# Hard Boiled Ideas™
# Armies

One Bad Egg

Hard Boiled Ideas

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# Hard Boiled Ideas™
# ARMIES

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# Hard Boiled Armies

If you're a fan of the fantasy novels of Glen Cook, J.R.R. Tolkien, and others—or maybe you just pine for the days of **Birthright**—you might just have an itch that needs scratching. It's the itch to take armies onto the field of battle, where swords by the hundreds clash and contend for victory. I know I certainly do.

There's just one problem. Right out of the box, **Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition** does a lot for combat on the personal scale, but when it comes to the broader field of battle—when things go macro—the tools to handle a clash of thousands just aren't there.

Or are they? In **Hard Boiled Armies**, you'll find an examination of how to take the existing tools in the game—with just a few additions and changes of perspective—to get right where you need to go for medium- and large-scale military conflicts. And by looking at these existing tools with new eyes, you'll be able to add large-scale battles to your game in a way that feels both fresh and completely familiar.
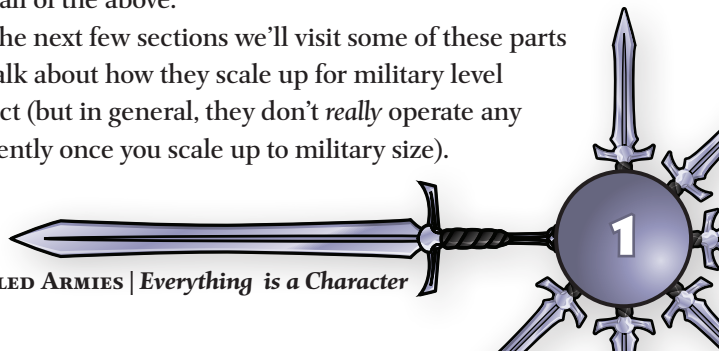
## Everything is a Character

When we were working on Evil Hat Productions' **Spirit of the Century**, we hit upon a simple way to address nearly every need the system had for something new by starting from this first principle: first, treat it like a character—then see what's missing.

So let's talk about the nature of characters in D&D, to unpack how this will help us. Relevant to our purposes, characters have…

- ✦ **Racial membership**, indicating the humanoid race they come from and their basic potentials (combined with **Hard Boiled Cultures**, this can get even more interesting);
- ✦ **Ability scores** and **skills**, indicating the ways in which the characters are effective;
- ✦ **Speed**, indicating overland movement speed;
- ✦ **Classes**, indicating the role they play in battle and giving them a set of features to use in the field;
- ✦ **Defenses**, representing the difficulty of assault;
- ✦ **Hit points**, measuring how much punishment they can take before they're removed from a conflict—which bring a few other tools along, like healing surges;
- ✦ **Powers**, reflecting the various ways they can attack enemies and overcome obstacles;
- ✦ and **Equipment**, used to boost the effectiveness of all of the above.

In the next few sections we'll visit some of these parts and talk about how they scale up for military level conflict (but in general, they don't *really* operate any differently once you scale up to military size).

# Scale

But first, let's dig into the broader idea of writing up an entire army as a character.

The basic proposal we're making here is simple: an army is just a character that operates on a different scale. That concept, in turn, breaks down into several types of scale—two of size, one of time.

What scale(s) a conflict is operating at might change from scenario to scenario, as well—or an entire campaign might lock its dials into one particular set of settings.

## Size

Most obviously, the difference in scale is one of *size*. An armed squad of 40 men takes up more space, so the squares on the military-scale battle grid may represent city blocks, towns, or nations, depending on how big we're envisioning the armies and the field of battle. When we're talking about scale as size, there are two things you'll want to figure out: the approximate size of a military unit, and the approximate size of a square on the map.

Suggested size levels are described on the following tables. Depending on your inclination, you might even run a conflict with map and unit elements each taken from a different size-class.

| SIZE | MAP SQUARE |
| --- | --- |
| Tiny | City block, a football field |
| Small | Neighborhood, a village |
| Medium | 1 square mile, a town |
| Large | 10 square miles, a city |
| Huge | 100 square miles, a barony |
| Gargantuan | 1000 square miles, a kingdom |

| SIZE | UNIT MEMBERSHIP |
| --- | --- |
| Tiny | Dozens |
| Small | Scores |
| Medium | Hundreds |
| Large | Thousands |
| Huge | Tens of thousands |
| Gargantuan | Hundreds of thousands |

These are just examples, of course! Your idea of what makes up a tiny conflict could be larger than a battle involving a few dozen troops, and your idea of a gargantuan battle might not be quite so hyperbolic on the numbers. And while the size types have familiar names, don't take them as having any relation to creature sizes. We're just making use of an already-established vocabulary, here.

## Time

The other way scale might be measured is *time*. This is a pretty important decision that may affect how powers and healing operate—at least so far as how they interact with the story being told about the conflict goes.

Questions about time that need to be answered are:

✦ How long is a *round*?
✦ How long is an *encounter*?
✦ How long is a *day*?

Once you go military, all three of these terms become somewhat abstracted. A "day" might represent an entire year of conflict or a whole war end-to-end. Daily powers, operating on a battlefield scale, tend to be those one-time gambits pulled off by brilliant commanders. An "encounter" might represent a days-long fight or even a season of skirmishes and battles.
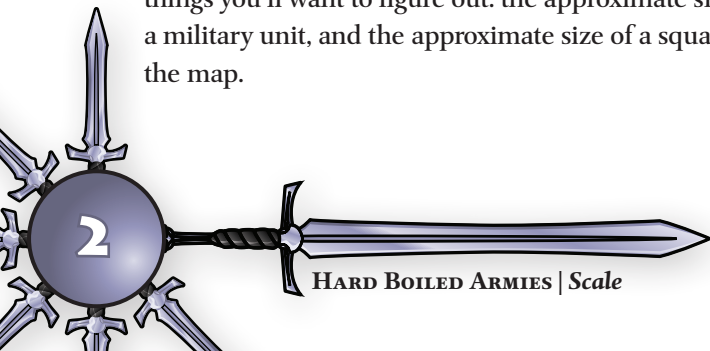
Some of the answers here are more closely tied to your size factors than you might think. In particular, you'll want to look at how a military unit's speed (which, like a character, will tend to range from 5 to 7 squares per action) relates to how long a round represents.

For example, a squad of heavily armored humans can move 5 squares in a single round—10 squares if they give up a standard action to take two move actions. Use that as a rule of thumb—if you're running a battle where each square is a mile on a side, and your troops can cover 10 squares (i.e., 10 miles) in one round, does that mean that each round of a conflict is roughly half a day, a full day, less, or more?

With your notion of a round rooted in this somewhat concrete reality, you can then "zoom out" from there to determine what an encounter is (*e.g.*, a collection of 6-20 rounds), and what a "day" is (*e.g.*, a collection of 2 or more encounters).

This will also play into your ideas of what a short rest or long rest is. For military conflict, a "short rest" might be at least 4 hours of shut-eye for the troops, or a week-long shore leave in a resort town. A "long rest" could be what happens when the fighting stops while everyone digs in and waits for the winter season to pass—armies don't fully heal up until that early spring recruitment drive!

## Other Concerns

There are a few other random concerns to think about when it comes to scale, and most of them have to do with how you set up your maps.

### Actions

Are all combat actions allowed at your chosen scale? Can all military units bull rush, charge, climb, grab, crawl, squeeze, run, and mount a total defense? Do they all get to take a second wind once per encounter? What does a minor, move, or standard action look like at this scale?

**EXAMPLE**

A grab might simply be a way to express one army pinning another one down, preventing escape. Climbing comes into play when dealing with, say, a wall of cliffs; treat them as walls of 1 square in height for the purposes of movement). Move actions could cover half a dozen miles and take place over the course of four hours.

## Conditions

What do the various conditions look like when they're inflicted on a military unit rather than an individual? For example, consider the prone condition—when inflicted, this might not mean that all the soldiers have been knocked on their asses, so much as an indication that the unit's mobility has been cut out from under it, or that they've dug into trenches in order to better withstand a ranged assault.

**EXAMPLE**

A slowed force might not be *entirely* slowed—it's just that enough of their men have been wrapped in arcane fetters to slow the main body down as they refuse to leave their men behind. Weakened might indicate broken weaponry, or that half the force is afflicted by a spell of pacification.

## Fortifications

How do fortifications play into things? Do they act like armor worn by any military unit that occupies the fortification, or perhaps provide resistance—or maybe they're just sources of cover and/or concealment? Do they provide attack bonuses? What penalties might be involved (for example, a unit enjoying a fortification's benefits might suffer from the immobilized condition until the start of their next turn)? And what *are* fortifications, on your map's scale—a small fortress, a large walled city, something else?

**EXAMPLE**

Small fortresses occupy a single square and provide cover to the force that encamps within. A walled city might span a 4x4 area, providing cover to those in the "wall" squares, but superior cover for those in the center 2x2 area. Armies attacking from elevated positions might gain combat advantage on melee targets positioned downhill.
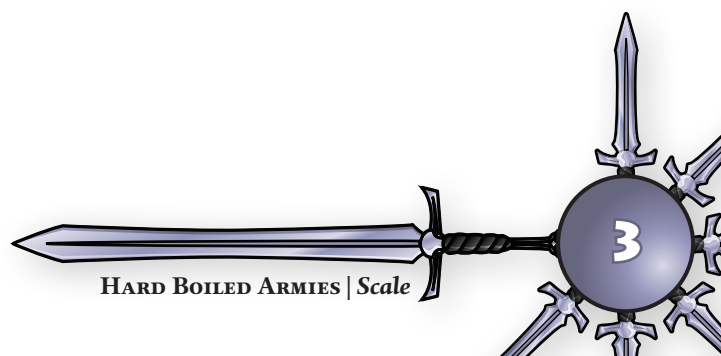
## Lighting

How will lighting come into play in your battle? Does it all occur during the day, or at night? Or are rounds roughly half a day long, allowing you to alternate between well-lit and low-light circumstances every other round?

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> Accepting that most fighting happens during the day, with the occasional night operation, you might roll 1d6 at the beginning of each round: on a 6, night-time fighting breaks out.

## Occupancy

Do the usual rules about more than one character not being allowed to occupy the same square apply here? Or are the military units involved small enough relative to the size of a square to potentially allow more than one to occupy and hold a given square at a time? If that's so, are you sure your squares aren't too large?

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> If you look at armies as a kind of swarm, they might get a similar spin for movement rules. Allow them to enter or move through an enemy's space, but unlike a swarm they'll trigger opportunity attacks if they do. Forces that move through occupied squares treat those squares as difficult terrain.

### Ack! Too many questions!

Okay, you're right. I am putting a lot of questions out there, and the examples can only go so far as to tell you what answers are good ones.

The good news here is that you can trust your toolbox. The system we're operating in here has a lot of good ways to express an idea, and very few bad ways. So if you find yourself flummoxed about which of several options to pick—stop. Flip a coin (or roll a die—you've got plenty). Pick one and try it out. It'll work!

If your complaint is instead that these examples are too lightweight, or that the questions themselves don't suggest answers to you, then skip ahead to the **Invasion!** encounter on page 16. There, you'll find a focused, specific-situation set of answers to all of these questions. Think of it as an extended example used to expand upon the ideas in this section.

## Ranged Attack

Does the full range of character-scale ranged attack powers make sense at your scale? Should the range of bows be cut in half to avoid stretching credulity, or will everyone at the table be on board with the abstraction that's represented there? Should your "bows" be considered to be longer-range artillery weapons instead, ala catapults and cannon, with standard "small arms" ranged weapons essentially turning into melee attacks for your military units? How about magic and other attacks with an area of effect? Before you go and cut that *scorching burst* down to size, remember that a wizardly military unit has potentially dozens of spellcasters all throwing that sort of firepower around!

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> Slings and crossbows become catapults and ballistae. Arcane and divine ranged attacks come about as the result of hours-long rituals on the part of 30 spellcasters working in concert.

## Terrain

What's difficult terrain, when you're talking about a military scale conflict? Is it everything that's not paved or otherwise well-worn? How about a forest? A mountain range? When does terrain change from difficult into hazardous? Is a rapidly-moving river (that you have to cross without the benefit of a bridge) hazardous terrain, prone to drowning your troops? Or is that reserved for such traveling pleasures as an active lava field?

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> Roads increase a unit's speed by 2 squares if they travel on nothing but road squares for their move action. Open plains and light hilly country are standard terrain. Mountains and forests act as difficult terrain. You can cross a river without a bridge, but you're slowed until the end of your next turn, and your force must make a DC 20 Athletics roll or take 1d6 damage from faltering mounts and drowning men.

# Attributes of Military Units

Having covered the topic of scale, let's get deeper into the building blocks of the "military unit character."

## Race and Culture

With the racially (or, with *Hard Boiled Cultures*, culturally) varied armies of a fantasy war at hand, racial advantages will translate straight over to the battlefield. Since a military unit should be written up just like a character, units comprised of elves or apelords (see **Races of the Shroud: The Apelord**) with their base speed of 7 will make for highly mobile troops. Those with low-light vision will be more effective during night-time operations. And behold the terror of the combined breath-weapon assault tactics of dragonborn shock troops!

## Mixing Up Race or Culture

Obviously, in terms of system, it's easiest to compose a single military unit using just one racial or cultural base-line—without suggesting that the *story* focus on this idea of a segregated military, it may simply be worth the lack of headaches to base the racial component of a military unit on its *predominant* member race at the least.

But what happens when you're fielding a motley company of elves and dwarfs working in tandem, or something of that ilk?

One short answer is, maybe you should field two different military units, but give them each half hit points and allow them to occupy the same square and move in tandem, and share the same set of standard/move/minor actions in a turn—maybe one round the elves take the move action, while the dwarves use the minor and standard actions.

But a longer and potentially more satisfying answer involves going beyond the scope of *Hard Boiled Armies* and looking to another product of ours, *Hard Boiled Cultures*. Using the guidelines found there, you could construct the *military culture* that your "hybrid" military unit represents—a blended race, so to speak, that takes a little bit of its basic package from each of the member races composing the unit. *Viva la difference!*

## Racial Substitutes

That all said, it might be worth simply skipping the whole idea of racial composition for your military units, and instead brew up half a dozen custom military cultures (traditions, really) that would be built like races or cultures (again, *Hard Boiled Cultures* would be your friend in this) and stand in for the usual racial slot when building a military-scale "character."

Of course, the absolute cheapest way to do this is to treat every military tradition as a specific configuration of the human racial option from the **D&D 4E Player's Handbook**, the closest that book offers to a "generic" race (though basing every tradition on a different race, such as the half-elf, could produce some other pretty interesting results, especially when that *dilettante* stuff comes into play).

Here's a sample military tradition: the **Roughneck**.

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**ROUGHNECK TRADITION TRAITS**

**Average Height:** 4'6"-6'9"
**Average Weight:** 75-280 lbs

**Ability Scores:** +2 Strength, +2 Constitution
**Size:** Medium
**Speed:** 6 squares
**Vision:** Normal

**Languages:** Common, choice of one other.
**Skill Bonuses:** +2 Athletics, +2 Endurance
**Seen It All:** Roughnecks gain a +2 racial bonus to their defenses against attacks with the fear keyword.
**Tenacious:** As a move action, roughnecks can dig into a location represented by a single square on the map. So long as they do not move from that location, they reduce all push, pull, or slide effects affecting them by 1. If this does not reduce the number of squares moved to zero, the effect ends.
**Gut It Out:** Roughnecks may use *gut it out* as an encounter power.

