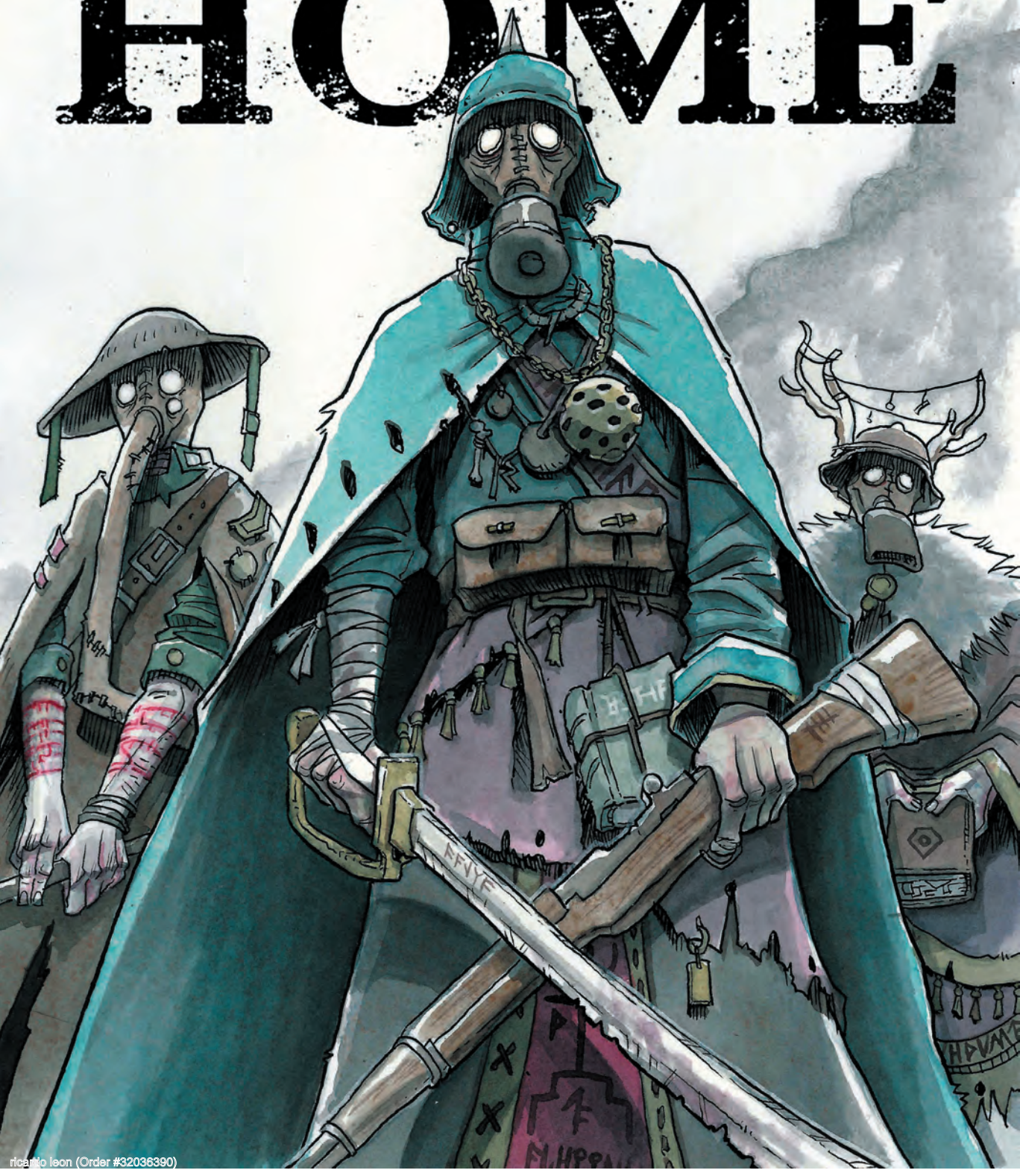


NEVER GOING HOME



NEVER GOING HOME

+One System

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Never Going Home

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Death is what we see when awake, when we are asleep it is dreams.
-Heraclitus, *Complete Fragments*, Fragment 21

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**This project was made possible by the
786 people who pledged their support.**

To the memory of my great-grandfather Frederick Edwin Kilpatrick whose 1917 army registration form shows he changed his listed occupation from "school teacher" to "carpenter." I take that as a story about what it means to go away to war.

- Matthew Orr

To those who came home. To those who were left in the mud. To that half cigarette.

- Brandon Aten

This book is dedicated to those who never stopped pushing me. To Beth Geoghegan and Gary Stewart, thank you seeing my potential and giving me the tools to grow. To De'Ale Houcott, thank you for sticking with me all these years and being my sounding board. To anyone who ever listened to me recite historical facts and retell stories from the past, thank you for listening and for asking the questions that made me want to dig deeper.

Finally, this book is dedicated to all those who went missing during the Great War from 1914-1918, and particularly to those men and women whose ultimate end remains a mystery. Your stories are still being told. You are not forgotten.

- Sarah Aten

To the men and women who go through the real hell of war so that most of us can live in peace.

- Irvin Jackson

To those who need it the most: despite the horror and monsters in front of you, there is always hope and a future worth fighting for.

-Charles Ferguson-Avery




The Buy-In

Never Going Home is a party-focused role-playing game set in horror-haunted trenches during the First World War. If that sounds good to you, skip this page, and get ready to deploy. If you aren't sure, read on to see if *Never Going Home* is for you.

- **Role Playing Game (RPG):** “Table top” or “pen and paper” role-playing games involve some people sitting together, with one person serving as the Narrator, who directs the adventure, and everyone else portraying characters in the story. The Narrator needs to know the rules and use them to give the other players challenges to overcome while crafting an engaging story. Together the player characters (PCs) form the Unit, who are friends, allies, or at least willing to work together. The Unit moves together from event to event, solving problems, defeating enemies, and gaining rewards as they go. Ideally, a role-playing session should be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved, even if terrible things happen to their characters.
- **Party-Focused:** *Never Going Home* uses the +One System to focus play and growth on what an individual character can do as part of the larger story that follows a group of soldiers called a Unit. Individual characters may depart regularly as they die from injuries or collapse into madness due to forces from beyond the Veil. Characters are quick to create, so players should expect to re-join the story portraying a new member of the Unit. Each character can have their own heroic moments, but the story of the Unit is the focus.
- **Horror-Haunted:** The Veil between worlds has been opened by the slaughter from the war; and the monstrous Whispers of beings wholly alien to humanity can now be heard. Some people have listened to the Whispers enough to gain arcane powers and now struggle to maintain control as their minds and bodies begin to change. Others are too far gone, mutated into barely-recognizable versions of their former selves. War consumes the days and monsters stalk the nights. Not even dreams are safe. Players manage their characters' mental and emotional resources with a dwindling hand of cards.
- **The First World War:** The setting is the real Earth and the characters are all humans. A terrible new element has been added to the war, but the true horrors of the real war are part of the story as well. The game is set in the years between when the Veil was torn in 1916 and when the war really ended in 1918. The focus is on the front-line soldiers who are fighting and experiencing the worst of the magic and monsters. There is some mention made of, but little exploration of, the “home fronts” of any of the belligerents and civilians only appear in passing.

Thank you for reading. Hopefully, now you know if this game is for you or not. We hope it is. Your first mission is waiting.

 THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE
TO TURN BACK!!!

October 18, 1917

To His Royal Highness, King George V
London, England

Enclosed is the report I am required to submit regarding my involvement in and knowledge of the events that occurred on the Somme battlefield beginning July 1, 1916. The following documents have been collected from various sources, but the primary content of the manuscript is a replica of the journal of Alfred Warbeck, an English soldier who served during the Great War. The discovery of his journal in Delville Wood in the spring of this year, it gave us a window into the early days of the Catastrophe. It is a shame that we don't know what happened to him—but that's a fate that has befallen many an Englishman (among other nations' soldiers for certain) since the outbreak of war in 1914. Had he lived through the attack at a Longueval in 1916, he would be a valuable resource to us now. Yet, despite his absence in this world, he has provided us valuable information about how these beasts and their masters are conjured, what they want now that they are here, and how to interact with them without becoming corrupted by their vile magics.

Amazingly, through his journal, we have tracked down a few other of the key players in those early days and conducted interviews with them; the main ones being a former soldier in the German army, Reiner Kauffman, and the First Mutineer, as he has come to be known, John Hampton. The army has also included select telegrams and letters from our military archives, and contacted the sister of Alfred Warbeck, Mary, to fill in the gaps in the story for Your Majesty. Some of the information here comes from telegrams sent to and from myself and others before John Hampton first deserted his post. Others come after it became apparent that our war of attrition was fast becoming a war against the occult. In leaving us this information, Alfred Warbeck continues to serve this great nation, even from beyond the grave. I trust that you will use discretion when sharing the information in these pages. I regret that I am unable to come to England at the moment to deliver this in person, as I am here settling matters in Africa. This matter nevertheless requires haste. If Lloyd George, Lord Stanley, and Robertson can come to an agreement on what to do in France, may it please you to send word to me as soon as you can. I, for one, am at a loss.
Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief,
British Expeditionary Force



Playing the Game

Skill Rolls

When a character wants to do something, they may be asked to make a skill roll against a Target Number (TN). Some Target Numbers are set by Missions, the Narrator sets all other Target Numbers. Players roll D6 dice (called Skill Dice) equal to their training in the skill. Dice showing 5 or 6 are successes. The number of successes on the roll must meet or exceed the Target Number to accomplish the action. On each roll, the player may use as many +One manipulations equal to their current score of the governing attribute of the skill being rolled. Attributes do not decrease through use.

Failure simply means what the character was attempting doesn't happen. All skill rolls take the form "roll [skill name]: TN #" which means "roll dice equal to skill training, manipulate dice equal to attribute rank, meet at least the required number of successes."

Skill Manipulation (The +One System)

The attributes are linked to specific skills which dictate which ones they can manipulate. A character's score (rank) in a skill's governing attribute dictates how many times a skill roll can be manipulated. A roll can be manipulated in the following ways:

Before a Roll:

- Temporarily gain an untrained skill (dice are bought separately).
- Add a die to the roll (ex: roll 4 dice on a skill with 3 training).

After a Roll:

- Add a pip to a die (ex: change a 4 to a 5).
- Reroll any number of dice. Keep the result (once per skill roll).

Simpson has 2 training in Ranged and 3 ranks of Guts. To hit an injured Trenchstalker requires 4 successes. His player buys two extra dice with 2 points of Guts and rolls: 5, 4, 3, 1. He keeps the 5 and rolls the remaining three dice again: 6, 5, 2. A total of only 3 successes, the shot misses.

Roth has no training in Communication but 4 Smarts. Trying to get useful information from a raving soldier is TN 2. Her player buys the Communication skill for the roll and two dice then rolls: 5, 4. She spends her last point of Smarts to add a pip to the 4, giving her the two successes she needs.

Durand is severely injured. He has Athletics 2, but currently only 1 rank of Brawn. Crossing the stream requires 3 successes. His player buys an extra die with one point of Brawn and rolls: 4, 1, 1. There is nothing else he can do, and the stream washes him away.

Challenges

Throughout the game, there are touchpoints that represent significant barriers to the characters. These are things that *will* happen if encountered, no bypassing or talking their way out of them. The Narrator may sometimes insert other Challenges as needed.

Challenges are too big to overcome alone and require the characters to work together. A Challenge may require multiple skill rolls that must be accomplished by the group, one skill roll that every person must succeed at, or even one skill roll with such a high Target Number that multiple players must make the roll and combine their successes. Challenges take the form "Challenge [skill name(s)]: TN #" which means "each character participating in the Challenge makes the appropriate skill roll individually then pool total successes, meet at least the required number of successes."

Unlike skill rolls, failure of a Challenge can have a penalty associated with failure.



Letter to Mary Warbeck from Alfred:

June 10th, 1916

Mary,

They are planning something huge for next month, a great offensive that will help us break the enemy lines and win back France. I don't have many details to share, but I'll be on the move from Verdun in the morning. The fighting here isn't going as well as we hoped, so we'll be moved to make a run at the Germans from somewhere else - and that will take the pressure off the men here at Verdun. That's what we hear anyway. You know how the rumors can be, having read enough of them in my letters home. I hear we're moving to the Somme valley, but again, it's rumors. They won't tell us the full plan. I am taking tonight to pack my bags with what little I have to take with me and try to rest before the march. It's not easy. The rain has filled up our trenches again and we are drowning in the mud. We try to get out of it by laying down crates and planks, but soon they sink into the mud, as well. I am continually soaked through.

How I wish I could see you and Mother, sit around the fire with you after a meal and talk of nothing and everything. How are you Mary? I hope you don't worry too much over me. At least it's not cold here, being summer, but the night brings rats. They chatter and scurry through the area where we try to steal a few moments of rest, waking us whenever they run over our outstretched legs. It's horrid. I'd kill for a bed! "This is war," Officer Bailey tells us when we complain. But this isn't like any war that's ever been fought, Mary. There's an older man here with us - John - he fought in the Boer wars. It wasn't like this, he says. This is some kind of new hell. Mary, tell Mother not to worry for me. And take care of her, Mary. If this new offensive is as big as they say it will be, the war will be over soon. I miss you my sister. I think of you often.

With love,

Alfred

Cards

The Journey, Healing, and Character Growth

A standard deck of 52 playing cards with 2 jokers is used to represent the emotional resources and memories of the characters. For six or more players, two decks (each with 2 jokers) are shuffled together.

The players may use any decks they have on hand. The four traditional suits are called for in the game, so the cards should be recognizable as such. Each suit is tied to a specific narrative theme.

- **Spades:** Knowledge. Learning, growing, overcoming suffering.
- **Clubs:** Things. Overcoming obstacles, action, adventure.
- **Hearts:** Relationships. Emotion or connection.
- **Diamonds:** Self. Ambition or hopes.

- **Jokers:**

- A joker is considered wild and functions as one non-joker card each time it is played or revealed.
- After a joker is played or revealed for any reason, reshuffle the deck, including the joker.

- The black joker also triggers a draw for possible Corruption .

Each card in the players' hands represent their character's memories and constitute what makes them human. Any time a player is forced, or chooses, to play a card they should think of it as their character forgetting something about themselves. Cards in hand should always be kept secret. After played cards are resolved, the Narrator moves them to a discard pile kept behind the Narrator Screen. Aces are high. Maximum hand size is seven.

Cards are earned as a reward for surviving Missions, completing special tasks, defeating Antagonists, or when the Narrator thinks a player has done something awesome. Cards serve multiple purposes in the game:

- **The Journey:**

Players must contribute at least one card to each Journey made by the Unit. If they do not have any cards, they put one in from the deck towards the Journey without looking at it.

- **Initiative:**

The player who reveals the highest card (or the Antagonist with the highest printed Initiative) chooses who acts first in each combat.

Cards revealed for this purpose are not discarded. Players without any cards may discard an Initiative card from the deck, which is not added to their hand.

- **+One:**

A card may be spent during a skill roll to add a +One effect of the player's choice to the roll.

- **Whispers:**

Many Whispers require a card to be discarded (or "burnt") to power the magic.

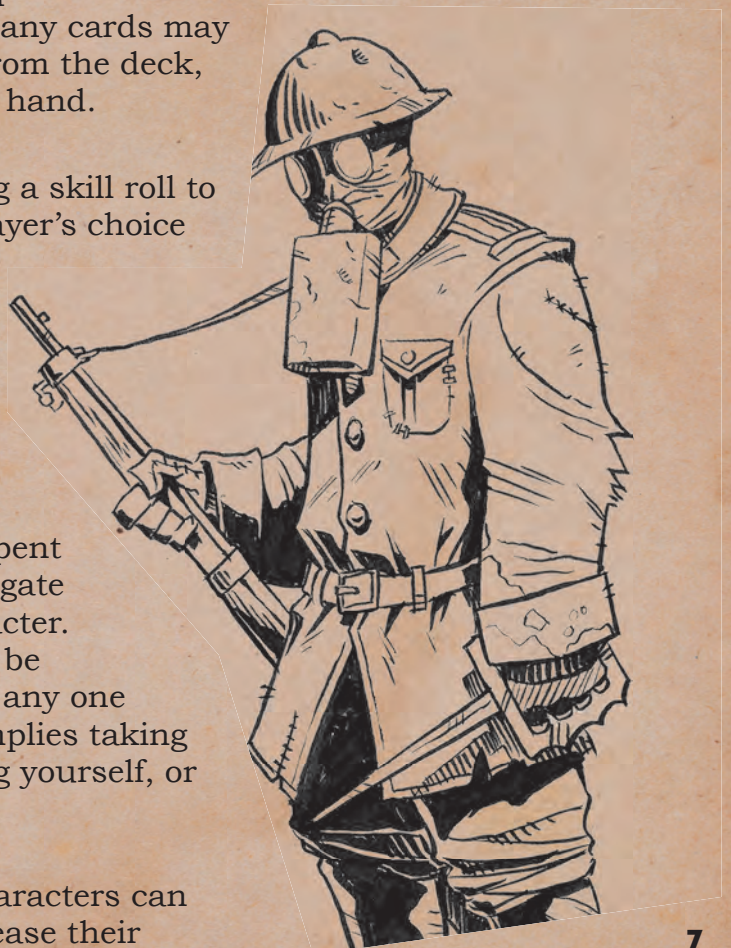
- **Healing:**

In Combat: Cards can be spent on a one-to-one basis to negate damage done to your character.

Out of Combat: A card can be burned at any time to heal any one attribute one point. This implies taking a break, mentally preparing yourself, or bandaging your wounds.

- **Character Growth:**

At the end of a Mission, characters can spend sets of cards to increase their



attributes and skills. In general, the number of cards needed is one more than the number of the new rank in the skill or attribute. For example, buying a fourth pip in Brawn requires discarding 5 cards. See the end of character creation for the full details.

Which joker is which?

Traditionally, card decks have a joker with a colored image called the red joker and a joker with a black and white version of the same image called the black joker. Other decks of cards may have two different images or two identical jokers. Examine your deck before play so you can decide which joker is which.

Corruption

Certain instances will cause a player to “draw for Corruption” or “take a chance of Corruption.”

- Whisper effect
- Adversary ability
- Mission Incident
- Using the black joker
- Character advancement (Whispers ranks 3, 4, and 5)

When a Corruption chance occurs, the player draws a card from the deck and looks at it without revealing the card to other players. If it is a black card, the character gains 1 Corruption point. If it is a red card no Corruption occurs. After the player sees the card, they pass it to the Narrator, who also looks at it. The Narrator keeps a secret record of each character’s total Corruption. Corruption is not cleared at the end of Missions, though there may be chances to shed Corruption during specific Mission Incidents. If any character has 5 Corruption points at the end of a Mission, they do not return to base with the Unit, as they have now joined the Others.

If at any time someone has 3 Corruption, the Narrator can choose to add from the deck to the Journey, one card per player with 3 Corruption. If at any time someone has 4 Corruption, the Narrator can choose to add up to two cards to the Journey per player with 4 Corruption. This represents chaotic outside influence on the Unit.

The players and Narrator should both keep track of Corruption. The Player may not wish to write down their character’s Corruption, because that is supposed to be a secret. The Narrator should keep a written log because there may be modifications to the Journey deck, Mission elements, or adversary interactions based on Corruption levels.

As characters gain more Corruption, this illustrates their slow loss of humanity. How much they role-play their Corruption is up the player. As a character takes more Corruption, they may not make the most optimal choices to assist the party, accomplish missions, or when contributing cards to the Journey. In general, however, they are still trying (perhaps in a twisted way) to work with the Unit until the moment they are fully corrupted and wander away from humans.

June 28th, 1916

I didn't remember until this evening that today is the day it all started. Two years ago, that Archduke was killed in Bosnia, and the world went mad. It doesn't seem possible that it was only 2 years ago. We were all so green and excited...ready to march off to France to save Paris. Ha! We're not the same now. The world is different now, and it will never be the same.

They marched us to the Somme, as we expected, and we are waiting for the first of July to make our offensive. It will start with shelling, as it always does, but there are whispers of new weapons that will help us cross the stretch of land in between the trenches. These are military secrets though, and they won't tell us anything until they must. I hope the rumors are true. If we can get into the German trenches, we can run them out of France. Then we'll be one step closer to ending the war and I can go back home.

Combat

Initiative Order

- Initiative Order is determined by the highest-ranking card (Ace high). Each player may show (not discard) a card for consideration.
- Tied players may choose to show another card. Highest wins.
- If a character has no hand, they may reveal a card from the deck. They do not put this card into their hand, and it is discarded after determining Initiative.
- Winner of the Initiative determines who goes first.
- After each action, the character who just acted determines who goes next.
- The Narrator may group Antagonists however seems appropriate for the situation. Each group gets a spot in the Initiative.
- The last character to act in a round chooses who begins the next round, but they may not choose themselves.

Some players may hold onto a card for a while specifically to have a good place in the Initiative Order.

On each character's turn they make one action: an attack, a skill roll, or a Whisper. They may also move before or after they act.

Defense

The rank of the targeted attribute is the Target Number for any attack, as normal, the TN must be equaled or surpassed for the attack to succeed. All attacks target Brawn by default, but some abilities and Whispers target other attributes.

Armor

For a creature or character with Armor, the Target Number for attacks is Brawn or Armor, whichever is higher at the moment. Attacks targeting other attributes are not affected by Armor. The term "Armor" is used as a general term for "hard to hit." An armor-plated Antagonist and a spectral one may both have 5 Armor but are hard to hit for distinct reasons.

Damage

By weapon or Whisper.

Sample Combat

After failing a Stealth Challenge, the Unit falls under attack in heavy woods by a mob of three Common Soldiers led by a Veil Priest. Simpson has three cards and reveals a 10 of spades in his hand, Roth has four cards and shows an 8 of diamonds, Durand chooses not to show any of his five cards. The Common Soldiers have a 6 and the Veil Priest also has a 6 according to their statistics. Simpson has the highest Initiative and decides who acts first.

He takes the first action himself, and fires his rifle at the Priest, which has 4 Brawn for its Defense. Simpson has 2 training in Ranged and 3 ranks of Guts. His player buys two additional dice, then rolls all four: 2, 6, 2, 5. With his last point of Guts, the player rolls the failures again: 5, 4. The shot still isn't good enough so they discard a 4 of spades and buys one more pip to raise the 4 to a 5. Now with 4 successes, the shot lands, inflicting 2 damage. Simpson decides to let the priest go next.

The Narrator announces the Veil Priest will cast Blood Blade as a ranged attack against Simpson. Though it looks dramatic, this is a risky attack because it requires 5 total successes; 4 to meet Simpson's Brawn Defense and another to activate the power from range. The priest has 3 training in Blood Magic but currently only 2 Brawn. The priest loses 1 Brawn to activate the Whisper and secure 1 success, then buys a fourth die with its last point of Brawn and rolls: 2, 4, 1, 4. With no remaining Brawn points the roll cannot be further manipulated and the Whisper fails. Screaming fiercely, the priest moves toward Simpson with terrible gleaming eyes showing from under its shadowed hood. The Narrator chooses the mob of Common Soldiers to go next.

The mob takes aim at Simpson who has already proven to be a threat. Pooling their Ranged skill rolls they come up with 5 successes, enough to hit Simpson's Brawn of 4 with one extra. This "extra" success may be spent after the roll because the soldiers are using weapons, but since they are using pistols there are no abilities they can activate with just one extra success. It is the normal damage of 2 from a single ranged weapon to Simpson. He wants to keep his 10 of spades for future Initiative contests as it is his highest card, so he discards a 9 of hearts instead to negate 1 damage. The Narrator chooses Roth to go next.

Roth also knows Whispers. She has 3 training in Elemental Rituals and 4 ranks of Smarts. Because she is using magic, her attack must be exactly planned before rolling dice. She decides she will attempt to deal 2 damage to one of the Common Soldiers with a blast of wind. She needs a total of 3 successes for this attack; 2 to meet the Brawn Defense of the Common soldier and a third success to buy a second point of damage. Any card will do to activate the Whisper and grant her 1 success, so her player discards her 6 of clubs. Then they buy an additional die and rolls: 2, 2, 5, 3. They bump the 3 up to a 5 using some of her remaining Smarts points and gets the 3 successes she needs. The spell deals 2 damage, killing one of the enemy soldiers. Only Durand remains and Roth chooses him to go next.

10 Durand rushes forward with a hand axe to attack another of the soldiers.

With 2 training in Melee and 3 Brawn, his player buys one extra die for the attack and rolls: 1, 2, 3. A total miss. They decide to reroll all his dice: 5, 6, 5. A perfect roll this time. He surpasses the 2 Brawn of the soldier and deals 1 damage. The last success is not enough to buy more damage and he cannot spend his last point of Brawn or his cards to buy another die now because dice must be bought before the roll. There are no special conditions in play to make note of at the end of this round so combat simply continues. Since he was the last character to act in this round, Durand gets to choose who will act first in the second round. He cannot choose himself, but instead of an ally, he tells the Narrator the Veil Priest can go first. Just whose side is Durand on?

Weapons

For weapons, successes in excess of the number required to hit (usually the target's Brawn) are spent after rolling for various weapon effects. The number of successes needed for each effect is listed in parentheses below.

