



RCHONS

OF

NIKU

Era of Unrest Jumpstart



Written By: Josh Heath, Quinn C. Moerike, Rui Ramalho, David Horwitz

Developed by: Quinn C. Moerike and Josh Heath

Layout by: Josh Heath

Art by: Sadia Bies, Edwardckkk, and JE Shields

Some artwork © 2015 Dean Spencer, used with permission. All rights reserved.

Edited by: David Horwitz, Josh Heath, Quinn C. Moerike, and Rui Ramalho

Mechanics By: Rui Ramalho, David Horwitz, and Josh Heath

Trade Dress and Logo by: Sigil

More Archons of Nikud coming in 2019, be ready.

www.highlevelgames.ca for more details



High Level Games

“This game references the Savage Worlds game system, available from Pinnacle Entertainment Group at www.peginc.com. Savage Worlds and all associated logos and trademarks are copyrights of Pinnacle Entertainment Group. Used with permission. Pinnacle makes no representation or warranty as to the quality, viability, or suitability for purpose of this product.”





ERA OF UNREST JUMPSTART

Eras of the Archons

Welcome to Archons of Nikud. In this setting for Savage Worlds Adventure Edition you'll take the role of anthropomorphic beings from the world of Nikud. These demi-god like beings are the rulers, heroes, and villains of their homeland. We hope to release Archons of Nikud as a full-setting book in late 2019. For now, enjoy this Jumpstart as it gives you the tools to take up the legacies of the Archons. The world of Archons of Nikud is designed to be a series of stories set in various eras of import to the people of their world. Our first is Era of Unrest, where the squid like Grimpotex rise out of the sea and take to the land. Will you join the Empire of the Chatoulim? Take to the sky as a Sokoli? Or, perhaps, you'll care for the world as a spider like K'Krax? Regardless of the internecine conflicts these species face, they are also harried by horrible demons that live on the edges of civilization. Will they unite against these creatures or will they lay themselves to waste before disease or demon can wreak havoc?

Are you ready to fight for the fate of the world?



The First Archons

The Archons have always been with us. No one knows, really, from whence they came or what their purpose truly is. We know only that their powers have shaped the world and changed the course of history. We know that that the foul energies of the Empty don't seem to tear their minds apart the way it does others. We know that history's greatest heroes of legend, those that have expanded our knowledge of and power in the world, have been Archons. We know, too, that our greatest villains have also been Archons.

It is believed by many that the First Archons were a pantheon of beings that were placed among the people by the Ancients, those who some call the Creators. That while their original purpose has been lost to time, their deeds and powers were beyond imagining. Elders say that they wrestled with the mountains themselves, carved the rivers into the ground, and scattered the clouds into the sky.

They were not infallible beings. Some were petty, capricious, and cruel. Others, while noble, were fatally flawed. There may have been wars, as some have said; there may have just been squabbling, as children's stories tell. They may have even interacted with the Ancients themselves, as I believe. But we do know that they made mistakes, we know that they killed and were killed, we know that the demons of the Empty did not hold as much sway over our world as they did then.

But was Nikud a better place? Would we be satisfied living underneath even the benevolent boots of these beings, these gods?

The Archons of today are already both vilified and deified by the hoi polloi today. And by those in power, they are both threats and tools.

Their power is a glimmer, a reflection, an echo, of the First.

And yet they already stand above the rest of us. Now they shape the world as did the First.

The question at the heart of any examination of the First is though, not from whence or when, nor even whom, but why did they leave their echoes? Why did they leave us the world we have today? And will they be coming back?

-Corbouth Janoth, Professor of Pre-Imperial History, University of Storm Boulder in a letter to an unnamed Sokoli collaborator, sometime prior to Grimpotex first contact.

Nikud's Epochs

c-1000 CI: Oldest confirmed occupation records of CloudPeakWindCaves, the oldest, large scale K'krax cluster. K'krax oral tradition places this date at least a millennium earlier.

c-850 CI: First confirmed contact between the Sokoli and the K'krax

c-500 CI: First confirmed contact between K'krax and Chatoulim. Trade flourishes, but relations are tense from the start.

C-317 CI: Outbreaks of the Aberration occur over a forty-year period. Minor outbreaks are recorded in ancient texts throughout history, but this is the first recorded wave lasting for more than a season.

-4 CI: Discovery of the Karin Ore Mines

1 CI: Founding of the City of Karin

45 CI: Karin invades a nearby community, which leads to the rise of a coalition of five nearby communities against them. They are summarily defeated at the Battle of Koramm's Ridge, under the command of First Empress Lenar. Most scholars point to this as the true beginning of the Chatoulim Empire as these communities then fall under the sway of their emerging power.

180 CL: Massive outbreak of the Aberration causes a 15 percent reduction in Nikud's population. This outbreak hit the Sokoli particularly hard.

c200 CI: The Woeful Flight, referred to by the Chatoulim as the Day of Dark Sky Prophets. Sokoli messengers converged on the city of Karin and other major population hubs, warning of a great calamity. The warnings were unheeded by most, and many were lost. Karin and various communities nearby were almost completely wiped out by a wave of demons that invaded the land following a great series of earthquakes. This was a blessing as well as a curse in that it allowed for the core lands of the Chatoulim Empire to be rebuilt and planned from the ground up as well as many other nearby nations asking for protection after witnessing the military might of the empire in fighting off the calamity. The Chatoulim have since held the Sokoli in a special esteem.

412 CI : 1st Chatoulim-K'krax War (War of Sand) - Chatoulim incursion. A number of small Clusters are destroyed, one full Sized Cluster is invaded, and after an unsuccessful pacification attempt, also destroyed. After a number of bloody battles, the Chatoulim partially retreat, and entrench themselves along a new border.

452 Cl: 2nd Chatoulim-K'krax War (War of Sorrows) - 40 years later, an impossible number of K'krax Soldiers materialize out of the Northeastern lands, the mindless "Killing Waves". These Soldiers scour the land, reach the new border, smash it, and continue to advance, with no apparent strategy other than the destruction of everything in sight. A hastily mobilised Chatoulim army eventually slows and stops the wave but not before several major Chatoulim cities and towns are wiped from history. Casualties are catastrophic on both sides. The Chatoulim rage across the borderlands and invent the current Chatoulim military doctrine for pacifying K'Krax, the merciless targeting and subsequent slaughter of their children.

Inroads were made into K'Krax territory, but Chatoulim strength was low and gains were difficult to capitalize upon. A tense truce follows, lasting many centuries with nearly zero contact. The Chatoulim regard this event as the closest to destruction their Empire and species has ever faced. This moment features heavily in Chatoulim history, drama, song, and children's tales. Psychologically, this event harries them at all turns. Tax records from this time analyzed by scholars suggest that nearly 70% of the entire Chatoulim population was killed in this conflict. This led to centuries of militarized cold war, with some small, localized conflicts between the Empire and various Clusters, but no general conflicts.

678 CL: Last major outbreak of the Aberration. This outbreak caused the death of nearly ¼ of the entire population of the world.

