

THE ORIGIN OF TREE WORSHIP

TIMCON

10-April-2004

Northfields Community Centre
Northfields, West London. W13 9SS

Issue 6

SPECIAL ISSUE!

Programme for TimCon 01

Easter 2004

Still an Occasional WFRP Gazetteer by Tim Eccles

Welcome

Welcome to TimCon 01! And to a special issue of The Origin of Tree Worship, which is a mixture of convention programme and my usual fanzine - although the issue is unusual as I did no articles in it, but simply edited everything. The primary aim of this issue is as a souvenir of the convention, provide details of the games and financially support this convention and (with luck) future events. To that end it will be sold in a limited number to the wider WFRP community. Not only might this encourage them to attend a future event but also it will, of course, subsidise the costs incurred. However, whilst it is number 6 all the discussions of issue 5 will appear in issue 7; in other words, this stands alone and does not refer to any of my other fanzine issues.

Pride of place here goes to the Alfred Nunez convention scenario "Playing with Fire". Whilst Alfred could not be here, he kindly offered the use of his convention scenarios and allowed me to print up his GenCon 2003 scenario. All delegates were asked to contribute to this issue and the results are what you see; my thanks to the contributors.

TimCon 01: Delegates (at time of printing)

Jo Bain
Natascha Chrobok
Simon Crowe
Tim Eccles
Tom Hayllar
John Foody
Mark Moores
Peter Murray
Ian Noble
Clive Oldfield
Rich Pingree
Robert Rees
Gavin Taylor
Luke Twigger
Wim van Gruisen
Ian White
Ryan Wileman

(Very approximate) Timetable

0900 Setting up, meeting up, last minute breakfast etc
1000 Everyone plays in the first game. **We need to start these games on time.**
1330 Lunch (but the first games might overrun)
1430 Second Game. **Again, the games need to start promptly.**
1830 Pack up, retire for drinks/meal/farewells etc (but again games might overrun)

Games

1000-1330 **The Tilean Job** **Gavin Taylor** **Room 3**

From the opera by Fettucini (sung as Remo lies dying on the battlements at the Battle of Aldente):

*"The One Cornetto
Bring it to me...."*

The characters arrive in Tobaró by boat to fulfil the last request of a dead friend: to complete his last and greatest heist, and put one in the eye of those garlic-eating Tilcans. That's right, the PC's are going to nick the Horn of Remas. In the middle of the afternoon. During a riot on market day. Arriving at the port, our plucky heroes have a run in with the local Sindicalistas, who have got wind of their plans and are determined to stop them. Having overcome (at least temporarily) the local opposition, the PC's proceed to meet their contacts, the secretive Societa Mantenera di Elfo, to finalise the plans, and receive some demoralising information... The raid takes place in the Piazza di Maiale, leading into a thrilling chase through the City of Sirens. Having hopefully overcome their pursuers, the PC's attempt the final stage in their plans, an escape over the Ebaró Pass and into Estalia. Assuming their adversaries didn't get there first... The intention is to try as an experiment a Warhammer romp (may Sigmar strike me dead!). Ironically, what I really want to encourage is good roleplaying—to keep a good humoured bantering going as we tour the highlights of Tobaró, visit the more vivid sections of the Critical Hits and try to set a record for the most failed Psychology Tests in one afternoon. It's ideally suited to folks who don't take the thing too seriously, and are happy to be mockney wideboys Mikael Stock, Bernhardt Berg, Freidrich Ubertreiben and the rest for the afternoon. A knowledge of a certain film which shall remain nameless is an advantage, but not necessary. The ability to sing the theme song to a certain Wall's ice cream advert is an absolute requirement, however. I'm prepared to come in early and teach it if I have to.

Players: Mark Moores, Peter Murray, Ian Noble, Robert Rees

1000-1330 **At the Edge of the World** **John Foody** **Room 2**

A low-key scenario for six dwarf PCs.

Sitting on the edge of the Borderlands is the border post of Arak Angazhar, furthest point south of Karak Angazhar. A small trading and watch post, it is the half way point of a Watch Patrol from the main hold. Normally, they would rest and relax for a night or two before heading back. This time is different however. An agent of the Chancellor stationed in the outpost has dropped out of contact. The Chancellor wants to find out why. Should be easy for a group of six brave dwarfs.

Players: Natascha Chrobok, Clive Oldfield, Luke Twigger, Ian White, Ryan Wileman

1000-1330 **Arrows of Outrageous Fortune** **Wim van Gruisen** **Room 2**

The yearly archery competition at the Sigmarite Monastery of Saint Lucas is at hand. The best targeteers in the region come here to win the grand prize, while the common folk don't want to miss their chance to see these fine people at work. All these people draw pedlars and other activities, and for two days the monastery has a bit of the allure of a great city. For two days people also get the possibility to find your way

their of the drudgery of everyday life. You are all going to the tournament; some of you intent on participating in the tournament, some of you to encourage your friends, or simply to drink beer and kiss girls until you run out of money. This all changes when you stumble upon that body in the ditch near the road, though ...

Players: Jo Bain, Simon Crowe, Tim Eccles, Tom Hayllar, Rich Pingree

LUNCH BREAK

1430-1830 Far from Heaven Clive Oldfield Room 3
An adventure for elf PCs.

You are the elite pathfinders of your tribe. They rely on you for an early warning of encroachment on the great forest. It is your duty to investigate anything unusual, neutralise any threats and report back to your king. Last night a fireball, or comet, or something, lit up the sky, then burst into a brilliant ball of flame, not far from where you were camped. Something about this harked back to old legends. Something stirred the race memory of disaster, schism and exodus. Something told you that not just the Mon-Keigh will hold this event significant. Did the comet have two tails; hard to tell, you were so close. What *is* certain is that you need to investigate.

Players: Tim Eccles, John Foody, Luke Twigger, Ian White, Ryan Wileman

1430-1830 Silent Waters Robert Rees Room 2
Whilst set in The Empire, this game will be run using D20 mechanisms.

Fear grips the river. In the dead of night River Watchmen are disappearing with no clues as to what has happened to them. If the problem is not solved soon trade along the river will come to a complete halt. Rivers are The Empire's trade life-lines. Who can be found to solve the mystery...? This is a deeply Gothic horror mystery!

Players: Simon Crowe, Mark Moores, Gavin Taylor

1430-1830 Playing with Fire Ian Noble Room 2
This is a Gen Con 2003 scenario written by Alfred Nunez.

Life in Wendorf was hard enough for a woodsman. Still, working in the woods taught you patience, as well as give you time to quietly observe those with whom you share this trade. This tranquil life was destroyed when the Grand Prince declared some of the forest where you and others like you made your livelihood as part of his private hunting reserve. A number of you were forced to leave, as there was not enough work. Where to go? Wolfenburg, of course! The streets there are paved with, well if not gold at least silver. You gathered your meagre belongings and sought your friends out. All of you departed your homes believing that you could easily find jobs in Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. Those who knew what their labour was worth said that it should be fairly easy to find jobs that will pay you between 6 to 9 shillings a day. It is going to be easy from here, isn't it?! The adventure revolves around the job that the PCs end up saddled with.

Players: Jo Bain, Natascha Chrobok, Tom Hayllar, Peter Murray, Rich Pingree, Wim van Gruisen

IN DEFENCE OF NUTS & BOLTS

Standing Up For the Rules by John Foody

Most WFRP players admit it is the Warhammer world that attracts them to WFRP. You won't hear me disagree with that, even though we could argue for ages about what aspects we like and hate. In WFRP, the rules usually, and thankfully, take a back seat. But that is not is because they are the best rules around. Indeed, they one of the most maligned aspects of the game. Still, I'm here to stand up to those D20 bullies and sing the praises of the original system.

Such a defence isn't a blind against-the-odds defying stand however. I know many of the rules are flawed, or more often just a little rubbish. Other games do some better and let us be honest WFRP's were influenced by, or ripped off, other games the designers liked at the time. A second edition of WFRP is likely to improve the rules, but only if they keep the heart of what is already there.

My own games use a rules-lite version of the rules and this works just great for us. So is this a good basis to act as a defender? Absolutely – for the WFRP rules actually encourage this. So what is it I like.

Naked Dwarfs & Other Oddities

The basic profile is an expansion of the Warhammer Battle Game. But so what? The profile is a perfect piece of design. One line gives you most of what you need. Stick some newly rolled up character profiles in there and what do you find – most characters are pretty much the same. The humans anyway – the elf stats are too hard, the dwarf is too tough and halflings, well better left unsaid. But it works great. All these problems are balanced up great by Fate Points. These are the perfect idea for a dark fantasy game. It means characters can be normal, but yet blessed by the gods. There could be more guidance on how to use, but that is elsewhere.

Careers are also one of the best things in WFRP. No you don't have to roll them. Just choose one if you want but that ignores the nastiness of the Warhammer world. What careers do is immediately bring the world to life. You know there are all these people out there. Whatever you role has a personality, an immediate background. You are not born a hero - you bloody well have to work at it. You're not just a fighter trying to make it rich, you're a Labourer on your way up. A labourer! I mean who wants to do that – and yes I do speak from (very brief) experience. But, that's the point you are not a labourer. You're about to be an ex-labourer. OK, now the careers system falls down after this proud start but even then it still works for the above reasons.

Skills are also a simple system that allow for nice customisation but still without making characters get too hard. Some aren't really skills, but we don't want feats, boons and curses here. WFRP characters aren't made of stuff of heroes. They are the guys next door but the gods have said they are going to do great things. Both careers and skills work well for PCs but less so for NPCs – but that is something easy for GMs to solve.

Wading Through the D&D Rip-off Stuff

I'll completely ignore Alignment, scenery and a host of other useless stuff. Tests, such as Risk and Hatred are all simple. Quick and easy. OK, stuff like Gossip is pointless and hey, I've just seen this Reaction thing. The rules generally encourage you to deal with most stuff between looking at your profile and skills. Easy.

Insanity – fantastic. Yeah, it's a rip-off from Call of Cuthulu. So, it works great without having to think about it too much. The cures are nearly as much fun.

Wandering Creatures, treasure tables. Now it is easy to say that most players ignore it and easy to say that look, there it is – a table for rolling how many pennies a boar has. But, it's all got out of the way so quick.

The Art of Staying Alive

Combat in WFRP is just the best. It is simple, quick and deadly enough to make it interesting. It isn't realistic not even logical. The book does say "Character A strikes a blow, Character B strikes a blow." It forgets to say, "until one falls over..." but still. At that stage you get to use Critical Effect tables. Yes another rip-off. But it works so well; it feels churlish to look at them badly. I only use them for PCs and NPCs otherwise it gets too much. The Sudden Death Chart works well instead for lesser mortals – is great in fact.

As to the weapons – bombs, pistols. Absolutely useless really, but pure atmosphere and excellent plot devices.

Here we find one of WFRP's smallest and most perfect rules. That is the chance to roll another damage dice once you have rolled a 6. It is the great leveller, and gives WFRP combat the edge so many others miss.

Not So Magic

I can see you... Yes I can... Sitting there, thinking now he's gonna get stuck! How is he going to defend the truly awful magic system? It is terrible and rightly hated by all. So says the general opinion. Well there wrong! Oh yes, they are! Again it is simple, quick and works well to carry

the game forward. It even has nice little touches like needing to roll when you start running out of Magic Points. The disabilities also immediately serve to give personality to characters and atmosphere to the game. The Clerics advance table is also a nicely random judgement of the Gods.

So yes, the spells are too heavily battle based but hey! I like Steal Mind. I have also never been stuck for spells to give NPCs. In a low-level magic campaign they are effective and powerful.

The Gods are an atmospheric bunch. They are immediately in conflict, but often in a subtle way. Pacifist gods in game of violence are just great. As are the Druids. What is missing is more information on some of the gods – Khaine, Sigmar and those of Chaos.

Not a lot of Beauty

The bestiary offers a real insight in the Warhammer world. Everything you need for years of campaign are here. The truly interesting creatures are those unique to WFRP - The Skaven and Fimir especially. Others creatures are off course standard fantasy fare, or on occasion Runcquest inspired. The real villains in WFRP are the humans, one of the greatest strengths of the background. The creatures here are therefore just perfect as spice. Players who see a beach by a lake, worry about bandits behind them in the forest not Sand Clams or Octopus. When they appear they are surprising and effective. Unlike the rabbit and the frog of course.

Also, the simple profile comes back in to play. To make creatures harder you simply and easily add a few increases to the figure. Usually works like a dream.

In the End

The WFRP rules are not realistic but they allow the game to be played smoothly. They have to amended and changed to suit the personal game. However, there is no doubt that they only benefit the game. They highlight important aspects of the world and allow them to be played through. There is so much missing from the basic rulebook, fundamental parts of what is generally considered to be WFRP. The real strength of WFRP isn't to be found within the main rulebook but here are the basic building blocks -here could be cut or refined.

What makes the WFRP rulebook so influential is that is has rarely been added to. GMs have worked with what is given here. Instead of just new creatures and the like, what is there has been expanded and developed. Games Workshop have also largely followed this line, with not always worthy results. But this should give some hope to all those looking forward to a second edition.

Thoughts on WFRP2 (and a long digression)

Clive Oldfield

Why would anyone want a second edition WFRP? I'll be discussing a few of the views have been bandied about. This will all be independent of the endless arguments and speculation as to what GW's interests are and what GW may or may not want to do. GW's decision will not be taken with only the games' interests in mind.

1. WFRP is old and needs updating.

This is nonsense, of course. RPGs have no half-life. A game that was playable in 1986 is playable today. There might be faults with the game that can be loosely connected with its age. But age alone is no reason to get rid of something or renew it.

2. What about getting more people to play the game?

A big, brassy 2nd ed. vigorously promoted by GW would bring a lot of people into the hobby. In fact, in view of GW's position in the gaming market, I would suggest that this would be the single act that could grow the RPG hobby more than any other. If it were to happen, it could drag all the GWers who are too young to have necessarily been exposed to D&D etc back in the 'good old days' into the RPG fold.

It has been suggested that using d20 to bring people into WFRP would be a good idea. This is actually doing things exactly backwards. This wouldn't grow the hobby in any way, it would just move players about a bit. There is really no point of this. It wouldn't bring anything useful and no more source. Only GW can bring out official source for WFRP and they would not do this because they'd be mixing their intellectual property with a rival's.

The idea that d20 is popular and would bring more people to WFRP makes the assumption that these people would be unwilling to learn and play another system. Frankly, I would say that anyone who would refuse to try a game because they didn't already know the system is not the sort of person I would want to play with, anyway.

The idea that a good number of new recruits to WFRP would make the game commercially viable once more is a worthwhile one. But, to make a second edition aimed at a demographic who have knowledge and access to the first edition, and never bothered to play or buy it (existing non

WFRP RPGers), seems bizarre, when you could market the game at an already large and loyal following familiar with the game world and many of the existing system foibles. The Warhammer World might possibly be the best supported background in gaming today.

So a second edition would necessarily have to be an update of the existing system, or a new system.

3. With the wealth of new improved RPG knowledge, with new techniques that can be borrowed from uncountable sources, now, a much better system can be designed without even having to resort to difficult stuff like new ideas.

It is certainly true that lots of new and different techniques can be brought to bear on the second edition system. But most of us have been playing this relatively ancient game so long that we have created a whole range of modifications to the basic system. There are lots of different ways to roleplay and there are almost as many ways to play WFRP.

Without resorting to new-fangled RPG analytical theories and system models, it can be seen as testament to WFRP flexibility and balance that it seems to sit somewhere near the middle of many modern systems and most ways of playing is only a short walk from this place.

Personally I like to play with as few rules as possible and I like the rules that I do use to be as much suggestions as anything else. This has a drawback in that many players like to know what to expect and like rulings on the part of the GM to be as consistent as possible. Necessarily fewer rules means more arbitrary decisions by the GM and often the players too. Whenever I resort to the rulebook during play it is usually with this in mind, and on behalf of the player.

The sorts of RPGs in general that I like are also based on one single mechanic. I like this mechanic to have the right amount of complexity that more than a single piece of info can be gleaned from it (i.e. a single roll should tell you as much as you need to know, whenever possible), but it must remain as simple as possible. This is what I do with WFRP.

Any single D100 roll can be either a failure, success, critical failure, or critical success. Roll under or equal to target is a success, of course. A double rolled gives the element of critical-ness. So a 22 rolled with a target of 21 is a critical failure, with a target of 23 it is a critical success.

This bit is important. Despite a career system based on stat progression that directly links to the chances of success, and a stat line that gives instant access to the sorts of chances of success, and despite

modifications to the rolls that are given sometimes specifically and sometimes generally in the rules, and modifications that the GM can throw in at a whim, the chance of success of the basic roll in WFRP is always (and this is only a slight exaggeration, it is always) fifty-fifty.

