

# Friars Almanac



ISSUE FOUR

MOON OF STAGNANT WATERS

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## Copyright Information

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4th Edition

**PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, written by Rob**

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## PRIME MINISTER TAKEN BY FIEND

In a rare break in the foul weather that has smothered the Capitol for over a month; the carriage of the Prime Minister, overdue from his return from the Synod was discovered in the middens, its coachman slaughtered, the horses decapitated and fed upon along with most of the **Prime Minister's Staff. While Investigators for the Crown** are tight lipped as to the fate of the Prime Minister, a trail of blood leading into the Middens has been discovered. According to denizens who frequent the area of the old river-barge docks, a large fiend with the appearance of a dog or a wolf has been using the area as a hunting ground. If the people of this once great capitol were in need of proof that the demon tower had extended its reach beyond the river we are told will protect the northern half of the city, the loss of the Prime Minister would be it.

In light of this terrible news, the King has assumed direct control of the Parliament until such time as the crisis is ended.

IN OTHER NEWS a fire is burning uncontrolled through the ministry. The timber structure thought abandoned since the fiend incursion of several months ago has been devoured by a fire that has added to the red miasma that is killing the city. Firewardens have refused to enter the no man's land that is the district of ministry and it is now certain that the district will be lost once the fire spreads beyond the Ministry building itself. The Crown has asked for Volunteers to enter the ministry district and pull down buildings along the riverside district.

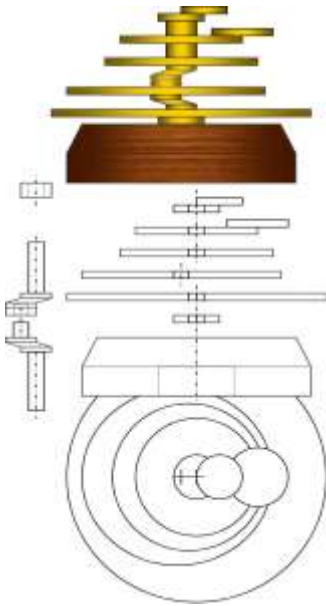
DM BRIEFING: The Prime Minister is indeed dead. His remains along with the remains of many other victims will be found in the lair of the fiend that has dragged him from the wreckage of his carriage.

The Fire in Ministry is forcing many fiends into the adjacent districts. Anyone volunteering to pull down buildings in the Ministry can look forward to being attacked by fiends fleeing the fire.

Written By: Sean R. Meaney

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## A YELLOWDINGO ATE MY BABY

*Director Timo Vuorensola blabs under torture that he knows the whereabouts of Nazi UFOs.*



What Is Iron Sky about?

*Iron Sky is, in short, a story about Moon Nazis returning to Earth with their war fleet. But before that, they send a small reconnaissance team to Earth to find out, what kind of a place they are about to return to, after being 73 years completely cut out of communications, stranded on the Far Side of the Moon. And the world they find out is not quite the same they've expected to find...*

Why a film about NAZIs and UFOS? Why not Martian War Machines in Revolutionary War America?

*Nazis are the perfect enemies, totalitarian, cruel but look cool and sexy - and yet, so horrific in the history, and UFOS are - well, a conspiracy theory dictates that Nazi scientists did build UFOS during second world war, so it was a direct connection there.*

When can we expect it in Cinemas?

*2011 - Not sure on which quarter, though :) - Timo Vuorensola*

*Interview By Sean R. Meaney*

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

***"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."*** - H.P. Lovecraft

## ADVENTURING IN THE MARKET

*Igthorn watched as his servants unloaded the fifty small barrels and began carrying them into his cellar. The Sign of the Creaking Stool swung in the slight breeze.*

**"Fifty Ankers of Beer Master Igthorn."** Igthorn stared at them with suspicion. *They seemed slightly smaller than the last shipment.*

**"You are sure those are Ankers?"** the Wagon merchant looked up from counting the payment.

**"Of course – they have the seal of mercantile standards and everything."** Lord Igthorn scratched at his stubble beard while looking the mark over. *Everything seemed right...except the size...he would check it later and pass a little message along to the Merchant guild.*

**It's always as good idea to know your weights and Measures.** With Treasures trade goods being squeezed into oddly sized containers you never know when you will need to know.

BARRELS	
TYPE	VOLUME
Pin	4½ Gallons
Firkin	9 Gallons
Anker	10 Gallons
Kilderkin	18 Gallons
Half -Hogshead	27 Gallons
Standard	36 Gallons
Tierce	42 Gallons
Hogshead	54 Gallons
Puncheon	72 Gallons

Pipe	92 Gallons
Butt	108 Gallons
Tun	216 Gallons
Cistern	256 Gallons

*Example – our merchant peddling Firkins as Ankers is short-changing Lord Igthorn by a gallon of Fine Wine per barrel. That error may seem insignificant, but it can add up to fifty gallons of Fine Wine for the shipment. At 4,266 cp per gallon that can amount to a 2,133gp shortfall.*

FIRKIN		
CONTENTS	WEIGHT	VALUE
Silver Coin	500lb	2500gp
Salt	200lb	1000gp
Flour	57lb	114cp
Beef	50lb	300gp
Gunpowder	25lb	47gp

SPECIFIC GRAVITY	
MATERIAL	S.G.
Water	1.0
Ice	0.918
Alcohol	2.67
Milk	1.031
Hardwood	0.896
Salt	2.22
Brick	2.0
Limestone	2.67
Marble	2.68
Granite	2.7
Copper	8.9
Silver	10.57
Gold	19.30
Platinum	21.40