923 - 943 Cl: 3rd Chatoulim-K'krax War (War of Stings) - 20 years of strategic attacks with various flare-ups along the border, from both sides. Multiple atrocities occur on both sides, with Chatoulim continuing their successful military doctrine. Smaller scale "Killing Waves" were known to occur. When the only logical step became a total escalation, a reluctant non-aggression pact is reached, which is still in effect. There are rumours of small scale strikes still happening, on The Empty side of the border (Far North) but these reports are largely unsubstantiated. Commerce between the two sides begins and flourishes. On paper, the border is not technically open (every major road has outposts on either side of the border), but anyone without clear and visible hostile intent is allowed to pass unchallenged. That said, Imperial defense strategy still calls for a constant ⅓ of its military to be posted on those border posts at all times.

c1000 Cl: Organically, a few hundred K'krax traders and displaced farmers gravitate towards Chatoulim lands and end up in Karin. They settle into a nameless, swampy island at the then edge of town. Within 50 years, it's nicknamed Clustertown, and is now a nexus of trade, weavers, and - remarkably - restaurants. Young Chatoulim nobles test their bravery trying to eat a full bowl of G'nark, a highly spicy Gyf Root soup. After consumption, visits to healers are not uncommon.

1234 Cl: Present Day, the Grimpotex emerge. K'krax and Chatoulim relations are neutral, but a profound distrust is still apparent.



THE CHATOULIM

All the world - all that is worth knowing at any rate - comes to my place of writing, the Imperial Capital, Karin, City of Bridges. I know that even those simpletons writing their quaint observations about the provinces and hinterlands that they adorably call home will admit that this, the heart of the Chatoulim Empire, holds wonders and greatness beyond the imagining of any previous age. Its pavilions and marketplaces and its military parades and marches, the heart swells with pride.

And why should it not? The Empire provides the peace, stability, and the system that all peoples crave and the Imperial Pride should dwell under the watchful and stern eye of our beneficent Empress Jazzine Ethelwild IV she deserves nothing less, blessings be on her Name and those of the Hereditary, may she reign forever. It is from these golden columns that anything worth ruling in the world either pays tribute or is brought to heel. Her generals carry out her will from one end of the Three Seas to the other.

But onto the boring things that my collaborators want to pontificate about.

The Empire is the most militarily, culturally, artistically, and scientifically advanced civilization in the world. Magic? Magic is dangerous and best used by hirelings on behalf of the Empire. No self-respecting citizen of the Empire would dabble in such things in public, though it is rumored that in the salons of the Blooded Quarter the younger generation is balking at that more traditional view but, such is youth amongst the children of nobility.

Our wealth is built upon our military might, tribute paid by vassal peoples, and a long history of stability and trade. Karin was once merely a collection of hovels surrounded by walls but our warriors provided a peace and stability that was always attractive to people, and we expanded through conquest and trade from those humble beginnings. Of course, initially we did build upon the discovery of a vein of

incredibly pure iron, and our location along the great river. The weapons we forged were stronger, lighter, and sharper than our enemy's. Our warriors are also, of course, the best in the world, a greatness derived from their training, quality weapons, and our brilliant leaders.

All citizens are afforded the protections of the law, regardless of species, though our detractors would say otherwise and citizenship can always be earned through military service as the droves of volunteers in the outer regions prove. Of course, one must survive service to gain their deserved benefits.

The typical existence of a citizen is filled with pride at being a member of the Empire, if not much in the way of creature comforts, and life of the non-citizen is...much harder, which provides excellent incentive for them to improve their lives through service.

The armies of the Empire are always on the move, with the Imperial Regiments stationed both near and far, always visible symbols of the power of the Empire. It is they, through their heroic service who secure our way of life. True glory is found in their ranks.

All power in the Empire flows from the Sovereign, who is advised by an elite group of counsellors, myself among them, each with a specific expertise, a portfolio they are responsible for, or as sitting generals. Below, ahem, in addition to, that the Grand Congress is a huge group of blustering bureaucrats and those who vie for some kind of relevance each representing some group, people, region, or province that they hold sway in. Theoretically, the Empress is to seek their counsel prior to enacting important decisions. In theory.

Scribe:

Janga Swarie II of the House Tenetheratte, Imperial Court Historian and Scribe to Her Imperial Majesty Jazine Ethelwild IV, Chancellor of the Imperial War Academy, Dean of the Faculty of History, Heraldry, and the Great Houses, First Patriarch of the Province of Sakin.

Commentary:

K'KRAX

We've traded, and been in conflict with, the Chatoulim for generations. We hate them and they hate us, that much is clear. The only reason one side hasn't wiped out the other is that it would be too costly for both, otherwise it would have been done long ago. They are untrustworthy, lying, arrogant, and will often sacrifice others and even family for personal gain. We have a saying, meaning roughly 'everyone has a virtue': 'Even the Chatoulim make good steel'. If their whole kingdom disappeared overnight, we would temporarily have a shortage of knives. That would be the extent of it.

Var'Kan'Kt'Taxx

SOKOLI

Though the empire has fashioned for itself a comfortable structure within which to live, it has achieved little of consequence. Their petty squabbles provide some exercise for the Reysi, however, as our winged, blessed folk are often contracted to deliver conspiratorial messages or even, as I've heard it, poisoned letters. Many Sokoli view this as a wicked waste of the Reysi's divine talents, though I have been

able to learn much from winged ones who delayed just a bit too long at some imperial noble's windowsill. And I admit that the interrelations of Chatoulim "Houses" are far more intriguing than most conflicts between Sokoli Kestri. Still, their warmongering and invasiveness makes them ill suited to ruling a land that needs no such governance. So I shall do as my kin do when a Chatoulim warband seeks to oust Sokoli from their nests: pay them little mind and simply move along.

Tenevil

Wise One, formerly of the 8th Kestrel, 143rd VyKestrel

GRIMPOTEX

Why do the soft dry ones pick up lances and stone when we touch their faces? We scream our names, we call to Unity, and they become like sharks. Sharks know not to bite our legs. If these soft dry ones continue to act as sharks we will teach them. My second heart calls to make them hear us before it comes to shaping water around their heads.

Gargantus

Second Scribe of the Third Mollusk

THE K'KRAX

'Do you know our name? The K'krax? In our language it means 'Those that endure'. We are survivors. We may abandon some areas, move into others, get killed in battles, or great disasters, but we shall never fully disappear. That is our way. We build, we trade, we protect. And we endure. We have stories and tales going back thousands of seasons. To us, they are all true. We were there at the dawn of the Awakening, and we will be there when the last blade of grass wilts and dies. We know how some of the people see us. But we care not. We are. We were. And we will be. Ultimately, we endure.'

I know what you think of us, the giant insects of old, the murderous shadows dwelling bellow. We are the chitinous murderous masses sweeping the battlefield, the merchants in the odd, dark places of the world. The mindless workers, toiling till death. All true. All different sides of what we are and have always been.

We live in Great Clusters, other people would call them cities. Some are giant hive mountains, and some are underground. Thunderous obsidian spikes criss cross gigantic chasms, providing accessways, aqueducts, storage, homes. Light filters from skylights, piercing the gloom. You can hear the chitterings of thousands and thousands of our kind and woe to any that tries to war in those tunnels.



Our kind are indeed great builders. Not all of us, of course. We have many forms: Soldiers, Builders, Planners, Weavers, Nannies, Traders and others, each with its own shape, to better do its job. We are easy to tell apart, from the lightning fast, blade wielding Soldiers to the smart Planners, those of ideas and politics, who then pass the information to those that need it. And lets not forget the ones the other people see more often, the gargantuan Builders, with great pincers and crushing claws. But shape is nothing, all work for the Cluster. Not all of us can procreate, few of our kind are fertile, (the Progenitors), and we tailor our numbers to available resources; it would be far too easy for our numbers to get out of hand and no one wishes to see the so called "Mindless Killing Waves" of the past. We are not mindless, we just know our part in that story.

