

REVENGE



A Tribe & Cycle



Dream Pod 9

REVANCHE

"Listen to me, my brothers and sisters! Now is the time of prophecy, now is the time of wrath and pain. We have battled through adversity and we have passed our tests. We have freed the dagger and set it to cut through the land like fire. Now it is time for us to come to know the wrath of wisdom, and the wisdom of wrath. Finally it is time for us to claim Joshua's heritage, and to finish the war that took his life. No longer can any deny - We are the scions of the Ravager, and all who stand before us will know fire!"

— Alexis of Blade

For centuries the Z'bri in the H'l Kar have ruled over Vimary with terror and pain. Even the Nation feared their wrath, and was forced to flee before the armies that came to burn Vimary. Now the time of the H'l Kar is over, as Tribals and Fallen join together and march into the H'l Kar with fire and vengeance.

REVANCHE is a complete cycle for Tribe 8. Four Quests and myriad hooks chronicle the events of the great and terrible war that deals the fatal blow to the H'l Kar and nearly to the Nation as well.

REVANCHE contains:

- Prelude adventures, Four full Quests, and many hooks for further adventure
- New NPCs and information on the armies of the Nation
- New Z'bri monstrosities and creations
- A deeper look at the nature and psychology of Hunters.

DP9-819

www.dp9.com

A Tribe & Cycle



Dream Pod 9

ISBN: 1-894578-56-2



9 781894 578561

Printed in Canada



Conquest



Part Four

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Special Thanks

From the Pod: To Steph, Josh and Phil for letting us play in your universe

From Hilary: To Wicked Ink and associates for constant miracle-making!

From Moyra: To Wicked Ink and the Inklings for being the creative force they are: you guys pulled through and kicked the proverbial butt, yo. To Jack the panoramic mechanic, noisytots, Coldstone dairy highs, Palazzio garlic rolls, the Pacific, Deborah, and most of all, to the many shared Hallucinations that brought us each together.

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Produced and Published by



Dream Pod 9

5000 d'Iberville, Suite 332

Montreal, QC

Canada

H2H 2S6

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Dream Pod 9 can be reached through the Internet. Look for our page on the World Wide Web at www.dp9.com. Also check out the rec.games.frp.misc newsgroup for support and information about Tribe 8.

Stock # DP9-819

Legal Deposit: June 2001

Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec

National Library of Canada

ISBN 1-894578-56-2

First Printing

Printed in Canada

Prelude

The present is nothing but the effect of the past's cause. To forget the past is to forget yourself, and to be trapped in an endless cycle of mistakes.

-- Madame Curie, Keeper Ancient.



BLOOD AND SACRIFICE

Altara Ven, Lightbringer of the Fallen Isles:

The rain is cold and impersonal against my cheeks. Rain used to bring us such hope, hold such life for us. It fed the crops, bathed our children, and washed away the dull land of yesterday to reveal the face of tomorrow. We could raise our hands and feel its cool touch splash into our palms and know we were building our future, planting our future, raising our future from the castoffs of a World Before.

We were walking firmly into its embrace with open arms and open eyes, boldly taking the steps laid down before us by prophecy. But now, now the rain simply makes a thick sludge of the ashes still choking the air. Starvation walks freely among our depleted numbers and sickness takes those the hunger misses. Linger on our dirty lips is the simple question: what is to become of us?

REVANCHE

In retaliation against the Child and the Warrior, the Beasts drew their claws across Vimary. We had few options — fight or die. We chose to fight, and went back across the bridge into tribal lands, to stand in arms with those who had cast our souls aside. Our struggle was bitter: blood ran down our arms as freely as it did theirs. For one brilliant moment we were neither Tribal nor Fallen, but a people of an inherited world against an enemy we can not hope to understand. How many generations must be lost before redemption is at hand?

Hom and Haven are thick with people now. No longer the refuge of the discarded, the Fallen Isles now house what remains of the free Nation. As much as we fought arm in arm not so long ago, we now bare our bitter teeth and snap at each other's throats like starving dogs in a pen, despite all the best efforts at unity. If what the caravan says is true, then lightning-quick from the H'l Kar come the Beasts that smell our deaths. I wonder, will we make it easy for them by tearing ourselves apart before they arrive?

HOPE AND GLORY

From the musings of Ross Pal'on, leader of The Hope:

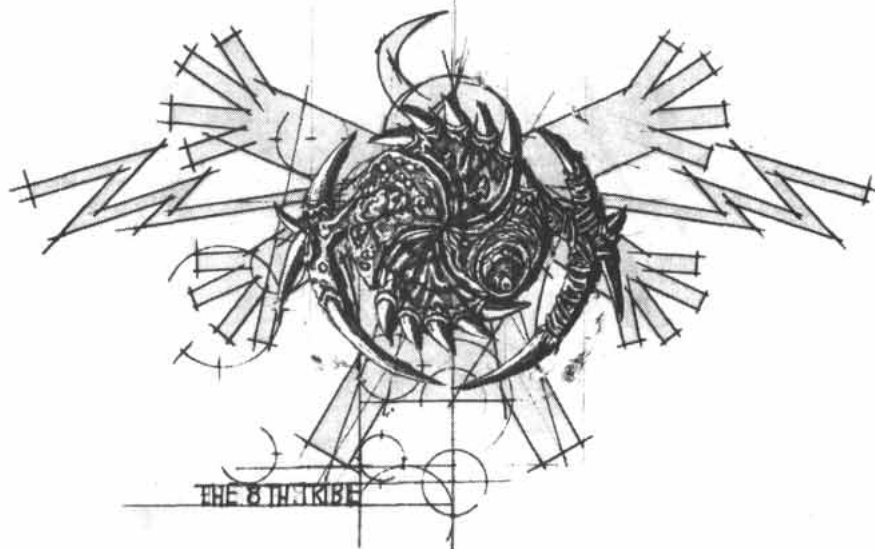
They say that the Mother sleeps within the Dome She created for Her people. Some say She is dying there, leaving us alone, children with no Mother to turn to. I cannot believe that. I will not. She is sleeping. I am certain that She is, for if She were awake, She would surely see the damage done to the lands all around. She must wake, for without Her, how can we heal? The Z'bri have left us with no real home, and I believe that it is Her Dome, Her great Firmament, and not Her waning, that is draining our Mother dry as surely as the Z'bri would suck away our souls.

It is not the Z'bri alone that stand ready to claim our souls. I have seen the dreams; I have heard the armies moving north across the land. All around us are those who cry for revenge against the Z'bri, who howl for the blood of those who destroyed our precious Vimary. They are blinded by the glory of a shining sword, by a rage that is centuries old.

For myself, I can only see the cost. So many more dead, so many lives destroyed, so many souls sucked away. What good is it to defeat an enemy if no one remains to enjoy the victory? Sometimes it seems to me that those within the Firmament were right to hide themselves away from this world and what we are becoming.

Then I think of Eva, buried there deep within the core of the Firmament, slowly draining Herself to keep Her people hidden, and I know that we cannot hide ourselves away. We must rebuild so that we may stand straight and tall within the light of the sun, rather than cowering in the leafy shadows at the Mother's side. As hateful as it is to me, we cannot rebuild until the threat of another Z'bri attack is ended.

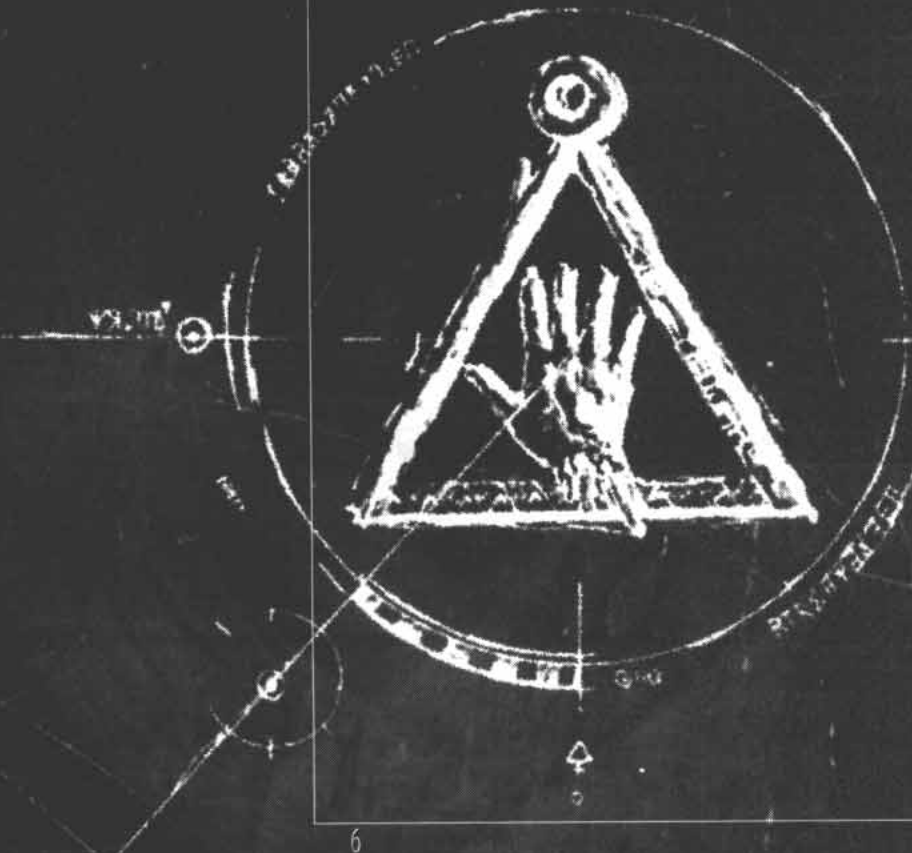
Perhaps that is the only way to save Her. Goddess, help them to see. We must fight out of hope, fight to be free, but the One help us if we fight blinded by rage and glory — for then we will never be free.



Chapter one: Fallow Fields

These are truly unusual times. Within a single season, generations of hatred and separation have been forgiven and forgotten so that we may live in harmony with the Outcasts on their little islands. The Fatimas behave as if the Burning was nothing more than a temporary inconvenience, and The Crone and The Trickster whisper enigmatic promises of "Revanche."

- Alethea Uhan'on



HINDSIGHT

Tera Sheba was blinded by the shadows. While she jumped at every sound, afraid of Z'bri hiding behind each corner, Cylix and his allies continued to whisper their lies to Her. I soon began to realize how the Z'bri had so easily fooled our ancestors from the World Before. Our own greed for power and status can blind us to the Truth. Even more worrying to me, though, was the knowledge of how fallible our goddesses truly were...

- Caitlin Aria'on, Evan Nurse

INTRODUCTION TO REVANCHE

Revanche is the third Cycle book for **Conquest**, the second **Tribe 8** Story Cycle. The events of **Revanche** follow the events in the Cycle books **Warrior Unbound** and **Broken Pact** as well as the interlude book **Vimary Burns**. It is not necessary to have played the previous Cycle, **Children of Prophecy**, or the earlier books in **Conquest** in order to enjoy **Revanche**. However, several years and many major events have changed the setting given in the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, and so a short summary is given below in order to help Weavers catch up on events.

If you intend to play **Revanche**, or think that your Weaver will use information for the book in her Cycle, please stop reading now.

Revanche details the rise of the Nation and the Fallen from the brink of ruin after **Vimary Burns**. This book is broken up into four Quests, each detailing a major event in the fulfillment of Joshua's prophecy, with support information in the *Weaver's Resources* section at the end of the book.

Revanche, in brief, covers the epic rise of the Fallen and the Nation as they finally unite against their common foe — the Z'bri of the H'l Kar. Though they struggle in their alliance, and have to learn hard lessons, humanity unites against the Beasts. After breaking apart the Z'bri Houses and leaving the H'l Kar nearly undefended, the new alliance raises the largest army seen on Vimary since the time of the Camps. Then, in a Crusade that starts out gloriously and ends in blood and madness, humanity finally overcomes two centuries of Z'bri power and crushes the H'l Kar once and for all. For groups focused on destroying the Z'bri, this campaign will be the height and fulfillment of their ambitions. Those interested in other issues, however, will not be left out; the time of **Revanche** is also full of politics, schemes, spirituality and growth. The book uses a modular and flexible format that allows Weavers to use as much or as little of all these themes as they wish.

At the beginning of **Revanche** things look grim for humanity, as Tribals and Fallen come to the brink of war due to misunderstanding and treachery. Only the actions of the PCs will be able to save the delicate alliance. After a prophetic dream showing the fate of Vimary and Hom alike if the Z'bri are not stopped, the PCs must go to Eva's Firmament to bring out as many Evans and Shebans as they can. Freshly returned from their

diplomatic mission, the PCs must then race to the H'l Kar to stop a reconciliation of Z'bri factions that could unite the Lords of all Houses against humanity. Finally, with the Houses split and the ranks of the Army of the Crusade swollen by those the PCs have recruited, the Fallen and Tribals join to fight an epic, brutal battle against the H'l Kar. After months of fighting, madness and plague, the Ziggurat is finally brought down and Z'bri power in Vimary is crushed once and for all.

THE AXIS

The events of **Revanche** start to move the Fallen deeper into the prophecy of Joshua. In this book the Characters will cut through the land like wildfire, and will emerge strong and feared. It is a crucial, pivotal time for humanity. Since the Opening, the Takers have held the position of power, and even the coming of the Fatimas only brought an easement of the terror. Now, at long last, humanity will rise up and will begin to throw down the rule of the Beasts forever.

As a result of this important moment in history, there is a great deal of spiritual activity surrounding the events in **Revanche**. Dreams and visions start to increase both in frequency and in the number of recipients. The River of Dream begins to flow in odd currents, and the lines between events start to become uncertain. Z'bri become Hunters, humans become monsters, and outcasts become heroes. **Revanche** encompasses a vastly important time, but it is an uncertain and changing time as well. Weavers are thus encouraged to make as much use of symbolism and Dream as they (and their Players) are comfortable with.

RUNNING REVANCHE

Revanche is the third Cycle book in the **Conquest** Cycle for **Tribe 8**. While the format of the book is similar to previous Cycle books, the content is a little different. The early Quests in **Revanche** provide a fairly linear adventure set that Weavers can run without too much preparation in order to bring their Players into the events of **Revanche**. The last Quest, however, is very open ended and freeform, as it covers the events of an entire war. While there are Acts in which there are plenty of predefined adventure seeds for Weavers, most of *The Razing* is based around a loose modular structure that allows the Player Characters' actions to determine what happens, and lets Weavers play as much or as little of the war as they feel is necessary.

Revanche also continues the tradition of **Broken Pact** in that it is very combat-intensive. Though there are countless opportunities for investigation, spirituality, and politics, the focus of **Revanche** is on the war that finally ends Z'bri power in Vimary forever. Plenty of plot hooks have been provided for non-combat action, and the modular structure allows Weavers to run anything from a nearly combat-less game to a bloody epic across the face of Vimary.

1. Fallow Fields

Everything in this book is presented with an eye to giving the Weaver tools, tips, tactics and ideas, rather than an iron plan that cannot be changed. Weavers are, as always, encouraged to change everything in this book to fit the playing styles of their groups.

CONTENTS

The rest of this chapter involves the setup information for **Revanche**. *What Has Come Before* gives a brief Weaver's Synopsis of the events that have taken place in the **Tribe 8** world between the **Tribe 8 Rulebook** and the beginning of **Revanche**. Following is the *Themes and Atmospheres* section which discusses the mood and nature of the Quests of **Revanche**. A timeline of events and the scope of the book is then given in *Timeline*. *The Situation on Hom* then gives a brief overview of the political situation on Hom at the start of the Quests.

The Quests proper start with *Fallow Fields*. This quest begins with Joan bringing the body of Lilith to the Children of Lilith as a sign of goodwill and respect. When the Children of Lilith discover that Lilith's Spear is missing, however, they begin to accuse Joan of stealing one of their artifacts. The situation quickly starts to spin out of control, and Hom nearly explodes into madness when an attempt is made on Magdalen's life using the very spear the Children of Lilith had been demanding. The PCs must race against the clock of public pressure to discover who was behind the assassination attempt and bring them to justice before the Fallen and Tribals end up at war with each other. Soon after the PCs have helped see justice done, a dream comes to many Dreamers of Fallen and Tribe alike; the vision reveals that if they do not work together and take the war to the Z'bri, the Z'bri will soon burn them all to ashes.

Quest Two, *Fallen Blossoms*, picks up when the PCs are sent as ambassadors to the Evans and Shebans in the Firmament. The Tribes desperately need the numbers and powerful Synthesis of the Evans and Shebans, and so the PCs must find a way into the sanctuary. Inside they find that the Shebans have taken over the Firmament, and use tales of terror about the entire outside world being corrupted to maintain their power. The PCs must work with those who wish to find the truth in order to break the Sheban hold on the Firmament and allow those who wish to go free to join the other Tribals on Hom.

While the Evans from the Firmament are joining forces with the slowly assembling army on Hom, the PCs are drawn by dreams into the H'I Kar in *Desert Rose*. Following the dreams sent by a Magdalite spy in the H'I Kar, the PCs must undertake a desperate quest to steal the Baron's heartstone and break apart the budding alliance between the Koleris and Sangis. Working with a mad and heavily tainted woman, the PCs are able to break apart the Houses, causing the Koleris to leave the H'I Kar en masse. Moving quickly, the PCs return to Hom to let everyone know that the H'I Kar is now without their strongest warriors, and that the Houses are in disarray.

With the PCs' news the new Crusade lurches into full speed, and soon the Army of the Crusade marches out of Hom to retake Vimary and burn the H'I Kar to the ground. Quest Four, *The*

Razing, covers the course of the war from the first glorious battle, through the bloody and brutal razing of the H'I Kar, until the fall of the Ziggurat and the end of the H'I Kar Z'bri.

Chapter Five, *Aftermath*, then describes the state of Vimary, and the rest of the world of **Tribe 8** in the wake of the great Crusade and the shattering of Z'bri power. It is followed by Chapter Six: *Weaver's Resources*, which contains NPCs, weapons, Z'bri forces and information about the H'I Kar to help Weavers run **Revanche**. Two sections have been reprinted from **Broken Pact**, in order to present necessary information for Weavers who do not own that book.

FORMAT

All of the Quests in **Revanche** share a similar format, to allow Weavers to easily track information. Each Quest is headed by a bit of narrative that establishes the tone for the Quest. Following is a Quest Prelude that details the state of the world at the beginning of the Quest and sets the necessary players on the stage.

Each Quest is then divided up into three to six sections called Acts. Each Act is a specific scenario that makes up the parts of the body of the Quest. Each Act starts off with a *Weaver's Synopsis* that gives a quick summary of the events in the Act in order to make it easy for Weavers to keep track of events during a game. Following the *Weaver's Synopsis* are the Scenes of the Act. Each Scene covers a specific set of circumstances or actions that the Weaver can use to build her chronicle. Some of the Scenes are quite specific, allowing Weavers to quickly run the adventure. Most, however, are fairly open and modular in nature to better allow PCs to control the flow of the story with their choices and actions.

A *Tips and Resources* section finishes out each Act. This section gives thumbnail statistics for combatants in combat-oriented scenes. More importantly, it contains additional rules and tips and options for Weavers running the scene. Many suggestions for dealing with PC-driven changes to the story are given, as are ideas for further scenarios and encounters.



WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

The following is a very brief summary of the events that have changed the world of **Tribe 8** since the main Rulebook. Note that these events are very condensed and lack a great deal of the detail that brought the stories to life. What is given here is enough for Weavers to jump into **Revanche**, but those interested in more detail and history should check the appropriate books.

The metaplot began with **Enemy of My Enemy**, in which one of the supposedly vanished Joshuans appeared in Vimary. Following his trail led Fallen heroes to find Lilith in **Children of Lilith**. Though originally created by Dahlia as a trick to teach the Fallen a lesson about independence, Lilith quickly started making changes that her creator had not foreseen. She raised the isle of Haven next to Hom, giving the Fallen more room and new agricultural lands. She also led many Fallen against the Z'bri, and gave them a feeling of hope and belonging. In the end, she even overcame Dahlia's illusions, and became a true Fatima. In a confrontation with Tera Sheba, Lilith was killed, and a guilt-wracked Joan took the fallen Fatima's body to ease Her own pain. In so doing, She openly defied Tera Sheba, starting the split between the Pillars.

Next, the Fallen were subjected to an inquisition and attack by the Tribals in **Trial By Fire**. This grand quest began when Agnes was kidnapped by the Z'bri, and the Fallen were blamed for it. In reality, the Fates had set Agnes up, hoping to make Her grow by putting Her through a trial and test of strength. The Nation was fooled into believing that the Fallen had betrayed Agnes, and Tribal armies attacked Hom and Haven, forcing the Fallen into hiding. Many important Fallen, including Ardatli Maque, Veruka the Wraith and Kara the Hunter were also lost — though these were not meaningless deaths. The Fallen finally redeemed themselves and proved their innocence when they attacked Abonom and freed Agnes. Agnes returned to the Nation, changed and pained in many ways. Slowly, however, She started to grow.

Warrior Unbound began the **Conquest Cycle**. This Cycle started when Joan opened Her Tribe to the Fallen, letting them return to the Nation if they passed tests She set for them. This led to a schism between Joan and Tera Sheba that resulted in Joan being put on Trial and sent deep into the River of Dream. In the end, Joan was saved by Fallen heroes, and stood free and proud — no longer shackled by chains of guilt or loyalty to Tera Sheba.

Joan's new pride, combined with the hatred that the Fallen and Joanites had for the Z'bri, led Joan to break the secretive Pact of the Dome in **Broken Pact**. The Fatimas and the Z'bri had long ago sealed a mutual non-aggression pact by trading Joshua's and Tibor's heartstones. Manipulated by the Baron and wanting to regain Her brother's heartstone, Joan broke the Pact when She and a small army made a lightning raid on the Ziggurat. When Joan found out that Joshua's heartstone was gone, She went mad and returned to Vimary. There, She invaded Tera Sheba's sanctuary and smashed Tibor's heartstone, forever shattering the peace between Z'bri and Fatimal followers and completing Her split from Tera Sheba.

Mad with rage and yearning for the taste of war and human pain, the Z'bri then invaded Vimary in two opposing armies in **Vimary Burns**. The Tribes, weakened and split by internal feuding, were unable to stand before the invasion. Within a week, most of Vimary had been overrun, and the Tribes were forced to flee to Hom. The Evans and Shebans took refuge in the Firmament, a gigantic living fortress formed by Eva. For the next two months, the Z'bri ravaged what was left of Vimary, turning Bazaar and the surrounding areas into ruins.

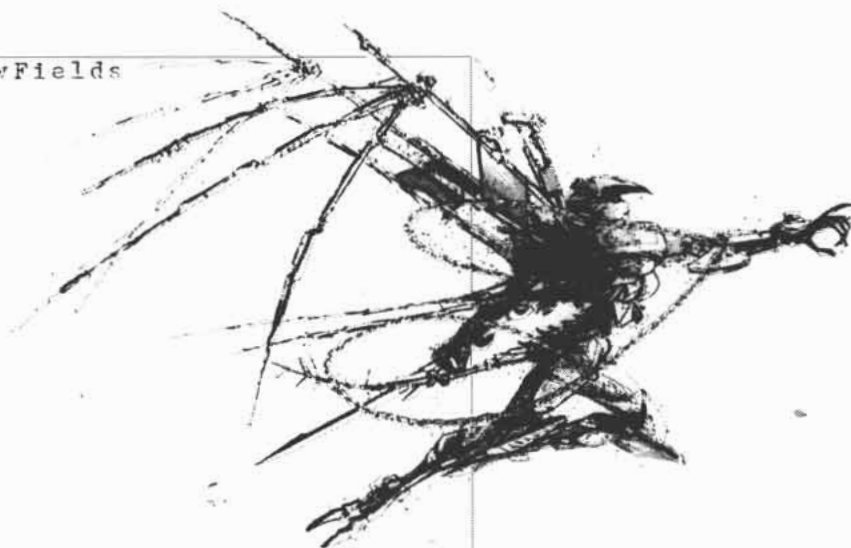
THEMES AND ATMOSPHERE

The events in **Revanche** are vast, and change the face of Vimary in a very profound way. More importantly, they change the way the Tribes and the Fallen look at themselves, each other, and the world around them. Before **Revanche**, the Tribes and Fallen were quarrelsome, fractious and utterly unable to stand before the menace of the powerful H'I Kar Z'bri. Even the Fatimas themselves were so wary of the Z'bri that they had made a peace with them that was bought at the cost of their worshipers' lives. In the middle of **Revanche**, the Tribes and Fallen together descend into a kind of madness in which years of hate and fear nearly turn them into the Z'bri that they are trying to destroy. In the end, the Nation does more than destroy the H'I Kar; they also learn a powerful lesson about themselves, and receive a warning that unless they learn to control themselves, worse may be yet to come. The following themes will help Weavers maintain the right atmosphere for **Revanche**.

UNITY

During **Revanche**, the Tribes and the Fallen learn a lot about unity. The Quest begins with the two groups nearly at each other's throats. It quickly becomes obvious to all that if they do not stop their fighting, they will be destroyed. When they finally do join together in strength, their might surprises them. The Tribes and Fallen learn that the whole of their Nation can be much more than the sum of its parts, so long as they work together. In **Revanche**, all the best successes come when people work together, and all the worst failures are from fractiousness and isolationism. When PCs work together, and work with others, they should be increasingly successful, finding the power in shared strength.

The fate of the Z'bri also serves as a foil for the growing unity of humanity. When the Houses refuse to work together, and the unity of the H'I Kar falls apart, it allows humanity to crush the once unassailable land. Even without the Koleris, the powerful H'I Kar Lords are capable of stopping the Crusaders - but they will not even work with each other. Without the Baron to lead them, the Z'bri fall apart and are destroyed one at a time. Weavers should play up the disorganization and scattering of the Z'bri in comparison with the unity of the Army of the Crusade.



DESTINY AND GLORY

Dreams, visions, and omens haunt the Crusade. Everyone in the Army of the Crusade believes that they are on a mission of destiny, that it is time and past time for them to do what must be done. Even with Joshua, their ancestors were unable to bring down the H'I Kar, but now the Tribes and Fallen together shall do just that. Even the Tribals begin to recite the Prophecy of Joshua, fully believing that it is the time spoken of when "They shall learn the wrath of wisdom and the wisdom of wrath."

It is this sense of destiny that leads so many thousands (who only months before were fleeing in terror) to join the Army of the Crusade and dare to storm the H'I Kar. This acceptance of destiny (and the strength that comes from faith in destiny) leads them to glory. At the start of the war, hope, unity and belief in the future bring the Army great success. When PCs accept their place in the Cycle, when they are willing to risk and bleed to gain a better future, then they should achieve successes that they might not otherwise have been able to.

REVENGE

Though it has the potential to be mankind's greatest hour, there is a bitter pill at the heart of the Battle of Retribution that leads it to brutality and horror — Revenge. At first, vengeance starts out as an acceptable motivation, as it leads many to achieve great feats against the Z'bri and lends courage and purpose that even the feeling of destiny cannot. Many leaders of the army, and nearly all the Jackers, drive their troops on with tales of the horrors that the Z'bri have visited upon them and their ancestors. Soon, however, justice turns to raw hatred, and the need for revenge overcomes the need to build a better future. Rather than fighting the Z'bri to assure safety and freedom, many begin to kill and hate for the sake of hatred and killing. It leads the army into madness, nearly destroying the course of the Crusade. In the worst moments, the army is not even interested in ending and winning the war, but seems content to let the burning and slaughter go on forever.

In the end, the Tribes and the Fallen must learn to balance their need for revenge with the need for justice, and their need for

blood with the need for life and peace. PCs should feel the siren call of utter hatred, the wish to destroy every last Z'bri and burn them to ash — but they should also realize that when they fight for hope rather than hate, they accomplish much more.

TIMELINE

Revanche starts in the early autumn after **Vimary Burns**. A month and a half has passed since the Tribes were driven onto Hom. While the war is still fresh in the minds of all of the Tribals and Fallen, they have been sharing close quarters just long enough that tempers are flaring high enough to reach danger levels. The period between the start of **Revanche** and the beginning of the war (in *The Razing*, p. 48) is only another two and a half weeks. The razing of the H'I Kar, however, turns into a grinding campaign that takes four months to complete and ends with winter setting in.

THE SITUATION ON HOM

In the wake of **Vimary Burns**, almost all the Tribals, with the exception of most Evans and Shebans, are living on Hom with the Fallen. The result is an overcrowded land of fearful and angry people who do not like or trust each other. Some on both sides are seeking peace; others, however, seem too involved with their own agendas to see that they are leading themselves towards disaster.

Though the so-called "New Bloods" and the Lightbringers, along with strong factions of the Magdalites and Joanites, are urging everyone to work together — at least until Vimary is retaken — they are facing an uphill battle. The Herites are refusing to submit to anything that they see as Fatimal or Tribal domination, and many will not even honor simple and rational requests for peace. Several Herites have even gone so far as to beat and mug Tribal refugees. At the same time, the Tribal old guard, led by Nostra Guy'on, is insisting that the Tribals should take complete control of Hom. They see working together with the Fallen as a stain upon their honor, and think that the Fallen should serve them. In order to try and ease some of the tensions, Joan has gone to get Lilith's body to return it to the Fallen.

PRELUDE HOOK: RAVAGED LEGACY

She came to amend as our Savior and Friend

By forging Her Father's new Nation

By Her Hammer and Spear we shed doubt and broke fear

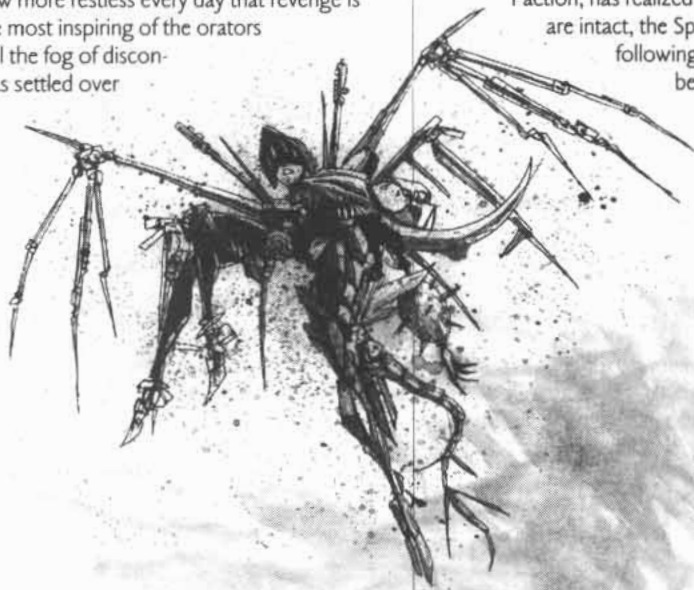
And pledged to secure Liberation.

- From The Ballad of Lilith

In the two months time since the burning of Vimary, morale among the five displaced Tribes and the Eighth Tribe has gone from bad to worse. In the Tribes of Dahlia, Agnes, Joan, Magdalen and Baba Yaga, reflection on the losses that the Nation has suffered turns even the most dedicated minds to morbid introspection. The victories of the Crusades seem drastically overshadowed by the loss of the homeland and the fracturing of the tribes.

The Eighth Tribe too is suffering, as the Tribes now radically outnumber them in their own living space. The quarters are close; one can hardly manage to roll out of bed in the morning without encountering another body. The effort to remain an independent and autonomous entity is a daily struggle. Although camaraderie and conviction were found in the battlefield during the Crusades, domestic conditions are far from friendly. Old wounds itch when the Fallen encounter the faces of the people that cast them out; old grievances and prejudices surface in thinly veiled hostility on behalf of many of the Tribals when conflict arises.

Even in the Eighth Tribe, the infighting escalates. Many of the Fallen Factions, especially among the Herites and Doomsayers, begrudge Deus for offering the Tribals hospice on the islands. To make matters worse, food supplies are meager at best and the threat of famine grows stronger every day. Tribal and Fallen alike seem to have lost focus in the war against the Beasts. Joan and Her warriors grow more restless every day that revenge is delayed, but even the most inspiring of the orators can not seem to quell the fog of discontented apathy that has settled over the islands.



As a goodwill gesture, and in an effort to refocus at least a segment of the population on the goal against the Beasts, Joan sent word to the Children of Lilith that She would embark on a pilgrimage to retrieve the Liberator's body from the ruins of Duskfall. In the three days since, the Children have remained in vigil on the west bank of Hom, waiting for Her return. At dawn on the third morning, deep in ritual and sensing Her return, the Children in unison begin to sing the Ballad of Lilith. Although their voices are low and baleful, the weight of their words steeped in Dream shakes the whole of the island (Force).

SCENES

Rude Awakening: If any of the PCs is a Child of Lilith, it is assumed she would be involved in the vigil awaiting the return of Lilith's relics. However, those that are not will be woken in terror by the tremors rocking the island. Even the heaviest of sleepers are shaken awake; hovels rock and objects fall crashing to the ground. If the PC party is particularly combat oriented, the Weaver should feel free to misguide them into thinking the Z'bri have come for their final revenge upon the Crusaders. Swarms of people move to the west side of the island and the PCs will be caught up in the wary masses. The pull of Dream will be strong as the Children's ritual plateaus, drawing particularly active Synthesis users like a magnet to the site of the Fallen Fatima's return.

Prodigal Goddess: Although Joan's intention is to rally the Fallen and seal goodwill back into their relationship with Her warriors, the return of Lilith's relics will be caught up in mixed emotions. Weavers are encouraged to play with the drama of this scene, the reverence with which the body is received, and the spiritual communion that occurs between the Children of Lilith and their dead Fatima. Joan appears in the first rays of dawn, cradling Lilith's body in Her arms, and descends to the dead Fatima's children, where a pallet has been prepared for them to bear Her body back to Her Palace. However, as Joan withdraws from the body, the song the Children of Lilith sing begins to falter and a whisper seeps through the crowd. Cerah, the Leader of the Faction, has realized that although most of Lilith's relics are intact, the Spear and Hammer, dismantled following the raid on the Ziggurat, have not been returned with the rest. She calls out to Joan to inquire after it, but the Warrior just turns Her back without a word and flies away.

F A L L O W F I E L D S

L.FallowFields

Malign Speculation: Confusion ensues following Joan's lack of response. The solemnity of the occasion is shattered in the wake of Her flight. Conclusions are jumped to, and Weavers are encouraged to introduce outlandish theories on behalf of the NPC cast. Some say that Joan wants its power for Herself; others claim that She has lost it, but Cerah's answer is the most vocal: Joan does not trust the Spear that was forged to destroy a Fatima in the hands of the Fallen. Present PCs are engaged in the discussion. If they do not take an active role, Lizel, a low profile member of the Children of Lilith, will ask them what they think Joan is doing.

JOAN'S INTROSPECTION

The truth behind the matter, however, is that Joan cannot find it within Herself to tell them She does not know where it is. The voyage to the ruined lands of Duskfall has struck sadness deep into Her heart. Outside the heat of battle, She has seen the smoldering remains of the Nation and the decaying carcasses of Her once proud warriors. The sights She experiences leave Her torn. Although the desire for revenge still burns brightly within Her, for the first time She is troubled by the price that comes of waging war and turns to the One Goddess for guidance.

QUEST ONE: FALLOW FIELDS

Fallow Fields is the opening act of the arduous formation of unity necessary to launch the Crusade — the last leg of the war against the Vimary Z'bri. PCs will be integral to the construction of this tenuous union. Several options are given to get the PCs committed to this quest from the onset, and more can be found within the Acts themselves. Act One, *Eager Fallacy*, sees tempers rise on Hom and Haven as the displaced Tribes and the Fallen begin to grate on each other's nerves. Old grudges find new heat in close quarters, and it begins to appear as if those who once fought arm in arm will now turn arms upon each other. PCs will witness several events that foreshadow a dangerous game being played remotely by Cylix Seth'on by means of the Black Owls. When the game comes to a head, an attempt is made on Magdalen's life, leaving the PCs with the first chance to react. Fingers are pointed and friction between the Tribes and the Fallen escalates dangerously.

In Act Two, *Wisdom Lost, Wisdom Gained*, the PCs are left to solve the mystery of the assassin. The PCs must take to the pavement and scare up the clues that are needed to reveal the treachery of the Terashebens and stop the Tribals and Fallen from killing each other. All around them, conflict rages. The Tribals demand justice, once more denouncing the Fallen as deceitful criminals. During these events, the PCs bear witness to the effectiveness of the new generations of Tribes and Fallen. The New Bloods and the Children of Hom have grown up in an environment of constant conflict coupled with constant change, and do not have the old feuding tendencies of their parents. As such, they prove an invaluable aid by working together with the PCs to track down the Black Owl behind the assassination attempt and unravel the mystery. In the climax of *Wisdom Lost, Wisdom Gained*, the PCs reveal the plot and quell an incident of

violence occurring at the Cage between the incensed Tribals and Fallen.

Finally, Act Three, *Dream, Dance and Direction*, sees the conflict between the Tribes and Fallen subside slightly. During the night following the conclusion of *Wisdom Lost, Wisdom Gained*, the PCs share a prophetic dream with a handful of people on Hom, including some of the leaders of the Fallen factions and Tribes. However, before those that experience the vision have a chance to digest its meaning, the occupants of the islands are awoken by one of the Dahlian Caravans lost during the Crusades. Roused by the Dahlians' music and dancing, the people of Hom spill out of their hovels and follow the Caravan to the Cage. Once there, the Dahlians reveal that they have been in the north spying on the Z'bri and have found out that a full-scale attack on Hom and Haven comes within the month. Non-combatant PCs are now given their place to shine; they must work with the others that have had the dream to prod the Eighth Tribe and the displaced Tribes into action. A pre-emptive strike is planned, setting the stage for the gathering of forces in Quest Two, *Fallen Blossoms*.

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

In the first wave of the Crusades, the blood of My Children stained the soil of Vimary. They fought and died for the freedom of the Nation in the war upon the Beasts. We have not seen such loss since my Brother was betrayed. What freedom have they now for all the losses they have suffered? The Nation is divided, the toils of all the Tribes reduced to rubble and ash. All we have built is lost to the retaliation of the Z'bri.

The Eighth Tribe too, has suffered immeasurable losses, but still the resonance of My Brother within them grows stronger by the day. Their rage and defiance strikes hard and fast, and their hearts burn for revenge. Like My Brother foretold, they have become resilient and strong, nourished as they have been on hardship and on pain. I had hoped my Niece's body would serve as a testament to my faith in them, but it seems that my efforts have failed, for I do not know what has become of Joshua's Hammer.

If His prophecy holds, it is they that will lead us into victory, away from the defeat that I have, for the first time, begun to fear.

Help me, Mother. Help me keep them all as one.

Help me claim Liberation on behalf of all Your Children.

- Joan's prayer to the One Goddess

A number of conflicting forces are at play in Acts One and Two of *Fallow Fields*. Influenced from three radically different directions at once — physically, through *Dream* and by spirits — the PCs are likely to begin *Fallow Fields* in convoluted discord.

In the PC's physical environment, the islands are in turbulent times. At each other's throats, the Tribals and Fallen encapsulate the sociological ramifications of the Crusades and the burning of

Vimary. The overwhelming loss, the omnipresent sense of defeat, the restlessness, disappointment and fear manifest themselves in violence, prejudice and distrust when confined to the area of the islands. Weavers will likely have to navigate their PCs through this hostile environment with care, lest the Players be drawn in too far and miss the opportunity to uncover what is really happening.

The River is in turmoil, and its influence on the inhabitants of the islands has intensified. With five Fatimas in close proximity, and a constant and intensifying state of emotional uproar, Tribals and Fallen alike will find themselves more keenly affected by the River's tides. In addition, the Spear of Lilith has by no means been merely misplaced. Stolen by the Black Owls from the Watchtower shortly after the burning of Vimary, it is currently being hidden in a riser shaft in the heart of a building inside the Cage. As the root of the debate, ranting and infighting on the islands, the spear's influence becomes symbiotic to its physical surroundings, gaining power from conflict even as it provokes it.

Lastly, the PCs, along with a handful of others, have been targeted by the Totems to deliver urgent messages to the Tribes and the Fallen, presumably from the One Goddess Herself. In visions and dreams, the PCs will be influenced by the presence of these powerful spirits, instilling a sense of urgency toward the culmination of the prophetic dream that comes in Act Three, *Dream, Dance, and Direction*.

Although these three influences assault the PCs at the same time, they should be concentrated in varying degrees to give the PCs a chance to sort everything out. The physical environment should be the predominant factor in the beginning of the adventure; the Spear's Synthesis influence should escalate out of this, culminating just before the assassination attempt. The visions and dreams that come from the Totems should gradually intensify throughout the investigation and come into full clarity during the dream that begins Act Three. Weavers should attempt to give each influence a significantly unique feel to allow their players to differentiate between the divided forces.



ACT ONE: EAGER FALLACY

How dare She pick and choose what relics we are fit to keep! She stole Mother away before we could weep our first tears of mourning. She denied peace to Liberty's children in their darkest hour. We have done our part — as Mother would have wanted it — held our anger in check instead of striking out in rage against Her Aunt. We have shown courage and patience and fortitude in standing beside Her, joining our hearts and our swords with Her children in fury against the Beasts.

Did our blood not mix with Her own children's in the gutters of the H'I Kar? Have we not by Her own Warrior's Code earned the right of respect? Are we or are we not the voice of the Eighth Tribe that speaks in Force as the Liberator's did? All that, and yet She will not even afford us the courtesy of words. Despite Her silence, I know the cause. It is a simple matter of fear. The Liberator's Spear was forged to fly true to the heart of a Fatima, and She does not think that we can be trusted with such power. We may be comrades while in arms, but in the eye of the storm, when the bloodshed subsides, we are still nothing more than miscreants and criminals to the Tribes — beyond trust, beyond compassion.

- Cerah, to the Children of Lilith

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Eager Fallacy outlines the conflict that ensues on the islands following the return of Lilith's relics in the *Prelude Hook*. In Scene One, *Widening Gyre*, feuding and infighting begin to escalate, threatening to shake apart the tenuous alliance of the Children of Prophecy. Joan, stricken by the destruction of Vimary, has momentarily lost Her direction and is neglecting the schism that has begun to erupt between the Tribes and the Fallen over the missing Spear. The time frame of this Scene is left to the discretion of the Weaver. Events can take as little as a few days or as much as several weeks depending on the level of foreshadowing that that Weaver is comfortable portraying to the PCs in the form of visions, dreams and the influence of the Spear.

In Scene Two, *Falconer Unheard*, Magdalen comes to the Fallen to petition for patience on behalf of Her Sister, but is interrupted by the outbreak of a fire following a terrifying explosion at the Goddess of Mercy Mission. Although it is assumed that everyone in the vicinity will respond to the fire, PCs will have the chance to realize that it is simply a diversionary tactic, and may be able, in Scene Three, *Anarchy*, to thwart the assassination attempt that is made on Magdalen by Cylix Seth'on's Black Owls.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

If the PC party does not have a Child of Lilith within its ranks, and did not respond to the scene of Lilith's return, they will no doubt hear about its occurrence on the streets the next day. The Cage will overflow with people, and Weavers should provide more than ample eager NPCs that are willing to tell the tale. It shouldn't take long for the PCs to see that the story is rapidly being blown out of proportion. Fallen versions include direct rebuffs on Joan's behalf or purported desecration of Lilith's relics. Tribals tell about the ungrateful Children of Lilith throwing objects and insults at the Warrior. The uproar gets steadily more heated, and minor skirmishes and arguments break out. PC parties with Lightbringers or peacekeepers in their mix may have to get involved in calming the disputes.

WIDENING GYRE

In the days following Lilith's return, the Cage is a cacophony of voices. Where the Joanites and the Children of Lilith come into contact with each other, serious tension prevails. The Children of Lilith, frustrated at the lack of attention to the matter of the Spear, demand answers from the harried Joanites. The official word is that Joan is deep in devotional prayer to the One Goddess and will not be disturbed. When the Children press the issue, many Joanites rebut by calling them ingrates. Although fists rarely fly, the discussions heat up.

Let the PCs decide where they stand in the debates. Weavers should feel free to use NPCs to stimulate the discussion. For every stance that the PCs may take on the issue, there is an equal and opposite reaction waiting to happen.

If the PCs believe that Joan is withholding the Spear, **Alnesh Kil'on** will have much to say on the issue. In the course of the Crusades, he has come to see the Fallen as sisters-in-arms. As such, he will try to keep Joanite tempers under wraps and quell the violence as best as he can. However, he will not allow flagrant accusations or assaults on Joan's honor. He will encourage the PCs to have patience, and maintains his faith that Joan will restore their trust. In the end, he understands the concerns of the Children of Lilith, but wishes to see peace restored.

Nostra Guy'on is, as is to be expected, less conciliatory. He believes that the Children of Lilith are acting like ungrateful children, and seizes upon every opportunity to tell them what he thinks in no uncertain terms. He does not purport to know if Joan is withholding the Spear or not, but maintains that if She is, She is wise in doing so. He believes that such power should not be in the hands of those that have at one time betrayed the faith of the Nation, and uses their current ungrateful outrage as evidence to his case that they do not deserve to wield such power.

If the PCs speak out against the assumption that Joan has withheld the Spear, or seem to side with Alnesh, **Cerah** will violently oppose them. She will point to Joan's silence on the matter as an indication of guilt and Her dismissal of the Eighth Tribe. If she feels she is losing the war of words, she will exacerbate the situation by suggesting that Joan's history of silence has always been a means of abdicating responsibility. Cerah will twist the knife further, asserting that Joan's last bout of silence was tantamount to Her handing Her Tribe over to Tera Sheba in an act of cowardice. The Joanites will be incensed at her remarks.



Parties with PC Lightbringers, Diplomats or peacekeepers in their midst should have ample chance to become involved to mitigate the disputes. There are several NPCs available who are unhappy at the current state of unrest; they will aid the PCs to this end. **Kymber Reva** will try to make peace for peace's sake, **Hal Ninva** will preach unity as a means to maintain his position as the voice of reason, and **Mek** will argue tiredly that the infighting is making enemies out of allies.

Unfortunately, every ten statements spoken by the peacekeeping voices will make less progress toward unity than each single corrosive comment made to drive the groups apart. **Kyrt the Free** takes advantage of the schism to further his cause against the Seven Deaths. He rabidly aggravates the situation by calling Joan's dismissal a betrayal against all those who have given their lives on the Crusades. However, he has no desire for the return of the Spear, stating that what comes from the Deaths can only be as corrupt as the Deaths themselves.

If the PC party is given to speeches and political maneuvering, Weavers can choose to have the debates escalate over several days. However, if dealing with a particularly action- or combat-oriented party, Weavers can choose to condense these events into the span of a single scene.

FALCONER UNHEARD

When the scene looks like it may grow dangerously out of control, Magdalen makes Her presence known. She has been watching the infighting with growing alarm, and has come to bring the Fallen a message that is ostensibly from Joan. Weavers should take their cues from the PCs when deciding how receptive the crowd is. She will use Her presence to enforce reception of the message if pushed, but only if the crowd is extremely unruly. Succinctly, She states that Her Sister has just been through a trying time, has been witness to the stark and still smoldering remains of Vimary, and reminds the crowd that Joan put Herself in grave danger in an effort to retrieve the relics for the Children of Lilith. In true diplomatic form, She petitions for peace and patience.

