

Letters From a Foreign Land.

An adventure for WFRP, CoC and MERP. By Graham Staplehurst.

From *White Dwarf* 93, pp 58-67. Transcribed by Zenobia. Original art-work missing except the map.

This is a role-playing adventure for a medium-sized party of player characters - 3 to 5 would be best - with a fair degree of competence. This adventure can be used with many different role-playing game systems. Provided are notes for *Warhammer Fantasy Role-playing* (WFRP), *Call of Cthulhu* (CoC), and *Middle-earth Role-playing* (MERP). This adventure should constitute sufficient material for at least two sessions play.

Synopsis of Plot

The essential plot in this adventure is simple. A small province in a backward, mountainous region is being affected by power-politics, with an evil-led faction attempting to gain control of the area. Owing to the area's historical autonomy, and the lack of any sign of outward aggression by either faction, neighbouring provinces have taken little interest in the struggles of the area. However, there is an occult force at work behind the faction (indeed, without this force there would be no faction as such).

The force has a higher aim, naturally. The area in question is famous for its secluded monasteries, religious retreats of devotion. Through divination and prophecy it has discovered that one of these will shortly provide a spiritual leader for a much wider area, who may well rise to become the chief Primate. With a power-base established in the area, the force can ensure its own candidate becomes this holy man and thus gain a powerful tool in its quest for evil domination of the whole continent.

The adventurers get involved when a friend or associate of theirs mysteriously disappears in the mountains. The adventure should be introduced by a series of letters from a certain Petrosian (see below) describing his travels. After they stop arriving, the adventurers are contacted by someone compiling a book about the country who was relying on Petrosian to supply vital contributions. He asks the adventurers to locate him.

Notes for Call of Cthulhu Keepers

The province in question is located somewhere in the Balkans, previously a state in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is even more cut-off and backward than the other new countries formed after the Great War. Because of its geographical remoteness and isolation it has a distinct Slavonic language and barely post-Medieval culture. The country is, however, predominantly Roman

Catholic rather than Eastern Orthodox and there are numerous monasteries as mentioned above. Not every detail of the country is supplied but you might want to imagine it as a sort of tainted, slightly grubby Ruritania (as in *The Prisoner Of Zenda* by Anthony Hope). Using this 'twee' setting will help to put players off the idea that there is some deeper evil at work here.

The evil force is a malevolent undead spirit, whose personal aura and power are sufficient to warrant being rated with the lesser gods. This being, once a Prince of his people around the time of the great Council of Nicaea, entered into Hell-knows-what pacts with some Great Entity and survived, creating an indestructible *Ring of Eternity* through which his essential spirit has persisted down ages of time. Now worshipped by an evil cult, he manipulates his worshippers and supplies them with the capability to perform evil deeds.

Petrosian is a Russian émigré, a scholar and a bit of an explorer-cum-adventurer himself. He writes fairly lurid tales of his exploits which sell well, and the contact who asks the player characters to find him is a newspaper publisher, Courtney St John. He will provide funds for travelling and a decent bonus for a good scoop.

Notes for WFRP Gamesmasters

The setting for this adventure is the eastern reach of the Middle Mountains, south of the Forest of Shadows, in Ostland. The area concerned is a backward province, surrounded on three sides by mountains and on the fourth by the Forest, and nominally ruled by Grand Prince Hals von Tasseninck of Ostland. The evil cult concerned is an ancient branch of the worship of Kháine, driven underground long ago. Some 700 years ago, a Necromancer and an Alchemist forged a bond of evil alliance and set up their kingdom, terrorising the population. Both were slain by a hero from Kislev - or so the story goes. Actually, the Necromancer survived, after having stolen the *Ring of Eternity* from the Alchemist. He went into hiding and developed a religion centring on himself as a manifestation of Kháine, preserving his body through the Ring, to become a demi-Liche.

The tiny kingdom, now a simple barony, is known in some circles for the religious retreats devoted to Moor. These often supply religious advisors (called seers) to the Empire's courts. It is into one of these monasteries that the Necromancer's tentacles have stretched.

Petrosian is a noted scholar, originally from Kislev. He became a noted, if eccentric, tutor of history in the university of Althorn and his writings were enjoyed for their fresh and even humorous approach. He also explored and investigated in person, the better to understand and discover history. Lately he was sponsored by his university to visit the barony and report back, and the adventurers are contacted by his principal (Ventura the Learned) to try and locate him.

Notes for MERP Game masters

The adventure is set in the massif of the Erred Nimrods (White Mountains), just west of Morton Fief. The high vale and slopes were claimed by a devout lord of the Faithful who loved the mountains as an echo of great peaks of Unmoor. The fief has had little to do in the great affairs of Condor, producing neither warriors nor statesmen, but the first lord, who died childless, nevertheless left a legacy in the form of an endowment to support three houses of contemplation. Here men and women congregated in the silent worship of Eru.

But deeper in the mountains, where none went is an even earlier legacy - a temple built by Black

Númenóreans, worshippers of Melkor, a copy of that constructed in Armenelos. And here a dire priest was rewarded for his sacrifices by immortality -in the form of a Wraith. When all his companions fled after the Fall (most to Umbar, some to the service of Sauron in Mordor) he was left to await his own death. But a messenger came from Sauron, bearing what he called the *Ring of Eternity*. Thus he endured, even through Sauron's own fall and rise.