Weapons – damage and abilities

Weapons

| Weapon | Damage | Ability |
|-------------------|----------|---------------------------------|
| Melee | | |
| Fists <3 Brawn | 0 damage | +1 damage (2) |
| Fists 3-7 Brawn | 1 damage | +1 damage (2) |
| Fists >7 Brawn | 2 damage | +1 damage (2) |
| Knife | 1 damage | +1 damage (2) |
| Club | 1 damage | +1 damage (2), stun (3) |
| Sword/Bayonet | 1 damage | +1 damage (2), Assault (3) |
| Axe/Pick | 1 damage | +1 damage (2), Wreck (3) |
| Staff | 1 damage | +1 damage (2), Flurry (3) |
| Firearms | | |
| Pistol | 2 damage | Critical (3) |
| Rifle | 2 damage | Critical (3), Aim (1) |
| Machine Gun | 2 damage | Critical (3), Spray (2) |
| Explosives | | |
| Grenade | 1 damage | 1 damage (1), Fragmentation (3) |

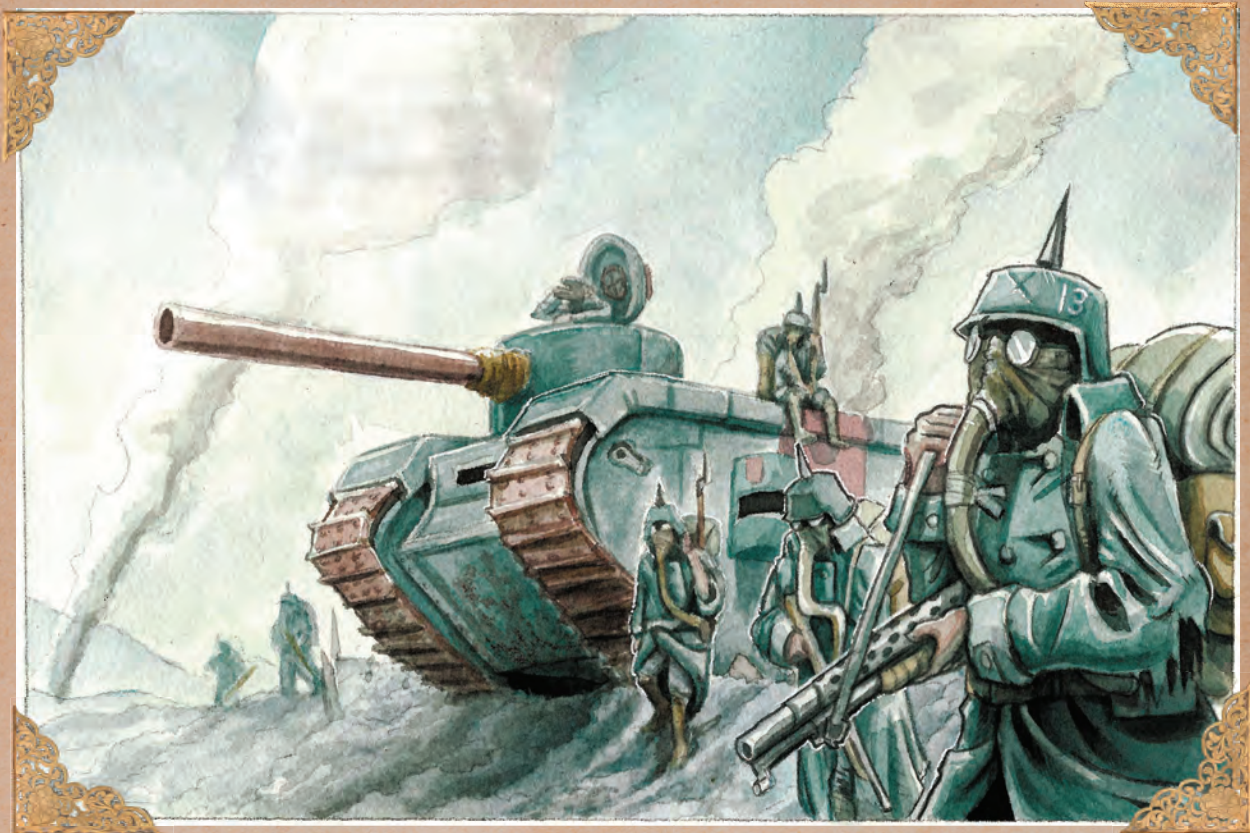
| Weapon Ability | Description |
|----------------|---|
| Aim | Reroll the damage die from the Critical ability. |
| Assault | Ignore armor on the next attack against the target, regardless of attacker. |
| Critical | Roll 1D6 for damage instead. |
| Flurry | Immediately make another attack against the same or different target. |
| Fragmentation | Deals damage to 1D6 targets. |
| Spray | +1 target |
| Stun | All other targets unaffected by stun must act in initiative before an affected character. |

Wreck Permanently reduce armor of the target by 1.

Note: With abilities that grant additional targets like from Spray, grenades, and Whispers, the player uses the same number of successes as the original attack against the additional targets' Defenses.

General Equipment

Equipment is treated abstractly. If a character has a gun, it is assumed they have a supply of ammunition to fire the weapon. All characters have basic equipment such as an entrenching tool, a knife, mess kit, and rations, as well as clothes, a gas mask, and personal effects. Some specific Mission Folios or events planned by the Narrator can limit what characters have access to. The items soldiers most requested were matches, socks, newspapers, and letters from home.



Vehicles

Most of the time soldiers are on foot, but sometimes a vehicle will be part of a Mission. When operating a vehicle, a character may use their own skills and abilities when appropriate, but most of their attention will be on operating the vehicle. During combat, they act on the Initiative of the vehicle and may roll the abilities granted by the vehicle, modified by the Brawn attribute of the vehicle. As normal, the character may make one action on their turn, meaning they can only use one of the vehicle's abilities at a time. One character cannot drive a truck and fire a gun from the back of the truck at the same time, for example. However, some vehicles allow multiple characters to operate distinct parts of the vehicle simultaneously.

Occupants of a vehicle do not take damage from attacks on the vehicle. All attacks against a vehicle must target Brawn. Vehicles are immune to attacks that target other attributes. When a vehicle's Brawn falls to 0, the vehicle is rendered inoperable and effectively destroyed. Whereas a destroyed or abandoned vehicle might be a good place to hide in some cases, if the enemy knows you are there, you just become a sitting duck.

Truck

A heavy, four-wheeled vehicle intended to transport troops or supplies. Most trucks can handle off-road terrain at half speed, but most are not suited to muddy conditions or steep terrain.

Initiative Value: 8 **Armor:** 5

Brawn: 7

Skills/Abilities:

- **Ram (Brawn)** ☒ □ □ □ □: The driver may attempt to use the weight of the truck as a weapon. Deals 2 damage - +2 damage (2). Targets larger than a horse automatically deal 1 damage to the Truck's Brawn.

- **Mounted Gun:** Some trucks have guns mounted on the back or roof of the vehicle. Requires a second operator to roll Ranged. Damage as Machine Gun.

Weakness: To stop while fully loaded, drive the truck through obstacles, or do almost anything involving hills, the driver must succeed on a Transport roll or lose control of the vehicle.

Tank

A heavily-armored vehicle with tracks instead of wheels and integrated artillery. Intended to be immune to infantry and allow movement across the craters, trenches, and barbed wire of No Man's Land.

Initiative Value: 5 **Armor:** 7

Brawn: 10

Skills/Abilities:

- **Ram (Brawn)** ☒ □ □ □ □: The driver may attempt to use the tank as a brute-force weapon. Deals 2 damage - +2 damage (2), Critical (3). Targets larger than a house automatically deal 1 damage to the Tank's Brawn.

- **Cannon:** Mounted in a turret which can be pointed in any direction, a tank is a mobile artillery piece. Requires a second operator to roll Ranged. Gain +2 successes automatically against other ground vehicles. Deals 3 damage - +1 damage (1), Wreck (2), Assault (3), Fragmentation (2).

- **Anti-Personnel Guns:** Requires a second operator to roll Ranged. Damage as Machine Gun.

- **Unstoppable:** After being reduced to 0 Brawn, a tank retains its current Armor score and continues to function, but none of its other weapons or abilities can be used. When the vehicle takes additional damage, draw a card. If it is a red card, the tank is undamaged, if it is a black card, the tank is finally destroyed. •

Weakness: Because the inside of a tank is cramped, hot, and noisy, all skill rolls made by characters inside that are not directly related to the Tank's operation have +2 TN.

Airplane

A light-weight, powered, flying machine, usually with four wings, sometime more. Originally used for reconnaissance, they were soon armed with machine guns and became a significant threat because of their speed and air superiority.

Initiative Value: Q **Armor:** 4

Brawn: 4

Skills/Abilities:

- **Mounted Forward Guns:** Built into the front of the plane and

synchronized to fire through the propeller. Can be operated while in flight by the pilot rolling Ranged. Gain +2 successes automatically against any ground target. Damage as Machine Gun.

- **Tail Gun:** Requires a second operator to roll Ranged. Damage as Machine Gun.

Weakness: A plane destroyed in flight leaves the pilot to plummet to death unless equipped with a parachute. Even then, the pilot (and/or other crew or passengers) must roll Athletics: TN 2 to escape the plane before they can activate their parachute.

Telegram from army archives:

DATE: June 30th, 1916

TO: WILLIAM ROBERTSON, LONDON

THE PAPERS YOU SENT CANT BE DECIPHERED STOP KAISER
MUST BE PLANNING SOMETHING BIG STOP WILL KEEP
WORKING ON OUR END STOP THIS MAY REQUIRE CALLING IN
NONMILITARY EXPERTS STOP ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO
GO DOWN THIS ROAD STOP

Whispers

The powerful beings from beyond the Veil whisper through the cracks in reality. Those who choose to listen to these whispers learn how to manipulate reality. Individuals may style themselves as keepers of ancient knowledge or as heralds of the Earth's new masters. They may call what they do magic or arcane arts or little tricks. They can adopt whatever names, clothing and trappings they desire: robes, cards, hand gestures, old books, necklaces of bones. No matter what it looks like or what they call it, their power is ultimately coming from the Others and the more powerful they become, the more of their humanity they lose in the process.

The Whisper skill can be used to know general information about magic like recognition of a rune, identifying the effects of a particular Whisper, or potentially knowing the weaknesses or habits of a supernatural creature. If the Whisper skill is bought temporarily it only applies to this knowledge and does not grant the character magic powers. All characters who train in the Whisper skill (i.e. have a point of training) are called casters. Individual powers are known as Whispers and are grouped into different Whisper Paths. Different Whisper Paths draw on different attributes. When a caster takes their first point of training, they choose a Whisper Path and select one Whisper to learn from that Path. Each time they earn a new point of training, it can be added to a current Whisper Path, or the character can begin training in a new Path. Each Path is treated as a separate skill because it may use different attributes and has a different level of training.

Like weapons, many Whispers have augments which can be added to the basic effect by rolling successes beyond the Target Number. Augments are specific to each Whisper and are listed in the Whisper's description. Unlike weapons, Whisper effects must be fully planned before rolling any dice. If the

Whisper skill roll fails to provide the required number of successes for the Whisper as planned, the roll fails completely, and nothing happens. Many Whisper Paths provide ways to gain additional successes on the roll. Some Whisper effects use the terms “target” and “victim.” The target of the Whisper is the character—or characters—the Whisper is directed against. The Defense of the target is the Target Number for the Whisper skill roll. If the roll succeeds, the target becomes a victim and suffers the effect of the Whisper, usually damage. The skill roll must succeed to have a victim.

Steps of Casting a Whisper:

- Choose Whisper and any augments.
- Spend any spell requirements (discard a card, take a damage).
- Roll for success.
- Make additional sacrifices (some Paths only).
- If successful, apply effects.

Whisper Paths

Blood Rites (Brawn) The caster willing to use their own blood as a source of power becomes much harder to stop, until they bleed themselves dry. For each Blood Rite they use, they must take 1 damage to Brawn. This counts as one automatic success. Many rites do not require a skill roll because the Blood Mage targets themselves. They may take additional Brawn damage themselves (or allies may take the damage) to create additional successes (one point of damage per success). This additional damage may be taken before or after rolling the dice.

Strength: The caster becomes supernaturally strong for their next action. Add +1 damage to melee attacks.

+1 damage (1), Strength lasts until the end of combat (3)

Scabs: Creates a tough “second skin” able to absorb damage. The caster gains Armor equal to current Brawn. Lasts until destroyed or until end of combat. +3 Armor (2)

Speed: The caster becomes supernaturally fast for their next action and may leap incredible distances.

Speed lasts until end of combat (2), caster attack a second time at the end of the round (2)

Interject: The caster decides when they act in Initiative on the next round. Before or after any character takes an action, the caster may declare they are taking an action instead. The caster only has one normal action per round. Effect lasts until end of combat (3).

Blood Blade: Magical blood streams from the caster’s open wounds and forms a solid object to cut into enemies. The attack targets Brawn and deals one damage.

+1 damage (1), Flurry (1), the attack may be made from range (1)

Blood Double: When the caster would take damage instead their body explodes into a pool of blood and the caster appears unhurt nearby. Lasts until used or until end of combat.

+1 additional double (3)



Rotten Tricks (Brawn) With Rotten Tricks, the caster forces their own body to spew forth noxious clouds of a magical nature. It's a disgusting process and leaves the caster's mouth covered with sores and the taste of bile. All tricks require a successful Whisper skill roll against the target's Defense. If the attack roll fails, the vile cloud is still released onto the battlefield. The caster must then immediately succeed at a different skill roll (listed with each Whisper) or the cloud blows back on the caster and any allies making them suffer the Whisper's effect instead.

Still Air: After several deep breaths, the caster inhales deeply and creates a

complete magic barrier around themselves and any willing allies. The Target Number to create Still Air is the caster's current Brawn. On a failure, there is no blowback, the barrier simply fails to form. Still Air protects those inside from all attacks, including other Whispers originating outside the barrier. Sounds from outside are muffled and looking through the barrier is like peering through thick glass. The force field may not be bypassed by gas or moved from its point of creation in any way. The barrier cannot be used to trap hostile Antagonists and does not prevent allies from willingly leaving. The caster may maintain Still Air by forfeiting their action to concentrate. This may be done for as many consecutive rounds as the caster's current Brawn.

Wretch: The caster vomits a stream of foul-smelling acid towards a nearby target. On a hit, the fluid deals 3 damage to anything inorganic. Organic substances are not harmed. If the initial attack misses, roll Mechanics with the same TN to prevent blowback.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1), Wreck (2)

Poison: A cloud of thick yellow or pale green smoke pours from the caster's mouth and nose with a burning sensation which the caster may send against living targets. The poison deals 2 damage. If the attack misses, roll Ranged with the same TN to prevent blowback.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1), Assault (3)

Smoke: With a series of racking coughs and powerful sneezes, the caster fills the area around a target with gray smoke which is cold, almost like fog, and lays thickly in low areas. The smoke completely blocks through the cloud, making Ranged attacks and many Whispers impossible. If the initial attack fails, roll Stealth with the same TN to prevent blowback. The caster may maintain the Smoke by forfeiting their action to concentrate. This may be done for as many consecutive rounds as the caster's current Brawn.

Strange Wind: By screaming into the sky, the caster creates a buffeting wind that blows against a target from all directions. This attack targets Smarts. If the initial attack misses, roll Athletics with the same TN to prevent blowback. Victims of Strange Wind have their TN for all attacks they make increased by 2 for their next action. The caster may maintain the Strange Wind by forfeiting their action to concentrate. This may be done for as many consecutive rounds as the caster's current Brawn.

Spray (2)

Swamp Gas: With a resounding burp and a powerful exhalation, the caster sends a wave of stinking gas at one target. This attack targets Guts and deals 1 damage. If the initial attack fails, roll Knowledge with the same TN to prevent blowback.

+1 damage (2), Spray (1)

Old Ways (Smarts) Some secrets were gleaned from the Others long ago and have been passed on in secret from teacher to pupil throughout the ages. These ancient Ways are generally the least powerful of Whispers, but they are also less costly for the caster. The Old Ways do not require anything more than a successful Whisper skill roll against the target's Defense. However, most of the Whispers have no effect unless they also add augments.

The Wolf's Head: A prayer and a few taps to the face grants a target wolf-like senses superior to human. The caster may put The Wolf's Head on

themselves or on an ally. In either case, the Target Number is the target's current Brawn. The Whisper lasts for a few hours and generally lowers the TN of applicable skill rolls.

+1 superior sense (2)

The Hart's Hooves: A poem in an ancient tongue grants a target deer-like speed superior to human. The caster may put The Hart's Hooves on themselves or on an ally. In either case, the TN is the target's current Brawn. The Whisper lasts for about an hour.

The effect lasts until the next sunset/sunrise (2), target may attack a second time at the end of the round (3)

Befriend: The caster looks an animal in the eye and calms or redirects their fear and aggression. Calmed animals do not attack the caster and empathic communication is possible. Animals given commands assist the caster if able. Beasts can only be commanded to attack. This attack targets Guts.

+1 animal (1), +1 corrupted beast (3), command +1 animal (2), command +1 beast (1)

Sickness: By blowing some dust into the air the casters puts a simple hex on a target. The sickness targets either Brawn (flu, cramps) or Smarts (headache) and deals 1 damage.

Spray (1), Sickness deals another 1 damage on the caster's next turn (2).

Healing Circle: With raised arms and an ancient chant, a healing aura forms around the caster. The total number of characters who can benefit from the aura is limited to the caster's current Smarts.

+1 target (1), +1 healing (1).

Grove: If some living plants can be found before sunset, the caster can lay down, as if to sleep, and create the illusion of a peaceful forest clearing. All willing allies may sleep peacefully for the night and nothing enters the Grove to disturb the sleepers. The TN is the number of sleepers, including the caster. Each participant may also place a card face up on the table (This does not count as playing the card). Anyone who placed a card may then take one of the placed cards, a card from the deck, or pass (the caster chooses the order). If any cards remain face up on the table, they are discarded, but the caster must face a chance of Corruption.

Elemental Rituals (Smarts) Study of the basic elements and energies of the universe allows the caster to command the forces of nature. The elements can be forced to accomplish a simple task or to attack a foe. For all Elemental Rituals, the caster must discard a card, which counts as 1 automatic success, then succeed at a Whisper skill roll against the target's Defense. If the caster has no cards, discard one card from the deck. If it is a black card, the caster also takes a chance of Corruption.

If the caster uses up a source of the element for the chosen Whisper, it grants 1 additional automatic success to the skill roll. Lighting a candle, pouring out a jug, throwing a stone or releasing feathers into a breeze are all examples of using up a source.

Fire: Command of flames, explosions, and heat. The caster may maintain command of non-attack effects by forfeiting their action to concentrate. Attacks target Brawn and deal 1 damage.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1), Critical (3), automatically deal 1 damage next round to one victim (2).

Water: Command of rivers, lakes, and the ocean. The caster may maintain command of non-attack effects by forfeiting their action to concentrate. Attacks target Brawn and deal 1 damage.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1), Stun (3), automatically deal 1 damage next round to one victim (2).

Earth: Command of rocks, mud, and plants. The caster may maintain command of non-attack effects by forfeiting their action to concentrate. Attacks target Brawn and deal 1 damage.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1), Wreck (3), automatically deal 1 damage next round to one victim (2).

Air: Command of wind, storms, and fog. The caster may maintain command of non-attack effects by forfeiting their action to concentrate. Attacks target Brawn and deal 1 damage.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1), Assault (3), automatically deal 1 damage next round to one victim (2).

Star: Command of the night sky and stars. The caster summons a rain of meteorites to the battlefield. The number of targets and the total amount of damage dealt must add up to the number of pips on the caster's discarded card (face cards count as 10). Other characters may join in the ritual, and PCs may contribute one card each. All contributed cards add one automatic success. If any black cards are contributed, the caster faces a chance of Corruption. On their next combat action, the caster may only move.

+1 damage (1), Spray (1).

Mental Anguish – The caster attempts to destroy a target's psyche. Attacks target Smarts and deal 1 damage. There is no relevant element for this Whisper. +1 damage (1), Spray (1), automatically deal 1 damage next round to one victim (2).

Healing Words (Guts) Not all the Whispers speak of wholesale destruction. Some find in the muttering of the Others charms for extending life and even words of hope. For all Healing Words, the caster must discard a card, which counts as 1 automatic success, then succeed at a Whisper skill roll against the appropriate Defense. If the caster has no cards, they may not use a Whisper. If the caster's current Guts is their maximum total, they gain 1 additional automatic success on their Whisper skill rolls.

Body Heal: Target recovers Brawn damage but cannot be healed beyond their maximum. Body Heal targets Brawn. If more than 3 damage is healed, warm yellow light shines in the area.

+1 healing (1), +1 target (1)

Mind Rest: Target recovers Smarts damage but cannot be healed beyond their maximum. Mind Rest targets Smarts. If more than 3 damage is healed, soft music played on unidentifiable instruments can be heard.

+1 healing (1), +1 target (1)

Spirit Charge: Target recovers Guts damage but cannot be healed beyond their maximum. Spirit Charge targets Guts. If more than 3 damage is healed, a gentle breeze caresses everyone present.

+1 healing (1), +1 target (1)



Holiday: A group ritual which eases tensions and lifts spirits. The Target Number for Holiday is the caster's current Smarts. The number of targets and the total amount of healing must add up to the number of pips on the caster's discarded card (face cards count as 10). Other characters may join in the ritual, and PCs may contribute one card each. All contributed cards add 1 automatic success. If any black cards are contributed, the caster faces a chance of Corruption. On their next combat action, the caster may only move. +1 healing (1), +1 target (1).

Mercy Aura: The caster surrounds themselves with a pale aura which draws in spiritual energy. When a player character dies, the healer may take a random card from the hand of the deceased, if any remain. The effect lasts until used or until the end of combat. A minimum of 1 success is required to begin the aura, but the total TN is set by the augments chosen.

Take a second random card (2), the aura can be used multiple times until the end of combat (2), take a card after a character is dealt more damage than the targeted attribute, but before they decide whether to negate the damage (3).

Sense Corruption: The caster's hand appears to turn to glass and touching a target grants insight into the target's soul. When the ritual is performed, the Narrator makes a hand of cards (from discarded cards) equal to the character's current Corruption level (one black card for each Corruption). For each success the caster rolls (up to 5), they draw one card from this hand.

Chaos Songs (Guts) By embracing direct connection to the Others, the follower of this Whisper Path learns Chthonic prayers unspoken since ancient times and becomes a mad jester dancing to insane music made by alien horrors.

Each time a caster uses Chaos Songs, they must take 1 damage to Guts. This counts as 1 automatic success. They may take additional Guts damage themselves (or allies may take the damage) to create additional successes (1 point of damage per success). This additional damage may be taken before or after rolling the dice.

Make Them Flee: The caster strikes up a threatening chant which invokes fear in those who hear it. Allies may join the chant, but they must suffer 1 Guts damage as well. All sacrificed ranks of Guts add 1 automatic success to the song. This attack targets Guts. Success means the victims are panic-stricken and retreat, leaving combat.

+1 target (1), the chant also inflicts 1 Guts damage to each victim (4)

Hold Them Fast: With a low-pitch droning wail, the caster roots those who hear it in place with fear. Allies may join the chant, but they must suffer 1 Guts damage as well. All sacrificed ranks of Guts add 1 automatic success to the song. This attack targets Smarts. Success means victims cannot move on their combat action, though they may still attack. The caster may maintain Hold Them Fast by forfeiting their action to concentrate. This may be done for as many consecutive rounds as the caster's current Guts.

+1 target (1), victims may not attack either (3)

Put Them Off: With a series of annoying, screeching calls, the caster ruins a target's ability to focus on fighting. This attack targets Guts. Victims have their TN for all attacks they make increased by 2 for their next action.

+1 target (2)

Draw Their Ire: Making a raspy cooing noise and halting movements reminiscent of a dying bird, the caster makes themselves nearly impossible to ignore. This attack targets Smarts. Victims of Draw Their Ire may only attack the caster with their next action.

+1 target (2)

Stare Them Down: Locking eyes with a target, the caster lets the target look through their own eyes into the emptiness beyond the Veil. This attack targets Guts and deals 1 damage.

+1 damage (2).

Steal Their Dreams – The caster walks through the mind of a victim and may take something away with them. This attack targets Smarts. If the victim is a player character and has cards in their hand, the caster may take one card at random. If the victim has no cards or is an NPC, the caster may still learn useful or interesting information from the victim. If the victim is an Antagonist, the caster steals a card from the Reward the Antagonist would normally give, possibly eliminating that Reward.

The caster instead looks at two random cards, keeps one and returns the other (3)

Alfred's Journal

July 1st, 1916

The fighting today was terrible – so many dead, so many wounded. More on their side than ours, hopefully. We are all weary tonight and yet sleep is hard to find. Not just because of the death, but because of what happened after. An hour or so after sunset, the air grew unnaturally quiet. I looked around, everyone seemed to notice. Thomas used his periscope to have a look over at the enemy. "Good God!" He hissed. "What do you see?" I asked. "The Germans are coming up out of their holes," he said. We didn't believe it at first – the Germans were going over the top, as if there was something in their trenches that terrified them more than our gunners? Then we heard the yelling, the cries of all those men echoing out across the field of shells and wire. "It's a trap," I said, as Thomas made towards the ladder. "They'll shoot you." He went over anyway, and when he didn't fall back down riddled with bullets, more of us took courage and went over ourselves. I could see them—the Germans—stumbling, crawling, hiding wherever they could, more of them coming up over the top into No Man's Land. Then, before any of us knew what was happening, a flash of light filled the field—so dazzling white it blinded us. But there was no explosion, no gas, no shrapnel. The light lasted not more than a few seconds and then it was gone. Fear sent us back into our hole. We waited, Ready for the Germans to come pouring into our trench. But they didn't. Yet, we could still hear the Germans calling to each other: "Monster—monster—"

July 3rd, 1916

No one has seen the officers for days. They couldn't have abandoned us, and surely they aren't all dead. We're left to wonder.

"Maybe they went to get the new weapons," William says. "But why would they leave us here without telling anyone?" Thomas says. John is silent. He knows something. "John," I say. "What is it?" He grunts and spits on the ground. "No officer abandons his men," he says. "Something happened to them. The Germans must have brought down some dark magic in that light." We all go still. None of us have wanted to say this, but John says it without fear in his voice. "Be on your guard boys," he warns. "Something is coming for us."

July 4th, 1916

There was supposed to have been more to the offensive here at the Somme than just the one day of fighting, but without the officers, what are we to do? Thomas continually looks over the top with his periscope, but nothing changes. All he sees is the Germans at their machine guns, watching us like we're watching them. William waits nervously—everything makes him jump. John, battle-hardened as he is, keeps watch over the rest of us. He doesn't give us orders, but we look to him anyway. He stands at the opening of our dugout, chewing his tobacco, and spitting into the mud. He doesn't say much, he just watches.

July 5th, 1916

Officer Bailey is back! But he doesn't seem well. He continually mutters to himself, and he won't take off his gas mask. He stinks, but no one has the heart to tell him. It's like he's a man half-dead. He barely speaks to any of us. We're too scared to ask what is happening with the war effort. Bailey stays in the dugout, smoking his cigarettes, holding his head in his hands as if he's nursing a headache. This continues for a whole night and into the next day. William and Thomas start to whisper in the dark. "He's shell-shocked. They'll execute him if he doesn't snap out of it." Such things have happened. "Quiet," John says, his gravelly voice cutting through the stillness. We see the end of Bailey's cigarette glowing in the darkness, brightening as he takes a drag. Thomas starts in again: "What's going to happen to us? Would they execute us too?" He's young, too young to be out here, and yet, here he is. "Nobody's getting executed," John silences them with his surety. "He'll snap out of it," William whispers after a time. "He has to." But there's a growing dread coming upon me. Something isn't right with him; something happened to him, something none of us have words to explain.

Character Creation

Recruitment

Divide 10 points among the three attributes:

Brawn: Strength, Flexibility, and Physical Health.

Smarts: Intelligence, Knowledge, and Mental Health.

Guts: Courage, Willpower, and Emotional Health.

Each stat requires a minimum of 1 and can be enhanced later through game play. The average human ability for each of these attributes is 3. The peak of human ability is 6. Attributes greater than 6 indicate superhuman—and possibly supernatural—ability.

Attributes govern three things:

Health: (Physical, Mental, and Emotional): When you take damage, reduce the targeted attribute. If any attribute is reduced to 0, your character dies. Starting with any attribute at 1 will leave you very vulnerable. Unless otherwise stated, any time a character receives healing, damage can be healed from any attribute.

Defense: This is the Target Number others need to hit to damage that attribute.

Skill Manipulation (The +One System): The attributes are linked to specific skills that dictate which ones they can manipulate. All skills require hitting a Target Number of successes. A success is a 5 or 6 on a D6. Your character's score in a skill's governing attribute dictates how many times a skill roll can be manipulated. A roll can be manipulated in the following ways:

Before a Roll:

- Temporarily gain an untrained skill (dice are bought separately).
- Add a die to the roll (ex: roll 4 dice on a skill with 3 training)

After a Roll:

- Add a pip to a die (ex: change a 4 to a 5)
- Reroll any number of dice. Keep the result. (Once per skill roll.)

