

An Adventure/Short Story for *TORG: ROLEPLAYING THE POSSIBILITY WARS*™

TM

TORG

NO QUARTER GIVEN



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For Revenge...

NO QUARTER GIVEN

By Brian Sean Perry

For Revenge...





Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

No Quarter Given



<i>Introduction</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Prologue</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Prologue Two</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Act One: The Missing Explorer</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Chapter One:</i>	
<i>Adventure into the Unknown</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Act Two: Search for a Stelae</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Chapter Two: Reunion and Betrayal</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Act Three:</i>	
<i>London Bridge is Falling Down</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Chapter Three: The Carredon Cometh</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Epilogue</i>	<i>64</i>





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"Will you walk into my parlor?" said
the spider to the fly;

"'Tis the prettiest little parlor that
ever you did spy."

— The Spider and the Fly
Mary Howitt 1799-1888

"But you had best look quick, little
fly;

"For all too soon, you shall die!"

— Araneae



Introduction

You Have Nothing to Fear...



No Quarter Given is an adventure for *Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. You must have the roleplaying game to play this adventure. The *Orrorsh* sourcebook is also extremely useful.

Southeast Asia, as well as the rest of the Earth, is under siege by the Possibility Raiders from other cosms. A High Lord called the Gaunt Man has recently been released from the imprisoning force of the Heart of Coyote. He has resumed control and begun to make up for the time lost in the battle with the eternity shard. This adventure involves a group of player character Storm Knights preventing the Gaunt Man from acquiring too much power.

Usually adventures for *Torg* are designed only to be read by the gamemaster. However, *No Quarter Given* contains sections of fiction for both gamemasters and their players. After reading the prologue, the players can follow the adventures of another Storm Knight group that they are assisting. The two groups will meet at the end of Act One and then separate to finish their own missions.

A final warning to the buyer: *No Quarter Given* is an adventure for *experienced* characters. While they will not be facing the Gaunt Man themselves, they will be facing a few of his most promising Nightmares and a member of his Hellion Court. Any characters that cannot handle the stress of the action will die.

Starting Up

Gamemasters should allow their players to read the two Prologues prior

to Act One. The remainder of the fiction pieces should be read after the act that they follow is finished. The adventure acts themselves should only be read by the gamemaster. If you wish to photocopy the Prologues for this use, we give you permission here.

Act One contains the necessary details for starting the player characters on the road to Orrorsh. If they are already in Orrorsh then most of the first scene can be deleted.

Adventure Background

The Gaunt Man is the High Lord responsible for the invasion of Earth. Along with his Darkness Device, Heketon, the Gaunt Man plotted with several other High Lords to conquer the Earth. But in the early days of the invasion, the Gaunt Man was set back when he became entrapped by the Heart of Coyote, a powerful eternity shard destined to protect the Earth.

When he emerged, victorious, from the fight with the Heart of Coyote, he gained its great store of possibility energy. With this energy, he began to make plans to end his long thirst for conquest; he wishes to finally expand his realm, which was delayed by his absence, and to exact revenge upon all Storm Knights. He blames them for all of his troubles and realizes their importance as defenders of Earth. Once they have been removed, his conquest will be a relatively easy task.

However, as can be seen in the adventure *The Gaunt Man Returns*, these plans have yet to reach fruition. The ultimate revenge on the stormers will take place in *No Quarter Given*.





Adventure Synopsis

Although the Gaunt Man is nearly all-powerful, his brilliance allows him to realize that he does have flaws. Therefore, after creating his plans, the Gaunt Man consults his mirror, Wicked, to determine the source of his greatest threats. The mirror seeks out the answer to his query and presents the images of two groups of Storm Knights, one group being your players and the other being the characters of the fictional adventure.

With this knowledge, the Gaunt Man sends forth his minions to trap and destroy the two groups. Unfortunately, it is the very trap that causes the Knights to become involved. In Act One, your players are summoned to Orrorsh by one of the Gaunt Man's nightmares, Araneae, a twisted offspring of Basjas (of the Hellion Court). She invites the characters under the false pretense of finding her lost hus-

band. Once they do arrive, she plans to encase them in her magical webs and destroy them.

But the characters in the fiction cross paths with your players and Araneae is, hopefully, defeated. The players are informed of the true mission to defeat the Gaunt Man and are left to destroy one of the stelae supporting the Victorians' bridge to Gaea. Act Two has them following the lead of a Victorian explorer that claims to know the location of the cult that is defending the stela. They follow the explorer but are betrayed as he is actually the head of the cult and is leading them into an elaborate ritual planned to destroy them.

Act Three takes place after they defeat the explorer and his cult. After being led astray, they must start anew their own search for the stela. They are unable to find it at the cult's temple, but are able to speak with the local villagers to determine its true location.

The conclusion of the adventure pits the players against Lord Stanton

Cheltenham and ends either with the group's demise or the defeat of Cheltenham and the uprooting of the stela.

The fiction adventure is left undetailed so as not to ruin your reading.

Perseverance

Although possession of the *Orrorsh* sourcebook is helpful, it is not mandatory. *No Quarter Given* includes an outline of one of the most important mood elements of Orrorshan adventures, Perseverance. With it you can truly make your players feel afraid for their characters' lives. Throughout this adventure are places where the characters can gain and lose Perseverance. This is a measure of how well they are handling the horrors and insanities placed upon their minds. As a gamemaster, you can call for a Perseverance check whenever a truly horrific event occurs.



Q: How is this done?

A: Each group adventuring in Orrorsh either has or is given a perseverance rating (see Act One for groups new to Orrorsh; they begin with a Perseverance of eight). This is a measure of how cool they can remain when their very souls are in jeopardy. If you feel that an event has overcome previous learning experiences, or is simply an unexpected, horrific shock, they should make a check. At this time, one player makes a roll for the group, finds the bonus number and adds it to the group's Perseverance number. This roll can not be assisted by card play or possibilities, but the character can roll again on 10s and 20s.

Q: What is this total?

A: This total is then checked against the difficulty of the act or adventure in question. **For this adventure, the Perseverance difficulty number is 23.** If the characters manage to generate a total over this number, they have overcome the Power of Fear and continue onward.

But if they should fail, the horror that they are facing gains an advantage. Every monster detailed throughout the adventure has a *Fear Rating*. This rating is used whenever characters fail their Perseverance check. The monster gains a number of "fear points" equal to the number of Storm Knights multiplied by the monster's Fear Rating. With these points, the creature can use any of the following powers:

One-Point Powers:

- Steal one card per point out of a player's pool or his hand.
- *Stymie* an opponent.
- Spend a possibility for a roll-again. This is granted even to those monsters without a possibility rating.

Two-Point Powers:

- Produce an *Up* result.
- Cause a Storm Knight to be *Setback*.
- Mark a Storm Knight for Death; that Knight may not spend any Possibilities or cards to remove damage for the remainder of the scene.

Q: How often should I call for the check?

Congratulations

The Storm Knights in the party detailed throughout the fiction are also found in *The Character Collection*. These five characters were selected as the winners from player contributions. Congratulations go out to:

Creator Character

Marc Brenowitz	Andre Duchard
Pati Conley	Ti-Dara Jarnel
Bill Olmesdahl	Vito Tattaglia
Steve Tanner	Kevin Middleton
Dan Viger	Captain Verdigris

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The author also wishes to acknowledge the following sources:

Mary Howitt ("The Spider and the Fly")

The Bible (for the beginning of Prologue)

William Shakespeare (for the ritual in Prologue 2; *Macbeth* Act IV, sc.I)

A: Although truly cruel game-masters can justifiably call for a check every time the characters encounter the least disturbing thing, this does not make for a fun adventure. The purpose of Perseverance is to maintain a steady level of tension, fear and horror. Orrorsh thrives on fear, not despair. Characters that fail Perseverance checks too often go insane and outlive their usefulness in Orrorsh. Use Perseverance in moderation (twice per scene is a good target number), but do not make the adventure too easy.

Q: I look ahead at the number of dangerous encounters and think, "Isn't the Perseverance DN a little high?"

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. Orrorsh is a very nasty place and this is one of the toughest adventures that your characters will probably ever go on. The adventure pits the group against two younger Nightmares (Orrorshan territorial bosses) and a member of the Hellion Court. Although at first they are unaware of the true purpose of their mission, the difficulty that they face in making their checks should clue them in and warn them to be very careful about their actions.

As mentioned before, do not overwhelm them with Perseverance

checks, but never let up either. This adventure should not treat them with kid gloves if they screw up. This time if they screw up, they die.

Q: What does Perseverance have to do with the Power of Fear?

A: The Power of Fear is another mechanic through which Orrorsh maintains its dominance. Because of it, Storm Knights may not use some of their tremendous abilities (see the *Torg Rulebook* for greater detail on these)

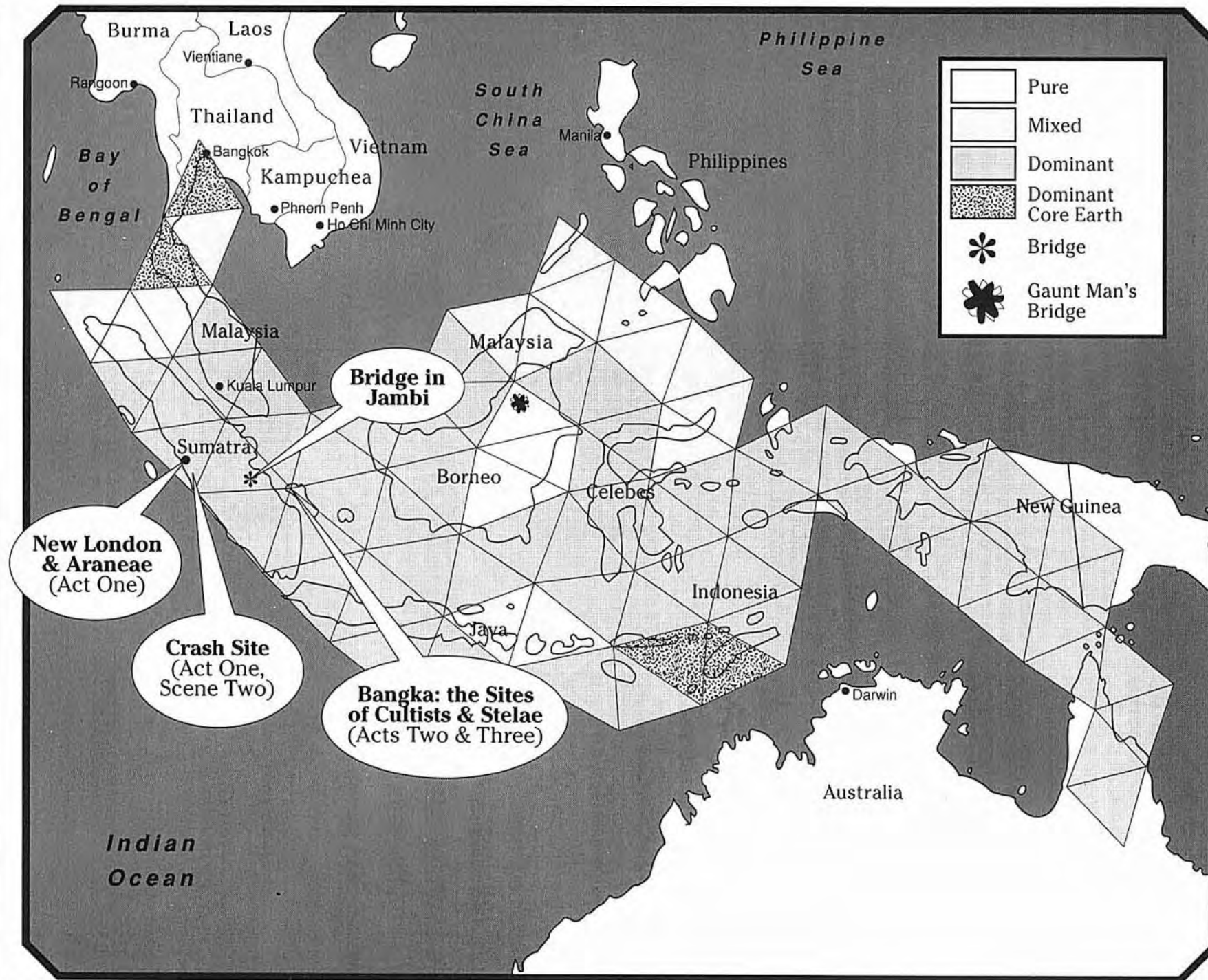
- They may not invoke Reality Storms.
- They may not play for the critical moment with their cards.

The Power of Fear can only be overcome by achieving a Perseverance value greater than the adventure DN + 12 (which would guarantee a success without a roll). Because of the intended difficulty of *No Quarter Given*, this probably won't happen. The Storm Knights are constantly kept on the razor's edge and are not provided with enough confidence-building scenes that would allow them to overcome the Power of Fear.

Q: Can I go home now? I don't like this Orrorsh place.

A: Nope.





Prologue



"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

"And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness."

— Genesis 1:1

The Gaunt Man casually returned the book to the case beside him and thought upon these words. In all his conquests, in all the realms that had fallen before his might, never had he witnessed words so close to the truth, yet so mistaken. The darkness did indeed come first. A darkness that was pure. A darkness that was power. Its identity was the Void.

As the Gaunt Man thought on, he picked up a small dagger, hued with crimson and turquoise, the colors of possibility. Then came Eternity. This was the light. But it was not good, as the book had claimed. Its white impurity stained the darkness. And since the Void could not allow itself to be blemished, it waged a war upon the Eternity. This war was the birth and death of all things.

The Gaunt Man looked upon a globe that sat before him. He spun it idly and continued. Out of that war came two beings, one his master and the other his enemy. Those beings were the Nameless One and Apeiros. Like their creators, they were aspects of darkness and light. The Nameless One took after the Void. It was the devourer, pure and dark, possessor of the traits of strength. Apeiros, light's champion, was creative, truthful, enlightened ... pitifully weak.

And so, like their masters, they renewed the war and darkness continued its mastery over light. The only difference this time was that the Nameless One was capable of chasing Apeiros from the Place of the Void. Much like the fool Adam, Apeiros was driven from Paradise.

Victorious, the Nameless One returned to the Void, but realized its sanctuary had been lessened. It had not been sufficient to drive Apeiros out; her continued existence was a stain that had to be destroyed before the purity could be restored. Cain had to kill Abel. So the Nameless One created the Darkness Devices (the Gaunt Man smiled a bit at this, casting a glance over to Heketon). Then he placed

within them the ability to find the most powerful and righteous. Those beings that they found would in turn seek out Apeiros' creations in all their forms and undo them. The devices would also find the one greatest of these "Possibility Raiders," the one called the Torg. This being, whose power would be shadowed only by the Nameless One himself, would be able to find and destroy Apeiros. Only then would the Void be returned to its proper state.

As the Gaunt Man finished his thoughts, he thrust his dagger forward into the teetering globe and forced it to stop violently. Its point was neatly nestled between the islands of Indonesia in the southeast Pacific, the area which he claimed as his domain.

"I will be this Torg!" he shouted triumphantly and watched as a small creature skittered across his laboratory floor. It cowered underneath some diabolical device, waiting to see what form its master's rage would take this time. But no destruction came, instead the Gaunt Man moved confidently to the far side of the room to a wall hanging. He stood before it for a moment then drew the curtain aside.

Behind it lay the mirror Wicked. It served the Gaunt Man in many ways. It was his confidant, listening patiently to his tantrums and tirades. It could find where his enemies lie and aided in transporting his armies to attack. It could reveal the deceptions and treacheries planned by his supposed allies. And it could sooth his nerves and bolster his confidence. As much as a being like the Gaunt Man can have, it was his lover.

The Gaunt Man stood before the mirror, taking in his own image. Previously, Wicked had shown an image of death and power. The Gaunt Man once saw a tall, proud man. One whose plans to become Torg saw few setbacks and fewer outright defeats. Now he saw a hollow man, lean and very tired. The lines in his face were pronounced and his hair graying. Wicked showed him the tolls that this world had taken and as he continued to stare, he became angry with this image.

"Wicked, why does this world trouble us so?" he queried. "Our plan to reap this world of her possibilities was flawless. But we did not anticipate the power of her protectors. Why does she have so many of these accursed Storm Knights? Why do stormers from other worlds come to her aid? Could it be that Apeiros is here? Or is she



protecting this one from afar?

"My pet, the Carredon has been slain. Storm Knights, whose audacity exceeds tolerance, have violated my home. A mere shard of possibilities kept me bound for nearly two years and close allies have turned against me in that time.

"I desire revenge, Wicked, cold, long, painful revenge!" he exclaimed. "I will rape this planet and all others like it. I will use Apeiros' own precious possibilities to seek her out. And when I find her, she will pay for disturbing the Void. She will suffer and she will die."

The Gaunt Man whirled on his toes, launching another dagger across the room. Its path found the small creature that had fled his fury before. He picked up the wounded thing, removed the dagger and cleaned the blade upon his forearm. He brought the creature before Wicked as if to share it. The creature squealed for mercy, but found none. The Gaunt Man closed his hand about its neck, bled the life out of it and discarded the husk.

"They will not escape me this time. Like this poor pitiful creature, there are no hiding places. Apeiros will not be able to protect her Storm Knights now. I will resurrect the Carredon. I will let it loose upon this planet and the planet

will squeal for mercy. Then I will expand my realm. I will cover the globe and squeeze. The possibilities will flow out like blood and the Earth shall perish. I will have my revenge!

"But," he inhaled cautiously, "we must be careful, Wicked. These stormers are cunning and resourceful. We can not afford any more mistakes. Our allies must be absolute in their loyalty and our enemies must be treated with caution. Therefore, Wicked, I ask you where lie my greatest threats?"

The Gaunt Man's image faded away from Wicked's surface. Brief moments later, it was replaced by the image of two small groups of people. Both reeked of possibility energies, honor and thus, weakness. The Gaunt Man glared at these Storm Knights, plotting their demise. He turned away from Wicked and headed out of his laboratory. He had to prepare for the Carredon. He had a world to conquer.

As he left, the images in Wicked's face slowly faded. They were slowly replaced by a glowing almost maniacal, Cheshire-like smile. And then, quietly, almost imperceptibly, the remains of the unfortunate creature vanished.



Prologue Two



The nightmare, or perhaps *vision* (she wasn't sure), was always the same. It began with darkness, enclosed by a tunnel. Then a faint light appeared at the far end, calling her. And as Ti-Dara approached, she realized that it was the flickering glow of torch light.

The tunnel opened into an enormous cavern. It sat about fifteen feet above the ground with rocky walls climbing up to it and beyond into the darkness above. Beneath her, at the center of the cavern, was a pit of boiling liquid. The torch lights that drew her in danced with the rising vapors. Their flickering light cast an eerie hue upon the surface. Although she was a distance away, she could almost swear that the pit was filled with boiling blood, its red hues being far too dark for anything volcanic.

Along its edge, Ti-Dara spied several other figures. All but one were cloaked in dark red robes, hoods covering their grim visages. The remaining man wore a ragged overcoat and brimmed hat. His appearance and intent stare caricatured a scarecrow watching over his fields.

As Ti-Dara made her way to the floor, she spotted another priest entering from just below her. She froze, hoping not to be spotted. After he made his way past, she eased herself behind a fallen rock to avoid discovery. The priest who had just entered bore a large sack. He approached and addressed the leader.

"Oh, victorious Gaunt Man," he began and recognition flashed across Ti-Dara's mind. She remembered earlier visions. Ones that showed her power as a Storm Knight and revealed the Gaunt Man as one of the terrible beasts behind the invasions. The scarecrow before her was that man and just the remembrance of those earlier visions alerted her every instinct to flee. But she found herself unable to. Instead she sat, mesmerized by the proceedings, and watched as they began.

"Lord and master, we have brought to you the bones and ashes of the Carredon, your greatest of creations." The priest continued, "We merely await your word. The pit of resurrection has been prepared, as have our souls. We willingly give our lives so that your beast may be brought back. Our souls will become as one to grant you the power necessary to destroy the Earth and her protectors."

Ti-Dara began to shake with fear and anticipation. The tension in the cavern rose as the priests positioned them-

selves about the pit. While they arranged themselves, Ti-Dara noticed several additional onlookers. In separate tunnels about the cavern were four other people. To her left was a sturdy-looking man in a wheelchair. She sensed that his disability was only physical and that his resolve was infinite in strength. To his left was a much larger man, ogresque in stature. He wore a very proper pin-striped suit and smoked away at a cigar. Directly across from her, a smaller man descended the wall. Even though she knew where he should be, she found it difficult to follow his movements. They were finely masked by his stealth and his garb. Lastly, to her right, was an edeinos whose appearance was anything but normal. He seemed to be wearing a rocket suit, an outfit that was quite different from the skins she had seen other edeinos wearing. She would have pondered it longer but her thoughts were brought back to the pit as the priests began to chant. The Gaunt Man raised the oversized bag above his head and emptied its contents into the pit. Large bones and ashes mixed with the pit causing the pit to churn even more intensely. The Gaunt Man then raised his cane above his head and glared at the cavern ceiling. When he joined the priests in their chant, a faint beam of light descended from out of the darkness. The light grew everblinding and came accompanied by the screams of a thousand tortured souls.

The priests, too, added to the cacophony as they began to writhe, wracked by unending pain. They struggled desperately, shouting and clawing at their flesh, fending off invisible beasts, attempting in vain to protect their souls, but eventually, one by one, they lost their battles, and out of their collapsed forms rose small ghost-like apparitions. These too tried to avoid their fates, whirling about the room, seeking an escape from the light. They fled between the rocks and even about Ti-Dara, but they could not find solace from the light. Finally, the last of the souls were drawn in and as they merged with the light, the light exploded, leaving the cavern in darkness and deafening silence.

Ti-Dara lost track of time as she recovered. She slowly regained her sight, while the cavern remained still. She fought to keep her breathing quiet so that her presence would not be detected and awaited the next event. Since she could not detect them, she assumed that the other onlookers sat similarly, anxiously waiting.



Eventually, the beam of light returned. It descended once again from the void above and into the pit. The Gaunt Man slowly lowered his head as well and viewed the pit's surface. Noise returned to the cavern as the pit began to bubble and the Gaunt Man recited from some arcane verse:

*"O, well done! I commend your pains
And every one shall share i' the gains
And now about the caldron sing,
Like elves and fairies in a ring,
Enchanting all that you put in.
Black spirits and white, red spirits and gray,
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may.
I conjure you, by that which you profess,
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:
Come untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches; Come bring waves that confound
and swallow navigation up;
Make castles topple on their warders'
And cause palaces and pyramids to bow
Their heads to their foundations
Bring even destruction, answer me
To what I ask you."*

Intense heat washed over Ti-Dara as she continued to watch. She fought against unconsciousness and endured the endless barrage of tortures that beset her body. A blistering wave of heat smashed into her, causing her breath to halt, as a form began to rise out of the pit.

The wings of the beast came first. Slowly flexing, they drew their possessor up out of the pit. The Gaunt Man followed its slow flight about the cavern, first smiling, then evoking a truly demonic laugh. The Carredon gathered greater speed, exercising its new body while remembering its ancient abilities. It roared and the cavern shook. It flapped its wings and the winds tore loose a barrage of rocks from the walls they struck. It proclaimed its resurrection with a blast of fire that set the vacant bodies of the priests aflame and scored the rock beneath them. Finally, it drew itself up before its master and began to speak.

"Gaunt Man, you have brought me back. What desires shall I fulfill? We have need of revenge against these stormers. Our injuries must be equated with their deaths. Shall I go forth and destroy their world?"

The Gaunt Man took in the grandeur of his pet. He reveled in its sheer power and how, with it under his control, his own might became unequalled.

"Oh yes, my pet. We shall have our revenge. I have need of you on Earth. It is time that we crushed these pathetic Storm Knights and their world. I have called for you to be my herald. You will let them know of death and destruction. You will let them know of pain and suffering. And you will let them know of their end that has come."

The Gaunt Man glanced briefly back at the pit and the smoldering remains of his priests. He continued, "But you must wait. I must prepare them for your arrival. There are plans that must be finished. We must not be caught unpre-

pared as before. For the time being, wait here and let your anger smolder and grow. When it becomes a flame, you will know that your time has come. And with it, Earth's time of reckoning."

Ti-Dara cowered beneath this display and watched as the Gaunt Man turned and exited the cavern. The Carredon watched too, as he left, and then scanned the cavern. It reascended into the air, like Lucifer trying to regain Heaven and tested its powers a second time. As the beast circled, it listened for movement, but Ti-Dara sat deathly still. It sought out prey through sight, but that also failed to detect her quivering form. But then the Carredon smelled. It caught a forgotten scent and sniffed at the air once more.

"Stormers!" the Carredon roared, "I smell you. I know your energy and it betrays you. I sense your presence and you shall die for intruding here. You shall be the first victims of my revenge. Prepare yourselves for whatever gods you have, because you shall soon be joining them!"

The Carredon whirled in the air, trying to track the scents. It had smelled all five of the Storm Knights, but one was stronger than the others. The dragon sought out Ti-Dara by her scent and found her. It headed towards her, opening its maw, and let loose a blast of flame ...

Ti-Dara would escape, waking once again from her horrifying nightmare, just as the fiery blast crashed across her body. The only evidence that would remain of the vision would be a fiercely-beating heart and a sweat-drenched bed. But for the others, the nightmare continued.

