

BY SIGMUND FREUD

Angels

creatures of the

dream seed



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fra domenico

Engel

creatures of the
dreamseed

surceit dominus



laudate dominum

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PRINTED IN THE CANADA.

oculi nostri ad  dominum nostrum



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Roma Aeterna April 2655

My dear Pictre

A Writer of the time before the Flood once proposed that all truths start out as blasphemies. Does this mean that it is the duty of all faithful Monachs which I consider myself to be to oppose the spread of important truths? Yet another enlightened mind claimed that a man of science should continually strive to doubt his own truths. I have spent the last decade living this almage. The autumn of my life - a life sadly not always free of sin - has begun: my hair is as gray as theory. Still I hope to spend a veil more decades under the blessed face of our Lord: to experience the beauty of this our World and take part in the blessed enlightenment found by so veil. Sitting here at my desk in my beloved cloister: Herzenburg, I have decided to put down in Writing an edited version of the memorable and sometimes even horrific events that I have witnessed during my travels. During this journey which took several years I always took great pains to note all significant events within the pages of my journals. I did not judge my discoveries but rather reported my findings to those wiser than myself. Who asked me to embark on my journey for our own salvation as well as for that of future generations (may the Lord of the Floods not prevail). so that they may come to the right conclusions without my own humble thoughts hindering theirs.

For you my old friend: whom I trust as no one else I have created a second annotated draft that I will be sending to you. Some details were not mentioned in the initial text for reasons of courtesy. Between the two of us however a more open form of discussion is permissible I hope than between myself and the Shepherd of all believers. But I want to force neither you nor him to read my journals in their entirety especially considering the misconceptions and departures to which I can be prone at times. Therefore the Lord may forgive me for submitting to you a clear and concise summary of the events that took place during my journeys. Everything began in 2676. When I was summoned to Aeterna - the same year that witnessed the campaign of the Gabrielites against the German Dunklords. They went forth to restore order in accordance with the heavenly council and to spread discord and unrest amongst the unscrupulous Heretics who claimed lordship over cities in Sylvania Bavaria and Frankonia and who therewith brought shame unto us all.

In this precarious political climate was I (then a quietly respected Basilite Monach in the cloister of Herzenburg) forced out of the quiet solitude of my life by the summons of my Abt. a most devout follower of the Pontifex Maximus. In the quiet of his study I was informed that the most honored Shepherd had selected me for an undisclosed mission. During my journey to Roma Aeterna I surveyed some of the cities in Toscana partly because I was rather less than eager to reach Roma and was therefore looking for excuses to dawdle and partly because these cities kindled my inborn curiosity. But finally I reached the city of the Michaelites where I was met by an educated brother from Herzenburg whom I had not seen in quite some time: Hieronymus. According to the edict of the Konsistorium he was to accompany me on the upcoming journey. But in regards to the expedition itself we heard only veiled hints about a number of famous cities and abbeys and also about distant regions of Europe. In the coming years he was to become a trusted companion as well as a good friend of mine - and he probably never regretted those days as he was able to witness things that are without doubt worth seeing. These things and many others alike I transcribed into my journals.

Brother Hieronymus is indisputably one of the best cartographers in the whole of Europe as well as being an artist of some skill and during our travels he faithfully recorded and drew the landscapes of our beloved but tortured continent. Like me it was not just the desire to survey and see the World: however which made him undertake this arduous and dangerous journey. Both of us have and always have had a never-ending hunger to find Truth but mine is a hunger always combined with nagging doubts that some truth can never be what it appears to be - and I suppose he might have felt this way as well.

Domenico

introduction

introduction

These are the tales of the journeys of Fra Domenico, Monach and Painter of Monsters of the Ramielite cloister of Herzogenburg, and of his companion Hieronymus, the Cartographer. Collected in the year 2654 from the thirteen diaries and journals of Fra Domenico, these notes have been compiled for the Pontifex Maximus Secundus and the most honored Konsistorium for further investigation. Many of the following entries have been included without any changes from my journals. Additional notes have been included with all due diligence and restraint to point out the essential.

I, Fra Domenico, most subordinate servant of the holy Angelitic Church, have created this documentation to best of my own and my colleague Hieronymus' knowledge and conscience. My findings have been structured so as to allow for the ease of further studies and investigations. Therefore, they do necessarily take the chronological order of my encounters with the Dreamseed and other demonspawn into account.

Some of the accounts about which the Pontifex Maximus and the revered Konsistorium will read on the following pages might appear to be fever dreams and fantasies, given the amount of detail and the various nuances which I have included — but I can assure you that all I have written and drawn here is directed by the utmost scientific precision and is nothing but the truth. The few con-

clusions and speculations that I have included are based solely on my own impressions and assumptions and should be regarded as such, and shall therefore neither contradict nor unduly influence the wise opinion of the venerable Konsistorium. Rather, they are only my personal opinion, which, I humble remind my readers, was requested by the most holy Pontifex Maximus himself.

Before I end this introductory text, let me mention that my colleague Hieronymus and I would kindly ask the Konsistorium not to make available to the public the details that I will unveil in the following. The findings contained within these pages will make the common believer shiver with fear or worse. We would instead humbly request that this journal be kept under lock and seal in the libraries of the Vatican until the Angelitic Church has completely evaluated, tested, and confirmed the whole of the text — and until methods and means have been found by servants of the Church to combat and defeat these monsters. Until then we would suggest just denying the existence of such horrible monsters and covering up their atrocities, to avoid hysteria among the masses.

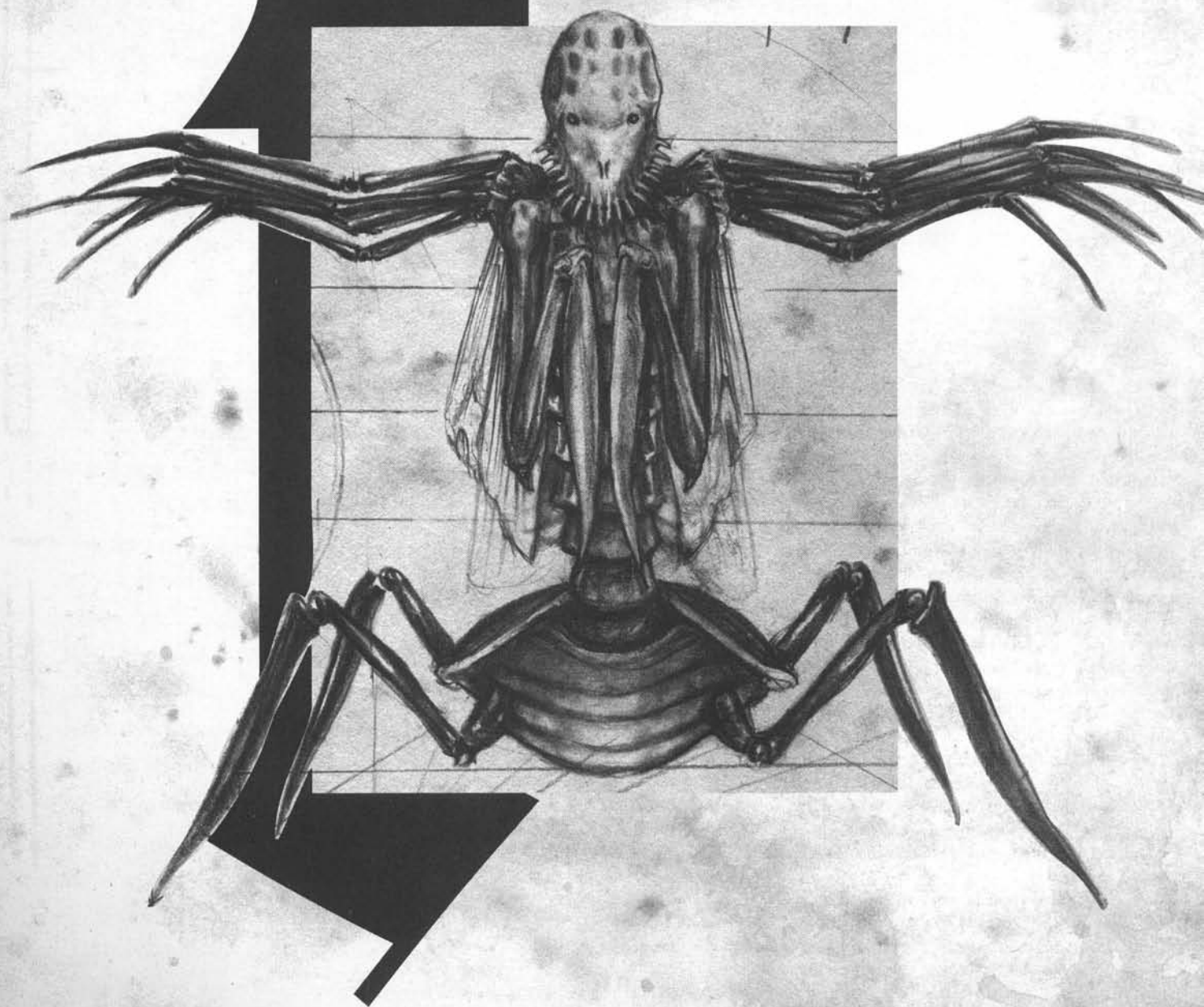
Set down in the year 2654 in Roma Æterna

Fra Domenico

Witnessed by Hieronymus, Cartographer

significat anima mea votatum

b o o k



oculi nostri ad  dominum nostrum

o n e : to unknown shores

which details the beginning of our journey from the eternal city to the shores of hellas as well as all kinds of creatures which troubled our travels and which also includes some hints about greater things to come

23rd January 2647

Our departure from Roma Æterna was hasty, as the Pontifex Maximus seemed all too eager for our return and the results of our investigation. Hieronymus, who will accompany me, is an old acquaintance — a Ramielite Monach like me who, in fact, inhabited a cell right next to mine in the cloister of Herzogenburg for many years. He seems to have been waiting for this journey for many years, as he was called to Æterna to prepare, it seems, in 2645. Possibly my call to duty is due to his advice to the Pontifex Maximus.

Hieronymus himself is an extraordinarily quiet person of about 50 years. His pace seems to be something slower than mine, which slows us down more than I might prefer. Perhaps his tired knees,

perhaps stiff from leaning and poring over maps too much, will regain some of their vigor when we are underway, thus hastening our journey.

Despite this speed, he seems to be very self-confident, and his feet seem to follow an invisible trail that only he can perceive. But what else could one expect of one of the most masterful cartographers of Europe than that he can find his way better than almost anybody else? I hope the honored Konsistorium will excuse my comments on the qualities of others and on similar digressions — I seem to be all too prone to such banalities at times.

God willing, we will reach the foothills of the Apennines following Hieronymus' guidance today. The porters seem to be at ease — which clearly demonstrates that keeping the true reasons for my journey secret from them, an idea originally hatched by Consistorial Cardinal Rufus Kant¹, was the right

*What a prophetic sentence! As it I had known then what insupportable pan-
ic the tales of dipeperical
insectoid beasts from the
depths of the Internus would
have caused amongst the
populace! At this point I
could not have dreamed of
the importance and magnitude of
our findings and discoveries.*

choice. Excitement fills my veins when I think about actually coming face to face with one of the demons of the Dreamseed. Hieronymus apparently differs with me in this regard, though. He seems rather tense and sometimes stares at me when he believes me not to notice it. Maybe he is simply afraid of what is surely to come.

6th february 2647

Ancona is already a whole day's travel behind us and the claims of our porters seem to be true regarding travel along the coast: it is much faster, although Hieronymus has started working on his main endeavor and begun remeasuring the coastline of Europe, which slows us down considerably.

Since I first sighted a Dreamseed creature ten days ago, there have been no other signs of the unnatural to be found — although we were lucky enough to spot a few of the messengers of Heaven flying in the distance. Bran seemed to have noticed my dissatisfaction with this and advised me that I should not despair about not having seen any of the strange beasts. The Himmel of the Michaelites is much too close for us to see any of the dark and foul beasts. This makes sense, of course, and it also allowed me to find new courage. Before us lay the Adriatic Sea, and those azure waters made me forget the hard march of the last days. Hieronymus seems to have recovered completely, though, and since crossing the Apennines he has actually flourished. His work is coming along very well, and he has regained the happiness which he often lacked in the past weeks.

24th january 2647

Unluckily, we did not reach our goal yesterday. Therefore, we have to advance a little faster than we had estimated beforehand. Hieronymus was roused from his slumber by severe cramps in his legs — the forced march seems to be less forgiving to him than it is to me. Hopefully, the ascent to the Apennines will not slow us down even further². Our porters have made quite a number of jokes about my companion already, and the Templars that the Pontifex Maximus has sent to guard us have not been of any help in this regard....

Bran, the Armatura and leader of the five Templars, seems to be a young but extremely gifted leader. He completes all his tasks meticulously and retains a strong grip on his men. Up to now we have not seen any creatures of the Dreamseed. They seem to be hiding as if they were aware of my most holy mission and actually wished to hinder it.

You won't believe how much Hieronymus annoyed me at the beginning of our journey. Pieter, living side by side in our cloister and spending your time in contemplative discussion is one thing. While venturing out to find and study the most dangerous prey in Creation is another. But thankfully I have forgiven the old bookworm.

8th february 2647

This morning a single ray of light breaking the clouds above us illuminated a huge carcass lying on the beach ahead of us. The gigantic and horribly reeking flesh was covered in huge beetles with shiny black carapaces, each roughly a foot long, which troubled the Templars immediately. Their worries were validated a short time later, when the things attacked Hieronymus, the porters, and me. One of the Iberians was bitten in the right eye, which was damaged so severely that he eventually lost it. We have done our best to bandage his wounds and hope to find a Raphaelite hospital soon, so the Begines and Monachs there can take care of him.

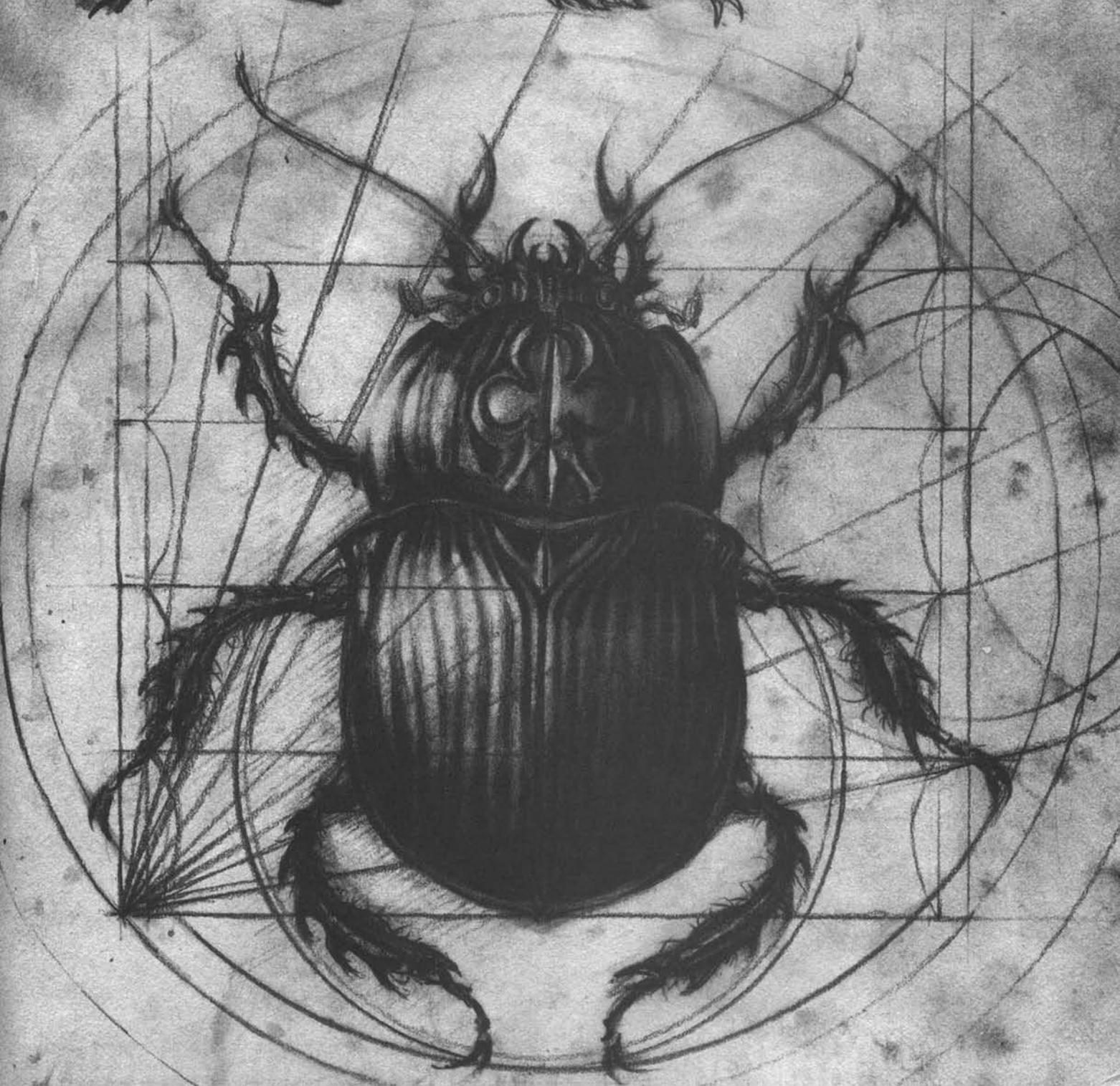
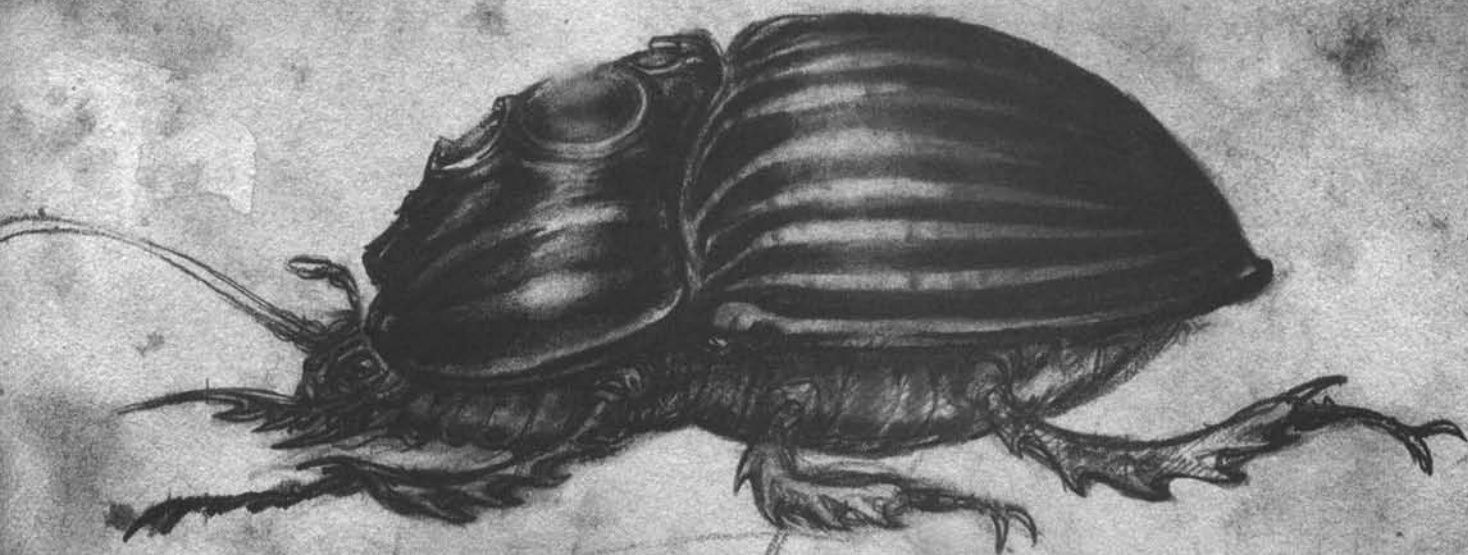
More interesting than the beetles, which I have come to classify as *Tracery-Scarabs* due to the form of their carapaces, was the massive carcass itself. After measuring it and venturing to estimate how much of it was hidden in the sand, I came to the conclusion that it must have been at least 28 paces long. This indeed was very much impressing, considering that this was not a whole creature in itself, but rather only one of his legs! The whole creature must be of enormous size — at least 40 meters in length and weighing, we have surmised, more than 200 tons. I hope we will see a live specimen of this gargantuan creature, which I have come to call *Devourer of the Earth* due to its huge size. My idea of taking one specimen of every type of creature we encounter back to Roma Aeterna has herewith become impracticable. The porters are unwilling even

28th january 2647

The cramps in Hieronymus' legs have passed, but huge blisters have sprung up on his feet — poor, miserable fellow. The ascent has been awful for him, but perhaps his constant muttering and whining will attract the attention of some demon of the Dreamseed. The air up here in the mountains is very pleasant, with a constant wind blowing across the sparsely covered mountainside. My worst expectations seem to have come true: Our journey will definitely take much longer than I had hoped if we cannot increase our speed drastically. Thank the Lord for our wise choice in porters, though — the Iberians are a tough, enduring, and jolly bunch. They probably wonder, though, why they are so well paid. If our journey continues like this, their questions will never be answered, I suppose. The Templars seem to be used to such ventures as well, as they never seem to complain.

In the afternoon I believed that I saw a small swarm of Dreamseed creatures hovering above one of the peaks in the distance. Unfortunately, no one else could see them, and now I fear the fresh mountain air is beginning to play tricks on my senses³.

³At times as I recall my companions did imply that I was beginning to hallucinate, hearing such claims especially from Hieronymus, hurt me quite a bit.



to come close to the lifeless mass, and, even if they had dared to touch it, there is no chance that we could have moved it, let alone lifted it.

fervor, however, I will have him bound so he can finally get some rest and sleep.

10th february 2647

The wound of our porter has become infected and is oozing pus. He is suffering terribly and is sometimes unable to stand at all, not to mention completely unable to carry any load. I have begun to carry for myself the scrapbooks I brought to serve as my future journals. Burdening the poor fellow with them is just impossible and putting them into the hands of one of the other porters seems unfair to me.

Just after waking up from a particularly vivid dream, I noticed nearby one of the Tracery-Scarabs, which flew quickly away. Unfortunately, I was unable to determine if it was one of those who troubled us two days ago, or if it was a different breed. I begin to suspect that the bugs are following us, and to make sure that these disgusting creatures are not searching for an opportunity to attack us again, I will ask Bran to position sentries around our camp tonight. Another such incident could prove fatal to our expedition.

Actually at this point I wasn't at all certain if these beasts did follow us; it was rather one of my famous "gut-feelings." I know you always claimed that these were significant, but you know how little I regard them.

13th february 2647

After and despite my having stayed beside our wounded porter for three days, his soul ascended to Heaven tonight, when his body succumbed to gangrene in the thunderstorm surrounding us....

The other porters have burned his body in a violation of the customs of their home, but they could not find enough small stones for a proper burial on the beach. This is undoubtedly the bleakest day of our journey thus far, and it will remain forever committed to my memory.

In the afternoon we broke camp heading west, for we plan to reach San Marino before dusk. We hope to enjoy a soft bed and a warm meal there.

14th february 2647

After leaving San Marino at the break of dawn, we soon reached an uninhabited region. Bishop Marco de Polognia has given us some hints about possible hiding places of Dreamseed. Some of the porters seem to suspect the true purpose of our journey — possibly one of the Templars has spoken too freely of his excitement in regard to upcoming events. Hieronymus grows tougher every day; especially since the demise of our porter, he seems to be nigh unstoppable. Quite possibly this is his way of coping with the death of a companion, although he should know better than many others that death is nothing one has to fear. If he continues in this

⁵ A real dilemma. my dear Piffre is not death a state of being worth aspiring to? I hope we will find the time to discuss this topic sometime soon.

28th april 2647

Finally, after interminable weeks of routine marching, we have reached the spot Bishop de Polognia showed us on the map in his study. If my memory of the history of this region does not deceive me, this is the spot where the pre-Flood city of Venetia, or Venice, once rose. Some claim that it was similar to modern day Roma Aeterna, but much smaller, less majestic and impressive. Without Hieronymus at my side and his constant encouragement, I would quite possibly have returned already to the Eternal City and presented myself to the Pontifex Maximus and the Konsistorium — crawling in the dust and dirt and submitting to their judgment for my failing my ordained duty. In more than 40 days now, I have not seen a single Dreamseed creature. Even the tiny Tracery-Scarabs which followed us for so long have seemingly been gone for ages.

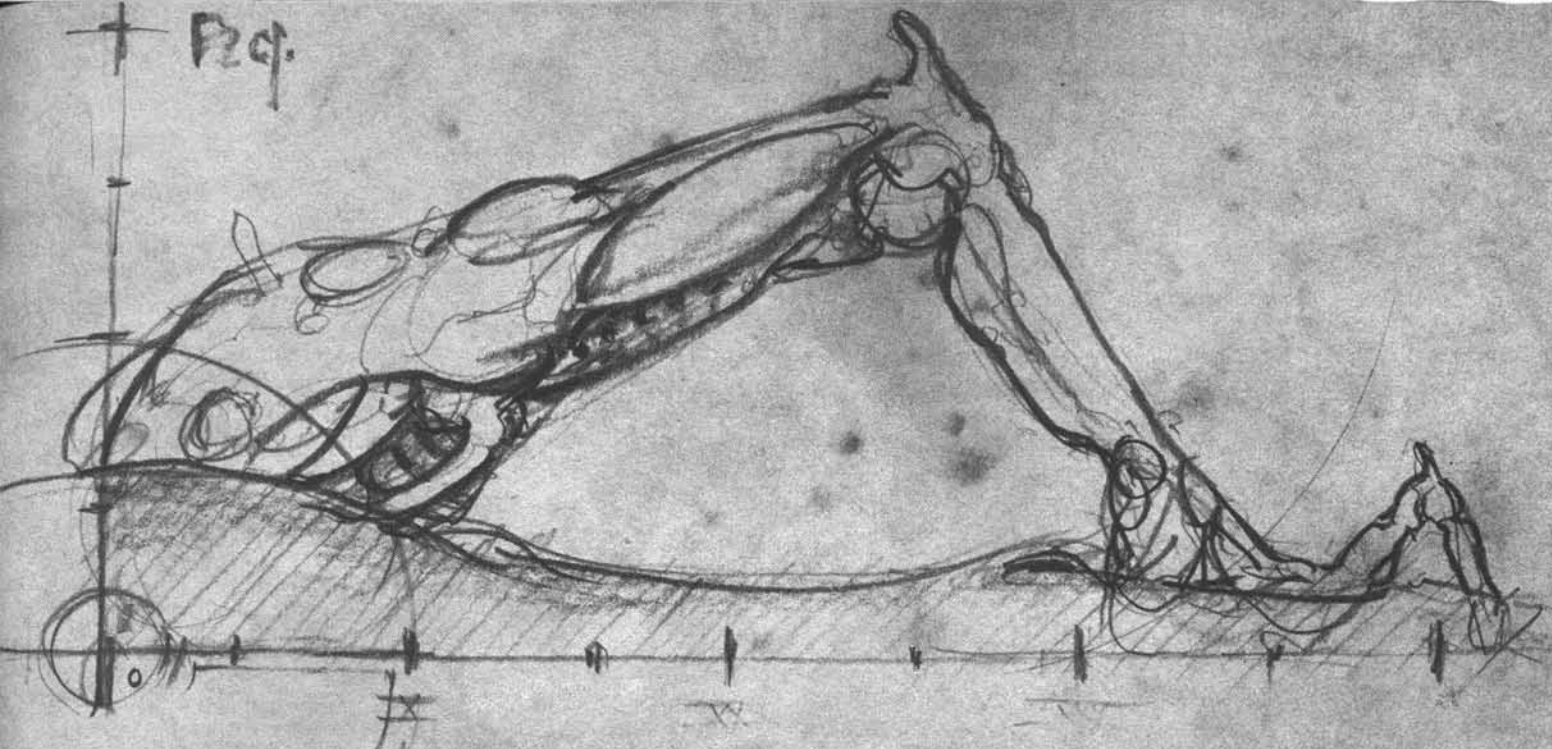
Could there be a connection between the disappearance of the Tracery-Scarabs and the lack of Dreamseed? Is there some mental bond between the demons? That would mean that there is some form of alien and godforsaken intelligence within the servants of the Lord of the Flies. What a horrible thought!

Meanwhile, our porters seem to have come to terms with our mission. Every night around the campfire they sing their rowdy drinking songs, which seem so unfamiliar to us continental Europeans. The stoic calm of our protectors seems equally unsettling. Bran has not voiced a single complaint, nor shown any sign of dissatisfaction, even if Hieronymus demands that we backtrack for a few hours so he can correct an irregularity in his measurements. This Armatura seems to possess an awe-inspiring sense of duty. On my return I will try to mention the young man's exceptional performance to the Pontifex.

29th april 2647

Our decision to follow the hints of Bishop de Polognia will keep us here for a few days. Together with the porters, Bran and his men have erected a camp to protect us from the worst of the weather. A general unease has befallen our group — the lake in front of us seems deceptively calm, while the fog that has arisen this morning seems to swallow all sounds. Some indeterminate fear has claimed my soul. I have instructed Bran to find an experienced ferryman or a coxswain. Hopefully he will be back soon. Eagerly I await the chance to inspect the ruins that jut out of the water like black, broken teeth.

+ Pzq.



tarf. aEj.

Scr. II 1/2



homof. XVII



Afternoon, a catastrophe: Hieronymus has disappeared without a trace. Although he has proven able to defend himself, and has demonstrated his skills at swordplay to me, I am still very much worried about him. I will send out the remaining Templars to search for our cartographer. Sometimes I believe that the test the Lord has in store for me is not about the Dreamseed monsters, but rather about keeping together a bag of fleas.

30th april 2647

This morning the Templars returned to the camp with Hieronymus in their midst. He was in high spirits and I doubt that he heard my remonstrative words, distracted as he was by the maps and measurements he made yesterday. The Templars told me they had found him about three hours back in the direction whence we came. He had been sitting on a rock, studying his records — only after two of them grabbed his arms and began dragging him back to our camp had he taken any notice of their presence.

His skills as a swordsman will not be of much use to him if he does not notice a Dreamseed demon until the foul fiend has split him open with its wicked claws.

Bran is still nowhere to be seen. And yet, the vague fear that troubled me earlier has slowly subsided⁶. My old thirst for knowledge seems to have replaced it.

In the afternoon a dark figure seemed to emerge from the mist, which turned out be Bran on the bow of a barge. Finally he had returned, and the boat offered mute evidence that he had been successful in acquiring a method of transportation. Regrettably, the craft proved to be too small for the whole of our group, and we were thus forced to leave the porters behind; the Iberians seemed to be more than happy about this development. We boarded the vessel together with the Templars and set out. The coxswain was a young fellow by the name of Benitorio, and appeared to be a little too enthusiastic to be a reliable guide — but at the moment he was the only one available to us. The porters waved goodbye to us as we disappeared into the mist. The depressing half-light of the mist is frightening, but at least I find the time to add this entry to my journal in the flickering light of an oil-lantern. The only thing disturbing my concentration is the gentle rocking of the barge and the sound of Hieronymus choking up his breakfast at the bow of the barge.

Later: We have heard a deep droning sound for some time now, which seems to originate from somewhere in the mist. Dark shapes seem to advance on us from the depth of the fog; sometimes these shapes seem to be tricks our minds play on us, while

others are the broken remains of the ruins through which we move. Our ferryman has started to sing and has not stopped, making it almost impossible to notice the sounds of our environment. As his high-pitched voice is terribly disturbing, I have tried to convince him to stop singing altogether, but all my efforts are met with the thick-headed response that it has always been the tradition to sing while punting. His singing really has me on edge. If the Lord had at least granted him a pleasant voice...

I have to close, now, as we are approaching the small island to which I have been directed and which was at some point called Burrano. Bran is just stepping onto the shore, closely followed by Hieronymus, who seems to be willing to risk anything just to escape the rocking of the boat. Already his face changes from pale white to the soft pink I am used to. I am waiting for the last of the Templars to get off the barge and will then follow them, but not before I have whispered a few words into the ears of Benitorio — I will spare you the exact phrases, but suffice to say that I will instruct him about his behavior during our absence, and remind him of his duty to meet us here after our excursion.

1st may 2647

Dear Lord, I can hardly write, my hands shake so. But on! The turbulent events of the past day must be recorded as quickly as possible. Everything has been so confusing and awful, though, that I am not sure where to start.

On closer inspection, Burrano was not very large, but extremely convoluted. Everywhere relicts of buildings dating from the time before the Second Flood were to be seen. Adding to this confusing atmosphere was the dense fog, which seemed to ooze from the very cracks and corners around us. Especially after nightfall, our sight was so very much reduced that we decided to set up a temporary camp and continue our exploration in the morning. In the middle of the night I awoke suddenly to the sound of Bran ordering his Templars to ready their weapons. Even before opening my eyes I heard a deep buzzing noise, as if thousands of tiny wasps were defending their hive. The mist and the darkness were so impenetrable that I could hardly see my own hands before my eyes. The Templars seemed to be hindered similarly by the bad conditions. Only Hieronymus did not seem to be disturbed by the commotion surrounding him, although I could not see him — his snoring was so loud that I could have found him easily. After some time the buzzing ceased and only the loud snoring of my companion and the muffled whispers of the Templars could be heard.

6 Actually it vanished quickly like a torpid vessel stretched to its limits and then suddenly broaded. And: actually pure curiosity was quick to replace it.



Fig. I



Fig. II

Ernst H. H.

The next morning, little if anything seemed to have changed. The fog was as opaque as before. Only Hieronymus seemed to have found any rest during the night. Despite the awkwardness of traveling in the mist, I decided to continue our investigation. Bran urged us to stay as close together as possible in order to not lose each other in the half-light and mist. We eventually reached the remains of an old building, the four outer walls of which were almost completely intact. We slipped inside through one of the openings. In the twilight of our lanterns we saw several leathery bags hanging from the ceiling or the walls, held by sticky strands with the hardness of steel. At once I began to inspect these disgusting objects, which were about the size of a pig's skull. After I had unfurled my instruments on the ground and selected a long steel needle, I began inspecting the one closest to us with the aid of a magnifying glass. When I pierced one of the veins in the outer shell of the bag with my needle, a plethora of disgusting, foul-smelling ichors poured out. I used my scalpel to slice the bag open completely, but everything that had been contained had drained out onto my feet and the ground before me⁷. I began to inspect the nauseating slime: within it one could see small black dots, which upon closer examination with the magnifying glass turned out to be tiny, not yet fully grown black flies of some kind. One of the other cocoons had burst open as well, but, unlike the one I had unwittingly opened and the ones still remaining intact, this one seemed to be dry and brittle, almost as if devoid of fluids. I suspect that the tiny creatures within had reached maturity, using up all of the slimy, nourishing fluid within, and then escaped their cocoon. After trying to scrape the disgusting stuff from my shoes, I decided to look for this swarm. Sadly, we did not find

any trace of these smallest servants of the Lord of the Flies, and finally Hieronymus and Bran convinced me to return to our boat before night fell once again.

Now my tale forces me to recall the whole of the horrible scene I had to witness. It is this memory that still makes my hand shake slightly. We reached the barge, which was at exactly the same spot where we had landed. As I had ordered him earlier, our ferryman Benitorio was standing completely still at the brow, staring in our direction. He rested heavily on his punting-pole, his mouth open as if he wanted to cry out in warning or accusation. But as we neared, something in his stance warned us. Edging forward, we could see that his eyeballs were rolled up into their sockets, his lids half closed so that his pupils were not to be seen. When I moved to advance upon him, Bran kept me back. The Templar's intuition told him that some kind of danger emanated from the youth. The finely honed instincts of the Armatura were right, of course; before I could take more than a step, the most horrible of sights unveiled itself — a swarm of tiny black flies began to pour from mouth and nose of the youth,

seemingly without end. At first they seemed to dance about the boatman, whose body retained its erect position, but then they flew off into the thick fog. I was lucky enough to catch one of the little devils with my hands, but the soul of our ferryman seemed to have long since departed.

So this was the buzzing that we had heard last night. Our way back across the water took us the majority of the night, since we had only Hieronymus' fortunately unfailing sense of direction, which seemed to function despite his dizziness and constant vomiting, to guide us. If not for him, we might not have made it back at all. In the early morning hours we reached our point of departure and the porters were overjoyed to see us alive and well, although the corpse of the ferryman did cause some commotion.

2nd may 2646

Hieronymus spent almost half the day advising me that it is not right to dissect a corpse, and the Templars seemed similarly ill at ease about my plans to inspect the corpse; and indeed I am no medic. But after I told them that I had done similar operations hundreds of times (only on smaller animals, though), they seemed to be sufficiently satisfied to let me continue.

I have come to classify the tiny demons that caused poor Benitorio's death as *Thorax-breeders*. On a first cursory examination, the corpse of our ferryman seemed to be strangely soft beneath the skin. And while carrying it, I noticed that it felt like a skin of water rather than a corpse in the grip of rigor mortis, which caused us considerable difficulty when we were positioning it for the dissection. The first cut with the scalpel confirmed my guesses. The majority of the viscera seem to have disappeared⁸. On the other hand, the bones of the thorax region are exceptionally brittle and break easily — even slight disturbances make them break like the dried icing on an old cake. I suppose that the rest of the skeleton has been damaged similarly. Therefore, I decided against a full dissection. Before burning the Benitorio's mortal frame, I have taken samples of the flesh and the bones that I will present to the Konsistorium for further tests, to ensure that I did not overlook anything.

After I had finished my tests, Bran suggested that we break down the camp and continue our journey as we have lost quite some time with the recent events.

28th may 2647

Today we will reach, God willing, the port town of Bihac. Regrettably, the samples I have taken from Benitorio's corpse have begun to mold. I had feared that the heat of this climate would cause this, and I could do nothing to prevent it. Using a knife,

⁷ Actually I threw those shoes away soon afterwards and bought a new pair in the market of Ufine. The smell was so awful and unbearable that my companions were unwilling to sleep or camp anywhere near me.

⁸ At least as far as I was able to judge such matters.

Мозг. ф. тонк

€

мозг

II

for

II

Угловат



I have cleaned the samples of their furry, light-green covering — smelly business, but necessary. However, I doubt that this will be of any help for long.

The mood of our porters is at a new low, and even Hieronymus' usual euphoria has been replaced by depression and sullenness. Yesterday one of the Templars broke his arm while trying to catch a fish with his hasta — even more evidence that all of us lack concentration. Hopefully, staying in a large town (Bihac has more than 5000 inhabitants) will rejuvenate our spirits and grant us new energy.

Afternoon: Bihac is a dirty and unpleasant town. Most of the people are ill-disposed toward travelers, and the inn is far too expensive. At this point I feel I am compelled to warn any readers — especially, of course, the Pontifex Maximus and members of the most honored Konsistorium — about ever setting foot in the "KroArcher." The cockroaches in the toilets are so large that I am thinking about classifying them as Dreamseed, and the beer is so stale that it lacks foam even being poured straight from the barrel. Each of our beds has more inhabitants than the whole of Bihac — probably including the surrounding hamlets — and I am very much unsure of the sex of our waiter. But still, I suppose, it is good to see other humans.

I have used the last hours of the day to inspect what remains of the samples before the mould has claimed all of it.

Ah! At this opportunity I also realize that I still have a living specimen of the Thorax-breeder with me, which I had completely forgotten to mention due the events of the last weeks. Surprisingly enough, the little beast is alive and well, and it has just begun a strange form of dance within the stoppered glass-tube in which I keep it. But let me inspect the samples from the mortal remains of our ferryman now.

The mould is persistent and has already begun to reclaim the parts I have cleaned with my knife. Using a little water, I have cleaned the flesh again, and afterwards the bone fragment. The upper layers of the flesh are already too decayed for me to make any assumptions about the effect the infection of Thorax-breeders has had on them. But upon closer inspection of a deeper layer, tiny white bubbles can be seen resting between the strands of muscle. Within them, tiny black spots can be seen, but without more advanced instruments and further medical knowledge, I can discern or guess nothing more. I can only hope that better minds of the Angelitic Church will be able to provide me with more information after I have returned to Roma Aeterna.

After cleaning the piece of bone, my earlier observations seem to be confirmed; the Thorax-breeders have drawn all nutrients out of the structure, leaving it weak and brittle; the bone is porous, rills run along it, and it breaks like an old pastry. The bone seems to have retained some measure of its hardness, but has become devoid of all flexibility.

Before we leave tomorrow, I will boil the bone fragment and hope that it will survive the rest of journey, but I am burning the piece of flesh. It will not endure much longer in any case, and, regardless, the smell has become quite unbearable. There is not enough light to allow me to continue my tests, so I will try to get some sleep.

18th June 2647

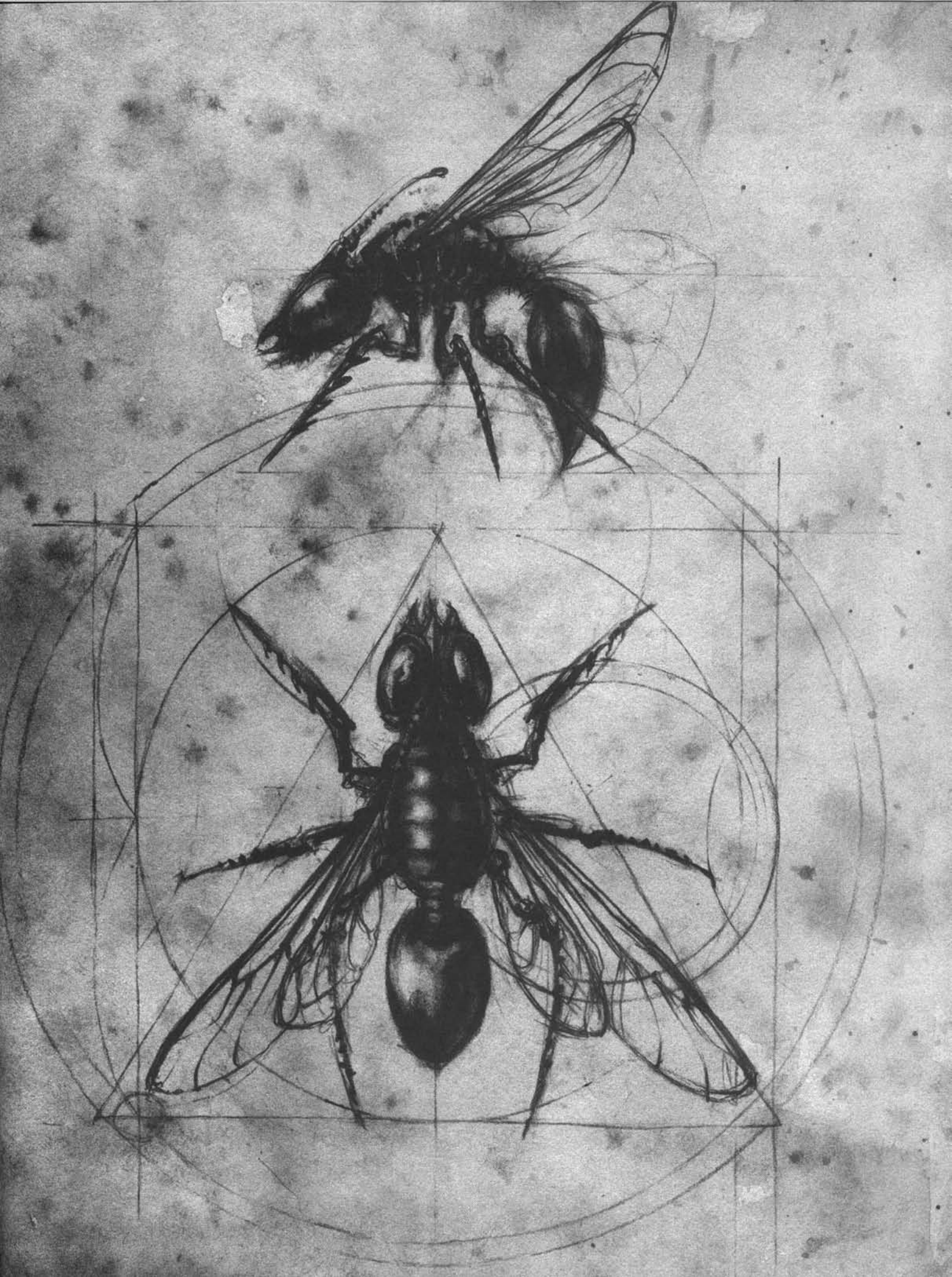
We have reached Tirana in Albania, where my order maintains a cloister. For quite some time my companions and I have noticed a significant rise in temperature. In the far distance on the southern horizon one can see a strange glow, which bathes the city in an eerie light at night. Hieronymus is once again not well; he suffers from nausea and headaches. I am not feeling particularly spry either, but curiosity urges me on. The inhabitants of Tirana do not seem to share my fascination with the approaching Inferno at all, however.

Our supplies have almost run out and we will soon have to restock for the coming weeks. Everything that remains is damp and has begun to spoil. Maybe our nausea is caused by spoiled food? Bran has convinced me that horses would be most useful to speed our travel. I consider spending this money as an investment for the future, and hope that the Pontifex Maximus will not be angered by this seeming extravagance, which I consider to be in the interest of all faithful. Josip, the Ab of the local cloister, has directed me to a trustworthy horse-merchant in the town.

Ah, yes! One thing of note: The closer we come to the Inferno, the more excited the Thorax-breeder gets in its glass prison. If it continues with its frenzied attacks of the walls, I fear it might kill or damage itself and therewith prevent me from studying it further. I am thinking of ways to pad the glass to protect it, but I fear to free the creature unintentionally.

19th June 2647

Due to the approaching threat of the Inferno, the local price of horses has soared. We have decided to purchase some much cheaper mules. Bran bought three of the thick-headed beasts and still had to pay a considerable sum. Hieronymus' state has taken a turn for the worse since yesterday. He seems to be in the grip of fever, and quite possibly we will have to approach a medic for further aid. Some of our porters exhibit the first symptoms of a similar infection as well. Bran and the Templars seem to be completely healthy, though, and I feel much better since waking up this morning. Our confinement due to Hieronymus' inability to travel allows to investigate my captive further.



20th June 2647

Alas, the specimen lies on the bottom of the tube and has stopped moving altogether. Even rocking the tube gently elicits no reaction, and I fear that my premonition of yesterday has come true. The tiny demon is dead, executed by his own demented will, or by that of his master.

Most alarming: When I opened the tube for further study something very strange happened, which I still cannot explain even as I write these words. The flame of the candle suddenly went out and plunged my room into complete darkness. Out of surprise or sheer clumsiness I fumbled with the container, and in the confusion it must have dropped to the floor. I found the empty tube lying besides the table after I relit the candle. I searched the wooden floor of my chamber, but have found nothing. The demon has escaped. Did it act as if it were dead to deceive me? This would offer proof to my theory that some malign intellect is inbred in all servants of the Lord of the Flies. But such a small beast and such advanced intelligence? How could such a small body contain such falsity? Was I, a Monach of the Ramielites, really duped by a demon smaller than my fingernail? What shame!

And, now I think me, where did the breeze come from that extinguished the candle? The windows of my chamber were all securely fastened. Perhaps my research took so much of my attention that I did not notice someone entering my room to speak with me. Quite possibly the person would have left again seeing me so deeply occupied by my investigation. This would explain the breeze. And the remains of the Thorax-breeder could have just fallen into one of the cracks between the boards, of course. There is not much point in spinning such convoluted tales about what happened, surely... especially if they lead to supernatural explanations.

Later: In the evening I decided to walk the streets and alleys of Tirana to get a sense of the way the inhabitants react to the approaching Inferno. Sadly, the local dialect of Common is much too alien for me to understand easily; it sounds like an altogether different language. Our porters will probably not be of much help in this regard, and Hieronymus, who has mastered quite a number of different dialects, is bedridden. Only Bran's knowledge of the area promised some opportunity for me to speak with the people. Unfortunately, his appearance seems to have scared most of them so badly that I have gained only closed mouths and fearful looks for all my efforts. But then, as the sun completed its journey across the heavens, the only ray of light and hope in an otherwise frustrating and unhappy day shone bright: a fellowship of Engel is standing at the end of the road which leads to our inn, talking to some of the inhabitants of Tirana. I can only hope that I will have the chance to speak with them tomorrow.

This morning did indeed bring some enlightenment. The Michaelite of the Engel fellowship is called Vaniel, and appears to be an experienced leader. Seeing the fuzz on his chin, though, I would suspect that he will be purified soon, and therewith ascend to his reward. His words were well chosen and his voice was deep and sonorous, and his whole fellowship seemed to act in unison. He reported that his fellowship had been sent from the Himmel in Roma Æterna on special mission here in Tirana. He was not allowed to disclose the details of this mission, but then I am sure that they have nothing to do with me anyway. But another detail he mentioned awoke my interest: on his last mission Vaniel had encountered a gigantic Dreamseed creature with limbs that bore a striking resemblance to the one my group had encountered at the very beginning of our journey on the 8th of Februarii. The fact that the story did not end in victory but rather in the retreat of his fellowship drove home his point regarding the creature's size and might. The Michaelite's tale was far too detailed to allow me to doubt its veracity — Of course I would never imply that one of the Heavenly Host could fall prey to the sin of lying or was even able to bear false witness, but I have sometimes encountered Engel who were rather eager to emphasize their own courage and bravery. But Vaniel does not seem to be one of those.

Whatever the case may be, I was overjoyed and at the same time shocked to hear that the description Vaniel gave indeed seemed to confirm my estimation of the size and appearance of the beast I had only partially been able to see. Four pairs of mighty legs, each as long as the mast of a sailing ship of the Angelitic Church, and each with mighty claws at the end of the legs, were fastened to a body otherwise very similar in appearance to a gigantic dragonfly. Its six huge wings caused a storm like a hurricane and prevented the fellowship from coming too close. The gigantic head of the foul fiend had no eyes to be seen, yet still it seemed to be able to navigate, flying toward its goal with unshakable single-mindedness. A large number of smaller demons surrounded the monster, seeming to serve it rather like the cleaning fish of the sea serve the whales. Perhaps this strange form of symbiosis could also allow the Devourers of the Earth to use their companions as eyes and ears? During the course of his tale, Vaniel also mentioned that the behemoths themselves were not dangerous to the Engel, but that their "court," as he referred to it, was the greater threat; when the smaller creatures noticed Vaniel and his fellowship, they began attacking en masse at once, which eventually forced the fellowship to retreat.

9 I know that this is a daring theory but we beggars cannot be choosers. Being no men of science.



My companions and I owe the fellowship further thanks, as well. Carviel, the Raphaelite among them, blessed Hieronymus and our porters with renewed health, which will allow us to leave tomorrow. This fortuitous meeting has also given me new faith and resolve, so we are altogether ready and eager to leave for new shores.

6th august 2647

Until now there has been little to report since my last entry. Now I can see the Inferno with my bare eyes, an impressive sight indeed: a gigantic pillar of fire reaching up to the clouds with hot winds circling it for many kilometers, some even reaching our position. Never before have I seen such a primal force of nature with my own eyes, and the trepidation I now feel brings tears to my eyes. The terror of our porters has been growing steadily, and now that we can actually see the Inferno, some are unwilling to continue. Only Bran was able to motivate these simple fellows to go on. Numerous tales about the Dreamseed imply that the spawn of the Lord of the Flies is mainly found in or near Infernos. Therefore, I hope to add some concrete facts to my rather meager theories concerning their nature.