This is genius and this is grim and this is perilous and this is wonderful. The most rules-lite system anyone would have the cheek to produce and charge money for and not present as a parody would not come up with a fifty-fifty (or d2 if you will) system. It would be disillusioning to many (most) players it would be seen by many (most) as overly simplistic, even the narrative rules-lite enthusiasts might find it too much, or at least not sufficiently elegant.

Know that however each player struggles for respectability, strives for some sort of power or puiissance, or works towards competence and even relative safety, whatever they do, they don't know it, and I'm not sure I should be telling you, actually, but they're playing a d2 system and they can't get away from it. It's almost like a pervasive and insidiously cruel curse of Chaos.

One in ten of rolls made will result in critical something or other; roughly half failures and half successes. The critical success (doubles) rule, and I don't even know if this is actually in the rulebook I've been playing it this way so long, begs something exciting to happen. One in ten rolls something exciting should happen, just a small thing, sometimes, but just enough and with just the right frequency to give the game a character that goes beyond the control of either GM or Players. Whoever rolls the crit must make something up that makes that resolution a bit special, or the other players and GM, can chip in with their own ideas. It is amazing what little bits can be gleaned, what extra details added, what new plot hooks invented through this necessity.

The modifications to a roll I mentioned earlier is a theme from the rules. Many of the skills discuss various if not exhaustive possible modifications. The modifications are discussed under risk tests and again many modifications are talked about in the combat section. This sets the basis for the possibility of adding as many as you desire. You can do this on a whim, for any ounce of entertainment the PCs give you then you can offer them +10 to their target. It doesn't matter how you do this because as we already know, there's a roughly fifty-fifty chance of succeeding, however generous you are.

Because there is always a fifty-fifty chance of succeeding with any roll, the GM has to be careful when he calls for rolls. If the task to be performed is unopposed and simple then don't ask for a rolled test. If it is quite difficult but the PC has some sort of skill or knowledge or career that would suggest he was fairly good at this sort of thing, then don't ask

for a roll. If the task is very difficult and the PC has no clue about how to go about it then don't ask for a roll.

I generally only ask for a roll when either the task requires some sort of number from 1 to 100 to give an indication how well the PC did, ie failure isn't dangerous or important, you just want to have a rough idea about how something is going, or the problem is of the difficulty that based on the PCs expertise that roughly (or exactly) a fifty-fifty chance of success feels about right.

Opposed rolls are used seldom in WFRP. The WFRP roll under on d100 system does not suit opposed rolls well at all, and involve fiddly maths to calculate the degree of success (i.e. how far the roll was under/over the target). I usually only use the opposed roll for initiative. Apart from this, usually you can see any situation to be resolved as some sort of dialogue or combat whereby one person can make a roll and see how well they did and then if necessary the second person can respond to that. I would even like to not use initiative and just have the first group always go first and the second group always respond, and i'm not sure if it's habit that keeps me using an initiative system, or the complaints of my players when they are in the second group.

It has often been noted that rolling for personality and human interaction type events, fellowship and leadership, is out dated and restricts roleplaying. But I would suggest that as we have already seen that there is always a fifty-fifty chance of the success of any uncertain action, then the fellowship test no longer becomes a test of the PCs social skills, but rather it becomes a random NPC personality generator. If the chances of success are fifty-fifty then the player may be rolling to see how his PC fares, but the roll will indicate, just as much, the (effectively) predetermined attitude of the NPC. This makes so much more sense in respect of the story created by the gaming session. If the GM knows how these people are going to react, through whim or important plot device, etc, then there is never a need to roll.

This simple mechanic, in my experience, contributes immensely, and more than any other system, to the flow of the story of a RPG session. I have played specifically and militantly narratist games where the mechanic had not contributed to the story half as much; WFRP is sometimes almost like a story generation system independent of any actual roleplaying that you may be lucky enough to have going on at your table. This is due to the critical feature. One in every ten rolls on average is special. Someone is forced to think of something interesting or amusing every ten rolls of the dice. Not even the writers for 'Friends' have to work with such a demanding ratio.

I'm sure anyone playing the game for any length of time has a similar cache of modifications and house rules that they don't even remember whether they are original rules or not. Whether they play the sort of game that uses intricate and detailed rules to arbitrate on as many situations as possible, or they just like to tell fun stories, or they prefer a consistent and rigorous competitive combat system, a new edition could only reasonably take the game in a single one of these directions; two thirds of the angles will be outside the compass.

4. It will at least get rid of the unfashionable random character generation.

Anyone who does not like random character generation can create their own system in an evening's pottering. They don't need a new edition for this. Nevertheless these people are deeply misguided. In a game of heroic struggle against the odds, of common folk buffeted by fate and the winds of Chaos. Where the mark of good character is making the best of whatever poor hand life deals you, in this sort of world, in this sort of game random character generation is the only way to go.

NB. As I've already explained the d2 system that governs WFRP you will understand that the relative efficacy of the results of any character generation system is only an illusion. It makes no difference to how the game will go; it is simply, and rightly, just part of the background and atmosphere. And the atmosphere of WFRP demands random character generation.

5. It would bring back a consistent canon.

There is a natural desire, especially gratified in the internet age, for some sort of consistent WFRP world to share with other fans. This is an illusion. I once spent 2 hours on the train from Athens to Vienna chatting to some guy about a mutual friend of ours. We had met completely by chance, I told him where I was from and he asked me if I knew a guy called Steve, which I did. We gradually found more and more things in common for our respective Steve's to have a 2 hour conversation about him. It took that long for us to realise (despite our wishes, I suppose) that we were in fact talking about different people. People want to have the same world as others to talk about and to exchange views on. This shared world would be no less illusional of a second edition than it is of a first.

More importantly, the setting for a second edition would have to be the new, all improved, latest version of the WFB game. While I have nothing against this setting (I will readily take whatever good stuff GW offer me and place it in my own Warhammer World), I can see no advantage to it

Warhammer II

Robert Rees

With WFRP once again out of print the slate is once again clean to discuss what WFRP should be about and what form any new revision of the rules might look like. One thing I think everyone has to accept is that the current system for its virtues and vices cannot simply be rolled out once again if any serious attempt is to be made to capture an audience outside the core market. The basic rules are over twenty years old and the world of roleplaying has distinctly moved on in terms of game design. New roleplaying systems tend to be designed these days with a great deal of thought put into the purpose and nature of the rules. It is not enough to bodge some innovations onto an existing system any more.

With that said the reason why WFRP has managed to struggle on for as long as it has is the unique style and setting that offers an experience that is difficult to find elsewhere. Getting rid of the unique aspects of the game is throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

With that in mind I want to throw out a few thoughts on what WFRP 2 might look like and what aspects of the system should definitely be retained in any future revision.

The Gamble

One of the first things that any new publisher of the system is going to have to consider is how much to include in the initial book and how much to leave to later supplements. The risk is that if you do not have enough in the initial books purchasers will be disappointed and any cash flow problems will lead to the game being deemed "unplayable" due to a perceived lack of vital information.

The current kitchen sink approach though is equally unacceptable. The current large WFRP book has a large page count but the quality of the content is highly variable. The same is true of the utility of the material. The current book is neither a complete game nor a tightly focussed product but something in between. I am not sure that this approach will win any more converts to the game on its third airing.

Limitation

My feeling is that the main book needs to be stripped down and address the core of the game rather than simply touching on a broad sweep of information. The key features of WFRP in my mind are The Empire,

Humans and the Threat of Chaos. In my view any new revision should focus on creating a great game where groups of humans take on Chaos inside the heart of the Empire and also on its borders. Everything else should be put to one side and dealt with in supplements.

I would even go further and say that information on the Empire should be stripped out and put its own book. Gaming is a lot more “component” based since the advent of the d20 phenomena. If the goal is to get people playing WFRP then I think that a separation of system and setting is vital. If people love Storyteller or Tri-Stat and are prepared to do a conversion then give them what they want. Let the system stand on its own merits and at least sell people the setting.

Metagame Considerations

One of the things that WFRP is usually praised and remembered for is the Enemy Within campaign. Right from the outset WFRP 2 should decide what it is going to be about. If it is going to be about epic campaigns with a Renaissance Gothic feel then make it clear that is what the game is about and offer support for it.

One of the real problems with Enemy Within is that it often consists of individually excellent segments tied to other less good scenarios by the thinnest linking material known to man. Having a definite campaign structure is I think a good idea as it allows players to immediately see where their characters begin and where they are going to go.

The other thing that people liked is the detail of the setting with the village and town descriptions that allowed campaigns to be extemporised around NPC and location descriptions. This is another valid approach. If the game is going to be about exploring the setting then the material needs to be there quickly but given the amount of information that can already be drawn on this should not be a problem. The only problem with this approach is answering the question of what the characters are meant to be doing. A freeform structure can turn off as many people as it attracts.

A Time and a Place

One thing the new revision will need to do is put down roots. It should decide where the core games are going to be and when and then fix them. This will be a huge help in resolving the desire for compatibility between WFB and WFRP as you only need to get a snapshot of a particular world and stick with it. Fanatics can then spend their time resolve all the retcon issues and the regular gamers can just drop in and out of fixed setting.

Options

One of the things a new revision will have to offer is flexibility in how to handle things. For a start the Warhammer world is quite inconsistent is it high or low fantasy? For the Battle fans it is clearly very high fantasy but for the roleplayers it is general quite low. The only way to handle this is to take the D&D route where by there is the basic game and then a book like *Unearthed Arcana* that allows you to play a totally different game. Currently there is too much effort spent on trying to come up with systems that reconcile the inconsistencies in the background. One size really does not fit all here. Come up with a consistent vision for the main book and choose mechanisms that are flexible enough to be completely replaced to allow a totally different version of the game to be played.

Social Backgrounds

One thing that WFRP did half-heartedly was to tie the character into the background of the game. As many people have said what other game allows you to start off your adventuring career as a rat catcher. WFRP should take a leaf out of the *Chivalry and Sorcery* book and include a lot more detail in character generation that ties in the character to the background. While this would essentially involve rolling on random tables to determine facts about the character's early life and family it might be possible to have a mechanism where by Fate Points are traded in to "bump" up the character's initial circumstances.

Skills

Well with the big questions dealt with we can now get into the nitty-gritty of what needs to stay and go. In my opinion Skills are one of distinctive aspects of the WFRP system. They are also a total mess. In general the roleplaying world has settled on a core system of numeric skills and non-numeric "Merits and Flaws". WFRP is a messy combination of the two. Luck and Numismatics clearly fit the Merit template while Law is more like a Skill. Things like Comedian are more difficult. Being funny is something of an inherent trait and would be a Merit, performing comedy on stage though is something that improves with practice and experience and is therefore more like a Skill. Is it really any different from any other kind of performance though?

Having skills as words that are tested on attributes is one of WFRPs distinctive traits but if we stick with the descriptive approach there needs to be more flexibility in defining the descriptive labels. Heroquest will probably be an informative example here of how descriptive labelling can be turned into a powerful mechanic.

I do not envy the person who has to sort out WFRP Skill system. My inclination is to go with the conventional forms because they will be more familiar to new players but in doing so you would be removing one of WFRPs more distinctive features.

Fate Points

Fate Points are a strange mechanism in WFRP as their primary job is to provide a balancing factor. Firstly to balance humans against other races such as dwarves and elves, secondly to balance the rather bloody critical hits table. When they were introduced Fate Points were a fairly interesting and radical addition to roleplaying rules. Time has moved on though and the Storyteller system of Willpower has taken the basic idea and radically enhanced it. Fate Points should become an out and out metagame device not just saving a character but allowing the player to control the flow of the game more.

Fate Points should be fixed in value to even up the differences between the races and also in the interest of balancing out the player experience. Naturally “races of destiny” such as Humans and Orcs should have more access to them than other races.

Critical Hits and Insanity

This is a slightly odd aspect of the game in that I personally think they are fairly stupid systems that add nothing to the game. However for many people they are defining aspects of the game. Clearly combat has to remain a bloody and violent affair. As such the current system is probably the best thing to stick with. However a little streamlining in the way that damage accumulates and ultimately guarantees an extreme demise would be appreciated by me at least.

It is hard to talk about Insanity without getting annoyed by the current approach in WFRP but what would serve a new game better is a mechanism like Vampire’s Humanity rating which starts high and then is eroded by things that happen in the game. What is important about this system is that the character builds up a certain tolerance to horrific events and that a low rating impacts everything about the character. Rather than having the character suddenly display a sudden and precise clinical condition they start perceiving the whole world differently and others can see the change in the character.

Careers

If there is one thing a new revision of the game needs to take on board it is the idea of Careers. This was one of the genuinely different ideas that set WFRP apart from AD&D when it was originally released and is certainly the key thing that shapes character's stories as they develop within the game.

The only problem is that the game world has once again moved on and many games now deal with professions as a simple skill rating. This is a brilliantly elegant solution to the problem of relating professions to sets of skills. It is however quite abstract and unsuitable for WFRP.

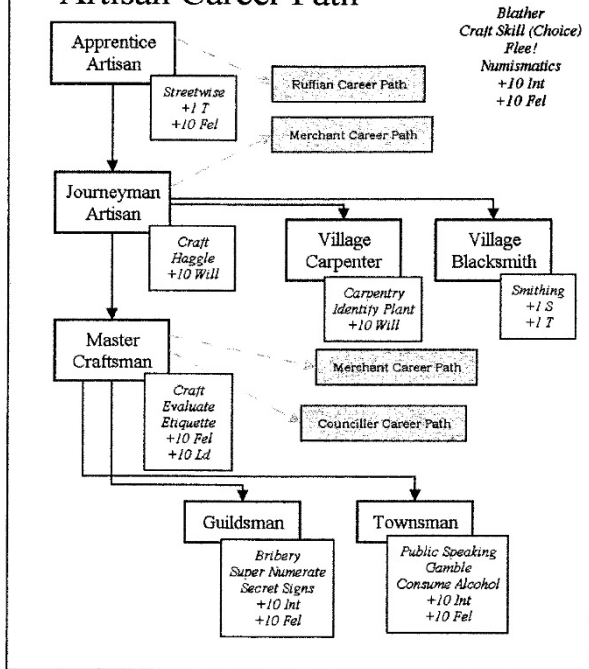
The things I like about WFRP careers are the entry and exit conditions that help create a feeling of a character moving through a career. What I really do not like are Advances. Careers really only make sense during character generation, once the game begins they begin to fall apart. Realistically a character ceases to be a Scribe or a Runner once they become an adventurer. Some Careers are plausible but really you are trying to fit a square peg in a round hole unless you introduce some generic "Adventurer" career. D&D is the lead here, Careers are more flexible than AD&D's classes but now Careers seem to have the flaws of the class-based system while D&D allows use to use and abuse the class template as you see fit.

Careers need to be relegated to character generation, downtime and for defining NPCs. Active PCs should gain Advances according to what they are doing and studying. Of course defining how this exactly works will depend on how Skills are reorganised. The most obvious template for a new system would seem to me to be BRP system of skill checks - you get better at what you use.

I would also like to see Careers (particularly the split between Basic and Advanced Careers) reorganised into large sets which I will call "Career Paths". So for example the Artisan Career Path would be made of the following Careers: Apprentice, Journeyman, Master. A Journeyman could enter the Village Smith or Carpenter Career or move onto the totally different Merchant Career Path. A Master can become a Guildsman or move onto the Town Councillor Career Path.

To move along a Career Path the character must meet the requirements for Advancement but moving to a different Career Path would essentially be free. Some Advances would be moved up a level so that they belonged to the Path rather than the individual Career. For example the Artisan Path might have the Barter and Craft Advancement at the Path level so that an Artisan at any stage of their career can take them. Advances that remain at the Career level must truly be specific to that stage of the character's life. Apprentices for example are notorious for getting into

Artisan Career Path



trouble on the city streets but by the time they become Journeymen they are free to follow their own interests and are unlikely to be rebelling against their masters and fellow townsmen, after all they are now on their way to becoming pillars of society.

I think it is also important to get away from random chances of having a certain skill. This feature of Careers can be very disempowering for players with luck alone defining the character rather than the player. Instead where there were random skills I would add more skills but limit the number that may be chosen thus allowing the player to retain control of their character while forcing them to make some tough decisions and having to prioritise what they want for their character. It would also help

differentiate characters who have the same Career. Otherwise you have the situation where all Trappers are identical for example.

Magic

Magic is another messy area in WFRP in a way that simply isn't the case in WFB. The solution is to be brutal and to simply get rid of it. To my way of thinking wizards are simply too different to incorporate into the typical adventuring group. Since the basic rulebook essentially got away with making magic an NPC thing until *Realms of Sorcery* was published I don't think there is a lot lost in ditching it completely and leaving it as one of the optional areas I talked about earlier.

