

VIMARU BURNS



A Tribe  Cycle



Dream Pod 9

A Tribe & Cycle

VIMARY BURNS

"The Baron has lied to us! We did not triumph at Aboron. The Nomads' have continue to strengthen their herds while we fight amongst ourselves over our meager resources. All the while the 'Baron' sits in his little pleasure palace, feasting on the flesh of his new acquisitions!"

"The Koleris shall no longer be meek little pups who chase the bones thrown by our master. We shall take back what is ours by the right of the Hunt! The Tribes shall once again tremble in their homes as we take what we please when we please. Together we shall crush the Tribes and slake our thirst on their blood and the flesh of their dear addressees. Prepare your prides, my siblings, for we shall march soon!"

— Lord Marenk of Koleris

Vimary Burns tells the story of the 23rd retribution against the islands of the Nation. Angered at the destruction of the Pact of the Dome, conspirators against the Baron begin a cleansing of Vimary. Two armies march upon a divided Nation and the Eighth Tribe may be their only hope for survival.

Vimary Burns includes:

- Six interwoven tales detailing the events leading up to, including and after the Burning of Vimary;
- Plenty of tips and advice for weaving the events of Vimary Burns;
- Playable NPCs representing a new future for the Nation and the Fallers;
- A look at the key agendas and conspiracies of the major players both within Vimary and beyond;

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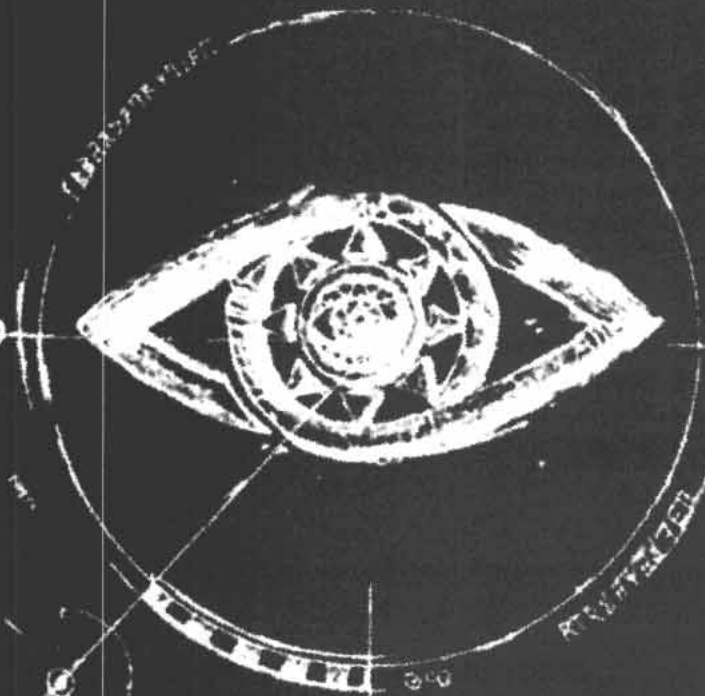
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Prelude: Duplicity and Duality

I congratulate you, my lords and princes. We are victorious against the Tin Goddesses. Let them remain trapped on their pitiful island, begging us to let them live. Many sacrifices have been taken from their number this day; look at these beautiful, young prizes! I am grateful for your loyalty and courage, and I shall share these delicious spoils of war with you. Then, when we desire more, we shall demand a higher payment for the border to remain. Yes. Let these "Tribes" remain, but their freedom shall cost them. It shall cost them dearly.

- The Baron of the H'l Kar, speaking to his court.



Demand for Retribution

From the letters of Captain Trr'kas of Koleris:

Count Lothar,

It has come to my attention that our mutual ally, Count Valk, has been speaking to that Koleris, Lord Marenk. No doubt you have heard that Marenk was awarded his new status following the events near Abonom. He has tasted tribal blood and desires more of it. To my knowledge, however, he has not joined our 'little' arrangement. I would warn against offering him a place at our table. My suspicions are that he is loyal to the Baron, and it is this loyalty that is preventing him from rampaging across the Tribal lands. Maybe you have been south for too long. Situations have changed here in the H'l Kar, and we must tread carefully. Capal watches and they are restless. You must be ready to move when the time is right.

For the Seed and the Blood.

Lost Loyalty

From a speech given by Marenk of Koleris:

The Baron has lied to us! We did not triumph at Abonom. The Rusted Warrior has killed Tibor's heart! Our greatest leader has been lost beyond even the Seed's salvation! The agonizing loss that has been felt by all is no "resonance" of Rakh's death. It was the final cry of our true leader, now lost for eternity! The Nomads' bitches continue to strengthen their herds while we fight amongst ourselves over our meager resources. All the while the 'Baron' sits in his little pleasure palace, feasting on the flesh of his new acquisitions!

Siblings! There is a vast wealth of flesh across the border, and it taunts us, calls us weak little tales to scare their children. The Baron has tricked us with his words of "alliance" and "non-aggression." We are Koleris! We are Rage and Death personified! The Tin Goddesses have proven that they care not for pacts or treaties; they have constantly broken this false peace of the Baron's.

The Koleris shall no longer be meek little pups who chase the bones thrown by our master. We shall take back what is ours by the right of the Hunt! The Tribes shall once again tremble in their homes as we take what we please when we please. Their 'goddesses' will not stop us! I know they die just as we do, and for this they fear us.

Already our brother, Count Lothar, is marching from the lands south of Vimary to meet with us. Together we shall crush the Tribes and slake our thirst on their blood and the flesh of their dear goddesses. Prepare your prides, my siblings, for we shall march soon!

The Need for Action

From a speech by Prince Fa'Cul of Sangis:

What do you plan to do, my Baron? Marenk has stirred the Koleris against you and has convinced the Flemis that the time for retribution is at hand. Even my skills cannot stem the tide of Destiny, my lord. You must act, and act fast, lest you lose everything that has been gained. Please, my lord, let me finish before you decide to kill me for my honesty.

The Court is questioning the wisdom of leaving the shattering of the Pact to go unpunished. You must respond to these claims; a few children will not satisfy your allies forever, not with Marenk's promises of greater wealth from the Tribes. Marenk's march needs to be stopped or you shall need to take the lead. If we fail to regain control of this situation, next season shall see Marenk taking up residence here in the Ziggurat. We shall be nothing more than jewelry around his neck.



Conspiracies in Motion

From the letters of Count Valk of Melanis:

Count Lothar,

I feel that I must warn you of an unexpected development. The Baron has discovered our plans. I found evidence that our ally Captain Trr'kas had been reporting our movements to the Baron for some time. Fear not for Trr'kas; I have taken the matter into hand. . . so to speak. The Baron, however, is a different problem. No doubt you are aware that he has received a great deal of wealth and status from this 'pact' of his.

Of course, with the threat of the Koleris taking said wealth away from him, the Baron has begun to prepare an army to take back the resources of that ill-begotten island. He has tired of the Tin Goddesses' inability to keep their side of the Pact and is moving to take back what is his. You must act quickly, my friend. I have been informed that the Baron has already departed the Ziggurat and has left Prince Fa'Cul to watch over things while he personally destroys the goddesses. Fa'Cul will be no problem for me to handle; I trust you will be able to look after the matter of the Baron and his army? Please hurry, before all is lost.

I remain your faithful friend.



Further Deceits

Count Nemerath speaks with Kail'ak, observer for Prince Thak'ichk'at of Capal:

Yes, I agree that the recent number of breaches from the H'I Kar speak poorly of the Baron's control of the Vimary experiment. However, I have received some disturbing news from my contact within the H'I Kar. The Baron has lost his hold over the Koleris. They have now split into two camps; one marches on Vimary under the banner of Count Lothar. I believe you and the Count were once. . . familiar. . . with each other, my prince. But I digress. The other camp is following a new Koleris Lord named Marenk. Apparently Marenk was badly affected by the destruction of Tibor's heart and has stirred the other H'I Kar Koleris into a frenzy over the matter. I fear that this instability could be a threat to our own security. The H'I Kar have always been a useful buffer between us and these 'tribes.' If it falls to chaos, we could be seeing unwanted attention coming our way. On the other hand, we could gain a great deal of strength if we were to secure the H'I Kar for ourselves. . . if I'm not mistaken?



The Beast Stirs

From the letters of Count Lothar:

Count Valk,

My faithful friend. I will personally see you torn asunder for this! Do not think that I am so simple as to fall for such amateur manipulations. You shall have your little war and I *will* kill the Baron. When I have finished, the metal idols and their sad little followers in chains behind me, I will hunt you down and feast upon your cooling corpse. Trr'kas had already informed me of your visits to Marenk; I have also heard rumor that the Baron is giving chase to Marenk's army. Hardly the actions of a decisive leader, I should say. I will take great pleasure from tasting the flesh of the Baron, and feeling his cooling blood on my chin as I rip his heartstone from him.

No doubt I will be able to gain Marenk's support as well; it would seem that he and I have similar goals. Our little "arrangement" is over, Valk. I hope you will be prepared by the time I find you. It would be a shame for your death to be too quick.

Visions of War

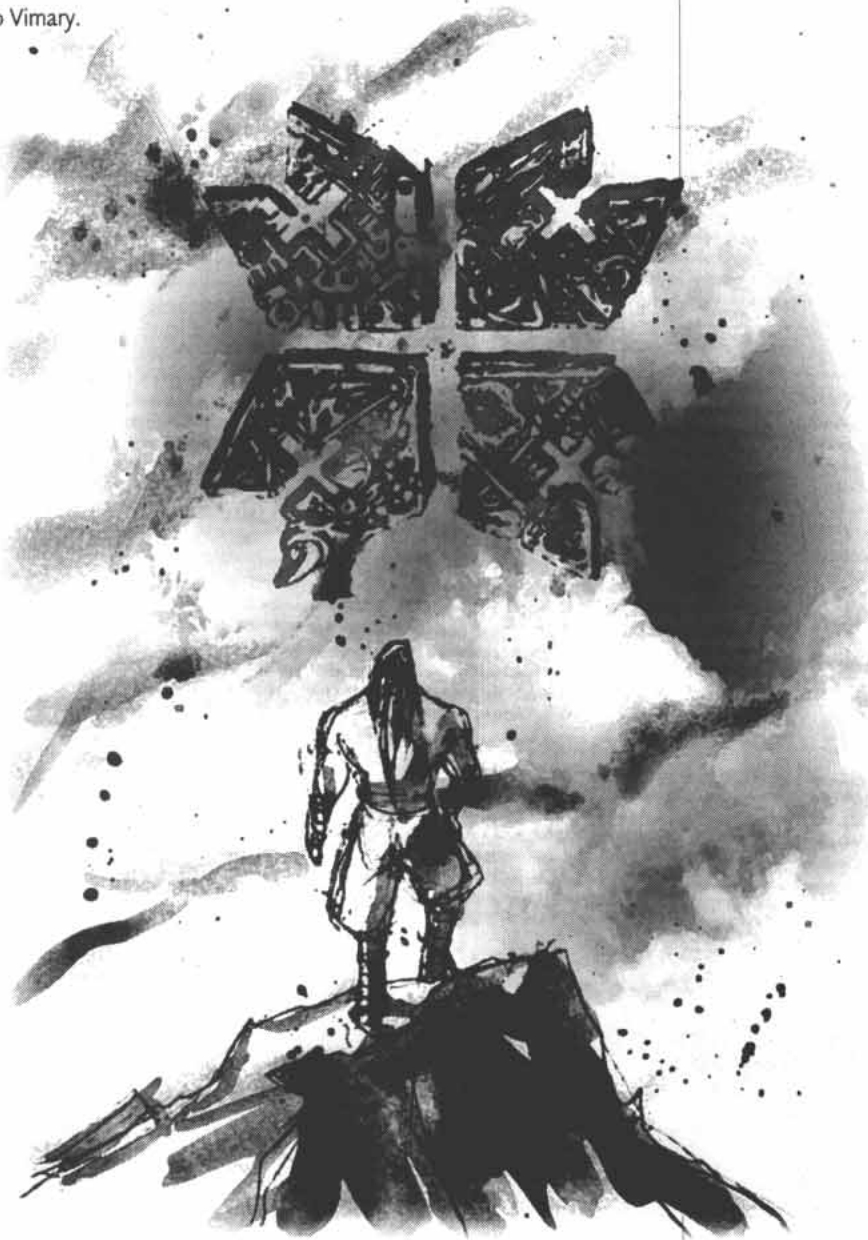
From the visions of Peithos the Hidden, Guide:

I stood on the Great Hill, looking across the width and breadth of Vimary. To the north, I saw the H'l Kar covered by a dark storm cloud that rained sword blades onto its bloodied, broken ground. Turning to look eastwards, I noticed the cloud stretching around the east, to reach south of the Fatimas' isle. A great whirlwind raged at the center, the small dreams of the squats nearby swept up into its darkness as it approached.

Then I saw the Medallion of Vimary shatter in three. The smallest of the three lay to the west. The second largest piece became overgrown with vines and the largest segment became surrounded by water.

Trees are in flames across the Nation, shadows move between the buildings of Bazaar, and the massing dead from the World Before are screaming again.

War is returning to Vimary.



Chapter One: Approaching Storm

We have been betrayed!

The Sangis plan to rob us of all that we have worked for, and they have the support of the treacherous Melanis. We cannot allow them to defeat us! The tribute we send to the south has guaranteed us, with their pledge of aid, the warriors we need to take back what is ours! The time has come for us to crush that Sangis weakling who has tried to take Tibor's place. The Koleris are the *true* leaders of the Z'bri. You shall become rich beyond your wildest lusting by time we reach the H'l Kar. No goddess and certainly no baron will be able to stop us!

- Count Lothar, speaking to his army



The Dancer's Tale

From the Journal of Larissa Hevilkin:

Day One: As the scribe it is my responsibility to record this journey for you, Bright Lady. We separated from the Caravan of the Laughing Dancer to trade goods with the Clan of Dancing Fish, south of the Sunken City. I am aware that trade with squats is frowned upon, but we needed to gain some herbal supplies for some of the young who have fallen to the gasping plague this year. I will admit as well that I personally wanted to find any news on Elden's caravan, the Singing Knives, who failed to return from a similar trip last season.

Because we wanted to travel with haste, it was decided that only a small group of ten would leave the Caravan to take part in the trading. The clan's village lies about three day's journey from the southern bank, about a day's journey from Haven. Following the trip over the River we journeyed southwest for a day without seeing any sign of squat raiders, which I considered unusual for this time of year.

Following sunset, we made camp. Chance and Mella began to argue over their interpretations of Ra'Ham's legends, while Will, Dayla and I prepared the fires. Daron, Holin and Berri set the tents for us. Max remained silent as usual, practicing his dance of solitude. He always makes me feel uncomfortable when I see his quiet meditation; it seems wrong for a Dahlian to be so... depressed. Chantelle wasn't far away, giggling as she watched the argument.

We have finished eating now, and Daron has offered to take the first watch. I have a horrible feeling we should have asked the Rangers for support. Something is wrong. Please watch over us tonight, Dahlia. Guard our sleep.

Building Tension

Day Two: A herd of wild pigs almost trampled us to death today. After breaking camp, Chantelle had continued to goad Chance and Mella. Holin was forced to intercede and told Chantelle that she was being childish. She flashed her usual smile and skipped ahead of the group. I suspect that she and Holin are secretly attracted to each other. She seems to go to great lengths to get him to notice her.

Berri and Max rode at the back of the caravan, and seemed to be in heated argument over some matter, but I was unable to ascertain what it was that troubled them. When I asked Dayla she merely shrugged and said "Sibling stuff."

I wasn't so confident. Max kept looking behind us as we moved through the woods.

There was a shriek from up ahead, and once we realized that we had lost sight of Chantelle, Holin ran ahead while the rest of us tried to calm the horses. We heard swearing, and then a herd of wild pigs came charging along the trail. The horses panicked and spilled their packs onto the ground as the herd ran by. I was thrown to the ground, along with most of the others. Only Max and Berri were able to keep control of their horses amongst the chaos.



Larissa Hevilkin,
Dahlian Scribe.

Scribe for the Caravan of the Laughing Dancer, it is Larissa's responsibility to keep a record of anything the group discovers that may be of interest to Dahlia and to also write many of the passion plays performed by the Caravan. Her lover, Elden, a skilled knife-thrower, was part of a caravan sent to trade supplies with a local Squat settlement south of Haven. A season has passed, and they are yet to return.

Larissa and her lover have always been close and his failure to return is weighing heavily on her heart. The fact that Dahlia has sent the Laughing Dancers south has given Larissa the perfect opportunity to discover the fate of Elden and his Caravan.

Highlights: Innocent, Caring, Shy

Attributes: AGI +1, CRE +1, INF -1,
PER +1, PSY +1, WIL +2, STA 30
UD 4 AD 3

Skills: Animal Care 1/0, Animal
Handling 2/+1, Craft (Book
Binding) 2/+2, Dance 3/+1, Hand-
to-hand 1/+1, Human Perception
1/+1, Music 2/+1, Notice 1/+1,
Read/Write (Dahlian) 3/0, Riding
2/0, Throwing 2/+1, Synthesis 1

1. Approaching Storm

Holin came back, supporting Chantelle. She had been crying, and it appeared as if she had twisted her ankle. Thank the Goddess she wasn't trampled. Many of the goods we had bought with us were either damaged or lost, no doubt eaten by the pigs. However we had enough to be able to still trade for return supplies and I must admit, we still wanted to find the Singing Knives.

We have managed to set up camp with little incident, although I have noticed that there are no night noises. The sooner we find out what happened, the sooner we can go home. I pray you watch over us again tonight, my lady, I truly do.

Silent Homes

Day Three: My fears have become stronger, my Lady! After a day of uneventful travel, the only highlight coming when Will hit Chance for starting the argument again, we reached the village as the sun began to descend. It was deserted. Completely deserted. It was as if there had been a flurry of activity, and then everyone simply up and left. There was no sign as to why the squats had fled. We couldn't find any evidence of Boarhead's Raiders, and there seemed to be no evidence of an animal attack. We searched the entire village until it became too dark. Daron decided that we should set up camp in the meetinghouse at the center of the village, arguing that the building would conceal our campfire.

Holin and Chantelle started to argue when Holin suggested she rest her ankle. She angrily pushed him away and began to practice her dancing. Her ankle was too weak and she placed too much pressure on it. Crying out in pain, she fell down, and when we looked at her ankle we found that it had become swollen and discolored. Berri told her to toughen up, and Max wandered off to dance away from the rest of us.

We are all tired and angry. Most of all, I think we are all scared. Something unnatural is happening here, and it is making us all uneasy. Daron has said that he has found some tracks leading south. He suggests we follow them for a day, and if nothing comes of it, we'll go home. There are enough supplies lying around the village for the trip back. I am scared, my lady, I shall pray to you in my dreams, in the hope that you may hear me.



