



# WEIRD WAR I

## NO MAN'S LAND



**PINNACLE**  
ENTERTAINMENT GROUP





# WEIRD WAR ONE

## No Man's Land

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# Chapter One: Lawrence of Arabia

*No Man's Land* is set in the deserts of the Middle East, making it something of a departure from the conventional, soul-crushing grind of trench warfare found on the Western Front. On the Middle Eastern front, much of the fighting was of a more unconventional and fluid nature than soldiers experienced elsewhere in the war. Lack of reliable communications often led to soldiers and other fighters there operating with more autonomy—and far less support—than their more traditional counterparts in Europe.

This scenario is specifically designed for Allied troops. While it works best with British characters, French or even American representatives can be included with a little work.

In this adventure, the heroes join T. E. Lawrence on a raid deep into enemy territory to destroy a critical waystation on the Ottoman Empire's vitally important Hejaz railroad. Once there, they discover *something* has already eliminated the Turkish garrison...and it's not done with its own, far older mission yet!

## Personnel Assignments

Lawrence's knowledge of the peoples and customs of the Arabian peninsula and Syrian desert is second to none. He consistently achieves success in the field, and the British Army occasionally has him instruct other members of its ranks in his methods and tactics. By late 1917, his unorthodox methods and manner of dress, as much as for his accomplishments on the battlefield, are beginning to draw attention not just from his superiors, but also journalists in search of a unique angle on the war.

This opens the door to virtually any type of character to take part in the adventure, from veteran soldier to intelligence operative to journalist. It's recommended at least one character

have Knowledge (Archaeology) or Knowledge (History). Survival and Knowledge (Arabic) are also useful in this adventure.

If you're running *No Man's Land* as a standalone adventure, the soldiers can simply be assigned to Lawrence's command for this raid. On the other hand, if you're playing an ongoing campaign, the heroes may already be members of the Twilight Legion. In that case, they've been dispatched as liaisons to recruit Lawrence into the Legion. His regional expertise, experience, and skills as an archaeologist would make him a valuable member of the organization.

Finally, if your player characters haven't yet joined the Legion, a sudden reassignment to the Syrian desert might seem highly unusual. Should this be the case, perhaps Lawrence is already a member of the Legion, and the organization has pulled strings to route the soldiers to his command for their recruitment test.

Whether they remain in the theater after completion of the adventure is up to you. The history of the region, along with the more independent nature of guerrilla operations, makes it ideal for conducting operations of value to the organization.

**Mankind has had ten thousand years of experience at fighting and if we must fight, we have no excuse for not fighting well.**

**—T.E. Lawrence**



## TIMELINE OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN THEATER

Most people imagine trench warfare and the European theater when they think of World War I. What is often overlooked is the fact it was truly a *world* war, with clashes between great powers occurring around the globe. The Middle East, while not home to the huge static battlefields of Europe, was the scene of ongoing hostilities from the very first days of the war.

Below is a brief summary of some of the major events in the region, with an emphasis on those affecting the area covered in this adventure.

**November 2, 1914:** Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire, following Turkish shelling of Odessa. Britain and France follow suit on November 5.

**November 21, 1914:** British and Indian forces capture the city of Basra in the Ottoman province of Mesopotamia. Strong fortifications and support from Royal Navy vessels on the Euphrates enable the British to hold Basra for the entire war.

**February 19, 1915:** The British and French navies begin bombardment of the Dardanelle coast, hoping to force through to Constantinople with naval power alone. On March 18, the destruction of the French battleship *Bouvet* with the total loss of its crew forces the cessation of Allied attempts to force the straits by naval power alone.

**April 20, 1915:** Claiming all Armenians had allied with the Russians, the Ottoman Empire began a series of massacres in the Van region of the northeastern Empire. The Armenian Resistance began in earnest, with Russian support.

**April 25, 1915:** Allied troops land on the Gallipoli peninsula at the entrance to the Dardanelles Strait, hoping to seize the forts guarding it. The force consisted of a large contingent of Australian and New Zealand soldiers (ANZACs), as well as a few regular British and French army divisions. The beach assault quickly stalled, leading to months of bloody, futile trench warfare.

**December, 1915:** After a failed attempt to circumvent the Turkish defenses at Gallipoli in

August, the Allies evacuate their forces from the peninsula. Although ultimately unsuccessful in their goal of forcing the straits, the Allies did tie up a large portion of the Ottoman Empire's military during the campaign.

**June 10, 1916:** Arab Hashemite forces under Grand Sharif Hussein, guardian of Mecca, rebel against the Ottoman Empire, attacking Turkish forces at Mecca. Hussein enters into an agreement with Britain and France against the Empire.

**July 9, 1916:** Hashemite forces under Hussein, along with Egyptian forces sent by Britain, succeed in taking Mecca.

**October 1916:** An attack by Arab fighters on Medina is repulsed by the Turks in a bloody battle, leaving the Ottoman Empire in control of the end point of the vital Hejaz Railway. Captain T.E. Lawrence is assigned to work with Arab forces in the area.

**March 11, 1917:** British forces capture Baghdad without a fight, taking some 9,000 Turkish prisoners.

**July 6, 1917:** Lawrence, leading a force of Arab soldiers and Bedouin warriors, seizes the vital Red Sea port of Aqaba. Lacking a means of communication with his superiors, Lawrence rides a camel across the Sinai Peninsula to inform his commanding officers in Cairo.

**January 25, 1918:** Arab and Allied forces under Lawrence and Prince Zeid bin Hussein turn a defensive action into a rout of a Turkish garrison at the strategic Tafilah, in the Dead Sea region of Palestine. Lawrence is awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and promoted to Lieutenant Colonel for an "outstanding feat of arms."

**March 3, 1918:** The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Livostk removes Bolshevik Russia from the war.

**October 1, 1918:** Allied and Arab forces seize Damascus, the northern end of the Hejaz Railway, severing Turkish supply lines further into Arabia.