*Examples*

*Firkin of Salt: 9 gallons x 10 x 2.22 = 199.998lb*

**Block of Marble: (5' x 5' 10") = 250 cubic feet = 1560.75 gallons x 10 x 2.68 = 41828.11b. 41828.11b/2240lb = 18.67 tons.**

*Tax Barrel: 500lb of silver / (10.57 x 100) = 4.7304 gallons. Double to 9 gallons for loose coin. Firkin of Silver coin (500lb).*

CONVERSIONS	
GALLONS	CUBIC FEET
0.125	0.02
1	0.1604
2	0.3208
8	1.283
64	10.264
320	51.312
640	102.64

Written By: Sean R. Meany

## GAZETTEER BUILDER

HOW TO DESCRIBE YOUR OWN KINGDOM

### Mini-Gazetteer Name

***“Underlie the title with a Quote relevant to the region”*** - the quote should be by some prominent person

Begin with an untitled Introduction. This is about one hundred and fifty words on the region describing/hinting at recent history and how things currently stand.

Lay of the Land

This is a thousand words covering the provinces, their beginnings, settlements, and people.

Sites and Landmarks

This is approximately fifteen hundred words describing assorted geographical locations of particular significance and their history.

People and Society

This is fifteen hundred words on the Ruling Class, lesser significant families and factions.

Economy and Trade

A good description of fifteen hundred words on Yield rates, Agriculture production, Exported Surpluses, Shortages, Trade Routes, Local Currency, etc.

Religion

Five hundred words on Religious factions, Religious Leaders, the current situation, and background history.

Magic

Insert about five hundred words on the local wizards, magic, and magical history of the region – ending with the status quo.

Laws

This is three hundred words covering the laws of the land, Legal Authorities, etc.

Adventure Hooks

Three hundred words on short adventure inroads.

History Checklist

Bring up the rear with a timeline covering the significant events of each year by date.

You may include some small (low Byte) artwork through the article relevant to the various underlined sections. Such images might include pictures of the local Prince, a castle overlooking a village, wizards duelling with magic, maps, etc.

Created by: Your name goes here (Insert year you knocked out the Gazetteer)

*And there you have a Mini-Gazetteer for your setting. This Gazetteer layout will be used with the Brynryfe Campaign Part 4-6.*

Written By: Sean R. Meaney

## ALTERNATE HISTORY

An Alternate History can reap some reasonable rewards for your campaign or story writing...

### Introduction

Julius Caesar, looking to make his mark as an Emperor, forgoes suggestions by advisors that Britain is ripe for civilizing and turns to reports that there is some great empire in the far east of the world that Rome might grow wealthy from in trade and commerce. He orders construction of the *Via Macedonia* with a plan to establish a great Roman Road that extends the width of the World.

### The Via Macedonia

An almost straight Roman *via calx* running the length of Macedonia from Vione to Istanbul (via Xanth). This five hundred mile long Road sits between the Pindus Mountains, and the Aegean in the South, and the Rhodope Mountains in the North. Every twenty five miles of the Via Macedonia is marked by a Roman Fort to encourage stability, Security, and Romanization of the region.

Over time this corridor is increasingly populated with town and villae who are taking advantage of overland trade with Rome via the Oranto – Vione shipping corridor in the West, and Istanbul in the East. For Rome herself, the Via Macedonia does not reap the promise of great rewards; rather it is a minor success economically and those rewards come slowly over time.

Written By: Sean R. Meaney

## THE WHEEL TURNS

ADVENTURE 2-5 Characters, Levels 3-5

DM BRIEFING: The Party is spending the Night in the Guild Town of Leia. The Local Guild Lodge also serves as the Inn and Tavern for the 200 population town.

Part 1: A night on the Town.

For the PCs

*As you enjoy a quiet evening after a hard trek to get to this sleepy little hole in the wall, a bunch of local boys who have been swilling beers all night decide to include you in their argument over Turnip pricing in the regional market place.*

Dexterity check on random PC to find which is hit by the beer mug (1hp). Try for non lethal violence.

Let the Players duke it out with drunken Laborers. Anyone attempting to leave will be attacked by drunken laborers near the entrance.

For the PCs

*Within minutes of the beginning of this brawl, the local guardsmen burst into the tavern arresting everyone conscious or unconscious. Identified as ringleaders of this brawl – rightly or wrongly, you are escorted down the street, past the church to the Guard Cells by the Gate.*

**“Father Therou adjudicates criminal cases in the Morning and I’m not waking him just for you idiots.”**

*The Duty Guardsman locks you in for the night.*

**“You can contemplate your chances under a new fangled concept as trial by Magistrate...”** He relaxes down outside your cage in a wooden chair – the rest of the guards departing for the evening.

This can be a serious situation if the PCs killed anyone or resist arrest– otherwise they are detained for damages in the Guard house cells near the Church gates - For what ever reason they will be spending the night separated from their equipment.



Part 2: Crushed beneath the Wheel of Progress

For the PCs

*As you contemplate your future in the quiet of the prison you are compelled to sleep.*

Ask the PCs what their actions are. Those who choose to sleep will enjoy what little sleep they can get. Those who decide to stay awake will need to make a fatigue check against their constitution.

It begins as a distant vibration that increases with intensity and within a few moments a huge explosion as though a mountain had exploded with terrible force. Your keeper is awake and is screaming at you with his weapon in his hand. As the sound settles down there are distant screams. Your guardsman opens the outer door and steps outside.

**“What the hell is that thing?”** He seems terrified of some thing overhead as he vanishes from view. As you now have a view of the street you can see people



running about in all directions in a terrible panic – all looking up.