The Warriors' Plight

Mikal Ben'on remembers:

It had been a great time to be a young Blade of Joan. Following the fall of Abonom and the New Crusade, my friend Shaun and I were eager to follow the path that had been set by my cousin Valerie and the Templars who had helped save Agnes. We would be heroes. Since childhood, Shaun and I had trained for this. The rumor that Joan was planning another crusade meant that a lot of us were manning the Fingers, preparing ourselves for when we would strike deep into the H'I Kar and teach the beasts to fear us again.

The naïveté of youth. That's what my Uncle Javik would mutter as we practiced at the base of the Tower of the Full Moon, where we had both been assigned. Only eighteen summers old, Shaun Kil'on and Mikal Ben'on were destined to become names that the Nation would remember for generations to come. At least, that's what we hoped.

It had seemed as if Joan favored us that day when we saw the solitary Gek'roh running across the remains of Abonom, heading north towards the Ziggurat. Our Captain, Damish Morth'on, decided that it would be prudent to hunt it down. Gathering our patrol together, we stood at the base of the tower that morning, and performed the pledge of Joan. Once we had finished, twenty of us rode across the desolate landscape towards an unforeseen destiny.

The Gek'roh's tracks were clear in the torn earth where the Crusade had marched on the Ziggurat.

The sun's heat seemed to beat down on us as we rode across the blackened land. There was the sweet yet bitter stench of decaying offal in the air as the horses' hooves buried themselves in the loamy soil. The black trees seemed to reach for us, the sharp branches catching in armor and cloak. The itching scratches made the heat seem more unbearable. I shifted impatiently in my saddle and looked at the tracks we were following. There was something niggling at my mind about those muddy prints.

"Shaun, what do you think of these tracks here?" I pointed to the clawed markings that we had been following. Shaun and I had often been part of the hunting parties along the Hunting Paths to the west, and we had learnt many things in regards to animal movements. These tracks seemed, to my mind, to speak of nothing more than. . . dear lady. . . pack movement. Shaun agreed with me, and we rode to the head of the patrol.

Captain Damish admitted that they were aware of the other tracks, still he was confident that they were older than the current markings. Neither Shaun nor myself could refute this. We didn't have enough experience, while the scouts were more skilled in this area. However, I could not shake the feeling of dread that crept over me.

It was near sunset when we found ourselves heading northwest, towards the Spine Bridge. It was decided to set up camp rather than wander into the woods at night. Lots were drawn for night watch duties, then a meager meal was rationed out. Shaun and I drew different watches, so as he lay sleeping I was helping Umar patrol the perimeter. The night was silent, and that unnerved me even more than if we had heard a monstrosity moving through the trees.

I was glad when I wrapped myself in my sleeping blanket and fell into a fitful sleep.



Mikal Ben'on, Joanite Blade

Mikal's family has a long history amongst the Joanites. Hoping to live up to the name of his family, Mikal joined his childhood friend, Shaun, in volunteering to support the border guard at the Seven Fingers.

Over the last few months, while training at the tower, he has begun to become aware of a strong spiritual and emotional bond with his childhood friend that he is unsure how to express. In the meantime, he remains by Shaun's side almost constantly and the two friends are formidable in battle.

Since he was very young, Mikal has shown an unusual aptitude for Synthesis. He is constantly aware of the subtle changes within the River of Dream, often using this knowledge to his advantage.

Highlights: Loyal, Dreamer,
Untapped potential

Attributes: AGI +2, APP +1, BLD +1, FIT +1, PSY+2, STA 30, UD 7, AD 7

Skills: Archery 1/+1, Athletics 1/+1, Combat Sense 3/0, Cooking 2/0, Dodge 2/+2, Dreaming 1/+2, Hand-to-hand 2/+2, Melee 2/+2, Mythology 1/0, Notice 1/0, Riding 2/+2, Survival 2/0, Swimming 1/+1, Throwing 1/+2, Synthesis 2

Surrounded by Darkness

From the Journal of Larissa Hevilkin:

Day Five: We have been on the run since yesterday. They are still following us; I am scared, but I must begin from where I left off. After a restless night, we woke just as the first light of the sun broke through the trees. There was silence. No birds singing, no dogs barking, absolute silence. Taking note of this ill omen, we prepared to depart. Chance and Will refused to talk to each other, while Chantelle wouldn't let anyone look at her ankle. The pallor remained as Daron and I searched for supplies amongst the abandoned buildings. We found some cured meats in one of the larger buildings, obviously the desertion had been recent, otherwise the wildlife would have taken it. If there was any wildlife left.

Oh, poor Will, poor Chantelle. Baba Yaga lead you safely to the fold.

We returned to the meetinghouse to find Mella and Dayla in a heated discussion. Mella had suggested that Dayla help search for supplies and Dayla had felt that Mella was implying that she was lazy and not helping the group. Holin was nowhere to be seen and Max was sitting with Berri, watching the proceedings with amusement. Daron asked where Holin was, but no one would speak. I volunteered to find him.

His tracks were fairly easy to follow. He had wandered to a nearby stream, near the edge of the village. He seemed to be crying. I asked him what was wrong.

He told me that Chantelle had rejected him. When he turned to look at me, I noticed a long scratch down the side of his face. He said that she had attacked him later, calling him a coward. I tried to assure him that she needed to be left alone, mentioning that her wounded ankle was also wounding her pride as well. He said he understood, but I got the feeling that he wasn't telling me the truth.

After we had all gathered, Daron confirmed that there were tracks leading to the south of the village. He suggested again that we travel for a day and try to find any evidence of the Singing Blades whereabouts. If we found nothing we would return to Vimary. The group all agreed, although I will admit that I wanted to keep searching until we found them.

By the sun's morning quarter, we had traveled beyond the woods and were on open plain. A large blacktop lay to the east, running parallel with our path for a while before it turned southeast to where it is rumored the old Joshuan village of Magog lay. The grass was yellow, as if sun-baked, which was odd for this time of year. There was an unusual haze beyond the next forest, which we were bound to reach about noon. I noticed some movement on the blacktop, but it was too far away to tell what it was. We halted as I pointed it out to Daron. He nodded that it should be worth investigating, as travel along the blacktop would also be faster if we needed to return to Vimary at all speed.



It took longer than expected, and we didn't reach the blacktop until nearly nightfall. As the sun was setting, we could no longer make out any movement. Keeping to our word, we began to travel north again, but I felt we had failed my love. How could we give up so easily? I fought the urge to strike Holin and Daron for giving up. It was a selfish thought, and an alien one for me. I was a scribe. I wrote passion plays and songs for our troupe to perform. I recorded the travels of our caravan so that I could accurately retell the tale. I would never think of striking anyone. Now I wish I had paid more attention to those feelings, and seen them for what they represented.

For what they *truly* meant.

We had traveled a quarter of the moon's journey when it happened. Will had finally stopped arguing with Chaunce when a large, clawed *thing* leapt onto his horse. He was on the ground screaming before we even knew what had happened. I watched in horror as Holin undid his scarf and jumped onto the beast. Then I was knocked off my own mount by something that smelled like the weeds that cling to the shore banks — musty and damp, with the slight sweet smell of decayed meat. I couldn't see anything, yet I could hear the liquid gurgles from Will as his lungs filled with blood; the sweet hum from the knives in Holin's scarf as he danced between the monstrosities, no doubt slashing deep into their hides with pinpoint accuracy. Mella and Dayla were grunting as they fought their own assailants. Whatever had knocked me seemed to be remaining still. I could feel its irregular heartbeat, smell its scent. The smell was very familiar. Then it spoke to me.

"Help me, Lissa."

It was Elden. My lover.

The Singing Knives

Elden's voice was hoarse and barely recognizable, but I knew that it was my soulmate who held me down. I reached for the knife in my boot as Elden moved off me. Chantelle screamed, and I heard Daron cursing, but all I could do was stare at the man I had — that I still — loved. He had been made taller, obviously by the dark dreams of the Z'bri. The knives that he had loved so much had been embedded into his hands and back, like claws and spines. His features had been twisted as if someone had crushed his head and then stretched it out again. His eyes were sad and I could see that he was fighting some internal war with himself. He wanted to kill me; he wanted me to kill him. I helped him decide. I may be a scribe, but I can still dance with the knives. As his body crumpled, I wept tears of sorrow for him. His soul will not rest, for he has been stolen by the Z'bri. I pray that you find his wandering spirit, my goddess, before it is swept into the Sea of the Lost.

The other Singing Knives seemed to have lost all their humanity. They fought ferociously as we attempted to free their tortured souls. Will was dead, his throat and lower jaw torn from his body. Holin and Mella were seriously wounded, and Chantelle's wounded ankle was broken. We knew that we had to return to Vimary and inform the relatives of those who died. We also knew that the Z'bri that had done this wouldn't be too far away, and we were ill-prepared to fight any more. None of us slept that night; we rode along the blacktop, determined to return to the Great River.

Into The Maw

Mikal Ben'on remembers:

We broke camp before daybreak. Damish warned us that we had needed to find this Gek'roh today, otherwise we'd need to return to the tower empty handed. Already we had wandered beyond our normal jurisdiction; technically we were in an area patrolled by the Tower of the Eastern Wind. Travel through the forest was slow, and we had to dismount after several Blades were nearly knocked off their horses by low branches. Haunting silence surrounded us as we made our way deeper into the woods, and the heat increased as we traveled further north. Umar complained that we were getting too close to the H'I Kar. Damish asked if he planned to desert the patrol. Umar didn't speak up again.

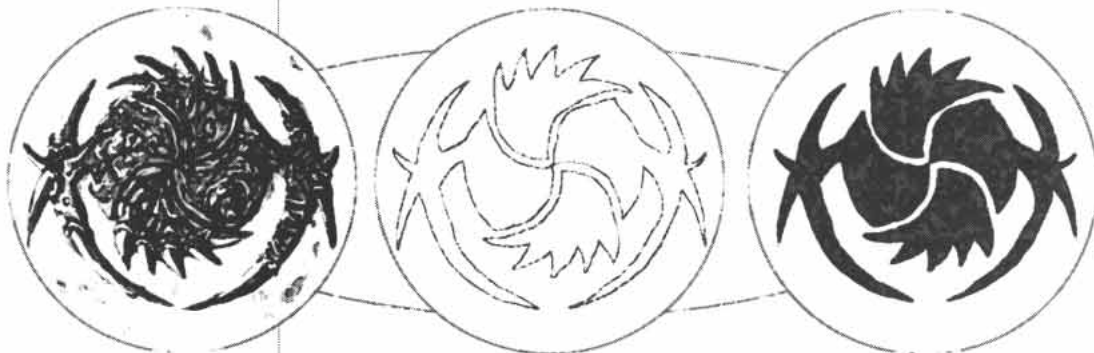
The Gek'roh had continued to the north, heading towards the stream that ran off from the Great River, and eventually ran through to the Discarded Lands. The scent of decaying meat was stronger the closer we got to the stream. There was now also the smell of sweat, a damp, musty odor that stuck to our clothes. I could taste bile in my throat, and noticed others beginning to spit as well. It was as we were nearing the edge of the forest that I heard the noise.

At first it had sounded like a dull thudding sound, yet as we moved closer to the source, it took on a more thunderous, rumbling tone. My heart was beginning to pound with barely restrained excitement. Muscles taught with fear and excitement, we moved through the trees towards the noise.

The Beasts

We stopped to rest as the sun rose. Max kept watch for the first hour, followed by Holin, then Mella. Dayla and I administered what we could to Chantelle's ankle before we rested. After we had rested, we rode on. As the sun reached its zenith I could see movement to the east. I asked Daron what he thought of it, but he yelled at me to keep riding. Mella kept complaining about the heat as we rode on, and I myself began to sweat. Suddenly Chantelle's horse reared, throwing her to the ground. It ran off, as we tried to control our own mounts. I looked to the east again. It is an image that will haunt me always. There were hundreds of Z'bri moving towards us, an army of twisted, scaly monsters. They were still a distance off, but were traveling quickly. Some raced towards us furiously as we attempted to outrun the army. I am ashamed to admit it, my Lady, but we left Chantelle behind. It wasn't until we saw the army to the north, and we were forced to ride southwest that I realized no one had stopped to help her. We are all guilty for her death.

We have had a chance to rest now, so I have written as much as I can. The Z'bri have blocked off our only route north. We have no choice but to travel to the south, and attempt to move northwest later to out-run them. What scares me most is that there are so many here. All these Z'bri, more than we had ever believed there to be in the world. Why are they here? How many altogether? I can only hope that we can find a way back to you, Bright Lady, to warn you of what is happening here. I can only hope that we survive. Mella has begun to cry again, and Holin has not spoken a word since we realized Chantelle was missing. Max has wandered off again. Where is he?



Atmosphere of Doom

Across the stream an army was gathering. It looked as if every Koleris in the H'l Kar was standing before us. My hands began to sweat as I fought the urge to charge at them. Gek'roh hunting packs were being driven by scaled Iv'chet, serfs were being placed at the front of the army forces; to act as a barrier, no doubt. Umar whimpered quietly, a noise I had never believed the large man to be capable of. Then, without warning, he burst from the forest, screaming Joan's name at the Beasts. Some of the nearer serfs turned to watch the solitary warrior charge into the deep stream, attempting to cross while wearing heavy armor. Holding his sword up high, Umar waded through the water, until it was up to his neck. A serf loosed an arrow at him with an almost casual gesture. It found its mark easily.

As we watched Umar's body collapse under the water, Damish gave a loud war cry. We didn't think about any consequences, we just charged out of the forest, determined to exact revenge on Umar's killer. The Z'bri nearest us, a large rock-like creature, simply undid the chains holding the Gek'roh it was herding. The beasts ran towards us, promising us eternal damnation.



Salvation's Price

From the Journal of Larissa Hevilkin:

I thank the goddess that I am still alive. This peace will not last, considering the discovery we have made, but I am jumping ahead of myself again.

As the sun rose on that sixth day, we could hear the guttural baying of the Z'bri behind us. Daron made us push the horses as we rode south. The sun's heat was unbearable as we rode through woods and over the plains. It was as we approached the next rise that we made the most horrendous discovery. An army, no, a Horde almost twice the size of the group we had seen before was marching north. Serfs, Gek'roh and twisted monstrosities of melted flesh and exposed bone were being driven by hundreds of Z'bri. Near the back of the army was a giant Flemis Gek'roh ridden by the most hideous beast I have ever seen. Its body was black, with yellowed pus seeping from the base of the myriad spines across its shoulders and forearms. The carapace over its head had seven small mandibles that seemed to constantly quiver with rage. I sagged in my saddle, defeated. We had been herded by the other Z'bri to help add more fodder to this army. Mella screamed in horror and leapt off her horse. She ran along the plain to the west, screaming incoherently as some of the Gek'roh split off from the army to chase her.

"Why don't they attack us yet?" Daron asked, watching the approaching army.

"Because of me." Max slid gracefully off his horse. He moved to stand before us. Berri hissed something to him reproachfully. "We have done what was asked of us. Why should they suffer for our agreement?" He fixed his gaze upon his sister. Dayla watched the approaching army nervously.

"Berri and I have been in constant contact via the Dream with Dahlia. She wanted us to investigate rumors of increased Z'bri activity to the south. Now we know why. I am sorry. Yet there is a way out. Berri and I can try to summon our Dancer to rescue us. We can only try."

We quickly climbed off the horses as Max drew a knife. Berri seemed to be about to cry.

"The problem is that one of us must sacrifice himself to allow our Fatima to find us. I hope you find your way back safely."

Before we could do anything, Max ran stabbed himself in the chest. With the accuracy that only Synthesis could allow, the blade ran smoothly into his heart. Using his remaining strength, Max summoned the power of the River, his blood beginning to spiral on the ground as we felt our bodies become weightless. Her voices sang in our ears. "My poor, poor children. Where are you?"


Max's spirit stood beside me.

"We are here, mother of the dance. Please help us. Please save us."

Dahlia stood before us, and we could see the Great River behind Her. Without a blink, we were standing near the edge of Bazaar. I tried to regain my senses as Max faded from view.

Dahlia took us to Her tent at the center of Her Caravan, beyond the Physical. We told Her of the Z'bri and their army, we spoke of the loss of the Singing Knives, of Chantelle, Will and Mella. She wept for the loss of each one, and promised us that Max was safe in Baba Yaga's arms now. That She will warn the Nation. Tell them to prepare.

This peace is only temporary; there is a great storm approaching. I can only hope we survive.



Trapped

Mikal Ben'on remembers:

Blood flowed freely that day. The stream became thick with bodies, the heat was unbearable as I swung my sword at the beast attacking me. Our horses were dead. Damish had been trapped under the dead weight of his mount, the stream's bloodied waters slowly drowning him. We battled without discipline or strategy, the unnatural fury within us causing us to fight blindly. It was during this rage that I saw Shaun fall, as a beast that was all claws and spines leapt at him. I screamed out his name as he rolled out of the way. Feeling the Dream welling up in me I felt my heart burst with devotion to my closest friend. My feet danced on the surface of the water as I ran forward, my blade sure and true, cleaving deep into the monster's heart.

As it fell, a great calm came over me. Looking down at my friend I saw that he had numerous gashes across his body, and was near exhaustion. The River of Dream was flowing all around me, separating me from the battle, as though the world slowed down to a near standstill. I lifted Shaun up with a strength I could never have possessed and carried him into the woods, the battle moving at a snail's pace around me. As we moved deeper into the woods, I felt my strength waning. Then, without warning, the Dream collapsed, as did I.



I. Approaching Storm

Devotion

Struggling against the exhaustion, I opened my eyes to look straight into Shaun's.

"Mikal... thank Joan..."

He was bleeding freely. After quickly checking the area, I saw that we were alone. The sounds of fighting had ceased. There was no need to think about the outcome. The rest of the patrol was gone. Shaun was unconscious when I returned, but still breathing. I took several deep breaths and tried focusing my mind on the River again. I could *feel* the oppressive strength of the Z'bri nearby, but it seemed to be moving away from us. We were safe for the moment.

Placing my hands on Shaun's chest I prayed to Joan and the Goddess, slowly feeling the timid flow of the Dream. Slowly the trickle began to grow into a strong pulling sensation as the River flowed through my body. I felt cuts rip open on my arms as I took on the pain that wracked Shaun's body. He sighed gently when I removed my hands. He was no longer bleeding, and I had numerous rent and throbbing wounds along my arms and chest. I would be weak, but I knew that I had saved him from slow death.

We had no supplies or food and we needed rest. The heat from the previous two days was giving way to a biting chill, as the claws of the dying winter returned. Leaning against a tree, I wrapped my arms around Shaun to keep him warm.

