



DEOGENESIS

THE KILLING GAME



SOUFFRANCE

THE CITY OF COMBS

FIELD HOSPITAL
MERCURE

FRANKA

TO AQUITAIN

TOULOUSE

LA ROUTE DE LA RÉSISTANCE

CAMP FIERTÉ

MONTPELLIER

RHÔNE-DELTA

BAYONNE

HYBRISPARTIAN BORDER

ATUMA'S ROUTE

PEYREPURTUSE

QUERIBUS

PERPIGNAN

ELANI'S ROUTE

HIJOS DEL SOL



CITY



TOWN



OUTPOST



ROAD



TRADE ROUTE



ARTIFACT FIELD



ZIGGURATH

SPORE FIELD

MOTHER SPORE FIELD

SOUTHERN
COAST OF FRA
2596 A.D.

HELVETICA

TERRITORIAL REGION I

MURNAKIR'S REALM

ADVANCE OF THE WACHSMANN-LACROIX EXPEDITION JAQUIERAS FIE

CUSTOMS STATION

THE BERNESE PASSAGE

SENTIER DU CHASSEUR

NISTRELLE CONFLUX

CARNET
INTELLIGENCE POST

REAPER'S BLOW (SUBTERRANEAN)

BERGAMO

THE BERNESE

PURGAN BORDER

100

REAPER'S BLOW (SUBMERGED)

MORVANT ▼
CONTROL TERMINAL

TOULON

THE MEDITERRANEAN

CORPSE

THE BLACK NEST

● AJACCIO

HAMZA'S ROUTE





THE KILLING GAME

DÉSORMAIS
ENFERMÉ DANS MA SOLITUDE,
JE TRAÎNERAI PARMI LES CHOSES
QUI PARLERONT TOUJOURS DE TOI.

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PROLOG

NEPHRAIM

A wave of spasms runs through Nephraim's body. His navel is the epicenter of the convulsion. Vibrations race across his skin, tearing gouges into the yellow war paint on his black chest. He looks like a human wasp.

He stands knee-deep in the brackish swamp water, watching the figures on the opposite bank. There are thirty steps between him and the nine creatures waiting for him. Eight motionless Leperos are standing there: five men, a woman and two children, all of them naked, their hair tangled. They are armed with spears that feature crooked tips like the stinger of an insect. The Frankan stigma glows on their chests. Drones.

The Pheromancer is taller than his servants by a head. Spindly, he towers amidst them like an ossified skeleton covered in pale leather. His head is swollen; his forehead is red and domed like a fleshy anvil. The Aberrant's face is so distorted by the swelling that only his nose and the tiny maw are visible below. Nephraim feels a second wave. His muscles tighten as spasms plow through his innards. The Pheromancer tries to control him, but the Anubian resists with tenacious effort. The tarry Marduk Oil repels the creature, but for how long? Nephraim feels the incredible power of the Pheromancer with every twitch of his muscles. He will not be able to withstand the Aberrant for long. He takes three brave steps towards the opposite bank, his eyes focused on the Pheromancer.

"Murnakir! I have come to make peace." Nephraim struggles with every word. He can literally taste the overwhelming stench of the Psychonaut; it clings to his palate like molten wax. Every breath carries swathes of poison into his lungs, inducing new waves of spasms that Nephraim's body utilizes to fight the Pheromancer's influence.

A grotesque grin forms on Murnakir's lips, exposing his rotten teeth. Then, suddenly, a handful of wasps rush towards Nephraim. The Anubian freezes. They go directly for his head and change direction only at the last possible second. Feint attacks. The Pheromancer is checking him out. Nephraim chokes and clenches his teeth. He has to resist; he cannot allow fear to enter his heart. The Aberrant simply waits for the right moment to capture Nephraim's mind like some hapless prey. A wasp abruptly stops in front of his face, hovering in place, its wings beating frantically. Its tiny head jerks back and forth, its antennae twitch tensely. Nephraim squints his eyes and sees the face of the pheromancer upon the wasp. He swats it aside. Damn!

A drone has used this opportunity to creep up on him. Her spear greedily races towards Nephraim's throat. The Anubian retreats and grabs the wooden shaft. Striking with his elbow, he breaks the spear in two. The drone grabs his arm, her fingernails tearing into the skin. The eyes of the Leperos are bloodshot; her mouth is wide open and she is ready to bite. The Anubian smashes his fist into her, shat-

tering the drone's jaw with one blow. Broken teeth lacerate his knuckles; the drone staggers, takes two erratic steps backwards and falls into the water.

From the corner of his eye, the Anubian registers a second attacker. He pushes his bloody hand into his leather belt pouch and grabs the scaly, cold-blooded mass. Lightning quick, Nephraim turns towards the Leperos, his hand emerging from the pouch. He releases the black mamba that has encircled his forearm. The serpent's head mercilessly shoots forth from Nephraim's palm and the animal's teeth burrow headlong into the drones forehead, releasing its venom. In one fluid motion, the Anubian jerks his arm back, pulling the snake towards him and stowing it swiftly inside the pouch. The Leperos cries in pain and with flailing arms, breaks down. Paralyzed and foaming at the mouth, he sinks into the knee-high swamp, fighting the murderous poison in agony.

"ENOUGH!" Murnakir's word sounds throatily across the water. Nephraim looks over to the Pheromancer. The other drones distance themselves from the Anubian.

"KING MACHIAWEN ACCEPTS YOUR OFFER," the Pheromancer grumbles. He takes several slow, long strides through the brackish water towards Nephraim. With every step, the swamp squelches, and bubbles rise to the surface. The Pheromancer has a honeycomb between his gnarled fingers; the Anubian's heart almost stops in his chest. He

has never been this close to an Aberrant. He can smell Murnakir's breath. It wafts through the air like the smell of a corpse, drowning out all other smells. The veins on the Pheromancer's glowing red forehead throb as he breaks the honeycomb in two.

"SHARE IN MACHIAWEN'S NECTAR WITH ME, AND WE WILL MAKE PEACE."

The creature offers Nephraim a part of the honeycomb. Golden honey drips from the Aberrant's hand and mixes with the sticky water.

"THE SWAMP IS THE NEW BORDER."

The Anubian hesitates at first. Then he carefully takes the honeycomb and moves it slowly towards his mouth. He studies Murnakir's every move, watching carefully as the Pheromancer devours his share of the honey.

"YOU ARE A WASP MAN." Murnakir's voice crawls from his tiny maw.

"TELL MY KING ABOUT YOU." With these words, the Pheromancer turns his back to the Anubian and returns to shore. He buzzes several times like a frenzied swarm of wasps, communicating to his drones to follow him.

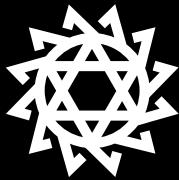
Nephraim watches them leave until they have disappeared in the thicket of the swamp. Then he looks down at himself, sees the yellow war paint and exhales wearily. The black oil and the yellow paint have saved him. His serpent is his wasp sting. He laughs incredulously. Wasp man.



1

CHAPTER

GOLD AND ARTIFACTS



THE BLACK HEART

There is war in Franka. A war for supremacy. The Lords of the Legions have subjugated the heart of the land, enslaved a whole people and turned them into mindless drones. With their swarms, they have darkened the skies over Souffrance. Their vents spew forth sinister clouds, impregnating the air with pheromones that drive people out of their minds.

Legions of vermin transform the surrounding landscape and adapt it to their masters' will. The Spitalians call it "terraforming". It's a giant metamorphosis, the end stage of which is *Homo sapiens* losing their habitat, after which they are buried by the upheaval. The signs have never been clearer.

However, resistance has surfaced on the shores of Franka. Down here in the southern coast where the countless arms of the Rhône meet the salty swill of the Mediterranean, free people gather. They haven't fallen for the lure of the Pheromancers because their will to survive is stronger. They band together in the coastal cities – the last bastions of Frankan civilization.

Perpignan. Montpellier. Toulon.

Peace, unity and an iron will to reclaim the land are the reigning virtues here.

The current state of these cities can be attributed to a single Cult: the Neolibyans. For decades, they have been expanding and fortifying the coastal cities. They have brought prosperity and commerce to Franka. They conciliate between the long-established Clans, and their Scourger packs pacify the border settlements. They dispense justice and restore order to the frenzied Rhône basin, promising the people a better future. In Perpignan, they buried the hatchet with the Jemahmedans, aided the Resistance and built bridges of understanding. In Montpellier, they assist the Spitalians, providing them with resources and supervising the negotiations with the Anubians. In Toulon, they promote education. Their Grantors finance expeditions and have made scrap a flourishing trade — a thing the Chroniclers never managed.

But it doesn't end there. Since Nephraim's visit to the swamps as an ambassador to the Pheromancers, all advances on their part have ceased. The Pheromancers stay within the confines of their domain. A new border seems to have formed, and not even the Spitalians can comprehend this mysterious air of tranquility.

However, a new danger has appeared on the horizon and the people living in the swamps and the coastal cities have yet to take notice. This danger is of the human sort, an invisible snare tightened by growing resentment and mistrust amongst the people.

Beyond the Rhône, in faraway Aquitaine and in cold Justitian, amber eyes full of suspicion, discord and envy watch the southern coast of Franka. In the Clusters, they are making plans to overthrow the Neolibyans' rule. They want to break their dominance and to stop them from exploiting Franka. The Chroniclers have watched the Africans bleed the land dry for long enough. They have seen them drain it of its artifacts while cementing their claim to rule with the hidden treasures of the Rhône. Once upon a time, the Chroniclers failed here, losing their territory and power. They will not let this happen again. They are initiating Operation Mirage. Spotters, provocateurs, Shutters and Black Judges will start to infiltrate the coast. The Senate in Justitian is well aware of this operation.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Welcome to Franka. It's the year 2596. Death lurks in the shadows of the swamps, and hatred breeds in the hearts of the envious. To the north, spores fall from the sky; to the south, there are rumors of war. For ten years, Fortuna has smiled on Hamza and inspired the Raider to pursue ever-riskier endeavors. However, the frenzy of success has drawn enemies into the orbit of the Neolibyan Raider. They lust for his wealth, his power and his reputation. In their eyes, Hamza bleeds out the land; he is the reason for the depletion of Franka's resources and his time has come — he must be killed.

The chainsaws are well oiled, the revolvers are loaded and the rage burns. The

smell of an imminent rebellion mingles with the salty sea air — one spark, and the time of peace will be over. Forever.

This book reveals the details of the machinations on the southern coast of Franka and leads experienced players even deeper into the world of DEGENESIS.

"GOLD AND ARTIFACTS" describes the region, the country and its people. Toulon is central to the events and the starting point for upcoming campaigns.

"THE SERPENT'S NEST" examines the abysses of the human soul and takes a closer look at the dramatic developments that result.

The adventure "OPERATION MIRAGE"

throws the players right into the inferno of terror and violence.

"DAY OF THE PHOENIX", the last chapter, ties up loose ends and leads the Characters deeper into a vortex of vindictiveness and bloodlust so Game Masters can continue the campaign on their own.

THE KILLING GAME is a mixture of adventure, sourcebook and background information all rolled into one book. It offers material for countless gaming sessions on the banks of the Rhône, while tying together past and future stories set in the world of DEGENESIS.

MIRAGE

A slab of ice had been propped up against the longer wall of the room, cooling the scriptorium down to a pleasant temperature. The office was crammed with riches and trophies: restored figurines of the bygones, pelts and expensive cloth, maps, caskets inlaid with gold, African tribal masks and artistic metal goods. Mirage didn't care for any of those things. She had come for the artifacts: the loot from the Rhône swamps that has made the Raider Hamza Abubakar III a rich man.

Hamza stepped away from the window, approached his desk and motioned for Mirage to take the seat opposite to his.

"Remove your mask!"

Mirage unbuckled the leather mask and pulled it from her face.

For a moment, Hamza looked at her in surprise. He had not expected a woman to be underneath the disguise.

Advantage: Mirage.

"What we want is simple," she began. "Stable exchange rates, par for par from Drafts to Dinars, plus knowledge of and an option of first purchase on all artifacts brought from the swamps to..."

"I have no reason to negotiate with your Cult", Hamza interrupted her self-assuredly.

She wasn't used to others questioning her authority.

Advantage: Hamza.

Mirage brushed away a damp strand of hair from her forehead; her barcode tattoo shimmered under the thin film of sweat covering her expressionless face.

"The Chroniclers gave up Toulon decades ago. We rebuilt this city with our own hands," the Raider continued. His position was his evidence, and the grin of a perpetual winner slid across his lips.

"Franka does not belong to the Neolibyans." Mirage contended, trying to apply pressure. "Your Cult has many enemies. Is it your will to gain more?" She knew that the Chroniclers had rallied behind this negotiation. Aquitaine and Justitian wanted calculable results. The Clusters relied on the formula of progress.

Unimpressed, Hamza filed his fingernails on a cushion of sand.

"In Tripol, where I come from, we have a saying: The sweetest price is the one that you have to risk everything for." He blew the nail filings from his fingertips and looked Mirage in the eye. He was consciously provoking an altercation. Let this woman threaten him for as long as she desires. He was the lion in this room, and Mirage, the gazelle with the broken hoof.

“The population is backing us...”

“Wrong!” he interrupted again. Mirage faltered. He leaned across the desk, his voice commanding. “The greatest weapon of civilization is bread.”

His tone became spiteful: “A well-fed soldier fights for the will of his people, his god and his rulers. A hungry soldier will throw himself into the arms of the enemy, begging for food.”

Mirage blinked. Hamza was only an arm’s length away. She could grab his throat and fire the electric charges built into her suit. Then, the negotiations would quickly change course and align with the wishes of the Chroniclers. She contemplated the political upheavals that would follow after such an attack. No, overt murder would have been diplomatic suicide for her Cult. There had to be a better alternative.

“Justitian, Aquitaine – our Cult started the rebirth of civilization.” She tried to use logic: “If you withhold artifacts from us that we urgently need, you damage...”

“Absurd.” It was the third interruption.

“The southern coast is dotted with our schools and universities; they train more scribes and apprentices than there are books in your cities.” Hamza had Mirage where he wanted her. She was at his mercy. She had nothing to offer.

Bored, he reclined and looked out of the window.

Mirage ran out of options. She hated his complacency. No one had ever dared to talk to her in such a dismissive manner. Where she came from, the Chroniclers were a force to be reckoned with, and their word was the law. Without saying a word, she put on her mask, buckled it and watched the room once again through amber lenses. She had lost her face.

“The Fragments will not be happy about the results of our negotiations,” she grated through her Vocoder.

Hamza laughed harshly. He turned to her, his legs spread far apart, and asked her with his head slightly tilted: “Do you know the golden rule, Chronicler woman?” Without awaiting an answer, a pouch full of Dinars was flung across the desk, and coins fell out and rolled around the floor in circles.

“Gold rules everything.”

For a moment, she stood as if rooted to the spot, her gaze following a swirling coin until it finally lay still. She knew what had to be done.

It was time for a paradigm shift.



SOUTHERN FRANKA

Life between the putrid swill of the Mediterranean and the Mother spore fields of the heartland has had its own rhythm, dictated by the Pheromancers, for generations. Swarms of millions and millions of insects darken entire regions as primitive human drones from the swamps drive the wooden pheromone idols of their masters into the ground in order to mark the borders of their realm. Time and again, Spitalians and the Resistance from the neighboring territories cross these lines in an attempt to weaken and drive back the enemy. Their successes are few; others prove superior. In the decayed quagmire of the swamps, untouched artifact veins are hidden, and the Lion has come to unearth them.

The Neolibyans have left their mark on the region, unparalleled by any other Cult. They brought commerce and peace to the coastal cities and turned them into centers of knowledge and communication. They calmed the feuds between the Clans of the Rhône delta and elevated the best of the natives to be their aides, advisers and governors. They established trust and granted the Clans autonomy and self-governance. They didn't force a religious corset on them in contrast to the Anabaptists and Jehovahans who tried albeit unsuccessfully.

The thriving trade (in which Dinars pass quickly from hand to hand) attracts a nefarious bunch. Kidnapping, blackmail, murder and pronounced violence are known evils, for even the power of the influential trader Cult does not reach into every corner of the region. In the last decades, several parasite cities ruled by local tyrants, cruel Apocalyptics and other crooked characters have developed along the coastline and have quickly become a reservoir for assassins, outcasts and intellectual firebrands. Their number is growing.

THE RHÔNE – LIFELINE AND BREEDING CHAMBER

Famulancers and recruits are on their way south down the Rhône for the first time. They crouch at the railing, trying to protect themselves with their gas masks against the all-encompassing, putrid smell. Suddenly, the monotonous chugging of the petro engine stops. The captain of the swamp cutter raises his finger to his lips, calling for silence. He lets the boat float. The Famulancers and recruits gaze feverishly from the helmsman to the riverbank and back. Nervous tension fills the air. The first nerve cords threaten to fray. Suddenly, a throaty chortling breaks the silence as the captain shakes with laughter. He explains to them that the swarm isn't one to nest on the water. No one needs be afraid as long as they stay on board. Death lurks on the shores and in the depths of the impassable thicket beyond. The engine starts rattling again. They keep moving south.

Without the region's eponymous river, there would be no north-south passage. The Rhône is the main route for any form of travel in this region – be it the Spitalians' troop movements and supply convoys, the Apocalyptics' Burn smuggling or the commonplace movement of goods between Southern Franka and Borca. At the same time, the Rhône and its countless tributaries inundate the surrounding countryside. Without the river, the swamp characterizing Southern Franka and covering several 10,000s of square kilometers would not exist. It is the breeding ground of the Pheromancers.



THE RHÔNE SWAMPS

The first extensions of the swamps make themselves known through soft smacking sounds; footprints are suddenly covered in water. Swarms of flies rise and form dark clouds above small puddles that soon turn into ponds and larger bodies of water. Forsaken villages in this region bear testimony to the battles fought to the death by native Clans in this clime. Everything is silent except for an occasional gurgle. Further inland, the sodden meadows turn to boggy seas of reed, which are interspersed with clusters of trees. They are the harbingers of the swamp woods stretching from the Rhône along the tributaries of the main river. In this impassable thicket of vegetation, the water runs slowly, giving off an air of stagnation. This, however, is not the case. Claggy chunks of Sepsis waft patiently through the twilight under a canopy of leaves, looking for dry land to conquer. Wherever they land, thousands of ants swarm out to carry the seeds to their destination. They share this realm with termites and swarms of wasps whose nests extend over three to four treetops at a time. The mounds of this plague are often several meters high; they are the unmistakable sign of spore field being close by (the exact proximity of which cannot be determined in this impassable terrain). In general, there are almost no landmarks perceptible to the human eye – after an hour in the swamp, everything begins to look the same.

THE RHÔNE DELTA

Beyond the swamps, the waters of the Rhône mix with the mineral-rich Mediterranean streams of the Reaper's Blow to create one of the largest known biotopes in existence. The many feeder rivers and lakes are spawning grounds for thousands and thousands of species of fish and mussels. Above them, various species of seabirds circle in swarms overhead, screeching wildly. The plentiful flora and fauna of this habitat are the main food sources for the hundreds of thousands who inhabit the area of the Rhône delta. Long before sunrise, there is bustling activity. Mussels are a regional delicacy. Small fish cutters and boats leave the settlements. Nets have been laid between small pinnacles and across the bays; each morning, the locals rise to check their nets and dive for the small shellfish.

MONTPELLIER

Montpellier is the largest city of the Rhône delta. It has a long history of African influence. In their quest to conquer the treasures of Franka, the Neolibyans arrived in this harbor aboard their towering Surge Tanks. The small harbor was one of the first the Neolibyans landed in to conquer the treasures of Franka with their Surge Tanks. Those times

FACT SHEET: MONTPELLIER

CITY: Montpellier, Tech-Level IV

PROVINCE: Southern Franka/Rhône delta

INHABITANTS: 64.000/Spitalian census

POPULATION STRUCTURE: 40% Africans (many residents of the second or third generation), 60% Europeans (mainly Frankans)

CLAN SANGLIER: Consists of the 17 families originally residing in Montpellier who leased the harbor for an indefinite period of time to the Bank of Commerce in Tripol and receive an annual harbor tax. Many important positions within the city's administration are held by members of the Clan; many descendants join the Resistance

LEADER: Atuma, the Persistent

GOVERNING FORCE: Narida Woznan, Registrar of Southern Franka

FEATURES: City wall, small freight port, bastion (military hospital and headquarter of the Spitalians in Southern Franka), bazaar, circus

TRADE/GOODS: Mussels, seabirds, fishing, oyster farms, crab, seafood, petro, medical supplies, gas masks, filters, Marduk Oil, exotic spices and goods

CITY GUARD: 4 Scourger packs (70 warriors) and 150 Sanglier legionnaires (mercenaries) led by Atuma, the Persistent; 200 Famulancers led by Narida Woznan, Registrar of Southern Franka

ARTIFACT TRADE: Steady trade with small to medium finds

COMMUNICATION: Directional radio network connects to Toulon and Perpignan via relay stations, daily dispatch rider to Toulouse



are now but a thing of the past. Nowadays, large ships are rarely seen in Montpellier. The old harbor installation has become too small and thus not profitable enough for the giant scrap freighters from Tripol. Expanding the harbor has been deemed a worthless endeavor, so larger cargo is simply unloaded in Toulon. Still, Montpellier is of great importance to the Africans, as it provides Perpignan, Toulon and Tripol with much-needed victuals.

Nearly every hour, bird hunters, fishermen and mussel collectors arrive at the harbor with fresh catch. As soon as the goods have reached the covered market next to the harbor, young Neolibyans haggle with stubborn Famulancers and Clanners over the best merchandise. On a good day, many a fisherman earns more Dinars than a Famulancer earns in a month. Of course, the fisherman will not get far, for the Africans have encircled the harbor with an impenetrable maze of booths and tents. In the bazaar, colorful fabrics, coffee, tea, cocoa, red pepper and many other exotic goods beckon passerbys. There is little likelihood that the newly paid fishermen will return home without having first succumbed to the temptation of the market.

Beyond the bazaar, the city itself sits on a hill above the harbor, encircled by high walls and patrolled by the red-clad legionnaires of the resident Clan Sanglier, Scourgers

and Spitalians. At the top of the hill, the two most imposing buildings of the city tower above winding alleys full of multistory townhouses. The whitewashed ruler's palace has intertwined with the ruins of a bygone cathedral and is currently the seat of Consul Atuma, "the Persistent". This moniker does not imply a reputation of laziness, but instead is derived from the fact that he has survived three assassination attempts. Opposite the palace on the other side of the central square stands the somber bastion of the Spitalians. The clunky concrete building serves both as the headquarters and the barracks. Here, Famulancers prepare for missions in the Rhône swamps under the command of Narida Woznan, Registrar of Southern Franka. She gladly made the concession to have the scaffold-like observation towers of the bastion be slightly lower than the high tower of the ruler's palace. The Spitalians cooperate closely with the Africans. This is why agents of the Chroniclers have observed delegations of Anubians entering the bastion lately.

BAYONNE

Two Scourger packs proudly followed the Surge Tank Mbogo as the steel giant delved into the thicket of the strange mangrove forest. Mbogo was 30 meters high. Suddenly,



its chains grasped at nothing. The giant teetered, tilted sideways, and its rumbling roar turned into a death rattle. It had become bogged down. The name of the Neolibyan responsible was struck from the archives of the Bank of Commerce; Mbogo was eviscerated and served as a command post for a short while. When the nearby scrap veins had been looted, the Scourgers quickly covered the pile of shame with a camo net and left.

But, more than 20 years ago, the Surge Tank was rediscovered next to the ruined harbor of Bayonne by the Rhône Flock. Sacrocant, the Raven of the Rhône Flock, seized the moment and had his Vultures repair the aggregate and the radio equipment – electricity, communication, a new camp. Within a few years, a little settlement arose around Mbogo. Currently, it consists of over 50 huts and serves as a transit camp to the various Flocks of the Rhône delta. Food, weapons, Stork children and Burn are traded on the boggy floor between the huts. Additionally, the natural bay of the ruined harbor provides a good connection between Bayonne and Montpellier where the inhabitants regularly travel via rafts and ferries in order to supply the camp with petro and other important goods, like Ex.

Most people wonder how Sacrocant manages to keep the Spitalians favorably disposed towards the camp. Only

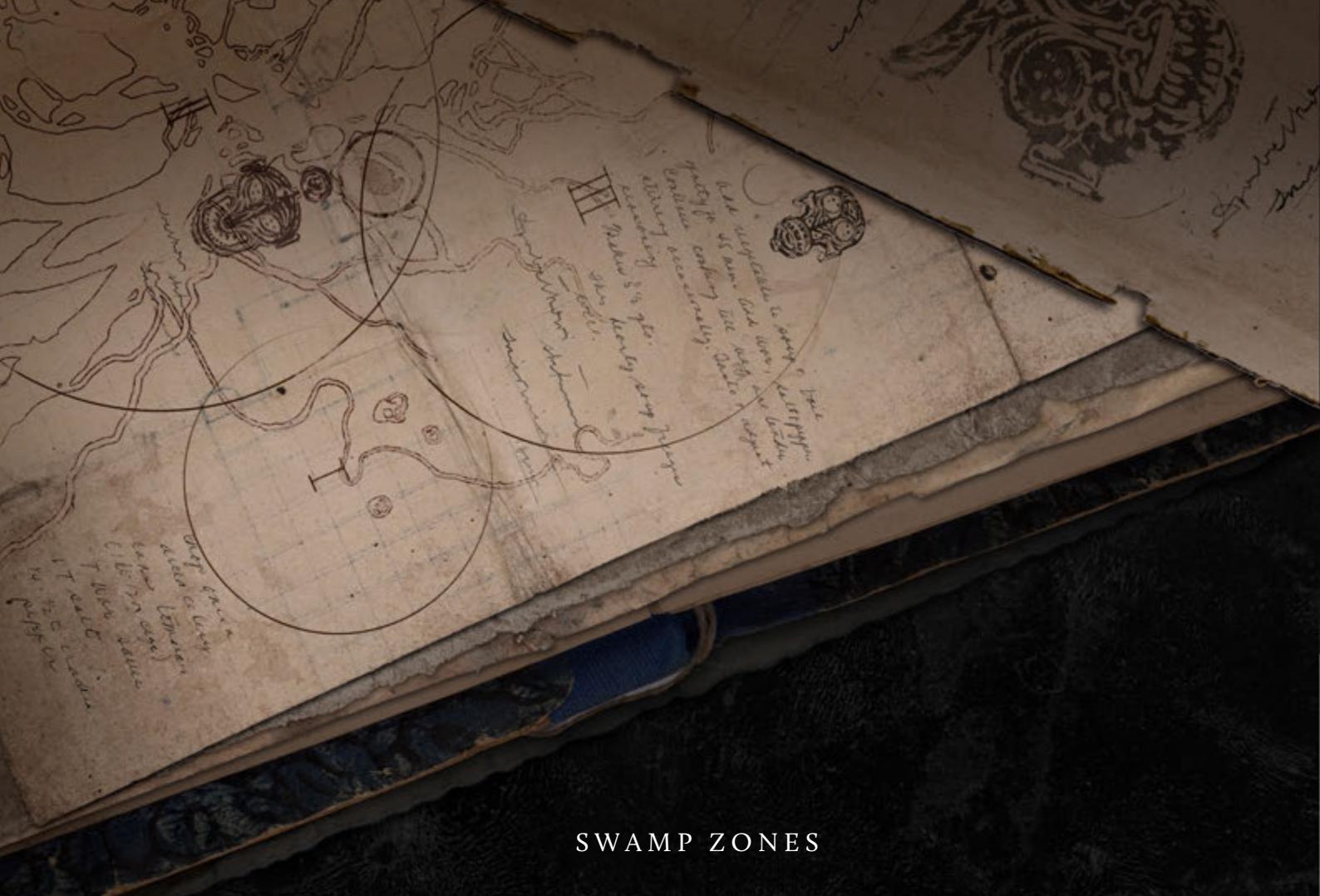
the most trusted advisors of the Raven know that there is often living cargo in the hold of the two cutters of the Flock. The Rhône Flock sells captured drones to the bastion who use them as lab rats for their research.

MOTHER SPORE FIELDS

The Epigeneticists are desperate. Either the Noumenon squads are unable to take exact measurements, or the Rhône swamps are really so contaminated that the area's Mother spore fields cannot be mapped precisely. South of Souffrance, they have registered nine clear signatures so far, three of which have been confirmed by sightings – with considerable losses. Dozens of fields in the virgin phase stretch between those nine "Grandes," and their number is increasing. Further north, there is nothing but eternal static; the pulsation of the Earth Chakra drowns everything else out.

JAQUIERA'S FIELD

Wachsmann-Lacroix – the name alone makes young recruits break out in a cold sweat as chills run down their spine. The expedition of the same name has achieved the



SWAMP ZONES

The Spitalians have divided the Rhône swamps into five categories:

CATEGORY I: These are mainly border areas where the sole danger is poisonous Primer fauna. Here, there are only natural traps, for example, ponds full of acidic jellyfish completely covered in plants or parts of a large swarm that have become separated from the main body by petro smoke or gusts of wind. Unguided and bereft of their will to survive, these clouds even attack drones without warning.

CATEGORY II: These are drone territories that lie within a 50 km radius of Mother spore fields. Once a pheromone idol has been sighted, extreme caution is necessary, as there is usually more than a single drone. The Leperos roam the countryside in groups of 20 or more and are completely unpredictable. Fleeing in panic is not advisable, nor is pursuing them hastily. Drones act as a swarm – either they chase their prey into an ambush like army ants or they sacrifice themselves to protect the hive. Famulancers like to tell a tale of a drone that lured its pursuers to a giant vespiary only to jump in itself and have the colony rise up in a giant cloud.

CATEGORY III: Mother spore fields. Sporeination is omnipresent here amongst the heavy, dripping pheromone clouds that hang in the air. Even without a Pheromancer being visibly present, the phenomenon „Unity“ is at work here. The Characters

can resist it with PSY+Faith/Willpower (5). Being exposed to it without Marduk Oil is sheer suicide, not to mention the other problems of the massive spore infestation and the constant Pheromancer threat. The Mother spore fields also act as amplifiers for the Earth Chakra. There is a slight tingle; an urgent vibration can be felt here constantly, almost like a fleeting thought.

CATEGORY IV: These are the big Mother spore fields. Clay vents are already thrusting out of them. Here, giant methane clouds add to the dangers of Category III and even gas masks don't offer complete protection from their effects: accelerated breathing rate, tachycardia and drowsiness. Heavy limbs, disorientation and mild amnesia have also been documented; methane clouds are considered an environmental toxin with the quality "Narcotic (7C, 7 Ego)".

CATEGORY V: Souffrance. Here, every step is an ordeal. Souffrance leads over ring walls that are more than 100 m high and down into valleys where the air is thick with spores like blowing snow. The hollows in between are full of methane and cannot be crossed without oxygen devices. Sight is obstructed to a few meters. Swathes of spores darken the rays of the sun to a gray twilight; single flakes descend onto discolored, bulging plants upon which palm-sized primal ants stretch their antennae towards the intruders. If the newcomers continue for a few more meters, the ants will attack them and tear every bit of neoprene from their skin. No one passes through Category V.

MARDUK'S PROTECTIVE HAND

The Anubians smile gently if someone wants to haggle for the price of their oils. Without their tinctures, anyone who enters the swamps has no chance of coming back out. Marduk Oil protects one from coming under the influence of the Pheromancers – and their hosts. Once applied, the oil ren-

ders the user essentially invisible to uncontrollable drones and plagues for six hours.

Because of this effect, Marduk Oil is a cornerstone of the Africans' success in Southern Franka. The oil's protective effect is needed in order to exploit the abundant scrap veins. Users of Marduk Oil can stand

right next to a drone or rest under a vesperary without being attacked – at least until their sweat mingles with the Marduk Oil. In dangerous situations, the Character must roll 1D6 every 10 rounds – on a roll of 1, the oil abruptly loses its potency against drones and plagues.

greatest successes for the Cult in Southern Franka where the region's previously most powerful Pheromancer was quartered in her own field. Afterwards, they fired fungicide grenades from their mortars for two days until the Mother spore field finally collapsed and swamp water filled the ditches. Gone. The symbol of the Frankan Rapture forming in the landscape afterwards was only the stale aftertaste of victory, completely washed away by the sight of the drowning drones. However, this legend is crumbling. Seven months ago, Noumenon Vocalizers in the area of Montpellier registered a new frequency, coming from what seemed like Jaquiera's field. The ensuing investigation remained inconclusive. Perhaps a measuring error of sorts?

MURNAKIR'S REALM

The idols of Murnakir jut out from streams and reed-covered meadows like pearls on a string, dividing the land. They form the demarcation line between civilization and the dark heart of the swamps. No civilized person has ever crossed this border. Thousands and thousands of human drones surround the pheromone markers. They dig for food in the mud, listen intently to the angry buzzing of the wasps and drag tree trunks from the swamp to create new idols. Stigmata bloom on naked skin. Their eyes are empty and their lips are twisted in an eternal smile. Unity. Apathy. Franka has lost entire generations to the Pheromancers, and here, their fate becomes visible. The only thing the Spitalians know about the lord of those drones is that he is supposedly some sort of herald and ambassador for a much more powerful Pheromancer from the north. Since he negotiated peace with the Anubian Nephraim from Toulon, registered drone forays have ceased south of the border.

SENTIER DU CHASSEUR

Glacier water feeds the river that has its source high in the Alps and flows down into the Alpine foothills near the trading post called Cremant. Since the Sentier du Chasseur is the only safe passage to the swamps besides the Rhône itself, Cremant is of special strategic importance for the Spitalian supply convoys. Day and night, dozens of Scrapers are busy building supply rafts and longboats for the next group of one hundred Famulancers who are to be shipped to Montpellier. At the same time, the scattered Clans living nearby transport their goods to Cremant in order to exchange them for everyday items. All this happens under the watchful eyes of a squad of soldiers who maintain order at the trade post. The Hellvetics do not tolerate turf wars this close to the Alpine fortress.

NISTRÉLLE CONFLUX

The Nistrelle conflux, where the Sentier du Chasseur enters the Rhône, is a confusing spider web of tributaries, small archipelagoes and soft bays. This vast area is an important landmark for all troop movement heading towards Montpellier. Following secret routes, certain islands are used as collecting points to load the military units and goods coming from the north and east onto swamp cutters that will eventually transport them to Montpellier or other destinations. Usually, this happens at night to minimize the threat of the omnipresent drones and swarms.

MERCURE FIELD HOSPITAL

While most Famulancers are happy to leave the Nistrelle conflux behind, a different fate awaits a few chosen ones.

THE UNIVERSE IS TRANSFORMATION, LIFE IS OPINION.

[MARCUS AURELIUS]

On the night of embarkment, an armored hand suddenly touches their shoulder. They then look into the eyes of Commando Prime Canelle, and there are no more questions. There is no way back. The crew of the Mercure is handpicked, for the camouflaged ship is on a recon mission. 21 Preservists, a dozen Epigeneticists, one unit of Field Medics and a few “volunteers” live on board under constant threat of discovery. To avoid attacks, the Mercure constantly changes her position between the archipelagoes navigating the many different tributaries. Her mission: Enter the heart of the enemy. Find its weak spots. Prepare the deathblow.

FOSTER FOREST

Foaming swamp water, the desperate cries of a mother, a straw doll floating on a pond – the settlers of this region call it The Forest That Devours Children. No one knows how many sons and daughters have disappeared under its dark canopy over the decades. The Fosters have taken them, they say. The fear of those Psychonauts runs deep and pushes the farmer Clans and their children towards Toulouse. Still, someone must procure food, which is why the Resistance has started fighting the Foster Forest.

One summer they tried to set the western fringe of the trees on fire in order to burn down the whole forest – an exercise in futility. The sturdy undergrowth cannot be burned down; the Fosters cannot be smoked out. After a few hours, the flames started dying down under the thick swathes of carbon dioxide welling up from the smoldering quagmire. Four weeks later, the vegetation had grown back, and everything looked as if nothing had occurred. It was time for another tactic.

For a year now, the combatants have entered the Foster Forest in small groups. They target Pheromancer idols that lay strewn among the underbrush, trying to blow up as many as possible. If they encounter drones or Fosters, a merciless hunt begins. However, the Resistance troops give the northern part of the forest a wide berth, for the first clay vents are already visible between the trees – a foretaste of what's lurking behind them.

THE NINTH ZIGGURATH

Northwest of Foster Forest, wedged between the fringes of the Rhône swamps, Grenouilles from Toulouse have carved an observation post into a hill. The tunnels are low. They have a makeshift bracing made of boards, and, a sound-insulated petro generator rattles inside, exasperating the hired Scrappers with its continuous dropouts. The exhaust fumes are funneled outside through a well and treated; the water tastes of soot. This, however, is of little concern. The most important thing is to remain undetected; the forays to the hill are treacherous as is. Day after day, Gian d'Ecur, the commanding Epigeneticist, sends three of the 20 auxiliary Spitalians beyond the hill to collect samples, set up new sample containers, look for drones and check the height of the heap.

The heap. D'Ecur assumes that the ninth Ziggurat arises at a distance of 2 km from the hill — underground. Millions and millions of insects carry small clumps of cellulose through the forest on two roads that are 150 m wide each. They deposit the leaves, the pieces of bark and the twigs in a depression where the two insect roads meet. They form a circular compost pile with a diameter of 50 paces. It is exactly 7 m and 12 cm high. It has been like that for a year now. Every day. No matter how much material is added to it, the heap doesn't grow — at least not upwards. Gian d'Ecur has sent countless reports to the bastion and requested a research squad tasked with finding the entrance. In vain. She has orders to report the first sightings of armed drones, but until then, all resources are to be allocated elsewhere.

THE CITY OF COMBS

Beyond the Foster Woods is the City of Combs. Reports about it are scarce, for those who have returned from there can be counted on two hands. The area is dozens of kilometers wide. It is nestled in a hollow and resembles a giant, endless beehive. The air is parched and hot; it vibrates with the high-pitched buzzing of millions and millions of insects nesting in one giant colony. Should the structure be threatened, giant swarms of wasps, wild bees, young termite queens, locusts and other vermin will eclipse the sun.



The surging roar of this vermin storm will draw hundreds of drones armed with primitive weapons. They will come rushing from the surrounding forests and into the City of Combs, where they will defend the nest against the approaching intruders. An all-out attack would be senseless, but the bastion knows that it's time to act. According to the Spitalians, the City of Combs is the breeding ground for the huge swarms of Southern Franka. Their pesticide production runs at full speed.

THE VENTS OF MACHIAWEN

The vents of Machiawen are characteristic for Franka: they tower above the treetops of the swamps, some of them higher than 60 m. They continuously spew methane clouds into the air, releasing their master's pheromones into the wind. Their foundations are covered with eager architects, giant termite states that ceaselessly carry building materials to the vents. Human thralls do the same.

On the visible pheromone routes, drones procure lumps of clay and rotting wood so that the termites aren't burdened with long distances. Everything works according to a scheme; everything is intertwined. Only the Burn collectors of the Solar Wind Flock stand outside this structure. Their devotion to Machiawen allows them to move freely on the fields, a movement that seems chaotic compared to

everything else that happens here. Nearby drones stop and tremble in awe every time one of the queens steps out from the vents and issues new instructions to her Apocalyptic on how to deal with the exiles in Borca. Everything comes at a price.

SOUFFRANCE

Expeditions to Souffrance have been condemned to failure. Every step towards the Earth Chakra leads out of the known world and into a new present. Methane enters the lungs and causes breathing problems; colors speak, and pheromone messages take the form of symbols in the air. The abstract perfection of the surroundings is eerily beautiful. The Marduk Oil starts itching and burning on the skin; the body resists, longing for the holistic unity that has been absent for so long. Drones form a cordon, welcoming the newcomers with empty eyes. They politely free them of their gas masks and carefully help them get rid of the rather bothersome neoprene. The omnipresent love breaks the racing hearts of the visitors, filling their chests with overwhelming joy. Now it becomes apparent who has steeled his mind and is the master of his will; flight is the only option, even if it means betraying your comrades. This is not the day to sacrifice everything, for Souffrance is still many kilometers away.



DRONES

No one knows exactly how many people vegetate in the Rhône swamps serving as drones of the Pheromancers. Resistance and Spitalians estimate their number to be somewhere between ten thousand and some several hundred thousand, but it is impossible to determine. The Fosters have bled entire cities dry, especially in the northern part of the region, which has the highest concentration of drones. There are almost no free Clans left. Those few lone wolves that remain gut the abandoned settlements and are constantly on the move. They are hard-boiled hermits and mistrusting strangers; they even avoid the recruiting efforts of the Resistance. Most Clans succumb eventually, exchanging their autonomy for their queens' nectar.

These humans are degenerates, nothing more than primitive tools – and easily recognizable as such: naked and with matted hair, the Frankan stigma on their chest. They are an army of Leperos bereft of their culture, their tradition and their will. Dazed by spores, they have bloated into a defensive wall, serving to protect their alien rulers. Any attack against the Aberrants attracts drones. They navigate the pathless swamp as one large unit, attuned to their masters' emotions without having any of their own. Their lives do not matter. There is no hesitation when they attack an enemy of the structure. Those who get too close to their turf will find a quick death. Poison arrows, spike traps, impassable terrain and disorientation can kill even the best-equipped warrior.

If no imminent danger is present, the drones venture as far as the borders of the swamps as scouts in order to report their findings to their masters. Motionless, they stand in long lines for days. Suddenly, there's a collective murmur, and the drones start swaying to an inaudible melody in the wind: new orders. Some, driven by an inexplicable zeal, break formation, turn tails and run into the thicket. Hours later, they come back, dragging a tree trunk with all of their might. They begin working the wood with simple hand axes and continue until they collapse. Whenever a drone drops from exhaustion, another one steps in and takes the tool from their clenched fingers. The work proceeds without pause until the idol stands.



IDOL OF MACHIAWEN



IDOL OF IOMEDES



IDOL OF MURNAKIR



THE NINTH IDOL

IDOLS

The wooden Pheromancer idols resemble roughly hewn monoliths fashioned from preserved swamp wood with very simple tools. They bear a vague likeness to the faces of the queens of each respective drone state. They are erected by the primitive tribes in order to mark their territories and draw borders between the respective domains. Despite terrain playing a minor role here, most idols are placed prominently on glades in the underbrush or on islands amidst the seas of reed. Sometimes, only a few centimeters of them are visible above the surface of a pond – their exact position matters more than their visibility, or so the Spitalians assume. Intact idols are often adorned with dried human skins or smeared with colorful glandular secretion. The Pheromancers use them as control posts to relay orders to their drone state, and as such they are staunchly guarded.

Spitalians and Resistance know that the idols can be used to manipulate the drones. Their tactic is simple: Whenever the terrain permits, they dig a flat ditch around the idol and fill it with petro. Then they tie a small petro bomb to the idol itself and blow it up. The burning secretions put the surrounding drones in an ecstatic defense mode at once. They come rushing in troves, ready to attack any enemy – however, there is no one to fight. Instead, the petro ditch is set ablaze so that the drones are encircled by a ring of fire and smoke, unable to see a thing. The defense

order makes them stay where they are while the Resistance kills them off one by one with bullets and arrows. Should some drones break free from the ring, the Famulancers' splayers do the rest.

Lately, however, there have been an increasing number of reports about encounters with Fosters coming to the drones' aid on such attacks to coordinate their defense.

Every fifth drone is so rotten that it starts displaying mutations. Typically, these manifests as walnut-sized glands in the armpits, but an infestation of other lymph nodes, for example in the groin or the neck, has also been documented. When such a drone is killed, their agonising death causes them to radiate acidic alarm pheromones. These pheromones can travel up to an impressive speed of 30m/min over a one kilometer radius before the efficacy wears off. All drones and Pheromancers within the respective area are notified and called to the location of said drone. This blowout can only be stopped by acting quickly (for example, by plunging the corpse into swamp water). If there is not enough time or if someone has managed to kill a Pheromancer whose alarm pheromones are ten times more potent, the only thing that will be of any use are the ozone grenades manufactured by the Spitalians of Montpellier. Within split seconds, they can break down all pheromones into their chemical components.

EAST OF THE RHÔNE

The southern Frankan borderland has Toulon as its capital and it profits generously from the mix of various cultures. The Rhône swamps to the west and the lost part of Franka to the north may be difficult terrain, but the region more than makes up for this by offering sufficient trade and expedition routes in the Mediterranean, the foothills of Hellvetica and the corridor to Genoa. More than anywhere else in Southern Franka, everything here carries the Neolibyans' thumbprint. Ever since the Anubian Nephraim negotiated the memorable truce with the Pheromancer Murnakir in the name of Hamza Abubakar III, the region has continuously flourished. There are no swarm attacks, fruit and wild wheat grow on the fields, and even the children are safe here – no Fosters.

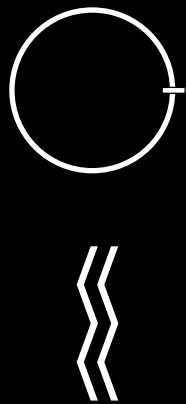
Instead, a coalition between the Resistance, Africans und Hellvetics works together to further fortify the Scorched Path, a path that is essential for their survival. In the cities and coastal villages, the Clans learn the art of self-governance and credits from the Bank of Commerce enable them to establish new manufactories and build a modern infrastructure. Benevolence is not the impetus, for the Neolibyan principle says that wealth is the result of hard work and cleverness. However, now that peace has been established with the Pheromancers, the exploitation of some of the richest scrap veins of Franka, which happen to be located in this region, can finally begin. Day by day, Frankan and African Scrapper squads freely enter the outer swamp regions to salvage the riches hidden there and transport them to the ports. Their payment is hard gold – everyone profits, and for the time being, the Africans are seen as friends and not as exploiters. In the shadows, shrouded figures stand apart from this glory, and fret. The Neolibyans' success is the swansong for the Chroniclers' efforts.

TOULON

When Hamza Abubakar III entered the port of Toulon for the first time aboard the Unya in 2586, he smiled. A timorous Touloni delegation greeted him. They were frightened and deeply impressed by the giant ships waiting on the horizon beyond his flagship. As he walked down the gangway, his followers were already throwing barrels overboard – spices, food and petro. Welcome gifts. No more, no less. The negotiations with the Clan lasted for seven days; Hamza had not come to take by force that which already belonged to him. He wanted them to give Toulon to him voluntarily, and he got it because he promised peace and wealth to the inhabitants of the city. The resident Scappers spat into the sand – for them, the Africans were scavengers whom they would have to fight against for the few bones that were to be had in the hinterland. They were wrong.

With each passing year, Hamza acquired more trade concessions for Toulon and the coastal city changed more and more. At the border of Ferrallies, the Scrapper district, he built the largest petro refinery in Franka. He turned the Cour Argent into an entrepôt for the giant scrap freighters of the Bank of Commerce. Afterwards, he established a university where Europeans and Africans were to study side by side and contribute to the body of knowledge in the new world. Unlike all of the other Neolibyans, Hamza did not try to impress the Europeans with exotic spices, colorful fabrics and wild circus animals. He interacted with them as a business partner.

This is also the reason why in addition to supplying his own Scappers with Marduk Oil, he also ensures that the hired support squads have protection against the phero-



FACT SHEET: TOULON

mone traps in the swamps. The holds of the freighters started filling up and Hamza's investments began to pay off. The scribes of the Bank of Commerce thanked their ancestors for the extraordinary balances – that is, until the year 2588. Two years after his arrival, Hamza lost two of his expeditions to the drones of Murnakir within a three month period. All the while, giant vermin swarms wandered along the coast, devastating it. However, the Raider was ready to respond to this challenge – he sent his half-brother Nephraim to the swamps to negotiate an unprecedented peace agreement with the Pheromancers. The exploitation of the rich scrap veins could begin.

After this, everything changed for the better. Clans from the surrounding countryside came to the city. Perpignan and Montpellier tried to outdo each other with offers to create alliances; even Genoa, the Alpine fortress and the Resistance sent negotiators to profit from Toulon's newly won freedom. Today, there are more Scrappers and traders along the spacious corridors and in the winding alleys of the city than anywhere else on the Frankan coast. It is said that Hamza stands on the battlements of his palace every morning, smiling down on the city.

MORVANT CONTROL TERMINAL

The corps headquarters of Territorial Region I was perplexed when, in 2569, the Africans explored a new route from Genoa out across the southern tip of the Alps. Three Surge Tanks were bogged down in the process. When a few weeks later, the Hellvetics additionally noticed that road-works leading to the Northeast and the Southwest had new endpoints in the small port of Ducal, their astonishment turned to anger. Were the Neolibyans really trying to avoid the tollable route "Hard Path/Bernese Passage" by creating a new land route through the Alpine foothills? One week later, the foundations of a control terminal could be seen protruding from the earth at the strategic summit where the new coastal route from Ducal meets the Bernese passage. After another two weeks had passed, the new terminal was finished: a gray, compact masterwork of Genie craftsmanship. The members of the corps headquarters assured each other of this fact before the first customs duties were raised. After going back and forth, the Hellvetics and the Neolibyans made a pact to avoid embarrassment on both sides. The Africans would pay the tributes, and the Hellvetic Genie troops would fortify and maintain the impassable parts of the Scorched Path. Today, the control terminal is an important landmark on the way from Toulon to Genoa. The Genie squads stationed there regularly mend the parts of the Scorched Path that are in need of repair; because of the proximity to the Reaper's Blow, work is never scarce.

CITY: Toulon, Tech-Level III-IV

PROVINCE: Southern Franka/border region

EINWOHNER: 52.000/Neolibyan census

INHABITANTS: Clan Touloni/dominant, Neolibyans/dominant, Scourgers/dominant, Scrappers/dominant, Apocalyptic/numerous, Resistance/numerous, Spitalians/present, smaller Clans/present, Hellvetics/infrequent, Chroniclers/unknown

CLAN TOULONI: Descendants from the five original Clans of the port city that are each responsible for governing one of the districts and electing the mayor from their midst; the Clan has very good connections to the Neolibyans and profits from cheap credits through Hamza's Grantors; each Clan has sent alumni of the university from the coastal settlements to set up manufactories and expand the trade network

LEADER: Hamza Abubakar III.

GOVERNING FORCE: Zohra, Consul of Toulon

MAYOR: Vericon the Elder

FEATURES: City fortifications, large freight port, industrial smithies, petro refinery, university

TRADE/GOODS: Petro, African mineral salts, sulfur, Marduk Oil, weapons, ammunition, swamp animals, fishing, seafood, distillate, gas masks, filters, scrap, bygone relics, smitheries, generators and aggregates

CITY GUARD: 12 Scourger packs (250 warriors) commanded by Ayubu, the bloodhound, under supreme command of Hamza Abubakar III; 30 Famulancers of the L'Orage military hospital under supreme command of the Montpellier bastion; 160 Resistance fighters and 40 Grenouille fighters commanded by Zoe Morceau; 80 Beau Monde city guards

ARTIFACT TRADE: Extensive trade with medium to large finds

COMMUNICATION: Directional radio network connects to Toulon and Montpellier; wire radio via Morvant Control Station and Ducal to Genoa and Carnest intelligence post.

At the same time, two dozen soldiers guard three towering petro tanks – all maintained by the Neolibyans for the preservation of the Scorched Path. African Scrappers and Resistance fighters are among the regulars at the outbuildings that arose were quickly erected around the control station in the form of thriftwood huts and tents full of holes.

THE SCORCHED PATH

A wide path follows the coast. It leads westwards from Genoa and joins the Bernese Passage after an onerous crossing through the Alpine foothills and before meandering on towards Toulon: the Scorched Path. It is the only safe land route across this remote southern tip of Franka. The path has its name for a reason: African Scrappers and Resistance cadets patrol almost every kilometer of it. Always in pairs and with petro-filled tanks on their backs. Their mission is to maintain the shallow fire pits on the side of the road, which are spaced at intervals of 200 m. They fill the holes with dried marram grass, straw and leaves. Then they cover the combustible material with sand and douse everything in petro. This way, the pits can easily be turned into smoldering, smoking fires used to disorient any vermin if a swarm attack is imminent. While swarm attacks have become increasingly rare after having made peace with the Pheromancers, strong winds sometimes carry smaller swarms off course and towards the Mediterranean. It would be too grave a danger to be unprepared.

DUCAL

Before the creation of the Scorched Path, Ducal was a hard-to-reach sinkhole of a port amidst a field of rubble – only a few chosen ones knew it to be a safe trade center for weapons and Burn. But then, the Neolibyans came

and made Cardial, the Raven of the Sickle Flock, an offer he couldn't refuse: the Scorched Path and all the gold of Tripol if he maintained an enclave as a landing site for covert operations. Since that day, smaller African expedition forces have been arriving in the remote port only to scatter to the four winds within a few hours unbeknownst to and unnoticed by the Hellvetics, Chroniclers and Spitalians; the Cardial and his people make sure that the remote port remains safeguarded from meddling eyes. Those who ask too many questions receive a passage as cargo on the next Neolibyan ship back – there's always a demand for slaves. Honest guests can enjoy themselves in the little village that the Flock has established along the path. Here, people become blood brothers; they drab and exchange Burn from all over Europe. Some of the guests are curious Neolibyans who (under the influence of Unity) make glorious plans of joining forces against the Bank of Commerce only to be ashamed the next morning of the nonsense they spouted the night before as such words are surely bad for business.

BERNESE PASSAGE

The Bernese Passage is the central trade route to Borca. From Morvant Control Terminal, it leads through one of the densely populated heartlands of Hellvetica up to Bern. A giant, heavily guarded dam blocks traffic on the path so that only a certain number of travelers can use the various parts of the path at a time – every 40 kilometers there are gates which allow passage, however, those caravans that reach one of the gates too late may have to wait for two or three days before continuing their journey. This takes time, which is why there are always acts of sabotage and rowdy races between the regular traders. The Hellvetics make no exceptions, so they have to be fast – attempted bribery is punished with prohibition of passage. These strict safety

THE GREAT EXODUS

Anabaptists are rare in this region. Many of the old chapels and missionary houses stand empty these days or are used as barracks and storage for weapons by the Resistance fighters. Cathedral City doesn't mind. After several devastating battles in the Rhône swamps, the Cult retreated from the Mediterranean

coast against the expressed wishes of the Spitalians.

However, the Baptists decided that the support of the population had vanished, and with it the will of the leaders of the Cult to keep concerning themselves with the people of Southern Franka. In 2577, the great exodus

northwest towards Briton into the promised land of the Anabaptists began. There, generations of followers of the Broken Cross successfully worked as missionaries and fused the Cult with the Clans of the Atlantic coast. Together, they harbor one of the greatest secrets of the Anabaptists: the Star Fire.

measures serve a purpose: the protection of the populace. To the left and right of the passage are the scattered mountain villages of the Alpine Clans. Some are located directly on the route while others can only be reached by nearly impassable mountain tracks. The settlements form the backbone of the Alpine fortress: the Clans living there produce food and find new recruits for the Hellvetics. An uncontrolled tide of travelers is always accompanied by the danger of an attack or a revolt. This makes it necessary to break up and monitor the tide. Only the never-ending supply trains of the Spitalians going from the Protectorate to Toulon and Montpellier via Bern are granted free passage. In return, Enclave Doctors are sent to the mountain villages to provide medical care for the Clans.

Due to the strong presence of the medical Cult and the strict regulation of traffic, the Bernese Passage is considered one of the safest and most profitable of Alpine passages. There are even traders who spend their whole lives on the path, buying goods from passing caravans to sell to the Alpine villages and vice versa. At the gates, there also camps of minstrels, actors and other riffraff hoping to get rich off those waiting to continue their journey.

CARNEST INTELLIGENCE POST

This angular bulwark stretches at a dizzying height between two steep mountain faces and casts a long shadow over the section of the Bernese Passage directly below. While a customs post equipped with heavy gun turrets controls the traffic on the ground, the information collected from the listening posts of the Alpine fortress is compiled 200 steps above the heads of the guard detail. The post acts as a central intelligence hub and is the real reason for the massive security on the Bernese Passage. Here, all intercepted radio transmissions are evaluated, troop movements of all allies and enemies are recorded, and encrypted messages are decoded. A P-26 cadre protects the vicinity and watches the passes to report anyone or anything approaching the Alpine passage. The three Surge Tanks that became bogged down in the impassable mountains in 2569 are under special surveillance. In the meantime, they serve as weigh stations for the Africans along the Scorched Path. The commanders of the intelligence post are sure that the strategic placement of these units is no coincidence. Rather, they are three spearheads that will help to establish a bridgehead in the border area between Franka, Purgare and Hellvetica. Scouting missions that are part of the precautionary maintenance cooperation have shown that the Surge Tanks are ready to use and that the Africans maintain hidden caches of fuel, ammunition and provisions within close vicinity of their basis – one more reason to make the safeguarding of the intelligence post a top priority.

GRIONESSE CUSTOMS STATION

The customs station is located in a pastoral valley next to a settlement; it's but a necessary evil in the neatly organized everyday life of the Alpine fortress. As the central reloading point between Western Borca, Eastern Borca, Franka and Purgare, the station is teeming with an uncouth support staff who is responsible for handling the massive turnaround of goods. It's an anathema to any Hellvetic.

Smuggle and theft are common in Grionesse, and there are always conflicts between the trade caravans and groups of travelers from the various Cults: In Grionesse, Anabaptists meet Jehammedans, Spitalians meet Apocalyptic, and Neolibyans meet Chroniclers. Amidst all this, there are various Clans who still harbor old grudges. The regiment of Hellvetic soldiers stationed here is often on special duty in order to remain in control of the situation. This is why comrades react irritably to even the slightest transgression – no one here has been able to take a joke for quite some time now.

CREMANT

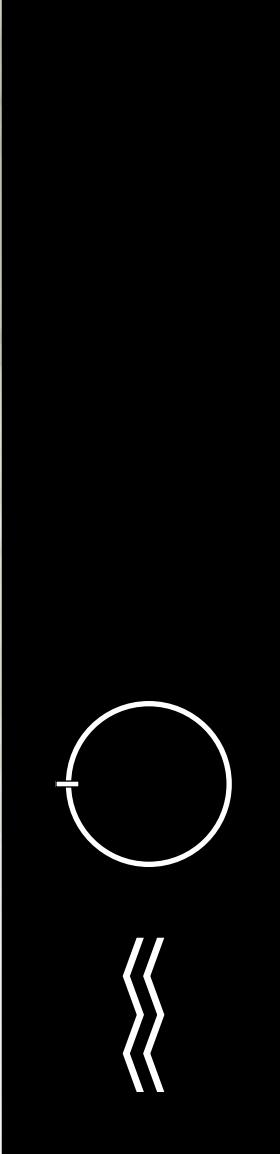
There is no direct way to Cremant. Kranzler himself has ensured that the place cannot be found on any map. Even many Hellvetics do not know its location; a handful of Clans from the immediate vicinity use the settlement as a trading post or in exchange for medical care enlist their adolescents as recruits at the small Spitalian barracks at the fringe of the hamlet.

The soldiers from the Alpine fortress stationed here watch this, but say nothing. They have been sworn in and the orders are clear: they are not to meddle in the affairs of Commando Charcutier and his corps (the Red Pack).

The ten Preservists are handpicked by Kranzler. They are commanders who have already been awarded medals and enjoy prestige. In Cremant, they are officially tasked with organizing the Frankan troops who are then shipped to Montpellier via the Sentier du Chasseur.

Unofficially, they perform screenings. The Preservists are among the best strategists of the Cult and of great importance to Operation "Mercure", which is currently preparing a devastating attack on the heart of the Frankan enemy. They carefully select the most promising of the Famulancers passing through and prepare them for the Mercure field hospital.

Far away from the Spital, the corps also experiments with various ways to train recruits in the field. Kranzler doesn't want his people to come back in body bags. This is why those who fail at this extremely hard drill end up inside the swamps as fodder for the armored slugs who slowly eat away at any and all organic material.



WEST OF THE RHÔNE

The Southwest of Franka knows no peace, only fierce resistance. Toulouse and Perpignan are the cornerstones of this region. It is here that the Clans try to revive their connections to the bygones while simultaneously trying to wake their brothers and sisters from the dangerous stasis that the grueling fight against the Pheromancers has driven them into. Without the Neolibyans, this region would have fallen to Souffrance long ago. The trader Cult supplies the hinterland with petro in order to create a border of smoke and fire against the swarms. It also supplies the Resistance with weapons and Marduk Oil so they are able to keep the vital Route de la Résistance between Perpignan and Toulouse open. This is essential for trade as well as for the groups of hundreds of Famulancers who push forward into Briton from Montpellier. The Atlantic coast, with its washed up freighters and tankers, promises large profits, however, these cannot be exploited without a land route. The pristine Castilian plateau, which lies near the Atlantic coast, is another area of interest.

PERPIGNAN

Perpignan is a melting pot, which is home to the Jehammedans whom lair in the black garden of the Lion. In 2552, an alliance of Leopards and pirates sank the 14.000 ton freighter Siphō and the weapons Catamaran Kashka in the fairway of the port. The trade route to Tripol was severed, but the oil spill was still worse. It poisoned the city's fresh-water sources and suffocated the surrounding land. For years, the beaches were black. Thousands and thousands of seabirds died and with the exception of two dozen families, the Clans left for Toulouse and Montpellier. The families incessantly dug channels and trenches through the hinterland to pump out, redirect and ultimately burn the poisoned water. This created an effective way of protecting the route to Toulouse from swarms and the Spitalians showed their gratitude in the form of gas masks to shield against the petro fumes and chemicals to purify the drinking water. Toulouse, however, sent food to the kindred Clans beyond the Bordenoir, the black soot border that had descended upon the land.

After the basic supply was restored, they picked up tar lump after tar lump from the beaches; they dredged the petro sand slag from the fairway and purified it as best as possible before sending it to Montpellier. They used the profit from this to hire African Scrappers to dismantle the blockade. A handful of bluestreak cleaner wrasses on a whale of

steel, the Scrappers attracted others – Apocalyptic, Anabaptists and the Resistance: for metal means weapons, and weapons mean trade. The Neolibyans were astonished. No one would have ever considered purchasing the concession for Perpignan in the auction again, but Clan Bordenoir had earned the respect of Tripol and opened up a corridor into the hinterland.

When, two decades after the catastrophe, the smallest Neolian freighter that had ever been seen on the coast of Franka pushed its way through the fairway, there was much rejoicing. Flocks of African Scrappers started converting the sunken ships and excavating the fairway. Today, the Siphō serves both as a trade office and freight port. The infrastructure of the megaton ship has been torn down and used to build new platforms that seamlessly blend with the old harbor. From the skeleton of the Kashka, a fortress tower rises 25m above the port, protecting Perpignan from pirate attacks with the repaired weaponry of the former catamaran. At its flanks fly Clan Bordenoir's banners: a black fist on red almost on equal footing with those of the Bank of Commerce. Elani, the daughter of the jackal, Consul of the city, has a natural flair for such gestures.

Nominally, the Bordenoir rule the city; Elani seldomly interferes with their decisions, but on rare occasions, she does point out potential consequences they may not have

FACT SHEET: PERPIGNAN

considered. Her focus is the Jehammedans who have been settling in the city since the exodus of the Anabaptists. They are mainly Hybrispanian Clans whom Clan Bordenoir invited so as to increase the number of inhabitants of Perpignan and to develop a profitable trade with Hybrispania. Bariel, the Shepherd of Perpignan, considers their growing camp both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, he is able to carry on his feud against the Anabaptist enclaves of Queribus and Peyrepertuse directly from the city and offer the Cult a haven in Franka. On the other hand, he must rely on the numerous Swords of Jehammed to protect the city and the Route de la Résistance. More and more often, the Swords arm themselves and fight the drones independently. Unlike the inglorious trench war against the Broken Cross, successes against the drones and their masters are met with cheers from all over the city. A dangerous tendency, for time and again, young men and women of the lower ranks defect to the Resistance in the hopes of helping these people take back their freedom.

LA ROUTE DE LA RÉSISTANCE

The area west of the Rhône swamps is disorienting. The lines between the Frankan resistance fighters and the drones marching out of the swamps have shifted so often that the Route de la Résistance does not mark a clear front through the land. The road goes past the Anabaptist churches situated atop bleak chains of hills whose earth has been so severely poisoned with pesticides that not a single blade of grass will show itself for the next thousand years. It is in these hills that pockets of resistance can seek shelter from the watchful eye of the status quo. The route continues, extending past countless small settlements and memorial sites before finally reaching the three big cities it connects. The parts close to the swamps are secured by a network of trenches, donjons, observation decks and hidden shelters where Resistance fighters rub shoulders with Famulancers when they both have guard duty. Signal flags and lights inform the nearby towers as soon as new swarms form above the swamps. After a few minutes, a mixture of petro and water pours into the channels along the affected part of the road – one spark is enough to smother the land with black smoke for days. In the vicinity of Montpellier and the Foster Forest, this tactic no longer works – here, the trails lead north, straight into enemy land. Day by day, new fighters armed with flame, steel and fungicide grenades enter the Pheromancers' refuge to fight against a unity born out of Pheromancer manipulation.

CITY: Perpignan, Tech-Level III-IV

PROVINCE: Southern Franka/Free Franka

INHABITANTS: ca. 50.000/no census

POPULATION STRUCTURE: Clan Bordenoir/dominant, Neolibyans/dominant, Scourgers/dominant, Jehammedans/dominant, Resistance/numerous, Scrappers/present, smaller Clans/numerous, Apocalyptic/infrequent, Spitalians/infrequent

CLAN BORDENOIR: The families of Clan Bordenoir make up 20% of the inhabitants of Perpignan and thus the largest part of the various Clans; every family is responsible for one administrative part of the city. The weapons manufactories and the numerous small mills refining the Hybrispanian ores are the biggest source of income

CONSUL: Elani, the paw of the grey jackal

LEADERS: Veracq, the Fist of Perpignan, Bariel, the Shepherd of Perpignan

WEAPONS MASTER: Assegai

FEATURES: Freight port with repair dock, turret, weapons manufactures, mills

TRADE/GOODS: Hybrispanian cattle, riding horses, mining, ores, salts, heavy metals, cloth, goat products, petro, Marduk Oil, weapons, ammunition, distillate, gas masks, filters, scrap, bygone relics, wrought products, generators and aggregates

CITY GUARD: 120 guardsmen of Clan Bordenoir commanded by Veracq; Assegai's pack, 16 Scourgers commanded by Assegai (freight port and turret); 200 swords of Jehammed commanded by Bariel; 30 Resistance fighters under varying command

ARTIFACT TRADE: Steady trade with smaller and medium finds

COMMUNICATION: Directional radio network with relay stations links to Toulon and Montpellier, daily outrider to Toulouse



CAMP FIERTÉ

The training camp Fierté is the anvil of the Resistance upon which experienced combatants pound young people into proud Resistance fighters. The drill is hard. Yes, three months is not a long time, the rest will have to be learned in the field. Life is the best teacher – and the death of others. Shut up! Keep moving, for Franka! Together with a team of 100 Spitalians, the generals of the Resistance teach the new recruits the basics of fighting against the spawns of Souffrance, with special attention given to the the fight against drones. The drill sergeants repeatedly stress that the Lepers are the ultimate danger. It's not the enemies' superior numbers, nor their serfdom to the Aberrants – no, it's the reproductive capabilities of the female drones'; they can give birth to new Pheromancers at any time.

Translation: kill the females first.

The Anubians who have inhabited a part of the camp for some time bite their tongues at the indoctrination of the medical Cult. They cook Marduk Oil, create medical salves from swamp plants and hand these out to the recruits. They encourage the fit and give those on their deathbeds the

blessing of the ancestors. Then they shake their heads incredulously. The Crow is dancing on one leg because it has bitten off its other one. An eagle kills the heart by thrusting its claws into it and squashing it, not by eating the festering skin around it in the hopes that it will stop beating. The Anubians are aware that the Spitalians know this all too well and that they are simply using the young Resistance fighters as a distraction for the actual thrust of the dagger. Why don't the Europeans take the direct way towards the target?

TOULOUSE

Toulouse is a beacon of hope for the scattered Clans of Franka. Day after day, new refugees trek their way through the labyrinth of watchtowers, barriers, petro trenches and mollusk grenades that surround the city. The constabulary registers all newcomers and issues them a registration passport: peasants go to the southern quarter; craftsmen to the manufactories; recruits to the recruiters over there.



Yes, there. To the left, those with the drum! Don't lose your passport, or next month, you will be digging petro trenches! Even groups of Famulancers on their way to Briton are being checked; it's a matter of principle. Toulouse is the Resistance – the Resistance is Toulouse. The Clan doesn't want anyone to question where the authority lies.

From the three mighty city gates, wide main roads lead straight through the Clan quarters. Entire families live here, crammed into multistory buildings. The roofs of those buildings have been linked with planks and bridges to form a colorful street market. Every roof is a small island – here, wine and cheese are offered; over there, flatbread, goat meat on a stick and fermented milk. In the Clan quarters, cultural aspects from all over Franka come together. The chansons that they sing together are the singular unifying element. These songs originate from a time long forgotten and ring out from cookshops in the twilight of the evening. Time and again, they are interrupted by long moments of rapt silence as the various Clans take time to remember those that have fallen for the Resistance.

Beyond the Clan quarters is the city center. Its western border is a deep, elongated ditch. In the dry canal, numerous workshops and trade halls are lined up. Building materials, weapons, scrap, hardware, Frankan memorabilia – the manufacturers' quarter supplies the city with everything it needs. Amidst the craftsmen, Neolibyans and Apocalyptic sell what the logicians of the Resistance don't claim. Sometimes, intermediaries of the Chroniclers search for undiscovered artifacts in the halls of the Scrappers. The Capitol quarter is located beyond the canal. The small plaza in front of the big bygone building is covered in wooden pillars on which the postings and announcements of the Savants – they think themselves sages, but the people consider them bureaucrats – flutter in the wind. This branch of the Resistance has given itself the task of conserving, archiving and renewing the knowledge of the Grande Nation. While some restore books recovered from the mud of Parasite, others create reproductions to be sent to the various camps of the Resistance. In the evenings, they read, discuss, log and write the new history of Franka. Armand Malpierre,

FACT SHEET: TOULOUSE

CITY: Toulouse, Tech-Level III-IV

PROVINCE: Southern Franka/ Free Franka

INHABITANTS: City population including satellite towns 130.000, increasing/registration by the Resistance

POPULATION STRUCTURE: Resistance/dominant, smaller Clans/dominant, Spitalians/numerous, Scrappers/numerous, Anabaptists/present, Jehammedans/present, Apocalyptic/present, Neolibyans/infrequent, Scourgers/infrequent, Anubians/infrequent, Chroniclers/infrequent

LEADER: Armand Malpierre, Marechal de Franka

GOVERNING FORCE: Grande Savant Pélat du Casse

FEATURES: Fortified city wall, labyrinth of flames, Capitol, Camp Etienne, manufacturers' quarter

TRADE/GOODS: Bygone relics, wheat, vegetables, dairy products, cattle, wine, cloth, petro, Marduk Oil, weapons, pesticide, ammunition, distillate, gas masks, filters, scrap, wrought goods

CITY GUARD: 150 constables commanded by Pélat du Casse; Bataillon de Toulouse,

1.500 fighters commanded by Fanele Deroin; volunteer corps of the free Clans of Franka,

600 mercenaries under varying command; strike forces from Montpellier,

100 Famulancers and 300 Grenouilles commanded by the Registrar of Southern Franka;

Smaller fighting bands, 300 volunteers and opportunists

ARTIFACT TRADE: Steady trade with medium and large finds

COMMUNICATION: Daily outriders to Perpignan and Montpellier, wire radio network to Aquitaine, Scrapper radio

Marechal de Franka and thus high commander of the Resistance, can't even muster a wan smile for their efforts anymore. While the Capitol lives in the past, Camp Etienne coordinates the present. The barracks-like facility forms the center of the city. In its yards, cadets are drilled; in the bunker-like training centers, veterans teach enemy lore, strategy and leadership to prospective sergeants and commanders. In the warehouses, the arrival of goods is registered, uniforms are assembled, pesticide bombs are built and supply trains are commissioned. The command staff give the marching orders after evaluating the daily dispatches and radio transmissions on troop movements and consulting with the emissaries of the Spitalians and Anabaptists. Every evening, the result is the same: more fire trenches in the north, northwest and east; supplies for the scattered units around the Rhône swamps; the remainder of the men marches towards Parasite as rearguard.

QUERIBUS & PEYREPURTUSE

The last two remaining bastions of the Broken Cross in Southern Franka throw their shadows onto a barren high mountain valley through which an effortless route leads to Hijos del Sol, the first main camp of the Jehammedans in the Pyrenees. Before the peace treaty between the two Cults, the two mountain fortresses had repeatedly been the target of massive attacks, but Queribus and Peyrepertuse are not easy targets of conquest. The battlements of the fortresses have been hewn directly from the rock and protect the small mountain paths leading up to the gates. Additionally, the roughly 500 Anabaptists stationed here have drilled numerous sortie tunnels into the rock in order to be able to easily encircle attacking enemies. If the attackers manage to reach the gates, the twin fortress can be notified using smoke and fire signals, which will allow them to attack the enemy from behind.

The Jehammedans have stopped counting their losses. After the peace agreement, Cathedral City allowed them to recover the skeletons of their fallen in order to perform the last rites. Time and again, the caravans traveling between Perpignan and Hijos del Sol stop at the mouth of the valley to dig the mortal remains of their brothers from the mountain slopes. When the travelers gaze up at the fortresses, hatred burns in their eyes. Each of them would give his life to see the Broken Cross dragged down in the dirt and disgraced. The Shepherds of Perpignan and Hijos del Sol have decided to act in a different manner: they study all potential Anabaptist supply routes, relaying the information they gain to bandits and other riffraff. Every peace agreement becomes fragile at some point, and until then, they strive to keep the mountain fortresses as weak as possible.

HYBRISPANIAN BORDER

In the Pyrenees, the realm of the Jehammedans begins. The barren mountain region is the chosen home of several hundred families who have set up camp here. Based on their traditional way of living, they have close-knit alliances with the Hybrispanian Clans who have often merged with the ram Cult. Side by side, their warriors spill their blood against conquering Af-

TE PUEDES VENDER,
CUALQUIER OFERTA ES BUENA ?
SI QUIERES PODER...
QUÉ FÁCIL ES
ABRIR TANTO LA BOCA PARA OPINAR,
Y SI TE PIENSAS ECHAR ATRÁS
TIENES MUCHAS HUELLAS QUE BORRAR.

[HÉROES DEL SILENCIO]

ricans from the south while also protecting the highlands against attacks from the north. Situated on a mesa is the fortress city Hijos del Sol, where reports of enemy movements throughout the Pyrenees are collected and evaluated. On several occasions, a vanguard from Perpignan has been quickly fended off and driven back across the mountains into the hinterland. The settlement is marked in red as a strategic key point for the foray into the Hybrispanian heartland on the maps of the Bank of Commerce.

HIJOS DEL SOL

Hijos del Sol is rich in its own right. Every day, the families living here thank Jehammed for the happiness he has brought them. The settlement on the mesa is a haven to roughly 10,000 Jehammedans and Clanners. In its center is an artesian well that the inhabitants consider holy. A simple

system of pipes and drains leads water through countless dry-stone walls to the lower terraces. They are covered with lush meadows that are home to thousands of goats and several hundred horses. When the morning sun hits the western slope of the city, the water drains and glitters like gold, giving the settlement its name. The idyll is treacherous, however. Extensive defense systems are embedded in the countryside around the city. Under the broader paths into the valley, the ground of the countryside has been hollowed out so that heavier vehicles sink in. Above the smaller entrances, slip rock that can easily tumble down at any time, sealing the fate of intruders, has been collected. Strategically placed guard posts guarantee that approaching enemies are detected early on. Everyone here is aware of the important role that the fortress plays in the conflict with the Africans and they are willing and ready to give their life for this war.