The lower an attribute gets, the easier it is to hit and the less manipulation you have at your disposal.

Gender, Sexuality, Personal History

These are part of your character. Consider them. They may come into play from time to time, but mostly where you come from, how you present yourself, and whomever you are attracted to are subsumed under the pressures you face as a soldier. They may come out more strongly in your memories, but they will be among the aspects of your humanity you may be forced to give up just to survive.



Training

Select three skills from the following list (these are your trained skills):

Skill List

Athletics (Brawn) (lift, run, smash) Used for all acts of movement, speed, grace, feats of strength and tests of pain or physical endurance.

Melee (Brawn) (use hand-to-hand weapons) Covers kicks and punches, wrestling, sword fights and bar room brawls.

Stealth (Brawn) (be quiet, stay hidden) Concealment in all forms; moving lightly, breathing quietly, getting behind cover. Can also be used when palming objects or setting camouflage.

Communication (Smarts) (speak, write) Represents both technical knowledge such as alphabets and how to operate a radio, as well as emotional aspects, such as reading body language and being persuasive.

Knowledge (Smarts) (book learning) Anything which can be studied and remembered; baseball statistics, ancient history, camp rumors, terrain map, bird species, how to treat shock, etc.

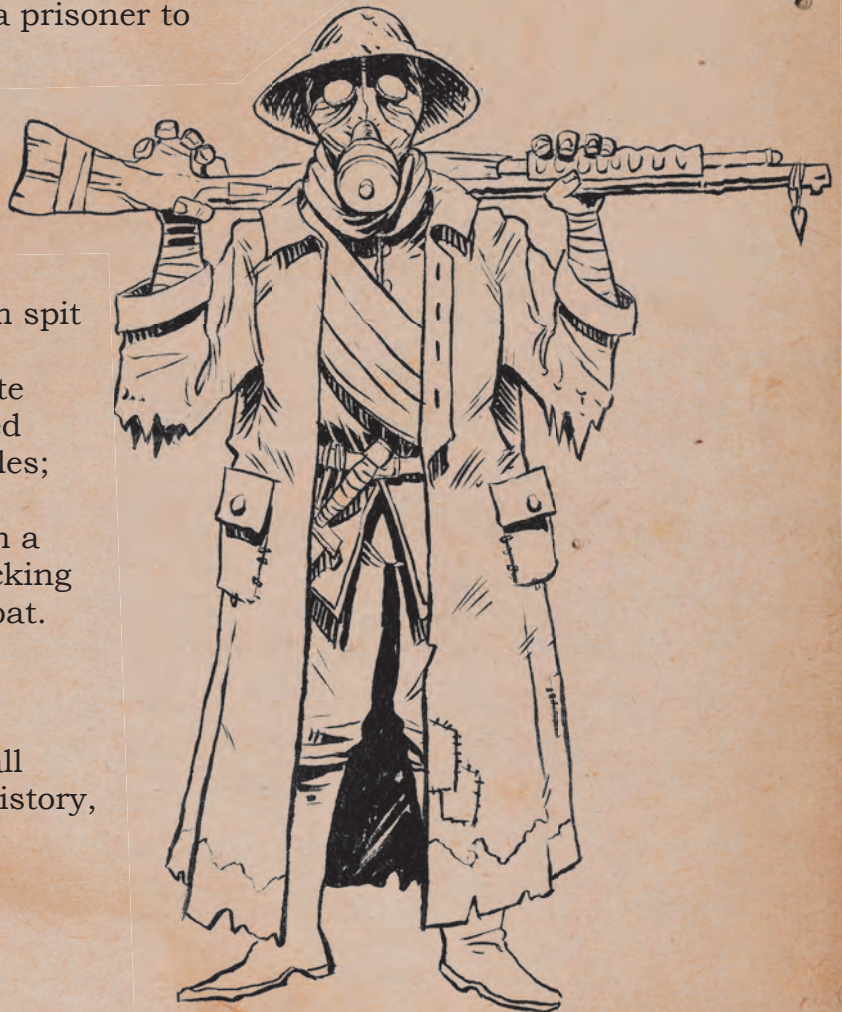
Mechanics (Smarts) (build, use, fix machines) Includes the skills of diagnosing problems, reading diagrams, improvising parts, and making repairs for any device; as well as using them.

Investigation (Guts) (find answers) Used to search a room, to pump a local for information, or to force a prisoner to confess. Can also be used to read one's own intuition.

Ranged (Guts) (use guns, thrown weapons) Covers everything that hits what it's pointed at, from spit wads to artillery.

Transport (Guts) (operate vehicles) Anything related to the operation of vehicles; taking curves on a motorcycle, driving down a mountain in a truck, tacking into the wind on a sailboat.

Whisper (Variable) (use magic) Represents both specific knowledge of a Whisper path, and overall experience with occult history, symbols, and methods.



Assign three Skill Dice among your trained skills.

Each point of training represents either a level of formal schooling on the subject or years of experience. These points can be distributed in any way: 3, 0, 0; 2, 1, 0; 1, 1, 1. A trained skill with no Skill Dice is still considered a trained skill.

If you assign a Skill Die to the Whisper skill, choose one Whisper Path and choose one spell from that Path. When you assign additional Skill Dice to the Whisper skill you may either add training to a current Path or train in a new Path. You will have one spell for each point of training in each Path.

Deployment

Draw three cards representing your starting mental and emotional resources.

You may immediately spend cards to build your character or retain them for use during game play.

Who is in Charge?

Never Going Home is intended to focus on low-ranking soldiers sent on Missions by officers who stay in the relative safety of their field offices behind the front lines. Once the Unit goes out on a Mission, no one is there to make their decisions for them or end arguments with, "but I out-rank you." Soldiers in the field will have to work things out as equals or pick their own leaders.

Of course, in a "proper" military organization someone is always in charge. If you want to incorporate ranks, a chain of command, and field promotions into your games, feel free to do so. At the start of any Mission with a Ranking Officer, that officer may take a chance on Corruption then draw 4 cards from the deck and distribute them among the soldiers of the Unit as they see fit, respecting the hand size limit. The officer may keep some (or all) of the cards.

Character Growth:

At the end of a Mission, after players receive their Decoration cards, you may spend cards to build up your character. Cards spent this way are discarded.

Skills

- **New Skill:** Any combination of cards. The cost is 1+the number of extra skills. First new skill costs 2 cards (1+1). Second new skill costs 3 (1+2), etc.
- **New Skill Die:** Any combination of cards. The cost is 1+the number of the new training pip. Filling in pip 4 of the Communication skill costs 5 cards (1+4).

Attributes

- **Increase Attribute:** Any combination of red cards. Number of cards spent is 1+the number of the new attribute rank. Making Brawn level 6 would cost 7 (1+6). Collecting this many red cards should be difficult.

Modifiers

- If the cards are all the same suit, cost is reduced by 1. You must have enough to buy the advancement but keep one card of your choice.
- If the cards are all face cards and/or aces, increase effect by one. For example; 1 more training pip, new skill starts with 1 pip, attribute increased 1 more rank.



Telegram from army archive:

DATE: July 6th, 1916

TO: DOUGLAS HAIG, LONGUEVAL. URGENT

INTERCEPTED MESSAGES FROM KAISER'S MEN STOP GERMANS
ARE FIGHTING AMONG THEMSELVES STOP BEASTS AND
MONSTERS FROM ANOTHER WORLD STOP FRENCH CANT BE
REACHED STOP WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE SOMME STOP
SEND REPLY TO ROBERTSON POST HASTE STOP

The World At War

The Progress of Events: 1914-July 1916

"I've been comparing this period to an historical estuary, where one generation and another generation sort of mingle...the Old World and the New World. But maybe it's more of a wormhole through time, and when this 19th century group of people transitions through to the 20th century it's not going to make it intact. It's going to suffer damage on the way through. It's like a birthing process to the modern era, and that can be bloody and painful and potentially fatal too."

— Dan Carlin, "Blueprint for Amageddon IV"

The First World War, sometimes referred to as The Great War or, simply, WWI, was a conflict between the major powers of Europe and their colonies between the years of 1914-1918. Though most of the iconic imagery from the war is based on the battles that raged on the Western Front (modern-day Belgium and France), there were battles fought across Europe, Asia, Africa and on the seas. It saw the advent of new military technology; everything from machine guns and other heavy artillery to chemical weapons, tanks, and military planes, which, as Dan Carlin comments, led to massive destruction, upheaval, and death. The war toppled empires and changed the face of Europe for the modern era.

Though many volumes have been written trying to explain the underlying causes that led to the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914, there are some undisputed facts. On June 28th, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated (along with his wife) while on a state visit to Sarajevo. His death sparked a spirit of chaos among the leaders of Europe, as each nation tried to anticipate each other's moves while simultaneously choosing sides in all the potential conflicts. This period is known as The July Crisis. When Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28th, a cascade began. On July 30, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia authorized general mobilization of troops. In response, Germany declared war on Russia on August 1st, the same day that France began to mobilize their troops. Germany invaded Luxembourg on August 2nd, and on August 3rd, invaded Belgium, and declared war on France. On August 4th, Britain declared war on Germany. On August 6th, Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia. On August 12th, Britain and France declared war on Austria-Hungary. The countries split into two alliances: The Allied Powers (Britain, France, and Russia) and the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary).



It is impossible to detail every battle or major event in so short a volume as this, but it is possible to layout a general timeline of the first two years of the conflict up until the first day of the Battle of the Somme on July 1st, 1916. The fighting began in continental Europe, specifically in Belgium and France. August and September 1914 saw the creation of the lines of conflict across what is known as the Western Front—the source of most of the images one has seen of trench warfare. The trench lines at the end of September 1914 remained largely unchanged for the duration of the war.

At the Eastern Front (Russia), in Serbia, and in colonies across Africa, fighting also broke out at the start of the war in 1914. There was a general feeling that the war would not last long. By the start of 1915 however, it became clear to military commanders that there would be no easy path to victory. Battles broke out across the globe as a result—in the Italian Alps, Turkey, Sinai, Palestine, and Macedonia—as nations tried new tactics to rout their opponents, cut off supply lines, and weaken the resolve of the enemy. War still raged across Europe in the trenches too, and by the turn of 1916, the Allied Powers were ready for something big that could break the stalemate on the Western Front.

In January 1916, Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British First Army, began planning an operation “to wear out the enemy and exhaust his reserves.” The plans would develop throughout the spring and be known to history as the Somme offensive. It was a massive undertaking that involved moving troops, building barracks, and transporting water and food, all of which involved building roads, railways, and pumping stations. As the situation at Verdun (where French forces had undergone a German offensive for months) worsened, General Joseph Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of the French Armed Forces at the Western Front, pushed Haig to start the “Big Push” at the Somme no later than July 1st, 1916 if he wanted the offensive to be a joint operation. This is where our story begins...



The World Broken, The Veil Torn: July 1916

On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916, 30,000 people were killed. If the Others were already looking at the world and pushing on the fabric of reality, this massive number of dead and even more enormous number who lay wounded on the battlefield was the final push tearing the Veil between worlds. No one close enough to see what the tearing looked like survived to describe it. They were overwhelmed by the first wave of corrupt energies and turned into the first heralds of the terrible new reality. Those further away from the center of the tearing saw a bright light and most took it for a great explosion or some terrible new weapons. Those sensitive to the world beyond its material surface began to hear the Whispers almost immediately. Some few of these resisted the cloying voices of the Others long enough to write down their impressions. At first the voices were not Whispers but seemed like screaming in the minds of those able to hear.

Alfred's Journal:

July 8th, 1916

I awoke last night to the sound of sniffing. I thought it was a dog, but we didn't bring any with us from Verdun. I looked around in the darkness, trying to find the animal—for surely it was making an animal noise and gave an animal smell. It was a large one judging from the depth of the sounds it makes: deep grumbling and hissings. As I came more fully awake, I realized it was above me, at the lip of the trench. I moved to stand but someone caught my arm. It was William and his eyes were full of terror. I started to ask, "what's the matter?" but I didn't get the words out before I heard it: a great unearthly shrieking and coming from whatever it was sitting atop the trench. It barked and called and scratched the ground with its huge feet, sending chunks of earth raining down around us. My heart was in my throat; I was paralyzed with fear. I clutched my gun, waiting. Then it moved off at a fast pace, calling into the night, its heavy footsteps echoing across the ever-stillness of the night. "Did you see it?" I dared to whisper to William. He nodded, fright still hanging over his features. "What was it?" He just shook his head at me. "I don't know" he answered. "It wasn't natural, Alfred. It was a monster."

July 9th, 1916

Officer Bailey disappeared in the night. No one saw him leave. We searched up and down the trenches, but there was no sign of him. Wherever he went, he didn't take any of his supplies or belongings. We found his pack stashed inside his dugout, one of the sturdier ones with planks fortifying the sides. Someone has drawn symbols all over the boards. Someone... Bailey. It had to be him. No one knows what they mean.

They aren't like any language we've ever seen. John crosses himself, walking off down the trench by himself, muttering and cursing as he goes. William's face has gone white. I look at Thomas; he shrugs and

shakes his head. "Did you see him do it?" William asks us. "What is this? Witchcraft?" Thomas puts his hand on William's shoulder, steadying him as we all contemplate what Bailey has gotten himself into.



The Veil

The Veil is nothing new. In fact, it is something quite old. Our ancestors understood it. They feared it. They tried to appease it. Sometimes they worshipped it and even tried to use it. It is known, has been known and, despite the early 20th century claims of advancement, science, learning, and reason conquering the superstitious beliefs of early peoples, we never quite forgot it.

Still, the question has never been satisfactorily answered: What is the Veil? That may be a question better left unanswered, but the time for that has passed. Understanding it matters if humanity is going to survive. To put it succinctly, the Veil is the membrane between this world and all others. Much later in human history, if it survives the Great Unending War, humanity would begin to better understand the nature of the universe, and that there are multiple dimensions, multiple existences. Between them all is the Veil.

In most cases, the Veil is impermeable. No science can pierce it. No energy massive enough can disrupt it: Not the titanic force of stars exploding, nor the reality-wrenching depths when they collapse to a single point. However, there is something about life, or maybe thought...or will itself...which punches right through the Veil under the right circumstances.

It is possible that the Others discovered this. Although, given their capricious and corrupt nature, they more likely stole the secrets of the Veil off the bloated corpse of some other long-lost civilization of greater beings. Who knows how many times—if time is even a factor to beings outside of known existence—the Veil has been discovered, analyzed, and ripped? Perhaps a thousand, thousand civilizations have discovered the potential and the power to cross dimensions and realities, ascending to some higher plane of existence. Perhaps a thousand times as many reached for such lofty goals, only to fall to murder, mayhem, and madness on a scale unimaginable.

Now, it is humanity's turn.

We have discovered it the way all others before us likely discovered it. The Veil is most vulnerable to intense psyche...thought, will, whatever it may be. When the mind is at its most focused and coherent, it can slice through The Veil. In most cases, this only occurs at the most intense moment of a being's life: at the moment of a violent or painful death. At that instant, the human mind is at its most focused.

This is why humans have cast others into volcanoes, carved their hearts out on altars of stone underneath the stars, and thrown the innocent into raging fires throughout history. Those moments send needles stabbing through the Veil, like pinpricks through the aether. Through those pinpricks, ancient peoples whispered their desires, wishes, and curses to whoever was listening on the other side. Usually, it failed. But sometimes, it worked. Something listened, and, for whatever reason, acted.

But those small moments, where the Veil was pierced, were brief and fleeting. The Veil healed itself quickly, closing again to its old, relatively impermeable self. However, there is a way to permanently weaken the Veil, to keep the tears open longer, to do more than just whisper. It just requires a lot more people dying at once. A whole lot more. Like those who died in the early battles of the Great War.

Once all that death weakened the Veil, even rent it permanently in places, things changed. It was too much for the Veil to heal back from. Even when it did recover, new tears, new calamities, more death just occurred elsewhere soon after.

Crouched, waiting, hungering, in the in-between places of reality, space and time, were the Others.

Our universe alone is unspeakably vast. The entirety of all universes, all time, all realities, is something the human mind can never truly even begin to grasp. The same goes for most other beings as well, even the Others. One may be able to pierce the Veil through death or, in the case of those who seek to master magic, sheer willpower. However, poking through to another reality that's habitable, or which is even compatible with your own on the most basic, primordial level, would be like winning the lottery...every day for a year.

So the Others instead just wait and reach out across the Veil, like a spider on its web, for some unfortunate or foolish species to pluck at the strands. When one does so, the Others rush to the breaches, whispering from out of the darkness, teaching their new acolytes how to use the very essence of the Veil; the very fabric that keeps reality together.

To the receiving species, this seems like a boon. Those who are sensitive to the Others' whisperings, who can understand it, and who can focus their will without being tossed into a volcano or having their hearts ripped out, learn to manipulate the Veil. They learn to perform magic.

But every spell is a trauma. Every casting, a calamity. Every invocation is akin to convincing the mind it is in its dying moments. The mind does not hold up well under that kind of regular onslaught.

Neither does the Veil or reality.

And that's why the Others Whisper.

The more one uses magic, the more one tears at the Veil. The more a species uses magic, invariably, the more widescale death and destruction occurs and the more the Veil tears, the more the Veil is torn, the weaker it gets. The weaker it gets, the easier it is to move in-between realities. The easier it is to move between realities, the more...things...slip through to prey and hunt and feast. The species subjected to this then feels compelled to use its newfound gifts to combat those things...the Veil is thus weakened more...more slip through...more death, more magic, more war, less Veil.

Until...well, that's perhaps a question, like "What is the Veil?" that is better left unanswered.

Letter from Mary Warbeck, tucked inside Alfred's Journal:

July 12th, 1916

Alfred,

Hopefully this letter reaches you. Mother and I are desperate for news. It's been weeks since you wrote us that they were moving you from Verdun to the Somme. The things they are saying of the war are awful. Tell me they're not true.

Charlotte had a letter from her husband yesterday about the first day of the battle. So much death! How could so many die in one day? We pray that you are not numbered among the dead or missing.

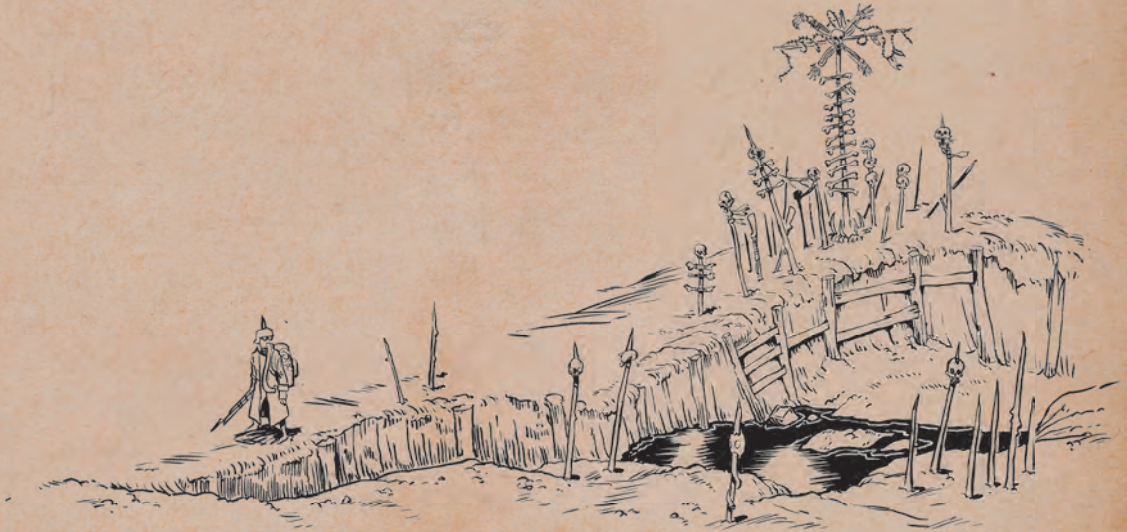
We read also that there was a great flash of light on the field and that no one knows what it was. What does it mean? They also say that the Germans have taken hold of our military leaders. The general himself is corrupted and fighting for the other side? Alfred! How? How can these things be true? Charlotte's husband wrote of great beasts and Dark creatures coming in the night. He sounded like a madman. I think Charlotte believes he has gone quite insane. What is happening on the front? Please write us as soon as you can so that we know you're safe.

Your dearest sister, Mary

No Man's Land

"No-man's land...is like the face of the moon: chaotic, crater ridden, uninhabitable, awful, the abode of madness."

-Lieutenant Wilfred Owen, British Armed Forces (March 18th, 1893-
November 4, 1918)



At the words "trench warfare," the mind often conjures images of a long, deeply dug trench stretching for miles as far as the eye can see. While this is true, it's only part of the story. The trenches for both the Allied Powers and the Central Powers were more than just one lengthy line that stretched on forever. Each side fighting on the Western Front had a vast network of trenches, through which they moved soldiers, artillery, and supplies. There were trenches for reserve fighters and those for active combat. Rather than a single line, the trenches looked more like a web: a sprawling manufactured system of protection, transport, and respite. In between, the land that stretched from the Allied Powers' trenches to those of the Central Powers was the aptly named "No Man's Land."

No Man's Land was the land that neither the Allied Powers nor the Central Powers could claim as their own ground. It was occupied only by abandoned military equipment and death. The space between the trench lines could stretch as far as a few hundred yards or meters, but in some areas, the trenches between the opposing armies were much closer. The terrain between the trenches was pockmarked with shell craters and riddled with the bodies of fallen soldiers and animals. It was poisoned from the use of arsenic, chlorine gas, and other chemical weapons. It was a trap of twisted barbed wire and land mines, where one was under constant threat of machine gun fire from the enemy.

Though it was a deadly place, soldiers did have to venture into No Man's Land on occasion: during an attempt to gain ground, for example, or afterwards to retrieve the dead or wounded. The fear and dread that surrounded venturing "over the top" (as veterans have described coming out of the trench into No Man's Land) was palpable. As Harry Patch (the longest

surviving veteran of the trenches) commented: "if any man tells you he went over the top and he wasn't scared, he's a damn liar." Tragically, because of the fear and (quite honestly) the logistics involved, not every wounded soldier was retrieved, and many met a gruesome end in the mud as they waited for their comrades to take them on a stretcher to safety. Even 100 years after the fact, remains are still being uncovered from these areas, where thousands gave up their lives to gain a few yards on the enemy.

Telegram from army archive:

DATE: July 13th, 1916

TO: WILLIAM ROBERTSON, LONDON

PLANS HAVE CHANGED STOP WE HAVE DISCOVERED A NEW POWER THAT WILL HELP US WIN THE WAR STOP FLASH OF LIGHT WAS NOT GAS IT WAS THEIR ARRIVAL STOP GERMANS FOUND THE MEANING OF THE TEXTS FIRST BUT SOON EVERYONE WILL KNOW STOP WE WILL REMAIN AT LONGUEVAL STOP

The Allied Powers (Entente Alliance) Third French Republic

France had long been preparing for war with Germany. France was soundly beaten during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, which ended with the unification of Germany. The French could only watch helplessly as Wilhelm, King of Prussia was crowned Kaiser Wilhelm I of the German Empire in the Palace of Versailles. Adding further insult to the defeat, France also lost control of Alsace and Lorraine, territories along the border with Germany. The defeat left France with a very clear memory of the horrors of war and in the decades which followed, it was France who constantly worked to prevent another war. France warned against the growing power of Germany and it was France who built the European alliances intended to prevent further German expansion. By allying itself with Russia on the other side of Germany and with the UK at its own back, France created the Entente Alliance, which it imagined created a stable situation. In any future conflict France was guaranteed a single front while their great rival of the age was guaranteed two. Who would enter a war under such disadvantageous conditions?

Then the Great European War France had made "too horrible to even contemplate" happened anyway. The alliance system did not prevent the war, it simply obligated all of Europe's Great Powers to involvement in what had started out as a regional conflict. France suffered, as it had always feared it would, as much of the fighting of the Western Front took place in France. The Allied armies stopped the German advance at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914. This area in the northeast of the country then became the scene of protracted trench warfare for the next four years.

Though France controlled colonies from Morocco to Vietnam, none were directly involved in fighting. However, volunteers from these areas joined French units like the Oriental Corps and were sent primarily to fight the Ottoman Empire. France also used political pressure and select operatives to support favored opposition figures in Egypt, Arabia and Palestine to further weaken Ottoman control over the Middle East.

Once the Veil was torn, little changed in French attitudes or military procedure. Everyone knew from the beginning what a horrible slog a war is and monsters getting involved didn't change that. France is resolved to fight, whether that means Germany or the Corrupted. The undead are a constant threat which requires a bit of extra planning just like chlorine gas is a constant threat. Whispers are just another battlefield innovation useful in the grim task of forcing an end to the conflict.

Themes: Personal honor, the small comforts, tragic circumstances.

Officer Attitudes: This generation of officers has been preparing all their careers to fight Germany and redeem the national honor lost in the last war. They are determined not to loose again and they will do almost anything to inspire their soldiers to hold their lines and fight to the last.

Soldier Attitudes: French soldiers are relaxed and somewhat fatalistic.

Three years of military service is compulsory so the army contains every sort of French person. Most hope simply to survive their tour. From building trenches to burring bodies to facing down shambling shapes in darkness, war is an unpleasant business. If one must go do something unpleasant, it is best to just get it done as directly and thoroughly possible.

Alfred's Journal:

July 14th, 1916

Everything fell apart after that first day here on the Somme. Whatever that light was, it brought with it a great darkness and enemies worse than the Kaiser's men. We wouldn't have meddled in the dark arts like they seem to have done—at least I hope we wouldn't. But I wonder...it has taken our commanders as well, whatever it is. We hear rumors passed through the trenches, spreading like fire. Sacrifices. Mutilations. Self-harm. Blood magic. A new order has taken control of the military; we follow those who delve into the occult. It doesn't make sense to me. "Why not?" Thomas asks me. "We kept hearing them talk about a new weapon to help with the war, something far better than gas." I'm not convinced. "This isn't better than gas. It's worse. They're ripping men apart," William says. "Hush up," John says, ever stoic. "You don't know who is listening." There are men in the trenches and in the field from here to Longueval. The word has spread all the way from that small haven to the front in a few short weeks. Something is happening in Longueval that terrifies the men. But the occult? Have we employed druids and warlocks to help us win? I don't think the army would stand for it! Then I remember the marks we found in the dugout before Bailey disappeared again. I'm scared. What if they've doomed us all?

July 15th, 1916

Officer Bailey is back. This time there is no question in my mind that he has become a dead thing. The flies never leave him. He tells us to march, as we're leaving the front. This would normally bring joy to any soldier, but this time we know that no matter where we are in the vast network of trenches, we aren't safe from the Thing that has taken hold of our officers. As we march through the mud, we see evidence of the secret things our officers have been

doing these last weeks: etchings in the mud of the trenches, strange arcane symbols of some unholy power, like the ones we found in Bailey's dug out; bones piled upon bones, brutally ugly monuments to the dead made out of the dead themselves. I shudder as we pass a tower of limbs crowned with a skull and ragged wire and can't help but wonder if these men died before they were torn apart, or after. Were they Allies or enemies?