Approach of The Baron

As we lay there I remembered our youth, how we had been inseparable blood brothers all through our training and hunts. The nights we had been told to guard the supplies when we traveled the Hunting Paths. We had been young and innocent. Now, within two days, I felt as if I had aged several summers at once.

"Mikal? Where are the others? What happened?"

I explained to Shaun what had happened. We agreed to return to the stream and try to find any other survivors. Carefully following the tree line we returned to where we had first seen the army. The opposite bank was now deserted. There were the mutilated corpses of our horses, but no sign of any of the patrol. Shaun leaned against a tree, his breathing becoming weak and labored. There didn't appear to be any survivors, nor were there any supplies. We needed to return to the nearest tower, and warn the Templars of what had transpired.

I placed my arm around Shaun; his warmth was comforting. He held me close; his breathing sounded heavier. Quietly, eyes closing, he slid to the ground. I panicked. Calling his name, I tried to make him wake up, tried to bring him back to me. I didn't want him to leave me alone here. I held him close, crying to him to look at me.

It took a while for me to realize what was happening. The same as before, I was reacting to my basic urges. My love for Shaun now turned to a fear of loneliness, and a desire to hold him close to me. Similar to the fury that had overtaken us when we had been near the Z'bri. Was there a connection? I remembered my Uncle warning us that the dark powers of the Z'bri drew the thoughts from within the warrior and corrupted them. Was this what had happened to us? Why again? I stroked Shaun's hair. Was this my feelings or something from the nearness of... the Z'bri!

I looked out over the stream to see yet another army. Holding Shaun close to me, I stepped back amongst the trees. This army was larger than the first. Flemis juggernauts carried ethereal warriors on their backs. Hordes of serfs, their arms covered in weeping sores and a strange yellowed mucus, marched at the front, while a palanquin of flesh and bone was carried on the shoulders of four large monstrosities. I didn't need to guess who lay within. Fighting the alien urges racing through my mind, I dragged Shaun's body as far into the woods as I could. But the thoughts remained, tainted and evil, corrupting my true feelings and causing me to desire. . . pain, pleasure and death; to be nothing more than a copulating beast in a single mound of flesh and sweat. Lips pressed against mine, and the River of Dream washed over me once again. Shaun and I floated in a bubble of Dream, safe for a brief moment.

I closed my eyes and sank into his embrace.

Trapped Part II

When I opened my eyes it was night. I felt as if my mind was clearer than ever before. Shaun was sitting nearby; his wounds had begun to bleed again.

"We need to move quickly — they're ahead of us now. The Tower of the Eastern Wind should be a day and a half from here. We'll travel there; they may have been able to hold off the invaders."

We walked all night, through that silent wood. The trees were no longer angry, but scared, shrinking from the wan light of the moon and stars. We didn't speak the entire trip, but kept our arms around each other, supporting the other as we walked. I kept thinking about the two armies. Why hadn't we known of this movement before the Beasts were knocking on our door? Hopefully news had already reached the Grand Council. Joan would be able to stop the Z'bri. She had the support of the people now.

Except Tera Sheba. I realized that the Wise-One had been very cold to Joan following the Crusade. Keeping close to Shaun, I began to pray that we'd see Joan again.



Chapter Two: Night of The Beasts

Even though the signs had been visible for weeks, the tribes remained ignorant of what was about to occur. The Seven Deaths were still divided, largely due to Joan's Crusade. The Fallen happily celebrated their victory, while the families of those who were captured or killed were left to mourn in the shadows.

I had to act fast, lest the Z'bri's internal war crush us all.

- Peithos the Hidden, Guide





The Forced March: A Serf's Tale

Remia speaks to her companions:

It was intolerable, really. I hadn't fought and killed to get to the position of personal concubine only to be dragged on a sweaty, long march into the lands of the Dying Ones, but my master wanted to have his pleasures nearby while he fought. Fa'Cul happily guarded the throne while we had to be carried into battle. I never liked that bitch; she had claimed that only a Z'bri could truly pleasure the Baron. Well, I had been his and Sl'Onis' personal toy for three seasons, and I could still pleasure them in ways she could never imagine.

You would not believe how angry the Baron had been when he discovered that Marenk had successfully enraged the Koleris into attacking Vimary. Fa'Cul took great pleasure from giving him the news, I suspect. She has always had a dislike for the tribes, and I suspect she had been secretly pleased that the Baron was forced to take action. He tossed me aside when he found out; my ribs and left leg were exquisitely snapped in the process, and I remember crying in ecstasy as Rak'nar of Melanis reset the bones.

My master quickly summoned the other Princes and told them to ready themselves for a march on Vimary. I suspect he wanted the Princes with him so that none would attempt to challenge Fa'Cul, though I have heard that she is feared even by the Koleris when she is enraged.

All the concubines were to travel with the Baron, because many of us had also been trained in the art of warfare. What can I say? It makes the lovemaking more. . . intriguing. I was to remain with my master as an additional support to Sl'Onis and his guard. As I entered the palanquin, Sl'Onis warned me that if the Baron was to die, I would join him. I merely cut his abdomen and licked at the blood. Promising to keep the Baron safe and. . . comforted. . . I brought Sl'Onis to climax and then climbed, sticky and satisfied, into the fleshy confines of our transportation.

The Baron brooded as we traveled from the Ziggurat to the Spine Bridge. My friends, I can now tell you that he had a habit of brooding. I guess the pressures of caring for the salvation of all souls can weigh on the minds of a great figure such as my master. None of my ministrations seemed to help this time. His porcelain features seemed to be as of stone, and his eyes had a cold fury to them that almost scared me. He casually tore the skin off my arm and played with the raw flesh underneath, as he no doubt planned what he would do to Marenk when we caught up with him. He casually placed my skin over his wounds from the Rusted Warrior's 'Crusade.' I watched as my flesh bonded with his, healing the wounds. He slowly tore the skin off my legs. I writhed on the fleshy, fat filled pillows as we moved onwards. The palanquin gave some of its skin to me, to heal my new wounds. I caressed its sides in supplication for its love.

By the time we reached the shores of Vimary, where Marenk's army had been rumored to be, we could find nothing but a few corpses and tracks leading southwards. The Baron was infuriated. He told Sl'Onis and the other princes to drive the forces faster. As he settled back next to me, he whispered into my ear.

"Trust me, my sweet. We shall feast well within the week. I will defeat Marenk and then we will take the goddesses for ourselves. You and I shall take joy from the bones of the Child and the Whore." He gently smothered me as I dreamt of the pleasures that awaited on that tiny little island.

Rumor of War: A Joanite's Memories

NIGHT OF THE BEASTS



Alethea Uhan'on,
Joanite Templar

Born to a family rife with political intrigue, Alethea chose to become a Blade, and spent her early years keeping out of the political arena. At the age of twenty summers, she was a part of the recent Crusade against the Z'bri, where she managed to help save some Agnites from being enslaved by the Baron.

Following the Crusade, Joan selected Alethea to become a Templar. The Fatima hopes to start adding new blood to the sisterhood, and Alethea is one of the first of this new generation that is bereft of the biases of past Templars. Enjoying her new-found position as one of the favored of Joan, Alethea does fear that she has inadvertently made enemies with those of her own clan.

Highlights: Loyal, Honorable, Observant.

Attributes: AGI +2, FIT +1, INF +1, PER +2, STA 25, LID 5, AD 6

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+2, Archery 1/0, Combat Sense 3/+2, Craft (carving) 1/0, Dance 1/+2, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Human Perception 2/+3, Leadership 2/+1, Lore (Joan) 2/0, Melee 3/+2, Notice 2/+2, Read/Write 1/0, Tactics 2/0, Synthesis 1

From the story of Alethea Uhan'on:

It was a great honor to be asked by Joan to join Her at the grand council. When I asked why I had been chosen, She smiled.

"Because someone must remember," was the only reply She would give to me.

The Grand Council was present, as were the Fatimas. Dahlia stood in the center of the chamber, each mask looking in a different direction. Beside Her was a tired looking Dahlian not much older than twenty summers, clutching a small journal to her breast while she glanced nervously around the chamber.

The other Fatimas stood in a circle around their Sister.

"My daughter, Larissa, has bought us grave news from the south." Dahlia's voice reverberated around the room. "An army of Z'bri are approaching; it is a -"

"Nonsense!" Tera Sheba interrupted. "The Beasts would not be so foolish."

I noticed the Dancer's eyes twinkle merrily.

"Then ask her yourself, Sister."

The poor Dahlian seem to shake uncontrollably as the Wise-One stepped up to her and began to question her about what she had seen. I listened in horror as she told of the silence of the southern squats, and the empty forests. Then when she spoke of the army, hordes of Z'bri and serfs approaching, I knew we had to act. Joan placed Her hand on my shoulder.

"Patience, my daughter. You must listen." Joan's voice was soft and low, piercing the anger clouding my mind.

Tera Sheba looked to Her Sisters. "It is the truth. Z'bri are moving from the south." She then turned and looked over to Joan, Her cold gaze ignoring my presence. "It will be up to you and Agnes to protect us, Sister. You are the one who brought this death upon us, it is your duty to fix it."

Magdalen spoke up. "Joan's forces are weakened. Agnes has lost many children. They cannot protect us alone. We all need to help."

"Then why not enlist the help of the Eighth Tribe?" The derision and hatred was clear in Tera Sheba's voice. "They may be willing to help you."

"We must evacuate Bazaar," Eva's voice cut through the air. "The children need to be safe. If we take refuge, then the beasts will eventually grow tired of trying to breach our defenses and leave us alone."

The Warrior laughed. "Don't be foolish. They want our blood and our tribes. Hiding will not stop them."

I watched the Grand Council, as they listened to the Fatimas arguing like children. What would the tribes think if they knew that the goddesses were bickering about their lives as if it were some personal game? I didn't even think as I began to speak.

"Action must be taken! Surely it would be best to start preparing for defense of our settlements. We should move as many people as we can to Bazaar. The settlements are too spread out to effectively defend. We have several patrols stationed at the Seven Fingers, so we should be thinking about protecting ourselves from the southern attack."

The Fatimas and the Council all turned to look at me. I have never been as scared as I was at that moment. Baba Yaga finally broke the silence.

"The child is correct. We must be ready, otherwise all is lost," lifting Her bulk, She shifted towards Tera Sheba. No words passed, but the Judge swept out of the Council Chamber, Iris Medi'on quietly departing as well. The Crone spoke again.

"We must inform Westholm that they need to strengthen their defenses. I do not believe we have time to gather the settlements."

Eva rose, Her head bowed as She spoke. "I feel we must evacuate. Defense will not work. However, we shall prepare the defense of Lai." Her wings unfurled, and the Mother flew from the chamber as well.

The meeting began to degenerate from there. Joan agreed to send some warriors to Griffentowne and Westholm. Dahlia would gather all Her caravans to Bazaar while Magdalen and Agnes were planning to find hiding places in Sub Terra. Baba Yaga returned to Mortuary to prepare for any possible evacuation. The Grand Council was left to plan the mundane details.

Ill Tidings

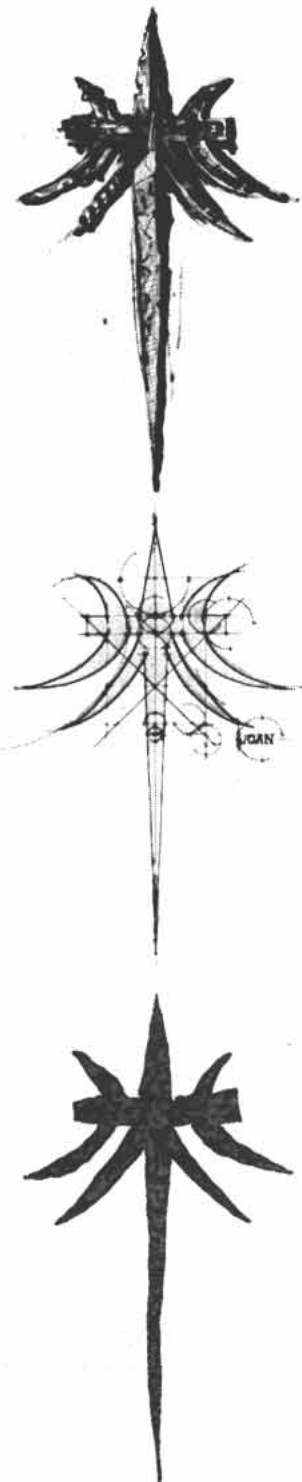
The following day a group of Joanites and Evans began the journey to Westholm. I couldn't shake a feeling of foreboding. Joan sent several units to help defend the towers, and the remaining patrols started organizing the defense of the Fallen Bridge as well as all entry points to Bazaar. A cold wind blew through the streets as we helped traders and families to board up windows and doorways. The Sheban Watch had been ordered not to help but keep an eye on the general proceedings, yet some watchmen lent their hands to our tasks. Tera Sheba remained in Solitude and refused to have any contact with Her Sisters.

That night I was haunted by dreams of two rabid dogs biting and clawing each other while they stepped all over a litter of newborn puppies. The imagery disturbed me so deeply that I found myself awake, wandering the hallways of the Watchtower in the early light of morning. There was a commotion at the gates, and I ran to see five wounded men being led into the courtyard. I recognized Captain Jania from the Westholm contingent that had left the day before.

I ran quickly down the stairs, desperate to know what had happened. Joan was already there upon my arrival. Jania's arm and torso was severely torn, and one of her legs had been broken. She had been carried in by two young Blades who looked to be almost as bad as she was. She gasped as she spoke to Joan.

"Beasts are running through the Duskfall. We. . . managed to pass Griffentowne safely. But as we made camp in the Duskfall, Beasts. Too many. . . no escape."

She closed her eyes.



2. Night of the Beasts

Joan ordered for them to be allowed to rest. As the day progressed, news spread about the increasing number of Gek'roh in the Duskfall. A Dahlian Caravan returned, its wagons near collapse and the horses exhausted, reporting that all routes to Westholm had become impassable. The number of Chained in the Duskfall had become overwhelming.

As the sun began its descent, a missive from Eva arrived, calling all to return to Lai. Tera Sheba emerged from Solitude and gathered Her tribe to Her. They too left for Lai. The streets of Bazaar had fallen silent, the Agnites hiding in Playground, Xstasis sealed. Only our patrols were on the streets by the time night fell. I noticed that even the usual squats and outcasts were not to be found. War had returned to Vimary.



Burning Forest: A Keeper's Record

Maxwell Bunkgarde Speaks:

Ahem! Testing. . .Testing. . . (A distant howl is heard) Damnable contraption! If I just push this here. . . That should do it. This is Max Bunkgarde of the Leadurv Bunker. I am making this recording in the hopes that if anything happens to me, well, someone will know what happened.

For the benefit of all you hoity-toity Olympus freaks, our bunker was based deep within what the Tribals call "Duskfall." I say "was" because those demonic mutants managed to break into the base. (Sound of crying)

As I was saying, the day of the attack was- (static) -..ay when we normally would go hunting for artifacts. Chen was the first to spot movement. No one believed him. . . he used to see ghosts in his bedroom. . . but then the perimeter alarms went off.

(Howling sounds closer. Someone is running through what sounds like undergrowth. Static sounds, then silence.)



Apocalypse

Click. . . they are still in the forests. I hope to get to the western settlement of the Tribals. I have friends there. Most of the survivors are on their way there. When the Beasts attacked, Chen ran back into the Bunker. I dragged Janelle and Peter, my wife and son, into the woods. We hid as the Beasts ransacked our home. Several families escaped using trucks and autos, yet not all of us were lucky. There was a large explosion as Chen set off our dynamite cache. The nearby trees are still burning, the smoke is making my eyes water. Still, it's keeping the monsters at bay.

(Howling starts again) Damn! They're trying to drive us westwards. . .



Damnation

Where was I? Ah yes, the explosion. Janelle, Peter and I were knocked down by the force of the blast as a giant cloud of fire and debris rose above the forest. I suspect that Chen augmented the explosives with his formulas. While the ash and debris rained down around my family and I, we ran.

Younger Voice: Da! Mam and I are hungry. When will we get there?

Maxwell Bunkgarde: Soon, Peter. Soon. Like I said before. . . we're trying to get to the Tribal settlement. It has been a day since we ran from the remains of our home. The monsters are still following. . .the fires won't hold them back forever.

Peter: Da! Da! Come quick!

Maxwell Bunkgarde: I only hope we get to the settlement in time.

Peter: *Da! It's Mam! She's-*(static)

Decembre's Final Lesson

Grandmère Décembre speaks:

Ah . . . *ma mère nocturne*. . . I know what is about to come.

Flames to the west tell me that troubles have returned to our lands, as I have always believed they would. It is right of you to prepare us for departure from our homes again. However, I will not be joining you.

Please. Do not argue with me. I have made my decision. My body is too old for such a journey. . . I must finish my time here. There is no need to be concerned; I know preparations have been made. Eventually I will walk among you once again. When the Second City is found, I shall be with you.

Oui, I remember when you came to my dreams. I had cried myself to sleep, the sticky blood-tears covering my face. You were more beautiful than anything I ever knew...a promise of what lay beyond those pits. The secrets you whispered made me realise that there was hope for us. That very night I prayed to the Goddess and She answered. She told me that you would guide us to freedom and I believed Her.

I have a request of you. Do not hate those who have turned from you. I have seen that they are the future. Ally yourself with them, for it will be the only way our tribe can survive. Some fear their arrogant independence, yet this is because they are still children. They will mature, *ma mère*, I hope you will guide them. Of course you shall try to control them. I wish you the best of luck. . . it will not be easy.

Watch your Sisters, *ma mère* — Sheba and Eva are afraid of the future. You must comfort them. The future is growing dark, yet it can be changed by what we do *now*. My life has been long. I have seen happiness and sorrow, pleasure and pain. To die is not something I fear anymore. I return to your embrace by *my choosing* — not because of fear, but because I will need to help the new blood that shall be born from this coming conflict. There are those amongst the young who share common goals of unity and strength. They will need support and they will need guidance.

To be able to help them, I must die and be reborn, so that I may see through their eyes, not these weak and tired orbs of mine. Even I, myself, have been blinded by the malaise of tradition and age. My only other request is this. Take my life now, *ma mère nocturne*. Protect my soul from the clutches of the Beasts so that I may be born anew among friends and not enemies.

Be blessed among the stars.



Puppets of Lothar: An Ivchet Confesses

Garakon confesses to his captor:

What do you wish to know? Here I am, at your mercy, Betrayer. You turn your back on me, but you are no different. It is all smoke and mirrors in the end. You wish to know of The Burning? Hah! Very well.

Lothar had been gathering his forces southeast of Vimary for some time. We had been camped too far north for the Leox squats to notice, yet south enough to avoid the Fatimas' attention. Each season Lothar would move a few more orders down to our new base camp. After we had made contact with Hattan, we began to send them a 'tribute' to help gain their support, as Capal had decided to watch rather than get their hands dirty.