Conclusion

It is fun to talk about WFRP 2 but in all reality I don't think there is going to be one unless it develops out of the Mordheim style skirmish rules or the planned MMORPG. However it is possible to take some of the better ideas for the game and transplant them to other more flexible rule systems. Talk of WFRP d20 can cause eyeballs to roll but realistically why not? If you can define what you like about WFRP then you can create any number of WFRP style games. There is nothing magical about the make up of the current green rulebook. WFRP was genuinely a different game in its time but that time was definitely in the past. Other games are stepping into the Dark Fantasy/Historical Fantasy territory, a number of the fantasy novels that inspired WFRP have now been converted into perfectly serviceable games. Unless WFRP moves on it is only a matter of time before someone successfully combines the elements of humour, low fantasy and Gothic Renaissance that have previously made WFRP unique. There seem to be a number of French RPGs that seem to cover this ground. A lot of WFRP fans have taken a shine to 7th Sea. A few roleplaying companies are now looking at the *Enemy Within* as a model for producing linked campaign hardbacks, indeed I believe Mongoose Publishing have already marked a slot in their release schedule for such a product. Time seems to be running out and the niche threatens to become a ghetto.

Anton Gorgas has a Secret

Robert Rees

Premise

One thing that the Old World really lacks is any kind of positive afterlife. This helps give the setting some of its gloomy atmosphere but also fails to address some of the fundamental needs of people to answer why they are alive and what happens to them after death. I think that any cult that could offer some kind of positive view on death and life after death (even in the form of undeath!) would enjoy a wave of popularity similar to that which the Roman Empire gave the Egyptian mystery cults of Isis and Christianity. The idea with this scenario outline is to present a cult that ultimately is evil but at the same time offers a challenge to those investigating it in a way that a normally chaos cult might not.

Synopsis

Anton Gorgas is a famous explorer from the Old World who has recently completed his greatest expedition to the fabled land of Khemri in the South. He has returned to his home town with many artifacts and stories of this strange and little known land. Gorgas plans to sell his artifacts and write a book about Khemri, thus settling his future as a gentleman. Ideally he would also like to marry a noblewoman and advance his social position.

In addition to these mundane ambitions though Gorgas has darker, stranger ambitions. In one of the ancient tombs he opened in Khemri he encountered one of undying kings of the dead who captured the explorer and tortured and questioned the Old Worlder about why he had come and the land he came from. This dread lord realises that his ancient world along with his personal cult of priests and temples is long gone and the land is down the domain of the dead alone. Still wanting the power inherent in a living group of worshippers the ancient king offered to make Gorgas his new high priest. Inducting Gorgas into the ancient rituals the king has replaced Gorgas's right eye with his own so that he may see this changed world for himself. The pact sealed Gorgas has returned to bring a rebirth in the ancient cult.

Advice for running the scenario

This article is nothing more than an outline rather than being a fixed set of events. I think it is best to run the scenario as a background subplot in the group's favourite or "base camp" city with the progress of the cult being charted between the group's regular adventurers. The first obvious element is the triumphal return of Gorgas and the public showing of his treasures. After that the changes being made by the cult should be subtler. For a start donations to the normal temples will fall off to only a trickle. Instead the cult members focus on the cult and the possibility of their eternal lives. Money that once may have gone to Morr or Shallya can now go on improving the homes and property of the wealthy. Gorgas too is richer but has a plausible explanation in the sale of his treasures. If the group is friendly with someone who might be interested in the cult one of the best way to show that something is changing is in the attitudes of their friend. Eternal life means long term planning and essentially a deep conservatism.

The rulers of the town will be split between those in the cult and those outside and perhaps still loyal to the Imperial religions. Some kind of showdown will be inevitable at this point and tensions will rise. Ultimately the player characters will have to choose a side to be on. If the cult remains undiscovered for too long the city may find itself under the sway of a cabal of undead creatures all answering some long dead master. The cult will be able to spread to other cities and soon a New Khemri might be reborn in the Old World.

Anton Gorgas

Gorgas is a very well known figure in his home city although he has been absent on his expeditions for many years. Returned to live out the life of a honourable gentleman he essentially lives a life of a respectable and wealthy merchant. He still lives in his family home but now has the funds to improve it beyond all recognition.

Physically Gorgas is a man in his late thirties whose adventures have left him with a wiry thin frame and weathered leathery skin. His right eye is normally covered by an eye patch. If uncovered though the eye is obvious a desiccated dead thing with a pale white and a colourless iris. The pupil however still lives and pulsates wildly as the malign force behind it probes the world around it. He dresses in fashionable town clothes but careful never to offer offence to his social betters by being ostentatious. Personality wise Gorgas is always polite and friendly. Much of his day is taken up with socialising in either the city taverns or in the homes of wealthy patrons. He has a vast store of anecdotes and stories about his travels. Many are very funny, many are very informative about lands

outside the Old World and some are very profound about the risks of venturing into the unknown. Gorgas is always ambitious though and while the PCs are unlikely to encounter this aspect of him he has always desired to rise to a station more suited to his self-image.

Unless the characters are rude or aggressive they will probably have no problem meeting and talking with Gorgas. However he rarely found without an entourage of admirers, cultists and armed servants so civility will be important.

The Ever Living Eye

Gorgas's right eye has been replaced with the fell undead eye of his master. The eye allows the undead king to read Gorgas's mind, talk to him and the king can see through the eye as if it were still part of him (Gorgas, however, cannot). The eye grants Gorgas magical enhanced powers of perception and the ability to detect and divine magic energy. The eye can cause fear in those who are not familiar with it and can even entrance those who look too long upon its ever-changing pupil.

Destroying the eye will cause both the undead owner and Gorgas a great deal of pain and sever the direct link between them. However Gorgas is not playing his part involuntarily and the loss of the eye while painful will not change much. His master will still be able to grant Gorgas the spells and knowledge he requires to maintain and grow the cult. In time Gorgas may even be able to create a new amulet to replace the eye.

If the characters could remove Gorgas's eyepatch in public then he would most likely be lynched and burned by outraged commoners. Doing that though would take some clever planning.

Gorgas's Powers

Rather than give a definitive list of the powers Gorgas has as high priest I think it would be better for individual GMs to define what Gorgas is capable of. He is obviously capable of conducting all the cult rituals including the creation of undead mummies. However he should also be a powerful necromancer with the ability to create all manner of undead and to curse his opponents. Other suitable powers might be the ability to possess and command animals such as beetles, rats and snakes. He might also be able to create a variety of minor illusions, have access to powerful battle magic and be able to safely make a variety of potions and other alchemical devices. Anything on top of this should continue the undead Egyptian theme.

What the cult offers its members

Rather than trying to list a cult doctrine (which Gorgas will eventually set down according to the teachings of his master) I will try and say what the cult offers its members and what it expects in return.

Essentially the cult offers eternal life through mummification and rebirth in an undead form. The teachings of the cult are that the soul after death travels through many chambers in the afterlife including that of Morr. However if certain rituals are performed after death the body can be preserved and the soul can return to re-occupy the body. Naturally the individual will be greatly changed by the experience but having once returned to life their soul may move between the worlds of the living and the dead at will.

In addition to this the cult fulfils all the normal functions of a cult. Allowing a great deal of social interaction between the members and offering an alternative way of gaining status in society, one not based on wealth or birth. Cult members will work together to advance each other and the cult itself.

What the cult wants from its members

Well firstly the cult wants obedience to the high priest and to the teaching of the cult. Secondly cultists must take part in the cult rituals. This point is the most important as completion of certain rituals greatly empowers the undead king.

Finally the cult needs money, not necessarily for its leaders but as a form of "health insurance". The materials required for the mummification and rebirth rituals are extremely expensive and therefore the cult members must pool their resources together to purchase them. Since no one knows when they are going to die the money is spent as needed. The mummification ritual is also very hard to perform and Gorgas needs sacrifices to perfect the process before any important members of the cult die. This is initially the darkest aspect of the cult.

Cult Rituals

There are daily rituals at sunrise and sunset, the sunset ones being the most important as this is when Gorgas has his powers renewed. In addition to this there are several important rituals (that empower the undead king) that need to be performed in a replica of the king's tomb. For the most part these are symbolic and complex rituals of remembrance and offerings. If completed successfully the king may tap his worshippers' life force to bolster his own powers and his spirit may

briefly occupy the imitation tomb. One of Gorgas's early tasks will be to persuade a cultist to construct this ritual tomb somewhere on their property. Preferably a country estate where the rituals can be conducted in private.

Cult Mummies

Worshippers who die and are returned as living mummies do enjoy a form of eternal life as promised. However their souls are thrall'd to their undead master and they must follow his bidding. They are also undead and share their contempt for the merely mortal. A cult mummy is only destroyed when its body is utterly annihilated if this does not happen the mummy may animate any part of its body as soon as the sun sets after its initial "death".

Initially the mummies will be more like zombies but if Gorgas gets enough practice at the art of mummification it might soon be the case that the mummies are almost indistinguishable from the living. When this happens Gorgas will be responsible for creating a den of powerful undead in the very heart of the Old World.

Fighting the Cult

Discovering anything about the cult may be initially difficult however as it becomes more successful there will be many opportunities for discovering more about it. Members might become disillusioned with the result of the mummification process. Non-cultists will not want to lose power and influence to cult members and may want the secret of the cult for political reasons. The temples of the Imperial religions will certainly be worried about the strange behaviour amongst their former followers. Any of these parties might be interested in supporting the group in any action against the cult and its members.

Approaches for tackling the cult will vary according to how long it takes the group to discover what is happening and what they plan to do about it. To be successful they will have to gather evidence and allies. Any definite proof on necromancy will certainly make things easier. Ultimately though the only way to deal with the threat is to imprison or kill Gorgas and travel to Khemri and destroy the undead master in his lair. Anything less and enough of the cult will always remain to allow itself to be rebuilt.

Playing with Fire

Alfred Nuñez Jr.

Additional background by Tim Eccles and N. Arne Dam

GM Notes

Background

The Ahnenerbe is a secret society of Sigmarite wizards who conduct investigations into the nature of Chaos and humanity's place within the world. They undertake a variety of activities into diverse areas such as archaeology and theological research into obscure and ancient texts. Their findings are then translated for consumption by both the laity and cult leaders. In addition, members of this secret society hold and scrutinise uncovered artefacts and knowledge for cleansing and/or use by the cult in its ceaseless war against Chaos. At times, the hierarchy of the Order of the Silver Hammer may call upon the highly trained individuals of the Ahnenerbe whenever dangerous chaotic powers are brought to light.

A renowned scholar with magical aptitude from the University of Nuln, Maria Schroeder was recruited by the Ahnenerbe ten years ago. She was sent to Wolfenburg to be mentored by another member, Reiner Kepler. She also joined him in his search for abandoned sites in the forested and mountainous areas northwest of the Ostland capital. Five years ago, Herr Kepler fell down a shaft in the southern edge of the Middle Mountains and broke his neck. Maria and Reiner's servant, François Boudaud, had to carry the deceased wizard back so he could find his final rest in accordance with Sigmarite rites. After a time of mourning, Maria accepted François into her service and continued on with her work. In time, François became much more than Maria's servant, he also became her lover.

Two months ago, Maria located a site where a series of shallow ditches in a regular pattern indicated the remains of an ancient village. Coincidentally, this find was in the area near the location of her mentor's demise. Maria returned to Wolfenburg and quickly assembled a group of labourers to help her excavate the site. At about this time, a relative of François arrived from the Parravon region of Bretonnia. He introduced his sister to his mistress and told her that Jeanette was looking for employment. Maria hired the newly arrived Bretonnian to work on the site with the others.

Under Maria's direction, the labourers uncovered some coins that dated the site to the later years of Emperor Boris the Incompetent's reign. They then cleared some of the forest in order to excavate more of the site. In time, the expedition found an opening in the side of a hill that led to an underground corridor. Maria entered the cave alone with torch in hand. She eventually found a partially sealed chamber that radiated magic. Crawling through the opening, she soon found a clay-encrusted amulet with an unrecognised -- and barely uncovered -- stone at its centre. A cry outside forced Maria to return to her workers. To her grief, she found that François had met with a fatal accident. Jeanette told her that François thought he had spotted something up a deep and rocky slope. In his enthusiasm, the servant tried to scramble up the hill, but he lost his footing and cracked his head on a large rock. None of the workers, other than Jeanette, saw the accident. They did see the body, however.

Two accidental deaths in the same area caused some fear in the superstitious labourers. Moreover, Maria took François' death very hard. She returned to Wolfenburg to bury her erstwhile lover and grieve over his loss. The Sigmarite wizard accepted Jeanette's gracious offer to replace his deceased cousin as her servant. Maria kept to herself in her

study and slowly began to do further research on the site and her findings as a means to console herself.

Who is Jeanette?

Jeanette is indeed François' brother. She is also well aware that François was wanted by authorities in Gisoreux for murdering the scion of a powerful noble family (the fact that the scum assaulted their youngest sister had no bearing in the eyes of Bretonnian justice). Jeanette learned from their mother where his brother lived and that he was in the employ of some recluse wizard (Reincr). Jeanette tracked her brother down and blackmailed François into gaining her employment with the wizard, even though François now worked for a new master. Having secured a position, Jeanette murdered François at the earliest opportunity (no one would suspect a sister).

Jeanette had another reason for wanting to work for François' employer. As an important member in the Cult of the Naked Paw in Parravon, Jeanette had a vision of a large warhammer crushing a series of earthen mounts. Between blows, swarms of rats scurried from one point to another looking for safety. Wolves stood on three sides of the devastating weapon waiting to devour the scattered rodents. Suddenly, a large rat stood on its hind legs and brandished a talisman with a glittering stone. A greenish-black beam shot out from the charm and demolished the warhammer. The wolves then fled in terror.

At that moment, Jeanette knew that this artefact must be hers. Her only concern was that no one else received such a revelation.

Adventure

"Playing with Fire" is a WFRP adventure designed for player characters in their first career. GMs who have more experienced players may want to modify the scenario to make it more challenging for their players. The events of this scenario take place in Ostland town of Wolfenburg and the nearby areas of the Middle Mountains and Forest of Shadows.

Introduction

Maria Schroeder has been closeted in her study for the past month reading various tomes she obtained from the University of Nuln and meticulously cleaning the encrusted amulet she recovered from the archaeological site. She always locked the door behind her whenever her attention was needed elsewhere, even her servant did not have a key for the study. In the past few days, the Sigmarite wizard noticed that a lone figure would stand across the street below the window of her study for extended periods late at night. Uncertain if her work was getting to her, Maria started asking her servants to keep watch. Jeanette and Hans-Pieter (newly hired upon Maria's return to help with heavy work) agreed to do what they can.

Not assured by this, Maria knew she had to find some more assistance. Sending a message to her superior in Wurtbad would take far too long and she couldn't call upon the local cult of Sigmar (most in the cult did not know of the existence of the Ahnenerbe, much less their work). Maria needed local help. She told Jeanette that she needed her to find some reputable individuals she could hire as guards. Maria suggested that Jeanette might want to check with some of the local merchants to obtain some recommendations and seek these people to learn of their level of interest. The wizard gave Jeanette a pouch with some Gold

Crowns to do what she must to perform this task. Maria stated her desire to interview the candidates before deciding upon whom she'll hire and at what wage.

Jeanette is caught between a rock and a hard place. She needs more time to scheme and is certainly not ready to show her hand. Jeanette knows that she cannot dredge scum as potential candidates for Maria's guards as that might cause her mistress doubts about her integrity (time enough for that later). Jeanette clearly cannot afford to get Maria accomplished men-at-arms either. What the Bretonnian needs are bumbling who can convince her mistress that they are capable of handling themselves in a crisis.

Enter the PCs

Jeanette takes her search to the taverns of the Docke district alongside the River Wolfen. Transients and those fleeing their bored lives are more likely to be found among the many dives in the area. Her first order of business, however, was of a precautionary nature. Jeanette met with a cell (thirteen members, including herself) of the Cult of the Gnawer in the Well that she had taken over from its recently deceased leader (may the Horned Rat gnaw on his bones). She informed them of her search and selected three to follow her at a discrete distance. Once she selected the soon-to-be-victims, the three cultists would follow the hired help while ensuring that they did not follow Jeanette.

It is late afternoon when you arrived at the big city of Wolfenburg from the small farming town of Wendorf. You feel a bit nervous as this is the first time you have ever visited the Ostland capital. Still you tried to keep from gawking as you don't want people to think you're a bunch of country bumpkins fresh from the farm.

There is a queue of people at the gatehouse awaiting entrance. As the queue moves forward, you hear the guards inform the people that there is an entrance tax of 2/- per person to enter. You also learn that individuals entering the city are only allowed by law to carry one hand weapon and a dagger. Any other weapon or metallic armour must be stored at the gatehouse. The clerk at the gate will provide a receipt to the owner so they can claim any confiscated possessions upon their departure from Wolfenburg.

Though you weren't keen on the idea of the tax or leaving any of your possessions behind, you did so as you didn't want to create a scene.

You immediately walked to the riverfront in hopes of landing a job on the river or about town. After several hours of frustration, you decided to stop at a (cheap) riverside tavern for a pint or two.

The Griffon's Chamber Pot was an apt name for the dive you wandered into. Still, you had little money so you made the best of a less-than-ideal situation. Once you've settled down with your pint, you noticed a woman approaching your table.