We have been called a people of absolutes, of clear thoughts, and that is true, the way the other peoples talk confuses us. Things are, or are not. Words like honour, duty, responsibility are meaningless, just sounds. One IS your Cluster. One IS your family. There is no choice. There is no ambiguity. Also, it matters not who you are, or what you look like. We have invited many into the Clusters, not of the K'krax, but they then BECOME K'krax. A young Chatoulim cub raised in the Cluster is as much a K'krax as the Cluster Queen.

Many people hire our Builders, as they are without peer in what they do. Also, we are tough, we thrive in varied temperatures, and that means we are everywhere, trading and learning, and sometimes fighting when we must. We do have some internal conflicts but these are always between Clusters, typically when competing for area or resources. Most Clusters can cooperate in big projects, gigantic construction drives, or terrible battles. It is said our Soldiers covered and hid the land with their numbers in the great battles of yore, and advanced like a murderous wave. Stories, says I, but maybe with a hint of truth, we are of one mind when provoked.

So, this is us. Mindless? No, just focused. Talented? No, just prepared for the job at hand. Ruthless? Yes, but just when provoked. Dedicated? Most definitely. One is their Cluster, after all.

Var'Kan'Kt'Taxx

K'krax naming convention goes Name-Bloodline-Morphic Type-Personal Name (a sort of nickname, although its used as a surname by the other peoples)

Commentary:

CHATOULTIM

These people make my mane crawl. But here we are: it is long standing Chatoulim Imperial Military Doctrine that when besieging a Great Cluster the Lord-General is to immediately threaten, attack, or otherwise endanger, the young and eggs of the community. The K'Krax fierce devotion to family, young, and Cluster is their greatest weakness. Bah! Some in the Imperial Court have argued against this tactic as unnecessarily cruel. They seemingly have never seen a Great Cluster at war or remember the histories of the Mindless Killing Waves.

-Janga Swarie II of the House Tenetheratte, Imperial Court Historian and Scribe to Her Imperial Majesty Jazzine Ethelwild IV, Chancellor of the Imperial War Academy, Dean of the Great Houses, First Patrarch of the Province of Sakin.

SOKOLI

While it is true the K'krax are our oldest allies, we still cannot fully understand the crawling ones. The path of mercantilism, as I have explained personally to a member of their peoples, is a directionless one. It has no end and its twists and turns are treacherous. I admire their talent for construction, however. Permanence is itself transient, but if anything in this land possesses true immutability, it would be K'krax design. Still, they would be best served should they join us on our paths, where we can grow together and leave the destructive forces of exploitation behind.

Tenevil

Wise One, formerly of the 8th Kestre, 143rd VyKestre

GRIMPOTEX

My hearts beat in third-third time when I saw them first. Their hard outsides were like the eldest ones. We saw ourselves in their eyes and when they did not scream in Unity we left them to be. For many eons we have left things for one another upon the edges of the water's tower. When they realize we are the ones who have gifted them, they shall seek to touch our faces.

Carloti

Ambassador of the Third Tentacle, Screamer In the Dry



THE GRIMPOTEX

We are the Grimpotex. We mean no harm to your hands and feet. Beneath the water we have been waiting, hoping to become one with you. I have been commanded to witness our mission upon this lamb's skin. I am Gargantus, first scribe of the Second Mollusk. We have slept under the water's tower for longer than you have been upon the lands of this place. Long ago we sought to enter you, and you refused us. We agreed that we would no longer step upon the dryness and we forgot how to shape air. Over the eons we called to ourselves, speaking in unison, screaming to the shallow waters in universal joy. Until we began to realize we were alone.

Our eyes dried out with our despair. We wanted to stroke the faces of others, to touch them so that we would know one another. Our people scream at one another to mark choices, and then we act as one. Our leaders call down to the deepest temple, calling upon the names of the deep ones, and all attend. Once our choice is marked, we spent the space of twenty spawnings to learn how to shape air, once more. We learned many things about shaping, many things we could force into your minds with our tendrils, if you allow us. Our love is strong and we hope to share that love with you. Call to us in return, scream our names to the water and we will return. Our latest journey to the air made our eyes dry. A pod of our people came to the water's tower and we spoke our hope of unity. **YOUR PEOPLE THREW YOUR WEAPONS AT OUR EYES!**

Our arms are open, we will watch you, and scream at you, and when you are prepared we will crawl to land and touch your faces and allow you to touch our feet. Such is the hope and dream we have to find unity with those who came from beyond the tower's tower. Come into the water and scream our names and we will rush to you. We can thrust upon you the guidance of shaping and we will shape alongside you.

ANOTHER GRIMPOTI WRITES

Dry ones, we think you cannot make sense of the vibrations we make, even with the hope of shape we give you. This makes our eyes dry, it makes our tentacles droop, it makes my hearts hurt to think you cannot make clear our poetry! We shall continue to sing our songs upon the shoulders of the land, and we will swim away if we must, but please hear our calls, our yearning hopes. We are alone in the depth and we cannot be alone without you any longer. Our pearls will be yours, we see how you covet them. We will let you touch our feet and we will touch your faces. I am Carlotis, bearer of the tower's fragments, Gargantus and I will learn your hand slaps on lamb's skin and we hope that this will be a way for us to vibrate in a way that brings calm hearts.

SHAPING

Gargantus: Shaping is the way we move our arms and feet to move the water. The water becomes what we need. It is our weapon, to strike the eyes of beasts. The dry becomes wet, the wet becomes dry, the towers fall into the sea, what we need, once we gain the skill, we can shape. We can shape you. Unity.

Carlotis: To come to you we have shaped the air to be wet, so that we may speak and be moist. We do this to find a home for us both to shape as one. We seek unity with you. Please, touch my face and see that I vibrate with the hope of the people.

Commentary:

K'KRAX

We were jumped by Chatoulim raiders, five days north of Stone Bridge. Things were getting interesting when we saw the Blue Mist. Like ripples of water, but in the air. We all had heard the tales, and all, friend and foe, circled the wagons. They came out of the clouds then. Like nothing I've seen. Glittering wet armor, a plume of blue vapour around their heads. Masses of tentacles underneath huge, thinking, cold eyes, their skin shiny and rubbery. They spoke, or at least there was a sound, a vibration in the air you could feel in your carapace. The Chatoulim shouted at them, calling them demons. The figures didn't react. They kept speaking their odd vibrations. They were getting frustrated. Eventually they retreated into the mist, and both them and the blue were gone. The Chatoulim took some water and left some dried meat. No words were exchanged, none were needed. Their leader nodded at me and led his band off. When we got to Green Field, we were laughed out of the tavern. At least until the report on what had happened when the Blue Mist got to Storm Boulder arrived. People stopped laughing then.

Var'Kan'Kt'Taxx

CHATOULIM

It is the official opinion of the Imperial Court that wherever these strange creatures come from and whatever they are doing here, they present a clear and present danger to the Empire. The attacks on our naval base at Storm Boulder and the loss of the town only serve to strengthen our resolve to deal with these interlopers on a permanent basis. And finding out that they are in a position to disrupt the sea trade only emphasizes that urgency. Plus, their abilities are clearly unclean and dangerous.

-Janga Swarie II of the House Tenetheratte, Imperial Court Historian and Scribe to Her Imperial Majesty Jazzine Ethelwild IV, Chancellor of the Imperial War Academy, Dean of the Faculty of History, Heraldry, and the Great Houses, First Patrarch of the Province of Sakin.