**October 30, 1918:** The Ottoman Empire signs the Armistice of Mudros with the Allies, ending active Turkish involvement in the war.



# The Foundations of Terror

*No Man's Land* is set in the Syrian desert in the Middle Eastern theatre of the war, sometime between August 1917 and August 1918. This is the period during which Lawrence is most active leading actual missions in the field. Beyond that, we specify no set date for the adventure to allow you to most easily fit it into an ongoing campaign, if you desire.

Our story, however, begins long before those dates.

## Ancient Foe

Hundreds of years before the crusades, a Bedouin sorcerer summoned a particularly powerful spirit, an ifrit. He bound it with a geas to slay anyone not belonging to his tribe who encroached upon his ancestral lands. The ifrit protected the sorcerer's patch of desert, brutally slaying any invader, unwary traveler, or nomad unfortunate enough to cross into his domain.

Years, then decades, then centuries passed. The sorcerer's descendants eventually faded from the land. The ifrit remained, and with no one of the original summoner's bloodline remaining, it preyed on anyone who crossed its path. The desert in that area gained a well-deserved reputation for being cursed or haunted, becoming truly no man's land.

And so it remained until near the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, during a brief period of peace between crusaders and Saladin's Muslim forces. A small group of the Sons of Solomon composed of members of both sides of the conflict trekked into the cursed desert. There, they trapped the seemingly unkillable ifrit in a magic circle and walled its prison off in a cave under a rocky hill. The Sons erected a small fortress, to be manned by whichever side held control of the region, to watch over the ifrit's prison.

The Crusades eventually ground to a halt. Soldiers returned to their homes and families. The fort was abandoned in spite of the efforts of the Sons, but the remoteness of the region served well enough to safeguard the prison for over half a millennium.

Unfortunately, recent events have conspired to release the ancient horror once again.

## The Arab Revolt

Although the failure of the Dardanelles Campaign in 1915 led the British and French to curtail conventional operations in the region, they began to seek alternate methods to pressure the

Ottoman Empire there. Following the capture and torture of several outspoken members of the Arab nationalist movement, the British approached the guardian of the city of Mecca, Grand Sharif Hussein, offering him an independent Arab nation in return for his support against the Turks. Initially, Hussein's personal forces, known as Hashemites, were outmatched by the better-equipped and better-trained Ottoman troops.

In 1917, the Allies began recruiting Bedouin tribesmen to harry Ottoman forces throughout the region, disrupting supply lines and forcing the Empire to spread its troops thinly. Unlike the Hashemites, the Bedouins were often more mercenary in their assistance; their loyalty was primarily to their families and tribes. The British paid out hundreds of thousands of pounds each month to secure their support.

The investment proved worthwhile. The tribesmen, often led or at least coordinated by T. E. Lawrence, have been surprisingly effective at guerilla warfare. By avoiding the established battlelines of conventional warfare he turned the entire desert into the front line for the Ottomans. Lawrence's raiders tear up railroads, attack lone outposts, and harry caravans. His strategy has been remarkably successful and forced the Turks to enforce key strongpoints and build even more throughout the desert to protect their supply lines.

## ALTERING THE START DATE

Lawrence was active raiding Turkish outposts and railroads in the region before the summer of 1917. The Arabs didn't seize the port of Aqaba until July of that year. If you've chosen to set the adventure before August 1917, the characters have to make a longer trek across the desert to reach his area of operations, traveling either from British-controlled ports in southern Arabia, the Suez, or even Palestine.

Most operations ceased in the region following the fall of Damascus in October, 1918. Lawrence himself became engaged in that campaign by September of the same year, so real-world events prohibit the adventure from being set after August of 1918.

Although he's listed in the *Weird War I* Warmaster's Guide as a Captain, Lawrence was promoted to the rank of major shortly after his success in the capture of the port of Aqaba in July, 1917. That is how we refer to him in this adventure, but if you set the adventure before July 1917, use the rank of Captain.



## The Hejaz Railway

Constructed over seven years between 1901 and 1908, the Hejaz Railway was intended to connect Istanbul to Mecca. This served two purposes for the Ottoman Empire. First, it allowed easy access for Muslim pilgrims to the holy city of Mecca. Secondly—and perhaps most importantly for the Empire—the railway extended its effective control deep into the region and allowed for easy transport of military forces.

By the beginning of World War I, the railway stretched over 800 miles from Damascus to Medina. It traverses harsh desert terrain and rugged hill regions, ferrying Ottoman troops and equipment deep into the Arabian desert and carrying valuable shale oil back to supply Germany in Europe. It is a vital, but vulnerable part of the Ottoman war effort.

### Unintended Consequences

Under the direction of now-Major Lawrence, Bedouin tribes regularly raid the railway. Hit-and-run attacks and judicious use of explosives stop short of actually destroying the important railroad, while forcing the Turks to commit large numbers of troops to protecting it. The pressure created here by guerrillas has contributed enormously to Allied efforts elsewhere in the region.

Repair efforts can take days or longer to coordinate once the damage is discovered,

creating critical delays in the Empire's resupply efforts. To combat this, the Turks have been creating more and more wilderness outposts, both to patrol the railroad and to have materials for its repair nearby in the event of sabotage.

Recently, elements of the Turkish forces occupied the ancient fort built so long ago by the Sons of Solomon—which just happened to overlook the Hejaz Railway. The soldiers were completely unaware that beneath it a terrible creature awaited freedom.

### Jailbreak

Over the centuries, a number of earthquakes have struck the area. Although the quakes didn't break the wards of the magic circle, they did crack the wall sealing the buried chamber. A pack of ghulas, a lesser and corporeal type of djinn, sensed the ifrit's power and were drawn to the caves under the fortress.