Those asleep and awake are disturbed by a terrible thunder so deafening that they are literally deaf for the next few hours (they must each conduct a listen check to see if they hear what happens around them). In the middle of the night the Doomwheel – a huge Steam-driven construct crushes half the town. The sound of it crushing half the town will wake the PCs. Out in the Street is a sudden anarchy as survivors emerge to be confronted by a great looming shadow a mile high.

If the PCs escape their cage and leave the building read this:

You see a terrible looming shadow: A mountain a mile high that blots out the Starlight. What torchlight there is seems to illuminate a wall of Stone that seems to have crushed half the village...then a great spray of steam strikes the village from above and everything vanishes in a cloud.

The Steam kills everyone in the spray zone and levels all the structures. The PCs should be careful where they are located. Just outside their cell block, they suffer steam burns (4d6).

Otherwise,

A great sound of gas or steam – matched by the warm cloud that billows through the building you are confined in comes from somewhere overhead. A terrible noise of things being destroyed issues forth before falling quiet.

A Steam exhaust blows away part of the surviving town – if the PCs are still trapped in their prison cell they will only hear further destruction and screams.



The momentary silence is short lived. The great engine of the gods moves away as the earth trembles with its fury and for a time you are alone.

This is the most likely time the PCs will be able to free themselves. They have about half an hour before the Carrion feeders arrive.

Part 3: Just when you are vulnerable

As the Doomwheel moves off – a tide of Undead pour into the Town devouring the remains of the Dead and attacking the Survivors.

If the PCs are still hold up in the Guard house at Church Gate – they are soon confronted by undead (Ghouls) who want in to feed on them.

Your guardsman finally returns in a panic twisted by pure terror. As he reaches the door, he is immediately grabbed from behind and devoured by Clawing undead hands that drag him screaming into

the darkness, before even more ghouls enter the building and are clawing and snarling as they reach through the cage trying to get you.

If the PCs are outside when the undead attack:

At first there are distant screams and then the horror comes out of the darkness. It seems to be a hundred ghouls, all of them drooling for your organs. You notice your wayward Guardsman from earlier in the night fleeing toward the prison block – only to be grabbed as he reaches the door.

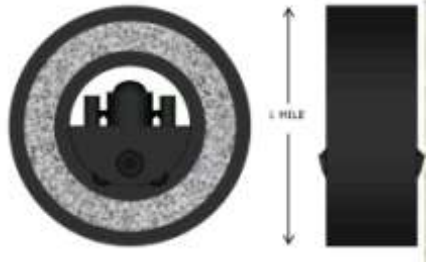
Either way the PCs should be encouraged to believe the Cage is the only save place to be for the evening.

#### Part 4: Picking through the Ruins

As daylight arrives the Ghouls slathering for your innards vanish into the last remnant darkness and you can settle down to deal with the Carnage of a long night.

By morning the undead horde have moved on. A few are hold up in the ruined buildings. The PCs will find the few remains of their equipment buried in the debris field scattered across the landscape. It is a scene of utter devastation. Likely if they enter any of the ruined buildings they will be attacked by Undead. They are the only Survivors.

A damaged bell tower, a couple of Gates, and a cluster of buildings. There are corpses here and there that have been fed on and a huge trench where whatever it was rolled through town.



It is unlikely they will be able to pursue the Doomwheel as horses were crushed in the Guild Stables. The adventure ends here. They are the Sole Survivors of some terrible Engine of Death and will be lucky to survive on what they can scrounge from the ruins. The Trail will likely crush the next town and the Next in what appears to be a pretty much **100' deep, 2000' wide furrow which begins at the Quarry Mountain where it was crafted a thousand miles away and ends in the Ocean if the PCs don't warn future victims in its path.** Basically the DM is urged to line this up with as many communities as possible.

Eventually the Trench will become a river from the Mountains linking all these Ruined Communities by **'Canal'**. **The experience Points on offer should be allocated toward any NPCs they saved from being eaten and Undead killed.**

#### HAUNTED SPACESHIPS

*"The most common explanation - which we see in Solaris, Galaxy of Terror, Sphere, Blake's 7, and others, is that there is some kind of technology that manifests the contents of people's unconscious minds (this idea goes back to the Krell technology in Forbidden Planet). So people think they are seeing*

*the dead, but they are just seeing what's in their own brains.*” — Annalee Newitz, IO9

What she said. No, seriously you can put your **'haunted spaceship' into any D&D game, and I don't** just mean literally.

### Generate a Haunted Spaceship

The Spaceship: Yes I know this is D&D, but spaceships have been in this game since Expedition to Barrier Peaks (oops, I should have said spoilers ahead).

#### 1D10      Spaceship

1. Spaceship (Adrift in space, the ocean, Or wrecked on the land)
2. Steamship out of time (a big iron hulled steamship from the future or past).
3. Isolated Village (one of those annoying points of light you seem to never find until it is too late).
4. Abandoned City (This is like the village only really, really big).
5. Engine of the Gods (a giant crushing wheel of Doom).
6. Isolated Manor House (a Huge Manor out on a hill, lonely moors, etc.)
7. Deep Mines (forgotten to the past by the current miners).
8. The Fae Realm (The PCs are pulled into a new reality overlaying the regular one).
9. **Nautilus (Captain' Nemo's Submarine** beneath the sea)
10. The Graf Zeppelin (similar to the Nautilus but sails the sky)

The Haunter: In this case the remains of the crew are wandering the ship. This is pretty much the minion.

