

BAND OF BLADES

MILITARY FANTASY FORGED IN THE DARK

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Band of Blades
A Forged in the Dark Game
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Based on **Blades in the Dark** by John Harper

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CHAPTER 1

THE BASICS

THE GAME

Band of Blades is a game powered by Blades in the Dark about the surviving remnants of the Legion; a once storied band of mercenaries, now trying to survive and stop the Cinder King from destroying the remaining bastion of humanity. There are military tactics, bold missions, battles against undead, horrific magics, and soldiers fighting for, dying and caring for each other.

We play to find out if the Legion survives the undead hunting them, and along with their Chosen (a human imbued with the divine spark) manages to make a difference in the war.

THE SETTING

When humanity is in true peril (and affairs of the supernatural plague the world) the gods would create one or more Chosen. Powerful champions imbued with the aspect of the deity in question, they ride forth to vanquish mythic beasts, mend rifts in the world, and seal away curses. When the Cinder King rose in the West, an unheard-of nine Chosen arose. When they faced the Cinder King, five were Broken and turned to fight at his side. A desperate army was assembled by the remaining Chosen and led to fight a final decisive battle on the plains of Ettenmark.

Humanity lost. They did not expect the horrors the Broken brought to bear.

Now in retreat, a band of mercenaries seeks to survive and stem the tide of the Cinder King, hoping to buy time for the Eastern Kingdoms to mount some wild hope, some wild plan, to keep humanity alive.

SO YOU'VE PLAYED BLADES...

Band of Blades is a Forged in the Dark game of dark military fantasy. Many of the mechanics and trappings will seem familiar, but if you're looking to highlight the differences here are a few things to keep your eye on.

- ◆ **CHARACTER FIDELITY.** Everyone will make Specialists (the equivalent of characters in Blades). Who you play on the mission will vary. Some missions you'll play your Specialist, and others a rookie. Be prepared to portray different characters based on mission parameters, what's available and who the Marshall sends on the mission.
- ◆ **ROLES.** In addition to individual characters, you'll also be responsible for a role in the game. Some Roles are required (Marshall, Quartermaster, Commander, GM) and some are optional (Spymaster and Lorekeeper). These roles have different responsibilities to the Legion and the campaign in general. While the game follows individual soldiers on the mission, it also plays at a higher level.
- ◆ **NO DOWNTIMES.** Downtime actions are taken at the role level (and not the soldier level). There will be a chance for some Free Play (see Back at Camp Scenes), but not Blades Downtime actions as you may be used to them.
- ◆ **STRESS.** You'll note Legionnaires start with less stress (6). However you can go to the end of the track and only when you cross (7th) do you trauma. Trauma is more deadly. If you Trauma on a mission and are left behind enemy lines, you are not guaranteed to make it back to camp safely.
- ◆ **HEALING.** Healing is more streamlined to help with managing piles of sheets. When the Quartermaster declares **rest and recuperation**, you'll check boxes for wound levels, and clear the row when all are full.
- ◆ **GEAR.** Load is selected at start of mission, and boxes represent rarity and availability more than weight or encumbrance.
- ◆ **BLIGHT AND CORRUPTION.** Undead spread plague and mutation. There are new ways for characters to leave the game.
- ◆ **REP AND FACTIONS.** There are no factions, and no rep to gain to advance. The legion is always considered Tier 1 (or Threat 1) for each soldier, and there is no set way to improve that overall. Your enemies will often field monstrosities more impressive than you. Which brings us to...
- ◆ **DEATH AND DIFFICULTY.** Character creation is streamlined, but death is always on the table. Don't expect every soldier or rookie to make it. Threat level means harm will be higher and situations are more dangerous than they are in blades. Your job is to finish the mission and survive. Always keep that in mind.

LEXICON

There are many new terms in **Band of Blades**, which often only appear on one sheet. Here's a unified list of them for when you're first reading (or referencing) to help you find which term goes with which playbook or sheet.

ASSETS RATING: Number of dice the Quartermaster rolls when acquiring assets in a location. See Locations.

BLIGHT: Patches of rotting flesh, eye discoloration, mutations and trouble seeing reality. If a Blighted individual dies they'll raise as one of the standard line troop Rots of the Cinder King's army. See Playbooks.

BROKEN: Once Chosen, now powerful undead serving the Cinder King. Each uses their divine spark to make horrible undead troops.

CHOSEN: A human bound to a deity. The only source of true supernatural power in the world.

CORRUPTION: Gained from being exposed to Broken or undead troop curses and fluids. See Playbooks.

FAVOR: A compulsion of the Chosen to pursue the agenda of the deity they're bound to. Missions have Favor tags. See Chosen.

HARM: Damage that doesn't have to be purely physical (forex curses). Recovered via Rest and Recuperation (see Quartermaster). See Playbooks.

PRESSURE: A measure of how surrounded you are by undead, and how able they are to harry your forces as they move. See Commander.

INTEL: Measure of enemy and local area info. Used to get better missions, and enhance engagements. See Commander.

LEGION: A storied mercenary unit, formed in the Old Empire, having tangled with a few powerful enemies in their time.

LEGIONNAIRE: A member of the Legion.

LOAD: What soldiers can bring on missions. See Playbooks.

SPECIALIST: A trained and geared soldier who performs above and beyond a regular line troop. Usually assigned a squad for a mission.

SQUAD: Five rookies or soldiers sent on a mission. Only full squads can go on missions.

SUPPLY: A measure of liquid capital, tradable goods, and local influence. Used to buy and boost campaign actions. See Quartermaster.

THREAT: How dangerous an enemy is. Line troops are Threat 1, Broken Threat 5. See Broken.

SUPPLY CART: logistics carts for carrying extra supplies. Help stretch out food stores. See Quartermaster.

TIME: Clocks indicating time passage and how long you have to reach Skydagger before the Undead or winter cut you off. See Commander.

TRAUMA: What happens when you take 1 more stress than you have available. Soldiers over their Trauma limit die. Those who trauma and are left behind die. See Playbooks.

SETTING

There isn't an extensive primer on the world, so the game relies on you to fill in details, and make up facts past what is known. Keep the following in mind when writing the setting and establishing tone.

- ◆ **THERE ARE NO DRAGONS, NO ELVES, NO DWARVES.** There are only people, with differing cultures. The world has some large, strange animals (called Beasts or Great Beasts), but they are still animals. They won't talk, or hoard gold, or know spells. They may be giant boars, or car-sized snakes.
- ◆ **THIS IS AN OLD WORLD.** There are ruins of the past, remnants of past chosen, great beasts, and wounds on the land from troubles that came and went. Most of it's forgotten till the Old Empire discovered Alchemy and codified writing. But the ruins of the past litter the world. Explanations for some things are just forgotten.
- ◆ **MAGIC CAUSES AS MANY PROBLEMS AS IT SOLVES.** There is never a spell that will just fix your problems. Often trucking with the supernatural will have unexpected consequences (like corruption or blight), or have a limited effect (only sort-of solves a problem).
- ◆ **THERE ARE NO WIZARDS.** Magic (as it exists in most fantasy settings) is not a thing in **Band of Blades**. The only source of Miracles are the Chosen, and people tied to the gods (like Mercys). Their power is localized (they cannot will things to happen on the other side of the world, they cannot perform large-scale acts).
- ◆ **ALCHEMY IS SCIENCE.** There are properties of the world that are not the same as ours, but they can be studied and understood. Alchemists are not performing Miracles so much as they are using scientific principles that work in this world.
- ◆ **PRAYER DOES NOTHING.** You'd think in a world with gods that embody and walk the land, prayer would be a thing that could change the world. It doesn't. They do what they want for reasons that are largely incomprehensible, and they don't spend a lot of time explaining themselves. People still interpret, build religions, and fight over their beliefs.
- ◆ **STRENGTH AND COURAGE SOLVE PROBLEMS.** With big enough armies even Chosen may die (the Godwar proved this). Chosen need troops as much as the troops rely on them. Strength, training and steel can often make more of a difference than superstition, supernatural power or hope.
- ◆ **THERE IS NO PROPHECY.** Nothing is written. Nothing is preordained. There are no words carved into stones that say what will be. There is no fate. You make your own destiny. There is no chosen one protected by plot. Anyone can die. This also does not stop people from believing otherwise.

TONE

Band of Blades is a dark military fantasy.

Dark fantasy is *dark* because of the horror elements. Where there are dragons and wizards in classic high fantasy, a Dark Fantasy tends to be closer in look and tone to the real world, with the *fantasy* (aka the supernatural) appearing mostly in the horror elements. There is no spell to save the day, no shining warrior who lives because they are righteous. The world doesn't care if our protagonists live or die, and the odds are stacked against them. The enemy has magic, and you have cunning, courage, and strength of arms.

Military fantasy is akin to war stories you might find about world war one and two. War is hell, and it's not heroes leading valiant charges. Soldiers often sleep in the mud, march large distances, and deal with starvation, and a relentless enemy that could end them at any time.

The world here is roughly at a late renaissance tech level. Black powder is a thing, and most countries have muskets and simple muzzle loaded pistols. Combustion engines don't exist yet and steam engines are huge and are, so animals move carts. The Nation of Or has made significant studies in Alchemy and Mechanics, but most of their findings have not spread world-wide. There are no factories or large scale production techniques. Post is still delivered by riders.

HORROR

Horror is a big part of the game. Each of the Broken represents a different genre of horror. Make sure to use a safety tool at the table (I prefer Brie Sheldon's Script Change mechanic at my table).

- ◆ **YOU CAN'T TELL PEOPLE TO BE SCARED.** Saying "you should be afraid now" doesn't work. The best you can do is show them something that scares you and hope that they too are scared.
- ◆ **FAILURE ISN'T SCARY.** Just making things hard isn't scary. Fear comes from tension, helplessness, and the hope that just maybe you might make it. Don't have everything just kill people. They won't be scared.
- ◆ **CONSUME MEDIA.** Read stories written in the style of horror you're trying to emulate. Try different descriptions that make you shiver. Watch horror movies, and study how they frame shots. Remember that jump scares are a visual and auditory trick, and not something for roleplaying games.
- ◆ **SET THE MOOD.** Lower the lights. Leave light spooky music on in the background, but don't let it disrupt the game.
- ◆ **RESPECT BOUNDARIES.** You're never sure where anyone's limit is. If folks get uncomfortable, take a break, check in with them, and make sure to respect anything that's off-limits.

THE CAMPAIGN

The first **campaign** of **Band of Blades** is the march to Skydagger keep. Here's the rough shape of the first Campaign in its entirety.

BEFORE PLAY

You'll need 4-5 players, and printouts of the handouts (and probably extra copies of the Rookie and Soldier sheets). This is a quickstart meaning that you'll also need the Blades in the Dark rules (you can find the SRD at bladesinthedark.com).

Before play, everyone should choose a role sheet. You'll need a Commander, GM, Marshall and Quartermaster. If you have a fifth player they can choose one of the optional roles (the Spymaster or the Lorekeeper). The sheets should have all the instructions you need.

WHAT DO WE DO FIRST?

The game starts with a mission. The Chosen sheet should have a starting mission on the inside of their handout. You zoom in and control some soldiers on a mission. After you're done the sheet will step you through the standard **mission phase** and **campaign phase**.

WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

After the first mission, you keep rotating through the **mission phase** (where you play out the missions) and the **campaign phase** (where you roleplay in camp, time passes, and you perform your roles).

ENDING THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign ends when there are fewer than 3 specialists or full squads in the Legion, all the Time clocks on the Commander sheet are full, or you reach Skydagger Keep and play through the final scenario.

Good Luck!

PHASES OF PLAY

Play rotates between two major phases. You should aim to start the session with the **mission phase**, and finish the **campaign phase**.

MISSION PHASE

This is the phase where the players zoom in and play the outcomes of the missions the Legion is undertaking. The steps are as follows. During the Mission phase you will mostly be roleplaying a Legionnaire (specialist, soldier or rookie).

- ◆ **PRIORITY.** The **Commander** asks their **INTEL** questions, and chooses which mission is the priority mission, which is secondary. The Legion only has resources to deploy for two missions, as the camp is constantly attacked, so they automatically fail the 3rd mission when it's present.
- ◆ **RESOLVE MISSIONS.** The **Marshal** is responsible for selecting who goes on each mission, who is in charge, gathering and making the **engagement roll** (during which the **Quartermaster** can spend materiel to help). They also should make sure all soldiers get xp at the end of each mission. Legionnaires played on the primary mission gain xp according to the back of their playbook. Specialists that survive the secondary mission mark **2xp**.
- ◆ **MISSION PENALTIES.** Always apply mission penalties first. If you've attempted the mission and been at least partially successful (GM has final say) don't apply the mission penalty.
- ◆ **MISSION REWARDS.** Gain mission rewards for successful missions.
- ◆ **BOOKEEPING.** Mark -1 Morale for each Legionnaire that died on the mission. There are so few left that each death is felt.
- ◆ **BACK AT CAMP.** If you have a Lorekeeper they will set a scene that occurs as the troops return from their missions. If you do not, this is the **GMs** responsibility. Play out the scene, and feel free to Free Play anything else that seems pertinent or interesting. *Do your soldiers want to talk to someone in town? Does the command staff need to have a discussion about something happening in the Legion?*

TIPS AND TRICKS

On missions if someone dies have them take over a Rookie.

If you need the squad as a unit to roll, choose a Rookie to champion for them rolling a pool as appropriate. If you have multiple people playing rookies, this prevents group actions from having two players roll and also a squad rolling.

If you need an NPC rookie (or rookie squad) to roll, use **1d**. A specialist or soldier rolls **2d**.

CAMPAIGN PHASE

This is the phase where high level decisions are made and executed. The players are mostly playing their role-books and making decisions at the legion level. The steps of the **campaign phase** are as follows:

- ◆ **TIME PASSES.** **Time** and **pressure** on the **Commander** sheet increase by 1 each. The **Quartermaster** must spend 1 **food** (bubble) to feed the Legion or lose 2 **morale**.
- ◆ **CAMPAIGN ACTIONS.** The **Quartermaster** takes **campaign actions**. The Legion will get a number of **campaign actions** for free based on troop morale. This is also when laborers work on **long-term projects**, the **Spymaster** (if you have one) deploys their spies, the **Lorekeeper** tells their tales of the Legion (if enough Legionnaires have died), and Alchemists can be used to perform Alchemy projects.
- ◆ **LEGION ADVANCES.** Ask the **Commander** if the Legion will advance to the next location, and which path they'll take if so. If the Legion advances, the Commander will roll **pressure** to see how much time they accumulate. The **Quartermaster** may spend **horses** (one bubble per) to lower **pressure** for this roll.
- ◆ **MISSION FOCUS.** The **Commander** chooses which mission type to focus on from those available in the Legion's current location. This doesn't guarantee that such a mission will appear in the next set, but it makes it far more likely.
- ◆ **MISSION GENERATION.** The **GM** generates and fleshes out missions using a combination of the charts on their sheet, and what has happened in the game before. When they're ready, they will present what missions are available to the **Commander**, and rotate back to the **mission phase**.