Petrosian is a lesser Dúnadan from Lamedon who has joined the Sages' Fellowship in Minas Anor (Minas Tirith). Currently undertaking a major history of the worship of Ecrú after the Fall, he has been to many centres, most recently to the distant barony. When no word comes from him for many weeks, a Sage contacts the characters to investigate. The map given here extends from the frontispiece map in *Erech & the Paths of the Dead*, an adventure supplement from ICE.

The Letters

The following are extracts from the letters Petrosian has written to the characters. He writes about once a week, and delivery takes as long as you assess for the countries and distances concerned.

1 ...

The carriage service was punctual and surprisingly comfortable; the border patrol stopped us once but it is good to know that the region is protected. The flower-decked 'capital' was wonderfully rewarding, for greenery was everywhere; roses peppered the shrubs along the pavements and entwined themselves around the gateposts and fences and women with brooms swept the side streets with their tunnels of trees, although litter appeared non-existent.

There is a shrine here, but it is a place of the people, with scarved peasant women crossing and re-crossing the vast mosaic floor. I took a lit candle, had a tumbler-full of water ladled from a bucket, indulged in the luxury of climbing stone steps to gaze upon a long-gone corpse, and partook of a gooey conglomeration of sticky food which I was requested to 'try'. It was all homely, cosy and spiritually comforting.

2 ...

And so we came to Sibiu, after cutting through the mountains and waving to the rural folk along the wayside, sitting like over-sized dolls in worn jackets and enormous, brightly-coloured skirts. Some we passed along the dusty road, high-tailing it in dirty old narrow-wheeled cans with an arched cover over the top and a poor thing of a horse putting away to goodness knows where. There are many of these wanderers of a more ancient race than ours. Some stay along the town fringes and infiltrate the fairs and markets and some 'travel' over the back roads living in wanderer villages but still part of the populace.

3 ...

I went to a shrine and stood with the congregation through the service, while nuns chanted scriptural responses... I left for a lunch in a typical peasant's home. I took the dishes out into the kitchen, tip-toeing past grandfather snoozing on the rude sofa and arranging fresh food on a tray. It was a glorious day, full of memories. For all along the road the houses were fascinating; storks nesting in thatch, and attic rooms whose arched brow-windows gave them the appearance of eyes watching you - a most uncanny sight.

4...

Sighisoara was my nuncheon stop, where 975 long, slanted steps led up to the hill-top shrine, a former sanctuary for the populace fleeing from the hated, impaling Wild Horde. Little boys made their silent way up the cobbled path on their way home.

This fortress-town with its concentric walls holding in its heart the shrine and the tiny stone rooms built into the rock have sheltered the long-suffering inhabitants from enemy raids. In the square, the circular beds of flowers hug the stone in formal patterns as variegated as a patch-work quilt.

5

Suceava in the high vale is the lush province of black earth, where every inch is utilised and every furrow ploughed by horses or bullocks. Suceava is a joy, for it is the old princely residence of the baronial rulers, where the citadel was entered by Mirkał the Brave without opposition; henceforth it was united, although the Empire ruled closely in later centuries. I must say, I admired Mirkał and the other baronial heroes; Petru Rares's statue at the Monastery of Moldovitar is imposing, with its long locks and six-pointed crown, and the Monastery of Mirkał showered me with gifts.

6 ...

In the southern region, the painted monasteries of Voronet and Sucevitar are genuine masterpieces of the barony's art and architecture. With their illustrations of scriptural stories and historical scenes they are unique; everything is there, from battle scenes and sieges to a genealogical tree. The fires of some hell pit flame around struggling souls and live coals scorch their tormented bodies, while animals give back fragments of human bodies to supplement those which have been savaged. It is a pity that the art of fresco painting appears to have been lost, and that Voronet lies in such ruined splendour, its cloisters silent but with the memory of echoing treads.

7 ...

it is a fascinating country, chock full of things - the wanderers, flowers, woodlands, towns and villages. Friendly folk help one on one's way and absurd happenings tint everyday life with the colour of gold. The mountains succour me and shed upon me their beguiling majesty and their arboreal splendour.

How can one adequately describe the magic of those deep-forested mountains in the pedestrian language of a letter? Superb and magical, they display their gentle slopes in a wealth of varying shades of green, for sweet chestnut, flowering acacia and tall pines follow the trails up to the gorges and down again to the plain...

8 ...

I have returned to the mysticism of the Monastery of Mirkal, but something has disturbed my researches. In the cells and hallows of this ancient building a strange cry awoke me last night. There was much to-ing and fro-ing, the patter of slippered feet, and the screams ended. None here seemed to be aware of anything more than a brother seized with a fit, but his words were not incomprehensible to me:

*Kħa-ly iest'churya 'es tron'n u-kħa-ly;
Djūrian 'os nazg kēchkar!
Aī kħa-ios en all'alluchyren 'es chthon'n nam-ly.*

This message of doom from the Realm Outside has shattered the feelings of peace I had until now. I am always looking over my shoulder and seeking something to fear - but I know not what.