During the delivery of the message, PCs should be given the opportunity to sense that something is amiss (Notice vs. Threshold 4, or automatically to any PC with the Perk Acute Sense: Smell). Somewhere, and not too far away, a fire is kindling out of control. PCs should be given the first chance to respond to this knowledge, but if they fail to notice or choose to do nothing, a murmur will spread throughout the crowd, interrupting Magdalen's speech. Simple Investigation, Navigation: Land, or Survival skill rolls can be made (Threshold 4) to determine that the smoke is coming from the direction of the Goddess of Mercy Mission.

Regardless of who makes the observation aloud, or how most characters personally feel about the burning of the Mission, a riot will quickly ensue. Most of the Nation and the Fallen have

been witness to the burning of Vimary, and know that like it or not, the preservation of Hom is vital to the survival of both groups. It is also likely that most people know someone who is currently convalescing within; following the Crusades, Kymber opened its doors to the wounded that the Tribes managed to salvage and transport back to Hom. Kymber and several of the others who maintain the Mission will immediately run to the source, leaving the PCs in the midst of the chaos. Leadership skills or use of Conjunctional Synthesis (Empathy, Inspiration, Sensuality, Unity, or Recognition) can be used to quell the crowd or direct its efforts toward the Mission.

The PCs arrive just in time to see what was a small fire kindling at the side of the Goddess of Mercy Mission erupt into a wall of flame as a small cylindrical object at the root of the fire explodes. The PCs can choose several avenues of action at this point of the Act. Those with Leadership (2) or higher can take charge and help to organize the mass of people that have emptied out of the Cage, while others inclined to hands-on activity can take part in the efforts to put out the fire and save the occupants within. A handoff line from the bank of the river to the Mission should be formed to gather enough water to put out the flames

Rescue parties willing to go into the flaming structure can attempt to pull the wounded from within. The regular occupants of the Mission — those considered emotionally unstable — currently reside on the top floor and will prove to be the most difficult to save. Some may be uncooperative or hostile to their rescuers, while others may be dangerous in their state of relentless panic. PCs will face the ethical dilemma of choosing to endanger themselves in order to save the occupants or leaving the victims to perish in the flames. Also, if the PCs have an NPC ally from the Crusades who was severely wounded in battle, PCs will be given a chance to try and rescue their friend from the burning building. As far as specific personal plots are concerned, the outcome of life or death is left to the discretion of the Weaver, but in either case, the possibilities exist for her to engage her players in an emotionally charged scene.

When the fire is almost under control, and most of the crisis has been averted, the PCs should have a moment to reflect on what has happened. Having seen the sudden eruption of the flames, and with rudimentary examination of the origin of the fire, it is clear that the fire was an act of arson. The remnants of a metal cylinder are broken and smoldering in the heat of the embers. When turned over, the charred image of the Herite sigil is drawn in black, viscous, burnt oil on its side. Herites among the PCs will find the act asynchronous to recent plans among the members of the Faction, while others should recognize that were the Herites to launch an attack in Hom in these times, it would likely be against one of the Tribal encampments, rather than on one of the cornerstones of Fallen society.

When trying to figure out motivations behind the attack, PCs can make Investigation or Tactics rolls (Threshold 4) or use the Eminences of Truth, Wisdom, Mystery or Recognition to come to the revelation that although the fire could have been merely an act of mindless violence, the assured response to the conflagration would make it an ideal diversion to ensure that another place nearby was left unguarded. Because most of those that responded to the fire came from the Cage, the PCs should

1. Fallow Fields

be left with sufficient reason to think that something may be going on there. Weavers may choose to give those PCs with the Eminence of Fate an underlying sense of impending doom in that location. Those using Fate or Truth in Conjunctional Synthesis will have a stark but fleeting vision of the head of the Liberator's Spear piercing a heart wrapped in barbed wire. PCs successful at seeing this vision will be filled with an overwhelming sense of urgency.

ANARCHY

It is assumed that the PCs will return to the Cage, where people are filtering back into the area after the trauma of the fire. A group of Kymber's fellows have set up an area on the outskirts and are dressing the burn wounds of those injured in the rescue missions and the fight against the flames. Those close to the pavilions at the center of the Cage have already started to take up their arguments again, and seem incongruously angry among those recovering from the fire. If the PCs have not deduced the involvement of the Spear, Weavers may choose to give those with Children of Lilith/Joshuan Eminences a tangible sense of the surge of Force as they step into the Cage. PCs have several means of construing where the Spear is being hidden. Psyche, Synthesis Lore, or Dreaming skills can be rolled (Threshold 5) to determine the presence in the area; Camouflage, Tactics, or Ambush can be rolled (Threshold 6) to determine the most effective origin of attack; Force or Vengeance (Threshold 5) can be used to detect the source of the presence like a game of Hot and Cold; or Wisdom, Truth, or Recognition can be used to illuminate the hiding place or draw the PC magnetically towards the Spear. In any case, the successful cell will spot the spearhead emerging from the rafters high atop the tallest building of Cage. From what the PCs on the ground can see, the spearhead is camouflaged by the decrepit roofing of the World Before, is cradled in a groove and is pointing downward towards the south entrance of the Cage.

The PCs will have little time to decide on strategy; just as this discovery is made, Magdalen returns from the Mission area and approaches the archway. Dark and shadowy movements on the roof signal that the trap is about to be sprung and PCs will have to react immediately if they wish to thwart the attack. A loud twang is heard, and the Spear hurtles downward; it is brilliantly afire with the power of the emotions it has absorbed, and it crackles through the air like thunder. Capriciousness can be used to throw the ballista's aim off, Motion can be used to slow its speed enough to render it harmless, and Force can be used to buffet the Spear off-course. The Spear can also be physically deflected, intercepted, or, as a last-ditch effort, PCs can elect to jump in front of it.

If all efforts of the PCs fail, or they do not attempt to save Magdalen, the Spear will hit, and Her body will wrack, but at the same moment, a man's cry of anger and pain will be heard behind Her. Alnesh Kil'on's body twists in a grotesque mimic of Magdalen's form. His chest bursts forth with fire and blood as he uses the Aspect of Sacrifice to take the Fatimal wound upon himself; the Spear's energies are visibly drawn to him, and all who stand near are thrown to the ground by the force of the Spear's transferred impact. Alnesh's body collapses in on itself and

crumbles to the ground, an empty husk charred by the incredible energies that rammed through his flesh and mind.

If the PCs decide to chase the assassins, they will have to move quickly. Predicting that they will be chased, the Black Owls have a well planned escape route, descending by rope to the rear of the building and out to the north end of Cage. The PCs will have to maneuver through the excited crowd. To make matters worse, one assassin lobs a Keeper hand grenade over his shoulder and into the mass of people in his wake. Quick thinking and creative efforts to stop the impending explosion should be rewarded, but it is expected that Dodge rolls will be used (Threshold 6) to avoid the circle of the blast. The explosion seriously wounds several NPCs, and may prove damaging to the PCs as well. The crowd degenerates into full-scale panic, and the wounded look like they may be trampled in the uproar. Those with the Eminences of Empathy, Unity, or Sensuality may try to contain the emotions of the crowd (Threshold 7); those with Force may try to buffet the crowd back away from the wounded; those with Leadership may try to take charge.

EYES IN THE DARKNESS

Any attempt to sway the crowd or rescue the wounded will result in losing the trail of the assassin. If some or all of the PCs decide to continue in full-on pursuit, they will have to weave through the wounded, fighting off the crowd to get any closer. As they escape its confines, they will win some ground, but lag some distance behind the running figures. As the PCs break past the wall of the Cage, they see the assassins running into the trees ahead. If the PCs choose to follow, they will be led into a trap. In the wide berth between two trees, netting has been laid on the ground beneath a layer of debris. Once the PCs are over it, several people in the trees will spring the trap. A Combat Sense roll (Threshold 5) can be made to avoid being caught, but the delay it causes (or the detour required to avoid it) will ensure that the assassins, well in the lead, will be given ample opportunity to escape.

The PCs can, however, capture one of the trap operators in the trees, if they have avoided being caught up in the net. If they elect this course of action, it should not be prove extremely difficult to catch one. Nhung the Shadow is not a member of the Black Owls; she is a Herite who has been convinced by them to aid the assassination party, whom she believes are Herites themselves.

If the PCs choose not to chase the assassins, the above scene is expected to play out in the background. The hand grenade will go off, the mob riot will ensue and the Black Owls will escape. Nhung the Shadow will get away as well, but she will be spotted fleeing by Tirk the Young, a Child of Hom, and a member of the New Bloods. Several other options are open for PC action immediately following the assassination attempt. The mob must be controlled to ensure that the casualties of the explosion can be safely removed and treated. Leadership skills or use of Conjunctional Synthesis (Empathy, Inspiration, Sensuality, Unity, or Recognition) can be used to calm the tide of people and direct them into benevolent action. If the PCs do not take care of this, Kymber Reva and her followers will.

Immediately following the Spear's hit, all Magdalites in the crowd will rush to protect their Fatima. Magdalen Herself is physically unhurt, but is visibly shaken either by Alnesh Kil'on's death or by the heroic efforts necessary to ward off the Spear's attack. She rallies quickly, however, and will direct Her children to ease the crowd's suffering; the Magdalites will join the PCs or Kymber's fellows to quell the panic and help with the wounded.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

More on the Fallen and Tribal Elders appearing in this Act can be found on the following pages in other Tribe 8 books:

Mek: Tribe 8 Rulebook, p. 95; **Hal Nirva:** Tribe 8 Rulebook, p. 101; **Kymber Reva:** Tribe 8 Rulebook, p. 105; **Alnesh Kil'on:** Word of the Pillars, p. 70; **Nostra Guy'on:** Vimary, p. 93; **Kyrt the Free:** Children of Lilith, p. 89; **Cerah, Child of Lilith:** Broken Pact, p. 84.

The **Spear of Lilith** can be found on page 75 of **Children of Lilith**. Otherwise, the following statistics can be used: Acc +4, Parry +3, AD +50. Can be hurled at anything within line of sight, to count as a Short Range target. Add the power of Red Mist: an aura of hate and fear surrounds and permeates the Spear, as well as the atmosphere surrounding it. Any who venture within two feet of it must make a WIL roll against a Threshold of 5 or be consumed by a berserker rage for MoF minutes.

This relic of Joshua's Hammer was manipulated by Dahlia, was critical to Lilith, was wielded by Agnes, and was used by Joan to smash Tibor's Heartstone. With such intensive Fatimal use, it has become immensely powerful. With each day it spends in the Cage, its presence gains in power, feeding on the rage, fighting and fury of its surroundings. At the same time, it nourishes the aggressive tendencies of those in proximity — particularly Characters with the Eminences of Fury, Force, Rage, Vengeance and Conflict. Weavers can demonstrate this unnatural intensity both by means of personality changes in the PCs' allies as well as in the PCs themselves. Although Weavers should use a narrative approach when describing the effects of the Spear's atmosphere, a negative modifier (-2) is in effect when using the Eminences of Unity, Empathy, Inspiration, and Wisdom, as well as during any WIL or PSY action to maintain control of a PC's emotions.

For Grenade and Explosion rules, please see the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p 148.

Nhung the Shadow, Herite Conspirator has the following statistics: **Highlights:** Cold, Loyal, Perceptive; **Attributes:** AGI +1, CRE +2, INF +1, PER +2, PSY -2, WIL +1, STA 25, UD 6, AD 6; **Skills:** Acrobatics 2/+1, Athletics 2/+1, Combat Sense 1/+2, Dodge 3/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1, Human Perception 2/0, Intimidate 2/+1, Melee 3/+1, Notice 3/+2, Synthesis 1; **Eminences:** Recognition and Freedom.

ACT TWO: WISDOM LOST, WISDOM GAINED

'Course everybody's at each other's throats. When in the One Goddess' name aren't they? Far back as I can remember — and I been on this island my whole life — there hasn't been a time when somebody didn't have a grudge to bear, or a throat to cut, or a back to stab. I thought maybe we was making some progress with the Crusades, 'cause it looked like everybody was finally getting around to talking to each other, but here we are, right back to where we started. If you listen to the Tribals, every person on Hom could be likened to the most scheming, underhanded and treacherous Iv'chet out there — even me, who ain't never had a Goddess but the One. Listen to the Fallen and it seems like nobody ever got kicked out for a good reason, even though you can still smell the stink of blood on some of their hands.

Frankly, in the end, I don't care what Goddess you prayed to, what you did or didn't do, or who kicked your ass on the way out the door. The past is in the past, and every one of us had better start leaving it there. If we don't, them bugfaced bastards up in the H'I Kar won't mind. They're just sitting up there after all, drooling in wait, and begging for a chance to take away our future.

-Tirk the Young, Child of Hom

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Wisdom Lost, Wisdom Gained follows the aftermath of the assassination attempt made on Magdalen's life. In Scene One, *Passionate Intensity*, the chaos of the Cage has settled somewhat, but rage runs high as answers are sought and accusations are thrown. Tensions between the Fallen and the Tribes rise once more, as the attack is blamed on the Herites. Kyrt the Free is arrested by Joanite Templars and the question of justice is raised. The PCs have a chance to gather information from the scene and speak to some of the key players.

In Scene Two, *Revelation*, the PCs take to the beat to try and unravel the mystery. Aided by Tirk the Young, a charismatic New Blood, the PCs must track down sufficient evidence to determine the culprit behind the crime. A number of leads become available to the PCs, finally culminating at the capture of one of the Black Owls — Judge Puris Dan'on.

Finally, Scene Three, *Indignant Shadows* details the PCs' plight to clear the allegations against the Herites and reveal the Black Owl's influence on the event. Together, the PCs and the leaders of the Tribes must determine what serves as justice, when Justice's minions fail.

PASSIONATE INTENSITY

The scene at the Cage shifts radically from panic to outrage. If Alnesh has died, Nostra Guy'on will be outraged. Once word gets around that one of the Herites was seen fleeing the scene, he will call for blood. It becomes apparent that if the PCs have been successful in capturing Nhung the Shadow and wish to get any information out of her at all, they must keep her hidden to avoid the Joanites' blind rage. Tirk and a few of the New Bloods will volunteer to transport Nhung into a safe house so that she can be effectively questioned at a later time.

If they do not get their hands on Nhung, Nostra Guy'on will seize upon Kyr't the Free and demand that he be held pending justice done. Kyr't is less incensed by the accusation than he is by the demands. Although he has had nothing to do with the assassination attempt, he does little to proclaim his innocence, and in fact, makes matters worse by telling the Joanites who fall on him that they have no right to do so. He maintains that the Fallen should never have opened their doors to the Tribes. He uses Nostra Guy'on's outrage and demands as testimony to the Tribes' misguided conceptions of authority and ownership, and in rabid outcry of his own declares that the Fallen should have proclaimed the burning fields of Vimary the new Circle of the Chosen and left the Tribals to fend for themselves against the Z'bri hoards.

The Magdalites and Joanites will want immediate and capital retribution for the incident and it will be left to the PCs to mediate the scene. If they do not step in, or if they falter, Hal Ninva will take their place and remind the Tribes that the Eighth Tribe has paid in blood for the right to stand on its own. Several options, if suggested by the PCs, will placate the Tribes enough to delay their attempted execution of Kyr't the Free:

Trial of Many: Representatives from each of the five displaced Tribes and the five Outlooks will be brought together to form a judiciary council that will hear the facts and determine the outcome on the matter.

Trial of One: Since no central authority exists that carries jurisdiction over both the Tribals and the Fallen save for the One Goddess, Kyr't's judgment can only be left in Her hands. He is to be brought by powerful Dreamers of both contingents into the River, where they will ask the One Goddess to illuminate the truth of the matter, and determine his fate.

Stay of Justice: The Eighth Tribe will request a stay of action that is amenable to both the Tribes and the Fallen (three days), during which the Fallen can do their own investigation into the matter, and decide what the best solution for justice is. Following the stay, the Eighth Tribe will present its decision to the Tribal Council. If the decision is deemed unsatisfactory at that time, negotiations over the matter will resume between the Tribes and the Fallen.

In any case, the time elapsed between this scene and the solution's culmination should be somewhere in the region of three days. Once the terms of the agreement have been set, the Tribals will disband, leaving the gathering of the Eighth Tribe, including the PCs, to talk amongst themselves. Once the Tribals

are gone, Kyr't proves to be quite reasonable and speaks freely to the PCs and NPCs present. He makes no claim to the assassination attempt, and once more, he is insulted at the accusations. He maintains that the Herites may carry the torch of hatred for the Seven Deaths, but they are not as rash as people take them to be. He is more than aware that any attempt on a Fatima's life in the current state of the Nation would be asking for death, and does not know any Herite suicidal enough to undertake such a mission.

If the PCs made any public display in the course of the attack (visibly tried to thwart the assassination attempt, chased after the assassins, etc.), they will be asked how they knew the event was going to happen. It will be up to the PCs to divulge as much or as little information as they know. Their cell will be asked by Hal and/or Mek to be one of the groups investigating the crime.

REVELATION

There are several departure points from which the PCs may start their investigation. If they have captured Nhung, this would be the most logical place to start. If not, they have at least seen her or have her description, and may try to pinpoint her location on Hom and Haven. They may choose instead to start by examining the area on the roof of the building by the ballista. Finally, by examining all the events of the attempt, they may choose to locate a Keeper to inquire about the origins of the explosive used in the fire and the grenade launched during the assassin's flight.

NHUNG THE SHADOW

If the characters did not pursue the assassin out of Hom, Tirk the Young will approach them as the leaders of the Factions filter away. He will tell the PCs that after the assassins broke out of the clearing beyond the north wall of the Cage, he saw a girl jump down from the tree, glance down the path of the assassin, and hurry away in the opposite direction. He will give them a description of Nhung and will tell them that he's seen her around before in the Cage, that she is covered in barbed wire tattoos like many of the Magdalites are, and that he thinks she was fairly new to Hom before the Crusades began.



Regardless of whether Characters saw her themselves, or if they have received her description by way of Tirk, they have several different means of tracking her down. PCs with the Eminence of Wisdom may attempt a ritual to divine her hiding place or identity; PCs with the Eminence of Fate can use their Synthesis to make their paths converge, or may call up an omen of where the Herite will be. However, if the PCs choose the gumshoe approach, they should also be quite successful. Talking to Fallen NPCs, they will find out that Nhung is often very cold and remote in the Cage, but that she is also often seen skulking around the edges of Ile Perdue.

Those more in the know still may not know her name but can relate that the reason she is seen in Ile Perdue is that she is a trader of Hazers, drugs that blur the distinction between the flesh and the mind, and with it, the distinction between pain and pleasure. Word on the street is that she is assumed to have been one of Magdalen's Ecstasies; her product is extremely effective. However, many note that she is an odd sort for a Fallen Magdalite, since she refuses to be drawn into the festivities, or even withstand the faintest touch. If the PCs venture to Ile Perdue they will encounter Nhung, who lives in a small ramshackle shack in a shantytown behind the den of iniquity itself.

Nhung will be wary of the PCs and will bolt if any come too close. She will deny any association with the assassination attempt, and if pressed, will grow caustic and spiteful. She will try to leave them, and will run if they pursue her. PCs will have to physically apprehend and seclude her to get information from her. Although a tough and stubborn young woman, Nhung can be intimidated. PCs can use Interrogation or Intimidation (Threshold 6) to wear her down; use of Capriciousness, Truth, Bravery, and Conviction can be used to mollify her; Conflict can be used to make her give over her information against her will. If at any time any of the PCs touch her, they will lose ground, making her venomous and angry.

Nhung will eventually convey the following:

- She has been running tasks for a small Herite cell who call themselves the Long Arm. Formed only recently, they rabidly oppose the presence of the Fatimas and the displaced Tribes on Hom.
- She joined up with the cell because she wanted to hurt Magdalen, though even if pressed she will not explain more.
- The fire at the Goddess of Mercy Mission was set using a rusted old tank that they got from one of the few Keepers that still lives on Hom. Although Nhung has never met him, she knows he can be found in the shadow of the South Tier Bridge, not far from the wheel. The Keeper was also the source of the fire cones that the assassin used when fleeing the Cage.
- The cell has another runner that works for them, a Jacker who is the one who put them in contact with the Keeper in question.
- What she knows and the Herite cell does not is that the runner is not a Jacker as she pretends to be, but is in fact, a Dahlian. Nhung trailed the girl after a covert meeting, and saw her illusion fade. The Dahlian is about 17 summers old, has shoulder length

blonde hair and has a fresh, youthful face full of freckles.

- The cell leader is named Coron the Consecrated. He is tall and decidedly average looking, but Nhung once saw him without a shirt while spying on him, and he has great owl wings tattooed over his back and arms. (If the PCs have been playing the course of the metaplot, they should be able to positively identify the iconography of the Black Owls with this information.)

- The attack on Magdalen was never meant to kill Her. Instead, it was intended to send a message to the Tribes about being where they should not be.

If the PCs are well established in Fallen Society, or if any of them are well connected among the Herites or have Herite Lore, they will know that such a cell does not currently exist. If the PCs pass this information by Kyr, he will confirm that no Herite he has ever met has gone by that name. If the PCs choose to impart this information to Nhung convincingly, and she realizes that she has been duped, she will be far more forthcoming about any information she has.

GAROTH. THE KEEPER

If the PCs decide to investigate the item responsible for the explosion which allowed the "cell" to escape, they will find that many of the Keepers have gone underground. Approximately a dozen Keepers can still be found above ground. If the PCs barter with the Keepers, they will give the PCs the name of the Keeper who deals in such items. Directions will also be given as to where Garoth can be found. As Garoth is not interested in going underground again, he will be more inclined to listen to what the PCs have to say, and what they have to offer. He will, of course, be concerned that these Fallen have sought him out by name, and will be slightly paranoid throughout the entire conversation. The information will not come cheaply; Garoth charges steeply, demanding large amounts of food or relics. He will settle for no less.

If they have already spoken with Nhung, then they will be able to locate Garoth directly.



1. Follow Fields

- If the PCs come to an acceptable barter agreement with Garoth, he will give them the name of Celia, a person who has made a number of purchases from him recently, including the grenade. He does not know what her Fallen faction is. When the PCs call it a fire cone, Garoth will shake his head, and mock them for their ignorance.
- Puzzled, he will tell the PCs that she met his price — fresh fish, and lots of it — without any bartering.
- Garoth will also inform them that Celia asked for a relic crossbow, which he now has for her.

CELIA, DAHLIAN TINKER

If the PCs investigate the ballista itself, they will find that it is of Tribal make; it is not made with the care of a weapon shaper, but has the feel of a weapon made by someone using precise instructions, followed precisely. PCs who succeed on a Notice roll (Threshold 4) will find a piece of a Dahlian bracelet wedged between the struts that hold the ballista at a 45-degree angle. Other than this, no other information can be gleaned from the site.

If the PCs have a Dahlian or ex-Dahlian ally or contact, she will be able to tell them that a Dahlian artisan has made the bracelet. Although parts of the ritualistic inscription are missing, the piece is detailed with the name Celia. The ally can confirm that there is indeed a Celia, and she is part of the Tinker Caravan, which is currently scattered across Hom. If the PCs do not have a Dahlian ally, they can have the bracelet appraised in the market, but will find out only the information concerning the meaning of the inscription.

If the PCs have spoken with Nhung, then they already know that that Celia the Jacker and Celia the Dahlian are one and the same. However, if they are only working with the information they have acquired from the bracelet or from Garoth, inquiries after Celia will elicit the response: "Which one? The Dahlian or the Jacker?" Leads on Celia the Jacker will lead nowhere, and it should not take long for the PCs to realize that Celia the Dahlian has been posing as a Jacker around town. Finding Celia the Dahlian is a relatively simple task after all of that — everyone in town agrees that she can be found at Junks.



When the PCs track her down, Celia will be sitting in a back corner of Junks. She watches the Fallen mingle in a distant and bemused manner. Celia has situated herself beside the rubble of what was once a window, loosely covered by an oil tarp. If the PCs are physically aggressive in their approach, she will make quick use of the exit. However, if the PCs only seem to wish to speak with her, she will be willing to accommodate them. If the PCs are blatant in their address of the assassination attempt, Celia will dance around the issue, never truly denying or confirming her involvement in the matter. Instead, she will say that there is a price involved in any living arrangement.

If the PCs have the piece of the bracelet, Celia will feign innocence, and ask where they have found it. The bracelet will serve as a powerful bargaining tool, especially if they imply that were the location of its discovery made known, Celia's status in the Tribes might be drastically affected. If the PCs do not choose to use the bracelet to barter, Weavers are encouraged to give the information she has to offer on a sliding scale; the more the PCs offer, the more useful her information will be to them. Celia is extremely cagey, and will not be tricked into giving anything away freely or cheaply. In the end, if the price is high enough, Celia will convey the following information:

- Celia will first start with information she believes the PCs already have: Coron is the ringleader of the group of assassins.
- Celia will ensure that the PCs are fully aware that she simply did the bartering for Coron, and never asked any questions about what the goods were going to be used for.
- Celia has no idea where the fish came from, Coron always gave it to her, and said to pay whatever was necessary. PCs can infer from her smug look that Coron paid much more than the Keepers actually asked for.
- Now that she comes to think of it, the fish were never marred, suggesting that they were caught without hooks or spears. She believes that Coron was getting the fish from off-island.
- Celia will admit that she suspects Coron is not what he says he is. She has no proof, of course, but her working theory at present — just between her and the PCs — is that the Tribal markings Coron has tattooed on his skin are much too austere for the Fallen. Even he purports to be.
- Without giving any solid facts, Celia will tell them that she knows where to find Coron the Consecrated. She says she knows he's looking for one more item, and she happens to know that one of her Keeper contacts has it ready for trade.

INDIGNANT SHADOWS

If the PCs fail to barter with her successfully, or fail to initiate a plan of action with her, Celia will lean across the table conspiratorially and propose a plan of her own; She will to go Coron, and tell him that Garoth is unwilling to make the trade for the item by her proxy. She is confident that he will buy her story, and tells the PCs that they can pick the stage for their ambush. For her part of the bargain, she claims only the goods that Coron was planning on paying for the relic crossbow.

It is assumed that the PCs take Celia up on her offer. Weavers should let them take the lead in planning the event, as Celia will be amenable to most anything. Taking Coron down should not prove to be too difficult, though the Weaver is encouraged to lend the scene a sense of drama. Once Coron is captured, the PCs can choose to interrogate him themselves, or drag him back to the Fallen Elders.

Judge Puris Dan'on (Coron's true identity, which will be the first thing a successful interrogation will reveal) will be a tough nut to crack, and will refuse to give over information. Synthesis, especially the Eminences of Conflict, Mystery and Truth, will be a great help to the PCs' information gathering. He will not be easily intimidated, and can withstand severe amounts of pain, should the PCs decide to be less than pleasant with their interrogation techniques. Puris will refuse to make conversation, remaining stoic and silent until the bitter end. The most successful facet of Dream that the PCs can utilize is the Dahlian Aspect Puppet Show. If successful (Threshold 5), he will be consumed by images of himself drowning in the water pits of Court Hall, straining and gasping for air. If they are successful at this measure, he will confess everything to them as if he were confessing to Tera Sheba Herself.

The information Judge Puris Dan'on has to impart to the PCs is:

- He is the de facto leader of The Black Owls on Hom.
- The Spear was stolen from the Watchtower during the burning of Vimary. When it was stolen, the Hammerhead was still attached, and is being held by Mirah Slade'on somewhere on the island.
- The Black Owls fundamentally believe that the five displaced Tribes and the Fallen are slowly being consumed by Z'bri taint, because living beyond the gift of order that Tera Sheba bestows leaves them vulnerable to the Beasts' Atmosphere. The Black Owls believe that eventually the Fallen and five Tribes will be consumed by Z'bri Atmosphere, filled with hatred, madness and treachery.
- The mission was mandated by Cylix Seth'on, who serves as Tera Sheba's right hand. Magdalen was never meant to die. Rather, the staged assassination was to serve as an allegory for the Tribes about the dangers of living side by side with criminals and vermin, instead of remaining loyal to Justice.

Optimally, the investigation into the assassination attempt should take up most of the three days that have been agreed upon between the Tribals and the Fallen. Weavers are encouraged to make the deadline loom, so that the PCs may arrive in the nick of time with the real culprit of the attack. If the investigation has happened more quickly, it is expected that the PCs would bring Judge Puris Dan'on to one of the Fallen Elders. In this case, the elapsing time can be spent strategizing on the approach that the Fallen will take with the Tribals in the matter of the assassination attempt and the liberation of Kyr't.

If the PCs do arrive just as the Tribals and the Fallen are coming together, they will find the Cage in the middle of a tense moment. The Tribal Council and the Fallen Elders come together to conclude the agreement that was struck in *Passionate Intensity*. Kyr't will be reluctantly brought forward as the two sides meet in a quiet and somber moment tinged with anger and forced civility. Whether the Tribals have agreed to the Trial of Many, the Trial of One or the Stay of Justice, the terms of the agreement will be formally stated, and Kyr't will be brought forward and given a formal accusation by Nostra Guy'on on behalf of the Tribes. Weavers are encouraged to make his speech spiteful and filled with contempt, stating that the Tribes will not tolerate the criminal element of the Fallen, of which Kyr't is a symptom.

Politically or socially oriented PCs will have their chance to take center stage during this scene, for in order to bring justice to the correct perpetrator, they must interrupt the inception of the trial to make their case. The Tribals will initially be incensed by the disruption; some of the Old Guard may even go so far as to draw their weapons, leaving the PCs in haste to seize the moment. The facts that the PCs present should be enough to sway some of the members of the Tribal Council; although Influence rolls (Threshold 4) at the request of the Weaver can be used to determine the PCs' success, resourceful and stirring roleplaying should be rewarded.



Nostra Guy'on will begrudgingly go with any majority decision made by the Tribal Council. However, although he still clearly holds on to his bias against the Fallen, he is also shaken by the turnaround of events. Disillusioned by the criminality of his ally's actions, Nostra is secretly enraged at Cylix Seth'on. That the High Judge would dispatch the Black Owls toward such an irreparable act against the Tribals is contemptible to the leader of the Old Guard; that Cylix did not forewarn him is unforgivable.

Weavers should let the PCs lead the scene; however, if the issue of Puris Dan'on's punishment is not initiated by the PCs, Kyr't will demand retribution. Hal Ninva will step in and defer the decision to the Tribes in an act of political maneuvering. He will state that although Judge Puris Dan'on has maligned the intentions of the Herites, the greater grievance against him lies in his attempt to harm Magdalen. Also, Hal will point out that regardless of Tera Sheba's withdrawal, Puris still belongs to the Tribes, and is subject to Tribal Law as determined by the Tribal Council. Just as Kyr't's guilt or innocence could only rightfully be determined by the Fallen, the Fallen must now trust the Tribes to do what is right.

The Tribal Council is caught in an extremely difficult position. Having screamed for retribution for the capital crime, the Tribal Council must follow through on its own demand, even though it now concerns the fate of a high-ranking member of the Tribes. They are faced with the reality that the old rules of Tribal Law no longer apply, for they cannot cast him out of the Tribes, as may have been historically done. To do so would be to hand the power of their own law back into the hands of the Fallen, and cause them to lose more face than has already been lost this day. The Tribal Council steps away from Puris Dan'on for a moment to discuss the matter quietly.

After a brief conference, Shera Uhan'on returns from the group and faces the Judge, signaling a troop of warriors to stand around him in a wide circle. She cuts Puris Dan'on's bound hands free and addresses him, stating that his crimes have indicated that he has turned his back on the interests of the Tribes. By raising his hand against the Lover, he has forced the hand of the Tribal Council; they have no choice but to proclaim judgment upon him. Unsheathing a dagger, she lays it on the ground before him, backs away and draws her sword. She tells him that he has his only choice before him; he must take action himself, or submit to the judgment of the Council.

Puris Dan'on takes up the dagger, turns its blade inward, and regards Shera Uhan'on with scorn. "I submit to none other than the only Judge," he seethes. With those final words, he drives the blade into his chest and falls to his knees in an outpouring of blood.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

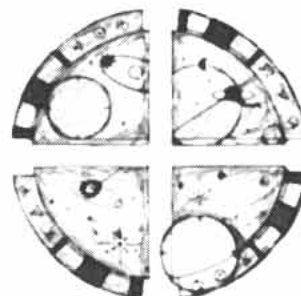
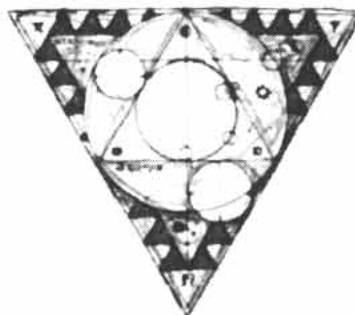
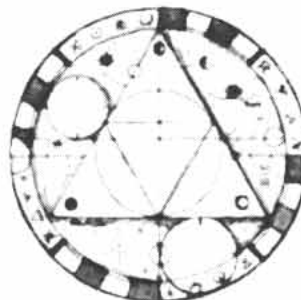
More on Nostra Guy'on can be found in **Vimary**, page 93.

Statistics for Nhung the Shadow can be found on page 17.

A full writeup for Garoth the Keeper can be found on page 92.

A full writeup for Celia can be found on page 93.

For Judge Puris Dan'on, use the Sheban Judge template in **Word of the Pillars**, page 79, or use the following statistics: **Attributes:** KNO +2, PER +1, WIL +1, STA 30, UD/AD 3. **Skills:** Human Perception 2/0, Interrogation 2/0, Law 3/+2, Lore (Black Owls) 2/+2, Read/Write (Sheban) 2/+2, Ritual 2/+2, Synthesis (Truthsaying) 2.



ACT THREE: DREAM, DANCE AND DIRECTION

*Oh, won't you come along with me, love, come along with me!
Come for one night, lie by my side, and come along with me!*

- Temptation Reel

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Dream, Dance and Direction sees the Children of Prophecy brought back to task following the events in *Wisdom Lost, Wisdom Gained*. Scene One, *Wisdom of Wrath*, outlines a prophetic dream experienced by the PCs, as well as some of the most prominent leaders of the Fallen and the five displaced Tribes. In the dream, the Players are guided by their respective Totems through a vision of a dismal future.

In Scene Two, *Rallying Cry* the characters awake to the sound of a Dahlian Caravan moving through the winding streets of Horn and over the Shipwreck to Haven. The PCs accompany the mass of the island's inhabitants to the fields outside of Lilith's Palace. There, the Dahlians tell the news they have come to deliver, that Z'bri attack is imminent. In a massive strike of the same destructive force that saw the ruin of Bazaar, the Z'bri of the H'l Kar plan to end the menace of the Tribes altogether. Faced with a choice between evacuation or preemptive strike, the Nation rallies to action, and the PCs have a chance to take a directive hand in planning the impending raid on the H'l Kar.

WISDOM OF WRATH

In the dead of night following the unmasking of the Black Owl plot, the PCs are enshrouded in a dream steeped with portent. The Weaver can choose to introduce the dream individually to her Players, as a group, or simply as a narrative prologue to the adventure. If the PC or the party is particularly proficient in the Dreaming skill, has Dream Travel or is extremely skilled in Synthesis (2), the Weaver is encouraged to increase the dream's level of interactivity. However, the outcome of the dream should remain intact so that it maintains a prophetic influence on the PCs' motivations.

The dream begins in the Cage, mirroring the conflict and infighting that occurred in the wake of the return of Lilith's relics. Tribals and Fallen face off in a mirage of feuding, hurling insults and rebuttals at each other. The dreamer, fully within herself, is faced with her most detested counterpart in the Tribes. Even if it is within the dreamer's nature to attempt peace, the opponent's ire will intensify, pressing in upon the dreamer until she can feel the enmity tangibly emanating from the other.

The hostility escalates to violence as the dreamer's opponent begins to throw punches, draw weapons, or take whatever aggressive action is in vein. It will be clear that the dreamer's

nemesis is irate, scathing, and intent upon seeing blood. If it is within the dreamer's nature to flee, there will seem to be nowhere to go with the masses of people crowding all around. No avenue remains open for long, the voices blend and converge into a caterwauling of rage. If it is instead within the dreamer's nature to fight, her opponent will be fierce and almost overwhelming.

In the midst of the chaos, the sound of abject violence echoes out of proportion; bones snap and grind, yowls of pain begin to substitute for cries of anger, until finally the dreamer realizes that beyond the immediate circle of people around her is a field of snarling, twisting Z'bri. Coiled and striking the crowd down, they trample the broken and bloodied corpses beneath them. None but the PCs will be cognizant of the Z'bri presence in the dream. Instead, the dream figures continue to battle blindly at one another until the last warrior has fallen to the Beasts, who at last advance upon the dreamer. The malignant abominations close in around the dreamer (or the cell of PCs, if the Weaver has chosen to run it this way) tightening their menacing circle around her until their panting, fetid breath can be felt upon her bare skin.

In this last moment, time holds its breath as the dreamer looks down into her hands, which are both wrapped around the hilt of the sword of Joshua. In that instant, she realizes, with the unique impact of dream clarity, that in her hands she has held the power to smite the Beasts all along. As she looks to her ruined brothers and sisters, she sees that one's slack hand holds His Hammer, another holds His Claw, and another lies upon the steel blade of His wing. All around her, the spent and wasted hold the keys — have always held the keys — to their salvation, but only now, when the moment is lost and she stands on the precipice of her own death has she finally learned the wisdom of wrath.

As the Z'bri tumble upon her, and rend her screaming flesh, the world explodes in a blinding blaze. As she dies, one solitary image is left tattooed to the back of her eyes: the outline in silhouette of her (former) Tribal Totem's image, like a signature left on the mind.

RALLYING CRY

The PCs awake, in jarring contrast, to the sound of music, and a great commotion outside. Song wafts through the windows, spinning footfalls land just outside the door, and a river of people spirals through the streets. The PCs should go to see what is happening. Passing just beyond their door are the bright and vibrant colors of flags and ribbons, spiraling behind the dancing figures of the Caravan of the Morning Star, which has been missing in action since the burning of Bazaar. The parade of people that move behind them laugh and dance together, Fallen and Tribal alike in a celebration of levity and joy that has not been seen since the Crusade's last triumph. The parade swells as more and more people tumble out of their homes to the sights and sounds, joining up in the throng. The seeming celebration is deeply compelling, but more importantly, it seems to have an intent.

F A L L O W F I E L D S

1. Fallow Fields

Winding through the streets of Horn, the Caravan pied pipers lead the occupants of the island toward Shipwreck, calling to all the dwellers of Haven before them, until the whole of the Nation and the Eighth Tribe is amassed at the doors to the Palace of Lilith. Here, Vesprus, the Little Trickster of the Morning Star, climbs atop the rubble walls of the building, slides a clean white porcelain mask from her pack, slides it over her face and calls out into the dawn for Dahlia. In a spindling of wind, a random and nameless face beside the PCs funnels and expands, transforming itself into the Trickster Herself. Vesprus bows with a flourish and tells her Fatima that she has brought news from the H'I Kar.

Vesprus tells the crowd that she and her Caravan have been hiding all this time, working their way north to the tainted lands. They have been spying on the Z'bri, hoping to gauge their next move with enough time to prevent it. She says that the Z'bri have grown fat and overconfident since their triumph over Vimary. The Z'bri lords believe that complete and total obliteration of the Tribes is at hand, that they have succeeded in crushing the spine and the spirit of the Tribe in the Z'bri retaliation against its "little uprising." She reports that they are planning to wipe Horn clean in just over a month's time, while the Tribes and castoffs are busy learning to "play house on their little island."

REACTION. DETRACTION

A range of emotion falls over the crowd as Vesprus tells her tale. PCs should identify the dream vision that they have just had with the impending attack that is being described. Weavers can suggest that PCs who are paying attention to the reactions among the masses make Human Perception or Notice checks (Threshold 5) to recognize that others in the crowd seem to recognize this chain of events as if they have had the dream as well. Among the NPCs that shared the dream are Kymber Riva, Alethea Uhan'on, Nostra Guy'on, Captain Megan, Cerah, Alexis of Blade, Kyrt the Free, Tirk the Young and a scattered few less-influential characters among the Tribes and Fallen. The Weaver should feel free to add any NPCs from the PCs' personal histories that she thinks would contribute to the mood.

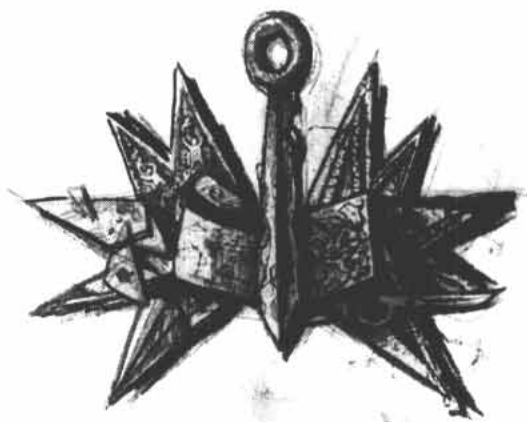
A murmur goes through the crowd as people begin to talk about the news they have received. Lkening the news to Larissa's report of the Z'bri hordes (*Vimary Burns*, p.16), many are quick to believe the story. There remain a few unbelievers, and more than a few people who are afraid for the fate of the Nation. If the PCs do not speak up concerning the vision they have had, Tirk will call out to Vesprus, saying that he has seen the Z'bri attack in his dreams. He will make his way to the front of the crowd, and declare that he does not believe he is not alone. He will point out people in the crowd whose faces he can read like they were his own, challenging them to admit to having had the dream.

He will ask the PCs directly, but if they are not forthcoming, he will speak up himself or call on another who has reacted to the news. Once the dream has been related, and the majority of the crowd is swayed, Mek will take to the stage. If the PCs have been the ones to tell of the dream, he will ask them - in hopes of crossing the bridge between omen and action - if they believe that they now, in the light of day, still hold the keys to salvation. A debate will ensue about the course of action that should be pursued.

Mek and the **Jackers** will call for a preemptive strike almost immediately, while the Z'bri still believe that the hearts and spirits of the Nation and the Fallen are spent. They call for all the people of Horn, Tribal and Fallen alike, to band together and wage full and final war upon the H'I Kar. A large part of the crowd is in agreement with them, especially those among the **Children of Lilith**, **Lightbringers**, **Agnes and Her Children**, **Dahlia and Her Children**, **Joan**, **Shera Uhan'on** and the **Templars**, as well as a good part of the younger generations of **Magdalites**.

Nostra Guy'on and the **Old Guard** will agree that a preemptive strike is in order, but they are quite vocal about their beliefs about how the strike should happen. They believe that order and organization are key to a well-oiled attack; they agree that the participation of all is fundamental, but insist that the only way that their actions will be successful is if the Tribes lead the attack and the Fallen are dispersed into the ranks. **Magdalen and Her Sirens** and **Baba Yaga and Her Children** are in agreement.

The smallest, but no less vocal faction is led by **Kyrt the Free** and **Troy Fenys**, who rebel against Nostra Guy'on and those in his camp. They declare that they do not need the leadership of the Seven Deaths and their pompous leaders, that the strength of the arm of the Eighth Tribe will be proved. They are separationist in their argument, stating that the Tribes should fight on one line, and the Fallen on the other. Many of the **Doomsayers** will fall into agreement with them, stating that the only guidance that they need has already been given; Joshua's rage is within the hearts of all of the Eighth Tribe.



BETWEEN QUESTS

Little time elapses between *Fallow Fields* and *Fallen Blossoms*. However, the Hooks included are easily condensed or expanded to follow whatever timeframe the Weaver has available for her PC party to pursue. Also, if the PC party is deemed particularly unsuitable for the mission to the Firmament (i.e. extremist Herite Cell) the Quest Hooks included ensure that they will still play a vital part in rallying the forces in preparation for the war on the H'I Kar.

HOOK: GATHERING THE LUMANS

While one delegation travels to the Firmament to secure Eva and Tera Sheba's assistance, another group will be sent to seek aid from Chief Lum and his people, the Lumans. Chief Lum's assistance will be sought before that of other Squats due to his people's worship of Eva and the Chief's interest in joining Her tribe. This is an option for PCs who are not interested in the trip to the Firmament, particularly if their cell is composed of Herites, or like-minded individuals who would want nothing to do with the Fatimas. Eva's decision to isolate Herself within the Core has caused the people of the Outlands to feel Her absence, which could be a motivating factor in convincing the Lumans to accompany the delegation. It is possible to convince the Lumans that when the Z'bri are defeated, Eva may return Her favor to their lands (see *Vimary*, page 114).

Weavers should let the PCs take the foreground in these debates. As the ones that have been witness to the prophetic dream, their opinion is valued among those that they side with. Their compatriots will gladly allow them to be their spokespersons in the debate. If no amenable solution is negotiated by the PCs, Joan herself will step in and propose a plan of action. She declares that She will lead a force, as will Mek, as will Her Templars. She will urge anyone who wishes to fight to pick their own leaders, follow their own hearts, to follow no one but the need for Liberation.

This will suffice to get the ball rolling, and the Nation and the Eighth Tribe agree at least that all forces available to them must be brought together if they are to be successful in their endeavor. The PCs are asked to go as an envoy to the Firmament to see if they can convince the Evans to join the war. Nearly ten thousand strong, the people under Eva's dome are crucial to the success of the Nation. Although there is grumbling from Nostra Guy'on and his people concerning the choice of delegation, the PCs are marked as the chosen people to fulfill the task. The fact that the entire PC cell has been privy to the vision is seen as anomen that testifies to their inevitable success.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

The threat of the Z'bri attack is not an imminent danger. When the Nation and the Eighth Tribe lost track of the game to infighting, Dahlia recognized the threat of stagnation and became angered at the wasted opportunities for change. Tiring of the petty bickering, and anxious for the new world that surely must be born of the War, She called back Vesprus from the H'I Kar to direct the next act of the play. Although the Z'bri do wish to see an end to the troublesome people of the Nation, their own Houses are too divided to be of any immediate danger to the Tribes. The Nation and the Eighth Tribe are severely depleted by the invasion of Vimary and currently divided between Hom and the Firmament. As such, the Z'bri do not consider either one to be much of a threat.

Weavers are encouraged to let the PCs, particularly those who are good speakers or leaders, take the forefront. Their status will go far in ensuring others will listen. When the PCs speak, have those who agree with their position back them up. For example, rather than Mek speaking out about immediate action, simply have him throw his weight behind a PC already on that path.

SCENES

The cell will be given an approximate location of Chief Lum's settlement, in the forests north of Griffentowne. If the PCs can convince the Caravan of the Sail (see *Word of the Dancers*, p. 74) to take them by water, the trip will take approximately two hours, and the way will be clear. The cell could make the trip in half a day on horseback, while walking will require a full day's journey.

Hunting Party: If the PCs choose to ride or walk, there will be the threat of attack, particularly from the Z'bri. However, the Z'bri are not the only reason that travel in the Outlands is dangerous, and the Weaver may wish to include this scene to illustrate that point. En route to the Lumans' territory, the PCs will be set upon by a small party of Boarhead Warriors, followers of Luther Boarhead. The Boarhead Warriors will be intent upon taking the PCs alive to use as either slaves or currency. The Weaver should feel free to tailor the strength of the war party and the difficulty of the battle as she sees fit. The battle should be difficult, though not impossible, and should give combat-oriented characters the chance to shine (see *Vimary*, page 115).



1. Fallow Fields

Ritual and Sacrifice: As they enter the forest that the Lumans call home, the PCs will be met by a band of guards protecting the outskirts of their territory. The way this initial contact is handled will affect their dealings with the wary Lumans; the Lumans have been besieged numerous times, both by the Z'bri and Luther Boarhead. If the PCs attempt to force their way into the settlement, they will be taken prisoner, hampering their ability to negotiate with the Lumans. If the PCs ask or agree to be escorted to the settlement, their bargaining position will be more secure. The Lumans' willingness to discuss their problems with the PCs will also be dependent on their approach.

