

WEIRD  WARS

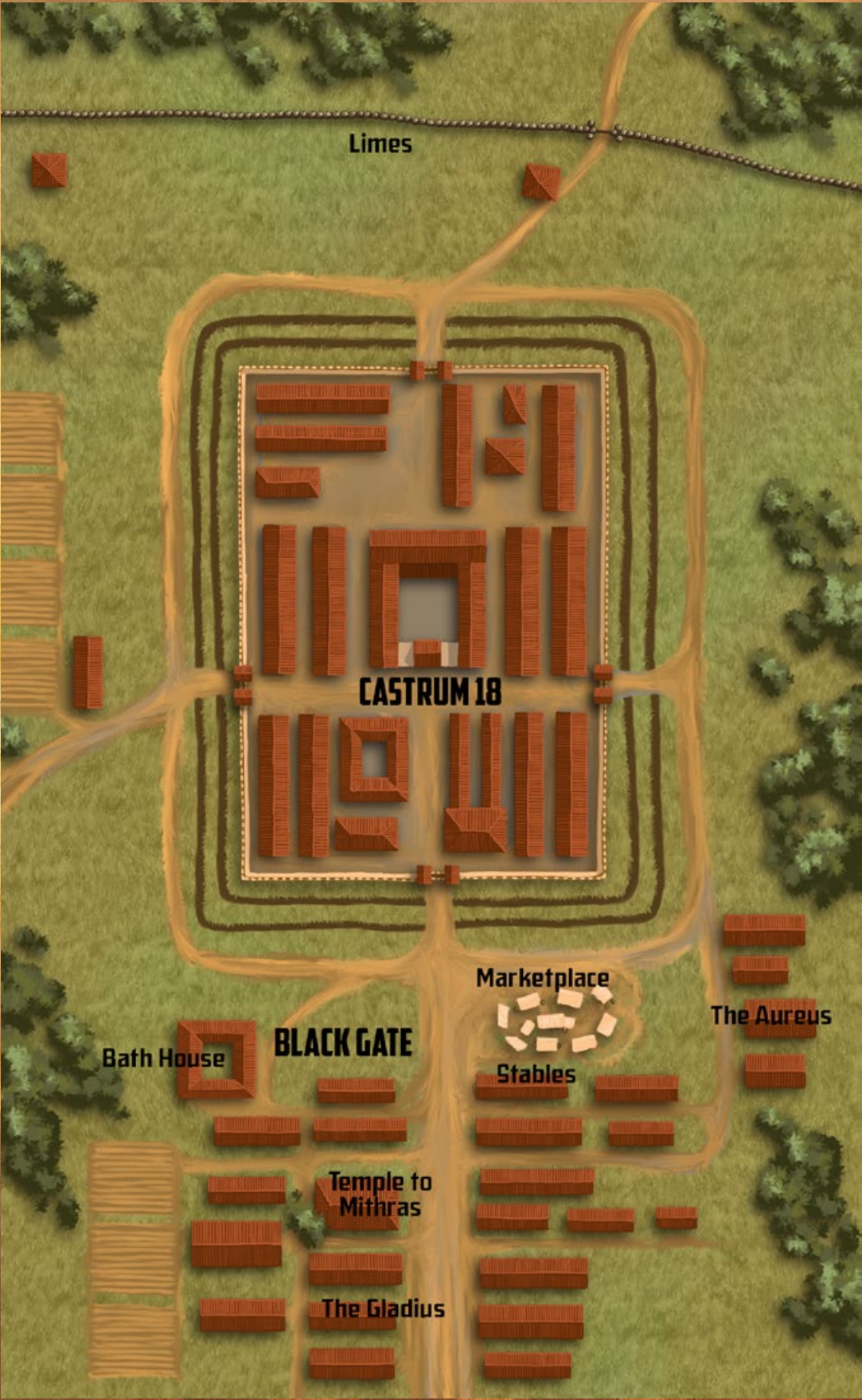
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Nox Germanica











# NOX GERMANICA

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**Teller's Dedication:** To the men of the legions. Strength and honor.

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# THE LIMES GERMANICUS

The dark, dripping forests of Germania have long been a source of mystery and fear for Rome. These trackless lands and their barbaric inhabitants present an environment unlike anything else in the Known World. From the time of Julius Caesar, Germania has resisted the best efforts of Rome to bring the light of civilization to its benighted lands.

Multiple attempts to conquer or subdue the region culminated in the Varian Disaster of 9 AD, when German warbands destroyed three legions and ended forever any attempts by the Empire to spread beyond the Rhine. Forgoing expansion into this howling wilderness, Rome instead constructed the *Limes Germanicus*, a system of log walls, ditches, 900 watch towers, and 60 legionary camps stretching more than 300 miles along the border of Germania Superior and Germania proper.



## THE STORY SO FAR

Despite this history, Rome gladly recruits warriors from these savage lands to fill her auxilia cohorts, albeit ones far removed from the Germanic frontier. One such man is Gaius Lentulus, formerly Arbanel of the Chatti tribe.

Lentulus served Rome as an auxilia commander on the Aegyptian frontier. During a desert patrol he stumbled onto ancient ruins containing things man was not meant to know. Lentulus was the only survivor of the encounter. When the dust settled, he gathered up everything he could carry and returned to Alexandria. He was branded a coward by his commander for surviving where others didn't and set for execution. But Lentulus had learned much from the black tomes he had unearthed. His commander met a terrible end and the prisoner escaped, now determined to return to his homeland and rid them of the Roman plague.

### THE EAGLE FALLS

Lentulus forged the appropriate documents conferring Roman citizenship gained from an honorable term of service and fled to Germania. Hatred burned in his heart as he traveled, and tales whispered in childhood of the Germanic hero Arminius and his success against Varus' legions echoed in his mind.

This once loyal servant of Rome is now a bitter enemy. Lentulus, once again known as Arbanel, vows vengeance,



and intends to rally the tribes across the Limes Germanicus in revolt.

Using the dark powers he learned in Egypt, he plans to use the might of the Romans against them. Arbanel will use a dark ceremony to raise the remains of the long-dead lost legions of the Teutoberger Forest Massacre and send them against his hated enemies. The attack will start with Castrum 18.



## CASTRUM 18

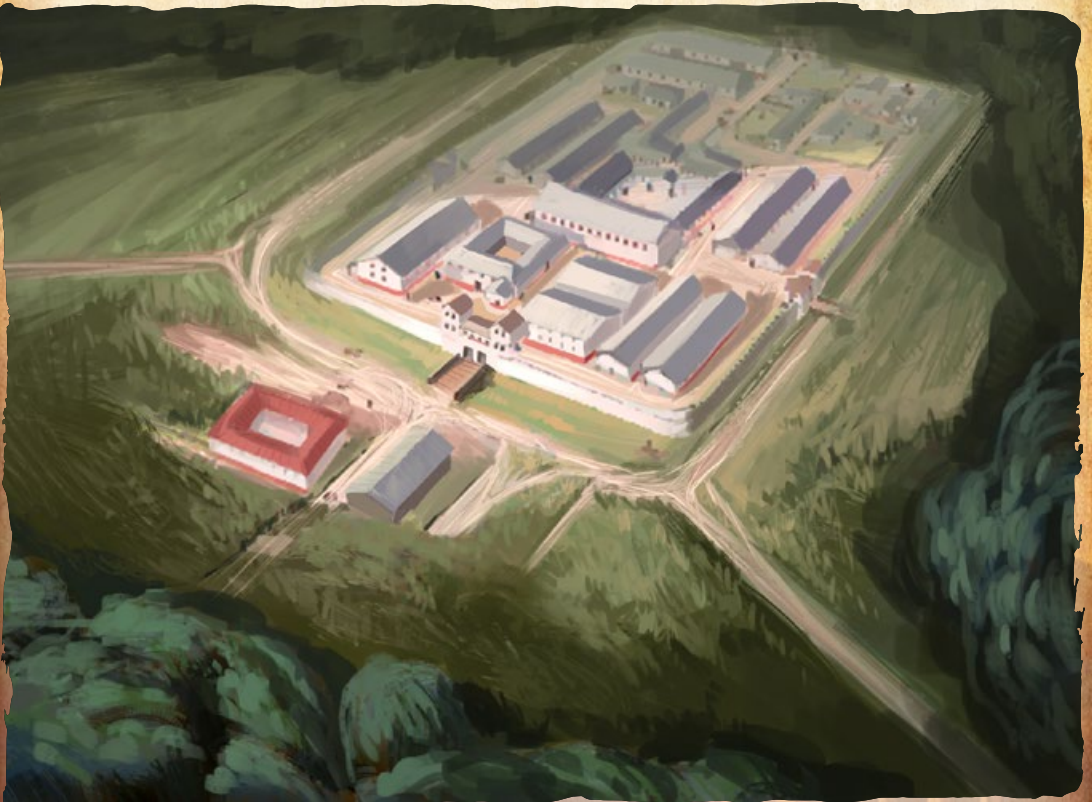
The adventure begins on the Limes Germanicus, in the late summer and into early fall during the reign of Hadrian in 120 AD. The characters are legionaries assigned to a cohort garrisoning one of the many forts along the Limes, charged with keeping an eye on the barbarians across the border. While the encampment is mainly manned by soldiers of the legions, there are also auxiliaries stationed there, as well as a variety of support personnel both in the castrum as well as the nearby settlement of Black Gate. There are even some local

friendly German warriors employed as guides. One or two Germans of noble birth are held as hostages to their tribe's good conduct and are given fairly free reign around the fort.

The center of life for the heroes is officially known as Cohort Castrum 18 by clerks at the legion's headquarters in the fortress-city of Moguntiacum. The castrum sits several hundred yards away from the ditch and stockade of logs comprising the Limes Germanicus.

Roughly 500 men of Cohort V of the Legio XXII Primigenia (devoted to goddess Fortuna) live here, commanded by Marcus Tiro. Titus Salienus is the Praefectus Castrorum, or second in command. The characters belong to the V Contubernium, III Century, commanded by the gruff veteran centurion Crassus Longinius.

Cohort Castrum 18 is surrounded by a defensive ditch and rampart faced with stone and backed with an earthen berm. The outer face of the wall is whitewashed and painted with a pattern of blocks,





making it seem to the barbarian eye to be made of marble. Inside the wall, an earthen ramp is placed along the length of the fortification, enabling defenders to access the top anywhere along its length. The corners of the castrum wall are rounded and do not have towers, but all four gates are flanked by a tower on each side. The four rectangular gate houses, made of stone, provide access to the camp. The ground outside the *castrum* is cleared on all sides except the south for a distance of 100 yards.