SO YOU'VE EARNED RANK...

Promotion is the process by which a playbook advances or specializes into a new playbook.

The first advance a **Rookie** earns must be *Not A Rookie Anymore*, which changes them into a **Soldier**. Likewise, every **Soldier** can take *Specialist Training*, which converts them into a specialist. These two abilities **promote** a character.

In order to **promote** you must have the pre-requisite non-specialist action ratings of the playbook you are advancing to. These are the pre-marked actions that are already on the playbook. It wouldn't make sense for a **Soldier** to become a **Scout** without having any rating in **SCOUT**. You do get your specialist action rating for free. If you already have the specialist action, increase your rank in it by 1 up to a maximum of 3.

*Dwight is promoting Twilight Vexing Gale from Soldier into a Sniper. He does the actions first, so he makes sure he has the requisite action ratings. Vexing has **SHOOT 2** and **SCOUT 1**. He copies over his ratings in **SWAY**, **MANEUVER**, and **SKIRMISH** but gets one dot of the Sniper specialist ability (**AIM**) for free.*

When a character is promoted, copy over their information into a new playbook of the appropriate type. You keep all your core aspects—your **heritage**, current **stress** and **trauma**, **trauma conditions**, **corruption**, **blight**, and **harm**. You also keep any special abilities or action ratings you previously had. Copy them down into the notes section of your new playbook.

THREAT AND INJURY

Missions are dangerous, and it's not uncommon to come back from the field with injuries to the body, curses, or other harm. Wounds linger until they're addressed with the **rest and recuperation** campaign action. This action lets you mark boxes next to your wound levels. When all the boxes are marked, clear the row of wounds.

Each playbook has a place to record harm of these levels:

- ◆ **Level 1 Harm** is light harm, representing minor injuries that could be treated in the field with a Medic, or that are generally short-lived complications. **EXAMPLES:** *Bruised, Drained, Distracted, Scared, Sprained Ankle, Confused.*
- ◆ **Level 2 Harm** is moderate harm, representing injuries that make it difficult to accomplish fundamental tasks. **EXAMPLES:** *Exhausted, Bleeding Cut, Concussion, Panic, Burns.*
- ◆ **Level 3 Harm** is severe harm, representing injuries that make it impossible to perform basic actions. These sorts of injuries can be fatal if not dealt with quickly. **EXAMPLES:** *Impaled, Broken Leg, Shot in Chest, Crushed Rib, Catatonic.*
- ◆ **Level 4 Harm** is fatal, representing injuries that will not be recovered from. You might have time to utter a dying sentence, or push yourself for a final action but this soldier's story is finished. **EXAMPLES:** *Drowned, Sucking Chest Wound, Poisoned.*
- ◆ **Level 5 Harm** is instantly fatal, representing immediate death with no room for recovery. **EXAMPLES:** *Bisected, Immolated, Decapitated.*
- ◆ **Level 6+ Harm** is catastrophic trauma representing injuries that leave almost nothing to recover. **EXAMPLES:** *Shredded, Turned to Ash, Liquefied.*

Undead come with varying Threat levels. In general the higher the threat the more dangerous they are and the harder they hit. Every Legionnaire is considered Threat 1, though fine weapons and armor (bold under load) make most specialists effectively Threat 2. You do an extra level of harm (or extra clock segments in a battle clock) for each level of Threat you're above your opponent.

*Red Hook is an Infamous horror (Threat 3), with fists the size of ship anchors, and fights with giant metal hooks. He's effectively a small gang, and has **potency** in physical combat. He's fighting Riya the Heavy. She's got **fine** weapons and armor (Threat 2). She tries a **risky** maneuver and spends an **ANCHOR use** to fight as a small gang herself. On a 4-5 Red Hook lands a fatal blow (level 2 harm base, +1 for potency, +1 for extra Threat, even scale). Riya must resist or spend armor to survive.*

CORRUPTION AND BLIGHT

Attacks that spread the unwholesome essence of undeath, like the bite of the Burned, or venomous bile of a Spitter, give **corruption** equal to the **Threat** of the enemy. Corruption is the spread of an unnatural essence to living things. It can be reduced with a **RESOLVE** resist (usually one level). Wearing pieces of chosen, and holy relics can aid in resisting (+1d, and the level of **corruption** is reduced by one), though such relics will shrivel and crumple after being exposed to too much corruption (most come with a few charges only).

Corruption is increased on a track, similar to stress, but there are no common ways to reduce it. When you gain your 7th point of corruption, reset your corruption to zero and gain a **Blight**.

Blight is **corruption** made manifest. If you fill up all available **Blight**, your character descends into blight sickness, being taken over by corrupt influences, and potentially mutating and growing violent with your fellow squadmates.

- ◆ **Level 1 Blight** is visible corruption, but easily concealable with long-sleeves or a button-up coat. This blight is painful, but can be ignored, similarly to an exceptionally bad rash. **EXAMPLE:** *Patches of rotting flesh. Discolored hair or eyes. Boils.*
- ◆ **Level 2 Blight** causes significant, wide-spread changes. Often this can be concealed with long coats or many layers of clothing, but reliquaries tremble or boil in your presence, marking your inexorable change. **EXAMPLE:** *Grown claws. Eyes in places they should not be. Widespread skin color changes.*
- ◆ **Level 3 Blight** is marked by transformations of the body, such as the growth of new limbs, the rearrangement of organs in the body, and other transfigurations that would give anyone pause. Most people will also undergo hallucinations, and see friends as monstrous. Powerful undead may command you at this stage. **EXAMPLE:** *Fangs. Tentacle growth. Widespread pus and boils. New mouths growing and whispering.*
- ◆ **Level 4 Blight** converts the entity mind and body into a creature of darkness, from which there is no return. The new entity is an enemy to the legion, and will attack them or flee. Undead Elites or higher may command it at will.

MISSIONS

RANDOM MISSION GENERATION

It's the **GM's** task to create the missions available to the Legion. Most missions will be generated by consulting the random mission charts (except special missions). Special missions appear when you roll a 6 on the Mission Count chart (see **GM** rolebook), or the **Commander** spends **INTEL** (which simply supersedes the roll, and sets the Mission Count result to 6).

The first step to generating missions is to confer with the **Commander**. They'll tell you what types of missions they are looking for.

Next decide how many will be available. Consult the Mission Count table. Typically, there will be three missions, though rarely there is a dearth of available missions or pressures, and two may appear. The chart will also tell you if one of the missions is special, has additional deploy requirements (like extra specialists, which there is a random chart of requirements for if you don't know in your gut which type should be present), or if it has an element important to the chosen (favor). Special missions have writeups in the appropriate **location** the Legion is camped at, the rest should be rolled up randomly.

When you generate a mission, consult the Mission Type table to decide what kind of mission it is. Each of the four mission types appears on this table, as does a stand-in for whichever mission type the commander focused on, and a wildcard, where you decide on the mission type. After generating the type of mission, you can then generate the sub-type, reward, and penalties for the mission.

*Sam rolls on the Mission Count table and gets a 5. She will generate three missions for this mission phase, and one of those missions will grant **favor**. Sam decides to generate the mission with the favor first, and rolls the mission type, getting a 3. Scouting Mission.*

*Then she rolls on the Favors table and gets a 2: Holy. So the scouting mission will be concerning some holy place, person, or thing significant to the Chosen of this Legion. Sam then rolls for the sub-type and gets a 5. Looks like an exfiltration, probably to rescue a member of the faith. Generating the rewards, Sam gets a 1 for **+2 INTEL**, and when penalties, she gets a 1: **+Time**. This holy person has valuable intelligence, and not recovering it will cost additional time.*

After you get the basic frame of the mission, take some time to flesh out the details. Each of the mission types has a flavor, and you can bring them more fully to life by understanding what their essential nature is.

FAVOR

Missions with favor usually mean that there is something slightly supernatural or tied to the Chosen present. If the Chosen's favor is tied to the mission they may request the commander pay special attention to it. If a favor not of your chosen crops up feel free to use it to inspire the mission, but the supernatural may not be involved.

- ◆ **HOLY:** Something concerning culture, practices or religious sites. Notably not magical. **Examples:** Religious texts. Pilgrims on the way to shrines. Holiday observances.
- ◆ **MYSTIC:** Something clearly supernatural in play. **Examples:** Relics. Rituals. or cults. Pieces of ancient chosen.
- ◆ **MERCY:** Domain of Ostarra. Missions concerning saving innocents, or relics and holy sites specific to Ostarra. **Examples:** Protecting innocents a Broken is planning to kill en masse. Saving a holy site with unarmed holy attendants. Dealing with Mercys or doctors.
- ◆ **WILD:** Domain of the Horned God. Something concerning a mystic imbalance in weather, wild animals or nature. **Examples:** Sacred beasts. Corrupt weather. Blighted animals.
- ◆ **KNOWLEDGE:** Domain of the Orite gods. Traits of alchemy, mechanical wonders, history and Old Empire technology. **Examples:** Academics. Recovering ancient knowledge. Finding Empire tech.
- ◆ **GLORY:** Domain of the Living God. These are tests of strength, courage and endurance. **Examples:** Fighting superior foes. Risking a squad when it might be wiser to walk away. Fighting impossible odds.

SPECIALISTS

Extra specialists on missions are usually tied to the missions nature. It might be easier to roll up the mission and see if an obvious specialist type presents itself, but if you need more inspiration roll on the specialist table. You may need an extra Heavy for difficult battles, Snipers for targetting specific powerful undead, Medics for relief or rescue missions, Officers for negotiation and Scouts to find difficult paths, or navigate dangerous areas.

ASSAULT MISSIONS

Assault Missions are about **conflict**, typically head-on. It's rare for an assault mission not to end in gun-fire, drawn blades or explosions.

In an assault mission, always ask: *Where is the enemy weak and where are they strong? What avenues of attack are they prepared for? How would they react if a fight breaks out? What major opponents are present, and how do they enter the theater of battle?*

Mission objectives will involve destruction and fighting. Sometimes the objective will be to kill a particular person or creature, but often it is to fight for a specific tactical objective. Sometimes the goal is to destroy an alchemical lab Blighter is using, or a smithy Render is forging new troops or weapons in. Sometimes it's to hold a pass, or collapse it.

ASSAULT MISSION TYPES

Assault missions are about conflict, but the types are not necessarily about just enemies present. People might be raiding locally, but it can also be an assault mission to rescue people. They can be the challenge, or the objective, but they'll play a key role in the mission. The wild is probably the force that changes the battlefield, provides an opportunity for the undead, or cause the Legion to race to acquire their target.

- ◆ **PEOPLE:** Bandits. Cults. Village Elders. Soldiers. Insular communities. Opportunistic raiders. Hungry soldiers raiding as they flee.
- ◆ **THE WILD:** Inclement weather, wild animals (possibly blighted), wildfires, strange terrain (such as the warding stones on the Long Road or mystical woods of Talgon Forest).
- ◆ **UNDEAD:** Engaging at least a squad and one Elite of undead, either head on or opportunistically.
- ◆ **POWERFUL UNDEAD:** Contesting at least one Infamous (possibly a Lieutenant in the later game) and trying to derail their plans.

RELIGIOUS MISSIONS

Religious missions are about **culture**, typically in a religious context. These missions are often a way to showcase the world, or its history.

In a religious mission, ask: *Whose culture is this part of? Is this from Aldermark, one of the eastern kingdoms, or a legacy of the Old Empire? How does that culture display its faith?*

Mission objectives should be about recovery of religiously significant things, practice of religious rituals, restoration of past glories, and protecting the faith and practices of the people. The objectives are almost never about engaging with the enemy. They are about finding historically important, or culturally significant assets, and unexpected allies tied to such elements. Of all the mission types, Religious missions are probably the most varied in both design, and objectives.

RELIGIOUS MISSION TYPES

Religious missions are about performing one of the following, or protecting people who are doing such things. You might be unearthing an artifact, or escorting a religious figure to or from a location.

- ◆ **CLEANSING:** A holy place is befouled and must be purified, which may include performing a ritual or simply driving out the undead occupying it. This may also be finding an object or place that might fix a befouling (recovering holy waters that might cure a disease, or a wound your Chosen got in a battle with the Broken recently).
- ◆ **DEFENSE:** Something of cultural significance must be protected from the corrupting influence of the undead.
- ◆ **UNEARTH:** A valuable artifact, historical object or area must be unearthed to serve use in the war.
- ◆ **ESCORT:** Someone holy or significant must be brought to or from a place safely.

SCOUT MISSIONS

Scout missions are about **discovery**, and operate far away from the Legion. These missions are about learning what the enemy is up to, finding and rescuing someone or something, scouting paths, and learning what the source of a problem is.

In a scouting mission, ask: *What thing is not what it seems, or how it is hidden. How will you reveal that truth? Is the **INTEL** that the mission provides from encountering a specific undead, or are there plans and schematics to recover?*

Mission objectives should be about gaining intelligence from a place and learning something that isn't known. Sometimes through observation, sometimes through stealing or acquiring things that are written down (such as schematics or maps), and sometimes through finding local sources with vital intelligence you need.

SCOUT MISSION TYPES

Scout mission types are always about the thing being scouted.

- ◆ **AREA RECON:** Investigate an area for a resource, group, or person. You might have heard of undead moving into the area, or make sure the Legion isn't passing by an infested wood. You might look for resources.
- ◆ **ROUTE RECON:** Find a path through an area that leads from or to a place, or through the theater of war.
- ◆ **TROOP RECON:** Spy on and record troop movements, activities, and numbers. Figure out their movements or strategies.
- ◆ **INFILTRATION:** Going behind enemy lines, usually to recover some information.
- ◆ **EXFILTRATION:** Rescuing a person from behind enemy lines, usually to recover some information.

SUPPLY MISSIONS

Supply missions are about sourcing **material things** or occasionally, trading mercenary work for wealth and resources.

In a supply mission, ask: *What the **SUPPLY** is physically. If it's a big item, how will they get it back to camp? If it's wealth, how does that wealth get traded for other things?*

Mission objectives should be assets to reclaim (such as carts or goods left out in the field), caches of weapons secreted away in the past. Sometimes it's mercenary work (clearing out undead, or fighting other humans), finding something someone values highly (a nobles paintings in a villa overrun by undead), or protecting someone during travel. It's often not glorious work, but the Legion recovers and grows through careful allocation of supplies.

For mercenary work, always come through with the payment. The game is hard enough as it is don't short the payment unless the actual playthrough of the mission is just getting paid.

SUPPLY MISSION TYPES

These missions are mostly about how you acquire the supplies that the Legion needs.

- ◆ **SCROUNGE OR TRADE:** A valuable resource must be recovered, or can be traded for with another group. Many of these missions can be social.
- ◆ **RESCUE SUPPLIES:** A source of supplies has fallen into enemy hands, or is guarded by undead, but can be liberated.
- ◆ **MERCENARY WORK:** A person or group wants to hire the legion for a job in exchange for wealth and materiel.