THE MEDITERRANEAN

On the coasts near the Rhône delta, the air smells of salt. The soft blue waves are home to thousands upon thousands of specimens of sea flora and fauna which provide nourishment to animals and people. The sea is rich with oxygen and minerals. Further south, the biodiversity ends. The surface of the water near the cities is covered in oil layers that shimmer in the sun. Thick carpets of algae that have been cut into abstract patterns by the boats and freighters passing through bob up and down on a foul-smelling swill. Below them, giant jellyfish swarms roam the depths to catch, kill and dissolve the last schools of fish with their nematocysts. On the southern coast, there is no marine life left, not even a jellyfish. In the border regions between Franka, Purgare and Corpse, the subterranean lava streams of the Reaper's Blow boil the seawater – this area is extremely dangerous for ships of all size. Without warning, giant gas bubbles rise from the seabed drawing in boats and then creating towering sea waves which crash down upon them. Even deadlier are the small bubbles. Once the sea starts seething, the sailors don gas masks or press wet cloths to their mouths and noses. The caustic chlorine gas from the small bubbles burns the skin. If it enters the lungs, another ghost ship will wash ashore somewhere on the coast of southeastern Franka — if it doesn't shatter against the rocks first.

ROUTES OF THE NEOLIBYANS

For Tripol, the Mediterranean is the golden gate to Europe. Day by day, freighters, cargo catamarans and speedboats carry goods and artifacts from Europe to the land of the Lion. The Mediterranean routes are a profitable business for the Neolibyans and serve as lifelines for the Bank of Commerce. The wealth of Africa mostly depends on successful trade missions and the well-organized movement of goods. This is why the Cult employs ingenious methods when it comes to protecting its routes. It knows that the Albatrosses and Buzzards will attack mercilessly at the first sight of a mistake. Still, it's not very profitable to supply every ship with large guard details and heavy arms when the same troops could be accompanying expeditions in Europe. This is why shell games have become apart of the daily life on the waves of the Mediterranean.

It starts in the ports. Misinformation about freights and routes is spread deliberately to lure attackers into well-prepared ambushes. Bogus cargo is also often used: a freighter

that's only fit for the scrapheap is the trojan horse; it transports a few boxes of valuable goods to fool the enemy, but behind them, petro and explosives fitted with a timer are hidden. Let the vultures get what they deserve.

However, these games inevitably devour too many resources, just like the extremely cruel punitive expeditions. Breaking one's own habits has stood the test of time and proven to be more efficient. Some of the large freighters do not make for Tripol at all – instead, representatives of the Bank of Commerce inspect, evaluate and transship the goods using mysterious mobile steel islands to bring them to an undisclosed location.

When the freighter returns to Franka carrying new goods, many smaller ships touch at new ports of destination that are not a part of the route at all. If one of them gets lost, four others reach their destination. In spite of the increasingly bolder Leopard attacks on the coasts of Africa, the losses are bearable.

THE REAPER'S BLOW

The sea is burning. Every year, new islands form here as the water bubbles and boils. Volcanoes spit fire into the sky; giant chunks of boiling rock resemble comets as they howl through the air. Those who use these waterways are either reckless or suicidal. Only few Flocks know the way markers and paths through this deadly realm. For them, the labyrinth of rugged basalt islands, strong currents and reefs is a last resort if they need to throw the speedboats of their African pursuers off the track. Sailors in the Reaper's Blow are held in high esteem by the Frankan, Purgan and African flocks. Every successful escape is another story to be told in one of the many secret nests along the coast.

THE BLACK NEST

A few nautical miles from the steep coast of Corpse and thus in the territory of the Purgan Flocks, a shelf of rock juts from the Mediterranean rebelliously. The island has no name, and still every Apocalyptic who has ever sailed the Mediterranean knows it – it is the home of the Black Nest.

Entering the natural harbor is dangerous – the currents between Corpse and the basalt island punish the slightest mistake with a swift death. Newcomers are greeted with loud cheering by the members of the flock who call the Black Nest home. Barefoot, they scramble across the rusty superstructures and assign a space somewhere along the tight fairway to the helmspeople. Once the ship has landed, it is connected to the other boats with ropes, chains and planks and then unloaded.

Beyond the harbor on the cliffs, there is a fortress of steel and rust. It is the sanctuary of Callisto, the leader of the Black Flock. Defense towers fitted with machine guns and tank guns aim at every mobile target on the horizon. No one can approach the island without being met with resistance by the Apocalyptics.

From here, the Black Flock terrorizes the trade routes of the Neolibyans, organizes the Burn smuggle all over Europe and raises stolen children in order to mold them into merciless Seagulls and Battle Crows – all for the purpose of expanding the pirates' territory.

The island is not only the home of its permanent residents; it also serves as a meeting point for negotiations, pacts, turf discussions and hierarchical encounters between many of the smaller flocks on the western flank of Corpse. Once a year, on the summer solstice, all migrating birds of the Mediterranean meet at the Black Nest to honor Callisto. For a week, the leader of the Black Nest accommodates thousands of Apocalyptics in her realm. During this time, they negotiate for the most profitable smuggling routes and the Burn harvest on the spore fields close to the coast. The

migrating birds swap and repair weapons, patch up ships and sign peace treaties for the next year.

If the negotiating parties are in disagreement, the tarot, which only Callisto may interpret, decides how to avoid conflicts between rivaling Flocks. Her neutrality is indisputable regardless of the outcome. No one here has anything to gain or to lose.

CORPSE

The west coast of the island is 90 steps high and marks the border with Purgare. It is not navigable – the currents close to the island inevitably smash larger ships against the cliffs. The Africans have tried often enough. Only small cutters can approach ports like Ajaccio if they know the way through the scrap wall protecting the entrance. On all other routes, hidden harpoons and security chains or petro bombs can turn the fairway into a blazing inferno and block the way.

Scourgers in their nimble torpedo boats have to land in uncontrolled bays and climb the rock spires in order to reach the hinterland. Sometimes, they also swim for miles under cover of the night to reach an offshore sandbank. Then, the retaliatory strikes against the pirate nests on the island begin. The packs are battle-hardened – however, to prevent themselves from being spotted, they usually only take out an Albatross or Buzzard. After clipping some of the birds' feathers, the Scourgers prefer to retreat after their assassinations.

This, however, has not always been the case. Ten years ago, several well-paid mercenary bands from Tripol massacred the Sun Flock, an extremely dangerous and defiant group of hardened Apocalyptics. Their leader along with a handful of his faithful followers escaped the bloodthirsty Scourgers at the eleventh hour. The Bank of Commerce was not amused. Since then, the attack squads specialize in assassinating the leaders of the Flocks.

This extremely dangerous ongoing battle is necessary, for Corpse is a rock that obstructs commerce for the Africans, and it cannot simply be blown up. The pirates of the island massively disrupt the trade traffic with Roma. They become more and more insolent, in turn costing more and more Dinars. With the scrap walls to the south and east being impassable and the west coast being inaccessible due to the immediate proximity to the Reaper's Blow, the Africans can only resort to sending in ruthless Scourger squads.

Kifo, who are known and despised for their ruthlessness, can regain some of their old honor through these suicidal visits to the shore. On Corpse, not even the ancient rules of Chaga are valid anymore.



TOULON

Toulon is steeped in the spirit of the Neolibyans.

It has profited from the influence of Africa like almost no other city in the land of the Crow. It has become a symbol for success under the auspices of trade, its importance along with the number of inhabitants grows quickly. It has become the center of the goods trade extending from Borca across the Alps. For the Hellvetics of Territorial Region I, the city is a welcome relief from the dull white of the mountains. For the Apocalyptic, it means protection, expansion of their business and smuggling routes. Its port guarantees profit for everyone involved; however, success generates envy and hate. For years now, Toulon has been a smudge on the lenses of the Chroniclers of Justitian and Aquitaine, and yet, the city bristles with potential. The possibility of a powerful union of city states with the two other coastal cities, Montpellier and Perpignan, should not be underestimated as this could seriously threaten the predominance of Justitian on the European continent. The Judges identify the largess and the lenient laws of the coastal cities as the problem. As far as the Senate is concerned, a detachment of City Judges and Protectors should be sent across the Alps to instill the Neolibyans with some order and responsibility. In their eyes, Toulon is a swamp breeding lawlessness, and it's only a matter of time until the bandits it births come across the mountains and try to establish their habitual misconduct in the Protectorate. This cannot happen. There cannot be another power rivaling the Justitians and questioning the authority of the laws of the Protectorate.

For now, the Neolibyans are firmly established. Although they are masters of foresight, often planning several years ahead, they have become drunk on the success of the last decades and have lost their eye for detail. For a long time now, hidden powers have been at work in Toulon, eroding the city's substance. They want to dissolve the rule of the Africans by driving them from the city to drown in the sea; they want to conquer their wealth. In the bowels of Toulon, a secret conspiracy thrives behind closed doors in Terres Putain and in the Scrapper districts of Ferrallies. It gains momentum, finds followers and co-conspirators. Soon, they will show their unsightly, envious faces and reach for the crown.

THE ANCHOR OF TOULON

The symbol of the anchor of Toulon is just as well-known as the Neolibyan flag. For over 100 years, the banner has been flying over the western part of the city. Its significance is easy to decipher, for the anchor reflects the five districts and the trade of goods between them. Moreover, it symbolizes the waves and the sea, the fishing routes of the fishermen and the merchant peddling his goods along the coast. Almost no other sign has been tattooed onto the upper arm of long-established inhabitants of the city as often as the anchor of Toulon. It is also proudly displayed on the flag flying from the fortress of Toulon.

COUR ARGENT

Those who come to Cour Argent do so to make money, whether that be getting rich on bygone treasures or becoming involved in big business. Trade is thriving, and countless people haggle on the markets, buying and selling everything they have wrested from the grasp of the Rhône swamps or imported from foreign lands. In the Northern Port, African Scrappers unload tons of cargo from the freighters out of Tripol and Qabis. Speedboats from Constantine deliver chests full of freshly-minted Dinars to the house of the Bank of Commerce. Volunteer Scourger packs report for duty on the south coast as supplemental forces to the Africans. Settler ships from Zillah and Algiers land, their holds full of the belongings of North African Clans planning to settle down in Toulon in the hopes of getting their share of the big profits. The Spitalians of the nearby field hospital L'Orage check the imports and make sure that no Psychovores are brought into the city with organic material. Amidst all this, adolescent Apprentices and Scribes of the Neolibyans walk past – they come from all coastal cities to study at the University of Toulon and gain experience as young traders. Equipped with credits from their highly indebted home villages, they have come to prove themselves in Toulon — sharpening their wits, developing common sense, and planning their first risky endeavors. If they employ cleverness, negotiate skillfully and hone their financial skills, immense riches and fame await them. If they look to the north, uphill, they can easily catch a glimpse of the great heights that the best of the Neolibyans have risen to. Hamza's palace with its silver court, eponymous for the whole quarter, sits there like a monument for the ambitions of those daring to reach for the stars.

A loud ship's horn drones from the Northern Port: full speed ahead. The prow crashes into the sea, the holds are filled to the brim with Frankan artifacts. The transporter is headed south and soon she will reach her destination: the markets of Tripol. With each and every one of those transport ships that leave Toulon's harbor, a piece of Franka's history and cultural identity dies.

COUR ARGENT

Tech IV

POPULATION:

ca. 8.000, 70% Africans, 30% Europeans

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY:

Good; secured by redundant emergency generators

FOOD SUPPLY:

Good; fresh goods every day

RESIDENT CULTS:

Neolibyans, black Clanners & Scrappers, Scourgers, Anubians, Spitalians

MOOD:

Enterprising, mild

IMPORTANT AREAS:

Hamza's palace, University of Toulon, Silver Axis, Grantor Street

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FREE
IN THIS WORLD OF HATE AND GREED ?
IS IT BLACK OR IS IT WHITE ?
LET'S FIND ANOTHER COMPROMISE .

[WOLFSHEIM]

THE UNIVERSITY

From the beginning, Hamza's plan and Zohra's contribution envisaged a united Toulon and a university where the teachings and the knowledge of the Neolibyans could be passed on was the key to their vision. The richest families from the southern coast of Franka would send their children there to learn the secrets of the Neolibyans and to cement their relationship with the merchant Cult. The Bank of Commerce would levy tuition fees in the form of bonds, which the Clans would vouch for in holdings, harvests, docks, ports and warehouses.

At the same time, the university would be a great place to win the students over to the Neolibyan cause, to teach them profit optimization and the power of capital, all the while cleaning their heads of trivial nonsense like pride, homeland, culture and solidarity. Hamza and Zohra agreed on all this from the beginning. If the next generation of rulers, big landowners and Clan leaders were to grow up without prejudices the Neolibyans would be able to effortlessly loot Franka and expand the African influence to the Borcan border. Thus, the number of students grows with every semester. The red university building made from brick and wood now has three stories. Thousands of tomes of history, the natural sciences, economic theory and more, all fill the giant library; and each day, more books come in from Roma

and Cartagena. The campus itself has ten dorms for the almost 300 students. Their schedule leaves barely any time for leisure, and everyone who wants to spend four years of his life here vies for the best spots in the dorms. In class, they note and log every word the tutors say. Only when the buffalo horns sound from the battlements of the University in the evening, does the day of learning end. Then, the students gather on the central plaza in front of the University where a giant, ocean blue mosaic of the Libyan adorns the ground; there they form study groups for the night in order to deepen their knowledge of the most important lessons of the day.

THE NEOLIBYAN CONSULATE

The consulate is the political heart of Toulon, and its rhythm controls the fate of the city, the negotiations with supplicants and inhabitants of the surrounding region as well as agreements made that determine the relationships of the Neolibyans with other Cults. The walls of the consulate have seen many an important face in the last ten years: field officers from Territorial Region 1 demanding petro shipments for Hellvetica; Streamers from Aquitaine and Justitian wanting to make a tender for precious artifacts;



Anabaptist emissaries in need of credits for their missionary endeavors in Purgare and Pollen; and also Preservists and Registrars from the faraway Spital and Arnsberg who wanted to build bridges between the Anubians and themselves. They all wanted to be looked upon with favor by the Neolibyans.

Zohra, consul of Toulon and Hamza's half-sister, knows the ways of diplomacy and the unique characteristics of her Cult. She knows how much pressure they can apply to their competitors if the agreements are right. These days, almost 150 scribes work for the consul. They translate, dictate, produce oath sigils, advise others and issue insurance policies. The waiting rooms in front of the reception hall are often filled to the brim with applicants, messengers and heralds waiting for an audience. For quite a while now, the consulate has been unable to deal with all inquiries and has often had to postpone appointments for months or reject applications in advance.

GRANTOR STREET

Those who want to start an expedition to the Rhône swamps need money. By buying a concession, a Neolibyan Raider secures the maintenance of the route, the purchase

of the artifacts and the transport of the goods to Africa. Scrappers can also organize their own expeditions. They will need food, petro, weapons, tents, cooking implements and Marduk Oil. Not every Scrapper can afford to equip a raiding party. That's what the Grantors are for; young Neolibyan Scribes and Merchants who act as moneylenders. It's their first step into the wide world of commerce, and on Grantor Street, they can prove themselves by giving small expedition credits to Scrappers and thereby gain a percentage of the profit plus interest. In small chambers that dot the roadsides, the Grantors listen to the tales of the Scrappers, questioning them about the uncertainties of their routes, discussing potential dangers and calculating the risk. The scribes log every word, calculate the potential profit on slates and deduct the costs for using the concession. In the end, Hamza Abubakar III wants to profit from every business made through his concession.

If an expedition is successful, the Grantor must pay a commission fee of 20% of his profit to Hamza's palace. Another 20% goes to the scriptorium on Grantor Street. The next fifth goes to the Bank of Commerce which permitted him to work as a moneylender. The successful young Grantor keeps 40%—enough to tender a new extradition credit.



HOUSE OF THE BANK OF COMMERCE

The Bank of Commerce is powerful. It casts a long shadow far across the sea towards Europe where it opens up a subsidiary. Soon everything will move to the rhythm of money, credits and debts. Only the Sheikhs of Tripol can tell how many people, villages, and cities currently depend on the Bank of Commerce like a newborn baby on his mother's milk. However, they would never allow a stranger a peek at their ledgers.

Grantors and Merchants cling to the Bank of Commerce like hungry jackals. It lends money to Raiders and Seafarers for grand endeavors and can, in one fell swoop, freeze or confiscate fortunes. Expropriation is the worst thing that can happen to a Neolibyan, and the Bank of Commerce possesses the necessary authority.

It has opened up a subsidiary in Toulon, where it profits from Hamza's expeditions and his exploitation of Franka. This is why it has given the ruler of Toulon its unwavering support. Lekon Ajabi, head Magnate of the magnificent white building, has not been residing in Toulon for quite a while. He has left his tasks at the Bank of Commerce to his subordinates while he supports the petro trade in the conflict areas of Hybrispania. War is always profitable, and with Hamza at the helm, Toulon is in good hands. Lekon does not need to supervise the business of the Bank of Commerce there anymore. Once power structures and financial circuits have been established, all parties involved will internalize this structure and continue working according to the established principles of success.

THE SILVER AXIS

A plastered, seemingly ruler-drawn straight road leads past the southwestern flank of Hamza's palace towards Terres Putain. The elite merchants of Franka and Africa offer their goods here to those who can afford it. Craftsmen from Port Lagagne rent booths to exhibit their products. Anything of value can be bought here: animals ranging from beautiful birds and butterflies to monkeys, hyenas and baboons, spices, jewelry, foreign metals, artifacts, bygone relics, strange works of art, statues and books. Everything that was wrested from the Rhône swamps and did not go to the markets of Tripol lands in the Silver Axis.

The booths themselves are draped with colorful fabrics; barkers loudly call out prices and goods. From back alleys, music can be heard, and people sitting on benches at small tables drink coffee and tea from cow horns and wooden cups. You have to know what you're looking for in order to find it, but many Neolibyans know the ins and outs of the bazaar of Toulon like the back of their hands.

S U P P L Y

The swamp takes, but it also gives. There is an abundant food supply; if there is one thing that Toulon has no lack of, it is a variety of food.

Every day, swamp hunters bring fresh goods to the city. The Rhône is a paradise for snakes, and they are a delicacy on the markets, where they are smoked on a spit and sold. If you pay double the price, you can also get the skin. A variety of meat can be found here – frogs, quails, and ducks are sold and prepared at different stalls. In Terres Putain, you can sometimes even find crane or piglet meat. In Saint Chenil, they prepare lizards to keep the hunger at bay while one journeys. The meat of the lizard is roasted on a twig until the skin becomes crispy and is served in flatbread. On

the legendary fish market of Port Lagange, good catch abounds. Every morning, the fishermen unload oysters, mussels, fresh fish, shrimp and seafood at the beach. Here, Scrappers get their provisions for the day before filling their bellies with crab chowder and snake blood to strengthen their immune system. Soon, they will go back to the Rhône swamps, and they want to be prepared.

Those looking for more exotic food have to go to Cour Argent. The bazaar along the market road offers fruit, spices and roots from Africa that aren't available anywhere else in Europe. Here, Scourgers spend their earnings drinking fermented milk and eating exceptional meat. The pack needs to remain healthy.

Only Ferrallies does not offer a lot of diversity for the stomach. The resident scavengers put up small tents for their brothers. In large copper vats, they cook old leather in salty sea water and hand the wet lumps to their poor brothers and sisters. Chewing the warm leather scraps doesn't provide many nutrients, but it quells the hunger pains for a while until one can afford more substantial offerings.

In one of the caliginous dead ends behind two junctions and further beyond the din of the streets, a master blacksmith is said to have set up shop. Here, Tuga, a legend among the African Scrappers, fashions excellent rifles for an exclusive clientele: great hunters going north to kill the most dangerous prey of all – Psychonauts.

NORTHERN PORT

The jetties of the Northern Port are the only ones on the Frankan coast big enough for the true freight colossus of the Mediterranean to moor. There are only six of them, although Hamza would prefer ten. Additionally, he needs to keep parts of the eastern pier accessible for the four speed-boats that the Scourgers use to safeguard the port. This is why the new day begins three hours before dawn, even if the old one has ended just five hours before. Porters, haulers, throwers, pump people, mussel scrapers – the peons who slowly gather around the big wharfs have very dark circles around their eyes and burning shoulders. Men and women flock to the banners of the various counting houses to make coffee and tea on public coal ranges. Then they unpack their breakfast and start swapping what they have brought with them. They celebrate eating together knowing the next possibility will not arise for another sixteen hours. At the sound of the first bugle, the Neolibyans arrive, flanked by mute Scourgers who will act as overseers later. Teams are assembled, tasks are assigned, and the goals for the day and the pay are set. After a short commemoration of the ancestors, work starts. Thousands of boxes, pallets, baskets and casks are unloaded from the day's incoming freighters and then carried into the warehouses or reloaded onto smaller ships destined for Montpellier and Perpignan.

Freight cranes take care of larger containers; the rest is muscle work. There are no breaks – those who are too slow are shouted at and pushed on. Time and again, Scourgers come patrolling. Whips are not needed to maintain morale. People labor from dawn to dusk of their own volition, loading the goods onto outbound freighters which were unloaded that very same morning. Those who break down from exhaustion are dragged aside by their comrades and left to the Anubians. Water, tea, blessed oils for the temples and a few good words, then it's back to work. Trade never sleeps.

THE WAREHOUSES

West of the Northern Port are the warehouses. The oblong stone buildings have no windows; high gates have been erected every 20m between the lateral walls. They are only opened when an import runner announces a shipment or a porter from the Silver Axis waves an order. The air within is much cooler in comparison to the air out on the street. Animal symbols and numbers painted on the floor and the crossbeams point the way through the jungle of shelves and stockpiles. What goes in must go out, and therefore, a certain system is necessary. Ancient Neolibyans, chosen for their integrity, experience and memory, show the por

ters the way. Each and every one of them presides over an entire warehouse and has numerous assistants. They often come from the home villages of the warehouse owners or are disagreeable half cousins, nephews and nieces that need to be fed and have asked for work in Toulon – their wish has been granted. The warehouseman alone determines what goes to the front, to the back, to the top and to the bottom. Trouble befalls anyone who acts against his organizing principle. It can take days to find goods that were incorrectly stored. When the night comes in this area of the borough, the Scourger presents triples. With trained hyenas on the leash, they patrol every cobblestone between the warehouses. This makes burglaries a rarity; although stored goods keep disappearing according to the register...

THE BARRACKS

The Barracks were built by the Hellvetics: solid construction, Genie fabrication... a forward post. When the Morvant control terminal was expounded, stationing troops in Toulon became unnecessary, and the corps command wanted the troops closer to Ducal and the junction Scorched Path/ Bernese Passage, instead of far away on the coast. As a sign of goodwill (but mainly to save expenses), the Hellvetics gave their barracks - including the surrounding defense wall - to the Touloni in 2572.

For decades, the Senate of Toulon has used the barracks

as a training facility for the city militia, and the Resistance recruited potential fighters for the Frankan army from there. Then the Neolibyans arrived, and the Touloni city militia suddenly became obsolete. Battle-hardened Scourger packs entered the city; some of them had fought on the fronts in the Balkhan and in Hybrispania. Although they were few in numbers, their bearing was formidable. The sound of their assault rifles, when fired into the air, did the rest. The Senate decided to give the barracks to Hamza as lodgings for the African troops.

Today, twelve packs commanded by Ayubu reside there. The defensive walls have been topped with barbed wire; the outer facades are painted with images of avenging ancestors. Skulls of beheaded enemies and masks of fallen Scourgers hang from the main gate serving as reminders of the military clout of the troops. On the inside, there is a considerable arsenal. The armory alone contains machetes, spears, boxes of ammunition, shields, decorated assault rifles, whips and torture implements. Two field howitzers are mounted on swiveling gun carriages in the guard towers where they are doubly boarded with steel; if necessary, they can fire far inland or out onto the ocean. The vast inner courtyard is used for fights between the packs. The Scourgers try to stay on guard to avoid growing sluggish while away from the front. Some of them even volunteer to support African Scrappers on their expeditions in hopes of sharpening their senses with a journey far from home.

TOULON BY NIGHT

The night turns the streets of Toulon into a colorful array of lights. Streetlamps light the main roads; their erratic flickering shows the state of the Module.

In the back alleys, insect-repellant candles burn on windowsills, smelling heavily of cloves and grated lemon peel. On the canals, the navigation lights of the barges and boats bob up and down. Those who

forget their light can head for the Scorched Path right away. A nighttime collision would not only destroy the transported goods but may also lead to the blocking of the canal which would result in some steep fines. The same is true for the port: ships and boats without navigation lights are considered suspicious. If the Scourgers detect one on the waters, they encircle it with their speed-

boats. More than once, some madmen have tried to steer boats full of explosives into the freighters to sink the colossus in the port. Or worse – to steal goods from ships that had just arrived.

Only in Saint Chenil is it dark at night. Maybe so the people can - at least at night - forget all the vermin creeping through the alleys here.

THE LAW OF THE COAST

Hamza Abubakar III left the legislation within the city limits to the Touloni. It was a gesture of respect to the long-established families and Clans whose shoulders the city rested on. The Senate of Toulon has always judicialized capital offenses. There is only one punishment for murder — At dawn, the culprit is dragged to a boat and brought out onto the sea. At noon, the executioners throw him overboard, his hands tied behind his back. Only his legs and endless pedaling can save him now; however, truth be told, most never make it back to shore.

Minor offenses are treated differently. In Terres Putain, there are several "Arènes de l'égalité" (arenas of settlement). There, people who have been wronged can publicly confront the offenders and demand either a public apology or compensation.

For the inhabitants of the district, the rants are a welcome diversion, especially if it comes from someone paid to clamor. After the speeches, the audience judges the accused person by throwing colored shards of glass into a vase that is passed around to: red means guilty, black means

acquittal. The district judges log and execute the judgment, but the actual punishment is the damaged reputation that the accused person suffers. If he's a trader who has cheated on the scales, he must lower his prices ruinously for the week or leave for another town, lest no one buy from him again. If he's a burglar, he can expect to be beaten or stoned in the streets as soon as he goes out into the open. Simple offenses like petty theft, unpaid fines, failing to pay the bill at a restaurant or indecent behavior are punished by compulsory labor on the Scorched Path. For the first offenses, it's a few days, then weeks and in the end, entire years of compulsory labor.

Crimes against Africans are a general exception from this form of legislation. Those who offend Hamza's people will probably end up in chains: the Neolibyans do not tolerate lengthy trials, intellectual revolts or dissent. Scourgers drag the culprit on board of the next freighter to leave; the destination is Africa, where the culprit will spend the rest of his life on a plantation. Similarly strict is the law in Cour Ar-

gent, the only district where weapons are not allowed. Visitors who want to pass the bridges must leave all of their weapons with the Scourgers on duty. They receive a bond with which they can reclaim their weapons later. No bond, no return.

Additionally, the field hospital itself has six Field Medics and two Surgeons who can take care of complicated illnesses, wounds and fractures; the only thing that's missing is the patients. Neolibyans and Scourgers would rather go to an Anubian instead of being treated by a hairless white crow. The Scrappers of Ferrallies cannot afford medical care, and the Touloni of Port Lagagne do not cooperate with the Spitalians due to their less-than-glorious past. Instead, they trust in domestic remedies, medical herbs from the swamps and other "painkillers" from Terres Putain.

Outside Cour Argent, the Spitalians have no authority — they can neither control nor arrest anyone. This is why serving at the field hospital L'Orage feels more like a punishment than an honor these days.

FIELD HOSPITAL L'ORAGE

After the devastated campaigns of the Wachsmann-Lacroix expedition, there is almost no Spitalian presence left. Once, the medical Cult was able to boast about its barracks in and around Toulon; today, however, its battalions hide behind the walls of the bastion at Montpellier.

The defeat in the swamps was too embarrassing, the losses too high. They couldn't simply march down the streets, chests swollen with pride trying to muster new troops in front of the population. Almost nobody believed the boisterous promises of the doctors anymore. As a sign of goodwill, the formerly magnificent military camp L'Orage was remodeled into a simple field hospital as a gift to the Neolibyans to provide medical support for their population. In return for a high lease, Montpellier supplies the African rulers with thirty Famulancers to act as guards within Cour Argent and keep a special eye on the Northern Port and its flow of commodities. They often perform randomized testing, especially when perishable goods are imported from Africa.

THE CUSTOMS HOUSES

Toulon's main source of income and the foundation of the Neolybians' success is the customs houses. All items being shipped out of Toulon as well as all items being imported are first inspected by the African appraisers working for Hamza. They appraise generators, artifacts, barrels of petro and other goods to calculate the markup. They take consult Neolian traders who deal in bulk imports, take samples of imported goods and determine the customs value.

In Toulon, the currency is Dinars and Chronicler Drafts are rarely accepted. Every morning at sunrise, the house of the Bank of Commerce determines the exchange rate for the day and sends messengers to the customs houses to inform them. Thus, the Bank of Commerce controls the foreign currency and profits from the exchange of Drafts coming to Toulon across the Alps from the Northwest.

THE REFINERY

The refinery is Orma's realm. The close confidant and cousin of Hamza is a legend among the African Scrappers – whatever he touches is imbued with a new spirit. Under his supervision, artifacts are refurbished in the spacious section of the port. Europeans are not even allowed to work as assistants here. Incoming goods are evaluated on large examination tables; useful things are separated from the scrap and carried into the respective craft halls for further processing. These craft halls double as dorms for Orma's Scrappers. There, the artifacts are either dismantled or restored and upcycled so they can be sold at a high price in Tripol. If the Chroniclers saw how much rare metal gets carelessly tossed into the melting pots here or simply dismantled to serve as spare parts, their diodes would explode.

The African Scrappers have little use for European storage media unless it contains construction plans or information that could lead to huge finds. They are especially interested in the legacy of the UEO, which apparently had several warehouses and manufacturing bases in the Rhône swamps. Coordinates, holomaps, security codes, and transponders – everything that can be of assistance in the salvaging of more UEO artifacts and weapons goes straight to the palace.

THE PETRO TOWERS

Millions of gallons of fuel are stored in the petro towers in Toulon. Every week, tankers arrive to top off the 30 m high reservoirs. The veins of the Resistance are thirsty, and without petro, there would be no Scorched Path or safety from the swarms – there would be no Module and thus, no electricity in Toulon.

For Ayubu, the towers are a weak spot – no more, no less. Hamza had insisted on building them right at the harbor. In the meantime, Ayubu had them secured with armor plating, cross-bracings, platforms and UEO guns flanking the towers from the top of sea bunkers on both sides. Between the bunkers, an aggregate not tied to the Module can pull taut a giant security chain. All of this will, however, be in vain if the ship decides to target the towers from their position on the sea and ends up inadvertently hitting one of the countless pipes that transports petro and contaminated sediments (as well as the gases that they produce) between the towers. To minimize the danger of explosions, the waste matter is pumped directly to the Module via pipes under the sea. Let the Crow's Scrappers try and get the crap burned.

ON THE WATER

Toulon is constantly on the move. Broad man-made channels and waterways criss-cross the city like scaffolding. On them, goods are transported back and forth between the districts. Heavy-duty freight, generators and trade goods are loaded onto either small boats, gondolas or rafts to be shipped across the bay from Ferrallies to Port Lagagne or Terres Putain. The din of the engines drowns out everything else, and the air is heavy with fumes. The only thing to do is hold your breath and put your fingers in your ears until

the scrap gondola has passed.

The inhabitants dump their trash into the small waterways weaving across the districts, but they also do business nearby. They buy firewood and petro, building materials and food from traders on rafts and gondolas. Dinars change hands quickly, and the hustle between the barges and boats is enormous. Waifs beg for a piece of bread or simply steal it. Loud shouting, haggling and arguing echo through the alleyways. Inexperienced Neolibyan Apprentices fight

against experienced Scrappers for customers and prices, supply and demand.

The beloved floating cookshops move every hour on the hour from canal to canal to sell their dishes. For a few Dinars extra, some of these cookshops offer benches and tables so diners can eat in the company of others while traveling to their desired destination. Over the years, they have become an institution; nowadays, many traders, Neolibyans and rich Touloni do business at the tables of cookshops.

HAMZA'S PALACE

One building dominates the heart of Cour Argent: the palace of the Raider Hamza Abubakar III. Not a week had passed since his arrival on the shore in the summer of 2586 and already the negotiations with the Senate of Toulon were in full swing. The Neolibyan ferried one of his scribes over to Port Lagagne with two chests full of Dinars in tow — it was the deposit for the hill over the northern port, the heart of Cour Argent. The scribe had not yet returned with a final answer when Abubakar ordered his Scourgers and cartographers to survey the hill and mark the corners of the defense wall with spears.

On that day, the construction of the palace began. Every month, new wings and rooms are finished; trees and bushes are planted in the extensive garden; and paths made of looted Purgan marble are laid. Exquisite fabrics fly from the windows and the handcrafted doors are adorned with reliefs of Hamza's family tree, a testament of his affinity to the eight ancestors.

Rare birds in cages made from twirly silver and wire hang from the ceiling of the pergola leading to the garden. Here, the Raider entertains his guests on cushions and couches with African tea, Ratluk from the Balkhan and Andalusian rosewater. Those who make it here for an audience with the Neolibyan understand quickly how many riches Abubakar III has assembled in the last decade. The palace is far from finished, Hamza tells his guests, who listen amazed. He gazes into the distance, looking at what he has already created and what he has yet to create.

THE OUTER WALL

The outer wall surrounds the palace like an armor belt made of massive rock. Crowns and horns project outward from the walls; weapon spaces on the battlements enable quick salvoes and counterattacks. Even outnumbered, the defenders could easily hold the wall against an entire army. The South gate opens up onto a path leading down to the Silver Axis. Via the East gate, one reaches the Street of Grantors.

THE INNER WALL

Should the outer wall fall, defenders can retreat higher up to the inner wall to entrench themselves in the palace. From here, a parapet walk leads to the other palace buildings and the atrium.

ATRIUM

A vast inner courtyard is the centerpiece of the palace. Here, Hamza receives Magnates and Sheikhs from Tripol as well as guests of the consulate. Every day at sunrise, the members of Ayubu's pack prepare for their daily posts by greeting their ancestors here. Afterwards, they don their masks and check their weapons before taking positions all over the palace and Cour Argent.

THE GARDENS

The gardens of Hamza's palace are breathtaking. Sculptures, boulders and rare plants decorate the area. The Raider has bought every strange sapling available and had it planted and tended to by the gardeners. Tiled pathways

snake through the area, encircling the whole palace. In sand patches, desert flowers grow; in the forest gardens, colorful and delicate flowers blossom, the beds beautifully manicured. A basin cuts straight through the center of Hamza's personal Eden: dragonflies zip across the surface — in the water are the rarest of fish that one can procure. Those who gaze inside for too long get a feeling of deep longing and peace. There are not enough places like this left in the world.

THE CORE HALL

A staircase sixteen steps wide leads from the atrium that connects the palace front to the great portal. This square double door is 6m high and fashioned completely from silver with a lion's head embossed on the metal. Beyond lies the palace's Core Hall: a colossal, three-story stone building with angles and terraces emulating a step pyramid.

The flood of images and impressions intoxicates visitors, overloading their senses. The corridor's walls are covered with works of art from all over Europe. All inlays are made of silver and platinum, garnered from the scrap of Franka. Countless alcoves full of books, reading corners, offices and workstations take up the almost 60 rooms of the Core Hall. Globes, artifacts, and astrolabes adorn the various side chambers while the skeletons of animals and humans decorate the walls. Mammoth tusks from faraway Pollen are propped up along the corridors; masks of wild Clans from Britain and the Stukov desert hang from the columns. Thirty of the most beautiful Neolibyan rifles are

HAMZA'S PALACE





- 01. THE OUTER WALL
- 02. THE INNER WALL
- 03. THE ATRIUM
- 04. THE GARDENS
- 05. THE CORE HALL
- 06. GUARDHOUSE
- 07. OVERWATCH PLATFORM
- 08. GUESTHOUSE
- 09. GREENHOUSES
- 10. TEMPLE OF THE ANCESTORS
- 11. SUN PATH
- 12. THE SHRINE OF ANUBIS

on display in the trophy room, each of which are worth a fortune. In between, there are bejeweled Jehammedan daggers and sabers, icons made of gold wire and musical instruments from the Balkhan. Servants carry heavy blocks of ice to the palace and put them into shadowy corners to maintain a pleasantly low temperature. Palace girls make tea, place bowls of dried blossoms in the offices and fill the hall with fragrances and spices from all over the world.

GUARDHOUSE

Diagonally across the central hall is the guardhouse. The building belongs to the Scourger packs. Ayubu resides here. The dorms, armories and arsenal of the Scourgers are also located here. There's a simple rule: at any given time, four packs of Scourgers have to be in the guardhouse while the other eight packs are stationed in the barracks in Cour Argent for emergencies. Once a week, the packs exchange position with their brothers left in the barracks.

OVERWATCH PLATFORM

The Overwatch platform juts out from the palace like a seventy-meter-long needle. Inside, there is a spiral staircase that leads up to the summit. From there, observers have a wonderful view across Hamza's realm. There is no better place to truly understand what the Raider has created in the ten years since his arrival. The view from the platform is awe-inspiring, and Hamza's power becomes clear only when looking towards the horizon from this vantage point. If sharpshooters were to take position here, they could see the entirety of Cour Argent.

GUESTHOUSE

The guesthouse is the palace's home for servants and highly decorated guests. It contains thirty additional rooms, and those who lodge here want for nothing. Small fountains offer freshwater, and alcoves invite guests for a moment of repose. Gold-embroidered cushions, silk scarves, woven tapestries display images – Hamza's wealth engulfs his guests even in their dreams.

The servants' wings, each equipped with its own kitchen and various storage rooms, are equally luxurious. Hamza wants to share his success with everyone, and, therefore, ensures that even his close to 200 palace servants have the same luxuries as he does. Hamza knows that if his servants considered the palace their home, they will take good care of it and preserve its beauty as if it was their own.

GREENHOUSES

In the northern part of the garden, situated in the shadows of the core hall, are the greenhouses. In these glass buildings, Hamza's gardeners grow healing herbs and rare plants that the Anubian Nephraim needs for his ancestor rituals and to produce Marduk Oil. Countless species of butterflies

and moths soundlessly glide through the humid thicket within the greenhouses. The caterpillars are harvested and brought to the Groceries in Port Lagagne where silk for the palace is made from their gossamer threads.

TEMPLE OF THE ANCESTORS

A gilded dome covers the temple of the ancestors. The round building has no walls, only pillars supporting the open space and the vault. The ancestors shall be able to freely enter this place. The interior of the temple is simple and plain so that nothing distracts from the rites. A circular altar with a brazier is the center and the sanctuary of the temple. Any servant may pray here in the evening hours when the setting sun shines through the arcades.

SUN PATH

The sun path leads straight from the Temple of the Ancestors to the eastern gate. On this short path, the Anubian initiates begin their processions from the temple to the city to bless the black Scrappers for the next expedition and bring Hamza's gifts to the house of the Bank of Commerce.

THE SHRINE OF ANUBIS

In the garden just south of the temple of the ancestors, Hamza had a shrine built for his half-brother Nephraim to be used as a place of meditation. Below the shrine is Nephraim's crypt, a subterranean storage room full of ancestor masks, snake baskets, ritual implements and Nephraim's personal weapons. When he goes to the swamps, he first takes everything that he needs to survive the journey from his crypt.

THE VAULT

Deep below the palace, more than a third of Hamza's personal assets are stored within the hill – the rest are shares and estates in Africa.

The vault is vast and contains incredible possessions: bygone wines, spices, Duat fruit, tinctures and fabrics from Africa, silver from the Balkhan, casks of Marduk oil, as well as tens of thousands of freshly minted Dinars and hundreds of gold bars – unbelievably valuable loot from all over the world. Not even Hamza himself knows exactly the worth of what lies here.

Another vault sits behind several portals and steel-gated doors, secured with bygone ID locks. It contains Hamza's real treasures: unique artifacts like key wands, holocards and signature decoders, but mainly Drafts. Chronicler Drafts that have never been creased, most of them genuine, some counterfeit, but all of them counted and rolled into small bundles and stored on pallets.

With this foreign currency, he controls the exchange rate and tilts the scales of the exchange offices to the side that's most profitable to him and the Cult at any given time.

FERRALLIES

Cable coils as thick as a man's arm wind through the sodden pavement of Ferrallies that is covered with crudely hewn wooden planks. The bubbles of air enclosed under the planks make loud, squelching noises when the Scrappers run across with their carrying rigs and wheelbarrows. People call them Pheromancer farts. The Scrappers laugh, even though their life is anything but funny.

A cable has broken in a nearby scrap hall. Whipping backwards, it broke both the legs of a scavenger. His brothers are kneeling around him, trying to splint the bones and carry him to his tent, but this will probably not guarantee his survival. If he cannot stand, he cannot work. But his job in Ferrallies is all that he has. Since the Neolibyans have taken over Toulon, the district has gone downhill. It once was the hub of the trading and recycling of artifacts. Here, the treasures of the Rhône were processed, dismantled and appraised before being sent to Borca. The gold rush brought Scrappers here from all over Europe, and for years, many dirt diggers praised the district as a "second Tech-Central" or even called it "New Bedain". Two decades ago, however, the Chroniclers dropped the Scrappers and the district like an overripe fruit. The swamp, the drones and their masters had bested the technology Cult and its efforts to push forward to the north. The Scrappers remained – as losers.

With the Africans in charge, everything changed. They sent their own Scrapper squads northwards, concentrating the processing of their finds in Cour Argent and Terres Putain. They also built new halls and started shipping the artifacts over the Northern Port instead of using the canals and the freight gondolas of the Scrapper district. While the rest of Toulon thrived through trade and African spending capacity, Ferrallies slowly deteriorated.

Today, the glory of the pioneer years is almost gone. These are the dog days in Ferrallies, and there seems to be no end in sight. Warehouses have been eviscerated, and Scrappers have squatted the vacant manufactories and alcoves, living in small tents or under tarps. They survive by processing building materials, rolling and forging steel and sheet metal, repairing ships or maintaining the Module and thus supplying the Cour Argent with electricity. Time and again, small groups of fortune hunters go north and enter the swamps, but they lack the knowledge of the African Scrappers who often have looted an exposed scrap vein months before. Moreover, the Neolibyan Scrapper squads are equipped with Marduk Oil that makes them basically invisible to the drones.

FERRALLIES

Tech IV

POPULATION:

Ca. 10.000, 11% Africans,
89% Europeans

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY:

Good; direct connection to the Module

FOOD SUPPLY:

Poor; only self supply and third-grade goods

RESIDENT CULTS:

European Scrappers, Clanners,
undercover Chroniclers

MOOD:

Squalid, industrial, loud

IMPORTANT AREAS:

The Module, Appraiser Parlors, Battering Forges, Great Hall, the Burster



THE BATTERING FORGES

In the Battering Forges, the Iron Brothers take anything that seems salvageable from the scrap heaps. Vehicle bodies, locking systems, generators and other smaller machines are either repaired or dismantled to the last coil and sorted away as building parts. The Africans have delighted in the European carrion crows' collecting mania for quite some time; lately, however, emissaries keep coming from the harbor, looking to buy rare and desperately needed spare parts. All negotiations are handled by Deich, a henchman of Nestor and agent of the Justitian Cartel. The Cartelist is the supervisor of the Battering Forges. His coarse manners set the Africans' teeth on edge. He bores customers to death with bad jokes about the origin and the value of his goods until they are fed up and agree to pay any price. The Scrappers call this "talking the strangers into it" and love Deich for all his small victories over the "damn Africans".

THE GREAT HALL

Originally, the Great Hall was used to temporarily store and redistribute prey from the swamps before it was appraised, weighed and cracked. The construction used up enormous

amounts of material and took over two years. Borcan manufacturers had brought plans and drafts across the Alps from Borca and advised the architects. The struts and masts were based on the static principles of the technology center in Justitian. Huge double doors could be lifted using a complex pulley system, allowing for tall structures, generators and machines with the help of a railing system to be transported and stored inside.

The Great Hall was once Ferrallies's pride and joy.

Today, it serves a different purpose. It provides a home and lodging for the remaining dirt diggers. Today, over 500 Scrappers live tightly packed in the multi-story terraces and in the working bays and alcoves. Drums, oil barrels, lockers secured with heavy chains and small beds of straw and padded leather mark the personal space of the Scrappers living in the Great Hall. It's like a beehive. Scaffolding and platforms on metal stilts separate the room, reaching up to the roof of the hall. Even up there, scavengers and newcomers intending to chance it in the swamps find a place to sleep. Cables branch out of multiple power sockets, winding between the alcoves, and leading outside over small posts and through the streets right up to the Module. This is the source of the electricity for the generator which is used to



light the hall. At night, tube lights flicker and light up the countless small groups of footstools and flivvers where the Scrappers sit together while they work on upgrading their tools and weapons or making plans and drawing maps. Here, they tell each other about their journeys, about new or unusable landmarks, and about life in the wilderness.

APPRAISER PARLORS

Once, ten appraisers worked here day and night, checking countless artifacts brought in for their usability and to determine their resale value; however, when the Africans came, everything changed. Today, the appraisers only assess scrap that is washed into the Appraiser Parlors by the kilo. They sort metals and calculate the actual demand; they broker between the Scrappers in the Battering Forges and the Burster to negotiate the price and the amount for sales. Their faces are grim. They feel betrayed and taken by surprise. The artifact trade was their thing; it was the great promise of the Chroniclers that once brought them to Toulon. The metal detectors have long since been turned off, and the workbenches with the huge magnetic coils stand still. How should they melt precious material from a piece

of rusty sheet metal?

They spit, take a drink and look out of the window over to Cour Argent. In the background, you can hear one of them ranting about the Africans and how they have it coming. The others nod silently.

THE ABANDONED ALCOVES

The Chroniclers built three alcoves in Ferrallies between 2545 and 2567. They were supposed to catalog the stream of artifacts and direct them to the various Chronicler operations rooms. One alcove for stream fragments destined for Aquitaine, and the second for artifacts destined for Justitian. The third was supposed to supply Toulon itself. The generator-powered alcoves were lit by floodlights and staffed with powerful Agents and scavengers. The area was only accessible through a security checkpoint with an electronic pass that the Chroniclers personally gave to only the best ruin wolves.

In 2577, everything changed. "Operation Toulon" was declared a failure, and the Streamers and Agents were called back to the Clusters overnight. They didn't even take the stock stored in the alcoves with them.

The Scrappers only heard of their fate in the weeks and months that were to come.

The alcoves lay dormant. However, the Chroniclers had left behind bugs, automatic cameras and recording devices that were embedded in cracks to allow future monitoring of Ferrallies from the Clusters in Justitian and Aquitaine.

These devices are still hidden in the gables and metal foundations all around the deserted Cult quarters. They broadcast all discussions and information within a 500 m radius to the readout centers in the Clusters.

FREIGHT GONDOLA

Most of the inhabitants of Ferrallies subsist on collecting and sorting scrap. While parents search the hinterland for new finds, the kids at home separate recyclable metals from useless scrap. Boards, planks, struts, pipes, beams, sheet metal – everything that can be recycled as building material is carried to the freight gondola. This broad barge is just small enough to squeeze through the canals of Ferrallies, and it belongs to Nestor. His people appraise the value of scrap and pay at once. They know that many will not survive the next day without the few Dinars and Drafts. Late in the evening, the sirens sound – time to make way. For now, two cutters with strong engines push the gondola with its heavy load to the port. Tough shit if you're in the way; it has no brakes. In the port, peons unload the cargo and sort it into containers. Resale is by the ton; anything else wouldn't be profitable for the Grantors.

THE SMELTER

The smelter — a furnace that runs all day and all night — stands right next to the jetties of Ferrallies. Here, steel beams and sheet metal are produced. Day in and day out, Scrappers with black lung, barely able to breathe, shovel coke while others keep the compressors that fan the embers going. The heat is searing, especially when the molten metal runs into the casting channels and makes the air shimmer. At the jetties, scrap boats unload ships full of rusty iron and brittle steel. Above them, electric pulleys with tilting shovels squeak along a fine-mesh steel net. Below, Scrappers with clunky cable remote controls hanging around their necks run back and forth, constantly looking up. The tilting shovels need to be set down carefully when the two slew-ing cranes move overhead. The cramped controls of the two magnet claws are right under the cables. It's their job to bring bulky goods from the cranes to the furnace at once so the work can continue smoothly. As soon as one of the big electromagnets is started, all remote controls around it fail. It's also not uncommon for the locking mechanisms of the tilting shovels to open suddenly. More than one dirt digger has been killed by a hail of rusty scrap.

THE BURSTER

The Burster is not a building, but a district within a district. With the help of the Iron Brothers, the Chroniclers wanted to start a Mediterranean Cluster here. Piers were driven into the ground; channels for cables and conduits were milled; halls of sheet-metal were erected; punches, rollers and presses were installed; and finally, steel superstructures that were supposed to form the outer walls of the new Cult quarters were later built. There was, however, no "later".

The superstructures folded and are now used as bridges between the buildings where the hardcore Scrappers, led by Nestor, crack the steel and plastic casing of large artifacts and modules to get to their precious innards. Useful stuff is sold to the Neolibyans; the rest rots in the cramped corridors between the halls outside. It's not profitable to dispose of the scrap as all that plastic would only destroy the smelter. This is why the premises become more and more treacherous with every passing month – some halls can only be entered by crawling through the old maintenance tunnels. Nestor, who has established the Iron Brothers headquarters in the heart of the Burster, likes it that way.

Ever since the legendary Cave Bear, Eisenhauer, joined Nestor a few weeks ago, order has been introduced into the chaos. Heaps of scrap are piled and welded into barricades; folded superstructures are turned into defensive corridors; ambushes are prepared in cluttered halls; and ducts are cleared to serve either as emergency exits or as death traps. Everyone here has long suspected that something major is going on.

THE MODULE

From afar, the Module looks like a Kraken covered in perforated metal plates and caught in a tangle of overhead power cables. Cable harnesses over a meter in diameter jut from the thicket of sheet metal, steel struts, wooden beams and aggregates in a series connection. Wheezing, rust-eaten pipes regurgitate clouds of black smoke: the monster shakes. Suddenly, red lights blink through petro fumes, and warning signals blare. Everywhere, Scrappers look up with worried expressions. Then, there is silence. The first Scrappers start bringing in copper coils and cask-sized fuses; they light arc welders and crawl into the Module, cursing. From somewhere, a voice grates from a speaker: "Batteries to 11! Move your asses!" Endless minutes later, the beast comes to life again with an earsplitting screech. A longer shutdown would have had disastrous consequences. Not only Ferrallies, but also the other districts, especially Cour Argent, are connected to the grid of the giant generator that consumes more oil than a dozen Surge Tanks. The Africans punish every shutdown with high fines; their agreement with the Iron Brothers knows no loopholes. The Scrappers begrudgingly pay. No one wants to end up on a plantation in Africa.

TERRES PUTAIN

In the west of Toulon, the old and the new merge. Terres Putain is a melting pot of cultures. Traditional families, new settlers and acolytes of the Resistance live alongside Apocalyptic from the parasite cities, irregulars from Toulon, pioneers and swamp hunters. The various individuals meeting here form one of the liveliest and most sinful districts on the southern coast of Franka. Inns and joints stand next to and on top of each other; in the small alleys, there's gambling and drinking. Whores, riffraff and peons offer their "diverse" services. Amongst them live Jehammedans who cut their lambs' throats, letting the blood run into the gutters and roasting the fresh meat over an open fire and selling it.

The people place bets in small gambling halls and play with colorful gaming pieces on painted boards; they eat, drink and celebrate together. In the dank and half-flooded basements below, riskier competitions take place in the pale glow of the oil lamps. Reckless Battle Crows high on Glory fight rabid Gendos, armed only with a knife. Scourgers determine their pack's hierarchy through fistfights with shard-studded gloves. Cock-fights, eating living sprats, catching poisonous snakes or plucking a Dinar from a bowl of acidic jellyfish with bare hands – the list of potential bets is long, and some risk more than is good for their life and limb, drunk on ill-advised courage.

Winning a bet enables you to fulfill any wish, no matter how crude. Whether you are looking for bounty hunters, wanting to make someone disappear in the swamps or seeking to expand your arsenal, there seems to be the right middleman for any endeavor, no matter how shady. Anubian Sickles sell their experience in fighting Psychonauts to European Scrappers planning an expedition to the North while Apocalyptic sell excellent ammunition that they procure through trade — in exchange for highly potent Muse, Argus or Glory, the Burn-addicted highly corrupt Hellvetics from the Morvant control terminal trade quality ammunition with the Apocalyptic.

On top of all this, there's the profitable business of bordellos, naked skin and quick fun. Nine months after many of these nightly encounters, the resulting bastards are born and shipped to Saint Chenil at dawn where they will grow up in the Orphanage without parents, a name or a future.

TERRES PUTAIN

Tech III

POPULATION:

ca. 11.000, 35% Africans, 65% Europeans

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY:

Medium; connection to the Module, regular fluctuations due to bad wiring

FOOD SUPPLY:

Medium; fresh meat daily, other goods only irregularly and often second quality

RESIDENT CULTS:

Clanners, Apocalyptic, Scourgers, Anubians, Jehammedans

MOOD:

Eclectic, weird, sometimes aggressive

PLACES OF INTEREST::

Camp Resistance, Houses of Shame, Forgery, Arms Distillers, Slaughterhouse



LE CIRQUE

Le Cirque is the first of many street taverns in Terres Putain. A timber bar with wooden stools runs the length of the narrow, elongated taproom; opposite it, tables are lined up along the wall. Names are cut into the tabletops; men who, before their last expedition to the swamps, drank their last libation here in this bar: Spitalians from Borca, Resistance cadets from Toulouse, even Hellvetics are immortalized here. Sometimes, their brothers in arms pin their medals or insignia to the walls. The innkeeper doesn't mind. Jaque has lost three sons in the war; his wife has run away to turn tricks in the houses of shame. Burn. Ex. It never stops.

CAMP RESISTANCE

From Toulouse, the Resistance has spread across the coastal cities and become the strong arm of the people, the self-proclaimed defender of Franka. This aligns with the wishes of the Spitalians, because they need more volunteers for the fight against the Primer. For the Neolibyans, it means less expenditure of resources and more autonomy. In the cities,

the Resistance acts as a standing militia and a civil defense. This means that the Neolibyans can send their Scourgers on military operations that need firepower instead of having them remain in the city to maintain order.

The Resistance guarantees peace and order within the city limits and finances itself completely from the taxes and levies of the Touloni. The camp itself is an elongated stable surrounded by a fence of rusty steel plates and field planes. It houses the troops that are being taught moral values, fightings formations and swamp warfare. The Spitalians from Montpellier send their emissaries here to recruit Resistance fighters as Grenouille troops. They teach them how to handle pesticides and warfare agents and show them tactics that have proven useful against Pheromancers and their drones in the field.

Eight months ago, Zoe Morceau, general of the Frankan Resistance, moved into a flat-roofed building on the premises. Since that day, she has been restructuring the troops, handing out medals and promoting cadets. She's planning something...

AS I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY
OF SHADOW AND DEATH
I TAKE A LOOK AT MY LIFE
AND REALIZE THERE'S NOTHIN' LEFT.

'CAUSE I'VE BEEN BLASTING AND LAUGHING SO LONG,
THAT EVEN MY MAMA THINKS THAT MY MIND IS GONE.

[COOLIO]

THE HOUSES OF SHAME

For many veterans of the Pheromancer front, the houses of shame are the first place they go to in Toulon. These bordellos, led by Magpies from various Flocks, cater to every price range. Those who only want to talk better visit the fortune tellers in the next street.

Some specialize in the wishes of young Neolibyans and have extensive baths in their basements. Of course, the colorful mosaic tiles do not resemble the baths of Tripol in the least, but it's the thought that counts. Watchful Battle Crows guarantee that everyone pays for the services rendered.

LE BOUGE

The entrance is at the back of a dilapidated building in the port and leads right down to the basement. It is quiet here; the flickering light comes from floor lamps with greasy shades. There are neither chairs nor armchairs, only benches, and curtains instead of walls. From beyond, you hear strangely muted coughing and wheezing. From somewhere, a little boy appears, carrying a goat's skin. "Unity?" He knows the answer to the question, taking the newcomer with the sweat-covered face by the hand and leading him to a free cot. Dinars change hands; the suspicious eye of a Woodpecker looks out from behind a curtain. Coughing. Wheezing. Silence.

LA ZONMÉ

Clavion, a Cuckoo who has pledged alliance to the Raven Sacrocant from Bayonne, offers his services in the Zonm  . The password that visitors need to enter the intricate house

at the end of the harbor bay can only be obtained via two intermediaries. The first one recites a riddle that the applicant must relay to the second one. The second intermediary, usually a member of Sacrocant's Flock, offers three possible answers. The applicant must choose the right one and give it at the entrance of the Forgery. If he chooses the wrong one, he must find the first intermediary again. If he chooses the right one, he may enter and tell Clavion what he wants. Why go to all the effort? Clavion is one of the best forgers money can buy. In the Zonm  , half a dozen of the most talented craftsmen work for him. He has poached them for hard Dinars from Port Lagagne, and the Cuckoo can fulfill almost any wish, whether it be Justitian citizenship papers, customs markers for using the Bernese Passage, Neolibyan rifles or Spitalian neoprene suits - he can do it all. He is even said to have fashioned a detailed replica of a Helvetic grenadier's harness. Clavion's customers appreciate his services and know their worth.

LA MOULE

The roofed barbecue shop, La Moule, lies in the harbor of Terres Putain and caters almost exclusively to natives. On tattered seats, the Touloni sit next to Scrappers, Jeham-medans and others. Together, they eat roasted eel and drink wine, often late into the night. The air smells of the freshly-grilled fish that is served with vegetables and warm white bread - simple, fresh food. Mussels in a delicious sauce cook in large cauldrons and are the specialty of the house. If someone asks the popular innkeeper, Madame Manon, for the recipe, she usually responds by hitting them over the head. Her cordiality is only an act. Many of the fishermen



frequenting her inn are relatives and intermediaries of the Black Flock. They work for the Buzzard Sabata who specializes in smuggling all kinds of Burn. Far out on the ocean, the fishermen load the hot stuff and secretly bring it to La Moule where it is stored in stacks alongside boxes of fish in the basement. In the alleys around the barbecue shop, not only peons, but also Hellvetics and Scourgers buy Glory from the Flock's Finch. The stimulating effect keeps them awake and productive. Natives even obtain credit. Those who cannot pay work off their debts in one of Madame Manon's houses of shame.

THE ARMS DISTILLERS

Far away from the shops and market streets are the alleys of the arms distillers. Their markets disappear just as quickly as they pop up. On rickety tables, all sorts of illegal weapons are presented for an hour at most: from Neolibyan rifles, judges' muskets, fungicide rifles and gas cartridges to Scourger rifles, Jehammedan scimitars, trailblazer attachments and the decorative daggers of the Resistance. There is also ammunition, but not much. Prices are high, but no one would dare to haggle. The traders are Vultures from all Flocks of the hinterland; the goods have all been stolen from dead people who have no use for them many more. Finches keep watch while deals are struck. The Scourgers know about these markets; yet, they are usually too slow. If danger is imminent, the arms distillers retreat to the surrounding houses where they have a lot of helpers. Some let them use their hidden basements as warehouses; others make a living altering the weapons until their origin is no longer recognizable.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Right in the middle of Terres Putain is the great slaughterhouse with an adjoining meat market where the Touloni shop for their daily needs. In the derelict halls, hunted game and cattle are processed; rendered animal fat and ground bones are sold to Scrappers who use them for their products. Due to the friendship between Nestor, the leader of the Iron Brothers, and the Balkhani master butcher, Goran, the relationship between the butchers and the Scrappers is warm and amicable. In return for maintaining the facilities and crafting various spare parts, the Iron Brothers receive special prices. The Scrappers stand firmly by the butchers if an altercation arises between them and the Jehammedans or the Africans, who quite frankly don't know the value of a good cut of meat. Maybe they complain with good reason, though. In the last weeks and months, Scrappers who have openly sympathized with the Africans keep disappearing. If you ask the Iron Brothers about their whereabouts, they grin broadly and mutter "meat market".

PORT LAGAGNE

Port Lagagne is the source of Toulon's pride. Here, the Clans originally met and used the warm, flat bay to reap oysters. They built fishing boats to harvest the riches of the sea and, afterwards, concocted myths of their origin on the beaches, singing loudly and drinking algae tea and fish oil. Port Lagagne is still the soul of the city; here, the first streets and paths were tiled and the first canals to transport goods were dug. In the Toulon fortress, the Senate controlled the fate of the former fishing village by forming alliances and agreements with the Hellvetics, the Chroniclers and, finally, the Neolibyans. Even today, the inhabitants revel in their past glory. Without Port Lagagne and the Senate, there would be no modern Toulon, and Vericon, the governor of Toulon, relentlessly mentions this in every speech to his followers, even at the risk of boring everyone to tears.

Port Lagagne has every reason to be proud. In the Groceries and workshops, excellent manufacturers and craftsmen are at work. They work with gold, silver and gemstones, all of which are in high demand. Others carve rare ivory from Africa, work with pearls and craft exquisite composite pieces from fish bones, mussel shells and wood. Bowyers, net makers, basket weavers and jewelers have shops where they exhibit their craftsmanship and even attract the business of wealthy Neolibyans from Africa, Hybrispania and Purgare who visit the booths to have their rifles, ledgers and urns embellished.

The cartographer Chenzira, who is booked for years in advance, has set up his shop here and had his workers line the walls with stretched goat leather, upon which he draws detailed maps of the southern coast of Franka. The Bank of Commerce in Tripol pays a fortune for Chenzira's annually updated maps and atlases, for they are the foundation of the entire Frankan concession trade.

PORT LAGAGNE

Tech III

POPULATION:

ca. 22.000, 19% Africans, 81% Europeans

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY:

Medium; connection to the Module, massive fluctuations during rain storms and when the humidity is high

FOOD SUPPLY:

Good; fresh fish and seafood every day plus regional specialties

RESIDENT CULTS:

Clanners, Jehammedans, Neolibyans, Scrappers, Apocalypticists, Anabaptists

MOOD:

Gregarious, enterprising, dignified

IMPORTANT AREAS:

Toulon Fortress, Fish Market, Groceries, Red Sextry



THE FISH MARKET

The din of the fish market is legendary. Fat women shout across the booths, undercutting the prices from neighboring traders with each passing minute. Amongst them walk sunburned fishermen who have just returned from the sea with their catch. They are followed by their young children who directly process the bounty on the beach. With stones and simple tools, they crack open the shellfish and crabs, throwing the juicy meat into pots, ready for transport. Two boys grab one of the pots and run to the soup kitchens – small, open parlors made of wood – that are spread all over the beach. Workers are standing at the bar, greedily looking at the hot iron plates and boiling pots of water, their mouths watering at the sight of fresh fish and crab chowder.

The craftsmen from the Groceries come here, too; they sit in the sand in small groups and crack open oysters while drinking Purgan distillate and shaking with laughter. For them, this is merely a short break before work in the workshops resumes.

New boats arrive. They throw their weighted nets overboard and take in the sails. A white-haired fisherman with a baritone voice sings the first lines of an old song, and the patrons of the soup kitchens join in. A girl skulks around

the booths, a basket on her back. She collects the mussel shells from the floor and carries them to her mother who works on one of the many jetties, crafting necklaces and bracelets from the shells: Talismans of Toulon.

TOULON FORTRESS

Even if the Senate likes to call it a fortress and goes so far as to boast about it, the building is just a propped-up town hall, surrounded by a wooden palisade. The adobes give it substance, and the fortified towers are supposed to lend it an air of formidability. In reality, they are laughable when compared to the fortifications in Cour Argent. They probably would not be able to withstand a direct attack.

Toulon's Senate and its Governor, Vericon, look past the dilapidated structure and see it as a symbol of the city's history. The old glory will not return, and the only thing that remains is dusty tales. Within the semi-forgotten building, these tales are worshiped. The flags that flew over the city decades before the Neolibyans came adorn the walls: pennants and banners from times long past that only the oldest inhabitants of the city can recall. Hanging inbetween the



historic flags are contracts with the new rulers, poems, tapestries, cudgels and many other trophies collected over the last hundred years – keepsakes from times past. Old times.

THE GROCERIES

At first glance, the Groceries seem rather unremarkable. Workshops, forges, craft guilds – all cramped into low, wooden huts with extensive canopies. In the shadow of these canopies, booths have been erected. Every building seems to specialize in a different kind of commodity and production process; each offers a different service.

A multitude of different craftsmen can be found here, selling their services and wares. From cobblers crafting boots out of beautiful snakeskin to the production of valve seals and repair filters from rubber and caoutchouc – one can find almost anything he needs.

Even the most exquisite jewelers and goldsmiths have shops here. Jehammedans cooperate with Scrappers and Clanners, exchanging knowledge about production techniques, the value of raw materials and metals. However, different powers are at work behind this busy veneer.

A hidden Leopard camp uses the Groceries as a front. This group of African traders does not want to bow to the will of the Bank of Commerce, so they deliberately undermine the business efforts of the Neolibyans. In the chambers and tunnels of a subterranean section of bygone ruins, the Leopards store ammunition, Duat fruit, salt, minerals, petro and all other stolen goods that they have bought from the pirates of the Mediterranean. Here, one can also obtain credits under much better conditions than from the Grantors.

The most valuable commodity, however, is information. Chroniclers from Aquitaine and Justitian buy everything they can to learn about the trader Cult, Tripol, profits, scrap veins and the like. The emissaries of the Mediterranean Flocks, on the other hand, are more interested in the cargo and the routes of freighters leaving the port. Only those who have a guarantor get access to these markets. In the past, Scrappers or Jehammedans who disclosed secret passwords to agents of the Bank of Commerce paid for it with the blood of their families, for the Leopards only know one answer to betrayal.

THE PEARL CATCH

The entrance to the pearl catch is hidden behind a curtain of wattled seashells. The pearl catchers sit behind the curtain – young men and women with sunburned skin and matted hair dessicated from the salt of the Mediterranean. They crack open the shells and look for the pearls. The divers specialize in catching mussels on the south side of Saint Chenil. Selling pearls to the Africans generates a large profit, because to them, they are symbols of fertility and a coveted dowry in their villages at home. The young Neolibyans from the counting houses are interested in the divers for yet another reason: bets.

On every fourth evening, they gather at the cliffs to bet small pouches of Dinars on either the size of the next pearl, the most pearls in one dive, the longest time underwater or a specific diver. Chosen Touloni determine the amount and watch the proceedings. Afterwards, they rake in the gold and pay the winnings. For the divers, this sport is extremely dangerous. When they have been pushed beyond their limits, the Neolibyans lure them back in by offering their protégées a share of the winnings and providing them with Unity or Spitalian tranquilizers. Both help to quell the panic rising under water as the divers run out of breath. Deadly accidents are a regular occurrence, but the divers' families are adequately compensated.

THE RED SEXTRY

The old Anabaptist chapel stands on the border between Port Lagagne and Saint Chenil. It once served as the headquarters for the Sublime Lacroix. The enamelled tiles of the outer walls still gleam the same bright red as the day when the foundation of the sextry was laid with them. La-croix's biddenhander was the only thing retrieved from the swamps after the Sublime's death. The sword now hangs far above the front portal, but it is more stigma than relic, for the Cult no longer has the support of the the population of Toulon. Families, whose children believed in the teachings of the Anabaptists only to lose their lives to the swamps in the disastrous Wachsmann-Lacroix expedition, despise this place. They spit at the red walls in passing or break off pieces from the tiles.

The cool interior, however, serves passing pilgrims as a place of worship and remembrance. Two Orgiasts were detached here from Briton to guard the sextry; they also keep the holy place clean, wash away the spittle and light new candles daily. They are the only reason why the sextry still exists. If some raging Touloni had their way, the red house would have already been razed.

The Orgiasts don't like this volatile atmosphere. They wait tensely for their relief or some reinforcements. Only the Cult's status and strength in Franka protect them from a fate far worse.

THE GOLD SMITHY

The tiny forging hammer monotonously taps the golden ring. The Abrami crouches over it in deep concentration, the tip of his tongue peeking from the corner of his mouth. He stammers short orders to his two sons: he wants them to turn the melting dishes and keep an eye on the temperature of the noble metal. Both Ismaelis do old Erech's bidding.

The Abrami looks up, wipes the sweat from his brow and then dries his hand on the leg of his pants. His workshop's red tarpaulin roof throws warm shadows onto his face. The customers are waiting. The Neolibyans scramble to get his rings, bracelets and necklaces. Erech works hard to earn his keep. He saves every Dinar so he can free his brother from the plantations in Africa. He tried to betray the Neolibyans. For months, Erech's brother was lucky – until the scribes found the forged books and had Melchior dragged onto the next transport to Tripol. The Scourgers didn't even give him enough time to pray to Jehammed.

Erech chews on the leather of his apron. He has negotiated with the Neolibyans for a long time, and they have given him a glimpse of hope. If he works hard this summer, he be able to buy his brother's freedom next year. Erech hopes that he can keep up with his workload. The gout is slowly creeping into his hands, and his back aches. If his two sons weren't so incompetent, they could make more money in less time.

OYSTER BAY

The oyster farmers stand in the knee-deep silt, armed with long, flexible rods. The rods whip through the air, hitting the seagulls who circle above the farmers trying to steal the mussels from their baskets. The rods find their target, hissing through the air. Sometimes they hit hard enough to throw a seagull into the mud. Dinner.

Oyster farming is hard work. For hours, the farmers wade through the rubbery mud or crawl around on their knees on wooden boards to dig the oysters out from their holes. The burning in the joints that comes from a day of work in the humid mud is called oyster fever. But the Africans and Touloni love the fat meat of the mussels and pay handsomely for the juicy morsels.

SAINT CHENIL

Once, Saint Chenil was the soil on which the awe of God grew; it was home to the Anabaptists and operation camp for the Spitalians, but that was long ago. Today, it is a house for dogs without masters.

The chapels of the Anabaptists have stood empty ever since the great exodus. The Spitalians have left their camps. The cast-iron crosses have been sawed off; the eight-shanked Spitalian cross flakes from the walls of the houses. Those who live in Saint Chenil today only live here because they have nowhere else to go.

Orphans survive on the streets here amongst the stranded losers, invalid Scrapers, the blind and the ill, refugees, and spore-infested Burners who would cause any mollusk to burst. Life has forgotten those stranded here. They eat the scraps that drift down the bay from the canals of Port Lagagne and do the most menial of work until the next winter comes to deliver them from their misery. In the Great Tannery, the survivors swat themselves to death amongst the gases that rise from the lye, corroding their lungs and burning their retinas.

Many of them stand on the beach the whole day, armed with a long pole, to salvage driftwood for the campfire at night. Others cook a nauseating algae soup in bowls full of holes, in hopes of making their own stomachs believe it was real food. On the cliffs on the south side of Saint Chenil, lizards breed and warm their bodies in the sun. A few well-aimed stones, and you have at least a meager dinner of sorts.

Alongside the poor, the maimed and the exiled live the old families and Clans of Toulon, those whom the changes in the city and the tides have forgotten, whose family trees and bloodlines are dying. Some of them belonged to the alliance with the Anabaptists and the Spitalians, but when those Cults' power dwindled, so did the importance of the inhabitants of Saint Chenil. The Spitalians do not recruit Grenouilles in Toulon anymore, and the last nose ring of a Touched one was pierced over twenty years ago. There are no more prayers, songs and sermons in the streets, only the sound of silence.

Those who have to disappear, want to be forgotten or who are simply fed up with the world often hide here, for nobody looks for anybody in Saint Chenil, at least not voluntarily.

SAINT CHENIL

Tech II

POPULATION:

ca. 1.500-2.000,
3% Africans, 97% Europeans

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY:

None; sometimes small aggregates and batteries

FOOD SUPPLY:

None; from hand to mouth, sometimes barter or scraps from other districts

RESIDENT CULTS:

Clanners, scattered lone wolves

MOOD:

Exhausted, barren, miserable

IMPORTANT AREAS:

Sacre Amiel, Orphanage, Great Tannery, Southern Port



SACRE AMIEL

A rundown chapel in Purgan style. Clunky and hewn from black basalt, it stands in the middle of Saint Chenil. The two soot-blackened windows left and right of the main entrance remind visitors of the burnt-out eyes of a stone skull. The entrance has collapsed.

Only pale rays of light coming in through the cracks and notches in the ceiling lighten the interior of this formerly sacred site. Although it is full of echoes, the chapel seems inert and silent, just like its inhabitants. After the Anabaptists left, rattled Burners and maimed war veterans moved in. They covered the floor between the pews with dried moss, straw and some mats: this black crypt would be their home until their dying day.

Today, almost 200 homeless live in the chapel. There's a small fire burning in the middle of the room that they use to cook their meager catch and the alms they collect. Adonai, an Iconide of the Jhammedans, comes every day to look after the people living here. He takes care of the maimed ones: washing their wounds, collecting donations in Port Lagagne and buying medicine from the Spitalians and Anubians in Cour Argent.

The lost ones consider him the good soul of Sacre Amiel, the last guardian of the people of Saint Chenil.

THE SOUTHERN PORT

The southern port can barely be called as such; the water has long since turned into stinking foam. All dross landing in the bay of Toulon gather in Saint Chenil and slosh against the quay walls as a viscous, oily mass. The boats here must be rowed or pushed out of the garbage because their propellers would otherwise become hopelessly entangled. Only those who have no choice and nowhere else to go dock in this "port". The poorest of the poor piece together rickety rafts of driftwood in order to go dig in the dirt for useful things. They are easily recognizable by their red, blistered forearms. Most of them do not have very long to live.

THE ORPHANAGE

The contorted Orphanage in the south of Saint Chenil is surrounded by tarred wooden planks. Low clouds of ash rise from the chimneys. The pebble-strewn yard is only accessible through a heavy iron gate.

For the kids left here, it's the gate to hell. Wachsmann, a former Preservist, is the secret head of this institution. After his disastrous swamp expedition, he retreated here to hide from his Cult. In the basement, he expands his laboratory while his servant Opis leads the Orphanage. Wachsmann

gets a bounty for every child admitted to the Orphanage. Usually, lost women from Terres Putain or Ferrallies who cannot feed their children give them up to the Orphanage, hoping that there they will find protection. Other kids are bastards or mongrels whose parents would rather see the brats disappear than let them become their heirs, but Wachsmann doesn't care for those stories. For him, the children are resources. He beats them and leases the adolescent ones to the Tannery or to the fishermen of Port Lagagne as assistants. Others are used to help him expand his labs: he makes them steal things for him or sells them to Apocalyptics.

Nowadays, there are almost 400 children in the house. They live in the large dorms, one bed next to the other, jammed together like sardines. If they do not obey, Opis beats them senseless. Wachsmann hates dirt and messiness, and so small groups are required to clean the Orphanage on a daily basis. Older children become supervisors, and watching and denouncing other kids earns them days off and sweetened water. This way, Wachsmann keeps the children at bay, making them his accomplices while robbing them of their innocence.

THE GREAT TANNERY

A small ferry berths down at the jetty, and Haakon's stooges unload new merchandise: pelts and animal skins from the Rhône delta. Haakon the Borcan is a leaden man with corroded fingertips. He's partially bald with a cleft lip and the odor emanating from his leather apron mixes with his stale rotten breath. He barks at his workers to be careful with the merchandise. No one would willingly spend time with the tanner. Still, his leatherware is in high demand all over Toulon and beyond the city limits as well. It's high-quality workmanship. The colors are luscious. No one knows where

the Borcan gets the recipes for the chemicals and dyes. The stink of the Tannery is abominable. The bleaching and dyeing basins that have set into the floor gurgle sluggishly. Wooden catwalks lead past the basins, and rickety ladders lead down into the lyes. Here is where the children and adolescents whom Haakon leases as workers from Wachsmann toil. This work is not made for humans.