The castrum is oriented in such a way that its main gate, or *Porta Praetoria*, faces south, away from the Limes towards Nida, the regional capital and base of further garrisons behind the border. On the other side of the praetorium, the *Via Praetoria* continues to the north wall, where it goes through the *Porta Decumana*. This gate leads to the Limes proper and the crossing into German territory roughly half a mile away.

The *Via Principalis* crosses the *Via Praetoria* at a right angle, going through the outer wall at the *Porta Principalis Dextra* (right principle gate) on the eastern perimeter and the *Porta Principalis Sinistra* (left principle gate) on the west side.

The central structure of the fort is the *principia*, a central plaza surrounded by housing and offices for the garrison's command staff and their families, which is flanked by a roofed hall for assemblies of the castrum's troops. The standards of the centuries and the cohort are located on display there, in a shrine they share with images of Emperor Hadrian.

Other buildings of note are the *praetorium* (the fort commander's residence) to the west of the *Via Praetoria*, and a large grain storage building, kept stocked at all times to enable the garrison to hold out in the event of a siege.

The rest of the fort's interior is packed with stables, armories, workshops, latrines, a hospital, and six barrack blocks

for each century (divided internally into rooms each housing a *contubernium* of legionaries), as well as a barrack block of an *ala* (squadron) of auxiliary cavalry and a century of archers from Crete. Also found in the castrum are sacrificial altars for taking auspices and giving sacrifices before battle and on major holidays, the *Tribunal*, where courts martial and arbitrations are conducted by the castrum commandant, and the guardhouse.

## BLACK GATE

To the south of the castrum, on both sides of the road heading south toward Nida, lies a small settlement named *Porta Negra*, or Black Gate. The settlement got its name from the fact that the survivors of Varus' massacred legions came back to Roman territory through this area. It's also the route Germanicus took when he returned to Roman territory after his campaign to recover the lost eagles of the three destroyed legions. The village begins roughly 50 yards beyond the ditch outside the main gate.

Legionaries are not allowed to marry, but many keep common law wives and families outside the castrum in the village. The population of the settlement is an eclectic mix of veterans of the cohort who settled here after their discharge: Roman civilians, slaves, Romanized Gauls from south and west of Germania Superior, traders from the furthest reaches of the Empire, local Germans, and barbarians from across the Limes come to trade.

Between the dependents, traders, local tribesmen, barbarians, and craftsmen, the population of the settlement is roughly 1,500. The village has developed into a supply hub for local farmers, the castrum, and barbarians from across the Limes who desire civilized goods.

A few other locations of note are listed below:



**The Aureus:** An official hostel for visiting imperial officials. This inn boasts several suites of rooms, as well as a number of single rooms for the visitor on a budget. The common room serves fine meals and decent wine.

**Baths:** Behind the Aureus is a bath for the castrum and settlement, a relatively large and elaborate structure designed with all the features of Roman baths found in more civilized places. It has a changing room, a cold bath, two lukewarm baths, a hot bath and a sauna, with the complex being heated by a system of underfloor and wall heating.

**The Gladius:** Black Gate's main source of entertainment for the troopers is this rough and tumble tavern. Several varieties of wine from throughout the Empire can be found here, although most legionaries opt for cheap Gallic wine. Beer is available for natives, as well as those troops who have "gone local." The pretty barmaids augment their pay in the second floor rooms.

**The Markets:** Black Gate also hosts several markets at which the locals display their wares for the legionaries to spend their pay on.

**Shrine of Mithras:** This simple temple provides spiritual support to the cohort. It also serves as a base of operations for the Sons of Solomon in their on-going surveillance of the Germanic frontier. The temple is maintained by a Priest of Mithras (use statistics from *Weird Wars Rome*) as well as three acolytes (use statistics for legionaries).

**Houses of Venus:** These small, scattered brothels cater to the warriors' carnal pleasures.

## SI VIS PACEM PARA BELLUM

*—If you desire peace, prepare for war*

Life for a legionary stationed at Cohort Castrum 18 is filled with a variety of

## TIMELINE

The events of the latter part of the adventure all move forward to culminate on September 11, the anniversary of the Battle of Teutoberger Wald, where Varus destroyed the three legions that Arbanel seeks to use against the Empire. The following timeline gives you a quick overview of how the events from this point forward should flow:

- **1 September:** Anniversary of the founding of Legio XXII (**The Stars Aren't Right**, page 12).
- **2 September:** Aristovarus' delegation passes through the cohort's area, Arbanel arrives in Black Gate in "**He's a Witch!**", page 12.
- **3 September:** Arbanel is flogged and sent into German lands.
- **4 September:** A survivor of the German noble Aristovarus' party arrives at the castrum (**This Means War!**, page 15).
- **5 September:** Aristovarus arrives to pick up any survivors of his delegation.
- **6 September:** The contubernium heads to their assigned watchtower and participates in the battles that follow (**The Savage Horde**, page 17).
- **7–8 September:** The legionaries cross the Limes and travel through the wilderness to Aristovarus' village (**Hades No, We Won't Go**, page 23).
- **9 September:** The party arrives at the massacre site at sundown (**A Somber Reminder**, page 23).
- **10 September:** The heroes arrive at Arbanel's camp (**The Eagles Have Landed**, page 24).
- **11 September:** Arbanel begins the ceremony to raise Varus' dead legions (**The Unquiet Dead**, page 26).





duties. Typically a trooper spends a week manning a watchtower along the Limes on the lookout for German activity, then three weeks back at the fort performing any number of routine tasks.

The adventure begins with the characters off of wall duty, so the War Master has up to three weeks of garrison duty before the main events of this adventure kick off. The events below take place in addition to the usual mundane training all troopers are tasked with each day. Feel free to include as many or as few as you'd like, and add more if your players seem to be enjoying garrison life. The key thing to remember is that when the events of Act Two kick off, the date is September 6, so backward plan accordingly if you want to have your players experience more of life in the Roman legions than outlined in this act.

Of the scenarios below, only **He's a Witch** must be played out.

## TRAINING DAYS

For the legionaries stationed at Cohort Castrum 18, the duty day is divided into eight watches of three hours each, the beginning of each is marked by the blast

of a trumpet from the praetorium. The main item on the agenda is a vigorous training session lasting about three hours. As the characters are fairly new recruits, they receive two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Other training might include a 20-mile march or a four to five mile jog under full pack, or swimming a nearby river.

This might be a good time to use the Interlude rules and let the players flesh out their legionary's backstories.

## STOP, THIEF!

The centurion assigns the contubernium to patrol duty in Black Gate. Since the village has no formal police force or watch, the soldiers of the garrison provide a modicum of public safety. They spend the day walking back and forth, showing the eagle, so to speak. Their job is making sure the crowds at the taverns don't get too rowdy, disgruntled Germans who think they've been swindled don't get too violent with the local traders, and the ladies of the houses of Venus aren't rolling too many drunks.

Late in the day, as most merchants are closing up shop, cries of "Stop thief!" sound from the market place. The legionaries spot a small boy darting down the crowded main street just before he ducks down an alleyway. If the patrol fails to give chase, a swarthy merchant puffs up to them, swearing to report them for failing to do their duty by not apprehending the thief.

Run this as a standard Chase. The boy, Hermes, adds +2 to his rolls for his preplanned escape route in addition to any bonus for his speed. The thief can be caught with a successful grappling roll, requiring Advantage and a King, Queen, or Joker.

If he is, Hermes pleads for mercy from the legionaries if caught and offers to give back the statue he stole from the merchant. If the characters let him go,





they've made a friend for life—and one who might help them later when they come back to Black Gate during the upcoming siege.

- **Hermes (Slave Boy):** Use Slave stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. Add Young, Fleet-Footed, and Knowledge (Black Gate) d10. He has no equipment or gear.

## WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

As the warm days of August begin to draw to a close and the rains move in, a supply convoy arrives from the Legion's warehouses at Nida. It is the job of the men of V Cohort to escort the convoy from their camp to Cohort Castrum 17. The duty falls to the V Contubernium, III Century, V Cohort (the heroes' unit) to accompany the heavily loaded wagons.

The convoy consists of five heavy wagons pulled by oxen. The weather is unseasonably cool for late August, with heavily overcast skies that threaten rain. The drovers of the wagons are uncommunicative Gauls who just want to get their job done and be away from the frontier. Travel along the graveled road that parallels the Limes should take three days at the speed the oxen plod.

If anyone thinks to look, the wagons are filled with armaments—pila tips, bundles of arrows, lead sling shot, and several hundred gladii, along with 30 or so shields.