The Sons' magics prevented them from freeing the ifrit themselves, but ghulas are shapeshifters and deceivers. When the Turkish troops arrived at the fort, the ghulas realized they had the perfect tools to liberate the powerful ifrit.

One of the monsters, taking the form of a beautiful woman, enticed a Turkish soldier into the caves with promises of hidden treasure and all manners of other, earthly delights. The creature convinced its dupe to break the circle of powdered iron trapping the ifrit. Released from its prison, the

Thomas Edward Lawrence.



djinn refused to grant its rescuer any wishes—not even one for a quick death.

Together, the monsters made short work of the small garrison. The flesh-eating ghulas feasted on the remains of the slaughtered troops, while the ifrit headed into the nearby desert to search for other interlopers on its master's domain.

## Mission Briefing

The adventure begins with the heroes receiving their orders—or at least an introduction to the mission for non-soldiers—from Major Lawrence himself. The heroes' orders are to rendezvous with him at Wadi Rum, a sandstone valley in the desert east of Aqaba.

### Wadi Rum

Wadi Rum is about a day's ride by camel from the Red Sea port of Aqaba. The trip is uneventful, but provides an excellent opportunity to expose the characters to some of the environmental difficulties they're going to face. See **It's a Dry Heat** on page 8 for more details.

Even characters who are experienced horsemen find camels to be a different animal altogether. Allow the troops to make Riding rolls at –2 as they adjust to the unusual gait and riding position. Any who fail (or don't even try) suffer a Fatigue level from Bumps and Bruises (see **Hazards** in *Savage Worlds*).

Wadi Rum is a large valley carved from the surrounding sandstone and granite peaks. It has been used as a gathering place for more than two millennia. Petroglyphs dating back to before 700 BC adorn nearby rocks as a testament to the area's history. The valley is a staging area for Lawrence's raids well into 1918, with him visiting the valley more than half a dozen times.

Currently, Wadi Rum is home to a semi-permanent encampment for Bedouins of the Howeitat tribe. Although most dwellings are tents, there are a few, older mud and stone houses. The encampment is supplied with water by both seasonal and year-round springs in the area.

The Howeitat tribe is led by Auda abu Tayi, a powerful warrior and friend of Major Lawrence. The tribe is allied with the British against the Turks and supporters of the Arab Revolt. When the soldiers arrive, they are welcomed as friends and quickly led to the tent where Lawrence is waiting.

## Mission Briefing

Lawrence is a surprisingly small man, given the stature of his accomplishments. He stands less than five and half feet tall, and his soft-spoken, polite nature often makes him seem even less imposing. Lawrence is dressed in traditional, white Bedouin robes when he meets the player characters. He is blond haired and blue eyed and his skin bears an impressive tan.

After speaking briefly with the group's Arab escorts, he motions for the heroes to take a seat on rugs on the ground.

*"You must forgive me, as I'm rather unused to leading trained soldiers into battle. If my methods appear unorthodox, I can only ask your forbearance. I assume you are here either because the high command believes I need some traditional reinforcements or perhaps to study our successes. Regardless, my mission—and philosophy—remains the same. This is the Arab's war, and whenever possible, we must let them fight it."*

*"Our raids against the Hejaz Railway and other isolated outposts are having the desired effect on the Turks, namely drawing manpower away from other areas and into the wastes. In response to our attacks, the Turks have installed a new fortified waystation along the railroad to support repair operations and patrols in the area."*

*"What the Turks could not know is the location they've chosen—an old fortified mountain—is one I personally visited less than 10 years ago. While the fort is more than sufficient to thwart a cavalry assault, I personally observed a back way into it via a cave network I believe the original defenders intended as a last-ditch means to escape should their defenses fall."*

*"The fort's entrance to the caves was well hidden, and I believe if we move quickly enough we can make use of it before the Turks discover it. However, as we must expect some resistance even once we're within the fortifications, I feel reinforcement of the Bedouin irregulars with a few stout soldiers such as yourselves may be advisable. Hence your presence here today."*

## To Be or Not To Be

Ideally, Lawrence tasks the soldiers with the mission, introduces them to their Bedouin allies, then bids them on their way. Should none of the soldiers speak Arabic, one of the Bedouins is assigned as an interpreter.



If the player characters are lacking in Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Archaeology), Lawrence comes along on the mission, but solely as an observer. Of course, that's not the in-game reason he's accompanying them, but those skills are vital for their success.

In that case, the major is fairly hands-off when it comes to the tactical details—this kind of thing isn't this specialty. In short, he's there as a tool for you to keep the mission on course and provide any critical missing skills, but don't allow him to overshadow the heroes.

### Operational Details

The major doesn't have a tremendous amount of intelligence on his target. From memory, he can provide a rough sketch of the general fortress' layout including the entrance to the tunnel, but he has no information on current troop strengths or other recent modifications. Based on his experience in the region, he believes the Turkish outpost is manned by no less than a platoon, but certainly no more than a company.

The train schedule is more predictable. One passes the outpost every three days. The waystation is approximately 200 miles from Wadi Rum. On camelback, that distance equates to roughly four days' travel. By leaving tomorrow morning, the soldiers can be in place for a night train due to arrive six days from today.

The Howeitat tribe provides escort for part of the march, but the waystation lies within another tribe's territory. Bedouins are fiercely protective of their territory, so the characters must rendezvous with the other tribe at an oasis on the morning of the fourth day, about a day's ride from the fort.

The mission objectives in this order are:

- Seize the fort and hold it until the next train passes
- Destroy all repair materials
- Destroy the track so as to stop the train
- Eliminate all enemy personnel and return with any items of intelligence value

### Support

If for some reason any of the characters lost their weapons prior to reaching Wadi Rum, enlisted are reissued Lee-Enfield Mk III rifles and officers are provided Webley revolvers, along with the usual amount of ammunition. Civilian characters are not issued arms.