"Pardon me," the woman says with a slight, foreign accent. "I hope I'm not intruding. My name is Jeanette Boudaud and I am in the service of a Lady who would very much like to hire a group of capable and discreet individuals. I could not help but notice that you all seem to meet the former requirement of my Lady and I surely hope the second as well. Are you available to speak with her, say in about two hours time at her townhouse? You need not agree to anything until you've spoken with my mistress, of course. Are you interested?"

Naturally inquisitive, the PCs will probably want a bit of information before committing themselves. Jeanette really has little to offer since she's not quite sure what her mistress has in mind. It'll probably include some guard duty, but beyond that she doesn't truly know. The PCs are going to have to trust their instincts (or, the very least, their empty

pockets and growling stomachs). Once the PCs agree to meet with Maria, Jeanette invites them to her townhouse on Höheland Strasse in the Besitztümer district that night. "My mistress would most likely be interested in seeing your letters of reference. I assume you have some?" Jeanette says as she excuses herself (PCs with the *Etiquette* skill realise that this is proper protocol when looking for employment). Without waiting for a response, Jeanette then pays for their drinks before taking her leave to ensure that "everything is ready" when they arrive. Jeanette provides a time that'll give her a minimum of two hours to prepare.

As she leaves the PCs, Jeanette covertly makes contact with the cultists to let them know that his task for the wizard has met success. She'll also provide them with the description of each PC. Should the PCs follow Jeanette out of the tavern, the servant will "accidentally" bump into the cultist as a sign that she's being followed by the PCs. This will clue the cultists to provide Jeanette with the time to get away.

The cultists are dressed as stevedores (since that is what they are when they're not plotting to end the world) and will do whatever they can to slow the PCs down. They may accost the players with wild accusations of being scabs (strike-breakers). The cultists may even act as beggars by claiming unemployment resulting from border skirmishes with Talabecland. Another tactic may be that one of the male stevedores accuses a player of sleeping with his wife and/or daughter and demands restitution. The female member of the trio might even charge one of the players as someone who raped her the previous Festag after a night of drinking. "Taking advantage of me, they did." Either of the latter two allegations have a secondary benefit of drawing a crowd which should hinder the PCs further. After five to ten minutes of this, the cultists will then act with surprise when they "realise" that the PCs were being "truthful." By then, their primary mission will have been accomplished.

***** NPCs *****

Albrecht, Greta, and Wilhelm, Cultists of the Gnawer in the Well, Stevedores (Labourers)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 31 | 32 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 32 | 1 | 30 | 28 | 28 | 30 | 29 | 28 |

Skills: Consume Alcohol, Drive Cart, Scale Sheer Surface, Shadowing

Possessions: Sword, Leather Jack (0/1 AP Body), and Pouch (2d6 shillings, 2d6 pennies)

Personal History: The three have been cultists of the Gnawer of the Well for several years. They are experienced at following people and, if need be, capturing them for the heinous rituals of their cult. The three cultists are well aware of the dangers inherent in their membership, but are firm believers that the day of the Horned Rat is fast approaching. The three are certain their efforts to bring about that day will be justly rewarded. They don't know how right they are...

The Job

As you head southeast towards the address Fraulein Boudaud gave you, you can not help but notice that the streets of this district are considerably cleaner than those near the riverfront. The houses look very sturdy and larger than the ones near the Griffon's Chamber Pot. You arrive at the three-storied townhouse in due time. There's a well-crafted, hammer-shaped knocker on the door.

Hopefully, the PCs will take the opportunity to knock.

A few moments after you knock, a tall man opens the door, looking at you suspiciously. "You are the people Jeanette had spoken to I take it? Please enter." After everyone is in the entryway, the man closes the door and tells you, "Please follow me."

He leads you into a room where the benches are all covered in some stylish canvas. They certainly look more comfortable than the ones in the chapel of Sigmar back home. "Please be seated. My Mistress will be here presently." The man then stands by the door through which you entered the room.

Several minutes later, a medium-built woman with black hair and blue eyes enters the room looking a bit harried. "Hans-Pieter, bring a couple bottles of wine and pour glasses for my guests. My apologies to all of you for my tardiness and appearance. I am Maria Schroeder and I thank you for coming. Please introduce yourselves and tell me a bit about you."

Should the PCs ask about Jeanette, Maria informs them that her servant is in the kitchen preparing the night's meal.

"Do you have any letters of introduction or reference with you?" Maria asks. "If so, may I have them to peruse?"

[GM Note: Letters of reference aren't an absolute necessity for an individual seeking employment, but they are a matter of formality and some importance. In the Old World, many well-to-do and would-be employers expect such references from job seekers, especially for well paying jobs. For the purposes of this scenario, the employer is in a bit of dire straits. If the PCs do not have such letters, make sure they come up with a reason why they lack these documents. Never pass up a golden opportunity to make players role-play. The more they squirm, the better].

As soon as Hans-Pieter has poured the wine, Maria asks him to leave a couple of opened bottles before he departs. She then closes and locks the door behind him, stating, "What I have to say is a private matter that I would prefer to keep that way. I trust that you will agree to this?"

Maria awaits their consent before continuing.

"Allow me to come to the point. I spend a lot of time in serious study, preferring to do so privately and without disruption. Recently, I have noticed that strangers have been lurking across the street from my window at odd hours of the night. I've spied them glancing up from time to time as if trying to see what I'm doing. Such invasion of my privacy disturbs me. It also points to a need I have for trusted and capable people to act as guards for me. The job is only temporary, no more than several weeks, and I can pay 1 gold crown per day for each of you. All of you needn't be here at once. So, if you're agreeable, you can work out a schedule of who will be on duty when. I can provide lodging if you need it, but I will have to deduct for meals should you wish to eat here. I shall also require your services should I need to travel. I will pay each of you who accompany me an additional gold crown per day. I only ask that you respect my privacy and follow whatever direction I provide. What say you?"

No doubt, the PCs will try to haggle a higher price. What they should realise is that Maria's offer is a more than fair one. There are many unskilled workers making a whole lot less per day than this. If need be, GMs might wish to impose an **Int** test on players who forget their place in the larger society. Bloody transients.

If possible, Maria would like some of the PCs to start tonight, if they are amenable. There should be at least two guards on duty at any given time. The wizard expects several patrols around the house every hour, perhaps one every twenty minutes or so. The duty is tedious and boring. At no time will Maria allow Jeanette or Hans-Pieter to be part of any patrol. They are employed to be her, not the PCs', servants.

Should the PCs turn down Maria's offer, don't fret. Just ensure that no one else seeks to employ such a ragtag group of would-be adventurers. As their money dwindles, the PCs should return to Maria to inquire if the job is still open.

Is there Anyone out there?

The first few days are rather uneventful. In fact, you're just bored. Except for odd noises in the dark recesses of alleyways and shadows, nothing is amiss. You wonder if your presence has discouraged anyone from spying on Maria. On the other hand, it may be more likely that the Lady was just paranoid about imaginary spies. Jeanette and Hans-Pieter both carry on with their duties without complaint.

If asked, the servants tell the PCs that they have not seen anyone watching their mistress from the streets.

One night, a lone figure in a wide-brimmed hat and overcoat appears sometime after midnight. He stands in the shadows watching Maria study an object she recovered from the cave. PCs on patrol will have to pass an **Observe** test to spot the man. Should they fail, a screech of a cat from the same direction should help them notice the prowler. The spy will certainly notice the PCs, so sneaking up on him will fail. If the PCs come after the figure, he will quickly retreat down a narrow alleyway.

Should the PCs pursue, they will run fifteen yards down the alley before it turns to the left. Once they make the turn, they will see a second alley about ten yards from the turn go off to the right. The one they are on continues straight for another twenty yards before ending on a street. PCs need to successfully pass a **Listen** test for normal noise (+10 for *Acute Hearing*) to hear scraping sounds coming from the second alley. If the PCs turn onto the second alley, they will see a 6 foot wooden fence blocking it about five yards from the corner. The wide-brimmed hat lies before the fence, but there is no sign of the spy.

PCs looking over the fence do not see anything more than the garden of another townhouse. If the PCs have a lantern or torch, they can see that the plants nearest the fence look to be untouched. There are no broken branches, twigs, or anything else to indicate the passage of anyone in the last few minutes. A word of caution: should the PCs have a light source at this time of night, there is a reasonable chance (say 10%) that a guard or servant will notice strangers lurking behind the master's house and sound an alarm be bring forth the Watch.

Inquisitive PCs may decide to inspect the fence for clues. Anyone who successfully passes a **Search** test finds a parallel set of four scratch marks. The top portion of the scratches seems marginally deeper than the rest. PCs successfully passing an **Int** test (+10 for *Carpentry*, +10 for *Follow Trail*) can clearly determine that these marks are very recent.

Once the PCs have exhausted their search, they will likely return to report the matter to Maria. The question may well be when. There is a probability that the PCs may decide to continue conducting their investigations by making inquiries at the households of Maria's neighbours. The PCs are uncouth, country bumpkins after all.

As a matter of fact, the PCs' rural origins (betrayed by their accents) will be held against them by the servants working for Maria's affluent neighbours. These servants will naturally see themselves as a cut above the PCs in social standing and this reflects in the -10 modifier that is applied to any **Fel** tests. Should the PCs' try intimidation, they should be "awarded" with a -20 modifier to any **Ld** tests. Of course, intimidation will work in the PCs actually resort to violence.

In any event, the neighbours will not be able to provide the PCs with any useful leads for this scenario. Should the GM feel the need, this could be an opportunity to introduce any red herrings they choose.

At some point, Hans-Pieter will notice any apprehension on the part of the PCs and will ask them about it. He offers his concerns for the mistress should the PCs ask him about his interest. Whether he learns from the PCs or Maria some time later, Hans-Pieter is clearly concerned. He privately shares these worries with Jeanette.

Jeanette realises that Hans-Pieter feels protective towards Maria, though she doesn't really know (or care) if it's out of loyalty or something more. In fact, Jeanette has other important matters on her mind. Jeanette had instructed her cult underlings to cease with their spying for the time being. Did anyone disobey her? Or, did someone else learn about Maria's findings and activities? Could it be a rival?

Field Trip

Anxious about the turn of events, Jeanette decides to advance her own timetable. She knows that one of the reasons that Maria had not returned to the excavation was the "accidental" death of her brother. Jeanette also lacked any knowledge of what Maria has been studying in her private quarters. Her cult lackeys had proven ineffectual in their observations outside Maria's window. Jeanette concludes that she may be better able to separate Maria from her work if she were able to get her mistress away from Wolfenburg without arousing suspicion. Moreover, this may provide her with a chance to putting some distance between Maria and the new, interested party.

In an attempt to insulate her desires, Jeanette privately approaches Hans-Pieter about her concerns for the Mistress. She professes her guilt to him that her brother's untimely demise has denied Maria the opportunity to further excavate the site at the edge of the Middle Mountains. Hans-Pieter considered Jeanette's distress and then suggested that perhaps they should suggest to the Mistress that she resumes her studies. Jeanette agrees with Hans-Pieter's idea and asks if he could raise the issue with the Mistress as she would feel most awkward doing so. Hans-Pieter agreed on the condition that Jeanette accompanies him as a sign of support. The two servants found Maria in the drawing room.

Out of sight, though not earshot of inquisitive PCs who are nearby (**Listen** tests for soft sounds, +10 for *Acute Hearing*), Hans-Pieter raises the issue that he and Jeanette discussed with Maria. Hans-Pieter told Maria that Françoise's untimely demise has denied her the opportunity to further excavate the site at the edge of the Middle Mountains. While he appreciates that the loss of such a noble servant would be hard to overcome, Hans-Pieter believed that her late servant would have understood the Mistress' need to continue with her work. With Maria's permission, Jeanette offered to arrange for some labourers to accompany the Mistress on short notice. Hans-Pieter then points that, if needed be, the Mistress' newly hired guards are being paid to assist in whatever tasks she so instructs. Maria contemplates the recommendations for a moment or two before agreeing. She gives Jeanette a day to hire eight labourers and arrange for supplies and wagons. Maria then grants Jeanette leave to perform her tasks and requests Hans-Pieter to inform the guards of her desire to meet with them.

As you go about your tasks, Hans-Pieter approaches all of you. "The Mistress requires your immediate presence in the drawing room. Follow me."

You arrive at the drawing room where Maria awaits you. Hans-Pieter closes the door before sitting in a nearby chair. "Please be seated," Maria begins. "I have decided that I can no longer put off my work. Two months ago, I abandoned an excavation site northwest of Wolfenbürg due to a tragic accident. I mean to return to it tomorrow morning. The journey will take three days of slow travel by wagon, weather permitting. We will cross the river and leave by the southwest gate. From there we will take a lightly travelled track towards the northwest.

"I'm sure you want to know what does this mean to your employment. At Hans-Pieter's suggestion, I plan on continuing your employment on this excursion. As we agreed when I first hired you, I will increase your wages starting tomorrow, the day of departure, and will provision the trip. I may require you to assist the labourers at times in addition to your normal guard duty. Until then, I still need you to carry on your duties. Agreed?"

Suspicious PCs may decide to follow Jeanette around. Unfortunately, she left very early to complete her tasks. Insistent PCs may find her in the Docke district after several hours of searching. They find Jeanette talking to a group of people near the docks. Observant PCs may make an **Int** test (+10 if PC has been or is currently a Bounty Hunter) to notice that three of the group were involved in the incident that occurred shortly after Jeanette met them at the Griffon's Chamber Pot.

Should the PCs decide to challenge any of the three (whether Jeanette is still there or not), the three look puzzled by any accusation. They clearly maintain that the PCs are mistaken in their recollection. The three then turn away in order to avoid any confrontation.

Wayward Bound

The morning of departure is a bit on the cool side and misty. You noticed that the expedition has three wagons. The first looks to have Maria's personal effects and is driven by Hans-Pieter with Jeanette sitting besides him. The second two carry tools and provisions and are driven by labourers hired for the task ahead. You can either ride or walk as need be. Each wagon has barely enough room to squeeze in four additional passengers, thus anyone riding will have to be awfully friendly to one another.

As the journey is mostly uphill, the expedition takes many breaks (every two hours) so the horses can feed and rest. The PCs may need to be reminded by Hans-Pieter that there should be at least two of them with his mistress at all times. They are paid as guards, after all.

Though the mist clears, the day remains cloudy and cool during the morning. In the late afternoon as the air begins to dry out, a couple of figures are spotted walking towards the party leading a mule. The beast of burden is laden with packs slung onto its back and tools such as shovels and pick-axes. The two men wear ragged, heavy cloaks and patched clothing. As the two close with the wagons a foul odour drifts towards the expedition as you have the misfortune of being downwind of the two travellers. Whoever these men are, they are sorely in need of a good scrubbing in some fast moving, cold river.

If the PCs haven't moved to take a position between the lead wagon and the approaching strangers, Hans-Pieter calls them over to remind them that their duties include intercepting strangers. Hans-Pieter also instructs the PCs to inquire about the Schöffrigloch homestead.

“Hello, travellers to the mountains, could you spare a bit of food to a couple of hungry and weary prospectors? We don’t have much of any worth, but we’d be happy to trade what we have,” calls forth the one with the scar over his right eye. A wide grin showed that he was missing a few teeth.

“Indeed,” says the second who walked with a slight limp and a broad smile showing his rotting teeth. “I am Leif Gruber and my companion is Johannes Stroh. We are on our way to Wolfenburg. What news have you?”

[GM Note: Pause here to allow the PCs to step forward in their role of guards. If they are unwilling to earn their pay properly, have Hans-Pieter step forward after Maria asks him to take the lead. Her servant will give the PCs a look of disgust as he moves to obey. Maria should deduct their pay for the day to emphasize her disappointment.

“As you can see, we are a large group, so we do not have much that we can afford to share,” responds Hans-Pieter. “News from Wolfenburg is nothing more than stories of Talabeclander raids across the border. Some say that the raids are taking a toll on the farmers and herders in the region. May be a hard winter. If you have any news on the Schäfrigloch homestead, we would be willing to part with a skin of ale and a loaf of bread.”

“Well, now,” Johannes comments, barely containing his excitement over Hans-Pieter’s offer, “you are a considerate fellow. When we left the family and retainers yesterday morn, they were all hearty and hale. Very friendly people, even if they had to clear the barn of their pigs so we had a place of sleep for the night. Frau Schäfrigloch is expecting her sixth child and the oldest, Eva, is becoming a lovely lass. Herr Schäfrigloch talked about going to market soon, most likely in the next fortnight. How about that loaf and skin now, eh?” Hans-Pieter motions to one of the labourers in the second wagon to fulfil the bargain.

At any point of time, the PCs can make further inquiries of Leif. The malodorous twosome are a bit overwhelming so a T+20 test is required to talk to either prospector. Failure to pass the test means that the PC’s eyes water as their sense of smell is being assaulted. Failure of greater than 30 reduces the PC to a queasy stomach and some vomiting. If the latter occurs, the prospectors comment that the PC should be careful about drinking the water from the river.