July 16th, 1916

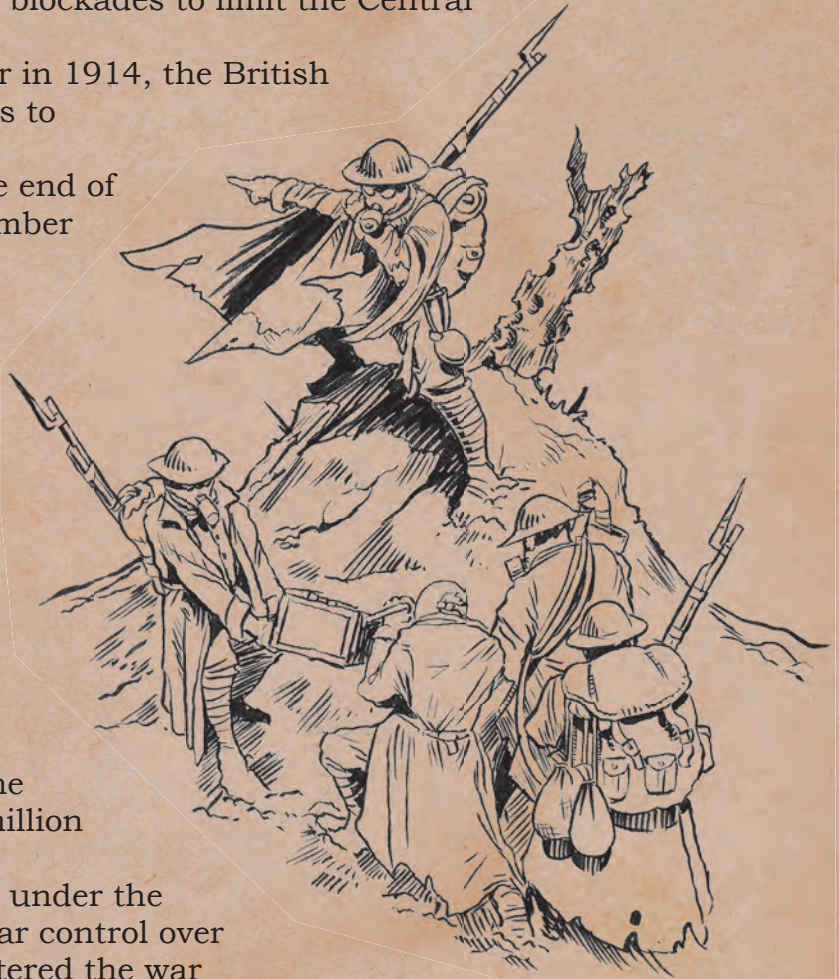
The nights are quiet...filled with the same quiet that we sensed before the great flash. I am afraid.

British Empire

In 1914, the British army encompassed soldiers from every continent. Coming from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Africa, those serving under the British banner found themselves alongside one another in the trenches that snaked through continental Europe. Soldiers in Britain's African colonies spent the early years of the war taking Germany's African colonies (Togoland, Nigeria and Kamerun, German South West Africa, Uganda, and Angola were some of the theatres). On the seas, the British navy patrolled the North Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and The Channel, and set up blockades to limit the Central Powers' supplies.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, the British Army relied on volunteers to supplement their small professional force. By the end of September 1914, the number in uniform had more than doubled. Women were also allowed to volunteer, and served mostly as nurses, and mostly at home, though some women did serve in France. In January 1916 conscription began, and restrictions were lifted in May 1916 as the need for troops ballooned beyond what had been expected. By the end of the war, some 5 million had served.

Other nations serving under the British banner had similar control over their own armies and entered the war and recruited or conscripted soldiers on their own timelines. For example, Canada asked for volunteers



initially, and did not start conscription until 1917. The first battle that Canadian troops fought was at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. Canadian troops would play a part at several of the more notorious battles on the Western Front, including Ypres and the Somme. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC) did not exist at the start of the war (they formed in December 1914) and they underwent several transformations throughout 1915 and 1917. Originally participating in the Gallipoli campaign, the ANZAC was disbanded in January 1916 and reformed into the I ANZAC Corps and the II ANZAC Corps. Both were transferred to the Western Front. In 1917, the I ANZAC Corps further divided into the Australian Corp and the New Zealand Division.

The British Indian Army (also known as the Indian Army or IA) also played a crucial part in the war and developed a reputation for fearlessness. In 1914, the IA was the backbone of the British Empire's military might. The Gurkha soldiers are famously remembered for their use of the Khukuri knife and their resolve to fight to the last. They saw combat in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Sinai, Gallipoli, The Western Front, British East Africa, and Egypt. Like other armies serving under the British flag, recruitment was voluntary. Some 1.75 million soldiers served in the IA during the war.

Though the full details remain sealed by royal decree, it is widely accepted the British were early adopters of Whispers for the war effort. Despite resistance from some officers, the military authorized arcane research units within weeks of the tragedy at the Somme. In the climate of those days, finding out exactly what caused the explosion and how to control that power were given top priority. The application of this early British experimentation eventually produced some of the war's most horrible devices.

Themes: Duty, heroic sacrifice, weaponization of every possible advantage.

Officer Attitudes: Loyalty is an important quality for the officer corps. They consider anyone unwilling to fight to the last a traitor. The majority of officers are so dependent on the chain of command they trust information and orders from command more than what they see on the ground.

Soldier Attitudes: British soldiers tend to believe they must fight "for King and country" when called upon to do so. Raised on heroic stories of British soldiers fighting to establish colonial control of the far-flung Empire, many see the war as their own opportunity to do their part for the Empire. Moral is generally high among British troops.

Telegrams from army archive:

DATE: July 17, 1916

TO: DOUGLAS HAIG, LONGUEVAL

ARE YOU MAD STOP THE GERMANS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THEIR
KNEES BY THESE THINGS STOP MARCH OUT AND FINISH THEM
STOP WE DONT NEED THIS BLOOD MAGIC TO WIN STOP SEND YOUR
SORCERERS HOME STOP

DATE: July 17, 1916

TO: WILLIAM ROBERTSON, LONDON

YOU MUST COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF STOP KITCHENER REFUSED TO LISTEN BUT MAYBE LLOYD GEORGE WILL STOP WE MUST CONVINCE HIM AND ASQUITH STOP COME TO LONGUEVAL AND WE WILL SUMMON THEM SO YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF STOP

Russian Empire

As the largest Slavic nation, Russia saw itself as defender of all Slavic peoples. When political and ethnic tensions within the Austro-Hungarian Empire threatened the Slavic Serbians, Russia declared war on Austria-Hungary to defend them. This spark ignited the rival alliances. Unfortunately for Russia, it could not support its moral position by strength of arms. Most of the battles of the Eastern front were fought on territory Russia controlled at the start of the war. From the Battle of Tannenberg in August 1914 to the Battle of Riga in the September 1917 Russia was constantly pushed back in a long war of attrition. Russian armies would lose with heavy casualties, retreat, call in new troops to fortify the lines, then repeat the disastrous process; losing control of Poland, the Baltic states, and eventually Ukraine.

Though Russia's army had skilled officers and plenty of troops, they found time and again numbers alone did not win battles in a modern war. Russian industrial goods had mostly been imported from Germany or England and capacity within the country could not supply the guns, and much less the bullets, needed to fight a protracted war. Rail lines were few. Food was scarce. Uniforms were heavily patched. Conscripts on the way to the fighting had to be guarded like prisoners of war. In these conditions, many soldiers were ready to do whatever the Others suggested. After the Veil tore open, order at the Russian front line was almost non-existent.

Well aware of how badly the war was going, politicians in the weak central government demanded more political power so they could run a better war effort. Every political theory from greater autocracy to total anarchy was advanced by one group or another. However, all power remained with the Tsar. In the face of the appalling military losses, Tsar Nicholas himself left the capital to personally take command of the armies at the front. His inexperience and seeming inability to make decisions did nothing to help the situation. Worse, with the Tsar absent from the capital, his disliked German wife and her hated wizard adviser were left to run the country. Widespread popular protests followed, leading to the Tsar's abdication in March 1917.

The politicians rushed into the power vacuum, proclaiming a republic and attempting to set up a stable government. The soldiers, well aware that being sent to the front was essentially a death sentence, would only support whomever promised to keep them garrisoned in the cities and end the war. While defeats continued political tensions eventually led to the seizure of power by communists in November 1917. They concluded a separate peace with the Central Powers and Russia left the war the following January.

Themes: Desperate conditions, political turmoil, determination against impossible odds.

Officer Attitudes: Most Russian officers are part of the Russian nobility and

support the Tsarist status quo. Many of the top Russian generals are, in fact, uncles of the Tsar. Thus, both honor and familial duty are part of serving in the army. More than once officers, trying to resign in shame after losing a battle, have had their resignations refused; as there is no one else to take over their command.

Soldier Attitudes: By and large soldiers are drawn from the poorest classes of Russia's urban and rural poor. They have only a nebulous loyalty to their "Little Father," the Tsar, and once the progress of the war became clear, they have no desire to throw themselves in front of enemy machine guns merely for a patriotism. The role desperate and unhappy soldiers have on the spread of Corruption and on the accompanying political chaos cannot be overstated.

Copy of a letter to Mary Warbeck, collected from Mary in spring 1917:

July 18th, 1916

Mary-

You and Mother will be worrying over me, but I assure you, I'm fine. I survived the fighting on the Somme. The offensive that was supposed to win back the Allies' territory in France didn't go as planned, and there has been no fighting since the start of July. Something is happening Mary. I don't know if the war will end soon or not but believe me when I say I don't believe the Germans are the enemy any longer. I don't want to frighten you but know the ravings of Charlotte's husband don't sound too insane. Stay calm. Don't tell anyone what I've told you. I'll write again as soon as I can.

All my love,

Alfred

Italy

Initially, Italy was not involved in the war because it was not part of either of the two alliance networks which went to war in 1914. The next year however, responding to political pressure from France and Britain, Italy joined with the Entente powers to attack Austria-Hungary in the Tyrol region on Italy's northwest boarder. These Great Powers effectively promised Italy could keep whatever territory it gained in the war. Having successfully invaded Eritrea in 1880 and Libya in 1914, Italy was feeling ready to take on a challenge in Europe. Italian politicians and nationalists could look to a time when Italian cities controlled "the known world" and they desperately wanted to re-capture some of that long-faded glory.

The whole of Italy's involvement in the war took place on Italy's immediate boarders; Garrisoning the Alps in the north and pushing into Austrian territory in the northwest. Battles included the Asiago Campaign and a series of major battles on the Isanzo River between 1915 and 1918. Perhaps because of their limited area of deployment, Italian soldiers tend to deny they saw anything strange during the war.

Themes: Territorial ambition, reclaiming past glories, earning respect.

Officer Attitudes: Many officers are relatively untested in war. There are any number of famous Italian commanders from history, but all the wars in living memory have been small conflicts. Despite this, with national pride on the line, they are determined to use as many troops as it takes to accomplish their mission.

Soldier Attitudes: From the beginning of the conflict the average soldier has been eager to gain glory in the conquest of territory. Thousands of soldiers have willingly thrown themselves into the desperate conditions of mountain fighting so that Italy can claim a victory. Most Italians have less interest in the greater progress of the war, focused on battles on Italy's own borders.

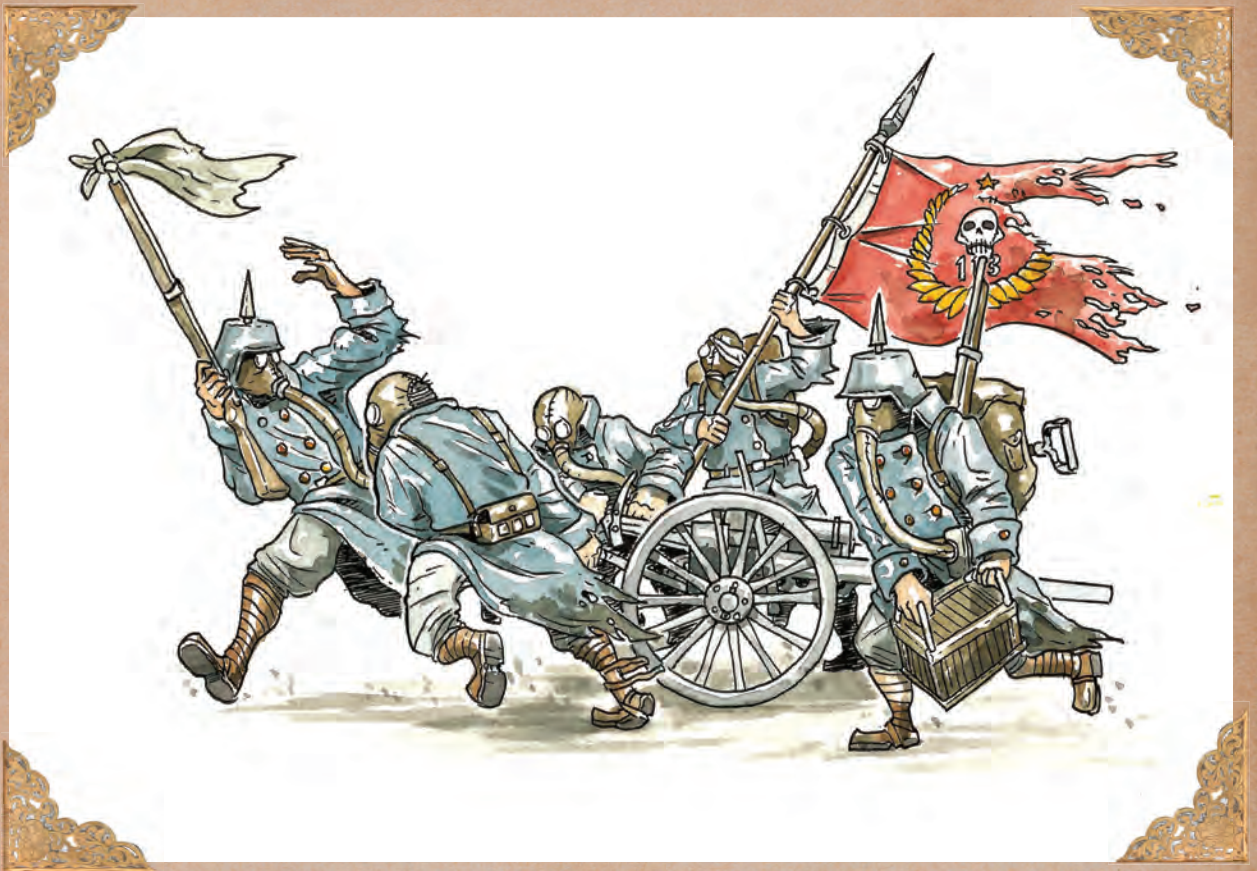
Alfred's Journal:

July 20th, 1916

We march. We pick up anything we find that's of use: munitions, coats, tins, cigarettes. We find dogs and horses, abandoned or escaped, and take them too. We put masks on them if we have them to spare. The horses make carrying our growing stockpile of supplies easier to move. The dogs keep away the rats. But nothing keeps away the flies. The mud is oppressive. I am dead tired by the end of the day, having spent mile after mile pulling my boots from the ground's clutches. Everything stinks. I wear my mask most of the time now to keep from smelling the stench around me. When we finally break free of the trenches, crossing the open ground doesn't offer much relief. There is not a shrub or a tree or a blade of grass in sight. Everywhere I look there is mud, and wire, and shells, and the leftovers of battle. Bailey doesn't say where he is taking us. We silently follow, but I fear mutiny is brewing. A letter from Mary came today, so this gives me hope that the army still functions outside of the front. How they found me I'm not sure. Someone must still be communicating our movements to the general.

July 22th, 1916

We come to Longueval, rather, what is left of Longueval. The Main Street is a dirt road between piles of rubble. When we first arrive, there are other troops mulling about, picking through the piles. Bailey meets in a bombed out building with the other officers. When he comes back, he tells us to set up for the night. This is where we'll stay until further notice. Bailey comes around, half-heartedly checking munitions, passing out rations, ordering when we'll rest and when we'll keep watch. The flies follow him wherever he goes. "What kind of magic keeps him alive?" William hisses as soon as he is gone. "He's not dead," Thomas answers. "He's sick." We all look up at a grunt from John. "He's not sick," the old soldier says. "He's caught whatever madness is taking control of the army." I shudder. When I close my eyes, I can see a future where we fight one another instead of the Germans. Will this all end with men trying to remain men against the darkness? John is getting ready for something. The other men look to him now. Whatever he has planned, they'll follow.



United States of America

America tried for a long time to stay out of the Great War, but no one already involved could ignore a rising power like the United States. With the publication of the Zimmermann Telegram, news of the Saladin Ritual, and the declaration by Germany of “unrestricted submarine warfare,” the United States could no longer remain neutral. The U.S. entered the war in April 1917 and immediately began shipping soldiers to Europe to break the stalemate on the Western Front.

This relatively late entry of the United States into the European theater has significantly changed the tone of the war. While on the surface, the brash, fresh, well-equipped, and eager troops from the U.S. are a welcome addition to the Allied forces, it is believed that the American Expeditionary Force under General John J. Pershing have a not-so-hidden agenda: keeping whatever the hell is happening in Europe contained. If their allies and the whole of the hemisphere must be sacrificed to that goal, then so be it.

Any operation that relies on European ships approaching the U.S.’s territorial waters are heavily discouraged, and there have been at least two incidents where allied ships were “accidentally” fired upon for appearing to be heading to the U.S. There were profuse apologies and even compensation, but the message to the allies was clear.

That being said, the Americans’ presence has been greatly appreciated. They dove into the fight with an enthusiasm most of the European troops lost two years prior, even if they often make the same mistakes most troops made two years ago.

As for the unusual occurrences, at first the U.S. troops were armored by disbelief. That, however, has run its course, and they are becoming just as haunted, some would say just as tainted, as the other military forces. However, they are taking things in an extremely practical manner. American troops appear to be encouraged to speak bluntly and plainly about what they've seen, and new troops, arriving at a staggering 10,000 per day, are instructed to "Believe your own eyes, and report what you've seen, no matter how crazy it sounds." This has led to a distinct lack of what some refer to as superstitious paralysis among the doughboys, unlike that which particularly plagues troops from Eastern Europe's more rural areas.

On the other hand, many U.S. soldiers just simply cannot accept that bullets sometimes do not work. And, sometimes at the cost of their lives, they seem compelled to at least try shooting everything they don't understand first.

There are far fewer cases of "Whispering" heard among U.S. troops than any other force, at least on the surface. Central Powers' intelligence sources suggest that many U.S. soldiers are hesitant to admit when these abilities appear, not due to fears from their military, which, again being practical, has accepted that such individuals exist and may be an asset. Instead, they appear to fear reprisals from within their own units. Several, being a bit too enthusiastic about their newfound abilities, have been found murdered in their billets with fellow soldiers claiming they must have been killed by the enemy, who snuck past a full guard, sometimes far behind enemy lines, and killed the soldier...with U.S. equipment.

Far more successful, and common, appear to be U.S. soldiers being subtler about the use of these newfound abilities, claiming "they got lucky" or "someone was looking out for them." As long as they maintain this subtleness, the troops serving with them are just glad to live to see another day.

In addition to these differences, more American units seem to be specifically assigned to hunt down unusual happenings, focused on killing things that are not Central Powers troops, and confiscating and obtaining any materials or information about the source of these unusual goings on. Some suspect that, not having suffered the internal damage and direct contact with these strange happenings as the European nations have, the Americans are playing a long game which has nothing to do with which side wins the conflict, but rather what happens to the world afterwards.

These efforts appear to have dampened what may have been, under other circumstances, a tipping point in the war, with the fresh and well-equipped U.S. troops finally breaking the stalemate of the Western Front. Instead, their generals and commanders seem quite content to maintain the status quo, while gathering every scrap of information they can find.

Interestingly, not a single scrap of this collected material seems to be returned to the United States itself, instead bound for field headquarters and newly established bases in France and England. Additionally, some have noted that not one U.S. soldier or any other personnel have returned from Europe to the United States itself. Not even its commanders. Not even the wounded or maimed.

Ships which have been to Europe are being resupplied at sea, with claims

that this is expedient, and except for troops bound for the front or some other post, U.S. transport crews are loathe to set foot on European soil. There have even been several incidents where those who fell overboard in European waters were thrown life preservers or some other aid, and then instructed to swim to shore, or were left to be rescued by others, and never again allowed back onto their ships.

This appears to be carefully hidden from the troops to some degree, but there is growing concern among the doughboys that they may never be allowed home.

Themes: Hidden agendas, promise of victory, the "adventure" of going to Europe.

Officer Attitudes: For most, the whole war in Europe is a mess the Brits and French badly botched which now requires U.S. help to clean up. It is a situation they shouldn't have to deal with, yet here they are. Like an annoyed parent putting children back to bed, America is stepping in with overwhelming force shouting, "stop this right now!" Not even the top military commanders have been allowed to hear everything known or suspected about the Others.

Soldier Attitudes: Americans in Europe are as diverse as the nation they hail from. Some soldiers have political convictions or strong ties to the Allied Powers which drew them into the conflict. Others were drafted. Still others just wanted to see Europe on the government's dime. Most approach the unique problems of this conflict with rehearsed pragmatism.

Alfred's Journal:

July 24th, 1916

My days have been spent waiting. I almost wish for fighting. Longueval has no residents other than us, so there is no distraction: no whiskey, no girls, no music. Just us and the other battalions who've come at the command of Haig. Haig is here in the town somewhere they say. I haven't seen him yet. Thomas told us Robertson and Lloyd George are coming from London on Asquith's orders. Thomas knows everything, but he has a big mouth. Sometimes people only tell him things because they know he'll repeat it, so you can never be too sure that what he says is true. "It's the weapon!" He tells us excitedly. "The one they were going to use at the Somme. That's why Robertson and Lloyd George are coming." I don't think that's right, and I tell him as much. If there was going to be some new weapon in the Somme, why did they move us so far from the front? Why haven't we spent these last weeks preparing for an offensive? I can't shake the sight of the Germans running from their own trenches, calling out in horror. And the creature atop our trench that night- or the bones we saw on the march here. "They aren't coming to see Haig's new weapon" I say. "They're coming to put an end to Haig's madness." "What madness?" Thomas asks as if he doesn't know, as if he hasn't watched Bailey day after day and wondered. "You know everything; I'm surprised you have to ask," I say. He doesn't like that. "Whatever dark arts the Germans used, we're not using them. Asquith wouldn't stand for it." I give him a meaningful look and his arguments die.

The Central Powers (Quadruple Alliance)

German Empire

For Germany, a miserable war has gotten even more so. The death toll, the unrealized expectations of a quick victory and settling of old debts with the rest of Europe, and hunger; all have been a dagger to the heart of German morale. And now this. This new reality has hardest hit both Germany and France. It is in those lands where the most horrific manifestations of this new dimension to the war have occurred.

Germany's vaunted discipline has faded as it has lost nearly all its experienced veterans and troops. Its technological edge is blunted. Americans are on the horizon, arriving sooner, faster, in better health, and better trained than anticipated.

Add to that monsters stalk not only the trenches, but seem to be drawn to the misery, hunger, and anguish of the German people. The only light has been its newly trained divisions of storm troopers, originally trained to race through the enemy's trenches to destroy command and control apparatus, instead, many of them are being retrained to engage, and sometimes utilize, these new threats.

Armed with copious amounts of mustard gas, new light machine guns and the knowledge that failure could mean the complete fall of the Fatherland, these new storm troopers have revitalized the German war effort. There just are not enough of them.

The other bright spot has been the German U-boat fleet, which has been mostly untouched by the changes to the battlefield since the Battle of the Somme. With the British Royal Navy retasking, like the Americans, to containment of the "European Problem," the German submarines have been able to break the blockade of Germany to deliver much needed supplies and food. The problem: there are very few other countries willing to send them the food and supplies they need.

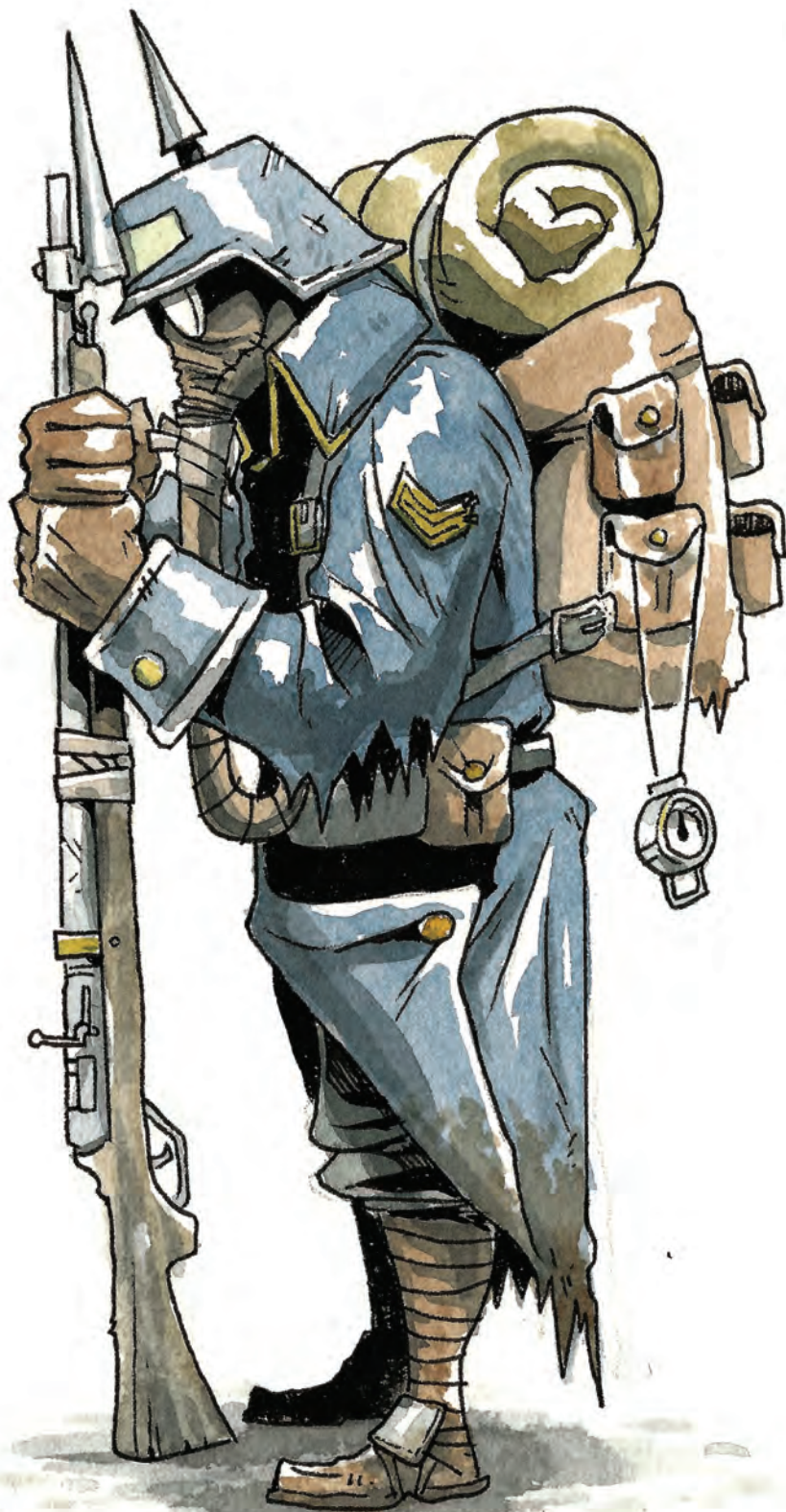
From the start, it was clear that Germany was not logistically ready for this war. It had the guns, the ammunition, and the labor, but it did not have the food nor the money. As the war has dragged on, its early successes failed to turn into more concrete victories, and as the terrors following the Battle of the Somme spread, the German government must rely more and more on its allies, particularly the Ottoman Empire, for basic needs.