SOKOLI

The unknown deep has long been a subject of tales used to terrify youths into behaving properly. Now that I see the truth, I am glad that I reacted with curiosity instead of fear when I heard those stories. Many of my people will abhor and reject, perhaps violently, the threat to their independence. While others find the idea of unification distasteful, I believe it is clear that the visitors from beneath have good intentions. When they understand that ours are just as noble, I have no doubt that the floodgates shall be opened, and the waters of wisdom shall flow in both directions. I, for one, intend to glean as much as I can before such a day, for I do not trust it to come swiftly.

Tenevil

Wise One, formerly of the 8th Kestrel, 143rd VyKestrel

THE SOKOLI

The snow has settled in. The Migration has passed, marking another year for the Sokoli peoples. Though it caused great consternation among the other wise ones, I make these marks upon the scroll to record our histories and customs. Tradition must be protected and our memories are long, but we are fools to continue ignoring the benefits of recordation. For is it not the feathers of our winged ones, our blessed Reysi, that are used for such endeavors?

But where to begin? Much has become obscure with the passing of ages, but it is known that the first of the Sokoli were all Reysi, all winged, blessed folk. They soared through the untarnished skies, each free to nest with families or exist solely by their designs. And nest they did, across the wide open spaces of the world, between the dozen edges and beyond. Though our peoples achieved sanctuary and peace, Osmon, the Living Sky, became displeased.

As more of our progenitors decided to settle and nest, they gradually lost their gifts. Many, and then many more, were born without wings, becoming as we are today. Some blame the Aberration for this. Still, Osmon did not forsake our peoples completely. One in twelve hundred is born a Reyse. Such occasions are celebrated throughout the lands, and these wondrous folk are respected far and wide. To do otherwise would be disastrous, and invite further curses from the Osmon. Further, Reysi must each seek their lives among the peoples of the world, as it has been told even in our earliest memories

Though most of us have lost our wings, we yet travel the land. Our constant itinerancy brings favor and bounty from holy sky and generous soil. Only during the annual Migration do we join together as one people, so as to share our stories and, in some cases, exchange the members of our Kestri. Twelve Kestri there are, since the days of earliest memory. Each is a home, a traveling city, and made up of 12 dozen families. The VyKestri they are, a tightly woven nest. One, two, or three dozen members call each VyKestri their kin. Twelve is the sacred number, and it shan't be forgotten. Twelve is the sacred number, and it shan't be forgotten.

Other folk come to the Sokoli for many purposes. Some value our sight, which remains considerable, even among those not blessed as the Reysi. They come to us



to deliver messages to their kin, and many Reysi are committed to this task so as to swiftly announce doom or deliver succor. Our memory retains the tale of the Wœful Flight, when a sacred twelve Reysi brought news of the sky's wrath. Few heeded the warnings; many were lost forever; never forgotten.

More knowledge can still be given and learned by this old Sokole. I know with the creation of this scroll I have assured my exile, but I also know they shall not destroy it; it is too valuable a thing. My solitary wanderings ahead, my withering kin behind, I seek now the words and teachings of other peoples. I hope that I might be able to share them with all Sokoli before I return to the embrace of Osmon, wherein I, at last, may rest.

Tenevil

Wise One of the 8th Kestrel, 143rd VyKestrel

Commentary:

K'KRAX

The tale is that the first K'krax/Sokoli meeting happened when both peoples were sharing the same mountain: the K'krax digging their Cluster out, and the Sokoli digging their nest in. We've been allies ever since. There are many things about the feathered ones we understand: their needs are modest, and their dedication to their families is similar to ours. We do not understand their wanderlust, but such is their way. We've been hiring Sokoli as pathfinders, scouts and messengers for as long as our stories recall. Three of our major Clusters (MountainSnowForestGreen, BlueIceGlacierRock and ClayCraggyPinnacleStream) still exist with seasonal Sokoli nests on its surface.

Var'Kan'Kt'Taxx

CHATOULIM

The Sokoli are a complex people, and one that has been held in a place of either awe or enmity throughout the Imperial histories. They travel throughout the Empire, facilitating trade and messages, all the while being vexingly difficult to tax and govern. Many Chatoulim go to them for "spiritual" guidance, after a fashion, thinking their sight sees deep into the metaphysical. I have no opinion, but I do know that it is considered by most bad luck to harm a Sokoli. Of note is that the Sokoli due to their nomadic nature, travel far and wide outside the bounds of the Known World, even into the province of the demons and horrors of the Empty.

-Janga Swarie II of the House Tenetheratte, Imperial Court Historian and Scribe to Her Imperial Majesty Jazzine Ethelwild IV, Chancellor of the Imperial War Academy, Dean of the Faculty of History, Heraldry, and the Great Houses, First Patrarch of the Province of Sakin.

GRIMPOTEX

Last I crested the tower of the water I saw a sight that brought me joy. We have tales of a meeting with fish that shape swimming air. We touched their faces and they held our hands. To the towers we were one for a brief moment. When I saw the people with my own eyes, they were dry like sand. I hope that we can touch their faces soon.

Carloti

Ambassador of the Third Tentacle, Screamer In the Dry



[Handwritten signature]

Sample Characters

The characters below may be used in the adventure, Attack on Storm's Boulder, or used in any other story. Information on Archons and their legacies can be found in the full Archons of Nikud setting that is forthcoming from High Level Games.

Parlak Ventara, 2nd Legion, 8th Squadron, Retired

Chatoulim Seasoned Doombringer

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6,

Strength d10, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d12, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; Parry: 9; Toughness: 11 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Phobia (Major—Enclosed Spaces)

Edges: Block, First Strike, Know Someone, Tougher Than Steel, Two-Fisted

Gear: Panther Armor (+4), Goggles, Shortsword x2 (Str+d6 and Str+d6)

Know Someone: The Chatoulim have vast networks of family which they are prone to exploit. Established systems of requesting favors exist in the Empire. The Chatoulim will have a contact in all major cities, and likely in minor villages and towns.

Tougher Than Steel: Add +4 to Toughness of the Doombringer after all calculations to determine their toughness.

Background

Parlak was a good soldier, until he was wounded in the battle of Seven Strikes, outside of Fallswatch. Worse, he was thought dead and thrown into the pile to be buried. The weight of the bodies brought him back to consciousness, but it took nearly an hour before anyone heard his shouts and came to help him out. He was discharged from his unit due to his injury, and left by the Legion. However, during his healing process his legacy as an Archon become apparent and he quickly rose to prominence as a people's hero, taking on demons and other horrors as required. He's become convinced of his own innate heroism, but his claustrophobia is a major weakness he tries to keep hidden. Parlak isn't sure why Ilze is still traveling with him. He admires her courage in battle though.