When they are brought into the settlement, the PCs will notice that many of the Squats are malnourished. What animals they have managed to catch are currently being sacrificed in rituals to Saim, the darker aspect that the Lumans attribute to Eva — the taker of life. The Lumans believe that Eva is angered with them, and is showing Her displeasure by causing their lands to suffer. The PCs will be informed that they will be brought to Chief Lum that evening, after he has led a ritual petitioning Eva to return Her favor to his people. The PCs will be permitted to view the ritual, and Weavers are encouraged to take creative license in its description.

CLIMAX

When the PCs are brought to Chief Lum, the task of convincing him to join the war against the Z'bri will not be an easy one. Due to increased attacks by the Z'bri and Luther Boarhead, he will be reluctant to send warriors away from the settlement. Most arguments will make little headway, and threats of dire consequences will be coolly rejected. However, indications that the Z'bri are responsible for Eva's withdrawal from the land will help to convince him, and suggestions that joining the war may gain Eva's favor will obtain his immediate aid — as long as the PCs know of Chief Lum's desire to join the Evans.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs are successful, Chief Lum will agree to bring half his warriors into the battle. He will tell the PCs that he will meet the forces in Hom, as he must prepare his people for war. If the PCs arrived by water, they will have to return overland, as the Sail will have moved on to the next port of call. The difficulty of the trip back to Hom is left to the Weaver's discretion.

HOOK: BROTHER'S KEEPERS

If success in the assault on the Ziggurat is to be ensured, the assistance of the Keepers is vitally important. This hook is an additional option for PCs who are not interested in making the trip to the Firmament, and is also a good opportunity to bring a character that has generally played a secondary role in the PC group to the fore. Regardless of whether this hook is used by the Weaver, the Fraternity of Freedom will join the war effort, and be involved in the attack on Hl'kar.

SCENES

Chosen One: A man emerges from the busy crowds of Hom and accosts a PC who is wearing a unique item — jewelry, weaponry, an interesting hat, a tattoo or Tribal markings. His name is Marc; he is a Doomsayer, and he insists that he must speak to the PC right away, because he recognizes her from a vision. Marc will tell the cell that his vision showed him untold death and destruction that will be caused by the assault on the Ziggurat unless the Keepers are present. The Doomsayer will insist that the accosted PC is the only one who can sway the Keepers to join the war, and will beg her to believe him. If the PCs seem reticent, the Weaver should feel free to include any personal details about the chosen PC that will lend credence to his vision and secure the cell's cooperation.

Garoth: Garoth is one in a group of approximately a dozen Keepers that have been seen aboveground on Hom in recent weeks. If the PCs have met Garoth, he can be approached to seek support from the Keepers. If the PCs have not met him, inquiries around Hom will get a few names; however, Garoth's will be the one most frequently and favorably mentioned.

Garoth does business in the shadow of the South Tier Bridge, not far from the Wheel. When approached, Garoth will be sitting in his stall with a few unremarkable items. He will be willing to hear what the PCs have to say, but will be somewhat suspicious. The cell's mission to gain the Keepers' aid will serve to get past his misgivings; Garoth and the rest of the Fraternity of Freedom refuse to "hide" in the tunnels under Vimary any longer. Garoth will fully agree that fighting against the Z'bri is necessary, and will take them to meet with the Fraternity.



Down the Rabbit Hole: Garoth will escort the PCs to a hidden entrance into the Keeper tunnels, located in the vicinity of The Goddess of Mercy Mission. (see **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p. 103) If the PCs have earned Garoth's respect, he will take no security measures when entering the tunnels. Garoth will lead the PCs through the upper levels to a large room, where a number of Keepers are gathered. Many will greet Garoth, but when the PCs are noticed, the room will fall into an uneasy silence. Garoth will announce to the members of Fraternity that the PCs have asked for their help in the coming battle, and that he personally will not hide any longer.

Here, the cell will have the chance to persuade the Fraternity of Freedom that the Keepers' involvement is essential to the ongoing struggle with the Z'bri. As with Garoth, these Keepers will be willing to listen, and can be influenced to join the war. When the Fraternity is convinced, Garoth will decide that an attempt to convince the rest of Keepers must be made. The Fraternity will agree, and they, along with the cell, will go to speak to them. This time, the PCs will be blindfolded for the trip through the tunnels.

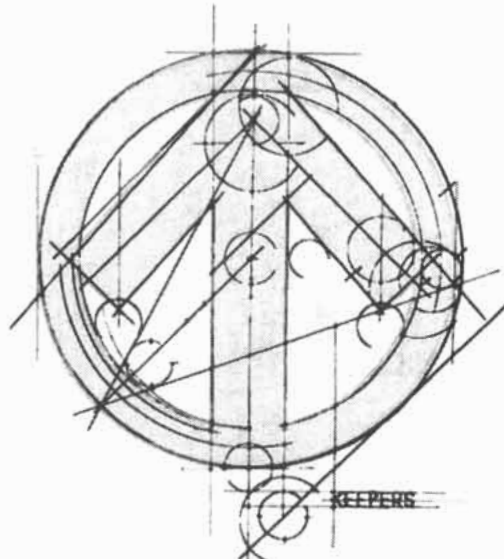
CLIMAX

The PCs will be led through the tunnels for approximately half an hour, taking twists, sudden turns, and several changes in direction. When they reach their destination and the blindfolds are removed, they will find themselves in a small shadowed area. The twenty-five members of the Fraternity stand in an arc behind them, while an indeterminate number of shapes, presumably Keepers, are concealed in the shadows before them. Garoth will step forward to state that the Tribal savages have requested their aid, and that the Fraternity of Freedom supports them in their appeal.

This is an opportunity for the PCs to make any speeches or arguments they feel are necessary or dramatically appropriate. Initially, the cell will likely be unable to convince the Keepers; the Keepers will state that the activities on the surface are not of their concern. However, should the PCs make a particularly strong, creative, or moving argument, the Weaver should feel free to reward them by having up to seventy-five Keepers, in addition to the Fraternity of Freedom, agree to join the assault.

AFTERMATH

Whether the other Keepers are convinced or not, the PCs will have succeeded in securing the aid of the Fraternity of Freedom. After they return to the surface, Garoth will have them relay the demand that he be involved in the planning of the attack, since the Tribals and Fallen are unaware of what the Keepers can do to help. He will tell them to visit him when the Keepers are needed, and then he will gather the others.



Chapter two: Fallen Blossoms

Within these blossoming, curving walls, we have done away with the evils of yesterday. Never again will harm come to us, save for those who carry evil intent locked behind their hearts - and they too, shall be dealt with in due time. We walk away from the past and carry justice into tomorrow. You are strong here, children of Wisdom, children of Life. We are strong... within the Firmament.

- Tera Sheba the Wise



QUEST TWO: FALLEN BLOSSOMS ACT ONE: WHERE NO SHADOWS FALL

As agreed at the Cage in Quest One, the PCs travel to the Dome of the Firmament to recruit from the population within for the upcoming war. They meet a representative of the Hope, an underground movement smuggling goods and people through the Firmament's walls, and use one of their passages to gain entry. Inside, they are given a tour of the encampment by one of the Hope's leading members — High Judge Verra Thaim'on. Cylix Seth'on, who for some time has been investigating the alleged underground movement, discovers the PCs inside the Firmament and captures at least one.

The remaining PCs and Verra save the captured PC, stealing the Fatimal artifact used to execute the guilty in the process. Cylix shuts down the Hope's exits, effectively sealing the PCs inside. Verra takes them to her 'solarium' in the hopes that they can somehow break through the thinner skin to freedom. High up in the canopy of the Firmament, the PCs are confronted by Cylix, Tera Sheba, and a division of the Terasheban Watch.

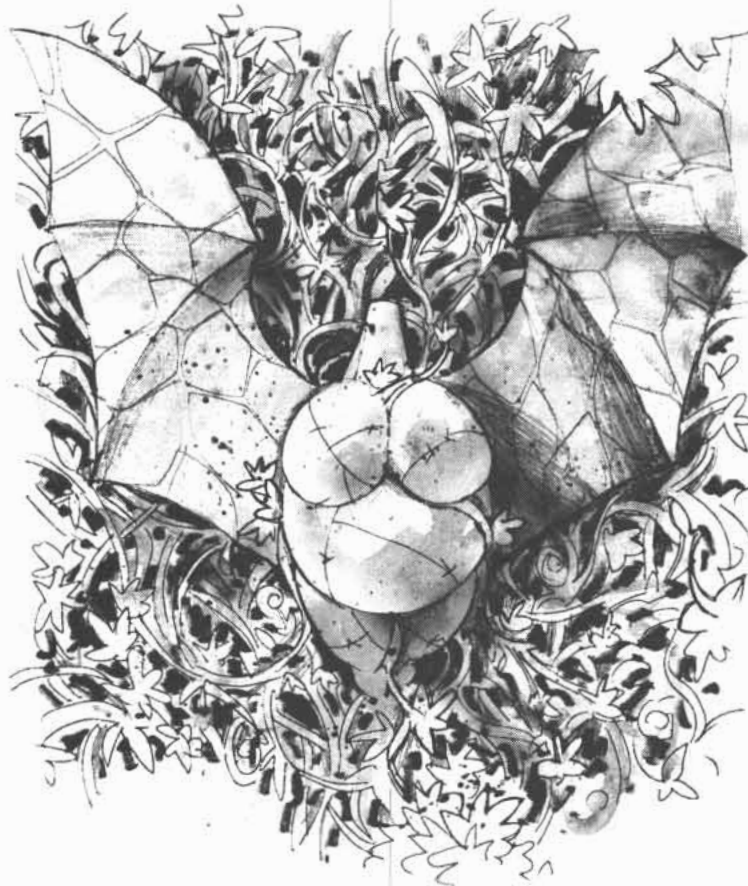
In an act of sacrifice, Verra impales herself on the replica of Tera Sheba's axe, the Finger of Tera Sheba. This outpouring of blood and sacrifice ripples across the skin of the Firmament and breaks open the Dome, spilling in a shaft of pure, clean sunlight upon the inhabitants. Tera Sheba, disgusted by the PCs' actions, gives Her backhanded blessing to the "unfaithful," giving them permission to leave and join the army.

My retreat lies just where the dome's curve is steepest. The wall there is petal thin, literally, delicate in scent and tender in texture. If you run your hand across it, its fleshy pulp will stain your palm a soft shade of blue. And, if you press hard enough, you can bruise the flesh enough to feel the warmth of the sun. Not the glowing bulbs that provide us with our unnatural day, but the true sun that hovers in the sky over Vimary. I go there to collect myself and steady the purpose of my mission. It was there I realized the grave mistake my mother, the Wise One, made. She will smother us all in protection if I do not show Her the truth. My revelation binds me to the Hope, ties my soul into the cause. I would lay my life down for Tera Sheba, but even those we love dearest can be mistaken. I call it my Solarium.

- High Judge Verra Thaim'on

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Where No Shadows Fall takes the PCs into the Dome of the Firmament. The underground movement known as the Hope, a group of people both inside and outside of the Firmament, introduce themselves to the PCs and conduct them inside. There they meet Verra Thaim'on, High Judge of Tera Sheba and one of the leaders of the Hope. Verra takes the PCs on a tour of the interior, allowing them to witness the paranoia and creeping tragedy of life inside the Dome.



LOGISTICS

It is not an easy undertaking that the PCs have before them. The path is filled with dark threats, and the Firmament itself presents impressive dangers. The Firmament assignment can easily be seen as either a noble undertaking or a fool's folly. The PCs should be encouraged to seek out information both about the path to the Firmament and about the Firmament itself if they are not already familiar with them.

The Fallen Isles of Hom and Haven roil with people, both Tribal and Fallen. Crusaders polish their blades, Lightbringers convene at the Cage, and whispers run thick in the trees. Depending on the various contacts the PCs may have, information can be either straightforward or convoluted with war stories. Emotions about those inside the Firmament run in all directions: they are seen as cowards, misguided individuals, potential allies, victims, or even the enemy. Weavers can embellish or diminish these emotions with a number of contacts and informants the PCs speak with.

During this time of questioning, two routes to the Firmament are obvious: by land or by water. If the PCs present a third, viable option, they should be allowed to take that route. Time is of the essence, so any alternative routes should try to stay within the timeframe of no longer than two days. Depending on how long a Weaver wishes to take with this portion of the Quest, she can encourage or discourage an option that has the potential of extended combat. Each of the two provided routes presents its own hazards and strengths.

Overland Route: If one approaches the Firmament by land, it is just under a two-hour ride by horseback, half a day if by foot. However, the most direct route to the Dome of the Firmament, located at Sanctuary, is straight through Bazaar — currently rife with Z'bri. The central hub of Tribal life is now the site of a war with several sides. Remnants of Lothar's and the Baron's forces are still battling in the wake of their masters, and Skkr Flemis purge the last Rakh still refusing to join their collective. All of this is further complicated by the remaining Joh'an fighting from their Skyrealms, allying and betraying the various factions as they play one off another. If the PCs opt to travel by land, they must find a way through the war zone. They might simply keep their heads down and avoid hotspots, or they may attempt to purchase passage from a Joh'an.

Water Route: The second choice, by water, is safer but takes longer. The safest routes circumvent Bazaar, but one must still approach the Dome of the Firmament cautiously; the vines that spill into the Great River are thick and dangerous. If the PCs have connections to the Dahlians, the Caravan of the Sail is still in operation and could be bartered with for passage. If they have Keeper connections, a powered boat may be used. Depending on the mode of aquatic transportation, the journey can take up to a full day.

When the PCs have chosen their path, they are approached by Ross Pal'on. Ross is a hefty woman of tall stature and build who talks bluntly with little nonsense. Once she feels they can talk without being disturbed, she gives them an itinerary of their day, where they have been, who they have spoken to, and other

details. She reveals that she has been shadowing their movements, deciphering why they wish to go to the Firmament. Concluding that their cause is worthy, she reveals herself as a member of the Hope.

Ross offers to work with the PCs, putting her connections at their disposal. Ross will then travel with them to the Dome. If the PCs seem likely to mistrust Ross, the Weaver can choose to have Ross provide aid at a crucial point (while trying to sneak into the Firmament, for example), or she may decide to simply have Ross shadow the PCs all the way into the Firmament until she is needed.

THE HOPE

The Hope is an organization working both within and outside the Dome. Built on the ideological foundation that their respective Fatimas are "only mistaken," Evan and Terashebans shuttle necessary medical supplies, foodstuffs, and people between the outside world of Vimary and the interior of Firmament. In time, the Hope's leaders proclaim, Eva the Mother and Tera Sheba the Wise will realize the error of their ways and put an end to this isolation. In the meantime, they maintain two passages through the Dome of the Firmament for their illicit purposes; communication between the two halves difficult but frequent. Neither of these passages is very stable, and have on more than one occasion collapsed, killing those trying to escape.

Representing the Hope's leadership inside the Dome is **Verra Thaim'on**, High Judge of Tera Sheba and Inner Circle Member. On the outside is **Ross Pal'on**, an Evan who Fell in absentia by not entering the Firmament with her kinsmen. Both of these optimistic women are strong in their faith that their respective Fatimas have only been misguided, and are a binding force to the Hope's success. Each has her detractors, but for now, their joint leadership is firm.

HOPE'S SECRETS

Whether the PCs travel by land or water, Ross will direct the PCs to approach the Dome from the Winter River, which still runs straight through and then under the Dome. This is the more accessible of the secret entrances into the Firmament, Ross explains; the other is used more as an exit. A small group of Hope members are waiting, and show the PCs into a camouflaged encampment. They are warned against wandering outside, as patrols of dark figures are known to circle the Dome (the Hope is unaware that these are Tera Sheba's Black Owls, under the direction of Cylix Seth'on).

Under the cover of a new moon, Ross leads the PCs in an exhausting ritual. Taking a great portion of the evening, they construct ovoid "shells" made of river reed and clay. Ross tells the PCs that she will not travel with them further, but they will be met by Hope members inside. They are to ask for "Number One" and explain that "Number Two" sent them. The PCs are then each sealed inside a pod and sent down the river, into the mesh of roots that filters water coming into the Firmament.

WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW

The two passages used by the Hope are both difficult to maintain and are constantly under threat of detection as well as permanent closure by Eva Herself. It is a theory among the Hope's more optimistic members that Eva approves of their actions, allowing these exits to exist at all.

The first passage, used primarily as an entrance, uses the Winter River. The roots of the Dome of the Firmament reach down deep into the land, but the water still flows through. The leafy roots extend into the cold water, extracting any impurities it finds while still allowing fish and other various types of wildlife through. By creating a shell of living material, usually with Life Synthesis, it is possible to "fool" these purifying tentacles to allow access. Less thorough ritualistic shells have resulted in the occupants drowning, either through fracture of the shell or detection by the roots. Should a shell crack, its occupant can attempt to swim the rest of the way (roll Swimming, Threshold 6). The roots act as a defense, lashing out and grappling intruders until they drown (Melee 2/+2, STR +3). The Dome is fifty meters thick at the base, but the current is strong, and a successful trip takes under fifteen minutes. Chance plays a very big part in survival; praying to the One Goddess has never hurt anyone.

The second passage relies on the Firmament's need for a light source. Ascending the 700-meter height to the top of the Firmament, it is possible to pierce one of the phosphorescent orbs and shimmy up the stem until reaching the crest (roll Climbing, Threshold 4). Hope members on the outside will cut away the thinner top foliage, allowing an individual to shove herself through. As the Firmament is regenerative, being crushed within the stem is a very real possibility for those who linger (the Firmament will detect the intruder after two failed Climbing rolls, and crush with STR +4 every round thereafter).

THE OTHER SIDE

After the suspenseful ride through the wall, the PCs hear scraping sounds on the outside of their shells; they are hauled out of the water and the shells are split open, giving them a breath of fresh air. Stiltwalkers pull pod after pod from the river, letting the first PCs through to wait and worry over those who are following behind them.

The PCs are then conducted to a nearby building and into the presence of "Number One," who is revealed as High Judge Verra Thaim'on. Verra comments wryly that the Hope usually spends its time getting people out, not in, and inquires after the PCs' reasons for coming. She reacts to the news of a renewed Z'bri offensive with worry, and agrees that the population within the Firmament will be necessary to hold off the attack. She commits herself to helping the Characters, and begins to organize a tour of the Firmament for the PCs' benefit.

Because of the danger of discovery, Verra invites an Evan into the room to disguise the PCs. Through the use of Life, their Fallen tattoos are twisted into Evan or Terasheban symbols. Verra promises the PCs that the tattoos can be replaced later. With the PCs successfully disguised, the High Judge takes them out into the Firmament.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

The Watch: Bearing the regalia of their predecessors, the Terasheban Watch take every precaution: walking no less than three abreast and in full battle armor, the Watch is an ever-present reminder inside the Dome. Patrolling the fields, the market squares, the streets and even the occasional home, they cannot be missed as direct adversaries. Having shifted from a position of protector to enforcer, the Watch uses their position to reinforce Tera Sheba's dominance inside the Dome, as well as to secure the rights and privileges of their fellow Sheban tribesmen. While several Evan leaders cry foul, there is little they can do in the face of their missing Fatima. Their faith in Tera Sheba's ability to deliver them from this time of need is still constant, but it grows weaker each day as the Mother grows more and more distant.

The Dome of the Firmament: The walls of the Dome are thick and porous, creating pockets of vegetation all throughout its massive circumference. Some are easily as large as a medium-sized habitation; many of the lower levels have been converted into homes and hideaways by the more resourceful of the Firmament's population. One such pocket, high along the curve, is in use by Verra Thaim'on. She will mention it in passing (the Weaver is encouraged to use the speech given at the beginning of this scene), commenting that it cannot be seen from the ground level. She calls it her Solarium, and uses it as meditation and relaxation space.

Mother's Slumber: Cocooned within Her Temple, Eva the Mother remains secluded in the leafy confines of the Heartroot. What once was the main audience chamber of Sanctuary now acts as Her refuge. What communication She has outside the Heartroot is hazy and disjointed through Dream, and conducted with only a handful of Shamans. Her feelings of guilt, remorse and responsibility nearly cripple the Evan leadership, leaving most decisions in the hands of Tera Sheba and Her select inner circle. The entrance to the Heartroot is bound closed by unbreakable foliage, securely frustrating any direct contact with the Fatima from the outside. Not even Her most trusted followers have been allowed in Her presence. The Shamans conclude that the Mother has entered into a somnambulist state, in which She is able to tend the Firmament but able to do little else.

The Fields: Even in the Firmament, the day-to-day must continue. Fields need to be tended, children need to be raised, buildings need to be erected and then maintained. In the unnatural light of their extended day, Evans labor to bring life and sustenance from dying soil. Their silos, while full now, cannot be expected to sustain them indefinitely, and, with the crops failing, rations are beginning to be discussed.

2. Fallen Blossoms

Shebans are not expected to work the fields with the Evans, creating a very obvious — though rarely discussed — division of labor. Shebans spend their days walking the roads and the newly erected Courthouse, ensuring "high morale" and "spiritual purity." While Evans are encouraged to work a full day, Shebans are allowed an early retirement to further purify themselves for their Fatima by studying scripture. Stiltwalkers work the rivers, but their numbers are far less than those of their counterpart Evan fisherman. There is a very bitter undercurrent that runs between Evan and Terasheban, but the penalty for rebellious talk is a **Trial of Purity** (see *Corrupted Perfection*).

More on **Verra Thaim'on** can be found in the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p. 64

For information on the Caravan of the Sail, please see **Word of the Dancers**, page 74.

For **Ross Pal'on** use the following statistics: **Attributes** BLD +2, FIT +1, KNO +1, WIL +2, INF +1, STA 35, UD 6, AD 6. **Skills:** Combat Sense 1/0, Leadership 3/+1, Lore (Evan) 2/+1, Teaching 2/0, Synthesis 2. **Eminences:** Life, Unity

For information on the Winter River, see **Vimary**, p. 40. The Winter River is the southmost of the two pictured in the map.

ACT TWO: CORRUPTED PERFECTION

And though the world is tainted, filled with the indulgence of hate and the shadow of ignorance, we here within the blessed Firmament understand the one and true path. Created for us by the Mother and protected by the Wise One, we no longer need worry about those lost unto the filth that remains of Vimary. Like a shaft of light, we hold at bay the darkness of corruption and throw illumination upon the truth.

Yet, there are those among us who hold corruption behind cleverly crafted walls, deceiving family and neighbors alike. Rest assured, we shall root out this blight — these infestations. We are pure, we are strong, and we will endure where others have failed!

- High Judge Cylix Seth'on



WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

In *Corrupted Perfection*, the PCs witness a Trial of Purity, where the "impure" are tried and sentenced to death. Verra narrates the bastardization of justice and explains how the Shebans exploit their positions to propagate their reign of terror in the Firmament. An accident brings the light of Truth on the PCs and reveals them as impostors and Fallen. The Watch falls on them in overpowering numbers and succeeds in capturing one of the PCs. The rest escape and hide within the city, ready to plot the escape of their imprisoned comrade.

WORKING WITH HOPE

The tools of execution are carefully crafted Fatimal artifacts that resemble the ax of Tera Sheba. They are called "Fingers of Tera Sheba" and only five have been made. During the tour and planning stages, Verra describes these artifacts, mentions her "solarium" at the top of the Firmament, and discusses her religious experience and why she is involved with the Hope. The Solarium is a place at the very top of the canopy where the Firmament is petal-thin. There, she can touch the surface and feel the warmth of the sun.

Verra's last stop is the **Block**, a raised stage area outside the Courthouse. There, Sheban High Judges hold trial over the question of moral purity, claiming to support the Dome of the Firmament's cause. Tera Sheba has proclaimed that those who do not live the ideal of the Firmament and do not possess within their souls the purity necessary to thrive inside this sanctuary are enemies of Eva the Mother, Tera Sheba the Wise and the Nation of the Dome. A verdict of guilty results in public beheading. With Baba Yaga outside the Dome, the dead do not pass into the afterlife, but instead drift into the Sea of the Lost.

High Judge Jozef Kath'on, overseer of the Trials of Purity, is hard at work on stage when the PCs arrive. With disgust, Verra describes the proceedings as they transpire, interjecting commentary and explaining how the investigations that precede the trials are performed. In the first days of the Firmament, the Shebans used a harsh policy of re-education and brainwashing; now nearly every accusation results in execution. The defense provided by the Sheban Advocates is half-hearted, at best. Witnesses come forward to declaim anyone, anxious to prove their own purity and conviction. Testimony consisting of dreams and spirit quests, circumstantial evidence and ex post facto accusations are accepted with equanimity.

Verra also points to the executioners, who stand at attention with large serrated axes. These are the **Fingers of Tera Sheba**, exact replicas of the ax that Tera Sheba Herself wields.

"These are very difficult times," High Judge Jozef Kath'on proclaims to the public throngs conscripted into attending as witnesses. "The time of re-education and coddling the impure is over. We need to be firm with misanthropes, to establish our sincerity." He then calls High Judge Cylix Seth'on to the stage and asks him to confirm sentencing on the suspect.

THE TRUTH SHINES THROUGH

Cylix takes the stage with a warm smile to the audience, and lifts up a lantern in his one arm. He gives a short speech (found at the beginning of *Corrupted Perfection*, p. 32) on the "pure light of Truth" that the laws of Tera Sheba provide before turning to confront the suspect. He announces that as Tera Sheba's light brings truth, it burns away lies and impurities, and opens one door of the lantern to shine on the suspect's forehead. The suspect writhes and screams in pain; the bond on one arm breaks, and his flailing arm knocks the lantern from Cylix' hand. The lantern falls to the ground, bouncing until the opened door shines light into the audience — and onto the PCs.

The PCs are blinded by pain and feel as if their tattoos are on fire; each PC takes one flesh wound from this. They will see their comrades' tattoos twist back into their original Fallen designs. Cylix also sees this. His shock quickly gives way to action, and he calls on Sheban Watchmen as well as the masses in the stands to stop the Fallen infiltrators. Members of the Watch begin to push their way through the crowd, most of whom duck for cover rather than follow Cylix's orders.

In the ensuing fight, the PCs will soon realize that their best option is to flee; more of the Sheban Watch arrive every round and will soon overpower them. Verra appears to have disappeared until she returns with a small contingent of the Hope, who wade into the fight to rescue the PCs. Even with the Hope's numbers, the Shebans have an incredible advantage, and Verra concentrates on getting the PCs out to safety.

Just before the last PC is able to escape, Cylix hurls the lantern at her head, catching her off guard and knocking her to the ground. If the Weaver wants to avoid appearing to railroad the PCs, one or more of the PCs may catch sight of a child about to be trampled by the Watch; PCs with strong motivations to protect or preserve life should find it difficult to not try to effect a quick rescue. Whichever the case, several Shebans take this opportunity to tackle the PC, while the other Watchmen pursue the rest of the escaping party.

If the Weaver does not wish to have a PC captured, Verra can be captured instead, although this will have less personal impact on the PCs. If Verra is captured, her second, Xander Thaim'on, will act as the PCs' liaison with the Hope.



TIPS AND RESOURCES

More on **Cylix Seth'on** can be found in **Vimary**, p. 95

Fingers of Tera Sheba are exact replicas of the ax that Tera Sheba Herself wields. A Finger is unbalanced for combat (-2 to ACC and Parry) but is heavy and sharp (AD +20). It also confers a Synthesis modifier (+2 to Shebans) as a major Fatimal artifact.

For **High Judge Jozef Kath'on** use the High Judge template in **Word of the Pillars**, p. 79, or the following statistics: CRE +2, INF +1, KNO +3, PER +2, PSY +1, WIL +2, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3.

For **Xander Thaim'on** use the Lorekeeper template in **Word of the Pillars**, p. 79, or the following statistics: AGI +1, FIT +2, KNO +2, PER +1, WIL +1, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 4, AD 4.

ACT THREE: HERE COMES THE SUN

Wise One, I love You even now with every breath I take. I have done nothing but dedicate my life to Your love and Your glory; Your justice and Your wisdom; Your vision and Your word. But You allow all Your eyes to be blindfolded, allow all Your ears to be deceived, and all Your lips to speak mistruths. You barricade us with these fibrous walls, building an army for a battle we cannot hope to fight alone. By shunning the Nation You seal our fate. I love You, Sweetest Justice, but You have been mistaken. I love You, Wise One, but I shall see the Truth shine through.

- **Verra Thaim'on**

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The events of *Here Comes the Sun* come fast and furious, as the PCs must save their fallen comrade from Jozef and Cylix's justice. Breaking up the witch trial building at the Block, the PCs steal one of the **Fingers of Tera Sheba** in their flight to safety. When Cylix blocks off the exits from the Firmament, they settle on a desperate plan: climbing up to Verra's Solarium and punching through the petal-thin surface. Cylix and Tera Sheba pursue the party into the canopy, and Verra faces down the **Wise One**, sacrificing herself to make the Truth shine through. The canopy of the Firmament splits open, allowing sunlight to fall inside. The Dome breached and the truth out, Tera Sheba admits defeat and allows the PCs to take any willing recruits from the Firmament.

RED SCARE

Verra (or Xander) rallies the Hope together nearby to discuss what they should do. All but one respond; an Evan, **Yadira Wild'on**, is missing. Many worry that **Yadira** has been captured, or worse, that she has betrayed the Hope and has already

2. Fallen Blossoms

compromised the Hope and its secrets. Putting their fears behind them, the Hope concentrates on the matter at hand. The Hope, however, are smugglers and freethinkers, and find themselves lost when it comes to violent action; they turn to the PCs for direction.

The PCs' specific plan of attack or infiltration can be determined by their individual abilities and resources. The Hope, both its members and impressive resources, are at their disposal. There is no time for reinforcements to arrive from the Fallen Isles.

THE TRIAL

The trial of the PC is highly publicized, and the enthusiasm over having a real, live outsider makes it unnecessary to conscript an audience. The Block, a raised platform ringed by bleachers, stands outside the Courthouse. The outer wall is decorated with banners of white and red; below them stand members of the Watch. The Block is ringed with a roiling crowd of people armed with rotten vegetables and rocks. Knowing that there are other Fallen at large, Cylix orders the Watch around the Block to be tripled; all who come to watch must swear on the Terasheban Book of Law that they are a pure citizen of the Firmament. Those who lie will be wracked with intense pain. Guards are posted around the interior in the midst of the audience, as well.

The trial begins with a blaring fanfare and Jozef Kath'on steps on the stage and works the crowd into a frenzy. Playing off of established paranoia and suspicion, Jozef informs them that the outside has coveted their purity and now seeks to invade and spoil it. Even now, infiltrators are among the pure citizens of the Firmament, intent on corrupting and destroying all that has been built by their hard work. He then blames the spoiled crops and depleted fishing on these infiltrators, citing them as a blight upon the Firmament and the sole reason for its troubles. A large woman is dragged onto the stage; this is Yadirā Wild'on, whom Jozef proceeds to accuse of smuggling the infiltrators into the Firmament. She is sentenced to death and chained to the wall to await execution.

Cylix takes the stage next and has two executioners drag the captured PC onto the block at the center of the stage. The PC has been beaten and interrogated (the Weaver may wish to run the interrogation as a scene parallel to the Hope's planning session). He announces to the assembled throng that this is the first infiltrator to be caught, and one that will be executed publicly as a warning to all others. He accuses the PC, slapping her repeatedly to keep her conscious, of being tainted by the outside, and challenges her to display a purity equal to the "pure golden light" of Tera Sheba's faithful. Cylix calls the executioners forward, Yadirā is strapped down next to the PC and the Fingers of Tera Sheba are raised. If the PCs do not interfere, the condemned will die.

THE RESCUE

The Weaver should scale the opposition to fit the PCs' abilities. A direct assault on the Block, especially with the members of the Hope involved, is possible and will work, but will result in many deaths. Other plans, such as infiltrating the trial, are also possible, but they must circumvent the tight security that Cylix has set up. Violence is probably inevitable, especially when the captured PC and Yadirā are rescued from the stage. In the ensuing tumult, one of the PCs should be given the opportunity to steal one of the Fingers of Tera Sheba; if the PC does not take it or later leaves it behind, Verra will take it for herself.

REACH FOR THE SUN

After the PCs have made good their escape, they and the members of the Hope will be able to disappear into the small city surrounding the Courthouse, making use of the Hope's secret passages and hiding places. The Watch roams the streets, hunting down identified members of the Hope as well as inflicting savage interrogations on innocents. It becomes obvious that the PCs cannot stay inside the Firmament any longer without making the situation even worse.

The PCs and Yadirā are both conducted to a large cellar where they can hide for a short while; there they are tended to by an Evan Healer. In tears, Yadirā reveals that Cylix tortured the existence and location of the Hope's entrances from her; reports filter in that the High Judge has stationed guards to close off these exit routes. Those who are near them have been taken into custody. If the PCs do not think of it, Verra will suggest her Solarium as an escape route — the ceiling is thin enough that they should be able to break through.

The Solarium, high on the upper edge of the Dome, can be reached by climbing one of the many Pylons that support the canopy. It is only a short way to the base of the closest Pylon, but the PCs, Verra, Yadirā and a few other members of the Hope must dodge both the Watch and any civilians who might raise an alarm. The Pylon itself is designed to be climbed; a spiral staircase of vines and creepers lead up its length. Yadirā will explain that this is to make it easier to harvest the vegetables that grow along the Pylon's length. After a tiring climb, the party will reach the Solarium.

THE SOLARIUM

Created mostly of flowering petals, its thick-seeming walls still allow the Solarium a fragile atmosphere. Blues overlap lavenders as the petals' fragrance fills the room, easily brushing off on a person as she bruises the fleshy pulp. Higher than other such pockets, the Solarium is gifted with the rare benefit of direct sunlight. At high noon, despite the petals' thick layering, the bright sun filters through and dapples the floor. Laying a hand flat against the wall will reward the characters with the familiar warmth of natural light. As a High Judge and Inner Circle Member, Verra chooses not to draw attention to her Solarium by living at Solitude with her Tribesmen. She frequents the Solarium often to regain her composure and faith in the Hope.

THE WRATH OF WISDOM

The skin of the Solarium is thick and pulpy, and progress in cutting through the membrane is slow. Before the PCs can make any significant progress, footsteps rustle from the entrance. A smug Cylix enters, backed by a handful of the Sheban Watch. The PCs feel the presence of something dread and mighty, and moments later, Tera Sheba (who barely fits within the Solarium's confines) fills the entranceway and glowers at the PCs. Her voice resonating throughout the Solarium, the Wise One informs the party that they are under arrest, and orders the Watch to apprehend them. Unless the PCs surrender, a melee undoubtedly ensues.

These Watchmen are well trained, and their Synthesis is supported by Tera Sheba's presence; even with their superior numbers, the PCs and the Hope cannot prevail. When Verra sees this, she shouts for the fighting to stop and calls Tera Sheba forward. Such is the power of her personality that most stop fighting; Tera Sheba, however, does not move.

Verra steps forward with the **Finger of Tera Sheba** stolen from the Trial of Purity and begins to speak. She asserts that the outside is not in darkness, tainted or threatening those inside, but is in need of their help. She instead proclaims that the interior is in unnatural light, and in shadow. She reveals that she has been outside, and by Tera Sheba's definition, should be tainted, but has served at the Fatima's side for months. She then declares that she will see the Truth shine through, and hefts the unwieldy ax. Before anyone can react, she falls on the serrated blade, gutting herself and spilling blood across the floor. Lips lined with blood, she turns to Tera Sheba and repeats with her last breath: "I love you, Wise One, but I shall see the Truth shine through."

THE TRUTH SHINES THROUGH, REDUX

As Verra's body falls to the floor of the Solarium, the leafy floor splits under her. The tear continues across the floor and up the walls, then across the ceiling. Sunlight from the outside spills inside, even as the room shifts and separates, opening a chasm into the Firmament below. The rent expands, and the vines and material of the dome splits; the PCs find themselves at one end of a rip that measures nearly one hundred meters long. A nearly palpable shaft of sunlight falls through the hole and falls across the Courthouse far below.

Everyone within the Firmament can see the pure light shine in. For Evans especially, with their connection to nature and their recent separation from the real natural world, this is an incredibly religious experience. The sky is not roiling with dark clouds of ash and taint as they have been led to believe. It is pure and clear, and the sun shines. For Terashebans, the shaft of light is resonant with the purity Cylix was speaking about at the trial. Tera Sheba's mistruths and exaggerations about the outside world are proved manifestly false.

REDEMPTION

The tear in the Firmament is a moving experience for those below; for those in the Solarium, however, the floor has gaped open and been rocked with tremors (anyone who succeeds an AGI roll against a Threshold of 4 remain on their feet; those who fail fall; fumbles have slipped near the edge are in danger of falling to certain death). Cylix loses his footing; one of the PCs (or Xander) has the opportunity to grab his hand, leaving him dangling over an enormous drop. The fate of the High Judge behind the Inquisition, the Black Owls, and a generation of oppression is entirely in their hands. They may pull him to safety or drop him to his death.

Tera Sheba stands at the edge of the rent, looking down into the Firmament without moving. Eventually She turns to the PCs and informs them that they have destroyed whatever protection Her and Eva's Tribes ever had and condemned them all to tainted lives. With the Dome compromised, they may take whomever they wish, as the damage is already done.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

For the members of the Hope, use the templates for Evan Nurse and Sheban Advocate in the **Tribe 8 Companion**, or appropriate templates from **Word of the Pillars** and **Word of the Fates**. The Hope number between twenty and thirty within the Firmament.

For **Yadira Wild'on** use the Nurse template in **Word of the Fates**, p. 113, or the following statistics: INF +2, KNO +1, WIL +1, STA 25, UD 3, AD 3.

For the Sheban Watchmen, use the Joanite Warrior template from the **Tribe 8 Companion**, p. 112, or the following statistics: BLD +1, FIT +1, PER +1, STA 30, UD 7, AD 7.

BETWEEN QUESTS

Word spreads like wildfire that those who wish to leave may do so, and many answer the call. Some five thousand assemble to march back to Hom. It is estimated that a further two thousand leave on their own, either to Hom, Westholm or the Outlands. Many younger men and women leave their loyal families to join the Nation and the Felln on Hom; others leave lovers, spouses and friends behind.

Tera Sheba: Knowing that the rent in the Firmament has lost Her support and loyalty, Tera Sheba has given Her consent for people to leave the Firmament, though She is filled with a contempt for those who do. The Wise One is not as apathetic as she appears, and has elected to use the events as an opportunity instead of a defeat. Knowing that only those unhappy with Her rule will leave, She seeks to cull the Firmament of Her detractors, leaving only the loyal behind.

Eva: The Mother remains in Her comatose state, and gives no guidance on who leaves and who stays in the Firmament. Those who do join the army do so without Her blessing and many speculate that they will be exiled in absentia when Eva eventually recovers.

2. Fallen Blossoms

The Firmament: Those who remain in the Firmament begin to call themselves the "Untainted," becoming more xenophobic and fanatical as time passes. They resettle on the tip of Sunblessed Peninsula around Tera Sheba's new Solitude and the inert Eva. The rent in the canopy slowly heals, allowing less and less of the outside world to intrude on the arcology inside.

Hom and Haven: With an influx of some six thousand recruits, Hom is bursting at the seams with people and activity. The knowledge of agriculture that the Evans bring with them is not enough to make the granaries stretch enough to feed everyone; Hom will starve in a matter of months.

HOOK: SECOND CHANCE

Connections between families, friends and lovers were broken by those wishing to leave and those wishing to stay. Loyalty was tested, and bonds were severed. In *Second Chance*, the PCs are given an opportunity to go back for those left behind, convincing family or friends to reconsider their choice. For a Sheban or Evan PC, this could be the chance to right the wrong done to them by their families when they were exiled to Hom.

The rent created by Verra Thaim'on's sacrifice has closed significantly, but is still open enough to allow a small party through. It will entail scaling the Dome of the Firmament nearly 500 meters into the air before reaching what is left of the Solarium. Winds are strong at those heights and the Black Owls still patrol the lands surrounding Firmament. The outer walls are smooth but fibrous, and will allow for pitons. The PCs may also wish to duplicate the "shell ritual" from Act One, and take either the Seed or Harvest rivers. In both cases, the Watch regularly patrols both the Solarium and all banks of the river near the Dome's curve. Only the fanatic now reside inside, and all are wary of a second infiltration.

SCENES

Who Goes There: The Black Owls are still patrolling outside the Dome of the Firmament, their guards up against attack from the Fallen. Their reward for catching a "tainted soul" for trial is residence within the Firmament and the promise of gifts well worth the effort. Each is desperate for the chance to prove themselves and live the "Good Life" within the Firmament.

The Telling Moment: Searching out a face in the thinned population of Firmament is still a daunting task, but well within possibility. If the PCs happen to be Sheban or Evan, perhaps a favored sister or a mother can find them before the PCs find her. It's a bittersweet moment filled with hate and accusation. Unless the PCs are incredibly persuasive, she will stay and the PCs are forced to accept that her decision is final. She or someone she confides in will then inform the Watch that there are infiltrators in the Firmament once more.

Double Jeopardy: The PCs are caught inside the Firmament and are again put on trial before the now fanatic crowds. Their trial is

a speedy one and execution is inevitable but for the saving grace of Eva. In a vision, the Mother comes to the people of the Firmament and warns them against more bloodshed. Tera Sheba, unhappy by being usurped by Her sister, stays the execution for one night until She has concluded her sessions with Eva. While the PCs sit in the jail outside the Courthouse, the family member or friend they spoke with earlier appears and releases them. She and a few others agree to join the war effort, and leave with the PCs.

AFTERMATH

The PCs' second foray into the Firmament is far less successful than their first, and is almost not worth the effort. With no more than ten new recruits, the PCs return to Hom with just that many more mouths to feed.

One saving grace of this trip is the information gained on the atmosphere within Firmament. It is dense with religious fervor and suspicion. The Trials of Purity have stopped, but people still mysteriously disappear if their conduct is less than perfect and politically acceptable. Eva's form still lays inert, but Her mind seems to be extending further and further in the River of Dream. Tera Sheba's reign seems to be at its height, Her word law without question.

HOOK: WESTHOLM

Behind a massive wall, the denizens of Westholm cower in terror from an invasion that no longer threatens them. If the PCs feel the army's numbers are still not enough, they may wish to tackle Westholm's impressive defenses. Those inside live in terror of Z'bri possession, and refuse to open their gates to any lest they be secretly infested. The PCs will not have the luxury of an underground resistance like the Hope this time, but if they are riding high on the success of the Firmament, they may not heed the danger.

SCENES

The Wall: The trip to Westholm is difficult and long; when the PCs arrive they are greeted by a wall composed of logs and concrete, studded with metal "spikes" fashioned from farming implements. The surface of the wall is electrified, and shocks any who touch it with an intensity of 10. Guards patrol the top of the wall, but refuse to admit anyone inside, insisting that they cannot trust that they are not possessed. Neither will they explain how the wall was constructed or its full function. The PCs will find that Synthesis will not affect those on the wall or anyone inside; the wall itself cuts off connection across it.

The Past Speaks: Night falls, and while the PCs are making camp outside the wall, they find a rectangle of plastic. This is Maxwell Bunkgarde's tape narrating his family's flight into Westholm and the construction of the wall (*Vimary Burns*, p. 28). The PCs may identify it as information storage with Lore (Keeper), Hagglung, Streetwise or Trade. Unlocking the information within, however, is an entirely different matter, requiring contacts with Keepers or

creative use of Synthesis (the Aspect Tradition would be especially useful). Listening to the tape, the PCs will learn that the Wall is a hybrid Technosmithing and Synthesis construction, with solar-powered generators inside the town providing a constant stream of energy to maintain the Synthesis "wall" into the River of Dream.

Pull the Plug: Armed with the knowledge that the wall is powered by sunlight, the PCs can interfere with the mechanism. By felling trees into the wall to siphon off the power, creating a storm to block the sunlight or some other strategy, the wall can be powered down long enough for the PCs to make a demonstration of Synthesis or Dream, proving that they are not Z'bri. Westholm will grudgingly welcome the PCs inside (reactivating the wall a minute later) and listen to their proposition.

AFTERMATH

Westholm was never a populous town, but those inside are eager to help after being confined within the wall for months. The wall is deactivated long enough for the PCs to leave, along with the fifty volunteers they have earned. Evan barges are loosed from the docks and the army's newest group of recruits paddles south to Hom.

HOOK: CYLIX' REVENGE

If Cylix was not dropped to his death, he wants revenge against the PCs. Discarded from the side of Tera Sheba, yet still popular with the people, he continues to grow more embittered and crazed. He shows no hesitation in controlling the Watch through blackmail, though the Black Owls still follow him through their loyalty. It is a subtle power struggle between Cylix and Tera Sheba, with the PCs caught in the middle.

His accomplice, Jozef Kath'on, feels equally vengeful toward the PCs, and is willing to give every resource he has to wiping them from existence (if Cylix was killed in Act Three, Jozef can seek revenge in Cylix' name; substitute Jozef for Cylix, below). Cylix now travels out of the Firmament freely, and has strengthened his tenuous contact with the Black Owls. With this at his disposal, Cylix Seth'on makes the lives of the PCs a living nightmare.

SCENES

Through Dreams He Walks: Walking through the Dreams of the PCs, Cylix begins a soft campaign to drive them into insanity. It starts slow, with simple nightmares, but builds on their worst fears until they are unable to sleep for fear of monsters slitting their throats at night. In possession of several Fatimal artifacts, Cylix is able to increase the onslaught when he begins creating delusions for the PCs. Soon, they are unable to tell reality from fantasy when either awake or asleep. Those adept in Dream should be able to detect their dreams are being manipulated by an outside source (Dreaming, Threshold 5). A salient clue to

Cylix' interference is the predominance of large, dark owls within the dreams.

Straight As The Owl Flies: Knowing that the PCs have been "softened" by unrelenting nightmares, Cylix accompanies the Black Owls in an attack to finish them off. The attack comes when the PCs are most vulnerable (they have been watched for days), and at first the tide of battle is heavily against the PCs. Cylix, disguised, hangs to the back, using his Synthesis to further distract the PCs with elements of their nightmares. At the last minute, the PCs are rescued by Mek, the Guides or some other appropriate third party. As the PCs dust themselves off, they find a lantern on the ground. The PC captured by Cylix in Act Two will be able to identify it as belonging to the High Judge.

The Lantern Lights the Way: The obvious solution is to find Cylix and dispose of him once and for all. This is not as easy as it sounds; no longer bound by Tera Sheba directly, Cylix travels frequently between the outside world and the Firmament. However, clever use of Synthesis using the lantern as an anchor or thorough investigation through Hom will allow the PCs to track Cylix down to a decrepit building on the south shore of the Sunken City. There the PCs can finally end their torment — and tormentor — for good.

AFTERMATH

With Cylix dead, the Black Owls have lost their primary leadership. Jozef Kath'on tries to take up their reins, but he is not the leader that Cylix was. The Black Owls continue in a diluted and disorganized fashion for a few more months before finally collapsing altogether. Only a few rogue Black Owls remain, conducting personal campaigns of terror on the Fallen. More surprisingly, the PCs may receive a dream visitation from Tera Sheba Herself, thanking them for disposing of a wayward and dangerous fanatic. The Wise One explains that She is trying to do Her best, but Her insistence on Truth can only be withstood by the truly pure. Cylix was unable to bear the full light of Truth.



