

Introduction

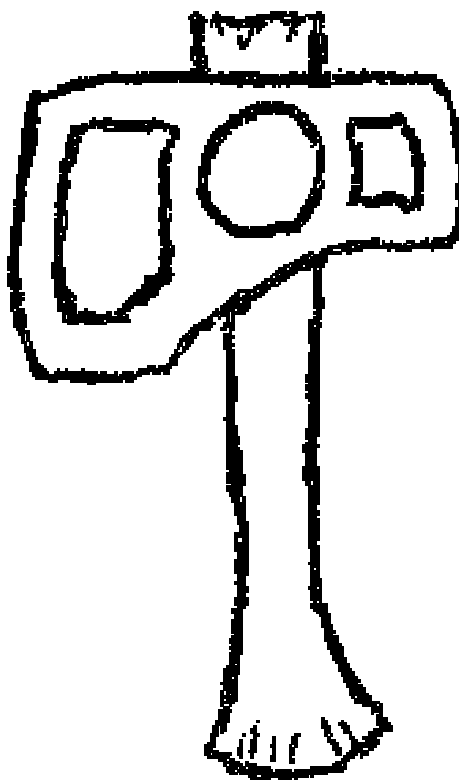
The Beginning of the End

“**The Empire at War**” is designed to replace the old GW publication “The Empire in Flames” as the finale of “The Enemy Within” campaign. Why bother rewriting the finale given that second edition WFRP will be set nearly ten years after most of the events in the original WFRP campaign? The answer is two-fold. First, a significant amount of the Warhammer background has changed since the early 1990s when EiF was released, rendering much of the events in that publication obsolete. Second, there is a need among us old folk to have a more plausible transition from the “old” background to the “new.”

Some may wonder why we didn’t just take the outline of the proposed “Empire in Chaos” manuscript that James Wallis so graciously made available to many rabid fans and use it as a basis for a more finished adventure. Simply put, that outline belongs to Herr Wallis and is not ours to do what we can with it. Moreover, there are certain aspects of the plotline of that draft which we do not believe is consistent with all that has gone before. That said, it is our intent to use some of the subplots he added to “**The Power Behind the Throne**” supplement.

The “**Empire at War**” (“EaW”) adventure assumes that the players have spent most of the year (2513 I.C.) completing the task set before them in “**Something Rotten in Kislev**.” We know there are those who are not particularly keen on that series of scenarios as written (including some of the writers for this project), so it may come as a pleasant surprise that Simon Dennett is working on a piece for Warpstone which will provide some modifications to that supplement. In addition, some might want to modify Tim Eccles’ “**A Pass Too Farside**” to use in place of SRiK. In any event, the PCs need to be removed from the Empire for the year between PbtT and EaW.

Whatever adventure is used, the thing to keep in mind is that it need not be directly related to TEW campaign. There is a view that holds the whole idea behind SRiK was that powers in Middenheim needed a place to send the PCs to be rid of them. The hope was the PCs would be unlikely to survive the rigours of Kislev and, with their deaths, the secrets exposed in the PbtT would be extinguished with the newly inducted Knights Panther (incidentally, each PC should wear a medallion which identifies them as members of the Knights Panther). That the PCs (mostly) survived will impress certain influential and powerful people in Middenheim. Perhaps the PCs could be put to use to further the interests of Middenheim, if not the Empire?



A lone figure sits at a desk in a dark room scribing a message. A door opens and another person enters the room.

"You summoned me, m'lord?"

"Indeed. I have a message for you to deliver to our associate in Altdorf. Wait after you've delivered it for a return response. See to the delivery yourself."

"Yes, m'lord."

"And take an armed guard with you this time. The Altdorf-Middenheim Road is getting increasingly dangerous and I do not want anything to delay you. Take Konrad and Fritz with you."

"Very good, m'lord. On another topic, Natassia Hess has been dispatched to meet with the peasants in Talagraad."

"Excellent."

"If I may speak freely, m'lord, I do not think that these transients should be entrusted to carry out any task that you are planning for them. I believe that their elevation to the Knights Panther by the Graf was a mistake. They have forgotten their place."

"That may well be, my friend, but by all accounting they have proven resourceful. More importantly, they are expendable."

"Yes, m'lord. Can we trust them to carry out the mission successfully?"

"I certainly hope so, for their sake and ours. The information we have obtained on the Purple Hand should prove helpful assuming the individuals in question can successfully complete the first mission we have set for them."

"Can we count on the accuracy of the information?"

"I believe we can. The vermin we captured were rather resistant to talk, but Malfrek has a way of loosening tongues that is second to none. The Master Interrogator knows his craft exceptionally well. Here's the encrypted message for you to deliver. Make haste as our associate needs to be forewarned."

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GM Notes

EaW is conceived as the final part of the TEW campaign and assumes most who will play this scenario have played the earlier volumes in sequential order.

With some minor adjustments, EaW can be used with players who have either begun with PBT or had their characters from earlier editions replaced during their time in Middenheim. In this situation, the GM could assume information about the PCs has reached the Purple Hand in Altdorf from a number of ranking members who were forced to flee Middenheim in the aftermath of the Wasmeier affair.

EaW is designed to cover several different types of situations, ranging from intrigue in an urban environment to tracking down enemies of the Empire in rural situations, and all points in-between. Players will be expected to extend their characters' ability to deal with a wide range of circumstances and events if they are to successfully complete the various missions put before them.

Overview of the Scenario

The finale to TEW is broken down into the following segments:

Return of the Knights Panther

The PCs are summoned home. Various encounters along the route from Kislev to Middenland will give the PCs a taste of the state of the Empire during their yearlong absence. They will also come to realise that fame has not yet been accorded to them. Still, the PCs must be properly prepared for the tasks ahead.

Enter the Wolf's Den

The PCs find their assignment as Knights Panther changed to perform a dangerous task: eliminating the threat posed by the fanatical and deadly Sons of Ulric. The task is also

intended to provide one more test of the PCs' meddle, particularly in as much as they must find a creative way to uncover and disrupt the Sons of Ulric's deadly schemes.

Into the Maelstrom

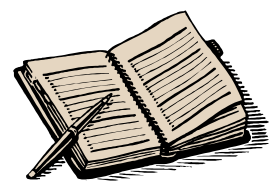
The PCs are (unofficially) brought into Baron Heinrich Todbringer's service before being dispatched to perform the delicate task of uncovering and smashing the Purple Hand's machinations in the heart of the Empire. This mission takes the PCs into Altdorf. There they must navigate a complex situation in the Imperial capital to destroy the machinations of the Purple Hand. Missteps here could compromise their patrons and result in the PCs' arrest and execution.

War!

Wrapping up loose ends in Altdorf, the PCs are pressed into service to bring the opposing sides together before the Empire is fractured beyond repair. Opposing the PCs are the remnants of Purple Hand as well as extreme faction of the cult of Ulric. Moreover, the PCs' have their own enemy with whom they must contend. Finally, there is one last, unexpected foe that must be defeated before peace can come to the Empire.

TEW Time Line

The following timeline provides background information critical to understanding events that have occurred in the Empire before the PCs' return from Kislev. Some of these may have come to the PCs' attention in the earlier instalments of the Enemy Within campaign. Other events may reach the PCs by way of rumour. If used as a rumour, GMs should feel free to exaggerate or omit bits of information as they see fit.



TEW TIMELINE

Year	Season	Events
2512	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown Prince Hergard von Tasseninck of Ostland leaves for Altdorf. • Crown Prince Hergard von Tasseninck journeys into the Grey Mountains. • Emperor Karl-Franz issues the 'mutant edict'. • Crown Prince Hergard von Tasseninck is reported killed in the Grey Mountains. • Grand Prince Hals von Tasseninck blames the Talabecland Grand Duke for his son's death. • A Talabecland cavalry troop is ambushed on the Ostland border • Azhag leads a big horde of orcs and goblins from the mountains into Ostermark, razing the town of Kohlizt. • Middenland towns suffer from riots as Sigmarites rebel against persecutions from Ulrican templars • Crown Prince Wolfgang Holswig-Abenauer - likely heir to the Imperial throne - now lives in virtual isolation at Castle Reiksguard; whether the isolation is voluntary remains unknown and much debated.
	Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bands of greenskins still pillage east of Bechafen. • Mysterious collapse of Castle Wittgenstein
	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Theogonist Yorri XV goes to Middenheim and is attacked by Sons of Ulric on the way home. • The Sigmarite cult has a high level conference in Altdorf to address the growing discord with Ulricans. The conference agrees on the Eimar Concord Draft, which is to be sent to Ar-Ulric in Middenheim. • Meanwhile, the carnival in Middenheim is marred by conflict and rumours of devious schemes at the court. In the following weeks, however, Graf Boris seems to tighten his grip on the city-state. • Ulrican leaders and scholars gather at the temple in Middenheim to debate the Eimar Concord Draft. The conference drags on, as the delegates fail to agree on the theological minutiae. • Southern Middenland plagued by bands of mutant raiders flying banners with a red crown.
2513	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Middenland village of Bösel, mutants, villagers, and Imperial soldiers kill each other in turn. Stories of the Bösel massacre spread across the Empire • The Ulrican conference fails to reconvene as delegates refuse to come because of the 'Sigmarite massacre of the Ulricans of Bösel. • Bands of greenskins move from Ostermark into the east of Ostland, looting the countryside.