Pah! Nemerath was playing games again, of that I am certain. Ah. . . I see that interests you. Yes, Count Valk had been in contact with Nemerath. He was supposed to convince the Capal Melanis to support Valk and Lothar. But Nemerath would merely make pretty promises without committing any resources. At least, that was what Valk was telling Count Lothar. I personally feel that the Melanis was playing us for fools.

It wasn't long after the Hattan contingent arrived that we received word from Valk of the Baron's movements. Lothar was furious, and we lost several serfs and one pride before he calmed enough to give the order to march on Vimary.

It was a beautiful day when we left the Battlement and moved swiftly towards the woods that surround the Great River. Many small Squat settlements were taken to swell our numbers. Lothar drove us to the east, as he was determined to meet the Baron head-on. When night fell, we'd lie in wait, not wanting to draw the Tribes' attention. Soon we were on the shore of the Great River, the crescent moon shining above us. I remember looking at the glowing lights of the Outcasts' islands with a hunger I had never felt before. How the camps had spoiled us. We needed the joy of the hunt, and Lothar had succeeded in providing.

As we approached the South Tier Bridge I could smell the delicious fear of the outcasts as they watched us gather on the banks of the Great River. In our eagerness to reach their shores, many of us leapt into those treacherous waters only to be swept away by the strong current. Lothar screamed for us to stop. His mandibles quivered as he stood before the bridge, surveying the little islands below. The giant form swayed unsteadily, as if he had been pulled into a dream.

"We will leave the Outcasts alone," Lothar spoke, his voice echoing across the water, "The Baron approaches! He must be stopped before he takes all the bounty for himself!"

With howls of rage we demanded the right to feast on the little islands of the outcasts. Yet, Lothar refused to attack the Fallen havens, his gaze trance-like and distracted. So we charged across the South Tier Bridge; our contacts in Vimary had made certain that the Tribes would ignore the eastern end of Bazaar, expecting us to come across the water. As we crossed the bridge I looked down to see the scared faces of the Outcasts as they watched us heading towards Bazaar. A small part of me felt concerned about leaving them *behind* us.

The First Signs: a Serf's Tale

Remia speaks to her companions:

Ah, the exquisite pleasure I had upon awakening! We had found that fool Marenk; the Koleris were engaged in battle against the defenders of a tower. The Baron slid from his palanquin and strode through the troops, calling Marenk's name. While the hordes gorged themselves on tribal blood, my master looked for only one victim.

The fool stood at the top of the tower, howling his defiance as he shattered the mirror lens beside him. I noticed several prides break from the main horde and head to the west and east, no doubt to feast on the delicious bounty that awaited there.

Seeing Marenk, the Baron howled; his fleshy cloak billowed as it unfurled into two giant wings. He leapt up, the massive wings beating against the air. Marenk crouched, snarling in rage at his enemy. Sl'Onis ran towards the battle, leaving me alone. I silently fondled the fleshy folds of the palanquin as I watched the drama unfurl — it was the most beautiful dance I had ever observed. The virile young warrior swiped at my master, his claws slashing at the thin membrane of the Baron's wings. There was a howl from the Baron as Marenk drew blood.

Landing on the buttress, my master swung his arm hard, aiming for the Koleris' head. Marenk attempted to jump out of the way, yet failed to notice the sharp bone whip until it had wrapped around his neck. With a savage pull, the whip cut through scale, flesh and bone. Marenk's head fell into the ravaging horde of Chained below.

Turning to gaze over the army, the Baron spread his wings and his muscular and ridged body glistened with blood and sweat.

"I have proven to you my strength. Do any dare challenge their Baron?"

The Koleris howled in fury as Marenk's body was thrown to the ravening beasts at the base of the tower.

"We shall march on Vimary. Tomorrow, you shall have what you desire. The Death of the Tribes. We shall steal their goddesses and make them pay for the crimes they have committed. We shall save the poor humans who die at their hands."

I gasped in pure joy at the thought.



The Defense of Westholm: A Keeper's Record

Maxwell Bunkegarde Speaks:

click . . . Testing? (voices can be heard yelling in the background.) This is Max Bunkegarde speaking again, possibly for the final time. I have much to say, yet little time with which to say it. Hopefully Kayven's plan will work. These Tribals have powers that defy any formulas we can imagine.

Janelle, my wife of fifteen years, is dead. While I had been trying to get this recorder working, she had been suffering from a treacherous wound she had received during our flight from the Z'bri monsters. Yes, I have learnt their true name, the name of the alien menace that has perverted the flesh of our ancestors. . . However, I must continue this tale:

Peter and I were unable to bury Janelle. . . sorry. . . I've got to stop. . . for a moment, at least.

click

Golgotha's Triumph

Voice of a Tribal: . . . over the fortification! Where are River Bear and Kayven?

Maxwell Bunkegarde: Peter and I continued moving west. We found Elise and Mark camped barely hours away from Westholm. Most of the other survivors had reached the settlement, but Elise and Mark had offered to stay and help find others. The Tribals had been wary at first, but when some of our people offered to help fortify the settlement, the Evans and Yagans agreed to offer sanctuary to all who sought it. Elise offered to drive us in to Westholm while Mark remained to wait for the Joanite searching parties.

When we arrived, I could do nothing but stare in amazement at the fortifications. In barely a day the Tribals and Leadurv Keepers had created a huge wall made from trees, earth and cement. Sharp, vicious metal spikes thrust outwards from the construction; a deterrent for anything hoping to breach the barricades. Within the wall, the settlement was bustling with men, women and children helping gather stores and weapons in preparation for a seige.

(There is the sound of several people yelling. Someone stands and walks over wooden floors. A door is slammed shut.)

Damn it all! I don't have much time left. I must go help Kayven soon. The settlement is well prepared. We even have some assistance from a clan of squats living across the West Bridge. River Bear and Kayven have a plan. We shall perform a ritual, using our Keeper formulas to channel the energy of the Tribals into the Wall. If it succeeds — and it must succeed — it shall keep us safe from the Z'bri for a while. Kayven believes that the Armament will carry into the spirit realm. Apparently the Z'bri are capable of possessing human bodies; this wall will prevent those who are possessed from crossing the threshold.

(static)

Muffled Voice: . . . well. We need you. The others are waiting.

Maxwell Bunkegarde: I must go now. Peter, I don't know what will happen when we do this. . . I love you, son. Don't make the mistakes your ancestors made. If I die, I hope you will hear this. . . don't hide. Our ancestors hid when they should have fought. So much has been lost. . . it is up to you to regain what is ours. Goodbye.

The Doomsayer's Warning: A Fallen Tale

Alya of the Children of Lilith speaks:

The noise of the Beasts was unbearable. Families huddled in their homes as the South Tier Bridge shook from the feet of the beasts and their slaves as they crossed over towards Vimary. The poor Joanites guarding the bridge made little noise as the monsters engulfed them, tossing the torn limbs over the bridge and into the trees beneath.

Most of us were in the Cage at the time, I suspect because Den-Hades had planned it. Those Guides are very odd, the way they seem to *know* things. The torches blazed as the leaders of Hom gathered. Many Fallen cells stood around the edge of the Cage, wanting to see what was happening. Den Hades stood in the center of the Cage, Halos and a solidly built man stood beside her. She looked at the gathered Fallen and began to speak, the rumbling of the Z'bri almost drowning out her voice.

"Eighth tribe, this is our brother Peithos," She gestured to the large man. "Peithos is also a guide of considerable skill. He has remained hidden in the Temple carefully following his visions. It is one of these visions that has drawn him here." She always spoke with simple elegance, aiming directly at the heart of the matter.

I noticed Hal Ninva look at Peithos with a sharp, piercing gaze. If Hal did not like this man, then I did. Peithos looked around the gathering self-consciously.

"I have seen a horrible invasion," All eyes involuntarily looked in the direction of the bridge. It wasn't a particularly convincing start. "Many will die. The time of the Camps will return if you do not act now. The Eighth Tribe must support their families, or the past shall be reborn into the day." If Peithos said anything else it was lost in the din of vocal disapproval from cells throughout the Cage.

"Help the Fatimas! Never! They killed my daughter."

"My brother had me exiled! It is justice that he now suffers!"

Hal Ninva beamed as he stood up. "Why should we sacrifice our own? Surely we cannot win, why kill ourselves as well?" There were shouts of agreement from around the arena. Hal looked pleased with himself. It was more than I could stand.

"Because, you short-sighted fool, the Z'bri will come back. Not only that, but the tribes will, once again, be in debt to us. Look at how Joan has tried to help us reconcile with our former loves. The Joanites have been sorely weakened by their stance against the Z'bri; while the *Wise-One* quails in Her watery Lair, whining about past glories, the Warrior has spoken for us. She has defended us against Her Sisters.

"What of your families? I was too young to remember anything before becoming an outcast, but some of you remember. How can you allow yourselves to be as cynical and mistrusting as those who abandoned you? The Eighth Tribe must still prove that it is the equal to the Nation. Cower all you want! If we remain here, once they have finished with the tribes the Z'bri will happily march over and take our lives as well."

I felt nervous when I met nothing but silence, but the look of sheer loathing on Ninva's face was well worth it.



Alya The Knife, Child of Lilith

Despite her somewhat sarcastic demeanor, Alya is a skilled diplomat. Her cynicism is more a way to break the ice as opposed to being offensive. She was once the victim of one of Hal Ninva's bids for popularity, and hates the Lightbringer with a passion. The love is not lost between them; Hal sees her as a child playing an adult's game.

Her youth, however, is how she has managed to remain an influence in Fallen Politics. The winds are changing, and those like Ninva are being seen as too traditional for these volatile times. Although she avoids getting too involved with the Fallen Elders, she is tiring of the lack of focus that politics of the Fallen have shown.

Highlights: Perceptive, Sarcastic, Reluctant Leader

Eminences: Inspiration, Conviction

Attributes: AGI +2, BLD -1, CRE +1, INF +1, PER +2, WIL +1

Skills: Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 1/+2, Etiquette 1/+1, Haggling 1/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Human Perception 3/0, Investigation 1/+2, Law 1/0, Leadership 3/+1, Lore (Fallen) 1/0, Melee 2/+2, Navigation (Urban) 1/0, Notice 1/+2, Streetwise 2/+1, Synthesis 1



Vimary in Flames: A Joanite's Memories

From the story of Alethea Uhan'on:

The first warning we had was the sound of fighting from the East gate. A Joh'an had flown down and slaughtered the guards, allowing the serfs to break through. I ran with my unit, hoping we would be able to support the fighters that were in that area of the city. A blazing ball of oil flew through the air above us, and I heard screaming as a ruin burst apart in the explosion. A troop of older Agnites ran out of a street ahead of us. I recognized their leader, an ex-barren known as Garth. I called his name. He seemed to beam with excitement.

"Why, lady Alethea. What a pleasant surprise."

I glared at him. "What is happening, Garth? Where are all the people?"

He hopped from one foot to the other as another fireball raged across the sky. "We have evacuated Playground. Thanks to some tunnels Abrams has shown us, we managed to get many people to head for Joan's Tower. Serfs and Gek'roh are in the eastern quarter. We tried to keep them at bay, but there are too many! Magdalen showed up and *ordered* Agnes to follow Her!"

I began to ask him how far away the enemy was when one of my men cried out. A large, oily blob was squeezing its way through the tight alleyway we were in. A translucent tendril reached out and attached itself to Valir, one of our youngest warriors. He screamed as the beast began to drag him towards it. I ran over and hacked at the long tendril with my sword. The tendril broke, but Valir kept screaming. I watched in horror as the remaining piece of fatty flesh dug into his arm. I dragged Valir's body along as the Flemis attempted to ensnare me as well. The Agnites began to hurl spears and rocks at the Flemis bulk as the others helped me pull Valir to safety.

"Quick, we'll take the tunnels. The others are moving towards the main force at the Watchtower." Garth pulled us down a flight of stairs that led to a basement room. Once we were safely inside he lit a torch and led us to where the floor had caved in, colorful ropes running down to a concrete tunnel. As I prepared to lower Valir into the hole, his eyes opened.

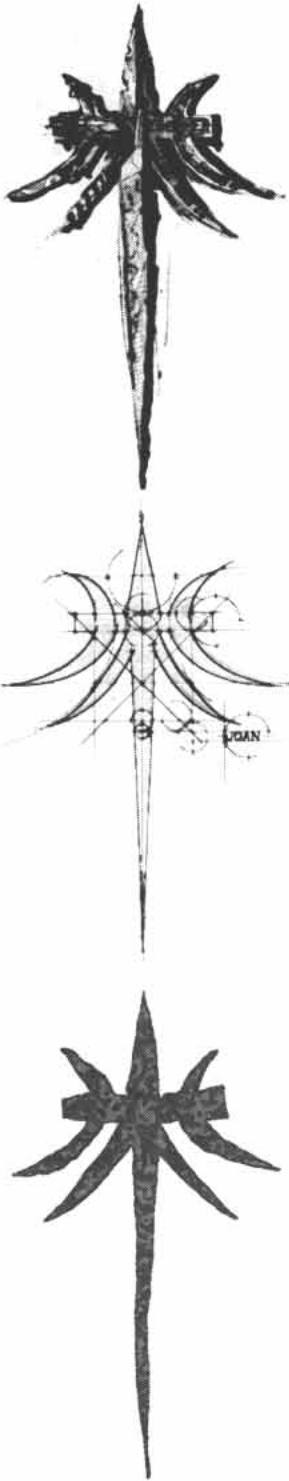
Off-white cataracts looked up at me as he tried to focus.

"It is inside me, Althea. They are calling to me. . . us. . . we."

I watched as his skin began to change texture and form. His features became soft as the Flemis infected his mind, soul and body. I raised my sword and ended his torment.

"Quick! We must get to Joan."

I took one last look behind me. The light of burning buildings illuminated the room. Valir's body was lost in the shadows.



The Infestation

We ran blindly through the tunnels, the noises above echoing eerily around us. Eventually we entered the Pit. People were running everywhere; Joanite and Agnite patrols were attempting to drive the people onwards to the Tower. Moving quickly through the crowd, Garth led us up a spiraling ramp towards the surface. There was the sound of howling from behind us.

Three Gek'roh hounds came running out of the tunnel known as the Envy Line. The monsters were each the size of a large man, and their yellow eyes seemed to be ablaze with light as they started charging into the confused crowd. I yelled to my unit, ordering them to engage the beasts, but we were separated by the fleeing mass of humanity. Squat, Keeper and Tribal ran as one. Some ran deeper into the tunnels, others fled for the ground level. We pushed our way through the crowds as possibly fifty Serfs emerged from the tunnel. Although we were outnumbered, we were determined to fight. I prayed to Joan as I released my fury, my blade swiftly cutting down the Serfs that stood before me. Garth and his unit danced and flitted around their opponents, disorienting them, while we took the advantage. I saw Garth giggling and spinning around one of the Gek'roh, the ebb of the River building and swirling around him. Without warning the confused Beast turned and attacked the Serfs. The other two beasts, seemingly jealous of their rival, also started to feed on the Serfs. Taking heart, we began to beat back the horde, when another howl issued from the tunnel behind us.

"Retreat!" I screamed as more Gek'roh bounded from the tunnels. Continuously fighting, we backed our way up the ramp. The last of the non-combatants had escaped. I was praying that Baba Yaga would find our souls after we died, when the tower above us seemed to tear in half. Joan swept down into the chamber, Her cold eyes burning with righteous fury. The beasts cowered before Her as She cut them down. We rallied and joined our goddess in cleansing the emporium of the Z'bri filth.

It was a joyous battle; the monsters ran from our blessed swords and righteous fury. Soon besides us, our Fatima and the corpses of the dead, The Pit was deserted. Some of my patrol started for the tunnels, their rage getting the better of them.

"Halt!" Joan's voice rang like a bell through the room. "Return to the surface and regroup near the Watchtower."

Quietly we began the climb to the surface. Upon reaching the ground, Joan flew above the rubble of the emporium, and brought Her mighty sword down on the building. The nearby ground caved in, sealing the Emporium for good.



The Fate of Sanctuary

The Watchtower was in a state of chaos. To the east Bazaar was burning, our warriors and the Agnite teams were lined along the streets, catapults hurling flaming peat onto the approaching army. Joan and Dahlia were standing at the base of the tower, and Baba Yaga was rumored to be gathering Her tribe together, preparing to make a push to the north near the Hunting Paths and the Seven Fingers, where the remaining guards could help defend the tribes.

Carefully making my way through the crowds I found Garth being attended by an Evan woman.

"Apologies for my rudeness, but who are you?"

The healer smiled. "I am Nadia Aria'on, cousin of Benjamin Aria'on." She pointed to a man who was speaking to Joan and the other Templars.

"You are from Griffentowne?" Garth toyed with the bandaging around his ribs. There was sadness in the young woman's eyes. I noticed she also wore many bandages.

"So Griffentowne was lost." I said matter-of-factly. Nadia nodded in affirmation.

"The beasts attacked so quickly — we had refused to retreat to Sanctuary, not wanting to leave the other tribes without any support. Benjamin had managed to convince those who had been keeping him under house arrest to join him in traveling here to Bazaar.

"No sooner had the families prepared to leave than an army of serfs struck the settlement. Luckily most of us were already on our way here. We only discovered what happened by the time we were near Sanctuary. Oh, Eva and Tera Sheba have protected our sisters and brothers well.

"Lai is surrounded by an impenetrable canopy of vines. They begin in the waters around the isle and stretch high into the sky, all twisted and woven together. I pity any Z'bri that attempts to breach that wall. It was while we were looking at this that one of our scouts saw the refugees struggling against a pack of monstrosities. Attempting to help, we tried to drive the serfs off. That's how most of us were injured. But many more have died in Griffentowne.

"Eva hasn't abandoned us, we are still able to help heal the wounded. She is protecting Her children within the Firmament, Her green womb. We have chosen to remain to help those who need us. Eva has allowed us to do this."

Even though I understood what Nadia meant, I couldn't help but feel angered at Eva and Tera Sheba, safe and comfortable in their sealed world, while we were suffering. We needed the Judge and the Mother's strength and support.

If we didn't have that help, we would surely lose.