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**Gut It Out**                              Racial Power
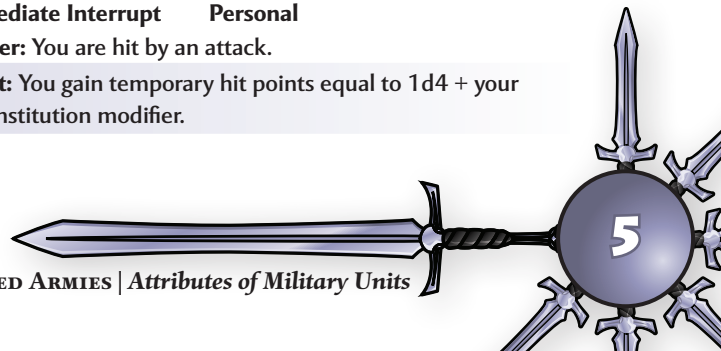
*Facing a withering assault, a roughneck knows it's just a matter of gutting it out.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial**
**Immediate Interrupt          Personal**
**Trigger:** You are hit by an attack.
**Effect:** You gain temporary hit points equal to 1d4 + your Constitution modifier.

## Languages

Languages may play a key role in military conflict. Consider what's necessary to coordinate your efforts with an ally—or sue for peace with an enemy. The languages available to your military force can, and maybe even should, make the difference.

On the other hand, languages might bore you to tears. If you want to make languages well and truly optional, remove conditional restrictions such as "your enemy must be able to understand you" when you encounter them in a power description. On the open battlefield, an enemy can understand the bellowed rage of an opponent just fine—regardless of what language he's screaming.

## "Useless" Racial Abilities

Useless abilities? I dunno, man. I don't think there are any. Sure, that +2 to Diplomacy or Nature might seem like it won't see any use on the battlefield, but when you say that, I say "military scale skill challenge" and start getting really excited about the possibilities.

Before you declare any racial ability to be of zero military use, step back for a moment and take some time to think about what uses of that ability might look like if they were allowed to operate on a titanic scale. I think you'll start to see that much of this stuff is every bit as exciting as the notion of a *flaming sphere* set loose that's big enough to burn an entire fortress to a cinder.

Maybe not as flashy, sure. But wars aren't always won with flashy maneuvers. For more on the topic of skills and other abilities, see "Other Attributes in Brief," page 10.

## Speed

Many of the possible thoughts about a military unit's speed have already been covered in the section on scale, above. Here's one more: if the possible speed of your troops in one round just doesn't match up with the scale of your map squares, *you're allowed to change it.*

One possible way to change speed is to simply divide speed by two and round down, though that tends to give the short shrift to units who were originally running around with a speed of 7. What might be better would be to change the "default" speed (typically 6 squares) to a different number, and then treat all sevens as +1 bumps to the default, and all fives as -1, etc. It'd be pretty easy to drop the default speed to 4 instead of 6, creating a range of military movement from 3 to 5 squares per action.

Make sure to consider terrain, however (see some questions and examples to consider on page 4). If you're feeling like the speeds offered are too high, it might be better to cure that with a landscape full of terrain that's difficult and hazardous!

Be careful whenever you adjust assumptions about a military unit's speed. It's *strongly* tied to the idea of range with attacks—in particular, the ability to get *out* of range of something nasty. In other words, if you're contemplating cutting down speed, you should probably apply some similar thinking to attack ranges (see page 4).

## Class

Classes are where much of the sexy in D&D comes from, and it's no different on a military scale. The roles that the classes play are just as relevant to troop movements as they are to individuals in a skirmish. We'll be covering two of the most important parts of a military class—hit points and powers—in the next few sections, but for now, let's talk a little about scaling up the classes from individuals into military units, and what that *looks* like.

As with many things in **Hard Boiled Armies** this is more about a deliberate shift of perspective than it is about changing how any of the basics work. Here's a quick table to explore some possibilities:

| THIS CLASS | IN THIS ROLE | MIGHT BE CALLED |
|---|---|---|
| Cleric | Leader (Divine) | Command staff; medical support |
| Fighter | Defender (Martial) | Infantry; marines |
| Paladin | Defender (Divine) | Crusaders; jihadists |
| Ranger | Striker (Martial) | Archers; cavalry; guerilla fighters |
| Rogue | Striker (Martial) | Black ops; stealth troops |
| Warlock | Striker (Arcane) | Pact troops; snipers |
| Warlord | Leader (Martial) | Command staff; tactical support |
| Witch Doctor | Controller (Primal) | Doom patrol; hex-men |
| Wizard | Controller (Arcane) | Artillery; demolition troops |
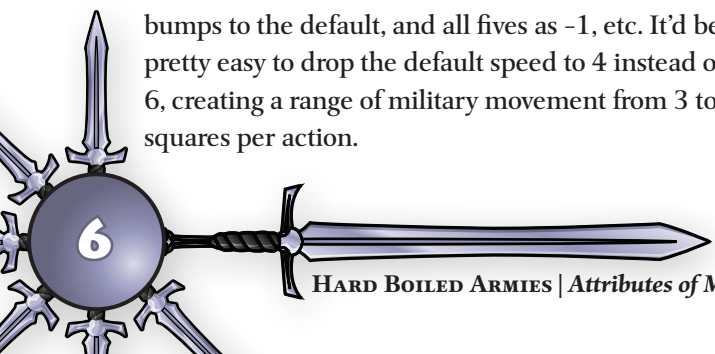
## Mixing Up Classes

So what happens if you want to put together a heterogeneous military unit? Straight up, if you're not willing to use the "half and half" strategy proposed for races (see "Mixing Up Race or Culture" on page 5), your only other recourse is to use the multiclassing rules.

When working with a military unit, you can probably safely ditch some or all of the feat requirements needed for powers substitution (if you haven't already ditched those as a house rule for PCs) beyond taking the basic multiclassing feat.

Yes, embracing the multiclassing rules means you can't *triple class* a military unit, but much as with straight up PCs, that'd be more work than it's worth anyway: make multiple units in such a case.

For an example of a multiclassed military force, see "The Laughing Skull Brotherhood" on page 14.

## Hit Points

When building a military unit, hit points stop representing *health* and start to represent *troop strength*. Hit points could be taken as an abstract measure of a unit's durability, or they could be taken instead as a literal measure of the number of troops the unit still has in play.

While abstraction certainly has its merits, measuring a single hit point in terms of the number of casualties it represents can bring the harsh realities of war home. At the smaller end of the scale, one hit point might represent a single soldier, so a 37 hp unit would be made up of 37 soldiers—commence the wincing when a 2d6 attack lands! At this scale, you can also start to view a military unit as essentially composed of minions (since one minion has the equivalent of one hit point). At bigger scales, one hit point is going to represent *multiple* soldiers. Quoting the losses during battle will make it feel particularly bloody: "A hit! 25 of your men go down under a storm of eldritch fury."

Beyond determining what they represent, there are plenty of dials to play with in terms of hit points, so let's get into them.

## Healing

It's important to regard a loss of troop hit points as not *deaths*, necessarily, but as *casualties*. Fallen soldiers may recover, heal up, and return to the field of battle—that's a healing surge in action. Depending on what your time-scale looks like (see page 2), a healing surge could also represent the results of recruiting new troops to replace the fallen.

## Option: Dwindling Strength through Attrition

When hit points represent the number of men you have on the ground, it can stretch some folks' credibility to have a unit continue to dish out full-strength punishment even when it's down to just a few men. On the other hand, the last few men might be particularly inventive, stubborn, and deadly—so there's plenty of rationale for it, if you're willing to exercise that.

So for those who want dwindling numbers to feel like they're dwindling, we present this optional rule: once a military unit becomes bloodied, it automatically gains the weakened condition. Simple as that!

As a further option, a second threshold (reduction to half your bloodied value, for example) might inflict another condition, such as dazed, as decimated troops scatter and fall into chaos.

---

**WEAKENED WEAKENED?**

What happens if a reduced unit that is weakened then gets hit by the wizard corps *ray of enfeeblement* volley? Possible answers include:

- ✦ Allow a doubly-weakened condition that cuts the damage that can be dealt to a quarter of its regular size, or maybe even only able to deal out a single point of damage.
- ✦ Allow a "double weaken" to follow the optional progression from above—resulting in an already-weakened unit also becoming dazed.
- ✦ Call it redundant—no additional effect. Go pick on someone your own size, wiz-lads!
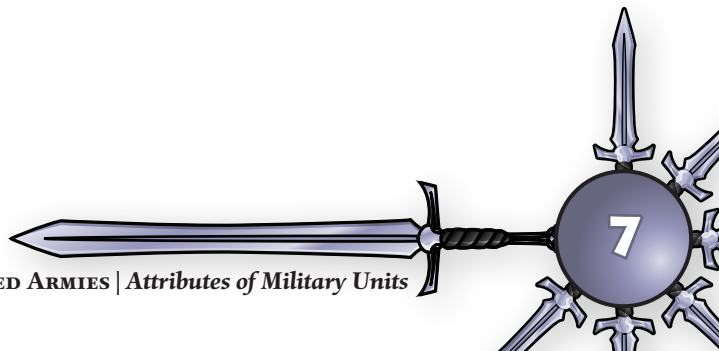
## Option: Mixing Up Scales via Hit Points

What happens if you want to mix together several sizes of military units? Here are a couple of thoughts.

### Smaller Units

Generally speaking, a military conflict operates on a scale appropriate to its largest member. So a smaller-scale unit might still be able to mix it up, just not as effectively–they enter the fight already suffering the weakened condition (which may have some interesting side effects over the course of things; see "Weakened Weakened," above). It would also make sense to cut the smaller unit's normal hit points in half (or more), to represent how quickly they can be crushed by the attacks of larger forces.

### Minion Units

Especially small scale units relative to the battle, or units that are of the right size but still especially light-weight, should get the "minion treatment." Give them a single hit point, and eliminate all dice from the damage their powers deal–set a fixed minimum, replacing each die removed with a single point of damage, so a 2d6+4 attack would simply become a 6 point attack. Further, such units should only have access to one or two at-will or utility powers at most–no encounter powers, no daily powers!

### Elite and Solo Hordes

Going in the other direction, the rules from the **D&D 4E Dungeon Master's Guide** about converting monsters into elites or solos can be applied to military units as well, to represent a force that's oversized or especially competent for the field of battle it's entering–additional action points, boosted defenses, hit points multiplied by a factor of 2 or 5, and perhaps an extra action or encounter power in its arsenal. Use these sparingly, though! It will often be more interesting to represent a large force as a collection of several units, rather than a single monolith.

## Option: No Fighting Without Bloodshed

To add a bit of "realism" (or at least, a greater sense of military grit), consider this set of optional rules, intended to reinforce the idea that no military attack occurs without a price paid in blood by both sides.

### No Whiffs

One way to make sure military conflict feels bloody enough is to give every attack power a weak miss effect (but only if that power doesn't already have one). That way, every time forces clash, the defender comes away with at least a few losses. The miss line would read as follows:

> **Miss:** One-quarter damage, rounded down. No conditions or ongoing effects. Power cannot be sustained.

### The Price of Aggression

Complementary to the "no whiffs" rule another rule that reinforces the cost in men and material for the attacker: impose a price, in hit points, to be paid for taking an attack action at all. If not paired with the "no whiffs" rule, this price might be paid only on a successful hit. Depending on how expensive you believe attacks should be, the price could be one of the following:

- ✦ Take 1 point of damage
- ✦ Take damage equal to half the level of the target
- ✦ Take damage equal to the level of the target

When you go beyond the one point of damage option from this list, attacks become a real gamble (as in war)–one where you hope that what it costs you to make the attack is outweighed by the amount of punishment you inflict on the enemy. It's brutal, but for those looking for a little **Black Company** action, it's right on the money.
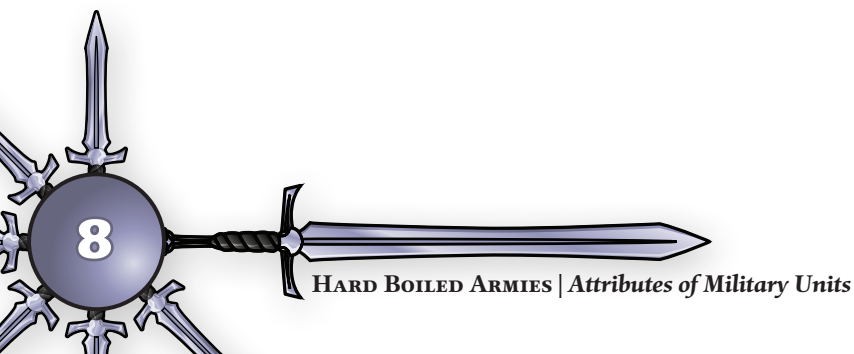
## POWERS

As with the other elements of individual characters, nearly every class power can be translated into a military scale attack or action with almost no modification (modulo adjustments made for range or speed–see the discussion on page 6).

When it comes down to it, most of the change has to do with the *color text* for the power rather than its function. Melee attacks become a clash of swords, as a foreign army is driven from its fortress by a *tide of iron*. Ranged weapon attacks become artillery volleys using mobile catapults instead of bows–allowing a *nimble strike*. A squad of berserkers sends foes fleeing before its *rain of steel*. An assault by way of military magecraft is the result of an hours-long ritual–even if the mechanical effects look an awful lot like *burning hands*. Entire battlefields are sanctified under the divine aegis of the Pale Wanderer (see **Gods of the Shroud** for more on him) rather than a small group when the clerical troops fire off their *shield of faith*. And *icy terrain* may as well be called *instant glacier*!

## Optional Rule: Military Powers

As an optional rule, the following powers might be available to some or all of the troops in a battle. Depending on your inclination, they might simply be "class features" available in addition to all the powers that a military unit would normally get from race, class, and feat–or they might require some or all of them to be swapped in, multiclass-style, to take up existing power slots (maybe charging a feat for the privilege, maybe not). As a middle ground between these options, these powers might be freely available, but each unit would have to pick only one it can use each battle.

As they currently stand, these powers are all "utility" powers, and we're not putting a level on them–give them a level rating if you like, to guide any powers-swapping option, or don't. They should work out fine at any level! Other powers could be created that are explicitly attacks, which might act as basic attack options, or might necessitate a "power swap" strategy and level rating, but those are out of the scope of this particular product.

### Airlift                                      Military Feature

*With the use of flying mounts, your troops take to the air to cover ground.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial**

**Minor Action**                    **Personal**

**Effect:** Your unit gains a fly (clumsy) speed equal to its regular speed until the beginning of its next turn.

### Camouflage Training                          Military Feature

*With a little bit of preparation, your squad blends into the landscape.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial, Stance**

**Standard Action**                 **Personal**

**Special:** Your unit must be trained in Stealth to use this power.

**Effect:** You gain concealment at the beginning of any turn that follows a full round in which you did not move.

### Diversionary Force                           Military Feature

*You detach a small number of men from your main force, sending them out to stage a diversion.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial, Stance**

**Standard Action**                 **Personal**

**Effect:** Spend a healing surge without gaining hit points and take damage equal to your level. You cannot heal this damage while the stance persists. You create a second military force in an adjacent square with hit points equal to your level, and defenses equal to your own. You may establish line of sight and line of effect only for your at-will powers through this second force.

**Special:** This stance automatically ends if the diversionary force's hit points are reduced to zero or below. If you end the stance while the force is in a square adjacent to you, you regain hit points equal to the diversionary force's current hit point total. As a move action, you may move the diversionary force a number of squares equal to your speed.