TEW TIMELINE

Year	Season	Events
2513	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Ostland detachment is ambushed and severely decimated near the Talabecland border. The Ostland Grand Prince blames Talabecland for the aggression and mobilizes three companies along the border. The Ostland Grand Prince sends envoys to Altdorf, Nuln and Stirland asking for support against the Talabecland aggression. Baron Stefan Todbringer, heir to Middenheim, dies in his sleep after a long illness.
	Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graf Boris refuse to reissue the Edict of Succession, thus leaving it unclear as to whom he plans to eventually name as heir. The greenskin bands gather in eastern Ostland under Azhag's leadership and are routed by two Ostland companies under Count von Raukov's command. Graf Haupt-Anderssen of Stirland accepts an alliance with Ostland in case of a Talabecland invasion. Altdorf and Nuln both ignore the Ostland request for assistance. Following dissent in the Sigmarite hierarchy after the Bösel Massacre, Grand Theogonist Yorri XV calls for a new Sigmarite clergy meeting in Altdorf in order to bring the Eimar Concord back on track. After a series of mysterious misunderstandings, the meeting is postponed for the spring. The Talabecland village Rönndorf is pillaged by Ostlanders. Grand Duke Gustav blames the Ostland Grand Prince who in turn claims it is the work of Ulrican bandits. The Talabecland Grand Duke is mobilizing additional troops along the border and sends messengers to Talabheim, Hochland, and Ostermark asking for support. The Hochland Baroness Tussen-Hochen makes an attempt to mediate in the provincial conflict, but is undermined by her own vassal Count Ludenhof who is responding to a “request” by Grand Duke von Kreiglitz to pledge support to Talabecland and mobilizes his army near Hergig.
	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Middenheim, Graf Boris tells the Ostland and Talabecland diplomats at his court that the time is not for internal bickering when a greater enemy is on the rise. His young relative, Helmut Todbringer, who claims to be the rightful heir to Boris' throne, speaks publicly in favour of supporting the Ulrican brothers of Talabecland. After a handful of minor incidents along the border, the Ostland and Talabecland companies are disbanded for the winter. The Nordland Baron Nikse publicly announces an alliance with Talabecland, pledging support in case of Ostland aggressions. His liege-lord Graf Boris is furious and demands the Baron's presence in Middenheim. Baron Nikse remains in the Nordland capital, claiming that travel is unsafe before spring. The Wissenland Count Pfreifraucher pledges support to Ostland in spite of his liege-lady the Countess of Nuln's neutrality.

The Machinations of the Purple Hand

The Cult of the Purple Hand's malignant plot, called **Operation Zeal**, is coming to its conclusion. As we first learned in the **Mistaken Identity** (contained in the Hogshhead version of **Shadows over Bögenhafen**) and **Death on the Reik** adventures, the cult has spent years infiltrating upper echelons in the Cults of Sigmar and Ulric as well as other circles of power. The Purple Hand has used these positions to rekindle the ancient rivalry between the two cults by calling attention to the Sigmarian Heresy (**Shadows over Bögenhafen**, page 40), hoping for a brutal civil war that would bring the ancient empire of Sigmar to its knees. Such strife and mayhem is the ultimate goal of the cultists' master Tzeentch, Lord of Chaos and Changer of the Ways. The Purple Hand cultists are confident they shall be his chosen leaders once this new order of change and chaos has come about. And, as shall soon be revealed, a civil war is indeed now a clear and present danger to The Empire.

Getting so close to this ultimate goal, however, has been extremely difficult for the Purple Hand, since it has faced not only spies and agents of the ruling classes, but also some serious challenges of its own making. For one, the obsession with secrecy and anonymity implies that communication between the cells scattered all over The Empire and beyond is scarce and sometimes severely lacking. Furthermore, many local leaders are driven by personal agendas and ambitions as much as by the goals laid out by the leaders in Nuln. As a result, the different cells operate rather independently of one another, and have - on several occasions - ended up obstructing each other's plans.

Thus, Operation Zeal was seriously threatened two years ago when the Cult's leader in Middenheim, Law Lord Karl-Heinz Wasmeier, pursued a nefarious scheme of his own; an attempt to replace the Graf of Middenheim with a Doppelgänger under Wasmeier's control (as described in **Power Behind the Throne**). Due to intervention by our resourceful PCs Wasmeier's plot failed. Many Purple Hand cultists were uncovered as Schwarzmantel agents combed

through the wreckage left behind by the battle between the PCs and Wasmeier. These subversives were taken deep into the fastness of the Fauschlag for interrogation; many were never heard from again.

In spite of setbacks such as this, a handful of key cells have successfully worked on Operation Zeal. Purple Hand members have infiltrated the Ulrican clergies of Carroburg and Talabheim as well as the Talabec court. They have used every opportunity to spread the idea of Sigmarian Heresy and any other thing that would fuel the fire of Ulrican hatred for Sigmardites. One ranking cult member, **Baron von Kutenholz**, has infiltrated the Sons of Ulric - a secret brotherhood of Ulrican radicals whose hatred of Sigmardites is matched only by their unscrupulous lust for power. As the PCs will soon learn, the effects are now clear - Western Middenland has suffered numerous violent incidents with religious overtones, while the religious turmoil has turned the old border dispute between Ostland and Talabecland from bad to worse.

Most critically, however, the cell in Altdorf has also been very active over the last couple years. Blessed with the good will of Tzeentch, the cult thrived as some of the Emperor's very closest advisers and confidants were removed in a series of scandals, leaving the Imperial court and ministries wide open for infiltration at the highest level. Thus, the Cult of Sigmar's very influential Court Lector and Imperial Confessor Hasselstein retired following some undisclosed scandal at court during the Great Fog Riots of 2510. Eager to restabilise the situation, Grand Theogonist Yorri XV promoted the elderly and reliable priest Lothar von Metternich as replacement for Hasselstein. Yet, because of Lothar's high age, the young and very promising priest **Dieter Kucinich** was appointed as his principal aide. Kucinich was not only a theological and political talent; he was also a Purple Hand cultist. With his appointment the Purple Hand cultists had come as close to the Emperor as they had ever been.

But this was not the end of the fortunes Tzeentch bestowed upon the Purple Hand. Last year, the

Imperial Chancellor Mornan Tybalt fell out of favour at the Imperial court and was replaced with his First Secretary **Johann Heinz Lieberung**. Johann is the estranged cousin of the late Kastor Lieberung and bears a strong resemblance to the former Magister Impedimentae of the Purple Hand cell in Nuln – as well as a certain Player Character (whether that character is still alive or not). Already a member of the Purple Hand, Johann Heinz dropped his last name when he entered the University of Altdorf in 2510 where he studied law. Heinz' quick mind and calm demeanour soon landed him a position in the Imperial Chancellery. As chance would have it, two of Heinz' superiors died from some mystery ailment – with differing symptoms in each case – in succession, thus elevating the young lawyer to the position of First Secretary to the Chancellor by the time the former Chancellor himself was ousted. The Time of Changes would soon be upon them all.

Unbeknownst to other Purple Hand cells of Reikland, a second, smaller cell is active in the Altdorf area. **Erwin von Mühlerberg** joined the Purple Hand after rioting prompted by the opposition to the Window Tax was violently suppressed. He was ordered to set up his own cell that should attempt to neutralise the Crown Prince Wolfgang Holswig-Abenauer. A few years later, von Mühlerberg was accepted into the unit assigned to guard the Crown Prince at Castle Reiksgard. As the years passed, von Mühlerberg was promoted several times until he became Captain of Castle Reiksgard, just one step below the Commander.

As fate would have it, von Mühlerberg gained some access to the Crown Prince himself. He took the opportunity to befriend the heir of Karl-Franz, whom von Mühlerberg found increasingly frustrated with his lot in life. Crown Prince Holswig-Abenauer was as impatient as he was arrogant and insufferable. He could not wait for his opportunity to rule over those who treated his spineless uncle as if the Emperor was less a noble than the provincial Electors. Von Mühlerberg knew he had a potential recruit on his hands; it would just take

some time and care to convert the Crown Prince to the Cause.

All three agents will have their role to play as the final phase of Operation Zeal is executed. Unless the PCs manage to thwart their plans, The Empire will be entering a world of chaos.

On the Road to War

In the year that the PCs have been in Kislev proving their worth, the situation in the Empire has gone from bad to worse. Raids across the Ostland-Talabecland border have grown into skirmishes and the occasional set battle with troops employed by the local barons. A number of individuals have come to realise that this proxy war between the two provinces could quickly deteriorate and destabilise the entire region.

The province of Hochland increased the patrols along their eastern borders in an attempt to keep the Ostland-Talabecland strife from spilling over. During the summer of 2513, Count Ludenhof pledged support for the Talabeclander cause. In addition, Ludenhof is placing increasing pressure on Baroness Tussen-Hochen to abdicate her position as the liege of Hochland, as well as give her daughter's hand in marriage to the ambitious Count. Rumours abound that Grand Duke von Krieglitz is more than ready to recognise the change in Hochland's power structure.

Nordland had also gearing up its patrols, though its border with Ostland is largely uninhabited forest. Some claim Baron Nikse is preparing to grab land that, he claims, was historically Nordlander before Ostland overran during the latter stages of the Dark Ages.

While working towards averting war, the other provinces are laying plans for mobilisation, including far-off Wissenland. Mercenaries, particularly those from foreign lands, are finding ready employment in the northern Empire. Settlements along the routes to the northern provinces suffer the depravity and violence for which mercenaries are known.