10th august 2647

This morning we made a rather gruesome find, and I am not sure if this was pure coincidence or if the Lord himself pointed us to this clue. Hieronymus, being his usual distracted self, tripped over something hidden in the soft sand. At first we believed it to be a root of some kind, but upon closer inspection we recognized it as a withered human arm! Attached to it were the mostly buried remains of what once had been a human, and the corpse seemed to be devoid of water as well, in a manner similar to the arm. At first I was tempted to believe the corpse to be rather old, mummified by the sun and heat, but after we had excavated the body I came to realize the true horror of the situation: only parts of the body had been blighted in this way. The rest looked fresh enough to suggest that this poor farmer (for that is what the poor fellow must have been judging by his clothes) had been plowing the fields a mere two days ago. This odd revelation made me think deeply, and finally Bran said what some of us had already suspected, but none had dared to speak out aloud — something must have inflicted this strange dehydration upon him, and therewith caused the man's death as well.

Is this a new hint at Dreamseed activity? Maybe some new, hitherto unknown species? In my excitement, I almost forgot to take samples, but luckily reason enforced its power on me soon enough. But there are negatives to our discovery as well: the mood of our porters has taken another turn for the worse (if such is possible), and most of the day was

wasted convincing them to continue the journey. Again, Bran has proven his dedication and skill at negotiating with the common people.

Later: It has become almost unbearably hot. Sweat is running down our faces and breathing becomes ever more difficult. The mules seem not to mind the heat at all and continue their steady march, while we have to drag on besides them. The hope of finding a new species of Dreamseed has sharpened my senses and makes me forget the hardship of traveling, but no signs of Dreamseed were to be found before we established our camp for the night.

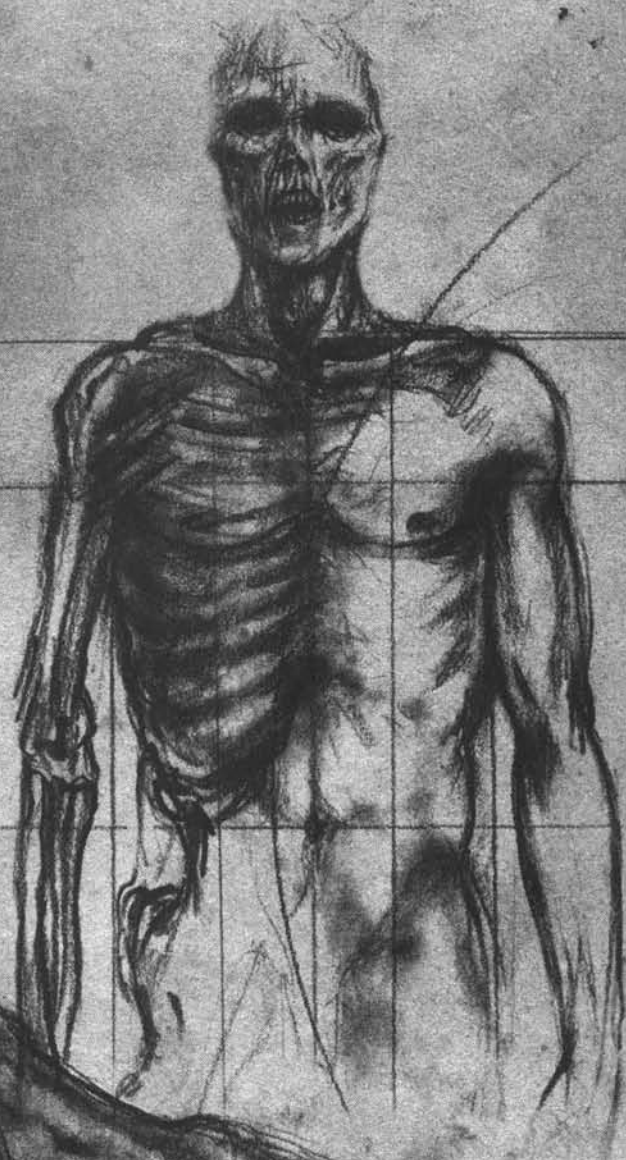
11th august 2647

Despite the lack of light in these wee hours of the day, I have taken up pen and journal to transcribe what has just occurred, lest I forget some important detail. I had just awoken from some horrible dream concerning my innards and my eyes had just adapted to the little light that was available at the time, when I heard a light humming similar to the noise of the swarm of Thorax-breeders. Instantly, I was wide awake and wanted to raise an alarm, when Bran gently put a hand on my arm, once again demonstrating his control of the situation. He put his forefinger to his lips, urging me to be quiet, and then pointed at five fist-sized objects hovering above our heads. Despite the frenzied beating of their wings, they did not move about at all, but rather they appeared to be looking for something. Since they were right above our heads, I got the impression that they were spying on us. It was still too dark to make out any details, but what little I saw only seemed to confirm my fear that the demons were able to communicate with each other¹⁰. Sometimes, other sounds could be heard besides the monotone drone caused by the wings of the demons: shrill cries and creaks which seemed to differ slightly in frequency and length for each of the creatures.

This unnerving cacophony proved too much for one of the other Templars, a young man called Timo: he jumped up, charged the beasts, and hacked at them with his hasta. One of the bugs succumbed to the first blow, but before Bran and the others could join him, all four of the remaining Dreamseed creatures fell upon him. A loud cry came from Timo's throat as he was injured in the leg by one of the foul creatures. He retreated as the other Templars entered the fray, clutching his leg and obviously in severe pain. Soon thereafter four dead beetles lay at our feet, defeated by the skill of our protectors; fortunately, the abominations were rather clumsy and awkward fliers. I collected the small cadavers and put them into one of my large sample cases before taking care of the wounded Timo, who now lay shaking on the ground.

Seemingly, one of the small demons had stung him in the leg with its long front claws. When I lifted his long surcoat, I beheld a horrible sight: all

10 Although I cannot offer any decisive proof, I am convinced they were communicating.



6



70

Truncus temporali. Una. Pericardio. Intra.
Truncus epul. Intra. Pericardio.
Truncus omni. Intra. Pericardio.

around the puncture, which could be clearly seen but was not bleeding at all, the flesh appeared to be dried out and visibly darkened. At once I remembered the corpse we had found yesterday, as the tissue of that poor farmer had looked quite similar after we had excavated it. At first we did not notice how it spread, but although it had at first been the size of a Euro, it soon was almost as large as my palm. All the while Timo was shaking convulsively, his face a mask of unbearable pain. His brothers lifted him up and carried him away from the beach, and although they bound him to prevent him from lashing about, I fear that he may be doomed. Unless we receive some divine intervention, like a traveling fellowship of Engel, we will probably lose another member of our band.

12th august 2647

This morning the whole leg of the Templar had become blighted. I think this term is most appropriate for its state, and I have therefore named the new Dreamseed species we encountered as **Blight**s. Hieronymus' proposal of amputating the leg above the wound to prevent the infection from spreading was dismissed out of hand by the Templars. Bran later explained to me that a one-legged Templar could not be reborn as one of the Engel, and that they would therefore rather let him die whole than cut off a part of him to ensure his survival. When I came to Hieronymus' aid, Bran stated quite calmly that this was not a matter for discussion. Luckily, I am not easily swayed from an advisable course of action — probably one of the reasons I was chosen for this mission by the Pontifex Maximus — and continued the argument together with Hieronymus. An amputation was clearly the only chance the man had, so I had to make Bran realize what state his brother was in. Just when I had almost given up my efforts, the young Armatura surprised me once again. With a quickness reminiscent of lightning, he drew a long knife and, with no further ado, severed the blighted leg with the precision of a surgeon. Timo's loud cry quickly subsided and was replaced by low moaning as he finally lost consciousness.

Late afternoon: Timo has finally woken. He hovered between life and death for a few hours, I think, but he seems to have survived the worst of it. He has asked for some water, and Bran seemed over-eager to supply it at once. The young Armatura is clearly shaken by the decision he made earlier; he has not spoken a single word since, but nevertheless cares for his brother like a mother for her long-lost son. Whatever his conscience tells him, I am sure that he acted correctly.

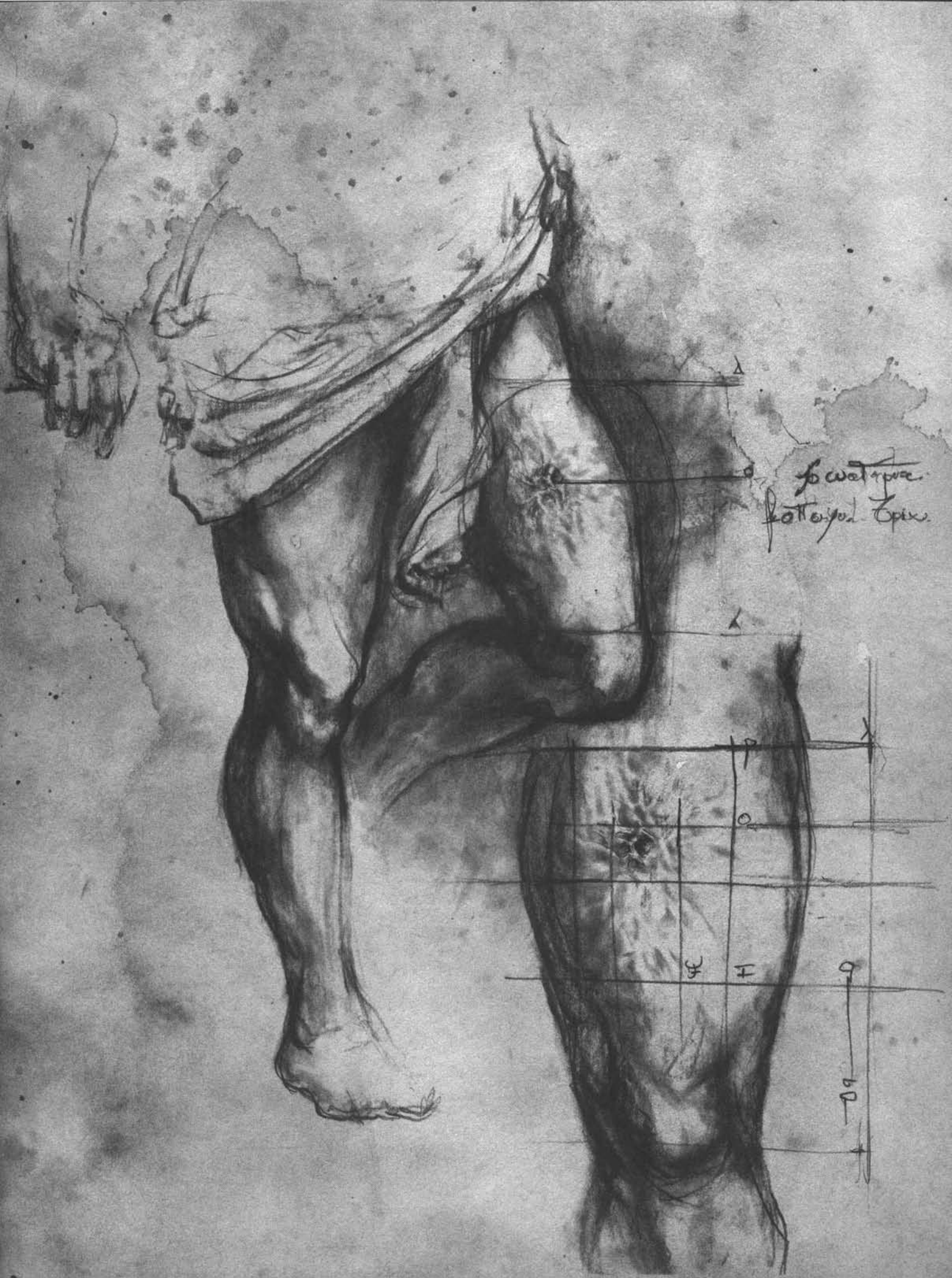
The Blights I collected for my studies are only of partial use; Bran and his men severely damaged the specimens in the fight. Of course this was necessary, but, sadly, only one of the Blights is of any use to me in my research. The rest are just various pieces too damaged to classify or categorize them correctly, so I will survey them one last time, then dispose of the pieces and retain only the almost complete specimen.

Later: The body of the Blight is just less than the length of a man's foot and looks strangely distorted at first sight, as the thin legs are quite long and seem unable to carry the beast along. The front legs in particular are horribly elongated, and seem to work similarly to a whip, as even in death they retained their extreme tonicity. The wings seem much too small to lift the bulky body, which bears evidence as to why its flight was so clumsy. The chitinous shell of the Blight is of a brownish-black color, and exceedingly resilient. Despite my best efforts, I was unable to penetrate the shell with my scalpel; this might be the reason for the destruction the Templars unleashed upon the other Blights — otherwise the beasts would not have been harmed! The sheer force of impact seems to have crushed the fiends rather than splitting them apart. The front extremities are equipped with long claws very much reminiscent of thick needles, and seem to be made of the same material as the shell. I was unable to locate any kind of mouth or jaw, but possibly the corresponding part of the demon spawn has been destroyed beyond recognition. I could surely find no eyes, though, which are unlikely to have been completely destroyed in the fight, which in turn brings me to two possible conclusions:

1. The creature has some kind of eyesight, but I was unable to identify the receptors. Or,
2. The fiend is lacking eyes altogether. Being blind, it must then be equipped with some other method of recognizing its environment. These I will hopefully be able to locate upon closer inspection of the viscera.

The head itself contains several white, longish organs of unknown purpose, which could serve to help it navigate without eyes. More remarkable is the presence of something very much resembling a brain, quite different from the ganglia of mundane insects. Perhaps more educated minds than mine will be able to come to more scientific conclusions than I can achieve here in the wilderness — but I am certain that the Konsistorium will excuse my ineptness in my efforts to do their will and study the servants of the Adversary.

But I fear that I have been exhausted by the events of the day and must bring both this passage and myself to rest.



Сватрва
Котелънъ Тривъ

14th august 2647

The improvised stretcher which the Templars built to transport Timo broke down after only a few days. We have therefore decided to strap him to the back of one of the mules. Something has to be done about the infection growing in his leg before it can spread through the whole of his body, but we are lacking the knowledge, instruments, and medication to do anything about it. Unless something is done soon, though, Timo will succumb to gangrene like the porter we lost at the beginning of our journey. This would be a most tragic turn of fate, considering how valiantly he tolerated the pains of his wound, only to succumb to the effects of his rescue. Cold sweat covers his face, and every step his mule takes causes him further pain; with each step I seem to feel some of his pain as well.

May the Lord provide for his health and safety.

I pray that we find some kind of village soon. Hieronymus cannot offer me any promise, though, as he is unsure when we will find the next settlement. The heat of the Inferno still troubles us despite its distance, and every time I look back at it, I have the feeling of being watched by some consciousness far beyond my simple mind and much too alien for me to ever comprehend. These thoughts trouble me even in my dreams, and every morning I feel more deeply exhausted. We all fight a losing battle if we leave the illumined path of science and rationality. Only with science as my sword, rationality as my shield, and faith as my armor can I oppose the fear slowly encroaching on my mind and thus retain my sanity.

Afternoon: Finally, relief is in sight! On the horizon we can see a palisade, which hints at the presence of an army in the service of the Angelitic Church. Bran has sent out one of his Templars to get help, while we rest in a hollow to spare Timo the unnecessary pain of rough travel. Despite the blankets and the heat of the Inferno, he feels like a block of ice. May the Lord have mercy upon him.

Sundown: A group of Templars has just arrived. Timo has once again lost consciousness, but his breathing is deep and regular, so I am not overly alarmed. The Armatura of the group is, surprisingly enough, female — a middle-aged woman by the name of Ivar Pëtra, who looks as though she has led quite an adventurous life. She seems competent and efficient, not wasting any time but rather ordering her men to strap their disabled brother onto the stretcher they have brought with them. We will now proceed to the camp.

The camp is roomy and well-fortified, evoking the impression that the Templars are prepared for an extended stay. And indeed Ivar confirmed my suspicion; they had been ordered by their superiors in the Gabrielites' Himmel to come here and watch the Inferno and to fight any emerging Dreamseed

creatures. At the moment I doubt the usefulness of such endeavors. Considering the multitude and number of beasts the Lord of the Flies sends to spread fear and havoc amongst the population of Europe, I cannot believe that an army of Templars would be enough to stop a massive assault of the armies of darkness. A whole flight of Engel, consisting of numerous fellowships, would probably be more appropriate. I would of course never question the skills and abilities of the Templars, especially after all that Bran and his men — especially Timo — have been through with us, but one must not underestimate the danger of the servants of the Adversary.

Ivar has arranged a feast for tonight. She also seems to be very much interested in my research, and I will gladly pass on all the information I have gathered up to now, as they might prove useful to the Gabrielite Templars. This could save a number of lives, and, besides, she seems a most pleasant companion.

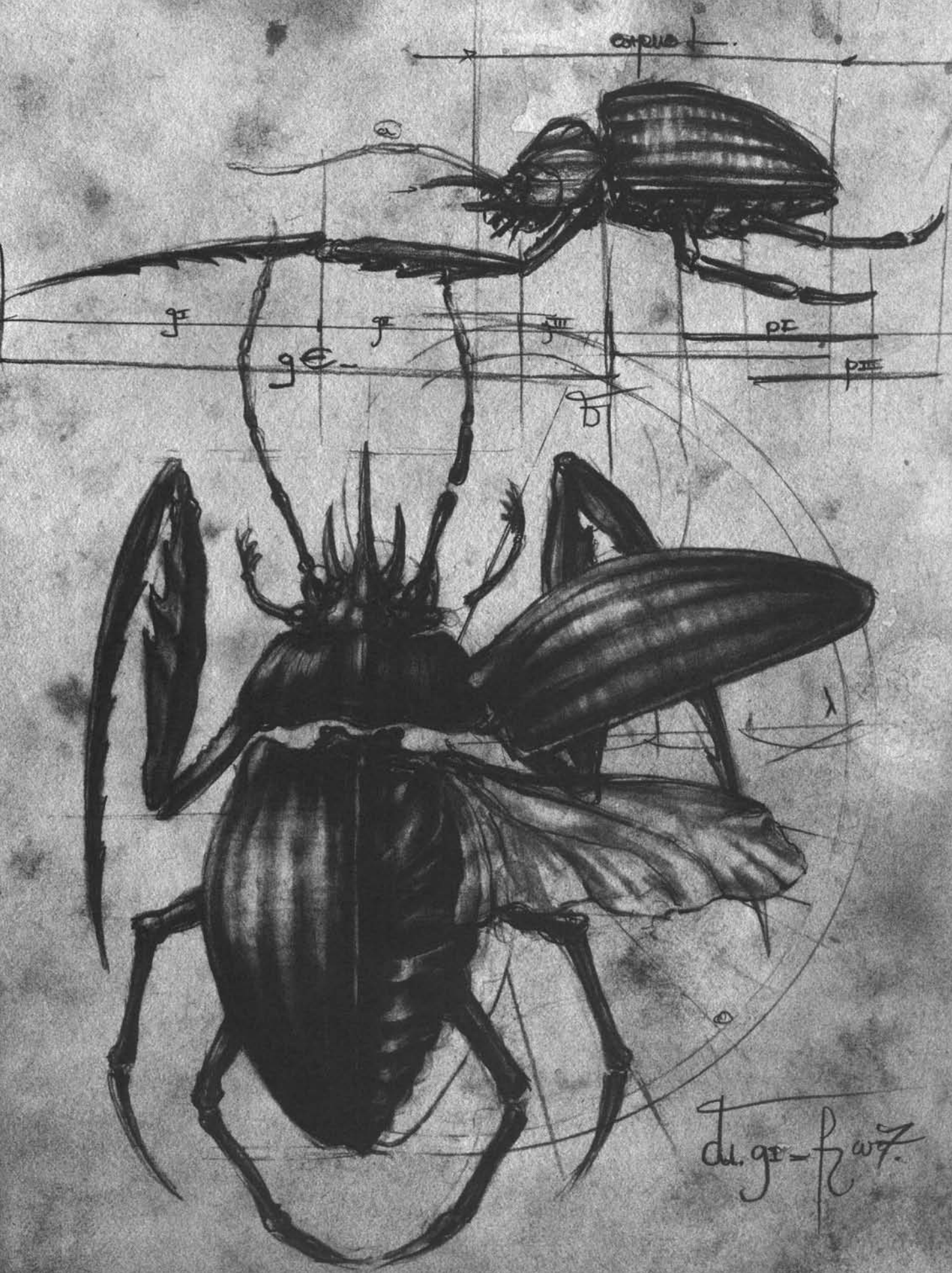
15th august 2647

May the Lord forgive the failings of this poor sinner. I have slept well past my usual hour. When I awoke, the day had already begun, and the majority of Templars had been called to alert. Yet when I tried to rise, my tortured body was unwilling to cooperate in any way. Yesterday's rice-wine has taken its toll, as if all the demonspawn I had ever encountered dance around within my head, filling it with pain, as well as their buzzing and a certain nausea. The Devourer of the Earth seems to be the leader of the bunch, although I am unsure how such an enormous beast can fit within the tiny confines of my skull. He seems to ram against the sides of my head, angered about the loss of one of his legs, while thousands of Thorax-breeders flit around in the back of my eyes, obscuring my vision.

After some cold water I feel a little better, but I still do not know why the camp is filled with so much activity. If I can ever rise again without suffering severe bouts of nausea, I will do so at once and find out.

Afternoon: The alarm of the morning seems to have been caused by nothing more than the undue zeal of a young Templar, who believed a protuberance of the Inferno to be the beginning of the Final Battle and subsequently raised an alarm. Hopefully, Ivar will punish him appropriately. Sadly, I have not seen her at all this day, although I was told that she and her staff were discussing further actions. Bran seems to be part of that staff as well now, and the codex of the Templars prevents us from continuing our journey. My agonized feet appreciate this turn of events, but my curiosity is very much unsatisfied with it. Our quest has suffered so many setbacks already that I would gladly leave

She was not exactly beautiful, but nonetheless very attractive and well-formed. While I will not say she caused unnatural feelings to arise within me, they were feelings perhaps inappropriate to a Monach. Truly, however, my greater age and I hope wisdom allow me to be somewhat more honest with myself about my imperfect human yearnings. But maybe we will find the time to discuss such things in a more appropriate setting.



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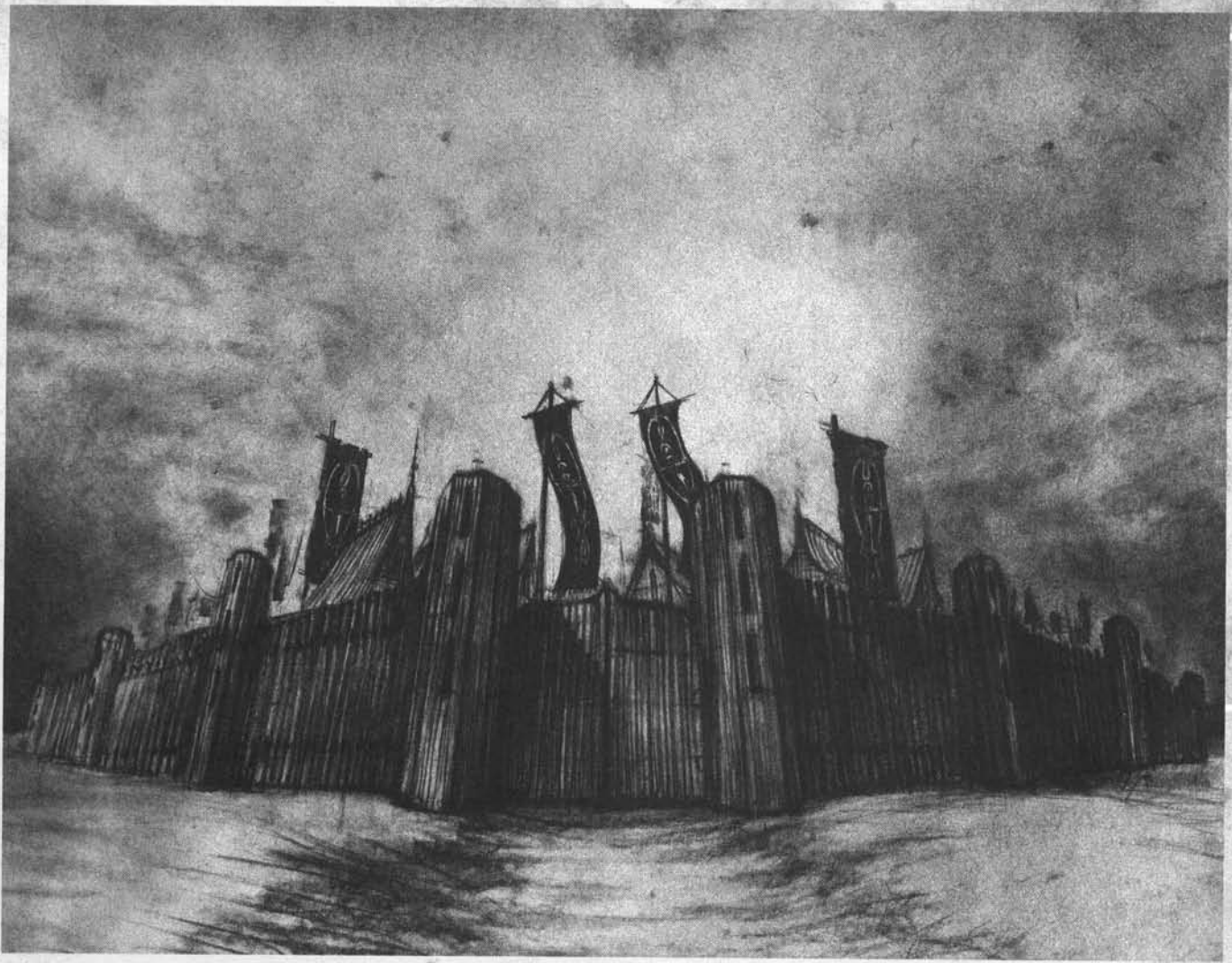
as soon as possible. Maybe we should just leave without Bran and his men. I will discuss this matter with Hieronymus tonight.

The following days did not see us leave, but rather the discussion with Hieronymus brought on a situation that had us confined to the camp for an extended stay. The next three weeks did not provide any new insights into the nature of the Dreamseed,

but offered me ample opportunity to study the life of the Templars and the ants living beneath my bed.

The following chapter, however, will clearly demonstrate that our stay was not for naught, and that the Lord in His boundless wisdom had His reasons, as He always does, for forcing us to stay there. A change was coming which I did not expect and which leads us to the second part of my documentation regarding the demonspawn in service of the Adversary.





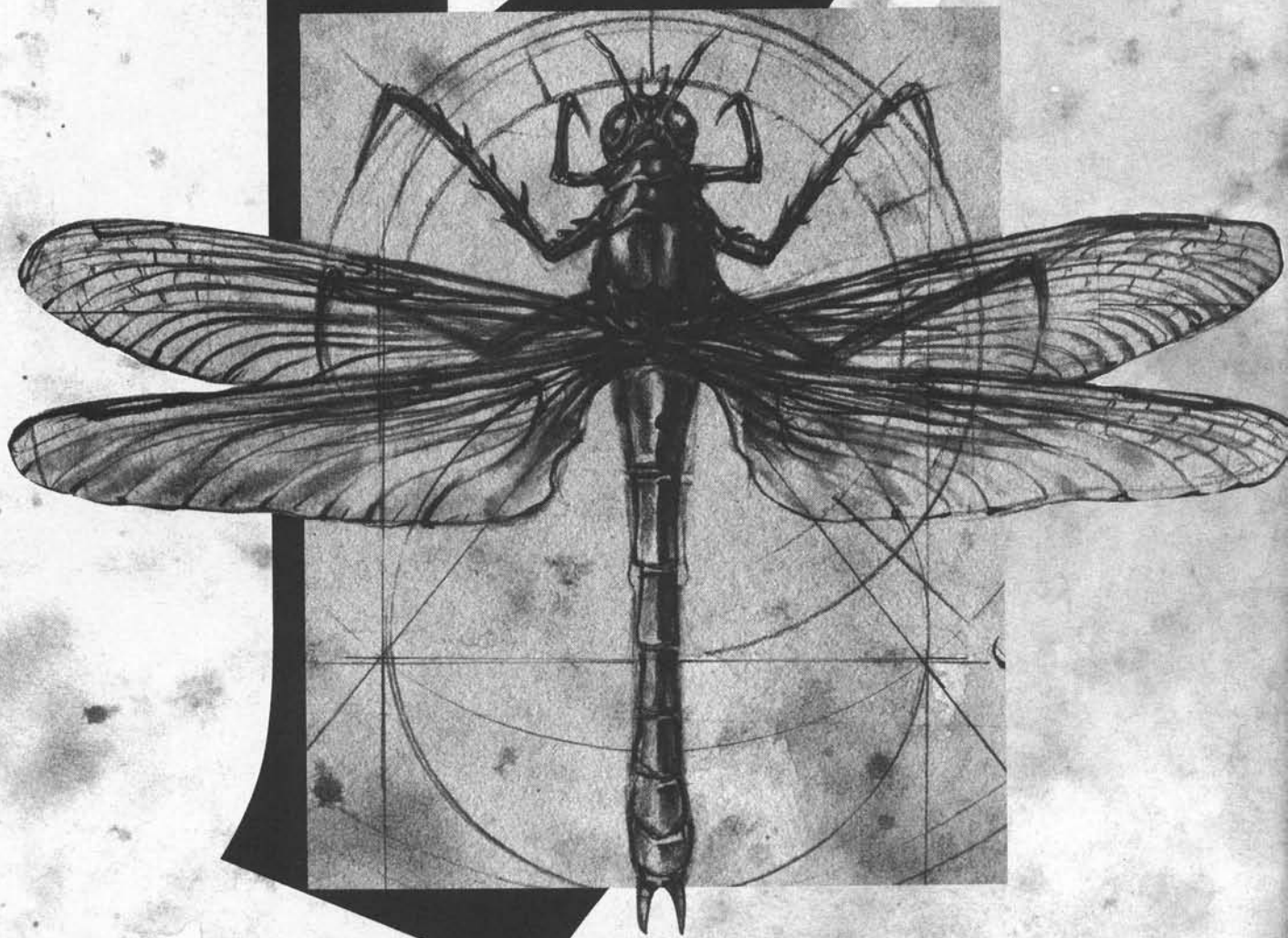
book one: to unknown shores

magnificat anima

mea dominum

agnificat anima mea dominum

b o o k



oculi nostri ad ^{os} dominum nostrum

t w o :

toward the brandland corridor

which describes our long journey from the military camp of the gabrielite templars to the brandland corridor of batumi, and also tells of the multitude and diversity of the awful demons the [Engel] encounter in their daily struggle against evil.

5th september 2647

Slowly, boredom seeps into my mind. Day after day, the Inferno approaches our position so slowly that it truly does seem as if some superhuman power tries to keep the pillar of flame from moving with an intangible, invisible rope. If not for Hieronymus' mathematical arts, nobody here would be able to tell if the fire had moved at all. I have finally given Bran to understand that I am not willing to stay here any longer, as doing so risks the success of my mission. To my surprise, the good man apparently

shared my opinion and agreed to leave the camp of the Gabrielite Templars as soon as possible. However, he first wants to replace Timo, the Templar we lost due to terrible events of last month, with a warrior of his order presented to him by Ivar Pètra. According to Bran, Timo was in relatively good shape and was escorted to a nearby monastery a few days ago. This news brought the first smile to my contrite face in ages. Timo will at this place of healing, God willing, be able to heal the physical and mental wounds inflicted upon him when he lost his leg completely!

As he could read in Bran's face, this clearly implied that the Armata had wanted to get rid of the cripple as soon as possible as the young man had become utterly useless to her. His presence would have weakened her company's morale even further.

At any rate, the events concerning Timo and the subsequent course of his ailment tell us that at least this malicious infliction, sprung from the Lord of the Flies' perverted mind, can be stopped, even though the losses incurred are terrible. Thus, our journey shows a first success which should not be underestimated, despite all adversities we have had to face so far. I must admit to feeling a little pride well up in my heart.

It fills me with a strange joy to contemplate leaving the safety of the camp behind, even to cope with the hardships of the road tomorrow.

12th september 2647

I do not know how to start, yet duty obliges me to take up the pen again to portray the events of the last few days, even after such a long time of not being able to write or draw at all. On the evening of Septembri the 5th, the world seemed a warm, pleasant garden of mysteries and attractions waiting to be explored. Today my mind is enmeshed in our harsh reality. Our last evening in the camp of the Gabrielite Templars drew to a close with a great feast and much rice wine, when suddenly the toll of the alarm bells put an end to our festive mood. And now I wish it had been just another false alarm.

Hardly visible to the naked eye, a dark cloud floated toward the camp from afar, a black blemish on the red-gold background of the Inferno. A quick glance through Hieronymus' telescope chilled my blood even as I began to sweat nervously — even today, I find it hard to tell if these were signs of my excitement or my fear. There, in the glass, the largest number of Dreamseed creatures ever beheld by men was assembled, with the possible exception of that fateful battle near Jerusalem, which will probably remain matchless in its scale for all eternity (or at least 'til Judgment Day).

In any case, the urge I felt to take my possessions and flee was surpassed only by the desire to learn more of the Dreamseed demons, a desire that had grown considerably during my time at the camp waiting for another encounter with those beings. And so I stayed, diary in one hand, Hieronymus' telescope in the other, rooted to the spot on the broad gallery crowning the camp's palisade fence, as I stood and stared toward the unspeakable horror drawing near.

What had first appeared to be a giant swarm of tiny demons grew within minutes into a throng of creatures, some apparently the size of a horse. Either my eyes were playing tricks, or else I had just witnessed a new and cunning strategy of the Lord of Flies: Pretend to be relatively harmless in the beginning so it is too late for your opponents to escape when you turn out to be insuperable. Regardless, when finally I turned my eyes from that fascinating

sight, the Templars had finished preparing to meet the Dreamseed. Mighty ballistae and other war engines had been turned to face the Archenemy's southwestern advance.

Finding a suitable position for myself was rather difficult: first, it had to be an elevated vantage point in order to allow me to observe the upcoming events very closely; secondly, I did not want to be in the Templars' way during the battle; the Lord may forgive me my weakness and my vanity, but I thirdly had in mind the safety of my own life, which is so dear to me. Time being short, I was not able to find a suitable position to meet all three of these criteria. I passed the camp's tall watch-post and scuttled into an upper walkway on one of the troops' quarters, where at least the latter two of the criteria were met — or so I thought, in my naïveté. From there, eagerly, I watched the swarm of Dreamseed demons, trying to sort out those creatures I had already encountered during my journey from those that were new to me. Unfortunately, the advancing army included not only a stunning array of creatures already known to me, but also such a large number of various demons I was not familiar with that I was largely unable to distinguish between the individual species due to my excitement.

Then the horde fell upon us. The assault was of such brutality that the palisade fence gave way immediately beneath the weight of the first larger demons, as ears of corn falling before the peasant's scythe. With long claws and grotesque mandibles, some of the demons chopped away at the battle-hardened, yet utterly confused and overwhelmed elite Templars of the Engel of Death. Other creatures attacked their opponents in a more alarming fashion, by spitting well-aimed spumes of some burning, sticky substance at them. I named this latter species **Firebugs**; not a very poetic name, I know, but fitting nonetheless. Mere seconds after the name had sprung into my mind I witnessed one of the Gabrielite Templars being hit directly by a stream of the fluid disgorged from a bug's mouth. The pony-sized Dreamseed turned to its next victim immediately, but I could not tear my eyes from the young, panic-stricken warrior, who writhed desperately, looking for a place to wash himself clean of the viscous, steaming liquid. He never found it, however, for the scalding substance scoured the flesh from his bones. It was not so much the horrible sight that made me feel nauseated, but rather the sounds coming from the young man just before he fell to the ground twitching. A few moments later, he was dead.

While the Firebugs did their deadly work from the skies, the Templars were attacked on the ground by another new species with absurdly long limbs, which these creatures used in close combat with the utmost precision. Though I noticed two pairs of wings on these demons' backs, for reasons I still cannot fathom today they refrained from taking



flight whilst fighting. Maybe these creatures are related to the Blights — their ability to fly was modest at best and they were somewhat reminiscent of miniature versions of these fiends that I saw during the battle at the Templar camp. What horrified me even more than the prospect of having to oppose a giant variety of Blights was the obvious fact that the demons were obviously adhering to a certain strategy, moving in a very odd, synchronous way.

Yet my horror increased further when I realized that these demons were actually able to turn invisible for a few seconds — or at least, perhaps, they were capable of moving so fast that they appeared to turn invisible. When I first saw this phenomenon, I blamed it alternately on my unrestrained consumption of alcoholic beverages earlier that night, or else on a lack of sleep and untamed excitement. The third time I saw one of the demons vanish into thin air right in front of my eyes dispersed all my doubts, however: this species of Dreamseed is somehow able to conceal itself from our view, at least for short periods of time, but certainly for long enough to reappear unexpectedly behind its enemies and stab them in the back with one of its elongated claws. This abomination made me want to turn away from the all too one-sided battle, but at that moment the rickety construction beneath my feet suddenly collapsed. For a brief moment I remembered the countless adages regarding improvised ladders that my mother — God bless her soul — used to tell me when she caught me building one of them as a child. My memories were interrupted by harsh reality, though, when I hit the floor. That pain offered great proof as to what a wise woman my mother had actually been — and then I lost consciousness.

Momentarily, I came to my senses again, only to find that new dangers were already waiting for me. Where I had thought the Templars' barracks would meet at least two of the criteria for a suitably safe position to take during this battle, the only remaining advantage of my position at the moment was the fact that I would still not get in the way of the Templars. But neither could any Templars be aware of my current danger. And the enemy was breaking through the barracks' door. The room, which usually gave shelter to fifty Templars, seemed to shrink until I feared that its walls would touch me at any moment. With a final, shattering blow on the door, a nightmare incarnate now stood in the opening, studying me with huge insect eyes that seemed to reflect all the evil in the world. A sticky black substance dripped from its maw. The demon belonged to the species I had been about to name mere moments ago. Spontaneously, hundreds of names came to my mind, but none of them would have been appropriate to my Order's scriptures, being even less poetic than the name I have now chosen: *Shadeshifter*. (All I could do was die on the

spot or muster the last vestiges of sanity I had left to observe its approach and satisfy my scientific curiosity.) Just before the demon pounced, it seemed to merge with the shadows in the room, and all that happened afterwards is little more than a vague memory.

When the *Shadeshifter* came back into view, it towered a full two meters above me, claws raised to deliver the fatal blow. I heard a high, whistling sound, and the *Dreamseed* collapsed, burying me under its massive, foul body. The last thing I recall seeing was a green-feathered arrow lodged in a gap between the armored plates of the demon's neck. Then I fell into the arms of blackest night and tender unconsciousness.

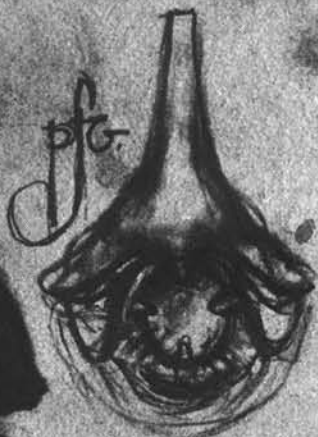
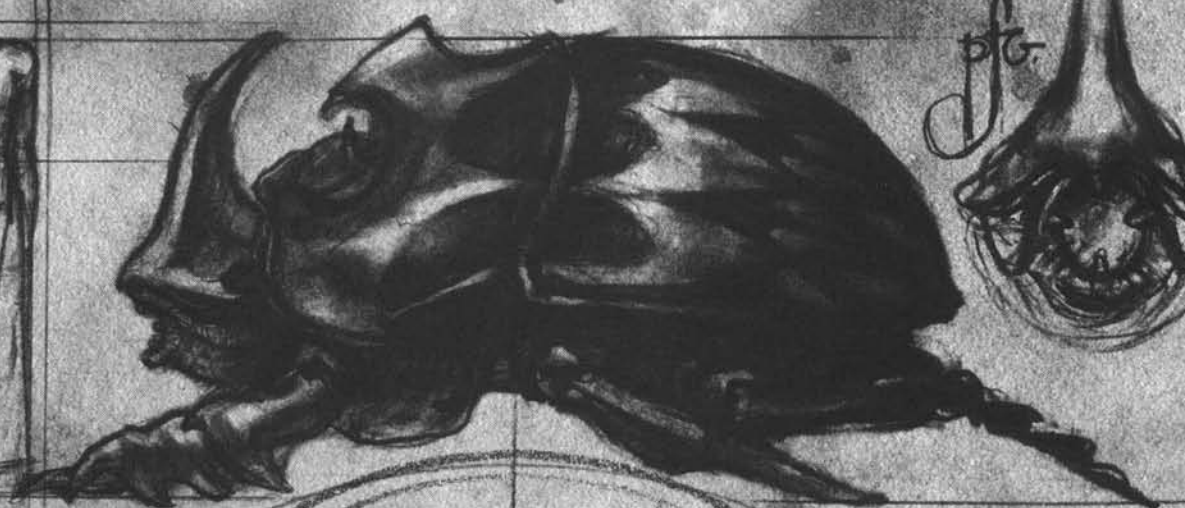
I awoke aboard a ship sailing in a northeast direction. The face of an *Engel* appeared above me, urging me to remain still. My gaze wandered around the deck, but all I could see in the darkness were shadowy figures. A depressed silence reigned, broken only by the creaking of the vessel, and the only illumination in the pitch black night was a sheen of light emanating from southwest. Two days have now passed since I awoke aboard the ship. I had then been unconscious for five days, and I have no recollection whatsoever about what happened in the meantime. In that regard I have to rely on the tales of my companions and our saviors. Hieronymus tells me I had been rolling around on my bed as if in the grip of a feverish madness, uttering words that scared my companion, even though he had not been able to understand them. He described them to me today as strange sounds that can only be produced deep in your throat, followed by high clicks he would not have attributed to a human being. I tend to believe that many of Hieronymus' depictions must have been exaggerated, and yet I am rather worried about my lack of recollections in regard to yesterday's events.

Apparently, Hieronymus had been at my side the whole time I was unconscious, even though he must have been in pain as well: his arm is in a sling and his head crowned by a dirty bandage that obviously should have been replaced quite some time ago. I still have not seen Bran yet, but Hieronymus assures me that the *Armatura* is well, even though he has not been talkative, instead spending his time standing by the rail staring back in the direction whence we came.

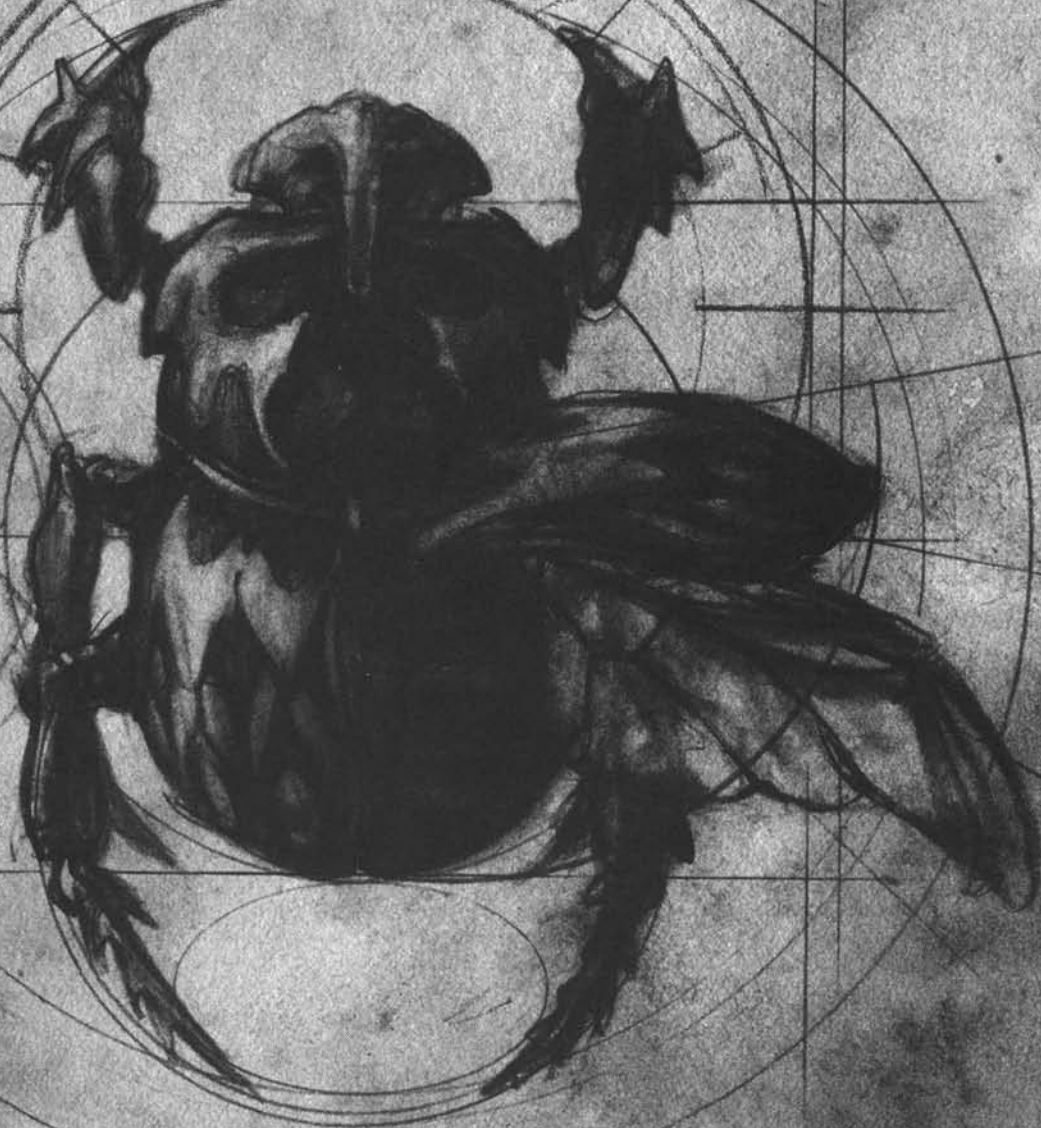
I feel quite all right today. I will have to ponder many questions for a long time to come, but at least I seem to be of sound mind again.

13th september 2647

Apparently, Bran has decided to put an end to his brooding silence. This morning, he stood next to my bed, a heavy burden on his soul. After exchanging a few fine phrases about our state of health,



J.G.



he revealed to me what had happened since the Dreamseed's attack on the camp of the Gabrielite Templars. For the first time since I had regained consciousness, one of my companions would or could tell me what I was not able to remember.

Obviously, my memories had been accurate in that the green-feathered shaft — my last observation — had not been wishful thinking, but rather had sprung from the string of a Urielite Engel's bow. The divine saviors who came to our aid had been the fellowship of Vaniel, whom I had already met in Tirana — coincidence or Providence? This piece of information made clear to me why the face of the Angel whom I had beheld after awakening had seemed so familiar to me. It was Carviel, the Raphaelite who had helped Hieronymus recover from his fever in Tirana, allowing us to continue our journey.

Thank God, everything is coming full circle and the last remnants of long unconsciousness, which have hampered my senses for so long, start to fade. But Bran has not finished his tale yet and I do not want to disturb his report...

The arrow fired by the Urielite — who goes by the name of Juviel, I am told — killed the monster on the spot, and the beast collapsed, burying me under its bulk. Unfortunately, the demon must have been so extraordinarily heavy and its carapace so hard and full of spines and protrusions that I lost consciousness mere seconds later. (I still bear bandages from the several scrapes and punctures I suffered when the creature fell on me.)

Together with the Firebugs, the Shadeshifters were clearly winning the battle when the Engel appeared. Sadly, the arrival of the fellowship came too late for most of the brave Templars, and even the champions of the Lord might have been defeated, but that something made the Dreamseed creatures call off their attack quite suddenly. I have to add another remark here: Contrary to my initial presumptions, the Shadeshifters, Bran assures me, apparently do use their wings, if only to glide for a short distance like locusts. In retrospect, these creatures are indeed very much reminiscent of locusts. Their limbs are extraordinarily elongated, but otherwise they bear a certain likeness to those insects that have plagued man, and especially farmers, for many ages.

Why Vaniel and his fellowship arrived at the Templar camp at all is a question the Michaelite has not yet answered. I think I will ask him about the reasons for the Engels' presence as soon as I get the opportunity.

To my surprise, the ship we are on does not belong to the Angelitic fleet. She is a fast-sailing merchant vessel of the New Hanse, called the *Esperanza*. The crew had been drawn to the camp because of the fires raging across the battlefield. They were convinced they were following a beacon and had almost run ashore before they realized their mistake. The ship's captain, a man called Hennings,

rescued the fleeing and the wounded after seeing what had actually drawn his attention to the camp. He refused to sail any further toward the Inferno (and therewith *Æterna*) when he had been heard about the awful kind of demospawn that haunt the region. Not even the protest of Armatura Ivar Pètra — who, thankfully, was also among the survivors on board — could make the old seadog sail any further to the west. To us, however, his steadfast refusal came as a lucky coincidence. Although we are not continuing our journey by road along the coast, as Hieronymus would have preferred, we are at least sailing in the right direction for our own purposes. As soon as we find a suitable place to moor, Captain Hennings will drop us off and we can continue our journey. We will have to look for new porters, though. According to Bran, ours have vanished without a trace since the Dreamseed attack. Nobody knows if they are dead or if they were able to escape the Dreamseed's clutches, but I fear the worst. Nevertheless, I will pray for them tonight, whatever their fate may be.

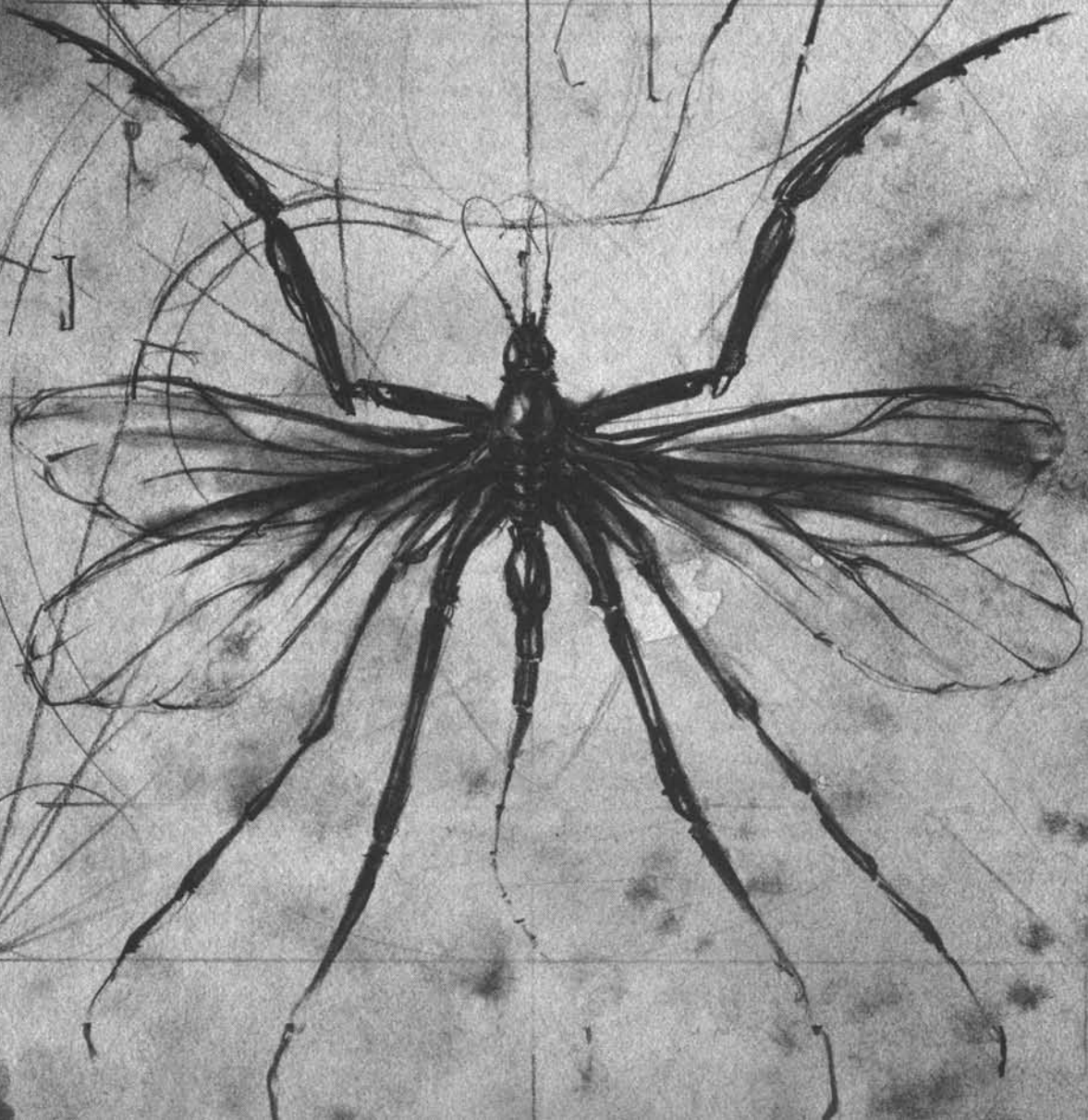
This evening Ivar Pètra presented me with a gift. I am not sure whether I should feel happy about it or give it back because of the depressing circumstances under which I received it. The Armatura handed to me the claw of a Shadeshifter that had had to be removed from her right arm. Worse, I noted with alarm, her arm had been amputated, due, as she explained, to the severity of the wound.