### Forced March                                 Military Feature

*Pushed past the point of exhaustion, your troops make a hard drive to cover ground.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial**

**Move Action**                     **Personal**

**Effect:** Spend a healing surge without gaining hit points. The unit may move twice its speed as a single move action.
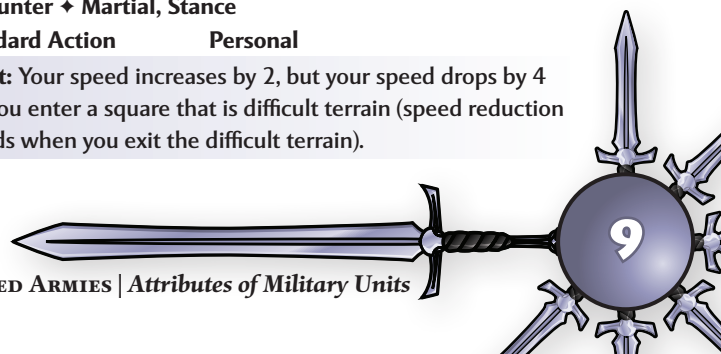
### Mounted Travel                               Military Feature

*Your troops mount up and ride.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial, Stance**

**Standard Action**                 **Personal**

**Effect:** Your speed increases by 2, but your speed drops by 4 if you enter a square that is difficult terrain (speed reduction ends when you exit the difficult terrain).

## Study the Foe
**Military Feature**

*By studying your foe, you anticipate his move.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial, Reliable**

**Immediate Interrupt**     **Personal**

**Special:** You must be trained in Insight.

**Trigger:** An enemy force you can see moves through a square within 2 squares of your position.

**Effect:** Roll your Insight skill against DC equal to 10 + the enemy's Bluff skill. If successful, you may shift 1 square, ignoring difficult terrain.

## Tunnel Brigade
**Military Feature**

*Armed with spade and pickaxe, your troops dig deep to cover ground unseen.*

**Encounter ✦ Martial, Stance**

**Standard Action**     **Personal**

**Special:** Your unit must be trained in Dungeoneering to use this power.

**Effect:** Your unit gains a burrow (tunneling) speed equal to half its regular speed, rounded up.

**Special:** If your unit is dwarven or composed of members from another underground culture, burrow speed is equal to regular speed.

# Other Attributes In Brief

Rather than break into the rest of a character's attributes in depth, here's a quick overview of what remains.

## Ability Scores

The six ability scores are just as meaningful for a military force as they are for an individual. A particular squad of soldiers might be especially strong, tough, nimble, intelligent, wise, or charismatic, which might color their tactics and mode of warfare in addition to complementing their character class. *The Laughing Skull Brotherhood* (page 14), high in Charisma, embodying the *trickster rogue* class build makes for a *terribly* interesting ally−or foe−after all.

## Defenses

Not much to say here−all four defenses function pretty much the same, and for similar reasons: good equipment, good training. It just happens to be bought and done in bulk. Speaking of which…

## Equipment

Equipment should likely be given to a military force based on the lowest common denominator. Sure, a few of your men here and there might be outfitted with a *+2 longsword*, but unless the vast majority of them are all similarly equipped, that's a minor detail that gets lost as "noise" against the larger backdrop.

Outfitting an entire force with *+2 swords* could be a pretty expensive proposition, too! But so long as the force's patron is able to cover the mass equipment costs (taking the basic cost of the item and multiplying it by the number of men), the unit can gain all the benefits of possessing that item−"scaled up" in terms of the color text where appropriate. Racks of healing potions? Sure! Able to afford fifty *helms of ghostly defense?* Welcome to an entire armed force gone insubstantial when the fires of heaven rain down.

Downgraded versions of powers and bonuses might be allowable if a large minority of a force, but not all of it, possesses the item; for example, if half your men have *+2 swords*, and the other half doesn't, that would average out to the effect of a *+1 sword*.

## Feats

Most feats make the transition painlessly. Some might need to be reviewed carefully (be afraid of the *enlarged dragon breath* feat) but still make the grade. If anything, military-force-specific feats are ripe territory for additional house rules and development!

## Skills

As we hinted earlier, making skills relevant is simply a matter of supersizing skill challenges and other skill checks to the military scale. Here, it's more about choosing an appropriately-upsized scope for the challenge or test and what it represents.

- ✦ Successful **Acrobatics** rolls might allow a force to travel past enemy lines by swinging through the treetops of a nearby forest. Or it might be used for tricky maneuvers, allowing your force to show up in unexpected positions on the battlefield.
- ✦ Good **Arcana** rolls grant insight as to the magical resources and gambits of your foe, knowledge of elemental and fey forces, and warnings when a dark ritual is being performed behind enemy lines.
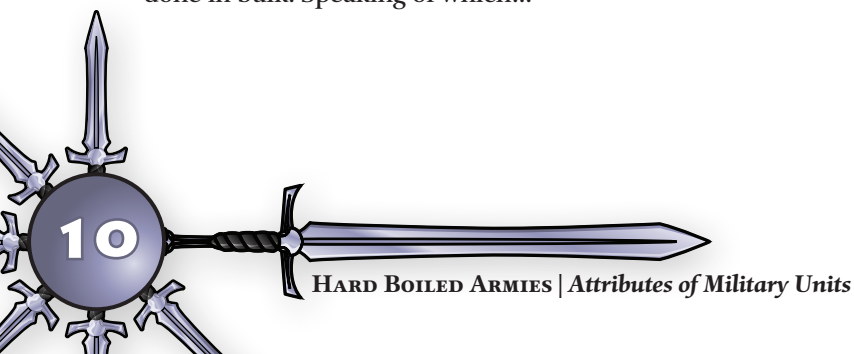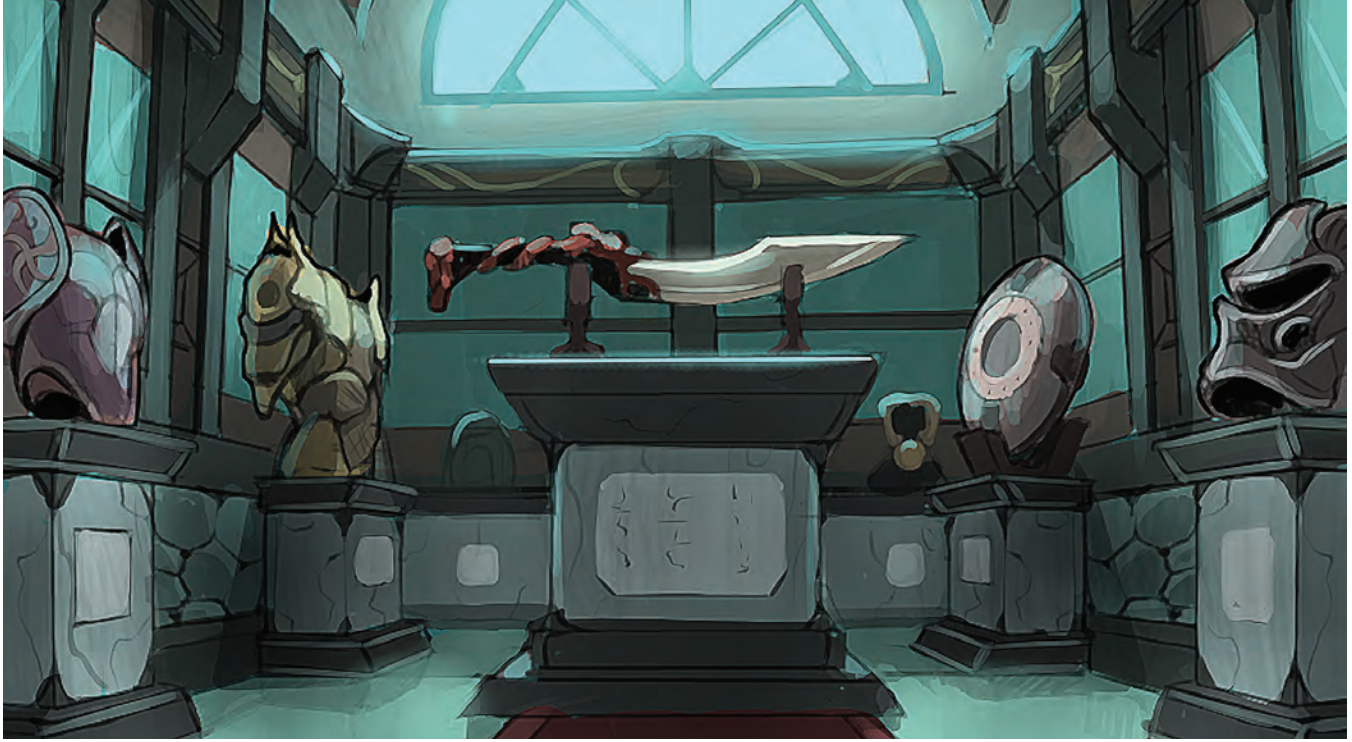
- **Athletics** enables you to force your way out of getting pinned (by a "grab"—see "Actions" on page 3), cut around obstacles (via a "leap"), or engage in an amphibious assault (swimming).
- **Bluff** is the skill of doing feints already—but with a military force, those "feints" are complex battlefield maneuvers, diverting your enemy's attention away from what you're actually doing and putting him at a disadvantage.
- **Diplomacy** might win you a passel of friendly townspeople willing to quarter your troops as the winter closes in, or be used to negotiate terms of surrender.
- **Dungeoneering** can be used for clever underground-travel gambits, and might be put into service as the skill for crafting earthworks and other on-the-fly fortifications.
- An army with a strong **Endurance** score marches farther and can live on less. Endurance wins wars.
- Training in the **Heal** skill means you have some trained medics on hand, useful for keeping allied armies on their feet.
- **History** could remind you of a military gambit tried on the same field of battle centuries ago.
- **Insight** stops being a question of body language and starts to become a skill of studying the way your enemy thinks, reading troop movements to get an idea of the bigger picture and the next move.
- A successful **Intimidate** roll against a bloodied military force might just turn their charge into a rout.

- **Nature** gives insight to the capabilities of monstrous armies of natural origin—and can feed your army off the land, reducing its dependency on a supply train.
- **Perception** rolls gather valuable reports from the scouts you've sent out to the perimeter. It's not Perception any more; it's intel.
- **Religion** yields tactical and strategic information about armies of the dead and immortal, or might tell you about an enemy's religious day of peace—ideal for negotiating a cease-fire.
- A **Stealth** check isn't about hiding one man, it's about hiding a hundred—the skill of camouflage and ambush.
- A good **Streetwise** roll means you're able to enlist the criminal underworld as a hit-and-run guerilla force for a few turns, or set you up with superior knowledge of the streets of an invaded city—turning its districts into difficult terrain only for your foe.
- **Thievery** might be the skill of defusing battlefield traps set to throw your allies into chaos. Or it could be used to disrupt an enemy's supply train, leaving its troops underfed and ill-equipped.

It's all a question of thinking big, in terms of the actions taken and effects coming from success or failure. Sure, a particular skill might represent the knowledge of just a few commanders of the military unit rather than the force as a whole—but it also represents what the force can do *with* that knowledge in hand.

# Characters on the Fields of Battle

While you certainly *could* run an entire campaign on the macro scale, playing armies instead of individuals all the time, the truth of the matter is that most uses of mass-scale armed conflict will occur in the context of a smaller, more personal game involving individual heroes–the PCs.

And once you start doing that, the players are going to want to get their PCs directly involved in the action. It's inevitable; so the question is, how are you going to handle it? The following is a grab bag of possible answers and ideas. Pick and choose the ones that work for you!

### DIFFERENT SCALES, DIFFERENT CHOICES

You don't need to lock into a single option here. Maybe you'll choose a more "potent" one ("Heroes Writ Large") for a small scale battle, and a less potent one ("Masters and Commanders") for the larger war!

## Against a Backdrop of War

Maybe the answer to involving the PCs with the military conflict is *not* to involve them. Stick with me, here.

In some stories, the characters are running around in a war-torn landscape, having their own individual adventures, but they aren't shaping the larger conflict so much as being shaped by it themselves. At the very least, they aren't the sort who will shape the war through individual *fighting* action–but what they can do in the halls of power, as diplomatic emissaries and couriers, and so forth, is another story entirely.

So involve the PCs that way, but recognize that your campaign is operating in two different modes–the personal adventure mode, and the military action mode. The two might affect one another where they touch right at the edges, but there isn't much, if any, overlap. *And that's okay*.

## Masters and Commanders

If the PCs want to be involved in the war, then it's time to give them some responsibility. Put them in charge of the military forces that get deployed in their side's favor. They might be too small as individuals to make

use of their character's powers on a battlefield scale (but see "With Our Powers Combined," below), but they can at least be directly responsible for the actions and command of one or more military units in action (in fact, it might be particularly fun if they are responsible for more than one piece on the board).

It might even make sense to let them make the occasional skill roll off their own sheet rather than off the military force's–Rogram the Sneaky might lend his prodigious talents at Stealth to help disguise his unit as a group of harmless local farmers! By sharing skills and the occasional feat benefit, but not powers, the feel of the kind of difference a talented commander can make will still be felt, and won't force you into some cinematic-scale suspension of disbelief.

## With Our Powers Combined

Then again, maybe those powers can and should be deployed on a battlefield scale–provided that the PC is a member of a larger force with talents similar to her own (read: a military unit sharing the same class as the PC, perhaps). Separated from their unit, the PCs won't be able to do much of anything on a military scale–but by joining up, with their powers combined, it becomes powerful alchemy.

In such a case, the PC's powers would lend additional diversity to the powers already enjoyed by the military force. Perhaps the People's Warlock Army is primarily composed of *star pact* warlocks–but when Juna Feyblood joins up, they start to play around with some of the benefits of the *fey pact* as well, not to mention pick up the option to use the *eyebite* at-will attack, not previously a part of their sheet.

Maybe the restriction on sharing the same class as the military force is unnecessary–in which case the PC that joins up adds an *intense* amount of additional options for the unit in question. Consider what happens when a squad of paladins suddenly get the benefit of a PC warlord in their midst, following her orders to victory as they enjoy the benefits of both their powers and a fully operational warlord, on a battlefield scale. (This nearly shades into "Heroes Writ Large," below.)

In the sad event that the PC's military force is wiped out, she would remain on the board, but unable to affect the conflict directly. For that to happen, she'd need to find another military unit (and maybe eat a standard action joining up with it).
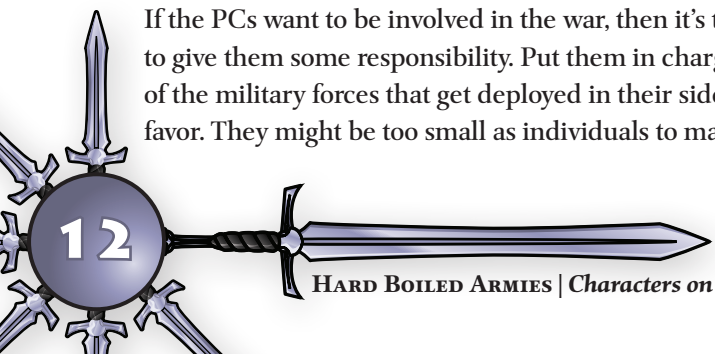
## Heroes Writ Large

If you're looking to crank the cinematic dials up to eleven, or otherwise fulfill the notion that the PCs are very nearly gods among men, this is the option for you. It works pretty simply: there's no difference of scale between a PC and a military unit. Done!

When the battlefield scale increases beyond the individual, the PC's abilities "scale up" to meet the challenge. The warlock's *howl of doom* becomes a dread cry indeed, ringing out over entire battlefields and driving entire armies into a sudden retreat; the paladin's *on pain of death* prayer drives the duke's men to their knees, miles away.

