' bloodlust and knows that he has drilled him to perfection. Once Bascule is in a fit of rage, nothing can stop him. It also helps that the Preservist is great at covering his tracks. The Anabaptists will never know what hit them.

ROLE PLAY

Bascule is the muscle of Mission Concorde. Brutality and mercilessness are his trademarks, torture, his forte. Where other people have a heart, Bascule has a hollowed-out black hole. He has seen the depths of hell and managed to return. As a human machine of destruction, he's equipped with arsenals that match his depravity.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Conqueror, Spitalian, Rank 4: Preservist

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:5 AGI:5 CHA:2 INT:3 PSY:5 INS:5

SKILLS: Athletics 8D, Brawl 8D, Force 10D, Melee 10D, Stamina 9D, Toughness 10D, Crafting 6D, Navigation 8D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 8D, Stealth 9D, Leadership 5D, Artifact Lore 5D, Medicine 6D, Science 5D, Deception 7D, Domination 7D, Reaction 9D, Willpower 11D, Primal 9D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 4, Authority 5, Network 1, Renown 3, Resources 2, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: +3D Leadership (Red Pack)

POTENTIALS: Preservalis 3, Polaris 3, The Last Farewell 3, Could Be Worse 2

INITIATIVE: 9D / 18 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Iron Bite, 5D, Distance 1, Damage 4; Hydraulic Stranglehold, 8D, Strangulation, 1 Trauma per round; Heavy Pistol, 8D, Distance 10/40, Damage 12, Mag. 12, Thunder Strike; Preservalis Sword, 10D, Distance 1, Damage 12

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 10D; Ranged Combat active (Jump for cover), Mobility 7D; Mental, Willpower 11D

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Steel-reinforced Preservist uniform, Armor 4, Sealed (+4S)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 3/22, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 10

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Mustard gas grenades (3), Black marbles (2), Hydraulic arm, Set of iron teeth, Spitalian medal with embedded transponder.

BLACK MARBLES

Souvenirs of Olgovid. As life left the Psychokinetic, two black marbles fell from his dimming eyes. Bascule managed to catch them before losing consciousness. The marbles are incredibly light and it's almost as if one could reach right through them. If pressure is applied, they become heavier, and their density increases hundredfold. Upon being thrown onto the ground, the marble immediately opens up a Rift, engulfing anything within 10 m in absolute blackness. It swallows sound and robs its victims of their senses. Within the Rift, all actions are at a penalty of +4. Bascule holds onto the marbles, keeping them for a special occasion.

PROSTHETIC ARM

Bascule's hydraulic arm can unleash enormous strength. Per combat round, Bascule's added trait of BOD+Force rises by +1 (up to a maximum of 20). The Preservist can tear apart steel plates or bend iron bars. Once the maximum capacity is reached, the pressure pistons revert to their starting position. The hydraulics is not added to Bascule's melee damage.

POTENTIALS

POLARIS

PREREQUISITE: INS+Primal 10

The Preservist's will is a guiding light. His brute force inspires his men. Spitalians, who fight alongside the Preservist regain 1D6 Ego when completing a mission or killing a common enemy. Once per day/per Potential Level.



DOCTOR VEGA

THE EPIGENETICIST

Consultants are not immune to the seductive force of power. They cling to their position instead of the truth. Paralyzed by their desire for power, they destroy the principles of science. In disgust, Dr. Vega abandons her analyses. She sacrificed her life to the Spital, only to end up banging on doors that will never open. Vasco's knowledge is kept under wraps, Spitalian armies are led by half-truths, and poorly equipped troops die by the hundreds in suicide missions all over Europe.

The Starfire is the only way to put an end to this. If Vega's assumptions are correct and the Anabaptist relic actually contains pure Primer matter, she can use it to prove the incompetence of the Consultants. For decades, they have ignored evidence, wasted resources and weakened the unity of the Cult by eroding work groups and responsibilities. Vega wants a complete reformation, a full militarization of the Cult with only the Preservists having the power to make decisions. Clear targets, clear tasks.

Charcutier, who was alerted of Vega's existence by Ruytman's urgent letter, is impressed with the extremist. He has Kranzler's permission to support Vega without informing the Provost of the Epigeneticist's goals.

Instead, he has sent his elite team, the Red Pack, to Briton for support.

They are supposed to first get rid of Vega's political enemy Ruytman and then start searching for the Starfire. The more pressure Vega exerts on the Consultants, the more she is able to distract them from Charcutier's studies in Cremant, making it easier for the Commando Prime of the Old School Preservists to conduct his secret experiments.

ROLE PLAY

Vega is the brain of Mission Concorde. When it comes to her ideology, she's ruthless and destructive. The Consultants are interfering with her vision of the Spital's future. Vega would do anything to unmask the leaders and sound the bell for a new Spitalian era. She's convinced that humankind can conquer the Primer. This, however, can only be accomplished with a different system, and the dawn of any revolution is a bloody red.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Hybrispania, The Heretic, Spitalian, Rank 4: Epigeneticist

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:2 AGI:3 CHA:3 INT:6 PSY:4 INS:3

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Brawl 3D, Melee 5D, Stamina 5D, Toughness 4D, Navigation 5D, Dexterity 7D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 6D, Stealth 5D, Expression 6D, Leadership 6D, Negotiation 6D, Artifact Lore 9D, Engineering 8D, Focus 10D, Legends 8D, Medicine 11D, Science 11D, Deception 6D, Reaction 7D, Willpower 7D, Perception 6D, Survival 4D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 4, Authority 5, Network 3, Renown 4, Resources 4, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: Supreme command over the Storm Watch of Rennes.

POTENTIALS: Brainwave 2, Marathon 2, Tunnel Vision 2

INITIATIVE: 7D / 20 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Injector Gun, 5D, Distance 1, Damage: special, Piercing (4);

Combat Knife, 6D, Distance 1, Damage 4, Smooth Running (2T)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 7D,

Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 7D, Mental (Willpower) 7D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Spitalian uniform, Armor 2, Epigeneticist version, Sealed (+6S)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/14, Flesh Wounds 8, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Research notebook (Secrets +2), Injector gun with tracking display, Vials of adrenaline (6), Vials of neurotoxin (4), Vials of general anesthetic (10), Transponder (4). Portable field analysis kit.

AHEAD OF HER TIME

Vega sees connections in the Primer's meta-conduct that other Spitalians have so far missed. Many of her results and findings are similar to those of Hernez Vasco, Vega's intellectual idol.

She's convinced that Vasco was even closer to the truth than she is today. She keeps her analyses and reports in a leather research notebook that she always has on her. Her findings are so shocking that they could provoke an upheaval within the Spital if they were to become public knowledge.

INVENTORY

INJECTOR GUN

Vega's injector gun can easily be hidden and is equipped with various vials that can be exchanged with the touch of a finger. With it, Vega can inject highly effective neurotoxins as well as potent anesthetics. An adrenaline injection immediately restores 1D6 Ego. The injector is also equipped with a needle that inserts a transponder into the target's body. Vega can use it to mark a subject and pinpoint them using the display on the injector gun.



AMPERE

THE STREAMER

This damn mission is driving Ampere crazy. The journey from the Protectorate to Briton took him six months, a journey during which he circumnavigated all of Franka. Ampere is haggard and overwhelmed. In Carhaix, he was supposed to meet a group of Shuttlers who would join him and help him carry out his investigation. Nothing! For three weeks, he was stranded in this shithole. He contacted Aquitaine every day to ask for reinforcements. The answer was always the same: Score too low. All forces were in the field at the moment. Ampere was told he had to continue on his own. In the end, even his radio broke down.

Alone? The Chronicler runs a hand through his greasy hair, his face a study in desperation. How on earth is he supposed to complete this task on his own? Unveil the secret surrounding Jehammed's Will? Uncover Argyre's plans?

All that Ampere has found out so far is the result of endlessly interrogating captured Pictons. Argyre is looking for an artifact called Jehammed's Will. However, he knows from radio transmissions intercepted in the Central Cluster that the Needles in East- Borca are looking for this artifact as well. Ampere is afraid that Jehammed's Will has the power to locate the Last Server. Should this knowledge fall into the hands of the Needles, the renegade Chroniclers would be able to uplink to the Last Server and reboot the Stream. The Needle Towers? Could they be the uplink? If Ampere's onto something, it might already be too late. According to all of his calculations, Jehammed's Will is in Briton. How can Aquitaine allow itself to slip into standby and completely disregard a situation like this? Ampere can't make sense of the world anymore.

ROLE PLAY

Ampere is erratic and exhausted. This mission is beyond his capabilities. He has learned to gather information and crack mental conditioning, but he doesn't take to physical altercations and violence.

The Cult has forsaken him on the most important mission of his career. He desperately needs support and doesn't care which camp it comes from. If necessary, he would even be willing to work with Palers, seeing as the world might end tomorrow. He is in a state of panic. He has to leave Carhaix and make it to Brest. Maybe, the current situation is better there.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Borca, The Mediator, Chronicler, Rank 4: Streamer

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 1, AGI 3, CHA 3, INT 5, PSY 4, INS 3

SKILLS: Brawl 2D, Melee 2D, Dexterity 4D, Mobility 4D, Expression 4D, Negotiation 5D, Artifact Lore 7D, Engineering 7D, Focus 7D, Legends 7D, Cunning 7D, Reaction 7D, Willpower 7D, Orientation 5D, Perception 6D, Empathy 7D

BACKGROUNDS: Renown 1, Resources 2, Secrets 5

SPECIAL: Polygraph

POTENTIALS: Download 3, Fractal Memory 2, Number Cruncher 3

INITIATIVE: 7D / 14 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Streamer glove: 2D, Distance 1, Damage: Dazed (5)

Shocker: 2D, Distance 1, Damage: Dazed (8)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Parry), Melee 2D,

Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 4D

Mental (Willpower) 7D

MOVEMENT: 4m

ARMOR: Chroniclers' suit, Armor 2, First Impression +1D, Source (Level 2), Green Light

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/14, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 7

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Vocoder, Chroniclers' Mask, Draft Printer, Shocker, Tracker. Ampere owns a small notebook in which he collects all of the information that he finds on Jehammed's Will. It also contains a shorthand transcription of the interrogations of captured Pictons.

CHILD OF THE PROTECTORATE

Ampere has never had to leave the Protectorate before. His demeanor and way of thinking have been shaped by everyday life in Borca. Chroniclers call the shots where he comes from. Briton is a world that is alien to Ampere. He doesn't really understand the language, the food is terrible, and Anabaptists and other types of dangers are at every corner. There are no Judges to escort him, all the women are taller and stronger than him, and the awful weather here has given him the worst cold of his life.

Only his sense of duty and a vague misgiving about what he's found out so far keep him from packing his things and returning home.

INVENTORY

POLYGRAPH

Ampere owns a portable polygraph that he can use on anybody within a 10 meter range. Its gauge registers the movement patterns of eyelids and lips as well as microscopic behavioral disorders. It assesses the veracity of a statement and reports it to him as a percentage. The polygraph makes it nearly impossible to lie to Ampere. The Streamer has 4 automatic successes on PSY+Cunning and INS+Empathy when trying to detect lies or spot memetic conditioning patterns.



BALOR

THE CHAMPION

Argyre, the putrescent God, has chosen Balor and given him his baleful eye, enabling him to punish the world with just a gaze. He was the best amongst the Pictons. He fought his way ruthlessly to the top of the Clan and became its uncontested leader. Balor hacked to pieces anyone who objected to his authority and then consumed their heart and brain.

Years ago, Argyre led his chosen one down to the catacombs of his lab; a giant subterranean vault covered in projection walls came alive. Balor saw endless Cadmium-colored skies, evergreens, bright red birds, and people of all different hues. There were kids with women more beautiful than anything Balor had ever seen. Music flooded the hall, enchanting melodies that made Balor's heart boil over with excitement. The Picton couldn't believe what his master had shown him. These picture sequences were images of paradise.

The rotting God leaned close to his warrior and showed him a symbol that suddenly covered all of the projection walls. Two brightly glowing runes: RG.

"They killed the world," Argyre said, and in that moment, Balor knew his task. He was to find the disciples of the RG runes, capture them and bring them to London where they would receive the punishment they so justly deserved.

Year after year, he set out with his warrior, cracking the cells in which the world killers hid and delivering them to his God. Argyre showered Balor and his warriors with gifts, fed them the star food and showed them the most beautiful pictures of a distant past.

However, they were not cautious enough. One of the world killers managed to flee. Argyre's rage knew no bounds, and he turned Balor's descendants into dust. That was the law.

ROLE PLAY

Balor is the champion of the Pictons. He is their chieftain and the mouthpiece of the God they all pray to. All of Balor's emotions are brutal and at the same time, childishly naïve. He is not subjected to the standards of civilization and everything he does can be taken at face value. Those he hates, he mangles; those he loves, he protects with his life. The Maglev Port awakens. The wagons open, and Balor boards them with 30 of his warriors. In an hour, they will reach Plymouth where Helios' tracks can no longer be traced. They have to look for the world killer on the other side of the water.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Destroyer, Clanner: Pictons, Rank 5: Champion

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 4, AGI 3, CHA 2, INT 1, PSY 4, INS 5

SKILLS: Athletics 7D, Brawl 9D, Force 8D, Melee 10D, Stamina 8D, Toughness 9D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 8D, Stealth 6D, Conduct 3D, Leadership 6D, Legends 2D, Cunning 7D, Deception 5D, Domination 7D, Faith 10D, Reaction 9D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 8D, Primal 7D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUNDS: Renown 4, Allies 4

SPECIAL: Argyre's star food: +6 Trauma

POTENTIALS: Bloodthirsty 3, Elephant Skin 2, Marathon 1

INITIATIVE: Reaction 8D / 17 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Fist, 9D, Distance 1, Damage: Dazed (2), Smooth Running (2T)

Balor's Eye, 8D, Distance 25/200, Damage: 16, Loading Delay +1 combat round

Grendel, 12D, Distance: 2, Damage: 12 Out of Control (2), Terrifying (3)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Parry), Melee 10D,

Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 5D, Mental (Faith) 6D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Balor's bone armor and elephant skin, Armor 3

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/18, Flesh Wounds 18, Trauma 14

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Balor's chainsaw is nicknamed "Grendel" and is a terrifying weapon. With a piercing howl, the self-sharpening teeth cut through skin and bones. Balor's Eye. E-Cube Belt (12 E-Cubes).

RED HERRING

The near-field phenomenon that makes it seem as if Helios was in Briton is not caused by the Sleeper Prophet, but by Ifrit, one of Aries' henchmen. The Pictons follow the signature without knowing its source.

INVENTORY

BALOR'S EYE

Argyre has equipped his champion with a unique artifact. The eye on Balor's forehead is a modified Soul Burner. It has a complete cable duct and battery supply, both of which run along Balor's spine and are fueled by his E-Cube belt. The eye has the same effect as a Soul Burner. The reload, however, is delayed by one combat round per shot. The eye can be recharged 12 times before the E-Cubes need to be changed.

POTENTIALS

BLOODTHIRSTY

PREREQUISITE: Picton, star food, INS+Primal 8

Whenever blood is shed, Balor goes wild with rage. If one of his attacks causes Damage, he immediately recovers 1 Ego point. The Picton can use the recovered Ego point in the next combat round for his initiative, thereby exceeding the maximum of 3.

For each point in Potential, he gets 1 additional Ego point above his Ego pool maximum. This is a side effect of Argyre's star food, a hormone cocktail he feeds to his Pictons, making it easier to train them.



MALINESSE

MOTHER OF THE SWARM

She will never forget the torture in the camp. The electroshocks. Eating from troughs. The soundproof room. The darkness. The separation from the supreme consciousness. Malinesse hisses out her hatred through clenched teeth.

Once upon a time, she lived in harmony with Ganaress. Her waking mind wanders off to the other side where she ascends the steps of the Ziggurath on top of which the former king sat on his throne. Malinesse was dying for his caress, for the juice of saliva and the nectar in his sweat. Night after night, she copulated with the Pheromancer King. She was the mother of his swarm. She wanted to hatch generations of his descendants in her belly and flood the world with his likeness.

Suddenly, it was all over. They caught her. Still, she gave birth to Ganaress' heirs, but the Spitalians smashed her swarm against the walls and strangled them. Then, they came for her. They stabbed her with pointed edges and cut her up, only to stitch her back up again. In the end, they severed her connection to the supreme consciousness. Malinesse's chest was a gaping, festering wound. The teats that she had nurtured the descendents of Ganaress with were no longer there. She drowned in her own screams in a soundproof cell.

For a long time, Malinesse felt nothing. The present, nothing more than a withered caricature of the glorious time she had spent with her king. Suddenly, however, she woke from this murky dream. Something is approaching the coast, bigger and more powerful than Ganaress had ever been. The orders are simpler, their structure is incomplete, but the urges they contain within them are overwhelming. Copulation. Separation. Division. Proliferation.

Malinesse smells the life force rising from the ocean and is ready to receive this new seed and become one with it.

ROLE PLAY

Malinesse grew up in the heart of the Earth Chakra, copulated with the Pheromancer and gave birth to dozens of drones before the Spitalians got hold of her. When her stigma fell silent, she got rid of her primitive first language. She learned words, adapted her etiquette to the reality of the camp and observed her torturers. She knows that the Spitalians are afraid of what's lurking in the ocean. Malinesse, however, is not. When the time comes, she will jump into the sea and merge with the Black Water. Then, her stigma will bloom again, and all the Ganarids of Briton will follow her into the sea.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Creator, Clanners: Ganarids, Rank 5: Idol Bearer

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:2 AGI:3 CHA:4 INT:2 PSY:3 INS:5

SKILLS: Athletics 3D, Melee 3D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 7D, Force 4D, Crafting 7D, Mobility 7D, Stealth 7D, Conduct 6D, Seduction 6D, Legends 6D, Cunning 6D, Faith 8D, Reaction 5D, Empathy 9D, Orienteering 9D, Perception 9D, Primal 10D, Survival 9D, Taming 7D

BACKGROUNDS: Secrets 2

SPECIAL: Transponder Implant

POTENTIALS: First Language 3

INITIATIVE: 5D / 20 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Biface, 3D, Distance 1, Damage 2, Impact (1T)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 7D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Faith) 8D

MOVEMENT: 3m

ARMOR: Leather robe and rags, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 12/16, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 5

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Malinesse owns nothing but the rags she wears and her idol mask. If she wears Ganaress' mask, it works like a Talisman (+3D to Faith rolls). At the same time, her voice becomes three octaves deeper, sounding throaty and masculine. In this state, she attracts all insects, and Ganarids within a 300-meter range become subconsciously aware of her.

CAUGHT

As the only Ganarid in the entire camp, Malinesse was never set free. Instead, she remains under Dr. Vega's control. Three weeks ago, she was dragged from her cell and brought into a foreign city under the cover of the night. The closer she gets to this place, the clearer the beckoning of the Black Water becomes to her. She is suddenly set free in Brest. The Spitalians use a transponder implant in Malinesse's neck to watch the movement patterns of the drone. Vega assumes that Malinesse can track the Starfire and thus, will lead Mission Concorde to success naturally. However, the drone reacts to something completely different. Leviathanics calls for her ...

POTENTIALS

FIRST LANGUAGE

PREREQUISITE: Drone,

INS+Primal 4, INS+Orienteering 4

Malinesse detects the language of the Ether. In every waking moment, her sharpened senses communicate with the Chakras. She doesn't broadcast signals anymore, though. The primal scraps of language are a hail of sensory impressions, distances and orders, which are shared between the Pheromancers, drones and swarms of Franka. Those who can decipher the first language will never become lost. They will always find running water and be able to sniff out food. A character with this potential gets 1 automatic success to INS-Skills per potential point.



OPPOLUS

KING OF THE BRITONI

It was a misty spring morning in 2559. Oppolus had just become a man and was chasing a majestic stag when he suddenly saw a small bundle in the wet undergrowth. Two abandoned babies lay on a forest clearing, frost-bound and malnourished, neither one of them much older than a year. For a short moment, he wanted to turn his back and forget having ever been witness to the sight of them.

However, the hunter couldn't simply leave the children to such a fate.

He brought them to Brest and named them Barringer and Vicarent. He raised them as if they were his own. One was frail, quiet and pious; the other, strong, willful and wild. The two boys were like two sides of a coin when they argued, laughed and played.

Oppolus' foster sons brought him a sense of fulfillment his own future children would never provide him with. He spent every day with the boys. He taught them to fish, hunt and set traps. Even after he ascended to the king's throne, he still spent every free hour with them. When they reached their thirteenth year, he gave them to the Anabaptists for training and turned his attention to his ancestral seat. When Vicarent and Barringer returned to Brest with the corpse of Ganaress years later, Oppolus realized the scope of his decision not to abandon the children in the forest. His chosen sons had redeemed Briton and freed its people. Oppolus' regency has been sacrosanct ever since. The Britoni recognize the wisdom and foresight in his kingship and support him in all of his decisions. Thus, Oppolus continues to reinforce the alliance between the Anabaptists and his Clan, shaping the history of the land like no one before him.

ROLE PLAY

The sagacity of a long life is written on Oppolus' face. His eyes have looked upon Briton for 60 winters, and he has been ruling this area for almost 40 years. The ruler appears much younger than he is. Since the passing of his last wife, his actions have been ruled by reason and a calm disposition. When he speaks, every syllable is as heavy as a millstone. He no longer finds it necessary to prove himself. His deeds speak for him, and he prefers to strike his enemies with disregard instead of rage. The only thing that upsets the king is malicious gossip about his foster sons. Indeed, this is the reason why he has declared Yasen the Merciful his personal archnemesis.

The Emissary, however, sees the King of the Britoni as a pawn who will continue to cling to his throne as long as Vicarent, his son from the forest, is there to protect him.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Traditionalist, Clanners: Britoni, Rank 5: King

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:4 AGI:5 CHA:5 INT:4 PSY:3 INS:4

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 8D, Force 8D, Melee 9D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 8D, Crafting 5D, Navigation 5D, Mobility 4D, Projectiles 7D, Conduct 8D, Expression 7D, Leadership 9D, Negotiation 7D, Focus 6D, Legends 5D, Medicine 3D, Cunning 4D, Faith 6D, Reaction 6D, Empathy 11D, Orienteering 8D, Perception 7D, Survival 8D, Taming 7D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 5, Authority 6, Network 4, Renown 6, Resources 5, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: +3D CHA+Leadership (Britoni)

POTENTIALS: Asceticism 1, Elephant Skin 2, Stony Calm 3

INITIATIVE: 6D / 12 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Whetted harpoon, 7D, Distance 5/15, Damage 9

Britoni Longbow, 7D, Distance 15/60, Damage 11

Whaler knife, 9D, Distance 1, Damage 5, Smooth Running (2T)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Block), Brawl 8D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 4D; Mental (Faith) 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Walrus leather harness, seal skin and elephant skin, Armor 5

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/12, Flesh Wounds 16, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Oppolus' bodyguards. Eight members of the Chapel Guard chosen by Vicarent who have sworn to protect Oppolus. Oppolus does not know who his bodyguards are. The swath of cloth his foster children were wrapped in when Oppolus found them in the woods.

OPPOLIDS

The eternal king suffers from his own inadequacies. None of his children that share his blood can meet his harsh gaze or match the heroics of his foster sons. He cannot stand to be near them. He hates their boastful nature and their need to be admired. His children soil the legacy of his rule. He would prefer to drive them out of Briton, banishing them forever. However, he's bound by his blood, and so he endures their self-indulgence, even if their every action is a source of shame.

STARFIRE

Oppolus knows that the Starfire is hidden on Ushant. Years ago, he banned the fishermen of Brest from stepping foot on the island and fishing in the waters around it.

POTENTIALS

STONEY CALM

PREREQUISITE: Focus

Wisdom is embedded in his bones and his gaze is one of eternal serenity. During negotiations and arguments, Oppolus' calm fills the room, taking the wind out of the sails of flying tempers and pouring oil on troubled waters.

Per point of the Potential, the king gets +1 on all rolls on CHA+Conduct and CHA+Expression to mediate a conflict between arguing parties and convince them to look at the situation from his standpoint.



SOUFIANE

THE LEOPARD

The Bank of Commerce has devoured Soufiane's home village. One morning, he saw the Scourgers dragging the shaman to the center of the village. They tore his clothes and jewelry off of him and beat him senseless. Then, the pack invaded the surrounding houses and dragged all of the valuables out of the dwellings. When they were done, they went for the girls. The screaming was unbearable. Soufiane was at a loss for how to defend himself. He screamed at the Scourgers to stop, but the only response Soufiane got was the butt of a rifle that left his cheekbone shattered.

Months later: Aribat, support base for Gibraltar and the Hybrispania campaign. Soufiane heard about a network of merchants who unbeknownst to the Bank of Commerce, traded with the enemies of the Neolibyans. Without giving it a second thought, Soufiane joined the Leopards.

The first years went well. He made enough Dinars to buy his own launch, which allowed him to make the leap to Lisbon. From there, he smuggled African ammunition and rifles to the camps of the Guerreros. An informer in the hinterland introduced him to the Chroniclers who also were in need of his services. Soufiane's network branched out, and Aquitaine became his client.

In Franka, he heard stories about legendary Britain and Gaelic. A territory where no Neolibyan had tread before? Soufiane knew what his next destination would be: Briton – the perfect starting point for an expedition to the North. For three years now, he has been commuting between Brest and Saint-Brieuc. He has undertaken three successful looting trips to Brighton so far. Next destination: Gaelic. Not so fast. While at an inn in Brest, he hears disturbing news. A Neolibyan is supposed to be in town. Soufiane is petrified, his face set in grim lines. Has the Bank of Commerce beaten him to his goal? He must find out if the rumor is true before someone thwarts his plans. There's no time to waste.

ROLE PLAY

Soufiane has left Africa behind, dedicating his life instead to Franka. His abhorrence of the Bank of Commerce runs deep. The Leopard has a stockpile of earthy language and treats every Neolibyan he encounters with sheer contempt. Every African who shows up in the Northwest is a source of concern for him.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Visionary, Clanners: Leopard, Rank 3: Scout

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:2 AGI:2 CHA:5 INT:3 PSY:2 INS:4

SKILLS: Brawl 4D, Force 4D, Stamina 3D Toughness 3D, Dexterity 6D, Navigation 6D, Mobility 5D, Projectiles 5D, Conduct 7D, Expression 7D, Negotiation 8D, Artifact Lore 5D, Engineering 5D, Focus 5D, Legends 6D, Cunning 6D, Deception 4D, Faith 5D, Reaction 4D, Empathy 5D, Orienteering 8D, Perception 8D, Primal 7D, Survival 8D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 1, Network 6, Resources 2, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: -2D when negotiating with Africans.

POTENTIALS: Danger Sense 1

INITIATIVE: 4D / 10 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Pistol, 5D, Distance 10/40, Damage 9, Mag. 12

Assault Rifle, 5D, Distance 30/120, Damage 11, Mag. 30

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 5D, Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 5D, Mental (Faith) 5D

MOVEMENT: 2m

ARMOR: Vest made of buffalo leather and patched clothing, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/10, Flesh Wounds 6, Trauma 4

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Soufiane's launch, Nautical charts, Contraband: assault rifles, hunting rifles, revolvers, pistols, ammunition with 5 different calibers. Soufiane's hot goods are stored in steel boxes in the cargo hold of his launch. The boxes are sealed and welded to the ship's floor.

LAUNCH

Soufiane's high-speed launch has room for 30 passengers, and he can reach any port in Briton with it. The boat is also useful in shallow waters. Below deck, there are all kinds of ammunition and rifles, which he smuggles out of Africa and sells all over Franka.

DEBTS

On his trips to Saint-Brieuc, Soufiane has left many an invoice unpaid. He has also cheated Scrappers on several occasions — Scrappers who risked their lives salvaging dirt from the slush of Brighton for him.

For months, Soufiane has laughed away his debts and staved off the Scrappers, but the mood has recently hit rock bottom. A hand full of Trash Whales and Mud Crabs want to get even with the snappy Leopard; they're just waiting for the next time he enters the Scrapper port.

INVENTORY

NAUTICAL CHARTS

The Leopard has spent all his money on nautical charts that supposedly show the way to Gaelic and contain the most important Bygone cities and towns. He's convinced that the Marauder who strikes terror in the hearts of those heading towards Britain has not yet reached Gaelic. Soufiane needs a powerful crew brave enough to set out with him to make the find of their lives. For cash, of course. For Drafts that Soufiane doesn't have ...



PAREL

THE SALT WOLF

The women of Brest love Parel, and he loves them, too — all of them. The Scrapper really doesn't know which one he should begin with. Parel makes them all happy when he returns from his forays under water where he collects trinkets of the Bygones. How incredibly beautiful these things all are! The gold, the faded pictures, the maps, the jewelry, the cutlery, beautiful silver and gems - these shining stars of an era long past have made Parel rich. He is a legend amongst the Scrappers of Briton, and many of them are envious of his little submersible, which takes him to the bottom of the sea to salvage treasures from a forgotten world.

When he generously treats everyone to distillate in the inns or adorns himself in the most beautiful jewelry, the hearts of all the girls in his presence begin to beat ever more briskly. Many a Britoni would love to crack Parel's jaw or drown him down at the beach for his extravagance, but, alas, the Scrapper is under Oppolus' protection.

Morbihan, a daughter of the King of the Britoni, has lost her heart to the Salt Wolf and wants nothing more than to marry the fly-by-night Scrapper. However, Parel has no desire to settle down. After all, his love is boundless and can't be limited to just one.

Week after week, Oppolus calls the Scrapper before his throne, trying to get him to plight his troth to her. Parel squirms like a worm between the king's gnarled fingers. Neither money nor demands can hook the Salt Wolf.

Instead, he holes himself up on his island and maintains the power supply lines, hoping that the longer he is absent, the sooner he'll be forgotten. However, the past keeps returning to haunt the Scrapper. Suddenly, a former lover shows up in Brest and signs on in the workshop of the Salt Wolf. Parel's world is turned upside down. How will he ever be able to deal with all this mess?

ROLE PLAY

Parel constantly finds himself in a trouble of his own making. That the Salt Wolf's behavior puts a spell on married women is a law of nature. However, the profligate life he leads could prove deadly for him any day. Parel's affairs have long since been an open secret in the inns of Brest. Oppolus' protection will not be able to keep the imminent day of reckoning at bay forever.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Adventurer, Scrapper, Rank 5: Manufacturer (Salt Wolf)

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:2 AGI:5 CHA:4 INT:4 PSY:2 INS:3

SKILLS: Stamina 3D, Toughness 3D, Crafting 8D, Dexterity 7D, Projectiles 6D, Navigation 8D, Conduct 6D, Expression 8D, Seduction 9D, Artifact Lore 8D, Engineering 9D, Legends 6D, Science 9D, Cunning 6D, Deception 3D, Reaction 3D, Willpower 3D, Empathy 5D, Orienteering 4D, Perception 5D, Primal 4D, Survival 5D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 5, Authority 3, Network 4, Renown 5, Resources 5, Secrets 1

SPECIAL: Known all over town, -3D Stealth within the confines of Brest.

POTENTIALS: Brainwave 2, Truffle Pig 2

INITIATIVE: 3D / 8 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Bygone Taser, 6D, Distance 5/10, Damage - Dazed (8)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 5D, Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 5D, Mental (Willpower) 3D

MOVEMENT: 3m

ARMOR: Salt Wolf parka, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/6, Flesh Wounds 6, Trauma 4

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Fiancé, World Map, Ambergris Perfume and Aphrodisiacs (+1S to rolls on Seduction), Stimulant (regenerates d6 Ego once), Sealed instant coffee (regenerates 1 Ego once). Parel's workshop: access to hoist, dry dock, heavy current and tools for extensive repairs.

FIANCÉ

Parel's submersible. A small submarine for up to six passengers. Equipped with an oxygen turbine for eight-hour dives, it can reach a maximum depth of 600 m. Additionally, an airlock makes it possible to leave the submarine underwater.

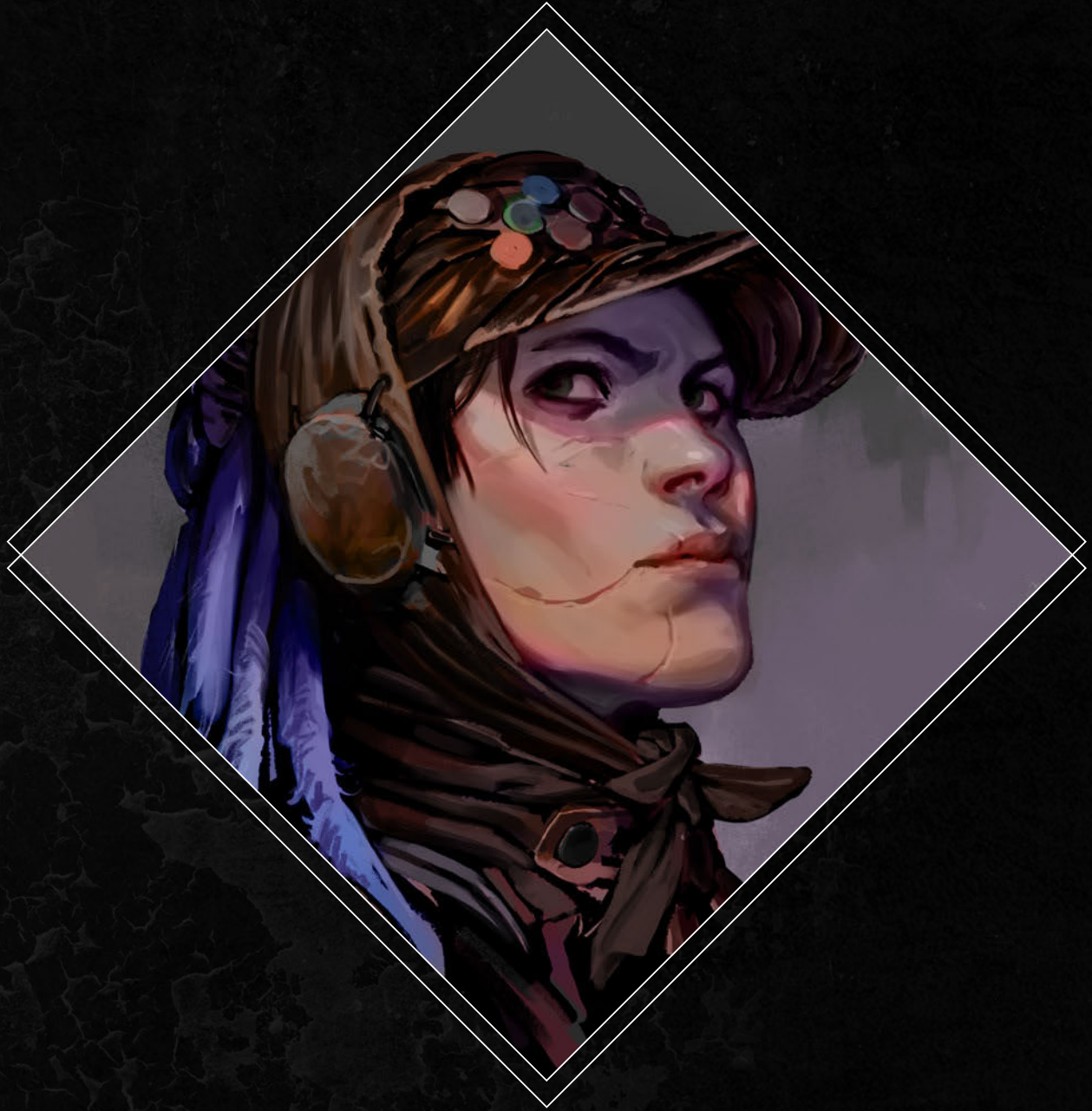
FAMILY TREE

Parel comes from a bloodline of Chinese traders and explorers who landed on the West Coast of Franka in 2305. Heading towards the rising sun, a handful of these families settled in Saint-Brieuc and helped found the Scrapper city. Parel's facial features are typical of the first settlers here and very common amongst the Scrappers of Saint-Brieuc.

INVENTORY

WORLD MAP

On one of his countless dives, Parel found an ancient map of the world, fully intact and shrink-wrapped in plastic. All of the continents are pictured along with ocean routes to foreign shores. Parel has painstakingly restored the map, adding new coastlines and adapting it to contemporary knowledge. This map would be worth a fortune to any Raider. However, Parel uses it in a completely different fashion. He enchants girls with stories of faraway places and lands, pointing to beaches of paradise and promising to take them there one day. The girls giggle wildly, as their imagination runs rampant.



GARLENE

THE INFECTED

Something has happened out on the Atlas platform. Garlene is afraid. Her whole crew is dead, and she's the only survivor.

She doesn't know what it was or how it happened. A foul smell was suddenly everywhere. Something came pouring out of the well, but it wasn't oil. The foreman screamed like a hogtied pig when the fucking stuff touched him. Then, a loud, rumbling noise came from the feed tube, and the whole platform shook. The crew ran for their lives. Steel ropes whipped through the air, ripping a Scrapper to pieces. Another one was buried under debris. A third wasn't able to get out of the pilothouse and took his own life with a bullet. Garlene was the only one to reach the rescue capsule, manically hitting the abort button until it plunged down into the sea.

Three days later, she reached Carnac. At dusk, she went ashore by stealth, got herself some food and examined her right arm. The black dot had gotten larger. Delicate black veins were spreading from it, growing and branching out in different directions. She felt an unbearable pain upon touching the spot.

Garlene has grown desperate. What can she do? If the Spitalians found her like this, they would cut her to pieces; the Anabaptists would throw her into the House of Atonement.

There's only one person who can help her: Parel, her lecherous former mentor. She can stay with him, hidden from the outside world. He has enough money and influence, that's for sure. Garlene bandages her arm and starts walking towards Brest. Every day, the pain growing stronger.

ROLE PLAY

Garlene warily eyes any stranger who gets too close to her. It has been two months since the event on the platform, and the black plexus has taken over her entire arm. Her body erupts in bouts of fever, trying to fight the invader beneath her skin. Garlene cannot confide in anyone, the fear of a potential death sentence is all too real. She tries to numb the pain with distillate, whiling away the hours in Parel's workshop. The Salt Wolf has yet to notice anything, his eyes instead preoccupied with her chest. Suddenly, she catches wind of an Anubian staying at the Balsam House. Garlene must see this healer without anybody noticing.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Wanderer, Scrapper, Rank 3: Machinist

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:3 AGI:3 CHA:4 INT:3 PSY:3 INS:4

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 5D, Force 4D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 6D, Crafting 5D, Dexterity 6D, Navigation 5D, Mobility 5D, Projectiles 5D, Arts 5D, Conduct 5D, Seduction 5D, Artifact Lore 5D, Engineering 7D, Reaction 5D, Willpower 6D, Empathy 5D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 6D, Primal 7D, Survival 7D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 1, Network 2, Resources 2, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: +3D to rolls against Parel's attempts at seduction.

POTENTIALS: Darwin 3

INITIATIVE: 5D / 14 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: .36 Wrench, 3D, Distance 1, Damage 4, Blunt

Masterpiece "Chouchou", 5D, Distance 5/20, Damage 8, Scatter, Double-Barreled, Muzzleloader

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 5D,

Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 5D, Mental (Willpower) 7D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Heavy working coat made from leather and fur, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 7/12, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Parel's jewel, a locket containing Parel's picture that serves as a sign of his eternal adoration. Masterpiece called "Chouchou", Double-barreled rifle, uses any small scrap as projectiles.

DEADLY FREIGHT

Garlene has been infected with Black Water. Her arm has turned into a pulsating excrescence; black blisters amass beneath her skin. She carries Leviathanics within her.

Garlene's immune system still fights with all its might, but as soon as the small veins reach her brainstem, there will be no salvation for the Scrapper. She can already hear the droning of the sixth Chakra. There is a continuous pain in her diaphragm and she smells its musty odor in every bead of sweat running down from her forehead.

PAREL'S GIRL

Parel grants Garlene's every wish. She's the one he adores. The Salt Wolf has been crazy for her since the day he took her on as an apprentice. Countless times he has tried to win Garlene's heart, but he always ended up making a fool of himself. The Scrapper is not interested in her mentor's pitiful displays of affection. She just wants him to shut up and pay her.

However, Garlene's rejection of Parel only makes him desire her even more. If he were to notice her affliction, he would without question, do everything within his power to save his former apprentice.



IMBALI

THE HECATEAN

The sound of the wave came from far away. The signal was different from anything Imbali had ever heard in the land of the crow and it came down to Montpellier from the North. The life thread had been plucked like the string of an instrument, echoing through the realm of the ancestors.

The Hogon nodded at his Hecatean. It was the sixth sign – the wave that the Anubians had been waiting for since the beginning of time. Hastily, he ordered the seeds strewn onto a metal plate. Then, he opened a tiny vial and carefully added a drop of blood right in the center of the seeds. The seeds opened up at once, taking the form of a multipetaled lotus.

“Crown!”

It took Imbali's breath away. Seconds later, she left the shrine, ready to travel north. Whatever had caused the wave, Imbali had to find its source.

The passage to Brest cost her patience and time. She is on foreign soil now, and the spirits of the land do not favor her. However, Imbali is not afraid. She is already aware of her destiny. For the time being, the Jackal sleeps in the shadow of the pyramids, hiding from the scorching sun. Soon, however, he will rise from his dream and wear the crown that him and his people have always been entitled to.

The Balsam House is Imbali's refuge. She imparts her knowledge to the superstitious women and stubborn Ascetics and in return, learns the secrets of the land. In Carnac, the Field of Visions is the place where the Jackal unveils himself to those who pray. It's the sign Imbali has been looking for. Here, she will find the key to delving deeper into Anubis' realm and prepare for his arrival. She hides her true motives behind the face of a healer, a mask she will wear until the Ka within her awakens.

ROLE PLAY

Imbali will soon become a Hogon. One last trial separates her from diving into the shadow of the Pyramid and causing the Ka within her to rise from its slumber. The sixth sign has opened the eye of the sleeping Jackal. The Anubians will soon be transformed, just like it has been prophesied. The day has come for the one to unify with the six and form the seventh sign.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Healer, Anubian, Rank 4: Hecatean

ATTRIBUTES: BOD: 4 AGI: 4 CHA: 4 INT: 3 PSY:4 INS:5

SKILLS: Athletics 9D, Brawl 7D, Force 6D, Stamina 7D Toughness 10D, Stealth 7D, Arts 7D, Conduct 6D, Expression 7D, Artifact Lore 5D, Legends 7D, Medicine 8D, Science 7D, Cunning 6D, Deception 7D, Domination 6D, Faith 10D, Reaction 7D, Empathy 8D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 8D, Primal 9D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUNDS: Network 2, Renown 1, Resources 1, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: -

POTENTIALS: Gaze of Fate 3, Embrace of Apophis 2

INITIATIVE: 7D / 18 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Liver Shot, 7D, Distance 1, Damage 2, Dazed (4), Smooth Running (2T)

Leg Scissors, 7D, Distance 1, Damage 2, Dazed (4), Falling Damage 4 (2m)

Chokehold, 7D, Distance 1, Dazed (6), Entangled

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Block), Brawl 7D,

Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 4D, Mental (Faith) 10D

MOVEMENT: 9m

ARMOR: Light gazelle hide and linen, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/20, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: The Sphinx Effigy (+1 Secrets for other Anubian), Blood of the Duat (Level 3), Marduk Oil (+4S when resisting Pheromancer Phenomena for 1 hour (8 uses))

SPHINX

Imbali always has an image of the Jackal on her person. Her Hogon gave her the drawing before she left to go on her quest. It shows the Sphinx in Anubia, however, her head is not human, but that of a jackal. Below, the handwriting has faded but the message can still be made out: “12.000 A. D., The first people – source of the prophecy?” N. T.

CARNAC

Imbali waits for the right time for her passage. She has heard that a Leopard is in town. She tries to find the trader and get him to guide her to the megaliths. Imbali has no idea that the Jackal is already trying to contact her. The visions of Carnac are a warning against the danger that lurks in the ocean. The sixth sign is a signal of destruction.

POTENTIALS

EMBRACE OF APOPHIS

Imbali knows a form of martial arts that blocks the energy flow in the enemy's body, rendering them incapable of fighting. Most kicks, holds and blows are aimed attacks at +4. For every point in the Potential, the difficulty decreases by 1. All attacks made this way generate special damage. Imbali's passive Defense is also raised by +1.



ERIS

THE DELILA

Eris runs, runs as far as she can, runs to the end of the world to hide. For hell is on her heels.

Eris has blasphemed, has questioned Jehammed. When she saw the ancient scrolls in the rooms of the Shepherd, she recognized the symbols. They were the same ones that were used for the Apocalyptic Tarot. The migratory birds had long since found the answers the Jehammedans were looking for.

She dares to speak her mind, but her words fall on deaf ears. The Shepherd of her tribe casts her down. He hits her and bites her cheek until blood begins to run down her face. He drags the heretic back into his tent and cuts her hair. Eris's black tresses tumble to the ground. She has been disgraced. The Shepherd threatens to cut her head off if she dares to sully the truth again. Eris holds her tongue. She knows that she's in danger of being ostracized. Chained up like an animal, she sleeps next to the goats.

On a freezing cold night, a haggard man steps into view. She cannot tell if she's dreaming. His name is Adonai; his gaze is more benevolent than anything she has ever seen. He dissevers the chain around her ankle and secretly leads her out of the camp. He points north, urging her to flee as far as she can. Eris wants to meet the lips of the stranger with her own, but he places his hand over mouth warning her against her own desires. There is a glint in his eyes. He says she is Jehammed's doom and the Ram will not allow a black sheep in his flock. If she wants to survive, she best take refuge with fishermen in a faraway place, in meadows where Aries cannot see.

Eris has understood. She runs.

ROLE PLAY

Eris is lost in a foreign land without a semblance of support. Briton is enemy territory, and she's a helpless castaway. She wraps herself in veils, but her tattoos give her away every time. When she walks down the streets, she is spat upon and beaten. The men come after her as well. Some days, she prays for Aries to come and deliver her from this place. One autumn morning, Brest appears before her. Is this the place Adonai was talking about?

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Hybrispania, The Defiler, Jehammedan, Rank 2: Delila

ATTRIBUTES: BOD: 1 AGI: 3 CHA: 5 INT: 4 PSY: 3 INS: 4

SKILLS: Athletics 2D, Melee 2D, Stamina 3D, Toughness 4D, Mobility 5D, Stealth 6D, Arts 8D, Seduction 8D, Expression 7D, Focus 7D, Legends 9D, Cunning 5D, Deception 4D, Faith 9D, Reaction 5D, Empathy 6D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 7D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUNDS: Renown 1, Secrets 4

POTENTIALS: Jehammed's Doom: Eris makes other Jehammedans feel ill at ease, throwing them into a state of inner turmoil. The closer they get to her and the longer they stay in her presence, the harder it becomes for them to concentrate. All INS rolls are at a penalty of -3D. After 5 combat rounds, a successful roll on PSY+Faith/Willpower (3) is necessary to avoid the loss of 1 Ego Point. The effect ends when the Jehammedan leaves Eris's presence.

INITIATIVE: 5D / 14 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Knife, 2D, Distance 1, Damage 2, Smooth Running (2T)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Parry), Melee 2D, Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 5D, Mental (Faith) 9D

MOVEMENT: 2m

ARMOR: Threadbare clothing, Armor 0

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/18, Flesh Wounds 10, Trauma 4

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Scroll, Jehammedan robe

JEHAMMED'S DOOM

Eris knows the story of the angels of death. The Nine Horned Ones that Aries sends to get rid of black sheep. They come in the dark of the night to judge those who have soiled the herd. She has a hunch that Aries has already caught track of her scent. She can feel the stigma hovering above her.

Eris knows that she will not be allowed to travel to the stars for only those who are pure of heart will enter the realm of the Ram and wear his Golden Fleece.

But why not sow more discord if she can't reach paradise anyway? Why should Eris keep quiet about the secrets that she has buried in her heart? About the symbols? About the Horned Nine? About the ark?

INVENTORY

SCROLL

Eris stole a scroll from her Shepherd. It is a brittle piece of parchment containing 22 symbols. Each of them describes the way to the realm of the dreams and wishes of a faithful person. Together, they form a guide, detailing the behavior of many people, even mapping their actions in relation to each other. However, Eris sees the symbols of the Apocalyptic Tarot in them. Could Jehammedans and Apocalyptics have grown from the same root? Uttering this thought amongst the followers of Jehammed would result in death.



IFRIT

THE HORNED ONE

The scent of incense wakes Ifrit from a vivid dream. His father is standing at the opening of his tent. The look on his face is grim and forlorn. With swollen eyes from saying goodbye, a final farewell is the only thing left on his lips. It is time to go. The Ram has called for Ifrit. His worldly life has reached its end and the time of his consecration is nigh.

Then comes the passage: days bleak as lead and nights dark as tar. Weeks later, scarred rocks come into view, a black island on a colorless sea: Crete.

From afar, he can see the Temple of Aries rise up as the one-eyed ferryman guides the boat along a tame river into the interior of the island. Ifrit's awe is boundless. He takes one giant leap, skirring over the last steps up to the portal. He's ready. The lamb within him must die so it can be reborn as a ram. The gate leading towards his consecration opens.

Ifrit wallows between warm bodies. They wait for him with widespread legs and tender caresses. They whisper promises and words of love. Ifrit has been chosen to drink the Holy Ghost. He greedily washes down the silver milk from the chalice of the Fatum, and an ocean of blackness engulfs his mind. For a moment, he is dead. Then, his human body is flooded with the divine spirit.

As Ifrit returns from the dead, he sees the world with new eyes. The helmet of the Ram guides him through space and time; the fleece warms and strengthens him, and Aries' blood pumps through his heart. He knows his task. Ifrit must unite the star, the disc and the spear in order to enable the divine spirit to rise up to the heavens so that the Jehammedans can start their glorious journey to paradise.

ROLE PLAY

Ifrit is a shell. If he takes off the helmet, his memories fades. He neither knows his mission nor how he has come to the location that he is at. His black pupils are filled with innocence and his voice sounds hollow and afraid. Clad in rags, he sneaks across the land, trying to figure out the purpose of his quest. Once he puts on the helmet, everything changes. He becomes a puppet, controlled by his Marauder. He is nothing more than a single-minded killing machine, whose utility only Aries understands.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Balkhan, The Hermit, Jehammedan, Rank 4: Blood of Aries

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:4 AGI:6 CHA:2 INT:2 PSY:5 INS:6

SKILLS: Athletics 10D, Brawl 7D, Force 10D, Melee 10D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 10D, Mobility 11D, Stealth 11D, Legends 5D, Domination 7D, Faith 9D, Reaction 9D, Perception 9D, Primal 12D, Survival 10D

BACKGROUNDS: Secrets 6

SPECIAL: Regeneration (1 Flesh Wound/10 Min), Ifrit automatically enters the Ire of Jehammed whenever he is in combat.

POTENTIALS: Fleece of Aries 3, Ire of Jehammed 3, Throes of the Wolf 3

INITIATIVE: 9D / 24 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Horn of Ifrit, 11D, Distance 1, Damage 13

Head Butt, 8D, Distance 1, Damage: Dazed (4 Ego)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Parry), Melee 11D,

Ranged Combat active (Dodge), Mobility 11D, Mental (Faith) 9D

MOVEMENT: 10m

ARMOR: Black Fleece, Armor 3, Fire Resistant (8), Insulated, Terrifying (5)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/18, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 9

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Blood of Aries (48 days), Horn of Ifrit, Ram helmet. If the distance between Ifrit and his Ram helmet is more than 100 m, the self-destruction mechanism turns on, and the artifact explodes within (3) combat rounds. The electrostatic pulse cripples all technology within a 30 m radius. Aries' control over his Horned One ends at once.

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Ifrit does not look like a Jehammedan. His former tattoos have either faded or disappeared altogether. Without his Ram helmet, he looks like a local. Black hair, shaggy cape, and erratic movements. However, as soon as he dons his helmet, the electronics within latch onto the probes implanted under his scalp. Ifrit's skin suddenly becomes dry as if somebody had covered him in a wax shroud. His eyes glow like smoldering embers, and his black fleece returns to life. Aries is now within Ifrit's head, directing his Horned One like a marionette.

INVENTORY

RAM HELMET

Ifrit's helmet causes unknown near-field phenomena that can be measured in EMPs of a very high frequency. These phenomena also interfere with electronics: Telegraphs start tapping out Morse code as if by magic, fluorescent tubes dim, and sun discs discharge spontaneously.

POTENTIALS

THROES OF THE WOLF

PREREQUISITE: Arianoi, Primal, PSY+Faith 10

Ifrit sacrifices one Ego Point to activate the Potential. If he does Damage with his first attack, he may use the Ego Points from this attack as an extra dice for a second attack in the same combat round. This can be used once per combat per Potential level.



BARRINGER

KEEPER OF THE STARFIRE

Ushant. The remoteness of the island has eroded Barringer's mind. The eternal wind, the weather – the sun is but a flaming marble hidden behind a steel gray veil of clouds. Every morning, Barringer walks the trail up to the temple to gaze into the pitch black cloud of the Starfire. There, he screams out questions for which there are no answers. Who were the mothers that abandoned Vicarent and him on the clearing? Is this all a part of some bigger plan or just some absurd coincidence? What is his destiny? Will he be left to rot on this island?

The Starfire crackles quietly. Barringer curses in desperation. Time and again, he has to explain the significance of their task to his pack. The men have long since stopped listening to his Gnostic ramblings. Barringer does not know the answers, either.

Is all of this only a divine trial? Is that why they are forced to look into the eye of the Demiurge every day without crumbling? To not let the hatred grow within their hearts? Barringer pulls at his nose ring. The cold iron chains the soul of the Touched to their mortal bodies. What if he took it out? Would the Demiurge devour him?

The Ascetic turns his forlorn gaze to the sky. Soon, it will be autumn, and he will finally see his stepbrother again. He will plead with Vicarent to throw the Starfire into the waves and finally end this nightmare. Since the day the Sublime triumphed over Ganaress, Vicarent and Barringer have been slaves to the Demiurge. The Starfire has consumed both of their lives; their greatest victory has become their greatest tragedy. Vicarent's unrest grows with every passing year, and Barringer's self-chosen exile slowly starts to feel as though he were being buried alive.

ROLE PLAY

Barringer's mental strength and his pious determination to help his stepbrother are waning. Every new day on the island is like a rusty nail piercing his skull. He's still able to keep his men from mutiny, but the patience of Barringer's pack is wearing increasingly thin. It is only a matter of time until one of them betrays the secret of Ushant and smokes out the Starfire.

BLACK THOUGHTS

Barringer's fate is linked to that of his stepbrother. As the best amongst Vicarent's men, he started watching over the Starfire twelve years ago. First out of conviction, then out of a sense of duty. However, the hardships of the island have shattered Barringer's faith. Deep down, he longs for someone to take over his post or for the cursed fire to disappear forever. He has often considered ripping the iron pan from its chains and throwing it into the ocean. He fights these dark thoughts that bedevil him in such moments with prayers, trying to keep his vow in mind. However, with every passing second, his yearning for freedom becomes stronger.

PALE MEMORY

The Ascetic finds no peace. The truth about his and Vicarent's origins has been haunting him for years. Often, he has pleaded with his foster father Oppolus to retell him the exact circumstances of that fateful spring day when the king found the abandoned babies. Barringer has visited the clearing in the forest dozens of times, meditating and trying to conjure some forgotten memory in vain.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Protector, Anabaptist, Rank 2: Ascetic

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:3 AGI:3 CHA:4 INT:4 PSY:4 INS:2

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Brawl 4D, Force 4D, Melee 7D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 6D, Crafting 8D, Dexterity 5D, Mobility 6D, Stealth 4D, Arts 8D, Conduct 7D, Expression 7D, Leadership 5D, Focus 9D, Legends 7D, Faith 9D, Reaction 6D, Empathy 6D, Perception 6D, Survival 3D, Taming 5D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 6, Authority 2, Network 3, Resources 2, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: +4D Orienteering on Ushant.

POTENTIALS: Pneuma 2, Zealot 2

INITIATIVE: 6D / 18 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Quarterstaff, 7D, Distance 2, Damage 3

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Parry), Melee 7D, Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 6D, Mental (Faith) 9D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Ascetics' robe, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/18, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 7

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Barringer's journal. Contains all traps set on Ushant and stories he has written during the long winters on the island. Most of them are about his and Vicarent's origins. The treatises are confusing and make no sense, but they contain countless names and networks of Britoni families from the last three generations.



VICARENT

THE SUBLIME

The ghosts of the past haunt Vicarent. He sees Ganaress' grotesque face— night after night, the demon haunts the Sublime's sleep, taunting him. Vicarent's limbs are sluggish. He cannot raise his sword; he doesn't have the strength to behead the Pheromancer King.

Vicarent awakens in spasms, the creature's booming laughter echoing through his head. He gazes despondently into the darkness of his bedchamber, listening to his own heartbeat. The sinking feeling of insignificance settles on the currents of his mind. The Slayer of Ganaress will never be able to live up to his greatest act of heroism, will never face such an enemy again. If he had not invoked the Demiurge back then, he would never have been able to conquer Ganaress. His whole life has been built upon this one lie.

Cathedral City, though, sees him as a savior. Ever since the death of the Baptist Altair, the Council of Emanations has kept asking him to take over as his successor. Vicarent could vomit. The thought of a life as a square Baptist in Borca alone is enough to make him gag. He rejects the invitations of Emissaries and refuses to appear in front of the Council. Vicarent wants to stay on the front line. Briton needs him. He has saved this land. His ruse saved tens of thousands of people. However, the emptiness in his skull eats away at him. There are no enemies here he could face. There is nothing to enhance his heroism. Instead, the whole region annually celebrates his victory. Year after year, Vicarent has to deliver the same blow again and again, ritually beheading Ganaress. Some days, he feels like a hand puppet in a children's theater; a haunted, failed legend unable to live up to his renown. In moments like these, Vicarent can clearly see his archenemy vanquishing him. Ganaress' fleshy, dumpy legs press down on the Sublime's chest, an omnipresent laughter pouring from him. The air leaves his lungs, and the Anabaptist has only one wish left – a heroic death instead of a meaningless life.

ROLE PLAY

Vicarent is embittered and consumed with self-loathing. A dark aura surrounds the giant who forever banished laughter and joy from his face.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Chosen, Anabaptist, Rank 4: Sublime

ATTRIBUTES: BOD: 6 AGI: 4 CHA: 3 INT: 2 PSY: 6 INS: 4

SKILLS: Athletics 11D, Brawl 9D, Force 12D, Melee 10D, Stamina 11D, Toughness 11D, Crafting 6D, Dexterity 5D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 6D, Leadership 8D, Negotiation 5D, Legends 5D, Deception 7D, Domination 9D, Faith 12D, Reaction 10D, Empathy 6D, Perception 6D, Primal 10D, Survival 5D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 6, Authority 5, Network 3, Renown 6

Resources 4, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: +3S to Faith rolls whenever Vicarent faces an overwhelming enemy.

POTENTIALS: Fishermans Blood 1, Moving Mountains 3, Torchbearer 2, Unleashed 3

INITIATIVE: 10D / 20 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Bidenhander, 8D, Distance 2, Damage 12, Impact (2T)

Dagger in the Hilt, 10D, Distance 1, Damage 6, Smooth Running (2T)

Spitfire, 4D, Distance 3/10, Damage 12, Fire Hazard

DEFENSE: Passive 1, Melee active (Block), Melee 8D,

Ranged Combat active (Plunge), Mobility 7D, Mental (Faith) 12D

MOVEMENT: 11m

ARMOR: Steel armor and leather poncho, Armor 5

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/24, Flesh Wounds 22, Trauma 12

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Seal of Mont Saint-Michel. Iron chain with unbroken Anabaptist cross as a sign of his sublimity.

THE TAINT

Boundless anger lies buried in Vicarent's soul. Using the Starfire to secure his victory was his biggest transgression. The Sublime cannot forgive himself for this act of betrayal that he committed before his God's watchful eyes. The shame eats away at him, kills all the joy of his glory. Instead, his voice is moody, his answers are brief and sometimes even incoherent. With a stony gaze, he stares at nothing.

Apathy overwhelms him whenever he hears a retelling of his alleged acts of heroism. He would so love to be a true chosen one, a Sublime. Then he could change the world without submitting to darker powers.

ARMY

Vicarent commands Mont Saint-Michel and consequently, the largest army in all of Briton. In addition to the 2,000 Orgiastics, any pack in the Northwest would come to the Sublime's aid and brave the fire with him if he told them to.

However, not all Anabaptists look upon Vicarent's exalted position with delight. There are powers within the Anabaptist cult who are preparing for Vicarent's demise, or more specifically, the day thereafter. When powerful autocrats fall, chaos follows.

Yasen the Merciful has long since become Vicarent's most important political opponent. However, the Sublime does not argue with the gaunt madman. Yasen uses Vicarent's unwillingness to engage with him against him, declaring it a sign of his weakness and thus, putting even more pressure on Vicarent to act.



ARNIKA

THE HALO

12 years, 7 months, 3 weeks, 4 days, 18 hours, 49 minutes and 13 seconds. This is how long Arnika chased his God Helios before finally seeing him. In chains.

He had sacrificed his whole life for this moment. Since that day when he left the Petrigrad bunker and saw the light of the sun for the first time, nothing has been able to stop Arnika from pursuing his mission. The journey was merciless, and his path was fraught with countless dangers. His endless search led him through the warped and distorted forests of the Balkhan, across the Adriatic Basin and the snow-clad peaks of the Alps. In Borca, he lost his way, and became frantic. Was Helios still alive?

His long journey led him to the border of the Protectorate. Projection walls glistered as they rose up in the barren no man's land. Getrell's idol flickered down from them, smiling at Arnika and pointing him north to the land of the Scavenger. The Halo froze. No one had ever returned from there.

Arnika took courage and crossed the border at the Janus crater. There, he entered the burnt realm of the Marauder, where he survived on lichen and meltwater. He chased footprints in the soot and snow, cladding himself in darkness.