MISSION OBSTACLES

On any mission, there will be impediments to just accomplishing the mission objectives. There should be about three major obstacles on each mission, but how you create them is up to you, as a **GM**. There are a few different approaches that give avenues for interesting challenges:

LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBSTACLES

If a mission is about infiltrating or assaulting a place, it can be fruitful to think about the physical layout of the location. You can provide environmental obstacles (a dangerous climb, a sealed grate, finding a pass through the mountains to the bandit camp, bad weather conditions). Don't overuse these (players can often overcome them with a single roll) but always consider how they may interact with other challenges. Will breaking the grate alert the undead? Climbing the hill is hard enough, but are there patrols below that might spot you?

Missions may take more than one day. Think about obstacles on the road. Sometimes something as simple as finding enough food to make the trip can make for an interesting obstacle. Will you raid that abandoned village knowing undead may lurk there, pack ahead, or take level 1 harm for going hungry?

If you need to sneak into a camp to destroy an alchemical laboratory, you might have the obstacles **Perimeter Security**, **Laboratory Security**, and **Laboratory Destruction**. Then you can think about what sorts of problems might lie in each of these—what sorts of Perimeter Security does this mission have? Are they undead stationed at the edge of town, or are there gas traps that line the streets? Do Crows peer down from rooftops and periodically scan the horizon?

ENEMIES

Enemies (usually undead) are a common obstacle. For instance, if your mission is to defend an ancient shrine, you might imagine **a squad of cultists with their leaders**, and **a swarm of blightbeasts they've chained**.

When you inject a monster as an obstacle, you need to know what Threat level they operate as. If you're at a loss, look at some other monsters and see if you can't find one about the same toughness. If you can't, remember that Threat 1 monsters are rank and file threats, Threat 2 monsters are a respectable challenge, and Threat 3 monsters are on-par with a specialist all by themselves. Threat 4 challenges are usually too much for a squad to handle directly without incredible luck, and usually require creative solutions.

Threat 5 or higher challenges are reserved for the Broken, the Cinder King and entire armies.

In the previous example, you might decide that the cultists are **potent** Threat 1 fanatics, strengthened by their zeal and some choice drugs. Their head may be Threat 2, as is the dark champion blessed by their god, and the swarm of Blighbeasts are Threat 2 (but detail what makes them more threatening than the average cultist).

STAGES

Sometimes, a mission is easy to break down into conceptual stages. Each of these stages could be an obstacle. If you've heard about a prisoner that the undead are keeping, you might have the stages: **Scout out where the undead are keeping the prisoner, break the prisoner out, and get back to camp.** In each case, consider what blocks the objective from straightforward completion—are there several buildings with prisoners and you have to figure out which one holds the prisoner you care about? What makes getting back to camp difficult? Are there Hounds that will chase you down?

MISSION REWARDS

Make rewards concrete. Always interrogate the rewards—if a mission gives a boost to **MORALE**, is that because a number of the troops actually care about the people you're rescuing? Are they family members of people in the Legion? Or is there a strong desire by the troops to be active instead of reactive? Is there someone in the Legion who is particularly agitating for an aggressive approach?

This is especially true of abstract rewards, such as **INTEL** or **SUPPLY**. In these cases, turn the rewards into something physical and see if you can inject it into the mission. It's much better to steal a book of alchemical secrets or the plans to some terrible project of the Broken than to simply gain an **INTEL**. It also gives the squad a more concrete goal than 'spy on the enemy'. The mission then becomes to find the schematics to Blighter's brewing labs or a communiqué from the Cinder King to his minions.

- ◆ **MORALE:** Something about this mission is emotionally important to the Legion, and success will improve how they feel about the war.
- ◆ **SUPPLY:** There's a valuable resource in the mission, such as rare art that can be sold, trade goods that can be exchanged, or arms and armor that can help bolster the Legion. Alternatively, someone might be willing to pay for the Legion's help.
- ◆ **INTEL:** There are plans, schematics, or designs to be found on the mission, or key information that might help the war effort.
- ◆ **TIME:** Completing the mission will reduce the Time clock, because it puts the Legion at a significant advantage or gives the undead a significant disadvantage.
- ◆ **XP:** This mission has significant lessons for the Legion; success grants additional xp to the specialists partaking.
- ◆ **POINTS:** At the end of the game, the disposition of the Legion during winter will depend on their final score. This mission provides a significant boost to their chances.
- ◆ **ASSET:** An asset of Standard quality, such as Black Shot or Horses, is available on this mission, usually, but not always in enemy hands
- ◆ **FINE ASSET:** As with Asset, but Fine quality, such as Alchemicals or a Siege Weapon.
- ◆ **EXCEPTIONAL ASSET:** An Exceptional quality asset is available on this mission, such as an Alchemist or Mercy. Perhaps a relic.
- ◆ **SPECIALIST:** A well-trained soldier is available to be recruited or rescued, or is willing to join the Legion in exchange for a favor.

MISSION PENALTIES

Just as with rewards, these need to be concrete too. If a mission increases pressure, determine how that happens in the story—are there extra undead that have flanked the Legion, or is there simply less help in the region now? Is there a time penalty because it takes longer to get through an area or because the undead have pushed up their time-tables? These fictional conclusions can be built upon in later missions and will inform what campaign actions the Legion takes.

- ◆ **PRESSURE:** Failing this mission bolsters the undead threat in some way, giving them aid, letting them increase numbers or Threat in the area, or making their presence worse for the Legion.
- ◆ **TIME:** Failing this mission represents a large material advantage for the undead, making it less likely that the Legion get to Skydagger at all. Ask—*How are the undead advancing or gaining significant ground? How is the Legion losing ground?*
- ◆ **SUPPLY:** Representing either increased expenditures or reduced resupply options for the Legion, this mission costs Supply. Ask why Supply will vanish—*Are you paying for medicine? Is it being plagued in some way?*
- ◆ **MORALE:** Something about this mission is emotionally important to the Legion and failure will discourage them further. Ask—*How do things look grim? Who does the Legion care for that they might lose? How does the Legion have to abandon people in need, and why does this bug the average soldier?*
- ◆ **NONE:** For once, there are no consequences to not performing this mission. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, however.
- ◆ **DEATH:** A Legionnaire dies as a result of the consequences of the mission failing, generally the Marshal's choice. Ask—*Why will they die? Is it poison, curse, disease, wounds? Are they lured away to die without the Legion's protection or is it an assault on the camp?*

EXAMPLE MISSION

*Sam looks at the mission she's generating: a scouting mission to exfiltrate a member of the faith with valuable intelligence. Failing the mission will cost the Legion **TIME**, so Sam makes that concrete. The undead have cut off the main road, and finding another way past them will take time, unless the Legion can recapture this priest.*

*Sam decides that at least 1 point of the **+2 INTEL** the mission grants should be in the routes around the undead. Perhaps this priest knows a number of high-mountain routes, and travel between them would be much safer. The other intel could be something found in the undead camp.*

This is a scouting mission, so Sam considers what thing is not what it seems: the reason why the undead haven't just killed this priest. Perhaps this priest has some sort of ties to the Broken. Were they a priest of one of the gods that became the Broken? If so that Broken may want to try to turn them personally, to create a unique Elite. That could be fun. She adds that to the penalties.

*Sam looks at the obstacles that might be in play here. Clearly this is going to be a raid on some sort of camp. She decides the camp is in a small village the undead have repurposed. The priest will be held securely, in the old constabulary, seen to by an Infamous with orders and a map of local undead outposts (the 2nd **INTEL** point). Dealing with that guardian (luring it away or distracting it) and breaking and overcoming the lock on the cage are one obstacle together.*

Sam considers that second challenge, and decides that the farther-out security is not terribly difficult to bypass. Getting to the constabulary means creeping about a town crawling with several units of undead. She makes a six-clock to represent getting to the building and makes notes about obstacles this clock stands for: Finding a route and sneaking through town, or engaging a squad blocking a path quickly and quietly. There are too many undead about for a single unit to take head-on, so she makes a four-clock alarm as well. This will represent exactly how much hot water the squad is in (when those scout rolls shift to maneuver rolls as they sprint for their lives).

In order to add stakes, and spice things up, she makes a larger eight clock to represent a powerful servant of the Broken approaching to take the priest back to their master. Actions that delay (waiting for patrols, taking a while to fight, waiting for dark) would put ticks on this clock and creates a sense of tension and pacing to the whole endeavor.

Sam sketches out a loose map of the village for later presentation to the group.

FICTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

Always consider the story of the missions and their consequences. If you only take the missions for their rewards and penalties, the game will feel tedious and dry. Instead, find the stories each mission tells.

For instance, if your players choose not to go on a mission to destroy one of Breaker’s Breeding Pits, you should talk about how Devourers have made travel on the main roads deadly and how people traveling the countryside are disappearing in droves. Add additional devourers in future missions (perhaps in pairs instead of the single monster threat they usually are). If your players fail to accomplish a mission to cure a mysterious illness that has befallen some of the troops, make sure to worsen that illness in some concrete way. Perhaps one unit is ill and cannot deploy. And if untreated over longer periods time, this may spread, or cause death.

On the other hand, let the players roll forward with their victories. If they kill off Viktor Karhowl, the Macabre Scientist, you can make reference to the shortage of Spitters that the Legion has encountered in recent days. Perhaps a later mission might be about Blighter attempting to recreate some of Viktor’s formulas. Every mission, successful or not, has a consequence to the story which should be reflected going forward.

MISSION NAMES		
1	Azure	Arrow
2	Amber	Citadel
3	Broken	Fire
4	Chosen	Hawk
5	Crimson	Light
6	Diamond	Mountain
1	Emerald	Peak
2	Flying	Storm
3	Grasping	Thorn
4	Screaming	Tiger
5	Shattered	Wing
6	Western	Wolf

If you like coming up with mission names pick from the left to the left.

Or roll 4d6. Two first two dice decide 1-3 top half, 4-6 bottom half. The other dice decide which mission names are selected.

So if I wanted to name a mission, I might roll 6, 5, 5, 4.

I get... Operation: Shattered (6, 5) Tiger (5, 4)! (remember to say it dramatically)

FAIRNESS

An unstoppable army of undead. The breaking of the Chosen. A grueling march east. And in the center of it all, the seemingly unstoppable Cinder King himself. In the context of the setting, the idea of fairness may seem strange. But in order for *Band of Blades* to remain fun, the game must remain fair for those playing it.

Fair here doesn't mean nothing bad happens to the players (or that they are guaranteed to survive or make it to Skydagger). Fair means that problems will appear and grow throughout the campaign, and only the actions of (or lack of action by) the Legion will change the course of this. Fair means that players understand the difficulties and risks, and know how their decisions will reflect on the characters they're playing.

The first step is to communicate clearly about rolls. Ensure that everyone at the table is clear about the sorts of results that might come up. Sometimes that means communicating as to what the different results (1-3, 4-5, and 6) might mean for the character, including some outcomes that might happen as a result. Sometimes that might mean unpacking your reasoning a bit and negotiating with your players. Sometimes it's being clear about what is and isn't possible.

PLAYER: *Can I intimidate these undead into giving us a bit of space? I have a spear and can swing it in a big arc around us...*

GM: *No, I'm sorry, undead don't care about their bodies or really about much other than their orders. I could see skirmishing to create that space though—though it feels pretty desperate since they outnumber you so heavily.*

PLAYER: *Yeah, it's fine, I'm sure I'll roll a six. *picks up the dice**

GM: *Before you roll, let's just be clear. On a 1-3 here, they overrun your whole squad and severely harm everyone involved, including you. On a 4-5, you take severe harm, though the squad is safe, for the moment. Are you sure you want to take those odds?*

PLAYER: *Is there any way we can make it less dangerous?*

GM: *Sure, a group action here could mean you're fighting at scale, which would bring it down to risky, though that exposes the squad to danger. One of them might get dragged off by the undead as you establish your line.*

Another place you'll want to be careful about fairness is in **resistance rolls**. Give players an option to make resistances for most things, and consider whether the methods they're resisting with eliminate the threat altogether. The balance here is to allow players to be clever without losing the threat you've established.

GM: Okay, roll a maneuver roll to get up the cliff. It's risky—if you fall, that could be a pretty nasty injury.

PLAYER: Risky? I mean, I have a rope and a grappling hook. It seems like the worst that happens is it goes slowly, right?

GM: With the rain, and the height of the cliff, I still think it's pretty risky. If this were a normal day, sure, but the Transformed have been chasing you and you can't afford the time to find a way out of this ravine.

PLAYER: I guess it's a good thing I have three dice here. Looks like... 4-5.

GM: No problem. You get about halfway up and you catch the eye of a Transformed looking over the cliff at you.

Player: Oh no! Uh, is there any way it might not spot me?

GM: Sure, that could be a resistance roll. Since it's a physical action and you're probably clutching the mountainside to hide under an overhang, that's a Prowess resist.

Players have small **stress** pools to start, and you should be mindful about the scale and number of consequences you apply to them. Even a relatively 'safe' resistance roll can end in trauma. In many cases, limited effect or losing the opportunity to act can be an appropriate outcome. Alternatively, a player might offer a creative flashback. This can be a good way to haggle down the resistance cost into a fixed number.

PLAYER: Could it be an insight resist instead? I think we might've spotted them earlier and chosen a better spot. Or see it first and hang close to the cliff to avoid being seen.

GM: If you flashback to having scouted the area, then sure. I'd say that's a one stress flashback, though—finding a safe spot in the rain. Let's make a **SCOUT** roll as a fortune roll and on a 1-3, we'll say it took two stress instead. Does that sound fair?

Above all, the key is to establish agreement about the fiction and to work out what is the most reasonable outcome in the story. Not necessarily the one best for the players or the Legion, but the one that makes sense in context, given the story so far. Introducing more severe consequences is appropriate if the story has built up to them.

Specifically, Lieutenants (Threat 4), should be saved for later in the story. They are mighty forces organizing troops and working in the background, rather than line troops sent on every mission. Keep them off-screen until after the Legion has advanced four times. This gives time for the players to get used to the Infamous and lower ranks. When introducing a Lieutenant, flag its presence in the mission briefings, or hint at it in the missions leading up to its introduction.

Though a rookie can take on a line troop, and most Specialists can face Elites on even footing, an Infamous is quite dangerous, and a single Lieutenant can often shred a whole squad on their own. When presenting powerful foes remind the players what the mission objective is (it's usually not directly attacking the foe) and that retreat is always an option. For Lieutenants, more clever solutions will have to be deployed (reducing their Threat value by negating their advantages, and showcasing their weaknesses). Hitting someone with a ballista after bringing them into a carefully calculated target zone, taking away insubstantiality or invisibility through creative use of resources, or removing the finest horseman's steed are all ways to offset Threat. Adjudicate appropriately.