Victoriously, the Carredon turned to search out the remaining stormers. Kevin Middleton's thoughts raced with the realization that he, too, had been spotted. He tried in vain to turn his wheelchair away but the rough terrain struggled against its wheels. The left wheel on his wheelchair caught in a crack, spun wildly and sent him flailing over the edge.

He crashed hard on his right arm and there was a sickening crack. It was broken, but his arm quickly became the least of his worries as the dragon approached. He tried to drag himself, backwards, to safety but the Carredon moved with blinding speed. It grabbed at his legs, snatching a foot. It lifted him with one hand and grabbed at Kevin's throat with the other.

"Know, stormer," it taunted. "Know that you will not die alone. All of your kind has met its end. I have returned and there will be no escape from my vengeance!"

Kevin looked into the beast's eyes and saw that no soul lurked behind them. The black orbs just stared back and absorbed his fear. He could not help but remember the verse, "Look into the abyss and it too looks back at you." But he was unable to ponder its full meaning as the dragon squeezed the last of his consciousness out of him.

The next victim of the Carredon's wrath was the edeinos Rocket Ranger. He boldly leapt to his fate, electro-blasts and rocket suit guiding his way, Captain Verdigris challenging the Carredon to an aerial battle.

The beast whirled after dispatching Middleton and easily evaded the Captain's first volley. It did not give him time to ready another, launching its massive frame head-on into





the smaller lizard. They collided and hurtled toward the far side of the cavern, but the Carredon pulled out of the thrust and left the Captain to face the impact of the wall alone. His stunned form plummeted and never regained consciousness. The Carredon tore open the edeinos' damaged metal suit with little effort and dispatched the stormer within.

The last two Knights — Vito, the Ayslish giant and André, the Cyberpapal thief — were able to team up against the winged horror. The giant drew the Carredon's attention with a short burst of automatic fire and readied himself for the conflict.

While it swooped down upon his new found companion, André positioned himself above the site of their fight. When the Carredon passed him, he opened fire with his trusted GodMeeter and actually managed to wound the beast. Vito used the confusion to get into melee and was able to use his tremendous strength to hold it temporarily.

But the Carredon's confusion did not last long enough for Vito to exploit his advantage. As soon as it recovered from André's blast, the beast threw off the giant with little effort. The battle continued badly as André's next shot went wild and the Carredon managed to dodge back into the air. Once it regained breathing room, it was able to unleash another fiery blast. The inferno ended the fight for the giant and its heat washed up the cavern wall, forcing André to pull back against the wall.

That was all the opening the Carredon needed. While André attempted to recover and bring his weapon to bear, the Carredon slid his way into the tunnel, grabbing André along the way. Grasping him securely, it continued until it reached the open air of Gaea. For the first time André saw where the caverns were located. They emerged from the side of a mountain and over some remote, nameless jungle, André prayed for his final salvation as the Carredon dropped him effortlessly to his death hundreds of feet below.

After watching the end of the last stormer, the Carredon returned to his roost in the mountain. It knew all too well that this had only been a test. Somehow, these stormers had only been a small spectre of their actual selves, like annoying daydreams. Perhaps his master, the Gaunt Man, had arranged it this way as an exercise or perhaps they had managed it on their own. But it did not care, it knew that it had regained full possession of its abilities and even against true stormers, or Storm Knights as they so mockingly called themselves, it would fare no worse. It returned to its pit confident in the knowledge that no stormer would ever be capable of defeating it ever again. Not even that bitch Tolwyn. She had returned from the dead and so had the Carredon. And the Earth would soon shudder with this knowledge.





Act One

The Missing Explorer

Major Beat

Because of Wicked's images, the Gaunt Man has become aware of a threat to his domain. He learns the identities of the Knights pictured in Wicked's face and makes plans to prevent their interference. He has assigned the Nightmare Araneae, an offspring of Basjas, to their case. His orders are for the Knights to either be corrupted (so that he can use them) or, failing that, have them killed.

In order to begin their ordeal, Araneae calls the Storm Knights to her estates in New London. She does this under her human name of Lady Araneae Winston, the wife of noted Victorian explorer, Lord Reginald Winston. She begs for their arrival, stating that her husband has disappeared while adventuring in the jungles of Majestic.

When the Knights enter Orrorsh, a fierce reality storm strikes the Storm Knights' transport and they crash in the jungles near New London. Araneae tracks them down and sends a small horror group out to corrupt or kill them. If the Storm Knights manage to pass these tests, she allows them to check out New London and awaits their arrival. She then attempts to drug them either at dinner or when they sleep that night, setting up her final trap. She is hoping the power of fear will work on them, giving her more overall power in the end — even though the Gaunt Man would prefer them "disposed of."

The Storm Knights wake to find themselves imprisoned and trapped in spider-web cocoons. The Storm Knights from the fiction arrive to help them escape them and together both parties set out to track down and kill Araneae.

SCENE ONE: Plea for Help

The Situation

Standard. In between adventures (or at the end of another adventure), the Storm Knights receive an urgent telegram. The telegram on page 16, which also arrives with a set of plane tickets to New London, is addressed directly to one of them.

The Action

The Gaunt Man has some troubles in his plans from the start. Although he trusts that Araneae can carry out her assignment with ease, one of his Hellion Court does not. Lord Stanton Cheltenham feels that Araneae's intent to invite the Knights into her lair is the worst decision that she could make. Therefore, he assigns one of his servants, William Devon and the cult of the Black Heart, to prevent their arrival.

Kidnapped!

Devon's plan to prevent the Storm Knights' arrival is to kidnap one of their loved ones. He hopes that he will then be able to blackmail them into staying away from Orrorsh, regardless of Araneae's pleas. Little does he know that he parallel's his master's plan.

After receiving the telegram, one of the Knights receives a message from the "local" (depending on where the Knight lives) authorities. They explain





No Quarter Given: Prop 1 Telegram

<Storm Knight's Name>,

URGENT stop YOUR HELP IS NEEDED stop MY HUSBAND DISAPPEARED INTO
THE JUNGLES OF MAJESTIC TWO MONTHS AGO stop PLEASE COME TO OUR
ESTATE IN NEW LONDON ASAP stop YOU WILL BE PAID FOR YOUR SERVICES
stop PLEASE HURRY, I FEAR THE WORST stop
-LADY ARANAE WINSTON

that there has been a break-in at a relative's residence and that the Knight is needed for some questioning.

When the Knight arrives, he discovers that the home has been ransacked. The door to the residence is broken in, tables lay broken in heaps and glass is scattered everywhere. There are even bloodstains on the carpets and walls. On one of these walls, scrawled in black, dried blood, is a message. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Do not attempt to come after Lord Winston. He meddled once too often in our affairs and has paid the price. Do not let his ignorance cost your precious loved one's life as well. We will contact you after we have made sure of your compliance.

— The Black Heart"

[Note to the gamemaster: This would make a good time for the group's first Perseverance check. If they succeed, they may do what they choose; if they fail, they must waste some valuable time questioning the authorities and working up their nerve.]

At this point, the authorities have no leads. They called the Storm Knight to try to determine a motive and a suspect, but otherwise are clueless. They are more than willing to let the Knights do some of their own investigation work.

However, the Knights themselves have only one lead — Lady Winston's

summons. Unless they decide to avoid Orrorsh (and thus end the threat to the Gaunt Man and the adventure), they should follow-up on the telegram.

Flags

Personal Stake. Run through the kidnapped event using this Knight's loved one. This subplot runs tragically through Acts One and Two.

True Identity. The Storm Knight involved in this subplot recognizes the Lord Winston's name on the telegram and knows he is an explorer. However, Lady Aranae maintains a perfect illusion of "goodness" aimed at preventing the characters from knowing her true intents. The Knight has heard of her, but has no particulars.

Romance (male Storm Knights only). This Storm Knight has filled that special spot in Aranae's heart. While still trying to eliminate the other Storm Knights, she will save this character for her own. She desires to mate with this character and will attempt to charm and finesse him. However, like any good Black Widow, the honeymoon does eventually end. See Scene Five, "Welcome to My Parlor" for more information on this subplot.

Cut To ...

If the Knights decide to investigate the telegram and travel to Orrorsh, cut

to Scene Two, "Riders on the Storm." If they are already in Orrorsh when they begin the investigation, cut to Scene Three, "Jungle Journeys."

When starting the mission, they begin with eight Perseverance points plus an additional point because of the kidnapping. Remember the Perseverance DN for this adventure is 23.

SCENE TWO: Riders on the Storm

The Situation

Standard. When the Knights decide to pursue the investigation, they must first decide how they are going to travel to Orrorsh. Whether or not they decide to use the tickets supplied by Lady Winston, they are going to run into trouble. The tickets are not the trap, the trip is.

The Action

As the Storm Knights approach Majestic by whatever transport they've arranged, the border storms get increasingly worse. The closer they get, the more they are buffeted by air turbulence or ocean waves. The Storm Knights get



Orrorshan Border Storm Chart

Skill Total	Bonus	Description
+13 or more	na	The Knight overwhelms the storm, freeing all of his companions as well! Unfortunately, he also overwhelms the surroundings, shattering the transport vehicle. This may not be much trouble for boat passengers but for air passengers...
+12 to +5	na	The Knight escapes triumphantly. No additional side effects.
+8 to +4	na	The Knight manages to escape, but is still a bit shaken. After a round of disorientation, the Knight is free to act.
+6 to +3	na	An internal strength allows the Knight to momentarily overcome his fears and escape, but he still shakes (and remains inactive) for 1d10 rounds.
+4 to +2	+2	The Knight feels a halting sense of dread just as he is about to escape which pulls him back into the storm at the last moment.
0	0	A valiant effort is quenched by last minute fears. This Knight is beginning to think this was a BAD idea.
-1	-1	This Knight is sure that it was a bad idea and suffers for his doubt. He is <i>stymied</i> during the next round.
-2 to -3	-2	Raw terror runs through the Knight who shakes before the onslaught. Confidence quickly flees. The Knight is <i>stymied</i> during the next round.
-4 to -7	-4	The storm seems to take on a life of its own. The storm now begins to generate a reality total against the Knight — using its strength of sixteen. Use the Storm Results Table in the <i>Torg</i> basic rules to resolve the rest of the fight.
-8 to -10	-6	The storm rises up fiercely before the Knight. The storm reacts as above (attacking the Knight as if it were a living character) and also forces the Knight to make a Perseverance check. If the Knight fails, the group's Perseverance is <i>reduced by one until the end of the scene</i> . If the Knight succeeds, the storm dissipates for everyone.
-11 or worse	na	The storm transforms the Knight and strips away five possibilities and all the character's reality adds. If there are more Knights locked in the storm, they are <i>stymied</i> during the next round. The transformed Knight is terrified and unable to act until "Crash Landing."

a brief rest as they pass through a small calm spot, but are then hit by the worst of the storm as they exit. The other side of the calm is the border to Orrorsh. As the characters pass through this point, the Orrorshan reality rides over their transport and creates a reality storm about them.

The unusual reality storm is the Gaunt Man's first defense against invading Storm Knights. Gamemasters can choose to run the storm one of two ways. The first is to have the Knights fight it as a standard, albeit difficult, border storm. That is in order to pass through unharmed, the Storm Knights must each generate a *reality* total greater than the strength of the storm.

The strength of this storm is a 16. If a Storm Knight's *reality* total is greater than 16, he passes through the storm

with no ill effects. However, if the result is less than 16, use the difference to check the "Storm Results Table" on page 40 of the *Torg Rulebook*. On any result except a Transform, the Storm Knight loses the corresponding number of possibilities and must continue to fight the storm. If the result is Transform, the Storm Knight loses all possibilities and is transformed into an Orrorshan. This will also occur if the Storm Knight is stripped of all possibilities during his battle with the storm. Note that in the event that the Storm Knight is already an Orrorshan, he will be transformed into a Core Earth character — he has been attacked by the Core Earth portion of the storm. The Knight will also transform if he loses all his possibilities and *reality* skill adds. See the *Torg Rulebook* for the

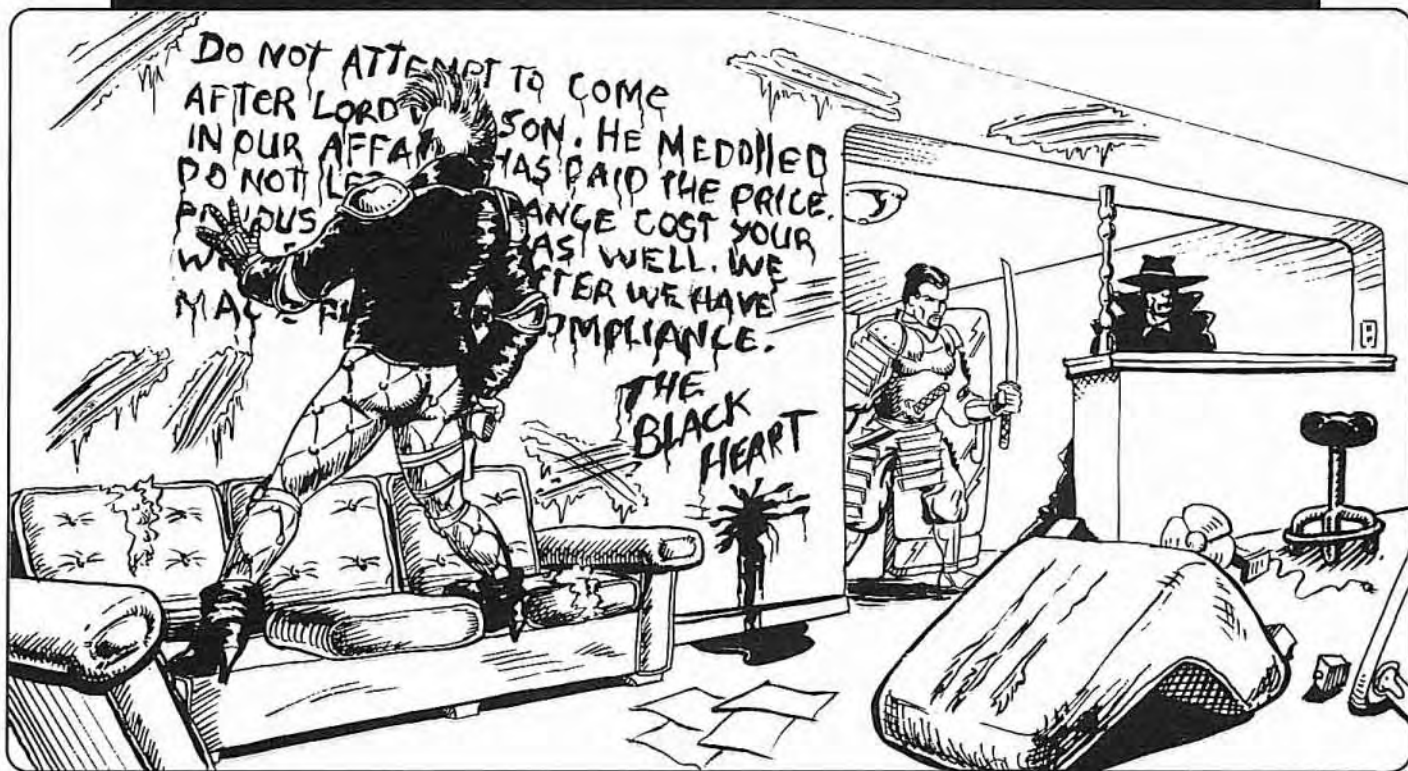
consequences of transformation.

A second method of running the reality storm utilizes the sidebar above. Because this is Orrorsh, the border storm frequently has some additional, more unsettling side effects. The first round the Knights are involved in the storm, they should make a *reality* total and subtract 16 (the storm's strength). Check this number versus the chart.

The "Skill Total" column is the number of result points (negative or positive) the Knight obtained when rolling against the storm. The "Bonus" column is the number the Knight must add to his skill total on the following round when checking against the storm. The "Description" column tells what actually happened.

One saving grace to the encounter with the storm is that the Storm will





end after six rounds — regardless of the type of storm the Knights confront. At the end of the sixth round, the plane/ship/mode of transport emerges from the storm, but the trouble is not over yet.

Payback

As each Knight emerges from this storm (not the traditional type of storm — the one referred to in the sidebar), he or she gets a reward, or pays a penalty, for fighting the battle. Characters who emerge from the storm after only one round of fighting gain three possibilities for their heroics (whether it was their rolling or a comrades' that freed them). Knights who emerge after two or three rounds gain one possibility each, but those that get away after four gain none. Knights who remain in the storm for five or six rounds lose two possibilities each — and if they do not have possibilities (unlikely at this part of the adventure), they may transform (as per the normal

rules of transformation).

In addition, if the entire party emerges from the storm after one or two rounds of combat, increase their Perseverance by one point.

Crash Landing

This is used only if the characters came by air. If they arrive by ship, skip to "Silver Linings."

As the Storm Knights emerge from the reality storm (either by a successful roll or as the transport leaves the storm), they quickly notice that they are not out of danger yet. Have them make a *Perception* roll. If anyone gets an 8 or better, they realize that the pilot was killed in the first round of the storm and the battered plane has begun to plummet. Someone will have to land the plane.

If a character has the air vehicles skill, that Knight can try to land the damaged craft — a skill total of 13 or better is needed (an unskilled attempt

may also be made, but increase the difficulty by 5). If the character fails by five or more points, the plane crashes, out of control (everyone in the plane takes damage value 25).

If the Knight piloting the plane fails by less than five points, then the plane undergoes a controlled crash — everyone takes damage value 16.

If the skill total succeeds, then any Storm Knights who get themselves strapped in receive only a few shock points (damage value 10), while others will be bounced around a lot (damage value 14).

Silver Linings

One good side effect of the storm is a boost in Perseverance. The Storm Knights become slightly hardened to fear after making it through the storm. If all of the Storm Knights survive, relatively intact, they gain a two point bonus. If one (or more) of them are transformed by the reality storm, their



grasp is slightly tenuous but a bit stronger than it used to be. They only get a one point bonus in this event. This is in addition to all other points garnered (or lost) throughout the action.

Cut To ...

The characters are now in the jungles of Orrorsh, a full day's walk from New London. Cut To Scene Three, "Jungle Journeys."

SCENE THREE: Jungle Journeys

The Situation

Standard. After weathering the reality storm and crashing in the jungle, the Storm Knights must make their way northward to New London. It is nearing dusk when they crash and

they estimate a full day's walk to reach the city.

The Action

This scene involves Araneae's attempts to sway or destroy the characters while they are traveling through the jungles of Orrorsh. Unless they would like to travel Orrorsh by night (possibly the worst decision they could make), they should set up camp. The most likely spot for this is at the crash sight. The noise and excitement should scare away most of the minor horrors and provides a decent shelter if they did not bring camping gear.

Camping Out

Even if the Storm Knights do not make their camp at the crash site, they will have to set up somewhere. They will want to rest up and heal, but Araneae does not really care what they want. She has her horrors follow the

Storm Knights and they will attack wherever they decide to settle for the night.

Let them set up their camp and arrange defenses and watches. There is plenty of usable wood if they want to start a fire and foraging provides a minor meal.

If they don't settle down and push on into the jungle at night, feel free to attack them anyway and augment the forces with random creatures roaming the jungle (see the *Orrorsh* sourcebook or *Creatures of Orrorsh* for some good examples). In any case, work around to "Will o' Wisps" (below) eventually.

In the event that the Storm Knights began the adventure in Orrorsh, this is where their troubles begin.

Will o' Wisps

Either in the camp or on the road, these elusive spirits will appear. Sometime after midnight, they emerge from the jungle and start pulling the charac-



ters in separate directions. If any scouts or watches are set up, the Will o' Wisps attack them first. Each Will o' Wisp vanishes after leading its victim into one of the encounters listed.

Will o' Wisp (1 per Storm Knight)

Reality: Orrorsh
DEXTERITY 16
 Dodge 19, fire combat (electrical discharge) 20, maneuver 19
STRENGTH 0
TOUGHNESS 10
PERCEPTION 10
 Tracking 11, trick 15
MIND 12
 Test 14, willpower 13
CHARISMA 12
 Persuasion 14, taunt (20)
SPIRIT 12
 Faith (Orrorsh) 14
Possibilities: none
Natural Tools: Electrical Discharge (damage value 17, range 3-10/20/30)
Power Rating: *Hypnosis*
Corruption Value: 12
Fear Rating: 1/2
Weakness: None
True Death: Sunlight

Description: The wisps are small balls of light that *hypnotize* their victims and lead them unknowingly into the dangers of the wilderness. When a person sees a wisp for the first time, the *hypnosis* power takes effect. If successful, the wisp will lead the character off into some trap or danger, or may lead the character away from its companions and attack on its own.

Will o' Wisps normally inhabit very remote areas where there are small populations — but they are almost never found far from some population. They do not "talk," but, through their *hypnosis* power, they do communicate — they prey upon their target's desires, fears, and needs. See the *Orrorsh* sourcebook for more information on the *hypnosis* power.

Using the Wisps

These wisps are unusual for their type — they have been compelled by Araneae to seek out this group of Knights and lead them into particular traps. They will attempt to hypnotize the Knights until successfully attacked, in which case they will either flee into the jungle or counterattack (depend-

ing on their chances). They will try as best they can to lead the Knights into "The Encounters" below.

The Encounters

After a Will o' Wisp entrances a Storm Knight, it leads her malevolently into one of the following attacks. Since Araneae's first intent is to test the Knights' corruptibility, gamemasters should arrange the deadlier encounters ("Deep Shadows," "The Tiger" and "The Devil") for those characters that are seemingly incorruptible. The other encounters are set up to pose moral dilemmas that may cause the corruption of a Storm Knight. The *Orrorsh* sourcebook should be consulted for more on corruption.

Deep Shadows

This is a test of strength and courage. The Knight led into this trap should be one of the bravest and most incorruptible — but not necessarily the strongest. Read the following aloud to the player or paraphrase:

The haunting light of the wisp has led you far into the jungle. Not so far that you couldn't find your way back, you are sure, but certainly deep enough to make you nervous.

And it doesn't help that the shadows and the sounds of the forest have gotten more alarming and more intense. You are beginning to feel you are being followed, and that the wisp is the least of the dangers you will encounter this night.

Two figures form out of the jungle's darkness and attack the wisp's "victim." These "shadow vampyres" are all that remain of vampyres who displeased the leaders of their covens, or perhaps one of the Hellion Court. Their histories are unknown, even to themselves. Now, they merely seek revenge on those who live free.

Shadow Vampires (2)

Reality: Orrorsh
DEXTERITY 12
 Acrobatics 17, dodge 17, stealth 15 (25 in darkness), unarmed combat 17
STRENGTH 14

Climbing 16
TOUGHNESS 14
PERCEPTION 11
 Find 13, tracking 14, trick 15
MIND 12
 Test 17, willpower 17
CHARISMA 5
SPIRIT 8
 Faith (Orrorsh) 18, intimidation 14
Possibilities: none
Natural Tools: Fangs (damage value STR+2/16), claws (damage value STR+3/17)
Power Rating: 5 (always includes life drain against Toughness)
Corruption Value: 18
Fear Rating: 1
Weakness: Intense light
True Death: Finding the staked body of the vampyre and burning it
Description: The shadow vampyres' bodies where staked out in the jungle not far from where they will attack the victim (possibly within sight), and they are furious that the wisp has led the Knight to their weakest point. They will initially attack the Knight but, if the Knight is perceptive, she can possibly trick them into attacking the wisp as well. The wisp's bright electrical attack will cause the shadow vampyres' weakness to be invoked. The vampyres will attack until destroyed — they cannot risk having anyone know where their staked bodies lie.

The Lady...

After a brief trek into the wilderness, the wisp's light is replaced by the sounds of beautiful music. A young woman's singing can be heard off in the distance and the Storm Knight feels compelled to follow — unless she can make a *Mind* or *willpower* total higher than 24 until out of earshot (three rounds of walking).

The Knight is led off into a clearing, where she sees the singer — a siren that looks like an attractive Victorian man or woman (whichever the character's taste). At this point, characters that would have no interest in the siren's appearance gain a plus two to all future *Mind* totals. The character is allowed a *Mind* total upon seeing the siren for the first time, and the difficulty remains at 22.



Between the character and the siren lies a pond of quicksand. The controlled Storm Knight will blunder into it and begin to sink. If the victim does not fight the sinking, she will last ten rounds before going under. But if he struggles, the end will come quicker and she will go under in six rounds — see the drowning chart.

There are some low hanging branches that the character can try to catch. Grasping one requires an *acrobatics* or *Dexterity* roll (difficulty 15). But falling in and climbing out does not free the character from the Siren. The Knight will continue to move towards her.

Once across, the Knight is confronted with a dilemma. The siren is chained to a rock on the far side of the quicksand. She pleads a pitiful case that she was wrongfully imprisoned here by an evil Nightmare. She can only leave if she can convince some being to release her. Unfortunately, she was also cursed with a voice that drew her potential saviors to their doom in the quicksand. She woe-fully pleads to the Storm Knight to release her.

The siren is telling the truth — to some extent. The siren was chained here and can only escape if set free by someone else, but it was another band of monster hunters that imprisoned her (they found her True Death).

The siren is very anxious about being saved — within two more days, her time will be up and she will die the final death. She has little hope of luring anyone else to her rescue, and she will attempt to get the Knight to free her. She will use *trick*, *charm*, and *persuasion* on the Knight — but the Knight is free of her mind-numbing voice at this point.