Lawrence sees each member of the unit is issued a camel and a one-quart canteen. He recommends the heroes not bring along steel helmets or gas masks. Both are unnecessary and

potentially deadly in the desert heat. Additionally, he provides them with two compasses and a fairly accurate set of topographical maps of the region with their destination marked, as well as the oasis where they're to meet their Bedouin allies.

*"Standard practice is for the Bedouins to water their camels every three days. That is also when you will be able to refill your canteens, so I recommend practicing restraint with your consumption," Lawrence explains.*

For fire support, the team is equipped with a Lewis machine gun with two 100-round drums and a Stokes mortar with 10 rounds. See the *Weird War I Player's Handbook* for game statistics on these weapons. For taking out the train and tracks, they are provided four Garland contact mines. These are standard anti-tank mines modified to work on trains.

All the support weapons and ammunition are carried on a single pack camel; there are no spare riding camels. There is no resupply point other than oases, so the raiders must carry all ammunition and provisions on their camels.

## Crossing the Sands

The Syrian desert reaches from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean and encompasses much of present-day Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and parts of Saudi Arabia. It comprises nearly 200,000 square miles of rocky and sandy ground.

There are oases approximately every three-days' ride, provided one knows where to look. Fortunately, Lawrence knows where to look. For anyone unfamiliar with the desert, it requires a Survival roll at a -2 penalty to find one.

### It's a Dry Heat

During the winter months from November to March, the northern Arabian desert enjoys fairly pleasant temperatures, reaching highs in the upper 60s and 70s. Night time temperatures can drop to the low 40s or below. But where's the fun in setting a desert adventure during the winter?

The desert temperatures from April through October can easily exceed 100° or more during the day. That means the characters face Vigor rolls to avoid Fatigue from heat (see **Hazards** in *Savage Worlds*). However, you don't want to risk overburdening the heroes with these rolls or slow down play too much. The point is to instill a healthy respect for the desert conditions without outright killing the travelers before the adventure even starts.



Assume the day the troops arrive and depart from an oasis they are able to drink ample water to avoid heat exhaustion or worse. Only worry about Vigor rolls on the day between the waterholes. If the characters follow Lawrence's recommendation and are careful with their canteens, they only need to worry about two rolls to avoid Fatigue from heat. Any levels of Fatigue they suffer this way are recovered once they reach the oasis and can rest.

## Meeting Engagement

After two days' travel, the group reaches the edge of Howeitat territory and their escorts drop off to head back to Wadi Rum. It's another day to the next oasis, where the team is to meet the members of the other Bedouin tribe. Either their Bedouin guide or Lawrence can easily show them the route, or they can plot it themselves using their maps and a successful Survival roll.

At the end of the third day, as the heroes are nearing the oasis, have them make Notice rolls. Those who succeed see a group of riders already at the watering hole. Anyone who gets a raise on the roll or examines the area with field glasses identifies the riders as a patrol of Turkish camel cavalry.

The oasis is in the middle of a flat stretch of ground. The characters are exiting a region of rough terrain when they spot the enemy troops. The Turks are not yet aware of the presence of the strangers, giving the heroes time to plan their attack. There is nearly 100 yards of open ground between their current location and the oasis.

The enemy soldiers are preparing to spend the night at the oasis. From Lawrence's briefing, the British know this is likely to disrupt the operation, as the Bedouins will simply fade back into the desert if they see the Turks occupying the site. To continue with the operation, they must eliminate the patrol. The soldiers should also be aware that any of the cavalrymen who escape may alert the troops at the waystation.

As this encounter occurs after the team has been on restricted water rations, it's possible one or more of the travelers has at least one level of Fatigue. If the heroes are particularly weakened, adjust the numbers of the Turks down. Should the fight turn against the characters, feel free to have their Bedouin allies arrive early (see **Here Comes the Cavalry**, below). The purpose of this encounter is to reinforce the dangers of desert combat and provide a little action rather than kill members of the group.

- **Turkish Soldiers (2 per hero):** Use the stats for Ottoman Empire Askeri from the *Weird War I*

## DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

The standard-issue infantry uniform isn't particularly well-suited to the extremes of the desert. Any straight-laced officer or soldier who insists on wearing his regular uniform receives a -1 penalty on any Vigor rolls made to avoid Fatigue from the heat. On top of that, walking around with a frying pan on one's head is also a bad idea, tacking another -1 penalty onto the rolls for those who wear their helmets.

Traditional Bedouin garb consists of loose layers that allow for free movement of air and wind to cool the wearer. Surprisingly—at least to many westerners—black robes are just as effective at this as white ones. Anyone who opts for Bedouin robes suffers no penalties for clothing to his Vigor rolls to avoid heat-caused Fatigue.

*Player's Guide.* Add Riding d6. Each has a camel in addition to his standard equipment. The men are armed with Gewehr 98 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1).

## Here Comes the Cavalry

Shortly after the fight is finished—or during it, if the British are having too tough a time of it—their Bedouin allies arrive. If the battle is still underway, the tribesmen don't hesitate to join in on the characters' side.

There are 25 warriors in the band, all mounted on camels. Only ten of them are armed with Lee-Enfield rifles. Two others use muzzle-loading jezails. The Bedouins begin the adventure with a High Ammo Level.

The remainder carry older Martini-Henry rifles. The heroes can convince those armed with these to upgrade their rifles to the more modern weapons carried by the Turkish patrol with a Persuasion roll. Under no circumstances do the nomads carrying the jezails agree. They see their heavily-adorned rifles as status symbols and won't relinquish them.

- **Bedouin Warriors (25):** See page 16. Armed as noted above.



## The Old Stone Fort

It's two days' travel to the waystation from the oasis. There is no additional watering point in the desert between the two, which means the heroes arrive soon after facing Vigor rolls to avoid Fatigue and dehydration.

Of course, the members of the Turkish patrol were all carrying canteens, which could help the British avoid the rolls—if the characters thought to gather them, that is.