Of all the calamities, truly little compared to the Turnip Winter of 1916 to 1917. Not only were people forced to eat turnips that were virtually inedible as the potato supply ran out, but.... something...*infected* the turnip crop, something that led to numerous agonizing deaths, and then to the dead getting back up with a new, far more awful hunger.

There's widespread talk that many of those turnips, meant to be animal feed, came from the Ottoman Empire.

Coal has run short, not because the German mines lack coal to be dug, but because the miners have all been sent to the front lines. This has made winter harder on the German people, who also lack clothes because the textile factories are making uniforms.

Among the misery, the seemingly unending casualties, the terrors and horrors that the government either can't—or won't—explain, the apparent ineptitude of the Kaiser and the Reichstag, there is growing talk of



revolution.

At the beginning of the war, the increasingly powerful Social Democratic Part of Germany held its tongue and supported the war effort. Now, there's less and less need for them to do so, and their grumblings have gotten louder and louder. The Whispers are now being heard in dark corners of the Reichstag, and are suspected in the deaths of the Imperial Diet (parliament)

On the front lines, the German troops have extremely mixed feelings about those who hear the Whispers. Those feelings have a nasty habit of changing with the tides of war.

If the German troops feel victorious and that fate is with them, those with their unusual abilities and powers are heralded as avenging angels for the German people. When things go badly, however, they are cursed, blamed, and sometimes killed by their fellow troops.

This has led to the Germans organizing those who hear the Whispers around hardened veteran units, specifically the storm troopers. When placed in storm trooper units, they can be force multipliers, seeding terror through the enemy trenches as their units close in on their true goals.

On numerous occasions, Allied forces have found themselves battling some unnamable horror at one location, only to realize their mistake when an ammo dump explodes, a key bridge collapses, or a field headquarters goes up in flames.

On the Eastern Front, at least the strange events radiating outward from the Somme appear to have driven Russia into civil war after the communist Bolsheviks took power. The deal with the fledgling "soviet" government has given German huge territorial gains in the east and, more importantly, freed up soldiers to check the renewed power of the Allies in the west. This has relieved some of the pressure on Germany, but given its own multitude of problems, it has not been able to take full advantage of new eastern lands.

Given the ever-increasing calls for some kind of victory to shore up morale, and calculations that the military should now make headway, the pressure for victory in the west is stronger than ever. The whole war effort now looks to hang on repeating all the battles of four years ago.

Themes: Confidence, technological innovation, commitment to the Fatherland.

Officer Attitudes: Careful planning and waiting to strike until a moment of advantage are part of German officer training. The country is by and large committed to the war and officers can make plans knowing the best supplies and troop allotments the government can manage will follow. Once supplies, materiel, and transport are all arranged, the actual battles are almost footnotes. All problems are approached this way.

Soldier Attitudes: The initial enthusiasm for the glory of territorial expansion has cooled significantly; now all that remains is the cold determination to make sure all this was somehow "worth it." With so many fellow Germans dead and the Kaiser still asking for more, the soldiers have to believe if they can simply hold on a little longer, they will finally secure what they have all been fighting for.

July 24th, 1916

We wait and wait and wait without new orders. We don't see Bailey except in the mornings when he calls roll and distributes rations. Then all day we wait, hiding from the heat in the shade of what is left of the buildings. Then one day, we see a car rolling slowly through the streets. "That has to be him," William says. "That's not him," says John, meaning Haig. "That's Robertson." So Thomas was right. "But where's Asquith?" John snorts at the thought. "Asquith isn't going to leave his plush apartments to come here. It's more likely that King George will come again to the Front." We follow the car with our eyes down the road. After it's disappeared from view Thomas gives me a wink and nods his head in the direction we saw it drive. I look at William and John. William's eyes are wide with fright, he's shaking his head no. John simply waves us away saying "baahhh" as he dismisses us. Thomas and I leave them, and creep down the road towards the car. We turn the corner and see it ahead parked outside a field tent. We can hear arguing even this far away. We sneak up the road, careful not to let anyone else see that we're moving towards the tent. That's surely where Haig has been hiding with the other officers. As we come up to the backside of the tent, we can make out the voices more clearly. "I won't stand for this. Parliament is going mad over the issue. The King is completely out of sorts. You're disobeying direct orders from your superiors. This is unconscionable, Haig." It must be Robertson, then, I think as I listen. "Get these men back to the front! You're wasting time!" There is a shuffle of chairs and papers. "Sir! I assure you that this is not a waste of time," the General says. "The Kaiser's men were already overrun by these Things; we just need a little more time before we're ready to..." But Robertson cuts him off. "Then get back to the front and finish the job. We'll not stoop to using the dark arts to win." I look to Thomas, and he seems to understand then that what I've been saying is true. These monsters might have been summoned by the Germans, but our leaders are also trying to use them. "We'll have a tough time convincing the rest of them, sir." Haig's voice has taken in a sinister quality. "Who?" Robertson bursts with impatience. "The officers, sir. They hear the whispers of these Things and are listening to their words. I fear my only hope now is to sway these creatures to our cause, to gain control of the army again." There is a long pause in which I imagine fear taking root in Robertson as is it taking root in me. "General, are you saying that these Things have control of my officers?" The answer is so quiet. "Yes, sir." I see Thomas shift uncomfortably beside me. "Then you best get some new officers, General," Robertson says. We hear the flap of the tent open and the car engine firing up. Thomas and I don't talk about what we heard— not on the way back to our place among the rubble, and not after when William questions us. "Ah," John says to us. "So you know something's not right. Now we all know," he mutters.

Austria-Hungary

While war erupted in France, Belgium, Africa, and the Middle East, it also encompassed nearly all Eastern and Central Europe, along the border of Russia down into the Balkans in what is known as the Eastern Front, or the Eastern Theatre. The war was no less brutal in the east, although the entrenched stalemate that occurred in France did not repeat itself in Galicia, Poland, and Russia. There were many more Central Powers' soldiers in the east because of one of the most important aggressors: Austria-Hungary.

Recall that Austria-Hungary was the First Nation to declare war in 1914 (against Serbia). Their aggression after the rejection of the July Ultimatum started the whirlwind of nations jumping into the conflict to defend themselves and their allies. Without Austria-Hungary's actions, it's possible to imagine a world in which The Great War had never happened. Without Austria-Hungary, there might not have been a Russian Revolution. Without Austria-Hungary, German victories on the Western Front might have looked entirely different.

Austria-Hungary was a multi-ethnic empire that was struggling to stay together at the outbreak of war in 1914. In fact, Archduke Ferdinand's assassination was motivated by a Bosnian who didn't think Austria-Hungary had any business ruling Serbia or the Balkans. Though they had power, it was disparate and relied on the armies from different ethnic regions to work together. This lack of uniformity led to an increasing reliance on their allies to take command. As the war went on, more Germans were found at the head of Austria-Hungary's armies.

Austria-Hungary also lacked the same military might as their neighbors. When Russia mobilized against the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia, Austria-Hungary had to pull back many of its troops from its invasion of Serbia and send them to the north. Germany was entangled on the Western Front at the time and couldn't assist. Thus, the invasion of Serbia- the event which had begun the spread of war throughout Europe- was hard fought and produced enormous casualties for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet, there were early successes. In 1915, the empirical forces beat back the Russians from Russian Poland, thus virtually eliminating the threat of a Russian invasion of Germany.

As the war dragged on, Austria-Hungary relied increasingly on Germany to fight their multifront war, first with Russia and Serbia, then later, with Italy and Romania. By the end of the war, Austria-Hungary had all but become a German satellite. This sentiment does seem to fit the facts. As Erich Ludendorff, the First Quartermaster General of the German General Staff said, the empire was a "drain on German blood and German war industries." That Austria-Hungary as a state entity did not survive after the end of the war in 1918 is not a surprise; but it does beg the question, what were they hoping to gain? Was the leadership interested in holding the Empire together, or in something else?

Themes: Proud traditions, ethnic conflict, resignation to chaotic events.

Officer Attitudes: The many ethnic regions of the empire each maintain their own military units. Before the war, these ethnic units were always stationed in a foreign region so local rebellion was always impossible. Once the war required these different units to work together against larger threats, they

found it almost impossible to do so. Many officers, replaced by Germans, have returned to their home regions where many have taken up the fight for independence.

Soldier Attitudes: There is more loyalty to officers than to the nation. In the west, Austrian troops are happy to fight with their German “cousins.” In the more diverse east, there is more resentment of the interference of Germany and many have given up the war and directed their arms at their imperial masters in the hope of gaining Allied support for their national independence.



Alfred's Journal:

July 30th, 1916

They are moving us again, but Bailey doesn't say why. We're going back to the front. It is almost a relief to me. How it can be still amazes me. I can't forget the sound of the General's voice as he admitted that there is another power controlling his army.

August 2nd, 1916

We've made it back to the trenches, but we still have a long way to march before we're at the front again. It's worse this time, going back. We don't know what we're headed for. I'd almost be thankful if I was gunned down by the German machine gunners. The officers have started to come in the night, choosing one or two men from the dugouts. We don't know what happens—none of us has the courage to follow—but we hear the chanting, and we hear the screams. The men come back to us, but they aren't the same afterward. They are hollow like Bailey. I can't help but think of the tower of bones I saw on the way here. How many others might now be set around us as we hide from our own commanders in these holes?

Ottoman Empire

If any nation can be said to have profited from the upheaval and tumultuous events following the Somme, it's the Ottoman Empire. Once referred to as the "Sick Man of Europe," the Empire has seen its fortunes change significantly, at least on the outside.

The Empire was already heady from its victories at Gallipoli and had just forced the British to surrender during the Siege of Kut less than three months before the Battle of the Somme began. But it had suffered horrible losses against the Russians in the Caucasus Campaign, and, in truth, was stretched to its limit in many ways.

Unlike the industrialized powers of Europe, the Ottoman Empire was mostly an agrarian society. Its weapons were outdated, its troops undersupplied, and it had no infrastructure to speak of across much of the empire. Simply moving troops from one front to another resulted in agonizing delays, logistical hurdles, deaths, and mass desertions.

Then Somme happened...and things...changed.

Allied intelligence reported that shortly after the events at Somme, Enver Pasha, the head of the Ottoman Empire's military and leader of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, ordered a number of old, nearly forgotten and esoteric libraries and book collections throughout Constantinople, Damascus and Baghdad raided and seized. Some of the manuscripts taken undoubtedly predated the Roman Empire. Shortly after, soldiers among the army who were the center of reports of unusual activities were collected and sent back to the capitol under heavy guard.

Despite the common soldiers' beliefs that these people would never be seen again, they almost all came back, sporting significant promotions, the best equipment the struggling military could afford and authorities which frequently belied their experience and station.

Then, the fortunes of the Ottoman Empire shifted.

First, Allied Powers' naval excursions into the Dardanelles began suffering mysterious losses. Submarines simply disappeared, never to return or be found. There were reports of Ottoman ships, both military and supply transports, dumping what appeared to be shrouded bodies into the nearby waters. These initially appeared to be burials at sea, but they occurred at night, and whatever rituals were being performed were nothing like any Allied intelligence experts, well familiar with the practices of the Empire, had seen before.

Then, the Ottomans renewed the Caucasus Campaign in the late fall of 1916, and an unseasonable warm front always seemed to precede the Ottoman troops, which almost intelligently held the Russian winter at bay. The Ottomans drove deep into Russian territory, seizing Ardahan, Kars, and Erevan before the offensive stalled out.

They have also shored up their holdings across the Middle East and have driven into Egypt all the way to Alexandria, and rumors fly about a potential push into British-controlled India and Persia.

While these gains may be due to the fact that the Allied Powers are currently "distracted" by events in Europe, others point out that the incidents do not seem to be contained to the Western Front, and similar "incidents of curious and sometimes unspeakable occurrences" as the British describe them, seem to be occurring all along the Ottoman Empire's front lines.

Previously, the Ottomans relied heavily on German assistance, both in finances and materiel, in training and in leadership. Now, German officers say they are sometimes openly scorned, mocked, and disrespected and some divisions of Ottomans have been seen on the Western Front for the first time, almost as if a counter to the presence of Americans. Reports from Allied Intelligence note that even the Germans and Austrians are disturbed, and sometimes surprised, by their presence.

However, despite all that, desertions within the Ottoman Empire seem to be at an all-time high. Soldiers who, by all accounts, have never even been to the front lines have fled, and there are reports in Egypt and across the Mediterranean of haunted refugees from the interior of the Ottoman Empire, from Syria and Iraq and Anatolia, who appear terrorized, frightened, and haunted.

Other reports indicate that Enver Pasha has diverted some divisions into the interior of the country in relation to some "internal matter" which is a closely held secret. Allied sources among the Bedouin and Kurds suggest that there was some sort of mysterious project that would have solved the transportation of the troops across the territories that went badly. Very badly. Now people are fleeing the area with only the clothes on their back and grievous scars and injuries, as if they had been set upon by vicious animals.

Whatever this incident is, has helped slow the Ottoman advance down, and religious and political figures who were protesting... something...occurring within the military have been silenced, imprisoned, and in some cases have died under mysterious circumstances.

Now, however, across Europe and the Middle East and parts of Asia, independent Ottoman deserters can be found, spinning wild tales that make those of the mysterious happenings of the Western Front pale in comparison. These deserters, despite their sometimes insane ramblings, seem to have an unusual wealth of knowledge about the supernatural creatures now stalking the warzone...more than just old superstitions or information gleaned from observation, but they sometimes know names, weaknesses and habits, as though they trained or even worked beside them. They always seem to stop short of going into details, as if they fear reprisals of the most horrible nature. Themes: Cautious optimism, long legacies, fervor.

Officer Attitudes: Officers are sworn into a nearly ancient order; bound protect the Ottoman Sultan with their lives. Despite the attempts of the Young Turks to push the Empire in a more secular direction, the Sultan remains an important religious figure for the vast majority of officers as well. All of Enver Pasha's efforts have borne fruit so far. Loyalty to his military leadership is total.

Soldier Attitudes: Given the agrarian nature of so much of the empire, most soldiers are conscripts, extracted from the land as part of the tax on local governors. These troops are drilled to follow orders without question. Despite this, most soldiers have strong sensibilities which orders can only push so far. The problems in the heart of the Empire have not yet reached any of the battle lines, but when they do, the soldiers will make their own decisions about where to point their guns.

August 4th, 1916

They took William last night. John, Thomas, and I got the courage to follow them. It wasn't as hard as we thought it might be. They were singularly focused on their dark deeds. They had cleared out a circular area in what was left of the grass above the trench. We saw the general there. The chanting was low, we couldn't make out what they were saying, though if we had been able to hear, I suspect that it wouldn't have been any language that men speak. We watched as they pushed William into the middle of their circle, where there were carvings in the ground. The chanting continued, each of them holding out their hands towards the sky. What evil gods are they calling down on us? If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I don't think I would believe it. William struggled against the ropes at first, but realizing it was hopeless, he stopped. At least, that's what we thought at first, but then we realized he had stopped struggling only because he was paralyzed with fear. Over his body appeared a tall and ghastly nightmare, his shadowy cape flew out behind him as he appeared in the circle. The monster looking around at the chanters, then down at his feet at William. William crumpled, fainted perhaps, and the tall shadowy nightmare stepped over him, moving towards the officers who had summoned him. It was too much for John. He stood suddenly, unslung his rifle, and began shooting. One officer went down, then another, before they realized what was happening. "John!" Thomas yelled, trying to pull him down into the trench, to run away from the officers who were now moving fast towards us. "The boy! Alfred! The boy!" I ran forward, dodging the officers one by one, until I had reached William. He was white as death; I wasn't sure he was even alive. Over my shoulder I heard shooting, and John calling out. Thomas was shooting now too. I saw the creature watching idly. It didn't move to interfere. I hoisted William onto my back and ran with him towards the trench. The remaining officers were starting to flee. John and Thomas had shot 5 or 6 of them. The creature turned its head to look after the fleeing officers, then looked at the three of us mutineers and seemed to shrug. Then it turned and walked away in a new direction. We watched it disappear over the edge of a hill. "What were you thinking?" I snapped. I set William down in the ground. He had regained consciousness but was still too pale. He needed a medic. "Something has to be done," John said. "I'm not following any commander that does those sorts of things," he said as he gestured to the circle. The noise has drawn a crowd of soldiers, but as they come up out of the trench, they can't make heads or tails about what they see. "It comes down to this," John says. "You're either on our side, or on their side," again gesturing to the ring where the officers had conjured the creature. "I'm not going back to the front. I'm hunting down the men who brought these monsters upon us." John is right. How can we do anything else? But how can we convince what remains of our regiment to fight our own?

Bulgaria

Because of economic hardships following the Second Balkan War, the Kingdom of Bulgaria declared its neutrality when the Great War began in 1914. However, it still smarted from territorial losses to Serbia, Greece and Romania and hoped to reacquire them through an alliance with one side or

the other. Throughout the summer of 1915 both alliances courted Bulgaria, with the country holding out for the best deal possible. With the Entente Powers faltering at Gallipoli it looked as if the Central Powers were on their way to victory and Bulgaria officially joined them, creating the Quadruple Alliance.

In October, Bulgaria's sizable army invaded Serbia and played a vital role in capturing the country. Fighting was extremely heavy in the rugged terrain. With Serbia occupied there was now a continuous land route from Germany, through Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria to the Ottoman Empire and supplies began to move from Germany to assure the final victory at Gallipoli. Bulgaria continued its joint campaigns with German forces throughout 1916 and 1917, holding back Greece in the south and invading Romania in the north. Eventually, Bulgarian forces pushed far enough to threaten Russian-held territory.

Always treated as a junior partner by its allies, Bulgarian forces found themselves doing much of the heaviest fighting, first in Serbia and later against Greek forces, while Austria-Hungary, and even more so, Germany, reaped the rewards. This bred some level of resentment among the Bulgarians and, perhaps, made their officers all the more susceptible to the Whispers. By the time anyone truly questioned the partnerships they had made, Bulgarians found themselves at war with all the Allied Powers, virtually dependent on German materiel, and led by a Corrupted military establishment.

Themes: Revenge, expansion, outdated methods of fighting.

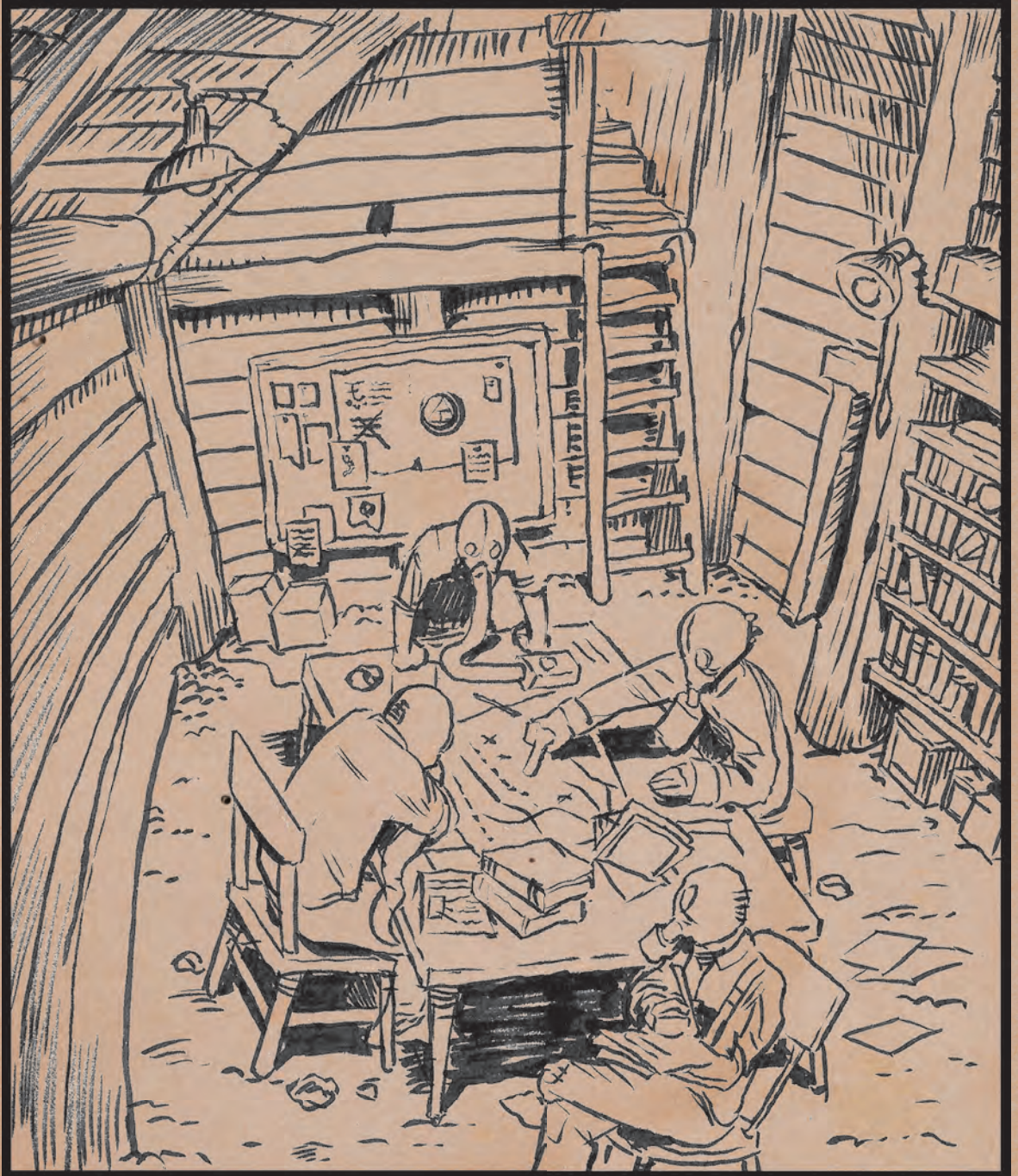
Officer Attitudes: The Bulgarian government keeps the military at arms-length due to unclear laws governing the chain of command. Additionally, the conditions of the alliance places Bulgarian forces under the ultimate command of German officers. Upset at their hands being tied from both directions, Bulgarian officers grumble. Yet they must make the best of their difficult position.

Soldier Attitudes: Military service is compulsory and the Bulgarian army is larger than average for the size of the country. Soldiers tend to fight fiercely against traditional enemies, often relying on savage hand-to-hand fighting and cavalry. Against armies equipped with modern weaponry, they are far more likely to simply surrender before any real fighting can begin.

Running the Game

The X Card

We recommend you use a safety device such as an X Card for all role-playing sessions, especially when playing with people you do not know well. A safety device is ideal for games like *Never Going Home* because the subject matter is deliberately dark and creepy, dealing with supernatural horror, human cruelty, and the consequences of war. The X Card is simply a large letter X on a card or sheet of paper placed where everyone at the table can reach it. If you have a big table, use more than one. One is included at the back of this book for you to copy.



If a player does not want to role-play a situation, they can simply pick up the X Card to signal a halt to play. They don't need to explain themselves, but you, as Narrator, and the table generally moves the scene of events or changes the circumstances to remove the unwanted content from your group narrative. It is not a pause button to let someone catch their breath, it is channel change button to do something else. Role-playing is, ultimately, a form of entertainment and keeping the events of the game in the realm of entertainment for all players is part of your role as the Narrator. You can read much more about the X Card from its creator John Stavropoulos at <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>. Alternately, search for some other safety tool that works for you.

The Narrator

As Narrator, you have a lot to do to make a session of Never Going Home a success. You must know the rules, control all the Antagonists and non-player characters, describe everything the player characters see, and keep the group moving through the events of the current Mission. While all this is happening, you must also create and maintain the proper atmosphere for the game. Keeping the following priorities in mind will help create the wasted landscapes, the haunting moments and the feeling of near-hopeless odds that Never Going Home calls for.

Signal Over Noise

As one of the players at the table, the Narrator can join in the social aspects of getting together to for a session. Have a laugh with your friends at the right time. There will be distractions from the game; phone calls happen, children may come to say goodnight, there will be snacks and bathroom breaks. This is all part of people getting together. Remember through all of it, you are the one who cuts through the noise to keep the focus on the game. The Narrator gives the group direction and other players take their cues. Keep your focus on the events of the game and others will follow your lead. Take the time you need before the session or during downtime to think about what is happening with the NPCs and the Antagonists in the Mission. What is going to happen next? Make plans, change them as needed, and keep the game moving.

Story Over Combat

Sometimes a story can be about a running battle or a series of increasingly tough Antagonists, but usually there is more to the story than combat. If the monsters are too easy to beat, the players can become bored and if they are too hard to beat, they could become frustrated. Instead put the reason for fighting at the center of the story. Why is the Unit fighting? Survival, revenge, power, confusion, and many others are remarkable story motivators for a fight. Which NPC betrayed them to the enemy? How did their own mistakes add to the trouble they have to deal with? Set up reasons why first, then use combat as a climax to the story or as a significant barrier before the characters even reach the climax of the tale. When it is time to have a fight, be ruthless. The players fight all the harder knowing what is at stake.

Involvement Over Happiness

The game and the setting are dark and foreboding. The goal is not to

make players happy with their characters' situation and pleased with their range of options. Instead, make sure the players are invested in game play and involved in the events of the current Mission. Bring the players deeper into the experience by talking directly to their characters; call them by their names, tell them what they are seeing, ask them what they are feeling. Listen when they talk about their hopes and dreams so you will know how to tailor events and threats to the soldiers trapped in your adventure instead of offering generic haunts. Sometimes it helps to let the players decide what is horrible about a situation. Force them to choose what threats they have to face. They know more about their characters' own fears than you ever will.

Creativity Over Notes

Though the game is built around working through Missions, that does not mean that you must check every box on your list of events. Sometimes you can tell players, "no," but sometimes you should let them go off and get themselves into unexpected trouble. Players often think of solutions to problems which you didn't anticipate or prepare themselves for threats you didn't plan to use. Reward their creativity when they think of worthy additions to the story. Often following the characters produces results just as good as, or even better than, your notes. When that happens, go with it. It is important to keep the story moving. You can change things as you go to bring the adventurers back to the story you planned, or you can add additional challenges if they are getting off "too easily." Be flexible, but don't let the players push you into letting them complete a Mission automatically. Never forget you have the final say on what happens in the world.