Chapter three: Desert Rose

Open your eyes, Dreamer, and know my plight.
Born among the Tribes and nurtured in that garden,
Now I wilt, alone, among Beasts and Horrors
I am abandoned by both Mother and Nightmare,
Encircled by Hate for what I have seen.
Come to me, Dreamer,
For while I am a Withered Rose,
I still know the secrets of the desert.

- Felice's Call



QUEST THREE: DESERT ROSE

DREAM CALL

In this quest the Fallen are contacted through their dreams by a mysterious person who offers tempting insinuations of an opportunity to deal the Z'bri a crippling blow. Identified by only the image of a rose in the desert, Felice is a member of the secret order of the Withered Rose, Magdalite Diplomats sent to the H'I Kar to maintain relationships with the Z'bri under the Pact of the Dome. When Pyton, the Lord whose household she stayed in, died in the assault on Vimary, Felice took up his mantle, giving the Serfs "attention" in his place. Knowing that such power can neither last nor satisfy her, she is now seizing an opportunity to barter her way back into the Tribes and Vimary.

Felice has heard of an embryonic alliance between the Sangis Prince Fa'Cul and the Koleris Count Lothar. This alliance would reunite the H'I Kar Z'bri under a unified leadership intent on the destruction and enslavement of the people of the Nation and Hom. Felice has seen a way to destroy this alliance before it begins, but she is unable to affect it herself. Those who answer her call, she hopes, will be able to make the summit meeting between Lords, which will be attended only by honor guards, look like a trap by stealing the keystone of the alliance — the Baron's Heartstone.

Act One, *Dreams of a Desert Rose*, takes place on Hom as the characters receive Felice's dream call, investigate what it means, and prepare an expedition northward. Act Two, *Palace of a Desert Rose*, takes the Characters on the journey into outskirts of H'I Kar and to Felice's hamlet, now besieged by her late lover's enemies. Felice speaks with the Characters, revealing the developing alliance and her own corrupted nature. Act Three, *Revenge of a Desert Rose*, details the meeting between Z'bri and the Characters' destruction of Fa'Cul's alliance.

ACT ONE: DREAMS OF A
DESERT ROSE

And as the Rose dissolved before me I saw two crossed swords made of bone, sparring or fighting, I could not tell which. Suddenly the back-and-forth of the duel stopped, and the swords turned to bear on me, advancing slowly through the darkness. I screamed and ran, but in my dream the swords were always behind me.

- Jakan, Herite Trouble Maker

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

In Act One, the Characters' dreams are visited by the Withered Rose Felice, who is using Pyton's Heartstone to cast her dreams as far as Hom. Others on Hom have received similar dreams, and the Characters can investigate to piece together a more coherent message as well as puzzling out the dream's last reference to a "Withered Rose." Once resolved, the Characters can answer the dream summons, at which point Felice attunes the Characters to the Heartstone with Sensuality, providing them with a beacon to follow north.

This scene begins with the Characters dreaming; the Weaver may ask the Players what they are dreaming, or describe their dreams for them. Their dreams are then interrupted by the presence of a single desiccated rose, wilting over an expanse of dry and cracked ground. A drop of blood wells like a tear on the edge of a petal and falls, followed by another blood tear. This image, perhaps along with Felice's Call at the beginning of this chapter, is the same in everyone's dream. Because Felice is contacting as many Dreamers as she can, the message she gives to each is incomplete, and each Dreamer only gets a partial message. The Characters may dream the following:

- A path winds through dark and twisted woods, recognizable as Duskfall. The path branches, and the trees open up down each fork displaying a tableau: on one side is the Cage in flames; on the other side is the H'I Kar, also in flames. Showing the character loved ones suffering and dying in the flaming ruins of Hom and old Z'bri enemies doing the same within the H'I Kar can intensify this vision.
- A tower built of flesh stands in the midst of smoldering fields. Around the spire are ringed warriors of the Z'bri, fighting to gain the walls. Gouts of flame and the sounds of battle indicate that the Sangis palace is defending itself, but a keen eye will see that it is a losing battle. At the apex of the tower is the image of the desert rose, crying blood tears down the walls.
- Four quarters of a circle lay spread out above the glyphs of the Fallen and the Nation. Slowly the four quarters gravitate toward each other, resolving into the symbol of the Z'bri as it grows in size. Eventually it looms over the other two glyphs, casting a menacing shadow. The Dreamer instinctively knows that if the four quarters unite, the larger, more powerful symbol will crush the others. Just before the pieces snap together, however, lightning shoots out of the Fallen glyph's hands and shatters the Z'bri symbol; the quarters spin out of orbit.
- The image of the Baron's face leaps out of darkness towards the Dreamer then collapses in on itself, shrinking and crumpling until it coalesces into what looks like a lump of obsidian. Those familiar with Heartstones (such as anyone who accompanied Joan into Solitude) will recognize it as such. The point of view pulls back, showing the Heartstone sitting on a velvet cushion, and the lid of a box closes over it, sealing it away.

The Weaver may create more visions if she has more Players, but should be sure to give the four described above to Characters, even if this means a Character receives more than one. The Weaver should feel free to modify details of the visions to better engage the characters, pulling on heartstrings and calling on loyalties, beliefs and personal agendas. Each Character's dream ends with the whispered words: "I am a Withered Rose, but I will bloom in your dreams again, tomorrow night."

INTERPRETATIONS AND INTI-MATIONS

The next morning, the Characters wake to a Hom bursting with talk over another common dream. Many among the Fallen dreamt of the Desert Rose, although no two dreams were identical. Everyone seems to be giving an account of their vision, trying to put together a coherent whole, and to decipher the import of the dream. The Desert Rose is on everyone's lips, and in this air of hope and enthusiasm, conversation can easily start up even among strangers. The following are a number of encounters the Characters may have, either by chance or by seeking out aid or advice.

Dreamers: Everyone on Hom seems to want to share their take on the dream call of the Desert Rose, either by relating what they dreamed or what they believe the dreams mean. The Characters can be given descriptions of others' dreams, including crossed swords turning as one against the dreamer, or of a secret flaw in impenetrable armor. Some elements, such as the Desert Rose herself, are almost so common as to be universal. Other aspects of the dream are more rare, including the last line that all the Player Characters heard. Opinions are far less coherent, ranging from beliefs that the Z'bri are coming to storm Hom to the Baron rising again. Extreme interpretations range from the Z'bri contracting into one massive and self-destructive Flemis collective to an oncoming firestorm that will destroy everything from Hom to the H'I Kar.

Horace the Bald: This Doomsayer is among many who have taken up preaching at Hallows, prophesying at the top of his lungs since he woke up this morning. When the Characters pass by, he shouts for them to stop, wades through the small crowd that has assembled to listen, and, placing his palm over the Characters' foreheads, declares that they are the chosen ones meant to answer the call. When asked why, he will loudly explain that he saw their features framed in the windows of the besieged spire in his dream. A handful among Horace's adherents will urge the Characters to take up their charge and answer the call. When questioned, however, it becomes obvious that Horace received only a portion of the dream call, and while he will never willingly admit to it in front of his followers, he did not see the Characters' faces in the tower at all.

Magdalites: The children of the Lover have taken up residence on Hom since the Burning, some setting up shop as before and others soiling their hands with the rebuilding and fortification of the island. There are no known members of the Withered Rose on Hom, as these Diplomats do not return from Z'bri lands. The very existence of the Withered Roses is secret knowledge, even among Magdalites, but there are rumors of Diplomats disappearing with no trace, or of threats of diplomatic assignments that are neither pleasant nor temporary. Such rumors, or an ex-Magdalite who was so threatened, might direct the Characters to the Sirens with pointed questions. Magdalen Herself will not speak to the Characters without a very good reason (having saved Her in *Quest One: Fallow Fields* might qualify), preferring to let the Sirens speak for Her. The Sirens will be elusive about the Withered Roses, but eventually, if put under enough pressure, will admit their existence and function. None

of the Sirens received the dream call, nor can they identify which of the Withered Roses it might be.

Deus Ex Machina: If the Characters have difficulty discovering the existence of the Withered Roses or seem disinterested in the dangerous task of saving Felice, the Weaver may call on either Magdalen or the Guides to help them along. Magdalen might approach characters who saved Her from the assassination attempt, giving them information about the secret order of diplomats and asking the Characters to rescue Felice as a favor. The Guides, on the other hand, felt the influence of Pyton's Heartstone in Felice's dream call, and will send the Characters to fetch an exiled Diplomat that may have the potential to be a Guide. It is doubtful, however, that the Guides would be so straightforward with the Characters; they may instead ask the PCs to investigate the potential opportunity Felice proposes, and add bringing her back to Hom almost as an afterthought.

ATTRACTION AT A DISTANCE

By the time the characters dream again the next night, they should be prepared to accept Felice's summons. Further dreams, either their own or sent by Felice, may be used to cement their resolve. At about the same time as the previous night, the Desert Rose appears in the Characters' dreams and asks if they will help her. If any of the Characters accept the summons, the Desert Rose dips its bloom as if in a nod and disappears from the dream. Felice then uses Sensuality to attune those who accepted to Pyton's Heartstone. When they wake, they will feel an irresistible pull northwards, toward something that they are both attracted to and repulsed by. Characters who do not accept Felice's summons receive the same nod in their dream, but are not attuned to the Heartstone. An entire cell need not accept the summons; the fact that some members are attuned should be enough to drag the rest along to protect their friends.

The attunement to the Sangis Heartstone is neither natural nor healthy, nor will the Characters understand what they are drawn to for quite some time. Characters will sense some ineffable entity beckoning them northward, toward a consummation promising infinite joy. The price for such joy, which the Characters will come to understand instinctively, is only eternal servitude. The absolute joy, however, is worth any price to the Characters; this is a realization that, if voiced, should concern any cellmates not attuned to the Heartstone. As time passes on their journey northward, the Characters' connection to Pyton's Heartstone will deepen into obsession, and they will be plagued with disturbing dreams and daydreams of communion with their heart's desire. At no point do the characters lose the ability to think clearly; rather, they are simply unable to entertain the thought of not proceeding northward.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

For more information on the Order of the Withered Rose, see **Word of the Fates**, pages 88 and 93.

For more information on Prince Fa'Cul, see **Vimary**, p. 119

For more information on Lothar, see **Vimary Burns**, p. 62

For a full write-up on Felice, please see the *Weaver's Section*, p.92

For information on Pyton and the Baron's Heartstones, see the *Weaver's Section*, p.91

For **Horace the Bald** use the Doomsayer template in **Warrior Unbound**, p. 96, or the following statistics: KNO +1, PER +2, PSY +2, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3.

ACT TWO: PALACE OF THE DESERT ROSE

There are many things seen and many more unseen;

Yet there are even more things that never should be seen.

- Dannae Lilkin, Seer.

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Having accepted Felice's call, the Characters now follow the pull of Pyton's Heartstone north, into the H'I Kar. When they arrive at Felice's hamlet, they find it besieged by rival Z'bri out for Pyton's blood — unaware that their quarry is already dead! Since Pyton's death Felice has taken up his mantle, keeping his death secret. Now she has rallied the Serfs of the hamlet to defend her territory against the Z'bri attack; bolstered by her Synthesis, they have held off the invaders for days, but they are slowly being overpowered. The Characters must fight or sneak their way through the battlefield and into the spire, finding Felice at the top of the tower. The former Diplomat tells the Characters of Fa'Cul's embryonic alliance with the Koleris and makes them an offer: she will help the PCs to break up the alliance if they will take her home, to Magdalen.

THE JOURNEY

The draw of Pyton's Heartstone is towards the northwest, to the western outskirts of the H'I Kar. There are a number of routes which the Characters can take in that direction, but none of them is safe or certain. The following areas are detailed to cover whatever route the PCs opt to take.

Bazaar and Firmament: Both Bazaar and the Firmament have been described in Quest Two. Bazaar has changed little in the past week, but, depending on the outcome of the previous Quest, the Firmament can be considered a safe path if the inhabitants have been pacified. If they have not, the Firmament will repel the 'invaders' as before.

The Great Hill: Within the Great Dome, the Melanis study the Bone Pile where Baba Yaga was accustomed to dwell, but the scholars themselves do not pose much threat to the PCs. Their guards, however, Chosen Serfs and Iv'chet warriors, ensure that their masters' studies are not disturbed; they maintain a vicious perimeter and kill nearly anything that moves. Synthesis will be more difficult to maintain here, due to the Melanis Atmosphere effects (see **Horrors of the Z'bri**, p. 96), but not impossible.

Hunting Paths: The forests blessed by Mary and Eva are now almost indistinguishable from the untamed wilds of neighboring Duskfall, and are haunted by Gek'roh and Koleris, who seem to be engaged in some sort of guerrilla war between themselves. Characters venturing into the Hunting Paths must confront both sides to pass through, even if the events make little sense to them. The ongoing skirmishes might be mistaken for some sort of Koleris hunting rite, if it were not for the looks of fear and terror with which the Koleris face their foes.

Ruins of Griffentowne: Still smoking, the ruins of Griffentowne present a terrible but relatively harmless landscape, as the Z'bri who slaughtered the inhabitants have returned to the H'I Kar. Griffentowne's silent landscape is terrifying, however, for a different reason: the souls of those who fell in the Burning fell outside of Baba Yaga's reach, and should be unquiet spirits haunting the land. Instead, however, is silence — the souls are now in the clutches of the Z'bri.

Shattered Fingers: The old border and the lands north are now the extended slaughterfields of the Koleris, a lifeless and ruined plain dotted with trophy piles and peopled with the warrior Z'bri and their Serfs. Both are a threat, since the Koleris prize killer instinct and savagery in their Serfs, as it makes them more enjoyable to kill. The Koleris are, however, relatively spread out across the plains, and the party might gamble on slipping through quickly and avoiding any encounters.

Duskfall Forest: Ironically, Duskfall presents the safest route to the western H'I Kar, as the Gek'roh and other monstrosities of the forest are a more sporadic and less unified threat than the Melanis of the Great Hill and the Koleris in the Shattered Fingers. This route is not without danger, but if the characters primarily desire a route that will not tip off the Z'bri, Duskfall is a good option.

The Great River: Eventually the Characters will have to cross the Great River in order to enter the H'I Kar. A raft can be made from the timber of Duskfall, although this entails camping at the forest's edge for at least a day. If Westholm has been brought back into communication with the outside world, boats might be gotten there. Savvy Characters might choose to make the entire journey on the Great River, leaving Hom or the Sunken City by boat, traveling around Westholm and up to the H'I Kar. The northern fork is inhabited by a breed of fish engineered by the Skkr Flemis to observe any who cross, but their current level of disorganization will make anything short of an army too insignificant for a real response.

As the Characters travel ever further northward, clues begin to pile up. The Z'bri are fighting each other in Bazaar, sitting complacent on the Great Hill and fighting a guerrilla war in Duskfall. The slaughterfields north of the Shattered Fingers should harbor ranks of warriors preparing to march, but it is

nigh deserted. It should become more and more obvious that not only is there no imminent offensive, but that the Z'bri are almost incapable of mounting such an effort. The Dahlians were, as usual, embroidering on reality. A few freshly killed Serf corpses, however, indicate that there are some pitched battles taking place, and this fact should be used as a hook to draw the Characters not attuned to the Sangis Heartstone north to Felice's territory.

THE PALACE

Half a day into the H'l Kar, the Characters crest a ridge and see the besieged Sangis spire that featured so clearly in their dreams. The Z'bri that surround the spire have made slow progress taking the tower, but the signs of a losing battle can be seen: the outer wall has been breached, and even at a distance the defenders are plainly fatigued. It is only a matter of hours before the tower falls to its invaders. Those attuned to Pyton's Heartstone can sense the object of their obsession at the peak of the tower, and while they do not necessarily feel compelled to walk through the Z'bri to get there, turning their backs on it will be unthinkable. They must get inside.

The tower itself is slowly being overcome, as its outer wall has been breached. Defenders along the intact portion of the walls keep the breach under heavy fire and have their heaviest fighters in the courtyard, holding off as many as they can. The courtyard guards have not been completely successful, however, and some invaders are already inside in small groups, having barricaded and fortified their positions. From these forts they harry the defenders and make moving troops within the tower difficult for the defenders.

It is doubtful that the Characters will be able to break the siege, unless they have brought an army of their own. It is possible, however, to use the chaos of battle as cover in an attempt to get inside, engaging the Z'bri and Serfs only when necessary. Finding a way to signal the defenders will make this easier, as their fire and Felice's odd form of Synthesis will help clear a path through the gates and into the Spire. In the courtyard, the Characters will find no less than five defending Serfs fighting a losing battle against one of the Koleris Iv'chet. The Fallen will be easily distinguished from the twisted forms of the Serfs, especially if they join in the fight against the Koleris. Their added numbers will allow them to vanquish the Z'bri, and the Characters will then be conducted under guard through labyrinthine passages of sporadic fighting, towards the top of the spire.

MISTRESS OF THE PALACE

The uppermost room of the Spire is circular and ringed with windows looking out and down onto the battlefield; at the very center of the room is a large, fleshy throne where Felice sits, clutching Pyton's Heartstone, directing the battle. In order to take advantage of the 360-degree view, Felice frequently orders the chair to turn, which it does by standing up on its set of eight human legs and spinning around. The Characters are brought up through a staircase in the floor, and it takes Felice a few moments to tie up the battle so that it does not require her attention and she can speak. The former Diplomat gives clipped

orders to a continual stream of runners interspersed with cooing incantations she whispers to the Heartstone, which glows a dull red in her hand. Her cool, collected demeanor is impressive but also unnerving. Weavers should highlight her casual acceptance of such things as her throne and the twisted Serfs she commands. Characters attuned to Pyton's Heartstone will be sorely pressed to wait patiently while Felice holds it only a few feet away, and Felice will wrinkle her nose and signal her guard Serfs to hold the Characters at any lack of 'restraint'.

After a few minutes, Felice turns to the PCs and announces the battle can go without her for a short time and thanks them for answering her call. She introduces herself and politely asks the names of the PCs. Felice is excited to have someone to talk to who is not a subservient Serf, something she has not had since Pyton's death, and will try to strike up a conversation if the Characters do not try to focus her on the situation at hand. She will ask about Magdalen's new chambers on Hom, inquire after old acquaintances and if they survived the Burning, and will actually ask if the Characters' journey was pleasant, even as the tower shudders under the Z'bri attack.

If the PCs do not bring the conversation back on topic, Felice will wander in that direction after she has wasted precious time on small talk, reminded that the old acquaintances she inquires about are in terrible danger. She warns the Characters that Fa'Cul is proposing an alliance with Lothar, blithely assuming that they understand who said Lords are and what the alliance would mean. The Characters will most likely have to have her backtrack and explain things slowly so that they understand the consequences of this event.

BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS

Fa'Cul, Sangis Prince among the Z'bri, sees herself as the successor to the Baron's legacy of power, power that he held through intrigue and scrupulous alliance. To that end, she has made overtures to Count Lothar, Koleris leader of the largest war party in Vimary. Through careful negotiations she has convinced the Count that she has no plans to dominate and restrain the Koleris' spirit, but seeks to bind their martial ability to her political connections and extensive resources. Together they will be the greatest and strongest Z'bri in the region; they will prove their mettle by destroying that which stymied the H'l Kar for so long: the Fatimas and their Nation, now hiding on the island Hom.

Fa'Cul's mentor, the late Baron, kept the Koleris in check and away from Tribal throats for decades, and the Koleris have interpreted this as a betrayal of their very natures. Fa'Cul, who herself never approved of the Pact of the Dome, needs to distance herself from the Baron's legacy of manipulation, even if she secretly wishes to continue it. Her solution is both simple and daring: as the keystone to her alliance with Lothar, she has promised to hand over the Baron's Heartstone as a hostage for the Koleris. By surrendering the Baron's soul to the Koleris' attentions, Fa'Cul shows public distaste for the Baron's tactics and allows the Koleris to enact their revenge. Less immediate but more potent, the Baron, as author of the Z'bri Houses and founder of the Sangis, exacted oaths of loyalty and support from

all others in his house, and bound their wills to his very soul. The destruction of the Baron's Heartstone and his resident soul would cause a backlash to crash over his house, crippling them with pain, regret and dark, haunting, tortuous memories. Fa'Cul's implicit offer allows the Koleris easy retribution against any Sangis treachery.

The Baron's Heartstone will change hands in a secluded grotto north of the Ziggurat known as the Vale of Teeth. There, Fa'Cul and Lothar, attended only by honor guards, will meet and seal the alliance by exchanging the Heartstone and oaths of loyalty and support. The meeting is ostensibly secret, and few outside the two Lords and their councils know of it. Felice knows only because portions of Pyton's espionage network still report back to their Lord's hamlet, unaware their messages are delivered to Felice in his absence.

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

Felice concludes that the seminal alliance is vulnerable to interference, but the Diplomat has found herself unable to take advantage of the opportunity. She called the Characters to H'I Kar in the hopes that they might succeed where she would fail. Felice still expects to participate in a support role, lending the Characters her knowledge and experience among the Z'bri, her remaining contacts and the failing resources of Pyton's hamlet. Her price for this is simple: once their intrigues are complete, the characters must conduct her safely home to Vimary, where she hopes to be reunited with Magdalen.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

The besiegers of Felice's tower are led by four Z'bri Iv'chet. They seek to capture or kill Count Pyton, unaware that he is already dead. Of the Z'bri, two are Koleris and two Flemis; their overlapping Atmospheres turn the seventy Serfs and Chosen among them into a well-coordinated and thoroughly blood-thirsty army. They are pitted against defenses manned by some thirty Serfs and Chosen.

See *Weaver's Resources*, pages 94-95, for full writeups of the members of the Four Winds of Vengeance, the Z'bri alliance attempting to destroy Pyton and his realm.

The defenders' most potent weapon is Felice's Synthesis channeled through Pyton's Heartstone, as she uses Conflict to turn the invaders against each other. The two Flemis Iv'chet focus primarily on undoing the damage Felice does to troop morale, and the Diplomat keeps both riding hard to calm and control the portions of the army that mutiny.

ACT THREE: REVENGE OF A DESERT ROSE

Many things have come between my kind and yours, and these things have tricked us into seeing not what binds us together but what sets us apart. Today, however, we will create a bond between us using that which once had us opposed. Emile, hand me the box.

— Fa'Cul to Lothar in the Vale of Teeth

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The Characters now fight or sneak their way out of Pyton's besieged hamlet, taking with them couriers of the deceased Lord. These couriers speak in Pyton's name and take messages to other Sangis Lords, arranging for them to appear at the Vale of Teeth with their armies just after midnight. The Characters themselves proceed to the Vale or to intercept Fa'Cul's entourage and steal the Baron's Heartstone, hopefully without alerting anyone of its theft. When Fa'Cul is unable to produce the Heartstone and Sangis armies appear around the edges of the valley, Lothar concludes that the alliance was a trap. The Sangis and Koleris fall into an all-out war.

THE VALE OF TEETH

Felice informs the group that along the north bank of the island of the H'I Kar is a low bank of hills, broken once in a small pass. The edges of the valley are ringed in sharp standing stones, creating an effect of a screaming mouth open to the sky. This is the Vale of Teeth, where Fa'Cul hopes to seal her alliance to the Koleris. The Sangis delegation composed of eight Z'bri and some twenty Serfs will arrive first as the sun sets, and busy themselves with posting sentries and setting up a grand pavilion tent of human skin. Koleris scouts will precede Lothar to check on the honor guard and ensure against Sangis treachery. Count Lothar, his eight honor guardsmen, and handful of Serfs will arrive at midnight. Fa'Cul will give a short speech before calling for the Baron's Heartstone and handing it to Lothar. The two Lords will exchange oaths and the fate of humanity will be sealed. The Characters must intervene before this happens.

The temptation to assassinate the two greatest leaders of the Z'bri may be tempting, but naked force will serve the Characters poorly. The honor guards of both Lords comprise the most elite warriors of each House, and most are Lords, able to possess another body, Serf or Fallen, if they are slain.

The most vulnerable aspect of Fa'Cul's delicate plan is the Baron's Heartstone. While the honor guard is primarily concerned with protecting the Prince, the Heartstone is guarded by three Chosen Serfs. It might seem simple to slip in, slit their throats, and make off with the Heartstone, but this would alert the Z'bri. The summit meeting would be postponed while the full weight of the Sangis armies fell on the Characters to retrieve the Heartstone. Instead, the Heartstone must be stolen or destroyed without anyone knowing that it was disturbed.

There are as many ways to interfere with Fa'Cul's plans as there are Player groups. The Players and Weaver are encouraged to use their imaginations, tempered with an understanding that the Z'bri are neither stupid nor easily fooled. The Characters' best chances lie with a careful plan that assumes intelligent and rational opposition.

THE TEETH OF RETRIBUTION

Once the characters have heard Felice's information and have formulated a rough plan, the Withered Rose will suggest that more damage can be done. Instead of simply breaking apart the alliance, she believes the spoiled summit can be a wedge to split the Houses apart into an internecine war. Using the hamlet's couriers, Felice can send messages to other Sangis in Pyton's name. Playing on their fears and personal agendas, she can manipulate each one into arriving at the Vale of Teeth with their armies at a specified time. If Lothar finds Fa'Cul unable to produce the Baron's Heartstone only to then be surrounded by Sangis armies, he will come to the inevitable conclusion — the Sangis Prince set a trap.

Felice has ten couriers that she can use, but they, along with the Characters and Felice herself, will need to get out of the besieged tower. As soon as the couriers are gathered in Felice's chambers, the tower shudders under the Z'bri attack. Criers announce that the walls have been breached in earnest, and invaders are pouring into the spire. It is time to leave. There are three primary escape routes available to the Characters:

The Front Door: The most straightforward route is out the gates and through the invading army. While this may seem absolutely suicidal, the Characters may remember that the Z'bri are not here for them, but for Pyton. They will face sporadic fighting going downstairs and heavier opposition in the courtyard and outside the gates. The most difficult aspect of this escape route is the Atmospheres of the remaining Z'bri: the two massive Flemis stormed the gatehouse and have now engulfed the walls on either side, clearing them of archers. Passing between the two Flemis will require great strength of will simply to remember why they are leaving and not turning back to fight for the Z'bri.

By Air: Pyton kept a stable of flying Sangis mounts that Felice will suggest as a possible escape route. Each mount can carry eight humans, although it will be a tight fit. Felice, who has gone riding with Pyton, will offer to ride the high-spirited stallion, while one of the Characters directs the far calmer mare. One of the Flemis on the walls will see the beasts escape, conclude that Pyton is fleeing and pursue by inflating himself until he floats and beating his pinions for locomotion. Once he is near, the Flemis will inflict his Atmosphere, not on the Characters, but their mounts, tempting them closer to his gaping maw. The weaker-willed mare will easily succumb, requiring the PCs' intervention.

Tunnels: When asked if there are any other ways out of the tower, Felice will remember the tunnels that take away the spire's wastes. Unfortunately a group of invaders has fortified in the chamber over the tunnel access, and the PCs arrive there at the same time the second Koleris does. He had planned to rally

the Serfs to joining in the bloodletting, but on seeing Pyton's Heartstone in Felice's hand, he flies into a rage and leads them in an attack on the party, intent on winning the Heartstone. He knows that Pyton is dead and that Felice has his Heartstone — he must be killed, or alternately, given the Heartstone. Otherwise he will pursue the Characters through the labyrinthine tunnels all the way to the exit into the Great River.

Once in the clear, the couriers will each leave for their destinations, leaving the Characters to their part of the operation.

THE RETRIBUTION OF DESTINY

Fa'Cul and her entourage leave the Ziggurat in the mid-afternoon, traveling for two hours to the Vale of Teeth. The characters may choose to intercept the entourage as it travels, or they may attempt to infiltrate the camp at the Vale of Teeth. Each target has advantages and drawbacks, presented below.

THE ENTOURAGE

The Sangis travel to the Vale in four carriages pulled by monstrosities that might have once been human. Fa'Cul and two of her honor guard ride in the lead carriage; two guardsmen ride ahead and two flank the entourage. The last two Z'bri ride Sangis mounts, keeping an eye on the entourage from above. The Baron's Heartstone rests in the second carriage under guard, the third carriage carries the pavilion tent, and the last 'refreshments': captured Tribals and Squats to be slaughtered after the alliance is sealed. The carriages are driven and guarded by Serfs, four to a carriage.

The Serf sitting next to the second carriage's driver is one of the Chosen (see *Tips and Resources*), and holds a horn with which he can summon the outriders in case of emergency. The other two sit inside with the Heartstone in its chest between them. The Chosen will not hesitate to unleash their Sundering on anyone, friend or foe, who enters the carriage. They will assume that the Z'bri have been called or overwhelmed, and will fight fanatically to the death.

Intercepting the entourage and sneaking into a moving target presents difficulties all its own, but these difficulties affect the Serfs and Z'bri, as well. The carriages will be difficult to halt if anything goes wrong, and most of the entourage will be distracted with the business of keeping the caravan moving. Characters will only have to deal with the Sangis atmosphere if they approach Fa'Cul's carriage or encounter one of the outrider guards.

THE CAMP

The pavilion tent is large, with a handful of different rooms and chambers. The loud sounds of Fa'Cul 'relaxing' comes from one of these; she is attended by two of her honor guard and a number of Serfs. The Baron's Heartstone sits in another chamber with its three Chosen guards (see *Tips and Resources*); its door is flanked by two more Serfs. The captured Tribals and Squats are held in another room, and the two Sangis mounts in yet another. Serfs roam the pavilion setting up decorations and furnishings for the summit; the honor guard patrols the perimeter, haunting the stone spires that surround the Vale.

The Heartstone is placed in the center of a large, bare room on a bone pedestal. The three Chosen sit in a triangle around it, facing in. Any obvious approach will be seen by at least one of the Chosen. If anything goes awry, the Chosen's first priority is to alert the rest of the delegation; only after the alarm has been sounded will they attempt to overcome attackers.

Serfs and Z'bri will be distracted with setting up camp and securing the area for the first half-hour after arriving at the Vale of Teeth; this presents a golden opportunity. Afterwards all will settle in to waiting and watching, although since the meeting is supposed to be secret, they will be expecting Lothar's party, not Fallen infiltrators. Serfs and Z'bri within the camp are either stationary or follow set patrols that can be evaded. Sangis Atmosphere radiates powerfully from Fa'Cul's chambers, resisted at a -4 modifier. Characters would best give this corner of the pavilion a wide berth.



EPILOGUE: THE DESTINY OF HOPE

Assuming the Characters are successful and their theft remains undetected, Fa'Cul meets with Lothar, both attended only by honor guards. Fa'Cul gives a short, self-congratulatory speech, and opens the Heartstone's chest, only to come up empty handed. Just at that moment, Sangis war parties crest the ridges around the Vale, and the Koleris make the obvious conclusion. Lothar's scream of betrayal can be heard all the way to the Shattered Fingers. Fa'Cul acts quickly, seizing the opportunity to eliminate her greatest rival, and takes up command of the Sangis. The Koleris take up arms, but once the odds are apparent their strategy shifts from slaughter to ensuring that one Koleris runner escapes the Vale to warn the rest of the House, and any others who will listen, of Fa'Cul's treachery. The Sangis and Koleris are at war.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

More on **Prince Fa'Cul** can be found in **Horrors of the Z'bri**, p. 118.

Sangis Monstrosities, great flesh-crafted beasts of burden, are not intended for combat, but can take care of themselves rather well when it becomes necessary. Use the Qh'far Symbiot Mounts from **Horrors of the Z'bri**, p. 94.

Fa'Cul's Honor Guard: a full writeup can be found on page 95 of the Weaver's Section.

Sangis Mounts: Capable of flight, these horrific beasts are similar to the Qh'far mounts created by the Melanis. Use the Qh'far Symbiot Mounts from **Horrors of the Z'bri**, p. 94, adding the Ability Flight.

There are about 15 captured Tribals and Serfs awaiting death in the final carriage in the caravan. Use the Weaponshaper and Serf templates from **Warrior Unbound**, p. 96, or the following statistics: **Tribals** — AGI +1, FIT +1, KNO +1, PER +1, STA 30, UD 5, AD 5. **Serf** — FIT +1, PSY -1, STA 25, UD 3, AD 3.

There are 16 Serfs riding as guards for the carriages, four to each, as well as two before the caravan and two following. Use the above statistics, adding AGI +1, BLD +1, and bone swords (AD +10).

A trio of **Chosen**, specially honored Serfs blessed (or cursed) with the power of Sundering, has been charged with guarding the Heartstone. Before the Burning of H'l Kar each was a powerful priest of a Sangis hamlet, but recent times have recalled them to Fa'Cul's direct service. Their leader **Emile** is ecstatic to be so close to his mistress, and his eyes and actions blaze with fanatical zeal. **Henri**, on the other hand, is a broken soul who serves the Sangis Prince, not out of awe or even fear, but because his will is so weak he simply follows the orders of whoever can overpower him, which is usually Fa'Cul or Emile. The last is **Eduard**, who hides a deep resentment towards Fa'Cul: originally Eduard served the Baron, but after his death was claimed by the Prince. He finds Fa'Cul weak, distracted and inadequate compared to his former master but serves her because he has no other choice. Use the above Serf Guard statistics, adding Bone Blades (UD +8) for Emile, daggers (AD +4) for Henri and claws (UD +9) for Eduard.

[T] BETWEEN QUESTS

There is little time between this and the next quest, *Razing the Field*, although the PCs must make it back to Hom to mobilize the army. Their southward progress will see many Koleris loping northward, leaving the Slaughterfields to answer Lothar's call. Many will be blood-mad, and the Characters may have to defend themselves from those Koleris who cannot restrain themselves until they actually reach the battlefield. The return journey may be played out or simply narrated by the Weaver.

On reaching Hom, the Characters will be greeted at the bridge by Shera and Mek, who will ask if the army should move. The PCs know that there is no oncoming Z'bri offensive, but they also know that the Z'bri Houses have collapsed and are fighting amongst themselves. It is a prime opportunity to strike and wipe out the H'l Kar permanently. Besides the pressing concern of the army, the Characters must also decide what to do with Felice and with the Baron's Heartstone, assuming it is still in their possession. Both are twisted, insane, and will probably corrupt any who encounter them; the Characters are faced with a difficult decision.

The H'l'kar is briefly alight with flames as Z'bri battle Z'bri. The primary factions are Fa'Cul's Sangis and the Koleris, now without their leader. Many of Fa'Cul's rivals among the Sangis use this opportunity to strike against her, but many more find that the Koleris are making no distinction between who supports the Sangis Prince and who does not: all Sangis are in danger of Koleris attack. The Flemis are, for once, divided on whom to support, which is putting a significant strain on the collective. Some Flemis have actually severed their connection to the collective to take up arms on either the Sangis or Koleris side. After several short and brutal battles, the Koleris leave the H'l Kar, heading downriver to Capal. In the wake of their withdrawal the H'l Kar is left fragmented, and desperately short of experienced warriors.



[T] HOOK: DEFENDING MR'THON

As the PCs watch from a safe distance, they watch as a Koleris runner escapes from the Vale and sprints for the Slaughterfields to raise the alarm. From their vantage, the PCs can see a detachment of Sangis turn to follow him. It is plain that the runner is unaware of his pursuers, who will surround and capture him soon. The PCs must protect the Koleris runner and ensure that the messenger can escape to effect the collapse of the Houses.

[T] SCENES

This hook entails a running combat as the PCs harry and interfere with the Sangis pursuers long enough for the messenger Mr'thon to make it across the Great River. The PCs will quickly find that simply killing the Sangis is not a solution, as nearby Serfs or even members of the party will be possessed by the Lords and the pursuit will continue. The PCs may attempt to maintain their secrecy, but their presence is a moot point to the Sangis and Mr'thon will only be grateful for the assistance.

Absalom's Folly: At first Mr'thon will proceed directly south in a straight line towards the Slaughterfields. The area is lightly wooded with twisted trees that snatch and grab. The area provides a great opportunity for the PCs to harry the Sangis under the cover of the forest, but just as the trees thin Mr'thon's long tendrils are caught up in the tree branches. If the PCs do not help free him, he will be cut down by the Sangis; of course, the enraged Koleris will try to Exsanguinate anyone who approaches. The PCs have very little time to negotiate the situation before it is too late.

Streetwalker: Out of the woods, Mr'thon cuts southwest to avoid the bulk of the Ziggurat. Dodging through organ farms and the occasional Sangis spire, the fleeing messenger collects more pursuers as the Sangis blow horns to alert their fellow Z'bri. Mr'thon seems intent on continuing through denser habitations, and if the Sangis continue raising the alarm, he will be overwhelmed in short order. If the signal horns can be stolen or destroyed, Mr'thon will pass through the fringe of the Ziggurat unobstructed.

Finish Line: The end of Mr'thon's race is the Great River, across which lie the Slaughterfields and the bulk of Lothar's army. The PCs find one of the Sangis pursuers' bodies lying on the ground, alive but inert; the Z'bri has left this husk and has dashed ahead to possess another body and has raised the alarm at the near side of the Spine Bridge. Mr'thon faces some twenty Sangis warriors, odds which he cannot beat. The River's current is fast and treacherous, removing swimming as an option. Without the assistance of the PCs, he will be found and slaughtered before he can make it across the river.

AFTERMATH

Safe across the Great River, Mr'thon will rally Lothar's army to take the Spine Bridge and cross the Great River into the H'l Kar. The Houses of the Z'bri will be at war, a distracted target prime for attack by the Eighth Tribe. The PCs can make the rest of their journey to Hom, dodging the war bands of Koleris moving north.

HOOK: SEEDS OF TEMPTATION

The PCs may end up bringing two corrupted threats into Hom with their return: the Baron's Heartstone and Felice Hevkin. On the journey south and in Hom itself, these two threats dance through selfish and depraved desires, locked in a spiritual combat with each other, with little regard to the damage they cause around them.

SCENES

Contact: As the PCs travel south, Felice takes a definite interest in the Baron's Heartstone, and tries to arrange to carry it herself, citing that she has experience with such things and is the best candidate. If this does not work, she will attempt to manipulate the PCs, playing off their fears, insecurities and personal agendas, to disqualify each PC from being the bearer. Simultaneously, the Baron's influence works its slow corruption on whoever is presently carrying it, inflaming in them their selfish impulses, making them less willing to share the responsibility of holding the Heartstone.

Menage a Trois: On Hom, the PCs are visited by both the Guides and a delegation of Sirens; they did not come together but both arrived at the same time. The Sirens are ostensibly there to welcome Felice back into the Tribe, and the Guides to congratulate the PCs and tend to any taint they may have contracted in the H'l'kar. Both, however, are there for the Baron's Heartstone. Neither are comfortable mentioning the Heartstone in the others' presence, assuming correctly that they

are here for the same thing. Halos will speak cryptically to the PCs, warning them that their recent success may make them a target to others on Hom. In the end, the Sirens leave with Felice; the Guides remain and tell the PCs the real reason for their visit. When the PCs look, however, the Heartstone is gone. The PCs and Guides dash after the Sirens, but are stopped outside Magdalen's new chambers on the North Shore. Magdalite guards ask the PCs their business and in other ways stall for time. A hideous scream echoes from inside, and the guards dash inside.

Bad Apple: Past a small foyer, the interior of Magdalen's home takes up the entire first floor of the building; the Fatima Herself sits in a throne of tattered velvet, facing off with Felice, who clutches one Heartstone in each hand. The guards will point at the gash in Magdalen's leather mask, and shout that the woman has hurt Her; Felice is ranting that "We shall rise again, we shall see you dead, tin goddess!" The former Withered Rose has been dominated by the Baron's Heartstone, and is using both Heartstones to attack Magdalen with crude Sundering, which slowly rips Felice's body apart. The PCs can try to appeal to Felice and her old loyalties to her Fatima, or they may attempt to overpower her with brute force. As soon as the Baron's Heartstone is pried from her hand, Felice will crumple into a fetal ball.

AFTERMATH

Magdalen will demand possession of the Baron's Heartstone due to the power it gives the bearer over the Sangis. She argues that it will be a key resource to use in the upcoming attack and it should remain in the hands of someone strong enough to withstand its influence. She offers the Guides Pyton's Heartstone as consolation; Halos accepts the proposition, later explaining to the PCs that the Lover will not have the Heartstone for long. Magdalen will want nothing to do with Felice after the attack, claiming that she is corrupted beyond redemption; if the PCs make no offer or suggestions, the Guides will take her in instead, nursing her back to health in mind and in body.



Chapter four: The Razing

Their screams of passion and pain became a symphony to me, the sound of life playing itself out upon an instrument I had created.

— Prince Fa'Cul

Hearing the Beasts howl as I set them and their homes to fire was the sweetest sound of the Battle...

— Shera Uhan'on



QUEST FOUR: THE RAZING

The Razing begins a week or two after the end of the events in *Desert Rose*. While the Characters were in the H'I Kar destroying the bonds between the Z'bri Houses, the Fatimas, along with the elders of the Fallen and the Tribes, set about organizing their armies for their attack on the H'I Kar. When the PCs come back with the news that the Koleris are abandoning the Sangis, Joan and the Jackers (with vocal support from many other sections) call for the Battle of Retribution to not just be a stopgap measure, but a razing that will destroy the H'I Kar and end the threat of the Z'bri once and for all. They argue that with the Houses sundered and the Tribes and Fallen standing together the fight can be ended decisively, if they but move quickly and with purpose.

Though there are a few dissenting voices, the vast majority of the Nation agrees with this plan, and the ranks of the army swell rapidly. The Fallen, for the most part, go along with the plan, with only the most radical Herites refusing to cooperate with the Tribes to destroy a greater enemy. With the exception of the Shebans and Evans still inside the Firmament, and a few radicals who refuse to cooperate with the other factions of the alliance, most of the combat-ready men and women of Vimary are soon taking up arms and marching for the H'I Kar. These events make up *Act One: Onward Crusading Soldiers*.

At first all goes well, as the army marches largely unopposed through the ruins of Bazaar and towards the Seven Fingers. It is in the shadow of the Seven Fingers that the first major battle (and only large scale field battle of the war) is fought. The Z'bri, pouring out to stop the Battle of Retribution before it can start, meet the allied armies in a horrible battle. By retaking the fortresses of the Seven Fingers and launching raids into the Z'bri flank, the crusading armies crush the Z'bri resistance and send them running back into the H'I Kar. These events make up *Act Two: Glory and Terror*.

Refortified and garrisoned, the Seven Fingers serve as a staging area for the war into the H'I Kar. With the Z'bri forces staging guerrilla raids out of the twisted lands of the H'I Kar, the armies embark on a scorched earth campaign — utterly and completely destroying every inch of the Z'bri lands south of the Great River. The army of the Nation then splits into three wings, one blocking the Spine Bridge and the other two moving into the west and east flanks of the H'I Kar and burning them to the ground. In the process of doing so the plagues of the Serf Fields fall upon the main body of the army, turning an already terrible situation into a living nightmare. For months the main army suffers through plague while the second and third armies make endless, brutal, bloody raids into the H'I Kar.

Act Three: Blood Madness, covers the effects of this terrible and seemingly endless war. The constant contact with Z'bri taint, and the mental and spiritual strain caused by endless brutality, makes Shera Uhan'on's mind snap. Using her position as commander of the Second Army, the Templar starts sending war parties of "undesirables" on suicide runs against heavily fortified Z'bri positions. It falls to the Player Characters to find out that Shera has gone mad, and to stop her from destroying the armies from within.

4. The Razing

When Shera is removed, things go from bad to worse. Rather than diminishing or coming under control, the raids into the H'I Kar intensify. The possibility of finally taking revenge for generations of fear and pain drives the Tribal armies to massacre Z'bri in endless orgies of destruction. *Act Four: The Last Days of B'ares* bring the PCs face to face with the fact that they are in danger of becoming something as bad as the Z'bri themselves, when they encounter a Z'bri Lord who is in the process of renouncing his vile heritage — only to be brutally murdered by those he was trying to save.

This realization leads directly into *Act Five: The Rancid River*. In this Act the Player Characters, with the aid of Den Hades, go deep into the River of Dream and view first hand the damage caused by the spiritual pollution rising from the endless destruction of life. The Characters speak with the spirit of a fallen Hunter, and receive a vision of what is waiting for humanity if they do not find a balance between destruction and creation.

Armed with this knowledge, in *Act Six: Great Shall Be the Fall* the Characters must convince Joan and the leaders of the Battle of Retribution to end the war with a final strike against the Ziggurat — destroying it, and Z'bri power in Vimary, once and for all. After a short and brutal siege and a final battle, the Characters stand in the ashes of the Ziggurat and receive a vision of even worse battles to come. With this Pyrrhic victory the armies return home to lick their wounds and see what can be done to heal the burnt remains of Vimary.

WEAVING THE WAR

The six acts of *The Razing* do not all proceed directly into each other. The course of the Battle of Retribution takes several months, and much of that time is full of endlessly repetitive and dehumanizing combat. In order to help Weavers bridge the gap between acts, several interim quest and campaign hooks are given. These short synopses and adventure hooks can be used to flesh out the course of the war to fit individual groups' stories and styles. By adding or removing various hooks and subplots, the Weaver can determine how long the quest will be, and the subjects and themes it will touch upon in her campaign.

Weavers should pay attention to how their Players are dealing with the war. Each group will have different end goals and desires, to which the plot can be tailored. Players whose Characters have a heavy focus on combat, for example, may want to play out many of the raids between *Glory and Terror* and *Blood Madness*. On the other hand, Characters playing diplomats or Lightbringers who are more interested in the human cost of the war may not want to play out any of them at all.

In the end, the important thing is not how many fights the group goes through, but that they feel involved in the Battle of Retribution and the incredible changes taking place in the setting and the world. Do whatever is necessary to ensure that they feel the powerful combination of glory and horror that the Battle of Retribution becomes. Focusing on the themes of glory, vengeance and the corruption that valuing revenge over justice brings will help the group feel part of the war, no matter how many or how few fights they participate in.

ACT ONE: ONWARD CRUSADING SOLDIERS

Now is the time of prophecy! Now we shall cut through the land like fire! For generations we have cowered and whimpered. Since the time of the opening we have been sheep — bred, sheared, and slaughtered. No longer! Now is the time to cast aside differences, to stand together as the one face of Humanity. Now is the time to cast the Beasts down, once and for all, and to feed them blood and fire!

- Deus, a Speech at the Cage

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

In this Act the PCs become involved in the formation of the Army of the Battle of Retribution. Whether the Characters become front line pawns or important battle commanders will be determined by their previous reputation and the actions they take early in the formation of the army. By letting the Characters get into the decision making process early, the Weaver can ensure that the Players have an impact upon the world around them.

Characters who have already been through **Broken Pact** will be moderately familiar with this process, but may be surprised to discover that things are going to work a little differently this time around. In **Broken Pact** the army was really a fairly small strike-force, designed to make a lightning raid into enemy territory and then get out quickly. This time, however, the army is going to be the biggest body of troops that Vimary has seen since the time of the Camps, and is being led not just by Joan and Agnes, but by all of the Fatimas, along with the elders of the Nation and the Fallen alike.

Rather than giving a single method for involving the Characters in the formation of the army, this section looks at how the army is called up and fit together, both in terms of tactics and politics. With this knowledge, and the adventure hooks provided, the Weaver can tailor the PCs' entrance into the army to fit the group and campaign. Drawing upon previously set politics, rivalries and connections allows PCs to be inserted at any level of the army, and also allows new Characters to easily be drawn into the epic of the Battle of Retribution.