Siren (1)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 10, swimming 10, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 14

Find 14, trick 17

MIND 10

Test (11), willpower (11)

CHARISMA 15

Charm 20, persuasion 19, taunt 17

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Orrorsh) 11, reality 12

Possibilities: 5

Natural Tools: Teeth (damage value STR+1/8); claws (damage value STR+4/11)

Power Rating: *Siren song* (requires a Mind or willpower total of 22 to overcome, otherwise the target will follow the song directly to the siren); *resistance to normal weapons*

Corruption Value: 20

Fear Rating: 1

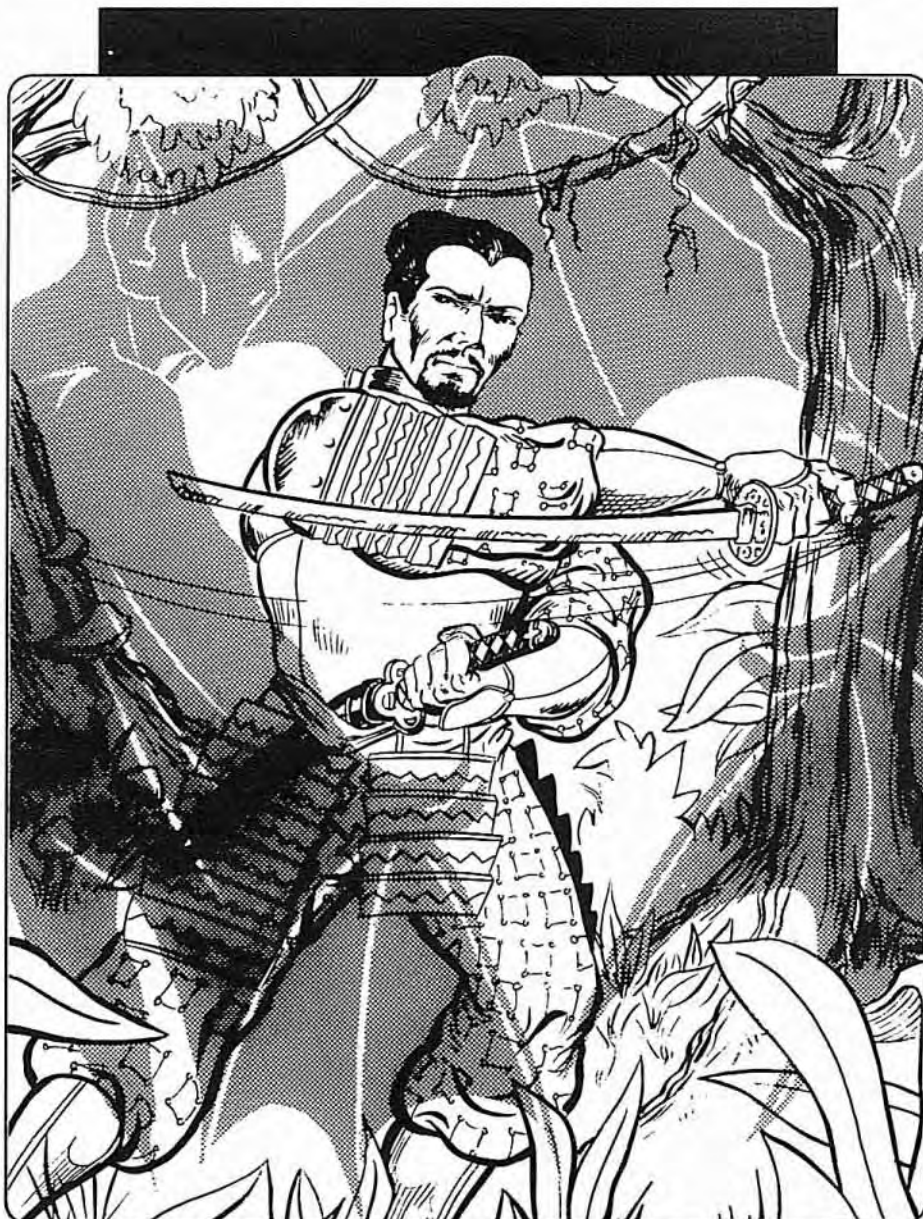
Weakness: Successful taunts.

True Death: Being chained in place for more than two weeks kills the siren.

Description: The siren has the natural ability to assume attractive male or female guise — but only one of each. The siren has picked, based on the Knights' sex, what it thinks will be the most appropriate guise.

What the Siren Does

If the siren is freed by the character, it will act grateful and be full of praise. It will beg the Knight to take it back to the party, claiming it is lost in the jungle without guidance. However, the siren will lose this pleasing facade



Drowning Rules

When a character falls into quicksand or is immersed in water, there is a chance of drowning. Each round that a Knight is unable to breath freely (because of a failed *swimming* roll or other factors). A *Toughness* total is made against the liquid's difficulty. Five points are added to the difficulty each round until the victim either starts drowning or escapes.

Once drowning, the victim takes damage equal to $9 + 3$ per round (9, 12, 15 ...) until death or rescue.

Liquid	Swimming Difficulty
Water, calm	5
Water, turbulent	8
Water, in combat	10
Quicksand	14
Water is very cold	+3
Character is weighed down	+5
Character is buoyant (life vest, etc.)	-5

when it has lulled the Knight into a false sense of confidence. The siren has not eaten for days and will try to surprise the Knight with vital blows (to the Knight's unarmored parts)

when it can resist no longer. At this point, its true evil is revealed and the Knight can strike back.

Should the Knight resist the exploring of the siren, the contrary creature will weep, beg, and whine until

the Knight is out of the clearing — and then turn on the song again, hoping to ensnare the Knight and start over. Knights who do not free the siren from her predicament are eligible for corruption checks (see the *Orrorsh* sourcebook) unless they have a very good reason for not letting the "innocent" go (other than "I have a bad feeling about this").

... or The Tiger

Once the Storm Knight is away from the others, a large "tiger" begins to stalk him. This is a test of the Knight's ability to survive in the jungle — the wisp has led the character off and away from camp, and the character must make at least three *tracking* or *Perception* totals of 15 to get back. Of course, the tiger will have other ideas ...

Bengal Tiger (1)

Reality: Core Earth

DEXTERITY 15

Dodge 17, maneuver 16, running 19, stealth 18, unarmed combat 20



STRENGTH 16
TOUGHNESS 15 (18)
PERCEPTION 6
 Tracking 18, Trick 15 (18)
MIND 3
 Test (17), willpower (10)
CHARISMA 4
 Taunt (20)
SPIRIT 5
 Intimidation 15 (20)
Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: teeth (damage STR+4/20), claws (damage STR+3/19); hide (TOU+3/18)

Description: The tiger is, thankfully, a normal creature, somewhat confused by the nature of this jungle (it actually managed to wander into Orrorsh somehow and keep from being transformed). It is, however, hungry and willing to attack a human (or edeinos, or giant, or whatever the Knight is) if it can convince itself of a victory.

Tiger by the Tail

The tiger will stalk and track the Knight for a few minutes and, if the Knight does not perceive the tiger or find camp in a matter of minutes (the latter is very unlikely), it will attack.

Unlike most Orrorsh creatures, the tiger can be dissuaded from fighting to the death. If the character is able to do it a lot of shock and a K (without actually knocking it out), but no more than one *wound*, the tiger will flee and seek easier prey. However, if the tiger takes more than one *wound*, it will go berserk, performing all-out attacks every round until killed. At this point, it will ignore shock and KO damage, and will fight for one round after taking a "Dead" result (unless it takes a *wound* beyond dead) — it is a mighty creature.

The Pit ...

One of the Storm Knights is led into a tiger trap (possibly set for the tiger above). The pit is 20 feet deep and is spiked on the bottom. The character remains entranced by the wisp until he hits the spikes, so no *acrobatics* roll is allowed. The damage for the fall is equal to the Character's Weight Value + 4 (height value) + 3 (damage for the

spikes). After the fall, the character is freed from the wisp's trance but not the pit or the encounter.

The pit is littered with the remains of several other creatures — human, animal and other. There is also a small object glittering in the rubble. This encounter is a test of greed and selfishness, traits always open to corruption. The object appears to be made of gold and shines magically. Once the Knight escapes (with a *climbing* total of 12 or more), he faces his test. If he keeps the object for himself and does not present it before his companions, this greed becomes a mark of corruption. On the other hand, if the object is given to the group, he has passed the test.

The Prize

The object is an occult talisman that was carried by one of the pit's former victims. It was used to expose corruption in others. Basically, when held by a person with the *occult* skill, the character can make an *occult* total versus the target's corruption value. If the character's total is higher, and the target has a *corruption* value, the occultist knows the target is corrupt (but not how corrupt). If the occultist's skill total is lower than the target's *corruption* value, or the target doesn't have any corruption, then nothing is revealed.

The problem with the stone is that whenever it is exposed to a person (which must be done to use it; the character must actually show the target the stone), there is a chance that the target's desire will be so great for the stone that he or she will want it badly enough to take on corruption and steal it. This reaction is purely a judgement call — if the character is naturally greedy, he or she will take on corruption; if not, the character probably won't. For Storm Knights, the gamemaster may want to have them make willpower rolls to resist the stone's allure.

... or The Pendulum

This is another trap devised to sway one of the Knights onto the path of Corruption. It may also result in a loss of Perseverance. It takes place entirely in the mind of the Storm Knight as a

ghost fills his thoughts with the scene. Read aloud or paraphrase:

Your wisp has led you into a clearing in the jungle. It's mesmerizing glow is replaced by the sound of a blade swinging through the air. In front of you, on a small stone table, is some sort of creature of Orrorsh, bound and gagged. Above it, swinging menacingly, is a large metal blade.

The Knight should be informed that there is something unnatural and surreal about the whole scene — but that the pendulum is coming down at an alarming rate. The Knight must choose quickly.

If the Storm Knight acts to save the creature, the scene twists and buckles, changing the Knight's perceptions several times. The first change makes the Knight think it is he that is laying on the table, and the monster is above the table, laughing. Then, when the Knight tries to struggle free, the scene switches back. At this point, if the Knight continues to try to free the creature, the Knight succeeds and the dream ends. The Knight has defeated the corruption and the fear. The whole party gains a Perseverance point.

If, at any point, the Knight decides not to free the creature, the dream ends, leaving the Knight in the jungle just a few steps from the camp. The Knight feels somehow "dirty" and cowardly. The Knight does not gain corruption (unless he taunted or otherwise treated the monster cruelly), but the party loses one Perseverance point for his being fooled by the Power of Fear.

The Devil ...

The smell of brimstone fills the air as a succubus or an incubus appears (as appropriate), replacing the wisp in the Knight's field of vision. This attractive demon then proceeds to *charm* the character.

The demon will try to lure the character away from the jungle, promising virtually anything (and this demon's specialty is anything) if the character will go with it. This is a test of loyalty. The Knight is asked to choose between safety and pleasure, or the party.

The demon will do its best to make



it seem like the Knight really has no other sane choice than to go with it. "The rest of the party will join us" and "I'll send out searchers to find them and bring them to safety" should be great tag-lines for the creature. It will not attack the character until the Knight commits to one choice or another — at which time it will try to kill the character unmercifully.

Succubus/Incubus (1)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 15, melee combat, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 12

Trick 18

MIND 11

Willpower 14

CHARISMA 14

Charm 17, persuasion 19, taunt 18

SPIRIT 5

Faith (Orrorsh) 15, intimidation 12

Possibilities: 5

Natural Tools: claws (damage STR+1/15)

Equipment: Greatsword (STR+5/19 with armor defeating attack and life drain)

Power Rating: 5 (including armor defeating attack and life drain in greatsword)

Corruption Value: 22

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: holy symbol

True Death: trapping the creature in a desolate place where it will not come into contact with any sapient being for at least a month.

Description: The succubus/incubus is a prideful, lustful creature. Its *charm* and *persuasion* attacks play to the character's lusts and desires. Giving in to the creature, even a little, strengthens its powers. If the target character "plays along" or perhaps jokes with the creature, these are signs of weakness — the demon gains anywhere from a +1 to a +5 (gamemaster's option) to its attempts to entrap the character when the target is not serious about resisting.

The Greatsword the creature carries is an evil weapon of great power. The sword is invisible until used. It will confer the *life drain* and *armor*

defeating attack power to whoever wields the sword automatically — but whenever the character uses the sword, it is time for a corruption check.

Running the Demon

Along with the above suggestions, use the succubus/incubus characters to play on the desires of the weakest — morally — characters. It will promise them anything — sex, power, money, safety — for their cooperation. When it gets this cooperation, or the cooperation is adamantly refused, the creature will attack. If it can, it will try to surprise its opponent and gain advantage any way it can. One moment, the Knight could be in a passionate embrace, the next, a screaming demon with an evil Greatsword could be trying to cut the character's head off.

... or

The Deep Blue Sea

If the Storm Knights made camp at the original site, a wisp draws one back to the beach and into the water. Lying in wait is a patch of strangleweed (a distant cousin to the Sargasso weed). The strangleweed will attempt to keep the Storm Knight under water until he drowns so it can absorb him (use the "Drowning Rules" on page 22 if a character is successfully grappled). This is merely a test of strength and endurance.

Strangleweed Patch (1)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 12

Maneuver 13, swimming 20, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 15

TOUGHNESS 13

PERCEPTION 2

Find 8, trick (30)

MIND 1

Test (30), willpower 20

SPIRIT 3

Intimidate (14)

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: weed tentacles (grapple attack; damage STR+1/16)

Description: The strangleweed appears to be normal Sargasso weed if

examined. However, it comes to life when a lone Knight is within its reach. Its strong tentacles reach out and grapple the target and, if the weed gets a wound or greater, the Knight will have to break its grip (either by beating its STR+5 in a pulling test or by doing it two wounds of damage).

The weed also has one more annoying characteristic: it is a compound creature. When it is "Dead," more tentacles will come up. Three "Dead" results will get rid of the weed, but the Knight is better off "killing" the weed once and escaping. The weed is not mobile on land and cannot pursue.

The weed is not a horror — just a nasty plant transformed by Orrorshan axioms.

At Last a Break

Araneae will be disappointed if the Storm Knights live but not overly surprised. She is secretly hoping that they do survive so she can play with them herself. If they make it through these encounters, she will not molest them further until they arrive in her area.

Variables

If the encounters prove too tough and you wish to continue with the rest of the adventure, have a small group of Victorian monster hunters (perhaps the ones that imprisoned the siren) show up. They can help the Knights finish off some of the encounters and will walk with them to New London.

If the Knights overpower the encounters, you may wish to "soften them up" with some horrors from the *Creatures of Orrorsh* book. This is okay, but the more the Knights fight, the better their Perseverance should get — as long as they keep going.

Should the Knights all escape the encounters reasonably unscathed (nobody goes corrupt or dies), increase their Perseverance by two points. If it is a tough struggle, then increase it by one. If some Knights "go over" and begin a trail of corruption, or a few party members are "lost," they lose one Perseverance point.



Flags

Nemesis. Araneae wants this Storm Knight dead, dead, dead. Increase the number of forces against the character or run him through more than one encounter. Some suggestions are 3 Shadows instead of 2, a half-starved tiger in the pit, a shark just off the coast that catches the scent of his blood, etc. Don't even bother with an attempt at corruption for this Knight: kill him/her off.

Romance. This Storm Knight isn't to be killed ... yet. The wisp that entrances him will just lead him into one of the corruption encounters or just off from the others for a while. He should be protected from the dangers of the jungle creatures and can make his way back after the fights are over. If played right, the rest of the party should be suspicious — "Why'd he have such an easy time of it?!"



Cut to ...

The rest of the jungle journey is uneventful and the Storm Knights reach New London. Cut to Scene Four, "Legal Troubles."

SCENE FOUR: Legal Troubles

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights can wander through New London a bit before heading off to Lady Winston's estates. They should try and find out where she lives and contact her at some point. Read aloud or paraphrase:

New London is the center of activity on Majestic. With the influx of Victorian immigrants, Padang became the new capital for this colony of the Victorian Empire. During the day it is quite active and people can be seen going about their daily business.

You are free to explore the city and visit the tourist locations, but you should contact Lady Winston at some point. You were expected to arrive at the airport yesterday. You can get di-

rections to public buildings (police station, library, etc.) from passers-by.

The Action

The Knights can spend this scene going about the town and asking for information on Lady Winston or the Black Heart. The following is a short summary of some of the most important places in New London.

1. The Police Station. The local constabulary can give Lady Winston's address and a switchboard number (a sure sign of her status) if they feel the Knights are "reputable types." They vouch for her as an upstanding citizen but have not been informed of the disappearance of Lord Winston.

The information they give on the Black Heart refers to a military campaign in the early days of the invasion. When the Victorians arrived on Majestic, a large group of pirates and cults began terrorizing the newly arriving citizens. The Army stepped in to protect the citizens and the police officer believes that the last of the cult was destroyed by Victorian Soldiers and groups of Storm Knights over a year ago.

2. Public Records Office. A well-placed bribe can gain the Knights ac-

cess to the records of the Winstons. They are legitimate immigrants from Victoria and Lord Winston is a member of the Royal Explorers' Society. The deeds to the house are under Lord Winston's name and a marriage certificate is dated prior to the invasion of Earth.

There are no records regarding the Black Heart.

3. Library. The library only contains the Winstons' address and switchboard number. The only information on the Black Heart are some news articles that echo the report given by the police station.

4. "Outfitter's" (a Victorian Army & Navy Store). The clerk at the desk knows Lord Winston. If asked, he states that he has not seen Winston for at least a month or so, but he believes that Winston was planning on going monster hunting. He explains that "monster" hunting is very similar to the big game hunts that occurred on Core Earth when the Europeans invaded Africa. He does not regularly see Lady Winston and can give no information on her.

If questioned about the Black Heart, he says that Lord Winston might have mentioned it in passing but the clerk has no other information.



Other local merchants can also be questioned. They (for the most part) know of Lord and Lady Winston and vouch for them. Lord Winston is a known explorer and while they are unaware of his disappearance, they will confirm that he often goes exploring for several weeks at a time. Lady Winston is described as an attractive, pleasant society woman. She regularly gives to charity and frequently sponsors social events.

Private Investigations

Unless the Storm Knights are being secretive with their actions they will eventually attract the attentions of Sergeant Willingham. Sergeant Willingham is a fifty-five year old career police officer. He has been in the service of the Queen for thirty-seven years and is extremely loyal to Victoria. He considers his reassignment to New London a distasteful but necessary service. Currently, his biggest gripe is with the interference of Storm Knights and other "monster hunters." He is of the opinion that if they just let the proper Victorian authorities do their jobs, this war would be ended and everyone could return to their normal lives.

When he becomes aware of the Storm Knights' presence, he will watchdog the rest of their investigations. Initially, he just asks about their purpose for being in New London and if informed of Lord Winston's disappearance, he will insist that they end their investigation. "It should be handled by Victorian officials." "Commoners are not to overstep their authority."

He will become more irate if the Storm Knights persist in their investigations or begin to argue with him. After a few minutes of arguing, Willingham will ask for the Storm Knights' passports. No excuses are accepted and he will arrest them if bribed or phony passports are given. If the characters are overly obnoxious or resistant, he will arrest them regardless of what they come up with, declaring the papers forgeries or citing civil disorder and resisting arrest.

Sergeant Willingham
DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 10, fire combat 14, maneuver 10, melee weapons 13, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 9

Evidence analysis 11, find 14, trick 12

MIND 8

Science (criminology) 9, willpower 10

CHARISMA 7

Taunt 9

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Sacellum) 9, intimidation 16

Possibilities: none

Equipment: Lee-Hollings Light Revolver (damage value 15; 6 shots), extra ammo, police whistle, billy club (damage value STR+2/15)

Description: Sergeant Willingham is a patriotic beat cop with an attitude. His age is starting to catch up to him as the waistline waxes and the reflexes wane. He often gets in trouble with his superiors over discipline problems and is looking for the Storm Knights to give him an excuse to run them in. Willingham has been jaded by "heroes" and "the upper crust" for so long that he has little respect for anyone — a very unusual attitude for a Gaeon.

Should the Storm Knights go quietly and have actual passports, they are released within an hour. Willingham makes a forced apology and storms out of the police station. His superiors apologize for the misunderstanding and allow them to leave. They will suggest that the characters stay out of his way and perhaps head off to Lady Winston's now.

If the Storm Knights resist arrest, then Willingham has no choice but to call for reinforcements and start shooting. Normally, he is accompanied by a force of three or four younger officers that follow his orders — he will call for more. If captured, the Knights will spend the remainder of the day in jail. That evening, Lady Winston arrives and posts their bail, releasing them into her custody. Unless the Storm Knights present further problems, most of the charges are dropped and they receive only a minor fine for false passports. If they flee, Willingham's side of the encounter will result in a formal warrant for their arrest being posted.

Variables

The troubles with Sergeant Willingham can (and should) be avoided through politeness. If the Knights go off to Lady Winston's, Willingham leaves the Storm Knights in peace. But if they decide to confront him, Willingham will attack and whistle for reinforcements. Three to four additional officers come to aid Willingham's group (use his stats).

If the Storm Knights are obstinate, aggressive, or even just plain annoying, they may get a bad reputation in the town. If they are combative and do not try to avoid taking on the town guard, New London's garrison will be alerted. Remember, these Victorian soldiers (of which there are no less than four hundred in the area — and usually more than one thousand) are experienced monster killers and serious about their jobs. If the Knights want a war, they'll be happy to fight for King, Queen, and Country.

This is the eventuality that the Knights should avoid. If Lady Winston learns that they are trying to kill or fight the guard, she may become amused and start sending horrors against the town — to the Knights' aid. This will blacken their names throughout Orrorsh and might even earn them a few corruption points if they don't back off. The Victorians are more obstinate than the Knights could ever be.

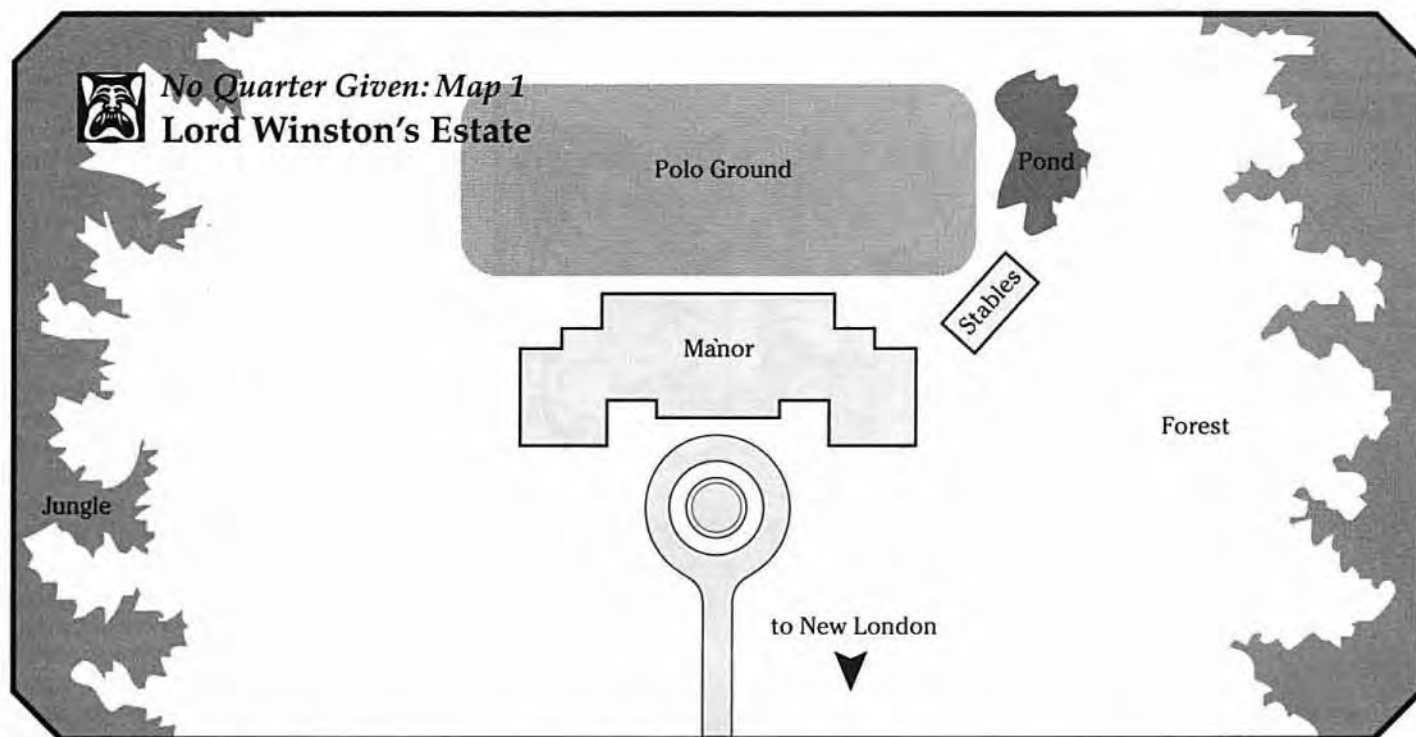
Misleading

None of the information gathered in this scene prepares the Storm Knights for the true mission. But, being able to stop and rest and reequip will hearten the characters. If the Knights get through the scene without a major blow-up, they gain one Perseverance point for recovering.

Cut To ...

When the Knights finish their investigations and head out to Lady Winston's Estates, cut to Scene Five, "Welcome To My Parlor." If you have been subtle enough, there should be little reason for them to suspect Araneae when they meet.