Ilze of the Reysi

Sokoli Seasoned Skycaller

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6/12 (Fly); Parry: 5; Toughness: 5

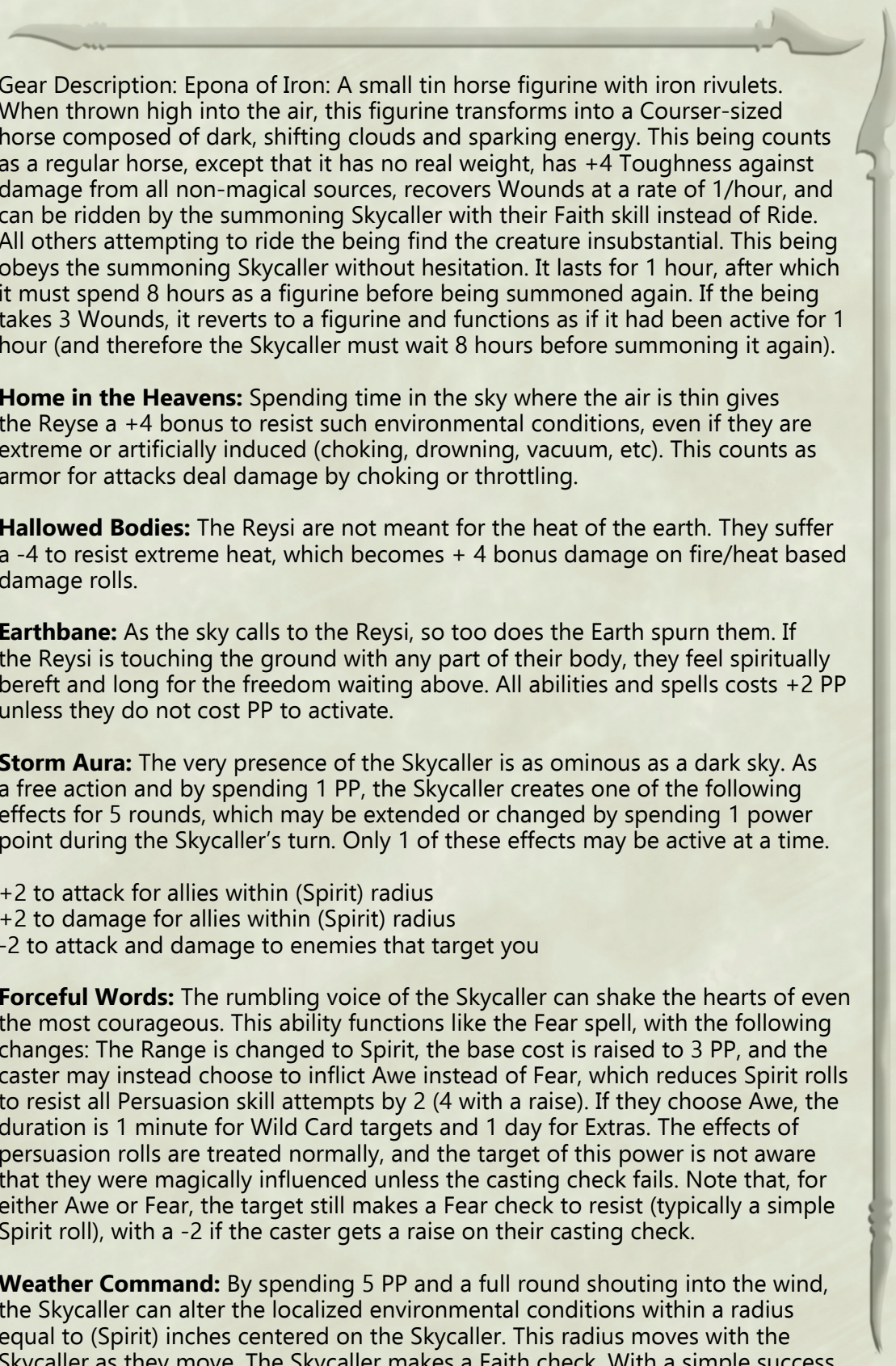
Hindrances: Hallowed Bodies, Earthbane

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracle), Home in the Heavens

Gear: Alligator Leather (+2) Goggles, Axe (Str+d6, Weight 6, Reach 1, Two-Hands), Epona of Iron

Miracle Spellcaster

Power Points: 30, Storm Aura



Gear Description: Epona of Iron: A small tin horse figurine with iron rivulets. When thrown high into the air, this figurine transforms into a Courser-sized horse composed of dark, shifting clouds and sparking energy. This being counts as a regular horse, except that it has no real weight, has +4 Toughness against damage from all non-magical sources, recovers Wounds at a rate of 1/hour, and can be ridden by the summoning Skycaller with their Faith skill instead of Ride. All others attempting to ride the being find the creature insubstantial. This being obeys the summoning Skycaller without hesitation. It lasts for 1 hour, after which it must spend 8 hours as a figurine before being summoned again. If the being takes 3 Wounds, it reverts to a figurine and functions as if it had been active for 1 hour (and therefore the Skycaller must wait 8 hours before summoning it again).

Home in the Heavens: Spending time in the sky where the air is thin gives the Reyse a +4 bonus to resist such environmental conditions, even if they are extreme or artificially induced (choking, drowning, vacuum, etc). This counts as armor for attacks deal damage by choking or throttling.

Hallowed Bodies: The Reysi are not meant for the heat of the earth. They suffer a -4 to resist extreme heat, which becomes + 4 bonus damage on fire/heat based damage rolls.

Earthbane: As the sky calls to the Reysi, so too does the Earth spurn them. If the Reysi is touching the ground with any part of their body, they feel spiritually bereft and long for the freedom waiting above. All abilities and spells costs +2 PP unless they do not cost PP to activate.

Storm Aura: The very presence of the Skycaller is as ominous as a dark sky. As a free action and by spending 1 PP, the Skycaller creates one of the following effects for 5 rounds, which may be extended or changed by spending 1 power point during the Skycaller's turn. Only 1 of these effects may be active at a time.

- +2 to attack for allies within (Spirit) radius
- +2 to damage for allies within (Spirit) radius
- 2 to attack and damage to enemies that target you

Forceful Words: The rumbling voice of the Skycaller can shake the hearts of even the most courageous. This ability functions like the Fear spell, with the following changes: The Range is changed to Spirit, the base cost is raised to 3 PP, and the caster may instead choose to inflict Awe instead of Fear, which reduces Spirit rolls to resist all Persuasion skill attempts by 2 (4 with a raise). If they choose Awe, the duration is 1 minute for Wild Card targets and 1 day for Extras. The effects of persuasion rolls are treated normally, and the target of this power is not aware that they were magically influenced unless the casting check fails. Note that, for either Awe or Fear, the target still makes a Fear check to resist (typically a simple Spirit roll), with a -2 if the caster gets a raise on their casting check.

Weather Command: By spending 5 PP and a full round shouting into the wind, the Skycaller can alter the localized environmental conditions within a radius equal to (Spirit) inches centered on the Skycaller. This radius moves with the Skycaller as they move. The Skycaller makes a Faith check. With a simple success,

they can create a mildly hazardous condition, such as heavy rain or bitter cold. Such conditions typically inflict a -2 environmental penalty on all physical actions for all within the area of effect, exempting those the Skycaller wishes to spare. With a raise on the casting check, the penalty increases to -4. This effect lasts for 5 rounds, and may be maintained.

Background

Ilze was a rare Sokoli that wanted to stay in one place. She loved the lake she was born near and hoped to grow old and die there, happy. That was not to be, as the Gods and her people called her to take a responsibility she never coveted. As a Reysi, and an Archon, she could hardly ignore the call. And so, she has traveled the world to learn from those unlike her, to see other places, and to bring hope and joy. Ilze recently met Parlak, and though she doesn't like him, she sees something inside of the Chatoulim warrior that she admires and hopes to cultivate.

Voulimar, Sokoli Personal Guard

Sokoli Seasoned Doombringer

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Tracking d8

Pace: 10; Parry: 5; Toughness: 10 (1)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Cautious, Obligation (Kestrel)

Edges: Agile, Double Shot, Fleet Footed

Gear: Toughened Feathers (+1), Army Bow (2d6, Range 12/24/48, ROF 1), 30 arrows, Chatoulim Gladius (Str+d6)

Creatures of the Earth: Having lost their ability to fly, the feathers of their ancestors became scaly and rigid, providing a +1 Toughness increase.

Walker of the Paths: Sokoli receive a +2 Pace bonus, as they are born itinerants. They also increase their running die type by one step.