Nevertheless, Haakon doesn't let the orphans die. He pays the lease for them a month in advance, and a boy who perishes in the dyeing sludge at the beginning of the month only raises his costs unnecessarily.

Outside on the big yard, the leather that has been hung to dry on the high poles flaps in the wind. Tomorrow, it will be shipped to Port Lagagne to be turned into clothing and shoes at the Groceries.

THE BARRAGE

At the Barrage, Toulon ends. The vaulted dam was built by the bygones as a protection against the stormy sea. Today, it has become a pilgrimage site for those who want to commit suicide. Those who want to end their life do so here. Undertows parting at the jetties will drag anyone under who jumps down into the water. A simple death. Only one leap, they say. But if you do not jump far enough, you get skewered on scrap washed up on the shore or on driftwood that clings to the washed out walls like a reef of mussels.

On the southern end, a rusty ladder leads up to an old guard house built halfway into the cliffs. Wachsmann has the only key to the massive steel door.

On some stormy nights, neighbors see him climb up to the house and put a candle in the window. Often, he remains up there for hours. Probably to stare down at the waves and the dam that has killed at least as many people as the old bastard himself, the neighbors mutter.

UEO SUPPLY CENTER

Commando Prime Volta has given Wachsmann the password for the guard house of the Barrage to use in case of emergency.

One such emergency occurred two weeks later: Volta was dead. Stoned and hacked to pieces by Murnakir's drones.

Ever since, Wachsmann has helped himself secretly to the stuff from the UEO supply center hidden under the basement of the guard house. It took Wachsmann years to enter the correct code and open the portal. Behind the sealed steel door

that would have been able to withstand even heavy artillery fire, an incredible reservoir of bygone treasures is hidden.

Whenever the bounties for the orphans run short or important chemicals dwindle in the lab, Wachsmann descends into the secret subterranean storage that stretches from the Barrage to the south side of Saint Chenil. Some of the tunnels have collapsed, but there are still a significant amount of easily accessible areas filled with helmets, protective vests, gas masks, filters, weap-

ons, ammunition, sleeping bags, tents, purification tablets, emergency provisions and much more. The old Preservist takes care to sell different stuff on the black market every time. Except for the fucking general of the Resistance, no one has ever asked any questions. However, the woman wants more information, has even threatened Wachsmann once. He was impressed. "Maybe they'll be able to strike a deal, after all. Why not, if it's for a good cause – but only if she begs..."

THE CULTS



SPITALIANS

Southern Franka belongs to the Spitalians; Montpellier is the headquarters of the medical Cult in the area. From here, all supply routes and expeditions are planned and organized. Almost daily, new Famulancers reach the city via the Bernese Passage and the Rhône. There, they get their marching orders – to the Scorched Path, to Toulouse, into the swamps.

Those who survive the next weeks and months can spend their furlough in the coastal cities or maybe, one day, be relocated to the Mediterranean for good.

The war against the Pheromancers wears out most front-line soldiers, and nothing is more dangerous than a comrade who walks the thin line between idealism and madness.

CHRONICLERS



High ambitions, but not the necessary means. The Chroniclers had gained the trust of the population of Southern Franka and, in the end, foundered on the swamps. Their efforts were fruitless, so they retreated.

That the Neolibyans managed to do what the Fragments didn't is a deep red mark in the otherwise immaculate equation of the Frankan Cluster. At the moment, the Cult confines itself to simple trade. Using Toulouse as an outpost, agents and intermediaries from Aquitaine advance to the coast looking for business partners, often accompanied by Shutters. Animosities are commonplace. The fluctuating exchange rate of the Dinar exacerbates their mission, for in the humid swamp climate the value of their Drafts sometimes crumbles as quickly as the paper they are printed on.



HELLVETICS

Where there is trade, there is violence, and where there is violence, protection is needed. For the Alpine fortress, the south of Franka is a gold mine. The contracts with the Spitalians guarantee medical care, and the customs agreements with the Neolibyans fill the warehouses with gold, petro and rare minerals.

Additionally, there are plenty of rich merchants relying on the Hellvetics' to escort them through areas infested with Apocalyptic and drones – who else can they trust? For many of the soldiers, this is a welcome alternative to the humdrum of guard duty.

The coastal cities are also a popular destination for extended holidays: distillate is cheap, and there's more than enough distraction. Rampant debauchery must be avoided, though, for the Alpine fortress has its eyes and ears everywhere these days. Those who go too far are arrested and brought back. The Cult is merciless – too many have fallen prey to the temptations of the cities recently and have, therefore, vacated.



JUDGES

The Judges have reached Bassham. The Protectorate has never been bigger. Can the city state grow even larger? The Senate in Justitian thinks so.

The borderlines between the Cultures don't mean a thing to the Judges. They only care about territorial claims, occupations and cities that can supply resources to the Borcan metropolis.

This is why the Judges' Cult has been sending Black Judges to the region for years now: to keep an eye on the political developments. Protectors are also sent to southern Franka to learn the language and to assess the social climate. They are joined by bounty hunters who chase fugitive criminals in the swamp cities in the name of Justitian, seeking to make them pay for crimes committed in the north that have yet to be prosecuted.



CLANNERS

The Clans of the Rhône delta are old – rooted in the sea, in fishing and in alliances with the Neolibyans. For generations, the cultures have integrated, blossomed and grown strong under African leadership.

Then, there is also the Resistance. They are the most dominant of all regional Clans. Not only in the hinterland of Toulouse is it considered a question of honor to strengthen the ranks of the Resistance with at least one scion. The ruling Clans of the cities also aid these defiant camps with their own blood. It's all about coming together to fight the superior enemy who has forced all of Franka under their yoke: the Pheromancers.

Those who have proven themselves in the fight against this spawn are welcome everywhere and can rely on the help of the common people.



SCRAPPERS

The Mediterranean coast is ripe with European and African Scrapers. The artifact fields in the Rhône swamps are supposed to be enormous. Legends and rumors of unsalvaged scrap veins and overgrown cities deep in the swamp as well as mighty artifacts waiting to be found have abounded here for decades.

Only the Pheromancers and their drones stand in the way of an all-out race for those treasures. Every expedition is a game against death that the Africans are much better at. Those who dare to enter the swamps without their expensive Marduk Oil will die a miserable death, caused either by their stupidity or poverty. Outside the swamps, there are jobs for the Scrapers in the ports. Those who cannot – or do not want to – risk anything go to the cities as a mechanics to help the populace and make hard Dinars with their craft. It's enough for a simple lifestyle, but nothing more.



NEOLIBYANS

They own Southern Franka. They are the lords of the coastal cities. Every year, the Bank of Commerce auctions the concessions of the area to the most industrial Merchants of the Cult. The flow of commodities lures acolytes from the northern coast of Africa to the cities on the southern coast of Franka. There, they control the markets while exchanging the rates – all but guaranteeing that the Europeans fare better with than without the Neolibyans. Everything is so much simpler when the population gives voluntarily – a second Hybrispania would be far too expensive. The only factor that pushes the costs is the protection of the trade routes. Apocalyptic and Leopards who are opposed to bowing to the Bank of Commerce are a nuisance to the Neolibyans. But that is nothing they can't handle, say the Merchants with a confident smile.



SCOURGERS

The name Ayubu promises pride; the Rhône swamps with their Pheromancers, however, promise glory. The few Scourgers are not keen on taking over guard duty in the cities, not even in Toulon. They can chase enemies of the Bank of Commerce along the Mediterranean or gain fame through heroic deeds on the Scorched Path or go on expeditions into the Rhône swamps. Not every death is glorious, though; some comrades die miserably in the swamps, others are infested with spores and become drones themselves. However, the war pays off: in wages and in glory.



ANUBIANS

In Montpellier, they cultivate their alliance with the Spitalians through learning and teaching. In the cities and on the fringe of the swamps, they make Marduk Oil, create salves from Duat fruit and provide counsel. Without the children of the jackal, there would be no front against the Pheromancers. There is no settlement in which the Anubians are not free to move, and their retreat would be harder to endure than the anger of the Neolibyans and Scourgers. Time and again, Anubians go to the swamps themselves, escorted by mercenaries from all Cults. They never tell anyone what they are looking for, nor do they explain how they get ahold of the key rods that they use to enter the hidden bygone installations. Alone. Their companions have to wait outside.



JEHAMMEDANS

There are too many Africans. In the eyes of the Jehammedans, the Frankans have sold out to the enemy. Instead of

aiding their own brothers in the Southwest, the Neolibyans turn themselves into slaves voluntarily. Even the Anabaptists have more honor. It is too early for an open confrontation, though.

The Shepherds collect their herds in the cities. They grow, watch, and become a part of the everyday life there. As long as the Africans do not push forward to Hybrispania via Toulouse, there will be peace. Should such an attack ever occur, the Rams will rise up and push the Lion back into the ocean.



APOCALYPTICS

The Mediterranean, the Rhône delta and the coastal cities are home to several dozen flocks, and every day the promise of profit lures more in from Purgare, Hybrispania and Borca. Some form alliances, others fight for the most profitable hunting grounds.

So far, burn trade, raids, kidnappings, slavery, piracy, gambling, prostitution and other forms of entertainment have proven to be profitable sources of income.

However, the Flocks feel a change coming – wise Ravens repeatedly tell the same fortune from the cards, a sign that draws even more Apocalyptic to the coastal cities. Change is always a good outcome, for if one loses, another wins.



ANABAPTISTS

The south of Franka has fallen to the Demiurge, the chapels of the Anabaptists stand abandoned and looted. The Promised Land lies to the northwest, and the Cult, with the exception of some accommodation for packs traveling to Brighton, has no quarters on the coast anymore. Even Spitalians prefer to rely on Resistance fighters who know the lay of the land rather than on their brothers in arms. Here, others are responsible for bringing the cleansing fire.



PALERS

Gods are sleeping in the swamps. There is no other explanation for the multitude of artifacts on the markets of Toulon, Montpellier and Perpignan. Time and again, there are these secret signs, and once more, relics end up in the cold hands of those who are not worthy.

It's a shame for the Revivers of the Cult. They stay underground and inspect old bygone tunnels in search of clues for undiscovered bunkers. It would be a death wish to push forward into the swamps without a clear destination. It is better to join expeditions or to evaluate the finds of the ones returning before the goods get to the markets. After all, some things simply don't belong in the wrong hands.



RUMOR MILL

The trade routes in southern Franka guarantee a lively exchange between the settlements. Via the seaways, the Scorched Path, the Bernese Passage and the Route de la Résistance, information reaches all Cult centers and larger settlements – even information that would do better to remain secret.

Not only the Cults are watching each other closely; the Clans, too, are grinding their sharp knives. Facts about trade caravans, their routes and the supply venues can be easily bought for the right amount of Dinars. Not all information is reliable; the Cults deliberately spread rumors or lay traps in order to get those incidents that seem to constantly resurface under control. There is also a tight-knit net of rumors and stories that are sometimes made up just to have something to tell, but sometimes contain a kernel of truth, as well.

It doesn't matter if the Characters hail from southern Franka or have just arrived, they will have heard rumors. To determine what the Characters have heard on their way, you can use the following table. Every player should secretly be given some of these rumors before the game begins, there-

by ensuring every Character has some personal background knowledge and maybe a personal incentive to become part of the adventure. It doesn't matter if some players know the same rumors. This only substantiates their potential truth. The rumors can be helpful for (1) some introductory play in Toulon and (2) leading to adventures of their own or (3) as preludes for the events to come. Additionally, some of the rumors can be interspersed later in the game in case the players need a new approach.

RULES: Let every player make an action roll on INT+Legends before the game begins. Characters from Franka get +1D on this roll. Scrappers, Apocalyptics, Scourgers and Anubians can add their background "Network" to it. Clanners of the Resistance, Scrappers, Neolibyans, Judges, Chroniclers and Spitalians can choose if they want to add the bonus dice from "Network" or from "Secrets" to the roll. Every success is rewarded with 1 piece of information from the rumor mill category "Success". For Triggers, players get a special rumor from the following list, depending on how many Triggers they have rolled.

SUCCESS

- ◊ Southern Franka has been in gold rush mood for decades. Giant treasures are buried in the swamps.
- ◊ The Anabaptists left the region in the great exodus. Their new home of choice is northwestern Franka, holy Briton.
- ◊ The Chroniclers' artifact trade in the region was not successful. They were never really able to establish themselves and look at the thriving cities of the Neolibyans with contempt.
- ◊ Bayonne and Ducal are nefarious hamlets. Those who look for assassins should go there. You should always pay your debts, however, or you'll be next on the kill list.
- ◊ If you fuck with the Neolibyans, you'll be shipped to Africa as a slave. Goodbye forever!
- ◊ The Iron Brothers of Toulon is the largest league of Scrappers in existence.
- ◊ There was no hill in the old days where Hamza's palace stands today. It was raised to hide all the Raider's gold and the treasures within.
- ◊ Terres Putain is the territory of the Apocalyptics. Flocks from all over the Rhône delta socialize there.
- ◊ Saint Chenil is a good place to hide: lots of riffraff, criminals and wanted people are living and hiding there.
- ◊ The Hellvetics pay enormous bounties for deserters.
- ◊ The Pheromancers and their enslaved drones are the true rulers of the Rhône. Millions of them are said to live in the swamps of the North.
- ◊ Toulouse could soon become an unconquerable fortress in Franka. The Resistance gains dozens of new warriors every day.
- ◊ Those looking for money and credits for an expedition should talk to the Grantors in Toulon.
- ◊ Supposedly, there is a master forger in Terres Putain who can supply and forge anything – passports, citizenship papers, weapons and insignia.
- ◊ A Preservist is hiding in the city.

1 TRIGGER

- ◊ A Spitalian hospital ship lies hidden in the Rhône swamps. The doctors are planning an attack on Souffrance.
- ◊ The Anabaptists have retreated from Southern Franka after a conflict with the Spitalians. They preferred to form an alliance with the Anubians.
- ◊ Somewhere in the Mediterranean, there's a secret island of Apocalyptics where the pirates keep all their treasures.
- ◊ Never sell too much of anything at once. The exchange rate and prices change faster than a leaf turns in the wind. The Africans are masters at manipulating them.
- ◊ Apocalyptics like to cheat European Scrappers with diluted Marduk Oil. Better to send someone else and pay a little more than to bump into the drones later because the stuff doesn't work.

2 TRIGGERS

- ◊ Explosives are going for top prices on the underground markets of Toulon at the moment. Maybe the Scrappers are planning something.
- ◊ In Perpignan and Toulouse, Chroniclers are hiring anybody who is able to hold a weapon. It is said the Cult is afraid of an African attack.
- ◊ In the Mediterranean, a fully loaded Neolian freighter cruises aimlessly. The Africans say it is a myth. However, there is a rumor in Toulon that the crew was attacked by a Pheromancer following their last radio transmission.

3 + TRIGGERS

- ◊ According to the innermost circles of the Cluster, there are numerous UEO factories located in the Rhône swamps. They are the fertile soil for the rich artifact veins in this area.
- ◊ Toulon is built on a secret UEO base. The city's underground is riddled by interconnecting corridors and supply tunnels.
- ◊ The Chroniclers are preparing for a substantial conflict in Toulon. All signs point to civil war.

TIMELINE

2497: Hellvetic military expeditions from Territorial Region I to the southern coast of Franka. They first register a backwater fishing village called Toulon. Clan Touloni calls the region its own and lives in the bay, far removed from the world. The Clan leaders start trading with Territorial Region I; mussels, oysters and fish secure business relationships with the soldier Cult.

2521: Toulon arouses curiosity. The Fragment Ordinator, founder of the Aquitaine Cluster, reaches the fishing village and scans the region. His calculations will make quite a splash in a few years.

2539: The Chroniclers in the Central Cluster studying the Ordinator's notes discover a giant scrap vein in the swamps north of Toulon. They move vast resources to the southern coast of Franka. In alcoves all over Borca, Scrappers exchange their Drafts for concrete site plans and maps of artifact mines north of Toulon. A real scrap rush begins.

2544: The Scrappers are dragging find after find from the morass; however, transporting it all back to Borca makes little sense. Some ruin wolves think that everything will be looted by African Scrappers as soon as the fields are left unguarded. Exchange halls, alcoves and a processing plant are needed. They look to the northern point of Toulon where an old industrial estate sits rotting.

2545: Within only a year, almost 5.000 adventurers come to Toulon. They all want to make the big find. The natives, Clan Touloni, hate the Iron Brothers, as the Scrappers call themselves. They fill the city with their stench and their loud noise. The natives retreat to Port Lagagne, the old center of Toulon, and try to erect a barrier between themselves and the northern part of the city called Ferrallies.

2548: The Touloni suffer under the yoke of the Chroniclers, Spitalians and Anabaptists – high taxes, permanent surveillance and absurd hygiene regulations. At the same time, the Anabaptists muster recruits from the population to bolster their ranks.

2551: The first drone attacks on Scrappers in the Rhône swamps. Scrapper runes now mark danger zones, but the attacks increase. The drones seem unimpressed and have apparently endless reserves. Even in large raiding parties, the dirt diggers are not safe.

2568: The Chroniclers realize the threat posed by the Pheromancers beyond the swamps. They try to persuade the Spitalians and Anabaptists to take preventive measures. With the aid of the Resistance and Grenouille forces, they burn giant swaths into the swamp so the Scrappers can dig. Head Preservist Wachsmann, a merciless Borcan who likes to torture imprisoned drones, hatefully names the operation "dry season".

2569: The reckoning for the Spitalians' arrogance is quick and merciless. A Pheromancer named Murnakir leads a horde of drones to the field. Hundreds of Leperos, naked and with blossoming stigmata, are his warriors. Their arrows and spear tips are covered in Murnakir's glandular secretions. Even small scratches turn into necrosis. Amputations happen on a daily basis.

2573: The Spitalians cannot stop Murnakir. The Wachsmann-Lacroix expedition fails, leading 200 Famulancers and an entire Preservist corps to be wiped out by spore-infested drones. The six Anabaptist packs under Lacroix suffer a similar fate. The swamps reek of death. Murnakir now openly threatens to destroy them completely if their troops do not retreat from the swamps. The Chroniclers give in. The losses are extreme; Scrappers are either massacred or forced to change sides forever. The technology Cult pulls up stakes and leaves the city, now focusing on faraway Montpellier, where a counterattack may prove far more successful.

2577: Exodus. The Scrappers are speechless. The Chroniclers have simply left them behind. The Spitalians have curled up without making another sound. The Anabaptists have left their chapels and gone to Briton. The Scrappers who had hoped to make a fortune from the scrap veins in the north have been left high and dry. Many despair while some leave for Eastern Borca or Bedain, hoping for better times. However, there are also stubborn folk who cling to the promise of riches. They gather around Nestor, an angry Alpha Wolf who keeps whipping them back into the swamps in small groups. He firmly believes that far greater treasures lie buried behind the Pheromancer border.

2580: Toulon has been laid waste. The city threatens to sink into insignificance.

2586: Hamza buys the concession for Toulon. Year after year, he buys it again, turning the city into a bastion of trade. He hands out casks of Marduk Oil to his Scrappers so they can protect themselves from the pheromone traps in the swamps.

- ◊ The Touloni negotiate their autonomy. The Senate thanks the Raider by making him absolute ruler of the city.
- ◊ Hamza talks his half-sister Zohra into becoming Consul. From now on, she is the decisive power in all political questions.
- ◊ His cousin Orma leads all swamp expeditions approved by Hamza. He uses his experience from years of work in the ports of Syracuse to train a new generation of African Scrappers in Toulon.

2587: The Central Cluster in Justitian gets wind of the Neolibyans' activities. The Fragments are bewildered.

2588: Murnakir in the north is a mortal danger for Hamza's Scrappers and their expeditions. He sends a nimble speedboat to Zillah where his half-brother Nephraim, who is dedicated to the Anubians, lives. Only the gods can subdue the Pheromancer now.

2589: Nephraim negotiates peace with the Pheromancers in the north. The swamp is the new border line

2592: The discontent of the Iron Brothers is rising. Ferrallies, the Scrapper district and once the heart of Toulon, is now only a garbage dump full of losers. Nestor, the Alpha Wolf of the Iron Brothers, believes more and more firmly in a violent revolution to cut off the African Scrappers from their success.

2593: The Aquitaine Cluster sends its Paradigma Mirage to Toulon as mediator. In the name of the Chroniclers, she is supposed to persuade the Raider to finally cooperate with Aquitaine and Justitian. Mirage's first mission fails miserably. Hamza's meeting with Mirage ends in a disaster, and the Cluster looks like a fool.

2594: Ayubu, the bloodhound and a legend among the Scourgers, wins battle after battle for the African cause in Hybrispania. Hamza sends a messenger to persuade Ayubu to come to the Frankan Coast and help him. He wants to use Ayubu's legendary name

and his influence to strengthen his own Scourger packs and simultaneously establish a martial antithesis to Resistance General Zoe.

2595: An unknown Flock called Firebirds nests in Toulon. Their leader, Rattler, is a mystery to many of the Apocalyptic living in the region. There's very little reliable information about his past, and no one knows the goals of the Flock.

2595: Operation Mirage begins.

- ◊ Commando Requiem sneaks into the city. They begin infiltrating numerous sites and smuggling weapons and secret arsenals into the city in order to arm collaborators and prepare for the upcoming civil war.

2596: Leaders of the Black Flock – a mighty alliance of apocalyptic pirates – have recurring visions of burning birds. In their nightmares, a phoenix attacks them. The tarot shows the same cards over and over again.

◊ Commando Requiem forms an alliance with the Iron Brothers. Nestor joins the secret society and, with the aid of the Chroniclers, plans the downfall of the Neolibyans.

◊ Supply and attack tunnels are being dug from Ferrallies and Terres Putain towards Cour Argent. The operation runs at full speed. Commando Requiem wants to hit the Neolibyans' weakest spot and conquer the palace of the Raider.

◊ Mirage wins the Firebirds for her cause. Their mysterious leader Rattler is supposed to back her up with his sharpshooters and mercenaries. The Paradigma has no idea what kind of forces she is dealing with. In her mad effort to deprive the Neolibyans of their power and dethrone Hamza, she makes a pact with the Phoenix who only pursues his own goals. For him, Mirage is merely a puppet, dangling from one single string.

◊ 72 hours to go.





CHAPTER

THE

SERPENT'S NEST

2

HAMZA

The corridor leading to the temple of the ancestors was narrow and empty. Hamza was angry that he couldn't find the time to pick the right artworks from his vault to decorate the sparse walls. It would have made his daily walk to his morning prayer so much more agreeable, however, there was always something more important to do. Just like now. Scrappers had made trouble in Ferrallies, had been blocking the freight gondola for several days now. Hamza had to react. He sent food to the district to calm the raging workers and buy some time until Orma got back from the swamps. His cousin would talk to the Iron Brothers in their own language.

The Raider opened the wood paneled portal at the end of the corridor, the pearls and brocade of his cape rustled softly. He donned his white, unblemished uniform. He wore it out of respect for the ancestors whom he thanked every morning for his luck.

Two female Initiates were already standing at the altar, waiting for him. His half-brother Nephraim stood behind the altar, lost in prayer. Hamza went around the altar, ignoring the Initiates who took his cape as he passed. He

greeted his half-brother by kissing him on the forehead. Anxiously, Nephraim opened his eyes.

"How did the bones fall?" Hamza asked, searching Nephraim's face for the source of his worries.

Nephraim sighed. "Not good ... very bad, indeed. Bad luck ..." He let the rest of his answer hang in the air for a moment. "... for everyone else."

The Initiates chuckled and then stared at their feet in shame. It took Hamza a moment to understand the joke, but then the two men laughed out loud and embraced each other.

"Fucking Anubian!" Hamza grinned and clapped Nephraim's shoulder. "You almost ruined my day."

"A change from your lucky streak would do you good," Nephraim dryly replied as they stepped closer to the altar. The ritual was prepared. A slab of slate lay on a bed of glowing embers, rosemary and anise burning on it. Hamza lowered his head over the slab, inhaling the smoke rising from below, and coughed slightly. An Initiate poured milk from a bowl over Hamza's skull. The pearl white liquid ran across his black skin, across the brow and the cheeks and fi-



nally dripped down to the slab of slate. With a loud hiss, the droplets of milk boiled away when they hit the sacrificial altar. The ancestors had been praised.

A loud noise in the distance startled Hamza. He looked at Nephraim with questions in his eyes. It had sounded as if a container ship had smashed into the harbor.

“Collision?”

They both listened. Birds were singing in the garden outside. It sounded peaceful.

Another loud noise, much closer this time. That wasn’t an accident, that was an explosion. Hamza ran from the room; Nephraim followed without being asked. They ran through the western exit towards the observation deck.

The third explosion hit them in full stride. Desperate cries wafted from the east across the palace. Wheezing, they continued running, jumped up the stairs, almost tumbling, and stumbled upwards. Upstairs, they found the door locked. The rattle of rifles sounded in the distance. What on earth was happening?

“Let’s break it down!” Hamza panted, and the blood brothers threw themselves against the locked door with

all their might. The hinges creaked; dust trickled down on Hamza’s white uniform, and a seam ripped open on his sleeve. His eyes showed just how much he hated this fact. As hard as he could, he rammed his shoulder against the nailed-up wooden planks, and Nephraim followed his example. A loud creaking noise, a jolt... the doorframe broke out of the surrounding wall. The half-brothers tumbled headfirst onto the platform. They rose coughing, surrounded by a cloud of dust. They rubbed their eyes and tried to get a good look at the city. In front of them, Toulon expanded towards the horizon. Three giant black columns of smoke rose to the sky, the Cour Argent was ablaze, and the Silver Axis was an inferno of flames.

Nephraim stood at the railing gaping, eyes wide open.

“War,” he said bewildered.

Hamza stepped next to him, trying to grasp the situation. His face was annoyed; he grimly straightened and dusted off his uniform.

“Your city. What will you do?” Nephraim asked, still looking at the sea of flames.

“I’ll take it back.”

TOULON MUST BURN

Toulon has become a monumental humiliation for the Chroniclers. The Neolibyans' success is an eyesore for Justitian. Every balance the Bank of Commerce publishes makes the otherwise rather pragmatic minds of the Tech Cult nearly throw a fit. The Central Cluster rages.

One thing is for sure: the artifacts of Franka are not meant for Africa. The exploitation of the European continent must stop. For too long, the Chroniclers had to watch the heritage of Franka and thus, the key to the rebirth of the Stream, being loaded onto rusty transport ships and brought to Tripol.

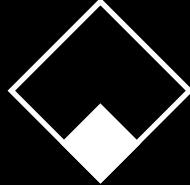
All earlier embargoes and any attempt to negotiate with the Africans have failed. There is no negotiating with Hamza Abubakar III. Day by day, the Cluster loses artifacts, Drafts and impact.

The looting and the Neolibyans in general must be stopped. Frantic, Justitian contacts the Cluster of Aquitaine, ordering them to devise a plan to oust the Africans of Toulon and seize the artifact trade. A shadow government shall infiltrate the city with armed collaborators playing a vital role in decision-making. Once the opposition is properly established and equipped, an explosive civil war will bring Toulon back under the control of the Chroniclers.

In the turmoil of the armed riot, the Neolibyans will be pushed back to Montpellier or even across the Mediterranean.

With Toulon under supervision of the Central Cluster, cutting off the other coastal cities from commerce and supply may only be a question of time. In an extensive maneuver, the Chroniclers can lead a double attack from Aquitaine and Toulon to bring the entire southern coast of Franka back under European control. If this is done, the stream of artifacts will dry up, just like Tripol's trade routes to Africa.

The Central Cluster is certain of its success.



OPERATION MIRAGE

The Chroniclers of Aquitaine have allocated the highest level of resources for the secret mission.

They named the operation after the Paradigma Mirage. As namesake, she handles the preparations, coordinates the development of the armed resistance and escalates tensions in order to put the Tech Cult at an advantage.

She has spent her whole life manipulating people and making them see the Chroniclers in a good light. As Paradigma, she does not promulgate the ambitions of her Cult. She, instead, spends her time arousing the greed of allies and taking advantage of their power, which she then uses against targets of the Cluster. Toulon is her job.

Here, fortune smiles upon her. The city is full of people desiring power and ready to sacrifice their life for change. In their frenzy, the conspirators do not realize at first that they are only the scapegoats for the Chroniclers. Once started, the operation moves straight towards X-Day, awaiting only Mirage's signal to initiate the upheaval.

For exactly a year now, the Paradigma has been working from behind the scenes. The weapons, ammunition and explosives are in place.

POWER BLOCS

Toulon is a melting pot of various factions and motivations with not only the Chroniclers viewing the African dominance with discontent. In this anthill, there are a lot of political firebrands who would, at the collapse of the existing order, charge the wounded city in order to mark their territory. Beyond the city limits, encompassing the entire region, predators wake from their hibernation and gaze hungrily at the southern coast.

THE RULERS OF TOULON

The Africans rule with the support of the people. For a decade now, they have been flooding Toulon with wealth and work. The inhabitants are loyal and willfully bow to their masters. However, Africa's success has blinded the rulers of Toulon. They have become too distracted to see envious faces appearing among the population of the city, seeking to usher their demise. Operation Mirage will end fortune's favor of Africa.

THE IRON BROTHERS

The Iron Brothers are the hard core of Operation Mirage. Success has passed them by; they were the losers left be-



hind in the race for the artifacts of the Rhône swamps. They feel betrayed and deserted, and Mirage knows how to direct their anger towards the proper targets.

The Paradigma is aware of Nestor's hatred of the Neoliberians and his desire to elevate the Iron Brothers from their position at the bottom of the food chain. She can rely on the Scrappers' loyalty. As a sworn fellowship, they are more than willing to retaliate against the Africans.

COMMANDO REQUIEM

Mirage takes leadership of Commando Requiem, a nefarious squad of Shutters controlled by a Fuse called Factor. They are planted in the city as provocateurs and simultaneously carry out surveillance, supplying Mirage with all necessary information to guide the operation. Justitian contributes its share by dispatching Judges as executioners for Commando Requiem. The Black Judge Arcville commands a band of Jurymen and Protectors who are supposed to adjudicate according to the laws of the Protectorate during the rebuilding of Toulon.

THE BLACK FLOCK

The Black Flock has no place in Toulon. The Mediterranean

is their territory. Suddenly, however, the three leaders of the Flock all have visions and nightmares of a Phoenix rising. At the same time, a smugglers' nest located on the outskirts of Toulon is destroyed by an unknown group of people. There is only one survivor ... time for the Black Flock to investigate and set sail for Toulon.

THE FIREBIRDS

Mirage does not want to rely exclusively on the Iron Brothers. She knows that she needs heinous and corrupt agents to seize the city from the Neoliberians. She combs the underworld of Terres Putain and finds what she needs. The Firebirds, a scattered Flock of Apocalyptics, have nested unnoticed right in the heart Toulon. Rattler, their leader, is a cynical and violent mercenary. His Flock is very well equipped to successfully lead a civil war.

THE CAULDRON

Independence comes at a high price. In the cauldron, there is no common goal; the various groups are divided and at enmity. Without leadership, they are exposed to political upheavals and will have to make their arrangements with the future rulers.



THE RULERS OF TOULON

CONQUERORS

Ten years can change the world. The Neolibyans believe firmly in this proverb. In almost no time, the Africans have achieved more in Toulon than all other Cults who fought for this city for almost 50 years.

In return, the population gives the new rulers loyalty. The wealth that the Raider Hamza Abubakar III has showered the region with changes the people, brings them together and creates a peace that many considered lost for a long time. Although the Touloni are not happy about every new law the Neolibyans pass, they know that the danger of perishing under the despotism and dominance of another Cult is far greater. The Africans offer the protection that the Touloni never had as subjects of their former rulers. That alone is reason enough for the Senate of Port Lagagne to support the decisions of the Cour Argent without opposition. No one wants the total surveillance of the Chroniclers to return, nor do they want to live by the vulgar rules of the Spitalians or under the religious fanaticism of the Anabaptists and Jehammedans.

Ayubu, the Bloodhound, defends Toulon against out-

side enemies. His army consists of 12 Scourger packs, all under his command. Their job is to guard the Cour Argent and Hamza's palace with their lives and keep peace within the city limits. They all have sworn an oath of fealty to Hamza and have promised to keep harm from the Raider and his Consul. No one will be able to get past them easily.

In addition to his Scourgers, Hamza has very good relations with Perpignan and Montpellier. In the event of a conflict, the resident Neolibyans of these cities, Atuma and Elani, will support their Cult brother with all available means. Armed warships will be deployed, Scourgers will spread out in Koms and take up position in the hinterland. Within 72 hours, they will lay siege to Toulon – and that will only be the first wave.

As a son of Tripol, Hamza has patrons and minions all along the coast of the Mediterranean. To challenge the Raider is to make a formidable enemy. Countless parties profit from his rule and do not want to see his status and his power endangered. Should a military conflict arise, Hamza can always rely on Africa's best forces.



HAMZA ABUBAKAR III.

Abubakar II. was a mighty Magnate, deeply rooted in the elite of Tripol, however, he was not particularly faithful. While he begat countless children with slaves and priestesses, his wife birthed him only one son: Hamza.

Old Abubakar died before his newborn could speak, and his son inherited his wealth. It would be the starting capital for Hamza's success. Without growing up in the shadow of a overpowering father figure, Hamza basked in the comforts of Neolibyan wealth. At school, he was never quite fully there, always dozing in and out. He cut university. After two weeks, he gave up his work as a Scribe and argued loudly with his mentors. He was destined for greater things, for something bigger than just following in the sire's footsteps. He dreamed of reuniting his scattered family, of uniting the Abubakar family tree and make his name unforgettable.

However, he needed a place worthy of such a union. Tripol with its ancient power structure was too cumbersome. He let his gaze wander across the map to the coast of Franka: Toulon. The sleepy town was almost not worthy of its concession, which he would be able to acquire rather cheaply. Hamza did it. Within a few years, his creativity invigorated the city, elevated it to a bastion of trade and commerce. The value of the goods to be harvested in the swamps was immense.

The Bank of Commerce had a hard time believing his balances. Sheiks barged in, offering Hamza hard cash to buy the concession from him, while others plotted to have the Raider ousted or simply killed instead. Nothing of the like happened, though. Hamza had powerful allies in every faction. His half-siblings, scattered across the entire North African coastline, were a belated gift from his deceased father. He unified them through his wealth and his vision of the Abubakar family tree. They are his extended arm, his spies, his intermediaries and his most powerful supporters.

ROLE PLAY

Higher. Faster. Further. Nothing can stop Hamza's ambitions. Everything he touches turns to gold, his lucky streak knows no end. With the confidence of an all-time winner, he presses ahead with all of his business ventures, makes lightning-quick decisions determining the fate of entire regions and signs agreements that cement his bloodline's claim to rule for decades to come.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Creator, Neolibyans, Rank 5: Raider

ATTRIBUTE: BOD 3, AGI 4, CHA 6, INT 5, PSY 4, INS 3

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Force 7D, Toughness 7D, Melee 7D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 9D, Etiquette 10D, Expression 10D, Leadership 12D, Negotiation 12D, Focus 9D, Science 9D, Cunning 8D, Deception 8D, Domination 10D, Willpower 10D, Reaction 7D, Empathy 9D

BACKGROUND: Allies 6, Authority 6, Network 6, Renown 6, Resources 6, Secrets 6

SPECIAL: -4D when negotiating with Chroniclers; Kindred Spirit – no mental attack can destroy Hamza's trust in Nephraim

POTENTIALS: At Eye Level 2, Crown of Creation, Nine Lives 1, Wheel of Fortune 2

INITIATIVE: 7D/18 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Scimitar made from Marrakush steel, 8D, Distance 1m, Damage 6, Piercing (1); Masterpiece Rifle, 11D, Distance (50/400), Damage 12, Thunderstrike

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 7D; Ranged Combat active (Look for cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Willpower) 10D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: White uniform, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/20, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 7

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Concession for Toulon confirmed by the Bank of Commerce in Tripol; Psychovore wood casket (the Abubakar family tree is engraved in the lid; contains the first Dinar Abubakar II. ever made on a silk cloth)



THE MORE DANGER

Hamza has more enemies than the pages of his ledger have room for. Not only Chroniclers, Scrappers and Judges want him dead, many Neolibyan Sheiks and agents of the Bank of Commerce desire the quick death of the Raider who is so spoiled by success. But he says to himself that the fastest horse produces the biggest cloud of dust and enjoys the fame caused by his enemies that immortalize his name.

FAMILY TIES

Old Abubakar left Hamza an unfathomable network of half-siblings, cousins and other blood relatives whom the Raider has found, supported and protected over the last years. They are the branches of the Abubakar family tree; he is its trunk. He has called his most loyal relatives, Nephraim, Zohra and Orma, to Toulon. Dozens of others sit in cities scattered around the Mediterranean, following his orders, watching his commodity flows and supporting his empire.

POTENTIALS

CROWN OF CREATION

PREREQUISITE: Neolibyans, min. Rank: 5, CHA+Leadership 12

Hamza's successes are legendary. His long, energetic and wise leadership has created a network that is able to bear even the most difficult of burdens. Whenever a venture fails or an ally cuts ties, someone new steps in to offers his services at once. As long as Hamza's Renown is at least 6, his other Backgrounds cannot be lowered.



PATRON

Years ago, Zohra started promoting education in the city. She provided the University of Toulon with an endowment from her personal assets, not only to establish a gem of knowledge on the map for the population, but also to teach the people Neolibyan laws and commandments. The more influence the ideals of her Cult have on the youngest generation, the less danger there is of interference by other Cults, revolutionary ideas or a hostile takeover by rebels. Peace tastes best when everyone believes in its good taste.

TOO IMPORTANT

Hamza has dispatched a pack of Ayubu's best Scourgers to guard his half-sister. Even if the Raider appreciates her sharp tongue, he knows how useless a weapon it is should someone attack the Consul physically. She's too important for all his political issues to be put in danger's path. Those who get too close to her will suddenly see a combat knife flash and hear the roar of submachine guns. Hidden in the thicket of surging masses out on the streets of Toulon or behind secret doors in her Consulate, Zohra's pack is never far away. Those who don't watch out for them will only see them when it's too late.

ZOHRA, CONSUL OF TOULON

Hamza's half-sister is the eternal mediator of Toulon. She always strikes the right chord; knowing when to show her counterparts goodwill, but also how to relentlessly enforce demands. In Constantine, she settled violent altercations between the gold diggers and the minters by forcing both sides to the negotiation table using notarial pressure. In Tunis, she is well known for advocating for the rights of the city fathers, who were deeply indebted to the Bank of Commerce. She averted the garnishment of the Ancestors by procuring documents that showed that at the last minute the Libyan himself had laid the foundation for the building.

When Hamza called her to Toulon, she was already a veteran of the diplomatic battlefield. She was going to be the voice of the Raider, calming down those who Hamza had robbed of their fortune the day before. Zohra liked this role – Hamza controlled the trade while she directed politics. As Consul, she holds all the power of the entire region in her hands. Any Cultist of distinction must consult her; she reduces boasting Preservists and highly distinguished Hellvetics to pathetic supplicants. Those who want Hamza's money have to get past her – and they all need money for their operations, to secure their resources or to pay their followers. In return, she demands solid pledges and pacts from the ambassadors and leaders of the other Cults. No troop movements here, no regional conflicts there. Neolibyan peace must be kept, and Zohra monitors that all parties act accordingly. Those who become entangled in her network of handshakes and pledges learn quickly how the Neolibyans conduct business.

ROLE PLAY

Zohra despises bad manners and those who are inarticulate; a clear sign that the Crow is inferior to the Lion. She fluently speaks various European and African dialects, is an expert on the history of Franka and Borca and can recite the genealogy of regional ruling families forwards and backwards. Those who care to spar with her on a verbal level should be prepared for a battle of attrition.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Mentor, Neolibyans, Rank 5; Consul

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

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Toughness 5D, Mobility 5D, Arts 9D, Etiquette 11D, Expression 11D, Leadership 10D, Negotiation 10D, Seduction 10D, Focus 6D, Legends 8D, Science 10D, Cunning 7D, Deception 7D, Domination 7D, Reaction 5D, Willpower 8D, Empathy 9D

BACKGROUND: Allies 4, Authority 5, Network 5, Renown 4, Resources 2, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: Magniloquent (+2D in debates); Linguistic Genius, fluent in a dozen African and European dialects and languages

POTENTIALS: At Eye Level 2, Inspiration 1

INITIATIVE: 5D/12 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: -

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 5D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 5D; Mental (Willpower) 8D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Splendid regalia from Bengasi, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/16, Flesh Wounds 10, Trauma 5

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Dark blue velvet pouch with silver-coated seeds (the seeds are fashioned in the gold smithy; each of them is a small artwork that reminds her of a favor bestowed; many believed to have Zohra outsmarted in a deal when she gave them a seed as farewell gift)

ORMA

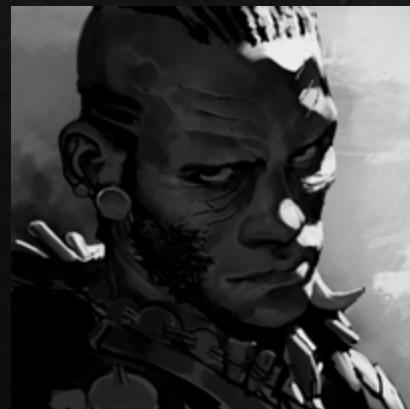
Syracuse. European Scappers work hand in hand with African ones. Orma supervises a cargo ship being gutted. Metal plates are torn from the hull, the steel bends and releases a creaking noise that is deafening. Still, it doesn't seem to be loud enough to stop the Scrapper camps from arguing. Orma frowns incredulously – Purgan and African workers are going at each others' throats yet again, threatening each other with knives and soldering bolts. Every day, it is the same unbearable process. Orma has to tear them apart like kids arguing over a ragdoll; then he has to explain once again the rules of cooperation. It makes no sense. Scappers aren't herd animals.

Then, a Scribe with a letter from his cousin Hamza on the southern coast of Franka finds him at the quay. Abubakar III has bought a new concession, the Rhône swamps on the other side of Toulon are ripe for the harvest of artifacts. Hamza wants Orma and his best men. He is supposed to lead the expedition and will be participating personally in the looting. With trembling hands, Orma folds the letter again and hides it in his breast pocket. This is the chance of a lifetime. That same night, he handpicks a dozen of his most capable Scappers from the African camp and hires a high-speed longboat to cross over to Toulon in the morning.

Let those worthless workers argue and fight on Scrapper island until their teeth come out; in the meantime, he and his men will train new Scappers in Toulon, go to the swamps with fresh resources and retrieve a fortune from the brackish water.

ROLE PLAY

Orma believes in something he calls 'group spirit'. Working towards a goal together is better than acting as a lone wolf. As far as Hamza is concerned, he is preaching to the choir. The Raider supplies him with resources, Marduk Oil and maps. Within a few months, Orma and his men managed to organize a small army of hundreds of African Scappers, which are divided into mobile, powerful squads and slowly penetrate the thicket of the swamps. The African Scappers took the Iron Brothers completely by surprise. Their coordination, their equipment and their unity guaranteed their success. Chroniclers and Iron Brothers have lost the race for the artifact veins for good.



MARDUK OIL

As Hamza's artifact Hunter, Orma has unlimited access to all necessary resources including the valuable Marduk Oil that the Anubian Nephraim distills for the black Scappers. In Orma's warehouses, casks of the tarry substance are piled high to the ceiling. Enough Marduk Oil to equip his Scappers for months of expeditions in the swamps.

MOTHER LODGE

Orma knows how to locate scrap in the swamps better than anyone else. For years, he has been plotting the finds, marking them on a map tattooed on his forearm. According to his calculations, even greater treasures are waiting to be discovered deeper in enemy territory. He suspects the region's main source is located between the Foster Forest and the City of Combs. It is marked on his forearm with a star rune.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Adventurer, Scappers, Rank 4: Alpha Wolf

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Force 6D, Melee 6D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 6D, Crafting 9D, Dexterity 9D, Navigation 8D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 6D, Stealth 8D, Etiquette 8D, Expression 9D, Leadership 9D, Artifact Lore 9D, Engineering 8D, Legends 7D, Science 6D, Faith 6D, Reaction 5D, Empathy 9D, Orienteering 10D, Perception 10D, Primal 8D, Survival 10D

BACKGROUND: Allies 4, Authority 4, Network 4, Renown 5, Resources 6

SPECIAL: Alpha Wolf of the African Scappers; +2D to INS+Orienteering in the Rhône swamps; unlimited access to Hamza's resources

POTENTIALS: Artifact Sense 3, Truffle Pig 3

INITIATIVE: 5D/16 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Machete, 6D, Distance 1, Damage 8; Revolver, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 10

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Faith) 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Black fur coat worn over oil drenched leather clothes, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 3/12, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 4

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Map of finds (tattooed to forearm); steel screw with fitting nut (a simple example Orma uses on newcomers – both of them are useless without the other, but together, they stabilize each other)

POTENTIALS

ARTIFACT SENSE

PREREQUISITE: INT+Artifact Lore 8, INS+Primal 8

The Chroniclers call them Heurisms – subconscious scripts according to which the mind makes decisions without even being aware of it. Others call it intuition or a gift. With activation, assessment or the repair of artifacts, Orma receives a number equaling his Potential level on all action rolls that land on INT+Artifact Lore or INT+Engineering Trigger.



DESTINY

Ayubu knows that the spirits are waiting for him. They stand on the black shores of his dreams, grinding their blades, and will pass their judgment on him when his time to enter the realms of the dead comes. The Dumisai knows the punishment that awaits him for all the bloodshed he caused throughout his life. He was a merciless warlord. Therefore, they will shred his skin and tear his heart from his chest.

Ayubu begs Nephraim to calm the spirits, but the Anubian dismisses his plea. No blessing from the jackal could wash his hands of the blood of innocent. His life will be judged based upon his deeds so there is nothing left for him to do but to try and countervail all of his evil deeds with good before his time finally comes.

POTENTIALS

BLOOD HOUND

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Dumisai, PSY+-Domination 8, INS+Primal 8

On the hunt, there is only one target – the prey. By Ayubu's side, there is no time for laggards. Allies who fight with the Blood Hound in their visual range get +1D added to Potential levels of their Initiative.

LAST BITE

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Dumisai, BOD+Toughness 10, INS+Primal 8

Once Ayubu reaches his maximum Trauma, he continues to fight for three more rounds without penalties before collapsing dead. For these three last combat rounds, he can use his full Ego pool one last time.

AYUBU, THE BLOOD HOUND

Gunfire blasts through the darkness of the jungle. It smells of napalm. More land gain. Ayubu's pack has made it unscathed into northern territory. A Guerrero appears in front of his barrel. Ayubu has no time to ponder; his reflexes fire salvo after salvo into his opponent. Only when the noise of war ceases is he able to glance at the faces of the dead: child soldiers. Hybrispania cannot mobilize any more men for battle. The land is bleeding to death. There is no honor in such victories.

Still, his reputation as a merciless warlord precedes him.

His campaigns are met with awe by the Africans as well as the Guerreros. When Ayubu commands a vanguard, the corpses pile, forming mountains.

His military advances ignited the legends about the Scourgers in the nests of the Crow; his name alone instills fear into the hearts of men.

Suddenly, his Moyo arrives back at his camp. For two months, he has been on his feet and has mastered all heroic deeds, sparing Ayubu from disgrace. He is like a wild dog, emaciated and hungry. His final test is to have an Anubian foretell the fate of Ayubu, but the Moyo doesn't dare to share this prophecy. Ayubu wrestles him to the ground, breaking the Moyo's arm. He wants to know what the ancestors have predestined for him. In tears, the Moyo predicts Ayubu's death. The Dumisai falls silent. The ancestors have abandoned him.

A week later, a messenger from distant Franka arrives with a dispatch. Hamza wants Ayubu in Toulon as his new warlord.

ROLE PLAY

The Dumisai is driven. His end is near and might come any day now. Such was the prophecy of his Moyo. He suspects that Toulon will be his grave, but he doesn't know the guise in which death will come to him. With this in mind, he's on the lookout for any sign of change. His senses are sharper than they were years ago in the jungle, and he distrusts everyone, even Hamza. Lately, he has noticed the strange movements of Scrapper squads beyond the city walls. A week ago, a flooded tunnel, not yet depicted on any map, was uncovered in Terres Putain. Ayubu recognizes the signs. He won't go to hell without a fight.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Ruler, Scourger, Rank 4: Dumisai

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

SKILLS: Athletics 10D, Brawl 11D, Force 10D, Melee 11D, Stamina 10D, Toughness 11D, Crafting 8D, Mobility 9D, Projectiles 11D, Stealth 8D, Leadership 8D, Legends 6D, Cunning 7D, Domination 9D, Faith 8D, Reaction 9D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 7D, Primal 10D, Survival 9D

BACKGROUND: Allies 3, Authority 5, Renown 6, Resources 3, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: +2D two PSY and CHA when dealing with Africans

POTENTIALS: Blood Hound 3, Wild Dog Run 3, Last Bite

INITIATIVE: 9D/18 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: UAO combat knife, 12D, Distance 1 m, Damage 7, Smooth running (2 T); Assault rifle with sight, 12D, Distance (30/120), Damage 11, Salvoes (3); Heavy pistol, 11D, Distance (10/40), Damage 12, Thunderstrike

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 12D;

Ranged Combat active (Sidestepping), Mobility 9D; Mental (Faith) 8D

MOVEMENT: 10m

ARMOR: Scourger mask (+2D to PSY+Faith against mental attacks); camo clothes, combat boots, flak jacket and helmet, Armor 4

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 2/16, Flesh Wounds 22, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Walkie-talkie; compass; function pockets (Pain killers (5 x level 3), aromatic salt (level 1 stimulant), matches, dressing material, multitool, saw wire, rope (10 m), tac light for assault rifle, eight spare clips)



NEPHRAIM

Nephraim stands in his half-brother's working rooms, calmly looking over Hamza's shoulder as he thumbs through tomes, rewrites concessions and doctors the balance sheets. Everything worldly is caught up within Hamza. Nephraim embodies the other side: the realm of the ancestors. He's one with the spirits. He sees them in the stones and the bark of the trees, hears them in the wind and talks to them in his sleep. He knows they are well disposed towards him and his half-brother; he knows that the ancestors watch over them.

Since the time he faced Murnakir, he has known of the abysses lurking beyond the borders. All that is life must come to its end in the realm of the Pheromancers. It is Nephraim's job to guard the people of Toulon against them, using his abilities to stop their advances and enforcing peace in places where even the Spitalians were met with defeat.

He takes a handful of seeds into his mouth and starts chewing on them. They burst, piercing his gums and his tongue, their crystalline tips burrow deep in his mouth filling it with blood. Then he hears them out there in the swamps. The drones. He hears their thoughts, hears them talk to each other soundlessly, obeying the orders of the Pheromancers. Nephraim realizes the network of invisible paths spreading through Franka, traces of scent far beyond human perception transmitting primal morphemes and information. If the Anubian can decipher this language, he will be able to enter the heart of Souffrance. It is his destiny; this is why he has come.

ROLE PLAY

Two souls inhabit Nephraim's body. One of them is the keeper of his half-brother Hamza, speaking calmly and compassionately; the other mercilessly penetrates deeper and deeper into the realm of the Pheromancers, trying to grasp their language and plans. The Anubian knows the importance of having information on the enemy. To understand the enemy is the key to destroying him. This is one of the reasons he shakes his head in disbelief when he watches the operations of the Spitalians and the Resistance. Whoever wants to successfully storm the swamps must first disable the brain guiding the Pheromancers.



WASP MAN

Nephraim is the only one who can move freely in the swamps beyond the borderline. Ever since the Anubian faced Murnakir, drones have avoided him or simply have not noticed him. The Spitalians would love to know more about the source of his abilities, but Nephraim doesn't share his secret. Instead, he ventures into the heart of darkness alone. Sometimes, he disappears behind the borders for weeks. He will only tell Anubians in Montpellier the information he has brought back to the realm of humans from the world of the Pheromancers.

BLACK MAMBA

His most dangerous weapon is a three-meter-long black mamba, which he always carries in his shoulder bag. If someone gets too close to him, he whips his hand from the bag and attacks with the poisonous snake as if it were a whip. Its neurotoxin takes hold within seconds, causing drowsiness and cramps. The victim suffers for minutes until he finally dies.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Africa, The Disciple, Anubian, Rank 3: Sickle

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

SKILLS: Athletics 7D, Brawl 9D, Force 6D, Melee 9D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 7D, Dexterity 7D, Mobility 10D, Stealth 9D, Arts 8D, Etiquette 8D, Expression 9D, Legends 9D, Medicine 7D, Science 7D, Cunning 7D, Deception 9D, Faith 9D, Reaction 9D, Empathy 10D, Orienteering 10D, Perception 12D, Primal 10D, Survival 9D, Taming 8D

BACKGROUND: Network 2, Renown 5, Resources 3, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: +3D to fending off infections (Psychovores); immune to the poison of the Black Mamba

POTENTIALS: Gaze of the Ancestors, Eye of Horus 3, Sekhmet's Slumber 1

INITIATIVE: 9D/20 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Black Mamba, 10D, Distance 2 m, Damage 1, ignores Armor (only full body armor protects), Poisoned (7C, -2 Ego per round +1 Trauma per minute until death)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 10D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 10D; Mental (Faith) 9D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Leather pants, a cape made of woven swamp grass, Armor 0

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 3/18, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Shoulder bag (for Black Mamba); pouch with bronze bowl (food, herbs, camo paint – the little bowl is his most important survival tool); Marduk essence (+8S for six hours); Duat seeds; Duat blood (Level 2)

POTENTIALS

GAZE OF THE ANCESTORS

PREREQUISITE: Anubian, INS+Perception 10/1 x per day

Once one crosses into the spirit world, knowledge is ubiquitous. Every stone, every creature, and every gust of wind – an open mind is necessary to understand their quiet whispers. With a roll on INS+Perception (5), the Character receives a cryptic hint concerning an event in the future.

THE IRON BROTHERS

TOGETHER

European Scappers who want to survive in and around Toulon join the Iron Brothers. Fellowship, civility and fraternity form the basis of their bond. Over the years, they have had various leaders. Their name dates back to the early days of Ferrallies when thousands of Scappers from all over Europe came to Toulon to try their luck. Even after the great failure in the swamps, the name of the union remained. It protects those who cannot afford any other refuge in this region.

Scappers who refuse to join the Iron Brothers are on their own. Only members are given information; jobs are only shared among brothers. An oath of fealty usually is enough to become a member. Common rituals, the distribution of rations, the allotment of lodging and the maintenance of the Module constitute the daily life of the Iron Brothers. Even without any great successes in recent years, they still have their community, and together, they will make it through the next winter.

The Iron Brothers have long since started to offer their skills as mechanics, workers, peons, assistants, trackers and craftsmen in all districts of the city in order to make do in these hard times. Whatever they can spare, they share with

each other. Nestor, Alpha Wolf and official leader of the Iron Brothers, makes sure that the rules are observed. From his headquarters at the Burster – the monstrous production hall and unfinished Cluster – he leads the Brothers, giving speeches in the Great Hall and preparing them for his plans. He has a promise that galvanizes his audience: their day will come.

CLOUT

The Iron Brothers want Toulon back. Nestor's explanations are simple and obvious: they were here first. The Africans stole artifacts from under their noses and with their cursed Marduk Oil made their people invincible against the drones. If they were to chase away the Neolibyans and their black Scappers and get hold of the Oil, the riches would finally land where they belong.

The Iron Brothers are a legion; their brotherhood is over 1,000 members strong. However, Nestor greatly overestimates their strength. He counts every orphan, every pregnant woman and every toothless cripple to encourage his people. The battle-hardened core of the Iron Brothers

EVERYONE WILL SEE
AND EVERYONE WILL KNOW
THAT BOY, YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW
I'M DIGGIN' YOU A SHALLOW GRAVE

[16 HORSEPOWER]

barely consists of more than 200 Scrappers. Not enough to face an army of Scourgers, the Resistance and the Beau Monde all at once. For years, Nestor has been postponing his attack.

But now, everything's different. With the aid of his officer Eisenhauer, he has been able to smuggle a massive amount of explosives and weapons into the city. Then there is the support of Commando Requiem, the Cartel and the Firebirds. For the very first time in Nestor's life, he sees a plan come to its fruition. Operation Mirage will be a great success for the Iron Brothers. It has to.

THE CARTEL

Bosch has gotten wind of Operation Mirage. He has his large ears everywhere, especially if he can get a share for the Cartel.

The constant cries of the Iron Brothers and their morally charged ringleader Nestor aggravate him considerably. Yes, it's all very tragic: no artifacts and no food; the Neoliberals are evil and the black Scrappers take away everything. What an embarrassing lot.

Good old Bosch knows that he cannot trust such bedbugs, so he relies rather on his boys. In the end, there's money to be made.

He sends his officer Deich from the Protectorate, followed by 40 Cartel thugs, to get a good look at the situation and to stake a claim for the Cartel. Deich is supposed to support Nestor in his plans for revenge so Bosch can then wheedle a part of the loot out of him later. After all, one hand washes the other. That's the way of the Cartel. If Nestor reacts in a petulant manner, Deich and his boys are supposed to break his legs and advise the Iron Brothers to join the Cartel - for their own protection, of course.

Deich and his boys are ham-fisted goons. In the Protectorate, they have either grown fat or worked as pit fighters. They collect debts and chase traitors to the Protectorate's borders for their master Bosch. Toulon is their first job abroad. They have greatly underestimated the numbers of the Iron Brothers. Weeks and months will pass before Bosch can send reinforcements. They must face Nestor's men shorthanded. To prepare, they spend their time lifting weights, gorging themselves on Bion and Glory and attaching a few more rusty nails to their cudgels.



NESTOR

The Touloni called him the best Scrapper in town, however, they continued to buy from the Africans. The Chroniclers promised him rich spoils and a business partnership but then left him to dry. Speechless, he watched Hamza's minions digging through the swamps and making the profits he and his brothers should have made. Nestor was always at a disadvantage. His whole fucking life, others passed him by, cheated him and kept his share. Why were the black Scrappers so lucky in the swamps? Sure, because they use this witch oil and collaborate with black charlatans. Nefarious nepotism!

Nestor is fed up with being the loser. He's sick of others cutting off his air supply. Everyone else is to blame. His honesty didn't pay off. How dumb of him to always fall for the same promises.

But this is all over now. The anger that has built up within him for decades oozes from his every pore. He's fed up with always waiting. Nestor realizes that only he alone can determine his destiny. He loads a round into the chamber of his machine gun and oils his chainsaw. What has he got to lose? They have taken everything from him already.

Maybe the others were always faster and smarter than Nestor, but they forgot one thing: the Alpha Wolf enjoys the loyalty of his brothers all over Ferrallies. For years, they stood by his side as losers; promises made to them were broken just as often. Nestor is the fuse for this teeming powder keg. He's their leader. With one word, he can channel the growing irascibility of his Cult and provide the anger of the Iron Brothers with a target. Toulon will burn.

ROLE PLAY

Since the beginning of Operation Mirage, Nestor's eagerness is untameable. His life has been given meaning again. This time, everything is at stake: payback, compensation, victory. He has decided to trust the Chroniclers one last time, but only on his terms. This time, the initial situation is different. He is leading a powerful army, and the masked faces need him and his men to overtake the city. Without the Iron Brothers, they will not be able to do so, and this will guarantee him a handsome share of the spoils this time.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Borca, The Chosen, Scrappers, Rank 4: Alpha Wolf

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Force 9D, Melee 9D, Toughness 9D, Crafting 8D, Dexterity 7D, Navigation 7D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 8D, Stealth 6D, Expression 7D, Leadership 9D, Negotiation 7D, Artifact Lore 7D, Engineering 7D, Focus 7D, Domination 8D, Reaction 8D, Willpower 9D, Empathy 7D, Orienteering 7D, Perception 9D, Survival 10D

BACKGROUND: Allies 4, Authority 4, Network 4, Renown 3, Resources 4, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: +2D to INS+Orienteering in Toulon

POTENTIALS: Hour of the Bastard, The Mob 3, Tough Dog 2

INITIATIVE: 8D/14 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Light MG (modified), 7D, Distance (30/80), Damage 11, Salvoes (4); Chainsaw bayonet, 9D, Distance 1m, Damage 12, Terrifying (3), Impact (1 T)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 9D;

Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Willpower) 9D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Ebonite harness, Armor 4, Insulated; Welder overall of oiled leather, Armor 1, Fireproof (4); Armor total: 7

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 2/18, Flesh Wounds 18, Trauma 9

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Walkie-talkie; site plan (shows key positions, supply storage points and ambushes; hard to read (INT+Science (4)))

AGITATOR

Nestor can talk – at least better than other Scrappers. His anger goes straight the hearts of the Iron Brothers. When he talks, they nod and bang their shovels against metal casks. He is the embodiment of all their thoughts, which he crafts into sentences that get under their skin. His brothers rally behind him. He's their Alpha Wolf.

INVENTORY

CHAINSAW BAYONET

A bullet wound can heal, but a lost arm doesn't grow back. Nestor has attached a jagged titanium chainsaw from UEO stocks to his machine gun. Its teeth can even bite through thin steel sheets. If the saw gets stuck, Nestor can boost the engine power for a while so the saw is able to free itself.

POTENTIALS

HOUR OF THE BASTARD

PREREQUISITE: Scrappers, long suffering, PSY+Faith/Willpower 8, INS+Survival 10

Nestor has had to take so many blows and setbacks in his life that now, he can draw on the purest anger seething inside of him. Whenever he faces someone who has insulted, used, betrayed or ridiculed him before in an altercation, he regains 1 Ego Point per combat round. This is his hour of revenge.

EISENHAUER

They laughed about him once too often. They ate from his plate once too often. They cheated him once too often. Eisenhauer has 1,000 reasons to be angry. His anger has always been buried in his empty stomach, filling the void there. But now, by Nestor's side, his stomach is finally full, and the anger bursts to the surface.

There are a dozen rumors surrounding Eisenhauer. Some say he's merely a myth. Others say he's the brother of a Cave Bear from Borca named Blacksmith who has fallen into disrepute. Others surmise that Eisenhauer gets his powers from elixirs and flasks bought from Apocalyptic in Bayonne. Rumors suggest that he has recovered significant amounts of bygone demolitions material, explosives and weapons from the swamps.

In any case, it's true that Eisenhauer is always a hot topic amongst the Scrappers of Ferrallies. They say Nestor pleaded in vain with Eisenhauer for months, trying to get the giant to take his side. Only when, a few weeks ago, rumors of Blacksmith's death hit the southern coast, did things change.

At once, Eisenhauer became Nestor's bodyguard. He smuggled warheads, kinetic energy penetrators and weapons to Ferrallies and equipped the Burster with a giant arsenal for X-Day. Using Factor, the Fuse, he was able to distribute the arsenal, organize squads of thugs according to weapon type into different groups and teach inexperienced Scrappers how to use explosives. He will lead the heavy artillery and destroy Hamza's palace himself. Ever since Eisenhauer joined, no one has doubted Nestor's words anymore, and the Alpha Wolf's plan has started to take shape. All Scrappers aspire to be part of the grand reckoning.

ROLE PLAY

Eisenhauer can paralyse his victims simply by looking at them. His beady eyes peer out from under his protruding brow and low crackles sound from behind the metal casing that partially conceals his face. He induces debilitating fear. Eisenhauer doesn't talk. He thrashes. When his arms, covered in finger-thick veins hit a target, bones break and innards rupture. He is an animal. Once he's enraged, nothing can stop his frenetic and violent rampage.



ANABOLIC AGENTS

Blacksmith got his tinctures from a pit fighter from Justitian named Atama. The anabolic agents encourage massive muscle growth and pain resistance. In return, they kill all carnal desires in the user. Blacksmith always shared his rations with his brother Eisenhauer. But now, after Blacksmith's death, Eisenhauer's reserves are slowly dwindling. In a few months, he will have to go back to Borca to get new supplies. On the way back, he will confront the pigs who killed his brother and avenge his death.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Borca, The Hermit, Scrapper, Rank 5: Cave Bear

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 6, AGI 3, CHA 1, INT 2, PSY 3, INS 4

SKILLS: Athletics 10D, Brawl 10D, Force 12D, Melee 8D, Stamina 10D, Toughness 12D, Crafting 8D, Projectiles 9D, Stealth 5D, Artifact Lore 7D, Engineering 6D, Science 5D, Cunning 7D, Domination 9D, Reaction 7D, Willpower 7D, Orienteering 7D, Perception 7D, Primal 8D, Survival 10D

BACKGROUND: Renown 5, Resources 4, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: +3D to collecting scrap; Passive Defense +3/active Defense +4D at the Burster

POTENTIALS: Nitro 3, Rage of the Bear, Tough Dog 3, Truffle Pig 2

INITIATIVE: 7D/16 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Dismantled heavy duty Gatling, 7D, Distance (50/200), Damage 12, Salvoes (15); Gloves into which iron pins are sewn, 12D, Distance 1 m, Damage 8, blunt; UEO mortar, 7D, Distance (40/80), Damage 15, Deviation, Explosive, Thunderstrike

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Brawl 12D; Ranged Combat active (simply remain standing), Mobility 3D; Mental (Willpower) 7D

MOVEMENT: 10m

ARMOR: Body armor and face guard, Armor 5; Armor total: 8

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 2/14, Flesh Wounds 24, Trauma 9

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Syringe (3 x anabolic agents); counterfeit Drafts (INT+Science (3) to identify them as Nullify's; covered in Blacksmith's blood)

POTENTIALS

RAGE OF THE BEAR

PREREQUISITE: Permanent abuse of anabolic agents, BOD+Toughness 10 The Scrapper's body has been exposed to Atama's substances for far too long and, as a result, doesn't follow the laws of nature anymore. Eisenhauer can tolerate higher levels of pain than most normal opponents. Every wound seems to only enrage him even more. If Eisenhauer takes Trauma damage in combat, he regains 1D6 Ego Points at once and also starts raging without feeling pain. All Trauma penalties are completely ignored. But from now on, there is a chance each round for Eisenhauer's metabolism to collapse. At the end of each round, make an action roll for BOD+Toughness (5). If the roll fails, Eisenhauer dies of a heart attack after 1 D6 rounds.



CARTEL THUG'S

While Nestor is busy leading the Iron Brothers, Deich has rounded up Cartel thugs from all over Borca to help with the operation. They are paid by Bosch and have already made a name for themselves in the Protectorate. They form a well-muscled core; they are a tough dirty squad. Breaking bones and shattering jaws. After the operation, Deich is supposed to rein the thugs in and secure a share of the loot for Bosch. Bosch has given his dog permission to shed blood if Nestor and his Iron Brothers get in Deich's way. Scrapper victory will be followed by Scrapper war.

INVENTORY

FLASK

A bit of distillate every morning, every noon and every evening – who would deny Deich such pleasures? He bought the silver thing engraved with a Crow from an African Scrapper who claimed to have taken it from some pirates. Whatever, the important thing is that it doesn't leak. Deich doesn't know that the bottom of the flask contains a hidden map showing the coordinates of three Crows' nests in the Mediterranean.

DEICH'S FAVORITE BOOK

Deich likes to read his booklet. However, there are no words. Instead, it contains pictures of tits, hips, asses and sometimes faces. In it, he collects every scrap of bygone beauty he can get a hold of and caresses the hair in the pictures. He thinks about what he could do with such wenches. Then he opens his belt.

DEICH

Imagine a city like Toulon under Scrapper control. Deich grins. What a dream. The Cartel has sent him here as negotiator and strong arm for the Iron Brothers. Deich's grin turns into primal laughter. If his Master, old Bosch, could only see this paradise, he'd fart from excitement.

Deich sees his future brightly and clearly in front of his eyes: tits, hips, distillate, mountains of Burn and parties till the break of dawn. More riches than any Borcan has ever seen. He sees himself sitting on a porch, clad in a lion's pelt, smoking tobacco and celebrating his old age.

He is still dreaming of his future life when Nestor grabs him by the ear and pulls his head down so he can look him in the eye.

"Get a grip, Deich!" the leader of the Iron Brothers shouts.

Deich returns sullenly to work. The tunnel must be finished by tonight. Damn drudgery. Nestor, that shapeless mite! Deich could crush him, shove him into a rusty tin can and shoot him back to Cour Argent. But Master Bosch has ordered him to hold back. Why the heck does Bosch like this puny Scrapper? Deich ponders this for a while. Then, suddenly he comes up with the answer: maybe they are related. They both look like dwarves! Deich can barely control his laughter; he breaks out in sweat as he starts digging again. Then he thinks of tits again, of women and alcohol, of the riches and the impending victory. When it's all over, he will take Nestor to task.

ROLE PLAY

Bosch didn't decide to send Deich on this mission because of his outstanding mental abilities; he sent him because of his absolute loyalty to the Cartel.

Like a dog, Deich will attack anyone who gets too close to his master and at his behest, sniffs around where the Iron Brothers are. Bosch wants to know what the share for the Cartel is. If the operation succeeds, he wants to claim his portion of the stolen goods as quickly as possible, before the Chroniclers take everything.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Borca, The Visionary, Scrappers, Rank 5; Officer

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 9D, Force 9D, Melee 9D, Stamina 8D, Toughness 9D, Crafting 6D, Dexterity 6D, Mobility 6D, Projectiles 9D, Artifact Lore 6D, Cunning 6D, Domination 9D, Willpower 7D, Reaction 7D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 6D, Primal 6D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: Allies 4, Authority 5, Network 2, Renown 2, Resources 2, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: Letter of manumission from Bosch (+2D to PSY+Domination versus Scrappers)

POTENTIALS: Darwin 1, Tough Dog 3

INITIATIVE: 7D/12 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Heavy pistol, 9D, Distance (10/40), Damage 12, Thunderstrike; Scrap club, 9D, Distance 1 m, Damage 9, blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 9D; Ranged Combat active (find cover behind others), Mobility 6D; Mental (Willpower) 7D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Mechanic's cap; Overalls with ebonite molding, Armor 4; Armor total: 7

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 6/14, Flesh Wounds 18, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Flask; favorite book; walkie-talkie; belt with various grenades (4 x high explosive shell, 3 x frag, 2 x smoke grenade); plastic bag with Burn (3 x Glory (Level 6))

HURLANT

Her two daughters, Feme and Vermilla, died last year. She had gone to the swamp with them. One last chance to find something that would get the three of them through the coming winter. Hurlant and her daughters lost their way in the dense thicket of the Rhône swamps, a week's journey from Toulon.

Feme died first. Exhaustion. Vermilla managed, with her mother at her side, to get back to the city albeit with a heavy case of swamp fever. Hurlant had no Drafts left for the Spitalians and without a word, the people at the L'Orage sent her away. The Scrappers in Ferrallies tried to save the girl, but by dawn, Vermilla was dead, too.

Hurlant screamed until there was no air left in her lungs and her eyes were blood-shot. She was at the mercy of fate. Like all other Scrappers in Ferrallies, she had become meaningless for the city and its rulers. No false sympathy would ever bring her girls back to life.

Eaten alive by pain, she piled stones onto her daughter's small grave. She tried drowning her anger in distillate; she slept with men who gave her warmth in the freezing nights. Nothing helped against the emptiness and the knowledge that, those responsible for the death of her daughters sat stuffing themselves on the other side of the bridge leading to Cour Argent.

How she would have liked to send the children of the Africans to the swamps to perish just as miserably as her little Feme!

Aimless and without purpose, she took a job at the Burster. Hard work, but the few Drafts she earns keep her alive. However, they are not enough to forget the agony. Nestor is the first to recognize Hurlant's hatred. He takes her hand and explains to her the plan of the Iron Brothers. He needs a lost soul like her, someone who wouldn't mind killing as many people as possible to express their pain.

She has learned to drive the freight gondola – and how to stop it in case of emergency. When the time comes, she will drive the explosives into the petro towers and turn the Northern Port into an ocean of flames. This will be Hurlant's revenge.

ROLE PLAY

Hurlant is a wreck whose life means nothing to her anymore. The only thing keeping her alive is her search for a culprit to hold accountable for the deaths of her daughters. She doesn't care if dozens or hundreds have to die.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Martyr, Scrappers, Rank 2: Badger

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 3, AGI 3, CHA 2, INT 2, PSY 1 (3), INS 3

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Force 6D, Melee 6D, Toughness 6D, Crafting 7D, Navigation 8D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 5D, Stealth 6D, Seduction 4D, Artifact Lore 5D, Engineering 5D, Deception 4D, Reaction 4D, Willpower 4D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 6D, Primal 5D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: Allies 1, Network 2, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: Heavy psychosis (-2D auf PSY)

POTENTIALS: Could Be Worse 2

INITIATIVE: 4D/10 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Hurlant's crusher, 6D, Distance 1m, Damage 9, blunt; Flare gun, 5D, Distance (15/60), Damage 5, Fire hazardous

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 7D;

Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Willpower) 4D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Greasy butcher's apron made from studded leather, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 4/8, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 4

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Utility belt (+1D to AGI+Crafting and AGI+Dexterity); cutting board with iron edge (Volta's legacy; hard to decipher, needs complex INT+Science action (15 successes), 1 action roll per hour; contains plans, lists and codes of the UEO compound under Saint Chenil); radio detonator for explosives on board of the freight gondola



FREIGHT GONDOLA

The freight gondola is Hurlant's mightiest weapon. She has the keys to this monster. Cour Argent's weakest spot is its petro towers. Hurlant is burnt out and has nothing more to lose. If nobody stops her in time, she will sacrifice herself on X-Day and initiate the downfall of Toulon.

INVENTORY

VOLTA'S LEGACY

During her desperate journey through the swamp with her daughters, Hurlant found an object on a skeleton that had been gnawed away at. She has no idea how much the object she found is worth. The nondescript booklet with the rusty steel cover and the hard to open lock is the old notebook of Commando Prime Volta, a Preservist of the Wachsmann-Lacroix expedition. Volta was responsible for the equipment of his troop and meticulously logged all of the Preservist storage points from Cremant to Toulon. The booklet also contains inventories of the secret UEO supply center in Saint Chenil, including lock codes and passwords for the entryways and emergency generators. Since Hurlant doesn't read Borcan, she doesn't know what to do with all of this. Instead, she has turned the booklet into a cutting board for tubers and potatoes and carries it with her at all times as part of her working equipment. If she only knew what wealth it contained ...

COMMANDO REQUIEM

INVISIBLE

Toulon is being infiltrated. The Paradigma Mirage is flanked by a hidden coterie of provocateurs and mercenaries, and their common denominator is "Commando Requiem". Mirage acts as its strategist; she is the head of the operation, allocates jobs and determines the line of approach. The members of the Commando have sworn fealty to Justitian and Aquitaine and have exchanged their former lives to fight a war on invisible fronts far away from home. They are a secret society – wherever they go, they cover their tracks and hide their deeds.

The Fuse Factor and his 24 Shutters belong to the Commando. He is their obscurantist; they are his two dozen dirty hands. For years, he has supported and equipped them. He has accomplished missions together with them that were not meant to be dragged into the light of day.

However, it is not just the Chroniclers who are part of this operation. In Justitian, they exerted their influence, applied pressure on the Senate, forcing them to cooperate. At Senator Rutgar's bidding, a squadron of 30 Jurymen, Vagrants and Protectors led by the Black Judge Arcville, was assembled. Rutgar deliberately chose Arcville to lead this unit to the distantly located source of conflict. There they

were to support Mirage, Factor and their Shutters on behalf of the Protectorate and help them conquer Toulon. Rutgar assured the Chroniclers that Arcville was the best man for the job.