After an eternity, he reached Plymouth. The wind proved to be a merciless traveling companion. Helios was forced to work in a quarry surrounded by guards. An implacable hatred consumed Arnika's mind. What had these beasts done to his God?

The following night, he repaired an old motorboat and crept into the camp of the Pictons. While the guards were dozing, he freed Helios from the yoke. A blaring alarm woke the cannibals, and in no time, they were trailing behind the two fugitives. Arnika reached the rescue boat just in the nick of time and set out into the black sea with his God.

ROLE PLAY

Arnika would give anything to please his God. His whole life is dedicated to serving the Sleeper Prophet, and no amount of torture could ever lead him astray. However, Arnika is not sure of his role, doesn't know the destiny his God has chosen for him. For the time being, Helios doesn't inform his Halo of his next move. Arnika only knows that Brest is the starting point of this crucial mission.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Balkhan, The Martyr, Paler, Rank 4: Halo

ATTRIBUTES: BOD: 3 AGI: 4 CHA: 1 INT: 4 PSY: 5 INS: 5

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Brawl 5D, Force 5D, Melee 6D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 7D, Crafting 6D, Dexterity 6D, Navigation 7D, Mobility 8D, Projectiles 9D, Stealth 10D, Conduct 2D, Artifact Lore 9D, Engineering 8D, Focus 8D, Legends 10D, Science 7D, Cunning 9D, Deception 10D, Domination 7D, Faith 10D, Reaction 9D, Empathy 7D, Orienteering 10D, Perception 11D, Survival 10D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 1, Resources 2, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: Disfigured. CHA rolls have a +1 penalty

POTENTIALS: Alias 3, Chosen 1, Midnight Sun 3, Sparkling Fire 3

INITIATIVE: 9D / 16 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Paler Uzi with silencer, 9D, Distance 10/40, Damage 7,

Smooth Running (2T), Salvoes (3)

Hand axe, 6D, Distance 1, Damage 5

Throwing knife, 9D, Distance 3/10, Damage 4

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 8D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 8D; Mental (Faith) 10D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: RG Composite armor and rag coat, Armor 6, Bulletproof (9)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/20, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Throwing Pulsor (3), Sun Disc: Charon, Argyre's Yoke

INVENTORY

ARGYRE'S YOKE

Argyre binds his Sleeper slaves with the yoke, a barb, eel-shaped neck brace that buries its thorns deeply into the flesh of the one who wears it. If the Sleepers get too far away from the heartbeat signal, the yoke's interference generator will activate itself. Their own blood turns against them and crystallizes, puncturing organs and finally tearing through their skin. Death occurs within seconds. Argyre can expand the area of movement for each Sleeper individually.

Arnika managed to short-circuit Helios's yoke and free him from it. He's been carrying it as a keepsake ever since, waiting for the day when he faces Argyre so he can subject the Marauder to his own chains.

CHARON

Arnika uses the palm-sized sun disc for navigational purposes. It converts GPS data, and provides information about distances, the position of the sun, the weather and the date. It is also able to pinpoint running water and localize magnetic fields. It is Arnika's talisman and it has delivered him from an untimely end dozens of times.

POTENTIALS

SPARKLING FIRE

PREREQUISITE: Paler,

INS+Orienteering 10, INT+Focus 8

Arnika can sense when somebody is using artifacts and technology around him. The higher the object's Tech Level, the stronger the Halo feels its activity in the form of a tingle. With every Potential point, he gets one automatic success to all rolls on INS+Orienteering in order to pinpoint unknown technology.



HELIOS

THE SLEEPER PROPHET

His last memories from the time before the big bang are palaces made of glass, steel canisters full of milk, and the laughter of children disappearing from the streets forever. A benevolent sun greeted him for the final time as it set into the horizon of a deep crimson sky.

The chamber is ready. The needles come down; chromium-colored liquid is injected into his veins. A chilling sensation fills his entire body. A coat of frost and green gel engulfs him, followed by a barrage of pictures, endlessly repeating themselves. Neurons collapse under memetic salvoes – repetitive strokes of lightning that flash dates and logic tasks to ensure that his brain continues to function during the cryogenic sleep.

Suddenly, it's all over. Helios' memories fade as a new dawn breaks. He awakens and knows right away what he has to do. Helios has made it to the future in order to deliver mankind from the events of the past. He is the obverse of Project Tannhäuser, the sunlight of a long-forgotten era. A Free Spirit.

The signal Helios was supposed to follow in order to equip his army has faded. Someone has hijacked the freighters. The Sleeper Prophet goes north where a single shipment still broadcasts somewhere near the ice barrier. However, the signals drawing him towards Britain turn out to be a ruse. His guards are killed, and Helios is brought to London. There, he meets Argyre, the devil incarnate and one of the architects of Project Tannhäuser. The Scavenger controls the Sleeper Prophet through the use of the yoke, and forces Helios to partake in his perfidious plan. With the help of Jehammed's spear, Helios has been given the task of repairing and aligning a Thor laser that Argyre salvaged in Bath. However, the coordinates are wrong and the spear is missing two important components.

Before the Marauder can even start searching for the parts, Helios manages to flee. A Halo has found the Sleeper Prophet and clears the way for him with a barrage of bullets. Together, they make their way towards freedom via Plymouth.

ROLE PLAY

When Helios prefers to keep his identity a secret, he uses an alias, namely, that of a Neolibyan trader who came to Brest with plans of circumnavigating Aquitaine and finding profitable trade routes. His Free Spirit suit is hidden under a loose robe as he surveys his surroundings, all the while keeping his distance from strangers.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Bygones, The Ruler, Sleeper Prophet, Cascade: 500

ATTRIBUTES: BOD: 4 AGI: 6 CHA: 4 INT: 6 PSY: 6 INS: 2

SKILLS: Athletics 9D, Brawl 7D, Force 8D, Melee 9D, Stamina 10D, Toughness 10D, Navigation 11D, Mobility 10D, Projectiles 10D, Conduct 9D, Expression 8D, Leadership 7D, Artifact Lore 12D, Engineering 10D, Focus 11D, Legends 11D, Science 10D, Cunning 9D, Deception 10D, Domination 12D, Reaction 10D, Willpower 12D, Empathy 4D, Perception 4D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 1, Renown 6, Resources 2, Secrets 6

SPECIAL: Solar Cells: +1 charge/full hour of sunlight

POTENTIALS: Regeneration, +2 Flesh Wounds, +1 Trauma Damage/day

INITIATIVE: 10D / 22 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Charged Punch, 9D, Distance 1, Damage 5, Dazed (5), Smooth Running (2T) Microwave Pulsor, 10D, Distance 30, Damage 14, Fatal, Terrifying (3)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 10D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 10D; Mental (Willpower) 12D

MOVEMENT: 9m

ARMOR: Free Spirit suit, Armor 7, Bulletproof (10), Sealed (+2E), Fireproof (8)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/24, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 10

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Jehammed's spear, a nondescript staff with a crude stone tip and strange engravings.

FREE SPIRIT

In the event that Project Tannhäuser had failed, humanity was to reinvent itself on its own. Free Spirit was his Plan B, the ideological counterpart to Getrell's memetic reeducation of humanity.

Only through ideological warfare could the wheat be separated from the chaff, thus bringing the best of humankind to the surface. The survivors of this millenium-long selection process would be the seed of Getrell's last trick.

To strengthen the alternative rebellion against Project Tannhäuser, Getrell chose seven Free Spirits – Sleepers who hadn't undergone Tannhäuser conditioning and intellectual antagonists of the Marauders. Their names are Cultrin, Karakhan, Enceph, Helios, Trice, Uriz and Daimondal, and each of them is equipped with the will and the technology to lead humanity back to the path of self-determination.

DEMETER

The Free Spirit suit is encoded with biometrical data and fits like a second skin. Embedded solar panels fuel the built-in cybernetics, store warmth, and filter out salt from sweat in order to make the water potable. Chromium-colored cables lead to magnetic coils on Helios' right hand. There, they enter a Microwave Pulsor in Helios' palm, which he can use as a weapon.

When fully charged, the Pulsor can be used 10 times. Aimed at an opponent, it deflagrates the enemies' interstitial fluid and boils their blood. Damage (14), metallic armor provides protection.

Helios can use the charges to enhance his physical performance.

+1 BOD/charge for 10 combat rounds, even above the maximum of (6).





3

CHAPTER

BLACK ATLANTIC

ARIANOI

Sparks fly as two flintstones are struck together. The sound of the rocks scraping against each other bounces off the ancient walls, echoing throughout the barrow. But, the attempts are in vain. No sparks can be blown into a flame. Is there too much moisture in the air? Is the straw too wet? Ifrit has no answers. Yesterday, it was all clear to him, but today, everything seems strange.

He stares at his blood-soaked hands, the flintstones buried inside of them. Open wounds cover his palms, his fingernails are broken, and the skin is torn. Ifrit tries to concentrate. He takes a deep breath and clenches his teeth together. What could be more difficult than lighting a fire?

He gazes at the cave entrance. Rain falls softly on the fallen flora. Yellow and brown leaves cover the ground, leading fortuitously into an unknown forest. Where is he? Ifrit does not know. His eyes search the dimly-lit cave, where he takes notice of a strange helmet on the floor that seems to return his gaze. His ram helmet! How does he know that? Ifrit does not trust his own thoughts. Does the horned helmet belong to him or to someone else? The helmet's black

sockets stare at him; almost as if they are looking through him. Ifrit shakes his head in disbelief and smashes the flintstones against each other once more. Clack! Clack! Why isn't it working? He grunts angrily and hurls the stones out of the cave. He cowers, curling up into a fetal position and pressing his knees to his mouth. Spasms take over his body as the tissue beneath his scalp begins to itch.

Ifrit scratches his head, probing, burrowing, and scraping his scalp. His black hair falls into his eyes, obscuring his vision. "Praise Jehammed ..." he begins his prayer, realizing in that moment that he has forgotten the line that follows. How is that possible? Yesterday, it meant more to him than his own existence!

Ifrit grabs a stone and smashes it against his forehead. The sound is hollow. Blood trickles down between his eyebrows, but he feels no pain. A strange humming sound comes from the helmet. He frowns and stares at the headpiece of bones, as if it were possible to interrogate it. Nothing. Silence. Only the patter of rain in the background.

Ifrit rises, desperately searching for answers. He turns

around and looks into the cave. He freezes immediately. There is a corpse!

Ifrit fights for breath and takes two steps towards the distorted body. The dead man lies in the wet foliage, with contorted eyes and a swollen tongue. Blue strangulation marks cover his throat. Ifrit stares at the corpse, unable to comprehend what happened. Did he kill him? He looks at his red hands still caked with blood. His wounds have already healed. What is happening? Fear clutches his chest, and desperation floods his mind. He is so cold that his lips are trembling. Unconsciously, he licks the dried blood from his hands and crawls towards the corpse on his knees. He lies down next to it, embracing the rigid body. It is still warm. Ifrit cradles the corpse, tears running down his cheeks. A helpless sob rises from his chest. Softly, he kisses the dead man's forehead and begs him for forgiveness. However, the corpse does not respond. "Jehammed, come to my side. Provide me with strength in darkness..."

His prayer ends as abruptly as it started. Again, Ifrit cannot even summon those things which lie floating on the

surface of his memories. In a hushed whisper, he asks the corpse for its name. Dead silence.

Ifrit throws back his head in anger. The itching underneath his scalp becomes unbearable. He rolls in the leaves in the cave as if suffering from an epileptic fit. Then suddenly, he lies on his back, straight as a ramrod. He glares with motionless eyes at the ceiling of the barrow, his ears attuned to every sound.

The ram helmet speaks to Ifrit, communicating with him in his thoughts. It asks him to put it on. Ifrit sits up straight and gazes once more into the helmet's sockets. They stare back at him.

Ifrit brushes his hair from his face. He crawls on all fours towards the helmet and takes it into his hands. There is a crackle. His fingers twitch. Ifrit puts the helmet on. The visor covers his eyes, and the itching underneath his scalp stops immediately.

Ifrit sees the world for what it truly is.

BEFORE THE GAME

BLACK ATLANTIC is the last part of the Jehammed's Will trilogy. This sourcebook and scenario ties up many loose ends from earlier publications and storylines. We recommend that game masters read the earlier publications as well in order to familiarize themselves with the background story of Degenesis. This is the only way to experience BLACK ATLANTIC's full potential at the gaming table.

The characters should have already played IN THY BLOOD and THE KILLING GAME as this will allow them to fully engage with BLACK ATLANTIC and its secrets.

Of course, it is also possible to play BLACK ATLANTIC without having played the aforementioned campaigns. In this case, however, there are a few things to consider during the preparation phase. When the adventure starts, the characters must have Jehammed's disk and Jehammed's star in their possession. Both artifacts are needed in order to embark on this adventure and they are relevant for its successful completion. If you want to begin with BLACK ATLANTIC, you can take the plots of the earlier publications mentioned above and summarize them as collective memories for your players. This way, the characters have a common backstory as well as a starting point for the new campaign.

As always, the more you prepare the adventure, the more relevance the story will have at the gaming table.

PERSPECTIVES

In any conflict, the various perspectives of the people involved are decisive in determining its future development. This also applies to the scenario BLACK ATLANTIC. As with any other campaign, the characters will eventually have to choose sides to survive the adventure that awaits them. As a game master, you have to decide which direction to steer the players making sure that the campaign unfolds in a way that does not seem contrived. The scenario outlined here serves solely as a guide and its development should be adapted to the players at the table. We offer you a framework of essential scenes, but it is up to you to decide how to use them and which significance they carry. Customize the campaign to the motivations and predilections of your players. Skip or change parts you cannot use and insert them elsewhere at your whim. Stay flexible and mind your players' actions so you are able to give priority to specific scenes in order to make the story more dynamic.

Even if the scope of action has already been determined, you can shorten or extend the campaign as you see fit. The description of the region in Chapter 1: Starfire offers enough

material for an extended prologue or numerous side adventures, which can serve to embellish the existing plot.

CHALLENGES

BLACK ATLANTIC challenges game masters as multiple plotlines interact with each other throughout the campaign. The awakening of Leviathanics, Mission Concorde and the secret of the Starfire comprise the main plot. There are also subplots that deal with the agenda of the Sleeper Prophet Helios, Jehammed's Will and the machinations of the Marauders Argyre and Aries.

The game master is tasked with navigating smoothly between the different storylines and determining the course of this epic adventure. Each scene provides clues and key moments, allowing players to grasp the storyline in its entirety and find their way around. In some scenes, the game master will have to take on the role of a variety of NPCs and interact with the characters as either allies or enemies. In order to attach more significance to these key scenes, we recommend running the BLACK ATLANTIC campaign as a

series that involves several different cliffhangers and spans numerous gaming sessions. The breaks will allow players to compare their theories and observations, which, in turn, will help them to plan their next steps.

ALLIES

During the scenario, characters will have to surround themselves with allies in order to surmount dangers or take on powerful opponents. The NPCs point the group in the right direction and might even offer up a vital clue at just the right moment. If players are self-motivated and actively involved in the story, game masters can reduce the allies' influence and leave the characters to investigate things on their own.

Each constellation of characters will experience the plot of this scenario differently. The preferences and background knowledge of your players will significantly influence what they end up discovering.

PROLOGUE

An extended prologue in Briton can have positive effects on the development of the scenario. If the characters have already formed alliances with certain NPCs prior to the beginning of the adventure, these alliances can be readily worked into the story. Chapter 1: Starfire provides an extensive overview of the land, detailing its regions, history, and people. For the game master, it is a treasure trove of ideas worthy of a prologue within the adventure, which will also help to familiarize the characters with important NPCs. Below, you will find an overview of possible scenarios that can help get the adventure started.

THE RED PACK

If the characters have met the Red Pack before, they can follow their tracks to Rennes in this campaign. The scenario *RIISING RAVENS* offers a suitable transition by providing clues about the secretive elite unit and the uncovering of its ties to Dr. Vega.

THE SEVENTH ZIGGURATH

A new expedition to the alleged location of the seventh Ziggurath is underway, and the Spitalians are desperately looking for people to join the mission. The investigations here can be linked to Dr. Vega's field analyses.

THE FOREST OF THE DRUIDS

What is the story behind the mysterious Druids and why are they always attacking caravans that pass through the ruins of Nantes? What connects the God of the Druids, Cernunnos, to the measurements of the seventh Ziggurath?

THE GANARIDS

In Briton, stories of revenants persist. Who are they and where do they come from? The time has come for a trip to Briton's past. While investigating, the characters may find out about Malinesse.

DIVING FOR SCRAP

Saint-Brieuc offers a multitude of stories. Go along with the Trash Whales down into the depths of the ocean or accompany the Mud Crabs over land. Days here are spent searching for artifacts with the hopes of coming upon the one big find. This could be an opportunity to get to know the Salt Wolf Parel or gain the Leopard Soufiane as an ally.

FACTOR'S CACHE

The Fuse Factor has made life in Toulon hell for the characters. It is time to dig deeper. If the characters look into Factor's past, they will inevitably find his cache in Carhaix. This could be an opportunity for them to meet the stranded Chronicler Ampere.

OIL RIGS

Maybe the characters have heard rumors about oil rigs that, according to some, are hidden in the Atlantic and now, they want to get to the bottom of it. This could be an opportunity to introduce Garlene before she infects herself with the Black Water.

ARRIVING IN BREST

Once the characters have reached Brest, they need a place to stay and a base for their operations. Give the group of players enough time to get acquainted with life in the city and their new environment. The better the characters know their way around the walled city, the easier it will be for them to keep their bearings during the scenario. Use the city map at the end of this book along with the description of the various quarters from Chapter 1: Starfire in order to let your players get a feel for the city.

Every quarter has its own personality, abuzz with different activities and inhabited by different kinds of people. The news flying around the markets is the first fodder for conversation that the characters encounter and it forms the starting point of their own investigations.

CONTACTS AND NETWORKS

Britoni are a suspicious lot, secretive and leery of outsiders. However, if the characters manage to crack their hard shell, stubborn Northerners can turn into fervent allies. The same holds true for the Anabaptists. As the largest and most dominant Cult, they pull all the strings in this land. They are responsible for law and order and expect pious behavior. Under the rule of the Broken Cross, the characters must behave differently than they would on the liberal southern coast of Franka. To gain a network in the city, it is necessary to understand the people. Tactless behavior will not get the characters very far. If they prove themselves loyal, however, they will gain the people's trust and receive invitations to all the right places; they will eat with the locals and become privy to their secrets. Social skills are necessary in Brest, if they want to avoid becoming scapegoats. The laws of the Britoni are merciless, and the characters should never underestimate them. Life at the fringe of Briton has united the people of Brest, and if the characters are looking for trouble, they have come to the wrong place. They will quickly have a family of hunters around their neck, who, to top it off, have allies amongst the Anabaptists.

FODDER FOR CONVERSATION

The best-case scenario would be for the characters to arrive in Brest the first week of October, right before the Day of Ganaress and right after the pilgrims and merchants who travel to the city at this time of year. The city is teeming with visitors enabling the characters to mingle with the population without drawing too much attention to themselves. They also are able catch the news circulating on the markets and in the inns. On a successful role INS+Empathy (2), PSY+Cunning (2) or CHA+Conduct (2), the characters obtain detailed accounts of events and personal stories from which they can extract additional information.

Use the table "Impressions" on the next page and choose which tidbits might be interesting for your players.

ANABAPTISTS

Anabaptists play a special role in Brest. Their Cult is in charge almost everywhere in Briton and they share the land with the Britoni Clan. Anabaptist PCs will have it easier getting around the city and contacting members of their Cult. In return, however, the Broken Cross expects devotion and loyalty. Players must walk a thin line, trying to decide between the advantages the Cult offers and its demands.

JEHAMMEDANS

Playing a Jehammedan in Briton is an enormous challenge. Although the war between the two Cults has officially ended, Jehammedans remain alone on enemy territory. They will need quite some skill and deception in order to mingle with their archenemies without giving away their own Cult identity. We encourage players to think about how they will manage remaining inconspicuous. They need to consider how they will cover their tattoos, and disguise their appearance whilst walking amongst wolves.

IMPRESSIONS

- ◇ **TRONTE, THE MASTER OF THE CHAPEL:** "The battle of Bassham was a disaster. So many lost lives. It was impossible to count the dead. A purple mist a thousand meters wide shrouded Markurant's Ziggurath, and you couldn't tell friend from foe in this fucking storm."
- ◇ **IPPAH, HEALER FROM THE BALSAM HOUSE:** "Yes, the treatment is free. However, I must cauterize the wound or the Demiurge will go right into your blood. Spitalians call that gangrene, but they have no idea what they are dealing with."
- ◇ **NICODEMUS FROM MONT SAINT-MICHEL:** "Was in the Gauntlet for two weeks. You can forget about it now! It's impossible to cross. Corpse Eaters disemboweled one of my Orgiastics. Sick land ..."
- ◇ **GISTMOR, THE WALRUS HUNTER:** "In a few weeks, the great hunt will start. This year, I'm getting a bull, and I'm going to kill it on the shore. You've got to wait for the right moment. Go after the beasts when they are sluggish, right after feeding."
- ◇ **ALFALFA OF MILL ALLEY:** "Yes, I make flax flat caps. They'll keep your ears warm in this fucking weather and they fit under any helmet. 20 Drafts a piece."
- ◇ **REDUX, THE MUD CRAB:** "Screws, boards, metal casings...We got 'em here, copper wire, nails, bolts... Come and get 'em. Don't complain tomorrow if you don't buy 'em today. Hard times are a-coming."
- ◇ **MADECH, WHEAT MERCHANT FROM CARHAIX:** "I tell ya, that guy spent three weeks in the inn here! Chronicler. What a dick! He kept fiddling with his radio as if it were his cock."
- ◇ **RONDRICK, FAMULANCER FROM MONTPELLIER:** "I can hardly wait for the Chapel of Saint Vicarent to open. Ahh, to have a chance to finally see the bones of a Pheromancer King! That alone makes the journey worth it."
- ◇ **YANNICK, CADET OF THE RESISTANCE:** "Wish my boys down in Toulouse could accomplish something like the Anabaptists did up here. I mean, look around you, man! The land is flourishing, there's food, and the women are full of life."
- ◇ **GRIMBALDINO, PILGRIM FROM PURGARE:** "I traveled for a whole year from Cruces to the Northwest. It is a great honor to finally see the Sublime. Our world needs men like Vicarent."
- ◇ **POLI, PAREL'S MOUSE:** "Yes, the Salt Wolf can repair anything. Talks a bit too much, but you get what you pay for. Which means I get paid even less. At least, the lunch is always good."
- ◇ **ANEZ, HYBRISPANISH SUGAR MERCHANT:** "No, it's not too far. I've been catering to the entire western coast of Franka in the meantime. Ships from Lisbon enter the harbors of Aquitaine all the time. That makes Brest a side business for me."
- ◇ **REUTERS, THE POSTRIDER:** "There is a lot of movement on the street this year. I see more Spitalians coming to Rennes from the South than usual. The mood is murderous. Those bald guys have beef with the Anabaptists. I have no idea why."
- ◇ **ONZE, THE CHAPEL GUARD:** "Get off the street! Get away from there! Make some room! Don't just stand around! Work! I don't understand how you all have so much time to hang around. When I was your age, I had to fight a war. You can't rest on the heroic deeds of others forever!"
- ◇ **MAIWENN, THE BAKER:** "Emissary Yasen always reaches Brest before Vicarent. They aren't too fond of each other. It must have something to do with Oppolus. I don't care, let those high-and-mighty people mangle each other as long as us ordinary people are left alone."
- ◇ **GWENNNDAL, THE OPPOLID:** "Of course I am the son of the King. Who are you to ask this? What is your lineage, horse face? None? I thought so. Scum like you can only act on the authority of the rags hanging from your shoulders."
- ◇ **OREGANNÉ, ONE OF THE TOUCHED:** "Come to the Empty Jug, you can sleep there like the Ascetics do and find inner peace. We take in anyone who understands the brotherliness of the Broken Cross. If you want, I'll show you where you can get baptized."
- ◇ **KAETELL, THE PEON:** "Save your money. The rooms are too expensive. Down in the furriers' quarter, there are empty sheds you can use. It's drafty, but you won't get wet. The fucking weather they have here."
- ◇ **BATISTA, THE FUROR:** "Ganaress' remains are in the Chapel. If you want to see what the Demiurge does to his servants, then have a look around there. But even in Pollen, I have never seen anything like this."
- ◇ **ZEMA, THE TANNER:** "If you don't wear warmer clothes, you'll die. Autumn in Brest is no fun, much less the winter. Two layers of fur and a thick walrus leather coat, and you'll be more or less on the safe side."

ACT BLACK WATER

FIGURES IN THE MIST

If the characters have seen the red-haired woman, let the entire group roll INS+Perception (4). The mist is thick, and hundreds of people are here. The fish market is vast, but attentive characters are able to detect movement from the corners of their eyes.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: In the mist, the characters recognize a female Spitalian stealthily approaching the strange woman. She dons her gas mask, her eyes never leaving her target.

1 TRIGGER: Another Spitalian approaches, making his way carefully between the stands from the other side. Carefully, he draws a pistol from his holster. The approaching female Spitalian also appears to be carrying a gun.

3+ TRIGGER: A black silhouette on the roof of a house gets in position behind the chimney, the barrel of a rifle glints on the windowsill two floors below. Its target is set on the fish market. Is this an assassination attempt?

SCENE 01: GRAY AND DRAB

Morning on the fish market. A thick autumn mist has engulfed the market stands. The worse the visibility, the better the mood. Fishermen drink strong distillate from copper thimbles. The stuff burns away the dark thoughts. On wooden poles, strips of pike hang out to dry. A fisherwoman loudly complains about her lumbago, while Britoni sing war songs in the background.

Over at the pier, the silhouette of a hunting boat juts out from the drab gray. Men drag a heavy, rusty chain on board and link it to a gearbox at the dock. The links engage, and a shadowy fisherman throws his full weight against a giant wrench. A leverage high above the ship creaks loudly, then a crane swivels sideward, and the chain tautens. Cheers from the ship sound over to the stands. Suddenly, the chain links clink and rattle as the ship's cargo is hauled into the air. A giant black shadow falls on the ship's deck.

"Yeah, just like that! Get that fucking whale over here!" someone shouts from the distance.

The racket attracts the attention of others and they turn to look at the whale hanging by its tail from the chain. Water pours down from the black and white corpse as they haul it towards the dock.

"Six tons of oil. Maybe seven." a vendor says confidently from behind his stand.

"You have no idea, idiot! At least ten!" his wife snaps.

The characters are right in the middle of the commotion. Maybe they have come to take a walk or cure last night's hangover with a hearty bite of pickled herrings. In any case, they notice a strange figure in the middle of the crowd...

RED HAIR

All of a sudden, a woman appears in the middle of the bedlam. Her skin is a milky white and her bright red hair cascades down her back to her hips like a pulsating color in the ashen morning. She is barefoot, and shapeless rags fall from her shoulders. The red-haired woman stands with her back to the characters and is the focal point of attention near and far. Slowly, the stranger pulls a nicked wooden mask from her tattered dress and covers her face with it. A deep, guttural voice rattles from her throat. It hums throughout the fish market, drowning out scraps of conversation ten paces away.

I. THE ORCA

The throaty chant of the red-haired woman rises. An orca swings in the air, the crane creaking under its weight. Suddenly, a sound comes from the whale corpse – it is so deep and terrifying that the whole fish market jumps back. All eyes are on the orca. The faces of the onlookers are frozen, their eyes wide with terror. Something roars from inside of the orca.

Before anyone can ask a single question, the flank of the whale bulges. In the next instant, a tearing sound rips through the pier. The orca's entire abdominal wall bursts open, and a fountain of gurgling innards pelts the fishermen.

Behind the characters, chaos erupts. Incredulous screams abound, one no longer distinguishable from the next. People jump over the booths and fishermen take cover behind barrels and sacks. The red-haired woman stands completely still, her arms outstretched. What is happening?

Before the characters are able to grasp the situation, black water splashes from the orca's abdomen and a bulky mass crashes down onto the pier.

THE ABOMINATION

Bones and black gossamer lie under the whale corpse. A steaming lump of flesh breathes heavily, pulsating and shivering on the ground. Two fishermen try to get away, placing one foot behind the other. Suddenly, the disfigured creature rears its head. It looks like the skull of an undigested sea lion. It is surrounded by sinews and muscles. The sockets are empty black pits and its teeth have been laid bare. Something gelatinous runs down its body; pedipalps feel their way over its skin and black tentacles wriggle on its back. Fractal wave patterns cover the surface of the beast's skin, and it snarls ominously.

Suddenly, a meter-long nettle whip dashes out, entangles the ankle of a fisherman and sweeps him off of his feet. The creature rears itself up, exposing an oily amniotic sac on its amorphous belly. It drags the screaming fisherman inside of its body.

"Take me!" the red-haired woman screams across the fish market in a demonic voice. Before the characters can react, the Spitalians rush the stranger from both sides.

THE CHARACTERS INTERVENE

If the characters want to save the fishermen, they have to intervene at once. The head and shoulders of the helpless man are already trapped in the amniotic sac. His face is pressed against the transparent membrane as he drowns in the black amniotic fluid.

If the characters approach the beast, it will spit out the fisherman in order to regain its full mobility. It hisses and lashes out with its nettle whip, trying to hit the characters. The second fisherman tries to get to safety when the nettle whip suddenly hits his arm. He cringes in pain before falling to his knees. He stares at his seething arm in terror as red boils cover his skin, an indicative sign of brutal burns.

The two Spitalians and the characters join forces and confront the monstrous creature in battle. Out of the corner of their eyes, the characters see the red-haired woman escape.

THE CHARACTERS RUN FOR COVER

The characters can hide and watch the situation unfold. Bascule attacks the red-haired woman and pushes her to the ground. The woman groans vehemently as the Preservist tears the mask from her face.

"Hold her still! I'll put her down!" The female Spitalian has already reached the woman. She kneels down and loads a vial into her injector gun. In the heat of the battle, the red-haired woman kicks the injector, and the weapon flies through the air. Let the characters roll INS+Perception (2) to see where the injector lands. If one of the charac-

BLURRED

If the characters survived the scenario **RISING RAVENS**, they will recognize the scarred Spitalians approaching from between the booths on the western side of the market: It is the Preservist they rescued from Sacrocant's Surge Tank. As game master, you can play with the characters' memories here and point out details that will allow them to recognize Bascule in the crowds of the fish market before it's too late.

FORETASTE

The creature from the orca's belly is a bestial foretaste of Leviathanics. The sixth Chakra has not yet found a human host to merge with, but the extent of its power is already visible. Black Water has turned the undigested sea lion into an Incubus, hell-bent on proliferating as quickly as possible.

ABOMINATION COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D / 12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Bite 6D, Damage 7, Infectious
Nettle Whip 6D, Damage 7, Smooth
Running (2T), Dazed (3), Entangled

DEFENSE: Passive 2, Mental 8D

SPECIAL: Swarm Strength 12
(plagues swimming in amniotic sacs)

PHENOMENA: Lord of the sixth
Plague; Nettle whip; Spindrift;
Ingestion; Abort; Amniotic sac;
Incubation

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Ingested Biomass,
fat and muscle fibers, Armor 2

SPORE INFESTATION: 14
(+ 12 with Plague)

CONDITION: 28 (Trauma: 12)



THE DISPLAY

If the characters try to recover the broken-off part of the injector gun, they must roll AGI+Dexterity (2) to free it from a crack underneath a market stand without damaging it. A quick glance at it shows that it is a display. A blinking dot moving westwards, continually getting further away. A roll on INT+Artifact Lore (1) is enough to figure out what it means. The display is linked to a transponder that is probably located within the body of the red-haired woman.

ters gets a Trigger on this roll, they will notice that when the injector hit the ground, a little square part of the weapon broke off the casing and slid under a market stand. INS+Orienteering (2) is necessary to find it later.

Suddenly, a shot rings out across the market and hits the creature that is now approaching the Spitalians and the red-haired woman. The direct hit brings the monster down, but it immediately gets up again and continues racing towards its target. The Spitalians have no choice but to let go of their captive and take on the approaching monster. As they draw their weapons, the red-haired woman scrambles to her feet and runs away, heading west.

THE CHARACTERS FLEE

If the characters run away, they will have to fight their way through the shocked masses who are coming towards them in an effort to get a look at the events on the pier. Alarm horns blare across the fish market, and a squad of chapel guards heavily armed with Spitfires and spears races past the characters.

Let the characters roll INS+Perception (3) to help them get an idea of the situation amidst all of the confusion. If they are successful, they will see the red-haired woman running between the market stalls heading towards the whale oil refinery. It won't take long before she has completely disappeared from their view. With a Trigger, they notice the silhouette of a Preservist pushing past the bystanders to reach the pier. With two Triggers, they recognize his face. It is Vatenguerre, the Preservist who enlisted them to save a hostage in Bayonne.

II. DIAGNOSIS

The fight is over. The creature lies motionless on the ground. The faces of the Spitalians are tense. The fisherman who has been dragged into the amniotic sac is dead and the other one writhes in pain in a state of shock on the pier floor.

"Vega! Diagnosis?" Bascule shouts at the female Spitalian.

"Discordance...maybe. I've never seen anything like this!" she tells him in amazement. Suddenly, Vatenguerre steps between the two of them. He recognizes the characters and looks at them in astonishment.

Bascule, however, ignores them, instead moving towards the injured fisherman. Vega points to a black lump that clings to his burnt skin. She takes the folded plastic tarp from her belt pocket and spreads it on the ground. Bascule nods, having understood his task. Before the characters can anticipate what is going to happen next, he amputates the fisherman's arm with one swift stroke of his sword. Blood sprays from the stump, and the burnt forearm hits the tarp with a thud. With a flick of the wrist, Vega wraps the appendage up while Vatenguerre kneels on the screaming fisherman's chest, trying to clamp the artery of the amputated limb.

In the middle of tending to the fisherman, he suddenly looks up at Bascule who is touching his ear as if having heard something.

"Retreat!"

Vatenguerre lets go of the thrashing fisherman and takes a grenade from his utility belt. With a smooth pitch, the metal egg rattles across the pier. Then, it explodes, producing a thick cloud of smoke.

SURROUNDED

Before the smoke clears, a squad of armed chapel guards comes running onto the pier. They aim their lances and Spitfires at the characters.

"Don't move!" they shout.

"What in the hell is happening here?" someone barks from the other side.

"Fucking shit! Look at the Demiurge over there." The commotion is clear as a bell. They are surrounded. The Spitalians have fled and left the characters to their fate, leaving all of their questions unanswered. They are faced with superior numbers of armed Anabaptists. These men are enraged veterans. One false move and the situation will end in carnage. The only thing the characters can do is try to prove their innocence and help the fisherman whose life is bleeding out of him.

All of a sudden, a flash cuts through the mist. One of the chapel guards has ignited his Spitfire and is lighting the remains of the creature on fire. The flames hiss, and a vile smell wafts across the pier.

"My God, who would've thought that the Demiurge could produce such a smell?" an Orgiastic calls disgustedly as he covers his mouth and nose with his hand.

"You there!" the leader of the Guard suddenly shouts, addressing the characters. "Get your stuff. You're under arrest. We're taking you in for questioning!" He turns to one of his comrades, "Jonte! Take your men and turn the city upside down. Bring me these damn eggheads. Leif, get the wounded man to the Balsam House right away!"

ARRESTED

The chapel guards put the characters in chains and lead them through the city towards Oppolus' castle. The guards are extremely uneasy, shaken by the events at the pier, which they consider to be an omen of the worst kind. They do not want the population to be consumed with panic, especially not when the Day of Ganaress is so close. As they pass by the market, they order the merchants at their stands to keep away from the pier.

The characters are now under control of the guards, and you can jump directly to Scene 02 if you choose.

IMPRESSIONS

What is going on? In the thick of these unbelievable events, there is no room for questions, there is only time for conclusions. Characters may roll INT+Legends (2). Spitalians may add their Secrets trait to the roll.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Evidently Preservists. This is a secret mission, and the characters have landed right in the middle of it.

1 TRIGGER: Discordance? Not a chance! Membrane creatures are abiotrophic, their physical state rarely rising above that of a jellyfish. Furthermore, the Discordance zone lies in the Mediterranean, thousands of kilometers to the south.

2+ TRIGGER: Vega doesn't seem to belong to the Corps. What could she need the arm for? Is it contaminated? Spore affliction happens through inhalation, not through a center of infection.

LIFESAVER

If nobody comes to the aid of the amputated fisherman, he will bleed to death within a few minutes. The characters have only one choice. They have to find and clamp the artery to stop the bleeding. By now, the fisherman is deathly pale and unconscious. A roll on INT+Medicine (5) is necessary to stabilize him. It's hard to say if he will make it through the night.

III. THE FLOOD CHAPEL

If the characters have been following the red-haired woman or found the display and were able to track her, their path will take them to a rough trail along the Roadstead of Brest beyond the city walls. The embankment is steep, and the mist limits visibility to a few meters. In the distance, they see the woman's silhouette. She flees to a remote flood chapel that juts out into the water. A pier made of stones leads to a wooden cross that soars skywards. If the characters enter the pier, the woman will turn towards them.

"Leave me alone!" she snarls from a distance, her shoulders trembling nervously. She breathes heavily, and her gaze flutters from left to right as if she were looking for some way out. If the characters decide to approach her, she will take a step backwards towards the cross, realizing in this moment that she is trapped. With a roll on CHA+Conduct (3), a character can try to calm her and get closer. At the slightest sign of violence, she will plunge into the sea.

MALINESSE

"I am his queen. You cannot harm me. His kingdom will return," she threatens from her scratchy throat. Her teeth are black. Her face and other parts of her body that have been left exposed by her ragged dress reveal scars.

"Malinesse. Mother of the swarm. That's what he called me."

When asked who called her that, she laughs with disdain.

"Ganaress. The only true king of this world. He will rip apart the body of the humans and drink the juice from their hearts."

If one of the characters makes a move that seems dangerous to her, she will growl at them: "You are not going to bring me back to the Spitalians! I do not belong in a cage!" She tears open her dress of rags, brandishing her chest as a warning sign. Her breasts have been cut off, a circular mesh of scars and ulcers covers her torso.

"This is what they did to me!"

The sound of an approaching engine drowns out her screams.

Three jet skis come rushing out of a fog bank and race past the pier of the flood chapel, raising high fountains of water in their wake. Walrus hunters. The bow wave splashes down on the characters. Before they can get a good look at the people on the jet skis, they hear them shouting.

"Leave the woman in peace!" a man with a thick beard and braided tresses shouts. The characters see him swivel the high-pressure harpoon that is mounted to his steering wheel towards them. Another man stops his jet ski at the pier and jumps into the knee-deep water with his sword drawn. He wades towards the characters, his eyes grim.

"What do you want with the girl?" he asks reproachfully. The situation has taken a turn for the worst. The Britoni have misunderstood the characters' intentions. For them, the whole situation appears to be an attack or an attempted rape. If the characters do not defend themselves with conciliatory words quickly, things will get ugly. A Combination roll on CHA+Expression (3) and CHA+Conduct (2) is necessary to find the right tone and calm the mood.

Malinesse takes advantage of this momentary distraction. She manages to escape into the water in a single bound.

UNDERWATER

If one of the characters jumps after her, they will quickly realize how cold and murky the water in the bay really is. Diving in full equipment also turns out not to be the best idea. The armor fills with water, the fabric macerates, and the character begins to sink. Their movements are leaden. With a roll on BOD+Force (3), they reach the dry land again. However, there is no trace of Malinesse. It is as if the bay has swallowed her.

The display also goes dark. It seems that the transponder does not work underwater.

QUESTIONS UPON QUESTIONS

Who is this strange woman and why is she blathering on about this King Ganaress? INT+Legends (2) helps connect the dots. Spitalians and Anabaptists add their Secrets trait as additional dice.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Ganaress was the Pheromancer King who suffered a crushing defeat 12 years ago and whose death freed Briton from Franka's curse. Could Malinesse be a surviving drone from his hive?

1 TRIGGER: The scarred chest shows no stigma. How can that be? A drone would be completely afflicted by spores. How does she have the ability to form sentences and communicate with words?

2+ TRIGGER: Did the Spitalians inflict these scars? Has she fled from them? What about the transponder? Did the Spitalians implant it to watch her? To what end? What makes a drone so extraordinary that Preservists are involved and more importantly, why here in Brest? Nothing here reeks of sepsis.



WALRUS HUNTERS

The walrus hunters are just as confused as the characters. Minutes ago, they came to the rescue of the strange woman, but now they realize that they completely misjudged the situation.

"Damn, we're all really worked up about what happened down at the docks earlier. We set out from there to search the roadstead for the Spitalians," says the hunter with the braided tresses after briefly introducing himself as Ghilvern. "The Anabaptists are beside themselves. After 12 years, the Demiurge shows up in Brest, right on time for their public festivities."

If the characters ask about the Spitalians, the hunter will simply shrug.

"Rennes is their headquarter. They have no business in Brest. No one takes them seriously. They have no authority here."

The hunters are truly sorry for having mixed themselves in the affairs of the characters. They would have preferred to help them instead of getting in their way, but from their perspective, the scene looked quite different. Ghilvern pats them on their shoulders: "Come to the Tusk tonight. The best inn in town. First round is on us." His invitation is one of sincerity.

"If you stay for the holidays, you have to attend the great walrus hunt. No event in the area compares", he cheerily insists. "Forget the girl. If she was in league with the Demiurge, she will sooner or later end up dangling from some city wall."

Ghilvern gives the characters directions to the Tusk in L'Arc. "Tonight at nine. Make sure to come thirsty!" Then, he mounts his jet ski and revs the engine. Taking a wide curve, he races back into the mist, and his men follow.

TRANSITION

As a game master, you can decide whether to jump at once to Scene 03 with the characters or to have them arrested upon returning to Brest. If they return to Brest, a couple of fishermen will recognize the characters when they enter into the city. Patrolling chapel guards arrest them for questioning and they are led in chains to Oppolus' castle.



SCENE 02: OPPOLUS' CASTLE

They await their verdict in a drafty, poorly lit shack. Transom windows that are more like cracks let just the slightest amount of light into the room. A long bench and a cold wall are the only luxuries afforded to the characters. They are on a small rock pinnacle that extends out into the roadstead where the castle is situated. The last three hours spent in waiting feel as though it were an entire day.

Finally, the heavy gate creaks open, and a man comes limping in. His left leg is cut short by a wooden peg. He grabs a chair from the corner of the room and sits down in front of the characters with his arms folded. His face is mild, his eyes two warm opals searching the characters' faces for any sign of emotion.

"Tronte," he says tersely. "Master of the Chapel," he adds, clearing his throat.

"Who were the Spitalians at the fish market?" he asks his first question.

He listens astutely to the characters' answers.

"Are you in league with them?"

"Why didn't you try to arrest them?"

"Did you know the red-haired woman at the pier?"

Bureaucratically, he asks one question after the other. Suspicious of the characters, he probes further: "Why are you in town?"

"What belongings do you have?"

"Where are you staying?"

The interrogation is tenacious but all of a sudden, it ends abruptly. A man in thick seal fur and walrus leather armor enters the den.

"Tronte, let these people go! I have no use for prisoners right now. Not today, not next week."

The new guy in the room is old and tall and he is covered in ivory trinkets from head to toe. His voice is gruff like a stalling engine.

"Go on, unchain them!" he says.

The master of the chapel is confused. "King Oppolus, these people have ..."

But the king interrupts him sharply: "These people have done no wrong. Did you see what this creature did to the poor fisherman? We are lucky that there weren't any more corpses." Then he looks at the characters and nods gratefully. "This arrest is shameful. I apologize in the name of the Britoni."

Tronte tries to explain his take on things, but Oppolus raises a cautionary finger. "Master of the Chapel, do not contradict me. Look at these people. In which way are they connected to the Spitalians you are looking for?"

KING OF BRITON

The man who rules Briton does not distance himself from his subordinates. On the contrary, the first encounter with the king is a peaceful one. A roll on INS + Empathy (3) is, nevertheless, necessary to sort through the fragments of conversation and distill their meaning.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The king has a great interest in making sure that the events at the port don't attract attention. Does he really just want to maintain the image of a peaceful city, or is there more to it?

1 TRIGGER: Vicarent is the foster son of Oppolus? How did the Slayer of Ganaress become an Anabaptist when his roots are with the Britoni, and more importantly, how did Oppolus find the child?

3+TRIGGER: Which enemies are a threat to Brest, and how could they profit from the upheaval? And of still greater importance, what could pose a threat to such a powerful city that has been able to maintain its independence for centuries?

Tronte can provide no logical answer and resignedly unchains the characters.

Oppolus is satisfied. "Peace is a necessity. At least, once a year. If we start arresting those who are not from here and throwing them into the dungeon, the mood in the city will turn sour."

"But we don't know what the Spit..." Before Tronte can finish, Oppolus leans toward his face and presses his index finger to the man's lips. Then, he loudly hisses "Sssshhhhhhh!"

FRESH AIR

Oppolus pardons the characters and leads them out of the den and into a forecourt. They stand in the drizzle with their shoulders hunched. The mist still clings to the city like the haze in a wash house, draping a veil upon all of the buildings.

"I don't need any trouble," mutters the king. His face reveals lines of worry, his breath condensing in the cold midday air. "Brest has enemies, and they are all in the city to celebrate. They will try to exploit any sign of weakness. Whatever happened at the fish market today, I don't want a lantern hung on it." Patiently, he waits for a reaction from the characters.

"We'll forget the whole thing." The king orders Tronte to have the characters transported from the island over to L'Arc before trudging down the winding set of stairs that lead to the castle proper. Tronte sighs and shrugs. Grumpily, he fulfills the task that he has been given. He hands the characters their belongings and leads them over a small bridge.

"If something strange should happen in the city, let me know. Oppolus wants to ensure that the situation remains calm. He looks forward to these holidays all year long, for this is the time when the Sublime graces the town with his presence." He makes sure that the characters are able to follow his every word. "Well, you know, Vicarent, Oppolus' chosen son." Then he sticks out his tongue and makes a gesture that mimics cutting his own throat. "He's the boy who killed Ganaress in one blow! Jab! Off with the head!"

If the characters aren't able to follow him, Tronte will spell it out for them: "Oppolus loves his son. He only wants him to be happy. The whole celebration is simply an endless sign of his gratitude. That is why the king is so keen on everything going smoothly. It means everything to him."

THROUGH THE EYES OF A VETERAN

Tronte appears far less naive than his king and is the kind of man that can't be easily deterred. The veteran has seen enough to be able to tell bullshit from truth. He is also quite suspicious about the sudden appearance of the Spitalians, and considers Oppolus' path of calmness and composure a mistake. Tronte tells the character the way to the chapel of Saint Vicarent in case they need to find him later. At the same time, he warns them to remain peaceful during the holidays.



SCENE 03: AT THE TUSK

Following the eventful morning, the characters find themselves in the Tusk in the evening. The traditional Britoni inn is crowded with guests from all over the area. Tobacco smoke hangs heavily in the air, stinging unaccustomed eyes. Music is being played on a small stage. An old woman with a scratchy voice cranks on a barrel organ, singing folk song after folk song. The audience cheers and sings along while engaging in drinking competitions. In a niche, teenagers lie on benches while Lavender tattoos shoulders, collarbones and scrawny chests. They joke loudly about who amongst them can tolerate the most pain.

Ghilvern spies the characters in the crowd and waves them over to the counter so he can treat them to the drinks he promised them.

"What are you doing in Brest?" he asks as he gives out mugs of beer.

"Day of Ganaress? Walrus hunt? The auction?"

If the characters ask what the auction is all about, Ghilvern will explain what it entails. "Mud Crabs from Saint-Brieuc bring unwanted goods to Brest every year. Stuff that either didn't find a buyer or was considered worthless by the Chroniclers," he says, taking a deep sip from his mug. "Sometimes real treasures can be found there. But one time, a trader from Aquitaine misjudged a handful of scrap and pointlessly drove the price upwards. When nobody wanted to bid, he lost a fortune at the auction," he says with a big grin. "Definitely worth a visit. It starts tomorrow morning at eight o'clock at the Brotherhood Square."

Before they can ask more questions, there is a bang in the background.

SCRAPPER IN DISTRESS

"I'll kick your ass, you miserable scumbag!" a man roars angrily. Dishes fly, tables and chairs are turned over, wood cracks and cries rage across the room. One look over the shoulder explains everything. Three Britoni are roughing up the shop. They jump over the benches and race towards a Scrapper.

The first one grabs the Scrapper by the neck. He lifts him off his feet and smashes him with full force onto a tabletop.

"That was your last prank, Parel!" the red-faced Britoni roars. The Scrapper gargles unintelligibly, trying in vain to free himself from the steel grip. The two other Britoni grab the arms of the Scrapper and hold him down. Parel can't move.

An uproar breaks out as guests scream in vain, trying to voice their dismay about the sudden outbreak of violence.

"Come on, Brentwin. Leave Parel alone, damn it. He didn't do anything!" shouts an angry young woman and throws herself at one of the thugs. A slap sends her promptly to the ground.

"Shut up, you whore!" thunders the Britoni, his face twisted in anger. He pulls

a knife out of his shoulder bag and holds it to the throat of the wriggling Scrapper. "I'll cut off your ugly nose, you dwarf!"

Things are getting serious. Ghilvern rushes over to help the Scrapper, leaving the characters behind. Before he can get anywhere near him, a stool is thrown in his direction. It hits the hunter on the temple and sends him crashing into a bench. He falls unconscious as he hits the floor. All hell breaks loose. Dozens of men and women attack each other, breaking off chair legs and using them as batons. Beer pitchers crash on top of skulls and fists fly. A surge of pent-up rage sweeps through the inn, carrying along anyone who gets into the fray by accident.

The characters are in the thick of the action and must fend off a hail of blows from all sides.

I. OUT BACK

A roll on INS+Perception (3) is necessary to keep track of the chaos. The characters see the three men lift the overpowered Scrapper and throw him through the window and out into the yard. The glass breaks and shards rain onto the ground. The three men run through the rear exit directly to the back of the building to finish the Scrapper off.

If the characters want to intervene, they have to get around the ongoing brawl with a roll on BOD+Force (4). A roll on AGI+Dexterity (3) is necessary to avoid flying fists and chair legs.

At the rear door, there is a slippery stairway that leads to a poorly lit area outside behind the inn. After rolling across a canopy, the Scrapper crashed onto the ground at the other end of the lot. The Britoni have him surrounded with their knives drawn. The Scrapper slowly rises from the mud, hunched in pain.

"Don't come near our women anymore, Parel!"

"Really Brentwin, you got something confused," coughs the Scrapper and wipes the blood from his mouth. Brentwin jumps at Parel, his knife raised.

"You'll die right here!"

Parel jumps aside.

"I'd rather die here!" he gasps in a desperate attempt to face danger with humor. The meager Scrapper is no opponent for his three towering adversaries, and if the characters do not move in, it will only end bloody for Parel.

THE CHARACTERS INTERVENE

If the characters decide to face the attackers, they will have to leave Parel's side. A dangerous melee follows. The hunters are experienced close-combat fighters who handle their knives with exceptional agility. They do not view the characters as enemies, but in their fit of anger, such distinctions do not make much of a difference.

A COOL HEAD

The situation is out of control, and the characters have to defend themselves in the midst of the scuffle. Drawing a weapon, however, would turn the fight into a bloodbath. If one single shot is fired or if a deadly wound is struck, the entire inn will attack the characters, beating them senseless. But they won't stop there. The following morning the characters will be executed in the Blood Pit. A simple roll on INS+Empathy (1) should suffice to convey to even the most trigger-happy character that they have no chance of surviving a brawl forty to one.



UNDER OBSERVATION

In the heat of the fighting, the characters do not notice that Vatenguerre has followed them to the inn in an attempt to better understand their motives. Either they are still in possession of the Spitalian medal, which he used to locate them, or Vatenguerre followed them from Opolus' castle.

Let the character with the highest value in INS+Perception (4) roll.

If they get a Trigger on the roll, they will notice the outline of a figure briefly peeking into the lot behind the inn from the opposite roof. The next moment, it is gone. The situation out back is too risky to chase the figure, but the sighting should give the characters an indication that someone is following them.

In this situation, the characters must try to keep the dispute under control, making sure that it doesn't end with fatalities. If Parel sees a firearm, he will shout at the characters, warning them not to shoot.

Alarmed chapel guards come running, alerted by the noise. They attack the Britoni and throw them to the ground. Handcuffs rattle as they arrest the belligerent hunters.

THE CHARACTERS DO NOT REACT

If the characters decide not to act, but to watch the spectacle from a distance, they must witness the hapless Scrapper suffer at the hands of the Britoni. Two men hold him down with his arms twisted and their knees pressed into his back. Brentwin tears the cap off of his head and cuts off his ear. Parel screams for help, but that only results in a response from one of the hunter's fist.

"Other side!"

The men turn the Scrapper around forcefully. The scene is cruel; Brentwin is hysterical with rage. Suddenly the characters hear the noise of troops approaching on the street. Somebody has alerted the Chapel Guard. Four heavily armed Anabaptists storm into the alley and put an end to the torture.

THE CHARACTERS FLEE

If it becomes too volatile for the characters, they can flee, going behind the building and out onto the street. There, they run into the city guards who have been summoned to the scene. One of them jogs towards the characters and stops them to ask what is going on. When the characters point to the area behind the inn, the troops immediately rush into the alley in order to prevent the worst from happening. Parel survives.

II. THE DUST SETTLES

The chapel guards break up the brawl in the inn. They order the guests to return to their houses and drag the three Britoni responsible for starting it all towards the castle. A guard plants himself in front of the characters. With a notebook in his hand, he addresses the characters as witnesses and interrogates them.

Parel pipes in, covered in his own blood. "These people here saved my ass," he says, visibly relieved.

"If you weren't so busy getting yourself into trouble all the time, you wouldn't need help from strangers," the guard snaps. He casts an appreciative look at the characters and turns on his heels.

In the distance, they see the guard shake his head.

"Stupid Scrapper ...," he mumbles and disappears into the evening mist.

Parel straightens his cap and tries to regain his composure.

"I don't know how to thank you," he says ruefully. If the characters try to find out which skeletons in Parel's closet caused his assailants to erupt in such anger, the Scrapper will simply moan, "Oh, tales of trifles! People really do take each nice word far too seriously." Immediately, he changes the topic. "Come to my island, to my workshop. There food is divine, and you can stay there." A roll on INS+Empathy (3) reveals that the Scrapper does not feel very safe at the thought of going home alone, and the invitation also serves to provide him with an escort.

III. PAREL'S ISLAND

It is already well past midnight when the characters reach the small island on the Penfeld. Parel used the time on the raft to tell them a little bit about his life. He is one of the Salt Wolves and has found glory and wealth in Brest. His life's work was to build the power lines to Morlaix. His workshop is the best in the whole area, and together with his Mice he can repair anything. He also hires passing Scrappers to work for him for a few months. Sometimes, though, they stay for years. If there are Scrappers among the characters, he will try to recruit them on the spot.

When they arrive at the workshop, the characters enter a massive warehouse crammed full with cannibalized turbines, workbenches, and cable drums. It is hard to keep an overview of this wild jumble. Parel urges the characters to follow him to a tin hut perched on stilts in the middle of the warehouse. Ten steps up the stairs, and they reach an expansive kitchen with a dining area. Warm light shines from a crackling stove into the room. Three teenagers sit around a table, working on a gutted engine block. A fourth is stretched out on a bench half-asleep.

"Mice! I brought guests. Poli, brew coffee for these people, Weilam, get the dump-lings from the refrigerator. Monia, is there any caramel sauce left?"

The wiry teens are on their feet in an instant and scurry around grabbing things to serve the characters. Parel clears the table, sweeping the tools off the desktop with his arm. There is a loud clatter. "Please, sit down!"

Immediately, the youths hand the characters cups full of fragrant brown liquid. Tin bowls with pies stacked tall and covered in creamy sauce land in front of them.

Parel seems happy and encourages the characters to enjoy the meal. Apparently, nothing can spoil the good mood of the Scrapper who almost lost his life two hours ago.

Just as he begins telling his version of things, the side door flies open with a loud bang.

ATTENTIVE

The chapel guards seem to know the Scrapper and be aware of the fact that he is in trouble. While the characters are being questioned, one of them may try to learn more about Parel. On a successful roll on CHA+Conduct (2), one of the chapel guards readily indicates that Parel has been walking on thin ice for quite some time. His womanizing has earned him mortal enemies in the city, and the only reason he's not dangling from a wall is the protection afforded him by the king. The Chapel Guard doesn't have the slightest clue as to why he has found himself in the king's good graces.

A CLOSER LOOK

Garlene is visibly upset, but her behavior hides more than just a spiteful woman who wants her peace. A Combination of INS+Empathy (3) and INT+Medicine (2) reveals more.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The woman is obviously sick. High fever is written all over her face. She has dark circles under her eyes and her pupils are dull. Although she seems to have mustered enough strength to appeal to Parel's conscience, she looks exhausted.

1 TRIGGER: The symptoms are consistent with severe flu or malaria, which is typical for the southern coast of Franka. Her lips have an unnatural paleness, and her eyes dart back and forth.

3+ TRIGGER: In addition to clear signs of a severe fever, Garlene's right arm hangs limply by her side. She seems to intentionally avoid moving it. Is it broken?

MEASUREMENTS

If the characters own electronics, sun disks, or E-cubes, they notice a rapid decrease in the stored energy. The objects discharge spontaneously or crackle when touched, sending an electrical impulse through the character's fingers. A roll on INT+Artifact Lore (4) provides information.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: An antenna that is transmitting the pulses of the static magnetic field may be triggering the interference. The current fluctuations indicate that the pulse is unstable.

1 TRIGGER: The enormous strength of the electric field indicates a near field. The impulse must be coming from within the city limits.

3+ TRIGGER: Who could have such a powerful antenna in this area? The Chroniclers of Aquitaine are almost a thousand kilometers away. The technology required to produce such a strong impulse must be worth a fortune.

GARLENE

A woman in a greasy work coat is standing in the doorway, her face sweaty and visibly angry at the arrival of the late guests.

"Are you out of your mind, Parel? What have I told you? Do not bring guests here!" Her voice is tense and bitter.

"But Garlene, you don't understand, these people here ..." Parel starts in an attempt to appease the woman.

"I don't give a fuck who they are! I told you, I don't want anybody on the island, or I'm out of here." Short of breath, she kicks a workbench. Tin cans full of nails and screws drop and rattle across the floor. The Mice in the back of the room press their hands against their noses to suppress their laughter.

"But Garlene, listen to me, these are friends ..."

Garlene cannot be calmed down. "You gullible idiot, just stick to our agreement. As long as I work here, I don't want any of your fucking friends on the island!"

Parel feels humiliated. He squirms and writhes, going back and forth between the characters and Garlene. He wanted to be the perfect host, but the nagging of the other Scrapper makes this rather difficult for him.

The characters recognize that something is clearly wrong with Garlene. She looks unhealthy. If one of the characters starts to question her about a possible illness, she will immediately become snarky. She demands that Parel remove the characters from the island immediately or she will leave the workshop at once. If he does not follow her orders, she will furiously rush back into the workshop and begin to pack. Parel hurries after her to calm her down.

Before the characters can follow them with the hopes of trying to remedy the situation, strange things start to happen. A radio on one of the workbenches suddenly crackles, producing a static tone sequence. Neon tubes inside the warehouse dim spontaneously, only to light up again moments later.

CURRENT FLUCTUATIONS

Parel comes running back into the kitchen. He looks around confused. He stares at the ceiling, then at the Mice and finally at the characters.

"Power fluctuations?" he asks in astonishment.

If the characters point to the crackling radio, he will respond with a baffled look. "Poli, Weiland, check the transformer. Monia, Valentino, see if anything has damaged the overhead lines."

Parel sits down at the radio and fiddles with the settings, trying to change the channels. He is visibly confused. "An electromagnetic disturbance," he mutters to himself, not sure if the characters are able to follow him.

If the characters ask what it is all about, he will respond by saying, "Something is interfering with the FM band and producing a static magnetic field." Immediately, Parel picks up a scrap of leather and a piece of coal and tries to calculate the formula.

However, it all ends just as quickly as it began. The glow of the neon tubes stabilizes and the radio falls silent. Parel is still pondering the formula when Poli returns to the kitchen.

"The transformer is OK, and the transmission line hasn't suffered any damage. But ..."

"Are you sure?" Parel asks, lost in thought.

"Yes, yes, I'm sure ..."

"Did you read out the fluctuations? Did you check the distributor?"

"Yes, yes, but I ..."

"What about the rest of the workshop? Does everything work properly? Did you check the switch boxes? Has anything been blown?"

"Yes, yes, but ..."

"Damn it, do not YES-YES me!" Parel rebukes the Mouse.

"Garlene took the raft and ferried over to Brest!" Poli manages to complete his sentence completely exhausted.

"Why didn't you say that right away?" the Scrapper gasps in panic.

Without wasting a second, Parel is on his feet. He runs out of the kitchen and



hastily calls back to the characters to find a place to bunk. Parel's home is their home. Suddenly, he is gone.

The Mice lie on the floor, their faces bright red from laughter.

A NIGHT AMONG MICE

The six Mice are a relaxed bunch of juvenile Scrappers. Although they all love their mentor, they do not take him very seriously. He found them as orphans and taught them everything they need to survive. Even when his sweeping stories of love affairs bore them to death, they still help him out. If the characters question them about Garlene, Monia will say, "Parel lost his heart to Garlene years ago. She's the only one who never fell for his wily ways. Every few years, she stops by the workshop and works here for a while. Parel has always granted her every wish."

If the characters continue the conversation and try to find out about Garlene's illness, Weilam will say "Yeah, I've never seen her so tired before."

Valentino jumps in, "She looks pretty exhausted. Maybe she caught something on the platform."

Poli interrupts sharply, "Platform?! What are you talking about, man? You can't just talk about the platform, you idiot!"