Horror Over Hope

The world has been broken open by horrors and there is no sign of things getting better anytime soon. Amid this horror, let the characters have some respite in pockets of normalcy. Offer them hints and rumors of better times ahead and of greener pastures somewhere else. If they quit, you will not be able to keep showing them new horrors. Remind the characters they are trapped in a haunted war zone, stumbling from one disaster to the next. Keep them leaping from the frying pan into the fire over and over again. Every victory must come with a terrible price. Every new dawn must be earned by the terrors of the darkest hours of the night. The cursed outnumber the survivors. Death is a certainty.

Telegram from army archive:

DATE: August 6th, 1916

TO: WILLIAM ROBERTSON, LONDON

MUTINY ON THE FRONT STOP OFFICERS MURDERED IN THE NIGHT STOP
SOLDIERS USED AS FODDER FOR DARK ARTS STOP I TOLD YOU THIS WOULD
HAPPEN STOP FRENCH ALLIES STILL UNREACHABLE STOP STILL NO
FIGHTING AT THE FRONT STOP GERMAN TRANSMISSIONS HAVE CEASED
STOP SOME SOLDIERS ARE NOW FOLLOWING ORDERS FROM A MAN NAMED
JOHN HAMPTON A VETERAN SOLDIER STOP HES HUNTING US DOWN ONE BY
ONE STOP

Missions

Never Going Home is played by completing Missions, which are small adventures including a setup, a number of events for the characters to interact with, and a reward for those characters who survive. A single Mission lasts for about an hour of play time but can cover any amount of time in the game. Some Missions are entirely self-contained, and some are part of series telling a larger, connected story. Play through as many Missions as needed for the length of your gaming session.

Each Mission has a Mission Folio divided into four main parts. First is the Mission Briefing that gives the Narrator all the background information they need to run the Mission. This also contains a briefer Mission Objective given to the players, it doesn't give the players as much information as the Narrator has. Next is the Journey, using cards and role-play to set the emotional tone for the Mission. The Journey is explained in more detail shortly. The main section of a Mission Folio is the Incidents. Each Incident details what the characters encounter as well as what the surviving characters get to do next. Incidents can range from making simple skill rolls to an encounter with Antagonists to moments of role play. Lastly, the Mission Folio gives a Decoration in terms of new cards added to players' hands.

After each Mission is complete, characters heal all their attributes to their maximum rank. Then players may spend cards they collected during the Mission to buy advancements for their characters. This is usually the only time characters can advance. After advancement the Narrator shuffles all discards back into the deck so it will be ready for the next Mission. Corruption is not cleared at the end of Missions. It takes a special event during a Mission to heal a Corruption.

The Journey

The Journey is an event that happens as the first part of each Mission. It focuses on role-playing or character moments and helps sets the tone for the events to follow. Each Journey lists its Requirement (i.e. three hearts, one card of each suit), and some more difficult missions also include things to avoid (i.e. no sixes, no more than one spade). The Journey Requirement is told to players before they contribute cards.

Each player *must* contribute one card from their hand to the Journey, but they may contribute more if they wish. If a player has no cards, add one card to the Journey from the deck without looking at it. By group consensus players may elect to take more time on the Journey to gather what they need and add additional cards from the deck, but never more cards than the total number of players. Sometimes the Narrator may also add cards to the Journey for corrupt characters. Players' hands are always secret so open discussion of who is contributing what card is discouraged. General discussion of how confident the players are they can succeed at the Journey can be allowed, especially if it is played in-character.

Once all the cards have been contributed to the Journey, the Narrator shuffles them and deals them out face down to the players. If there are more cards than there are players, the Narrator may deal themselves a Journey card as well. These cards should not be added to players' hands. Anyone may



start. One at a time, players reveal their Journey card and either answer the question posed by the Journey in the voice of their character or narrate a scene of what their character does during the Journey. When the Narrator reveals a card, they tell which character the thoughts they describe occur to or who is involved in the scene they narrate. All answers and narrations should be inspired by the themes of the revealed card's suit with higher numbers being more intense, if appropriate. The scenes can involve role-play with another character at the table. Each answer or scene should last for about one minute.

Depending on the Mission, successfully meeting the Requirement grants a bonus to the Unit for that Mission or failure will impose a penalty. Reveal this benefit or penalty after all the Journey cards have been revealed.

All cards contributed to the Journey are put in the discard pile. If a joker was played, shuffle the deck as normal (first draw for Corruption if it was the black joker).

The Difficulty Can Float

Some Missions do not list a Target Number for skill rolls, though many do. Even with a tightly scripted Mission, every possibility cannot be covered in the notes. If the Unit goes into a cellar you didn't plan to be there you aren't going to know ahead of time what the TN to search the debris should be. Sometimes the numbers on the page end up not working for your group. They might be sneaking past every guard you set without breaking a sweat or they might not be able to land a blow on the first monster you put in their path. Many times you will have to adjust or invent Target Numbers on the fly. Roughly half of skill rolls should fail. The difficulty floats to the level of the party.

Lower or raise TN as you see fit. You can also put more Antagonists into a fight or have allies show up to help your weary PCs. Another option is to make any skill roll a Challenge. Some Challenges are already called for in the Mission, but the Narrator may add more Challenges or convert a normal skill roll to a Challenge if it seems like the right decision for advancing the story. Work the collaboration of the characters into the story in some fitting way. For example, after coming up against a riddle-sealed door no one can unlock, discussion of the problem helps the soldiers remember their school books and they can attempt a Knowledge Challenge together. Converting a single roll into a group Challenge can also be important when facing particularly strong Antagonists. If the Unit attacks as a group, forfeiting their individual attacks for the combat round, they may score enough successes to hit a monster giving them some trouble. If they do this, only one weapon will actually damage the monster as the rest of the Unit is effectively creating the suppressing fire which allows one soldier to hit.

Mobs of Antagonists

In the statistics for each Antagonist is a listing for mob or solo-type Antagonists. Several Antagonists with the mob trait can pool their attacks and abilities when appropriate to attack a PC or complete a task. This is the same as PCs completing a Challenge. For example, a player character with a Brawn of 6 is impossible for a Common Soldier to hit with a ranged attack and even a PC with a Brawn of 4 is difficult for such an Antagonist. To make groups of enemy soldiers or monsters more threatening, they can act as one. If four Common Soldiers attack the PC with 4 Brawn they would only need to roll one success each, so when they pool the successes together – as a mob – they have enough to hit the PC. Only one Antagonist's weapon will actually deal damage as the rest of the Antagonists are effectively creating the suppressing fire which allows one Antagonist to hit. Even a tough character can be threatened by a large group of enemies.

The Narrator may group their mob Antagonists however they see fit at the beginning of combat and may adjust them later as events unfold. A mob of Antagonists acts on a single Initiative. Each individual Antagonist in a mob may only act once during a round of combat. Antagonists in a mob are targeted and dispatched individually, their Defense does not increase from being part of a mob.

Antagonists with Whispers

Some Antagonists can cast Whispers. Casting a Whisper is generally the same for Antagonists as it is for Player Characters. If the Whisper Path requires the caster to take damage or make skill rolls, they must take that damage or make that roll. If the Path requires a discarded card, the Narrator does not have to pay this cost as the Narrator does not have a hand of cards. Antagonists using Whispers are generally already fully Corrupted and no longer limited by the memories of their humanity.



August 7th, 1916

John has amassed an army of his own. They come from everywhere, once they hear the news. We're hiding in Delville Woods, but we're easy enough to find for those who know we're here. We have some ANZACs and some Canadians. French too. We even have a few Germans in our band. We'll take anyone as long as they want to fight the ones who brought the creatures into the world. The Germans: Reiner, Friedrich, and Josef, tell us about the night after the first day at the Somme. They saw it happen right in front of them. Their commander had discovered a tablet with ancient runes and had employed mystics and sorcerers to decipher the meaning after their own archeologists and translators failed to determine the origin. "The tablet was a spell. The flash of light was the thinning of the Veil that keeps them hidden from our world." We are all amazed by this. It fills John with fury. He's determined to wipe them out, and the men who brought them here. "But I don't understand," says Thomas. "Why do these creatures care about the war?" They don't, Reiner tells us. They are quite indifferent to our struggles. William is better, thanks to our medics, but he still isn't well. I go to see him after I eat a supper of hard bread and cold meat. He's sitting up in our make-shift field hospital. He's still too pale and his eyes have gone dark. What's worse, he stinks the way Bailey stank. And there are flies buzzing around him constantly. It turns my stomach, whatever they did to him, we can't undo it. "Alfred," he says, catching my arm as I approach him. "I don't know how much longer I can fight them." I shake my head. Get well, I tell him. Don't think about fighting. But he shakes his head. "No no, you don't understand," he says. "I can't fight them...the whispers." He taps the side of his head with his finger.

August 8th, 1916

Men continue to find us in the woods. They bring supplies and rations, but we'll soon be hungry. We must move, but there's nowhere to go.

August 12th, 1916

We are continually afraid of the noises we hear in the night. The men who summoned the monsters are still contacting them, bringing more of them into the world. And what's worse, the men who are coming to us now tell us that the officers and what's left of their army has learned how to use the magic that the Things brought with them. This unsettles John. He decides we must return to Longueval and capture the field office. It's risky, but aren't we used to it?

August 15th, 1916

We're nearing Longueval. We move during the day and hide at night. We must wear our masks all the time now. If we don't, the flies that continually swarm will drive us mad; they are much worse here than in the woods. And we never know when the gas will come. It's a new kind of gas. We don't know what it does exactly, but anyone that gets into it starts to deteriorate, like a doll left outside too long. We don't know who can possibly be sending the gas. It's not coming from shells. It sneaks up on us unannounced and there are never any soldiers following behind it.

Corruption

With the Veil torn and otherworldly threats walking the Earth, mere humans cannot help but fall victim to the influence of these powerful Others. That influence is measured in Corruption. Specific Mission Incidents, Antagonist abilities and Whisper effects may force a draw for Corruption. Additionally, learning additional Whispers causes Corruption. A character draws each time they earn the third, fourth and fifth point of training in each Whisper Path. Each time a character must draw for Corruption, they take the top card of the deck. If it is a joker, they reveal it and must draw again. First shuffle the deck, discarding the revealed joker as normal. Once the player draws a non-joker card, the character has a 50% chance of Corruption. If the card is red, they do not gain a point of Corruption, if it is black, they do gain one Corruption. The player makes note of their character's Corruption as they see fit and the Narrator also makes a record of all characters' current Corruption. These records are kept secret from the other players.

You use the players characters' Corruption against them in several ways. Firstly, when they contribute cards to the Journey, you may add one additional card for each character with 3 Corruption and two for each character with 4 Corruption. Additional cards mean you give yourself cards during the resolution of the Journey. You can use these to represent additional hardships the characters face or especially tough questions they must wrestle with. You can confront those players already corrupted with disturbing images or you can represent the Others attempting to influence those who have yet to be corrupted. There can be incidents which play out differently depending on how much Corruption they have. There are also Antagonists with attack priorities tied to Corruption. The current level of Corruption of any character is technically a secret, but sometimes it helps to sow discord in the group by allowing events to suggest who is already walking in the shadow of the Others.

Because Corruption is secret, there no requirements of how players must play once they are carrying Corruption. As Narrator you can nudge them in certain ways in how you describe what they see and in what you tell them enters their mind when the Journey uses a question. Other than this, it is up to the individual players to decide how they play their character dealing with Corruption. They may try to prove they are not under the influence of the Others by trying to be extra helpful to their peers. Perhaps they will feel they are already a failure and volunteer for dangerous assignments to atone or to punish themselves. They may choose to embrace their descent into madness with increasing selfishness and debauchery which threatens the Unit. Confusion should reign, because any of these responses could be thoroughly human responses to the situation the soldiers find themselves in.

When a character reaches 5 Corruption, they are on their last Mission. At the end of the current Mission (unless they happen to find a way to clear some of their Corruption) they do not return to base with the rest of the Unit. Instead the character has given themselves up to Others and wanders off to join them. They may appear later as one of **The Disfigured** or as some other Narrator-controlled Antagonist, but the player must create a new character. Those moments between realizing this is their last operation and the actual end of the Mission should be a culmination of the road the character was

on over the course of their Corruption. Will they turn on the rest of the Unit? Will they try to destroy themselves rather than heed the Others' call? The choices are up the player, but as Narrator you can help them decide what is best for their character and the overall story. Sometimes some dramatic revelation is appropriate. Other times simply disappearing from the embrace of human company is the most dramatic way for a character to exit the game.

Character Death

When a player character reached zero ranks in any attribute, they are dead. There is no way to bring them back with medical care nor magical healing. The body may rise again as one of **The Unfallen**, but the player will



need to create another character from scratch to continue playing. They use the normal character creation rules. The only thing you, as Narrator, must decide is when the new character can step into the story. Most of the time, it is easiest to assume the Unit is made of several NPC soldiers, one of whom steps forward to become a PC as soon as the start of the next combat round. Sometimes, it makes more sense to wait until the end of the combat or even until the end of the Mission, but don't keep players waiting too long.

Telegrams from army archives:

DATE: August 16, 1916

TO: WILLIAM ROBERTSON, LONDON

THE SOMME ABANDONED STOP TAKING REFUGEE IN ALBERT STOP MADE CONTACT WITH JOFFRE STOP FRENCH SOLDIERS ALSO DESERTING STOP NO WORD FROM THE EAST STOP INTEL SAYS RUSSIANS ON THE RETREAT STOP PEARCE WONT SEND ANY RELIEF FROM AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND UNTIL THIS MESS IS UNDER CONTROL STOP WHO ARE WE EVEN FIGHTING STOP

DATE: August 16th, 1916

TO: DOUGLAS HAIG, ALBERT

JOFFRE IS RAVING LIKE A MADMAN STOP WHAT HAVE YOUR SORCERERS UNLEASHED ON US STOP IF YOU CANT GET THE ARMY UNDER CONTROL GET YOURSELF OUT OF THERE STOP PARLIAMENT AND THE KING HAVE AGREED STOP UNTIL WE RESOLVE THE MATTER OF THESE MONSTERS WE WONT FIGHT THE GERMANS

Resources

Books

With the Help of God and A Few Marines - Albertus W. Catlin & Walter A. Dyer
George, Nicholas and Wilhelm: Three Royal Cousins and the Road to World War I - Miranda Carter

World War I: The Definitive Visual History - DK/Smithsonian

World War I in 100 Objects - Peter Doyle

To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918 - Adam Hochschild

A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk - Mesut Uyar & Edward J. Erickson

Film and TV

Gallipoli (2005) Tolga Örnek, director

The First World War From Above (2010) Mark Radice, director

They Shall Not Grow Old (2019) Peter Jackson, director

Websites

A virtual tour of the Italian Front: <http://www.worldwar1.com/itafront/virtual.htm>

A list of Canada's First World War battles: <https://www.vimyfoundation.ca/learn/canadas-fww-battles/>

Wikipedia has good "Battle of" pages for many battles such as Somme, Verdun, Belleau Wood, etc.

Other Media

Hardcore History "Blueprint for Armageddon" podcast series by Dan Carlin.
World War One (All Parts) by Epic History TV on YouTube.

Alfred's Journal:

August 17th, 1916

Tomorrow we strike. We've spent the first part of the night refilling guns and fortifying our defensive structures. We can see Longueval on the horizon. I'm sure they know we are here. Thomas and I are nervous. Poor William seems not to know what's happening around him. And John: stoic and stiff as ever.

August 18th, 1916

To our great surprise, Longueval was empty. Most of the equipment needed for a field office had been left behind. We seize it for ourselves. As we look around, we start to notice signs of sorcery. They've left markings on trees and boards. They've left circles on the ground. There are piles of bones behind the field tent where Thomas and I spied on Haig and Robertson. Thomas and I enter the tent, trying to make sense of it all. There are papers scattered everywhere, maps and telegrams and handwritten notes and manuscripts. While we're poking through the stacks of papers, the Telegraph starts buzzing. I pick up the headset and hear the series of beeps coming across the line. "Get Reiner," I tell Thomas. Thomas runs from the tent and returns a few minutes later. Reiner sits down at the telegraph, taking the one and paper I've found. He writes furiously as the message comes across the wire. After a few minutes, he pauses and takes off the headset. "That's it" he says. "Just the same words over and over." He hands me the paper and I read it aloud. "Lock. Book. Bear. Wood. Moon. Tide. Tree. What is this?" I look at Reiner, who simply shrugs, then Thomas, who shakes his head. "A code?" he asks. I don't know. I fold the paper and put it in my pocket.

Antagonists

How To Read these Entries

Name: Includes any alternate names as well as descriptions of motivations, habits, favorite attack methods or typical hiding places.

Type: Mob Antagonists can attack together using the Challenge rules. Solo Antagonists may only attack alone.

Initiative Value: A card number (ace high) as if the Antagonist drew the card for Initiative.

Armor: The Armor rating of the creature. It could be "None."

Brawn, Smarts, Guts: These attributes work just like player character attributes. If any retribute reaches 0, the creature is destroyed.

Weapons: For common hand weapons, use the standard weapon information. Weapons unique to the monster will give basic damage as well as any augments.

Skills/Abilities: One of the 10 common skills or a fully-described unique ability. Common skills and abilities with linked attributes and training points work just like other skill rolls. Some abilities are always active and happen without a skill roll if and when they apply.

Weakness: If the Antagonist has one, it will be listed. It could be "None."

Reward: The number of cards the character to who destroyed the creature draws from the deck. Some Rewards are "for the Unit" which means the Unit must decide who receives the cards. It could be "None."

Non-Supernatural Threats

Average Human

Any human being who is not a soldier. Farmers, townspeople, journalists, scientists, merchants, and politicians may be caught up in the events of the war and blown into the soldiers' path by fate. Many are simply trying to survive, so fear and desperation will dominate their personalities. Other humans stick stubbornly to their routines as if nothing is wrong with the world. Still some may have found a way to thrive in the war zone and may see any soldiers they meet as tools for their own ends. The trouble is, at first, it's difficult to tell a scared innocent in need of help from a shrewd manipulator.

Type : Mob

Initiative Value: 4

Armor: None

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 3

Guts: 3

Weapons: Generally none. May have a Knife, Club, Staff or Pistol, if appropriate.

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Communication

- Specialty : May have a third skill related to their profession or main experience.

Weakness: Generally, they fear for their lives and do what anyone who threatens them says.

Reward: None

Commando

A soldier with more fighting training than an average grunt, trained to near the peak of human ability. They are no longer surprised by the many ordinary deaths of war and most will be familiar with the supernatural horrors of the battlefield as well. The most pragmatic sort of soldier, they are sometimes swayed by realities "on the ground" when other soldiers would follow orders no matter what.

Type: Solo Initiative Value: 7 Armor: 4
Brawn: 5 Smarts: 3 Guts: 4
Weapons: Knife and Machine Gun
Skills/Abilities:
- Melee
- Stealth
- Ranged
Weakness: None
Reward: Draw 1 card.

Common Soldier

An infantry soldier from any army. Most are from the national armies involved in the war, likely a raw recruit but already weary with fighting. The Common Soldier is still determined to prove themselves to whatever officer or leader they are serving and will usually follow orders. The nature of such soldiers is to follow, and their loyalties can be swayed. They are sometimes found fighting for AWOL commanders, warlords, and even monsters. Members of civilian militias and even criminal ruffians use the same information, but their reasons for fighting can be very different.

Type: Mob Initiative Value: 6 Armor: None
Brawn: 2 Smarts: 2 Guts: 2
Weapons: Rifle and Bayonet
Skills/Abilities:
- Melee
- Ranged
- Specialty : Has a third skill related to their military position or training.
Weakness: None.
Reward: Draw 1 card for the Unit per group of Common Soldiers.

Hallow Sister (Gallow Sister or Nightingale)

Perhaps they were nurses with the Red Cross who were cut off in the war zone, maybe they were nuns whose abbey was destroyed, they could just be volunteers who took to helping the injured where they could. Whatever their origin, the Sisters have become a frequent, if not altogether welcome, presence on the battlefield. Many sisters stoop with age or with the emotional burdens they seem to carry. They wear a mix of salvaged military equipment, archaic medical gear, and religious paraphernalia, but are known by the bold red arcane symbols on their robes. They generally appear in groups of five or



less, in the aftermath of battle, seem to know right where the wounded are, and silently begin to ply their trade. If attacked for their efforts, they withdraw with supernatural speed, ending combat after one round.

Type: Solo

Brawn: 2

Weapons: None

Skills/Abilities:

- Stealth

- Knowledge

- Healing Arts : The expert care of the sisters (gentle words, half-chewed herbs spread over burns, fresh bandages) allows them to heal the body, mind and spirit of those they choose. This ability may target any attribute. If the Healing Arts skill roll surpasses the target's Defense, the target recovers one rank in the targeted attribute. Augments may be bought after the roll, as with weapons.

+1 healing (2).

- Triage: This ability is always active. The Sister may make either a Communication or Investigation roll to "read" a patient's future and see if they are "worth" saving. If they deem a patient to be unworthy of their time and attention they are as likely to perform a mercy killing as they are to leave the injured person alone. If they decide to help, they may reveal

Initiative Value: 10

Smarts: 4

Armor: None

Guts: 6

some of what they glimpsed as they work.

Weakness: None

Reward: None

Officer

An experienced soldier yet untouched by the Others. These soldiers are usually given special assignments or special responsibilities. Spy missions, sniper posts, scouting missions, sapping operations and disinformation campaigns are all run by Officers. They are loyal to their army and will be committed to completing whatever mission they are assigned. If captured, they will demand to be treated by the laws governing prisoners of war and they are unlikely to defect.

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 8

Armor: 3

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 3

Guts: 3

Weapons: Pistol

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Investigation

- Ranged

- Specialty : May have a fourth skill related to their military position or training.

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw 1 card.

Shell Shocked Soldier

Sometimes the pressure of war causes soldiers to break with reality. This can happen on the actual battlefield or in the weeks and months afterward. In either case, the primary motivation of a Shell-Shocked Soldier is to escape from the threatening situation their experience or memory tells them they are in. They try to exit wherever they are, even moving vehicles, and will fight anyone who tries to restrain them. A soldier experiencing shell shock is highly likely to get themselves hurt or killed and may bring unwanted attention upon anyone in the area.



Type: Mob

Initiative Value: 9

Armor: None

Brawn: 4

Smarts: 1

Guts: 2

Weapons: Knife or Pistol. Possibly a Rifle and Bayonet .

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Ranged
- Communication

Either cannot stop talking or body language clearly conveys distress. Either way, making sense of what they are saying is often difficult.

Weakness: A fellow soldier or someone experienced with shell shock may attempt a series of Communication rolls to end the shell shock episode. This character and the Shell-Shocked Soldier both make Communication skill rolls and compare who rolled more successes. Personal acquaintance with the Shell-Shocked Soldier grants one automatic success per roll. Three consecutive successes are needed to end the shell shock. Alternately, an Athletics Challenge: TN 4 may be used to successfully restrain a Shell-Shocked Soldier until the moment passes.

Reward: None

War Dog

These are the dogs of war. They serve as companions for the troops but are even more important for their trained roles. Dogs are employed as vermin killers, guards for officer's camps, tools for finding explosives, and as all-purpose detection systems. They can be found on patrol anywhere someone has decided no one else is supposed to go. They may also be encountered as feral packs, searching for their next meal.

Type: Mob

Initiative Value: 6

Armor: None

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 2

Guts: 2

Weapons: Bite: 1 damage

Skills/Abilities:

- Athletics
- Melee
- Investigation

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw 1 card.



Copy of a letter to Mary Warbeck. This letter was found tucked into the journal. It was never sent through the post. We have sent the original to the intended.

August 20th, 1916

Mary,

I can't see how you'll ever read this; no post comes now. I have no one to take it from me to you. How anyone will ever escape from this hell is yet to be seen.

All of it is true, but it's worse than Charlotte's husband has written. The flash of light on the first day of battle wasn't gas, as we had suspected. It wasn't a new weapon that the Germans created. But somehow, they were contacted by a power from beyond this world and it has spun out of control. It's true- it has taken all our officers. They sacrifice their own men, sometimes even their own lives, to use the power of these Things. What's more, we're all at constant risk of corruption from the darkness. I have managed to escape it thus far, but soon there will not be many of us left. We'll all be sucked into fighting each other, to what ends, I don't know...until none of us are left perhaps.

Mary, I know you won't be able to read this, but know that I love you. So much. Tell Mother too- and tell her that I'm sorry. I'm never coming home.

*With Love,
Alfred.*

Supernatural Threats

Cackling Horror

“Every one of the bastards who summons these things think they're special; that they can control it. They're wrong every damn time...and both sides end up paying for it.”

Pain, carnage, misery, conflict...the Cackling Horror lives not just to experience them, but to cause them. For far too many, the last thing they hear is the twisted, malice-filled laughter of this irredeemable monster. Unable to pierce the Veil on its own, power-hungry casters bring them across in exchange for what they believe will be a powerful ally who will grant them increased arcane power. This is true...to a point.

The only thing a Cackling Horror cares about is carnage, pain, and destruction. It does not care who wins or loses. It does not care about anyone's side of a conflict. It does not care about the person who foolishly summoned it. The only thing it cares about is that sweet, sweet moment, when everything goes south, and devolves into destruction, confusion, horror, and death. And it works extremely hard, even carefully subverting the plans of those who summoned it, to make sure that happens. Of course, if the



summoner also is adept and eager to cause widespread destruction and death, the Cackling Horror is more than willing to work with them in good faith...for a while....

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 6

Armor: 4

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 5

Guts: 4

Weapons: Claws: 1 damage - +1 damage (1), Assault (2), Flurry (3)

Skills/Abilities

- Stealth
- Communication
- Knowledge
- Investigation
- Elemental Rituals

Fire, Mental Anguish

- Chilling Laughter (Guts) : A smile spreads across its face. It enjoys being evil. This attack targets Guts. Targets all enemies engaged in combat against it. All victims suffer the Stun effect.

Weakness: None

Reward: Everyone involved in combat may either draw 1 card, or heal 1 point of Corruption.

Corpse Feeder (Ghoul or Leichenfresser)

“They wouldn’t be such a damn problem if they waited until you were actually...you know...dead.”

Clearly some type of humanoid carrion creature, corpse feeders, frequently referred to as ghouls, stalk the outskirts of the battlefield looking for the fallen, or the injured. They then drag the target away to eat them in peace. Wielding razor-like claws and teeth designed for tearing flesh, they are at times stubbornly persistent, skittering away when fired upon or attacked...only to circle around and come back later.

They avoid light, coming out almost exclusively at night. They scavenge for food either alone or in packs of up to six. However, if an area has experienced a significant amount of death recently, they may congregate in larger numbers and get bolder.



The detestable creatures appear to be drawn to death and decay, and when their numbers do swell, they have been known to specifically target field hospitals and villages whose inhabitants have already been weakened by starvation and disease.

Type: Mob

Initiative Value: 7

Armor: None

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 2

Guts: 2

Weapons: Claws: 1 damage

Bite: 2 damage, Assault (2)

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Stealth

Weakness: Shining a bright, sustained light on a corpse feeder will cause it to move into the nearest area of darkness. However, it is unlikely to leave combat unless it has been injured. The light does no actual damage to the creature.

Reward: Draw 1 card.