Was this a fitting punishment by the Lord for her arrogant behavior toward the young Templar Timo, whom she had had removed from the camp due to the loss of his leg only a few days earlier? Or pure chance that it was her who would have to suffer so dearly?

15th september 2647

A severe thunderstorm is brewing on the horizon. Captain Hennings has ordered me and some of my companions below deck. We are not allowed to come up again unless he tells us to. At first, Hieronymus refused the captain's order because he had already been denied the chance to survey that part of the Balkan coastline which we had passed during our short sea voyage by now. The forceful way in which the captain repeated his order, however, convinced my companion of his resolve on this matter. The sailors of the New Hanse are stoutly built to the last man — at least those on our ship. Bran and the Templars (at least those who are not too wounded to help) are supposed to stay on deck to lend the sailors a hand in the upcoming storm.

Down here, in the ship's guts, one can feel every single wave, every single pulse of the sea. On deck, I can hear sailors running madly from one side of the ship to the other and back again. The wind is caught in the tightly stretched sails, tossing the bow



hither and thither. Hieronymus is crouched in one of the freight holds corners, spreading the contents of his stomach all over the merchantman's cargo. The sharp, sour stench of fresh vomit, coupled with the severe rocking, is pushing bitter bile up my throat as well.

May the Lord have mercy and may His wrath pass quickly!

The Lord has not answered my prayers: the storm does not abate. It rather grows all the more severe. A few moments ago, a tremendous blow followed by a hollow thud made the whole ship tremble. Desperate shouts and cries of pain can be heard on deck. I am almost torn apart by my own curiosity regarding the events above our heads and it is getting harder and harder for me not to stand up and push open the porthole in order to witness whatever is happening beyond it. Hieronymus' face is a pale white blotch in the darkness of our shelter. The lanterns have finally gone out, after our repeated attempts to keep them burning in the raging storm. Only the small tallow candle I always carry in the folds of my robe casts a feeble glow.

The darkness surrounding us grows thicker and more oppressive — and I fear that something lurks in the shadows. I can just barely make out its scuttling movement, movement that gives you the impression that the shadows know that you can only watch them from the corners of your eyes. If you look at them directly, they are gone.

On deck, silence reigns. What is happening up there? Should we look? Hieronymus seems to have the same idea, judging from his face and his glances. But what if the captain tries to underline his vehement order: to stay below deck until he calls us up again? What if he becomes violent at our disobedience? I have heard that a ship's captain is judge, jury, and executioner aboard his ship, possessing all the rights he needs to have even Monarchs and their companions hanged by the highest mast — the "yard" as the seadogs call it. I try to imagine which fate could be more terrifying: to be killed by the shadows down here or to be killed by the captain up there. Hieronymus seems to have reached some conclusion, as he is already standing on the wooden steps leading upstairs. He begins to open the portal...

The porthole is locked. Even with our combined strength, we could not open the way to freedom. We are prisoners, trapped, hopelessly surrendered to the shadows that seem to thicken down here. My brothers in fate can sense the threat now, too. I can already hear the shades' voices, words in an unknown language, whispering to me. I cannot block my ears to them. O, Lord, aid us!

The shadows still do not rise, though they remain thick. Probably these are the last entries of my diary and this is the premature end of my

excursion in service to the Pontifex Maximus. Praise the Lord, and may this chronicle find its way into the hands of those who can put them to good use in their struggle against the demons commanded by the Lord of the Flies.

I am alive. Praise the Lord in all His mercy. Mere moments after I had resigned myself to my fate, the portal to freedom and light opened before us and led us out of our dark dungeon, which was soaked in the smell of fear, vomit, and urine. Almost I had lost both sanity and life.

The ship's main mast is broken. Splintered pieces of wood are scattered everywhere, the remains of many of the deck's structures. The fallen mast had landed on our porthole, making it impossible for us to leave the freight room. Only with their combined strength, the wholly exhausted sailors and Templars who had stayed on deck managed to move the mighty pole. The storm has passed as quickly as it had begun. Nothing unusual on these seas, our captain noted. He seems quite distraught at the loss of the main sail.

16th september 2647

I understand now why Captain Hennings seemed so worried yesterday. The reason for his brooding pensiveness was not the broken mast in itself, for the ship otherwise remains seaworthy, but rather the fact that we are now subjected to the sea's often ill-tempered moods. We have no means of propulsion, except for letting the currents guide us.

May the Lord guide our vessel. Again, the course of our journey is dictated by higher forces, and again, the future remains uncertain. The fear of the Dreamseed my companions have harbored for so long has been replaced by a different kind of fear, that of an unknown fate. At least now I will have the time to think about what I experienced yesterday. I have not decided yet whether the shadows below deck were the result of my feeble nerves or if Death has indeed become a member of our party on our involuntary journey, given shape in a new, yet to be defined species of Dreamseed creature. I am absolutely sure that the voices that tried to creep into my mind during the storm did not originate in my imagination. They were real. Even though I had been unable to understand the words themselves — if the utterances were words at all — I nonetheless knew their meaning and their intention. They suggested I should end my journey, and thus my search for answers to questions I have not asked yet, not even thought of yet. The voices were sweet and alluring, but at the same time they were frightening and menacing, devoid of any emotion whatsoever, yet determined and resolute. Thinking of them makes me shudder. For the first time, I am contemplating an abortion of our journey, not out of cowardice or to protect my own hide, but only because I am

afraid I might actually find what I have been looking for. An answer to why all this is happening?

1st october 2647

Fate seems to be on our side in the end. After days of drifting over the sea, we have caught sight of land again. Hieronymus' joy is minimal, however. Like me, he looks forward to having solid ground beneath his feet instead of the unsteady planks of a ship, but the fact that we have been adrift for the last few weeks has occasionally turned his face red with anger. He has made it clear to all of us that he intends to travel back along the Thracian coast in order to survey the coastline (according to him, we surely must have traveled an amazing distance), starting once again at the point where we started our sea voyage. As soon as we have gone ashore and he has calmed down a little, I will try to convince him to rethink this plan. I know all too well that he is a perfectionist, but he has had ample opportunity to copy some of Captain Hennings' maps, thereby filling in the gaps in his own.

In the afternoon, our captain spotted a suitable place to anchor. This evening we will surely be able to go ashore in a longboat. Hieronymus, Bran, and I have already packed our belongings and have started to make plans about how will proceed. We have at least agreed upon what to do with our gear: first, we will need new porters; Bran has already taken care of our protection. The majority of those Gabrielite Templars who survived the Dreamseed attack will accompany Armatura Ivar Pètra to Nuremberg, where she will give a report of the events to her order. The other Templars and the two remaining warriors of Bran's original force will join us on our voyage, ensuring our safety. I hope the quality of Thracian porters will compare favorably to that of the Iberian ones. If this is the case, we could move ahead quickly, making up for the some the time we have lost.

Later: Everything works out according to our plan. Dusk is falling, and we are now standing on firm ground. Bran has left with three men to look for new porters. The others have started to establish a camp and to light fires. Hieronymus proves stubborn when it comes to the route we should take. Somehow I will have to convince him of my mission's preeminence. I think I already have come up with an idea of how to get him to accept my wishes.

3rd october 2647

My little deception has worked admirably, and Bran has served me well once again. I beg the Lord for forgiveness, but I saw no other way to get Hieronymus to acquiesce. If Bran had not sounded an

alarm this morning, reporting that a whole squad of Dreamseed demons was approaching our camp from a westerly direction, I would still be in a heated discussion with Hieronymus about our route. Moreover, we all benefited from a long-distance run down the beach, useful considering our protracted sojourn on board the *Esperanza* and in the Templars' camp before that, with all the inactivity those locations imply. I believe we did the right thing, even though Bran and I had to resort to a little lie to nudge our friend in the right direction. Surely Hieronymus will understand when I explain everything to him in a few days.

We are all very, very exhausted now. After two hours of running on sand, our new porters have obtained a first impression of what they will have to face in the near future. Furthermore, we all noticed the effect that weeks of sloth and over-indulgence have had on our muscles and joints. Hieronymus looked back toward our camp so often and in such a frantic manner that I do feel sorry for having played such a nasty trick on the poor fellow. I guess I am obliged to tell him the truth as soon as possible.

On another note, the voices in my head grow more and more — the word? — *yes, present*, making it hard for me to think clearly at times. I have tried to silence them with alcohol, with exercise, with meditation, all to no avail. I have to be rid of them, to banish them from my brain, or else I am afraid I shall eventually, perhaps soon lose touch with this world altogether. I do not know if and to whom I should confess my tribulations. Certainly, Bran would insist on ending our journey to protect me from this unknown menace. Hieronymus would probably be so scared that he would flee recklessly back in the direction whence we have just come. No, I think will have to deal with this manner on my own.

What scares me most is the fact that I feel I am beginning to understand the whispered words in my head. Still, I am the master of myself, and as long as this is the case I will follow the path I have chosen. Nothing will prevent me from doing so.

8th october 2647

We have reached Alexandroupolis today. Everything seems to start anew, almost as if a great cycle will repeat itself. My feet are a bloody mess. The horny skin that had grown on my soles over the last few months must have been eaten up by the short time of laziness on the ship. The others cannot be faring much better than me. I wish Vaniel's fellowship had accompanied us when we disembarked.

Damnation! — Now I recall: I wish I had asked Vaniel, as I had intended, why he appeared at the Templar's camp just when we had needed their aid the most. I am growing old, I'm afraid. My brain is like a sieve, and many things slip through it without

~~What can the best of
tell...~~

Forgive me, I have been
away from a monastery for
far too long and have been
babbling nonsense. Maybe this
is the influence of the voices.
Incidentally I no longer believe
ve that they came from the
shadows themselves. Rather, I
am now convinced they at-
tempted to lodge themselves
inside my head.

book two: towards the island and corridor

me even noticing. We will have to stay in Alexandroupolis for a few days, so I can write a synopsis of our journey thus far and find the time to recover myself. I think the rest of the party and myself can only benefit from a short stay in the city.

26th november 2647

No remarkable events have occurred during the last weeks in Alexandroupolis, so all I can report is that the voices have become my constant companions. And I have started to reply to them on occasion. Of course I do so only when I can be sure there is no one else around, and even then I speak only in a hushed voice. There is nothing more to say about my own writings of the last few weeks, except that they now appear incomprehensible even to myself. Thus, I will abstain from having them published.

There. I have burned them. They would not be of any help and would only open me up to ridicule.

We stayed in a small inn in town by the name of "Inn that offers the honored traveler a bed without being too expensive." [The name here is a rough translation from the native local dialect. No matter how hard I try I fail to remember the original name because of its many umlauts. The innkeeper, who went by a similarly bizarre name, was friendly enough to translate the name of his business from the regional dialect, which even Hieronymus, with his many tongues, deemed peculiar.]

I suddenly realize that I have not explored more than the tip of an iceberg, to use a common metaphor, although I have considered myself an expert on the Dreamseed. All the creatures I had encountered until now do not seem to be related to each other in any way, yet all of them remind me of the disturbing dreams I had as a child. I fear now more than ever that a full classification of the demons might be very difficult, if not impossible — in the end this fear is more than justified when I take into regard how little we yet know. However, I do not want to distract the attention of the Pontifex Maximus and the revered Konsistorium from my humble account. I will resist this despair, to ensure that my report will be read with no preconceptions.

Our departure from Alexandroupolis is not a burden to me, because it distracts me from the meager, altogether insufficient results I can present. Frankly, my humble gains are nothing more than a few moldy samples of bone and a Shadeshifter's claw. In addition, my diary contains a number of more or less representative illustrations, my word being the only proof for their authenticity. Further, I do not entirely trust our new porters. Even with Bran's assurances that they were the best money could buy, I am unconvinced of their quality. Certainly, I will sleep with one eye open during the coming nights. Better safe than sorry.

During the last few days I have been able to push back the whispering voices in my head. Apparently, my agitation has been the reason for my nightmarish fantasies. Now my will urges me ahead, and I am determined to travel directly to Moscow, where I hope to find some new results. I have heard that the region is home to so-called "Brandland guides" who lead roped parties into the nearby Brandland in return for money. I am looking forward to finding one of these people and traveling into the unknown together with my companions. However, a long way lies ahead of us and we know nothing of the dangers we might have to face until we reach Moscow.

3rd december 2647

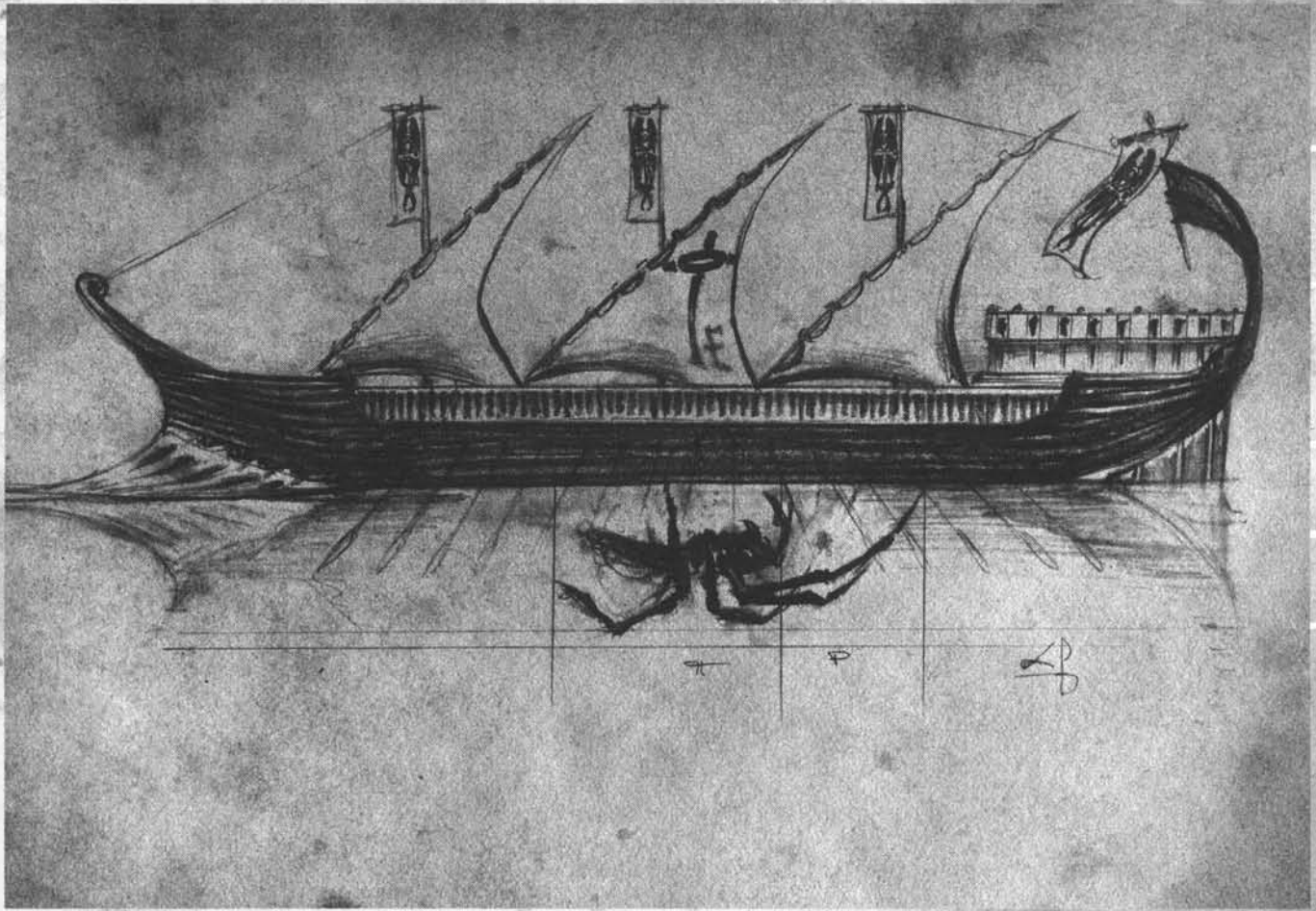
It is absolutely amazing how densely populated southeastern Europe is! In the last 140 kilometers (as Hieronymus estimates we have traveled), we have passed through four large and seven smaller settlements, all of them being ports of call from which one might sail to Asia Minor. I suspect that this astounding phenomenon is limited to the coastline.

We have a decision to make. Hieronymus wants to sail to Asia Minor because he wants to draw as many maps as possible. Bran is of a different opinion: he thinks that the sea voyage as well as the march along the coast of Asia Minor is far more dangerous than traveling along the coast of Central Europe. In Central Europe, so Bran explains, the relative proximity of the Himmel will offer us some protection. But I find it rather unlikely that we will encounter Dreamseed creatures on territory belonging to the protectorates of the Engel castles. Those few encounters we have had with Dreamseed before now only add to my doubts. Thus, I am tempted to agree to Hieronymus' suggestion and to arrange for a crossing of the straits of Marmara. Thereafter, we could proceed along the northern coast of Asia Minor toward the large Brandland corridor in the east. Perhaps we could even hire a Brandland guide there. If we should not find one, it will certainly be possible to sail from there along the Brandland corridor up to Donez or even to Moscow.

6th december 2647

Bran has arranged our crossing on a merchant junk, the *Nadeshda*. The fare is surprisingly low and, I think, a little unusual: the captain would accept us as passengers only if we were willing to lend him and his crew a hand during the crossing. Even though Hieronymus and I are not used to such hard labor, it will not do us any harm to get some exercise. Moreover, it is important to save some Manna to pay a Brandland guide. I have heard that they charge horrendous prices for their services.

³Consistorial Cardinal Rufus Kant was right when he said that my task would require more than a simple March who had never seen anything of the world outside the walls of his monastery. But I was presumptuous enough — what a fool — to trick myself into believing that I was the ideal candidate for this mission and that the revered Cardinal must have been wrong. How naive I was! How immeasurably arrogant in my yearning to make it into my order's annals with such a monumental task!



7th december 2647

Now I know why the fare was so low and the junk's captain has insisted that we should lend him and his "crew" a hand. The ship may be large, providing ample room for my travel companions and me, but the entire crew consists of the captain and a cabin boy on the brink of malnutrition. I hope my glances were angry enough to give Bran a fair impression what I think of his choice of vessels. I will surely have a few words with him this evening.

Noon: The sun is at its peak and the weather is very dull. There is hardly a breeze to stir the sails, let alone move us along. On the horizon, a war galley belonging to the Templar Fleet rides at anchor. I can make out the white and golden banners of the Michaelite Templars hanging listlessly from her proud masts. There is something strange, almost surreal about the whole scenario, however. Bran, whose eyesight is far sharper than mine, says the galley's hull rides the waves in an awkward way and the ship reflects the sunlight strangely.

The blasphemous swearing of our captain has drawn my eyes away from the war galley. Apparently, he is more than a little annoyed at the sudden delay in our crossing. After a good deal of barely articulate shouting, he has just vanished below deck without a word.

The surrounding sea is like a mirror. No wave ripples across its surface, and I feel as if the world has held its breath. But why? A sudden vibration and a jolt rock my concentration as well as the junk. Something is throbbing and hammering below deck. A strange rhythmic churning not unlike the beating of an enormous heart breaks the silence and our ship starts to move. The captain storms up the stairs. His hands black with some strange oily substance and wearing a wide grin on his face, he turns to Bran and me. We are making headway and — may the revered Konsistorium forgive us — neither Bran nor I chide the captain for his obviously heretical doings. At least not right now. The ship is moving without any muscle or wind power. Something else must be propelling it, some infernal device that has slept in some Diadoche's treasure chamber for centuries and is now being brought to life again in the junk's hull.

We approach the galley of the Michaelite Templars fast, making to pass by, and now I can see it more clearly. It seems as if the ship is covered with a finely-woven veil. Milky white threads entwine the masts and the structures on deck of the galley. Bran's acute eyesight spots another peculiarity and the young Armatura immediately points it out to me. In the direct vicinity of the galley the sea is rippling violently, as if gigantic beads of water were dripping from the sky to the sea's surface. The galley begins to bob and rock slightly as if some heavy weight has just been lifted from it. The strange concentric waves have begun to ripple away from the galley in growing circles, then fade away as spread out into the surrounding waters.

But now the small spots that stir the rippling water, the points at which the invisible drops fall from the skies — I cannot describe it in better terms — start to move toward us, making a trail across the surface of the water. Maybe my mind is playing tricks on me, because the junk is heading toward the galley, but it seems as if something is coming closer to us beneath the waves — and it is moving very fast! Bran must have had the same idea: he rushes to the captain of our ship as fast as his feet will carry him. Even the porters have noticed something. I must stop — I fear that we are in grave danger.

Moments later: After a short yet heated discussion and a minor scuffle, our captain has been convinced to turn off the cursed engine. It is now very quiet on our ship again. The small circles of waves still get closer, but they have slowed down noticeably. Around the patches of rippling water, now less than a hundred yards away, the sea has taken on a darker hue, as if a massive body is crawling toward our vessel.

Now I understand: The blood in my veins freezes as I realize that the Lord of the Flies has apparently come up with a new deviltry. The shadow now slowly creeps beneath the hull of our ship, reminding me of the body of a giant spider scuttling under the sea's surface, just like a common spider scuttles across the ceiling of a room. The thin tapestry around the Templar galley has to be the "spider's" web. All of us hold our breath as the creature vanishes from sight underneath the junk. Minutes pass and nothing happens....

Ah! Now I catch sight of the shadow again. It returns to the galley, thanks God, leaving us alone. The captain's confounded noises in our hold must have lured it near, that much is for sure. Probably the creature is blind, or at least very nearsighted. Slowly, the small circles of waves retreat from the junk and turn toward the Templar galley again. Now I am absolutely convinced that the heretical artifact of our captain must have drawn the Dreamseed creature near. Despite my former intentions, I will reveal the name of the captain and his ship to the revered Consistorium upon my return. I believe it

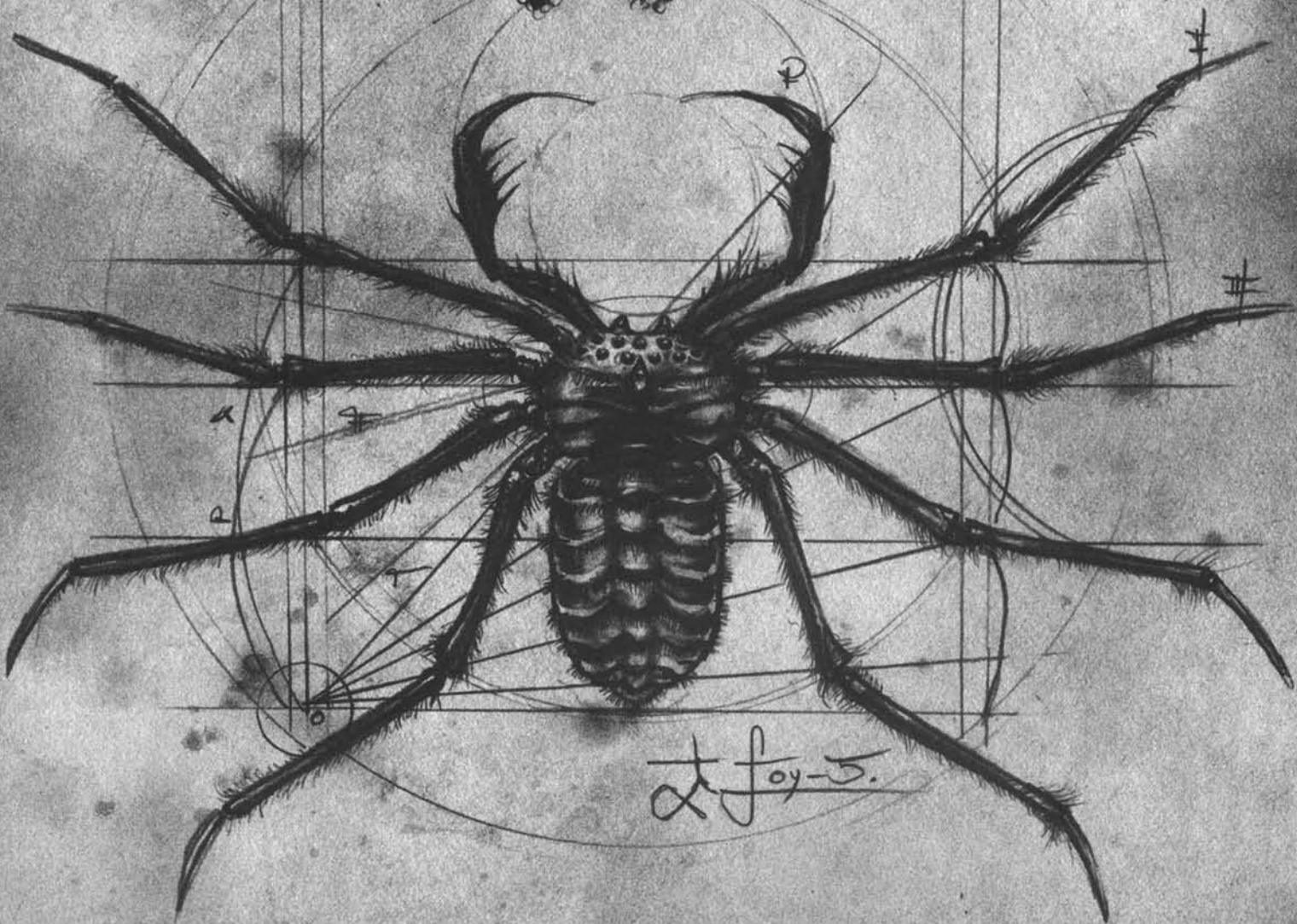
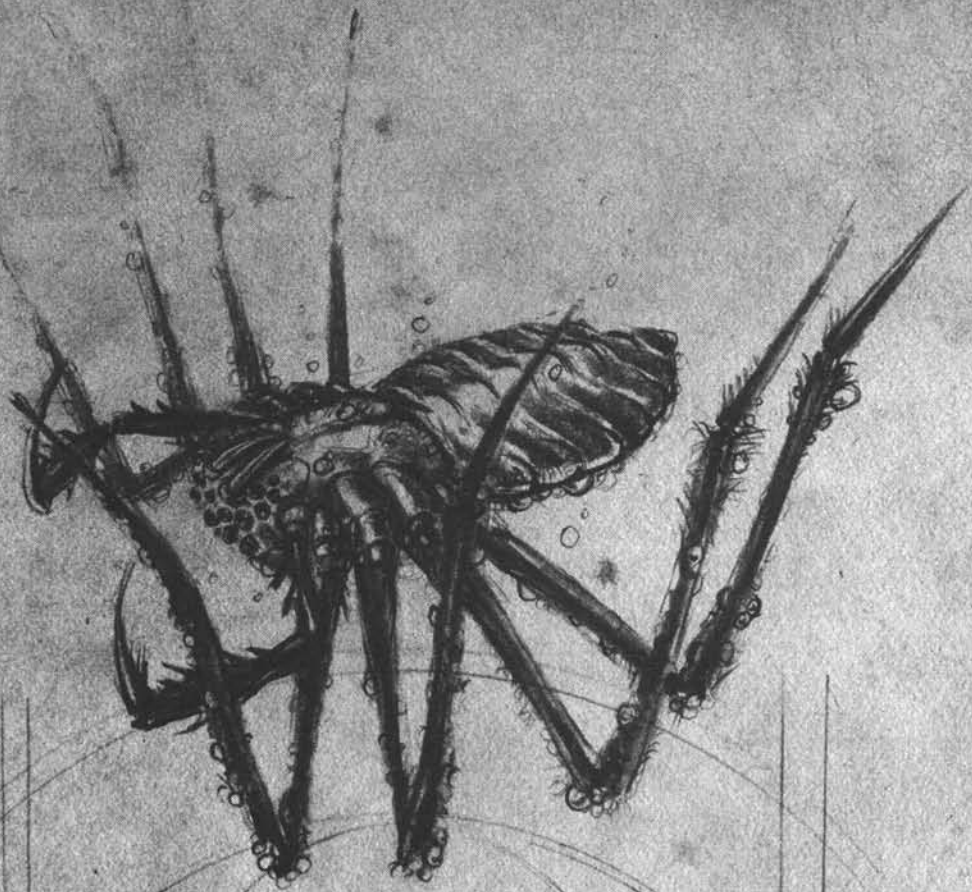
will be for the common good if such heretical machinery is taken into safe hands. I will not mention it to him right now, though, as this would only further delay my return.

Evening: The wind has arisen again. Now we can continue our crossing without having to use devices that properly belong to the Adversary. I did have the chance to have a look at the Dreamseed creature in all its malign glory before the sun went down. It reminded me of a spider indeed, although some of its features made it different from a common spider. But who knows? Nobody can say for certain whether those spiders living in our homes are not Dreamseed creatures as well, hiding behind their apparent inoffensiveness while monitoring our every move. Anyway, the body of the Waterweaver (as I have named this species) is as big as a four-wheeled teamster's wagon, and its legs are remarkably long. Its entire repulsive body is covered with bristly hairs. When I saw the Weaver lift itself from the waters a few moments ago, I could spot tiny bubbles of air coming loose of it as the creature broke through the sea's surface. Perhaps the thing collects air in its thick fur in order to get the necessary buoyancy. Otherwise, I could not explain why it should have this bristly fur at all. Meanwhile, the entirety of the galley is covered in a fine, delicate web. The web itself appears to be covered with tiny droplets, or maybe it consists entirely of water (though I find this latter idea unlikely). Unfortunately, the galley is too far away for me to make out such details. After reconsidering the whole matter thoroughly, Bran and I agreed that it would not be wise to get closer to the creature again. It appears far too aggressive to risk such an endeavor: over the last few hours the Waterweaver has entirely destroyed large sections of the Templar galley. Survivors are nowhere to be seen. As soon as we are far enough from the monster, we will say Mass for those unfortunate souls who fell victim to the enormous Dreamseed fiend.

9th december 2647

This morning we finally landed on the shores of Asia Minor, in a minor port called Bursatum. My body is battered and bruised from the many hardships of the crossing. My companions are glad to leave the abominable junk behind, and I share their notion. Bran has taken care of everything that still had to be done in regard to our captain.

The land here differs from everything else I have ever seen. The trees are small, and the land is desolate, stony and rough, almost as if the influence of the Inferno to the east is carried hither on searing winds. Still, the Brandland has to be at least several hundred kilometers from here, making it impossible for the heat to travel such a long distance. Moreover, the Pontic Mountains lie ahead of us. Could it be



A. Joy-5.

The voices in my head were growling louder again at this point in my journey and I was forced to write down at once each of my thoughts to keep them from rapping away like the leaves of a tree in the heat of a Inferno. I was too stupid, however, to record much of this development in my diary.

that a new Inferno has erupted? From out of nowhere? A new Inferno nobody knows about? Or is there really such a difference in climate between this side of Europe and the one we came from? At any rate, I should not be too rash in my conclusions. In the afternoon, we are ready to continue our travels into territory unknown to all of us.

Hieronymus has heard from one of the fishermen in Bursatum that we are about to head into a region where water is an extremely rare commodity. Due to this, we will have to restock our water supply in one of the nearby settlements in order to avoid the risk of dying of thirst. What a horrible thought: to die because of such a trivial lack of nourishment on such an awe-inspiring mission! Ahead of us, the peak of a large mountain the locals call Uludeg (Ulodag?) towers above the landscape. Unfortunately, I have no clue of whence this moniker springs or what its meaning is. However, I believe that such linguistic banalities will be of no further relevance to our journey.

comments, sulking, and moaning. But I do not blame them. We have been traveling like this for weeks and months now, and I put their bad mood down to the heat!

12th december 2647

My expectations have been disappointed once again. The sheen of light we had beheld yesterday evening turned out to be only a beacon of a primitive outpost of the Urielite Order. The Keepers of the Ways have taken up the task of preventing ships from going to anchor on these unfriendly shores. The Monachs there could not provide us with proper shelter. Our nocturnal effort has been in vain; our strength has been wasted. Yet we found some comfort in the presence of a Messenger of the Lord on his way from his Himmel in Montsalvage to Amman. He told us of his journey and the things he had seen. His cheerfulness made me sad. I felt homesick. Fortunately, the Engel offered me to give his best wishes to Ab Arbogast in the Himmel at Prague, for he planned to rest there on his journey back to Montsalvage.

In the morning, we said goodbye to the Monachs and the Engel, wishing each other the best of times and God's speed before heading off into the unknown. With some luck we should be able to reach the next large settlement, a town the Monachs called Samsun, within a month. Until then we have to ration our water, for the Pontic Mountains have very few springs where we can slake our thirsts and refill our jugs.

Meanwhile, the brood of the Lord of the Flies is nowhere to be seen. Once again, my mission becomes a burden to me, because I feel as if I am not up to this task at all.

Later: And still we move on. It appears to me as if the mountain crests go on forever and the cleft slopes want to lead us astray. Bran suggests he could climb up to one of the peaks in order to get an idea of our exact position. Then, so he says, we will be able to determine how long our self-chosen martyrdom will last. I guess I will not allow him to go, since I doubt that his endeavor will be worthwhile. I think perhaps I do not want to know how much longer I have to climb around these mountains⁹.

11th december 2647

The people inhabiting this region have to be tougher than I originally thought. Almost no gentle winds stir the air here, even though the sea lies to our left, which should guarantee at least the occasional breeze. When there is wind, it is more of a scorching gust, making the air vibrate, burning eyes and lungs. My Monach's robe, already in a piteous state, is soaked with sweat, clinging to my limbs like a climbing plant that tries to entangle and slowly smother its prey. The others surely suffer as much as I do, but they do not let me see it. Hieronymus seems to be the bravest of them, considering his great age. The coastline is unusually rugged; countless rocks and small islands form a natural barrier that would make landing with a seagoing vessel nigh impossible.

Evening: We can see the lights of a settlement on the horizon. Since temperatures drop to more comfortable levels once the sun has set, it would be a good idea for us to keep walking. My suggestion to rest during the day when the heat is almost unbearable to us and to travel by night does not sit well with Bran. He fears the darkness could be far more dangerous than the heat: Dreamseed demons could be attracted by the light of our lanterns, and we would not notice their approach until it would be too late. I want to believe his objections, but in face of the high temperatures I find it harder and harder to do so. Thus, I stubbornly insist on continuing our march into the night.

The inner tension of my companions starts to show at last, if only in a rather restrained fashion. Admittedly, the frequent rests I need to write down my thoughts slow us down a good deal. My companions' displeasure shows itself in their biting

At that moment, I hoped the Lord would grant me wings in a future life, so I could soar above the mountains like an Engel. When I thought of the young Urielite, I contemplated lending him a helping hand by throwing myself off the nearest precipice that I would know what task the Lord had in store for me in a future life. Fortunately I came to my senses in time, pushing this thought aside.

1st January 2648

It is January for the second time since we started our journey. When we left Roma Aeterna, I was a man with the best of intentions and the passion of youth. My journey has taken its toll on me. I feel as if I have aged more than merely one year. I wonder how Hieronymus must feel, my dear old friend who doubted right from the start that he would be able to cope with the hardships ahead of him. Yet Bran

leads his second group of Templars with the confidence and precision I have always seen in him, and I admire him for his prudence and his courage. Samsun cannot be too far now, even though I cannot see the town yet. We ran out of water two days ago. I hope for a miracle or my worst fears will come true: we will die of thirst. My eyes burn and it is hard for me to write anything down, since my hands do not want to obey me anymore.

Noon: Provided my weakened senses do not play tricks on me, I think I can see horsemen in the distance who seem to be hunting something on the beach below us. Unfortunately, it is very misty and the image blurs again and again.

Later: When we approached the place where I had seen the horsemen, they had vanished without a trace. I do not know whether they were an illusion or not. Bran and Hieronymus confirm my observation, however. Bran adds that judging from their silhouettes the horsemen must have been heavily armored. Grimriders in such a distant part of the world strikes me as rather unusual. Maybe the horsemen were mercenaries in the service of a Junklord who has retreated here to hatch sinister plans far from the mighty arm of the Angelitic Church. We will see what awaits us at Samsun as soon as we will have reached the town. Probably we are in mortal danger if the authority of the Holy Mother Church does not reach as far as here. Maybe our journey will find its premature end, and we will be taken prisoner by some megalomaniac Diadoche. Then we would have to lead miserable lives like lambs waiting for the slaughter, fearing that every new day could be our last.

Be it as it may. Neither malevolent Dreamseed demons nor vain and arrogant Diadoches will discourage me. We will continue our mission unless and until we are forced to abandon it.

I need some rest now. Just a few moments of sleep and a beaker of cool water or sweet wine to unravel these knotted thoughts in my head.

3rd January 2648

I have slept. To be precise, I have slept better than ever before in my entire life. My lips may feel like open sores, raw, dry, and cracked, yet I feel like a newborn babe. I must have lost consciousness sometime during the last two days. Somehow, I suppose, my companions have carried me here. Even though I can neither see nor hear any of them, this is the only plausible explanation. I will look for them soon to get a report on events. First, I should try to stand on my own two feet.

My hardships must have been more strenuous than I had expected; I have not regained mastery over my entire body yet.

Before I could muster the strength to look for him, Hieronymus had already appeared at the side of my bed. He delivered me from my ignorance by answering my questions regarding our rescue, his report as short and dry as ever. But I still do not feel up to the task of writing about the events. My eyes are as swollen as my lips. If I had not expected the worst, I would have fled from my own reflection in the mirror. I look like a frog that has been sunbathing for far too long. Come to think of it, that is exactly how I feel.

6th January 2648

The last few days were interminable. Fortunately, my condition has improved enough for me to take up a pen and continue my chronicle of events.

Bran has spent the last few days gathering information on the horsemen who appeared and disappeared in the mists like a mirage just before our arrival at Samsun. Apparently, the horsemen have become the stuff of legend in this region. The people of Samsun exaggerate every encounter with the horsemen, whether confirmed or unconfirmed, with flamboyant details. With every new peasant who claims to have seen them, the horsemen grow larger and crueler than with the peasant before. I would like to summarize the essential and obvious facts here, so I can refer to them if I should ever encounter the horsemen myself.

In the Samsun area, the horsemen are called the "Sea-Mares." This name itself tells a great deal regarding the aura of terror that surrounds the horsemen. Furthermore, they apparently only turn up in groups, and most often after sundown — which was not the case when we encountered them, however. Moreover, they never stray far from the water. These were the facts. I suspect that they are a marauding group of renegade Grimriders who want to fill their purses a little in this region. On the other hand, many stories of these Sea-Mares end with the disappearance of one or several persons. The only traces that remain of the victims are blood and a few shreds of clothing. Of course, this could be nothing more than the heated imagination of the locals. However, Bran seems to give credit to the stories, and I trust that he would have recognized obvious tall tales.

Tomorrow we will start to look for the horsemen. The Grimrider theory still does not sit well with me. Until we can be absolutely sure about the nature of the Sea-Mares, I will try to enjoy the comfort of our accommodation here at Samsun. The inn is clean and roomy. To be honest, I would not have expected this level of quality here. This may be the last comfortable lodging we will see before we reach the Brandland, and perhaps for an even longer time. Once we have found a Brandland guide to lead us into that pitch-black wake of the

Inferno's passage, we surely will find no shelter therein — if there is anything worth seeing in that wasteland. Maybe I will find all the answers to my questions concerning the Dreamseed demons, their organization, and their function for the Adversary, but maybe I will find only weariness. Or maybe I will only find my own doom there. I have to come up with an idea how to make sure my writings will not be lost to the world, even if I must make a complete set of copies of them. Regrettably, that would take a lot of time, and if there is one thing I do not have, it is time.

7th January 2648

The night has not brought any new insights. Even worse, a new problem has arisen overnight: To whom shall I give this treasure? Whom shall I endear with my invaluable writings? I must find a solution to this problem. Bran and his Templars are already waiting for me downstairs. We want to find those strange horsemen haunting the region. I have no other choice but to push aside these troublesome thoughts for the time being, or I will not be able to face the problems at hand.

Time flew by during the day. We followed many hints from the local people and eventually arrived at a perfectly situated place from which we could watch a wide area of the sandy beach along a small bay. The town council helped us in this, even though the magistrates did not appear to be too happy about our presence at Samsun. I think they mistrust official emissaries of the Angelitic Church. The seven councilors discussed the topic of the Seamare hunt extensively (the locals pronounce the horsemen's name as one word, and we all seem to have picked up the habit), first amongst themselves, and later with us. They wanted to know who would pay for the costs involved in the attempt to take the Seamares into custody. When I offered to deal with the problem at no cost to them, they became as polite as young Begines, eager to provide us with everything we would need to track down the horsemen⁶. Actually, there are no Templars or militiamen in Samsun who would have dared to deal with the Seamare problem. Bran's sense of honor is impeccable, and it did not take much convincing on my part to persuade him to participate in this little venture. Our Templars are well equipped, their courage has already become almost legendary, and a few ropes, shovels, and buckets should be more than enough to welcome these fiends in an appropriate manner. Now we simply sit around, waiting for night to fall. The light is already fading, and I can hear my bed in the inn calling. However, the call of adventure after such a long time of slothfulness is far more alluring than any bed could ever be. I am ready for the Seamares to arrive. They may give me the opportunity to test my swordsmanship — Bran, I

have neglected to mention (as I never thought it important enough), has occasionally been tutoring me in the rudiments of his art in our spare time. Hieronymus was so kind as to offer me his blade; he does not need it anyway, because right now he is where I wanted to be a few moments ago: he was too tired to accompany us, and swears that he has been feeling too old for a brawl for quite a while now.

Darkness falls, and soon I will not be able to write anymore. I do not dare to light a lantern. The Seamares are still nowhere to be seen. The sea is quiet, and a gentle wind carries the salty taste with which we have become so well acquainted with over the course of the last year. I will stop writing now, for my nose already touches the pages of my diary. I fear that I will not be able to read the words I am writing right now when the morning comes.

8th January 2648

In the end, last night brought nothing more than cold feet and sulking Templars. The prospect of a good fight had awakened the thirst for battle in my protectors. Since they had not been able to quench it during the night, they were in a rather bad mood when the morning came. Like me, Bran had apparently presumed that we would have been very lucky if we had already encountered the marauders during the first night of our hunt. We will have to repeat our excursion tonight and hope for better luck this time. To make up for last night's errors, I will bring blankets and some rice wine.

Meanwhile, Hieronymus' maps and charts have grown to such an extent that we will have difficulties bringing them any further on our journey. We need a cart or a wagon. I have just talked to him, after he returned from buying new chart paper. According to him, the paper will suffice for the upcoming days. I did not have the courage to ask for the exact meaning of "the upcoming days." Did he mean the upcoming days of our entire voyage, or merely the few days until our departure from Samsun? May the Lord protect me from the latter possibility.

The town's streets here are remarkably well maintained. Admittedly, this does not come as quite so much of a surprise as it would be in other parts of Europe. Here, it almost never rains. The hot desert wind shoves the thick clouds, which are perpetually looming over our heads, in a northeasterly direction, toward Roma Æterna. This region is only rarely touched by a cloudburst, which explains the changes in the landscape and the town all round us. The houses are simple, flat buildings. Presumably, larger buildings would be ravaged by the winds. Everything is covered with a delicate veil of gray and black sand, giving the town a rather bleak character that loses much of its severity once you get to know the townspeople. The people are very friendly toward strangers, even though the locals'

You may wonder what made me so keen to stalk the Seamares. I had far more important work to do than act as some kind of nightia ensuring the safety of the local people. However, a voice deep inside of me told me that I would not be facing common soundreps. Therefore, I felt compelled to address this problem. Reading now what I have written such a long time ago I realize how sloppy my writings from that time are. So many details have been lost and still refuse to step out of the darkness within the tangled web I call my brain...

piety could be more prominent. I have not seen a church yet, and many of the travelers who come to town to trade at Samsun are savages from the south who have opposed all efforts of the Angelitic Church to convert them up to now. Many of them look as if they were an integral, yet living part of the gray landscape: their faces are pale, their black clothes are filthy. Occasionally, I see jewelry or embroidery unlike any in Central Europe.

Contrary to my former prejudices, the savages are not intimidating at all. They smile at us all the time. Hieronymus claims this is nothing more than a wicked façade. He is convinced that they try to lure us into a false sense of security, just to stab us in the back as soon as we trust them. Personally, I admit that they may be rather simple, but I believe them to be utterly harmless. Their primitive clothing and their innocent smiles are proof to me that they are probably an offshoot of common European peoples. Their affinity toward a nomadic lifestyle without the slightest desire to build more permanent homes hints at old scriptures from the archives of my order that tell of the early days of mankind and our evolution from tribes of hunter-gatherers to rice and cattle farmers. I wish I had more time to devote to this fascinating aspect of human evolution! Maybe I will have the opportunity to visit this place again after I have accomplished my mission. I guess it would be nice to study people after having studied Dreamseed creatures for so long.

Tonight is just like yesternight. Our camp is in the most suitable position and the visibility is good. But there is something more that brings joy to my heart: the pleasant warmth of rice wine in my belly and the blankets around my feet and shoulders. Darkness apparently falls sooner than yesterday. I already find it very hard to make out the letters in my diary. Again, I have to refrain from lighting a lantern, which would only act as a warning to our adversaries. I will stop writing now. If we are lucky, I will be able to write about the success of our endeavor tomorrow.

9th January 2648

O, how innocent designs can turn into utter catastrophes over the course of a single night! No matter how innocuously you write them down, they nevertheless can become ghastly horrors you never wanted to summon. But I should explain my ravings before I continue.

Surely it would have been advantageous to write down yesterday's events as soon as they had transpired. Unfortunately, the dread I felt would not abate until this late hour of morning, and I fear that it could return with all its might as soon as I finish my report.

Just before the sun disappeared behind the horizon the sea started rippling at several places close

to the beach. Once again, it was Bran who noticed it first. His eyesight is extremely acute when it comes to spotting things that would remain invisible to others. At first, we had been watching the beach itself, because nobody had thought it necessary to watch the sea. What should have come out of the sea anyway? Alas, I should have known better. The troubled sea released one, then three, and at last seven bizarre creatures from its waters. Initially, they looked like great, oversized crayfish, and their clumsy movement almost made me smile. Having crawled from the sea, they raised to their impressive full height on their six limbs. The giant crabs' armor was covered with small seashells, barnacles, and other crustaceans. They gleamed in hues of red, brown, and black in the last rays of the sun, just as their smaller brethren which the people living on the Croatian coast catch to cook delicious meals. However, these creatures certainly did not belong to the same species as my favorite dish. This thought made bitter gall rise in my throat, and even before I had swallowed it down again, the seven beasts showed their unnaturalness by standing fully upright!

It was then that I finally realized that we had truly found what we had been looking for. The *Seamares* — aptly named, for even I could not have come up with a better moniker — were roughly two and a half meters tall, bearing a striking resemblance to knights in heavy plate armor. They had folded their first pair of legs in front of their bodies, giving the impression of wearing fine breastplates and ornate helmets⁷. The only flaw in their cunning disguise was that their imaginary steeds lacked heads, making them even more dreadful to behold. They looked like the ghostly knights riding through the darkness on headless corpses of horses, ready to take to a cold, watery grave everyone foolish enough to oppose them. Nonetheless, we had a promise to keep, to put an end to this travesty of everything that is good and holy. But how? We had expected a band of scoundrels we would chase away with our intimidating appearance and the authority of the Angelitic Church. Suddenly, we were faced with the most bizarre Dreamseed demons we had yet seen.

Their walk was so reminiscent of a horse's that one had to constantly remind oneself of their true nature. The dull clatter of their "hooves" seemed so real that I turned around to see if there were not real horses around somewhere. What happened next surely was the most unfortunate chain of adverse circumstances that I have witnessed in my entire life. Moreover, it all happened so fast that I have difficulty recounting events in chronological order.

Suddenly, I heard a call from that side of our camp which lay toward the town and, looking that way, I saw small figure clambering over the rocks toward us. Before I was able to shout a warning, the terrible creatures noticed the small figure and started swarming toward it. Where I had been too

7 Actually, they reminded me very strongly of the Pontifex Maximus elite guards, although I would have never included such an observation in the original version of this document, of course. Surely the Konsistorium would have sent me to a fiery death for that unpolite remark despite all the services I have rendered to their holy cause. Nevertheless, this is what I thought at that moment, dear friend.

tongue-tied to shout to warn the small figure of the approaching menace, one of the Templars under Bran's command broke the silence by shouting out loud. The small shadow stopped in its tracks as if thunderstruck, which was exactly the worst thing to do in its situation. If it only had kept on moving, it certainly would have reached the safety of our camp. But the seven demons were now barring the shadow's passage, and began encircling their victim. At the same time, the Templar's shout called our presence to the demons' attention. Three of the Seamares turned around to advance on our position.

Once again, Bran was the first among us to assess the situation properly, instantly bringing the blade of his hasta to the ready. Empowered by his grim determination, I jumped to my feet — and immediately sprawled at full length, having become so excited that I forgot the woolen blanket wound around my legs to keep me warm. Thus, I missed the following few seconds. After I freed myself from the trap I had set for myself, I saw that Bran was already fighting the first Seamare. Bran put up a fierce resistance, but the giant creature had a demon's might. My brave Armatura was forced back step by step. The two other creatures had been caught in the trap we had set so cautiously the day before — a deep pitfall we had dug close to our camp, covered with driftwood and ropes, meant to stop the charge of armed horsemen across the sandy beach. Sadly, one of our Templars had been too rash in his charge against the Dreamseed creatures, and fell into the pit along with his opponents. Terrible noises came from the depths of the pit. I refrained from glancing down into it, because I was too afraid of seeing what the noises already hinted at. Meanwhile, our other Gabrielite Templars had rushed to the side of the strange small figure, which later turned out to be a boy from the town who had been sent to us with wine and bread. Since everything happened so fast and I had no chance to reach one of my comrades in time to be of any help, I watched the whole scene stunned; good Hieronymus' sword was never freed from its scabbard. I doubt I could have been much use with my rather feeble fighting skills against the armor of those nightmares in any case.