The Mice are terrified. They have said too much. Mortified by their slip of the tongue, they try to change the subject and question the characters instead. If the characters try to learn more about the platform, they must first succeed in a Combination of PSY+Cunning (4) and CHA+Expression (3). If the roll is successful, the Mice will tell them that there are secret drilling rigs out in the Atlantic, but that they have never been on one personally. Poli wants to work there one day. If the roll fails, the Mice will immediately feign fatigue and retreat into their bunks. The characters have already heard enough.

THE KIDS AS ALLIES

Technology and stories from distant lands fascinate the Mice. They will take this opportunity to inquire about every exciting detail of the characters' lives. If the characters are responsive and friendly, they can try to build a relationship with the youngsters who, in turn, know Brest like the back of their hand. If the characters have questions about the structure of the city and its layout, the Mice are able to provide them with useful information. They are an excellent start for setting up a personal network. Indeed, the Mice will also one day grow up.

SCENE 04: THE AUCTION

If the characters are to make it to the auction at Brotherhood Square in time, the day will begin with little sleep. As they climb out of their bunks, they see Parel stretched out on a bench. The Scrapper snores like a sawmill. Next to him are more than a few flasks of distillate, which have evidently been used to purge the grief from his heart. He is out of commission until further notice. Poli's eyes are bloodshot from lack of sleep. He checks if the raft is at the dock, then dresses himself before leading the characters down to the river.

OVERVIEW

The square is enormous, its scope almost imperceptible to the naked eye. Alleys and streets, two dozen in number, come from all sides and meet here. The center of Brest is bursting at the seams; preparations for the next day are in full swing everywhere.

Booths are laden with goods and carved wooden masks of Ganaress dangle from gables. Oxcarts are stuck between the paving stones, hindering the flow of the stream of people. The faces are as diverse as the land —peasants, hunters, fishermen, Touched, Ascetics, Orgiastics, Scrappers, musicians and chapel guards all going about their business.

STRANGE REQUEST

The stranger's request should stun the characters. He is clearly talking about the two strange artifacts that fell into their hands during their long journey. Who is this man, and why is he looking for the star and the disc? The characters can either try to talk to him or spy on him. The latter will not be successful, because the stranger is already aware of his persecutors (s. Shadowed!).

I. BROTHERHOOD SQUARE

The characters reach the event almost half an hour after it starts, the exhaustion of the previous day stuck in their bones. A large crowd has gathered at the Blood Pit. Farm girls walk among the bystanders and sell boiled brandy to drive away the spirits of the night. If the characters try to catch a glimpse of the action, they spot two Mud Crabs moving through the crowd on large mechanical stilts. They both hold up finds in the air, touting their supposed value. With their ear to the crowd, the Mud Crabs listen for bids. One after the other, works of art find new owners as rolled Draft bundles change hands.

"Mud Crab, I'm looking for something special," a voice booms suddenly. "Tell me, have you heard anything about a star and a disc? Both round like a plate, one dull and black like a starless night, the other made of pure gold."

The man who has made this odd request stands no less than ten paces away from the characters. He is wearing a snow-white robe and his skin is a dark mahogany. The Mud Crab stops in his tracks and tries to make out the man behind the question in the crowd.

"Yes, I know the star and the disc," says the Scrapper on the high stilts.

The man in the white robe listens attentively.

"The dull black thing is my asshole, and the disc of gold is my mother's nipple."

Roaring laughter floods the Blood Pit. The Mud Crab raises his buttocks in the air and makes loud farting noises and suckling sounds. Not amused, the man pulls his hood deeper over his brow and slowly removes himself, leaving the crowd behind him.

THE NEOLIBYAN

If the characters talk to the man, he will calmly gaze at them from under his hood. His eyes are iridescent, sometimes a sparkling gold, sometimes brown.

"My name is Shamash of Constantine," he says in fluent Frankan. "I'm looking for the grandest gift of all. A present for my Sheikh. Something worthy of a ruler of the universe." He smiles mildly and cocks his head.

If the characters probe to find out what he already knows about the star and the disc, he will meet their questions with a question of his own. "What do I need to know about it? Do you have any insights you would care to share?" In the same breath, he beckons the characters to follow him to a market stall. He insists on treating them to a glass of mead.

"I've traveled the seas in search of this legend. Such an artifact would be worth my weight in gold in Africa."

He leans against the booth and asks, "Do you think the star and the disc are in Brest?" If the characters say no, Shamash will reply by saying, "Of course, for who would want to bring such a treasure to here of all places. To the end of the world, ha! Surely, my informant has deceived me." Then he toasts the characters. "I'm staying at an inn in L'Arc. It is called West Wind. I'll be there for the holidays. If you hear anything, then, please, drop by."

If, however, the characters confess to knowing about or even possessing the star and the disc, Shamash will give them his undivided attention. "There is nothing I'd rather do than take a look at your discovery and convince myself of its value. Not here, though. Find me in my room this evening where we can negotiate in peace." He pays the market woman and heads southwest, trudging off into the approaching morning



rain. The characters have time to discuss and assess the situation. There seems to be someone in Brest who knows about their strange discovery, and they have a trail to follow. As they are drinking the last drop from their cups, a riot from a crowd in the background spills over to them.

SKEPTICISM

Only African characters can make a Combination roll on INT+Legends (4) and PSY+Cunning (3). They are also allowed to add their Secrets trait to it. If the roll is successful, the encounter will leave a bad taste in their mouth. Which Sheikh rules the gold mining town of Constantine? Why would a Neolibyan send a servant without backing into such dangerous climes? Where are the Scourgers who are protecting this herald from his ruin?

II. YASEN AND HIS FOLLOWERS

"Make way for the Emissary of Rennes! Get out of the way! Clear the road for Yassen the Merciful," a voice thunders across the marketplace.

Behind the characters, the crowd parts, and a pack of riders comes down Pioneer Road heading towards the square. Armored Orgiastics encircle an old man in dark clothing who is perched on a white horse. His stature is haggard, resembling that of an emaciated vulture. His face is a molten candle without form, framed by a wreath of snow-white hair. Disgust and hatred smolder in his eyes. From the mount of his horse, he searches for the guilty whom he can lead to slaughter like a hangman. Mothers hide their children behind them. The woman at the booth where the characters drank their

SHADOWED!

Maybe it is just a hunch, but the characters have a sneaking suspicion that they have been under surveillance for two days now. If one of the characters saw the figure on the rooftop the night before, allow them another roll on INS+Perception (4). A look out into the gray sky and over the black rooftops reveals another figure, once more behind a chimney, once more looking towards the characters. Damn, what's going on? Who's watching them?

When the characters reach the spot where they saw the figure, it is already gone. They do not yet know that Arnika has tracked and located their artifacts. He carries out the biddings of his master, looking for weaknesses within the group in preparation for an assault on them.



mead sighs loudly. "I guess, five. Maybe six," she says to herself.

If the characters ask what she means, she will answer with a shrug. "Well, I think, this year, he's going to have six people killed over the holidays" She looks at them, ponders for a moment, and then adds, "Maybe seven."

THE ADDRESS

Yasen dismounts his white horse in the middle of the square. He takes three steps to a well, pours water in the palm of his hand, and sips it. Disgusted, he spits it out on the pavement.

"The purest source is just as polluted as its vicious people." Nobody in the marketplace even ventures to go near the Emissary. Instead, a procession of barefoot and bald-headed Ascetics follows their leader to the chapel of Saint Vicarent. The characters can easily observe them from a safe distance in the crowd. The Ascetics stop in front of the unadorned chapel.

The gnarled old man turns to his followers and thoughtfully chews on his lips.

"Listen to me, Brest," he shouts. "Everyone here lives under the all-seeing eye of God. His Pneuma is almighty

and his garden is without equal. However, on my journey here, I've heard two things that have troubled me. Yesterday, the Demiurge swept through our midst and left his mark. May the death of two poor souls be lamented." He makes a brooding pause and wags his forefinger.

"Then, an emanation befell me that a goat has stolen its way into our congregation to mate." A whisper goes through Yasen's followers. "Bring her to me, because only I can split the Demiurge's whore into four parts."

As the old man is about to carry on with his sermon on the Jehammedans, he is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the Sublime who is riding into Brest on horseback.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

The mood is noticeably charged, but as soon as word spreads that Vicarent has made it to Brest, the onlookers take off in all directions. Everyone wants to catch a glimpse of the Slayer of Ganaress, and Yasen's audience evaporates. The Emissary wraps himself in his fur and goes to the chapel for prayers.

"Religion is the poison of humanity. We are deserving of the idol worshipers who have long guided our peoples," someone whispers in the direction of the characters.



When they turn around towards the direction of the voice, they recognize Vatenguerre, who is hiding from the morning rain under a tarpaulin. He gives the characters a comradely look.

"Did you enjoy the spectacle?" he asks in amusement.

Finally, they will get some answers. The characters may go under the tarp and question the Preservist.

"Yesterday? The creature at the harbor? It's something new. We don't know what it is. However, it's aquatic and extremely dangerous. Vega, our Epigeneticist, is trying to decode the salvaged material," he says worriedly. "We are here because of a premonition. The sixth Chakra is about to blossom. Our mission is secret, not even our Cult knows about it."

He leans over to the characters with his fingers spread and begins to clarify the situation.

"Back then, you remember that thing in Bayonne. You did a good job there. Without you, our commanding officer wouldn't have survived. We need help again, serious help!"

He makes sure that everyone is listening carefully.

"The Anabaptists are hiding something in the city. They call it Starfire. We believe that it is pure Primer matter. We know it is here, but we don't know where. You must mingle

with the Anabaptists and inform us of its whereabouts so we can act."

He lets out a deep breath, then he takes his black knife and knocks the steel against a wooden wall. "This is not about you or about me or the motives of individual Cults. This is about everything. The Anabaptists are keeping something from us that will enable us to save humanity. Not even the Spital supports our mission because nobody wants to risk political alliances."

If the characters ask Vatenguerre about Malinesse, he smiles cynically. "A goddamn drone brought us here. Can you imagine that? Some chemical reaction in her brain drew her here, just like a salmon floating upstream to its spawning grounds. She is a human truffle pig. Nothing more." Then he turns back to his destination. "We cannot be amongst the Anabaptists without attracting attention to ourselves, which makes it impossible to infiltrate their inns. However, I am sure the information is out there in L'Arc in the Flask or in the Empty Jug. Rub shoulders with the fanatics and listen. Help us retrieve the Starfire before it's too late for us all." He moves backward along the wall and slowly disappears into a nearby alleyway, his parting words to them: "I'll find you when the time comes."

III. SEPARATE WAYS

After Vatenguerre's appearance, it is clear that in Brest, there are more secrets than meets the eye. The characters have countless leads, but still see no clear lines that connect the dots. They must carry out the investigations themselves, if they are to uncover the secrets buried here.

- ◇ What are the sixth Chakra and the Starfire all about? How can they get more information about them?
- ◇ What role does Yasen the Merciful play in the whole affair?
- ◇ Where does King Oppolus stand in this matter and where do his loyalties lie?
- ◇ Where did Malinesse disappear to? Why did she lead the Spitalians to Brest?
- ◇ Does it have something to do with Garlene and her symptoms?
- ◇ What is going on with the oil platforms in the Atlantic?
- ◇ What is the story with the Neolibyan and why is he searching for the artifacts?
- ◇ Is someone still trailing the characters?
- ◇ Where did the near-field phenomenon of the previous evening come from?

The questions become more specific, but the answers remain unclear. The characters can either follow their hunches or continue following the course of the story.

SCENE 05: RETURN TO L'ARC

If the characters take the road leading to the Southeast, they will inevitably pass a sloping embankment. A small trail leads to a wide field surrounded by a high fence. From their vantage point, they can see dozens of dogs barking from within a fenced courtyard. The dogs are following a man who is carrying several puppies in his arms.

If the characters approach him, they will hear the old man mournfully mumbling into his beard.

"What a shame," says the man as he sighs through the chain-link fence. "Just fell over dead last night. Seven down." His voice is weak. The wind blows his gray curls across his face. Gently, he places the dead puppies in a small hollow while the other dogs jump around nervously and let out high-pitched whines. They push their snouts through the fence and lick the characters' fingers.

A gray-haired woman joins the elderly man, wrapped in a dense sealskin winter jacket. As she helps her husband bury the puppies, she notices the characters. "We raised them like our children. Some of them don't have litters anymore, and the bloodstock gets smaller with each passing year," she says wistfully.

If the characters ask how the puppies died, the man will simply shrug. "It started sometime after midnight. The dogs began to howl like crazy and roll in the grass. All hell broke loose in the Compound."

CONNECTIONS

The story should make the characters suspicious. The time of death of the puppies coincides with the fluctuation of currents on Parel's island. Could this be a lead? A Combination on INT+Artifact Lore (4) and INT+Medicine (3) will reveal the link.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The impulse of the near field originated within city limits. Perhaps, the static magnetic field affected the dogs. Animals tend to be much more susceptible to electromagnetic interference.

1 TRIGGER: If the antenna sent, in addition to the wave, a tone in a frequency that is inaudible to humans, that could explain the behavior of the dogs. Maybe, a dog could even be trained to find the source of the signal.

3+ TRIGGER: An autopsy of the puppies' eardrums would provide conclusive evidence as to whether acoustic reasons were the cause for their sudden death. However, the old couple would never agree to it. Theirs is a glaring grief.

I. THE BRAGGART

"Corentin! How much do you want for one of your dogs? Have you changed your mind since we talked last week?" A neatly dressed young man leans over the fence of the enclosure, grinning like a shark. His pea-green shirt contrasts his umber-colored skin and a gilded fang dangles ostentatiously from his earlobe.

"Even if you could gather up the ten thousand Drafts, we wouldn't sell you any of our dogs!" the old woman immediately steps in.

Hearing such a sum should send the characters' blood pressure skyrocketing. Ten thousand Drafts for a dog?

"Come on, Maelle, the dogs aren't worth that much! I told you, I'll buy one for two thousand, tops," mocks the popinjay.

Corentin straightens himself and stomps over to the fence. "Stop right there, Soufi-

ane! Seven of our puppies died tonight. Do you know how to raise and train a dog? Do you have any idea how rare dogs are? Why don't you sell the Africans a mangy gendo, they wouldn't notice the difference anyway!"

"Don't be so upset, old man. You don't seem to be short on clients." He looks dashing in the direction of the characters and struts toward them, puffing his chest.

"Seriously, the mutts aren't worth the gold..." he whispers loud enough for the elderly couple to hear. Maelle throws a lump of dirt over the fence, and the young man jerkily jumps aside in order to avoid it.

"Ha! That's a good way to scare off respectable customers, you old trout," he answers with a cheeky grin exposing two rows of pearly white teeth. In the next moment, he crouches down next to the characters and takes a colorful box out of his pocket. He opens the tin case, revealing rolled tobacco leaves. He nods invitingly.

"Gentle people, you look as if you are unable to turn down some good tobacco." He does not hesitate to light one himself and blows the blue haze flamboyantly into the air. The man is clearly moonstruck, but his humor and his act are fabulous.

He introduces himself as Soufiane, a merchant from Lisbon, always on the lookout for good merchandise. "Do you have anything to offer?" he asks, letting a bundle of rolled Drafts dance between his fingers. Before the characters can answer, rumbling thunder blasts across the city. Suddenly, it begins raining cats and dogs.

IN THE SOUP KITCHEN

They hurry over to a soup kitchen on a nearby street corner. Soaking wet, they sit down with Soufiane near an open wood fire. The server brings thick blankets of walrus leather to warm them up and takes their orders.

"The best the house has to offer and mead for all," Soufiane orders, ignoring the wishes of the characters. "My treat," he casually says, rubbing his hands by the fire. "So, shall we start from the beginning," he commences businesslike. "I have a launch down in the harbor. A fast thing, it is. With it, you can even land in difficult waters." With raised eyebrows, he makes sure that the characters are listening attentively. "I've made three loot tours to Britain, right up to the coast of Brighton. It's hard to believe how much there's left to find up there." He lights his tobacco roll once more. "You have to go in there with a competent group. Just a handful of men, not more. You don't want to draw too much attention; otherwise, your best friend from next door will turn into a hawk. But let me tell you, the best part is ..." Soufiane exhales, blowing a thick plume of smoke into the face of a character. "No Neolibyans! It's all for us."

If the characters tell him about their encounter with Shamash earlier this morning, Soufiane's face will immediately freeze. "So, the rumor does contain a kernel of truth?" he asks completely baffled. "What does he look like? What is he looking for? Did they send him ahead? Are there others? Where is he?" Soufiane's barrage of questions comes like a bat out of hell. All of a sudden, his serenity vanishes, and he nervously fidgets with his legs.

If the characters ask Soufiane what he knows about the artifacts that Shamash is looking for, he will simply shake his head. He has never heard of a star or a disk.

"You must do me a favor. I have to know what the Neolibyan is up to. If I find out about his plans in good time, we'll be able to forestall him. I have many friends among the Scrappers of Saint-Brieuc, all of whom have a score to settle with the raiders of Tripol."

If the characters inform him that Shamash is in the West Wind, Soufiane's ears will perk up. "All right," he says. "We'll meet there at around seven and look for him. When he shows up, you pressure him for information." If Soufiane's words fail to convince the group, he will beckon them closer. "Folks! I'm a weapons smuggler. I have every caliber you can dream of. I am happy to do my part and pay you well for any business that we do together."

THE LEOPARD

Soufiane does not attempt to hide his disgust for Neolibyans. He denounces their greed and gluttony. However, it is difficult for the characters to see how Soufiane's ambitions differ from those of the Neolibyan traders. A roll on INT+Legends (4) reveals more. African characters may add their Secrets trait.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The trader does not respect the principles of the Bank of Commerce, that much is for sure. He also does not seem bound to any Magnate, instead working on his own—a rarity for someone from a culture that has produced the world's most successful trading network.

1 TRIGGER: The Neolibyans make enemies wherever they rule and conquer. There is rumor that a conspiracy is under way in Africa. Supposedly, a group is currently working to undermine the position of the Cult of Traders by carrying out acts of economic sabotage in order to weaken the Bank of Commerce.

3+ TRIGGER: The members of this network of saboteurs and independent traders are called Leopards. They act in secret and operate far from the lucrative trade routes in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, they are a danger that the Neolibyans find difficult to deal with because of the clandestine nature of the network and the fact that its members do not identify themselves as Leopards.

DISC AND STAR

The characters would do well to carry their possessions with them. The more they get involved in the story, the sooner they realize that there is more to the artifacts in their possession than they thought. Keeping the disc and the star in their chambers while exploring Brest would be a major mistake. Burying them out in the field is not a good idea either. Arnika has long since located the artifacts and is only waiting for the right moment to strike.



II. ATTACK!

A look outside gives them a clear view. The rain has stopped, but the sky is still leaden. As soon as the characters leave the close quarters at the soup kitchen and step out onto the street, they notice a Chronicler lost in thought wandering through the mud. He has not even bothered to put on his mask or hood and his greasy hair sticks to his face. Using some sort of gauge, he checks something, then looks up at the roofs in surprise. Soufiane is saying goodbye to the characters, when all of a sudden the Chronicler looks at them alarmed.

"Get away from that door!"

Not a heartbeat later, an explosion shakes the soup kitchen. Smashed wooden struts and bricks tear across the street. A hail of shards, splinters, and shrapnel flies over the characters. Suddenly, the front of the house splits and support beams bend under the weight of collapsing floors. A thick cloud of black ash hisses out onto the street.

IN THE NICK OF TIME

The Chronicler's warning comes just in time.

The characters must succeed in a Combination of PSY+Reaction (4) and AGI+Dexterity (3) in order to find cover at the last second. Otherwise, they will be killed by falling pieces of rubble or the bodies will be riddled with flying shrapnel. Explosive damage (12). Armor does not offer protection.

THE PALER

Glowing wood chips sail through the stifling smoke. The characters are caked in ash and surrounded by collapsed debris. The blast has separated them. Every character is at least ten steps away from the next character. Burning logs are smoldering everywhere, and decapitated body parts stick out of the rubble. Getting one's bearings is difficult. The reverberation of the explosion is like a distant thunderstorm in everyone's ears.

A mechanical humming mixes with the deafening noise. A hooded figure hurries from one cover to the next, a submachine gun at the ready. Phunk! Phunk! Silencer! The bullets strike the ground next to the characters. Dirt fountains spray up all around them. The attacker is nimble, blending in with the environment. He purposely dives towards the character who is carrying Jehammed's star and disc.

To their left, the mysterious Chronicler rises from the rubble and stumbles forward into the dense smoke. He wants to help the characters and ignites a charge on his module. Two dozen flickering rays of green light pulsate from his suit and the flashing stripes cut through the curtain of ash and smoke. The hooded man doesn't take long to answer. The attacker throws a glowing cylinder at the Chronicler. The luminous tube sails through the air and upon impact, bursts with a hissing flash. The characters feel the hair on the back of their necks rise and their muscles tingle. The light show of the Chronicler dies down at once. Electronics owned by the characters also discharge immediately if they are within the blast radius of the electromagnetic pulse.

The Chronicler throws himself to the ground, holding his arms protectively over his head.

"Damn it! Paler!"

Phunk! Phunk!

KILLING ZONE

Escape is the only chance of survival. The characters must leave the killing zone, where the Paler has the advantage and can easily wear them down.

Let the characters jump out from the area and into the fresh air where they can get to safety. Rolls on AGI+Agility are necessary to dodge the hail of bullets and find a suitable cover. The Paler follows them. He tries to isolate the character in possession of Jehammed's artifacts from the rest of the group. The rearguard battle leads them into a side street with the Chronicler. He coughs and gasps as dust trickles from his cloak like flour.

"All modules are empty! The Paler got me! My suit is useless!" he exclaims as a warning to the characters. He crouches behind a wall of barrels as Soufiane comes running from the right, panic in his eyes. An ash gray cloud of dirt follows behind him. He throws himself into the cover of a doorway and frantically tries to reload his pistol. "What the hell is going on here?" he asks in a terror-stricken voice.

The Paler mercilessly chases them. They see him positioning himself at the end of the alley. He has full cover.

"Why are we being attacked?" the Chronicler shouts at the characters, unable to comprehend how he became a target himself. Before they can answer, a bullet hits him, and he lands face-first on the hard pavement.

If the characters want to help him, they must leave their cover and rush through the alley, placing them in Arnika's line of fire. The bullet only grazed the Chronicler, but his shoulder is bleeding. "We've got to get out of here!" he grates. A Combination of INS+Perception (2) and PSY+Cunning (2) reveals a recessed door that can be knocked open with a wooden beam. Perhaps, they can move through the interior of the building to another street, which will allow them to escape the Paler.

ARNIKA'S HUNTING INSTINCT

If, during the altercation, the tide turns, giving the characters the upper hand, the Paler will cease his pursuit of them and give ground. He will consider his mission a failure and under no circumstances, will he risk capture much less death. Instead, he will return and inform Helios of the characters' abilities.

If the group has a heavy arsenal of trailblazers, hand grenades, or assault rifles, Arnika will not hesitate to retreat. After months of preparation, he knows the nooks and crannies of Brest by heart and can outmaneuver the characters, shaking them off without much effort. However, this brush with the Paler should be a clear sign for the group that they are in the crosshairs of foreign powers. Their motive, however, remains a mystery.

THE HALO

Arnika is masterfully prepared for his attack. He followed the characters for hours as they made their way from Brotherhood Square to L'Arc. When he sees them entering the soup kitchen, he climbs in through the roof and places his explosive devices in the rafters and at the rear exit. The dense smoke and clouds of ash do not obstruct his view in the least. His Potential allows him to fight without penalty. His mouth filter regulates his breathing and his sun disc functions as both a talisman and transmitter. Wrapped in his black rag coat, he is barely visible among the debris. Only when he dives toward another cover, does he appear like a wavering shadow in front of the thick wall of smoke.

The Halo uses all of his advantages in order to emerge from this encounter as the victor. His goal is to procure Jehammed's disc and star. Human lives are the least of his concern and the characters are no exception. He does not necessarily want to kill them; however, if they are too resistant, the Paler will be left with no other choice.

Within the killing zone, the characters fight with -6D. If they want to face Arnika, even if only in a somewhat restrained manner, they will first have to flee from the debris field and regroup outside of the fire.

OUT OF THE BLUE

There must have been a reason for the attack. The characters have not become victims at random. INT+Legends (4) provides information. Chroniclers, Hellvetics and Palers add their Secrets trait to the roll.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The Paler is definitely after the artifacts that the characters have.

1 TRIGGER: The attacker's equipment is enormous and his skills are precise and deadly. He must be a high-ranking Vault Crawler.

3+ TRIGGER: Everything about him screams Halo, a follower of a Sleeper Prophet. But why is he operating in Brest of all places?

SCENE 06: SOUTHWARD

The characters go through the adjoining house and come out onto a parallel street. There, they meet people who are trying to reach the collapsed soup kitchen. They offer to help the characters. Hustle and bustle abound to the left and right of them. The Chronicler stumbles. "Have we gotten rid of him?"

The characters may take a look around. In the distance, they see a squad of chapel guards approaching rapidly. Soufiane grabs one of the characters by the shoulder.

"The Anabaptists will only slow us down. Remember the agreement! Grab the Chronicler and get yourself to safety. I'll distract the guards. We'll meet after sunset at the West Wind!" The merchant in the dusty shirt puts his pistol in the hand of the nearest character and makes his way down the street. Waving his arms, he runs towards the chapel guards. "Here, over here! There was a gas explosion! Help me, I'm wounded!"

The characters can seize this opportunity to flee through the branched network of roads with the Chronicler.

"I have a shed down in the furriers' quarter. We have to get there. Quick, down the stairs to the jetties," he whispers exhausted and begins to move.

The characters hurriedly follow the scraggy man past the east flank of L'Arc and down some stone steps to an artificial peninsula that protrudes into the roadstead. The Chronicler stops at a hut made of tin and rotten wood. He is breathing heavily. "Here we are." He unlocks an intricate security cylinder on the front door and exhausted, drags himself into the hut.

I. CONSPIRACY THEORIES

A flickering neon tube on the floor illuminates the shed, casting long shadows on the bare walls. Abstruse mathematical formulas, stenographic transcriptions, protocols, drawings of circles, and illegible diagrams cover the walls. The Chronicler falls feebly into a chair. His shoulders slump forward, and a string of saliva dangles from the corner of his mouth.

"Ampere," he says, carefully trying to strip off his cloak. If the characters do not understand, he adds, "It's my name. What are yours?"

Carefully and with a worried look, he opens the collar of his Chronicler suit and tries to free his wounded shoulder. "Can you treat this wound?", he asks, visibly nervous.

If one of the characters agrees to help the Chronicler, a successful roll on INT+Medicine (t) will tell them that the wound is merely a scratch. The Chronicler is hyperventilating for no reason. If the character tells Ampere that the wound is not dangerous, the Chronicler will instantly collapse in relief and let out a long groan.

When the characters ask him about the context of their fateful encounter, his grief vanishes. Immediately he starts to sputter.

"Last night, there were fluctuations of currents throughout the city. It was a near field that was triggered by a magnetic pulse. At noon, I tried to triangulate the origin of the field, but it isn't stationary. The antenna is moving." He says it so quickly that his words almost trip over each other. In one leap, he is on his feet. He scribbles some numbers on the wall with a piece of chalk and turns to the characters, his arms spread wide.

"I think something powerful is haunting Brest. It is not the Paler from earlier. Although, I don't yet know how he fits into the scheme of things. His equipment has no comparable signature." The man jumps frantically towards the window, raises the screen, and looks out. "He didn't follow us, did he?" he asks with fear in his voice. After making sure nobody is lurking outside of the shack, he runs his hand through his greasy hair. "The only logical conclusion is that a Marauder has a finger in the pie," he says in awe. "Argyre."

He lets the name hang in the air, even if the characters are unable to follow his chaotic rant.

REVELATIONS

Amperes' baffling ramblings are worrisome. Should only half of what he says be true, then the characters and the population of Brest are in grave danger.

Marauders are legends. Few people have ever seen one, but stories of their campaigns and reigns of terror are anchored in everyone's collective memory. Nobody knows their intentions, and no one escapes their wrath.



AGAIN, FROM THE BEGINNING

Ampere is thoroughly convinced of his theories, but it is difficult for him to explain them in a coherent manner. The characters must make an effort to wrestle his findings from him, otherwise, the Chronicler will flounder in his blathering.

"Last year in Borca, a squad of Preservists wiped out a group of Pictons who had invaded the Western Protectorate. They are Argyre's slave warriors. My job was to crack the conditioning of the captured Pictons. The warriors were calibrated. Brainwashing," he says excitedly. "The interrogation of the Pictons yielded the same pattern again and again. Disc. Star. Spear. However, under the superficial conditioning, another mission was hidden. Helios!" Ampere speaks about his knowledge with such a certainty that he does not pay any attention to whether someone is able to follow him or not.

"The data we found on Helios in the Cluster revealed him to be a Sleeper Prophet. He has Palers that obey him and no agenda that aligns itself with that of other Sleepers. However, there's more ..." Ampere walks alongside his notes on the wall, tapping the stenographic reports.

"I placed a query in the static Stream to find clues about the conditioning of the Pictons. In 2588, we intercepted a radio message from eastern Borca, most likely transmitted from one needle tower to another. In that conversation, the Needles discussed an artifact that they referred to as Jehammed's Will. It supposedly consists of three parts: A disc, a star, and a spear." The more Ampere reveals, the more lively he becomes,

ENLIGHTENMENT

Eventually, the characters will have to decide whether to trust Ampere and admit to him that they have Jehammed's disk and star. If they show the Chronicler their find, his eyes will beam with excitement. "That's why the Peler attacked us," he says anxiously.

His fingers trace the symbols and engravings on the artifacts. "How do they work?" he asks curiously.

If the characters cannot provide him with an adequate answer, he will beg them for permission to examine the artifacts more closely. "The symbols here, they are a unique code." He immediately starts transcribing. "I'm going to need time!"

SEETHING WITH ANGER

If the characters want to make progress with Garlene, they are going to have to put their social skills to the test. The Scrapper trusts nothing but her own opinion and is wary of just about everyone. All interactions with her are at (-2D). Gaining her trust requires tact and the right choice of words, otherwise her pent-up anger will boil over, and she'll shut herself off completely. Rolls on CHA+Conduct, CHA+Expression, or INS+Empathy are necessary for pouring oil on the troubled waters. Intimidation attempts by PSY+Domination bring about the opposite effect, causing her to try to get rid of the characters at the first opportunity she gets.

carried away by the story's development yet again. "But it gets even better! 2588 and 2597 both yield the same numerical anagram: 1616. This code has been appearing on switch profiles in the Aquitaine Cluster for weeks."

Ampere is frantic. "I pleaded with the Cluster of Aquitaine to help me investigate these phenomena. Nothing! The special unit I requested didn't show up." Nervously, he chews on his nail bed. "Maybe, their cover was blown. Maybe, someone intercepted my radio messages. A Marauder is definitely involved here!" His gestures become erratic; he does not understand why the Chroniclers are not supporting him in his task. His conspiracy theories continue to multiply. "Maybe, the Cluster was infiltrated. Maybe, they want to get rid of me because I know too much. The whole thing stinks to high heaven. The Peler earlier, did you see him? He's after me!" Ampere's words make less and less sense as he goes on.

"I need allies to help me find out what's going on here." He begs the characters to join him. Then he breaks off in the middle of his sentence and points at one of them. "You! Look out of the window to see if everything is all right. You never know!"

II. VITAL SIGNS

Dusk engulfs the roadstead. The low-hanging autumn sun is a yellow smudge on the distant horizon. Above it, gray and black clouds cover the entire sky. It looks as if a stormy night is approaching. A peek through the window offers a good view of the nearby fur market. Between the stalls, a handful of laborers scurry about. They hang the stretched skins, clean their tools and close their workstations for the day.

Have the acting character roll INS+Perception (3) to make sure the coast is clear. If successful, they recognize a familiar figure in the perse evening light: Garlene.

Her back is laden with a bulging backpack, the heavy load slowing her pace. She negotiates loudly with a man at one of the workstations.

If the characters want to confront Parel's flame and find out more about her condition, they must head out to the peninsula where the furriers are.

BEASTLY AND BUGGED

As soon as the characters approach the open area, they hear Garlene protesting from afar. "Of course, I can work! I've been working hard my whole life!" followed by, "No, I'm not sick! It's just a flu, furrier. No reason to worry. I can sew, stretch, and skin. No matter what you give me, I can do it well."

The furrier eyes her skeptically. "What's wrong with your arm, Scrapper? Does it have the flu, too?"

She looks around anxiously and suddenly notices the characters. She rolls her eyes in annoyance. "You all are just what I need! Did Parel send you to beg me to come back to the workshop?" she accusingly asks them. "Forget it! I'm not going back to that island! That horny prick can look for another helper."

Garlene has clear intentions. She never does anything half-assed. Completely shaken by the characters' presence, she collects her stuff and puts on her backpack. With INS+Perception (2), one of the characters notices the furrier's son. The boy is not even sixteen winters old. He is pale as chalk and hides behind his father, seeking protection in his shadow. His eyes are red and his short black hair makes his jug ears even more pronounced. He gazes up at Garlene as if mesmerized. What is wrong with the boy? Is he in love?

The character who picked up Vega's display hears a sudden beep coming from their vest pocket. A quick glance at it reveals a point that is moving towards them. Distance: 300 meters to the south. When the character tries to inform the group, Garlene interrupts him. "Parel is as ridiculous as the idiots who he surrounds himself with."

Suddenly, there is a throaty growl. The furrier's son jumps across the workbench

and pulls the surprised Scrapper to the ground. Garlene crashes to the pavement like a sack of potatoes and the crockery she carries rattles loudly. The boy is on top of her, biting her right arm as if he were possessed. Garlene howls in pain. The furrier does not know what has gotten into his son. Trancelike, he just keeps repeating his name: "Elam! Elam! Elam!"

GANARIDS

The boy bites and chews on the leather of Garlene's sleeve, but his teeth cannot puncture it. The boy's father is frozen in terror like a pillar of salt. He stands there, stammering the name of his child. The characters must do something. Before they know it, two other figures come storming out from between the stalls. Their skin is sallow, and their eyes are red and greedy. They run directly towards the Scrapper lying on the ground.

"Get off me, you son of a bitch!" Garlene screams in a voice distorted by pain. She tries to loosen a wrench from her belt to beat the boy off of her.

A fight breaks out. The two approaching lunatics open their mouths and snap at the characters. With an iron bar and a knife, they attack at random. Their movements are chaotic and unpredictable. What the characters do not know is that the two men are Gnarids, just like the boy. Malinesse's presence has put them in a trance. They want to infect themselves with Leviathanics. Madness has taken possession of them, and their perception is limited to one target: Garlene's pulsating arm.

In the heat of the battle, let the characters roll INS+Perception (3). If they succeed, they discover what has triggered this fanatical attack. A hundred paces away, Malinesse runs aimlessly between rows of sealskins that wave in the wind. Even at dusk, her wooden idol mask and red hair are unmistakable.

"Devour her! She carries the new life within her! Tear her skin off in scraps!" the redhead growls in her raspy voice.

THE CHARACTERS CHASE MALINESSE

Once the characters have gotten rid of the ferocious Gnarids and incapacitated Elam, they can try to capture the mother of the swarm. The display guides them through the forest of billowing skins and pelts. Suddenly, however, the chase comes to a halt. The transponder ceases to send any transmissions. Has she fled into the roadstead again?

The growl of the mother of the swarm continues to echo in their ears. One thing is clear: Vatenguerre has not told them the whole truth. There is more to Malinesse than just the story of a simple drone whose good nose has unwittingly led her to Brest. What does she have to do with Ganaress and the creature from the day before? Why did Malinesse's people attack Garlene? Is there a connection between the Scrapper and the mother of the swarm? Before they can connect the dots, the characters discover a tiny, blinking transponder near the roadstead. The tiny pin is covered in fresh blood. Malinesse has gotten rid of her pursuers for good.

THE CHARACTERS EXAMINE THE ATTACKERS

The characters can focus on the slain attackers. A closer look at their sternum reveals unfinished stigmata. The two lunatics lying on the ground were probably drones. So was the boy. How did they manage to hide among the furriers undiscovered? Why do they wear clothes and have weapons?

When the characters confront Elam's father, he is afraid of the punishment that awaits him. Stuttering, he tells the story of the boy's abduction after his birth and of how he returned years later, much older. That was a time when stories of revenants circulated all over Briton. He cannot say what is wrong with his son, but he pleads on bent knees with the characters not to tell anyone about it. He swears not to reveal anything about the incident if the characters just leave his son with him. If they agree to this, the furrier will take the unconscious boy in his arms and run off.

DILEMMA

The characters are faced with a moral dilemma here. How can they deal with Elam in front of his father without harming or even killing the boy? The latter would shock the father who knows nothing of the Gnarids. It would also make the characters murderers. More and more workers on the fur market mix themselves in the commotion and try to get a better look at what is happening. They have to incapacitate the boy without inflicting any massive physical harm. The characters may easily come to their wit's end under such volatile circumstances. Every decision counts and has moral consequences.

THE MOTHER OF THE SWARM

"The Black Water is my destiny," Malinesse croaks from the south of the market. Her silhouette is a blur between the skins and stalls. She has disappeared somewhere in the thicket of the workstations and is circling the scene. Repeatedly, she barks her accusations to the heavens.

"He was our salvation. Now, a new wave is upon us. A voice so powerful that it will ruin everything."

Let the characters roll PSY+Cunning (2) to get an overview of the chaos.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Malinesse is responsible for the outbreak of violence. Perhaps, her presence alone controls the attackers.

1 TRIGGER: The awakening of the abomination and Malinesse's appearance at the pier happened at the same time. Did the drone influence the creature, and why was she begging to be one with it?

3+ TRIGGER: Bascule tore the wooden mask off of Malinesse's face. When she was wearing it, her voice was distorted. Does the idol mask amplify her abilities?



CURIOSITY

The altercation with the furriers has attracted workers whose curiosity led them to the scene. If the characters want to work covertly and avoid attracting even more attention to themselves and the Scrapper, they must make a move. With a successful Combination of PSY+Cunning (3) and PSY+Domination (2), one of the characters can talk to the crowd and scare them away by falsely assuming a position of authority. In the ominous twilight, the workers are easier to confuse. The characters can get a few hours' head start before the chapel guards learn about the incident and start their own investigation.

THE CHARACTERS SAVE GARLENE

The Scrapper lies on the ground, curled up and grinding her teeth. Sweat trickles down her forehead, and she struggles to fight back the tears. Her right arm is stiff as a poker. What is wrong with her? She is shivering. Still carrying the heavy backpack, she looks like a beetle unable to get up on its own.

"Please help me ..." she chokes out, trying to control the desperate sobs in her throat.

If the characters try to help her, she looks at them panic-stricken. "Not here!" she pleads with puffy eyes. Where can the characters go with her? Ampere's shed is the only possibility nearby.

III. DARK OMENS

Ampere stands deep in concentration pondering the code. The characters arrive and in an instant, his concentration is broken. He stares at Garlene in disbelief.

"Who ..." The question sticks in his throat as he realizes the severity of the Scrapper's state.

"Over here, on the couch," he says invitingly, putting down a coat so the characters can lay Garlene on it. The Scrapper's chest rises and falls in a frantic manner. She is burning with heat, and her gaze flickers across the room. A nameless fear has taken possession of her.

"Please, I beg of you, do not turn me over to the Spitalians or the Anabaptists!" Her every word is a plea. Her heart is pounding. Whatever it is the woman is suffering from, she can already see death approaching. If one of the characters tries to cut open

the sleeve of her coat to uncover her secret, she will start panting. Each layer cut open releases more moisture, and a musty stench fills the shed. Finally, her arm is exposed. Black streaks crisscross her arm, branching out into fractals under the translucent layer of skin.

"Extraordinary!" Ampere comments.

"They're going to kill me!" Garlene gasps.

If the characters ask Garlene about the origin of the infection, she sits up and begins to explain. "It happened about two months ago. There was an accident on one of the secret oil rigs out in the Atlantic Ocean," she pauses slightly. "I don't know, but we drilled into something and then my entire crew was dead. I fled with the escape pod. On the first day, it was just a black dot. Down here on my arm. Since then, it's been growing. It gets bigger with every passing day," she says.

Ampere watches the characters in confusion as they question her. Infections are not his area of expertise, but the mention of oil platforms piques his interest. "So they do actually exist! I knew it! The oil platforms are Aquitaine's fuel!" he says smugly.

When the characters try to figure out what brought her to Brest or how she intends to get help, Garlene goes on to explain: "Parel is an idiot, but I've always been safe on his island. The old man doesn't do me any harm, and I knew I could hide there for a while. I was hoping this shit would pass. But it's only gotten worse." She gulps. "Three weeks ago, I heard on the market that an African woman was practicing medicine in the Balsam House. I'm absolutely sure she's an Anubian. However, I can't get in there with my arm. If one of those crazy Ascetics finds out about this, they will throw me on the next cart to the House of Atonement in Vannes!" Slowly, she closes her eyes. Garlene definitely needs some shuteye. Her voice starts cracking, "Someone has to get the Anubian out of the Balsam House and bring her here. She is the only one who can help me."

"That is absolute nonsense!" Ampere interrupts. "How many more people do you want to bring into my shed? Look at my papers and records! Do you even know what's going on here?"

Ampere continues blustering and nothing can be said to assuage his fears. His paranoia runs wild. Anxiously, he runs to the window to make sure everything is quiet outside. The characters have to convince the Chronicler to cooperate with them if they want to save Garlene. Their common sense tells them that the Scrapper has no chance of survival if Spitalians or Anabaptists see her in her current condition. Everything depends on the decisions of the characters.

AT THE CROSSROADS

Within 48 hours, the world of the characters has been turned upside down. They have gotten a glimpse behind the scenes, discovered the first effects of Leviathanics and stumbled into the line of fire of an alleged Marauder. The artifacts that they have carried with them for so long are slowly revealing their secrets. Now, it is up to them to connect the dots in this web of information and find out the truth in its entirety. The following four scenes can be played in any order, with some of them possibly not being played at all. The scenes all happen concurrently. The characters will not be able to be everywhere at once unless the group separates and tries to follow all the leads during the same night.

Splitting up the group will prove to be a challenge for the game master, but it enables the players to grasp the full spectrum of the adventure and later on, pool their knowledge. Additionally, characters acting on their own are usually weaker but also more inconspicuous, which gives them an advantage in this recon mission.

Read the following scenes carefully and decide whether you want to lead the characters to different locations, or if you want to let the group decide what their next steps will be.

You also need to choose whether you want to leave out a scene or use it at a later time. Whatever the characters decide in the following hours, the Day of Ganaress is on its way.

CALCULATIONS

If the characters ask Ampere about his calculations regarding the two artifacts, the question will hit him like an electric shock. "Here, the star generates coordinates when you convert the symbols into a duodecimal system. I don't yet understand the numbers, because I don't have any tools to match them to existing records. I would need access to the static Stream in order to draw further conclusions."

He wanders through his small shed, lost in thought. "It would all be a lot easier if we were in Aquitaine, at least there's some technology there that I could use," he murmurs in an annoyed voice. "If I just had a map with a coordinate system ..."

"Parel," Garlene whispers softly, "Parel has a map of the world. That's what he uses to charm all those unsuspecting girls..." Then, sleep washes over her.

TRANSITION

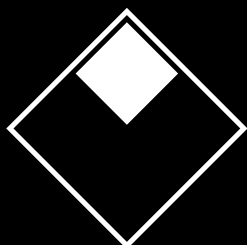
The first three scenes take place in L'Arc. The fourth one, however, leads to Unir.

SCENE I: THE FLASK: Here, the characters can try to locate information on the Starfire for Vatenguerre.

SCENE II: AT THE EMPTY JUG: In order to experience Yasen and his sermon firsthand, the characters must come here. How else will they be able to get to the bottom of the Emissary's agenda?

SCENE III: WEST WIND: If they want to help Soufiane and question Shamash, they must go to the West Wind.

SCENE IV: THE BALSAM HOUSE:: If they want to find the Anubian, they have no other option but to go to the Balsam House. Garlene's time is running out.



THE FLASK

WELCOME

"Private function. Access by invitation or reservation only." With these words, the characters are abruptly rejected at the front door. If they want to get into the Flask, they have to come up with a plan. Maybe they have heard that the innkeeper, Norveigh, can be bribed. One hundred Drafts gets them in. Otherwise, they can try to persuade Tronte, the master of the chapel, to help them. Their only other option is the rear entrance. If they take this route, they have to go through the kitchen without anyone noticing and then make their way into the taproom.

TAPROOM

The characters burst into a gathering of Anabaptists. The taproom overflows with chapel guards, Orgiastics, Touched and Furors. The songs are loud and boisterous. Drinks are being guzzled at every table, and news spreads loudly throughout the room.

"Three Spitfire tanks blew up. The soup kitchen is in ruins. Twelve victims. Opolus and Vicarent are going to have to bless a lot of new graves," the characters hear in passing. Suddenly, they see a familiar face. It is Ghilvern, the hunter from the previous day. He toasts them from a corner of the Flask, beckoning them over. A stitched-up cut on his head glows a firesome red.

"I heard you saved that dirtbag Parel!" he says visibly pleased. "He doesn't deserve any help, but what the heck! Come, drink with me. I'm still waiting for my company to arrive," Ghilvern invites the characters. "That Scrapper has turned Brentwin's wife's head 180 degrees. She's not herself anymore, and Brentwin is boiling with rage. He's not the only one who has a score to settle with that Salt Wolf," he says, stuffing tobacco into a pipe fashioned out of walrus ivory.

ISLANDERS

There is something fishy about the story of the returnees. Why does the barmaid call Halvert and his pack "island boys"? Why are the guests so excited about their appearance, and why was there no contact in the meantime? It feels as if the entire Flask is in on a secret that nobody talks about. A roll on PSY+Cunning (3) is necessary in order to recognize a pattern.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Halvert has something to hide, and Ghilvern covers for his brother. His deployment to somewhere on the Atlantic cannot be a coincidence.

1 TRIGGER: Is Halvert possibly stationed at the Starfire hideout that Vatenquerre mentioned? If so, they need to investigate and get more information out of Halvert.

3+ TRIGGER: Maybe, if they get the Orgiastic drunk. That might get him to talk without attracting too much attention. Or perhaps find him a woman whom he can confide in.

HOMECOMING

Suddenly the front door opens, and two dozen Orgiastics enter the packed room under the cheers of the crowd. The newcomers look like they have not sat in a barber's chair in years. Shaggy beards and long hair, their clothes have seen better days and their emaciated faces are a testament to their time away.

Ghilvern cranes his neck and looks for familiar faces. Then, his arm shoots up and beckons an Orgiastic to the table. "Halvert! My old chap!" The hunter and the Orgiastic hug as if they have not seen each other for an eternity.

"My brother!" Ghilvern then tells the characters. "He was gone a long time. Halvert, sit. These people are friends. They're new to the city."

The gritty man with the tired eyes looks the characters up and down before slumping into his chair exhausted. He greets the group with a drowsy nod. A barmaid comes to their table and asks for their orders. Halvert looks up and wags his tongue at her. "Beer. Roast meat. And later, your tits and your ass in my bed."

Ghilvern and Halvert burst into loud laughter, and the waitress smacks the Orgiastic lightly on the back of his head. "You Island Boys are incorrigible. The same lines, year after year," she says mockingly and turns to take the others' orders before disappearing. If the characters take a look around the taproom, they will see similar scenes everywhere. The crowd receives those just arriving as if they are coming home after a long time away. But where have they been for so long? The characters can ask questions to find out.

AMBIGUITIES

"Oh, Halvert and his pack are stationed outside Brest. Out there on the borderland, you know what I mean?" Ghilvern interrupts. The two brothers exchange looks. "Outside, on the Atlantic. Rough weather, hard work. After a while, it wears the best man down,"

Halvert explains, trying to stifle the conversation.

"What's new, Ghilvern? Any hellspawn we can lock jaws with?"

The Britoni recounts the past year. Their sister died, and their homestead has been abandoned. "It was quiet since the last Day of Ganaress, even on the border beyond Rennes. However, the Northern Passage is completely shut down now. The Demiurge has risen from the ground there. Yesterday, there was a sighting down in Godasse, near the fish market. These men were there and helped get rid of the beast."

Perceptive characters notice that the conversation seems extremely staged. Halvert has apparently not been to Brest for exactly a year. Why hadn't he been at home at least once during this time? What danger lurks on the Atlantic that requires a one-year deployment without contact to one's homeland? The characters can tell by a roll on INS+Empathy (3) that something is being left unspoken.

DRINKING BOUT

If the characters decide to drink Halvert and Ghilvern under the table in hopes of getting more information, this will affect both their Stamina and their wallet. The two men empty glass after glass with the characters. Sentences become longer, their relevance however diminishes. Halvert's tolerance has suffered after a year without alcohol, but Ghilvern drinks like a bottomless pit. The characters must pass multiple rolls on BOD+Stamina (3) to stay on their feet. After the tenth round of distillate, the difficulty increases by (1) with each additional glass.

In order to get Halvert to keep talking and to say something concrete, a successful Combination on PSY+Cunning (3) and CHA+Expression (2) is necessary.

"Demiurge," he mutters sluggishly. "I can't stand Ushant anymore. Barringer's drive. It's always the same sermon!" Halvert's babbling is incoherent, Ghilvern's eyes are half-closed. He snorts through his beard. "Why don't you tell him to send you back to Brest?" Ghilvern asks with a shrug. Halvert raises his eyebrows in disbelief. "I made a vow, you bastard cur! Do you want me to become a traitor?" Staggering, he raises his forefinger and presses it against his brother's chest. "Something like that could only come from an unbeliever like you!"

Ghilvern knocks his hand away. "Who are you calling an unbeliever, you damned lump of walrus shit?" Halvert immediately straightens himself up, wobbles and tries not to lose sight of his brother. "Mother should have set fire to you after birth, you piece of shit!" The mood turns ugly rather quickly. Suddenly, the two brothers grab each other by their collars. Spitting and cursing, they start throwing fists at each other.

OUT OF HERE

The two screaming drunkards attract the attention of the others in the taproom. Immediately, Anabaptists are up on their feet trying to separate the brothers from each other. The characters have what they need. Now they have to get out unnoticed. The turmoil rages on in the background as they fight their way to the door.

"You're not really trying to skip out on the tab, are you?" the waitress screams after them. The characters have to take care of the bill if they do not want to have the attention turned in their direction. In the crowd, they recognize some of the chapel guards from the day before who came to check if everything was okay. They look drunk. After the characters have paid the bill, it is their task to get away secretly. Let the group roll AGI+Stealth (2) or PSY+Deception (2) to avoid attracting attention.

They made it. They are back in the fresh air of L'Arc. Now, they just have to find a way to get in touch with the Spitalians somehow. Maybe, they can find Vatenguerre at Brotherhood Square tomorrow.

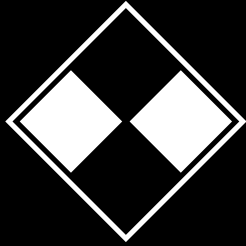
DISCREET

The Flask will be the starting point for further adventures. The more inconspicuous the characters act, the easier it will be for them to gain access to the Flask in the future. If the characters mingle with the Anabaptists to try to expand their network or if they befriend chapel guards during the scene, their efforts this evening will prove worthwhile later. The characters can also try to find out something about the attack on the soup kitchen; however, this will only lead to a dead end. The chapel guards only know the official version of the story. To their knowledge, it was an accident.

It seems that they also have not heard about the incident with the tanners yet. The sighting of the creature at the fish market is the topic of everyone's conversation. The Anabaptists see it as a bad omen although it has no bearing upon their mood in the least. Their sense of superiority is omnipresent, and to them, Briton remains invincible.

LOOT FEVER

In addition to the characters' investigation, the Red Pack is also looking for the Starfire. If the characters' mission is unsuccessful, the Spitalians get the information they need on their own.



AT THE EMPTY JUG

AMONGST FANATICS

A narrow lane leads to the Empty Jug. A flickering light shines from the low windows of the underground tavern. On the stairs, the characters meet Ascetics who are deeply immersed in prayer. Their eyes are closed and their lips are tight. With clenched hands, they rock back and forth, humming melodies into their spirits.

THE TOMB OF THE GRACIOUS

The interior of the inn is like a tomb. A forest of pillars supports the stone vault, and low support beams divide the room. Iron chandeliers dangle from the ceiling with candles that produce just enough light to make out the contours of faces in the murky depths of this tomb. At least, the echo down here is more pronounced.

"Temptation is a daily burden. With every glance it torments our existence, separates us from the divine Pneuma in all of us." The characters recognize Yasen's voice. At the end of a long, unadorned table, he holds his sermon. The characters estimate that perched in the niches on the walls and sitting at tables are at least two hundred people who are listening attentively to their idol. If the characters want to move in the Empty Jug without being noticed, they must stay in the shadows. A successful roll on AGI+Stealth (3) keeps them hidden.

"The creature that bared its face at the fish market was a sign of the Demiurge. However, it was also a sign of vice. The citizens of Brest have turned away from God's word and partaken of the poisoned milk," he continues.

THE GOAT

Suddenly, there is an interruption. The scream of a woman rings through the building. All faces turn towards the exit. Yasen's bodyguards come rattling down the stairs in full armor, dragging a young woman behind them. Her robe is torn and her breasts hang free. Her face is covered in blood. An Orgiastic takes her by her short hair and throws her at Yasen's feet.

"We found the goat, Emissary!" the front man eagerly reports. "She asked one of our men for money. Offered to let him mount her in exchange for Drafts." He mercilessly grabs the woman by the neck and presses her chest to the table. He squeezes her cheeks with his armored right hand so she is unable to speak. "You were right, Yasen. A Jehammedan, right in our midst!"

He nods at her tattoos, which are now clearly visible. Ascetics stand up in disgust and spit on the helpless woman, who is pushing with all her might against the Orgiast's grip.

A second bodyguard approaches, reaching for her robe and exposing her bare bottom with a jerk. "Look at the poison that lies between these thighs!" he exclaims demanding. A plump female Ascetic with ruddy cheeks and angry eyes quickly steps up. With a leather belt, she starts to flog the Jehammedan.

"Enough!" Yasen's order brings the commotion to a halt. "Let her speak, Massimo!" The front man complies and throws the woman into a chair. Yasen approaches her. "What's your name, you whore?"

The woman spits a bloody glob in his face. The Emissary wipes it away unimpressed and fixes her with his gaze. "Tomorrow morning we'll put you on an iron spit, roast you over open fire, and pick your bones. When the juice of our stomachs have cleansed your disgusting remains, we will shit you on our fields as dung," the Emissary says spitefully. Motionlessly, Yasen watches his captive trying in vain to wriggle free from the bodyguard's grip.

"Aries will tear you to pieces, old man! He's already looking for me." Each of her words is full of disdain. The Anabaptists answer with roaring laughter.

TO THE SLAUGHTER

What is a Jehammedan woman doing alone on enemy territory? Is she suicidal? Like a helpless sheep, she has come to a pack of wolves who take much joy in playing with their prey. Whatever the reason for her presence, she will not survive more than a day without a miracle.

A roll on INT+Legends (3) offers further clues. Anabaptists, Jehammedans, and Palers add their Secrets trait to the roll.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Perhaps the woman is an outcast without a tribe, a Delila lost in Brest who sells her body to survive.

1 TRIGGER: Yasen is obviously looking for scapegoats that he can send to the slaughter. A helpless Jehammedan would come in handy.

3+ TRIGGER: What did the woman say about Aries? Didn't Ampere mention a Marauder? Why would a Marauder be looking for an outcast woman though? Could this be a lead?



"Take this bag of wind away." Yaseen makes an indifferent gesture. "Announce to Oppolus that an execution will take place tomorrow morning. The goat's head shall roll before the procession begins."

Massimo grabs the hair of the Jehammedan and drags her out of the hall. His men follow him to a wooden staircase leading to the upper floor.

IN CHAINS

If the characters want to find out where the guards have taken the woman, they must leave the inn. With a roll on IN-S+Orienteering (2), they can take a rough guess at which direction the wooden staircase will take. However, to get a decent picture, they must get to the roof of the community building. They can reach the outbuilding via a ladder on the side street, but they must be vigilant, otherwise the guards will discover them.

From the rooftop, the characters spy a round tower on the opposite side of the Empty Jug. It appears to be connected to the inn. If the characters decide to approach the tower, they must be careful. The gables of the roof are rotten and slippery, prone to collapsing under the first wrong step. A roll on AGI+Mobility (3) helps to avoid slipping.

A crenel on the tower allows a look inside. The Jeham-

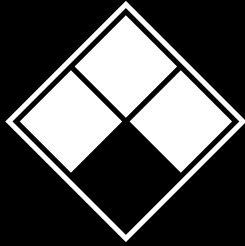
medan is huddled in her dungeon. Without explosives, the walls are indestructible, and even then, the woman would still be in chains. If the characters try to talk to her, she storms to the window. Her breathing is shallow. "Please get me out of here."

"Eris," she says upon being asked her name. "My tribe has rejected me. I'm alone," she declares. If the characters ask why she is in Brest, she will lower her head. "An Iconide who saved me from my Shepherd sent me to Brest. His name is Adonai, and he said I should seek shelter among fishermen's children." She pauses. "Shelter from Aries."

The characters should remember her liberator. He is the Iconide whom they helped at the burial ceremony after the civil war in Toulon. He is the one who bequeathed Jehammed's star to them. However, her words about Aries serve as a clear warning to the characters.

"Get me out of here. Free me at dawn when they take me to be executed. Free me, and I will reveal to you the common teachings that bind the Jehammedans and Apocalyptic," Eris whispers through the crenel.

"Go! Make sure no one sees you! The wolves will be careless if they are sure my blood will flow and that will make your job easy," she says before disappearing from the window. The characters must leave before they are discovered.



WEST WIND

THE AGREEMENT

Soufiane is already waiting nervously in a side street in front of the West Wind. When he notices the characters, he waves his arms wildly to get their attention. "Finally! You're late. It took forever to get rid of those damned chapel guards." Soufiane seems harried. He looks around. "I'll keep an eye behind the buildings and you go inside." He waits for the characters to agree and then high-five's them all. "Done!"

STRANGERS AMONGST STRANGERS

Inside, the air is like that of a humid swamp. Tobacco smoke festers, making it impossible to see beyond one's own arm and the noise in the room makes conversation a futile endeavor at best. Immediately, pearls of sweat form on every forehead. A flamboyant Bygone relic flashes colorfully, drawing guests to it. They eagerly play the strange game containing a silver ball. As if possessed, they bang buttons on the sides of the machine in order to move two flippers that keep the ball away from a hole at the center.

If the characters let their gaze wander through the smoke screen of the confusing taproom, they will suddenly see Parel sitting at the counter. He has buried his head in his hands and sits in front of an army of empty glasses.

If the characters address their acquaintance, he will shakily raise his head in their direction. The Salt Wolf can barely open his eyes, and his reactions are slow. When he recognizes the group, he unrestrainedly falls into the arms of the first available character.

"I love you! I love you so much!" he moans. Then he whirls to the waitress and yells, "I love this man, he saved my life! I love him!", but his screams are lost in the noise of the West Wind. Parel can no longer see straight and slurs his sentences. If the characters leave him to his fate, someone will rob him, or possibly even stab him. If they want to protect him, they will have to take care of him.

A SECOND GLANCE

The characters sit opposite Shamash, but with his hood and in the dim light of the inn, his features are barely perceptible.

A successful roll on INS+Perception (3) yields a clearer picture.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: A golden circlet sparkles on Shamash's forehead, and snug headgear frames his features. African jewelry?

1 TRIGGER: Despite the heat, Shamash wears heavy gloves. The characters, on the other hand, must take off their shawls and cloaks in order to get some fresh air.

3+ TRIGGER: Even though a wet film shines on the forehead of each character, no bead of sweat shimmers on the face of their interlocutor.

SHAMASH

They see Shamash sitting in an alcove. The white hood gives the Neolibyan away. When the characters reach his table, he asks them to sit down. If they have Parel in tow, the Scrapper stands there, drowsily muttering to himself.

"Your friend has been drinking here all night like someone who just got kicked to the curb," Shamash says with a broad grin. "Do you want to trade with me?" he asks brusquely. The characters must decide how much they want to reveal. If they start talking about Britain, a crooked smile will flash across Shamash's face. "Who wants to go to Britain anyway? An expedition would consume vast amounts of resources and possibly cost two-thirds of the lives of the people involved." If the characters ask about the dangers, he dismisses the question. "Cannibals. The entire region is full of them. No base for negotiations."

If the characters try to find out why he is working alone, far from Africa's influence and without escort, he will laugh loudly. "I haven't seen any Chroniclers in Brest, have you?"

Parel begins to nod off and is soon asleep, resting peacefully on the shoulder of a character. The group can address the topic of the artifacts again. Shamash leans back. It almost seems as if he knows that the characters have the disc and the star and are just unwilling to say as much. The Neolibyan watches each of their movements.

"You have to put something on the table if you want to negotiate," he says encouragingly. The characters are in a bind. If they refuse, there is no reason for the Neolibyan to interact with them any further. He asks one last time, "How much are the plates worth to you?" If the characters continue to deny possession of the artifacts, Shamash's expression darkens.

THE SPEAR

"Every object is part of a prophecy, predetermined through space and time." Without asking, he reaches for two of the characters' cups and empties the last sip on the floor. In the next instant, he holds a hazelnut between his fingers. "A nut is a nut. Today. Now. At this moment," he says. Then he puts it on the table and covers it with a cup. He turns the other cup upside down. "But tomorrow, the nut will be a tree. It will carry many nuts, and its seed will cover the earth." He knocks on the empty cup and raises it. The nut is under it. Then he raises the first cup, and the nut underneath is gone. "The question is not what the nut is now, but what the nut will someday be." His eyes glimmer. He studies the reactions of the characters.

