

HARVESTER OF GRAVES

Whilst most eyes have been on the vallorn erupting from Béantal Dol this season, the activity in the east of Sarangrave has also seen portentous happenings. The courageous efforts of the Citadel Guard and the Golden Axe have turned back the assault of the Hidden Snake and Poison Crane, along with their undead allies. Yet in turn the Druj in the Salt Flats of Sanath have turned weapons on their fleeing compatriots, signalling that there is no return to the heart of the Mallum for the two armies.

The barbarians now find themselves in an unenviable position. Close to breaking from the casualties inflicted upon them by the Varushkans and the Urizeni, denied entry to Sanath, and cut off from any chance of resupply or support. If they flee they will die, if they make camp they will starve, the only way open to them is to strike with fear, unleash terror, and hope they make it across the Howling Abyss.

It is apparent that the wider plan is to drive the remnants of the armies into Imperial lines, bleeding their own forces, and ultimately breaking them in bone and sinew. The only way is west, onto the axes and rods of the Empire's armies that have already driven them back once. When the armies do break, the twisted abominations that march with them will fall in savagery upon Imperial soldiers.

There is a conjunction to the Fens of Varreth in the Turan Flats within Sarangrave. The Sentinel Gate will enable travel to the location on Saturday or Sunday of the Summer Solstice.

OBJECTIVE: TRAP THE SPIRITS

- **The winter rituals cast upon the Hidden Snake and Poison Crane are uncoiling**
- **The Halls of Maykop have offered use of the Scorched Drenkthal**
- **Successfully using the boon will contain the spirits**
- **The Halls of Maykop will expect the boon to be returned to them**
- **If nothing is done thousands of winter husks will fall under the control of Agramant**
- **If that happens the regions of Thornfen, and Kroll will be terrorized**

When the two Druj armies disband, the winter spirits that animate the corpses alongside their armies will seek out the dead in the wider area, will fall under the macabre control of Agramant, The Howler, eternal of Winter. These husks are not the somnambulant shamblers ushered into wakefulness by the magic of Wise Rangara, they are bloodthirsty cadavers keen to feast on flesh and blood. They are vicious, cunning and cruel, slaking their cold hunger with living and screaming meat. These terrible monsters will spread into Thornfen and Kroll bring terror in their wake.

Six months ago, the Empire, led by Earl Zoran De Orzel as Field Marshal, passed through the Sentinel Gate and drew the attention of Het Rethan "Fangsnapper". This daring intervention allowed the Shield of Ipotavo to receive vital resupply from Axos. This intercession was a clear demonstration of the Empire's willingness to help its allies, and the Axou are keen to return the favour. Upon hearing of the rampant husks, the citadel has offered three strange posies of herbs that would entrap the Winter spirits inside and prevent them from entering the recently deceased. These posies are an ancient boon from Wise Rangara, won in centuries past, that allows the bearers to sap away the lingering Winter magic in an area. The use of the boon requires agreement from Grandmother Winter, which the Axou have secured for this purpose.

The Halls request three volunteers to bond to the three aspects of the Scorched Drenkthal that take the form of small bundles of herbs wrapped in cloth, as they journey to the Fens of Varreth. Each corsage would offer some benefit whilst in combat, but potentially leave those bonded with a lack of caution - less than ideal given the presence of rampaging Winter spirits. The three will need to reach a set of pillars that mark the edge of the reeking mires of the area, placing their herb bundle at the base of one of the pillars. This would slowly sap away at the Winter magic in the area, wrangling the spirits and effectively trapping them. After 10 minutes, the three bundles of herbs will have been suffused with the winter spirits and can be reclaimed, ready to return with to Anvil and to be passed back to the Axou by the civil service. What the Halls of Maykop might do with the spirits once they have been bound to the Scorched Drenkthal is unclear.

Agramant's monsters are far too smart to attack the fortification in Thornfen. They will prey on settlements and pick off stragglers, dragging them into the darkness to devour them. The populace of a terrorised region are slowly depleted and such regions will quickly become underpopulated and eventually abandoned, while the people who live there will be filled with terror. Garrisons and armies cannot benefit from natural resupply in a territory that contains one or more terrorized regions.