As the Seamares did not see the necessity to continue their masquerade, they had started to use their first pair of limbs, now extending huge, scythe-like claws. They were battering the Templars with these gruesome weapons, inflicting deep wounds. No sounds were to be heard from the pitiable Templar in the pitfall, and I feared the worst. I spotted the claw of Seamare scraping over at the edge of the pitfall, in fact, and my heart missed a beat due to sheer terror. I am certain I would not have been any match for those monsters, and I guess none of my companions would have been able to save me. But suddenly, there was a loud boom, followed almost directly by a second one. A piercing screech sounded from inside the pitfall, and the claw that had just

extended from there exploded into a thousand splinters. A putrid pulp of burned flesh, black blood, and bone fragments rained down on me, covering my hair and my face. After the second thundering bang the beast twitched for a last time and lay still on the bottom of the pitfall. Three more blasts took care of the second Seamare. Consequently, four of the monsters fled toward the sea, leaving their intended victims behind. Bran's opponent was no longer able to flee on its own. The sharp blade of Bran's hasta had cut off three of the demon's six legs. The severed limbs lay on the ground, twitching in malicious reflexes. With a mighty stroke of his hasta, Bran cut in half the rest of the demon. We had at least won a small victory. Sadly, though, the poor boy had been hacked to pieces by the Seamares' sharp claws. I fear his family will have to bury his remains there, for so horribly little was left of him. The poor Templar who fell into the pit together with two of the beasts had also been crushed and mutilated by the massive Seamares.

After having coped with my initial dread, I realized that we were being watched. At once, I remembered the strange thundering bangs. I looked around, searching for the force behind our unexpected rescue, but I saw nothing to satisfy my curiosity and dread. I did not like the idea of simply accepting my fate and attributing our rescue to a miracle. Not that I lack the faith necessary to believe in divine intervention, but I usually try to find other more logical explanations first. Otherwise, I would risk thanking the Almighty rashly, although He did not even plan to interfere in my life. Grudgingly, I started to examine our findings.

Obviously, the Seamares have developed the amazing capability to deceive their victims with an astonishing form of mimicry. After Bran and his men had pulled the two Seamares' bodies out of the pitfall, I had the opportunity to study the inside of this Dreamseed species in detail, as well as taking a closer look at their outward appearance. Unlike all other specimens of Dreamseed I have studied before now, the Seamares' limbs are crooked, appearing rather awkward and cumbersome. The joints are protected by various seashells of immense size, which seem actually to have been grafted to the Seamares' own thick shells. Probably, their only function is to simulate an ornate suit of armor. These general features are valid for the rest of the body as well. Legs and claws end in horn-like bulges, resembling hooves and the visor of a helmet, respectively. Those bulges resembling visors are an integral part of the Seamares' disguise, because they stand with the first pair of limbs in front of their faces to create the illusion of wearing helmet and breastplate. I was even able to duplicate the necessary movements of the limbs with one of the bodies. The tips of the scythe-like claws are of a surprising flexibility and sharpness. Moreover, they are covered with tiny saw-teeth, so I had to be very careful not to cut



myself when I was examining them. Only the neck of the creature's head is heavily armored, while the rest of the head appears to be quite vulnerable. Considering how effectively armored the rest of the entire body seemed, I felt a spark of hope regarding the overall vulnerability of the Seamares. It is of disadvantage, though, that the softer parts of the head only become visible when the creatures reveal themselves in their true shapes. Since the Seamares apparently only do so when they are certain of bringing down their chosen prey, this weakness could prove minimal when it comes to the extermination of this species. Nevertheless, this represents a relevant, significant observation.

Bringing my superficial examination to a close, I would like to point to the abdomen of the Dreamseed creature which had reminded me so much of my favorite dish at first. It is roughly similar to an oversized lobster's tail, hinting at the natural environment of these enigmatic creatures. While on dry land, the Seamare hides this telling part of its body beneath its massive bulk. Without a doubt, this tail makes the Seamare a very fast swimmer. Even so, the Seamares obviously prefer to come out of the water to hunt. It remains unclear for now how long these creatures can stay on dry land or if they are even subject to something so trivial as a need to breathe — do not forget that these are beings of a demonic origin.

This is definitely another black day for our mission. Again, a member of our party has lost his life under tragic circumstances. Moreover, a young innocent's life has been taken. What a depressing twist of fate! What a meaningless death! The boy had been sent to us with the best of intentions, and, just as in the case of our boatman Benitorio, the Dreamseed demons have robbed him of his life completely unexpectedly and for no purpose. What madness, what a waste!

Evening: I am seething with anger. The dim-witted people of Samsun have robbed me of the chance to further examine the bodies of the Dreamseed creatures. A veritable mob of outraged citizens has burned the three Seamare specimens on the beach. What a tragedy! All my work, and all our dangers for naught. Now we will never know more about these mysterious beings if we do not decide to stay in this ramshackle town longer than we had initially planned, a stay that would spell disaster for our overall plans for our journey. Once again, I have reached a dead end. The problems threaten to overwhelm me.

Grant me your wisdom, O Lord. I am pleading for your help.

10th January 2648

We cannot wait a day longer. After yesterday's events we have decided unanimously to leave Samsun to bring our mission to a close. It is still unclear who saved us from the Seamares and how our savior managed to defeat our opponents with such efficiency while remaining invisible during the fight. Bran suspects the wounds on the Seamares' bodies stem from pre-Flood projectile weapons. If the ignorant townsfolk of Samsun had not acted so rashly, we might have found some evidence for Bran's theory. Now, assumptions are all we have. If Bran is right, we are dealing with a Heretic, which leads only to further questions. Questions that will likely never be answered. We must depart today and continue our journey to the east.

I have not prayed for a long time. Could our tribulations be the Lord's punishment? No, it cannot be. I am His humble, loyal servant. I act on the behalf of His spokesperson on Earth, the immortal Pontifex Maximus — no, I have not been misled. The only possible answer is that the Adversary's power has grown. He is gaining the upper hand here on earth and puts obstacles in his opponent's way in order to increase his might even further. Is the Lord of the Flies already heralding the Last of Days?

Our party's mood is getting worse. Since we have left Samsun, I could feel the heavy burden on the soul of my companions. Tension is growing and the future ahead of us is grim. Our mission leads us directly toward the Brandland corridor in the east. Maybe this is what takes such a toll on the nerves of my companions. Personally, I feel excited when I think of entering the eye of the storm and solving the mysteries of the Dreamseed in a few days. There is no turning back for me. Despite all my fears, my decision is irrevocable. I will not give up.

19th January 2648

We must have covered half of the distance now between Samsun and Batuni, the city at the edge of the Brandland. Hieronymus' eyes keep festering shut. He could barely open them this morning. The sand gives him trouble, and over the course of the last four days the inflammation has evolved into a veritable threat to our mission. I fear my old friend will lose his eyesight if my medicine does not show any effect soon. Moreover, his lamentations and constant cursing irritate the rest of the men so badly that I worry about a possible escalation of the whole matter. Hieronymus has been unable to draw any maps for the last three days. I had to promise him to draw the maps in his stead as well as I am able. Unfortunately, we are slowed down even further by my having to address two tasks at once.

Bran has run ahead to scout; all I can see of him is a tiny silhouette on the horizon. Hopefully, he will tell us that he has caught sight of a settlement upon his return. Or at least a watering hole, for we are running out of water. If my mouth were not so dry and my lips so sore, I would laugh at our situation. Again, we are traveling along the coast, with water just a few meters away, and yet we have to fear dying of thirst. And so I choke back my laughter, crying a few hot tears instead, tears that carve deep furrows like raging rivers across the dusty landscape of my face.

Evening: Bran has returned to our camp. Unfortunately, his search for water or shelter has been unsuccessful. During the last few hours we have taken turns leading poor Hieronymus by the hand, because he is now totally blind. His eyes have swollen horribly and are encrusted with pus. He is in great pain. This time, it more than hypochondria. He has tried several times to force open his eyes with all his remaining strength. Since I cannot look after him all of the time, I have asked the Templars to tie Hieronymus up so he can do himself no permanent damage. I feel terribly guilty, but I guess it is for the best of all of us. We have fetched some seawater to cool his eyes. Even though the salt burns in the wounds, it surely acts as a disinfectant of sorts and helps to draw out the pus, which cannot be too wrong. The rest of the party copes astonishingly well with our situation. Except for Hieronymus, no one seems to have responded to the desert sand in an unhealthy fashion. Although I notice that the fine sand finds its way into every fold of skin on my body, only poor Hieronymus has been hit so hard. Tonight, temperatures are sure to drop dramatically again. Ever since we ran out of firewood two days ago, we have found nothing flammable. At least we have a lighter load to carry now.

20th January 2648

One of our mules did not rise from the ground this morning. I had not noticed how exhausted our beasts of burden must have been. The other mule seems to be in good shape, even though it lamented the death of its partner loudly and extensively. Every morning, it takes us a little longer to chase the stiffness from our bones. I fear that some morning soon we will not be able to lift a finger because we have frozen stiff overnight. One of the porters had the idea that we should lie as close as possible to each other through the night in order to warm ourselves, a plan which has been moderately successful at best. However, maybe we would have turned to ice last night and his idea actually saved our lives.

I can see the Brandland on the horizon for the first time. It looks like a wall of darkness, giving the impression that we have actually reached the edge

of the world. What an interesting term: "the edge of the world." Could this be true? Are we approaching the actual edge of the world or is there a land beyond it, free from Dreamseed, awaiting our arrival? We will know soon enough, that much is certain. First, we will have to reach Batumi, the last outpost of human civilization. According to my Order's records, Batumi is a haven for outlaws and Heretics, which does not bolster my confidence in the least. But in order to understand the machinations and atrocities of the Lord of the Flies, one has to explore rather than retreat from them.

Bran leads our way again to warn us of unexpected guests or events. Thus, I have a little more time to care for Hieronymus. His condition remains unchanged. I am not sure whether to see this in a positive or negative way. We shall see what the day will bring. For the meantime, we are still bound to lead Hieronymus by the hand.

Afternoon: We are resting for a short while. Bran has discovered tracks he cannot assign to any creature he knows; they look as if something huge has been dragged over the ground. The trail is at least eight paces wide, with three smaller furrows in the sand on both sides. From the spacing of the tracks we can deduce that the creature, if creature it is, as we all fear, must be at least of a size comparable to that of the Waterweaver, which means an estimated 16 paces in length.

In spite of our awkward situation we have decided to follow the tracks for a while. We want to know which kind of creature leaves such strange tracks. Since the tracks have not been blown over by the wind, we have a good chance of finding their originator.

It is late afternoon, and the light of day already starts to fade away. We have just found something that reminds me vaguely of the remains of a human corpse. Due to the way the bones are arranged within some sort of slimy, sticky substance, I have got the notion that we are indeed in pursuit of a new species of Dreamseed — a new species that somehow swallows and dissolves its victims whole, only to excrete them again later only somewhat whole. However, I am wondering what a man-eating demon serving the Lord of the Flies does in this desolate wasteland. It is a rather fortunate happenstance to find a living creature in this desert at all, and this odd behavior leaves me completely flabbergasted.

Hieronymus' pitiable condition sticks at my conscience regarding the way I have chosen, but I have no other choice. I must accomplish my mission.

Daylight has faded almost entirely now. I am determined to walk on all through the night, if necessary. I have to keep reducing the distance between us and the creature. Time is running short on us, our water reserves are depleted, and Hieronymus' condition is only getting worse. I will continue documenting our journey as soon as I find the time tomorrow.

My sense of humor must have turned so much to bitterness at this point that I did not even comment on my harsh phrases. Moreover, I can only assume that I must have meant those words in dead earnest.

21st January 2648

I made the right decision yesterday when I insisted on following the tracks of the Dreamseed creature. Unfortunately, the night was very dark and like so many times before, I could see the creature only vaguely. Still, the darkness was to our advantage this time. The demon — for this creature certainly can be nothing else — was moving very slowly. Thus, it was no hard for us to catch up with eventually. What we saw made half of my party lose their poise; if not for my quick assurances, the greater part of our porters would have fled screaming into the night. Few are the terrors in this world that can prevent me from accomplishing my mission after everything I have seen already. The demon slowly made its way toward the southeast — directly toward the Brandland Corridor. The fact that the creature was going in the same direction as us could not amaze me, but I wonder why it went such a long way round before?

In any case, the beast's entire body was of a blazing red color, or at least that is what it looked like in the glow of our lanterns, and its huge abdomen resembled an utterly distended balloon attached to the rest of its body. Our estimation of its size seems to have been quite accurate. The most bizarre and horrifying detail about the demon is that human bodies could be seen constantly shifting under the translucent skin of the creature's sack-like abdomen, apparently trying to escape from the inside of the monster. This observation made even my blood curdle. It seemed to me that I could almost make out the faces of the unfortunate victims in their leathery prison, grimacing in pain and screaming for release. The creature swallowed its prey alive, digesting them ever so slowly until it vomited forth or excreted what we found on our way yesterday: an undefined lump of bones in a pulpy sac of gall and liquefied flesh. Even Bran, who usually forgets about his own safety when it comes to protecting others, made no attempt to free the helpless victims with his hasta. He too must have realized immediately that those poor souls were beyond help. The creature itself ignored us, and something told me it might be of advantage to stay unnoticed. Who could tell how fast and dangerous this creature, which appeared so clumsy and sluggish now to us, could become if provoked? In the end, we decided to let the creature get away for the time being, but to stay on its trail. Maybe we can keep on following it unnoticed and learn more about it. It makes no difference to us. Apparently, we are all heading for the Brandland. All that is left for us to do is to bury the dead that the Collector of Souls (as I have dubbed this new species) is expelling or regurgitating along its way.

It is a strange feeling, wandering in the wake of a Dreamseed creature, climbing up dune after

dune, always worrying that the monster could suddenly turn around and attack us. Until now the Collector of Souls has not even turned its tiny head to take a closer look at its pursuers. In broad daylight, the colossus looks surprisingly docile. If not for its repulsiveness, one could almost mistake it for a domesticated farm animal grazing calmly at pasture. Unfortunately, its pasture is human blades of grass, and the sight of its victims being digested alive makes my hair turn white. Having shrugged off his initial lethargy, Bran now seems eager to attack the Dreamseed demon. Given the monster's size, I feel a little queasy at this thought. Moreover, the Collector of Souls cannot be as slow as it now appears, because otherwise it would not have been able to catch and devour its victims.

The groundswell is growing rougher. Frequently, rock can be seen beneath the ashen desert sand. The sound of the Collector's abdomen grinding over the ground is slowly worming its way into my brain. I am absolutely certain that it will heretofore haunt me in my dreams. We have neither slept nor rested for more than a few moments in two and a half days and nights now. All of us are at the ends of our tethers, first and foremost Hieronymus. The Dreamseed shows no sign of fatigue whatsoever. Slowly, inexorably, it moves on toward the darkness ahead. I have never been so close to Brandland in my entire life. It is awe-inspiring, yet frightening at the same time. The Collector of Souls crawls on without showing any need for rest, while we most definitely will have to pitch camp now. Tomorrow — or at least after a few hours of rest — we will try to follow the Collector's trail again.

22nd January 2648

Bran and the Templars were gone when I woke up this morning. The trail of the Dreamseed creature has been largely blown over by the wind. Still, it is not difficult to follow. I fear Bran is about to do something foolish and attack the Collector of Souls. Hieronymus is somewhat better today. He can open his eyes again, making the going less rough. We have to catch up with our Templars before disaster strikes and our party gets even smaller.

We are too late. Albeit we can account ourselves happy for not having lost one of our party, the Collector of Souls is no more. We have been running for the last hour and I have to catch some breath before I will be able to think clearly.

Later: I find it hard to be angry with Bran, but I had hoped to learn more about the demon. At least I can examine its body, now that they have slain the beast.

According to Bran, the Collector of Souls made use of an interesting strategy to account for its plump sluggishness. The demon can apparently extend a long tongue from its far too small head

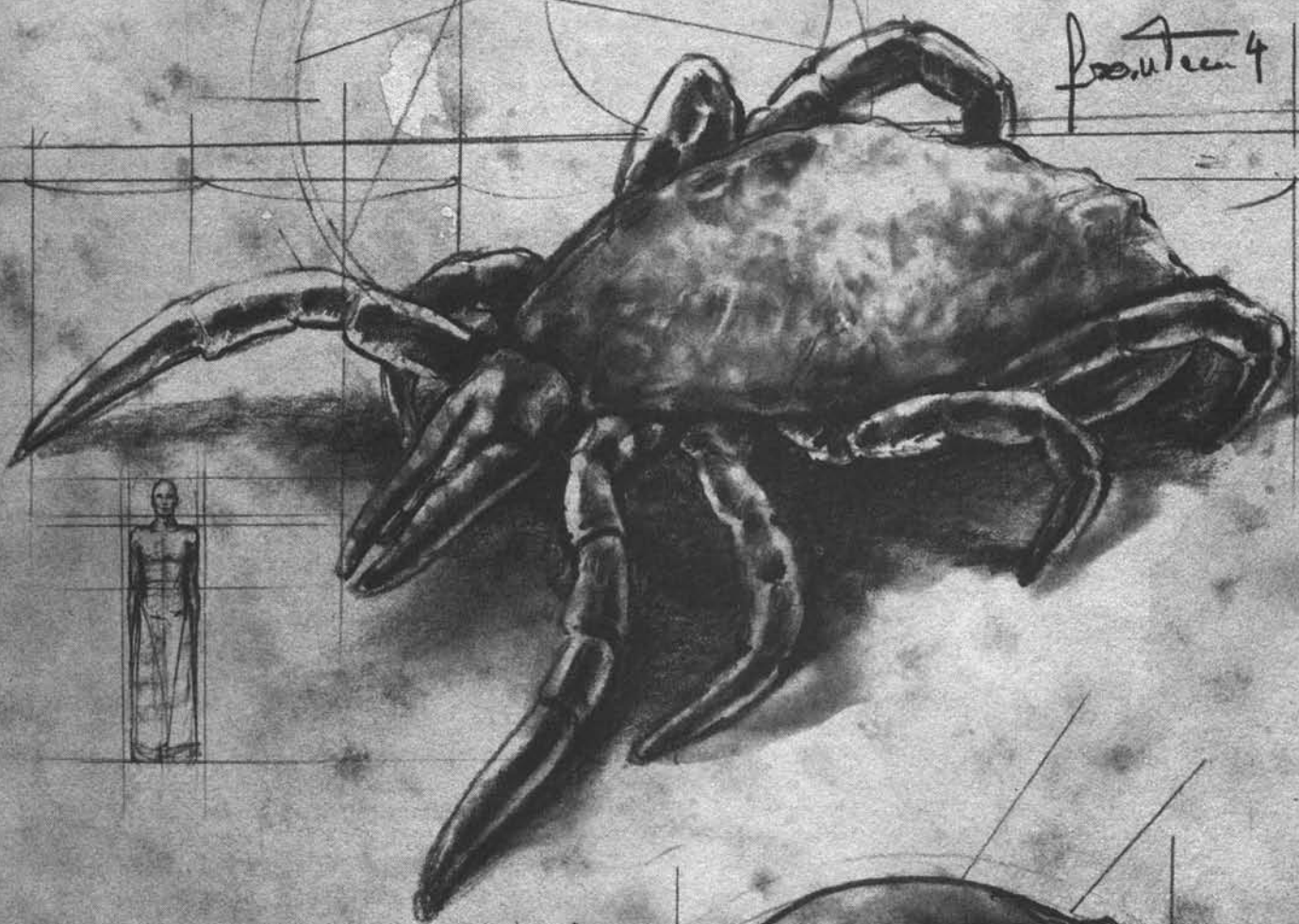
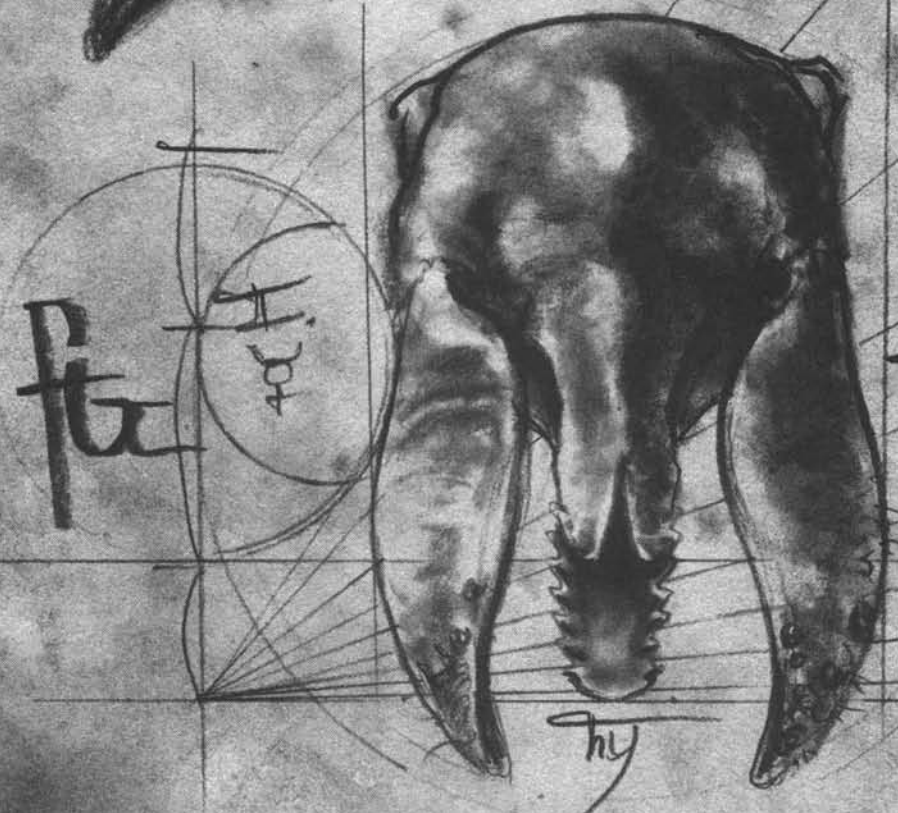


Plate 4



H. 20

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that it employs with breathtaking speed and precision to paralyze its opponents. Some kind of poison must be secreted from the tongue's knobby surface that paralyzes the victim and renders him helpless while the Collector of Souls either draws him in or crawls close enough to swallow him whole. Now that the flaccid body of the monster lies unmoving in front of me, I can study the tongue closely. It must be at least nine paces long and it is as thick as my thigh (which has grown considerably more muscular in the course of the past year). The creature's tongue may be even longer than that, but I do not dare to touch it because I know nothing of the poison's potency.

The six legs of the Collector are short, but strong. Like the rest of the body, they appear to be somehow out of shape. The gigantic abdomen indeed consists of a translucent, extremely sturdy leathery material. Bran must have had a good deal of trouble cutting it open. The victims of the Collector — nomadic savages to the last man — all died shortly after leaving their cruel prison. Many of them were already dead when the Templars tried to free them, while others survived the first few moments of their newfound freedom, despite their severe bite wounds, before perishing in excruciating pain. Overall, I counted twelve unfortunate victims, seven of whom must have already been dead, while the other five obviously were still alive when the Templars cut them from the abdomen. Their limbs have partially dissolved and are nothing more than undefined lumps. Their muscles are lying bare, since their skin has vanished almost entirely. The stench of digestive juices and rot is overwhelming. Appalled by the corpses, porters and Templars alike keep their distance from the titanic mount of flesh. Upon death, the Collector's skin has taken on a distinctively lighter shade of red. I assume this happened because the Collector's body fluids have stopped flowing, although I cannot be sure of this.

We have decided to rest here for the remainder of the day and to celebrate our small victory with our last skins of water and our porters' secret supply of delicious brandy, which they had kept quiet about until now. My examinations have been so time-consuming that night is already drawing near.

23rd January 2648

A humming noise roused me from deep sleep this morning. At first, I intended to blame the noise on last night's brandy, until I spotted several small dots on the horizon, closing very quickly. With a great amount of reeling and staggering, I rose to my feet to have a closer look at the phenomenon. Suddenly, I realized what it was — Dreamseed. I woke my companions and asked Bran to corroborate my observation. As I have already mentioned several times, I'm sure, his eyesight is far better than mine. Bran not only confirmed what I had seen, but he

also was more precise about nature and number of our enemies. They were Tainter-Dragonflies, one of the most common Dreamseed species of our time — the grunts of the Adversary's army, if you will. One of those creatures would not have meant any danger to us, for a single Tainter-Dragonfly is no match for an experienced and well-armed Templar. However, we were facing roughly twenty of those monsters, each of them armed with razor-sharp mandibles and poison stingers. Even our courageous Gabrielite Templars could not stand up to such overwhelming odds. Thus, Bran's first order was to look for cover.

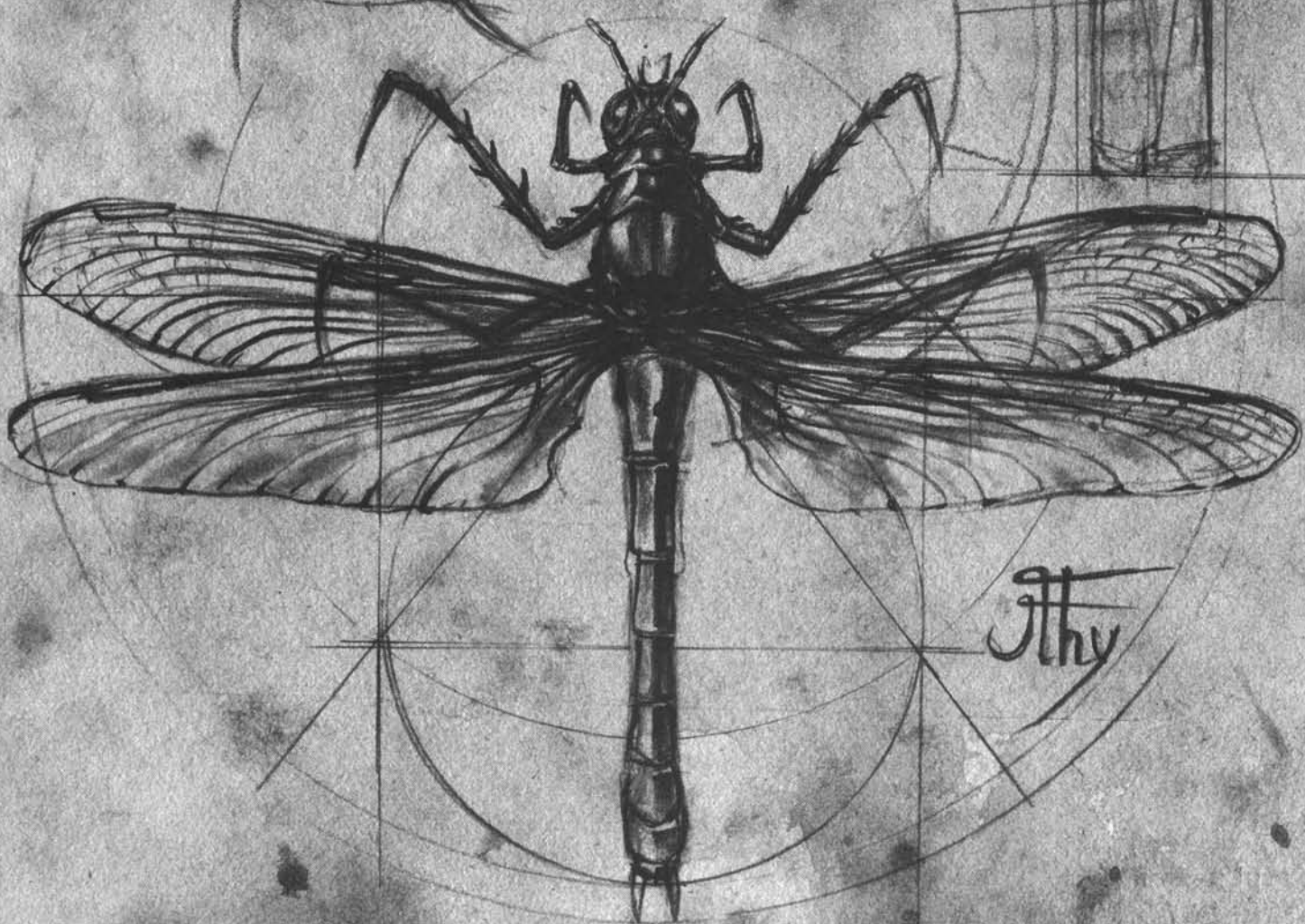
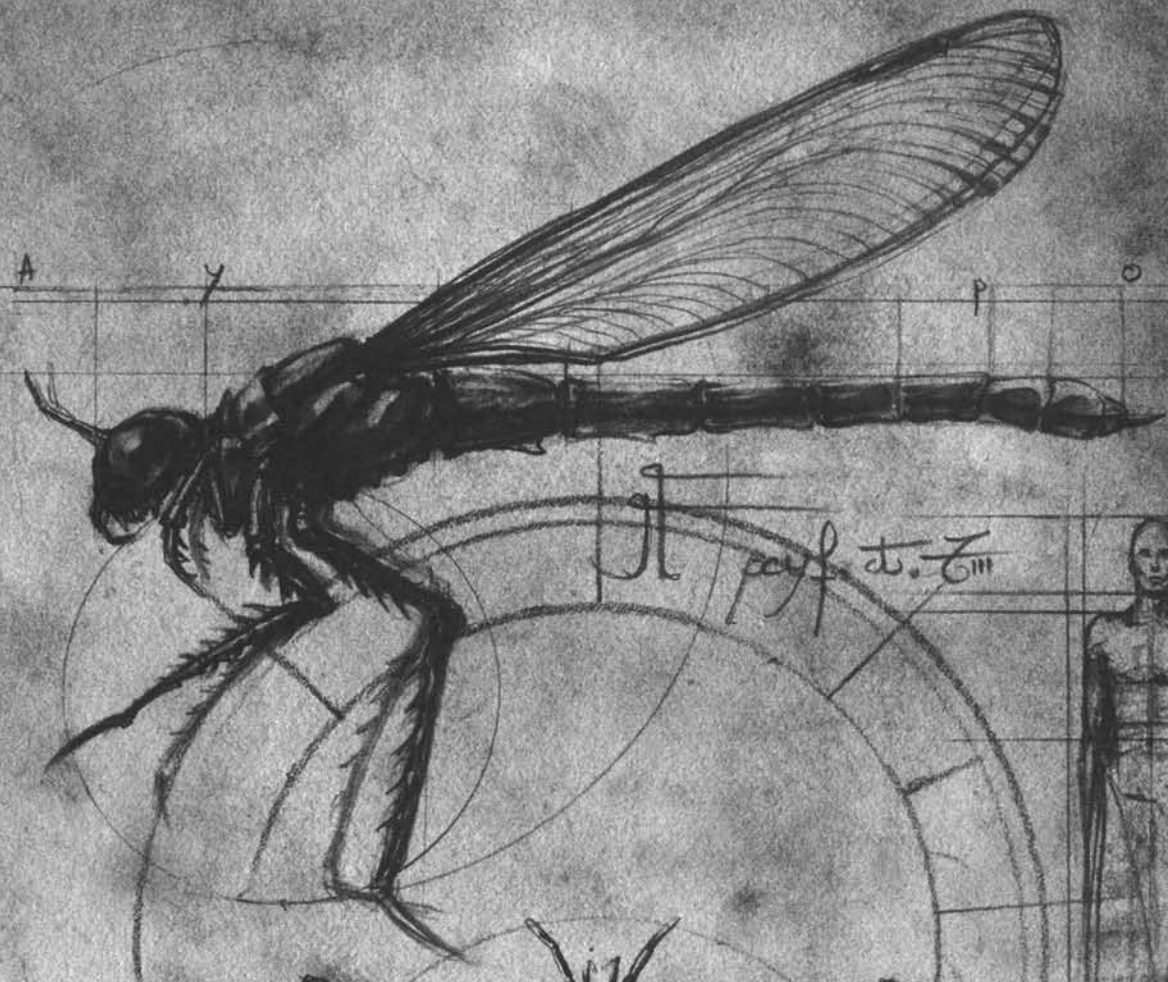
Fortunately, we had been wandering through rough terrain for the last few days. Thus, there were enough ledges behind which we could hide from the monsters' view. If we had encountered them a week earlier, we would have been done for, but now we stood at least a chance of survival.

We cowered behind various rock formations and waited for the enemy. The humming and droning of the man-sized wings was loud enough to make you think a thunderstorm had started to rage over our heads. Then the demons arrived. Unfortunately, I had chosen my hiding-place so poorly that I was unable to see what happened now near the Collector's body. At that moment, I did not really care. I only hoped that none of my companions would lose his self-control and try to flee, for he would never be able to escape the Dreamseed.

I watched how the demons soared over our heads. They turned around to fly over our position for a second time, before they turned in the direction of the carcass of their gigantic relative. A small number of them stayed airborne to search the area. Was it mere coincidence that the Tainter-Dragonflies arrived here so shortly after their demonic brethren's death? Or does their arrival offer further proof of a mental communication system, as I had assumed earlier? I strongly doubt that the Tainter-Dragonflies' arrival here at precisely this moment was sheer coincidence. I believe that the Collector of Souls must have called them here somehow prior to its demise.

But we have more pressing problems to deal with right now. I do not dare to imagine what will happen if those creatures decide to stay here until hunger and thirst force us to leave our hiding-places. Since there is nothing else for me to do, I shall continue to write down today's events in my book. The demons seem to have left the air above us, so I will venture to look about....

The majority of the demonic squadron has already started to feast on the remains of the Collector's victims. Thus, the question whether we want to bury the bodies is no longer of any relevance. Thus far, all my companions have remained calm. I have to praise them for their patience. Hieronymus — who sits next to me — has just wished that his eyes would return to the sorry state they were in two days ago, because then he would not have to



Dear Pistor, I have to admit I was sorely tempted to make Hieronymus' wish of sealed eyes come true by hitting him in the face ensuring that he would not be able to open them for a very long time to come. But he had grown dear to me and I was well aware that he did not really mean what he said, so I abstained from this act.

watch this grisly scene. However, I do not take him too seriously, for his blindness has been a time of great suffering for all of us, and especially for him, since he was unable to work on his maps. (It was even worse for me, though; as soon as he had opened his eyes again, he started to reproach me for the many mistakes I have made in continuing his work on the maps, even to the point of wondering aloud how I ever made it into the service of the Angelitic Church⁹.)

The Tainter-Dragonflies will not leave. Greedily, they have begun to devour the Collector of Souls itself. This strikes me as quite odd, for it constitutes an act of cannibalism; the different Dreamseed species have to be considered as a part of a greater whole. The various species are merely slight deviations from the whole, it would seem, just like some people have large noses while other have a darker tone of skin. Nevertheless, they are all part of the same race. I must think on this.

It is late afternoon and my back is aching. Certainly, the others do not fare any better than me in their hiding-places. Hieronymus has fallen asleep. He almost gave us all away with his thunderous snoring, but I saved the day with a spirited blow to his belly. The once again airborne Tainter-Dragonflies are high up, moving in constantly expanding circles, nothing more than black, glittering dots in the steel-blue sky. They have finished their dirty work on the ground. No trace of the impure spawn remains on the battlefield. Not a single bone, not a single piece of flesh, not even the armor plates. The jaws grinding on steel-hard chitin gave me the creeps. I am extraordinarily glad that that is over. As elegant and agile as these demons might appear in flight, their way of scuttling on the ground is so bizarre and grotesque that it almost sickened me.

Ah, wait, what is this? Praise the Lord, they are flying away! I would not have been able to stand their presence nor watch their atrocities any longer. Hieronymus has been roused by the beatings of their wings. Bran is even more excited than before and I think I know what upsets him: The creatures came from the direction of our destination, and they also returned there. What if Batumi is in the clutches of the Dreamseed? Or worse, what if Batumi has been razed to the ground? Where can we restock our provisions then?

Nightfall: We walked in silence for the rest of the day.

25th January 2648

Finally, Batumi lies just ahead of us. The fear that has been gripping us for two days now has grown more tangible — the fear of heading toward death and corruption. Moreover, we are constantly

aware that the flying minions of the Lord of the Flies could return at any second. At least for now, that fear has not become reality. One hour's march away from Batumi, we can already see that the town is bustling with activity. Obviously, there is nothing in the town's direct vicinity its inhabitants would have to fear.

For some reason, the sound of countless beating wings is creeping into my thoughts, not unlike the noise of the Tainter-Dragonflies. Is this an ill omen, or rather the return of the voices that tried in the past to possess me? But no — it only takes a look at Bran, who is walking next to me while I am checking on my diary, to see that I am not the only one who hears the deep humming sound. I do not have to look behind us — now is not the time to write.

Again, it is hard for me to recount the events of this day with the care and detail necessary. Nevertheless, I will try my best. The Tainter-Dragonflies eventually must have caught our trail and started to follow us. Our ensuing escape was a torture indeed. Even though the Dreamseed creatures were still far away when we noticed they had returned, they were catching up with us very quickly, and after the hardships of the recent weeks our legs were already as heavy as lead. Yet we started to run; what else was there for us to do? We managed to stay close together for the first half-mile and to maintain most of the distance between us and the monsters. Eventually, however, exhaustion set in and our head start melted away. Hieronymus and the porters tired more than the rest of us. Just as Bran wanted to give the order to halt our retreat and face the enemy (which would most certainly have meant our deaths), we saw a small house ahead, to our left by the side of the road. We dashed toward it with renewed vigor, thinking we had found shelter, when something unimaginable happened that will surely change my view of the world for all time.

When we opened the decaying door of the house, Bran and I stopped dead in our tracks, thunderstruck. While I at first attributed the sight before my eyes to a frightened and weary mind, I quickly had to accept it as harsh reality when I realized that Bran would be unlikely to suffer from exactly the same delusion as me. A creature, half-human, half-insect, stared at us with malevolent eyes, giving the impression that it was as startled to see us as we were to encounter it in this small house. The creature was at least two meters tall and possessed two pairs of arms, one with sharp claws instead of fingernails, the other with two scythe-like horn blades instead of proper hands. Apart from a normal pair of human eyes, several more pairs of eyes resembling those of a spider were spaced randomly on its head. Vile mandibles twitched where a mouth should have been. We were trapped. In front of us stood a hair-raising abomination about which we knew nothing,

while in our back a veritable squadron of Tainter-Dragonflies waited, all too eager to tear us to shreds.

The creature made the decision for us as to which monster we should face by attacking us, uttering sounds that might have been words once but, due to the altered physiology of the speaker, were nothing more than clicks and grunts. Thank the Lord, Bran was level headed enough to ready his weapon, while I simply stood and stared at that which I could not fathom. I had heard stories about the so-called **Tempted**, men and women who form a sinister pact with the Lord of the Flies in order to be granted his twisted "blessings." I had never thought these stories to be true, and I still would not do so if I had not seen this creature with my own eyes. Bran had difficulty keeping the Tempted at bay while the rest of our companions arrived at the small house one after the other. Several times the Templar's hasta almost cut my head from the shoulders as he swung it about in his mighty battle with the abomination. Since utter confusion ruled in the crowded room, I dropped to my knees and crawled out of the danger zone on hands and knees. Poor Hieronymus was hit a blow from the haft of a Templar's hasta just as he entered the treacherous safety of the house, sending the old cartographer sprawling to the floor.

A few moments later, Bran had pushed the Tempted back into a corner with the help of two other Templars. The repulsive creature did not turn idle there, however. Rather, it ripped the wooden wall behind it to pieces as if it were paper, escaping through the hole it had thus torn. My rash joy turned to sheer terror very quickly. Probably the Tainter-Dragonflies would not have been able to get into the house before, but now a two-meter hole in the wall had turned our bastion into a death trap. Like a flock of frightened birds, we ran about looking for shelter from the Dreamseed demons that now began to pour in through the hole. I fled upstairs to the second floor, when helpless Hieronymus came to my mind. My old friend was nowhere to be seen when I looked for him on the first floor, which was now crowded with Templars and Dreamseed creatures locked in vicious battle. After a moment of frantic searching I caught a glimpse of Hieronymus. Together with two of our porters, he was cowering under a table, trying not become the target of a Tainter-Dragonfly's attention. Considering the circumstances, he did a remarkably good job. Since I could not help him in this situation, I made to retreat upstairs when I was hit in the head by a blow. At least, I suppose I must have been hit, even though I do not remember it, just as I do not remember any other details of our fight with the Dreamseed spawn from that point onward. Bran later told me all about it.

Apparently, the malicious and surprisingly cunning Tainter-Dragonflies had taken advantage of the fact that the roof was rather dilapidated by

squeezing their claws through the gaps between the shingles, seeking to pry them up in an attempt to gain ingress. When I was hit in the head by one of the descending Dreamseed, I lost consciousness and would surely have been eaten had Bran and his Templars not already defeated the enemies on the first floor, and been thus able to rush to my aid.

Now I am lying in a bed in an inn in Batumi, wearing a rather bulky, bloody bandage around my head. All the other members of our party have miraculously survived the incident more or less unharmed. Hieronymus has a few bruises and his head also hurts, but at least his encounter with the blunt end of a hasta has not left any open wounds. Furthermore, Bran confided in me that our triumph does not belong to us alone, for apparently we received help from a group of men from Batumi. I will get to know those men pretty soon; Bran has told me that they seemed quite knowledgeable about finding Brandland guides. They could be of use to us.

28th January 2648

Batumi has a unique flair all of its own. When I look out of the window, it appears peaceful somehow, even idyllic. I had conceived it quite differently in my imagination. Still, the air is stifling, and in spite of the fact that the Inferno must have passed near here centuries ago, the heavy smell of fire and smoke hangs in every corner and every piece of furniture in my room, even though the furniture itself cannot possibly be centuries old. Bran has just told me that the men who helped us to vanquish the Dreamseed will not find the time to talk with us this month, because they have another job to do. My admittedly rude curses and Bran's repeated reminders that we are on a holy mission could not bring those people to change their minds. Bran told me these men followed a certain code of honor that turns any agreement of verbal character into a binding contract, and they had sworn their services elsewhere for a time. Thus we had to put up with our fate. Meanwhile, nobody in Batumi has heard of a Tempted here, and the Tempted himself has not resurfaced. Nevertheless, I will keep my eyes open.

22nd February 2648

The men who saved our lives a month ago have kept their promise. Yesterday, they sent word of their return and they want to meet with us tomorrow. Now that I am back to full health I am burning to continue my journey. When Bran told those people a month ago that we would like to travel into the Brandland, they laughed at him, as the Armatura told me later. Tomorrow I will try to convince them to find a Brandland guide for us as soon as possible, even though they cannot expect to be paid for their aid, since we are running out of Manna. The only

book two: towards the brandland corridor

10 Most certainly they could. Roma Aeterna being only thousands of kilometers away, those men were well aware that the Pontifex Maximus' grace would amount to nothing in such distant reaches of Eastern Europe.

reward they will receive, I think, is the glory and the kindness of Our Lord, personified in His spokesman on Earth, the Pontifex Maximus. Certainly, they cannot refuse such an offer.¹⁰

The people of Batumi have eventually gotten used to us after having tried to avoid us in the beginning. It appears that making friends is easier in a city on the edge of the world. During the last few weeks there have been occasional attacks by Dreamseed creatures, but we have not been in any real danger, or so it seems. The locals follow a very simple strategy: If there are signs for an imminent attack by the Dreamseed on their city, they hide in the basements of their houses until scouts returning from their patrols signal an end to the threat. Otherwise, they simply pay no attention to the demons with a stoic calm, as if the demons did not actually exist. I know it sounds unlikely or even crazy, but that is the way it is. Dreamseed and locals simply pay no attention to each other. Is the solution I have been looking for so simple in the end? Is it possible that the people of Batumi have lost their fear of the Brandland beasts over time and that said beasts are no longer interested in the unafraid humans? I will have to find out for myself. I do not know how, but I am sure that I will come up with an idea.

23rd february 2648

Today is the day. We will continue our travels and face new hazards. This afternoon we are going to meet with the men who can hopefully help our mission. I will count our Manna and have the porters restock our supplies. Hieronymus finally listened to my pleas and has sent a trustworthy messenger carrying the majority of his maps to Roma Aeterna in order to reduce the weight of our gear. Personally, I have been unable to part with my journals. Maybe I will not have the opportunity to do so in the near future, even though I have sworn to find a way to get my diaries to safety if something bad happened to me. It is too late now anyway. All that matters now is to face the enemy with all due determination.

As it has turned out, Bran knew all along that the men who were supposed to get us to the Brandland guides were actually Brandland guides themselves. According to him, he only kept silent about this in order to spare me unnecessary excitement

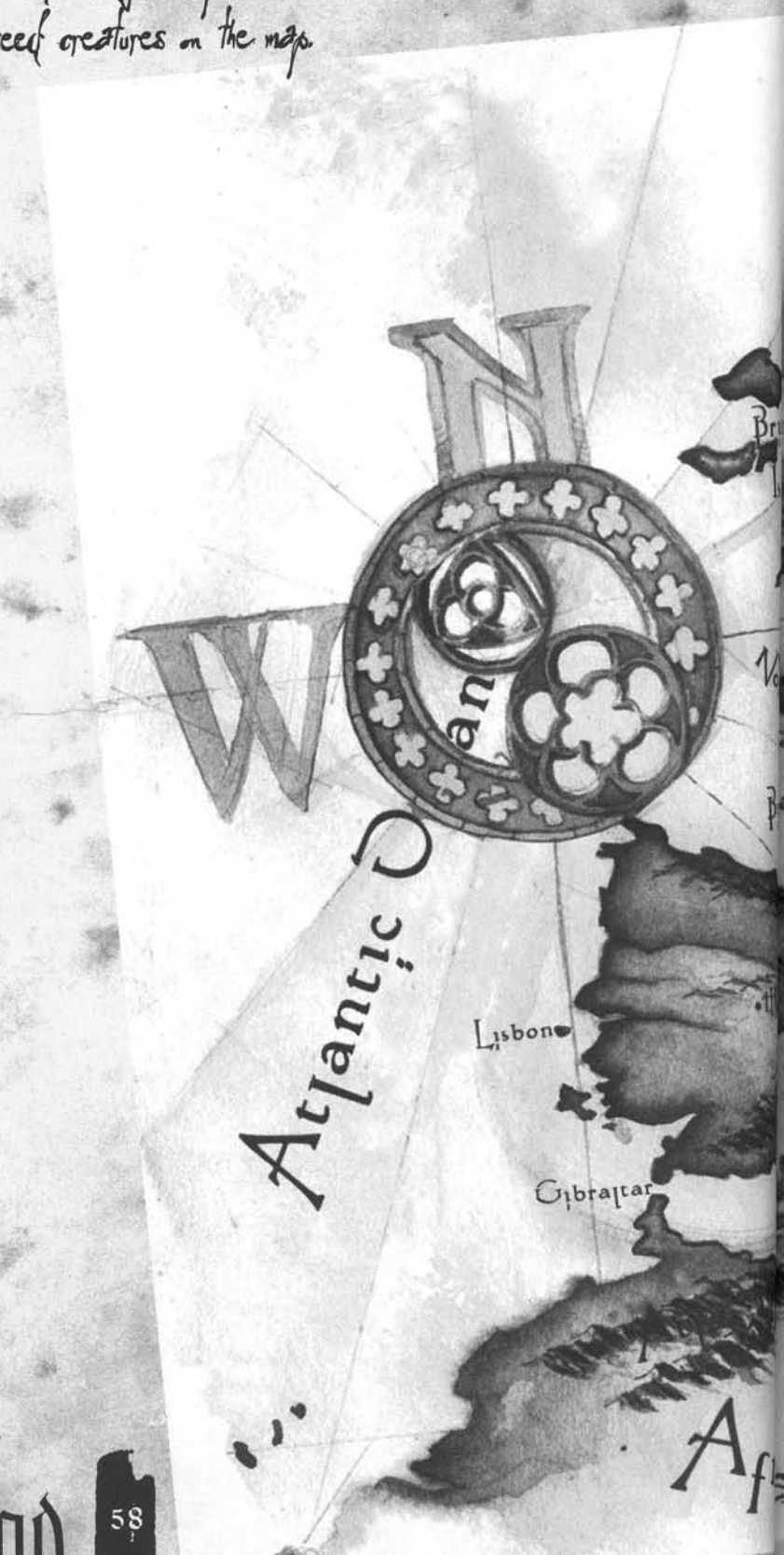
and to keep me from acting rashly. Moreover, it would not have made much of a difference, because the guides had a mission of their own to accomplish before they could turn to our needs. They would not talk about this other mission and I cannot blame them for it.

The four men were already waiting for us, when we arrived at the place we were supposed to meet them in the early afternoon. Their leader, a small but incredibly wiry and dark-skinned man by the name of Faraque, did not waste any time. He quoted me the amount we were to pay (I do not want to repeat it here), which made me shiver and sweat at the same time. I told him the amount I was prepared to pay them for their services and the four men started laughing in earnest, which annoyed me a great deal considering our situation. After we had paid for the second or third round of the finest brandy, the gap between our expectations and those of the Brandland guides slowly started to close. In the evening we eventually came to an agreement, but it was not exactly what I had originally hoped for. To pay the "exceptionally fair" price they demanded for a tour through the Brandland we had to agree to "partake of the hardships of such a journey" — whatever that should mean. Furthermore, we had to leave our porters behind, because Faraque did not have enough of the strange devices one has to wear when entering Brandland. Since he insisted on taking the Templars along for reasons of our own safety, a different solution to the problem had to be found. As I saw leaving behind our porters as the only alternative, I agreed to Faraque's precondition which took care of another problem; due to the high price the Brandland guides demanded for their services, I could no longer really afford to pay the porters in any case. Unfortunately, I am at a loss how we are supposed to take all our equipment with us now that we will leave our porters behind. We shall have to decide quickly, though, for we have made an appointment to depart tomorrow morning, as soon as the pale sun sends the first ray of light through the gray clouds.

This entry concludes the second part of my documentary on my journeys and the Dreamseed that I encountered, in all its various forms. The third part will deal with the true horrors and abominable atrocities of the Brandland, and with the giants and leviathans the Lord of the Flies sends against humanity in his madness.



Note: I took the liberty to include a map for you here that will give you an idea of our route. Hieronymus was not willing to give me one of his maps but I managed to borrow one of the early works from his study. I have included it here so it will not get lost. I have marked our way through Europe as well as several important sites of encounters with Dreamseed creatures on the map.





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agnificat anima mea dominum

b o o k



erunt nostri ad 60 dominum nostrum

there:
a sort of
homecoming

in which our excursion comes full
circle, depicting those
mind-boggling Leviathans which dwarfed
our worst nightmares and fears.

Six weeks passed before we took the most crucial step into the unknown.

The journey to Donez, the city where we wanted to start our expedition, turned out to be rather dull, with few exceptions like our choice of transportation. I do not want to bore either Pontifex Maximus Petrus Secundus or the revered Konsistorium with a tedious account of our problems in finding a suitable ship. Therefore, I would like to continue with the next challenge our party had to face, when for the first time within living memory an official delegation of the Angelitic Church entered Brandland, the proverbial lion's den.

16th april 2648

For over a month now, stifling black smoke and twilight have been our companions while traveling along the Brandland border. The smoke still seems very eerie to me. My dreams are troubling me; during the course of our entire journey my sleep has never been as uneasy as it has been during the last few weeks — with the possible exception of that fateful night over a year ago when we lost Benitorio and actually had to face Dreamseed creatures for the first time.

book three: a sort of homecoming

Faraque and his fogleman Eli are still not in a very talkative mood. None of my questions concerning the Brandland's black heart have been answered to my satisfaction. They simply keep telling me that they belong to those chosen few who have seen the lands beyond the curtain of smoke more than once. I start to mistrust them, since they have given this rather trite answer a little too often. I admit that I was wary of the four Brandland guides right from the beginning, and I only agreed to be led into the unknown by them at Bran's urging. Surely, our problems in communicating with each other must add to my distrust; as far as I can tell they only understand half of what I try to tell them. Hieronymus has fewer problems in communicating with them, for his linguistic talents allow him to get a good grasp on foreign dialects rather quickly. The strange devices one of our guides has stored in his cart frighten me. Faraque said something about air supply and security measures when I asked him about the shiny apparatus. Now that I have to put them on, I get the impression we are trying to disguise ourselves; with these huge round discs of glass in front of our eyes and rubber trunks stretching from our noses to the machine on the cart, I feel as if we seek to transform into Dreamseed creatures ourselves, or at least that we are trying to look like them. My loyalty to the tenets of the Angelitic Church is being put to a thorough test, since I have been taught to regard technology as heresy and the work of the Adversary ever since I was a small boy. Now I find myself in the precarious situation of being forced to depend on such deviltry if I want to enter the Brandland in the Church's service. However, I assume the Pontifex Maximus and the revered Konsistorium were aware of such a possibility, and will forgive me for violating the rules of the Angelitic Church regarding technological heresy in order to accomplish my mission.