The prospectors have a general idea as to the number of people living at the homestead, both family members and retainers. Since they really can’t count beyond twenty (fingers and toes), the prospectors reckon that’s there’s more than that number there. They also know the basic layout of the farm and that the gates are locked from dusk to dawn. One or two retainers or Schäfrigloch boys are on guard duty during the night. Moreover, the prospectors can tell any who ask that the family is very hospitable as well as friendly.

PCs who are not native to these parts of Ostland may ask about nearby villages. The prospectors smile and state, “You’re not from around these parts, are you? Villages are few and far apart in this part of the country. Most people live in fortified homesteads scattered throughout the forest.”

If the PCs ask about sightings of Beastmen or Orcs, the prospectors answer that none have been seen of late. However, since the expedition is travelling through the Forest of Shadows and towards the Middle Mountains, anything can happen. “Just because you don’t see them doesn’t mean that they aren’t there or aren’t already following you.” Small consolation.

Leif Gruber and Johannes Stroh, Prospectors

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 42 | 38 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 30 | 2 | 33 | 30 | 29 | 42 | 30 | 24 |

Skills: Animal Care, Carpentry, Fishing, Game Hunting, Metallurgy, Orientation, River Lore

Possessions: Axe, Leather Jack (0/IAP Body), Bow (R 24/48/250, ES 3), Mule, Tent, Shovel, Pans, and pouch (d6 pennies)

Personal History: Both men are friendly and simple folk. They have been prospecting on the lower southern slopes of the Middle Mountains for over a decade. The hard life has been taking its toll on the two prospectors as evident by their pungent aroma and physical appearance (both men are in their early 30s). The two find just enough gems and valuable metals – chiefly silver – to continue their livelihood. The mere fact that Leif and Johannes are still alive is a tribute to their ability to avoid the creatures that live (and hunt) in the area where they prospect.

Death in the Wilderness

Once the exchange has been made, the prospectors continue on their way. As the day nears dusk, Hans-Pieter finds a spot to set camp. The PCs are given a couple of tents to set up. Those who have **Ranger** and certain **Warrior** careers (like Mercenaries and Soldiers) have no problems setting up their tents. Those who spent their lives in towns – typically **Academics** and **Rogues** – experience some difficulty. Should one of these PCs try their hand at erecting the tent, use an average of their **Dex** and **Int** to determine their initial success. Should they fail, allow them to try again with a +10 modifier on the second test (one would expect them to learn from their mistakes, after all). Continue to give another +10 modifier for each successive attempt until the PC succeeds.

Given that nights in the Forest of Shadows are hardly a picnic, the PCs are expected to participate in Watch duty. Two of their number, along with two Labourers, will have to take part in a three-hour shift. All this preparation is for naught, however, as nothing untold happens during the night. Mischievous GMs may have their players roll to hear the odd sound of the night. A distant howl or growl would go a long way to keep the players on their toes.

The morning is overcast from the clouds that moved into the area overnight, though the weather remains dry. The group breaks camp after a cold breakfast and continues the journey.

The day passes and the sky clears of clouds without the expedition encountering other travellers. GMs are encouraged to add random, hopefully benign to some degree, encounters to spice up the trip.

At the end of the day, the expedition sees the Schäfrigloch homestead in a clearing ahead. There several cultivated plots of land cleared from the forest outside the ditch that surrounds the walled settlement. An empty animal pen is situated to the left of the road leading to the homestead. The roofs of several buildings can be seen over the 15-foot stockade. Except for the sounds of chickens, all is quiet and peaceful. Yet something

seems amiss. Any PC passing an **Observe** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*) notices that there is no one on the watchtower. Passing a second **Observe** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*) allows the PC to notice that there isn't any smoke coming from the main house's chimney. As the party cautiously moves forward, they will notice that the main gate is ajar.

If the PCs don't show the initiative, Maria orders the PCs to investigate as she is concerned about the situation. The expedition will remain outside the gates until the PCs report back with what they've learned. Maria intends to reach an arrangement with Herr Schäfrigloch to allow the expedition to camp in the courtyard for the night.

The PCs may conduct a patterned search or they may do so in a haphazard manner. The following should help the GM manage through the randomness of the typical PC party:

Courtyard: The courtyard lies empty except for the occasional chicken stalking about. Outside the clucking, the only other animal sounds come from the barn.

Barn: The animals here only number one rather perturbed cow, a restless ox, and a couple of nervous pigs as anyone with the *Animal Care* skill can easily determine. If no PC has that skill, the animals appear as "restless" within their pens. PCs investigating the barn more thoroughly should take a **Listen** test for soft noises (+10 for *Acute Hearing*). If they succeed, they should hear a soft whimpering sound coming from a pile of hay on the loft above. The snivel only slips out once, so PCs that fail do not get a second chance.

Those that succeed need to carefully approach the sound so as not to scare the young lad hiding among the hay. Should the PCs boldly "attack" the loft, 10-year old Heinrich Schäfrigloch panics, lets out a yell, and tries to leap out of the loft window to the ground below where he intends to run away. An **I** test needs to be made for Heinrich to see if he succeeds in leaping or tips and falls out of the nine-foot high window. Once on the ground, the boy will run (if he can) through the gate and into the forest.

Should the PCs calmly approach the hidden Heinrich, allow them a **Fel**+10 test (other modifiers include: +10 for *Charm*; +10 for *Wit*; +10 if using a calm, soothing voice) to assure the lad that he is safe with them. If they fail by 30 or less, the lad is not quite certain and backs towards the window. Allow the PCs a chance to pass a second test. If the second test is failed or the first fails by more than 30, the boy panics and tries to leap as described above. Once the PCs have secured the child, Heinrich breaks down and cries uncontrollably. He mutters, "They killed Mum, Dad, Eva, Willie, Reiner, Katie, Stef, and Bruno" over and over again.

The PCs will have to comfort Heinrich continuously over a period of d3 hours to get him calmed down enough to learn anything worthwhile. Unfortunately, there's not much. Heinrich recalls being asleep in the hayloft sometime during the night when he awoke to an overbearing smell. He began to call to his two brothers and the two sons of family retainers below when he heard movement followed by a gurgling sound and thrashing about. Heinrich cautiously peered over the edge and saw his older brother, Wilhelm, being strangled by some two-legged beast with dark fur and red, glowing eyes filled with hate. Heinrich saw that his other brother, Reiner, and the other two boys, Stefan and Bruno, were already dead with a barrel-chested man standing over them. In the dim light of Mannslieb, Heinrich could see that the man was enjoying watching the spectacle of his brother's death. The boy also noticed that something dimly shine with a green, eerie light at the unknown bald man's throat. Heinrich began to slowly, as quietly as possible, move towards the window to warn the others when he heard screams coming from the main house. Fear gripped him and he could only manage to burrow into the hay, hiding from those he knew would murder him. At some point, Heinrich must have fallen asleep until the PCs arrived. He didn't know if the man and his beasts had returned for him.

Blacksmith Workshop: A search of the workshop doesn't reveal any evidence of what happened to the occupants. The above living quarters indicated something entirely different. An overturned table and broken bowls and cookware gave every indication of a struggle, yet there are no bodies here. From the furnishings, you can discern that a family of six lived here (though only four appeared to have slept here). PCs conducting a successful **Search** test (+10 for *Follow Trail*, +10 for *Excellent Vision*) near the entryway can find indications of something (somebody?) being dragged towards the main house. A successful **Search** test in the living quarters and find several tufts of coarse hair. The hair has a rather pungent smell that Heinrich (see above) will confirm – after a sniff – as the same stench he smelled last night. PCs with a background as a Gameskeeper, Hunter, Ratcatcher, or Trapper will recognise the smell as musk.

Carpenter Workshop: Located next to the blacksmith shop, the carpenter workshop has no signs indicating anything is amiss. The furnishings in the quarters above indicate that four people live here.

Watch Tower: Though attached to the main house, the tower has its own entrance along with living quarters. The accommodations here reveal that three men lived here, but there are no signs of a struggle or bodies. When the PCs open the trapdoor leading to the twenty-foot high top, five startled crows take flight, cawing in anger over the disruption. A bloated corpse lies near the edge overlooking the direction from which the expedition arrived.

Upon closer inspection, the PCs notice that the dead body is covered in unopened, deep red pustules. The staring eyes are bloated as is the purple tongue hanging out the mouth. A long dart is embedded in the man's throat with the surrounding skin taking on a blackish-green colouration. PCs with no experience dealing with disease-ridden corpses (no background as a country herbalist, beggar, physician student, or Shallyan initiate) must take a **CI** test. Failure of thirty or less means that the PC is shaken and will suffer a modification of -10 to any **CI** test while within the homestead. Failure of more than 30 means that the PC picks up an **Insanity Point** along with the temporary reduction in **CI**.

PCs with the *Cure Disease* skill may take an **Int** to try to determine what caused the corpse's condition. A successful test means that PC diagnoses the symptoms as indicative of the Crimson Pustule Fever, a wasting disease in which those so infected normally die anywhere between 3 and 5 days after the pustules appear. In addition, the fevered individual is very weak and generally bed-ridden within a day of catching the disease. Other than the symptoms, the corpse doesn't exhibit the decay of flesh associated with the illness.

Should Heinrich be in the company of the PCs at this point, he recognises the man as Heinz Gruber, a friend of his father's for the past ten years.

Gatehouse: The small building is situated at the back of the compound near a smaller gate. The gate opens to a small track that leads to another homestead several miles to the west. A table and two chairs are the only furniture found within.

Main House: This building dominates the enclosure and is the home of the Schäfrigloch and the Wurzelsspross families (the latter are tenants). When the PCs enter, all is quiet and there is a faint odour in the house. A search of the upper floors reveals nothing unexpected. From the furnishings, the PCs get a pretty reasonable idea that the Schäfrigloch homestead was doing well for itself.

Following the smell is rather easy. Leading to the kitchen, the PCs open the door to find the room in complete shambles. Damaged cookware is everywhere and streaks of blood can be found on the floor. A successful **Search** of the room reveals two bloody footprints behind a toppled table. One is of a boot print with a nearby smear where the individual attempted to clean the boot of blood. The second print is a partial footprint, which seems to indicate a misshapen foot. PCs with a background in a rural **Ranger**-type career with the *Follow Trail* skill sees the partial spoor as being closer to a squirrel (albeit a large one) than a human. Any PC with a background as a **Rat Catcher** sees the footprint as being more like a large rat. The back door of the house is opened to the outside.

The largest streak of blood points to an opened door, which leads to a set of stairs descending into the dark cellar. Any PC who successfully passes a **Listen** test for soft noise (+10 for *Acute Hearing*) hears a buzzing sound down below. The smell is stronger here and takes on a nauseating mixture of sickly sweet and bodily wastes.

Should the PCs opt to descend, they should take some precautions. A PC with the *Cook* or *Herb Lore* skills realise that soaking a piece of cloth in sour wine or vinegar before placing over the nose and lower face will offset (to some degree) the odour below. Any PC undertaking this precaution gets a +20 modifier to a **T**+10 test once they reach the bottom of the stairs. Those that fail the test feel nauseous at the stench and suffer a -10 modifier to the following **CI** test. Any PC that fails the modified **T** test above by more than 30 vomits uncontrollably and suffers a -20 modifier to the subsequent **CI** test.

The sight that awaits the PCs in the cellar is ghastly. The remains of the inhabitants of the homestead are piled in the centre with bloated flies buzzing about. Many have been mutilated in some horrific fashion and parts have been gnawed. Most of the remains are covered in blood, gore, and filth, though some of the latter seems to be left by something other than the victims. All PCs must take a **CI** test with whatever modifier they receive from the above **T** test. Failure of thirty or less means that the PC is shaken and will suffer a modification of -10 to any further **CI** test while within the homestead (may be added to that which they may have received from the tower). Failure of more than 30 means that the PC picks up an **Insanity Point** along with the temporary reduction in **CI**.

PCs who still have enough visceral fortitude to investigate the corpses will see that many bear straight red lines across their throats indicating that they were first strangled. A few were slashed by some weapons that tore at the flesh rather than cut cleanly. Many of the victims have had their hands torn off. To add a touch of gruesome horror, the killers left the pretty face of Eva Schäfrigloch unmarred, though the same cannot be said for the rest of her.

On the nearby wall, the PCs can see the following message scrawled in blood, offal, and other bits of gore:

“I am coming to gnaw your bones, Traitor. LH”

Heinrich Schäfrigloch, Herdsman
 Height: 4 ft 10 in
 Weight: 80 lbs.
 Hair: Sandy Brown
 Eyes: Blue
 Age: 10
 Alignment: Neutral (Sigmar)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 5 | 27 | 29 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 32 | 1 | 34 | 26 | 31 | 28 | 30 | 32 |

Skills: Animal Care, Charm Animal, Specialist Weapon-Sling

Possessions: Sling (R 24/36/150, ES 3) and ammunition, Staff

Personal History: Heinrich is the third son of the Schäfrigloch family and the fourth oldest. He was learning to become a herdsman when he took ill the earlier in the week. His mentor, Rolf Schäffer, left Heinrich behind when he took the sheep out to pasture. Heinrich had hoped to leave the farm for the big city (Wolfenburg) some day where he could become a merchant or something equally important. Perhaps even a squire to a powerful knight. Heinrich knew that the dream was some years off, or so he thought.

Last Rites

Once the PCs have finished their investigations, twilight has descended upon the expedition. A roadwarden patrol of six men has arrived an hour ago and engaged Maria in conversation as they await the PCs' return. The warden wearing a badge of office (apparently the leader) hands Maria a letter bearing a seal (her wizard's license, if the players try to uncover) which she folds and places in her pouch. The wardens are dressed simply with a black and white sash across their torsos indicating that they are in the employ of the Grand Prince of Ostland. Jeanette has positioned herself so she can hear the conversation without appearing to do so.

When Maria spots the PCs, she motions them to approach her. She introduces them to the warden leader, Otto von Schattenlauf, and instructs them to report what they have learned. Should the PCs propose that the nature of the findings warrants a private conversation, Otto suggests that they move a safe distance from the expedition so they can converse in private. Jeanette will slyly attempt to reposition herself where her skills of *Acute Hearing* and *Lip Reading* will be of use. PCs who are specifically on the lookout for such need to pass an I-10 test (+10 for *Sixth Sense*) to notice Jeanette's efforts and take whatever action they deem appropriate. Jeanette may curse them under her breath, but she will not take any action against the PCs. There is plenty of time to settle the score with them later.

If Heinrich is with the PCs, he will be invited to join in the report as he is the only person to have survived the murders. As the PCs relate what they've uncovered and any conclusions or speculations they have, Maria and Otto glumly listen to the PCs. The wizard will make the sign of Sigmar whenever the PCs describe the carnage. Otto will interrupt occasionally to ask them repeat a detail or two.

Even if Jeanette was caught trying to eavesdrop earlier, she will be nearby when the PCs describe what they found scrawled on the wall of the cellar. The information is alarming to say the least. Jeanette begins to worry that leaving the dying Lutz Holzapfel in the

sewers with his throat slit was not a good idea. She should have made certain that the former cult leader was food for the rats before she left the scene.

Any PC declaring that they are watching Jeanette's reaction when the message is being described should take an **Observe** test. If they succeed, they notice that she seems to be somewhat anxious for a brief moment. Should they question Jeanette at all, the servant will deny that she was anything other than disgusted at the slaughter they described. The message further unsettled her as it clearly indicated that a madman was behind the slaughter rather than unwholesome creatures such as Goblins and Beastmen.

With Maria's permission, Otto presses the PCs into assisting his men with piling the bodies upon a bed of dried timber and straw in the courtyard. In accordance with Sigmarite burial rituals in Ostland, the bodies are to be burned with on-lookers imploring Sigmar to welcome the fallen to his bosom. PCs who are native Ostlanders know that this burial practice is tradition in their land. PCs from other provinces may well view this ritual at being at odds with the burial customs with which they are familiar.

Before the funeral pyre can be lit, Rolf Schäffer returns with a flock of sheep. The sight of so many strangers causes Rolf great concern as he can only guess that their presence portends ill. Heinrich races to his mentor and tearfully relates what he saw and learned about the demise of everyone in the homestead. As Heinrich finishes, Rolf wails with his own grief for these people were the only family he ever knew. Heinrich consoles the older man.

After the funereal flames have died down, Maria orders that the camp be set just outside the gate of the homestead. If challenged, Maria will simply state that while it would be safer to be within the walls of the homestead, it would not be showing the proper respect for those who remain. Likewise, the roadwardens will set camp alongside the expedition.

***** NPCs *****

Otto von Schattenlauf, Roadwarden Sergeant, ex-Noble

Height: 6 ft 1 in

Weight: 180 lbs.