Strife between the cults of Sigmar and Ulric has poisoned relations between provinces as their confrontation has even spread into parts of the southern Empire. If forced to choose sides, followers of Taal, Rhya, and Manann lean towards those who follow Ulric whilst cults of Mórr, Verena and Shallya maintain neutrality. In contrast, the cult of Myrmidia are rumoured to be negotiating an agreement with the Sigmarites.

Tension and fear are very palatable in the Imperial capital. Many representatives from the provinces are packing their bags for flight to their homes whilst spies and gossipmongers abound. Wild rumours and conspiracy theories are en vogue during this time and the economy is becoming depressed as many families are beginning to hoard provisions against the coming hardships. Moreover, supplies of foodstuffs and other goods are becoming more scarce and expensive (GMs should double prices and lower availability for all merchandise and provisions on

the tables on pages 293-297 in the WFRP rulebook to reflect the economic conditions). Even the popular Greubentreich pale cheese is getting harder to find in Altdorf.

If something doesn't break soon, the threat of famine may become reality in the Empire.

In the midst of growing uncertainty, the Emperor's health continues to decline. A growing number of nobles believe it may be time to declare Karl-Franz invalid and elect a new Emperor before the dire situation becomes desperate. Others, like the Grand Theogonist, believe appointing a regent might be the best solution until which time a more thorough examination of the Emperor can be completed.

Amid all this confusion and foreboding, there are rumours of bold attacks by mutants and other foul beasts from the forests.

Sidebar: The Schwarzmäntel

Emperor Magnus the Pious' brother, Grand Duke Gunthar von Bildhofen of Middenland, originally founded the Middenheim-based Schwarzmäntel in 2350 I.C. Its original purpose was to ferret out and discretely dispose of hidden cultists and other enemies of the Empire. The years later, it became apparent that Gunthar von Bildhofen was positioning himself to succeed Magnus as Emperor. The Electors feared that the Schwarzmäntel would give von Bildhofen an instrument to remove them should they oppose him in any way. So, they convened a meeting where they requested Emperor Magnus' involvement to remedy this potentially explosive issue. Negotiations dragged out for months and occasionally became heated. The Imperial Edict of Sigmarzeit 2362 I.C. disbanded the Schwarzmäntel.

In 2410 I.C., Gravin Solveig Todbringer of Middenheim grew increasingly concerned that Emperor Dieter IV did not appreciate the importance Middenheim played in the security of the northern Empire. The surrounding forests providing hiding places for the fell creatures that escaped destruction a century before. There were also signs that cult activity continued beyond the reach of the City Watch. With the Emperor's attention divided between his poorly planned campaign in the Border Princes and the growing difficulties with Marienburg, Gravin Solveig created the position of Privy Councillor and secretly resurrected the Schwarzmäntel organization under that post.

The current Privy Councillor is Baron Heinrich Todbringer, illegitimate son of Graf Boris Todbringer of Middenheim. Foremost among those reporting to the Baron is the Master Interrogator, who is an expert at eliciting information from the "guests" to his workshop deep in the Fauschlag. The workshop contains every conceivable device of interrogation. "Guests" are kept in any of the thirty cells located nearby for the duration of their "visit."

Like any other covert organization, anyone employed in the Schwarzmäntel is required to maintain a code of silence on any operation and their role within the organization. Failure to observe this silence is considered a treasonable offence with death as the only acceptable punishment. Schwarzmäntel agents who go "rogue" can count on their former compatriots hunting them down like the treacherous dogs they've become.

Important Events

Though not directly involved with the actions of the PCs at the start of the scenario, the following has influenced the increasingly dangerous situation in the Empire.

The Eimar Concord

After the GT returned from his meeting with Ar-Ulric [mentioned in (Hogshead's version of **Power Behind the Throne, Carrion up the Reik** section, page X)] he presided over the Sigmarite conference in Altdorf, which resulted in the so-called Eimar Concord Draft. This is a proposal for joint Ulrican-Sigmarite statement that specifies their mutual recognition and divine status. It was subsequently sent to Ar-Ulric for revision, and the plan was that both parties were to meet in late Pflugzeit 2513 in the Verenan Eimar monastery near Kutenholz in order to sign a final version of the Concord.

Two months later Ulrican leaders and scholars gathered at the temple in Middenheim to debate the Eimar Concord Draft. As winter approached, the conference dragged on and the delegates failed to agree on theological minutiae. Furthermore, misinformation and a constant leak of confidential details poisoned the atmosphere. After two weeks, delegates in favour of the concord accused others of deliberately

obstructing an agreement, only to be accused themselves of succumbing to hegemonic Sigmarite doctrine. In the end, the conference ended without a consensus of opinion, and delegates made their way home before the winter set in. It was agreed to reconvene on the first day of Jahrdrung.

However, following the Bösel Massacre, the Ulrican leader in Talabheim Fräi-Ulric refused to send delegates, and the conference was cancelled. Anti-Sigmarite sentiments spread like a fire through Ulrican areas.

The Bösel Massacre

During 2512, raids from mutant bands flying banners with a red crown plagued the southern Middenland village of Bösel. In early 2513, under the leadership of a self-appointed Ulrican witch hunter, Karl Kuten, the villagers captured a band of mutants with the same symbols. At the ensuing trial, the Imperial Coroner refused to hear evidence against the mutants. Instead he charged Kuten with illegal use of arms and violation of an Imperial edict protecting the physically deformed. Immediately, the villagers rioted. They killed the coroner and five Imperial soldiers, then burned all the mutants, while three soldiers managed to flee. Within a week, Bösel was burned to the ground by a band of yet unidentified Sigmarite templars

Adventure

Starting the Adventure

The Starting Point

The PCs start this scenario waiting for word that will call them home. No matter the degree of success (or failure) the PCs have experienced in Kislev, they should be very eager to quit this land. The graciousness of Tsar Raddi Bokha in ordering that winter quarters be prepared for the loaned Knights Panther is countered by the squalid conditions of the accommodations. Fuel for heating was in short supply most of the winter and only now should the PCs be recovering from a myriad of illnesses that have plagued them throughout the cold months.

On a day when the sun rose and broke through persistent cloud cover for the first time in months (24 Jahrdrung 2514), the PCs are roused by a loud knock at their door. A large and stoic Kislevite Knight of the White Wolf, Alexei Starenko, stands before the PCs and notifies them "your presence is requested at the Barracks of the Order of the White Wolf. You are to come at once with all your possessions." The tone of the knight's voice should make it clear that the request is a mere formality. Alexei will wait for the PCs to gather their stuff, though he will make his displeasure known if they look like they're not hurrying.

Once the PCs are ready, Alexei leads them to the barracks of the White Wolf near the Temple of Ulric. The Kislevite salutes a guard and tells him, "The Imperials are here as required. Open the door so they can enter." Stifling a yawn, the guard does as he is told and motions the PCs to enter. Once they have done so, the guard closes the door behind them.

Typical of most Kislevite buildings, the interior of the Barracks are poorly lit and its air thick with smoke. It takes a moment for the PCs' eyes to adjust to the sudden gloom.

"I hear that your exploits this past year have brought you some measure of renown in this region," states a man with a Talabeclander accent. As the PCs take notice of the stoutly built man in the far corner, he continues, "I have been charged with the task of taking you by boat to Talagraad. The trip should take about 20 days with the spring thaw, Taal willing, and I hope you will tell me of your exploits. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ulf Weisschlag and I have this summons for you." Ulf then hands one of the PCs (preferably a female, if one is present. Otherwise Ulf hands it to the one who looks like the most capable warrior) a sealed letter. PCs who look for such things will notice that there is no impression of a signet ring on the wax.

Suspicious PCs may quiz Ulf to ensure that he is not leading them to a trap. Expecting such a reaction, Ulf provides few answers as he is under obligation to be discreet. The Talabeclander will not be insulted if the PCs are slow to trust him. In fact, Ulf will chide them if they do not try to learn where his loyalties lie before extending their trust.

What Ulf can provide is that he has been in the service of Middenheim for the past decade, performing simple tasks which involve low risks. An example he will provide is this job bringing the PCs to Talagraad. Ulf has to have some assurances that the PCs are not the paranoid sort, given to killing anyone for looking at them cross-eyed, if he is to fulfill his assignment. Ulf will then point out that he and his sons (both of whom also work on the boat) are outnumbered by the PCs so their risk in accompanying him on his boat is nearly non-existent.

In closing, Ulf points out the PCs trust in him is really not a factor. They are instructed to accompany him as time is wasting away while they dither over something so inconsequential. If the PCs still need time, Ulf will inform them they have only an hour before he sails down the Urskoy to the Talabec and home. He tells them his ship goes by the name of "Winter's Chill" and is moored at the eastern end of the docks.

*****Handout #1*****

Knights Panther,

Reports of your exploits in Kislev have reached our ears and we are most interested in hearing your side of the tales.

We have sent one of our most trusted servants, Ulf Weisschlag, to bring you safely to Talagraad by river. The roads have become more dangerous in your absence and we wish your journey to Middenheim to be as safe as possible.

When you arrive at Talagraad, you are to go to the Hangman's Inn to the south side of town. We have arranged for your accommodations there. In addition, another one of our servants will meet you there to inform you of recent developments. Due to the delicate nature of the information, our servant will contact you in a manner that is deemed to be appropriate.

May Ulric and Taal protect you on your journey.

His Grace the Graf and Elector of Middenheim,

Boris Todbringer

If the PCs accompany Ulf, then they will depart from Kislev immediately. Ulf's twin sons, Oskar and Olaf, are 17 years old and quite able to help his father with his boat. Winter's Chill is a medium size river barge and the hold is full of barrels of vodka and bundles of fur destined for trade in Talagraad and Talabheim. Ulf makes his living moving goods along the Rivers Talabec and Urskoy.