OBJECTIVE: END TRAKAA'S TORTURED SOULS

- **Het Trakaa has mustered his remaining tortured souls to strike a blow against the Empire**
- **If these monsters are not destroyed, then the Turan Flats will become terrorized**
- **Priests will need support to exorcise these powerful creatures**

Tortured Souls are born from a combination of the Druj's apothecary skills and mystic rituals that break an individual's will and turn them into a monster full of wrath and malice towards any they face. They are fearsome foes, often still clad in the garb of their former Imperial lives, and capable of inflicting a grievous curse with blows from their weapons. Whilst it is possible to put down and execute their physical forms, their spiritual presence can quickly return. Het Trakaa, the general of the Hidden Snake, has unleashed the last of these pitiful abominations here in the Turan Flats, intent on setting them free against Imperial forces to deal as much pain and suffering as possible, before they are destroyed.

Exorcists will need to ascertain the strength of the aura that lies on each creature using insight ceremonies, before mustering sufficient power of will, and liao, to dismiss the souls of these tortured beings. Whilst many of the tortured souls are comparable to those encountered before, around a dozen of them are more powerful creatures, possessed of greater awareness of their surroundings and with stronger connections to their former lives. These individuals will be recognisable by the distinctive Imperial clothing they still wear, but will pose a far greater challenge for priests to exorcise successfully.

If the majority of the tortured souls are not destroyed, they will stalk the region making it terrorized. The monsters will roam the area, killing and torturing any innocents they find, and striking terror into the hearts of those they encounter.

OBJECTIVE: KILL TRAKAA AND SUL

- **The armies of Het Trakaa and Sul Maggotgnaw are about to collapse**
- **What is left of the two forces will scatter across the territory looking to prey on the weak**
- **Killing Het Trakaa and Sul Maggotgnaw will ensure that these attacks are scatted and uncoordinated**

Both the Hidden Snake and Poison Crane armies have now been broken in battle and will disband within days. When that happens, the soldiers who are left will break and seek out cover as the army dissolves. Whatever happens, these partians will be a problem for the Urizeni, raiding farms and caravans, stealing goods and attacking patrols. But those attacks will be ill-disciplined, they will lack any direction or purpose. They will be a problem, but not one that grows with time, or joins forces with other problems the Urizeni face, at least until they get new leadership from somewhere.

However, if the generals of the two armies are still alive when their army collapses, they will go with their soldiers and be able to maintain a degree of cohesion and control over what remains. On the face of it, the effects will be the same, the army will dissolve and the soldiers will go into hiding, emerging to attack isolated farmsteads and passing merchants. But with the leadership still there, such attacks will be guided by a malicious intelligence, able to plan attacks and act in concert with other enemies of the Empire.

The two generals have been identified as Trakaa of the Hidden Snake and Sul Maggotgnaw of the Poison Crane. Marching under a tattered banner depicting broken bones, Trakaa will be accompanied by his personal Pakad bodyguard. Sul Maggotgnaw is protected by a unit of poison-wielding Chikkad who fight under a banner depicting a ichorous maggot. Killing these two important Druj leaders will ensure that the surviving Druj are left leaderless, limiting the threat they post once the army disbands.

THREAT: THE MIRK LIZARDS

- **The Druj are joined by a group of human warriors clothed in scraps of tattered blue fabric**
- **They appear to be excommunicating rather than executing some victims in battle**

A band of human warriors march with the Druj into battle. Wearing tattered scraps of blue tunics, they have the demeanour of grim-faced and seasoned mercenaries, well-armoured and carrying an assortment of weapons. Next to nothing is known of them, but there are rumours that these warriors are driven to oppose the Way in some fashion. There are claims that priests among them have excommunicated foes on the battlefield, rather than executing them as the orcs might do. There is no known reason for their actions, or why the Druj allow it; so the war scouts urge caution. Killing them will put an end to their plans and stop their support for the orcs of the Mallum, but if more can be found out, it could prove useful in time to come.

ENVIRONMENT: WORDS IN THE PINES

- **Druj ghulai have invoked the power of Agramant to curse the area**
- **Combatants that fall in battle, either Druj or Imperial, will rise again as a shambling husk**
- **Skilful blows or dedicated effort can stop these hideous creatures in their tracks**

With the enmity of the Conclave safely in place, Blood upon the Snow, is limited in what he can do in Sarangrave, unless invited into the world by a magician. In their desperation the Druj have done exactly that, invoking the power of Agramant to curse the whole area. As a result, each spirit, whispering gnawing words of unending hunger for the living, is quick to find a body of a recently felled combatant in the area and animate them in a cruel mockery of life. Biding the sibilant uttering of their master, the corpses will stalk forth in a stumbling advance keen to slay any living creature they find.

Anyone who falls in the battle on the Fens of Varreth will rise again after three minutes unless the individual is executed before they arise. The shambling corpses are not especially hardy, and can be taken down through a sustained assault or more expertly ended through the delivery of cleaving strikes or mortal blows to the limbs or torso.