Cultists

Humans who have committed themselves to gaining the power offered by the Others. They have learned some Whispers and are hungry for more. They will almost always be led by a more powerful figure, usually a Veil Priest and are used as expendable front-line forces. They are willing to die to complete whatever assignments they are given. Cultists tend to dress in dull-colored robes as a symbol of their new path in life. They seem to still be mostly human, but they cannot usually be reasoned with.

Type: Mob Initiative Value: 8 Armor: None
Brawn: 2 Smarts: 4 Guts: 2
Weapon: Pistol and Knife
Skills/Abilities:
- Knowledge
- Ranged
- Elemental Rituals Fire
 (Or another Path, usually Old Ways or Rotten Tricks.)
Weakness: None
Reward: None

The Disfigured

These demons were once soldiers who lost their humanity in the trenches. They are infested with disease and vermin: rats, frogs, lice. Their skin and clothes are caked with blood, mud, and shit. Many are missing limbs and are marked and scarred by horrible war wounds. They are hotbeds of disease, though they are unaffected by the horrors they carry. Although they can and will use firearms, they love to hurt, maim, and torture with hooks, barbed wire, and mutilations. They are also skilled at deception and are frequently found having ingrained themselves in the ranks of regular soldiers.

If a player character takes on 5+ Corruption, they either go through a lengthy period of self-mutilation or throw themselves into physical altercations where they might suffer grievous wounds. If these Corrupt characters are ever seen again, they have become one of the Disfigured.

Type: Solo Initiative Value: 8 Armor: None
Brawn: 4 Smarts: 3 Guts: 3
Weapons: Pistol
Skills/Abilities:
- Athletics
- Melee
- Stealth
- Ranged
- Integrated Deception (Smarts)



- Jagged Implement (Guts) ☒ ☒ □ □ □: Disfigured almost always keep sharp objects on their person to use in case they are disarmed or if they have the chance to hurt someone slowly. Success on a Jagged Implement roll against a TN equal to the number of enemies they face means the Disfigured has pulled out a new melee weapon which does 2 damage.

- Vile Host: This ability is always active. Disfigured are always accompanied by a variety of sickness-causing germs and vermin live in their filthy wounds. Anyone who grabs or grapples a Disfigured has a chance for Corruption. Also, the Disfigured can choose to cause a chance for Corruption to anyone they damage with the Jagged Implement ability.

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw 1 card

Nightfiend

“When they broke the ceasefire and opened up on us with their big guns, the Colonel just smiled grimly, and told us to keep our heads down and wait for the screams...”

Ever hungry, drawn to light, noise, and battle, it is common for both sides of a conflict to agree to hold their fire until morning when there are signs of Nightfiends about.

Most often seen in the Middle East, and, given their almost crocodilian heads and voracious appetites, Nightfiends are also known as Sobek's Get, for the Egyptian god they resemble. They stalk the night alone, drawn toward sudden, bright flashes of light. A steady, dim or even moderately bright light may rarely draw their attention, but the spasmic visual display of gunfire, the brief moments where artillery turns night into day; this draws the Nightfiend's attention. Using its preternatural ability to use the shadows and darkness as cover, the beast sneaks up on the living and gorges itself on as much flesh as it can find, holding its victims down with its superhuman strength and causing horrific damage with its terrible jaws.

Even when confronted directly, their thick hides often repel light gunfire. Fortunately, they tend to hunt alone.



Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 9

Armor: 3

Brawn: 6

Smarts: 2

Guts: 3

Weapons: Bite: 2 damage - Critical (3)

Claws: 1 damage - +1 damage (1), Flurry (3)

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Stealth

Weakness: Bright lights, such as gunfire or artillery at night, draw its attention.

Reward: Draw 2 cards; choose one to keep, discard the other.

Rot Breeder

When one of the Disfigured manages to survive long enough and demonstrates a particular capacity to spread corruption, the dark powers nurture it into a Rot Breeder. These creatures are not simply disease vectors for contaminating humanity, but serve as organizers for the mass conversion of people into monsters. Where Hive Rats and the Disfigured are common, there is a good chance there is a Rot Breeder in the area directing their operations.

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 6

Armor: None

Brawn: 4

Smarts: 5

Guts: 4

Weapons:

May pick up and use human melee weapons, but usually does not.

Tongue-Tentacle: 1 Guts damage - +1 damage (2), Spray (2)

Skills/Abilities:

- Athletics

- Melee

- Ranged

- Rotten Tricks

Poison, Strange Wind, Swamp Gas

- Vile Host: This ability is always active. Rot Breeders are always accompanied by a variety of sickness-causing germs and vermin live in their filthy wounds. Anyone who grabs or grapples a Rot Breeder has a chance for Corruption. Also, the Rot Breeder can choose to cause a chance for Corruption to anyone they damage with a melee weapon.

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw 3 cards; choose one to keep, give one to another member of the Unit, and discard the last one.



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Skin Thief

A shuffling monster perhaps assembled from mis-matched parts with loose skin, long arms, and many teeth. They feed on flesh, the fresher the better, but they are careful to peel the skin from their victims first. They keep whole skins as trophies which they preserve by air drying. The most successful among them amass a collection of skins which they use to decorate whatever hole they claim as their home. The Skin Thief is an ambush predator rather than a hunter, disguising itself well enough to appear as a corpse or a living human to get close to potential victims.

Type: Solo Initiative Value: J Armor: None

Brawn: 4 Smarts: 3 Guts: 2

Weapon: Fists: 2 damage - +1 damage (2)

Skills/Abilities:

- Athletics

- Melee

- Wear Skin (Smarts) : The Skin Thief dismembers human bodies carefully and wears the stolen parts as easily as clothing. It uses arms, heads, and sometimes faces to fool its prey. It is a visual disguise only, a Skin Thief cannot speak and does not learn anything from its victims. The Wear Skin skill roll becomes the TN to spot the disguised creature.

Weakness: If not desperate for a meal, a Skin Thief may be persuaded to leave an area if its collection of trophies is threatened.

Reward: Draw 1 card.

Slugmule

"They stink. They're dumb as a box of rocks and they're ugly as homemade sin, but at least they're not trying to eat us...."

It's obvious that a lot of the monstrosities filtering through The Veil had to eat *something* before they got a taste for humans. Slugmules were probably at the top of the menu. Stinky, messy, and none-too bright, Slugmules are like a cross between a pig and a donkey, if both those creatures were a lot less bright and a lot less charming.

Despite their shortcomings, they are strong, have amazing endurance, and



seem fairly unflappable. All you need to do is put blinders on them, and they immediately become docile and accept any rider and just about any prodding to go where the rider wants them to go, even into a nest of demons. Of course, you better keep them blindfolded. As soon as their eyes are uncovered, they completely freak out, tossing rider and gear and stomping anything nearby into the mud. Also, you can feed them just about anything organic...dead bodies, rotted vegetables, outright garbage, you name it. This is immediately obvious as soon as you smell their breath. They breathe a lot....



Type: Solo Initiative Value: 3 Armor: None

Brawn: 4 Smarts: 1 (3 while blindfolded) Guts: 3

Weapons: Bite: 1 damage

Kick or Stomp: 1 damage - +1 damage (2)

Skills/Abilities:

- Athletics

- Melee

Weakness: Completely tame and obedient while blindfolded. Attacks anything and everything in range when not and will attempt to flee.

Reward: None

Trench Gremlin

These foul little creatures stand around fourteen inches (36 cm) tall. They are intensely curious about people and the things they covet. If something is important to humans, it becomes important to the Trench Gremlin. This includes machines, specifically weaponry, but also extends to food, money, alcohol, entertainment, and sweets. They can be cruel and wicked things but are not overtly malicious. They merely crave constant stimulation and don't care who they hurt or what they damage in the process. They are somewhat monkey-like in appearance, but stand bi-pedal, hunched over. They are agile, quick, and clever in escaping the people they piss off with their shenanigans, never engaging in a stand-up fight if they don't have to.

Type: Mob Initiative Value: K Armor: None

Brawn: 1 Smarts: 4 Guts: 2

Weapons: Claws: 1 damage

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Communication

- Mechanics

- Investigation

- Ranged

- Transport

- Quick Escape (Smarts) : The Trench Gremlin slips through the cracks and could be anywhere by now. Success on a Quick Escape roll against a TN equal to the number of enemies they face means Trench Gremlin leaves combat. It can flee or reenter combat at any time.

Weakness: Trapping the Trench Gremlin in a box or cage from which it cannot possibly escape temporarily reduces its Smarts to 1 and the only action it can take is to attack with its claws.

Reward: Draw 1 card for the Unit for every 3 Gremlins killed or chased away.



Trenchstalker

“NOW they stop firing?!?! Bloody bastards...”

Like some horrific cross between a frog and an anteater, this beast treats the trenches like an all-you-can eat buffet. Its powerful legs propel it across the No Man's Land swiftly, making it a difficult target to hit when on the move. Once it finds a trench, ignoring the screams cries of horror within, it begins to simply slurp soldiers up with a sticky, frog-like tongue. Very soon, the cries and screams are emanating from the creature's distended gut. Once it has had its fill, it leaps away to digest its still living prey in relative peace.

As a sign of how bleak and cynical this extended war has become, you can always tell which way Trenchstalkers are headed across No Man's Land, because the other side often stops shooting at them to let them pass through safely....and as to not draw attention to themselves.

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 6

Armor: None

Brawn: 5

Smarts: 3

Guts: 4

Weapons: Bite: 2 damage - Stun (2), Swallow Whole (3); see They're Still Alive below.

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Pounce (Brawn) : It leaps onto a target, knocking them to the ground. Victims suffer Stun and the Trenchstalker automatically makes a melee attack against the victim as the first action of the next round of combat which does not count as the Trenchstalker's action for the round.

- They're Still Alive: Victims of Swallow Whole are paralyzed by the creature's stomach juices and can do nothing but scream. They must be rescued by killing the beast within 4 rounds or they suffocate.

Weakness: None

Reward: Everyone involved in the combat draws 1 card.

The Unfallen

“Very early on we learned a pretty vital lesson: Bury or burn the damn bodies.”

A disturbingly frequent site on the battlefields, particularly following intense fighting, are the Unfallen. These are the re-animated corpses of dead soldiers, whose bodies were never buried; although there is some evidence that anyone who dies a violent death and does not receive a proper burial could rise to become one of the Unfallen.

Barely intelligent, and fortunately not much of a threat once identified, the greatest risks from these creatures are their numbers, and the chance that they will be misidentified as allies. Under cover of darkness they will wander into the barracks or marching columns of their former comrades, seemingly unaware they are dead until the fact is noticed by someone living.

Then all pretense is lost and they savagely attack with claw-like bony fingers or any melee weapon they can find, be it trench knife, shovel, or busted rifle. They occasionally have working firearms, but they do not appear to know how to acquire more ammunition and, fortunately, their aim is pretty



awful. Another unfortunate aspect of these beings is that they appear to be easily controlled and influenced by other, more powerful, corrupted beings and cultists, who use them as shock troops.

Despite whatever uniform they were wearing when they died, they appear to consider all, uncorrupted living beings to be their enemies. Most soldiers feel they are doing these creatures a service by sending them to finally rest in peace.

Type: Mob

Initiative Value: 5

Armor: None

Brawn: 2

Smarts: 2

Guts: 2

Weapons: Bayonet or Claws (as Bayonet)

1 in 6 will have a Rifle, but they are unable to use the Aim augment.

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Ranged

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw 1 card for the Unit for each group of Unfallen defeated.



Veil Priest

Humans who have a knack for learning magic can become powerful and feared figures in the cults they lead. They have the goal of greater power, but they are cleverer than common cultists. Most delude themselves into believing they can control the power of the Others if only they learn enough and make the right contracts. Willingly, or only half-suspecting, Veil Priests often serve as a doorway for the worst of the horrors which now swarm the Earth. They wear the robes of their cult or dress in black and are usually distinguished by some piece of faded or half-ruined finery. They don't seem to be truly human anymore and are no longer swayed by human concerns.

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 5

Armor: None.

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 4

Guts: 4

Weapon: Staff or Club

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Knowledge
- Investigation
- Chaos Songs

Or another Path, usually Blood Rites or Elemental Rituals.

Make Them Flee, Put Them Off, Stare Them Down

Weakness: They know they cannot enjoy their power if they are killed. They are always interested in the price of living one more day.

Reward: Draw 2 cards, keep 1.



August 21st, 1916

Reiner sits at the telegraph in the field office as much as he can. As the front descends into chaos—further chaos—we rebuild what he can in Longueval and hold our breath. At night we stand guard. The monsters sometimes wander too close. They don't seem to want to fight us. They are as indifferent as the tall nightmarish one I saw summoned on the night they used William to conjure it. We must watch William all the time now. He was dismissed from our field hospital; no one knew what was wrong with him. They say it's only his mind. But they didn't watch him like we all watch him now. They don't see him changing. He's taken to wandering and sometimes he goes too far afield. He doesn't talk. He's gone grey in the face. His eyes are bulging, his skin sagging and sinking. He's little more than a skeleton. He refuses to eat. And he mutters constantly about the voices. We take turns watching him—all day and all night—on John's orders. He's thought of turning him away, but he says he needs proof. "Of what?" Thomas asks. John simply shakes his head.

August 22nd, 1916

Reiner received a message today on the telegraph, a French message. We brought in Pierre to translate. He read out the words. "Cadenas-eh, a lock" he makes a motion with his hand as if he's turning a key. "Livre, a book. Ours, bear. Bois, the forest, or, maybe wood, timber." By now my heart is starting to beat faster. I look at Reiner who looks like his mind is furiously turning. "Eh, the next word—lune—is the moon. Marée, water, or the tide. And Arbre..." I cut him off. "Tree." I finish. Pierre looks up. "Yes yes, a tree. You know this code?" He looks from me to Reiner and then back. "It came in a few days ago in English," I say. "Send it out again. In any language. See what comes back." Reiner nods and gets to work. I can't stop thinking about it, even now, when I'm supposed to be sleeping. It will be my turn to watch William soon.

I was interrupted before by none other than William, as if writing about him had summoned him. He came up behind me so silently, I had no idea he was there. Everything happened so fast. He tried to kill me! His fingers came around my throat. We struggled so loudly that it awoke others. Thomas came to help me. We fought him off—who would have guessed he had such strength when he's barely more than a ghost! It gave us all quite a scare to say the least. "I'm sorry Alfred," he muttered over and over. We had to take him somewhere where he couldn't hurt anyone else. John tied him up and left him in the hospital. He wailed for a time—we could all hear his cries echoing out across the dark—but he's stopped now. Whatever proof John needed, he has it now.

August 23rd, 1916

Reiner has been sending out the list of words—lock, book, bear, wood, moon, tide, tree—in English, French, and German. He received something today which we think might be an answer. "Locked in the book of secrets. We bear witness—nature leads us into the eternal tree." Reiner was pale as death when we told us. "It's what they found," he tells us. "This was in the book they found." What book? I ask. "The book the wizards brought to us. The book they were using before all this happened."

Don't have the chance to ask more. We hear men calling out in fear. Even as I write these words, writing and looking, running now...I am hiding from them. The men are moving into the woods. The creatures from the other world are here; it's not like last time. This time they are angry. And there are men with them. I must stop writing now, for fear they will hear the scratch of my pencil on my paper but

The Belly of the Beast

Crystal Mazur

Mission Briefing

In August of 1916, the Battle of Somme changed the course of the war with an explosion that has now led to strange supernatural entities taking to the front lines. You have been part of a detail of soldiers who have been testing a weaponized vehicle in secret for the better part of a year. The project took a while to get approvals, and many seem to think it is a pipe dream at best. Since the Battle of Somme event, there has been a push to move your secret project to the front lines for actual combat. These weaponized vehicles, called Tanks, have gone through several forms of testing and development to get to where you are now. While some of these previous tanks had been failures, the advancement of development of the current tanks leave you hopeful it will help to turn the tide of the war in your favor.

The project feels though it has been cursed since the beginning, with setbacks and failed tests plaguing the detail over the past year. Several of the lead scientists on the project have died mysteriously or committed suicide after one of the failed tests. The plans have been kept secretive until recently, as you get closer to testing the tanks in active battle fronts. There has been talk of starting to open some of the research to the public, which has been met with trepidation. Military leaders ask for secrecy for a few more weeks to finish up testing and development because they are hoping to utilize them soon. Your superior officer pulls your entire detail off to speak with you as you are finishing up your work for the day. A reporter is being allowed to visit your base and have a look at your operations.

Mission Note: This mission consists of several parts, each of which has a few set Incidents that deal with a subplot. There is a spy within the detail that characters will slowly uncover. These Incidents always occur even if the Requirement of each Journey are met, but do not need to be the first Incidents of each part.

Mission Objective Part 1

You have traveled to the drop-off point and connected with the reporter. Escort the reporter back to base safely by the end of the day.

The Journey

You set out before dawn across the countryside to the pick-up point several miles southward. It is humid and threatens to rain during the trip. As you continue to travel through the expanse, the reporter continues to ask a lot of questions, making it hard to concentrate on the surroundings. The route to the drop-off point travels near the fighting taking place in the area. It is difficult to navigate the area due to rerouting, skirmishes breaking out, ghosts, and uncrossable terrain. You need to think fast and act as a Unit to make it there and back in time.

Requirement: All red cards

Narrative: Describe how you will make it to base with the reporter undetected.

Failure: The detail comes under attack and the reporter is put into danger.

“A backpack is discovered” and **“The supernatural roam this area”** always happen, even if the Journey succeeds. Choose additional Incidents equal to the number of black cards played.

Incidents

A backpack is discovered filled with papers and supplies on a corpse that you walk past. Communication: TN 2 is needed to discover what the papers say. If successful, it is discovered the enemy is also developing their own vehicle similar to the one your detail has been working on the past year. The papers indicate the information was gathered by someone on the project detail. It is possible you have a traitor in your group who is feeding the enemy these plans.

The supernatural roam this area, so you may run into an entity you are not equipped to fight. Some of the terrains were damaged by skirmishes, making it hard to traverse. You happen upon several **Corpse Feeders** who are feeding on the bodies of the dead from a recent fight. It is the first time most of you have seen these monstrosities, so it catches you off guard. If you are unable to stay hidden, they will direct their attention to you. (2 x **Corpse Feeder**)

Get Lost: It is quite easy to get lost in this area given all the chaos happening. There are several explosions nearby, causing you to go off route and get turned around. Pay close attention to your surroundings and your map, or you may be stuck out here after dark. Make an appropriate roll to get you back on the correct pathway before dark.

Fall under fire: It is very possible your detail will fall under heavy fire during this mission. You cross too close to the front lines and are unable to remain unseen. German soldiers can track down your group and open fire upon you, causing your progress to be slowed or stopped while you deal with it. Your primary objective is the safety of the reporter you are escorting. (Unit x 2 German **Common Soldiers**)

The reporter is injured, and your Unit is compromised and in danger. The reporter stumbled onto a trip wire and caused it to explode. Everyone rolls Athletics: TN 2 to avoid the explosion or take 1 damage to Brawn regardless of Armor. You must stabilize the reporter to move them and get them out of harm's way. Burn 1 card to stabilize the reporter enough to make it back to base.

You stumble upon a ritual conducted by **Cultists** gathered close to the base. There is a smell of incense and sulfur in the area accompanied by a strange glowing around the area. You can hear chanting and a low growling that seems to be growing in volume the longer the chanting continues. Dread begins to take hold and you all start hearing whispered promises of power and strength. It is tempting to give in to the voices; roll Knowledge: TN 2 to resist the allure of the chanting. Those who fail must draw for Corruption. If the Unit wishes to investigate what is going on, they must roll Stealth: TN 2 to avoid being detected by the cultists. Their chanting speaks of a new power rising soon. (Unit x 2 **Cultists**)

Decoration

All survivors draw 1 card.

Mission Briefing

Yesterday was a long day for your group and you have a feeling of dread. Your detail has been asked to give the reporter a tour of your project and to showcase the advancement of technology from the start of this endeavor. Your detail is one of the leading field experts on the tank and its effectiveness in battle. This request goes against the collective thought of continuing to keep this research a secret. Up until this point, there have been several styles of tanks which have had their shortcomings. Several models of the tanks were complete failures and the project was on the verge of being canceled because of it. The newest model addressed a lot of these issues but has not yet been tested against the supernatural creatures seen wandering throughout the night. It continually feels like the project has been cursed.

Mission Objective Part 2

Showcase the tanks and answer any of the questions the reporter may have for you.

The Journey

You take the reporter to the testing fields to show them the tanks and what they can do in combat. Travel to the test site is easy from the base and does not take up any resources you have to make it safely. You run through several scenarios and answer questions about the project.

Requirement: 1 of each Suit

Question: What makes this tank superior to those tanks before it? How will it handle supernatural creatures in battle? What are some of the drawbacks to this tank?

Failure: There are multiple issues which happen with the tank and the demonstration making it problematic for showcasing the success of the machine. "**A traitor is in your midst**" will always happen, even if the Journey succeeds. Pick 1 other Incident plus an Incident for each suit missing.

Incidents

A traitor is in your midst, as you had discovered yesterday. Keeping an eye out for anything suspicious, you carefully watch those around you to see if you can discover their identity before they are able to sabotage the project or the demonstration. Roll Investigation or Communication: TN 5 to identify the traitor correctly. Any failures lead to a false accusation with the result players are unable to reroll Skill Dice for the rest of Part 2.

Tank malfunctions have been a setback of this project since the beginning. While it seemed like you were headed in the right direction with the project, today, the tank backfires on you while demonstrating the firing capabilities. Roll Athletics: TN 2 to avoid being injured by the tank. Take 1 damage to Brawn if failed.

Ghosts in the machine have never been a problem. Today seems to be the day problems wander into your testing field. **Trench Gremlins** can bypass the tank's defenses, leaving those soldiers inside vulnerable to their mischief. This is the first time some in your detail have seen these strange creatures and they may have trouble dealing with them. (4 x **Trench Gremlin**)

The Germans have discovered this location and attack the detail as they are working on the tank. It is unclear how the Germans found this area, or

how they got past the security around it. The detail comes under attack and the project is compromised. To protect the integrity of the project, the detail must make sure to kill all German soldiers before they escape. After combat, roll Investigation or Communication: TN 3 to make sure all enemies have been eliminated. (Unit x 2 German **Common Soldiers**)

You can't fix a broken tank easily, so when you bust a tank, it can set the entire project back months. Which is exactly what happens. Your tank breaks. Gears get interlaced and the treads break, making it impossible to run, and almost impossible to fix. Challenge Mechanics: TN 4 is the only way to fix the broken tank, so it does not slow down the project.

It is easy to get lost in this terrain, and while taking the tank out for the demonstration the driver gets turned around and wanders out of the testing area, which can lead to other complications. Roll Transport: TN 2 to get back to the testing area without incident, though your commanding officer may not be happy to hear about this.

Decoration

Unit draws and splits 3 cards.

Mission Briefing

The day after the tank demonstrations your commanding officer brings your detail into their office for a meeting. The continued feeling of dread and being cursed continues for the group, making it hard to concentrate on your tasks. Upon arrival, your commanding officer wishes for your detail to get him a verbal report of what happened the day before. He patiently listens while the group retells what happened the day before. He states there is a concern about the reporter and what their article is going to cover regarding the tanks and their performance in battle. After taking some time to weigh your report along with the information he has, he informs your detail he has no other options before him, and the reporter needed to be dealt with. Your commanding officer feels it is better to handle this quietly so you can continue with the project, rather than have everything compromised.

Mission Objective Part 3

Deal with the reporter 'as you see fit.'

The Journey

There is a lot left open to interpretation on how to deal with the reporter. You meet privately as a group to first discuss what options you feel are appropriate for your detail before enacting upon them. The detail may also further question the reporter on what they plan on doing with their article or how the reporter felt about the demonstration the day before. If asked to share their article, the reporter only states they are just focusing on the facts of what they saw, and the truth about tanks must be shown to the world.

Requirement: 3 of the same suit

Question: How do you think you should carry out your order to 'deal with the reporter as you see fit'?

Special Journey Resolution: Each player picks one card from their hand for the Journey as normal. They place this card face down in front of themselves. Then each player draws a second card from the deck. The Narrator will then

describe what each suit means for the Incidents (see below). The players may then decide if they wish to keep their already played card or replace it with the card drawn from the deck. The unused cards are discarded. Players keep and resolve their own chosen card rather than the Narrator shuffling the Journey cards. Answering the Journey question in character can take more than one minute.

Mission Ending: There are doubts and disagreements about how best to handle the reporter, which causes issues within the ranks of the Unit. **“Too many spies in the pot”** and **“Our superior officer is wrong”** are always part of the resolution, even if the Journey succeeds. If the Requirement is met for the Mission, the group seems to agree about what course of action to take and may go forward with their agreed upon solution. If the Requirement is not met, the detail must take a vote on how to handle the situation and go with that. If a tie occurs, the Narrator will pick a random player to draw a card, and that is the Incident which the detail must act on. By then, it may be impossible to work together.

Incidents

Too many spies in the pot: Paranoia is running high in the detail. Even if they caught a traitor earlier, there could be another, or several more, hoping to sabotage the project. It is a high probability the traitor is the reason for all the bad luck with the project. Whether it is through magic or simply passing information to the other side, the traitor in the group has got to be the cause of it. It is possible this will cause the Unit to turn on themselves and destroy each other.

Our superior officer is wrong: They do not agree at all with their superior officer and believe them to be compromised. They cannot support the superior officer any longer and feel they may be the one to blame for all the bad luck surrounding this project. They feel it might be better to go AWOL than to follow through with any further orders like this.

Eliminate (Club): The reporter cannot be allowed to live. They should be quietly eliminated to avoid having their article released to the public and potentially endanger the project and its outcome. Whether you disagree with the reporter’s view on tanks, or whether you are loyal to the commanding officer, you feel that the reporter is a danger to the project.

Escort back (Heart): The story must be told. Information needs to be given to the general public, so they know what they are dealing with. It is imperative for the public to know what these tanks are and what they can do. To silence a reporter in the name of secrecy does the public at large a disservice on information. You can just ‘let the reporter escape’ and hope they make it. It would be even better to escort the reporter back to safety and lie to the commanding officer about the reporter being killed.

Destroy notes (Spade): Without proof there is no story. While killing a reporter is bad, destroying their notes and any photographs on the subject is nice and clean. There would be enough doubt put on the reporter for lack of evidence it will make their report hard to believe and possibly be unpublishable. It would also help you to avoid killing a reporter, an act that could turn everyone against your detail very quickly if done wrong.

An offer you cannot refuse (Diamond): The traitor was right all along. You

were talking to the German spy and have been thinking about joining the plot. They have been asking for help by gathering information and sowing confusion within your detail, as the tanks are too dangerous for humanity. You feel they are speaking the truth and you want to help by delivering the reporter to the other side.

The Reporter

Use the Antagonist **Average Human** with a Specialty of Investigation.

Conclusion:

Should the detail decide to kill the reporter, they do so quickly and quietly. They can dispose of her body and take care of all the evidence that is left behind, making it look like an accident that was caused by enemy forces. Other options may be more complicated, but nothing the group can't handle. No matter what course the detail decides to move forward with, there is too much bad blood and suspicion for them to continue to work together. They all request to be transferred off the project and move on with their service.

Decoration

All surviving soldiers draw 2 cards, and keep 1.