#### 1D10      Haunter

1. Zombies
2. Ghosts
3. Robots
4. Aliens – monsters that are truly different from the regular encounter
5. **Mirror Reality PC's**
6. Doppelgangers
7. Wraith
8. Dimensionally displaced Crew
9. Parasitic Infestation
10. Killer Plant

Krell Technology: An Alternate Reality Generator **working off the Victim's mind. This is the Source of** the problem.

#### 1D10      Source

1. Telepathic Brain in a Jar
2. Professor in the Brain Booster 10000
3. Alien Artefact of Awesome Irresponsibility
4. Psi-capable Predator (also known as the PSIREN)
5. Artificial Intelligence – Literally a Machine Brain.
6. Active Dimensional Distortion
7. Elder Squid god (also known as the Despair Squid)
8. Downloaded Consciousness
9. Hallucinogenic Psychotropic Substance
10. Networked Parasitic Nanotech

Example of a Haunted Spaceship

- Spaceship-10 (Zeppelin)
- Haunter-2 (Ghosts)

- Krell Technology-10 (Networked Parasitic Nanotech)

### *The Aeria Gloris*

*The PCs encounter a Great Airship (The Aeria Gloris) travelling through the clouds. Once on board they begin to be attacked by ghosts as they search through the superstructure. Of course there are no ghosts as they are infected by a nano-machine network so they see a common reality (in this case we will call it **The Dreaming**-a psi-plague that pops up now and then).*

**There isn't a cure** – you just have to survive 24 hours of freaking out and live the rest of your life with a psi-connection.

Written By Sean R. Meaney

## A NEW CURRENCY

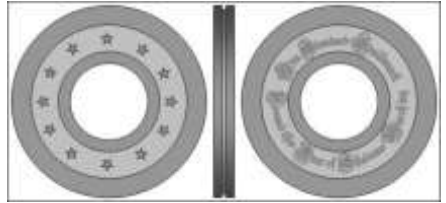
### The Guild mark Standard

Recently certain Merchantmen have begun trading in a new Currency Standard known as the Guildmark. The coin appears to be a Platinum Piece equal to two regular Platinum Pieces. What is of interest is the cut down scale of a Platinum Dragon soldered between two Platinum faces. This actually puts the coin at above two Standard Platinum Coins making it more valuable than any currently used trade currency.

The Coin itself is Marked on one side with twelve Stars and the other with the Words: ***One Standard Guildmark – Coined this year of Shadows Marching.***

What is unknown is the source of the currency. It is thought to be some tradeguild attempting to standardize commerce. The coin is infact the manufacture of a secret guild of Pirates - None other

than the **Driftport of Shadow**. The **"Guildmasters"** have seen an opportunity to devalue other traded currencies by stealing their coin and minting a standard currency that is increasingly popular to the detriment of its rivals.



### The Driftport of Shadow

The Drift Port consists of up to a thousand pirate ships lashed together to form a temporary island. This convergence of the guild is set by the Armillary (an artefact held amongst the **"Guildmasters"** which indicates at certain times when a certain moon is eclipsed by its twin). The Armillary causes a stain-like mark resembling a crescent moon to appear at the location of the next Shadow port convergence on the charts of every Guild Pirate – no matter their distance from the Artefact. This gathering is perhaps the only time in which Pirates will not assault one another.

### Adventure Hooks

- **A Cartographer's Mark** A Map Collector notices a crescent moon stain that appears and then vanishes only to reappear at different locations on an old Ships chart. He sends the Adventurers by ship to investigate the most recent location of the stain.
- **Ships Ahead Captain**: A voyage by ship encounters the Drift-port of Shadow by pure

chance. The Trader recognises many Pirate insignia. The port will of course not be there the next time they attempt to find it.

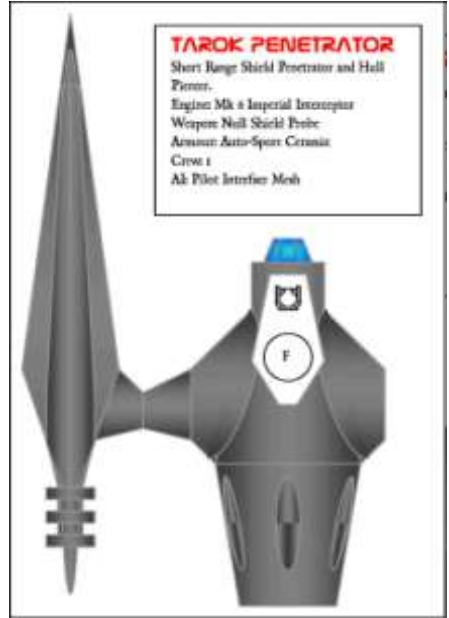
- **A Maelstrom:** A powerful Guild-mage takes the entire Driftport of Shadow through a dimensional storm onto the sea between worlds. He summons up a Maelstrom centred on the **port while the Adventurers are "in port"**.

Written By: Sean R. Meaney

## THE TAROK INCURSION

*It fell from the sky to strike the Castle of King Edwin. As the strange artefact ignited and burned with a poisonous glow— every hand desperate to put out the blaze and rescue the injured were soon to perish from a foul poison. But the King, found later by rescuers from the surrounding city found a few who had sought shelter, who despite rumours that he had been killed in the destruction of the royal wing during the Star-fall would prove safe and well. Odd though that he should prove immune to the poisonous miasma when all others fell dead within days of the merest exposure...*

Are you looking for a Foe to terrify, try the Doppelganger species known as the Tarok. These alien shape-shifters are just looking for some pathetic little civilization to violate from within. Their Penetrator is designed to get past all but the most advanced shield technology designed to get that lone agent deep behind enemy lines without detection.