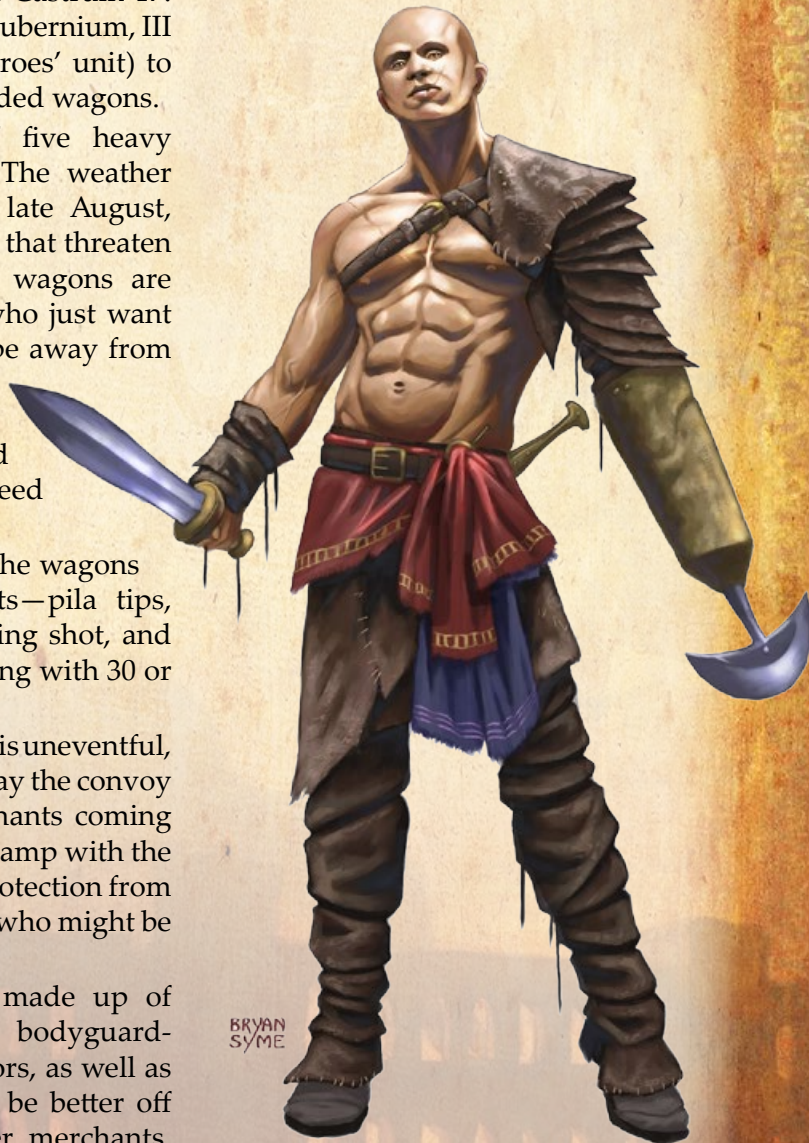
The first two days' journey is uneventful, and at dusk of the second day the convoy runs into a party of merchants coming the other way, who ask to camp with the heavily armed group for protection from bandits or German raiders who might be in the area.

The merchant group is made up of several tough looking bodyguard-types, probably ex-gladiators, as well as several men who seem to be better off and are typical of frontier merchants,

along with a train of four mules loaded with bundles of goods. They are led by an immense man, whose horse staggers under his weight.

The travelers make small talk with the characters, share their wine with the soldiers, and generally attempt to put them at ease. These merchants, though, are actually brigands in disguise, who have found out about the arms shipment and mean to make off with it. They really have no wares to sell, just bundles of rags and leaves tied to their mules.

Clever characters who examine the merchants closely may notice some discrepancies in their appearance



KRYAN  
SYME



and stories. If conversation turns to Cohort Castrum 17, a Smarts roll on the character's part reveals details in their story are off—names of people there are wrong, etc. A Notice roll allows the character to spot an Imperial brand on one of the mules, as well as the leader's horse, which indicates they are stolen. Just as strangely, the merchants don't try to sell the characters anything from their stores of goods, and are fairly free with their wine (if asked, they attribute it to good trading at the castrum).

As the night goes on, the head merchant brings out more wine. This amphora, however, is drugged with a powerful sleeping agent. If the characters imbibe, they must make a Vigor roll or pass out for 1d6 hours. If the whole party is rendered unconscious, they awake the next morning to find the wagons gone. Otherwise, sometime during the night, the merchants attack the contubernium and attempt to steal the goods over their dead or incapacitated bodies.

- **Brigands (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Experienced Soldier stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. They are armed with spatha (Str+d8), pugio (STR+d4), and leather armor (+1).
- **Brigand Leader (WC):** use Barbarian Chieftain stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. Add Obese to his Hindrances. Armed with long sword (STR+d8), pugio (Str+d4), and lorica hamata (chain mail) (+2).

If the brigands make off with the arms shipment, they take it to the rebellious village in the **Show Them No Mercy** encounter, where it is used to equip the rebels to a higher standard than they could otherwise achieve (see below).

Killing off the brigands means fewer bandits are in the kidnapper's group in the **This Means War!** encounter.

If the characters make it to Cohort Castrum 17, they get a chance to pick up some rumors among the garrison, especially when word gets around

of their heroic actions in saving the shipment of armaments. Drinks and congratulations are shared all around.

During the celebration, or recuperation if the party was unsuccessful, a Streetwise or Persuasion roll uncovers the following rumors:

- Roman scouts into the German lands have noticed a lot of activity among the tribes in the last few weeks.
- A sentry at one of the watchtowers saw an eagle flying backwards last week. Surely this is a sign of bad times to come for the legion.
- (With a raise) One of the locals asks if Black Gate is located at their castrum. He goes on to say that the tales of Germanicus retrieving the eagle standards of Varus' destroyed legions was a propaganda hoax. His grandfather was with the punitive expedition, and came back through Black Gate on the way out of barbarian territory. He said on his deathbed that the expedition came away empty handed.
- A storm approaches. The tavern keeper warns the heroes to stay the night, or risk running afoul of Woden's Hunt. He goes on to explain the particulars of this legend, including the fact that those who lay on the ground will be missed by the Huntsman and his Hounds (see page 30).

## SHOW THEM NO MERCY

The inhabitants of a local village have thrown out the Roman tax assessors (known as tax farmers), and even cut the ears off another. The officials demand the cohort commander do something about it.

Since this sets a bad precedence for other villages in the cohort's area of operations, the tribune orders the character's century to march on the village and make an example of them.



## THE VILLAGE



The village is a collection of huts and farm buildings enclosed by a stockade mostly erected to keep animals in rather than attackers out. The villagers, however, are expecting some kind of retribution from Rome and have readied themselves for battle, gathering whatever weapons or farm implements they can find, closing the village gates and posting guards.

The century arrives late in the day and stops below a ridge overlooking the village. Crassus Longinius, the century's gruff centurion, plans to spend the night in the woods and attack at first light. He has the artillerists begin assembling the light artillery (scorpions) the century has brought.

Crassus summons the characters' contubernium to his presence shortly after nightfall and orders them to capture the village gates by stealth and hold them until they hear a trumpet. They are then to open the gate to allow their fellows in.

Capturing the gate shouldn't be too tough as it defended by just five sleepy warriors (use Barbarian Warrior stats from *Weird Wars Rome*). The

contubernium only needs to make a Stealth roll at +2 due to the darkness. Climbing the rough hewn timbers that form the eight-foot high palisade is accomplished with a Climbing test.

Once the sounds of combat are heard, more villagers, outnumbering the heroes two to one, quickly arrive and attack.

- **Village Guards (3 per Hero):** Use Barbarian Warriors from *Weird Wars Rome*.

### TO ARMS!

After three rounds (or when half the villagers' warriors are put down, whichever comes first), the legionaries hear a trumpet call. Opening the gate requires one hero to spend two entire rounds of actions, or two heroes a single round. The cohort arrives at the gate three rounds after the trumpet call.

At this point the fight becomes a Mass Battle. The Century's Centurion, Crassus Longinius, has Knowledge (Battle) d10 and Spirit d8, and A Few Good Men.

The rebel village leader has Knowledge (Battle) d4 and Spirit d8.

The Roman force has 9 tokens (7 if the arms shipment was stolen in **Wolves**



in **Sheep's Clothing**, page 9), and the villagers have 10.

The following modifiers also apply:

- **Light Artillery:** The Romans add +1 due to their ballistae and scorpions.
- **Terrain (Walled Village):** +2 to rebel rolls until the walls are breached or the gates opened.
- **Morale modifier:** +2 to villagers (no retreat).

#### CRUEL SPOILS

Once the villagers fail their morale check and break, Crassus allows his troops to pillage the villagers' belongings for one hour. Those legionaries who partake get one Spoil roll at -2. This cruel action, Crassus believes, will teach the other villages to pay their taxes. (Of course it actually just enflames them against their Roman occupiers, leading them to join Arbanel later.)

### THE STARS AREN'T RIGHT (SEPTEMBER 1)

The first of September is the anniversary of the founding of Legio XXII Primigenia, and all the soldiers of the cohort look forward to a day of feasting and games, as well as good-natured contests between centuries.

The cohort's priest of Mithras begins the day by taking an augury. A white bull is led into the castrum to be sacrificed. As it passes down the Via Praetoria and through the assembled centuries, it breaks free from its handlers and runs amok! If someone manages to somehow subdue the bull without killing it they are regarded as heroes by their fellow legionaries (+2 Charisma in dealing with them). Use the bull stats from *Savage Worlds* should one of the characters attempt this challenge.

When the bull is killed during its rampage, or subdued and sacrificed afterwards, the priests declare the auspices bad and predict dark times ahead for the men of V Cohort.

Understandably, this puts the superstitious soldiers in a dark mood and dampens the rest of the festivities. Fights break out among the legionaries and the men of the Gallic cavalry *ala* stationed at the fort as the anxiety spreads, and by nightfall the hot-headed soldiers are ordered into their barracks.

### "HE'S A WITCH!" (SEPTEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>)

The day after the disastrous Founding Day ceremony, the centuries at the castrum are put to hard labor clearing the surrounding fields of brush, chopping firewood, and graveling the path from the fort to the Limes. The command's goal is to tire out the troopers and take their minds off the events of the 1st of September. Unfortunately, this just makes the soldiers tired and worried. Several dark portents take place:

- Around mid-morning, a cart hauling gravel loses a wheel, spilling its load and crushing an unfortunate legionary from the Second Century to death.
- Around noon, the passage through the Limes of a party of German nobles heading for Nida doesn't do the troops' morale any good. Many mutter dark curses at the barbarians as they proudly ride past the spot where the trooper was killed earlier in the day.
- In the late afternoon, a soldier from the characters' century clearing brush mishandles his axe in sweat-slicked hands and injures his leg badly. The characters are close by and can attempt to treat the wound (a successful Healing roll stabilizes him and stops the bleeding). Troops at dinner mutter about the bad omens and the certain disaster looming on the horizon.

#### ENTER THE BARBARIAN

That night the heroes' centurion allows them to go into Black Gate if they like. A little wine and women should do them good. Off-duty soldiers go into the village dressed in their military tunic



and belt armed only with their pugios. No other weapons are allowed outside the castrum's gates (except for patrols).