All this can be rationalized by talking about things like ritual and long-term military stratagems and clever trickery and all that, but really, it's about the pulpy superheroics of one man being proof against an army. There's nothing wrong with that, if it's where you want your game to live.

## Heroes Writ... Uh, Less Large

If you want to dial back from "Heroes Writ Large" just a touch (setting the cinematic dial at, say, a solid nine), treat all armed forces as swarms vs. PC abilities, only taking half damage from *all* attacks instead of just melee and ranged. This is essentially equivalent to the idea of treating the PCs as if their attacks are weakened vs. armies, plus a few other benefits (see the **D&D 4E Monster Manual**'s glossary for the lowdown. Alternatively, you could simply give armed forces some amount of resistance vs. PC attacks, scaling the resistance larger the more out of proportion the size of the force is with the individual PC.

Another halfway point that allows your PCs to take individual action on a large battlefield would be to adopt some of the recommendations in "Option: Mixed Scales via Hit Points" on page 8. This leaves the PCs unusually fragile to attacks from armed forces. Before we consider that a problem, let us contemplate the phrase "fragile to attacks from *armed forces*." Swapping out a PC's hit point total for something much smaller will should impress upon them the danger they're engaging in—and for some higher-level characters, bring back the heady, if perilous, thrill of early-level play.

## Inequality

A potentially unpopular option would be to favor some player character classes over others when it comes to military actions. Those classes which embody the leader role in particular—such as Warlords and Clerics—might have a natural affinity for large-scale actions on the battlefield.

If it suits your game, and doesn't bruise anyone's sensibilities, there are a few ways you could configure this particular option.

**Supreme Commanders:** Leader classes might get to participate according to a different set of rules. For example, while the other PC roles might be allowed to participate in a "Masters and Commanders" sense, leaders might get a low-powered version of "With Our Powers Combined."

**Versatile Leaders:** Leaders might be treated mostly the same way as the other roles, but with just a little extra versatility. For example, you might allow all roles to loan their at-will powers to military forces they command, but those playing leader roles could be allowed to use their utility powers on a military scale as well.

**Team and Individual Events:** Maybe it's a simple case of leaders being more effective with a team, but everyone still getting to compete at the individual level. In this set-up, you might decide that leaders get a healthy dollop of "With Our Powers Combined", while the rest of the player characters move around the battlefield as "Heroes Writ Less Large." The leaders would get the benefit of the sturdier hit point counts and versatility of a military force, but everyone could move about the battlefield as a serious participant (albeit with reduced hit points of their own). If the leaders get separated from their armies, they become just like any other character.

**Role Reversal:** Or maybe this has it all backwards—maybe it's some non-leader role that should get the spotlight. Your strikers might be more effective than leaders because they can work alone, slip behind enemy lines, and assassinate commanders. Your controllers might be more effective because they're ideally suited to planting seeds of chaos among your foes. Your defenders might be better suited to holding the line and drawing the key players of the opposition out into one on one combat. Here, you might make the non-leaders "Heroes Writ Large," but require leaders to have an army of their own to participate.
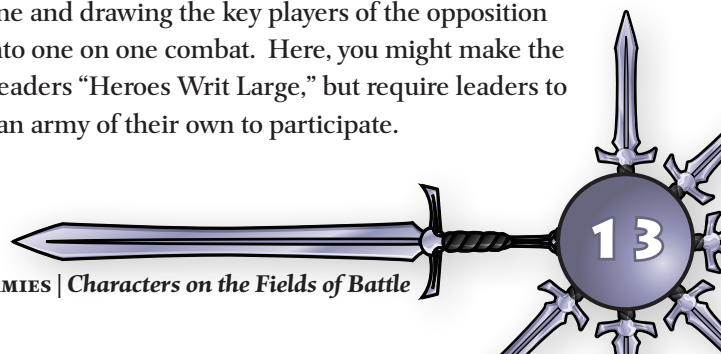
# Sample Forces

Here are a few sample military forces. Enjoy!

## The Doomkeepers

The Doomkeepers are a small, tightly knit unit of a couple dozen halfling witch-doctors. Fearless and more than a little bit crazy, they're sent into all manner of bizarre situations and given fairly free rein to "fix it," or at the very least tame it so that allied forces can operate at maximum effectiveness. Their array of close burst and wall powers give them the ability to cause incredible chaos behind enemy lines.

## The Laughing Skull Brotherhood

The Laughing Skull Brotherhood is a motley crew featuring at least a few members of nearly every race, though their largest populations are humans, elves, and half-elves (the original founders). They've been all over the world and, when paid enough coin, have kicked much of the world's ass.

As a military force build, the Brotherhood is based on the half-elf as a cheap way to convey the mixed racial origins of the army. They do their dirty work through a mixture of clever trickery—they are first and foremost rogues—and some dark, dark magical stuff. By multiclassing into the warlock class, they've got a few non-rogue powers up their sleeves. They've invested plenty of capital into outfitting themselves with *+3 pact blade rapiers*. The fact that they have massive advantages in the Stealth department doesn't hurt either. Their "hand crossbows" can be taken as a set of light, mobile, enchanted ballistae they've constructed.

Alas, license restrictions will only let us show you what powers they have, not what most of those powers can do, by and large—but a little research will reveal these guys are an unholy terror. (Plugging the data below into the **DDI Character Builder** will generate a proper readout too.)

| Doomkeepers | Level 1 Witch Doctor Army |
|---|---|
| Small natural humanoid army | |

**Initiative** +0          **Senses** Perception +2

**HP** 22; **Bloodied** 11

**Healing Surges** 8; **Surge Value** 5

**AC** 14 (16 vs. opportunity); **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 10, **Will** 16

**Resist** 5 necrotic (mask of the ancestors)

**Saving Throws** +5 vs. fear

**Action Points** 1

**Speed** 6

⊕ **Poke With Sticks** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

+2 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.

↚ **Spirit Shout** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Implement, Primal, Thunder**

Close burst 1; +5 vs. **Fortitude** (+7 if flanked); 1d6 + 5 thunder damage.

↚ **Tremor Strike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Implement, Primal**

Close wall 5; +5 vs. **Fortitude** (+7 if flanked); 1d6 + 5 damage.

↚ **Hex of Pain** (standard action; encounter) ✦ **Implement, Primal, Psychic**

Close burst 5; targets one enemy in burst; +5 vs. Will; 1d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

↚ **Chains of Spirit** (standard action; daily) ✦ **Implement, Primal**

Close burst 2; targets all enemies in burst; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage and the target is immobilized (save ends). The Doomkeepers may immediately shift a number of squares equal to the number of enemies hit.

**Evil Eye** (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within 10 squares makes a successful saving throw; twice per encounter)

The enemy rerolls the saving throw.

**Mask of the Ancestors**

Wisdom modifier bonus to AC in light armor and resist to necrotic damage (both reflected above).

**Second Chance** (immediate interrupt when hit by an enemy attack; encounter)

As per the halfling racial ability.

**Bloodthirsty Mien**
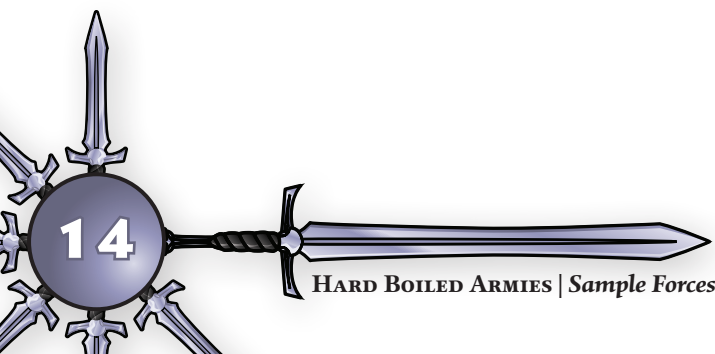
As per the feat in the *D&D 4E Player's Handbook*

**Alignment** Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

**Skills** Acrobatics +2, Arcana +5, Heal +7, History +5, Intimidate +10, Thievery +2

| **Str** 10 (+0) | **Dex** 10 (+0) | **Wis** 14 (+2) |
|---|---|---|
| **Con** 10 (+0) | **Int** 11 (+0) | **Cha** 20 (+5) |

**Equipment** leather armor, medicine stick, mask

## Laughing Skull Brotherhood — Level 13 Rogue Army
**Medium natural humanoid army**

**Initiative** +11      **Senses** Perception +6

**HP** 86; **Bloodied** 43

**Healing Surges** 8; **Surge Value** 21

**AC** 26; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 23

**Action Points** 1

**Speed** 6

**Race Features**

Dilettante, Dual Heritage, Group Diplomacy

**Class Features**

First Strike, Artful Dodger, Rogue Weapon Talent, Sneak Attack, Pact Initiate (fey pact)

**Feats**

Acolyte Power, Adept Power, Backstabber, Combat Anticipation, Novice Power, Pact Initiate (Fey), Secret Stride, Weapon Proficiency (Rapier)

**At-Will Powers**

Deft Strike, Sly Flourish

**Encounter Powers**

Bait and Switch, Dire Radiance (dilettante), Eyebite (pact initiate), Rogue's Luck, Sign of Ill Omen, Tornado Strike

**Daily Powers**

Clever Riposte, Curse of the Dark Dream, Deadly Positioning

**Utility Powers**

Chameleon, Master of Deceit, Shadow Stride, Shielding Shades

**Alignment** Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Dwarven

**Skills** Bluff +15, Diplomacy +12, History +12, Insight +13, Intimidate +15, Stealth +22

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Str** 11 (+6) | **Dex** 20 (+11) | **Wis** 11 (+6) |
| **Con** 14 (+8) | **Int** 12 (+7) | **Cha** 18 (+10) |

**Equipment** pact blade rapier +3; hand crossbow +3; shadow-flow leather armor +3; elven cloak +3

# The Corpse-Child Army

This blight has marched out of the deepest mists of the Shroud. Commanded by a small number of death-mothers (see **Horrors of the Shroud: The Death-Mother**), this horde is composed largely of the fallen youths of overrun villages.

This is an example of army built like a monster rather than a character. This results in a force with more hit points, but fewer powers—perfect for a villainous horde. Based on the concept of a small number of solo monsters commanding a large horde of minions, the resulting monster-force blends both elements: above minion strength but below solo strength, as far as how it manifests on the battlefield. If you really want to make this an implacable foe, consider applying the *battle champion* template from the **D&D 4E Dungeon Master's Guide**—it's practically *made* for upgrading a fighting force into a lethal, veteran army.

## The Corpse-Child Army — Level 7 Skirmisher
**Medium natural animate army (undead)**      XP 300

**Initiative** +9      **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision

**HP** 60; **Bloodied** 30

**AC** 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19

**Immune** disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

**Speed** 6

⊕ **Chattering Horde Onslaught** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear**

+10 vs. Will; 1d8+5 damage and the target is pushed 1 square. The corpse-child army shifts into the vacated square.

↯ **Shrieking Retreat** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**

+10 vs. Fortitude; only vs. targets that can hear; 1d8+5 thunder damage. *Hit or miss:* the corpse-child army shifts 2 squares away from the target.

❊ **Skull Catapult** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic, Thunder**

Burst 2 within 10 squares; +8 vs. Will; 2d8 + 4 psychic and thunder damage. The target is dazed until the end of its next turn. *Miss:* Half damage (thunder only), no daze.

**Eat the Dead** (move; encounter) ✦ **Healing**

Only usable when bloodied. The corpse-child army moves up to its full speed into a square where another military force was killed, although any mass grave would do. The corpse-child army heals 20 hit points.

**Alignment** Evil      **Languages** Common, Primordial

**Skills** Intimidate +9, Stealth +12

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Str** 10 (+3) | **Dex** 19 (+7) | **Wis** 16 (+6) |
| **Con** 16 (+6) | **Int** 13 (+4) | **Cha** 12 (+4) |

**Equipment** rags, broken toys, jagged bones
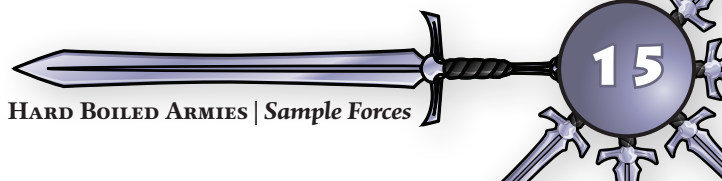
# INVASION!

## Encounter Level 5 (1,025 XP)

## SETUP

This encounter showcases the ideas in *Hard Boiled Armies* in a specific way: defending a city against an invading force. It's been left unnamed—give it a name that suits the game you're dropping this into. Players take on the roles of commanders of the city watch, charged with keeping the peace within the city and defending it against the aggression of outsiders. They might be playing PCs within the city, on a smaller scale, but for our purposes when it comes to military-scale conflict, they take command but don't confer their usual character abilities to their units.

The outsiders—a raiding army—have just come knocking. A small fleet of ships bombards the city from outside, there are some operative forces inside the city looking to open the gates and let the invaders in, and there's a ground force marching on the city from outside. Forewarned, the city has locked its gates, but has no idea of the traitors that lurk within.

This encounter includes the following military forces.

**1 Guerilla Skirmishers (G)**
**3 Invading Infantry (I)**
**2 Invading Veterans (V)**
**2 Raiding Ships (S)**
**4 Traitorous Cabals (T)**

(A larger, printable map with grid-marks is found at the end of this encounter.)
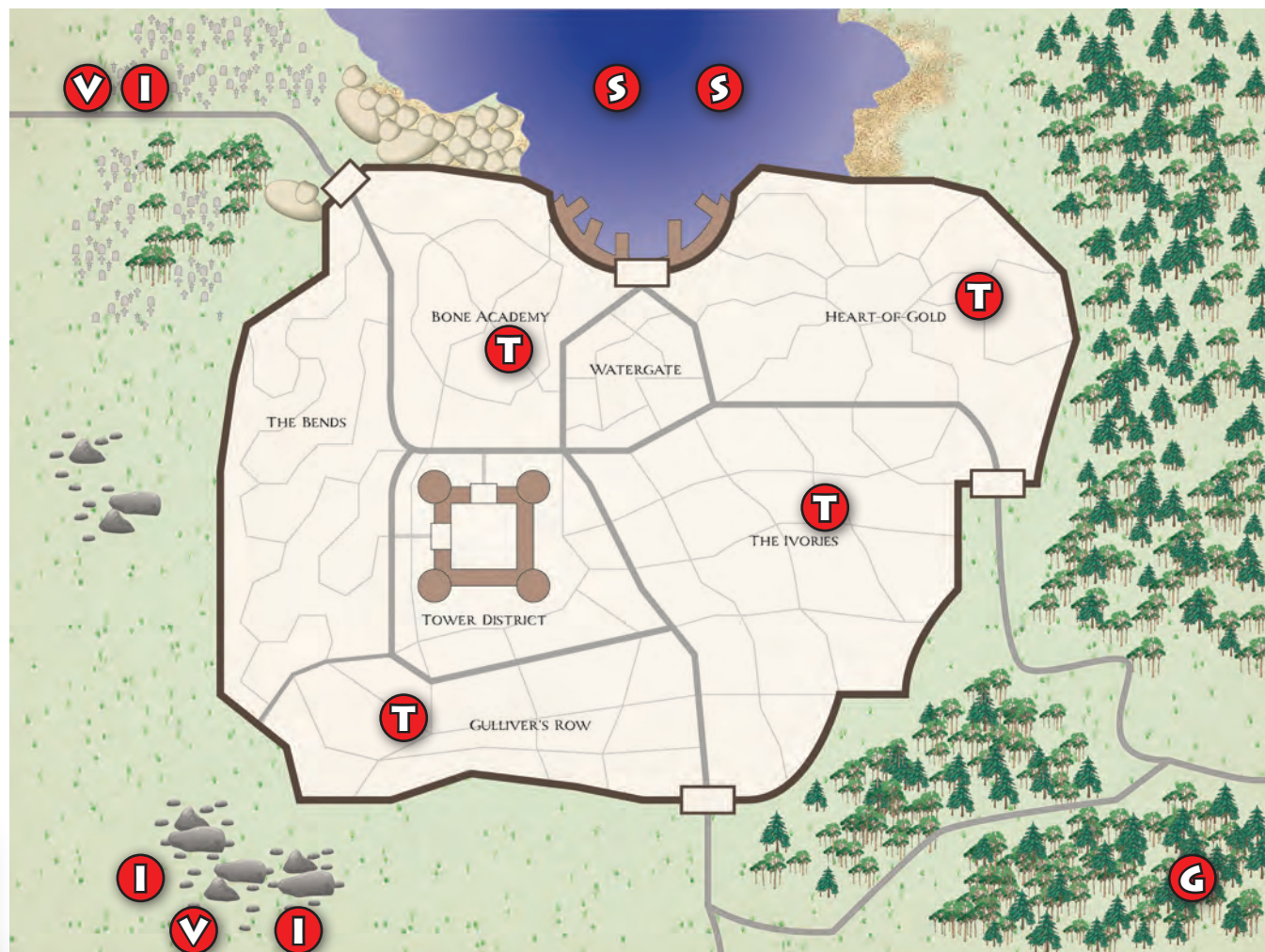
**As the bombardment on the city begins, read:**

*An invading force closes on the city! The alarm goes up, and the gates are locked from inside. The Watch goes on high alert, but doesn't have long to wait—a small fleet of warships enters the harbor and bombards the city with heavy cannon fire. To arms!*

# Scale

The dials for scale are set as follows:

**Hit Points:** Each hit point represents one to three soldiers, meaning most companies of the watch comprise about 25-75 fighting men and women. It also puts the size of the invading force in the low to mid hundreds.