The Lamps are Going Out

Corey Capps

"The lamps are going out all over Europe: we shall not see them lit again in our life-time." - Edward Grey

Mission Note: The Village the characters are entering is corrupted ground, do not reveal this directly. To visually represent the waning hope of the village at the start of the game create a Lamp Counter by dealing two cards per player into a separate pile behind the Narrator screen, these will be revealed during the Journey. For any death in the village (character, NPC, killed by character, killed by NPC, killed by natural or unnatural causes) remove a card from the Lamp Counter. If a player caused the death, use the Lamp Counter for the Corruption chance. If at any point all the cards are removed from the Lamp Counter go to the Incident **The Lamps**. Characters can continue to be corrupted beyond this point but will do so using normal game rules.

Mission Briefing

Near the end of a long day of fighting, deep in the enemy trenches, the rush of victory almost compensating for the twist of fear and disgust in your gut, your squadron rounds a corner just in time to see the members of an enemy squadron retreating up a ladder and back to the relative safety of the captured ground they've held for months. Your squadron surges forward and quickly piles out of the trench after them. Ahead of you the enemy soldiers rush into a small village. Arriving at the edge of the village you don't see the soldiers, or anyone.

Mission Objective

Find the enemy soldiers.

The Journey - While reading this deal the cards from the Lamp Counter face-down in a row in front of the Narrator screen to represent the lamps.

The village is old, but well-kept for being near the edge of a battlefield. It is near dark but oil lamps in various numbers and sizes sit in front of the doors of some of the buildings, creating strange shadows everywhere. The buildings appear to be a mix of family homes and business, none taller than two stories. Some appear untouched, others are in ruins. The stone road ahead of you is approximately a mile long and passes from one end of the village to the other but opens midway into a square dominated by the silhouette of a chapel. The quiet is unsettling. Fear and confusion start to creep into the back of your mind, "Where could they be hiding?"

Requirement: A mix of black and red cards (at least one of each) with total value of black cards that is higher than the total value of red cards. Face Cards count as 10s, Aces count as 1s.

Narrative: Using the received card each person should "spot" a hiding place and describe why it seems like the place they should check first.

Success: The characters spot movement in the location described by the highest value black card. Use that description for the first location the group decides to investigate. Anyone with a card that matches the number of the highest card may draw a card.

Failure: The quiet of the village shakes you and you can't seem to focus, any place will do, so you investigate the location described by the lowest red card. Anyone holding a card that matches the number of the lowest card must also discard it.

Incidents

Street Incidents:

There are 4 types of buildings in the street, based on the groups' description from the Journey, use the information below that best fits their description. Based on the groups' projected playtime allow as many investigations as you want until it feels appropriate to move to the square.

Street Incidents are not presented in order and are mostly repeatable, allow the group to determine which building they want to investigate next. If the group moves towards the square or the Narrator feels it's appropriate move to the Incident **Night Patrol**

Ruined Building - No Lamp

Characters who don't investigate should face a physical threat (collapsing floor, falling wall, etc.) and take 1 Brawn damage or a mental threat (decaying or burned corpses, startling a group of bats who fly in their face, etc.) and take 1 Guts damage. Characters who investigate may roll Investigation, Knowledge, Mechanics, or any skill they can justify roleplaying: TN 2 to detect the danger and avoid it.

Ruined Building - With Lamp

Similar to **Ruined Building - No Lamp**. If multiple characters approach establish a marching order. When they get near to the lamp check the lead character's Corruption score for the effect below. *The lamp flickers to life...*

0 - Normal Flame ...and burns brightly.

1 - Normal Flame ...and sputters but stays lit.

2 - Purple Flame ...and the flame turns purple as you see notice the oil turning dark.

3 - Purple Flame ...and flares into purple flame. You feel weakened. Roll Knowledge or Communication: TN 2. You gain a memory of the original owner of the lamp Add one dot of training to any untrained skill. Take a Corruption chance. Failure: Take a Corruption chance. Suffer 1 Smarts damage.

4 - Purple Flame ...flares into purple flame which is drawn down into the well of the lamp. The lamp detonates. All nearby characters Challenge Athletics: TN (3 + Number of Characters) You avoid the explosion. Failure: Glass shrapnel and sticky burning oil explode through the air. Take 1 Brawn or Guts damage. Regardless: Any chance of stealth is gone. Skip to **Night Patrol Incidents**

Intact Building - No Lamp or Broken Lamp

There is a 1 in 2 chance that the door is locked. These are buildings with residents who had left before the occupation, somehow managed to escape, or willingly joined the supernatural occupation.

The door of this building is marked with a dark sooty X. The interior has been tossed, but there may still be useful things here. Characters may roll Investigation: TN 1) useless but sentimental item (doll, pictures, etc.) that indicates the residents left in a hurry or were forced to leave. 2) a clue to what's going on in the village (a diary indicating that the minister is in league

with the soldiers, the words "The Night Master hears all" carved into a table top, an oil lamp full of what looks like blood", the X on the door is blood mixed with something caustic, etc.) 3) Something useful (a weapon, flashlight, first aid kit, etc.) the character draws a card.

Intact Building - With Lamp

These are occupied buildings, roll 1D6 to determine the number of residents.

Roll 1D6 to determine the color of the lamp(s):

1-2 Normal Resident / Normal Flame

3-4 Corrupted Resident / Flickering Purplish Flame

5-6 Extremely Corrupted Resident / Bright Purple Flame.

If characters are looking for a specific type of lamp there should be at least 1 of each, but Normal Resident / Flames are most common. **Narrator Note:** You may choose to roll for each resident of an occupied building, while this may offer unique role playing scenarios, rolling for the largest lamp to represent the NPC the characters interact with will be much easier to keep track of, in game terms Corruption spreads quickly through a home.

- **Normal Resident**

These doors are always locked. Forcing/jimmying the door/window with Athletics or Mechanics: TN 2 forces a Corruption chance. The residents may communicate through the door. They will try to dismiss the characters. Characters may roll Communication: TN 1) Resident tells them it's not safe after dark, that's when the Inquisitors come out. 2) The resident has not seen the enemy soldiers but says soldiers occupy the buildings in the square. Threatening the resident results in +1 TN to roll.

- **Corrupted Resident**

There is a 50% chance these doors are locked. Forcing/jimmying the door/window with Athletics or Mechanics: TN 2 forces a Corruption chance. Residents will open the door if they know the characters are foreign soldiers. There is a 50% chance the resident will lie about seeing the soldiers (they haven't) and ask the soldiers to pay for the information, otherwise roll Communication as for a normal resident. Threatening or attacking the resident has a 1 in 2 chance of the resident(s) retaliating (Use **Cultist**).

- **Extremely Corrupted Resident**

These doors are never locked. If the character knocks, the resident will open the door, if they force their way in, the resident greets them and asks them to close the door. These residents will always lie about having seen the soldiers and offer to lead the characters to them. They may pretend to hate what's happening but are hoping to be promoted instead of sacrificed. Optional Communication: TN 3 will see through the lies. Threatening or attacking the resident forces a Corruption check and has a 1 in 2 chance of the resident(s) retaliating (use **Cultist**) who calls for help, jump to **Night Patrol Incidents**.

Night Patrol Incidents:

These Incidents are presented in order but not all occur, start with **Bonfire**, and follow the prompts within the Incident to create your story.

Bonfire

The Unit sees a bonfire has been started in the square, revealing a large group surrounding it. They appear to be lighting torches, each turning and heading out into the village in different directions as they remove their torch from the flames. One turns and slowly starts walking down the street the Unit is on.

Inquisitors

*You watch as the soldier (**Inquisitor**) gets closer, as he walks down the center of the road, he slowly waves the torch back and forth chanting in a deep voice.*

Give players a moment to react.

- If they try to hide use the building descriptions from **Street Incidents**.
Challenge Stealth: TN (1 per character or 1 per character -2 if inside a building or with resident)
Success: The Inquisitor passes without issue. The Unit may continue to investigate with another appearing after each investigation but increase TN of the Stealth Challenge by 1 per character each time they repeat this Incident. They may move freely to **The Square**.
Failure: Jump to **Inspection**
NOTE: If any character in the Unit was exposed to lamp oil in **Ruined Building - With Lamp** they may not contribute to Stealth challenges or take Stealth skill roll when hiding from **Inquisitors**
- If they move to the square without hiding jump to **Inspection**.
- If the Unit is being escorted by **Extremely Corrupted Resident**, they will avoid the Inquisitor, the resident explains they must remain quiet and follow him/her.
Challenge Stealth: TN (1 per character -2) Success: *You make it to the square where the resident tells you the soldiers you're looking for are in the Chapel and says they must return home. The resident leaves but doesn't go home, they're going to the minister. Jump to **The Square**. Failure: *The resident says stop where you are and be absolutely silent* jump to **Inspection***
- If the Unit engages the **Inquisitor** quietly run combat normally, if they use guns or other loud instruments Characters have 1D3 rounds before reinforcements (2 Inquisitors) arrive.

Inspection

*The soldier stops abruptly and slowly turns his head in your direction. The lenses of his gas mask reflect the light of the torch seeming to radiate a sickly purple glow. He turns towards the uUnit and begins walking in their direction. The soldier steps closer, waves his torch and evaluates the party seeming to look through the characters. The raspy draw of air through his mask reverberates the air around you. Challenge Investigation: TN (1 per total Corruption of the characters) Do not reveal results directly to players. Success: *Seeing nothing the soldier turns and returns to his patrol.**

Failure: *The soldier approaches the most corrupt character and whispers, "Sacrifice for the Night Master," and shrieks casting the Fire Whisper. Combat ensues. Characters have 1D3 rounds before reinforcements (2 Inquisitors) arrive.*

The Square

The square is occupied by:

- **Corrupted and Extremely Corrupted Residents** 2 for each card remaining in the Lamp Counter - each carries a lamp or lantern
- **Inquisitors** who will leave after lighting their torches down side streets if characters wait
- **2 High Inquisitors** who stand on either side of the chapel doors
- **1 Vehicle** that may be hotwired (roll Mechanics: TN 3) but has keys under the seat (roll Investigation: TN 1).
- Buildings with no lamps
- A bonfire

The Chapel

*A chapel, lit by the bonfire, sits across the square from where you entered, two large doors flanked by stained glass windows sit beneath a bell tower with shelling damage that has created a large hole in the face of the chapel. A man (**The Minister**) is standing on the landing outside of the chapel. "Welcome, welcome... all are welcome to meet The Night Master. Come forth and look to the heavens and hear the truth."*

*Two strangely dressed soldiers (**High Inquisitors**) open the doors of the chapel and bring out the enemy soldiers (1 for each special Corruption card remaining) that the Unit had chased into the village. Their hands are bound, and their eyes are covered with blindfolds, they are marched onto the steps of the chapel and each forced to kneel in front of a lamp. Some beg to be freed and ask what they've done wrong, others remain stone faced and silent. The Minister walks behind them, assessing them, and stops behind a soldier who remains silent. "Have you no prayers for The Night Master?" The soldier says nothing. The Minister nods to an inquisitor who grabs the soldier's head and forces it backward making him face the sky as he slides his hands over the face of the soldier, his thumbs passing under the blindfold. "Would you see the heavens? Would you hear the truth?" The soldier begins to grunt as the Minister presses his thumbs down into the soldier's eyes. He struggles but is held fast by the Inquisitors. As the soldier finally screams in pain, the Minister proclaims to the crowd, "A worthy prayer for The Night Master" kicking the soldier forward onto the lamp which explodes into purple flame then quickly dies out. An inhuman shriek comes from the tower of the chapel.*

How it all goes down

Two events will trigger the last Incident **The Lamps**, either all the Lamp Counter cards being removed or the death of the Minister.

- If characters try to intervene all residents except the enemy soldiers and minister will engage. At the end of each round of Initiative there is a 1 in 3 chance of an additional Inquisitor joining the fight.
- If characters don't intervene the Minister kills each of the soldiers gruesomely
- The Minister cuts the throat of one tied soldier each round. Each time this happens, remove a card from the Lamp Counter.

The Lamps

Describe the Incident that causes **The Lamps** to trigger adding: *The lamps around you all begin burning purple, the flame growing to unnatural heights tinting everything in the village the color of an old bruise. Scents of ammonia and copper burn your nostrils and irritate your eyes. You feel a reverberation in your bones as a blaring screech comes from the tower of the chapel and all the lamps go out.*

If engaged in combat all combatants turn their attention to the tower, characters may continue to fight if they choose. At the start of the next Initiative round:

The Night Master

A black pair of clawed hands appear at the edge of the opening in the tower as an abomination heaves itself into the air. The minister (or any corrupted if the minister has died) calls out, "Awaken Night Master" as the creature spreads giant wings and shrieks again.

If the characters are making noise, fighting with guns or draw attention to themselves The Night Master will attack them, if not it will land on the steps of the chapel and begin eating the dead.

Characters, if undiscovered, may choose to leave the village at this point. Challenge Stealth: TN (2 per player) Success: Sneaking past Inquisitors you make it safely back to the trenches to find the line was broken and is now held by your allies. Failure: The characters must fight The Night Master who has noticed their attempt to escape.

If characters can start the vehicle in the square, they may automatically succeed on leaving the village, but after reaching the trenches a shadow circles the trenches at night. **Narrator Note:** It is at your discretion to have The Night Master fight the soldiers by dropping on them as they try to enter the trenches or just having a haunting villain in the night sky.

Fighting the Night Master

The monster has no loyalty and while given cause to attack the characters will also attack other noisy NPCs (using guns, Whispers that are verbal, etc.) with the exception of the Minister. Killing the Night Master and The Minister stuns the other corrupted out of combat, while still dangerous, they will wander away and only attack if provoked. The characters may leave the village unmolested at this point.

Decoration

For every unfilled first and second dot of Corruption totaled across all characters, the Unit receives a card. The cards should be dealt to characters in order of least corrupt to most corrupt, one at a time.

Antagonists

Inquisitors

An enemy soldier who has succumbed to the will of the Night Master and patrols for sacrifices. He wears his gas mask and has an oil cloth pulled forward like a hood over his head and shoulders. The cloth and his uniform are covered with strange crudely drawn symbols painted in white and black. He carries a torch that drips a dark crimson and burns a low smoky purple flame.

Initiative Value: 4

Armor: None

Brawn: 2

Smarts: 4

Guts: 2

Weapons: Fist: 1 damage

Torch Club: 1 damage but catches victim on fire (ongoing 1 damage per round on victim's turn until an action is spent put out the flames).

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Elemental Rituals

Fire

Weakness: Inquisitors are blind but use a form of echolocation. Staying still and quiet essentially makes you invisible to them.

Reward: None

High Inquisitors

An enemy soldier who has succumbed to the will of the Night Master and received its blessing. He wears his gas mask and has an oil cloth pulled forward like a hood over his head and shoulders. The cloth is completely covered in a white paste. He is larger than normal. He carries a staff that smolders and glows purple at the end.

Initiative Value: 8

Armor: 2

Brawn: 4

Smarts: 2

Guts: 3

Weapons: Fist: 2 damage

Torch Staff: 2 damage but catches the entire Unit on fire (ongoing 1 damage per round on each victim's turn until an action is spent to put out the flames)

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee

- Investigation

- Elemental Rituals

Fire

Weakness: High Inquisitors are blind but use a form of echolocation. This improved echolocation does not provide still and silent characters with invisibility but does make the Inquisitor sensitive to loud noises. Gunfire at Melee range does 1 damage to Smarts.

Reward: Draw 1 card.

Minister

The former minister has fully succumbed and been blessed by the Night Master. He is older and appears to be in poor health. He wears roughly made vestments that are covered with a white paste. His glasses appear to be smoked, hiding his eyes.

Initiative Value: 10

Armor: 2

Brawn: 2

Smarts: 6

Guts: 5

Weapons: Ceremonial Knife: 2 damage - Flurry (2)

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Communication
- Elemental Rituals

Fire

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw cards equal half the number of players to be shared by the player who landing the killing blow.

The Night Master

It appears to be a giant bat, its body the size of a person, its arms ending in 6-inch (15 cm) clawed hands with 4-foot (1.2 m) spines coming from the side of each wrist, a membrane running under the arms from the end of each spine to the waist of the creature allow it to fly. Covered in dark hair, its body is ape-like. An oversized upturned flat nose dominates its face, a heavy brow covers tiny beady eyes, ears larger than the head protrude from each side of its face. When it shrieks you see a too-wide mouth full of teeth.

Initiative Value: 10 (5)

Armor: 3

Brawn: 6 (6)

Smarts: 2

Guts: 4

Weapons: Claws: 2 damage

Bite: 1 damage - Stun (2)

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Investigation

- **Diving Attack (Must be Flying):** The Night Master may attack twice while flying (2 claws or 1 bite and 1 claw), swooping close to the earth then returning to the air..

- **Wing Point (Must be on Ground):** The Night Master swipes with its wing, Make a wing point attack against two targets that are near each other. Deals 1 damage and the target is pushed out of melee range

- **Shriek (Guts)** : A scream which shreds the world. A ranged attack which targets Smarts and deals 1 damage.

Weakness: If the target specifically targets the creature's wings and deals any damage, or the Night Master's Brawn falls below 4 it can no longer fly. The Night Master falls to the ground damaged, but not defeated. Immediately make an attack with Shriek which does not count as an action for the round. Use the Initiative and Brawn listed in the parentheses for the second half of the fight, this may appear to "heal" the creature.

Reward: Draw cards equal to half the number of players to be shared by the player who landing the killing blow.

The Sword Quest

Steven Wu

Mission Briefing

Command has ordered you to find and assist a man claiming to be “Merlyn.” Apparently, this enigmatic figure has sent us several communiques with actionable intel about enemy movements. We were skeptical at first, but have used his intel to avoid two ambushes and set up a successful one of our own. We believe he may have some sort of insight into the appearance of these horrors, and may have a way to end the mysterious affliction that has been causing so many casualties among our people. Find out what he wants, and confirm whether what he offers is a way to end the war for good.

Merlyn is a man who wears the stitched-together uniforms of the British Expeditionary force, the German Third Army, and the French Fifth Army. His face is covered by an aged stag skull with antlers intact. His voice is surprisingly light and cheerful, with a very clear English dialect. He speaks to the Unit thus:

“So we are all done with this war, yes? The Empires of the Ignorant will be gone soon enough, so why die for some would-be king in a faraway palace, right? I’m Merlyn...yes, the Merlyn, or Merlin with an ‘i’ if you prefer. I serve the true king, or will rather. Or perhaps did. I don’t remember. I’m piecing together my past from your quaint little books.

“We’re getting off track. The true king. Yes. Once and future. We need the sword though. One of you will be worthy...draw it out. It’s near here, outskirts of Cambrai. I put it there after you lost it. Or I will. Find it, bring it to me, the king will serve in the time of greatest need, and I serve the King. And the one I serve will be victorious, in war and peace!”

Mission Objective

Recover Caledfwlch (Kahlehd-Fulc’h), the Sword of Kings. One of you must draw the sword to become the Promised King.

The Journey

You travel through untamed woods, stealing through dappled shadows and heavy foliage to avoid conflict as much as possible. The sounds of artillery and firearms echo around you, but there are still occasional moments of eerie silence, even in the middle of a war zone.

Requirements: One face card.

Narrative: In those moments of silence, what do you observe about your traveling companions? One of you is the Promised King...who do you think is the most worthy among you? Let the hierarchy and suits of the cards inform your answers.

Success: Player with the highest face card is the presumptive “chosen one” and will gain an additional point in a skill of the player’s choosing for the remainder of the mission. In the case of a tie, each player in the tie will receive this benefit, but each must draw for Corruption. Each player in the tie must also attempt to claim Caledfwlch. (See Incident “Claiming the Sword”)

Failure: There is no readily apparent leader among the players. Each player must attempt to claim Caledfwlch. (See Incident “Claiming the Sword”)

Incidents

The Ambush in the Clearing: The Unit comes across an open space in the woods. Roll Investigation to reveal the location of the ambush, after which roll Stealth to bypass the ambush. A failure of the Investigation skill roll means the Unit walks into the ambush, and 3 **Order of Camlann Initiates** attack. A failure of the Stealth roll means the Unit alerts the ambushers, and the same attack occurs, although with -the ambusher's Initiative Value reduced to 4.

A Moment of Quiet: The Unit huddles together to recover from the ambush. If combat occurred, the Unit may make Investigation and Knowledge rolls about their attackers. A success in either will reveal that the attackers were likely not soldiers of any nation, but rather seemed belong to an organization that is actively hunting the unit. Moreover, it seemed that these attackers were untouched by the Outsiders. Faced with the prospect of a formidable and disciplined foe standing in the way of their mission, each soldier may make a special Knowledge roll modified by Guts instead of Smarts. Upon success, the soldier's resolve is strengthened and they gain one +One for a Guts-linked roll as the mission progresses. This roll is unavailable if the unit successfully snuck by the ambush.

The Hunting Party: The Unit is being stalked by 2 **Order of Camlann Knights** and 2 **Initiates**. At an abandoned farmhouse, the Knights catch up to the players and combat ensues. The fighting takes place across a small field, with the farmhouse and a toolshed providing cover for the opposing sides. A broken-down sedan is beside the farmhouse. Three successful Mechanics rolls will allow the Unit repair the vehicle, and a subsequent Transport roll is needed to escape via the vehicle.

Wrong Place, Wrong Time: If the vehicle was previously repaired, the Unit may bypass this incident. Two kilometers (1.2 mi) outside of Cambrai, the Unit encounters forward scouts of the German Third Army (2 German **Officers** and 2 German **Common Soldiers**). They are challenged by the scouts. A soldier may bluff past this checkpoint by rolling Communications. Upon a failure, the German soldiers will attempt to take the Unit into custody. The delay allows a unit of the Order of Camlann (1 Knight, 2 Initiates) to catch up to the Unit. The ensuing battle is a free-for-all, with the Narrator free to determine the targets of NPCs' attacks randomly or through observing the actions of the players.

The Lady: After the checkpoint, the Unit arrives at the outskirts of a tank graveyard, where numerous tracked vehicles have been destroyed by artillery bombardment. Currently, the site appears quiet. However, directly in their path, a woman awaits flanked by 2 **Order of Camlann Knights**. She introduces herself as **Nimue**, the one hundred and tenth to hold that title. She leads the Order of Camlann. The desire of the Order is to stop any further tearing of the Veil, by hunting down fey artifacts connecting the two sides of the Veil, as well as any who have been Corrupted by the Others. She will offer the players a choice: turn back from their quest and return from whence they came. The players may make this choice. If they do, Nimue quickly departs with her people; proceed to the Incident "The Man from the Future."

If they refuse, combat ensues. Upon defeat, the Lady, with her dying breath, begs the players turn back, revealing that it was her first predecessor

who trapped Merlyn close to a thousand years ago. Upon dying she also drops a coded Tome of the Camlann. A Knowledge roll will allow the Unit to decipher part of the Tome; specifically, a portion of the vow of the Order, which reads, "And in the name of Noble Mordred, we vow, with our lives, to sever the link between the Realms. Should ever another like the Abomination Arthur arise, we shall be there to stop it."

Claiming the Sword: Caledfwlch is an ethereal blade that seems to phase in and out of existence. After the Unit defeats Nimue, they find the flickering sword stuck in the ground, half phased into an unexploded artillery shell. If no player played a face card during The Journey, the players must now fight for the right to claim the sword. Each must play a card, with the sword going to the player who played the highest card. If the highest played card is not a 10 or higher, the Sword becomes corporeal and explodes the shell, dealing 1 Brawn damage to each player regardless of Armor. If multiple players tied during The Journey, only the tied players must now fight for the right to claim the sword. The same rules as above apply. If there was only one "chosen one" they may simply claim Caledfwlch.

The player who claims the sword, regardless of whether the shell detonated, must draw for Corruption. If the claimant of the Sword is killed by a shell detonation, any surviving member of the Unit may claim the sword, but must then draw for Corruption. Caledfwlch is a melee weapon which deals 5 damage - + 1 damage (1), and grants its wielder the following ability: Blade of Healing (Guts) [training equal to the wielder's Melee training]: This attack targets Brawn but heals 1 Brawn damage for each success rolled over the target's Defense.

The Man from the Future: Upon claiming the sword or if the Unit walks away from Nimue, Merlyn appears as if from thin air. If the party took Nimue's deal, Merlyn automatically attacks. If the sword was claimed, Merlyn asks the wielder to slice through the Veil, and will lead the unit in a ritual to "Return the King." The Unit must use their willpower to resist with a special Challenge of Knowledge modified by Guts instead of Smarts. If the Unit fails, each soldier must draw for Corruption twice and the adventure ends with Caledfwlch ripping an even bigger tear in the Veil. If the Unit succeeds at the Challenge, it does *not* comply with Merlyn's demand and **Merlyn** attacks.

Upon Merlyn's defeat, the adventure ends.

Decoration:

All survivors draw 1 card. If the claimant of Caledfwlch wishes to keep the sword, the claimant does not draw a card, and instead must draw for Corruption during each Decoration. Otherwise, the sword disappears.



Antagonists

Order of Camlann Initiate

The initiates of the Camlann order wear normal, loose fitting clothing. There isn't a set uniform, but each wears a necklace with a copper bit that depicts a caged dragon.

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 6

Armor: None

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 2

Guts: 4

Weapons: Pistols and Knives

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Knowledge
- Ranged

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw a card for every group of Initiates defeated. Simply killing one, or allowing German soldiers to kill one offers no rewards.

Order of Camlann Knight

The Knights of the Camlann order wear black military uniforms. The uniforms themselves bear no sign of rank, but each carries the insignia of the order, a caged dragon. Other than that, they seem to wear no adornment or decoration, a testament to their discipline.

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 4

Armor: 2

Brawn: 3

Smarts: 3

Guts: 4

Weapons: Rifles and Swords

Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Knowledge
- Ranged
- Heretic Sense (Smarts) : The Knights seem to have a preternatural sense of the locations of casters. They vaguely sense and may attempt to find users that are within 100 feet (30 m) of them.
- Final Sacrifice (Guts) : A Knight may choose to sacrifice themselves in order to seal away the horrors of the veil. By pulling explosives rigged into his uniform, the Knight dies but deals 2 Brawn damage to everyone within a 10-foot (3 m) radius (including allies), regardless of armor. Victims may roll Athletics: TN 2 to reduce this damage to 1.

Weakness: None

Reward: Draw 2 cards, pick 1 to keep, discard the other.

Your Majesty,

This is, unfortunately, where the journal ends. Based on the dates in the journal, we are led to believe that the attack in Delville Wood was the first strike of the dark alliance between these creatures and the men who are using their powers. Among the many who have defected from the enemy side, we have discovered a key witness to the events in Delville Wood. His testimony will be forthcoming. We are still working to prepare his statement, and our historians are attempting to verify what details we can before we can send a fuller report on the matter.

I will continue to follow the lead on John Hampton's whereabouts until it leads to his discovery or grows cold. He made many friends in Cape Colony during the Boer Wars, and they are likely to take him in—if he indeed has fled here. I have my doubts about the validity of the information we received about him, but we will continue to follow any clue. It is paramount that we find him and take back the stolen Book. It is our last hope at undoing the Thinning, if such a thing can be done at all.

Yours in Grateful Service,
General Douglas Haig

X

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