There is room in the hold for the PCs to bunk and store their gear. Ulf does not expect the PCs to help taking the boat downriver, but will accept any help freely given. The boatman certainly expects the PCs help to defend the boat from river pirates, bandits, or any other threats. If need be, Ulf will lay out these details for the PCs.

Should the PCs take too long to accept Ulf's offer or decide to go on their own, Ulf leaves after the hour expires. The PCs are now stuck travelling by road, which will be longer, slower, and much more dangerous.

The PCs may believe they could make better time on their horses. The problem here is the PCs no longer have them. While they were wintering in Kislev, the Tsar's advisors decided it would be proper for the state to take possession of the horses so as to somewhat offset the expense of housing the PCs. Of course, there was no reason to concern the PCs with this little detail at the time.

The road west from Kislev starts out on the north bank of the River Urskoy, but crosses to the southern bank at Opolensk where it remains until it returns to the north bank at Zwolen. From there, the road follows the north bank of the River Talabec through the southern reaches of Ostland to Wurzen. From this point westward, there are no formal roads, just trails on either side of the river that are used by locals and bandits to get from one place to another. From Küsel the Talabec Road runs between the north rim of the Eye of the Forest and the river until it ends at Talagraad. GMs will have to modify the following section as it assumes that the PCs are smart enough to take up Ulf's offer.

PCs travelling with Ulf are likely to ask him about the state of affairs in the Empire. The first time such a question is asked, a sad expression momentarily crosses the Talabeclander's face. As he plies his trade from Kislev to Vorgen, Ulf knows the following:

- *Tensions have increased along the Talabecland/Ostland border regions. What were once raids by bandits across the borders have now grown to include men-at-arms and the militia of the local barons.*
- *Heated words and accusations have been exchanged between the Grand Prince of Ostland and the Grand Duke of Talabecland.*
- *Raids across the Stirland/Talabecland borders have been said to be on the increase.*
- *Some of the raids are apparently fuelled by a poor calving season and low yield of winter crops.*
- *Last fall, Talabecland and Nordland have reached a pact of mutual aid in the event of an attack by Ostland on either party.*
- *Rumours are circulating that the Grand Count of Stirland might enter into a similar pact with Ostland.*
- *There are also rumours of an incident in Middenland in the fall, which caused a further breakdown between the cults of Sigmar and Ulric. Ulf doesn't know any more information about the incident in question.*
- *Pressure is building for Hochland and Ostermark to muster troops in the case war breaks out in the east, even though Talabheim has not committed itself to any camp. Ulf expects this to change in the near future.*
- *Gossip has it that Ostermark is likely to ignore calls from Talabecland for aid on the pretence of increased Orc raids in the eastern marches.*
- *An Ulrican group called the Cult of the Howling One has been operating in the southern portions of Ostland causing further problems in the region.*

- *There are additional rumours of other Ulrican groups operating in Middenland in defiance of the Emperor's ill-conceived edict protecting dangerous mutants.*
- *There is no word that either the Graf of Middenheim or the Ar-Ulric supports these extremist Ulrican groups.*
- *There are reports of mutants raiding villages and farmsteads in the Howling Hills and the Drak Wald Forest. One such group was killed with a force of the Sons of Ulric tracked them down in their base camp.*
- *Other mutants have been seen in the western portions of the Great Forest between Volgen and Altdorf.*

Return of the Knights Panther

In this section, the PCs return to Middenheim consists of four stages and is detailed. The first covers the PCs' sailing down (or walking along) the Rivers Urskoy and Talabec and a couple encounters which should provide an insight into the deteriorating situation in the eastern Empire. The second involves an important meeting in Talagraad with Natassia Hess, one of Heinrich's most trusted operatives. The third part will cover the journey from Talabheim to Bergsburg with its inherent dangers. The fourth and final part places the PCs face to face with one of the Sons of Ulric.

Travelling

Just as with any period of travelling within an adventure, attention needs to be paid to balancing the mundane nature of travel with keeping the players interested. Within and without a potential civil war, the ordinary nature of the world will continue. PCs will meet a host of different characters upon the road, including merchants, pilgrims, labourers, craftsmen, peddlers, robbers, beggars and all manner of itinerants. Refugees might also become a feature as civil war becomes ever more likely, whether economic migrants, fleeing religious persecution, having lost home and living to raiders (legitimate soldiery or otherwise) or simply sensibly removing themselves to safer pastures.

The effects of a civil war will be felt amongst these travellers since security will become a bigger issue. Civil wars always lead to a breakdown in law and order as those who should be upholding justice are otherwise engaged. This means those who can, will purchase more

security in some form. Most simply, this means travelling together in larger groups. Merchants might be able to afford to hire guards. Travelling PCs can join a group, hire guards or be hired themselves – although they are probably passing in the direction opposite many of those on the road, who will be fleeing the troubles. Whilst the civil war has not formally begun during this particular part of the journey, GMs need to focus on this aspect of the war already. The fact is that even before hostilities actually start more and more private wars will begin to escalate as the general political background becomes ever more thunderous. As we know, the civil war is propelled by a single act of murder, but the ill will and self-interest that will feed this war is already present and taking place to the extent that various parties believe that they can "get away with it".

Attitudes towards the PCs will vary. They are well-armed and unknown outsiders. This will make them very suspicious and likely to be avoided. After all, many undesirables will take advantage of the collapse in law and order to rob, rape and pillage. Few can look less trustworthy than an adventurer! At the same time, small groups of travellers might take anyone on trust when they are stuck in the middle of nowhere around their fire at night in the middle of a forest. Whatever the realities of the human race (and others), most people would welcome friends, as they are less dangerous than the dark and whatever hideous monsters are surely lurking just beyond the light of the fire. Equally, where PCs include non-humans a GM might run a campaign where dwarfs or halflings in particular are regarded as trustworthy, and should reflect this in the attitudes of these people.

In practical terms, these travellers are of little use to the PCs. True, they can become the source for prospective adventures – but the key here is that they are simply ordinary people dealing with an abnormal situation as best they can. These assorted travellers are part of the background colour; not everyone is the source of an adventure. Where they will prove particularly useful is with information from the south. GMs need to prepare a store of rumours and stories to keep the players informed of what these people know. Of course, what they know might be utter rubbish or only part of the picture, but over the weeks a reasonably full picture of what has been and is happening should develop.

These ordinary people should be played carefully. They will be a constant event on the roads, tracks and crossings and might be found anywhere. Sometimes they will be lost and seek help. More usually, they will be suspicious and defensive. Still, a code of goodwill always exists between travellers and those thrown into difficult and unwarranted situations. The majority can be prevailed upon to recognise this.

Smoke on the Water

The journey downriver will take two and a half weeks. The following table will detail the stops at the end of a days travel and should help the GM plan for additional nasty surprises. In addition, important events happening throughout the Empire will also appear in the various timeline tables (italicised) used in this scenario. GMs should note that news of some of these events might not reach the PCs' ears until some time after the event takes place, while other events are not intended to be widely known. The lapse of time is highly variable depending upon where the news originates from and the PCs particular circumstances (e.g., at a tavern in a large town or crawling through the wilderness). The inclusion of such information is to provide a sense that events are happening in the larger world.

GM Note: The dates in the following table, and the others that follow, are meant to be a guideline for GMs as well as an aid in running this scenario. GMs should feel free to adjust the

dates as in accordance to the needs of their campaign and the players.

Day	Events/Stopping Point
24 Jahrdrung	Arrival at small town of Nidzica
25 Jahrdrung	Arrival at village of Piast
26 Jahrdrung	Arrival at the riverside Inn of Playful Boyar
27 Jahrdrung	Arrival at small town of Opolensk
28 Jahrdrung	Arrival at the riverside Vodyanoy's Pool Inn
29 Jahrdrung	Anchorage in a cove on the south bank of the Urskoy.
30 Jahrdrung	Anchorage in a cove east of the Torszchan Hills
31 Jahrdrung	Arrival at small town of Zwolen on the Kislev/Empire border
32 Jahrdrung	Arrival at village of Bratian
33 Jahrdrung	Arrival at small town of Wurzen
Mittelfruhl	Arrival at small town of Vienau
1 Pflugzeit	Arrival at the riverside Inn of Karog's Daughter
2 Pflugzeit	Anchorage in a cove
3 Pflugzeit	Arrival at riverside Inn of the Swimming Dog, south of the small town of Trillheim. <i>Scattered gangs of greenskins emerged again to loot the Ostlander countryside as the snows melted two weeks ago.</i>
4 Pflugzeit	Arrival at the riverside Inn of the Wyvern
5 Pflugzeit	Arrival at the riverside Inn of the Black Swan.
6 Pflugzeit	Arrival at village of Küsel. <i>Raiding across parts of the Ostland/Talabecland border are steadily increasing.</i>
7 Pflugzeit	Arrival at the riverside Inn of the Eagle and the Serpent
8 Pflugzeit	Arrival at the riverside Inn of the River Nymph
9 Pflugzeit	Arrival at Talagraad, the port town of Talabheim

The small towns that Ulf moors his ship for the night are market towns. Upon arrival, he stores his goods in a nearby warehouse for the night. Ulf wakes up early in the morning to arrange for the selling, trading, and buying goods before he's ready to depart for the next market town. Unless the PCs have volunteered to help, they can spend the evening and night as they please. Ulf will allow the PCs to bunk in the hold on the "Winter's Chill," if they wish.