SCENE FIVE: Welcome To My Parlor

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights are invited (or brought) up to the Winstons' manor and given the details about Lord Winston's disappearance.

The Manor

The estates of the Winstons are located just north of New London. It is a typically large Victorian house nestled at the edge of a forest. Behind the manor is a large polo ground where the jungle has been cleared for grazing and riding. There is a stable off to the side and in the back corner is a small spring fed pond. The house is surrounded by a planted forest that gives way to the jungle.

Lady Araneae

Araneae is one of the many off-

spring of Basjas and a loyal agent of the Gaunt Man. Under his orders, she infiltrated Victorian society by seducing Reginald Winston. They met in the Gaeen Congo where Araneae was masquerading as a peace missionary and Reginald was searching for a white gorilla that was terrorizing trade caravans. Reggie got his gorilla and Araneae got him. Reginald quickly fell in love with Araneae and they returned to Victoria for their marriage. It took place just prior to the invasion and they crossed the bridge together to help defend the natives of Earth.

On Earth, Araneae continues her charade as a beautiful and intelligent social worker of the upper class. To the unknowing, it appears as if she is continuing her peace work, aiding and "saving" the locals from the disasters that have befallen them in the course of the invasion. She has actually been ferreting out the Storm Knights that have been appearing in the local villages on Majestic and keeping track of them for her true master. Since Reginald is often out exploring the wilds, she has little trouble maintaining her cover.

Her actions during Lord Winston's absence impressed the Gaunt Man. Because of her talent for maintaining

fear with subtlety, Araneae was empowered as the Nightmare for the Victorian sturats in the vicinity of New London. She plays both sides of the war by sending the horrors that plague local villages while at the same time using Lord Winston's wealth to create relief funds for them. This has effectively kept the region filled with terror and unrest, but has not pushed the people into despair. Only know, Lady Araneae has decided to make a move for greater standing in the Gaunt Man's eyes — she intends to use the Storm Knights as her passport to the Hellion Court.

The Action

When the Storm Knights finally meet her, Araneae presents her caring Victorian side. She is a beautiful, young and wealthy woman devoted to the protection of the impoverished and terrorized of Earth. If asked, she will go into lengthy detail on all of her relief efforts and even ask the Knights if they would care to help after they find her husband. Araneae is charming to a fault and displays very little of the class bias other Victorian aristocrats are so prone to.





an eternity shard. These details can be found with an *evidence analysis* of 12 or greater, but there is no sign of the actual shard. The last of the notes refer to a creature on Borneo and contain a map of the island. They become important later on during the fiction.

The Last Supper

After investigating the study, the Storm Knights are invited to dinner. They are served a wonderful selection of Victorian cuisine and fine wines. Stimulating conversation and news about Orrorsh and Victorian society flavor the conversation. However, Araneae plans this as the end for the Knights. She has placed a sleeping powder in the food. It is undetectable and quick acting. Have each Knight make a *Toughness* total versus a difficulty of 24. Those that fail become groggy, pass out and will wake up in Scene Six, "Trapped Like Flies" with terrible headaches.

Variables

Should the Storm Knights miss finding the clues in Lord Winston's study, they will be given another opportunity to find the information at the end of Scene Six.

Having the Storm Knights get captured in this scene is important. If the Storm Knights avoid dinner, leave before she can poison them, or make their *Toughness* checks, greater measures should be taken. Either increase the dosage, and thus the difficulty, for tough characters or have them attacked by some of Araneae's servants. They can be equipped with dart guns that increase the amount of poison. Eventually, this should take down even the most resistant Storm Knight.

If everything else fails, Araneae can attack the Knights with her servants at this time — it doesn't work as well, but she may be able to render them unconscious and continue with Scene Six.

This scene should be very cinematic: it does not give the Knights a lot of choice in their actions, but it does make for a good story.

Eventually, the Knights will ask about her husband and the Black Heart. She will break into tears and fight to regain composure. After that, she begins.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

"My husband left fifty-eight days ago. He was planning on an expedition to the east. He was investigating the formation of a small cult called the Black Heart. I thought that he was just going to get some more information then return for aid. Since then, he has yet to return or send word. They have surely captured or killed him by now or else something in the jungle got him. He has never gone away for this long before without at least writing back. I implore you, please find my husband. I do not wish to be a widow."

After her speech, she will breakdown again and excuse herself until dinner. She allows the Knights freedom to roam the manor and search Reginald's study. Her performances are timed so that the Storm Knights can be encouraged to stay the evening before heading out after Lord Winston.

It is very important to the tension of the adventure that Araneae appear good and helpless — but, if the Knights have

some way of determining her corrupt nature, you can skip to the confrontation below. If at all possible, convince the Knights that their mission is to find the Black Heart and destroy them, possibly rescuing Lord Winston for the grateful Lady. This will make the shock that much more effective.

Exploring the House

The Knights are allowed to wander around the house a little, but are primarily confined to the study. If they want to look anywhere else, they will find very little of interest — and Araneae will encourage them to look in the study anyway, since that's where all the "clues" are.

The Study

Various clues on the Black Heart are hidden in the study. A copy of Reginald's journal is here and it details his discovery of the Black Heart. The last entry is dated approximately two months ago, but the next page has also been torn out. There are also several other papers with information concerning the cult, including one on



Flags

Romance. This subplot reaches its summit in this scene. Araneae will flirt playfully throughout the scene before making her move. After dinner, the Knight wakes up in Araneae's room. He has succumbed to the effects of the drugs and lies helplessly paralyzed. He can try to recover in vain as a seductive looking Araneae approaches. She explains that she wants to mate with him (regardless of his views on the matter) then he will be disposed of like the others. After the love-making, she returns him to unconsciousness and places him with his fellow Knights. If she is not killed in the finale, this makes a good "seed" for a future adventure.

Nemesis. Araneae wakes this character up to gloat over him. He finds himself already wrapped in webs and unable to resist her tortures (this may be a good time for a Perseverance check). However, she does not kill him yet, saving him for the final scene.

Cut To ...

After serving them the sleeping poison, Araneae wraps them with her spider silk. Her webs have the same *life drain* properties as Basjas' (pages 26–27 of the *Errors!* sourcebook). Cut to Scene Six, "Trapped Like Flies." This is the dramatic conclusion to the act.

SCENE SIX: Trapped Like Flies

The Situation

Dramatic. The Storm Knights wake up with terrible headaches after having been drugged by Araneae. They find themselves bound in a spider's cocoon and sitting in a damp basement. Fiveshock points and a K condition simulate the after-effects of the drug, which may not be cancelled with possibilities (they already took the damage). The webs have a *Toughness* 20 to break out of (a character must do the web in his or her area at least two

wounds on the Ord column to break out — unfortunately, their hands and arms are tied up, so they can only use their strength).

Lying next to them is another man who looks very pale and is unconscious. This is Reginald Winston.

The Action

Araneae has defeated the Storm Knights with ease. She presents herself to them as they awake and graces

them with her true "beauty" as she switches into spider form. She waves away some creatures that accompanied her and gloats over her victory. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Where is the famed cunning of Storm Knights that I've heard so much about? You have been lead merrily along my web of deceit and now sit here trapped like flies. Did you ever suspect me? Of course not; like so many fairy tales, you had to come to save the poor maiden. Well, the evil stepmother finally won and I get the



The Codex of Brahma

Cosm: Core Earth

Possibilities: 50

Tapping Difficulty: 20

Purpose: to enlighten all people in the glory of the Hindu trinity, Apeiros and the cosmverse.

Powers: +3 to any *Mind* or *Spirit* roll dealing with Hinduism or the Cosmverse.

Group Power: Block (see sidebar)

Restrictions: the Codex of Brahma can only be used by those with the *faith* skill (of any kind). When tapping possibilities from the shard, those whose faith is not Hinduism have the difficulty increased by +3.

Block Power

Purchase: 20

Use Cost: 8

Coordination: 12

Difficulty: 12

Range: 4 (6 meters)

Duration: 9 (1 minute)

Effect: Protect Storm Knights from the influence of Darkness Devices

The direct effect is to block Storm Knights from the influences of the Nameless One's Darkness Devices. It creates a protective sphere about the shard in which a Darkness Device cannot continue its manipulations. If used in the vicinity of a stela, it "deadens" its power. While a stela is deadened, Storm Knights can attempt to break it (an attack versus its *Toughness*) before the sphere's duration ends. If successful, the stela becomes inoperative. The Darkness Device is not able to channel its power through the stela during this time, but the stela can defend itself normally (see *The Storm Knights' Guide to the Possibility Wars* or the basic *Torg Rulebook*).

Although this is a strong power, it is not without its weaknesses. In addition to being small and short-lived, the protective sphere generated by the power is fixed. That is, it cannot be moved once created. This will make every second count while in the sphere.

killed by jungle creatures. I must play the distraught, black widow for these ignorant Victorians. I shall return to dispose of you after the webs have drained you of your precious possibility energy. Enjoy your last hours."

Time for a Perseverance check. If the Knights fail, they must wait to be rescued (below). If they succeed, they will alarm Araneae and she will leave the room to make preparations to destroy them. In the former case, she will be overconfident and may "play" with the Knights before their annihilation. In the latter case, she may choose to create more demon spiders or even call in some other servants (see *Creatures of Horrorsh*). Succeeding at this point automatically boosts the characters' Perseverance by two.

The Rescue

After her speech, Araneae returns to her human form, leaves and locks the room. She intends to leave the characters in the webs while the *life drain* removes possibilities and return the next morning to kill them, but after a few minutes, the door swings open and two Storm Knights enter. They are Vito Tattaglia and Ti-Dara Jarnel from the fiction.

Vito frees the characters while Ti-Dara speaks with them briefly. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"*Bonjour, fellow Storm Knights. We must act quickly if we are to succeed in capturing Araneae. We have come to aid you and show you the true purpose of your visit in Horrorsh. A short while ago, I began receiving visions of the Gaunt Man, the High Lord behind the invasion of Earth. He has defeated the Heart of Coyote and returned to power in Illmound Keep. If this planet is to fight off the invaders and survive the war, we must again defeat the Gaunt Man. We will explain further after we defeat Araneae.*"

Ti-Dara performs a *healing* miracle (see basic book for details) for each of the Storm Knights and helps Lord Winston as much as she can — the webs have drained much of his life force. After the Knights are healed, everyone races outside where Kevin Middleton, Andre

happy ending. I do not understand why the Gaunt Man was so worried about you, it was so easy to arrange your defeat.

"In case you were wondering, that gentleman next to you is my husband, the honorable Lord Reginald Winston. The cult of the Black Heart does indeed exist and he was getting a little too close to discovering the power behind them. You see, the Black Heart are one of the Gaunt Man's tools. Working with Lord Cheltenham, I have been playing both sides of the scenario. He would

send the cult to terrorize one of my villages for a while then I would come to the rescue with soldiers and money to provide relief. That way, the villagers always recover just enough to remain fearful rather than sink into despair. Since I could not have Reginald discover me, I had to remove him. It also provided me with a beautiful trap with which to draw you in.

"Well, I must be going now. I have to announce the death of my poor husband, who's remains have just been returned to me after he was



Duchard and Captain Verdigris are already involved in the fight. Araneae is here, cloaked in a 25 meter wide darkness sphere, and accompanying her are several demon spiders which she has summoned. Two of the spiders are already down. If you wish to include the fictional characters, they are listed in the *Torg Character Collection*. The rescue of the Knights by the fiction characters gives the Knights a +1 to their Perseverance — they know they aren't alone in their fight.

Demon Spiders (2 per Storm Knight including the fiction characters)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 14

Dodge 16, maneuver 21, running 17, stealth 16, unarmed combat 17

STRENGTH 15

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 10

Tracking 13, trick (10)

MIND 1

Test (10), willpower (10)

CHARISMA 5

Taunt (15)

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 14

Possibilities: 2 per Storm Knight

Natural Tools: Mandibles (STR+3/

17) **Power Rating:** *Resistance to normal weapons, dark vision*

Corruption Value: 8

Fear Rating: 1/2

Weakness: none

True Death: A demon spider receives its true death when Araneae experiences true death.

Note: The demon spiders are Araneae's greatest creation. Using her powers (*create demon spider* is a two-point power), she can convert normal spiders into 4' tall spiders that are under her control. Any spiders that are still alive after Araneae's death die. Demon spiders are filled with corrupted souls from the Waiting Village. If the fight begins to go against her, she may create more demon spiders from the normal ones that inhabit the building. If Araneae begins creating more spiders, this is time for another Perseverance check.

Araneae

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 13 [16]*

Acrobatics 16 [19], beast riding 17 [20], dodge 16 [19], fire combat 14 [14], maneuver 16 [19], stealth 15 [18], unarmed combat 17 [20]

STRENGTH 11 [21]

TOUGHNESS 11 [18]

PERCEPTION 15 [13]

Find 16 [14], tracking 16 [14], trick 18 [16]

MIND 16

Occult 22, test 17, taunt 19

CHARISMA 18 [11]

Charm 20 [13], persuasion 20 [13], taunt 21 [18]

SPIRIT 15

Faith (Orrorsh) 22, intimidation 19, reality 24, shape shifting 25

Possibilities: Total number of Storm Knight possibilities divided by four

Natural Tools: Mandibles (STR+4/25); Web (can spin a web large enough for one human-sized creature every half hour; The web has a TOU 20. To free oneself of the web a character must get a *Strength* total over 20 and/or do at least two *wounds* to the web).

Power Rating: *Life drain: Dexterity* (her webs), *shape change, create demon spider, resistance to normal weapons, darkness, dark vision*

Equipment: Lee-Hollings Light Revolver (Damage value 15; 6 shots)

Goals: To replace her mother as a member of the Gaunt Man's Hellion Court. If possible, to corrupt the Storm Knights.

Corruption Value: 25

Fear Rating: 2

Weakness: Fire

True Death: Like Basjas and all of her offspring, if she is wrapped in her own web for three days, she will die.

Description: Araneae will fight while the odds are in her favor. If it appears that the Storm Knights are winning, she can further shapeshift into a small black widow. In this form she has a *stealth* value of 30 but is not *resistant to normal weapons*, and she has the skill and attribute values of her human form. She will flee into the jungles and wait for the Storm Knights to leave.

*The numbers in brackets are skill and attribute values for Araneae in spider form.

Fact and Fiction

The Storm Knights from the fiction will fight mainly a defensive battle leaving the glory for your players. In the event that one of the fiction characters is seriously wounded, have him retreat into the background where Ti-Dara will heal him. None of the fiction characters should die in this battle.

Aftermath

When the battle is over, Ti-Dara and the other Storm Knights have some information for your players. She explains her visions and their plans to remove the Gaunt Man's bridges to Gaea. Reginald Winston also has a few words for the players, and it becomes obvious that they may be his last. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Ti-Dara, I was responsible for your visions. Just recently I learned of the Devil's return. Although Araneae was unaware, I had learned of her role as one of the Gaunt Man's lieutenants well before she captured me. But she managed to trap me just after I called out to you and I remained her prisoner these last few weeks.

"I overheard her speaking with a servant of the Gaunt Man and the leader of the Black Heart, whom I was unable to identify. Araneae and the other gentleman seemed to be arguing over your group's fate and I believe that he was the one responsible for the kidnapping of Kevin Middleton's loved one.

"If you have not already found them, my notes are stashed away in the study. They detail the cult's activities and the Gaunt Man's return. You should also search out my colleague, William Devon. We were working together and he has the map. Go to the Outfitter's and have him arrange the meeting."

He continues telling the player character Storm Knights that the Black Heart is holding their captive friend on the island where the stelae just north of Palembang sits. In order for them to aid in the Gaunt Man's setback, they should remove that stelae after they perform the rescue. Without





the stelae, the Majestic bridge should fall as Core Earth refills the zones surrounding the stelae. Although there may be severe casualties in the transformation, they will be light compared to what the Gaunt Man will wreak with his new power.

In order to remove the stelae, the characters will need to use an eternity shard that Winston found. He reveals its hidden location in the basement and outlines its powers.

Winston then turns to the characters from the fiction and explains a similar situation and gives them directions to find their loved one. He also tells them of the Carredon's resurrection. They should move to prevent it from returning to Illmound Keep and if possible remove that bridge as well. If the Gaunt Man were to lose both bridges, he would be cut off from Heketon and Gaea. His efforts would be restricted to maintaining the areas he has and reconnecting to Gaea.

At this point, Lord Winston collapses. Depending on the mood of the adventure, he may expire here, or he could be carried into town. This is the end of Act One.

Flags

Martyr. Unless the Knights are losing the battle badly, this card should be saved for the final act. You can always use the fiction Storm Knights to cheat and give the heroes a victory. Having the bridge to Gaea removed is much more important than winning this fight fairly.

Variables

Lots of different things could happen in this scene. The Knights could resist Araneae and attack her before the fiction Knights arrive; they could burst out of her webs early; they might even get killed. As the gamemaster, you will have to balance the different possibilities — members of the New London Guard can show up to act as cannon fodder; the demon spiders of Araneae might *not* die when she does. If things are going really easily, maybe Basjas sends “help” for her child.

This scene should have all the tension and excitement of a climactic battle. If the Knights triumph (and it is win or die, most likely), they gain +4 to their Perseverance. An additional +1 is awarded if they somehow manage Araneae's true death (though no one

knows it at the start). In addition, if the Knights did not need the assistance of the fiction Knights in defeating Araneae (they used it, but didn't really need it), then they get another +1.

Struggling On

The party has to continue on after the Black Heart. Winning the fight with Araneae should give them quite a bit of confidence and their Perseverance continues to rise.

Awards

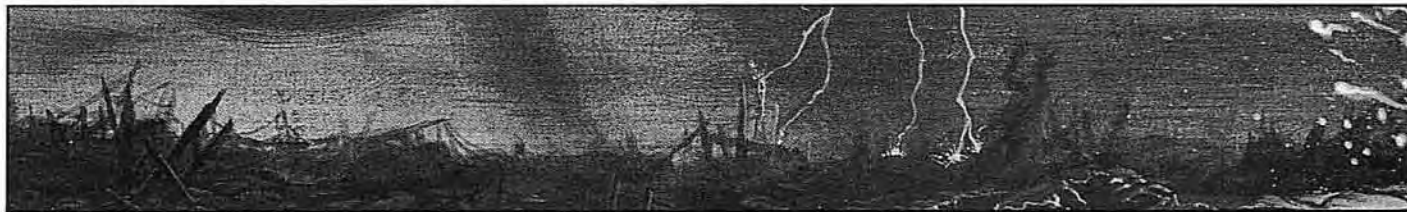
For successfully completing this act, each survivor receives three possibilities. An additional possibility is awarded if the Knights manage to kill Araneae for the final time.

Cut to ...

The fiction. Allow the players to read the two prologues and the first chapter of the fiction. Then cut to Act Two: “Search for a Stelae.” It is not vital that all the players should read the fiction, but it does give them a feeling of tone for their trek through the jungle.



Adventure into the Unknown



"Verdigris, Point! Duchard and Tattaglia, Flanks!" Kevin Middleton shouted. He had assumed the combat leader's position for the group since their gathering. He was technically in charge because he had the most at stake in the mission. After the visions, his home in England was attacked by a group of hellhounds and a ravagon intent on preventing his venturing to Orrorsh. They ransacked his home and captured his wife, Katrinna, hoping to use her to keep Middleton out.

But his love was too strong. After the fight, he had raced to London to find his friend Vito Tattaglia whom he had recognized from the vision. He took the recent nightmares as prophecies of their joining and wanted to recruit him for the journey to Orrorsh. When he arrived at Vito's home, he discovered that two of the other Storm Knights had also arrived.

Ti-Dara Jarnel, using her mystic powers, had found André Duchard in Paris and together they flew to London where she knew they would find Vito and Kevin. They picked up Captain Verdigris a few hours later in Cairo and had him redesign Kevin's wheelchair for all-terrain capabilities. Once completed, they headed into the jungles of Orrorsh to determine why they had been summoned.

Now, Kevin knew why they came. Aside from rescuing Katrinna, he was supposed to trek to the very heart of Orrorsh, Illmound Keep. Once there, they were to use the eternity shard that Lord Winston had given them to take down the bridge back to Gaea.

Hopefully, they would arrive before the Carredon crossed and it would be trapped on the other side. But secretly, Kevin hoped that the Carredon would already have come across. Although it had only been a dream, he wanted a rematch with the Carredon. No one gets away with killing an ex-Marine that easily, especially not when that ex-Marine was himself.

"Kevin," Captain Verdigris interrupted, "What are we supposed to be looking for?"

Ti-Dara responded, "Lord Winston said that Katrinna's kidnappers are somewhere within a day or two north of here."

"Great! But where the hell are we? All I can see is jungle," André complained. He was not accustomed to the close confines of the trails. He was more at home in an urban

jungle and felt mildly uncomfortable being this close to nature.

Ti-Dara tried to sooth some of his complaints, "We're along the western coast of Borneo. After we find Katrinna, we can head northeast and find Illmound Keep."

"Cut the chatter, folks," Kevin piped in. "It's bad enough that we have to slog through this heat and humidity without your attracting every critter for ten miles. Verdigris, see anything yet?"

"Nope," the edeinos replied. "But to tell the truth, it's been awhile since I been in the jungles. Not too much forest surveillance needed in the Sahara Desert."

The group continued along their trail for quite awhile without much activity. Verdigris, André and Vito continued to maintain the lead position, but since they had begun a unique series of bad banter and dirty jokes, Kevin and Ti-Dara remained back slightly, so as not to become involved. Kevin continued to sulk and complain about the lack of discipline of his companions, but realized that they were just letting off steam to avoid getting too tense. It was annoying, but at least it was better than having them shooting off at random into the jungle. Too many critters here in Orrorsh would be less afraid of, and more interested in, the source of the noise.

After a few more hours, they broke out some supplies and began to settle down for the evening. They set up a small cooking fire and sat quietly while they ate, keeping a cautious eye out for any of the nighttime predators that would now be waking up.

Things remained unnervingly quiet throughout their meal. A couple of times, André thought he spotted something prowling around the edge of the camp, but as soon as he got up to investigate, it scurried away. So he settled back down and continued his watch of the perimeter.

Vito broke the long silence with a question, "So, Kevin, why's don't you tell us 'bout your wife and those t'ings dat grabbed her."

"I've already told you everything you need to know," Kevin snapped. He had been startled out of his thoughts by the giant's booming voice and was in no mood for conversation.

The giant, however, persisted with his "casual" interest. "So tell us again, Kev," he said, "or do ya wanna hear about



Clementa, Mobius, and the travelling weird scientist again?"

Involuntarily, Middleton groaned, and Verdigris let out a sharp bark of laughter. Actually, coming from the edeinos, it was more of a hiss — but Kevin got the idea.

"All right, you win," he said, and the party started moving again. "I met Katrinna while we were both chasing Amethyst the Dark Wizard out of Scandinavia — and we were each operating independently at the time. After the last battle with the Wizard's minions, she blew up out of the water just off the bow of our ship. At first, we thought she was a last gasp of Amethyst's — but she was able to stop us from attacking with her ... winning ways."

Kevin smiled to himself — the first smile in many days — and remember the tumultuous meeting. "It's amazing we didn't kill each other then — or over the next few days. But surprise and anger turned to friendship ... and then to love. We romanced and married a few months later, settling down in the north section of London. We were able to put the War behind us for a little while, and we even started to talk of children."

A ragged sigh escaped the ex-Marine's lips, and all but Ti-Dara looked away. The pain in his face and voice was only countered by iron control he kept over his features.

"But then the ravagons came. I was out, or I might have been able to do ... something. I don't know," he shook his head and paused. Vito nodded to Verdigris, and the rocket ranger flew off again onto point. Vito started pushing the wheelchair, allowing Middleton to compose himself.

"I got there moments after the attack. The place was a wreck, and I think I saw a ravagon flying off with someone — no, not someone," Middleton spoke through clenched teeth, "it was Katrinna. In his talons. I cried out, but I couldn't do anything. I was useless."

There was a long pause as the sounds of the jungle filled the ears of the Storm Knights. No one looked at the ex-Marine in the wheelchair, but they all knew what he was going through. In this war of possibilities, who had not lost someone, only to feel helpless afterwards?

"But I got to vent at least a little of my frustration quickly. A group of hellhounds — at least that's what I think they were; they certainly weren't normal hounds or even wolves — attacked. I don't know if they were supposed to slow me down, distract me, or kill me. I hope it wasn't the latter, because they were woefully out of their element. I was able to get to my weapons and that was that."

"I downed the hounds quickly, but by then, the ravagon was gone. I wheeled my way in the direction I'd seen it going — uselessly, I know — but I couldn't catch sight of it."

"But I saw something else."

Kevin raised a fist and clenched it in front of his face. The tendons in his neck and the muscles in his back stood out until each of the others were certain here was a man, crippled or not, who no one should cross.

"One of the hellhounds I'd shot had loped off, mortally wounded. I found it, steaming and smoking and smelling of sulfur, bathing the cobblestones in its dark blood. As I looked at it, the hellhound dissolved, leaving only a pool of gore."

"But then the gore began to shift and move. I thought I

should draw back; that it was a trap, but then I realized I wanted it to be a trap — I wanted to fight against death again. It would fill the hollowness in my chest."

Kevin's hollow laugh echoed in the other stormers' ears. "No such luck. The blood shifted and smoked, and started to form runes — then letters, in a language I didn't understand. Finally, the blood-words turned to English, and their meaning was clear."