The same goes for threats within a mission. If you intend to hide the presence of a threat, think about how that threat should be foreshadowed, and make sure it's not impossible for the players to tackle that threat. For example, if Render has just gotten the power Shredders, (which gives him shrapnel grenades) you might reveal them after a bad engagement roll, with a soldier having stepped on a shredder and the squad needing to make a rig roll to disarm the trap. You might reveal their presence in a field before the squad crosses by having a woodland creature set one off. If one goes off without previous notice, make sure it's hitting a squaddie not being played, and be ready for people to **resist** the outcome by hearing a sound, and leaping to push friends out of the way.

Remember that fairness is also following up on your threat. If you put a camp full of bandits into play, and the players engage all of them at once, this means they have zero to no effect (and they should expect this). A sizeable force will likely shred their abilities and resources quickly, and you should adjudicate harm appropriately. High Threat opponents might act quickly, with the players having to **resist** their blows to get close enough to attack.

In this game there is **armor** but there is no plot armor. Soldiers dying are a part of every war story. Sometimes suddenly from a bad resistance roll. Sometimes dramatically as they push themselves past massive harm for one final action. Sometimes in a grand moment as they stay behind to set off the alchemical explosives and seal their squads escape. But soldiers die.

ALCHEMY

Alchemy (also called the Craft or Aetheric Science) studies certain properties of this world that don't work akin to ours. When adjudicating what can and cannot be done with alchemy remember a few quick rules.

SCALE. The Legion has limited Supply, but the Nation of Or has effectively infinite **supply** and a few hundred Alchemists on hand. If something can solve a problem except that it's in limited supply, they would have already won the war (despite current Alchemical problems with Corruption).

- ◆ **LIMITS.** Alchemy transmutes substances. The solution will be a physical object (a gas, liquid or solid). It's not a spell, invisible field, or something that covers a vast area. People are still required to use and deliver it.
- ◆ **DANGERS.** Formulae take years of perfecting to stabilize (and some never are) and rare reagents. A concoction made on the road may work, explode, or worse expire just before you need it most. Whenever alchemy is in play ask yourself: *How is this difficult or dangerous to transport or use?*

Despite it's expense, dangers, and current Corrupting state, Alchemy is still incredibly useful. Producing such things may be quick (acquire assets using your number of alchemists as the assets rating) or slower (Alchemy **long-term project**). Depending on the ingredients, speed desired, or how well the formula is known, transmutation may be more dangerous. The **GM** will let you know if the action will generate more **corruption**. Here are some things Alchemy may produce:

- ◆ **UNGUENTS.** Liquids or pastes applied to the body. **EXAMPLE: Owlsight oil.** Placed on the eyes, allows you to see in the dark. User will be blind the next day when it wears off, and get headaches if exposed to bright light.
- ◆ **OILS.** Liquids used on the world. Acids are an example. **EXAMPLE: Flame oil.** Volatile oil ignites when exposed to air and cannot be put out by water.
- ◆ **POTIONS.** Liquids that are drunk or injected. **EXAMPLE: Rage Venom.** Injected into veins, it grants the user **potency**. They must **resist** to do anything other than destroying friends and foes they see. Addictive.
- ◆ **MACHINING.** Harder and better processed metals, often worked with a higher degree of precision. **EXAMPLE: Fine** weapons and armor.
- ◆ **CLOCKWORK.** Timers. Springs that enhance lifting. Small mechanical marvels. **EXAMPLE: Machine Priest Grapple.** Cable inside a cylinder, with a harness. Fires at high velocity as a grapple. Can pull troops up the cable. Must be wound for an hour once the spring is spent before being reused.
- ◆ **AETHERIC.** Gases. Inhaled as vapors, or contained in goggles and vials and used to filter light through for detection or testing. **EXAMPLE: One Eye.** See Sniper playbook.



CHAPTER 2

THE WORLD

LEGACY OF THE OLD EMPIRE

The Legion was once a military unit of the Old Empire. It's reinvented itself many times, sometimes flushing to the strength of thousands, and sometimes barely surviving in a band of a dozen. The flavor of your Legion—it's morals, customs and practices—will be up to your table, and emerge during play. There are however a few facts always true:

- ◆ **THE LEGION DOES NOT PROMOTE BASED ON MONEY, OR SOCIAL STATUS.** A noble's child may be guaranteed command elsewhere, but in the Legion only your loyalty, time of service, and strength in arms advances your position. That doesn't stop families from joining, or siblings from looking out for each other. The extent this is tolerated is up to your table.
- ◆ **THE LEGION ANNALS ARE THE MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION IT HAS.** The Legion has fought monsters, and saved relics and various useful trinkets over the years. But even its coffers are not as prized as the Lorekeepers Annals. They tie the legion to it's roots, and maintain a written history to the past. The Legion has been flush to thousands, sold its services to warlords and kings, but when its gone down to a handful of soldiers, they save the Annals at all costs.
- ◆ **THE LEGION IS NOT BEHOLDEN TO A SPECIFIC COUNTRY OR PEOPLE.** The command staff choose who to take contracts with, but most of its members are misfits from the four Eastern Kingdoms. The Legion doesn't care what anyone's gender, ethnicity or quirks of dress are. If you're willing to follow orders and it's unusual battle strategies, and have sufficient strength of arms ... you're family.

A BRIEF HISTORY

0 OEF **FOUNDING OF THE EMPIRE:** Many cultures existed previous, but didn't keep great records until the first Emperor standardized writing. Historical texts are written using OEF notation—Old Empire founding being set as the year 0.

408 OEF **TANTARUS ASCENDS:** The 7th Emperor takes the throne of the Old Empire.

422 OEF **LEGION FOUNDED:** Emperor Tantaros founds the Legion as an elite unit trained to fight supernatural or impossible threats under his personal banner.

566 OEF **EMPIRE SHATTERED:** The Last Emperor is killed by several Chosen and the seat of the Empire shattered. The Legion becomes a mercenary unit. They sell their services to nations and people that can afford them.

658 OEF **THE GODSWAR:** The Chosen battle each other. Terrifying artifacts are created among the gods. Many bound to the gods (such as Mercies or Alchemists) are slain or destroyed. The Legion is reduced to a handful before rebuilding.

838 OEF **THE CINDER KING APPEARS:** The Cinder King gains a nine-pointed crown of True Fire and emerges in the west. He uses powerful sorceries to slay a city and build his first army.

840 OEF **THE FIRST BREAKING:** A Chosen manifests itself far in the west to face the Cinder King. The First Breaking occurs.

841 TO 842 OEF **CONQUEST OF ROYIN:** Cinder king conquers the Confederacy of Royin. Their Chosen does not manifest. Aldermark marshals its armies, and the Twin Gods Choose.

843 OEF **BATTLE FOR ALDERMARK:** Cinder king faces Aldermani armies. When one of the Twins is Broken, 9 Chosen appear in the Eastern Kingdoms. Eastern Kingdoms marshal armies.

841 TO 844 OEF **CONQUEST OF ALDERMARK:** Cinder King pushes east. The Aldermani fight a retreating battle buying time. Cinder King crosses the Tigeria.

845 OEF **THE GREAT BREAKING:** Black Shot helps Eastern armies push the Cinder King back. In a decisive battle five Chosen are Broken, but the line holds.

843 OEF **NEW MUSTER:** Alanna returns to the Eastern Kingdom for fresh levies. She posits a new plan and is granted fresh armies. The Eastern Kingdoms dig deep hiring mercenaries, and warbands to construct these armies. A Bartan general enlists the Legion from their contract in the Isles. They march with the armies of the Eastern Kingdoms.

843 OEF **ETTENMARK FIELDS:** The Cinder King retreated for reasons unknown, but his Broken were busy. The decisive battle is west of the capital of Aldermark and elite undead never before seen decimate the Eastern armies.

What remains retreats in disarray east to regroup and try to hold the line at the Eastern Kingdoms. The Cinder King hurries behind them with the majority of his

THE UNDEAD

This isn't the first time Undead have appeared in the world. Occasionally those buried with powerful Chosen or relics will rise and become tomb guardians. This condition was mostly used to scare children until the Cinder King appeared.

The undead armies are an unusual force. On the one hand, they defy the rules of the mortal world, and their actions twist the living into an unrecognizable parody. On the other, they do obey their own rules. Knowing those rules can mean the difference between life or death in the field.

Simple undead with no orders are feral. Depending on who imbued them with undeath (which broken) they may stand about, devour fresh corpses as if driven to, or lash out and attack with hatred. They simply lack the intelligence to make choices and act on pure instinct.

They may follow their last instructions with mindless repetition, or devolve into predatory, ruthless monsters. More powerful or intelligent undead possess the capacity to improvise or act independently, though in the absence of clear orders, those actions may be to follow their own personal agenda.

The line troops may not be too bright. They will try to execute abilities to the best of their ability, but work better with simple directives rather than complex puzzles or orders.

Loyalty in the undead is unquestionable. Those of higher Threat command those of lower stature categorically. Even if the undead in question does not want to follow those orders, they must act to accomplish the tasks they are set.

Undead will is imposed by word, or given by hand-signs, though sometimes the bodies being commanded are so badly damaged that it's unclear how they can see or hear the command. No soldier has ever seen an undead receive orders from vast distance. Due to this the Cinder King was limited in the size of army he could raise. Breaking gives him the ability to multiply his force by the number of Broken he commands.

Commands fade after enough time, depending on the power of the undead giving the command. A powerful undead might command an underling to stand where it is forever, but if the one giving the commands leaves the area or is killed, that command will eventually fade. The more powerful the undead, the longer such commands will persist.

More powerful undead usually delegate direct control, focusing their influence on a few powerful subordinates, who then control a number of less powerful lackies. Thus, the undead armies have a command structure not too dissimilar from the Legion.

CULTURES OF THE EAST

BARTA

Barta is the largest of the Eastern Kingdoms. Once—long ago—they were invaders from across the seas, landing in the eastern Kingdoms fleeing a disaster from distant shores. They have been part of the region since before the Old Empire. Barta is a fertile land, and provides food for most of the Eastern Kingdoms. They are a republic, with each major sub-region electing a religious, and civil head, which together comprise the Circle (their ruling body). They are matriarchal, and value age and wisdom.

Bartans are tall, dark haired people, with skin of varying shades of brown, with red or black eyes. They have strong kinship and family alliances, and most Bartans wear jewelry made of tokens granted to them by family, and people they have forged strong friendships with. Contracts and alliances are sealed with such tokens, and many Barta tales start with such a token being used to gain hospitality, or ask for favors via ancient alliances. Their dress favors wraps and flowing cloth, where they show off their mastery of brilliant dyes, and many Barta decorate their skin with complex tattoos and detailed, painted designs. There are seven major churches, including the church of the Blue-skinned Goddess where daily the priesthood attempts to form a Chosen, which is often how the call to danger is heard across the East.

Barta names use the Old Empire format (first and family name). Family names are always passed on through the mother.

FIRST NAME: Adikar, Arun, Karoj, Kirish, Makit, Nadit, Parkresh, Raghav, Rakash; Adisha, Aswina, Rahika, Kalyika, Mitali, Rashi, Kaviya, Riya, Seneha, Shimya, Vani.

FAMILY NAME: Arani, Chabarti, Dardhi, Dewa, Kapatia, Khatri, Pakshi, Manabur.

TRAITS

- ◆ **FRIENDLY:** Mark an additional **SWAY** action when you create the character (max 2).
- ◆ **PIOUS:** Any mission you go on you may equip a Reliquary in addition to your other utility choices.
- ◆ **STOIC:** When you resist with **proWESS** take +1d.
- ◆ **VICIOUS:** Gain the **vicious** trauma condition. You don't actually have to mark a trauma, just the condition. It does count for trauma **xP** purposes.

ORITE

Once a grouping of disparate tiny city states, Or was unified by a priesthood of what they dub the three Gods of Civilization—the Maker, the Shaper and the Builder. They forged a nation by proposing an unheard of accord—instead of having one monarchy and noble structure, Or would recognize all of them at once, and in return the priesthood would give to each equal advances. Hence most people in Or have one noble title or another (being a Prince of a principality the size of a village), though families powerful in trade and holdings are well known among their peers. Orites first meeting often ask each other probing questions to determine lineage and title.

Their priesthoods study Alchemy and a variety of sciences, and have created many of the wonders seen in the world today. From a variety of clockwork inventions, steam powered engines, to precision ground lenses, and meticulously machined guns. Their achievements in metalurgy, math and science are reknown well past the Or borders, and their port capital hosts ships from many nations seeking these wonders.

Their cities are cosmopolitan, and Orites are people of many different skin, hair and eye colors. Orites prefer complex inlays in their metalwork and armor, and garments of linen and velvet cloth. As a matter of fashion Orites prefer to wear masks to hats, and maskmakers are often very distinguished if they are skilled.

NOBLE TITLES: Principis, Graf, Reina, Viscount, Contessa, Baronet, Dame, Gallant.

FIRST NAME: Alben, Anton, Blas, Cyprian, Elrik, Farian, Leon, Marilo, Rubin, Silvin; Aurora, Chiara, Emetta, Hadriana, Katovica, Livia, Millia, Severina, Tiana, Valeria.

FAMILY NAME: Albrekt, Garossi, Rodano, Loprio, Martiko, Sanicci, Zardani.

TRAITS

- ◆ **NOBLE:** When the Quartermaster declares campaign actions, you may boost the effect of 1 action you are affected by (see Quartermaster sheet). So if the quartermaster declares liberties, your Orite may clear all your stress (but the whole Legion doesn't get extra **MORALE**).
- ◆ **CONNECTED:** Mark an additional **CONSORT** action when you create the character (max 3).
- ◆ **VENGEFUL:** When your wounds penalize a roll, you gain potency to that action.
- ◆ **STERN:** Mark an additional **DISCIPLINE** action when you create the character (max 3).

PANYAR

Panya is a land called blessed by the Panyar and cursed by everyone else. It's a deep forest, sparsely populated, and peppered with ancient ruins. Dangerous beasts roam and paths appear and change with the moon cycles. Its inhospitality is why Or and Aledermark haven't tried invading each other since the fall of the Old Empire.

Being Panyar isn't exactly a question of an ethnicity, but of habitation. Anyone that lives a dozen or so years in the forest gains an animal trait (cat-like eyes, stripped or spotted hair, fangs, etc), and once they do, the more dangerous beasts of the woods tend to leave them alone. The Panyar build villages and small towns out of wooden structures and hold to ancient traditions. Their gods (the Horned God of the forest, and Nyx the goddess of the moon) are more physically present in the world than other deities, embodying the physical realm in the way others do not.

Panyar names have three parts. The first name (a color) is granted by a mother, though some have special meaning. Silver (the moon's color) means the Panyar is an orphan. Black means their color was taken from them—they are an exile. The second name is given by elders when a child's mark appears, as a means of recognizing adulthood. The Panyar have traditional quests they perform for their third name (some only have two). They are fluid and will sometimes change their name after a great deed.

FIRST NAME: Amber, Azure, Russet, Scarlet, Sapphire, Silver, Vermillion, Violet.

SECOND NAME: Charging, Dancing, Flowing, Growing, Raging, Surging, Standing.

THIRD NAME: Blaze, Ember, Flood, Grove, Glade, Reef, Storm, Tempest, Tide, Weald.