My first attempt to put on the smelly mask made of leather and rubber failed miserably, as retching almost overwhelmed me. Right now, I do not dare to give it another try, fearing to fall once again victim to my anxiety and trepidation. I will have to find a solution somehow before we enter the darkness tomorrow.

17th april 2648

This morning, my knees still were weak from fear. However, my excitement is reaching an unexpected intensity now that I have put my panic aside and can even keep on writing while wearing the bizarre mask. We have been moving toward the black center of the Brandland for about three hours now, and I do not have words to describe my feelings.

Vegetation is scarce. Everything is covered with a fine, grayish-white layer of ash, reminding me of snow-covered lands that Engel returning to the

Himmel at Prague after long voyages to the far north have told me about. The leafless tress we saw during the beginning of our push into the Brandland are giving way to small, crippled stumps devoid of life, and the occasional patches of grass are brown and withered. I wish I could describe the smell of the smoke around us, but the mask hinders me from smelling more than my own bad breath.

The light of my lantern is barely strong enough to illuminate the pages of my journal. I hope it will not get much darker so we will not have to feel our way like moles. The clattering and rattling from our guides' talismanic poles is extremely enervating. I am coping with another wave of nausea. As I have stopped noticing the monotonous moaning and stomping of the machine supplying me with breathable air, the only thing still annoying me is the rope tied around my hip, which makes me stagger and sway when my companions stop all too suddenly or try to sidestep a pothole without warning.

Only now do I realize into what a perilous place I have entered. When Faraque said a few hours ago we would not be able to lead a conversation for a long time I did not pay much attention to the comment. The relatively short period of our silence seems like ages to me now, however. I fear I will start talking to myself soon in order to cope with the loneliness.

We have set up camp for the first time. I begin to realize that I cannot tell what time of day it is. Light conditions do not change here, but if my instincts can be trusted, night should by now have fallen. Yet this is of no consequence in the Brandland. The fire of our camp, which we have kindled with wood we carried with us to this Godforsaken place, burns just brightly enough to illuminate our immediate vicinity. Here and there shadowy figures seem to move within the veil of smoke, attracted by the fire. Maybe the fire reminds them of the time when this strip of land had been in the fiery embrace of a gigantic inferno. I am not sure what scares me more: the certainty that huge monsters are waiting for us somewhere out there in the dark, or the fact that we have to sit around the fire in silence, connected to heretical machines by these smelly masks. I am undecided. The more I think about it, the more I understand that the Dreamseed creatures are not simply "out there" in some vague direction, not merely a nebulous threat, but that we have actually trespassed on their territory. If (when?) they attack us here, we are doomed.

I feel so very tired, as if we have already wandered through this hostile landscape for days. Again and again, I feel like my head will explode any minute, but every time the pressure seems to disappear as fast as it came. I remember Faraque mentioning pressure equalization before we set out on our expedition. I chide myself for not having paid enough attention to his words when he was explaining



his damned machines. He said something about an increase in air pressure that would set in as soon as we pushed into the Brandland corridor.

My head hurts, and I would freely give my last Manna to breathe fresh air again and take this mask off.

19th april 2648?

Our journey already has continued for two periods of sleep now. I fear I must start now use this rough measure of time because I cannot tell for sure how many days have actually passed. The air that I am breathing smells staler and staler, and I can only hope that this is a normal phenomenon. The shadowy figures all around us come dangerously close more frequently, and it is merely a question of time as to when the first Dreamseed creature will attack us. Meanwhile, we have learned to communicate reasonably well via simple eye contact. I think Bran shares my concerns about our situation. The monotony of the scenery and of our trek allows me ample time to contemplate this place quite extensively, and I have reached the conclusion that either the normally vicious demons of the Dreamseed have indeed failed to take notice of us, or else they do not want to attack us for some unknown reasons. Where will our journey into the unknown end? Are the cunning monsters planning to let us waltz right into their sanctum, so we can see the truth behind their existence — whatever that may be — before they devour us? I fear I am closer to the truth than I would like to be. What use is it to either the Angelitic Church or to myself that someday a gigantic Dreamseed creature will appear at the gates of the Himmel at Roma Aeterna and vomit forth my skeleton? What a mockery would it be if this journey ends in meaningless death despite all my efforts, if we end up being swallowed by a Collector of Souls or some even more gruesome creature?

But my thoughts grow clouded — I was the one who strove for this Brandland expedition. To whine so now is disgraceful. Yet I am almost overwhelmed by hunger. Until today (whatever day this is) I had refused to subject myself to the wearisome procedure of eating that Faraque has shown us. First, a tube beneath the long supply hose is unscrewed and one of the food sticks — which look so disgusting that it almost makes me retch, being reminiscent of human feces — is inserted into the tube. Then, the tube is closed again. A strange mechanism allows the wearer of the mask to discharge the foul air within the tube and eat through a small opening at the same time. My taste buds have suffered dearly. The sausage has no taste. At best, there is a subtle flavor of old leather mixed with the taste of iron. Maybe one of the concentrate's components is blood. It keeps us from starving anyway.

We have stopped for a moment on the edge of a large crevice in the ground, it seems. As I am marching in the fourth place of the line, I cannot see what has made Faraque, Bran, and Eli stop.

I am distressed about what we have found. Our sudden halt a few minutes ago was not due to fatigue, but rather served to afford an investigation of a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. We are standing on the edge of a crater, which on closer inspection has turned out to be the gigantic maw of some incredibly large creature, it would appear. I find that I cannot be amazed, so many terrible and inconceivable sights have we encountered before now.

Imperceptibly, some sort of strange tissue had replaced the glassy ground we had been marching on. It was unclear whether the new surface consisted of natural rock or whether it was an artificially created structure. Jagged spikes reminiscent of teeth within the mouth of some failed experiment alternated with more amorphous forms similar to the inner organs of an animal. Here, at the center of this curious change, the strange structures united to form something like an infinitely large maw protected by huge thorns around the rim. The walls of the maw seemed to slope gently toward the center of the earth.

Eli and Faraque were communicating via a series of complex gestures. It seemed as if they were planning to circle the crater. I have torn out a page from my journal to show my companions with simple symbols and a few arrows that I wanted to climb down the maw to learn more about it. The silent discourse between the members of our party seems to take hours. Bran is doing a respectable job of trying to plead my case (at least I think so). He is tenacious, although our guides do not seem ready to deviate an iota from their decision.

We have reached an agreement at last. Even though it is not entirely to my satisfaction, one tends to grasp at straws in situations like these if one does not want to go mad. The two guides are still unwilling to follow us down into the maw, but they have at least agreed to wait at the edge of the abyss for the rest of us to return. Bran is unfastening the rope that served as our lifeline to reality from Eli and is taking the lead now. Initially, I wanted to be in his position, but the Armatura suggested that it would be much too dangerous for me to take the lead, in case of an attack. We depart after a short, somewhat cool goodbye. Faraque's and Eli's faces reveal that they expect it to be a last goodbye. I would not be surprised if they take their heels as soon as we are out of sight. Fortunately, I have managed to take the compass, so the guides would be forced to head into the darkness without any means of orientation. I guess this will keep them from leaving us behind in the smoke. I have to stop writing now, because the descent requires too much concentration to do two things simultaneously.

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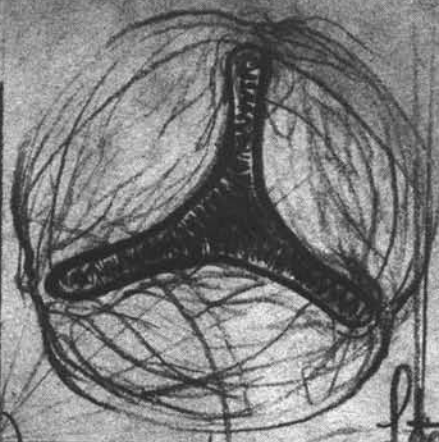


fig I

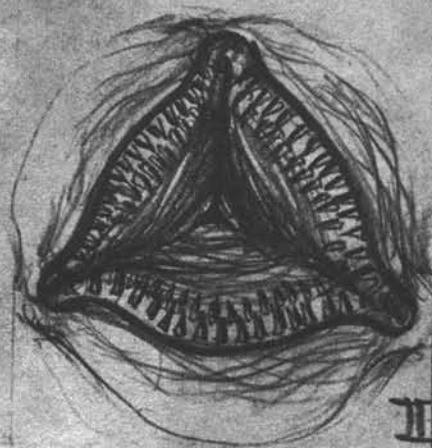


fig II



I write this now in retrospect, as I sit with my companions here in the mist.

We wound down deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth, our number now reduced to six: two Monarchs and four Templars against all the Dreamseed of the Brandland. I recall feeling a great pressure that threatened to make my head burst, but which returned to normal shortly before we finished our descent. We seemed to enter a living organism, for the ground beneath our feet pounded rhythmically as if floods of blood were pumped by a gigantic heart to the most distant parts of a titanic body. Fear gripped me, not for the first time, when I thought of the possibility that the gargantuan maw above us could close with a loud smack, making it impossible for us to return to the surface. But no such thing happened for the few hours of our expedition. We eventually reached a sort of terrace from where we could get an acceptable overall view. Where I had had the feeling we were approaching the bottom of a huge funnel, the cavern we were in now actually broadened. To be more precise, it broadened so much that we could not see the other side. Then, the smoke cleared momentarily, and I suddenly realized what purpose this mind-boggling maw served; the voices in my head laughed at me while I banished theory after theory from my reeling mind.

In plain view, horrible creatures of all sizes and shapes rose from the mists that emanated from deep down beneath us. Some of the creatures appeared as if they were still nothing more than raw clods, ideas sprung from a twisted mind. When I looked more closely, however, they took shape, forming horrors that I do not want to remember and will not capture on paper, because I fear that they will come and put an end to my life as soon as I summon them from my memories. Standing on the terrace, I was convinced that dying on the spot was far more preferable an option than to live in the knowledge that such creatures exist.

The Lord of the Flies has invented the most powerful weapon in the world: Fear. I guess I have found the origin of our tormentors and we are standing right in the middle of it, in the womb of our fears and sorrows, having descended through the proverbial Hell-mouth itself. Words alone cannot offer proof to the claims I dare make, but there can be no other solution; everything matches up so perfectly. The most horrible thing is, however, that there can be no escape, for how could mankind be taught to fear no more, how could they be relieved of the dread they must feel day after day? Moreover, there is absolutely no chance to fool them into believing that their fears are unjustified, that everything might turn out all right in the end — for who could tell if there is not a tiny spark of panic sleeping in us all, waiting to set our neighbor's mind on fire as soon as he is confronted with new terrors? And

who can say whether the Lord of the Flies has not even more terrifying creatures in store? My turbulent thoughts make me dizzy —

The horrors were far from over; it was impossible for me to rest a while to catch my breath. Worse, I was not the only one to be shaken by our observations. The others were affected as well, their souls and their sanity likewise shaken. Dear Hieronymus, especially, who had struggled with headaches and labored breathing throughout our expedition into the black smoke, was barely able to remain standing, hit hard as he was by the sight in front of us. The fact that the sights had not been restricted to my own deluded and cloudy mind, but were rather a shock that struck our party to the last man, did not encourage me in the least. My devastation grew when I looked at Bran, who had always seemed to me firm as a rock. He looked fragile and vulnerable, like a newborn baby; the absolute certainty had struck him too that humanity was fighting a losing battle. Every minute the specters around us grew in numbers. We had to return to the surface or we were doomed.

The monsters stayed at our side for hours, and I am surprised to be sane after such mental pain and anguish. The higher we climbed, the more the creatures took shape and the more horrible their appearance became. New forms constantly merged with those already present, and every time I thought to have seen all the horrors that could possibly exist in this wide world, more grotesque forms joined the carnival of dread. None of them attacked us, but I wished time and again they had, as that would at least have distracted me from the insane dance of shapes and specters clouding my mind. In the end, we realized too late that we had reached the upper edge of the Broodmother, and lost our balance, falling one upon the other. My air supply was almost cut off when Bran came to rest on the supply hose. I would have suffocated miserably, which I would have regarded as a blessing under these circumstances, but my will to live prevailed, and I was able to call the shaken Armatura's attention to my dire situation.

The name of Broodmother for this species seems appropriate to me, although I am not certain whether it is in fact a sentient Dreamseed demon in its own right, or simply a gate to Hell. Always before now, my first thought has always been the most fitting when it came to naming new species, and the first association I had here was of a gigantic breeding machine for Dreamseed creatures, giving birth to unspeakable horrors conceived from our gathered fears. How pointless it seemed to me to classify the Dreamseed now that I had learned that the demons could take any shape imaginable! Nevertheless, I have a mission to accomplish and I will not permit my own doubts and impressions to lead me astray.



We have just returned to the edge of the Brandland corridor, where new horrors were revealed to us that force other concerns aside for a time. Our guides, Faraque and Eli, have not disappeared as I had suspected they would. They have not been devoured by demons, either. They have simply died, sitting back to back. And — Good Lord, spare me from the ramifications of this thought! — but they look like they have been dead for months. Under their masks only empty eye sockets stared at us, accusingly, and their bare, bleached bones indicated foul play of the worst sort. Am I to blame for their deaths? Was it possible that they actually starved to death? But no, we have not been away long enough for this to have happened, and our supplies were far from depleted when we started our expedition into the maw. I must know.

Yes, I fear that, somehow, they ran out of food and water, and, since they had had no means of orientation because their compass rested in my pocket, they have just sat here and starved to death in this horrible place.

No! What am I writing? It cannot be — it simply cannot be. Is this another trick of some creature of the Tempter, perhaps even a trick of the Adversary himself? We were in the Broodmother's maw no longer than a few hours, surely. How can it be that the two guides starved to death in such a small amount of time? And even though I had their compass, they might have found their way back simply by following the supply hose. At least if there had been danger they could have given us a sign by pulling on one of our hoses.

Or maybe they did pull at one of our hoses? Did I not have the feeling time and again on my way down that something was pulling on my artificial umbilical cord? Did I not dismiss it as the sharp edges and ledges trying to latch onto the hose? Nothing is clear, nothing is certain. No, that is not true. One thing is certain: We must flee this place at once!

We are out. When I had turned away from the new horrors of our dead guides to look into the eyes of my remaining companions, our expedition into the Brandland turned instantly into a flight from the darkness by silent mutual accord. Without the help of our experienced Brandland guides, we groped systematically, frantically along the supply hoses toward freedom. The longer our flight took, the more fearful we all became. Frequently, I found myself looking back over my shoulder, noticing that my companions did the same. As if I had dearly hoped to find proof for my concerns, I suddenly realized we were indeed being pursued. The shadows around us condensed and formed legs and claws. With every new shadow, our hope of leaving the Brandland alive diminished. Bran was the only one who gathered his courage and wanted to face the enemy, but he was unable to unfasten himself

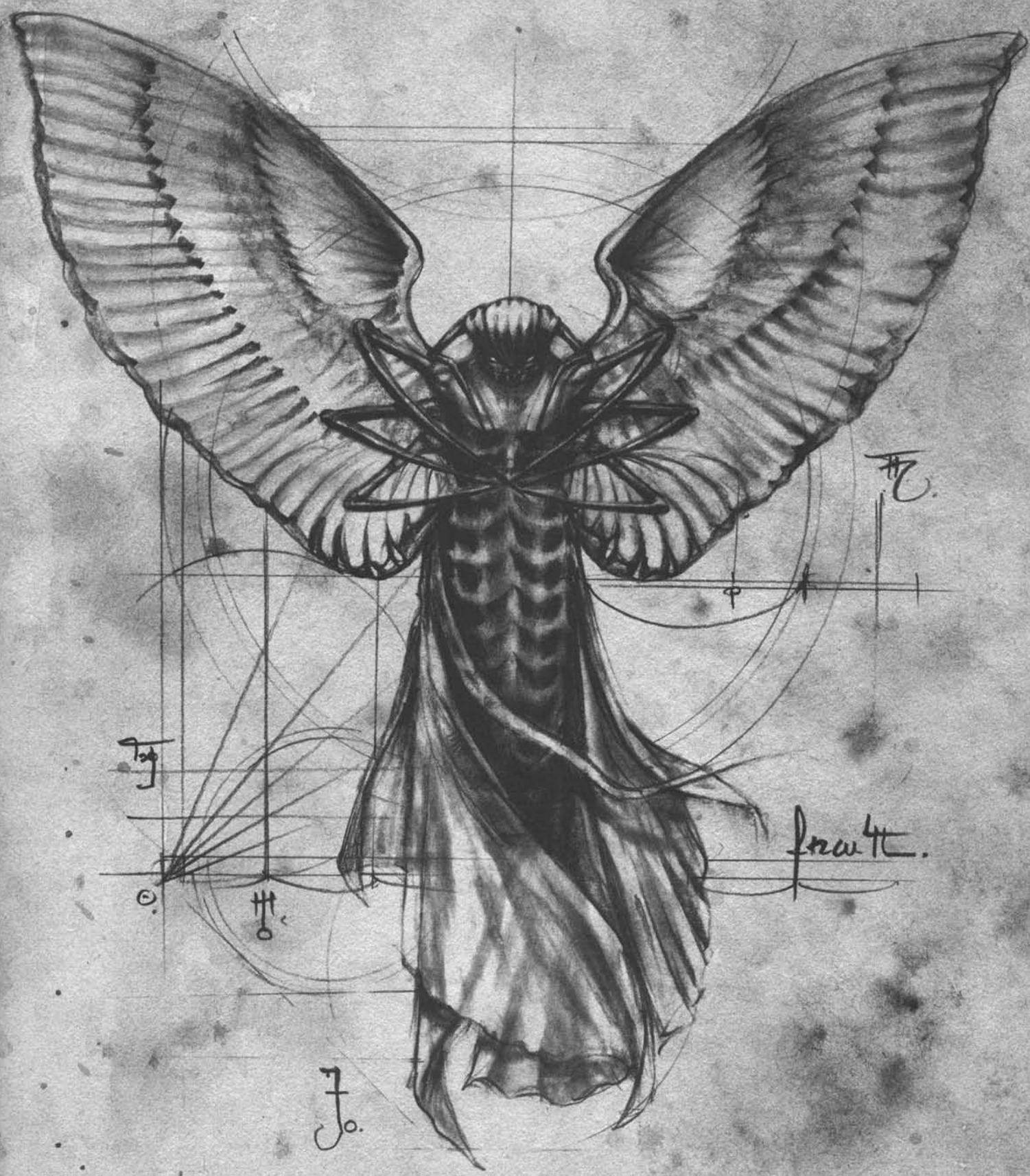
from the rope connecting us. Every time he tried to loosen the rope around his hip, we others pulled on the rope so hard that he was almost thrown to the ground. Eventually, the Armatura gave in to our frightened mob and gave up on his heroic endeavor. I believe it saved his life, though, for the number of our pursuers must have been legion and many of the shadows were most assuredly of the size of the largest houses in Prague or Roma Æterna.

Never before had I run so fast, and I pray that I will never have to run so fast again. Since we had lost track of time anyway, I can only estimate as to how long our odyssey through the darkness must have taken. My lungs were burning like fire and my knees were bruised and battered from constant tripping. I grew so tired that I'm sure I must have fallen asleep yet kept on running. At some point I choked on my own vomit, for the strains were so great that my body almost gave up on me, when suddenly it grew brighter all around us. My eyes shed burning tears due to the unfamiliar brightness, and I greedily sucked fresh air into my lungs after I tore the mask from my face. Surely I would have died right there if we had not reached the edge of the corridor in time, because I would have torn off the putrid, vomit-filled mask anyway, come what may. Hysteria is the only appropriate term to describe our behavior then, for the first thing to happen after we had thrown aside our leather and rubber prisons was that we all started to laugh from the bottom of our hearts, hugging each other as if we were a family whose members we had not seen in ages and were now reunited.

The unholy machines were awaiting us; the two remaining Brandland guides were little more than two skeletons in the decaying remains of clothes. Our joy ebbed soon enough at such a gruesome sight; after the first moments of happiness at having survived the black hell, a far more familiar feeling returned to our hearts: once again, fear. The two had not just died of starvation — one had lost his head, and the other had been cut neatly in twain by a nearly horizontal slice through the midsection.

I must digress here. I cannot express enough my astonishment regarding the inability of the human mind to get used to fear. One would think there is a certain limit to the terror one is able to feel, but my own experiences have taught me better. I will never again mock anyone in the grip of fear, no matter how causeless that fear might be. This is not to say that our fear was causeless. We will, I fear, always have cause to fear.

As soon as we dared to look toward the black smoke, Bran called out in surprise. He was looking upward, to where the white wings of several Engel had appeared over our heads. Or so we thought. It was almost too late when Bran noticed that what we had thought to be messengers of the Lord were no Engel, but grotesque mockeries of those divine



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champions. From afar, they were indeed very similar to Engel, but when they got closer, we realized that they were Dreamseed demons. Similar to giant moths, their wings bore a sparkling coloration reminiscent of Engels' wings. Their abdomens had even grown hideous flaps of skin that from a distance resembled the war skirts of the heavenly beings. They had drawn their limbs close to their bodies, but when they realized that their ruse was no longer effective, they raised their claws, which glittered in all the colors of the rainbow, and attacked. Since I could not flee from the descending Pseudo-Engel, I lay down and stretched my arms like the body of one dead, waiting to be covered with stones in order to make it easier for my companions to get rid of my mortal shell. Then I turned my head to watch everything in cruel detail.

It quickly became clear to me what had happened to our poor Brandland guides. The razor-sharp wings of one of the diving Pseudo-Engel cut a stunted yet sturdy tree cleanly in half, as if it had been a mere wheat-stalk; these beasts must have slain the guides with their deadly wings, made in mockery of the graceful feathered pinions of God's divine servants. One of the monsters descended upon Bran, who seemed yet unwilling to die. Rather, he was more than ready to use his hasta to do unto the demon what it had done to our guides. These demons were neither stupid nor clumsy, however, and their chitinous covering proved strong. Most of Bran's attacks missed their target. In the end, the Lord must have appreciated our Armatura's efforts, however. After several moments of vicious fighting, the exhausted Templar got rid of the monster by casting the ponderous hasta aside, dropping catlike to the ground, and ramming his knife into the Pseudo-Engel's abdomen when the monster dived down once more to slash at him. The Dreamseed creature's blood painted the whole of the battleground red, and Bran emerged from the whirlwind of limbs like a wingless avenging Engel. Somehow our Templars managed to defeat the demonspawn, which must have waited for easy prey here. But, alas, what a terrible price we had to pay! We lost two of our number. Our once glorious and proud party was now reduced to four pathetic figures, each one of whom wished devoutly to be hundreds of kilometers away in some better place. The Pseudo-Engel had been the latest sign of the Lord of the Flies to show us how he mocked us, amused by our pointless efforts. Through the Adversary's terrible mind the Lord's own servants, the pinnacle of Creation, have been twisted into a caricature, a mockery of grace and beauty. Even the most steadfast Engel would have turned away in tears from such blasphemous brazenness.

And here we are: Bran, the Gabrielite Templar Amrob, Hieronymus, and myself, standing on the edge of the world. I have not yet seen the hereafter,

which means the Lord does not want me to die yet. Am I cursed? Have I seen too many of the secrets of Creation? Have I become a prophet who should spread his revelations among the Lord's people? Or am I merely a lunatic who has seen so many dreadful things that his frail mind has shattered? My only anchor in this world are my companions, who have seen everything I have seen. They are living proof of what is written here. What if we are decimated even further? Will I return home all alone in the end? Or will I only make it to Roma Aeterna to be locked away in some deep dungeon, slipping away into oblivion, because my report is deemed madness or worse? I have no choice but to find it out for myself.

So cheer up, my loyal companions. Let us continue our journey. What could ever happen now that is worse than what we already have faced?

23rd august 2651

My eyes fill with tears and my body shakes in silent sobs as I write this date. What has happened to us? How can this be? This has certainly been the cruelest trick the Lord of the Flies has ever played on us. I have calculated and recalculated, contemplating the matter a hundred times. It cannot be that we have spent three and a half years in the Brandland. Admittedly I had no means at my disposal to measure the passage of time while we were in the Brandland corridor, but this goes beyond everything I am ready to believe. But I must continue my tale. Let us leave these other considerations aside for the present — whenever that is.

After our companions had been buried, we wandered north again. Fortunately, we soon found a fishing vessel in a small coastal village whose captain would accept us as passengers; Hieronymus had apparently had the presence of mind to take the Manna that the Brandland guides had been carrying when we buried them. It would not have done them any further good, so I cannot think ill of Hieronymus. None of us was able to think clearly or talk much, even though we should have been eager to do so after our long term of vocal abstinence. Quite the opposite was the case, however. The Brandland has changed us all. The maps Hieronymus draws are no longer as precise and detailed as they were before, and he frequently looks at me with reproachful eyes as if I was to blame for our situation. Maybe he is right and I really am to blame for our suffering, our battered minds. We have all left behind a part of our innocence, our immortal soul, back there in the Brandland.

Will the gates of Heaven stay closed for us now? Have we all been banished from Eden? The only straw I am clutching at is my task. Hieronymus, however, no longer seems to draw any pleasure from his.

The fisherman, having brought us to the estuary of the river Desna, has just revealed heart-breaking news to us. The Desna, a small river, could take us almost to Moscow — if the words of our captain can be trusted. But why should he be lying to us? Unfortunately, we cannot spare the time to visit this grand city; having rest and civilization so close before our eyes but not being able to enjoy the benefits leaves me and my companions more than a little frustrated.

24th august 2651

Amrob is suffering from an ailment which keeps him from sitting still in our boat. All day he has been complaining about itchiness all over his body that is now starting to hurt. I have taken a look at the Gabrielite Templar's skin. It is reddened in many places and stretched tightly over small bumps. It almost looks like there is something growing beneath his skin, or else some horrible disease is producing hardened cysts all over his body. I would not be surprised if the latter was the case, considering (even though I still refrain from thinking about it) that we have been wearing the same clothes for three and a half years. Hygiene has not been a priority during the last few weeks, either. In fact, we smell so bad that our coxswain almost would not allow us on his boat. I start to feel disgusted by myself.

Thinking about it, I feel an itch all over my body as well. An examination of my own body does not yield the same results as that of the Templar's body, however. Scabs cover large parts of my skin and my backside still hurts, since the hygienic conditions within the Brandland were gruesome. The special clothes given to us by the Brandlandguides, which I still wear today, have soaked up all the natural processes of my body. Of course, we have emptied the bags in which our feces were stored in the meantime, but the strange suit still smells awful. We have grown used to the smell, I suppose, but others we encounter must surely be very annoyed if not appalled by it.

How I long for a hot bath in the *thermae* of the *Himmel* at Prague! Even a simple bath in an inn would be a godsend. I will daydream a little more and go to sleep very soon. Who knows when I will be able to sleep again?

25th august 2651

This morning I was roused by terrible screams, and I encountered Bran halfway between my own bed and the deck. I already knew who was crying out in pain. Amrob was squirming on his bunk. I could see his skin moving beneath his clothes, and the pillows under his back had turned red, soaked

with his blood. Bran and I tore off the poor man's clothes as fast as we could. Now we could see what caused the Templar so much pain. Bumps nearly as big as a man's fist had sprung up all over Amrob's body, and whatever grew within them was now stirring, trying to find a way out of its host toward the light of day. In some places the skin was stretched so tight that it ripped open like an overripe fruit. The sharp ridges of the creatures beneath the skin were unmistakably a sign of the Adversary. They had to be the Lord of the Flies' latest deviltry, a legacy from the Brandland corridor poor Amrob had been carrying inside him ever since our return from the smoke. The creatures breaking through the skin were of a blue-violet color, visible in places beneath the film of blood in which they were covered. They had two feelers, twice as long as the rest of the demon's body, that whipped through the air like a scourge.

After they had left the host body in which they had matured, they scuttled about full of vigor, dodging many of Bran's efforts to squash them under the sole of his boots. Since they were unable to fly — I thank the Lord for this small mercy — we nevertheless managed to cope with them rather quickly. Not later than the third Scourge, however, the real danger of these creatures became apparent. Their spiny ridges had cut through Bran's boots, hurting his foot quite painfully. Noticing this, I stopped following the Armatura's example and snatched a frying pan from a nearby shelf to take our enemies to task. A short time later I had done my bloody work and killed all of the Scourges. Who knows what havoc they might have caused if one of them had survived. But had I really managed to kill them all? That concern aside, I assured myself that Bran had not been wounded too seriously. The Armatura was back on his feet, limping around, cursing and swearing.

I then decided to take care of Amrob. Now that the creatures had left his body, the poor man seemed to be in better shape. He had fallen mercifully unconscious, no longer thrashing about on his bed. With the help of Hieronymus I even managed to bandage all of his wounds; he has lost a lot of blood, but I am convinced he will survive this attack of the Dreamseed.

I have awoken in the middle of the night: there is a thought I cannot get out of my head. Surely there must be more to the scourges than what we have witnessed so far. They mature within a host body. I do not know how they get there. Then they hatch — which causes the host considerable pain — and can be dealt with rather easily. Somehow this makes no sense. Thus far, most of the creatures of the Tempter that we have encountered have possessed hidden natural weapons or used bizarre forms of camouflage. If they did not, then they were at least extremely hostile, brutal, and strong. The Scourges are different. I must have missed

something, or else the Lord of the Flies grows weary of his own creations. To be sure, I will submit our bodies to a careful examination for any signs of a similar infection.

Examining Bran and Hieronymus has not yielded any further results. We agreed on doing this examination every day. Furthermore, we decided to keep silent about the whole incident, as we are afraid that our coxswain might throw us overboard if he hears our story. It will take at least another three days before we reach the coast. We explained the Templar's screams as being the result of a colic he always gets when he eats raw salted fish. The simple fisherman accepted our story and leaves us alone. We threw the dead Scourges overboard when he was not looking, just as we did with the bloody bandages.

26th august 2651

When I think about what I have written here I feel as if I had gotten so close from the rest of the world that my mind was unable to produce a single clear thought. otherwise I would have thought it presumptuous to compare myself to a surgeon. But I will consider my own thoughts at this moment as nothing more than the by-product of the extremely confusing and strenuous circumstances in which I found myself.

Bran has just woken me, at this late hour, standing next to my bed with a lantern. Without a word he lifted his shirt to show me what a devilry lies hidden behind the seemingly harmless Dreamseed creatures I have dubbed Scourges. Just like in Amrob's case, large bumps have appeared all over Bran's skin. I could see that the brave Armatura was in as much pain as the Gabrielite Templar before him had been, although Bran clenched his teeth and tried to put a good face on the matter. I saw no other option but to cut the creatures out of his body before they started to leave their host in their more brutal fashion. Bran simply nodded when I told him what I was going to do, and I promised to be as careful as possible. The Scourges Bran had squashed under the sole of his boot must have laid their eggs into his open wound even as they died. There is no other explanation as to how the monstrosities could have infected him. Before I took care of poor Bran, I had to take precautions against suffering his fate myself. Therefore, I went looking for the frying pan and also fetched a fishing net as well as a number of kerchiefs. I also roused Hieronymus, which turned out to be the most difficult task of all. But I could not do the surgery all on my own. Even though my skills in that regard have increased over the course of the last five years (how I sicken at the thought of those lost years!), I am no surgeon.

Bran's brow was covered in sweat and I thought I already could see some movement beneath his skin. Why did he wait so long before he came to me? I would have been able to do the surgery without causing too much harm, but now the cuts will have to be quite extensive. Time seemed to fly by while I was cleaning my scalpel — usually, I use it to

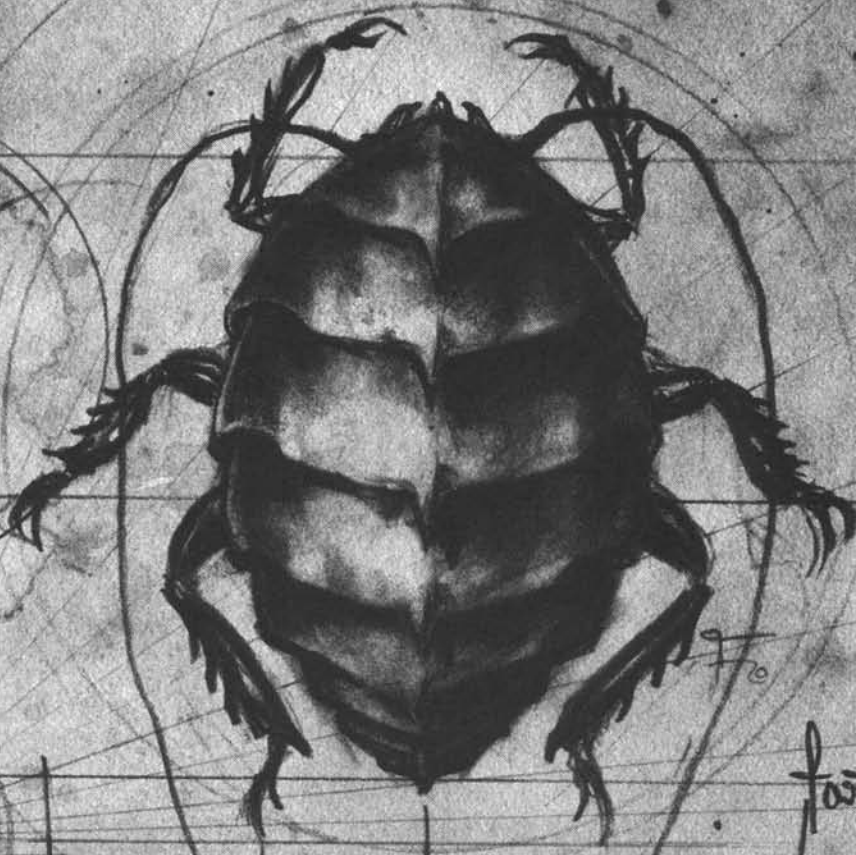
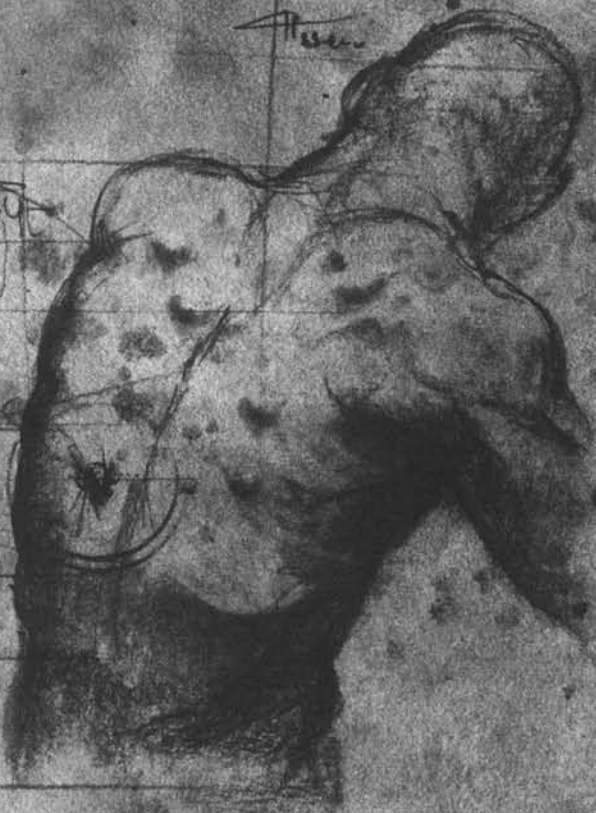
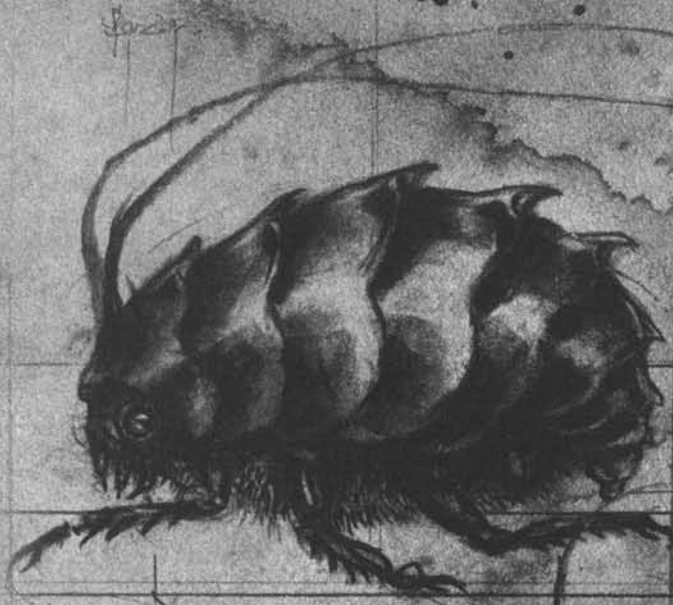
sharpen my red chalk — by sterilizing it in the flame of Bran's lantern. The first cut was the hardest, because it was the first time I had actually sunk the blade into living flesh. Worse, a dear companion of mine was on the receiving end of it. My belief that the Scourges had already grown to considerable size turned out to be correct, making my work difficult. With our combined efforts, however, countless kerchiefs, the large net we threw the creatures into after we had wrapped them up in the kerchiefs, and a good measure of hope, we managed to free Bran from the troublesome parasites with minimal pain. Every cut I made added to my self-confidence. Presumably I could have become a surgeon with a talent comparable to my artistic one. Maybe I would have lived a very different life then... of course it would have been different.

27th august 2651

We spent the whole night stitching Bran together again. We threw the net with the Scourges, still full of life even though they were wrapped up in kerchiefs, overboard. My companions and I have spent the remainder of the day resting.

In the afternoon, I realized that we owed our coxswain some explanation when he asked me why Bran suddenly seemed so uncomfortable as well, and if he also had a problem with salted fish. Fortunately, the Lord has granted the fisherman a rather weak mind, so I was able to convince him that Bran had simply begun to feel the strain of our many travels. I assured the fishermen that Bran was too tough a man for his own good, which had delayed the onset of his illness until now. Just when I got the impression that the fisherman had lost the plot halfway through my explanation, we were both apparently satisfied and returned to our day's work. My day's work consisted of making up for the sleep I had lost during the night. I cannot say what the captain did, as I fell asleep almost immediately.

Late evening: The sun has already set after shining through the clouds for the first time in days. A breeze has sprung up which, I am hopeful, brings us closer to our destination. When I look at the waves I have to think of our first sea voyage. Hieronymus had not had much opportunity to look at the sea then, except for the water directly under the rail as he hurled forth the contents of his stomach. Now he is on deck for hours at a time, looking calmly toward the horizon. I am not sure which Hieronymus I like better. The only thing I can say with certainty is that this journey has made men of us, adventurers like those appearing in old stories and sung of in epics. I hope the revered Konsistorium will not misunderstand these words when I return. Neither arrogance nor high spirits



Handwritten characters, possibly 'H' and 'J', within a circular diagram.

Handwritten signature or name, possibly 'Foster'.

Small handwritten text, possibly 'cup'.

makes me write them. It was rather the insight that glory and heroism hide far darker secrets than one would assume.

Stories of heroes are nothing more than romanticized second-hand knowledge. All the hardships, all the suffering and all the pain, all the losses of life and soul are left behind by history and slowly fade away. Will there be tales told of our deeds? Will the allegedly heroic acts of Fra Domenico and his brave companions be remembered? If so, for what achievements will we be most praised? Are we those who shed light on the mystery that is the Dreamseed? Are we those who survived the Brandland? Or will we be an example of folly and arrogance? Who knows what name I will be given and what name will be given to our story? Maybe there will be a memorial stone at Roma Aeterna, on which will be written: FRA DOMENICO, EXPLORER, SCHOLAR, PAINTER OF MONSTERS, Monach of the Ramielite Order of Prague, who lived and died for the Angelitic Church on his search for the Truth.

A nice thought for a nice evening[†]. But now, despite the fact that I have slept much of the day, my bed is calling. Therefore I will end my writings for today.

29th august 2651

A severe storm is raging, churning up the sea. We are gnats trapped in a nutshell, afloat in some titan's cauldron whose water is coming to a boil. I think it must be daytime, yet it is dark all around us. The clouds are so heavy with rain that they look as black as the night sky itself. And yet, strangely, the storm came up so fast that nobody noticed it brewing on the horizon. After having praised our good fortune on the sea yesterday, I now suffer from a churning stomach, the constant up and down of the waves rocking our boat relentlessly.

I cannot write any longer, for I will surely have to throw up, destroying my writings, if I keep looking at the scribbles on these pages.

The storm has passed as quickly as it came. Still, I have not grown calm. There is something strange about the silence all around us. Moreover, darkness has not faded away as I would have expected. Rather, it has grown even darker since this strange silence set in. Could it be that the reports about storms hiding a place of utter calm in their center are true? If so, the worst is still to come, as we have yet to pass through the other side of the storm. I cannot see very far; my eyes have not grown accustomed to this darkness. But wait — I can hear and sense some change in our direct vicinity.

My words and those of my companions seem to echo from imaginary walls as if we were standing in the entry hall of the Himmel at Prague. The sound

of rushing waters is all around us. We face a strong wind and it seems as if we move forward at great velocity, a feeling—

I beg the pardon of the revered Konsistorium for the sudden interruption of my writings before, but external factors tore my writing utensils from my hands. Now that I have found my journal under a jumbled pile of fishing nets, I can give a summary of the most recent events. Just when I was about to point out the rapidity of our movement, we seemed to run aground, and were stopped rather abruptly. But then our ship almost capsized when the bow bore down into the water, and then we seemed to fall from a great height. We were thrown around like rag dolls and I lost hold of my journal when I tried to dodge falling pieces of debris. Now all is eerily calm again, and we remain afloat. Nobody seems hurt. Even Bran's wounds did not open again. Amrob, who is in an astonishingly good shape again, considering his condition only a couple of days ago, helped me to my feet. We found Hieronymus beneath a pile of ropes. Except for a few bruises, he has gotten off lightly.

Still, a deafening roar makes communication extremely difficult. I have been looking for an explanation for this noise, but I have not come up with a satisfactory solution. It sounds as if a waterfall is pouring down toward us from far above. The fine droplets of water on my face support this assumption. But whence and how could a waterfall patter down on us on the open sea? Has the storm blown our ship to an unknown shore? Only now do I notice the biting stench all around us. When I run my hand over my face and sniff at the damp condensation, I realize what is the cause of the stench. The liquid reeks of bile, as if one of my companions had vomited onto my face. I am perplexed. Something strange has happened, something I do not understand yet. Something terrible.

Now that our initial panic has subsided, we have decided that we are inside some huge cavern; the information at hand simply does not allow for any other conclusion. I was never educated in the physical laws of nature, but I have had ample opportunity to experience their effects in my travels. The sound of our voices echoes back from the gigantic walls. Further, we cannot see the sky. While my eyesight is not the sharpest, Bran's senses have rarely failed us, and even his eyes cannot pierce the darkness. We have not come up with a sensible explanation with regard to the stench, however. Right now, we have to deal with a far more worldly problem. The mast is broken — not that I can feel the slightest breeze which could bring us to a better place, even if the sail were still in one piece. Bran, Amrob, and our coxswain are already trying to cope with the matter, so I have the time to think about more far-reaching problems.

As things stand, the chances of my getting my own memorial stone are rather good. A memorial stone does not mean as much to me now as it meant to me then however. Becoming an authority in Dreamseed matters has taken its toll — on me and on others.

2nd september 2651

I have developed a good sense of time, I think; although appearances can be deceiving, as we only recently learned far too well, I have the impression that my calculations are correct this time. Otherwise, I could never trust my mental faculties again. The sail is back in its original place and will serve until we have reached a safe haven, even though it is repaired only provisionally. But how on earth are we supposed to find that safe haven? The air is still, and neither the darkness nor the awful stench have receded.

Dull thuds at the boat's fore make me prick up my ears. Have we reached the shores of a heretofore unknown island? My curiosity urges me to lay my pen aside and see for myself what fate has in store for us.

I was right. We have reached something. It is neither an island nor solid ground, however. Surely, the Pontifex Maximus and the revered Konsistorium are wondering now what kind of shore we reached, and I will give an answer soon (perhaps I do not want to write down what I can hardly believe myself), but first I will hold to the facts and tell of events as they occurred, in chronological order.

As soon as I had laid my journals aside, I could hear Bran's voice from the ship's fore. After having rushed to his side, I could barely believe that we had found land. The Lord had not left us. When Amrob jumped overboard, however, I quickly realized that we had truly discovered something other than land — if I were still able to feel true fear, it would have overwhelmed me then and there. Landing on the supposedly firm ground, the Templar immediately sank into the soft, stinking mass up to his armpits. When Bran directed the light of his lantern toward it in order to help poor Amrob, I could see that the mass consisted of many layers of fleshy tissue that seemed to suck greedily at the unfortunate Templar. Shortly after we managed to free the Gabrielite warrior, finding almost no resistance in doing so, my initial calm eventually turned into panic.

At first I had thought the fleshy mass to be a new species of Dreamseed, but now I suddenly realized that we had been in the clutches of a Dreamseed creature all along. It was not only the soft substance beneath us that was tainted with the touch of evil — everything around us was. To make sure of my theory, I asked Bran to make a few deep cuts in the mass with his hasta after he had helped Amrod get back onboard. I could not fool him for long, I guess, because when our eyes met I thought I could see the glimmer of comprehension in the Armatura's eyes. Without a word he did what I asked. Yet even though it was not too hard to cut the

appalling flesh with the weapon, no response to our attack occurred — no vibration, no shaking of the waters around us, not even a roar from the creature in whose bowels we are now trapped.

A few moments ago I thought I had seen through the Lord of the Flies' sinister games, and now I realized I have been misled by my own arrogance. How could I have known such a creature to exist, a creature so inconceivably large that it could block out the sun, a Leviathan of biblical proportions? A story comes to my mind, one I was told when I was a little boy at the Ramielite Himmel. The story is of a man called Jonah, who had been swallowed by a whale (a huge, aquatic creature of the old world), only to be spat out by the monster again some time later. It is an allegory from days long gone, the meaning of which I never really understood and probably never will. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the whole story. Perhaps if I did, it could give us some clue or information regarding our situation.

3rd september 2651

Our precarious situation makes it impossible for me to sleep. Again and again, the same bewildered thoughts run around my head, circling around the same question: How can we escape from the Leviathan's body? Despite yesterday's disappointments, I am still sure we are in the belly of such a beast. I will go for a walk on the deck of our prison. Maybe I will find the inner calm necessary to sleep.

Thank the Lord, for our salvation is near! How grateful I am that my mentor insisted on a thorough education when he introduced me to the customs of the Angelitic Church! How happy I am that my tortured mind has not forgotten about everything that made me the leader of this mission!

If I am right, then only a thin membrane of skin, muscles and sinews lies between us and our freedom. There has to be a way to pierce this membrane, and even if Bran's hasta has proven ineffective, this is only due to its relative size: small Dreamseed creature, small weapon; large Dreamseed, large weapon. We have a sail and we have the foul-smelling gas bubbles of the Leviathan's belly, which are most certainly inflammable. If we make a balloon of the sail and channel the gas into it, it must then yield the most explosive results when exposed to flame. Even though the gas here at large has not reacted with the flames of our lanterns, I am sure that this is merely a problem of the right concentration — and that concentration surely exists in the bubbles that float about by the hundred alongside us in our prison here. In defiance of all dull theory, I will try whether my idea works out before we starve to death here.

To my surprise, my companions were rather taken with my suggestion, and more than willing to put it into action. However, doing so out to be far more difficult than I originally expected. To reshape the sail into a balloon might surpass our abilities, for none of us is skilled with thread and needle. What a mean skill, yet now it means so much! It is evening now and I am too tired to think clearly.

7th september 2651

My hands are bleeding and sore. At least I am in good company. Rickard, our captain, has demonstrated considerable talent in the use of thread and needle, the logical result of mending so many sails and nets, I suppose. Without being able to actually see it for the darkness that surrounds us, I presume that we are now in the possession of a balloon. Surely we would not win any prizes with it, and now the second part of my plan is yet to be implemented. We will attach the balloon to the ship's mast and place the opening on the balloon's bottom over one of the enormous gas bubbles. Now we will have to wait. My experiments to achieve the desired results with a small model I built from a piece of sackcloth all failed. Nevertheless, I must remain hopeful that my plan will work and we will soon be free.

9th september 2651

Today is the day. We are in bad shape. The air makes our heads hurt and our fresh water and food supplies are almost depleted. The balloon is now bloated like the belly of a pregnant woman about to give birth. I would prefer to wait a while more until the balloon is just short of bursting, but we do not have the time. Amrob and Bran have made a makeshift fuse from ropes and pitch. The plan is to use this fuse to detonate the balloon from a safe distance. Whether or not this plan fails, we can spare ourselves the attempt to repeat our procedure: if the gas does not light, we are doomed; and if it does light but my calculations are incorrect, we will probably have blown ourselves and the ship to bits. The tension in me is mounting so that I feel it is me who is bound to explode, and, given the light-headedness I suffer from the gas we have been handling, I must be careful not to lose consciousness. Since we will be embarking on an unknown journey as soon as the way out has opened, we have packed all our belongings in waterproof containers. We have wrapped the books in oil-cloth and tied them to our bodies using sturdy ropes, and Captain Rickard has sewn shut several dried blowfish from his catch, hoping that they will provide us with the necessary buoyancy if we should be thrown overboard or find ourselves without a ship. If not, I will sink like a stone with all the baggage on my back.

3 Pierre - I have changed the adjective here in the printed version of my diaries. Originally, I used the term "divine power"... but that would be blasphemous. Wouldn't it? Nevertheless, it was apparently the first thought to come to my mind at the time...

Using long poles, Rickard, Bran, and Amrob are getting our ship into a position from which we can safely light the fuse. Thank God the Gabrielite Templar Amrob has some experience with the use of dangerous explosives, saying he has used them many times in his war against the Dreamseed. I hope they do nothing wrong. I will close my journal now in order to tie and store it as cautiously as I have done with the others. May God protect us.

12th september 2651

I am alive. Almighty Lord, I am alive. I cannot describe how it feels. I am sitting on the sandy beach of a coast I suspect to be in the far north, for a cold wind is blowing into my face. I could not care less. I am alive and this is the only thing matters to me. Bran and Hieronymus sit nearby, both as silent as I. My heart fills with contentment for another reason: I was right. My foolhardy plan worked. The explosion was far more violent than I would have imagined, however. But let me catch up on events.