This is the last letter from Petrosian. The fragment of language given above is in an arcane language (WFRP: Magick (Necromantic); MERP: Black Speech) and is the calling up of a spirit in the name of the *Ring of Eternity*. Reveal this only to player characters with knowledge of the relevant language (a skill check may be required).

Event One: Commencement

The adventure starts as described above, with the player characters being contacted by someone connected professionally with Petrosian. The person is aware of the friendship between the characters and Petrosian and knows they have been receiving letters from him. Alternatively, you could have the PCs hired by the person and given all the letters above.

The characters have to journey to the barony where Petrosian was travelling and studying. Its location is given in the Introduction. The backward region is relatively cut off. A nearby town can be reached by various means of commercial transport, but from there on the journey will be foot, horse or pack beast.

In addition to dashing straight off to the barony, PCs

may want to do a little investigating. Reveal pertinent information from sources relevant to the game & setting you are using, in addition to information you deem they could find out from that given in the Introduction. You may also like to have them discover some conflicting legends and stories about the region (for example, in CoC, the tales of Count Dracula).

Encounters along the way should be appropriate to the rural country side through which the adventurers travel. They may meet footpads and con-men; if it is winter, there may be wild beasts roaming closer to civilised areas, such as wolves; other encounters should be taken from the usual procedures for generating them in your game (in WFRP you might have some Beastmen and/or goblinoids in the 'gloomy depths' of the Forest of Shadows). This stage of the adventure ends when the PCs reach the barony -probably meeting one of its poorly-equipped border patrols first.

Event Two: Border Patrol

The border patrol is an uncouth bunch of six men-at-arms headed by a sergeant. All speak only their own barbaric dialect - even those knowing a similar language will have only half the normal chance to understand the men. The sergeant actually understands some Old Worlder/Common (CoC: any Slavonic language) but if PCs want to talk to him, they will first have to persuade him to be patient.

If the characters seem at all suspicious, the sergeant will order his men to search their belongings. If anything suspicious is found, he will attempt to arrest the party, otherwise he will do nothing. Try to make the sergeant as sinister as possible. He is greasy and unkempt in appearance, speaks with lisps and snarls, and wears a grubby neckerchief embroidered with what look like small yellow-and-black eyes (actually just a pattern).

If the characters allow themselves to be arrested, their belongings will be confiscated (any money being divided out between the men, the sergeant keeping anything of obvious value) and they will be

escorted to a stone hut beside a house where the patrol (and another) reside, about 2 miles from where they were arrested. The hut has a small window and a single door which is barred and locked from the outside. There is some strewn hay and a wooden pitcher of water inside. The roof consists of heavy timber baulks and tiles.

Anyone protesting will be beaten up by three of the men. Later that evening, the men will celebrate their good fortune and get themselves drunk on the loot. If the characters do not take this opportunity to escape, starve them for a couple of days, then have them released, common belongings being returned to them.

Event Three: To The Monastery of Mirkal the Brave

This monastery is the last place Petrosian was known to be at, and the characters should think to head here first. Directions are not difficult to obtain. The best place to go would be one of the shrines along the route, for the more learned priests who tend them speak other languages (WFRP: Reikspiel/Old Worlder; CoC:

French, German, Russian; MERP: Adûnaic, Sindarin, Dunael) known in the 'outside world'. If the characters show great devotion, generosity or manage to influence a priest, they may be provided with a guide to the monastery.

Use the descriptions given in Petrosian's letters to give a flavour of the tiny, secluded land to the players. On the way to the Monastery they should be able to find food and lodgings if necessary, although it is just 20 miles or so wide. Remember that it can get cold in an elevated region such as this, and sudden squalls of rain, sleet or snow are not uncommon even during the more pleasant months of the year.

Other events and encounters may be as you wish. The 'towns' spoken of by Petrosian are little more than walled villages (WFRP: use a much-compacted version of the village on p333-335; MERP: for an example, see Caras Gwindor in *Dagorlad & the Dead Marshes* or Carandor in *Trolls of the Misty Mountains*). However, the towns are currently subject to occasional small-scale riots as those people under the sway of the Evil One try to wrest control from and undermine the authority of those currently in power. Most of the time, the characters will be ignored by the locals, unless they specifically interfere.

The characters should certainly meet some of the wanderers (CoC: gypsies). They might react in various ways - for example crossing themselves and hurrying out of the way. This should certainly get the wind up the players. The wanderers speak their own tongue, which is one of the influences on the barony's strange dialect. They may also try to give a warning to the PCs, but it is likely to be incomprehensible.

If the characters are relatively weak, a 'wise woman' from a group of wanderers may press a small charm made from bones and herbs on one of the PCs at random. They may accept or reject it. It will ultimately prove useful against the wearer of the Ring - if they remember it!

The Monastery of Mirkal the Brave is a low, broad square edifice. Four short towers with conical roofs form the corners, connected on three sides by a wall and covered cloister, and on the fourth by the dormitory and other rooms used by the monks. One of the towers is square and slightly larger than the others, housing six men-at-arms who keep a watch on the surrounding vale. They are often busy dealing with small raiding groups (bandits, wild tribes) or wild animals which might endanger the monks and their servants working the fields.