TRAITS

- ◆ **COLD:** Gain the cold trauma condition. You don't actually have to mark a trauma, just the condition. It does count for trauma xp purposes.
- ◆ **QUICK:** In normal load you're considered fast and quiet, as if you had equipped a light load. This may make a difference in position or effect when running, jumping or climbing (**MANEUVER**) or sneaking (**SCOUT**).
- ◆ **SHREWD:** When you resist with insight take +1d.
- ◆ **STRANGE:** When you resist corruption take +2d.

ZEMYATI

The Zemyati are a pale-skinned people that inhabit the mountain region of Zemya. they are organized into clans and often raid to supplement their food, supplies and treasure. They tend to wear heavier cloth with high collars, usually detailed with embroidery in gold and silver. Both men and women wear jewelry of braided metals, and decorate clothes with forged pieces reminiscent of armor.

Each Zemyati bears a small dagger on their person to swear blood oaths with, or seal contracts, and this knife is used as part of many of their rituals (such as mourning). Each Clan has planted a tree watered at some point with blood of all who would become clan-members, and each family grows in turn a tree in their family home cut from their clan tree. The Zemyati believe each tree is is an abode for their Living God, who answers no Zemyati prayers, but who they believe curses those that break rules of hospitality or oaths sworn before such trees. Trees growing inside houses, and caves are signs of Zemyati holy places.

Zemyati 'last names' are always tied to their Clan. Since all clansfolk share the same last name, they identify each other by patronymics and monikers. A patronymic is usually a parent name with an ending. So Vikei son of Boryev, could be Vikei Boryevich. Kariya daughter of Eleya would be Kariya Eleyovna. Monikers (ex: Vikei One Eye, Boryev Keen-axe, Eleya Fire-hair, or Ananika Deer-swift) are also common.

FIRST NAME: Adrimir, Colay, Gabridyor, Liavel, Maleksei, Melislav, eonin, Viltory; Alik, Dania, Emilinya, Freriya, Isalana, Klarina, Sverena, Tatinika, Valentina, Zaya.

PATRONYMIC: -ovich, -evich, -ich; -yevna, -ovna or -ichna.

TRAITS

- ◆ **TOUGH:** You never take less effect from **level 1 harm** penalties.
- ◆ **BOLD:** When you **resist** the consequences of **desperate** actions take +1d.
- ◆ **LOYAL:** When you lead or participate in a **group action**, take +1d to your roll.
- ◆ **STUBBORN:** When you **resist** with **resolve** take +1d.

A NOTE ON HERITAGES

The heritages of the Eastern Kingdoms infuse the story of **Band of Blades** with a sense of multiculturalism and give characters a national identity. Individuals from these cultures may be as varied as you can imagine, but the traits are meant to give you a quick way to come up with characters.

Heritage traits are cultural, not racial: they're an insight into the things that each of those cultures values. If you want to play someone of Bartan descent that was raised in Zemya, have fun and take Zemyati heritage traits. However, the game is designed for you to only take traits from one heritage, not to mix and match.

Earning **xp** for heritages is simple. Did the mechanic you get from your culture enter play? Great. Mark that **xp**. Don't overthink it.

CULTURES OF THE WEST

ALDERMANI

Aldermark was glad to lose the yoke of the Old Empire, and looks down on those that still venerate its remains. Somewhat xenophobic they tend to value their own culture and twin gods above others. They're olive-skinned people with brown and black hair. Ravaged recently by the undead, they remain a proud people, using their own language whenever possible, and priding themselves on surviving. They're known for a powerful cavalry (mostly from the plains) and great hunters (in the north). They've turned the money raised through trade into buying Orite inventions, having black powder technology, good roads, and some primitive steam engines fueled by their many forests.

FIRST NAME: Aldke, Buren, Deikart, Fulon, Haghulm, Hanar, Janton, Zigfren; Anjika, Ennika, Erela, Grisynn, Idlin, Joha, Karona, Katriza, Kola, Lenia, Sarina.

FAMILY NAME: Beher, Jeiker, Pober, Scharel, Schmeker, Skeider, Weidt, Weyer.

THE DAR

An ancient cataclysm broke Dar. Now deadly shadows are bound to its confines and walk the ashen wasteland of it, with few arable cities and paths warded by ancient stones. North of Dar is the Gap, a pit so deep the ocean flows into it at high tide and it has not filled. At the center of Dar is a basalt throne, which once had a ten pointed crown of True Fire floating above it. Why would anyone stay in such a hellish land? The pale haired, pale skinned Dar can't leave. After a few years away, the bodies of anyone born in Dar start bleeding until they die or return to the cursed land. Many refuse to take the Dar black coinage, and are superstitious about catching the curse of the pale folk. The dar are haunted, but iron willed, and do what they must.

FIRST NAME: Basar, Birosh, Garanj, Hirem, Kibak, Mekan, Okosh, Pogan, Sarkar; Akara, Orosha, Gada, Beila, Hikata, Mekuna, Okona, Paya, Sakara, Zagona.

LAST NAME: Bekatief, Lahazar, Mehalsun, Omonar, Royota, Siharun, Zohitar.

OTHER PLACES

West of Aldemark are some notable areas that may be noted in the Legions Annals.

THE CONFEDERACY OF ROYIN

A theocracy that worships a single god, but whose Chosen often leave offspring which bear powers that can be passed on through bloodlines. Many tales are told of these Blooded heroes, but most were killed when the Cinder King razed the country almost a decade ago.

THE GREAT CITIES OF THE WASTES

The Bone Wastes are considered an inhospitable desert land, except for the Great Cities. Each boasting a unique culture, they exist as treasured stops and the backbone of the trade routes through the Wastes. Each has a powerful ruler claiming a different title. Stories abound of Sorcerer Kings and Queens, and chained Wastes beasts. But they must surely just be tall tales.

THE PRINCIPALITIES OF ANDRASTUS

Nobody is sure how many tiny city states are part of Andrastus at any given time (the Andrasti Great Families there war constantly, and some are annexed, or conquered regularly). The one thing known about this war-torn land is that they will band together if outsiders try to claim territory. The Cinder King has sent one of his Broken to conquer them.

SPOILER WARNING!

Many players enjoy the sense of exploration and surprise that comes from playing the game without knowing all the details of every location. If you want to discover the shape of this war as the Legion does, you may want to stop reading here. There is nothing secret or magical about the locations (as the creators we've played through this game multiple times), or information that is forbidden to know, but playing it without knowing all the quirks of the setting and missions is a fun experience for many people.



LOCATION WESTERN FRONT

Three years ago, a big Aldermani battle against the Cinder King's troops happened here, and more recently the armies of the Eastern Kingdoms built their fortified camp here before advancing to Ettenmark Fields.

The area remains marginally fortified and is a good place to regroup before pushing on. The few soldiers remaining here are exhausted and on edge, but know better than to start trouble with the well armed and more disciplined soldiers of the Legion. If you were hoping to find other Chosen that survived the offensive at Ettenmark, they are not present. Rumors are they've gone a grueling long way, taking the southern path to fight on a different front.

The main fortification of the area is the previous army rear camp. From it, at night, you can still see orange reflection on the clouds above Karlsburg, the old capital of Aldermark, which is still burning.

A few soldiers hold out behind the makeshift walls, pits and barricades—most barely holding it together, some having fully given up. There's a few days left of supplies for the handful of people left in the fort, with lots of talk in the shadows of abandoning their post.

In the surrounding areas, undead have been crossing the Tigeria and increasing in numbers. At night, they test the camp defenses, looking for a weakness to exploit. A brutal intelligence underlies their movements, looking to cut off avenues of escape.

The Western Front is not a front at all. The recent battle passed here weeks ago, yet now brews on the horizon again. The area only houses scared soldiers and people from further west that look at me out of hollow eyes. There are not enough folk to clear up the remnants of the battle and the stench is significant. My leg, wounded at Ettenmark, pains me. I follow the Lorekeeper now, who bids me use my hands to draw, if I cannot fight. There's little else to do, so I'll lend my meagre skills.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

WESTERN FRONT DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault and Scout

ASSETS RATING: 0

SCENES

Smouldering and burnt ground blasted by flame and touched by blight. Twisted leafless trees, standing silent above half devoured corpses, broken spears, dead soldiers, and horses. Dust clouding the air and obscuring undead forms shambling in the distance. Wreckage of siege weapons and encampments hastily uprooted weeks ago. Wide eyed, traumatised infantry standing and staring into the distance. Soldiers huddling in corners, talking in hushed tones of retreat and escape. Refugees staying quiet—as scared of the soldiers as they are of the undead.

CHALLENGES

Squads of undead shambling throughout the land, feasting on corpses of soldiers and hunting the living. Routes watched, escape cut-off. Small, desperate civilian convoys still in the area looking for shelter and protection. Decaying walls and trenches that withstand each evening's raid on the rear camp.

SPECIAL RULES

When advancing, add **+1d** to your **pressure**. The undead are plentiful and move to cut off all paths of egress from this area.

The troops remaining here are shell shocked and have trouble processing what's going on. You can bring them along, but they can't fight. The **Quartermaster** may make a **4-clock long term project** to feed and rehabilitate them. When it's complete, you may add up to 5 rookies to the Legion (**Marshal**).

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Mercy, Glory

An officer belonging to the Orite First Batalion, Marquess Herminia, held a village to allow the escape of refugees. Your Chosen believes the main intelligence behind undead maneuvers in the area along with several elites are trapping the Marquess. Bring two squads and your Chosen on this dangerous rescue mission.

MISSION REWARDS: Specialist: Officer (+2 Actions), 5 Rookie Recruits, +2 Morale

MISSION PENALTIES: -2 Morale

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: All

In the middle of the Tigeria, is Watershed Cathedral, also called the Chapel of the Waters. The cornerstone of the chapel was brought from the Ostarran Cathedral in Barta. Cut ages ago by a Chosen of Ostarra, the stone retains substantial power, and properly handled could be used in reliquaries. The church is behind enemy advance troops who are currently defiling it. Expect heavy resistance.

MISSION REWARDS: 2 Religious Supplies (square), +2 Morale.

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Scout

FAVOR: Glory, Knowledge

A daring scout remained behind during the Legion retreat to study Broken plans. Now hunted by a powerful Elite or Lieutenant in Karlsburg—the still burning capital of Aldermark—you've spotted their signal requesting help. Survive the city and get them out. The mission takes 3 days. Bring supplies. Good luck.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Intel. **Specialist:** Scout (+2 Actions). Ask two intel questions (**Commander** sheet) of your choice.

MISSION PENALTIES: -1 Morale



LOCATION PLAINSWORTH

Plainsworth was once a small prosperous town, owing its bustling commerce to sitting on an intersection of several Old Empire roads. Situated in the heart of the Aldermark breadbasket, the bounty of nearby villages flowed through it until it was on the verge of becoming a town.

Now the hushed tones and shuttered windows of the local residents project a sense of growing unease. Its inns, streets, and alleyways have refugees trying to keep out of sight and families fleeing the Cinder King's advance.

The town has a small garrison, its own well, and the crumbling but servicable remnant of the old Tantari wall made in the heyday of the Empire, providing a strong defensible position against a western approach. They've erected makeshift fortifications to the south, and trust the hills and the Blackwood to protect the eastern approach.

As a small provincial village, Plainsworth holds some of the Aldermani superstitions and dislike for Old Empire things, and this wariness extends to the Legion, whose roots are from there. Mixed with some local problems with bandits, and retreating soldiers that have a tendency to take what they want by force, the populace is unsure if having a small well armed force is a blessing or a curse.

Nearby plains and villages may have supplies that may have to be wrested from undead. The forest and mountains to the southwest are dotted with a few crumbling holy sites. The roads leading into the village have a sporadic stream of families and a mix of straggling soldiers fleeing the front.

Unease is the feeling I get in this town. The population hides indoors, and even the refugees take shelter in alleys and beneath structures, as though hiding from sight will somehow keep them away from the Cinder King's wrath. I miss riding out with my squad. My leg still aches, though I can walk well enough that the Marshal has me standing my turns at watch. The Lorekeeper tells me to keep drawing and writing these journals. I don't see the point, but I've never disobeyed orders since joining the Legion.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

PLAINSWORTH VILLAGE DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: All (Assault, Religious, Scout, Supply)

ASSETS RATING: 2

SCENES

Nervous youths heading out to walk the wall at dusk. Town Elders going stone-faced to the local inn for a meetup every night, bringing maps. Refugees looking wide-eyed with fear out of alleyways. Children playing as if nothing is wrong. Gabled houses with shutters closed, sitting impassive across deserted cobblestone lanes. Two men arguing a long-standing feud, held back by kinfolk, standing in front the statue of the town's hero.

CHALLENGES

Roving band of undead. Some scouts, some troops of opportunity. Mountain and east-plains bandits preying on targets of opportunity. Village and town ritual observances, now seen as possibly more important than previously. Squads of other military units, turning to raiding and targets of opportunity. Food and supply shortages. Summer rains, unconcerned with the current crisis, leading to floods and routes cut off.

SPECIAL RULES

Plainsworth was part of the Aldermark breadbasket. Acquiring **food** and **horse** assets at Plainsworth is at +2d.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Mystic, Mercy

Voyis Kariyevich, the Kingfisher Knight, is reknowned for his skill in battle. He's said to be cursed, and rather than inflict this on others, he retired nearby to the southern mountain range to spend his days in contemplation, tending a local holy site. If he could be swayed to join and be cleansed, his expertise and combat might would surely be a huge benefit to the Legion.

MISSION REWARDS: 1 Religious Supplies. +2xp for all Specilists on the mission. **Specialist:** Heavy (+2 Actions).

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Supply

FAVOR: Glory, Knowledge

Nearby is a storied place from the Legion's history. Unearth the Tantari Banner, the original symbol of the Legion's authority, lost when the Empire fell centuries ago. It was granted to the Marshal of the Legion by the last Chosen of the Empire before they left the Kingdoms after vanquishing a demon.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. **Relic:** Tantari Banner (1 utility load. If carried on an Assault mission, grants +1d Corruption **resist** as long as the Legion does not fall back)

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Mercy

An Infamous led undead patrol has been doing nighttime raids on local settlements and capturing people and keeping them in cages. A nearby village Plainsworth used to regularly trade with is currently being used to hold these captives before they are taken for undead conversion. A rapid raid would reunite local friends and families, and possibly net volunteers for the Legion.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. 5 Rookie Recruits.

MISSION PENALTIES: -1 Morale.



LOCATION THE LONG ROAD

This Old Empire road has long fallen into disuse, with the blight and decay pushing in from the west. The road is exposed and winding, but is lined by ancient Empire warding pillars along its path. These pillars are filled with some ancient protections that seem to be proof against the undead, stopping the blight from spreading where their line holds. But they are too few, and many are broken down and destroyed by simple age and lack of upkeep.

The Empire glory days long gone, the road's fallen to disuse with lack of maintenance over the centuries, and Aldermark has not provided upkeep. Nature in the area is taking over, leading to sections where the road disappears and has to be found again. Needless to say, travelling too far from the protective pillars is fraught these days.