For a year now, Commando Requiem has been infiltrating the city. They have gotten a clear picture of the situation, scouted routes and in preparation for a longer military campaign created a subterranean supply system. Through it, they bring weapons, military equipment and spotters into the city. Explosives are secretly attached to key points throughout the Cour Argent. On X-Day, they intend to cut the beating heart off from the rest of the city, blow up the bridges to Terres Putain and Ferrallies and take Hamza's palace by force. Afterwards, it will be their job to hold the line until reinforcements arrive.

COMMAND CENTER

Commando Requiem works from the abandoned alcoves in Ferrallies. Consulting the legacy of the Chroniclers, Mirage tries to get an idea of the city. All frequencies meet at this central hub. Monitors flash in the darkness of the lower levels, neon lights flicker and the chill of condensation

YOU TAKE A MORTAL MAN
AND PUT HIM IN CONTROL GOD
WATCH HIM BECOME A
WATCH PEOPLE'S HEADS A'ROLL
A'ROLL, A'ROLL

[MEGADETH]

mixes with the stuffy air, irritating the eyes and the lungs. The light of a picture wall burns through the darkness of the chamber. For a moment, the glowing rectangle is filled with a flickering image of the Silver Axis. The series of pictures are grainy and flicker, displaying images captured by the camera lenses of the Shutters who are measuring the Cour Argent for the day of the attack. Traffic routes become visible, the outer wall of Hamza's palace, then the Street of Grantors, the University and the Neolibyan Consulate.

Commando Requiem has analyzed Toulon completely, marking the weak spots for destruction. For weeks now, information caches have been piling up on the server exclusively installed for this operation. The Shutters film every movement happening in the heart of the city. Via routers in their backpacks and suits, images are sent to the abandoned alcoves with a delay of only a few seconds. With the incredible amount of data, Mirage and Factor have calculated an attack plan for the X-Day that will leave the Neolibyans in complete and utter shock.

Once the operation has been successfully completed, Mirage wants to reopen the alcoves as the first point of contact for future artifact trade under Aquitaine's control. The

Burster will be restructured into a brand new Cluster that serves the Paradigma and Toulon will finally belong to the Chroniclers.

WEAK SPOT

The Commando is sure that it will succeed and in its hubris, fails to see its own mistakes. Its own very human mistakes. This is something a Paradigma like Mirage could never acknowledge. For the sake of victory, she has made a pact with powers beyond her control. Rattler and the Firebirds are the most dangerous dregs she could have found for her operation. The Fuse Factor has already fallen prey to the Flock. He lost his mind in the warm embrace of a Magpie and told her secrets not meant for foreign ears.

Then there is the Black Judge, Arcville, who thinks more of his job and his position than Rutgar would ever deem him worthy of. He is just a pitiful puppet on a string, to be sacrificed whenever deemed necessary. For now, he acts pompous, full of vanity and pride, overestimating his own importance. He dreams of his victorious return home. Soon, he will realize how it feels when Justitian cuts his last string.



MIRAGE

The Aquitaine Cluster was a miracle. Created by humans, equipped with the wisdom of the bygones and beyond all imagination. Mirage's eyes flashed when she first saw its interior. She shed tears of joy. It was the only time in her life.

She came to the Cluster as a child. The Chroniclers had given logic problems and puzzles to the kids in the neighboring villages to test them. Mirage excelled. With ease, she solved complex geometrical formulas and laughed with joy as she arranged a strange, colorful cube by color within just a few seconds. One morning, two Fragments visited Mirage's parents, showered the couple with Drafts and took the girl to Aquitaine with them the same evening.

The Chroniclers loved their little prodigy, guarded her. They let Mirage enter the world of the Stream and taught her to understand the power of the machine. Years went by, and the girl became a woman. She never wanted to return to the easily comprehensible world of her childhood. The Cluster had become her home. Thus, she completely surrendered to the Cult and gave up human desires – emotions, closeness and lust were words without meaning to her. Instead, she cultivated her gift, making the Cluster's missions the focus of her life.

Whoever said a bad word about the Chroniclers or dared to question the work of the Cult became her nemesis. An attack on the Cult was an attack on everything she considered to be perfect, a place which was a sanctuary for her. The Fragments quickly realized her devotion and supported her in political conflicts. Mirage became a Paragon; she was now the voice of the Cluster. Her job was to be the face of the Chroniclers, to avoid diplomatic damage before it happened and influence the opinion of the population for the benefit of the Chroniclers.

ROLE PLAY

With the naïveté of a child, Mirage divides the world into black and white. One is either for or against the cause of the Chroniclers. Being against it is a declaration of war. She would never doubt the righteousness and legitimacy of her operation, not for a second. The Chroniclers are the last beacon of light for civilization. Those who oppose them are Barbarians and must die. Only the goals of the Cluster matter.

NO PRICE TOO HIGH

Mirage will never forget how Hamza embarrassed her. No one has ever dared to speak as badly about her Cult or undermine its influence as he did. She is ready to make any pact that would lead to Hamza's destruction and bring Toulon back into the hands of the Chroniclers. However, in blind contempt, she forms pacts with powers beyond her control. Rattler controls her impulses and directs her actions, distracting her from his own plan.

PRODIGY

Mirage is the prodigy of the Aquitaine cluster. She's extremely important for the Chroniclers and she shall not be harmed – regardless of the circumstances. Therefore, the Fragments protect the Paragon by all means possible. A kidnapping or even torture of Mirage would be the worst catastrophe for the operation. Such a situation would result in drastic measures being taken.

POTENTIALS

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Paragon, INT+Focus 10, PSY+Cunning 8

Mirage's brain is like a bygone supercomputer. Algorithms determine possibilities for event manipulation. Mirage analyzes the near future. She calculates the moves of her opponents and employs counter-measures. For every Trigger on PSY+Cunning (3), her passive defense rises by 1 for the rest of the scene.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Righteous, Chroniclers, Rank 5: Paragon

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 2, AGI 3, CHA 4, INT 6, PSY 4, INS 1

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Force 6D, Brawl 6D, Toughness 6D, Dexterity 9D, Mobility 7D, Projectiles 8D, Stealth 8D, Expression 9D, Leadership 8D, Negotiation 9D, Artifact Lore 12D, Engineering 12D, Focus 12D, Legends 10D, Science 10D, Cunning 8D, Deception 9D, Domination 9D, Faith 10D, Reaction 10D, Empathy 4D, Orienteering 4D, Perception 6D

BACKGROUND: Allies 5, Authority 5, Network 5, Renown 5, Resources 6, Secrets 5

SPECIAL: +3 Network for provocations; -2 Secrets for other Cults

POTENTIALS: Fractal Memory 3, Situation Analysis, Upload 3

INITIATIVE: 10D/24 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Streamer glove (SIGMA Level), 8D, Distance 1 m, Dazed (8), Smooth running (2 T); Vocoder (SIGMA Level), 12D/9D, Damage 3+T Ego, Distance (10), Thunderstrike, Area damage (45°)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 7D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Faith) 10D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Chronicler suit (SIGMA Level), Armor 4, insulated, bulletproof (6), SIGMA source (Level 6), Freon (2 x Level 3)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/20, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Tracker (SIGMA Level, can start transponders)



ARCVILLE

The Protectorate. Expands from Justitian to the southern coast of Franka. No borders. Arcville adjusts his glasses and absentmindedly reads the status reports. So far, everything is going according to plan. The population will need guiding principles to withstand the imminent change of power. Of course, some things will change. The laws of the Protectorate must be enforced stringently. People will not like it, but humans are an adaptive species. With time, they will become desensitized. A work camp for criminals must be created. Arcville ponders, "Ferrallies might be a good location. There also need to be weapons, patrol and a curfew. We will need to find loyalists among the population and offer bounties for denouncing dissidents. No problem, there are traitors everywhere." He continues to plan. "Get the Anabaptists to come back, they have a positive influence on society, and quell rebellions early on."

Arcville's hand strokes his beard. He thinks his mission through. The Senate of Justitian has given permission for the operation. He is here at the behest of Rutgar, as head of the Judges, taking part and coordinating their needs. He was fully aware of the importance of his job from the beginning. He needs to carry the spirit of Justitian to the coast of Franka. As soon as Operation Mirage is successfully carried out, he will appoint more Judges, recruit Jurymen and turn Toulon into a place where the law reigns.

He looks at the status reports again. For the moment, he concedes, it makes sense to cooperate with the Firebirds. However, when everything is said and done, he must incarcerate them or banish them. The Iron Brothers are thugs; if used correctly, they yield satisfactory results, but from time to time he must rein in Nestor. Too much participation creates megalomania, and the Senate wants to avoid paving the way for a second Cartel in Toulon.

ROLE PLAY

Arcville gets things done. He judges people by their utility, discerning if they are of use for Justitian in the long run. If they are only of worth for a single task, he uses them and promptly discards them when they are no longer needed. He has long since focused on the population of Toulon, assessing the situation. Vericon, this bloated carp of a mayor, and Zoe, the General, are to be the first to fall when the revolution comes. Right now, they are too influential, but the Operation will rob both parties of their power and place them in Arcville's crosshairs.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Creator, Judges, Rank 4: Black Judge

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

SKILLS: Athletics 7D, Brawl 6D, Force 9D, Melee 8D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 8D, Navigation 7D, Mobility 5D, Projectiles 7D, Stealth 8D, Etiquette 5D, Expression 4D, Leadership 6D, Focus 6D, Legends 6D, Cunning 6D, Domination 6D, Reaction 6D, Willpower 5D, Empathy 4D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 8D, Survival 4D, Taming 5D

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

BACKGROUNDS: Verbündete 3, Autorität 3, Netzwerk 2, Ruf 1, Ressourcen 5, Geheimnisse 3

SPECIAL: +2 Network when gathering information through riffraff

POTENTIALS: Hammer Blow 3

INITIATIVE: 6D/12 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Arcville's judgement hammer, 8D, Distance 1 m, Damage 10, Blunt; Heavy revolver, 7D, Distance (10/40), Damage 12, Thunderstrike

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 8D;

Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 5D; Mental (Willpower) 5D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Black leather coat, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/10, Flesh Wounds 16, Trauma 7

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Glasses with leather case and cleaning cloth; Antiquarian Codex (parting gift from Rutgar as a sign of his "faith"); Golden pocket watch (Dauphine had it engraved with the picture of their estate near Bassham)



P U P P E T

The Black Judge considers himself more important than he actually is. Rutgar only approves Operation Mirage, because the Senate has ordered the support of Arcville's mission. Secretly, though, Rutgar hopes the mission will be a failure. In his eyes, the Protectorate has overstepped its bounds, blindly groping for new destinations instead of focusing on the defense of the existing borders and fending off the attacking savages surrounding Justitian. At the first sign of Arcville failing, Rutgar will cut all ties to the Black Judge and abandon him to his fate. This is why Rutgar chose Arcville for Operation Mirage: he is the most expendable Black Judge.

DAUPHINE'S LIST

Arcville's wife Dauphine manages a small estate not far from Bassham where she wistfully waits for her husband to return. In case something should happen to him, he has given her a list with the names of all the Black Judges in the Protectorate. Should he die, he has instructed her to contact these Judges and ask for their support in her remaining years of solitude. In his mind, this act is not equivalent to signing Dauphine's death sentence.

Worried about her husband, she went straight to Justitian to find the first name on the list. Iwanov. Rutgar's most capable man.



FACTOR

The Chroniclers needed a hatchet man. Someone free of ailments who knew pain, but never yielded. Even in his days as a Shutter, Factor was known moreso as a crowbar than as a great strategist. Mirage wanted a follower who could meet the Scrappers on the same level; someone who could laugh and drink with them. Factor would easily be able to persuade the Iron Brothers of their common cause.

The preparations went as planned. Week after week, Factor opened one weapons cache after the other that the Chroniclers had buried for him in the hinterland of Toulon and smuggled the goods into town with the help of the Scrappers. At the Burster, they distributed what sanctioned technology the Cluster had supplied Operation Mirage with. Stun grenades, explosives, chainsaws, ammunition. There were walkie-talkies, transponders, interceptor antennae and radio blockers as well. The masked men had done a great job, a toothless Cartelist chuckled at Factor when he saw the arsenal.

Their location was secure. Now all they had to do was wait for the signal. Factor wanted to fine tune the plan in advance with the Firebirds in their nest in Terres Putain. He wanted to have a look at the tunnels and hold a last strategic meeting. However, what he saw there was life changing. Factor was prepared for anything, except for this woman. He had never seen or felt something like her before. Alabaster, a Magpie, took his breath away. He only wanted one thing, to feel her near him, to feel her hands on his rugged face and to bury himself in her embrace. At night, he dreamed of her; by day, he desperately looked for her between the canals and the alleys of the district. No trace. Nervously, he chewed his fingernails. He had to have her.

But she belonged to the leader of the Flock. Rattler.

ROLE PLAY

Factor is drunk in love. He has lost control over his thoughts and keeps drifting through his memories, clinging to every detail of Alabaster's face. She has become his curse. His mind floats in ecstasy, lovesickness and in deep turmoil. He wants the Magpie, wants to run away with her. Operation Mirage has lost all priority. If he cannot have her, his life has lost its meaning. Jealousy is eating through his synapses, pushes him to increasingly reckless decisions.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Mediator, Chroniclers, Rank 4: Fuse

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

SKILLS: Athletics 7D, Brawl 8D, Force 9D, Melee 8D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 8D, Crafting 6D, Mobility 8D, Projectiles 9D, Stealth 7D, Etiquette 5D, Artifact Lore 8D, Engineering 7D, Legends 6D, Cunning 7D, Deception 7D, Domination 7D, Reaction 6D, Willpower 5D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 6D, Primal 6D, Survival 5D

BACKGROUND: Allies 3, Authority 1, Network 4, Resources 4, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: Subdermal transponder

POTENTIALS: Backdoor 2, Dead End 2, Download 1

INITIATIVE: 6D/12 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Submachine gun, 9D, Distance (10/40), Damage 7, Smooth running (2T), Salvoes (3); Crusher, 8D, Distance 1 m, Damage 9, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 8D;

Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 8D; Mental (Willpower) 5D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Armored overalls and cape, Armor 4

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 3/10, Flesh Wounds 16, Trauma 7

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Belt with the various grenades (3 x high explosive shells, 3 x flash bangs, 3 x smoke grenades); Influence grenade (generates electrostatic field for unstable high-voltage discharge through particle cloud)

SONG OF THE SIREN

Alabaster sees straight through Factor's stumbling courtship dance. He constantly gives himself away as he obsessively looks for reasons to visit the nest of the Firebirds with the sole purpose of seeing her. The Fuse has hopelessly fallen for her. She feeds him stories and elicits confessions from him. He has long since told her the entire plan of Operation Mirage, informed her about his instigators and given her the access codes for arsenals and communication channels. All this has only one use for Alabaster: she passes all the information on to Rattler, the only person she trusts. Meanwhile, the Phoenix prepares his day of reckoning.

POTENTIALS

BACKDOOR

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Shutter, PSY+Deception 6

Fuses like Factor have developed certain survival strategies to get through their missions alive. One of the best is not to raise suspicions at all but to swim alone as an inconspicuous impulse in the data stream. Backdoor gives the Character +1D per Potential level to PSY+Cunning or PSY+Deception when he comes to infiltrate the community disguised as a member and gets away unscathed.

DECOY 5

Things did not work out well for Decoy 5. His last missions didn't produce the desired success. His attack on Atuma in Montpellier failed. In northern Purgare, Decoy's identity was compromised. Moreover, he had to exchange an artifact for his life. The Cluster has issued a first warning. There will not be a second one. Decoy knows that he is being watched, that he's down for the count and that another failure will cost him his life.

A cold shocker to the neck and a silent bullet between the eyes would be the last moments in Decoy's short life.

The Central Cluster informs Decoy about Operation Mirage. He's supposed to infiltrate his own people and cover all tracks that reveal the Chroniclers as the ones responsible for giving the orders. Should the mission fail, Decoy is to eliminate everyone involved in the operation, including its commander, Mirage. Not as a punishment, but to keep them from being captured and tortured, to avoid having to divulge information to the enemy. Decoy knows that he is being used as a fail-safe, and that is what he's best at.

He infiltrates Commando Requiem disguised as a Judge and forges an alliance with Arcville. A counterfeit letter from the Senate is enough to make the Black Judge eat out of the palm of Decoy's hand. "Too simple," Decoy thinks, "the Commando is too sure of itself." It is only a question of arrogance until someone makes a fatal mistake. But who? Decoy is running out of time. Too many factions are pulling strings at once. The mixture is volatile and could cause a chain reaction that will kill everyone involved.

ROLE PLAY

Decoy has a feeling that there is already a traitor in the ranks of Commando Requiem. He just doesn't know who it is yet; he is wholly unaware of the motives of the traitor. The Shutter understands what's at stake. One wrong step, and he will end up a nameless, bloated corpse out in the swamps. He needs more information and from a neutral party. Dressed in the uniform of a Chronicler, he infiltrates Terres Putain, checks the situation there and buys information from third parties. He needs to know who is really in charge of this operation.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Borca, The Conqueror, Chroniclers, Rank: 3; Shutter

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

SKILLS: Athletics 8D, Force 8D, Melee 7D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 6D, Crafting 8D, Dexterity 8D, Mobility 9D, Projectiles 9D, Stealth 10D, Etiquette 7D, Expression 6D, Artifact Lore 7D, Engineering 7D, Focus 6D, Legends 6D, Cunning 8D, Deception 8D, Domination 7D, Reaction 7D, Willpower 6D, Empathy 6D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 7D

BACKGROUND: Network 4, Resources 4, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: Access to sanctioned technology

POTENTIALS: Dead End 2, Download 2, Multiply 2

INITIATIVE: 7D/12 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Combat knife, 8D, Distance 1m, Damage 6, Smooth running (2 T); Sniper rifle with sight, 9D, Distance (50/400), Damage 11, Sensitive

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 9D; Mental (Willpower) 6D

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Chronicler suit, Armor 2, First Impression (+1D), Source (Level 3), Fumor (Level 2), Discharge (Level 2)

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

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Opticalizer (mask with special optics; neutralizes all visual penalties caused by environmental influences); Stream drone with recording equipment and display; skeleton keys; camo paint; Judge's coat, hat and sunglasses (Armor 2)



F L E M M I N G

For his operations, Decoy has an incredible amount of fake identities he uses to trade with various factions. In Toulon, he poses as the Frankan Judge Flemming who was sent from Justitian to help Arcville. He acts grumpy and taciturn, chews tobacco and takes notes. To gain the trust of the people he talks to, he talks about how life in the Protectorate is so much safer than out here, where law-breakers, killers and cutthroats reside.

I N V E N T O R Y

STREAM DRONE

Eico is a spy drone that Decoy has re-coded. In addition to its limited learning abilities, Decoy has added rudimentary speech functions. The drone is palm sized and can record images and sounds that Decoy can extract using the micro-sensors of his opticalizer. Eico is Decoy's eye in the sky, his distant early warning system and his only companion.

P O T E N T I A L S

M U L T I P L Y

P R E R E Q U I S I T E:

Chroniclers, PSY+Deception 6

I am Legion. Some Shutters wear their undercover identities like a second skin. With this Potential, a Chronicler can develop a number of established disguises equaling his Potential level. He switches roles so expertly that he gets, in connection with his respective identities, +1D per Potential level on PSY+Deception.

THE BLACK FLOCK

PREDATORS

The Neolibyans say that the Mediterranean belongs to Tripol. The Apocalyptic say that the Mediterranean belongs to the Black Flock. Both are right. The situation changes with every new month. As soon as the Black Flock attacks, a trade route that was considered safe and profitable yesterday can turn into ruin for both the crew and the concession of a Magnate. However, these migratory birds must fear increasingly dangerous Scourger counterattacks. Aggressions lead to merciless retaliation – captured Apocalyptic are tortured, enslaved, or burned alive. For as quickly as they accumulate riches from pillaged freighters, they are also in danger of losing their own life. Like so many things in the life of an Apocalyptic, living on the sea is a whipping frenzy of experiences which abruptly end with a burnt corpse drifting on the ocean waves.

Still, the Black Flock boasts about being the most powerful league of Apocalyptic on the Mediterranean in existence. Their three leaders Callisto, Meridian and Sabata are considered merciless strategists. They cannot be overcome with ordinary methods. Tripol will shower anyone who manages to chop off one of the three heads of the Black

Flock with shiploads of Dinars. Easier said than done.

Almost 700 pirates have gathered under the flag of the Flock, armed to the teeth, obedient and loyal unto death. They race across the waves on nimble trimarans equipped with heavy turrets, all the while skirmishing with African transport ships. Meanwhile, the Flock's boarding ships attach their hydraulic hooks to the hulls, skinning the outer hull like an onion and enabling the Pirates to quickly enter the cargo hold replete with goods. Combat divers attack the crew positioned at the railing with harpoon crossbows from underwater. They drag their skewered rivals down and drown them in the waves. In direct confrontations on the open sea or in narrow coastal straits, the Black Flock uses jet boats equipped with fixed lances or machine guns, which are mounted on the steering wheel. They also use hovercrafts to quickly deploy troops at shallow beaches and bays.

Their resources are manifold, their attack tactics rarely predictable. The Black Flock is a plague that the Neolibyans cannot subdue on their own. For years, they have tried to collaborate with other Cults to strike a fatal blow

WHEN THE SWALLOWS FELL FROM THE EAVES,
AND THE GULLS FROM THE SPIRES,
THE STARLINGS, IN MILLIONS,
WOULD FEED ON THE GROUND WHERE THEY LIE
AND THE AMBULANCE MEN SAID
"THERE'S NOWHERE TO FLEE FOR YOUR LIFE,"
SO WE STAY INSIDE,
AND WE'LL SLEEP UNTIL
THE WORLD OF MAN IS PARALYZED.

[SHEARWATER]

on the southern coast, but no one, except for the Scourgers, has been ready to enter the fray thus far. The Bank of Commerce has suffered enormous losses, which was to the Chroniclers' liking.

BAD OMENS

The Apocalyptic Tarot varies from Flock to Flock. Ravens and Buzzards interpret symbols and patterns according to their own traditions, auguring luck, warning of evil or permitting a glimpse into the future. A certain order in the cards, however, is known to all Flocks as the symbol of absolute doom: the Abomination above the Creator.

If these two cards appear in this order, the future is ill-fated. Over the centuries, the meaning of this pattern has become engraved in the minds of the soothsayers and fortunetellers. The Abomination symbolizes chaos, destruction, obliteration and destruction. The Creator is the symbol of birth, purity, and life force.

As a single card, it can transform a prophecy into either good or evil. In combination, however, these two represent

the rebirth of the darkest desires, the zero hour on a morning that never comes and a labyrinth of pain that cannot be escaped.

It is said that this combination has only been laid three times over the last 500 years – at the birth of the Pheromancer Markurant, at the fall of Exalt and on the day before the Eshaton.

A few weeks ago, the fortune tellers of the Black Flock unexpectedly laid the fatal pattern. All over the Rhône delta, Ravens laid the disastrous combination, too, and were inclined to interpret it as the arrival of a momentous day that looms on the horizon like a billowing storm. Whilst migratory birds on the mainland are still interpreting, the Black Flock has already noticed the scent.

Toulon is the source of the omen. Trimarans are fueled up and loaded with ammunition. Pirates have been dragged out of their bunks and sobered up. Tomorrow, they will set sail for the southern coast of Franka before it is too late. The leaders have agreed that they want to stay one step ahead of their destiny and avert it before it kills them all. They are prepared for the worst.



CALLISTO

The sky is glowing. The sun is a burning sphere, singeing the grass yellow. Three birds fall, wings broken and feathers burnt. Raven, Buzzard, Albatross. In their agony, they stare upwards, see their killer, wings spread wide, circling the sun. The Phoenix.

Callisto awakes from her slumber feverish with cramps. She grabs the jug of water next to her bunk and empties it in seconds. The same dream for weeks. A Firebird chases the leaders of the Flock and then burns them to ashes.

For years, she has expanded the power of the Apocalyptic to the Mediterranean. She has become a feared pirate whose raids have severely damaged the flank of the Neolibyans. On Corpse, she skirmished heavily with invading Scourger packs, all the while keeping the primitive Clans from the inhospitable hinterland at bay. No one could defeat Callisto's pirates. Even the Mother of Ravens from faraway Justitian could only send her praise and demand her share of the loot. Callisto sent a quarter of it, for she knew with whom she had to share to keep her nest clean. Under her influence, the three most powerful Flocks united on the pirate island of Corpse to become a single one – the Black Flock.

But now, fear invades her bunk. She keeps having this fever dream which she is unable to interpret. In her despair, she consults the Tarot. The cards keep revealing the same pattern. The Abomination above the Creator. An imminent maelstrom of chaos, destruction, and death. She must consult the other leaders of the Flock. She calls for a meeting.

ROLE PLAY

Callisto feels that her dream is more than a mere figment of her imagination. She trusts the Tarot, knows the power of its prophecies. Unrest fills her days. She has never known helplessness. With every passing day, it gets worse. She must find whoever is behind the symbol of the Phoenix before he finds her and the others. She must be quicker than the firebird.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Protector, Apocalyptic, Rank 3: Raven

ATTRIBUTES: KÖR 3, GES 4, CHA 4, VER 3, PSY 5, INS 3

SKILLS: Athletics 7D, Brawl 7D, Force 7D, Melee 7D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 7D, Dexterity 7D, Navigation 10D, Mobility 8D, Projectiles 8D, Stealth 8D, Etiquette 7D, Leadership 10D, Negotiation 10D, Seduction 8D, Legends 7D, Cunning 11D, Deception 9D, Domination 8D, Faith 10D, Reaction 7D, Empathy 8D, Orienteering 8D, Perception 8D, Primal 8D, Survival 7D

BACKGROUND: Allies 6, Authority 6, Network 4, Renown 6, Resources 5, Secrets 5

SPECIAL: Leader of the Black Flock

POTENTIALS: Card of Destiny 3, Crow's Nest 3, Star of Destiny

INITIATIVE: 7D/16 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Repeating crossbow, 10D, Distance (15/60), Damage 10; Blade bracelet, 9D, Distance 1m, Damage 7, Smooth running (2T), Camo (4S)

DEFENSE: Passive 3; Melee active (Parry), Brawl 9D; Ranged Combat active (Duck), Mobility 8D; Mental (Faith) 10D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Leather armor, Armor 3

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 3/20, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Apocalyptic Tarot; Raven jewelry (Callisto follows the custom of accepting oaths of fealty together with a gift)

FARAWAY MOON

Like many Apocalyptic, Callisto grew up amongst Storks. She was kidnapped as a child and sent to the spore fields to harvest Burn as soon as she could walk. Her parents never saw her again. She spent her whole life in the Cult, saw its best and its worst sides and clawed her way to the top.

She is famous now and embodies the heartbeat of the Apocalyptic unlike anyone else. She hardly remembers the Stork who named her Callisto. She has heard it is the name of a faraway moon somewhere out there in the sky.

POTENTIALS

STAR OF DESTINY

PREREQUISITE: Apocalyptic, min.

Rank: 3, CHA+Leadership 10,

PSY+Cunning 10/1x per day

Callisto's star of destiny burns brightly in the night sky. Her future is tightly interwoven with that of the Cult. As the Raven of Ravens, it is easy for her to even win leaders of other Flocks over to her side. They follow her voluntarily. Nothing will ever shake Callisto's claim for leadership. She is already a legend. Only willful abdication can put an end to her authority.



SABATA

Three shiploads of Glory to Ducal, two to Ajaccio and one to Perpignan via Elani's route. Sabata orders the Leopard to be careful on the last route and to sail under the Neolibyan flag, for Clan Bordenoir has been increasingly checking unmarked African freight in the last weeks. With a well-intended warning and a kiss to the cheek, she wishes the merchant a safe crossing.

Sabata takes a long sip from her goatskin – Argus. Suddenly, heat flares behind her forehead, and her eyelids flutter. She walks through the curtains to her adjoining room where the sacrificial altar stands. On top of the stone are dead starlings with broken wings whose heads have been torn off. Blood pools in a small puddle in the middle of the altar plate. Sabata gazes inside, trying to grasp the future. The Burn in her lungs fires signals into her subconscious. Her nose starts to bleed, red liquid trails across her lips, drops down and mingles with the blood of the starlings. Under her eyes, the pool changes shape, vibrates, dissolves and coalesces again. A pattern becomes recognizable: a bloody, pulsating maze without exit.

Sabata grabs the altar by its corners and topples it, screaming in despair. The vision fades, there is only a soft echo of chirping starlings in her ears. She is certain of it. A spirit of vengeance has entered the land of the living and will not rest before it has taken its revenge. Sabata must warn her Flock. She fastens her feather cape and runs down to the jetty. It is a day's journey to the Black Nest.

ROLE PLAY

Sabata is the augur of the Black Flock, with her second sight always directed towards the future. For years, her premonitions have kept the Flock from doom; her ability to sense danger is a legend even amongst other fortune tellers. However, her abuse of Argus gradually takes its toll. It is becoming increasingly hard for her to live in the moment. The impressions from the future raining down on her diminish her view of the present. It is only a matter of time until the Spore Infestation takes over and she loses herself in the endless field of possibilities of an unknown beyond.



CLANDESTINE TRADE

Sabata controls the entire Burn smuggle on the Mediterranean for the Black Flock. She cooperates with Leopards, fishers in the Rhône deltas, corrupted Spitalians and migratory birds of the mainland. Deliveries, trade, and loading take place on the open sea or on a small chain of islands close to Corpse. Sabata's smugglers are constantly on the move and transport merchandise from all over Europe that extend to the coastal cities of Franka, Africa and Hybrispania from here.

This is also the reason why she has access to all sorts of premium Burn and knows the benefits of each variety.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Hybrispania, The Traditionalist, Apocalyptic, Rank 3: Buzzard

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

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Brawl 5D, Force 4D, Melee 5D, Stamina 5D, Toughness 4D, Dexterity 6D, Navigation 7D, Mobility 6D, Arts 7D, Expression 8D, Leadership 6D, Negotiation 6D, Legends 10D, Medicine 6D, Science 5D, Cunning 6D, Deception 7D, Domination 9D, Faith 10D, Reaction 7D, Empathy 10D, Perception 10D, Primal 8D

BACKGROUND: Allies 4, Authority 5, Network 4, Renown 5, Resources 3, Secrets 6

SPECIAL: Complete addiction to Burn: -4D to PSY+Faith when not in intoxication or stimulus phase

POTENTIALS: Black Omen 3, Second Sight

INITIATIVE: 7D/16 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Koumaya dagger, 6D, Distance 1m, Damage 5

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 6D; Mental (Faith) 10D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Leather bodysuit and cape made of black feathers, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 15/20 (6 points permanent), Flesh Wounds 8, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Burn skin (made from exquisite halcyon skin); Several leather pouches with Burn (3 x Bion (Level 6), 3 x Glory (Level 6), 3 x Unity (Level 6), 3 x Argus (Level 6), 1 x Muse (Level 4)); Sacrificial disc (sacred stone from Zillah)

POTENTIALS

SECOND SIGHT

PREREQUISITE: Permanent Spore Infestation min. 4, INS+Perception 10, INS+Empathy 10

Sabata sees the future. Permanently. She weaves a pattern from the fragments, protecting her Flock from dangers and giving them an advantage. Once a day, she rolls INS+Perception (3). If successful, the members of the augur's Flock get +1D per resulting Trigger as a bonus to actions directly related to her vision. In case of an imminent attack, these are bonus dice for Initiative; in case of negotiations, the bonus is added to social skills. If survival is of the essence, it is added to instinct skills etc.



LORD OF THE SEAS

Meridian grew up on the ocean and knows the sea better than the land. Out on the ocean, he never loses his bearings. He knows every stream and every vortex. He can even interpret and circumnavigate the subterranean movements of the Reaper's Blow before it's too late. This is why his hideaways and storages are hidden on shores where almost no other boat would dare to dock. If chased, he lures his pursuers into dangerous waters, causing their boats to crash against sharp cliffs or run aground. On land, however, he feels unsafe and adrift, which is why he prefers to avoid dry land in the first place.

MERIDIAN

A few years ago, several well-armed Scourger packs destroyed the Sun Flock under the instruction of the Bank of Commerce. Up until that point, the Sun Flock had been the most successful pirate crew on the western flank of Corpse. Their leader Vulco and a handful of remaining Seagulls, who hadn't been torn to shreds by machine gunfire, fled north towards Justitian.

Meridian met a power vacuum waiting to be filled. He was at the right place at the right time. He recruited newcomers, had them tear down the old nest and bring everything that was still usable to a new hideaway. The smuggler route on the Mediterranean was still the most profitable and hardest to control. The sea promised far more than that which could be acquired in raids on the mainland. Meridian used his knowledge of the sea to plunder, steal and extort until his success had become clear for everyone to see. It was only a question of time until he met a fate similar to Vulco's. When Callisto suggested to unify the Flocks of Corpse to display strength and exert dominance, Meridian agreed at once. Their chances of defeating the Scourgers would be much higher if they worked together.

Suddenly, however, Meridian's confidence dwindles. Although he hasn't believed in bad omens for a long time, he notices something from the corner of his eye. It is like a premonition he cannot grasp. Something is moving under the sea. It lives in the silt. It worms through the sandy ground. Meridian has visions. He tries to interpret the signs, and for the first time in years, he shuffles his Tarot. Twice, three times, four times. The same picture over and over, the same pattern: The Abomination above the Creator. The worst of omens. All life will be subject to arbitrariness. Order will be smashed, and madness will flood the world. When he closes his eyes, all he sees are trembling, featherless Ravens. They are bleeding and coughing up their insides.

ROLE PLAY

Meridian has never been one to believe in the mysticism of his Cult. He prefers to live in reality, where bullets kill and a hidden knife guarantees survival. This is why the figments of imagination that constantly surround him now are all the more disturbing to him. His eyes are bloodshot from enervation. He must consult Callisto to rid himself of the storm raging inside his head.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Purgare, The Traveler, Apocalyptic, Rank: 3; Albatross

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

SKILLS: Athletics 8D, Brawl 6D, Force 8D, Melee 10D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 9D, Dexterity 7D, Navigation 10D, Mobility 9D, Projectiles 7D, Etiquette 6D, Leadership 5D, Negotiation 5D, Seduction 7D, Legends 6D, Cunning 7D, Domination 10D, Reaction 8D, Willpower 7D, Orienteering 10D, Perception 8D, Primal 7D, Survival 7D

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

SPECIAL: Bonus +2D to INS+Orienteering on the Mediterranean

POTENTIALS: 1,000 Ways 2, All-In 3, Ambidextrous 2

INITIATIVE: 8D/14 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Perfectly balanced twin sabers with mother of pearl handles, 12D (10D when fighting with two weapons), Distance 1 m, Damage 9

DEFENSE: Passive 3; Melee active (Block), Melee 12D; Ranged Combat active (Duck), Mobility 9D; Mental (Willpower) 7D

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Wide red robe covered in jewelry and seashells, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 4/14, Flesh Wounds 18, Trauma 9

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Meridian's bracelet; Goat skin (3 x Glory (Level 5)); Copper binoculars (loot from Meridian's first attack on the African freighter, +2D INS+Perception when looking into the far distance)



IVAR

Ivar's last memory is endless pain. With their knee on his neck, someone nails him to the ground. Next to his ear, the flame of a Bunsen burner hisses. The air is crackling. It smells of burnt flesh and boiling blood. He tries to rise, but the animal on his back dislocates his shoulder with a jolt. Ivar screams and squirms. He does not understand what is happening. Cold sweat runs into his eyes; his vision is blurred. In a dark corner of the nest, he sees a Stork of his Flock. Jorane is gagged and chained to a chair, his gaze flicks around in despair, his chest heaves with fear. Corpses are scattered at Jorane's feet. Ivar knows them all. They are all Storks of the Black Flock.

Suddenly, someone steps into Ivar's view. As Jorane looks up at the bloodied figure in front of him, he becomes short of breath. Lying on the floor, Ivar tries to capture the face of the unknown man, but he only registers his strange tattoos, which cover his entire back like a labyrinth. Then, the carnage begins. Ivar watches the stranger repeatedly hit Jorane's head with the butt of his rifle. Over and over again, blow after blow, until the skull finally shatters with one loud crack.

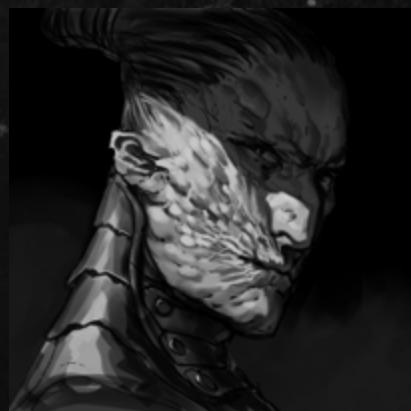
Silence. No one speaks. Not a single sound throughout the entire bloodbath.

Ivar wants to live. He rears in agony. With the last of his strength, he tries to fight the giant who has nailed him to the floor. But the animal simply grabs him by the head and like a maniac, smashes him into the wooden floorboards. Blood and dust blur Ivar's vision. He cannot see anything anymore. He hears the Bunsen burner being hurled at him feels its searing heat. His heart races, and Ivar is certain that, any moment now, it will all be over.

Suddenly, he hears words of redemption, "Hurt him, but leave him alive. We need a decoy." After a split second, the darting flame of the Bunsen burner begins to eat through Ivar's skin. It melts his face. Endless pain.

ROLE PLAY

When Ivar washes up on the shore of the Black Nest, he does not know how much time has passed since he was tortured. Days... Weeks...? He has lost all sense of time. He stumbles along the beach, looking for his Flock. He has to warn them of the madman who has come to get even with all of them.



NEST CONSTRUCTION

Ivar's mission was to set up a new nest for the Black Flock in Toulon so that, in the future, they would be able to circumnavigate Ducal and Bayonne and smuggle directly through Toulon. So far, pretty harmless. The Storks going with him were supposed to look for potential recruits for the Flock and round up children for the Burn harvest. Saint Chenil seemed to be created for this purpose. In the Orphanage, there were children abound.

Why were they attacked? Was it because of turf wars between Apocalyptic? The smuggle hadn't even started and the nest had yet to be built.

Was someone trying to make a point or incite a feud? Who would dare declare war on the Black Flock in such an open manner?

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Traveler, Apocalyptic, Rank 2: Woodpecker

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

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Melee 5D, Force 5D, Stamina 4D, Toughness 5D, Crafting 7D, Dexterity 6D, Mobility 5D, Projectiles 5D, Arts 3D, Etiquette 5D, Leadership 4D, Negotiation 5D, Seduction 4D, Legends 7D, Cunning 7D, Deception 8D, Reaction 6D, Willpower 5D, Empathy 7D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 6D, Primal 5D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: Allies 2, Network 3, Resources 1, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: Burnt face (CHA -2D); Paranoia (+1D to INS+Perception related to ambushes)

POTENTIALS: Crow's Nest 1, Sleek 1

INITIATIVE: 6D/10 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Knife, 6D, Distance 1 m, Damage 4, Smooth running (2T); Throwing knife, 5D, Distance (3/10), Damage 5

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 5D; Ranged Combat active (Hit the ground), Mobility 5D; Mental (Willpower) 5D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Padded and studded leather bodysuit, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 7/10, Flesh Wounds 10, Trauma 5

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Belt pouch (Dinars and Drafts); Plastic bottle with petro and matches (for the pig with the Bunsen burner); rope (3 m); Trap bag (tripwire and small, clanking plates of sheet metal)

ABANDONED NEST

Terres Putain. An abandoned supply cellar between the Le Cirque and a neighboring house. The building of the nest had just begun and Ivar had already obtained some rudimentary furnishings. In the abandoned cellar, there were still four canisters of petro, seven bottles of pure distillate, tools, coils of cable, two walkie-talkies with weak E-Cubes, three crossbows with 100 bolts and a collection of simple melee weapons, a change of clothes and various knickknacks - none of which justified an attack. Ivar has not forgotten the goat skins full of Burn or the Dinars behind the loose wall paneling (INS+Perception (3)). But wild horses couldn't drag him back to that cursed place.

THE FIREBIRDS

PYRE

The origin of the Firebirds lies somewhere deep in the northwest of Franka. As a Flock, they never were conspicuous. There is almost no available information about their past; neither about Rattler, their leader, nor about his loose company of fewer than 20 followers. Due to their small size and their obscure business, they haven't piqued anyone's interest since establishing their nest in Terres Putain a year ago. The Ravens of Bayonne and Ducal are blind to their presence and the Apocalyptic, who have lived in Toulon for generations, are also unaware.

No one knows that the Firebirds have come to set the world on fire.

Is there something more dangerous than a mad Apocalyptic out for revenge? Yes – one who is willing to take on his entire Cult.

Rattler is a Phoenix. As such, he has risen from the ashes of his own grave. Whoever tried to kill him back then is long dead. While seeking revenge, Rattler destroyed everything that might have acted as a reminder of the time before his spiritual rebirth.

His thirst for blood has yet to be quenched; it has been hitherto but a drop in the ocean – the Phoenix is mercilessly

plotting. He wants to turn Toulon into a pyre – not to gain power over the city or the region but to transform it into a charnel. To do this, he will allow the already hostile factions to battle it out against one another. He will create as much confusion as possible and bring the chaos of the ongoing civil war to its climax. Rattler knows his siblings. He knows the Apocalyptic will come as soon as they smell the stench of corpses coming from Toulon. Like greedy vultures, they will circle the city and try to nest. Only then will Rattler's reckoning begin. He will kill them one by one until he is wading to his knees in their blood. He will punish them for what they have done to him. For stealing him from his mother as a child, teaching him to kill and taking his innocence.

The Phoenix has brought together others who share his destiny. They were the most degenerate criminals and executioners he found during his long journey. They were merciless creatures who were stolen from their parents and taught to kill and torture from an early age, ultimately abandoned to their a self-destructive existence.

Rattler encourages them to repent and take revenge on the Apocalyptic – the Cult that destroyed their lives and

GEFÄHRLICH IST WER SCHMERZEN KENNT
 VOM FEUER DAS DEN GEIST VERBRENNT
 BANG BANG
 GEFÄHRLICH DAS GEBRANNT E KIND
 MIT FEUER DAS VOM LEBEN TRENNT
 EIN HEISSE SCHREI
 BANG BANG
 FEUER FREI!

[RAMMSTEIN]

turned them into heartless beasts. When Toulon falls, Rattler's siren call will sound. Apocalyptic will start marching along the entire southern coast to feast on the fresh cadavers. This will be the hour of redemption for the Firebirds, and Rattler's carnage will be infinite.

SWANSONG

Rattler wants as many Apocalyptic as possible to join him in death.

He is not concerned with how many heads have to roll as a result. Commando Requiem, the Scrappers, the Neoliberians – to the Phoenix, their lives are all worthless. They are his puppets. He has only to pit them against each other, leaving them to bleed to death from their own wounds. They will depart the city as rotten cadavers paving the way for the Apocalyptic's takeover. This is Rattler's only reason for involving the Firebirds in his plans. He manipulates Mirage, lulling her into a false sense of security and fueling her hatred for Hamza with each passing day. She does not see that the Phoenix is preparing her for her own demise. In his hands, she is a useful tool for his final act.

Rattler and his Firebirds only know the madness that they have committed themselves to. It is their form of reckoning. The terror that they will bring over Toulon will be unrivaled. The Firebirds do not fear death and have nothing left to lose in the world of the living.

POWER

The explosives that the Iron Brothers and Commando Requiem have smuggled into town are nothing compared to what Rattler and the deserted Sapper Baptiste have put into place.

The rogue Hellvetic emptied out an entire Alpine storage belonging to his Cult before joining Rattler's brigade. For months, he distributed the explosives all over Toulon, from Port Lagagne to Ferrallies. Hidden in the cracks between buildings, under bridges and jetties and tucked away in the corners of labyrinthine bars and attics, the bombs tick quietly away. Only Baptiste controls the detonators, and if Rattler gives him the sign, the Hellvetic will pronounce a death sentence for the city and turn Toulon into hell on earth.



RATTLER

Like a child, Rattler stares at his fingers, which are exposed to the sun. Where the sunbeams penetrate the thin layer of skin, his fingertips blaze a fiery red. In this instant, all life on earth seems to hold its breath, the chirping of the birds falls silent and the wind appears to have lost all its power.

No one knows exactly where Rattler comes from, what motivates him and what the story behind his deeds is. He doesn't seem to know himself. Rumors surround the Flock that dared to cast out a madman like him. However, they are only legends. Rattler himself does not comment on such things. He stays silent, rarely expressing his opinions, but when he talks, every word weighs as heavy as a tombstone.

Thoughts whirl through his head: distorted images and figments followed by absolute nothingness. There's a roaring silence within him, the scream of a woman he calls mother fills the void within his skull. Then the ritual begins. A ritual that many who got too close to Rattler did not survive. He touches his bald skull with his index finger. Carefully he traces the lines of his tattoos covering his entire body like a mouse looking for a way out of a maze. If he runs into a dead end, he becomes quiet, softly closes his eyes, and exhales silently. The next second, someone dies.

In such a moment, no one is safe from the Phoenix; no one can predict whom his death sentence will kill. Firebirds and other followers who have already experienced Rattler's trance seek safety as quickly as possible, leaving the room or barricading themselves behind steel doors. Alabaster, his executioner's bride, is the only one who his desire to kill appears to spare. He pauses when she looks him in the eye, averts his gaze as if he's trying to hide something from her that is buried deep inside him. Almost as if she could see through his actions like a mother who is able to calm her child's fit of rage, simply by giving a stern look.

ROLE PLAY

Rattler is a human mosaic of abysses that are beyond understanding. His behavior is always erratic; everything he does has brutal consequences. However, there is a method to his madness which always follows a goal that only Rattler himself seems to know. That is another reason it seems almost surreal that he is never drunk, despises Burn and knows no carnal desires.

POTENTIALS

RORSCHACH

PREREQUISITE: Tattoos, PSY+Domination 12, INT+Focus 10

Rattler's sheer presence incites great discomfort and unease in his attackers. It is difficult for one to maintain his concentration or to focus on him at all. His tattoos are an oversized Rorschach pattern, which opponents lose themselves in. When Rattler is attacked, 6s are simply removed from the dice pool which increases the probability of botches.

BAD LUCK

PREREQUISITE: Phoenix, PSY+Domination 12, PSY+Cunning 10

Those who look into the fire of the Phoenix get burned. Rattler's presence puts absolutely everyone into a subconscious state of alarm. Those who fail an action roll on PSY+Willpower/Faith (4) botch already if they have as many 1s as successes when they encounter him. In the presence of the Phoenix, reflexes fail, and trained behavioral patterns become muddled automatic responses.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Culture: ?, The Aberrant, Apocalyptic, Rank 4: Phoenix

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 4, AGI 4, CHA 4, INT 4, PSY 6, INS 5

SKILLS: Athletics 9D, Brawl 10D, Force 8D, Melee 10D, Stamina 10D, Toughness 10D, Mobility 10D, Projectiles 10D, Stealth 8D, Expression 10D, Leadership 9D, Negotiation 8D, Focus 10D, Legends 6D, Cunning 12D, Deception 10D, Domination 12D, Reaction 12D, Willpower 12D, Empathy 10D, Orienteering 8D, Perception 10D, Survival 10D

BACKGROUND: Allies 3, Authority 6, Network 4, Renown 2, Resources 5, Secrets 4

SPECIAL: Trance – in his own world, Rattler feels neither pain (no wound penalties due to Trauma) nor influences (mental attacks fail without collision); +2D to INS+Orienteering and AGI+Stealth in Toulon – Rattler knows the city by heart, aboveground as well as underground

POTENTIALS: 1,000 Ways 3, Asceticism 3, Bad Luck, Rorschach

INITIATIVE: 12D/20 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Sawed-off shotgun, 11D, Distance (5/10), Damage 10, Scatter, Double Barreled; Iron chain, 9D, Distance 2 m, Damage 8, Out of Control (2), Impact (1 T)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 10D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 10D; Mental (Willpower) 12D

MOVEMENT: 9m

ARMOR: Leather pants and a long, shaggy fur vest, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/24, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 10



ALABASTER

Rattler's fingers close around Alabaster's throat like a vise. He presses her against the wall. Her lips turn blue and stars blaze in front of her eyes. It is Rattler's way of showing affection. He only tortures her, he does not kill her. The gilded cage in which he keeps her has no doors and no locks. She could leave this insanity and violence behind tomorrow; Rattler would not stop her. But she cannot.

Alabaster's soul is shattered and charred. It happened a long time ago. Soot covers the pile of shards that is her past. Every memory of it is a bell chiming in the deep fog of oblivion. Nightmares loom there, haunting Alabaster night after night. The only one who can take her fear of yesterday away is Rattler. His core is scorched, just like hers. But from the ashes, something that is more dangerous than any of Alabaster's nightmares arose. Even when Rattler beats and chokes her or when he lays his weight on top of her suffocating her, she knows that he will protect her from all the others who would wreak the same havoc upon her, only to slit her throat afterwards.

As long as she can endure his rage, she is safe from death stalking her. At his side, she feels immortal.

ROLE PLAY

Alabaster has broken more hearts than she dares to remember. Whoever looks into her eyes for too long falls into an endless abyss and loses his mind. Those who touch her will never forget her. Her whole life, men wanted to own her, but she refused, dashing their hopes and fleeing from them. Countless of her former lovers, (Ravens, Scrappers, and Chroniclers alike) now seek to kill her. If they cannot have Alabaster, no one else shall. Consumed by sinister jealousy, they rush after her, search for her. Wherever she walks, she is stalked by the shadows of those who would rather have her back in chains, so they can gorge themselves on her beauty forever.

Rattler does not want her. She means nothing to him. That is why she fell for him. There is nothing that could separate her from him, and she is ready to fulfill every one of his demands in order to be in the safety of his proximity.



THE CAPSULE

Rattler's gift in honor of her loyalty was a capsule made of platinum the size of a fingernail. Alabaster had to promise Rattler to open it only after his death. The inconspicuous piece of metal contains a rolled-up microfilm. It has the coordinates of three RG bunkers in the Pyreneans, including passwords for the timers of the 900s sleeping there. Alabaster wears the capsule in an empty bullet casing on a leather string around her neck.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Seeker, Apocalyptic, Rank 2: Magpie

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

SKILLS: Athletics 5D, Brawl 4D, Force 4D, Melee 5D, Stamina 5D, Toughness 5D, Dexterity 8D, Mobility 7D, Stealth 7D, Arts 7D, Etiquette 10D, Expression 9D, Seduction 11D, Legends 7D, Cunning 6D, Deception 9D, Reaction 5D, Willpower 6D, Empathy 9D, Perception 6D, Primal 6D

BACKGROUND: Network 5, Renown 3, Resources 1, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: Calms down Rattler while he is in trance (INS+Empathy (3) to get through to Rattler); Bonus +2D to PSY+Willpower in Rattler's presence; Rorschach and Bad Luck have no effect on Alabaster

POTENTIALS: Siren 3

INITIATIVE: 5D/12 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Metal coppers, 5D, Distance 1m, Damage Special, Piercing (2)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 7D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 7D; Mental (Willpower) 6D

MOVEMENT: 5m

ARMOR: Frayed poncho, leather bodysuit, shod boots, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/12, Flesh Wounds 10, Trauma 5

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Leather necklace with ammunition casing (contains platinum capsule, a gift from Rattler); Alabaster's chest (many suitors, many gifts – Alabaster has collected all the jewelry, Dinars and Drafts in a chest at her bed)

POTENTIALS

SIREN

PREREQUISITE: CHA+Seduction 9

Her voice causes dizziness and rushes through the ear canals as an echo, still audible even days later. If a suitor falls under the spell of Alabaster's voice, it does not matter much what she says. Everyone hears what they want to hear anyway. Alabaster gets +1D per Potential level to CHA+Seduction and INS+Empathy if she wants to win somebody over. Her action rolls count as a continuous mental attack. The Triggers she achieves are deducted from the victim's Ego points; they cannot drop under 1, though. As soon as the Ego points drop to 1, the image of the Magpie takes root in the mind of the victim. The memory of her is ubiquitous, the suitor feels drawn to her, wants her, wants to protect her. Soon, the Magpie will become his only purpose in life – in both good times and bad. Over time, desire turns to pathological obsession leading to either a state of servitude or the desire to destroy that which they cannot have: Alabaster.



BAPTISTE

Spring. The northern slope. A fortified village close to Mulhouse. Inside, there are enemy collaborators, some Burn smugglers and rebels who oppose the Hellvetic league. The Alpine fortress knew only one way to react. The Spitalians paid the Hellvetics to put an end to all of this. They sent in a secret special forces team. Baptiste was the man with the explosives and the grenades; he handled the hellfire.

It was one of those missions that make men lose their souls. The dead. The scorched eyes. The shrapnel in skulls. A monument of corpses. Only for the money. The Hellvetics had sold Baptiste as an executioner to the highest bidder. He obeyed. Like a true soldier. He did not ask any questions. He thrusted the bayonet into bodies and cut open abdominal walls. At some point, his humanity had left him. He had looked into dying eyes too often unable to feel sympathy anymore. He only wanted to spit on them.

His comrades saw him shatter, saw the anger well up inside him and wanted to get rid of him, just like the Corps Command. But Baptiste smelled a rat, caught scent of the ambush. What lousy comrades they were. Instead of them burying him alive, he buried them under a rockslide. The explosion of the warheads he had hidden the day before could be heard miles away.

His flight took him southwest. Franka. There, he looked for someone who would make use of his ruthlessness. Someone who would pay him for it. Now it was Baptiste who sold himself to the highest bidder, and that was Rattler.

ROLE PLAY

Baptiste is a psychopathic pyromaniac. For enough money, he will commit any murder. He sees assassination as a game. He sees the body count as the calculated efficiency of a well-planned bomb attack. He is Rattler's watchdog of doom, and in many ways, the two men favor each other in respect to their mad appetite for destruction. But Baptiste does not have Rattler's foresight; without the Phoenix, the deserted Hellvetic is not able to act. His violent dynamics only unfold when he is obeying orders. Still the old soldier, through and through.

BOUNTY

Close to Bergamo, composite sketches of Baptiste adorn the walls of the outpost Tirano. The bounty on his head are 10.000 Drafts for whoever catches the deserted Sapper. Dead or alive. Baptiste has mortal enemies within his own Cult, however, there is no reward being offered for stolen Hellvetic equipment. The Hellvetics will not buy back their equipment; they will seize it. For the Alpine guardians, the price for such business is non-negotiable.

EXPLOSIVES

Baptiste stole a considerable amount of explosives and detonators from the Hellvetic field warehouses in his day. Two dozen time bombs have already been attached to charges all over the city. He wears seven charges on his own body: two time bomb chargers, two movement detonator charges and three remote detonator charges. The last charge is a body charge that is fitted with a dead man's switch, which Baptiste can activate at any time. A final firework for the day of the Phoenix.

INVENTORY

BUNSEN BURNER

The deserter's interrogation tool is an old, trusty Bunsen burner from the Alpine fortress's Genie depots. Calmly, he lowers the darting flame towards his victims and looks them square in the eye as he tortures them. It's all a matter of patience.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Frranka, The Destroyer, Hellvetics, Rank 3: Sapper

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 6D, Force 9D, Melee 9D, Stamina 8D, Toughness 9D, Crafting 9D, Dexterity 9D, Mobility 6D, Projectiles 9D, Stealth 8D, Engineering 6D, Focus 7D, Science 6D, Deception 5D, Domination 7D, Reaction 8D, Willpower 8D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 6D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: Authority 2, Network 3, Renown 2, Resources 4, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: +2D to action rolls to handle explosives

POTENTIALS: Doctrine: Discipline 3

INITIATIVE: 8D/14 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Combat knife, 10D, Distance 1m, Damage 6, Smooth Running (2T); Light MG, 9D, Distance (30/80), Damage 11, Salvoes (4), Jamming; Mortar, 8D, Distance (20/60), Damage 15, Deviation, Explosive, Thunderstrike

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 10D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 6D; Mental (Willpower) 8D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Hellvetic harness, Armor 5, Fireproof (8)

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/16, Flesh Wounds 18, Trauma 8

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Backpack; Bunsen burner; Explosives (2 x Timer, 2 x Movement detonator, 2 x Remote detonator, 1 x body load with biased off-switch); old ordnance map (shows location of four Hellvetic field warehouses along the Bernese Passage)



HEXELL

A rise. A storm rages across the mountain flank where the nest of Hexell's Flock is located. The wind howls like a dying stallion. Darkness ahead. There is movement between the trees. He can barely see a thing, but the Raven Kelvis shouts at him to finally fire. Hexell exhales. The barrel of his rifle searches for a target in the darkness. 300 feet. Maybe more. The finger pulls the trigger. The salvo chases the victim – a predator born of hot lead. The fugitive dies. Something in Hexell dies, too. Forever.

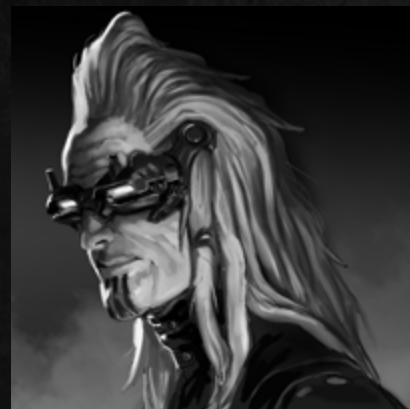
Kelvis rejoices. Without a word, Hexell turns around, raises his rifle and shoots the Raven. He stands immediately. He runs toward the darkness he fired into before, leaving his first Flock forever.

In the twilight of Hexell's memories, years fade. He makes his living as an assassin, moving from Flock to Flock, sometimes in Purgare, sometimes in Borca. He never stays in one place for a long time. He can barely count the number of murders he has committed. But his skills earn him good money. When he lies with his rifle in ambush, no one is safe from him. The Apocalyptic pay killers like him well.

Then, he meets Rattler. The Phoenix is not like any man Hexell has ever served before. Rattler does not force him to kill, but asks a simple question instead: What if he could have vengeance for what his Cult turned him into? What if he could find redemption? Hexell does not understand, but Rattler makes him look out to the sea. Rattler whispers that they will come to get him. That will be the day of Hexell's reckoning.

ROLLENSPIEL

Hexell is stoic, he never opens up. When he is on a mission, he carries it out with utter precision, emotionless like a cold-blooded hunter. While he has yet to understand Rattler's plan in its entirety, he will not hesitate to put it into action. Shooting is all that Hexell has ever learned. Watching the thread of life through the scope of a rifle from afar – and then cutting it with a single well-aimed shot is what he lives for. His victims do not see or hear him. In moments like this, Hexell is a god, and his life has a purpose.



INVENTORY

SNIPER RIFLE

Hexell's sniper rifle is like an extension of his body. He knows every precision screw, every little scratch, every quirk (+2D to AGI+Projectiles). It takes him no more than three breaths (2 rounds) to dismantle the rifle and put it into his custom-made shoulder bag. He knows that his instrument is sensitive. This is why Hexell only uses ammunition that he has honed, oiled and prepared himself (Piercing 3).

POLARIZATION GOGGLES

Hexell took this artifact from a Scalar on his kill list. The goggles have various filters and expand the user's field of vision considerably. When confronted with fog or a cloud of dust, it sharpens enemies' silhouettes. It registers thermal sources at night, gauges humanoid shapes hidden behind walls or doors and removes interferences. The goggles automatically apply different tints and adapt to any source of light within seconds. With them, Hexell can even hit a target that is backlit by the sun (visual penalties from environmental influences and from long-range shots are not applicable).

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Purgare, The Defiler, Apocalyptic, Rank 2: Owl

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 6D, Force 6D, Melee 6D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 6D, Crafting 9D, Dexterity 10D, Mobility 10D, Projectiles 10D, Stealth 10D, Engineering 5D, Focus 8D, Deception 6D, Reaction 8D, Willpower 8D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 8D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: Renown 4, Resources 2, Secrets 1

SPECIAL: +4D when attacking from an ambush; no visual penalties for environmental influences or long-range shot

POTENTIALS: Danger Sense 3, Angel of Death

INITIATIVE: 8D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Hexell's Sniper rifle, 12D, Distance (100/1000), Damage 11, Piercing (3), Sensitive; Pistol, 12D, Distance (10/40), Damage 9

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 10D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 10D; Mental (Willpower) 8D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Leather coat, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/16, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 5

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Polarization goggles; Rifle bag

(customized for Hexell's sniper rifle); ammo box with weapon accessories in the lid; camo net (a net of thin nylon threads easily adaptable to the environment with leaves, grass, or rags (+2D to AGI+Stealth))

POTENTIALS

ANGEL OF DEATH

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Owl, Focus

Hexell does not enjoy killing, but he enjoys the precision of the act. If Hexell uses Ego Points at the beginning of his round to boost his Initiative and his first action roll to attack a targeted enemy, he regains all of those Ego Points at the end of the round if the first shot kills the target.



THE CAULDRON

TOGETHER

The cauldron is a colorful mix of various factions, targets and ambitions. Here, Franka's greatest strength and greatest weakness meet. On one side, there is the Resistance: a Clan of free people fueled by national eagerness whose hopes of a rebirth as a nation lie buried in the wet undergrowth of the Rhône swamps. On the other side, the Toulonis, a Clan of history, pride and honor, tightly connected to the Neolibyans through alliances and dependent on Africa's exploitation of the shores of Franka.

Amongst them, there are the renegades, the faceless ones and those who would like to stay invisible. Toulon has been a haven for many dubious figures, and for decades, they have been licking their fingers and cultivating their own greediness, undisturbed and unknown to the rest of the world.

The independency of the Cauldron is also its strength. No matter who inherits the city, the people will adapt, find their ecological niche, and suck the right tit.

Toulon has always been contested by various powers. Cults have always fought for the city and will continue to do so in the future. The population will have to jump on

the bandwagon, for as long as they cannot form a unified faction, they are cursed to exist as a scattered and easily controllable herd.

The Resistance would love to rule Toulon, however, it lacks the economic prowess and the tactical skills of the Neolibyans. The Toulonis on the other hand want to keep the soft cushion that the Africans have provided them with. A life under the yoke of the Spitalians and Chroniclers? No thanks.

Discord is Toulon's biggest problem. As long as no one from their own ranks gets up and takes responsibility for a joint operation, the needs of the people in the cauldron will continue to be nothing more than static background noise - too trivial for anybody to really listen to.

Can a stranger awaken the city and lead it to greater heights? Zoe Morceau, leader of the Resistance, has the will power. Vericon, the town elder of the Toulonis, opposes her. The luxuries of the African occupiers have lent his life an air of refinement. He has no reason to betray his benefactors. Times have never been better for him and the beneficiaries of the Neolian spring.



ZOE MORCEAU

The world is a pile of shit and the Cults are the flies orbiting around it.

Nothing is sacred to them, nothing concerns them. As long as it benefits their organizations, as long as they are the ones cutting the profit, the rest of mankind can be left to perish miserably.

“Order must be restored,” Zoe says. She narrows her eyes to slits and looks to the north. The rebirth of a nation, greater than all of the other Cults, which are driven by pride, language, origin. A higher morale that elevates an ideology above individual greed.

Zoe turns towards her followers, raises her clenched fist to the sky.

She dreams of Franka’s rebirth. The storm of Souffrance. The thundering hymn of an entire people. Tongue and tradition are the essence that gives birth to unity. The people of Franka crave purpose; they want to be more than the mere pawns of higher powers. She calls out to the crowd. The Spitalians feign strength, but they’re ultimately just minor players, a group only open to a chosen few. To conquer the Pheromancers, it is necessary to unite millions. Franka must rise with a roar from the ashes and claim its inheritance – with fire, iron, and a king capable of leading this grand nation. Zoe’s followers rejoice and fire shots into the air.

ROLLEN SPIEL

Zoe is the leader of the Resistance in Toulon. As such, she recruits people from all factions, rallying them around her ideas of a unified Franka, united under one flag and leadership, reclaiming the land now under the control of the Cults. She combines fervor with national pride, love of one’s homeland and hatred of all forms of oppression. Spitalians, Neolibyans and Pheromancers alike are parasites that suck people dry and exploit them for their own purposes.

Zoe will, therefore, support those who make the best offer that benefits the greater good of Franka. If she meets agitators whom she considers worthy to join her opposition, she will stop at nothing to bring them to her side.



FRANKA’S PARAGON

The general is extremely well connected and has received patronage from Armand Malpierre from Toulouse, the Marshall of Franka. He sees her as a blazing paragon of a new generation of Frankans who are capable of reconquering their lost territory – if Zoe’s fire can just ignite them. For that reason alone, she shall lack nothing. Money, arms, soldiers – the Marshall will ensure that she receives it all. The general wields more power than she knows, however, this position also makes her a vulnerable target. If she becomes too defiant, the noose will tighten around her neck, and her enemies will try to oust her – a situation that could easily be perceived as a declaration of war between the Cults and the Resistance.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Traditionalist, Clanners: Resistance, Rank 4: General

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Force 7D, Melee 7D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 8D, Navigation 6D, Mobility 8D, Projectiles 8D, Stealth 6D, Etiquette 6D, Expression 8D, Leadership 9D, Negotiation 9D, Seduction 6D, Focus 8D, Legends 8D, Cunning 7D, Reaction 7D, Willpower 8D, Empathy 7D, Orienteering 7D, Perception 6D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: VAllies 5, Authority 4, Network 2, Renown 4, Resources 4, Secrets 2

SPECIAL: +2D to INT+Science/Legends on rolls concerning the history and culture of the bygone Frankans

POTENTIALS: Moving Mountains 2, Paragon 3

INITIATIVE: 7D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Officer’s sabre, 8D, Distance 1 m, Damage 10; Assault rifle, 8D, Distance (30/120), Damage 11, Salvoes (3); Pistol, 8D, Distance (10/40), Damage 9

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (crouched advance), Mobility 8D; Mental (Willpower) 8D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Uniform, officers’ coat and respirator, Armor 3

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/16, Flesh Wounds 16, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Binoculars; Fusees; Resistance field manual (hierarchy, survival tips, songs etc.)

POTENTIALS

PARAGON

PREREQUISITE: CHA+Leadership 8

Together against the enemy for a bright future. Those who follow Zoe are invariably swept away by her candid devotion. When allies fight on her side, they automatically close ranks around her to form an impassable front. Everyone fighting under the general’s command gets +1D for all action rolls to defend or support Zoe. Moreover, the Resistance leader can encourage her fighters through brief incendiary speeches. On a successful action roll on CHA+Leadership (3), all allies regain Ego Points equaling her Potential level immediately.



SENATE

Once per week, the Senate, led by Vericon, holds a session in the old fortress of Toulon. The members of the Senate are his spies. They are well informed and have connections to city dwellers from all walks of life. This is another reason why Vericon is always aware of the political climate in Toulon. He sells this information to the Neolibyans, often at a great profit. At the same time, he has his eyes on all factions and prepares for future alliances.

LE BEAU MONDE

Vericon is head of a battle-hardened city guard that is under the command of the Senate. This guard, comprised of 80 people, acts as a militia and serves as the so-called "Beau Monde", the upper echelons of Toulon. They are equipped with Neolibyan sabers and rifles that Vericon has bought for his fighters. They can be easily recognized by their blue scarves and felt caps. An entourage of six bodyguards accompanies Vericon to events outside the fortress of Toulon.

BUNKER OF THE PATRIARCHS

Vericon has access to all the important hubs of the city. The most important one lies directly beneath the fortress of Toulon. The bunker belongs to the patriarchs and is full of food and money, an emergency flare gun, survival kits, three carrier pigeons and hidden access to a canal in Port Lagange. Here, a longboat is waiting that will take him unscathed out of the Fortress of Toulon so he can secretly escape in case of a military conflict.

VERICON

Time changes everything. Vericon slurps a fat oyster and throws the shell in the pile of empty seashells in front of him. In the last 30 years as leader and representative of Clan Touloni, he has seen his fair share of things. Changing powers: Anabaptists, Spitalians, Chroniclers; the city switching from one hand to the next. He remembers that it was worse under the Chroniclers. However, the uprisings of those days passed him by. Today, he is better off than ever before. Under Hamza's rule, he has been able to increase his personal autonomy and successfully attain rights for the masses – rights, which the masked faces had up until then withheld. If it was up to him and the Senate, things could continue like this forever. Toulon thrives in Neolibyan peace, but Vericon feels that there will be new rebellions soon. When he talks to his advisors and surveys the mood in the streets and taverns, he knows that not all citizens of Toulon share his point of view. The scale will tip, new factions will arise, anger and envy will forge ahead, and the game will begin anew. Toulon is an important world hub, a pivotal point of commerce for the entire southern coast of Franka and this, an issue of contention for generations to come. Vericon will be prepared and proceed tactically with new rulers just as he did with the former ones.

He is a gambler. However, he knows that he has no ace up his sleeve. The times have changed, and yet, nothing has changed.

ROLE PLAY

Noble garments, voluptuous mistresses, oysters and wine, the most exotic spices, generous portions. The crowning glory, the parties with musicians, actors and dancers. The Neolibyans know what life is all about. Vericon has gotten a piece of this wealth for himself and for his people. His Clan has profited greatly from the economic growth. It is only fair that he keeps the lion's share for himself since he bears the most responsibility. When it comes to urban affairs, there is no avoiding him. Sure, the Neolibyans rule the city, but he is number one amongst the citizens of Toulon. Vericon gazes at his reflection one last time. His garb is regal and dignified, but not ostentatious. He feigns humility and modesty. His fat hand pushes a strand of hair from his forehead before he returns it to the depths of his sleeve.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Mediator, Clanners: Toulonis, Rank 4: Mayor

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

SKILLS: Force 4D, Toughness 4D, Projectiles 4D, Etiquette 7D, Expression 7D, Leadership 7D, Negotiation 7D, Seduction 5D, Artifact Lore 5D, Legends 7D, Science 6D, Cunning 8D, Deception 6D, Willpower 5D, Empathy 6D, Perception 5D, Primal 4D

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

SPECIAL: +2D to CHA+Negotiation versus Toulonis; nominally high commander of the Beau Monde that dispatches six bodyguards for Vericon

POTENTIALS: Brainwave 2

INITIATIVE: 4D/8 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Small pistol, 4D, Distance (10/40), Damage 7, Camo (4 S)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (jerk back), Mobility 2D; Ranged Combat active (drop to the ground), Mobility 2D; Mental (Willpower) 5D

MOVEMENT: 2m

ARMOR: Grand clothing of exquisite quality, Armor 0

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/10, Flesh Wounds 8, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Livery collar

(A chain of office showing the city's coat of arms with the anchor of Toulon); Metal cylinder (contains graphite pen, wire and small pieces of paper for sending messages via carrier pigeon); Pocket mirror; handkerchiefs; Pouch with Dinars and a silver-coated seed

ADONAI

Mercy. The Jehammedans have waged wars against countless enemies for centuries. Against the Anabaptists, against the Spitalians, against themselves.

Adonai buries a strange Icon in the damp sands of Saint Chenil on the outskirts of the city. He watches the waves break before him. The sea foam rises to his ankles. He marks the location of his cache.

Hatred has drowned out faith and poisoned the hearts of the people. Adonai has come to Toulon to exert mercy.

He wandered here from faraway Hybrispania. Always alone, always on the move. Staying true to Jehammed's teachings, he possesses only the bare necessities. At the Frankan border, he lent support to a dying Shepherd of his Cult. The old man had led a good life, and Adonai released him into a blessed death. The remaining herd presented him with a last parting gift. An Icon – the likes of which Adonai had never seen. The children of the Shepherd called the relic "Jehammed's Star". Adonai promised to guard the Icon and carry it to safety.

For years, he has been looking in vain for a place like this. The world around him is in flames, and as long as the smoldering fire still burns, there is nowhere to hide the Icon.

ROLE PLAY

Adonai embodies the best traits of his Cult. He is a merciful, deeply spiritual man who tries to impart the wisdom of Jehammed's teachings to those around him. He shares his last rations with the hungry, his cape with the cold and gives solace to the hopeless. He is the blessed soul of Saint Chenil. All lepers and lost ones would come to Adonai's defense if anyone were to insult him.

Adonai despises violence. With a dignified look, he stares deeply into the eyes of his opponents and simply asks them to step aside. His voice is crystal clear; his touch takes away the anger. An aura of holiness surrounds him. In a world without moderation, his faith is something foreign and unpredictable. It causes amazement and calms rage. He is the guardian of Toulon, and people trust in him.



INVENTORY

JEHAMMED'S STAR

The meaning of the relic that the tribe of the dead Shepherd gave to the Iconide on his journey remains unknown to him. The Icon is an ancient artifact, part of a far bigger construction, and can only work properly when combined with the other missing components. Jehammed's Star is nothing without this other piece. Adonai examines the strange Icon, holding it up against the light and admiring its beauty. One day, he may grasp its meaning. But until then, he continues to bury it at the beach of Saint Chenil every morning, marking the spot and changing the location each dawn.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Hybrispania, The Martyr, Jehammedans, Rank 3; Iconide

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 6D, Force 7D, Melee 8D, Toughness 10D, Crafting 5D, Dexterity 5D, Navigation 8D, Mobility 5D, Arts 6D, Etiquette 10D, Expression 9D, Leadership 9D, Negotiation 8D, Focus 6D, Legends 8D, Medicine 5D, Cunning 6D, Faith 11D, Reaction 7D, Empathy 9D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 7D, Survival 5D, Taming 6D

BACKGROUND: Authority 3, Network 5, Renown 6, Secrets 1

SPECIAL: +1D to CHA+Negotiation when in contact with other Cults

POTENTIALS: Asceticism 2, Iconides Blessing 2, Compassion 3

INITIATIVE: 7D/12 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Walking staff, 8D, Distance 2 m, Damage 5, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 5D; Mental (faith) 11D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Ram skin coat over handmade leather jerkin, Armor 3

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 0/22, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 9

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Jehammed's star

(wrapped in a ram hide and buried at the beach – only Adonai knows the exact spot); Ram horn with blood paste (from a sacred ram that sacrificed itself for its herd – with it, Adonai paints Jehammed's symbol on the forehead of diseased people; as long as it has not dried, +4D to action rolls to get better)

POTENTIALS

COMPASSION

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Iconide or Oracle, PSY+Faith 10

Adonai is a pillar of unshakable trust in Jehammed. An aura of sanctity that shields him from worldly dangers surrounds him. Regardless of belief, whoever raises his hand against the Iconide must make an action roll to PSY+Willpower/Faith (3 + Potential level). If unsuccessful, he loses Potential level x 2 Ego Points due to this unbearable act of sacrilege. The attacker will be plagued by a guilty conscience for weeks to come.



OPIS, THE GRENOUILLE

Opis is a sewer rat in human form. He is Wachsmann's henchman and greatest admirer. He knows every story about the legendary Preservist by heart and swallows every word that falls from Wachsmann's mouth as if it were pure honey.

Wachsmann's minion would do anything for the old man. He installs traps in the swamps to catch drones, which he then beats senseless. He drags victims to Wachsmann's laboratory, and assists his master in cutting them open and rummaging through their entrails. Like a real doctor.

Wachsmann has promised to make Opis a real Spitalian one day. He must give his best and learn from the old man. Learn to fight and destroy the enemy. Learn to beat the children at the Orphanage until they obey his every order. Wachsmann has whispered something to him. Opis has been chosen to carry on Wachsmann's legacy if something should happen to the old man. Opis' eyes light up, he understands what Wachsmann is implying. He must arm the children and go with them to the swamps. It is his calling to fight the final battle against the Pheromancers. But Opis needs weapons.

Suddenly, the thug has an epiphany: The Resistance! As a Grenouille, he can infiltrate their camp and go right to the source of the Frankan arsenals. A ridiculous woman named Zoe is their boss. He could take her out. One stab with his knife would be enough. But no, the time has not yet come. Wachsmann knows why he is keeping her alive.