Within the walls are lawns and some flower beds (two devoted to growing medicinal herbs) and, in the centre, a shrine where the brethren go for their religious devotions. The walls of the shrine are painted with splendid frescoes (see Letters)', within, it is austere and has a great aura of spirituality.

Event Four: Petrosian's Last Stop

Petrosian's itinerary can be followed to some extent to plot his progress around the barony, ending at the Monastery of Mirkal the Brave. Here, the player characters will be able to find someone that speaks

their language, as there are some 35 learned brothers here, under Father Maynir. He will talk freely to the PCs and tell them:

(a) that Petrosian left the monastery, saying he was going to visit the letter office in the capital, then go on to the higher vales (which, he did not specify) before returning to the monastery.

(b) that he left a pack with extra clothing and a few other things to collect later. He will let the PCs take this if they make an easy Fellowship/Influence roll (CoC: any applicable communications skill).

(c) that the brother Petrosian heard to scream is now confined to a small room in the guard tower for his own safety, since he is subject to very severe fits. They pray for his recovery constantly.

(d) he knows nothing about the disturbances in the towns of the barony, nor about any threats, demons or whatever.

Petrosian's pack contains little of interest. There are some spare items of clothing, a bedroll, a gnarled stick (used for walking) and some books, rather old and out of date, on the history of the region. In one of the books are some pressed flowers. These are the same as those in the wanderer's charm (if anyone has it, make an Observe/Spot Hidden/Perception roll/check to notice this), and can themselves be bound into a minor charm. They could also help the PCs to find more of the same plants growing in the wild; they are not uncommon.

The 'mad' brother will give no more information to the characters although they should be allowed to see him if they make a Fellowship/Influence roll. If anyone wears or openly carries a charm, he will be calmer, but this will only be noticeable to Father Maynir. Also, if they look around his new cell, they have a chance to notice some marks scratched on the back of the door, perhaps making a symbol.

If the books have been examined, characters may make a check against Library Use, Intelligence or whatever seems appropriate to remember a page showing similar symbols (they are to be found as a motif in the frescoes at the Monastery of Voronet). Father Maynir may also be able to help with this. If the PCs do not discover this information, they may ask at the letter office in the capital (Mieräch).

Event Five: The Ruins of Voronet

The road up from Mieräch to Voronet is a good track as far as the shrine marked on the map (WFRP: shrine to Moor; CoC: a tiny church; MERP: old Dunael shrine with standing stones). From then on it is but a path used only by the few farmers and wanderers who still travel the high vales. Wheeled vehicles cannot pass at all easily. The path gets steeper and less distinct until the gorge is reached.

Huge cliffs lower on the far side. On this side the path winds round the spur to a tiny village on a high dale the other side of the peak from Voronet. Its roofless walls are easily seen from the path, but harder to reach. Some clambering may be necessary. Parts of the path are marked by steps cut into the rock.

If the characters obtained their information (that Petrosian went to Voronet when he said the 'high vales') from the letter office, the Evil One will have learnt of their plans and will send a party of peasants to waylay them. The group consists of eight countrymen, armed with pitchforks (in WFRP/CoC one also has a crude firearm). They will try to ambush the party but are not too difficult to spot if a watch is being kept.

Neither will they press an attack too heavily, fleeing if several are injured or an alarming counter-attack is made (with magic or efficient firearms, for example). The peasants will remain completely silent throughout (other than grunts of pain or dismay) and will not talk if captured. In the latter case they will appear extremely frightened.

The ruins of Voronet are smaller than the Monastery of Mirkal the Brave. A narrow dormitory building is linked by two walls to the shrine/church making a rectangular cloister. The whole structure is built upon a narrow shelf on the sloping hillside; around are the broken remains of other terraces where fruit trees, vines and other crops were grown to support the brethren. The dormitory building has lost its roof but the gables walls still stand, if somewhat crumbled. The older shrine is in better condition.

Nothing of interest can be found in the dormitory or cloister areas, save the fact that many of the weeds and plants growing there are less than welcoming: nettles, deadly nightshade, pale lilies and madwort (MERP: see Erech and Paths of the Dead for the latter). By the walls of the shrine in contrast pimpernel, edelweiss, boneset and vervain can be found.

In the shrine, the walls have retained their marvellous paintings, although slightly faded from their original glory. Nothing remains of the furnishings. There are niches in the solid walls which once held candles or lamps, and detritus litters the floor. If the far end of the shrine is inspected, the characters should notice that the altar stone (one large block) has been split in two and there are signs of charring. If the characters can move either portion of it (a very hard Strength check/roll), they will discover a small hollow in the flagstones in which lies an unrecognisably burnt body, which has been dead for some time.

This is the body of Petrosian, although without very special help the player characters will not know it. However, they may guess if they discover a secret door in the back of a niche to the left of the altar. This stone slab swings in when a catch is depressed to reveal a flight of steps down within the thickness of the wall. At the foot of the stair, some 20' down, is a room carved from the solid rock, once the crypt of the shrine. Lying to one side is Petrosian's abandoned pack.