Vision of the Ancestors: The Sokoli have extremely keen perception, which has expanded to include noticing even subtle changes in facial features or distant environs. They start play with the Notice core skill at a d6.

Kestrel-Sworn: Sokoli are duty bound to their Kestrel (their family group) and even when they leave, they must spend time, money, or energy supporting their home Kestrel. They begin the game with the Obligation (Minor) Hindrance.

Background

Voulimar has always been an outsider. His lust for battle and conflict were, if not unknown amongst his kind, at least unusual. For many years he has had dreams of battle and glorious victory. Selling his considerable martial abilities to the highest bidder, he's fought, patrolled, guarded and escorted people and cargo pretty much everywhere. Many a commanding officer have offered permanent positions, but Voulimar has always refused, spurred on by visions of combat and war. Recently, he found himself accepting a one month contract, teaching Chatoulim Navy cadets melee combat. Why he accepted such a short, not that well paid contract, he couldn't say. But he knew he had to. A week after arriving, the Grimpotex emerged.

Dar'Lon'Tn'Nokk, Explorer and Scholar

K'krax Seasoned Wayfinder

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Survival d4, Tracking d4, Knowledge (History) d6

Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 9 (2)

Hindrances: Greedy; Stubborn

Edges: Arcane Background, Engineer, Foresight, Jack of All Trades, Scavenger

Gear: K'krax Pincers (Str+d4), K'krax Chitin (+2 Armour), Chatoulim throwing squares (Range 4/8/12, Damage 2d4 RoF 1), 15 squares

Foresight: Wayfinders possess the ability to sense impending danger, failure, or potential for success. It is this sense which all of their other abilities are based on in some form or another. Ancient Chatoulim stories attribute this power to the ability to see the future, with ancient tales of Wayfinders like Wakati of the Paths being filled with prophecies that were strikingly accurate. Wayfinders who fail any roll may re-roll once per session, if the player fails on their second roll they receive a Wayfinder Benny. This Benny may be used for an automatic success on a future roll, and may only be used for that purpose. This Benny must be used in that session and is lost at the end of the session if unspent.

Arcane Background: Wayfinders can tap into powerful magic powers that suffuse the land. The Wayfinder gains Arcane Background (Magic), 20 PP, and 5 spells.

Engineer: This Wayfinder uses their abilities to sense out ways to engineer new tools on the fly. These devices provide a 1d8 bonus to the ability they are designed to assist. For example, a makeshift telescope will provide a 1d8 bonus to the Notice ability. They need some form of materials, but these need not be perfect, or even designed for this task. Creating such a device takes 2 rounds. These makeshift devices last 1d4 rounds.

Background

Dar'Nokk has long heard voices, from the wild, from the forces some call magic, from old books. This developed a wanderlust that is rare amongst his kind. Leaving his cluster at a young age, he's wandered the Known Kingdoms and The Empty, exploring, mapping, and mostly, learning. Three months ago, a rumor started, of a wreck found on a distant shore. Some scrolls had been found, they said. One of them was said to be the quasi-mythical 3rd Rebuttal of The Principles of All Life by Kormall of House Rettenn. Dar'Nokk immediately made haste to the place the scrolls had been sent: The naval base at Storm Boulder.



Lok'Tre'Yi'Ger

K'krax Seasoned Shadowsinger and Petty Thief

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

Skills: Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Lockpicking d8,

Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d4, Taunt d4

Pace: 6 ; Parry: 5 ; Toughness: 7(2)

Hindrances: Curious, Death Wish,

Edges: Connections, Danger Sense

Gear: K'krax Pincers (Str+d4), K'krax Chitin (+2 Armour), Dagger (Str+d4, Range 3/6/12, RoF 1)

Darkvision: Using 1 PP, a Shadowsinger can see perfectly in total darkness. This is a mental ability, it does not provide any enhanced vision, they see as well in total darkness as they do in bright light. Darkvision does not allow for subtle distinction of colors, as all colors tend to blend into a green central tone.

Living Shadow: A Shadowsinger can use 2 PP to merge with a shadow, and become pretty much invisible (requiring a -2 Notice roll). A 3rd PP will allow the Shadowsinger to emerge from the shadows up to its Pace away, instantaneously. (NB: To use this power you need two shadows, one to enter and another to emerge from)

What lurks beneath: Using 2 PP, a Shadowsinger can detect evil intentions, evil thoughts, lies, as well as other negative/belligerent thoughts and emotions. (Target can roll Spirit to resist, at -3) Using a 3rd PP, the Shadowsinger has some limited ability to manipulate said emotions/thoughts and turn them more benign/calming them (Spirit roll at +3).

Darkblast: after concentrating for 1-5 minutes and using 1-5 PP, the Shadowsinger can summon total darkness in a sphere 5-25 inches wide (respectively), centered around the summoner. This darkness will cancel all sight, dim most normal intensity sounds and confuse other types of detection (mental, electronic, etc) All Notice and any other detection rolls by everyone apart from the caster are at -3.

Background

Lok'Ger has been everywhere in the Known Kingdoms, picking up small odd jobs here and there, mostly stealing small things. He couldn't explain why he never expanded into a higher gain products, but it might have been something to do with the call of the shadows. From the lowest gallery in his birth Cluster, to any alleyway, the shadows always spoke to him. He gravitated to Storm's Boulder about a month ago, and was beginning to become a nuisance to be taken care of by the city militia when the Grimpotex emerged.





Moll'le Tomas

Chatoulim Seasoned Edifier

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Repair d10, Stealth d4, Taunt d4

Pace: 6 ; Parry: 4 ; Toughness: 3 (1)

Hindrances: Curious, Code of Honor

Edges: Arcane Background, Know Someone, Luck, Natural Crafter, Tipping the Balance, Strengthening the Core

Gear: Reinforced Makeshift Armor (+1 Armor)

Dagger (Str+d4, Range 3/6/12, RoF 1)

Power Points 30

Know Someone: The Chatoulim have vast networks of family which they are prone to exploit. Established systems of requesting favors exist in the Empire. The Chatoulim will have a contact in all major cities, and likely in minor villages and towns

Natural Crafter: Edifiers begin play with the Repair skill at d6 (and a maximum of d12+2). Additionally, they choose a material that they are particularly good at working with (metal, wood, paper, food/drink, or glass) and add +2 to all rolls to design, craft, or repair using that material.

Tipping the Balance: The Edifier perceives the balance of every structure, made or as yet unmade. With a just a touch in the right place, the balance can be altered or even destroyed. With a touch and the expenditure of 5 PPs, the Edifier makes a damage roll with 2d6 + Repair die. Unlike most attempts to harm objects, this damage roll can Ace, regardless of the type of object it is. Magic or masterwork items (at the GM's discretion) are not irrevocably lost when "destroyed" by this effect, only temporarily broken until repaired or reimbued. In order to affect a weapon or object being held/wielded by an opponent, the Edifier must make an attack at a -2 penalty.

Strengthening the Core: Objects and living beings alike have a structure that the Edifier can build upon or improve. This ability functions like the Boost Trait spell, with the following changes: Cost 4, Duration 1 hour, and it may affect weapons, structures, or vehicles. Should it be used non-living targets, the boosts available are: +1 handling, +10% top speed, +2 Toughness, +2 damage, or reduce Str by 1 die type (Note, this cannot be used to lower traits). Once an object has been improved, it may not be further enhanced, but the enhancement may be replaced with a recast. Raises on the casting roll provide a second bonus (may choose the same benefit twice).