"Stay out of Orrorsh. The Torg commands it. Your life, the life of your lady, and the lives of your species depend upon this. No quarter shall be given if you do not heed this warning. So says the Torg."

Kevin fell silent then. The rest of the group knew the story: Middleton knew the 'Torg' — undoubtedly the Gaunt Man — had no intention of keeping his word. In his hollow eyes, Kevin and Katrinna were insects little better than the ordinary people of their race — and they would be extinguished when he chose. This warning was either a trap for Kevin and his Storm Knight friends, or a warning meant to keep inconvenient flies out of the Gaunt Man's soup.

Kevin intended to spring the trap, or spoil the soup, and turn the tables on the lord of Fear as other Storm Knights had done before.

"So you still t'ink dat your lady might still be amongst da livin'?" queried Vito. His voice was quieter than before, but still as light as a giant could make it.

"*She has to be.*" Kevin bit down hard on the words. "If she wasn't, I'd ... *feel* it. Wouldn't I?" Troubled, he lapsed into a long silence.

During the pause, Ti-Dara moved closer to Kevin. She slid in beside the giant, who let her hold the left-most bar on the wheelchair. Silently, she began to rub Kevin between his shoulderblades. She could feel the tight muscles begin to respond to her touch, but then the shoulders tightened again and Kevin's head came up in alarm.

Ti-Dara backed away, alarmed, and right into the giant. She looked at Kevin's hard and reddened features and up at the stony expression of the gangster-giant, "Kevin, I wish only to comfort you. I know the troubles which you face," she stammered. "I meant no harm."

"Perhaps we should camp here, Vito," Kevin said quietly, never letting his eyes stray from Ti-Dara's face. The woman was obviously growing uncomfortable and was starting to fidget. "Perhaps you'd better go call in Verdigris, Ti. Then take first watch." She nodded quickly and took off.

"Watch her, boss," Vito said as the mage disappeared into the underbrush, "she could be trouble."

Kevin sighed. This time it was a healthy, full sigh, untrobbled by grief — but still sad. "No, Vito, she isn't trouble. She's just confused."

"That's the worst kind o' trouble, boss," he grumbled. But, before Kevin could respond, the giant moved off to collect firewood.

After a quiet dinner, the group slept in watch-shifts. Ti-Dara took the first watch, then stayed awake by the fire while Verdigris took the outer watch. Then she went to sleep and Vito took the outer point. The rotation included Kevin and then André next and then it was morning.

The night had passed peacefully except for a minor



skirmish between André and an owl. The embarrassed cyberKnight almost scared the life out of Kevin when the forest creature "ambushed" him while he answered a call of nature. Fortunately, the young man was able to alert Kevin and the others before they wasted ammunition on the frightened beast.

Within an hour of the "owl attack," everyone was awake, fed and ready to go. They resumed their marching order with Captain Verdigris scouting ahead. After a day back in the wilderness, the edeinos had remembered most of his natural abilities and was able to steer the party away from numerous encounters with the local wildlife. By early afternoon, they had covered a solid twenty miles of territory.

"Captain Verdigris, why don't you come back and we'll stop for lunch," called out Kevin. He was using one of the wrist communicators that Captain Verdigris had made for everyone, but unfortunately, its designer wasn't responding.

"Allo? Captain Verdigris?" André called out as he tried his as well. But it wasn't that Kevin's communicator was working improperly; Captain Verdigris simply was not responding.

"Wait here," motioned Kevin, "I'll go up ahead and see if I can spot him."

Kevin proceeded up the trail. After a few yards, the others lost sight of him because of a turn in the trail, but assumed he would be fine. Aside from the edeinos, Kevin had had the most experience in jungle situations. He had been in Vietnam for three tours and had come to Orrorsh once a few months ago, but after a few moments they began to worry.

"Kevin?" Ti-Dara called out. "Hello, Kevin? Please respond."

Silence.

"I vote we ditch this place and go look," André said.

"Me, too. Ti-Dara, is you wit' us?" replied Vito.

Ti-Dara made the decision unanimous as the three of them began to move slowly down the trail. Vito led the way with Ti-Dara between him and André. After a minute or so, they reached the turn in the trail and began a search for the others.

"Kevin! Captain Verdigris! Where are you? Please call out," transmitted André, but no response came. Only the sounds of static could be heard from the communicators. He posed another question, "Ti-Dara, you're a mage or something, aren't you? Can't you find them?"

Ti-Dara replied, "I can try, but I can't guarantee anything." And she set about trying to scan the local forest for any signs of Kevin or Captain Verdigris. In the meantime, Vito and André moved around slowly, searching the underbrush and the tree for any signs of their lost companions.

"Ti-Dara, have you located them yet?" queried André, but Ti-Dara scolded him for disrupting her concentration.

"Don't disturb me; I've nearly got something," she snapped, her eyes closed tightly, "shut up!"

"Sorry."

After a few more moments, as Ti-Dara closed in on the traces of her friends, her concentration was once again broken, but this time André was not the cause. From out of

the jungle somewhere, the rock was hurled and it struck Ti-Dara just hard enough to ruin her scan.

"What was dat?" asked Vito.

"I don't know; go check it out, you lummo. It came from over there," André replied as he gestured towards a section of the tree-line from where the rock had originated. But Vito's search was interrupted by another rock striking him on his backside. This time the rock was accompanied by a voice.

"Leave my jungle! Your friends are lost to you!"

"There! There they are," Ti-Dara cried out, ignoring the mysterious voice. "I think that they are right over there, in that grouping of trees."

Vito and André moved to where she had pointed out but they found no sign of their friends, not even Kevin's wheelchair. The only things that they could find were the trees.

"I'm positive. Their cries are ringing in my head. They are right there," Ti-Dara exclaimed, moving towards the spot of the mental summons.

"I told you to leave! Leave or you will suffer the same fate as your friends!" the voice cried out again.

"What fate? Where are our companions?" André shouted back.

"Wait, I t'ink I know. Somehow, that creature has transformed our friends into these trees," Vito said. Ti-Dara confirmed his suspicions with another scan of the trees. The scan told her that their companions were indeed either the trees themselves or entrapped within them.

"What have you done? Free our friends!" Ti-Dara scolded at their unknown nemesis.

"No. They entered my area and didn't pay me proper homage. Therefore, it was my choice to do whatever I wished with them. Now, I give you ten seconds to get out of here before I do the same to you! Ten, nine, eight..."

André interrupted the voice's countdown, "What 'homage'? This is not your road. This is just a trail through the woods. Now I demand that you let our friends go!"

"Not my road, indeed," the voice muttered. "Seven, six..."

"Well, how about we pay their toll and you free them?" Ti-Dara tried to bargain.

The only sound was the rustling of leaves. It sent chills up and down the companions' spines; they knew whose leaves were rustling.

"All right," the voice finally answered. "You can pay the homage for them. But if you can't, I'll turn you into trees as well — and you can guard my road forever."

"Dat sounds fair," Vito responded. He continued to scan the area with his large eyes, squinting in the shadow of the woods. His eyes were better than his companions, but the shadows seemed to be swirling and moving to confound him.

"So what sort of homage do you want, *mon ami*," André asked. "We must get started, neh?"

"Oh, that's right," the voice answered. Vito thought he saw movement off to his left, but, when he looked, it was just more shadows.

"First, I demand that you water the roots of my trees."

"That doesn't sound too bad," Ti-Dara said.



"With the blood of a human."

"That does," André responded crisply.

"Oh, I dunno," Vito considered, moving close to the strangest of the trees — it looked an awful lot like Captain Verdigris 'rooted' to the ground, his arms outstretched as if in flight. "Uman's 'ave a lot o' blood."

"Vito!" Ti-Dara admonished, "how could you?!"

Vito backed away from the cyberpriestess, a little closer to the tree and the swirling shadows. "Hey, babe, take it easy; it was just a thought!"

The voice seemed amused. It began to cackle as Vito continued to back away from Ti-Dara, his eyes wide. She began to raise her hands and chant in a strange tongue. Her fingertips began to glow.

"Now, Ti," the giant began, "let's not get hasty —"

"Hee, hee, hee," the voice chuckled evilly, "I suppose giant blood would be acceptable! Heh, heh — eii!"

The voice cut off as Vito whirled with amazing swiftness, his hands reaching up in to the shadows in Verdigris' branches. At the same time, Ti-Dara's fingertips exploded with light, and one small, dark shape was revealed, silhouetted against the limbs above.

Vito grasped with his meathook-like fingers and pulled. "Aeeii!" the voice screamed as he yanked it free from its perch. "No! Don't! Leave me alone!"

With a final tug and a sound of cracking wood, the giant brought ... something down from the branches of the tree. Immediately, the protective shadow around the creature — and, indeed, around the whole grove — cleared. In Vito's meaty paws was what looked like a struggling, ugly wooden doll.

"Well, what do we have here?" André asked, drawing his GodMeeter. "A little kindling for tonight's fire?"

"Let me go! Let me go!" the creature cried weakly. "I'll die."

"Ya got that right, Pinnochio," Vito said. He turned toward Ti-Dara, holding the creature at arm's length.

Ti-Dara began to weave her arms and cast another spell. This one took several minutes, but Vito's strong arms did not tire. The creature, however, began to show visible signs of deterioration. Its gnarled "skin" — obviously tree bark — began to flake in the giant's hands, and its cries became weaker and weaker.

"I'll destroy you all," it breathed.

"You'll do nothing, except free our friends," André demanded.

"I'll die first ..." it gasped, the sentence taking the last of its strength. The creature seemed to lapse into unconsciousness.

"It tells the truth," Ti-Dara assessed, letting her arms fall



to her sides. "The creature is some sort of evil wood sprite — totally unlike anything we have seen in Aysle. Even those consumed by the Dark have vibrant, evil life. This thing has no life of its own; it can only exist by drawing life from its trees."

"So dat's why it got so weak alla th' sudden."

"Right. And that's why it will die if it is not returned to the trees," Ti-Dara confirmed.

"You want I should put it back up dere?" Vito asked skeptically.

"No," André said, "then it will have no reason to assist us."

"But if we don't," Ti-Dara said, "it won't have the power to help us."

André considered this for a moment and then pointed his GodMeeter at a young sapling. With a harsh report, the gun fired, cutting the tree off mere inches from its base. "Give him that," the Cyberpapal Storm Knight said. "It won't be enough for him to work against us, but it may revive him."

"How do you know?" Ti-Dara queried, retrieving the dying sapling.

"I don't. You want to wait around until it dies and see what happens then?"

"No." Ti-Dara held out the sapling and touched the creature with its top end. Immediately, the small "man" responded, turning toward the sapling and seizing it with both hands. But the dying tree shriveled quickly, its last energy consumed by its former lord.

"Aahhh!" the creature sighed. It did not recover completely, but its skin began to seem less brittle and it was awake. "More! More!" it cried out.



"Nope, little fella, not yet," Vito said firmly. He tightened his grip again, making certain the imp couldn't squirm out of his grasp. "You know what we want you to do."

The creature looked into the giant's eyes with a malevolent glare. "All right. You win. But first you must swear."

"Swear what?" Ti-Dara asked.

"First, you must swear to let me go back to the trees — *immediately* after I turn your friends back. Then, you will leave my wooded area, never to return. For that price, I will turn your friends back into their original forms."

The companions all nodded, and Vito began to hold the creature out toward the nearest of the two strange trees.

"No!" Ti-Dara yelled, interposing her body between the tree and the creature's outstretched claws. "If it reaches the tree, its power will be returned!"

The creature cursed. "But if you don't, I won't be able to turn them back," it whined.

"Yeah, right," Vito said, pulling the creature back toward him and staring it down. The small face quailed. "Then I guess you ain't no good to us, den. Let's see how long you last *dis* time."

"All right! All right! I'll do it," the "sprite" cried. "Just get the mammal out of the way!"

Amused, Ti-Dara stepped aside. The creature reached out its grasping arms — they did look like roots — and a dark shadow passed from it to the trees. Slowly, both turned into the unconscious bodies of Captain Verdigris and Kevin Middleton. Both were fully equipped and apparently unharmed. Ti-Dara checked them both out completely.

"They're fine, just asleep."

"There! Release me!" the creature demanded. "Keep your bargain; return me to the trees!"

André broke in this time, "You can't, Vito!" he said, "If you do, the creature will become powerful again — and we'll all be trees!"

"True, true," the imp cackled, "but you swore!"

"And we all know what a powerful thing the sworn word is — especially in Orrorsh," Ti-Dara confirmed grimly.

The giant paused to consider while the creature struggled in his grasp. Slowly, he raised the creature up to his face. This time, it was undaunted by his stare. "Little plant," he growled, "you t'ink you're powerful, eh?"

"Yes, yes! And you will find out how powerful, soon!" The thing laughed with glee.

"So you can live offa any tree, eh?"

"All trees are my food, yes," the creature answered, irritation sounding in its voice, "So are you going to keep your bargain or not? If you won't, there are worse things that the Power can do to you than turn you into a tree."

Vito nodded slowly, agreeing. "Well, den, I guess I'd better put ya back in da trees, den."

In a swift movement that drew a cry and then a long wail from the creature, Vito drew back his arm and threw the creature as hard as he could — which was very hard indeed. The dark wooden imp screamed as it sailed over the trees and out of sight. "Back to da trees ya go!" he yelled.

His only answer was a long cry, suddenly ended.

"C'mon, crew," he said, picking up Kevin, wheelchair and all, "let's go before it gets back." Without waiting, he began his long strides down the path, leaving the other two to carry the edeinos rocket ranger.

"I hate the woods," Ti-Dara thought she heard him mutter. But then the sounds of the forest closed in again and she concentrated on walking.





Act Two

Search For a Stelae

Major Beat

Working on the advice of Lord Winston, the Storm Knights examine the rest of his journal and seek out William Devon. Ed Johnston, the owner of Outfitter's, arranges for a meeting that evening at a local pub. Devon arrives and after some discussion, he agrees to accompany the Knights to the cult.

The Storm Knights encounter some trouble as Sergeant Willingham enters the pub just as they prepare to leave. They race off after avoiding a fight with Willingham (and backup if there was trouble before) and make their way to Bangka, the island where the cult is located.

Devon then leads them to the Black Heart's temple, an old, decaying church located on the edge of a small village just north of Muntok. He reveals himself as the head of the cult and after ordering the cultists to slay the Knights, he escapes out into the graveyards.

After the Knights dispatch the cultists, they find Devon poised over the kidnapped loved one. He intends to sacrifice her and call forth the gospog of Orrorsh.

The Outfitter

Now that the Knights have a little more time in town they can equip themselves at the Outfitter. Ed Johnston runs this Victorian equivalent of an army surplus store which is well stocked with the necessities of monster hunting. Musty shelves are lined with camping gear and outdoor wear. A display case along the side houses several types of firearms, mainly Victorian made muskets and revolvers. Assume all normal supplies and items such as crosses and garlic can be obtained for reasonable prices.

If given the proper credentials, such as a well placed bribe, Johnston leads the characters into a back storeroom where some more modern weapons can be obtained. You can stock this section as fits your campaign. Johnston can also perform custom work on most weapons, including commissioning silver bullets. Johnston will set prices as high as he thinks he can get without driving away potential customers. He will of course explain that he can not be held responsible for any troubles caused by illegal transactions.

SCENE ONE: Locating Help

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights continue to investigate the cult. Their leads are Reginald's journal and a man named William Devon. The Outfitter will arrange a meeting between Devon and the Storm Knights for later that day at "Bloody Mary's," a local pub.

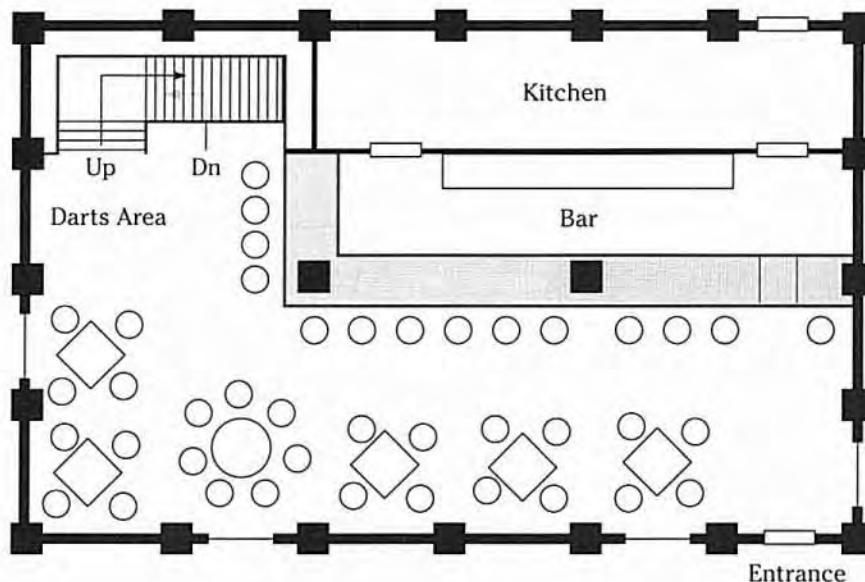
The Action

The rest of the scene takes place in "Bloody Mary's," a local tavern. The atmosphere is somewhat congenial, but the Knights can determine that the patrons are probably more wary than warm. Some of the patrons may even refuse to acknowledge the characters' presence. However, Mary does acknowledge them. She is the hostess and owner and a friendly, matronly woman. When they sit down, she will come to the players' table and take their orders. Her conversation is sparked with wit





No Quarter Given: Map 2 Bloody Mary's



and she will make mother-like scoldings to any of the inhabitants who scoff at the Storm Knights.

After a delicious meal, Ed Johnston arrives with another gentleman. William Devon stands just shy of six feet tall and is solidly built. His clothes are right out of the Explorer's handbook, tank khaki dress shirt and pants. A pistol is holstered on the side. They come over to the table and Ed introduces the parties. After ordering some drinks for everyone, Ed sits back and lets Devon take over. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Ed has told me about the incidents up at the Winstons' estates. I had begun to worry about Reginald. We were supposed to continue our investigations on the cult about two weeks ago. When I went to their house, Araneae told me Reginald was suffering from some sort of virus or cold. Later, I couldn't recall him being sick earlier or in all the time we've spent together. But I didn't want to pry further.

"I now understand what was happening. It is unfortunate, Reginald was a good man and a better explorer. He will be missed. I suppose you must have some questions now."

Devon will answer some of the characters' questions on the Black Heart

cult (see below), but prefers to talk it about after they leave Bloody Mary's. He glances about briefly, stating that sometimes the walls have ears and that this may not be the safest place for this sort of conversation; a point which is punctuated by return stares from some of the other patrons.

Cleaning Up

The characters can finish their food and interact with the people in the pub as they see fit. Nothing untoward happens until they get ready to leave. Searching out William Devon helps the investigation but does not increase their Perseverance.

Flags

Romance. Mary, while a bit plump, is a fairly attractive woman. She is fiercely independent and sometimes a bit aggressive, which has left her still unmarried. She takes a liking to this character and may make a friendly offer for more than just warm food. If the Storm Knight playing this card is a woman, some patron of the bar tries to charm her. He should be someone of decent standing, perhaps an adven-

turer or off-duty policeman.

The biggest problem with the romance is that Mary is Sgt. Willingham's "lady-love" — even though she doesn't know it. This can be used to introduce the characters to Scene Two. Likewise, if the gamemaster chooses an officer of the guard as a romance for a character, the officer is one of Sgt. Willingham's friends, and the good sergeant doesn't want the officer caught up in any outside intrigues.

Mistaken Identity. Uh, oh. One of the characters — preferably one with some corruption on his or her soul — has been accused of being a monster by one of the gypsy people who clean up for Mary. This can be any of the Knights, as the *mistaken identity* can be used to infer that this character is a servant of the evil. If this card is played, it provides a strong motive for the action in the next scene — Willingham has a good excuse.

Cut To ...

The scene ends as the Knights begin to leave the bar. If the characters had some trouble with Sergeant Willingham earlier, cut to Scene Two, "What's All This, Then?" If their previous encounter went peacefully or



you want to avoid the fight, cut to Scene Three, "Calm Before the Storm." Note that the mistaken identity subplot (above) can be used as an introduction to Scene Two.

SCENE TWO: What's All This, Then?

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights finish up the meeting and are about to head out when Sergeant Willingham enters Bloody Mary's. The action is dependant upon what occurred during their previous encounter (or by subplots). This scene can be skipped entirely if it is not appropriate.

The Action

The events in this scene can take several courses depending upon the actions in Act One, Scene Three, or the subplots currently being played.

Suspended

If the characters were wrongly arrested earlier, Willingham has been suspended for a few days as a disciplinary action. He has spent those few days drinking heavily and looking for a fight. Luckily, the Storm Knights that caused his troubles are in the right place at the right time.

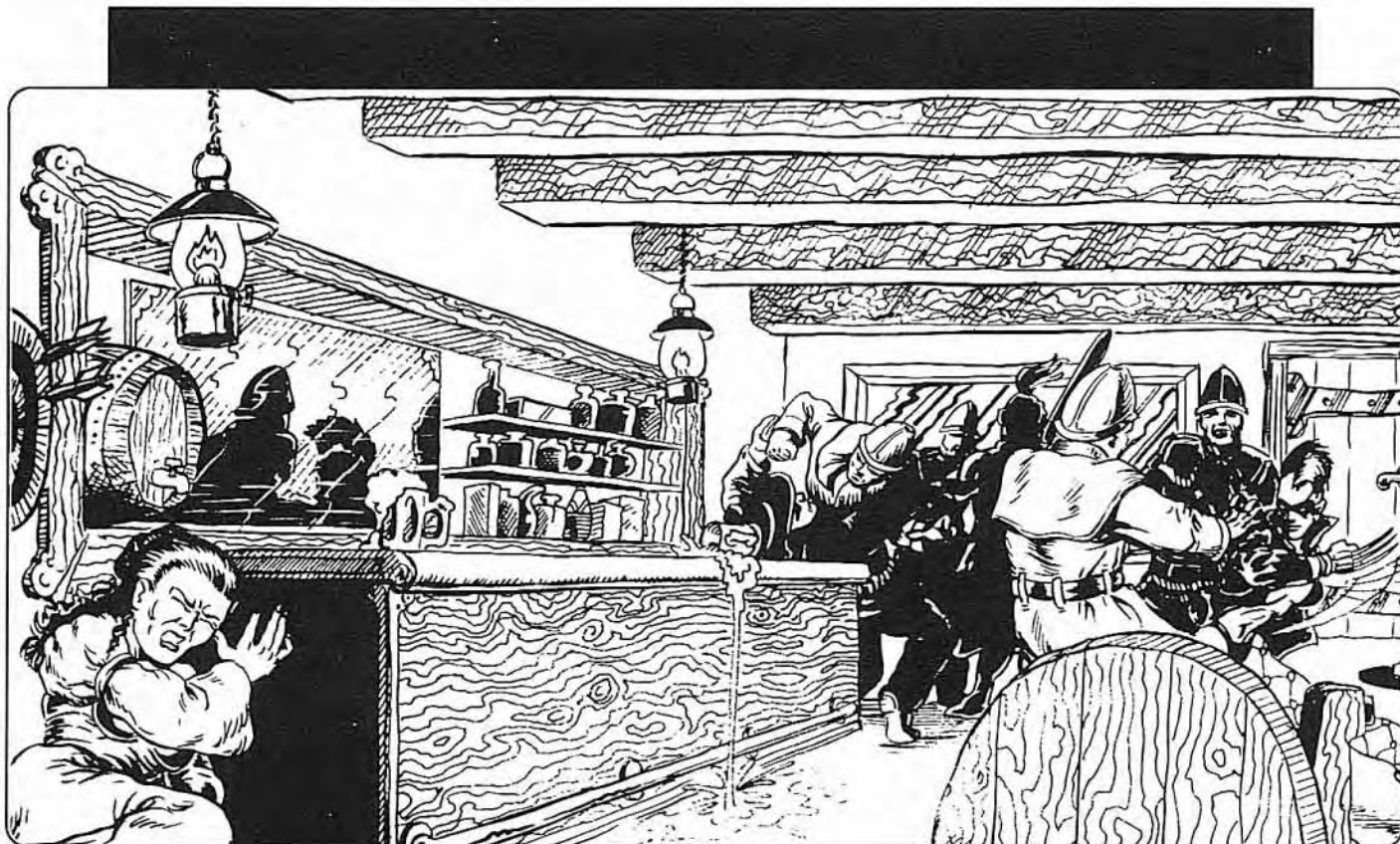
He enters Bloody Mary's and it is immediately obvious how drunk the sergeant is. After hassling the bartender for more drinks (which he is refused) and making a nuisance of himself to the patrons, he spots the players. He becomes rather vocal about his opinions of the Storm Knights and some of the patrons beat a hasty re-

treat, perhaps sensing the fight about to ensue. Mary moves to head Willingham off, but he merely pushes her away, roughly. Willingham steps up to one of the players and tries to goad a reaction out of him. The more violent the better.

If the party pursues the fight, chaos erupts as some other off-duty policemen in the pub back Willingham. The bar fight lasts only a couple of rounds before on-duty officers arrive to break it up. The Knights will be let go after only brief questioning since Willingham was the person who started the fight — unless they start using deadly force.

Warrant For Arrest

If the Knights fled in the earlier altercation with the sergeant, Willingham arranged for an arrest warrant. When they are about to leave, two of the policemen that were in that fight enter Bloody Mary's and spot the



characters. On a *Perception* roll of 10, the characters also spot the police and notice them leaving to get back-up.