The walls are carved: three have been defaced beyond recognition but a few sections echo the frescoes painted in the shrine. The fourth wall has harsh images of an entirely different style. It is titled in an arcane language (see notes on Letters), which translated might read 'The Evil/Enemy One/God(?) Dances With The Black/Dark Spirits'. In the centre of the carving is the image of a black sepulchre or temple, surmounted by a beacon of black fire: actually shards of a glittering black

stone like jet.

If the fire gems are touched, they feel loose; in fact they can be removed. They are attached to the end of a wand or rod of some sort, engraved with golden symbols. Anyone holding it and looking at the image of the temple receives a tugging sensation. This will return every time they think of the temple, even after leaving the crypt. The rod is in fact a way of locating the Evil One's temple.

Petrosian's pack reveals little that the player characters did not know, except he appears to have become paranoid about some evil force developing in the barony and trying to overthrow the authorities - and perhaps spread beyond its borders. He notes in an unfinished letter that he does not trust anyone in the towns, and that he has been set upon twice, the second time only just escaping with his life. Another charm may be found in the pack.

If the characters are in the vicinity of the Monastery when darkness falls you may have them encounter some minor form of undead, such as a ghoul or zombie. It should not be too difficult to overcome if they face it, but immediately after defeating it, everyone should make a Spot Observe/Hidden/Perception roll/check to see if they notice a pair of bats or night birds wheeling away and flying off in the direction of the ruined temple, 5.

The characters should be motivated to find the temple; if necessary add passages to Petrosian's unfinished letter detailing his belief that there is an evil cult centred at the temple of the crypt carving, and where he believes it to be. If they do not find and use the wand, they will take longer to find the temple and will have to risk a greater chance of encounters with wild beasts in the mountains.

Event Six: The Temple

No path leads to the Temple. It sits in a freezing hollow almost 9,500 feet up, 4,000 feet above the vale of Suceva, hidden at the head of a narrow U-shaped valley. There are only ruins here now, sharp edges of black stone marking the lines of walls and a teetering quarter of its once splendid dome. Within is a circular slab once used for sacrifices: they were burnt alive in a brass brazier.

Anyone stupid enough to repeat the words of the mad brother (see *Letter 8*) in this place will summon up the Evil One, who will try to either destroy the characters immediately or turn them to his purpose. If he seems to be failing, he will disappear after inflicting as much damage as possible (including making the rest of the temple crumble about their ears).

Behind the ruins of the temple a small, squat structure extends from the mountainside, partially buried by falling scree. Upon investigation, the outline of a door can be found in its otherwise smooth sides. Clearing away the stones allows the door to be opened - either prising it with some strong, narrow implement, or by saying 'Open' in the arcane language. There is no handle.

On the other side is a single room, unlit by window or

lamp but smelling pungently of a noxious substance. Upon a pedestal is a brass thurible or censer, beside it a brass lectern upon which a heavy-bound book with brass clasps sits. The clasps are magically locked and cannot be opened. The room feels oppressive and all lights are only half as effective as normal in here.

If the thurible is lit (it is half-full), it will glow, lighting the room with a lurid violet. It will also cause the book to spring open, and a plume of smoke to gather over the thurible. Anyone with mediumistic, clairvoyant or divination talents, skills or abilities can see into the smoke. If they do so, the book will riffle through its pages to some blank ones and a quill will spring up from the binding for them to record what they see/hear/divine. Otherwise, if someone concentrates on a subject, the book will turn its pages to a relevant passage. The following should be somehow revealed to the party:

When the time of Stone comes and the clouds gather in the heavens shall come a leader of the Faith from the high retreat. He shall come with glory and enlightenment on the one hand, and with darkness and deceit on the other. He shall hold the balance of the world, and cast it down. He shall be the bringer of war and doom, and death will follow his skins. For he shall be a worshipper of the murderer and insanity. This shall come to pass after the time of Ferrand in the place of Mirkal.

Despite being written in the arcane language, anyone holding the rod from Voronet can understand it as, of course, can any diviner. The Ferrand referred to is WFRP: the father of Emperor Karl-Franz I; CoC: Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary (this is the French form of the name); MERP: (S: from fea-rand, 'wandering spirit'), apply this meaning how you wish, e.g. to the time when Sauron returns in the Third Age, or when the Nazgûl are seen abroad again. The place of Mirkal is obviously the Monastery of Mirkal the Brave. WFRP/CoC: Note that use of the divinatory procedure will lead to some small Sanity loss.

Event Seven: Return To Mirkal's Monastery

On leaving the chamber of prophecy described above (from which nothing can be removed without it immediately crumbling to dust) perceptive characters may notice a furtive figure. If they try and follow or sneak up to it, they will see someone in a cowed hood fleeing. The figure is obviously sure of its way and moves faster than the player characters can follow. This is Herisan, the Evil One's disciple at the Monastery. The PCs' task now is to return to the Monastery and unfrock the evil brother, whose identity they will have to discover for themselves.