Weather on the plains is fickle and sudden storms and hail coming down from the mountains in the mornings and evenings forces travellers to seek shelter early, and start even earlier.

Occasional villages crop up now and again—meandering paths leading off the main road,—but they're never in sight of the road itself. These small enclaves are the home of distrustful communities, religious sects, or long-isolated clusters of farmsteads.

All hold their autonomy above all else.

It feels like we've been traveling this road forever. Hoofbeats and cart-wheels sound strange on whatever the Empire did to the stone of their roads, but it's mostly held up through weather and use, so who am I to say. The lands west seem to be in winter, but the trees are leafless due to blight, not snows. At least making these entries buys me some time riding on carts. I'm so tired of marching.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

THE LONG ROAD DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault and Scout

ASSETS RATING: 0

SCENES

Long stretches of uneasy quiet. Flat open grasses for miles, swaying in the wind and growing out through ancient cobblestones. The hum of warding stones, only felt in your bones. The roar of baerngard (large, furred, plains predators), distant, but carrying over the plains. Smashed and burned carriages of travellers who didn't make it. Wandering undead, still around from the Cinder King's first push into Aldermark three years ago. Stormy weather that swells suddenly, drenching the plains in rain.

CHALLENGES

Wildlife, driven mad and ravenous by the encroaching blight. People and animals touched by Blight. Sudden, vicious storms in the exposed terrain that start fires, strike apart cobbles, and change temperature rapidly. Difficulty in finding markers or paths, in hundreds of miles of similar terrain.

SPECIAL RULES

Consume an additional **food** (bubble not square) when **time passes** here. There simply aren't many resources to be foraged like in other areas, and travel coupled with digging a new base camp takes its toll.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Mercy, Wild

The baerngard of Aldenmark are reknowned for their massive strength and powerful jaws that can snap a man in half. When they feel the touch of age, they seek the Bruin Graveyard. Fleeing the blight, several nest in this boneyard. Left to their own devices, they will be killed and reused by the undead. They must be captured, sent away, or slain, with any fresh corpses burned.

MISSION REWARDS: +3 Morale. If the Legion has an Alchemist and brings baerngard bones, the Quartermaster gains: Rage Venom (3 charges). Spend to equip all Legionnaires on a mission with Rage Venom.

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Supply

REQUIREMENTS: Medic, Scout

FAVOR: Mercy, Knowledge

The Legion has spotted smoke. An Alchemist's caravan bearing rare earths and texts turned east and was assaulted by Undead. A few apprentices hide in the wreck. The great alchemist Aether Magnus is missing, having lured the leader of the Undead away. Find him. Treat his wounds. Escort him back. And keep the hunters on his trail from claiming his life.

MISSION REWARDS: +1 Morale. +1 Supply. 1 Alchemist.

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Supply

REQUIREMENTS: Chosen, Supply Carts

FAVOR: Mystic

The Long Road once forked, heading east, before most of the Warding Stones there failed. Even Chosen don't understand Old Empire tech fully, and when damaged, the stones exert strange behavior: lightning storms and driving wild creatures mad. Your Chosen wants to unearth a Warding stone, and bring it to camp to fashion a ward for the Legion. They will try to contain the stone's damage until you make it to camp.

MISSION REWARDS: -1 Time, -1 Pressure. All Legionnaires may clear 2 Corruption.

MISSION PENALTIES: None



LOCATION BARREK MINES

Resting at nearly 10,000 paces up in the mountains, the small town of St. Oysingard was built to mine ore in the Old Empire days. It had remained a small mining outpost until the Cinder King arose and the Orite alchemists discovered that it was a source of Black Earth which was needed for Black Shot transmutation. The mining town boomed once again, until the push of the undead 3 years ago reached it.

The same offensive that ended in the great Breaking also liberated the town. Now mostly a community of people from the Eastern Kingdoms, they have come to secure a valuable source of Black Earth for the war efforts. Food and mining supplies have been periodically arriving from the east—though few have been received in a while—and the caravan with the last big shipment of Black Earth headed back has not been heard from.

In the nearby cliffs lie several mountain drilling operations—a dense honeycomb of mines and minerals and industry. Old equipment lies abandoned for lack of people to drive them, while the few mines still open struggle to pull materiel out of the ground without collapses or worker shortages interrupting—a problem made more difficult by rumors of horrific creatures that still lurk in the mines.

The townsfolk here are optimistic of the Legion's arrival (after all, they've heard stories of them), and they are hungry for news from the front.

The mining town isn't large, but hearing the speech of my countrymen warms my heart. I hadn't realized how long I've been away from home and how much even the casual banter of workers makes me feel at ease. The furnaces warm this high valley, and I relish the comfort even though I know it's temporary.

I hear the undead are marching from the south. The Commander is trying to wheedle explosives from the Quartermaster to close the pass. I don't know how long this warmth will last.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

BARRAK MINE DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault, Scout and Supply

ASSETS RATING: 1

SCENES

The booming sound of a clockhammer breaking mountain walls. The bustling townsfolk quickly hurrying from house to inn while snow pours down. The unearthly quiet of a land covered in snow. Warm lights pouring out through old glass. Carts rustling into town carrying loads of minerals, with exhausted workers pushing them by hand. A rousing cheer to the Four Kingdoms in the tavern by loyalists keeping up appearances.

CHALLENGES

Skittering, many-legged creatures that hide in the dark mountain cravases, hostile to human and undead alike. A few military stragglers from the eastern kingdoms, requisitioning troops and equipment, sometimes by force. The bitter cold temperatures and harsh snowstorms that can make passage difficult.

SPECIAL RULES

When the Legion first arrives, the Quartermaster gains a brace (square) of Black Shot—the last of the supplies still remaining in town. Acquiring Alchemists and Black Shot are at +2 effect, and acquiring laborers is at +1d.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Mercy, Knowledge, Glory

Almost 300 years ago, Oysingard—a Chosen of the Living God—was entombed. He fought alongside Zora against the Last Emperor, but was horrifically wounded. Details of his death vary from being entombed alive to committing suicide. Regardless, his resting place is worth examining.

GM: Oysingard is still alive though weak and maddened (Threat 3). He's squad of Threat 2 undead (Revenant) Zemyati attendants.

MISSION REWARDS: +1 Supply. **Living God's Blessing:** Specialists and Soldiers on this mission gain an advance when Oysingard is laid to rest.

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Mercy, Knowledge

Though the armies of the Eastern Kingdoms reopened the town, there have been undead plaguing the mountains since the Cinder King's first advance. Clearing out the infestation would cover your back, and help with being hunted from multiple angles. **GM:** Choose an infamous and a site that crafts undead from a Broken not in this campaign. The mission is to destroy this source of undead creation.

MISSION REWARDS: -2 Time. -1 Pressure. +2 Morale.

MISSION PENALTIES: +1 Time.

MISSION TYPE: Supply

FAVOR: Wild

The most lucrative vein in the area has been shut down for months. Something has infested the lower parts of the mine, claiming a number of miners' lives. The more credible accounts talk of the creature's impossible number of legs, savage efficiency, and the persistent clicking sound that seems to presage its attack. If the monster could be killed, the mine could be reopened, and supplies refreshed.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Supply. 1 Black Shot (square). 1 Supply Cart.

MISSION PENALTIES: None



LOCATION GALLOWS PASS

This narrow mountain route has been worn into the rock from thousands of pilgrims making their way through this awe-inspiring territory. Some sections of the path have small alcoves for the dead carved into the rock. Huge statues are carved partially into the mountainside, many half sunk in the ground over time. Their origins are disputed. Some claim them to pre-date the Old Empire, while others speculate them to have been erected during one dynasty or another.

Much of the path is below the tree-line, and gray, leafless trees weather the winds that cut through the mountains and canyons, stirring many ropes hung from their branches. Once, pilgrims would hang offerings from them, but the cold howling winds and the bare rock and trees cast them in a different light—one that's given the pass its name.

The weather on the path is fickle and avalanches, inclement weather, and the occasional disappearance or overgrowth of the path itself makes it hard to traverse. Numerous forks in the path lead towards shrines, sacred springs, caves and the like. Many can be found here for those hardy enough to reach them.

Even now, pilgrims can still be found traversing this isolated path—though these days, few and far between. Besides travellers, there are few other people who live in the area. Only the occasional reclusive monk, shrine attendant, or goatherd. The area is too barren, and requires resources to be brought in from outside.

The cold makes my leg ache again. Our food is carefully rationed, and tempers short. Arguments are stopped only by the lack of air this high in the mountains.

I look at the statues scattered about here and wonder who would put all the effort in, so high up in these long-forgotten places. Some soldiers jokingly hang up offerings in the old way. I, less jokingly, have raided a few such offerings for sugar for my tea. If the gods mind, they can come down and share.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

GALLOWS PASS DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault, Religious and Scout

ASSETS RATING: 0

SCENES

A solitary blind traveller, tapping with crooked staff along the mountainside. A stampede of goats fleeing an unseen undead presence. Stark, broken statues towering impossibly high in the distance. Giant rock carvings telling tales of ancient Aldermark. The notes of wood and bone wind chimes hung by previous travellers. A large shrine to the gods, now empty of people, but clearly upkept in the summer months. The grim and somber fields of trees, a noose hanging from each one.

CHALLENGES

Avalanches. Crumbling cliffside paths covered in ice. Ambushes by undead scouts. Dangerous, huge high-peaks snakes, that descend to hunt. Thick mountain mists obscuring more than a few feet of visibility. The exhaustion of fighting uneven terrain, high altitude, and inclement weather for miles.

SPECIAL RULES

When advancing, add **+1 Time**. There is no clear route, and bridges that would allow for easy access have not been upkept.

Any soldier not wearing **Winter Clothes** on a mission should wake up in the morning with level 1 'Frostbite' harm unless they take precautions to mitigate this somehow or make a **prowess** resist.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Mystic

Of the holy sites here, none are better known than the monastery of Kevala. Having trained two people Chosen in the Quiet Era right after the Last Emperor's death, it's a powerful holy place known to bless all who light its fires and reside within for a week—neither such power nor the flames will stand unchallenged by undead that enter the mountains.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. +1 Supply. **Blessing:** Choose 1, and you may mark **1 Time** per each additional: *All specialists gain 1 xp—Your Chosen gains 2 Favor—You may promote 2 Rookies into Soldiers.*

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Scout

FAVOR: Knowledge, Mercy

The Annals tell of a keep the Legion once was assigned to nearby. Without supply lines, it cant hold indefinitely, but might provide a place to rest or ressupply. Travellers on the path say locals are sequestered there and have taken in many recently. News of the war might be found there. **GM:** These locals are cannibals who eat travellers they take in.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. +2 Supply. 5 Recruits (prisoners to be eaten)

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Scout

FAVOR: Mystic

Undead have been spotted scaling a cluster of the giant statues making their way towards the buried head of the largest. Ambush them and find out what they seek. (**GM:** The head is a temple, at the core of which is an artifact).

MISSION REWARDS: +1 Intel. **Relic:** True Fire (Brands a forehead. Bearer can mark **2 corruption** to **push**. When they do, they are limned in fire, can see the Cinder King and he them, and have immense strength).

MISSION PENALTIES: +1 Time. +1 Pressure.



LOCATION SUNSTRIDER CAMP

Once a bustling trading post for plainsfolk, pilgrims traveling west, and those heading north—Sunstrider Camp is now choked with refugees from the surroundings.

The permanent structures here provided a winter camp for the biggest of the horse clans of the plains, and the horse lord Tenesk and his riders have taken charge. They've fortified the winter camp further, and opened their doors to the refugees, providing food and shelter for those unable to fight but demanding those that can join the frequent mounted raids on the undead. Many plainsfolk ride into battle a unique type of local horse known for their speed, heardiness and unruliness. Tales claim the horse's origin is divine (offspring of the Horned One, or a Chosen blessing their steed when dying). In Aldermark, they're called *furemeen*—firemanes.

While undead top the list of the many problems the camp has, there are also a contingent of mountain bandits using the chaos of war to enrich themselves. Tenesk has been unable to mount a serious offensive against them while the undead threat looms so heavily.

There are mountain shrines to the southwest—the people in this area cling to their faith, and for some it's all they have left. Many plan to make pilgrimage and seek shelter and the protection of the Gods there. The plains east of the camp are full of small enclaves of travelers, and there is no end of news from all over Aldermark here at camp, almost all of it bad. Rumors abound of the Cinder King crossing the Tempest Sea to the south.

I've ridden since I was a young girl—among the Legion, my prowess in the saddle is well known. My squad is mounted whenever horses are available. That said I've never ridden a steed like a firemane. I fell in love with them as soon as I saw them, and I am not ashamed to say I cheated one of the local plainsfolk at cards and traded all my winnings back to him for a single ride. The strength and speed of that animal was breathtaking. I'm afraid no amount of winnings would persuade my card player to part with the steed. A shame.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

SUNSTRIDER CAMP DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault and Scout

ASSETS RATING: 1

SCENES

Plainsfolk with silver tipped spears and beautiful red-maned horses riding on patrol. Refugees searching new arrivals for familiar faces, some having tearful reunions. Tenesk at a war table under an open-air tent, reviewing maps with his captains. The sounds of the hoofbeats of the riders leaving on a mission. A parent hugging their youth as riders wait to take them away to join their raids.

CHALLENGES

Bandits seizing opportunities to loot and pillage those too weak to resist. Undead waiting to ambush those who leave the protections of the camp. Keeping the peace in the civilian areas of the camp. Refugees who are trapped nearby, unable to make it to the camp. Pilgrims paying for aid or support.

SPECIAL RULES

Due to the Horse Lord's commands, it's easier to find quality steeds in this area. Acquiring Horse assets is at +2d.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Supply

FAVOR: Glory, Wild

The Horse Lord Nettare has thrown in with the Broken, dreaming of elevated status after they sweep the lands. He hosts a Lieutenant in his own tent, and his riders begin to exhibit signs of corruption and Blight. Many of them, however, ride the legendary firemanes. Steal a number either from his corrals or from undead-reinforced scouting parties to supply and reinforce the Legion.

MISSION REWARDS: Quartermaster gains: 1 Firemanes (Spend like horses, but reduce **pressure** by 2 instead of 1 when advancing).

MISSION PENALTIES: +1 Pressure.

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Glory, Mercy

A powerful Infamous was left behind when the Broken crossed east. Now it haunts the mountains, creeping down at night to capture prey. The screams of its victims echo off the mountain faces. Without the support of its Broken, the creature has set many devious traps about its den—it should be destroyed, but not underestimated. **GM:** Choose an Infamous from a Broken you did not pick.

MISSION REWARDS: +3 Morale. -1 Time. Pressure does not increase.

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Glory

Falkes—self-styled Bandit King—has a camp up in the western mountains. From there he has access to both the west and eastern roads and preys on many. If he could be reasoned with, the bandits could be an asset against the undead. Dead, his raids on refugees would end, and it would free up Tensk's men from bandit duty.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. **If killed also gain:** +2 Supply, 1 Horses. **If allied with also gain:** -1 Time, Pressure does not increase.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.