The Knights have two rounds to make their escape before the policemen return with Willingham and at least one officer per Storm Knight. They will all be carrying guns. A fight in the bar or a chase scene throughout New London follows their return.

If the Knights manage to get out of the bar and wish to avoid a confrontation, Devon will lead them to a safe house. It takes three to four rounds to reach. He explains that the house contains an underground passage that he occasionally uses. The front door can be bolted just long enough for the party to flee into the tunnel. The tunnel leads to another basement a few blocks away. Devon will not explain why he has used the tunnel. From this location, the Knights can leave New London relatively undetected.

Variables

Should the Storm Knights get captured in the chase scene, they will be jailed and will stand trial for assault, resisting arrest, disturbing the peace, and anything else Willingham can come up with. They will have to devise their own escape this time since Lady Winston will not be coming to bail them out. If they can not come up with a plan, Devon could be used to provide an escape.

Flags

Nemesis. The trouble in Bloody Mary's is centered on this character. For some reason, Willingham blames this Knight for all of his trouble. Have the sergeant get in this character's face, insulting him and threatening bodily harm.

Mistaken Identity. When questioning people in the first fight, patrons claim that the Knights started the trouble. They state that the Knights deliberately decided to get back at a drunk Willingham for placing them in jail. If the police win the fight, arrest the characters for assault and possibly attempted murder.

Cut To ...

Once the Knights resolve the difficulties in New London, they finally head out to Bangka, the island location of the cult and the stelae. Cut To Scene Three, "Calm Before the Storm."

SCENE THREE: Calm Before the Storm

The Situation

Standard. This scene takes place in a small village just north of Muntok. The Knights are being led by Devon to the Black Hand's temple, which is supposedly the sight of a stelae supporting Majestic's bridge.

For once the Knights travel in Orrorsh without some horror jumping out at them. It is quiet... almost too quiet. On the journey to Bangka, Devon details the Black Heart to the characters. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Prior to the invasion, many of the Black Heart were simple thieves, pirates and murderers. They worked both independently and in groups throughout the seas and islands of Indonesia.

"When Orrorsh arrived on Earth, the cult of the Black Heart began to change. Those that survived the migration to the new world received visions of a black heart pumping new life into them. They were of course receiving a vision of Heketon and were converted by her powers.

"The cultists, once gathered, became responsible for hundreds of deaths throughout this portion of Indonesia. Their terror tactics provided the fear necessary to convert the people needed to support the stelae being planted about the island. When the bridge from Victoria landed, the stelae areas were filled with the new reality.

"Heketon also used the cult as bait to draw in Victorians. After the bridge landed, the cultists did not stop their murdering and looting. They attacked the new Victorian settlements and

forced the arrival of soldiers. These troops already supported the axioms of Orrorsh and once they began spreading, the rest of Sumatra was converted.

"But as the war continued, the cult began to dwindle. Heketon no longer sought out additional recruits and Storm Knight interference caused heavy losses in the cult's ranks. A cult that once numbered over a thousand gradually was reduced to around one hundred.

"Today, their numbers are between 50 and 100 cultists spread out over Majestic, Borneo and Jakarta. They are controlled by various Orrorshan leaders still provide a frequent source of the random terrors that keeps Victorians from sleeping at night."

Note to the gamemaster:

William Devon made a slight slip during his speech. He referred to Heketon as "her." Only the cultists of the Black Heart give the Darkness Device this gender. If the players catch this, he will correct himself, saying he's been fighting the terror of the Black Heart so long he's started to learn their traditions and taboos.

The Temple of Darkness

As the Knights approach and walk through the village, they notice very few people. Doors are bolted and windows shuttered. Those people that they do see are the sick lying in the street, beggars, eyes peering out of shadows and women grabbing children and rushing inside houses. The faces of the people are dirty, tired and fear-filled. Any attempts at entering a house are refused, often by knife point.

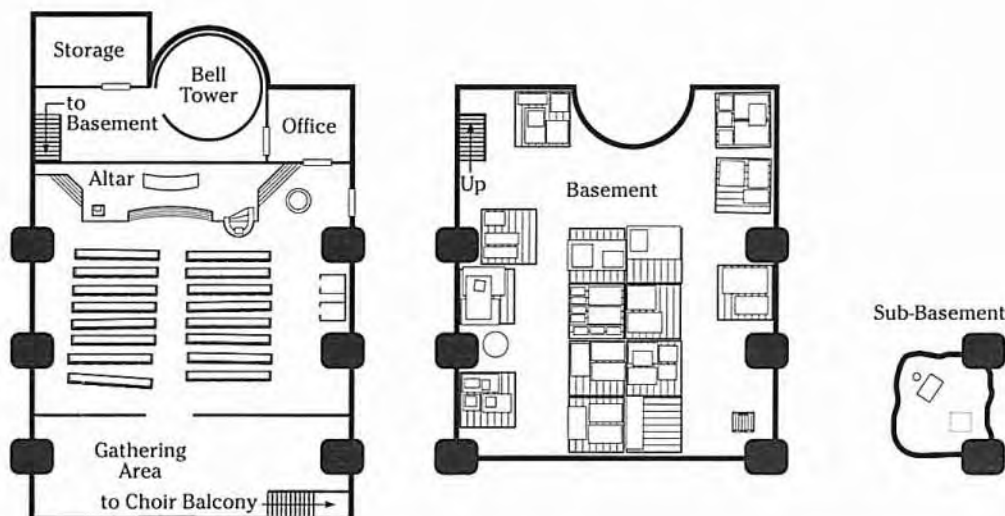
At the end of the main road is a medium-sized church. Next to it lies a desolate graveyard overgrown with weeds and dying trees. A rusted gate surrounds the church and graveyard and the cross that once stood atop the church has fallen to the ground inside the gate. Devon claims that the church is where the cult originates from.

Since the area is overcast, the interior is only dimly lit by a few, sparse candles and holes in the roofing. The doors to the church are only barely attached to their hinges. As the Knights





No Quarter Given: Map 3 Church of the Black Heart



enter, the skies grumble and a light rain begins.

The Action

Devon allows the Knights to pass him at the doorway when they enter. The interior of the church is ruined. The offices in the front have been looted and the furniture is destroyed. Close examination even reveals a corpse, which has probably been dead for several months. The pews in main sanctuary are in disarray and the cross has been torn down and ruined. Rain filters in from various holes in the roof. To the left, lies a small staircase leading downward and doors on the right lead to the graveyard. A faint murmur can be heard from downstairs.

When the Knights move down to investigate, a crash of thunder follows the closing of the stairway door. Devon seals the Knights into his trap.

Cultist: Acolyte (2 per Storm Knight)

Reality: Orrorsh
DEXTERITY 10
Dodge 12, maneuver 11, melee weapons 12, unarmed combat 12
STRENGTH 10
TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 9

Trick 10

MIND 8

Willpower 10

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Orrorsh) 11, intimidation 12

Possibilities: few (50)

Corruption Value: 12

Equipment: Dagger (damage value +3/17), garotte (damage value +7/18; must make a vital blow attack on the throat), heavy leather cloaks (armor value+2/16)

Cultist: Priest (1 per Storm Knight)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 10, maneuver 9, melee weapons 12, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 10

Trick 14, Scholar (Orrorsh) 15

MIND 8

Occult 10, willpower 10

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Orrorsh) 14, focus 15, intimidation 14

Possibilities: 5 each

Corruption Value: 15

Equipment: Dagger (damage +3/

17), robes (armor +3/20), Occult Kit

Miracles: Each priest should have 2-3 of these miracles: *blind*, *healing*, *hell's fire*, *satan's mark*, *sins of the flesh*, *ward enemy*

William Devon: High Priest of the Black Heart

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 16, fire combat 15, melee weapons 17, stealth 16, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 11

Alteration Magic 17, evidence analysis 18, find 17, scholar (arcane lore) 20

MIND 13

Conjuration magic 19, occult 20, survival 18, test 19, willpower 20

CHARISMA 11

Charm 16, Taunt 16

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Orrorsh) 17, focus 16, intimidation 16, reality 19

Possibilities: 18

Corruption Value: 18

Arcane knowledges: darkness 2, entity 5, folk 3, inanimate forces 2

Spells: *Death haunt*, *fear*, *lightning*, *madness*, *summon scarabus*, perhaps a few more from Pixaud's (game-



master's discretion)

Miracles: *Healing, hell's fire, paralyzation*

Equipment: Occult kit, standard Cross heavy revolver (damage value 16, ammo 6, range 3-5/15/25), leather vest and greaves (armor +3/20), magical dagger (damage +5/19)

True Death: Upon death, Devon will be sent to the Waiting Village.

Goal: To gain immortality and everlasting power through magic and service to the Black Heart (Heketon).

The Battle

When the Knights arrive at the church, they will, apparently, "surprise" the cultists during one of their rituals. They will attack, causing a Perseverance roll (the pure evil of the men and women of the cult is palpable at this time). Devon will, regardless of the Perseverance total, flee. Hopefully, the Knights will be kept busy by the cultists and will not pursue him. His goal is to get upstairs to where the prisoner is kept — since he set this all up anyway.

Gamemaster: try to make certain Devon gets away at this point to set up the final, dramatic scene of the act.

Variables

If Devon cannot get away at the start of the battle, he may revert to his true colors, using his miracles and spells to break free of the Knights. His first concern is the ritual.

If Devon has been spotted earlier as a corrupt soul, this whole scene could be going differently. Devon, hopefully, still led the Knights here, but now he needs to escape them to perform the ritual. If all else fails and Devon is not around, his sister, Patrice Devon is on hand to perform the ritual (use the same stats).

When the Storm Knights defeat the cultists, they may be tempted to search the room and the rest of the church for clues. If they do, have them hear screams from outside in the graveyard. They should confront Devon and the dramatic scene before searching. This leads to Act Three.

Note that if the Knights are losing the battle, or if it is taking a long time, they

hear screams outside anyway — the ritual has begun (see Act Three). They must get outside quickly. At this point, the cultists are also eager to disengage — they want to see the ritual performed and may run outside if they can.

Flags

Suspicion or Mistaken Identity. One of the villagers believes the party to be more cultists. The villagers know Devon is the leader and one of them rushes at the party with dagger. A crude attack that can easily be overcome and Devon urges them forward.

Cut to ...

Once the Knights defeat the cultists, or the action progresses far enough, they hear screams in the graveyard and must investigate. Cut to Scene Four, "The Storm Breaks." The Perseverance gain for Scene Three is one point, or two if they defeat the cultists before the screams begin.

SCENE FOUR: The Storm Breaks

The Situation

Dramatic. The weather outdoors continues to worsen as the Knights rush outside to find Devon. They find him in the graveyard, dressed in priest's robes, preparing to sacrifice the kidnapped loved one.

The Action

Devon stands out triumphantly in the storm surrounded by a small group of cultists. Winds whip about his robes and rain soaks the altar before him. Clutched in his hands is a large, ebon dagger. Strapped to a black altar (that wasn't there before), is the loved one the Knights came to rescue. Devon laughs maniacally, and the knife in his hand plunges downward. Lightning flashes behind him, and the Storm Knights have only seconds to act.

At this point, the Storm Knights are about one hundred yards away from Devon, and there is very little they can do to save their friend — but it is possible. Flip the top card of the initiative deck over and have the Knights make a Perseverance check, with plus two added to their total (they've found their loved one).

Devon strikes on his action, but if the Knights overcome the Perseverance number here, he hesitates, perhaps sensing that all is not well — this could give the heroes time to save their friend. If, however, Devon gets an action before they can do something, he will kill the friend in one action.

Killed?

If the sacrifice is performed successfully, then Devon has used the power of the sacrifice shard (the altar) to open a gate to Gaea and summon a group of fourth-planting gospog that are under his command. The final fight begins when Devon sends the last of Devon's cultists attack the Knights and he prepares for the arrival of the gospog. The gospog arrive on the third round of the fight.

Saved?

If the Knights somehow save their friend from being sacrificed, either a cultist or Devon himself will die on the altar — most likely by self-inflicted wounds. This will have the same effect as sacrificing the friend would have — the gospog will appear out of a dimensional rift three rounds later.

The Last Battle ... Almost

The remaining cultists, Devon, and the gospog attack the Knights. As soon as the gospog appear, have the Knights make another Perseverance check. If they saved their friend, increase their Perseverance by one point. If they didn't, increase it by two — they are fighting for revenge.

Cultists (5)

Use Acolyte stats from Scene Three.



William Devon

Use stats from Scene Three.

Scarabus (1 per Knight)

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 14

STRENGTH 18

Lifting 21

TOUGHNESS 17 (22)

PERCEPTION 13

Find 14, trick 14

MIND 15

Occult 31, test 17, willpower 17

CHARISMA 15

Charm 18, persuasion 18

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Orrorsh) 18, intimidation 15

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: claws (damage STR+3/21), scaled hide (armor TOU+5/22)

Power Rating: 7 *Cold aura, armor defeating attack, resistance to normal weapons*

Corruption Value: 25

Fear Rating: 2

Weakness: ritual drawings. Also, these creatures cannot move from the graveyard.

True Death: Tied up with silver thread and buried for 24 hours.

Using the Scarabus

The cold aura effect does not hurt the cultists as long as Devon is alive—he bears a talisman that protects his allies from the cold aura of the scarabus (it is under his clothing). If he dies, then they are affected as well.

Also, note that the scarabus were not supposed to be summoned to fight the Knights—they were Devon's best chance at becoming a favorite of Heketon.

As it is, though, he can use their occult wishes during the fight if he gets desperate. Each scarabus will grant him one wish (see the *Orrorsh* sourcebook, page 104 for details), though he must make a "payment" for each wish. His first choice will be to kill cultists—in exchange for a cultist's life, he can have a wish. The second might be his soul. After that, he'll have to start bargaining.

When a wish is granted, the scarabus granting the wish will disappear, returning to Gaea.



Limitations on the Wishes

The scarabus have some advantages here. They've been summoned into a hostile environment where they know Devon is in trouble. However, they have to fight—and can't leave—unless they kill the Storm Knights or grant wishes. So, they will probably not be hard bargainers, but their wishes will only be limited in usefulness.

For example, a scarabus wish might be used by Devon to summon five more cult members—he may ask for

more, but that's all he'll get—to heal himself or the members he has left, or maybe to grant him the use of a particular power (from "The Horrors" in the *Orrorsh* sourcebook). It all depends on how well the Knights are doing—the scarabus may be so put off by being summoned into this situation that they would rather take their chances in the Waiting Village than help the summoner (it's up to the gamemaster).





The Storm

Battle conditions become miserable while the storm and the scarabus-generated cold continue to rage throughout the battle. Because of high winds and poor visibility increase the difficulty numbers for: bows and thrown weapons (by 4), guns (by 2) and energy weapons (by 4 — the rain scatters the beams, reducing their accuracy). After the fourth round, ground conditions are muddy and slippery. All *Dexterity* skills suffer a -2 penalty. However, poor sighting provides a benefit to skills such as *stealth*. When using this skill, combatants gain a +2 bonus. Any attempts at *flight* are hindered by the winds, increase DN's by 4.

A Reminder

Since Orrorsh prides itself on the horror that it can create, it makes an additional effort at disturbing the Storm Knights. The Knight who moves to rescue the victim of the sacrifice is treated to another gruesome sight. The loved one is being held by the altar which is in reality a *spulg*.

The clay monster has entrapped the victim within its tentacles and is hold-

ing him/her for Devon. It will fight off anyone that attempts to remove the victim. When the Knights realize this, they lose one Perseverance point and must make a Perseverance roll.

If Devon is killed or rendered unconscious during the battle, the spulg will start to messily devour the sacrifice — alive or dead. Either way, the Knights lose another Perseverance point and must make another roll.

The spulg will devour a living victim in three rounds, unless it is attacked, in which case it will wait until it has destroyed its attacker to continue its meal. Getting the victim away is a Strength or lifting maneuver against the spulg's Strength if the creature is still alive.

Spulg

DEXTERITY 10

Melee combat 12, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 16

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 8

Trick (15)

MIND 3

Test (25), willpower 18

CHARISMA 4

Taunt (18)

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation (25)

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: 3 tentacles (damage value STR+6/22; vital blow holds the Knight immobile until he or she can break free)

Power Rating: regeneration

Corruption Value: 10

Fear Rating: 1/2

Weakness: acid

True Death: being subjected to absolutely dry heat for an hour (a fire in a dry place — like the church — would do)

Variables

The scarabus creatures are the major monkey-wrench in this scene. They are very powerful, but quite contrary. They can drag this battle out, or turn the tables on the Knights (or Devon) with their occult abilities. There is even the chance that a Knight might make a "deal" with a scarabus — if a good Knight, or even one tainted by corruption, offers up a sacrifice to a scarabus, it will most likely help him or her.

Awards

For successfully completing this act, each surviving Storm Knight receives four possibilities. If the Knights actually saved their loved one, then give them another possibility. Encourage the Knights to purchase the group power of the Codex of Brahma eternity shard. Without its power, it will be nearly impossible to uproot the stelae.

In addition, the group's Perseverance increases by 4 points (including all the other bonuses they may have gotten during the scene).

Cut to ...

The Knights search the church and discover that the stelae is not here. They must head back to the village outside the church. The people there are cheered by the news of the destroyed cult and they learn that the stelae is actually rumored to be in the home of Lord Stanton Cheltenham. Cut to Act Three: "London Bridge is Falling Down."



Reunion and Betrayal



"That son of a —," Kevin hollered, before Ti-Dara cut him off.

"So, the wood-sprite attacked us. It's not the end of the world. We simply continue on."

Kevin glared at Ti-Dara, André and Vito. Because of their hurry to leave the "sprite's" area, the group had, apparently, taken a wrong turn and now stood, waist deep, in thick brush, complete with prickly thorns. Although Kevin's wheelchair was capable of crushing the branches in front of him, those that escaped along the side were still able to tear at his sleeves and open skin.

He thought they should have turned around a mile ago, but the others assured him that the brush was purposely placed there as a deterrent. It took them a full mile and nearly an hour to decide that maybe Kevin had been right. So, quietly, they turned around and followed Kevin back to the trail, quietly with the exception of Captain Verdigris.

"I still can't believe you broke my rocket pack. How am I supposed to fix it here, in this technological wasteland?"

"Quit your complainin'," Vito said forcefully. "If you hadn't been gloating about ridin' so comfortably in da air, I might not've had to resort to such drastic measures. Besides, I t'ought you lizard-types, didn't mind dis stuff?"

"Mind, *mind*!? I'll show you mind!" he exclaimed as he began to draw his electro gun. "I deliberately got out of the Living Land to avoid 'dis stuff'!"

"**VERDIGRIS**, Shut Up!" Kevin blasted. "And holster that weapon." He was in absolutely no mood for their petty bickering. He agreed that what the giant had done was stupid, but bitching about it wasn't going to change anything.

And so, the group made their way out of the brush and back to the fork. As they took the right fork, André told the others that he could almost swear that he heard something snickering off in the distance, but it quickly quieted down after Kevin turned around in his chair, glaring.

The remaining section of the trail, luckily, was unobstructed. They made up for some of the lost time and reached a new area by sunset. The trail slowly widened into a small clearing where a small cabin stood. It had probably been a hunter's cabin at one point, but now, the guessed, it held a much more vicious kind of predator.

Kevin had the others halt while he decide on an attack

plan. "Verdigris, why don't you make a quick fly-by and see what you can scout out?"

The edeinos sighed and replied, "Sorry, no can do. Remember, Dopey the Giant here broke my flight pack?"

"Hey, is youse calling me Dopey? I'll make you eat that rocke ...," retorted Vito, before he was interrupted by Ti-Dara.

"Gentlemen, remember who the real enemy is. The Gaunt Man and the Carredon are our objectives, not each other," she scolded. "Kevin, I have just made a mindscan of the cabin and I only sense one person, non-hostile and frightened. It quite possible that the person is Katrinna, but I can't be sure. Orrorsh has been known to interfere with mental abilities."

"How'd ya do that, Ti?" the giant glanced at Kevin meaningfully.

"I've been ... practising, Vito," the woman said slowly. "I learned a few tricks while in Aysle."

"I thought you were a priestess, Ti," André said. The level of tension rose in the group.

"I ... am, André," Ti-Dara said slowly, "I've just picked up a few extra tricks. Is something wrong with that?"

"Okay, Ti, okay," Kevin acknowledged. "Let it drop." The group's leader turned to the rest of the Knights, "Let's play this safe. Vito and André, you two stay here while we move around to the other side. And you had better keep it quiet. If Katrinna is killed because of you, I will, personally, kill you before the Gaunt Man does."

Vito and André waited quietly, as told, until the others made it to the far side of the cabin. Then, cautiously, both groups moved up to the silent building. Kevin inched up to a window and confirmed Ti-Dara's belief that there was only one figure inside and that it was his wife, Katrinna.

Kevin raced to the front door of the cabin and burst in. He looked, joyously, at his wife and wheeled to her side.

"Oh, thank God! I thought you might never make it here alive," she began to cry out. "What's going on, Kevin?"

"Easy, Katrinna, slow down. We came to rescue you and go home, but what happened? Why did they keep you here?" Kevin asked.

"I'm not sure exactly. After the ravagon captured me, it flew us north, up to another camp. I believe it took us up the Maelstrom Bridge in Aysle, then came across into Orrorsh.





After we arrived, it brought me before its master, the Gaunt Man."

"The Gaunt Man spoke with it briefly then turned to some kind of mirror. It looked like a normal mirror at first, but when he said some words, you, you ..." Katrinna stuttered as she began to break down.

Kevin comforted her gently, but needed to know why she was kept here. "Please, go on," he pleaded.

"Well, the mirror showed you and your friends fighting these giant spiders and I wasn't sure who was winning. I didn't think you were going to make it out of there alive. But that didn't concern the Gaunt Man. He seemed very upset that you had come to Orrorsh and began shouting about 'damn stormers,' some 'Apeiros' person and fate. Then he turned back to the ravagon.

"We may still have use for her yet. Take her back to the old cabin and await my word," he ordered. That was when the ravagon brought me here, two days ago. It left soon afterwards. I was not locked up, but I was too afraid to step outside of the door for fear of the ravagon returning."

And just as Katrinna finished detailing her misadventures, a large black shape passed between her and Kevin. It brushed her back as four more shapes slid out of the shadows of the cabin.

"Hellhounds," cried out Kevin. "Katrinna, stay back, we'll take care of them!" And Katrinna did as she was

ordered. She retreated to the bed and watched the fray as it began.

The first victory went to Kevin who easily blasted the first hellhound with his shotgun. It sprawled backwards into the shadows and landed with a sick thump that seemed to indicate that it would no longer be causing anyone harm.

Ti-Dara managed to evade one the hound's leaps and drew her sword and gun. The hound's next attack was cut short by a well-placed slice to its mid-section. But Ti-Dara also became the first casualty. While she turned to face her first attacker, another one used the opportunity to strike at her unprotected back. He leapt and raked across her back, drawing blood and knocking her forward with a pain-filled cry. André caught her under one arm and fired a round from his GodMeeter. If the hellhound did have a God, it went to meet it after the blast.

While André aided Ti-Dara, Vito continued to upset the Nile hero. Using his giant strength he upstaged Verdigris by grabbing the two remaining hellhounds by their hindquarters and tossing them out the window. After a brief licking of their wounds, they fled into the distance jungle.

"Well, Miz Katrinna," Vito inputted after the fight. "I guess we knows now why youse was left alone. But it takes more than a few overgrown puppy dogs to take us out. Shall I escort youse out or would you prefer to take da chariot?"

Katrinna opted for the chariot and after settling herself in



Kevin's lap, allowed Vito to lead the way out. Kevin suggested that they try to get as much distance as possible from the cabin before the ravagon returned and found Katrinna missing. They all agreed and they exited the cabin, joyful at the reunion. Ti-Dara began to perform a healing miracle on herself, and was beginning to feel better.

But the joy, and their escape, did not last long. As soon as they exited the cabin, they were greeted by a disturbing sight.

"Ssstormers. Welcome. Welcome to your deathss," the ravagon slurred menacingly. It was surrounded by several other winged figures, two of whom were additional ravagons. The others, five in number, appeared to be faceless degenerates of the ravagons. As the group looked on, they suspected that they were not even capable of flight. But since none of their own group could fly, it did not matter. They spread out to let Kevin take the foreground.

"Ravagon! I'll kill you! You dared to enter and attack my home. You kidnapped my wife and kept her locked here in despair, while I fought to your doorstep. You will die today, not I!" Kevin spoke slowly and determinedly. As he did, Katrinna slid from his lap and back to the protection of the doorway. She wished again that she had the components for her spells — otherwise, her husband might not get out of this battle alive.

The stand-off between horrors and Storm Knights lasted several seconds. The ravagons chattered and postured as the Knights prepared for the attack. Then the battle was engaged as Kevin moved to draw and fire his shotgun. He blasted at the primary ravagon, but missed his mark low as it fled upwards, into the sky.

Vito called for the other ravagons to take him on. Captain Verdigris continued his animosity towards the giant and left him to his stated challenge, although he thought that the ravagons would probably slaughter Vito. Instead, he moved to assist André and Ti-Dara who were already in the midst of battling the faceless ones.

"You can flee all you want, but if you want me, you are going to have to come down here," shouted Kevin. He was trying to mock his opponent into making a rash attack and the ravagon was a willing recipient. Unfortunately for Kevin, he had misjudged the beast's speed and was unable to block the brunt of the swooping attack it made. The ravagon flew, headlong, into Kevin's shotgun range, but was able to rake his exposed arms before Kevin could fire. Afterwards, it fled back into the sky and mocked him back.