ROLE PLAY

Every week, Opis secretly enters Camp Resistance, posing as a Grenouille who is ready for battle. When nobody is watching, though, he tampers with the arsenal. A pesticide grenade here, three warheads there, a sack of gunpowder across the shoulder and then, without a worry in the world, he disappears on a raft to Saint Chenil. Opis licks his lips. The Resistance has yet to register that its resources are dwindling. The camp is too focused on listening to the words of General Zoe.

In the meantime, he has stored enough weapons in the Orphanage to be able to start a small-scale civil war. Wachsmann is proud of Opis. At least this is what Opis believes.

CHILD SOLDIERS

The children of the Orphanage hate and fear the Grenouille. In their eyes, he is a demon under the control of an even greater one. Given the chance, they would take revenge on their tormentor at once, drowning him in one of the lye pits at the Tannery. However, they are afraid of him – of his fits of rage and of his beatings. They are not strong enough, and he has complete control over them. He starves them and makes them sleep outside in the courtyard if they do not obey him. His punishments are degrading; they take away the children's will to resist him and diminish what strength they have.

INVENTORY

WAR ARSENAL

Even though Opis looks like a ridiculous caricature of a Spitalian in his tattered neoprene suit and broken gas mask, his collection of memorabilia and military equipment from Spitalian stock is impressive. In preparation for becoming a Spitalian, Opis has been stealing anything he could get his hands on over the last decades so as to take up his post as well equipped as possible. Whenever a Famulancer in Terres Putain wasn't watching his backpack, Opis seized the opportunity to build up his collection. He has crossed the swamp several times, never once afraid, and to his own amazement, he has never been attacked. From there, he has dragged every moss covered Preservist helmet and rusty Splayer back to Saint Chenil. Now, his hoard is filled to the brim. More than anything else, he cherishes the Preserverists' colorful poison gas grenades. They smell nice, just like the mustard seeds of his youth.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Franka, The Traveler, Clanners: Grenouille, Rank 2: Grenouille

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

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Brawl 6D, Force 7D, Melee 6D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 7D, Dexterity 6D, Mobility 5D, Stealth 6D, Etiquette 3D, Focus 4D, Legends 5D, Medicine 4D, Science 4D, Cunning 6D, Deception 7D, Domination 7D, Faith 5D, Reaction 4D, Orienteering 5D, Perception 6D, Survival 5D

BACKGROUND: Network 1, Resources 3, Secrets 1

SPECIAL: +2D to PSY+Deception against Resistance members; +2D to INT+Legends when it comes to Wachsmann's tales

POTENZIALE: Phalanx 1

INITIATIVE: 4D/8 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Traqueur, 6D, Distance 2 m, Damage 7; Cudgel, 7D, Distance 1 m, Damage 5, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 6D/7D;

Ranged Combat active (Drop to the ground), Mobility 5D; Mental (Faith) 5D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Tattered Spitalian suit with gas mask that is not airtight anymore, Armor 2

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 7/10, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 6

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Used Spitalian equipment (chalk pouch, broken mollusk container, field bandage, blank vials and metal syringes, surgical instruments, and various insignia)



WACHSMANN

The beast within Wachsmann's soul lies in a deep slumber.

Once, when he was a Preservist, he was sent by the Spital to assume power over the Pheromancers. Together with the Sublime Lacroix, an Anabaptist who was just as cruel as Wachsmann, he heralded the start of the "dry season". Together, they danced to the tune of blood and thunder. When it came to hunting, catching, torturing, and killing Leperos, they shied away from no horror. Wasn't the destruction of the Homo Degenesis spawn the most important mission of a Preservist? Hadn't he been made for this? His heart was a corrupt lump of flesh pulsing away lifelessly. Only the killing, the total annihilation of the enemy excited him, inspired him to be the greatest he could be. In '68, they assembled an army of extraordinary power. Two Preservists corps, hundreds of Famulancers and four Anabaptist packs gathered to cross the swamp northwards. With fire and sword, they would have split the Pheromancers' innards and fumigated them. However, things turned out differently than expected.

The Aberrants' retaliation hit the Wachsmann Lacroix expedition harder than ever before. The Noumenon Vocalizers registered giant discharges that reverberated for years. Wachsmann was behind this suicide mission, however, he ended up fleeing instead of confronting the Spital. He hid in Saint Chenil and let time pass until people started forgetting about him. The Spitalians declared him dead and stopped looking for him.

ROLE PLAY

Wachsmann would never admit to having made a mistake. He knows no guilt. Neither for the men whose death he is responsible for, nor for the bloodlust that drove him all his life. In his head, he is above the law. He despises his Cult because they did not praise him as a hero but instead tried to consign him to oblivion. If he could, he would muster the Preservists again and lead their campaign to its glorious end. The Consultants should have supported him. He was so damn close. Alas, there was no support.

Only in his lab in the basement of the Orphanage, is he reminded of the old days. There, he experiments on drones that Opis brings him from the swamps. He cuts them open, amputates their limbs and skins them. Everything in the interest of humankind, of course.



PRESERVIST CURSE

Wachsmann embodies everything that is gross and despicable in the early Preservist doctrine. Methods, principles and a sense of superiority from the time before Kranzler became Provost of the Corps. Wachsmann is the personification of all of these things. That alone was reason enough for the old Preservist to fear discovery by the Cult. He is sure that Kranzler would do anything to capture Wachsmann and hold him accountable for the failed expedition. To escape his rightful punishment, Wachsmann hides in Saint Chenil, working on his plan in secrecy. He wants to indoctrinate the children in his the Orphanage just like the Preservists did. He wants to turn them into cold-blooded child soldiers who are completely dedicated to his cause. With them, his plan is to go to war against the Pheromancers – to finally finish the expedition that started decades ago.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Borca, The Fanatic, Spitalian, Rank X: Elder

ATTRIBUTES: BOD 2 (5), AGI 2 (5), CHA 2, INT 5, PSY 5, INS 2

SKILLS: Athletics 6D, Force 6D, Melee 6D, Stamina 6D, Toughness 6D, Dexterity 6D, Navigation 6D, Mobility 6D, Projectiles 6D, Focus 10D, Legends 10D, Medicine 10D, Science 10D, Cunning 8D, Deception 8D, Domination 10D, Reaction 8D, Willpower 10D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 6D, Survival 6D

BACKGROUND: Network 2, Renown 5, Resources 6, Secrets 3

SPECIAL: Old age (-3D to BOD and AGI); Resilience (+3D to all action rolls against illnesses and poisons); Ruthlessness (+2D against all kinds of mental attacks)

POTENZIALE: Old School Teachings 3, Preservalis 3, Will to Survive

INITIATIVE: 8D/20 Ego Points (Focus)

ANGRIFF: Preservalis' sword, 8D, Distance 1m, Damage 10; Pistol, 7D, Distance (10/40), Damage 9

VERTEIDIGUNG: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (Look for Cover), Mobility 6D; Mental (Willpower) 10D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Black robe, Armor 1

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 10/20, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 7

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Leather etui (unrollable, contains syringes, 3 x Narcotics (Level 3), 3 x Stimulants (Level 3), 3 x Painkillers (Level 3)

POTENTIALS

WILL TO SURVIVE

PREREQUISITE: Rank: Preservist, Focus, PSY+Willpower 10

Wachsmann is an Old School Preservist. He can focus his mind on a single goal and unlock reserves that are beyond normal human potential. He has exchanged his conscience for these techniques. Even if he seems old and frail, the doctrine is still within him. If he succeeds in a roll of PSY+Willpower (4) in a dire situation, Wachsmann's Ego Points double (even above maximum), and he is immune to all Trauma penalties until the end of the scene.



3

CHAPTER

OPERATION
MIRAGE

RATTLER

She's the most beautiful creature to ever grace the earth. The sunlight plays with her hair, flooding her tresses. A shadow is cast upon her face, making her barely recognizable, but there can be no doubt: she is the best he has ever known. She embraces his small body and presses him to her. He smells her skin and kisses her tender breasts, his eyes tracing her freckles. The tall grass around them rustles in the wind, and she caresses his hair. He is so young. So fragile. His eyes find hers. He sees her lips moving, but there is no sound. There is only the light behind her, shining through her shimmering blonde hair with the energy of life itself. He is safe in her arms. He loves her. His mother.

All of a sudden, black hands are everywhere. They reach for him from the tall grass. Like vises, they grab his arms and legs, tearing him from her lap. He sees his mother's des-

perate eyes. Within them, there's infinite fear. He clings to her, but the black hands are stronger, faster. They drag him away. She becomes smaller and smaller as blades of grass obstruct his line of sight; her silhouette becoming barely visible. She screams. Silence. He screams. A hush descends upon the world. There are only black hands and grass, grass that extends to the sky, extinguishing the almighty light.

The first explosion tears him from his daydream. He blinks twice, returning to the present. He looks around. The tunnel in front of him collapses with a ghostly moan. A dust cloud billows towards him. The three Scrappers in the tunnel next to him nod in his direction, signaling that everything is going according to plan. He answers with two gestures of his own, telling them to march on and detonate the other explosives. With his hand, he wipes his bald,



sweat-drenched head. It is unbearably hot and stifling. He runs his fingers over the scabby tattoos that cover his scalp like a maze. Why does this dream keep occurring over and over again?

A few streets away, there is the roar of other explosions. The Scrapper with the burnt ear turns to him. "Come on, Rattler, we gotta go! The hole will cave in any moment now!" Rattler grabs his pump gun and takes three steps towards the Scrappers.

A wooden voice sounds from the Scrapper's radio, "Ferrals is closed off, we control the north."

The Scrapper jumps up and high fives his brothers. "We got them by the balls!" he cheers joyfully. Then, he turns to Rattler again, "Did you hear that, man, the city's ours!"

"Ours?" Rattler asks with disbelief. He squints. In his

mind's eye, he sees the face of his mother. It's out of focus. He tries to remember, but her features fade. There is only the blinding sun. The moaning of the collapsing tunnels tears apart his memories. He lifts his pump gun and shoots the Scrapper at point-blank range in the face. The shot makes the other two dirt diggers jump to their feet. The first of them has barely risen when the butt of Rattler's rifle smashes his temple and throws him back into the dust. The second one retreats with panic in his eyes, desperately trying to get the old revolver from his belt. Rattler is close now. He touches him with the muzzle of his shotgun, and pulls the trigger. A fountain of blood sprays through the air. The echo of the shot races through the tunnel.

"Mine!" Rattler spits on the dead man.

His hour of reckoning has just begun.

BEFORE THE GAME

Your players have arrived at the southern coast of Franka. They have reached Toulon. Congratulations. The worst is yet to come.

It is up to you at which point of your campaign you want to play “OPERATION MIRAGE”. You may use it to start a longer campaign in the Rhône delta, dragging your players into the chaos of civil war and forcing them to make tough decisions right away. However, you may also play smaller adventures in and around Toulon, taking your time to turn the players into collaborators of the operation. Once your players start enjoying the region and its protagonists, the events to come will not be forgotten. Be aware, though, that it is your game and your campaign. You decide how to use (or change) this adventure. You are free to change the order of events as you wish and you decide which paths will lead your players to a certain scene. Every Game Master will have to adapt the story to his or her group. At the same time, players will not be able to act everywhere at once.

Therefore, it is important to assemble the scenes from the chaotic events and define the links between them based on your needs. In the following chapter, the episodes are set amongst rivaling factions. The framework of the adventure consists of key scenes leading up to a climax. If at all possible, you should let your players decide what happens in the downtime and get them to act and react quickly in order to keep the pace of the story.

“OPERATION MIRAGE” is an adventure for experienced game masters and hard-nosed Characters. Your group will have to test its limits to survive the hail of bullets coming from the violent upheaval raging in Toulon.

PERSPECTIVES

In Toulon, countless factions are at work at the same time. Their intentions will unfold during the adventure, and they will establish their positions within the game. As Game Master, you will have to decide whose perspective you want to focus on and which side you want your players to support. If your group is independent, the dynamics will develop without you needing to intervene. If your players are, however, in league with one of the participating factions, they will have to fight and maybe even take responsibility for their missions. The points of entry to the adventure are manifold. The first two chapters contain additional material and offer various pathways for players to enter the story.

THE RULERS OF TOULON

Do your players want to maintain the status quo and keep the Neolibyans in charge? If they succeed, wealth and alliances await them. However, the Africans are under siege – to support Hamza means alienating the Chroniclers and provoking their cold-blooded fury.

THE IRON BROTHERS

The heroes of the class struggle and the revenge of those left behind. Maybe your players belong to the Iron Brothers and support their reckoning with the black rulers. Nestor’s words carry the fire of unity, and the Scrappers have never been this close to victory before. Can the players support the Iron Brothers and gain the advantage in the civil war?

COMMANDO REQUIEM

Upheaval, espionage, infiltration and coordination are this faction's strengths. You can turn your players into agents of the Paradigma Mirage. Maybe, due to their great skills as provocateurs or their loyalty towards Justitian, they have become part of the events in this adventure.

THE BLACK FLOCK

Maybe your adventure starts on the Mediterranean, as huntsmen of the Black Flock. Starting as bystanders, your players are dragged into the vortex of events by the devastating prophecies of the Tarot. At Callisto's behest, they must discover the origin of the Phoenix.

THE FIREBIRDS

Try to stop your players from interfering in the Firebirds' business. Rattler's destructive momentum is an essential part of the last chapter, "Day of the Phoenix". If you introduce your players to this faction too soon, you will rob yourself of steam for the final showdown.

THE CAULDRON

Independence comes at a high price. Autonomy means getting by without the support of the Cults and being caught between the conflicting interests of various factions. The Resistance wants to rule Toulon. In the wake of events, Zoe Morceau will try to cement her claim to power – naturally against Vericon's wishes. Why install new rulers when the old ones have yet to shown signs of inadequacy? Vericon will do what he can to keep Toulon a Neolibyan enclave. He will support the Africans by force of arms.

The players may also support Adonai in an attempt to protect Saint Chenil and its lost souls, delivering them both from a danger for which they are not responsible.

Finally, there is the mystery surrounding Wachsmann. Can the ancient Preservist win over the players or is he so despicable that they will confront him in the frenzy of the civil war and pillage his hideout?

PRELUDE

While Operation Mirage is the climax of this book, Toulon and the surrounding region offer countless campaigns and adventures that you can let your players experience beforehand: Smuggling Burn on the Bernese Passage, expeditions to the Rhône swamps, skirmishes with drones, hunting Pheromancers or supplying food to the Mercure field hospital.

There are also Scrapper revolts, the threat of the swarm, the destruction of idols and missions to search for artifacts in the brackish swamp water. The culture clashes and the encounters between Cults and enemies are so versatile that you may feel compelled to skip it altogether and move straight to the adventure.

Take your time. Establish the mood. Introduce your players to the people and the land, their fight for survival and their longing for freedom. The players' impressions will impact their decisions and make it easier for the group to support a faction based upon motivations they can understand.

ALTERNATIVES

If your players act from within the region, there are many possible ways to enter the adventure.

1. BAYONNE

Following the orders of Sacrocant, the Raven of Bayonne, the Characters try to keep supply routes open during Operation Mirage in order to smuggle Apocalypitics from the Rhône Flock out of the city.

2. DUCAL

Cardial, the Raven of Ducal, has always struck good deals with the Neolibyans and does not want to see their power undermined. As customers, they are important for his imports and secure his sphere of influence.

3. ALPINE FIRE

Morvant Control Terminal is desperately searching for the Hellvetic deserter Baptiste. Tirano outpost has even offered a huge reward for the Sapper. All hints leading to his arrest are additionally rewarded with Hellvetic loyalty and passage through the Alps free of charge.

4. BROTHER CITIES

Montpellier and Perpignan, Toulon's brother cities, will not stand idly by when Toulon, the center of African trade, is under fire. If the resident Consuls, Elani and Atuma, realize the city is on the brink of civil war, they will send their armada of battle ships to support Hamza.

5. SPITALIANS

The Scorched Path, the link to the Bernese Passage, will become impassable if Toulon collapses. In the eyes of the Spitalians, this would be a disaster. This route is vital for their troops and they are willing to do anything and everything to take control of it.

NEW TO THE CITY

Let your players experience the look and feel of everyday life in Toulon. A sumptuous lunch on a floating cookshop in Terres Putain, bargaining on Grantor Street, the first orange of their lives at the Silver Axis in Cour Argent or the sounds of trumpets and shanties as they enjoy a spicy fish soup at the fish market in Port Lagagne. Make the city come alive through impressive scenes. Show your players its diversity. Every day, new faces appear in Toulon, the constant flow of goods and trade washing them ashore – only to be gone the next day.

Newcomers usually don't get any strange looks. They will have an easy time finding shelter and food and will most definitely be impressed by the Toulonis' hospitality. The city makes a living from its visitors; they are the backbone of its economy.

CONTACTS AND NETWORK

Once your players are familiar with the region, let them establish their own network or maybe even their own center of operations within the city. If the Characters already know each other from previous adventures, they may have similar goals. If they are, however, meeting for the first time, they will soon realize that the customs between the Cults in Toulon differ from those in the Protectorate and in Purgare. People are more social. The constant influx of foreigners has drawn the Toulonis out of their isolation and multiplied their tongues. This, however, does not mean that brawls are few. One bad pun or a suggestive look at the wife of the fisherman at the next table, and fists fly. However, these skirmishes tend to end before anyone gets seriously injured.

In between events, you can encourage players to increase their number of contacts or find new allies. The better they know the lay of the land, the easier it will be for them to make important decisions or find their way around town later. The five districts are linked in various ways. You can reach the next borough via roads, canals, piers or jetties. If your players are familiar with the city, they will know where to find shelter when things go awry.

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION

People like to talk. Especially when asked for their opinion. If your players want to make inquiries in an inn, cookshop or pub to find out certain information, the following table will help you to easily improvise topics of conversation with the people of Toulon. A successful roll on INS+Empathy (2), PSY+Cunning (2) or CHA+Conduct (2), combined with an offer of a few glasses of wine or distillate loosen the tongue, making stories flow freely.

IN THY BLOOD

Groups that have already investigated the events of Altair's death in Lucatore can follow up directly with **THE KILLING GAME**.

The obvious link would be chasing Decoy 5 – after being compromised in northern Purgare, he returns to his home turf in Franka through the Alps. Once there, he contacts the Cluster. The players can follow him to Toulon and try to expose him. However, he is in hiding for now.

Jehammed's disc could be another bridge connection. If the players have activated the transmission, the artifact will emit a weak, fuzzy signal. This signal will try to link up with an emission source in Toulon that cannot be clearly pinpointed. It is strongest within city limits.

IMPRESSIONS

- ◊ **THIEBAULT, THE OYSTER FISHER:** “Work’s hard, but it’s worth it. All the Africans have to spend their money somewhere, right? Yes, the canals in Port Lagagne all lead to Oyster Bay. From there, you can easily reach the hinterland.”
- ◊ **LORIOT, THE IRON BROTHER:** “I still got three teeth in my mouth. But even two would be enough to bite the fucking Neolibyans’ balls off! They took everything from us. Even our teeth!”
- ◊ **UMA, THE NEOLIBYAN SCRIBE:** “No, you cannot make an appointment at the Consulate at this time. Better come back in six months’ time. No, there are no exceptions, unless it is important for Consul Zohra.”
- ◊ **GORDEFOIX, THE BORDENOIR:** “I am studying at the university. My parents paid for my tuition. Afterwards, I will be given a parcel of land to run in Perpignan. Then I will rise to the top. Us Frankans can be just as successful as the Africans.”
- ◊ **NOEL, THE ORPHAN FROM SAINT CHENIL:** “May I repair your leathers, Mr. Scrapper? No, I don’t know my parents. I live at the Orphanage with all the others. May I mend your shoe, Mr. Spitalian?”
- ◊ **CUIVRE, OFFICER OF THE BEAU MONDE:** “I don’t care what you say – all those years of peace are rather suspicious. If you ask me, it’s only a matter of time until the people go crazy and want to live at Hamza’s palace. Greed, my friend, is a human thing.”
- ◊ **DAR-UGUDAI, THE BLACK SCRAPPER:** “I have seen many things in the swamps. Even the ancestors are powerless there. We have to rely on our instincts and our Oil to escape the drones. There were thousands of them where we dug last month. Dangerous land out there.”
- ◊ **ORLY, THE AGING TINSMITH:** “The Chroniclers and Spitalians were scum. Fees, checkpoints, raids. A few more years, and our generation would have bashed their skulls in with stones. The Africans are a blessing; they don’t bother us and they give us jobs. Rebel against the rulers? Are you crazy? Why?”
- ◊ **EDITH, THE FURIOUS FISHMONGER:** “Month by month, the Spitalians complain. Either one of their strange spears or their backpacks goes missing. What the fuck does that have to do with me? They shouldn’t bother me. They should keep better track of their things. Ugly sea cucumbers.”
- ◊ **MARTINEZ, THE HYBRISPARTIAN TRADER:** “Do not talk well. Looking for booth. Got goods. Good munición. Sabers. Knives. Por qué no one wants to buy? No Cojones in this town.”
- ◊ **COGNAC, THE WOODPECKER FROM BAYONNE:** “In Bayonne, we produce the best alcohol in the entire region. Bullshit, the distillate from Bassham is nothing compared to this. Why don’t you come to Le Cirque and see for yourself?”
- ◊ **NAZAIRO, THE JEHAMMEDAN BUTCHER:** “Heart, brain, lungs — everything’s premium quality. The meat is good, no bones there. Praise Jehammed, I do not sell to Anabaptists.”
- ◊ **ANTOINE, HELVETIC SOLDIER:** “On leave. Need a distraction. Two weeks, then it’s back to the snow. Say, do you know by any chance where I can get some Glory? Yes, I have heard that many deserters find shelter in the swamps. Small wonder, only lunatics go there voluntarily.”
- ◊ **COIPEL, THE SHREWD GRANTOR:** “Ten Dinars for 18 Drafts. If you buy today, you can resell for 22 Drafts tomorrow. The house of the Bank of Commerce forecast it this morning. If you want to wager more, feel free. Your risk.”
- ◊ **AGADIR, THE LEOPARD:** “Better prices, better conditions. If you come looking for me in the Groceries, then wait for me at noon by the wiremakers. I will make my rounds. Feel free to follow me. No, either no Neolibyans or no deal.”
- ◊ **ARCHARD, RESISTANCE CADET:** “My mother once read to me from an old book. Us Frankans used to be a civilized people. We had a king and an anthem that every child knew by heart. Don’t you think that’s something worth fighting for?”
- ◊ **MATTEO, THE PURGAN PEON:** “Sure, man, I saw it with my own two eyes. A lot of traffic on the sea towards Corpse. Why doesn’t anyone believe me? In Genoa, it’s all anyone talks about.”
- ◊ **WERKZEUG, THE BORCAN SCRAPPER:** “If you are not an Iron Brother, you don’t stand a chance in this city. Us Scrappers are different. Everyone fends for themselves, but we would never single anyone out. I hope someone properly shits down their throats. I, for one, am moving west.”

72 HOURS

EXHAUSTION

THE KILLING GAME depends on maximum velocity. Suddenly, the Characters are torn from their everyday lives and forced into the trenches where they find themselves surrounded by warring factions. Do they have time to catch their breath? No way. Everyone must run for their lives. The events are constantly chasing the Characters, pushing them to their limits. There is constant danger: thirst, food shortages, explosions – the next days will prove to be grueling. Whereas food and water will eventually surface, sleep is few and far between.

Without losing part of his mental skills, a Character can remain awake for $20 + \text{BOD} + \text{Toughness}$ hours. After this, he starts to lapse, and receives a penalty of $-2D$ for all actions. His movements become uncontrollable. Shadows dance in the corners of his eyes, and then they start to burn. For every additional hour he wants to stay awake he needs to sacrifice 1 Ego point.

Once the last Ego point is used up, the penalty rises to $-4D$. From this point forward, only sheer willpower can keep him from falling asleep – the successes on a roll on $\text{PSY} + \text{Faith} / \text{Willpower}$ determine how many minutes the Character can remain awake before having to roll again. On the first failed roll, his body takes what it needs, and the Character falls asleep at once. If he's awakened, he can repeat the roll with $+1$ difficulty (stacking).

For every hour of sleep, however, he regains a quarter of the Ego points that were lost due to fatigue. If he sleeps for four hours in a row, the torture begins anew. The Character will, as a result, be in a bad mood.

BURN

Burn is also useful when one hasn't slept; the spark of the Earth Chakra brings enough energy to drift for days. In the intoxication and stimulation phase, Characters are not required to sacrifice Ego points, nor are they obligated to do this later. If the Burner has inhaled Unity, he doesn't suffer a $-2D$ penalty from exhaustion.

STIMULANTS

Analeptics have a major effect on those who are sleep deprived. During regular waking hours ($20 + \text{BOD} + \text{Toughness}$ hours), Characters benefit from the effects that are described in KATHARSYS (p. 177). Afterwards, these effects change. Characters don't get any bonuses, but they also don't incur a $-2D$ penalty from exhaustion. They are wound up and full of energy. Their bodies are pushed to their limits, albeit at the expense of their health.

Instead of burning 1 Ego point per hour, Characters take 1 point of damage every hour. Trauma resulting from this depletion doesn't initially cause wound penalties. The effects of the stimulants wear off after level $\times 3$ hours.

Once this occurs, Characters suffer all of the negative effects immediately. They incur a $-2D$ penalty and lose the Ego points that they would have had to use. If their Ego pool is depleted, they collapse and remain unconscious for 1D hour.



MOVEMENT

Within a few hours, Toulon transforms into a war zone. Entire streets are barricaded off using wooden beams and the wreckage from bombed-out houses, the rubble of which blocks access to the streets. Puddles of petro burn on the pavement and in the harbor plumes of black smoke fill the air. Eyes water everywhere. Plunderers roam the ruins, burn fueling their bodies. Losers without a faction who think their time has come. They lure victims into ambushes and then turn the tables on them. Any movement through the embattled city districts becomes an obstacle course for the Characters. They cannot expect any help from the residents; those who cannot flee to one of the assembly camps settle in as best they can and shoot at anything that moves.

During the 72 hours of Toulon, the Characters will have to find various routes through the city to get to different locations. As a Game Master, you can use the following collection of events and encounters to enhance the experience for the players.

HUNTING FRENZY

Confrontation lurks around every corner: a band of Iron Brothers is taking their anger out on African prisoners. Apocalyptics of a resident Flock try to take advantage of the chaos to make gains. Looters who have picked up arms on the battlefields are now looking for prey. The players decide

if they are the hunters or the hunted. In any case, terrain will play a special role in Toulon.

If the group chases someone, for example, to prevent them from getting help or betraying other Characters, the chase will, depending on the district, go through scaffolding that runs along the harbor and ruins that have been set ablaze. Quays and boats can also be used for getaway routes. Using Action Rolls on BOD+Athletics and AGI+Mobility, the Characters run across rooftops, all the while trying not to fall and making sure to dodge heavy swinging chains, live wires, and flying pieces of debris. Failure may result in wounds and unpleasant encounters. After all, who wants to fall through a roof and land in the middle of a Leperos den?

CAUTION

A passageway and beyond it, an alley linking several backyards. Ideal for avoiding the main thoroughfares. However, it is an escape route created either by Scrappers or Apocalyptic. The tripwire at the beginning (hidden 4C) detonates explosives that block the way out with an avalanche of rubble – it was originally designed to throw off pursuers. For good measure, the rest of the way has been lined with two pitfalls (hidden 2C, pointed iron rods, damage 9), a bear trap (hidden 4C, damage 8) and a combustible dust mine (hidden 3C, damage 8, fire hazardous, cloud (3 m, 1 round)). Those who don't know their way around them have no place here.

BLIND

Death treads lightly. With a successful roll on INS+Perception (4), the Characters can detect the impending doom in time and react. The wind blows clouds of poisonous vapors in their direction; they will be completely surrounded within 3 rounds. It is either petro smoke (Poisonous (3C, 1 flesh wound per round)) billowing through the streets or a condensed cloud of mustard gas (Poisonous (5S, 1 Trauma per round)) that was released by panicky Famulancers. If the Characters are engulfed in the cloud, they will be poisoned every round. They need to find a way out, which is hard due to the restricted visibility (-2D). Only when a Character has collected 12 successes on INS+Orienteering in a complex action, can he leave the danger zone.

STOP!

Heavy beams, sharp-edged scraps of steel, a few sheets and rods, all joined together with countless weld seams – there is no way past the barricade. Guards have been digging behind the barricade (roughly twice the amount of Characters; they are Iron Brothers, Apocalyptic, Scourgers or plunderers, depending on district; full cover, passive defense +4). Somehow, the Characters have to break through.

If the Characters try to charge the barricade, they will be shot at. They have to use every house entrance and every pile of rubble as a shield before they can vanquish the barricade with BOD+Athletics (2) and initiate close combat.

With AGI+Crafting (complex action, 20 successes, 15 min.), the Characters can build a mobile cover from a cart and some scrap (partial cover, passive defense +2).

Creating a distraction would be a less dangerous option (PSY+Cunning (2)) and can be combined with a surprise attack (sneaking up, conflict of AGI+Stealth against INS+Perception) in order to shoot at the guards.

Finally, there's always the option of negotiation. Under the given circumstances, everyone in Toulon can be bought so that after an honest discussion, a few items or Dinars change owners, and Characters can go wherever they please (bribe: conflict with CHA+Seduction against PSY+Faith/Willpower; negotiation: CHA+Negotiation against CHA+Negotiation; Intimidation: PSY+Domination against PSY+Faith/Willpower).

HAIL OF BULLETS

A shot rings out, and suddenly, all hell breaks loose. Mortar rounds explode, the earth shakes, and entire houses collapse with a groan. Through the dust clouds and roaring flames, combatants enter the battlefield, and the Characters are right in the thick of it all. It's time to make decisions. If the players support one of the sites, it will result in them becoming involved in urban warfare. Once marked as enemies, they will attract attention. They can, on the other hand, choose to lay low and wait, later on selling their lives dearly.

MASSACRE

Flies, rats, street dogs, vultures – the stench of rot lures them all in. The Characters can encounter the remains of an execution at any point in time. There is no order anymore – might makes right. An investigation (INS+Perception, INT+Medicine and/or PSY+Survival) may provide vital clues – corpses of executed Scourgers with electrical burn marks running along their throats or pages from the Judges' Codex strewn on the floor speak a language understood by all. It might, however, be advisable to make oneself scarce, just in case danger is still lurking somewhere nearby.

PLAYING ALONG

If the Characters are at the wrong place at the wrong time, they can easily catch the attention of one of the factions. Scourgers consider the group to be one of the auxiliary groups of the Toulonis; Iron Brothers think the Characters are part of the Commando Requiem etc. Since no one knows who's fighting on which side anymore, the Characters can try to play along, improvising their way through such situations. Successful conflicts with PSY+Deception against INS+Empathy circumvent open disputes. The Characters will have to sacrifice some of their time in order to drag a canister of petro to a front line, build a barricade, prepare an ambush or temporarily guard prisoners. On the other hand, the group may gain invaluable information by doing so.



PROLOGUE: THE DAY BEFORE

Something's looming in the air. If the Characters are independent and not affiliated with Operation Mirage, you can use the prologue to alert your group of things to come.

The following scenes are snapshots that can be used if you want to push the players directly into the adventure without allowing them time to prepare. The events take place at different locations throughout the city so you will have the opportunity to introduce the Characters to the people of Toulon. Make sure to mention the various central locations so the group can get their bearings with ease later on in the game. It is of course up to you how many scenes you play. The events are not crucial for the adventure itself, but they can provide an initial glimpse into the prime movers behind the scenes.

Therefore, the prologue functions as a bridge between a preceding campaign in and around Toulon and OPERATION MIRAGE – if the players are not already in over their heads, that is.

SCENE 01 // COUR ARGENT: THE BARGE

When people have no idea about how to operate a boat, accidents are bound to happen. One can hear the constant crashing and clanking in the canal that separates the Cour Argent from Terres Putain. Some degenerate Scrapper's barge is blocking the way; the damn thing is wedged between two quays, making travel along the canal impossible. A flood of angry shouts traverse the waters. Rafts, floating cookshops, and small ferries are backed up out into the bay.

Maybe the Characters are stuck aboard one of those boats jammed in between the quays. Everyone involved is hot under the collar; no one is remotely willing to take a step back.

“Someone tell the damn Scrapper to get his boat free!”, a husky voice shouts from the pontoons over to the boats.

In the meantime, the mood on the water is heating up, and fistfights between the sailors on the cookshops and the ferries are brewing.

The Characters can make good with those involved with CHA+Negotiation (2). Otherwise, things are going to get out of hand – there will be a savage brawl, but it will set the boats and rafts in motion. Those who fail their AGI+Mobility (2) roll will go overboard. It's no fun swimming in full armor (BOD+Athletics (3)). To get the Character back on board, the group needs a successful cooperative Action Roll on BOD+Force (5).

A little while later, an African emissary accompanied by four armed men reaches the canal. Instantly, the situation turns dire. The emissary demands the canal be cleared, “Now!”

He motions to the Scourgers to enter the boat and help the Scrapper at the wheel to steer it backwards.

Suddenly, the sailor loses his grip. The engine of the barge whines painfully, and the bow bores into a stone stairway with a piercing scream. The Scrapper looks to the left and to the right. With nowhere to turn, he jumps overboard. The emissary points at the fugitive and barks orders in African to the Scourgers. The Scourgers stare at the fleeing barge pilot who, in a panic, swims through the waste towards the other side of the canal. Hesitation. No one wants to step foot into the stinking sewage. A shot is fired. It's a complete miss. The Scrapper disappears into a side channel. Silence.

The emissary unleashes a torrent of African curses and rebukes the Scourgers as if they were unruly pupils. Furious, he turns around and leaves. The Scourger squad jumps onto the barge and examines the bow that is stuck between the quays. The squad leader takes a look at the backlog and desperately shakes his head.

The canal is impassable.

CHASE

The Characters can pursue the Scrapper. Bergmann, an Iron Brother, has become anxious – the canal may be jammed, but the Africans almost captured him. He needs to disappear as quickly as possible. Bergmann could never withstand an interrogation at the Scourger barracks. With an Action Roll on INS+Survival (2), the Characters can follow the Scrapper to the Slaughterhouse. There, however, they lose track of him.

If the Characters try to intimidate the butchers to get information, they will be confronted with a wall of muscles, meat hooks, leather aprons, knives, hatchets and machetes. Goran, the owner of the Slaughterhouse, despises snoops. He throws a large piece of ham onto the counter and massages the fat. He's not one to negotiate. "No Scappers. Just ham," and that's the last word.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

It doesn't make sense to put pressure on Goran. However, the Characters have a moment to take a look around the large cattle pen. The area is confusing; stables and production stands obstruct their view. In addition, there are at least six exits leading out to the street. A rooster with ruffled feathers crosses the Characters' path and crows at them angrily. The Scrapper has escaped.

SCENE 02 // FERRALLIES: THE BEATEN DOG

At the east end of town, Characters can see the other face of Toulon. Side alleys of the main thoroughfares are crammed with rubble and scrap. Building material that can be neither smelted nor burnt.

The Characters might end up here while looking for cheap spare parts. Or they may be searching for a craftsman to repair or tweak their broken equipment. There aren't many reasons to roam Ferrallies early in the evening.

The workshops, where the Scrappers work till dusk, open out onto the streets allowing a glimpse inside.

Broad-shouldered workers sit next to each other on stiff workbenches. Using improvised tools and brute force, the Scrappers dismantle and salvage various finds.

Children zig zag between the workers, helping their parents and trying their best not to get popped on the back of their heads.

They continue further down the road, up a crooked stairway and into a tight back alley. The Characters actually must find a way to squeeze through here.

The inhabitants of Ferrallies are not used to seeing strangers. With hostile looks and sullen eyes, they size them up.

The impressions come thick and fast. "Be careful! Don't touch that cable!" Throaty laughter. "Idiot!" Sparks fly. The taste of iron is on the Characters' tongues as if they have just downed a glass of blood. Noise is coming from every direction and their ears begin to ring. "You want to load E-Cubes? Real E-Cubes? Back there, third door on the left."

DISORIENTED

As soon as the Characters leave the commercial area, the noise subsides. They are now in the residential area. Cables hang down from the fronts of buildings like vines. Here and there, copper peeks out from the insulation. The windows are covered with tarps and rags, boards taking the place of real doors. Ladders and catwalks link the various areas of the houses; below them, passageways have been created between the buildings in order to access the yards and pathways beyond. A labyrinth – the Characters have lost their way. Their sense of direction doesn't help them here, for when the sun sets, everything looks the same.

A successful roll on INS+Orienteering (2) leads the group back to a corner bar where they can ask for directions. The place is a sleazy hole-in-the-wall. The misspelled sign over the entrance reads "Borka's Pryde". The air in the taproom is inundated with human waste gas and alcohol fumes – three short tables and a handful of benches are barely visible through the smoke that hangs from under the ceiling. More than a dozen

listless customers hang out here, eating gray grits and washing their meal down with distillate from canisters. Even before the Characters enter, it's totally quiet. Questions are met with leaden silence and disgruntled sighs.

At first, the skinny innkeeper and his customers do not react to the Characters at all. Those who don't belong here have no place here.

With a successful roll on CHA+Conduct (2) and the right words or a round of distillate, the group and their inquiries concerning a way out of the district attract Wisal's attention. The African Scrapper is past his prime. A gray beard frames his rugged face. He's an unusual sight, for most inhabitants of Ferrallies do not live to see his age. "I'll get you back to the main road. I was leaving, anyway," he mumbles into his beard. He briefly says his farewell to the other customers and then steps out into the alley and stretches. "Not from around here, are you? Follow me." His back bent, he hobbles leading the way. As they go through the winding corridors and alleys, he tries to make conversation. "Swamp fever. My hands are a wreck. I sell knowledge. Working's too hard," he briefly tells the Characters and shows them his stiff, spindly fingers. "I get by in Ferrallies. Somehow. Here, we barter. No one has money," he digresses. "Back to Africa? No, my son is still here. He ended up with the migratory birds. Someday, I'll see him again." At a crossroads, the African suddenly stops and stares into the alley to the left.

PECKING ORDER

"You fucking newt! We got you a job at the Burster, asshole, and you're not willing to give us this damn coil!"

A defenseless Scrapper lies on the ground as five imposing figures light into him. "Iron Brothers!", Wisal warns the Characters, fear in his eyes. He points straight ahead. "You have to go there, I will find another way. Take care!" With these words, he hurries back into the darkness, turns a corner and is gone.

Another kick. The victim curls up and lets out a low moan of despair. He tries to protect his head with his knees. The Characters can hear the helpless Scrapper as he starts to vomit. "Where's the fucking wire? We are running out of time!"

Now, the group has a choice. They can either sneak across the crossroads towards the main street with AGI+Stealth (2), or they can intervene. If the roll fails or if the Characters come to the aid of Kreisel, the guy on the floor, the five thugs will choose a collision course at once. "Our argument! Our district! Stay out of this!"

A roll on PSY+Domination (4) can stop the impending altercation at once. These Iron Brothers are small fry who are used to a commanding voice. If the intimidation fails, an angry fistfight follows. As soon as the first Scrapper suffers a serious blow or someone pulls a gun, the goons run away. They have to save their strength for the next day. "We will get you, you pigs!" they shout down the street. Then they are gone.

SCENE 03 // TERRES PUTAIN: FLOODED TUNNEL

Like a lot of other things in Terres Putain, the floating kitchens are a must for visitors. The Characters accidentally stumble in on a business dinner, but the host, a wealthy Grantor called Hadir, shows generous hospitality. Almost 20 guests sit at long tables in the middle of a raft. They are negotiating prices and smoking rolled tobacco leaves while awaiting the feast. The cook, Aldoraque, serves the food in metal dishes placed atop glowing coals. The patrons serve themselves: lentil stew, braised lamb, cooked carrots...what more could one want?

At some point, Hadir leans towards one of the Characters: "Don't you want to sell your weapon to me? Give you good price. It might be enough to start an expedition. Makes quick profit, and a tough guy like you doesn't need a weapon, am I right?"

Just as the Grantor finishes his last sentence, a ghostly moan comes from the left. Next to the canal a three-story building bulges and twists, then topples forward like a sleeping giant. It crashes into the water.

The Characters are less than 5 m away from the falling stones and the collapsing

housefront. It rains bricks and braces, and waves crash and rock the raft. Patrons try desperately to cling to the wooden planks of the cookshop, some inevitably falling into the canal. The Characters are swung back and forth as they hold on dearly to the tables that are screwed to the floor. (Combination, PSY+Reaction (3) + BOD+Force (2)).

As quickly as the show began, so shall it end. The house is gone. It has collapsed upon itself as if the earth had swallowed it up. People start gathering around the newly formed cavity.

IN SITU

The raft reaches the dock; the shock is clearly visible on the faces of Hadir's guests. They run to safety on the dry land before the Grantor can reschedule appointments with them. No more business for today.

If the Characters investigate the location where the house has collapsed, it is time for an Action Roll on INT+Science (3) or AGI+Crafting (2). A success shows that the wall of the canal has sagged inwards and that the foundation has been undermined. If one of the Characters climbs down to the scene of the accident, he may roll INS+Perception (4) to discover two shovels and a pick that will soon be enveloped by the water rushing into the hole.

A BUZZ IN THE AIR

None of the onlookers can comprehend what has just happened. Confusion abounds until a district judge accompanied by three guards enters the crowd. Surveying the destruction, he offers a few words of consolation.

If the Characters show the official what they have discovered, his reaction will be one of incredulity. "Who would want to bring a house down? Who are you? Architects? I have no use for witnesses like you," he rages. He tells the bystanders they should be thankful that the house was not inhabited. It doesn't bear contemplating how many injured there would have been if people had lived in the building. "I assume it was shoddy work by Scrappers from Ferrallies. Good-for-nothing riffraff. Case closed," the district judge proclaims with an authoritative tone. "Go on, secure the hole!"

With a successful roll on INS+Perception (3), the Characters can hear a faint buzz high above their heads. Almost invisible against the light of the sun, a small flying device hovers there. It is Eico, Decoy's small, agile Stream drone.

The Characters must enter a Conflict with Decoy (PSY+Deception against the Shutter's CHA+Expression) if they want to keep their discovery a secret for the time being. If Decoy thinks their conduct will attract attention or if the Characters approach his location, the drone will disappear into an alley behind a neighboring building. There, the Shutter will lie in hiding to watch the events more closely. As soon as the Chronicler has retrieved the drone, he flees. With AGI+Mobility (3), the Characters can follow him as he heads down a road which turns out to be a dead end. There's no way out, not even an unbarred window – the black clad, hooded stranger has simply disappeared. With INS+Perception (4), the Characters can locate a cast-iron drain grate hidden behind a pile of junk at the end of the alley. A roll on BOD+Force (3) is necessary to lift the grate – the tracks clearly show that it is moved regularly. The tunnel below is narrow and leads directly to a dank basement where the trail ends.

DEC OY 5

If the Characters unmasked Decoy 5 back in Lucatore, he's got them on his radar. But even if he has never met the group, it's always in one's interests to possess Judas goats. In both cases, Decoy will try to spy on the Characters from time to time. Depending on how the Operation develops, he might even be inclined to slip them hints. Of course, he expects them to do the dirty work. Why should he be left to clean up the mess by himself?

SCENE 04 // PORT LAGAGNE: THE SCOURGER HELMET

It's just past 11 a.m. at the fish market. A bank of fog lifts from the beach of Port Lagagne, clearing up the view over to the northeastern part of the city. The bright laughter of children sounds above the busy rustle of the fishermen's everyday life. Cooks shout the prices of their food; the smell of cooked mackerels and fresh sardines wafts from the cookshops. A Touloni with a broken arm pays for round after round of brandy and complains that his rigging is torn, leaving him bound to the land.

Maybe, the Characters have just arrived with one of the boats or perhaps, they are

late risers coming to the fish market for breakfast. All of a sudden, salt is the only thing one of the Characters can taste – he has been hit in the face with a bucket of seawater. A bright green alga adorns his cheek. The capering children burst with laughter. A boy pinches his own nose; his head is beet red from screaming and laughing. The girls giggle loudly, hiding between the legs of the fishermen present.

It looks as if the seawater had been intended for someone else and accidentally hit the Character. Still, the incident is the source of much amusement. Some fishermen turn around, looking at the Characters, trying to comfort them with a smile: “Don’t look so sad!” one of them calls. “This happens to us every day.” Laughter. Should the Characters react too angrily to the children’s jest, they will be thoroughly mocked. The children of the fishermen are harmless; they are merely playing games and prancing around.

Let the Characters roll INS+Perception (2). If the roll is successful, the container that the algae swill came from will appear strangely familiar. The children are playing with a sky blue Scourger helmet, upon which the UAO logo is as clear as day.

If the Characters want to examine the strange toy, they need a successful roll on INS+Empathy (1). If they don’t roll this, the children will retreat and hide between the legs of bystanders.

If the roll succeeds, the players can take a look at the helmet. The bullet hole is unmistakable. A roll on INT+Science (2) shows, without a doubt, a barrel lodged in the helmet. An execution. If the Characters ask the children where they got the helmet from, they will respond with a fearful look in their eyes. They are afraid of having done something reprehensible. In order to assure them that they won’t be punished for telling the truth, it is necessary to roll on PSY+Cunning (3) or INS+Empathy (3). If the Characters are successful, the children lead them away from the beach and into the heart of Port Lagagne.

AT THE CANAL

The children are excited. It’s forbidden for them to play this far away from the beach. This morning, however, they slipped away after one of them claimed to have seen a ball floating in the canal. When they reached the spot, however, there was no ball to be found. Using a net they had taken with them from the beach, they fished around in the murky waters crawling with algae. Then, out of nowhere, the helmet appeared.

“Here, it was right here. This morning at sunrise,” says Neville, small and blond, pointing to the black stew two meters below where the Characters are standing. They look down from the wooden jetty.

“My mom says I’m not supposed to jump into the canals. Otherwise, the dead who dwell down there will eat me alive,” Joanina says, her voice trembling. “But that’s not true. One time, my father climbed in and he was able to stand in there; the water only came up to his neck!”

While the children bicker over the depth of the canal, the Characters need to decide whether they want to probe any deeper. What’ll it be: Into the stagnant waters or off to the Scourger barracks in Cour Argent?

THE BODY IN THE WATER

If one of the Characters is bold or reckless enough to climb down into the canal, he will soon find out that it’s deeper than expected. The Character stands on his tiptoes; the water is frigid and so dim that below the surface nothing can be seen.

If one of the Characters takes the plunge headfirst into the oily mixture of sewage and algae, allow a roll on INS+Perception (3). If successful, the Character can grab onto something akin to a cloth. If he tries to pull it up, it won’t budge. Whatever he has in his hand, it’s stuck somehow. A roll on BOD+Force (2) is necessary to free the find.

When it’s finally yanked free, a dirty, bloated vest drifts upwards. Then, a face surfaces on the water. A young Scourger has taken a bullet to the head. His forehead is exposed; the eyes have been dislodged from the sockets by the violent pressure of the

bullet exiting his skull. Black water trails down from his nose and mouth, covering his cheeks and chin. The children are dead silent. A cry of horror escapes from Joanina.

If the Characters drag the corpse from the water, the children will run back to their parents screaming. If they investigate the body with INT+Medicine (4) or INT+Science (3), they will be able to quickly reconstruct what has happened. The corpse of the young warrior was weighted down with stones and tossed into the canal. Except for the head wound, the corpse shows no traces of violence or a fight. This can only mean one thing: he was executed.

SCENE 05 // SAINT CHENIL: THE CAMO BOAT

When people stay in Saint Chenil voluntarily, they only have themselves to blame. Whatever drove the Characters to come to the southern tip of this town, they won't stay very long. It's noon, but out here amongst the degenerates, even the brightest day feels like the darkest night.

On a desolate beach, a thin woman sells rusty tin cans. They are empty. The only thing they are good for now is storing ammo. She smiles tiredly. Her eyes are dark with still darker circles forming crescents underneath them. This is the courtyard of Sacre Amiel, the old Anabaptist chapel. A light wind of misery surrounds the holy place. Wherever the Characters look, someone is dying or passed out in his own feces.

Before the Characters can say knife, a legless cripple begins to fumbles around with their supplies. It is easy to chase him away (PSY+Domination (1)), but his angry curses awake the others like him who suddenly turn around to face the Characters. What an eerie place. No one talks. A warm breeze blows across the yard. Some of the derelicts start to rise, while the others, under the weight of their own weakness, remain on the ground.

If the Characters leave the yard, let them roll INS+Perception. The player with the lowest number of successes or who has no success at all suddenly realizes that he's missing something. One look over his shoulder: the tin can trader runs towards the beach with the stolen goods in hand.

CHASING THE THIEF

The thief is quick like a starved weasel. She flees from the Characters fueled by her desperation. Elaine knows every stone, every ditch and every special feature of Saint Chenil by heart. Whatever she may have stolen, if she can turn it into Dinars, she will live to see the next month. She does everything in her power to escape her pursuers. The terrain is difficult. The Characters have -2D to their role on BOD+Athletics (3) to follow her.

Should the Characters catch Elaine, she will resign herself to her fate and plead for forgiveness. She will beg and throw herself in the dirt at the feet of the Characters. The Characters must counter with PSY+Faith/Willpower (3) to avoid giving a few Dinars to the thief.

UNEXPECTED

Perhaps, the Characters are in the middle of a conversation or maybe, they have come to the realization that they weren't able to catch the thief, either way they are distracted by an event happening down at the harbor. A smaller, considerably faster boat speeds out from behind the slipstream of a small freighter entering the harbor. The ship's side is barely a head above the surface of the water. A successful roll on INS+Perception (3) lets the Characters follow the boat, but only with their eyes.

It veers right towards the facilities of Ferallies, disappearing under the superstructures of the harbor. With INT+Engineering (5), the Character is able to deduce that this must have been a camo boat.

AT THE BARRACKS

If the Characters decide to go to the Scourgers in Cour Argent, with or without this information, their day will quickly take a turn for the worse. They are kept in an interrogation cell for hours and repeatedly questioned. The children have long since disappeared, because nobody wants to pique the curiosity of the Africans. Later in the evening, the Characters are released. They are told in no uncertain terms that this matter is not their business and that they should forget about it if they don't want any trouble.

ELAINE

If the Characters treat Elaine with a lick of decency, she will become a valuable ally. While the thief knows nothing about the camo boat, she knows everything that's going on in the streets and behind many of the walls of Saint Chenil. In conversation, she expressly warns the Characters against the old man in the Orphanage. She says the house on the hill is not a good place, not for anybody. The poor children. If the Characters want to know more details, they have to pay. Nothing in life's free.

X-DAY

01. CRUCIBLE

Cour Argent. Summer. Morning. A fresh breeze. The first stands around the Silver Axis open and the merchants display their goods. Fishermen are returning to the Northern Port from the sea. Along the streets, women can be seen carrying baskets filled with goods, children at their side with smaller baskets in tow. The waves rush softly, quietly breaking on the quay walls.

The first explosion tears through like an artillery strike. A wave of bottled-up heat spreads, bubbles of fire burst in the air, dragging swaths of molten splinters behind them. The blast burrows through the pavement, tearing the cobblestones apart. Market booths collapse and people and animals are thrown to the ground. Pieces of metal, logs, bird cages and body parts rain down upon the streets. The whistling crack is greater than all the screaming. A shrill noise bores into ear canals, making the thunder of the detonation sound like a distant storm. Burning casks and smoldering oranges roll across the street. A baboon lies on the floor, his abdominal wall split open by a chunk of debris; his entrails spread across the street. Buildings tremble and then burn, caving in on themselves with a tired groan of resignation. Covered in blood and riddled with stone shards, wounded people stumble out from crumbling housefronts. Bewildered, their gazes take a winding path as they try to assess the situation. Some of them are missing arms. Other survivors cling to the dead, emitting soundless screams. Seconds ago, this area was vibrant with life. It suddenly finds itself at the mercy of death.

Where minutes ago, the Silver Axis cut across the Cour Argent, there is now just a black gaping hole. A pillar of smoke rises toward the sky. Glowing particles and sparks rain down, igniting rooftops and setting fire to the surrounding buildings.

A second detonation startles everyone. To the west, towards Terres Putain, a cloud of ash billows above the buildings menacingly. The barracks have been destroyed.

Not a heartbeat later, the third detonation goes off. Everyone is so paralyzed from shock that no one notices the pillar of smoke. Eastwards, towards Ferrallies, the Scorched Path Bridge has been bombed.

Terror has come to Toulon.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

The Iron Brothers have set off giant loads of explosives at three spots in the Cour Argent to herald the start of X-Day and the attack on Hamza's palace. The destruction of the Silver Axis is meant to terrify the inhabitants, causing them to flee in a state of panic. With the second explosion they intend to destroy the Scourger packs stationed there. The purpose of the last detonation is to sever Cour Argent from Ferrallies, thus, preventing a counterattack by the Resistance and the Beau Monde. Everything goes according to plan, Operation Mirage has begun.

I. ATTACK ON THE PALACE

The Cour Argent is in shock; the center of Toulon is in flames. X-Day has descended upon the city just as the conspirators planned.

From the east, fleeing citizens approach the bridge to Terres Putain, their faces contorted in fear.

Nestor and Eisenhauer lead shock troops consisting of armed Scrappers through the alleys of the burning district. It's the main force of the Iron Brothers. They surge along Grantor Street towards the palace. Over 200 men form the hard core of the attack.

The Iron Brothers' rejects branch out to the neighboring areas of Cour Argent. The mob shoots at everyone they meet. Merchants run for cover and mothers crouch in doorways with their children. Scrappers chase Grantors through the streets and beat them senseless. Chaos reigns.

When Eisenhauer reaches the palace, he takes up his position on a nearby rooftop. He has brought a heavy anti-tank rocket launcher; three minions carry the grenades. The giant puts the first one into the barrel, lifts the gun, aims at the outer wall and fires. A flash shoots from the muzzle, and the grenade hits the defense wall with brutal force. Bullseye! Stones rain down and the Scrappers rejoice.

II. AT THE CONSULATE

While Eisenhauer hurls his grenades at the palace wall, Deich leads a second squad. The officer along with two dozen Cartel thugs storm the Consulate. With a battering ram welded from junk they break open the main gate; the way to the patio is free.

Under the influence of Glory and Bion, the Cartel thugs set off. They attack the helpless Scribes and servants. Girls and women are dragged by their hair to the back of the patio and chained there. The men are felled with sharp blows. Deich's people give free reign to their rage. Showing no mercy, the Scrappers ruthlessly beat their victims with crowbars and nail-studded clubs. Blood paints the patio red.

Meanwhile, the Cartel officer rages through the offices. Like a rabid dog, he breaks down doors, looking and screaming for Zohra — a valuable hostage, indeed. He wants to bring her to Ferrallies, where he will demand a ransom for her return. The Consul has barricaded herself in her study with two apprentices. Deich will find her.

LOCATION

Depending on where the Characters are at the time of the detonations, the events come thick and fast. Ideally, the Characters are surprised at the Cour Agent (sections I through IV) or in the Northern Port (section V) and become directly involved in the civil war. Decide which sections match the decisions of the Characters. If the Characters are in Terres Putain, Port Lagagne or Saint Chenil, they can side with Zoe and the Beau Monde — simply skip to Scene 02. If the group was in Ferrallies, they are probably attacking Hamza's palace right now or are moving among the fugitives.

EQUIPMENT

The marauding gangs of Scrappers were armed by Commando Requiem and Eisenhauer. Many of them carry muskets, including ammunition, as well as grenades, Marvel rifles, bottle bombs and homemade crossbows, not to mention, an entire arsenal of weapons for close combat. The majority have entered the battle for Cour Argent heavily armored. Most of the Scrappers do not only wear shields, welder's goggles and helmets, but also rubber or metal harnesses and leg protectors. Some are even wearing coats reinforced by asbestos.

OUTNUMBERED

In Act One, the Characters are outnumbered if they are not fighting on the side of the rioting Iron Brothers or of Commando Requiem.

One false move, and they will come under fire. Scrappers and Chroniclers man embrasures on rooftops. From there, they monitor the alleys and streets of the Cour Argent. Recklessness is fatal — a fact that

the Characters should be made aware of. To get through the urban combat unharmed and undetected is one of the thrilling parts of Act One.

If the Characters are hardened, well-armed veterans with sufficient combat experience, you can adjust the number of attackers in the various fights accordingly.

If the Characters are inexperienced,

you can reduce the number of opponents to give them a chance to survive.

Alternate between defeats, retreats, advances and successes from scene to scene. This improves the dynamics of the scenes and attaches more significance to the actions of the Characters.



ZOHRA'S SCOURGERS

If the Characters intervene, they have to face Deich's men.

If they choose to do so, unexpected help will arrive. Zohra has sent her six bodyguards to the palace because she had not expected a direct attack on the Consulate. Three of the Scourgers have returned and are trying to enter the patio over a neighboring rooftop. They have already exhausted all their ammunition on the way back, but they are valuable allies when confronted with fighting the Cartel bastards. With PSY+Perception (2), the Characters can spot the Scourgers, and on a successful roll on CHA+Expression (2), they may contact them using sign language to coordinate a joint attack.

There is not much time. Three rounds after the fighting starts, Deich bashes in the skulls of Zohra's apprentices and overpowers the Consul. With a grenade, he creates an exit for himself, carrying Zohra, who is now unconscious, over his shoulder. After ensuring their leader's departure isn't met with obstacles, Deich's men seek their own getaway. It's time to rescue the hostages and tend to the wounded.

III. LOOTING

In front of the house of the Bank of Commerce, there lies a pile of dead and wounded people. A group of looters has entered the house. Roughly 30 Scrappers are destroying the outer wall with heavy hammers while others beat helpless Scribes and accountants. A Shutter gives commands, orchestrating the chaos that is being unleashed.

"No, don't kill that one. We need him. Arrest him!" his tinny voice rattles from the Vocoder.

Iron Brothers carry chests of Dinars from the house. The Shutter orders them to



form a chain down to the boats upon which the stolen goods are to be loaded. Everything needs to be shipped to the Burster.

Suddenly, he grabs his shocker from his belt and rams it into the back of a gray-haired Scrapper. The Iron Brother falls to the ground, writhing in pain. Dinars roll from his hands and pockets.

From the left, a Scrapper wearing welder's goggles and a red bandana that conceals his face approaches. He comes on the dead run to kick the helpless dirt digger in the face, leaving two of his teeth broken.

"Not like that, you fucking bugger. Share! We said share. Get up and keep working!" he shouts at the thief. Then he grabs him by the collar and pulls him back on his feet. After witnessing this, the surrounding Scrappers work even harder.

IV. BURNING OF BOOKS

At the University, a squad of Jurymen, Iron Brothers and Shutters goes to work. Judges? Here, in Toulon? Not a chance!

With pickaxes and shovels, half a dozen Scrappers destroy the ocean blue Mosaic depicting the Libyan. With angry blows, they tear up the road. The floor tiles shatter and the image is no longer recognizable. Books and tomes tumble from a third story window down into the courtyard. Older Scrappers have their children pile up all the books.

"Burn that crap, kids! Douse it all with petro," a dirt digger with greasy hair and buckteeth yells over.

Less than 30 paces away, in the shadow of the pines in the courtyard, Jurymen

POWERLESS

If the Characters are close by, they can secretly observe the events. A simple roll on AGI+Stealth (1) is enough. Openly confronting such superior forces is useless, but the group can try to rescue some of the wounded.

By creating a diversion (for example, a mock assault with PSY+Deception (2), then fleeing in a Conflict with BOD+Athletics and hiding with AGI+Stealth), some of the Characters can transport the wounded from the street to safety without the raiders noticing by using AGI+Stealth (2). Like any open attack, failure will result in a chase.

have rounded up the students. With muskets at the ready, they separate them into two groups: Europeans and Africans. Two Protectors chamber a round in their rifles and aim at the heads of the black students.

A Shutter carrying a Cascader solemnly walks up and down in front of the students. Using his portable rod which amplifies his voice, he tells them in fluent Frankan: "If your home is Perpignan, Toulouse or Montpellier, if Franka is your legacy, you may go." The students, most of them younger than 15 winters, look at him in fear, not quite understanding his command. A Juryman steps in; he pulls a young Sanglier close to his face by the threads of his scarf and yells: "Get the fuck out of here and take your scruffy coastal rabble with you!"

Carefully, the white students start moving, hands still in the air, hesitantly looking over their shoulders to their black classmates who have been herded over to the wall of the building.

"What about us?" a young African asks, tears in his eyes. Before he can take his next breath, the side of his face is met with the butt of a rifle. The boy stumbles, not able to retain his balance. Blood wells from his split cheekbone. The Shutter turns to the student, gazes down at him, then looks at the Protectors and Jurymen in turn who are already baring their teeth.

"The rest will be executed."

DELIVERANCE

The Characters can try to save as many students as possible from execution. Brute force is the only way to do so. The students are surrounded by two Shutters, two Protectors and six Jurymen.

If the Characters intervene, the situation escalates, and chaos ensues. The Shutters will immediately retreat and send for reinforcement: the Iron Brothers.

In the heat of the battle, as many students as possible will try to flee and escape from the university grounds.

Meanwhile, the six Jurymen turn on the Characters, weapons drawn. The Protectors raise their rifles and shoot the fleeing students in the back. They try to hit as many of them as possible and loudly swear at every missed shot.

The Characters have exactly 5 minutes to retreat before the Shutters return with the Scrappers.

If the group does not intervene, the African students will be executed without exception. Their bodies are looted, they are stripped naked and then tossed into a nearby canal.

V. KIDNAPPING

While in the background, missile fire rings through Cour Argent, a set of different events is unfolding at the Northern Port.

The Famulancers and Field Medics of the L'Orage military hospital have been disarmed and taken captive. Their hands tied to their backs with wire, they are led single file to the jetties. There, a large cargo raft with an outboard engine awaits them. Six Scrappers and two Jurymen escort the 30 Famulancers. Two Scrappers have the barrels of Fungicide Rifles that were looted from the Spitalians aimed at the prisoners. The rest of the Iron Brothers and Jurymen are armed with muskets and machetes.

A giant female Scrapper with chiseled jaws, yellow teeth and russet-colored, tangled hair is their leader. It is Hurlant. She is marching ahead of the impedimenta. Suddenly, she whirls around and hatefully shouts at a Field Medic:

"Remember my face, you pathetic excuse for a doctor?"

With an iron rod, she hits him in the stomach with a vengeance. The Spitalian vomits at once and collapses in a puddle of his own gastric juices, struggling to breathe.

"My daughter vomited just like that before she died." She takes another swipe at him. The iron rod hits his back; the impact of the blow tears the neoprene. The Field Medic falls to the ground and lies there unconscious, but Hurlant's raging cries do not cease.

"You fucking pigs could have saved her!" She raises the rod for a third time, but before Hurlant can smash the prisoner's head, a hand grabs the weapon and holds it suspended in the air. "Enough!"

A nondescript man in a threadbare black coat has approached. His partially bald head is compensated with a beard. Round, tinted glasses enshroud his eyes. Strong and with an angular build, he's one head shorter than the Scrapper.

"That's not the way revenge works, Hurlant. Let the doctors live, we need them in Ferrallies to take care of our people."

"Don't intrude, Arcville! This is my business."

The bespectacled man leans in close to Hurlant and clarifies, "I'm not intruding. I'm giving you an order!" She spits on the frames of his glasses, tears the iron rod from his hand and with a hysterical scream sends the weapon flying out across the port. The rod hits the ground 20 meters away, dully clanking across the pavement.

The Scrapper is fuming. She reaches a small dinghy with three brisk strides and starts the engine. Water foams as she curves around the jetty and races east across the bay.

Arcville turns to the other Scrappers. "You there, on the raft with the Spitalians! Get them to Ferrallies! Get them to work. Take the wounded one with you!" He motions to three of the heavily armed Scrappers. "The rest of you – with me." He starts moving, and the Scrappers follow.

Only two Iron Brothers and two Jurymen remain. They herd the prisoners to the raft with their weapons.

VI. TO TERRES PUTAIN

After the guards are overwhelmed, the Spitalians are set free. Carrying the Characters and the doctors, the large raft departs from the quay.

"Do you know what's going on out there?" Field Medic Remagnac asks. Without waiting for a response, he updates the Characters on the events of the last few hours. "Right after we heard the explosions, a group of Scrappers entered the premises of L'Orage. They ran to the second floor, threw the patients out of the windows and rounded up our people."

A Famulancer reports: "I have seen Judges and Chroniclers, too. Something major is happening here."

The cargo raft floats out into the bay; the Characters can easily steer it using the long oars and the small engine (Action Roll on AGI+Navigation (1)). From the raft, they can see the Cour Argent in its entirety. The city has been devoured by fire and smoke. The palace is shrouded in a black cloud torn by the flashes of sporadic explosions. There are thunder and rifle salvos in the air. If the Characters look at the bay, they can see fugitives from the Cour Argent everywhere. There are families and merchants, some on small boats, others swimming in the water. Several Famulancers try to help those in the water reach safety on the raft.

At the Northern Port, silhouettes materialize. Scrappers notice the fugitives and alert the others.

"We must reach the Camp Resistance. In Terres Putain," Remagnac says. "We need to join forces with them."

"General Morceau is the only one who can help us," another Spitalian interjects.

"We also need reinforcements. From Montpellier," Remagnac concludes, concern evident in his voice.

LIBERATION

If the Characters act quickly, they can subdue the four guards and free the Spitalians. Hagel, one of the two Scrappers, is armed with a Fungicide Rifle loaded with Fire Dust (damage 8, Fire Hazardous).

The other Scrappers and the two Jurymen will fire their muskets (damage 8) and then in close combat try to shove the Characters into the water from the jetty (Conflict with BOD+Brawl/Melee against BOD+Brawl/Melee or BOD+Force). Hagel tries to shoot at Characters in the water.

THE RADIO

Hagel carries a radio pieced together from several various old devices. If the Characters take it off the Scrapper, they will be able to listen in on the communication between the Iron Brothers later on. To do so they have to decrypt the device through a combined Action Roll on INT+Artifact Lore (3) and INT+Engineering (2). If the players choose not to intervene during the kidnapping, they will be able to procure a radio from one of the other Scrappers or have the group's technician build one.

THE MODULE

Following the explosions, the power lines from the Module to Cour Argent were cut by the Iron Brothers. Toulon is off the grid. Only Ferrallies still has electricity. Those without an emergency generator or those who don't know how to get a converted petro engine running will have to spend the next nights relying on torches and oil lamps. In Ferrallies, the lines begin to crackle from overload.

With a successful roll on INS+Perception (2), the Characters spot a hijacked torpedo boat veering close to the burning barracks. From the distance, they can hear the vehicle howl before it races across the water and turns around a long curve at breakneck speed. It plunges through the waves in a sharp twist, heading directly for the raft. There's less than a kilometer between it and the Characters, who are standing with the rescued Famulancers.

With INS+Perception (2), the Characters can make out four shapes. Probably Scrappers. Before they can finish though, muzzle flashes appear. Someone is shooting at them from the boat!

CRASH

If the Characters cannot subdue the attackers, they will have to use the raft as a weapon. With AGI+Piloting (3) they can use one of the many currents in the port to cross the attackers' path. If the roll is successful, the raft will suddenly head for the torpedo boat. The torpedo boat will no longer be able to elude its advances. To jump overboard in time it is necessary to roll on AGI+Mobility (2). A split second later, the raft crashes into the bow of the torpedo boat. Both vehicles burst into a thousand pieces. Clinging to parts of debris, the Characters – and most of the Famulancers – reach Terres Putain.

SURROUNDED

The Iron Brothers do not want to ram the raft; they still need the Spitalians.

They start circling the craft from 50 meters away so the shooter (hunting rifle, damage 6) can fire at the Characters from the superstructure. The waves start to swell, swaying the raft. The situation becomes critical. The Characters get Passive defense +2 and -2D to all actions. If an action that involves movement fails, the Character must roll AGI+Mobility (2) in order not to fall overboard. He must roll BOD+Athletics (3) to avoid being dragged underwater by the weight of his own equipment and to ensure that he stays close the raft. Only with joint forces (Cooperation, BOD+Force (5)) can he be hoisted on board again.

An Action Roll on INT+Engineering (3) is necessary to locate the tank of the torpedo boat. Once the location is spotted, the Characters can try to blow it up using firearms (aimed attack, AGI+Projectiles (4)).

Another possibility would be to eliminate the pilot. Due to the speed, the difficulty is 5 – if the Characters hit him, the boat loses control at once. It pitchpoles multiple times, leaving the resulting wreckage floating on the water.

02. HOLD THE LINES

The eastern part of Terres Putain. Rescuers pull the Characters and the Spitalians from the raft or up from the basin on dry land. People help wherever they can. There is panic in the streets. The wounded are treated on location. Children run back and forth between the adults with buckets full of water. They get dressings for wounds and support the elderly. There is consternation everywhere; no one can make sense of the attack.

“We hold the bridge to Cour Argent. Our boys are in the trenches,” a black-bearded fighter of the Beau Monde, calls to the crowd with pride. The people stand in line, watching the Spitalians and the Characters. Remagnac calls upon the Famulancers to follow him to Camp Resistance. The district is in an uproar. The inhabitants are no longer carrying out their day-to-day business. They have left the shops and their work to try to understand what's happening. Even here, almost 4 km from the dramatic events of the war zone, the distant roars and crashes of the war make themselves heard.

After 20 minutes of walking through the alleys, the Characters reach the Resistance camp. Faces covered in scars peer down at them from the guard towers. People in self-styled uniforms stand with rifles at attention and salute the Famulancers as they walk past.

Inside, barricades are being erected and soldiers are preparing for a sortie. The inhabitants supply the camp with food, water and blankets. Atop a platform, Remagnac spots the leader of the Resistance loudly arguing with a fat, stocky man: Vericon, the mayor of Toulon.

“General Morceau, L'Orage reports for volunteer duty. There is heavy fighting in Cour Argent,” Remagnac begins confidently, saluting to the dais.

“This group,” he continues and points at the Characters, “has saved us and other innocents. Please, do offer them your ear.”

The General salutes the Characters and waves for them to join her on the dais. With a gesture she tells Remagnac to lead his men into the low barracks where there is food.

THE EMISSION SHIELD

In preparation for Operation Mirage, Factor has erected an emission shield around the city that absorbs radio waves and thus, makes radio communication impossible. Toulon cannot make contact with other cities in the region anymore. Within the city, radio communication continues to work as usual. The Iron Brothers use their Scrapper radio, and Commando Requiem has their own secure connection.

The shield is maintained by frequency emitters Factor has placed on rooftops or hidden in backyards throughout the city. The fist-sized, cylindrical antenna tips are mounted on tripods that are screwed firmly

to the ground. Those who get close enough can hear a fluid, static noise.

Only four of these emitters are still intact. They are located in Cour Argent, Ferrallies, Terres Putain and Port Lagagne. The antenna tip in Saint Chenil is not in place anymore. Beggars found and dismantled it, selling the bizarre contraption for a few lousy Dinars.

This is why the shield is defective; it cannot pick up all outgoing radio transmissions. Very strong signals can get through, but they are completely distorted and sometimes, indecipherable. In order to deactivate the shield, all other emitters have

to be destroyed. To pinpoint them, the radio can be modified using a combined Action Roll on INT+Artifact Lore (3) and AGI+Dexterity (2) to polarize the interval noise of the emitters.

It's a race against time, as Factor is aware of any variations within the shield and accordingly sends Shutters to secure the remaining antenna tips at once. He himself watches over the last emitter on the rooftop of the abandoned alcove in Ferrallies. As long as it remains active, the communication network remains unstable. Ferrallies however, can only be reached by boat.

“Who are you? What’s happening out there?”

The Characters barely have time to report what they have experienced before Vericon interrupts: “We cannot send our men there. It would mean signing their death sentence. Let’s wait with our counterattack and hold the line until they are ready to negotiate!” The mayor seems tense. Deep, dark rings encircle his eyes and the flesh on his face sags. His face resembles a pale, molten candle. His damp black hair hangs limply across his forehead.

“We don’t even know who is attacking us Vericon, and you want to draw in your horn? What happens when there is an attack on all of us. We live under the anchor of Toulon, not the rune of the Scrappers.”

The Characters quickly realize that Zoe is a woman of action and Vericon, a man of doubt. They continue arguing, unable to determine their next move.

Morceau turns her head, looking at the Characters invitingly. “What about you? I can find a use for anyone and everyone.”

Vericon rolls his eyes. Zoe lifts a finger and signals for the mayor to be quiet. She has had her fill of objections.

“You’ll send the men to their doom!” Drops of sweat fall over Vericon’s protruding beady eyes, as he breathes heavily.

“We will attack.” She looks at the sky with trepidation “At noon. When the sun is at its zenith. By that time, the Scrappers will be exhausted. Once their legs tire, we will get them.” Whoever this woman is, she knows what she wants.

Desperately, Vericon throws his arms in the air and leaves the dais, muttering curses under his breath.

“That won’t help Hamza!” he shouts at the top of his lungs. “Can’t you see? The Scrappers have blown up the barracks!”

With wild gestures, he points to the Northeast, towards Cour Argent. Then he angrily leaves the dais.

FOR FRANKA

If the Characters attempt to talk to Zoe, the general will have a few moments for them. The conversation will, however, constantly be interrupted by runners bearing messages or conveying Zoe’s orders. The General congratulates the Characters for having successfully saved the Spitalians. She tries unabatedly to win the group over for her cause. For Toulon, for Franka. Not as a part of the contending units, but as allies acting independently. After all, Zoe cannot take care of everything on her own. If the Characters deny her offer or try to work for her as mercenaries, the conversation ends. She’s looking for people who are fighting for the common goal out of conviction, not for monetary gain.

FIGHTING FOR AFRICA

If the Characters are working with the rulers of Toulon, the story could also begin here. The group has come to visit Hamza at his palace. The purpose of this visit could concern matters of trade with the Africans or perhaps, they need to settle a debt with Hamza. In this case, the Characters will have been at Hamza's side since the bombing commenced. Here, they will have found refuge behind the palace walls.

I. DEFENSE

The noise in Hamza's palace induces delirium. The eastern part of the outer wall has been shattered. Incessant grenade attacks have blasted the stones, sending them flying and leaving a cavernous hole in their place. The path to Hamza's garden is now accessible. Battles are raging. The defense is hopelessly outnumbered. Hamza has only four packs at his side. Not even 30 men are under Ayubu's command. The Dumisai has unified them into one single pack.

Shots ring out across the battlements, the Scourgers answer with salvos from their assault rifles. The Iron Brothers do not care, though. Dozens of them have been stationed under a tall, portable battering ram complete with steel roof, barbed wire, corrugated iron and rubber insulation. The bullets fired by Ayubu's warriors are not powerful enough to penetrate the protective roof. Under the roof, the Scrappers remain unscathed. Not a single bullet is capable of even grazing one of their shoulders.

Supporters of the Iron Brothers tirelessly run across the green expanses of the gardens. They transport heavy machinery in carts, shoving it under the protective cover of the battering ram, which is now nestled against the wall of the guard house.

Eisenhauer and Nestor pull back the protective tarps covering the machines, revealing giant jackhammers with petro compressors underneath. They will supply the necessary force to pulverize the inner wall of the palace into dust.

In his office at the top of the palace, Hamza desperately tries to establish a radio connection to his cousin Orma. He's on his way back to Toulon aboard the Unya, the largest, most exquisite transport ship from the Raider's shipyards. Hamza wants to warn his cousin and tell him to make a stop at the Northern Port so the Neolibyan and his Scourgers can come on board. No one can harm them aboard the Unya.

STATIC

If the Characters were able to obtain Hagen's radio or some alternative, it will suddenly start crackling. With INT+Engineering (1), it's easy to equalize the signal so that the Characters can listen in on Hamza's unsuccessful call for aid to his cousin. It's easy to contact Hamza. He asks the Characters for their help; they need to find out why the transmission is jammed and figure out how to fix it. Only the Unya can help him now. In return, he offers safe passage and shelter to the Characters.