By: Sean R. Meaney

## SHORT FICTION

### LOST TO THE AETHER

Ensign Curtis stared at the two Suns that seemed to orbit the very edge of the Star system. Somewhere between those engines of raw power, Hondo Curtis came to realize that the star patterns he should be seeing were not there. He flipped them in his mind with precision, and then again. No, he now was well beyond the limits of his primitive world. Hondo looked about before thinking to pull his compass. A lifeless desert in all directions and the Suns would never go down.

**"That's not good."** The Compass indicated one of the stars in a line from the surface of this perpetually lit desert. It was generating a magnetic field so intense that a compass would detect it. He would need water.

.)

They had lost one. The Captain grimaced at the loss of the young crewman.

**"Any idea what happened to him?"** The Engineer the Ensign was working under shook his head.

**"He was assisting me in examining the ships compass** for that error we were getting. Every few seconds the Compass would roll through three hundred and sixty degrees before correcting. When the wave of darkness hit the ship, he was enveloped by it then **simply gone."**

**"And he was in contact with the Ship's Compass when it happened?"** The Engineer nodded at the Captain's assessment of the events.

**"And you have no Idea?"** The Engineer shook his head.

**"No. It will be up to one of those from the Royal Science Academy to explain it"**

The Captain nodded. **"And how are we for a replacement compass?"**

**"We have a couple spares in stores Captain."**

**"Keep me apprised of the situation."** The engineer looked up.

**"Yes Captain."** Captain Sykes turned and began the long walk back to his cabin. He had lost one.

.)

Ensign Hondo Curtis looked up from the bottom of the hole he was digging for himself. Four feet down and he was tired already.

**I won't make it. Hondo struck at the compacted dirt** with a stone tool he had made from the Obsidian he has found two feet up with less effort than he should have. One hundred and ten days out from his

appointment to the Steam-ship named the Enterprise and he is Lost in a freak mishap holding the compass. Hondo sat down in the hole. Damn It. The dirt was cool against his back at this depth. It felt good.

To hell with that. It could be worse. He could be dead and reduced to a puddle on the deck with that cute ships nurse who checked his vitals crying over it.

He resumed digging. No way was he going to have her cry over a biological sample of his remains.

.)

Had it been days? It seemed like it. The obsidian hammer dug slowly into the sandstone. A stick of dynamite would be good about now. It would have been good ten minutes ago when he hit the sandstone layer.

Wait a minute. Ensign Curtis shook the sand from his brain and smiled.

Dear tobacco pouch, I barely knew you. Hondo pulled the small metal slivers from his bandoleer and broke the bullets open releasing the gunpowder. He gently slipped it in a small hole he had managed in the stone layer and lit the makeshift tobacco paper fuse.

Ensign Curtis climbed out of the pit and rolled out across the warm sand with a rain of stone. The explosion had indeed cracked the sandstone and **churned Hondo's bowels. Ensign Curtis looked back** into the hole. He suddenly realized he had lost the Compass. Hondo grimaced and looked into the hole.

**The ship's Compass was cooked and there was** substantial cracking in the Sandstone.

It took what seemed like hours for the water to bubble from the crack in the stone but he would live. There was the first trickle of water and it just seemed to pour from the stone with increasing force.

The well filled and the compass that had sacrificed its life that he might live, floated near the surface. Ensign Curtis fished it out along with the shirt that had served as his dirt removal sack.

### **Hondo drank from Hondo's Well.**

.)

Captain Sykes struggled to compose the message to

#### **Ensign Hondo Curtis's parents.**

Third day of December eighteen twenty five.

Dear James and Elizabeth Curtis, I must inform you that your son was lost in the line of duty. Though I did not have the chance to know him, His senior officers inform me that he was diligent in the carrying out of his duties...

Captain Sykes stared at the report.

.)

Hondo collapsed near the Well edge, weakened by the lack of food. No compass. No bullets. No way to find food, signal for help, or get home. He had gone a week without food and it was coming to an end just like that.

The smell of the young nurse washed over him as he focused on the memory of her face.

.)

#### **"Beautiful..." The delirious Ensign Hondo Curtis**

struggled to reach out to the beautiful face. The two individuals who stood over Ensign Curtis were rather confused by the images coming from his mind. The shorter of the two tasted the water of

**Hondo's Well** and nodded while the taller blur knelt to force regurgitated fungus into his mouth. Hondo choked on the sugary substance. There was something horrid in the taste but his brain told him to swallow.

Hondo floated in light. There was nothing there but a bright, all-encompassing whiteness. Then they came to him. Their necks were long and flexible and at the end of that appendage were small hairless heads with nothing familiar about them beyond the idea of a humanoid form. They had no eyes that Hondo could spot but they seemed to look straight at him. They sensed his confusion and the one leaning over him reached out to touch its forehead and then the forehead of Hondo as if imparting some meaning in the gesture.

They saw with their minds. They saw what Hondo saw and gained from the experience. Ensign Hondo Curtis stared at the alien two fingers and thumb that defined what could be a hand and the stranger

**touching the hand, feeling the images that Hondo's** mind broadcasted so loudly. He though momentarily of his own people, his family and his world and the alien minds devoured the images that he offered up.

Hondo hungered, and understanding, the alien regurgitated the chewed fungus that it had fed him before. His feelings of concern at having to ingest the alien substance confused his motherly companion. The alien being stroked the side of his head and encouraged him to ingest. Hondo Swallowed and the one who had fed him withdrew. Then they were gone again leaving Ensign Hondo Curtis to drift in the white light.