**Map Scale:** Each square on the map represents an area the size of a city block.

**Unit Size:** Medium-size military units are large enough to prevent other military units from moving into or through the same square.

**Time:** Each round reflects about an hour of action.

# The Player Characters

Each player should design a 2nd-level watch force using typical character creation rules from the **D&D 4E Player's Handbook** or any other source that provides a playable class, such as **The Witch Doctor**, **D&D 4E Player's Handbook 2**, and so on.

The *neighborhood beat* feat is available to these player character military forces.

Each watch garrison starts the encounter either in the Tower District, or in a district specified by its *neighborhood beat* (see the feat, below).

## Neighborhood Beat [Military]

**Prerequisite:** Military Force

**Benefit:** Choose a district that you are most familiar working in. You gain training in a skill appropriate to that district:

- **The Bends:** Gain training in Dungeoneering.
- **The Bone Academy:** Gain training in Arcana.
- **Gulliver's Row:** Gain training in Streetwise.
- **Heart-of-Gold:** Gain training in Diplomacy.
- **The Ivories:** Gain training in History.

In addition, once per encounter, you may ignore difficult terrain until the end of your turn within the district you've specified for this feat.

# City Districts

These are districts as labeled on the map:

**The Bends:** Urban legends abound as to why the streets in this district are so thoroughly inefficient, looping around and bending back on themselves frequently. Maybe it has something to do with the way the ground is shaped, maybe it was a necessity for arcane reasons (warlocks and wizards occasionally take residence here, though the wizards have been thinning out over the years), maybe it was to create confusion for an invading army, or maybe the guy who designed it was just insane. Regardless, the twisting streets and numerous side-alleys make this a ripe place for crime. It's a corrupt, exciting place to live.

**The Bone Academy:** This is where the scholars and artists live. It's also home to a number of mortuaries, owing to the presence of the city's northwestern cemetery just outside the walls.
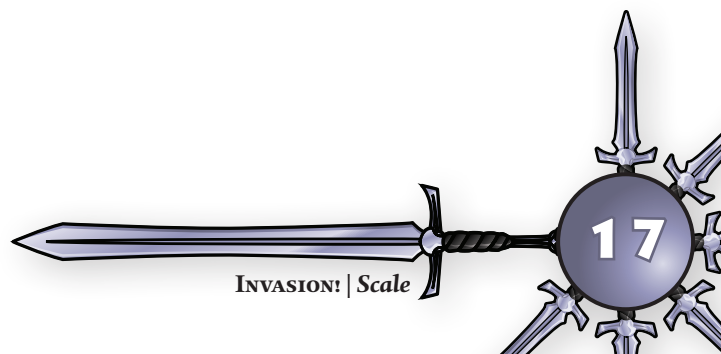
**Gulliver's Row:** Characterized by long, east-to-west streets, Gulliver's Row is where folks with money yet don't fit the Heart-of-Gold lifestyle end up living. This tends to be home to the more successful criminal elite, but it's also home to a lot of interesting little shops and such.

**Heart-of-Gold:** This is where the wealthy live. The district's name is taken from the area right at its center, where the biggest and most expensive houses are found.

**The Ivories:** Named after the white-washed walls of the tiny houses that the lower classes live in. It's a working neighborhood, and the biggest district in the city.

**The Tower District:** This is where the Tower, seat of the city's government, is found. Spanning four city blocks, it's a mini city-within-the-city, and it acts as a headquarters for the city watch.

**Watergate:** So named for the northern city gate that opens out onto the harbor docks area rather than a road. It's a tight knot of businesses and warehouses focused on sea-trade.

# The Invaders

## Guerilla Skirmishers (G) — Level 2 Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid army — 125 XP

**Initiative** +6     **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision

**HP** 35; **Bloodied** 17

**AC** 16; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14

**Speed** 7 (forest walk)

**⊕ Death From The Trees** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

+7 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage. If the guerilla skirmishers are within 2 squares of a forest square, they shift into that square after the attack.

**⤳ Firebombs** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Zone**

Ranged 3; +3 vs. Reflex; 1d6 fire damage and the skirmishers shift 2 squares. The square the target occupies becomes a zone of fire, inflicting 5 fire damage on any creature that starts its turn in or moves into the square. The zone dissipates at the end of the skirmishers' next turn.

**↯ Distraction Ploy** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**

+5 vs. Will; the guerilla skirmishers move up to their full speed without provoking opportunity attacks. They may attack one target at any time during this move, dealing 1d6 damage. At the end of the guerilla skirmishers' turn, the target must move up to its full speed in pursuit of the skirmishers, ending that move in a square adjacent to the skirmishers if possible.

**Alignment** Evil     **Languages** Abyssal, Common

**Skills** Bluff +6, Stealth +9

| Str 15 (+3) | Dex 17 (+4) | Wis 14 (+3) |
|---|---|---|
| Con 11 (+1) | Int 13 (+2) | Cha 10 (+1) |

## Invading Infantry (I) — Level 1 Brute

Medium natural humanoid army — 100 XP

**Initiative** +2     **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision

**HP** 36; **Bloodied** 18

**AC** 14; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12

**Speed** 6

**⊕ Hit Em Hard!** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

+4 vs. AC; 2d6+3 damage

**↯ Charge!** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

Make a charge attack ending with *hit em hard!* If the attack hits, the target is knocked prone.

**Shake It Off, Men!** (immediate reaction when affected with a condition that a save ends; recharge ⚅)

The invading infantry makes a saving throw against the triggering condition.

**Regroup!** (immediate reaction when bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**

The infantry shifts 3 squares, and heals 9 hit points.

**Alignment** Evil     **Languages** Abyssal, Common

**Skills** Athletics +8, Endurance +8

| Str 16 (+3) | Dex 14 (+2) | Wis 13 (+1) |
|---|---|---|
| Con 16 (+3) | Int 12 (+1) | Cha 10 (+0) |

## Invading Veterans (V) — Level 2 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid army — 125 XP

**Initiative** +5     **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision

**HP** 38; **Bloodied** 19

**AC** 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14

**Speed** 6

**⊕ Tactical Assault** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

+9 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage and the target is marked until the end of the invading veterans' next turn.

**↯ Use the Bows!** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; +9 vs. AC; 1d6+3 damage and the target is marked until the end of the invading veterans' next turn.

**↯ Divide and Conquer** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; only vs. a target the veterans have marked; +7 vs. Will; the target is pulled 1 square. If the target has no adjacent allies after being pulled, it takes 1d10+3 damage and is slowed (save ends).

**⤳ Catapults!** (standard; recharge ⚄⚅) ✦ **Weapon**

Ranged 5/10; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d10+3 damage and the target is knocked prone.

**Alignment** Evil     **Languages** Abyssal, Common

**Skills** Bluff +7, Insight +8, Stealth +8

| Str 17 (+4) | Dex 15 (+3) | Wis 14 (+3) |
|---|---|---|
| Con 14 (+3) | Int 13 (+2) | Cha 12 (+2) |

## Dial Setting: Melee Bows?

Something you might not have noticed here: things like bows are being treated as melee weapons with reach, while catapults and such are getting the actual ranged attack treatment.

I decided to go that direction to reinforce the idea of scale here. It takes engines of war to really throw some damage over the entire length of the city.

Then again, that might not be to your taste; maybe you think that bowmen should be able to shoot their arrows over great distances. It's an easy fix, if so: change "Reach 2" to "Ranged 2/5" or something similar.

| Raiding Ships (S) | | Level 2 Artillery |
|---|---|---|
| Medium natural humanoid army | | 125 XP |

**Initiative** +5      **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision

**HP** 31; **Bloodied** 15

**AC** 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14

**Vulnerable** fire; the raiding ships take ongoing 5 fire (save ends) when struck by an attack using the fire keyword.

**Speed** 0, swim 6

⊕ **Repel Boarders** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

   +9 vs. AC; 1d6+3 damage.

⟐ **Cannon Bombardment** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**

   Burst 1 within 10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d8 damage and ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

⟐ **Focused Barrage** (standard; recharge ⚃⚄⚅) ✦ **Fire**

   Ranged 10; +5 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 damage and ongoing 5 fire (save ends). *Miss:* Ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

| **Alignment** Evil | **Languages** Abyssal, Common | |
|---|---|---|
| **Str** 10 (+1) | **Dex** 19 (+5) | **Wis** 14 (+3) |
| **Con** 13 (+2) | **Int** 13 (+2) | **Cha** 8 (+0) |

| Traitorous Cabal (T) | | Level 1 Minion |
|---|---|---|
| Small natural humanoid army | | 25 XP |

**Initiative** +3      **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision

**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

**AC** 16; **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12

**Speed** 6

⊕ **Knives in the Night** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

   +4 vs. AC (+5 vs. AC in low light); 4 damage.

**Inside Man** (standard; encounter)

   The traitorous cabal attempts to opens a city gate in an adjacent square. Roll Bluff vs. a DC of 18. On a success, the gate is opened. *Fail:* The gate takes 5 damage.

| **Alignment** Evil | **Languages** Abyssal, Common | |
|---|---|---|
| **Skills** Bluff +5, Stealth +5 | | |
| **Str** 12 (+1) | **Dex** 17 (+3) | **Wis** 13 (+1) |
| **Con** 13 (+1) | **Int** 15 (+2) | **Cha** 14 (+2) |

# TACTICS

Overall, fighting inside the city streets will be pretty chaotic and claustrophobic. Military forces prefer to move along the major boulevards to avoid getting bogged down in the district interiors, but there won't always be an option for that.

The guerilla skirmishers stay outside the city, harrying any enemy forces that attempt to maneuver in or around the forests there with hit-and-run strikes. If the enemy doesn't emerge from the city, they concentrate instead on creating a distraction, either by assaulting the southeastern gate or by lobbing abuse over the walls.

Invading infantry and veterans engage in a full-tilt effort to break through the western and/or southern gates, using the cover provided by the rocky hills and small forested area to maneuver into an ideal position before exposing themselves. If necessary, the infantry assaults the walls away from the gates themselves–likely at the southwest corner–dividing watch attention.

The raiding ships stick to the deeper parts of the harbor if they can manage it, taking advantage of their "swim" speed to maintain distance and keep up bombardment of city occupants. They are the least invested in this conflict, and if given a good reason to retreat northward off the map, they might just do so.

The traitorous cabals attempt to move toward the gates and open them as quickly as possible. If their effort fails, they try to bloody the Watch from within the city while the invaders pound on the gates and walls from outside. Once the invaders get inside, if any traitors remain, they maneuver to pin down watch garrisons in a morass of interior streets.
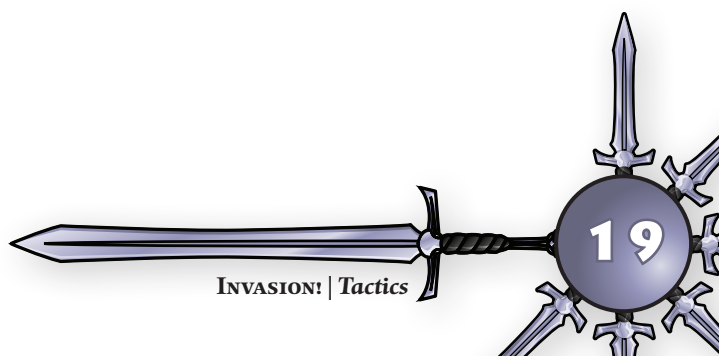
# Features of the Area

No military conflict comes without its complications. These are the features that complicate the scenario.

**Buildings:** City buildings provide cover to military forces that are more than 4 squares apart from one another. Treat this as a characteristic of all squares inside the city walls.

**Cemetery Grounds:** While cosmetic from a system perspective, the northwestern part of the map contains a number of squares of cemetery grounds. Clever players or GMs might be able to make interesting use of this, whether via necromancy or other gambits.

**City Gates:** The city gates can be opened from inside by someone with the right authority. If closed they have to be battered down from outside. Treat each as having 15 HP, and vulnerable 5 to fire. No roll is required to hit. Alternatively, city gates can be treated all-or-nothing, with a break DC of 25—in which case the traitorous cabal's miss effect becomes a reduction of the DC by 5. Once opened, the city can be entered or exited through that gate. Otherwise they're treated as walls.

**City Walls:** City walls provide cover to those inside the city against melee and ranged assault. They provide cover to those *outside* the city against melee assault only. One square of wall has 40 HP and resist 5 to all damage (all-or-nothing alternative: a break DC of 40), if someone is looking to break through the wall. No roll is required to hit. If a force is looking to scale the walls from outside, it takes a full move action to reach the top, and has a Climb DC of 20. A force that climbs over the wall grants combat advantage until the beginning of its next turn. A force that's knocked off of the wall takes 1d10 damage from falling. An interior force can "man the walls" in a given area by moving into an adjacent interior square. Forced movement which would cross the wall stops at the wall or otherwise attempts to flow around it.

**Forests:** Forests are treated as difficult terrain, but also provide concealment to those within.

**Harbor:** The harbor area has a few docks, which while treated as difficult terrain, allow a ground-based force to stand without needing to "swim" (commandeering small boats, actually swimming, or some other means of aquatic travel). Deeper areas of the harbor (squares showing nothing but water) can only be reached by swimming.

**Nightfall:** The assault begins at night under a partial moon. Treat the entire map as an area of low light. If the fight lasts longer than 5 rounds, dawn arrives, changing the area to well-lit.

**Roads:** The major boulevards are treated as clear terrain. Inside each district, however, the roads get much narrower and intricate, and are treated as difficult terrain for military forces.