ON THE ROOF

If the Characters decided to accompany Hamza, they can help him establish radio contact. Hamza assumes that there is no response because the connection to the antenna on the Palace roof is missing. The Characters are supposed to retrieve it, set it up in the office and connect it to the radio there. Reaching the roof via the staircase is not a problem. But the antenna, a small monster of 3 m length including linkage, is on the other side of the roof. At least two Characters have to dash across the roof with AGI+Mobility (Complex Action, 9 successes), loosen the fixtures with AGI+Crafting (Complex Action, 6 successes) and bring the antenna to safety with BOD+Force (Complex Corporative Action, 15 successes). It is impossible not to be spotted by the attacking Scrappers while doing so. Each round, muskets are fired at the Characters. While sprinting there and using the antenna to partially shield themselves on the way back, they get +2 passive defense. Back in the office, a roll on INT+Engineering (2) is enough to connect the antenna. The signal is extremely weak. Something is jamming the transmission.

II. BLACK HOPE

Nephraim enters Hamza's office.

"They have our sister." The look in his eyes is sinister and his lips are twisted in disdain. "They will demand ransom for her."

"Iron Brothers. Haven't we done everything we could for the last ten years to appease them?" Hamza asks not awaiting an answer to the obvious. He overhears fighting in the courtyard.

"They will be here any minute," says the Anubian.

"I cannot leave Zohra here. We must ask Elani and Atuma for reinforcements. They owe it to us!" Hamza sounds desperate.

"No, the Northern Port is our only chance. You can't stay here, you have to leave Toulon," Nephraim replies.

"It can take hours for Orma to reach the city!" Hamza's rage is apparent. Nervously, he taps his fingertips on the surface of the desk.

"Leave the palace and the treasures to the Scrappers. Save your life, instead."

"What about you? I'm not leaving you behind!"

"They won't hurt me. They need someone to make Marduk Oil for them."

Hamza is silent. His empty stare lingers in the room. Then he takes one of his rifles from the wall and chambers a round.

"Prepare Ayubu for the breach! We are going to board the Unya and regroup. At dawn, we attack Ferrallies."

DISTRACTION

Ayubu and Hamza need a distraction for their escape from the palace. The entire outer wall is surrounded. The Iron Brothers and Commando Requiem are waiting for one false move from the Neolibyan and his Scourgers. Then, they'll open fire.

Nephraim wants to reach the observation deck and light a beacon there to confuse the Iron Brothers. On holidays celebrating Hamza's reign, the fire is lit to welcome allied warships from Montpellier and Perpignan. Now it's only a ruse to distract the besiegers for a few minutes and allow Hamza and Ayubu enough time to escape through the southern gate.

The Iron Brothers will have to stop any war fleet from entering the bay. Someone with a radio has to go down to the Northern Port and report from there. The last thing that Nestor and Eisenhauer need now is an open flank at the bay.

A few moments of confusion is all the Africans need. A desperate measure, indeed, but, maybe the only way.

THROUGH THE SOUTHERN GATE

A blinding beacon of fire rises on the observation deck. Cannons roar and a rain of sparks scatters across the sky. Ayubu has ordered his Scourgers to break off for the counterattack once the signal has been sounded.

The first group is supposed to join the ground conflict, taking up position behind the trees and on the premises. They are to lead the fighting from the Sun Path to the eastern gate. The main group is supposed to attack the southern gate in order to facilitate Hamza's escape. If the Characters are able to defend the palace, they will try to break free with Hamza and ten Scourgers. Ayubu will be the head of this mission.

That path leads past the southwestern wall to the guard tower located next to the gate. In the east, the first rifles rattle – the other 20 Scourgers have fanned out. They engage the besiegers in battle, making sure to keep them distracted. Ayubu hurries the group along. Into the guard tower, then along the inner defensive wall. The plan works. The attackers situated in the outer ring run eastwards. Ayubu raises his hand, waits a moment, then gives the signal. Five of the Scourgers throw ropes over the wall, rappel into the thicket of pines and guard the others as they descend. Hamza, Ayubu and the Characters follow (BOD+Athletics (2)). The rearguard trails behind. No attackers. Hamza frowns. Too easy. Ayubu hurries them through the outer ring to the southern gate. The massive gate doors have been torn from their hinges. They hang askew, blocking the passageway. The group advances, watching the surroundings with weapons at their side. Down the ramp. The courtyard is littered with barricades and debris. Suddenly, a grenade sails through the air. Ambush!

Emerging from the surrounding buildings, Shutters and Iron Brothers flood the area. The Scrappers are high on Burn. Their bellows ripe with bloodlust, the Scourgers attack with bludgeons crafted together from scrap metal. They meet their fate in the fire of the rifles. Soon, single combat begins.

The Characters must simultaneously protect Hamza, keep an eye on Ayubu and support the Scourgers. The superiority of the enemy is overwhelming; standing back to back, they fight for their lives. Out of nowhere, a giant Scrapper appears in front of Hamza, eyes wide open with a crude metal axe ready to strike. Suddenly, there's a loud hiss. The giant's head detonates raining blood upon those close by.

FROM AFAR

If the Characters are not in the palace, but, instead, in Zoe's camp, they can watch from afar the beacon of fire dancing upon the hill that is being swallowed by smoke. At the top of the tower above the observation deck, a magnesium blue pillar shoots 20 meters into the sky. Fireworks explode, sparkling around the fountain of light. The flying sparks and stars are like a signal of victory.

The Resistance is baffled. From the bridge, they can only see but a fraction of the horizon. Should ships be visible there, it would be impossible to spot them. Is this the salvation for Toulon they have hoped for? Did Montpellier and Perpignan have cruisers in the nearby waters? There is not a shadow of doubt in Zoe's mind. Now is the chance to recapture the city. At once, she gives the marching orders. On to the Silver Axis!

IN POSITION

Hexell is in position somewhere out there. Aiming from a distance of 1000 m, he kills Iron Brothers and Shutters with shots to the head. Rattler's orders were clear: nothing can happen to Hamza. The sniper covers the fugitives like the hand of God.

A Combination of PSY+Reaction (4) and INS+Orienteering (3) must be successful in order to see the muzzle fire in time and to determine the location of the shooter. But who is he? At the moment, his identity remains a mystery.

If Hamza's group becomes compromised, Hexell is ready. From his position, he can cover the Africans until they reach the Silver Axis. Under his protection, the squad is able to move towards the Northern Port. Afterwards, they disappear from Hexell's view. Corpses are strewn across their escape path.

03. DEATH ON THE SILVER AXIS

The sun is at high noon and the rifle fire has died down. It looks like everybody's taking a break – save for the Resistance. Zoe's orders are to push through to the Silver Axis in three wedge formations. If the Characters are here at this point, they are part of Zoe's wedge formation. One wedge formation veers off to the destroyed barracks, while another charges northeast and tries to secure the flank. The Resistance units and Beau Monde fighters under Zoe's command take position at the western end of the Silver Axis. The Cour Argent is empty. Nothing moves along the road. Zoe grabs a pair of binoculars and gives them to one of the Characters.

"Keep your eyes peeled!" she commands. "Sound the alarm if anything moves!" Through the lenses, the Character surveys the wide, empty road. Bird cages tumble in the wind, the parrots within burned to shapeless lumps. Torn tarpaulins flap across the bodies of the dead. Here and there, appendages jut out from the under the debris and wreckage of the first explosion. A thin layer of ash and dust covers the Silver Axis like a phantom blanket, as if trying to cover up the atrocities buried beneath.

Suddenly, something enters the street from the north. Blue helmets become visible as they dash across the vast stretch of rubble. They are only about 500 or 600 meters away from Zoe and the Characters. The Africans have arrived.

Zoe signals to the commander of the Beau Monde. He takes a silver whistle from his waistcoat pocket and blows. Three sharp pitches echo along the Silver Axis. The Africans signal back. They want the Resistance to close the ranks.

I. COVERING FIRE

The Resistance and the Characters race along the streets. After they have made it half-way, an armored car suddenly revs up to the east end of the Silver Axis. The vehicle spits fire and smoke; a battering ram covered in welded steel plates and metal spikes protrudes from its hood. Dozens of Scrappers have taken position on the bed of the car. The combustion engine under the hood growls. The heavy wheels, with the stature of a grown man, turn on the spot. With a hungry jolt, the beast kicks into gear and races straight down the Axis. The battering ram tears through booths and throws what remains of the city off the road. The armored car accelerates, and the Scrappers open fire. A hail of bullets hits the Africans and the Resistance. The Scourgers and the Resistance retaliate with fire. 200 meters to go.

THE ARMORED CAR

The armored car has three weak spots: the tank that is welded to its side, the water inlet to counteract overheating and the driver. INT+Engineering (3) or INS+Perception (3) are necessary to identify these weak points and aim at them. At full speed and over the distance, an aimed shot is necessary to hit one of the three targets.

◇ Tank (difficulty 5): The right side of the armored car explodes, and the vehicle tilts to the left, sliding into a pile of rubble a few dozen meters further down the road. The Scrappers are thrown from the bed of the vehicle. Some survive and after a moment of disorientation keep on fighting.

◇ Water inlet (difficulty 4): A fountain of steam blinds the driver, and he crashes into a building. The Scrappers jump from the bed of the vehicle and get into fighting formation immediately.

◇ The driver (difficulty 3 + 6): Shooting through the armored slit of the driver's cab and killing the Scrapper requires enormous skill and a Combination of INS+Perception (3) and AGI+Projectiles (6). If the bullet hits, the driver loses control at once and the armored car bucks. The Scrappers are sent flying out of the vehicle and hit the ground resulting in broken bones and shattered skulls, that is, if they are not already buried beneath the steel monster. Three heartbeats later, the car explodes into a massive fireball.

JUNCTION

If the Characters have been divided between Zoe's and Hamza's camp so far, this is where the different storylines meet and form a single plot.

UNDER FIRE

Bullets are literally flying past the Characters' ears. While the Scrappers do not aim at the Characters directly, there is always the danger of getting winged as soon as a Character comes out from his cover. If a Character wants to change position, he must successfully roll AGI+Stealth (3) or auf AGI+Mobility (3) or be hit by a bullet (amage, armor protects). If one of the Characters tries to hit the tank, the water inlet or the driver, he'll be under massive fire if his attack fails. For another attempt, a change of position is necessary.



NO WAY BACK

The rattle of the gunfire resonates far and wide. The explosion of the armored car draws conspirators down to the Silver Axis. Any moment now, reinforcements may come rushing from every direction. The market street is too central and due to the many side roads, almost impossible to defend. If the troops try to position themselves here, they will be wiped out. Ayubu and Zoe exchange commands. Uncertainty is written all over their faces.

“Resistance: back to your post at the bridge. You must secure the west and lure those pigs in towards you,” the Dumisai barks from under his mask.

“Those who are still standing and able to fight: come with me. We won’t stop until we reach the refinery.” He points south.

“Forget the refinery, Ayubu.” Hamza is here. A bullet has grazed his neck. A rivulet of blood runs down his collar, dyeing his white uniform bright red. “The Iron Brothers will be looting there. We need to reach the customs offices and entrench ourselves.”

The Dumisai considers this briefly, and then unfolds a map of the city in front of the Characters.

“I need covering fire. A handful of you will be responsible for distracting the Iron Brothers at the refinery. Stick close to the warehouses!” He looks at the Character closest to him: “If you are attacked, retreat west to the barracks and have the Resistance secure a corridor for you.” Then he turns to his men. “We go east around the refinery and take position at the customs offices. The area between them and the port is open on all sides, we will not be ambushed there.”

INTERCEPTED

Commando Requiem has intercepted Hamza’s distress call to Orma. Mirage orders the Iron Brothers to regroup and prepare to have Hamza arrested as soon as the ship approaches. Mirage wants the Raider alive. No price is too high. With Hamza and Zohra in the palm of her hand, she will be able to blackmail the Neolibyans on the Frankan coast at a later point in time. She will be able to instruct them to make concessions, retreat, or work in the interest of the Aquitane Cluster. However, Nestor refuses to obey the Paradigma. He wants Hamza’s head. The Raider is the living embodiment of everything Nestor has suffered. The time has come for him to settle the score. Amongst his trusted inner circle of supporters, he has promised a reward to whomever succeeds in completing the task at hand.



07:00 PM

II. INTERFERING TRANSMISSIONS

Ayubu's pack dives eastwards from one row of houses to the next.

Meanwhile, the Characters can continue west to the warehouses. As they run along the streets, they become acutely aware of the fact that they are met with very little resistance. The streets stand still.

A roll on INS+Perception (2) shows that the coast is clear. Where are the enemies? They do not seem to be waiting at the refinery as presumed.

Still, caution is of the essence. It's quiet, almost too quiet. The warehouses are in sight now, gates wide open, thick fumes billowing from the buildings. Seagulls circle above the clouds of smoke draped across the sky. The air is heavy with ash. Corpses are scattered in front of gates; bodies akimbo, faces buried in the dust.

All of a sudden, the radio that the Characters took from the Scrapper at the harbor starts hissing. Crackles are followed by rustles, which then change into an odd series of tones similar to a feedback loop. A roll on INT+Science (3) informs the Characters that something is interfering with the frequency domain of the device, and obviously they have come closer to whatever is causing it.

With a Combination of INT+Engineering (3) and INS+Orienteering (2), the Characters can start pinpointing the source of the interference.

A rusty iron ladder leads up to the roof of a nearby warehouse. The high-pitched sound almost cracks. Over there, a rope links the roof with the adjacent building. It's hard to tell from here what is responsible for the interference on the other side.

There is a gap of 3 m between the two buildings. The street is 10 m down. If the Characters want to bridge the gap with a rope, moving hand over hand, a roll on

BOD+Athletics (3) is necessary. PSY+Cunning (1) can give them the idea to secure themselves on the rope with a belt or a second rope. If the roll fails, an unsecured Character will fall down into the alley next to the warehouse (falling damage 20).

As soon as the Characters reach the other roof, they see the source of the interfering signal. A lonely emitter screwed to the corrugated iron of the warehouse roof pulses its frequency. If the Characters approach it, allow them to roll INS+Perception (2). If the roll is successful, they will see a dead body lying curled up on the floor next to the hatchway leading into the warehouse. It's a black Scrapper, one of Orma's people.

If the Characters try to approach the body, he will suddenly look up. Blood trickles from his mouth and despair colors his eyes. He tries to warn the Characters, but he cannot make a single sound.

A M B U S H

Factor noticed someone trying to manipulate his emitter on the warehouse rooftop in the Cour Argent. A black Scrapper had pinpointed the radio sequence and tried to destroy the antenna. Factor unloaded a barrage of bullets on him with a machine gun and then hid on the rooftop of a neighboring warehouse to make sure that no one else could come into contact with the emitter.

When he notices the Characters, he fires automatically. His years as a Shutter take over. He is a born assassin; it courses through his veins. The salvos miss the Characters, but they have to run for cover in order to escape Factor's fury. The Fuse knows no mercy. He wants to kill these saboteurs as quickly as possible and get back to "Operation Mirage".

If the Characters return the fire and put pressure on him, he will react instantly. Factor pulls a strange grenade from his belt and throws it at the rooftop the Characters are standing on. The metal egg bounces across the corrugated iron, blinks three times and then suddenly disappears in a cloud of blue vapor. The mist quickly covers everything in the area, and flashes of energy flicker between the clouds, discharging themselves on the metal. The air expands; static electricity accumulates and gathers dust particles. INT+Engineering, INT+Artifact Lore or INT+Science (4) make clear that the cloud can discharge a giant flash at any moment that will make the entire rooftop of the warehouse an area with high voltage. Were this to happen, organic material, including the Characters, would go up in flames within seconds.

Only jumping from the roof can save the Characters now. With BOD+Athletics (3), they can break through one of the windows of the opposite buildings or through an awning (falling damage 3, 9 if not successful).

CROSSROADS

If the Characters started looking for the emitters before this scene, Factor will fire at them instead of at the black Scrapper. Factor reacts at once if his frequency shield is put in danger. This scene can be continued based upon the Characters' decisions.

FACTOR'S AGENDA

Factor will never surrender, but he will also not continue fighting if he feels outnumbered by the Characters. As soon as he feels endangered, he will flee and join Commando Requiem. He uses his knowledge of the area and his equipment to quickly disappear in the Cour Argent. However, the Characters will probably have a good idea of who's behind the attack now: the Chroniclers. What's happening? INT+Legends (2) helps them realize that their opponent might be a Shutter.

IN THE MEANTIME

While the Characters are confronting Factor at the warehouses, a dramatic event unfolds on the bridge to Terres Putain. Zoe and the Resistance are under heavy fire. The Resistance and the Beau Monde suffer several losses, and the Iron Brothers manage to push them back across the bridge. Zoe and her men have to entrench themselves and defend the passage to Terres Putain. Now, they are no longer able to help Ayubu and Hamza.

Meanwhile, there is much rejoicing in

response to the spectacular attack of the Iron Brothers on the Cour Argent in Ferralies. The population there that had already held the Scrappers in a rather positive light have no reservations about openly siding with them now.

Wounded Iron Brothers are being medically treated, and people gather provisions to support the rebellion against the Neolibyans. Others land on the east side of the Cour Argent with small boats and rafts to loot what the Iron Brothers have not yet

carried off. Even independent Scrappers who had previously renounced Nestor before try to seize this opportunity. The civil war quickly gathers momentum; more people becoming involved with every passing hour. It looks as if an entire district is rising against the rest of the city.

The few who condemn the attack have but one option: flee. Travelers take the Scorched Path to Ducal to escape the Iron Brothers' despotism. The Scrappers' reign of terror has begun.

04. ORMA'S RETURN

Finally. Salvation. If the Characters look out into the bay, they can see the silhouette of a giant transport ship glide across the horizon. The Unya. It's heading right for the harbor. Orma's men are on board, bringing weapons, ammunition and gear. If Hamza and Ayubu manage to get on board of the transport ship, the Iron Brothers will have no chance of apprehending the Raider anymore. If this is the case, only a Flock of Apocalyptic pirates with boarding ships can constitute a danger for the Unya. Scrappers are landsmen, ill-prepared for a battle in the bay. It all comes down to a final confrontation in the Northern Port.

If Hamza reaches the Unya, he will ask Montpellier and Perpignan for help. This cannot happen. The Iron Brothers are willing to do anything to keep the Raider from being rescued.

I. RACE TO THE JETTY

Ayubu, Hamza and the other remaining Scourgers lose no time leaving when they see the ship. If, in the meantime, the Characters have not reached the Africans, they can keep track of their movement from the vantage point of the warehouse rooftops.

The Unya plows through the waves, advancing towards Pier 1 — the only pier able to accommodate a ship of its size. The fugitives are less than a kilometer from the pier. The port is open terrain. Deadly. Snipers or a pincer grip from two sides and they will be left at the mercy of their enemies. There is almost nowhere to take cover; there are only bags of sand, casks, and shiploads scattered across the pier. Other small obstacles offer marginal protection.

Hamza's cohort rushes from one position to the next. Now the Characters have a chance to close ranks. To jump from cover to cover while watching the area, successful Combinations of AGI+Mobility (2) and INS+Perception (2) are necessary. Nothing. No hostile movement. Only galloping in the distance. Wait — galloping?

SUPERIOR FORCES

Ten Jurymen armed with hammers ride on horses from the Silver Axis to the Northern Port. At their sides, mounted Protectors with muskets accompany them. From the refinery, Shutters and Scrappers jump from their hiding places and rush Hamza's group. Boats from Ferrallies land at Pier 6. Iron Brothers come running into the harbor across metal walkways. There is shouting and combat noises ring from all over.

In the east, behind L'Orage, a dust cloud swells above the rooftops. Something is racing towards the harbor. A hijacked Scourger Kom leans into the curve, approaching the quay at lightning speed. Eisenhauer is up on the roof standing in the rear. He peers through the barrel of his minigun mounted on the roof in the hopes of spotting his next victims. A second Scrapper maneuvers the vehicle around the sharp curves of an obstacle course. Once Eisenhauer spots movement from the back, he sets the minigun to rapid fire. It begins to rotate, spewing bullets. Hamza, Ayubu and the Characters are surrounded.

FROM EVERYWHERE AT ONCE

Jurymen and Protectors are flooding the front line. Muskets spit lead and smoke fills the pier. The attack tears a swath into the lines of the defenders that is quickly occupied by several dozen Scrappers and Shutters. Death has sent his henchmen.

In the chaos of the attack, the Characters need nerves of steel. They must persist. While waiting for the landing of the Unya, the passing of seconds feel like endless hours, and every minute of survival counts. Courage and the instinct of self-preservation.

INFILTRATED

If there are Judges or Chroniclers among the Characters, questions will be asked when they first encounter Shutters or Jurymen. Judges and Chroniclers may roll INT+Legends (4). If they have the background Secrets, they get +1D per level to this role. The more triggers, the more detailed the information:

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: The Chroniclers in Toulon are Shutters. Some work for the Cluster, but most work on their own account. The same is true for the Jurymen — officially, they are not part of the Cult but are equipped and employed as auxiliaries. Some work as mercenaries, which indicates a planned, coordinated attack. That, however, is not a cause for concern. On the other hand, if the leadership of the Cults is involved, though, something disastrous is underway.

1+ TRIGGERS: Shutters are often used for secret missions. The Judges are supposed to have a unit for such purposes, as well. Everything indicates that there's more than meets the eye.

3+ TRIGGERS: The Shutters and Jurymen are conspicuously well-equipped — some of their gear is new, never having been touched, as if fresh from storage. This is obviously a covert operation. Somewhere in Toulon, the strings are being pulled.

tion fill the Characters. Considering the enormous number of attackers, every player rolls a D6 – the result shows how many Ego points the Character regains. Now the Characters must give full measure. They must fight alongside the Africans and make sure to protect each other.

The mounted enemies rage. Scourgers fall under the blows of their hammers by the score. INS+Taming (3) is necessary to make a horse prance so that an ally is able to knock the rider off the horse or hit them (Conflict, BOD+Brawl/ Melee against BOD+Force). Once the rider is down, all advantages are gone.

The Iron Brothers and Shutters use their superior numbers to try and surround single targets, subduing them through sheer numbers. A Character who has been surrounded has -2D for all combat actions while the attackers have +2D for all actions against the victim. They become distracted, however. If an ally comes to the defender's aid, he gets +2D to his attacks in the first round. If he wounds one of the Scrappers or Shutters, a breach is created, through which a Character who has been cornered can break free, lifting the penalty. It's hell on earth.

But there is also Eisenhauer on the Kom. His salvos pepper every cover with bullets and randomly strike the battle. Wherever the Cave Bear sees Africans, he shoots at them recklessly with complete disregard for his own people, be it Iron Brothers, Judges or Shutters. If a salvo gets close to the Characters, they must successfully roll INT+Focus (3) or INS+Primal (3) to sustain their bearings in the battle. To be able to duck and cover consciously or instinctively, AGI+Mobility (3) must also be rolled. If one of the rolls fails, one of Eisenhauer's bullets hits them (damage 12). The 6.000 rounds in the ammo battery that he has slung over his shoulder and carries on his back are enough for him to fire all night long.

If the Characters want to stop Eisenhauer, they have to eliminate the driver of the Kom racing towards them. An aimed shot (AGI+Projectiles (5)) makes the Scrapper violently jerk the steering wheel. The steering jams at once. The Scourger buggy rolls over, Eisenhauer is thrown from it and crashes into a warehouse 20 paces away. He's wounded, but not fatally. Filled with the rage of a bear, he prevails. He can no longer sense pain. It'll take 20 rounds for him to once again be able to battle. That should provide enough time to keep the other attackers at bay until the Unya reaches the harbor.

II. IMPACT

The ship's horn blares out, surpassing the noise of the battle like the wrath of God. Orma pilots the colossus straight to-

wards the dock. The steel hull screeches across the ancient stones. A blast moves through the ground, crumbling mortar and sending bricks towards the heavens. There is a dull, groaning sound that extends across the harbor; the hull has been deformed by the pressure of the engine. Everyone not clinging to a doorframe or a cast iron bollard tumbles to the ground. A flood of debris rolls through the Northern Port, followed by fountains of dust, distorting the face of the quay beyond all recognition.

The titan has struck.

The fighting comes to a halt, causing the Characters and other combatants a moment of disorientation. Pier 1 has suffered a massive amount of damage. But there is not a minute to spare. Ropes and towing chains are lowered from the Unya to save the defenders.

Orma aims the onboard cannon at the harbor and fires at the Iron Brothers. A curtain of fire hits a group of attackers, obliterating them. It's now or never. Hamza, Ayubu and the Characters must run down to Pier one and board the Unya.

"Hamza first!" Ayubu shouts at the Characters. "Get back. Keep shooting. Hide behind our shields!"

Ayubu and his Scourgers form a wall with ancestor masks. The barrels of their assault rifles flash between the tower shields.

"No ammo!" a Simba shouts from the left. "Empty!" a voice returns from to the right. Ayubu chuck's his loaded pistol at the very first Character he encounters.

"Cover us! Shoot only if it's a certain hit."

At this point, the first bullets dart over the heads of the defenders or hit the steel-reinforced wooden shields.

Suddenly, Orma's onboard cannon stops whirring. It's jammed.

Meanwhile, Hamza has reached the hull of the ship and is being pulled to the deck by the black Scrappers on a chain. Bullets puncture the metal around him. Orma's Scrappers send back the fire as best they can.

Ayubu looks at the Characters. "You go first! We have your backs covered." Without hesitation, he commands a sortie, and his Scourgers run to the next secure spot to fire their last bullets. It seems as if Ayubu is trying to force the Scrappers into melee.

SHIELD WALL

The Characters have to endure five rounds of combat under a curtain of fire. They are well protected behind the African shield wall (Passive defense +4). The more Scrappers they eliminate, the better. If a Character wants to aim at an Iron Brother, he must partially give up the cover (Passive defense +2). Every shot is answered with a counterattack.

05. THE LAST STAND

The Characters have reached the hull of the ship. Heavy ropes are thrown down to pull them up on the deck. Half way up, they see the Scourgers and their Dumisai entering close combat. With knives and machetes they attack their enemies, killing one Iron Brother after the other. When they reach the deck, the Characters will be able to jump to safety and have a better view of the entire Northern Port. Muzzle fire illuminates the night. The Scrappers are everywhere. The whole area is inundated with wounded, unconscious and dead fighters.

“You got the damn barge stuck!” the Characters hear Hamza shout across the deck.

“We need the tugboat!” Orma points at a small, bulbous boat roped to the dock. “Yuma, can you pilot that thing?” Orma shouts at one of his men.

“Yes, but we need someone to fix the towing chains.”

Hamza, Orma and Yuma look at the Characters in turn, their eyes hoping to have the unspoken question answered.

“Follow me!” Yuma dashes twenty paces across the deck, grabs a rope, ties it around his chest and jumps overboard. In three swift leaps, he manages to get to the base of the ship’s hull and starts swimming towards the tugboat.

I. THE TUGBOAT

Time is running out. Yuma has reached the tugboat. He starts the engine. The flood-light lights up, and the annular barge reverses. Orma’s men aboard the Unya cast heavy towing chains into the water.

While Yuma keeps the tugboat on course, the Characters must catch the massive chains with hooked poles, carry them to the stern and keep them taut (Cooperative Action Roll on BOD+Force (10)). Now, one of the Characters can put the loose ends into the massive hook of the winch with a roll on AGI+Dexterity (4).

All of a sudden, everything happens at once. The Iron Brothers notice the tugboat. A hail of stones, missiles and rifle shots is hurled at them. In the wheelhouse, Yuma is completely unprotected. The Characters, however, still have some cover at the stern. If they signal to Yuma that the towing chains are fixed, he will turn the tugboat around at flank speed.

The further the barge veers, the more the Characters find themselves in the line of fire. Suddenly, the shooting stops. A massive silhouette pushes through the ranks of the attackers, shoving one of their lowly henchman out of his way. Eisenhauer!

The colossal Scrapper is back. He shoulders his missile launcher and tries to reduce the tugboat to ashes. Yuma gives his all to pull the Unya free. The chains are stretched even tauter; they groan and creak as the links grind against each other. Grenades hit the sea and towering fountains of water shoot overhead.

Thoughts and actions come thick and fast. The tugboat literally leans sideways, and the gearbox shrieks at maximum performance. Only the ghostly moaning of the Unya is louder. The steel brackets of the winch croak and excessive pressure tears wedge-shaped rivets from the metal cladding of the brackets. The tugboat is on the verge of rupturing. Suddenly, there’s a jolt. The towing chains go slack. The Unya departs the harbor.

The Characters have one last moment to notice the muzzle fire of an approaching grenade. It’s coming from Eisenhauer’s anti-tank rocket launcher. They must jump into the water or risk their lives onboard. PSY+Reaction (2) and AGI+Mobility (2) to dodge the missile (no success: 10 damage and falling overboard).

Seconds later, the grenade hits the wheel house, and the tugboat explodes into a thousand pieces. Yuma is dead.

UP AND DOWN

To follow Yuma, the Characters must either rappel as well using BOD+Athletics (2) or use one of the emergency rope ladders and slowly climb down the hull. Swimming to the tugboat in full gear requires a roll on BOD+Athletics (3). Otherwise, the Characters will have to wait until Yuma has piloted the tugboat to the starboard of the Unya. Then, they can jump aboard.



II. THE DEATH OF THE DUMISAI

Steel plates and incandescent slivers rain down. Blast waves transform the still waters of the bay into raging storm tides. The Characters are pulled down into vortexes and pushed back to the surface again. No amount of effort can deliver them from the force of the explosion.

Using what little strength they have left, they cling to wooden planks floating on the surface of the water.

Steering backwards, the Unya escapes from the harbor basin and heads for the middle of the bay. The stern of the transporter generates massive waves, carrying the Characters far away from the Northern Port.

On the Pier, Ayubu and his pack have nowhere left to turn. Scrappers and Jurymen serve the last remaining combatants fatal blows. Blades flash amidst a storm of rifle fire. Hammers are wielded upon steel helmets; filed iron rods pierce flak jackets. Blood flows. Spiked clubs come down, inflicting terrible wounds.

A Simba has been vanquished; two Iron Brothers skewer him with a pointed mace. Another Scourger falls to the floor, his body riddled with self-made morning star and bayonet stab wounds. It's endless carnage.

The Characters see Ayubu, broken knives and splintered spear shafts protruding from his back. In their killing frenzy, the Iron Brothers brutally beat the Dumisai without pause. Rocks hit his head, blows from the left, kicks from the right. Blades pierce his side flank; the blunt side of an axe smashes his ancestor mask. He's down. Machetes cut him. Iron rods smash his bones. Not once does the Dumisai scream. Ayubu fights to his last dying breath.

WESTWARD

Hamza is safe. The waves of the bay slowly transport the Characters back towards Terres Putain. The Cour Argent is still burning. Entire rows of houses are in flames; sparks fly into the cloudless, starry night. The battle is lost. The war isn't.

THE DAY AFTER

06. KING FOR A DAY

Night spread across Toulon like a dark cloak. Oil lanterns and torches light the streets in the western part of the city, whilst flames rage in the Cour Argent. Nestor and his Iron Brothers have captured Hamza's palace. The vault is being emptied. Everything that the Scrappers consider valuable is brought down to the harbor by chains of looters. From there, it is shipped to Ferrallies. So far, the Iron Brothers have not been able to access the second chamber. To break through the bygone portal leading to the artifacts, they need the heavy machinery from the Burster.

Meanwhile, in the upper regions of Hamza's palace, acts of iconoclasm run riot. Walls are knocked down as Cartelists smash the mosaic in the atrium and leverage it out of the wall. In the central hall, Iron Brothers burn bygone relics, atlases and books. Ceramics and statues lay shattered on the ground. Some Scrappers are donning Hamza's clothes, strutting through the halls in blue and white robes and sipping wine from silver chalices.

The vandalism knows no bounds. Nestor's men want no memory of the Raider left behind. Nothing more than dust shall remain.

N E P H R A I M

The Scrappers have arrested Nephraim. Nestor has detained him on the third floor of the central hall. The Anubian is in chains and severely wounded. The Iron Brothers will go to any length to get ahold of the recipe for Marduk Oil. Torture but a means to an end. As long as his secret remains his own, the Anubian cannot be killed. Nestor's orders.

I. BACK AT THE CAMP

The Characters have made it back to Camp Resistance. Tired, wounded and exhausted from the long hours of the past day they return to the encampment through the fortified, heavily guarded main gate. Tensions are running high inside. The wounded are everywhere. Famulancers and Field Medics run around, desperately trying to staunch bleedings, remove bullets and save those who are dangling at the border between life and death.

Further back in the camp, the dead that were recovered from the Cour Argent have been laid out. Mothers mourn their fallen sons, their wails bespeaking their pain.

Fugitives, merchants and Grantors are camped on the west side. All those who were able to escape the Cour Argent alive the day before stare ahead worried now. They count their belongings or look for family members in between the hastily erected cots. The Characters have a few moments to assess the situation and seek help.

If they go to Remagnac, he will tell them how many have fallen. "There are 54 dead Resistance fighters. 14 of them belonged to the Beau Monde. Young people, barely 20 winters old." Then, he squints over the shoulder of one of the Characters and remarks:



"I have not counted the wounded yet. We don't know how many will survive the night."

If the Characters ask for medical assistance or food, Remagnac gives them whatever he can spare. But his supplies are limited. The lion's share of his equipment is still at L'Orage or has been looted by the Iron Brothers.

If the Characters are looking for something to eat, Remagnac will point at the food tent. Inside the tent, the youngest of the Resistance, with the help of the Jehammedans, warm up stews from the day before and hand out braised meat in tin bowls. The soldiers cower with their shoulders hunched and their heads lowered, absentmindedly stuffing pieces of bread into their mouths. Many of them have lost good friends.

At some of the tables, ornery cadets curse quietly under their breath: "What have we ever done to those pathetic Iron Brothers?" – "Believe me! Yesterday at noon, I saw Chroniclers fighting side by side with the Scrappers." – "Nonsense, Chroniclers can't fight. And what's more, what would they be doing here? They haven't come to Toulon for the last 30 years."

Listening to the various fragments of conversation, the Characters come up with several theories. However, no one seems to really understand how the surprise attack could have happened and who's actually behind it.

"I tell you, it's the Neoliberals' fault. They have gotten pretty bogged down in their artifact trade," someone in the corner of the tent charges. From the other corner, another person responds: "Maybe we should negotiate with the Scrappers before more blood is shed." An angry shout answers: "Are you mad, you fucking Beau Monde? Do you want to lick their boots before the blood has even dried on them?"

Suddenly, people begin to clamor at the front of the tent.

II. THE NEGOTIATOR

If the Characters run outside, they will see the first gray light of the day. A bank of mist coming from the sea engulfs the city, flooding Terres Putain in dim light. There is a terrible commotion at the Camp gate: Zoe and Vericon are arguing loudly. When the Characters arrive, they can only hear the last words of the argument.

"No, you should have listened to me. Hamza is lost. His ship is out there in the bay. We should have united."

"Shut up, old man. You are yesterday's Franka. The Resistance is the Franka of tomorrow. Play your game of submission as long as you want, but you are going to have to do it on your own! When we take back the city, it's ours and not Hamza's anymore. Then you will have to negotiate

with me." Zoe's face is red with anger. Vericon is drenched in sweat.

"General Morceau, there!" a cadet suddenly interrupts, pointing at an alley between the houses. At once, a dozen rifle barrels swing around at a figure approaching the camp slowly and with a limp. A grin becomes visible in the mist. The silhouette takes shape. An ancient Iron Brother drags his crippled leg with his eyes fixed on the cluster of people in front of him.

"Alpha Wolf Nestor wants to negotiate peace with Toulon," the old Scrapper croaks. He's obviously slightly intoxicated. He takes a deep draught from his canteen and starts laughing. "Surrender and swear fealty to him, and we can start rebuilding the city tomorrow." He takes three lurching steps forward. With his dirty arms, he wipes his mouth... burps...farts. He staggers, fighting to regain his footing. He tries to focus; he still has something more to say.

"We can all be friends. You and the Iron Brothers. Bring us the head of the damn African aboard the ship, and no one will be hurt..."

He hasn't even finished his sentence when Zoe takes three steps towards him, grabs her pistol and shoots him in the forehead. His head jerks backwards, his knees buckle, and his dead body hits the floor. Without a second thought, Zoe empties the rest of her magazine into him. She whirls around and points at one of her men: "Chain the cripple to a horse and chase it across the bridge to Cour Argent! The rest of you, get ready to fight. At 9:00 p.m. sharp, we make a sortie."

"You cretin! You imbecile!" Vericon is so agitated that his normally monotonous voice almost cracks when he shouts: "That's not how diplomacy works!"

Zoe is unimpressed and doesn't even look in the mayor's direction. "Beau Monde, troop up! We are going to retreat to Toulon fortress. Now!"

"We can get by without you, you ridiculous gnome," she scoffs at him. "Once we get the city back, we will execute those who were unfaithful to the Resistance. Treason is punishable by death," Zoe says to those gathered around her. She looks the Beau Monde fighters in the eye one by one to make sure her words have been understood.

TOO MANY FRONTS

Vericon cannot believe that Zoe has just made this decision. He is enraged and returns to Port Lagagne immediately. The situation appears to be a deadlock. Discord and hostility dictate their interactions. If reinforcements don't arrive soon, taking back Toulon will be an impossible feat. All over the city, fires roar. The Characters cannot react to all the information they receive from citizens and fugitives. In order to fully grasp the situation, they have to move beyond the walls of Camp Resistance and talk to the people in the streets of Terres Putain.

THE SITUATION

- ◊ Port Lagagne burns along the border to Saint Chenil. During yesterday's attacks on the Cour Argent, beggars and cripples entered Port Lagagne from the slum to loot food in the southern part of the city. Fishermen and seamen were involved in bloody fights with thieves and robbers and are now setting up barricades.
- ◊ Fugitives from Cour Argent have left for Bayonne to get help. They take the Scorched Path. No matter who you ask, in everyone's mouth is one name: the Chroniclers. People swear that they have seen the Tech-Cult conspiring with the Scrappers. There are also reports of Judges being involved. No one can make the connection.
- ◊ The Unya lies in the middle of the bay; the people in the city have no way of contacting the crew. Spotters at the fish market haven't seen any movement on deck. However, the Iron Brothers have not attacked the transport ship. As far as the population and the Resistance are concerned, the Scrappers in Ferrallies have no vessel available to them that would enable them to approach or damage the Unya. Hamza and his men seem to be waiting for reinforcements.
- ◊ The Scrappers had been masterfully ready in body and mind and were armed to the teeth. It looks as if the strings were being pulled from afar and outside forces took part in it. But who could be responsible for this? What was their motive? Who would try to confront the Africans here?
- ◊ The only information that could be dug up about Nestor is that he's an embittered Alpha Wolf whose headquarters is the Burster and whose career as an artifact hunter met its end with the arrival of the Africans. Did he strike to get revenge? Why on such a large scale? Who are the other Scrappers from the day before? Eisenhauer? Deich? Characters can try to roll INT+ Legends (4) to connect the dots of the many rumors that float amongst the population. What powers are involved, and why do so many rumors lead to Borca?
- ◊ Still, all radio communication beyond the city is blocked. Something is jamming the frequencies, and it definitely has something to do with this strange emitter. Who was the attacker? Are there more of these interference antennae located throughout the city?
- ◊ The provisions in the city are to last for only a few days. If order cannot be restored, the city will fall.



08:00 AM

07. DIVIDE AND CONQUER

While the Characters try to figure out what exactly is going on, they see the Resistance leave the camp. The radio that the Characters took from the Scrapper in the harbor starts making noises. A rough voice comes through the speaker.

“Bergmann to Hagel, Bergmann to Hagel...come in, you damn idiot! Over.”

“One of two options: He’s either sleeping or dead,” another voice says.

“If this asshole is sleeping, I’ll blow his brain to pieces with my pump gun.”

“Let’s change to 16, the Chronicler frequency is more secure. Maybe, he lost his radio,” the second man says.

There is a brief silence.

“Hm. Maybe, you are right. What’s the code again?”

“When will you finally get that in your head, you fucking bastard? 64-152. Over.”

I. A NEW TRAIL

As soon as the two Scrappers have finished their conversation, a wave of interference hits the radio. It’s similar to the static noise from the day before. There seems to be some sort of interference field in Terres Putain, similar to the one that the group pinpointed in Cour Argent the day before. Judging by their current position, the signal can only come from the Southwest. A successful roll on INT+Engineering (2) helps the Characters detect the source of the wave. Could the two Scrappers be close?

If the Characters go after them, they climb up into the hills through the streets and

SECRET LANGUAGE

The Scrappers have said too much. Now, the Characters know the code to join the communication network of Commando Requiem. If they manage to adjust the radio, they can listen in on conversations on a separate wavelength. They need a successful Action Roll on INT+Engineering (3) or INT+Artifact Lore (2) to join the hidden channel.

alleys of Terres Putain. The light of morning is still faint, but wherever they go, they encounter families loading their possessions onto donkey carts and trying to leave the city. Mothers press their newborn babies to their breasts and fathers, armed with axes and harpoons, look around grimly and watch out for people who get too close to their families.

The wave of interference becomes stronger; the Characters will soon be able to locate the source. They have reached the area of the Arms Distilleries. Houses are stacked one on top of the other and copper piping juts out from the walls, spitting out hot steam from within the buildings. The terrain is difficult, the chances of finding the emitter from down here are slim to none. After about five minutes, they realize they have been walking in a circle. They need a better vantage point. Next to a small inn, a rickety wooden staircase leads up to a nearby truss. One small jump, and the Characters are on the other side. The radio groans sharply. They're getting closer.

The Characters jump onto two more roofs, and then do a quick sprint towards a small forest of chimneys. The second emitter is there. The same design as in Cour Argent. Footprints left in the soot on the tin roof lead straight to the antenna. A successful roll on INS+Survival (2) tells the Characters that the footprints are fresh; someone has been here in the last 15 minutes. He must have knelt down next to the antenna, maybe, to repair something. Triggers make the Characters aware of a strange sole pattern. The footprints lead down again. The Characters scurry to the edge of the roof and look down.

II. THE NEST OF THE FIREBIRDS

Down below, they see the Chronicler who shot them with bullets and grenades the day before at the warehouses. He spies the alley left and right. He moves a fake wooden wall from one of the houses and disappears in the darkness beyond. The secret door slides back into its original position. He has not seen the Characters. This is their chance to follow the Chronicler and exact revenge.

The detachable wall is mounted on a ball bearing in a joint and can easily be moved. Behind it, there is an old, moldy staircase, leading to a basement 20 steps below. The walls are moist, the railing slick, and moss grows on the steps. Behind the Characters, the wall closes without a sound. At the foot of the stairs, the Characters find an iron gate that's ajar. Behind it, a locked gate leads into a larger section of the basement. Water drips from the ceiling and puddles have formed on the floor. Catwalks erected from perforated metal plates and wood pass over the rivulets and lead deeper into the rooms. No one is here. The only thing that can be heard is the constant dripping of water. If the Characters continue quietly, rolls on AGI+Stealth are at -2D. Beyond the main part of the basement, they can see candles and oil lamps flickering in small alcoves and sleeping bunks. This place doesn't look like a refuge for the masked faces. It's some secret sort of den. Where's the damn Chronicler?

Suddenly, the word "ALABASTER!" courses through the corridor. A shadow scurries across the walls six alcoves away from where the Characters stand. "Alabaster, the coast is clear." Silence. "My mission is complete. Let's get away from here." The Characters hear a rumbling noise. Then the voice turns desperate. "I won't hurt you! Together, we can start anew. I'll treat you better than anyone else can. ALABASTER!"

If the Characters are hiding in one of the alcoves, let the most attentive player roll INS+Perception (3). If the Character is successful, he will notice toes behind a shelf on a wall. If the Characters look behind the shelf, they will spot a naked woman who raises her index finger to her lips. With her other hand, she makes a slitting motion across her throat. The stranger is barely visible in twilight, but she looks terrified and distraught as if she fears for her life.

"You promised to wait for me!" The voice changes from miserable to reproachful. It's getting closer to the alcove where the Characters are crouching. If they attack now, they have +2D two Initiative rolls. Factor, the Chronicler they encountered the day before, steps out from a side tunnel. He blankly looks the Characters in the eye, and a second later, a battle ensues.

FACTORS WAY

Factor fights until his last drop of blood. He has nothing to lose. Alabaster has broken his heart. His life has no meaning if he cannot flee with her.

If he is severely wounded, he won't hesitate to take a high explosive shell from his belt. Should he not be able to do so, he'll bite down on the capsule of poison that, like every Fuse, he carries in his mouth. His lips turn blue, his eyes protrude, and blood runs from his nose. His throat swells, and then, grunting and gasping for breath, he dies.



ALABASTER'S TRUTH

Factor lies in his blood; his fingers bent like claws and his body contorted.

"He was obsessed with me. He wanted to kidnap me." Alabaster steps from the alcove and looks at Factor's body in horror. "I was his whore. He couldn't live without me."

She kneels and pulls his eyelids down. Her shoulders, collarbones, ribs and breasts are covered in a landscape of scars. Burn wounds, stab wounds, and bruises blemish her pale skin. Her snow white hair falls onto her face. She gets up again and looks at the Characters, her voice trembling, "He would have slit my throat if you hadn't come."

She looks at the Characters one after the other. Alabaster is breathtakingly beautiful. Her eyes reveal weakness and exhaustion. One could easily lose themselves in them. If the Characters ask her what she knows about the dead Chronicler at her feet, she will first look upon the stiff body with pity.

"He's a Fuse. He has secretly entered the city to agitate the Scrappers. He talked a lot about himself and his mission." Then, she falters and peers into the empty room. "The Chroniclers engineer this war from Justitian and Aquitaine. They have been plotting everything for months."

If the Characters ask her about the place they are in, she will listlessly respond, "This is my Flock's hideaway. Firebirds. Our men are out there, helping the Resistance." She hastily puts on a leather bodysuit and a heavy poncho. With two quick movements, she slips into a pair of iron-shod boots. She grabs a bag and shovels clothes and belongings into it. Rings, jewelry, Dinars, rolled-up Drafts.

"I am going to disappear from here. This nest is of no use to us anymore," she sighs. "We will move on. To Bayonne or Ducal. The city is not safe." She turns on her heels and walks towards the exit.

THE MAGPIE'S LIES

Alabaster pulls out all the stops to win over the Characters and escape from the nest. She plays innocent, making herself appear vulnerable in order to convince the Characters that she needs their protection. When she answers, she never lies; she simply tells her version of the truth, omitting those details that could put her in danger. This is why the Characters cannot sense her lies, even if they succeed in a roll on INS+Empathy or CHA+Expression. If one of the Characters gets uncomfortably close, she will ask the others for help and try to turn the group against each other.

U S E F U L

Rattler and his hell hounds have long since left this place in order to prepare for their day of reckoning. None of them plans to ever step foot in these quarters again. Alabaster remained behind to lure Factor away from Ferrallies and cover for Rattler so he could devote his energy to his next steps. The Phoenix trusts that the Magpie can handle the Fuse, on her own, if necessary. The Characters constitute a welcome help for Alabaster. This way, she doesn't have to endure Factor's fetor and sweat before killing him.

FACTOR'S REMAINS

Unconscious and foaming at the mouth or spread across the room in little pieces – Factor is dead, and the Characters must roll INS+Perception (3). If no one succeeds, the skin of Factor's lower jaw will start blistering. The transponder in Factor's gums has overheated and melts into a highly toxic metal alloy.

If the Characters are successful, they hear a rhythmic crackle – the transponder does not register a heartbeat anymore. It changes to self-destruction mode and an orange glow emanates from Factor's cheek.

The countdown is running: with a Combination of INT+Medicine (3) and AGI+Dexterity (3), a Character can retrieve the rhythmically vibrating transponder. As soon as it registers a heartbeat, it switches back to sleep mode.

While it is a nuisance to carry the transponder around, it's worth it. The small metal pin contains authorization codes for various sanctioned caches. Nullify, the Scalar to whom Factor answers, has been generous.

Using INT+Engineering (5), a Character who has the appropriate tools can deactivate the transponder sensors so it won't overheat anymore. Until then, the Character must carry the pin on his body.

If the Characters try to stop her, her eyes brim with tears. With a trembling voice, she says: "Please, let me go! So many others have hurt me before."

When the Characters leave her be, she continues to the exit. She calls over her shoulder, "There's a Burn stash, and provisions for two days. Our people have also left me ammunition. Take what you need before someone finds you." She stands in a rectangle of light shining down from the street above. She looks down at the steel caps of her boots and says, "Thanks. For everything." Then she's gone.

III. SEARCH

If the Characters start searching the nest for useful things, they realize that the vault is much more serpentine than it appeared at first glance.

◊ One room appears to be some kind of sleeping area. Lockers are lined up against one of the walls, and there's a workbench situated in a corner. Shell casings clutter the floor. Trailblazer ammunition. Hellvetics, here? If the Characters rummage through the lockers, they will discover yellowed maps. They are hard to read, but with a successful roll on INT+Science (2), they realize that they show Hellvetic encampments in Territorial Region I. They also contain inventories of explosives.

If the Characters continue their search, they will find a Hellvetic Sapper medal lodged between two floor planks. If the Character who has found it tries to get it out, he will notice with INS+Perception (3) that the boards can easily be removed. In a hollow, there is a weapon case emblazoned with the seal of the Alpine fortress carefully wrapped in a paraffin paper – a Trailblazer.

◊ Another area – some sort of common room. In the middle of the room, there is a trestle table covered with cracked Burn cusps and scraps of food. The moist walls are smeared with charcoal drawings that resemble a city map. On the map, there are encrypted annotations. A successful roll on INT+Science (3) enables the Characters to comprehend the drawing: it shows the western part of Terres Putain, the area around the bridge to Cour Argent. Three buildings are marked with Xs. On the opposite wall, the Characters find a similarly crude drawing. It shows a child being eaten by a stork that is stuck in the mouth of a rattlesnake.

Behind a curtain that has been partially torn, the Characters uncover an alcove containing a heavy duty shelf. It contains looted cases of ammunition (34 rounds of caliber 5,56x45 mm, 16 rounds of caliber .357 and 27 rounds of caliber .44 as well as 22 rounds of caliber 12 shot), coils of ignition wire and a tool pack (level 3). Way back on the topmost shelf (INS+Perception (3)), there is a small leather pouch with Spitalian equipment (3 x antibiotics level 3, 17 capsules of Ex).

◊ Next, the Characters discover a set of double doors. The second door is locked. It can be lifted from its hinges with a Cooperative Action Roll on BOD+Force (9). Behind it, there's a dim, sparsely furnished area that seems more like a meditation room, than a place of living. A human-sized figure kneels in the corner of the room. Covered by a dirty, moist sheet, the shape is barely discernible. If the Characters approach it and take away the sheet, an acrid stench will fill the air. Underneath the sheet, there is a mesh covered in dead birds – thrushes, blackbirds, finches, sparrows, jackdaws and magpies are tied together with wire and twine. It is carefully fashioned in the image of a kneeling woman with outstretched arms. A macabre scene. Dozens of dead birds' eyes stare at the Characters, and water drips incessantly from the dank ceiling and walls.

The Characters are left with more questions than answers. Whoever those Firebirds might be, they have a twisted taste. Alabaster might have been able to explain, but the Magpie is already gone.

08. DESTINY

The Characters are back on the street. If they hurry to Camp Resistance, everyone still standing there will be in motion. The Famulancers have improvised some equipment for themselves. Grenouille fighters are shouldering their backpacks and checking their Traqueurs. Resistance cadets count their bullets and fill their bottle bombs. The Beau Monde fighters fasten their leather harnesses and grab some canteens – some of them grumpily look off into the distance. They bare or grind their teeth, their lips tight with tension. Tobacco rolled into corn leaves is passed around, and the soldiers smoke anxiously. Exhaustion is chiseled on their faces.

Rest, however, is not an option. Zoe is planning a well-organized counterattack to bring the city under Resistance control. In her mind, this is the perfect moment for such a move. In the general's eyes, the rulers of Toulon have given up on the city; she considers the retreat of the Unya a sign of cowardice. Now it's her job to turn the tide and charge the Cour Argent. This will cement the supremacy of the Resistance and allow her to get even with the Iron Brothers at the same time. It's her destiny.

I. CARRIER PIGEONS

Suddenly, the mayor comes running back to camp, accompanied by a servant of the Toulon fortress. The servant shlepps a cage with three pigeons inside and is unable to keep pace with his irate master. Vericon runs across the well-trodden patio of the camp, his short legs waddling as he wipes the sweat from his face. His eyes dart around the ranks of the armored warriors as he searches for general Morceau. Standing next to Remagnac, she discusses the current situation.

“Zoe. General Zoe. Please, hear me out!” Vericon coughs and squeezes his way through the throng of fighters.

The Characters are very close to both of them.

“What do you want, Vericon? Why aren't you in bed with your one of your trollops?”

“Please!” he says breathlessly. “Listen to me! We will send these men right to their graves if we don't wait for reinforcements.” Zoe raises a brow.

“Look, I brought carrier pigeons. We can ask Perpignan, Montpellier and Toulouse for help.”

“You're a crazy, helpless old man. Your time's running out,” she replies disdainfully. The mayor waves his arms, grabs the cage from his servant and shouts: “This is our only chance. The radio communication is jammed. We need support! We need the Africans! Otherwise, all our fighting men will be feeding the worms tomorrow instead of being with their wives.”

Vericon puts down the cage and reaches for the pigeons. He pulls them out one by one. His thick fingers move nimbly as he ties messages to the legs of the birds. He asks his servant to hold the birds that are ready to fly until he's done with the others. Zoe observes the disquieted man. She openly shows how much she despises his nervousness and submissive behavior. Vericon takes the three pigeons from his assistant and turns, full of hope, to Zoe.

“You will thank me for every life that these pigeons save.”

The mayor throws the birds in the air. The pigeons beat their wings and rise into the sky. Satisfied, Vericon looks up to the clouds and watches his animals glide across the camp in a wide arc.

Suddenly, three shots ring out. The pigeons explode in clouds of feathers and fall to the ground dead. Someone has shot them. Gaping, Vericon looks at the feathers sailing down. No one knows where the shooter is. However, the general has had enough.

“Great idea, mayor!” Zoe shouts. “Resistance, we cross over to Cour Argent. Right now! Hamza has given up on his domain. It's our job to take back the city and kick some Iron Brother ass.”

THE SHOOTER

Hexell saw the birds from the rooftop in the western part of Terres Putain and shot them down. Rattler doesn't want any outside intervention before his plan has come to its fruition. Commando Requiem's emission shield plays into his hands, and Hexell makes sure that the city remains cut off from other means of communication.

09. BACK AND FORTH

If the Characters inform Zoe about what they found in the nest of the Firebirds, it will be in vain — she has never heard of this Flock. If the Characters show her the marked buildings on the map, she will verify their positions. She doesn't know what's there, but she suggests the Characters have a look and report back to her. If the Characters tell the general about the emitters and the Fuse, she will assume that there could be three more locations with frequency disruptors. If so, the Characters are to destroy the emitters at once. She will personally lead the Resistance across the bridge to Cour Argent. Her goal is to conquer the burnt out barracks and set up camp there. In the evening, she plans to infiltrate the palace by coming from two different directions.

I. BELOW GROUND

SCRAP AND MEAT

The signs are too strong to chalk it up to coincidence. It appears as if the Iron Brothers are in league with the butchers. This was probably also the reason why the Scrapper who wedged his barge in the canal got away so easily. If they can, the Characters should notify the Beau Monde or the Resistance about their suspicions. With so many allies, no wonder the Scrappers were able to launch such a successful attack on the city.

It doesn't take the Characters long to find the first building marked on the map. It's very close to the slaughterhouse. If the Characters were here to look for the Scrapper the day before the attack on the Cour Argent, they will recognize the building at once. The ruins of a shelter separate the open road from the entrance to an intricately designed courtyard. Slanted rays of daylight reveal the area beyond — all the buildings surrounding the courtyard seem to be empty.

The wet area is strewn with metal sheets and wooden planks. If the Characters are looking for something out of the ordinary, they need a successful roll on INS+Survival (3). Under some wooden planks, they find a hidden cache. If they lift the cover, they will discover a tight shaft, barely wide enough to squeeze through. A ladder leads twenty, maybe thirty paces down into the shaft. It is pitch black and sewage runs down into a hole. If the Characters climb down, they will soon be standing in a sea of mud. They have to light the area with torches, lamps or spotlights; otherwise, they won't be able to see their hands in front of their faces. From here, a tunnel leads east. It is barely high enough to stand in and barely wide enough for two pairs of shoulders.

If the Characters go on, they will soon realize that the whole construction is not very stable. In Toulon, the groundwater is right below the surface, and it seeps up through the ground here and there, forming small puddles around the Characters' footprints. If the group continues further, they will find that the tunnel branches out after a few hundred meters. A side tunnel that is clearly smaller curves north, the main tunnel continues east. A roll on INS+Orienteering (2) reveals that this is probably a second accessway to the main tunnel, almost certainly coming from one of the three marked buildings in Terres Putain. If the Characters follow the main tunnel, they will reach an execution site after roughly 100 m.

Three dead Scrappers are lying in the tunnel. With a roll on INT+Medicine (2), the Characters realize that two have been shot at from a close distance with a pump gun; the third had his skull bashed in. The corpses were not looted; they all still have their weapons, ammunition and gear. Further down the tunnel, the Characters spot digging tools and a cart. A radio receiver lies in a puddle, tuned to the Scrapper frequency.

Whoever killed the Scrappers attacked them from behind and did not give them time to react. An act of retaliation? Probably not. It seems as if the dead Iron Brothers were close to their killer, as if they had been down here with him together.

DECoy 5

The Characters are still on site. With a successful roll on INS+Perception (2), they hear a low whirring coming from behind them. It originates from the same direction that they came from. If the Characters listen, they can hear footsteps plodding through the puddles. It's just one person moving slowly and trying to be as stealthy as possible.

If the Characters want to stay where they are, they have to put out their lights and

successfully roll AGI+Stealth (3). Further down the tunnel, a red ray of light flickers, and the whirring gets closer. A fist-sized drone tumbles through the narrow tunnel, bumping into support beams. It dives below them and flies to the place where the battle took place earlier. The Characters go unnoticed. Its search beam points at the corpses, moving along the Scrappers who have been shot. Behind it, a pair of amber eyes appears from within the blackness of the tunnel. As the figure nears, one can make out a long, gray, hooded coat and a sniper rifle slung across the shoulder. Chronicler. Definitely. If the Characters aim their weapons at him and attack, the drone will whir, blink rapidly, and then emit a hysterical alarm.

The Chronicler will not enter a fight against superior numbers unprepared. In the tight tunnel, he can barely move, let alone, aim his weapon at the Characters or even flee.

Instead, he raises his hands and surrenders.

“I am no enemy,” he says. Slowly, he takes off his mask and shows his face. It is emaciated and covered in stubble. A bandage is wrapped around his forehead. “I am not one of the attackers.”

If the Characters question him, he will introduce himself as Decoy 5. “I work for Justitian. A secret cell called Commando Requiem has ignored the wishes of the Cluster and started a civil war in Toulon.”

He shows the Characters where the barcode on his forehead used to be. Now, there is only a scar. It has been burnt away to prove that he’s on a secret mission. “The Cluster has tasked me with finding and eliminating the leader of the cell. Her name is Mirage. The entire operation is named after her.”

Then he looks around the tunnel, scanning the support beams with his eyes.

“The Scrappers have dug tunnels like this all over town. They all start in Ferral-lies or Terres Putain and lead to Cour Argent — into backyards and empty basements. “This is how the Iron Brothers managed to secretly hide the payloads and destroy the center of Toulon yesterday,” he explains laconically.

Slowly, the drone comes back to Decoy, hovering next to his hands that are still raised in the air. “Oh,” he suddenly says, “this supporting beam over there doesn’t look very stable. I wouldn’t be surprised if it snaps any moment now.”

WHEN PATHS CROSS

If the Characters know Decoy from the events at Lucatore, the scene will develop differently. If the Characters spared Decoy’s life before, he is indebted to them and will try to win them over. He has known for a while that Commando Requiem is not the only thing troubling the city. He is on a mission to find out more about the Firebirds which is why he has entered the tunnels.

II. RAT TUNNEL

The supporting beam creak and groans. “Run!” Decoy screams and starts moving backwards. The Characters run in the opposite direction. Behind them, the whole section of the tunnel collapses. Debris falls from the ceiling, support beams buckle under the pressure and wood splinters are propelled through the tunnel. The Characters have to run for their lives. A cloud of dust overtakes them and then blows past. They made it! Decoy is on the other side. Eico, his drone, is with the Characters.

It makes soft crackling noises and hovers around aimlessly. Suddenly, its search beam comes alive; its master’s voice coming from the built-in microphone is like sandpaper on wood. The connection is bad, but Decoy’s words are intelligible:

“The side tunnel is free. I will try to get through there. You have to get Eico outside before its batteries are empty. I’ll try to meet you once I have found another way to Cour Argent.”

The Chronicler sounds worried. “Please protect the drone! If it deactivates, you’ll have to take it along. I can only pinpoint it at the surface. Please don’t leave it in the tunnel ...”

The connection is lost. The Characters look into the dark tunnel ahead. They start moving and the drone follows them at walking speed. About 10 minutes later, they

reach a spot where the walls are lined with scrap. The tunnel now looks like a circular bulkhead. Eico flits into the metal tunnel, its search beam examining the rusty cladding. It definitely looks as if the Scrappers dug these tunnels through the canals in preparation for their attacks. Supply tunnels for invisible troop movement.

If they pass through the sluice, they will find a ladder leading upwards on the other side. If the Characters climb it, they will reach the dusty basement full of tools, wheelbarrows and casks full of soil waiting to be carted away. Eico blinks nervously and flies up to the ground floor to scan if the building is clear.

If the Characters follow it, they can take a staircase that leads to an abandoned shop. It is a small factory; the cabinets are empty, the tools are rotten, and there are no goods. Light falls through its narrow, boarded-up window front. Looking out, the Characters realize that the subterranean tunnel has led them to the Silver Axis, which is completely devoid of people. The backside of the house borders the port of Cour Argent. They are less than 500 meters away from the barracks. A back door leads to a small pier where a shabby motorboat is docked. All of a sudden, the radio creaks.

A tinny female voice speaks over the secret Chronicler wave:

“Mirage to Commando Requiem, Mirage to Commando Requiem. Our operation has been compromised. Immediate retreat from Cour Argent. I repeat, immediate retreat from Cour Argent. All units meet at the alcove.”

Eico's electronics go haywire. A connection is made. Decoy's scratchy voice comes in through the microphone:

“She's the traitor. The alcove's in Ferrallies, north of the great hall. You must try to reach it. I will try to get there through another supply tunnel. Northeast of your positi...” The transmission abruptly cuts out, and Eico drops like a stone to the wooden planks of the pier. Its batteries are empty.

B Y S E A

The Characters don't have much time to think. They have to pack the drone and consult the map of the city as quickly as possible. Their fingers run across the map and locate the great hall. The alcove is supposed to be north of it. It would be suicidal to run through the Cour Argent, but the shabby motorboat might be an option.

If the Characters get on it, they must successfully roll AGI+Navigation (2) in order to start the engine. The boat is small, agile and has just enough room for the Characters. At full speed, they race across the bay. The mighty Unya, Hamza's transport ship, comes into view. The titan does not move. Are the Africans expecting someone?

10. HURLANT'S REVENGE

Right in the middle of the bay, when the Characters are off the Northern Port, the radio cries havoc again.

“Hurlant! These pigs have betrayed us! I told you this would happen!” a male voice shouts.

“What? Who?” a woman exclaims.

“Those damn Chroniclers! I knew they wouldn't be true to their word. I tell you, enough is enough! I'm taking Eisenhauer and a bunch of men. We are going to burn down that alcove and send them all to hell.”

“You want me to meet you there?”

“No, you do what we agreed upon. Drive the freight gondola into the petro towers, and cover the bay in flames! Let Hamza roast on his ship. I'll take care of Mirage.”

“Roger!”

The radio transmission has barely been received when the Characters see the freight gondola leaving the port of Ferrallies heading east. The broad barge full of scrap slowly plows through the water; the loading area full of garbage is already ablaze. The ship's destination: the petro towers.

The Characters have only one chance to avoid catastrophe.

They have to stop Hurlant.

I. THE FREIGHT GONDOLA

The Characters must be quick if they want to catch up with the freight gondola. With AGI+Navigation (3), they can jump the bow waves and approach the colossus of steel, rust and roaring flames. The whole loading area is a blazing inferno. They have to anchor their boat to the freight gondola with the grappling hook in order to climb aboard. A roll on BOD+Athletics (2) is necessary to safely reach the other side of the gondola's wall. Hurlant looks over her shoulder and growls. She storms from the driver's cab in a fury when she notices the Characters aboard her vessel.

“Pigs! Traitors! Sons of bitches! I'll tear you apart!”

She curses hysterically, swinging her iron rod. She attacks the first Character. Her pupils are dilated and she snorts like a raging bull, her face contorted in an ugly grimace. Hurlant has inhaled her entire stash in one go. Glory burns in her lungs. If she is to leave this world, then let it be with a bang that rattles to the edges of the earth. The barge approaches the petro towers. The Characters must defeat the raging Scrapper to stop the freight gondola.

The battle is bestial. Hurlant is fuming with hatred. She gives no quarter; if one of the Characters should fall into her clutches, she will sink her teeth into his ear or neck, scratch his eyes out and drag him into the flames on the landing area with her. The Scrapper fights with the rage of an outcast who has nothing left to lose. She is determined to take as many as possible with her to the depths of hell.

CHANGE OF COURSE

The Characters have defeated Hurlant. The massive Scrapper lies with her eyes wide open in a puddle of blood and bodily fluids, her body twitching for the last time. However, the danger is not yet over. The group must stop the freight gondola before it crashes into the towers. If they enter the driver's cab, they will see that Hurlant has broken off the ignition key and latched the steering wheel. Damn! The petro towers have already cast a threatening shadow on the water. The only option the Characters have is to break the interlock of the steering wheel through a cooperative feat of strength and then turn the gondola around before it's too late. The Characters need a lever, a rod or a crusher to jam between the iron spokes.

With BOD+Force (Cooperative Complex Action, 14 successes), they can brace themselves against it. They have four rounds. If they are successful, the freight gondola will suddenly veer from its course and turn 180°. Its bow will smash against the quay wall at the docks of Ferrallies. The impact of the crash jars the Characters. Burning scrap hisses and spits as it falls from the loading area into the water. The collision with the towers has been narrowly averted. Time to take a deep breath.

THE CUTTING BOARD

The Characters don't have time to look around the freight gondola for usable scrap. They have to vanish as quickly as possible, for down here in the harbor, they run the risk of discovery.

However, let the Characters roll INS+Perception (4). If the roll is successful, one of the Characters will notice a weird cutting board on the dashboard of the driver's cab. Slices of potatoes and a knife are next to it. A closer look reveals a tricky locking mechanism at the outer edge that could be picked with skilled fingers. Who builds something that complicated and then uses it to cut potatoes? It doesn't look like a Scrapper design, because the seams are too delicate. However, the Characters don't have the concentration to ponder this for long.

Out of the corners of their eyes, they notice that the Unya suddenly starts moving. The bow of the ship starts turning towards the open sea as if the heavy freighter wants to change position. Does Hamza want to leave Toulon? Was Zoe right? Have the rulers of Toulon surrendered without a fight? These questions remain unanswered. They have to get away, out of the line of fire before a patrol guard of the Iron Brothers notices them. On the dockside, a ramp leads to the loading area below the low awning. It is less than 20 quick paces from their current position. From there, they can reach the alcove by moving across the roofs. Every minute counts.

PETRO TOWERS

The Characters can make a Combo of INT+Science (3) and INT+Engineering (2) to determine the danger that the petro towers pose. In the tanks, there is a giant fuel supply. If one of the towers catches fire, this will cause a chain reaction. Millions and millions of barrels of petro will flow into the harbor and turn the whole city into a hellfire that no one can escape. No one.



11. SILHOUETTES

The Characters dash across the rooftops of Ferrallies, jumping over the intertwining alleyways below. They run for cover and check for spotters. The coast is clear. They continue running.

The sun beats down on the rusty corrugated iron, blinding the Characters. From the rooftop of a lofty hall, they have a magnificent view of the bay. It shows that the Unya has turned around completely. They see a small speedboat veer from its wake. It is rushing away from the transport ship, directly towards Cour Argent. Not even binoculars can help identify the pilot. Is Hamza sending a negotiator to the Scrappers? The Characters are unsure.

Engine noise can be heard in the distance. If the Characters try to locate its source, they will suddenly see two trimarans dash straight into the bay from the open sea.

PIRATES

The trimarans are only the vanguard. If the Characters look toward the horizon, they will suddenly see an armada of boats and ships approaching the port.

Have the Neolibyans finally sent reinforcements? The Characters can see the contours of two dozen vessels of var-

ious sizes. Looking through binoculars and telescopes, they can make out symbols or flags hoisted at the masts of the ships.

As soon as they focus their lenses, it becomes clear. One of the ships flies a black flag with a white bird on it. Apocalyptic? Pirates!

The Characters have barely seen the flag when the trimarans race across the waves of the bay, and circle the Unya in a wide curve. All of a sudden, a gun barrel on one of the trimarans fires a warning shot. The missile races through the air and explodes in a luminous fireball only a few dozen meters above the Unya. Is the vanguard trying to announce its arrival?

A look back to at the horizon shows that the ships are still heading towards Toulon. What's happening? The rumbling sound of engines fills the air above the harbor basin. Have the Pirates come to take advantage of Toulon's vulnerability and loot the city?

It's hard to tell from up here. The Characters have to continue to the alcove; they can't stay and watch the events unfold. Whatever is happening down there, they will have to find out about it later.

12. HEADQUARTERS

The Characters made it. They were able to trace the position of the abandoned alcove on the map. At the same time, they tapped the Scrapper radio and now know the whereabouts of the Iron Brothers. They are half an hour ahead of the Scrappers.

From a neighboring roof, they can keep an eye on the street around the alcove. Empty. No one in sight. If they survey the area constructed out of triangular metal, cable and steel support struts, they will realize that the safest way to enter the building is from the rear.

The Characters must make their way, hand over hand, along a taut chain (BOD+Athletics (2)) to get over the fence of jagged metal and barbed wire.

On the other side they look around, but they still don't see any guards. The air is full of dust and static noise. Coils of cables sneak across the ground, some surrounded by copper pipes; others crawl up the walls like ivy. With a roll on INS+Perception (3), one of the Characters notices empty shell casings in front of the back door. It is exactly like the ammunition in the nest of the Firebirds.

One look into the alcove reveals the target of those bullets to the Characters. A dead Shutter lies spread-eagle at the foot of a staircase that leads into the building. There is a gaping hole in his chest, the upshot of a giant caliber. With a successful roll on INS+Perception (2), the Characters notice a tiny photoelectric barrier at ankle height before they descend. With an unsteady flicker, it produces a light that falls on the tiny motes of dust that have been catapulted by their steps. If the Characters keep looking around, they will see a crumbling rail running along the fence. A tiny camera attached to a small axle bearing runs slowly and inconspicuously along the rail system, focusing its lens on the Characters. A surveillance system?

If the Characters go down, they will be standing next to the Chronicler who has been shot. He lies in an eight-sided antechamber full of rusty pipes, with sheet metal clad walls and a heavy, vault like steel door. The scanner that was attached to the door has been torn out; the massive safety bolts have been completely melted and red-hot metal still drips from the locking mechanism. A roll on INT+Science (3) tells the Characters that the lock has been disintegrated using rare chemicals. Triggers reveal that they are from the arsenal of the Sapper.

If they listen, they will only be able to hear static noise and sporadic beeping. It's as silent as the grave.

COMMAND CENTER

If the Characters enter into the darkness that lies behind the door, they will immediately see two corpses stretched out in a pool of blood on the floor. The dead Chroniclers are unarmed. They died without a fighting chance. If the Characters continue walking through the corridor, they will notice a bright, flickering light at the end, burning through the darkness.

The Characters have found some sort of command center. An enclosed circular room filled with countless projection screens lies hidden down here. A red alarm light pulses from the ceiling. After crossing a small metal walkway, the Characters will reach the command platform where they can take a look around. Images of the entire Cour Argent flicker back and forth on the screens and projection panels; others show streets in Ferrallies or Terres Putain. It's a one-of-a-kind surveillance central, a hub of information from all over the city. Rows of numbers and strange calculations scroll across amber screens. Receivers and sound carriers with blinking lights are located in between the screens. Recording reels slowly turn on tables, taping conversations. All of Toulon merges into one single data bubble here.

The value of the equipment cannot be measured in Drafts. An operation outfitted

INFORMATION FLOW

The equipment of the alcove is like nothing the Characters have ever seen. Chroniclers can use the Secrets background trait. They receive +1D per level. With a Combined Roll on INT+Artifact Lore (4) and INT+Engineering (3), the Characters can find out the following:

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGER: Cameras have been placed all over the city. The electricity supply is not enough to activate them all at once. Recordings are triggered by movement sensors.

1+ TRIGGERS: With a control panel, it's possible to turn on the cameras and get an overview of the current situation.

3+ TRIGGERS: Some of the equipment at the alcove is level SIGMA. This applies to premium components and items that have been developed specifically for covert operations. Invaluable.

5+ TRIGGERS: There is a subnet in the system. Via an encrypted connection, all recordings are transmitted with a delay to the network of a Scalar whose ID the Characters can extract: Nullify.

with this many resources must have been set up for the purpose of yielding more than a few looted treasures. Whoever is in the driver's seat has the support of those in the highest echelons of power.

The Characters are still looking around when suddenly a black screen comes to life and shows a recording of the Characters descending the steps to the alcove. The surveillance lenses seem to snap everything that's happening in and around the alcove.

A roll on INT+Artifact Lore (3) is necessary to rewind the recordings. The Characters have to rewind for almost 4 hours in order to see the last pictures. There's something there!

ABDUCTION

No sound. Only static background noise. Two men charge into the alcove. Without hesitating, they neutralize the guards. One of them looks like a red-bearded Hellvetic in a dirty white harness. The other one is bald, covered in tattoos from head to toe. He has a black fur coat draped around his shoulders like a cape. Is he an Apocalyptic?

A woman appears on the screen. A Chronicler. She tries to fire a charge connected to her suit, but the Hellvetic hits her in the temple with the butt of his rifle, and she falls to the floor. He sits down at the panel and starts moving several controllers in order to get an overview of the situation. The tattooed guy kneels on the back of the Chronicler and with a knife, cuts the cables on her suit in three quick movements. Sparks fly. He has rendered her harmless. He drags her to her feet by her hair and throws her into a control chair.

The Chronicler is calm; the camera pans close to her face. She seems to know the attackers. The camera changes perspectives. The tattooed guy talks to his hostage, his mouth moving as if he were imitating explosions. BOOM! BOOM! Softly, he caresses the Chronicler's cheek and runs his fingers across her crew cut. Then, he bangs her head on the panel three times.

He asks the Hellvetic something, who nods in response and places a microphone in front of the woman's face. She seems weak, but the tattooed guy pays her no attention. He only stares at the Hellvetic and flicks his tongue. After a few moments, he massages his bald head and starts to trace the lines of his tattoos. The Hellvetic approaches the woman and takes a portable Bunsen burner from his belt bag. The flame jet blazes intensely. He grabs the woman from behind and brings the glowing flame to her face. The Characters see her scream. A strand of hair starts burning, and then her tormentor suddenly releases her. The woman wheezes, struggling to breathe. She bends over the microphone and starts talking into it. Less than 20 seconds later, the Hellvetic brutally hits her neck with the butt of his rifle. The woman collapses on the ground and falls unconscious. The one with the tattoos pulls her arms behind her back and puts her in chains. The Hellvetic throws her limp body over

his shoulder. They leave the command center together with their hostage.