Without waiting for their answer, he grabs a leather-wrapped staff. In one quick movement, he loosens the sheath, and a spear with a stone tip appears. Shamash smirks. "Just a spear. A weapon without potential. It cannot kill without someone's hand guiding it." Shamash shows the stone spearhead to the characters. Despite its delicate engravings, it appears to have been the product of an archaic technique. It's no forged piece of steel.

"It is not the task of the spear, but the task of the carrier to unfold its power. He can either keep the force contained in the simple weapon – or decide to unleash it."

Shamash's observations are captivating. The Neolibyan guides the conversation as he pleases. He answers each of the characters' question with a parable.

If the negotiations don't bend to his will and the characters persist on their stubborn course, Shamash will rise from the table, throwing a pile of coins at its center.

"I'll pay the bill, but only for the present and never for the future."

With these words, he leaves the table and disappears in the crowd.

THE AWAKENING

Parel snorts and his eyes flicker as if he is about to awaken. "Garlene," he whimpers to himself. His arms are half outstretched, his fingers void of strength. The Salt Wolf looks as if he could vomit at any moment.

The characters must decide what to do with the haggard Scrapper. Should they bring him back to Ampere's shed?

If they leave the West Wind with Parel in tow, Soufiane will immediately cross their path. Astonished, he looks at the drunken Scrapper, then waves the characters away from the street and into a back alley. "He went that way. I watched him leave the inn."

The group stands on a winding street with houses lined one after the next. The view of the sky is barely visible from where they are standing. If the characters want to try to find tracks in the darkness of the backyards, they must succeed on a roll on INS+Survival (3). The cobblestones lead into a hollow that has filled with mud. Countless tracks lay on its surface. One, however, stands out. It is fresh. The sole profile is segmented, and two letters are emblazoned on the heel: RG.

But the shoe size cannot belong to Shamash, the shoe print is far too small for him. The Paler? Is he still tracking the characters?

"What does it mean?" Soufiane asks. He does not understand the context. If the characters decide to let him in on their guesswork, his charismatic grin will fade away.

"Tomorrow after the procession, find me at my launch down in the harbor. We must equip ourselves! Someone wants to get rid of us," he says in a conspiratorial tone.

"I do not want to get rid of her! I love her!" Parel suddenly interjects. Soufiane rolls his eyes and runs back to the main street.

CONNECTIONS

Ampere has mentioned three components that make up Jehammed's Will: a disc, a star, and a spear. Why does Shamash show them the stone spear in order to make his point? Is it part of the artifact? What about the strange engravings on the stone? A successful roll on INT+Legends (6) can provide information. Chroniclers, Scrappers and Palers add their Secrets trait to the roll.

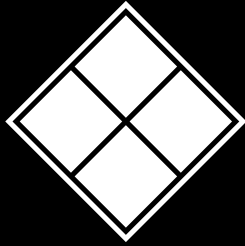
SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The symbol seems familiar to the character; however, they cannot put their finger on it.

1 TRIGGER: The engraving resembles the strange drawings on the Aquitaine ships, which washed into the port of the City of the Chroniclers years ago.

3+ TRIGGER: The same symbol supposedly marks the hidden portals that lead into the interior of Exalt's Grindworks.

TARGET

The characters have been warned. They must be more careful. How did the bloody Paler manage to follow them without them noticing? Are they carrying something he can track? Have they been bugged? Their sneaking suspicion should be reason enough for the characters to inspect their gear.



THE BALSAM HOUSE

LATE IN THE EVENING

Unir is already asleep when the characters reach the Balsam House in the north of the city. Located at a crossroads, the four-story building rises from behind a high wall. An Ascetic with thinning hair and wrapped in a thick fur stands at the iron gate. He blows warm air into his freezing hands. The characters must find a way to gain access without anyone noticing. If they want to go undetected, they must climb over the wall and sneak into the building, AGI+Stealth (3) to avoid being seen.

If they want to fake an injury or illness, they must succeed on a roll on PSY+Deception (3). They can also try to inquire about the fisherman who lost his arm the previous day.

"He's dead! Who are you? Relatives of his?" the Ascetic replies. If the characters' act is convincing, he will lead them to the morgue, where the dead are laid out.

THE GUIDE

If the characters engage the Ascetic in a conversation and ask questions concerning the presence of an Anubian woman in the Balsam House, he will look at them perplexed. "Imbali? Of course, she's here. Where else in Brest would an Anubian be? In the elephant temple, perhaps?" he curses, as if the characters have taken leave of their senses. Why on earth would they ask him such a foolish question?

"There, down the hall. It's the third door on the right. She's in the steam bath. Don't worry, she's only milking snake venom." He returns to his post at the gate, shaking his head. The characters find the door without any difficulties.

IN THE STEAM BATH

Clouds of steam heavy with the scent of essential oils hit them as they enter the room. A circular basin filled to the brim with shimmering emerald-colored water bubbles softly. Wooden walkways lead around the pool. The characters can make out the silhouette of a person through the fog that fills the heat-drenched room. The person is situated on the opposite side of the pool. If they cross through the haze, they will see that the figure is a woman. She is standing at a table naked, covered in blue and yellow paint from head to toe. She holds the skull of a viper to a mason jar and squeezes the poison out of the snake's fangs. When she notices the characters, she carefully puts the serpent in a basket and turns to them.

"Why have you come to me?" The slim woman shows no signs of shame and steps in front of the group. Four concentric circles surround her belly button.

If the characters explain why they have come, the Anubian will listen attentively.

"Does your visit have something to do with the creature at the fish market? What does it look like? Does it have wave patterns and fractals?" she asks.

The more the characters tell her, the more worried she becomes. "How do you know the Scrapper? Why are you helping this woman?"

She makes sure that the characters' explanations are credible, then puts on a plain linen robe. "You do realize that you cannot share your discovery with the Anabaptists? They will kill this woman and throw you on the next pyre," she admonishes them in no uncertain terms.

"We cannot bring her here. Lead me to her," she says, gesturing towards the door.

BACK TO L'ARC

Imbali jogs across the city with the characters. The Anubian has no problem keeping up. Thirty minutes later, they arrive back at the shed, where Ampere comes to

THE ANUBIAN

Imbali is unfazed by the appearance of the characters. It almost seems as if the Anubian expected their visit. What knowledge does she have that she is not sharing with the group?

A Combination on INS+Perception (3) and INT+Legends (2) reveals more.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Her accent betrays her. She is from the south coast of Franka. But what brought her to Brest?

1 TRIGGER: The rings on her belly represent her rank in the hierarchy of her cult. The fewer the rings, the closer the person in question is to the mysterious Hogons who lead the Anubians.

3+ TRIGGER: The machinations of the followers of the Jackal are even hard to understand for other Cults. Why has a high-ranking Anubian been humiliated with the task of helping Anabaptist healers and Ascetics? This doesn't add up.



meet them. He is visibly upset. He has been watching the Scrapper the entire time. "She's talking feverishly. I cannot possibly concentrate on my calculations," he laments, as if the characters might consider this a point of sympathy. The Anubian ignores the Chronicler and rushes past him.

Inside the shed, she gathers the group around the sleeping Scrapper. Imbali examines the blackened arm with a look of worry upon her face. "Wash your hands with soap. Do not touch the arm a second time."

She leans over Garlene and touches her brow. Then she rips the Scrapper's shirt open in order inspect her chest. Red stains of an unfinished stigma have already taken form.

"Spore infestation. It's moving from her arm towards her lungs. The poison is spreading throughout her body and multiplying itself," she whispers with awe in her voice. Imbali stares at the characters. "I have never seen anything like this! When the blackness consumes her shoulder and reaches her chest, it will be too late. We must cut off her arm, or else she will die."

"You're all insane!" Ampere suddenly stomps his feet and angrily tears his notes down from the walls. He stuffs them into his backpack, chiding the characters, "We're all fucked because we have a Marauder on our heels, and you have nothing better to do than to discuss amputations!"

The characters can try to calm the angry Chronicler, but their attempts prove futile. He is caught in the throes of paranoia. "We have to get out of here! This damn hut isn't safe. We were too careless," Ampere barks.

"The Chronicler is right. We need to get away from here if we want to save the girl," interrupts the Anubian. "Without my equipment, I cannot sever her arm. We'll be risking her life if we try to treat her here."

NEW LODGINGS

The Scrapper island in the Penfeld is the only safe place in Brest the characters know. The Salt Wolf would do anything to save Garlene. If the characters have already played the scene in the West Wind, it is possible that the drunken Scrapper is currently with them. If they skipped the scene, Parel will be asleep on the island.

But how are they going to get there? They need a boat. Soufiane is the answer. If they can find the Leopard at the port, he can transport them in his launch. This would, however, mean that they must divulge their secret to the shifty trader.

Ampere would give anything to get out of the shed and begins to pack his belongings in a rush. Imbali is also no stranger to the island and can ferry across from Unir as soon as she gathers her equipment from the Balsam House.

ACT AFTERGLOW

THE DAY OF GANARESS

What is this world? A sinister place.

Today is a veiled path, tomorrow is a silent grave. Whoever lives in the past, hangs by the threads of oblivion like a puppet. There is no way forward and no way back, just an endless struggle in a vortex of futility. The redemptive shores are known as religion and ideology. Hatred and prejudice. Nobody needs to seek hell. Everyone is already living in it.

SCENE 07: IN THE PENFELD

Deep in the night. An autumn storm sweeps over Brest. The characters have reached Parel's island and made it into the safety of their refuge. The Streamer Ampere and the Leopard Soufiane are with them. In addition to their allies, the exhausted Scrapper Garlene is there, as well. Parel and his six Mice — Poli, Monia, Weilam, Claude, Kriss and Valentino — are doing their best to accommodate and feed the group. Together they wait for Imbali to arrive.

Garlene's condition has worsened over the last few hours. The fever has taken hold of her and she shivers in her sleep. Her breath is faint and like a pendulum, she swings between life and death.

The soft whines of the Salt Wolf can be heard in the background. He is relatively sober and is finally beginning to understand the severity of the situation. The love of his life may fall victim to an illness with no name, and he is helpless, left to rely on the goodness of strangers. He paces around the room restlessly.

"Do not hurt her," he beseeches the characters.

They are in the middle of the warehouse. Poli has turned on the spotlights, bathing the room in a bright blue neon. In the cold light, everyone present in the room appears much older, having aged years within the space of a moment.

Garlene lies lifelessly on a makeshift stretcher in the middle of the room. The Mice have tried to clean and prepare everything for surgery. Tension has hardened their faces, and nobody says anything. The arm of the Scrapper is throbbing. Something uncanny is happening under the translucent skin. The black web is pulsating.

ASSISTANCE

If, among the characters, there are no Spitalians who are well-versed in medicine, Imbali will perform the amputation and ask the group to help her.

The Anubian relies on the aid of the characters. Ampere, Soufiane and Parel are not an option for this task.

I. MARDUK'S PROTECTIVE HAND

The large sliding door opens, and Imbali enters the Scrapper Hall. The wiry woman is carrying baskets, bottles, and a leather bag full of instruments. Water runs from her brow, and her robe is soaked with rain.

At a small side table, she lays out her utensils and frees her upper body from the wet clothes.

"What is her condition? Is she responsive?" she asks as she empties her baskets and bags in order to prepare her tools. "Whatever spirits have taken possession of her, they have not yet reached her soul. It's not too late," she tells those who are standing at her side.

She turns to the first character and hands them a flask holding a dark liquid. Characters from the Rhône swamps recognize the viscous fluid at once. Marduk oil. The balsam of the Anubians.

"Lubricate yourself," she says.

Imbali in turn opens a vial containing the tar-like substance and rubs its contents on her arms, chest, and face. The oil lends her face a demonic appearance.

"Come!" she orders and approaches Garlene's lifeless body. With oiled hands, she reaches for the poisoned arm of the Scrapper, presses her fingers into the transparent surface of her skin and massages the muscles. Black nettles wind their way through the permeable membrane and spread to the back of Imbali's hand. Instead of taking hold, they slide off of her skin. The Anubian woman nods seriously. "Marduk guards us against the poison."

DIVIDED BODY

The Anubian constricts Garlene's arm with a leather tourniquet and waits until the skin begins to turn blue. She casts a questioning gaze around the room, then rummages in her leather bag. She pulls out a butcher's axe and offers it to the characters. "I'll try to grab the artery when the arm falls. I cannot do both at the same time though. Here is the separating line. You must hit it! The blow must sever the arm smoothly. You must not hit too low, otherwise it will remain in the body." She turns the arm in position. "Here." She draws an invisible line with her finger. "She will be in shock, so you must hold her down, otherwise I will not find the vein." She looks in the eyes of the characters to see if they have understood. "You! Take the tub over there and fill it up with Marduk oil. When the poisoned arm falls, put it inside the tub and seal the lid with candle wax."

Parel cannot bear to watch the carnage that is about to take place. Distraught, he runs his hands through his hair, his breath rasping as he stares at the ceiling. Soufiane walks in circles through the warehouse, puffing one tobacco leaf after the other, trying to distract himself with a self-soothing soliloquy. Poli cries silently. He is aware of his own mortality, for inside of him is a fragile child, not a stoic warrior.

"We grew up with her," he murmurs. "When her arm is gone, part of us will fade." Tears stream down his cheeks.

"If you lose a body part, they say, the pain stays with you until you die." Monia's voice trembles.

"Do it," Imbali says.

SHOCK

With a dull crunch, the axe cuts through Garlene's upper arm. The black limb splashes on the stretcher, and a hot stream of blood shoots out of the Scrapper's shoulder. Garlene opens her eyes. The shock of the amputation has roused her from her sleep. She has foam on her lips and her eyes are glassy. Her nostrils quiver and she is unable to scream. Instead, she writhes and rages, wordlessly gasping for air. Blood gushes from the stump. Every movement is one of panic. The characters must give all they have to hold her down. Imbali buries her fingers in the open wound, digging through sinews and muscle fibers in order to catch the throbbing artery. Blood spatters everywhere. The Mice cannot watch this. Parel buries his face in horror and wails in anguish.

"Got it," Imbali shouts. "Pliers!"

Garlene twists in pain. She does not know what is happening to her. Her pulse is racing. The characters must use their words to soothe her. The shock leaves her unable to make a sound. Her hips shake and her legs tremble and kick the air aimlessly.

"Put two fingers in her mouth, otherwise she will bite off her tongue!" the Anubian commands. "You, hold her nose shut so she has to breathe through her mouth. I'll constrict the vein. Hold her still!" Imbali's face is distorted from exertion.

RESISTANCE

Marduk oil. Again and again, this Anubian witches' brew proves to be a shield against the powers of the Primer. The black fractals in Garlene's arm cannot spread to a new host. But what happens to a person not protected by Marduk oil? The fisher whom the beast's whip hit had nothing to guard him against the poison. Is the oil film the antidote to this new form of the Demiurge?

A successful roll on INT+Science (2) or PSY+Cunning (2) makes the characters realize that Elysian oil would probably have the same effect. If the characters have the holy oils of the Anabaptists in their possession, they can see if their theory holds true. The results are clear. The nettles cannot take hold if Elysian oil is applied. This information is vital for the survival of the characters.

TACHYCARDIA

Keeping Garlene under control requires tremendous concentration and willpower. Characters who help Imbali must successfully roll INT+Focus (3) or PSY+Willpower (3) during the procedure, otherwise they will make mistakes that can lead to the Scrapper's death. To hit the arm in the right place, the player needs a roll on BOD+Melee (2). It must cause at least Damage (8) to cut through the bone in one go.



"Give me that wire and the needle. Press her shoulder down. Now the linen towels. Press yourself against her! She mustn't move, or else I won't be able to close the wound!" Garlene's pupils twist and her eyelids flicker. Her bladder empties itself as her mouth fills with saliva.

Then, she blacks out.

SURVIVED

Imbali checks the pulse of the lifeless Scrapper and washes her forehead with cold water. "She will survive, but her body will take weeks to regain its strength."

Exhausted, the Anubian collapses next to the stretcher. "I felt the wave. Months ago. Something has awakened in the sea and it's lurking along the shore, trying to leave the water," she says in a faint voice.

Then she looks at Parel. "Where was the girl infected?" The Salt Wolf answers hesitantly: "The Atlas oil rig. That's where she was last stationed. I don't have the coordinates. You can only get there via a ferry from Carnac."

Imbali suddenly perks up. "Carnac?" she asks curiously.

If the characters try to ask her about the significance of Carnac, she will dismiss their questions. "It's nothing. The name just sounded familiar, that's all" She gets up and starts to wash the blood off the stretcher.

II. RESTLESS

Ampere hijacks an empty workbench at the back of the hall and begins spreading out his notes. Once the characters have managed to get the map of the world from Parel, they hand it over to the Chronicler. He leans over it and gazes broodingly at the illustration.

The characters see the world as it once was. It depicts continents with foreign names, mountain ranges, oceans, and islands. The land of the crow, nothing more than a small speck, is surrounded by an infinite unknown.

"I don't see the connection," Ampere suddenly says, laying two wires in the shape of a cross on the map and maneuvering them north.

"Why Bath? Why this primitive place in Britain's western exurbs?" he asks, as if the characters owe him an answer. "The numbers on the star are a code. They lead to here." He taps the spot. If the characters ask Ampere about his knowledge of Britain, he will simply shrug. "I don't know any more than anyone else. Argyre rules the entire region. No one returns from there alive."

"We could try to get there," Soufiane interjects. "With my launch, we can reach the coast and then fight our way inland."

The mere thought leaves Ampere disheartened. The



Chronicler has had enough.

If the characters tell him about their encounter with Eris, Ampere will raise his brows in response. "What should I do with a Jehammedan? The Protectorate is teeming with them." If the characters mention what they have learned about Aries, his face will become frozen in an expression of shock.

"The Marauder?" he asks breathlessly. If the characters tell him about Eris's claim to knowing the origin of the Jehammedans and Apocalyptic, his eyes will narrow to slits. "Is there a way to question her?"

"Only if Oppolus pardons her," Parel calls grimly over his shoulder as he covers Garlene with furs and helps the Anubian remove the stretcher.

"I can request an audience with the King, but we must reach the castle before dawn. If Yasen plans to execute her before the procession, we only have three hours left to get there."

SUN GODS

"Before you depart, let's return to your conversation with the Neolibyan for a moment," Soufiane interrupts the group. "What is Shamash planning to do? Has he come to spy on Britain? Are there more Africans coming?" He tensely taps his upper lip with his fingertips.

When the characters inform the Leopard of their conversation and make mention of the spear, Ampere immediately starts to listen attentively. If the characters start talking about their encounter in the West Wind, Imbali will try to interrupt them.

"Shamash is not a Neolibyan name," she says, trying to wash the Marduk oil off her skin with a sponge. "Re, Shamash, Helios, Apollo, Mithras, Sol Invictus," she recites. "The Bygones had innumerable names for their sun gods. Some of them living in palaces of gold, towers that reached to the sky ..."

Ampere and Soufiane look in Imbali's direction vacantly. Imbali pulls out a piece of parchment and walks towards the group. "In Anubia, near the pyramids, a statue has been waiting for millennia. The Bygones called it the sphinx." She spreads the scroll on the table. On it, the characters see a sketch of a jackal lying on its stomach with its front paws outstretched and its head held high. "The sun gods cut off the Jackal's ears and snout and carved the face of a man upon the head of our ancestor. They desecrated Anubis, and the Ba grew in the followers of the sun gods."

"What in the world are you talking about? What does your funny dog statue have to do with the Neolibyan?" Soufiane is visibly annoyed by the mythical statements of the

ALLEGORY

What is the point of Imbali's jackal story? Who are the sun gods, and how did they disempower the Cult of the Anubians? A roll on INT+Legends (4) must succeed in order to decipher this strange story.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: In the myths of the Anubians, the Ba stands for negative forces and is in direct contrast to the Ka, the symbol of physical perfection.

1 TRIGGER: Is the Anubian woman claiming that her Cult is older than Eshaton? Why was the Ba unleashed when the statue was desecrated?

3+TRIGGER: Does she equate the sun gods with the Bygones, and is the Ba responsible for their demise?

ALLIANCES

Oppolus' throne room is crammed to the ceiling with hunting trophies. Ivory, hunting horns, walrus skins, bear pelts and moose skulls tell the story of a long reign.

A roll on INT+Legends (2) reveals the King's alliances. In addition to the many trophies of Britoni origin, devotional objects of the Broken Cross deck the walls as well. Oppolus seems to have allies in both camps.

Anubian.

She folds the piece of parchment.

"Nothing. Or everything," she says softly.

Soufiane pushes past the Anubian and corners the characters: "If Shamash is in Brest, he has to be staying somewhere. I will get you to L'Arc and try to find out where the Neolibyan has pitched his tent. If he is in one of the inns, we'll find out where. Just like last night. Same time, same place."

"Come on guys, the boat is ready," Parel calls into the hall.

SCENE 08: THE AUDIENCE

The weather is fiendish. The wind howls and tosses the small motorboat back and forth. The tame Penfeld has turned into a raging river. Above the castle, lightning splits through the sky. Parel steers the boat sideways and rams into a small boardwalk. Even before he can moor it, a chapel guard comes running towards them with a lantern. "You can't dock here!" he yells over the storm.

Parel jumps out of the boat. "Come!" he shouts to the characters. The chapel guard sets his legs wide apart, blocking their way. "What are you doing here?"

"Please, we have to talk to Oppolus. The king must see us!"

"Are you out of your mind, you dwarf? What do you think this is? Do you even know what time it is?", the stunned guard yelps.

The Anabaptist has no intention of letting them pass. The characters must persuade the angry man. "Forget it! I'm going to count to three, and if you aren't back in your boat by then, I'll have you arrested. "If the characters do not convince the guard with a roll on CHA+Expression (3) or PSY+Cunning (3), Parel will raise his index finger threateningly.

"Listen, guard! I am soon to be married to Morbihan, the King's daughter. Then, I will sit at Oppolus' table and have all the time in the world to tell him of all your shortcomings."

Parel's threat surprises the guard. He looks around hesitantly. Then he turns on his heel and leads the group into the citadel.

"No word to Oppolus about Garlene!" the Scrapper hisses to the characters as they run up the stairs.

I. IN THE THRONE ROOM

Oppolus enters the throne room in his nightshirt, a walrus leather cloak over his shoulders. His eyes have the weight of sleep upon them and his hair hangs freely, no longer bound together in a braid. "Parel! What, pray tell, have I done that I should be subjected to your talk at this unfortunate hour?"

If the characters were arrested in Scene 02, the silver-haired ruler recognizes them and sighs resignedly. "Didn't Tronte warn you to keep your feet still?" he asks begrudgingly.

If the characters give the reason for their late visit, Oppolus will respond with a frown.

"The execution is legal and Yasen has already announced it. The woman has been accused of blasphemy," says the king with a shrug. Lost in thought, he cuts off a piece of meat from a cold roast that has been left on the table and stuffs his cheeks generously. With his mouth full, he explains, "Unless there is a witness who can clear the girl's name, Yasen will get what he wants."

He smacks his lips and rinses his throat with a bowl of mead.

If the characters inquire as to what charge of blasphemy Yasen has brought against her, the king will ponder this for a second. "How would I know? I was not there! Did you not witness anything?" he asks in astonishment, trying to dig a morsel of meat out from between his teeth.

If the characters tell him what happened in the Empty Jug, the king will consider their words with a thoughtful expression upon his face.

"Yasen is a madman. He executes people every year. It's his despotic way. The arbitrary nature of it all is supposed to be a warning to enemies not to question the Em-issary's power," Oppolus calmly explains while licking his fingertips clean. "Why is this

girl so important to you? She is just a stray Jehammedan!" His interest in the answers to these questions is sincere. He moves his tongue around to clean his teeth and remove any leftovers, emphasizing every sentence with a smack.

"So, you want to save her life? You know that you are making a powerful enemy? The Emissary does not forget his foes. If I intercede and pardon the girl, then I can only do it with you as witnesses." His blue eyes fix on the characters. "Then you will be on Yasen's death list instead of the girl." The ruler gives the characters a moment to consider this.

"Right now, he has nothing against you yet, but that will change. The day will come when he will drag you into the Blood Pit."

He asks the characters if they are ready to go to such lengths for an unknown woman. If they say yes, he will turn to Parel.

"I've helped you so many times, Salt Wolf. Kept you out of the worst. People want to cut your eyes out. If it were up to the husbands of Brest, you would already be rotting somewhere out in the woods. When will you finally clean up your act and marry Morbihan?" he asks reproachfully.

The Scrapper sinks in his seat. Oppolus does not expect an answer. He knocks on the table three times. "Come on! Get ready. You have to get to the Blood Pit as quickly as possible, or today's dawn will be your new friend's last.

TO THE BLOOD PIT

The storm has cleared and left a clear dark sky in its wake. It is just before six o'clock. The characters have exactly half an hour to reach the pit if they want to make it in time. They must make an objection in Oppolus' name and delay the execution until the king reaches Brotherhood Square.

The characters have not slept at all. Their eyes are red with fatigue and their nerves are raw. Now, they must rush through half of the city in order to save a Jehammedan who they have never met from her execution. On their way to Unir, they cross paths with the first flocks of visitors. Many got up early to prepare for the procession.

The unsteady light of wavering torches illuminates Brotherhood Square. Hundreds of people have gathered and are awaiting the execution in the Blood Pit.

II. CATHARSIS

The characters can hear the clanging armor of Yasen's bodyguards approaching from afar. Single file, the Orgiastics march across the pavement. One of them blows into a hunting horn, sending a jolt through the crowd. The characters recognize Massimo who is dragging Eris on a leash like an animal. Her arrival to the ring is met with cautious cheers. Most of those gathered are rather leery of the event. "So young," a white-haired woman with a pointed nose next to the characters whispers under her breath. A low rumble fills the rows of spectators, some with outstretched necks hoping to get a better view.

The hooves of Yasen's white horse thunder over the pavement. The Emissary enters the square. He raises his arm victoriously, circling the Blood Pit on his horse before dismounting and mingling with the crowd.

Where is Oppolus? The king seems to be taking his time. The characters can only hope that he has not been delayed.

All of a sudden, there is an uproar. Massimo pulls Eris to the center of the Blood Pit by the rope. He places his knee on the neck of the Jehammedan, pressing her to the ground. With an iron grip, he dislocates her wrist and bends her fingers. Whimpers of pain escape her mouth.

Yasen enters the pit. Like a predator, he circles his hatchet man and the prisoner, eyeing the helpless woman with disgust.

"Indeed, to experience purification as a blasphemer is the greatest grace of all," Yasen begins. "He who pollutes paradise and mates with beasts, who praises a god other than the true One, has nothing to lose in this world ..." He kneels before Eris, his face now near hers. "We send him underground, so he may suck on the Demiurge's teat."

The characters have to put a stop to this madness. The only way is by going down and entering the Blood Pit. Torches and lanterns line the path in the indigo light of morning.

If the characters decide to intervene and stop the event, Yassen will instantly freeze up. Incredulous, he sizes them up from head to toe. He cannot believe his ears. What are they saying about an objection issued by King Oppolus? He holds his hand to his ear and orders the characters to repeat their proclamation. Massimo and Yassen exchange perturbed glances. Both have never heard of an execution being cancelled. What begins as a faint whisper quickly takes the crowd by force.

"Release the woman!"

"Stop torturing her."

The Emissary cannot fully grasp the cries of protestation that now confront him. He searches the ranks for the troublemakers. "The Demiurge is not a phantom, to whom one can turn to and away from at one's own will. He continues to eat his way through our midst with every passing moment. If we show this heretic leniency, we will allow damnable thoughts to enter our houses." He holds his sermon with a raised forefinger and walks towards the characters. "What about you all? Which pack do you belong to? What goals are you pursuing with your false grace?" he snarls at the group. His bodyguards quickly appear and plant themselves in front of the characters. The young Orgiastics are fierce, but they only attack under the Emissary's orders. They form a human wall between the group and Eris.

TWO CAMPS

The Orgiastics of the Chapel Guard and Yassen's bodyguards are poles apart. The weapons and equipment of the Chapel Guard are covered in dents and scrapes, while Yassen's bodyguards carry armor and swords of the highest quality. A strong age difference is also clearly visible. The Chapel Guard consists mostly of gray-haired veterans whereas Yassen's bodyguards are polished fighters in their prime. In spite of their Cult affiliation, the Chapel Guard seems to back Oppolus instead of yielding to the Emissary.

THE PEOPLE

Brest opposes Yassen's power. The people have sided with their ruler, and the characters have dealt a blow to the Emissary in the form of public humiliation. Yassen and his troops must withdraw, otherwise they risk inciting a revolt with them as its target. But the characters have made a dangerous enemy. Over the next few days, Yassen will order his scouts to shadow the characters and collect anything that can be used against them.

THE KING'S WORD IS THE LAW

Chapel guards part the crowd gathered above the Blood Pit.

Oppolus appears on the stairs dressed in garments of splendor. Ivory jewelry dangles over armor made from walrus leather, and he carries his harpoon like a scepter. "In the name of the Britoni, I pardon the prisoner," he says coolly as he walks down the steps.

Two of Yassen's Furors stand in the king's way. Massimo gets up and presses his boot into Eris's back in order to keep her pinned to the ground. The Orgiastic grimaces defiantly.

"Walrus king, go home. Your time is up. Take care of your tusks or put them up your ass," Massimo mocks. "You're not a king. You don't even know what the title means, you petty fisherman. You play with your jewelry and your horns without even realizing how tawdry you appear. You are nothing but a pitiful chieftain!" The Orgiastic spits on the floor in disgust.

Yassen breaks away from the characters and goes over to Massimo. The Emissary puts a reassuring hand on the his armored shoulder. Then, he says in a paternal tone: "Massimo is right. You sit on the throne because of your son. A child not even sprung from your loins. Shame on you, Oppolus. You have fathered a dozen scoundrels, and they will befoul your kingdom."

Straight-faced, Oppolus listens to the charges attentively. The spectators watch the confrontation with astonished looks. Chapel guards protectively stand at the side of Oppolus, whose posture is as straight as that of a tree trunk.

"These people," his gaze wanders to the characters. "They have testified that the Jehammedan is not guilty. Their word stands against yours, Yassen, but my word stands above yours." He knocks the shaft of the harpoon on the pavement three times.

"The King's word is the law," the chapel guards bark in unison. Suddenly, the crowd joins in.

"THE KING'S WORD IS THE LAW", their cries echo through the Blood Pit.

Yassen twists his lips hatefully. The population has sided with Oppolus. With a jerk of his head, he orders his people to leave. Immediately, his guards rush forward and force the spectators apart in order to create a path for the Emissary.

Massimo bumps into one of the characters.

"I will remember your face, you traitor!" he hisses.

A hail of boos follows them as they leave.



III. AN ACHINGLY LONG NIGHT

The sky is tinted with a morning blue. Some of those who were in attendance at the execution pat the characters' shoulders appreciatively. The assembly disperses, and Opolus leaves under the protection of the Chapel Guard.

Eris straightens herself and wipes the dirt off of her face. She is distraught and looks exhausted. The night has left its mark on her. Parel puts his parka around her shoulders and looks at the characters, his eyes full of questions. "What now? Should we bring her back to the island with us? What about you? Are you staying here?"

The characters must decide what their next move is. They have been awake the whole night, but, right now, sleep is not an option. The atmosphere is heated. They have defied Yasen, and the music of the procession can already be heard in the distance. Strange sounds echo through the streets. Rattles, drums, and flutes battle for the audience's favor.

"Mingle with the people. I'll take care of Eris. She'll be safe in the workshop. Garlene needs me as well," Parel says reassuringly.

If the characters ask Eris what her origin is, the Jehamedan smiles to herself. "Do you know what it means to be alone? Without a tribe? Without Shepherds? You run

through the streets and are the prey of every impulse."

She runs her hands over the contusions on her arms and neck. "I don't know which is worse: to be at the mercy of my own tribe or that of another." She bites her lower lip. "Can you protect me?"

If the characters ask what they should protect her against, she will respond in a clear and steady voice, saying: "The ram knows each of its black sheep. He stalks them and rips them in two if they have even dared to poison his flock." The characters have some difficulties following her words.

"I saw something I should not have seen. I can show it to you if you offer me your protection," she negotiates boldly.

When the characters insist on seeing it, she says, "Not here. We must go somewhere safe." She looks around. "Everything is linked. Yesterday, today, tomorrow. The Cults, their rituals, our faith. When you look up at the stars, it will be clear to you."

The woman's words are peculiar, her explanations void of rhyme or reason.

"Come on, girl. I have food and clothes for you," Parel says, leading her by the arm westwards. With a wave of his hand, he assures the characters that he has everything under control and there is no cause for concern.



SCENE 09: THE PROCESSION

It is blistering cold. The crowd at Brotherhood Square seems not to be affected by this in the least. Wrapped in thick winter skins, they excitedly gulp down spirits and distillate in anticipation of the approaching spectacle.

Macabre melodies fill the street as the thunder of the procession sounds along Pioneer Road. People disguised as drones stagger ahead, their torsos bare. Their bodies have been smeared with mud and the stigmata is painted upon their chests. They move together in a flock towards Brotherhood Square. Some crawl across the pavement like animals and throw their heads back and forth as if scavenging the street for something to eat. Wind chimes ring ethereally as a breeze sweeps through the Ganaress masks hanging from the gables. Throaty singing drifts through the air, but the chaotic canon is unintelligible. Hundreds, maybe even thousands, imitate Ganaress' drone army. All of Brest has risen to its feet to attend the spectacle. Mouths agape and eyes wide open. Children cling to their mothers in fear. A group of people screams as the fake drones walking by threateningly grab a woman. Loud laughter accompanies the playful suspense and enthusiasm shines in the eyes of the crowd.

"GANARESS! GANARESS! GANARESS!" they roar in unison.

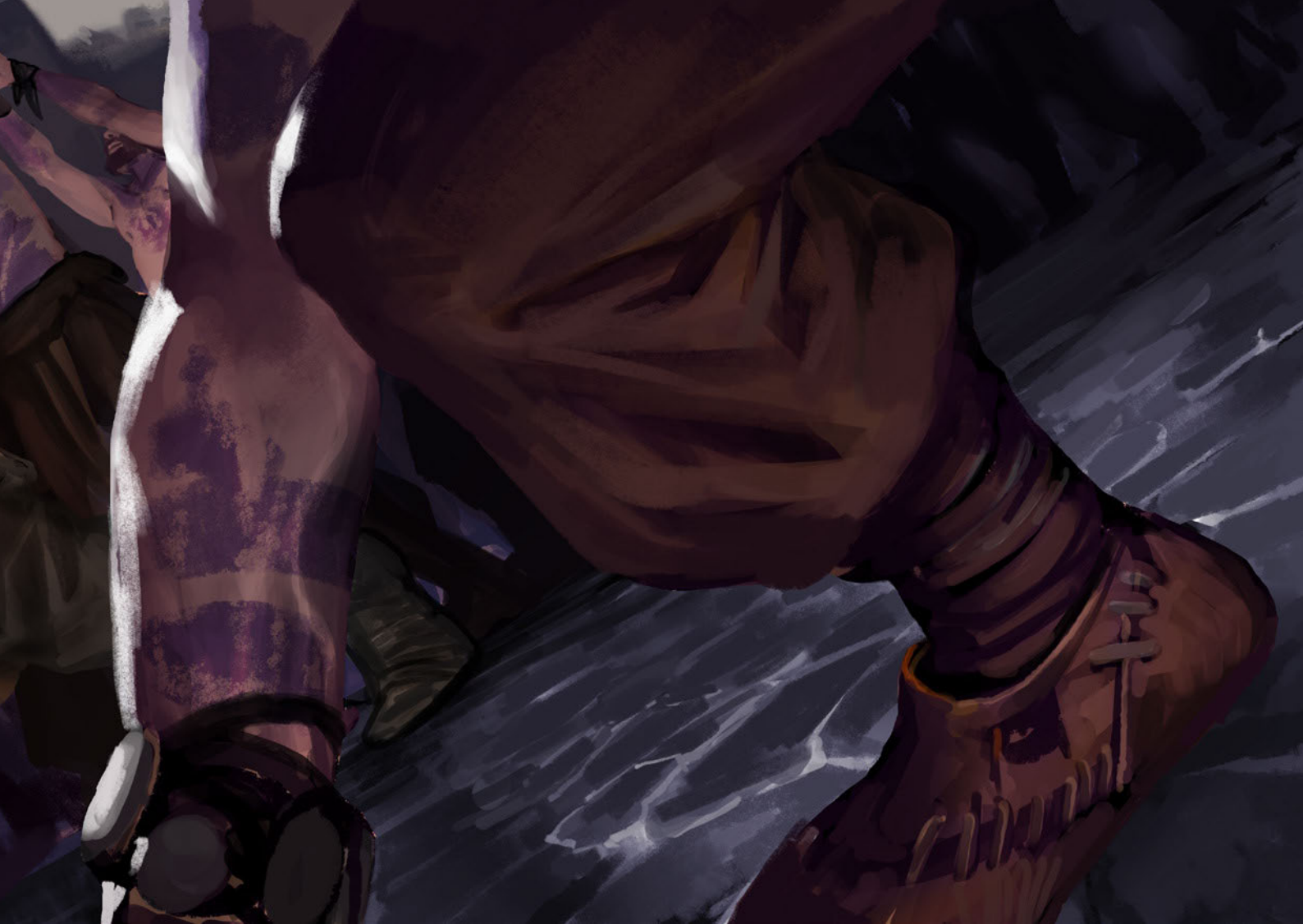
All faces turn to the Northeast. In the distance, a huge monster turns onto the processional route from a side street and walks through the underbrush of bodies. It is Ganaress himself. Stuffed with flax and straw, the effigy covered in whale blubber and walrus skin is approaching. Despite its artificial nature, it is still able to instill fear in those brave enough to cast a glance in its direction. Colossal in size, it looms over the heads of the city dwellers. Some children gasp at the sight of the monster. Their bitter cries can still be heard even as they bury their faces in the furs of their parents.

"GANARESS! GANARESS! GANARESS!" The chanting is overwhelming. The pounding of the drones makes the ground quake. The Demiurge's herald has arrived.

I. THE SUBLIME

Within an instant, the square is flooded with resounding cheers. The spectators turn away from Ganaress and the air crackles with tension. In the southwest of the square, the crowd parts, creating a path. Hunting horns blare. The characters must climb up onto a tribune in order to see what is going on. In the background, the cacophonous chants of the drones reach their climax.

A towering man donning armor and wrapped in a cloak that extends from the floor steps out into an alley



arrives. The Sublime. A deafening applause consumes the entire place as the people pay homage to their redeemer. Drum rolls accompany his appearance.

He listlessly drags a bidenhander across the pavement and discovers Ganaress in straw form. He takes long, languid steps towards the opposing army and his expression is one of indifference. With each pace, he moves closer towards his nemesis. The drones thrash wildly while the spectators watch with bated breath as their hero relives his most triumphant moment. The giant figure leans forward toward the Sublime.

Vicarent looks at it, his eyes glazed over with boredom. He beheads the creature with a swift strike. No anticipation. No theatrics.

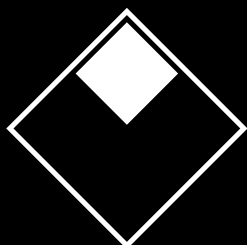
Ganaress' fake head rolls in a circle on the ground, before finally resting against a well. Vicarent does not wait for the endless applause. He takes three steps to the first row of spectators who rejoice ecstatically as he dives into the crowd. The drones awaken from their simulated trance. Beacons flare up everywhere, and purple mist swirls across the square. People fall into each other's arms amidst the plumes of colorful smoke. Music sounds from all corners, and the procession suddenly takes on a lively festive mood. People carry tables to the square and bring food from market stalls. Men tap barrels of mead and distribute pitchers

all around. Spurious drones grab frightened children and carry them around on their shoulders. On the rooftops surrounding the square, war horns sound, and soon, people's conversations are drowned out by the commotion, each word indecipherable from the next. Briton celebrates its invincibility.

DURING THE DAY

The characters have no choice but to continue their investigation. The Day of Ganaress is in full swing. If they want to rub shoulders with the population and find out more, this is the right moment to do so. The whole city is out and about. Exhibition fights take place in the Blood Pit and the stalls distribute free glasses of distillate. Music and dance transform Brotherhood Square into a place of exuberant celebration. Hundreds seated at banquet tables partake in the day's feast. Baskets full of food are passed around and bread is broken. People toast each other with drinking horns and kiss wildly.

The characters can seize the moment and split up to look for clues in various parts of the city or they can decide to stay together and work as a group. Below, we offer four scenes that take place independently throughout the day's festivities. As game master, you can also place these modular scenes elsewhere to give your players a new lead.



THE SEIZURE

A GLASS OF SPIRITS

In a quiet side street, the characters find peace and a moment's rest. The music from Brotherhood Square is a faint dull thud in the background. At a small stand, a maiden offers spiced tea and boiled brandy. Her father, a man with a silver mane and a tattooed face, rolls barrels into the nearby cellar. He smiles kindly as the characters move past him.

"Hey, guys. Help an old codger to lower this damn barrel down. My back's no longer what it used to be." The elderly man offers a rope to the tallest character as an invitation to help.

If the character does so, they must use their weight to counterbalance the heavy load and keep the rope taut. "Yeah, that's good. Let it come slowly," the old man encourages the character.

The daughter meanwhile invites the other characters to a shot of brandy as a token of her gratitude. "Drink to my old man!"

A roll on INS+Perception (3), and the characters recognize a strange wooden idol dangling from the maid's neck. A horrible face is carved into it. Fleshy and swollen, it grins at the characters. A second later, the maid drops a glass of brandy.

VISIONS

The maid rears up as if she has had an epileptic seizure. Her head flings back and forth. Her pupils quiver and her eyelids flicker. She looks possessed. All of a sudden, her body cramps up and vomit spews from her mouth. "Shera! Are you drunk?" her father asks confused.

It seems as though something strange has taken hold of her. She snorts as if unable to breathe.

"Heee iissssss hhhhheerrreeeeeee ..." the maiden growls in her madness. Her lower jaw is trembling.

If the characters want to calm the raging maiden and figure out what has taken control over her, they must go behind the booth. Her arms and legs twitch spasmodically, but Shera does not resist. The characters can rush her over to a bench and hold her down. Blood pours out of her nose, and she cocks her head as if she can see something that exists beyond the characters. Her breathing is erratic. A roll on PSY+Cunning (2) is necessary to realize that Elam, the furrier's boy, exhibited the same symptoms as the woman does now. If the characters unbutton her shirt, their suspicions are confirmed. A blooming stigma glows on her sternum.

"What is wrong with my daughter?" the old man asks worriedly and slaps her hoping to restore her to reason.

"Heee iissssss baccckckkkk ..., " she croaks. If the characters ask who she is talking about, she will open her eyes and suddenly stretch out her arm like a wind-up doll. Her finger points straight to the cobblestones on the side street. If the characters look where she is pointing, something unbelievable will happen. They recognize the Chakra symbol of a Pheromancer in the cracks between the cobblestones. She points to the next spot. A wind chime with the same symbol hangs from a nearby gable. Her finger points to a third spot. At a neighboring stand, green apples form a Pheromancer symbol. What is happening? The characters feel as if their sense of direction is slipping from them. The air takes on the sweet, delicate taste of rose water as vertigo overcomes them.

"GANARESS," the maid snarls. A stroke hits the woman, leaving her shaking. She spits uncontrollably and hits the back of her skull over and over against the wall until a red spot forms on the stone.

"You cannot deprive us of the Black Water!" she screams with pure conviction, then collapses.

The father stutters with fear in his voice and yanks the cape of one of the characters. "What is wrong with my daughter? Has the Demiurge possessed her?" His look

WARNING SIGNS

So far, no drone has been responsible for even the slightest twitch in a mollusk. The conventional methods also haven't been able to detect anything. No derangement and no clear signs of identity loss. The drones wear clothes, speak, and live among the populace.

How can that be? Have they been depowered? In spite of flourishing stigmata? How is that even possible and if so, who is responsible?

Without clear warning signals, any person could be a drone. To unlock the mystery, the characters must follow the trail of the revenants, and this leads straight to the Spitalians.



of uncertainty searches for answers. Two chapel guards observed the woman's seizure from afar and are now approaching to help. "Please, bring her to the Balsam House," the old man beseeches them. The veterans nod conversantly and seize the helpless maiden.

"Everything all right with you?", a guard barks at the characters.

The question comes like the tolling of a bell, and the dizziness suddenly subsides. If they check the places where the Chakra symbols appeared, they are no longer there. No trace of the wind chime, no green apples, and the lines between the cobblestones are nothing more than more than cracks.

REVENANTS

"I picked her up years ago. In the fall of '89. She lived outside in the forest," the old man sobs, completely disconcerted. "I didn't have anyone left to look after," he moans drearily.

If the characters ask him if such a seizure has ever happened before, he will wipe his tears from his face and say: "Yes, two or three times since I found her. But over the last few weeks, she has been acting stranger. Sometimes, she would just stare at the water for hours down at the roadstead. It was impossible to talk to her."

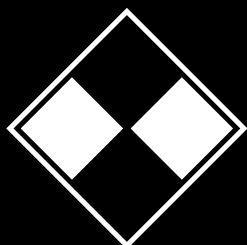
"But there has never been anything like this before ..."

The old man is completely at a loss. Teary-eyed, he searches for an explanation. "Do you think she's one of the revenants everyone's been talking about?" The characters can only guess. Still, the vertigo and the maiden's Chakra symbols together are puzzling. Did she mix the spirits with Burn? Have the spores affected them in any way? Did any of the black fractals jump on one of them during the amputation? The characters have every reason to be paranoid and quickly examine each other from head to toe. The question of whether they can still rely on their own senses slowly seeps into their consciousness.

EXTERNAL CONTROL

The Phieromancer King is dead, and not even Psychonauts can be resurrected. Or can they?

What is the Black Water? Why are Malinesse and the drones so obsessed with it? Is there something that influences their actions? Is the idol bearer alone responsible for these outbreaks or do other powers control them? Did the characters' contact with the black web trigger the maiden?



THE BEGGAR

EXCESS

Around noon, the festivities at Brotherhood Square reach their highest point. The chapel guards have their hands full breaking up fisticuffs, dragging drunks to the sobering chamber and trying to restore the peace. Meanwhile, behind a wall of wooden slats separating a market stall from the crowd a very different scene takes place. Peering through a crack between the boards, the characters see two men mindlessly beating up a beggar. They strike the man down with their cudgels.

BEHIND THE WALL

"I warned you, you miserable bag of bones! Stay away from my goods," one of the two thugs thunders. Blood oozes from a wound on the beggar's head. He tries to lift himself up. "Stay away from my stand, you thief!" Then they start laying in on the alleged pilferer again.

The assault is brutal. The attackers are drunk and bloodthirsty. They exploit the vulnerability of the beggar and take out their rage on him. There isn't a chapel guard anywhere to intervene. If nobody comes to the man's aid, they will kill him.

If the characters step in, the two Britoni will stop. "He's a dirty thief! For days, he has been stealing from me and robbing me of my profit! I've warned him three times already!" the angry Britoni protests when the characters interfere. His friend joins in, "Why are you getting involved at all? You're not from around here. Let us handle things like we usually do." As he passes by, he kicks the beggar in the ribs. The man writhes and tries to get to his feet once more. The first Britoni raises his cudgel in the air, preparing to hit the beggar again. If the characters draw a weapon or seriously threaten him, his club will freeze in midair. If the Characters succeed in a roll on PSY+Domination (3), they can take action against the two merchants and scare them off. If it looks as if a bloody confrontation is about to ensue, the two of them will rebelliously throw their weapons to the ground.

"There, you have your beggar. Come on, Flint, back to the booth," the first man says contemptuously, nudging his comrade to follow him.

IMPRESSIONS

Nothing about the beggar's outward appearance adds up. He is too young and too fit to not be able to fend for himself. He could easily find work as a peon or a stable boy. His rags do not reveal anything about his background. He wears no jewelry and has no tattoos or body paint that could mark him as a Britoni. Judging by his accent, it is hard to say if he even comes from Franka. What draws a beggar to the end of the world? Why is he here? Certainly not because of his piety. There are far better places to eke out a living or go underground. Is he running from something?

NO MEMORY

The beggar rolls and sits up, leaning his back on a nearby wall. Blood has turned his face bright red. The man is not even twenty winters old, yet he is haggard and exhausted. Shaggy black hair sticks to his face.

"Something to eat," he says with one hand outstretched. His arm appears from under his rags. Numerous bruises and scratches discolor his chalky skin. He looks as if he has been crawling through a field of barbed wire. A successful roll on INT+Medicine (2) indicates that the wounds must be more than two days old.

"Something to eat," he repeats.

If the characters share a ration with him, he will stuff the food into his mouth, his fingers shaking all the while. He fills his cheeks, gorging himself on the food. If the characters ask for his name, he will not answer, instead he just chews the food with his eyes fixed on a blank spot in front of his feet. If they ask him where he is from, he will painfully swallow a mouthful of food and wipe some blood off of his face.

"I don't know," he says, still staring at the same spot. "I have forgotten."

He is on his feet at once as if he had not been hurt at all. For someone who has been



wounded the way he has, the beggar appears exceptionally resilient. He cleans his face with a piece of his rag cloth and looks the characters straight in the eye.

"Who is the judge of humanity? Who leads the scions from afar and sows his seed in their minds?" he asks suddenly. His eyes are innocent like those of a child. If the characters ask what he is talking about, the beggar will smile.

"I knew the answer once. But I have forgotten it," he says absent-mindedly while scratching his scalp as if he had lice.

"Is it wrong to eat?" A roll on INS+Empathy (2) brings certainty that the beggar is serious about the quizzical question. If the characters tell the beggar that he should not steal food, he will look at them as though they have lost their minds.

"Is it bad to take what is owed to you?" he asks like a defiant little boy.

Before the characters have a chance to answer, he throws a heavy sack over his shoulder and wanders off down the street.

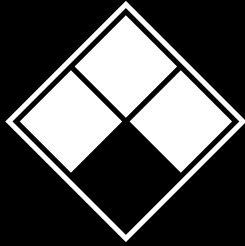
PECULIAR

The characters cannot make sense of the beggar's behavior. If they turn to watch him leave, they will see him heading west, making his way to Godasse. After a few moments, he disappears into the crowd. If the characters want to investigate, their only chance is to try to find the angry merchant. He is standing behind a table selling smoked meat and roots.

"That damn beggar! Always stealing from me and nobody else," he complains, his arms flailing. "No, he's not from around here. I'm sure of that. I recognize a face when I see it." Then he raises his finger as a warning, "Guys like that, we finish. Next time, don't interfere. We have our own rules here."

DISCREPANCIES

For someone who can't distinguish between possessions and loot, the beggar, with his odd question about the judge of humanity, exhibits a rather broad vocabulary. What is wrong with this man? Why doesn't he have any memories? Why did he ask these seemingly random questions? A successful roll on INS+Empathy (2) assures them that he is neither slow nor mad. On top of that, being able to stand after countless blows as if nothing had happened is evidence of a truly extraordinary constitution.



PRESERVISTS

TARGET

A little boy whose top row of milk teeth has fallen out tugs at the skirt of a character and extends his hand. A beggar child? The boy gestures as if he wants to whisper something to the character.

If the character leans down, the boy will whisper in their ear: "Your friend said to let you know that you make a very good target." If the character inquires as to which friend the boy is talking about, he will point towards a small side street. Vatenguerre. Wrapped in a black cloak and with his hood pulled over his head, he calmly waves them over. The boy is still holding out his hand. "Something sweet! Your friend said that you have something for me."

Once the characters have gotten rid of the child and made their way to the alley, the Preservist welcomes them sullenly. "You've got to learn to be less obvious!" Vatenguerre grates. "It's far too easy to track you down." He pulls his hood even further forward, his face hidden by the black fabric. "Follow me and make sure not to attract any attention. Vega wants to see you."

REUNION IN GODASSE

Vatenguerre leads the characters to Godasse, taking the small bridge on Miller's Lane. They reach a run-down country house in a backyard tucked far away from the streets.

Inside, the floorboards creak and the air is damp. Vatenguerre ushers them through a long corridor to a sparsely furnished living room. Someone has barricaded the windows. Flames crackle in the fireplace. An empty leather armchair is the only thing that catches the eye in the otherwise barren room. Vega sorts her notes at a work table.

"Have you found out anything?" the Spitalian asks without hesitation. "Vatenguerre has vouched for you. What are you doing here?" she wants to know.

The woman's features are polished porcelain. Her eyes are iron and her behavior is calculated. "Doctor Vega. I am leading this mission," she introduces herself and shakes hands with each character present.

LEVIATHANICS

Not wanting to waste any time, Vega begins her summary. "Besides us, you are the only ones who witnessed the attack two days ago. We examined the arm of the fisherman. This material is contagious. It wrapped itself around the existing DNA at once, but luckily the severed limb did not become an active substrate. It's hard to imagine what would happen to a living organism if it were to become infected," she rattles off the information like a machine gun.

"We're looking for the origin of this material," she adds. "We call it Leviathanics, it's a new form of Psychonautics. The sixth Chakra, the missing link, has most likely been bound to the water since Eshaton, but the evolutionary phase is over. It is coming to the land now."

If the characters have problems following her, she will slow down.

"Leviathanics originates in the Atlantic. We believe the Earth Chakra is located thousands of miles off the coast." She stops and takes a deep breath. "But when an Earth Chakra blossoms, it means that there are also Mother spore fields. When creatures like this beast come ashore, it can only mean one thing. A Mother spore field of Leviathanics has already reached the coast of Briton."

She looks at the characters, a sense of urgency upon her face. "Is there anything you can tell us that will help our mission?" If the characters say no, she will continue in more detail. "When Leviathanics makes it ashore, it will be our downfall. It is infectious and it is parasitic. It seeks human hosts and spreads through skin contact. Unlike all other psychonautical aberrations, it does not have to undergo an embryonic cycle.

WARY

The characters would do well to be wary of the conspiratorial nature of the meeting. What exactly is Doctor Vega saying? Why doesn't she make her findings public and enlist help from the platoons stationed at Rennes? Why is she surrounded by Preservists? Why did she wait two days before deciding to let the group in on what she knows?

Even if the Epigeneticist has decided to reveal the facts now, her explanations leave a bad taste in the mouths of the characters. Why did they release Malinette if she is so dangerous, and where are Bascule and the other Preservists right now?

Contagion is an immediate process that results in the complete infestation of the host and turns an infected human into a Leviathan."

If the characters do not understand, she will begin to lecture like a teacher: "Each Earth Chakra produces a specialized rapture. Leviathanics is the Sexual Chakra. It stimulates itself by splitting. Its blueprint is simple: impregnation, division, proliferation. Compared to all the other raptures, its instincts are more primitive and easier to decipher. And that is exactly its advantage. It is viral."

She circles the work table and plants herself in front of the characters.

"A sperm splits from the swarm. Alone and unique, it swims towards the egg. Its head is a battering ram, its primal instinct is predetermined. Every phase of its meaningless existence is geared towards this singular goal. Insemination. From a fusion with the egg comes the formula of life. Limitless possibilities for a singular opportunity. Leviathanics takes advantage of this unique process. Just like a sperm, it penetrates organic matter and fuses with it. It is at this moment that it becomes pure mutagen. It transforms living things, reducing them to a single purpose. Proliferation at any cost."

CLARIFICATION

If the characters try to ask Vega about her mission, her reaction will be a snappy one.

"Vatenguerre has already told you. We are trying to solve the mystery of the Starfire and carry out negotiations with the Anabaptists. However, they've proven to be a stubborn and unruly bunch in all regards. The discovery of Leviathanics is pure coincidence. Up until two days ago, we had only speculated as to its existence. What we discovered is conclusive proof."

The characters must decide what they are willing to disclose. In their current situation, the information that they have is worth gold. Can they trust the Spitalians? Will they tell them about Garlene? Should they reveal what they know about the Atlas oil platform or their theories about Ushant? Should they ask the Spitalians about Malinesse?

If the characters manage to successfully steer the conversation towards the subject of the swarm mother, Vega will grimace. "It was a mistake to rely on a drone. We thought she would be the perfect tracking hound for finding the Starfire. Instead, however, we must assume that it was Leviathanics that lured her to Brest," she admits contritely. "In the meantime, we must also take into account the fact that the incubation period of Leviathanics is a lot shorter for individuals with spore affliction than for their unafflicted counterparts. And this is exactly the problem." Her eyes narrow.

"Ten thousand former drones from Ganaress' hive live all over Briton. If only one of them gets in touch with the Black Water, we will instantly have a pandemic," she says ominously.

"The Anabaptists do not recognize the danger at hand," Vatenguerre interrupts. "If you know anything, you have to tell us!"

If the characters keep the information to themselves, Vega will bang her fist on the table. "This conversation never took place. Vatenguerre, take them away. We'll continue without them."

If the characters try to make amends, she will refuse their attempts at placation. "This is not child's play!" she hisses coolly before turning back to her notes.

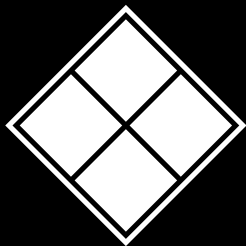
The Preservist shows the characters the way back to the road. When they enter the backyard, a caliginous sky greets them. Gray clouds race across Brest. "I thought we had allies in you," says Vatenguerre. "Do not stand in our way and you'd do best to forget what you've seen. To deny us your help is one thing, to betray us is another ..." he warns them emphatically and disappears into the house.

DRONE HIVE

Vega's numbers are terrifying. Ten thousand drones in Briton? Where are they all from? Why haven't they been hunted by the Spitalians? Is Vega trying to put one over on the characters, or does her apocalyptic prognostication contain a kernel of truth?

For the moment, the characters can only speculate. Vega's work pad on the desk could, however, tell them more ... Maybe, if they handed Garlene's arm over to Vega, she could examine it. Maybe, that would convince the Epigeneticist that they are not a threat. But that would, of course, mean betraying Garlene and the Salt Wolf.

According to Vega, the incubation period for an unafflicted person takes longer. Garlene became infected with Leviathanics more than two months ago. How fast would the infection progress in a drone? If it is true that Leviathanics attracted Malinesse, can the same also be said of other Ganarids?



SAINT VICARENT

ON THE BENCH

If the characters want to catch a glimpse of Ganaress' remains, this is the right moment. They have been informed that the chapel will be open to visitors for the next seven days. When they reach the black walls, they recognize a familiar face. Tronte, the master of the chapel, sits on a bench in front of the building, peeling apples. A good-natured smile flits across his lips when he sees the characters.

"Good job this morning," he says in a warm voice. "The chapel guards told me everything. It was wise to summon Oppolus, though I'm still wondering how you managed to get the old walrus out of bed so quickly." He asks the group to keep him company. He cuts two apples into quarters and shares them with the characters. "Yasen is a dangerous man, but his power rests in Rennes, not here. All of us chapel guards fought in the war. Now, all we want is to till our fields and get some rest," he explains prudently. "But the Orgiastics of Rennes are a new generation. They are thirsty for blood. Peace does not appeal to them." He plucks at his beard. "With Vicarent's victory over Ganaress, the Pheromancers have disappeared, and Yasen has turned the righteous rage of our Cult inward on itself. He wants change, but his hands are tied. The Cult gathers behind Vicarent, and the people behind Oppolus."

He gets up and stomps his wooden leg, inviting the characters to follow him.

"Do you want to see the Demiurge?" he asks.

GANARESS

Tronte thrusts a heavy key into the cast-iron gate. The doors open, and he welcomes the characters in with a gesture of his hand. The interior of the chapel is dull and gloomy. The rows of pews form a blur in the shadows, and the air is heavy with the smell of anise and incense. Slanting beams of light force themselves through honey-colored windows.

A monumental cross rises to the ceiling of the chapel. Ganaress' remains have been tied with leather and nailed to wood. His overgrown bones pile up to form the outline of a giant. Ganaress' skeletal dimensions are beyond belief. The Pheromancer King was a titan. His misshapen skull smiles down upon them.

"With his demise, Briton's rise began," Tronte says in a reverent manner.

The characters can take a look around the chapel. The plain room has nothing more to offer than its central display. If they ask Tronte about the battle waged against Ganaress, he will issue a shrug of ignorance.

"I wasn't there. We were in the field four years earlier, fighting against Markurant. I lost my leg in Bassham. When I took over the office here, everything had already ended."

ENCOUNTER

"I beheaded him. That's the whole story," a voice suddenly echoes behind the characters. If they turn around, they will see a giant leaning in the doorway with his arms crossed.

"The Sublime," Tronte says with deference in his voice and lowers his head.

"Stop your submissive drivell, Master of the Chapel," the Sublime responds indifferently, stepping out from between the pews. Vicarent's face is dark and hardened, his nose burnt and blackened. A heavy leather coat conceals his frame.

"Are you the fools who meddled in Yasen's affairs?"

If the characters answer in the affirmative, he will be unable to hide the hint of a smile.

"Good luck! That old sack of shit will do everything in his power to ensure you burn," he says without sparing them another glance.

Then he turns to Tronte. "Anything new about that sighting on the fish market two days ago? Have your men found out more?"

BONES

Characters who have never met a Psychonaut might tremble at the sight of the bones. The unnatural size of the Pheromancer alone is intimidating. They cannot comprehend how one single person could have succeeded in slaughtering this false god.

A successful roll on INT+Science (3) suggests that Pheromancers go through several stages of growth before becoming a queen. Different colored parts of the skeleton may indeed indicate separate growth cycles. Another strange detail catches their eye. The bones have honeycomb indentations that are reminiscent of a skeletonized hive. Are the plagues hatched in the Pheromancers' bones?

Tronte looks at the ground in shame. "Nothing, Sublime. We searched the entire bay and questioned the fishermen. They caught the whale about two hundred miles offshore. No one knows how the Demiurge got into the animal."

"The Demiurge is in everything, Tronte." Vicarent presses his lips together. "Never underestimate the great deceiver," he says in a sinister way, looking up at Ganaress. "What about the Spitalians? Do we have a lead there?"