Upon their return to the Monastery, they will have to first persuade Father Maynir that they are not demented, and that he really does have a renegade amongst his brothers. They may show him items from Petrosian, the black rod, etc. In addition, Herisan has grown worried about the mad brother and has had him

killed, although Father Maynir believes he battered himself to death in a fit.

Next a test will have to be devised; this might be as simple as a spell to detect the presence of evil, or undergoing a strict devotion to the divinity worshipped in the shrine, or trick questioning (as with CoC's Psychology skill). Naturally, Herisan will not let himself be captured by this if at all possible, escaping to the Monastery's graveyard and luring the PCs after him. Make this after dark. . .

Herisan's true nature is revealed. She is a woman posing as a brother, and using her multifarious skills to seduce brothers and make them willing slaves. She has thus gained freedom of movement (to visit the ruins of the temple and speak with the Evil One) and power within the monastery, and is much relied on by Father Maynir (not one of her conquests). Naturally, the other brothers who do her bidding will confuse any tests the characters try to perform.

She has a fair range of clerical skills herself but, more importantly, has been given a Staff of Necromancy by the Evil One so that she can summon up and control various sorts of undead. If the player characters try and attack her, she will defend herself with as many nasty critters as you feel appropriate. Such a fight takes place at night, and the characters will get little help from the brothers (except perhaps Father Maynir) - indeed, those devoted to Herisan might frustrate attempts by the characters to reach her.

If the PCs are closing in on her, she will break the Staff, destroying herself and tearing a rent in the fabric of Space. To the characters, it appears that the air turns a tinted red, and a ghoulish visage leers out of the sky, hundreds of feet tall, directly over the shrine. If the characters remember what happened at Voronet, they should head for the crypt.

Event Eight: The Crypt

Father Maynir (if still alive) will admit that he hasn't been to the crypt for several years; nothing important is stored there except a few old records of the Monastery put there during a tidy of their library by his predecessor. If it is entered now (again through a secret door and a flight of carved stairs), the characters will be met by an icy blast.

This immediately starts to gnaw through them (reduce Initiative, CON, hits, etc as appropriate) unless a save (Willpower/Channelling) is made. It is at this point that the charms may be useful, aiding this and subsequent saves/checks. At the bottom of the steps is a sight to cause Fear (a difficult save here to cross the threshold of the crypt, and for CoC another Sanity Roll) - a personification of the Evil One.

Here in the confines of the underground chamber they must battle the Evil One using their wits and skills. The following things may affect its ability to manifest here: magic weapons, spells and incantations of banishment (or dispelling, annihilation etc.), the charms mentioned above, prayers or holy rituals (Father Maynir might be able to help) and so on. A few things will be distinctly hazardous, such as possession of the black rod from Voronet, which gives the Evil One total control over the

possessor.

Meanwhile; the Evil One will be attacking the player characters with his icy blasts, illusory foes and terrible sights, trying to drive them insane. The crypt has been adapted for his purpose like the one at Voronet, with the scrolls and vellums cleared to make room for a small altar-stone. The Evil One might be able to animate some of the scrolls made from cured animal skins (treat as a swarm). These will be easily destroyed by fire.

The aim of the characters should be to survive until they can force the Evil One back where he belongs. Once this is done, they might conclude they have done their task. But they should heed the words of Petrosian closely, for did he not mention the *Ring of Eternity*? This will preserve the Evil One for a later time, to rise again with new disciples, if they do not find and destroy him. And now is the time, for he will be weak. It should become clear that they have only defeated a manifestation of his made possible by the Staffs energy as released by Herisan.

Event Nine: Grasp Eternity!

The Evil One has had his remains transported by Herisan to the shrine in Mieräch, the barony's capital. From there he has used a hypnotic influence to gain control of many people living there and tried to upset the rulers. Now his needy spirit calls upon his worshippers to regenerate his energy - by sacrificing their own. Naturally, this is so against the natural inclinations of most of the population that they are resisting the death wish covering the town. But a few are not strong enough and hurl themselves off buildings or onto knives. Some even slaughter their families first. The characters must act swiftly to prevent the Evil One from arising!

The shrine in Mieräch has no crypt but several stone tombs line the walls, and it is one of these they seek. Anyone making a Willpower I Resistance roll/check can force the black rod to locate its remains, otherwise it may be given away by townsfolk killing themselves upon it or clustering near to protect it, even though they unwittingly reveal its location. Some of the characters will have to stage a diversion to draw off any defenders whilst someone opens the tomb and removes the Ring from the hand of the Evil One. Naturally, it will take an extreme Fear check to do this, as it is even more hideous in reality than its apparitions and projections (and yes, it's time for another CoC SAN loss).

This practically ends the adventure. The townsfolk who have been influenced by the Evil One will be confused and dazed for some time after its destruction, but will not take any retributive action -indeed, they may even come to see the folly of their worship and thank the player characters for saving them from probable death.

The ruling authorities and the brothers of the Monasteries in the area may also give some gift to the party for helping rid the barony of this evil threat. In CoC there will also be a SAN gain for a successful conclusion to the adventure.