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Medium Brown

Age: 28

Alignment: Neutral (Sigmar)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 46 | 43 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 44 | 1 | 41 | 56 | 35 | 42 | 33 | 44 |

Skills: Blather, Charm, Etiquette, Heraldry, Luck, Public Speaking, Read/Write (Reikspiel), Ride Horse, Wit

Possessions: Mail Shirt (1AP body), Shield (1AP all over), Sword, Bow (R 24/48/250, ES 3) and ammunition, Horse and saddle, 10 yards rope.

Personal History: The fifth son of an Ostlander noble, Otto knew that whatever inheritance he received would hardly be anything he could live on. His choices were simple: either join a monastery or make his own way through life. The prospect of wearing hair shirts did not appeal to Otto, nor did life as a mercenary (as two of his brother's opted for). Instead, he decided that a career as a road warden would be comparatively less dangerous than military life, yet offer more excitement than a church could. His eight-year stint as a

roadwarden hardened Otto to the harsh realities of life in the Forest of Shadows. Gruesome deaths are part and parcel of life and have lost the ability to shock Otto. Still, he leads his men in performing their duties.

Adolph, Beatrix, Bertholdt, Gunther, and Heinz, Roadwardens

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 41 | 40 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 42 | 1 | 31 | 38 | 29 | 30 | 29 | 31 |

Skills: Ride Horse

Possessions: Mail Shirt (IAP body), Shield (IAP all over), Sword, Bow (R 24/48/250, ES 3) and ammunition, Horse and saddle, 10 yards rope.

Rolf Schäffer, Herdsman
 Height: 5 ft 9 in
 Weight: 172 lbs.
 Hair: Medium Brown
 Eyes: Hazel
 Age: 34
 Alignment: Neutral (Taal)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|----|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 31 | 52 | 4 | 4* | 8 | 41 | 1 | 32 | 25 | 24 | 29 | 30 | 33 |

Skills: Animal Care, Charm Animal, Musicianship- Flute, Specialist Weapon-Sling, Very Resilient*

Possessions: Sword, Sling (R 24/36/150, ES 3) and ammunition, Staff, and Flute

Personal History: Brain addled by a goblin raid in his youth, Rolf was “adopted” by Stefan Schäfrigloch some years ago. He was employed as a shepherd since he was better able to handle sheep than deal socially with people. A year ago, he became the mentor to Heinrich, showing the young lad how to herd livestock. The two have grown close together as friends, though Rolf is beginning to worry that he may be displaced once Heinrich gets older and more skilled. A small, but growing, voice in Rolf’s head suggests that he “arrange an accident” to prevent that day from coming.

Onward

The night passes without much excitement, except for Jeanette. She spends the night fighting an overwhelming urge to scream out her frustration and anxiety to sounds of the night. PCs specifically watching Maria’s servant must make an **Observe** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*, +10 for *Night Vision*) to notice her restlessness (constantly turning over, eyes scanning the area outside the light of the campfire). Any PC approaching Jeanette should be prepared for a snappy “bugger off” or some other similar response. The Bretonnian is in no mood to explain herself to anyone she considers dead meat.

Though the morning finds Jeanette’s mood no different, she has recovered from last night’s panic. Everyone else is rather sombre given the previous day’s findings and the grey skies of the morning. Otto von Schattenlauf informs Maria that his patrol will escort Heinrich to

the Schwarzeber homestead nearby (about two hours ride westward). Maria agrees with Otto's offer before ordering Hans-Pieter and Jeanette to see to the breaking of the camp. She then asks the PCs to accompany her for a talk while the labourers ready the carts.

Once they are out of carshot of the camp, Maria tells the PCs, "In my mind, the manner in which the killings were performed clearly indicates that this was not a random event. It may well be linked to the site where we are going. Two months ago, I led an excavation on the remains of a long abandoned settlement. Coins were found that indicated that the village was still inhabited fourteen hundred years ago, near the reign of Emperor Boris Goldgatherer when the Black Plague swept the land. Nearby, I found a cave which contained a partially sealed chamber within. In the short time I spent there I was able to find an ancient artefact. The chamber went unexplored as a fatal accident outside forced that expedition to be curtailed. Since then, I have not been able to determine the purpose of the artefact, but its design seemed so at odds with the nearby village."

Maria continues, "I tell you this because I need you to be more vigilant as we go forward. The success of this expedition and the lives of those participating demand your expertise. Jeanette is a good judge of people and I'm absolutely sure she picked you well. Given all this and the danger we uncovered, I will double your pay as of now. May Sigmar watch over us."

The PCs may ask to see the artefact that Maria is carrying. She politely declines to do so as it is safely hidden from those who would only see its monetary value. She knows that they would understand.

Once she said her piece, Maria excuses herself to see to the progress of the expedition. The PCs are left to talk among themselves for a few moments should they decide to do so. Allow the PCs an **Observe** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*) to notice a lump of raw meat amid some nearby bushes. A closer examination reveals that the remains are of a hand ripped from an arm. One additional ghastly detail to note is that the fingers have been gnawed off. Any PC scrutinizing the hand must take a **CI+30** test. Those that fail are shaken by the finding and must then take a **T+10** test. Failure of this test means that the PC is overcome by nausea and must vomit. They have 1D3 rounds to find a place to do so before their breakfast (or last night's dinner) comes up.

The expedition is ready to leave once the sick PCs have recovered their dignity.

The skies eventually clear as the day wears on. The forest closes in and its canopy provides ample shade over the track. The undergrowth thickens as few travellers have ventured beyond the homestead of the late Schäfrigloch family. At some points where the pathway narrows to barely one wagon width, the forest becomes ominously quiet. The GM should call for **Listen** tests (for soft sounds) at odd intervals to unnerve the PCs. Perhaps they heard a twig snapped or leaves rustle where there's no wind. Should the PCs rush into the brush, they find nothing amiss. Some of the Labourers may poke fun at the jumpy PCs as a means to calm their own nervousness.

The expedition arrives at the site of the ancient village by late afternoon. The darkening forest prohibits any activity other than setting camp. If the PCs expect to wander about without first erecting their own tents, Hans-Pieter will set them straight.

Things that Go Bump...

If the PCs were lax about it before, they are expected to set watch over the camp. That's one of the reasons why they are employed by Maria. PCs with the *Sixth Sense* skill feel uneasy throughout the night, whether on watch or trying to sleep. Allow these PCs to

make a **CI+30** test to calm themselves to get a reasonable night sleep. Those that fail will feel tired in the morning and suffer a **-10** modifier to any **CI** or **WP** tests that next day.

There is good reason for this unease. During the night, baneful eyes will be watching the expedition. Thus far, these individuals have kept their distance with only an occasional, cursory check on the travellers. The time is not yet ripe to make their appearance, so the Skaven who have been shadowing the hated manthings wait.

Near midnight, Jeanette creeps to the threesome that the PCs may have encountered earlier in the adventure in the Docke district in Wolfenburg. PCs specifically watching the Bretonnian servant must successfully pass an **Observe+10** test (+10 for *Excellent Vision*, +10 for *Night Vision*) to notice her moving stealthily to the labourers. Observant PCs must pass a **Listen** test for soft noise (+10 for *Acute Hearing*) to hear the frenetic tone, but not the words, of their whispered conversation. Should the PCs try to move closer to either hear the conversation or attempt to lip read, Jeanette and the three labourers will notice the PCs and halt their conversation.

The PCs may try to approach either Jeanette or the labourers later that night to question them. They will be met with utter contempt for prying into private matters. PCs may consider torture as a means to loosen tongues, but such an option should be considered impractical under the circumstances. Still, the PCs do not have much to lose as they are already marked for a final reckoning by the four cultists.

The Secret Chamber

After a long night, morning arrives in the forest. Where the canopy is opened to the sky, you notice the movement of the treetops and the gathering of dark clouds above. Hans-Pieter wanders by and mentions to you that rain is likely by nightfall. The servant then continues on his way to meet with Maria and Jeanette. After some conversation, the two servants walk towards the labourers, calling them together for the day's instructions.

Maria walks towards all of you motioning for you to gather around her. "Your duties for the day are rather simple," she states. "All of you are to accompany me to the cave. Follow me."

The object of Maria's quest is located a 200 yards upslope from the excavation. With lantern in hand, Maria leads the PCs through a narrow opening (one person at a time) and into a crudely cut corridor (any Dwarf PC will easily notice that it is not Dwarf handiwork). The corridor gradually descends into the darkness. About 12 paces into the corridor, Maria points to a fissure between a slab of rock and the corridor wall. "This is the chamber," she says simply before entering.

The chamber is large. The high ceiling is barely discernible by the lantern and the far walls unseen. "I didn't have the time to more thoroughly examine this room," Maria states. "I spotted the artefact fairly quickly and was inspecting it when I heard that my former servant, François, had met with a fatal accident." Maria pauses a moment to gather herself. "Shall we continue exploring?"

Scrutiny of the chamber quickly reveals that it was crudely built, even to the most obtuse observer. The five walls are of uneven length and the ceiling bowed from the weight of ages. Poorly crafted clay jars of various heights (from 2 to 4 feet in height) line the far wall, near a pile of rubble.

It would take 10 man-hours of moving rock from and digging through the pile to reveal a rubble-choked passageway. Any PC examining the area above the opening will discover

some etchings on a successful **Search** test. These scratches aren't of any letters or runes the PCs might know (assuming they have the *Read/Write* skill for some language). Even Maria has not seen their kind in her previous studies. Should she be informed of the discovery, Maria pulls a small book and writing instrument from her satchel and begins copying the carvings.

Allow any PC still combing through the remaining rubble another **Search** test. If they are successful, they notice something ivory-coloured under a large rock. Removing the rock reveals a skeletal hand poking out from deeper in the pile. Further digging would eventually expose a human skeleton.

Whatever was placed in the nearby jars has long ago rotted, leaving few unidentifiable remains. If inspected carefully, a small casket can be found in the largest container. Upon opening the casket, the PCs find a small, thin copper tube. If Maria learns of the discovery, she will ask for the item and examine it. She's not sure of the significance of the find, but she feels that it's just beyond her at the moment. After several minutes, Maria pulls a small lead box from her satchel and opens it. PCs with *Magic Sense* feel a tingling sensation from the opened box. Any PC next to her see an amulet made of copper with bits of dried clay on parts of it. A black stone at its centre seems to absorb the lantern's light into the greenish luminosity within. The wizard then inserts the tube in a small indentation in the amulet above the stone.

In the event that the PCs guarding the entry into this chamber do not clearly state that they are watching the opening, they and the rest of the party will be surprised by the sudden clearing of a throat behind them. Should they be vigilant, the PCs on guard should each be allowed a **Listen** test for normal noise (+10 for *Acute Hearing*). If successful, they see the shadows of four people with crossbows stealthily approaching the opening. The sentries have little time to anything other than sound an alarm and take action (there is no time to plan nor execute an organised defence at this point). Should any PC on guard duty fail the **Listen** test, they are considered distracted by the activity within the chamber for the moment. When they return to their duty, they are surprised by a loaded crossbow staring at them.

Uninvited Guests

Jeanette enters the chamber with the three members of the Cult of the Gnawer in the Well: Albrecht, Greta, and Wilhelm. Jeanette's crossbow is trained on Maria while the other three have theirs trained on the PCs who look or have acted as if they are the most competent of their company. The party are then ordered to a corner of the chamber.

Angered by the sudden betrayal, Maria demands an explanation of Jeanette. Jeanette responds, "Foolish cow, I have waited for this opportunity since I killed François two months ago. As the Horned Rat is my witness, I knew you would reveal to me the power that would raise me above his lesser servants. Once I take the prize from your dead grasp, I shall return to Wolfenburg and lead his army against the Imperial pigs of that city. The streets will run red with blood in his honour... ugh" Jeanette's mad ramblings are cut short by the sounds of something hitting her back. Eyes wide opened as a curse escapes her lips, the Bretonnian turns towards the opening. Two metallic stars, dripping with some greenish substance, are embedded in her back.

"Greetings, traitor" rasps the barrel-chested, bald man entering into the chamber. "It is I, Lutz Holzapfel, your enemy." Lutz is a rather disturbing sight with extended upper incisors in a protruding mouth and a few whiskers stretching from his unusually elongated nose. The combination actually resembles a muzzle of a rat. A long ragged scar across his throat is just as likely the cause of the poor quality of his voice as the black stone inserted

where his larynx would be. A successful **Int** test may be needed if the PCs don't recognise the stone as a larger version of that found on the artefact in Maria's possession. The sight of his chewing on a human hand (female by the looks of it) is ghastly and requires the PCs to make a **T+30** test. Failure means that the PC suffers from a bout of nausea and has a temporary modifier of **-10** to their **CI** and **WP** for the next 1D3 rounds. Hateful red eyes can be seen in the darkness behind the stranger.

"Albrecht, Greta, and Wilhelm, so good to see you again." The three turned momentarily to see their former leader and greet him. They still keep their loaded crossbows aimed at the PCs. "I have returned to reclaim what this dog..." Lutz points to the slumping Bretonnian "...tried to take from me through the time-honoured method of treachery. Thanks be to the Gnawer of the World that his servants happened along and gave me the gift at my throat." Lutz then kneels before Jeanette as three Skaven enter the chamber. Two are armed with swords with serrated edges while the third carries an unusual looking pistol. "I won't make the same mistake you did," Lutz promises Jeanette. With that, the bald man lunges at Jeanette with his mouth wide open and closes on the Bretonnian's throat. Quickly, Lutz jerks back his head and bloodily rips Jeanette's throat out. At the sight of this savagery, the PCs must take a **CI** test. Failure reduces their **CI** and **WP** by **-10** for the next 1D3 rounds (cumulative to any other temporary loss) while failure by 30 or more means that additionally the PC picks up 1 **Insanity Point**. All the Bretonnian could do is gurgle as she dies from poison, blood loss, and shock.

The sudden attack momentarily stuns all of the occupants of the room. If the PCs don't act at this time, Lutz swallows the piece of Jeanette before turning towards them. "Nice," he states as he licks the blood from his chin. "I wonder what each of you will taste like. If you just hand over that item in your possession, I'll put off the tasting for another day," the mutated human said with a toothy grin.

If the PCs don't react now, all may be lost. Realising the nature of the situation at the onset, Maria had readied herself by stealthily reaching into her pouch for some magical ingredients and backing up ever so much that Lutz stands between her and the pistol-wielding Skaven. She first casts *Aura of Protection* upon herself before attempting to cast *Break Weapon* on one of the Skaven in black.

Once he sees the manthing wizard cast her first spell, the Skaven Warlock casts *Warp Lightning* in her direction. Self-absorbed Lutz realises a little too late that he stands in the path of the Skaven spell and takes the full brunt of its damage. This magical activity unnerves the three human cultists who fire their crossbows at Maria and the PCs wildly (-10 modifier to **BS**). The Gutter Runners then close with the nearest PCs as the Warlock tries to cast *Shrivel Tongue* on Maria. Any PC who tries to stop the him may be shot by the Warlock.

No matter how the combat goes, Maria doesn't have a spell selection that includes a lot of offensive spells. She is a researcher after all, not a war wizard. What Maria has discovered, however, is how to use the artefact. If the battle goes well for the PCs, Maria will resist using the artefact. She has a responsibility to send such a powerful device to the Temple of Sigmar in Altdorf, after all. The Skaven and cultists will only flee if they lose 50% of their number (except when the fatalities are only the weak manthings!) and the fight is clearly against them.

Should the battle goes badly for the PCs, Maria will try too give them 30 seconds (3 rounds) to take the advantage. Should they be unable, the wizard then holds the amulet so the copper tube aims at the Skaven (or whatever target she chooses) and depresses a small button on the back. A bolt of incandescent green light (treat as a *Warp Lightning*) fires from the tube. Targets who successfully pass an **I** test take half damage, the rest of the

damage is absorbed by the wall behind them. Whenever this occurs, the ceiling of the chamber cracks and dust drops onto the occupants. If need be, PCs should pass an **Int** test (+10 for *Mining*) to realise that the entire chamber may cave-in if there is any more damage to the walls or ceiling.

Maria has recognised the threat and reaches the conclusion that it is Sigmar's will that the enemy be denied this artefact. She calls out a warning to the PCs to "Run!" (or grunts if the *Shrivel Tongue* spell succeeds) as she begins to fire at the ceiling above the Warlock. There is a loud cracking sound and the Skaven quickly grasps what is occurring. For the moment he and his company are torn between fleeing and pressing the attack. PCs may need an **Int**+20 test to realise that the ceiling is about to collapse and the time to escape is now. A PC with a *Mining* skill gets an additional +20 modifier to realise that the collapse will occur in 1D6+6 rounds. Those who fail can be roused into action by their fleeing companions. At this time, the human cultists still able decide that fleeing was the better option and join the scramble to escape. So, do the Skaven Gutter Runners as Maria continues to fire at the Skaven Warlock or the ceiling.