"Ssstormers never learn when they are beaten. I took your woman from you in England and you were unable to save her. I thought that would have given you sufficient warning. I am not some pitiful creature to be trifled with. I am a ravagon!"

But the taunt was not effective. This time, when the ravagon dove, Kevin was prepared and fired a blast full into the beast's chest. Its flight faltered and the ravagon was forced to gain altitude again before it could attack. The wound appeared to not be as deep or as deadly as Kevin first perceived, but the blast made it wary — but did not sway its determination. The Gaunt Man's punishment for failure was far worse than death.

While Kevin's ravagon recovered, the other two made their marks on Vito. His bravado had gotten him outnumbered and outclassed. He was able to wound one with a burst from his Thompson gun, but it was not a critical hit, and the ravagon was able to retreat and recover while its companion dealt with the giant. They continued to attack back and forth against the giant until he began to retreat.

The third battle raged on with similar intensity. André and Ti-Dara scored early victories, disabling two of the faceless ones quickly, but were now in trouble. Captain Verdigris had taken an early hit and was stunned, so that left the odds three-to-two in the faceless ones' favor. They exploited the advantage and kept Ti-Dara and André from reaching their fallen ally. But worse than the stand-off that they could not break was the realization as to what the horrors could do. Slowly, one of the faceless ones began to take on the appearance of Captain Verdigris. At the same time, Verdigris' face became a hauntingly blank mask of flesh.

"My God, André, we've got to save Captain Verdigris. He can't breathe!" Shouted Ti-Dara. If they were unable to rescue him soon, he would die.

While Ti-Dara and André attempted to defeat the faceless ones and save their companion, Kevin and Vito made some headway against the ravagons. Kevin continued to taunt the chieftain and managed to fend off most of its attacks while the giant kept the others at bay with his machine gun. The break came when the chieftain tried another diving pass at Kevin. Kevin braced himself for the attack, but looked surprised when it never reached him. Instead, he heard the staccato beat of Vito's gun and watched amusedly at its results. One of the lesser ravagons had begun a similar descent as its chieftain's but had to pull away to avoid the burst of fire. Unfortunately, it pulled away into the chieftain's dive and the two collided.

Vito used the confusion to switch targets to the other lesser ravagon and sprayed it with bullets. Its wings were heavily damaged and it took several hits across the body. It plummeted, lifeless, to the ground. Kevin made a similar attack against the chieftain, and managed to wound its wing. It was forced to crash-dive out of the air.

"Protect me, miscreant!" It yelled at the last ravagon. The crackle of possibility energy filled the air as Kevin and Vito moved in for their kills as the odds dropped from two against three to two against one healthy and one wounded ravagon.

But the odds were still against Ti-Dara and André. The faceless ones had been able to avoid many of their attacks and Captain Verdigris had fell to the ground. But their battle received a surprise break as well. As André began to make another attempt at rescuing the edeinós, the Verdigris-faced creature began to make another change. André backed off for a moment, as did Ti-Dara and the other faceless ones. They watched, confusedly, as the other creature began a transformation into a tree. Slowly, its dusty gray hide turned brown and then become rigid as a bark-like shell covered it. This freed Verdigris from his fate, who desperately gasped for air.

André used the confusion to press a final attack and took



out the last two faceless ones quickly. As Ti-Dara moved to check on Captain Verdigris she heard a spritely "You're welcome" from the direction of the old jungle trail. She wondered curiously as she aided Verdigris. *Creatures of darkness betray each other, she remembered quickly, especially when they are bound to service.*

The only fight that remained was between Kevin, Vito and the ravagons. The lesser ravagon fell quickly, vainly trying to protect its chieftain. The wounded leader let out an enraged cry as its last follower fell.

The chieftain went boldly to its end. It stood up slowly, crackling more possibility energy and extended its full body. It was a truly terrifying sight to witness the full size of the ravagon, but Kevin had already mastered his fears of the creature. He exercised his powers as a Storm Knight, after reloading, and placed a well-aimed shot into the ravagon. He ignored the posturing of the ravagon and managed to hit it just below the neckline and ripped its head off. The proud ravagon then teetered and fell, deceased.

The party sat back, stunned, and surveyed the results of their deadly battle. Four faceless ones laid slain, next to them stood the fifth, now horribly transformed into a tree.

Two ravagons also lay dead, one decapitated and the other riddled with bullets. But the fight was not yet over.

Slowly, Katrinna came over from the cabin. She stood before her husband as if to comfort him, but after a few moments, she grasped his shotgun unexpectedly.

"Kevin, I can't fight him anymore," she tearfully pleaded. "Forgive me, my actions are no longer my own. This is what the Gaunt Man referred to as 'my use.'" And as suddenly as she had grabbed the shotgun, she placed against his chest and fired. He was killed instantly.

Vito and André reacted instantly. They whirled and fired, spraying lead into the weeping figure that once had been Kevin Middleton's wife, and was now his murderer. Katrinna did not even try to get out of the way of the barrage, and was nearly cut in half. She fell, bloody and lifeless, over the corpse of her husband.

Ti-Dara rushed to the wheelchair-bound marine and cried out to Kra for aid. But her miracles could not bring back life to the dead man. She fell over him as well, weeping.

"I love you. I love you. I love you," she kept sobbing.

The three other Storm Knights all looked away.





Act Three

London Bridge is Falling Down

Major Beat

After searching the church and heading back to the village, the Knights are convinced that the stela is not here. They learn from the villagers that one Lord Stanton Cheltenham, who has a manor not far from here, has something meeting the stela's description in his manor.

The Knights rest briefly, then head out to confront Cheltenham in his demeane. They must overcome the traps and creatures he has set up as a defense, then attack the stela.

SCENE ONE: Friendly Faces

The Situation

Standard. After leaving the church, The Knights are greeted by a few of the local villagers that are coming out of their locked houses. Read aloud or paraphrase the introductions:

The recent storm has left the town glistening with water, clean and cool. It has also left the area uncomfortably silent, but slowly, one by one, the sounds of the jungle are returning. As you wander back towards the town, failing in your search for the stela, many of you feel the unnerving feeling of being watched.

As you turn to search the buildings about you for the watchers, you see dark faces peering out of shuttered windows and locked doors. They remained hidden for a short while, but as realization dawns upon them, many of the doors begin opening.

Frightened villagers cautiously leave their shelters to see if their salvation has truly come. They leave huddled doorways, glancing briefly at the church and begin rushing to your side, shouting praises in lost island dialects. After the initial surge dies down, one man, speaking broken English, presents himself before you.

"Thank you, mighty Storm Knights. Too long has our village been ravaged by the horrors of the cult. Forgive our distrust, but when we saw you arrive with Devon, we assumed the worst, taking you for new cultists. But instead you freed us and our gratitude is limitless. I sense that there is confusion and that you might need some help. Please accept my invitation to join me for dinner, perhaps we can begin to repay you."

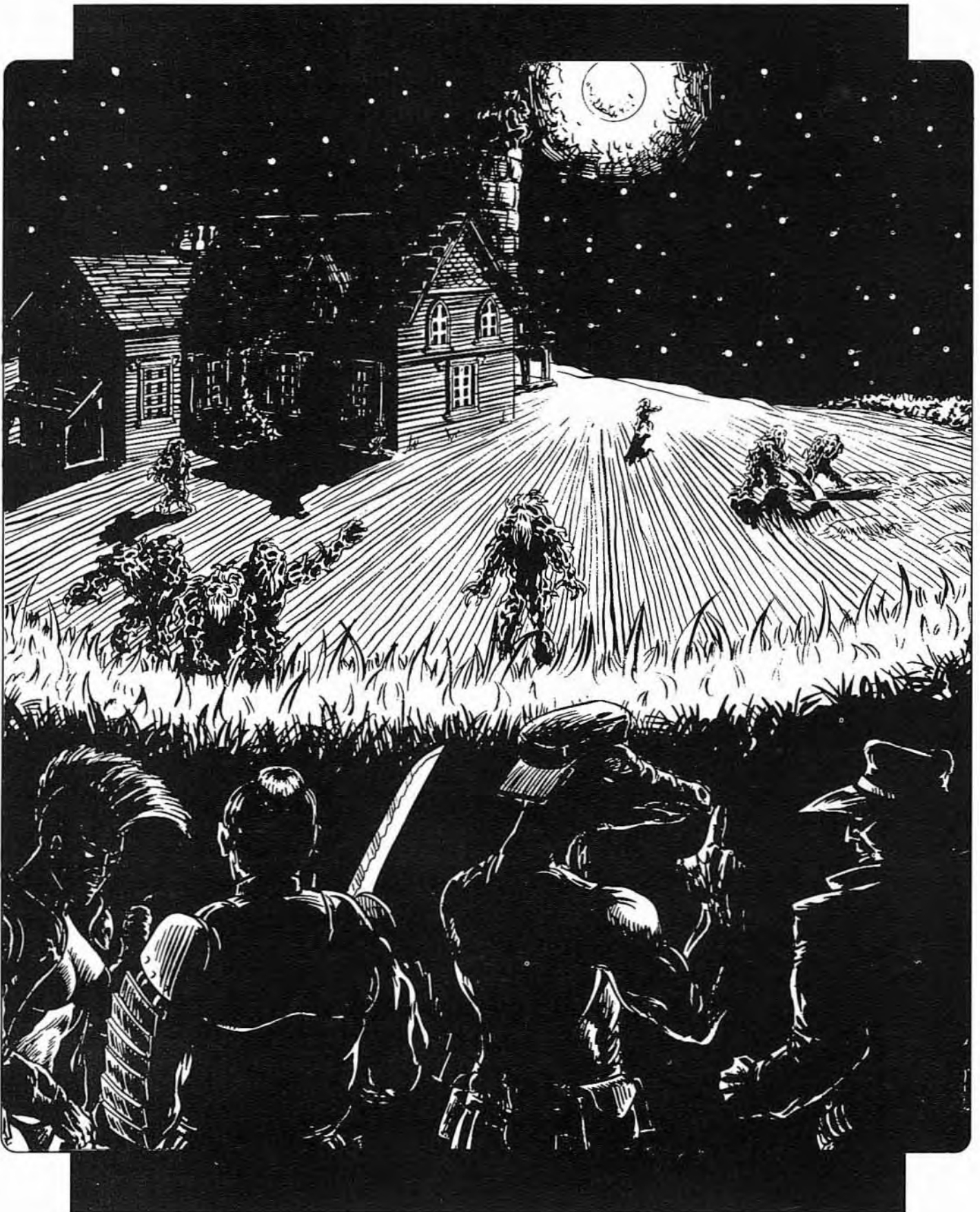
Warm Dinner and Welcome Answers

The food the villagers serve helps to warm the chill of the recent storm. The villagers continue to remain high-spirited throughout the evening and they try to supply answers to the Knights questions. Their village leader is fairly young and has spent some time out of the jungles. His English is quite decent and he appears well educated but simply prefers the simpler ways of his own people. Read aloud or paraphrase the appropriate answers to their questions on:

The Cult

"The cult was not always an evil tool of the Devil. The white man has always misunderstood what was different from his own. His god appears





to us as unforgiving and uncaring. His god only allows for the belief in his existence.

"But our way is very different. Like many of our spiritual brethren in the Pacific, we do not always associate all crimes with evil. Many have justifications that lie deeper than their outward appearance.

"The cult defends and works for its own. They understood the needs and wants of their own people and tried to fulfill them as best as they could. Although their ways may appear violent, it is no different than that of any of our ancestors. Man has an inherent need to protect and support his territory. We served that need with the cult.

"The cult began as a simple hunters' group. The best of our warriors would patrol the local jungles, protecting our homes from wildlife and other tribes. If an outsider entered our boundaries uninvited, he was dealt with swiftly and mercilessly. Such was the way. If you did not, other tribes would destroy you. The Gods did not have compassion for the weak.

"As the ages wore on, little changed. The only differences were the ways of protection and dominance and the areas of control. When the Westerns arrived in their ships, they sought to change our ways and they themselves caused the necessity of the cult.

"The cult began as all of our tribes became united against the imperialism of the West. Our hunters became what the narrow-minded could consider pirates and murderers in order to continue to feed, protect and nourish their families and loved ones. Sacrifices were made not to appease the gods, but to give them thanks for continuing victories. They also served as a fairly brutal and effective warning to the West to remain outside of our territories.

"But then Devil himself came. The horror that lives sacrilege in Borneo does not fit the life cycle. He is not another dominator. He does not wish to establish territories. He only desires death; death without purpose. He is what corrupted our cult."

The Gaunt Man

"He is the Devil to which we refer. He came here bringing his evil several

months ago. He inhabited the church, bringing about its ruin, corrupting the cult and forced our own people to turn against us. Under his influence, they sought to subjugate or slay those that opposed them, all for no purpose other than to serve their own needs and win favor from the Devil. We can no longer find pity in our hearts for their souls, for no longer believe that they have any. Therefore, you understand our gratitude for killing his chief agent, Devon."

The Stelae

"Although it pains me to hear you ask questions about that blasphemy, I understand why you must. As we have tried to show you, we are a people devoted to life. Our own being is caught in the infinite cycle of learning and reincarnation. Those that are unable to find true understanding and enlightenment are granted another cycle with which to find comprehension.

"But the Devil has no need care for life. He has always attempted to prevent our enlightenment by tempting our physical forms and torturing our souls. The longer that he can extend our suffering the greater joy he feels. When one of us finds true enlightenment, the Devil howls in agony as his power is diminished. Many of Earth's disasters are caused by his lashing out at those remaining, killing thousands, so that they are forced to repeat the life cycle. He uses this as revenge for he has lost the ability to cause further torment to that escaping soul.

"When the Gaunt Man came to our island, he instantly understood our ways. And as the destroyer of life, he sought out the ways that would most cause our suffering. The stelae to which you refer was a blasphemy to our beliefs. It is a gargoyle, shaped from stone torn from the earth and was placed atop our shrine. It sits high above the earth and mocks us with its foul caricatures.

"Fortunately, it does not reside here. The Devil knew we would betray it, and him. It was entrusted to a creature named Cheltenham, but I do not know whether this creature be man or beast. All I know is that its lair lies but a day's journey to the east. The Devil could not place the

gargoyle any further away without placing himself in jeopardy."

Final Farewells

After their questions have been answered, the Knights are invited to remain the night with the villagers. They extend the invitation knowing what horrors roam their once proud jungles at the nights and do not wish any harm to befall their new found protectors. When the Knights prepare to leave the next morning, the leader speaks with them one last time. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Our gods have shown that they have not abandoned us by allowing you to come. First, the gargoyle was removed. Then the last remnants of the cult were destroyed. Perhaps, if we survive these tests, we can resurrect our spirits and rebuild. To be without protectors would destroy us. We bid you good fortune in your pursuit of Cheltenham and await word of your victory."

Flags

There are no major flags for this scene but obviously *romance* and *suspicion* could play a part in the action. At this point, the personal stake involving the kidnap victim ends — the villagers will see that he or she is returned safely to New London and then home.

The Discovery

Because the Storm Knights finally discover the identity of their nemesis, they are given a final three point boost in Perseverance. But this is the last aid that they are given, any Perseverance that has not been gained or has been lost will make their final battles that much tougher.

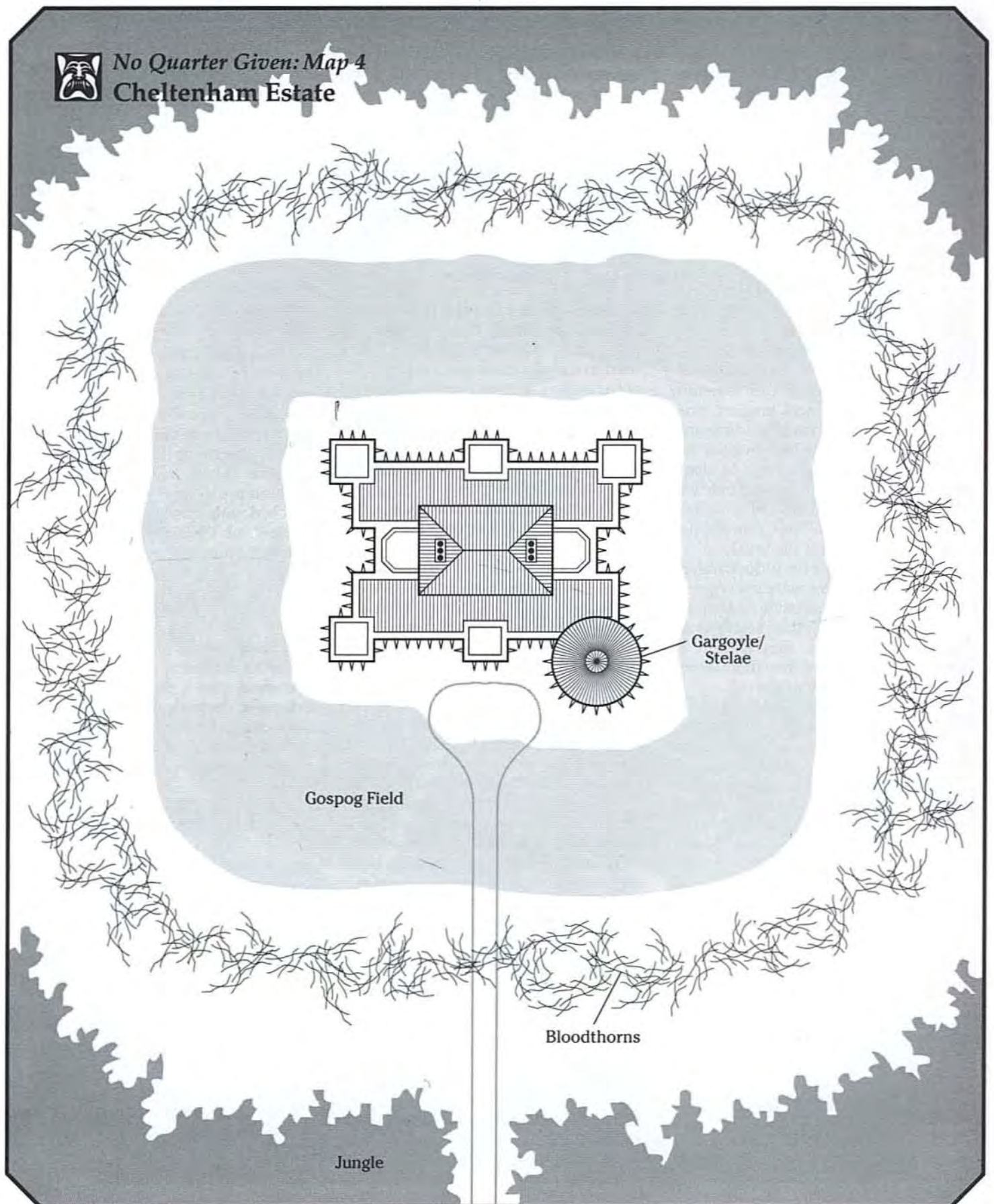
Cut To ...

When the characters head out for Cheltenham's estate cut to Scene Two, "On to Cheltenham's."





No Quarter Given: Map 4
Cheltenham Estate



SCENE TWO: On to Cheltenham's

The Situation

Dramatic. Once the Knights make their day's journey eastward, they reach the remote location of Lord Stanton Cheltenham's estate. It is a small estate with a gospog field and a protective ring of Bloodthorns.

The Action

The action begins as the Knights approach the estate. Before they can reach the actual grounds, the Knights must contend with several large (two meter) hedges of bloodthorns which have been imported from Borneo for the task of protecting the gospog field. Unless the Knights have encountered the plants before, they will need to make a *Perception, evidence analysis, scholar (plants)*, or *occult* total of 20 to suspect that they are anything other than sickly-looking rose bushes. There are enough bloodthorns to surround the entire estate (several dozen). When the Knights realize the bloodthorns are actually evil creatures, have the characters make a *Perseverance* check.

Bloodthorns

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 14, maneuver 15, unarmed combat 20

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 13 (18)

PERCEPTION 7

Trick (20)

MIND 2

Test (25)

CHARISMA 2

Taunt (25)

SPIRIT 6

Faith (Orrorsh) 10, intimidate (25)

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: Fibrous body (armor value TOU+5/18), thorns (damage value STR+1/14)

Power Rating: 3 (*life drain* plus two more points)

Corruption Value: 13

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: none

True Death: thoroughly salting the ground beneath the hedge.

Note: Bloodthorns can make up to four attacks a round. Ignore multi-action penalty if attacking up to four opponents.

In addition to protecting the gospog fields from stray creatures, the bloodthorns act as an early-warning system for the second generation gospog caretakers and Lord Cheltenham. Since it is nearly impossible to move through the hedges quietly while being attacked, the caretakers are quickly alerted to approaching threats. Therefore, once the Knights hack their way through the vicious barrier, Cheltenham will have been alerted and be arriving with the defense force.

Cheltenham's appearance with the gospog is worth a *Perseverance* check.

The Others (1 per Storm Knight)

DEXTERITY 10

Unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 20

TOUGHNESS 17

PERCEPTION 8

Find 13, tracking 13

MIND 5

Test (20)

CHARISMA 5

Taunt (20)

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Orrorsh) 17, intimidation 14

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: tentacles (damage value STR/20), ignore multi-action penalty to attack up to four opponents.

Power Rating: *Attack form resistance* — *firearms*

Corruption Value: 13

Fear Rating: 1/2

Weakness: salt

True Death: occult ritual

Description: Large, tentacled monstrosities, the Others are virtually mindless engines of destruction. Prodded by the Caretakers, they attack and feed as they sense living beings around them.

Caretakers (2 per Other)

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 12, fire combat 14, maneuver 14, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10 (12)

PERCEPTION 9

Tracking 13, trick 12

MIND 8

Test 12, taunt 12, willpower 10

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Orrorsh) 10, intimidation 12

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: Armored hide (armor value TOU+2/12), fangs (damage value STR+2/12)

Equipment: Blunderbuss (damage value 18, range 3-10/11-20/21-40, ammo 1)

Power Rating: *Attack form resistance* — *firearms*

Corruption Value: 14

Fear Rating: 1/2

Weakness: Holy Symbol

True Death: Shot and killed by own blunderbuss

Description: See the Orrorsh Sourcebook, page 102

Fifth-Planting Gospog: Wraiths (1 per 3 Storm Knights, round up)

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 16, stealth 21, unarmed combat 19

STRENGTH 15

Climbing 18

TOUGHNESS 21

PERCEPTION 12

Find 14, tracking 15, trick 16

MIND 8

Test (15), willpower 20

CHARISMA 10

Taunt 17

SPIRIT 14

Faith (Orrorsh) 20, intimidation 17

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: claws (damage value STR+4/19)

Power Rating: *Magical resistance, paralyzing touch, armor defeating attack, resistance to normal weapons*

Corruption Value: 33

Fear Rating: 2

Weakness: none

True Death: occult ritual

Description: See page 104 of the Orrorsh sourcebook. The Wraiths are bodyguards of Lord Cheltenham and will not attack unless he is attacked.

Lord Stanton Cheltenham

DEXTERITY 12

Beast riding 14, dodge 16, fire combat 15, stealth 15, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 15





TOUGHNESS 17

PERCEPTION 19

Find 22, language 20, tracking 21, trick 22

MIND 22

Occult 30, test 25

CHARISMA 13

Taunt 17

SPIRIT 14

Faith (Orrorsh) 19, intimidation 20, reality 25

Possibilities: At least one-half of the group's total number of possibilities.

Equipment: Amulet of Regeneration (works as the horror-power *regeneration*); Glove of Boiling Blood (when the glove is pressed against the flesh of someone and the words "To the Master" spoken the glove discharges the spell *boiling blood*. The spell is cast at the wearer's *occult* skill level).

Powers: *Attack form resistance* — physical, mental and spiritual damage from magical attacks, hypnosis

Corruption value: 34 (it's been going up)

Fear Rating: 3

Perseverance DN: 23 (the adventure DN)

Weakness: His personal possessions from his life before corruption

True Death: Burned in flames fueled entirely by occult books from his collection

Description: See page 28 of the *Orrorsh* sourcebook.

The Lord's Tactics

If the Knights have overcome the Power of Fear (by holding a Perseverance of 35 or higher), Cheltenham won't be too keen on continuing the battle—in fact, he will probably direct his gospog to attack while he flees in the company of a bodyguard (one of the Wraiths). He will decide that Heketon can defend the stelae if it wishes, but he is too valuable to waste.

Likewise, if the Knights beat the Perseverance DN at the initial confrontation (but haven't beaten the Power of

Fear yet), Cheltenham will try to invoke another check—by having his servants do something really gruesome to a Knight, or by displaying his occult power. If he cannot reverse the situation, he will try to escape.

Variables

It is highly possible that a Knight will have flight capability. If so, and the Knight decides to tackle the stelae that sits atop Cheltenham's tower, move on to Scene Three while the other Knights hold off the gospog.

Cut to ...

The drama continues to unfold even after the battle. As soon as Cheltenham's forces are defeated cut to, Scene Three, "Tower of Night."



SCENE THREE: Tower of Night

The Situation

Dramatic. The action continues after the battle between the Storm Knights and Cheltenham's forces. Immediately aware of the loss by Cheltenham, Heketon finally steps in on its own behalf.