Non-Player Characters

The lack of strict structure in this adventure, and the fact that there are three different role playing systems with which this adventure can be used, means that many of the people or creatures encountered are not detailed here. Most systems have sources from which you can draw 'normal' or 'standard' statistics for such encounters. The descriptions in the text should serve as guidelines; remember that with these less notable encounters, you should be aiming to annoy the player characters and wear them down a little bit, rather than trying to finish them off.

Herisan

Herisan is a woman disguised as a man. She has been posing as one of the brothers of the Monastery of Mirkal the Brave for some years, and has gotten the confidence of Father Maynir as well as seducing a number of the weaker brethren. She knows the location of the ruined Temple used by the Evil One and has learned of her 'destiny': to become the leader of her religion and draw the world about her into confusion and death. She plans to do this for her true master, the Evil One, whom she perceives as a manifestation of a horrible god (use whichever seems appropriate if no other guidance is given).

Herisan is about 36. She stands 5'6" tall, and has short black hair after the nature of all the brothers. She has a very pleasant voice and manner, and will help the characters whilst actually confusing them wherever possible. She wears the traditional black, cowled robes of the Order and bears a staff occasionally; she also has a concealed dagger with her almost always.

WFRP

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	40	44	4	3	9	58	1	41	45	56	41	59	53

Skills: Arcane Language- Magick, Charm (+10% Fel), Cryptography, Disguise, Divination, Identify Undead, Lightning Reflexes (+10% I), Luck, Magical Sense, Meditate, Public Speaking, Read/Write, Scroll Lore, Secret Language- Classical, Seduction, Sixth Sense, Theology.

Careers: Initiate, Seer, Charlatan, Cleric Level I, Cleric Level II.

Magic Level: I

Power Level: 22, Cast Spells - Cleric I, Cast Spells - Cleric II

Special Trappings:

Staff of Necromancy - Has an energy reserve (as Jewel of Power) of twenty points usable for any of these spells:

- Summon Skeletons/Skeleton Champion
- Stop Instability
- Hand of Death

Dagger of Kháine - magic weapon with Poison Attack, +2 damage and Fear.

MERP

ST	AG	CO	IG	IT	PR	AP	Lvl	PP	OB	AT(DB)	Hits	MM
77	75	45	71	95	96	63	7	28	65da	No(5)	55	15

Animist, Lesser Dúnadan

Languages: Dunael 5, Westron, Sindarin 3, Morbeth 3

Spell Lists: Sound/Darkness Ways* Surface Ways, Contaminations* Bone/Muscle Harm* Blood Harm* Organ Harm* Creations. (* indicates some spells on the list have the reverse effect of spells on a similar list in the rulebook, e.g. Contaminations=Purifications.)

Notable Skills: Base Spells +14, Directed Spells +34, Thrown Weapons +45; Acting +65, Use Items +57, Perception +55, Stalk/Hide +55, Seduction +50, Ride +42, Meditation +40, Read Runes +27.

Special Items: Dagger (+15 and x2 spell multiplier); Staff of Necromancy (summon up to 28 levels of skeletal undead (max level 7) per night).

No statistics are given for this being; you should not need them if the characters are careful enough to avoid a physical confrontation with it. The Evil One has great power in the spheres of illusion and terror, and also mind control/compulsion, although the latter is less effective against the player characters. Most of its power must be channelled through the *Ring of Eternity* which holds it half in this world and half in the next like a Wraith. Deprived of the Ring, it will wither and dissipate rapidly. It gets its power from the god it serves and also from its own worshippers. It is dedicated to the overthrow of lawful or good temporal and spiritual power in this world, replacing it with evil tyranny directed by itself and its master, through Herisan.

Father Maynir

Father Maynir is a venerable old man, with a shock of white hair and a forthright manner. He is capable in most situations, although not as fast or agile as he used to be, nor as used to manual work. The shock of discovering Herisan's true nature will probably put him out temporarily, leaving the PCs to attack her on their own. Otherwise he is a fighter! He is also well read and learned.

WFRP

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Lit	Cl	WP	Fel
4	26	31	2	3	9	58	1	35	38	68	41	62	42

Skills: Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Linguistics, Meditate, Public Speaking, Read/Write, Rune Lore, Scroll Lore, Secret Language -Classical, Speak Slavic, Theology.

Careers: Scribe, Scholar (incom.), Initiate, Cleric Level I

Magic Level: I

Power Level: 10, Cast Spells - Cleric I

Special Trapping

Chain with Holy Symbol can cast Stand Calm once per day.

MERP

ST	AG	CO	IG	IT	PR	AP	Lvl	PP	OB	AT(DB)	Hits	MM
71	38	65	50	90	53	77	5	5	25ma	No(0)	33	10

Animist, Rural Man

Languages: Wes 5, Dunael 5, Sindarin 5, Adânaic 5, Quenya 5

Spell Lists: Protections, Surface Ways, Direct Channeling, Bone/Muscle Ways, Blood Ways.

Notable Skills: Base Spells +10; History 4-50, Perception -1-50, Holy Ritual +45, Use Items +45, Read Runes +35, Leadership/Influence +10.

Special Item: Chain with holy symbol, casts Calm Song 2/day.