Tronte shakes his head. Diligently, he lists off where his chapel guards have been looking for clues.

"Vega. The sorceress of Rennes is behind all this. I swear, Tronte, I have rarely met a woman whose skull I would love nothing more than to split." Vicarent's words are pure poison. The huge man grunts.

"Sublime, maybe the Spitalian knows something more about the creature. Maybe, she can help us. I'm sure she's willing to have an earnest conversation with you."

"Shall I humiliate myself before her, Master of the Chapel? Should I fall down on my knees and beg for her help after they betrayed us?" Vicarent's outburst of rage is like a roll of thunder.

"I owe nothing to the Spitalians! Neither my time nor my humility."

He pulls his bidenhander from its sheath on his back and hurls it like a spear against the cross. The blade shatters Ganaress' ribs and sticks in the wood.

"I've done all of this on my own!" the Sublime roars with outstretched arms. His head is red with rage and his shoulders tremble. He stares wide-eyed at Tronte. "Don't you ever dare offer me unsolicited advice again," he warns the master of the chapel and stomps to the exit, cursing wildly.

COMPASSION

"For a moment, I thought he was going to crush my skull," Tronte exhales relieved. "He's not the man he used to be. Time has gotten to the boy," he says, his words coated in clemency. If the characters try to make sense of Vicarent's outburst, Tronte will respond dismissively.

"Oh, the Spitalians failed Vicarent in the battle against Ganaress. He never forgave them for their defiance," Tronte explains, hobbling over to the cross. He tugs at the bidenhander to free the blade from the wood. Then he bends down and starts picking up the shattered ribs.

If they ask him about Vega, he will pause. "She is the new High Commander of the Spitalians in Rennes. Her predecessor Ruytman hanged himself in the summer," he says laconically. "I've no idea what power games the Spitalians are playing amongst themselves, but I don't think they want to harm us. I'm sure they had their reasons why they couldn't help Vicarent."

He wipes the sweat from his brow and tightens his headband. "They fought at our side in Bassham. Without them, we would not have been able to storm the Ziggurath." The master of the chapel loses himself in the memories of his youth.

Suddenly, he looks at the characters as if he has had an idea.

"You know what? Come to the Flask tonight! Every year, the Sublime goes there when the first day of the festivities comes to its close. His mood at the table is much better than what you just witnessed here. I invite you to be my guests."

If the characters reject, he will insist. "Please, do not be too quick to judge. Vicarent is a good man. The anger is in his blood, but he does not truly wish ill upon anyone. He misses his brother, and the past is closing in on him."

If the characters ask who Vicarent's brother is and what happened to him, Tronte will nod compassionately. "Barringer. He has been stationed at another front for ages."

IRASCIBILITY

Vicarent's outburst is difficult to understand. What is the Sublime motivated by, and where does the choleric hatred of the Spitalians come from? A roll on INS+Empathy (3) clearly reveals that his nerves are raw and something is causing his patience to wear thin.

Vicarent is Briton's most powerful man, but his demeanor is reckless and brutal.

The characters can only guess as to what the reasons are.

THE DISTANT BROTHER

Why doesn't anybody talk about Vicarent's brother? Who is he? Where is he? Wouldn't he be in Brest for the Day of Ganaress? Is he also Oppolus' foster son? Tronte's tale sounds as if something has kept the brothers apart. What was the master of the chapel talking about when he mentioned another front? Is it the same front where Halvert and the other Anabaptists are stationed? Is he talking about Ushant?

SCENE 10: EVENING HOURS

The twilight of an ash-colored evening settles in. The festivities have already moved from Unir to L'Arc and the small side streets and alleys between the inns are packed. The characters must push past revelers on every side. The sleepless night is getting to them. Their eyes are burning, and their weariness impairs their perception. The characters are here to meet Soufiane, who went out alone to gather more information about Shamash. They find the lanky Leopard smoking on the street corner that they designated as their rendezvous point. When he sees the characters, he takes them to a terrace that overlooks the rooftops of L'Arc and the bay.

I. CONCRETION

"I have something!" he begins without a moment's hesitation. "Over in the Tusk, there are three birds without a nest, do you follow me?" He checks to see if the group has understood. "Apocalyptics! They're stranded here without a flock to protect them. That's why they're keeping their heads down and trying not to attract attention. Just pulling off small capers and running errands." His voice grows hoarse. "They know Shamash! They know where he lives. The Neolibyan has been in town for a year already. He pays the birds to procure things for him and listen around for mention of a disc and a star. In Saint-Brieuc, they buy printed circuit boards, navigational charts, gauges and all kinds of nautical equipment for him." Soufiane turns to surveil the area. He wants to make sure that they are alone. "It sounds to me like he wants to go to Britain." He pauses and lights a tobacco leaf. "Best of all," he says, smirking, "the Neolibyan has a Paler as his bodyguard." Wide-eyed, he watches the reactions on the faces of the characters.

If the characters ask how reliable Soufiane's informants are, he will reassure them of their credibility at once. "They want to get out of Briton as soon as possible. I have promised to bring them to Lisbon if their story holds true." With a casual gesture, he knocks the ashes off of the tip of the tobacco leaf and whispers:

"There's still more! I convinced them to break into Shamash's camp and steal everything that might be of help to us. In return, I have equipped them with a few assault rifles and ammo. They will act at dawn."

If the characters object to his tactics, Soufiane will raise his hands reassuringly. "Calm down! Have you already forgotten? Yesterday the fucking soup kitchen blew up around our ears! The Paler almost caught us! The fact that he's working with the Neolibyan can't mean anything good. We need to expose Shamash's plans before his guard dog strikes again."

If the characters are still not convinced, Soufiane will gesture irritably at them with the backs of his hand.

"With or without you. I don't care! If you'd rather wait like sitting ducks for him to kill you, go ahead! Six o'clock in the morning at the Tusk. That's where we're meeting. Ask Lavender, the tattoo artist, about the lodging of the three swallows." He throws the smoked tobacco leaf on the ground and grinds the butt under his heel.

"You have one night to sleep on it," he says before heading off to the harbor.

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSPICION

Soufiane's impetuous temperament leaves a bad taste in the characters' mouth. The Neolibyan's involvement with the Paler cannot be good for the characters. It is obvious Shamash is playing a double game with them. Was the Paler going after the artifacts on his behalf? How did the Paler know that the artifacts were in their possession? They had met the Neolibyan just a few hours earlier at the auction at Brotherhood Square. Was the Paler already pursuing them and simply waiting for the right moment to attack? Can he somehow locate the artifacts? A roll on INT+Artifact Lore (2) will provide them with a shocking insight: If the Paler can locate the artifacts, then they have just been lambs to the slaughter who are at his mercy.

NO DEAL

Soufiane does not tell the characters where the Neolibyan is residing and insists on meeting them at the Tusk. He does not want to be shortchanged and left out at the crucial moment. The Leopard makes it clear that the only reason they have a lead is thanks to his good nose. He expects to be given his share, whatever it may be.

The characters should at least have the decency to involve him in the business if he is going to supply them with weapons and ammunition.

II. THE INVITATION

If the characters stay in the open amongst other people, they will be safe for now. However, they have no idea when and where the Paler will strike next. They are currently in L'Arc. If they want to accept Tronte's invitation, they have to go to the Flask. In an inn full of Orgiastics and seasoned veterans, the chances of being struck down by a sniper are much lower. Maybe the master of the chapel knows something that could help them. The road heading east will take them to the Flask. Their one-legged host is already at the door, talking to his chapel guards.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Meanwhile, the story of the of the characters' moral intervention earlier that morning has made its round amongst the guards. The veterans greet the group, and Tronte introduces them. "Yasen's contenders look like they can handle a few glasses of distillate," the master of the chapel jokes encouragingly. The characters are led into the Flask and seat themselves at the table designated for regulars. Tronte has brought Vicarent's bid-enhandler with him. Delectable food is passed around and the scent is so irresistible that it makes the characters' mouths water. The Anabaptists eat, drink and celebrate the twelfth anniversary of their triumphant victory against Ganaress. The atmosphere is charged and there is a boisterous mood in the air. Chapel guard after chapel guard toasts the characters. Tronte leans over to them to make sure they have everything they need. If they ask for Vicarent, he will assure them that the Sublime will come. "He'll turn up," he says.

The taproom is packed with guests and the characters are the topic of conversation all throughout the bar. A volley of laughter breaks out at the next table. The Orgiastics imitate Yasen and retell the scene at the Blood Pit with a generous amount of grunting. The men burst with laughter. Their heads are flushed, and they almost choke on their last bite of dinner. Nobody among those present seems to show the least bit of compassion for the Emissary.

All of a sudden, clapping can be heard. The applause lasts for a painfully long time, but it is not directed at anyone in particular. It sounds like someone is slapping a tabletop with the palm of their hand over and over again. In the back of the Flask, the guests no longer make a sound. Slowly, the silence spreads throughout the room, and more and more Anabaptists crane their necks to see where the clapping is coming from.

III. HUMILIATION

The mirthful laughter in the inn has died down. All eyes turn to the man whose thunderous clapping rang out from the dark corner of the room. A scarred face rises from out of the shadows. The stranger dons an armored black and white uniform and a red cape. Grinning, he strides through the taproom. The planks creak under the weight of his boots and his Spitalian medal clinks against his chest. Dead silence. Everyone tries to place the stranger. The characters, however, recognize him right away. Bascule.

"I bow before the glory of the Anabaptists," he announces scornfully.

"What do you want, Spitalian?" an Orgiastic barks from one of the richly laid tables.

The Preservist raises his eyebrows, turns to the Orgiastic and walks leisurely up to him. He looks at the roast on the table, pulls off a rib and stuffs the meat into his mouth. A row of iron teeth shimmers.

"I want to be like Vicarent," he mumbles and smacks. "So brave, so sublime." Contempt resonates in his voice.

"You dare to drag the name of the Sublime through the dirt?" a young Orgiastic at the counter rumbles. The Preservist turns to the young man, cocks his scarred head and chews with his mouth open, his eyes fixed in his direction. The behavior of the Spitalian is pure provocation.

"If only we had more men like Vicarent, humanity would have nothing to fear!"

With one blow, all of the Pheromancers would be gone!" he says with a big grin on his lips, baring his iron set of teeth. He makes sure to leave no doubt as to whether or not he believes the legend surrounding Vicarent's triumph. Some Anabaptists grab the hilts of their swords and daggers. Several rise from their benches and surround the Spitalian threateningly.

"You miserable Preservist, shut your iron jaw before I solder your teeth together," one of the veterans spits out. The Preservist chuckles. Not a sign of distress. On the contrary, everything he does is an attempt to escalate the situation.

"Come on, you milksop. Show me how you are going to make me shut up!" he calls provocatively to the veteran.

"Enough!" a thunderous voice sharply interrupts the spectacle. Vicarent has arrived. Wrapped in a heavy cloak of skins, the armored giant marches between the Anabaptists, pushing the men aside.

He is a head taller than the rest of them.

"Why are you looking for a fight in my house, Spitalian?" he asks.

"At last, I can face the Sublime," Bascule says dismissively, eyeing his opponent from head to toe. "Vicarent, you really do look splendid. I'm almost inclined to believe that you actually are capable of moving mountains!" Every syllable uttered from the Spitalian's mouth is pure cynicism. He's clearly taunting the Sublime. Vicarent's face is frozen. His eyes are fixated on his opponent. Not once, do they blink.

"Tell me, Sublime, how did you do it? How did you slay Ganaress? One man, winning single-handedly against a Pheromancer King?" The Spitalian once more bites off a piece of meat from the roast and devours it with a chuckle. Vicarent is silent. His jaw is set and his charred nostrils quiver.

"You are not in Rennes, Spitalian. Brest is not the territory for your displays of arrogance." Vicarent's words are as clear as the day is long. He emphasizes them further by stepping forward towards Bascule.

The Spitalian is unimpressed.

"I have battled Psychokinetics and Pheromancers and survived. I know all of their weaknesses," he says before pausing dramatically. "I, however, do not know anybody on Earth who can kill a Pheromancer King. What is your secret, Sublime?"

Vicarent grimaces. He cannot believe that the man is challenging him, much less in such a manner.

"Have you lost your mind, Spitalian? Spewing such rubbish. What's to keep me from tearing you apart?" Vicarent unties the loop holding his cloak together. The heavy fur falls to the ground.

The grin of the Spitalian turns into an icy grimace. He lunges towards Vicarent.

"A harlot from Bergamo controls the Eden route. The troops of your Cult on the Adriatic are cut off from their supply lines and slowly bleeding to death. It's the Spitalians that are keeping your men together. You're completely dependent on us in Pollen." The Preservist spits in disgust. "Come on, tear me to pieces! Try it! I want to see what cloth the Slayer of Ganaress is cut from."

Bascule reaches out. A tiny black marble balances on his fingertips. The Preservist drops it.

LIGHTS OUT!

Everything goes black. The characters can't see anything. Their senses are useless. The beat of their hearts throbs loudly in their ears. It's deafening. All other sounds seem far away. The temperature drops and they begin to shiver. Something is holding them, attacking them. They hear the sound of tables falling over. They don't know where they are anymore. They collide into other bodies. With every step they either fall or float. Their equilibrium has been knocked off kilter. The air is as wet as water and it floods into their lungs. Are they drowning? What's happening here? Every thought rumbles like cannon fire. They stumble, pick themselves up, and try to hold on to nearby objects. The floor is slick and there are faint moans. How long have they been in here — has it been an hour? A day?

Dark blue stars twinkle in front of their eyes. They dangle from an endless umbilical cord connected to the abyss of a starless universe. There is nothing around them. No light. No purgatory. No God.

SUICIDAL

Has Bascule lost his mind? Why has he gone to such lengths to provoke the Anabaptists? He will not survive a fight against two hundred men. Does he have a death wish or is it all a part of some bigger plan?

INS+Empathy (3) reveals that the Preservist is keenly aware of what he is doing and this is all a part of something he is plotting.

A roll on PSY+Reaction (3) allows the characters to get out of the danger zone in time.

RIFT

If the characters battled Barghest during IN THY BLOOD, they will be able to identify the oppressive darkness that has engulfed them. It is clearly the Rift of a Psychokinetic. But how did these supernatural powers get into the hands of a Preservist? Even fully spore-afflicted Leperos cannot use Phenomena. What was that little black orb balancing on his fingertips?



LIGHTS ON!

Everything is over. The characters' eyes have to adjust to the returning light. The Flask is in shambles. Fallen tables and broken chairs are everywhere. The feast is scattered all over the ground. Anabaptists pick themselves up from the floor. "Demiurge!" an Orgiastic beside them gasps.

"The Sublime!" someone shouts from the left.

Vicarent crawls from out of the wreckage of tables and chairs. A cut has disfigured his cheek. Fresh blood spills from his throat, turning his collar red. Orgiastics try to help him, but he brushes them aside. "Let go of me!" he yells like a raging animal.

"Sublime, we will come together and we will find the Spitalian," a chapel guard calls and storms to the door. Vicarent picks up a chair and hurls it across the room, the wood shattering like a toy. "No," Vicarent clamors. He grabs his bidenhander and climbs across the tables, heading toward the exit. "Fix the inn and go to your posts. The walrus hunt starts tomorrow."

He turns to his men with a disdainful look.

"Today is the Day of Ganaress. The Preservist is mine!"

UNCERTAINTY

The Orgiastics are anxious. What is Vicarent intending to do? Who was the Preservist and why does he act with such hubris? Tronte recommends the characters look for a quiet place to stay while he and his men try to put the Flask back together. No one knows what sinister magic the Preservist has summoned forth. Some are convinced that it was a Rift, but how can a human being have the Phenomena of the Demiurge at his command?

FALSE PRIDE

Bascule's attack in the Flask makes no sense. Did the Preservist come to humiliate the Sublime before an audience of his followers in order to lure him out of his false sense of security? What kind of outcome does he think will result from his course of action? The chapel guards will turn the whole city upside down in order to find the Preservist. Vicarent's pride seems to be his fatal flaw and Bascule has rubbed a handful of salt on the open wound. Does the Preservist know something about Vicarent's victory that the Sublime is hiding from his people?

Could it possibly be connected to the Starfire that the Spitalians were talking about?

SCENE 11: BACK TO THE ISLAND

A miller ferries the characters across the Penfeld in exchange for a small fee. Almost an hour has passed since the incident in the Flask. The events of the day remain inexplicable. The dangers pile up and the secrets remain difficult to decipher. Brest is under assault by foreign powers, and the characters are caught up in a maelstrom that could spell their doom.

I. NEWS

The characters have just unlocked the large sliding door, when all of sudden Ampere comes running towards them.

"She's a fucking Delila! You have brought a whore of deception into this house!" Furiously, he points at Eris, who is crouching in a salvaged turbine at the other end of the hall with her knees drawn to her chest. "I subjected her to a polygraph test. She hasn't given one single truthful response the entire day." He shows the characters his portable polygraph machine and points at the different percentages on the display. "Here, see for yourself. Nothing adds up!"

The characters start to get a picture of the situation. Imbali has left the island and returned to the Balsam House. Soufiane is no longer there either. The Mice have brought Garlene into the house on top of the stilts to look after her. Parel has been taking care of the Scrapper all day and has not left her side once. Ampere and Eris are alone with the characters.

If they inform Ampere about the events of the day, he will listen attentively and then lower his tone so as to make sure the Jehammedan can't hear anything.

If they tell him what Soufiane found out, he can hardly believe his ears. "Did you say there's a Neolibyan who's using a Paler as an attack dog? Is Soufiane certain?" the Chronicler asks.

If the characters try to assure him that the story hasn't been fabricated, Ampere will broodingly run his fingers through his hair. "Why would a Neolibyan be interested in Jehammed's Will?" he mumbles. "Maybe the Paler put him up to it."

If they tell him about their encounters with both the Spitalians and the Anabaptists, the Chronicler will moan to himself, "Both Cults need each other. If this turns into a military conflict, it will spread to Borca and Purgare."

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

If the characters decide to approach the Jehammedan, they will find her huddled on the floor. She has taken off her shoes and rests her head on her knees. She looks at her toes in silence. If the characters ask her why she lied to Ampere, she will smile inwardly. "Because he did not ask the right questions," she answers without looking the characters in the eye.

"You see?" the Chronicler shouts indignantly as his mistrust is confirmed. "Why do we allow her to stay here? There are already too many people who know too much," he protests.

"Because you need me," Eris winks.

If the characters ask her why she is so sure, she will raise her head for the first time since their arrival.

"Because I know secrets about things that no one else outside of my Cult has ever seen."

Ampere groans and rolls his eyes. "Secrets of the Jehammedans? What might that be? Do you want to let us in on how to slaughter a lamb according to your religious beliefs?" he sneers.

"What's the name of the artifact you're looking for?" she asks quietly.

"Jehammed's Will. So what? That's just a name!" Ampere tries to belittle her.

"What about Aries? Is that also another random name in your world of superstitions?" she retorts.

Ampere uneasily rubs his hands together. He has no answer to offer her. The Jehammedan guffaws.

DELILA

If the characters have had contact with Jehammedans in the past, they may roll INT+Legends (2). Women branded Delilas are lepers and outcasts of their tribe. The community of their Cult is forever denied to them. Their crimes are punished with either loss of life or loss of freedom. Those whose fate is the latter are sold to Apocalyptic.

The reason for their exile is hardly ever known. Sometimes it's disloyalty, sometimes disgraceful behavior. Few women who have been expelled from their tribe survive. Distrust follows them wherever they go.

The scarlet letter of their deceit stays with them until they die.

THE SCROLL

Eris reaches into her robe and digs around. She pulls out a piece of parchment that been folded a dozen times. "I promised you knowledge if you agreed to save me," she tells the characters, holding out the small folded honey-brown piece of sheepskin. "I've deciphered the puzzle and, as a result, been cast out of my tribe. What I know is true, true beyond the shadow of a doubt. A truth so undeniable that my shepherd wanted to kill me for it."

It takes a while to unfold the brittle piece of parchment.

It contains 22 symbols. Each character is painstakingly labeled with a name in Hybrispanian script. At first glance, the text is unintelligible.

Ampere stands next to them. His mouth hangs wide open as his eyes wander over the symbols in disbelief. "A Stream code," he says, his voice trembling.

THE STREAM CODE

Ampere falls onto a bench. He is short of breath. When the characters try to make sense of his words, he swallows and takes another look at the folded scroll. "How old is this parchment?" he croaks.

"It has always been in our tribe's possession," Eris says calmly.

Ampere shakes his head. "That's impossible!"

If the characters try to convince the addled Chronicler to tell them about his theories, he will pull himself together and begin to explain.

"A hundred years ago, in the founding days of Justitian and when the Central Cluster was on the rise, the static Stream continuously spat out the same combination of symbols. It was the result of a long process. The databases were fed with information detailing the personalities of the residents of Justitian. Their behavior, preferences, outbursts, inclinations and urges were cataloged," Ampere describes excitedly. "From the existing data sets, we obtained a nationwide network of all existing personality patterns in the population of Justitian. The static Stream reproduced the same series of 22 symbols. It was multiplied a million times and covered all existing citizen databases. Every single person could be assigned to one of these signs." The Chronicler reaches for a glass of water and gulps it down.

"The Apocalypics used the same characters on their tarot deck. All Major Arcana resembled the Stream code to a T," he says frantically.

"We are all descended from the same doctrine," Eris interrupts. "Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It's all the same. Predestined and immutable."

Ampere hurls his glass of water out into the hall and jumps to his feet. A gasp of desperation escapes him, and he makes his way to his bed.

It is late. Too late for forming more theories. After 48 hours, the characters can barely keep their eyes open. They must sleep in order to regain their strength.

II. THE HAUNTING

The character with the highest Primal score wakes up with a dry, scratchy throat. The world around him is dark and the high ceiling in the room arches above him like a steely firmament. His thirst is overwhelming. An incomprehensible moaning pounds within his mind. If the character wants to straighten up, he cannot muster the strength. He is paralyzed. He cannot even clench his fist, let alone get up.

He sees movement from the corner of his eye, but even a simple turn of the head to see what is going on requires immeasurable strength. Rivers of sweat drip down his forehead. The picture is becoming clearer. A great ram, half human, half animal, has buried Eris under his weight. He relentlessly pushes his hips against the screaming Jehammedan, skewering her on his penis. His fleece is steaming from the heat of his wrath.

The woman screams as if she's being torn in two. The ram does not let up, penetrating her deeper and deeper. The character cannot help her; his body is leaden. The beast is ruthless. Its yellow teeth sink into Eris's cheek. Blood flows from where the ram has punctured the skin. Layer after layer, the ram gnaws off the woman's face. It devours morsels of her flesh, tugs at sinews and muscle fibers and licks out her eye sockets until nothing is left but her bare skull.

THE APOCALYPTIC TAROT

All of this cannot be mere coincidence. Apocalyptic characters immediately recognize the symbols on the scroll. They are identical to those of the Major Arcana, which the flocks have been using for over 500 years. Are they all just victims of a memetic indoctrination program? How can the teachings of the Jehammedans and the Apocalypics, two vastly different Cults, overlap? How can it be that the Chroniclers also know what the symbols are and that they found them in a digital computation?

INTIMATE

Play the following scenes, "The Haunting" and "Not a Dream", with one player absent from the table or during a break. For the story to proceed, it is important that only one of your players is versed in the revelations. If more players are familiar with them, it will diminish the experience. The hints emerging from the scenes will help your player elsewhere, but until then, the chosen player must process this new information alone.

NOT A DREAM

The character awakens again. He feels the heat of another body on his. Eris is on top of him. Before he can react, she thrusts her tongue into his mouth. She presses her naked body against him. Her thighs clasp his hips like a vise. She rubs her body against him and digs her fingers into his scalp. She kisses him in a frenzy. Saliva drips from her mouth like water.

"Fuck me," she pants.

Her hands tug at his clothes, trying to undress him. Her short hair is wild like straw. Her body glows as if in a fever and she breathes greedily. She spits in the palm of her hand and rubs the character's cock, preparing him for penetration. Eris trembles. Her nipples are hard. Beads of perspiration trickle down her skin, creating furrows in her dirt-covered body. She stinks of musty sweat and semen.

Eris is in a trance. She leads the character's cock between her thighs, burying it in her lap. Her knees are shaking. Her hips gyrate. All of her movements are pure lust. She bites his lip, licking up the saliva that has collected on the corners of his mouth. Panting, she sucks his tongue. Her buttocks slap rhythmically. Her moans are feral. She wants it all. She looks possessed. Her fiendish eyes search for the character's. Their eyes finally meet.

"Who is the judge of humanity? Who leads the scions from afar and sows his seed in their minds?" she asks as she climaxes. "Aries."

III. THE RECKONING

A scream rouses everyone from their sleep. Poli comes running out of the stilt house with a lit torch. Parel follows closely behind with his flickering flashlight. There is no time to ask questions.

"What the hell was that?" the Salt Wolf yells excitedly. The characters have no idea. However, a look around the room reveals the answer. Ampere is gone.

Where is that damn Chronicler?

They have to find him. The other Mice wake up as Poli runs to the sliding gate. "What's going on?" Eris puts on her robe, also unaware of what has just happened.

There is a second scream. "Damn! That came from the junkyard on the other side of the island," Parel exclaims frantically and runs off. The characters can follow him if they choose. If so, Eris will, in turn, follow them. Poli grabs an iron bar while running to arm himself.

The group runs down to the bridge that leads to the junkyard on the island. Soufiane runs towards them, his face full of horror.

"The Paler!" he gasps breathlessly. "He's taken Ampere hostage and holed himself up in the transformer station. Don't let him get away! I'll get rifles and ammunition." He rushes off in the other direction.

Meanwhile, the characters reach a junkyard flanked by tool sheds. The transformer station that converts and distributes the current arriving from Morlaix rises at the opposite end. The overhead power lines crackle eerily.

"He must be in the switch house!" Parel growls and points to the building in front of them. Crimson lights blink through the darkness of the junkyard, and the characters are able to make out the outlines of the front building. However, they are unfamiliar with the entire area. A roll on INS+Survival (2) reveals that they cannot storm the switch house head-on; otherwise, they would put be putting themselves in a clear line of fire. An accomplished shooter could easily mow them down. They must fight their way through the tool sheds in order to get to the transformer station safely.

Their lights are too risky and would give them away instantly. INS+Perception (3) is needed to navigate in the dark, AGI+Stealth (2) to hide behind the mountains of unsorted scrap, and AGI+Mobility (2) to move along safely. Eris picks up a metal pipe with a sharpened point at its end, arming herself as well.

"Do you see the Paler?" Parel whispers to the characters. They need a successful roll on INS+Perception (4) in order to see anything. Through a gap in a wooden wall they detect movement inside the transformer station.

"What should we do?" Poli asks tensely.

Why is it taking Soufiane so long to bring the rifles?



STORMING

The characters need a battle plan. Their vision is limited, and if they are not careful, they'll put Ampere's life at risk. They can try to make their way from the roofs of the tool sheds to the top of the switch house. Another possibility would be for them sprint to one of the observation towers and take position there. Ask your players to plan out their attack. If the characters try to contact the Paler, they will not get an answer. Where is that rat?

If a character decides to scale to a higher vantage point and use binoculars or the sight on their ranged weapon, they must make a roll on INS+Perception (3). From there, the character is able to see Ampere. The Chronicler is bleeding from an abdomen wound. He is bound and gagged and the Paler is nowhere to be seen. What's going on? The characters may agree to fight their way to Ampere. If they decide to fire indiscriminately into the transformer station, no one will return their fire. Has the Paler laid a trap for them? What is he waiting for?

Ampere raises his eyes as he spies the characters in the shadows. He tries to shout, but the gag acts as a muffle. He breathes frantically, shaking his head as if to warn the characters. Parel and Poli sneak around to the left. Eris is with the characters. They must roll INS+Survival (3) successfully to detect any tripwires in time. But there is nothing. No traps. Ampere squirms as he tries to sit up. Blood runs down from his nose and he snorts angrily.

Maybe the Paler has taken up position as a sniper, and they are marching straight into his crosshairs? The characters can try to protect themselves with metal sheets and plates. They edge forward, hiding behind their portable cover. Only two more steps. Nothing happens. There is no grenade, no barrage of bullets.

A quick flick of the wrist undoes the gag.

"The Leopard!" Ampere moans.

INITIATIVE

Encourage the players to take the initiative in this scene by properly planning the storming of the switch house. It is a matter of life and death, and they are up against a powerful opponent. The Paler has already gotten hold of them once, and they barely got away unscathed. If they let panic get the best of them while trying to recover Ampere, they will find themselves faced with potential annihilation. Even if the characters outnumber the Paler, he still has a significant advantage in the dark. Not to mention, their ally is in his hands.



BITTER TRUTH

Ampere is right. The Leopard has duped them. They do not know how long he has been working for Shamash; however, it is clear that he has been following them from the beginning.

It will be impossible for them to catch up to the launch. At the jetties, there are only pontoons, and Parel's diving gondola Fiancé is on the dry dock of the island. Who can they confide in? Who would be able to help them in a situation like this? Time is of the essence. The characters must make a decision quickly.

BETRAYED

"Soufiane!" the Chronicler coughs. "He attacked me!" his voice cracks. "The star! The disc!"

Parel cuts through Ampere's shackles. He stumbles forward, holding his stomach. "He lured you away so he could steal the artifacts!"

Another scream echoes across the island. This time, it comes from the direction of the warehouse. The group runs across the junkyard and back to the bridge. They hear the sounds of an engine. Soufiane's launch is heading out onto the water. Monia comes running towards them screaming. Panic-stricken and wide-eyed, she falls to her knees in the mud.

"He has Weilam! He said he'll shoot him if we try to follow him!" she bitterly sobs.

"No! No! No!" Parel mumbles, banging his fists against the bridge pier.

"He's been spying on us all this time," Ampere concludes. "He tricked you into coming to the soup kitchen. He lied to the Chapel Guard, telling them the story about Spitfire tanks exploding. He showed you the footprint in the alley. The Leopard is working with Shamash," he says cynically, "and now he has our artifacts."

"Fuck the damn artifacts! He has Weilam, you heartless robot!" Parel is beside himself. He punches Ampere, sending the wounded Chronicler to the ground.

"What in the hell have you brought into my life?" the Scrapper yells at the characters accusingly. He grabs Monia by the arm and pulls her towards the warehouse.

PERSECUTION

The characters have to take care of Ampere and patch up his wound. The cut is not particularly deep and no internal organs have been damaged. Still, the Chronicler is depending on their help. Eris assists them and looks after Ampere. Weiland's kidnapping leaves the Mice shaken. Parel gets himself ready. Wherever the characters go, he will follow them. He wants to settle the score with Soufiane. He orders the Mice to wait on the island, making sure not to let Garlene, who is still in a coma, out of their sight.

SCENE 12: THREE SWALLOWS

In the Tusk. Lavender dozes off in a chair behind a counter in the foyer. If the characters shake the man awake, he will wince and then straighten his leather cap.

"Why are you disturbing me at this hour, you idiots?" His mood is shitty.

If the characters ask for the three Swallows, he will sniff sullenly.

"What do you want from them? They are decent guys. Good guests."

If the characters explain that they made plans to meet them here, he will scratch his beard, still half asleep. "Third floor, sixth room. Just don't make any trouble, or I'll call the chapel guards on you!" he warns them tersely. He pulls down his cap and a moment later, he's snoring again.

The Tusk lies in a hushed silence. The majority of the guests are sleeping off the previous day. Every step the characters take up the wooden stairs creaks all too loudly.

If they stop to listen at the sixth door, they won't hear any noise coming from within.

"Maybe they're still sleeping?" Parel mumbles, and then examines the lock more closely. "I can crack that."

With three quick movements, he picks the lock. The characters cautiously open the door. Warm, stale air greets them and the scent of chicken broth lingers in the room. The blinds are drawn. It's dark and not a sound can be heard. If they cross the short corridor and enter the sleeping quarters, they will stumble upon the remains of a grotesque battlefield. Three men lay dead on the beds, their faces melted and disfigured beyond recognition. Their flesh hangs in strips where their cheeks once were, as if someone has scalded them with boiling water. Here and there, the muscle fibers have been cleanly peeled away, and their bare bones emerge.

"What happened to them?" Parel asks cautiously as he runs his flashlight across the faces of the deceased.

If the characters want to search for clues, a successful Combination on INT+ Science (2) and PSY+Cunning (1) is necessary. Hot water could not have inflicted such wounds. Furthermore, the beds are dry. In order to disfigure a person like this, it would require several minutes of dousing them with boiling liquid. Not to mention, the screams of agony that would accompany such an act of torture would have surely awakened the whole inn. The corpses show no other traces of bodily harm. No shots or puncture wounds. Quite the opposite, the whole thing must have happened rather fast. The three Swallows didn't have a chance to react. Something must have surprised them in their sleep. What weapon could exact such cruel wounds?

If the characters want to continue exploring, Parel will go back to the door in order to keep an eye on the hallway. Upon forcing open the desk drawer, the characters find 3,000 bundled Drafts. Below them is a piece of paper with some notes scribbled on it. They read like a grocery list. Next to the goods, there are markets all over Briton that supposedly have the items in stock. Contact details of Scrappers from Saint-Brieuc and merchants from Rennes are also noted. The murder does not look like a robbery. Nothing in the room seems to be damaged. It looks more like an act of revenge. Or maybe someone wanted to cover their tracks and get rid of witnesses. The backpacks of the Apocalyptics are open. If the characters browse through the contents, they discover a box of rolled tobacco leaves similar to the ones that Soufiane smokes. They also find another notebook. It contains the name of Reuters, the postrider who takes care of errands in the city. A neat list of dates from 2597 starting from October and going back to January is included as well. A roll on PSY+Cunning (2) is necessary to make the connection. It looks as if the three Swallows hired the postrider to deliver goods when they were running errands for Shamash. This must mean that the postrider knows where Shamash is.

CLUES

Going over the clues that they have, they realize that if they want to find Soufiane, they are going to have to track down the three Apocalyptics in the Tusk.

They have agreed to meet at six o'clock in the morning. The characters have less than an hour. What awaits them there? Another trap? They must be prepared for the worst.

DISTRACTION TACTICS

Has someone fabricated the story of the three Swallows in order to lure the characters into another trap? Was the operation canceled after Soufiane had successfully stolen the artifacts? Why did someone find it necessary to execute the Apocalyptics? Did they know too much?

The characters are caught in a web of intrigue. Does the fate of the three Swallows await them as well?

CORPSES

If the characters try to leave immediately, Parel will stop them. "What about the bodies? If Lavender finds them, he will think it was us. We have to wake him up or call in the Chapel Guard," the Salt Wolf says prudently. The characters must come up with a solution and act fast; otherwise, they will become a target of the investigation themselves.

I. THE POSTRIDER

Parel knows the postrider. "Reuters has his stable in Unir, near Brotherhood Square." The characters must track the man down before he starts his shift.

They run. A dense bank of fog engulfs Brest in its morning hour. The gray haze floods the streets, blurring the contours of the city. Without stopping, they hotfoot it to Unir. Parel's stamina fails him as his age catches up to him. They reach the stable of the rider, panting for breath. A man with a flat flax cap and a heavy bag around his neck is leading a horse out onto the pavement.

"Reuters!" Parel manages to shout with his last breath before a coughing spell brings him to his knees. The characters must take over the dialogue while the Salt Wolf catches his breath.

"Should I deliver something? Twenty Drafts per courier ride within the city limits, two hundred for deliveries to Rennes," the postrider says indifferently and holds out his hand. If the characters ask the man if he has ever delivered goods for the Apocalypics at the Tusk, Reuters will look at them as if they have lost their mind.

"Ever heard of confidentiality?" he asks indignantly and saddles up.

"Reuters, please!" Parel can hardly breathe.

The characters have to stop the postrider from leaving; otherwise, they will not get any further. A successful roll on CHA+Expression (3) or PSY+Domination (3) is necessary to either appeal to his sense of reason or employ intimidation tactics.

"Yes, I have provided courier services for the Swallows. So what?" he says irritably, trying to get his horse to move. They must grab the bridle if they want to keep him from leaving. "It's none of my business what people send!" he says, his mood turning sour.

If they ask Reuters if he knows a Neolibyan, he'll grunt from his horse: "What do you want from the man? He pays good money for my services." If the characters try to persuade him to reveal where Shamash is staying, the postrider will refuse stubbornly.

"Please, Reuters!" Parel can hardly breathe. "The Neolibyan is out to get the King. He is planning on murdering Oppolus. He's going to do it tomorrow during the ceremony on the Field of Victors!" the Salt Wolf pleads, resorting to an outright lie. "We are the only ones who can stop him, and if you help us, you'll be crowned a hero!"

Reuters looks stunned. He seems to take to the idea rather quickly. The postrider dismounts and unfolds his city map. "We're here," he taps the spot. "The Neolibyan has his quarters there, beyond the furrier's district in the eastern foothills of L'Arc." He spreads his fingers and measures the approximate distance. "You'll make it there in half an hour. Fifteen minutes if you run."

Parel rolls his eyes and takes off, his chest rattling.

II. THE DWELLING

They reach Shamash's alleged residence shortly after seven o'clock. Parel is exhausted and struggles to keep up in the final meters before they arrive. His hands clench his chest, and he gasps as if at any moment he could suffer from circulatory collapse.

The roadstead offers the characters a good view of the isolated house. Upon circling it, they do not see any movement. The windows are boarded up save for one upstairs, and the walls are covered in sheets of corrugated metal. The characters must climb onto the roof of an adjacent shed if they want to peek inside.

The air is pure. No fishermen are going about their work here. All of Brest has stopped working during the holidays, losing themselves instead in sleep.

"Go. I'll keep an eye out. If anything moves, I'll scream fire," Parel pants in a strained voice.

The characters run across the street. With BOD+Athletics (2) they make it onto the roof. With AGI+Stealth (2), they can do so without being noticed. If they look inside the house, they do not detect any movement in the darkness. They are only able to discern

that the house probably consists of a main room spanning two stories with a gallery on its upper floor. If they pry open the window, they can reach the gallery.

BASE OF OPERATIONS

Inside, dust drifts to the floor. The gallery is covered in perforated metal. A metallic sound echoes with each step the characters take. From up here, they can see the lower room in its entirety. Nothing but empty beds and leftovers. There is nobody here. A single ladder leads down a steep incline.

Worktables line the walls on the ground floor. It looks like the alcove of a Chron-icler. Nothing here is remotely reminiscent of the dwelling of a Neolibyan. No luxury, no bling. Instead, gauges flash and strange antennas whirr. On a green screen, a flickering line rotates clockwise over a grid. Radar? A rattling power module feeds a cable duct that has been wound up to a spotlight on the ceiling. The characters can turn on the light and look around. The spotlight illuminates the room, revealing meter-high walls completely covered in measurement data and nautical charts.

If the characters try to make sense of the images, a Combination of INT+Artifact Lore (4) and INT+Science (3) must succeed in order to determine the significance of the information. A series of measurements shows data for annual temperature averages. The curve ascends, hitting its highest point in the summer of 2597. A nautical chart next to it provides information on ocean currents in the Celtic Sea and in the Atlantic. Arrows indicate flow directions. A large map depicts the entire west flank of Franka including Britain and Gaelic. About sixty or seventy miles from the coast of Briton, in the middle of the ocean, a nail juts out from the wall marking a point northwest of Brest. Three straight red lines of thread connect it to three other locations that have also been marked with nails on the map. Aquitaine. Bath. London. Next to each city, someone has scribbled coordinates on the map.

Was Shamash trying to locate something in the ocean? If so, what are the temperature ranges and flow analyses for? There are no definite answers.

On a small slate, dates have been noted. 2579, 2588, and 2597. Each of them is followed by the same mathematical formula, the individual numbers of each year producing the same sum. 1616. It is the code that Ampere was talking about. The characters may continue to look around. Laying on a table is the strange spear Shamash showed them. Next to it is the stone spearhead. It has been split in half. On the inside of the stone is a meticulously engraved furrow that is an exact copy of the shape of the outer engraving. A mold for the strange symbol is created by putting the two halves together. Did Shamash pour the symbol himself, or was it already in the spearhead? The characters do not know.

The state of the residence suggests that Shamash has already packed up and left. Did he find what he was looking for? Why did he need the disc and the star? Did he assemble Jehammed's Will? Is the peculiar symbol from the broken spearhead the missing piece? Before they have the chance to ponder these questions any further, a shattering wail comes from the street. Parel!

IN THE FOG

Outside. The scream came from the roadstead. They see Parel wading knee-deep through the mist in the still waters of the bay. Something is floating towards the Scrapper. It looks like a body. The characters get closer. Parel pushes forward. His whimpers of disbelief waft across the waters. The Salt Wolf reaches for the body and pulls it close to him. His wails send shivers up their spines. It is Weilam. Parel collapses into the water and hugs the dead boy. His sobs are muffled by the fog. "Why?"

The characters have reached their ally in the water. The shallow waves carry Weilam's body, his corpse floating on its surface. He was shot at close range.

CLUES

The base of operations is full of clues the characters must decipher. A successful Combination on INT+Artifact Lore (4) and INT+Science (3) yields information.

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The nautical gauges leave no doubt in the characters' minds. Shamash is aiming for something that is directly linked to the three locations on the map.

1 TRIGGER: The flow charts may indicate that the object does not have a fixed position and is moving around in the Atlantic.

3+TRIGGER: Code 1616 must have some special significance. The years and temperature ranges as well. Can the object only be located at a certain time and under specific weather conditions?

DISCARDED

Their enemies disposed of the hostage and disappeared. Grief gnaws away at the Salt Wolf. He pulls Weilam's battered body onto a raft so he can bring him back to his island. For now, the characters must continue without the Salt Wolf.

ALTERNATIVES

The walrus hunt is one of the highlights of the Day of Ganaress. Even though the characters may not be celebrating right now, the big hunt offers them countless opportunities to get acquainted with both the hunters and the king.

As a game master, you are free to use the walrus hunt earlier in the scenario. This will allow the characters to earn the respect of the hunters, expand their network, and display their skills.

The walrus hunt takes center stage over the next few days, commencing every dawn at L'Arc harbor. Throughout the day, different competitions take place ranging from races and harpoon throwing to jousts with blunt lances. Close combat with walrus bulls takes place on the islands in the Atlantic. These events offers countless ways for the characters to win allies amongst the populace.

SCENE 13: WALRUS HUNT

They return to L'Arc harbor, which has changed significantly since they were last there. Hundreds of hunters from all over Briton have gathered here. Drafts change hands as jet skis are rented, motor boats equipped and harpoons fixed. The first round is a race to the Atlantic. Whoever leaves the roadstead first can claim their prize and the title of fastest hunter. Then it is on to the cliffs and out into the sea to pursue the big bulls.

If the characters want to search the roadstead for clues or chase after Soufiane's launch, they need to do so now. The Leopard has a head start of several hours, but assuming he picked up Shamash and got rid of the hostage first, he may not be too far.

I. UNEXPECTED HELP

Oppolus immerses himself in the crowd. The king walks in the company of his people, making his way to the harbor to take part in the hunt. While pushing through the huddled masses, the characters spot the impressive hunter. Is there a chance that he can help them? They have to get to him.

When the king sees them, he orders a group of warriors to make room for the newcomers. "What a lovely morning! The view is poor. As it should be. The hunt could, otherwise, hardly be considered a challenge." He showers them with questions. "Have you recovered from the festivities? Is the young woman doing well? Are you going to hunt with us?"

If the characters tell him about their recent encounters, his face will turn to stone. He immediately waves them off to the side so no one can hear. Then he questions them frantically about the events. When he hears that one of Parel's Mice has paid with his life, heavy furrows suddenly line his otherwise untroubled face.

"Take a boat or some jet skis," he urges them. "I'll inform a dozen of my men. They will assist you with the search. Was it a launch, you said? Those are rather fast, but we'll be able to catch up with them." He immediately gathers together a group of wild hunters covered in blue and yellow paint. Without wasting time on explanations, he orders them to search the bay and the Atlantic for the launch. The hunters mount their jet skis without a moment's delay. Engine after engine revs up. Oppolus himself hurries to one of the machines and jumps onto the saddle. "Go!" he shouts to the characters and starts the engine.

OUT INTO THE GRAY SEA

The characters have either mounted jet skis or boarded one of the motorboats. They sweep across the roadstead into the thick fog. Behind them, hundreds of engines drone and race past them. The other hunters have not been told about the search for the launch and Oppolus' sudden departure signals the start of the walrus hunt. Fountains splash in the air, settling back down on the surface of the water as glistening curtains.

The waters of the roadstead are tranquil. To keep a motorboat or jet ski at top speed without being toppled, successful rolls on AGI+Navigation (2) are required. The characters race past the cliffs of the bay. In the dense fog, approaching pinnacles are difficult to see. The piloting character must succeed in a roll on INS+Perception (3) to see them in time, thus allowing the character to circumnavigate them. If the Perception roll fails, a roll on AGI+Navigation (4) must succeed in order to avoid collision at the last moment. If the roll fails, the vehicle will crash into a pinnacle or capsize.

Onwards they go. The sounds of the engines are the only thing the characters can hear. A cool wind hits them. Oppolus is somewhere ahead of them. The cliffs disap-

pear behind gray veils, and the bay widens, which can only mean one thing: They are approaching the Atlantic. The view becomes clearer and the water more turbulent. The ocean is upon them. Two jet skis pass them by with a motorboat trailing directly behind. Keeping control of the vehicle becomes more and more challenging. The difficulty for a successful roll on AGI+Navigation increases to (3). All of a sudden, a flock of screeching seagulls sails overhead. A wall of smoke rises like a curtain as they race out onto the gray ocean.

II. THE CLOUD

The waves of the Atlantic are tumultuous. Hundreds of cheering hunters speed by on watercrafts, dashing off in all directions. On a boat as swift as an arrow, they recognize Ghilvern and Halvert. The brothers are heading south. The sky is cloudy and overcast, the sun's rays barely penetrating through the veil of gray clouds. Let the characters make roll INS+Perception (2). If successful, a character will notice a black cloud billowing over the open sea on the northwestern horizon. Oppolus is far ahead, but suddenly he curves sharply, throwing up a foaming fountain of water behind his craft. The king slows down and stares towards the northwest. When the characters reach him, they realize that he is watching the cloud with a look of consternation upon his face. "That cannot be!" he exclaims and suddenly turns, over-revving his engine. The jet ski leaps forward and crashes through the waves, heading straight towards the cloud.

LAND IN SIGHT

Oppolus pushes his vehicle to the max. The characters, in turn, must handle their engines roughly as well if they want to keep up with the king. What is that cloud? The waves are getting rougher. The ocean is a roaring beast.

Black cliffs rise in the distance. A rugged island juts out of the wild waters. Is it Ushant, the island where Halvert was stationed? This is obviously where the cloud originated.

Oppolus forms a long curve and approaches the island from the southeast. The waves suddenly grow much calmer. The characters see the silhouettes of a boathouse with its adjacent tower. The buildings are in flames. Who in God's name lives out here? A vanguard of the army?

III. USHANT IN FLAMES

The characters reach a shallow bay. Oppolus stalls his machine and plunges into the water, harpoon in hand. Halfway to the beach, he turns back to the characters. "Be careful and make sure to arm yourselves!"

The boathouse blazes fiercely. Large support beams break and crash into the water. The characters reach Oppolus. The king's hunting instincts have taken over. Like a predator, he analyzes the tracks in the wet sand.

"Four attackers," he says. "The tracks are from last night." With a groan, the roof of the boathouse gives in, and a tongue of flame shoots up with a crackling sound.

If the characters ask the king who lives on the island, he first answers "Anabaptists." Then, "My son."

If they try to find out whom he means, he will simply say "Barringer." He climbs up the bank to look beyond the boathouse.

BLIGHT

As soon as the characters have scaled the steep embankment, they are met with a horrid stench. Oppolus covers his nose and mouth with his arm.

The characters see a lifeless Anabaptist in the grass in front of them, his body covered in festering blisters. His swollen tongue hangs from his mouth. He is as bearded and unkempt as they remember Halvert and his men from the Flask. Another strange scent mixes with that of the corpse. It smells like garlic or mustard.

Dune grass blows in the wind. Oppolus rushes past, following a trail that leads through the terrain of marram. They find more corpses, in a state no less horrible. Some have split skulls or gunshot wounds from bullets that were fired point-blank. A massacre took place here.

"Do you think the Neolibyan was responsible for this?" Oppolus asks weakly. He does not wait for an answer, instead, he dashes along a trail and heads towards a grassy knoll. The silhouette of a jagged stone shrine is unmistakable against the backdrop of the sky. The king's gaze sweeps over the tall grass. He pushes the blades aside with his harpoon. Oppolus is obviously looking for something. If the characters try to find out what he is searching for, the king will ignore them, not allowing himself to be distracted. He suddenly freezes.

The harpoon falls from his hands, and he dives into the straw-colored grass. He uses his body to shield the man lying on the ground.

"Barringer," Oppolus shakes the man. "Barringer, do you hear me, lad?"

The characters approach him.

"My son," says the king. The man is not moving. Three bullet holes gape in his chest and his eyelid flicker. "Starfire," he whispers almost inaudibly.

With a trembling hand, Oppolus strokes his tattooed forehead and chestnut-colored hair.

"Help him," the king implores. "I beg you. Before you do anything else, help my son!"

The voice of the king shakes with agitation. Tears gather in the corners of his eyes.

STARFIRE

It is almost a miracle that Barringer is still alive. He has suffered serious wounds and severe blood loss. The characters have to stabilize and bandage him; otherwise, they will not be able to transport him. To bring him to the Balsam House in Brest, they first have to stanch the bleeding.

While one character tends to Barringer and dresses his wounds, the others can look around or question Oppolus about the island and his son.

"The Starfire," Oppolus says. "The greatest relic of the Anabaptists was hidden here. Vicarent brought it here and Barringer was its keeper. It's been burning up there in the temple for the last twelve years."

If one of the characters inspects the stone circle, they will find two more bodies. The Anabaptists lie on the ground, their bodies twisted and riddled with bullets. An empty iron pan attached to a wooden trestle with two heavy anchor chains dangles between the pillars. Eerie silence fills the shrine. The only sound that can be heard is the chains creaking softly in the wind.

If the characters wish to find out more about the Starfire, they must ask the king.

"It brought Vicarent to victory," he says. "The Starfire was his ruse. He killed Ganaress by bathing his blade in the fire and sharpening it on the stone. With the power of the Demiurge, he was able to defeat the Pheromancer King."

If they ask Oppolus why Vicarent hid the Starfire, the king will look at them confused.

"He hid it so that nobody can misuse it." Then he points to the dead lying in the grass. "They all vowed to protect it with their lives. Now look at them! They have been slaughtered."

WEAPONS OF WAR

If the characters examine the corpses, they will discover traces of chemical weapons with a successful roll INT+Science (3). Someone took the men down with poison gas and then shot or stabbed them at close range. A bright yellow grenade shell lying in the grass confirms the mustard gas attack. Spitalians are the only ones who could have committed this massacre.



DENOUEMENT

The morning has left six Anabaptists dead and one badly wounded. For the characters, it has Preservist written all over it. Vega, Bascule, Vatenguerre, and whoever else is conspiring with them are responsible for this cruel slaughter. So this is their way of negotiating with the Anabaptists? Their mission was cold-blooded murder. Everything they did in Brest was nothing more than a facade concocted to spur confusion. Ushant was always their goal. The whole thing is like a declaration of war against the Anabaptists. When word of this massacre reaches Briton, the unfathomable consequences will follow. What do the Spitalians want with the Starfire? What are their plans? What use does the alleged Primer matter have for them that would justify such a heinous attack? The characters have so many questions and so few answers.

Where are the Preservists now? What else are they planning? What about Leviathanics? Did the exploration of the sixth Chakra have anything at all to do with their plan? What happened to the idol bearer Malinesse? What danger would she really pose if she contracted Leviathanics?

Shamash, the Paler, and Soufiane have used the confusion unleashed by recent events to make their escape. Is Jehammed's Will lost? Will they be able to exact revenge for Weilam?

The characters have to go back to Brest. They must warn the Anabaptists and rescue Barringer. They also need to consult with Ampere so they can learn more about the unusual maps they found at Shamash's center of operations. If they are able to solve the riddle, they will be that much closer to locating the Neolibyan and his henchmen and bringing them to justice.

ACT RUDE AWAKENING

SCENE 14: BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

It is already late afternoon when the characters reach Brest. Oppolus intercepted the hunters at sea and sent them ahead to close the city gates. They are also to alert everyone within the city walls. Unrest has spread everywhere. The Brest Guard is preparing itself for war. Every Britoni old enough for combat arms themselves to the teeth and awaits the king's command. The Chapel Guard patrols all of the quarters, breaking into houses and ransacking basements looking for any clue as to the whereabouts of the Spitalians.

Oppolus has entrusted the characters with the responsibility of watching over his severely wounded foster son. He begs them to bring Barringer to the Balsam House so he can go to the castle and consult with Vicarent and Yasen.

I. BY A THREAD

When the characters enter the Balsam House with the seriously injured man, a susuration travels through the ranks of the Ascetics present. Medicine women run to Barringer and place him on a bed. They anoint him before washing the dried blood from his wounds and putting hot stones on his body.

Imbali appears on a balcony upstairs, drawn by the sudden noise. She looks down into the room below and when she recognizes the characters among the Ascetics, she raises her eyebrows in disbelief.

"Get him up to my room," she orders the servants. She motions with her head to the characters, instructing them to join her.

Imbali's witch's kitchen on the floor above is a small room filled with many a potent thing. Snake baskets and jars full of poison are piled up to the ceiling. There are vials of oil and canisters with salves and healing ointments inside. Glasses with dried herbs and healing earth line wooden shelves. It looks like an attic of yesteryear.

Barringer lies motionless on top of a round table in the middle of the room.

Imbali examines the injured man.

"Spitalians?" she asks soberly. If the characters confirm, she will nod sympathetically and put her hand on Barringer's chest. "They have poisoned him. His soul is already clenched between Ammit's teeth. She's dragging him down into her kingdom."

If the characters ask if she can save him, she will hesitate to give a response. She pulls out a sharp, richly decorated bone from a casket on her desk. She makes a small cut in his upper arm. A bead of blood wells up. Imbali catches the droplet with her fingertip and licks it off.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Mission Concorde has entered into its second phase. Bascule and Vega now have the Starfire in their possession. What do they want with it? They cannot possibly try to return to Rennes. The streets are teeming with Anabaptists and Britoni are combing through the forests and patrolling the coasts.

The Red Pack flees while Vatenguerre stays behind to destroy the evidence at the cottage in Godasse.

"Only an Imiut ritual can bring him back to our world," she says uncomfortably.

The door to Imbali's room flies open. Vicarent is standing in the doorway, shaking with rage. He reaches the table in three long strides and kneels beside his brother. He takes Barringer's weary hand in his own and kisses it. With his other ironclad hand, he caresses his brother's temple. A moment of silence passes, the titan is completely still. Suddenly, he whirls around. He grabs the Anubian by the throat and smashes her against a wall.

"You snake woman! You will save my brother!" the Sublime growls.

Vicarent's grip tightens around her neck. The sinewy woman gasps. She jerks free, pushing Vicarent's arm away as if it were nothing more than rubber. The Sublime is completely dumbfounded. He cannot believe that the woman has such strength. A scream of anger hurls from his mouth as he buries his fist into the wooden wall, leaving a hole behind.

"Of course," Imbali says calmly, slicking back her hair. "He's the only one worth saving," she adds contemptuously.

Vicarent ignores her. He has turned his attention elsewhere. He somberly plants himself in front of the characters.

"God have mercy upon you if you should keep anything from me. Do not just stand around there like cowards! Find the Spitalians and bring them to me! And make sure that you keep them alive!"

Without a single word of gratitude, he storms out of the room. Out in the hallway, he gathers his men. "Follow me. We will search Godasse!"

Imbali turns back to Barringer. Grimly, she tells the characters of her fears: "The Sublime is foolish. He is blinded by his anger. If his brother dies, Briton will drown in blood. I need three dog furs. The furs must be large enough to cover Barringer's entire body." She looks directly at the characters. "Otherwise, he will not survive."

DEADLOCK

The characters must do something, but it is impossible for them to be in two places at once. Either they procure the dog furs, or they help search for the Spitalians. They may be the only ones who know about the secret hideout in Godasse. They can try to guide the chapel guards there or they can settle the score with the Preservists on their own.

II. ALIVE

If the characters want to hunt the Preservists, they have to return to Godasse. With a successful roll on INS+Orienteering (3), they will remember the path on the other side of the bridge behind Miller's Lane. After passing over a dozen convoluted intersections, they see the cottage. The backyard is deserted, and the windows are barricaded. There is nobody around.

If they decide to storm it at once, they will instantly smell something burning. At the end of a long hallway, someone is setting fire to Vega's headquarters.

A shadow flits through the room. Flames crackle.

Vatenguerre is in the process of covering his tracks. A roll on AGI+Stealth (4) must succeed in order to sneak into the living room without getting caught. If the roll fails, Vatenguerre will react immediately. A canister of Petro flies in the direction of the characters. It bounces against the doorframe, spilling its contents onto the floor. The liquid spreads quickly. A blue tongue of flame springs up from the oil film, and the next moment, bright flames are dancing before their eyes.

Without thinking, the Preservist runs up a flight of stairs to the first floor.

The characters must jump through the blazing wall of fire if they want to catch Vatenguerre. A roll on INT+Focus (2) or INS+Primal (2) must succeed in order to overcome their fear of the fire. If the roll fails, that character must look for another way to get up there.

A DOG'S LIFE

How much is a human life worth? Three dogs' lives? Corentin and Maelle are the only people around who breed dogs, and theirs are the last specimens of their kind. In Briton, there are no Gendos, and the Imiut ritual only works with the skins of animals that are related to jackals.

Damn, where are they supposed to get 30.000 Drafts?

OPTIONAL

The following scenes, "Alive" and "The Compound", are optional. Decide if you want to let the characters join the hunt for Vatenguerre or send them to the Compound to negotiate with the breeders. The group may decide to split up so they can assist the Anabaptists in their search for clues and get the skins for the ritual. Both scenes impact how the Anabaptists will behave towards the characters later.

If the characters decide not to do either of the alternatives, they will continue on to Brotherhood Square in the evening. (Scene 15: Declaration of War).

Should this be the case, a band of chapel guards will apprehend Vatenguerre, and Imbali will go looking for the dogskins on her own.

TOUGH AS NAILS

Vatenguerre is an exceptional fighter and elite soldier. The confrontation with the Preservist is anything but a walk in the park. If the characters are reckless or overconfident, Vatenguerre will do everything in his power to separate them from each other and take them out one by one.

VATENGUERRE COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 9W / 18 Ego Points

ATTACK: Carbon-Steel Knife, 9D, Distance 1m, Damage 5, Smooth Running (2T); Automatic Pistol, 8D, Distance (10/40), Damage 7, Smooth Running (3T); (3x) Smoke Grenades, 10D, Distance (10/40)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 9D; Ranged Combat active (walk in a crouch), Mobility 8D; Mental 9D

SPECIAL: BOD+Athletics 10D; AGI+Stealth 7D; PSY+Cunning 7D; INS+Perception 9D

POTENTIALS: Preservalis 3; Danger Sense 2; Marathon 2

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Gas mask; Armored Preservist suit, Armor 3

CONSTITUTION: 16 (Trauma: 9)

EQUIPMENT: (3x) Adrenaline Injector, +1D6 Ego

UPWARDS

If they storm up the stairs, they will be greeted with a hail of bullets. Vatenguerre uses his slight head start to unload his pistol on the characters. Three rounds, nothing more. Then he runs. A ladder leads up to the attic. The Preservist jumps up part of the way and climbs the rest of it within two breaths' time. Before the characters are able to reach him, he kicks away the ladder. They must catch the wooden structure and put it back into position if they want to get to the attic.

IN THE ATTIC

As soon as the characters reach the attic, they are met with Vatenguerre's answer to their lack of caution. He lights a smoke grenade, filling the attic with white phosphorous. Dense clouds of fog hiss from the grenade and blind the characters. A roll on INS+Perception (5) is necessary for them to get their bearings. If Vatenguerre decides to attack them here, they will encounter massive difficulties trying to defend themselves. The smoke is thick, pushing the oxygen in the room further and further away. Breathing becomes a torturous endeavor. The Preservist isn't worried in the least. Situations like this are what his gas mask is for. Where is the bastard? A skylight creaks at four o'clock. Hazy rays of light pierce through the smoke and a silhouette scurries out.

ROOFTOP

A merciless pursuit. The characters climb through the hatch out onto the rooftop. The way back down is steep and easily more than ten meters. Rotten roof tiles crash down into the backyard, shattering loudly as they hit the ground. Fire is blazing out from the barricaded windows, eating its way up to the top floor and painting the adjacent street a wrathful orange. Black clouds of smoke drift along the tops of the neighboring buildings, making the roofs invisible. Vatenguerre runs along them and with an extraordinary jump, he sails several meters through the air and crashes onto the roof of the opposite house. The characters have to act before he gets away. If they try to follow him, they have to roll on BOD+Athletics (5) in order to bridge the abyss between the houses in a single bound.

They can also try to knock him down with a targeted shot. The difficulty of a shoulder or leg shot increases in this chaotic situation by (2).

Vatenguerre shimmies along a gable and tries to pull himself up by holding onto a cast-iron Anabaptist cross. If the characters hit him now, he will fall straight into the dead-end street below. The fall will leave him with several broken bones.

If the shot misses, the chase will continue. The Preservist gets further ahead. The characters must succeed in both BOD+Athletics and BOD+Stamina rolls in the next round of combat to catch up with the fugitive.

MELEE

If the characters manage to get to Vatenguerre, he will mercilessly engage in close combat with them. He wields his black carbon-steel knife masterfully. His feints, lunges, and attacks are deadly. His agility on the slippery rooftops is impressive. The characters are dealing with a very dangerous enemy whose cunning should not be underestimated. If the characters are careless, the Preservist replies with a pistol salvo. He will try to lure the characters into a melee and then hastily shoot them point-blank with his pistol.