The four sections of this act are divided as follows: *Armies* gives a look at the organization and distribution of the Crusading Army as well as a look at the personalities and politics of its leaders; *Plans and Positions* covers the general strategy of the army, as well as the leaders' plans for conducting the war; *In the Army Now* is a short series of hooks for drawing the PCs into the army as well as the complex politics; and finally *The March to War* is a brief scene of the assembled army marching to war.

ARMIES

In the wake of the Burning of Vimary, and after the bulk of the Evans and Shebans have been drawn out of their isolationism, the Nation has united against the Z'bri more strongly than since before the time of the Pact of the Dome. Though many still think that Joan and Agnes acted rashly in their previous attacks on the H'I Kar, most are more focused on the fact that, after generations of an uneasy peace, the Z'bri came and burned their homes and drove them out of their sacred lands.

The Fallen too are united like never before. Between the pressures of living near the Tribals and the fact that they have the best track record against the Z'bri so far, the Fallen have gained a sense of identity and a growing sense of pride. Though the Herites are still furious over having to work with the Fatimas, even they, for the most part, are proving willing to work with the Tribals against the common threat.

As a result, when the call to war goes out to the Fallen and Tribals, along with their Squat and Keeper allies, an unprecedented number of volunteers come forward. When the news that the Houses are fractured reaches the masses, the numbers swell even more. From a trickle of support the tide grows, until by the time the Battle of Retribution is ready to start, the Crusading Army numbers roughly 12,000 troops, with close to half again that number ready to take up support roles.

By group, the numbers are:

Group	Number of Warriors	Role
Agnites	200	Scouts
Dahlans	1,485	Scouts, Snipers, Raiders
Evans	3,600	Regular troops, Defensive engineers, Combat Healers
Joanites	3,140	Elite and Regular Troops
Magdalites	570	Regular Troops, Assassins, Spies
Shebans	455*	Regular Troops
Yagans	1,750	Regular Troops, Dream Warriors
Fallen	910	Shock Troops, Raiders, Regular Troops
Keepers	50	Shock Troops, Special Assignment
Squats	400	Disposables, Regular Troops

*Assumes the Fisher King joins the army. Otherwise only about 100 Shebans are present.

Early in the organization of the army the troops were grouped by Tribe (and by Outlook for the Fallen), and many wanted to be led into battle by their own Fatima. Only after extensive debate at the Cage, and several of the most respected warriors of the Joanites and Jackers putting their collective feet down, was the idea discarded as too cumbersome and awkward. Instead, the Army of Retribution was organized into three sub-armies, and within each army, companies made up of various groups of allied warriors.

THE FIRST

The First Army (or just The First) is led by Joan Herself, with a support staff made up of one Commander of each Tribe and one representative from each Outlook. The First is the main body of the Army of the Battle of Retribution, and is by far the most numerous. This is the army that takes the center at major battles, and is responsible for mass assaults, field battles and holding the line.

The First has the largest and least flexible companies, as its mission requires strength and solid lines of command more than adaptability. As a result, most companies of the First are organized along Tribal lines, with the elders or captains of clans commanding all the warriors of their specific clans. The elder reports to the commander of her Tribe, who reports to Joan and the Fatimas.

The First is comprised largely of Tribals, though Children of Lilith, Lightbringers and Squats also make a healthy showing. Of the Tribes the Evans make up the largest group of the First, followed by Joanites and Yagans. The First also has slightly more than half the numbers of the whole army, numbering 6,300. Most of the warriors of the First use spears and shields, fighting together in line. What they lack in training and experience, they make up for in numbers and teamwork. Some companies of the First include: Aria'on, Chop'on, Deth'on (Evan clans, making up the "body" of the First); Dian'on, Gia'on (Yagan clans); Jacobi'on, Kil'on and Guy'on (Joanites, making up the center of the line, as well as the shieldwall); and The Hammer and Sword (Joanites and Children of Lilith).

THE ARMY OF THE SPEAR

Led by Shera Uhan'on, the Spear is the second army and is made up largely of cavalry and groups of fast-moving shock troops. Having slightly less than half the numbers of the First (3,170), the Spear is still a large force. The Spear's job is to act as the hammer to the anvil of the First, striking hard and fast against the flanks of the enemy.

Shera runs her army much like she ran the army in the *Crusade of the Heart* (*Broken Pact*, pp. 33-40). She oversees a war council of

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ten commanders who advise her and keep the lines of command open in battle. Under those ten commanders are the captains of the 100 War Parties that make up the Spear (each commander being responsible for ten captains). Shera uses this structure to allow for flexibility and motion in battle, while still keeping a clear hierarchy.

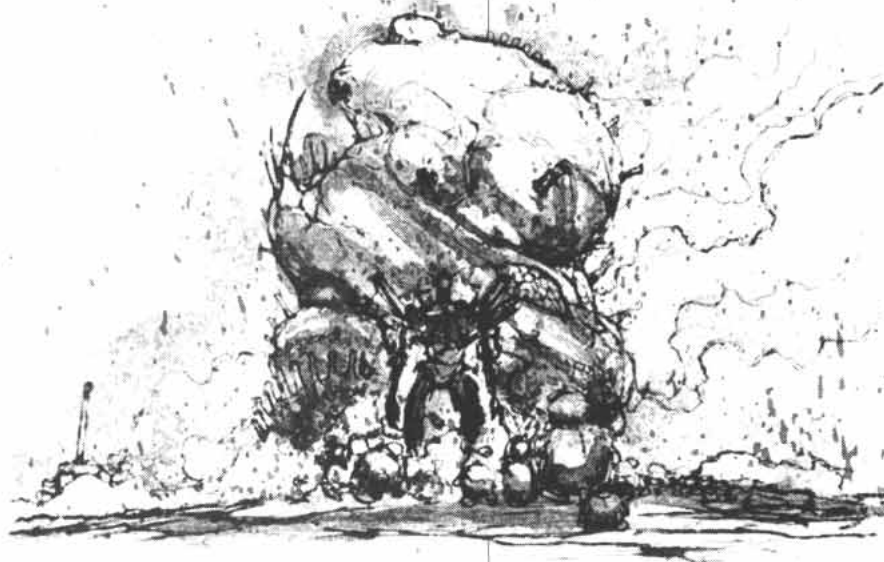
The Spear's central War Parties are mostly made up of Joanite cavalry, but Agnite scouts, Jacker skirmishers, Dahlian guerrillas and Lightbringer regulars also make up a significant portion of the army. The cavalry of the Spear is heavily armed and armored, using lances, spears and heavy swords to deliver crushing charges. The rest of the Spear are more lightly armed and armored, making a balance of speed and hitting power. Members of the Spear often claim to be part of the most dangerous army, and they are probably correct.

Some of the War Parties of the Spear include: Winter Wolves (clan Fera'on), The Bears (Agnite scouts), White Banner (elite White Guard heavy cavalry), Black Masque (Dahlian reavers), Long Riders (combined Dahlian/Joanite/Lightbringer scouts) and The Band of the Red Hand (combined Jacker/Yagan/Joanite medium skirmishers).

THE ARMY OF THE FLAME

Originally the Flame was supposed to be set up much like the Spear, but politics quickly destroyed that plan. When Mek was given command of the Flame by Joan (much to the anger of many conservative Tribals) it instantly became a rallying point for the Fallen, Herites in particular, who wanted to be part of the Battle of Retribution but did not want to be under Tribal command. As a result the Flame quickly became a motley collection of those who would not, or could not, quite fit into either of the other armies.

Mek, however, rose to the challenge, and with the help of several other Fallen turned the Flame into a raiding and skirmishing army. Where the First stands strong and the Spear strikes hard, the Flame appears from nowhere, strikes and withdraws at top speed. As a result, the Flame is the lightest armored, but most ruthless, of the three armies.



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They are also the most undisciplined, and Mek and his command staff have to work hard to keep the Flame under control and in battle order. Nominally the Flame is organized much like the Spear, with a group of corps commanders who command the captains of various War Parties. The problem is that most of the War Parties of the Flame are terribly flexible units. While this does allow a party to be assembled to exactly meet the requirements of a mission, the problem is that the War Parties occasionally reorganize themselves without bothering to ask permission from their captains, much less their commanders. Most of the Tribals consider the Flame a joke, and the Flame is just waiting to prove them wrong.

A few of the more important (and permanent) War Parties of the Flame are: Jackers (Mek's personal party), the Burning Blades (a vastly mixed group with a little of everything), the Bone Knives (Doomsayers and Herites), the Order of the Rose (Magdalites, and the single Tribal-only War Party in the Flame), DELTA (comprising most of the Keepers in the army) and Vengeance (Jackers and Herites, known as the most brutal and murderous party in the Flame).

POLITICS

Needless to say, the composition and leadership of the armies is a subject of great political furor. The alliance between the Fallen and the Nation is still very tenuous, and while most can agree to combine to fight the Z'bri, the details of how to organize the groups generate a lot of heat. Between the Herites refusing to serve under a Fatima, and the Old Guard of the Joanites wanting to have total control of the whole Army of the Battle of Retribution, bickering, politicking and outright hostility are the order of the day. Here is a run down of some of the important figures in the army, and their positions on various matters.

The Fatimas: Though Joan occasionally puts Her foot down on military matters, for the most part the Fatimas hang back from the center of the action. It seems to many observers that they are uncertain, and are trying to let their children decide what to do on their own. The truth is that Baba Yaga and Magdalen have both been having visions that have undermined their confidence, and they are urging the other Fatimas to use a light hand in the current situation.

Deus: Like many of the Lightbringers, Deus is all for the Fallen working with the Tribes to destroy the Z'bri. Deus and his faction, however, want the Fallen to work with the Tribes as equals in all things. They strongly believe that there should be more Fallen leaders in the army, and are growing weary of Nostra Guy'on and the Old Guard's attempts to use them as pawns.

Hal Nirva: Hal believes in the Battle of Retribution, and he also believes in a more moderate stance than most of the other Lightbringers. Though he is not a military man, he has managed to sway Mek to listen to his advice. He argues loud and long that now is not the time to debate the fine points of position with the Nation. Now is the time to show what the Fallen can do as the Eighth Tribe. Then when the war is over it will be time to 're-negotiate.' Hal is also doing his best to establish himself as a voice of reason with the leaders of the Nation, so that they will come to him as a liaison between the Nation and the Fallen in the future.

Kyrt the Free: Kyrt wants the Z'bri crushed. He also wants the Fatimas crushed. This leaves him, along with most Herites, in a bind. For now he is trying to lead the Herites to a compromise by following Mek, a Fallen, into battle. However, every backhanded comment, every "lost" weapon, and every attempt to remove Fallen leaders by the Old Guard is driving Kyrt closer and closer to walking out on the whole deal.

Mek: Mek is rapidly becoming a very angry man. The Battle of Retribution against the H'I Kar has been his dream for his entire life, and now that he is on the cusp of achieving it he has to watch people that he knows should be smarter wrangle, argue and bicker away what he sees as the Jackers' best chance. As a result Mek quickly starts becoming angry and brusque, but does his level best to keep the army moving towards the H'I Kar.

Nostra Guy'on: Nostra is the current leader of the Old Guard. He is brutally jealous of Shera and the younger Templars' position in the current arrangement, and is actively hateful towards the Fallen. While he can stomach (just barely) having Fallen in the army, the idea of having them in leadership positions is almost physically painful to him. He will do everything in his power to make the lives of Fallen in leadership positions miserable, hoping to make them fail so they can be replaced with more suitable (Tribal) candidates. Typical tactics he tries are 'losing' weapons, food and medicine designated for Fallen war parties, constant assignment of Fallen groups to unpleasant or highly dangerous duties such as latrine maintenance or front-line 'cannon fodder,' and encouraging subtle but persistent mockery and insubordination from Tribal followers towards Fallen in any position of authority.

Shera Uhan'on: At the very start of this movement towards unity, Shera was very open and willing to deal with the Fallen — mostly because of Valerie Valkin Ben'on's influence in her life. However, as frustrations mount, and as many of the Fallen refuse to be reasonable or follow orders, Shera quickly starts to lose patience with them. To Shera life is very simple — leaders give orders, everyone else follows them. When the Fallen refuse to toe the line, Shera quickly starts becoming harsh.

PLANS AND POSITIONS

While setting up the army and dealing with the political quagmire, Joan and the head commanders of the army also have to come up with an overall strategy for the war. If the PCs are high up on the chain of command (at least captains of war parties) they can attend the strategy sessions. How much impact they have is going to depend on how they play their cards.

After several days of wrangling, if the PCs do not attend or have little influence to get their own suggestions incorporated into the overall plan, the basic strategy is broken down into the following steps.

1. Retake Bazaar and Vimary Proper. Without this obvious first step the war is doomed to fail. The army will need the resources and room of Vimary to maneuver and to eat.

2. Take and re-fortify the Seven Fingers. The Seven Fingers are the most easily held fortification that the Tribes have, and they also make the perfect staging area for the invasion of the H'I Kar.

3. Clear the South Bank. Before the H'I Kar proper can be dealt with, the South Bank of the northern branch of the Great River must be cleared, or else the army will be marching into hostile territory with its back exposed. The hope is that this will also have the effect of drawing Lords out of the Ziggurat to defend their homes.

4. Block the Living Bridge, raze the outskirts of the H'I Kar. In order to isolate the Ziggurat for eventual attack, the surrounding areas of the H'I Kar will have to be cleared — essentially, by being burnt to the ground with every resident put to the sword. (Moving against the Ziggurat before this point would simply allow the Z'bri to hammer the army to pieces between the walls of the Ziggurat and their personal fiefs.) In this attack the Spear will attack the west, and the Flame will attack the east, making lighting raids deep into the northern H'I Kar.

5. Besiege and destroy the Ziggurat. Once enough of the H'I Kar has been burnt that it is no longer a threat to the army, the citadel/fortress of the Ziggurat can safely be attacked and destroyed by a combined assault.

6. Finish the job. With the Ziggurat gone the remains of the H'I Kar can be destroyed, and every last Z'bri driven from Vimary forever.

This, of course, is only the basic strategy. The tactics of each step are going to be subject to a great deal of debate. Joan Herself will vouch for this order of events, but will be willing to listen to good ideas about the tactics of individual steps. This leaves the floor open for everyone to argue their point, and for the PCs to get their ideas across.

IN THE ARMY NOW

There is no one way for the PCs to enter the army, and no one "correct" place for them to be. Most PC groups will probably join either the Sword or Flame armies, as they are the ones with the most opportunity for Fallen to shine or attain leadership positions. However, there is nothing stopping the PCs from joining the main army if that is where their inclinations take them. Many PCs will probably be connected and important enough that they will come straight from *Desert Rose* and into their own war party. The Weaver can use the following hooks for those who are not so ready, or for those who are not sure exactly where they might fit.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

While the PCs are recovering from *Desert Rose* and trying to get their bearings in the political chaos of pre-Battle of Retribution Hom, they are approached by Kyrt the Free, one of the important Herite leaders. Kyrt has recently had a falling out with Mek, who lost his temper with the impulsive young man and told him that he would "take orders and like it" or he could "get

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the hell out of my face, my army and my life." Kyrt is torn between furious and hurt, and comes to the characters seeking advice on what he should do. As Kyrt leads not only the Herites but many of the firearm-toting Keepers who are coming along on the Battle of Retribution, the Players should try their best to reconcile the stubborn Kyrt with the even more stubborn and impatient Mek. In so doing they may well find themselves sucked into the command staff of either Mek's war party (the Jackers) or Kyrt's party (the Unconquered).

BRIDE AND HONOR

Any PC who fought in the *Crusade of the Heart (Broken Pact)*, will find themselves approached by two very different "recruiters" in the same night. The first is Garret Kil'on, who remembers the Character from the fight in the Ziggurat, and comes to let the PC know that Shera Uhan'on is interested in offering the character a position as one of her commanders. Because of politics, however, she cannot come out and offer the position — she needs the Character to come to her and "request the honor of serving under her banner." Not long after Garret comes Troy Fenys. Troy first offers the PCs a position with her war party (Vengeance), but if they tell her about the offer from Shera she ups the stakes. She attempts to berate, cajole, blackmail and/or seduce the Characters into admitting that their loyalty is to the Eighth Tribe and not "servants of the Seven Deaths." If she can get them to do so, she then suggests that they take Shera's offer, and wait till the time is right to "serve her as she should be served." If the Characters refuse Troy becomes furious, and before she leaves tells them that not everyone killed in battle is killed by the enemy.

THE MARCH

Once everything is as set up as it is going to get without proper time to prepare and organize, the Army of Retribution marches out of their staging grounds on Hom. Two days before the march, the armies will be fully assembled. The First gathers at the Cage, the Spear gathers on the shore between the Great River and the Barren Lake, and the Flame gathers under the Joanite Towers.

In the first light of false dawn, the Flame crosses the Fallen Bridge and enter Bazaar. Though none other than the members of the Flame see it, Joan is there to see them off — and She salutes Mek (and the PCs, if they have come to Her attention) as they cross. Though they encounter some Joh'an, they find that the Z'bri have, for the most part, withdrawn before their approach. At dawn the Spear follows across the bridge in war party groups, and the two armies fan out to scout Bazaar as far as the Great Hill. They catch sight of the Z'bri, but the Beasts always retreat before them.

Just before noon the First crosses the Fallen Bridge en mass, their boot heels making the whole structure shake and shudder beneath them. Grim and solemn they pass through the burnt husk of Bazaar, and start the long march towards the Seven Fingers.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

When the PCs come back from *Desert Rose* things will start happening very quickly, and on a massive scale. For most PCs the gathering of the Army of Retribution will be the single largest group they have ever been a part of (12,000 compared to the 400 in *Broken Pact*), and they may feel overwhelmed by both the number of people and the fact that leaders of the Nation and the Fallen (not to mention the Fatimas) are putting forth all their power and influence to make sure that things happen the way they should.

It is important that the Weaver make the PCs feel like part of the process, not spectators. If the Players are feeling overwhelmed by events, then Weavers should bring plot points down to a level where they can be dealt with. Use the plight of friends, common people and old contacts to involve the PCs. Rather than having a battle of oration with Hal at the Cage, the Characters might have a quiet talk with a Herite friend who can't stand to work with the Joanites and is unsure of what to do. Weavers should give their Players what they want. If big drama will draw them in to the story, then that is what should be used. If lower-key scenes with 'regular folks' will work better, then by all means adjust the focus to include that. This Cycle book is intended to present a framework upon which the Weaver can hang her own stories; it is in no way necessary to run it exactly as written.

Also, Weavers should not be intimidated by the scope of events. 12,000 people in an army seems like too many to handle. The important thing to remember is that the 12,000 is something that most people never see as a whole (except maybe when the army marches across the Fallen Bridge and off of Hom). To most people in the army, the most important thing is their war party. Weavers should flesh out the group that the PCs belong to, as well as those closely associated with the party (commanders, allied and rival parties, etc), and then use the "named" NPCs from the party to demonstrate the scope of the army. Knowing that there are 500 Dahlian snipers in the army is trivia; having a Dahlian sniper as a member of one's war party is something that is actually real to the Characters.

ACT TWO: GLORY AND TERROR

Green boys on the march to their first battle often ask me what it feels like, what it's like to actually be in the middle of it. I just tell 'em "you'll see." I'd tell 'em more, but, really, how can you tell some fresh faced little kid that going into open combat is like you're going to puke up a lung, burst into flame and turn into a lightning bolt of pure joy all at once?

- Mek, to Deus

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

In this act the PCs get a chance to take part in, and possibly change the course of, the largest field battle on Vimary since the Liberation. When the remaining Z'bri of the H'I Kar spot the Army of Retribution on the march, they bring their forces up to the Seven Fingers. They had meant to hold there, but due to the lack of any central organization or command the Z'bri army came out of the Seven Fingers to meet the combined Army of Retribution in the Discarded Lands, the stretch of barren wasteland between Talon Nexus and Awarnak Kil'on's Tower (the central tower of the Seven). The result is a massive and bloody battle that sends the Z'bri retreating back to their own territory in the north.

The act is divided into five scenes. The first, *The Armies*, covers the set up and preparation for the battle, and includes hooks to let PCs help scout out and set up the battle. The second scene, *Battle Dawn*, covers the first massive wave of fighting and gives various conflicts for the PCs to get involved in. Scene Three, *The Tower*, covers an opportunity for the PCs to break into and secure Awarnak Kil'on's Tower. *Crushing the Flank*, Scene Four, follows immediately after *The Tower* and covers the PCs' attempt to sally out of the newly garrisoned tower to attack the Z'bri flank and end the battle. Scene Five, *The Dusk Dead Plain*, covers the aftermath of the battle. Finally a section of *Tips and Resources* provides thumbnail statistics for the enemies met in the Act, as well as ideas for involving the PCs in the battle and dealing with the high fatality potential of the situation.

THE ARMIES

Two days after crossing over the Fallen Bridge, the Army of Retribution comes within a click of the Seven Fingers. They bed down that evening, assuming that the next day they will begin the siege on the Z'bri-held defensive line. All that night scouts from all three armies scour the area, looking for traps and trying to get an idea of the enemy's strength.

During the night, however, scouts of the Army of Flame detect a massive force of Z'bri and Serfs moving down from the South Bank of the H'I Kar towards the Seven Fingers. Rushing back to base camp they report their findings to Joan and the command staff. Realizing that the Z'bri must be launching a major offensive, the army launches into action. The First is brought up to dig a very basic defensive line in front of a blacktop running out of Talon Nexus. They then form up behind the row of small ditches and spikes, ready to form a line between two buildings that will help guard their flanks.

While the First is forming up, the Spear mobilizes and crosses to the far side of the Rift. There they string out into a long line to hide their numbers. Once set up, they prepare to defend the First's flank, and to counter-attack the Z'bri horde. At the same time the whole of the Flame forms into a loose picket line, moving into the Hunting Paths to pick off Z'bri stragglers and to harry the flanks of the Z'bri armies.

(See map on next page for more on the placements described above)

Thus arrayed, the Army of Retribution waits for dawn and the telling battle against the Z'bri hordes to come pouring out of the Seven Fingers.

HOOK: THE SCOUTS

If the PCs are in a war party whose duties include scouting (as do many of the Spear's parties, and nearly all of the Flame's) then they should be the scouts that notice the Z'bri horde moving up from the South Bank.

While the rest of the army settles in to try (mostly futilely) to get some rest, the PCs are called in by their commander (or by Joan and the general command if they are Commanders themselves), and are asked to scout north into the Hunting Paths, getting as close to the Seven Fingers and the Z'bri lands as they are capable of. Their duty is to scout out enemy positions and numbers, not to engage the enemy or to make any raids. The commander issuing the orders lets the PCs know that their group will be the farthest north, and the furthest from the army and any kind of support. Extreme caution is urged.

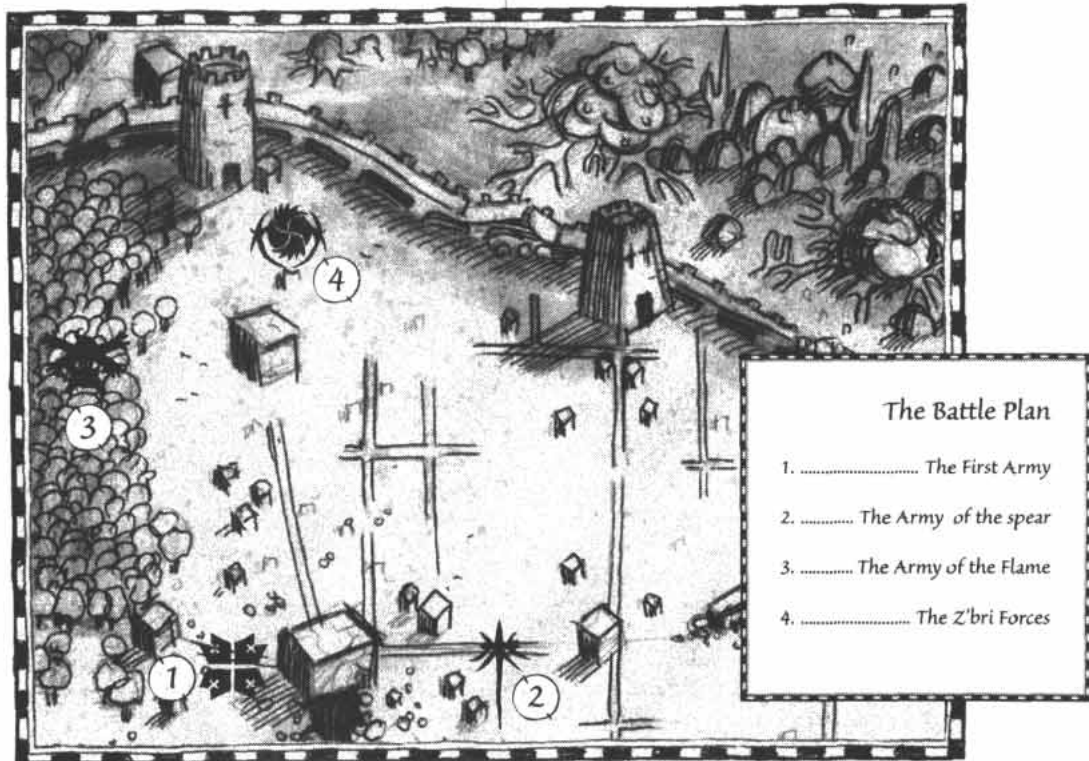
When the scouting party leaves, they enter the darkness of the thick woods, and head towards the fortifications. At first the night is far too quiet, with nothing moving at all. Weavers should arrange for a few small false alarms, such as a frightened badger or deer stirring the underbrush around them. It is only when the PCs come to the wall of the Seven Fingers that they hear the sound of movement — a mass movement coming from the North. PCs who want to investigate further (or to get any accurate idea of the number of troops coming) must sneak up onto the wall (or ruins thereof) and keep from being seen by the Serf sentries posted in a disorganized manner between the Towers. Once there, they will see a dark wave of troops coming down from the South Bank: thousands — maybe tens of thousands — of Serfs and Z'bri.

At that point the PCs should head back to the command center to report. On the trip back through the Hunting Paths, a group of Mithrop scouts (linked to hunting hounds, *Horrors of the Z'bri*, p. 114), comes upon the PCs' trail and starts to hunt them. The PCs must run or fight a group that will outnumber them about 2 to 1, and live to get their important message back to command. If they fail then the army will have much less time to prepare, and will be caught in a weak position come morning.

HOOK: COMMAND AND CONQUER

If one or more of the PCs are captains or commanders, they will be summoned to the emergency meeting when the scouts report that the Z'bri are bringing up a full field army. (If they were the scouts then they will be there already, and will be asked to stay long enough to report.) After hearing the report of the scouts, the PCs will then need to help plan the set-up for the next day's battle. None of the other commanders will be willing to risk an immediate counter-offensive, as fighting across the Towers at night would be suicidal. Neither will Joan be willing to retreat. Within those confines the PCs should be able to help determine and influence the set-up for the army.

The atmosphere in the command tent is very tense, and at several times, various commanders will snap or grow angry. The presence of Joan, Agnes and Magdalen, however, helps keep things under control. Unless the PCs go out of their way to goad an NPC into a rage, most of the command staff will remain mostly reasonable and will show a previously unseen readiness to work together. After all, everyone knows that the next few days could well see everyone in the army dead if they don't keep it together.



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HOOK: AID OF THE SPAWN

Unless the PCs convince them otherwise, a large portion of the Spear (those not mounted) does not simply ride around Talon Nexus to take up their position. In order to keep their numbers hidden from lookouts in the Towers, they go through the end of the Rift. While crossing the deep and treacherous crevice, they find that their way is blocked at several points by treacherous debris, sheer walls and deep water where old sewers have overflowed.

If the PCs are part of the group they will be approached, cautiously, by the Spawn (*Vimary*, p. 53), who want to help the Spear get across the Rift to gain revenge on their former Z'bri masters. If the PCs deal well with the Spawn (recognizing that they are not Z'bri and keeping their heads) then the creatures will show them an easy way across the Rift that will halve the travel time of the army. If the PCs attack the Spawn, then the Spawn will flee and not help them.

HOOK: COURAGE OR COWARDICE

If the PCs are part of the First, then the night will be less eventful for them than for others. However there is ample room for roleplay as the PCs and their companies wait for the dawn. A simple hook to draw the PCs into roleplay is to have a young, green member of their company — such as an Agnite or young Evan — come to the PCs and confess that she is thinking about deserting the army and fleeing. Though she wants to fight, she is becoming paralyzed by her fear, and is sure she is going to die the next day. (For a twist the Weaver could make the soldier a Yagan who has had a real vision of her coming death the next day.) The PCs must reassure and keep the young soldier from fleeing, while at the same time dealing with their own fears and issues.

BATTLE DAWN

With the rising of the sun the Z'bri army comes pouring over the wall between the Seven Fingers in a mass wave. Individual Lords bring their entourages of Iv'chet, Serfs and Monstrosities forward to battle, screaming for blood and with the power of their Atmospheres and Sundering beating about them. Though they are terrible to behold, they also lack any formal organization, and attack as a mob rather than an army — something that will cost them dearly.

Clouds block out the sun, keeping the field in a twilight haze as the howling mass approaches the Army of the Battle of Retribution. They come at a dead run, and the mere click between the armies is crossed in a matter of moments. Z'bri tear into the weak fortifications of the First, and come face to face with the shield walls of the line. A brutal, bloody melee ensues, lasting for hours without respite. Joan, Agnes, Magdalen, Baba Yaga and Z'bri lords alike stride through the carnage like angry gods of war, wreaking havoc in the enemy lines. The Z'bri Atmospheres start to take their toll as the day wears on, and even the presence of the Fatimas becomes too little to hold back the growing tide of madness.

While the First are under the hammer of the charge, the Spear counter-attacks into the Z'bri flank. Hammering the enemy they drive deep into the heart of the Z'bri hordes, but with only Agnes in support are unable to fully capitalize the gain in the face of several Melanis Lords who stand against them. All day long they charge up and down the field of battle, trying to find a spot where they can strike a blow that will shatter the horde.

In the depths of the Hunting Paths, the Flame wages a shadowy, moving war with the Chained who fight under the Z'bri. While fighting for survival against the monstrosities, the Flame also has to make sure that none of the main body of the Z'bri horde is able to pass through the woods to flank the First. The result is a horrid bloodletting that drenches the sacred trees of the forest. Towards noon Mek sends several war parties out in a sortie against the right flank of the horde, hoping to stop the endless pounding that the Flame has been taking.

What the PCs do during the early stages of this massive battle is going to depend on what army they are with, and what decisions they make. Those with the First will face an endless day of butchery, fighting the thickest attack of the Z'bri. Warriors in the Second will have more freedom to move, being able to withdraw and strike at the flanks of the Z'bri horde as they see fit. Finally, the scourges of the Flame will be the most free to make their own choices, having only to worry about the Gek'roh who pursue them through the dark woods.

How much of this combat is played out will be up to individual Weavers. Those wishing to have an endless bloody battle should be more than able to, and are encouraged to use as many Z'bri, serf and monstrosity templates from as many books as they can get their hands on. Those wishing to move quickly through the mass battle to the more personalized later stages can either gloss over the battle with narrative, or assume that their PCs' war party was not in the thick of the fight. Below are several hooks and seeds for Weavers to use to flesh out the battle.

FACING THE FLEMIS SHIELD

Warriors in the First and the Spear will encounter the newest weapon of the Flemis early in the battle — the Shield-Wall Serfs. See page 96 in the *Weaver's Section* for full details on this abomination. How the characters encounter the Shield-Wall will depend on which army they are in.

Soldiers in the First will meet the Shield-Wall early in the day, when the monstrosity moves slowly and methodically through the ditches and spikes the Nation's Army had spent the night erecting. Moving with calm deliberation, the Flemis beast uses its massive shields to hold off missile attacks while it demolishes and fills in the ditches and removes the spikes — thus allowing for mounted and heavy assault troops to move in behind it. If the PCs allow the Shield-Wall to finish its work, the abomination will come at them after they are done, and the rest of the day the PCs' company will be left without any modifiers from defensive fortifications. If the PCs go after the Shield-Wall, then it will slowly retreat, trying to draw the PCs into the middle of the Z'bri hordes.

Warriors in the Spear will only meet the Shield-Wall after they have made a successful strike into the Horde. Then, while they are still distant from support or reinforcements, the Shield-Wall will move between them and the rest of the Spear, forming into a square and trying to keep the PC's war party from rejoining draw the attention of more of the Horde, and the PCs will soon find themselves trapped between the Shield-Wall and the entire weight of the Horde without any support or backup.

THE CRADLE MAY FALL

An hour or so into the battle, the Company of the Cradle, a group of the First comprised of Evans and Agnites working with the Deth'on clan, responds to a Z'bri probe with excessive zeal, and breaks off from the main line. Rushing forward against a group of Stonerunners, they leave a hole in the line and move beyond the edge of the defensive works. A group of Bear Weres then descends upon them while at the same time a shock troop of Rakh Hive Battle Serfs rushes towards the hole in the line (between Deth'on and Guy'on's ranks).

The PCs, near the site of the breach — either from being in the First or being forward troops for the Spear — must deal with two problems at once. The gap in the line must be closed, and quickly, and the Cradle needs to be hauled back behind the line before they are utterly wiped out. The PCs can deal with one or both situations themselves, or can try to order the troops to take care of one or both problems. PCs in a command position can get the Guy'on troops to close the line in a few moments with successful Leadership rolls. Those without rank, however, will face a harder task, as they will first have to convince the Guy'on troops to listen to the orders of a random member of the Fallen.

Getting to the Cradle is harder, as the First has few troops to spare to go out into the no-man's land after them. The PCs will either need to flag down a company of the Spear (possibly through pre-arranged signals, or clever use of Synthesis), or go after the Cradle themselves. Doing so will require that the group help the Cradle (15 Agnites and 20 Evan Nanny/Warriors) fight off a frontal assault of 25 Bear Weres while dealing with harrying flank attacks by a half dozen Rakh Hive Battle Serfs.

ATTACKING THE UNITY

Several of the war parties of the Spear and the Flame have Lightbringer Dreamers who have set up Unity effects that give the group a low-grade telepathic communication, allowing them to move and strike as a group with near perfect coordination and without the need for vocalizing orders. One such party, The Vision, ravages the flank of the Z'bri near the wall of the Seven Fingers all morning. In fact they do so well that they draw the wrath of several Melanis Lords observing from the wall above. The Lords then use a group ritual that attacks the main strength of The Vision — their Unity bond. Rather than striking a single mind, the Melanis strike at the Unity effect and manage to confuse The Vision so badly that they turn and start attacking their own army.

The result is carnage as The Vision falls on the unsuspecting flank of the Spear. The PCs must intervene in order to keep the Vision from slaughtering (and eventually being slaughtered by) other members of their own force. The members of The Vision are mostly beyond reason, and so the PCs will have to think fast to avoid a slaughter. PCs with Recognition, Synthesis Lore, Z'bri Lore, or similar skills and abilities should be able to figure out the basics of what is going on if they hang back long enough to think rather than just reacting. Once they do so they have several options: they can try to kill the Lightbringer "centers" of the Unity effect, thus ending the corrupted effect and freeing the other members of the party; they can try to counter the Sundering corruption with a use of Synthesis (more Unity, Purity, Recognition, Devotion and/or Inspiration are all good choices); or they can try to raid the Melanis position and end the Sundering by disrupting the Lords' ritual.

OLD GRUDGES

Fighting on the Hunting Paths, the Flame is a disorganized group of war parties acting more or less on their own initiative, with only occasional direction from Mek and the command staff. In the middle of the battle with the Z'bri, a group of Herites working with the war party Vengeance (Troy Fenys' group), decides to use the confusion to settle some old personal grudges with Tribal enemies. Alternately, if the PCs angered Troy earlier in the campaign (such as in *Pride and Honor*) then the Herites target the PCs for assassination.

Vengeance waits until the group they are going to attack is worn down and scattered from a confrontation with Z'bri Misanthropes and then attacks isolated members of the group while they are out of the line of sight of the rest of their party. PCs so attacked must hold out for at least three rounds against odds of two or three to one before the rest of their party can come to the rescue. If it is a non-PC group attacked, then the PCs will come upon a scene of Fallen and Tribals fighting each other. The leader of the Vengeance force (Wid, a known friend of Troy's) will call out to the PCs that the Tribals have turned on them and are trying to kill them. The PCs then have to figure out the situation and end the fighting before the next group of Z'bri rally and form their next attack.

THE TOWER

As the battle rages on into the afternoon, the Spear and Flame together finally weaken the Z'bri horde enough that the First is able to start a slow, steady advance on the field, driving the Z'bri back towards the Seven Fingers. In a state of panic, a group of Flemis Lords (who had been holding Awarnak Kil'on's Tower) rush onto the field with almost all of their troops — leaving the Tower open and undefended at the back of the Z'bri horde. The PCs then have a chance to seize the initiative and storm the barely defended Tower. If they can take it, then they can summon reinforcements using the signal glass and fire on top of the Tower. Once fortified, the Tower would be a knife in the back of the Horde.

4. The Razing

THE GAMBIT

How the PCs are able to notice and respond to the Tower suddenly being open depends on which army they are in. PCs in the Flame have the easiest time of it, as much of the Flame's fighting has been in the Hunting Paths less than a click from the Tower. Any PC who is scouting for an opening on the Z'bri flanks can see the Sangis leave the Tower, and see that it is almost undefended (Notice roll with a Threshold of 4). A Tactics roll (or common sense) would tell the PCs how important the Tower could be to the battle. Given the Flame's organization (or lack thereof) it would be easy for the PCs to gather their party and head for the Tower.

PCs in the Spear have a slightly tougher time of it, as they are operating largely on the opposite side of the field. However, the mobility and shock-troop nature of the Spear make it possible that the PCs party could have pressed deep enough into the Horde to notice when the Tower empties (Notice roll with a Threshold of 5). A Tactics roll can be made to help PCs determine that seizing the Tower would be more important at this juncture than attacking the Sangis troops pouring out. The PCs have to fight their way across the field, however, which Flame troops do not. Spear troops trying to get to the Tower must defeat an equal-numbered group of Iv'chet warriors.

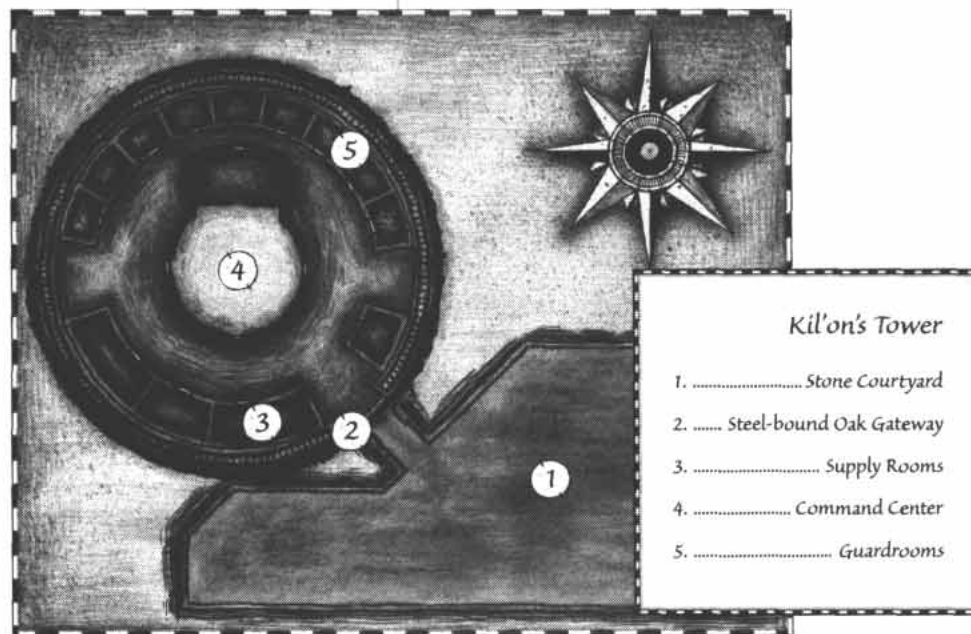
Finally, PCs in the First are in a difficult position. The First works on keeping an organized, solid line against the horde, and running off could possibly leave the whole army's flank open to attack. PCs can notice the Tower emptying, though it is very difficult across the field of battle (Notice roll, Threshold 7). Once they do so, however, they will have to figure out a way to get there — or send others, as a last resort — without jeopardizing the whole army. The First as a whole cannot get to the Tower before it is reinforced, as they simply are too big and have to fight through too many Z'bri. The PCs, however, could attempt to move into reserve and get another company to

come up and take their position. Once in reserve the PCs could request permission of their commander to take the company towards the Tower. Doing so, however, will be very difficult unless the PCs come up with a plan to move their company through the Hunting Paths (possibly by getting in touch with allies in the Flame).

STORMING THE GATE

Once the PCs get to the Tower they will find that the main doors of the gate — the only way into the Tower from ground level (made of thick, steel bound oak) — are closed, but not barred. The Sangis left in such haste that they forgot to command the remaining Serfs to bar the gate and drop the portcullis. The Serfs used what little initiative they had to close the doors, but did no more than that.

Battering open the doors is easy, in fact a single strong character (STR +1) could open the door herself. The opening door, however, draws the attention of the Shield-Wall Serfs left behind to guard the Tower. As soon as the doors start swinging in, the Shield-Wall, which is about seven meters from the gate, will rush forward and attempt to fill the gate and hold it. (It does not occur to them to close the gate at first, though it may later.) Unless the PCs can slip through the gap they will have to face the Shield-Wall in the doorway, where the Serfs can form into a triple file of six men, filling the door and presenting a formidable wall of spearheads. If the PCs can slip through the gap, then they can force the Shield-Wall into a square in the large courtyard (about fifteen meters to a side) and hammer them from an encircling position. In either case the PCs and their group have five minutes (fifty rounds) before a strong group of Melanis Iv'chet comes to reinforce the Tower. PCs on the inside can close and bar the gate, but those still fighting the Shield-Wall on the outside will have to fight a two-sided battle against the Serfs and the Melanis, or be killed.



SECURING THE TOWER

The floor level of the Tower is fairly simple in layout. The gate is to the southeast, and a large courtyard lies immediately beyond. In the building are supply rooms and a command room, then small guardrooms facing north, lined with arrow-slits. Once the PCs have defeated the Shield-Wall the two dozen remaining Serfs (normal Serfs, not battle Serfs) will go into hiding in the various storage and weapon rooms, arming themselves from the remaining Joanite supplies. They will be hesitant to face the warriors of the Battle of Retribution, but will fight like cornered rats if anyone enters the room they are in.

PCs should realize that they need to bar and hold the gate until reinforcements can arrive. The bars, one of wood and one of iron, are leaning against the wall near the gate, and require a combined STR of +4 to lever into place. There is also a portcullis which can be lowered with a crank-wheel that sits next to the gate. Dropping both secures the gate against anything less than a siege-ram or a sustained attack with axes. There are also spear and arrow slits around the gate that PCs or their party can use to drive away any potential assault on the gate.

An assault will take place while the PCs wait for reinforcements; more than one if the PCs do not signal the main army (see *Sending the Signal*, below). The first wave will be of Melanis Iv'chet led by a Melanis Duke. The Iv'chet will try to use spears and burning oil to try to clear the defenders away from the arrow-slits while they bring up axes to destroy the gate. The Duke will find a blind spot in the ground level defenses (though he could be seen from the roof) and will use his Atmosphere (Threshold 6, due to the power of the Lord and the number of Melanis present) to try to confuse the defenders, and hopefully make them forget what they are doing and why. Characters on the roof only face a Threshold of 5, due to distance, and can attack the Duke with missile weapons — or just drop heavy objects on him. It will take the Melanis Iv'chet five minutes (fifty rounds) to make a hole in the gate doors big enough for them to start trying to lift the bars off the gate. After that it will take them another ten minutes (100 rounds) to batter through the portcullis. (This can, of course, go much faster if the Weaver finds it dramatically appropriate, or slower if the PCs are getting slaughtered.)

If it seems that the Melanis are doing well, some of the Serfs who have hidden throughout the building (if the crusaders did not exterminate them) may stage a rally and attack the defenders from the inside, trying to distract them and cause further confusion rather than actually trying to kill them.

SENDING THE SIGNAL

Any ex-Joanite, or anyone with Vimary Lore, Tactics, or similar skills will know that there is a signal lamp and mirror on the top of every one of the Seven Fingers. Furthermore, a successful Joanite Lore, Tactics, or Joanite Code-language roll would let the Characters know that they could (and should) use the signal beacon to send a "distress call" to the main army to let them know to send reinforcements to the Tower.

Knowing that the signal should be sent and sending it, however, are two different things. After the PCs have secured the ground floor they must then struggle up the winding, narrow staircase that makes its way along the outer wall of the Tower towards the roof. Several Serfs, armed with spears and heavy boxes full of metal (for pushing down the stairs) will take any crusader approach up the stairs as a sign of impending attack, and will fight desperately to keep the PCs and their allies from getting upstairs. Though frightened, the Serfs are cunning enough to use the narrow stairway to their advantage, making it so only one of the attacking group can come at them at a time, pushing heavy objects down the stairs if they feel overwhelmed. The PCs will have to kill, bribe, or intimidate the Serfs to get to the roof.

Once on the roof the Characters will have to light the signal beacon (which has gone cold, and from which all fuel has been removed). Because it is a gray and heavily overcast day, there is not enough light to use the sun and the mirror very effectively. A fire will have to be built, and then the PCs will have to figure out how to send a message that the leaders of the Army of Retribution will believe. Using the Joanite-code language and personal messages to individual commanders is a good way to do this. After the first message, a group of Joanites in the First will hobble together a quick mirror/fire relay to "talk" back to the characters using Joanite-code.

Of course while the Characters are doing this they must also deal with the Melanis assault. After the message is sent it will take nearly half an hour (300 long rounds) for reinforcements from the Spear to arrive. At the Weaver's option parties from the Flame may arrive faster than that — especially if the PCs are being overwhelmed.

SALLY FORTH

After reinforcements have arrived (starting with the Winter Wolves and the Band of the Red Hand from the Spear, and DELTA and the Order of the Rose from the Flame), the PCs will be in a position to direct the garrisoning and defense of the Tower. Though the leaders of the various war parties may try to assume leadership, the PCs are already on the scene, and so with a little Leadership can keep command.

The first priority will be to make sure that the Tower can be defended and held. However, within a short time there will be enough troops in the Tower that it will become obvious that the forces there are capable not only of holding the Tower, but of making attacks from it into the Z'bri back. If the PCs think of it (or make a Tactics roll) they will realize they can use the signal beacon on the roof to coordinate an attack with all three armies, hitting the Z'bri horde from all sides at once and crushing them.

If the PCs manage to keep command of the Tower, let them decide on a plan of defense and attack. The NPCs present (such as Captain Kaet Fera'on of the Winter Wolves) can give support and advice. Any reasonable plan of defense should work, as the Z'bri armies will soon have more to worry about that retaking the Tower. The plan of attack should require a little more thought, but by using the view afforded by the Tower the PCs should be able to see the whole field and plan well.

4. The Razing

The best bet the PCs (and the army) have is to get the First to make a hard charge forward, followed by flank attacks by the Spear and the Flame. The troops in the Tower can then charge into the back ranks of the horde — where many of the remaining Z'bri Lords have tried to set up a command position. By breaking apart the Lords, the strike force will let the rest of the army quickly overwhelm the horde.