Sometime that evening while at their favorite tavern, the Gladius, they witness the following:

*The tavern is filled with fellow legionaries seeking Bacchus' solace from the events of the last few days. The few townspeople in the building give the soldiers a wide berth, having heard rumors of the bad fortune that seems to dog the cohort. Some mutter about the troops' presence in "their bar." One of the priests of Mithras sits in a corner, nursing his wine and looking glum.*

*After several rounds of drinks are dedicated to Bacchus, a well-dressed man of obvious Germanic origin enters the tavern. Unusually, his skin is quite tan and he carries himself with an air of command. This, combined with his fine Roman clothes draws looks from everyone in the establishment. He strides up to the bar and tosses down a few coins, then orders the barkeep to see to his animals out in the yard.*

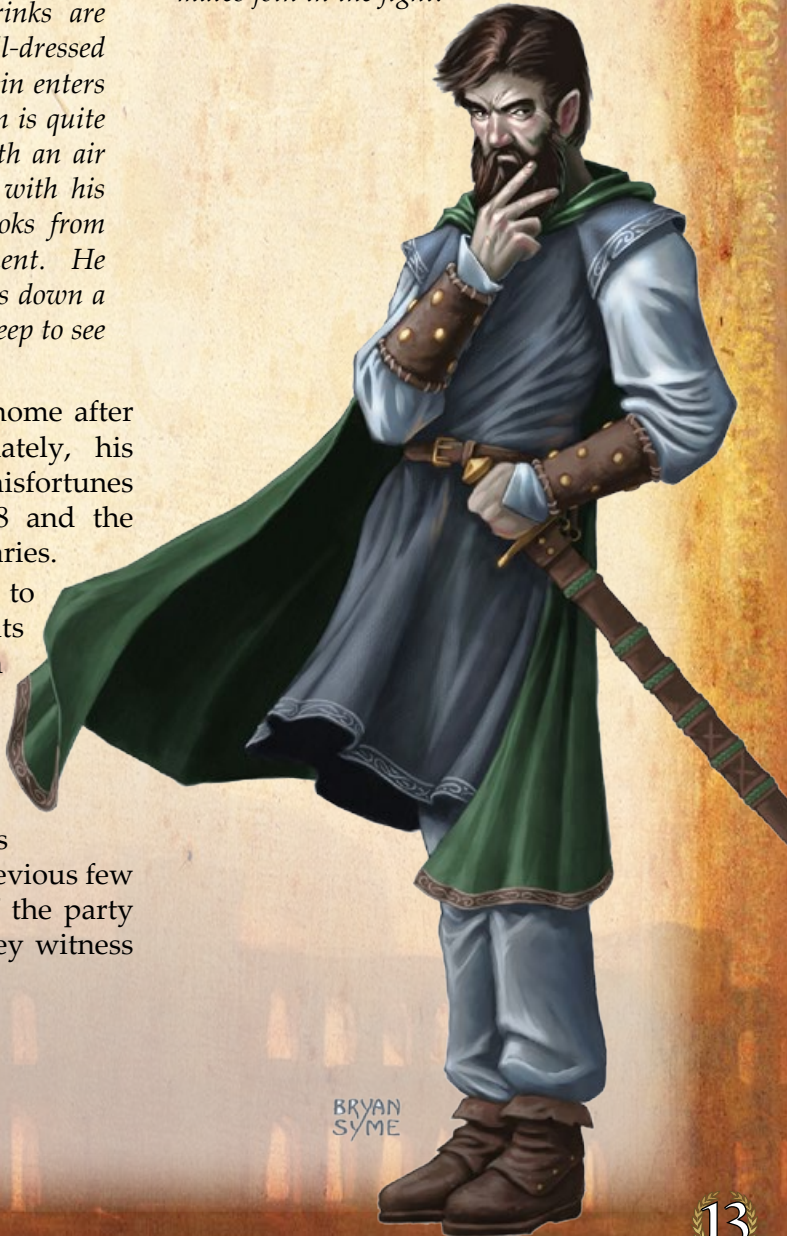
This is Lentulus, returning home after fleeing Aegyptus. Unfortunately, his arrival coincides with the misfortunes befalling Cohort Castrum 18 and the sour mood of the local legionaries.

If the heroes attempt to talk to Lentulus, he's curt, as befits a former centurion of an auxiliary cohort and German of noble birth. He is haughty, insulting, and snobbish, and mixed with the pent-up frustration the legionaries have over the events of the previous few days it's an explosive mix. If the party doesn't interact with him, they witness the following:

*A legionary saunters up to the strange German and demands that he move out of "his" spot. The German looks him up and down then turns away with a sneer.*

*"My days of taking orders from Romans is long past, soldier," he says. The legionary grabs the man's shoulder, demanding to know what citizen he killed to get such fine Roman clothes.*

*The German moves like a striking snake, grabbing the man's wrist and forcing him to the ground before letting him go and turning back to the bar. The legionary's face contorts with rage and he swings a meaty fist at the German. As he strikes the man, several of his mates join in the fight.*



BRYAN  
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The tavern erupts into a brawl, with the legionaries using this as an excuse to blow off steam. If the characters decide to join in, there are 10 legionaries, 10 townsfolk, and Lentulus. Not everyone piles on Lentulus—some of the townsfolk have scores to settle with the legionaries, so it degenerates into a huge, swirling brawl.

✂ **Lentulus/Arbanel:** see page 27.

- **Townsfolk (10):** use Citizen stats from *Weird Wars Rome*. Armed with improvised weapons (Str+d4, Parry and Fighting -1).
- **Legionaries (10):** use Legionary stats from *Weird Wars Rome*. Armed with improvised weapons (Str+d4, Parry and Fighting -1) and pugio (Str+d4).

#### THE WATCH ARRIVES

After five rounds of combat, or if Lentulus is Incapacitated, the garrison patrol bursts into the tavern. The watch's decanus lays about with his vinestick, separating the soldiers from the townsfolk and bringing a quick end to the brawl.

*The tavern keeper points out the battered and bruised German as the source of the fight and the watch hauls him to his feet. As they do, an amulet falls from his torn tunic, glittering in the light from the lamps. The priest of Mithras gasps at the sight of it, quickly stooping down and retrieving it. He holds it up to the light and declares "Decanus, this man is a sorcerer, and the cause of the troubles that have befallen this place. Take him to the tribune at once."*

The decanus looks around the tavern, and seeing the heroes' contubernium, orders them to gather the sorcerer's things and bring them to the castrum while his men escort the prisoner to the commander.

A legionary who makes a Notice roll gets a glimpse of the amulet. A Common Knowledge roll allows him to recognize it as Aegyptian in origin.

#### THINGS MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW

If they check out the stables, they find the German left his mule in the care of the stable boy, none other than Hermes from the **Stop Thief!** encounter (unless the characters killed him during or after the chase).

The mule is in reasonable health but seems to have traveled a long way. A pack on its back contains a variety of mundane items (clothes, personal goods), and a scroll of discharge from the *Legio XXII Deiotariana* in Alexandria, Aegyptus.

Lentulus actually came in with *two* mules. Hermes hid the other out back when the fight broke out in hopes of selling it. The legionaries should note the stable boy's strange behavior after talking with him a bit, but it takes an Intimidation roll to get him to reveal his secret.

This mule carries several chests. They're locked but can easily be broken open. They contain scrolls and tablets covered with unsettling writing, a mummified hand, eight rings of various common metals covered in strange runes, and small idols of unknown gods.

If the heroes decide to appropriate anything from the mules, they gain a Spoil each. This incurs a curse, however. Anyone who takes any of the items cannot spend Bennies to reroll critical failures. Getting rid of the cursed object is sufficient to remove the minor curse.

#### EXILE

The soldiers must take at least some of the items to the priest or they are thoroughly searched and punished if the items are discovered.

As they approach him, they find the following scene:

*The square before the praetorium is luridly lit by scores of torches. The tribune stands on the tribunal while the battered and bruised German is tightly*



*bound and supported by a pair of burly legionaries from the First Century. The camp prefect stands nearby, his scowl seemingly even deeper than normal in the flickering light. Antonius, the priest of Mithras, stands by, denouncing the prisoner as the source of all the cohort's troubles. The commander gestures for you to bring forth the items you found on the German's mules.*

The tribune and the priest of Mithras look through the items, with the priest repeatedly making protective gestures to ward against evil. A low murmur sounds through the assembled soldiers each time this happens. Tribune Marcus Tiro is no fool, and knows the well-being of the garrison depends on calming the superstitions of his soldiers after the events of the last few days.

Lentulus has come at an opportune time for him. Having run afoul of the auxiliary commander while stationed in Alexandria as a young staff tribune, Tiro is only too happy to make the German pay for old wrongs, especially if it means revenge also serves to calm his troops and get things back to normal.

When the priest finishes, Tiro announces that the German is a warlock who has disgraced the citizenship he earned with the legions, and on the morrow will be punished and banished from the Empire.

Lentulus is tied to a post set in the ground in front of the tribunal for just such occasions and left there overnight. He's guarded by a contubernium of troops from the First Century, part of the tribune's bodyguard. No matter how tricky or curious the characters are, they can't get past the veteran legionaries.

The next morning, the garrison is assembled in a square centered around the tribunal and watches as Lentulus is whipped to within an inch of his life. Once he has received his bloody flogging, he's carried to the Limes and tossed into the forest beyond.

The priest of Mithras burns Lentulus' possessions in a bonfire erected in the praetorium's courtyard. Characters making a Notice roll at -2 think the pile of goods thrown in the bonfire seems smaller than the items they found on the mules. After this, the garrison is given the rest of the day off in celebration, and the wine amphorae are broken out of storage and issued to the troops.

## THIS MEANS WAR!

The day after Lentulus is expelled from the Empire, read the following to the heroes:

*The day after the warlock was driven from Roman lands, your centurion compounds the pounding in your heads caused by Bacchus with a morning of gladius drills. As your contubernium finishes up weapons practice in the chill morning air, a rider comes clattering up the road from Nida. He is dressed as a German and has been badly beaten and injured. As he rides up to the front gate of the castrum, he falls from his horse.*

Aristovarus, a friendly local German chieftain from across the Limes, sent envoys, including his children, to meet with the Roman governor at Moguntiacum, but brigands captured them for ransom. A survivor of the ambush escaped the attack and rode to Cohort Castrum 18.

The German is brought to Tribune Marcus Tiro. The commander realizes that if word of this gets back to Aristovarus, Rome may lose a valuable ally on the other side of the Limes Germanicus. The characters' contubernium, along with another from their century (16 men total) is assigned to track down the bandits and bring the hostages to safety.

The survivor of the ambush can take them to where the attack happened. With a Smarts roll (or by asking), legionaries remember the party that passed through the Limes earlier had three children, five





to ten well-dressed nobles, and a guard of ten or so warriors.