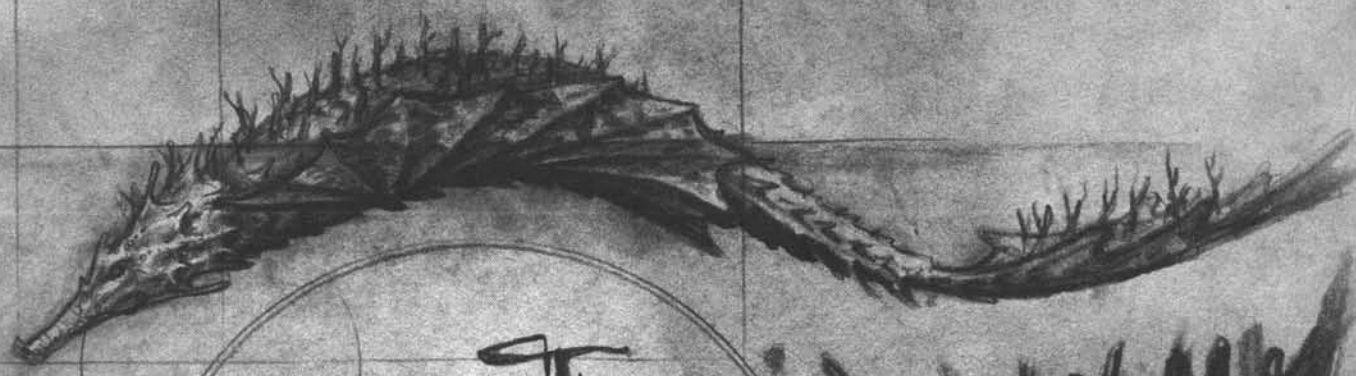
As soon as the fuse lit, the fire raced toward the gas-filled balloon. On Amrob's order we dropped down to the wooden planks beneath our feet and waited for the explosion. For a long time nothing happened. Then, suddenly, a deafening noise rocked the space around us, and an enormous wave made the ship's hull shudder. At first I thought that would be the end of our attempt, when a second explosion knocked me off my feet. The second detonation was shortly followed by countless others, and an epic version of what I had expected to see a few days before in my small experiments fell upon us as a belated validation of my theory. The creature, our great prison, screamed in agony so loudly that my ears still ring from its bellowing. Then we were grabbed by a gigantic, invisible hand and tossed through the huge hole that had opened before us. The impact broke my nose, I think, when I was hurled over the side of our sloop.

I cannot say with absolute certainty what happened next, but I am convinced that I saw the Leviathan in all its glory, if only for a short moment. I have drawn him now exactly how I believe to have seen him. I am certain I have not missed any important details. Its body was as large as an entire island, and on the monster's back grass and small trees had grown into a forest that was now being turned into a storm of loose leaves and flying trunks due to the Dreamseed's death throes. The fiend's head was of such colossal size that it reminded me of a Himmel being toppled by an unholy power. The creature's flippers were so huge that one blow with them could have razed an entire city to the ground. The demon's blood colored the sea pitch-black.

I must have lost consciousness then, and when I regained my senses, a bearded man I had never

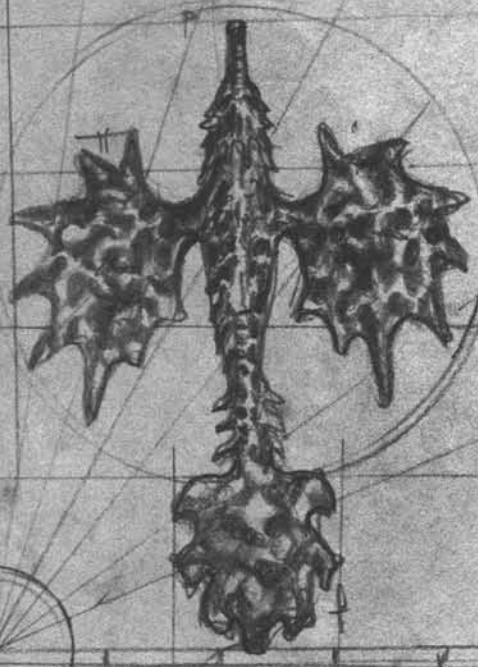
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seen in my entire life — although he seemed strangely familiar to me — offered me his assistance to stand. It seemed as if bones and traces of earlier forms of life on earth sprouted from the ground beneath his feet, and his voice was warm and pleasant. I asked him whether he had seen my companions. He answered that he had seen them, but that he was not sure whether I would ever see them again. These words made little sense to me, however, and I simply stared at him. He added that my journey was not over yet and that I had to continue following my destiny. I must have passed out again at that moment, and when I woke up later, the mysterious wanderer had vanished without a trace. The only thing preventing me from dismissing him as a phantasm is the fact that a slender path of tiny bones and seashells led up to the place where I regained my senses. The longer I looked at it, the more it faded away.

My search for my companions took quite some time. Eventually, though, I found Bran and Hieronymus; they were lying close together, as if they had clung to one another during the escape from the Leviathan, and both of them were in a pitiable state. However, I guess they must have thought the same when I awoke them.

Offshore, the bay into which Providence had swept us all contained several small islands whose once thick evergreen copses had apparently been ravaged by a severe storm. The sea beyond was churning and had taken on an almost blackish hue. Amrob and Rickard were nowhere to be found. Hieronymus was forced to use a tree branch to prop himself up, for he had a sprained ankle. Obviously he was in great pain, and his ankle had swollen to the size of a ripe melon. Bran had suffered a few new cuts and abrasions, and some of his old wounds had started bleeding again as well. Otherwise, we had gotten off rather lightly once again. We had vanquished the Dreamseed creature, although I have to admit that chance had certainly been on our side. I am not sure if it is possible to defeat such a monster in an open battle. The Leviathan was beyond a doubt the largest Dreamseed creature we have ever seen or even heard of.

13th september 2651

We have searched the whole beach and found no trace of our Gabrielite Templar or of Captain Rickard. If they had been washed ashore in this bay, we would surely have found them. If they have survived, they must have stranded on one of the islands. We do not have the time nor the means to search for them any longer. I am afraid that they will have to make it on their own, if they live, and all we can do is wish them good luck and God's blessing for the rest of their journey.

The now barely discernable trail left behind by the bearded wanderer (whom I had thought to have sprung from my tortured mind, until Bran and Hieronymus assured me that they had seen him as well) leads inland. Since we have few other options, we will follow his trail.

The trail has led us to the edge of a coniferous forest so thick that we soon lost both the trail and our bearings. When we were almost ready to turn back, Bran sharp ears heard a sound that made him stop. He has described it as a shrill, harsh roar in the distance. Our curiosity and our longing to see other people again lead us in the direction of the curious noise.

What we saw in the forest fills my heart with pity when I think of it now, but at the time dread crept into my heart. Soon, as we walked along, I too heard something. In a small clearing in the middle of the forest stood a stag, a noble animal most of the people back home know only from tales or books. This stag, however, was but a mockery of those depictions I have seen in the libraries of my Himmel. The miserable creature rose to a height of nearly two meters on shaky legs. Its reddish-brown fur was patchy, and in some places bone shone through bare muscles. In a dead creature, the sight would have been disgusting, but bearable. This stag, however, was still alive, and screamed its agony at us as we entered the clearing. Its eye sockets were already empty, and its pain must have been maddening indeed. Pink foam dripped from its gaping mouth, and it moved as if it were dragging along an infinitely heavy burden. When the pitiable creature stepped into the light I could see what I realize now was the cause of its deplorable state. If there had been something in my stomach worth bringing up at that moment, I would certainly have responded to my stomach's wishes. Yet I had no other choice but to keep on watching the grisly scene, spellbound, mesmerized by its horror. The stag's entire body was covered with a myriad of worms that were eating it alive, maddening it in the process.

Whether the worms on its back or the last vestiges of its rebellious spirit were responsible for its actions I cannot tell, but the stag suddenly lifted its head and stared at us with its empty eye sockets. Then it started to move fitfully toward us. Sadly, sickeningly, what should have been a furious and gallant charge was nothing more than a grotesque swaying and staggering movement of the half-dead animal. As it neared, one of its hind legs simply fell off. The creature crawled toward us on its remaining legs, and if we had not been stunned at the horrifying sight, Bran would already have put it out of its misery. The creature kept crawling toward us when suddenly I intuited the purpose of its pathetic



attack. The worms were looking for a new host body! Watching the feeble worms on the detached hind leg of the stag opened my eyes to the truth of the matter: they were barely able to move on their own, even though they tried to reach us, so they needed someone or something to carry them. I told my companions of my theory just in time, and luckily we shunned touching the stag and the pests that had infested it. I am sure that the stag under the control of the Pestworms would have posed a serious threat a few days ago. It could easily have killed a full-grown man with its antlers. Since we were not eager to suffer the same fate as the poor stag, we withdrew and paid attention from a safe distance that no other potential host approached the clearing and turned into an involuntary minion of the Pestworm Dreamseed. No living creature should suffer such disgrace. The stag now lies on the ground, weakly, its sides heaving as it emits small moans, and many of the Pestworms continue to feed although many have fallen or dropped off and have moved several inches toward us.

Now that darkness approaches, we fear that we might still be within reach of the Pestworms and their current host. Therefore, we retreat, since we do not want to get even more lost in this forest than we already are. We will return to the beach.

15th september 2651

The first thing I noticed this morning was the smell of rice fields and freshly cooked rice. At first, I wanted to dismiss this smell as a tell-tale sign of my hunger, an olfactory delusion, but when I stood up and looked to the horizon I could spot something that the darkness of night had hidden from me yesterday evening: houses. I roused the others and after shouldering our meager belongings we ran as fast as we could, given the condition of Hieronymus' ankle, toward the houses — and the rice.

Now, having arrived, we realized that it is not a village, but rather a single farm with several outbuildings. The most striking feature of the farm is the large number of scarecrows on the fields. This region must have been faced with a literal infestation of birds, since scarecrows are virtually unknown where I come from yet we had birds aplenty. But wait: have I just answered my questions myself? No. No birds infected with Pestworms have descended on this settlement, but that image in itself is one that makes me shudder convulsively.

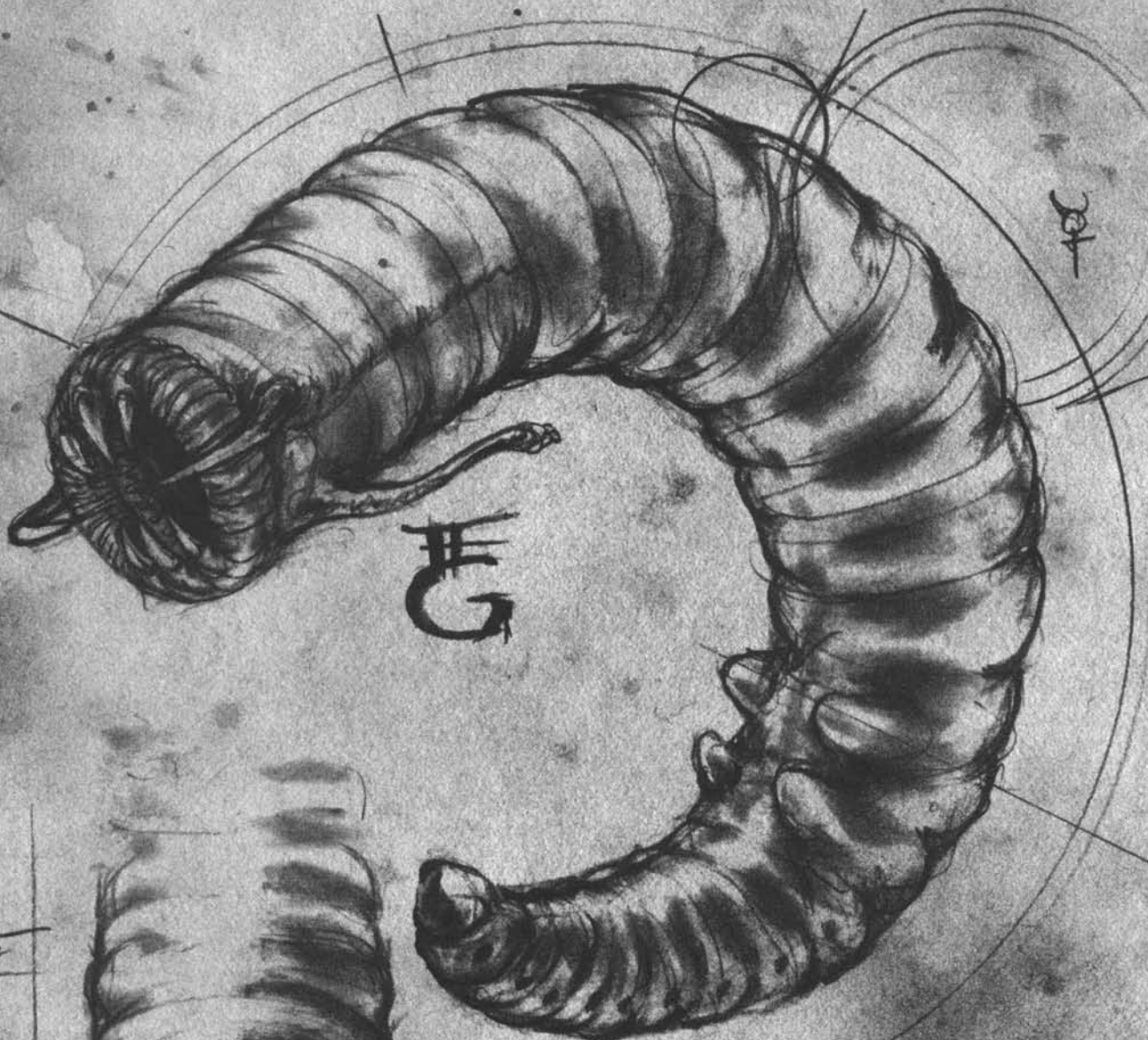
The closer we came to the main house of the farm, the heavier became the smell of burnt rice. I have to admit that we did not approach due to any altruistic reasons. And if I had not been so hungry, I might have acted with greater caution and aplomb. The door of the main house was wide open, staring at us almost reproachfully as we stepped

up to it. Bran called into the silence to see where the inhabitants of the farm were. When there was no answer, he entered the house and took down the rice from the stove in order to save what was left to be saved. We were decent enough to look for the owners of the house, rather than feasting mindlessly on the rice. Not having found them, we will search the various outbuildings for them, despite our great hunger.

How could I have been fooled into believing that I will see a day when the Lord does not hold new challenges in store for me? Something awful had occurred at this farm, something of a nature pleasing to the Lord of the Flies, something that brings havoc to peaceful lives. Something cruel and hideous. Once again, my theory concerning the Adversary's boundless, malevolent imagination was verified; to be more precise, the filtrate of human fears seems to be inexhaustible and the Tempter, as we have seen first hand, knows all too well how to give shape to these fears.

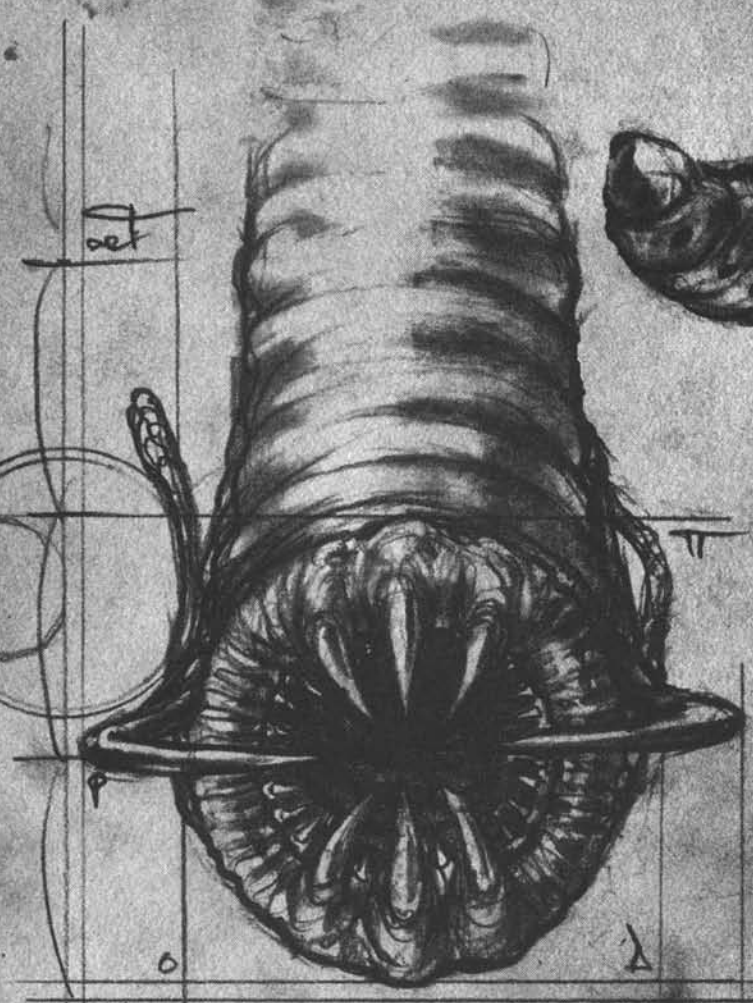
In the water on the edge of the rice fields we found evidence of another of the Lord of the Flies' sinister schemes: the corpses of a man and a woman, torn to pieces by some clawed beast and simply left where they had fallen. No animal can ever be responsible for such atrocities. Only Dreamseed creatures revel in such pointless killing — well, Dreamseed creatures and a certain kind of people, those godless, deviant people, Heretics. I abandoned myself far too carelessly to my own anger at their finding, however: I did not even notice the scarecrow standing so close to the two corpses. But then its sudden wide grin alerted me, and I realized that its outstretched arms waved in a breeze that did not exist, but it was too late for me to run away.

Immediately, the Scare fell upon me, its thin limbs unraveling in order to slash at me with its great talons. Bran's courage saved my life yet again when he flung himself with all his weight against the Dreamseed creature, disappearing with it into the water covering the rice fields. As quickly as the shock of my situation allowed me to, I pulled away from the Scare to observe it locked in its fierce fight with Bran. At that moment, however, I noticed movement at the other end of the fields, and only then did I understand into what a dangerous trap we had been led. We were only three. To be honest, I feared that Bran was more or less alone, as neither Hieronymus nor I could claim to be up to the task of facing, let alone defeating such a creature. I stood and wondered what to do. I could flee and leave behind a good friend who would surely die. Or I could stay and die myself, just as surely. I was lost in contemplation of this dilemma when I noticed Hieronymus already storming past me, despite his limping, swinging his sword high above his head. Obviously, he had not wasted his time with too much thinking. He had never thrown away his



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sword, either — despite its weight and the hardships, despite all the horrors we have faced. He has carried it as if he had known he would have to use it at this very moment. With a courage and a determination I would never have attributed to him, he stormed toward the second Scare, which approached our position on spindly legs. Hieronymus waited for it just inside the edge of our rice patty, where the field fell away beyond, and my companion could thus both face the monster eye to eye and gain the advantage of higher ground. The most bizarre of my thoughts at this moment was that I was most worried for my friend's sprained ankle, which had not had the time to heal properly. Now, I recall thinking, it would take several weeks until it would get any better. Anyway, from that moment everything happened so fast that I have to write more quickly before my memory of the battle fades.

Hieronymus' rush as the creature stepped onto the edge of the field was of such force that the Scare, despite standing much taller than the old Monach, was knocked down when the two collided. Hieronymus' sword bit deeply into the creature's exposed belly. But the Scare caught him for a moment with one claw so that Hieronymus was dragged off balance, and both he and the Scare landed in the water, breaking through the surface in a glittering splash. Mud colored the channel a murky brown, and I was far enough away from them in any case that I could not see what happened beneath the water's surface. When they rose from the water again, my friend's weapon protruded from a gaping wound in the Dreamseed creature's body. I would have thought the next blow mighty enough to decapitate my old companion, for these wiry creatures proved remarkably strong for their appearance, but he did not back down, clinging to the handle of his sword as if his life depended on it. And, frankly, it did.

In the meantime, Bran had emerged from the brackish water behind me as well. Somehow, he had managed to get behind the Scare's back, and I finally moved to join the battle. With a calm originating from my desperation, I waited for the right moment and pushed myself off the ditch's edge, landing atop the Scare's claws and pinning them to its body in such a fashion that the monster could no longer attack with them. There was only one thought in my head while I was clinging to the beast: Do not let go! Letting go meant certain death. I was sure that the creature was only waiting for me to weaken and loosen my grip. It wanted to get rid of me by any means. When it failed to shake me off using sheer strength (though I don't know how I managed to resist it), it pretended to ignore my presence. Its claws relaxed for a brief moment in order to fool me into thinking it was pacified. I did not fall for its trick, however, nor did I loosen my grip around its claws. It then raged that much more

ferocious in the next instant. I prayed and started to sing songs from my childhood days in my head. I had not finished the second ditty when the creature's body went entirely limp, falling into the water with me beneath it. Expecting another treacherous maneuver, I held onto the Scare as it sank into the water with me. If Bran had not pulled me out, I would most assuredly have drowned trying to resist the dead Dreamseed creature.

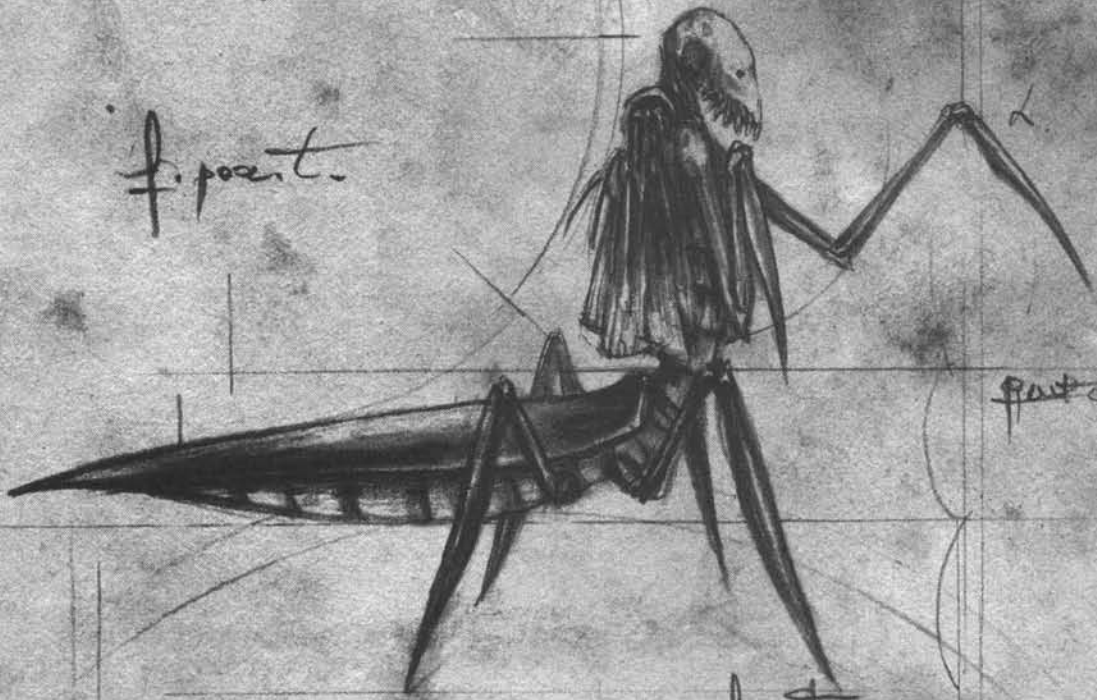
How Hieronymus managed to defeat the other monster remains a mystery to me. I can only assume that the Lord granted him the strength necessary to pass this test of faith. He is exhausted now, his ankle is of blackish color, and his whole body is shivering. Bran took the opportunity to climb up the Scare's back and to cut its head from its shoulders. Triumphant, he held the creature's head in its left hand asking me to take it with me so that I had at least some physical evidence of this new species' existence. I have buried the Scare's head under the water-proofed journals in my backpack, and buried the farmer and his wife while Bran watched the surrounding fields to warn us of any subsequent attacks. Since Hieronymus was incapacitated, I had to face this last horrible challenge on my own. Bran has seen no further sign of Dreamseed attacks, and since Hieronymus is not currently able to walk a single step, we have decided to stay at the farm. It offers everything we need to regain our strength.

9th october 2651

It has been three weeks since I last wrote in this journal. This is partly due to the fact that I have grown tired of writing. I beg the Pontifex Maximus and the revered Konsistorium for forgiveness, but nothing extraordinary or eventful has happened during this time in any case. But now Hieronymus' foot is no longer swollen, my companions and I have regained our strength, and we have been granted a much-needed time of respite from further encounters with the Dreamseed. I had begun to worry that we might be drawn into an endless whirlwind of Dreamseed encounters that would surely have driven us mad in the end. Hieronymus has copied the few remaining maps still in his possession onto a single large map over the course of the past several days. Afterwards, he destroyed all his other works in the fireplace of our haven. I have not asked his reasons to do so, but I am sure he is doing the right thing. At least, he is responsible for his own actions in the end.

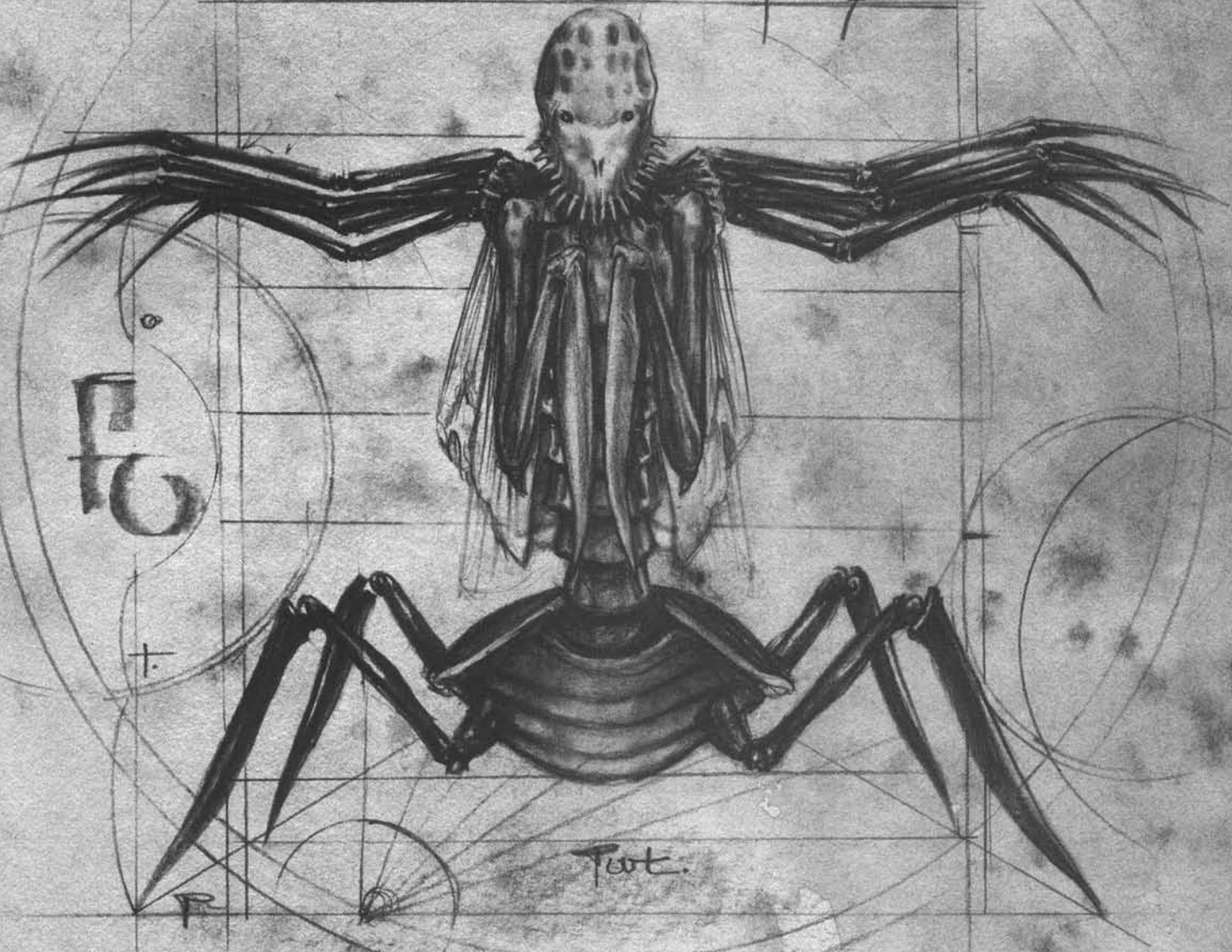
However, I have noticed that he is talking to himself when he thinks nobody is watching. I have not been able to discern what he is actually talking about, but he always seems to wear himself out as if he was arguing with himself. Certainly, recent events have taken their toll on him, and I guess it will take months before his mind has recovered

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completely — if that should be possible at all for any of us after everything that has happened. Anyway, he is not a danger to himself or anybody else at the moment, even though I am not sure whether he will not act as rashly during future encounters with Dreamseed demons as he did with the Scare, thus endangering not only himself but Brand and me as well.

We will continue our journey tomorrow morning, because we all feel up to the task at present. During the last few days, Bran and I have had the chance to wander through the area in the immediate vicinity of the farm. As far as I can tell, we must be on an island, because we have reached a stony beach to the north as well as the south of the farm after only short walks. As I suspected before, we must be on an island in the far north, for the wind is cold and the sea has been rather chilly for the last few days. I agree with Hieronymus — whose knowledge in geographical matters is far more extensive than mine — that we must be on an island off the Scandinavian coast, possibly Gotland. I do not remember much concerning this region, and what I do recall is displeasing. This island belonged to the territory of the Raguelite Order once, whose members died as martyrs quite some time ago, as everybody knows. There has been much talk in past years of unscrupulous mobs haunting this corner of the world, and some rumors even claim that Gotland is under a curse. I do not give much credence to curses, but a land without a strong ruler always falls prone to the influence, atrocities, and machinations of those wicked individuals whose endeavors would otherwise usually be nipped in the bud. Ergo, we have to be cautious.

During my excursion along the shore last evening I spotted a small settlement twinkling across the bay, which should prove to be a port where we can look for a boat to get to the mainland. Since I did not want to take unnecessary risks without my companions, I did not try to go there myself. We will leave the farm tomorrow, and this place will be our first destination.

10th october 2651

It comes as quite a surprise, but I actually feel a little sad having left behind us the place which has been our haven for so many days. A tear rolls down my cheek as I write this. I assume that the others feel the same way, judging from their expressions. The burden on my back seems to have become even heavier. Some provisions add to the weight of my journals, of course, but I would not have thought that it would make such a difference. Probably the short time of idleness on the farm did not go well with me. I am sure that the weight of my equipment will soon be far more familiar to me again.

We make good progress in the first few kilometers, and I suspect we will arrive at the port within a few hours. The drizzle that set in around noon has stopped, and a brisk wind is chasing the clouds over our heads away. A bright glow shines on the horizon, reminding me of the light of dawn. My calculations regarding our current position seem to have been quite correct. Since it is rather improbable that we are seeing the light of a setting or rising sun at noon, the glow must be produced by a Inferno, turning the lands far ahead of us into a literal purgatory. I guess it might be the Inferno of Trondheim that was responsible for the destruction of the Raguelite Himmel. I cannot be absolutely certain, of course, but I trust my feelings in this matter.

Late afternoon: We have come so close to the port that we can watch it from a nearby hill. Bran insists on waiting until the morning, because it would be easier to have a closer look at the settlement by the light of day. In Bran's opinion, it is absolutely necessary to see what kinds of activities are taking place down there, because it might not be safe for us to visit the settlement at all. I agree with him, although I do not know what kind of threats could be possibly spotted from so far away. Nevertheless, we will rest here on this hill.

11th october 2651

Bran was right. Yesterday, I would have doubted that we would be able to spot any details of the small town from our remote position. What took place down there in the marketplace, however, was clearly of such heretical nature that the townspeople might as well have lit a new Inferno or hoisted large banners saying that the town has fallen from grace. A gigantic monstrosity is looming over the marketplace, so tall that it even dwarves the houses of the town's center. The idol — for surely it can be nothing else — must be at least ten paces tall and looks remotely human. It is impossible to say of what material it has been made from our position. Bran says he can make out something like wooden framework attached to it. It seems that the blasphemous work has not been finished yet.

We spent the rest of the morning discussing what to do next. Bran wants to look for another way to get to the mainland safely and to return here only if we run out of options. Hieronymus prefers to walk into the city, decry the townspeople as Heretics, and send a messenger to the nearest Himmel in order to inform an Inquisitor about what is going on around here. Since I fear that Hieronymus' plan might well lead to our untimely demise, I only support certain aspects of it. I have proposed sneaking into town without attracting too much

unwanted attention, so that we can look for a captain willing to accept us as passengers aboard his ship; upon reaching our destination, we would give a report of the heretical practices to the Ab of a monastery or a Himmel as soon as we are reasonably safe. Unfortunately, Bran put an end to my wishful thinking by pointing out that we do not have the Manna to pay for a crossing. We could only offer some of our meager belongings as payment, and most of our equipment would be of no worth to common folk. My journals would certainly be of no use to them. The maps Hieronymus destroyed a few days ago would have been a much better medium of exchange, but I do not want to cast this into my friend's teeth, even though I have to admit I already had a sly reproach on the tip of my tongue moments ago.

When our party consisted of more than a dozen members, the chain of command had been much more obvious. Now that our journey has turned into a daily struggle for survival of sorts, every decision we make requires lengthy discussion. Nevertheless, we reached an agreement rather quickly. We will walk into town and try to act as inconspicuous as possible. Once there, we will try to find a means of arranging for a legal way to get on board a ship — either by offering to work for the ship's captain or by appealing to his generosity. If we do not find a captain willing to accept our offers, we will try to steal some transportation and try our luck on the water. May the Lord forgive us for this plan, which was born from dire need and not ill thoughts.

So far, we are not facing any problems regarding the implementation of the first part of our plan. The inhabitants of Skövde — the name of the town — are far too busy with themselves to take any notice of us whatsoever. Nevertheless, I will continue my entry later, because my habit of writing as I walk might eventually draw some attention our way.

Finally I have the opportunity to write down what has happened during the last few hours. The situation is even worse than I feared. The appearance of the idol, which we studied only from afar, goes far beyond our wildest imagination. I have no clue what purpose it might serve once it is finished. Bran was right about the idol still being in a state of incompleteness, though, if such words can be used to describe such an appalling monument. The inhabitants of Skövde have some rather curious burial rites, I might add. They have joined together all the bodies of their deceased, using ropes and wooden frameworks to combine them into an uncouth, remotely human structure.

Still, there is one thing I fear to know: Did the bodies of the people used for this construction as if they were stone and clay die of natural causes, or

did the heretical inhabitants of this town choose more sinister means to ensure a steady supply of building materials? If my latter suspicion holds some truth, we are in serious danger and must be all the more cautious. In any case, we will not be able to stay for long under this wooden ramp, where we have marked out a hidden makeshift camp. I have spotted three ships riding at anchor in the harbor, two of which look like trustworthy seafaring vessels. However, they appear to be closely guarded, so I fear they do not offer us any chance for a safe crossing. I even dare to claim that the owners of those ships are in league with the inhabitants of this cursed town, ensuring a steady supply with building materials for the idol. I will not find any sleep tonight, that much is certain.

13th october 2651

Everywhere in this town, I find what appear to be chestnut-sized carapaces of beetles, or perhaps some strange seashells on the ground. Cautiously asking a fisherman about these objects, I have learned that they apparently fell from the sky like hail three weeks ago, damaging many roofs and windows in town. I had actually noticed the bad condition of many of the houses before now. Here and there, people are busy repairing roofs. I picked up some of the shells for later examination. Due to the limited number of examination methods possible with my equipment, I have not learned more about the shells than I could have learned simply with the naked eye. This more than enough for a start, though. However the objects might have gotten here — whether they truly fell from the sky or whether they were dropped by someone or something — my experience tells me that they are related to some sort of Dreamseed.

What purpose do these empty, extremely durable shells serve? They closely resemble snail-shells, and except for a small opening in each one of them, there is no sign that they have ever been anything other than empty. Nonetheless, they must serve a purpose. I have tried to link all the facts about the shells in my mind over and over again, but to no avail. Something about the inhabitants of Skövde is wrong, eerie. I have decided to keep my eyes open for any details that could help me reach some conclusion in this matter, and have returned to sneaking through the town's streets like a shadow.

After my return to our hidden camp, I had a vague intuition as to what is happening in Skövde. The first detail to draw my attention was the stoic calm with which the populace responded to the gruesome sight of the idol. They acted just as if they were themselves exactly like the shells of Hailseed — which is the name I have given to this new species, if I am correct — hollow and empty. The

second detail catching my eye was the fact that a large majority of the inhabitants of Skövde sported bandages on their heads. They always try to keep the bandages hidden under hats and caps, but the bandages are quite obvious to a trained eye. Third, I had a sudden recollection of the Pestworms that had in some way taken control of the stag in the forest. Taking into account all these observations, several conclusions can be drawn which eventually yield the same results. The people of Skövde have lost their free will. Somebody or something else is pulling the strings in this town, something that must have crawled from the empty shells that fell from the sky several weeks ago, hitting many of the inhabitants in the head (if that indeed is how they arrived). But how can the people of Skövde be cured? How can I prove that I am right? To whom shall I give a report when all the people here have been affected?

And there is another question I have to ask: How does the idol made of dead bodies match up with all of this? Hieronymus and Bran are as clueless as I am. We have actually decided that solving this mystery is of greater importance for the present than escaping from this sink of corruption.

15th october 2651

I have come up with a daring yet loathsome plan. The means I am ready to employ in order to get to the root of this matter make me start back from myself.

I have to look inside a citizen of this town to see whether my theories are right.

If I am wrong, then I am simply a murderer, not an iota better than the people of this town. If I am right, then we can be certain what is happening here and can then start thinking about a plan to put an end to the threat. Nevertheless, I would still be a murderer. That is why I am having so many second thoughts about my plan and why I am trying to come up with another way to prove my theories.

Wait! — do some of the dead built into the appalling idol not wear the same bandages around their heads as most of the living citizens of this town? My companions confirm my observation, and a ray of hope now brightens my dismal mind. Now it seems there is a chance for me to die without having to burden my soul with a sin too great to appear before the judgment-seat of the Lord. Of course, it will be difficult to remove one of the bodies from the idol without drawing attention or to do the post-mortem examination right on the spot, since the area surrounding the idol is often occupied by townsfolk. Since we have managed to survive in this town undetected so far, though, I am convinced that we will obtain a corpse sooner or later.

16th october 2651

We put my plan into action last night. Now I am ready to report how we ended up on this ship, upon whose planks I take these notes, and I will also tell how I reached the conclusion that it is not up to us to save Skövde.

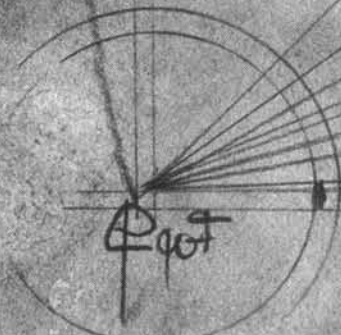
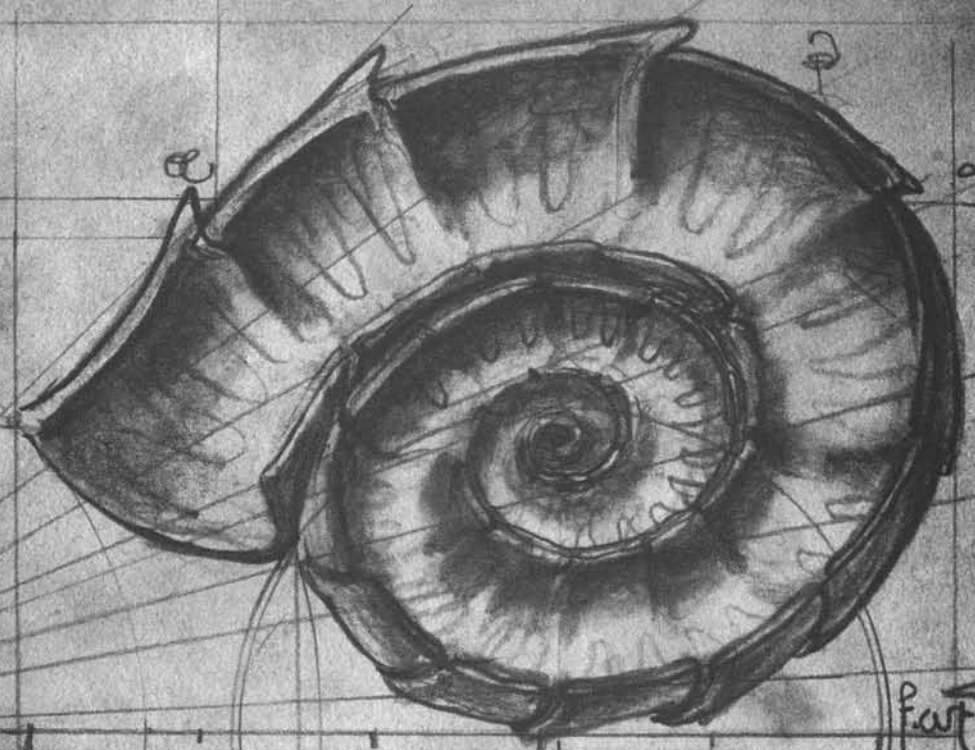
In the night, the three of us went to scout the marketplace. There was nobody guarding the idol at that time. I simply accepted our good luck, since most of the time we had not been so lucky in our journey. I was determined to steal one of the bodies and drag it to our ramp down at the harbor, so that is exactly what we did. Even though it was not easy to unwind the body from the combination of ropes, wooden framework, and other entwined bodies, our fear made us strong. After some short rests on our way back, we eventually arrived at the ramp and I started my grisly work right away. I covered my mouth with a piece of cloth, because the stench of the rotting corpse was nauseating. I could only hope that examining the body would still yield some results, even though it was in such an advanced state of decomposition. Bran and Hieronymus had been arguing as to who should stand guard outside our makeshift camp. Both were sure that we needed a guard so that we would not be caught in such a morbid act. Since I was well aware of why both were suddenly so eager to stand guard, I suggested that they should both do so.

As I had assumed, the man before me had suffered a head wound while alive, as the signs of healing in the tissue around the wound clearly demonstrated. There was a fine fracture along the bone structure itself that was half-closed again, scabs covering hair and skin all round the thin crack. I had to use Hieronymus' sword to open the skull, for I had no other suitable instrument at hand. Due to the unwieldiness of the sword in this situation and the inadequate lighting conditions in our camp, the cut was not very accurate; nevertheless I was satisfied with it, as I could now see what I had quite expected to find. A black larva sporting chitinous armor was coiled around the decaying brain, clinging to the cortex with all of its six limbs and its tiny sucker-like mouth, even in death. So gruesome was this sight that I nearly forgot to breathe, and I had to convince myself several times that the creature was truly dead. I was absolutely sure only after I lifted the armor plates of the Dreamseed, which required minimal effort and rather reminded me of a sick tree shedding its bark.

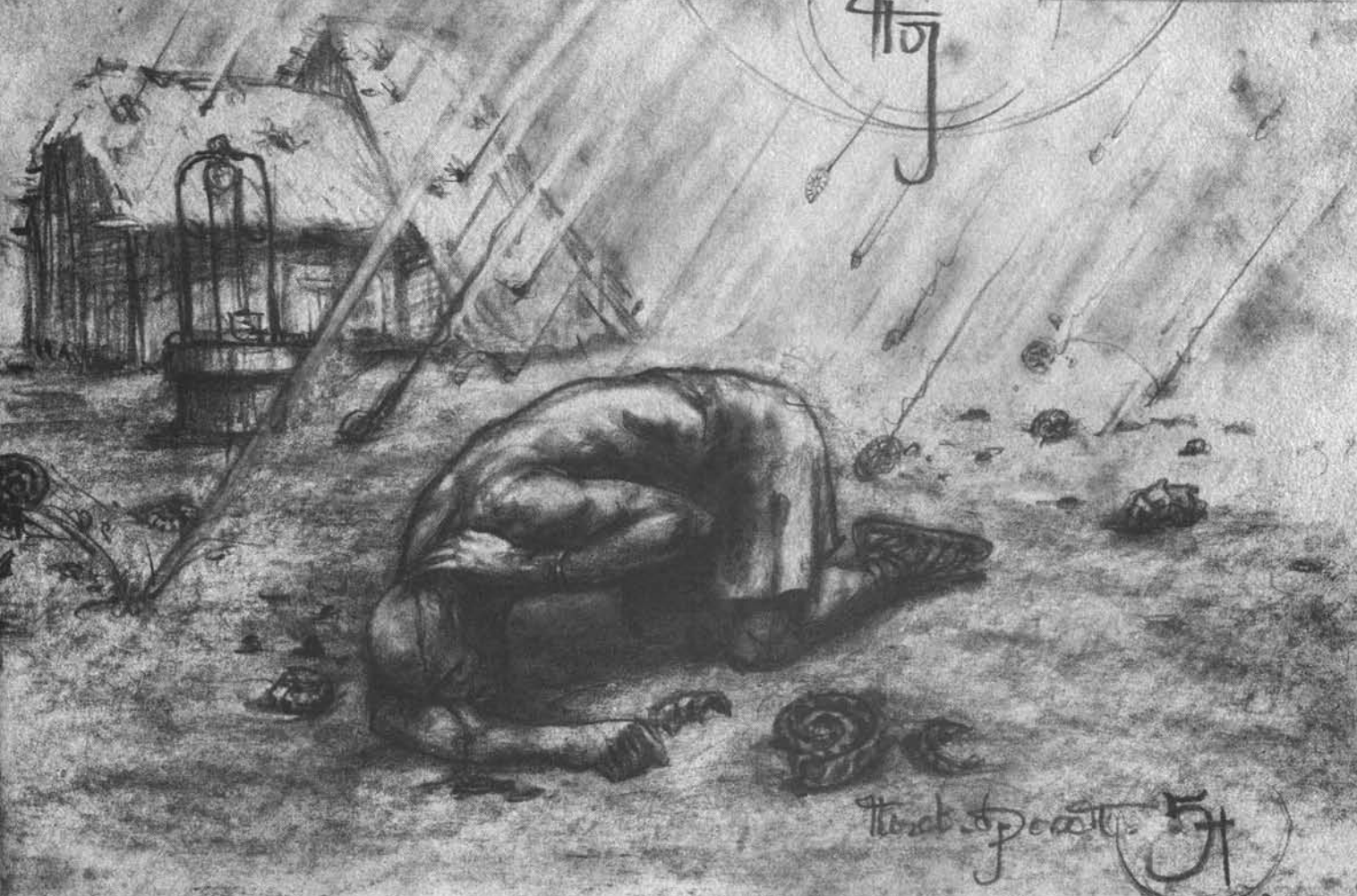
I called my companions in to show them what I had discovered, as I did not want to shoulder the burden of this appalling sight alone. Now I knew that it had been the Brainlarvae that had crawled from the curious Hailseed shells into the heads of the people of Skövde. The Larvae also had to be responsible for the people's strange behavior. I assume

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Thompson 57

the Larvae have taken control of their hosts, just like the Pestworms forced their will upon the poor stag, only in a much more subtle fashion. Are the Brainlarvae the next evolutionary step of the Pestworms? Had the Lord of the Flies responded to the fact that we had seen through his trick in the forest, and therefore tried to hide his influence even better? Only the Tempter himself knows — and he will not tell, but will merely laugh up his sleeve because we were so presumptuous as to believe we could foil his plans.

We have to act on the assumption that the whole town has been infected in a similar fashion, and since there are so many townspeople, we cannot possibly save them. All we can do is get away from Skövde as quickly as possible and hope we might arrange to send a fellowship of Engel to this Godforsaken town later on. Furthermore, it is an undeniable fact that it is not in truth human townspeople who build an idol here, but a horde of Dreamseed creatures. And if that is the case, then the thing is not necessarily an idol, but perhaps something far worse. But Hieronymus calls—

As if my assumptions called for validation, Hieronymus has sounded an alarm: the Corpse Golem — for that it is — has come alive. We go.

To my surprise, my examinations and contemplations regarding the Brainlarvae apparently took the rest of the night, for in the sickly light of a new day my sudden fears regarding the Corpse Golem had become horrible reality.

The idol had turned into a living nightmare looking for new victims to incorporate into its grisly makeup. It did not seem to care whom or what it destroyed with its grotesque, massive limbs powered entirely by human bodies. With every inhabitant of Skövde it killed, it also killed a fellow Dreamseed creature, but I guess the Brainlarvae's will to survive had been replaced by a more significant goal: the creation of a war machine that grows with every person it slays. As far as I could tell this was the only goal the Golem was pursuing: its own growth. Every inhabitant of Skövde it killed was then incorporated into its body, seamlessly integrated into the larger structure. The whole of it was covered by thousands of busy beetles that reminded me of Tracery-Scarabs. Thank the Lord numerous houses stood between the monster and us, so we were able to watch every move it made while still keeping a safe distance. The most fascinating thing about the creature was the fact that it apparently consisted of many individual demons of the Tempter acting as some sort of collective entity. I have to admit, though, that this assumption of mine might be wrong. Maybe the Brainlarvae actually mutate into the beetles that could be seen scuttling over the monstrosity's body. In any case, this form of Dreamseed was certainly the most complex I had seen so far.

Regarding our escape from the island, I would like to remark that we were contemplating the question of how to prevent this phenomenon from quickly spreading all over the world if we decided to leave right now with so many things undone. In the end, it all came down to this: we had to get one of the ships under our control while all the others had to be destroyed so that nobody could leave the island. I know all too well the likelihood of other ships riding at anchor at some other settlement on this same island, but at the time there was nothing else we could do to delay the threat. Getting a ship under our control turned out to be much easier than I would have supposed. Like the townspeople, the ship's crews were running round frantically on shore, in sheer panic, as if their will to survive had got the upper hand and they were suddenly in their right minds. Or perhaps the Brainlarvae did not agree with dying for a greater cause. Whatever the case, Bran took care of scuttling the other two ships' hulls, while Hieronymus and I took care of the final preparations for departure on the boat we had chosen.

And so here we are, riding the waves of the sea once again. I can still see the Corpse Golem raging and growing. The ships we wanted to keep from pursuing us, due to the work of a large axe wielded by Bran, lie in the harbor with a heavy list. I guess the Armatura has done his job perfectly, as always. Nevertheless, I am far from satisfied with our current situation. We did not get hurt and we did not violate the Lord's commandments, but an abomination that should have been destroyed still walks this earth. Only time will tell whether we missed the chance to nip this threat in the bud.

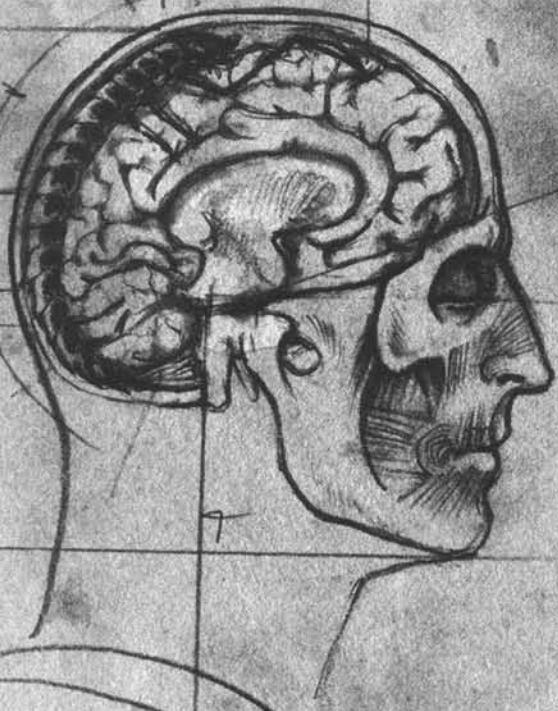
I will not write on, because my anger at the present is too great — anger at my own incompetence, my own helplessness, and anger at the Lord of the Flies, whose abominable creatures continue to take so many innocent lives.

23rd october 2651

Our voyage is anything but pleasant. Although we all have sailed on high seas numerous times now, experienced sailors were always at our side on those occasions. This time we are on our own, and the sea turns out to be a much tougher opponent than many of the Dreamseed creatures we have encountered. Even now, as I start to scribble a few sentences here, one of my companions is calling for my help. This ship is far too big for a crew of only three rather inexperienced men. If we ever reach the coast, we should consider ourselves very lucky.