THE END OF THE CHASE

Vatenguerre is incapacitated. Their strength in numbers has saved the characters from the worst. It is time to tie up the Preservist and hand him over to the Anabaptists as quickly as possible. They must continue. Nothing about their muddled situation has changed. Weiland's death has yet to be vindicated, and Shamash has their artifacts. He is getting further and further away with every uselessly passing hour.

III. THE COMPOUND

"How can you ask such a thing of us?" The faces of Corentin and Maelle are aghast. The elderly dog breeders have invited the characters into their small kitchen. Chopped chicken feet simmer in a cauldron — food for the dogs.

"You cannot just trade a dog's life for a human's!" Maelle says indignantly.

The couple cannot be convinced. Even if Barringer's life is in danger, sacrificing their dogs for some strange ritual is out of the question.

"A dog shows you a type of love no human ever will. You can beat them, kick them, or shoo them away, and still they sleep at your feet, granting you forgiveness in an instant," Corentin explains.

An adult setter lays his muzzle on the leg of a character and lets out a short yelp. With eyes the color of hazelnuts, it looks up at the character as if waiting to be petted. A handful of smaller dogs frolic around, running in between the character's feet.

"Look into their eyes! Do you really want to slaughter those innocent animals?" Corentin's cheeks become flushed. He fills a small glass with distillate and gulps it down. His wife cries softly.

The characters must be extremely persuasive if they hope to get what they came for. They have to tread carefully, making sure to use the right words. If they try to argue that Briton will find itself in grave danger if the dog breeders refuse to make this sacrifice, Corentin will grumble: "Fuck you! Why are our dogs responsible for war and peace? They did not kill those Anabaptists on the island!"

The characters must show their empathy if they want to move forward. A cooperative roll on INS+Empathy (3) is necessary in order to make the spouses sympathetic to Barringer's situation. The characters must collect (20) successes to get Maelle on their side.

"Maybe, they're right. If we are in a position to prevent the worst from happening ..." Corentin's wife falters and swallows hard. "Then, at least, we know that it was our dogs that prevented a wretched fate from befalling our land."

Corentin stares in disbelief at his wife. The characters have gotten to her. Minutes pass. Neither one of them speaks. Suddenly, he reaches for a knife and slams it on the table.

"Do it! Over there in the shed. Fast and clean! They are not to suffer," he says angrily and hugs his wife. "Come, Maelle. Don't do this to yourself."

Then, he leads the silver-haired woman out of the kitchen.

EUTHANASIA

The present situation is gruesome. The characters have to pick three dogs. Then, they must kill them in the shed and skin them. However, the search for the largest animals is torturous in and of itself. Wagging their tails excitedly, packs of dogs greet the characters with playful barking. They sniff the characters and jump up on them, leaning their front paws against their bodies.

The characters must not let their hearts soften if they want to save Barringer.

In order to ensure the dogs do not suffer, the characters must give them poisoned food or put them to sleep with a strong tranquilizer. The cruelest method would be to cut the dogs' jugulars and wait for them to bleed out.

Once the characters have selected their three victims, they bring them to the shed adjacent to the breeders' home. A successful roll on INS+Taming (3) is necessary, otherwise the dogs will sense that something is wrong and begin to yelp nervously. The barking is contagious. Other dogs in the kennel join in, and suddenly the entire pen is howling.

If no sleep-inducing meds are available to the characters, a roll on PSY+Faith/Willpower (4) is necessary. If the roll is not successful, the character will not be able to muster the courage to kill the innocent animals with their bare hands. Another group member must step up and take over the task. In order to skin the dogs, a successful roll on AGI+Crafting (3) is needed. It's over and done with. The characters have what they need. Now they have to get back to the Balsam House as quickly as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

This scene should only be played with experienced players who are able to handle such a situation at the gaming table. It requires a great deal of tact to both describe and experience this moment.

This scene is not about heroism, but rather confronts players with the question of whether it is right to trade one life for another. This moral dilemma is important to both character development and plot. Inexperienced players, however, could easily get the wrong idea.

IV. THE IMIUT RITUAL

The characters are back in the Balsam House. Imbali examines the skins and stretches them to see if they are large enough.

"Barely. But they will do," she says, her tone serious.

The Anubian has placed canopic jars full of blood all around Barringer who is lying naked on the table. Candles light the room. Needles and rolled tendons for sewing the injured man into the skins have been prepared.

Imbali dips her hands into the Duat blood and smears Barringer with the rusty brown liquid. She massages the blood into his pores methodically while whispering in an African dialect.

"He possesses amazing powers. That he is still with us is almost a miracle," she explains to the characters. If they ask Imbali why he has been able to survive, she will pause.

"He is not from here. I can feel it. Someone brought him to Briton a long time ago."

She stretches the first skin over the battered body. "He's not Oppolus' son, that's for sure. However, he is also not Vicarent's brother. Their lifelines sound completely different," she explains as if the characters are able to follow her.

Her gaze lingers on Barringer's features. "He's like a caterpillar in a cocoon. He has yet to show us his true face. When he returns to our world from the Imiut skin, we shall see his true countenance."

She wraps Barringer's head into one of the skins and starts to sew it shut. She repeatedly douses the hides with the resinous liquid and molds them onto Barringer's body until nothing of him is left visible.

ONE AND SIX

"You enjoy spending your time with those who are destined for death," she smiles all of a sudden. "How is your friend, the Scrapper? Has she woken up?"

If the characters say no or haven't been informed of Garlene's state, she will react serenely. "I'll check on her tomorrow."

If they tell her what they have learned about Leviathanics, the Anubian listens with a worried expression on her face.

"It was only a matter of time before the sixth Chakra blossomed." If the characters ask how she can be so sure, Imbali will take a bag with a handful of Dinars and empty it out onto the table. She takes six coins and places them in a row. She places a seventh one above them, but at a distance.

"There are seven Chakras," she begins. "Five have been in bloom for centuries. If the sixth one does not bloom, the seventh one cannot awaken." She points to the six dinars on the table and slowly moves the seventh coin towards them.

"One and six. These six must be completed first. Only then can the seventh one unleash its potential and achieve its consummation."

If the characters do not understand what she is saying, she will smile to herself. With her fingers, she touches different parts of a character's body. Their tailbone, their navel, the center of their torso, their heart, their neck and finally their forehead. "Did you count them?" she asks quickly. "Six! Six chakras are in your mortal shell." Then she points to a spot above the character's head. "Seven," she says auspiciously. "The seventh one is alone, separated from your body. It is the One, solitary and unique. It is not one of the six chakras within you. It's your crown."

If the characters ask about the meaning of the crown, she will sigh wistfully. "It is your immortality. It lights your way through Anubis' realm and leads you back to your destiny."

The characters have no time to ponder what they have just heard. An ashen-faced Ascetic bursts through the door. He looks startled, and his movements are hectic. "People are gathering. At Brotherhood Square," he croaks. Imbali nods to the group. "Go. I will watch over Barringer."

SIXTEEN?

Is the number seven a secret code for the number sixteen? Both are made up of a one and a six. Imbali's game of numbers is confusing. A successful roll on PSY+Cunning (2) proves that this is not a coincidence. The characters have encountered the number sixteen on numerous occasions over the last few days. The confusing calculation seems familiar to them, especially since discovering the slate with the strange dates in Shamash's base of operations. How is all of this related, though?

SCENE 15: DECLARATION OF WAR

Darkness has fallen over Brest. There is commotion on the streets as people flock to Brotherhood Square. Oppolus and Vicarent rally the populace. There is apparently a big announcement that will be made, and everyone is gathering at the Blood Pit.

Along the way, the characters overhear unbelievable snippets of conversation. People are informing each other about the events of the day. The characters hear "Ushant" and "murdered Anabaptists" all throughout the crowd. There is excited talk of the "Starfire" and the "fingernail of the Demiurge". Many people seem to be abreast of the happenings here. Many more than the characters expected.

The characters have to push through the throngs of people in order to catch a glimpse of what is going on in the pit. The Anabaptists have captured a Spitalian. Vatenguerre is hanging from chains, his body stretched out between two wooden poles. His face is bloody, beaten almost beyond recognition.

Yasen is already there inspecting the prisoner. "Where are your little helpers now, Preservist?" The Emissary tugs at Vatenguerre's ear. "Did you think you were going to escape? Did they leave you behind?" he asks spitefully. Vatenguerre does not react, but scans the audience. He recognizes the characters. He stares at them, an icy glare in his solitary eye.

The Emissary raises his voice. "Heed my words Brest. Today, we have experienced great suffering. A Cult that we all believed to be well disposed towards us has chosen the side of the Demiurge. The Spitalians have betrayed us!"

Vatenguerre cannot believe his ears. All he can do is shake his head.

"Six of our most faithful were slaughtered." Yasen smacks his hands together. His bodyguards push the biers of the murdered Anabaptists into the Blood Pit.

"The seventh, Barringer, the brother of the Sublime, will die at any moment," the Emissary moans, feigning grief.

People are becoming fidgety. Why would someone carry out such an assassination? Before Yasen can answer their unspoken questions, Vicarent enters the Blood Pit.

"We are convinced that the Spitalians had helpers in our ranks," Yasen calls. He peers into the crowd, scanning the rows of those present. If he sees the characters, he nods at them with a smirk. Massimo, his front man, is suddenly next to him. The Orgiastic also looks in the direction of the characters. "We have a boy here who has testified that these people are allied with the Spitalians."

The polished Orgiastic points at the characters. Hundreds of eyes turn and gawk at them. They are surrounded.

I. ON A RAZOR'S EDGE

"SILENCE!" Vicarent's roar interrupts the charges being made by Yasen and Massimo. The frenzied buzz of the audience falls silent. Even the emissary and his front man watch the towering man's every move cautiously.

"They delivered the Preservist to us so we could exact the punishment on him that he so justly deserves. They also brought my brother back to Brest. They owe us nothing more," the Sublime growls without even casting a glance in the characters' direction.

Yasen is taken aback. He circles Vicarent.

"Only a fisherman rules like that!" the Emissary says with contempt. "Did Oppolus' silly cackle go to your head? These people have sided with Jehammedans and Spitalians," he says accusingly. Yasen tries to bring Vicarent's attention back to the characters, but the large man just stubbornly stares at the Emissary. "Shame on you for sullyng your heritage. After all you have done for the Broken Cross and Briton. We need a sermon of retribution! Now more than ever!" the old man yells.

"The Sublime doesn't have the courage," Vatenguerre intervenes suddenly, coughing up blood and laughing mockingly. The Preservist has had enough of these antics. "Just look at the cut in his face. Vicarent, the great Slayer of Ganaress, got the beating

VICARENT'S SHIELD

The previous actions of the characters have a significant impact on Vicarent's reaction to Yasen's indictment. If they previously sided with the Anabaptists and handed Vatenguerre over to them, Vicarent will protect the characters.

On the other hand, if they sided with the Spitalians and perhaps even provided the Preservists with information pertaining to the location of the Starfire, may God have mercy on their souls.

The only one who can save them from punishment is Oppolus.



that he had so long deserved."

Thunderstruck, Vicarent lowers his eyes. Yasen fights for words. The audience can hardly believe the arrogance with which the Preservist speaks to the Sublime. They are completely flabbergasted by the situation unfolding right before their eyes.

"What do you want to do, Sublime? Declare war on us?" Vatenguerre asks with a sneer. Vicarent ignores his taunts. He draws the concealed dagger from the hilt of his bidenhander and plants himself before the prisoner.

"No," Vicarent dully says. "I'll win the war."

Without hesitating, he buries the dagger in Vatenguerre's flank and cuts across his abdominal wall. The Preservist squirms. A murmur goes through the audience. Vicarent throws the dagger on the ground and the bloody metal clanks across the paving stones. Without showing the slightest bit of mercy, he buries both hands in the wound he has created in the Preservist's stomach and rummages around in his intestines. Vatenguerre trembles. The Sublime shows no emotion. He yanks out the steaming entrails and smashes them to the ground.

Vatenguerre faints. The Sublime takes two steps back from his prey. With bloodied hands, he draws his bidenhander and takes aim. A lightning-quick strike splits the Preservist in half.

The audience turns away in disgust. The characters notice Oppolus at the edge of the Blood Pit. The king buries his face in his hands.

CONSEQUENCES

"Bind one half of the Spitalian to a horse and drive it to Rennes. The other half goes on the next cart to Montpellier," Vicarent orders the Chapel Guard. "Send a postrider to

the Spitalians. They have one week to bring back the Starfire." The huge man inhales loudly through his charred nose. "Or we will burn Rennes to the ground."

Then he turns to Yassen. "Send Gyrfalcons to Mont Saint-Michel. The troops are to gear up and march south. I want to see every Anabaptist of Briton under arms. At dawn, I will ride east with the men from Brest and join the armed forces there."

The eyes of the Emissary shine. His dream has finally come true. Briton is going to war.

Oppolus enters the Blood Pit. "That's not how I raised you," he looks up at his foster son defiantly. "Do not fall for Yassen's desires for revenge! He is using you!" the king's voice trembles. Vicarent stares at him motionless.

"Your fury will not bring back your brother! It will only make matters worse!" Oppolus' wisdom is entangled in a battle against his son's belligerence. Vicarent raises his eyes and looks at his stepfather.

"You taught me how to gut pigs, but you did not teach me how to kill Pheromancers," Vicarent says, turning away. A mere ten steps is all it takes him to exit the Blood Pit. The chapel guards are still trying to get the crowds of people to return to their homes.

The king lingers in the pit numbly, watching as two Orgiastics remove Vatenguerre's split body from the shackles.

II. TURMOIL

Oppolus spies the characters amidst the dissolving crowd. The expression on his face is that of a broken man, and the gentleness of his features is gone. He looks as if he has aged years in a matter of minutes.

"Briton will never again be the way it was," he says softly. The old man who in the morning had a youthful radiance about himself seems disheartened now. "If we do not find the Spitalians and get the Starfire back, corpses will pile up outside of the city gates." His voice is bitter.

If the characters ask him what he fears most, he will need some time to put his thoughts into words. "War," he clears his throat. "Rennes is a hellion and the Spitalians are armed to the teeth. If Vicarent wants to settle the score with the Spitalians, he must take the city by siege. That will result in thousands of lives being lost."

Oppolus' eyes are moist and glisten in the light.

"You are honest people," he says. "Help to stop this looming carnage from happening. Find the Starfire and bring it back before it is too late. Only then can we stop the wrath of my son," he implores the characters. "Yassen will continue to ignite Vicarent's temper and incite him to warfare. Beware of the Emissary and his men. He is after your heads. In Brest, you are safe, but not on Briton's streets," he warns them, urgency in his voice.

Two chapel guards reach the king. "Oppolus, come! We will accompany you back to the castle." The king nods resignedly and follows them.

WITHOUT A TRACE

Even if the characters want to help the king, they have no clue where to start. The Spitalians are gone. Vatenguerre, the only one they could have questioned, is dead. Baringer's life rests in Imbali's hands.

Can their allies Parel, Ampere, or Eris help them? Did the Chronicler perhaps discover a new lead on Shamash? They will be able to find out when they return to Parel's island. However, before leaving Brotherhood Square, which has already been deserted by the others, they hear a distant noise.

If a character attempts to make sense of the sound, they will hear wails travelling on the wind. A roll on INS+Perception (4) is necessary to interpret them. If successful, the character will realize right away what it is. It is coming from the Southeast. The dogs in the compound are going berserk.

ULTIMATUM

Vicarent's revenge will leave its mark on the Spitalians. The Northern Passage is closed and the Spitalians cannot expect any reinforcements from Borca. It will take at least two months for Montpellier to muster troops and send them over the Southern Passage to provide assistance.

The Sublime will raze Rennes if the Preservists are not arrested and the Starfire is not recovered within a week's time. His anger and pride cannot be restrained. The catastrophic effect that this war of Cults will have on other regions is unimaginable.

Briton is on the brink of disaster.

FATEFUL

The character that played the Haunting rolls INS+Primal (2). If successful, they will feel a vague tingling sensation. Their fingertips become numb, and their lips dry. Almost as if they have not had anything to drink for days. The thirst is overwhelming, and Eris has something to do with it.



SCENE 16: THE BURIAL

The miller from the previous day has ferried them across the river to Parel's island again. Torches are burning in the square in front of the large warehouse. Parel and his Mice have gathered around a fresh grave. They have buried Weilam under stones, sheet metal, and plastic tarps. Monia is crying. The other Mice gaze grimly at the cross into which they have notched Weilam's Scrapper rune. Parel stands amongst his orphans with his head bowed.

Eris stands further back and watches the ceremony from a distance. She has thrown a hood over her short hair to protect her from the wind. When she notices the characters, she nods towards them without making a sound.

"Ampere has been treated. It took awhile for him to come around and ask me for help," she says with a hint of mockery in her voice. If the characters tell her what happened on Ushant, she will shrug unaffectedly. "What difference does it make if it's an Anabaptist or a Jehammedan who loses their life?" she asks gruffly. "Only those who were close to us in life will mourn us in death, anyway." With a brief nod, she gestures to the Mice and Parel who are standing around the grave silently.

If the characters ask where Ampere is, she will point to the warehouse. "He spent the entire day bringing the clutter from Shamash's camp to the island."

I. SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Ampere has taken over the entire rear area of the warehouse. All of the maps from Shamash's base are spread out over several tables the he has pushed together. His stomach is bandaged and his greasy hair is awry, unfurling in every direction. With an apple in his hand, he walks up and down in front of his prey, pondering its meaning. Completely lost in thought, he does not even notice the characters approaching him.

When they address him, he flinches like a deer in headlights. With bloodshot eyes, he first makes sure that they are not there to harm him. Then he starts blathering.

"Shamash is looking for something in the ocean, northwest of Morlaix. The exact distance cannot be determined. Comparing the different maps, the estimated distance could either be sixty or one hundred miles off the coast." Ampere points to the areas that have been marked on the maps.

"My only conclusion is that the position depends on the currents."

If the characters ask what that might mean, Ampere will take another bite from his apple before responding. "Whatever it is, it is floating on the surface of the water."

The characters can discuss their own theories with Ampere and gain more clarity. What did Vega say about the Earth Chakra of Leviathanics? Mother spore fields are drifting towards Briton? Is Shamash looking for them?

"Rather unlikely," Ampere answers briskly. "The technology in his shed was not a replica of a Noumenon Vocalizer. He was searching for something else."



If Ampere can't tell where the object is located using the maps, how will they be able to find Shamash in this giant quadrant?

The Chronicler considers this for a moment. He points to a square area in the blue ocean: "If we were in these waters, we could use the radar."

SUPPER

Parel and the Mice come back into the hall, their expressions hardened. The Salt Wolf orders Claude and Kriss to look after Garlene. Monia, Poli, and Valentino are responsible for getting bread and preparing the supper. The Salt Wolf sits down at the table with a forlorn look on his face and clasps his hands. He stares into the void of the long hall. Eris helps the teenagers set the table.

Ampere leans toward the characters. "We have to help the Scrapper," he whispers. "Otherwise, he will never get back on his feet again."

If the characters try to comfort the Salt Wolf and bolster his confidence, a tear will roll down his cheek. "I've done many a terrible thing. But these kids are the best thing that ever happened to me."

When he notices the Mice returning, he immediately wipes the tears from his face, struggling to regain his composure. Eris and Ampere join them at the table. Monia has made tea, and the Delila puts smoked fish and bread on the plates. Everyone looks traumatized and exhausted in their own way. Their nerves are raw, but this fleeting moment of peace restores a little of their strength.

"We'll get the bastards. Won't we?" Claude asks warily. Ampere nods carefully.

"I'll kill them with my bare hands," the stocky Valentino growls. Eris blinks as if a particle of dust has gotten into her eyes. She looks at the ceiling, at the headlights.

IN THE DARKNESS

The character who witnessed the Haunting begins to experience terrible things. Each time the light dims, they see the silhouette of the horned beast. It is standing directly behind Eris and stroking her neck. It is invisible in the light, but in the dark, the character can see it clearly.

The character must succeed in a roll on INS+Primal (4), otherwise they will not be able to move. Even letting out a gasp will be impossible.

II. NEAR FIELD

Suddenly, the power grid begins to fluctuate just like on the first night. The near field is back. Ampere jumps to his feet.

"The Marauder!" he gasps, overwhelmed by his own assumptions.

"Can you localize it?" Parel asks excitedly and jumps up as well.

The headlights dim and light up again. Over and over.

"Yes! I need a radio!" the Chronicler shouts and runs to where his equipment is stashed. The Salt Wolf is at his side in no time, a heavy device in tow. The men turn the control knobs like mad, and a crackling noise floods the warehouse.

"Which formula is needed to calculate the distance?" Parel barks at the Chronicler.

"Wait, I have to concentrate!" he snaps back. Suddenly, a haunting melody comes from the radio.

"What the hell is that?" the men ask simultaneously.

"He's coming," Eris says.

Both Ampere and Parel disregard the words of the Delila, instead arguing about which mathematical equation is correct. Eris sits in a chair, rooted to her spot.

"He's coming," she repeats monotonically.

"Who's coming?" Ampere snaps.

"Aries."

TO THE STARS

The phases in which the lights remain on suddenly become longer. The two men stare up at the fluorescent lamps in amazement. "Is it getting weaker?" Parel asks.

"Yes. It's moving away from us!" Ampere answers.

"Away from us? You mean, out of Brest?" Parel does not quite understand the Chronicler.

"Yes. Out of the city!" Ampere repeats irritated.

"How is that possible?" the Salt Wolf moans. "A Marauder simply struts through the locked city gate and says good night to the chapel guards?"

Ampere ignores the Scrapper and rushes back to Eris.

"What are you keeping from us, you cheap tramp?"

The Delila does not answer. Ampere grabs her by the collar and pulls her from her seat. The Mice jump up. Kriss and Valentino clench their fists. "Hey! Leave Eris alone!" they shout out and threaten to trounce Ampere.

The Jehammedan breaks free. "I already told you all I know. Aries is after me. He will slaughter me just like he does all of the black sheep in his flock."

If the characters ask what she means, she will narrow her eyes to slits.

"He is preparing our Cult for the long journey to paradise. Only those who are without sin may enter his ark." She looks at her hands. "He culls his tribe with cruelty. The Ram knows nothing of compassion. I have tainted his tribe, and he'll make sure I pay for it."

Ampere does not understand a single word. Parel is also speechless. The Mice have gathered around Eris to serve as her human shields.

"Where does this heavenly journey in the ark lead to? Across the Atlantic?" Ampere asks cynically. He turns to the characters to check and see if they are just as clueless as himself.

"To the stars," Eris answers coolly.



III. BLACKOUT

A loud bang startles everyone. The hall is pitch black again. All the fuses have been blown. "Is it back?" Confused, Parel screams into the dark hall. Poli lights a torch and sprints to the sliding gate. He opens it and looks out at Brest.

"Blackout! The power grid is gone! The whole city is without electricity!" he yells back into the hall. Eris and the Mice light candles.

"Morlaix!" Parel whispers. If the characters ask what he means, he will immediately try to establish a radio connection. The characters can check their electronics to see if they work. The complete blackout has nothing to do with the near field. It was not an electromagnetic pulse.

"Did you say Morlaix?" Ampere's question is loud and clear. "What's in Morlaix?" the Chronicler repeats.

"The viaduct!" Parel exclaims in panic. "Morlaix generates all of the electricity for Brest and Saint-Brieuc. The scrap sluices were built by us Salt Wolves!"

Ampere's eyes widen. "Shamash," he hisses.

Parel listens attentively. "What did you say?"

The Chronicler's face glows with the excitement at having discovered another piece of the puzzle. "Shamash was trying to locate something floating on the surface of the ocean beyond Morlaix. He must have tapped the electricity!" he yells. If the characters ask for the fastest way to get there, Parel points at the door.

"Fiancé. With her, we can make it in six hours. We will reach Morlaix at daybreak."

FIANCÉ

"Poli! Open the sluices on the dry dock and get Fiancé ready!" Parel scurries around, looking for his equipment. "The rest of you, take care of Garlene. Hole yourselves up here on the island. Only the Anubian is to go ashore." Then he places a gun in Kriss's hand. "Shoot anyone who comes near you."

Ampere, Eris, and the characters trail closely behind the Salt Wolf. The small submersible stands ready with its capsule open. Poli opens the sluices and hurries over the dock in order to reach the vehicle in time.

"You're not coming!" Parel barks.

"Forget it! You need a co-pilot," Poli snaps back at him. "Besides, who will pilot the thing when you fall asleep?" the Mouse asks reproachfully.

The Salt Wolf is unable to provide a suitable answer to Poli's defiant response.

The Mouse pounds a big button, creating a sound akin to compressed air escaping. The glass dome lowers and locks in place. Blue valves light up. Projected navigation data flash on the glass dome in front of them. Parel turns the ignition lever and grabs the steering wheel. The Penfeld rushes through the sluices, flooding the dry dock.

Eris watches the spectacle in astonishment, while Ampere wipes the sweat of fear from his brow. The engine hums as Fiancé leaps forward. Bright headlights illuminate the underwater realm. They leave the Penfeld and dive into the roadstead. Countless schools of fish swim nervously around the submersible. Sunken, coral-covered Bygone ruins protrude from the mud. Seals cross their path and bump their noses against the submersible's glass dome. Characters who are seeing this murky world for the first time are completely overwhelmed. Soon, they will head north through the Atlantic.

SUBMERGED

The tiny submersible only has six seats. The rest of the characters must find a place in between the chairs. Inside the capsule, it is cramped and the air is stuffy. It also takes time to get used to the effect that the pressure has on one's ears.

The view, however, is extraordinary.

SCENE 17: MORLAIX AT DAWN

Six hours later, Fiancé resurfaces. The morning gray has a firm grip on the mysterious beach. Mist conceals the jagged cliffs that rise up in front of the characters. Ampere rubs the sleep from his eyes as Parel steers Fiancé into shallow waters. The hull of the submarine scrapes over the gravel of the beach.

There is no time to waste. The glass dome opens, and ice-cold air brings life back into their bones.

At the beach, the silence is deafening. The rushing of the waves in the distance is the only audible sound. In the dense fog bank, the characters can make out the contours of a gigantic bridge that extends from one cliff to another. Underneath is a ravine that has been flooded with seawater and a murder of crows circles above.

"Poli! You stay here. Keep the engine running in case something happens," Parel orders. He turns the characters. "Something here is rotten."

If the characters inquire about the other Salt Wolves, Parel will point to the cliffs. "Our workshops are on both sides of the viaduct. The main transformer is in the middle." He holds his hand to his ear and listens. "I don't hear it humming," he adds. "UGIAS! GILFORD!" Parel shouts into the fog. The names echo from the rocks, but there is no answer.

"Damn. We have to go up there," says Parel. He points to a wooden scaffolding that leads up to the viaduct and then at a trail that meanders along the cliff.

"There are two ways to get there."

I. CAUTION

Visibility is limited to just under ten meters. If anything, only the outlines of mountain ranges are discernible. The characters should be careful and take their time when searching the area. Just as Parel suspected, something is terribly wrong. Why isn't anybody here? Why isn't the transformer working?

The Salt Wolf points to the gigantic water wheels made of scrap and metal installed between the arches of the bridge. "The wheels are locked in the wrong position. They're not touching the water. Someone intentionally shut off the viaduct."

If the characters decide to rummage around near the scaffolding, they must roll INS+Perception (3). Near the beach, they discover a strange metal tin. It is black and an odd symbol is painted on it. A roll on INT+Legends (3) reveals that it is the astrological sign for the planet Mercury.

If they open the tin, a horrid stench emerges. The remains of a viscous algal slime slosh around on the bottom of the tin.

If the characters decide to search the beach, they have to roll INS+Survival (4). On a stone near the trail, a character discovers a strange sort of illuminant. It has a fluores-

cent color and seems to have been freshly applied to the stone.

The character is unable to figure out what the poisonous green substance is.

IMPONDERABLE

The group needs a plan if they want to make it to the top of the viaduct. Parel will do anything to get the transformer running so that the water wheels can be lowered again. Only then will the electricity be able to reach the power lines. Ampere's face is ashen. He has no idea what to expect up there.

"What if Shamash has set a trap for us?" he asks overly cautious.

"Nonsense!" Parel answers. "How would he know that we have been following him? Have you already forgotten that he had a 36-hour head start?" He turns and looks back at the viaduct.

"I'll take the scaffolding. You can do whatever you want." The Salt Wolf grabs his tool bag and walks to whichever rickety ladder is closest to him.

THE SCAFFOLDING

If the characters follow the Salt Wolf up the scaffolding, they will discover that the air gets damper and foggier the higher they climb. Half way up, the fog is so dense that they can no longer see the ground beneath them. They find more traces of the green illuminant on a pillar. If they ask Parel if Salt Wolves use luminescent color to mark objects, he will shake his head no.

They climb further up the ladder. Only a few meters separate them from the top.

On the left-hand side, they reach the railroad track that spans the entire length of the viaduct. They are immediately able to identify the transformer, which rests on the rails in the middle of the bridge. The switch block becomes visible as they approach. Someone has painted a symbol on it in the same shimmering green color. INT+Legends (3) reveals that it is the astrological symbol for the planet Saturn.

THE TRAIL

Characters who take the trail leading up to the left side of the scaffold will need more time to get to the top. The path is rough and steep and the limited visibility makes it all the more harder to progress. Characters must roll INS+Orientation (2) to avoid accidentally stepping on a loose stone and falling several meters. As they climb the ridge, the contours of the viaduct blur more and more. They can barely make out the architecture of the arched bridge, let alone maintain eye contact with Parel and Ampere. Eris is with them.

Indiscernible shapes gradually emerge from the gray haze in the distance. Are there rooftops there? Is this a settlement of the Salt Wolves?



STAR FOOD

The black tin with the Mercury symbol contains remnants of Argyre's star food. If the characters decide to keep their new discovery, they will be able to analyze the contents of the slime later on. The rancid algae porridge is a protein cocktail containing growth hormones, antibiotics, and antidepressants that maximize metabolism. It accelerates the process of mitochondrial beta-oxidation and increases body temperature and heart rate. Even resting, Pictons burn energy like marathon runners.



DELUSIONS

The character who experienced the Haunting hears birds twitter gently from behind the wall of fog. If they decide to follow the sound, they will enter an unknown wooded area. Faint rays of light cut through the mist and lure them closer. They can hear the splashing of a brook and cracking branches. Thick moss covers the stones at their feet.

On the opposite bank, they notice the silhouette of a black ram.

The creature fixes its eyes on them. Hot breath rises from its nostrils. The monster holds up three severed dog heads. Suddenly, the heads come to life and start barking, all of them baring their fangs. As if in slow motion, foam drips from their lips and blood streams from their ears.

Before the character completely realizes what they are seeing, the phantasm dissolves into thin air. They are the only one who experiences this hallucination. Their companions are blind to their premonition.

II. PICTONS

The characters who have decided to take the trail pass by a row of empty workshops. All of the shacks are open, but nobody is at work at the stations. The grinders remain switched off, bolt cutters lie forgotten in half-frozen mud, and doors creak in the wind. A symbol as green as a giant leaf frog is emblazoned on a low shed. INT+Legends (3) reveals that it is the sign of the planet Uranus. The paint is still wet.

Meanwhile on the bridge, Parel and Ampere move warily towards the switchboard. The Scrapper opens a switch box and flips on one switch after the other. Beneath them, something starts to groan loudly. The screw thread holding the water wheels in position creaks. It sounds as if someone has crushed brittle iron on top of a plate of slate. If

a character is in Parel's entourage, they may roll INS+Perception (3). Huge water wheels emerge from the fog and latch into position. In between the spokes made of scrap, the character suddenly notices a lacerated human corpse. A raucous rattle sounds through the water wheels. The character's gaze wanders to the wheel closest to them. A dead man with his arms torn off is wedged in the wheel hub. On the other side, another waterwheel swings up. A headless Salt Wolf is lying on the highest paddle. The sight is harrowing.

AMBUSH

All of a sudden, a yellow lightning bolt, straight as a die, sweeps diagonally across the sky on the right side of the viaduct. The static discharge makes the hair of the characters stand on end. A droning sound reverberates through the fog bank. A second later, the ambush breaks loose.

ON THE VIADUCT

The characters on the bridge barely have time to realize what has happened. From the right side of the viaduct, silhouettes shrouded in black come running towards them. They are armed and wrapped in mighty bearskins. Shrieking like hellhounds, they race across the railroad track and try to reach the switchboard where Parel, Ampere, and the characters are hiding.

Ampere gasps. "Pictons!" he wheezes breathlessly. "Argyre's slave warriors!" His voice trembles.

BETWEEN THE WORKSHOPS

The characters' view of the viaduct is obstructed by the dense fog. Before they can react to the glaring lightning bolt, a bearded, black figure jumps out of a shed. Armed with a sharp-edged club, the man attacks the character closest to him. His protective layer of soot, fur, and tree resin is so thick that his features are barely perceptible. Fluorescent paint adorns his chest, which is covered in runes and star symbols. He swings his club maniacally, trying to smite the characters.

Behind them, another battle cry is raised. A second warrior attacks them from the rear. With a wild jump, he lands behind the characters and lunges at them with his rusty blade.

A third man comes running and throws himself at Eris. He crashes down to the ground with the Delila underneath him. He buries his chiseled teeth in her shoulder and rips out a chunk of flesh. The pain is so intense that Eris can no longer breathe.

Two more warriors come storming out of their hiding places. The characters are outnumbered and things are turning deadly.

AWE

Ampere snaps in his state of panic. In the interest of self-preservation, he reflexively ignites the green-light module on his suit. A conical array of light flickers from his chest. The rays of light diffuse in the fog and flicker through the haze like flashing stripes. Awestruck, the approaching Pictons stop dead in their tracks.

SNIPER

If one of the characters accompanying the Salt Wolf is an experienced marksman, equipped with a rifle, pistol, bow, or crossbow, they will have a clear line of fire when aiming at the onslaught of cannibals. If the character positions themselves behind the switchboard, the fog will be their only obstacle. The difficulty of hitting a target increases by (1) in the gray haze.

If they hit a rushing Picton with bullets or bolts, the impact of the shot will throw the target from the bridge, where it will fall sixty meters to an inescapable death.

A skilled shooter can hold the right flank of the viaduct single-handedly as long as they have enough ammunition and no one returns the fire.

BALOR'S WARRIOR

The Pictons have rampaged Morlaix and massacred all the Salt Wolves. Their plan is to capture Helios and recover the disc, star, and spear for their master Argyre. Neither the Sleeper Prophet nor the artifacts led them to this place. It was the strange near-field phenomenon that Balor has been following for weeks that brought them here. Argyre's champion suspects that Helios is behind it and decides to summarily lay siege to Morlaix. With the help of his men, he intends to ambush and capture the Sleeper Prophet. Balor interprets the arrival of the characters as a sign.

The characters must defend themselves against thirty of these super-charged, crazed cannibals.



SUPERSTITIOUS

Pictons are superstitious and have only encountered the Cults of the Scrappers and Palers. They know no other power except for that of their leader Argyre. If the characters use weapons or technology unfamiliar to them, the cannibals must succeed on a roll of PSY+Faith/Willpower to avoid freezing in terror or fleeing from the scene. Their leader Balor, however, is difficult to impress and thoroughly convinced of his own supremacy. It is not necessary for him to make a roll.



BALOR'S ANSWER

If a character kills more than four Pictons, Balor will respond promptly. A glistening light comes from the other side of the smoke screen creating a lambent point on its surface. The light is so bright that it becomes inverted, burning itself onto the retina like a black spot. The following shot comes at full tilt. A yellow flash hisses from the fog and hits the transformer like a bazooka. The force of the murderous impact propels the generator block several meters backwards. Metal melts, and sparks spray from the wheels of the transformer.

What the fuck was that weapon?

Ampere gasps. "Soul Burner!" he shouts, taken aback.

"The transformer has been badly damaged! It will not survive a second attack!"

Parel shouts. "We have to get down from here!"

NO WAY OUT

The characters on the bridge are in extreme danger. Their cover will not be able to withstand a second shot from Balor's eye. Their only way out is across the 150 meters between the bridge and the cliffs. There, they will have to fight their way to the workshops in order to catch up with the rest of the group.

To their right, the feedback from a speaker suddenly screeches. Someone wheezes into a megaphone.

"Helios, you fucking world killer! Surrender or we'll tear your Sleepers to pieces! Return to your master, and he'll forgive you," the metallic voice croaks.

Ampere stares at the characters in horror. Parel acts at once. "Now!" the Salt Wolf shouts as he crouches down and hurries along the rails. The characters follow him. The megaphone squeals again, emitting a crackle of static charges.



On the left side of the bridge, more Pictons appear out of nowhere. Armed with axes and clubs, they block the way of the group as the characters attempt to flee. There is only one way to escape: close combat.

SIMULTANEOUS

Between the shacks, a battle of unequals is underway. The characters are outnumbered by the Pictons. Seething with rage, the Pictons thirst for any and every wound they can inflict. For every Picton slain, two new ones come running.

The characters involved in this battle have no idea what is happening on the bridge. They can only hear Balor's strange appeal rolling over the cliffs like a distant echo.

The attackers are ferocious and put up a fierce fight. Together, they try to wrestle a character to the ground. Once down, they immediately strike them with a blunt club, knocking them out instantly.

Eris screams like a banshee. A Picton has bitten her in the thigh and the Jehammed-an is unable to defend herself.

III. THE HORNED ONE

The characters are at their enemies' mercy. The fight in between the shacks leaves them at a disadvantage. A dozen Pictons have them surrounded and are striking and hacking at them. The character who witnessed the Haunting is the first to see the Horned One.

The rest of the characters will start to notice the approaching near field. At first, their electronics go haywire, but then they, too, see the stranger. His eyes blaze like burning embers. A horned helmet covers his face. His black fleece swirls erratically

THE BEGGAR

If the characters played the scene with the beggar in Act 2, the Horned One will immediately appear familiar to them. The same rags, the same physique, but in his new form, he is a frightening predator. The transformation is complete. What happened to the man from before?



behind him as if it had a life of its own. The skin of the Horned One is parched, each muscle fiber protruding from beneath its surface. All of a sudden, a snow-white, curved sword coruscates in his hand. He opens his mouth to scream, but the frequency of the tone he emits is so low that it can only be detected as an inaudible sound wave. Like the rumbling of an earthquake in the distance.

All of the Pictons abandon their battle with the characters and turn towards the stranger. Then they rush him. The Horned One hacks through the first wave of attackers with his white sword. Severed limbs fly through the air aimlessly.

Eris drops to her knees. Taken aback, she stares at the new arrival.

"ARIES!" she yells as if her soul has escaped from her body.

Having forgotten her wounds, she jumps up and runs past the characters towards the viaduct.

There is only one way out. The characters must follow Eris.

JAMMED

Meanwhile, at the bridge, a second shot never comes. The charging noise dies down like a misfire. Ampere notices that his suit is discharging. Is it the near field?

Parel, the Chronicler, and the characters must once again face off with the Pictons. The fight begins. Any misstep could prove fatal and result in a character's death. The confrontation on the bridge is a test of equilibrium. In order to avoid getting too close to the abyss during their attack or defense, a character must successfully roll on AGI+Mobility (3) for each turn that they are actively involved in the melee. If a roll fails, they must roll BOD+Athletics (4) during the following combat round to maintain their balance. Should this roll also fail, the character will slip. Their last hope is a successful roll on PSY+Reaction (4) which enables them to grab a rock in time and hold on to the mortal coil. In order to get back up, a successful roll on BOD+Force (3) is necessary.

DISCHARGE

With a simple roll on INT+Science (2), the character realizes that the near field must have discharged the Soul Burner; otherwise, they would have all been turned to dust long ago. The characters on the bridge are unaware of the origin of the Phenomenon, but the laser weapon no longer poses a danger.

I WIPE IT OFF ON A TILE,
THE LIGHT IS BRIGHTER THIS TIME
EVERYTHING IS 3D BLASPHEMY,
MY EYES ARE RED AND GOLD,
THE HAIR IS STANDING STRAIGHT UP
THIS IS NOT THE WAY I PICTURED ME

[SLIPKNOT]

UNION

The characters on the viaduct receive backup. Eris and the rest of the group take the left end of the bridge and join them in the fight against the Pictons. There is hardly any time to exchange words.

"ARIES," Eris gasps again. Her gaze is harried, and she is bleeding from a shoulder wound. Parel and Ampere do not understand what she is saying. The Delila points to the direction from which they came. The Horned One appears from out of the fog. His silhouette blurs, becoming a shapeless swirl of twitching, pitch-black fur. His fleece cramps and vibrates. The eyes of the Horned One glow like radiant stars.

"My will!" The voice of the Horned One is a chilling breeze out of a nightmare. If he reaches them on the bridge, they will be at his mercy. There is only one way: to the right, where the Soul Burner was previously fired.

VIEWS

The group is running for their lives. The Horned One follows them with his blade drawn. His low-pitched screams penetrate their entire beings, burning inside of their joints and vibrating through their teeth. Parel dives across the damaged transformer and Ampere follows. Eris fights her way up. The characters trail behind them.

The sun shines through the gray haze, its reflection on the surface of the sea. They must make it over the last 150 meters if they are to get to the other side of the gorge. No Soul Burner greets them as they pass. The near field disables all of the electronics. All the characters' senses are sharpened and their perception is acute. As they move along the viaduct, the group can roll INS+Perception (2). Silhouettes become visible on the sea. Something huge is floating past Morlaix on the Atlantic Ocean. It is visible to the naked eye. Ampere notices it as well. Flabbergasted, he stays standing for a second. "Iceberg!"



THE LAST OBSTACLE

The characters have no time to take in the beauty of the moment. They are met with a horrible scream on the other side of the bridge. A shaggy Picton covered in burn marks comes running towards them wielding a brattling chainsaw. Balor is out for their blood. Argyre's champion is livid. He storms into battle with war cries of hatred. "Helios!" Balor bellows without thinking. At first, the champion is perplexed when he sees the characters. They do not look like Sleepers. The muscle-bound savage, however, could care less. He does not need a justification to kill them.

With the Horned One behind them and the crazy Picton with the chainsaw in front of them, they have got enemies on both sides.

The characters have (5) combat rounds to defeat Balor before their pursuer catches up to them.

Balor is fearless and in a state of rage, but he is not stupid. His sinister eye is useless in the near field, putting him at a disadvantage. Deprived of his superior weapon, his only option is to engage in close combat with the characters. If he accumulates more than (6) points of trauma while fighting the characters, he will retreat. He will try to gather the rest of his warriors who are scattered about and leave the field to the characters.

IV. JEHAMMED'S DOOM

"Give me back my will!" a voice behind them thunders. The growl is as loud as an avalanche of rocks. If the characters do not get rid of Balor in time, their pursuer will advance and attack them. The Horned One is only a few meters away. His snow-white blade cuts through the air.

On the right side of the cliffs, a trail leads back to the beach.

"We have to get back to Fiancé," Parel screams consumed by panic and sprints off down the trail.

"He'll kill us all!" Eris gasps.

Suddenly, they begin to gain ground. A fleeting look over the shoulder reveals the Horned One. He stumbles about disoriented, holding his head in his hands. The characters have to make a combination roll on BOD+Athletics (3) and AGI+Mobility (2) in order to extend their lead on the rugged mountain slope without slipping. Each success increases the distance between the group and the Horned One by (10) m. Triggers double the distance.

A HAIL OF STONES

The Horned One has disappeared in the fog and the characters cannot see the top of the cliff anymore. The danger is not over yet. Suddenly, chunks of stone whistle past them and crash on the rocks below. The Horned One hurls stones at them, hoping to kill them off. Out of nowhere, a boulder hits Eris's shoulder. She moans and falls forward, crashing onto a ledge four meters below. The impact knocks all of the air out of her lungs and she collapses in exhaustion.

"Damn!" Ampere screams, trying to reach the ledge as stones sail past his head. The Chronicler needs help. He cannot lift the woman up by himself. The characters must come to his aid. BOD+Force (3) is needed in order to throw the woman over one's shoulder and make a run for it.

ERIS

Ifrit loses his bearings in Eris's presence and must pull himself back together. For a brief moment, he is unable to chase the characters. This is their only chance to shake off their attacker.

AT THE WATER

Parel races across the beach, desperately calling Poli's name. The boy is nowhere to be seen, and neither is Fiancé. Eris slowly regains her senses. Bloodied and badly injured, she opens her eyes. "Is he still here?" she asks, consumed by fear and shakily clinging to the character who is carrying her.

Before they are able to look around, Poli shows up with the craft. He opens the glass dome and shouts: "Iceberg! Guys, there's an iceberg."

When he sees the characters, he is completely shocked by their appearance. They look as if they are ready to drop. Occupied with exploring the iceberg, the Mouse has no idea about the embroilment on the viaduct.

The characters get on board with their injured. "Get us out of here!" Parel yells at his Mouse. "Go on, dive!" Ampere caterwauls.

Fiancé backs up and is completely surrounded by water.

QUESTIONS UPON QUESTIONS

Poli is eager to know what happened. "What was up there, and who was attacking you?" he asks.

"Pictons! Argyre's cannibals!" Ampere coughs exhaustedly.

"What was that horned creature?" Parel demands.

"Ask our Delila here! Maybe, she'll tell the truth for a change," the Chronicler growls. The petulance in his voice is palpable.

"He is a messenger of death. One of the Horned Nine," she responds in a dismal tone. If the characters ask what she means, she will answer: "Blood of Aries. They are his henchmen. He has imbued them with his soul. Now, he leads his scions from afar and sows his seed in their minds."

The beggar used the same exact words!

"Pictons! Marauders! Messengers of Death! What is next?" Parel blurts out completely overwhelmed. "Four days ago, my life was normal!"

If the characters ask why the Picton was shouting at Helios, Ampere will answer instantly. "I told you! Argyre is looking for the Sleeper Prophet. He is looking for him everywhere. In the Protectorate! Here! That's exactly why I came to this cursed area in the first place, and now it looks like Helios and Shamash are one and the same."

"Did you see the iceberg?" Poli interjects.

Ampere's face petrifies.

"That's it!" he says stomping his feet. "Shamash used the temperature scales to predict the splitting of the iceberg and the maps of the ocean currents to locate it," a bright-eyed Ampere announces his breakthrough.

"But why does he need a fucking iceberg?" Parel asks, shaking his head.

"Not the iceberg, but what's inside of it!" Ampere rejoices.

"Poli, head for the iceberg!" the Chronicler commands.

"We hardly have any fuel left!" Parel rages. Ampere puts his hands on his shoulders and tries to calm him down. "Listen to me, Salt Wolf. Weiland's murderer is on that iceberg. It's the only way!"

"Your ambition is disgusting, Chronicler." Eris rears up. "Can you not see what is happening to us? We are being thrown to the gods." The Jehammedan looks in the eyes of the characters, searching for some semblance of support.

"I want to live!" she says before cowering in pain.

"We will never make it to Brest or Saint-Brieuc," Poli interjects. "We only have enough fuel for thirty nautical miles. That's it!"



SCENE 18: THE ICEBERG

The group has no other choice. Poli lets the capsule rise to the surface and the iceberg appears before them like a mirage. The sunlight plays on it, blinding the characters. They have to blink in order to grasp its true size.

Suddenly, they see a boat floating beside the iceberg: Soufiane's launch. The anchor chain has been wedged into the floating mass. The iceberg pulls the boat along as it dances on the waves like a toy.

"We cannot land with Fiancé," says Poli. "We'll shatter on the iceberg if we try."

"Can you take us to the launch?" Parel asks. "If we make it to the boat, we can get on board. You veer round with Fiancé and get yourself and Eris back to the safety of the coast. Look for a Scrapper who can bring you to Brest and wait for us there."

Poli looks completely puzzled. "What about you? How are you going to get back to shore?"

Parel shrugs. Then he looks at the characters. "They'll take me home safely," the Salt Wolf says with a vile undertone.

The Mouse navigates the diving gondola, coming within a few meters distance of the launch. He opens the glass dome and salt water splashes into the eyes of the characters.

I. CONQUEST

The characters board the launch with Parel and Ampere. Poli turns around in Fiancé and takes off towards the coast. The boat rocks dangerously under their feet. Nobody



is on board. The taut anchor chain is the only way up the iceberg. It is only a few meters long, but if they slip, there is nothing to rescue them.

Hand over hand, they must make their way along the chain links in order to reach the iceberg and climb up its wall. To get across the chain, a roll on BOD+Athletics (3) is necessary. In order to get to the top of the ice wall, the same roll with a difficulty of (4) has to succeed.

ON THE FLOE

The wind whips against the characters' faces. The iceberg is as large as a village and the sunlight casts a resplendent glow on its surface. The characters' boots sink into the top layer of snow.

As their eyes grow accustomed to the fulgent light, they begin to see black outlines in the distance. On the opposite side of where they have landed, something incredible emerges from the flank of the iceberg.

They have to squint in order to make out exactly what it is. What is that?

"It's a submarine!" Ampere gasps, completely overwhelmed. "It's a goddamn submarine!"

ACROSS THE INFINITE WHITE

The group hurries over the ice floe. Their enemies have left their footprints behind in the thin layer of snow. INS+Survival (2) reveals that there are three of them and they arrived here only a few hours ago.

The group approaches the enormous ship. It is stuck in the ice, and the bow is tilted skywards. The closer they get, the more details they are able to recognize on the black hull. A successful roll on INS+Perception (1) is necessary to detect the white icon on the bow. It is identical to the engraving on Shamash's spear. What is going on here?

"Good God!" Parel moans.

"There are no gods," Ampere sneers. "This is RG work!". If the characters ask him what RG means, he will slick back his wind-tousled hair. "Recombination Group. Project Tannhäuser. The whole shit that destroyed our world," he spits out with revulsion on his tongue.

The characters see the command tower protruding from the ice. Crooked periscopes and sonar antennas point the way to the access hatch.

ORIGIN

The supply vessels of the Black Atlantic once sailed the ocean. Nuclear propulsion and programmed GPS coordinates had been leading the ships across the waters for five hundred years. Each freighter was equipped with Free Spirit gear. Once the crew of the Black Atlantic finally landed, they were supposed to pilot the ships to their positions, arm themselves, and build a conquest and conditioning camp with the material they had onboard.

The Chroniclers, however, hacked the security code of the supply ships, targeted the technology inside, and hijacked them. They created the Cluster of Aquitaine from the equipment that they seized.

The Black Atlantic, the mother ship, was able to escape though. After successfully eluding the Chroniclers, something out there on the ocean knocked the submarine off course and into the Ice Barrier where it has been stranded for the past few decades.

RAPPELLED

They quickly locate a chain. If a character chooses not to enter the room below, the hatch will close shortly after the other characters' descent. If they change their mind, they must make a roll on PSY+Reaction (3) to make it into the Polyhedron in time; otherwise, the hatch will separate them from the group. If the roll fails, the hatch will snap shut, and there will be no way of getting in before the training program is over and the Polyhedron has returned to its starting position.

SCENE 19: THE BLACK ATLANTIC

They are on the ocean in the middle of nowhere atop an iceberg floating aimlessly past the coast. The characters have climbed up to the control tower. Nobody is there. The access hatch is open, and a look inside of it reveals nothing more than darkness.

Parel nods. He is ready. Whatever lies in wait for them inside, he is determined to take revenge for his boy. Ampere is only interested in getting his hands on more information and finally being able to uncover the secrets of this world conspiracy.

They both stare the characters in the eye to make sure all of them are ready to go down the hole.

I. CONNING TOWER

The humidity is overbearing. The air is so damp that it feels as if the characters are drowning in it. Immediately, beads of sweat break out on their foreheads. The oppressive heat is agonizing. Parel lights their surroundings with his flashlight while Ampere feels his way past the characters. All of the lights in the tower are out. Everything is dark.

Red lights glow one floor down. A room that resembles a small integrated bridge system is equipped with a large number of screens recessed into the casings of the control desk. Vast amounts of data rush soundlessly across the screens. GPS analyses, speed analyses, radar analyses. Nothing of use.

A roll on INS+Perception (1) reveals a gold plaque embedded in a dashboard. The letters "BLACK ATLANTIC" are emblazoned on it. There is a date beneath it: 2066.

A successful roll on INT+Science (2) allows a character to figure out how the power supply of the ship works. The emergency generators were powered up six hours ago. The main supply line, however, has been dead for decades and hasn't been drawing electricity from nuclear propulsion for a long time.

CONTROL HATCH

If the characters continue their search, they will stumble upon an interlock. It is built into the ground and seems to be the only way down. There is nothing to their left or to their right.

"Is this a dead end?" Parel asks, shining his flashlight into the room. Condensation drips down the walls. As the characters look around, they notice a mechanism for unlocking the hatch. If they turn the levers, a loud hiss will sound. The hatch fans out like the iris diaphragm of a camera lens. Below it, there is only darkness.

Parel points his light inside, but sees nothing. Peering down, the characters can see a bare, unadorned room. The walls of the room have a bizarre angle and aspect ratio. It almost looks like the abstract version of a honeycomb.

The floor is approximately four to five meters below them, but there is nothing that resembles a door or suggests a way out of the symmetrical room.

Parel is chary, Ampere curious. "It's the only way," the Chronicler says.

"What if it doesn't lead anywhere? How are we supposed to get out?" Parel asks.

"We'll rappel down there and that will secure our way back out. There's bound to be a chain somewhere."

II. THE POLYHEDRON

Ampere slides down into the room below, and Parel follows. The characters can also use the chain to go down. One by one, they come down into the room. The floor is as smooth as glass, the walls as well. The material has a dull surface, which barely reflects any light. If the characters knock on it, it sounds muffled.

The Chronicler marvels at the construction from inside.

"Polyhedron," he says quietly. Nothing: no seam for a crowbar, no escape door, no button, and no indentation that promises a secret way out.

What kind of room is this, and why is there no way out? Before the characters can further consider the answers to these questions, the hatch above them closes. With a

loud clank, the chain they used to come down breaks in half. The severed collection of metal links comes rattling down, and suddenly, the room is blacker than the dead of night.

"I knew it!" Parel curses. "Holy shit! We're trapped!" he gripes and bangs against the walls.

They are locked in. A hush falls over the room. Only their voices echo from the walls. Suddenly, the lights come on again. All of the walls gleam like projection screens. The glistening white blinds the characters. They must blink in order to regain their vision. Suddenly, a horizontal line appears. It spans the entire room. A person in a white suit stands at a distance and waves to them. The camera zooms in. Within a second, the figure has been magnified greatly. The man's face is now as big as the screen and it takes over every square of the room. The stranger's visage covers the floor, ceiling, and walls. His piercing eyes are inescapable, but all of his other features remain undefined. Nothing else about him is memorable. His face is ephemeral.

The stranger begins to speak, an odd gracefulness in his voice.

"Welcome to the Polyhedron. Every personal characteristic has an archetypal origin. Its essence can be comprehensively narrowed down."

The announcement is absurdly loud. The noise is unbearable.

"The following protocol is a memetic training session. Progress will be rewarded. Errors will be punished."

MEMETICS

A bombardment of cascading images assaults the characters: Artillery fire. A newborn peeling out of the womb. Firing squads. Sunset in an endless sky. A starved woman in a prison cell. A Rottweiler trying to catch its own tail. A human gliding between stars. Another human being nailed to a cross. A happy child devouring a cat. A red-headed boy being mangled by a bear. Women undressing themselves and moaning. Someone swallowing poisonous fish. A man balancing while crossing palaces of glass. A woman eating shards of glass and bleeding from her mouth. Bombs. Tulip fields. The drilling of teeth. Rats gnawing on corpses. People masticating dead rats. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. Flags at half-mast. A plump man crying. A fat woman shaking with laughter. Intestines. Genitals. Planets. Bacteria. Processions. Demonstrations. A man's head being cut off with a chainsaw. Another man parting the ocean with a gesture. A monkey licks a fruit. The monkey is shot.

Bang. Everything is black.

TASK

Scarlet symbols flicker on the pentagonal projection screens. Their shapes are familiar. These are the symbols from Eris's scroll. They glow threateningly in the vast darkness of the room. Questions that are abstract in nature rain down on the characters. The characters must touch the correct icon in order to answer them. If they give the wrong answer, the room lights up in red as if an alarm has been triggered. Then the position of the room suddenly changes, tilting so that a new area of the room becomes the floor. For a brief moment, a current passes through the floor. The charge is not high, but the feeling is uncomfortable. The shock wanders up through the coccyx and climbs along the spine to the back of one's head.

Inside the Polyhedron, panic spreads, its tentacles taking hold of everyone in the room. What is this madness?

The next question follows. The characters do not have any time to think. A timer counts down the seconds remaining. If they are unable to answer the question within the allotted time, the room will creak once more, setting them all in a new starting position. Without warning, the air will take on the taste of gas.

If they answer correctly, the Polyhedron will light up, its entire surface becoming pale coral in color. A wonderful melody sounds, and birdsong mingles with it. A deer prances past them, and a woman's voice prays in a language they are unable to understand. The room changes its floor yet again.

THE PROTOCOL

The characters have only 30 seconds to respond. In this time, they must touch the right icon in order to complete the task. If they answer four questions correctly, the Polyhedron will rotate 180 degrees, and the access hatch will open into the floor below.

QUESTION: "I want to jump over my shadow and see behind my reflection."

ANSWER: The Adventurer

QUESTION: "I desire my neighbor's wife and the servitude of his sons."

ANSWER: The Ruler

QUESTION: "I want to draw a line in the sand and then cross it. Those who do not follow shall fall."

ANSWER: The Conqueror

QUESTION: "I long to die for you so that you remember me."

ANSWER: The Martyr

QUESTION: "It is my objective to mold you into the best that there is, thereby freeing myself from having to climb such great heights."

ANSWER: The Mentor

QUESTION: "I fight for you because I am not capable of fighting for myself."

ANSWER: The Zealot

QUESTION: "I envy your happiness and loathe your children. Without you, there would only be me."

ANSWER: The Defiler

IN THE EYE OF THE MARAUDER

Argyre's face should unsettle even the most hard-bitten of characters. Looking directly into the eyes of a Marauder is an experience that most people pay for with their lives.

Argyre overruled the training protocol, bringing it under his control from his headquarters. He releases the characters because only they will be able to stop Helios now. His hellhound Balor has failed him and the Sleeper Prophet is still on the loose.

The Marauder is fully aware of Helios' intentions for the Black Atlantic. He wants to use the weapons systems aboard the submarine to launch an attack against London.

ADMIRAL'S CABIN

While some characters have situated themselves at the commando bridge, others can make themselves useful by looking around the officer's cabin. The door is locked, but with combined forces and a crowbar, it can be forced open. A cooperative roll on BOD+Force (3) with (14) collected successes clears the way.

Inside: a bunk, a desk, and a locker. There is barely any light in the room.

A photograph hangs on the wall. It shows someone dressed in a Bygone uniform. A closer look reveals a familiar face. Shamash!

A brand new automatic pistol containing 12 rounds lies in one of the desk drawers. Next to it is a book entitled "Gulag Archipelago".

III. ARGYRE

Suddenly, the screens inside the Polyhedron flicker. Is there a technical defect? A white noise is followed by flashing green letters.

"// ENTERING SECURITY CONSOLE ..."

"// OVERRIDE ACCESS GRANTED ..."

All at once, the transmission changes. The screens fog up and condensation builds up on the recording lens. Large, spindly fingers wipe the fogged screens from inside the monitors. With vast strokes of the hand, the picture becomes clearer. The characters see a hooded, bandaged face emerging from the penumbra.

The stranger looks like a demon. Scraps of flesh hang from his deformed features, his jawbones held together with bolts and screws. His lips are frayed, revealing two ragged rows of teeth. Hot air rises from his rotten nose. His left eye is the only human thing about him. Crystal blue and clear, it looks right at the characters. His right eye, on the other hand, blazes red.

"Argyre!", Ampere moans, taken aback.

The hideous face snaps his tongue. "Where is Helios?" the grotesque Marauder asks. His voice sounds as if someone were banging hollow bones together. "Answer!" he orders.

If the characters try to explain their situation, Argyre's face will come even closer to the screen. His blue eye fills the room, magnifying the fine blood-red veins that branch out around his pupil.

"He's trying to rob me of my revenge!", the Marauder growls. "Find the main supply line on the bridge and start the fusion reactor at the stern of the ship. If the line works, I'll be able to overload the network and stop him." The characters hear loud keyboard sounds in the background.

"Hurry up. Helios wants to finish what Getrell started."

"// ABORT MEMETIC PROTOCOL ..."

The hatch at the bottom of the Polyhedron opens, allowing the characters to leave.

IV. COMMANDO BRIDGE

The characters reach the commando bridge. The emergency generator pulses red. The bridge is equipped with countless fittings and switches. A combination roll on INT+Science (4) and INT+Artifact Lore (3) is necessary to operate it. A system analysis confirms that the ship has suffered structural damage, most likely due to its impact with the iceberg.

To locate the main supply line, a character must boot the central unit of the system. INT+Engineering (3) is necessary to activate the correct switches.

A black screen instantly lights up, revealing a map of the Atlantic.

Columns of pre-programmed navigation data spanning over 500 years are projected on top of the map. They trace the exact route of the submarine. It is an endless, aimless course that zigzags across the ocean. In 2554, there was a collision 2,000 kilometers west of Briton, in the middle of the Atlantic. Here is where the Black Atlantic suddenly goes astray and starts heading north, straight towards the ice barrier.

A roll on PSY+Cunning (3) is necessary to recognize the correlation. The Black Atlantic must have crossed Colossus. The submarine appears to have passed right through the Earth Chakra. If the characters are right, the submarine could be responsible for churning up the Black Water that subsequently floated away. This would also mean that the Mother spore fields Vega spoke of would have been able to enter the ocean current and wash ashore in Briton.

A combination roll on INT+Engineering (4) and INT+Science (3) is necessary to discover that the switch modules for the fusion reactor are located at the stern of the ship. All of the fuses are blown or tripped. Parel casts a petulant look at one of the monitors. "The connection cable is dead. We have to start the reactor manually," he says. "How do you know how the reactor works?" Ampere asks perplexed.