It takes half a day for the rescue party to arrive at the ambush site. When they do, they find that the bodies of the German party's guards have been stripped and left to be picked over by animals, but tracks can be found leading away from the site.

A total of three Tracking rolls (+2 for the number of people being tracked) lead the heroes through the thick forests that lay between the Limes and the more settled lands around Nida to a nearby camp. A mixed band of runaway slaves, brigands, and deserters are holed up in a cul-de-sac at the base of a cliff.

The cliff behind the cul-de-sac is inaccessible. The shorter cliff to the south is a very steep 15' climb.

The contubernii arrive at the camp at dusk. A Notice roll spots the two sentries the brigands have posted outside (at the X's), but they are sloppy and don't keep a good watch (-2 to their Notice rolls to spot the rescue party).

In four tents at the base of the cliffs is the rest of the band along with the

hostages (three children aged 9, 10, and 13), as well as five German nobles (three women and two men)—adults use stats for Barbarian Warriors from *Weird Wars Rome*).

If the legionaries observe the camp during the day or early evening, they notice the brigands make the hostages go to a nearby creek to fetch water and wash clothes. A hunting party of five brigands also leaves during the day to forage. If the camp is frontally assaulted, the brigand leader retreats to the rear of the cul-de-sac and threatens to kill the hostages if the Romans don't retreat.

Rescuing the children earns Rome a German ally across the Limes in the person of Aristovarus and his people, and brings the legionaries to their commander's attention. Should this occur, Aristovarus comes to the castrum on September 5th and presents the most deserving member of the contubernium with a golden amulet and torc for their heroic deed. This magical amulet bestows +1 Toughness against attacks by supernatural creatures or arcane powers for the person who wears it.



- **Brigands (20, plus any survivors from Wolves in Sheep's Clothing):** Use Experienced Soldier stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. They're armed with long sword (STR+d8), pugio (STR+d4), and leather armor (+1).

## THE SAVAGE HORDE

Following his expulsion from Roman territory, Lentulus is determined to avenge himself upon his former masters. He heads to his home tribe and uses his powers of persuasion to convince the Germans that the time is right to attack the Limes. Along with cracking the Roman defenses and giving his new followers a taste of victory, Arbanel plans to use this attack as cover to get back into Black Gate and retrieve any of his goods that may have been taken from his pack.

### PALLIDULA, RIGIDA, ET NUDULA (SEPT 6)

—*Darkish, Chilly, and Misty*

Every three weeks, the *contubernii* from the castrum rotate out to the watchtowers along the Limes for a week of sentry duty. Placed every mile or so along the wall, these outposts serve as the eyes and ears of the border garrison. From these elevated positions the legionaries can see into German territory as well as watch for raiding parties that might try to slip across the wall into Roman territory, or slip back into Germania with stolen cattle or livestock.

The watchtowers stand 30' tall, and are stoutly built of stone. Each is equipped with signal flags for communications during the day, as well as pre-made signal fires in braziers waiting to be lit to warn of trouble at night. It's the heroes' *contubernium's* turn to spend a week at a watchtower, so they set off early on the morning of September 6th in a heavy fog.

The day dawns gray and dreary, with a heavy fog enveloping the castrum and the surrounding forest. It's the last days of the waning moon.

*Your centurion walks down the line of contubernii that make up this week's watchtower sentry roster. The thick fog makes the darkness of the pre-dawn hours even darker and colder than normal for the month of September.*

*Crassus Longinius inspects each man's gear, his eagle eye picking out the slightest deficiency, which is noted on a wax tablet by his optio. Once he's satisfied that all is in order, he gives the order for the contubernii to hoist their gear to marching position, gives out assignments and the day's password, "corvus," (raven) then marches the men to the castrum's northern gate.*

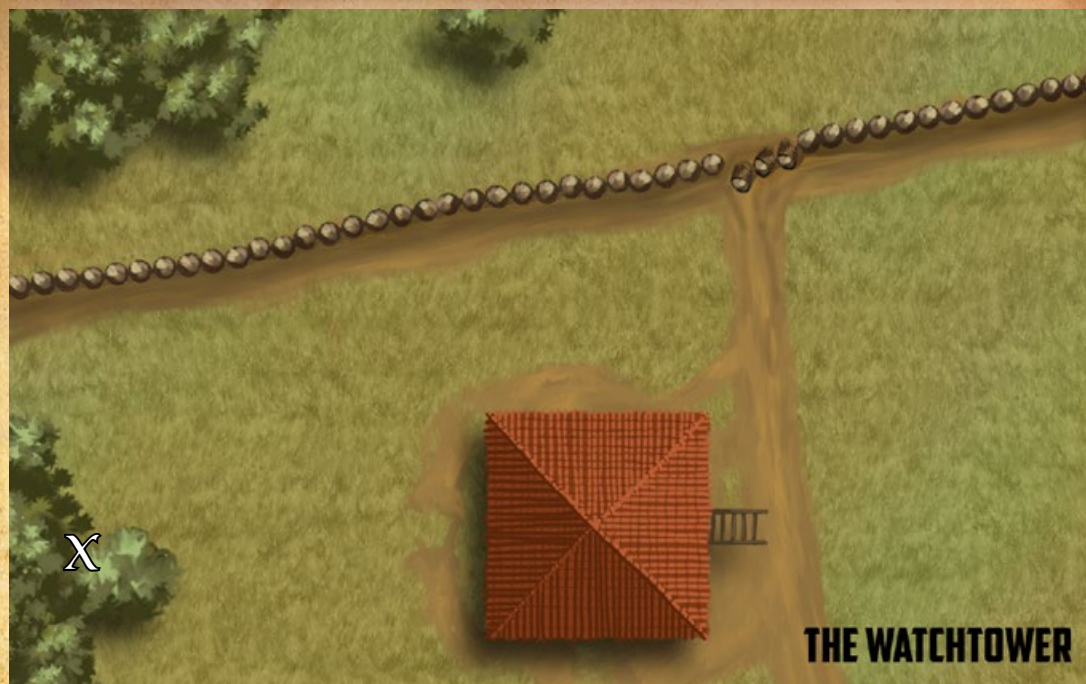
*A brisk walk of a few minutes takes you to the border crossing of the Limes. Your group swings left onto the path behind the palisade and sets off for the week's assignment, five miles down the border. The mist makes seeing anything across the stockade impossible, and soon your cloak and helmet drip water onto the ground. The pines on the Roman side of the border are dark, menacing shapes, and it's hard to tell if the sun has come up yet, so thick is this fog.*

The legionaries' group marches along the Limes for several miles. Each is burdened with his armor, shield, two pila, gladius, pugio, shield, waterskin, and pack with a week's worth of food and any personal gear.

The *contubernium* also leads a mule loaded with supplies for the tower, including several bundles of torches, an amphora of lamp oil (about five gallons), an amphora of cooking oil, several pounds of dried meats, grain, and vegetables, and a bundle of 20 pila.

As the marchers near their watchtower, have them make a Notice check versus a group Stealth of d4+2 to avoid being surprised by the German warriors hiding





in the trees and undergrowth to their left (inside the Limes at the spot marked X). Eight German warriors burst out of the trees five yards away and attack. Three rounds into the fight, eight more clamber through the broken palisade. Have each make a Climbing check to get over the wall and into the fight. The warriors fight until half their number are down and then attempt to retreat.

- **German Warriors (16):** Use Barbarian Warrior stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. Half carry long swords (Str+d8) and the other half carry battle axes (Str+d8). All have medium shields (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged).

## A FRONTE PRAECIPITIUM A TERGO LUP!

—A Precipice in Front, Wolves Behind

As the heroes move on into the watchtower, a successful Notice roll reveals a thickening of the fog as well as a smell of smoke tinged with meat. They must be getting close to the tower, and just in time for a hot breakfast!

Then the fog parts and they see the following:

*The mist parts to reveal the watchtower, dispersed by a slight breeze from the north. It sits on a knoll overlooking the Limes Germanicus where the line bulges toward barbarian territory as it follows the contour of the hill. The first thing that catches your eye is the pile of blackened bodies at the base of the tower, smoke wafting off the charred flesh. Makeshift ladders lean drunkenly against the stout stone walls, and you can see that the entryway's door has been smashed in. The palisade in front of the watchtower has been pulled down and the ground is littered with spent pila and dead Germans.*

A large force of Germans attacked the watchtower in the pre-dawn hours in order to break the line of signal fires that might alert the castrum to the west of the legionaries' home. Heedless of casualties, they stormed the tower, finally gaining entry to the second floor entrance. Once inside, they killed or captured the contubernium and retreated back into Germania.



The characters find the ground littered with dead Germans, most killed by pila hurled from above. Ten form a mound of burned bodies at the base of the tower, dead from burning oil poured on them from the watchtower window.

The legionaries can easily gain entry via the German ladders left in place. Inside, the tower has been ransacked, but strangely, only three Roman bodies are found where there should be eight. Use the same map from the last encounter for the watchtower, its surroundings, and the Limes.

The legionaries must decide what to do. The fog is too thick to use the signal flags or light the signal fires. They have two choices—stay put in the watchtower or head back to the castrum and report their findings. If they decide to split up, remind them of the danger posed by bands of lurking Germans to individual messengers if this is really a full scale border incursion.

#### TESTUDO

If the contubernium decides to wait until the fog lifts and then send a signal, they can spend the intervening time repairing the entryway, clearing out or burning the German ladders (the watchtower has its own that is used to gain entry on the second floor), and collecting and repairing the pila that pincushion the German bodies around the tower. If they do wait, another force of barbarians attacks about an hour after they settle in.

Unless the characters attack, the Germans assume the tower was cleared earlier and head on into the interior of the Empire.

If the legionaries attack or otherwise alert the barbarians, the Germans stop to reduce the strongpoint before moving on. There are 30 Germans and one leader in this raiding party, five of whom are armed with bows. Six Germans take a log from the palisade and begin battering at the wall of the watchtower while

several set up any ladders the characters didn't burn to assault the entryway. If no ladders are left, they chop down saplings to use as ladders while the archers try to keep the Romans pinned down.

The watchtower walls have a Toughness of 20 (4) versus the ram's attack of 2d6 AP2 value. A single wound knocks a hole in the wall two yards wide. The ram is three yards long and manned by six Germans (but can be manned by three), and has a Pace of 3. If the crew is reduced below three, more Germans move forward and pick up the log (taking two rounds to hoist it up into the ready position).