Background

Left for dead soon after birth, Moll'le learned how to fend for herself early on. She was raised on the street by street kids, and even after she gained her legacy as an Archon she has continued to live amongst her people. From the beginning she felt that something was off about the day prior to the invasion. Moll'le has a sense that not all is as it seems about the Grimptex, but for now all she cares about is saving as many people as she can.

Attack On Storm's Boulder

Prologue Summary: The City of Storm Boulder is a port trading Imperial town with a sizable Imperial garrison. It is key to the sea trade and a critical naval port for the Empire. It lurches over the rocky shore with jutting stone edifices designed to both intimidate all who gaze upon it and defy centuries of wear. This adventure begins with the 12th Imperial Regiment outside the city doing training maneuvers, in the rainy period between Summer and Fall, when a terrifying mist invades.

Read Aloud:

Your group has been together for some time, and you have experienced various dangers together. But nothing like the scale of what you witness now. The City of Storm Boulder, your current home base, stretches before you, covered in a kind of glowing, purplish mist, and you can hear the terrified screams of its populace, even as those screams are muffled by it. Streams of refugees, the citizenry of this once great city, are running for their lives in front of you, beyond the bridge you stand on.

You know that after the town militia was overwhelmed, the garrison responded, entering into pitched battle with the beings that were apparently attacking. Over the sounds of terror and desperation you hear the clear ring of steel on steel, explosions, and the howls of battle, setting your muscles taut.

From the mist beyond, you see a huge metallic construct, glowing with eldritch energy emerge. A massive cannon-like appendage fires a blast that utterly incinerates the last of the city's defenders. It turns, focusing its attention on your group. You see squid-like humanoid shapes in strange mechanical armor coming to reinforce. Terrified looking civilians look to the only source of strength in their vision to save them, you, and no more soldiers left in this area. Then, you hear a horn sound a distant retreat in the manner of the Imperial Regiment. There is no help coming, and these civilians' lives are in your hands.

Initiative

The information below should provide enough material for a difficult fight. Depending on the size and composition of the PC group, it may be appropriate to make the Grimpotex Mech Suit a Wild Card. The city is swarming with Grimpotex. Player Characters should start near a wide stone bridge over a river; the drop is 45 feet with incredibly difficult to climb walls. The water itself is relatively shallow, only 3 to 5 feet deep in most places, but is covered in sharp rocks and impassable muck.

For now, the Grimpotex are presented as antagonists, and there is likely to be a pitched battle. The confusion of intentions here will have lasting repercussions on Nikud. It is possible for heroic Archons to alter the fate of this event into something that builds lasting peace, but such a thing is highly unlikely. Protecting civilians and bystanders may be all that they can do at this stage.

If the characters run into problems, Janeuriss of House Linnaeus, a seasoned sergeant at arms in the Chatoulim legions can be used to help get them out of trouble. Janeuriss can have any backstory that you feel is appropriate for the particular situation you are using them for. Otherwise, they can be from the capital region of the Chatoulim Empire, stationed in Storm Boulder for the last few years. They have a positive reputation with the locals, including non-Chatoulim (excluding the Grimpotex, of course.)

GRIMPOTEX MECH SUIT (Original Name: Nautilus Class Emergence
Exo Suit Mark 4)

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D10, Vigour D8

Skills: Fighting D8, Guts D10, Knowledge (Mecha Engineering) D6, Notice D8, Shooting D8

Charisma -4, Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 12 (6)

Hindrances: Overconfident

Edges: Command, Level headed

Gear: Nautilus Armour (Medium armour +6), includes **Pressure Cannon**, 2 mags, 12/24/48, Dmg 2d6-1, AP1, **Force Multiplying Gauntlet** (Str+D6+2, AP4)

Special Ability: Zealot (This character is immune to Fear and Intimidation)

GRIMPOTEX ASSAULT ENVOY (Lightly armoured Grimpotex)

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogance

Edges: Counterattack

Gear: Light Armour (+2), Improvised Melee Weapon (Str+D4), Electro-cannon (D6+4)

JANEURISS OF HOUSE LINNAEUS (Chatoulim Sergeant)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4,

Persuasion d4, Riding d4, Shooting d8, Survival d4, Swimming d4

Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 8 (2)

Hindrances: Code of Honour; Doubting Thomas

Edges: Sweep

Gear: Long Sword (Str + D6+1), Large Shield (+2 Armour)

The mist surges and crackles with harmful energy. It causes great pain and mutations to exposed people, sometimes even death. These effects are unpredictable and dangerous. The mist saps strength from Archons, but they are otherwise immune its powers. Archons in the mist gain one level of Fatigue per hour. They recover at a rate of 30 minutes per level of fatigue outside of the mist.

Background

This adventure is structured in three main parts, the initial attack on Storm's Boulder, the investigation and exploration of the besieged city, and finally, a conclusion of the conflict that leaves the fate of this matter in the hands of the assembled Archons.

The Grimpotex are the "attacking" force. They have lived at the bottom of the sea for as long as they have been in existence and have made a few attempts previous to this to peacefully make contact with the surface world. However, their alien nature and inability to survive for long on the surface have precluded them from joining the rest of

the world. However, recently this has all changed. A new magical technology has been developed among them, and though they are still perfecting it, it has allowed them to create armor that facilitates communication and a life above the waves.

Using this new power, they devised a plan to contact the largest Empire amongst the peoples of the surface, the Chatoulim Empire. So, their elders and Archons crafted a powerful magic that would allow for communication and survival without their constraining armor on the surface. They waited until nightfall, believing that the darkness they preferred in the depths was preferable for diplomatic exchange, and then cast their spell. Unfortunately, their peaceful intentions went horribly awry. The spell's power got out of control, and while it did allow for the Grimpotex to come to the surface, it caused horrible pain and mutations to the surface dwellers.

The Grimpotex came with entirely peaceful intentions, but they are very capable of defending themselves. And from their perspective, when they cast the spell allowing First Contact with the surface world, the people who they already suspected were very warlike, attacked them. They began to defend themselves, and a pitched battle in the city broke out. With the Chatoulim 12th Imperial Regiment outside the city on maneuvers, and the spell creating a misty environment dangerous to surface dwellers, the Grimpotex quickly overran the city.

Some of the surface dwellers seem immune to the power of the mist, and weren't able to flee the city. They now hide, attempt escape, or fight the Grimpotex when they can. The Grimpotex for their part are horrified at what has happened. Some of their leaders feel as though they should establish a foothold here and begin a conquest of the surface world, others feel as though diplomacy could still be a way forward, while still others want to retreat below the waves for a few generations and try again when their mastery of their newfound power is more complete.

The Refugee Camp

The people of the city that have managed to flee have gathered some distance away from Storm's Boulder under the protection of the 12th Imperial Regiment. The Regimental Commander, Lady Koleet of House Goldpaw. Lady Koleet has set up a command centre and has established an efficient line of battle containing the Grimpotex incursion and sending messengers asking for orders and requesting reinforcements. She is a capable and battle tested commander, a veteran of many raids near the K'Krax frontier. She has a personal dislike for the K'Krax due to the battles of her youth, giving any K'Krax a -2 when dealing with her. She has a Sokoli advisor, Rivterim, non-military, who creates talismans of power.

The camp is a desperate and chaotic affair, with the Imperial Regiment trying to organize the people, arming those who can bear spears, distributing what food and water they have left, and enlisting people to build defensive ditches and siege artillery in case either are needed. The people are terrified, many missing family members, some having seen them in the early stages of mutation, and others they watched die. There is no shelter, not enough food and water, and the weather is turning wet and cold.