LOCATION

DURESH FOREST

The Broken armies have split here, looking to flank and pincer the Legion. One has squads that harass, while their main force pushes hard east to devour what resources the plains have, with tireless troops hunting down anything they can see in a land offering little cover. The other heads to the woods on the heels of the Legion.

Duresh is a Panyar word for these woods. In Aldermark this area is referred to as the Hellenwald—the Light Forest. When it starts out, sparse trees pepper gentle hills. But the locals that live within warn travelers to only travel as long as they can see light through the trees on the ground. Further than that, they warn, humans are not supposed to go. The Heart of the Wood (Talgon to the Panyar, or the Alderhart in Aldermani) lies ahead, hostile to those not meant to be there. Only a Chosen might lead you through safely.

This hard-to-navigate forest is populated by Aldermani hunters, a small number of Panyar families, and all manner of wild beasts. The forest is resistant to paths, often devouring signs of passage in a matter of days. While there are fewer undead here, travelling on the forest path itself can be dangerous.

There are a number of Panyar villages here, though they are small and insular. The Panyar have not been well-treated by the Aldermani, being regarded with suspicion and outlandish comparisons to folklore creatures. The locals in this area aren't fond of the Legion either, considering the Old Empire, and all its products, a mistake.

The Legion continues north, and my squad waits behind to scout out Undead movements. It's boring, but at least the area is shaded and the weather is nice.

As I sketch these ruins, I realize that many are Aldermani. One of the keystones on an arch nearby has a date less than a decade old. The forest must have spread suddenly to devour entire settlements. I recall Old Empire warding stones on the road nearby headed into the wood. Suddenly, the weather doesn't seem so nice.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

DURESH FOREST DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault, Religious and Scout

ASSETS RATING: 1

SCENES

The gentle sounds of precipitation landing on a carpet of blood-red leaves throughout the forest. A band of Aldermani hunters sighting the Legion, then diverting their path to avoid contact. Walking through a Panyar village, with the villagers hiding in their cabins. The horrifying sound of a creature crying out as another beast claims its life.

CHALLENGES

The uneven and ragged paths. Locals stealing supplies from the Legion under the cover of night. Wild beasts of the forest stalking soldiers who fall out of formation. Convincing locals to aid or at least not hinder your efforts. Rain turning quickly to sleet and icing over everything in sight.

SPECIAL RULES

The forest of Durresh is hard to navigate. Take **-1d** to **engagement rolls** for missions that do not have a Scout assigned to them.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Mystic, Wild

The twin gods of Aldermark were part of the war: Mattiar the Smith, and Gerholtz the Hunter. When they Chose, Gerholtz used a spear made by his brother to deal with a Blight maddened beast before marching to war. The Cacophany—a famous beast from the forest, inscribed on the seal of Aldermark—is pinned by this powerful artifact to keep it from rampaging. (**GM:** Make a **potent** Threat 3 many-headed supernatural beast that reanimates once the spear is removed).

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. **Relic:** Striking Spear (If anyone or their shadow is hit by this spear they are rooted in place).

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Scout

REQUIREMENTS: Vital

FAVOR: Glory

One of the Broken has been working on a special project to enhance their powers and the majority of their research is in their personal camp. Early reports indicate the Broken is away from the camp for a few days—a perfect opportunity to infiltrate the camp, find the research, and destroy any experiments or information that might be of use to the undead.

MISSION REWARDS: +3 Intel. Cancel next power the Broken would gain.

MISSION PENALTIES: None

MISSION TYPE: Scout

FAVOR: Knowledge

The Legion spotted a large patch of Blight ahead, near a crumbling pillar marked with Old Empire script. Take an Alchemist there to analyze the cause. Stop it if possible, or keep it from spreading. (**GM:** The Blight is coming through a sending-stone—linked to others in Dar and the East—which enables communication. It has to be deactivated to prevent spread).

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Intel. Each Legionnaire may ask a question about family, command, and friends from any of the linked locations.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.



LOCATION TALGON FOREST

The forest heart is dark and thick and makes for difficult to traverse terrain. The only real place to camp is Harug, a holy site of the Horned One ringed with carved stones. For no visible reason it doesn't seem to be encroached upon by the forest. The site itself is made of smooth stone platforms with holy patterns carved into them, small alcoves carved into trees, and the ornate pathways that lead between them. The sole attendant of the site is a dour priest named Rowan, whose Panyar traits are more excessive than most, and include goat horns and odd bark-like skin.

Here, the Broken are at a disadvantage. Undead in the forest are few, and are far more likely to mount ambushes than assault a fortified position. And the forest beasts are likely to turn their rage on them. The Chosen is too high a prize to forget entirely (and defeating the Legion would earn the Cinder King's favor), but it's no easy task to follow the Legion into here.

Talgon is one of the most pristine places left in Aldermark, but that does not make it safe. The forest does not care for intruders, and the Legion are only marginally better than their undead counterparts in the eyes of those things that call the forest home.

The forest creatures do not look at us with fear. They look at us with hunger. Glares and taunts do not usually dissuade the Legion. A few would show off their rifles or rub their bellies tauntingly when spotting an animal that got too close. Or at least they did till we saw a wolf-like creature, easily 20 paces at the shoulder, watching us with silver eyes and clearly deciding if it wanted to end us. I don't know how the Panyar sleep in their homeland if it's anything like this.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

TALGON FOREST DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Religious and Scout

ASSETS RATING: 0

SCENES

Unknown creatures moving among ancient trees. Shadows dancing in the distance. The creaking of forest wood and vine. Undead dismembered by a long-gone animal, left in pieces strewn on the forest floor. Eerie lights in the distance, moving past distant trees, then disappearing into the dark. The overwhelming presence of being watched by countless eyes.

CHALLENGES

Wild creatures of the forest, overly large, almost supernaturally intelligent and hostile to intruders. Thoroughly overgrown paths that need to be hacked down to make way for the Legion's passage. Undead ambushes and traps left for roaming squads. Sacred sites and their mystic wards, lost in the rampant bloom of the forest.

SPECIAL RULES

When Advancing roll Pressure at -2d.

GM: Pick one Broken. All undead encounters must be from that Broken's forces. The other Broken in the campaign is rushing through the southern plains to assault Fort Calisco.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Mystic, Wild

Talgon forest was once less formidable. A few hundred years ago, a Panyar sect brought a cutting of the Heart Tree of Panya to take root here in Aldermark. Now, with Panya under assault by the Cinder King, this new Heart Tree may soon be the last of its kind, and its importance to the Panyar people cannot be understated. Brave the wild guardians of the Heart Tree has to take a cutting.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. **Relic:** Heartwood Cutting (used in later Campaigns). **Final Score:** Add +10 points.

MISSION PENALTIES: None now. Consequences in later Campaigns.

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Mystic

One of the ritual observations for the Horned One is the last hunt of the season. A white stag, fully seven feet tall, has been sighted by your scouts near this place. Its sighting is an opportunity; catch the stag, prepare a ritual meal of it, and the holy site you're camped at will bless your troops.

MISSION REWARDS: 1 Food Supplies. **Blessing:** +2 Morale, and each specialist may clear all **stress** OR remove all **harm**.

MISSION PENALTIES: -2 Morale if your Legion has any Panyar Scouts.

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Mystic

When the moon was shattered, several pieces of the Goddess Nyx fell from heaven. A large piece can be found in the forest, only a day or so out. According to preliminary reports, there are ethereal, silver, and strange creatures, only vaguely humanoid, guarding the site where the stone crashed. (**GM:** Creatures are Threat 2 and there are a dozen of them.)

MISSION REWARDS: **Relic:** Lunar Crown (Worn by the largest creature, lets the wearer **WEAVE** moonlight, as purification or to reveal the unseen. Putting the crown on fuses it to the skull, and makes the bearer's hair white and eyes silver. Using the crown causes **level 2 harm** (burns) in the user.)

MISSION PENALTIES: Nyx worshippers desert seeking the relic (2 Deaths).



LOCATION WESTLAKE

Though Karlsburg (on the west shore of the Tigeria) was the Aldermark capital, Westlake may be it's proudest city. The seat of the Priesthood of the Twins (the gods of Aldermark) it has prospered for years by channeling trade from the coast, up the river, and west into Aldermark proper. Its massive walls are 50 handsbreaths high and decorated with the red and gold colors of the city.

Westlake has yet to fall to the undead horde. In the initial push, the undead stopped here. Before the Cinder King arrived in person to bring down the walls himself, the Eastern Kingdoms' reinforcements, with their newly invented Black Shot, drove the undead forces back over the Tigeria to regroup. Now, as the undead forces march east again, the city considers itself an untouchable bastion.

Before the gates is a tent city of refugees seeking the shelter of the walls but stymied by the protocols the Council has put in place. Curfew is strictly maintained and entry and egress from the city is tightly controled at the city gates, with many aspects of the population's lives tightly regimented in preparation for the oncoming siege.

The city guards sometimes roam through the camp outside the gates, under the pretext of "protection" or making sure "blight" isn't spreading. Mostly, they take what they want and try to provoke people for amusement. Those that react are denied entry behind the walls permanently. They kicked over the stew I was making for lunch today. The Marshal's sharp gaze rooted me to the ground, but I hope they let us past the gate before someone does something.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

WESTLAKE DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: All (Assault, Religious, Scout and Supply)

ASSETS RATING: 0 (outside the city) or 3 (inside)

SCENES

OUTSIDE: The stench of an overlarge camp without adequate sewage. Laughing guards taking bread meant to be shared by a family. The cries of hungry children, and moans of the wounded emerging from makeshift tents. The buzz of flies everywhere.

INSIDE: The perfect quiet of the city streets at night, well lit by lamp and patrolled by town guards. A bustling merchant square, with luxury goods and fine foods for sale. An intense street preacher proclaiming lack of devotion has created the undead plague. Snuck-in refugees living on the streets. The ringing of church bells.

CHALLENGES

Undead scouring the countryside outside the walls. Corrupt and haughty nobles of Westlake issuing self-serving edicts. Merchants charging excessive prices, claiming additional council tariffs. Numerous political factions looking to use the legion for their own personal causes, usually against the others.

SPECIAL RULES

The Council's strict rules make getting into the city complicated—the Legion must complete a **3-clock** “Entering the City” **long-term project** before they're allowed into the city.

Until the Legion is inside the city, the **asset rating** is 0. Travel from Westlake to Eastlake along the shoreline is treacherous. If the legion advances without the Quartermaster **acquiring** boats, add **2d** to the **pressure** roll.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: Horses, +1 Heavy

FAVOR: Glory

Only available before the Legion is inside the city. The undead have set up camp in a hamlet north of the city, looking to cook up a way into Westlake. Smashing this would delay their offensive and help ingratiate you to the town. **GM:** The Infamous heading up this camp is building something to scale walls, bring them down, or throw over the walls to demoralize and turn the populace.

MISSION REWARDS: -1 Time. +3 Morale. 2 ticks on Entering the City.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Supply

REQUIREMENTS: Vital, All Specialists

FAVOR: Mercy, Mystic

Westlakers don't recognise that missing people and an odd disease of the blood are heralds of something more sinister, but Legion annals do. The Last Emperor was destroyed when practicing similar rites, which use sacrifice and blood drinking to grant power arcane and mundane. A high priest is doing dark rituals beneath his gothic cathedral, using unwanted and unexpected passers-through. **GM:** Have each player pick a specialist to play, and investigate these symptoms.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. +2 Supply. 1 Religious supplies.

MISSION PENALTIES: 2 Legionnaires go missing. (2 Deaths)

MISSION TYPE: Supply

FAVOR: Mercy

Benritz, a powerful ruling council member, needs an escort for his daughter Maja to retrieve family heirlooms from a country manor a few days travel out. These heirlooms have no value to the Legion, but the councilman will pay handsomely for their return. The manor is secluded but serving as a base of operations for a elite squad of undead.

MISSION REWARDS: +3 Supply. +1 if Maja is unharmed. -1 Pressure

MISSION PENALTIES: None.



LOCATION EASTLAKE

Eastlake is a city that defines itself by its rivalry with Westlake. Whereas Westlakers show devotion through building churches, Eastlakers consider themselves more devout—after all their council is all annointed church folk and their mayor a deacon, which assures them they are far less corrupt and prone to graft. Where Westlakers channel trade from the coast, Eastlakers pride themselves on trade with the Eastern Kingdoms—the resounding bells that tell the time and raise alarms to the whole city are gifts from Or, which was allowed to build a temple to the Maker in town after promising such a wonder to the city.

Though Eastlake is seen as more refined and cosmopolitan, there is still an air of haughtiness. They are at their heart consumers, appreciating what others offer, but only from the stance of their own superiority.

So far, the war has left Eastlake relatively untouched, but a pall hangs over the city. Fires can be seen across the lake to the west. Rumors of undead pushing hard across the northern plains only compounds the fact that refugees have ceased to stream in from the south and east. The few words that come from the east say a powerful undead force is at the border with Panya, burning the mythical forest as it advances.

For now, the citizens of Eastlake remain paralyzed, caught between a horde on either side, but so far untouched by the undead. There's considerable debate about how to handle the situation, with some advocating for escape to the north, some arguing for a military response, and the majority wanting to wait, see, and trust in the gods.

The sky west of us has pillars of smoke. The sky eastward is a gray smear in the direction of Panya. The news is all bad, and even hardened soldiers seem shaken. In times like this some ask to pray with our Chosen. Most of us just shrug and trust in the Commander.

The folks in this town stick to their schedules, but you can hear the tension in their whispers. You can see the nervous gossip. I want to warn them what's coming, but I don't know that there's a point. Where would all these people go?

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

FORT CALISCO DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: All (Assault, Religious, Scout and Supply)

ASSETS RATING: 3

SCENES

Worried citizenry gossiping among silverstone cobbled streets, and window box flowers. Furtive boat launches off the docks as fishermen head onto the lake to bring in food. The mayor holding a town meeting to discuss the state of the war with worried citizens. Tired scouts arriving from outlying areas, each with worse news than the last. Makeshift fortifications being built on the outskirts of town. Young men signing up to join the town guard, and training in formation in the city squares—in part to reassure the citizenry, and only in part to prepare.

CHALLENGES

Undead packs that patrol the lakeshore, hunting stragglers. Unsettled or possibly riotous citizenry demanding a course of action. Fishing expeditions caught out by unseasonal weather on the lake.

SPECIAL RULES

Eastlake is cosmopolitan and untouched by war. Mercies, Alchemists, and Siege weapons are Standard rarity in this town.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Supply

REQUIREMENTS: Horses

FAVOR: Glory, Mercy

A Bartan officer and her warband were pinned down while pushing east to join the defensive line at Panya. Now beset by forces from the front, they won't last the night. You need to slip through the undead lines, support the warband, and punch back through to get back to the city. (Bring two squads on this mission and expect heavy losses.)