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Hondo seemed to drift for a long time before they returned to him. This time the other led him from the light to a chamber that had a distinct floor. Here the being that was his guide showed him artefacts that seemed to be a diverse collection of confusing and abandoned rubbish. His uniform was there, torn and ripped and he realized for the first time that he was without clothing. His pistol, his

compass, and a million other things they had apparently collected through contact. He saw a book. The markings seemed aged a millennia but it was a human written book. He looked around to see what else he could find. Was that some sort of glass tablet? It sat revealed amongst the junk. He hoped for the best as he struggled to examine it. Something he touched on it seemed to bring it to life. A tablet of moving pictures and words. Could it be some sort of projecting lantern showing a newspaper recorded on transparent paper? Perhaps the backing light was a phosphorescent substance. Hondo turned it over in his hand before returning to its content.

The tablet revealed a historical record of the history of man advancing far beyond the era he had left behind. It showed everything that he would never experience. The fall of the old world he had left behind, the Dark times that would have come in the years ahead, and then the rise of a Second era. He advanced the timeline down the hallway of eternity all the while watching as Humanity blurred to become something no longer human. The stress of his discoveries crushed him. The Calender referenced something different to what he was used to. The symbolic AK seemed to say it all. Humanity had ceased a mere thirty six thousand years after what? The birth of Christ? The return of Christ? Hondo despised the idea that he had missed the so-called second coming. He cried at the irony of it. Humanity had faded out venerating a man they wanted as a god. He looked up for a moment before returning to the madness before him.

History advanced through eternity as increasingly unhuman form blended with truly unhuman form, attempts at something called cloning only seemed to add to the tidal wave of inevitable change. Strange

and wondrous peoples from other worlds seemed to absorb into the family of humanity and vanish. All was gone. Humanity was lost to the past. Hondo kept looking at his alien companion with growing suspicion and concern. It seemed to respond to his gaze.

The faceless ones gathered in increasing numbers, first his two and then others he had not seen before. They crowded into the chamber to see what he saw. To experience the emotions he felt. To experience a history that none of them knew. From Hondo they learned of the Human race, the merging of many peoples through an eternity of change until one final image showed them the birth of a single child who was so like them it all fell into place. Ensign Hondo Curtis struggled to his feet and pushed slowly and gently through the gathered horde of strangers hungry for his thoughts – his memories. There he found the mother who had kept him alive and gently held her in an embrace.

Hondo was home.

Written by: Sean R. Meaney

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EBYNTYRE KEEP

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*Ebyntyre Keep clung to the cliff wall of the narrow mountain fissure overlooking this little known trade route. The cold whip of wind roared through the gap in the mountains like a perpetual storm.*

***"It looks abandoned. Perhaps we should stay the night." Avery Blackbriar could only stare up at the three towers – one from which seemed to issue chimney smoke.***

***"Appearances can be deceiving." Gregory looked around at where Avery was pointing...***

***"Civilization? Here? We can only hope they have a hot meal..."***

**DM Briefing:** Ebyntyre Keep, once a Wizard's Keep, is now an Inn managed by a Dwarf named Fallon Dirtwater (Proprietor of the Inn for over six years now, and its only living occupant). He has a few secrets. One of them is the ghost that occasionally feeds off a guest. Fallon is a loner who lives off his clientele. Those killed by the Ghost often go into the Stewpot, and their wares provide some minimal income.

**Fallon Dirtwater:** Dwarf (Fighter), Level (7) AI: Chaotic (Chaotic Neutral), Str(13), Con(15), Dex(8), Int(14), Wis(17), Cha(11); HP 20, Weapon: Great Cleaver (2d4+1), Armour: Leather Smock (AC9).

### The Keep Itself:

- A- The Atrium: Now it serves as a Stable for guests. There are rings in the wall where a steed may be tied up. Fodder is the responsibility of Guests though.
- B- **The Gallery: This is the inn's Taproom. There is a central table with a large Barrel on it that is perpetually filled with Beer (the only real 'gift' the wizard left behind).**
- C- The Hall: Once a grand hall where guests might have been cooked food by an army of Servants, It is now the Kitchen and quarters of Fallon. He keeps a Cot by the fire. There are Old Barrels used to prop up timber tables, a selection of Makeshift implements, a lot of preserved Sausages hanging from hooks, Horsemeat seems to be the only visible source of **Beef**.
- D- The Laboratory: It also served as a Library to the Wizard, but it is now a common sleeping area for Male Guests.
- E- Apprentice Quarters: Once the common Barracks for numerous apprentices, they now serve as a bathing area for the use of all guests. An old tapestry detailing a battlefield scene partitions one half of the room from the other – providing males and females separate bathing.
- F- **The Wizard's Chambers: These sleeping quarters are now reserved for female guests and have a selection of emptied book shelves lining the wall.**

## Looking for an Adventure Ideas?

- The Ghost is an escaped prisoner from the Tapestry hung in the Bathing Area (it holds up to a hundred ghosts – victims of the Genocide Tapestry) and they will likely escape if Spell-casters start lobbing off Dispel Magic or Destroy Evil.
- Behind a secret panel in the Wizard's Private Quarters (now the sleeping area for females) is a Spell book for a 15<sup>th</sup> level Wizard.

Created by: Sean R. Meaney

## BRYNRYFE CAMPAIGN

### PART 4 – KINGDOM BUILDING

You will of course remember our Map to the Kingdom of Rathenjo from last issue. This episode we will be building our Kingdom from the ground up. First up: Now we start piecing things together in the shape of a Gazetteer.