The Action

As soon as Cheltenham is defeated or driven off and the Knights try to tackle the stela, it will try to invoke a reality storm from the stela which is perched atop Cheltenham's estate. This storm is more vicious than the early border storm and it immediately takes on a life of its own. This storm should generate its own *reality* totals against the Knights with a base *reality* skill of 20.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel!

The stela is a gargoyle which sits atop that tower approximately forty meters above the ground. After a Knight reaches it, he must try to destroy it in some way (ways of destroying stela are explained in the Torg basic rules and *The Storm Knights' Guide to the Possibility Wars*). The stela has a *Toughness* of 20.

Note that the stela is in a good position to call out to Heketon for

help. If the Knights do not use the eternity shard, they are going to be attacked first by the stela's storm, then by Heketon's, and then by whatever the Darkness Device can throw at them — which will probably be a bunch of ravagons and maybe some more gospog. They had better use the shard or die.

Variables

If a Knight is able to bypass the battle with the gospog and Cheltenham, she may enter the fight with the stela alone — the others are still in the last scene.

If the Knights are unable (or unwilling) to use the eternity shard for some reason, they are in trouble. A dramatic skill use of *reality* is required to uproot the stela. Since the stela is in direct contact with Heketon, its *reality* skill is an ungodly 64. The Knights may have to dispose of Cheltenham and leave it at that. However, if you, as the gamemaster, think this is an unsatisfying ending, you may wish to have Heketon try out a "new" attack on them. Instead of using the *reality* skill of the stela, it invokes a "Fear Storm" on them.

The Fear Storm attacks the Knights' Perseverance, using a value of 30. It attacks each Knight in turn, attempting to turn the character into a quivering, terrified lunatic. It works exactly like a reality storm (mechanically), but has other effects:

- The character cannot receive possibilities from the storm. Instead, the points are added to his or her "personal" Perseverance number — if the

Knight gets a value of 37 or higher, the Knight wins and may uproot the stela. If not, the Knight loses Perseverance points until he or she has a value of zero — in which case the Knight is "scared to death."

- Storm Knights may "band together" and attack "Many-On-One" against the stela's Fear Storm. The stela must then attack them "One-on-Many." The stela only has 15 possibilities to spend during this fight.

This option is a last resort — though an interesting one. The Fear Storm takes on the forms of the Knights' worst fears. It can destroy them, or make them stronger.

Aftermath

If the Storm Knights manage to uproot the stela, the Gaunt Man has been defeated. Read the final act of fiction and the epilogue for the results of uprooting the stela.

Awards

If the Knights uproot the stela and complete the adventure, they receive 12 possibilities. If they do not, they will probably have paid with their lives.

If the Knights were unable to uproot the stela, but killed off Cheltenham and escaped, they get 6 possibilities each. They were partially successful.

If, by some chance, the Knights were able to employ Cheltenham's true death, they get +3 possibilities.



The Carredon Cometh



The four Storm Knights woke wearily the next morning. Much of the night had been spent burying their former comrade and his wife, and Ti-Dara had, apparently, not slept at all. They all moved sluggishly throughout the morning. After a quick and joyless meal, they began the long trek to Illmound Keep.

Few creatures were out that morning, so their travels were relatively easy. It was almost as if the Gaunt Man had resigned himself to their arrival and had called off his minions. Therefore, the foursome was able to make a full day's travel in peace. Their spirits began to even out toward the end of the first day as Verdigris and André began to converse, exchanging not-too-funny jokes and talking about neutral subjects. The edeinosaurs gave the brooding giant a wide berth.

But the other two Storm Knights continued to walk quietly. Neither André nor Verdigris were able to fathom the giant's dark thoughts, and Ti-Dara merely marched along with the others, saying nothing. Her beliefs, as a follower of Kra, were to protect of life. The Gaunt Man's cold manipulations of life and death had numbed her soul and she was beginning to lose her grasp on reality.

After the first night of travel, during André's and Verdigris' watch, Ti-Dara woke the sleeping Vito. She stared, red-eyed, into his large face.

"I loved him, Vito," she said quietly, "I've loved him since the moment we met. A year and a half ago."

"Huh?" Vito grunted. "Watchu talkin' about? I thought you just met."

"No," Ti-Dara said quietly, "I knew him before she did. I loved him before she did. But he hated ..." and here she looked at her cybernetic arm. For the first time during the quest, it was uncovered and shone silver in the dim light, "... this. He couldn't understand how I could have attached myself to a machine."

Vito nodded, though he didn't understand. He still didn't completely trust Ti-Dara, but the sadness was genuine.

"I guess, since he lost his legs unwillingly, he couldn't understand how I chose to make this a part of me." Ti-Dara looked off in the distance, and Vito was certain she was seeing the small, unmarked grave now miles away. "I tried to make him understand, but he could never love me back.

Then when Katrinna came ... he loved her. And I left."

Vito stared at the young woman as she laughed hollowly. He could tell she would spend the night sobbing again, but he didn't know what to say.

"It's funny," she sniffed. "Katrinna drove me to learn more about Kra and the powers within, and I even picked up my magic because, somehow, I thought it would make me like her." Ti-Dara's chuckle turned ragged in her throat. "Guess it's good I wasn't, eh, Vito?"

"Go to sleep," the giant said simply.

Ti-Dara pulled away, hurt, then saw the look in Vito's eyes. Finally, she found solace in another friend of her dead friend. She knew then, that she was not alone in her grief, even if her companion did not know how to express his. Sleep finally came.

The next two days proceeded similarly. Verdigris and André were what kept the group moving. They appeared to have recovered and were trying to shake the others out of their trances. But they remained content to bother each other when shunned repeatedly. By the end of the third day of travel, the group had come within a few miles of the keep and the small town nearby.

The last morning was misty. An early jungle fog made visibility difficult and kept the jungle fairly calm. Very little of the usual morning activity seemed present. Although it made traveling a bit slower, the fog did help to lift Vito out of his depression. It reminded him of the fogs on the moors and the street of London, his adopted home, and reminded him of the bustle and life of the streets. This seemed to bolster his spirits and he recovered more of his self-confidence.

Verdigris, meanwhile, had been tinkering with his rocket pack and, by the end of the morning, was able to achieve flight. André warned him not to get lost in the fog, but the former denizen of the Living Land only laughed (hissed) and the cyberKnight.

The group almost reached the keep by late morning. Ti-Dara was still very depressed, but the proximity of the keep gave her a determinedness she'd lacked before. When the group came out of the jungle beside a large field, she was in front, surveying the area to determine their next course of action.



"What is that?" queried André.

"I believe that it may be a gospog field. Yes, look over there," Ti-Dara stated. The others followed her gesture towards a caretaker, one of the early generation gospog that tended the fields.

"Great, how are we supposed to get past here. I mean, one gospog is bad enough, but a whole field?" André wondered.

Ti-Dara responded, "We should have no trouble getting past the field. Generally, the caretakers are restricted to their fields. They cannot discern the difference between visitors and attackers, so they are ordered to remain within the field. What bothers me is the village."

"Okay, why don't we just take things one step at a time," was Captain Verdigris' reply as he began down the road. The others followed and within a couple of minutes, they were past the field with no antagonism. Ti-Dara's guess had been right and the caretakers caused them no problems.

Next on their tour was the village that stood at Illmound Keep's base. It was a small village that normally should have been filled with various merchants and other people, but at the moment was eerily quiet.

"What gives?" asked the giant.

"I am not sure," answered Ti-Dara. "I thought that this was a busy village. Many of the Gaunt Man's allies use it as a base of operations."

But no answer came from the village which remained silent. As the group slowly crept through the village, they noticed that it seemed deserted. Captain Verdigris and André occasionally peered into the few windows that were open, but found no signs of life, or even unlife. The only motion at all that they could detect was a gentle breeze that flowed down from the keep. It moved along the main street, blowing scraps of refuse. Occasionally, one would whip itself into a frenzy, spinning furiously about a dust ball or piece of paper, but aside from that nothing moved or made noise. So, they moved through the village to the keep.

Illmound Keep. Finally, they reached their objective. It sat slightly higher than the rest of the village, as if to make a point of its dominance. Where late morning sun could break through the dark clouds, it showed that it had yet to fully crest over the keep. The shadows kept the keep's face dark and grim looking. The main street continued out of the village and up to the keep, so the group cautiously followed it.

As they got closer, the keep grew even larger. It soon towered above them, dwarfing them in its power. Inside the main gates, the shadows stretched across the group and they felt a chill. The cool wind grazed their faces and exposed arms, causing ripples of goosebumps to rise and tingle. Ti-Dara hugged her shoulders to warm herself, but could not help shivering. She wasn't entirely sure whether it was the cold or fear that made her shiver, but she knew that she did not like this place.

The group continued to inspect the grounds and moved around the side. They passed a gardener who only briefly broke from his work to watch them pass. He made no attempt to stop them, or even speak, and simply nodded his acknowledgement of their presence. Vito turned away from

the gardener's stare. Its cold, vacant eyes were a bit too disturbing to view.

"Why is it so silent?" André whispered.

Captain Verdigris responded silently, "I'm not sure. I would have thought that there would be guards or creatures or something."

"Yeah, dis is too spooky," added Vito.

And as they discussed the chills they felt, a voice responded to their queries. "It is that way because I wish it so."

The group quickly turned, ready for a fight, but found nothing behind them. Another cold shiver ran across Ti-Dara's spine. She recognized the voice.

"That was the Gaunt Man. Remember, from the vision?" she said.

The others nodded in agreement but were not sure what to do. They slowly turned around again and moved further towards the rear of the keep. Subconsciously, they tried to banish their fears.

As they eased around the corner, they found the source of their concerns. Standing alone, silently, was the Gaunt Man. His physical form did not seem overly powerful. The tall, lean man seemed barely strong enough to support the weight of his long rag-tag overcoat. The sunlight played about him as clouds moved to keep their master cloaked in shadow and his wide hat kept his features concealed. But they knew his true powers and halted several yards away from him.

"At last, you have arrived. Please, let us dispense with the pleasantries. Proceed," insisted the Gaunt Man, motioning them to pass. The members of the group looked curiously at one another, wondering what course of action to take.

"I attempted to prevent your arrival, but as sometimes happens, fate has decided otherwise," answered the Gaunt Man to their unasked questions. "I kept my forces from stopping you in the village because I knew it would be for naught. You were destined to reach the bridge and I wished not to waste my forces defying fate."

The Gaunt Man smoldered while the group sat still confused. They could not believe that he was letting them do as they wished. And it was at this point that they finally noticed the monstrosity that sat behind him. How they could have missed it to begin with was unbelievable, but now they could not avoid it. Behind the Gaunt Man sat his Maelstrom Bridge. They became sickened by the mere sight of its twisting and churning. Thousands upon thousands of bodies, both human and non-human, made up the vile structure and they could now hear the almost imperceptible moans of their suffering.

Unaware of their actions, the Knights slowly moved past the Gaunt Man towards the bridge. He stepped back and watched as they proceeded, knowing what the future held for them. They crept up to the bridge, disgusted by it but at the same time drawn to it. Then Captain Verdigris made the first step onto the bridge. It writhed beneath and around and eventually over his foot. He quickly withdrew it, sickened that the bridge was alive and sought to make him part of it.



"What are we supposed to do now?" asked André.

"I don't know. We can't possibly defeat the Gaunt Man," replied Ti-Dara. But their questions were answered as they looked up the bridge. From the other end, they began to see another figure descending.

André was the first to cry out "The Carredon!" as he rushed headlong up the bridge, not caring about the things that squished beneath him. Vito ran up next and was quickly followed by Captain Verdigris. All three drew firearms and began taking aim at the dragon. The crackling of possibility energy around them gave their weapons at least a chance of working. The Carredon rushed down the bridge towards them and swooped past as they fired. Only Ti-Dara remained below.

Ti-Dara quivered as the dragon approached. She flashed back to her visions, and remembered the breath that ended every one. It had flown past her friends with frightening speed and began to open its mouth. Ti-Dara consigned herself, too frightened to take an action, but never received the fatal blast of fire. Instead, it flew past her as well and sought out its master.

The Carredon slowly approached the Gaunt Man and waited for a response. The Gaunt Man spoke no words, instead returning a similar silence to the Carredon. The two stared at each other for a few moments, then the Gaunt Man raised an arm.

"Destroy," he uttered and the Carredon obeyed. It took to the air again and headed back for the bridge.

"Quickly, kill it!" shouted Ti-Dara and her three companions opened fire. Two of the blasts missed their mark, but Vito's rat-a-tat spray hit and, incredibly, harmlessly bounced off the dragon's hide. It returned in kind with its own blast of fire that scattered the three Knights and sent Captain Verdigris tumbling towards the edge of the bridge.

"Easy there, little liz," Vito remarked as he caught Captain Verdigris in mid-tumble. "I ain't ready for you to go yet."

"Thanks, big guy," he replied. "Now turn around and get that thing."

Ti-Dara watched the first strafing run with fearful eyes. She still had yet to set foot on the bridge and was trying to raise the courage to do so. As Captain Verdigris nearly tumbled off, she began to make the motions, but could not commit herself.



If only Kevin were here.

The second pass had similar results. This time Captain Verdigris was the only one to hit the Carredon, but his electro-ray caused as little harm as Vito's blast had.

The Carredon however, was able to cause a bit more damage. André, still unbalanced from the first run, left himself wide open for an attack from the Carredon. In a scene reminiscent of the vision, the Carredon swept past Vito and Verdigris and grabbed André. Effortlessly, it rose back off the bridge and released the young man.

"André!" they all screamed as they watched him plummet, but they were unable to save him. Only Verdigris could fly and when he attempted to do so, the Orrorshan reality whipped around him, overriding his Nile reality,



and shutting down his pack. Ti-Dara watched as André's body struck the ground beneath the bridge with a sickening crack. She raced to his side and fell across his motionless form.

Immediately, the Carredon returned for another victim. But its attempt was for naught as Vito and Captain Verdigris scrambled away. They split up, each hoping to draw the attention of the Carredon for the other. The Carredon chose Captain Verdigris.

"Where are your little wings now, stormer," it mocked. "Why didn't you stop your friend from falling?"

"AAArrgh!" cried out Vito. "It was not his fault. If your stupid reality hadn't interfered, he could've saved him!" and Vito punctuated his grief with a blast. He crackled with his own Ayslish energy and this time actually caused the Carredon some pain. It screamed out in agony and vowed to spread the dead ashes of the giant's body to the four winds, but Captain Verdigris saved his partner by firing another round from his ray. Together, they managed to win a round against the Carredon.

Ti-Dara continued to pray over André when he suddenly spoke, "Ti-Dara, I..."

Ti-Dara made a gesture to heal him, but he stopped her.

"Won't help ... cough ... Give me the bomb."

"What, how did you?" She squeaked back.

"Saw you ... saw you get it from Kevin back in New London ..."

"But ..."

André interrupted again raggedly, "Doesn't matter ... it's my job to find things out. It's your job to live. That's what a priestess does, neh?"

A fit of coughing interrupted him, and blood leaked from between his lips. "Now, just give it to me, I haven't got much time. I'm done for."

Ti-Dara sat back stunned for a moment, but as André's eyes began to flicker, and she knew what had to be done.

"Come on, toots ..." he hacked. "I can't do much else. Let me stick it out at the base of the bridge, go out a hero. We'll blow this sucker sky high. I don't think the Gaunt Man was expecting us to do this."

Ti-Dara looked back at the Gaunt Man, but all she could see was Katrinna. Not a rival, not an enemy, but an innocent, used by the Gaunt Man — to kill Kevin. She began to agree with André. She began to think that the Gaunt Man let them through so easily because he thought that they were only after the Carredon. She thought that he must not have considered the threat to his bridge, because if he had, he never would have let them get this far. She slid the small device that would drop the bridge to André and helped him to the base of the bridge. Finally, she had the courage to move up it.

"Carredon!" she screamed and it turned, surprised. She drew a small dagger out of her pack and moved up the bridge. Vito and Captain Verdigris instantly recognized the dagger as the shard Lord Winston had given them but they wondered what good it would do against a beast of the Carredon's size.

"Stormer! You have made a mistake coming here. I destroyed you once before, and though that was a dream,

this time will be no different!" It bellowed back.

Vito and Verdigris continued to watch as the Carredon descended towards Ti-Dara. She stood her ground bravely until it flew at her then nimbly dodged aside. She felt confident that she could get the beast, but needed more time for André to get ready.

Sixty ...

André used his reality to support the bomb as the Carredon and Ti-Dara continued their game for several more passes. After the last, Vito let out another burst. This succeeded in not only hurting the Carredon once more, but it drew attention away from Ti-Dara. The Carredon tired of playing cat-and-mouse with her and moved back to the giant and the edeinos. It began to fight intelligently and used the bridge to his advantage. Since the Storm Knights were still on the bridge, all it had to do was knock them off. Afterwards, they would be easy targets. The Carredon turned quickly and came in low, too low for them to dodge.

Fifty ...

Vito went tumbling over the edge first. For a moment, it looked like he would be able to grab the side, but then the Carredon dove in at him. Letting go of the bridge, he let himself fall backwards, surprising the beast — and he fired as he fell. The Carredon let out a shriek as it flew directly into the giant's automatic fire, and the last thing it saw as the giant plummeted through the mists was the huge man's sneer of defiance and the blazing fire of the Thompson submachinegun.

Forty ...

The Carredon wasn't finished, however, even though the giant had streaked its wings with wounds. It rose shakily, turning back toward its remaining enemies.

Captain Verdigris leapt off the bridge in a howling rage. His rockets still were not functioning, but he managed to jump directly onto the back of the Carredon. He clutched at the beast's wounded wings and attempted to steer it into the ground. However, the Carredon's own control of its wings was greater and the Nile hero was unable to stop him. The Carredon brushed alongside of the bottom of the bridge and tore the edeinos loose — but at a cost. The strong claws of the edeinos tore chunks out of the beast's soldiers, and the only scream was the Carredon's own. The edeinos was finished, but the hero had done his part.

Thirty ...

All the while this occurred, André watched in agony. He sat at the base of the bridge, helpless, as his friends were slaughtered. With broken bones, he could no longer move — he could only watch and hope that the counter would reach zero before the Carredon or the Gaunt Man discovered their plan. Looking up, he despaired. Only Ti-Dara was left, and she still could not step onto the bridge. The wounded Carredon turned toward her and howled its evil at the swirling winds.

Twenty ...

The Gaunt Man merely stood at the edge of his keep watching the events. He gloated over victory as the Knights began to die. Unknown to André and Ti-Dara, he was well aware of the ticking bomb that intended to destroy his bridge. However, he also was confident in the bridge's





might. He saw no possible way for the small device to disrupt the magnificent structure — he had taken precautions since he. So, silently, he allowed the bomb to tick away its — and his — last few seconds.

Ten ...

"So, Carrion, we are all that remain," Ti-Dara mocked. She hoped she sounded numb to the losses of her friends. Kevin's early death served to harden her heart and now she only sought the Carredon's death. Bravely, she stood and waited, grasping the dagger in her hand.

Five ...

"Don't you want to know why Tolwyn Tancred beat you so easily? Doesn't that bother you? How did a mere 'stormer' manage to kill you?" she mocked. The Carredon started to swoop and scream, but she held up the shard.

Four ...

"Do not mention that name, stormer. She should have remained dead when I first killed her," it shouted as it neared Ti-Dara.

Three ...

"Doesn't it bother you that you aren't immortal?" the mockings continued.

Two ...

"Die!" It cried, ignoring all the warnings its wounded flesh screamed. Ti-Dara braced herself, holding the dagger out.

One ...

"Come on ugly! I know your flaw. It is so simple, but there is nothing you can do about it. You know what it is?" Ti-Dara tormented. But the Carredon, mad with pain and rage, ignored her entirely and moved with blinding speed towards her. It would tear her in two with the impact, then it would baste the two halves with its flame and devour the remains while they still burned.

Zero ...

"You can never defeat all of the endless possibilities in an eternity shard!" and Ti-Dara sidestepped the beast's all-out attack and thrust the dagger into the Carredon's breast as the base of the bridge exploded in a brilliant light. "You will fall as your creator will fall! Kevin —!" she cried out as the beast's dying breath scorched her body.

Ti-Dara fell backwards off the bridge, tumbling from the force of the Carredon's impact and the explosion. She was

caught in the backwash of flames as they rippled up the bridge towards the heavens.

The Carredon hurtled uncontrollably down the bridge as well. Ti-Dara had discovered its true weakness. For all of its defenses, the Gaunt Man's greatest creation was still vulnerable to the powers of an eternity shard. In the last instant before death, the Carredon, and the Gaunt Man, suddenly realized that was how Bryce and Tolwyn must have been able to kill it before. Somehow they had managed to link themselves to the Heart of Coyote when they delivered the killing blow. That was the only possibility then and that was the only possibility now for this shard burned in its breast, consuming it like the flames that consumed the bridge above it. It flailed in agony, trying to remove the dagger, but its own attack had forced Ti-Dara to shove the dagger deep into its chest, beneath its armor. It clawed at the earth and rolled, trying everything to free the damnable shard from it, but nothing would dislodge it. Finally, it collapsed, incapable of preventing its death a second time. It bellowed a tremendous death roar and cursed the Storm Knights one last time.

"No!" The Gaunt Man watched in horror. He had allowed the Knights their battle with the Carredon out of confidence in his beast — and as a machination of the Power of Fear. He never expected them to defeat it, a mistake which now crushed him. He recoiled helplessly with disbelief as flames consumed his bridge. Somehow, the martyr-like actions of the Cyberpapal stormer had managed to disrupt the bridge. The bomb he supported carried much more force than any explosive the Gaunt Man had seen in all his lifetimes, and it managed to rip a hole in the reality that supported the bridge.

The Gaunt Man shook as he paid the price for his overconfidence. The inferno raged too hot for him to approach and even if he could, he had no power to stop it. The burning, writhing bridge, with the Carredon and the stormers — Storm Knights, he reminded himself — beneath it, reflected in his hollow eyes. He had underestimated Core Earth's allies and its defenders one last time.

Never again.

The Gaunt Man clutched his staff and watched the bridge burn.

Never again.



After the Fall

In Orrorsh ...

Lord Cheltenham's defeat sounds a major victory for the Storm Knights of Orrorsh and of Core Earth. One of the Gaunt Man's major servants has been defeated and the High Lord of Fear must spend considerable energy if he wishes to reinstate his servant.

But the most devastating blow of all was the destruction of one of the key stelae in the Bridge Triangle. Even though the Gaunt Man had several back-up stelae in place, and the Orrorshan reality was reestablished in minutes, many Horrors were destroyed and the bridge itself collapsed. The Storm Knights have cost the High Lord valuable energy that he had taken from his battle with the Heart of Coyote. Though the war rages on, the Knights can breathe a little easier, knowing the realm will not expand this day.

— Or —

The Knights have failed. Broken and disheartened, the survivors must make their way back to the realms where they can fight the Possibility Wars and win — the Gaunt Man is too strong. Though the Knights may have won some minor victories against the individual Horrors of Orrorsh, the stelae remains firm, and the Knights must hope that their comrades-in-arms — Kevin Middleton, Vito Tattaglia, André, Ti-Dara, and Captain Verdigris manage to keep the Gaunt Man's attention long enough for them to escape.

Because the Knights were unable to destroy the stelae, this bridge from Gaea remains intact, and it continues to funnel energy to the Gaunt Man — and drain it from Orrorsh. No glory can help this day, and the Knights can only hope they have not doomed their cosms and Core Earth.

In Gaea ...

The Gaunt Man looks down on the ashes of his Carredon, his bridge, and his dreams of renewed conquest. Behind him, Heketon sits, black and pulsing, waiting for its High Lord to move. Though the ancient artifact of evil is powerful beyond belief, it waits patiently for its Lord.

Finally, a sigh escapes the High Lord's ragged lips. Were there watchers other than the black heart — other than the dead and broken stormers that litter the battlefield — they would shudder at the sudden humanity of the sigh. More horrible is this creature, the Gaunt Man, because he can so fully emulate the mannerisms of the creatures he will conquer. Or so his mind tells him.

For a moment, the Gaunt Man feels his head droop and his eyes lose their burning fire. *Is there no end?* a thought flashes across his mind.

In wonder, the Lord of Fear and Horror looks at the thought, analyzes it, and squashes it. His hand makes the motion on the small Carredon head on his cane, and the eternity shard trapped in the beast's metallic beak pulses red and fades. A sneer tugs at the Gaunt Man's lips and he turns back to his idol.

"Heketon," he says, his voice echoing in the wasteland, "we must go. Return us to the site of our power; to Illmound Keep. I must plan, and you must act."

Silently, the device agrees with its master/servant. It does his bidding slowly, and the two figures fade out, leaving the burning bridge behind them.

Quiet comes over the battlefield, and the corpses of the Knights, and the burning carcass of the Carredon, rest in death, and in the burning night.

But not in peace. Not yet.

No Quarter Given — Response Form

1. Were the Storm Knights able to resolve their "legal problems" in New London, or are they currently outlaws there? _____
2. Was "Lady Winston" successful in Corrupting any Knights? _____ If yes, what are the names/cosms/character types of the Knights corrupted? _____
3. Was Araneae killed? _____
4. Did the Knights destroy the Cult of the Black Heart? _____ Did enough of the cultists escape to re-form the cult? _____
5. Was William Devon killed? _____ Is there another leader of the Black Heart? _____
If so, who? _____
6. Was Lord Cheltenham defeated? _____ Killed? _____
7. Was the stelae destroyed/uprooted? _____



NO QUARTER GIVEN

by Brian Sean Perry

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