MOVEMENTS

The transmission stops. Several projection screens spark to life at once as if an alarm had been triggered. A panel shows a ravenous pack of 50 to 60 Scrappers marauding through Ferrallies. Using a superimposed map of the city, the Characters are able to pinpoint their position – they are less than 10 minutes away from the alcove. Nestor, their boss, leads the way with Eisenhauer.

Another wall shows a handful of Judges approaching the alcove from the east. They are equipped with backpacks and sleeping mats as if they are preparing to leave. They are led by the Judge who the Characters spotted their first day in the harbor when they saved the Spitalians.

The Characters see Nestor take a radio from someone and talk into it. At the very same moment, the Characters' radio starts crackling as if it were lying right next to an emitter. The emission shield! One of the interference antennae must be here in the alcove. On the roof? Maybe. If the Characters turn on the radio, they will hear Nestor's voice:

"DEICH! Mayday!"

"Deich here," the reply comes in muffled.

"Come to the alcove with your men! It's time to deal with the Commando. Right away! Bring the Consul, too! We'll cut off her damn head and shoot it over to Hamza's ship. That'll show him what we'll do to any African who sets foot on our land again."

"Do you want us to bring the girls?" the faint voice asks.

"Yes! Our boys shall have some fun later on. Get moving!"

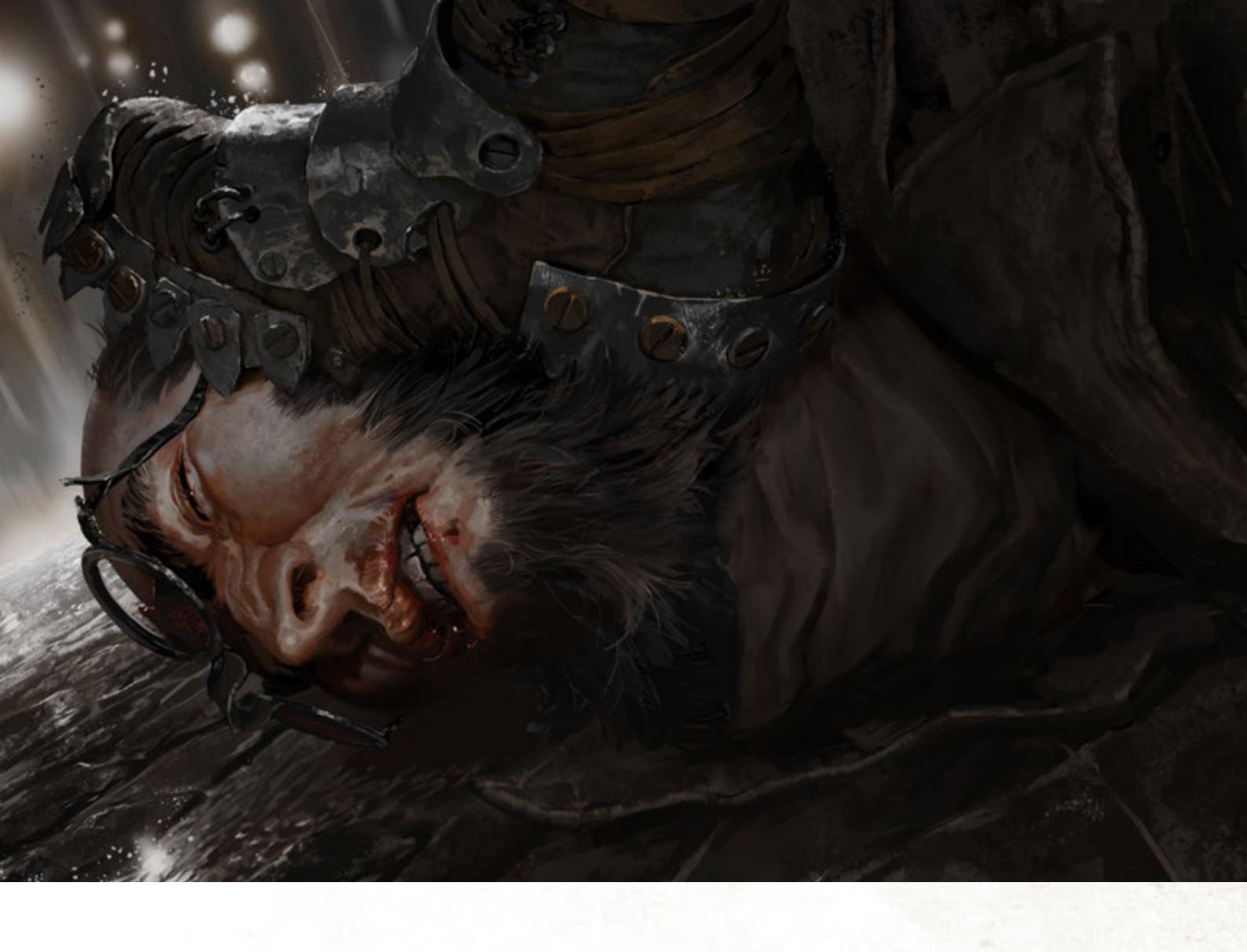
The conversation ends abruptly, and the third wall sparks to life. It shows the inside of the Battering Forges. The Cartelists round up the girls from the Consulate, amongst them Consul Zohra. Hostages in hand, Deich and four of his thugs set off.

DECISIONS

The Characters have to make some hard decisions. They need to react, or there will be a massacre. Moreover, they can't stay at the alcove; the Iron Brothers and the Judges will be there any moment.

◊ A look at the map tells them that the Battering Forges are only 3 to 4 minutes away. The Characters can try to intercept Deich and free Zohra and the six girls from the Consulate. They still have an advantage, but not for long.

◊ The third emitter must be somewhere on the roof. If it hasn't been destroyed, the radio network will remain unstable, and no help will come. Should one of the Characters go up to the roof, he must be quick, lest the approaching Scrappers notice him up there.



13. ARCVILLE'S FALL

If one of the Characters goes looking for the emitter on the roof of the alcove, he will quickly find it. However, there's a problem: It's roughly 20 meters above ground on top of a steel pylon that is located on the roof of the alcove. There, it's entangled in a jumble of cables. To shoot at the emitter would be to tempt death. It would attract the attention of the approaching Scrappers instantaneously. The safer option would be to climb the pylon at dusk, free the emitter from the strands of cable and disable it.

I. DEATH OF THE JUDGE

From higher up, the Character has a good view of the courtyard in the alcove. The two parties approach from two different sides. The Judges are walking straight into their death.

The Character up on the pylon must tug at the joints of the emitter with all his might to free it. He'll need BOD+Athletics (2) to avoid sliding down and hitting the roof as well as BOD+Force (3) to rip the damn thing from the strands of cable.

A rugged Scrapper secures the courtyard, scanning the

roof through his binoculars. The Character must roll AGI+Stealth (4) to hide himself behind the jumble of cables without sacrificing his view of the courtyard. In the darkness, he gets +2D to remain invisible to the spotter.

Got it. Meanwhile, all hell breaks loose down below. The Scrappers are flooding in from several alleys, their numbers significantly exceeding that of the Judges. The Characters watch as the Scrappers close in. Shouts echo across the courtyard; the Judges are completely surprised by the attack. Some barely have time to drop their backpacks before sharp-edged pipes smash into their faces, sending them to the floor. The Scrappers tackle the Jurymen from all sides. The Characters can see the Judge from the harbor desperately trying to fire his musket. Three Iron Brothers wrestle him to the ground and drag him out of the battle, over to Eisenhauer and Nestor.

"Arcville! You smarmy son of a bitch," Nestor screams. "Haven't I told your Commando a dozen times to stick to the agreements? What now?"

"Listen, Nestor, don't screw this up! Mirage, and Mirage alone, called everything off. I don't have anything ... ugh!" Eisenhauer's boot hits Arcville's face.

"Please, Nestor, we are at your si... argh!" Eisenhauer puts his foot on Arcville's head and presses it into the pavement.

"Nestor, Justitian is your ally, we can exp... aagh...ughhhh!" The Cave Bear slowly shifts all his weight onto Arcville's skull.

"You fucking traitor! Eisenhauer, kill him already! The rest of you, secure the alcove, we are taking everything with us," Nestor commands the Iron Brothers while condemning Arcville to death. Eisenhauer tramples the Judge's skull. Like a maniac, he kicks his head from left to right, stomping on it till the Judge no longer moves.

The Character who is still atop the roof of the alcove is now in mortal danger. If he doesn't abandon his position right away, he will share Arcville's fate. If he falls into the hands of the Iron Brothers, who are beginning to swarm, it will be all over for him. If he is to leave the roof as quickly as possible, disappearing behind a fence located in a back alley, then he must grab onto the dead cable. It's as thick as a man's arm and runs from the pylon over to the next roof. With BOD+Athletics (3), the Character is safe. For now.

II. ZOHRA'S LIBERATION

If the Characters come to Zohra's rescue, this is their last chance to free the Consul and her Scribes from the claws of the Cartel. Deich and his men turn from a small alley onto a neighboring street. Casks are strewn everywhere; steel beams jut from the walls. Boxes with scrap and other building materials are stacked several meters high. Suddenly, the Characters hear a female voice:

"If you only knew what we do in Africa to spark plugs like you. We cut their bellies open while they sleep and place snakes inside. Then, we sew them shut again."

It's Zohra's voice.

"Deich, is that true?" one of the Cartel thugs asks.

"How would I know? Never been to Africa!" Deich replies inanely.

The group slowly approaches the Characters. Deich and his men line up next to Zohra and the girls. The Characters still have time to find cover and prepare an ambush.

"At this very moment, three warships are approaching Toulon, manned with hundreds of Scourgers. On board, they have hyenas with a penchant for riot leaders, Deich."

"Shut up, woman, or I'll make you shut up!" Deich barks tensely.

"The Scourgers will take you and strip you naked. Then, they will chain you in the hyena kennel and let the rutting males mount you. For weeks," the Consul says dryly.

Deich whirls around and screams at the top of his lungs: "I will end you, you fucking cunt!"

Deich and his fighters are distracted. Now is the chance!

ATTACK

Deich stands with his back to the Characters, resulting in their attacks getting +2D to initiative. The fight starts. The

Cartel thugs are high on Glory and Bion. One of them grabs a girl and runs for cover, intending to use her as a human shield. Another runs toward a pile of barrels and starts throwing them at the Characters. Deich and the others try to force the rescuers to enter into close combat with them. They are dangerous and experienced melee fighters. The Characters must use the terrain to their advantage if they hope to stand a chance.

PSY+Cunning (3) to see loose steel beams leaning against the wall. They knock them over, burying one of the thugs under the crashing roar. AGI+Mobility (2) to dodge the barrels and get to the thug throwing them. Once they reach him, they eliminate him.

AGI+Projectiles (5) to hit the kidnapper's forehead with a well-aimed bullet and save the girl's life.

III. EISENHAUER'S RAGE

Deich and his men are dead; Zohra and her six Scribes are free. Zohra casts a look of gratitude at the Characters.

She kicks one of the dead Cartelists full force in the ribs. "Borcan pigs! Your Cartel will pay for this." She looks at the Characters. "We have to get out of here. Is Hamza aboard the Unya? You have to get the girls and me there. Here, we are done for."

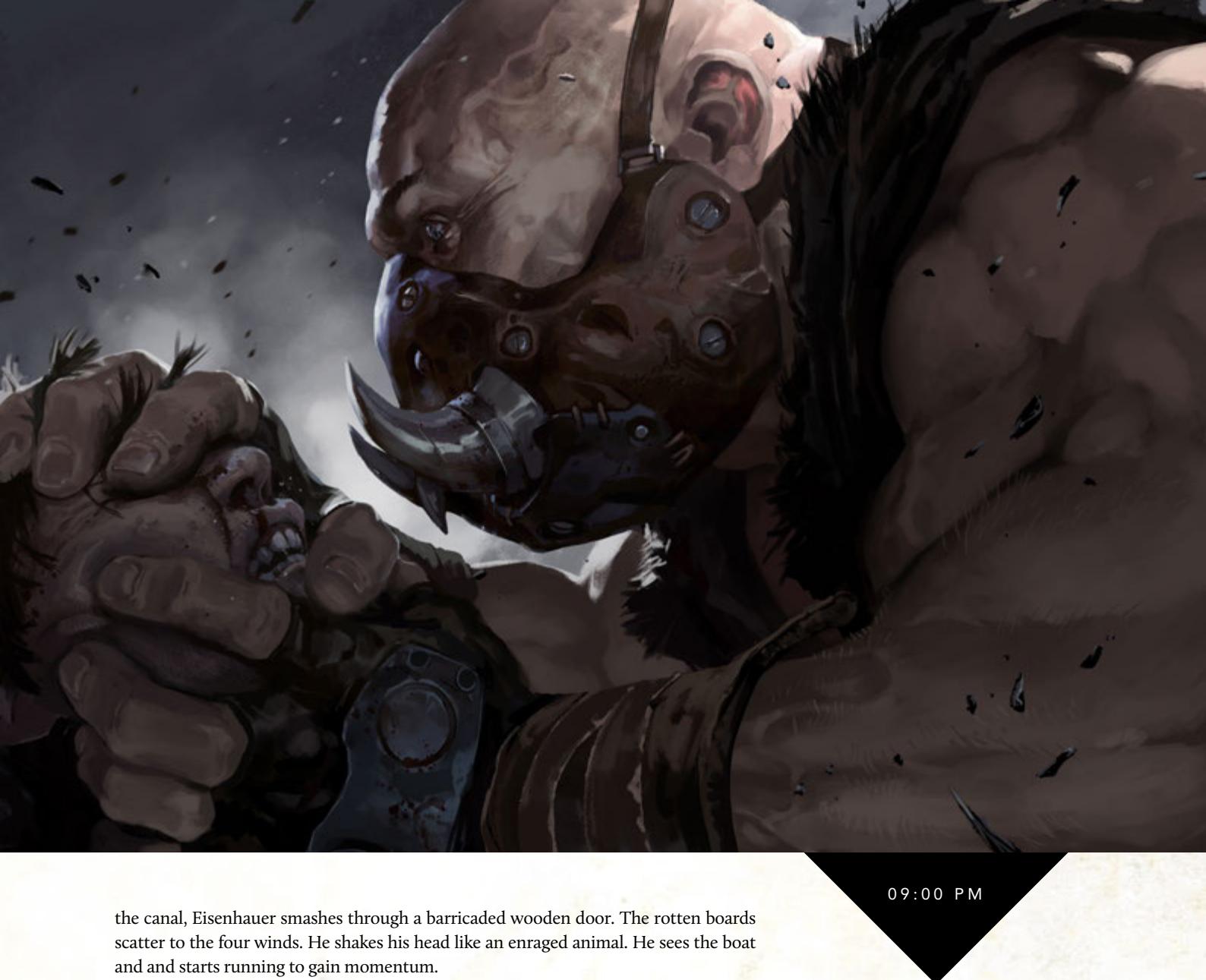
She has barely finished her sentence when the Characters hear a howling battle cry ring out above the roofs. Eisenhauer.

Nestor must have found the projection screens in the alcove and seen their attack on Deich. The Characters can already hear the sound of armor clanging; dozens of footsteps are approaching. They have to run. Flight is the only option. It would be a death wish to try and face the raging Scappers. The canal is five minutes away. If they can find a boat there, they will be able to make it to the bay.

The chase has begun. Already, the first Scappers are rushing into the street from the north. The girls and the Consul do everything they can to stay apace with the Characters. They run down the winding alleys as the pursuers shout and scream at them from behind. A bullet pierces the wall of a building. Wooden splinters and large chunks of clay fly through the air. Onward!

Down a handful of stone steps. One of the girls stumbles. Two hands grab her and pull her back to her feet again. A loud shout comes from the west. The Iron Brothers are trying to cut them off. Legs are burning and knees are aching. Over there, across the barricade. Then across the bridge. To the left and into the canal. There! It's a boat! A wave of rage floods into the street, trying to catch up to them.

The Characters jump onto the boat. Zohra helps the girls climb over the board wall. Her eyes are wide with terror; she throws her head from side to side, looking in all directions. Pistol shots. Hearts are racing. The damn engine won't start. Zohra freezes with fear. On the other side of



09:00 PM

the canal, Eisenhauer smashes through a barricaded wooden door. The rotten boards scatter to the four winds. He shakes his head like an enraged animal. He sees the boat and starts running to gain momentum.

With a giant leap, he pushes off the other bank, sails several meters through the air and lands on the side of the canal where the Characters are standing. The impact of his leap sends him crashing into the wall of a building. The awning falls down, dust flutters, and planks and pipes come loose. The engine of the boat lets out a groan full of exhaustion.

Eisenhauer picks himself up, grabs a long wooden slat and races towards the boat. His rage, like that of a bear, has become rampant. He's a ferocious beast, surviving solely on hatred and the will to destroy. The first strike with the slat misses. The force of the impact smashes the wood into a dozen pieces.

Eisenhauer doesn't mind. He approaches the Characters with his bare hands. He tries to get on board of the boat and strangle the first person he sees. The girls scream. He grabs a Scribe and forcefully throws her overboard. The boat bobs violently. Eisenhauer is unaffected by the the blows raining down on him. His eyes are crimson red. Blood rushes to his head, and the veins in his arms look as though they are about to explode. A faraway rattle sounds through the metal mask and iron tusks that have replaced his mouth. Suddenly, he gazes at the starry sky and moans. His back arches as if he had been impaled with a spear.

"GNNNNNHHHHHAAGGGGNNNNNGG!" Eisenhauer's gurgling is reminiscent of a looming thunderstorm. His hands spasm on his chest and spittle flies like a fountain from his mask. With a loud crash, he collapses onto the stone pier.

Motionless. Heart attack.

The Characters have to use the oars to push themselves away from the canal wall.

FIGHTING THE BEAST

Eisenhauer is a snorting beast in the guise of a human. Let the Characters roll PSY+Faith/Willpower (3) so they can at least try to hit the raging giant at the beginning of the round. If the roll fails, a Character must sacrifice an Ego point in order to act. If he botches, he flees at once. All primal instincts scream flight when confronting Eisenhauer.

14. REVELATIONS

The boat in which the Characters have fled with the Consul and her Scribes floats out into the bay. Out here, the night is dark as coal. The Characters can see the Unya; it is surrounded by dozens of small ships and trimarans. It looks like a swarm of predators circling a giant whale. The two parties seem to be eyeing each other suspiciously.

Suddenly, a beam of blue light floods the Characters. It's a circular spotlight at the bow of a boarding ship that has approached their boat under cover of darkness. Figures with loaded crossbows aim at the small row boat from the deck, their arrows targeting the Characters and the rescued hostages. "Try to flee, and we will ram and sink your boat," someone threatens from the other ship.

I. MERIDIAN

The boarding ship pulls up next to the Characters' boat. Ropes are lowered down to them. "Climb up! Meridian wants to talk to you."

On board, the Characters and Zohra are escorted to the bridge at once. The girls are brought below deck. "Don't worry, we won't hurt them," a pirate tells the Consul. The Apocalyptic who leads the group up the stairs is sunburnt. His body is covered in brandings and his hair is bleached. He is heavily armed. The other crew members look just the same. At the top of the stairs, the blonde man bangs on the door and yells: "We got the people from the boat."

He opens the door to the bridge and lets the Characters enter. A man in red robes with a goatee and elaborate jewelry made of seashells stands at a table, looking at site maps. He draws Tarot cards from a deck and briefly looks at each one. Then, he crumples them up and throws them across the room.

When he notices the Characters, he points at the barrels of distillate mounted on the wall and gestures at them to serve themselves.

"By Neptune, what the hell is happening out there?" Meridian asks in Frankan with a heavy Purgan accent.

Zohra quickly answers in accent-free Purgan: "An alliance of Chroniclers, Scrapers and Judges. They have started a civil war and ravaged the Cour Argent. All to capture my brother Hamza."

"Hamza Abubakar III., the Raider of Toulon?" The man in the robes asks astounded, turning his attention to her.

"Yes, they chased him from his palace, and he has retreated to the Unya."

"That means you must be the honorable Zohra, Consul of Toulon?" The Apocalyptic grins with one corner of his mouth as if he has just captured the best prey of his life.

"Of course I am!" Zohra answers indignantly as if offended that he didn't recognize her right away. "Which clan of Purgan fishermen do we have the honor of meeting?"

"I am Meridian, Albatross of the Black Flock. On the seas, I am your mortal enemy. In your bay, I am your guest. Right now, I am your only hope." His smile freezes and his voice takes on a tone of superiority.

"Ivar!" he loudly calls into the room. In an unlit corner, a young man rises from beneath a mountain of blankets and pillows. He has been there the whole time; he has heard everything. Now, he slowly steps into the light of the cabin. The right side of his face is scorched; the skin is a festering, weeping wound covered in blisters and burn marks.

"Someone did this to my dear Ivar. He was a handsome boy. Now, I can barely bear to look at him." Meridian's words are laced with revulsion and the desire for revenge. "I am looking for a man with a maze tattooed on his body. For him and his bodyguard, a Hellvetic."



If the Characters remember the pictures from the surveillance camera in the alcove, they will know right away whom Meridian is describing. If the Characters tell him what they have seen, Meridian will listen closely. If they ask the Albatross for the identity of the tattooed man, a laugh of disbelief will escape him.

“I have no idea. But I do know that something strange is going on.”

He points at his Tarot, takes two cards from the deck and puts one above the other.

“The Abomination dominates the Creator. In our language, this is the worst possible omen. For weeks, other leaders of my Flock and I have been laying out the same cards in the same order. Over and over again.” He looks up at the Characters to see if they can follow him.

“All tracks lead to Toulon. The omen’s origin is here.” His gaze wanders over to Ivar. The young man with the burnt face says quietly, almost solemnly: “He and his men attacked one of our nests within the city limits. Three weeks ago. They killed all our people. For no reason. They left me alive to tell the tale.”

Meridian draws a saber from the scabbard on his belt and holds the blade against the light. “We want to know why. Then we will flay the tattooed man and sew a new flag

from his skin.”

A clap of thunder coming from the direction of the city interrupts the conversation. Then two, four, six explosions. Meridian, Zohra, and Ivar rush to the windows with the Characters to see what’s happening. Cour Argent is ablaze once again. So is Ferrallies. Giant pillars of fire shoot into the night sky, spewing ash and embers towards the clouds.

“Payloads,” Ivar says with awe in his voice. Suddenly, Zohra runs to the opposite window.

“Look, there!” The Consul calls. A red flare rises over the Unya and hangs in the sky above the ship like a star.

Meridian doesn’t understand. “Hamza wants to negotiate,” the Consul says, a glint of hope in her eyes. “With your Flock.”

II. ABOARD THE UNYA

Meridian maneuvers his boarding ship across the bay to the Unya. Ropes and chains are lowered from the railing of the freighter to the crew of the boarding ship. Once on deck, black Scrappers welcome the Characters. They look exhausted and ill. Just like the Characters. They greet Zohra with a relieved smile. Meridian, the Consul and the Characters are led below deck. Even on the ship, Hamza’s wealth is



ubiquitous. A carpet of woven raffia leads straight to a portal made of carved jungle wood with silvered doorknobs. Behind it lies Hamza's office. The room is a stuffed sanctuary full of relics, trophies and naval maps. Orma crouches over a receiver. Hamza himself stands in front of a large map of Toulon.

"Zohra!" the Raider shouts in relief. He embraces his half-sister and nods at the other newcomers.

The Characters do not have time to look around, because Orma manages to establish a connection with the receiver instantly. A grainy female voice can be heard. General Zoe Morceau.

"To all the men and woman of a free Franka who are willing and able to serve: Take up your arms and charge the Cour Argent. The Iron Brothers are surrounded. The Resistance is only two blocks away from the palace. Several explosions have shattered the center and the eastern part of the ci..."

"We lost the connection," Orma says.

"Have you reached Perpignan?" Hamza asks.

"Yes, I was able to send a Morse code. The radio connection is back, but it's choppy."

"You want your beautiful city back, Raider?" Meridian asks brazenly.

"Hamza, this is Meridian, one of the leaders of the Black Flock. He saved us in the bay," Zohra explains. The two men shake hands guardedly. "What do you want from me?" Hamza asks the pirate.

"Amnesty. For my Flock. We have 300 men in your bay. Fully armed and ready for battle. We could have Toulon back in your hands before dawn." Sure of his victory, Meridian strokes his beard.

Then he continues: "No more Scourges on Corpse. No more attacks on our people. Safe passage for a year for all Flocks of the Mediterranean."

"That's beyond my power. Tripol will hunt your people one way or the other." Hamza answers tensely.

"Then you will take care of it, Raider! Business is business!" Meridian angrily shouts. "Do you think I am simply going to hand you your palace on a silver platter? We are the only help you can get. Until Montpellier or Perpignan sends ships, Toulon will remain nothing more than a smoldering corpse."

"The General will want the Cour Argent for herself if she takes the palace," Zohra adds anxiously. "That leaves us with absolutely no basis for negotiation."

Hamza frowns. His face betrays him, revealing how much he detests such compromises.



"Done," he says grimly.

"One more thing." Meridian has a final request. "We want the head of a man who has a maze tattooed on his body. You will have to topple your entire city in search of him."

Orma and Hamza look at each other stunned.

"Shaved head? Wiry? Black maze from head to toe?"
Orma asks the Apocalyptic. Now it's Meridian who is taken by surprise.

"You know him?" the pirate asks aghast.

"He brought us an incredibly valuable gift around noon," Hamza says grimly. "It's downstairs in the boiler room."

NUCLEUS

Hamza, Orma, Meridian and the Characters head for the stairs leading down to the boiler room.

"He appeared around midday. He was in a speedboat, waving a white flag," Orma explains as they run. "We didn't know who he was or what he wanted. He motioned over to our ship and then bent down and threw a large sack overboard."

The group walks along a narrow catwalk, their steps echoing loudly on the channel sheet. "Two of my men rappelled into the water immediately to retrieve the sack.

The tattooed man promptly turned his boat around and returned straight to Cour Argent. We didn't know what to make of it."

They have now reached a sealed door. Orma starts opening the locks. "When we brought the sack on deck, however, we found this." The door creaks as it opens. Light slips into the darkness of the boiler room from the corridor. A woman is inside. She squints, looking into the blinding light. The Chronicler.

"May I present, Mirage. Leader of Commando Requiem and nucleus of the riot," Hamza declares solemnly. Mirage is chained to a heating pipe and looks battered. Her hair is singed and her face is covered in scratches and bruises. "Bring the serpent upstairs; I want to hear what she knows about the tattooed man," Hamza says to Orma.

The woman looks around disdainfully, her glare finally resting upon the Characters. She seems to be memorizing their faces. "Your time has come, Hamza," the woman spits at the Raider. "Franka will recover from the African virus. My mission is successful, and your realm is a thing of the past. Not even your new friends can save you now," she cackles derisively. Her mouth is full of blood and her teeth shimmer red. Then, the butt of Orma's pistol hits the back of her head, and she falls to the floor, unconscious.



III. INTERROGATIONS

Back in the office, Mirage slowly comes to her senses. Hamza sits across from her. Meridian, Orma and the Characters are gathered around the table.

The Raider has put a small wooden casket in front of Mirage. Everything swims before her eyes, and she tries to get her bearings. Hamza carefully opens the casket. Inside is a silver Dinar on a silk cloth.

“My father’s first Dinar,” Hamza says stoically. Mirage doesn’t understand.

“The Libyan minted this coin with his own hands long ago. For generations, it changed hands and came into the possession of my family. My father bequeathed it to me even before I was born. It is worth more than all the treasures in my palace combined. It contains the spirit of the Neolibyans.” He carefully takes it from the casket, holds it between his thumb and index finger and shows it to Mirage. “This coin alone is enough to rebuild Toulon tomorrow. It is invaluable. It’s the foundation of our faith.” He spins the coin between his fingers.

“Artifacts are goods, but they are worth a fraction of what faith is worth. Your faith is in goods, resources, artifacts. It’s worthless when the source runs dry. Our faith is

in the capital, and its value is inexhaustible.”

Quietly, he places the Dinar back into the casket and closes it.

“I won’t hurt you, Mirage. Instead, I will show you how I will hurt your Cult. I will unmask it. I will ruin its markets, buy its Scrappers, flood its cities with Drafts and destroy its artifact trade. You will have to watch just how worthless and dispensable your faith in the bygones and their relics is.” Mirage’s eyes are wide; she watches every move the Raider makes.

“Or...,” he offers, “you talk to us.”

T R U T H S

“He’s called Rattler,” Mirage begins. “I recruited him for the operation. As a reserve, in the event that trouble with the Iron Brothers should arise.”

“Who is he?” Meridian asks, positioning himself so she can see him.

“He leads the Firebirds. An unknown Flock. Just a handful of members. His people are unscrupulous assassins. Money was motivation enough. He had full access to our arsenal and knew all the details of our plan.”

"What does he want?" The pirate asks short on patience.
 "He wanted to help me." She looks over at Hamza. "Help me eliminate him."
 Meridian grabs her by the throat. "What else? Did he ever talk of a Phoenix? Signs? Symbols?"

Mirage tries to get away. "No! He's a Phoenix himself! That's what the members of his Flock call him."

The Apocalyptic slaps the palms of his hands on the table in rage.

"That's all?" Meridian moans in despair. "Do you really mean to tell me that a sordid assassin has nested himself in my head and has been tinkering with my thoughts?" he shouts into the Chronicler's ear. "Why did he betray you? Are you his accomplice? Are you supposed to nose out this ship for him?" Meridian's paranoia runs wild; he doesn't believe a word the Chronicler says. He grabs his saber, pulls Mirage's arm across the table and raises the blade to strike.

"Talk or I'll hack off your arm!" Meridian's nerves are raw.

Hamza calmly looks Mirage in the eye from across the table. "If anything has happened to my brother Nephraim, I will take your other arm."

Suddenly, the door opens, and one of Orma's Scrappers comes running in.

"Hamza, we have guests."

C R E S C E N D O

"Put away the saber!" a voice from the corridor orders. Two women enter. One black, the other white.

Meridian lowers his arm and puts the saber back into its scabbard.

The two women approach the table. "Callisto and Sabata, mistresses of the Black Flock," Meridian introduces them deferentially. The women take a look around. Their faces are hard and serious, their temples and lips tight.

"He sent us a sign. It was rolled up next to a dead Scrapper on a raft floating out on the bay," Callisto says. She throws a piece of leather onto the table and unrolls it.

On it, the Characters see drawings that remind them of the wall paintings in the nest of the Firebirds. There is a Phoenix, the fire of its wings burning other birds as they fall from the sky.

"He has been waiting here for us all this time," Sabata says ominously. She looks past the Characters and stares into space. She sucks in air through her teeth as if she has witnessed something terrible, but there is only a void where her gaze ends.

"All of the prophesies were correct. The avenging spirit has taken on the form of a human. He has chosen his place of reckoning. The city is his altar. The way in leads through a maze of blood."

An incredulous, gurgling laughter comes from the opposite side of the table.

"Avenging spirit?" Mirage wipes the blood from her mouth. "All that Burn must have damaged your brain. Rattler is human," she says with an amused smile.

"Who's that woman?" Callisto asks Meridian.

"Mirage. Chronicler. Collaborated with the Phoenix," he answers. "She was the leader of Opera..."

"Very good," Callisto interrupts briefly. "Get all men ready to attack! We are going to split into three groups. Sabata takes Terres Putain. Meridian, you land in Ferrallies. I have Cour Argent." Her eyes focus on the Raider.

"Toulon is your city. See to it that your Scrappers bleed just like my migratory birds. We attack at dawn."

Then she turns to Mirage. "Meridian, make sure that the Chronicler is in on the frontline. We will need shields. Her suit looks like it can take a bullet."

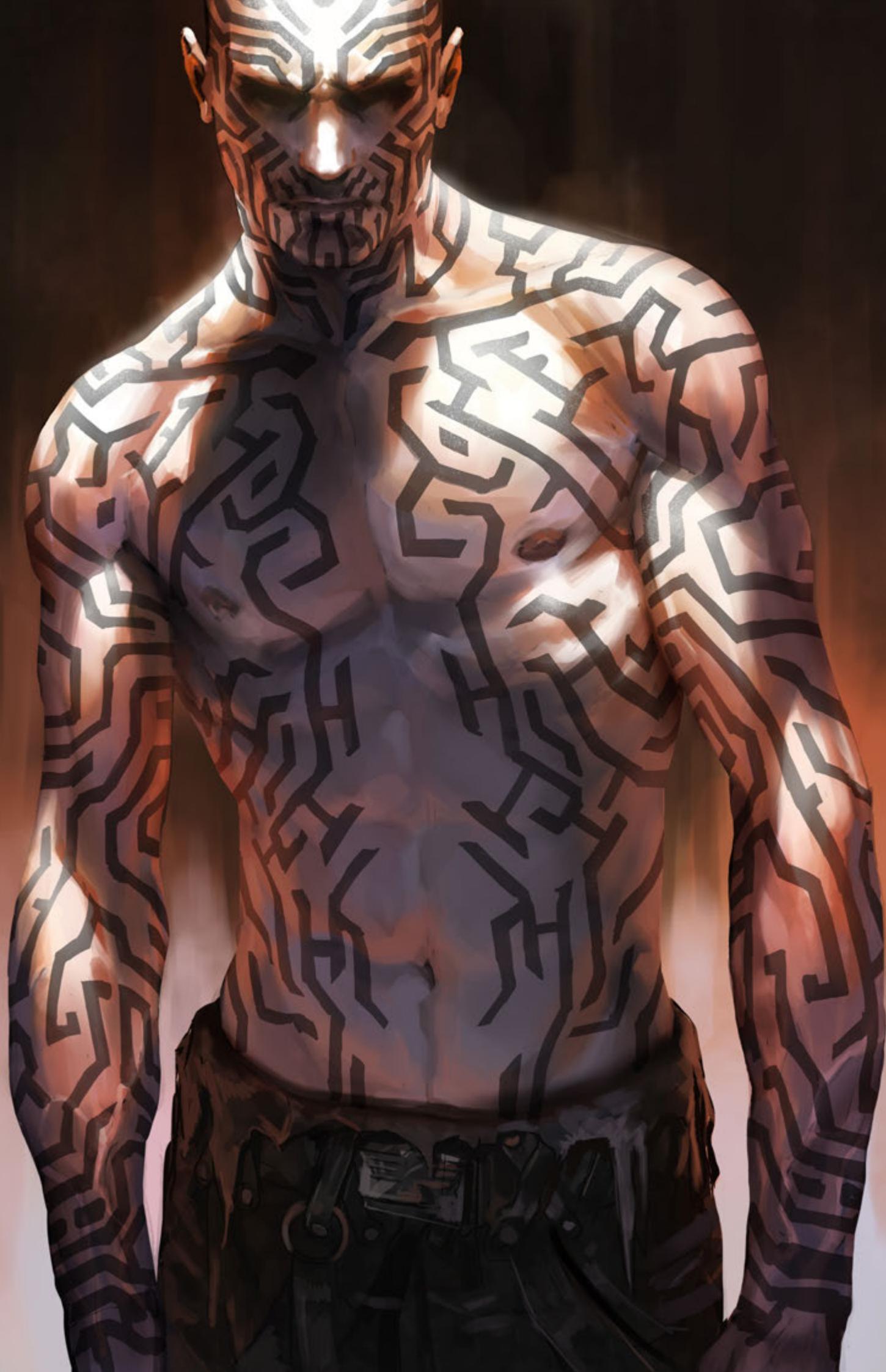
She whirled around and walks away.

B R A I N S T O R M

Who is Rattler? What does the Phoenix want? What is Mirage's true agenda? Why is the Black Flock here? Every answer raises new questions. The civil war in Toulon has been raging for two days. The Characters have been to hell and back. They will never forget this experience. Tomorrow is crucial. Their minds and hearts are racing. Whoever is responsible for this chaos must be stopped.

A last wave of determination and destiny washes over the group. They have come this far; they will make it to the bitter end.

When the Black Flock enters the battle, all the Characters feel a surge of courage. Spent Ego points are completely regained.



4

DAY OF CHAPTER
THE PHOENIX



DAY OF THE PHOENIX

15. IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS LIGHT

A tingling sensation spreads over the skin; it's almost as if one were lying atop a bed of ants. The faces of the Black Flock are tense. Amidst them, Hamza's Scrappers don their armor. Any moment now, the reconquest of Toulon will begin. And the Characters are right in the middle of things.

Groups have been formed, battle plans made, and officers appointed. Every available man and every battle-hardened woman is needed.

Hamza has made a pact with the Black Flock to liberate his city from the hands of the Iron Brothers. After two depraved days and two slaughterous nights, two very different powers have joined forces united to put an end to the killing and looting. Their eyes reflect their resolve to exact revenge on the Iron Brothers for their attack. They are determined to avenge the countless lives this futile war has taken.

"A Bounty! For those who bring me the head of Rattler!" Callisto shouts at the Acopalyptics who have gathered around her.

"Bounty for every dead Iron Brother. Free passage in my realm for those who find and free my brother Nephraim," Hamza calls to his people.

With a start, the Unya picks up speed. The boarding boats and trimarans of the Black Flock spread out across the bay. Terres Putain, Cour Argent and Ferrallies are their targets.

I. A GRAY DAY

The Cour Argent is covered in a gray mist. A warm front blew in, dousing the burnt-out heart of the city. The light shower has extinguished the last sources of fire. Gray clouds of smoke rise from the wet, smoldering embers and slowly drift upwards toward the accusing sky.

As the Characters look on, the panorama that is spread out before them morphs; the transformation is surreal. The splendor of Toulon has molten away, leaving behind only charred remains. The Neolibyans have fallen. The Characters are on a hunting boat that belongs to the Black Flock. Also on board are Callisto, two dozen pirates, Hamza, Orma, 16 Scrappers and the Chronicler.

Mirage's left leg twitches nervously. She knows what's in store for her if Hamza reclaims the palace.

The hunting boat reaches Pier 6, right next to L'Orage, the Spitalian field hospital. The group disembarks. Three Apocalyptic flank the Chronicler, making sure to keep an eye on her. Mirage's hands are tied to her back. One of the pirates shoves her forward. "Move it, snake!"

Crossbows are loaded, rifles are in position. Cautiously, the group moves across the pier towards the field hospital. So far, they haven't encountered anyone.

Callisto signals to the Characters to go west and circle the field hospital with Orma and the Chronicler hostage. She, Hamza and her group will go around to the east.

The alley in front of them is deserted. They proceed cautiously.

"When did you become Hamza's lapdog?" Mirage suddenly asks Orma.

"There are better things in life than sitting in musty alcoves and staring at monitors," he answers spitefully.

"If you were to change sides, you'd get everything, instead of just a miserable cut," she says cynically.

"Does this slut ever shut up?" one of the pirates asks exasperated.

Suddenly, a dusty fly sheet is thrown into the air, and an Iron Brother jumps out with eyes wide open. In fear of the approaching group, he had tried to hide underneath it, but now he has lost his nerve. Like a panicked doe, he races past the group. One of the Apocalyptic reacts without the slightest hesitation. A crossbow bolt pierces the throat of the running Scrapper. The Iron Brother crashes into a burnt out booth and dies miserably as he gasps for air. Barrels and stacked crates collapse on top of him, and suddenly, the alley is full of noise.

"Idiot!" Orma hisses at the pirate, his face a mask of anger.

POINTLESS

"Put your weapons on the ground at once!" a sudden shout echoes through the alley. In pale daylight, Black and white uniforms stand at the exit where the alley joins the street. Spitalians. Remagnac and his Famulancers. They were able to salvage parts of the equipment from L'Orage; they are armed with Splayers. Upon seeing the group, they arrange themselves into a phalanx formation. Remagnac's eyes are full of terror – he has just witnessed the execution of the Scrapper. "In the name of the reconquerors of Toulon," the Spitalians take a long stride into the alley, lowering their Splayers towards the group, "I order you to put down the weapons!"

The phalanx steps forward. "We are Hamza's people," Orma shouts back. "We have come..."

Why did you take a Chronicler captive?" Remagnac interrupts sharply, warily eyeing the weapons of the Scrappers and Apocalyptic. Orma looks incomprehendingly at the Field Medic: "She's the nucl..."

"Help!" Mirage suddenly screams, pulling away from her captors and shouldering past two Apocalyptic. She dashes towards the Spitalians. Remagnac is bewildered; he does not grasp the situation at all.

"Troia!" an Apocalyptic to the right screams, aiming his revolver at the fleeing Chronicler.

"NO!" Orma is too far away to stop the shooter. The Characters have one last chance. With a successful roll on PSY+Reaction (3), they can jump and stop the shooter before it's too late. A bullet goes off, ricochets off the opposite building wall in an obtuse angle and hits one of the Famulancers in the belly. His Splayer drops and clanks across the pavement. Two comrades drag him aside to cover him. The Spitalians misinterpret the shot as an attack and charge at once. Mirage races past the Spitalians while Apocalyptic and Scrappers shoot at the Famulancers. "DON'T LET HER GET AWAY!" Orma's desperate cry is drowned out by the noise of a forest of lances piercing through bodies.

At this point, the Characters have no chance to avoid the misunderstanding. Both parties attack each other delivering swift blows and deep stabs. The ground is slick with blood.

Mirage runs to the end of the alley. They must fight past the phalanx to catch the fleeing Chronicler.

PREJUDICES

The disastrous altercation between the group and the Spitalians can only be avoided if the Characters act fast and speak up. If they saved Remagnac and helped him in earlier scenes, they must roll CHA+Conduct (4) to cool the heated situation. After the chaotic events of the last days, the Spitalian trusts no one anymore; he has witnessed the execution of a defenseless scrapper and seen a Chronicler — a Cult with the best ties to the Spitalians — fall into the hands of adversaries. Remagnac's nerves are raw. Questions are hollow. Instantly, he falls back into trained patterns of behavior, knowing that, in this war, any moment of indecision could result in the demise of his people.

III. BREATHLESS

Mirage runs for her life. The Characters have just left the alley when they see Callisto, Hamza and the other Apocalyptic running around the corner. The noise of the battle from the alley behind the Characters has lured them in. They see the group, then the fleeing Chronicler, and look at each other baffled and charge on.

The Paradigma runs past the Customs Offices, over debris and rocks. She jumps over obstacles, never looking back but sidestepping — strategies of vulnerable prey. She's quick and agile; she's being hunted. The Characters have to enter a Conflict against Mirage in BOD+Athletics (6D). Her head start is a little under 60 m.

"Follow her!" The Characters hear Hamza and Callisto cursing behind them. "Spread out!", "Block her way!" and "Help Orma!"

Mirage enters a back alley beyond the Refinery. The Characters follow her, running and hurdling baskets, crates and bodies. She races ahead.

There is light at the end of the alley. She runs out, stumbles over an outstretched leg and crashes onto the cobblestone sidewalk face first. The Characters reach the exit of the alley.

A handful of rifle barrels are raised at once. They are aiming at the Characters' heads. Resistance badges flash; the scarves and caps of the Beau Monde shimmer blue in the hot morning sun. General Morceau has Mirage in a headlock. She stares at the Characters with her pistol raised. "Don't make a wrong move!" she warns the group.

"The Chronicler is mine."

Not a moment later, Hamza, Callisto and the Apocalyptic reach the sidewalk from a back alley leading east. Suddenly, they are all flanked by Orma and his squad who are entering from the south.

"Mirage is ours." Hamza's face is grim as he hisses his words from behind white teeth, his rifle raised.

"We have bled all night for Toulon. Countless of my men are dead. We defeated the Iron Brothers in the palace. The Chronicler is mine!" Zoe says. Her blue eyes are crystal clear and angry wrinkles line her forehead. Beau Monde and the Resistance surround their leader.

"You cannot have the Chronicler! She's the only one who knows who the tattooed man is." Callisto speaks angrily. Her lips are pulled tight and her repeating crossbow is aimed at Zoe. The general raises a brow. "Who's that woman?" she asks her guards in surprise.

"Callisto, mistress of the Black Flock," Orma growls at her and takes a step towards Zoe's guards. "She's here to help us to take back Toulon ..."

"The Resistance needs no help!" Zoe shouts. "We reclaimed the city while you sat on your fucking boat, you cowards!"

Hamza takes a long stride towards her, the butt of his rifle pressed to his shoulder and aiming at Zoe. "Hundreds of my Scourgers have fallen, as well as hundreds of innocents, and you want to argue about one hostage?"

"Kill the bastard, Zoe! Hamza is the African virus. Under him, there can never be a free Franka. Never!" Mirage croaks, spitting bloody ichor at the Raider.

The barrel of Hamza's rifle slowly swivels from Zoe's head to Mirage's. Orma cautiously steps aside. "STAY WHERE YOU ARE!" a Beau Monde shouts at him. Beads of sweat gather on the forehead of the young guardsman. The situation has turned into a standoff. One false move and there'll be a massacre.

Mirage gurgles, bloody spittle drips from the corner of her mouth. "You miserable Neolibyan, don't you see what you have done? You have rallied an entire people against you." She laughs scornfully. With a sharp movement of her lower arm, the general quells the laughter by pressing the cold barrel of her pistol against Mirage's temple.

"You want the artifact bitch alive? Then give me your realm, Hamza! We fought

BETWEEN THE FRONTS

The Characters find themselves situated between all of the factions; no one here is willing to relinquish their great triumph. Zoe takes her gloves off. This is her chance to show that she's the Savior of Toulon. It was under her leadership that the Iron Brothers in the Cour Argent were conquered. She hopes that her deeds will provide freedom from the bondage of the Cults. Freedom for Toulon, for Franka, for her home. Foreign powers have been living out their bloody feuds on Franka's soil for long enough. This must come to an end. The general will do anything to free Franka from serfdom and oppression.

for this city – it now belongs to the Resistance!” Zoe’s gaze is iron. Threateningly, she presses the barrel of her pistol harder into Mirage’s skin.

“I have no idea who you are, general.” Callisto walks around the circle of Zoe’s guards. “But we migratory birds prefer looting the ships of rich Neolibyans than those of miserable freedom fighters.”

There is a smile on Callisto’s face. The Characters must roll INS+Perception (4) to see what Callisto sees. If the roll is successful, they will vaguely notice that a group of pirates is silently approaching from the west, directly in the blind angle of the Resistance. Callisto tries to keep Zoe’s attention on her to keep her distracted.

THE HOUR OF THE EXECUTIONERS
It’s a staredown; it is a hesitant evaluation and the battle experience of many years. The pupils of the leader of the Black Flock widen and reveal her plan. Let the Characters roll INS+Empathy (3) to catch the moment when Callisto orders the attack. If they are successful, they get +2D to the subsequent initiative role.

Now!

With a hiss, a bolt flies from Callisto’s crossbow and pierces Zoe’s shoulder. In the next instant, dozens of shots ring out at the same time. Everyone fires, and the situation becomes uncontrollable. The Characters must jump for cover to avoid being hit by a salvo aimed at them or becoming the victim of one ricocheting in their direction. Everywhere, young fighters fall; cadets are peppered with bullets and collapse under the fire of rifles and crossbows. Amidst the falling soldiers, the Characters see the contours of Zoe’s body. She drags the Chronicler with her and tries to escape to Hamza’s place through the last open alley to the north. The Characters are close to her. Only they can follow her and stop the general from fleeing behind the palace walls with her hostage.

III. RUSH

Zoe has been hit, but that doesn’t slow her down. Quite the opposite, she is determined. She has only one goal: escape with Mirage. The Chronicler is her leverage against Hamza – she is the perfect hostage.

The Characters can follow the two fleeing women down the next alley. Zoe uses Mirage as a shield against rifle fire from the Characters. She knows that Hamza’s men wouldn’t dare kill the Chronicler unless ordered to. At the same time, she aims into the alley and fires her pistol repeatedly at her pursuers. Bullets fly past the ears of the Characters.

The outer wall of the palace can already be seen from

the back of the alley. Any moment now, reinforcements for the general could break out from one of the many side streets.

At a crossroads, the Characters finally catch up with Zoe. She stands with her back to a building on the corner. Only one street is left between her and the palace where she can take sanctuary.

“What makes traitors like you side with the African?” Zoe shouts at the Characters from the opposite side of the road. The barrel of her pistol twitches nervously, aiming at each of the Characters in turn. “Why are you trying to get in the way of freedom? Are you that cheap that you sniff the asshole of any dog that offers you money?” Her face is pale and her coat is bloodstained. The bolt is embedded deep within her shoulder. Mirage stands in front of her haggardly. Zoe repositions her so as to get the best possible cover against attacks. With CHA+Conduct (4), they can try to reason with the general to buy some time. Failure leads to a prompt answer. Zoe tries to eliminate one of the Characters with an aimed shot.

“Damn mercenaries! The world would be a much better shithole if pigs like you were fighting for a cause instead of out of greed.” Her eyes are full of disdain. Nothing can force her to surrender. She has sacrificed her best years for this moment. Now, she’s come closer to her goal than ever before.

A loud bang to the left startles the Characters. Zoe’s wrist shatters in a cloud of blood. The impact of a projectile sends her pistol sailing through the air. It lands somewhere in the dust. The general lets out a shrill scream in pain and whirls around to pinpoint the shooter.

“Stop!” a wavering voice calls out loudly. Vericon.

With trembling arms, he stands on the porch of a small shop, holding a tiny pistol. He struggles in vain to keep his composure.

Zoe pushes Mirage to the side. Her left hand grabs her officer’s saber. The metal slides from the scabbard, and she charges the mayor.

“I’ll kill you, you miserable parasite!”

With five quick strides, she crosses the street towards him. She’s badly wounded, but this is no hinderance to her. She is beyond the realm of sanity. If the Characters don’t have any ammunition left, they will have to melee against Zoe to stop her. Even after having her right hand shattered by Vericon, she continues fighting with her left as if in a fever (-2D). Her resolve to settle the score with the mayor drives her into a blind rage.

Mirage realizes that her moment has come. She takes a quick breath, jumps to her feet and runs towards the palace. Someone has to stop her. If one of the Characters can break free from the general, he will be able to pursue her.

16. AN EMPTY HEAVEN

Twenty meters. Legs burning with cramps. Ten meters. Lungs combusting, seemingly turning to ash. Five meters. 72 hours of war. No mercy. Three. Two. One. A hand grabs Mirage's hair. Zero: Impact!

The fastest Character falls into the soft grass of the palace gardens with the Chronicler. They slide across the wet ground, sending blades of grass flying. The fall expels the air from Mirage's lungs. She moans, fights for breath, rips and tugs, trying anything to escape.

The Characters have caught up with the fugitive on the grounds of Hamza's former realm.

A sombre scene surrounds them. Corpses are scattered across the palace garden. Skewered, hacked apart, shot. Iron Brothers, Resistance, Scourgers – death makes no distinction between Cults and Clans. Their bodies are mutilated and their eyes have rolled back in their skulls. It's a grotesque battlefield, made all the more surreal against the backdrop of the lost beauty of this place. Ghostly. Sick. The woman on the floor is responsible for all of this. If there is a heaven, it is empty. No God would wish to witness such carnage.

"Let go of me, you monkeys!" Mirage twists and turns as she spits blades of grass from her mouth and tries to free herself from the Character's grasp. A noise comes from behind the Characters. Hamza and Callisto enter with their pirates through the hole in the outer wall created by Eisenhauer's grenade. Orma and the rest of the squad of black Scrappers and Apocalyptics charge through the southern gate.

"Your pride isn't worth anything anymore, Raider. The Iron Brothers have destroyed its very foundation," the Chronicler groans.

Orma runs across the gardens to the Characters, kneels down and hits Mirage in the face, hoping this will silence her.

"Orma!" Hamza calls snappily. "She's no use to us dead."

At once, the Scrapper releases her and kicks the dirt indignantly. "Look what they have done."

Silently, Hamza looks at the trampled flower beds, trying to set a stalk upright, but the flower sinks back limply.

"Let's go on," he says tiredly and gestures at the Characters to help Mirage up and guard her.

The entire squad walks around the fish basin. Four dead Iron Brothers float face-down on the surface of the water. Next to the basin, there are two more dead. Another corpse lies next to a hastily erected fire pit. The smashed legs of chairs protrude from the coal. Next to it, there is a carpet of fish bones; they are spread all over the grass. The Scrappers have eaten Hamza's collection. The Raider looks away with disgust. He raises his gaze and looks at the battlements of the interior wall to detect if there is any movement.

A few shy faces are visible between the blocks of the wall.

"I am Hamza Abubakar III., rightful ruler of Toulon. General Zoe Morceau is dead. You have fought hard, and I owe you my deep felt gratitude. Put down your weapons and let us come together and join forces!" the Raider calls up to the walls. Beyond the walls, there is confusion.

"Open the main gate, and we will not shoot. We must end this madness."

I. HOMECOMING

The conquerors of the palace react hesitantly to Hamza's offers and suasion. Slowly, the main portal opens. Hamza, Callisto, Orma, the Characters and their captive, Mirage, enter.

Behind them is the full impedimenta of the pirates of the Black Flock. All the Apocalyptics who have not followed Meridian or Sabata to the other districts are there as well. The atrium is a vision of hell. Flies buzz across bodies, rivulets of blood meander

between the smashed floor mosaics; every step ends in a puddle of blood. Smashed skulls and burnt bodies abound. Wherever one looks, another dead body emerges from the field of rubble. The palace itself has been devastated beyond recognition. Smashed doors, shattered walls, gutted windows. The hideous face of envy, presented in all its wretchedness – those who raged here wanted to destroy everything that was emblematic of Hamza's prosperity.

Six haggard cadets of the Resistance approach the Characters, cautiously laying down their rifles at Hamza's feet.

"Where are the others?" Hamza asks without delay.

"There are no others," a cadet with a wounded ear answers. "The others are dead. We fought to the last man in the name of Zoe's cause ..."

"Enough. Cross over to Terres Putain and Port Lagagne! Tell the people the war is over and that they are to supply us with any provisions they have in their possession! I'll pay double the price for all of their goods."

Then, the Raider turns to Mirage and suddenly spits in her face.

"Was this worth all the dead, Chronicler?" His voice trembles, his eyes are glassy. Drool runs down Mirage's forehead and hangs from her eyebrow. She looks down at her feet and says quietly, but resolutely:

"You have no idea what you're talking about, Neolibyan. If you knew what we know, you would understand that it's worth any number of dead to rebuild the bygone civilization. You can show me your collection of silver coins and tell me about the value of your capital as long as you want. My capital is the Stream ..." She raises her eyes and drool drops to the floor. "Its knowledge is endless." Hamza's slap comes without warning and cracks like a whip. The Chronicler falls to the ground and stays down enfeebled.

"Search the palace for my brother Nephraim! Kill any Iron Brothers that are still breathing!"

II. REDEMPTION

"Orma, bring the Chronicler to the guardhouse! You," Hamza points at the Characters, "follow me to the wall! I need a better view." With the Characters in tow, Hamza climbs a staircase to the inner wall. Below, the Apocalyptic spread out to find the half-brother of the Raider. "I cannot thank you enough for your support. When this day is over, I will surely need new allies to rebuild Toulon."

They reach the inner wall above the entrance gate.

Hamza looks down at the destroyed Cour Argent. "I will need all the help I can get. I need ambassadors, people who have a good rapport with other Cults. This is essential if we are to avoid another war like this. I have to build bridges, even when my heart longs for revenge. Together, we can make the last three days a memory to be forgotten. We can start anew." A slight breeze blows across the city. The sea shimmers and the sky is clear. Hamza blinks with relief as if he can't believe his eyes.

"There!" He points at the horizon. Then, the Characters see it too. Three giant battle cruisers drift across the Mediterranean like a fata morgana.

"Perpignan, Montpellier. Elani and Atuma have received our call for help." His shoulders sag and overwhelmed by relief, he almost falls from the battlements.

If the Characters look to the palace, let your players roll INS+Perception (3). If they are successful, they will notice a reflection on the Overwatch platform. If they roll a Trigger, they will realize the source at once. A rifle. Sniper.

The Characters have barely any time to think when a pirate with eyes wide open comes running down the stairs from the Core Hall, waving his arms and shouting: "BOMB! BOMB! BOMB!"

The atrium explodes.

III. DEATH FROM ABOVE

The explosion is deafening. The blast propels the entire atrium up in the air as if a fierce blow from a giant had severed it from its foundation. The floor bulges. Pirates, bodies and debris are mercilessly heaved into the air by the low-speed detonation. The bubble of earth immediately collapses back on itself.

The Characters must make an Action Roll on PSY+Reaction (2) or BOD+Force (2) to avoid being blown across the wall by the blast and hurled down to the palace garden 20 m below. Next to them, Hamza clings to the battlements, trying to shield his head against falling debris and blocks of stone that howl through the air like masterless dogs. Next, a storm of dirt, dust and chunks of earth hails upon the Characters. Afterwards, they look across the edge of the wall. The atrium is no longer there. The crater is a gaping no man's land, black and dead.

"The vault," Hamza whispers, still trying to register what has just happened.

An ash gray cloud of dust envelops the palace and darkens the sky above. Surviving Apocalyptics and Scrappers stumble through the smoke. The Characters inside the inner wall hear ghastly cries of pain. A merciless barrage of fire begins. Projectiles rain down from the platform. Every salvo hits, and one by one, the Apocalyptics are executed. Muzzle fire flashes through the wall of dust, always coming from the same location.

"SNIPER!" Hamza shouts at the Characters and dives for cover behind the battlements. The Raider is in shock. He breathes deeply, his hands trembling.

"He's on the platform! There's only one way up. You have to go through the temple of the Ancestors. Take the long corridor. The roof will provide cover. Then up to the tower." He throws his rifle at the Characters. "Four bullets left!"

Then, he gets up, his knees shaking, and tries to get past the Characters over to the guardhouse. "I need to find Orma!" he desperately shouts.

The Characters don't have time to consider anything. They have to leave the defensive battlement and get to the other side of the palace garden. In order to reach the temple of the Ancestors, they need to use the wall as cover. A rusty boarding chain lies less than 10 paces away, a memento of the Iron Brothers. With it, they can rappel down to the garden and remain unseen by the sniper. More projectiles rain down. Like a madman, the shooter fires at anything that moves in the atrium.

IV. NO STAR

Hearts are racing. One mistake, and death will claim the Characters. The chain is attached to the battlement. Down. BOD+Athletics (2) to avoid sliding off the steep wall, hitting the ground 20 m below and ending up with broken bones. On the ground. Take a breath. The Characters are in the dead angle of the sniper. Suddenly, there's manic screeching. It sounds like an approaching chainsaw. Sabata charges through the southern gate and up the long stairs, taking several steps at a time. A handful of pirates try to keep up with her. Her face is distorted with terror; her eyes are wide open as if she had looked into the abyss of hell.

"HE'S HERE!" she shouts unbearably loud.

A shot hits her while she is running. Her body flies off the stairs, and she lands on the grass like a broken doll. Motionless, she lies on her back. A fist-sized hole in her chest. Her face is blank; she stares at the sky as if trying to count the stars. But there is no star. She is dead.

Behind her, the pirates try in vain to reach their Buzzard as the howling shots take them down one by one. Here, someone is mercilessly evening the score with the Apocalyptics.

The Characters don't have a chance to save any of them. If they move away from the wall, they will meet the same fate as Sabata. So they run on, through scrub and below trees, past the shrine of Anubis towards the temple of the Ancestors.

TWO MINUTES

In the early morning hours, Baptiste lined the vault beneath the palace with payloads and joined them to an optical barrier. When the first migratory birds go to the vault to look for Nephraim, they trigger the timer. Two minutes remain until the first detonation.

HEXELL'S REVENGE

The turmoil that ensued during the recapture of the palace provided Hexell with a window of opportunity. Taking advantage of the moment, he crept up to the platform and waited there for morning. Now, he is ready. Only heavy artillery fire poses a threat to him in his turret. His mission is simple and requires perfect skill: kill as many migratory birds as possible. Rattler has prepared his executioner for death, for he will not survive this day. But this is his unique chance to settle the score with the Cult that molded him into an assassin. Hexell takes aim at all Apocalyptics he sees on the atrium ground, the palace walls or in the garden. Other Cultists are of no importance. If one of the Characters is an Apocalyptic, however, he wastes no time in shooting them. If Hexell misses, he becomes so angry that he is only able to concentrate on the target, ignoring easier prey.

If the Characters recognize his shooting pattern by rolling INS+Empathy (4), they can try to divert Hexell's salvos from the wounded Apocalyptics in the atrium.



11:11 AM

V. THE ABOOMINATION

A naked Anubian lies in the grass in front of the Characters. Raped and strangled. Her cheeks are sunken in and her eyes have been disfigured. Her hair has been torn out in handfuls, bruises cover her slim body, and a rope is fastened around her slender neck. Flies buzz around irritably as the Characters approach the Initiate. The stench of the body is overwhelming. Suddenly, a loud bang rings out from the temple.

A scream rises from inside. If the Characters run over to the pillars, they can catch a glimpse of the austere interior.

Callisto lies on the floor, her calf torn by a bullet and her face contorted in pain. She is frozen with fear and pants in panic. She tries in vain to crawl away.

“Haven’t you ever wondered what could have become of us if the world were different?” asks a male voice. A figure steps out from behind the penumbra inside the temple. His shape is hard to make out. Tattoos cover his naked torso and head like a maze, making him appear like a phantom. His sawed-off shotgun is aimed at Callisto.

“You are the Phoenix,” the Apocalyptic whimpers.

“That is your name for the unspeakable, for your darkest fears, Callisto. Why don’t you call me by the cards? I am the Abomination. I sit above the Creator.” His voice sounds like the tail of a rattlesnake.

“What do you want from us? Why are you killing us?” Callisto screams out her questions as if the answers would be enough to stop the madness.

The tattooed man grabs her hair and drags her to the altar. “Look at my face!” He presses the barrel of his shotgun to her chin.

“Once, we were children. You and me. The most innocent life on earth,” he begins.

RATTLER’S INTUITION

The Phoenix has noticed the Characters. He moves erratically; he circles Callisto, sometimes standing in front of her, sometimes behind her, but never giving them a clear target for attack. The Characters will have to change positions behind the pillars in the temple of the Ancestors several times if they want to prepare an effective attack or at the very least, observe what is happening inside the temple.

"We were made into what we are now. We weren't born with blood on our hands — others taught us to kill."

Callisto's pupils meander back and forth; she's completely at the mercy of the madman and his rifle.

"I found the Stork who took you from your parents," he says to his prisoner with a sardonic grin of superiority. Callisto is petrified. She doesn't understand. "I had to torture him for days until he remembered every child he ever stole from their parents." The tattooed man leans very close to Callisto's ear. Carefully, he kisses her cheek and presses the barrel of his rifle under her chin, moving her face so that she has to look him in the eye.

"Mother loved us. You were her star. I was her sun." His voice breaks. His words are somber and leaden. Callisto freezes. She seems to be looking right through the tattooed man, as if hypnotized.

"I will destroy the Apocalyptic for what they did to us," he whispers and presses a kiss to her lips. "I will begin with you, sister." Then he suddenly whirls around and fires at the Characters.

VI. PHOENIX FIRE

Rattler doesn't think, he acts. His every move is coordinated in cold blood. He jumps between the pillars, appearing from behind their cover. He lures the Characters into the temple and then back out again as if playing a game with them. The Phoenix does not fear death. He knows that sooner or later it will come for him.

This recklessness, however, proves to work in his favor for the time being. He will try to force the Characters into close combat. He uses his shotgun like a club, deflecting blows and breaking bones.

His dance of dodging, diving, sidestepping and taking cover is deliberate yet follows no specific plan; it simply causes confusion and discomfort. Trained combat patterns do not help against the Phoenix.

Moreover, he can duck blows with lightning speed, retreat from the danger zone and then mercilessly return to the infight at once. His shrewdness is another weapon he has to use against the Characters.

Every round, he rolls PSY+Cunning in a conflict with PSY+Cunning of his attacker. If Rattler's role is successful, the Phoenix can dodge with AGI+Mobility, causing his attacker to accidentally hit another group member. If there is an Apocalyptic amongst the Characters, Rattler tries to separate him from the group and subdue him.

Callisto tries to help the Characters, but she's badly wounded and fights at -4D. If the Characters can maneuver Rattler towards the altar, she will try to ram her blade bracelet into his side.

Rattler's laughter vibrates through the temple whenever one of the Characters' actions fails. He loudly mocks and provokes them: "Now, come on. You can do better than that." Then, he charges and hits one of the Characters in the temple with the butt of his rifle on the dead run.

Only Cooperative Actions can pin down the Phoenix's movement pattern and stop his violence. The Characters must surround him, and one of them must try an aimed attack. If it fails, retaliation will come quickly; Rattler will attack the Character who tried to ambush him. Such a counterattack by the Phoenix can only be parried with a penalty of -3D.

In combat, Rattler will try to take one of the Characters hostage. If he manages to draw one of the Characters into close combat, he will try to grab him from behind and use him as a shield against blows and shots. The captured Character must win a Conflict of his BOD+Brawl/Force against Rattler's BOD+Brawl (10D) to free himself from his stranglehold.

The burnt-out Phoenix fights to the bitter end. He's a killer without remorse. The blood of hundreds is on his hands. He will go to hell laughing before he surrenders. His doom is his destiny, and his path to the afterlife is paved with the bodies of his enemies.

THE FACE OF DEATH

The battle against Rattler is the hardest of the trials the Characters have had to face in the last three days. They have no idea who Rattler is and what fuels his will to destroy. However, they all feel his haunting presence, witness his bizarre behavior and sense his inimitable hatred. Being close to the Phoenix is enough to generate primal, violent urges that take the Characters to the edge of a frenzy. If they defeat the Phoenix, a feeling of redemption floods them. Ego points lost in battle are completely regained. The Abomination is dead.

VII. THE SNIPER

Callisto slogs over to Rattler's corpse. She's overwhelmed by the experiences of the last minutes. Feverishly, she searches his unmoving face for something familiar. Her lips tremble as her hands roam over Rattler's bloodied body. With her fingers, she traces his tattoos. Whatever he may have known about Callisto, it was more than the Apocalyptic knows about herself. She collapses over her brother in exhaustion. Her tears are boundless.

Suddenly, the Characters become aware of shots being fired from the platform. That damn sniper is still up there. The Characters must leave through corridor.

They run through the long, roofed hallway. Only their steps echoing off the marble, punctuated by sounds of projectiles hitting their last surviving allies. Don't stop! Up.

Like a giant screw, the stairs wind upwards. Every meter to the top of the stairs is pure torment, every step a new instrument of torture in these endless hours of war. On the last landing, the Characters stumble upon dead Iron Brothers. They have been shot. Finally, a rectangle of light appears: it is the door to the platform. Motes of dust blow into the tower, steps creak on the ramshackle planks. Stealth rolls are made at -2D.

The Characters look through the rectangle, but can't see anything. They have to charge out and secure all sides right away; the view from the staircase and the access to the platform leave a surprise attack out of the question.

IN THE HEAVEN OF THE ANGEL OF DEATH

The Characters run out on the platform. Thick billows of smoke waft past. Embers fly aloft, carried by the wind.

To the left, a man sits propped up against the railing. Silence. His sniper rifle is next to him. His watches the Characters from behind his peculiar glasses. The glasses automatically tint, turning from orange to purple and locking in the backlight. The apertures mechanically contract and focus the eye lenses. It all takes place within a matter of seconds.

He's neither surprised nor does he attack. Instead, he chuckles, bares his yellow teeth and takes a drag from a rolled cigarette.

The sniper doesn't speak. He slowly rises and dusts off his coat. Then, he raises his hands as if to surrender and takes a step backwards towards the railing. His behavior is erratic as if he is unable to contain his inner amusement. He does not answer any questions, he just keeps laughing uncontrollably until he begins to wheeze. A gust of wind blows under his coat and the cloth flies like a pair of black wings.

If the Characters approach him, the haggard man will take a large step backwards. He lowers his head to one side as if watching every move the Characters make through his tinted glasses.

Then, he suddenly looks down at the palace. He stretches his arm and makes a fist with his thumb raised. If the Characters try to figure out who this hand signal was meant for, they will see several figures on the roof of the Core Hall opposite the platform. Through the clouds of smoke, they can make out Hamza, Mirage and Orma. There are, however, two more men. The smoke is exceedingly dense and it blurs the figures. They are indistinguishable against the hazy background.

The Characters have no longer than a heartbeat to judge the situation. Without warning, the sniper jumps backwards and tumbles across the railing without a word. Suicide.

The group can run to the edge in time to see his body hit a crater down below. A gray, circular cloud of ash spreads outward as if someone had thrown a stone into a deep, dusty hole. The sniper lies in the debris, arms and legs outstretched, his black coat forming wings. Like a fallen angel. An angel of death.

MOMENT OF MADNESS

If, upon seeing Hexell, the Characters act impulsively and execute the sniper on the spot, the scene will play out similarly.

The assassin does not fight back. He faces his own mortality without a trace of fear.

After his death, the Characters see a group of five silhouettes on the lower roof of the Core Hall. They may take Hexell's polarization glasses with them. They will be useful in the next scene.

VIII. ZERO HOUR

The Characters need to act. Hexell's sniper rifle lies on the floor fully loaded. If one of the Characters takes it and looks through the scope, he will see Orma and Mirage at once. Hamza's cousin has taken a bullet to the belly and is clutching his wound. Mirage hops from one foot to the other, barely able to stand from exhaustion. Hamza stands in front of her, his movements look as if he's negotiating – no, it's more like as if he's begging. If the Character moves the sight, he will see a red-bearded Hellvetic with a hostage. Nephraim.

The Anubian is blindfolded and his mouth is taped shut. His hands are tied, and a heavy chain hangs around Nephraim's neck. The links of the chain hang down one of his shoulders and lead to the neck of the Hellvetic. The red-bearded man has chained his hostage to himself.

The Characters cannot hear a word of the conversation taking place down there. They only see the Hellvetic move his prisoner in front of him like a puppet, grabbing him by the hair and holding his assault rifle to his head. Nephraim looks terrible. The Anubian is bleeding from several wounds, and his left leg seems to be broken. The Hellvetic himself is covered in blood as if he had crawled through a slaughterhouse. His harness is filthy, his gaze mad and grim. With a successful roll on INS+Empathy (3), the Character realizes that the Hellvetic does not react to Hamza's offers at all but instead threatens the Neolibyan. It's impossible to tell what he is saying. The situation is chaotic. Suddenly, the Hellvetic looks up at the platform, right into the lens of the sniper rifle. This is the moment of truth. One aimed shot, and the kidnapper is dead. Just one last shot.

THE LAST BULLET

The bullet flies from the chamber like a raging comet cutting through the atmosphere. The bullet pierces the skull of the Hellvetic at 5000 ft./s and shatters it into pieces, the reverberation of its flight lingering in the atrium for what seems to be an eternity.

A fountain of blood shoots up several meters and rains down like moist mist onto the fallen body of the kidnapper. The impact of the bullet has thrown Nephraim to the floor. He tries to get up, groping blindly about.

Hamza and Orma look up at the Characters aghast. They panic. They run over to the body and pull at the heavy iron chain. Hamza is next to Nephraim. He removes the blindfold and the gag, and drags at the chain like a madman while yelling at Orma. The Scrapper shouts back. He tears at the jugs around the dead Hellvetic's neck and tries in vain to somehow push it over the smashed skull. Hamza's movements seem powerless; his face, contorted in terror, is beyond recognition. In an act of pure desperation, Orma continues hitting the skull in order to break the mandible and yank the iron across the bones. Using the last of his strength, he thrusts a rod between the steel collar and the bone and levers as if his life depends upon it.

Suddenly, both men stop and look at each other forlornly. Hamza holds Nephraim's face in both hands and talks to him. He tries in vain to free his brother from the chains. Orma runs over to Hamza's side and grabs him by the neck away from Nephraim. The Anubian staggers and tries to move in the other direction. The chain becomes taut as he drags the corpse behind him in a semicircle.

Hamza tries to free himself from Orma's grip. He wants to return to his half-brother, but the black Scrapper holds him back using all of his strength, almost strangling his master while hauling him to the edge of the roof.

There, the collapsed Mirage crouches, powerless and lacking the will to flee. With his free hand, Orma grabs her hair and pulls her upright with one cruel motion. He leaps from the roof with her and Hamza, landing one floor below and out of sight of the Characters. Nephraim takes two more steps and finally collapses from exhaustion. He glances over his shoulder one last time to the Hellvetic who has his life around his neck. Then, everything is in flames.

PRECISION SHOT

The rifle is perfectly balanced, light as a feather yet still imbued with a deadly destructive force. An aimed shot can release Nephraim and end the drama on the roof. INS+Perception (2) to find the right moment to squeeze the trigger. AGI+Projectiles (5) to hit the forehead of the Hellvetic.

ALL THAT IS NECESSARY
 FOR **EVIL** TO TRIUMPH
 IS FOR GOOD MEN
 TO DO **NOTHING**

[BURKE]

IX. INFERN

The explosion on the roof of the Core Hall destroys the entire third floor. A flash of light floods the Characters up on the platform; black stars blaze in front of their eyes, and the ground shakes threateningly under their feet. The palace has been torn asunder. A giant crack has formed in the front, splitting apart the architecture. Bricks and parts of the battlement are reduced to mere stone powder and rain down into the crater of the atrium. With their liberating shot, the Characters heralded Nephrain's end. Their actions spelled his demise.

But it's not over yet. Half a breath later, a colossal detonation sounds from the east. The Characters turn their heads in time to see the Module in Ferrallies exploding as if someone had thrown a grenade into an anthill. A lightning bolt of energy whips through the cloud of the explosion, discharging its electricity on flying wooden masts, tumbling metal sheets and pulverized chunks of rock. At once, there's a chain reaction. Along an imaginary line from the Module to Cour Argent, a string of smaller and larger explosions occurs. The din is so extreme, the resulting quake so terrifying that it looks and feels as if the crust of the earth had been torn open by a giant blast. Bubbles of white heat race up to the cloudless blue sky. Molten metal rains down into the sea in a glittering array of colors. Human-sized debris tumbles angrily through the air, ultimately descending upon the city in the form of raging flintstones.

To the west, in Terres Putain, the ground trembles. Three consecutive thunderclaps shake the Resistance Camp, the Slaughterhouse and the city center. A hurricane of deflagration smoke and rows of exploding houses surge skyward, pulsating through the entire red and yellow spectrum before collapsing as a brown cloud of debris. Even in faraway Port Lagagne, fireballs flash.

Baptiste's dead man's switch has worked.

The Characters have sealed the fate of Toulon.

X. SURVIVAL

The Characters have witnessed the downfall of Toulon from the best vantage point in town. Maybe they haven't even realized yet that it's their fault. Maybe they are still too deep in shock. Maybe it'll take a few days for them to understand the consequences of their actions.

If the Characters want to search the palace for survivors, they will have to leave the platform. The descent is strangely quiet. Minutes feel like hours. Then, they are outside. The sniper has done a good job. Nothing moves. No one twitches. The Characters are wading through a mass grave. No bird sings; the wind is completely still. Tiny motes of ash rain down, making eyes water. The ground is still warm from the explosion of the vault, and a hot current of air rises from the crater.

A lone mammoth tusk lies on the path that leads through the garden. The relief engravings on it are still intact; they tell the story of a faraway Clan somewhere in eastern Pollen. Memorabilia and trophies from Hamza's great hall jut out of the close-cropped lawn. Once they were symbols for the wealth of the Raider, marking his power and influence. Now, they are nothing more than heaps of meaningless shards.

The Characters walk around the Core Hall towards the greenhouses. There, they see Hamza. He kneels with his back to the Characters, his crouching frame surrounded by broken bushes and snapped branches.