The villages at which Ulf stops at offer little. Generally, he stops at those with an inn (a number of smaller ones on the route do not have such luxuries), but stays on his boat as much as possible. One can never be sure of some villagers. As a matter of course, Ulf will make an offering for good fortune and good weather to whatever shrines of the gods (generally, Taal, Rhya, or Karog) he finds in the village. Some ships prefer to anchor in one of the many coves in the river, but Ulf likes to mix with people as much as he can.

The riverside inns where Ulf stops for the evenings also double as toll houses for the nearby road. Those establishments along the road from Zwolen to Hergig also double as coaching inns for the infrequent Bullshead coaching line. The riverside inns tend to have a mixed clientele of those travelling along the river (and road) and locals who come in for drinks, news, and gossip (among the few other enjoyments that may be offered).

These stops are a good way for the PCs to learn about what has happened whilst they were away in Kislev. For the ease of use by the GMs, the following rumours (some of which confirms what Ulf may have said) are arranged according to the area that the PCs are passing through:

Kislev:

- *Word has it that the eastern Imperial provinces have had a bad winter. Mark my words there will be shortages by low summer.*
- *I hear that King Zoltan of Praag is hiring bands of mercenaries for an expedition to clear the Trans-Lynsk region of bandits and vile creatures.*
- *The spring thaw this year means that there will be eels a plenty in the next two months.*
- *There's rumour that the Tsar has caught a chill during the winter.*
- *The Duchess Katarin is said to be arriving in Kislev within the week, something must be up with the Tsar.*
- *I've heard that the Tsarevich has met with an unfortunate accident while visiting his wife, the Princess of Erengard.*
- *Word is that the Gryphon Legion has been recalled to deal with goblin raids in the southern forests.*
- *Beware the border region. There's trouble afoot with some Imperial noble with designs on the area near Ostland.*

Ostermark:

- *Talabecland is mustering their forces on the pretence of defending the province against Ostlanders and Stirlanders. If you ask me, the Chancellor should do the same to protect us against Talabeclanders.*
- *I have heard that Count von Pirkheimer plans to take the Garderike province from Kislev. Could be trouble.*
- *Some seer is Bechafen claims to have had a vision where of the Empire in flames. Most likely drank too much Ostlander ale, if you ask me.*
- *I hear folk in the southern hills are burning huge bonfires in honour of Biersal.*
- *The Marcher barons seem more concerned with the Grand Duke of Talabecland's schemes than with goblins coming from the mountains.*
- *Baron von Bratian is said to be looking for a husband for his spinster daughter.*
- *Rumour has it that bandit activity is on the increase along the river from the Kislevite border to Talabheim.*
- *I hear that the raids across the River Talabec have become more vicious than last year's.*

Ostland:

- *I've heard that raiders burnt the village of Eisenbrücknear near the Korver Hills to the ground.*
- *There are strange folk about.*
- *Von Tasseninck should make peace with von Raukov so the Marshal can defeat the Talabeclanders.*
- *Rumour has it that the Grand Theogonist is raising an army to stop von Krieglitz from raiding Ostlander villages and homesteads.*
- *I understand that some homesteaders have heard howling before their homes have been attacked.*
- *The winter has been unkind this year. Too much chill and not enough snow. There's no rain on the horizon and none this past fall. The winter crop will fall short this year.*
- *A number of charcoalers have gone missing in the southern forests. Some say that it's the work of bandits or goblins, but I smell Talabeclanders.*
- *The Grand Prince has been talking all year about stopping the raiding across the River Talabec. He should stop talking and do something.*

Talabecland:

- *Von Krieglitz needs to stop those raids from Ostland. An assault on Wolfenburg would do the trick.*
- *The Grand Duke is trying to get Hochland to send him troops as he hears that Reikland will come to Ostland's aid in much the same way as Stirland did.*
- *Last year's drought has continued into this year. If not for the melting snows from Kislev, I'm sure the river would have run dry by now.*
- *There is talk that Talabheim will rejoin Talabecland as in the days before Emperor Dieter was illegally dethroned.*
- *Sigmarite enemies surround Talabecland. I would not be surprised if von Krieglitz tries to form an alliance with Middenland.*

- *Livestock is not doing well, particularly in the hills. This year's calving season has few healthy heads. There's even rumour of some nasty illness deforming some of those that survived.*
- *Goblin raids are increasing in the border regions with Ostermark. I wonder if they are allied with the treacherous Ostlanders?*
- *I've heard that the villagers of Isenhof disappeared without a trace a fortnight ago. No one knows what happened.*

There is a chance that the PCs might opt to stay in the boat and hope that the times until they reach their destination passes quickly. GMs should decide how much of game time they and their players want to spend on these types of journeys.

In addition to the mundane activities above, the following situations can be used to spice up the travel along the river:

It Takes a Thief

Slavyanaskaya is a small outpost located on the River Urskoy, opposite to Tsaritsyn and close to Ösel. Its purpose is to act as an Imperial Kislevite watch post and tollbooth. Given the relative prosperity of Tsaritsyn, it has little other purpose and is a desolate and rundown place. The local detachment of knyazates, or Imperial Kislevite river wardens, operates from here. Traders do not stop, and over the decades the local boyar has made it quite clear to the local bureaucrat he will militarily force the issue if the post attempts to interfere with his trade and own collection of tolls. The local soldiery has degenerated into little more than bandits and is held in very low esteem. The only apparent source of income for the small village that ekes out a living is some slavery, minor piracy and a lucrative trade in flora. To the east of the village are located some quite rare herbs and similar plants for magic and alchemical ingredients, which are jealously guarded. In addition, the post has been taken over by agents for the Black Scratch, a local skaven nest.

A small wooden tower is located on the bank, next to a dilapidated jetty. The post flies a very tattered flag of a rampant bear wearing a crown (one insignia used by the authorities of Imperial Kislev). A chaika boat is pulled up upon the shore, though it is barely seaworthy due to lack of use or maintenance. Chaika boats are Imperial Kislevite river patrol boats. The knyazates, under the command of Uruk Széckler, are also (knowingly or otherwise) under the command of the skaven. So too is a local hedge wizard, Sven Sokolova, who is under the tutelage of the local skaven seer. The background and nature of the Black Scratch are not relevant here; hopefully the PCs will pass through and bluff or pay their way past this minor irritation.

Indeed, none of this would be of any interest to our heroes, except for the fact that the river wardens eke out their living by a mixture of duty and piracy, and it is in this vein they will accost the PCs. In theory, the post has a boom that can be tied across the river, but this is unlikely to be serviceable. Instead, the knyazates can use their boat, and rely on two or three small fishing boats with which to intercept any lone vessel. How any encounter develops is up to the PCs. The Kislevites are pirates, true. They are, however, also the official law. If the PCs can put on a good show, it should be quite easy to scare off the wardens more nefarious aims, and barter for passage via a small bribe. Should the PCs show any signs of being worried or outclassed, the knyazates pounce.

The PCs will first become aware of when an official boat puts out to intercept them, accompanied by a number of fishing boats that will attempt to surround them. Should the PCs attempt to flee immediately, they will be able to out-distance the chaika quite easily. Ulf might need some convincing though; remember he makes his living by sailing the rivers and needs to keep officials happy. If this costs his passengers a few GCs, that is not Ulf's concern. In addition, the chaika has two small cannons in its bow. These are almost certainly rusted, but the PCs will not know this (though one with the *Engineer* skill will realize

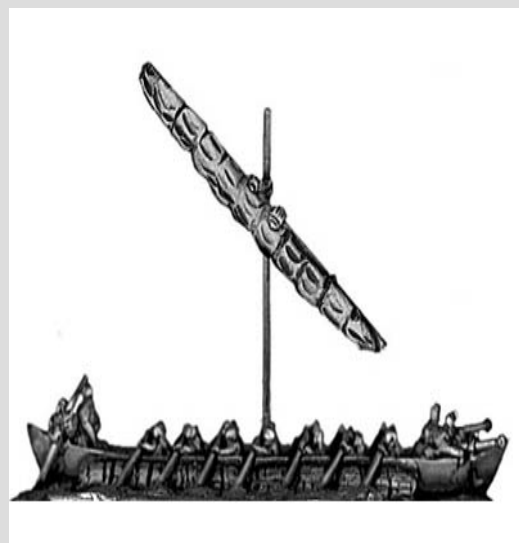
on close inspection that the cannon are past serviceable).

Ulf knows the way that things work on the river, as do the river wardens. Both will effectively expect the PCs to pay the latter off. Neither the Ulf nor his sons will help should a fight develop, and they will expect a hefty bribe not to turf the PCs off their boat if they are so crass as to do so. The knyazates will bluff and bluster, push around PCs and generally pick on any one different - elves, dwarfs and attractive human females might all receive some 'treatment'. A mixture of intimidation and/or a small payment will pay off these very petty criminals.

Sidebar: Chaika Boat

The boat has a central mast, but relies usually on oars. Cannons are located in the front, and sometimes elsewhere. Its crew will row as necessary, but these knyazates are usually too hung over or useless to indulge in much physical activity.

The following picture is of the excellent Eureka Miniatures model of a Cossack chaika boat, and serves to illustrate what our river wardens are using.