Even if the PCs prevail in combat, the activity in the chamber is too much for the weakened ceiling to bear. A loud cracking sound overhead warns the PCs (with **Int** tests if need be) that the ceiling is about to collapse. As in the above, a character with a *Mining* skill must pass an **Int**+20 test to realise that the collapse will occur in 1D6+6 rounds.

The opening is narrow so PCs need to make a **I**+30 test to get through without tripping. Only two can squeeze through in a round. Those who trip take 1D3 **Wounds** at **S3** from their companions fleeing over them. These same companions also have a -10 modifier to the above test as a result of their fallen companion trying to scramble out. By the time the last PC clears the chamber, an even louder crack, followed by the roaring noise of falling rock, fills the air. Dust fills the air and the PCs stagger out of the cave coughing and covered in dirt.

***** NPCs *****

Maria Schroeder, Wizard Lv1 2, ex-Student, ex-Apprentice

Height: 5 ft 4 in

Weight: 135 lbs.

Hair: Black

Eyes: Blue

Age: 31

Alignment: Neutral (Sigmar)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 38 | 39 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 54 | 1 | 42 | 45 | 58 | 43 | 44 | 40 |

Skills: Arcane Language-Magick, Astronomy, Cartography, Cast Spells-Battle 1, Cast Spells-Battle 2, Cast Spells-Petty, Evaluate, Herb Lore, History, Identify Plants, Magic Sense, Magical Awareness, Meditation, Numismatics, Read/Write (Reikspiel), Rune Lore, Scroll Lore, Secret Language-Classical

Magic Points: 29

Spells:

Petty: Find, Gift of Tongues, Glowing Light, Magic Alarm, Magic Lock, Mend, Protection from Rain, Reinforce Door

1st: Aura of Resistance, Cure Light Injury, Detect Magic, Immunity from Poison, Wilt Weapon

2nd: Aura of Protection, Break Weapon, Luck, Mystic Mist, Zone of Sanctuary

Possessions: Sword, Small Iron Ring, Writing Kit, and Pouch of Spell Ingredients

Personal History: See GM Notes above.

Lutz Holzapfel, Cultist, ex-Protagonist

Height: 5 ft 10 in

Weight: 162 lbs.

Hair: None

Eyes: Dark Brown

Age: 34

Mutation: Rat-like Face

Alignment: Chaotic (Horned Rat)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 43 | 30 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 42 | 2 | 32 | 34 | 32 | 54 | 33 | 28 |

Skills: Concealment-Urban, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Silent Move-Urban, Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun

Possessions: Sword, Mail Shirt (IAP body)

Personal History: Lutz was the local cult leader until he made the mistake of turning his back on the upstart, Jeanette Boudaud. He cursed the fleeing Bretonnian as his blood pumped through the gash on his throat. He also silently called upon the Horned Rat to allow him to live on so he could extract his vengeance on the traitor. In answer, a Skaven appeared out of the darkness and placed a charm of some sort on the wound. The blood flow stopped immediately, and Lutz slowly began to recover. When he was able, Lutz instructed his Skaven servant (sent by the Horned Rat, of course) and his two cohorts of his plan to extract revenge. After all, Lutz had been following the movements of the wizard's household for some time.

Kraach, Clan Skryre Warlock Engineer 2nd level

Alignment: Chaotic (Horned Rat)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|----|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 5 | 43 | 35 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 60 | 1 | 34 | 38 | 48 | 35 | 44 | 14 |

Skills: Arcane Language-Skaven Magick, Cast Spells-Skaven 1, Cast Spells-Skaven 2, Daemon Lore, Identify Undead, Magic Sense, Read/Write (Reikspiel), Scroll Lore

Magic Points: 20

Spells:

1st: Screech, Shadow's Companion, Summon Steed, Warp Lightning

2nd: Infecting Gaze, Scorch, Shrivel Tongue

Possessions: Serrated Sword (35% chance of causing *infected wounds*), Warlock Pistol (R 8/16/50, ES 3, 2 rounds to load, 1 to fire, 1D6+4% chance of mutation), pouch of 1D6+2 pieces of refined warpstone.

Personal History: As most Skaven, Kraach is ambitious and seeks whatever gives him power. He has cultivated the cult of the Gnawer of the World, even when it switched hands from one manthing puppet to another in a rather Skaven-like fashion. Still, the dying manthing might serve a purpose, so Kraach inserted a warp charm to stop the blood flow. The Warlock even allowed the expendable fool to believe that he was in charge of his effort. In addition, the cult's new manthing leader's secrecy suggested that he was on to something. Since Kraach performed certain tasks for Clan Eshin in the past, he called upon their help in this venture. It would be best if others in Clan Skryre did not know of Kraach's activities until he could obtain whatever possession the manthing sorcerer had and determine its value, if any. Of course, he'll have to exterminate the two Gutter Runners to ensure that his secret is safe, but accidents do happen when dealing with manthings...

Itzit and Steenk, 2 Clan Eshin Gutter Runners
Alignment: Chaotic (Horned Rat)

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 5 | 43 | 35 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 50 | 1 | 28 | 24 | 24 | 32 | 29 | 14 |

Skills: Concealment-Urban, Follow Trail, Marksmanship, Shadowing, Silent Move Rural, Silent Move Urban, Strike Mighty Blow

Possessions: Serrated Sword (35% chance of causing *infected wounds*), 2 Throwing Stars (R 4/8/20, ES C, 10% chance of poisoning), Blowpipe (R 12/24/50, ES 1, 10% chance of warp poisoning, effects vary), Black Cloak and Hood.

Personal History: Itzit and Steenk were dispatched to assist the Clan Skryre Engineer in whatever endeavour he was undertaking. Should the Engineer discover anything of power and value, Itzit's and Steenk's instructions were to kill Kraach and bring the item back to Clan Eshin. The two were also told to kill any manthings who learned of their presence.

Aftermath

Depending upon the battle, the GM should decide whether any person other than the PCs avoided being crushed by the cave-in. If they make it out (and they are able), the human cultists will likely flee while the Warlock and Gutter Runners need to finish business. Then again, if the Gutter Runners believe that they are not in shape to survive such an encounter, they will probably kill the Warlock from behind and flee the area. In fact, the two will take off after any fleeing cultists to ensure that no one will report their failure to others in Clan Eshin. Whatever the outcome, the labourers in camp will scramble to the hill from which the PCs emerge. All will want to know what happened while offering Maria (if she is still alive) and the PCs tea and some rudimentary medical attention (bandaging wounds, for example, but not the recovery of **Wounds**). Some of the PCs' story will be hard to believe (walking rats, indeed), but the absence or capture of the four (cultists) was noted by the others (were they assassins?). If Maria sacrificed herself, the telling of her unselfish act will bring a tear to the labourers' eyes until they realise that they haven't yet received their full pay. The labourers will then return to camp and ransack it for valuables to compensate for lack of wages. They will then head for home (after several arguments) with whatever they obtained. If the PCs do not partake in this, then it is their loss... Should the PCs wonder about Hans-Pieter, none of the labourers recalled seeing him since they began work. If the PCs search for the missing manservant, they will eventually find his corpse. A large blood-stained rock nearby reveals how he was murdered. Should Maria survive and the PCs make a good accounting of themselves, then the wizard offers to hire them to escort her and the artefact to Altdorf. There are a few of potential problems for the PCs no matter what they choose. If any Skaven escaped the cave-in, they might return to extract their revenge or silence the PCs. Escaped cultists could also describe the PCs to their Skaven masters before being killed, or they might wish to kill the PCs before their Skaven masters come after them. There might be others, like a band of outlaws, who may find a travelling wizard with an escort too tempting a target to pass. Then there's the possibility that the Sigmarte society of the Ahnenerbe may be interested in learning what happened to their missing colleague should Maria have perished in the cave-in. The records in her townhouse indicate the hiring of a group of people before her disappearance...

Reinald Jäger

Career: Hunter

Height: 5 ft 10 in

Weight: 165 lbs.

Hair: Medium Brown

Eyes: Medium Brown

Age: 20

Alignment: Neutral (Taal)

Fate Points: 1

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 32 | 52 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 41 | 1 | 31 | 30 | 32 | 34 | 42 | 31 |

Skills: Ambidextrous, Concealment Rural, Drive Cart, Follow Trail, Game Hunting, Secret Language- Ranger, Secret Signs- Woodman's, Silent Move Rural, Sixth Sense

Possessions: Axe, Bow (R 24/48/250, ES 3) and Ammunition, Dagger (I+10, S-2, Parry-20), and Purse (8 shillings, 9 pennies)

Personal Detail: You came from a large and relatively poor family. You and your twin were in the middle of the pack of six children and you had to learn early how to fend for yourself and make a living in the forest. Life as a hunter was a rather solitary one, with much time spent in the wild. As such, you learned to appreciate your family and friends. You had hoped that some day you'd be able to start your own family. Everything changed on the day when the Grand Prince declared some of the forest where you and others like you made your livelihood as part of his private hunting reserve. At least, that's what the man in the Ostland livery proclaimed in the town common to all assembled. There would now be too many hunters for the remaining patch of forest to support. A gathering of hunters met to determine which of your number would be given the first right to hunt. You knew where this was going to end up. All the oldsters with families to feed got first priority, followed by those with the longest ties to the town. You were not surprised that your youth worked against you. The same would hold true for your sister and friends in their occupations. Another strike was that your family's home would go to your older brother Frederick in time as he has his own family to look after and support. Well, no use dwelling on what you cannot control. If anything, you welcomed the opportunity to leave the small town you called home and see what the world had to offer. You and your friends left believing that you could easily find jobs in Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. What you lack in skill can easily be made up with an enthusiasm and an eagerness to learn. Your companions are:

Renata Jäger: Your twin sister without whom you could not have left Wendorf without some difficulty. You two have an understanding of one another that is more than you have with any other sibling. Still, you have some concerns about seeking employment in the big city. You're a hunter of animals, how can your skills be properly used in that type of setting?

Isolde Lang: A long-time friend of yours and your sister's, Isolde was someone to whom you thought you would someday be betrothed. Things changed when you learned that her parents were trying to obtain a match with the alderman's conceited son, Leif Schröder. Still, you were pleased -- if not surprised -- that the match did not come off. You are also pleased that she is travelling with you as Isolde has proven to be quite capable in and about a town. You can trust her instincts.

Diehl Bauer: You've known Diehl since childhood when you, he, and your sister would trample about in the forest. Diehl had always been interested in the healing effects of herbs, so it was natural that he chose that way of life. It's a good thing he did as you had oftentimes needed the various healing poultices that he was able to concoct. You hope that you wouldn't need any such on this trip, but if you do...

Kurt Stark: As far as you know, Kurt has always taken a shining to your sister. You weren't quite sure how you feel about it. He seems to be a nice guy in all the years that you've known him, though he does tend towards being a loner at times. Then again, the same could be said about you and your sister. It is a trait that many who make their living from the forest must have if they are to do well.

Ketrik Ragnisson: Ketrik is like a big brother (age-wise, not in terms of height) to many of you. You have heard tales that Dwarfs were fairly gruff in their manners, but Ketrik has never been cross with you. He is also the only one you know who has been outside of Wendorf for a considerable amount of time, so you're rather pleased that he'll be accompanying you to Wolfenburg.

Renata Jäger

Career: Trapper

Height: 5 ft 6 in

Weight: 133 lbs.

Hair: Medium Brown

Eyes: Medium Brown

Age: 20

Alignment: Neutral (Taal)

Fate Points: 1

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 42 | 42 | 5* | 3 | 8 | 41 | 1 | 41 | 30 | 34 | 34 | 32 | 31 |

Skills: Astronomy, Concealment Rural, Orientation, Read/Write (Reikspiel), Row, Secret Language- Ranger, Secret Signs- Woodman's, Set Trap, Silent Move Rural, Spot Trap, Very Strong*

Possessions: Leather Jerkin (0/1 AP body), Axe, Bow (R 24/48/250, ES 3) and Ammunition, Dagger (I+10, S-2, Parry-20), 3 Animal Traps, 10 yards of Rope, and Purse (7 shillings, 12 pennies)

Personal Detail: Life in Wendorf was difficult at times as you came from a large and relatively poor family. You and your twin were in the middle of the pack of six children and you learned early how to fend for yourself and make a living in the forest. Life as a trapper meant spending a lot of time alone, which was pleasurable at times since you found the wilds very peaceful. It also gave you a sense of independence from others. Still, you've learned to appreciate your family and friends. Then came the day when the Grand Prince declared some of the forest off-limits to those of you who made your livelihood in that part of his now-extended private hunting reserve. At least, that's what the man in the Ostland livery proclaimed in the town common to all assembled. It was clear that there would now be too many trappers for the remaining woodland to support. The town trappers gathered together to determine which trappers would be given the first right to ply their trade in the remaining forest. You knew that all the older trappers with families to feed were going to be allowed to stay as well as those with the longest ties to the town. Anything left over would go to the single and younger menfolk. It was always thus. So your course was settled. You left your home and kin (other than your twin who will accompany you) and make for Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. There you'll have to make a new start; your companions are:

Reinald Jäger: Your twin brother who has always (except when you both were working) been at your side. You two have an understanding of one another that is more than you have with any other sibling and share many of the same opinions about things. You are concerned about making it in the big city. You know about the quality of pelts, but will that be enough to give you a start? Even though you're skilled at trapping animals, you wonder how you can use your skills in the city.

Isolde Lang: A long-time friend of yours and your brother's, Isolde was someone with whom you have always gotten along. You worried for her when you learned that her parents were trying to obtain a match with the alderman's arrogant son, Leif Schröder. You were pleased – if not surprised – that the match did not come off. Isolde's independence and confidence will be helpful in to you all in Wolfenburg.

Diehl Bauer: You've known Diehl since childhood when you, he, and your brother would trample about in the forest. Diehl had always been interested in the healing effects of herbs, so it was natural that he chose that way of life. It's a good thing he did as many of you had oftentimes needed the various healing poultices that he was able to concoct. You hope that you wouldn't need any such on this trip, but there are those tales of city folk who take advantage of unwary outsiders.

Kurt Stark: As long as you have known him, Kurt has always been polite towards you and other women. He is rather reserved, which is a trait you admired in Kurt. His patience allows him to consider a situation rather than act in haste. That will come in handy when you get to Wolfenburg.

Ketrik Ragnisson: Ketrik is like a big brother (age-wise, not in terms of height) to many of you. He is certainly wiser than the rest of you, which is not surprising as he is not only older, but the only one you know who has been outside of Wendorf for a considerable amount of time. Ketrik typically shows patience with the lot of you, but you've seen him be very decisive when he puts his mind to it. He is also handy at building traps for you.

Isolde Lang

Career: Labourer

Height: 5 ft 9 in

Weight: 145 lbs.

Hair: Blond

Eyes: Blue

Age: 21

Distinguished Traits: Charismatic Eyes (+10 Fel*)

Alignment: Neutral (Sigmar)

Fate Points: 1

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|----|---|---|-----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 33 | 30 | 5* | 4 | 8 | 41* | 1 | 33 | 33 | 32 | 34 | 32 | 43* |

Skills: Carpentry, Consume Alcohol, Drive Cart, Ride-Horse, Lightning Reflexes*, Luck, Scale Sheer Surface, Sing, Very Strong*

Possessions: Leather Jack (0/1 AP body/arms), Sword, Dagger (I+10, S-2, Parry-20), Sling Bag with Herbal Tea, 10 shillings, 5 pennies)

Personal Detail: Life in Wendorf had its moments. You were raised in town and quickly learned that one had to rely upon oneself to manage through its obstacles. In fact, you pride yourself on your independence and the ability to speak your own mind. What little you do have was gained through your own efforts, which was certainly better than being dependent upon another's graces and goodwill. Your life took a turn when the Grand Prince recently declared some of the nearby forest would be confiscated from the town to enlarge his private hunting reserve. At least, that's what the man in the Ostland livery proclaimed in the town common to all assembled. That would only lead to less work for those like yourself. Your Guild elders met with the members to establish who will get hired for jobs first. Not that this was anything new. You knew you weren't going to stay in Wendorf long enough to feel the pinch of the impending job shortage. If anything, this situation will give you an excuse to leave town before your folks begin to press you (again) to marry that worthless and lazy Leif Schröder. You just didn't see begetting children as your lot in life. There just had to be better prospects in the wider world. You soon learned that your friends were of the same mind to leave home. You all departed believing that you could easily find jobs in Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. After all, how hard could it be to find jobs that will pay you a familiar wage of between 6 to 10 shillings a day? Your companions are:

Reinald Jäger: Reinald is one of the Jäger twins with whom you grew up and a good friend. Things seemed to have gotten a little strained between you around the time that your parents were trying to match you to that loser Leif. You were quite sure why, but things did recover once you torched any chances of that arrangement coming off. You are concerned about the twins doing well in Wolfenburg. They are wholly unprepared for it, in your mind, so you'll have to watch out for their welfare.

Renata Jäger: Renata is the other twin with whom you have a tight friendship. You believe that she'll be better equipped than her brother to adjust to city-life – as womenfolk are generally more adaptable by nature than the menfolk – but she still is an innocent who will need guidance and assistance. You'll do what you can to keep Renata from doing something she may regret.