Regarding my actual mission, I must note that something of the utmost importance to the entire world is about to happen. The Dreamseed demons

Fig.



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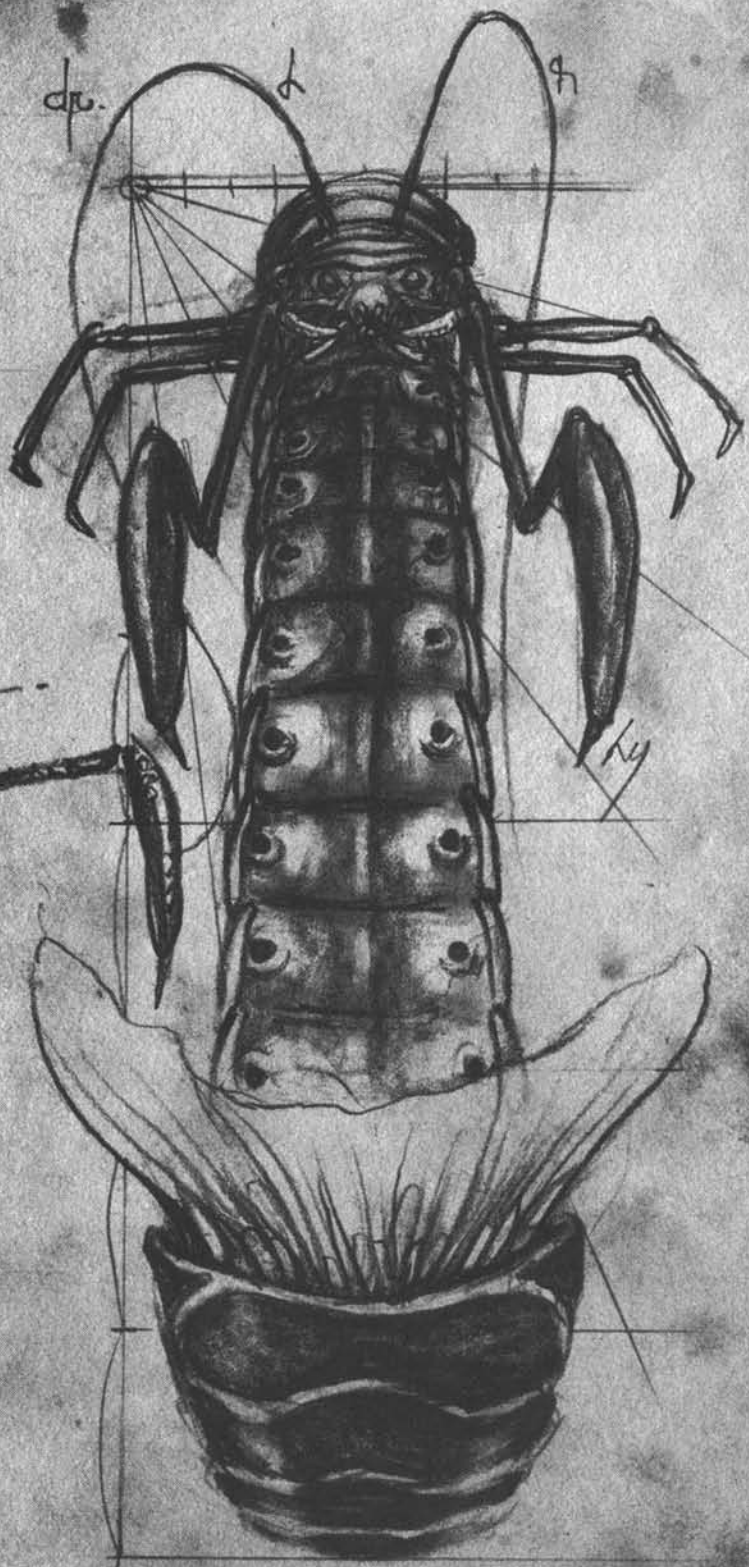
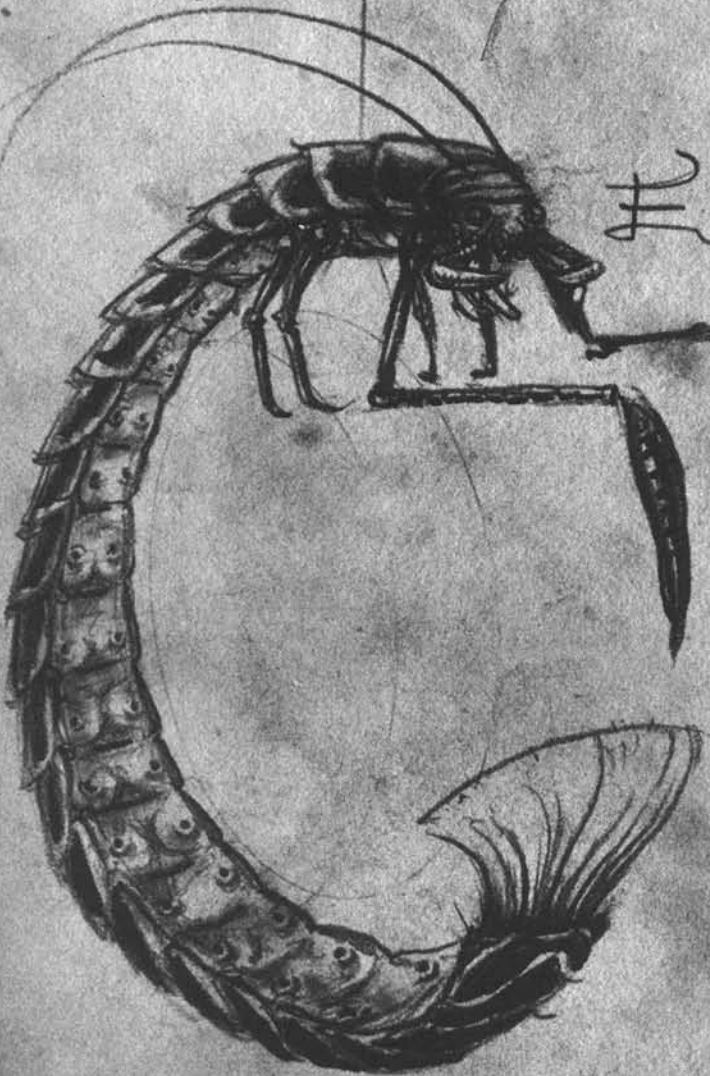


Fig.



28th october 2651

Urbs Lipsia!

We are back on firm ground. When I set foot on the pier of Urbs Lipsia, I started to cry hot tears of relief and joy. The ship on which we reached the city has sunk. Apparently, we sailed into the harbor mouth too steeply. I have heard many stories about this distant northern port town, but I would never have expected it to be of such monumental size. A stone wall whose true enormity I could only guess at surrounded the entire city, keeping the waters of the sea at bay as well. I find it hard to believe that this construction has been built by human hands. From old writings at the Himmel at Prague I knew the wall to be a relic from the time before the Second Flood. Instead of wasting my time marveling at the architectural wonders of the city, I shall appeal to the local authorities, trying to get my warning of the impending attack of the Dreamseed army through to the right persons. With some good luck, it should be possible to inform the Himmel just in time.

In the end, it seems my audience with the Archbishop of Urbs Lipsia, his Eminence Aroch of Leipzig, was more useful to me than to the Holy Angelitic Church. The people of Urbs Lipsia already knew about the approaching squadrons of the Lord of the Flies. Urielite messengers had delivered the terrible news to them two days ago. The city itself is not presently in danger, however, since the army of the Tempter is advancing more than three hundred kilometers to the west, near Colonia Agrippinensis and Aachen. The precise route the army would take was still a matter of debate, but the Dreamseed could attack two exposed targets if it simply kept on advancing straight ahead, namely Gratianopol and Roma Æterna. Both cities are possible targets for an attack that could deliver a fatal blow to Europe as a whole. We can only hope that our fears will not come true.

1st december 2651

His Eminence the Archbishop has cared for us in a very touching manner, offering us lodging at his own palace during our entire stay. Here we have enjoyed all the amenities we had missed for so long. Of course, his Eminence initially insisted upon a report about our journey, but when I showed the Pontifex Maximus' insignia to him and mentioned the secrecy of my mission, he refrained from pressing me further, assuring us that he would do everything in his power to help us on our continued journey. The rest of the time I spent dozing in my chambers or recuperating in the baths, trying to recover my strength for the continuation of our journey. I plan to depart soon, however, so that we do not become

are coming across the sea in squadrons. This gathering of the Adversary's forces has to serve a certain purpose. A battle is about to join, yet I feel myself unable to give a report to the Pontifex Maximus. When he will read my journals, it might already be too late. Perhaps it already is. Who can tell what events have taken place in Europe during our absence? We have been lost for three years, and wandered on the edges of civilization for two years before that. Surely, we must be thought dead, since our last known whereabouts would have come from a Urielite on his return trip from the battlefields of Jerusalem, and he must have given his report a long time ago.

Yesterday, at great last, I had my earliest wish of our journeys fulfilled: I beheld in full view the first Dreamseed creature I ever met, if only in part — the Devourer of the Earth. The vast creature passed over our heads, accompanied by hundreds upon hundreds of smaller creatures, most of them Tainter-Dragonflies. There was no joy in me to see this wish fulfilled, however. All my fears and assumptions were confirmed. Furthermore, the Engel Vaniel had not been exaggerating when he told me of the immensity of the Dreamseed's flying fortress. Today, however, I am no longer as eager to know the whole truth as I was when I started my journey. The monster's leg on that beach long ago should have satisfied my curiosity. Now this largest of the Dreamseed creatures — with the probable exception of the Leviathan — is moving toward my beloved Europe and I can do nothing else but add another sketch to the hundreds I have already drawn.

Apparently, the Devourer of the Earth is truly blind, yet it seems to command an entire army of smaller creatures. The wind of its huge wings sped up our ship as if the giant tried to mock us, lending us its support in this one-sided race. I do not believe there is a single vulnerable spot for even the weapon of an Engel to pierce through the tangle of thorns and armor plates the creature bears.

Is this the Lord of the Flies' ultimate creation? Did he create an invincible weapon in order to win the battle of good and evil? Or does this gigantic war machine have a weak spot I simply overlooked? Or does the Angelitic Church have hidden weapons to defeat such creatures? I do not dare to hope for such a thing, because I have seen too much suffering and pain to believe now that everything will turn out all right in the end. I must beg forgiveness that an old fool like myself is so depressed, that I can see no spark of hope left to me. Nevertheless, I pray to the Lord every single day that He might bring about the end of my odyssey, one way or the other. I am tired, but I am too afraid to sleep, because I fear my nightmares might catch up with me. Some of them are so real that I fear I will not awaken from them.

I am shattered.

We certainly did. I can still hear the sound of splintering wood and I am afraid they have been repairing the pier to this very day. I can only hope that I will not be held responsible for the damages caused by pest.

5 Believe me, Piotre, I actually pondered whether the Archbishop might not send along me at those huge tubes in which I had spent so much time. I was afraid my wrinkled skin would come off.



to accustomed to the luxuries here. Moreover, I am very confident that I may actually accomplish my mission.

4th december 2651

Somehow, I felt like a newborn baby when we left Urbs Lipsia, equipped with horses, pack animals, and provisions that could easily feed us for several weeks. I am indebted to the honorable Archbishop Aroch, as it was him who virtually ensured our recovery. The revered Konsistorium will surely chide me when they read my report and see it written here in black and white that I refused the offer of Templars to guard us on our way. I am surprised at myself, but my companions and I agreed that we do not need any protection, and that young Templars would only risk their lives unduly in our service. So we leave as we came: only the three of us.

There is one question I have been contemplating for quite a while, but unfortunately I did not come up with an answer to it: What has become of the Corpse Golem and the Brainlarvae on Gotaland? More than three weeks ago, a Gabrielite Inquisitor arrived at Urbs Lipsia on demand of the Archbishop. He at once betook himself to the city's harbor barracks, which are run by all the fighting orders. Immediately afterwards, the Templar galleys stationed at Urbs Lipsia took to sea under the Inquisitor's command, but we have not heard of the course of their mission ever since. I pray that it has not been too late to deal with the Dreamseed on Gotaland and that those brave men will return safe and sound. Maybe I will learn about the course of their mission later. For now, I suppose, I must be content to accomplish my own mission.

25th december 2651

The last leg of our journey is much more comfortable than anything that lies behind us. We have left the ancient city of Colonia Agrippinensis and are traveling through a potentially hazardous area, since the Dreamseed flew over it mere weeks ago. The townspeople actually confirmed that the monsters had been seen flying in the skies, but local authorities could not tell what might have transpired in the meantime.

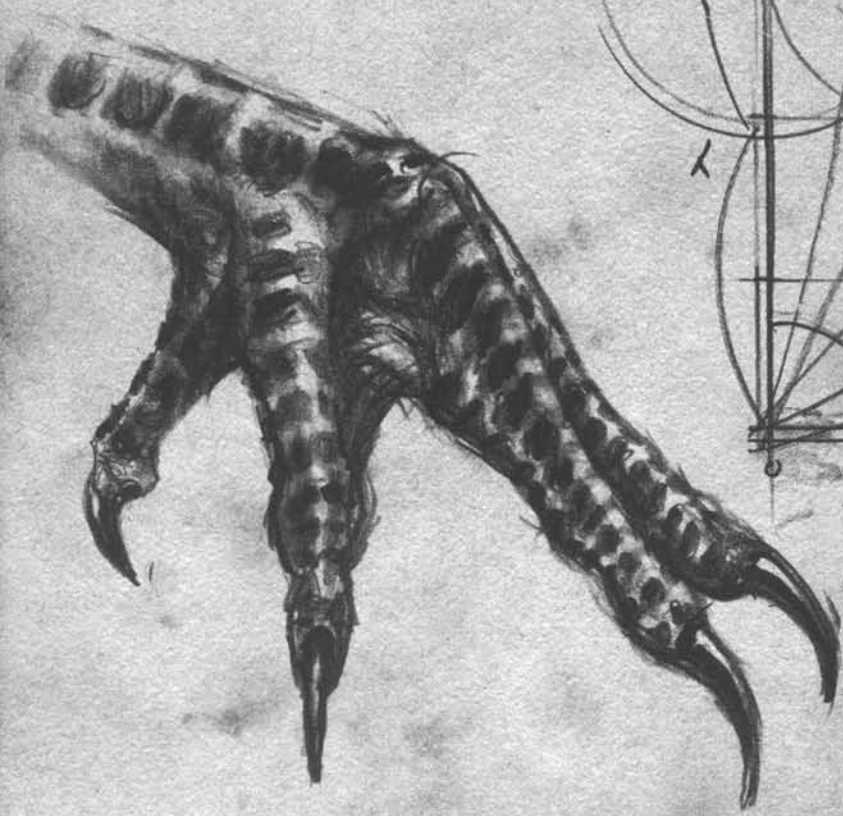
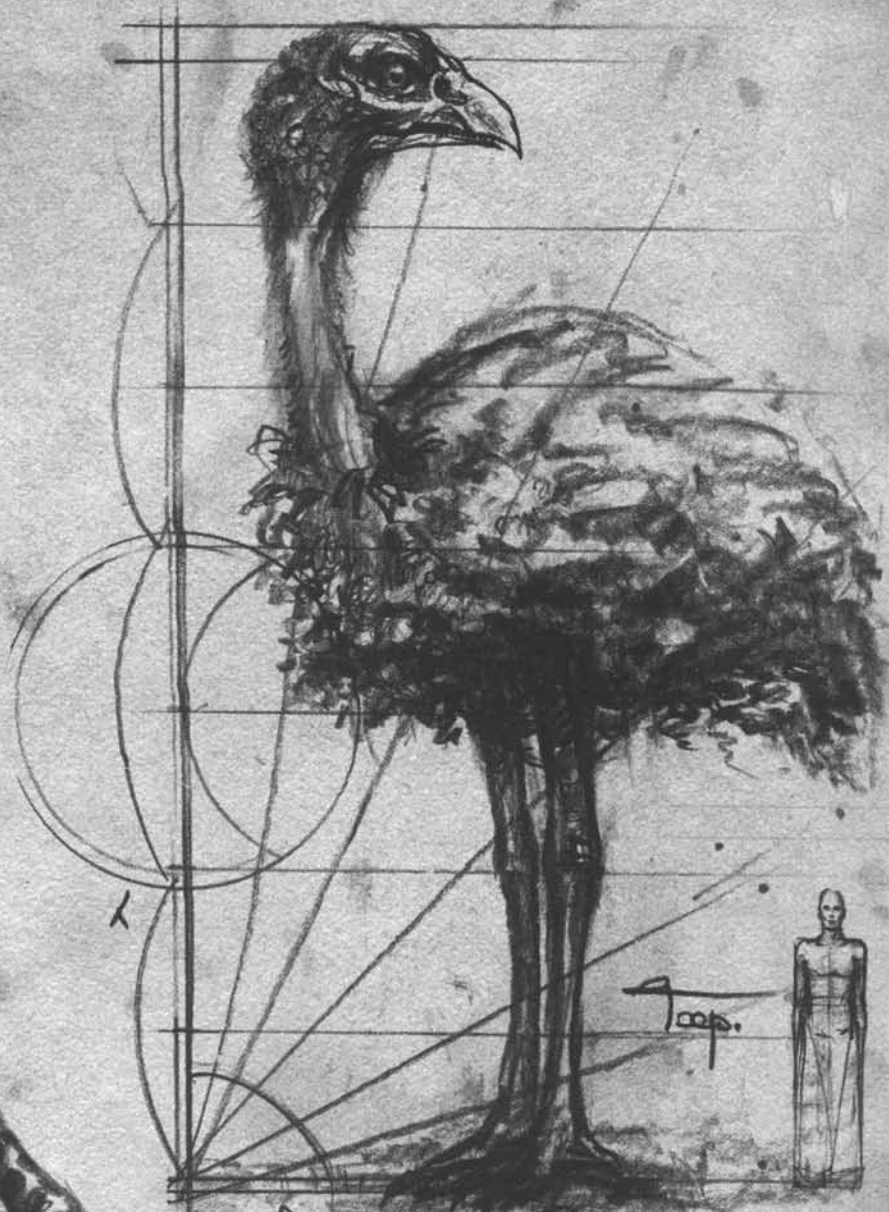
We are entering the coastland marches near Agrippinensis. Countless birds live here, and it is indeed a wonderful sight to see so many different species of birds in one place. I am not very familiar with ornithology, but nevertheless I take great pleasure in the often very splendid plumage of our winged friends.

Here, the past has caught up with us, for good and for ill. Fear, I now find, is as capable of regenerating in a man's soul as is strength; although I have grown somewhat accustomed to horrors, this new encounter with the Dreamseed frightened me greatly. Now that we are safe and homeward bound — great news, gentle reader! — I will give a report of what has happened.

This afternoon, we stopped in a small forest close to the beach, smelling of resin and softwood mixed with a dash of brine. Since the sea sometimes evokes a certain drowsiness and we had already traveled for some time, we decided to rest there for awhile. Just when we began to tie to one of the trees the canvas cover that should have been our roof for the night, we realized that we were in serious danger.

What we had taken for a tree was not a trunk of wood and bark, but the gigantic leg of a huge bird glaring down at us with yellow eyes. Only a stout leap saved me from being impaled by the creature's enormous beak, which drilled itself into the ground for a full meter right next to me. Panicking, I jumped back to my feet and nearly knocked over poor Hieronymus. We all started to run in different directions, away from the giant, malevolent bird. This strategy turned out to be most effective, because we gave the monster a real headache in deciding which one of us it should pursue. Of course, fate would not have it any other way — it chose me as its intended prey. While my skills as a horseman could undoubtedly be improved, I am quite a talented runner, and when it comes to long distances, I fare much better than my friend Hieronymus. Nevertheless, I was humbled against the strides of a flightless bird at least seven meters tall. Every stride brought me closer to death, and soon I could hear the dreadful claws of the monster crunching against the earth and stones of the forest floor behind me. I have always thought it curious, the details one perceives in moments of mortal fear.

I had begun to accept my inevitable demise when for the second time in my life an Angel's arrow saved me. I heard the beating of wings, followed by a dull, resounding crash behind me. Hearing no more the sounds of pursuit, I stopped and turned around. The *Stilter* — as I will call this Dreamseed creature from now on — had been cut down just as the tree we had taken it for falls to the forester's axe. At first, I did not dare step closer to the thing. When I could not see any signs of life in it, however, my curiosity gained the upper hand. An arrow protruded from one of its round eyes, which were the size of cartwheels. The creature's plumage was of shimmering green and brown hues; the feathers' coloration actually reminded me of late summer leaves, brown at the edges, but mostly of a rich green. The vestigial wings were so small that the *Stilter* would never have been able to take to the air. I almost overlooked them, to be honest.



frat... ..

The claws, however, were far from vestigial. Like strong, gnarled tree roots, they towered toward the sky. The razor-sharp tips would have surely have cut me to ribbons, if not for my heavenly savior who had ended the Dreamseed's life with a well-aimed shot.

The Urielite Simiel surprised me in many regards. He is a masterful marksman, which does not strike me as very surprising, and has actually been searching for us on behalf of Pontifex Maximus Petrus Secundus. He has been sent to tell us — God be praised! — that it is time for us to return home. I cannot believe that our odyssey is about to come to an end. Obviously, Archbishop Aroch notified the revered Konsistorium, as I had requested, that their servants were not moldering corpses, but rather in perfect health. And now it seems they cannot wait to hear our report. It is a fact, though, that there will not be enough time to deliver a written report, since my countless notes first have to be sifted through and brought into proper order. Moreover, a presentable copy has to be made, and the original text certainly needs some editing.

It seems that Simiel (or rather the revered Konsistorium) has anticipated all my objections. Simiel told me he would take me to the Urielite monastery of Saint Etienne, where all the necessary work on my journals can be done. A delegation of Monachs from Prague is already on its way to Saint Erienne to assist me. And so, our odyssey comes to an end without us having actually seen all of the European coasts. Surely, Hieronymus will not let this matter rest, however.

documentation of horrors for one twofold reason: these abominations still walk the earth, and some of them are so treacherous that I feel I must warn humanity of them.

During the fall of 2650, the Urielite Simiel and his fellowship arrived at a village in the eastern foothills of the Pyreneans, where they were supposed to learn what had happened to another fellowship that had been sent to the village several weeks earlier. The first fellowship had been sent to look after some farmers who had been neglecting their work for quite some time. After finding no trace of either farmers or lost fellowship from the air, they landed and found a grove of dead trees at the center of the village. They eventually discovered the mortal remains of a Michaelite who had been impaled on one of the withered trees, as butterflies are impaled on needles for reasons of scientific examination. Without doubt, this Engel had been a member of the lost fellowship Simiel and his brothers and sisters were seeking. They did not find any traces of the other lost Engel, however. Thus, the contrite messengers of the Lord wanted to bury their fellow Engel's body in the usual way.

When the fellowship began to cut down the tree in order to let the Michaelite down gently from it, however, the earth beneath their feet started to shake and a horrible roar sounded from deep underground. When the earth lifted itself up, all the Engel had taken to the air, only to see a gigantic Dreamseed creature emerging from the ground. What the fellowship had taken to be a dead grove had in fact been part of the creature's back. The trunks were not made of wood, but of chitin, forming an impenetrable, thorny armor upon its shell. Although, thank God, the creature could not fly, the Engel were utterly unable to hurt what Simiel called the Thornwood, or, alternately, Thorngiant. After the titan had razed the entire village to the ground during his fight with the fellowship, the Lord's champions were forced to retreat because they were totally exhausted and could not muster the strength necessary to defeat the monster. I could feel the desperation welling up in the Urielite when he told me of this encounter, and his pangs of conscience were written on his face. With Simiel's help and careful instruction, I have drawn a striking sketch that might help future fellowships to defeat the creature. So far, the creature (or its like) has never been sighted again.

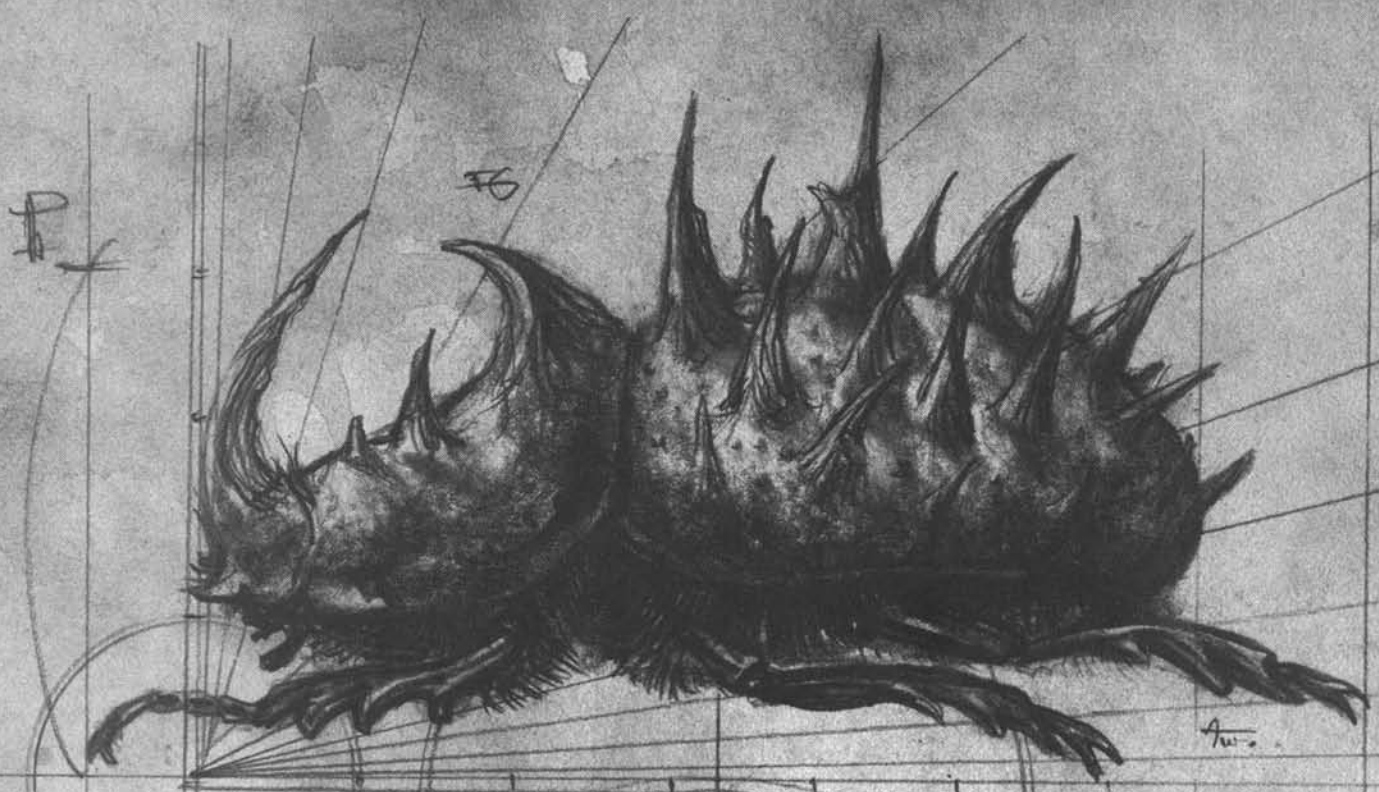
Another incident occurred a year earlier, in the fall of 2649. Simiel had been very young then, and very inexperienced in dealing with the Dreamseed in its various forms. In some places, Heretics worship rats as holy animals, since the Lord granted those rodents the ability to survive even the worst catastrophes. It is said that these cults hunt and eat rats in order to obtain the abilities of these repulsive animals. Simiel's fellowship was sent out to annihilate

addendum

Here I sit, now, at my escriptoire at Saint Etienne, finding it hard to finish my work, since there are still too many mysteries to be found. Fortunately, Simiel has become a veritable font of experience and knowledge; actually, he has told me of so many mysteries that all of them cannot be included here. I suppose I would have experienced much of what Simiel has told me of if we had ended our journey as we initially planned to⁶. Of course, Simiel's words are truth, and he is capable of descriptions so vivid that I almost feel as if I had lived through the events he depicts. Hieronymus has heard most of Simiel's stories as well, and he will be my witness upon his return. As I had supposed, Hieronymus set out again to complete the rest of his maps immediately after having spent only a few days at the monastery. I wish him the best of luck. Had I the time, I would have gone with him, as he came with me so many years ago.

The creatures Simiel described to me on our journey to Sain Etienne are included in this

At this point, I was afflicted by nagging doubts regarding the quality of my journals. Suddenly a strange fear gripped me that I could not comprehend at first. Later, I understood that it was the fear of actually finishing my work and for a while because there with I would finish a chapter of my own life as well. However painful my travels and encounters with the Dreamseed might have been, the journey itself nevertheless half (and has) become an important part of my own self.



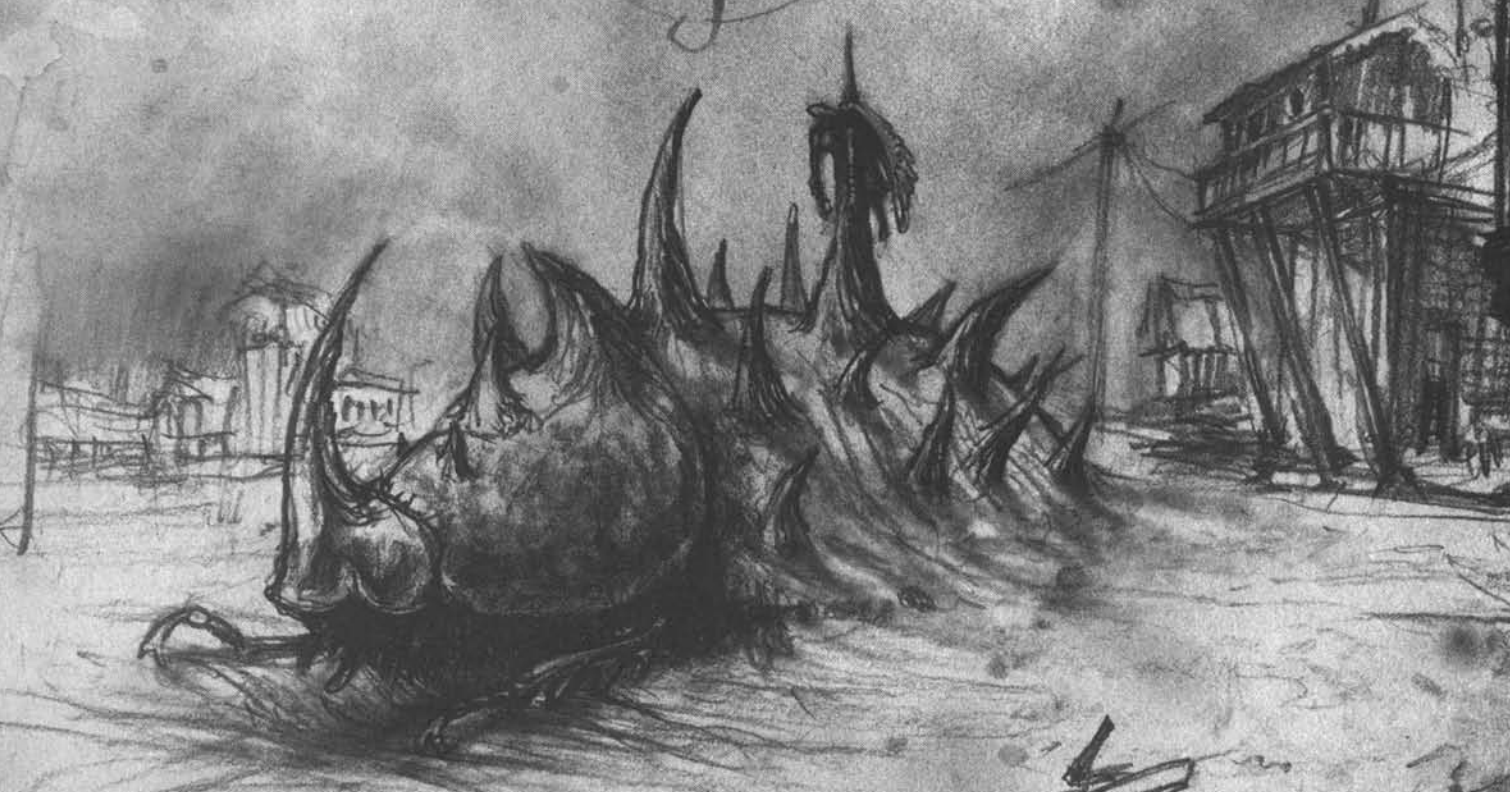
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one of these rat cults. However, the Heretics must have drawn the favor of the Lord of the Flies, who seems to have eyes and ears everywhere, and who sent one of his creatures among the cultists: a rat-demon, if you will. This **King of Rats** was none too eager to abandon his newfound followers. Simiel described his fellowship's battle with the creature in such detail that I have been able to make a drawing of it as well. The Urielite could not know with any certainty whether this creature was truly destroyed, for it was not actually a single creature the fellowship had had to face. Rather, the King of Rats consisted of hundreds, perhaps thousands of rats, which had merged to form a new composite entity with its own powers and sentience. In form it resembled a veritable mound of rats with a humanoid torso on top, which also was composed from bodies of these despicable rodents. Even hours after the fellowship had torn apart the King of Rats' body, they were forced to defend themselves from attacks by single rats, some of huge proportions, until a sizable portion of the entire swarm fled, maybe to reform elsewhere.

If reports about another King of Rats were to surface, I guess it would be best to use fire against this threat. Surely, Simiel would have had the same idea, if he had been more experienced before encountering the vile and cunning creatures of the Adversary.

The last encounter with Dreamseed I recount here should be read without bias, since neither Simiel nor myself was present to verify it. I only heard the tale yesterday, and did not want to miss the chance to present this most recent proof of the Lord of the Flies' cunning and malevolence. Although I did not witness what I am here about to write, its details match up perfectly with my own knowledge of the usual strategies and tactics of the Tempter.

In a village not far from Saint Etienne lived a woman who gave birth to three children in one

night. One of the children died during birth and was buried without having been baptized. Unfortunately, the Mater who served as midwife during birth had told the young mother, not wishing to cause undue concern at such a time, that the missing child was merely too weak to be given to the mother at once. As fate would have it, this area lacks midwives, and thus the good Begine hurried off to deliver another baby. She left the village before she found the courage to tell the triplets' mother that one of her daughters was dead. And so, the woman assumed that her other child would be returned to her. Thus, on the third day after the birth, when there were again three children lying in the cradle, the young mother thought everything was all right. She — most certainly not the smartest of women — was simply overjoyed to have her lost child back.

During the following nights, however, two of the children died of a strange disease that left the poor infants dried out like old husks. The parents were desperate, of course, and poured all their effort and care into their remaining child. She flourished — and when she turned one year, she had become strong enough to try to do unto her parents what she had done unto her sisters. What night after night shed the skin of the child who had died during birth was an abominable Dreamseed creature, which had drunk from the mother's own breast until it had grown strong enough to work its wickedness. The **Changeling** had killed its "sisters" quickly in order to grow even faster, eating the two infants from within, using the flesh of the dead child to implement its sinister plan. The parents survived the creature's attack and were able to slay the beast, but they have never had any children again, for their fear the horror might repeat itself was too great.

Of course, gentle reader, think of this story what you will, but I am convinced that it contains at least a kernel of truth, just as any good story does.



Postscriptum

Dear Piette

Now that my work lies before you and you have read of my experiences you may agree with me that we, humanity as a whole, are in a bad way. I have made this copy and sent it to you to ensure that my work will not be lost or destroyed. I know that I can rely on you dear Piette. Do not act rashly. Wait for my death or until you hear from me - although the Angelitic Church can work no evil, I nevertheless fear that some of its members would like the journals of the Monach Fra Domenico to disappear, together with their author, in the deepest vaults of Roma Aeterna simply because what is written here is too world-shattering to be believable. And we both know that not all of the decisions made by the Angelitic Church are for its own good.

So keep this book with my notes safe for all time to come. Guard it jealously. Who knows whether all of this will be to our advantage in the end.

Yours

Domenico

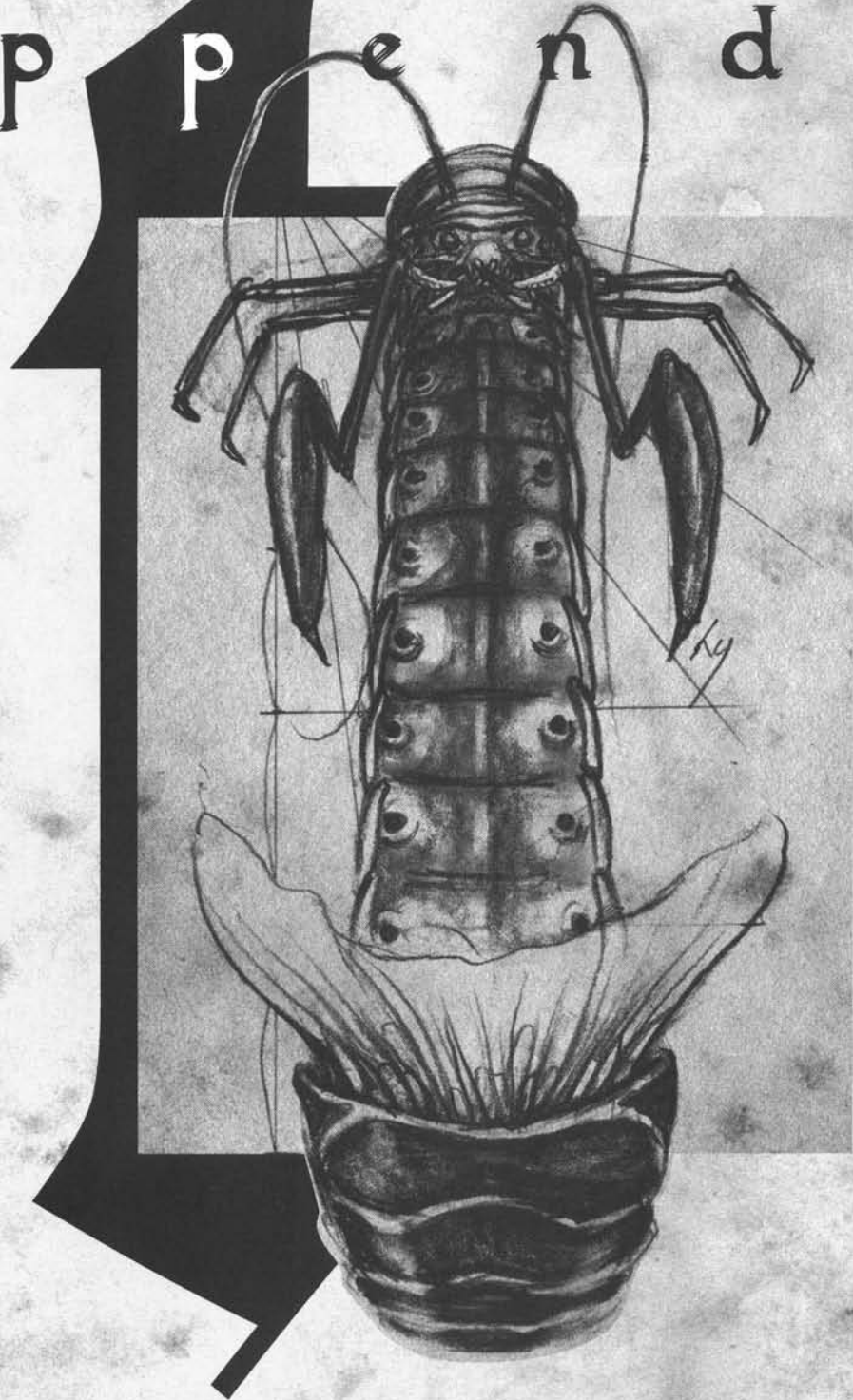




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a p p e n d i x



oculi nostri ad ¹⁰⁰ dominum nostrum

o n e :

storytelling dreamseed

or

how to use the creatures
in the service of the lord of the flies.

Certainly, a storyteller amongst our readers might have noticed it — the descriptions of the Dreamseed creatures within the pages of this book are heavily influenced by the subjective views of the author, Fra Domenico. In **Appendix Two: Rules for Dreamseed** you will find 3rd edition stats for all creatures which appear in Domenico's journals.

balance of power

If you have read this book carefully, you should have noticed that it often appears to be very hard for the Engel, especially young and inexperienced ones, to stand up to one of the demons of the Lord of the Flies described in the first three chapters. This is nothing but the bitter truth.

magnificat anima

101

mea dominum

appendix one: storytelling dreamseed

The Dreamseed creatures are large, countless, and possess the most absurd means of disguise, defence, and attack imaginable. Your players should know that any encounter with the Dreamseed is potentially lethal for their characters. Worse, if the players' characters fail, their failure could lead to the destruction of an entire city, or worse. Of course, the storyteller of an *Engel* chronicle also has to be aware of the momentous impact inherent in using such mighty opponents. The appearance of a titanic creature like the Devourer of the Earth should be the exciting climax of long campaign or an epic adventure scenario. The largest, most powerful Dreamseed creatures must not become everyday horrors. This would unbalance the game profoundly, because the Lord of the Flies would no longer be a dire threat to the European continent, but an unstoppable force of nature that is sure to annihilate the entire planet. Try to make your chronicle interesting without resorting to a constant stream of new monsters assailing the bastions of humanity. Demon attacks are a common enough phenomena in the 27th century, but such a terrible encounter should nevertheless always be described as something very special. You will see how an entirely new type of tension will be established in your chronicle when of course the characters have to risk their lives time and again, but do so in carefully measured doses.

fear is your friend

Fra Domenico's assumptions and theories lead to a lot of questions, some of which will play a role in future publications, others of which you will have to answer for yourself. One theory of the Ramielite Monach is always true to a certain extent, however. The fears of the beholder determine the actual appearance of the Dreamseed. The demons sent by the Lord of the Flies to battle the heroes of your chronicle are not limited to the shapes given to them by the author of this book. Those creatures Fra Domenico encounters on his odyssey through Europe are but a tiny selection of the most bizarre and treacherous fiends one can come across in the world of *Engel*.

If you come up with ideas for new Dreamseed creatures, feel free to create and add them to your own personal version of *Engel*. Maybe the characters of your players fear entirely different things than those described in this book — perhaps use a snake motif in your designs, instead of an insectoid one.

the way to the brandland

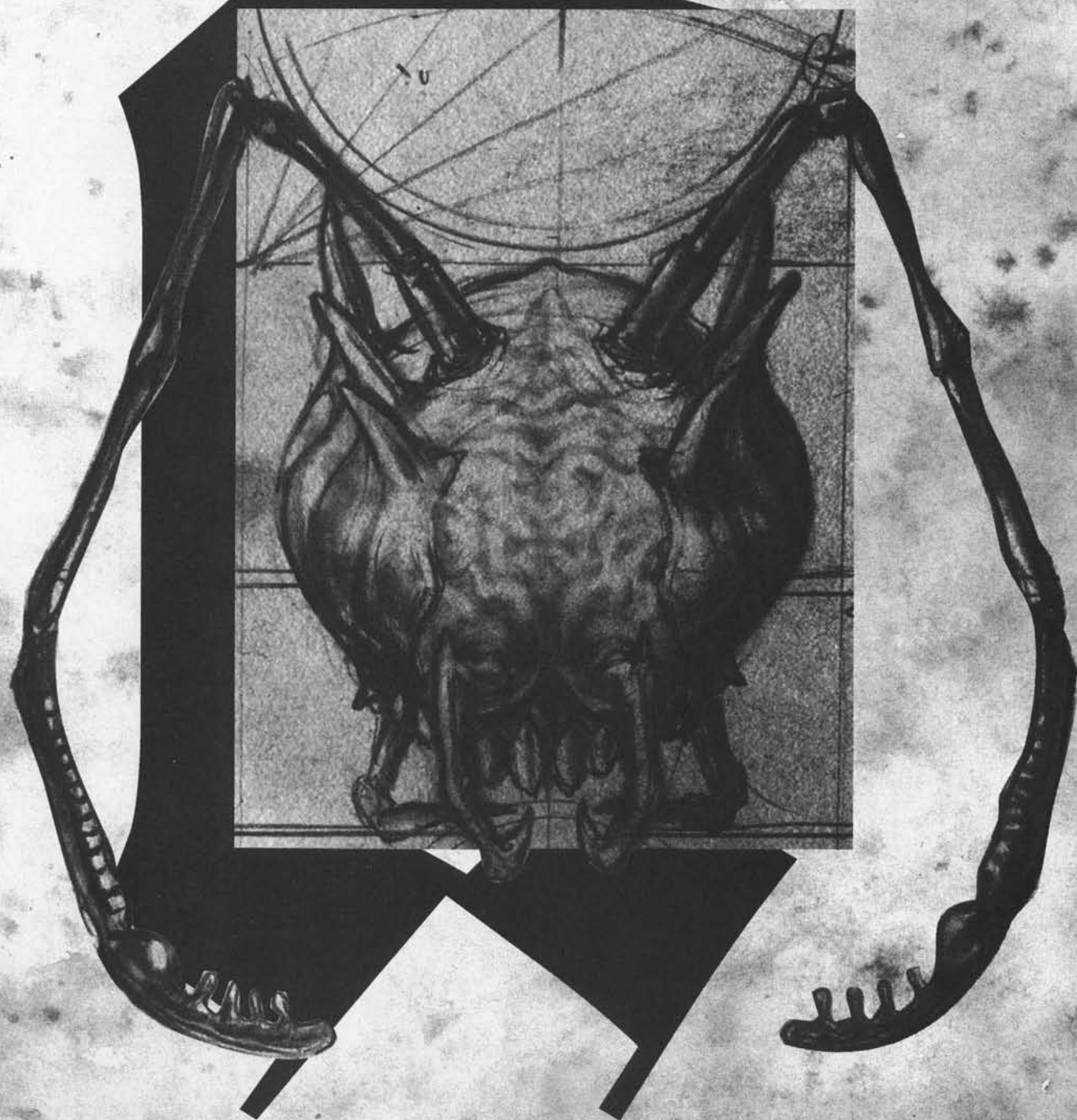
The small but enlightening Brandland expedition of Fra Domenico and his companions is but a single aspect of mystic elements to be found in 27th-century Europe. It serves players and storytellers alike in illustrating the vast potential of the world of *Engel*. The players are not encouraged to have their characters spend their time in a nearby Brandland corridor, for this would be as detrimental to the game as using too many powerful Dreamseed creatures. The storyteller should decide whether he declares the giant scorched corridors part of the game world actually accessible to the players' characters or whether he prefers to make stories about Brandland travels fairy tales or legends in his version of *Engel*. In any case, it should be noted again that 95% of all Brandland expeditions end with the death of one or all of the members, due to human frailties, technical malfunctions, or encounters with Dreamseed creatures from the nightmarish fantasies of this book or the storyteller's own mind.

time within the brandland

When Fra Domenico leaves the Broodmother after the creature has turned his nightmares into reality, three and a half years have passed that were like mere hours to the companions. This does not apply to the Brandland in its entirety. Only inside the Broodmother, which gives birth to new Dreamseed creatures conceived from the fears of humanity, does time pass in such an irregular manner. Time may even flow backwards or stand still within the bowels of the Broodmother. We leave it up to your personal tastes as a storyteller as to what happens when your heroes enter the epicentre of terror. Please keep in mind, however, that the Brandland guides have not designed protective suits for *Engel* as of yet. And even the angelic heroes of your story still have to breathe.



a p p e n d i x



oculi nostri ad ¹⁰⁴ dominum nostrum

t w o :

rules for dreamseed

or how

the creatures of the Lord of the Flies
are described in d20 terms.

creatures of the dreamseed

The term "Dreamseed" describes all those creatures born of the dreams of the Lord of the Flies. As such, the Dreamseed monster type is distinct from any other form of creature.

Most Dreamseed are very much reminiscent of insects, although they vary widely in appearance, size, and powers. Certain details of the creatures described in this book are left open to interpretation or alteration. This is intentional, so that the Storyteller has a great deal of choice on how he wants to use them in his game. This also maintains the sense of wonder and mystery that is such an integral part of Engel.

special abilities and attacks

Several abilities appear throughout this appendix. Each is designated either extraordinary (Ex) or supernatural (Su).

Extraordinary: Abilities that do not stem from any sort of "magic" or any mystical bond or connection, but which simply arise out of a creature's remarkable or "superhuman" physical or

too large, too small, too many

In this appendix you will find all the statistics necessary to let your heroes battle against the spawn of the Lord of the Flies. But some of the demons described by Fra Domenico — like the Broodmother and the Leviathan — are just too large to combat effectively on a personal scale. Only some of the most powerful artifacts of the Angelitic Church might be able to defeat such beasts. Therefore we have refrained from publishing any statistics for certain demons and leave the choice in the most capable hands of the Storyteller. Pestworms, the Hailseed, and the symbiot bugs of the Corpse Golem are also without statistics, as these are part of a greater whole and/or simply unable to put up a fight on an individual basis. Any other details have been included with the individual beasts.

appendix two: rules for dreamseed

physiological qualities. Using an extraordinary ability is generally a free action unless otherwise indicated in the specific ability's description. These abilities may or may not provoke attacks of opportunity, as explained under each ability.

Supernatural: Abilities that draw from quasi-magical or mystical powers or energies. Using a supernatural ability is a standard action unless otherwise indicated in the specific ability's description. Supernatural abilities generally do not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Some specific special attacks or qualities that appear throughout this appendix are as follows:

Damage Reduction (Ex): A creature with this special quality has a thick hide or shell that is hard to penetrate. This covering reduces any single amount of damage the creature takes — from weapons of any kind, though not by fire, cold, etc. — by the listed amount.

Improved Grab (Ex): A creature with this special attack may attempt to grapple as a free action with the listed attack type if that attack is successful, in addition to dealing normal damage for the attack. This grapple attack does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The creature is not required to make an initial touch attack to start the grapple, as this is assumed to have taken place with the initial attack. Unless otherwise stated, this attack can only be used against an opponent one or more sizes smaller than the attacker. In general, the grappling creature can move while still maintaining its hold.

Scent (Ex): This special quality lets a creature detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. The creature can detect opponents by smell, generally within 9 meters. If the opponent is upwind, the range is 18 meters; if it is downwind, the range is 4.5 meters. Strong scents, such as smoke or rotting garbage, can be detected at twice the ranges noted above. Overpowering scents, such as skunk musk, can be detected at three or more times these ranges.

The creature having scent can detect another creature's presence but not its specific location. Noting the direction of the scent is a standard

action. If it moves within 1.5 meters of the odor's source, the creature can pinpoint that source.

The creature can follow tracks by smell, making a Wilderness Lore check to find or follow a track. The typical DC for a fresh trail is 10. The DC increases or decreases depending on how strong the quarry's odor is, the number of creatures being followed, and the age of the trail. For each hour that the trail is cold, the DC increases by 2. The ability otherwise follows the rules for the Track feat, but creatures tracking by scent ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

Creatures with the scent ability can identify familiar odors just as humans do familiar sights.

Water, particularly running water, ruins a trail for air-breathing creatures. Water-breathing creatures such as sharks, however, have the scent ability and can use it in the water easily.

False, powerful odors can easily mask other scents. The presence of such an odor completely spoils the ability to properly detect or identify creatures, and the base Wilderness Lore DC to track becomes 20 rather than 10.

combat

Those born of the dream have come to consume and destroy. They attack everything alive without provocation, be it animal or human. The demons use their natural abilities instinctually and to their best advantage. Unable to feel fear, they fight until completely destroyed. It is not unusual for different types of Dreamseed creatures to attack together, seemingly intelligently and with coordination. As suddenly as an onslaught may begin, however, it may also end abruptly, when all Dreamseed retreat simultaneously as if some unseen hand guided them.