Uruk Széckler

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	50	45	4	4	9	42	3	45	59	43	33	47	44

Skills: Boat Building, Consume Alcohol, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Row, Sailing, Secret Language - Battle Tongue, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun, Swim

Equipment: Sword, Helmet (1 AP head), Sleeved Mail Shirt (1 AP body), Shield (1 AP all over), Crossbow with ammunition, D20 GCs, D20 shillings, D20 pennies

Typical Knyazate (Imperial Kislevite river warden)

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	41	45	4	3	7	33	2	32	32	30	35	28	31

Skills: Consume Alcohol, Disarm, Dodge Blow, Row, Sailing, Secret Language - Battle Tongue, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun, Swim

Equipment: Sword, Helmet (1 AP head), Leather Jerkin (0/1 AP body), Shield (1 AP all over), Crossbow with ammunition, D20 shillings, D20 pennies, D100 copeck, D100 grivna

Hang ‘em High

Around one of the river bends where the Talabec forms a boundary between Ostland and Talabecland, the PCs hear the sounds of horses galloping away from the river as well as the squeaky wheels of a wagon. Once the “Winter’s Chill” rounds the bend, the PCs see a man hanging from an oak tree (it doesn’t really matter which side of the riverbank this occurs). A placard hangs down from his neck with the words “Spy” and “Murderer” written with red paint on it. Should the PCs disembark at this point, they will clearly hear the man choking to death. Unfortunately, he will expire before the PCs can cut him down.

If the PCs inspect the body, they will see a patch on his right sleeve. Any PC with experience as a peddler, trader, or merchant will recognize the patch design as representing the Peddlers’ Guild. PCs without this background can also determine what the patch represents so long as they have the *Heraldry* skill and can successfully pass an **Int** test.

The dead man has no possessions other than the clothes he is wearing.

Those who killed him have even taken the man’s boots.

Should the PCs wish to extract vengeance for the man they don’t even know, Ulf reminds them he is responsible for delivering them to Talagraad. In addition, the PCs have no idea as to whether the man was justly killed or not.

On the Waterfront

This event should take place in one of the Talabecland villages where the “Winter’s Chill” has moored for the night and across from Ostland.

As the PCs are about to disembark, a contingent of armed men approach them. The only thing that distinguishes the menacing men from some other dangerous rabble is the red and yellow armband each wears on his sword arm. Some wear mail shirts while others leather jerkins.

A shout of “stay where you are” should keep the PCs from commencing an attack or retreating. Coming up from behind the armed gang is a man wearing a red and yellow tunic over his mail shirt. Any PC with the *Heraldry* skill will

recognize the symbol of the black eagle on the man's tunic as belonging to the Grand Duchy of Talabecland. The sergeant of the company, Wilhelm Grudenburg, orders the PCs to state their name and business. Wilhelm and his company are on the lookout for Ostland raiders.

The PCs can quickly establish their credentials by displaying their Knights Panther medallions. Of course, Wilhelm may suspect them of obtaining such through illicit means, though this would still mean the PCs may have abilities beyond the Sergeant's company.

If the PCs manage to win over Wilhelm – by displaying their medallions without the condescension normally associated with members of such a company – then the Sergeant will invite them for a drink at the local inn. Wilhelm is a good source of news and gossip with respect to happenings along the Ostland border. Wilhelm also knows the Grand Duke is moving more troops into the area in order to stop the Ostland predations.

Should the PCs manage to alienate Wilhelm by acting in some arrogant manner, the Sergeant will back off the confrontation. He then orders several of his men to keep an eye on the PCs while they remain in the village. In addition, Wilhelm will not respond to any of the PCs' inquiries with anything other than vague answers.

Howls in the Distance

Between the Inn of Karog's Daughter and the village of Trillheim, the "Winter's Chill" will be moored in a cove for the night. There are no villages nearby, but there are a few fortified homesteads where Ostlanders stubbornly eke out a livelihood amid the Forest of Shadows.

An hour or two before midnight, PCs on watch hear howling nearby (a few hundred yards) to the north. Any PC with experience in the forested wilds of the Empire – such as hunters, scouts, trappers, woodsmen – know the howling does not come from wolves, but from men imitating the predator. If awake, Ulf will comment on the strangeness of the

situation. He doesn't know of any local custom that would have men howling as beasts in the night. Ulf has, however, heard rumour of werewolves roaming in those parts of Ostland closest to the Middle Mountains. Still, stories of such fell beats tell of them being mistaken for wolves until it's too late.

Sounds of battle soon erupt and the light of a fire can be seen in the night sky above the trees. The PCs may decide the skirmish is someone else's problem, but the sounds of howling among the shouting of humans in panic should be enough to compel investigation. If not, the sounds of battle die down after half an hour, though the light of the fire continues for some time. The fate of those engaged in combat remains unknown.

The fortified homestead of the Schäffer family is under attack and set aflame. A number of men wearing wolf skin surround the palisade shooting their bows, some with flaming arrows, at the defenders who are returning fire. Two pairs of attackers, each armed with swords and wearing leather jacks under their fur, wait in the forest's shadow with scaling ladders at hand for the opportunity to scale the walls and kill those within. The attackers belong to the Cult of the Howling One. Chedwic Wanner, a renegade priest of Ulric and leader of this sect, directs the attack.

Chedwic's goal is to terrorise Sigmarite followers in the surrounding countryside with his predations on carefully chosen – and somewhat isolated – homesteads. This particular settlement is the fourth Chedwic has attacked in the last two months. He intends to burn it to the ground whilst its inhabitants and their livestock are slaughtered. Chedwic then cuts the symbol of the cult (stylised wolf howling) into some bodies of the slain, both human and animal, as a warning to others. Unless the PCs intervene, Chedwic will succeed in claiming this next set of victims.

Should the PCs decide to investigate, the journey to the battle should take ten to fifteen minutes. Unless utterly careless, the PCs arrive unseen by the attackers. The GM decides at

which point in the attack the PCs will arrive. It is recommended the PCs do so just as the attackers emerge from the woods with their ladders, unseen by the defenders. Chedwic should be in the PCs' line of sight, but his own movements in and out of the forest should minimize their chances of shooting him. The key is that, no matter what happens, Chedwic should escape the PCs at this stage: they will have an opportunity to deal with the renegade Ulrican priest at a later time.

Should the PCs manage to help drive off or kill the attacking cultists, Herr Gunther Schäffer

would be grateful. He will ask the PCs to stay for the night as he fears the attackers will return otherwise and a few of his hands are seriously injured. Sadly, Herr Schäffer can only repay them with a warm meal and bed for their troubles.

Whether or not the PCs take him up on the offer, the homestead will not be attacked again. By the time he arrives at his base camp, Chedwic Wanner receives word that the leader of the Sons of Ulric requests his company at a hunting lodge in Middenland to discuss a possible alliance.

Typical Cultist of the Howling One (Mercenaries)

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	42	39	4	3	8	41	2	30	38	29	42	33	31

Skills: Disarm, Dodge Blow, Secret Language-Battle, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun

Equipment: Sword, Leather Jack (0/1 AP body) under wolf fur, Bow (R 24/48/250, ES 3), Waterskin, and Purse (2D6 shillings and 3D6 pennies)

Another Brick in the Wall

It's mid-afternoon when Ulf ties "Winter's Chill" to the wharf at Talagraad. Should the PCs have been a pain to Ulf throughout the journey, the boatman will utter a loud sigh of relief at having this journey end. If the PCs have been of help, Ulf will be momentarily sadden by their departure, wishing them gods' speed as they disembark. Ulf will accept any offer of a drink with the PCs in the event the PCs were to graciously offer such as an expression of their gratitude.

Talagraad

Talagraad is a small town and port for the city of Talabheim. The town is situated where the western terminus of the Talabec Road to Lothrafurt ends on the Old Forest Road. Münster's Ferry provides transport across the River Talabec for those wishing to continue on to Bergsburg and Middenheim. The town is not terribly large with a population of roughly 450, but it bustles with activity. Coaches from the Tunnelway Coaches run frequently between the

port and Talabheim as do wagons with goods from Kislev to Altdorf.

Most of the inhabitants make their living from the river or prey upon those who do. Talagraad is also among the ports of call for the luxury ships of Altdorf's Hindelin Lines. The ships provide expensive and (relatively) luxurious transportation between the Imperial capital and Bechafen. There are many taverns and shops along the waterfront where travellers can spend their time and money while waiting for the ships to depart.

The streets of Talagraad are busier than normal. Talk is only of war and a sense of panic is barely suppressed. The strongest rumours, actually false, are that a large enemy force is only three days away. Marshall Granheim von Karthleiz of Talabheim and his small force is also a number of days overdue.

Traffic in the streets has two destinations. Most are heading to nearby Talabheim. Families are being sent into the crater, away from the

notoriously indefensible town. In the other direction travel carriages of the rich and powerful. Although publicly insistent that they are not afraid, they are travelling west to safer climes.

The flight of the privileged reached its peak the day the PCs arrive. Today, the Emperor Luitpold is heading to Altdorf. Hundreds cram the docks: merchants and nobles surrounded by guards. So bad is the situation that the company is cancelling servants' tickets and selling them at first class value. Troops from Fort Lackey are everywhere but this hasn't stopped the pickpockets from swarming.

Should the PCs hang around, a woman in simple black dress and coat will approach them. She is in tears and asking everyone for help. She says a thief has stolen her mistress' tickets. He was a handsome man in red and blue livery that said he was collecting tickets. As soon as he had hers he ran. Luckily her mistress did not see and she has a chance to save her job. Sobbing she begs the PCs for help. She is, as they may guess, a conwoman.