The Great Feast: An Iv'chet confesses

Garakon confesses to his captor:

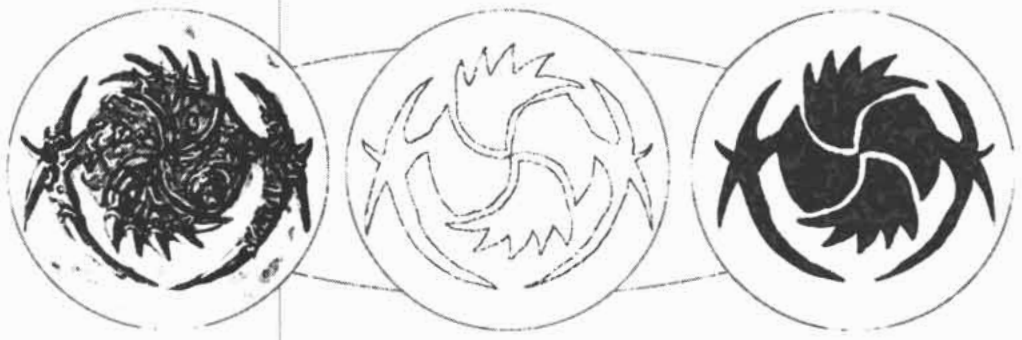
I felt as if I would weep with joy when our serfs used the tribes' own catapults against them. Lothar walked among the prides, his vicious claws cutting into the flesh of those he blessed as we began our advance on the Tower of the Warrior. The Gek'roh ran through the streets, hounding those foolish enough to leave their burning homes. Some of us found our way into the dark depths of the Emporiums, where many delicious humans were hiding, hoping we'd not think to look underground.

The feast was glorious. The Joanites and the children fought valiantly, yet they could not match our numbers. Eventually the defenders retreated towards the Tower. I was at the forefront of the hordes by that time. It was a beautiful sight; the eastern quarter of Bazaar was now ours. We had already feasted on several careless warriors. The Oneida clans sent by Hattan had been ordered by the Priests to take some of the children as tribute to their Mistresses. Prides howled with joy as each Iv'chet rediscovered the Seed in every death. My strength was increasing as I felt the visceral ecstasy of the Seed swim through my blood, my exposed flesh and my loins. This was true love, true purity. The screams of the dying played musically in my ears as we continued advancing on the Tower. I could smell the thousands of bodies as the Tribes attempted to move to the north end of the city.

New howls filled the air. Lothar strode past me; his huge, black, sweat and gore covered body smelt of sweet agony. I lusted for him, for the pure ferocity of the Count. Once he stood before the gathered Beasts he spoke. Even above the howls and snarling, his voice commanded obedience and attention. We became silent.

"The Baron has come," He called to his hordes. "It intends to stop us from taking the wealth that is rightfully ours. Let us rage, and tear the traitors apart!"

Screams and growls of aggravation rose from the gathered prides. We ran loose through the streets, gouging human and H'l Kar Z'bri alike. It was pure, delicious chaos. I felt the Seed ripping through my flesh like never before, and it was beautiful. Joan, the Warrior, stood before the tide of humanity, Her sword keeping us at bay, while the many-headed Trickster used illusions and speed to keep us disoriented. I kept running, hungering for the Serfs of the Baron. If we were to succeed, we needed to make certain that the Baron was dead. Trapped as they were, the treacherous Tin goddesses and their followers weren't going anywhere.





The Baron and The Lover: A Serf's Tale

Remia speaks to her companions:

Oh, how Sl'Onis and my master pleased me as we entered the tribes' main settlement! After a wonderful moment of bliss, we left the palanquin. Lothar's howls echoed across the city, screaming for my master to face him. Sl'Onis became agitated at Lothar's insolence. Personally, it bored me. All I could think of was my warm, moist womb-bed back at the Ziggurat. The Baron stood amongst the rubble as he observed the two armies clashing, trapping the pitiful tribes between them. He seemed dissatisfied with the fighting; even the other humans were of little interest to him. He wanted a Fatima.

Princes K'ark'oom and Skkr were hunting Tribals, hoping to fill their coffers with bountiful slaves. The Melanis prince, C'arhis, kept near the Baron, his twisted, pale robes moving as if the very fabric was alive. A fact that wouldn't have surprised me in the least.

Sl'Onis guided us via a quiet street, to avoid direct confrontation with the tribes. The Baron was displeased, and we Serfs were forced to follow. It was disgusting — the palanquin was left behind while we were forced to walk on the gravel and dirt. Of course, the cuts from pieces of glass and stone did make the walking a pleasurable experience.

She was waiting for us near the end of the street. Her new silhouette was unmistakable. Agnes the Child.

"Mr. Baron wants to play a game, I hope. . ." Her high-pitched voice rang through the air like music. She ran down the street, Her child-like giggles echoing off the darkened walls of the ruined buildings around us.

"Come Sl'Onis. We shall capture Her! Keep an eye out for ambush." The Baron began to chase the young avatar with us, his entourage, running behind him. Darting back and forth, Agnes led us deep into the ruins, away from the main battle, where the Princes were fighting Lothar's army. I felt a strange sensation of dread. We were being led somewhere purposefully, obviously it would be. . .

. . . a safe place to capture that vulnerable Child. No Tribals. Lothar is too focused on finding the Baron amongst his forces. There is no need to worry.

The voice whispered gently in my ear, almost indistinguishable from my own thoughts. I felt my legs tremble with desire as I heard the words repeat in my mind. Yes, I believed them fully, and did not say a word to anyone as we continued to chase the Child.

Eventually we found ourselves standing in a market square. The tattered remnants of merchant's stands, abandoned during the evacuations, clung to the crumbling walls. A fire was blazing where one of the burning oil canisters from the catapults had shattered against the side of a building. Agnes had vanished, and in Her place stood another goddess — the Whore.

Illuminated by the fire, Her robes of glass and gauze glittered like the starry firmament above. The alluring feminine form beneath was vaguely visible through those robes, and we all stopped and stared. As the creature of flesh and metal moved, I found myself a victim to Her seductive grace, the flames within my body soaring at a single glance. Oh, how I desired to be with Her. My master moved towards ethereal goddess.

"Your promises of pleasure do not fool me, Whore. I am the. . ."

Magdalen raised a finger and whispered to the Baron to be quiet. When She spoke, it was as if every nerve in my body vibrated to the sound of Her voice. I held back the urge to give of myself to Her voice alone; the voice that had been seducing me ever since we had arrived in Bazaar.

"Baron. . . it has been such a long time. After I spared you in the Rose of the Flesh, you still wish to challenge me? Very well. But let us do so *face-to-face*."

2. Night of the Beasts

She raised Her hand to the zipper that was Her face. The Baron, curiosity gaining the better of him, leaned closer to watch. The yells were getting more distant as a breeze swept through the plaza. Slowly the zipper began to descend, and a faint light shone from within the mask of the Fatima.

"Kiss me."

Her cloak flared open as the Baron leaned in to kiss the avatar. Sl'Onis cried out to our lord and master even as the barbed wires burst from the Fatal Lover's body and ensnared the Baron in their coils. Gasping in agonized ecstasy, the Baron embraced the Whore as Her cloak surrounded him, the glass and wire cutting through his flesh. I heard a chant filling the air; the sounds of children's voices was unmistakable.

*"You can run and you can hide.
We shall bind you
Tie, Tie, Tie.
No escape and no reward.
Caught little monsters
Caught, Caught, Caught."*

The Baron cried out as the Child goddess materialized behind him, and thrust Her claws through his back. The night was suddenly alive with whoops and hollering as children ran out from behind the ruined walls of the buildings. Beautiful Succubi and Incubi moved among us, the worshippers of the Lover torturing us with their own deadly embraces. Bats and pipes, swords and knives were thrust at us. As the Baron's body disintegrated, I felt the spell of Magdalen's beauty break apart. I never hesitated. As Sl'Onis and his guards attempted to reach the Baron's remains, I ran. Great roars filled the air as I fled through the burning city. New fighting had ensued and I kept running, without thought for where I was headed. All I knew was that I needed to escape before the Lover found me as well.



Seed against Seed: An Iv'chet Confesses

Garakon confesses to his captor:

Ha! Yes, Betrayer, you would have laughed. Z'bri against Z'bri, a battle of pure violence and beauty. The Baron's forces fought viciously, tearing Serfs and Gek'roh apart with impunity. Oh, the divine smell of spilled blood, coppery and bitter. I raged at the scent and fell to the ground, lapping at the sanguine fluids while the Koleris started tearing at each other.

Flemis moved slowly along the streets, consuming all living things in their path. Giant, hulking sacks of putrescent flesh and mucus, the faces of their victims slid beneath their pale white skin. Within the shadows crept the Melanis, striking quickly at their victims before disappearing again. Hah! Most beautiful of all though, was to see the Sangis copulating among the carnage. Even as they fought, they played with the still warm bodies of their victims. I doubt they *killed* anyone. Merely kept them. . . subdued.

The Princes. . . what fools they were. K'ark'oom went into a fury, and he leapt for Ambassador Ult'maht. Sundering ripped through the shrieking air and I suspect he used Ult'maht's connection to Skkr, for the Flemis began to scream with agony. C'arhis tried to flee the battlefield during the chaos. I was there when Lothar ripped his body to shreds. It is my belief that more, now than ever, Lothar desires nothing less than the complete destruction of the Melanis House. C'arhis took a long time to die. . .

The Tribes were not quiet during all of this either. At one point the buildings began to come to life. Giant warriors of concrete and glass rose from the ruins of the city and began to attack any Z'bri that came near. I saw buildings with Skyrealms collapse in on themselves, crushing the Joh'an hiding within. The Child Warrior danced among the Flemis Juggernauts, slashing at their rubbery hides, Her Dreams freeing those trapped within. Eventually, however, She had to retreat as Skkr began to unite the hive into larger, stronger forms. There was no hope for the Tribes; our numbers were slowly crushing them. It was merely a matter of time.



Decisions of Salvation: A Fallen Tale

Alya of The Children of Lilith speaks:

The decision had been made faster than I had originally believed possible. Hal Ninva had even agreed to back the attack in the end. Wily old bastard always knew how to keep up his popularity. The Herites were too divided to overthrow the decision; several cells happily joined the force solely in the knowledge that if they couldn't kill a few Fatimas, a Z'bri corpse or two would suffice. Within a few hours we were moving along the Fallen Bridge, coming up *behind* the Z'bri.

Running from the head of the charge, rubbing shoulders with Jacker cells and Herites, I screamed at the top of my lungs, the rage within me building. The beasts were fighting each other, oblivious to our advancing army. Blood flowed freely as we began to cut our way through the hordes of monsters. Some fought back, tearing at our flesh and feasting on our blood. Yet more of the beasts seemed intent on attacking others of their own kind.

We pressed on through the ruins of Bazaar. My sword flashed as I cut down the Serfs and Squats that were lagging behind the main armies. The Sunken City was overrun with beast fighting beast; many brave warriors were lost to the clutches of the Koleris, often when caught between two combatants. Pushing further north, towards the Watchtower, the flow of the River changed. Currents of Dream pulled us forward, and strengthened our Synthesis. I lost all sense of time and space. My sword cut, thrust and parried with almost no thought; it became an unconscious movement, my body instinctive and wild. A giant torch burned above us as Joan flew past, striking down at the hordes of the Z'bri. She was helping us to cut a path through the warring Z'bri to the center of Bazaar, where the survivors were fighting for their lives. Baba Yaga and Dahlia were guarding the thousands of wounded and frightened people, summoning powerful Dream to battle the Z'bri. The buildings themselves came to life, striking down into the swarms of Serfs and monstrosities that the Z'bri controlled. Once our presence had been detected, the beasts fled into the tunnels beneath Bazaar. I watched as some cells broke away from the main force to give chase.

The path to the Watchtower was now clear. The giant animated buildings froze as Dahlia noted our arrival.

"Come, Eighth Tribe, We wish you no harm." Joan landed before us, as Baba Yaga and Dahlia approached our army. The sounds of Z'bri fighting Z'bri echoed through the air, and every so often another ball of flame would be catapulted across the sky. Luckily, the tribes seemed to have been momentarily forgotten. Den-Hades stepped forward and addressed the Fatimas.

"There is no need to feel threatened. The Eighth Tribe offers you asylum on the isles of Horn and Haven. Now is the time for the past to be forgotten, so that we may protect the future."

Like I said before, simple, elegant and straight to the point.



Unexpected Allies: A Joanite's Memories

From the story of Alethea Uhan'on:

The Guide's voice reverberated throughout the Tower. No one spoke, each of us silently awaited the Fatimas' response.

"Sisters, we must protect the tribes above all else." Agnes glided out of the shadows, followed by Her latest shadow, Tomoe, and a group of wounded Agnites. "Vimary is no longer safe. The Baron is dead, but his death will only grant us a temporary reprieve."

Magdalen stepped up to join Her Sisters. "I concur. We must protect the people. Will you, the Eighth Tribe, help us to bring our children across the Fallen Bridge?"

One of the Fallen stepped from the gathered cells. She was a young woman with a patch over one eye; she was joined by a fairly large, bald woman and a confident middle-aged man who seemed to be fidgeting all the time.

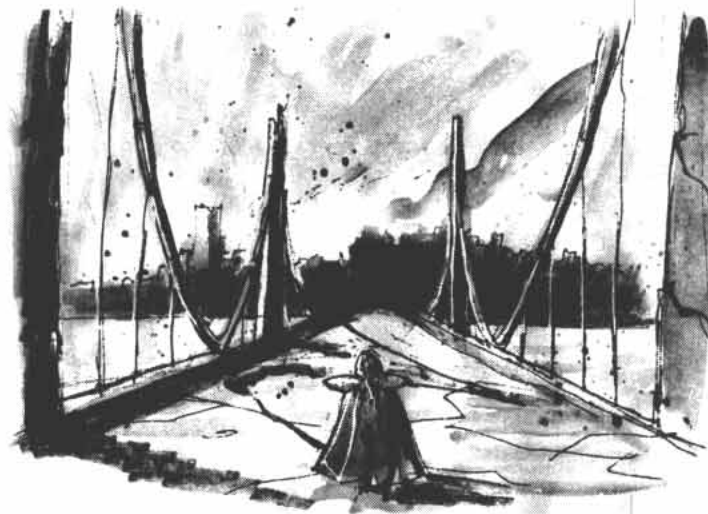
"We will help you. However there will be a price, which can be discussed once we are safely on Hom."

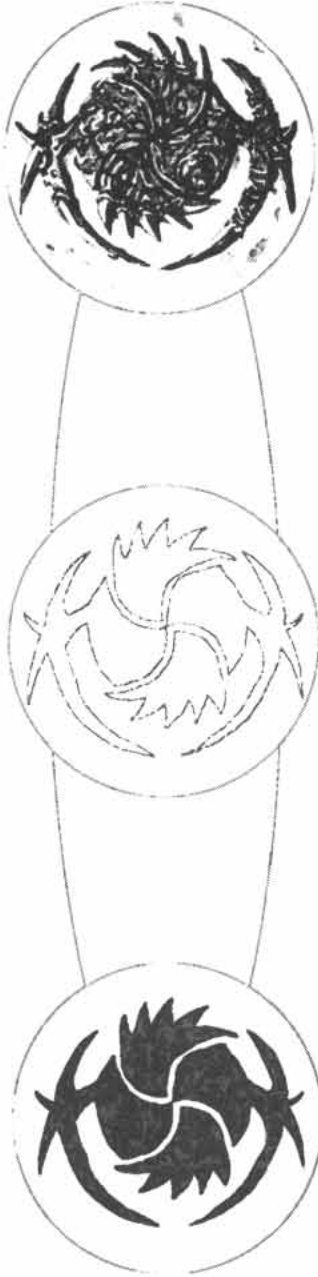
Baba Yaga motioned towards Joan. "Then call our warriors; we must keep the way clear for the weaker tribes people to journey to the Fallen Isles. The only blood that may be spilt is that of the Z'bri and their spawn. Let no Tribal or Fallen draw the blood of the other. For the time being we are as one Nation!"

Exodus

Joan and Agnes flew into the air as the forces of the Warrior and the Child joined the ranks of the Eighth Tribe. Dahlian Caravans were loaded with the wounded and elderly, while the children marched alongside their parents, under Magdalen's watchful eye. Baba Yaga ordered for the dead to be left behind, where She and the Old Ones performed death rites for them, ensuring their safe journey across the Fold.

Dahlia reanimated Her giant Golems, forcing hidden hordes of Z'bri to retreat towards the main battleground, which had moved northeast, away from Bazaar. Joan and Agnes watched over us as we continued marching. We reached the Fallen Bridge as the first rays of sunlight shone over the ruins. Thick, black and oily smoke hung in the air, while many towers still burned. I noticed a dark and heavy cloud hanging over the western sky as well. Lai was visible from the bridge. It looked like a giant wall of leaves and vines; no other life was visible, and I wondered what life would be like within that dome. To be trapped, uncertain of the future, too scared to look outside. I smiled. Somehow, I didn't feel sorry at all for them.





The Retreat

Remia speaks to her companions:

And so as the sun rose, I found myself here. It is true my friends: the Baron's body has been destroyed. Lothar marches on the Ziggurat even now, hoping to regain control of the H'I Kar. But Fa'Cul shall be waiting for him. She has the backing of the Melanis, Valk. I am confident that we shall soon be able to regain our status. Maybe SI'Onis survived as well. I am hoping.

Yet until we can be certain, we must hide here, in the ruins of the Emporiums. Be wary, though. I have heard the sounds of Chained moving through the tunnels. If we work together we may be able to get out of the city undiscovered. I am certain that I can get us safely to the land of Vytor. There may be safety for us there. What do you say? Divd? Getwn?

The Wise Eyed

Garakon confesses to his captor:

Once we received word of the Baron's death, Lothar became eager to reach the H'I Kar. The Oneida priests challenged him, a foolish decision, in afterthought. Hattan will receive a larger tribute as apology. The H'I Kar Z'bri lost their desire to fight after that.

Naturally some of us weren't happy with leaving the tribes to re-group, so we chose to remain and pick off the survivors. Of course, by then the Outcasts had helped the Fatimas and their tribes to escape. Their little islands are too easily defended, and the Rusted Warrior and the Child-Witch keep patrolling the shores, happily eviscerating any Serf or Z'bri that crosses their path. We tried the tunnels, where many of the Baron's supporters are hiding. Unfortunately for us, someone has trapped any tunnels leading out of Bazaar. Cave-ins, flooding and explosions have also had their toll on our numbers.

That is how you found me, Wise Eyed. Now I am your prisoner to slaughter as you please. Hah, you preach your converted ways, but you still are the same as us. Kill me. You want to do it. Just tear my heart from this stolen flesh which torments us. The Seed will triumph in the end, Magos, because the Goddess turned Her back on us all. She does not care.

I have heard tales of what happened to the surviving Nomads. Yes, I see that interests you. Lothar told us once, he knows where they are.

Now you will kill me, knowing that there are many secrets even you and your fellow Hunters are unaware of. Come over here and I shall tell you them all. Magos? Magos! Come back here! Kill me! Take my flesh! Magos? Where are you going?

Don't leave me here. . .