FACING THE LORDS

The best target for the troops in the Tower to strike is a small rise in the ground about halfway between the Tower and the advancing line of the First. There a group of three Sangis, two Melanis and a single Flemis Lord have set up a hasty (and much delinquent) command center from which they are trying to bring control and direction to the horde. Though it may seem like suicide to assault a position with so many Lords, if the PCs talk with the main army then the commanders of the First will tell them that both Joan and Agnes have promised to come and support the charge. With the help of two Fatimas the suicide mission suddenly becomes a possibility.

Even with this promise, however, the fighters in the Tower — already bloody and tired from more than six hours of conflict — may be reluctant to charge Z'bri Lords. The PCs will have to rally the troops, and, with oration, leadership and careful use of Synthesis, restore their will to fight.

The PCs should also be sure to coordinate the strike with the other armies, and move at an arranged time. When the time comes, the forces in the Tower burst out, riding and running hard across the churned mud of the battlefield. Due to the sudden assault on all other flanks there will be little between the Tower forces and the Lords' position.

At the same time as the Tower forces reaches the Lords, Joan and Agnes will sweep in from the other side and start a combined assault on the Z'bri. The forces unleashed will be titanic, and the battle will go back and forth between the Fatimas, the Army of Retribution, the Z'bri Lords and their most trusted Serfs and Iv'chet.

While Agnes and Joan hammer away at the majority of the Lords, and while the forces from the Tower clash with the Iv'chet and Serfs, the PCs come face to face with the Sangis Knight Sl'Onis. In the midst of the battle it will seem that a space clears, leaving the PCs alone to face the wrath of the Lord. Mocking and ridiculing the characters he will attack them with everything he has, not retreating even if the PCs start to overwhelm him.

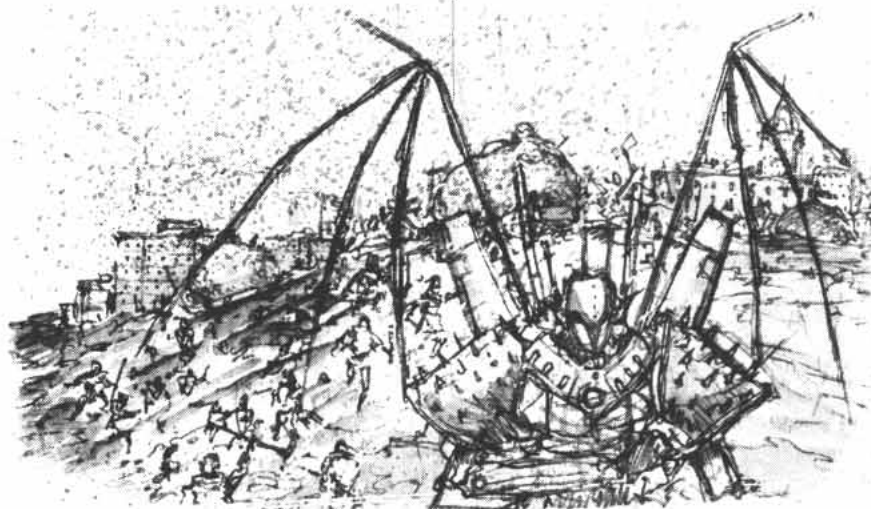
Weavers should let the PCs play out this scene for all it is worth. They are fighting the decisive conflict of the battle, side by side with Fatimas and Fallen alike, against one of the most cruel and wicked of the Z'bri Lords. The PCs should have a chance to defeat Sl'Onis themselves, and the Fatimas or other allied warriors should only step in if it looks like all the PCs will be killed without being able to defeat the Beast.

THE DUSK DEAD PLAIN

When Sl'Onis falls the horde breaks. All around the PCs they will see Z'bri fleeing to the north — swarming over the wall between the Seven Fingers in their hurry to escape back to the H'l Kar. Though there will still be sporadic fighting, the battle is over. The Army of Retribution is too bloodied and weary to pursue and take advantage of the rout. With the breaking of the Horde they have taken back Vimary, and will have to wait for another day to take the H'l Kar.

The scene immediately around the PCs will be bloody, muddy, horrible and glorious all at once. The Z'bri Lords will have all fallen before the combined assault, and only the soldiers of the Army of Retribution and the two Fatimas will be left standing. Everyone, however, including Joan and Agnes, is injured and covered in blood.

At that point Joan will approach the Characters. The victorious Fatima, red and black in blood and steel, will look down upon the PCs in silence for a long moment. She will then sheath her sword, slowly, and turn to look over the field. Not looking at the Characters, but speaking to them and them alone, She says, "Well fought. Today you have proven that Joshua's legacy lives."



Joan will give the Characters a moment to respond, then the Fatima will walk towards the armies, calling to everyone on the hill, "Now it is time to find out what we have gained, and what we have lost."

With that the battle is over, and the long, ugly job of counting those lost in the battle begins. The cost is high, but not as staggering as the Characters might fear at first. The field is grim as evening sets in. There are corpses of Tribals, Fallen, Serfs and Z'bri everywhere, often in deep piles where they killed each other in lines and droves. The grass everywhere is dead, and the soil churned into bloody mud. Cries of the wounded and the mad hang in the air, mingling with the tired victory calls and faint weeping of the living.

The numbers run as follows: The First was hit hardest, taking 35% casualties (with a further 3% missing). The Flame had the fewest counted casualties, but due to the nature of their fight had the most missing — 18% casualties with 14% missing. The Spear came out of the combat the best, taking only 16% casualties and 3% missing despite their heavy engagement throughout the day. Despite that, Shera Uhan'on is the grimmest of the commanders that night, retreating to her tent and refusing to speak to anyone.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Though the Battle for the Seven Fingers is a massive undertaking, the truth is that the Weaver does not need to keep track of, or even worry about, the whole battle. All that really matters is what the PCs do. PCs who do well should feel that their actions influenced the battle, PCs who do poorly should feel that they were saved by the actions of the rest of the army. Unless the PCs do something spectacularly bad, the Army of Retribution will win — but the cost of the victory can depend in large part upon the role the PCs play.

It is also worth noting that mass combats do not always need to be played out round by round. During the Melanis assault on the Tower, for example, it is possible that dozens of rounds could pass while PCs prepare defenses, or that many rounds pass without significant change to the situation. Weavers should use combat rounds only when it increases dramatic tension and keeps the game moving and fun. If they start to drag, then narrative time should be used to pass over the "boring" or unnecessary sections.

This is the biggest single engagement of the Battle of Retribution, and is also the most glorious. After this fight things are going to become difficult and ugly, so Weavers should let the PCs shine and feel a sense of glory and accomplishment in this Act. Moments of heroism and pure glory should stand out and be played to the hilt. It is also possible that PCs will die in the battle. This should not happen randomly, or without issue. A PC who falls can still have influence — their death spurring on others, or giving someone else an opening to kill the Beast that slew the Character. Weavers should make any PC death a memorable and momentous occasion.

The following statistics can be used to run the battle:

4. The Razing

Bear-Weres use either the template in *Horrors of the Z'bri* (page 115), or the following stats: AGI +1, BLD +5, FIT +2, INS +2, PER +1, WIL +3, STR +3, STA 60, UD 5 + natural weapon. Combat Sense 3/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1, Intimidate 2/+5, Notice 1/+1. Weapons: Bite (x6), Bear Hug (x12), Claws (x8), Bone Protrusions (x6).

Flemis Shield-Wall Serfs use the template on page 96.

Mithrops (a serf warrior and hunting hound linked together by an umbilical cord) use the archetype in *Horrors of the Z'bri* (page 114) or the following stats: AGI +1, BLD +1, CRE -2, FIT +2, PER +3, PSY -1, WIL +1, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 35, UD 7. Combat Sense 2/+3, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Navigation 3/0, Notice (Tracking) 3/+3, Survival 2/-2. Special: The hounds are able to track by scent.

Rakh Hive Battle Serfs use the template on page 96.

Serf Warriors use the following stats: BLD +2, FIT +1, PSY -2, STR +1, STA 35, HEA 0, UD/AD 7. All Combat skills at 1/0. Weapons: Sword (x9), Spear (x8), Ax (x13)

Sl'Onis uses the stats in *Horrors of the Z'bri* page 16, or the following: AGI +3, APP +5, BLD +2, CRE +4, FIT +1, INF +3, KNO +1, PER +3, PSY +3, WIL +3, STR +1, HEA +2, STA 45, UD/AD 9. Athletics 2/+3, Combat Sense 3/+3, Dodge 2/+3, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Intimidate 2/+2, Melee 3/+3, Notice 2/+3, Sneak 2/+3, Sundering (Appeasement, Soul Stealing, Exsanguination) 3. Claymore (x14), Chitin and Leather Armor (AR 10).

Stonerunners use the template on page 96.

Z'bri Iv'chet use the templates on page 95.

INTERIM HOOKS

In the weeks after the Battle for the Seven Fingers, the war begins to turn from a glorious crusade into an endless march of misery. While the Yagans try to deal with the vast numbers of dead and the Evans with the wounded, the First starts to rebuild and refortify the Seven Fingers, turning them into a staging area for the rest of the war.

It is the Spear and the Flame that suffer the worst. As the First stays back in the Seven Fingers the other two armies start to strike into the Z'bri holdings on the north shore of Vimary. As planned from the beginning they start to burn the area, razing as much of it to the ground as they can. Things do not go well, however, for though the Z'bri army was finished, the Z'bri themselves are far from done. Led by the Melanis Lords, the remaining Beasts start a guerrilla war against the Army, using the warped and twisted land of the H'I Kar itself as a weapon.

From the Serf Fields plagues start to spread through the Army, striking the First the hardest, incapacitating thousands and killing nearly as many. The constant pain and spiritual price of the endless brutality and razing in the Z'bri lands, combined with the terror and stress of constant raids and near continuous exposure to Z'bri Atmospheres start to spread madness through the ranks of the Flame and the Spear.

4. The Razing

Two and a half weeks of brutality and flame pass, in which as many troops as were lost in the Battle for the Seven Fingers are lost to plague, madness and guerrilla strikes. Progress is slower than anticipated, and raids across the Great River, which should have started a week after the battle, do not start until three weeks later. Many in the armies start to talk of letting the war end, and only the hatred of the Z'bri keeps the war effort alive. What started nobly soon becomes a haze of hatred, fear and pain as the smoke of the burning H'l Kar spreads over the sky.

The following seeds and hooks can be used by the Weaver to help flesh out this grim time in the war. Weavers are encouraged to play as much or little as their group wants. Those that want to play the slow and painful war in detail should, while those who are uncomfortable or who don't wish for much combat can skip most of the detail, and cover it through narrative and personal roleplay.

HOOK: THE LAST TOWER

The first Tower of the Seven Fingers, deep in the Hunting Paths and surrounded on two sides by water, held out against the Z'bri invasion in **Vimary Burns**. The Joanites there, nearly starved and more than a little mad from the length of their isolation and the ferocity of their battles with the Z'bri, have spent months cut off from all contact with the Tribes. When soldiers of the Flame finally reach the Tower two days after the Battle for the Seven Fingers, they are shocked to find the Tower still in Tribal hands.

Their shock grows when the Joanites inside the Tower refuse to come out, or to open their doors to the Army of the Battle of Retribution. Locked in a group paranoia and convinced that the appearance of a victorious human army is a Z'bri trick, the Joanites refuse to talk for any length of time — and fire arrows and ballistas at any who come too close or stay too long. So far gone are they that not even an appearance made by a Fatima will shake their belief.

PCs who are members of the Flame can have the first encounter with the Joanites. Those in other armies might come in later to help negotiate and try to convince the Joanites to come out — especially if any of them are Lightbringers or former Joanites with a good reputation. In any case, getting the Joanites out of the Tower will not be easy. They are mad and almost completely irrational. Getting them out is of vital importance, however, as the Army needs that Tower to secure their flank and as a staging point for raids into the H'l Kar. PCs will have to use ingenuity, and probably a bit of Synthesis and guile, to get the Joanites out without having to kill them.

The mad and desperate looks on the faces of the Joanites who do come out of the tower are haunting to see. They speak of men and women pushed beyond the edge of endurance. It is a look that will come to haunt many faces as the Battle of Retribution grinds on.

HOOK: THE SERF FIELDS

Scouts of the Spear and Flame moving forward into the Serf Fields see signs of madness and rebellion. Before the Army of Retribution can even arrive, many of the fields around the H'l Kar are on fire and there are signs of combat across the burnt land. Worse, there are many bodies found with their tongues turned black and bulging out of their mouths — a sign of Kol's Plague (see the *Weaver's Resources*, p. 92, for details on the Plague).

PC's who scout deeper into the area will find that the Serfs are not rebelling against the Z'bri. They are fighting each other as various Serf families and clans battle each other for dominance. Tribal and Fallen fighters appearing on the scene, however, immediately brings an end to inter-Serf hostilities as they all turn with savage single-mindedness upon the "outsiders." The favorite weapon of these Serfs is a sling with a ball made of hardened brain and shards of bone. Though the weapons do little damage (x4), the balls carry Kol's Plague, and anyone struck by one must make a Health test at -2 vs. the contagion factor of Kol's Plague.

When members of the Spear and Flame start to realize that the brain-balls spread the plague they start to engage in mass-scale slaughter of Serfs, killing any found without question or mercy. How the PCs deal with this increasing brutality is up to them.

HOOK: THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

As the razing parties start to move into Z'bri lands they find out how much they had underestimated the threat that the ground of the H'l Kar posed. Everyone knew that it would be hard, but even Jackers didn't realize the difference between lightning raids and a sustained operation into the wastes. While it was once possible to get in and out of the H'l Kar before its full defenses could be brought to bear, that is no longer the case. The Z'bri are at a constant state of high alert and have all their resources arrayed to wound and harry the raiding parties sent against them. The result is that when the raids start in earnest the casualty rate on both sides soon becomes staggeringly high — more than quintuple the losses the Army was expecting to take. As the weeks grind on and the plague strikes deeper into the First, the Army's progress slows to a crawl.

PCs who take part in the raids can learn first hand about how brutal this kind of warfare can be. Weavers are encouraged to use their imaginations when designing Z'bri defenses. Those who own **Broken Pact** should make extensive use of the kind of traps and pitfalls presented there. Though the H'l Kar is not as unified or deadly as the inside of the Ziggurat, large parts of it are "alive" and under Z'bri control. Giant swallowing mouths, bone blade traps, poisonous secretions, and a hundred other horrors can be sprung in seemingly innocuous places at the mere will of one of many Lords.

Common Z'bri tactics are to hide deep in the flesh tunnels that run under much of the H'l Kar, keeping track of troop movements through Aranós Scouts. They will then send Serf sniping parties to harass and anger Tribal and Fallen war parties,

drawing them into trapped ground. Most of the Z'bri Lords are patient, and will wait until the crusaders are well and deeply in before springing their traps. Then the land itself comes to life with horrors, while Serfs come out of the ground to attack, and hidden Z'bri Lords work Sundering from cover. Soldiers who survive usually respond by using Synthesis, Keeper explosives and fire to burn and level the entire area of the ambush, burning and razing it to the ground. Brutality begets brutality.

Aranos Scout statistics can be found on page 95.

ACT THREE: BLOOD MADNESS

War's glory fades fast enough once the last parade ground has been left behind. It vanishes altogether after the second or third day of battle. War is not shining armor and clashing swords and waving banners. War is blood and hate and filth. The strength of a true warrior lies not in how many enemies she can kill, but in how long she can continue to go on in the face of unending, grinding battle.

Each night I wonder if my body will break before the Z'bri. Each morning I fear that my mind will break first, destroyed by this constant, bloody death that surrounds us.

- Mek, Jacker

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The Player Characters return from a particularly bloody raid only to learn that a squad comprised of people they cared about was sent against a Z'bri lord. The entire squad was killed. Even more horrifying, Tirk the Young comes to them and tells the PCs that he believes the squad was deliberately sent on a suicide mission. He wants their help to discover why a small squad was sent to face a Z'bri lord alone, and who was behind it.

It soon becomes apparent that the orders were a deliberate attempt to destroy their friends. The PCs discover false intelligence reports that were given to the squad's commander. The trail, after some investigation, eventually leads to the Templar Shera Uhan'on, the leader of the Army of the Spear, which is stationed north of the Seven Fingers. Shera's mind has snapped under the pressure and endless horror of the wearying battle of the past several weeks, and she has begun to send "unsuitable" elements of her own troops out on suicide runs.

The PCs confront (or are confronted by) Shera, who accuses them of treason. As her troops move against the PCs, they must either surrender, find a way to escape, or kill their own. If they surrender they will face a military tribunal. Whatever the PCs decide, Tirk will confront Shera, either during the PCs' tribunal or during the hunt for the PCs (should they flee). Presented with evidence of her actions, Shera goes mad and kills Tirk. The PCs are then able to challenge Shera to trial by combat. With help from Joan, the PC is able to defeat Shera and kill her.

MAJOR NPCs

There are several key players in *Blood Madness*. They are detailed below, along with their motivations and goals.

Tirk the Young: Idealistic and hopeful, Tirk thinks that the deaths of the raiding parties are a mistake. When he starts to realize that someone is deliberately sending them on suicide runs he becomes angrier and angrier. Eventually this leads to his emotional outburst during the Trial, as all his youthful idealism dies in a burst of rage.

Momim: Captain of the Band of the Red Hand, this former Terasheban Jacker still burns with the rage that got him exiled nearly seven years prior. Outraged that he was given bad information, his anger will first rise against the Agnite scouts, but will quickly turn to Shera herself when he learns what she has done.

Tara: Tara is fiercely devoted to Agnes, and determined to be the best scout the Bears have. She is small and quick with tough attitude to spare, well past the point of being cocky. However, when she learns that a squad died in an area she scouted, she quickly changes to a child worried about being punished for being "bad." She will likely be cooperative, if only to prove that she is not the one at fault.

Shera Uhan'on: Shera has finally gotten what most of the Templars have wanted for years — a great and glorious crusade. But her tendency to lead from the front has cost her. The endless days of murder and fire have started to drive her mad, and she has extended her personal crusade not just to the Beasts, but also to all who are unworthy. She has never fully recovered from the disappearance of her lover, Valerie Valkin Ben'on (see *Word From the North* and *Warrior Unbound*), and this is also a contributing factor. At the start of the adventure she is quietly insane, but when the pressure mounts she grows increasingly erratic and openly mad.

THE GRIMMEST DAY

The first scene of the act opens with the PCs returning from a particularly gruesome and wearisome raid on the Z'bri. (One possibility is to use *The Nightmare Begins* Hook from *Glory and Terror*.) Before they even have a chance to wash the grime of the battlefield away, they hear, likely through rumors and gossip, that an entire squad of from the Spear (specifically from the party known as the Band of the Red Hand) was killed on what supposed to be a routine mission. Names dropped within their hearing give the PCs reason to believe they knew at least some of the casualties. This should be enough to get them to investigate further. It doesn't take them long to discover that in fact nearly the entire squad was made up of people the PCs were close to. The rumors are true; the entire squad was destroyed.

4. The Razing

While the PCs are coping with the loss of their friends (this may be the first major loss for them in this war, or it may be the latest of a long string of painful losses), Tirk the Young approaches them once more. His manner is subdued as he offers his condolences to the PCs, and admits that he was close to many in the squad as well. What perplexes him, he will tell the PCs, is that two days prior, the same area where the squad was killed was supposed to have been thoroughly scouted by one of the Bears (the band of Agnite scouts). If the area was truly that dangerous, why didn't the scout report it? Why was a single squad sent in alone? The more Tirk questions, the closer he comes to the conclusion that the squad was deliberately sent to die. He wants answers, and no doubt in their grief, the PCs will want those same answers. The logical conclusion (which Tirk can suggest) is that they work together to solve the puzzle.

CONFRONTATIONS

The logical place to start is with the captain of the Band of the Red Hand. Mornim is a Jacker who carries his anger always faintly rippling beneath a calm veneer. The PCs find him in his tent, mulling over the loss of his people. The strongest part of his upset stems both from the senseless waste of a good squad and the personal responsibility he feels for the deaths of those who followed him.

He is willing enough to talk to the PCs (particularly if they carry similar positions of authority of their own). The veneer of calm Mornim wears soon cracks as he bitterly rails against the Agnite scouts, who clearly must have failed his Band and the whole Army in this case. He says it is foolish to send children to survey the Z'bri, and now it has cost his Band dearly. If asked, he will explain that the orders he received were nothing unusual, and specifically requested that particular squad be sent to ambush what was supposed to be a tiny, isolated Serf hamlet. As the squad had quite distinguished itself in the taking of the Spine Bridge, even that request was not so unusual.

Mornim then gets distracted in his own rant about the uselessness of Agnite scouts. He hints that he may plan to beat answers out of the particular scout sent to survey that area, unless someone else can get the answers for him. If the PCs do not volunteer to find those answers, Tirk will. Mornim, caught up in his own anger, will not volunteer the source of his orders unless asked. That source, if revealed, was Shera Uhan'on.

If the PCs learn this, they may wish to go speak to Shera immediately. That would, unfortunately, leave the issue of the scout Mornim plans to take his anger out on, something that Tirk, at least, strongly wishes to prevent. Besides, he adds, how can they barge in and question Shera, if it turns out that there was an error much further down the chain of command? If this does not convince the PCs to speak first to Tara, then they can discover that Shera is away, conferring with Joan and Mek. If the PCs are truly bound and determined to speak with Shera, however, then do not force the issue. Shera will listen to their questions and give cursory and unsatisfactory answers, apparently interested only in getting the PCs out of her hair as quickly as possible. She seems on edge, and she approaches any future encounters with the PCs with suspicion and animosity.



Tirk knows the scout who supposedly surveyed the region in question, a tough-talking Agnite Child of about fifteen, Tara. Tirk tells the PCs that he overheard Tara telling her compatriots that just across the River there was a Z'bri Lord's fief, missed in earlier attacks. He believes she may have been referring to the same area where the Red Hand's squad met their end.

Tara is easy enough to find. She will either stick close to the Bears' camp, where she lords it over the younger Scouts, or she can be found near the Third's command central, eager to eavesdrop on the commanders and the captains as they plan. How she reacts to the PCs depends largely on how they approach her. If they condescend or try to treat her as a child, she will be defensive and less likely to talk than if the PCs treat her as an equal. Flattery, in small amounts at least, will get them everywhere. Tara believes she is the best Scout in the army — but she wants to hear it from others as well.

Once they get her to start talking, though, she will tell all she knows. Yes, the region she scouted was dangerous. Tara embellishes the story with a touch of adolescent drama, including numerous close calls and narrow escapes, but the core of it rings true, and her lingering unease at being so near a Z'bri lord alone is both obvious and sincere. If pressed, she will admit to being afraid, "but don't tell Agnes or the little brats!"

Furthermore, she told the same story to the Head Scout, so whatever happened is his fault, not hers. The Head Scout (and he isn't, naturally, but his fellow Agnites call him that) is a wary seventeen-year-old named Matty. He too is easy to find. Knowing that he is on the cusp of going from the center of Agnite society to its outskirts, he is eager to make friends outside of the Tribe. He also is quick to pass the buck. He gave Tara's report, he says proudly, directly to Shera Uhan'on.

At this point the pieces should begin to form a picture, and that picture is an unpleasant one. The intelligence report that Mornim says he received and the one Matty and Tara say they passed on do not match up. The logical conclusion to draw is that either one of the two sides is lying, or that someone else gave misleading information to Mornim.

TRASON

The path now leads directly to Shera Uhan'on. If her people are lying or if someone in her inner circle is giving false information to the captains, then she must be informed. Tirk will not lead in this situation, but can serve as the Weaver's mouthpiece to eventually direct the PCs in the right direction if needed. Alternately, if the PCs do not approach her, Shera will approach them, having heard about their investigation.

The initial meeting with Shera does not go well. While she is calm, those with Human Perception (Threshold 6) may notice that something seems slightly off in her demeanor. She listens to the PCs' story then accuses them of treason, by trying to sow the seeds of dissent within the ranks of the Army of the Spear. Shera asserts that her duty as leader of the army is to make certain that those beneath her are trustworthy and pure. Like the PCs, the squad that perished was unworthy. Those that are unworthy must be culled from the ranks of her army. While

she speaks, she grows more and more erratic, finally calling forth troops loyal to her to arrest the PCs.

At this point, the PCs can choose to surrender to Shera's troops, try to run away, or fight back. If they surrender, they will be brought before a military tribunal to defend their actions against Shera's accusations. If they run away, they will be hunted and risk being captured unless they skulk about the edges of the armies, unable to return to their own war party until Shera has been dealt with. Tirk, if he went with them to speak to Shera, will not flee with them, but will remain behind to face whatever comes. The PCs may decide to fight back. If so, they will face Shera's personal troops, and are outnumbered by at least three to one. Aside from being outnumbered, the PCs will have to face killing their own after the brutality they have witnessed so far. The Weaver should address this, playing on parallels between the Army and the Z'bri whom they are fighting.

BY MY SWORD

The PCs' best bet is to surrender to Shera's troops. If they do so (or as an aftermath of the fight between the PCs and Shera's troops), they will be brought before a military tribunal. The tribunal will be judged by three judges — one good combination would be Mek, the Fisher King and Joan Herself, although the Weaver may choose any major NPCs she wishes, bearing in mind that the tribunal is military in tone, and that Tribal and Fallen factions should both be represented. Whether She is a judge or not, Joan will be present. If the PCs ran away, Tirk will face this tribunal, and the PCs may hear about it in time to be present for it.

The PCs (or Tirk, if he faces the tribunal alone) will have the assistance of a Sheban Advocate in organizing their defense, if they so desire. However, they must present their own case. Shera makes her accusation before the Tribunal, speaking at length about how the Fallen under her command have continually sought to discredit her. During her speech, Tirk is agitated, barely managing to hold his tongue in his anger.

Finally Shera finishes, and the time comes for the PCs to defend themselves. Both Mornim and Tara can serve as witnesses, and are more than willing to recount their stories before the Tribunal; Mornim to see justice done, and Tara to stay out of trouble. Likewise, if Tirk is facing the Tribunal alone, the PCs can also act as witnesses. After most of the evidence against Shera has been presented, Shera laughs and calls each of the witnesses liars, pointing out that each is either Fallen or sympathetic to the Fallen. Finally Tirk can bear no more and directly accuses Shera of murdering his friends. He screams at her that she is no better than the Beasts, sacrificing her own troops to feed her own mad fears and delusions. Shera snaps, drawing her sword before any can stop her, and cuts down Tirk while he still screams at her.

With that the tribunal erupts into a screaming mob, with some characters (possibly the PCs) howling in outrage, and others shouting to try and restore some sort of order, others simply in shock. Belatedly, troops step forward to restrain Shera, who is now clearly insane, ranting about the undesirables in her army, and how she has tried to thin their ranks whenever possible.

4. The Razing

Joan steps forward. Shera has committed murder in front of the Tribunal. She says, and must pay. As a Templar, however, Shera has the right to try and defend her honor. If the PCs are howling for Shera's blood (which is likely, as she's just murdered another of their friends, and right before their eyes), then Joan agrees that the PCs have the right to challenge Shera to trial by combat. If the PCs do not suggest it, then Joan will, and offers the PCs the chance to make the challenge. They, above all others, have that right.

The fight between the PC and Shera should be a tense one. Shera is one of the most dangerous fighters in the army, even mad. If at all possible, let the PC defeat Shera on her own, without any outside assistance. If, however, Shera seems on the verge of defeating the PC, Joan will withdraw Her love and support from Shera at a crucial moment, shattering Shera's weapon and leaving Shera both wounded and vulnerable to a final fatal attack from the PC. Should the PC refuse to deal the final blow, Shera will grab a shard from her shattered weapon and, distraught at Joan's betrayal, take her own life.

With Shera's death, the Tribunal is formally dissolved and all charges against the PCs, if any, dropped. The Army of the Spear is left to pick up the PCs. If the PCs have been in a position of authority, such as commanders or captains, it is possible that Joan will offer them the task of taking over the Army of the Spear. Otherwise, the task will fall to another commander or to the Fisher King.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

Mormim's stats are as follows: **Attributes:** AGI +1, BLD +1, FIT +2, INF +1, KNO -1, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 35, UD 7, AD 8. **Skills:** Combat Sense 2/0, Dodge 2/+1, Melee 3/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Leadership 2/+1, Synthesis 1. **Eminences:** Wisdom and Vengeance.

Tara: **Attributes:** AGI +2, BLD -2, CRE +1, FIT +1, INF -2, PER +1, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 20, UD, AD. **Skills:** Camouflage 2/0, Combat Sense 1/+1, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 1/+2, Melee 1/+2, Notice 3/+1, Sneak 2/+2.

In *The Grimest Day* it is vital to convey a sense of weariness at the endless battle the PCs have been subjected to since the end of *Glory and Terror*. The lost squad of the Band of the Red Hand should be made up of NPCs the PCs have worked with and grown close to during the course of the game. If the Weaver is starting with *Revanche* as her first Cycle, or no appropriate NPCs exist, she may use the NPCs sketched below as a starting point, ideally working them into the Cycle at earlier points to make them familiar characters to the PCs.

Cyon: The nominal leader of the squad, Cyon was a Joanite Domsayer, eager to fulfill Joshua's Prophecy and become a hero of the Eighth Tribe. He was driven, almost to the point of obsession, on the subject.

Carrie: An Agnite Jacker, Cyon was her hero, serving as both her teacher and as an older brother figure. Idealistic and naïve, the Battle of Retribution was a time of a great deal of growth for her, as well as time for her to begin to fulfill her potential.

Fabian: A Dahlian Jacker, there was little that Fabian took seriously in life, least of all the Battle of Retribution. Even in the face of the darkest Z'bri horror, the war was one big adventure for him.

Tirk can serve as a valuable tool in *Confrontations*, helping keep the PCs from wandering too far afield in their search for evidence. While convoluted, the trail is not a difficult one to follow. If necessary, the Weaver may suggest Investigation rolls (Threshold 5) as needed to keep the PCs moving along.

Ideally the PCs will choose to surrender to Shera's troops in *Treason*, but if they do not, it is vital that they see the consequences of their actions. If they flee, then they must face the realization that they left Tirk alone to face Shera and her troops. As they flee, they see and hear him being beaten by the troops. Before the Tribunal, they should hear rumors of his mistreatment at the hands of Shera's troops as well. If they fight Shera's troops rather than running away, then they must deal with the aftermath of possibly killing their own people. Dreams of their slain opponents, in addition to the stares and gossip of the army around them, will help make the cost of their actions clear.

The military Tribunal in *By My Sword* should be run as a cross between a modern trial, a rant at the Cage and a Tribal court. Both sides are given an Advocate to assist in organizing their evidence if they wish it, but both sides must present their own cases to the three judges. While the proceedings are orderly, the spectators are not, necessarily, and may interject their own opinions on the discussion at hand. Anyone who is too disruptive, however, will be removed. As the head of one of the armies is involved, there will likely be a large crowd gathered to witness.

INTERIM HOOKS

An indeterminate amount of time passes between Shera's death and the beginning of the next act, *The Last Days of B'ares*. Below are some Quest Hooks that may be used to explore the aftermath of the events in *Blood Madness*.

HOOK: PARANOIA

With Shera Uhan'on's death, the Joanite forces are dealt a heavy blow to morale. Adjusting to a new commander, Shera's subordinates begin acting by rote and as communication breaks down, individual parties begin to conduct their own raids without direction. Soon after Shera's death, squad commanders can be seen arguing between each other, occasionally accusing others of disloyalty or Z'bri taint; a day or two later, a fight breaks out between two commanders over a minor logical issue. Several parties of the Spear and the Flame even leave the front to scour the ruins of Bazaar for Joh'an that have stayed out of the war, and murder every last one of them.

Amid the chaos and infighting, a disguised Troy Fenys moves silently between camps and speaks to the commanders of each squad. Disguised, she claims to be an impartial Jacker who wishes only to destroy the Z'bri. She tells each commanders half-truths about what she has overheard the others saying, each time claiming that her current listener is the only one she feels she can fully trust. She also uses the Eminence of Conflict to subtly manipulate each commanding officer into distrusting their compatriots. She does this to set up 'dangerous' commanders, or those she feels have slighted her, will be killed or removed from duty, or perhaps even banished under the guise of madness or insubordination.

Tracking down Troy should simply be a matter of time, either through footwork or Synthesis. Her meddling is not a situation best handled with martial strength or threats. A prime opportunity for Lightbringer PCs to show off, the easiest and fastest way to correct the problem of Troy's meddling is to speak to the commanders directly and en masse. Of course, the PCs will have to overcome the commanders' arrogance and unwillingness to listen, but once past that barrier the going should be easy; though the Joanite commanders are distrustful, they are still comrades-in-arms.

With the Joanites feeling a renewed sense of kinship, Troy will stop her meddling; the PCs have made it too risky to pit Joanites against each other. However, she will not forget the fact that they thwarted her plans, and may well plot revenge at a later date. Until then, however, she is nothing but cordial with them, 'admitting' that she was wrong to sow dissent in the ranks.

The Weaver should portray an atmosphere of paranoia, distrust and finger pointing that leaves no one untouched. The Joanite commanders, some already distrusting the Fallen, should be quick to shift blame from their fellows to the 'tainted' outsiders that dare to meddle in affairs that are not theirs.

Also, it is entirely possible that the PCs may agree with what Troy is doing. If so, let them help her remove one or two commanders without too much difficulty. After that, however, the commanders will begin to notice what is happening; witch-hunts require a great deal of momentum to keep moving, and it is doubtful that the PCs can sustain such momentum. It will also garner the PCs a great many enemies in Joan's Tribe.

HOOK: EYES IN THE MIST

With the Army of the Spear in disarray and rife with mistrust following the death of Shera Uhan'on, the Lords of the H'I Kar seize the opportunity to send a contingent of spies into the Nation's camps. Tr'main, a Melanis Iv'chet, inserts a group of possessed Agnites into Shera Uhan'on's army in the hopes of stealing memories directly from the army.

While on patrol, the PCs receive news of a captured group of Agnites being led toward a Flemis stronghold. With the news are orders to rescue the Agnites before they reach the stronghold. About half a day from the stronghold, the PCs find the

Agnites as well as some other Serfs. The Z'bri slaves aren't policed by Z'bri, but rather by Over-Serfs who are more loyal to their lords than the average. The fight should be short, bloody and very brutal; a good twenty Serfs will have to be put down for their own good. As they are chained together, this shouldn't be terribly hard. Those Serfs that are not Agnites are sickly, thin, and haunted — they are incapable of speaking except in low moans and incoherent babble. The PCs should be disgusted at what they are forced to do to the Serfs, which is essentially butchery.

Upon bringing the Agnites back to camp, only one of them will be willing to speak. Calling himself Renny, Tr'main begins asking what has happened, and where he is. Claiming he doesn't know how long it's been since they were captured, he routinely breaks down into tears and says that he wants to help, but doesn't know how. Renny also asks the PCs what's wrong with the army, correctly seeing the disarray and long faces present. After they favor him with more information, Renny says that while his 'friends' would like to go home, he would like to stay and help. In actuality, Tr'main is sending his followers to foul supply lines and gather rearguard information.

Renny makes a habit of sticking his nose into everyone's business; he should talk with the PCs several times. Perpetual curiosity is one of the reasons Tr'main chose an Agnite as a guise. Still, his mannerisms are alien, and he does not understand some very fundamental aspects of Tribal culture. Over time, the PCs should get suspicious, especially as the Melanis Atmosphere takes hold and begins to drain the bulk of their memories from them.

Several days after the Agnites are recaptured, Renny meets with one of the Aranos Scouts in order to suck its memories away and learn more about the army. If the PCs are not already suspicious of Renny, it is entirely possible they see him meeting with the Aranos, hands on the Scout's temples, pulling the memories from it. If Renny notices the PCs, he will simply attack them, relinquishing control of the body after a few seconds. This leaves the PCs in the unenviable position of likely having murdered a child, with the prospect of having to do so four more times. If the PCs successfully sneak up on Renny/Tr'main, it is quite likely both will die on the spot, without further information about the army making it back to H'I Kar.

The revelation that Renny is a Z'bri spy should come slowly, and with a great deal of forethought. Killing a child is not a decision that comes easily to anyone. For added impact, Tr'main might possess one of PCs' old allies or friends. Let doubt and uncertainty plague the Players as they attempt to wrestle with their own paranoia, as opposed to the paranoia of others.

More information on the Aranos Scouts may be found on p. 95.

HOOK: TAKING ACTION

In the wake of Shera Uhan'on's madness and subsequent death, the threat of further madness and corruption becomes very real to the Army. In hopes of preventing another such incident, Joan presses more members of the Sheban Watch into action, to guard against anything that could jeopardize the campaign against the Z'bri. Already distrustful of those involved, the Shebans' watchful eye is cast squarely on the Fallen, as well as those directly beneath Shera.

While the Joanite Warriors are the true driving force of the war effort, Sheban Watch members are necessary evil. As well as guarding against signs of disloyalty and dereliction of duty, the Z'bri atmosphere and taint of H'I Kar make those weak in spirit easy marks for corruption. Several units take charge of administration in Shera's army, headed by the zealous but fair Uren Russ'on. While Russ'on finds his work distasteful, he understands that it is necessary, and that he is actually doing good for the Warriors by protecting them from themselves.

Uren Russ'on and his fellow Watch members arrive only five days after Shera's death, calling the leaders together. Russ'on announces that he does not intend to be a burden to the camps, but his presence is necessary for their survival. He takes the leaders of the army aside, and demands that each undergo a ritual to determine if they have been tainted by the Z'bri, and where their true loyalties lie. Due to the fact that the Fallen are already 'tainted', all Fallen must likewise undergo the truth-testing ritual. The Sheban Watch is not polite about this, and will brook no dispute; if any refuse, they are taken into custody and shipped to a Sheban 'camp' back in Bazaar. It should be stressed that while the Fallen are scrutinized more carefully than the Joanites, the Shebans are not looking to frame anyone.

After returning from patrol one day, the PCs are making their way through the camps when they happen upon one of the Shebans being severely beaten by a group of masked men, all who have military bearing. The Sheban Watchman weakly cries out for help, saying he was only doing his duty like everyone else. The Weaver should make it plain that the Sheban will not likely survive unless the PCs intervene in his favor. Should the PCs assist the Sheban, the assailants scatter after a token resistance. They are Joanites who have had enough of 'Sheban interference' and wanted to send a message to Uren Russ'on. If the Sheban survives the PCs earn a valuable ally on the inside; the MP will not forget the fact that the 'impure' Fallen assisted him where his fellow Tribals did not. If the PCs allow him to die, eventually they will be tracked down by Uren, and a swift vengeance delivered on them.

When the dust settles, things are relatively similar to how they have always been — some plot against Joan and the war effort, and others oppose them. The Fallen are still distrusted by the majority of the Tribals, and the Sheban Watch members are still present. The Weaver should illustrate the fact that the war lies heavy and oppressive on everyone's shoulders; just as the Joanites do not wish for everlasting war, the Shebans do not enjoy doing their duty but will do it just the same. This also

provides the Weaver to introduce the PCs to future allies and enemies among the Shebans. If the PCs assist in laying down law and order for the good of the army, they will be looked at in a less harsh light. If the PCs are against the Shebans meddling in the affairs of the army, the Shebans will assuredly remember their names and faces for later persecution.

ACT FOUR: THE LAST DAYS OF B'ARES

More than two months behind schedule, the raids into the H'I Kar proper (on the North Bank of the Great River) start. Using flotillas and occasionally making use of the underground tunnels going from Vimary to the H'I Kar (use of the Spine Bridge is forbidden) hundreds of crusaders pour into the Z'bri lands and then back out daily. In the wake of Shera Uhan'on's death and the Skyrealm Crusades, the raids grow more brutal and out of control, and what was originally intended to be a semi-surgical operation to clear enough land for a successful siege of the Ziggurat soon becomes an endless series of burning and ambushes as Fallen, Tribals and Z'bri alike do their best to wipe their opponents from the face of the earth once and for all. Meanwhile the First guards the end of the Spine Bridge while they try to fight off the lingering effects of the plague.

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

The Last Days of B'ares begins several months (two to four, at the Weaver's discretion) after the events in *Blood Madness*. In this act the PCs are part of one of the endless raiding parties into the H'I Kar — either there for vengeance, or still trying to keep to the plan and clear an area large enough to allow for a successful siege of the Ziggurat. During the raid the PCs are lured into an ambush, and trapped in a pit surrounded by angry Iv'chet and Lord B'ares of House Sangis.

Just when it looks as though the PCs are going to be destroyed, B'ares calls off his warriors and sends them away. He speaks with the Characters, and as he does so they feel his powerful Sangis Atmosphere change to the sorrowful atmosphere of a Hunter. Finally B'ares throws down his spear and says that he will not fight humanity any more, that he has seen enough of death and pain — and wishes only to find a way to make right his past mistakes. He then helps the PCs out of the trap, and leaves them in as much peace as they allow. However, while the PCs watch B'ares head out across the burnt remains of the H'I Kar, another war party ambushes and murders him.

That night, while the Characters are still considering the spiritual dilemma of B'ares' apparent attempt at salvation, the corpses of the Army of the Battle of Retribution, the slaughtered Serfs and Joh'an across Vimary, and even some of the dead from the battles months ago, rise up as Zoms and go on a mindless rampage. The PCs must lead the defense against the walking dead, keeping them from spreading disease and death.

In the wake of the Zom attacks the Army of Retribution starts to build large scale corpse-fires, burning all the corpses they can find. As the PCs finally get some rest with the reek of the fires in their noses, they, and many of the spiritually sensitive in the camp, have terrible and prophetic dreams about the disaster that humanity may be facing.

THE AMBUSH

A gray morning early in the fourth month of the war, the PCs are ordered to conduct a scouting expedition into the lands north of the Ziggurat. The location is important because it is, as of yet, only lightly damaged by the war and because little is known about it. Who asks the PCs to go and how will depend upon their place in the army. PCs who are commanders in their own right may be asked by Mek, Garret, or the Fisher King. Lower ranking PCs will be asked or commanded to go by their captain. In any case their orders are to scout the area quickly, and if an opportunity to cause damage to any troop or supply reserves is found to take it and then retreat quickly.

Weavers should allow the PCs time to prepare, and to gather any additional forces they feel they might need. The mission is supposed to be scouting and possibly light assault, so having a small group of NPCs in support would be appropriate, but taking more than a dozen would ruin the point and make true stealth impossible. Once the PCs are ready they can head out into the burnt lands of the H'I Kar. They can get there by using the Keeper tunnels or one of the army's flotilla rafts. Either will result in an eerie but peaceful journey through the gray and twisted land. PCs may occasionally spot indistinct shapes moving in the distance, but nothing will come close enough for them to see.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The PCs should circle wide of the Ziggurat, as it is still a very dangerous area. Much of the land around it, however, is either on fire or in ashes. The endless raids of the Spear and Flame have wreaked their toll, and very few living beings move through the land for some distance around the Ziggurat. The PCs' target area is about three-quarters of a klick north of the Ziggurat, and centers on the phallic spires and vulval domes of a Sangis lord's estate. The estate itself rises in fleshy horror from out of the edges of the ruins and ashes around it, marking the line past which the Army has not yet been able to push.

The central buildings of the estate are two flesh-towers about twelve meters tall rising above a bone and muscle dome nine meters tall and about thirty meters in diameter. There is no sign of any entrance or exit on any of the structures, and no sign of life in the buildings. (Although the buildings themselves show some signs of life — blood pumps through the skin of the towers, and the dome shifts the position of its apex very slowly and subtly.) Outside the central estate are vast Serf-fields, stretching for half a klick to the north. The fields are littered with dozens of small buildings made of whatever the Serfs could scavenge; mostly old cement and asphalt slabs, as well as the

4. The Razing

skins of other Serfs. Beyond the Serf-fields there is another living building, this one a long low intestinal structure with a sphincter end at one corner of the farthest field. The intestine then stretches and winds through the fields farther north, past several more outlying estates. It looks like a protected corridor or hallway as much as anything; a way for Serfs and Z'bri to move (possibly en masse) without anyone being able to see them.

LURED IN

The PCs will probably (and rightly) want to check the "intestine," as anything that would allow for mass troop movements must be examined post haste. The PCs can scout the surrounding area looking for enemy troops or scouts, as well as traps. A Notice roll (Threshold 5) will tell them that the area was inhabited until recently, but that there are signs of mass movement across the Serf-fields. Following these tracks will bring the PCs out into the Serf-fields and into range of the trap. Scouting the perimeter will reveal little, save that the fields seem to be abandoned (they are) and that all the living buildings seem to be locked down (they are). To learn anything the PCs are going to have to actually go into the fields — and into the trap itself. B'ares will be following their motions by his connection to the ground itself. The whole surface of the Serf-fields has been consecrated with his blood, and he can sense the movement of anything living on the ground.

If the PCs balk at the idea of moving into the Serf-fields, then B'ares will try to subtly lure them closer by having the walls of the "intestine" pulse as though something was moving through it, away from the PCs' position. If that fails to draw the PCs out, then the Lord will send a few Serfs with the plague-bearing brain-balls and have them sling them at the PCs. At that point the PCs will either need to attack the Serfs or flee. PCs who flee back to camp will be told to go back the next day and investigate the "intestine," as it could be vital to the war effort to know what it is and what it could do. Those who attack will have to move into the Serf-fields, and into the trap.

THE TRAP SPRUNG

The trap itself is none too subtle, and not overly lethal in itself. It is, however, large. B'ares has set up a large section of the Serf-field (about thirty meters in diameter) to collapse at his command. By digging out a large hole underground, and supporting the earth above it with a cartilage and bone lattice, he has made a giant tiger-trap that can be sprung by withdrawing the lattice.

When the PCs move over the trapped area (which can only be spotted with a Notice check with a Threshold of 10, and even that only reveals a suspicious looseness of the ground) B'ares will have the lattice withdraw, spilling the Characters five meters down into a pit. The fall causes damage as described on page 153 of the **T8 Rulebook**. Inside, the pit is lined with a slick mucus membrane that is very tough (STA 30) and nearly impossible to climb without aid (Athletics rolls vs. 9 every meter).

4. The Razing

While the PCs are recovering from the fall, the upper edge of the pit is quickly surrounded by Serfs and Sangis Iv'chet armed with spears, slings and bows. A few of them will get overly eager, and will start to fire on the PCs (and any NPCs present) immediately. Most, however, will wait till B'ares appears at the edge of the pit, watching silently. Then a rain of arrows and stones will hit the characters.

There is probably little the Characters can do at this point, with a powerful Lord and well-armed and trained Serfs holding them in a pit. They should feel the edge of helplessness, and probably take some wounds from the rain of arrows and stones. Before any of them can be killed, however, B'ares stops the attack with a word.

"Enough," says the Z'bri lord, seeming suddenly uncertain. The taint of lust and anger in the air seems to waver, slowly melting into something softer — something infinitely sad. The Lord sends his troops away, dismissing them with a wave of his hand. He then goes into a loose crouch at the edge of the pit and looks down at the Characters below.

THE HUNTER BORN AND SLAIN

B'ares will watch the PCs for several moments longer, the Sangis atmosphere around him shifting with each passing moment. The aura of regret and sadness grows almost tangible, giving the PCs pause to reflect on their own sins. PCs who fail a PSY test (Threshold 7, as B'ares is a Lord) will be overcome with grief and guilt over their own past actions. "I will fight no more," B'ares tells the PCs. "I have watched as madness and inquisition stalk my people. We lost ourselves to rage and blood. I fear I have come out of the lust too late to change, but I will fight no more." With that, he throws away his weapon and reaches a hand down to assist the PCs out of the pit.