The man she describes is a servant of Helmut Sternwald, a merchant who has yet to arrive. The man is spotted easily, and looks a little nervous (this is due to the crowds). An accomplice of the conwoman, her brother, starts talking to the man as soon as the PCs are in sight, given the nod by his sister. The servant nods at the questions and then the brother shouts loudly at the confused man before storming off, "Be gone, I am not interested!" If the PCs force the tickets out of the servant he will run to soldiers, who ignore him until his master arrives. If the conwoman gets hold of the tickets she passes them on to be sold, then disappears.

Elsewhere in the centre of Talagraad, a crowd has gathered around a man in tattered robes. He is shouting down the occasional heckler but his voice is captivating many. "Why are we fighting? Man against man. Brother against brother. Have we not learnt the lessons of the past? Soon a storm of Chaos will be upon us, a tide from the North, hordes from the East. Our leaders fight for their own power and glory, but

we can tell which of them have fallen under the spell of the false gods, this enemy within whose black industry will bring ruin to us all." He carries on like this until night falls and then is back the following day.

Prices are three times standard as the shops empty through a general lack of goods and hoarding. Only lodging remains cheap.

Later, while walking the streets, they come across a group of armed men carrying standards and banging drums. They are members of the East Marches Company of Swordsmen, more simply known as the Marches. These mercenaries are recruiting members for the forthcoming conflict.

The Captain

At some stage the PCs are approached by Captain Heins of the *Swan*. He is tired and fresh off the boat. "I am not looking to waste your time and hope you won't waste mine. I have suddenly found myself with a passenger and need guards for the journey west to Altdorf. Are you interested? I will be leaving tomorrow."

The passenger is Count Orlov von Zorlov. He is leaving Talagraad as he is unpopular in the court. He suggested a diplomatic delegation should be sent to try and resolve the crisis but his enemies in the court have made him a scapegoat with claims that he is being disloyal.

Whether the PCs refuse or not, an unassuming middle-aged man then approaches them. Unbeknownst to the PCs, he is an agent of von Zorlov's enemies and saw them talking to the Captain. The man, if asked, will identify himself as Herr Bruno Zuber. He asks about their conversation with the Captain, a known contact of the Count. If they mention the passenger to him he thanks them and leaves. Should they avoid mention of the passenger, Zuber will ultimately obtain this information through other means.

The Count arrives in a black carriage at midnight escorted by two bodyguards. He is greeted by Captain Heins who shakes his hand before they all head below deck. Two hours

later two dozen armed men approach the boat. They then throw Molotov cocktails on the deck setting it alight. As the Captain and his passengers escape the burning vessel they are slaughtered.

If the PCs warn the Captain of the conversation with the agent then he warns the Count, who changes his plans. If the PCs do take the job, then they may be able to see the men watching the boat or the beginnings of the attack. If they save the Count while he is on boat, they will have gained a powerful ally. Not one that can help then any time soon however.

Whatever happens, the news is across town by morning. If von Zorlov is dead most people will mourn him a little.

The Missing Heir

This cameo can be used if you wish to extend the PCs stay in Talagraad. Otherwise, it can be located anywhere else.

Hugo von Talbanstock is a young member of one of the Prime families. His father died many years ago and various members of his extended family raised him. His best friend is the fourteen year-old servant Alexis Imanoff.

The young pair wanted to join the army to fight for Talabheim. However, Hugo knew that if he joined the standing Talabheim army he would be recognised. He would, therefore, never be allowed to fight. The pair has run off to join the East Marches Company of Swordsmen and fight in the war.

A ragged couple approaches the PCs looking upset. They ask the PCs for help to find their missing grandson Alexis as he is in danger of being arrested or killed. Assuming the PCs listen further, the Imanoffs say that Alexis is a stable boy in the household of Baron von Talbanstock. In recent years Hugo Von Talbanstock befriended him and the pair spent much time together. This seemed to be tolerated by Hugo's Uncle Boris von Talbanstock. The first time the Imanoffs realised something was wrong was when a group of men banged on their door. They demanded to know where Hugo and Alexis

were. They said Alexis had kidnapped Hugo and would be killed if found. They searched the house and then left.

Alexis' grandfather went searching for him, talking with those who knew his grandson. Bounty hunters had also visited some of these contacts. A price (30gc to bring the Hugo back alive, 20gc to bring Alexis back – dead or alive) has been placed on both the boys' heads. He was told the pair had gone to Talagraad, as had boy's uncle.

Alexis' parents can only offer 3gc as payment or else they will work for the PCs for a year. They are desperate and scared. The only reason they can think the boys may have visited Talagraad was to see Alexis' uncle Silas. He is a street trader who works around the docks.

Silas Imanoff is well known among the lower end of Talagraad's population. He sells lucky charms and is a terrible drunk, often to be found in jail or in the gutter. If they ask around, they can find him asleep in his small bedroom in a doss house or at the Eastward Traveller inn. Either way, he will be worse for wear. He says he saw the boys two nights ago at *The Bottom of the Well* tavern. Alexis wanted to find a Mercenary band to join. The other youth said nothing, "but I could tell he was a right snob, looking down his nose at me." Silas sent them to his friend Sven Svensson.

At this stage the PCs will start being followed by Max Kohl Kalhof, a Bounty Hunter from The Talabheim Warrant Execution Company. He is on Hugo's trail and thinks the PCs will know where to find Alexis. He is adept at keeping his distance but is a little over-confident so can be tricked into making a mistake.

Svensson is a weaponsmith, currently working hard to fill increased orders. He is not happy being disturbed, even more unhappy when Silas's name is mentioned. "That drunk is no friend of mine let me tell you. I wouldn't believe a word he says. I certainly never saw two boys and if I did I would have sent them home." He knows there are two mercenary companies in town at moment, the East

Marches Company of Swordsmen and The Muldhaven Death Watch.

The Muldhaven Death Watch is making ready to move out by the time the PCs get there. They are a small band and claim to not have seen the duo. They are all experienced and older men. The Marches have set up at The Bald Bear & Shears and recruiting there, their banner across the door. Any questions are directed towards Sergeant Ox, who says he has never seen them. He may or may not be lying depending on when they ask.

If they return to Silas, he will be a bit more drunk and a bit more fearful now he has been found out. He says that he did see the boys at The Bottom of the Well but doesn't remember what happened to them. Luckily, the Landlord has a pretty good idea. Silas was dead drunk, as usual, and the pair and another young lad (small, blond-hair, dressed like a peasant) from out of town left with Two Left-Hands Ivan, a local wheeler-dealer, "Not to be trusted".

If the PCs visit Hugo's family, they will not be able to gain access until they mention Hugo's name. Then they will be taken to see his uncle Boris. Bellowing all the time, he will demand and threaten them for what they know. He says that Alexis "and his people" (that is, poor people) have kidnapped Hugo for ransom to steal money from him. As yet, no ransom has been demanded.

Two Left-Hands Ivan is to be found at the dockside selling "advance tickets" for the Wizard's Way toll. The occasional traveller is fooled. Ivan will run if he sees the PCs coming as he generally has a guilty complex. He first says he took the boys to the edge of town and sent them home. Then he says he took them to The Bald Bear & Scissors and they signed up there. He is very cool under pressure and doesn't appear to be lying. Faced with anything physical, however, he will try to bargain. If the PCs let him go he will then tell them what he knows. He says he took them to Osterald stables as the owner was looking for stablehands. He knows that this is, in fact, the base for a slavery operation. If they don't get

an answer out of him, he heads to the stables to warn them.

A wooden fence surrounds the stables and all the workers here are armed. The owner is Igor Rabinkov, a one-legged veteran. He is also a slave trader, selling young men and boys into servitude to work and fight in the North. His regular transport east is two days late and he is nervous. At the moment he is even more nervous as two of his captives escaped a few hours ago. One of his men is dead and he is sporting a vicious cut across his face. If asked he denies knowing where the two boys are and says they were ungrateful thugs. "I pay well and hardly ever beat 'em." If asked about the third boy, he looks unsure and then says he ran away too. In fact the third boy, Heinrich, is still being held captive in the cellar with two others. They all know that Hugo and Alexis intended to escape and find the Mercenary group to join.

Sergeant Ox certainly knows about the pair now if he didn't before. Hugo and Alexis have signed up to join the group and are now resting in the inn. However, Ox and the Mercenary Captain, Aldous Ribbelheim, will deny any knowledge of the pair. Thirty armed men back them up.

There are a number of possible ways for the scenario to finish. The PCs could do nothing. Hugo and Alexis are young but where they want to be. Alexis' grandparents would be happy to know he is safe (for the moment). If the PCs tell the authorities, after some checking they will move with force on the inn. Hugo will be rescued and Alexis carted off to jail. He is executed a few days later. They can also convince Ribbelheim to release the boys if they tell him the truth. He doesn't want any of the problems that Hugo could bring. If PCs take the pair home, then both are forgiven (although Alexis is subsequently sacked).

If the PCs do take Hugo and Alexis back to Talabheim, they will be ambushed on the way unless they have dealt with Max Kohl earlier. The Bounty Hunter and a group of thugs ambush the PCs and attempt to grab Hugo. If the thugs succeed the PCs will be fugitives by the next day, charged with the kidnapping. If Kohl's

thugs fail, the PCs will be rewarded (a sum of your choosing, but it should be something miserly and, considering the von Talbanstock's wealth, rather insulting).

The Hangman's Inn

The Hangman's Inn is located on the south end of town on the Old Forest Road. It's easy to find, as it is the last place a person can get a drink before heading off to Wurtbad.