Divided

From the story of Alethea Uhan'on:

That day following the Burning of Vimary was one of the saddest days of my life. I stood at the Fallen Bridge, watching the Beasts attempt to enter the sealed dome of Lai, only to be crushed by the living vines that guarded it. There has been no word from Lai or Westholm. We have watched the fires burning near Griffentowne and the Mortuary, where I have learned Grandmère Décembre's body lies.

So many lives have been lost because we were divided. Eva and Tera Sheba's names are cursed regularly, as the survivors try to find their families amidst the confusion of people. The Fatimas are to meet with the leaders of the Eighth Tribe, in an attempt to arrange some form of treaty that will allow us to all live on these crowded islands without killing each other.

Already the signs of hate have begun to show. A mother and her three children were attacked this morning by a group of Herites blaming them for the deaths of so many Fallen. Although no one was killed, the mother lies in a coma, her children cared for by the Lightbringers who chased the gang away.

How long have we got? The main forces of the Z'bri seem to have moved north, leaving numerous small packs to keep us from returning to Bazaar. If we can find some common ground, there may still be hope for us all. But if this constant cycle of hate continues. . . then maybe we are not so deserving of the Goddess' gifts. I can only hope that this is not the case.



Chapter Three: From the Ashes

I am ashamed. A wise woman once told me that even a goddess must understand humility, and in my pride I believed that I already knew this. Yet I was wrong. Now, you who were abandoned by us, you have gained a connection to our mother that some of my Sisters have watched with jealousy. You have shown us that you would not abandon your former families, no matter the harm which they had done. The Eighth Tribe, the Tribe of the Fall, you are the soul of the future that I see. We must work together to do what should have been done generations ago. We must unite to restore the balance. To restore the World.

- Baba Yaga speaks to the Fallen



Closed Sanctuary

Tera Sheba calls to Her followers:

Laws are what protect us. I taught you the laws of the tribes and some fools did not follow those simple words. Now you can see what has happened. The Z'bri came to our doors and fed on the blood of our children. Surely you can now see the importance of Law.

To this end, Eva and I will once again give you the Laws. These must be respected. Those who fail to follow the Law will be exiled to the Great River, where the abominations of the Z'bri will feast eternally on your soul. Those who do not find these laws appealing may leave Sanctuary now. You may find 'refuge' out there somewhere. I care not, for you will have turned your back on your mothers and your family.

I see that none wish to turn from our Love. This is as it should be. All able-bodied tribe members must partake in Watch duty at least twice a moon. No one must attempt to contact survivors beyond the Dome. I have already seen the world outside and there is nothing there but the corruption of the beasts. Any family or friends who did not join us are now the pawns of the Z'bri. Forget them, as Eva and myself have.

You will remain devoted to us, as the goddess has decreed. Train to be strong, for we shall soon take back the land that the Beasts have stolen from us. I promise. There shall be no mercy.

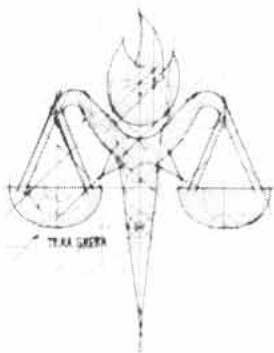


Shadows Behind Shadows

Cylix Seth'on addresses his supporters:

Justice must prevail! It was the tainting of the Tribes that led to this situation — this blasphemous alliance of the Fallen and the Joanites. Pah! Look at the outcome. They accused our Fatima of betraying both the Tribes and the Goddess. How dare they! The Wise One did naught except to protect us from ourselves. They dared to try to punish Her for that. Hah!

The truth, my fellow purists, is that the Z'bri have poisoned the tribes, infecting their flesh and their minds. The sins of the Beasts have begun to work their deadly fangs into our souls, and we must cleanse our sisters and brothers of this taint. I have inscribed a list of those who dwell here under the Dome of the Firmament that I believe may be possessed by this unbearable sickness. It is up to you to find these people and bring them here, where we may cleanse their bodies and souls, and make them fit for salvation. Some of you may feel a little uncertain, but you must have faith in your Fatima, for She has given us Her full support. She sees all truth; hears all truth; and knows all truth. Here we stand, unchallenged. Surely that is proof that She supports us fully in our mission to cleanse our homes of the Z'bri. Let us begin!



Strained Relations

From the Journal of Caitlin Aria'on:


Although Tera Sheba claims to have abandoned those beyond the Dome of the Firmament, I am certain that our Mother Eva has not. The Wise One has dominated all decisions since we took refuge here. Shebans have the greater power and influence, while the Seeds and Nurses must cater to their needs. There are some Shebans who fish the river that runs through the center of Sanctuary, but they are often derided by the Judges and Advocates, who have lived too comfortably over the last few summers.

Already I hear certain Shamans and Seeds grumbling, but Eva is still feeling the loss of Her other children. She has allowed Tera Sheba to take control while She broods over the fate of the Evans in Westholm and Griffentowne. It is hard to tell what has happened beyond this dome, as Eva has sealed us in completely. All light comes from great globes hanging from the roof; they flare into light at the same time every 'morning' and we are told that they are in tune with the sun outside. Yet I am certain that the lights have been shining longer than a day, while Tera Sheba tells us we mustn't cease our labor until 'nightfall.'

There are even more worrying rumors. . . I fear that the Watch is behaving outside of even Tera Sheba's ruling. Some of the more vocal members of the community had been declared tainted by the Watch. They were taken to the new Solitude to be 'cleansed.' Upon returning they refused to speak against the Wise One again.

I can hear them approaching now. I must hide this journal carefully, for it is a crime to question Sheba's wisdom. Yet I cannot dismiss the feeling that She has lost Her connection to Wisdom. Some say that the Great Owl itself refuses to speak to Her now. If that is the case, I pray that the other Fatimas survived and will rescue us before we tear ourselves apart.





Treaties and Promises

Alya of The Children of Lilith speaks:

All of Hom was present. The sun had reached its zenith when the Fatimas and the surviving Grand Council met with the Elders of the Eighth Tribe. Due to the size of the Fatima's forms the meeting was held outside the Cage. The crush of bodies was overwhelming as a majority of the Tribes and Fallen gathered together. Traders and the Griffentowne Evans wandered the crowds offering food and water to those who had arrived, and children chased dogs through the grass and trees nearby.

I had pushed through to the front of the crowd, where an armed group of Joanites and Jackers kept the people away from the clearing that had been made. Seats and tables had been placed where the Tribal and Fallen Councils would sit. Baba Yaga had entwined Her serpentine body around itself, in an apparent attempt to look less imposing. Magdalen, Her cloak shimmering in the sunlight, had decided to stand near Dahlia, who had placed Herself in between the two factions. Each of the Dancer's heads looked in a different direction, eagerness twinkling in Her eyes. Agnes had seated Herself on the Fallen's side of the clearing, Her intimidating new body surrounded by deadly looking animated toys. I still found it hard to realize that She had once been an innocent looking child. Joan was organizing the island's defense, as Her position in Hom seemed already accepted.

I personally felt the entire exercise was a waste of time. If the Fatimas wanted to they could easily take control; it seemed a little pointless having negotiations. It was amusing to see the Council of the Nation shuffle to their seats. It was so nice of the Fatimas to add the human touch, regardless of the fact that the Council would never even dream of challenging their goddesses.

Little did I realize my opinions would change this day. Baba Yaga spoke first, Her honeyed words catching me by surprise. The avatar of Fate was *apologizing* for all that had happened! Obviously Joan's change of heart had been more effective than we had believed.

Hal, ever the attention seeker, then spoke. "These are great words. Oh, Mother of Death. But words alone will not appease those who have suffered. There are some among us who demand atonement for the wrongs of the past! We want some guarantee that you will respect our own desires and needs." He always was a great speechwriter.

A murmur of shock ran through the crowd as the tribals became offended by Hal's manner towards one of their goddesses. Faust Verkin stood up. "I would request that you speak to our mother with a little more respect, Fallen."

Deus walked to the center of the circle as the noise built. He raised his hands for silence, and waited for the commotion to die down. "This will not do. We are not here to fight amongst ourselves. We are here to strengthen the bonds of peace." He turned to the Fatimas. "It is true that many of the Eighth Tribe were those who turned their backs on you. Still, it is also true there are those of us who were abandoned by the goddesses we had loved. The Guides have taught us many things over the years, but the most important lesson we have learned is that we are all children of the Goddess."

Deus swept his gaze around the entire clearing. "We, the Eighth Tribe, are the same as any person here. What we want is to be recognized as the equals we are, not as vermin to be tolerated. We still wield the power to Dream, because the Goddess has blessed us, just as the Fatimas have blessed each and every one of you.

"Let us stop fighting."

That man was a natural leader.

The Condition

The silence was somewhat unprecedented. I had expected at least some rebuttal from the Council. Baba Yaga seemed to be in deep thought over Deus' words. Magdalen was inscrutable as ever, and Dahlia seemed to be enjoying some private joke. I hoped that someone would speak.

"Thank you, Brother Deus."

Someone other than Hal Nirva, though. I swore under my breath as the pompous bureaucrat stepped into the center of the clearing.

"Your words inspire us to hope for a quick and satisfactory resolution to this matter."

I began to push my way through the crowd. Hal was going to ruin everything if someone didn't interfere.

Kyrt then stood and yelled across the clearing "Still, there is the matter of compensation for the atrocities that we, the Eighth Tribe, have suffered at the hands of the Seven Deaths and their people. . ."

That had been a foolish comment to make. I remember cringing as he said "Seven Deaths" and wishing he would be quiet. Chaos reigned as the tribes started shouting abuse at Kyrt, the Herites started screaming for the Fatimas' hearts and the Lightbringers desperately tried to restore order. Pushing my way through the irate crowd I managed to enter the clearing. The Tribal Council and Fallen Elders were standing, yelling across the clearing at each other. Closing my eyes I sensed the strong pull of the River around me. While the many Dreamers were attempting to draw on their own link, I felt the bond to the Fatimas, the way the currents of spirit were drawn to the goddesses.

Alya. The voice was familiar to me. It reminded me a little of Lilith. *Alya, let me help you. Let me give you the strength to resolve this matter.*

"There. Will. Be. Silence!"

The words reverberated across Hom and Haven. The strength of the River could be felt in those words. There was silence. All eyes gazed at the person who had given the command. It took me a while to realize that it was me.

"You are all acting like children! This is unacceptable behavior. It was this stupid bickering that allowed the Z'bri to lay waste to Vimary! Are we to become like our ancestors? So self-absorbed that we fail to see the monsters joining us at our hearth?"

"No! This will not happen. The past is exactly that. The past. It is dead, let us leave it. It is time to look to our future. Today, we have the opportunity to reunite families that have been divided for too long. Lovers will be able to look into each other's eyes again without shame. And maybe, just maybe, I'll be able to get a decent night's sleep without hearing someone whining about how things used to be better.

"Deus has stated what will be required for the Nation to be able to remain on our isles. It is a small and reasonable condition. Respect. The Nation must respect that we have a right to live how we chose. However that condition applies to the Eighth Tribe as well. We must respect our relatives within the Nation for the same reasons."

3. From the Ashes

I looked at the faces of the Grand Council, then those of the Fallen Elders. Hal Ninva seemed to be about to both faint and explode at the same time. There was a nice warm feeling in my heart when I looked into his panicked eyes.

"Wise words, child," Dahlia drifted over to where I stood. One of the orbiting heads winked at me. "And these words cannot be ignored. I offer my respects to the Eighth Tribe. You have continuously proven your worth as allies and equals over these recent years."

Magdalen remained still, Her cloak swayed around Her. Agnes came to stand by Dahlia and placed Her hand lightly on my shoulder. My head reeled from the strong currents of Dream that flowed around me, warping my vision. Baba Yaga looked to the Grand Council.

"We must discuss permanent living arrangements with the Elders of the Fallen." Looking towards the Elders She bowed Her head. "Much needs to be discussed in private. I ask that this young woman join us in making these arrangements." She pointed to me.

Mek nodded. "I agree. Alya the Knife, you have proven to us your wisdom. But before we continue I have one request from the Children of Lilith. They desire to have the body of Lilith returned to them as a gesture of goodwill. In return, the Children of Lilith shall help with supplying food and shelter to any Tribals who choose to reside on Haven."

A murmur of discussion went through the crowd. Dahlia gently led me to the negotiating table. All I could think at the time was that this was going to be very a long day.

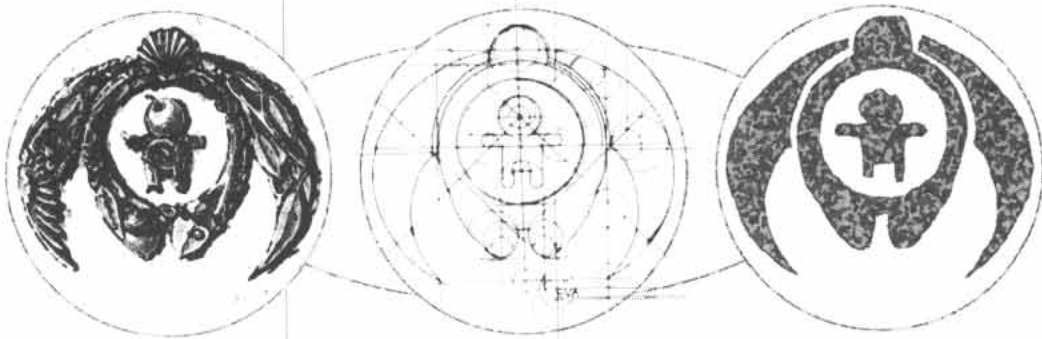


Mother's Lament

Eva Ponders:

I have abandoned my children. Justice is only fair. I cannot lead my beloved seeds anymore. My Sister must take my place until I have atoned for what I have done. Do not fear my sweet, sweet children. I will still watch over you as you roam the shattered wilds. My Sisters are with you. They shall protect you.

Have I done wrong? My heart screams 'yes.' Justice has told me that what I have done was necessary and righteous in the eyes of She Who Watches, but still my soul screams. My children decided to stay outside. I must look after those who followed me. Yes. I must protect you all from the monsters Outside. Oh, Tera Sheba, we may have made a terrible, terrible mistake. . .







**Shaun Kil'on,
Joanite Blade**

Childhood friend of Mikal Ben'on, Shaun has always remained loyal to his friend. They trained together since birth and Shaun has always believed that they would be friends forever. An introverted young man, he is usually reserved around Mikal, letting his friend do most of the talking.

Conflicted and torn over his duty to his tribe and Mikal, Shaun spends a good deal of his free time gambling, usually for relatively low stakes. His love for the games helps him to ignore the thoughts and feelings he doesn't know how to deal with, and his small winnings certainly don't do anything to discourage him from playing.

Largely thanks to Mikal's quick thinking, Shaun's wounds are no longer life threatening. But he needs time to recover. He knows that there will be a time when both he and Mikal will need to talk about what is transpiring between them.

Highlights: Open, Loyal, Self-sacrificing.

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +1, FIT +1, PSY+1, WIL +2, STA 30, ULD 8, AD 7

Skills: Animal Care 1/0, Archery 1/+1, Athletics 1/+1, Combat Sense 3/0, Dodge 2/+1, Gambling 2/0, Hagglng 1/0, Hand-to-hand 3/+1, Melee 2/+1, Notice 1/0, Riding 1/+1, Streetwise 2/0, Survival 1/0, Throwing 2/+1, Sleight-of-hand 1/+1, Synthesis 1

Unknown Futures

From the Journals of Mikal Ben'on

The Fingers had been laid waste to by the time Shaun and I managed to make it back. We were exhausted and hungry. I carefully searched the ruins of the Tower of the Full Moon for supplies, although I was certain that I would find nothing. The flies were ever-present as we gingerly made our way through the dead bodies that surrounded us. I made a quick head count and realized that the bodies here were less than a third of the force we had left behind. For a moment I hoped that some had escaped, but I knew better. The Baron had gained some healthy new slaves for his desires.

Shaun found Uncle Javik's body among the dead and began to weep. I embraced him, burying my face in his hair. The scents of sweat and blood filled my nostrils. We were tired and lonely, and Shaun was still too weak to fight. He held me close as we simply sat there, surrounded by the dead. Then I kissed his forehead, stood up and continued searching for any food. After we managed to scavenge some meager supplies, we prepared to start the long march to Talon Nexus.

At noon Shaun saw the horses to the east. I drew my sword and prepared to defend against whoever it was, when I recognized the riders as Joanites. Once they reached us, we learnt of the destruction of the other towers. Many Joanites had been captured, but some had managed to escape. This particular group had been headed to Talon Nexus as well and offered to take us there.

The rest of the journey was silent, we were all too concerned to talk about anything trivial. I watched Shaun closely while he rode. Several times he began to sleep and almost fallen off his horse. Eventually I convinced him to ride with me for the remainder of the journey.

Once we arrived, we saw that Talon Nexus had been hastily abandoned. It became obvious that most of the inhabitants had fled deep into Sub Terra once the Z'bri had attacked. Theresa, the captain of the Joanite unit, suggested we search the tunnels for survivors.

After searching the ruins we found many torches and supplies scattered throughout the settlement. The Z'bri had obviously been intent on reaching Bazaar, and we wondered if the battle had been a victory for the Fatimas or the beasts. My continued link to the River of Dream meant that Joan still lived. . . and I was certain that we would all have known if She had died.

The Z'bri struck about two hours after we had begun to search the Anger Line. The army was apparently returning to the H'l Kar, and several packs of Gek'roh had wandered into the Underlands. They chased us until we came to a flooded section of tunnel. I stood in front of Shaun, prepared to defend him to the last moment. Theresa and her unit stood by us, weapons ready, and I am certain that we all believed that death was upon us. It was not meant to be.

The water behind us began to churn as a horde of strange human-shaped creatures leapt over us. I felt a brief burst of Dream as they started to hack at the Beasts.

"Over here, quick!" We turned to see a young boy gesturing from an opening in the side of the tunnel that we hadn't seen before. Not wanting to waste the moment, we followed.

That is how we got here. The creatures we saw call themselves the Spawn. When the Z'bri first attacked, they came and helped many of the inhabitants of Talon Nexus escape into the tunnels. There are several well-guarded and deviously hidden rooms here. The Spawn show no discrimination, either; tribals, Squats and Keepers alike are living here safely hidden from the Chained that stalk the tunnels of Sub Terra. We hope to recover and then search for other survivors further to the south. I believe that the Fatimas still live; the River whispers of the words of war being spoken by Joan and Baba Yaga.

Until then, I remain here while Shaun heals. I stand here today because of his strength, and he says the same of me. Whatever lies ahead, only together can we survive. Only together.



Chapter Four: Weaver Resources

All I can say is... about time. Any more pontificating, and I was going to be sick.

- Alya the Knife after the Council speeches.



AGENDAS AND AFTERMATH.