The Bedouins lead the soldiers to a small ravine west of the waystation where they can corral their mounts before the assault. The fortress sits atop a small mesa overlooking the wastes, so an approach during the daytime would be quickly spotted by any sentries. While the terrain on the west side (opposite the railroad) is rough and rocky, providing significant cover, the Bedouins suggest waiting for nightfall to be safe.

### Secret Passage

Regardless of when the group decides to make its assault, they reach the entrance to the secret tunnel Lawrence mentioned without being spotted. Of course, there's a good reason for this—all the Turks are already dead—but the heroes are unlikely to know that at this point.

The cave itself opens at the back of an overhanging rock on the northwest side of the mesa. Any hero who thinks to look for tracks can make a Tracking roll. With a success, he spots several sets of footprints apparently belonging to dogs or wolves. A Knowledge (Zoology) roll identifies them as hyena tracks. A Survival roll at -2 provides the same knowledge, as does asking Lawrence or one of the Bedouins about them.

### Side-Track

Lawrence briefed the soldiers there was a single main passage, with only one dead-end spur leading off it. The spur is near the base of the stairs leading to the top of the mesa. A horribly mauled body lies in the fork. A pickaxe lies on the floor next to it.

A Knowledge (Medicine) or Healing roll tells the soldiers the victim was badly burned (which is obvious to all), probably died from those wounds, and was later partially eaten by scavenger animals. The body has been dead less than a day.

A successful Tracking roll at the last passage spots a pair of booted footprints leading down from the steps and into the corridor—in addition to the now-expected hyena tracks. A raise spots a

single set of bare footprints also entering the side tunnel.

Should one of the group ask, it's not possible to get an accurate count of the hyena tracks in the same way. There are too many and too much overlap.

### Broken Seals

The side passage leads to what was once a dead end. The wall at the end of the tunnel has been broken open, revealing the remains of a stone wall hidden behind a mud façade. A pickaxe lies in the dirt beside it.

Beyond the ruins of the wall stands a stone archway with cryptic runes inscribed above it. It takes nearly an hour of work to clear the inscription of dirt and dust enough to be legible. It is a collection of angular marks corresponding to no known language. Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Archaeology) identifies the writing as a version of a code used by the Knights Templar, while a raise deciphers it. It reads, "The darkness beyond has been sealed in iron." (If Lawrence is with the group, he deciphers this for them sometime during the next afternoon, if they request it.)

On the other side of the opening lies a roughly circular chamber, approximately 20' in diameter. The ceiling is blackened by smoke or scorching and a badly burned corpse lies between the doorway and the center of the room. Its features are too badly burned to identify, but remains of its gear and uniform appear to be those of a Turkish soldier.

A character carefully examining the floor near the corpse can make a Notice roll. Success finds a circle of iron filings about 10' in diameter around the center of the room. The corpse lies inside the circle—which is broken by the booted footprints. Also, in the center of the circle is a single, bent iron nail.

**Note:** It's fairly important the players uncover this hidden chamber. Without the clues contained within, it's very unlikely they can defeat the ifrit.

### Infiltration

Shortly after the last passage, the tunnel leads up a set of crudely carved steps. At the top, a wooden door opens into the remains of the hexagonal tower at the north end of the fortress. There are no signs or sounds of activity anywhere near the secret entrance, either before or after they open the door.

The tower is a crumbling ruin. Any investigator examining the door finds evidence it was recently



# Fortress Map

Secret  
Tunnel  
Entrance



- 1 Northern Tower
- 2 Keep
- 3 Barracks
- 4 Southern Tower
- 5 Well
- 6 Mess Tent
- 7 Supply Tents





uncovered with a Notice roll. Tracking finds several boot prints leading into and out of the tunnel, as well as a pair of bare footprints. A raise tells the sharp-eyed observer the boot prints likely belonged to the same person—and match those inside the tunnels if the troops discovered those.

Allow the team to prepare for their assault on the waystation, but anyone who observes the rest of the fortress sees no sign of movement whatsoever.

## Fortress of the Damned

As the heroes and their allies move into the fortress, they find it seemingly abandoned—at least at first. Assuming they attacked at night, there are no lights, no movement, and no sounds of activity anywhere other than their own. The stillness of the desert wastes surrounding them sits over the area like a heavy blanket.

As they move into the fortress, the group discovers signs of a battle, or more appropriately, a slaughter. The first sign is a pair of roasted corpses in the center of the fortress's central yard. A pair of scorched (and unusable) Gewehr 98 rifles lie nearby, all their spare ammunition cooked off in the blaze.

The soldiers can discover more gruesome details as they search the fort's other structures. Unless otherwise noted, the bodies are carrying, or in close proximity to the standard equipment for an Ottoman soldier of the appropriate rank.

**Barracks:** Other than the keep, these are the only two structures to resist the ravages of time well enough to be usable for housing. Each holds 10 bedrolls.

The first room the group enters also has six dead bodies, most still in their sleeping pallets. The soldiers appear to have been killed in a similar manner to those in the keep. These men died before they even had time to get out of bed.

The second room has only three bodies. All of them are in various stages of dress, as if they were preparing to stand-to.

**Keep:** The central keep is largely intact. It served as the command post (front room), officers' quarters (back room), and supply room (center) for the detachment. There are five dead Turkish soldiers in here. Three of the bodies belong to officers.

One, a binbashi (captain), has extensive burns on his back, but all were ultimately killed by slashing or puncturing wounds. A character who succeeds on a Knowledge (Medicine) roll

identifies at least a couple of the wounds as dog bites.

There is enough flour, beans, and other staples to feed thirty men for four weeks stored in the supply room. Additionally, there are 2,000 rounds of 8mm ammunition, three 250-round belts of 7.92mm, 10 canteens, and various other sundry items for maintaining a platoon's equipment and gear (needles, thread, gun oil, etc.).