The innkeeper is Hermann Krauthammer, a



middle-aged man who runs a (fairly) clean establishment. A couple of large bouncers, Josef and Otto Grosz, seek to it that anyone causing trouble is quickly and

roughly removed from the premises. The food at the Hangman's is not especially good, although a reddish-brown bitter brewed here known as Deep Red is considered a local favourite and priced accordingly (1s/8d a pint). Hermann also brews a pilsner he calls "Forest Amber."

The Hangman's Inn is also the northern terminus for the Black Fire coaching line, which runs a service between Talabheim and Averheim. Run by Anton Schneider, who spends a great deal of time in the inn when not at his nearby offices, the Black Fire has begun to receive some competition from the ubiquitous Four Seasons coaching lines.

When the PCs arrive, the inn is bustling with the late afternoon crowd. A Black Fire coach has just arrived and its passengers are disembarking for the friendly comforts of the inn. Farmers from nearby have also arrived for a couple of drinks before turning in, as have a few townfolk. Entering the common room, the PCs find there is standing room only near the bar. All tables have been taken, except for an odd seat here and there. There is no place for the PCs to sit as a group to avoid mingling. Several barmaids are scrambling to keep the ale

flowing as well as serve platters of food for those able to pay.

At some point, the PCs should approach the innkeeper to ask about their pre-arranged accommodations. Hermann looks at them quizzically and asks for their names and proof as to who they are. Hermann is expecting the PCs to state their names and discreetly show him the medallion indicating their status as Knights Panther. If the PCs attempt to loudly proclaim their names and/or status, the innkeeper will quickly try to quiet them and insist that prudence is in order. In the event that the PCs try to produce the letter from the Graf, Hermann will stop them by placing a hand on the person retrieving the letter. "You'll need more than Ranald's luck if you continue to be this careless," Hermann will warn.

Once he is satisfied with the PCs' identity, Hermann produces a key. "Take the stairs on the other side of the door to the right of the bar, your right. Go up to the top and make a left down the hall. Your accommodations are behind the door at the end and are large enough for all of you. I hope will find it satisfactory, especially since I have no other room available. Since your lodging overlooks the local gallows, you'll have a great view of tomorrow's hanging. The highwayman who styles himself as the Wyrn will meet with Mórr shortly after noon." With that Hermann, turns towards other customers.

If the PCs manage to ask if others have inquired as to their arrival, Hermann replies, "No one has approached me at all. Are you expecting someone?" The last question should be a hint that the innkeeper does not know of anything more than the PCs' need for lodging. Still, Hermann will graciously accept any coin the PCs may offer to keep them "informed."

The PCs may decide to carefully check around to satisfy themselves that they are not in immediate danger. Their activities may take a number of forms. They could act drunk and knock on neighbouring doors to see who answers while claiming to be looking for their own room or some fabricated person. Another

course of action could be to look from the grounds outside and try to identify their likely accommodations based on Hermann's description. They would try to see if they can see anyone in their room. The latter might involve finding a tree that could provide a level view of the room, but climbing a tree in daylight might arouse suspicions. There are any number of other things the PCs might do, but in the end, they just aren't going to find anything odd.

The Set-up

The room is fairly spacious with two beds, large enough for two to sleep on each. The floor has enough room for three or four people to sleep. There are two chamber pots for needed relief and a water basin for washing. There are also two large chests for guests to keep their belongings. The lock on the door looks fairly straight forward, though an experienced picklock will see that it's a bit more complicated (**CR 10%**). A fireplace is situated on the wall adjacent to the door with firewood to keep the night's chill at bay. There are windows on two walls, one facing towards the front of the inn, the other at the nearby gallows. Both can be closed and shuttered from the inside.

The PCs may take the precaution to set watches for the night with such vigilance likely to focus on the windows or door. Sometime around 2 in the morning, a figure will slip into the room through a secret door near the fireplace. Due to the skill of the woman who entered, any PC on watch must successfully pass a **Listen-20** test for soft sounds (+10 for *Acute Hearing*) to hear the intruder. Natassia Hess is armed and capable of using it to silence any who would call out an alarm.

[**GM Note:** It might be wise here to allow Natassia a successful Strike to Stun attempt to ensure any PC on watch does not set off an alarm in the entire establishment.]

In a quiet voice, so as not to upset the unaware person(s) on watch, the Natassia says, "Please don't be alarmed nor utter a sound lest this meeting be compromised. Those in Middenheim who trust in your discretion have sent me to discuss delicate matters with you.

My name is Kirsten Lübeck." Kirsten (Natassia) pauses in order to read the PCs' reaction. PCs may note that the black-haired (Natassia's hair is normally auburn, but she's wearing a wig), grey-eyed Kirsten is roughly 5ft. 6 in. in height and of medium build. She looks to be in her early 30s.

If the other PCs are still asleep, Kirsten waits for the PC on watch to wake them. She wants each to hear what she has to say to ensure they receive the information unfiltered by faulty memory.

Kirsten continues, "Serious things have happened while you were away. Serious efforts have been made to prepare a reconciliation with the Sigmarites, and we were making good progress. In fact, the Sigmarite leaders in Altdorf had agreed on a document that would go a long way in making peace, all we needed was the Ulricans to accept it. The cult leaders came to Middenheim, but we kept running into problems with some of our more, ehm, zealous priests. Too many problems, if you catch my drift. As if that was not enough, news of the Bösel massacre reached Middenheim before the meeting was to reconvene last spring – of course that was just the excuse the hardliners needed to stay away and thus derail the reconciliation."

"We have reasons to believe the Ulrican priests who prevented an approval of the document from Altdorf are associated with an extremist group calling themselves the Sons of Ulric. If I am not mistaken you have already met these bandits at least once. We need to identify these criminals and expose any links they may have to Ulrican leaders, before they succeed in bringing war on all of us. This, gentles, is where you enter the picture."

"We have a lead on an agent of theirs in Bergsburg. I am not familiar with the details, but a courier from Middenheim will arrive late tomorrow, sometime after the hanging, bearing a sealed message for you. It will tell you how to contact one of your fellow Knights Panther in Bergsburg. He will recognise and approach you, so try not to be conspicuous. In fact, anonymity and discretion will be the order of the day for you. Any questions?"

If asked about the Bösel massacre, Kirsten will pass on the following information:

- *Mutant bands identifying themselves with a red crown raided a Middenland village called Bösel*
- *These mutants were captured by an Ulrican witch hunter named Karl Kuten who dragged them to the village for trial*
- *The Imperial magistrate who presided over the trial, however, ruled that the witch-hunter's treatment of the mutants placed him in violation of the Emperor's edict protecting such abominations from maltreatment. (Kirsten will not try to hide her complete disregard for the Emperor's edict)*
- *The villagers rioted and killed the magistrate, most of his escort, and the mutants, but within the week, the villagers themselves were slaughtered and their settlement burnt to the ground. A couple small children escaped the carnage by hiding in the offal pit beneath the outhouse, and according to what could be gleamed from them, the perpetrators were an unidentified band of Sigmarites.*

If asked for further details on the conflict and suggested reconciliation between Sigmarites and Ulricans, Kirsten can inform them that:

- *The document is known as the Eimar Concord, as the plan was for the two cults' leading representatives to meet at a Verenan monastery called Eimar, near Kutenholz, where they were to sign a final version of the Concord.*
- *The following Ulrican debate in Middenheim was marred by numerous incidents wherein delicate information was leaked to demagogues who pestered the atmosphere in the town. The source of these leaks has not been identified yet.*
- *In the end, the recalcitrance of the Fræi-Ulric from Talabheim, as well as other leading priests, scuttled the effort to reach consensus on the suggested concord. Some of these opponents are believed to be influenced by the Sons of Ulric.*

In the event the PCs should ask why they have been chosen for the mission, Kirsten tells them their experiences in Kislev and the talents displayed in rather delicate situations have proven them suitable for the challenging task at hand. If pressed further on this issue, she will admit her leaders fear that rouge agents familiar with the regular network of spies have joined the Sons of Ulric, and thus they need new blood for this particular assignment.

Should the PCs inquire as to what they would get out of carrying on this assignment, Kirsten replies that she's not certain. It's possible that the PCs will be allowed to do as they please, but if she were a betting person, Kirsten doubts that is a likely outcome. She would expect that her employer would see to some reward for their efforts, but any specifics are beyond her knowledge. If the PCs refuse, Kirsten wagers the PCs would be ousted from the Knights Panther – as they are still bound by oath to serve the Graf – and either declared outlaws or assassinated. With that, Kirsten excuses herself and departs through the secret door.

Kirsten has no intention of letting on that she knows more than what has been stated above. Responses to questions going beyond the topics above should be vague and – if need be – Kirsten simply says she really knows nothing more than that which has already been imparted. Once the PCs have no further questions, Kirsten will tell them that when they have obtained the relevant information (to be specified by the Knights Panther agent in Bergsburg) they should extricate themselves from whatever situation they are in and return to Middenheim with what they have gathered. Shortly after they arrive in the city, the PCs are to leave word where they are lodging with the barkeep at the Red Moon Cabaret in the Freiburg district. Arrangements for a rendezvous will be made at that time.

With that, Kirsten (Natassia) excuses herself and departs through the secret door. Once closed, she bars the door so that the PCs cannot easily follow. Kirsten then takes the stairs up, rather than down towards the wine cellar. When she reaches the roof, Kirsten waits silently for ten to fifteen minutes (or longer) in order to ensure