The Germans continue the attack until their leader or at least 20 warriors are dead. At this point, make a group Spirit roll for each additional casualty. Failure indicates that the survivors break and run back across the Limes.

If the legionaries survive the assault on the watchtower, a Common Knowledge roll tells them that standard operating procedure in the case of a large-scale attack is to fall back to the castrum to avoid being picked off one contubernium at a time. If they decide to wait until the fog clears to send a warning, it's mid-morning by the time the mist lifts, and a column of smoke can be seen rising from Cohort Castrum 18's location.

- ✦ **German Warband Leader:** Use Barbarian Chieftain stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. He's armed with long sword (Str+d8), and scale mail (+2).
- **German Warriors (30):** Use Barbarian Warrior stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. 25 are armed with long swords (Str+d8) or battle axes (Str+d8) and medium shields (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged). Another five carry conti (Str+d8, Reach 2). Five are armed with short bows (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6).





## FACILIS DESCENSUS AVERNO

—*The Road to Hell is Smooth*

If the heroes decide to head back to the castrum before the attacking German band arrives, they run into a similar scene as detailed above when they get to the next watchtower. A band of 30 Germans is assaulting the outpost. The legionaries can either attack from the rear, wait and see, or keep moving to the castrum. If they wait, the Germans break into the watchtower after several minutes of fighting, and emerge a few minutes later with loot and weapons. They then head into Roman lands.

Of the other three watchtowers between the characters and the castrum, the next held off the attackers with three Roman casualties, the second hasn't been attacked, and the last (closest to the castrum) is under siege. It should be obvious to even the thickest legionary that this is a major German incursion. The soldiers stationed at the other watchtowers join up with the characters as they head back to the castrum.

## WOLVES AT THE GATE

The castrum is already under siege when the warriors return:

*Even before the castrum comes in sight, you hear a low grumble that resolves itself into a cacophony of shouts, howls, and screams. Smoke blackens the sky above the fort and Black Gate. As you peer through the foliage that rings the cleared zone, you see a host of barbarians that swarm like locusts around the stout walls of the garrison. While the walls appear intact, much of Black Gate is in flames. It appears that at least two thousand Germans wash around the walls of the fort.*

While the horde attacks the fort, Arbanel and his bodyguards head to the stables at the Gladius tavern to search for his stolen goods, then to the Temple of Mithras. Unless the characters previously found the mule the stable boy hid during the **He's a Witch!** encounter, Arbanel does, and heads back into German lands before the characters arrive at the siege. He also finds the items the priests withheld from the bonfire at the Temple of Mithras.

The garrison is outnumbered and surrounded, and the closest



reinforcements are at least two days away by horse at the regional capital of Nida. The characters and their fellow legionaries should realize the castrum likely sent riders toward the capital when the horde first appeared, so heading south to warn the rest of the legion would be redundant (and not very heroic).

At this point the legionaries can do one of several things. They can watch from the treeline for an opportunity to do something. If they do, go to **A Secret Way** below. Cowardly types might just decide to sit out the battle. If they gathered a force from the watchtowers, the other decani argue against doing nothing, requiring Persuasion versus their Uncooperative attitude. If they do decide to sit out the battle, run the siege using the Mass Battle rules. Since the player characters are trapped outside, they'll have to skulk around the edges of the battle and pick off lone warriors (rolling on the regular Characters in Mass Battles table at -4). A large scale map of the castrum and Black Gate can be found at the beginning of this adventure to help visualize the battle.

#### A SECRET WAY

If the warriors decide to watch the battle from the treeline they are eventually startled by the appearance of Hermes (or another street urchin if they alienated or killed Hermes). He explains that he and several other townsfolk fled into the forest when the barbarians appeared. He offers to show the group a way into the castrum through the devastated village. If the legionaries agree, Hermes leads them through the forest to the south of Black Gate, then up into the village.

Emphasize the scenes of destruction as they go: burning buildings and battle-mad Germans looting the houses, ravishing unfortunate women, or drinking themselves into a stupor.

The boy leads them to the baths and into the underfloor heating system where

a cleverly hidden tunnel leads into the castrum. Once inside the fort, they can report their findings to the tribune. He orders the contubernium to lead a sortie out through the tunnel and into the rear of the horde. The Knowledge (Battle) roll for the next round is made at +1.

Whatever the characters' participation, the attack on the castrum is a standard Mass Battle. The cohort's Commander, Marcus Tiro, has Knowledge (Battle) d10 and Spirit d10, and the Edges A Few Good Men and Death Before Dishonor.

The Germanic commander has Knowledge (Battle) d8, Spirit d10, and the Cry Havoc Edge.

The Roman force has 7 tokens and the barbarian horde has 10.

The following modifiers also apply:

- **Light Artillery:** Romans get +1 to their Knowledge (Battle) rolls due to the ballistae and scorpions they set up on the ramparts
- **Terrain (Castrum):** +2 to Roman Knowledge (Battle) rolls until the walls are breached or the gates opened.
- **Forlorn Hope:** German suicide charges against the walls give them +2 to their Knowledge (Battle) Roll, but cause them to lose 1 token automatically. The War Master decides when they use this option—likely when they're getting most desperate.
- **Morale modifier:** +5 to Romans' morale (no retreat; within the walls of a major fortification; leader's Edge, but fighting with unfavorable auguries), -1 per token lost for each side's roll.

**Breach:** If the Romans rout (roll a one or less on their Morale check), the attackers have broken in and conquered the fort. Any remaining defenders are taken prisoner and marched north into Germania when the horde retreats.



## CASTRUM DOLORIS

## —Castle of Grief

If the morale of the German force breaks, they either make an orderly retreat or rout back across the Limes. If they happen to win by reducing the cohort to zero tokens, the barbarians take the time to loot the castrum, then inexplicably cross back into Germania.

If the Germans sack the fort with the characters in it, the War Master can decide to either have them escape the final moments of the battle or become captives bound for Arbanel's camp. The legionaries should be able to find out what is behind the attacks and attempt to thwart them if they can manage to escape, maybe with the help of a sympathetic German from Aristovarus' tribe.

Assuming the Romans won the battle, they look upon a scene of devastation both within and without. The War Master can figure out how many legionaries are left using the Aftermath rules, or just use the description below.

*As the last of the barbarians disappears to the north, a weak cheer goes up from the survivors of the cohort. The land around the castrum's walls is littered with dead and dying Germans, and smoke from the burning buildings of Black Gate billows around, giving the scene a hellish look reminiscent of Avernus.*

*Teams of medical orderlies move about inside the walls, bringing the seriously wounded soldiers to the camp hospital where the Greek surgeons try to save as many as they can.*

*To your trained eye, at least two thirds of the garrison became casualties during the attack, which would have been much worse if not for the stout walls of the castrum and sturdy armor and iron discipline of the legion.*

*No sooner do you sit down to reflect on this day than you are approached by one of the tribune's bodyguards. "Come with me. The tribune wants to see you at once."*

The characters are led to the praetorium where they are interviewed by their commander as to the events on the Limes and what they saw and did during the battle. If any of the legionaries got two raises on their Fighting roll during the Mass Battle, he is awarded the corona civica.

After presenting any awards, the tribune orders the contubernium to go across the border and see what the Germans are up to while the garrison rebuilds the defenses, cares for the wounded, and sends for reinforcements. They need to move fast and light, so except for their contubernium (plus any replacements required to bring them back up to eight men if they suffered any casualties) they are on their own. If needed, they are given priority to see the doctors at the hospital for healing (the cohort's Greek surgeons have Healing d8).



## ALEA IACTA EST

Once the characters' contubernium has been healed, resupplied, and had a chance to rest, they set off the next morning (September 7th) for their reconnaissance of the barbarian lands. The path of the horde through the trackless forest is easy to follow, as the passage of hundreds of barbarians leaves quite a mark on the landscape.

As they move deeper into enemy territory, the heroes notice the oppressive nature of the terrain. The hillsides are thickly forested in conifers and what little light makes it through the foliage is strangely green-tinted. The pine needle-carpeted ground soaks up sound, and strange bird songs can be heard echoing weirdly around them.



The group can run into wandering bands of German warriors moving north to Arbanel's camp if you wish. These bands should number 7-15 standard German warriors. The contubernium also passes deserted German villages along their route. Searching through them might turn up a barbarian too old to have gone on the warpath, but for the most part it appears the inhabitants took anything of value and moved on. The trek northwards takes two days.

## HADES NO, WE WON'T GO

If the heroes were successful in rescuing the children in **This Means War!**, they find Aristovarus' village on the afternoon of their second day of travel. It's still occupied by his tribe, who are refusing to fight under the banner of Arbanel's horde. Aristovarus recognizes the characters as the saviors of his children, and welcomes them into his camp with a meal of salt, bread, and mead in his long house. Darkness is falling, and he offers the legionaries a place to stay in safety for the night. If asked about the recent invasion, the chieftain relates the following:

*A new war leader has arisen amongst the tribes. He goes by the name of Arbanel, and is supposedly a great warrior. Although he is a German, he spent time with your army in a far-off land, learning your way of war and going by the name Arbanel. Some whisper that warfare is not all he learned in that distant place. He claims to be able to wield dark magics which will expel the Roman invaders from German lands once and for all. The attack on your fort and watchtowers was just the first step in his sinister plan.*

*The call has gone out for all the tribes to gather at a sacred spot to the east of here beyond the Great Bog. Arbanel says he intends to pit the might of Rome against itself. Since you saved my children, I am*

*in Rome's debt, and have kept my people from joining this sorcerer's warband. I can send a scout with you who knows the way to Arbanel's encampment if you desire. He knows your tongue, and can both guide you and advise you.*

If the contubernium stays the night in the German village, the warriors are treated to a feast of roast meats and gallons of ale. Over the eating and drinking, the Germans tell tales of the massacre of Varus' legions and the aborted attempt by Germanicus to retrieve the eagle standards. They also mention the Wild Hunt when a storm blows up late that night and lightning crackles outside.

If questioned about the size or strength of Arbanel's forces, Aristovarus says he doesn't know how many answered the call to arms against the Romans, but he would guess it to be several thousand. They did see the remnants of the first attack pass close by the village, and saw Roman prisoners among the barbarians. From what he has heard, they are a part of his sorcerous plan. If the contubernium takes the chieftain up on his offer of help, a scout (if needed, use the stats of a Barbarian Warrior) is assigned to them, and they move directly to the village, skirting the Great Bog.