There are three cots in the officers' quarters, along with a writing desk.

**Mess Tent:** This is the only temporary structure in the fortress. Here, the detachment cook prepared meals; the troops took them elsewhere to eat.

One of the work tables has been overturned in a fight. The body of the cook lies pinned beneath it. Clutched in his hand is a large knife covered in blood. Other than that and typical mess gear and a few spices, there is nothing of interest here.

**Northern Tower:** This is the point of the heroes' entry into the fortress. It does not appear the Ottoman soldiers even bothered trying to fortify or use this portion of the structure. Any character with Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Archaeology) can tell the tower is of older, more primitive construction than the rest of the fort.

**Southern Tower:** This is actually just an elevated section of the fortress, built on a promontory rising 20' above the rest of the mesa. There are no structures other than fortified walls located here.

The Turks placed a Bergmann MG15 here, due to its excellent field of fire over the ground below the fortress. When the heroes arrive, they discover the machine gun has been turned to face into the fortress. Over 200 shell casings surround the weapon, and the badly charred remains of what must have been the gunner and crew lay behind the gun.

Another three bodies are scattered behind the machine gun emplacement. In addition to burns, these soldiers bear the same slashing and puncture wounds found elsewhere.

**Supply Tents:** At the base of the mesa, between the stairway leading to the fortress and the railroad, are three military-issue tents. Two of them house various tools and supplies for conducting repairs on the railroad. The third is used as temporary housing for any workers sent to assist in the labor or as a billet for patrols in the region. It is currently empty.

Piles of railroad ties sit to one side of the tents, near the railroad. There are several crates of iron railroad spikes in one of the supply tents and a



barrel of iron nails. These will be useful if the players discover the ifrit's weakness!

Scattered between the tents are two more bodies, both horribly mutilated. The wounds are severe enough to require a Fear (Nausea) check from anyone examining them. A hero who makes a Knowledge (Medicine) or Survival roll can tell something has been feeding on the corpses. With a raise, the investigator knows the scavengers were probably canine—likely hyenas.

A Tracking roll finds several tracks belonging to either wild dogs or hyenas around the tent. A raise identifies them as hyena tracks. The same roll also discovers a pair of booted footprints leading off into the desert to the east. (These two poor souls are the reason none of the creatures haunting the fortress are present. The ghula pack pursued them several miles into the desert and are feeding on their remains as the Allied soldiers arrive.)

**Well:** Although the characters may be suspicious of the well by the time they get around to filling their canteens, there is nothing amiss here—no bodies down the well, no curse, no poison, or any other danger. Of course, since water is a survival necessity and they're probably getting low, let them worry about it as much as you want.

## Creatures of the Night

When the heroes first arrive, none of the djinn are present. The ghulas are chasing down the last of the Turkish survivors. The recently-freed ifrit has gone into the desert to see if any of its master's people remain in the area. It does not return until the next night, when the arrival of the train draws its attention back to the fortress.

Around 2 a.m., the ghulas, in hyena form, get back a few hours after the Allied force takes possession of the fortress. Allow any soldiers still awake to make Notice rolls. Those who succeed hear the laughing barks of a pack of hyenas somewhere in the surrounding desert.

The ghulas have eaten very well, but the monsters are notoriously gluttonous, even going so far as to coat their bellies with oil to allow them to distend and continue eating! However, having learned the hard way that rifles can kill their kind with a good shot, most are willing to wait for the ifrit to return before they'll attack armed soldiers. The creatures can't pass up easy pickings though, so over the course of the night, they steal bites in hyena form from any bodies left in the open—or drag corpses back to the cave to devour whole.

## Infiltrators

A few of the monsters might use their ability to appear as beautiful women to lure lone sentries to their deaths between the time the Allies arrive and the battle with the train. The ghulas then change shape to impersonate their victims, infiltrating the heroes' forces. All told, the creatures replace four of the heroes' Bedouin troops.

Should one of the characters be brave (or foolish) enough to go poking around the ruins or cave alone, he may run into one of the scavenger djinns himself. The ghula, intrigued by the new arrivals to the fortress, passes itself off as its last victim, a Turkish soldier. It only expects to maintain the façade until the ifrit returns to slaughter the Allied troops.

The ghula, in broken Arabic, claims the garrison suddenly went mad and fell upon each other. It stumbles around explaining the strange wounds on the bodies, eventually pantomiming the men inflicting them on each other. On other questions, it simply goes mute, as if too terrified to speak.

It doesn't speak Turkish, should any of the soldiers know that language. This isn't really unheard of, as the Ottoman Empire conscripted large numbers of Arab soldiers into its ranks. However, a raise on a Knowledge (Arabic) roll identifies the language as a centuries-old dialect.

## Right on Schedule

The characters have about a day to ready themselves and their allies for the arrival of the train. It reaches the waystation at about 11 p.m. the following night. As it approaches, its speed makes it obvious the crew isn't planning to stop at the fortress.

## The Train

The train is pulled by a diesel locomotive engine. Behind it are three passenger cars, two cargo cars, and a caboose. The locomotive and each car measure approximately 60' in length, and the caboose is about 30'.

The locomotive, including the engineer's cab, is surrounded by heavy-grade steel. This provides +4 Heavy Armor, making it impossible to damage with small arms fire. The passenger and cargo car walls are mostly constructed of wood, which provides +3 Armor to anyone inside.

On top of the caboose, the Turks have mounted an MG08 machine gun. It is surrounded by sandbags providing medium cover (-2) to its crew. It is manned by a gunner and his assistant. They have four 250-round belts of ammunition.



## Stopping the Train

There are ample uniforms to disguise most of the raiding force as Turkish soldiers if the heroes decide to rely on deception. The train is not scheduled to stop at the outpost, but if they're disguised, the soldiers can easily flag it down or use one of the red lanterns from the supply tents. The crew has no reason to suspect anything, at least initially, so they bring the train to a stop quickly, but safely.