Vimary Burns covers one of the most turbulent times in the history of the Tribes since the age of the camps. The tribes are now divided, while the Fallen/Eighth Tribe has begun to be more unified. This is a crucial time, where the decisions of a single cell could tip the precarious balance that exists on Hom and Haven. Over the following pages stretches an examination of the various agendas that are at play both during and after the Burning of Vimary. Then a look at how to integrate the information revealed in this book into your own cycle. The section ends with a brief overview of Sanctuary and the casualties of the Z'bri invasion.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

Many agendas have changed during the events of **Vimary Burns**. The Fatimas and the Nation are divided. Valk and Lothar are about to start a civil war among the Z'bri. The Fallen have realized they need to help the very goddesses who abandoned them.

Here are the various viewpoints of each faction involved, as well as some hints in regards to the future of the Nation and the Eighth Tribe.

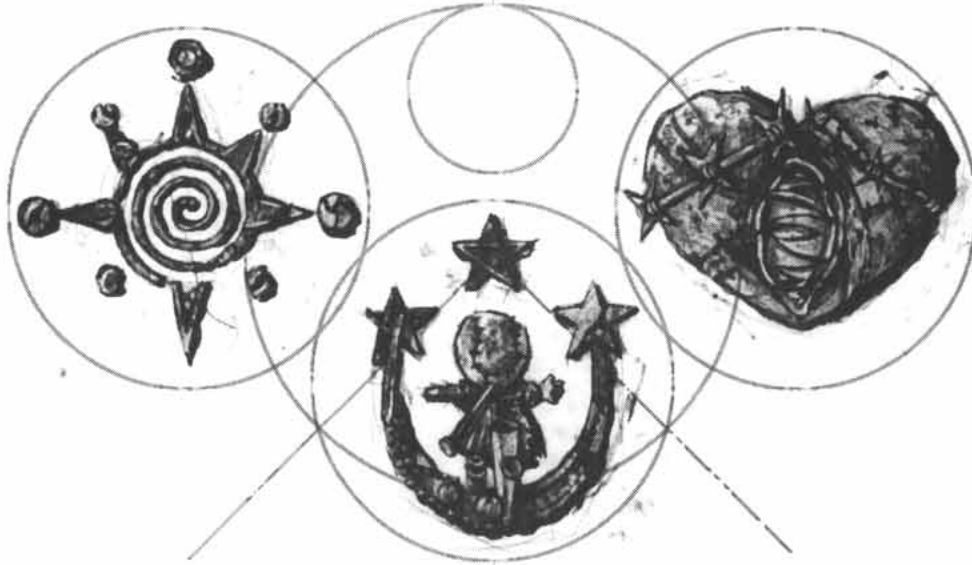
THE FATIMAS

Agnes is having a ball. During the invasion She helps Magdalen set an ambush for the Baron's entourage. Following the exodus to Hom, She has become determined to prove Her strength by joining Joan on patrol. Her awareness of the nuances of the Fold and the River of Dream is increasing, and already She is using this knowledge to gain an upper hand over the Z'bri. The **Agnites** themselves are following Agnes' lead. They are making certain that the lines of communication remain open, and have managed to endear themselves to many of the Fallen.

Baba Yaga is recovering from the death of Grandmère Décembre. During the initial evacuation, Grandmère Décembre remained in Mortuary with Baba Yaga. They spoke at great length, mostly in regards to the Eighth Tribe. Unknown to all, even the other Fatimas, Décembre's death has deeply effected the Fatima. Baba Yaga has promised Décembre that She will protect and nurture the Eighth Tribe. She hopes to sway the Eighth Tribe into following Her, thus avoiding any threat to the stability of the Dreaming that these young upstarts may present. The **Yagans** remain unmoved. They follow their Fatima's edicts, yet stay somewhat reserved towards the Eighth Tribe. The Old Ones have sensed Baba Yaga's fears and are troubled by them.



4. Weaver Resources



Dahlia has been preoccupied with strengthening Her bond with Agnes. During the worst of the Burning She was protecting Her tribe; now She is eager to see the Fallen and the Nation become one entity — it makes for a more entertaining toy. The **Dahlions** suffered greatly during the Burning. Nearly a third of their number are missing, leaving the survivors in a far more depressed mood than usual. However, they are following the guidance of their Fatima and have been quick to aid the Eighth Tribe in the challenge of supporting Hom and Haven's increase in population.

Eva still suffers greatly from Her loss. She has begun to regret Her decision to retreat to Sanctuary, and is too intimidated to challenge Tera Sheba, who has dominated matters within the Firmament. She knows what has happened in Hom, but Tera Sheba has convinced Her that it would be unwise for them to get involved. The **Evans** are divided. Those who remained outside of Sanctuary mourn the loss of their Fatima, even though they have retained their Synthesis abilities and connection to Dream. Evans within Sanctuary are growing restless. The Shebans are living off the fruits of their labor, and Tera Sheba is ignoring their needs. The unrest is growing, and some suspect that a civil war may be imminent.

Joan hungers for revenge. She plans to storm the H'l Kar before the Z'bri manage to regroup. Unfortunately, the Joanites have suffered a great number of casualties over the recent year and even with the help of the Fallen, She does not have enough of an army to undertake such an attack. The **Joanites** remain loyal to their Fatima. They are currently planning to retrieve the body of Lilith as an act of goodwill towards the Eighth Tribe. Secretly, many want revenge on the Shebans and Evans for abandoning them. This could produce problems if any contact is established with Sanctuary.

Magdalen is very pleased with Her success at defeating the Baron. She feels that She has more than proven Her ability to defend the Tribes. Eager to accept the Eighth Tribe back into the fold, She agrees with Baba Yaga that it is time for the Fatimas to fulfill their duties. She has remained in contact with Eva, in the hope of convincing the other Fate to support their initiative. The **Magdalites** are focused inwards for the most part, attempting to patch up relations within their own tribe, and considering everything else to be just another variation of 'business as usual.' While they also suffered a great loss to their numbers, they are determined to initiate diplomatic relations with the Evans and Shebans, in an attempt to build enough support for Joan to be able to take Her revenge.

Tera Sheba can feel the reigns of power slipping from Her fingers. Following the events in **Broken Pact** She has become even more obsessed with retaining what little control She still has. Taking advantage of Eva's depression, Tera Sheba plans to strengthen Her own position before She faces the other Fatimas. She hopes that by keeping the Fates divided She may be able to rebuild The Nation under the proper laws. Despite what She has told those in Sanctuary, Tera Sheba has not removed Her love from those Shebans who have evacuated to Hom. Rather, She is using Her connection to them to spy on the actions of the Fallen Elders.

The **Shebans** have split. Many have seen Tera Sheba's grasp of Truth and Wisdom waning, and no longer wish to have any part of Her fall. The Fisher King chose to remain in Bazaar along with a small contingent of loyal followers. While he remains faithful to Tera Sheba, he was not prepared to allow the Z'bri to simply take Vimary away from the Tribes. Those who have been ignored for so long are using this moment of weakness to gain more influence. Unfortunately the more these corrupted Shebans surround Tera Sheba, the weaker She becomes.

THE Z'BRI

Prince Fa'Cul: Has barely survived an assassination attempt by Valk. She lost her position on the throne and is currently in hiding, plotting her revenge. Fa'Cul has yet to learn of the Baron's demise. Once she receives this news, however, her rage and fury will be unstoppable.

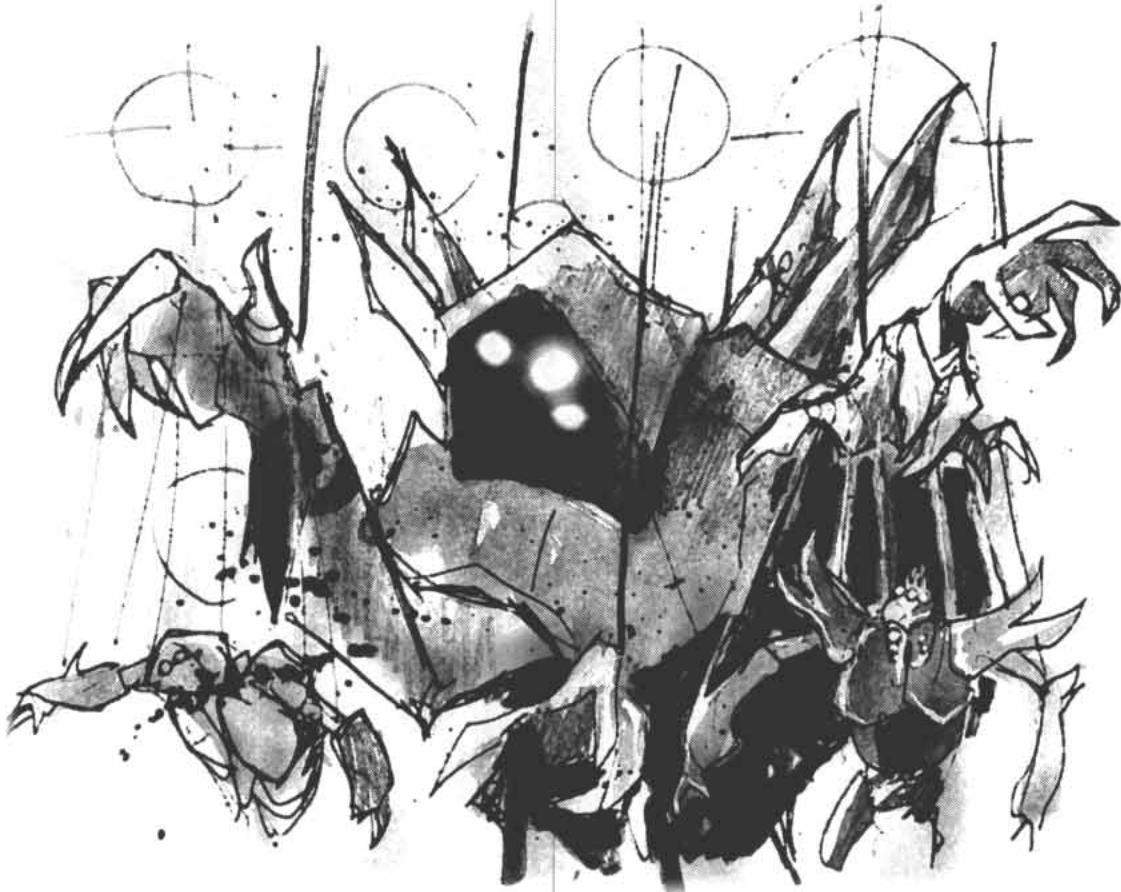
Count Lothar: Disappointed at being robbed of the pleasure of killing the Baron himself, Lothar plans to storm the Ziggurat and officially take control over all of the H'I Kar. He shall then return to Vimary to finish what he has begun. He has begun to suspect that Capal is playing some complex game beyond his current knowledge. Once he has captured the Fatimas and learned their secrets, he hopes to take over Capal. . . and then head south.

Count Nemerath: Very pleased with the outcome of the Burning, while the Prince of Capal is busy toying with the idea of invading the H'I Kar, Nemerath has managed to turn attention away from Eth'ian's experiments. (see [[Word From the North]]) for more details on Nemerath and his relationship to Eth'ian) He is also eager to be able to get hold of a Fatima without having to get his own claws dirty, planning to let the Koleris do all the hard work for him.

Sl'Onis: Although he barely escaped Magdalen's ambush, Sl'Onis has begun to go mad. He has looked upon the true face of a Fatima, and the revelation has had a profound effect on him. The Melanis will desperately want this knowledge if they were to find out. However it is more likely that the Hunters shall find the wandering Sangis first.

Prince Thak'ichk'at: Unfortunately for Nemerath, Thak'ichk'at wasn't born yesterday. He is eager to gain control of the H'I Kar situation, but his spies have informed him of Nemerath's convoluted manipulations in regards to the affair. Unknown to the Count, the Prince of Capal is keeping a close watch on Melanis activities within his city. It will only be a matter of time before Eth'ian's experiments are exposed.

Count Valk: This unfortunate Melanis' days are numbered. He is no longer of any use to Nemerath, and Lothar is out for his blood. He has successfully gained control of the Ziggurat and has the backing of the Flemis and Melanis who had been loyal to the Baron. Suffering from extreme, and somewhat justified, paranoia, Valk has several Flemis Behemoths surrounding the Ziggurat as protection.



THE OUTLOOKS

Children of Lilith: As the diplomats of the Fallen, the Children of Lilith have the most to gain from helping unite the Nation and the Eighth Tribe against the Z'bri. Of course, the matter of Lilith's body needs to be resolved before Joan can rely on the support of the Children. The success of the Joanites' plan to retrieve the body will greatly effect the Children's attitudes.

Doomsayers: Visions have been increasing amongst the Doomsayers and following Peithos' and the other Guides' prophecies, most are calling for the Nation and the Eighth Tribe to unite. More Fallen are beginning to pay attention to the ravings of these prophets, although there are many charlatans who are trying to gain status from offering quick 'solutions' to the current problem. The Guides are actively attempting to muzzle these con artists.

Herites: The outlook is currently the greatest threat to the reconciliation of the Nation and the Fallen. Luckily for those who wish to see unification, the Herites are too divided on the matter. Baba Yaga's speech has caused several cells to reconsider their views towards the Fatimas — if the Fatimas have no desire to rule the Eighth Tribe, then they cannot be a threat. On the other hand, opposing cells are arguing that the Fatimas are merely lulling the Eighth Tribe into a false sense of security before trying to eliminate them all.

Jackers: Unlike many of the Outlooks, the Jackers are almost uniformly pro-unification. They want to take the battle to the Z'bri and are willing to combine forces with the Nation to achieve this purpose. Naturally, once the Z'bri are out of the equation then attention can be turned towards the necessity of dealing with the Fatimas.

Lightbringers: Most of the Lightbringers are more than happy to compromise with the Nation. They are aware that the Fatimas and their tribes owe a great debt to the Eighth Tribe now and plan to use this knowledge to their advantage. Hal Ninva is remaining on the fence as he tries to ascertain which will be the most profitable side to join. Unfortunately for him, the longer he stalls the more his influence wanes. Already, the acerbic Alya of the Children of Lilith seems to be gaining recognition as a perceptive counsel for the younger Fallen. This is one outcome Hal Ninva does not want to see come to pass.

OTHER INTERESTS

Luther Boarhead is currently taking a defensive stance. The Z'bri are too active for his comfort, storming through the lands held until recently by Boarhead's sometime-allies. He plans to wait a while, then once the Z'bri turn their backs on Vimary, bring his forces in to occupy the isle.

The Leox have taken many losses since Lothar's forces ripped through their territories and are currently preoccupied with defending themselves against the Oneida.

The Oneida are suffering from the loss of many warriors. Lothar's army 'recruited' a great number of Oneida for their invasion and none have returned. Hattan is demanding greater tribute, which is becoming harder for the few northern clans of the Oneida to fulfill.

The Joshuans have managed to remain relatively unscathed. The younger generation is now arguing that they should be doing more to help the survivors of the Burning. A Council is currently being held to decide what the Joshuans plan to do, but the outcome is yet to be decided.



The **Marians** barely escaped discovery by the Z'bri. Mary's Temple is still safe within the Discarded Lands, although increased Z'bri activity has meant that there is no travel into or out of the temple. The Black Marians are currently attempting to drive the Tribes towards uniting with the Fallen so that action can be taken to restore Vimary. Many are being haunted by increasing visions of Mary watching Her children closely as if to pressure them into taking action.

The **Keepers** are relatively untouched within the Rust Wastes, so far ignored by the Z'bri. Still, there are fears that the Koleris' lust for more serfs will eventually drive them into the Rust Wastes. The Machine Monks seem to have become more reclusive than ever, causing the Olympus faction to become even more paranoid, meaning any attempts by non-Keepers to reach the Keeper stronghold are discouraged — using potentially fatal methods.

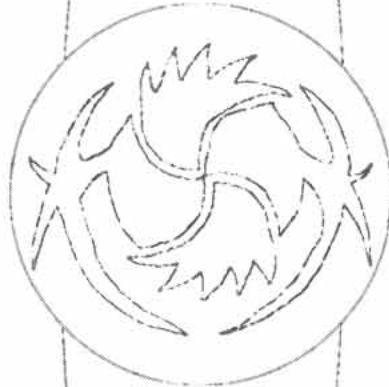
THEMES AND STORIES

Vimary Burns heralds a time of great change to the setting of **Tribe 8**. Until this point the Nation and the Fallen have been in a state of uneasy peace. Although Joan and Agnes have seemingly accepted the Fallen, the other tribes still view the Eighth Tribe with a degree of distrust. When running a cycle based around the time of the Burning of Vimary, a Weaver needs to consider the following themes.

Division and Unity: The recurring theme in all the stories presented here is that of Unity versus Division. To be able to overcome the vast hordes of Z'bri the Tribes and Fallen need to unite. Divided, they do not have enough warriors to be able to defeat the Beasts. United, they will be able to defend their homes from the Z'bri strikes.

Looking to the Future, The "New Bloods": As Alya says, "*The past is just that. The past.*" Much of the fighting and division between the Nation and the Fallen is due to past grievances. Still, there is a new generation standing up to be heard. Alya, Alethea, Larissa, Mikal and Shaun are all members of this new generation that has grown tired of the constant politicking of their elders and the ever-present threat of the Z'bri. Many of these 'New Bloods,' as the elders of both the Tribes and the Fallen have begun to call them, are starting to speak out. They wish to see the division of families and lovers halted. Rather than looking for enemies among humanity, the New Bloods want to see the beginning of something they call "Unification" — a joining not only of the tribes and Fallen, but of all humanity against a common foe. The Burning of Vimary has, in a way, cleared the path for a new future to be forged, and it is this new generation that is looking towards the dawn.

With these themes in mind, a Weaver can create many stories that can weave the events of **Vimary Burns** into her cycle. Here are some suggestions for Hooks and plots to draw your PCs into the storyline. Feel free to change them as you wish, so that they fit solidly into your game.



HOOK: TROUBLE TO THE NORTH

Set before the Burning, the PCs are haunted by visions similar to Peithos' in the introduction. (See *Prelude: Visions of War* p. 7). Either Peithos or Den-Hades requests that they investigate these visions, in the hope of uncovering their meaning. Traveling north, the PCs find evidence of Z'bri and Gek'roh heading northwards as well. Eventually they find Marenk's gathering army, and must return the information to the Guides and Elders before the army begins to march on Vimary.

HOOK: SOUTHERN MOVEMENT

Run as a parallel to the previous adventure. Squats from a local village come to Hom covered in wounds. The PCs are asked to investigate what happened, and they find evidence of a Z'bri attack with tracks that lead south. After following them for several days, the PCs find a Z'bri hunting party with several of the Squats captive as slaves. If they try to free the Squats they also discover evidence hinting at Lothar's forces gathering further south.