**Stony Ground:** Areas on the map covered in rocks represent rocky, hilly ground (and in some cases, sea-cliffs) which provides cover and blocks line of sight and effect. This ground can be moved through; if so, it's treated as difficult terrain.
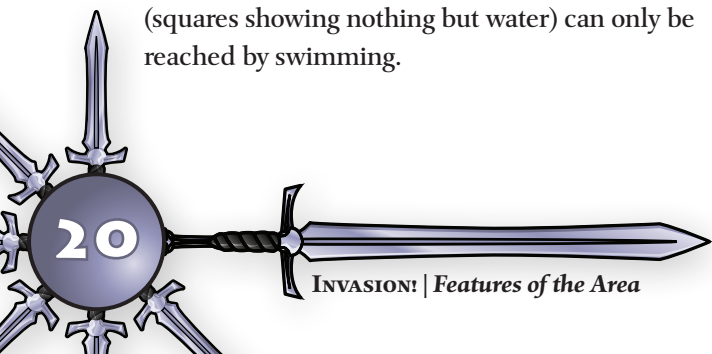
**The Tower:** The tower at the center of the Tower District may only be entered from squares that are adjacent to its entrances. It provides cover against all forces outside, even if they're immediately adjacent to the tower.

# Ending the Encounter

If the watch repels the invaders, they'll have their hands busy. Parts of the city will likely be on fire, walls and gates will need repair, and surviving traitors will need to be rooted out and tried for their crimes.
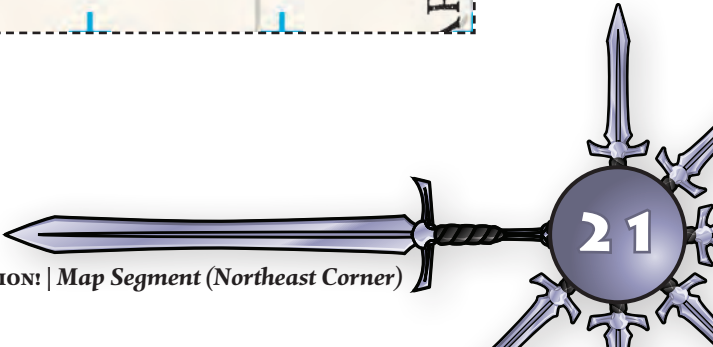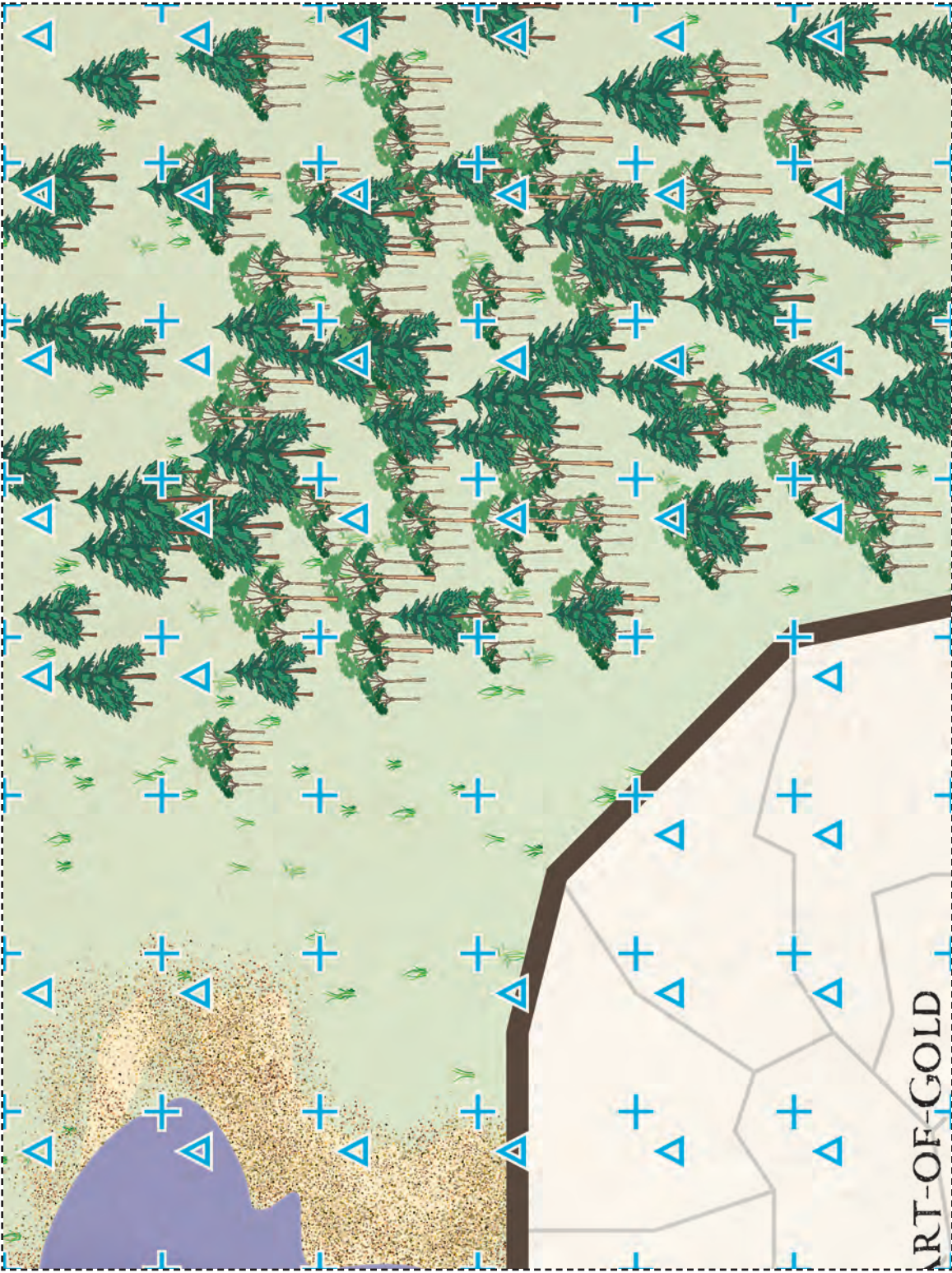
Plus, there's a lingering question: was this only the first, tentative assault by a larger force? And if so, will they be ready for it in time?