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. 4 Soldiers. 1 Bartan Soldier (+2 Actions, +1 Special Ability).

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Mercy, Mystic

Against the Cinder Kings orders, a Broken has encouraged some people to start worshiping the Cinder King's 'divine nature'. Calling themselves the Cult of Smoke, they perform a rituals including ingesting undead ash to allow this false god to 'Choose' them. GM: Mission starts as Blight signs in the city. Play out the search. Some of the cultists are badly Blighted and count as Threat 2/3 monstrosities.

MISSION REWARDS: -2 Pressure, +1 Intel (info on the Broken). +2 Morale.

MISSION PENALTIES: Broken gains Smoke Cultists (new line troop and Elite)

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Knowledge, Mystic

Many gods have Chosen before—reliquaries are remains of those divine-touched bodies. The head of a former chosen of Kara-anima was so preserved—and still infused with divine knowledge it can answer questions. It's hidden in a monastery a long day's ride from the city. The Mercy Damodi has been guarding the head in the catacombs, unwilling to risk transport as it's mystically connected to Breaker.

MISSION REWARDS: 1 Mercy. **Relic:** Severed head of a Chosen (It must answer a question truthfully once per session. It may lie more often).

MISSION PENALTIES: None.



LOCATION FORT CALISCO

Fort Calisco is under siege by the forces from one of the Broken. Safe refuge can be found within its walls, but getting in may not be so simple. The fort is well built, and has withstood several attacks, though the Undead seem to have a new plan.

Within the Fort, commander Jonakas—a grizzled Aldermani veteran—has set up a crisp defense. Now, this Aldermark hero holds his position knowing this is a last stand—an attempt to divide the forces of the undead and to slow the undead from their eastern press long enough for the Eastern Kingdoms to mount a response.

There are military units from many nations and areas, some having come here hoping to recuperate, some seeking a place strong enough to withstand the undead assault. Jonakas has kept the peace between everyone, but many unit leaders have strong opinions on how the defense and resource allocation can be handled.

The fort is surprisingly well equipped. Most assets can be found here, and there's no shortage of missions that need doing. A fair number of civilians are here as well, trapped in the fort with no escape in sight.

The last few days were a haze. I remember the treeline, sitting on my horse. The initial charge. I remember the blood. The roar of the undead. I remember my Corporal falling. I remember seeing our Chosen, bleeding on one knee, and me leaning down the side of my horse, offering our Chosen an arm. I remember the gates closing as a few undead made it through, and the defenders descended on them en-masse. I grinned at our victory, I grinned when the Marshall pinned my new rank on my armor. I grinned until I realized... we have no way out of here.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

FORT CALISCO DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: All (Assault, Religious, Scout and Supply)

ASSETS RATING: 2

SCENES

Solemn faces of people staring at the Legionnaires as they ride through the narrow streets. Crisp military forces practicing maneuvers in training grounds. The Commander walking along makeshift catwalks that network throughout the fort. Provisions being stacked and inventoried by official fort Quartermasters. Secretive transactions made by enterprising merchants in dark alleys.

CHALLENGES

In-fighting amongst the keep's trapped population. Diseased and injured warriors quarantined into triage camps. Attacks over the fort walls. Bombardment from the besieging forces.

SPECIAL RULES

If you do not acquire a route out of the fort (possibly from from some smugglers), missions outside the fort are at **-1d** to **engagement rolls**, and the Legion can't advance. When you advance to Fort Calisco do the following mission (no secondary missions, this time):

MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: Horses

FAVOR: Glory

To get into Fort Calisco, you have to break the siege. The best way to do that is to hit the undead in a position, and force them to shift forces to defend while the Legion makes a break out of the forest and into a side gate. Whatever the undead are preparing for the walls looks like a good target (ritual or siege weapons). **GM:** Make a clock for the Chosen stalling the Broken at this position while the troops light the target on fire. If the Legion has an Alchemist the engagement roll is at **+1d**.

MISSION REWARDS: -1 Time. +3 Morale. Pressure doesn't increase after the mission.

MISSION PENALTIES: None. Best try again if you hope to advance.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: Horses

FAVOR: Glory, Mercy

The undead horde arrived before all materials made it into the fort. A unit buried a supply cache of Black Shot, weapons, and food. It's sitting completely untouched, in sight of the northern wall. Sortie from the fort, deal with the undead crawling over the depot, and bring the supplies back before the siege cuts you off. **GM:** create an **8-clock** for the cut-off.

MISSION REWARDS: -2 Time. +3 Supply. +1d to **acquire assets** this campaign phase.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: Vital, All Specialists

FAVOR: Mercy

Signs of Blight spread among the general populace. Jonakas suspects the Orite unit named the *Garde Mechaniq*. Heavily injured in the war, their unit was allegedly ravaged by Blight, but investigation found no evidence of the problem. Jonakas has asked you to send a squad of specialists—and only specialists—to investigate and deal with this matter, which causes friction among unit loyalties in the Fort.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. +2 Supply. **Relic:** Blight Tank (moves 1d **corruption** from subject to victim. Cures Blight. User receives 1d3 corruption).

MISSION PENALTIES: +1 Time.

MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: All Rookies

FAVOR: Holy

When the tide turned, the Banner Guard—an elite squad of the Legion—was tasked by your Chosen with a priority mission eastward. Your paths cross again. They need help clearing Old Empire catacombs beneath the Fort, now overrun with undead. Built centuries ago for honored Imperial army dead, the Guard seeks a map to an artifact, inscribed on the shield buried with the Emperors lover. You play rookies of the squad assigned to the Banner Guard specialists.

MISSION REWARDS: +3 Morale. Played rookies get +3xp this mission.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.



LOCATION HIGH ROAD

Largely used as a pilgrimage route and for minor trade in the summer months, this is a route that cuts above the treeline and up to where the air is thin. The lower altitudes possess a stark beauty. Trees shift to coniferous, and eventually stop altogether, leaving mostly lichen-covered rock. Animal life dwindles, till the only beasts frequently seen are small mountain rodents and the birds studying you from above.

Though still travelled, upkeep of the path hasn't been a priority, even moreso on the Aldermark side. Now the decrepit sky bridges linking the shale and granite plateaus are mostly frequented by refugees escaping the new horrors the Broken have cooked up.

Most passage through these lands is hiking or climbing, due to the uncertainty of the quality of the bridges. It's easy to be ambushed, and the lack of terrain options make it hard to run from a fight. Food and fuel are scarce, and the cold winds make travel treacherous and slow. Often the altitude and weather are enemies as dangerous as the ones chasing the Legion.

These narrow paths and stone bridges are also a source of strength. Undead will have to follow the same roads, and the sky bridges form natural bottlenecks on which to fight them. Fighting the undead is never without cost, but here the odds are far closer to even if you can turn the terrain to your advantage.

The cold is pervasive. When you wake up, it makes your limbs stiff, and just as you've moved enough to shake it off it's time to set up camp. As we go up the mountain the snot freezes in my nose. They tell me it's not even winter yet. I beg you if you're reading this—if I die, bury my bones someplace warm.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

HIGH ROAD DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault and Scout

ASSETS RATING: Not Available.

SCENES

An old mountain monastery, abandoned long ago, with marks of travelers in its cold halls. Refugees cooking stale meat over a fire pit while snow gently drifts down over their blanketed bodies. Howling wind whipping over the top of a butte. Icicles forming along tent ropes. Pilgrimage altars etched into the mountain paths with long-decayed offerings left behind.

CHALLENGES

Sudden wind and snow storms that bring all safe travel to a halt. Days of travel with no restock in sight. Perilous climbs required to summit the next plateau. Creaky bridges not maintained in years. Undead nightmares scaling the sides of a mountain. Furred, high mountain lizards, looking for bones and flesh to eat.

SPECIAL RULES

Supplies on the high road are so scarce that the **acquire assets** campaign action is not available here.

Any soldier not wearing **Winter Clothes** on a mission should wake up in the morning with level 1 'Frostbite' harm unless they take precautions to mitigate this somehow (or make a **prowess** resist).

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: All

Archangel Bridge is a stone bridge, 300 paces long, carved with ornate religious imagery, stone railings, and steps leading up and down either side. It's also one of the only direct routes to Skydagger. Deploy 2 squads, 3 specialists and your Chosen, who suspects that holding here will force an enemy Broken to take the field. Help your Chosen fight off 2 waves of enemies, and keep them safe from aerial and ranged units while they duel the Broken, to buy the Legion time at Skydagger.

MISSION REWARDS: +5 Morale. +3 Time.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Mystic

The Pedestal monastery was abandoned years ago, but deep inside its sanctum is an artifact created from the Godswar, which once was fiercely fought over until the monks were entrusted with it. Though their order died out, they've left the halls filled with death traps and snares to meet Legion and Undead alike seeking it.

MISSION REWARDS: +2 Morale. **Relic:** The Bell of Keening (When rung mystic effects in earshot fade. It does not effect Alchemy, or the animating power of the undead. Each time it's used a crack in the bell forms. It shatters when rung 2 more times)

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

MISSION TYPE: Assault

FAVOR: Mercy

Boryev Natanovich, an elder and famous warlord of the largest of the Zemyati clans is trapped on an isolated butte, circled by high-mountain lizards looking to eat their bones. He refuses to abandon the small refugee camp he's protecting, but doesn't have enough warriors to shield them on the move. Rescuing one of the Zemyati Elders would mean a lot to the mountain tribes.

MISSION REWARDS: +3 Morale. A Zemyati Elder and refugees (+1 laborers). The Zemyati (as a people) will owe the Legion a debt.

MISSION PENALTIES: -1 Morale if the Legion has a Zemyati specialist.



LOCATION THE MAW

This expansive cave network was long ago used as part of a trade route to Skydagger Keep before a combination of natural hazards and cave-dwelling people made the passage too treacherous. Once a network of natural caves, many portions of the network have been expanded, and worked over time. The path remains traversible, though the passage sometimes requires stooping over, and sometimes passes through caves whose ceilings are so high lanterns do not reach it. The proverbial Maw is a pit so deep you cannot hear anything thrown in hit bottom. The path wraps around it's lip for several long hours.

Carved into the rock are huge pillars more ancient than the Old Empire, covered in a language lost to time. Occasional shrines pepper the sides of the road, early on with small gifts placed before them. Walls often glitter with beautiful mineral deposits, and fungal outcroppings that have grown among the stone give the path an eerie quality both natural and civilized.

The path can be difficult to follow, and becoming lost can mean death—as food and light run out. Found about are wrecked carriages of failed attempts to traverse from years ago, and more recent ones of folks who attempted to escape the war this way.

Deeper, off the path, live Pale Crawlers—a reclusive society of people who resent intrusion on their land, and look for opportunities to harass those who would trespass through their caves. Little is known about them on the surface. Though not blind, they scar themselves, and read through touch in the dark. Their expertise with fungal venoms is second to none. Only underestimate them at great peril.

It hasn't been easy. The dark at some point stops being just an absance of light and gains a weight and substance of it's own. Lights are conserved because without them we are lost for good, which means we often walk with only the faintest of shapes shambling about us. The damn things that live here keep attacking. Mikshim keeps screaming from some poison they used, though the Medic says he'll be fine. I dream about the sky. I can't wait to see it again.

-- Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

THE MAW DETAILS

MISSION AVAILABILITY: Assault and Religious

ASSETS RATING: Not Available

SCENES

Pale Crawlers scavenging from a wagon newly wrecked before disappearing into the shadows with shocking skill. Firelight dancing off strange writing carved into the rock face of a cave wall. Chittering and unidentified sounds echoing from deeper in the caves. A pit so deep, there's no sound if you throw anything into it.

CHALLENGES

Enormous spiders in the darkness, lurking and waiting. Pale Crawlers setting up ambushes and raiding parties. Cave-ins and treacherous routes making passage difficult or impossible. Undead flanking through the latticework of interconnected caves.

SPECIAL RULES

The paths of the cave system switch back upon themselves and are hard to navigate. Horses do not reduce pressure when advancing.

You cannot **acquire assets** here.

Squads on missions are well advised to have at least a few members equipped with Lanterns.

AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

MISSION TYPE: Religious

FAVOR: Holy, Knowledge

While most of the script on the cave walls remains indecipherable, some is recognizable to religious experts in the Legion. It speaks of the tomb of a pre-Empire hero depicted as wielding lightning—a Chosen from an era little is known about. Brave the tombs traps and guards, and fetch the corpse to make into reliquaries.

MISSION REWARDS: 1 Religious Supplies. **Relic:** Lightning Chain (mark 2 **corruption** to throw lightning nearby. Breaker always knows your location).

MISSION PENALTIES: None.

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MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: Vital, All Specialists

FAVOR: Mercy

The Pale Crawlers can be addressed head on. Scouts tracked some of them deeper into the caves. They sortie from a giant cave which is host to a Great Beast—a giant milky white serpent (Threat 4) which glows with a pale luminescence—which they feed intruders to. If you can end it, the Pale Ones would pull back, giving the Legion much needed breathing room as they pass through the Maw.

MISSION REWARDS: -2 Time. +3 Morale.

MISSION PENALTIES: If you attempt and fail: +2 Pressure. Otherwise: None.

MISSION TYPE: Assault

REQUIREMENTS: Vital, **Asset:** Explosives

FAVOR: Glory, Mercy

The route through the caves collapses to a single passage at one point—a vast cavern known as the Hall of Kings. This means that you know where a Broken chasing you must pass through to continue. A volunteer group should place and detonate charges on the supporting pillars to bury the Broken, ending them or burying them till long after the war is decided.

MISSION REWARDS: +5 Morale. -3 Time.

MISSION PENALTIES: None.



LOCATION SKYDAGGER KEEP

FOR THE DETAILS OF SKYDAGGER KEEP AND ENDING THE GAME
CONSULT THE SKYDAGGER HANDOUT.

Skydagger—the keep named after its tall, pointed spire—whose walls guard the only pass through the Westwall mountains. The only thing standing between the Broken hordes in Aldemark and passage into Barta and the Eastern Kingdoms. The Legion has a few precious hours before the bulk of the undead bring their numbers to bear—hours that must be spent readying the old, unused Keep to hold a sizeable force amidst the bitter, biting cold.

The keep has some Orite tricks bolstering it's old but solid Bartan construction. Pipes carry hot water through the halls, and walkways inside the walls provide movement even when early snows bury the gates and the walls above. Windows hiding under eaves provide a crisp view of the approaching enemies. Vantage points high up give a good angle for siege weapons, for those brave enough to endure the cold to use them.

It's a good bastion, but the undead are many. And tireless. And bolstered by unholy power...

Dame Mikila Savrelli died bravely while securing the gates of Skydagger Keep. I enter her last bit of art into the Annals here along with her name. We're holding the keep for now, but will we last? I do not know. I will make sure the Annals can leave down the mountain should the keep fall. As long as they survive, the Legion survives. If you read this, know that we stood, trying to keep the light that is humanity alive, yet again. Think kindly of us.

-- Lorekeeper Aswena. Legion Annals, third year After the Breaking.