HOOK: THE CHILDREN OF WAR

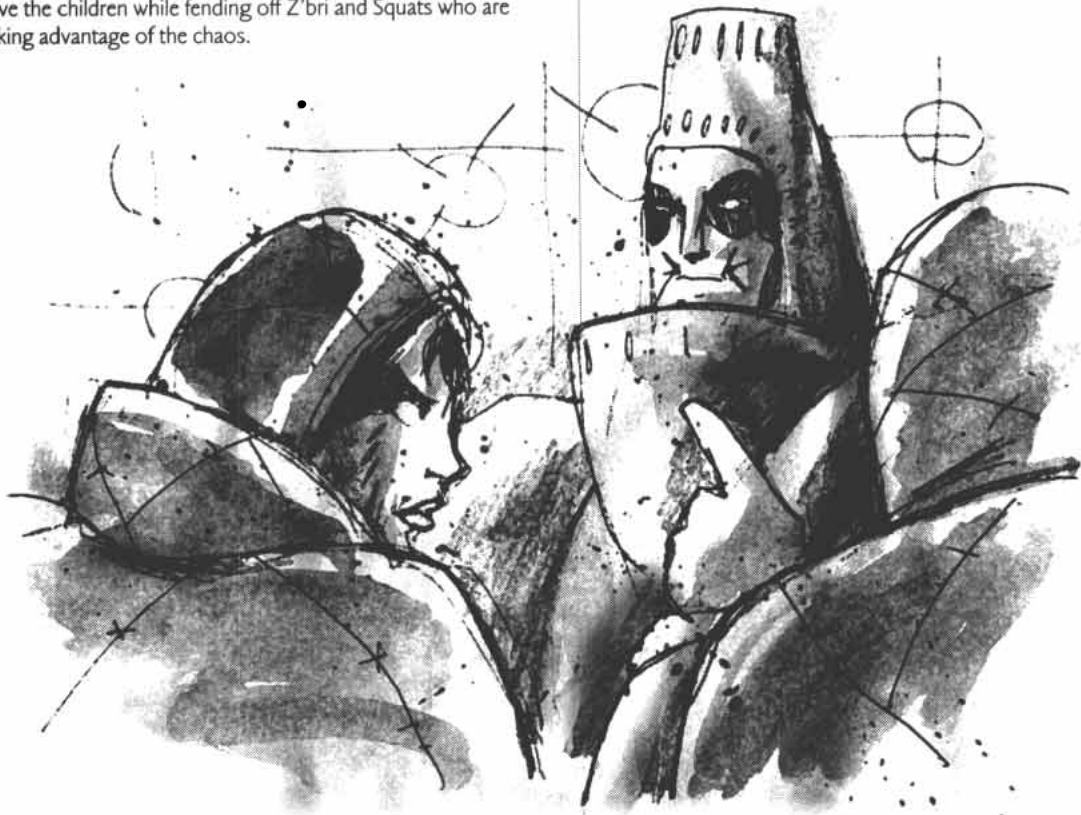
During the Burning of Vimary, the PCs are part of the Fallen counter-attack. While moving through the ruins of Bazaar, they hear the voices of children. A building has collapsed, trapping a group of Agnites in the tunnels underneath. The PCs need to save the children while fending off Z'bri and Squats who are taking advantage of the chaos.

HOOK: LOST GODDESS

It is decided that the Joanites and Fallen must launch a joint expedition back to Bazaar to recover Lilith's body as well as several valuable Fatimal Relics. The problem is that several Koleris prides have laid claim to the area and are currently warring with a Flemis collective that is loyal to Count Valk. There is also the problem of retrieving Lilith's body itself and returning it to Hom without garnering too much attention from the Z'bri.

HOOK: DIPLOMATS TO THE MOTHER

Baba Yaga and Magdalen want to re-establish contact with Eva. They are aware that Tera Sheba has taken control of Sanctuary, and Eva is not listening to their calling across the River of Dream. The Children of Lilith and Dahlians offer to attempt to breach the walls of Sanctuary and contact the Evan leaders within. Benjamin Aria'on will go with them. Tera Sheba is aware of the group's approach and is determined to prevent them from entering.



SEALED SANCTUARY

While their sisters were planning the defense of Bazaar, Eva and Tera Sheba chose to evacuate their tribes and seal themselves within a massive dome, now called the Firmament, covering most of Lai and the Sunblessed Peninsula. Eva has designed the Dome to be a perfect seal. Giant orbs hang from the ceiling of the Firmament, which produce artificial sunlight gathered by the leaves on the exterior.

A vine gate across the river that runs through the sanctuary filters the water, so that it is fresh and clear for the Evans and Shebans to drink. Vines, leaves and thorny brush that can be animated to deter anything from attempting to break through the seal cover the exterior itself.

EVA AND TERA SHEBA

The two Fatimas reside on opposite sides of the river. Eva remains at the original site of Sanctuary, a large pillar of vines and ivy that reaches up to the surface of the Dome of the Firmament. Eva Herself resides at the base. Her large form entwined in ivy and vines. She constantly maintains the habitat, leaving most of the organization and guiding of the tribes to Tera Sheba.

Tera Sheba has an iron grip over the Firmament's day to day affairs, and has made a replica council, dominated by Sheban High Judges, to reside over the population. She tends to speak "on behalf of" Her Sister. Eva has yet to speak up against the Wise One.

Tera Sheba's residence is a large wood and clay replica of Solitude. She often stands on its roof, watching the Evans toiling the fields and caring for the livestock. When She tires of this She will often fly around the Sanctuary, a constant reminder that Justice is watching.

INSIDE AND OUT

Including the Dome of the Firmament in your cycle can be a challenge in itself. Rather than provide maps and a detailed description of the area, much has been left for the Weaver to decide for herself. Depending on how much you want to focus on this aspect, the period directly following the Burning is up to the individual Weaver. The most important factors to consider are how the Evans and Shebans are looking at the situation, and what plans are being made by those who are residing on Hom and Haven.

A VIEW FROM WITHIN

The situation is worsening within the Firmament. Without the other Tribes to act as a buffer, the Shebans have begun to take over the management of the tribes' day-to-day existence. Many Evans are unhappy with the fact that although they outnumber the Shebans, they are not represented proportionally within the Council.

The Firmament Council tends to rule in favor of the Shebans in most cases and often dismisses any Evan complaints or protests. Adding to this is the lack of sufficient resources. The Evans are beginning to refuse to till the fields, meaning many are imprisoned by vengeful Judges. This, in turn, causes more Evans to protest. Unless a compromise is found soon, the entire community may find itself suffering from starvation.

To further complicate matters, the ever present Sheban Watch has begun to declare certain out-spoken Evans and Shebans as tainted by the Z'bri. Those who are accused of bearing this taint are often arrested by the Watch and taken to Solitude, where they are 'cleansed' by the heads of the patrols. The truth is that the Watch is using various brainwashing techniques to subdue those who threaten the Sheban control of Sanctuary. Tera Sheba seems to be currently unaware of these 'cleansings,' due to Her attention on the developments occurring between the Nation and the Eighth Tribe.

OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

The other Tribes feel that Tera Sheba and Eva have betrayed them. Although the Fatimas and Fallen Elders are currently preaching understanding and unification, many feel that the Evans and Shebans within Sanctuary should be left out of the new Nation that is forming. The Joanite are particularly angered by the Evans' lack of support during the Burning. Many Warriors have died from disease and festering wounds because there have not been enough healers to help. Although the Griffentowne Evans work selflessly to save as many as possible, they cannot help everyone.

The Fatimas have a more neutral stand in the matter. Baba Yaga and Magdalen are aware of what is transpiring within Sanctuary and are trying to get Eva to listen to them. Dahlia has remained quiet on the issue, which is causing many on the Grand Council to be concerned. Agnes and Joan have publicly stated that they hope to re-establish contact soon and seem to be more concerned with protecting Hom and Haven than worrying about Sanctuary.

CASUALTIES LIST AND GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The Nation lost many lives during the Burning, and many more tribals have gone missing. It has been presumed that most people missing are now slaves of the Z'bri. The following are the current estimates in regards to a body count. There are also notes about particular effects the Burning has had on various geographic locations within Vimary:

Agnites: 200 dead, 500 missing. Hesperrin and Carmitchel are among those missing. (see **Vimary**, pp. 86-87)

Dahlions: Unknown. Only 3000 have been accounted for on Hom. Another 1,500 are believed to be scattered between Westholm and the Outlands. Anaky is believed to have died in Bazaar. (**Vimary**, p.88)

4. Weaver Resources

Evans: 500 dead, 200+ missing. Most were evacuated to Lai.

Joanites: 800+ dead, 300 missing. Most of the units stationed at the Seven Fingers are considered either dead or missing.

Magdalites: 160 dead, 500 missing, including Fella and Armatha Hevkin (*Vimary*, p.98), Dhara Ibenkin (*T8 Rulebook* p. 61)

Shebans: 150 dead, 300 missing

Yagans: 300 dead, 200 missing. Grandmère Décembre died before the Burning. (*Vimary*, p.100)

Fallen: 100 dead, 50 missing. Due to their late arrival into the battle, their casualties are fairly minimal.

Westholm's fate is unknown. It is believed that the Z'bri may have ignored it. In which case, once the matter of living arrangements on Hom and Haven have been settled, a search party will be sent to discover the true fate of the settlement. Although many saw the Duskfall burning, a majority of the forest remains intact. The Z'bri have largely ignored the activities of any wild animals. Those that escaped the scorching of the Hunting Paths have taken refuge in the woods surrounding Bazaar, or the Duskfall itself.

Some isolated Evan settlements near the Duskfall and most Yagan settlements within the discarded lands have been left untouched. The increased number of Z'bri roaming Vimary makes life within these settlements one of constant fear. Sub Terra has become overrun with packs of Gek'roh and Koleris Iv'chet. The Keepers have sealed off all tunnels leading beneath the Rust Wastes, further preventing the Z'bri from entering their domain.

NPCs

While the characters listed in the sidebars can be used as Player Characters, the following are strictly Non-Player Characters. They are listed here for the Weaver's convenience. Please note that these statistics are only representative; if they do not suit your personal gaming style, feel free to alter them.



CAPTAIN THERESA SLADE'ON

Theresa was stationed at The Tower of the Eastern Wind, but luck was with her during the initial attack on the Seven Fingers. She and her unit had been patrolling to the south of the tower and were not present when Marenk's forces attacked. Barely escaping from the advancing army, Theresa proceeded to search for survivors, but failed to find any. She is currently helping the other survivors rescued by The Spawn in planning a counter-attack.

Although she is claiming to believe the Z'bri were routed, she fears for the fate of Bazaar. She is hoping that Mikal will join her unit, but realizes he will not leave his lover. Shaun's recovery is taking too long for her liking. If pushed, she may attempt to sacrifice him to force Mikal to join her.

Highlights: Driven, Vengeful, Self-serving.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	+1	APP	0	BLD	+2	CRE	-1	FIT	+2
INF	0	KNO	0	PER	+1	PSY	-1	WIL	+3
STR	2	HEA	1	STA	40	UD	10	AD	10

SKILLS

Archery	3	+1	Athletics	2	+1	Camouflage	1	-1
Combat Sense	3	+1	Dodge	1	+1	Haggling	1	0
Hand-to-hand	3	+1	Human Percep.	1	-1	Interrogation	1	-1
Intimidate	2	+2	Leadership	2	0	Lore (Z'bri)	1	0
Melee	3	+1	Notice	2	+1	Riding	1	-1
Sneak	1	+1	Streetwise	1	0	Swimming	2	+2
Synthesis	1							

GARTH, AGNITE FIGHTER

Garth was to spend his life as a Barren, until Agnes returned from the H'I Kar. Upon Her return She began to seek forgiveness from those She had harmed, and Garth found himself becoming part of Agnes' new Guardians. Sent to train with the Joanites, Garth met Alethea during his time amongst them. A strong friendship grew quickly, as did the realization that Agnes and Joan had blessed them both. Still a child at heart, Garth is still unsure as to how to approach Alethea. Either way, his devotion to Agnes has been renewed. He has vowed to defend Her with his life.

Highlights: Faithful, Amiable, Lively

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +2, APP +1, BLD +2, CRE +1, FIT +2, INF 0, KNO 0, PER 0, PSY -1, WIL +1, STR 2, HEA 1, STA 35, UD 9, AD 9

SKILLS

Acrobatics 2/+2, Animal Care 1/0, Athletics 2/+2, Combat Sense 2/0, Cooking 2/+1, Craft (Sewing) 2/+1, Dance 1/+2, Dodge 3/+2, Hagglng 1/0, Hand-to-Hand 2/+2, Melee 2/+2, Music 1/+1, Notice 2/0, Synthesis 2



GARAKON, KOLERIS IV'CHET

Garakon's fate at the end of *Vimary Burns* is left unfinished. Although captured by Magos the Wise-Eyed, for some reason he has been spared. Now deathly afraid of the Hunter, he believes that Magos is watching his movements. He is correct. Magos has planted a small seed of itself within Garakon, in the hopes that he will lead the hunter to Lothar. Garakon has taken to hunting other Z'bri, namely Gek'roh, in the hope of appeasing the hunter. If he fails to reach Lothar soon Magos may reconsider Garakon's usefulness.

Highlights: Hunted, Desperate, Repentant

Atmosphere: Koleris

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +3, APP -2, BLD +3, CRE -1, FIT +3, INF 0, KNO 0, PER 0, PSY 0, WIL -1, STR 3, HEA 1, STA 35, UD 10, AD 10

SKILLS

Combat Sense 2/0, Dodge 3/+3, Hand-to-Hand 3/+3, Melee 3/+3, Intimidate 2/+3, Sundering 2



4. Weaver Resources

COUNT LOTHAR OF KOLERIS

Count Lothar was once a student of Thak'ichk'at, Koleris Prince of Capal. There were rumors that Lothar and the prince had been closer, however Lothar denies this. After the Liberation, Lothar chose to remain in the H'l Kar and met Deacon Vytor. Vytor's fellow Melanis, Valk showed interest in Lothar's plans to eventually overthrow the Baron.

Lothar is more manipulative than most Koleris, as well as a shrewd tactician. He has long anticipated Valk's betrayal and even suspects that Nemerath is behind this. Still, Lothar is a Koleris at heart and he is as prone to losing his temper as any other Koleris.

Highlights: Shrewd, Intimidating, Powerful

Atmosphere: Koleris

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +4, APP +2, BLD +5, CRE +4, FIT +5, INF +3, KNO +3, PER +2, PSY +2, WIL +5, STR 5, HEA 4, STA 70, UD 18, AD 19

SKILLS

Camouflage 2/+4, Combat Sense 4/+2, Dodge 3/+4, Etiquette (Z'brì) 3/+3, Hand-to-Hand 5/+4, Intimidate 4/+5, Leadership 4/+3, Lore (Ancient Z'brì) 2/+3, Melee 6/+4, Notice 3/+2, Read/write (Z'brì) 2/+3, Ritual 3/+3, Speak (Tribal) 2/+3, Tactics 4/+4, Sundering (All Aspects) 4



PEITHOS THE HIDDEN. GUIDE

Peithos joined the Doomsayers during the Year of Lilith. He had been wandering the Outlands to the west of Vimary, near the Otter, for several years. After being welcomed into the Joshuan settlement of Magog, Peithos began to be haunted by visions of fire. He fled not long before bandits raided the settlement. Eventually he found his way to Hom and contacted Halos, who recognized him as a Guide.

He has kept to himself over the recent years, many mistaking him for a farmer rather than a Guide. Still, Peithos is a strong Guide who has earned his peers' respect many times. The visions that haunt him have driven the usually reclusive Guide to seek out those who have been chosen by the goddess. He hopes that by taking action he will redeem himself for abandoning Magog.

Highlights: Reserved, Wise, Guilt-ridden.

Eminences: Mystery, Shadow

ATTRIBUTES

AGI 0, APP 0, BLD +2, CRE +1, FIT 0, INF -1, KNO +1, PER 0, PSY +3, WIL +2, STR 1, HEA 2, STA 35, UD 6, AD 6

SKILLS

Agriculture 2/+1, Animal Care 2/+1, Cooking 1/+1, Dreaming 3/+3, Healing 1/+1, Herbalism 2/+1, Human Perception 2/+3, Lore (Fallen) 2/+1, Lore (Joshuan) 1/+1, Mythology 1/+1, Riding 1/+3, Ritual 2/+1, Survival 2/0, Synthesis 3

REMLIA, SERF FROM THE BARON'S ENTOURAGE

Remlia has known a life of depraved luxury. One of the Baron's favorites, she has been fleshcrafted to match the current Sangis image of beauty. Her mind has become so twisted by her experiences that she has become more Z'bri than human, and often considers herself an equal to Sl'Onis.

Vimary Burns ends with her taking refuge in the remains of Playground along with two other serfs. Her fate after the events listed remains unknown.

Highlights: Shallow, Spoiled, Callous

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +2, APP +4, BLD -1, CRE +2, FIT +4, INF +1, KNO 0, PER +2, PSY +2, WIL +1, STR 2, HEA 2, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3

SKILLS

Acrobatics 2/+2, Dance 3/+2, Etiquette (Z'bri) 2/+1, Grooming 2/+4, Human Perception 2/+2, Lore (Z'bri) 2/0, Music 2/+2, Notice 1/+2, Ritual 1/0, Seduction 3/+4, Speak (Z'bri) 1/0



COUNT VALK

Valk considers himself a master manipulator and brilliant politician. Unfortunately for him, Lothar is a shrewder opponent than he is used to. The disappearance of Fa'Cul, combined with the knowledge that Lothar is hungering for his blood, has made Valk a very nervous Melanis. He appears to be constantly agitated and fiddles with his many hands at every opportunity. His voice is either near the point of screaming or whining, which causes many of his followers to question his authority. Still he does have Count Nemerath's backing, therefore gaining the support of most Melanis Z'bri in the H'l Kar.

Highlights: Nervous, Manipulative, Conceited

Atmosphere: Melanis

ATTRIBUTES

AGI +4, APP +2, BLD +1, CRE +5, FIT +4, INF +4, KNO +5, PER +4, PSY +3, WIL +1, STR 2, HEA 3, STA 40, UD 8, AD 9

SKILLS

Camouflage 4/+5, Combat Sense 2/+4, Disguise 3/+5, Dodge 4/+4, Dreaming 2/+3, Etiquette (Z'bri) 4/+4, Hand-to-Hand 2/+4, Human Perception 4/+3, Interrogation 4/+5, Investigation 3/+4, Lore (Ancient Z'bri) 3/+5, Melee 3/+4, Mythology 3/+5, Notice 4/+4, Read/Write (Z'bri) 3/+5, Ritual 3/+5, Sneak 2/+4, Speak (Tribal) 3/+5, Tactics 3/+5, Sundering (All Aspects) 4