Alternately, the soldiers can simply place one or more of the Garland mines under the tracks—starting the fight with a bang—literally! Placed under the track, the mine explodes as the locomotive crosses it. This damages the engine, but more importantly destroys one side of the track, causing the train to derail.

## Attack!

The train carries a contingent of Turkish soldiers, but they are not expecting an attack at one of their own waystations. If the heroes use subterfuge to stop the train, the Ottoman troops are surprised for the first round of combat.

On the other hand, should the raiders simply derail the train, the resulting wreck causes casualties before the shooting even starts. Five of the Turks are Incapacitated immediately and the rest are Shaken by the derailment.

Once the Turkish troops recover from either surprise or being Shaken, they fight back fiercely. They initially fight from within the train cars, gaining medium cover (–2) from the walls, before retreating to form a line on the opposite side of the rails. There, the berm provides them with heavy cover (–4).

The machine gun on the caboose provides covering fire until either out of ammunition or eliminated.

Allow the players to control the Bedouin warriors as Extras. Don't differentiate the fighters who have been replaced by the ghulas at this point. Doing so would alert the players something is amiss.

If the Turks gain the upper hand, their officers begin a leap-frogging assault on the Allied position, attempting to gain the fortress itself if possible. The Turkish troops do not surrender until both officers and more than three-quarters of their number are Incapacitated.

- **Turkish Soldiers (40):** Use the stats for Ottoman Empire Askeri from the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. Armed with Gewehr 98 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1).

- **Machine Gun Crew (2):** Use the stats for Ottoman Empire Askeri from the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. Armed with MG08 (Range 30/60/120, Damage 2d8, RoF 3, AP 1) and Gewehr 98 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1).
- **Turkish Officers (2):** Use the stats for Ottoman Empire Officer from the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. Armed with Mauser pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6-1, RoF 1).

## Hell Breaks Loose

After three rounds of combat, or should one of the two sides be reduced to less than half its initial numbers, the smell of blood becomes too much for the ghulas.

At the beginning of the fourth round, hyenas appear to feed on the dead and dying on the edges of the battle. They don't directly engage any soldiers this round.

On the fifth round, the ghulas impersonating Bedouins succumb to their own hunger. They remain in human form until another soldier attacks them, but they begin to feed off the bodies of the dead and dying as well. Divide the impersonators up as evenly among the different groups of the players' Extras as you can.

At the beginning of the sixth round, the ifrit emerges from the secret tunnel entrance in the north tower. It moves to attack the first male it sees of either side. It does not attack female characters until they do enough damage to it with magic or iron to cause at least a Shaken result.

When the ifrit emerges, the ghulas in hyena form change into their natural appearance and attack whichever side is currently winning the battle. Those in human form remain so until attacked. Note the monsters can only use their Beguile ability if they can hide from sight for a round, but it can be a powerful tool against soldiers on either side.

The creatures want as many dead bodies littering the desert as possible, so they work to ensure the most casualties they can. If the tides turn and it's both convenient and safe for them, they may even switch sides during the battle. Ultimately, they and the ifrit want *everyone* dead.

The ghulas fight until the ifrit is defeated. At that point, if there are less than half their original number, the survivors change to their hyena form and attempt to flee into the wastes. Do to the nature of the geas upon it, the ifrit fights to the death.



- **Ghulas (2 per hero):** See page page 17.
- **Ghula Impersonators (4):** See page page 17. Armed with Gewehr rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1). These creatures use d4-2 when Shooting.
- ✦ **Ifrit:** See page 17.

## Defeating the Ifrit

Hopefully, the characters have discovered at least one of the clues to the ifrit’s weakness to iron in the cave beneath the fortress. If not, and they don’t have magical means of hurting it, they’re in for a very unpleasant fight. If they have, there are a few ways they can damage the creature.

The most obvious is to use the railroad spikes as simple hand weapons. Whether the soldiers employ them as bludgeoning or stabbing weapons, they do Str+d4 damage.

The heroes can also apply the iron spikes or nails to one of the mines (assuming they have a spare), creating an explosive device with iron shrapnel. This causes the mine to do 4d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template. The mines are designed to detonate on the weight of a train engine or other large vehicle, so modifying it to work on the ifrit, either by contact or remote detonation, takes a Knowledge (Demolitions) roll. The tinkering requires two rounds of work, and if the hero rolls a 1 on his skill die (regardless of the Wild Die), the mine blows up in his face.

Finally, the characters can use the Bedouins’ jezail rifles as impromptu blunderbusses, firing some of the iron nails instead of musket balls. The weapons are less effective when used this way (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6, RoF 1) and give the firer a –1 penalty to Shooting rolls, but they do provide a repeatable way to do damage. They still take two actions to reload.

## Wrapping Up

Once the group defeats the djinn and Turks, they can search the wreckage of the train. In the cargo cars, there is a considerable amount of foodstuffs, along with several crates of rifles and ammunition. While it’s unlikely the heroes have the means to transport any of these items, any of their surviving Bedouin allies are happy to load themselves down with the spoils.

A Notice roll at –2 uncovers a document pouch in one of the passenger cars containing several important looking dispatches. Unless someone in the unit speaks Turkish, they are indecipherable. Even if one of the soldiers does, the information is fairly esoteric, dealing with troop and materiel transfers between locations. However, it is of value to higher command, giving them valuable insight into redistributions of various Ottoman units throughout the region which can then be extrapolated into areas where offensive maneuvers are likely.

The heroes still face the journey back across the wastes to Wadi Rum. If Major Lawrence did not travel with the unit, hopefully at least one of the Bedouin warriors survived. Otherwise, it takes a Survival or Tracking roll each day to remain on the proper route. Each day lost can prove deadly in the desert heat!

Some of the evil of my tale  
may have been inherent in our  
circumstances.