## A SOMBER REMINDER

Whether the contubernium takes up Aristovarus on his offer of the scout or they continue to follow the horde on their own, they eventually come to a break in the oppressive woods. As the sun sets in the west, a wide field of open ground filled with tussocks of tall grass spreads to the north.

The trail of the horde runs eastward along the edge of the field and the woods. If the legionaries try to cross the open space, they find that it is in reality a bog. The clinging mud which lies below the thin layer of grasses and weeds reduces movement to 1" and gives a -2 penalty to any physical skill checks.



With a successful Notice roll, one of the travelers spots a glint of white in the weeds along the forest edge. Should anyone check, they find a frightful sight. As far as they can see into the woods and along the edge of the bog, the ground is covered in the remains of thousands of long-dead skeletons, still encased in rusting Roman armor and clutching corroded legionary weapons.

A Common Knowledge roll reveals this must be the final resting place of Varus' three destroyed legions, overwhelmed and wiped out over a hundred years ago. A raise on the roll reminds the characters that these remains were supposedly buried by Germanicus' punitive expedition against the Germans some 95 years before—a hint that his tale may not have been entirely true.

As the troopers move gingerly through the darkening area, they see a worm-eaten, translucent corpse, rise from a jumble of bones and rusted armor. Those who don't become panicked and flee see the following:

*A greenish specter rises like the mist off the bog, dressed in the armor and equipment of a Roman legionary of a hundred years ago. The shade points a finger at the contubernium and speaks in a sepulchral voice: "Avenge me! Avenge us. Know that the eagles are beset by dark beasts of the ancient times. With the tokens of our oaths and loyalty, the jackal and crocodile will blind my comrades when the clarion call summons us forth again to do battle. You must ensure that this does not happen."*

With this the spirit fades back into the jumble of detritus. The *lemur* (ghost) refers to the eagle standards Arbanel plans to use as part of his ceremony to raise the dead legions and send them into battle against the Romans along the Limes and beyond. The sun has now set, and the legionaries need to find somewhere to spend the night.

## THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED

As the sun rises on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, the contubernium sets off for another day of their expedition into barbarian lands. By mid-morning, they see smoke rising above a hilltop in the distance.

The party arrives at the German encampment at noon to find a large barbarian force, with more coming in as they watch. The camp lies in a hollow at the top of a large hill several hundred yards across. The depression is filled with crude shelters, and many of the trees that once filled it have been cut down and used to build lean-tos or provide firewood for the many burning campfires. The stink of unwashed barbarians is strong even within the tree line that surrounds the camp.

In the center of the depression is a huge standing stone, daubed with crude symbols and adorned with rusting helmets, skulls, and other trophies of defeated enemies heaped at its base. Next to the *menhir* (the tall, oblong stone at the center of the camp) is a huge tent (Arbanel's). Standing outside the tent on prominent display are three golden eagle legionary standards. Keen-eyed troopers (those who get a raise on their Notice roll) can make out the numbers of the legions from which these standards came—XVII, XVIII, and XIX. A Common Knowledge check confirms these are the standards of Varus' lost legions, which were also supposedly recovered by Germanicus' expedition. The soldiers also see a corral built of brush which houses the forlorn figures of the legionaries captured in the border raid.

## THE BARBARIAN CAMP

The German camp consists of a couple of dozen rude huts arranged in a haphazard manner throughout the bowl of the hilltop. In between the huts are lean-tos and shelters of all kinds. Between some of the huts and shelters





are campfires with spits or crude clay pots. Bones and trash lie everywhere, making it difficult to sneak about the camp (–2 to Stealth rolls).

Women, children, and hungry dogs roam throughout the camp, lending it an air of frenzied activity. These Germans are nasty, dirty savages with wild bushy beards and strange tattoos. One out of every 20 barbarians is a warband chieftain. No sentries are posted along the perimeter as the Germans feel their location deep within barbarian territory renders them immune from any counterattack by Roman forces.

The prisoner stockade is filled with legionaries captured during the attack on the Limes. If the castrum held, the pen holds only the 15 troops captured from the watchtowers. If the castrum fell, there are 40 bedraggled legionaries within. The captives are guarded day and night by German warriors, one for every three prisoners, with a minimum of five guards.

Characters making a Smarts check determine there are roughly 5,000 barbarians here. More arrive if the legionaries watch the camp for any

period of time. Off to one side, near the prisoner stockade, is a large pen holding a dozen fierce Germanic wolves, used by the warriors as shock troops and trackers if needed (use the Dire Wolf statistics from *Savage Worlds*).

In the center of the camp is a large, tattered and patched leather tent, such as might be found housing a Roman tribune while on campaign. This originally belonged to Varus, and is now the home of Arbanel. Planted in the ground in front of the tent are three legion standards, an outrage to any Roman soldier's sensibilities! His tent is surrounded by an elite bodyguard of seven huge barbarians (use Experienced Berserker Warrior statistics).

### SO NOW WHAT?

What the legionaries do at this point is entirely up to them. There are roughly 3,000 Germans of fighting age in and around the camp, and more come in during the course of the day, as well as hunting parties and women who leave the camp to hunt and forage in the surrounding area. The barbarians are deadly as a group, but could be distracted or drawn off by a clever plan.



The heroes can try to infiltrate the camp to steal or recover the standards, free the prisoners, kill Arbanel (who is far too well guarded), or whatever other clever idea they come up with. (Unfortunately, the woods are too damp to start a forest fire in.)

If discovered, the Germans try to capture them alive so they can participate in the ceremony Arbanel has planned at the Great Bog. If the legionaries manage to steal the standards, bands of Germans with dire wolves track them down and attempt to recapture them.

If the Romans decide to watch the camp, Arbanel makes an appearance just before dusk. He stands atop a shield and is held aloft by his bodyguard for all to see. Once all eyes are on him, he harangues the assembled horde. If the contubernium brought along the German scout from Aristovarus' village, he can translate Arbanel's speech. Otherwise, a Common Knowledge roll is needed to get the gist of what he says. The scout or translator relates the following:

*"He promises his people that using the powers he learned while with the Romans he will eject them not only from the Germans' homelands but all the way back to Rome itself. Arbanel praises the priests of his people for keeping the eagle standards, for they will be the key to using the power of the Romans against them.*

*The renegade goes on to say that tonight, as the anniversary of the great massacre comes, he will perform a great ceremony using the blood of the Romans and the power of their legions' standards to wreak havoc on their hated enemies."*

If the characters do nothing, the camp breaks into a frenzied celebration in anticipation of their coming victory, which lasts well into the night. Just before midnight, the chieftain and his entourage move out into the forest to great fanfare.

## THE UNQUIET DEAD

Late that night, after midnight and in the early hours of September 11<sup>th</sup>, with a new moon and under heavily overcast skies, the German camp stirs. To the cheers of his people, Arbanel and his bodyguard of seven elite warriors march into the woods with the prisoners, their guards (now one per two prisoners) and the legions' standards (if they still have them).

They move through the pitch black forest with torches aloft and stop beside the Great Bog in the middle of the Varian massacre site, surrounded by the bones of long-dead Romans. The Germans hurriedly set up an altar and plant the three legions' standards in a triangle around it, each guarded by a bodyguard. As they work to complete the site a thunderstorm erupts, drenching everyone to the skin.

Once the altar is completed (five rounds), Arbanel begins a ceremony to raise the dead legionaries using the rituals he learned from the tomes looted from that dusty, forgotten tomb in Aegyptus.

If he has the standards and/or captured Romans, he begins sacrificing the soldiers, pouring their blood over the eagle standards of the destroyed legions. This ceremony takes 10 rounds to complete. During this time, Arbanel is attended by six priests, his bodyguards, and the guards of the Roman prisoners.

If the contubernium attacks or otherwise attempts to disrupt the ceremony, Arbanel and the priests continue to sacrifice the prisoners at the rate of three per round (one legionary per two rune priests), letting their blood gush on the legions' standards.

Once all the prisoners have been sacrificed, or if the characters don't stop the ceremony, the dead legionaries rise to do his bidding. If this occurs go to **Vare, Legiones Redde!**



If the heroes interrupt the ceremony by Shaking Arbanel for more than one round or breaking one of the standards; or Arbanel tries to perform the ceremony without the standards or prisoners, it backfires, summoning the Wild Hunt, which kills him and his followers, and then attacks any characters in the area. In this case go to **Cry Havoc and Let Slip the Dogs of War**.

✂ **Arbanel/Lentulus:** See below.

• **Arbanel's Bodyguards (7):** Use Experienced Berserker Warrior stats in *Weird Wars Rome*. Armed with great axes (Str+d10, AP 1, -1 Parry).

✂ **Priests (6):** Use Barbarian Spellcaster statistics in *Weird Wars Rome*. Powers: *bolt (hurled stones)*, *confusion*, *entangle*, *smite*. **Power Points:** 10.

• **Prisoner Guards (1 per two prisoners):** Use Barbarian Warrior statistics in *Weird Wars Rome*. Armed with long swords (Str+d8) and shields (+1).

✂ **ARBANEL / LENTULUS**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d6, Riding d6, Spellcasting d10

**Charisma:** -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

**Hindrances:** Enemy (various Roman officials), Mean, Overconfident

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Level Headed

**Gear:** Lorica hamata (chain mail) (+2), horned pot helm (+3), spatha (Str+d8).

**Special Abilities:**

• **What No Man Should Know:** The knowledge Arbanel gained in the dusty tombs of Aegyptus allows him to call on the powers of darkness to animate and command vast numbers of the dead with access to the proper materials.



**VARE, LEGIONES REDDE!**

—*Varus, Give Me Back My Legions!*

At this point, one of two things is happening. Either the characters have failed to prevent Arbanel from raising Varus' legions and the undead are on their way to attack the castrum, or they succeeded but are now facing the Wild Hunt as a result of their success. The consequences of each are detailed below.

If the heroes didn't manage to disrupt the summoning ceremony, the forest comes alive with the rustle of moldering bones and the clink of rusted mail and equipment. The dead legionaries of Varus' three destroyed legions claw their way out of the forest floor and begin to assemble behind their standards. The heroes see an undead horde of 15,000 dead legionaries heading toward Roman lands.