Alternatively, if you're so inclined, you can "zoom out" and stage the next encounter on a larger scale map. You've played out the battle that started the war—now play the war, spanning the entire continent and the next several years!
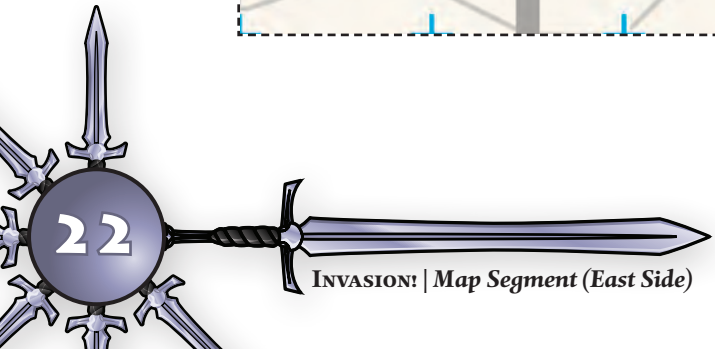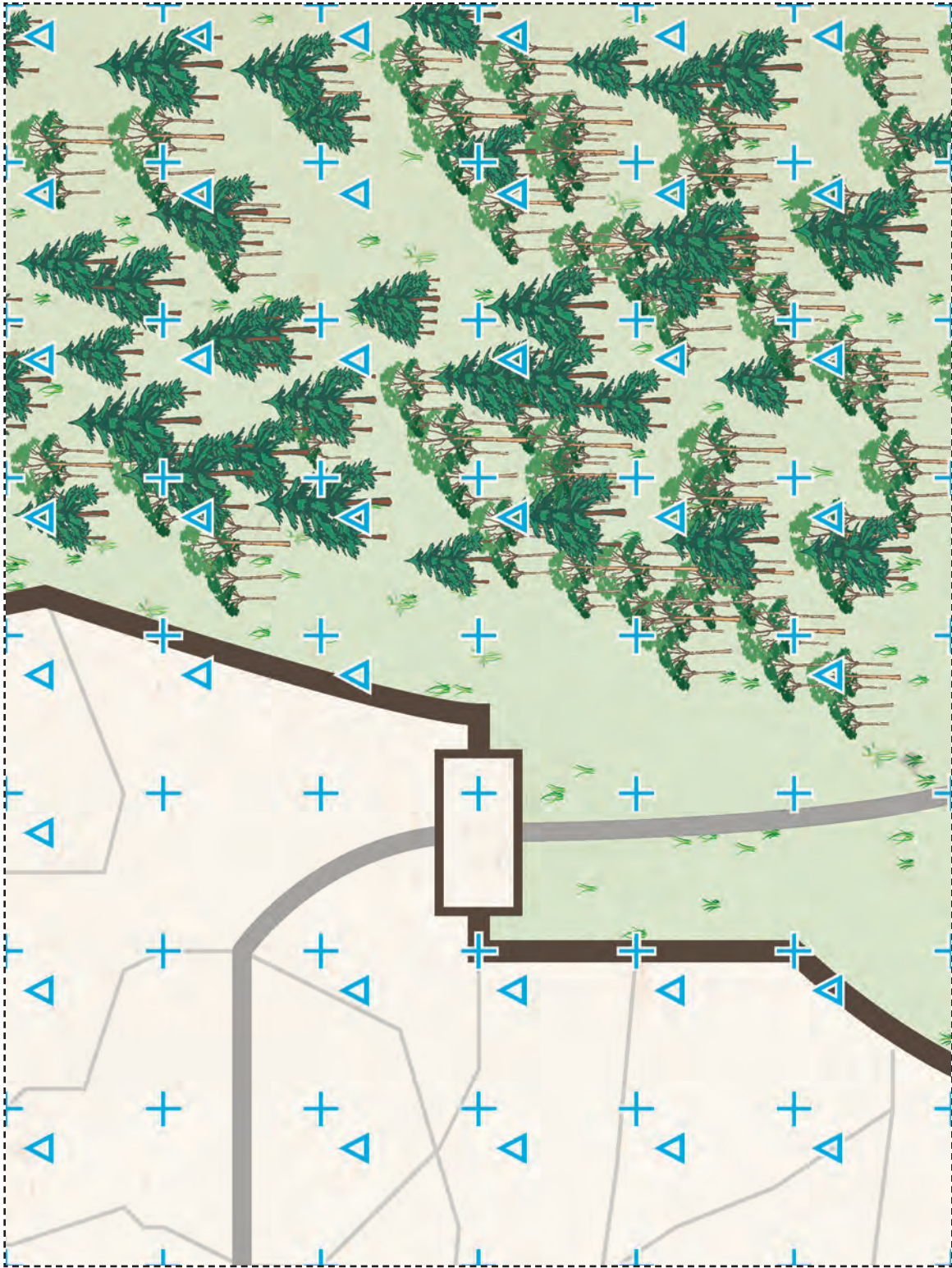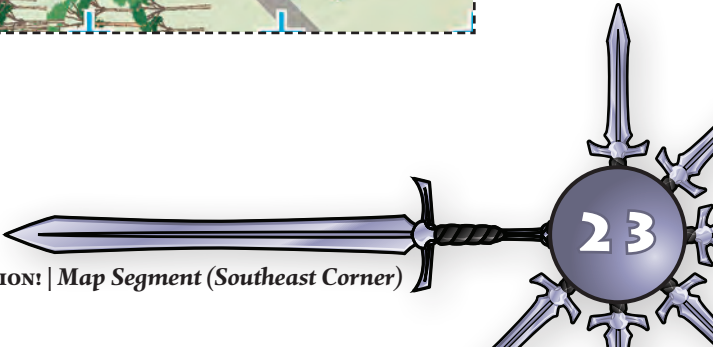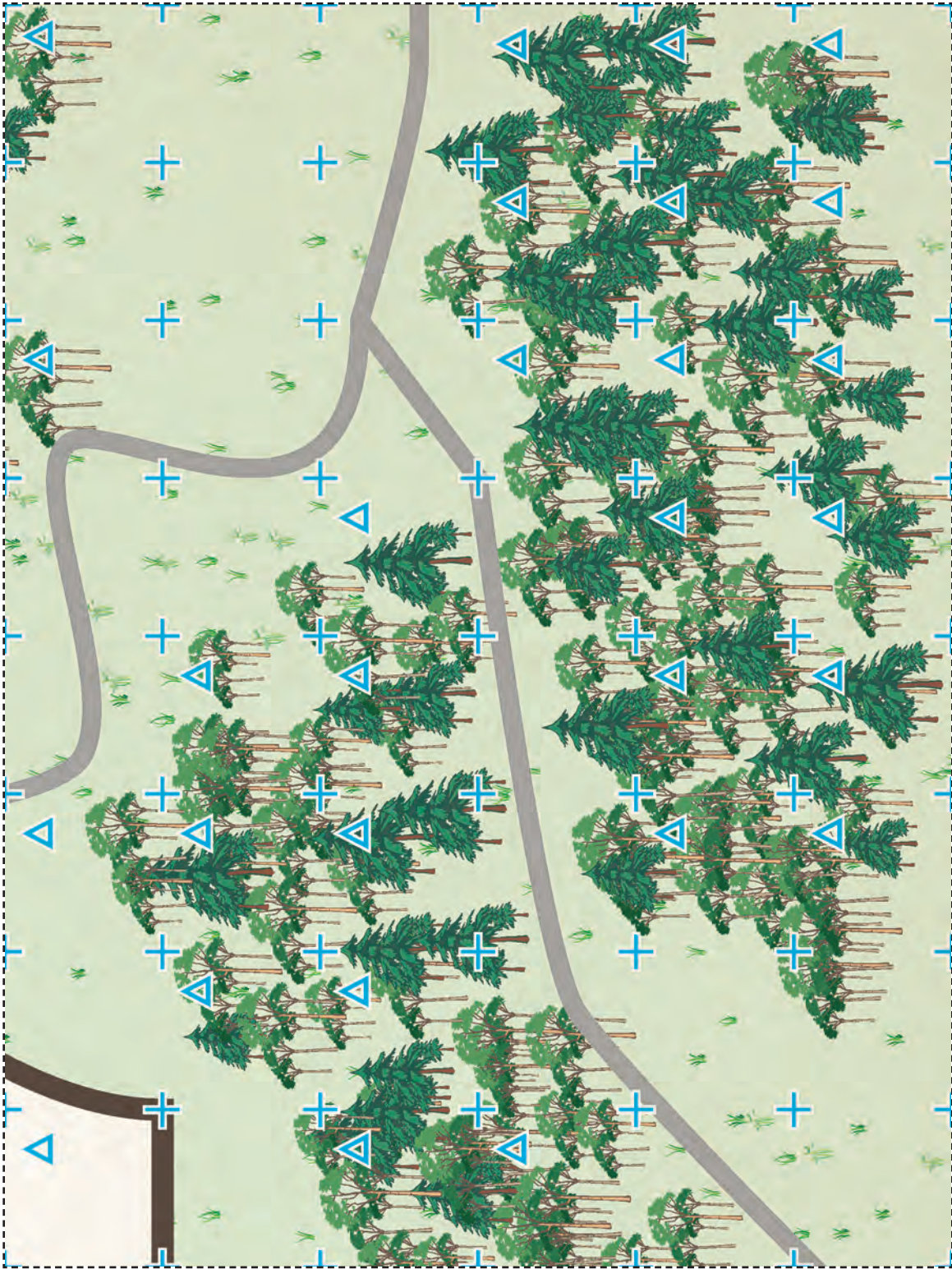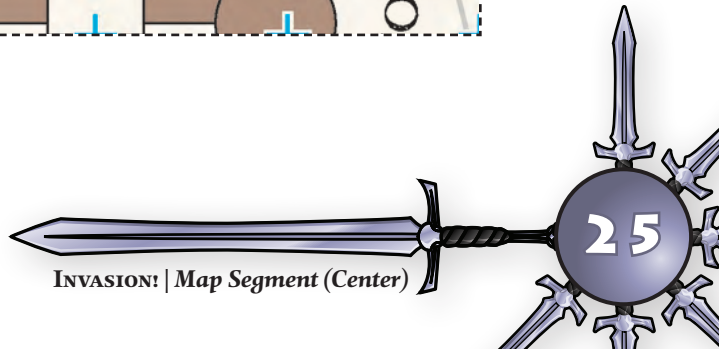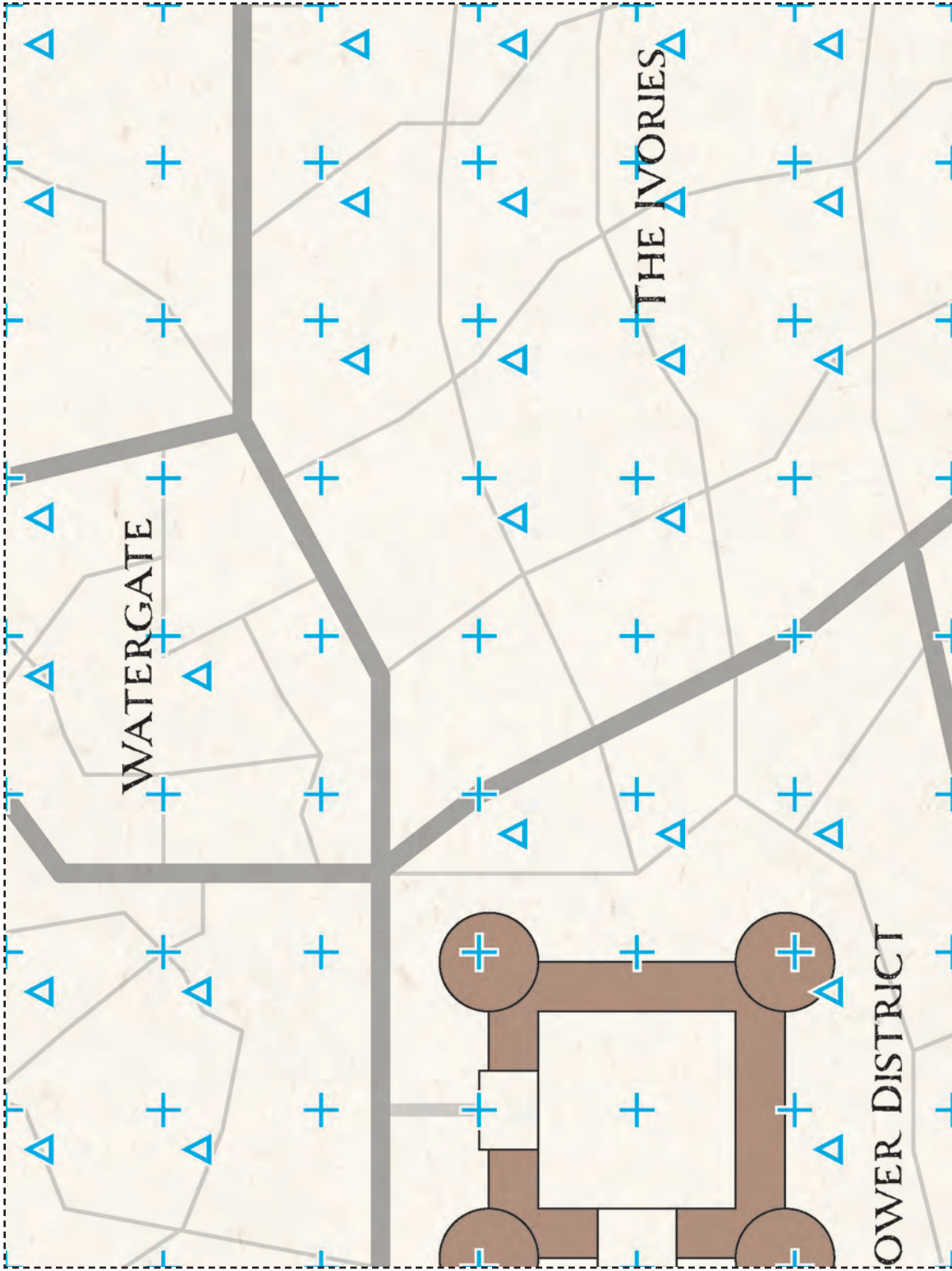
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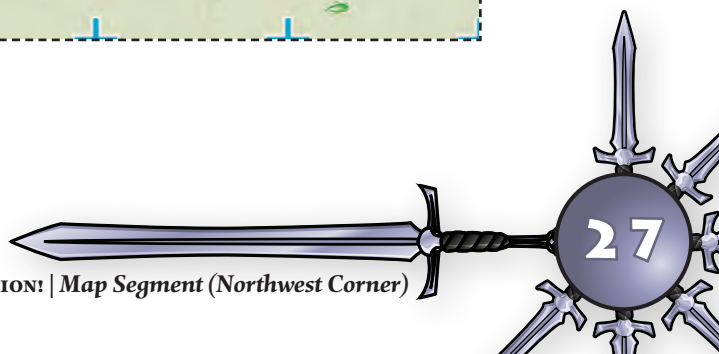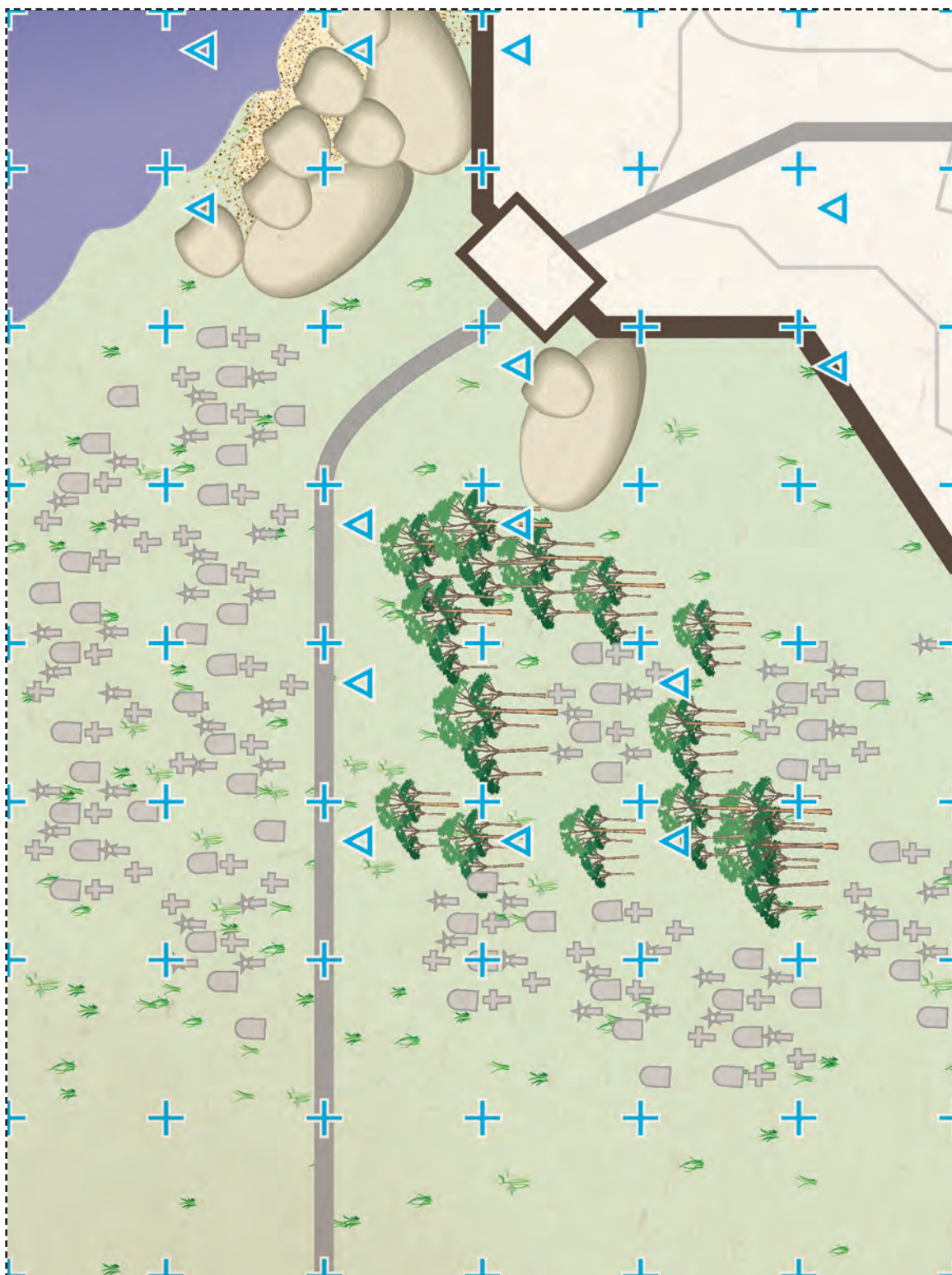


ART-OF-GOLD

# Map Segment (Southeast Corner)
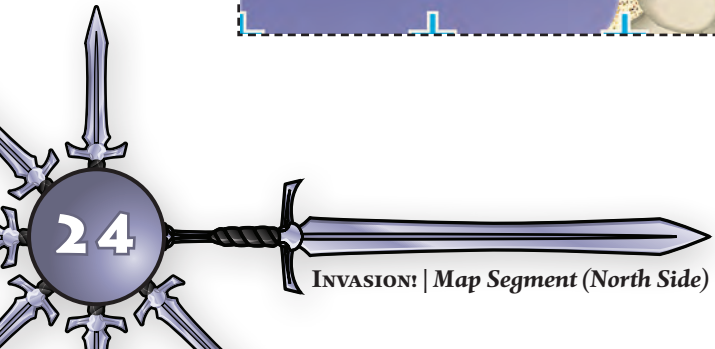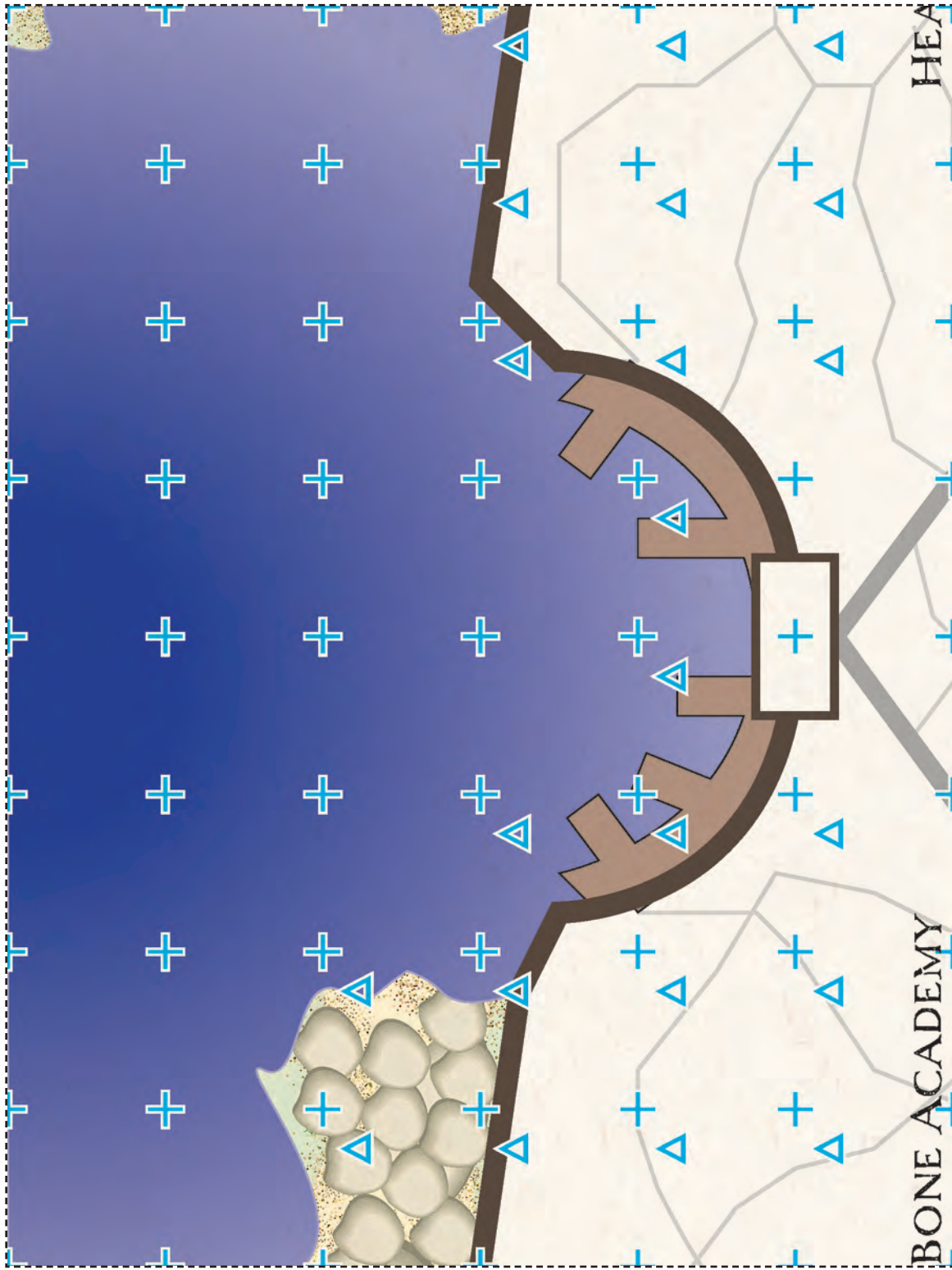
# Map Segment (Center)