### Kingdom of Rathenjo

*"Sleepy little Province, My Arse! The whole damn lot of them are bandits." -Estoban the Swordsman*

#### Introduction

The Kingdom of Rathenjo is literally the remnants of the Imperial frontier as it slips towards Barbarity. At the very edge of the Imperium at its height; in the century or so since the fall, Rathenjo, like many of these regional provinces has established itself as a sovereign state. In this case it meant forcing law and order on an assortment of farmers who decided that the future lay in Banditry and self government.

The Regional Governor decided to declare herself Landgrave after several farmers attempted to break away and unified the regional detachment of imperial bailiffs into a personal army. Those Farmers who sided with the Landgrave gained the title of Landsmen, while those who did not were declared Landless and were destroyed, enslaved, or forced to flee.

The Title of Landgrave has since passed down the family line several generations since the first and it is

a relatively peaceful Monarchy with a single head of state and no petty barons. Despite the machinations of wealthier Landsmen, the current state of relations with the Kingdom to the north is drawing the

### **Landgrave's attention.**

The Rathe Peninsula, ten miles wide, extends out into the sea by about twenty miles. While much of the region is covered in farms, there are a few small logging operations in the region devoted to management of logging in the forests that dot the small peninsula to continuously supply the Capital of Rathe with timber and firewood.

A majority of the larger estates are divided from one another by the South Road all the way past the Trade-way which darts of East to Iron-gate Pass, down to the Midneen Valley which rises between the Mountains of Infernal Cold which run the length of the Island and a Spur.

Somewhere in those Mountains at the Southern most reach of the South Road can be found an old City built by some unknown peoples.

### Lay of the Land

Rathe is the only port with a Breakwater and deep water trading port and Breakwater. As Capital of the **Kingdom, it's Population in just over three** hundred and fifty. It has small ship dry dock and repair facilities – which make it somewhat valuable. Even though the population is small, The Town is top heavy with wealthier families whose fine houses surround the market district, The Local Church separates these people from the Industrial district and the poor labourers who live either out side the walls with the more toxic industries or near the dry-docks where ships are repaired or constructed. The Landgrave holds a Residence here

Tradecross is a cluster of Inns and Taverns huddled in a narrow corridor of public land where the Trade-way meets the South Road. Despite its popularity as a stop over where the finest of foods of the Kingdom converge to be found in one place, it harbours a dark history. This is a site of Witch burnings a few hundred years back. Deep beneath the only church in the community is buried the Well of Thrice-damned Souls in which over a thousand women and children were murdered in a **purge of 'Witches'**. Only the Imperial archives record the slaughter. The populace have themselves long forgotten the sins of the past although a few of the Clerics tasked with cleaning out the church cellars have sworn they have heard a scratching sound somewhere below the old seal that marks the cellar floor.

Iron-gate pass is the only land route out of the Kingdom. The pass is only open a hundred days a year. The Fortress of Irongate is a major stronghold held by the Landsguard. They make sure that weapons are not being smuggled into the Kingdom. The town itself is a tight nest of stone buildings separated by narrow alleys.



Other Communities: Zora, Kimur, Hante, Watchtower, Pire, Acewyn, Pinwort, Islen, Blackbriar, Hailth, Janil, Bugh, Emry, and Pale are all small villages under populations of two hundred people.

### Sites and Landmarks

The Rathen Peninsula is a rather exposed and vulnerable coastline. Its farms and villages are not guarded by cliffs, rather sandy beaches. Hailth, Janil, Bugh, Emry, and Pale are the only large settlements on the Peninsula and they are major market places to surrounding farms and logging operations.

The Midneen Valley rises over two thousand feet into the snowline. Farming here is difficult. Despite the Fresh water pouring off the Glacier every spring, it is every acre a grazing field for Goats. Soft cheeses, Butters and yoghurt seem popular foodstuffs for this region along with a Black Brandy sourced from berries that fruit on Black Briars that are prolific in the rocky areas when nothing else will. The people here are not all that keen on

outsiders and it is not uncommon for the occasional traveller to vanish into a stew-pot.

The Infernal Pit is an active volcano. It has been spewing black smoke for the last decade and the last time that posed a problem, the Poisonous gasses washed down the Glacier and poisoned all life from the mountains to the sea. While such a horrifying event could happen again at any time, it is thought that it is unlikely to do so because the last time was preceded by a massive yeti migration along the base of the mountains toward Iron-gate.

The Glacial Region known as the Mountains of Infernal Cold are home to one savage species known as the Ice Hunters (yeti). They are fairly territorial and will not likely leave the Glacier (or approach the infernal pit).

### Economy and Trade

In a Points of Light Economy, there is very little traffic between communities – this forces them to be self sufficient – though it results in malnutrition and even failure of communities. Only the flow of Tax produce or Timber for firewood will be moved to the Capitol. That keeps Unofficial Traffic to a minimum and puts a limit on the distance of Travel for the Unofficial.

Heavy trade routes like the South Road or Trade way are heavy Traffic corridors for the movement of Tax Produce in the Direction of the Capital.

There are very few Settlements that are not located in proximity to exploitable fuel. Farms will be forced to grow their own fuel.

The Village of Zora is a Centre of Silver mining - much of which is minted into Coin for use by the

Wealthier families and the Landgrave in international trade. Silver is the only major export. Pire is a centre for Iron and copper Mining allowing the production of Copper and Iron Weapons and tools.

Wheat in the Midneen Valley yields less than fifty percent, while rye is at sixty percent on farms along the river north-east of the Capital.

## Religion

There is a Church in every Community – and this is the Imperial Church (The Holy Church of The Imperator) which directs news from every from every outlying province toward the Capital of the Fallen Empire. Alternative faiths are outlawed – though they do happen. The Midneen valley seems a hotbed of pagan activity.