Dreamseed creatures have low-light vision unless otherwise noted.

Dreamseed: All creatures of the Dreamseed are immune to mind-influencing effects and to natural poisons and diseases.

blight

Hit Dice:	Tiny Dreamseed 1d10 (5 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	6 m, fly 9 m (clumsy)
AC:	14 (+2 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks:	Whipclaw +4 melee
Damage:	1d3-3 and blight
Face/Reach:	0.75 m by 0.75 m/0 m (1.5 m with whipclaw)
Special Attacks:	Blight
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, resistances
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1
Abilities:	Str 4, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 9, Cha 3
Skills:	Spot +3
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (whipclaw)
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate plains and hills
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or nest (5-7)
Challenge Rating:	2
Advancement:	2-4 HD (Tiny)

description

See page 22.

combat

Blight (Ex): The whipclaws of the Blight secrete a most dangerous poison. The wounded limb or area (Storyteller's choice) begins to throb with pain immediately and slowly begins to blight. The victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 10). If this save fails, the victim loses 1 point of Constitution permanently and suffers a -1 penalty to all rolls due to the pain for 24 hours.

After 24 hours, the victim makes another Fortitude save (DC 11); in the event of a failure the victim loses 2 points of Constitution and suffers -2 penalty to all rolls due to the pain. Every 24 hours thereafter, the victim must make another Fortitude save, with each consecutive DC increasing by 1 and the resultant penalty to actions and loss of Constitution rising by 1 point for each day thereafter, as well. If his Constitution reaches 0, the victim dies from pain and dehydration.

There is no known antidote to blight poison: only amputation, the *Potestates* of an Engel, or some very few pre-Flood artifacts might have the power to halt or cure it.

Resistances (Ex): Due to the extremely hard shells of Blights relative to their mass, they take only half damage from slashing or piercing weapons.

brainjarva

Hit Dice:	Diminutive Dreamseed 1/4d10-3 (1 hp)
Initiative:	-2 (Dex)
Speed:	1.5 m
AC:	12 (+4 size, -2 Dex)
Attacks:	None
Damage:	—
Face/Reach:	0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m
Special Attacks:	Brain control
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed
Saves:	Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 3, Dex 7, Con 5, Int 5, Wis 17, Cha 6
Skills:	Spot +6, Listen +6, Climb +2
Feats:	Iron Will
Climate/Terrain:	Any terrain
Organization:	Solitary, pair, storm (3-10), brood (11-30), or plague (50-100)
Challenge Rating:	1/6, or that of host +1
Advancement:	—

description

See page 86.

combat

During the thankfully rare Hailseed storms, these Dreamseed creatures fall from the sky accompanied by more mundane hail. When the Hailseed begins to drop, all those without shelter might be hit; a simple shield held over one's head generally provides sufficient shelter. Every round, any creature without shelter suffers 1d6 points of subdual damage and must make a Reflex save (DC 20). On a failed save, the victim is hit on the head by a Hailseed cocoon — the character suffers 1d6 points of real damage and must then make a Fortitude save (DC 20) to avoid being knocked unconscious for 1d3 hours. The Brainlarva then escapes its shelter and crawls into the head wound of an unconscious victim, burrowing through the skull if necessary, while the anaesthetizing slime covering its body numbs the pain. It then attaches to the brain stem and the spinal cord to take control of its victim. It takes about half an hour for the larva to attach completely, after which it is no longer visible from the outside.

Removing the Brainlarva once it is firmly attached is practically impossible: it may be attempted only by one who has at least 10 ranks in Heal, and then only with a successful Heal check (DC 40). Further, the attempt is potentially fatal to the host; if the Heal check fails, the host suffers a number of hit points of damage equal to 40 – the check result.

Brain Control (Ex): Once it has entered its victim's head, the Brainlarva tries to establish dominance over the will of its host. Both host and Brainlarva make opposed Will saves every 4 hours, with the Brainlarva gaining a +1 bonus for each prior roll. After the Larva has succeeded in dominating its host, it gains full control of the body and access to the majority of the skills and memories of its host, although the host may at times (with a successful Will save) act and speak freely if the Brainlarva is not directly endangered. The Brainlarva often stimulates the production of adrenaline, so that the host effectively gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and appears to be much more aggressive and hostile than usual.

Engel are immune to the domination of a Brainlarva, which dies in the process of attaching to the brain stem.

changing

Hit Dice:	Small Dreamseed 1d10+1 (6 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m, fly 12 m (average)
AC:	15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +2 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d4
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Latch, blood drain
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, exchange
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 11, Cha 12
Skills:	Bluff +9, Disguise +9*, Escape Artist +17, Listen +2
Feats:	Skill Focus (Escape Artist)
Climate/Terrain:	Any terrain
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	1
Advancement:	2–3 HD (Small)

description

See page 96.

combat

Latch (Ex): If a Changeling hits with its bite attack, it latches onto its victim's body. An attached Changeling loses any Dexterity bonus to AC (it thus has an AC of 12).

Blood Drain (Ex): A Changeling that is latched onto a victim drains blood and other bodily fluids for 1d3 points of temporary Constitution damage each round.

Exchange (Ex): A Changeling can slip through the hole left by its bite into the skin of a baby after having consumed the infant's blood and internal organs. At night, the demon can leave this shell to cause further havoc. The only evidence of its false nature is the tiny scar on the back of the baby's neck (Spot check DC 25), but of course the fiend will be unwilling to be inspected closely and will try to prevent anyone from inspecting its back (raising as little suspicion as possible in doing so, of course).

Skills: A Changeling gains a +4 racial bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks, and a +8 racial bonus to Escape Artist checks. *When inside the skin of an infant, the Changeling gains an additional +5 circumstance bonus to Disguise checks.

collector of souls

Hit Dice:	Huge Dreamseed 14d10+65 (142 hp)
Initiative:	-1 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m
AC:	15 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +8 natural)
Attacks:	Tongue +21 melee touch; or bite +20 melee
Damage:	Tongue (poison); bite 1d10+12
Face/Reach:	3 m by 6 m/1.5 m (7.5 m with tongue)
Special Attacks:	Tongue, poison, improved grab, swallow
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, blindsight 18 m
Saves:	Fort +16, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 27, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 4, Wis 9, Cha 3
Skills:	Spot +10, Listen +9
Feats:	Cleave (bite only), Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tongue)
Climate/Terrain:	Warm deserts and swamps
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	10
Advancement:	15-26 HD (Huge)

description

See page 50.

combat

Tongue (Ex): The Collector uses its sticky tongue to snare any Medium-size or smaller target within 7.5 meters of itself, and to slowly pull the victim towards its mouth. This requires only a successful melee touch attack against the target. Victims can break free from the tongue with a successful Strength check (DC 23) — the Collector does not provoke attacks of opportunity for using its tongue to snare in this way. If the victim's Strength check fails, the Collector of Souls draws the victim in to bite him in the next round.

Further, if the Collector's tongue attack hits the victim's normal AC (as opposed to his touch AC), the victim is also affected by the Collector's poison, which is secreted by glands running the length of its tongue.

The tongue has an AC of 18, and 25 points of damage with an edged weapon will sever it. A severed tongue grows back completely within 7 days.

Poison (Ex): Tongue hit, contact poison; Fortitude save (DC 21); save every round or take 2 points of temporary Strength damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): The Collector must hit with a bite attack to use this ability. If successful, it deals normal bite damage with the initial attack, and can attempt to swallow its opponent in subsequent rounds.

Swallow (Ex): Collectors of Souls prefer to swallow their prey whole instead of ripping it apart; its mouth is jointed much like a snake's, allowing it to swallow victims much larger than appearances might initially suggest. A Collector swallows Medium-size or smaller victims that it has grabbed by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the Collector, a victim takes 1d6 points of acid damage every hour from the weak digestive juices within.

A swallowed Medium-size creature can cut its way out by using a Small or Tiny slashing weapon to deal 20 points of damage to the creature's interior (AC 18). Once a victim cuts its way out, the hole closes due to muscular contraction; any other swallowed victim must cut its own way out. A Collector of Souls can have swallowed up to 12 Medium-size creatures at any one time, which are slowly digested over the course of 7 days after acid damage has killed them.

Blindsight (Ex): The Collector of Souls can sense its surroundings within 18 meters by means of air pressure and vibrations, but has no normal sense of sight. If its carapace is completely covered, it is considered blinded.

corpse golem

	Large Construct
Hit Dice:	6d10 (33 hp)
Initiative:	-1 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m
AC:	16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +8 natural)
Attacks:	2 slams +8 melee
Damage:	Slam 1d10+8
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m/3 m
Special Qualities:	Construct, "we are legion"
Saves:	Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 25, Dex 9, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 4
Climate/Terrain:	Any terrain
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	3
Advancement:	7-12 HD (Large); 13-20 (Huge); 21-36 HD (Gargantuan); 37+ HD (Colossal)

description

See pages 88.

combat

Construct: Constructs are immune to all mind-influencing effects, poisons, diseases, sleep, paralysis, stun, and death effects. They are unaffected by critical hits, life drain, ability loss and damage, massive damage, and all other effects requiring Fortitude saves that do not explicitly affect objects.

"We Are Legion" (Su): The Corpse Golem consists of cadavers, and it gains in strength by incorporating more corpses into itself. It therefore seeks to slay everything living to continue its growth. Every Medium-size cadaver incorporated into the golem grants it an additional Hit Die, and for every two HD it gains its natural armor improves by 1 point. Every consecutive increment of 6 HD increases its CR by 2 points; thus, a 12-HD Golem (Large) is CR 5, while a 24-HD Golem (Gargantuan) is CR 9. It takes the Golem 1d6 rounds to incorporate a single man-sized cadaver sufficiently to gain these bonuses.

devourer of the earth

	Colossal Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	34d10+510 (697 hp)
Initiative:	-1 (Dex)
Speed:	6 m, fly 30 m (poor)
AC:	17 (-8 size, -1 Dex, +16 natural)
Attacks:	2 claws +40 melee, 2 wings +35 melee
Damage:	Claw 2d8+14, wing 2d6+7
Face/Reach:	12 m by 24 m/4.5 m
Special Attacks:	Crush
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, damage reduction 5, storm of doom, telepathy
Saves:	Fort +34, Ref +18, Will +11
Abilities:	Str 38, Dex 9, Con 41, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13
Skills:	Spot +15 (only via telepathy), Listen +15 (only via telepathy)
Feats:	Cleave, Power Attack, Sunder
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate and warm plains and forests
Organization:	Solitary or pair, always accompanied by a vast array of smaller flying Dreamseed creatures
Challenge Rating:	20
Advancement:	35-42 HD (Colossal)

description

See pages 8, 18 and 90.

combat

Crush (Ex): A Devourer of the Earth may simply land on opponents as a standard action, crushing them beneath its vast bulk. This crush attack affects any creatures of size Huge or less, and can affect as many creatures at once as may fit under its body (i.e., any in a given 12-meter by 24-meter area). Fortunately, the Devourer's enormity makes it relatively slow, so victims may avoid the crush attack with a successful Reflex save (DC 27); a target who fails the Reflex save is pinned and takes 3d8+21 points of damage, while one who saves is considered to have dodged to the nearest edge of the affected area. If the Devourer has pinned a victim, the victim suffers 3d8+21 points of damage every round until he escapes with a successful grapple check, or until the Devourer lifts off again.

Storm of Doom (Ex): The immense wings of a Devourer of the Earth cause powerful air turbulence. The flight maneuverability of any creature of Gargantuan size or smaller within a radius of 100 meters is reduced by one category, and that within 50 meters is reduced by two categories. Further, the flying speed of any such creatures attempting to move toward the Devourer is reduced by half. Creatures reduced to worse than clumsy maneuverability cannot maintain flight while in this radius. Other Dreamseed creatures are immune to these effects. An Engel attempting to use a *Potestas* within this area must make a Concentration check (DC 10) to do so.

The gusts generated within this area are also sufficient to blow out small open flames up to the size of campfires. If the Devourer of the Earth is within 50 meters of the ground and there is debris such as sand or loose dirt at hand, all sighted creatures within the area are blinded while they remain therein, and for 1 round after they exit the area of turbulence. An Engel attempting to use a *Potestas* within this area must make a Concentration check (DC 27) to do so.

Telepathy (Su): Devourers of the Earth maintain a constant telepathic link with all Dreamseed creatures in a radius of 5 kilometers. This form of coordination allows it to give the other demons commands while using their senses to compensate for its own blindness. These are considered free actions. As Devourers of the Earth lack physical senses and have to rely on their minions to guide them, they are effectively blinded if no other Dreamseed creatures are within 5 kilometers.

firebug

	Large Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	6d10+18 (51 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m, fly 9 m (clumsy)
AC:	18 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural)
Attacks:	Claws +8 melee
Damage:	Claws 1d6+3
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Burning stream
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, cold vulnerability
Saves:	Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills:	Spot +7, Hide +2, Listen +4
Feats:	Great Fortitude
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate and warm plains, hills, mountains and forests
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or swarm (3-8), or horde (9-20)
Challenge Rating:	4
Advancement:	7-15 HD (Large)

description

See page 30.

combat

Burning Stream (Ex): Firebugs can attack their opponents with streams of a burning hot chemical substance. As a standard action, a Firebug may target any one opponent within 4.5 meters with a single stream, making a ranged touch attack (+6 bonus). If it hits, the target is covered with the burning fluid, and takes 4d6 points of fire damage in the 1st round, 3d6 in the 2nd, 2d6 in the 3rd, and 1d6 in the 4th and final round. An opponent can scrape the substance away as a full-round action. A Firebug may use its burning stream attack up to 10 times before it exhausts its fire-chemical gland; the gland can "recharge" a single use of its burning stream attack every 30 minutes.

Cold Vulnerability: Firebugs suffer double damage from cold-based attacks.

Skills: Firebugs gain a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks.

King of rats

Hit Dice:	Huge Dreamseed 15d10+75 (157 hp)
Initiative:	+5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	3 m, climb 3 m, swim 3 m
AC:	14 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks:	Slam +17/+12/+7 melee
Damage:	Slam 2d8+6
Face/Reach:	3 m by 3 m /3 m
Special Attacks:	Wave of terror, frightening appearance
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, swarm
Saves:	Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +6
Abilities:	Str 19, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 11
Skills:	Climb +12, Hide +13, Listen +12, Search +6, Spot +10, Swim +12
Feats:	Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain:	Swamps, underground, wet cities
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	11
Advancement:	16-30 HD (Huge)

description

See page 94.

combat

Wave of Terror (Ex): As a standard action in place of its slam attack, the King of Rats can send forth wave after wave of the rats from which it is comprised to attack its opponents. All opponents within 3 meters of the King of Rats who are not flying are subject to a melee touch attack (+17 bonus) for 1d8+4 points of damage. Any creature that takes damage from the wave of terror must also succeed at a Reflex save (DC 10 + wave of terror damage taken) to avoid tripping or being knocked over by the rodents and thus falling prone.

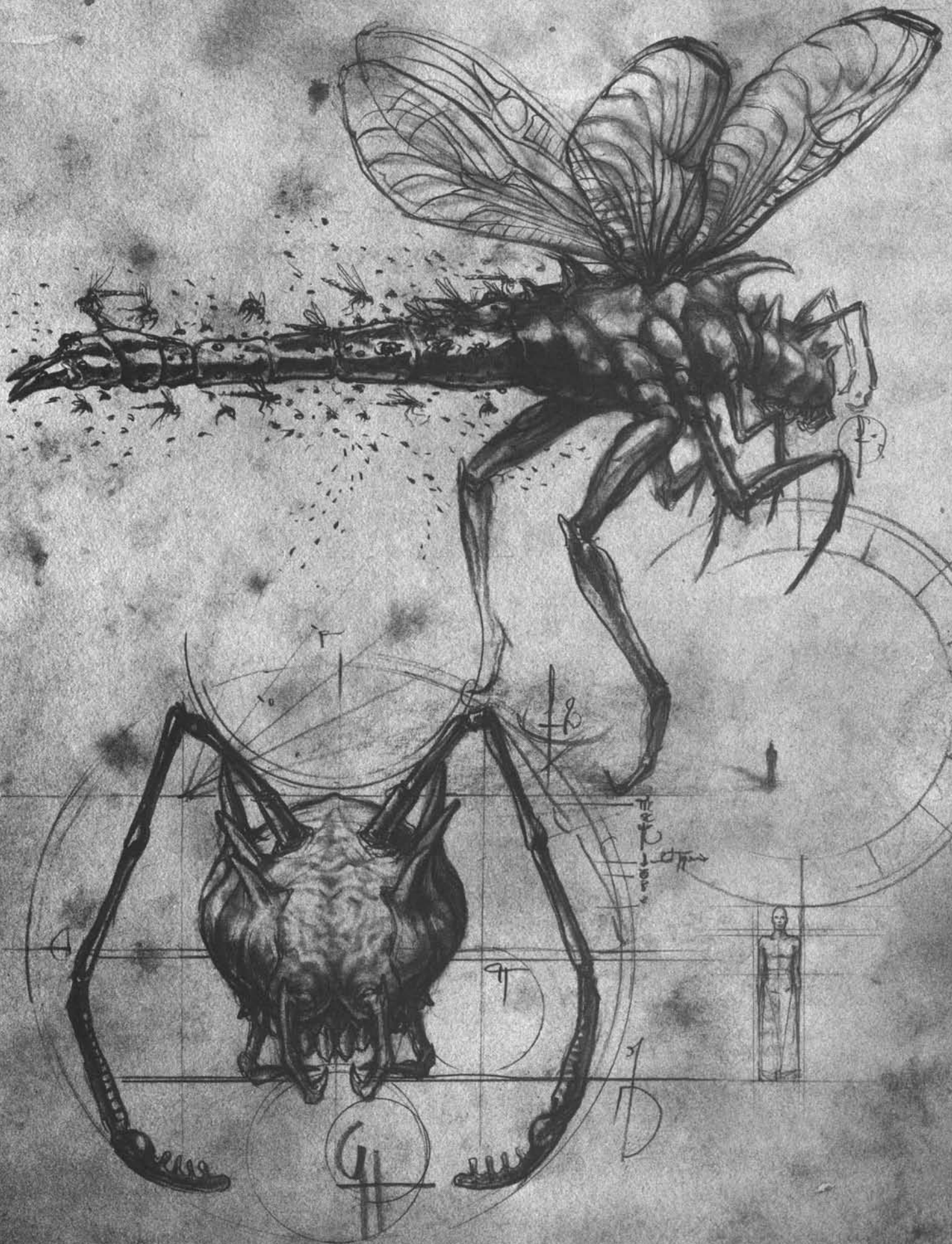
Frightening Appearance (Ex): When first seeing a King of Rats, a character must succeed at a Will save (DC 17) or be frightened for 3d4 rounds. A frightened character must flee the King of Rats as well as it is able; if she cannot flee, the character may fight, but she does so with a -2 morale penalty to attack and damage rolls and to saving throws.

Swarm (Ex): The body, if it may be called such, of the King of Rats is actually a massive swarm of hundreds of rats, and is therefore devoid of any human vulnerabilities. A King of Rats is immune to all critical hits, sneak attacks, and death by massive damage. Furthermore, it cannot be flanked, and suffers only half damage from piercing and slashing attacks.

Skills: Kings of Rats gain a +2 racial bonus to Listen and Spot checks, and a +12 racial bonus to Hide checks.

pseudo-angel

Hit Dice:	Medium-Size Dreamseed 7d10+21 (59 hp)
Initiative:	+4 (Dex)
Speed:	12 m, fly 18 m (good)
AC:	21 (+4 Dex, +7 natural)
Attacks:	2 wings +10 melee, claws +8 melee
Damage:	Wing 1d10+3, claws 1d6+1
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m /1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Executioner's edge
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, false savior
Saves:	Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 16, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15
Skills:	Bluff +8*, Disguise +8*, Hide +6, Listen +9, Spot +9
Feats:	Dodge, Flyby Attack, Multiattack
Climate/Terrain:	Anywhere
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or fellowship (3-5)
Challenge Rating:	6
Advancement:	8-12 HD (Medium-size)



description

See page 70.

combat

Executioner's Edge (Ex): The Pseudo-Engel can employ its hard, razor-sharp wings as slashing weapons with horrible precision. If the Pseudo-Engel scores a successful critical hit, it has decapitated or otherwise fatally dismembered its opponent.

False Savior (Ex): If a Pseudo-Engel can close to melee with an opponent before the opponent has realized the Pseudo-Engel is not actually an Engel, that opponent is considered flat-footed for the first round in which the Pseudo-Engel attacks.

Skills: *In poor light or if more than 30 meters away from an onlooker, a Pseudo-Engel gains a +4 racial bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks made to impersonate an Engel.

scare

	Large Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	5d10+15 (42 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	12 m
AC:	18 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks:	2 rakes +9 melee, bite +4 melee
Damage:	Rake 1d8+6, bite 1d4+2
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m /3 m
Special Attacks:	Pounce
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, vestigial wings
Saves:	Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 19, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 11
Skills:	Disguise +9*, Hide +5, Jump +29, Spot +6
Feats:	Combat Reflexes
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate plains and hills
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	4
Treasure:	Standard
Advancement:	6-15 HD (Large)

description

See page 80.

combat

Pounce (Ex): During the first round of combat, the Scare may take a full-attack action if it has already jumped upon its opponent as a move action.

Vestigial Wings (Ex): The short wings of the Scare do not allow it to fly effectively, but using the rudimentary wings and its strong legs, the Scare can make mighty leaps. When using their wings, Scares receive a +25 racial bonus to Jump checks and may ignore the maximum distance for height or distance in regard to jumping.

Skills: *In a location where the use of scarecrows or similar effigies is not uncommon, a Scare gains a +4 racial bonus to Disguise checks in order to appear as a harmless variety of one of these objects.

	Diminutive Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	1/2d10+1 (6 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m
AC:	18 (+4 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	None
Damage:	—
Face/Reach:	0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m
Special Attacks:	Barbshield
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, blindsight 18 m
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 6, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4
Skills:	Spot +3
Feats:	Toughness
Climate/Terrain:	Any terrain
Organization:	Solitary or plague (20–150)
Challenge Rating:	1/4
Advancement:	2–3 HD (Diminutive)

description

See page 71.

combat

Barbshield (Ex): The barbed, spiny ridge on the carapace of the Scourge can easily wound the feet of those stepping onto it. Regardless of the intentions of the character stepping on a Scourge, he takes an amount of damage equal to 1d3 + his own Strength modifier. Only extremely resilient footwear can prevent this damage (Storyteller's choice). Besides the more obvious damage, though, a more insidious threat lurks beneath the thorns: tiny reservoirs of spores. Anyone wounded by a Scourge's spine will be infected with spores, which begin to travel through the bloodstream to gestate beneath the skin of the victim. Within 1d20+20 hours, 2d6 scourges reach maturation, and each causes 1d6 points of damage to the host when it digs its way out of the host's flesh. They may be dug out of the victim's flesh before they tear their own way out, but this requires a successful Heal check (DC 15) for each larval Scourge, and deals 1d3 points of damage per such attempt.

Blindsight (Ex): The Scourge can sense its surroundings within 18 meters by means of air pressure and vibrations, but has no normal sense of sight. If its carapace is completely covered, it is considered blinded.

seamare

	Large Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	5d10+10 (37 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	15 m, swim 9 m
AC:	15 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks:	2 claws +7 melee, bite +5 melee
Damage:	Claw 2d4+3, bite 1d4+1
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, currentsense 30 m
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 9
Skills:	Disguise +0*, Listen +4, Spot +6
Feats:	Multiattack
Climate/Terrain:	Aquatic and coastal regions
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or troupe (3–7)
Challenge Rating:	3
Advancement:	6–12 HD (Large)

description

See page 45.

combat

Currentsense (Ex): Seamares are able to navigate perfectly underwater due to special sensory organs, even if the water is murky or there is insufficient light. When submerged, they gain the equivalent of blindsight to a radius of 30 meters under water.

Skills: *In low-light conditions, a Seamare gains a +12 racial bonus to Disguise checks made to impersonate a mounted and armored human.

shadeshifter

	Medium-Size Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	4d10+8 (30 hp)
Initiative:	+8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	12 m, fly 15 m (good)
AC:	19 (+4 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks:	2 claws +8 melee
Damage:	Claw 1d8+3 melee
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m /1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Sickle claws
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, shadeshifting, blindsight 18 m
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 14, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 8
Skills:	Hide +17, Move Silently +10
Feats:	Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (claws)
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate or warm plains, hills, and forests
Organization:	Solitary, pair, cluster (3–5), or horde (6–20)
Challenge Rating:	3
Advancement:	5–9 HD (Medium-size)

description

See page 32.

combat

Sickle Claws (Ex): The sickle-shaped claws of the Shadeshifter have a critical threat range of 19–20.

Shadeshifting (Ex): A Shadeshifter can use the Hide skill as a standard action even when it is being observed. It does this by flickering its wings in such a rapid, mesmerizing blur that its observers are momentarily distracted, as if the Shadeshifter had made a successful Bluff check to hide. It may use this ability only as long as there is a dark area or shadow within 3 meters of its position that it can move to. It cannot hide within its own shadow or that of another Shadeshifter.

Blindsight (Ex): The Shadeshifter can sense its surroundings within 18 meters by means of air pressure, sound, and vibration, in addition to having low-light vision.

Skills: A Shadeshifter gains a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks.

stilter

Hit Dice:	Huge Dreamseed 12d10+48 (114 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	15 m
AC:	18 (-2 size, +2 Dex, +8 natural)
Attacks:	Kick +16 melee, gore +11 melee
Damage:	Kick 2d6+6, gore 2d4+3
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 3 m /4.5 m
Special Attacks:	Powerful kick
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed
Saves:	Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 22, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 6
Skills:	Spot +7*, Listen +7, Hide -2*
Feats:	Power Attack, Run
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate forests
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	9
Advancement:	13-24 HD (Huge)

description

See page 92.

combat

Powerful Kick (Ex): A Stilter may effectively make a bull rush attack as a free action against an opponent of size Large or smaller if it hits with its kick attack. This does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The opponent, if this attack is successful, is knocked back as if the Stilter had opted to move with him as part of the bull rush attack, even if the Stilter remains stationary.

Skills: *A Stilter gains a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks in daylight conditions. In forested areas, a Stilter gains a +12 racial bonus to Hide checks.

tainter-dragonfly

Hit Dice:	Large Dreamseed 2d10+2 (13 hp)
Initiative:	+4 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m, fly 21 m (perfect)
AC:	15 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +3 melee; or sting +5 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d8+3; sting 1d6+2 and poison
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Poison
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, scent, cold vulnerability
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 14, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 11
Skills:	Listen +6, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +1*
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (sting)
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate and warm lands
Organization:	Solitary, pair, swarm (3-7), hunting swarm (10-50)
Challenge Rating:	2
Advancement:	3-6 HD (Large)

description

See page 52.

combat

Poison (Ex): Stinger hit, injected poison; Fortitude save (DC 12); initial and secondary damage 2 points of Dexterity.

Cold Vulnerability: Tainter-Dragonflies suffer double damage from cold-based attacks.

Skills: A Tainter-Dragonfly gains a +4 racial bonus to Listen and Spot checks. *A Tainter-Dragonfly gains a +4 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

thorax-breeder swarm

	Medium-Size Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	6d10 (33 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	0.75 m, fly 4.5 m (good)
AC:	14 (+2 Dex, +2 dodge)
Attacks:	Bite +5 melee touch
Damage:	Bite 3d4-1
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m / 1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Poison, infestation
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, swarm
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 8, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 4
Skills:	Spot +6
Feats:	Combat Reflexes
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate plains, hills, and cities
Organization:	Solitary or invasion (5-10)
Challenge Rating:	5
Advancement:	7-12 HD (Medium-size)

description

See page 14.

combat

Poison (Ex): Bite hit, injected enzyme; Fortitude save (DC 13); initial damage 1 point of Dexterity and secondary damage 2 points of Wisdom. An opponent that has its Dexterity or Wisdom reduced to 0 is effectively paralyzed, and is then susceptible to infestation.

Infestation (Ex): Anyone paralyzed by a Thorax-breeder swarm (or attacked by a swarm when already paralyzed or helpless) must also make a Fortitude save (DC 14) to avoid being infested with Thorax-breeders. If the save fails, Thorax-breeders are lodged in the digestive and respiratory system of the host and begin to consume their victim from the inside. After a number of rounds equal to the Constitution of the host, he loses consciousness for 2d6 hours. After this time the host is semi-conscious but remains paralyzed, while a new generation of Thorax-breeders feast on his viscera — which kills him within another 2d6 hours. After a number of days equal to half the host's original Constitution score, the new Thorax-breeders hatch and leave their host. The new swarm has Hit Dice equal to half the Constitution score of the deceased host.

Swarm: Thorax-breeders collect in swarms that contain hundreds of these Fine demon-bugs, which collectively attack creatures to find hosts to feed their next generation. It is very difficult to fight a swarm effectively: Opponents within 1.5 meters of a swarm suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all rolls, and the swarm receives a +2 dodge bonus to AC; piercing weapons deal only 1 point of damage with a successful hit, and the damage of all other weapons is halved. A swarm is immune to all critical hits and sneak attacks, and to death by massive damage. Fire- or gas-based attacks, however, deal double damage to the swarm.

thorngiant

	Gargantuan Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	17d10+119 (212 hp)
Initiative:	-2 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m, burrow 3 m
AC:	21 (-4 size, -2 Dex, +17 natural)
Attacks:	Horn +21 melee, 2 claws +16 melee
Damage:	Horn 2d8+8 melee, claw 2d6+4
Face/Reach:	6 m by 12 m/3 m (4.5 m with horn)
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, damage reduction 3, burrow
Saves:	Fort +17, Ref +8, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 27, Dex 7, Con 25, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 13
Skills:	Hide -7*, Listen +8
Feats:	Power Attack
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate plains and hills
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	12
Advancement:	18-26 HD (Gargantuan)

description

See page 94.

combat

Burrow (Ex): Thorngiants are adept at digging, and can move through earth and loose stone at a speed of 3 meters. They cannot run or charge while doing so. They often lie just beneath the surface of the ground with their enormous spines protruding, surfacing only to attack prey that passes nearby.

Skills: A Thorngiant gains a +8 racial bonus to Listen checks. *When buried just beneath the surface of the ground, a Thorngiant gains a +20 circumstance bonus to Hide checks (when any deeper, of course, it cannot be seen at all).

tracery-scarab

	Tiny Dreamseed
Hit Dice:	1d10+1 (6 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	4.5 m, fly 9 m (average)
AC:	14 (+2 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d3-1
Face/Reach:	0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m
Special Attacks:	Burning spray
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, blindsight 18 m
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +3, Will -1
Abilities:	Str 8, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 8, Cha 7
Skills:	Spot +3
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate and warm plains, hills, mountains and forests
Organization:	Solitary, pair, brood (3-6), mating swarm (7-16)
Challenge Rating:	1
Advancement:	2-3 HD (Tiny)

description

See page 8.

combat

Burning Spray (Ex): As a standard action, a Tracery-Scarab can spray a 3-meter cone of burning fluid from glands located inside its mouth. Targets in the area take 2d6 points of fire damage, although a successful Reflex save (DC 11) negates this damage. It takes about 10 minutes until the respective glands have recovered and refilled sufficiently to allow for another burning spray attack.

Blindsight (Ex): The Tracery-Scarab can sense its surroundings within 18 meters by means of air pressure and vibrations, but its normal sense of sight is virtually nonexistent. If its carapace is completely covered, it is considered blinded.

Waterweaver

Hit Dice:	Huge Dreamseed 10d10+30 (85 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m, climb 6 m, swim 9 m
AC:	13 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +15 melee, 2 gores +10 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d8+7, gore 1d6+3
Face/Reach:	4.5 m by 4.5 m/3 m
Special Attacks:	Net
Special Qualities:	Dreamseed, currentsense 30 m, nest
Saves:	Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +4
Abilities:	Str 25, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 4
Skills:	Climb +15, Hide -3*, Listen +5, Spot +9, Swim +15
Feats:	Combat Reflexes
Climate/Terrain:	Aquatic
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	9
Advancement:	11-20 HD (Huge)

description

See page 40.

combat

Net (Ex): The nets Waterweaver spin are stronger than steel and can be produced in astonishingly short amounts of time. Ships can get caught in these nearly invisible nets, and are subsequently completely covered in netting by the Waterweaver. When exposed to air, the netting begins to harden and to contract slowly, thereby crushing the ships encased.

A ship the size of a junk takes only about 3 rounds of spinning to be held immobile, and another 5 rounds to be completely covered. Just 10 rounds after the net is finished, it begins to crush anything softer than steel, causing 1 point of damage every round until the ship is completely destroyed.

Currentsense (Ex): Waterweavers are able to navigate perfectly underwater due to special sensory organs, even if the water is murky or there is insufficient light. When submerged, they gain the equivalent of blindsight to a radius of 30 meters under water.

Nest: Waterweavers often collect driftwood, water-plants, or even the remains of derelict ships with their nets, thus creating nests for themselves. When hidden within their nests, Waterweavers gain a +6 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.

Skills: A Waterweaver gains a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks. *When totally submerged, a Waterweaver gains a +6 racial bonus to Hide checks.

Dreamseed templates

pest

Pest is a template that can be applied to any animal or human. The affected being's type changes to Dreamseed, and it retains its special abilities, skills, and feats, in addition to gaining the following:

Hit Dice:	Increase to d10.
Speed:	As basic creature.
AC:	Natural armor is increased by +2.
Attacks:	As basic creature.
Damage:	As basic creature.

Special Attacks: The creature gains the infection special attack.

Infection (Su): Any target hit by a pest's melee attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + half the creature's HD) or be infected by Pestworms.

Special Qualities: The creature gains the Dreamseed, consumed, and half-life special qualities.

Consumed (Ex): Pestworms constantly consume their host, but their excretions keep the creature in a constant state of half-life. The Pest loses 1 point of Constitution permanently every day until that score reaches 0, when the host dies. Just before consuming their host completely, the Pestworms try to find a new host; therefore, the Pest is particularly aggressive when its Constitution score reaches 3 or less.

Half-Life (Su): Pests require neither their viscera nor their muscles; they are therefore immune to all critical hits and sneak attacks, and to death by massive damage. Piercing weapons also deal only half damage to the host.

Saves:	As basic creature.
Abilities:	Gain Str +2 and Dex -2.
Skills:	As basic creature.
Feats:	Gain Alertness.
Climate/Terrain:	As basic creature.
Organization:	Becomes solitary.
Challenge Rating:	As basic creature +1.
Advancement:	As basic creature.

tempted

Tempted is a template that can be applied to any human. The affected character's type changes to Dreamseed, and he retains its special abilities, skills, and feats, in addition to gaining the following:

Hit Dice:	As basic character.
Speed:	As basic character.
AC:	Natural armor is increased by +1.
Attacks:	As basic character.
Damage:	As basic character.
Special Attacks:	See "mutations," below.
Special Qualities:	Gain Dreamseed type, and see "mutations," below.
Saves:	As basic character.
Abilities:	Gain Str +2 and Con +2.
Skills:	As basic character.
Feats:	As basic character.
Climate/Terrain:	As basic character.
Organization:	As basic character.
Challenge Rating:	As basic character +1.

Mutations: All Tempted are granted one or more mutations by the Lord of the Flies. All Tempted gain low-light vision, and can thus see outdoors on a moonlit night as well as a human can during the day. In addition, each gains 1d3 mutations from the following list (chosen by the Storyteller); some servants might have additional blessings, but these are exceptional individuals and should be designed by the Storyteller with a certain purpose in mind:

- *Additional Limbs (Ex):* An extra pair of arms sprouts from the Tempted's sides. These are fully functional limbs, and the Tempted may now choose the Multiattack, Multidexterity, or Multi-Weapon Fighting feats (the latter two are the multi-armed creature's equivalent of Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats, respectively, allowing the creature to fight more effectively with its multiple off-hand attacks).
- *Blessing of the Swarm (Su):* The gifts of the Lord of the Flies can take any form: the Tempted gains a bonus of +2 to any one of his ability scores.
- *Child of the Brood (Ex):* The soul of the Tempted is merely an extension of the will of the Lord of Flies, and the Tempted thus gains dominion over the Adversary's lesser servants. He may control a number of HD of rats and similar lesser pests equal to his character level, and can maintain this control to a radius of 27 meters.
- *Corrosive Saliva (Ex):* The mouth of the Tempted constantly drips a milky fluid which is actually an extremely caustic acid. His bite attack causes an additional 1d6 points of damage; objects treated with this acid also take 1d6 hit points, and this damage ignores their hardness. The Tempted himself loses 2 points of Charisma.
- *Giant (Ex):* As many demons of the Dreamseed are gigantic relatives of insects, so is the Tempted a giant amongst men, albeit an ugly and awkward-seeming one. The size of the Tempted increases to Large: as a result, he gains a bonus of +4 to Strength and Constitution and a penalty of -2 to Charisma and Dexterity.
- *Hook-Claws (Ex):* The hands and feet of the Tempted sprout tiny claws and hooks, allowing him to scale any wall or even to climb across ceilings: he gains a climb speed of 6 meters and thus a bonus of +8 to all Climb checks.
- *Jointed Legs (Ex):* An additional joint develops beneath the knees of the Tempted, and the muscles of his legs gain considerably in strength and power. He gains a +10 bonus to all Jump checks and has no maximum vertical and horizontal jumping limits.
- *Mandibles (Ex):* A pair of horribly sharp mandibles grows from the jaw of the Tempted: he gains a bite attack for 1d6 points of damage and the Weapon Finesse (bite) feat. He also loses 2 points of Charisma.
- *Roach Shell (Ex):* The back and limbs of the Tempted are covered in gray, green, or brown plates of chitin. He gains electricity resistance 10 and his natural armor is increased by +2, but he loses 2 points of Dexterity and Charisma.
- *Scuttle (Ex):* When he uses all his limbs to move, the Tempted's base speed increases by 3 meters.
- *Spiders-Eyes (Ex):* A number of smaller eyes develop around the head of the Tempted, granting him 360-degree vision. He can no longer be flanked and gains a +2 bonus to Spot checks, but loses 2 points of Charisma.
- *Venom (Ex):* The neck of the Tempted swells and his salivary glands begin to produce a poisonous saliva to which the Tempted himself is immune. He may bite an opponent to inject this venom into her bloodstream. This venom has a primary and secondary damage of 1d6

points of temporary Constitution (Fortitude DC 10 + 1/2 character level of the Tempted + Con modifier of the Tempted). The Tempted loses 2 points of Charisma.

- *Wings (Ex)*: Dragonfly-like wings sprout from the back of the Tempted; he cannot hide them, but gains a flying speed of 9 meters, with a clumsy maneuverability. He loses 4 points of Charisma.

- *Perverted Potestas (Su)*: Some Tempted are also gifted with perverted versions of the Engels' *Potestates* — however, only exceptional individuals may be gifted with such special powers (Storyteller's discretion). Which corrupt *Potestates* are possible lies solely in the hands of the individual Storyteller.

everything beneath the sun

The world of *Engel* includes creatures other than those spawned by the twisted dreams of the Lord of the Flies. In the following, we have included some stats for the most common animals to be encountered in 27th-century Europe. If an animal is not listed below, we encourage Storytellers to create their own animals based on the statistics given here.

	badger	bear
	Tiny Animal	Large Animal
Hit Dice:	1d8+2 (6 hp)	6d8+24 (51 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m, burrow 1.5 m	12 m
AC:	15 (+2 size, +3 Dex)	15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks:	2 claws +5 melee, bite +0 melee	2 claws +11 melee, bite +6 melee
Damage:	Claw 1d2-1, bite 1d3-1	Claw 1d8+8, bite 2d8+4
Face/Reach:	0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m	1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
Special Attacks:	—	Improved Grab
Special Qualities:	Scent, low-light vision, burrow	Scent, low-light vision
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1	Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 8, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6	Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Escape Artist +7, Listen +4, Spot +4	Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +14
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)	
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate forests, hills and plains	Any forest, hill, mountains, and underground
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or cete (3-5)	Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating:	1/2	4
Advancement:	2-3 HD (Tiny)	7-10 HD (Large)

badger

Description

Badgers are a common problem in most of the hilly regions of Europe. Despite their small size they can be fierce opponents.

Combat

Burrow (Ex): Badgers are adept at digging, and can move through relatively loose earth at a speed of 1.5 meters. They cannot run or charge while doing so.

bear

Description

Bears are commonly found in the mountainous regions of Europe, far away from human habitation. They are especially fond of caves.

Combat

Improved Grab (Ex): The bear must hit with both claw attacks to use this ability. While it maintains a hold, it automatically deals normal bite damage in each subsequent round.

cat

Hit Dice: 1/2d8 (2 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 9 m
AC: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex)
Attacks: 2 claws +4 melee, bite -1 melee
Damage: Claw 1d2-4, bite 1d3-4
Face/Reach: 0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m
Special Qualities: Low-light vision
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities: Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7
Skills: Balance +10, Climb +5, Hide +17*, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Spot +4
Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)
Climate/Terrain: Any forest, hill, mountains, and underground
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1/4

dog

Medium-Size Animal
 2d8+4 (13 hp)
 +2 (Dex)
 12 m
 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)
 Bite +3 melee
 Bite 1d6+3
 1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
 Scent
 Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1
 Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15,
 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
 Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5,
 Wilderness Lore +1*
 Any land
 Solitary
 1

cat

Description

The cat is one of the most common pets of the 27th century, because it can sustain itself on mice and rats and requires little care.

Combat

Skills: A cat gains a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. Cats may use their Dexterity modifier, rather than Strength, for Climb checks. *In grassy or overgrown areas, the cat's Hide bonus increases to +8.

dog

Description

Dogs are not as common in the 27th century as they once were in previous eras. The statistics above describe one of the larger breeds, which protect lonely homesteads or are used for hunting.

Combat

Skills: *A dog gains a +8 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

donkey

Medium-Size Animal
 2d8+2 (11 hp)
 +1 (Dex)
 9 m
 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)
 Bite +1 melee
 Bite 1d2
 1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
 Scent
 Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +0
 Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12,
 Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4
 Balance +3, Listen +5, Spot +4, Swim +4
 —
 Any region
 Solitary
 1/6
 3-4 HD (Medium-size)

hawk

Small Animal
 1d8+1 (5 hp)
 +2 (Dex)
 3 m, fly 24 m (average)
 14 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural)
 2 claws +3 melee, bite -2 melee
 Claw 1d3, bite 1d4
 1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
 —
 Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2
 Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12,
 Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6
 Listen +6, Spot +6*
 Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)
 Any forest, hill, plains, and mountains
 Solitary or pair
 1/2
 2 HD (Small); 3 HD (Medium-size)

donkey

Description

The horse of the common people, the donkey is found in the households of many farmers and in the caravans of many merchants.

hawk

Description

Hawks of various kinds are found in many parts of Europe, and some are even tamed for sport or company.

Combat

Skills: *A hawk gains a +8 racial bonus to Spot checks in daylight conditions.

horse

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
 Initiative: +1 (Dex)
 Speed: 18 m
 AC: 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural)
 Attacks: 2 hooves +2 melee
 Damage: Hoof 1d4+1
 Face/Reach: 1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
 Special Qualities: Scent
 Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2
 Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
 Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +2
 Climate/Terrain: Any land
 Organization: Solitary
 Challenge Rating: 1

horse, grimrider

Large Animal

4d8+12 (30 hp)
 +1 (Dex)
 15 m
 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)
 2 hooves +6 melee, bite +1 melee
 Hoof 1d6+4; bite 1d4+2
 1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
 Scent
 Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2
 Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17,
 Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
 Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +5
 Any land
 Solitary
 2

horse

Description

Besides the donkey and the water buffalo, the horse is the most common pack or riding animal in the 27th century. Horses are rather expensive to keep, though, so only relatively wealthy mercenaries or traders keep any.

Carrying Capacity: A horse may carry up to 60 kilograms as a light load; 120 kilograms as a medium load; or 180 kilograms as a heavy load. It may drag 900 kilograms.

horse, grimrider

Description

The Grimriders have cultivated a special breed of warhorse; these are rarely sold and are therefore found only in the employ of Grimriders and influential Templars.

Carrying Capacity: A Grimrider horse may carry up to 90 kilograms as a light load; 180 kilograms as a medium load; or 270 kilograms as a heavy load. It may drag 1,350 kilograms.

PIS

Medium-Size Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
 Initiative: +0
 Speed: 9 m
 AC: 16 (+6 natural)
 Attacks: Gore +4 melee
 Damage: Gore 1d8+3
 Face/Reach: 1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
 Special Qualities: Scent
 Saves: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2
 Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4
 Skills: Listen +5, Spot +7
 Climate/Terrain: Any land
 Organization: Solitary
 Challenge Rating: 2
 Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium-size)

Pigs

Description

Pigs are one of the most common farm animals found in the 27th century, popular because they will feed on nearly anything. The surviving breeds are a ferocious crossbreed of wild boars and domestic pigs from earlier eras, however, and can be quite vicious, particularly with strangers.

rat

Tiny Animal

Hit Dice:	1/4d8 (1 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	4.5 m, climb 4.5 m, swim 3 m
AC:	14 (+2 size, +2 Dex)
Attacks:	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d3-4
Face/Reach:	0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m
Special Qualities:	Low-light vision
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills:	Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +18, Jump +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +10, Spot +4, Swim +10
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Any land and underground
Organization:	Solitary, family (2-7), or swarm (10-100)
Challenge Rating:	1/8
Advancement:	1 HD (Tiny)

rat, russian

Small Animal

Hit Dice:	1d8+1 (5 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	12 m, climb 6 m, swim 6 m
AC:	15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d4
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
Special Qualities:	Scent, low-light vision, cold resistance 5
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 4
Skills:	Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +11*, Jump +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Swim +11
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Any terrain
Organization:	Solitary, pair, family (3-6), or pack (11-20)
Challenge Rating:	1/2
Advancement:	2-3 HD (Small)

rat

Description

Rats are a common problem, especially in the ruins of older cities, due to the abundance of breeding pits available. A variety of methods are employed to exterminate the dangerous pests, none of which have been successful.

Combat

Skills: A rat gains a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Jump, and Move Silently checks and a +8 bonus to Balance checks. Rats may use their Dexterity modifier, rather than Strength, for Climb, Jump, and Swim checks.

rat, russian

Description

These large cousins of the common rat have jet-black fur and seem to enjoy spoiling and destroying as much food as possible— after gnawing into a granary, for instance, they often spread urine and feces inside. Common urban legends claim that Russian Rats steal babies and serve the Lord of the Flies directly.

Combat

Skills: *In darkened or shadowy conditions, a Russian rat gains a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks. Otherwise it gains the same skill benefits as its smaller cousin.

sea gull

Hit Dice:	1/4d8+1 (3 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	3 m, fly 12 m (average)
AC:	15 (+2 size, +3 Dex)
Attacks:	Claws +4 melee
Damage:	Claws 1d2-1
Face/Reach:	0.3 m by 0.3 m/0 m
Special Qualities:	—
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 8, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Listen +6, Spot +6
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (claws)
Climate/Terrain:	Any coastal or riverside region
Organization:	Solitary, pair, brood (3-12), or flock (10-30)
Challenge Rating:	1/6
Advancement:	—

sea gull

Description

Due to the close proximity of the ocean, sea gulls are found almost anywhere in Europe. Since pigeons have all but disappeared, sea gulls have eagerly claimed their ecological niche.

pikeshark

Description

Pikesharks are an extremely dangerous subspecies of shark able to survive in salt water as well as in fresh water. They haunt the canals and coasts of Europe, but sometimes even enter the deeper rice-fields. Nothing is safe from their depredation.

Combat

Scent (Ex): A pikeshark's scent ability works only underwater, but is effective to five times the distance of the standard scent ability (i.e., up to 45 meters for normal scents under normal conditions, and it can pinpoint opponents by scent within 7.5 meters). However, the pikeshark can smell blood in water at distances approaching a kilometer.

pikeshark

Medium-Size Animal	3d8+3 (16 hp)
	+2 (Dex)
Swim	18 m
AC:	15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)
Bite	+4 melee
Bite	1d6+1
Face	1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
Scent	—
Scent	Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2
Str	13, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Listen	+7, Spot +7
Weapon Finesse	(bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Any aquatic
Organization:	Solitary or pod (6-11)
Challenge Rating:	1
Advancement:	4-6 HD (Medium-size); 7-9 HD (Large)

snake

Small Animal	1d8 (4 hp)
	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	6 m, climb 6 m, swim 6 m
AC:	16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d2-2 and poison
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Poison
Special Qualities:	Scent
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills:	Balance +11, Climb +12, Hide +15, Listen +9, Spot +9, Swim +11
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Any temperate and warm land or aquatic region
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	1/2
Advancement:	—

water buffalo

Large Animal	5d8+15 (37 hp)
	+0 (Dex)
Speed:	9 m
AC:	14 (-1 size, +5 natural)
Attacks:	Butt +7 melee
Damage:	Butt 1d8+8
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 3 m/1.5 m
Scent	—
Scent	Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1
Str	21, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4
Listen	+8, Spot +5, Swim +9
Climate/Terrain:	Any region except desert and high mountains
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or herd (3-30)
Challenge Rating:	2
Advancement:	6-7 HD (Large)

snake

Description

The statistics here represent a typical poisonous snake, a danger to many farmers and villagers, but almost never found in cities. Smaller, non-venomous varieties are not uncommon, but pose no real threat to humans.

Combat

Poison (Ex): Bite hit, injected; Fortitude save (DC 11); initial and secondary 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage.

Skills: A snake gains a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 bonus to Balance checks. They may use their Dexterity modifier, rather than Strength, for Climb and Swim checks.

water buffalo

Description

Without a doubt, the water buffalo is the most common farm animal of the 27th century. It is used as beast of burden and as livestock, and to pull plows and wagons. Almost no rice-field is without one, and a few have even escaped into the wilderness, starting small herds away from the yoke of mankind.

wolf

Medium-Size Animal

Hit Dice:	2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	15 m
AC:	14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d6+3
Face/Reach:	1.5 m by 1.5 m/1.5 m
Special Attacks:	Overbear
Special Qualities:	Scent, low-light vision
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 14, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +1*
Feats:	Weapon Focus (bite)
Climate/Terrain:	Any forest, hill, plains and mountains
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or pack (5–16)
Challenge Rating:	1
Advancement:	3–5 HD (Medium-size)

Description

Due to the many wild dogs and escapees from a number of zoos and the poor hunting in many regions, wolf crossbreeds are a problem in many rural areas. They generally do not attack humans, but water buffalos or pigs can easily fall victim to a pack. When they do attack, they generally use flanking and pack tactics to best advantage.

Combat

Overbear (Ex): If a wolf hits a Medium-size or smaller opponent with its bite attack, it may make a trip attack as a free action without having to make a touch attack and without provoking attacks of opportunity. If this trip attempt fails, the wolf cannot be the object of an opponent's trip attack in return.

Skills: *A wolf gains a +6 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

appendix: open game license version

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the journals of the painter of monsters fra domenico

These are the writings of Fra Domenico, collected in the year 2654 from among 13 journals which burdened him heavily during his travels throughout Europe, and prepared for the Pontifex Maximus Petrus Secundus and the most honored Konsistorium.

I, Fra Domenico, most subordinate servant of the holy Angelitic Church, have created this documentary to the best of my knowledge, based on my experiences with the Dreamseed and other demospawn.

But before I end my introductory text, let me mention that my colleague Hieronymous and I would kindly ask the Konsistorium to not make the details of this text available to the public. The findings contained within these pages will make the common believer shiver with fear — or worse. We would instead suggest this journal be kept secret and in most responsible hands until everything within has been evaluated, tested, and confirmed.



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