Arbanel's new undead army moves south to attack Cohort Castrum 18, then moves on to the regional capital at Nida. Once Nida is destroyed the German plans to attack Legio XXII's main base at Moguntiacum. If the horde isn't stopped at the border, the barbarians and their



skeletal allies overrun a large swath of Roman Germania Superior before the magics powering Arbanel's undead army run out. If for some reason the characters fight the risen legionaries in the forest, use the skeleton statistics (see *Savage Worlds*), with various weapons giving them Str+d6, but no armor bonus due to the deterioration of their gear.

Soldiers who decide discretion is the better part of valor and head to the castrum to warn the garrison move faster than their shambling enemy. Due to the strains of the last few days each character must make a Vigor roll each day of travel or suffer the effects of Fatigue.

The War Master should throw in a few encounters as the legionaries race back to the castrum with their dire warnings, but the darkness and thunderstorm likely throws off any normal pursuit. If they push themselves the runners complete the journey through the wilderness to the Limes in just two days. This gives the cohort one day to prepare itself for the onslaught of the Germans and their undead allies.

If they so desire, the legionaries can attempt to convince the tribune of the hopelessness of their situation, although tales of undead Romans marching against their former homeland are hard for the grizzled commander to swallow. It requires a Persuasion roll at -4 due to the incredible circumstances against the Uncooperative tribune, although any Charisma bonuses that military awards might give to the heroes should be included.

In the days since the contubernium began their reconnaissance, another cohort arrived at the border to bolster the defenses, but the Roman forces are still pathetically overmatched by their undead comrades. If the characters are unable to convince the cohort commander to abandon Cohort Castrum 18 and they stay around for the Mass Battle that ensues, the forces for this

terribly lop-sided battle and their modifiers are as follows:

The barbarian horde has 10 tokens and a Knowledge (Battle) d10. The Roman force has two tokens and a Knowledge (Battle) d10.

The following modifiers also apply:

- **Light Artillery:** Romans get a +2 to their Knowledge (Battle) Rolls due to the extra cohort's ballistae and scorpions they set up on the ramparts
- **Tactics:** the Romans get a bonus of +1 to their Knowledge (Battle) Rolls for fighting barbarians and mindless undead
- **Terrain (Castrum):** +2 to Roman Knowledge (Battle) Rolls until the walls are breached or the gates opened.
- **Undead Wave attacks:** At the War Master's discretion, the Germans may add +2 to their Knowledge (Battle) Roll, but lose 1 token automatically.
- **Morale modifiers:** +6 to Romans' morale (no retreat; within the walls of a major fortification; leader's Death before Dishonor Edge), -1 per token lost for each side's roll. +2 to German morale rolls, since the bulk of their army is made up of fearless undead.

#### DISCRETION AND VALOR

If the characters manage to convince the tribune they need to fall back and join the main body of the legion, the castrum is hurriedly evacuated and the Romans march south to the regional capital.

In this case, the hurriedly assembled Legio XXII meets the barbarian horde outside the gates of Nida. The Germans have ten tokens while the Romans have eight. Modifiers are as above, with the addition of +2 due to the Roman general's leadership abilities, but ignore the terrain modifier. Morale modifiers are +2 for the Romans versus the Germans' +2 bonus.

If this battle is lost, Germania Superior is ravaged by the German horde and their undead legions. If the War Master needs closure, a force of three legions is finally assembled three weeks after the



battle at Nida. At this battle, the Germans have 9 tokens against the Romans' 10, with the same modifiers as above. If they lose this battle, Germania is abandoned to the barbarians as a cursed place and the border withdrawn to Gaul, forever changing the future of Europe. But that's another story...

**"CRY HAVOC AND LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR"**

If the heroes manage to disrupt the ceremony after Arbanel has started it, or if he attempts it without the prisoners or standards, something goes terribly wrong. The miscasting unleashes forces beyond the sorcerer's control and awakens an entity which doesn't appreciate the interference of ancient Aegyptian magic in the lands of Germania.

*With a crack of lightning that would make Jupiter proud, the blackness of the night is illuminated by a terrifying series of lightning bolts that arc from cloud to cloud far overhead. The lowering clouds that fill the sky from horizon to horizon seem to be lit from within by an unearthly glow that sheds a weird witchlight throughout the dark Germanic forest.*

*Across the Great Bog, a hurricane-like wind races, smashing into the forest, sending branches crashing to the ground, and blinding everyone with flying leaves and branches. Over the howling of the wind a mournful wail sounds, like a hunting horn. The Germans stand in shock, the constant flickering of lightning illuminating terrified expressions on their faces before they scatter into the surrounding woods.*

The characters might think the horns they hear are those of a relief column from the castrum, but they're badly mistaken. The fumbling of the spell by Arbanel has instead summoned the Wild Hunt, also known as Woden's Hunt to the German barbarians.

The terrible figure of a massive man with wicked horns on his head descends from the sky atop a mighty stag, accompanied by ethereal baying hounds. The pack rushes through the fleeing Germans and cuts down even the mightiest of the barbarians with little effort. This is a strong clue that the Romans should attempt to escape rather than make a foolish but heroic last stand.





To evade the Wild Hunt, each hero must make a Stealth roll opposed by the Huntsman's Notice. As warned by the tavern keeper of the Gladius on page 10, those who lay down and avoid the Huntsman's gaze add +4 to this roll. It's not a guarantee, but heroes who don't make eye contact with the entity have a much greater chance of being passed over.

Should the Huntsman win, 2d6 Hounds of the Hunt attack the unfortunate warrior. Otherwise, the Hunt passes by. Soldiers who flee in Panic or just decide that running is the better part of valor are automatically noticed and attacked by the Hunt.

Arbanel, if still alive, arrogantly stands up to the Huntsman. The being tears him apart then moves on to attack the main German encampment, dispersing the barbarians and ending the threat to the Roman border. If the Huntsman is somehow Incapacitated, he disappears, as does his steed and any surviving hounds. In this case, with the death of Arbanel and his promise of supernatural aid, the barbarian horde disperses back into their forest fastness.

✧ **Huntsman:** See below.

• **Huntsman's Steed:** See below.

• **Hounds (1 per hero):** See below.

## THE WILD HUNT

### ✧ HUNTSMAN

The huntsman is an avatar of Woden, the head of the Germanic pantheon of gods.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Riding d10

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

**Edges:** Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Improved Arcane Resistance, Improved Frenzy, Improved Nerves of Steel, Improved Sweep, Level Headed

**Gear:** Chain mail hauberk (+2), full helm (+3), huge axe (Str+d10, AP 1).

### Special Abilities

• **Hardy:** Multiple Shaken results do not cause the Huntsman a wound.

• **Fear -4:** The avatar of Woden is a terrifying supernatural creature.

• **Size +3:** The Huntsman is over 8' tall with massive arms and legs.

### HUNTSMAN'S STEED

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d6

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13

### Special Abilities:

• **Fleet-Footed:** The steed rolls a d8 for its running die.

• **Kick:** Str+d6.

• **Large:** Attackers are at +2 to all attack rolls due to the beast's size.

• **Size +6:** The steed is larger than an elephant.

### HOUNDS OF THE HUNT

The hounds that follow the Wild Hunt are black as char, with burning red eyes and vicious, yellow fangs.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d10, Stealth d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

### Special Abilities:

• **Bite:** Str+d6.

• **Fleet-Footed:** Hounds roll a d10 as their running die.

• **Go for the Throat:** If a hound gets a raise on its attack roll, it strikes its opponent's least armored location.

• **Terrible Wounds:** The jagged teeth of a hound inflict terrible wounds, which do not heal quickly. Healing rolls, including natural Healing, are subject to a -2 penalty on top of any wound penalties.





## EPILOGUE

Heroes who survive their encounter with the Wild Hunt and report back to the castrum are debriefed by the tribune and his staff as to the happenings beyond the Limes. The command greets wild tales of flying horses and spectral hounds with derision and the belief that the contubernium didn't really go deep into enemy territory. Another unit is sent into the forest to complete the mission, returning in a week with the news that the horde has dispersed.

If the contubernium thought to bring back proof of their success, such as Arbanel's head, then tales of dispersing the Germanic horde carries much more weight. If they recovered the standards of Varus' legions they are hailed as heroes of the highest order. They may even be awarded the *Corona Graminea*, or Grass Crown, for saving an entire legion, as well as promotions.

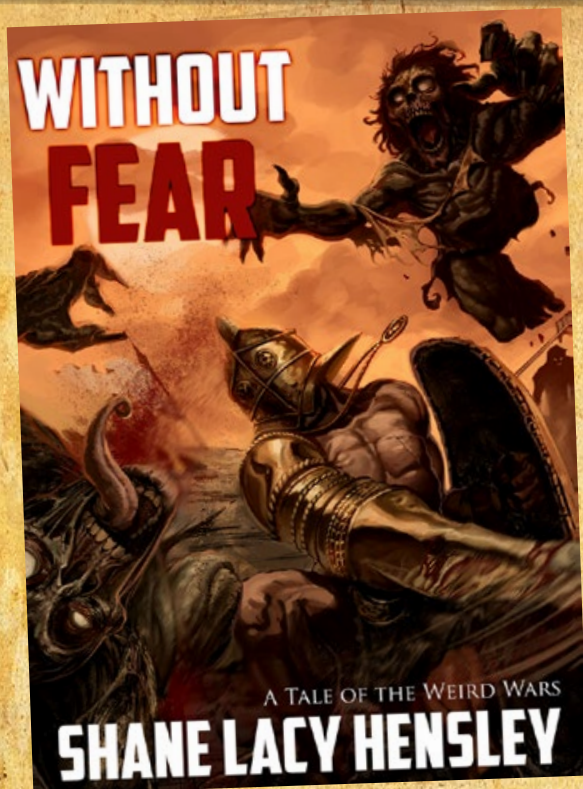
A contubernium who fails to stop the reanimation of the destroyed legions have a harder time as detailed above, but heroic actions by them in the war against the Germans and their restless dead gain them awards and promotions depending on their actions on the field during the Mass Battles.

If the War Master so desires, the tribune sends the contubernium behind enemy lines. Their mission is to end the uprising by striking at its leader in a series of near-suicidal commando style missions against Arbanel and his forces. Raiding parties splinter off from the main barbarian horde, although the undead legionaries stay in their ordered formations, so the heroes have a number of choices in how to carry on the campaign.





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