The PCs will probably be reluctant to trust the new Hunter (understandably so), but those PCs with Recognition, Fate, Inspiration, Empathy, Conflict, Truth or Mystery can be given a chance to sense the powerful change in B'ares. He will patiently wait while the PCs sort things out, remaining crouched above with his hand extended. If the PCs remain unwilling, he tells them he will not harm them (Truth, Recognition and Empathy will confirm his words). Again he tells them that he has had enough of the madness and horror of war, mirroring some of the sentiments the PCs have undoubtedly experienced themselves since *Blood Madness*.

If the PCs are still unwilling to trust B'ares long enough to get out of the pit, B'ares will use the last remaining vestiges of his Sundering to alter the pit (either by raising the floor or simply changing the walls to something easier to climb) enough for them to get out themselves. As the PCs emerge from the trap (either on their own or with B'ares' original offer of help), B'ares says, "For generations I helped keep your ancestors imprisoned. It is not enough today, to have set you free, but it is a start."

With that, he will turn to leave unless the PCs speak to him. He will talk to them for a short time, answering any direct questions enigmatically, possibly giving the PCs a helpful bit of tactical information, such the location of another Lord's stronghold. Finally, he leaves, apparently fleeing the H'I Kar entirely.

Shortly afterwards, while the PCs are heading back to their troops, they see B'ares again, surrounded by a troop of Joanites and Jackers. The humans have madness in their eyes and weapons in their hands. True to his word, B'ares does not fight back at all, although he does try to escape. While the PCs watch, they murder B'ares in cold blood. If the PCs attempt to intervene before B'ares' death, B'ares' attackers (who are all driven by an uncompromising hatred of the Z'bri) may turn on the PCs and attack them as well. When word gets back to the camps, the PCs may also find their loyalty questioned, particularly if they argued passionately in B'ares' behalf. However, if the PCs do nothing to stop the murder, they are faced with the ethical dilemma of B'ares' situation, with having done nothing while a being who was reaching for salvation was cut down. If the PCs manage to rescue B'ares, against all odds, he will take them on the vision quest himself before leaving them to join the Hunters in the wilderness.

NIGHT OF THE ZOMS

Late on the night of B'ares' change and murder, after the PCs have returned to camp, the Yagans in the camp start moving about uneasily. Any PC with Death will feel something in the air, a feeling of wrongness, like the tide of entropy washing backwards, as if the line between living and dead were trying to reverse itself. All other Yagans will feel this too, though few will be willing to talk about it. Most will try to retreat to a central location to discuss possibilities amongst themselves. However, Delisa Kerithkin, a Mordred Reaper (or another Mordred with whom the Characters have had contact), chooses to approach the Characters and let them know that something vast is moving through the River of Dream, and that she feels they should be on guard. With only that mysterious warning she will withdraw, refusing to answer further questions. As no one other than the Yagans feels the strange ripples in Dream, and because the Yagans withdraw rather than talk about it, few others notice their odd and uncomfortable behavior.

Shortly after Delisa's warning, screams of horror begin to raise at the edges of the camp. From the many corpse piles littering the H'I Kar bodies are rising. Corpses of Tribals, Fallen, Serfs, even Joh'an reanimate as Zoms and begin to converge on crusaders and Z'bri alike. Hundreds and even thousands of the dead, some months old, attack in mindless waves.

At the same time, due to the horrible disruption in the River of Dream, Synthesis ceases to work. Anyone attempting to access the River of Dream finds that the River does not flow through her at all, almost as though it had dried up completely. A Dreamer's trance states can affect no change on the world around her. On many levels, this should be even more horrifying than the walking corpses attacking the camps. Tribal and Fallen Dreamers alike have to deal with the horror around them completely without the Goddess's gift aiding them.

The PCs' best hope is to keep the Zoms outside of their camp completely. If they can organize a defensive line outside the camp quickly enough, the night will be long and terrifying, but survivable. If the Zoms have the chance to get into the camp, then chaos will reign throughout the night, and the number of casualties, between attack and plague from the corpses, will run high. Weavers may choose to focus on the physical or the spiritual aspect of the horror, or both, depending on their Player Circles.

When all seems to be darkest, and the PCs have been pressed to their limits by the Zoms and are despairing at the loss of Synthesis and what it might mean for the Nation as a whole, the sun rises. As soon as the light touches the land, all of the Zoms drop dead where they stand, leaving the landscape and camps littered with corpses of their fallen comrades and enemies. The disruption of the River fades somewhat with the coming of morning, and Synthesis gradually begins to work again.

THE CORPSE FIRES

With the coming of dawn and the end of the mysterious attack, the armies are in a confused uproar not only over exactly what happened, but also over how to keep it from happening again. If the PCs are leaders within the armies, they will be privy to the emergency meeting to decide what the next steps should be. If this is the case, encourage the PCs to take part in the meeting, which has a panicked air about it, with all of the leaders of the Battle of Retribution shaken by the rising of the Zoms. The logical plan is to burn all of the corpses that remain, Z'bri and human alike, as a preventative measure. While it is a terrible task to consider, the safety of the armies, already heavily stricken by plague and casualties, demands it.

At the Weaver's discretion, the PCs may be part of the squads assigned to the task of rounding up the former Zoms back into corpse piles. It is a gruesome job, and should be used to drive home the horrendous cost the war has had so far. Any former Yagans in the Player Circle may be pressed into service to help perform a ritual at each corpse pile as it is set alight, a belated death ritual that seeks to appease and calm the spirits of the fallen soldiers.

Throughout the day reports come in that the Z'bri were attacked by the Zoms as well, and took similar losses to the human army. Only the eerie, flickering light of all the corpse fires lights the day, as smoke and ash blot out the sky immediately surrounding the camps. A thin layer of ash settles in to cover the entire area, a gray reminder of all that has taken place.

That night, as the Army settles down into an uneasy sleep, all of the Yagans and Doomsayers are visited by powerful nightmares. While not all of the dreams are identical, all are similar in tone and meaning. If any of the PCs are among this group, their dreams focus on the corpse fires. In their dreams, the corpse fires grow out of control, spreading over the entire H'l Kar and burning it to the ground. Then, as the Dreamer watches, the fire jumps the Great River and begins to consume all of Vimary as well. Other Characters dream of fire raining down from the sky, likewise destroying first the H'l Kar, then Vimary. The implications are frightening but clear: as terrible as things have been, there is worse yet to come on the horizon.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

The most difficult part of *The Last Days of B'ares* will be in effectively communicating the profound change that B'ares undergoes as he changes from Z'bri Lord to Hunter. It is vital that the PCs have a sense of his chance at redemption, taken from him by the blood-mad squad that kills him.

There are several ways to do this. One way is to present B'ares, in his sorrow and regret, as similar to one of the Tribal or Fallen characters the PCs are familiar with, particularly an NPC who has grown especially tired of the war and its cost or who has warned of the toll such a war is taking. If the PCs have expressed such sentiments themselves, they may see their own grief mirrored in B'ares. Through the use of B'ares' body language and phrasing, the PCs should see the connection, and recognize that the war is taking a similar cost on the Z'bri, and it is a cost that B'ares, at least, is no longer willing or able to pay.

Alternately, the PCs may see B'ares as a foil to Shera Uhan'on. Unlike Shera, the Z'bri is able to turn away from the madness of war in time to save himself, a striking commentary on the way the war is changing the nature of the humans.



4. The Razing

The "intestine" north of B'ares' lands is, in fact, a corridor for troop movement. If the characters speak with B'ares for any length of time he can be persuaded to tell them that the corridor ends far to the north, but that there was a fight between the Koleris Lords and a Flemis Lord there before the Koleris left, and that the far end is destroyed and blocked off.

If the PCs have a tie to a Yagan or former Yagan who would work better than a mysterious Reaper, then Weavers should use the ally instead of Delisa. Delisa's full stats can be found in **Word of the Fates**, page 80. Weavers without that book can use the following stats: **Highlights:** Secret, deadly, grim. **Attributes:** AGI +2, APP -1, BLD +1, FIT -1, KNO +1, PER +1, WILL +2, STR 0, HEA +1, STA 35, UD 6, AD 7. **Skills:** Acrobatics 1/+2, Athletics 2/+2, Camouflage 2/0, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 2/+2, Dreaming 2/0, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Human Perception 2/0, Lore (Yagan) 1/+1, Melee 3/+2, Notice 2/+1, Sneak 2/+2, Tactics 2/0, Synthesis (Curse and Dream Travel) 2. **Weapons:** Bone Longsword (x12), bone blowpipe with poison darts.

The Zoms are without mind or spirit, and as such are immune to anything that would affect either. Use the following stats: AGI -1, BLD 0, FIT +2, INS +2, STR +1, HEA 0, STA 30, UD 6+. **Combat Sense** 1/0, **Dodge** 1/0, **Hand-to-Hand** (grapple) 3/-1. **Weapons:** Claws (x6), Bite (x7), various melee weapons (x8-x12).

ACT FIVE: THE RANCID RIVER

There are two sides to everything that exists. Light and dark, flesh and spirit, The Seed and the Goddess... the sooner you grasp that, child, the sooner you'll be able to pull your head out of your ass. There must be a balance between the sides. When there is no balance, everything tilts. If a thing tilts far enough, it will slide away as neatly as food sliding off a tipped plate.

- Den Hades, Guide

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Shortly after the events in *The Last Days of B'ares*, Den Hades comes looking for the PCs. Until now, she and the other Guides have had nothing to do with the Battle of Retribution. She will seek out the Yagans and the Doomsayers in the group first, asking them about their dreams. She tells the PCs that the Zom uprising was not a random event, and that they should look to the River of Dream to discover what is happening. She offers to guide them in their search of the River. She will help them, but she will not find the answers for them.

Once in the River of Dream, Den Hades and the PCs discover that the River has become a swirling mass of chaos, entropy and despair. Almost immediately they are set upon by specters. The PCs must drive the specters back, and then consider their next move. Den Hades guides the PCs deeper into the River, to a previously unknown Orb.

Once in the Orb, the characters find B'ares' spirit. Due to the spiritual disruption, he was unable to form a heartstone at his death, but he has found a small measure of rest within the Orb. He tells the PCs what he has seen of the war, and of the damage it is causing. He offers to take them to a well deep within his Orb that has the power to give visions of truth.

In the vision from the well (or in B'ares' retelling of his vision), the PCs see the H'I Kar destroyed, but with it goes the rest of Vimary. With the death of the last Z'bri they see the death of the last human as well, leaving only vultures, wolves and carrion. The Characters see that there is some connection between humanity and the Z'bri, and until it is understood, the Z'bri must be stopped, but not slaughtered.



Armed with their new knowledge, the PCs must return to the armies, where they must convince both the leaders of the armies and the Fatimas that the mindless slaughter of the Z'bri must come to an end. The Z'bri must be driven from the H'l Kar but allowed to live, lest humanity be destroyed along with them.

MAJOR NPCs

There are two key NPCs in this section, detailed below.

Den Hades: As acerbic as always, Den Hades has been haunted by some of the same nightmares as the PCs. Those nightmares are what drive her to join the Battle of Retribution. She recognizes the aura of destiny around the PCs, perhaps aware of their connection (however brief) to B'ares, who has also haunted her visions. She is determined to learn the truth of the situation, but knows it is not her destiny to do so. Therefore, she will relentlessly (and subtly) push and prod the PCs in the direction she feels they need to go.

B'ares: Gone from would-be Hunter to restless spirit, B'ares has found only a modicum of rest in his Orb. He knows he must find a way to communicate his vision to the other side of the River, but his powers are restricted. Den Hades was the Dreamer most visible to him, and so he reached out and touched her visions, goading her into finding the PCs and bringing them to his realm. He still searches for a way to atone for his past sins.

GUIDING WORDS

In the days immediately following *The Night of the Zoms*, the nightmares that plague the Yagans and the Doomsayers grow worse and worse, all promising of greater disaster to come. Likely the PCs, particularly those experiencing the nightmares themselves, will want to investigate to try and find the cause of the dreams. PCs with the Dreaming skill can attempt to find the answer in the River of Dream in one of two ways. While sleeping, the PC can attempt to leave her Dream-Realm and enter the River directly with a Dreaming roll (Threshold of 4 if the Character is well-rested, 5 or higher if the Character has the Insomnia flaw or has missed a great deal of sleep recently). Alternately, the PC may try to send her soul into the River through a trance similar to Synthesis (Dreaming roll, Threshold of 6, modified by ritual aids and support (as detailed in the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, page 162).

If the PCs do try and enter the River of Dream directly, they will find that the River itself is a maelstrom of despair and will be driven back to their bodies by the rushing weight of the darkness that pollutes the River. There is little the PCs can do to resist, but creativity should be rewarded, and particularly powerful WIL scores (3+) should be taken into account. However long the PCs manage to stay within the River, there is little they can accomplish there (Dreaming rolls are at a -3), save to witness the damage that has been done. They should be left with more questions than before.

4. The Razing

After the PCs have had a short time to investigate (whether or not they attempt to enter the River), Den Hades arrives in their camp, looking for the PCs. Until this point, the Guides have kept completely aloof from the Battle of Retribution. As a result, Den Hades' appearance should be presented as something particularly portentous, especially if the PCs have had no dealings with her until now. She speaks first with the Yagans and Doomsayers of the group, talking with them about the dreams they've had. While she gives little away about her own dreams (or the meaning of theirs), she does agree that the dreams are vitally important.

Then she speaks to the group as a whole. In typical Den Hades fashion, she berates them for not paying closer attention to their dreams, to the dreams of their friends. The PCs may be defensive, or might suggest that the war is their focus. Den Hades reminds the PC that their war exists as much in the River as in the World of the Flesh. As an example, she asks about the Zom uprisings. Through a series of leading (if indirect) questions, Den Hades shows the PCs that the Zom attacks are not a random thing, but are symptomatic of a larger problem. Characters who tried to enter the River of Dream should be encouraged to mention their experiences. Den Hades tells them that the answers they seek lie within the River itself. She will, particularly after hearing the PCs stories of the River's current state, offer to guide them. She makes it very clear, however, that this is their quest and their war, not hers, and she will not find the answers for them.

INTO THE DREAM

Furthermore, Den Hades will not lead the PCs in the ritual that will bring them into the River. She will assist the PCs with little skill in Dreaming, but she will step back and let the PCs take the lead in organizing the ritual. The larger and more intricate the ritual is, the easier it will be for the PCs once they enter the River. Again, use standard Thresholds on Dreaming rolls for entering the River, with modifiers for rituals, drugs and particularly for good roleplaying on the part of the PCs.

As before, as the Characters enter the River, they find it swirling with chaos, entropy and despair. With Den Hades's help, and with the support of the ritual, they are able to remain within the River, but it is a struggle, with the same oppressive weight still pressing upon them. The MoS of the Dreaming rolls to enter the River may be used here to counteract the -3 on Dreaming rolls within the River, to represent Den Hades's assistance and the ritual support.

The dreamscape around the Characters vaguely resembles the area around the Seven Fingers and the H'l Kar, but is a ruined, smoking wasteland where nothing appears to live. Almost immediately the PCs are attacked by specters. Some specters will attack physically, while others will torment the Characters with visions of the PCs' own worst fears and deepest secrets. (See *Tips and Resources* on p. 75 for more details.)

4. The Razing

Characters with the Dreaming skill can engage the specters in spiritual combat or actively try to drive the specters away. The other PCs may use Synthesis; remember the bonus for using Synthesis directly within the River. The encounter may be as difficult as the Weaver wishes to make it — the more difficult it is, the more important the meeting with B'ares will seem. The idea is not to gravely wound the party, but to point out that all knowledge comes with a cost, and that some types of knowledge are worth that cost. The PCs may defeat the specters with no combat at all, but simply by successfully dealing with their fears or defending their past sins to the specters and to themselves.

Once the specters have been subdued or driven off, Den Hades will lead the PCs to a secondary Orb. She does so by pulling them into a nearby puddle, drawing them down into depths that physically should not exist, but that exist in Dream. A surreal image of the PCs diving, one by one, into what appears to be a small, shallow puddle of water would be particularly effective here. The PCs must follow her through the gray, murky water, swimming to the point of feeling that they are going to drown in the dimness. It is dark and harrowing, and only when the PCs feel they are going to die do they surface into the Orb. The Orb itself is a gray, uneasy sea, the water as bitter as tears. The closest thing to habitation is a stark rocky outcropping that forms a small island. Standing upon it, in an eternal vigil, they see (and may recognize) the spirit of B'ares.

SPEAKING TO B'ARES

The aura of intense sorrow that began to form around B'ares before his murder is intensified here in the Orb that holds his spirit. The landscape reflects regret and unease. The gray sea surrounding the bare rock of the island is never completely at rest; neither does it ever fully break into storm. Instead it is restless and caught between two states eternally.

B'ares recognizes the PCs as they crawl out of the roiling sea. Den Hades he does not acknowledge, she in fact remains in the background for the remainder of the scene, having played her part as Guide. "There is a time," he says, "to put an end to slaughter. If a Beast can turn from its obscene feast, cannot the Children of the Goddess do the same?" He tells the PCs that he tried to form a heartstone at his death, but due to the disruption of the River (which the PCs have recently witnessed), he could not, and instead found his spirit trapped in this Orb.

He will answer most questions the PCs ask of him, if enigmatically. The Hunter's atmosphere is nearly overwhelming in the spiritual world, and Characters who are particularly guilt-ridden may be overcome by regret for their past actions. Flashes and images of their past sins will hang before their eyes. Highlighting particularly difficult issues a Character has faced in past games is a good way to bring out the intensity of this moment.

B'ares speaks of the war that continues in the World of Flesh, and laments the toll it will take unless it is stopped. He gestures to the center of his rocky, barren island, and tells the PCs of a sacred well there, one that grants true visions to those that look within. He offers to take the PCs there, so that they may see what he has seen, and learn what he has learned.

VULTURES AND WOLVES

If the PCs agree, B'ares will lead them off across the island. Although the area B'ares indicated looks to be no more than a klick away on a mild incline, the PCs discover that it is a difficult journey indeed. Before they can draw near to the well, each Character must face some unpleasant truth about themselves. One way to do this is to find out from the Players what they believe their Character's greatest weakness or flaw is, then present that to the PC as she approaches B'ares' well of truth. The effect should be similar to the use of Truth or Recognition, but on a much larger scale. The PCs will not only be confronted with their worst flaws, but they will also get a glimpse into how that flaw has affected those around them. The PCs who pass this test (and the only way to fail is to utterly deny the truth of the visions presented) will be allowed up the hillside to B'ares' well.

PCs who refuse the trip to the well will have the vision described to them by B'ares afterwards. PCs who fail the well's test will no doubt hear about the vision secondhand from Den Hades or their companions.

As the PCs look into the well, they see the following vision. It may be presented to them in individual snippets, based on each Character's Eminences — those with more "prophetic" Eminences like Fate and Mystery might see more than someone else — or it may be presented as is to each Character. The Characters see a stout door, set in the middle of an empty plain. There seems to be nothing behind the door, but it bears seven strong locks. As the first lock falls open a voice echoes "Come and see..." Beyond the door the PCs see a single Beast adorned in white, perhaps B'ares himself. Cowering at his feet are several human forms.

The second lock opens, again with the incantation, "Come and see..." Joshua the Ravager, His eye blazing red, thunders past the door and past the PCs, coming forward to slay the lone Beast. While He succeeds, He falters immediately afterwards, crumpling over the body of the Beast.

The third lock. "Come and see..." A vision of Vimary, black with masses of people, thick as locusts over the land. Tera Sheba's scales appear, tipping this way and that over the people's heads.

The fourth lock falls open, with the invitation to "Come and see..." A pale star falls from the sky, then another, then another, until it becomes a meteor shower. The masses of people beneath begins to thin somewhat, but a nearby field of purest white flowers withers and dies unattended.

As the fifth lock opens, the vision shifts to a dark clearing in dense woods. In that clearing are several wooden posts and stakes, each with stout ropes attached. The ground is stained a deep maroon with blood and there are piles of old bones nearby.

With the sixth lock, a thundering roar shakes the earth, sending stones tumbling down and raising dust. With a blood moon overhead, the thundering becomes the First Army's echoing footsteps across the Fallen Bridge.

As the seventh lock falls open, the door swings open as well, revealing the same lone Z'bri being struck down much the same way B'ares was killed. Then all is silence. The silence is broken by the hissing of fire falling from the sky, consuming the land as the sky darkens. In the dim light left to the PCs, they can see only corpses, human and Z'bri, beyond the door with circling vultures overhead and circling wolves on the ground.

As the vision fades (or as he finishes his recounting), B'ares says gravely, "The great day of wrath is come; who shall be able to stand in its way?"

The visions represent the growing imbalance in the Great Architecture. Rather than learning lessons from their past and the mistakes of their enemies, humanity is repeating them. Rather than defeating the Beasts, they are becoming them.

Let the PCs discuss the possible meanings of the vision itself. B'ares and Den Hades may offer their suggestions. B'ares knows well what the vision means, but also knows that the PCs need to reach the conclusion largely on their own in order to fully accept it. He will simply say, "I have seen the price of giving into hatred, and I pray you never have to see it." Den Hades may suggest the connection between Z'bri and human if the PCs do not see it. Skills such as Lore and Mythology may be useful here, as may some Eminences. The PCs should come to realize that in some deep and primal way, the utter destruction of the Z'bri, the endless days of hate and death, will either destroy humanity or turn them into Beasts themselves. The war must be won, but it also must end — soon.

SPEAKING OF HATRED AND FORGIVENESS

While still dealing with this knowledge, the PCs must go back to the World of the Flesh and convince not only the leaders of the armies but the Fatimas that some of the Z'bri must be spared. Probably to the Characters' surprise, Baba Yaga will immediately back them, putting Her full weight behind them and saying simply that they speak the truth, and that She (Death) is afraid of what will happen if the war goes on. Joan and the Old Guard will be the strongest opponents of the plan to end the Battle of Retribution, particularly at first.

The PCs will need to present strong evidence to back up the visions they received. The best evidence comes from the River of Dream itself. By pointing to the disruption in the River, and the rise of the Zoms, the PCs will be able to point out the link

between the mindless slaughter of Z'bri and the weakening of reality around them. Agnes will be the first one to suggest the idea of Forgiveness as a way to heal some of the damage already done, and will throw in behind the PCs. With Agnes and Baba Yaga persuaded, the PCs will be able to turn their attention on changing the minds of those immediately around them, if necessary.

Another suggestion is for the PCs to point out that the H'l Kar is weakened enough for the siege of the Ziggurat to take place — which was the original plan. Only the madness and hatred of the past months have made the armies deviate from it. Joan, in particular, will be more easily persuaded by the notion of returning to the original plan.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

There are many powerful NPCs in this Act, from a Hunter spirit to a Guide to the Fatimas themselves. It is tempting to let the NPCs run the show, and tell the Characters everything they need to know and what to do. A key factor in preventing that lies in the personalities of B'ares and Den Hades. Both know well the value of knowledge earned on its own. Den Hades is always naturally reluctant to be straightforward, and will talk in riddles as much as possible. B'ares is aware that the PCs (not to mention those they must later convince) will be less likely to accept a message of "stop slaughtering the Z'bri" from a Z'bri, and that they should reach that conclusion on their own. The PCs have information that the Fatimas and their armies presumably do not, which will give the PCs an edge in scenes involving those NPCs.

The encounter with the specters should be a harrowing experience for the PCs. It would be a good idea for the Weaver to already have a good idea of what her PCs' worst fears and secrets are, so that she may present them to the PCs during this encounter. One possibility is to ask the Players themselves, perhaps at the beginning of the Cycle. This will serve to keep the Players on edge, waiting to see when their Characters' fears will be brought out and used against them.

The encounters may best be run as individual scenes, particularly if the PCs have deep secrets that the rest of party is not privy to. However they are run, the scenes should be highly tailored to each PC and Player. Any combat should be dreamlike and surreal, and especially representative of the spiritual conflict taking place. Some of the specters may even look like fallen comrades of the PCs, particularly those who died in *Blood Madness*.

For the specters in *Into the Dream*, use the stats for Old Mack (*Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 163), with PSY -2 and spiritual claws (x7 damage) and teeth (x8 damage).

ACT SIX: GREAT SHALL BE THE FALL

I had watched my youngest son die choking from plague, my oldest son on the spiked fist of a Z'bri warrior. I had seen blood and sacrifice like I had never imagined, and thought I might choke on it. But when I saw the Ziggurat fall, when I heard the roar of its collapse, it all became worth it. My sons were dead, but their souls were free, and now mine would be as well.

- Chief Lum

WEAVER'S SYNOPSIS

Great Shall be the Fall begins as soon as the PCs have convinced the Fatimas and leaders of the Army of Retribution that the war needs to be brought to an end. The Command Staff of the army examines the current situation in the H'I Kar and the state of the army, and decides that it is time to launch the siege and razing of the Ziggurat.

The act begins with *The Siege*, in which the Army of Retribution crosses the Great River in force and sets up in a loose circle around the Ziggurat. They then deploy their siege weapons and start a heavy bombardment of the massive living fortress. After only three days, much faster than the Command Staff had anticipated, the Ziggurat starts to weaken. Keeper sappers with explosive satchels are then sent in to attack the base of the Ziggurat, setting the above-ground areas up to collapse into the subterranean levels. While the sappers are setting their charges, a massive combined group of Fatimas, Tribals and Fallen Dreamers starts a massive Synthesis weaving that splits open the earth and allows the Ziggurat's fall to shatter not only the above ground levels, but also the subterranean floors.

With the Ziggurat falling the Z'bri who remained inside come spilling out into the waiting arms of the Army of Retribution in the second scene, *Meat Grinder*. The battle that follows is brutal and bloody, but unlike the rest of the war is also short and decisive. Some of the Z'bri are able to flee into the Great River, but most are slain.

Revanche then concludes with *Amid the Ashes*. In this final scene the Army of Retribution burns the remains of the Ziggurat to ashes, and then turns to go home. With the fires of the H'I Kar behind them, the PCs are troubled when Joan tells them that their fight is only beginning.

THE SIEGE

Unlike the last time the crusaders came to the Ziggurat (in **Broken Pact**) this time they are not here for a lightning raid into the citadel. This time they are here to crush it and burn it to the ground, destroying the center of Z'bri power and ending the war once and for all. After months of indecisive, difficult fighting and struggling with plague, the Army of Retribution once more has a sense of purpose and morale starts to rise. With only a few Tribals still suffering from the plague, the Army is able to move in strength against the central symbol of Z'bri power, and to the troops it feels like the end of the war, and the end of centuries of Z'bri oppression, is finally near.

Thus with a renewed sense of determination, and a spirit not seen since before the Battle for the Seven Fingers, the army mobilizes two days after the PCs convince the Command Staff to strike the Ziggurat. The Command Staff decides on a three-pronged advance, unless the PCs come up with a better plan. First, the Army of Flame will use the remaining underground tunnels to move across the Great River. Once on the other side the Spear will join them, making a hard charge across the still-partially defended Spine Bridge. Once across both armies will set up a defensive line while the majority of the First comes across in a massive flotilla of rafts and boats that they have been building for the past several months.

Although the Spear takes mild casualties from bombardments from the Ziggurat, crossing the Great River will go surprisingly quickly and easily. Though none among the Army of Retribution knows it, the Z'bri in the Ziggurat are undermanned and running low on resources and morale. In fact when the army started to move many of the remaining Sangis Lords took their lives, taking the opportunity to create heartstones for themselves (which they felt they might not be able to do in the heat of battle).

Once across the river, the Army of Retribution sets up in a loose circle around the Ziggurat. The Spear takes the western flank, and Flame the northern-most point, with the First filling the gap between Spear and Flame, and then the Flame and the River. A section of the First remains on the far side of the Great River to guard the sick and wounded, and to stop any Z'bri trying to retreat down the Spine Bridge.

THE ENGINES

Once the army is set up, groups begin to set up the catapults and trebuchets. Although they are heavily guarded against an expected Z'bri counter-assault, such a strike never comes. Using the flotilla to keep supplies coming, the army then starts to launch a round-the-clock bombardment of the Ziggurat. Flinging combinations of glass shards, boulders and Keeper fire, they pummel the citadel for three days. Blood and mucus explode from solid strikes, and the smell of burning flesh fills the air. After three days the Ziggurat starts to visibly shudder, like a great beast starting to die, and several of the secondary towers and spires collapse, bursting on the ground like over-ripe melons. On the evening that the spires start to fall it is time for two special missions; the PCs have a chance to be part of either.

SAPPERS

PCs who have proven track records as scouts and raiders, or who have close connections with DELTA will be asked by the Command Staff to work with DELTA to get 20 large satchel-charges of high explosives to the base of the Ziggurat. Though the Tribals do not fully understand what the charges are, the members of DELTA have demonstrated the use of explosives often enough during the course of the Battle of Retribution that no one in the army doubts their effectiveness anymore. PCs are told that the mission is extremely dangerous, and that their mission will not be to fight, but to keep the Keepers alive so that they can set the explosives.

The PCs will be working with Franklin, a surly and short-tempered Keeper with a reputation as a deadly marksman. This mission, however, he is on charge of the demolitions, not shooting. He carries four very heavy satchel charges, which he will not let the "stupid apes" put their "damn dirty fingers on." It is up to the PCs to guard him throughout the night, and help him get into place to set all four charges before the next morning.

Between the PCs and the Ziggurat is a 500 meter "kill zone" of flat and burnt ground. A few trenches and trees, as well as the remains of dead Serfs and Beasts, litter the way but cover is little and far between. For the last 200 meters of the way the PCs will come under fire by Serfs using bows with poisoned arrows. For the last 50 meters they will also come under fire by the acid nipples, bone blades, poisoned darts and stingers of the Ziggurat itself. PCs will have to use clever planning, good use of Sneak, and probably a bit of Synthesis to make it across. The darkness helps, giving the Serfs a -3 modifier to their shots, assuming that the Characters are not showing their exact position with torches or other bright light sources. The full moon rises just after midnight, changing that modifier to -2.

Though the PCs will probably be expecting a sortie from out of the Ziggurat, it will never come. The Z'bri are dying, and they know it. Only the Serfs and the defenses of the Living Building are fighting at this point, and the Serfs fear coming out. Once the PCs get within 5 meters of the outer walls of the Ziggurat the Serfs' bow fire will stop, though the building's defense will continue.

Once near the wall Franklin starts setting up the charges. Each charge has to be set 50 meters from the last one. Moving too close to the wall allows the Ziggurat to attack the Characters with all its defenses, moving too far from it brings them back under fire from the Serfs. Franklin sets up the first three charges without too much difficulty, but after setting the third charge is hit with a poison dart. He barely feels it, and does not mention it to the PCs.

Just before Franklin can set the fourth and final charge, the poison from the dart finally catches up with him, and he expires quietly at the Characters' feet. The PCs are then faced with the task of setting the charge themselves. As it is unlikely the PCs have any skill with demolitions, they will have to be creative. It is possible they could try to go back to the lines and get another Keeper to set the charge, but time will be too short to get back

4. The Razing

before all of the timed charges go off. The PCs could also just push the charge into place and hope it is good enough. Weavers, however, should encourage PCs to work out another solution. Using Synthesis to figure a way to work the bomb is one possibility (Wisdom works best, but Inspiration, Force, Mystery and Recognition are all options.) It would also be possible to figure out how to use Franklin's walk-talk and get a Keeper on the other end to walk the Characters through the process.

Once the PCs are done setting the final bomb they must make their way across the kill zone again. This time, however, firing will be sporadic and random, and only Characters who fail a PSY test with a threshold of 2 are so unlucky as to be attacked. Once back at camp they will have about 30 minutes to prepare for the combined explosive/Synthesis blast.

WRATH OF FIVE GODDESSES

While the Keepers and their escorts are setting the satchel charges, the Fatimas begin to gather their most trusted priestesses around them, along with the most powerful Fallen Dreamers. By midnight, a total of three hundred Dreamers are gathered in a well-defended circle near the southwest edge of the camp. Each Tribe and each Outlook will have one representative leader who is in charge of their faction's part of the ritual. PCs with high Synthesis and/or a strong reputation in their Outlook should be asked to lead, either by the Fatimas or by someone else from their Faction. A Herite, for example, might be asked by Kyr to take his place, as he does not want to work so closely with the Fatimas.



4. The Razing

All the Dreamers are gathered, and the factions assigned their leaders, by the middle of the night. Then, just as the moon is rising, the procession begins a long, slow walk around the circumference of the Ziggurat, starting in the west and going towards the east. Members of each faction carry something symbolic of their faction and cause. The Joanites carry swords, the Dahlians masks, the Evans herbs, the Doomsayers heavy black cloaks, and so on. As they walk in slow and solemn ceremony, they will all hold their symbol before them, and chant a devotional chant to the One Goddess. The chants will also have something to do with the focus of the faction, with Lightbringers singing of unity, and Agnites speaking of the joy they would have in a world with no more monsters. The PCs should have freedom to help choose the symbol of their group, and to make up the simple chant for their group.

At each cardinal point (south, east, north, west) the procession will stop, and the leader of one of the factions will come forward, turn her face to the sky or the earth, and say aloud a prayer to the One Goddess, which her faction repeats with her. Each faction supplicates the One Goddess, asking her to strike at the Ziggurat and telling her why they feel the Z'bri must be driven from the land. The Evans will say that they wish to live in peace with untainted land, the Joanites will ask for glory and victory, the Jackers will ask that the vengeance which has burned so long within them will be quelled, and their ancestors set to rest at last, and so on. Weavers need not give the whole prayer for each group; a summary will suffice. At each stop one leader speaks, and then the procession moves to the next cardinal point, where another leader speaks. Thus there will be three circles around the Ziggurat, each taking two hours. The PCs should be the last to speak, taking their turns at the last few points of the third and final circle — the specifics, of course,

depending on how many of the PCs are skilled Dreamers. They should come up with their own prayers, and try to combine their personal quests with that of their Outlook.

At each turning of the circle, at each prayer, the feeling of imminence grows in the air. The River, which has been polluted for weeks now, feels clean as it flows around the Dreamers, and the world around them seems to ripple and grow hazy. A luminescent glow marks the circle where they have walked, ringing the darkness of the H'l Kar round with light. When the PCs finally have their turn to speak the energy surrounding the group seems to throb and beat to their words, in time with their heart, and every heart in the procession begins to beat as one, a sound just barely audible. The Fatimas look like pillars of fire in the night, and their presence drives away the early morning chill.

After the last PC has given her prayer, the procession returns to the West, where they began, and there stops. In the east, the direction the procession faces, the sun rises. Joan, Baba Yaga, Magdalen, Agnes and Dahlia all step forward, and beckon the leaders to come with them. All lift their hands and point to the Ziggurat, and with one voice, one heart and one intent, ask the One to split the ground and let the depths of the Ziggurat be exposed to the cleansing of air and fire.

With that the beating of the hearts grows louder, sounding in time, gaining volume with each pulse. The sound grows until the ground itself shudders in time with the beating, but it doesn't seem to hurt the ears of any human listener. Soon the earth is beating like a heart, rippling and moving. The ripple starts in the luminescent trail that the procession left behind and moves inward, gaining strength as it does. It gains speed as it goes, until it breaks on the Ziggurat in a great wave.



At the moment of its strike the Keeper bombs go off, and in a sudden grinding, sinking lurch the Ziggurat collapses inwards upon itself. In a spray of blood and mucus, and an explosion of fire and Dream, the citadel of the Z'bri falls. A great rift opens under the tower, and the dying structure falls into it, smashing into rubble.

Joan turns to the assembled, saying: "some Z'bri will have survived even that fall. They are to arm themselves for one last fight, and when it is won, so too will be the war."

MEAT GRINDER

Starting about twenty minutes after the Ziggurat falls, and lasting for nearly an hour, Z'bri start to scramble out of the wreckage and into the waiting spears of the Army of Retribution. At first all goes well, and PCs should have a chance to use group tactics to surround and destroy outnumbered Z'bri and Serfs.

After a short period of fighting, the last gasp of Z'bri resistance comes pouring out of the ruins of the Ziggurat in a roiling, pestilent wave. **Deacon Vytor**, the most powerful Lord of the Melanis, gathers all the remaining Lords and Iv'chet, and leads them personally out onto the field. Joan and Agnes lead a charge towards the group, and the PCs either help lead the charge, or are swept along by the tide.

The Z'bri forces keep their backs to the ruins, making it impossible to surround them, and for the first time in the Battle of Retribution the Z'bri force fights with unity and precision. Vytor is a silent and utterly deadly presence on the field, and keeps his troops in order and focused. Joan does Her best to hack through his troops to get to the Deacon, but is unable to in the face of the combined and coordinated Lords who surround him. Meanwhile the PCs are caught up against the line, and have to fight for their lives against the Z'bri Lords.

If the PCs have had a nemesis among the Z'bri (other than a Koleris), a Beast that has dogged their steps throughout the campaign, then Weavers should consider allowing the PCs to destroy their enemy once and for all on the field outside the shattered Ziggurat. There is little more symbolic of the end of Z'bri power in Vimary than killing the personal demon who has plagued the PCs. If not the Weaver can use Duke Belz'ey.

Just as the PCs are winning their fight (or being saved by friends if it looks like they will all be wiped out), Deacon Vytor will suddenly stop and look about himself. As he does so a small cyclone of dust, trash, papers, and bones will spring up next to him, in the center of the Z'bri formation. The Deacon exclaims in fury, and Baba Yaga appears next to him. The Crone says, "Dear Vytor, it is time." With that the collection of bones and trash that makes up Her body reaches out and wraps around Vytor. Waves of Synthesis and Sundering roll out, and as Baba Yaga becomes a storm of bones, Vytor disappears.

4. The Razing

The remaining Z'bri Lords panic, and try to fight their way out with a frenzied determination. Agnes, overextending Herself to try and reach Baba Yaga, is attacked by three Lords in combination and falls. Joan leaps to Her aid, but is attacked by nearly a dozen Iv'chet at once. The PCs must rush into the melee and help to save the Fatimas, fighting back at least four Iv'chet in order to give Joan room to dispatch the Lords.

By the time the PCs are done fighting, both Baba Yaga and Vytor are gone, and the remaining Z'bri are fleeing or being butchered. Agnes will tell Characters that ask that Baba Yaga is still near, but is recovering from Her conflict with Vytor. If asked about Vytor She will tell the PCs that nothing escapes Death, but will not be more specific than that, and will avoid the question if asked directly. Then She and Joan will return to the task of mopping up the remaining Z'bri.



AMID THE ASHES

While the last of the Z'bri are still being killed or driven into the Great River, several war parties of the First, working with several Jackers, brings hundreds of gourds full of Keeper Fire to the ruins of the Ziggurat. Working with a slow, methodical deliberation they move as far into the squirming, squishing mass as they can and start to pour the thick, sticky substance over everything they can reach. For nearly an hour they pour and pour, and only when their supply of Keeper Fire runs out do they set fire to it.

The result is a conflagration that towers nearly a hundred feet into the sky and burns for two weeks. For a time the bloodied, battered, and victorious Army of Retribution watches the fire burn in silence, staring as the flames consummate the end of Z'bri power in Vimary. As the fire burns and the thick, dark smoke hangs in the air a vision comes to many of the powerful Dreamers of the Army, including the PCs.

It starts with Joan saying "This is only the beginning" very softly, almost as though to Herself. The Warrior stands silently

watching the fire, Her silhouette seeming distant and weary. Then the Dreamers see an image of a black and monolithic city, a place of cold stone and hearts full of endless, deep hate. As they watch they see a river, tinged slightly red, wind past the glyph representing Vimary (pictured below) and towards the black city. Both cities then seem to float on the river, and start to drift slowly and inexorably towards each other. The Vision then fades out with the hint of Joshua's voice saying "They will find distraction in victory."

PCs should have a chance to break the silence, either with a momentous speech or a wild victory cheer. Whatever tone the PCs establish will quickly be picked up by the whole army, who will all follow in the PCs' footsteps. Weavers should let the whole army leave in somber silence, or erupt into cheering madness — whatever is most appropriate in response to Player actions.

As night falls the Army breaks camp and heads for home. Some war parties stay behind to keep mopping up, and many Yagans stay to start giving the souls of those trapped so long in the H'l Kar their final rites. Most, however, head for home. It is time to rebuild and start again.



TIPS AND RESOURCES

Statistics for catapults and trebuchets can be found on page XX. Stats for the Z'bri warriors use the template on page XX.

Franklin's stats are: **Attributes:** AGI +1, CRE +1, KNO +1 PER +3, STR 0, HEA 0, STA 25, UD/AD 5. **Skills:** Athletics 2/0, Camouflage 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+3, Demolition 3/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Melee 2/+1, Navigation (land) 2/+1, Sneak 2/+1, Sniping 3/+3, Tinker 2/+1. **Weapons:** Satchel Charges (x100), Knife (x4), Rifle (x25)

The Archer Serfs attack with a skill of 2/+1, and their arrows are DM 12, coated with potency 8 fatal toxin.

Duke Belz'ey's full write up is in *Horrors of the Z'bri*, p. 118, or the Weaver can use the following stats: **Attributes:** AGI +1, APP +3, BLD +5, CRE +3, FIT +1, INF +3, KNO +2, PER +2, PSY +3, WILL +4, STR +3, HEA +3, STA 65, UD 14, AD 13. **Skills:** Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 1/+1, H-to-H 3/+1, Intimidate 3/+5, Leadership 2/+3, Melee 3/+1, Notice 2/+2, Tactics 2/+3, Sundering (Appeasement, Soul Stealing, Chaining, Shattering) 4.

During *The Siege* it is unlikely that PCs will be able to be part of both missions at the end of the Ziggurat. If all the PCs are more interested in one mission than the other then that is obviously the mission to run. If, however, there is a split, then ambitious Weavers can run parallel scenes, cutting back and forth between the two to add tension and to show the full scope of the double assault.

The battle during *Meat Grinder* is the last fight of the war, and so Weavers should make it count. By this point in the story PCs probably have a lot of pent-up tension and anger, and the fight is the perfect time to let them vent it. Much of the rest of the war has been morally ambiguous and difficult — this really is not. By ending the Z'bri threat there and then the PCs are making sure that the grinding pain of the rest of the war need not be endured again, that the enslavement of the spirits of their ancestors is ended, and that centuries of fear and slavery are wiped clean in one stroke.

On the other hand, if PCs are still very troubled by what they learned in *The Rancid River* they may feel that letting the Z'bri who escape the H'l Kar flee from Vimary is for the best. It is unlikely that they will be able to get many others to agree with them, and so the fight will go on, but PCs should not be forced into combat. If they would rather let their personal battle end, then Weavers should let them. In fact, some Weavers may want to play the theme of forgiveness and balance by having a Z'bri that the characters allow to flee change atmospheres as he passes them — from Sangis to that of a Hunter.

The final vision and the burning of the Ziggurat give the ending of *Revanche* a rather pyrrhic sensibility. Despite the grim and rather somber thought of having to go back to war again, the PCs should also realize that they will have a time to rest and prepare for the next war. The point is not to overwhelm them or diminish the import of what they have done, but simply to let them know that though this battle is won, the war for the future is not yet over.



Chapter five: Aftermath

The H'l Kar is no more. No more must we run, and hide, and fear. Now it is time to rebuild, to make something rise from these ashes. It is time to build a new world, a shared and safe world.

— Kymber Reva, at the Cage



RAMIFICATIONS AND OUTCOMES

The events of **Revanche** and **Vimary Burns** have forever changed the world of **Tribe 8**. From the Z'bri being defeated and driven into the wilds, to the Tribals and Fallen working together in uneasy alliance, there has been a great upheaval. The following section runs down the major changes, and how they affect the people of Vimary.

THE STRAINED ALLIANCE

In the wake of the Battle of Retribution the Fallen and the Nation manage to maintain their loose alliance. There is a lot of work to be done in Vimary, and the threat of Capal, the northern City of Hate, looms large on everyone's mind. Those forces, combined with the Magdalite, New Blood and Lightbringer diplomatic efforts, keep the two groups working together. It is not always easy, however, as there are large cultural and philosophical gaps between the Fallen and the Tribals. Questions of freedom of thought, travel, and issues of leadership, power and land distribution are causing a great amount of unrest, as is the lingering Tribal belief that the Fallen are somehow tainted by their very natures.

While many of the old leaders and elder Tribals are still quietly antagonistic towards the Fallen, the youth of the Tribes are showing a different face. In the wake of Tirk the Young's murder, many of the young of the Tribes and Fallen both have gathered under a common banner. Those who were colloquially known as the 'New Bloods' have now started to formally organize themselves, and are using their numbers and diplomatic skills to become a formidable political force.

TRIBAL PERSPECTIVES

The Tribes were hit hard by the burning of Vimary, by the Battle of Retribution, and by the positions that many of the Fatimas have taken. The once orderly and convention-bound lives of the Tribals have been turned on their head, and many Tribals are in a state of mild shock. Though all are glad that the Z'bri menace has been driven back, few Tribals realize the extent of what they have accomplished — as until recently they did not even realize that the H'l Kar was still a major threat. Also due to the plague, the Tribals took far heavier losses in the Battle of Retribution than their Fallen allies, and are still trying to recover from their massive losses of life, property and sense of security.



AGNITES

Agnes and Her Tribe alike are growing up painfully fast — fighting in a war has a way of doing that. Agnes has seen the horrors that Her power helped unleash, but was unable to control, and has also gained a sense of Herself and Her value to the Nation. Her Tribe has learned that Playground is not the whole world, and that though they are young they are not immortal. Between the beginning of **Broken Pact** and the end of **Revanche** the Agnites lost nearly one-third of their numbers, and the Tribe is in mourning and shock. Increasingly they look to the New Bloods and the Fallen to show them how to be strong.

After the Battle of Retribution Agnes and Her Tribe return to Playground, and find it less damaged than much of Bazaar. They are not sure, however, how to repair it or what they should rebuild it as. Many Agnites now feel free to come and go between Playground and Hom, and so a steady number — though constantly changing specific set — of Children remains on that island.

DAHLIANS

Dahlia is wickedly, gleefully pleased with events. As She always wanted, the old Vimary has been burned and can now be replaced with something new. The Trickster is now staying heavily involved, both in public and in secret, with the politics of rebuilding Vimary and will do everything She can to mold it to Her vision. Her Tribe also came out of the war the least touched of all Tribes, with less than 3% losses, and is looking to help rebuild a brave new world. The Dahlians, like the Agnites, are fascinated with the new strength of the Fallen, and have a peculiar fascination with the Children of Lilith.

Though it would surprise the other Tribes to learn it, the apparently rootless Dahlians were shocked by their loss of Bazaar, the center of Tribal life which they had counted as their homeland. Though they are helping with the rebuilding, many are unsure if they want to "anchor" themselves down. More than ever the Dahlians are a people whose home is where ever they bed down for the night.

EVANS

Though the Joanites took heavier losses than the Evan's 32% casualties (20% of that from plague), the Evans themselves were the hardest hit by the events in **Revanche** because they have, for all intents and purposes, lost their Fatima. Eva sleeps on in the core of the Firmament, and the Evan homelands are dying by inches as the monstrous dome sucks the life from the land. The Evans are rudderless and afraid, knowing only that they will not bow down to the Shebans or to anyone else. Those who stayed in the Firmament are starting to slowly close their eyes to reality, becoming increasingly irrational and unable to deal with life. Those outside are doing slightly better, but still often look at the world around them with shell-shocked eyes.