Locally the church is under the thumb of Abbo Furenglave who is reporting the activities of the Landgrave to the Kingdom to the North – His agenda is to merge these two states. A nasty little secret that will put him at odds with the Landgrave once the inevitable invasion begins.

The involvement of the Church in Witch burnings was its effort to stamp out Pagans and Magicians. Though

Abbo Furenglave

*“The Pagan hides amongst us. Witches poison our village wells and our minds. You know who these people are. They walk beside you in the village marketplace; they even feign faith by sitting in this very church. Look around. Someone in this room is a Pagan. Someone in this Room is a Witch. One day they will slip up. One day they will be found out*

*by a Neighbour – and they will be turned in.”* – Abbo Furenglave addresses the Faithful of Rathe.

**Appearance:** Short and Elderly (53, Age 57,) with grey hair, and black leather patch over his missing left eye – which he lost recently to infection. He prefers the Red Clerical Robes of the Enforcer Caste of the Church – where he rose to power.

**Background:** Furenglave was born in the imperial capital and has looked on his deportation to this backwater as a disposal of himself by his rivals. As a Church Enforcer (Cleric of the Red Robes) he was a brutal and hard line butcher – he has not mellowed. He frequently preaches the extermination of Pagans and other Witches – Putting him at odds with the White Rose Monastic Order that has risen in the heart of the Empire with its message of tolerance. As the Current Church Patriarch is drawn from the White Rose Monastic Order, there has been a decentralization church power as hardliners are forced out from the capital to the provinces.

**Conspiracy:** It is only a matter of Time before the Abbo betrays the Kingdom of Rathenjo to the Kingdom to the North.

**Stats:** Cleric L8, Lawful Evil, HP 23, S13, W17, I18, D8, C7, Ch15, Rod of Church Authority (Rod of Smiting)

## Magic

Magic was a little more important in the Ancient times at the beginning of the empire but waned with the appearance of a central church. This escalated to the point of Witch burnings. Despite the illegality of **‘Witchcraft’** there is magic afoot in the Kingdom of Rathenjo. The current Magi hide in the ruined city in the Mountains far to the South and have a strong wizards-only community there. It is not unheard of that a wizard will abduct a promising

child from some isolated community in the Rathenjo and raise them in the magical ways. When they do return to the land of their birth, Wizards often pass themselves off as Travelling Scholars or Merchants.

## Laws

The Landgrave is absolute Authority. These Laws are enforced by the Troops of the Landgrave.

**Normally the Landgrave's Troops might visit a village once a year and Criminals who might be at large are dealt with harshly.** Until then a perpetrator might run free (if they are likely to not be a threat to others or flee) or be confined in a village stock until they do.

Treason is a blanket charge for any crime you are likely to commit. It means utter loss of citizenship for life.

Other charges: Murder, Rape, Theft, Brigandage, Tax Avoidance, etc. are simply the details of the nature of the crime.

**Because Witnesses must report to a 'Magistrate' when they visit the Community, law is difficult to enforce because it often occurs that Witnesses to the crime are persecuted (and even killed) by the perpetrator's supporters.** This often results in a lot of Judicial inequality.

## Adventure Hooks

### A CHILD ABDUCTED

*The village alarm sounded summoning all militia to the steps of the Church. The Priest – his eyes filled with fury was speaking.*

***"My fellow villagers! Evil has come to our small community. This very night Francel Derw, Youngest child of the Miller has been abducted from his home while he slept.***

*Prepare yourselves. We must hunt this fiend down afore darkness claim the young boy."*

*The Mob – armed with Farm implements fled in all directions with lit torches.*

DM Briefing: A wizard has abducted a child who shows magical promise and is fleeing the Village. If he is caught by the Villagers he will likely be butchered.

### RAIDERS?

*You wake to a sea of fire, smoke and screaming villagers. From what you can see, there are horsemen riding about the village with burning torches and they seem to be lighting the thatch of huts on fire...*

DM Briefing: The PCs Village seems to be under attack by Raiders. The kingdom to the north has begun landing troops in the Rathe Peninsula.

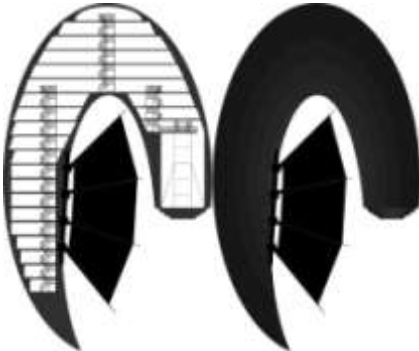
### THE DEMONWARDEN

***"It emerges from the Darkness like a wraith and the Hairs on the back of your neck can only stand up in awe. It is then that the tip of the horn submerges into a sea that can only boil with anger. Within moments a great ramp is lowered and the doors to some stable open, unleashing black-cloaked horsemen...all wielding harpoons."***

DM Briefing: At the height of the Demon War, a number of the Shackled were cut loose from Mael refugee ships. Standing one thousand five hundred feet high to its horns, these monstrosities had served to draw the great Mael refugee barges across the Khaos Sea.

Near the end of the Demon War, one of the **'shackled' was slain in battle.** The remains were harvested and one of the horns was carved and enchanted as a flying flagship for the use of Thuris

the Lich. He was promptly slaughtered and the Vessel claimed by the Demon Wardens: a group of self appointed exterminators who hunt the unhuman without mercy or distinction.



WEAPON: mass driver (20d6 x mile of altitude damage to all within one thousand feet).

CREW: 50 Demon Wardens

MOVE: 72 Miles per day

Written by: Sean R. Meaney