"I'm a Salt Wolf, remember?" Parel dons his goggles and walks down the hallway towards the stern.



V. THE REACTOR

The characters are standing in front of the sealed reactor room, trying desperately to crack the steel door open. It appears to be controlled by a safety cylinder with several recessed and rotatable coils. A combination roll on PSY+Cunning (3) and INT+Artifact Lore (2) must succeed in order to understand the logic behind the lock. The four coils are numbered. If they are put in the right position, the steel door will open.

They have made it inside. The fusion reactor is gigantic. "We could supply all of Briton with electricity if we had this!" Parel remarks, shining his flashlight around the room.

"Helios certainly doesn't have that in mind!" Ampere shoots back angrily. Without a second to spare, Parel immediately immerses himself in the security electronics. He breaks open a control box mounted to a wall to check the connectors. "All blown!" he growls.

"Hurry up, we have no time to lose!" Ampere yells.

"I have to solder this connection here and change these two switches. Then, the reactor should work using the control module over there and ..."

"You will do nothing," a voice interrupts sharply. It comes from a gallery located in the rear of the reactor. It is Helios.

The Sleeper Prophet is standing two stories above them.

"You had the opportunity to serve humanity!" Helios calls down to them. "Instead, you have allied with a miscreant. Anything that comes foaming out of Argyre's jowls is a lie. Because of him, humanity is trapped in this feverish nightmare." His tone is reproachful. "Our kind cannot solve even the simplest of tasks. The hurdles of civilization have proven far too steep for us. So, instead, we have eked out a comfortable existence for ourselves in the mud", he preaches accusingly.

"Why did you kill my boy, you bastard?" Parel bursts out. The Scrapper reaches for a small gun tucked in his belt.

SAFETY CYLINDER

The safety cylinder has four coils, each engraved with four numbers.

◆ **I. COIL:** 46 – 4 – 43 – 7

◆ **II. COIL:** 66 – 33 – 68 – 8

◆ **III. COIL:** 103 – 12 – 98 – 9

◆ **IV. COIL:** 407 – 13 – 24 – 16

The correct number combination is

43 (1), 33 (6), 98 (1), 24 (6).

Four minus three is one, the subtraction of nine and eight as well. Three plus three is six and two and four produces the same sum. These calculations provide the characters with the numerical anagram 1616.

Helios looks down at him with regret in his eyes.

"I would never kill a child," he says softly. "The potential of a weapon is in the hands of its carrier." He snaps his fingers. Suddenly, the Paler steps out from behind the shadows of Helios, dragging Soufiane with him. The Leopard is bleeding. He gasps as his eyes wander wildly about the room.

"If I give you the murderer of your child, the potential is in your hands." He grabs Soufiane by the collar and holds him over the railing. The Leopard groans with fear.

"But what effect will your revenge have? Nothing that has been done can ever be undone. Neither the boy's life nor the world can be restored to what it once was."

"What do you want, Helios? What is this all about?" Ampere roars out his questions.

"Argyre lives in the past. He wants to destroy the future," the Sleeper Prophet hisses back. "I, however, want to save the future. Or at least what's left of it."

Then he drops his hostage.

HEADLESS

The situation has turned dramatic, and the events have come to a head. The characters must decide whether to stay by the side of their ally Parel or chase after Helios and Arnika. Whatever the Sleeper Prophet has planned, it cannot be good. But who is telling the truth – Helios or Argyre?

NO WAY BACK

The Polyhedron has returned to its original position, and there is no way out. The characters need to follow Helios if they want to make it out of the Black Atlantic.

RETRIBUTION

Soufiane crashes down onto the metal floor. Helios and his Paler rush out of the reactor room. The Leopard rolls around on the floor screaming in pain. The fall has broken both of his legs, and he cannot get up.

Parel approaches him. The butt of his revolver hits Soufiane in the face. As if possessed, the Salt Wolf thrashes uncontrollably.

"Why did you kill my boy?"

"I ... I didn't want to!" the Leopard wheezes. "He ... he made me!" he stutters, swallowing blood.

"Do not lie to me, you bastard!" Parel shouts, pressing the barrel of the gun deeper into the Leopard's cheek. Soufiane whimpers, tears rolling down his cheek. He weakly raises his hands above his head. "He ... he asked me if getting to Britain was worth someone's life," the Leopard coughs and bloody phlegm flies out of his mouth. "He said he would take me there, but, first, I would have to sacrifice someone." Soufiane's breathing is getting heavier. "Then ... then he pointed to the boy ..."

A shot rips through Soufiane's confession. The head of the Leopard whips backwards, and his back falls against the ground. Parel stands over the body of Weillam's murderer with the smoldering revolver in his hand.

VI. TROOP QUARTERS

Helios has fled. The only way to follow him is through the troop quarters.

Computer systems blink in the partially lit room. A combination roll on INS+Perception (3) and INT+Artifact Lore (2) is necessary to see what is on the monitors.

Commands from London are being transferred to the systems. Columns of numbers pile up on top of each other and passwords light up. Argyre tries to bring the ship's security system under his control.

"//TRIGLAW MALWARE DETECTED ..."

"//BLACK ATLANTIC MAINFRAME COMPROMISED ..."

"//REACTOR MODULES COMPROMISED ...", all monitors suddenly start flashing at the same time.

Ampere catches up with the characters. "What's going on?" he asks out of breath. If the characters explain to him what they have just seen, he will sit down at one of the computers and try to get an idea of the situation at hand.

"The Marauder has overwritten all of the security programs!"

Parel joins him at the control desk. Startled, he looks over Ampere's shoulder.

"//ANALYSIS: STRUCTURAL DAMAGE CRITICAL ..."

Suddenly, sirens start to blare, and flickering lights bathe the quarters in an alarming red.

"//SELF DESTRUCTION MODE INITIATED ..."

"//ABORT ALL DISPENSERS ..."

"Damn! He's trying to blow up the ship!" the Chronicler screams.

SELF-DESTRUCTION

Argyre has disabled the security system of the Black Atlantic and activated the self-destruct mechanism. There is no turning back now. If the characters do not find a way out, they will go down with the submarine.

VII. MESS HALL

The characters are surrounded by a formless flow of red and black. Shadows obscure outlines and obstruct views. A large communal dining room awaits them. It's the mess hall for the crew. With his back against the longer wall, the Halo scurries across the room. That damned Paler is back. Phunk! Phunk! The all-too-familiar sound of the submachine gun spitting its hail of bullets. Salvoes strike, barely missing the characters and ricocheting wildly across the room.

"Why did you do that?" These are the Paler's first words. The voice sounds gentle like a child's and yet reproachful.

"Does he think we activated the self-destruct mechanism?" Ampere whispers from behind a steel pipe.

The characters can answer Arnika with either words or fire.

"Why are you standing in the way of a god?" The Paler is obviously referring to his Sleeper Prophet. Arnika has full cover right now.

"Why the hell doesn't he flee? When the ship explodes, he will be nothing more than ashes, just like his master," Parel curses.

"Why don't you just give up? We've already lost everything. How much worse does it have to get for you to finally realize what you are dealing with?" Arnika shouts at the characters.

The Paler is engaged in a rearguard action, in order to prevent the characters from progressing any further. If they try to approach him by crossing through the open mess hall, he will fire instantly and then immediately reposition himself at the back of the hall.

The characters can try to break his concentration by wearing him down with words. A successful combination roll on PSY+Cunning (4) and INS+Empathy (3) is necessary to throw the Paler into a state of confusion. Arnika has never had the chance to negotiate with others. No one has ever engaged with him in a way that did not consist of orders. No one has ever asked for his opinion. A successful roll on CHA+Expression (3) allows a character to capture the attention of the Paler. Each Trigger increases Arnika's Difficulty level by (1) on the Initiative roll in the next round.

The characters can lock Arnika into a battle of words by inquiring as to why he joined Helios and what benefit this entanglement has for him.

"Everything," Arnika shouts, not fully certain of his answer himself. "Helios will bring about a new world!"

If the characters try to figure out how he intends to do that, Arnika will roar back, "Everything we once possessed made us slaves. It drove us mad. We must rid ourselves of everything if we want to be born anew."

"Someone has definitely gotten to the Paler," Ampere scoffs behind his cover.

"He's delusional," Parel says. "Not one screw has been left intact."

This is the characters' chance. If they want to get to the Paler, they have to act now. As soon as the characters open fire, Arnika realizes the mistake he has made and falls back.

Ampere stalks forward. "Come on. We have to cut him off," he rallies the characters.

VIII. BUNKS

Arnika escapes through a corridor that leads to the dormitories. Bunk beds are lined up against the walls of the long hallway. They give off a putrid odor. Moisture has settled into the mattresses, and mold blooms on their surfaces. The shrieking of the alarm continues.

The Halo emerges from his cover and fires at the characters with a salvo from his submachine gun. The next moment, he is ducking behind a row of bunk beds. Arnika can predict the characters' every step and each attempt at gaining ground is met with hell. They are at the mercy of his keen senses. They need to employ a different tactic; otherwise, it will only be a matter of time before he wipes them out.

Suddenly, lockers begin to topple, their contents crashing onto the metal floor and rolling in all directions.

A roll on INS+Perception (4) must succeed in order to keep an eye on the Paler amidst the distraction. He runs to one of the bunk beds and reaches for a backpack.

COMPLICATION

Even though the characters are only dealing with one enemy, Arnika should not be underestimated. The Paler is no stranger to the absence of light and fights without penalty. Not only that, his stealth and size allow him to disguise himself rather easily. He is well prepared for a confrontation such as this one. To detect him between the tables and behind a cover requires a successful roll on INS+Perception (4).

SPOILS OF WAR

As a game master, you must decide how much loot you want to throw your players' way during the storming of the Black Atlantic. The firearm lockers are full of ammunition and equipment, most of which is in mint condition. These items have survived centuries isolated from the outside world. However, plundering takes time. The more time the characters spend cracking safes and breaking into supply depots, the further ahead their opponents will be. As a game master, you should make sure to keep the pace lively. The blaring alarm and the distressing red light should remind the characters that the self-destruct mechanism is continuously ticking in the background.



Then, he swiftly sidesteps into the next area of the ship and takes off as fast as he can.

What could be in this backpack that is so important Arnika does not want to leave it behind? The characters have no time for discussions. They have to follow him.

IX. ENGINE ROOM

The next room reveals itself to be a maze. A forest of pipes rises in front of the characters and branches out into the darkness. Parel coughs wearily. The events of the past few days have taken their toll. Ampere is also short of breath. The characters still have enough stamina, but the red lights and the alarm have deafened all of their senses.

"Why are the fucking pipes so warm?" Ampere asks, visibly aggravated. He stumbles forward so he can get a better look at the room. Something gurgles loudly.

"The reactor," Parel quickly explains, placing his hand on the metal. "The frozen ballast water in the hull is melting."

Ampere does not have time to ask a second question. A bullet tears him off his feet, and he hits the floor. His eyes are wide open. Blood gushes from a large wound at his hip. Ampere gasps for air like a fish, shakily reaching out for the characters. They have to pull him out of the line of fire.

"He hit me!" the Chronicler gasps.

His fingers cramp as he sets his hand over the wound. His face is ghostly pale, and his body shakes with shock. Before the characters are able to find a way to bandage the wound, a ghastly clamor sounds from the corridor ahead of them. The sound is deafening. It is as if a giant shipping container has just shattered. The next moment, they see a wave rushing towards them.

Arnika has opened the ballast tank. The water from the ship's hull floods the engine room where the characters are. The tremendous force of the tidal wave washes over the group, knocking them off their feet.

The character closest to Ampere must make a roll on BOD+Power (3) in order to hold on to the Chronicler, or else the torrent will wash him away.

All characters must roll on BOD+Athletics (3) to stay afloat. With INS+Perception (3), they see a rescue ladder that leads up to a higher level on the ship. Parel is trapped between the pipes and machines. He is in desperate need of help. If no one comes to his aid, the vortex will pull him under, and he will drown. The water is freezing cold, and the character who comes to his rescue must succeed in a combination roll on BOD+Athletics (4) and BOD+Power (3) in order to free the Salt Wolf and swim with him to the ladder.

If the characters work together, they will be able to bring themselves and their allies to safety. Blood trickles

DER SCHLÄFER ERWACHT UND IST BEREIT
UND BEFREIT VOM RAUM LEBT ER IN DER VISION
DURCHSCHREITET DEINEN TRAUM IN GEHEIMER MISSION
UND ER KÄMPFT UM DIE ANDEREN AUS IHREM TRAUM ZU WECKEN
WEIL ER WEISS DASS IN IHNEN VIELE KLEINE KRIEGER STECKEN

[DIE FANTASTISCHEN VIER]

down the Chronicler's leg. The pain is so intense he can hardly stand up by himself. He needs a character to hold him up.

"It must not end like this!" Hopelessness resonates in Ampere's voice.

X. WEAPON SILO

The group has reached the upper floor. Massive silos rise up like faceless idols in front of them. The characters have just enough time to catch their breath and take care of Ampere's wound. The Chronicler urgently needs help.

In the darkness and turmoil, a successful roll on INT+Medicine (3) is necessary to stanch the bleeding. For now. Above a row of control switches, monitors flicker a manic red.

GPS data rattles across the screens like gunfire. A roll on INT+Science (3) reveals what this room is used for. It is a weapon silo full of warheads that are currently aimed at their programmed targets.

Parel is struck still with awe. His mouth agape, he stares up at the silos that soar up towards the ceiling. "Nuclear bombs!" he whispers.

"That's what Argyre wanted to prevent. Helios intends to cremate entire cities with this arsenal," Ampere hisses between his teeth.

The characters suddenly remember the naval chart in Helios' base of operations. The nail with the three threads leading to Aquitaine, Bath, and London – these must be his targets.

Meanwhile, the self-destruction mechanism of the submarine continues to tick.

It is getting warmer and warmer. A race against time has begun that will either result in the destruction of the Black Atlantic or the death of tens of thousands of people.

If the characters look around the deck they are on, they will realize that there is no way out. A strange wall prevents them from going any further. A roll on INT+Engineering (2) shows that this part was built on to the weapon silo after its initial construction. Trying to find out what is hidden behind it is useless.

"We have to get out of here!" The Salt Wolf has comprehended the severity of the situation. His nerves are raw.

Looking down from their location into the flooded engine room, the characters realize that the water level is starting to fall. The ballast tank is slowly running dry. Their only option is to cross it so they can get to the bow of the ship.

The Paler must have taken the same route, because no trace of him has been left behind in either the weapon silo or the engine room.

XI. BALLAST TANK

The bottom of the ballast tank is still under water. It is difficult to say how deep. The characters can barely see their hands in front of their faces. If they shine some light on the water, the surface will glisten.

"That scum must have swum through! How else could he have gotten out of here?," Parel curses. The characters must decide if they are willing to take the plunge or not. It's now or never.

The water is cold and murky. It takes (6) full combat rounds to dive through the ballast tank. BOD + Stamina of a character determines how many combat rounds they are able to hold their breath. Each character must succeed in a combination roll on INS+Perception (4) and BOD+Athletics (3) in order to navigate the turbid waters and move forward at the same time. If the roll fails, the dive will take one combat round longer, and the character must repeat the combination roll. Each additional failed roll increases the number

of combat rounds under water. Each round that exceeds a character's BOD+Stamina costs the player (1) Ego Point. In order to avoid falling prey to panic in the dark, a roll on INT+Focus (3) or INS+Primal (3) is necessary. If the roll fails, the character will lose their bearings.

A red ray of light pierces through a crack in front of the characters. That must be the way out. With their last ounce of strength, the group swims upwards.

Finally, there is air.

XII. TORPEDO COMPARTMENT

Helios' blithe applause welcomes the characters. The Sleeper Prophet has let his white robe fall to the floor. A silver shimmering suit encases his body like a second skin. Cable ducts run along his arm. The symbol from the bow of the Black Atlantic shines on his chest.

The Paler crouches beside him, soaking wet. Jehammed's will in his hands. The disc, star, and spear are combined. The Paler starts to load his submachine gun.

"No, Arnika," Helios says coolly. "Let them come out of the water first."

The alarm cannot be heard in this area, but the red light illuminates the room. Along the wall behind the Sleeper Prophet and his Halo, torpedoes are stacked up to the ceiling.

"Are you crazy, Helios?" Parel is livid. Dripping with water, he climbs out of the ballast tank. "Can't you see we're all going to die any minute now?"

"Why do you find it necessary to get in my way then?" Helios asks with a sneer. "Do you still have yet to understand? Argyre has activated a Thor laser and wants to destroy the Minerva. Up there in the Earth's orbit is our last salvation and our only future." Helios lifts his finger, drawing Parel's attention to the ceiling. "The potential of this weapon lies in the hands of the Marauder. If we do not stop him, billions of people will have died in vain."

The Sleeper Prophet points to Jehammed's will, which is in Arnika's hands.

"Everything he has been searching for over the years has been encoded on this artifact. All the coordinates for his day of reckoning."

He turns his palms towards the characters and aims at them. The air scintillates and vibrates. An intense heat wafts through the room.

"You will not stop me from destroying Jehammed's Will."

The characters can roll INS+Empathy (3) to spy Arnika's ears as they prick up at his master's last sentence. He responds with a look of disbelief.

"The sun gives life, but it takes it as well! Stars burn out!" Helios says.

Before he can shoot at the characters, though, a salvo from Arnika's submachine gun hits him in the stomach.

CHANGING ALLIANCES

Helios stares at his wound in astonishment, then at his Halo. He is unable to grasp the treacherous attack that has just been carried out.

"You false fucking prophet! You never once talked about destroying the artifact!" Arnika howls. Helios ignores the characters and aims his Microwave Pulsor at Arnika. The beam coming from Helios' palm cuts through the Paler's shoulder. With lightning speed, the Halo dives for cover and reaches for his backpack. He immediately shoots a salvo at his master.

Helios aims his Pulsor at the characters again. They have to get out of the way. A battle is under way. The Sleeper Prophet fights tooth and nail for his life's work. "Give me the artifact, you piece of shit!"

Arnika does not hesitate for a second. He throws his backpack to the characters and the contents scatter, rattling over the checker plate floor.

"Put that around his neck!" the Paler shouts to the group.

ARNIKA

Arnika is shocked. His master deceived him. Helios had never said anything about destroying Jehammed's Will. The Halo is fully aware of the power that the artifact holds: it is the key to Exalt's Grindworks. If the characters want to defeat Helios, they must team up with the Paler. As a game master, you should use the ensuing chaos as a means to get your players to make quick decisions. The current situation does not allow time for discussions.

Even if the group is unable to defeat Helios with physical might, they still have a chance. Arnika. He is their last hope. The Paler has one EMP grenade left, which can disable the cybernetics of Helios' Free-Spirit suit.



"NO!" Helios seethes with rage upon seeing the object. Argyre's yoke lies on the ground. He tries to get to the collar before the characters can grab it. A character must act quickly in order to get the yoke in time. Got it! The eel-shaped collar is ice-cold.

"NEVER!" the Sleeper Prophet shouts and shoots his microwave beam at the character holding the yoke.

The characters and Arnika must fight together if they want to defeat Helios. His suit is fully charged. His BOD+Force is (14). The characters have to compete against him in a cooperative roll. In order to get the Sleeper Prophet on the ground, they must obtain more successes than him. To put the yoke around his neck, they need to keep him on the ground for another combat round.

The Sleeper Prophet is on a rampage. Equipped with superhuman cybernetics, he stops at nothing to shake off the attackers. The veins in his eyes are bursting with rage and saliva drips from his mouth. The suit starts to overheat and beads of sweat collect on his brow. Then the yoke snaps into place.

"NOOOO!" Helios roars again. His arms are trembling. He tries to increase the power load of his suit. Arnika comes to the characters' aid. An evil red dot lights up on the yoke and with a jolt, the collar contracts and gives off a loud hiss. Arnika lets go of Helios and jumps backwards.

"Get away from him!" the Paler shouts.

Helios struggles to get up. His eyes bulge and he gasps. In a last-ditch effort, he fires random shots around the room with his Pulsor. His head quivers as chromium tears flow down his cheeks. As if in a time lapse, small beads of cotton-colored fluff squeeze through his pores and cover his face like mold.

The yoke crystallizes the nanites in Helios' bloodstream. The Sleeper Prophet freezes, turning into a grotesque wax figure.



XIII. CRYOSTASIS CHAMBER

The temperature is becoming unbearable. Arnika grabs Jehammed's Will and aims his machine pistol at the characters. His eyes reveal a deep-seated sense of uncertainty. He does not know what lies ahead of him. Arnika looks up at his master who is fixed in his fate. The Halo's life has never been so devoid of meaning.

"Paler! Is there a way out at the bow?" Ampere musters up what little strength he has left.

Arnika looks at the group. He hesitates before nodding.

"Yes. We have to unlock the dispenser."

"The ship has a dispenser?" Ampere is shocked.

"More Sleepers?" Parel asks.

Arnika nods. "Sixteen." Then he looks back at what remains of Helios. "He wanted to awaken them."

The Chronicler does not understand. Arnika blinks at the artifact in his hands and runs to a set of stairs that leads up a shaft. The group arrives at a sealed entry hatch. In the middle of the portal is a round recess. Jehammed's spear fits perfectly inside.

"Which cascade?" Ampere asks as he struggles up the stairs.

"500. They are long overdue. If the Black Atlantic had not gone astray, they would have landed a long time ago."

"But the self-destruction mechanism opened the dis-

pensers!" Ampere warns.

Suddenly, the alarm system screeches.

"//MELTDOWN IMMINENT ..."

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-10 ..."

"We don't have any choice!" Parel screams up the narrow flight of stairs. Arnika presses Jehammed's Will into the cavity in the portal. The artifact locks in place. The Paler moves it clockwise and six bolts burst from their anchors. A glacial breeze hisses from the hollowed spaces. The portal rises, and the stench of decay wafts towards the group.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-9 ..."

The characters run up the stairs. Open dispensers flank a long hall. A frigid fog sweeps over the open cryostasis chambers. Stains of black mucus cover the walls, sticking to the floor and the dispensers. The entire chamber is filled with it.

"Black Water!" Parel's words mirror the characters' thoughts. Leviathanics has spread through the cryostasis chamber. It entered the ship's hull through the ballast water. A pulsating hole on the ceiling that has been patched with some sort of adhesive must be where the leak is. They are standing in the middle of a spore field of the sixth Earth Chakra.

Suddenly, there is a rustling sound from one of the dispensers.



INCUBI

The sound is all too familiar. The characters heard the same hissing noise at the harbor when they first encountered Leviathanics. A groan follows immediately. Then a rattling as symphonic as an entire nest of rattlesnakes.

A silhouette becomes visible in the frosty mist of a dispenser. A human being is vaguely recognizable, but the black fractals have completely consumed it and distorted its physique. Dead eyes stare at the characters.

A deep growl echoes from the creature's throat. It leaps out of the dispenser and starts attacking.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-8 ..."

A large gate at the end of the hall is their only way out. Everywhere in the dispensers, bodies begin stirring about. The characters will never be able to defend themselves against a horde of Leviathans. Their only option is to flee. While part of the party defends itself as best as they can, the others must open the gate. Parel and Ampere rush to the exit. Arnika assists the characters with the rearguard battle.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T - 7 ..."

The Leviathans are full-grown Incubi. The spore affliction must have occurred decades ago. Cryostasis was the only thing that kept them from awakening. Now they stumble forward out into the world. Programmed to propagate, their only goal is to infest as much organic matter as

possible so that they can merge with it.

To open the gate at the end of the hall, it is necessary to make a cooperative roll on BOD+Force (3) and collect (14) successes. The beasts cry out in agony as Arnika fires salvo after salvo at the approaching Incubi. A nettle whip winds around the Paler's leg and he crashes to the ground.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-6 ..."

The gate behind them creaks. Arnika tries to lift himself up. An Incubus attacks the Paler and pushes him to the ground. The fractals on its skin ripple. The creature opens its mouth wide, prepared to sink its fangs into the Halo. Arnika fires his last round through the monster's chest, then rolls over and jumps to his feet. Another whip winds around the Paler's neck. There is no ammunition left. His eyes fill with despair. The Incubus reveals its amniotic sac and tries to pull Arnika in. Arnika throws Jehammed's Will to the characters. The artifact sails through the air as three Leviathans overpower the Paler and tear him to pieces.

The golden disc slides across the floor. A character must grab it before it is too late.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-5 ..."

LEVIATHANS

Facing the Incubi is a death wish, pure and simple. Leviathanics has infested sixteen Sleepers and has merged with the nanite blood in their bloodstream. This grants them not only Phenomena, but also increased regenerative powers. Without flamethrowers, grenades, or heavy artillery fire, the characters don't have a fighting chance against these beasts.

XIV. TAKE OFF

The gate is open and a launch hangar is in view. A vehicle similar to a boat is there. It sits slanted on a ramp and is ready to be launched from the bow.

"Hovercraft," Parel shouts.

"Can you pilot that thing?" Ampere gasps, following quickly behind him. The characters must try to get the gate closed and give Parel cover while he figures out how to get the craft launched. The characters push the heavy doors using all the strength they have while the Leviathans hammer against the metal barrier from the other side. Each round, the group must make a cooperative roll on BOD+Force (2) and collect at least (8) successes in order to hold the gate shut.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-4 ..."

Engines howl and propellers spin behind the characters. The bow of the Black Atlantic opens, and daylight pours into the hangar. Ampere yells something, but the roar of the turbines drowns out his voice. They have to run if they want to board the hovercraft. BOD+Athletics (2) is necessary in order to make it in time for the launch. Ampere holds the side door open for them. The gate flings open behind them as the Incubi come storming in.

"//SELF DESTRUCT IN T-3 ..."

Parel lifts a lever and the launch pad rises. A loud bang catapults the escape vessel out onto the sea like a cannonball. The abrupt acceleration flings the characters into their seats, knocking the wind out of them. The horizon and the sky fade into a smear of gray and blue. Clouds whistle past above the characters' heads, and their sense of orientation keels over, floating off into the sky. Hundreds of meters further, the vehicle crashes into the water and decelerates sharply. The resulting pressure cruelly thrusts itself on their eardrums.

Parel pulls the hovercraft up and over the surface of the water. It instantly makes three leaps across the waves. The Salt Wolf finally has the vehicle under control and accelerates to top speed. The fan is so loud that it is impossible to even hear one's own thoughts. Suddenly, a yellow flash comes from behind the characters. If they look back, they will see a huge trail of smoke rising in the distance, heading north. The first nuclear warhead has been fired.

Another flash follows immediately. A second rocket shoots into the dusky gray sky from the Black Atlantic.

Parel pushes the hovercraft to its limits trying to put more distance between the iceberg and the vehicle. Ampere cannot believe his eyes. He watches as the two columns of smoke whip towards the blanket of clouds.

A third flash appears and everything becomes unbearably bright. A glistening white, followed by a furious yellow, and then a devastating orange. Finally, the sky turns dark. The next moment, the roar of the detonation catches up with them. The iceberg breaks apart into fragments and disappears into the waves. A raging current chases after them, trying to drown them in its forceful waters. Shards of ice, the size of houses, strike the water like meteorites of fury. Death spreads its wings. It rears its head out of a massive pitch-black cloud that rises up into the sky several kilometers beyond.

The characters have survived. Jehammed's Will is in their possession.

Helios, however, has won.

UNCERTAINTY

The characters only saw two rockets take off, but the coordinates in the weapon silo revealed three distinct targets. That means one city has been spared.

The characters can only speculate as to which one it was.

While Ampere shares his worst fears with the characters, Parel recoils into a grim silence. With howling engines, he races towards Brest

HIGH PRIEST OF HOLOCAUST,
FIRE FROM THE SEA
NUCLEAR WINTER SPREADING DISEASE,
THE DAY OF FINAL CONFLICT
ALL PAY THE PRICE...

[MEGADETH]

XV. NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST

The first nuclear warhead races across Britain. Its target is Bath. It has been launched in order to destroy the Thor laser, which is the last functional cannon of its kind. It is Argyre's life work. It is the weapon required to shoot down the Minerva — the space station where he suspects his arch-enemy Getrell has holed himself up. For decades, he has been toiling away at it, trying to get the laser up and running. The only thing he was missing was Jehammed's Will, which could have calculated the exact location of the Minerva in the earth's orbit and aligned the cosmic retaliatory weapon accordingly. In a few minutes, everything will be over.

Almost a thousand kilometers to the south, Aquitaine moans under a heat wave. This day in October is far too hot for the season. Ordinateur, the longest-serving Fragment and founder of the Cluster, has never experienced such a fall day in all his years on the western coast of Franka. He checks the weather data, the annual averages; anything he can get a hold of. It does not make any sense. The Stream

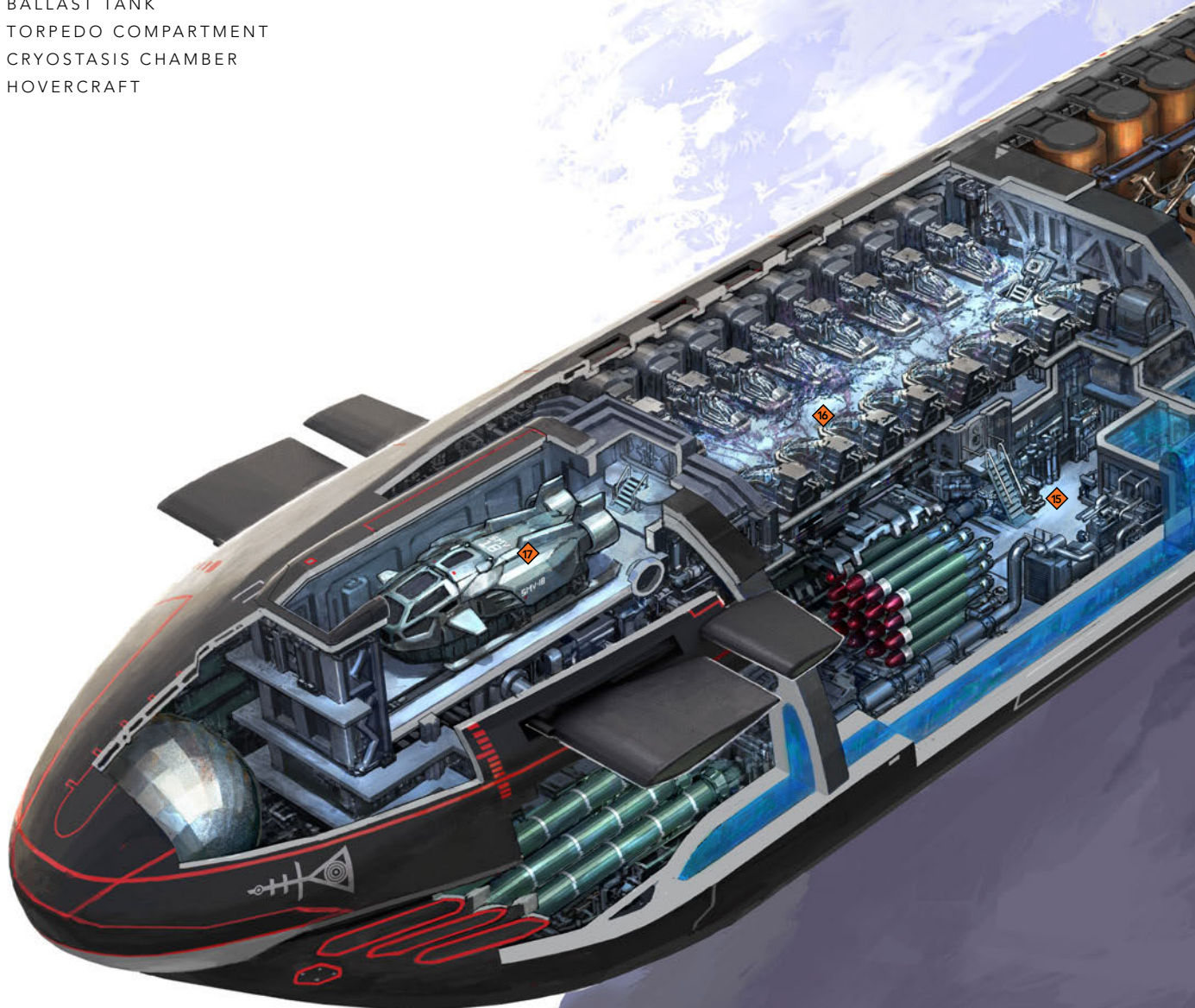
is of no help either. He has survived ninety-eight winters by always avoiding summer. He smiles and checks the incoming data on the Stream. The sonar antenna receives an abnormal measurement. The curve is much too steep, as if a huge bullet were racing across the sky. He shakes his head in disbelief and enters a request into the main system of the Cluster. Ordinateur waits. Forever.

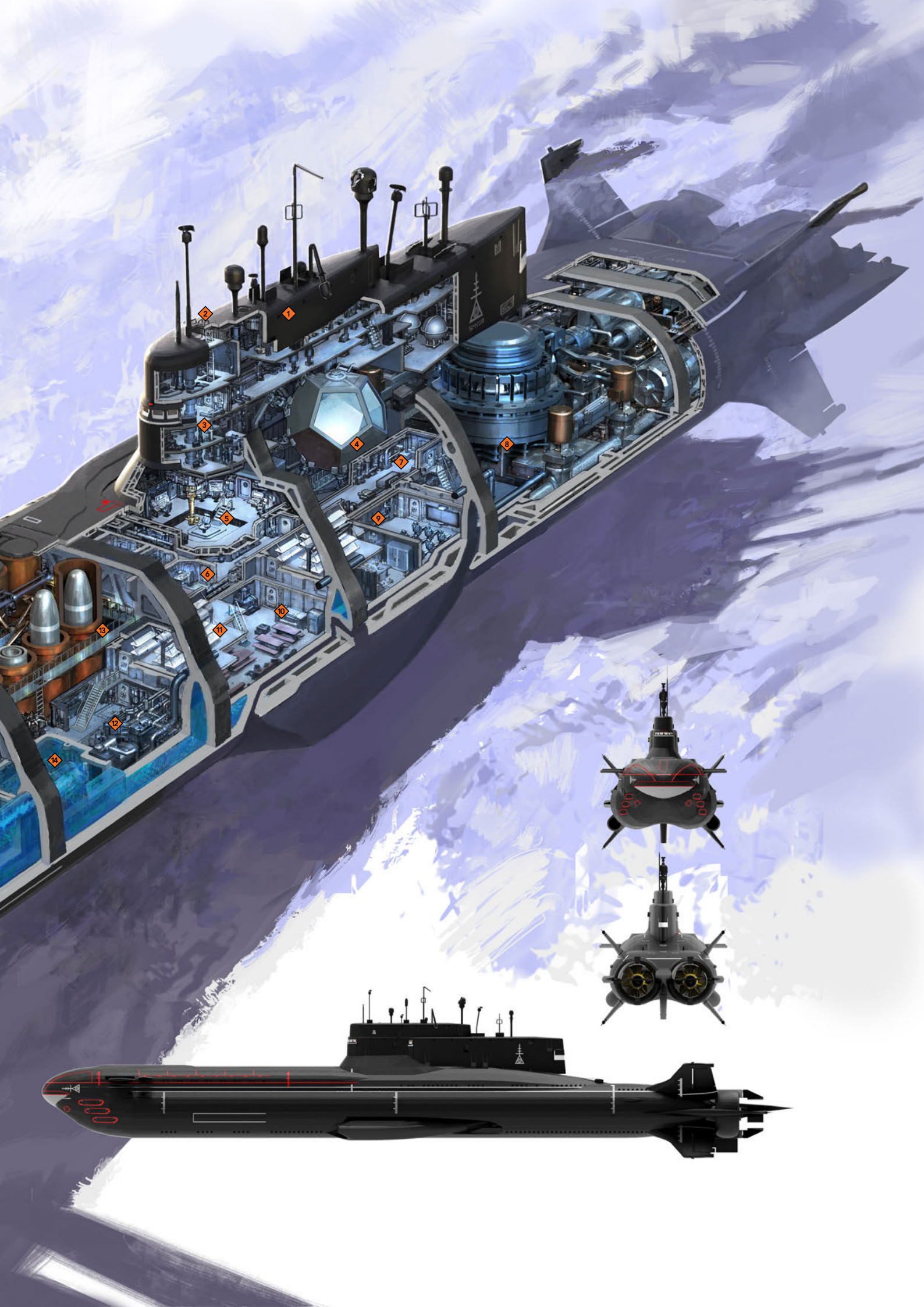
The second warhead hits the Aquitaine Cluster without warning. The hijacked Free Spirit gear, which the Chroniclers used to build the Cluster, marked the target in Helios' reticule of revenge. The five-megaton explosion rips through the heart of the city. Ninety thousand people burn out like stars.

Three minutes later, the blast wave can be felt in Toulouse, but it will take at least another two days for the Resistance to assess the extent of the massacre. And another two weeks before the news of Aquitaine's annihilation reaches Briton.

THE BLACK ATLANTIC

01. CONNING TOWER
02. CONTROL HATCH
03. INFORMATION BRIDGE
04. THE POLYHEDRON
05. COMMANDO BRIDGE
06. ADMIRAL'S CABIN
07. SAFETY CYLINDER
08. THE REACTOR
09. TROOP QUARTERS
10. MESS HALL
11. BUNKS
12. ENGINE ROOM
13. WEAPON SILO
14. BALLAST TANK
15. TORPEDO COMPARTMENT
16. CRYOSTASIS CHAMBER
17. HOVERCRAFT







A large, white, distressed number 4 is positioned on the right side of the page. The number has a rough, hand-painted appearance with visible brushstrokes and some black speckling, giving it a gritty, industrial feel. It stands out prominently against the dark, textured background.

CHAPTER

THROWN TO THE GODS



FINALE SCORCHED EARTH

MISSION CONCORDE

The Red Pack got wind of the story about the Ganarids and the Scrapper on the peninsula of the furriers. Rumors made their way around the fish market of Godasse that very next morning. The Spitalians had been hiding around these parts for days and when the news reached them, Vega immediately arrived at certain conclusions. If the Scrapper was infected with Leviathanics, it must have happened out on the Atlantic, which would mean that she knows where the Mother spore field is located. Vega asked around for Garlene and eventually figured out her connection to Parel's island and the characters.

The Red Pack hid out on a boat in the middle of the Penfeld after attacking Ushant. Vega expected the Anabaptists to react rashly and indeed, they did. Instead of searching for the Spitalians, they headed for Rennes. They only needed one victim to set these events in motion. Vatenguerre was the perfect distraction. Once the Anabaptists tasted blood, she knew they would relentlessly pursue their vendetta and the coast would be clear for the third phase of their mission: the abduction of the Scrapper. Once they had Garlene, they were able to locate the Mother spore field of Leviathanics.

The characters made it difficult for Vega to carry out her plans. However, when they suddenly left for Morlaix, Parel's island was left at the mercy of the Red Pack.

SCENE 20: VENDETTA

The hovercraft races into the roadstead, whipping across the water. Brest rises in the distance.

"We have to warn everyone!" Parel's voice startles the group after having not heard a sound from him for hours. The ride was brutal. Everything they just experienced in the short time between morning and noon is far beyond anything they could have ever imagined. Their experience on the Celtic Sea has rattled them to the core and everybody is on edge.

The fish market comes into view as Parel banks the hovercraft, making a sharp turn up the Penfeld. The vehicle races upstream.

They can see the island. Parel brakes abruptly and steers the hovercraft on its side. The air cushions crash against a pier and the craft comes to a standstill.

The Salt Wolf jumps out of the driver's cabin. Ampere carefully peels himself out of his seat and shakes his legs trying to get the feeling back into his wobbly limbs.

"POLI?" Parel screams. There is no answer. The Salt Wolf runs up to the warehouse.

"MONIA?"

Someone or something went through the sliding entrance.

"No! No! No!" Parel curses under his breath and runs inside.

The characters have difficulties staying apace with him.

"KRISS?"

The warehouse is in shambles. Toppled tables, shattered instruments, and torn maps are scattered everywhere. The door to the stilt house is wide open. The Salt Wolf sprints up the stairs with the last of his strength.

"GARLENE?"

Palpitations. Something terrible has happened. The kitchen has been completely destroyed. There is blood on the fixtures and the workbenches. Parel trembles. The characters follow him as he creeps over to the bunks.

Valentino lies alone in a pool of blood.

"Oh no! Please, no!" Parel cries out. He kneels next to the boy, trying to speak to him. Valentino's face has been beaten to a pulp. Someone has tortured him. His left eyelid trembles. A sign of life.

"VAL! VAL! Talk to me!" Parel wipes the blood from the boy's face.

"... they ...", Valentino whispers mustering what little strength he has left.

Parel cannot hold back the tears. His sobs leave him unable to speak and the characters have to take over. The fourteen-year-old boy is in bad condition. His jaw is broken and someone has knocked out his teeth. A thick trickle of blood drips from the corner of his mouth. If they ask who did this to him, he will try to say something.

"... Spitalians ...", is all the characters understand. "... ttthey, they have Garleeene and the others ..."

If the characters ask Valentino where the attackers have fled, the boy, barely able to keep his eyes open, will respond, "... Caaarnac ..."

The Mouse's eyes close for the last time. Valentino is dead. Parel collapses with grief.

THINGS NOT WHAT THEY USED TO BE,
MISSING ONE INSIDE OF ME
DEATHLY LOSS THIS CAN'T BE REAL
CANNOT STAND THIS HELL I FEEL

[METALLICA]

I. SALT OF THE EARTH

Parel bangs his fists against his head in despair. The sight of the dead Mouse is too much for him. Ampere pulls him away from the bunk and forces him back into the kitchen. Forlorn, the Salt Wolf screams until he can no longer breathe.

The Mouse was brutally murdered. "Spitalians" and "Carnac" are the only leads the characters have. Garlene knows the way to the Atlas platform. Vega must have taken her so she could get there.

The last ally the characters have left in Brest is Oppolus. The king is the only one who can still rally men and assist the characters. If they want to intercept the Spitalians at Carnac, they must reach Oppolus' castle and inform the king of the situation.

As they turn away from the bunk, Parel looks at them pleadingly.

"Where are they?" a growl escapes from deep inside of him.

If the characters tell him where they think the Spitalians took Garlene and the other Mice, he will kick a wooden slat out of its frame. It falls to the floor and reveals a secret compartment underneath. He reaches for Garlene's shotgun, throws two E-cubes to Ampere, and wipes the tears from his face with his sleeve. Three steps later, he is out the door.

Not knowing what else to do, the deathly pale Ampere downs a bottle of distillate and schleps after him without a word. Outside, the hovercraft is already howling.

BRITON'S ROCK

Parel drops the characters off at the castle and makes his way to the harbor with the hovercraft. After they have informed Oppolus of the situation, the characters are to meet Parel at the harbor. The Salt Wolf will meanwhile use the time to fuel up.

There are no chapel guards at the castle. It is completely deserted. Vicarent must have mustered all the Anabaptists and dispatched them to Rennes.

The characters rush through empty halls and corridors. A lonely cook jumps in shock as he sees the group running by.

The throne room is right in front of them. Oppolus sits at his table, overcome with immense grief. His hair is a mess. Lost in thought, he swivels a hunting horn around its

IMBALI'S ESCAPE

Imbali found what she was looking for in Barringer. A descendant of the Jackal is wrapped in the Imiut skin. His Ka is untainted, his life thread undefiled. She wants to awaken the Ascetic in the megalithic field of Carnac so that he may see the world through the eyes of an Anubian. Imbali hopes that this will fulfill her prophecy and allow her into Cairo, where she will finally be able to follow the path of the Hogon. Barringer was the last of her trials that she needed to complete in order to ultimately prove herself. It was her task to bring the descendant back to Anubis and prepare him for the awakening of the Jackal.

JEHAMMED'S WILL

The characters have to decide whether to hand over Jehammed's Will to Ampere or to keep it in their possession. The Chronicler, however, does not even look remotely capable of defending the artifact. This object is responsible for all of the madness in the last few days. Deciding to leave it unguarded now is a recipe for disaster.

own axis on the tabletop. He raises his eyebrows incredulously when he realizes that the characters are standing right in front of him.

"I thought you had fled and abandoned us!"

If the characters try to explain what happened, his face will become a study in bewilderment. Although the old man is unable to process the events he has just heard, he rises to his feet immediately. If they tell him that they think the Spitalians are on their way to Carnac, he will grab his harpoon.

"Carnac? What in the world is in Carnac? It's a Scrapper hamlet with no more than two hundred souls!" He struggles to follow the characters' words.

"An oil platform," Ampere sighs weakly. "We believe that the Spitalians want to get to a secret oil platform out in the Atlantic. It is only reachable via Carnac." The Chronicler uses the table as a crutch to support the weight of his body. He has lost a significant amount of blood.

Oppolus takes his hunting horn in his hand and opens the double door leading to the balcony. He steps out and sounds it, three short blows and three long ones. A gong answers from the city gates, first in Godasse, then in Unir. The king addresses the group.

"Part of the Brest Guard is still here. Fifty warriors in total. All of the others have left with Vicarent."

Hastily, he swigs down a goblet sitting on the table and walks to the exit. "We'll meet at the harbor. The Chronicler will not survive another two hours at sea."

Ampere winces in pain.

Suddenly, a medicine woman from the Balsam House comes rushing into the throne room. Her cheeks are flushed and soaked with tears. "Oppolus!" she yells. "It's Barringer! He's gone! The Anubian has disappeared with your son!"

Oppolus cannot believe his ears.

"Carnac," Ampere moans. The Chronicler stares at the characters. "Don't you remember? The Anubian wants to go to Carnac!"

Oppolus freezes. "The megaliths!" he suddenly bursts out.

He whirls around. "Bring the Chronicler to the Balsam House and take care of him there," he orders the medicine woman. "We must go to Carnac."

II. THE LAST HUNT

When they finally reach the harbor, dozens of armed hunters are already assembled on the jetties. They are waiting for Oppolus' orders. Parel, however, is nowhere to be found. It seems that despair drove the Salt Wolf mad and the old man left for Carnac on his own.

"Who is the fastest runner amongst you? Come forward," Oppolus calls. Three men step in front of him. The king evaluates his options.

"Kelvin! You will run to Unir." Oppolus points his finger at a youth with fire-red hair. "Grab a horse from Reuters' stable and catch up with Vicarent. If you ride the horse to its death, continue on foot. Tell Vicarent to change course and head to Carnac. We have located the Spitalians."

Kelvin nods and rushes north without asking any questions.

"The rest of you, take the fastest motorboats and jet skis. We are setting off for Carnac. We have to hunt down the Spitalians. We must catch up with them, or this will certainly be our last walrus hunt in peace." He turns and looks the characters in the eye. "You too!"

Oppolus gets off the pier and mounts one of the vehicles. The engine roars.

The characters can take the craft of their choice or ride in a motorboat with the hunters. Regardless of which option they decide on, Carnac is inevitable.

OFF TO THE SOUTHEAST

The night reclaims the Northwest and devours the cliffs of the roadstead. Only the headlights of jet skis roaring past cast their cold light onto an uncertain future. Screeching engines fade into the background as the characters become consumed by their thoughts and isolate themselves. What hell awaits them in Carnac? What could top the nightmare of the last few days? What is Parel's fate? What has befallen the other Mice? Where are Monia, Kriss, Claude and the Scrapper Garlene? What has happened to Eris and Poli? Did they escape in time? Did the Horned One catch up to them? Did stray Pictons take them prisoner? Or did they fall victim to the tidal wave of the detonation?

The questions go round in endless circles. There are no answers. The events of the last hours and days have taken their toll. The experiences rush past the characters' inner eye, filling them with rage, despair and a thirst for vengeance. The final battle is near. Each character regains their entire Ego pool before engaging in the last mission.

SCENE 21: ALL ROADS LEAD TO CARNAC

It is the middle of the night and a light glows on the horizon. This is Carnac. The armada of Britoni warriors veers towards the mainland. The outlines of boathouses and cranes are visible against the midnight blue sky. All is quiet.

Oppolus leads the host of boats and jet skis into the shallow bay of the small freight port. The king jumps down into the knee-deep water and wades to the beach.

A quick glance offers the characters a view of the settlement in its entirety. Carnac is a small hamlet. There is no trace of Parel and the hovercraft or the Spitalians.

"Listen! Split up. Search the houses and the Scrapper joint up there."

He orders the first group of hunters, pointing in the direction they are to go. He turns to the second group: "You all secure the beach. Search everything left and right from here."

Then, he looks at the characters. "Follow me! We are going to inspect the megaliths."

THROUGH THE WOODS

Oppolus crouches and enters the wet thicket in front of them. A dense forest rises behind Carnac, protecting the village against wind and weather. It is dark, but the ruler is in his element here. He moves over the rocks, damp moss, and rustling leaves, confidence in every step he takes.

"The field is above the settlement," Oppolus whispers to the characters. "In twenty breaths' time, we will be there."

The wooded area is eerie. Animal cries. Babbling brooks. Branches cracking. The rustling of the forest floor. Sounds come from every direction. The moon and the sky are barely visible from down here. The character tormented by the Haunting feels an uneasiness sneak through their body. They feel the warmth of hot breath on their neck, but there is nothing behind them. A roll on INS+Primal (2) confirms their premonition. Something is in the forest. But what? The Horned One? No one could have made it from Morlaix to Carnac in a single day. Is the Horned One even human? The thought torments the character as they gradually approach a clearing. The underbrush gives way to an open field.

I. THE MEGALITHIC FIELD

The grass is damp and covered with dew. No tree has grown in this field for thousands of years. It extends hundreds of meters straight in front of them as if someone had drawn it with a ruler. Shoulder-high megaliths protrude out of the wet ground. There

must be thousands of them. In the darkness, it is difficult to tell how many there are in total. The clouds part, letting in the moonlight which glistens on the crude stone blocks. A thin layer of frost lies on the megaliths, which have stood here since the beginning of time.

"Quiet!" Oppolus warns the characters. "Spread out!"

Oppolus separates from the group and sneaks through the knee-high underbrush. The characters can follow him or walk through another row of stones. A roll on AGI+Stealth (2) is necessary to move between the steles without being noticed. INS+Perception (3) reveals a sound coming from the nearby forest. Suddenly, a white stallion leaps out of the thicket. It snorts as it trots into the clearing. The animal is bridled, but without a rider. The horse neighs briefly before sniffing the grass for chestnuts.

Someone has to be here. But where?

A roll on INS+Perception (4) must succeed in order to pierce through the darkness. There. A hundred meters across the field, an almost indistinguishable figure tugs at something between the stones. The characters need to get closer if they want to find out what is going on over there.

It is Imbali. She is dragging the body wrapped in Imiut skin through the tall grass. Oppolus has also detected the movement and motions the characters to surround the Anubian.

A roll on AGI+Stealth (3) is required to get within ten paces of her. Imbali is singing. Soft and barely audible, she hums under her breath.

Is this an Anubian ritual?

Oppolus has no intention of waiting for the answer to present itself on its own.

PURE STRAIN

"Lay my son down on the grass, you snake woman!" Oppolus steps out from behind a megalith with his harpoon, pointing it at Imbali. The characters can also choose to let their presence be known.

The Anubian curses irately, unable to believe that the characters have betrayed her. Carefully, she puts the Imiut skin containing Barringer on the ground.

"Take two steps back. Now!" Oppolus gruffly orders.

"He's not your son," Imbali replies disparagingly. "He belongs to a tribe older than yours, dear King!" she hisses. "Older than all the tribes on earth."

If the characters ask what she means, she will growl in their direction: "You brought the Fisher King here, did you not? What do you know? You're nothing more than larvae digging through a rotten carcass."

Oppolus approaches the woman. The characters can come closer and form a circle around them. If they pull their guns, Imbali will respond by mocking them.

"I saved your companion's life and this is how you repay me? By pointing a gun at someone who helped you when you were in need. No wonder they call you crows!"

If the characters confront Imbali and try to find out why she abducted Barringer, she will gasp, infuriated at their line of questioning.

"Because he is better than the rest of us! Because he did not deserve to live his life with those whose core has been eaten away at by the Ba!"

Oppolus has heard enough. With the stock of his harpoon, he tries to strike Imbali in the head, hoping to knock her senseless. The Anubian, however, reacts with lightning speed. She meets the blow in the air with her left hand and breaks the stock of the harpoon in half with her right elbow. In one fluid motion, she rams the splintered end of the harpoon into Oppolus' thigh.

The king groans and falls to his knees in pain. Imbali whirls around and goes into a battle stance in order to defend herself against the characters.

"What kind of rotten traitors are you?" Every syllable is a reprimand. "Would you rather Barringer died and be up to your necks in the blood of a ruined country or see the king's foster son freed so that he may live forever?"

Oppolus rips the broken harpoon shaft from his thigh and stretches himself out on a megalith before standing up.

"HE IS MY SON!" the king roars with all his heart.

"No. He is his son," Imbali counters, looking past him into the field.



II. THE END OF THE EARTH AGE

A frightening sound blazes across the megalithic field, rattling as if a hail of hollow bones were falling from the sky. The bone drum blares through the night.

Something is roaming between the stone steles. The silhouette resembles a gaunt jackal. Its ribs protrude through its matted fur, but its abdomen is bloated as if the jackal had just gorged itself on the dead. A golden crown sparkles above the figure's head. It opens its seven eyes.

The vision is so strong that everything else around the characters blurs. The megalithic field has turned into a ghastly field of corpses. The jackal lowers its skull and gnaws at the bodies scattered upon the ground.

The horizon lights up in the West, burning brightly. The seven-eyed jackal raises its gaze and scrutinizes the characters. A dull growl rises from its belly and a mixture of blood and foam drips from its lips. Its ears perk up as if it has heard something. A deep thud mingles with the clattering of bones. It is getting closer and closer. The jackal raises its head in the air in order to trace the scent of danger.

Suddenly, a black ram bursts out from between the megaliths and rams the jackal's flank. The scavenger crashes to the ground, and the ram sinks its teeth into its throat. The black ram rages, tearing pieces of meat from the body of his prey. The jackal desperately snaps at the enemy, but the ram does not give in, instead trampling it into the dust. It pulls back and rams its horns into the jackal's stomach.

The clattering of the bones has become so loud that it drowns out all of the other sounds. The characters feel a tingling sensation on their skin as if there were a static discharge. The next moment they are back in the present and once again masters of their senses.

The jackal is gone, but the ram is still there.

IFRIT

The Horned One is back. He is facing the group in the middle of the field. His snow-white sword is gleaming, and his black fleece whips wildly through the air. He is the origin of the thumping.

"My will. My way." The words sound like a distant echo from a bottomless pit.

He attacks the characters immediately, their death is his objective. He will stop at nothing to get back his artifact. His eyes are blazing, and death rides on his every blow. Ariès controls Ifrit like a puppet. Nothing can stop the Horned One. Rapid strikes rain down on the characters. They must defend themselves against the attacker with might and main.

Ifrit lunges from one position to the next. One moment, he is crouched behind rocks in order to protect himself from enemy fire and the next moment he is standing behind the characters, ready to attack again. Each move is dastard yet deadly.

Oppolus helps the characters as best he can. The ruler tries to distance himself from the assailant so he is able to fire his bow.

The king's attempts are futile. Ifrit is driven by an insatiable fury that makes him

FLIGHT

If they want to break free from the apocalyptic vision, characters must successfully roll PSY+Faith/Will (5); otherwise, they will not be able to take their eyes off of the jackal.

If a character succeeds in recovering control of their senses, they will realize what is taking place in the background. Imbali has thrown the Imiut skin over the stallion's back and saddled the horse. The character can try to stop the Anubian, but Imbali's Gaze of Fate proves stronger. The Hecatean maneuvers her horse into attack position. If the character goes into close combat, the stallion will kick at them with full force. A successful roll on AGI+Mobility (4) is necessary to dodge the kick; otherwise, the character takes (10) damage (blunt) and ends up on the grass with broken ribs and bruises.

The Horse, Imbali, and her prey take off, galloping across the field.



unstoppable. A sensor system inside the helmet warns him against approaching projectiles. He intercepts one of Oppolus' arrows as it flies through the air and throws it in the direction of one of the characters.

"I am the judge of humanity!" he growls.

The character that has experienced the Haunting sees a shadow out of the corner of their eye. Eris is standing between the megaliths. She is naked. Her body is covered in blood from head to toe and her eyes are wide open. The Delila pants like an animal, her body giving off steam. She fixes her eyes on the character. With her eyes locked on theirs, she takes off her face, revealing a gaping black hole.

"Aries is in his head!" her voice echoes from the depths of the void.

Then, she is gone.

DELIVERANCE

Eris must have meant the helmet! It is the only option left for the characters if they want to stop the Horned One's savagely cruel attacks. Only by combining their forces can they defeat him. A targeted attack with BOD+Brawl (4) must succeed in order to grab Ifrit by the horns. This maneuver, however, will put one of the characters at a disadvantage as the side of their torso is left open for attack. A blow from the sword of the Horned One could prove lethal for this character. The only way to avoid this fate is if all characters throw themselves on Ifrit at the same time and force him to the ground, allowing the character the chance to tear the helmet off of his head.

The implanted probes in Ifrit's head hold the helmet firmly in place. A magnetic field has been created, making it practically impossible to remove it. The character



trying to rip it off must summon all of their physical reserves. They have to repeatedly roll BOD+Force (2) and collect a total of (16) successes in the course of several combat rounds in order to overpower the magnetic field. The other characters must concentrate on doing everything in their power to stop Ifrit from freeing himself and fatally wounding one of them. Like a predator, Ifrit grabs the throats of the characters, his blade searching for any target it can reach. His breath is searing and his fleece is cold to the touch. Ifrit bares his teeth. The helmet begins to budge. Ifrit's growl pounds, hitting all of the octaves audible to the human ear. Then the helmet finally comes loose. Ifrit falls silent and collapses onto the grass. The color quickly returns to his skin, the blood turning his cheeks and lips a rosy complexion. The fleece freezes, turning into a shaggy fur. The character holding the helmet must run for their life.

The young beggar lies on his back, his eyes wide and turned skyward. His face is a portrait of peace.

"Kill me," he whispers, blinking up at the heavens. His eyes full of innocence. If the characters hesitate, he will repeat himself, "Kill me, or he'll come back. He can only follow you if I am alive." The young beggar opens his rags and bares his chest.

"If you do not do it, he will find you again and chase you to the end of the world."

The characters have no other choice. They have to kill the beggar if they want to free themselves from Aries' clutches. The young man is not afraid. He stares up at the clouds, awaiting his fate. Oppolus turns away from the group, unable to watch them kill this forsaken soul.

A shot to the heart ends the beggar's life.

"Ifrit. I remember ...," he breathes, smiling as the light leaves his eyes.

THE HELMET

Once the connection with Ifrit is broken, the helmet will vibrate in the hands of whoever is holding it. The character only has 100 meters to get rid of the antlers or else the helmet will explode in their hands. The character hurls the helmet as far as they can into the open field. The mask of bones hits the ground at a distance and rolls through the grass. Seconds later, it explodes into an electromagnetic bolt of lightning. Aries has lost one of his Horned Nine.

III. FOR BETTER OR WORSE

Inventory: Aries' harbinger of death has been thwarted. Oppolus is wounded and Imbali has escaped with Barringer. There is no trace of Parel, Garlene, the Mice, or the Spitalians. The sun has almost risen, and a golden glow is fighting its way above the treetops. Foliage falls gently on the ground.

This quiet moment is a fleeting one. All of a sudden, a Britoni comes running out of the woods, barely able to breathe.

"Oppolus! We have found them!" he moans. "They left Carnac hours ago with a hijacked boat and are heading for the open sea. A Scrapper who knows the way has offered to help us."

"Where do they intend to go with the hostages?" Oppolus asks.

"They are headed to an oil platform. The Scrapper says they call it Atlas," the hunter pants.

"Tell the men to gather on the beach. Carnac must give us every drop of Petro they have left. We must follow them!"

THE CHASE

When the characters arrive at the beach, Scrappers are already fueling up the empty jet skis. Oppolus limps toward his men and instructs a Scrapper to give him detailed directions to the platform.

A man with long black hair and an unkempt beard explains the sea route to him.

"They got a good head start. They are about 4 hours ahead of you on a stolen patrol boat. However, your vehicles are swift and agile. You can catch up with them," he says.

"What do they want out there?" Oppolus asks grimly.

"No idea. Maybe, they want to get some fresh air. They have hostages with them: three children and a woman."

The characters immediately realize whom he is talking about.

If they ask the Scrapper if he has seen a hovercraft, he will simply laugh.

"In Carnac? Does this look like Aquitaine to you?" he fleers, displaying the gap in his teeth with a big grin. Where is Parel? The characters do not have any time to contemplate this. They have to climb onto their vessels and get out to sea.

All of the jet skis howl across the water. Dozens of Britoni race southwest in hopes of stopping the Spitalians. The characters can either ride on a jet ski with one of the hunters or drive one themselves.

SHADOWS ON THE HORIZON

A small army of nimble vessels and committed warriors races across the ocean. They are the best of the best from those who have remained at the king's side. They obey his every word and are loyal beyond compare. These men would die for their king. The characters have found themselves in the midst of a pack of Northmen who only have their eyes set on evening their score with the Spitalians. The morning sun glitters on top of the waves. The watercrafts try to gain ground and catch up to the Red Pack. What do the Preservists have planned?

A hunter who left to scout out the waters suddenly returns.

"Black dot! Ten degrees southwest!" he yells over the engine's howl.

That must be them. The characters need to make sure they do not fall behind the group. A roll on AGI+Navigation (3) is necessary in order to keep up.

Outlines on the horizon start to become visible. The distance between them and the Preservists is getting shorter and shorter. A patrol boat comes into sight as it plows the waves in front of them.

INS+Perception (3) is necessary in order to see the forms more clearly. A small dinghy rushes up and flanks the patrol boat before suddenly veering off. It turns sharply and heads straight for the armada.