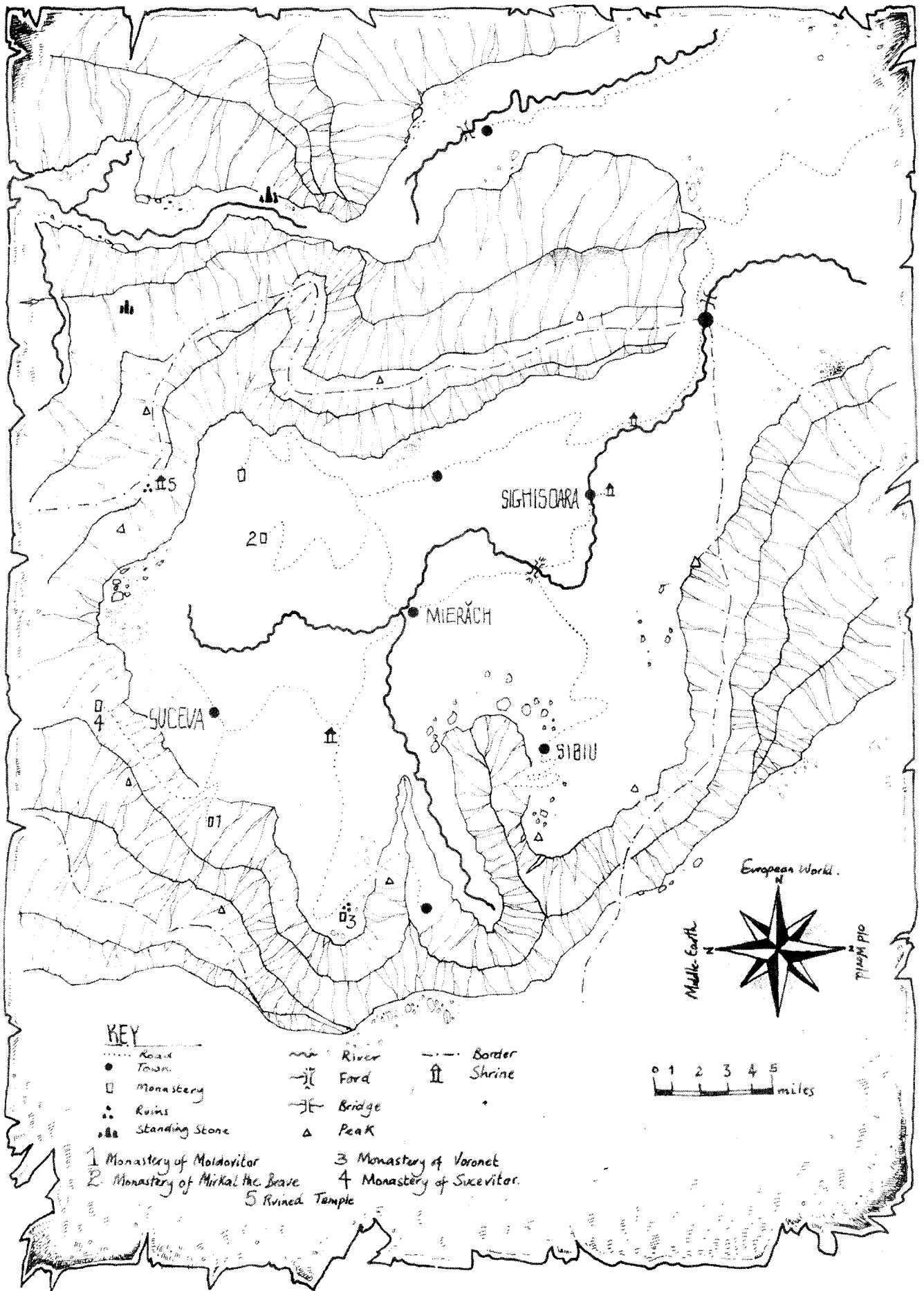
Useful Sources

Other encounters can be taken from the following sources: CoC: Third Edition Rules

WFRP: Rulebook - Beastmen (p216) and Goblins (p220-21) in the Forests; Boars (p233), Bears (p232) or Wolves (p247) in the wilder mountain-lands of the Barony; Ghoul (p248-49) or Zombie (p251-52) at Voronet. For the rural folk of the Barony, use the standard Human profile (p222). Also useful will be the standard NPCs and military types found in *The Enemy Within* (handout sheets and p27-30).

MERP: Normal Middle-earth creatures can be found on p86 (Table ST-2) of the rulebook; for undead see *Erech & Paths of the Dead* p11 and 35 or *Dagorlad & the Dead Marshes* p10-11 - ghouls and skeletons are suitable.

Graeme Staplehurst



KEY

- | | | | | | |
|-------|----------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Road | ~ ~ ~ | River | - - - | Border |
| ● | Town | — — | Ford | ⊥ | Shrine |
| □ | Monastery | — — | Bridge | △ | Peak |
| ⊙ | Ruins | | | | |
| ■ | Standing Stone | | | | |

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Monastery of Moldovitor | 3 | Monastery of Voronet |
| 2 | Monastery of Mirka the Brave | 4 | Monastery of Sucevitor. |
| 5 | Ruined Temple | | |