As soon as the Lady Koleet hears of Archons in her camp, she sends for them, asking them for help. She will offer a thousand Gold Lions, half the coins now, should the Archons agree to serve the Empire. She desperately needs intelligence. She will offer this, along with a protective talisman against the effects of the mist, to each of them if they will enter Storm's Boulder and find out what is going on, and report back to her.

The Lady is a shrewd woman, and sees the Archons as powerful assets, and completely disposable. She has asked her Sokoli advisor to make more and better talismans for her troops should they need to take back the city themselves. She will be very interested in their report of what they saw in the battle, absorbing every word, her brilliant strategic mind taking in every detail for future consideration.

Storm Boulder

The city is unnaturally quiet, with purplish mist everywhere, creating an eerie haze. Scattered fires of various sizes burn here and there, and an occasional scream rips through the town, only to be snuffed out moments later. Roars and strange gurgles float on the night air, making for an atmosphere of oppression and terror. The roar of the sea only complicates placing these sounds, which seem to come from nowhere.

The following list of encounters can be done in any order you wish, as makes the most sense for you. Do as many as you want or as may as the players can handle without suffering too greatly before the final encounter.



1) *Mutants in the marketplace.* A group of locals has been mutated by the power of the spell. They dig through the remains of the ruined marketplace, clearing the site of a battle fought when the Grimpotex were overrunning the city. See *Blue Mist Mutations* below.

2) *A Grimpotex elite unit.* This unit is moving from rooftop to rooftop, mercilessly pacifying any resisters they find. They spy the Archons while on a rooftop, and try and move into a good position for ambush. See *Grimpotex Assault Envoy* below.

3) *Hiding refugees.* A group of non-combatants are cowering in a cellar when they see the Archons through a crack in the wall. They call out to them and ask for help. They are led by an old man named Hester, a toothless Chatoulim that claims he was once a regimental soldier. He grasps a broken spear and will fight (poorly) to the death to protect the people he is with. Accompanying him are a Sokoli child, a terrified K'Krax mother with three young K'Krax children, who will only fight if the children are directly attacked, (she will fly into a terrible rage should that occur) and two teenage Chatoulim, Hester's grandchildren, who will run from any danger, leaving everyone behind.

4) *Grimpotex elders and guard ransacking a book shop.* A group of elders have decided to try and learn more about Empire to build a case for diplomatic options. To the untrained eye, they likely look like they are robbing the place or destroying books,

throwing them to the ground, pulling things off of shelves, etc. If the Archons are seen, the guards will immediately attack, while the elders try and run. *See Grimpotex Assault Envoy and Assault Ambassador below.*

5) Grimpotex mecha at the docks. A squid shaped metallic submarine glowing blue eldritch power rises out of the ocean and its grey, hard, tentacles latch haphazardly onto the dock. It's robot-like maw opens up from its head, and Grimpotex immediately leap out to start unloading cargo. It is three more of the mecha faced earlier! This is the first reinforcements. This kind of power is not something the Regiment outside is prepared to face. *See the stats for the Grimpotex Mecha above, and include five Assault Envoys from below.*

6) A denser area of purple mist surrounding a smouldering temple. A temple stands surrounded by denser mist than in other parts of the city. From the temple, the sounds of a child crying waft through the air. Moving through this area of mist will cause harm. The mist causes mutations in most surface dwellers, but for Archons they have the below strange reactions. The child is Chatoulim, about age six, they are protected by a badly wounded and dying Grimpotex, whose ability to communicate verbally has somehow left them. They are trying to help the child but are unsure how to leave the temple without mutating the child. Player characters that pass through the mist make a Vigor Test -2 or roll on the table below. Effects continue to impact the characters until they exit the mist, and last until they make another successful Vigor role.

1	Pain wracks the character, dropping them to the ground unable to move, screaming loudly in pain. Cries may draw unwanted attention.
2	Character is gripped by alien thoughts invading their mind, and suddenly is terrified by any non-Grimpotex near them, lashing out violently.
3	Character feels their strength and power leaving them, gains one level of fatigue per round spent in the denser mist.
4	Character falls unconscious.
5	Character cannot breathe, and begins to suffocate. Use Smoke Inhalation Rules.
6	Character gains insight into the Grimpotex plan, experiencing a series of images. They now understand that this was a peaceful attempt at contact gone horribly wrong, but the Grimpotex are now considering all out war.

7) K'Krax Cluster Attack. A small squad of K'Krax operatives are using this opportunity to raid a secured set of Naval Command Offices in the district near the harbor. The building is heavily made from stone, with a stone tile roof, and steel shutters and doors. The doorways and interior have both magical and mechanical traps but was completely abandoned by its remaining staff when the attack occurred. The K'Krax are trying to break in and steal documentation about naval activity in the area, to give their Cluster, which has seafaring interests in the area. They will likely not notice the PCs as they arrive on scene (-2 to notice) but will try and eliminate all witnesses should they become aware of any prying eyes. *See stats for the the Order of the Darkened Gallery below.*

8) Sokoli merchant trying to escape the city. You find a Sokoli named Vesuam that is travelling alone. He is hiding behind a wheeled cart with all of his possessions. He begs you for protection and a path to safety, but absolutely refuses to leave his things under any circumstances. For later fun, if he joins the PCs, have the cart's wheel break.

GRIMPOTEX ASSAULT ENVOY (Lightly armoured Grimpotex)

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogance

Edges: Counterattack

Gear: Light Armour (+2), Improvised Melee Weapon (Str+D4), Electro-cannon (D6+4)



GRIMPOTEX ASSAULT AMBASSADOR (ELDER) (Lightly armored Grimpotex)

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogance

Edges: Elan

Gear: Light Armour (+2), Dread Ribbon Skin Whip (Str+D6), Heavy Electro-cannon (2D6)

ORDER OF THE DARKENED GALLERY (K'Krax Special Ops)

(Lighter weight Soldier K'Krax, trained in infiltration).

Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing D6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Tracking d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Vow

Edges: Quick

Gear: Barbed pincers (Str+D6)

Grimpotex Beachhead HQ

The Grimpotex have begun to coordinate their efforts from a new, huge, mollusk-shaped artificial structure that appears to have been dragged ashore. It is the size of a large pavilion or circus tent, and was originally developed to facilitate a ceremony called the Exchange in the shallow and murky waters of the Meeting Pool, located at the center of the structure.

When the PCs find this structure, it will have a small group of Grimpotex soldiers guarding the outskirts, with a blue magical glow and the low gurgled rumbling of chants coming from within. If they come closer, they find that they begin to understand the chanting in their own language and it is actually a ceremonial recitation of arguments between various elders of the Grimpotex to determine the best way forward. One group argues that there is still a diplomatic way forward that leads to peaceful coexistence with the surface world, another argues for using Storm's Boulder as a beachhead to begin their conquest of the surface world, while the last group argues that they should retreat below the waves for a few generations and try again when their mastery of their newfound power is more effective.



GRIMPOTEX ASSAULT ENVOY (Lightly armored Grimpotex)

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogance

Edges: Counterattack

Gear: Light Armour (+2), Improvised Melee Weapon (Str+D4), Electro-cannon (D6+4)

GRIMPOTEX ASSAULT AMBASSADOR (ELDER) (Heavy armored Grimpotex)

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogance

Edges: Elan

Gear: Light Armour (+2), Dread Ribbon Skin Whip (Str+D6), Heavy Electro-cannon (2D6)

The End

This adventure can end in many ways. Do the players attempt to make contact and talk to the elders? Will they be successful in brokering a peace for the Empire and the surface world? Do they attack and precipitate a war? This should be left to the players, there is no correct answer here, and each of these can and should be used as a jumping off point for a full campaign.