THE IVORIES

WATERGATE

OWER DISTRICT

# Map Segment (South Side)



GULLIVER'S ROW
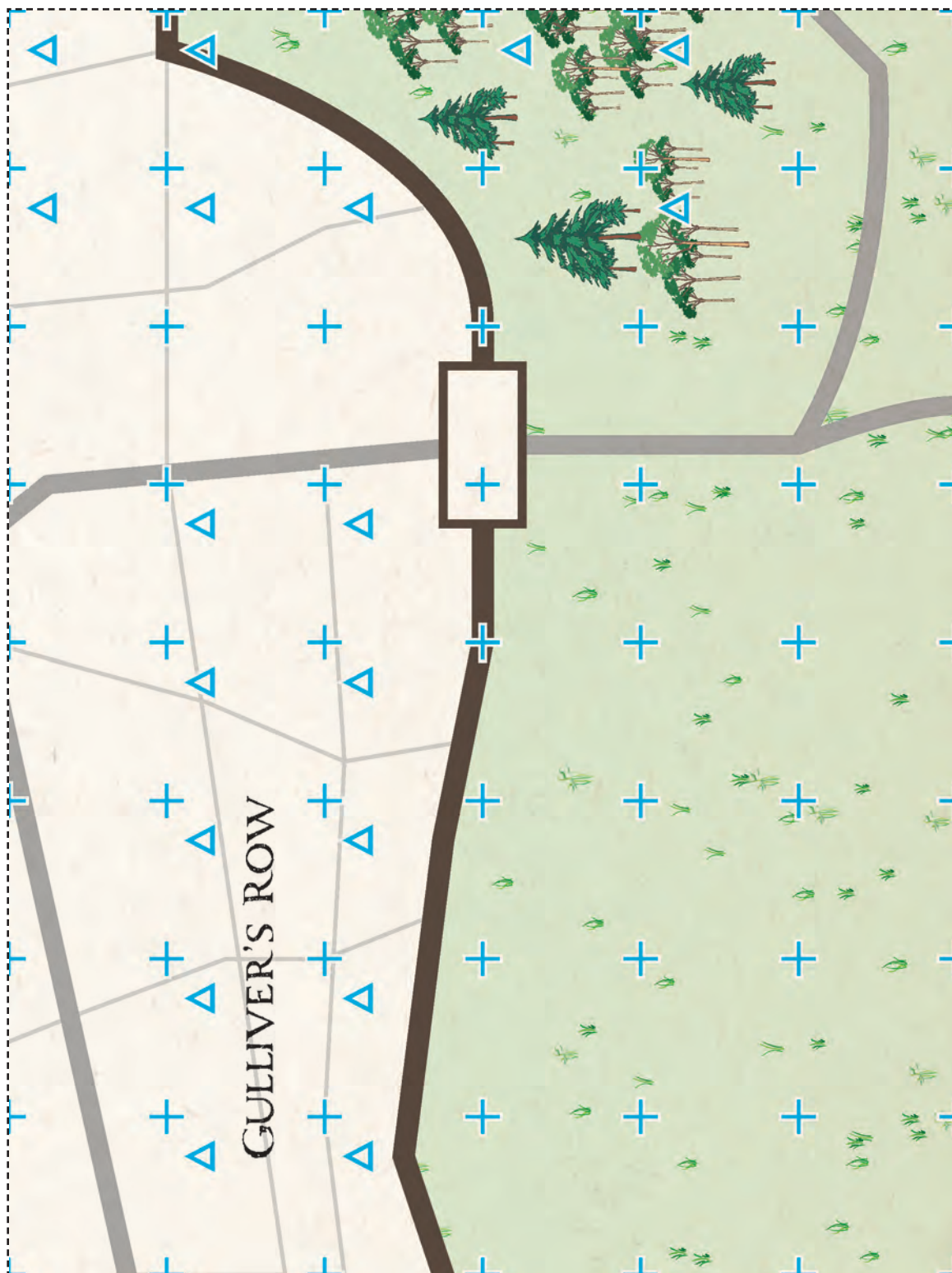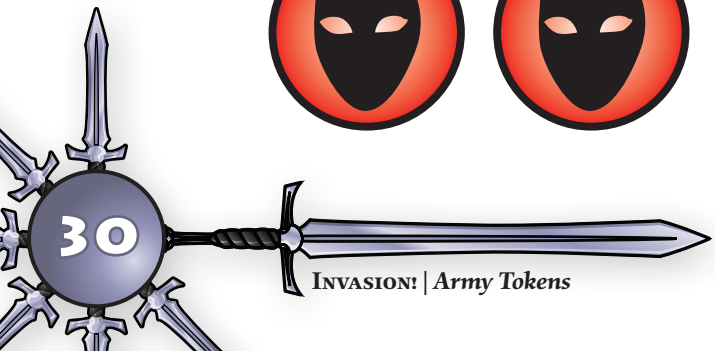
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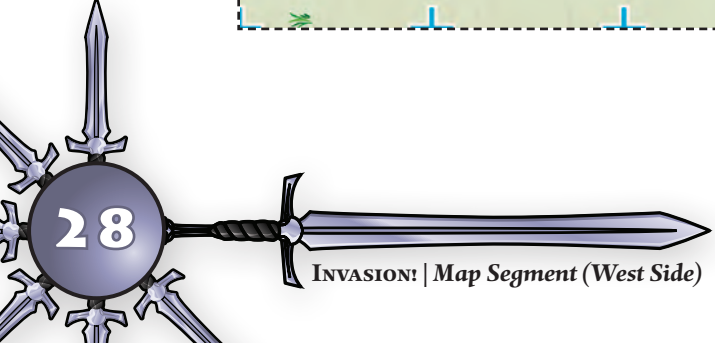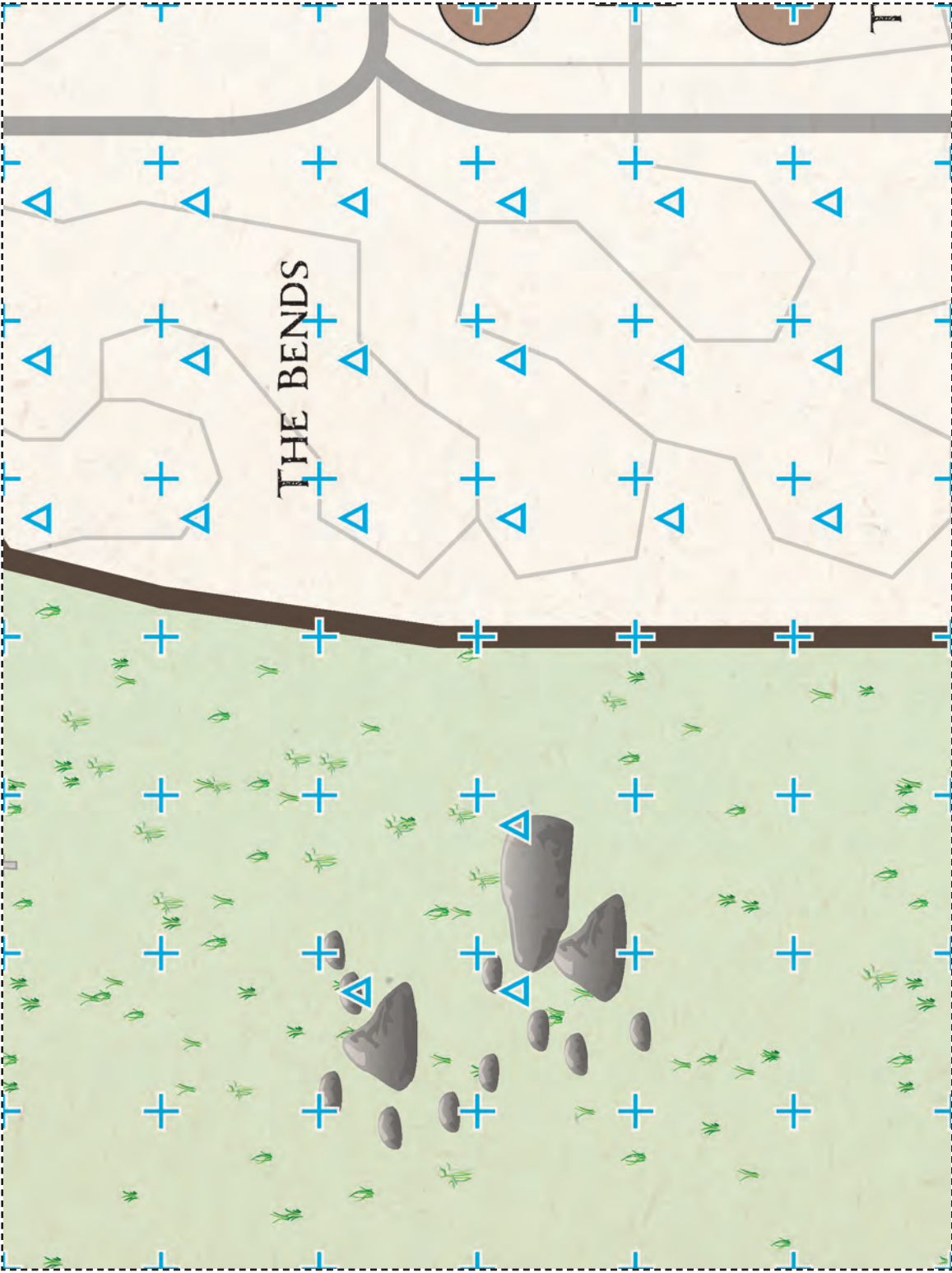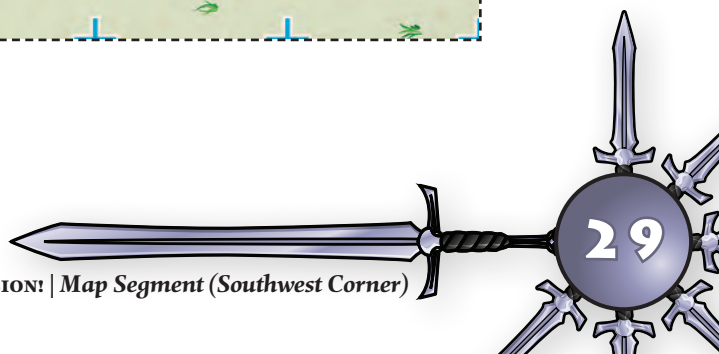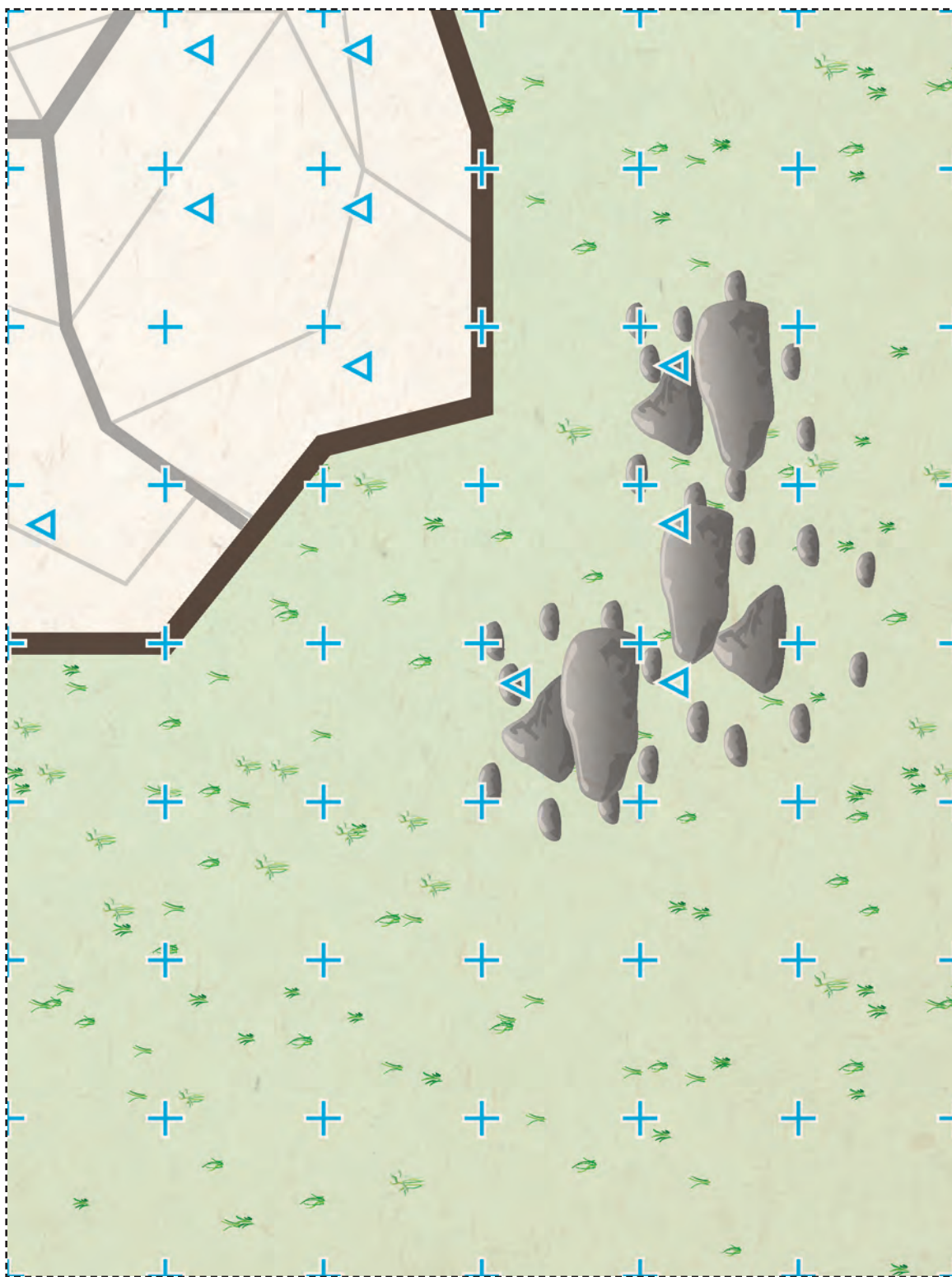
The Bends

## Gut It Out
Encounter • Roughneck Racial Power

**Immediate Interrupt**

Personal ✦ Martial

**Trigger:** You are hit by an attack.

**Effect:** You gain temporary hit points equal to 1d4 + Con mod [      ].

*Facing a withering assault, a roughneck knows it's just a matter of gutting it out.*

---

## Airlift
Encounter • Military Feature

**Minor Action**

Personal ✦ Martial

**Effect:** Your unit gains a fly (clumsy) speed equal to its regular speed until the beginning of its next turn.

*With the use of flying mounts, your troops take to the air to cover ground.*

---

## Camouflage Training
Encounter • Military Feature

**Standard Action**

Personal ✦ Martial, Stance

**Special:** Your unit must be trained in Stealth to use this power.

**Effect:** You gain concealment at the beginning of any turn that follows a full round in which you did not move.

*With a little bit of preparation, your squad blends into the landscape.*

---

## Diversionary Force
Encounter • Military Feature

**Standard Action**

Personal ✦ Martial, Stance

**Effect:** Spend a healing surge (no HP) and take your level [      ] in damage. You cannot heal this damage while the stance persists. Create a second force in an adjacent square with hit points equal to your level [      ], and defenses equal to your own. You may establish line of sight and line of effect only for your at-will powers through this second force.

If you end the stance while the force is in a square adjacent to you, you regain hit points equal to its current hit point total.

As a move action, you may move the force a number of squares equal to your speed [      ].

---

## Forced March
Encounter • Military Feature

**Move Action**

Personal ✦ Martial

**Effect:** Spend a healing surge without gaining hit points. The unit may move twice its speed as a single move action.

*Pushed past the point of exhaustion, your troops make a hard drive to cover ground.*

---

## Mounted Travel
Encounter • Military Feature

**Standard Action**

Personal ✦ Martial

**Effect:** Your speed increases by 2, but your speed drops by 4 if you enter a square that is difficult terrain (speed reduction ends when you exit the difficult terrain).

*Your troops mount up and ride.*

---

## Study the Foe
Encounter • Military Feature

**Immediate Interrupt**

Personal ✦ Martial, Reliable

**Special:** You must be trained in Insight.

**Trigger:** An enemy force you can see moves through a square within 2 squares of your position.

**Effect:** Roll your Insight skill against DC equal to 10 + the enemy's Bluff skill. If successful, you may shift 1 square, ignoring difficult terrain.

*By studying your foe, you anticipate his move.*

---

## Tunnel Brigade
Encounter • Military Feature

**Standard Action**

Personal ✦ Martial

**Special:** Your unit must be trained in Dungeoneering to use this power.

**Effect:** Your unit gains a burrow (tunneling) speed equal to half its regular speed, rounded up.

**Special:** If your unit is dwarven or composed of members from another underground culture, burrow speed is equal to regular speed.

*Armed with spade and pickaxe, your troops dig deep to cover ground unseen.*

---