Diehl Bauer: You respect Diehl for his dedication to his craft. He is very knowledgeable about the rules of society, which you know will be important in the city if what you heard of city folks – being very status conscious – is true. Certainly, Diehl's skill with healing herbs and the like will be helpful in the event of a scrape.

Kurt Stark: Quiet Kurt is very polite with ladies, almost too polite. You're concerned that the wrong type of woman might ensnare the reserved woodsman. And you're certain there will be plenty of those in Wolfenburg. Then again, there might be a subtle strength to Kurt. One could well be too naïve in some situations, but more than capable in others. You will just have to keep an eye on Kurt to protect him from being taken advantage of.

Ketrik Ragnisson: You find it rather odd that this Dwarf, whom you have known practically your entire life, would prefer the company of the rest of you. Not that you're complaining. He's a very agreeable sort, though nearly twice your age. You just hope that Ketrik's reasons for accompanying all of you on this journey hasn't anything to do with feeling the need to watch over you all.

Diehl Bauer

Carccr: Herbalist

Height: 6 ft 1 in

Weight: 180 lbs.

Hair: Auburn

Eyes: Green

Age: 20

Alignment: Neutral (Rhya)

Fate Points: 1

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4 | 31 | 34 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 33 | 1 | 44 | 35 | 46 | 34 | 35 | 33 |

Skills: Arcane Language-Druidic, Cure Disease, Etiquette, Excellent Vision, Heal Wounds, Herb Lore, Identify Plant, Read/Write (Reikspiel), Secret Language-Classical, Secret Language-Guilder (Healers), Silent Move Urban, Super Numerate

Possessions: Short, thick walking stick (can be used as Club), Dagger (I+10, S-2, Parry-20), Sling Bag (Pestle and Mortar, Dried Herbs- 6 doses, 12 shillings, 10 pennies)

Personal Detail: Life in Wendorf had been unchanging. You worked hard to achieve what you have in life. In your position as apprentice, you've learned quite a bit about herbs and people. There were times, however, that you felt like your talents would be better utilised in a bigger stage, like a large town or city. Yet, something held you back from leaving. Then came the day when the Grand Prince recently declared that he was confiscating some of the nearby forest to expand his private hunting reserve. At least, that's what the herald in the Ostland livery proclaimed in the town common to all assembled. You knew this would prove burdensome to some of the townsfolk who made their living from the forest. Though a selfish thought, the timing of the announcement could not have been better for you. You had reached the end of your apprenticeship with Frau Hahn and knew that it was time for you to journey into the wider world. You were rather fearful that you had to leave Wendorf alone, but now your friends can accompany you as they'll need to find employment as you will. You knew that the youth of your friends worked against them as the available work in town will diminish for many. You and your friends left believing that you could easily find jobs in Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. Those who knew what their labour was worth said that it should be fairly easy to find jobs that will pay you up to 10 shillings a day. You hoped that it would be enough while you search for a place to ply your trade. Thankfully, Frau Hahn provided you with a letter of introduction. Your companions are:

Reinald and Renata Jäger: You've been good friends with the Jäger twins since childhood. You, the two would romp about in the forest playing hide and seek as well as exploring. It was as if the forest called to each of you in its own way. While the twins generally chased the wild animals, you preferred studying the plant life. In the last few years, you've spent less time with the twins as your apprenticeship with Frau Hahn took up much of your time. Still, you kept in touch and knew both to do well in their respective pursuits (Reinard was a hunter and Renata a trapper). You just hope that the time you all will spend in Wolfenburg will not turn out ill for the twins. You're concerned that they might well feel out of their element.

Isolde Lang: You've known Isolde for quite a while, though not as well as you would have liked. Her family seemed to desire a good match for their daughter and did what they could to obtain it. You smiled to yourself when Isolde's independence exerted itself. The young Herr Schröder should count his blessings as you had no doubt that Isolde would have quickly dominated the pampered oaf. As it is, you're pleased that she has joined this little expedition to the big city.

Kurt Stark: You don't really know Kurt as well as the others, but he seems to be a quiet, reserved individual. You have never heard of him having an emotional outburst of any sort. Still, the woodsman seems to get along well with the twins and he does have that big axe. All in all, you're pleased that he is with this merry band.

Ketrik Ragnisson: You find Ketrik rather enigmatic. He's always been kind and generous; traits not normally associated with Dwarfs. Of course, you only know that from rumour as you don't really know any other Dwarfs except those few who have passed through Wendorf. Perhaps the fact that Ketrik seems to enjoy the company of those so much younger than he is unusual. Odd, perhaps. For the moment, you'll give the Dwarf the benefit of the doubt.

The More Common Medicinal Herbs in Ostland

Note: these descriptions can be found in Hogshead's "Shadows over Bögenhafen", pages 36-37

___ Geshundheit*

Availability: Scarce. Winter/Spring. Mixed Forest

Price: 15/- and 3 GCs

Application: Smear

Preparation: 2 weeks

Dosage: 1 day

Skills: Cure Disease

Tests: Int

Effects: When applied to infected wound, the effects of infection are halted and all lost **Dex** points are restored in 1D6 x 10 turns.

___ Salwort*

Availability: Plentiful. Autumn/Winter. Mixed Forest

Price: 5/- and 1 GC

Application: Inhale

Preparation: 2 weeks

Dosage: 12 hours

Skills: None

Tests: Patient's Toughness

Effects: A dried spring held under a concussed/stunned character's nostrils will revive the character in 1D4 rounds provided they make their Toughness test.

___ Sigmafoil*

Availability: Common. Summer. Marsh, bog, or swamp

Price: 5/- and 1 GC

Application: Inhale

Preparation: 2 weeks

Dosage: 1 day

Skills: Heal Wounds

Tests: None

Effects: Lightly wounded characters will recover 1 **W** point that day when treated, no matter how they exert themselves, but provided that they do not lose any more wounds.

___ Tarrabeth*

Availability: Average. Summer. Mixed Forest

Price: 10/- and 3 GCs

Application: Smear

Preparation: 3 weeks

Dosage: 1 week

Skills: Heal Wounds

Tests: Int

Effects: heavily or severely wounded characters will fall asleep for 24 hours, recovering 1 (*severely wounded*) or 1D3 (*heavily wounded*) **W** points on awakening. The characters are then considered *lightly wounded* (assuming that *severely wounded* characters are not suffering from broken bones).

___ Valerian*

Availability: Common. Spring. Mixed Forest

Price: 5/- and 1 GC

Application: Brew

Preparation: 1 week

Dosage: 1 day

Skills: Heal Wounds

Tests: Int

Effects: restores 1 **W** to *lightly wounded* characters.

Kurt Stark

Career: Woodsman

Height: 5 ft 9 in

Weight: 160 lbs.

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Blue

Age: 21

Alignment: Neutral (Taal)

Fate Points: 1

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Id | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|----|----|----|---|----|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 4* | 45 | 41 | 5 | 4* | 9 | 42 | 1 | 30 | 32 | 33 | 42 | 35 | 31 |

Skills: Acute Hearing, Concealment Rural, Fleet Footed*, Follow Trail, Identify Plants, Secret Language- Ranger, Secret Signs- Woodman's, Set Trap, Silent Move Rural, Specialist Weapon- 2-Handed, Spot Trap, Very Resilient*

Possessions: Leather Jack (0/1 AP body/arms), Two-handed Woodman's Axe (I-10, S+2), Dagger (I+10, S-2, Parry-20), and Purse (8 shillings, 10 pennies)

Personal Detail: Life in Wendorf was hard enough for a woodsman. Still, working in the woods taught you patience, as well as give you time to quietly observe those with whom you share this trade. Many had families to support, and only seemed happy with idle pursuits like gambling and drinking. While you had nothing against these activities, you weren't keen that some found enjoyment in annoying barmaids with their advances. Your mother taught you to be polite and respectful to ladies. You were surprisingly please when you heard that the Grand Prince declared some of the forest where you and others like you made your livelihood as part of his private hunting reserve. At least, that's what the man in the Ostland livery proclaimed in the town common to all assembled.

You and the other woodmen met to discuss the implications of the Grand Prince's order. The ability for all to make a living has been reduced, so some of you would have to leave. You looked about and saw the number of oldsters with families to feed. You weren't thrilled with the prospect of leaving, but you knew that you were young and hardy. You could make it elsewhere and had little to keep you back. This was especially true when you learned that some of your friends were in similar straits.

So, you gathered your meagre belongings and sought your friends out. All of you departed your homes believing that you could easily find jobs in Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. Those who knew what their labour was worth said that it should be fairly easy to find jobs that will pay you between 6 to 9 shillings a day. You hope to earn enough to allow you to travel in the future to some other town or village to ply your trade.

Your companions are:

Reinald Jäger: You've known Reinald for years and consider him a good friend. Well, as good as friend as you have since making friends doesn't come easy for you. Still, Reinald is considerate enough that you didn't think twice about joining him and his twin sister on their journey to Wolfenburg. You can only hope that things will work out for all of you.

Renata Jäger: You find Reinald's twin sister very pleasant company as you do most women. Some people mistaken this preference of yours for something other than it is. Their problem really. In any event, you do feel somewhat protective of Renata and will assist her should anything happen to her brother. She is a friend after all. Part of you hopes that the exposure to the city does not alter the agreeable disposition of the Jäger twins.

Isolde Lang: Isolde is another one whom you find lovely company. She is more decisive in her actions and demeanour than Renata, but this makes her all the more interesting. Since you tend towards being more reserved than the others in this company, you think Isolde may consider you as too agreeable towards others. That's fine. You just prefer to watch how things go before deciding your course of action. If nothing else, you're certain that Isolde will not hesitate to act decisively.

Diehl Bauer: You're not quite sure why Diehl joined this merry group. You didn't think that the lesser number of people working in the woods would have given the Herbalist a reason to abandon his trade in Wendorf. Perhaps there's something more. You've noticed that Diehl casts fleeting glances at Isolde. Perhaps she's the reason why he joined, though Diehl would likely deny such a thing. You do realise that the Herbalist is friendly with the twins, but enough to leave a comfortable life?

Ketrik Ragnisson: For some odd reason, Ketrik seems quite pleased to be leaving Wendorf. Given that he is older than you, you wondered why he didn't leave town before. Oh sure, you heard that he left for a short time many years ago to do a bit of mining as Dwarf tend to you when they're young. Then again, you imagine that the opportunities for a blacksmith are greater in a city than in a country town. Of all of you, Ketrik probably has the best chance of succeeding.

Ketrik Ragnisson

Career: Artisan's Apprentice (Blacksmith)

Height: 4 ft 11 in

Weight: 160 lbs.

Hair: Reddish-Brown

Eyes: Medium Brown

Age: 40

Distinguished Traits: Barrel-Chested (+1 S*)

Alignment: Neutral (Grungni)

Fate Points: 1

| M | WS | BS | S | T | W | I | A | Dex | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 3 | 43 | 24 | 5* | 5 | 8 | 34 | 1 | 36 | 51 | 33 | 64 | 55 | 23 |

Skills: Drive Cart, Mining, Read/Write (Reikspiel), Secret Language-Guilder (Smith), Sixth Sense, Smithing

Possessions: Hammer, Dagger (I+10, S-2, Parry-20), Tongs, and Pouch (8 days of iron rations, 4 GCs, 12 shillings, 8 pennies)

Personal Detail: Life in Wendorf had been fairly steady as there was always a need for a blacksmith. Still, your apprenticeship was completed (even with the years you placed in the mines near Dunkelpfad) and you would have to seek employment elsewhere. The decision was a hard one to make as you liked the people in this town. A number of the younger ones would speak with you as if you were their (short) uncle or kin. Since you didn't have any kin in town (your parents were killed in a goblin raid on their farm 20 years ago), you embraced this "relationship."

It became obvious that your time to leave had come when the Grand Prince declared – through his messenger – that a sizable portion of the forest where many of the townsfolk made their living would now be a part of his private hunting reserve. You knew that many of the younger folk – some of whom were infants when you began fulfilling your obligation to learn mining – would have to leave the town and seek employment elsewhere. Such was the way things so there was no use getting worked up over it. These fine folk would need an experienced hand to watch over them and keep them from harm. So, you happily had a role to fulfil.

You and your companions left believing that you could easily find jobs in Wolfenburg, capital and largest city in the Grand Principality of Ostland. You were confident that most would not have a hard time finding jobs that would pay them around 9 shillings a day. You knew you could, but you would have to find another blacksmith to sponsor you for the Guild membership in Wolfenburg. You had a letter of introduction from your current Master, Karl Dornier, which should help you.

Your companions are:

Reinald Jäger: You like Reinald as he is a good man with a stout heart. He is very close to his twin sister and is rather protective of her, in a rather quiet way. You're not sure how well he'll do in the city, so you will take some care in helping him through the difficult parts. Reinald is wise in that he listens to his elders and learns from them.

Renata Jäger: You are also fond of Reinald's twin city, Renata, and look at her as if she were your younger sister. She is very much like her brother in many ways: reserved, attentive, and not pushy. You are concerned that there may be some would take advantage of her, especially those sly and conniving miscreants who prey on strangers in their midst. You know Renata can take care of herself, as could many who made a living as a trapper. Still, selected applications of your hammer might well come in handy.

Isolde Lang: Isolde is a headstrong lass who will make it far in life. She definitely put an end to her parents' scheme to marry her off to someone less than half her worth. It also takes a lot of inner strength for Isolde to firmly decide to move on when the herald announced that a goodly portion of the nearby woods off limits. Unlike the Jäger twins, you expect Isolde to hold her own in the city.

Diehl Bauer: Diehl is a friendly sort whose skills as a healer might come in handy, especially if he gets caught up in something beyond his ability to control. You are aware that he would take offence to any suggestion that he might be caught in that kind of circumstance, but you've seen the type. Rural lad from the woodlands on his first trip to the big city. You'd bet two pints of ale that someone will try to take advantage of Diehl.

Kurt Stark: Kurt is a reserved sort of man, quite the opposite of Isolde. You sometimes wonder what's on his mind as he isn't much for idle chatter. Still, he has presence. Of course, his two-handed axe is rather imposing. Nonetheless, you hope he is able to fend for himself in Wolfenburg. You just might have to impart some of your wisdom on Kurt.

Final Farewells

Thank you for taking part in Tim Con 01 and I hope that you enjoyed it. Obviously, there is an intention to consider running something similar on a regular basis, either at the same location or elsewhere. We will no doubt discuss possibilities on the day, but please let me have any thoughts that you might have to improve upon the event or host alternatives.

As things stand as I write this, most people seem to be coming with other people - understandable in saving travel costs. I had hoped that a London location, by virtue of its population, would encourage individuals in the local area to join us. On the other hand, no doubt helped by the transport links, we do have two non-UK gamers here for the day and others from some distance away. There was a clear tendency for players to choose to play with people that they knew, though this did vary. Whilst this is understandable to a point, it does perhaps devalue the purpose of such an event? As organiser I was concerned that the event did not appear to be operating as a clique. Hopefully, I managed this okay.

Game choices were quite varied and everyone who wished to GM ran a game. Gav's "The Tilean Job" was popular, but equally some were concerned that they had not seen the film, the advertisement or 'got it' and so asked to avoid it. John's game was probably the most popular request, no doubt due to the quality of his Warpstone adventures and the kudos of playing in a game run by the man himself! That and Clive's elf adventure attracted a core of the same people to both games. For a late starter, Wim's scored heavily as did "Playing with Fire" once Ian had agreed to step in as GM. Sadly, Robert's was the least popular by initial choice, although I did not help by putting it at the same time as games run by two GMs, who both indicated an interest in playing in it! From the feedback that I was given, the d20 mechanisms were unpopular. I was surprised, not least because the feedback when I first proposed the idea of Tim Con was definitely for a variety of systems. I might also have been at fault as Robert proposed two games, and I selected the 'safest' one (set in The Empire) rather than what might well have been the most interesting (defeated conquistadors seeking to escape the Lustrian jungles). Still, Robert's game did better than my initial proposal to run a skirmish game with figures based upon my conversion of WFB to the time of Sigmar; that scored zero votes at the first hurdle! At the time of going to press, there were still a half dozen 'probables' that I was awaiting confirmation from.

I was very pleased with the range of games on offer. We had a blatantly humorous game to confound those who claim that there is no fun in WFRP anymore. We had all-dwarf and all-elf games, surely a novelty in itself! Robert's game points to one possible future for WFRP and encourages us to think outside the two-decade old system that we know (as do some of the articles in this fanzine). Even our two more traditional WFRP games offered different things - a tourney is something that I have been meaning to write up myself for some time now, and we have an 'official' Gen Con adventure.

Obviously the main thing is that we all have fun, and I hope that the games live up to the billing. It will be useful to get some feedback on what everyone thought of the various adventures so that we can plan for a next meet - with luck! Thank you for coming and here's to next time.