—T.E. Lawrence

## Bedouin Small Arms

Type/Caliber	Range	Damage	RoF	AP	Shots	Weight
<b>Rifles</b>						
Jezail	15/30/60	2d8	1	2	1	14
<i>Notes:</i> Snapfire, Min. Str d6, 3 actions to reload. Bullets and powder cost \$25. Four lbs per 50 shots.						
Martini-Henry	20/40/80	2d8	1	1	1	9
<i>Notes:</i> Min Str d6, 2 actions to reload.						



# Characters & Creatures

## Bedouin Warrior

Descended from nomads inhabiting the Arabian and Syrian deserts, these tribesmen have dwelled here for centuries. The Ottoman Empire forced the establishment of permanent settlements for many of the tribes, hoping to use them to constrain a populace it saw as a threat to its control of the region. Still, many Bedouins practice their traditional lifestyles and are able to survive the harsh conditions of the desert with little need for the comforts of civilization.

These fighters are overmatched in conventional battle against trained soldiers due to the latter's superior tactics and discipline, but their desertcraft and other skills make them impressive guerrillas and raiders, striking lightly defended outposts and isolated patrols from ambush then fading back into the desert like a breeze.

As a largely unorganized force, Bedouin warriors carry a variety of firearms. Some are equipped with the latest Lee-Enfield SMLE Mk III, but many carry the older Martini-Henry breechloaders, or even muzzle-loading jezails. Curved daggers, called *khanjars* or *janbiyas*, serve as both weapons and tools, as well as status symbols, depending on their ornateness.

### Bedouin Warrior

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Stealth d6, Tracking d4

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Illiterate, Loyal

**Edges:** Steady Hands

**Gear:** Camel, janbiya (Str+d4), and waterskin, and rifles of varying manufacture (see above).

## Camel

Camels are far better adapted than horses to a desert environment, although far less comfortable to ride.

### Camel

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6

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

**Special Abilities:**

- **Kick:** Str.
- **Ornery:** Characters suffer a -1 penalty to Riding rolls on a camel.
- **Sand Walker:** Camels treat deserts as normal terrain for traveling purposes.
- **Ship of the Desert:** Camels do not start making Vigor rolls for dehydration until a week without water.
- **Size +2:** Camels are slightly larger than riding horses.

## Ghula

These shapeshifting monsters are sometimes confused with the similarly named, carrion-eating ghouls, but they are far more powerful. Ghulas are driven by a nearly insatiable hunger that often leads them to consume the dead like more common ghouls, but they prefer the freshly dead or living flesh and blood of human victims.

The cannibalistic horrors often inhabit ruins, desolate areas, and occasionally burial grounds. Ghulas employ considerable guile to obtain their favored repast. In their natural shape, they resemble bloated and decayed corpses. They can assume the form of either their most recent victim or a beautiful woman to lure victims to their death. They can also change into a hyena-like beast to chase down their prey if necessary.



Although these creatures are not actually undead, they are preternaturally tough. They are actually a lesser type of djinni, spirits of Arabic mythology. Unlike other types of these beings, ghulas are always corporeal creatures.

## Ghula

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Tracking d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

### Special Abilities:

- **Beguile:** Any person who has not seen the monster in its natural shape must win an opposed Spirit roll vs the ghula to attack it.
- **Claws:** Str+d4. Ghulas possess claws only in their corpse-like form.
- **Disguise:** A ghula can flawlessly assume the shape of its most recent victim, including clothes. It gains no memories or skills of the victim.
- **Fear -1:** Anyone seeing a ghula in its corpse-like form must make a Fear check at -1.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Ghulas can make two Fighting attacks a round at no penalty.
- **Hardy:** A second Shaken result does not cause a wound.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Shapeshifter:** As an action, a ghula can change its shape to that of a beautiful woman, its most recent victim, a hyena (see below), or its natural, corpse-like form.
- **Unnatural Toughness:** Regardless of its form, a ghula receives +2 Toughness and +2 to recover from Shaken.

## Ghula (Hyena Form)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Tracking d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

### Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2.
- **Fleet Footed:** Ghulas in hyena-form roll a d10 when running.
- **Hardy:** A second Shaken result does not cause a wound.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting conditions.
- **Size -1:** Hyenas are the size of a large dog.
- **Unnatural Toughness:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from Shaken.

## ✖ Ifrit

Ifrits are powerful djinn composed of smoke and flame. Their humanoid bodies burn with the force of a furnace, smoke-black wings sprouting from their backs.

Ifrits are the spiritual embodiment of flame and destruction. They are difficult for even the most powerful of sorcerers to control, but their power makes them tempting subjects for practitioners of the dark arts nonetheless. Even when not bound by a sorcerer's command, ifrit tend toward evil and capriciousness, delighting in devastation and death.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

### Special Abilities:

- **Fiery Touch:** Str+d8; chance of catching fire.
- **Flight:** An ifrit has a Flying Pace of 12" and Climb of 2.
- **Heat Aura:** The heat from these monsters is so great any character within 1" of an ifrit must make a Vigor roll each round or suffer a level of Fatigue from heat exhaustion and dehydration. This Fatigue can Incapacitate as described under **Heat** in the **Hazards** section of the *Savage Worlds* core rules and is recovered at a rate of one level every hour with access to sufficient water.
- **Invisibility:** As an action, an ifrit can turn invisible. If it does so, its inner fires flare brightly, ending the effect for at least one round.
- **Invulnerability:** An ifrit can only be harmed by its Weaknesses or magic. It can be Shaken by other attacks, but not wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Size +2:** Ifrits are considerably larger than humans.
- **Smoky Shape:** An ifrit can maneuver through cracks in doors, rubble, or any barrier smoke can penetrate. It cannot cross barriers warded by iron or an unbroken line of iron dust.
- **Weakness (Iron):** An ifrit takes normal damage from weapons made of pure iron.