A BARRAGE OF BULLETS

The dinghy races mercilessly towards the Britoni. Suddenly, it veers right and sweeps across the waves. The characters see a muzzle flash. An ear-splitting sound follows. Brakka! Brakka! Brakka!

A fucking machine gun on the stern of the boat spits out its deadly load. Bullets whip through the water, creating fountains that spray up several meters high. The shooter fires at random, aiming for anyone in her path. Less than ten meters away from the characters, a salvo rips through a Britoni. The warrior with the walnut-colored hair topples over his jet ski and falls into the water, never to resurface again. Nearby, the chassis of another vessel takes a direct hit, and a raging backdraft catapults the rider through the air like a broken toy.

The attackers are prepared to do anything. They are ruthless. The dinghy makes another sharp turn, but this time, it is going in the other direction. The machine gun pivots back and rattles off its rounds of ammunition. Muzzle flash after muzzle flash lights up the sky. An execution is taking place out on the open sea.

Trying to approach the boat would be akin to committing suicide. Oppolus signals to his warriors to open the formation in order to make it more difficult for the shooter.

The danger, however, is far from over. The dinghy moves further out and positions itself so that the machine gun at the rear is now aligned opposite the direction in which they are travelling. Trancheur focuses on where they are going and Grâce on what they hope to leave behind. She fires targeted shots into the ranks of the pursuers.

A bullet pierces the head of a Britoni to the left of the characters, leaving a cloud of blood on the surface of the water. The impact has ripped the man off of his saddle and left his jet ski racing across the waves without a pilot.

Brakka! Brakka! Brakka! Nothing but pure carnage.

COUNTERSTRIKE

If the characters wish to make a counter-attack, they will need all of their skills. In order to catch up with the dinghy and outmaneuver it, a roll on AGI+Navigation (4) is required. However, this will bring a character directly in the line of fire. Dodging the machine gun fire requires a successful combination roll on PSY+Reaction (4) and AGI+Navigation (3). But dodging bullets is only the half of it.

The characters have nothing that measures up against the heavy artillery. Aiming at the shooter with a handgun requires extraordinary firing accuracy. All rolls on AGI+Projectiles are at (-4D) during the chase.

Additionally, the characters can only communicate using hand signals. If a character does not make a successful roll on PSY+Cunning (2), they will not be able to understand what another character is trying to tell them.

REINFORCEMENTS

From the right, a shadow approaches at breakneck speed. It plows through the waves like a rocket, leaving a meter-high cloud of mist trailing behind it. The characters recognize it immediately. It is the hovercraft from the Black Atlantic. Parel is back! He steers a straight course toward his target. The jet skis quickly slow down and come to a halt in order to avoid colliding with the approaching vessel.

The Preservists suddenly begin to realize what is happening. The hovercraft is on a direct collision course. The shooter pivots the machine gun and fires with a vengeance, but the hovercraft cannot be stopped.

A hundred meters to go. Sunlight flashes on the stormy water. Fifty meters to go. Empty shells fly in slow motion from the stern of the dinghy. Twenty meters to go. The engine of the hovercraft is so loud that it drowns out the roaring of the sea.

Ten meters. The characters' can hear the sound of their own heartbeats throbbing in their ears. Five ...

Impact! The hovercraft shreds through the dinghy like a thunderbolt. Broken boards and machine parts sail through the air, only to disappear in the water seconds later. The hovercraft makes a swift turn and heads back to join the armada. It slows down, and the side door opens.

The damned Scrapper has brought reinforcements. Vicarent rises from the passenger seat and lifts his bidenhander into the sky. Without a word, he points the sword in the direction they are destined for.

At a distance, it is already visible. The Atlas platform juts out from beyond the mist.

GRÂCE AND TRANCHEUR

The Preservists Grâce and Trancheur are aboard the dinghy. They have been tasked with putting all possible pursuers through the mill in order to buy time for Bascule and Vega. Trancheur pilots the fast-paced motorboat while Grâce positions herself at the rear behind a mounted, pivotable machine gun. There is a cylinder with several hundred shots on board and they are ready to use all of them. Nothing will stand in the way of Mission Concorde.



SCENE 22: ATLAS

The kilometer-wide Mother spore field can be seen from far away. It envelops the platform like a protective ring of fatty tissue. Black lumps drift past the vessels and the foul odor of rotting corpses hangs in the air. The viscous mass floats atop the water like a carpet — a living island of oily slime and quivering nettles. Exactly like on the Black Atlantic, only infinitely bigger.

The current sloshes through the web of bubbles, causing it to vibrate. Palm-sized lumps continuously come loose and pass slowly through the approaching boats. The Britoni slow down their engines and the hovercraft comes to a stop. They are still more than two kilometers away from the oil rig, which is clearly located in the center of the Mother spore field. Black tree nettles have devoured the Bygone structure and transformed it into a nightmare of oblivion. A swath in the Black Water delineates the path that Bascule's patrol boat took.

The Mother spore field seethes and foams. Fractals

writhe on its surface, forming slippery spurs before collapsing back into the mass.

"Do you remember what happened to Gaullion when he came in contact with this filthy fucking stuff?" one of the hunters asks loudly. Concern covers the faces of the other Britoni. None of them wants to drive into this poison on a jet ski. Parel's hovercraft glides across the waves in order to get a better look at it. Vicarent steps out of the cabin to assess the danger. The towering man eyes it and then addresses his troops.

"Demiurge! Don't touch it and don't get too close to it." Some of the hunters reverse their engines.

"What do we do now?" one of the men roars.

Without thinking twice, Oppolus drives to the hovercraft, and his foster son helps him on board. The old man turns to his fighters.

"Only a handful of us can go in," Oppolus yells at his men. "The rest of you, surround the field. Keep an eye on



every movement and do not let anyone get out."

Then, the king nods encouragingly to the characters. "Come aboard! This is just as much your story as mine."

The group climbs into the hovercraft. The characters have a much better view in the driver's cab. Parel's face is tired and embittered. The Scrapper has experienced too much misfortune in too little time. "I had to get someone," he says, trying to explain his disappearance. "On horseback, he would never have made it on time."

Vicarent grimly studies the characters. Parel has informed the Sublime of the events of the last twenty-four hours, nevertheless, Vicarent is not of the opinion that sharing a common enemy is grounds for trusting someone. Outside, the Britoni begin to circle the field.

"This stuff is deadly," Parel whispers. "We saw it with our own two eyes. If the men drive in on their jet skis, they will get infected. In the hovercraft, we're safe."

"Then we must drive through and storm the platform

alone," Oppolus says, holding his bleeding thigh in an attempt to quell the throbbing pain.

"What happened to you?" Vicarent asks his foster father.

"Nothing. A small wound. There is a much bigger one in my heart," the old man explains sullenly.

"Will you spare Rennes?" He changes the topic to more pressing matters.

"No," Vicarent tersely answers.

Oppolus clutches his son's shoulder. "What if I tell you that your brother lives in peace, but you will never see him again? Will you then swear off your thirst for revenge?"

Vicarent pushes his father's hand away. "Revenge is not a feeling. Revenge is a condition. Without revenge, a human being is nothing," he growls. "They have taken the Starfire. They have desecrated my life's purpose."

If the characters ask what he plans to do when he gets the Starfire back, Vicarent will glare at them.

"Destroy it, just as it has destroyed us."

I. BEYOND THE BLACK WATER

The hovercraft passes between the titanic bases of the Atlas platform. The patrol boat of the Spitalians is moored at a dock that has been consumed by black nettles. Parel maneuvers the hovercraft behind the vessel to prevent any Spitalians from escaping. Vicarent rummages around in the pockets of his coat and pulls out a canteen. He uncorks it and pours the contents over his head. Elysian oil flows over his face like liquid honey.

"Rub this over all of the exposed areas of your body!" he orders. He passes the bottle around to his men.

"As we fight our way up, it is necessary to pay attention to every step taken. Watch out for the ceiling and make sure the Demiurge does not drip onto your face!" he warns.

A yellow metal staircase spirals upwards.

FIRST FLOOR

Puddles of bladder secretions pulsate on the floor. Microbes and protozoa swim on top of the iridescent surface. The sharp stench of rotting whale carcasses overpowers their nostrils. The characters are unfamiliar with the terrain. Parel fares better than the characters in this quagmire of Leviathanics and takes the lead. The substance bubbles and gurgles all around them. As they ascend a metal staircase, a drop of Black Water suddenly drips onto the back of a character's hand. The wretched bead of liquid falls to the floor before it can spread. Lucky break!

Oppolus limps ahead. Parel holds the shotgun at the ready, and Vicarent covers the flank.

Suddenly, they hear a noise behind a row of empty barrels.

If they look behind them, they will discover a dead Incubus. There is a hole in its chest, and a hissing sound like water dripping on a glowing stovetop can be heard from inside of it.

Phosphorus glows from within the wound. Before they are able to examine the Leviathan again, Vicarent puts a finger to his lips and signals everyone to be quiet.

He points the tip of his sword to the ceiling, which is more than ten meters above them. The characters have to change their positions in order to see what is going on there. With a roll on INS+Perception (2), they notice a shoe sole through a crack in the metal. Suddenly, it is gone.

If they decide to look around, they will find two staircases leading upwards. Vicarent gestures to them. The characters are to take the one on the left while he, Parel and Oppolus take the right one.

SECOND FLOOR

Each character must make a successful roll on AGI+Stealth (3) in order to sneak up the stairs unnoticed. They come up to a steel door which has been left ajar. They look inside. Twenty steps to their left, they see Garlene. She can barely stand, even though Claude and Kriss are supporting her. She looks dazed as if she has been pumped full of medication. The two Mice are pale and exhausted. There is no trace of Monia and the Spitalians.

Claude's gaze wanders around the room. He spots the characters and looks directly into their eyes. He panics.

He tries to tell them, without making a sound, that they should stay where they are.

All of sudden, they hear footsteps.

"Go on, girl! Do it already! We still need two more samples."

Vega steps into view. She is dragging Monia by the collar towards a black bulbil, which is bulging out of the ground. Wearing gloves, Monia kneels and scrapes the oily substance off. She puts the shavings into a small container.

The steel door on the right side of the room flies open. Vicarent, Parel, and Oppolus rush in. Damn, they can kiss their advantage goodbye!

Vega reacts without a moment's hesitation. She pulls Monia to her feet by the hair. The girl screams, and Vega pushes the barrel of her injector gun against the throat of the Mouse.

"Let her go!" Parel screams, aiming at her with the shotgun.

"Do you know how fast nerve gas works? Leviathanics is nothing more than an old man with a cane compared to this stuff," the Spitalian retorts, as if the poison itself were on her tongue. "Bascule, we have visitors!" she shouts loudly.

Vega has yet to notice the characters and unknowingly moves herself out of their line of sight.

Suddenly, the Preservist appears from out of the shadows of a dim corner. He walks past Garlene and the Mice. This is what Claude had warned them about. Bascule loads his pistol and presses it against Claude's temple.

The characters must do something; otherwise, he'll kill the boy right in front of them.

SMOKED OUT

If the characters take even one step in Bascule's direction, he will grab Claude and use him like a human shield. Bascule grins maliciously at the characters, baring his iron teeth. His plan worked. He smoked the characters out of their cover.

"Go over there and stand next to the others," he tells them, a gun pointed at the characters the entire time.

Parel and Vicarent see the Preservist for the first time.

Garlene's eyes roll upwards and pale foam amasses on her lips. She is delirious.

"It's amazing how quick a bit of real medicine can get someone back on their feet, wouldn't you say?" Bascule laughs cynically and throws Claude to the ground.

"You miserable asshole!" Parel hisses. He waves his shotgun around and aims at the Preservist.

"Well, I guess you're not going to shoot your girl, now are you?" Bascule jeers, stepping behind Garlene.

"What do you want from us, Spitalian? I've already asked you once before," Vicarent says while taking a step forward.

"Stop!" Vega hisses and presses the barrel of an injector deep into Monia's neck.

"Drop your weapons or the girl dies. She won't be the last either!" she commands.

Suddenly, a rumble goes through the platform. It sounds like a seaquake.

Parel cautiously places his shotgun on the ground. Oppolus and Vicarent are at first slow to respond, but after a few moments drop their weapons as well. Vega turns to the characters. "You too!" she snaps.

A SECOND RUMBLE

All of their weapons are on the ground. Bascule walks around the room with a malevolent grin on his face. He loosens his right glove and rolls up the neoprene sleeve on his suit, revealing his hydraulic arm. On the ground, there is a large metal container. Bascule reaches inside of it with his mechanical hand.

A second later, he is holding a black stone nugget that is surrounded by a cloud of streaks.

"This is what I wanted, Sublime. The Starfire. What great fortune that it has found its way into the safety of my hand," Bascule says amused.

"Bascule, put it away! We need to make sure nothing happens to it!" Vega orders in exasperation.

"Shut the fuck up, Vega! Our imposter here, the Sublime, has earned himself a lesson in humility."

Vicarent stares at the floor. His chest swells and his fists shake.

"Ah, so you've sharpened your sword on the stone and poisoned Ganaress with it!" Bascule's remarks are a fanfare of derision. "How did you hide your thoughts and fears from him, you sly fox?"

Bascule steps in front of the Anabaptist and looks up at the giant in front of him. Their eyes meet.

"Preservist! You are compromising the mission! The fire must be brought to the Spital." Vega's tone sharpens.

Bascule pays no attention to the woman behind him.

"Fuck the Spital! I am a soldier. My commitment is to humanity not you. I give a fuck about your rank."

"Put it back, Preservist! That is an order!" Vega is furious.

A second rumble shakes the platform. Barrels topple, and the entire structure trembles. The ceiling caves in as pillars crack and bolts shoot out from their embedment like corks.

Confusion colors everyone's face. The Spitalians have no idea what is responsible for the rumbling.

THE THIRD RUMBLE

"We're not here because of your orders, Doctor," the Preservist says, annoyed. "We're here because it is necessary to know who our enemy is before we destroy him. Look at our tragic Vicarent. Understanding him means being able to kill him and all of his miserable comrades."

The Preservist laughs, his iron teeth on display once more. The Starfire palpitates in his hydraulic hand.

"Why did you kill Valentino? Why have you taken my people hostage? "Parel boldly blurts out. The Preservist raises his eyes and grimaces scornfully.

"Three dinners can make you forget one human life. Do not waste your time mourning the fallen for they cannot help you anymore."

An abrasive whistle coming from the Mother spore field interrupts the Preservist. A huge shadow breaks from the water. Something rises out of the ocean and hits the platform with full force.

Everyone must have a successful roll on AGI+Mobility (3) in order to avoid losing their balance. Garlene falls down and the two Mice supporting her as well.

The black spray forms a frothy mass of bubbles along the platform. The shadow is back. It pounds against the platform once more and chaos breaks out.

Vicarent grabs his sword and Oppolus charges Vega. The characters must react.

II. MOLOCH

A thunder of screams surges across the platform. It sounds as if it were coming from dozens of throats at once. Something is climbing up the platform and trying to enter through the second floor. Through the cracks in the outer paneling, the characters can see the titanic dimensions of the creature. Its shadow is the size of a sperm whale, but its shape is like nothing they have ever seen. It relentlessly pounds its upper body against the exterior walls, tearing off metal plates and paneling.

Monia breaks free and tries to run over to the characters, but Vega is immediately on her heels. She grabs the girl by her hair and hurls her to the ground, dragging her brutally across the floor behind her.

Parel aims out of desperation but does not dare to shoot. He does not want to put Monia in harm's way.

Bascule is quick to move. He pulls his gas mask over his face and takes a grenade from his belt. The bright yellow egg clatters over the ground before releasing its poisonous compound. Mustard gas. The Preservist immediately retreats to the back of the room with the Starfire and opens fire.

The beast's upper body suddenly breaks through one of the outer walls — it is a raging juggernaut made up of disjointed body parts. Limbs of humans and animals protrude from a mixture of intestines, blisters, and bones. It is all held together by Black Water, one giant mass knotted and disfigured beyond recognition.

Vicarent tries to circle around the smoke and follow Bascule. The Moloch screams in-



cessantly. He peels another metal panel off the outside wall so he can squeeze himself inside. A strong wind carries the cloud of sulfur mustard out onto the sea. Suddenly, the characters recognize a face inside the trembling forest of limbs. Malinesse. Her eyes light up, and she fixes her gaze on Vicarent like a medusa.

"GANARESS INUKI ... GANARESS MANUKI", she gurgles.

Vicarent stares at the creature in bewilderment. He cannot take his eyes off Malinesse's face.

"Ganaress?" he gasps.

The Moloch jerks forward. His movements are erratic. The enormous organism tries to snatch Vicarent and absorb the Sublime into his flesh. Nettle whips shoot forward, reaching for the Sublime, but they slip, stymied by his shield of Elysian oil.

Vicarent looks at the characters frantically.

"The Starfire!" he yells. It is their only chance.

Oppolus runs past the characters and attacks Vega with his hunting knife. The Spitalian lets go of Monia in order to evade the king. She lunges and buries her injector gun into Oppolus' neck. The needle pierces the skin of the king and releases its lethal contents. Oppolus stumbles sideways and presses his hand against the punctured hole. His lips turn blue as he gasps for life. He crashes to the ground, his lungs rasping in agony.

FINAL BATTLE

The characters only have one option left. They must defeat Bascule and hand the Starfire over to the Sublime. Vicarent reaches for the cosmic stone. Finally, he will be able to die the heroic death he has longed for ever since his fated battle against Ganaress. The Primer pulverizes Vicarent's genetic structure, reducing the Sublime to the fundamental building blocks of life. With one final jump, Vicarent throws himself against the creature and collides with Leviathanics. The Moloch screams in agony as the Sublime plunges into the Mother spore field with the beast in its arms. The Starfire lands in the center of the spore bud and the primer spreads around the platform, cooking the field into a primordial soup.

FIN

EPILOGUE

- ◇ Oppolus is dead, and Briton is drowning in blood. Consumed by their covetous craving to finally be recognized as the rightful heir to the throne, the king's biological children rip the realm to pieces. Fueled by greed and envy, the Oppolids start a war of succession, shaking the villages and cities of Britons to the core. Within one brief year, the once unified country will have reverted to regionalism and bloodlust.
- ◇ Vicarent is dead, and Yassen now controls the Anabaptists of Briton. His men manage to keep Rennes surrounded for six weeks. The Spitalians are completely cut off from the outside world, holed up in the eastern part of the city. The citizens of Rennes, however, betray them, delivering the Spitalians up to Yassen. On his orders, the 600 Famulancers of the Storm Watch are hanged at the eastern wall. The Emissary now undisputedly rules the region and closes off the borders in the South of Briton.
- ◇ The Spitalians and the Resistance gather their troops in Toulouse in order to help the Storm Watch. The Southern Passage is impassable and the obliteration of Aquitaine has left a death zone that spans several kilometers. The nuclear radiation makes the area impenetrable. After weeks of deliberating, they arrive at the bitter conclusion that they must leave the Storm Watch to their fate and retreat to Montpellier.
- ◇ Aquitaine has been annihilated. No one knows what happened there or has any idea where the attack came from. The majority of Chroniclers who were operating in Franka perished with the city. For weeks, a rumor circulates about it possibly being an act of retaliation by the Neolibyans. An attack to settle the score for the failed Operation Mirage.
- ◇ The Central Cluster in Justitian has issued a state of emergency. This one attack has left half of the total number of Chroniclers dead. Their work has been set back by decades, and they are weaker than ever before. All resources are being used to figure out what happened and why. However, they have no leads. The Fragments are on edge.
- ◇ Nantes has been orphaned. Trade caravans and toll fees have become obsolete, driving desperate Scrappers to Saint-Brieuc. The Scrapper city in the North, where they had hoped to find a way out of their misery, is also in a state of panic. After the destruction of Aquitaine, the artifact trade died down. The Scrappers have no connection to the market anymore. Hundreds of them try to flee to Borca in the East. They take the route of the Dead Channel on rafts and boats, but the Gauntlet proves to be a death trap for the fugitives.
- ◇ The Druids press westwards, where they conquer Nantes, thus enlarging their territory. Cernunnos follows his Clan, continuing further south to the ruins of Aquitaine. There, he looks for scraps that will help to keep sleep at bay. The Horned God's expeditions leave the forest of the Druids defenseless. In his absence, Exilers from Parasite sow the seed for the seventh Ziggurath. A new queen will rise to ascend it.
- ◇ Helios' mission is nothing short of a success for Trice and Enceph. They join forces and infiltrate the underground world of Justitian. There, they gain the support of the demagogue Vesna and take control of the local Paler command. They have plans to assassinate Gusev and Aspera. These two Marauders have stood in the way of the Free Spirits for far too long. They are the ones responsible for delaying the rebirth of Exalt. The time has finally come to restart the Grindworks.
- ◇ Argyre manages to calculate the trajectory of the approaching nuclear warhead at the last second. Using a megawatt salvo, he renders it harmless. The Thor laser is intact, but its energy has been used up. It will take the Marauder months to recharge it. Argyre was able to escape the revenge of the Free Spirit; however, he has yet to exact his own revenge. First, he needs Jehammed's Will and he is willing to do anything to get it.
- ◇ Aries has lost one of his nine incarnations. Ifrit's death has damaged the Marauder's memories. The other eight Horned Ones are still searching Europe for a lead that will point them to Jehammed's Will. They

have lost their way, though. In Justitian's Jehammedan quarter, Arianoi Naraka turns his face up to the leaden sky, trying to pick up the scent of Jehammed's Will.

- ◇ Trash Whales save Poli and Eris and bring them to Saint-Brieuc. However, it is too dangerous for them to return to Brest. The streets of Briton are teeming with Anabaptist patrols. Poli attempts to repair a radio so he can send a message to his mentor Parel letting him know that they are alive. There is no answer. Out of desperation, Poli and Eris join the fugitive trek that will try to cross over the Gauntlet via the destroyed Northern Passage.
- ◇ Imbali starts an odyssey through the uncharted territories of Franka. She manages to revive Barringer in the middle of nowhere. Born anew as an Anubian, he tries to find his place in the world. Together with the woman who has awakened him, he follows the whisper of the ancestors southwards through the jungles of Franka. They must first reach Montpellier so the Hecatean can bring Barringer to his final destination: Cairo.
- ◇ Parel's world has been shattered. The Salt Wolf has lost three of his Mice. However, he clings to the hope that Poli is still alive. He leaves his life's work and his island behind and begins a desperate search for the missing boy. He sets out together with those who have survived: Garlene, Monia, Kriss, and Claude. In the winter of 2597, they follow a lead to Saint-Brieuc. Poli is not there. He has already left for the Gauntlet.
- ◇ Ampere has witnessed more than he cares to tell. He wants to leave Briton and warn his Cult. He is the only Chronicler left who knows firsthand what transpired aboard the Black Atlantic. His worst fears have come true, and he suspects that this is only the beginning. Next target: the Central Cluster.
- ◇ The old war veteran Tronte leaves Brest in the dead of night and heads east. He knows the ins and outs of the collapsed Northern Passage and offers to serve as a guide for one of the fugitive treks. In turn, he hopes to surmount the Gauntlet and reach Bassham.
- ◇ Balor musters a handful of the remaining Pictons and pilots a boat to Britain. Argyre is trembling with rage when he arrives. His bandog has failed him miserably. He orders his champion to round up a new horde of warriors and cross the Stukov Desert. The Marauder suspects that the artifact he is after will soon show up in the Protectorate. In the chaos of the Clan wars, Balor and his Pictons join a marauding band of Cockroaches and reach the area of the Black Lung in the spring of 2598.
- ◇ Charcutier has accomplished everything he set out to. Mission Concorde and the killing of the Storm Watch have riveted the Spital's attention. An excellent distraction, which allows him to carry on with his experiments in Cremant undisturbed. While the Consultants and Preservists are busy strategizing how they will respond to the massacre of Rennes, the Commando Prime of the Red Pack focuses on training his child soldiers.
- ◇ One Mother spore field of Leviathanics has been destroyed. But more are drifting towards Briton. Nobody knows how many there are and they continue to grow daily. The Black Water is still searching for a human host to carry the seed of Leviathanics inland. The conquest has begun. The sixth Chakra broadcasts its orders, luring the country's Ganarids down to the sea.
- ◇ An aging hunter and a young Anabaptist are traveling the Scorched Path. They claim to have crossed the Maw on their journey. They continue on to Genoa and from there to Ducal, Toulon, and finally Montpellier. At every port, they search for passage to Africa. This request is met with condescending smiles from black Scrappers, that is, if they decide not to immediately chase them away. The strange pair requests an audience from Attuma, the Consul of Montpellier, but he refuses. Their last hope is the Anubians.



JEHAMMED'S WILL

The artifact is finally whole, all of its parts bound as one. A magnetic field surrounds the disc, star and spear, holding them together perfectly. The characters have the key to the Grindworks of Exalt in their hands. The star contains the navigational data for the Minerva Orbiter. Its exact flight path can be calculated with the help of the spear. A star map that the Jehammedans intend to use to follow their leader Aries to paradise is said to be contained on it as well ...

The powerful all have their sights set on Jehammed's Will – Sleeper Prophets, Marauders, Fragments and Needles alike long for its hidden truth. Some see it as a promise of a golden era, others as the chalice of their wrath.

However, the greatest wonder buried within the artifact remains yet to be discovered. Jehammed's Will stores the original signature of the 2^{16} virus. When it was released into the Stream, it permuted within seconds. Triglax programmed its primordial form into the Will as a last resort for a doomed humanity. Whoever is able to unlock the signature will hold the antidote for the virus and thus, the defibrillator necessary to reanimate the Stream. However, in order to release its secret, the artifact must first be dipped in nanite blood, and only one blood type can reveal the secrets of Jehammed's Will. His own – the blood of Aries.

FINAL STOP: BAIKONUR

The plan of the Needles is nearing its completion. The Triszyklion is in their hands, and the Carbon is fully equipped. At the behest of their eight masters, the Stork is have spent the past 20 years constructing the train and repairing the tracks that lead through the dense forests of eastern Borca. Along these tracks, there are four Needle towers that extend into the sky. Chromium, Iridium, Bismuth and Promethium all wait to be powered so they can fulfill their function as uplinks to the last server. The energy the Carbon will create with its last passage is the only thing missing.

The path ahead is clear. Chernobog, the Corroded who ensured for centuries that any attempt at crossing the area would be a feat of futility, is gone. He was lured away by the Corresponder in Sofia. Karakhan's ruse worked. The Free Spirit has not only opened the gateway for the Needles, he has also taken down their most dangerous enemy. During his southward campaign, Chernobog destroyed the Archivists of Prague — the only coalition that actively tried to expose and sabotage the plan of the Needles.

Now, the way to Baikonur is finally clear. The route is 4000 km long. It crosses Pollen and continues right into the spore wall. It is the most dangerous obstacle that the Carbon will encounter during its final transformation. The Piast of Wroclaw and his Druschnikks are the last adversaries on this final journey.

However, there is still one more piece that is needed before the train's metamorphosis can be completed. It has been located in Justitian and the Fragments have it in their possession.

Corium has already disarmed the alarm systems of the Central Cluster and set up a hideout in Justitian. With the help of the Scalar Nullify and his Zero Membrane, the Needle tries to get his hands on an artifact of great value. Years ago, a dimwitted Scrapper named Zander stumbled upon it by chance somewhere around Exalt. He became a legend overnight. The Fragments themselves showered Zander with a generous sum of Drafts. To this day, he has not been able to spend all of his fortune. The Fragments never informed the Scrapper of the significance of what he had pulled out of the ground out there in the wasteland. They also did not suspect that Zander's find would lure the Head Collector to Tech-Central. For years, he has been haunting the Scrapper district, collecting trophies and searching for Zander. Soon, he will find him and take his head, too.

THE FINAL ACT

In the netherworld of Cluster and Needle towers, the Scalar Nullify bides his time, waiting for his cue. Over the past two decades, he has been preparing for his final act by gathering and disseminating information. He has spied upon people and woven threads of influence in the political sphere. A map of knowledge unfurls in his mind's eye, allowing him to grasp the truth behind Jehammed's Will. The antidote for the 2nd phenomenon and the salvation for the Stream all wrapped up within a single artifact. Jehammed's Will can be used to activate the last server, which the Bygones hid on the surface of moon in order to protect it from terrorist attacks.

The Scalar has long since cooperated with the Needles, feeding them data he siphons off of the Central Cluster. If the Needles are able to take possession of Jehammed's Will and actuate the last server, all systems of Project Tannhäuser will reboot immediately. The virus will be destroyed, and the world will have access to all of humankind's lost knowledge.

However, this must never happen. Two Marauders have always been instrumental in the cultivation of the Fragments. Gusev and Aspera helped the aspiring technology Cult through its darkest hours and convinced the Chroniclers that a reboot of the Stream would usher in the end of the world. Project Tannhäuser would then be unstoppable. The AMSUMO army that Gusev tried to reprogram in Noret would come to life, old RG combat programs and all. Dispensers would be able to be actuated manually, spitting out Sleepers with intact memories on command. Getrell's orchestra of final human selection would begin its symphony.

ARIES

Like all Marauders, Aries is driven by revenge. However, unlike the others, whom Getrell's betrayal condemned to eternal damnation, Jehammed was able to escape his fate by committing suicide prior to Eshaton. He killed the lamb within himself to be reborn as a ram. His human shell may have died, but the divine spirit survived. His memory disintegrated and has inhabited various incarnations over the last 500 years. Like a marionettist to his marionettes, he dictates the movements of his human servants, guiding them to search for the fragments of his will. Jehammed's Will has been assembled at last, and Aries sees the world for what it truly is.

EXPERIENCE AND REWARDS

It is all over. The terrors of the campaign have been surmounted, but the wounds are just beginning to heal. Weeks and months will pass before the characters will fully come to terms with what has happened. The road to safety lies a long way ahead of them.

If the epic campaign BLACK ATLANTIC has been played over the course of several gaming sessions, the characters receive 1 EP per session. We recommend 3-5 scenes per gaming session as this will help to avoid diluting the plot but also ensure a good overall pace.

In addition to the EPs given during each gaming session, every player also receives 1 EP per scene played during the scenario. Grant +1EP if someone survives a situation where their life was at stake. Characters should also be rewarded with +1EP if they reveal something new or experience something exceptional. If a player independently accomplishes an extraordinary feat that significantly influences the plot, you can reward the character with +1 EP.

At the end of every act and at the end of the campaign, the characters receive additional experience points. The following list outlines the number of points to be awarded.

ACT 1: BLACK WATER

Conquering the Abomination +3 EP
Finding the Display +1 EP
Following Malinesse +1 EP
Negotiating with Oppolus and Tronte +2 EP
Saving Parel at the Tusk +3 EP
Questioning Parel's Mice on the Island +1 EP
Seeing through Shamash's Disguise +1 EP
Surviving Arnika's Assault +4 EP
Understanding Ampere's Conspiracy Theories +2 EP
Saving Garlene from the Ganaarids +2 EP
Outdrinking Ghilvern and Halvert +1 EP
Listening to Eris's Story about Aries +1 EP
Meeting Shamash at the West Wind +1 EP
Getting Imbali's Help +3 EP

ACT 2: AFTERGLOW

Successful Surgery on Garlene +3 EP
Seeing Imbali's Jackal Idol +1 EP
Getting Help from Oppolus +3 EP
Stopping Yassen from Executing Eris +3 EP
Attending the Day of Ganaress +2 EP
Correctly Interpreting the Barmaid's Seizure +1 EP
Saving the Beggar +2 EP
Negotiating with Vega +3 EP
Seeing Ganaress and Meeting Vicarent +2 EP
Planning the Attack with Soufiane +1 EP
Following Tronte's Invitation +1 EP
Surviving the Chasm +2 EP
Asking Eris the Right Questions +3 EP
The Haunting +2 EP
Saving Ampere from the Switch House +2 EP
Discovering the Three Swallows at the Tusk +2 EP
Intimidating the Postrider +1 EP
Discovering Helios's Secret Hideout +2 EP
Saving Barringer on Ushant +4 EP

ACT 3: RUDE AWAKENING

Defeating Vatenguerre +4 EP
Getting the Dogskins +2 EP
Attending the Imiut Ritual +2 EP
Witnessing the Declaration of War +2 EP
Traveling to Morlaix aboard Fiancé +3 EP
Finding the Star Food +1 EP
Facing the Pictons +5 EP
Fighting Balor +6 EP
Escaping from Ifrit +7 EP
Discovering the Iceberg +1 EP
Entering the Black Atlantic +2 EP
Discovering Helios's Past +1 EP
Mastering the Polyhedron +4 EP
Facing Argyre +2 EP
Cracking the Safety Cylinder +3 EP
Surviving the Battle against Arnika +4 EP
Surviving the Engine Room +1 EP
Discovering the Weapon Silo +1 EP
Conquering Helios +8 EP
Surviving the Cryostasis Chamber +6 EP
Obtaining Jehammed's Will +2 EP
Witnessing the Destruction of Aquitaine +3 EP
Navigating the Hovercraft +3 EP

FINALE: SCORCHED EARTH

Witnessing Valentino's Death +1 EP
Figuring out the Targets of Mission Concorde +2 EP
Finding the Lead to Carnac +1 EP
Experiencing the Vision in the Megalithic Field +3 EP
Defeating and Redeeming Ifrit +9 EP
Eliminating the Preservists on the Boat +3 EP
Seeing the Mother Spore Field +2 EP
Fighting Bascule and Vega +8 EP
Surviving the Moloch +8 EP
Saving Garlene, Parel and the Mice +3 EP

CULT CARDS AND BACKGROUNDS

SPITALIANS: The machinations of the Red Pack have been uncovered, shedding some light on Mission Concorde. The Doctors come to trust the characters and will seek their assistance in the future.

If the characters inform the Spitalians of their suspicions regarding Charcutier, an enormous inquest will result and their knowledge and skills will be called upon. If they hand over Vega's research notebook to the Spitalians, they may even be able to meet with the Consultants and discuss their concerns with them.

BACKGROUNDS: Allies +2, Secrets +1

CULT CARD: Black Die +2

SPECIAL: Medical help and support, Audience with the Consultants

CHRONICLERS: Ampere has survived, but he must make it to Borca in one piece if he is to warn his Cult. If the characters reveal the truth about the destruction of Aquitaine to the Chroniclers, they will be given information about the Central Cluster as well as granted entry into the headquarters. If they hand over Jehammed's Will to the Fragments, the Cult will forever be in their debt.

BACKGROUNDS: Allies +3, Secrets +2, Resources +2

CULT CARD: Black Die +3

SPECIAL: Access to the Alcoves and level 1-3 of the Central Cluster

CLANNERS: Oppolus' death shakes the country and the Britoni are consumed with grief. The peace that once covered the land perishes with the king. If the characters fought at Oppolus' side, the Britoni loyal to the king will remember them and help them escape out of the country.

BACKGROUNDS: Allies +1, Renown +1

CULT CARD: Black Die +1

SPECIAL: Britoni offer to assist in characters' escape

SCRAPPERS: Briton's Scrappers have been to hell and back. Aquitaine's annihilation and the destruction of the Atlas oil rig and the ruins of Nantes leave behind a festering wound. The Scrappers only have one option: flee. If the characters saved Parel from the kiss of death and were able to come to the rescue of Garlene and the Mice as well, the gratitude of Parel and the others will know no bounds. Wherever the Salt Wolf has allies, the characters will find allies, too.

BACKGROUNDS: Allies +2, Renown +1, Network +2

CULT CARD: Black Die +1

SPECIAL: Scrappers offer shelter and exchange goods

NEOLIBYANS: Soufiane has provided the characters with insight into the world of the Leopards. The characters can sell that knowledge to the Neolibyans and make quite a nice

profit. The Merchant Cult has no patience for double-dealing and they waste no time getting to the bottom of this mysterious Leopard alliance.

BACKGROUNDS: Resources +1, Renown +1, Network +1

CULT CARD: Black Die +1

SPECIAL: +1D when negotiating with Neolibyans

ANUBIANS: Imbali has spirited the characters away into a mystical world full of secrets and prophecies. If they apply the knowledge that she has imparted upon them, they will find it easier to communicate with Anubians in the future.

BACKGROUNDS: Allies +1, Secrets +1

CULT CARD: Black Die +1

SPECIAL: Network +1 to acquire Marduk oil

JEHAMMEDANS: The characters' relationship with the Jehammedan Cult could not be more volatile. They came to the aid of a Delila, helping her to escape her just punishment. They are also responsible for the death of one of Aries' incarnations. Worst of all, they have Jehammed's Will. In the future, negotiating with the Ram Cult will prove difficult for the characters. The Horned Ones will not rest until justice is served. Eris must die, and Jehammed's Will must once again be theirs.

BACKGROUNDS: Renown +1

CULT CARD: Red Die +4

SPECIAL: Imminent confrontation with the Ram Cult

ANABAPTISTS: Vicarent has redeemed Briton twice, first by beheading Ganaress and now in battle against the Mother spore field of Leviathanics. His legacy will not be forgotten, and the characters who fought at the giant's side will stand atop the same pedestal as him and be treated as objects of worship.

Yasen, on the other hand, does not take so kindly to the characters, seeing enemies instead of heroes. If the characters have already caused problems for the Emissary, he will make their life in Briton a living hell.

BACKGROUNDS: Allies +2, Renown +1 (Vicarent's supporters)

CULT CARD: Black Die +2

SPECIAL: Persecution and denunciation by Yasen's entourage

PALERS: Helios' machinations may have been set in motion, but everything did not go as planned. The characters are to blame for this. Nevertheless, the Palers assume responsibility for the demise of their god Helios.

BACKGROUNDS: Renown +1

CULT CARD: Red Die +3

SPECIAL: Palers ostracize and persecute the characters

GUARDS, ENEMIES, HENCHMEN

BRITONI HUNTERS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 4D / 12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Spear, 6D (5D with shield), Distance 2, Damage 7; Short bow, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 9, Magazine 1; High-Pressure Harpoon Thrower (on jet ski only), 7D Navigation + 5D Projectiles, Distance (20/60), Damage 10, Magazine 1

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Block), Melee 6D (7D with shield); Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 5D; Mental 5D

SPECIAL: Jet Ski, AGI+Navigation 7D, AGI+Stealth 6D, INS+Survival 6D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Sealskin cape, Armor 2; Wooden shield, Defense +1D/0, Attack -1D

CONDITION: 12 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Stalk / Subdue

The Britoni hunters have grown up in a tough land, and its forces of nature have steeled them. They are very skilled at navigating the waters on their crafts and they know the dense woods of Briton better than anyone else. Their knives are nimble, and their arrows fly straight. In melee, they are hot-blooded and show no fear. Facing off against powerful opponents only adds to their renown.

CHAPEL GUARDS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D / 12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Lance, 8D (7D with shield), Distance 2, Damage 7; Spitfire, 6D, Distance (3/10), Damage 12, Magazine 15, Fire Hazardous

DEFENSE: Passive 1 (2 with shield); Melee active (Block), Melee 8D (10D with shield); Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 6D; Mental 8D

SPECIAL: CHA+Leadership 5D, PSY+Domination 6D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Cast harnesses, patched pelts for insulation, thick leather, helmets and capes made of heavy seal skin, Armor 5, Massive (7); Tower Shield, Defense +2D/+1, Attack -1D

CONDITION: 14 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Veterans / Disarm and Arrest

Brest's 200 chapel guards are comprised of veterans who have all fought on the front lines. Having once gone to war against Pheromancers, they now serve as the city militia and maintain order in Brest. Most of them are at least 40 winters old and aren't as quick on the draw as they used to be, but when shit hits the fan, they know how to defend themselves. Every group consists of eight men, two of them carrying Spitfires and six carrying heavy lances and shields. The lancers form a defensive ring around the two men with the Spitfires to allow them time to prepare their flame-strikes without worrying about their tanks being attacked.

YASEN'S BODYGUARDS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 7D / 12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Bidenhander, 6D, Distance 2, Damage 11, Impact (2T); Short Sword, 8D, Distance 1, Damage 7; Mace, 7D, Distance 1, Damage 9, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Block), Melee 6-8D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 6D; Mental 6D

SPECIAL: PSY+Cunning 5D, PSY+Faith 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Composite armor made of bronze tiles, padded leather and fur, Armor 4, Massive (6)

CONDITION: 14 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Rearguard Actions / Protecting the Emissary

Yasen has 12 exceptional Orgiastics for bodyguards, four of which are Furors. They are young and fanatical, ready to prove themselves in the service of the Emissary. Yasen has handpicked these men and belonging to his entourage of bodyguards is a very special honor indeed.

In order to protect the Emissary, the warriors have been trained in fighting rearguard actions. When attacked, they all surround their master. Armed with their bidenhandlers, the Furors form a rearguard and hack at any attackers who get too close while the others bring Yasen to safety as quickly as possible.

RED PACK

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 8D / 14 Ego Points

ATTACK: Heavy Automatic Pistol, Gauge 9mm, 8D, Distance 10/40, Damage 9, Magazine 20, Smooth Running (3T); Carbon-Steel Knife, 9D, Distance 1, Damage 5, Smooth Running (2T);

Smoke Grenade, 10D, Distance (10/40), -4D on all Actions that require clear line of sight, Deviation, Cloud (5+ meters, 30 rounds);

Shock Grenade, 8D, Distance (10/40), suppress the use of EGO for 2 rounds, Deviation, Thunder Strike, Cloud (5 meters, 1 round)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 9D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 7D; Mental 8D

SPECIAL: AGI+Stealth 8D, PSY+Deception 6D, PSY+Cunning 8D, PSY+Domination 8D, Could Be Worse 2

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Preservist uniform, Armor 3

CONDITION: 16 (Trauma: 8)

TACTICS: Targeted Attacks / Assassinations

The Preservists of the Red Pack make up an elite unit. Their methods are ruthless and make the blood of their victims run cold. These men and women have been trained to regard loyalty as their highest duty. They will stand by their Commander Bascule, even if it means sacrificing their own lives.

GANARIDS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D / 4 Ego Points

ATTACK: Fist, 6D, Distance 1, Dazed (2),
Smooth Running (2T); Bite, 1D, Distance 1, Damage 2;
Iron Rod, 4D, Distance 1, Damage 4, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Dodge),
Mobility 4D; Ranged Combat active (look for cover),
Mobility 4D; Mental 3D

SPECIAL: First Language 1, INS+Perception 6D

MOVEMENT: 4m

ARMOR: -

CONDITION: 6 (Trauma: 4)

TACTICS: Surprise Attack

Malinnes's presence throws Ganarids into a trance. Overwhelmed by an uncontrollable urge to infect themselves with Leviathanics, they attack the characters without warning and sink their teeth into their flesh.

Ganarids cannot be identified solely by their outward appearance, which allows them to blend in with ease. They can be put in a state of trance at any moment, making their attacks completely unpredictable. In the first round of combat, characters receive a penalty of (-3) to their Initiative roll.

PICTONS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 7D / 10 Ego Points

ATTACK: Morning Star, 7D, Distance 1, Damage 9, Blunt;
Bone Dagger, 9D, Distance 1, Damage 5, Smooth Running (2T);
Cleaver, 8D, Distance 1, Damage 7;
Slingshot, 6D, Distance (5/15), Damage 5, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry),
Melee (s. Attack); Ranged Combat active (look for cover),
Mobility 7D; Mental 6D

SPECIAL: Star food, AGI+Stealth 7,
PSY+Domination 8D, INS+Primal 7D,
INS+Survival 8D, Elephant Skin 2, Marathon 2

MOVEMENT: 9m

ARMOR: Bear and caribou skins, Bone plating,
Armor 2 (total: 4)

CONDITION: 14 (Trauma: 13, raised due to the star food)

TACTICS: Berserk

Star food, the hormone cocktail Argyre feeds his minions, turns the Pictons into tenacious combatants. Their body temperature is a constant 39°C, making them more resistant to cold weather and hardening them to their core. As cunning warriors, they stealthily move about before unleashing their savage fury on their unsuspecting enemies.

Their grotesque appearance is unnerving and sends their opponents running in the opposite direction, allowing the Pictons to attack them from behind.

STORM WATCH

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D / 10 Ego Points

ATTACK: Splayer, 6D, Distance 2, Damage 6,
Cutting (2T, + 1d Damage); Fungicide Rifle, 6D,
Distance (2/8), Fire Dust, Damage 8, Fire Hazard or Chlorine Gas, Poisoned (5); Mortar, 5D, Distance 100/400,
Damage 15, Magazine 1, Thunder Strike, Scatter, Explosive

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D;
Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 5D;
Mental 6D

SPECIAL: Phalanx 1

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Spitalian suit, Armor 2, Sealed

CONDITION: 10 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Entrenchment / Phalanx

The Storm Watch consists of platoons of exceptionally trained fighters. The Famulancers are accustomed to an unforgiving daily life and are constantly on alert. The drills that they perform day in and day out hone their senses and have made them into real brothers-in-arms. In the field, Famulancers always look out for each other.

When fighting Pheromancers and drones, they always rely on the tactic of cordoning a quadrant and securing it until reinforcements arrive.

TRASH WHALES

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D / 8 Ego Points

ATTACK: Head Butt, 7D, Distance 1, Damage: Dazed (2 Ego);
Welding Torch, 5D, Distance 1, Damage 10, Fire Hazardous;
Hydrant Wrench, 4D, Distance 2, Damage 7, Impact (2T);
Marvel, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 8, Magazine 1,
Muzzleloader

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Block), Fistfight 6D;
Ranged Combat active (look for cover), Mobility 5D;
Mental 5D

SPECIAL: Nitro 2, Marathon 1,
BOD+Athletics & Stamina 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Diving suit, Armor 4

CONDITION: 12 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Fistfight

Trash Whales are strong swimmers and divers. They are also quick-tempered bar brawlers who do not tolerate any sideways glances after a hard, long day in the water. Those looking for trouble do not have to wait long to find it. The Trash Whales are anything but shy. One head butt, and their opponent's nose is broken.

Trash Whales feel at home underwater. Their diving suits are equipped with servomotors and can even withstand shark attacks. Hydraulic tin snips and soldering bolts serve as their defense. Their Achilles' heel is their breathing tube.





THE BLACK WATER LEVIATHANS

TIME OF CHANGE

All knowledge about Leviathanics is fragmentary. It is derived primarily from Vasco's observations that he made in his research bunker in Briton in 2575. Doctor Vega's more recent studies supplement his initial findings.

Colossus is out there at the bottom of the Atlantic. For 500 years, the Earth Chakra was disconnected from the rest of the world. Then, the Black Atlantic crossed the vortex of entrapped mutagen and cast up the Black Water on the sea's surface.

Never before had a rapture been so aggressive, so infectious and so full of the urge to proliferate. The danger Leviathanics poses has long since ceased to be a creature of the imagination. It is real.

BLACK WATER

Sepsis spreads underground, robbing the soil of minerals and salts. A spore field rises from the subterranean network of mycelium and forms a connection to the Earth Chakra. It releases its spores into the air. Some accumulate in Burn cusps that addicts will later harvest. The Primer enters the body through inhalation. It then influences the genetic material of the spore-afflicted individual, potentially creating a member of Homo Degeneration from that person's descendants. A rather tedious process.

Spreading in the form of Black Water, Leviathanics is much more efficient. This variety of Sepsis floats on the surface of the ocean like a layer of oily gossamer. At first, the field is no larger than a water lily floating alone on the open sea. Its nettles begin to spread downwards into the depths of the water, latching onto protozoa, algae, krill and fish in order to facilitate its growth. The biomass that has been absorbed accelerates the maturation of the spore field, causing it to grow and thrive. Over time, it becomes larger and larger until it reaches its final stage: transformation into a Mother spore field. In its supreme form, the Black Water is an island several kilometers wide consisting of fractal streaks and bubbling nodes, which are extremely infectious and potent. Leviathanics broadcasts signals through the supreme consciousness, luring spore-afflicted individuals to the Black Water. Overcome with the urge to infect themselves, they become the vessels, in which its seeds are carried to land.

Leviathanics remains bound to the water, unable to go ashore of its own accord. On land, cut off from the nutrient-rich ocean, it would wither and ultimately decay until nothing of it remained. In the ocean, the spore fields are at the mercy of the currents and the tides. Their position changes constantly, making it difficult for Leperos and drones to follow the signals that are broadcast by the fields.

This is precisely why cliffs and oil rigs make excellent docking stations for a Mother spore field.

STRENGTHENING

Black Water is movement. With ease, it can take on any form, flow through any crack, and hollow out any stone. If a Leviathan strengthens their Agility attribute, they become more agile and nimble, able to squeeze between tight bars or break out of fetters.

RULES: A Leviathan can increase their Agility skills by +1D per Overload point. If they want to squeeze through narrow cracks and crevices, they can do so by folding their bones together and liquefying their intestines. This enables them to get through any hole so long as it is no smaller than the diameter of their head.

DOMINANT ATTRIBUTE:

Agility

PRIMAL

In its primal phase, the Leviathan is a multiplying rapture of crackling, infectious energy. All of its urges are geared towards proliferation. Its Chakra tries to join with as many hosts as possible so it can create new offshoots.

FOCUS

If the Leviathan despores completely, it will start to wither. Additionally, it accumulates (1) Damage per hour. In this state, it will immediately retreat to the water, fleeing into the ocean in order to saturate itself with spores again. The plague of the Leviathans is tied to the ocean, and there is no chance of finding new spores on land unless they transport them in an amniotic sac full of Black Water.

SYMBIOSIS

The Leviathan rules over tiny microbes, algae, and protozoa. In contrast to other Homo Degeneration, the Leviathan cannot use its plagues to attack. Nevertheless, they are extremely useful. The Leviathan can call on them from anywhere in the ocean. They are so numerous that their swarm size in the water always numbers at least 100.

KNOWN PHENOMENA

LORD OF THE SIXTH PLAGUE

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 1

Even though the plagues of the Leviathan are invisible, they still lurk everywhere in the water. The Leviathan rules over countless strains of microbes, protozoa and algae that immediately unite with it underwater, and supply it with spores. They are legion.

RULES: For every combat round that a Leviathan spends in water, their spore affliction rises by +2, exactly like in a Mother spore field. If they overload their phenomenon and call on additional plagues of their Chakra, the spore affliction rises by +3 per round.

If they leave their natural habitat, they can carry their swarm ashore using the Amniotic Sac Phenomenon. The strength of the swarm that is being carried rises by (10) per Overload point.

SPINDRIFT

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 1

The Leviathan sprays a sizzling cloud of Black Water to douse flames and torches, protecting itself from open fire. The fine spray functions as an instinctive defense mechanism and also releases a putrid odor.

RULES: Spindrift does not require an action. A Leviathan must successfully roll AGI+Projectiles (3) in order to hit a flame source. To extinguish the flames, they must completely neutralize the potential fire damage with Overload points. The amount of points required is determined by the type of flame: A candle or single flame costs them 1 point, a torch costs them 3 points, the spill from an oil lamp or a campfire costs them 6 points and a burst of flames from a Spitfire costs them 12 points.

NETTLE WHIP

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 2

The Leviathan forms a nettle whip that has several tails. It uses this to attack and restrain its victims. Should the greedy tentacles even graze bare skin, they will immediately cause a burning sensation. The nettles inject their poisonous protein cocktail directly into the victim's nerve cells, creating bright red welts. The resulting cramps are so intense that humans and animals fall into a state of shock.

RULES: It takes a Leviathan one combat round to form a nettle whip. The whip can cover a distance of 2m. For every Overload point, it grows 1m. If a Leviathan wants to use it to attack, they must roll BOD+Melee. The whip's



Damage is (6); however, the victim must also successfully roll PSY+Willpower/Faith (3) or else they will also lose (3) Ego Points. This will leave them incapacitated in the next round. If a Leviathan encounters armored opponents, they can snatch them with their nettle whips and bring them closer for attack. In this case, the Leviathan must roll AGI+Projectiles. The victim can try to dodge the assault using AGI+Mobility. If the Leviathan, however, successfully traps their victim in the nettle whips, they can pull them near with a quick jolt (conflicting roll on BOD++Force).

INGESTION

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 2

The Leviathan grows by absorbing biomass, which it accomplishes through the ingestion of organic life forms. The Leviathan is a terrifying sight. Arms and heads of other creatures protrude from its amorphous body so that it resembles a walking field of corpses.

RULES: The Leviathan can incorporate severed body parts, dead animals, or entire humans into its body. It takes (1) combat round for it to absorb (10) kilos of biomass. The Black Water engulfs the organic material like mucilagi-

nous pulp, drawing it into the Incubus. Living victims take (1) Trauma Damage per round when being ingested.

The Leviathan's flesh wounds and its trauma rise by +1 for each successful ingestion. If the Leviathan despores completely, its body will reject the absorbed biomass.

FISSION

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 4

Once the Leviathan has ingested biomass, there is no stopping its proliferation. As an Incubus, it can split its host in two in order to multiply itself. While the split Incubi are weaker versions of their former host, they are still dangerous.

RULES: The fission takes place immediately. The available biomass splits into two halves of equal size. It only takes seconds for the Black Water in the host to form pseudopodia as a replacement for the body parts that were lost in the fission. A split Incubus only has half of its former Attributes, Skills, Flesh Wounds, Trauma and Spore Infestation points (rounded down).

A split Incubus can keep dividing itself, provided it has enough Spore Infestation points to activate the phenomenon again. If a Fission reduces the BOD attribute or trauma to 0 (rounded down), both copies die at once.

ABORT

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 5

The Leviathan can discharge stored biomass and turn it into explosive material.

RULES: The Leviathan receives (5) points of Damage and can eject its biomass across a distance of BOD+Athletics in meters. For each Overload point, the damage from the explosion of Abort rises by (1). In addition to the explosive fermentation gases, there is also the danger of scattered bone fragments hitting limbs, which could, in turn, create a center of infection.

AMNIOTIC SAC

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 6

The Leviathan combines the cell structures of ingested material, mixing them together in a black amniotic sac and creating an entirely new creature. This amorphous Homunculus is then excreted out of its body. This shapeless creature is limited in its attributes, but the Leviathan can use the cultivated spawn to increase its attacks, its field of perception or simply to create confusion.

RULES: A Leviathan must already have absorbed biomass with their Ingestion phenomenon. If they activate the phenomenon, an amniotic sac will form on their back, groin or throat like a goiter. The bulging amniotic sac is surrounded by a semi-transparent membrane. It fills with Black Water and begins the initial stage of Homunculus formation. The breeding of a Homunculus takes 10 combat rounds. In its primal form, it only has one point in each of the following attributes: BOD, AGI, PSY and INS. The Leviathan adds flesh wounds to its creation with each Overload point. The creature also gets one additional point in the attribute that the Leviathan chooses to overload. The Homunculus can help in battle, cause confusion, terrify enemies or raise perception. The Leviathan can create an unlimited number of Homunculi, as long as their Spore Infestation is high enough. However, Homunculi cannot live forever. They gain one flesh wound per hour. A Leviathan can form more than one amniotic sac, enabling them to breed several Homunculi at once.

INCUBATION

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 6

A Leviathan can target a specific opponent and infect them. If it senses an open wound on a potential victim, it will spray a concentrated jet stream of highly potent Black Water in its victim's direction.

RULES: The Leviathan must successfully roll INS+Perception (3) to notice the wound. With a targeted attack

using AGI+Projectiles, they can fire their viral cargo. Each overload point lowers the difficulty of the targeted attack by (1). If the salvo hits the victim, the wound must be cleansed with lye within (10-Overload) rounds or it will become infected with Leviathanics. In this case, only amputating the limb before the infection spreads will help.

MIASMA

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 8

If a Leviathan faces several sources of fire at once or is surrounded by enemies, it will vaporize its bodily fluids and spray a baleful Miasma. With a loud hiss, it immediately douses torches and Spitfire flames. A bank of black fog surrounds the Leviathan and obscures its frame. Suddenly, the air tastes like pure poison.

RULES: For each Overload point, the diameter of the Miasma rises by (3) m. The black mist extinguishes all sources of fire at once (s. Spindrift). The fermentation gases released cause symptoms of asphyxiation, and victims who inhale them lose (4) Ego Points per combat round. In the midst of a Miasma, the Passive Defense of a Leviathan rises to (4).

MOLOCH

PHENOMENON LEVEL: 10

If the Incubus absorbs more than 10 times its original weight, it becomes a Moloch. In this state, the Leviathan reaches its critical mass and outgrows the limits of its original host. In theory, there are no longer any restrictions regarding biomass absorption. It can incorporate humans and animals, combining them to form an unfathomable beast of colossal size. Black Water is the glue that holds the bodies together and enables movement. A Moloch has neither a beginning, nor an end. It has no head nor visible limbs. It is merely a collection of bones, scraps of meat, amniotic sacs, maws and eyes. It incorporates anything and everything that it encounters in its crazed urge to proliferate, continuously forming new Homunculi and spewing them out of its body. Its screams curdle the blood of everyone in earshot and originates from the heart of the Earth Chakra itself.

RULES: At least 100 Ingestions or 10 Incubi must coalesce in order for a Moloch to form. A Moloch is an unstoppable beast without shape or form, its only purpose is to grow and proliferate. The colossus can only be conquered by forcing it to split, which, consequently, will lead to it weakening itself. However, two weaker Molochs are still formidable enemies. Its vulnerable spots are its amniotic sacs where it carries its plagues.

VARIANT: INCUBUS

An Incubus carries the seed of Leviathanics. If the seed gains control over the host through infection, it becomes solid. The Black Water solidifies into an oily, viscid mass, consuming the host like tar and feeding off of them. Black Water pulses through all of its systems and guides the toddling biomass like a puppet of the Earth Chakra. The Leviathanics wipes out the mind of its host, reducing their behavior to primal instincts. Proliferation is their life's purpose. Whereas other Psychonauts are haunted by the memories of their human past during their focus phase, there is only a gaping hole in the skull of a Leviathan.

INITIATIVE: 6D / 16 Ego Points

ATTACK: Bite 5D, Damage 4, Infectious

Nettle Whip 6D, Damage 6, Smooth Running (2T), Dazed (3), Entangled

DEFENSE: Passive 2, Mental 8D

SPECIAL: Swarm Strength 10 (plagues swimming in amniotic sacs)

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Ingested Biomass, Armor 2

SPORE INFESTATION: 14 (+ 10 with plague)

CONDITION: 24 (Trauma: 10)

VARIANT: MOLOCH

Ingestion allows Leviathanics to run rampant, its uncontrollable growth creating monsters beyond one's wildest dreams. A Moloch is an abomination in conflict with all earthly creatures. It is simultaneously dead and alive, made up of countless bodies, muscle fibers, fat cells and knotted neural pathways. It moves forward, devouring everything in its path and, heralding the arrival of the sixth Chakra through the supreme consciousness.

INITIATIVE: 8D / 20 Ego Points

ATTACK: Bite 8D, Damage 12, Infectious

Nettle Whip 8D, Damage 6, Smooth Running (2T), Dazed (3), Entangled

Trample 6D, Damage 14+1D, Blunt

Ramming 8D, Damage 10, Area Damage (45°)

Scream of the Earth Chakra, Dazed(3), Terrifying (6)

DEFENSE: Passive 1, a Moloch doesn't defend itself, Mental 12D

SPECIAL: Swarm Strength 40 (plagues swimming in amniotic sacs), 1D Homunculi, BOD+Force 20

MOVEMENT: 10m

ARMOR: Overlapping costal arches, Skulls and muscle fibers, Armor 4

SPORE INFESTATION: 18 (+40 with plague)

CONDITION: 60 (Trauma: 24)

A LAST HOPE

There are only two known ways to stop the Leviathanics from entering a human host. The first is with the treasured Marduk oil of the Anubians and the other is with the Elysian oils that the Anabaptists hold so dear. Both form a greasy film on the skin that the Leviathanics cannot penetrate. The Black Water drops off of it in streaks, and the nettles are unable to root itself in the pores of the epidermis.

INCUBATION TIME

To infect a human, Leviathanics must enter the host's bloodstream through an open wound. The smallest scratch is enough for the Leviathan to get in. Once the human is infected, there is no way back. The only possible way to save the infected person is by localizing the center of the infection and removing the affected tissue or amputating the afflicted limb. In individuals without spore affliction, the infection takes PSY+Willpower/Faith weeks to develop.

After that time, Leviathanics takes control of the host.

LEPEROS

Leperos, drones, or carriers of the seed are perfect hosts for Leviathanics. Their immune systems are already adapted to the Primer, allowing the infection to quickly spread through the body of the afflicted person. For individuals with spore affliction, the process takes PSY+Willpower/Faith days to develop.

ALWAYS DEADLY

In contrast to other raptures, Leviathanics does not create spore-afflicted individuals. It does, however, always end in death for the host.

WEAKNESSES

FIRE

Leviathans are extremely vulnerable to Fire Damage and use Phenomena to extinguish fire sources. Flare bombs, Spitfires and Molotov cocktails cause an additional 1D Trauma Damage.

DESICCATION

The longer a Leviathan is on dry land without any contact to water, the greater the danger of desiccation. For each day on dry land, it loses one point of Spore Infestation. Once it has lost all of them, it is forced into the Focus Phase and receives (1) point of Damage per hour. If it cannot get back into the water in time, the Leviathan will die.

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UNIR

GODASSE

L'ARC

ROADSTEAD OF BREST





TO RENNES

PIONEER ROAD

HARBOR



BREST

2597 A.D.

UNIR

- 01. BROTHERHOOD SQUARE
- 02. SAINT VICARENT
- 03. THE WHALE SHRINE
- 04. BALSAM HOUSE
- 05. THE FIELD OF VICTORS

L'ARC

- 06. THE FLASK
- 07. THE TUSK
- 08. THE EMPTY JUG
- 09. THE WEST WIND
- 10. THE FURRIERS
- 11. THE COMPOUND
- 12. DANCE HALL

GODASSE

- 13. MILLER'S LANE
- 14. OPPOLUS' CASTLE
- 15. THE FISH MARKET
- 16. WHALE OIL REFINERY
- 17. FLOOD CHAPEL
- 18. PARELS ISLAND
- 19. THE CHARCOAL KILNS

BLACK WATER, DARK SOULS, STARFIRE




DEGENESIS
SIXMOREVODKA