Currently the Evans do not have a homeland. The Firmament is killing Lai and Sunblessed by inches, and the Evans outside know it. Many are trying to halt the process, but with no success so far. The majority of the Tribe is resettling around Griffentowne and Bazaar, and are hiding their confusion in hard work, rapidly rebuilding both areas.

JOANITES

Joan and Her Tribe were the leaders during the Battle of Retribution, and have covered themselves with glory and honor in the eyes of the Nation. Their casualties, however, were appalling. Between the start of **Broken Pact** and the end of **Revanche**, death in combat and death by plague have taken a full half of the Joanites. In a very real way the Tribe is now made up of those who were too old or too young to fight in the Battle of Retribution. Even the most stubborn members of the Old Guard are now showing a weary, broken willingness to accept Fallen into the Tribe.

Joan Herself is triumphant but weary. She sees very clearly the price the Battle of Retribution has had on Vimary and on Her Tribe, and it weighs on Her soul. She also worries greatly about the pollution of the River of Dream and frets after Joshua's heartstone. None of this, however, has dulled Her resolve. She is sure there will be a war with Capal, and is steadily making ready.

The Joanites are currently without a central home. Though the Seven Fingers have been retaken and resettled, they are no longer as important as they once were, as the H'l Kar is no longer a threat. As a result the Joanites are settling heavily in Bazaar and Hom, while working on building outlying towers and outposts to watch the new borders of Vimary.

MAGDALITES

Between slaying the Baron, being instrumental in the splitting of the Z'bri Houses, and Her support role in the Battle of Retribution, Magdalen has emerged as the foremost of the Fates. Her Tribe is also basking in a sense of pride and accomplishment. They took only 8% casualties in the Battle of Retribution, and so are in a stronger and more centered position

than the more badly damaged Tribes. They are currently using this position to dominate negotiations and relations with the Fallen, and to take over the scouting and spying operations towards Capal.

The Magdalites found that Xstasis was not only heavily damaged during the Z'bri raids, but that the Sangis also defiled and corrupted the area. Magdalen has not yet decided if She will resettle the area, and as a result the Magdalites remain on Hom and the reforming Bazaar.

SHEBANS

The Shebans took the lightest loss of life in the Battle of Retribution, at only 4%. Their main loss is not of members, but of unity. The Shebans now stand as a Tribe divided. Tera Sheba Herself is becoming increasingly domineering and intransigent, and is unable to cope with how rapidly the world has changed and with how much influence She has lost. As a result She is starting an inquisition of Her own Tribe, led by Her most sycophantic Judges, looking for signs of disloyalty and heresy.

An increasing number of Shebans, watching the beginnings of the witch-hunts, find themselves unable to stand with their Fatima. Many leave the Tribes completely, renouncing Tera Sheba and joining the Fallen. The majority, however, are starting to gather behind the Fisher King, who desperately seeks a way to return some measure of sanity to his Goddess and peace to his Tribe.

Many Shebans remain within the Firmament, and continue to lord over the Evans there. Those outside have returned to the Stone Shores, and are trying their best to rebuild the heavily damaged area.

YAGANS

Yagan casualties in the Battle of Retribution were higher than most suspect. Though they lost relatively few in battle, many Yagan mystics lost their minds or souls in the pollution that overtook the River of Dream. Nearly 11% of the Yagans were lost, many put down by their brethren. Now Baba Yaga and Her Tribe are near a panic due to the number of corpses and spirits that they have to give death-rites to and guide through the Fold. They have also become increasingly obsessed with the River of Dream, and spend most of their effort trying to cleanse it. As a result Baba Yaga and the ranking members of Her Tribe start to fade out of daily life and politics on Vimary, madly working at tasks most Tribals do not understand.

Mortuary and the Great Hill were moderately damaged during the Burning, but not so much that they became uninhabitable. The Yagans are thus resettling the area without making any major changes. While the elders and wise ones worry about the River, and the Pellis Artisans and Fleshers work like mad to give the death rites to the slain of the War, the common Yagans work on rebuilding.



FALLEN PERSPECTIVES

The Fallen came out of the Battle of Retribution as the top dogs on Vimary. They fought side by side with the Joanites, struck into the River of the Dream with the Yagans, fought corruption with the Shebans, and tricked and spied with the Dahlians. In many cases they even outdid their Tribal allies at the Tribes' own game. There is no doubt in the mind of any Fallen (or many Tribals, for that matter) that the Prophecy of Joshua is coming to pass. The Fallen have emerged strong and feared.

CHILDREN OF LILITH

The Children took heavy losses in the Battle of Retribution, nearly 16% casualties. Combined with their already low numbers the Children are in a precarious position. Two factors, however, promise some hope for the Children's future. First is that, despite their problems over Lilith's Spear, the Children are becoming very good at serving as middlemen for the Tribes and the Fallen. As a result they are well liked and respected by both groups, though they are occasionally put into bad situations by unreasonable demands from both groups. Second, the shrine of Lilith's body becomes a very popular pilgrimage point after the Battle of Retribution, and the Children find their ranks swelling with Tribals who desert their old Fatima to join them in the worship of their Fallen Goddess. The Children of Lilith also boast the most New Bloods among their numbers.

DOOMSAYERS

Of all the Fallen the Doomsayers took the fewest casualties from the Battle of Retribution, losing only about 6% of their number. However, the Doomsayers are riding the same high wave that most of the Fallen are, as they have seen the Prophecy of Joshua in action and have also seen their dire predictions of a crumbling world starting to come true. Many who once mocked the Doomsayers as fatalist crackpots started changing their tune after the Zoms rose. The Doomsayers are also working with the Yagans to deal with the problems of Specters in the River of Dream and are having surprisingly good relations with that Tribe. As a result many of the leaders of the Fallen, and a few leaders of the Tribals, are starting to look to the Doomsayers as advisors and prophets, hoping that they can help guide the way to a healed Vimary.

HERITES

In the wake of the Battle of Retribution, and with the current relations between Tribal and Fallen, the Herites are finding themselves between a rock and a hard place. After the Jackers and Joanites, they took the heaviest losses of the war, counting a 22% casualty rate. Unlike the Jackers, however, they have not gained a place of respect and are losing members to other groups. Combined with their shrinking numbers is the Herites' difficulty in dealing with the Fatimas and Tribals. With Vimary in such bad shape the prevailing attitude is that cooperation is necessary for survival, and the Herites are choking on that bitter pill. Some of the younger Herite leaders, Kyr especially, are starting to think that they may need to change their policies from open confrontation to more subtle methods. In the meantime it is the Herites who receive the most hatred and mistrust from the Tribes, and their very existence jeopardizes the current peace.

JACKERS

The Jackers are at both the highest and lowest point in their history. Taking more than 40% casualties during the Battle of Retribution has vastly reduced their numbers and took several of their important leaders and cells. However, at the same time Mek proved himself as a general, and now is high in the esteem of the Fatimas, the Tribals, and all the Fallen, establishing him as one of the preeminent leaders on Vimary. Other Jackers too have become nearly living legends, as even the Joanite Templars speak of their exploits in the Battle of Retribution with awe and a little fear. The Jackers are using their new status to establish themselves as the inheritors of the Joshuans' legacy, and are looking to establish themselves as a military force to rival or supersede the Joanites. Needless to say, many of the Joanite Old Guard are not happy with this.

LIGHTBRINGERS

The Lightbringers losses in the Battle of Retribution were at nearly 16%, which though lower than the Herites and Jackers, still proved their willingness to fight and die for their cause. Because of their bravery in the war, and because of the feeling of brotherhood and unity among the Fallen brought on by the success of the Battle of Retribution, the Lightbringers ranks are both swelling and gaining influence. There is little doubt in the minds of any that the Lightbringers will soon emerge as one of the dominant forces in Tribal/Fallen Politics.

Deus, Altara Ven, and Kymber continue to work to unify the Fallen into the Eighth Tribe. Their work is going well, and the majority of the Fallen now see themselves not as outcasts, but as leaders. Meanwhile, Hal and his followers are working with the Tribals, trying to steady and solidify relations between the Fallen and the Nation and to ensure that the current peace is not destroyed.



SQUATS AND KEEPERS

Though many thought of the Battle of Retribution as something between the Z'bri and the Tribes, the truth is that its effects were felt just as keenly by other groups. The fall of the H'l Kar and the flight of the surviving Z'bri, along with most of House Koleris, to Capal have changed the face of power in the Outlands. At the same time relations with Squats and Keepers are starting to polarize. Some Squat and Keeper bands are now nearly considered brothers, while others are becoming more hostile and distant.

VIMARY KEEPERS

The actions of War Band DELTA and the Keeper engineers who worked with the Army of Retribution have brought a new respect between those Keepers and the Tribals and Fallen. The Keeper warriors took fairly light losses, with only seven of their fifty-some members dying. After the Battle of Retribution the DELTA operatives return home and try to convince the other Keepers that more cooperation with the Tribals can only help both sides. Fallen Lightbringers start a similar push on their side of the fence.

Some of the older and more conservative Keepers, however, have only grown more wary of the Tribes. They saw parts of the madness and burning that the war turned into, and fear that the Tribals could be crazy enough to turn on Olympus next. Several voices among the Ancients start to speak of retreating deeper underground, and waiting for the current storm to pass.

NEAR LAND SQUATS

The Squats that fought with the Army of Retribution took heavy losses, as they were often used as suicide troops. Those who survived, however, have won the reluctant admiration of the Fallen and a few of the more open minded Tribals. Many squats have even been invited to join Fallen cells, and many of them have taken up the opportunity to join the "warrior sisterhoods." Lum still has not received the respect he wants so badly from the Tribals, but several Fallen leaders (Deus and Altara Ven in particular) are going out of their way to make him welcome among the Fallen.

The Squats that did not fight with the Army of Retribution also have taken a great number of losses, as fleeing Z'bri and Koleris raiders took out their rage upon the helpless villages in their path. The banks of the Great River for hundreds of clicks in each direction were nearly completely scourged of Squat Villages, and many have fled to the Oneida, Boarhead, or the Riders With Spirits for protection.

BOARHEAD

Though the Koleris break with the H'l Kar was a stroke of luck for the Tribes, it has the potential to be disastrous for Boarhead and the people of his confederation. The ranks of warrior Z'bri in Capal has swollen to a dangerous level, and the number of Koleris hunting the lands of the Confederation has reached a critical mass. Whole villages in outlying areas are starting to be destroyed, with large chunks of the population simply vanishing. Boarhead is all too aware that with the events in Vimary it is likely that the Capal Z'bri will come to regard humanity as a threat, and may decide to wipe them out preemptively. Many members of Boarhead's council are urging him to make an alliance with the Tribes and the Fallen. They hope to gain support against the Z'bri, and to avoid the wrath of those powerful enough to wipe out one of the largest concentrations of Z'bri. Boarhead, however, is stubborn and refuses to go to anyone in a position of weakness.



THE Z'BRI

Since not long after the Opening the Z'bri have ruled virtually unopposed over the H'l Kar, and have spread terror far and wide. Now the H'l Kar is broken, and the vast majority of the Z'bri who lived there have been slain. Though the Tribals never get an accurate body count, the Z'bri lost at least 65% of their Iv'chet, and a significant portion of their Lords. Though many Z'bri remain their power in Vimary is shattered forever. They are still dangerous individually, but are only monsters in the woods rather than an organized threat to the Nation.

House Koleris was almost untouched by the Battle of Retribution, and most of the House fled north to Capal. There they were greeted by their brethren, and with the newly swelled ranks the Lords of Capal started looking at the lands surrounding theirs with hungry eyes. They are, however, wary of the Tribes and the Fallen — for they now acknowledge that the Fatimas and their followers pose a significant threat. House Koleris is eager for battle, and may not wait for the Tribes to bring the war to them.

House Sangis was nearly decimated by the Battle of Retribution. They lost the most of any House, and are finished as a power. Though they still scheme and seek to rebuild their power, most have been forced to flee to Capal or Rhanto, where the Koleris and Melanis Lords look down on them and force them into subservience. Rather than face that fate, some Sangis still haunt the lands around Vimary, preying on those who stray too far from the safety of the group.

House Flemis was heavily damaged, nearly as badly as the Sangis were. The Flemis, however, managed to save more of their Serfs than the Sangis did, and have received a warmer welcome in Rhanto and Capal. The Flemis now seek to rebuild their collective, and to start their slow, inevitable spread across their new homes.

House Melanis fought hard in the Battle of Retribution, and took heavy losses. They were prepared for defeat, however, and so were able to retreat in good order at the end of the conflict. Most fled to Rhanto, where their House rules, and now scheme against the Fatimas and the Jackers, whom they see as their greatest enemy. No few Melanis Lords, however, have set up towers in the Outlands not too far from Vimary, and prey upon the remaining Squats to gain subjects for their continuing experiments.

THE RIVER OF DREAM

After the fall of the Ziggurat and the end of the Battle of Retribution, the River starts to settle down again. Within a couple of months after the war's end the number of specters and nightmares stalking the River diminishes enough that many Dreamers feel that things are heading back to normal. The truth,

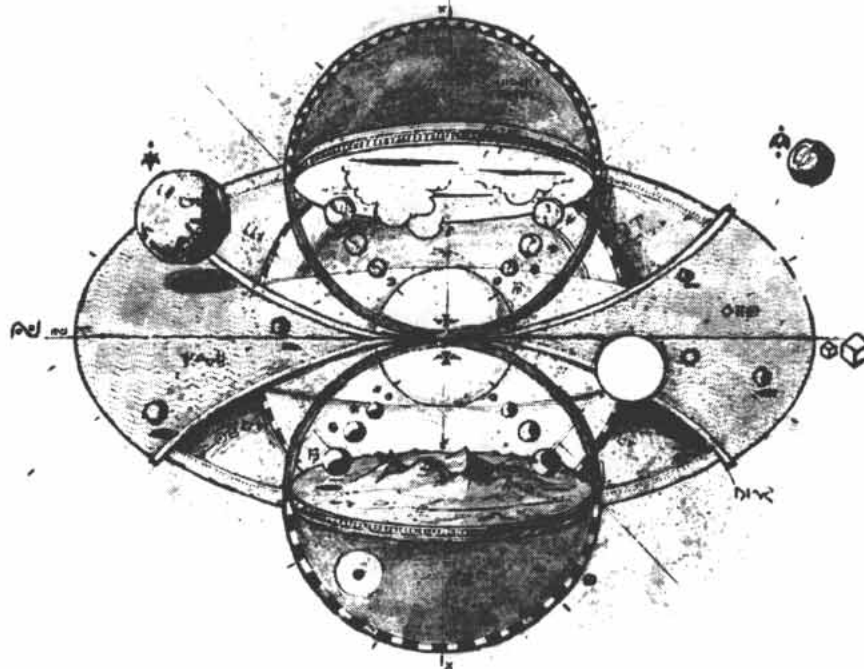
however, is that the River is still polluted and due to the impermeable Fold is unable to wash itself completely clean. Though Synthesis becomes usable again, many Dreamers report that using Synthesis too near the H'I Kar or the sights of major battles brings a tainted feeling or disturbing, half-incomprehensible visions.

Many Yagans, Doomsayers and other priestesses start to spend large amounts of their time and energy trying to remove the threat of specters and Zoms while searching for ways to cleanse the River. Many start to loudly curse the loss of Mary and Her children, and some feel that without the Forgive the task of cleansing the River may be impossible.

THE STATE OF VIMARY

Post-Battle of Retribution Vimary is, quite simply, a mess. For months after the end of the Battle of Retribution, the H'I Kar remains a giant corpse fire. Living Buildings and diseased Serf-fields are put to the torch by Yagans and Doomsayers working to save the souls of those lost in the making of the abominations. The Seven Fingers are being slowly rebuilt after being ravaged by the war. Bazaar and central Vimary was severely damaged by the Z'bri, and will require months of sustained effort to rebuild.

The worst, however, is not the damage to buildings or the fires in the north. The worst damage to Vimary is the Firmament, which is slowly sucking the life from Lai and Sunblessed. Because the central agricultural lands of Vimary are being depleted, food is becoming scarce and the coming winter looks to be a hungry one. Only Haven and the farmlands around Griffentowne are holding back full scale starvation, and it is not known how long they can hold out.



Chapter six: Weaver's Resources

I would tell you of the Battle of Retribution, but my tongue cannot catalogue the horrors. It would take a greater storyteller than I to spin that song.

— Benjamin Aria'on, to his children's children.



THE H'I KAR

Dominating the North Bank of the Great River for miles in every direction, and even spreading over parts of Northern Vimary, the H'I Kar is a vast and dangerous wasteland. Simply venturing into the waste is dangerous; trying to make war on the masters of it is nearly suicidal. The following resources can help Weavers make use of this dangerous territory.

LANDS OF THE Z'BRI

When the PCs are in the H'I Kar and the deeper parts of Abonom, the Weaver is encouraged to describe the terrain in detail. All that lives in the earth in these regions is twisted and perverted. No food or water exists that is not poisonous, diseased or tainted in some way. Weavers are encouraged to constantly remind the PCs of the disturbing nature of the terrain they are passing through, and to never let them take anything for granted as they might in normal wilderness areas. When traveling through these places, PCs should never be able to feel at ease or truly safe anytime they are not with a Fatima.

In these Z'bri lands, all the color appears to have been leached out of everything and even companions will begin to look washed out as the fatigue of battle sets in. Perspectives are skewed and distances cannot be judged clearly, leading to confusion and disorientation. Other senses, like sound and smell, are likewise confused. Screams and the sound of fighting will seem to be closer or farther away than their actual source. Echoes will be corrupted, changing the tone and intent of the words to darker ones when they are heard. Sometimes whispers carry, and at other times, shouts fail before they leave the throat. There are no nice smells in the H'I Kar that do not have some vile trap connected with them. Most smells are foul, food will be almost impossible to eat and one's own saliva will begin to taste of vomit and less savory substances as time goes on.

Everything in the Z'bri lands that is not bone fields or blasted and poisoned earth has some form of twisted life growing on it. There are the organ fields, mass graves and flesh-plant vineyards which Serfs and flesh-crafted insects tend to. Any Z'bri construction is a *Living Building* that uses flesh for almost all its parts; the bodies that make up such buildings, no matter how far they have been reduced to component muscles and organs, still live. Some are more sentient than others, and badly wounded PCs may find that the buildings in which they are seeking refuge are attempting to absorb or digest them.



LIVING BUILDINGS

The H'I Kar holds many buildings made of flesh and bone that have limited sentience. Flemis buildings tend to be part of the Hive mind, whereas Sangis buildings tend to be controlled by an Iv'chet whose body is part of the construction. Sangis Lords always refer to their Spires by the name they have given them and their Iv'chet "brain." The Ziggurat itself has several such personalities extending over its various regions.

The *Living Buildings* are detailed here, preceded by information on the defenses they can summon against intruders. Many of the Z'bri buildings have flesh-crafted defenses that will attack intruders. They have been detailed here by name, with corresponding descriptions and game stats. Many of the Flemis, Melanis and Sangis buildings encountered in *Revanche* will make use of these defense systems. Feel free to add your own or alter the lethality of the ones presented here. Following the description for each Living Building defense system are statistics for its use in the game. It is left to the Weaver to decide exactly what defenses the PCs will come up against in these various Living Buildings, although in some cases suggestions have been given.

Camouflage is a Target Number for Notice Skill checks to detect a defense before it can attack a person. These Notice rolls are at -2 when looking out for someone ahead of the person. When detected, the Living Building defense systems can be destroyed by brute force, and AR and STA ratings are given to represent the difficulties of doing this. Some devices will fight back, but most can be attacked once they are revealed without such a danger. Some traps are designed to have four or five of the same system layered in close proximity to one another to surprise incautious attackers. Many of these devices also receive a bonus to attack if they surprise an intruder, usually reflected in brackets after the Melee score.

Door-opening devices and disarming systems for defenses have various triggers and switches. Some require Sundering to activate, while others have organs and nerves that need to be touched in a certain way. For most PCs, the only way to figure out these devices is by trial and error or by being concealed and seeing Z'bri use them.

Lighting in Living Buildings can come from simple windows of bone and flesh or recessed organs that generate dull glows of various colors. The light organs work on various principles, but most are filled with a bioluminescent substance that glows when the building supplies the organ with heat and power.

- **Acid Nipple:** An acid-squirting nipple group will douse intruders or food for the Living Building in digestive juices to accelerate digestion. Four or five nipples are usually placed very near to one another when used as a defensive system. Camouflage 4 (3 in Sangis Building, because they are everywhere) Combat Sense 1/-1, To Hit 2/+2, DVx5, Range 2/4/8/16 (will burn each round thereafter for a number of rounds equal to the MoS, the Damage being equal to the original MoS minus one for each round thereafter), AR 3, STA 20. Hacking into these to kill them will subject the weapon used to a large amount of corrosive juices, likely damaging it. Bone is immune to the acid.

6. Weaver's Resources

• **Bone Blade Traps:** These shoot a spear or swing a razor-sharp bone blade when an intruder is seen by the device's eye, or when an object (like a floor rib) is touched without first giving a password (in Z'bri or Serf). Camouflage 5, Combat Sense 1/+2, Melee 2/+1* (if surprised, then +3), DVx10, AR 15, STA 40, has a 1 in 3 chance of shattering on metal armor.

• **Bone Sphincter Doors:** These doors are so thin as to be translucent when they are closed. They are the result of molding dozens of bones together to create several triangular tooth-like segments that bite toward one another to close a passageway. Camouflage 3, Combat Sense 2/+0, Melee 2/+2* (if surprised, then +4), DVx11, AR 20, STA 100, may shatter a tooth on metal armor on a 1 in 6 chance (reduce combat skills and damage by -1). If a door hits somebody with a MoS of 3 or more, it is considered to have caught her in its jaws and will crush/cut her for an automatic hit each round, inflicting a Deep Wound (reduced to a Flesh Wound if the victim is wearing metal armor or if allies with metal weapons help brace the door open).

• **Electric Tentacles:** These are a defense system to deter straying Serfs or to knock out or kill intruders. They are also used in torture rooms to assist in the application of pain. They function just like Tentacles (see below), but also have an additional electrical attack of Intensity 4-10 (**Tribe 8 Rulebook**, pp.153-154).

• **Gas Chamber:** When Sangis want to entertain, they usually use these chambers, constructed with bony and spiked floors, full of comfortable fleshy pillows. In these rooms, the Z'bri can get some assistance generating the mood through drugs. When one of several organs are pressed, the chambers fill with potent, gaseous drugs - POT 8, Onset: 4 rounds, both Euphoric and Hallucinogen which must be rolled for separately (**Tribe 8 Rulebook**, pp.152-153); also infects subjects with Sangis Atmosphere - PSY vs. 10 (**Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p.183, and **Horrors of the Z'bri** p.95). Camouflage 7.

• **Absorption Pit:** One potential trap is actually a disposal system that takes the form of a floor sphincter that is easily hidden in the flesh work designs of most Living Building floors. When it opens quickly, it can swallow a medium-sized or smaller person easily (BLD < 2). It will then either crush them with its powerful muscles and digestive juices (STR 2, Light Wound every six rounds) or send them off by mucus tube to a sewer tube. Camouflage 7.

• **Seed Dart:** The Sangis have a weapon that shoots a bone filled with potent disabling drugs. The weapon can only be part of a Living Building, and is usually mounted in a thick wall near an access point. It is sometimes used by the Sangis to force members from other Z'bri Houses to partake in their orgies. (Range 7 meters, ROF 0/12*, DVx3, POT 8, Onset: Instant, Euphoric; also infects victims with Sangis Atmosphere - PSY vs 11 (**Tribe 8 Rulebook** p.183, and **Horrors of the Z'bri** p.95).

• **Sphincter Door:** A very common feature in Z'bri architecture is the *Sphincter Door*, a longish passageway made of muscle that can clamp closed. Not particularly dangerous, it can nevertheless pummel and pin intruders. Camouflage 1 (or 6 for those deliberately hidden), Combat Sense 2/+3, Melee 2/+4 (if

surprised then +6), DVx3, AR 3, STA 90; if it hits, it will entangle the subject and has a STR of 4 for purposes of keeping its grip. These doors can suffocate ensnared victims; consider them to inflict a temporary Flesh Wound every five rounds someone is trapped. Such systems typically also alert the Serf or Iv'chet guards.

• **Tentacle:** The tentacle systems are a very common defense to keep Serfs from straying without harming them. Camouflage 4, Combat Sense 1/+1, Melee 1/+1* (if surprised then +3), Dodge 1/-1, DVx3, AR 5, STA 30; if it hits, it will entangle the subject and has a STR of 2 for purposes of keeping its grip. Such systems typically also alert the Serf or Iv'chet guards.

• **Living Flesh Walls:** Walls (floors and ceilings) are made of flesh, resin, bone and sometimes stone, varying in thickness from a few millimeters to a few meters. Living Flesh Walls are riddled with veins, arteries, nerves and nutrient channels. Larger support walls are typically almost a meter thick, and have even larger channels that can pass animals as large as a human. It is quite feasible to cut through walls, and examples of the Armor Rating and Stamina per one-meter-square section are given here and in associated Living Building text. Outer walls are known to scream when wounded, and also weep tears to quench flames. When attacking walls, the attacker rolls a normal to hit versus a defense of zero to calculate how much damage she inflicts. Blunt weapons suffer -2 to hit, except against Thin Bone and Mucus Walls.

• Thin Flesh Wall (AR 3, STA 20)

• Thin Bone Wall (AR 12, STA 40)

• Mucus Wall (AR 3, STA 40, STR 1 - repairs in 2 rounds)

• Internal Wall 10-centimeter-thick Flesh and Bone (AR 40, STA 100)

• Support Wall 1-meter-thick Flesh and Bone (AR 70, STA 150)



SANGIS PALACES

Sangis Lords live in palaces around the Ziggurat. Each palace is surrounded by large walls which enclose the Lord's possessions, keeping them safe. Guard Serfs led by Iv'chet protect this perimeter and also patrol the inside, which includes organ fields, twisted gardens, bathing pools, stables and the Serfs' quarters. These all sit at the base of the Lord's living quarters, a tower known as the Spire. The compound is filled with areas of flesh art and sculpture, from hedges of human hair to statues of growing bone. Compounds are typically separated from each other by roads, open sewers or nutrient river moats. The outermost compounds of the Sangis estates in H'I Kar are actually inhabited by more powerful Lords who use the space around them to cultivate exotic species of plant-organ vines.

HEARTSTONES

While characters may have had experience with heartstones in *St Christopher and the Croatan* (in the **Tribe 8 Companion**), **Broken Pact** or **Harvest of Thorns**, **Revanche** will probably be the first opportunity the Characters have had to hold one in their hand. Two heartstones play important parts in the events of **Revanche**; furthermore, Characters may have an opportunity to collect one or more on the battlefield.

Count Pyton: Felice's lover rests within his heartstone, allowing the Diplomat to pass through his mausoleum and into the further reaches of the River of Dream. She can also use the heartstone in her Synthesis rituals to avoid the negative modifiers inflicted for performing Synthesis in the presence of Z'bri or their taint. It is uncertain whether Felice was tutored by Pyton and can achieve this feat only with his permission, or if she has the inherent potential to be a Guide.

The Baron: Slaughtered by Agnes while Magdalen restrained him, the Baron was unable to flee to another body. The Sangis Lord's heartstone fell among the rubble and ruins of a Bazaar at war. The Baron rests uneasily, and his influence can be felt by those who carry his heartstone. It was some time before it found its way back to the Ziggurat, handed from one bearer to another in a meandering route northward until it was finally presented to the Prince Fa'Cul. Originally the Baron trusted Fa'Cul, but he was sorely disappointed. The Prince was careful to keep the heartstone contained in a specially designed chest to quiet its seductive whisper, and made arrangements to trade the Baron's soul for political gain.

TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

After the destruction of Tibor's heartstone, the Baron's may be the most powerful heartstone in existence. Not only can the heartstone be used as a conduit to the further reaches of the River and miscellaneous secondary orbs, but as it contains the soul of the founder of House Sangis, its destruction would prove disastrous for other members of the House. One of the things which bound the House together was a complex network of oaths and pledges of support, carefully worded and later manipulated, but incredibly strong nonetheless. This connection between the Baron and his vassals will cause them blinding pain if his soul were to be destroyed (no actions possible). After this subsides (a few minutes at most), the effluence of memories, emotions and other fragments of the Baron's soul will haunt the Sangis, distracting them with dream-like images and sensations (a negative modifier on all actions, ranging from -1 to -5).

The most dangerous aspect of the Baron's heartstone, however, is his still magnetic influence, radiating almost palpably from the stone. While the Baron cannot be described as thinking or even conscious, his soul still inspires impulses, both depraved and selfish, in those who carry it. The heartstone's journey to the H'I Kar, for instance, was the manifestation of the Baron's desire to return home to safety. After the heartstone is rescued by the Characters, other impulses will surface as the Baron revises his plans. He will certainly try and manipulate his bearers to avoid his own destruction, as well as persuading them to indulge in more and more depraved actions. Eventually, he may manipulate his bearers to prepare a ritual to resurrect him, a feat the Baron may well be capable of, even in an unconscious state.

SPOILS OF WAR

Not every Z'bri creates a heartstone at his death; rather, only the most potent Z'bri can maintain the concentration and control of the Old Arts even in the moment of death. In general, only Lords or those who have once been Lords are capable of the feat. When killing a Z'bri of such power, it is possible that the Characters may find a heartstone in the wake of its death. Knowing the dangers these heartstones pose to their 'winners,' both the Guides as well as the Sisterhoods on crusade try to collect as many of them as possible, keeping them out of the hands of the unprepared. Those who refuse to hand them over will probably find themselves the target of thievery attempts, both by those who approached them before as well others. Serf survivors, corrupted Fallen and Tribals, or even the Characters themselves may fall prey to the seductive draw of the heartstones. Most heartstones will seek a safe place to rest; more powerful ones will tempt their bearers to commit depraved acts and perhaps even attempt to resurrect the dead Lord.

KOL'S PLAGUE

Called Kola's Plague by the Tribals, this horrid plague has been a constant source of misery and death among the Serfs since the time of the camps. Kol's Plague has mutated, however, and is no longer as lethal in airborne vectors. It is now transferred from contact, though as little as a handshake or bump can spread the disease. It uses the write up for Kola's Plague on **Tribe 8 Rulebook** page 152, but has a contagion of 8 (contact).

Rather than using the decreased contagion of the mutated plague to help control it, the H'I Kar Serfs have taken to using it as a weapon, attacking enemies with balls made of the brain and bone matter of those slain by the plague. Anyone struck by these weapons must make an immediate Health test with a -3 penalty vs. the contagion of the plague.

FRATERNITY OF FREEDOM

The Fraternity of Freedom is a loosely organized group of about twenty-five Keepers who believe that continuing to hide under Vimary is to allow their lives to be governed by fear and paranoia. The Fraternity believes that in order to survive and flourish, they must quit the tunnels, and be prepared to fight for their continued existence. Since Garoth has the respect of the members of the Fraternity and is very passionate in his beliefs, the group looks to him for leadership and guidance.

They are a new generation of Keepers, who have seen what a lifetime underground has done to their parents and grandparents, and who realized, after the attack on Vimary, that the tunnels were not the protection that they had once believed them to be. They will not betray the other Keepers, but believe their views to be archaic and outdated. The Fraternity will do whatever it takes to build a life aboveground, or as close as they can at present - in the tunnels closest to the streets of Hom.

The Fraternity have gradually been making themselves indispensable to the people of Hom. The group's cooperation ensures that any member of the Fraternity can usually provide whatever their customers ask for. However, dealing with them usually comes with a steep price; the Fraternity will generally only accept food as payment. Without the support of the other Keepers, trade is the only way to ensure that they will not starve for their beliefs.



GAROTH, KEEPER, FRATERNITY OF FREEDOM

As the most respected member of the Fraternity, Garoth is regarded as the leader of the group, both within its ranks, and around Hom. During his time aboveground, he has recognized that though he keeps the relics of the World Before, the people of Hom will create the World to Come. More importantly, he has realized that these people who are on the brink of war are just like his ancestors, faced with a choice between hiding and fighting.

Due to this revelation, Garoth refuses to make the same mistakes that were made in years long past. He intends to make sure that the Fraternity has the opportunity to live outside of the tunnels, and perhaps, some day, become more involved.

Garoth has become well known and well regarded in Hom partially due to his impressive ability to procure goods (due to the Fraternity's cooperation and aggressive trading), and partially because he is agreeable, straightforward, and handles his business fairly.

Highlights: Caggy, Straightforward, Dedicated

Attributes: CRE +2, FIT -1, INF +2, KNO +1, PSY +1, WIL +1, STA 25 UD 2 AD 2

Skills: Firearms 1/0, Tinker 1/+2, Hagglng 1/+2, Leadership 1/+2, Read/Write (Keeper) 1/+1, Speak (Tribal) 1/+1, Tech Lore (Mechanics) 1/+1, Technosmithing (Jury Rig) 1

TIRK THE YOUNG, CHILD OF HOM

One of the first true Children of Hom, Tirk was never privy to life inside the Tribes. Many have told him that his body carries the grace and ease of a Magdalite, but Tirk shrugs this off. His mother was as foreign to him as Tribal Life, for she died when he came early — on the day of her fall. Cared for in infancy at the Goddess of Mercy Mission, Tirk learned to listen with care, as well as how to talk to people in the throes of madness and emotion.

By the time he was old enough to tear around the island, he had become the foster child of many a Fallen cell. Even though (and partially because) he holds no particular affinity to any of the Fallen factions, his winning charisma, his ease with people and his generally diplomatic and helpful personality have granted him the unique distinction of having no one on the island bear him any real enmity.

When the Tribals came, Tirk encountered his first measures of resistance, but has had little trouble circumventing it. As of late, he has been seeking out other youths amongst the Tribes and Fallen that tire of the continuous feuding. With them, he has been hard at work setting up a network of information. Where the Tribes and Fallen fail to communicate, Tirk says, he and his compatriots will be the voice of both. He is considered a member of the New Bloods.

Highlights: Charismatic, Politic, Dynamic

Eminences: Unity and Conviction

Attributes: APP +1, BLD -1, CRE +1, INF +2, PER +2, WIL +1, HEA +1, STA 25, UD/AD 3.

Skills: Combat Sense 1/+2, Dodge 1/0, Haggling 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 1/0, Human Perception 2/0, Investigation 2/+2, Leadership 2/+2, Lore (Fallen) 3/0, Melee 1/0, Notice 2/+2, Streetwise 1/+2



CELIA, DAHLIAN TINKER

Continuously amused by the foibles people manage to stumble into, Celia knows that many Tribals often find her sense of humor somewhat skewed. She delights in the lengths to which people will go to make their lives difficult for one other, and generally will help them out in any way that she can. Born into the Caravan of the Red Dawn, she spent a good deal of time among the Keepers in the Rust Wastes, and has as a result, an excellent network of contacts.

A lot of the time, Celia chooses to play up the finagling stereotype that the other tribes have of the tricksters in order to mask her true intentions and make it look like she's only out for material reward. Since the displaced Tribes have moved into living quarters with the Fallen, she has delighted every day in sparking conflict between them.

She does not intend to be malicious, but instead believes that learning comes best between people where clash and conflict are commonplace. Although Dahlia thinks Celia's involvement in the assassination attempt was unwise, the irony of its outcome was not lost on the Trickster. Someday soon, however, Celia may find herself the subject of her very own morality play.

Highlights: Devious, Rash, Amused.

Attributes: AGI +1, CRE +2, INF +2, PSY -1, WIL +1, HEA 0, STA 25, UD 4, AD 3.

Skills: Athletics 1/0, Combat Sense 1/0, Craft (leather working) 3/+2, Disguise 2/+2, Dodge 2/+1, Haggling 3/+2, Hand-to-Hand 1/+1, Seduction 1/0, Speak (Keepspeak) 2/0, Sneak 1/+1, Streetwise 2/+2, Theatrics 1/+2, Trade 1/0, Synthesis (Metamorphosis) 2.



FELICE HEVKIN. WITHERED ROSE

Felice was born and bred to be a dazzling socialite with a ready smile and entertaining wit; the fact that she also possessed an agile mind made her an ideal candidate for the Diplomats, who used her for a number of negotiations and maneuverings among the Tribes. Her life of privilege was over, however, when she stumbled over evidence that the Magdalites regularly dealt with the Z'bri. In her horror, she made indiscreet inquiries and showed her hand.

The Masters did not banish her, since they were loath to let her information get to Hom. They instead assigned her to the Withered Roses, as a Diplomat to Count Pyton in the Ziggurat. When the Sangis Lord fell out of favor with the Baron, he moved into the western outskirts of the H'I Kar. Felice followed, not simply because she was attached to Count Pyton as his diplomatic liaison to the Nation, but also because she had succumbed to his seductions and become his regular lover. Alone and forgotten on the fringe of H'I Kar, Felice and Count Pyton grew closer, eventually trading secrets about their respective groups and their understanding of the world. When the Baron called the Count to war on the Nation, Felice was placed in control of his realm.

Count Pyton returned with a festering wound, and a day later he died in secrecy. On his deathbed he told Felice that he would create a heartstone, a resting place for his soul, and entrusted Felice with its safety. When he died, Felice took up both his heartstone and his place permanently, maintaining the hamlet in his name. No other Z'bri knew that Pyton had died, and Felice did nothing to inform them. Slowly Felice realized she had no reason to remain in the H'I Kar, and when couriers meant for Pyton arrived with word of Fa'Cul's embryonic alliance, she saw her chance to win her way home.

Highlights: Laconic, Scheming, Depraved

Attributes: AGI +1, APP +2, BLD -1, CRE +2, INF +2, PSY -2, WIL +2

Skills: Dance 1/+1, Dodge 1/+1, Dreaming 2/-2, Etiquette 2/+2, Grooming 2/+2, Human Perception 2/0, Intimidate 2/-1, Leadership 2/+2, Lore (Z'bri) 2/0, Notice 1/0, Riding (Sangis Mount) 2/+2, Seduction 2/+2, Synthesis (Nitrous) 2

B'ARES, SANGIS LORD TURNED HUNTER

B'ares had reveled in the pleasures of his estate north of the Ziggurat since the days of the Liberation. Like all of the Z'bri, he grew more and more corrupt with each passing year, his lust for blood and flesh driving him to more and more horrible atrocities. He looked forward to the coming Battle of Retribution, confident at first that it would only offer him more pleasure. It did not. To his surprise, he watched his people fall to the same madness that grips the Army of Retribution, and he finally, after capturing the PCs, realizes that even he has had enough of the hatred and lust that has consumed his life so far. With that realization, he is transformed before the PCs' eyes into a creature of sorrow and regret, a Hunter.

Highlights: Solemn, Sorrowful, Doomed

Attributes: AGI +3, APP +4, BLD +3, CRE +1, FIT +1, INF +2, PER +2, WIL +3, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 45, UD, AD

Skills: Combat Sense 3/+2, Dodge 2/+3, Etiquette 3/+2, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Intimidate 2/+3, Leadership 4/+2, Melee 3/+3, Seduction 4/+4, Tactics 3/+1, Sundering (Soul Stealing, Appeasement, Animation) 4.

Note: B'ares' Sundering skill fades soon after his transformation.

THE FOUR WINDS OF VEN-GEANCE

The Four Z'bri besieging Pyton's hamlet are out to collect a blood debt of long ago, one they might finally be able to collect in the chaos after the Burning of Vimary. Of the four, Klu'rood was once a Lord; his vassal Spa'word was delivering a payment of Serfs to a Flemis Lord as payment; Dai'mahn and Sacr'hart acted as representatives to collect the payment. Pyton and his household swept in and stole the Serfs, resulting in the Flemis losing the support of their Lord and impoverishing Klu'rood. Now all four seek vengeance for Pyton's crimes of a century before; they simply do not know he is already dead.

SPA'WORD. KOLERIS IV'CHET

Spa'word has always been an Iv'chet, although he once aspired for more; his loyal service to Klu'rood earned him a great deal of favor, and he expected his Lord to transfer him into a larger and stronger body. His hopes were dashed when Pyton defeated him and stole his cargo of Serfs; he has harbored a deep hatred ever since.

Highlights: Reckless, Impulsive, Blood-mad

Attributes: AGI +3, BLD +3, CRE -1, FIT +3, WIL +2

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+3, Athletics 3/+3, Combat Sense 3/0, Dodge 2/+3, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Intimidation 3/+3, Melee 4/+3, Sundering (The Burning, The Shattering) 2

Weapons: Claws (x15), Body Block (x20), Tail Whip (x10), Bone Greatsword (x25), Spine Armor (+10)

KLU'ROOD, KOLERIS IV'CHET

Once a powerful Koleris Lord, Klu'rood arranged with Dai'mahn and Sac'hart's master for a number of Serfs to be sculpted into powerful war machines. He dedicated more of his corral of Serfs into this endeavor, and when they were hijacked by Pyton he was ruined, relegated to supporting more powerful Z'bri's endeavors. He blames Pyton for his failure.

Highlights: Careful, Fuming

Attributes: AGI +2, BLD +2, CRE +2, FIT +3, KNO +1, PER +3, PSY +2, WIL +3

Skills: Athletics 2/+2, Combat Sense 3/+3, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Intimidation 3/+2, Melee 3/+2, Notice 3/+3, Tactics 2/+2, Sundering (The Shattering, Holding) 3

Weapons: Claws (x13), Paired Spiked Whips (x20), Scale Armor (+15)

DAI'MAHN, FLEMIS IV'CHET

The cleverer of the two Flemis Iv'chet, it was Dai'mahn who ensured their survival after they lost favor with their Lord and the greater Collective. Selling their services to the highest bidder in H'I Kar, he managed to keep the two of them in fresh Serfs to maintain their degrading bodies. He has joined the others in the assault on Pyton, not out of revenge, but because he desires his quarter of Pyton's Serfs.

Highlights: Enterprising, Scheming

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +5, CRE +3, FIT +2, KNO +2, PER +3, WIL +3

Skills: Athletics 1/+1, Combat Sense 1/+3, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Melee 1/+1, Notice 3/+3, Sundering (The One Thought, Assimilate, Inflate) 2

Weapons: Body Slam (x10), Bite (x20)

SACR'HART, FLEMIS IV'CHET

Sacr'hart moves as he thinks: slow and plodding, but never missing a step. When he lost the Collective's favor, he nearly allowed himself to waste away, but was eventually persuaded by Dai'mahn to strive after survival. His thoughts, never quick, have also never left his deep hatred of Pyton, which threw his stable life into such disarray.

Highlights: Sedentary, Thorough

Attributes: BLD +5, CRE -1, FIT +3, KNO +3, PER +2, PSY +2, WIL +4

6. Weaver's Resources

Skills: Combat Sense 1/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/0, Tactics 3/-1, Sundering (Assimilation, Body Severing) 3

Weapons: Body Block (x15), Punch (x10)

ARANOS SCOUT (MELANIS ABOMINATION)

Less human than spider, the Melanis bred the Aranos Scouts to penetrate Sangis strongholds and return with secrets. Their bodies are only one and a half meters tall, compact and quick. Rather than hair they have a nest of quills, and spines instead of fingers. Aranos Scouts possess eight eyes arrayed about their forehead, for a better viewing arc.

The spines are strong enough to easily climb most surfaces, and rough pads on their hands and feet likewise aid them. Scouts' ash-gray skin can change with the terrain, making them nearly impossible to spot should they hold still or move at a crawl.

Aranos Scouts are very susceptible to mental domination, however. The Melanis intended them to see and remember everything on a journey, only to have those memories removed by the Melanis later. In a sense, the Scouts are little more than self-motivated cameras.

Attributes: AGL +1, FIT -1, PER +2, CRE +1, WIL -2, BLD -1, STR -1, HEA -1, STA 20, UD 6

Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 2/-1, Camouflage 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 1/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Notice 2/+2, Stealth 3/+1

Special: Spines (UD+5, +2 to climbing tests), Shifting Skin (+2 to Camouflage, +1 to Stealth)

SANGIS HONOR GUARD

The elite of House Sangis, Fa'Cul has selected the most powerful and veteran fighters from her House to accompany her. Due to the importance of the event, those who would normally never serve as mere guards, many of them Lords with vassals of their own, are in attendance. They have garnered many powerful favors for doing so.

Highlights: Careful, Suspicious

Attributes: AGI +3, APP +4, BLD +2, CRE +2, FIT +3, PER +3, PSY +2, WIL +3

Skills: Athletics 2/+3, Combat Sense 2/+3, Dodge 3/+3, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Intimidation 2/+2, Melee 3/+3, Tactics 3/+2, Sundering (Soul Stealing, one other) 4

Weapons: Bone Sword (x20), Leather Armor (+5)

FLEMIS SHIELD-WALL SERFS

After the raids on Abonom, and with a war with the Tribes on the horizon, the Flemis group-mind examined their previous battle strategies and decided that it needed to use tactics that drew upon the strength of a hive-mind and group singularity. The result was the creation of the Shield-Wall Serf.

The creation of a Shield-Wall is a horrid operation in which the minds of between one and three dozen Serfs are bound together and then stripped of any purpose other than the directive of group combat. The Serfs' bodies are modified, with huge shields and the massive muscles needed to use them added to, and replacing, the right arm of every Serf. The Serfs are then all armed with long spears, and have group shield wall and phalanx tactics burned into their minds. The result is that all Shield-Wall Serfs always know their exact position in relation to every other member of their wall, never panic, and never lose formation.

In combat the Shield-Wall Serfs fight as a perfect unit. They form into ranks, shields outwards and spears forward. In perfect unison most of the Serfs in a wall will use their spears to keep the enemy at bay (using the Keep at Bay maneuver, **Tribe 8 Companion** page 105), while one or two will then use the cover provided by the wall to make a heavy blow (Heavy Blow maneuver, **Tribe 8 Companion**, page 105 — save that there is no defense penalty due to the protection of the rest of the shield wall). The group fights patiently and methodically, grinding down opponents rather than going for a quick kill.

Highlights: Patient, Coordinated, Singular Mind.

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +2, CRE -2, FIT +2, INF -3, WIL +2, STR +2, HEA +1, STA 40, AD 10.

Skills: Combat Sense 2/0, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 1/+1; - Melee 3/+1, Notice 1/0, Tactics 2/-2.

Special: Shield-Wall Serfs always attack in groups of at least 1 dozen. If reduced to less than that number the remaining Serfs will retreat and attempt to join the nearest Shield-Wall. When fighting in a group, Shield-Wall Serfs gain a +2 to all Combat Sense and Tactics rolls.

Weapons and Armor: Scales and Chitin (AR 12), Long Spears (x12), Metal Tower Shields (+3 parry, x5, AR 20).

STONERUNNER

(SANGIS ABOMINATION)

Stonerunners resemble bipedal canines, their profile sleek, long-muscled and well suited for long-distance travel. Their bodies are thin and long-legged; their extremities bear claws for climbing and better traction. Originally created for the express purpose of scouting the edges of a Lord's territory for raiders and straggling squats, Stonerunners have recently come into use as messengers between Lords. In wartime Stonerunners are generally used to flank attackers, as they are fast enough to hit and run as well as occupy the attention of cavalry.

Attributes: AGL: +1 APP: -1 CRE: -1 FIT: +2 PSY: -2 BLD: -1 PER: +1 STR: 0 HEA: 0 STA: 25 UD: 5

Skills: Athletics: 2/+2, Combat Sense: 1/+1, Dodge: 1/+1, Hand-to-Hand: 2/+1, Notice: 1/+1, Navigation: 2/0

Weapons and Armor: Claws (UD+4), Thick Hide (AR 4)