If the Characters approach, they will see Mirage sitting in the grass a short distance away. Orma lies on his side effete and takes shallow breaths. His eyes are half closed, and he clutches the wound on his belly.

Mirage stares into the empty air surrounding her feet and salivates from the corner of her mouth. She has no energy left to resist her capture. Powerless, cultless and helpless, she sits atop the scorched blades of grass awaiting her death sentence. Her mission was a failure; she is now in enemy hands. If Hamza gives her to the Scourgers, she will never see Franka again.

If the Characters look at Hamza, they will see at once that the Raider is bent over Nephraim's lifeless body. He holds his brother in his lap, rocking back and forth as if in a trance. He stares ahead, biting his lower lip. His eyes are moist. Tears have left their traces on his dust-covered cheeks. An open wooden casket lies in front of him.

His hands tremble with rage as he opens his palm and looks upon his father's silver Dinar. Carefully, he puts the coin onto the burned forehead of his brother, pressing the silver into the blistered skin. His shoulders heave as he cries. He embraces his dead brother as if, maybe, that could revive him.

"Is that what you wanted to see, Mirage?" Hamza's words are full of hatred. He kisses the syllables between his teeth.

"Did you want to see me broken?" He chokes. "Well, here you are. Your Cult has been successful." A whimper mixes in with his angry words.

"You destroyed everything that was good in my life, everything worth living for!"

From where she sits, Mirage looks at Hamza. She almost seems to feel something akin to sympathy, now that she realizes the full extent of her deeds.

"If I had a bullet left, I'd blow your head to pieces," Orma interjects. He drags himself up. Bleeding, he crawls over to Mirage and grabs her throat, but he lacks the strength to strangle her. He foams from the mouth. His eyes are completely bloodshot.

"No, Orma!" Hamza's voice is iron. "We are better than them."

Orma does not understand Hamza's reaction; all the same, he lets go of Mirage.



"There is a bygone book that says that regicide is the worst of all sins." Contempt lines the words of the Raider. "That it's a sin so great that it questions diplomacy...No, it questions civilization itself. Those who kill kings are primitive barbarians."

Mirage listens attentively.

"We don't kill kings," Hamza says cynically. "Chroniclers do."

For a moment, there is silence. Nothing moves. Speechless, Orma watches his master. Mirage wants to answer, but she has nothing to say.

Suddenly, a battle cruiser honks its horn in the Northern Port. Perpignan and Montpellier have arrived. Relieved, Orma falls to his knees and laughs hysterically into the grass. He cannot believe that he has survived the ordeals of the last days. He steals a glance at the Characters. There is a glimpse of hope in his eyes. Hamza looks up at them. He nods in a thankful and reverent manner. His eyes are honest and clear. He's been through hell with this group. A link forged by destiny itself ties him to the Characters.

They have barely returned Hamza's gaze when they hear a rustling in the scrub. A shadowy figure in a gray, full-length hooded coat comes running out of the scrub with a heavy pistol drawn. In six strides, the figure crosses the lawn, dashing towards Mirage. A shot rings out. Then a second. Rotating shell casings fly through the air. A third shot. The assassin is very close now and the mask he wears is a familiar face. He fires a fourth shot. The minds of the Characters race. They raise their weapons. Fifth shot. Decoy 5. Sixth shot. Headshot. Mirage falls to the grass. The magazine is empty.

FIN

EPILOGUE

- ◊ The war for Toulon is over. The devastating outcome of the last days: 1,200 dead, more than 1,600 injured. The Scourgers and the Resistance have been completely wiped out. The hard core of the Iron Brothers as well. Anubians from Montpellier spend days performing the burial ceremony for the Africans that have perished. They deliver them unto the sea. On burning rafts, they float out onto the open water.
- ◊ Hamza's realm may be destroyed, but it is not forsaken. With his iron will and the help of his allies, he wants to rebuild Toulon. However, the tide has turned. When he tries to negotiate credits with the Bank of Commerce, not a single Soul Seer in Tripol is willing to vouch for the Raider. Hamza must surrender the majority of his holdings that he has in Africa in order to get fresh capital. Should fortune abandon him once more, he will be ruined.
- ◊ Mirage is dead. The Chroniclers have lost their most valuable Paradigma. For weeks, they do everything in their power to erase all traces leading back to Aquitaine and Justitian. They publicly deny everything. Meanwhile, the Central Cluster performs damage control by hunting for the few remaining survivors of Operation Mirage. Once more, Shutters spread out to eliminate the last instigators. Nullify, the Scalar, coordinates and supervises the operation.
- ◊ Decoy 5 is on the hit list of the Central Cluster. He knows too much. About Operation Mirage as well as about the Fragments who coordinated the operation from Justitian. The Cluster is desperately looking for assassins to take out the Shutter. Cultists who are enemies of the Chroniclers would be suited for the assassination. This would ensure that the killing cannot be traced back to the Central Cluster.
- ◊ Orma has lost dozens of his most faithful men. Hard months lie ahead of the black Scrapper. He has to train new Scrappers and start over completely. However, his supply of Marduk Oil dwindles. The expeditions into the Rhône swamps become riskier with each passing day.
- ◊ Hamza lacks the means to import new Marduk Oil; his capital is being poured into rebuilding the city. If Orma is unsuccessful in the swamps, Toulon will not regain its old splendor. The two Africans are in a tight spot. The Marduk Oil is the essence of their success.
- ◊ Zohra is still Consul. The Neolibyans are weakened, and she knows that their negotiating basis isn't the same as before the war. Still she questions every ambassador and every guest about the Cartel. The Borcan Scrapper union that sent Deich, one of their officers, to Toulon has gotten off easily. They have played almost no role in the investigation of the events. Zohra wants to change that. She hires intermediaries to investigate the instigators of the Cartel in the Protectorate. She's planning something. Revenge.
- ◊ The atmosphere between Neolibyans and Chroniclers in Franka is even more blighted than before. Their interactions with each other are openly hostile. Alcoves are flooded with fake Drafts and Scrappers are offered additional pay for African missions. Neolibyan Merchants hire appraisers to supervise artifact purchases. Perpignan and Montpellier utterly condemn the attack on Toulon, even if no Fragment in the Aquitaine Cluster confesses to have known about Operation Mirage.
- ◊ Ferrallies has been laid waste. The Module has been completely destroyed. Toulon needs a new energy grid. The Morvant Control Terminal offers assistance in exchange for free petro shipments to the Hellvetics' Alpine fortress. Hamza begrudgingly agrees and thus loses one of his main sources of income.
- ◊ Nestor has survived. He escaped on the night of the reconquest with 12 of his best men. With all the looted treasures his men were able to carry, he fled to Purgare via Ducal on the Scorched Path. He wants to reach Borca and the Hard Path beyond Bergamo to avoid the heavily guarded Bernese Passage. The group has looted a fortune, and Nestor wants to begin anew at home, together with his men. Next stop: the Protectorate.

◊ The Bear Brothers Blacksmith and Eisenhauer are dead. However, the legend lives on amongst the Scrappers. Supposedly, there was a third brother...

◊ In the days of the reconstruction, Vericon takes control of Western Toulon. Terres Putain has incurred massive damage, but Port Lagagne remains mostly intact. The mayor mobilizes the fishermen around their will to survive and supports Hamza and the Neolibyans. Together, they plan to lay a new foundation for the city. To counter trouble spots and political maneuvering, he has placed a temporary ban on members of the Resistance which prohibits them from entering the city.

◊ Toulouse is shocked by the news of Zoe's death. Armand Malpierre, the Marechal de Franka, has lost the general he supported and thus, the paragon of a new generation of freedom fighters. With a scrutinizing eye, he tries to unravel the events of Toulon, but to no avail. He is unable to find the killers of his general. He offers a reward of a generous sum for information on them or their arrest. He sends spies and spotters to the entire coastal region. Someone must know something.

◊ Meridian, the Albatross, has survived as if by a miracle. His aversion to dry land forced him to stay on board his ship while the bombs exploded in Ferrallies.

◊ Callisto's leg won't heal. A week after the events of the X-Day, her bullet wound starts festering. The Anubians have to amputate her shank. One-legged, she cannot fight anymore and thereupon declares Meridian the new leader of the Black Flock. From now on, Callisto dedicates her life to finding out about her past. Rattler has taken his knowledge to the grave, but the question of Callisto's origin eats away at the Apocalyptic. She desperately searches for answers, interprets the Tarot, and consults the wisdom of seers and augurs. Sabata could have helped her, but the Buzzard is dead.

◊ The Black Flock has lost almost 200 pirates. 70 of them have been killed by Hexell alone; the rest have been torn to pieces by explosions in Terres Putain and Ferrallies. Hamza is true to his word; he negotiates a year of free passage for the Black Flock, in which Tripol will not meddle with the affairs of the Mediterranean Apocalyptic. The pirates will need this time to fill out their ranks and regain their former strength. Even if the Bank of Commerce doesn't care much for the agreement, at least it no longer owes the Raider a favor.

◊ Alabaster goes west towards Hijos del Sol. The only man she ever loved has left her. Her heart is broken. The memory of Rattler won't heal. With the capsule the Phoenix gave her, she enters the mountain region of the Pyrenees, hoping to find a remedy for her pain. She will soon find out why Rattler sent her here.

◊ In the months of rebuilding, the parasite cities of Bayonne and Ducal flourish. The power vacuum created by the civil war lures the Ravens Sacrocant and Cardial from their nests into the area of Toulon. Both leaders plan to take control of sections of the city. Sacrocant is interested in the remains of Terres Putain, while Cardial relocates to the completely destroyed Ferrallies.

◊ In Justitian, there is excitement amongst the Advocate families of the Judges. A woman called Dauphine visits house after house worried sick about her husband. Arcville supposedly was a secret agent of the Judges and went missing in action. The Advocates are flummoxed; no one admits to knowing about an alliance of Black Judges who gave orders to secret agents on remote fronts. Commissioner Levantis listens to Dauphine's story and starts looking for answers in the swamp of the Senate. Together with the troubled woman, he searches all of Justitian for a man named Iwanov.

◊ Nephraim, the wasp man, is dead. Three months after the terrible civil war of Toulon, the first drone appears this side of the swamp border. Three weeks later, the number of sightings rises to 40. Something awakens in Murnakir. He can no longer smell the protective odor of the Anubian.

A NEW DAY

I. AFTERMATH

The war is over. In Toulon, a new day begins. Battle cruisers from Perpignan and Montpellier are docked. New supply ships arrive almost by the hour. Scourgers have secured the most important traffic hubs within the city limits; their heavily armed patrols search for rebels in the districts. In Port Lagagne, a militia forms. Armed fishermen gather to safeguard streets and prevent looting, especially at the border to Saint Chenil. There are often arguments and violent skirmishes there.

TROUBLE SPOTS

There are still small hornet's nests all over the city. Scrapper cells are being found and rooted out. Meanwhile, the city tries to straighten out the events. The districts are desperately seeking help to treat the injured, clear buried streets and extinguish fires. Anyone can help.

II. DEATHLY QUIET

At the shore of the gray beach below Sacre Amiel, there is a long row of corpses. Iron Brothers. A man stands knee-deep in the ocean. With a long, wooden pole he fishes for corpses floating past, dragging them from the waves to the beach. He doesn't loot. Carefully, he lays the dead side by side, blesses them, and closes their eyes. Then he goes back to the water to drag out the next bullet victim.

A small fishing boat approaches. Four enraged Touloni shout at the lonely collector of the dead. "Dirty Jehammedan! Why do you bother with the dead Scrappers? Haven't you seen what they did to us?" One of the fishermen springs into the sea spray and tries, clumsily, to wade to the beach. "You should stab the eyes of those pigs out instead of blessing them, you miserable scum!" The fisherman draws a baton from his belt; the other three leave their boat and follow him to the beach.

The Jehammedan is not fazed by this. He does not react to the approaching Touloni, but instead continues tending to the dead.

"How dare you dishonor us so, you pathetic goat fucker?" the first man shouts.

"Where were you when the Scrappers shot our people?" another demands.

The four of them encircle the Jehammedan at arm's length. He doesn't even blink in the direction of the fishermen. Without uttering a word, he continues working.

The rage of the fishermen boils over. A blow from the baton hits the Jehammedan's back. He lands on one knee and squeezes his eyes shut, but he doesn't deign to look at his attackers. Instead, he folds the hands of one of the dead Scrappers. The fishermen are confused; the Jehammedan's serenity enrages them all the more.

III. BURIAL

The Characters can watch the scene from less than 20 paces away. If they decide to help the Jehammedan, they must go over and step in between him and the fishermen. The attackers are dregs who only know strength when they are in a group. As soon as someone confronts them who could potentially be dangerous, their courage falters.

"What do you want? Stay out of this! This is our business!" one of them gripes half-heartedly.

If the Characters decide to use violence to chase the fishermen away or if they draw edged weapons to end the confrontation in blood, the Jehammedan will instantly break his silence.

"NO!" His voice is deep and decisive. "No more bloodshed. It's over." He steps between the fishermen and the Characters as if trying to protect his attackers from the



group. His gaze is crystal clear; he stares into the Characters' eyes as if looking through them. There's a humble look on his bearded face.

"Go! Leave the dead to rest!" he orders the fishermen at his back.

Cautiously, the four men retreat back into the water. One of them throws his baton into the wet sand to show that they have no desire to fight the Characters. Within three heartbeats, they are back on their boat and they row away hastily.

"Every dead is one too many," the bearded man mumbles and looks down at the Scrapper corpses with deep sorrow. Then he looks at the Characters again.

"Help me bury them." He takes five steps away from the Characters and draws a line in the sand with his wooden pole. Then he draws a second line at a 90° angle. A third and a fourth line in the sand complete the rectangle.

"A grave. For all of them," he whispers and grabs a shovel.

SOLUTION

Processing the events of the past days will take weeks and months. The mood in the city has changed; the Iron Brothers have lost all support among the population. Those who can be clearly identified as European Scrappers will have a difficult time in Toulon. The Scrapper rune has become the symbol of a meaningless rebellion. People spit on it in passing or promptly scrape it off of building walls.

IV. REDEMPTION

Adonai and the Characters shovel till sundown in silence. The Jehammedan seldomly speaks. Without a word, he shares his bread and water with the Characters. He observes the setting sun for a few moments and then returns to the hole.

"We were all children once," he mumbles as the Characters hand him the first bodies and he carefully puts them into the grave.

"You, me, them." Adonai's eyes roam over the dead. "Him. Her. That one over there, too." He sighs deeply.

"Why don't we laugh like children anymore? Why do we lose our innocence?" His questions hang in the air, languidly looking for answers. He places a Scrapper into the fresh grave and brushes the black locks from her white forehead. For a moment, he loses himself in her rigid face. Then he takes off his sheepskin and puts it over her head. Adonai lets the Characters pull him out of the pit and he quickly starts covering the bodies with wet sand.

V. THE RAG

It takes hours to bury the dead. Stars fill the night sky. A sea of endless possibilities scintillates in the firmament. Adonai has lit a small campfire and cooked tea. He hands the hot beverage to the Characters in tin cups.

Toulon is silent. The city has suffered. Wounded and black, it lies fallow; its former splendor has given way to the sickly glow of oil lamps and torches.

"The place I seek does not exist," Adonai suddenly says. He starts rummaging around in his backpack. Then he produces a dirty rag.

"Places do not carry hope. People do." Carefully, he gives the rag to the Characters. "Only people can protect Jehammed's star." He raises his eyes to the starry sky. Then, he gets up and walks into the darkness.

If the Characters unfold the rag, they will see a dull black disc with filigree engravings: Jehammed's star.

WACHSMANN'S LEGACY

THE LAST SCENE

The following scene is the last of the campaign. It is your choice if you place it days or weeks after the chaos of Operation Mirage. In this epilogue, the last big secret surrounding Wachsmann, the legendary Preservist who once tried to cross the swamp with fire and sword and whose disastrous expedition became a cautionary tale of pride, is revealed.

I. SECRET STASH

If the Characters found Hurlant's cutting board on the freight gondola, this is the moment to examine the complex locking mechanism. The edge of the small board is lined with fiber-thin strips of metal that fit into each other in various seams. It requires a lot of skill to correctly arrange the fibers within the seams, but once done, the cutting board will open itself and reveal its contents.

If one of the Characters successfully cracks the combination, the lid will open and he will see a nondescript booklet with yellowed pages.

It contains inventories written in a neat, but very tiny and hard to read Borcan script (Complex Action with INT+Science, 15 successes, 1 hour): "10 crates of antisepsics, volume 8 liters/canister, 20 canisters/crate; 16 boxes of bandages; various painkillers, 100 crates..." and so on.

If the Characters read through the tables, they will notice that this is the inventory of at least one secret UEO supply center. All the tables are signed "Commando Prime Volta". The last pages contain passwords and coordinates for the various entry points. A successful roll on INT+Focus (3) pinpoints one of the supply centers. Here, in Toulon, in Saint Chenil. The Barrage.

II. AT THE GUARD HOUSE

Night. Waves crash against the Barrage. A guardhouse stands lonely and colorless on a cliff. It's pitch black. The Characters approach the entrance on a small footpath. The door is wide open.

Inside. No breeze, no air. The Characters secure the room on all sides. A creaking staircase leads to the basement. Somewhere in the distance, a power unit hums. 12 steps later, the group stands in a bleak, dusty antechamber. There are footprints everywhere. Child-sized footprints. A roll on INS+Survival (2) shows that the footprints are barely older than a day.

They lead to a mechanical portal that has been secured with steel bolts and safety latches. The valves are as thick as a man's arm. They are wide open and reveal a seemingly endless, dark warehouse beyond. If the Characters light the way, they see that the entire floor of the is covered in footprints. The shelves are empty. Everything that is not mounted to the floor or the walls has been carried away. Only bleak bygone pictograms indicate what was once stored here: ammunition, weapons, medicine, blankets, pesticides, food...

The back of the warehouse seems to have crumbled decades ago. No one can pass through the collapsed heaps of debris. Whoever was here before the Characters has done a good job and left nothing of value behind.

III. OUTSIDE

If the Characters look for tracks outside the guardhouse, a hoarse voice croaks: "Already gone." A weird, haggard figure with a cloak of rags leans at on a collapsed wooden fence. A beggar. A native of Saint Chenil.

"The old man was here around noon. Took everything with him. The children carried as much as they could."



If the Characters interrogate the beggar, he will say: "I don't know the old man. I only know that he comes here quite often. Always accompanied by some sick boys. From down at the Orphanage."

If the Characters keep searching, the beggar will burp loudly and grin proudly, exposing his rotten teeth. "Please, help out a nice fellow like me with a few Dinars," he gurgles. "Thanks. I can pay you back tomorrow. I swear!"

Then, he tells them: "At noon, he came here with about 80 boys. They carried everything out of the house for hours and packed the stuff onto a donkey cart. Took quite some time. His servant was there, too. A rather boorish type. Looks like a doctor. Took all the stuff back to the Orphanage."

He grunts and points down the street.

"The old man is a crazy demon. If he looks you in the eye, he will devour your soul," the beggar says ominously and staggers down the footpath.

IV. THE ORPHANAGE

The Orphanage of Saint Chenil lies on a lift at the edge of the district. A dirt path lined with scarcely lit whorehouses winds up around the low hill to the entrance gate. A fence made of metal plates and wooden panels hides the inner courtyard from prying eyes. The group reaches the fence with a few quick strides. The gate hangs ajar on its rusty hinges, swinging eerily to and fro.

The inner courtyard is strewn with gravel and the moon shines down on the white bed of pebbles. No dirt, no garbage. Everything's clean and tidy. Those who live here take care of their homes.

The Orphanage is three stories high. It's a black house with integrated side wings and high trusses. No light comes from the windows. The building looks empty, as if the inhabitants had left it only hours ago. Two chickens awake from their slumber and fly around clucking when the Characters approach the entrance.

If they enter the building, they will be greeted by a musty chill in the air. The rooms have high ceilings, and yet the windows are barely larger than embrasures and so high that the Characters can barely reach them with their arms outstretched. The wooden planks on the floor are scrubbed clean. Here and there, buckets with rags stand in empty corners. No matter where the Characters look, there is not a mote of dust. They walk through the dining hall where immaculate bowls are neatly lined up on the long tables. The next room is a dorm. Dozens of straw mattresses are tightly packed, none of them covered with a blanket. It all looks as if the inhabitants had fled with all their possessions, never intending to come back – but from whom or what did they flee?

The Characters enter a long corridor leading to a side wing of the building complex. There, at the end of the corridor, a pale light falls out from under the crack of a door. If they approach silently and cautiously, they can eavesdrop. Silence. They hear nothing, at least not as long as the door stays closed.

Behind the door, a ladder leads down into a steep shaft clad in wooden planks. A sooty oil lamp listlessly burns at the bottom of the shaft, its light barely bright enough to see more than 3 meters in any direction. Then, there's a sudden rumble followed by the sound of breaking glass.

PURITY

The exaggerated cleanliness of the Orphanage can only mean one thing: Someone familiar with things like discipline, order and chains of command held sway here. Is it possible that Spitalians supervised and raised the children?

In the building itself, nothing suggests it was the Cult. However, the connection between Volta's booklet and the Orphanage solidifies. Could the old man the beggar mentioned be a Spitalian?



OLD SCHOOL

If there is a Spitalian amongst the Characters, he may roll INT+Legends (3) upon seeing the dissected bodies and the obscure lab; his Secrets trait is added as a bonus. If the roll is successful, he might remember some horror stories from his training. Rumor has it that the Preservists on the Frankan coast once sacrificed their own humanity for the sake of humankind. Their methods were far beyond anything that would have been possible within the walls of the Spital. They were called Old School Preservists. After the failed Wachsmann Lacroix expedition, they took their secrets and their doctrine to their graves with them.

V. THE LAB

If the Characters follow the noise, they need to roll AGI+Stealth (3) to avoid being noticed. Down below, an acrid stench wafts towards them. The intense smell of disinfectants burns their mucosae and dries them out instantly. There is also the slight stench of corpses. It hangs in the air heavily, cloying as if someone had unearthed a wet carcass. There is another rumble, followed by a string of unintelligible curses. From their position, they can see a room at the end of the passage. Against the light, they can make out the vague shapes of appliances – test tubes and bottles glint in the warm lamplight, crude formulas are scrawled on the walls.

Is this a lab?

The Characters must move cautiously through the shadows to get a clear picture. Once they reach the entrance of the room, they see a female corpse staring at them. It is spread on a surgical table. Her chest boasts a complete Frankan stigma. Her abdominal wall has been opened, and her entrails have been taken out and stored in metal bowls all around her body. Drone.

If the Characters risk a look into the room, they will be faced with a cabinet of horrors. Amputated heads and limbs float in murky liquids in glass tanks. Tables are covered with severed limbs; on some of them, the epidermis has been taken off to expose the muscles beneath. On another table, a human jawbone lies next to some teeth that have been broken out of the mandible with pliers.

A hooded, hunchbacked figure runs around the back part of the lab, hastily packing surgical instruments and drawings and filling sack after sack with tools. Suddenly, the figure stops as if it has noticed something.

“Show yourselves!” The voice is raw and domineering. Slowly, the figure turns towards the Characters. It’s an ugly old man. His head sticks out from his robes like the skull of a vulture. Snow white hair frames his wrinkled face. That must be the old man the beggar was talking about.

He stares at the Characters, sizing them up. “What are you doing on my premises?” His movements are jerky, surly even. Without taking his eyes off the group he drops scalpels and pliers into a bag. If the Characters ask for the supply center, he will stop what he is doing. The eyes under his bushy eyebrows try to read the Characters’ faces to find out how much they know about him. “Did the Spitalians send you?” he hisses impatiently.

There is about 10 meters between the Characters and the old man. He measures the meters of freedom between him and the group with jerky head movements. Even if he appears senile, his motions are controlled and extremely precise. His grip is firm. Suddenly, a breezy moan comes from the penumbra of the next room. A child moves about in a hip-high kennel. The child is imprisoned there. Weakly, the little one’s fingers shake the bars.

“What’s the matter? Does it break your heart seeing a drone in a cage?” he cackles cynically.

The naked boy in the kennel is barely 10 years old. A fully developed Stigma glows on the narrow chest. With an empty gaze, he stares at a spot beyond the Characters.

“If you are here for the children, you’re too late!” the old man croaks. His clipped sentence is followed by a sardonic chuckle.

If the Characters take one step towards the cage in an attempt to free the drone, he will quickly grab something from under the table. A black blade gleams in his hands. The cross guard boasts the eight-shanked Spitalian cross – a Preservalis sword.

“Dare to come closer, and I’ll slice you up.” He moves the sword as if it were an extension of his arm. At this point, the Characters should realize that they are facing an old Preservist.

“Do you know who I am?” he asks mockingly and obviously irritated that they don’t recognize him.

“I am Wachsmann, destroyer of drones. I tear the Pheromancers’ innards to pieces. I fight to save humankind.” He bares his teeth; his face is contorted with rage. “Get out of my way!”

With one long stride, he reaches the next room. He bends over the kennel and rams the blade of his sword between the rusty iron bars, trying to stab the captured drone to death.

VI. THE END OF AN ERA

The only way to save the drone is to face Wachsmann in battle.

The old man fights with the precision of someone who has spent his whole life with a sword in his hand and whose religion is murder. Even if he seems frail, his blows and feints are deadly. His indoctrination and discipline prevail, and once more, he’s a Preservist through and through. A bloodthirsty duel ensues. Wachsmann uses the confined space of the lab to his advantage, topping shelves, luring opponents into corners and trying to subdue them with aimed attacks. If he sees a chance, he will throw corrosive liquids or combustible chemicals at the Characters. He knows that his last hour has come and without a chance to retreat, he fights tirelessly to the bitter end.

“My legacy,” the words gurgle out of his swollen mouth. He clutches at his wounds, coughs up blood and laughs his last laugh. His eyes are fixed on his killers; even in death, his face is merciless.

The last Old School Preservist dies in a puddle of blood on the floor of his lab. An era dies with him.

THE LEGACY

The Characters have come too late. While Wachsmann confronted them for a last battle, Opis herded the children of the Orphanage onto a swamp cutter. The arsenal of agents that Opis has gathered over the years as well as all the equipment from the UEO supply center are also on board. Wachsmann has named his submissive thrall, a Spitalian, and given him his final task. He is to go to the swamps and enter the heart of the Pheromancers with his child soldiers. There, he will lead the final attack.

Opis knows his target. Up the Rhône, towards Souffrance.

At this very moment, the cutter puts out to sea at the Great Tannery. Opis has left 50 of the youngest and weakest orphans at the Borcan Haakon. After all, work must go on. The other 350 children travel towards an unknown future with their new leader.



JEHAMMED'S STAR

The artifact that the Characters received from Adonai is a strange, very thin plate. The material is indeterminable, but it's clear that it is a product of high precision. It doesn't yield if pressure is applied and it is very cold to the touch. Body heat doesn't transfer to its surface.

If the Characters possess Jehammed's disc, they will notice a low static noise when the star comes into the vicinity of the disk. If they put the star on top of the disk, it will fit perfectly in the indentation. Instantly, a magnetic field polarizes itself, and the star is locked in its final position. The fine engravings start shimmering; it almost looks as if lights were moving within the plate and along the lines. The dull

black artifact has found its home. If the Characters take a closer look at the engravings, they must successfully roll a Combination of INT+Artifact Lore (5) and INT+Science (4) to understand their meaning.

While Jehammed's disc seems to be some sort of receiver or amplifier, Jehammed's star resembles an astrolabe – a bygone tool to calculate star coordinates in the sky. In its middle, it boasts the old symbol for Jupiter, framed by planetary tropics. The four star symbols are arranged according to the Galilean moons of Jupiter — Europa, Io, Callisto and Ganymede — that are embossed on Jehammed's disc.

There is a recess at the center of Jehammed's star.

A closer look at the circular notch reveals a tiny socket for another instrument. Something is missing; this peculiar artifact is incomplete. Some pin or needle that would fit exactly into the hole and supply an alignment to the gauge. The Characters haven't the faintest idea what this last piece looks like.

If the Characters investigate the engravings further, they will realize that the strange symbols contain an encrypted code. Everything points at a positional notation system, but the star gives no indication from which angle to read and thus, decipher the symbols.

An axis of coordinates to pinpoint positions related to face and space is another clue, but as long as the symbol code has not been cracked, there is no unique mathematical correlation.

JEHAMMED'S WILL

If there are Jehammedans amongst the Characters or if any of the Characters have an Action Trait of 6D+ on INT+Legends, they may roll to remember clues from the past.

According to an ancient legend of the Ram Cult, Jehammed, the last prophet, bestowed a powerful artifact on his disciples before the Eshaton. This object, called "Jehammed's will" by the retinue of the prophet, was supposed to guarantee that humans would never search for apotheosis and that they would never populate the heaven which only the one true God may inhabit, to whom the last prophet had pledged allegiance to.

Jehammed's will was supposed to be a weapon for the disciples of the last prophet, powerful enough to exact retribution on the pride of those who try to usurp God's throne. Even after the last prophet ceased to walk amongst the Jehammedans, the artifact would still carry out God's righteous wrath.

However, the Eshaton destroyed Jehammed's will. Over the centuries, some parts were recovered while other parts fell into the hands of foreign powers; these pieces were sold, stolen, buried and unearthed again. But nobody has managed to reassemble all of the parts and make it whole.

It's unclear whether the legend is true. It is obvious, though, that there is more to this disc and the star than a transmitter and a system of coordinates.

THE HORNED NINE

Aries, the leader of the Jehammedans, would do anything to find the different parts of Jehammed's will and put the artifact together once again. To find all the components, he

has unleashed a death squad, the Horned Nine. This group of Hellvetic Infiltrators and Arianoi consists of faithful servants of the Marauder. They have all tasted his blood and immortality. Aries is mentally linked to all of them. He pervades their thoughts and navigates them from the north to the south and from the east to the west. Tirelessly, they hunt for the parts of Jehammed's will. It's their singular task, the meaning of their lives. Those who stand in the way of the Horned Nine will suffer the wrath of Aries.

BRITAIN

As if the Spitalians didn't already have enough irons in the fire with the lost Border Post North and the invading swarms from Parasite...!

Now, all of a sudden, reports abound about Clans from Britain crossing the border at the Janus Crater and the Stukov Desert for the first time.

They call themselves Pictons, and their bodies are covered in fluorescent paint. Their chests and limbs boast bygone star symbols. Primitive, sanguinary, and equipped with high-tech weaponry, they attack the border areas of Franka in the autumn of 2596.

Preservists manage to capture a handful of Pictons and with the Chroniclers there to assist them, they torture them until they break.

The answers they find cause uneasiness. The Pictons are Argyre's enslaved warriors. The Vulture has sent them through the desert to recover an artifact for him. A Streamer named Ampere, who is investigating the prisoners at the behest of the Central Cluster, realizes that the savages have been attuned to three different memes. The symbols they have been conditioned to seek are a disk, a star and a spear.

However, the imprisoned Pictons reveal even more. The hunt for the artifact is only one of two conditioning patterns they have been implanted with. The second, underlying mental imprinting focuses on the destruction of a person related to the black Sun Eye of the Palers.

Helios, the Sleeper prophet.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The events start to quicken their pace. There is talk of an Arianoi in the Jehammedan quarter of Justitian. The natives speak of him with reverence on their tongues. His name is Naraka. When the Judges try to look into the rumors, they quickly learn that every path is paved with red herrings...

You can find more revelations concerning Jehammed's star at www.degenesis.com.

EXPERIENCE AND REWARDS

It is over. The last hurdles of the campaign have been cleared; the Characters are at the crossroads of past experiences and future adventures. Behind them, lie days and weeks full of trials, tribulations, and revelations. Nothing can ever erase the upheavals of Toulon from memory.

If you played the campaign “OPERATION MIRAGE“ over several sessions, the Characters receive 1 XP per gaming session. The 72 hours of Toulon can be played in 9 sessions of 8 hours gaming time each to create a real-time gaming experience. If you have halved the number of gaming sessions thereby condensing the scenes, you may award 2 XP per gaming session. Furthermore, every player gets 1 XP per scene played during the adventure. Award +1 XP for surviving a life-threatening situation, for a new revelation or unique experience. If a player exhibited special, individual performance, you can award +1 XP to the Character if his actions significantly influenced the events of the game.

At the end of every Act and at the end of the campaign, the Characters get additional XP. For more detailed information, consult the following list:

NEW TO THE CITY

Creating a network +1 XP
Questioning the population +1 XP
Getting the lay of the land +1 XP
Finding allies outside the city walls +1 XP
Surviving expeditions into the swamps +2 XP
Conquering drones +1 XP
Following up on rumors +1 XP

PROLOGUE: THE DAY BEFORE

Pursuing the Scrapper Bergmann +1 XP
Getting to know and helping Wisal +1 XP
Aiding the Scrapper Kreisel +1 XP
Noticing and pursuing Decoy 5 +1 XP
Calming the children of the fishermen +1 XP
Recovering the body of the Scourger from the canal +1 XP
Noticing the camo boat of the Black Flock +1 XP
Alliance with Elaine +1 XP

ACT 1: X-DAY

Witnessing the explosion of the Silver Axis +2 XP
Aiding Zohra and the Scourgers at the Consulate +2 XP
Saving injured people at the Bank of Commerce +2 XP
Protecting the students of the University +4 XP
Saving the Spitalians at the harbor +4 XP
Surviving the Scrappers attack on the raft +2 XP
Raising the antenna at the palace +1 XP
Helping Hamza escape +2 XP
Eliminating the armored car +3 XP
Destroying the first emitter +1 XP
Surviving Factor's ambush +2 XP
Aiding the Scourgers at the Northern Port +2 XP
Coupling the tugboat +2 XP
Surviving Eisenhauer's relentless fire +2 XP

ACT 2: THE DAY AFTER

Listening in on the Chronicler frequency +1 XP
Finding the second emitter +1 XP
Conquering Factor +3 XP
Freeing Alabaster +2 XP
Searching the nest of the Firebirds +1 XP
Discovering the tunnel at the Slaughterhouse +1 XP
Aiding Decoy 5 and saving Eico +2 XP
Conquering Hurlant on board of the freight gondola +3 XP
Searching the alcove +3 XP
Turning off the third emitter +1 XP
Conquering Deich and saving Zohra +4 XP
Surviving Eisenhauer's Bear rage +2 XP
Getting to know the Black Flock +1 XP
Questioning Mirage +2 XP

ACT 3: DAY OF THE PHOENIX

Stopping Remagnac +2 XP
Facing the Resistance +1 XP
Conquering Zoe and saving Vericon +3 XP
Stopping Mirage from escaping +2 XP
Surviving the explosion of the atrium +2 XP
Escaping Hexell's hail of bullets +3 XP
Facing and conquering Rattler +7 XP
Execution of Baptiste +3 XP
Heralding the end of Toulon +7 XP

EPILOGUE: A NEW DAY

Aiding Adonai +1 XP
Shoveling the mass grave +1 XP
Getting Jehammed's star +3 XP
Discovering the UEO supply center +2 XP
Discovering Wachsmann's secret +2 XP
Defeating Wachsmann +4 XP

CULT CARDS AND BACKGROUNDS

SPITALIANS: If the Characters helped the Famulancers of L'Orage until the bitter end, their Allies or Network traits rise by 1. Also, the number on the white die on the Cult card rises by 1. They are welcome in Montpellier and will receive help in field hospitals in the Rhône area.

If they also discovered Wachsmann's secret and gave Volta's booklet to the Spitalians, their Network trait in relation to Preservists rises by 2.

CHRONICLERS: If the Characters confronted Commando Requiem and were instrumental in the failure of Operation Mirage, the Chroniclers will hate them from now on. Even if the masked ones never openly admit it, the number on the black die on the Cult card rises by 4.

Secretly, the Characters will be considered saboteurs and mortal enemies of the Cult. It will be increasingly hard for them to trade in alcoves or get factual information.

If the Characters had Allies or a Network including Chroniclers before the campaign, those background traits decrease by 1.

HELLVETICS: If the deserter Baptiste has died at the hands of the Characters and they can prove it, they will receive a handsome bounty. Every Character gets Resources +1 and additionally toll-free passage through the Alps, and the number on the white die rises by 2.

CLANNERS: The resistance will never forget Zoe's glory. Should the Marechal de Franka, Armand Malpierre, find the killers of his general, that might mean +3 on the black die on the Cult card for the Characters. The cooperation with the Resistance becomes harder.

At the same time, though, they win Vericon, the mayor, as an ally and advisor. The Clanners amongst the Characters get Allies +1; all others get Network +1.

SCRAPPERS: If the Characters confronted Nestor and his Iron Brothers and destroyed them, future negotiations with European Scrappers will prove to be more difficult. The number on the black die on the Cult card rises by 2. If they are also responsible for Eisenhauer's death, they get Renown +1.

If they have killed the officer Deich, they will have problems with the Cartel later. Bosch likes to settle scores. Nego-

tiations with the Cartel are at -2D.

If they remained faithful to Orma and fought by his side, they will have Network or Allies +2 when it comes to African Scrappers on the southern coast of Franka and on Syracuse in the future.

NEOLIBYANS: Hamza will not forget that the Characters helped him. Even if his realm is in trouble, he will supply them with anything he can spare. They get Allies, Resources and Renown +1. Neolibyans also get +1 to their Authority background. The number on the white die on the Cult card rises by 4. The doors to Africa are open for the Characters.

SCOURGERS: The packs of the Rhône deltas are not the only ones who will never forget the glory of the Dumisai; those who fought by Ayubu's side have also earned the respect of the ancestors. They get Renown +1, the number on the white die on the Cult card rises by 2.

ANUBIANS: Anubians know gratitude, too. The battle for Toulon will make it marginally easier to talk to the Jackals in the future. The number on the white die on the Cult card rises by 1.

JEHAMMEDANS: If the Characters return Jehammed's star, the entire Cult will be grateful. The number on the white die on the Cult card rises by 4. They get Network or Allies +3.

However, if the Characters handle the artifact carelessly, abuse it, or sell it to Chroniclers or Palers, they will become enemies of the Ram Cult. In this case, the black die rises by 4. If the Characters keep the artifact and try to uncover its secrets, they will be pursued by the Horned Nine. Sooner or later, the Characters will have to personally confront Aries' henchmen.

APOCALYPTICS: If the Characters killed the Phoenix, the Apocalyptics of the Mediterranean and of the Rhône delta will be grateful. They get Renown +2.

The pirates will grant them free passages between Purgare and Franka. The number on the white die on the Cult card rises by 2. Moreover, the Characters gain access to the resources of the Black Flock. They can use their Allies and Resources traits on Apocalyptics at -2.

GUARDS, ENEMIES AND MINIONS

IRON BROTHERS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 4D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Crusher, 6D, Range 1m, Damage 8, Blunt; Marvel, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 8, Muzzle Loader or Musket, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 8, Muzzle Loader; Explosive bottles, 6D, Distance (5/30), Damage 6, Fire Hazardous

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (Digging in), Mobility 5D; Mental 6D

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 7D, PSY+Domination 7D, INS+Orienteering 6D, INS+Perception 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Welder's goggles and Scrapper armor, Armor 4, Instable (6) or Rubber harness and helmet, Armor 5, Insulated; Tin shield, Defense +1D/0, Attack -1D

CONDITION: 18 (Trauma: 9)

TACTICS: Raging

The Iron Brothers are incensed and ready to do anything. They know that Nestor is counting on them. Like rabid dogs, they attack their victims. If a pack conquers one of their former oppressors, all Iron Brothers involved instantly regain one Ego point. Their day of reckoning has finally come!

CARTELLISTS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D/14 Ego Points

ATTACK: Crusher, 8D (10D), Range 1m, Damage 9 (10), Blunt; Shotgun, 8D, Distance (5/20), Damage 10, Scatter, Double Barreled or Mortar, 6D, Distance (20/60), Damage 14, Deviation, Thunder Strike, Explosive

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 8D (10D); Ranged Combat active (Digging in), Mobility 6D; Mental 6D

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 5D, PSY+Cunning 8D, PSY+Domination 8D, INS+Perception 7D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Helmet or mask, rubber harness, reinforced leather coat, Armor 5, Fireproof (4), Insulated

CONDITION: 18 (22) (Trauma: 9 (11))

TACTICS: Brawling

The Cartel Scrappers are used to real trouble. A little Burn, and then it's into the fray — as long as it works in their favor. If there's no real gain to be made and the situation is dire, the Cartelists prefer retreating and waiting to attack at a later point in time or at a different location. All of Deich's thugs are full of Burn, specifically of Glory (s. Traits in brackets) or of Argus (Initiative 10D, no surprise).

COMMANDO REQUIEM

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 7D/14 Ego Points

ATTACK: Shocker, 6D, Range 1m, Dazed (8); Steel rod, 6D, Range 1m, Damage 6, Blunt; Automatic pistol, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 7, Smooth Running (3 T); Smoke grenades & flash bangs, 6D, Distance (10/40)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active (Take cover), Mobility 6D; Mental 6D

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 7D, AGI+Stealth 8D, INT+Artifact Lore 6D, PSY+Cunning 7D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Scuffed Shutter Suit and leather coat, Armor 3

CONDITION: 12 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Ambush

Risk factor high, score low. The Cluster finds the Shutters used for Operation Mirage insufferable. They are violent and hard to handle; they have been independent for too long. They are perfect for Toulon — in other words, expendable.

The Shutters leave the front to the Iron Brothers; they prefer to act outside of the battle, “taking care of” prisoners and setting up ambushes with booby traps, mines or simply fire (+2D to AGI+Crafting when preparing traps).

ARCVILLE'S GANG

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D/14 Ego Points

ATTACK: Judgement Hammer, 7D, Range 1m, Damage 9, Blunt, Impact (2 T); Judges' Musket, 8D, Distance (10/40), Damage 8, Muzzle Loader; Flintlock Pistol, 8D, Distance (5/20), Damage 8, Muzzle Loader

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 7D; Ranged Combat active (Take cover), Mobility 7D; Mental 8D

SPECIAL: AGI+Navigation 7D, PSY+Domination 8D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Leather coat, Armor 2

CONDITION: 16 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Cavalry/static battle

The Jurymen and Protectors led by the Black Judge are a committed community who are used to working together under military conditions. Each of them has a battle-hardened horse, which is why they can be used as cavalry (s. KATHARSY: Vehicles in Combat). When fighting on the ground, the Jurymen and Judges flank each other. Quick changes of position are also part of their trained strategies (+2D to the first attack after a feigned retreat).

RATTLER'S RETINUE

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D/18 Ego Points

ATTACK: Knife, 8D, Range 1m, Damage 4, Smooth Running (2 T); Heavy crossbow with sight, 9D, Distance (30/120), Damage 12 or Sniper rifle, 10D, Distance (50/400), Damage 11, Sensitive

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (Crouched walk), Mobility 8D; Mental 4D

SPECIAL: AGI+Stealth 9W, PSY+Cunning 8D,

PSY+Deception 8D, INS+Perception 7D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Leather pants and coat, Armor 2

CONDITION: 14 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Urban combat

Nothing to lose, everything to gain – the Firebirds want to see Toulon burn. Whenever possible they ambush enemies and rely on well-placed, deadly pinprick attacks (+2D AGI+Stealth in the streets of Toulon). They prefer to fight alone. If they are cornered or if there is no other choice, the will band together. Any attempt to quell their resistance will only increase the burning hatred of the Firebirds. If a member of their Flock is killed, nearby Firebirds instantly get +1D6 Ego points.

RESISTANCE

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 7D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Rifle, 6D, Distance (30/120), Damage 6; Bayonet, 8D, Range 1m, Damage 5 or Pistol, 6D, Distance (10/40), Damage 9; Saber, 8D, Range 1m, Damage 9; Explosive bottles, 6D, Distance (5/30), Damage 6, Fire Hazardous

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active (Take cover), Mobility 6D; Mental 8D

SPECIAL: BOD+Stamina 7D, INT+Legends 6D, INS+Orienteering 6D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Leather armor over uniform, Armor 3

CONDITION: 16 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Charge/firefight

The Resistance fighters are loyal to a cause bigger than themselves: Franka.

Retreat is only an option when ordered. Their motto is “Resolve and Unity”. If more than 10 Resistance fighters charge an enemy across an open space, they get +1D to attack. Moreover, Resistance fighters regain 1 Ego point if they have conquered an enemy emplacement. The spirit of the moment mercilessly pushes them on.

THE BLACK FLOCK

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 8D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Cutlass, 6D, Range 1m, Damage 7; Throwing knife, 9D, Distance (3/10), Damage 6; Harpoon Crossbow, 7D, Distance (10/40), Damage 8 or Revolver, 9D, Distance (10/40) Damage 10

DEFENSE: Passive 3, always on the move; Melee active (Glide out of the way), Mobility 10D; Ranged Combat active (Duck), Mobility 10D; Mental 7D

SPECIAL: AGI+Navigation 7D, PSY+Domination 8D

MOVEMENT: 9m

ARMOR: Leather vest or clothing, Armor 1

CONDITION: 16 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Boarding combat

Mobility is the key. The pirates of the Black Flock are callous fighters used to preying on well-guarded trading ships and fighting Scourgers who are armed to the teeth. They have no environmental penalty in tight spots (below deck on a ship, in alleys or between struts and scaffolding). To the contrary – their passive Defense rises to 4 because the pirates are accustomed to using confined spaces to their advantage.

GRENOUILLES

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 4D/6 Ego Points

ATTACK: Traqueur, 4D, Range 2m, Damage 6

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 4D; Ranged Combat active (Hitting the dirt), Mobility 4D; Mental 2D

SPECIAL: INT+Medicine 4

MOVEMENT: 3W

ARMOR: Gas mask with improvised filter and used Spitalian Suits, Armor 1, Sealed (+2S)

CONDITION: 10 (Trauma: 5)

TACTICS: Combat formations/retreat

The Grenouilles' training isn't finished by far. If they see a chance to retreat, they'll gladly take it, for their combat formations only vaguely resemble the Spitalian phalanxes. In fact, the members of this auxiliary troop rather handicap each other instead of supporting each other.

In Formation, a Grenouille gets +1D to defense as soon as he has another next to him, but also -2D to attack because of other Traqueurs crossing his.

L'ORAGE FAMULANCERS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 4D/8 Ego Points

ATTACK: Splayer, 5D, Range 2 m, Damage 6, Cutting; Fungicide Rifle, 5D, Distance (2/8), Fire Dust, Damage 8, Fire Hazardous or Chlorine Gas, Poisoned (5 C, 1 Trauma per round, Potency -1 per round, successful roll on BOD+Toughness (Potency) and poisoning, one roll per round)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 7D; Ranged Combat active (Take cover), Mobility 7D; Mental 3D

SPECIAL: INT+Medicine 6D, INT+Science 6D, INS+Perception 6D

MOVEMENT: 4m

ARMOR: Gas mask with breathing cloths, level 1: +1S against Spore Infestation, germs and environmental toxins; Spitalian Suit, Armor 2, Sealed (+2 S), Reputable (Patients, +1D)

CONDITION: 10 (Trauma: 5)

TACTICS: Combat formations/agents

The L'Orage Famulancers have no combat experience. They are not unskilled, though, and can easily keep an enemy at distance when fighting in formation (Potential: Phalanx, level 2). However, they prefer to refrain from fighting and will only attack opponents who pursue them with fire dust and chlorine gas if absolutely necessary. As soon-to-be Field medics, they know exactly how devastating the effects of their weapons are.

LE BEAU MONDE

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D/8 Ego points

ATTACK: Rifle, 6D, Distance (30/120), Damage 6; Saber, 6D, Range 1m, Damage 8;

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 7D; Ranged Combat active (Take cover), Mobility 7D; Mental 4D

SPECIAL: AGI+Stealth 7D, CHA+Conduct 8D, INS+Orienteering 7D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Beret with emblem (Anchor of Toulon), reinforced uniform with insignia, Armor 2

CONDITION: 12 (Trauma: 5)

TACTICS: Ambushes/holding the line

The Beau Monde is an experienced militia with immaculate equipment. Its special strength is its knowledge of the city. As soon as the Toulonni freely choose their position, they get +2D to AGI+Stealth to camouflage their presence. It's easy for them to prepare a perfect ambush, for Toulon is their city. If the Beau Monde entrenches itself, the aforementioned also applies. It is not a major challenge for them to acquire material for barricades and improvised protective walls. They get +5 instead of +4 to their Passive Defense when in full cover.

AYUBU'S SCOURGERS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 9D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Combat knife, 9D, Range 1m, Damage 5, Smooth Running (2T); Assault rifle, 8D, Distance (30/120), Damage 11, Salvos 3; Pistol, 8D, Distance (10/40), Damage 9

DEFENSE: Passive 3; Melee active (Parry), Melee 12D; Ranged Combat active (Sidestepping), Mobility 8D; Mental 10D

SPECIAL: BOD+Athletics 9W, BOD+Stamina 9W, CHA+Leadership 7D

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Scourger Mask, PSY+Faith/Willpower +2D against mental attacks; Flak Jacket and Helmet, Armor 4; Oval Shield, Defense +2D/+1, Attack -1D

CONDITION: 18 (Trauma: 9)

TACTICS: Single combat/Veterans

Ayubu's Scourgers have been hardened by the battle against the Hybrispanian Guerreros.

As a well attuned team, they can use experience and tactics from professional warfare. As soon as Ayubu's men exchange orders and instructions in battle and coordinate with each other, they get +2D to Initiative.

If the Scourgers are separated from their brothers in arms, they pursue honorable single combat. None of them would hesitate to give his life for one of the others. If Ayubu so wished, his men would walk through fire for him.

AFRICAN SCRAPPERS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 3D/8 Ego Points

ATTACK: Various tools, 3D, Range 1m, Damage 6; Revolver, 4D, Distance (10/40), Damage 10 or Shotgun, 4D, Distance (5/20), Damage 10, Scatter, Double Barreled

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Retreat), Mobility 6D; Ranged Combat active (Jump for cover), Mobility 6D; Mental 5D

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 7D, INT+Artifact Lore 7D, INT+Engineering 6D

MOVEMENT: 4m

ARMOR: Lightweight casual clothing, sometimes coveralls or caftans, Armor 0; Draped with possessions, Armor 1

CONDITION: 10 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Retreat/digging in

The African Scrappers are unprepared and the escalation hits them hard. They have no combat training or experience.

The weapons they carry are either improvised or found on the street. If they are involved in a fight, they retreat as quickly as possible to dig themselves in somewhere. If they are pursued by an enemy, they will either surrender or fight for their lives out of sheer despair.

MURNAKIR'S DRONES

Murnakir's drones are hardly more than empty shells roaming through the Rhône swamps on invisible roads. Their bodies are emaciated. Due to the silent unity that links them all, they cannot feel hunger anymore. They only eat when ordered to.

WORKER

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D/8 Ego Points

ATTACK: Biface, 5D, Range 1m, Damage 3, Smooth Running (3T), Fragile

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Raise arm), Brawl 5D; Ranged Combat active (Crouched walk), Mobility 5D; Mentally unimpressed

SPECIAL: BOD+Brawl 5D, BOD+Stamina 6D, AGI+Crafting 6D, AGI+Stealth 6D

MOVEMENT: 3m

ARMOR: Naked, Armor 0

CONDITION: 6 (Trauma: 5)

TACTICS: Overrun

A single worker does not pose a danger for an able-bodied opponent. But drones are rarely alone in the Rhône swamps. In combat, the workers attack their enemies irrespective of their own lives. They grab their arms, clutch their hair and scratch their skin. They rely on their strength in numbers. If there are three times as many drones as defenders, the workers get +1D to Action Rolls in combat while their opponents get -1D. If there are five times as many drones as defenders, the bonus rises to +3D, the penalty to -3D. At eight times as many drones, the bonus rises to +5D, the penalty to -5D. If the penalty decreases BOD+Athletics to 0 or less, the defenders are subdued and cannot act anymore.

WARRIOR

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D/10 Ego Points

ATTACK: Club, 6D, Range 1m, Damage 5, Blunt; Blow gun, 6D, Distance (3/12), Damage 4, Poisoned (5C, 1 Trauma per round, successful roll on BOD+Toughness (Potency), one roll per round)

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active (Crouched walk), Mobility 6D; Mentally unimpressed

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 6D, AGI+Stealth 8D, INS+Perception 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Loincloth, Armor 0

CONDITION: 8 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Traps/ambushes

Drone warriors roam the borders as guards. They either prepare traps with potent poisons and lure attackers into them or they stalk their opponents from behind and ambush them. They are nearly invisible in the swamp.

IDOL BEARER

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 7D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Claw fingers, 7D, Range 1m, Damage 7

DEFENSE: Passive 2; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 7D; Ranged Combat active (Keeping in motion), Mobility 7D; Mentally unimpressed

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 7D, AGI+Stealth 8D, PSY+Domination 9W, INS+Primal 8D

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Idol mask, Terrifying (2), Armor 0

CONDITION: 10 (Trauma: 7)

TACTICS: Raise alarm

One fifth of all drones have lost their humanity for good. Glands grow under their armpits and their lymphatic nodes are on the verge of bursting. Their skin is covered in indurations. These Leperos are the vanguard of the Pheromancers, hiding their identity behind wooden masks that depict the faces of their masters.

Idol bearers are in constant communication with their queen, and the wind whispers to them where to set up the next border stone. They imprint the pheromone markers with new orders and call workers together. They read the traffic of the insects in the underbrush, which warns them of approaching intruders.

If the borders or markers are in danger, the Idol bearers attack the enemy without concern for their own lives. They are part of something bigger; their death has only one meaning – to call even more defenders to their side of the battle. Upon their death, their glands burst, spraying the vicinity with a sour smelling ichor that serves to warn those in surrounding areas. A roll on INS+Primal determines how strong the resulting effect is:

SUCCESS, NO TRIGGERS: Within half an hour, the warning ichor attracts all drones within one kilometer to the death scene. Pheromancers in the area are alarmed that an Idol bearer has died.

1+ TRIGGER: For each success, the scent of the dead Idol bearer has +100 m range. The strong scent affects all Characters nearby – without gas mask or respiratory protection, the nasal mucosae will swell within seconds and uncontrollable tears will blur the victim's vision (Poisoned, difficulty equals the number of successes rolled, -1D to all Actions, 30 min).

3+ TRIGGERS: In addition to all other effects, the ichor is so potent that the drones it attracts become extremely agitated. The death creates both sadness and rage; in combat, all drones have +2D to their Action Rolls against the common enemy.

5+ TRIGGERS: The Idol bearer sprays an individual scent that reaches Murnakir himself. While the event carries no particular significance for him, all Fosters, Exiles and Idol bearers are alerted to the location of this particular death instantly.

EQUIPMENT

MELEE WEAPONS

COMBAT KNIFE

Combat knives of UEO or UAO stock are made from by-gone steel alloys and are coveted melee weapons. The serrated edge of the blade is helpful in the wilderness and causes massive wounds.

The crossguards of UEO combat knives have steel eyelets so they can be attached to most assault rifles as bayonets.

UAO combat knives are also called Scourger Daggers and are given as honorary gifts by the Chaga to skilled fighters in his pack. On one side, the crossguard turns into a grip protector so the knife can also be used as a knuckleduster.

SPECIALTY: An UEO combat knife can be used to tweak an assault rifle without using up slots. The rifle can then be used as a melee weapon with the damage being equal to that of the combat knife.

UAO combat knives however can also be used as a knuckleduster. The stats are those of a common knuckleduster, but the weapon retains the combat knife's quality Smooth Running. The Scourger Dagger counts as a Cult object for Scourgers.

STEEL ROD

These flexible metal rods are neither as clumsy nor as conspicuous as a club, but are just as effective. In addition to the standard varieties that Jurymen, Hellvetic sluice guards and other guard personnel regularly employ to maintain order, there is also a telescope variety. After loosening the locking mechanism, the rod itself can be collapsed into a small cylinder leaving it almost imperceptible.

SPECIALTY: The telescope variety of the steel rod costs 300 CD and gets the Quality Camo (2D) as long as it is not extended. This variety also counts as a Cult object for Chroniclers (Shutters).

FIREARMS

SAWED-OFF-SHOTGUN

Precise sawing and good tools are necessary to shorten a shotgun without ruining the barrels (AGI+Crafting (4)). Afterwards, the rifle can be easily hidden under a coat or a wide jacket, which normally wouldn't be possible.

SPECIALTY: In some cases, the butt of the shotgun is also turned into a pistol grip (uses up 1 Slot). Such a weapon costs 200 CD more, but gets +1D manageability.

HEAVY DUTY GATLING

This model is only handed out for special ops missions. Since the Gatling principle prevents overheating, this weapon's firepower is legendary, but the consumption of ammunition is far too high for common missions. Any Fourier will start sweating bullets when he has to hand out an ammunition container with 6.000 rounds.

SPECIALTY: The Heavy Duty Gatling with its ammunition container uses up 3 Slots. If mounted, the handling penalty of -2D is neutralized by the stabilizers.

GRENADES

FLASH BANG

Like shock grenades, these grenades filled with magnesium are mainly used to initiate a quick attack. When ignited, there is an extremely bright, flickering flash of light that makes people automatically shield their eyes. Victims are temporarily blinded.

EFFECT: If a Character is surprised by a flash bang, he gets -5D to all Actions requiring sight. Each round following the attack, this penalty is reduced by 1D.

OZONE GRENADES

This agent was especially developed for forays against the Pheromancers. While the rod-shaped grenades are expensive to produce and not so easy to handle, they are indispensable for forays into Franka.

EFFECT: Once ignited, ozone is freed explosively and instantly destroys all messenger substances in the grenade's blast radius. Ozone grenades are essential for survival against the alarm ichors of the Idol bearers. Pheromancers who are in the affected area at the moment of the explosion become briefly disoriented and have -4D when using their phenomena for 2 rounds.

SMOKE GRENADE

In contrast to explosive grenades, a smoke grenade burns for a longer period of time while continually producing smoke. There are different smoke colors and it is important to keep in mind that smoke grenades are used by the Hellvetics for signaling as well. When the wind conditions are appropriate or if used in interior rooms, the smoke reduces visibility to an arm's length within 1 D6 rounds, which makes it much easier to retreat. One could also use this opportunity to force the opponent to enter into close combat.

EFFECT: After ignition, the grenade burns for 30 rounds. It depends on the room and wind conditions determine how long the penalty of -4D to all Actions requiring sight applies.

SHOCK GRENADE

Like flash bangs, shock grenades are mainly used to confuse and surprise opponents. They detonation is extremely loud and leads to a temporary blast injury if victims don't have ear protection. Chroniclers like to combine the effects of shock grenades with those of flash bangs.

EFFECT: Victims of a blast injury cannot spend Ego points for two rounds. Explosions using both Shock and Flash Bang grenades have the effects of both agents, but they cost 200 CW and have a handling of -1D.

ARMOR

SHUTTER SUIT

Shutters, Fuses and other Cult members on secret missions have no use for the pomp of regular Chronicler Suits. Maybe that kind of stuff can serve to intimidate Clanners, but there's a different set of rules underground.

SPECIALTY: Shutter Suits are de-glittered, making them much less conspicuous. They can also be tweaked with modules just like regular Chronicler Suits.

ARMED MELEE

(BOD + MELEE)

Name	Hand.	Dist.	Damage	Qualities	Enc.	Tech	SLOTS	Value	Res.	Cult
Iron rod	-2D	1	4+F/2	Blunt, Impact (2T)	2	II	1	20	-	
Cutlass	-	1	4+F/3		1	II	1	200	-	
Biface	-	1	1+F/2	Smooth Running (3T), Fragile, Brawl	1	I	-	5	-	
Combat knife	+1D	1	3+F/3	Smooth Running (2T)	1	II	1	450	2	Scourgers
Chainsaw	-2D	1	12	Sensitive, Terrifying (3), Impact (1T)	3	IV	1	1000	3	Hellvetics
Machete	-	1	6+F/3		2	II	1	450	-	
Steel Rod	+1D	1	3+F/2	Blunt	1	III	1	250	2	Chroniclers
Traqueur	-	2	3+F/3		3	II	2	200	-	
Walking staff	-	2	1+F/2	Blunt	2	I	1	30	-	

GUNS

(AGI + PROJECTILES)

Name	Caliber	Hand.	Dist.	Dam.	Mag.	Qualities	Enc.	Tech	SLOTS	Value	Res.	Cult
S.O. shotgun	12mm Buckshot	-	5/10	10	2	Scatter, Double Barreled	2	IV	2	1600	-	
Heavy Duty Gatling	5,56x45mm	-2D	50/200	12	strap	Salvoes (15)	7	IV	2	12000	5	Hellvetics

GRENADES

(AGI + PROJECTILES)

Name	Hand.	Dist.	Damage	Qualities	Enc.	Tech	Value	Res.	Cult
Flash Bang	-	10/40	special	Deviation, Cloud (5 m, 1 round)	1	IV	80	2	Chroniclers, Hellvetics
Ozone Grenade	-1D	10/40	special	Deviation, Cloud (15 m, 1 round)	1	IV	500	3	Spitalians, Resistance
Smoke Grenade	-	10/40	special	Deviation, Cloud (5+ m, 30 rounds)	1	IV	80	2	Chroniclers, Hellvetics
Shock Grenade	-	10/40	special	Deviation, Thunder Strike, Cloud (5 m, 1 round)	1	IV	110	2	Chroniclers, Palers
Frag grenade	-	10/40	15	Deviation, Thunder Strike, Explosive	1	III	300	-	

ARMOR

Name	Armor rating	Qualities	Enc.	Tech	SLOTS	Value	Res.	Cult
Shutter Suit	2	special	1	IV	2	300	3	Chroniclers

PROLOGUE

23 YEARS AGO: Mirage is brought to the Aquitaine Cluster. Her Chronicler training begins.

10 YEARS AGO: Hamza Abubakar III. buys the concession for Toulon from the Bank of Commerce.

TWO YEARS AGO: Mirage and Hamza meet to negotiate. The conversation doesn't go well for Mirage. The prodigy of the Chroniclers loses face and is humiliated.

A YEAR AGO: Mirage decides to instigate a violent paradigm change in Toulon with the aid of the Clusters in Aquitaine and Justitian. Her goal is to overthrow Hamza Abubakar III.

THREE MONTHS AGO: At the behest of Rattler, a Phoenix, the Hellvetic deserter named Baptiste starts looking for and cataloging the Achilles' heels of the city. He places payloads at all important hubs of Toulon.

EIGHT WEEKS AGO: The Cave Bear Eisenhauer, a legend amongst Scrappers, joins the underground movement of the Iron Brothers. He smuggles vast amounts of weapons into the city and arms the Iron Brothers.

SIX WEEKS AGO: Callisto, the undisputed leader of the Black Flock, suffers from fever dreams. A Phoenix wreaks havoc on her time and time again. When she consults the Tarot, it shows the Abomination sitting above the Creator – the worst of all omens.

THREE WEEKS AGO: Ivar, an Apocalyptic of the Black Flock, has washed up on the shore of the Black Nest badly wounded. His Storks have been massacred and his face has been burnt. A declaration of war? By whom? All Ivar can remember is that there was a tattooed man.

TWO WEEKS AGO: Ayubu, the Dumisai, notices strange movements beyond the city limits. The Iron Brothers seem shiftier than normal. Then, one of his men reports an uncharted tunnel in Terres Putain. The bloodhound senses that something is going on, but his comrades assure him that they are safe. Toulon is not the jungle of Hybrispania.

SEVEN DAYS AGO: Factor, the Fuse, has accomplished his greatest technical marvel to date: an emission shield he can use to jam radio transmissions and complete-

ly cut the city off from any communication with the outside world. The emitters Factor has mounted on rooftops all over the city keep the shield in place. At Mirage's order, he will disconnect all frequencies.

THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY: The Dumisai wants to investigate the tunnel. and He sends a young Dufu to take a look around at the Slaughterhouse. The inexperienced Scourger stumbles into an ambush and is executed by the Iron Brothers. They drop his body into a canal at Port Lagagne to get rid of all traces leading to the scene of the crime. The Iron Brothers have to be very careful.

YESTERDAY: Bergmann, a Scrapper allied with Nestor, is told to wedge a barge in the canal that separates Terres Putain from Cour Argent to distract the Scourgers from the nearby barracks. While the barge is being moved to dissolve the backlog on the canal, Scrappers place several payloads that Eisenhauer gave them for X-Day around the barracks. During the mission, Bergmann loses it, and he flees, before someone can arrest him.

◊ The wiremaker Kreisel proves to be a troublemaker. He was supposed to produce explosive coils for the operation the following day, but he got cold feet and backed out of the job. A group of Iron Brothers deals with him using kicks and blows.

◊ An uncharted tunnel becomes flooded and caves in on itself. This makes a multistory building bordering one of the heavily trafficked canals in Terres Putain collapse. The site is secured at once. Decoy 5, a Shutter, starts investigating there.

◊ The corpse of the murdered Scourger is dragged from a canal in Port Lagagne. Children are playing with the dead man's helmet, which leads to the creation of a search and rescue party for the Dufu. Who would dare to confront the best warriors of Africa? The Scourgers have no idea.

◊ A camo boat of the Black Flock reaches Toulon. It is supposed to search the waters for traps and supply the approaching pirates with an overview of the situation in the ports and on all possible landing stages. Apocalyptics hate surprises. Except for the ones they spring on others.

X - DAY

07:00 AM: Three detonations destroy the Cour Argent. The Silver Axis, the barracks and the bridge to Ferrallies are blown up. The Iron Brothers herald X-Day with terror.

- ◊ The main force under Eisenhauer and Nestor lays siege to the palace of Hamza Abubakar III. Countless grenades fly. The outer wall will not be able to withstand this ongoing barrage for long.
- ◊ Deich and his Cartel thugs attack the Neolibyan Consulate. They try to take Consul Zohra hostage in order to demand ransom later. The Scourgers responsible for protecting Zohra are killed.
- ◊ Scrappers and Shutters loot the house of the Bank of Commerce. There are many dead and injured. Concessions, Dinars and gold reserves are stolen and brought to Ferrallies via a human chain.
- ◊ Iron Brothers and Commando Requiem attack the University. They burn books and execute African students. They want to purge the spirit of the Neoliberians from the city.
- ◊ Remagnac and his Famulancers from the L'Orage field hospital are taken hostage. They are supposed to look after the injured Iron Brothers in Ferrallies. The Scrapper Hurlant coordinates the arrest. She has a score to settle with the Spitalians.
- ◊ There is a confrontation at the Northern Port. The Famulancers of L'Orage are rescued and escape to Terres Putain.

10:00 AM: Briefing at Camp Resistance. General Zoe Morceau and Mayor Vericon are discordant. The general wants to attack; the mayor wants to negotiate.

- ◊ Meanwhile, Iron Brothers with heavy machinery attack the interior wall of Hamza's palace. Though massively decimated, the Scourgers resist.
- ◊ A distraction on the Africans' part is meant to confuse the attackers. They ignite a signal beacon on the platform in hopes of sending a false message of victory against the Scrappers. The short moment of confusion is enough for Hamza, escorted by Ayubu and his Scourgers, to escape the palace. Nephraim, the Anubian, stays behind.

03:00 PM: On the Silver Axis, the Resistance, Beau Monde fighters and Scourgers meet. The three strike forces try to organize the retreat. The Iron Brothers have superior numbers and are extremely well equipped.

- ◊ The Iron Brothers send an armored car racing down the burnt-out Silver Axis. Massive fighting ensues. The Resistance must fall back to its post on the other side of the bridge in Terres Putain, while Ayubu's pack veers off to the Customs Offices.

07:00 PM: A strange frequency field jams radio transmissions and distress calls made by Scrapper radio to regions surrounding around the city. Transmission within city limits still work.

- ◊ At the warehouses, there's an intense altercation with Factor, the Fuse. His emission shield jams any communication with those outside of the city, and he defends his emitters by force of arms.

09:00 PM: Hamza, Ayubu and the Scourgers try to reach Pier 1 in the Northern Port to escape on board of the approaching African transport ship Unya. A brutal battle ensues. Jurymen, Scrappers and Shutters try to surround and kill the fugitives. Nestor himself has put a reward on Hamza's head. Eisenhauer supplies additional covering fire for the attackers.

- ◊ Orma runs the Unya aground and wedges the hull. The impact is massive. The black Scrappers supply covering fire for the retreating Scourgers. Hamza manages to safely reach the deck of the ship.

11:00 PM: The Unya cannot put out to sea. It is only a matter of time until the Scrappers board the ship from the port. With the last of their strength, the Scourgers continue to resist.

- ◊ A tugboat must free the Unya from its predicament so the colossus can depart the harbor. Right after the tugging chains are affixed, the transport ship leaves the danger zone. Seconds later, several grenades hit the tugboat and it explodes.

- ◊ Ayubu and his Scourgers fight to the last man. But their efforts are in vain. The superior numbers of the Scrappers and Jurymen eliminate them completely. The Dumisai dies from dozens of hammer and club blows.

THE DAY AFTER

05:00 AM: The Iron Brothers have conquered Hamza's palace. The Scrappers rage mercilessly. They want to completely wipe out the legacy of the Neolibyan.

- ◊ Meanwhile, the survivors of the day before gather in the Resistance camp. Zoe devises a battle plan for the next hours. A drunken Iron Brother shows up in the camp and tries his hand at diplomacy. Zoe sees his behavior as a declaration of war and executes him on the spot.
- ◊ The situation in the city is chaotic. More and more hotbeds of revolt surface around the city, damaging the unity of the population.

08:00 AM: Two Scrappers accidentally broadcast the access codes to a secure Chronicler channel. From now on, the Characters can listen in on Commando Requiem's communications.

- ◊ A second frequency emitter is found and destroyed in Terres Putain. It was also fashioned by Factor, the Fuse.

09:00 AM: Factor tries to abduct his beloved Alabaster from the nest of the Firebirds in order to leave the city with her, but ends up dying in an ambush.

- ◊ Clues in the abandoned nest of the Apocalyptics point to marked positions in Terres Putain. The Firebirds are very well informed about the Scrappers' movements. How?

11:00 AM: Vericon tries to persuade Zoe to refrain from sacrificing even more men for a counterattack. Instead, he wants to call for reinforcements from the surrounding cities using carrier pigeons.

- ◊ An unknown sniper shoots the pigeons from the sky.

01:00 PM: A secret subterranean tunnel leading to the Silver Axis is discovered close to the Slaughterhouse. There are probably more of these supply tunnels on the east side of town in Ferrallies, which would explain the surprise attack from the Scrappers the day before.

- ◊ Decoy 5, the Chronicler, is in the city on a secret mission. He is trying to find the leader of the riot, Mirage.

03:00 PM: On the encrypted radio channel, Mirage orders Commando Requiem to instantly stop the operation.

Nestor fumes, seeing this as a betrayal of their common cause. He orders Hurlant to destroy the petro towers with the freight gondola and to turn the Northern Port into an inferno.

05:00 PM: Hurlant has been subdued and the freight gondola has been steered off course at the last possible moment. The next danger is already lurking on the horizon. Dozens of pirate ships have entered the bay of Toulon.

06:00 PM: The secret hideaway of Commando Requiem has been attacked. Two unknown men, a tattooed one and a Hellvetic, have abducted the Paradigma Mirage.

- ◊ At the same time, Nestor, Eisenhauer and their entourage approach the alcove. The Iron Brothers want to settle the score with Commando Requiem. Arcville, the Black Judge, and his Jurymen fall into the hands of the enraged Scrappers and are summarily executed.

- ◊ Meanwhile, Deich brings his hostage Zohra to the alcove. Nestor wants to execute his captive as a warning to Hamza.

09:00 PM: Zohra and her Scribes manage to escape. However, they are pursued by the raging Eisenhauer and a pack of bloodthirsty Scrappers.

10:00 PM: Meridian of the Black Flock saves Zohra and her Scribes. The Apocalyptics are in town looking for a tattooed man who is somehow connected to their prophecies.

- ◊ Meanwhile, Zoe and the Resistance reach the palace. As the weakened Iron Brothers wait inside for reinforcements from Ferrallies, the supply tunnels suffer six huge explosions, leaving them in ruins.

- ◊ Hamza wants to negotiate with the Black Flock aboard the Unya. He hopes to forge an alliance with the Pirates. There, they find out that the tattooed man has brought a hostage to the Africans: the instigator of the riot. Mirage is in Hamza's hands. Using her, the Raider can apply pressure to the Chroniclers. The Apocalyptics offer the Neolibyan a pact to take back Toulon. At dawn, there will be a joint attack. Hamza wants to seize the moment before the Resistance can claim the city.

DAY OF THE PHOENIX

05:59 AM: The forces of the Apocalyptics and the African Scrappers land in three different spots of the city at the same time. Recapturing the city will be a swift endeavour.

07:07 AM: The Famulancers of L'Orage and the Pirates of the Black Flock get into a battle void of purpose. Everyone's nerves are raw, and a bloody altercation ensues. In the heat of the battle, Mirage escapes.

08:16 AM: Mirage falls into Zoe's hands. The general wants to use the hostage to blackmail Hamza to make concessions. She already conquered the city the night before, sacrificing her men to realize her vision of a free Franka. Now, she wants to see Toulon under the banner of the Resistance and exploit the city for the sake of her ideology. It looks like there's going to be a stalemate between the Resistance, Africans and Apocalyptics; any false move may lead to a bloodbath between the parties. All weapons are at the ready.

◆ In the heat of the moment, Zoe flees with her hostage. She's ready to do anything. Vericon, the mayor, confronts the fanatic general at the last minute. Mirage can't flee again.

09:11 AM: Hamza's men catch up with Mirage in the palace that has been laid to ruins. Hundreds of bodies line the gardens. Only six members of the Resistance are still alive. Hamza negotiates an instant truce and demands that they allow him to enter.

10:10 AM: A giant explosion destroys the atrium. On the night of the reconquest, Baptiste placed explosives and an optical barrier in the vault. Meanwhile, an unknown sniper has holed himself up on the Overwatch platform. He starts killing Apocalyptics on the palace grounds with aimed shots.

11:11 AM: Rattler, the Phoenix, has taken Callisto, the leader of the Black Flock, prisoner and plans to kill her. At the last possible moment, before the Phoenix ends her life, he tells the Apocalyptic the secret of their common origin.

11:13 AM: Callisto is safe. Rattler is dead. The madness he brought over Toulon perishes with him. However, the strange man with the haunting tattoos takes his secrets to his grave. The danger is not over, though. The sniper continues killing.

11:59 AM: The sniper jumps to his death. On the roof of the

Core Hall, another drama is playing out at the same time. Hamza, Orma and their hostage Mirage confront the mysterious Hellvetic, Baptiste. He has taken Hamza's half-brother Nephraim prisoner. Nephraim is tied to the neck of the Hellvetic with a heavy iron chain. In vain, Hamza tries to negotiate with the assassin.

00:00 PM: Zero hour. The Hellvetic has been shot. Desperate and shocked, Hamza and Orma try in vain to free Nephraim from the chain that binds him to the Hellvetic's body. The situation is desperate. Using the last of his strength, Orma has no choice but to jump from the roof with Hamza and Mirage. Seconds later, the third floor of the Core Hall explodes, dragging Nephraim to his inevitable death.

00:01 PM: Baptiste's dead man's switch detonates the payloads he has placed all over Toulon and floods the city with a sea of fire. In Ferrallies, Terres Putain and Port Lagagne, the payloads of the Hellvetic explode. The city turns into a funeral pyre. The explosions kill countless people and seal the fate of Toulon. Rattler's plan has come to its fruition.

— FIN —



TO BAYONNE

THE SCORCHED PATH

COUR ARGENT

SILVER AXIS

NORTHERN PORT

TERRES PUTAIN

PORT LAGAGNE

TOULON
2596 A.D.

0 500 2500m





TOULON MUST BURN



DEGENESIS
—
SIXMOREVODKA