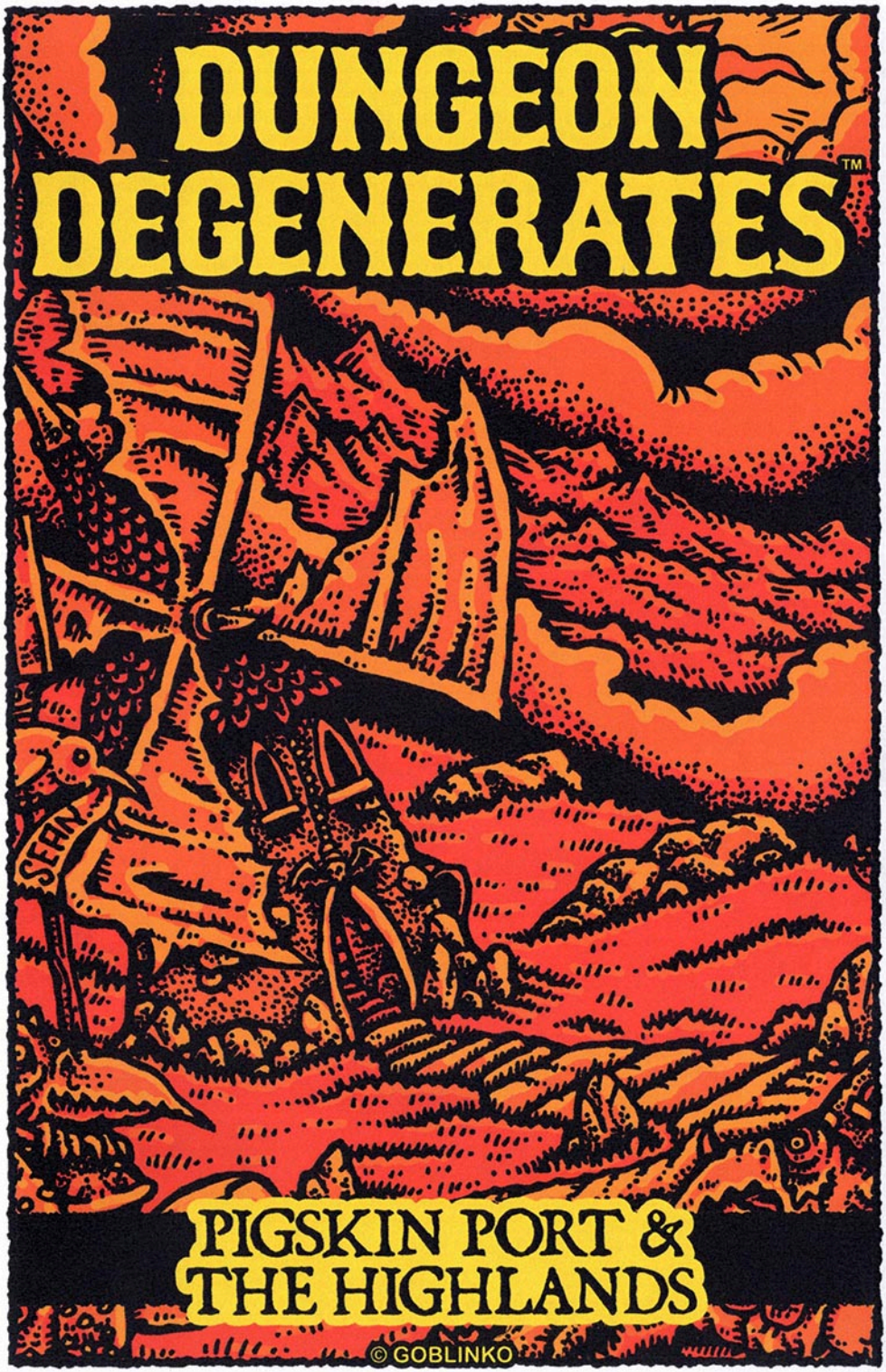

DUNGEON DEGENERATES™
SEAN
PIGSKIN PORT & THE HIGHLANDS
© GOBLINKO


SLAVER'S PA
THE TEMPLE OF MADNESS
THE TUNNEL OF TERROR
THE FOOTHILLS
PIGSKIN PORT
THE WINDMILL (FOOTHILLS)
NORTH BRIDGE (FOOTHILLS)
THE WATCHTOWER
BRUTTELBURG
EAST
(WITC

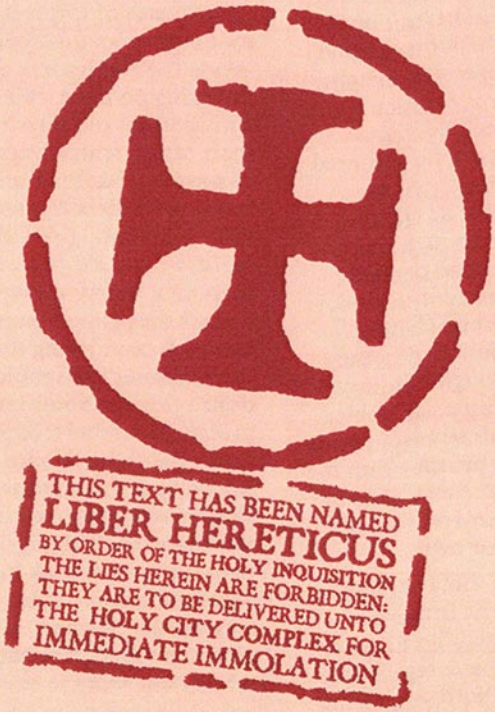
PIGSKIN PORT & THE HIGHLANDS

Wer weiß, warum die Gänse barfuß gehen?

Imperial historians call the Highlands the *'Kingdom of Madness'*; a chaotic realm where up is down & everything is wrong. Murderous madmen & monsters run rampant through the streets & men live in fear amidst the utter absence of law & order. Brigands, witches, vermin & disease take their toll on the wretched & amoral populace; a people cursed by the Celestials as punishment for their wicked worldly ways.

The land itself is cursed as well, seething with rot & warped by Daemonic presences. Are these merely lies penned by the Puritan propagandists of House Furzgeräusch, or is there any truth in these harrowing tales?

Lies or no - each day fugitives, deserters, pilgrims & exiles leaving the Würstreich walk the North road to Pigskin Port, where their freedom & an uncertain future await them.



© 2017 GOBLINKO - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Created by Sean Äaberg & Eric Radey

GOBLINKOMEGAMALL.COM

© GOBLINKO

PIGSKIN PORT

When the Highlands fell under Imperial rule, Pigskin Port was built as a trade post & center of the prosperous livestock industry in the North, its slaughterhouses & sausage factories feeding the people of the Würstreich. Over the long years, as Imperial power waned & resources were stretched thin, the Imperial vice-grip on the North loosened, allowing new ideas to grow & flourish among the workforce there.

THE RISE OF THE GRINDERS

As the legend goes, a pig-herder by the name of Frederick Van Schweinehaut was accused of mutinous rhetoric, escaped capture & fled into the Mountains of the Mouth. There he lived as a wild hermit until he discovered a lost abandoned mine rich in gold & other precious metals, along with ancient tools & relics of some lost civilization. Secretly returning to Pigskin Port, he gathered family & allies, bringing them to the lost mine to plunder its riches. Trading their bounty through secret proxies, they amassed a respectable fortune that they invested into land, livestock & infrastructure. Calling themselves the Grinders' Guild, they soon accumulated enough holdings to rival those of any Imperial Noble House. Inspired by this triumph, other commoners began to prosper with the help of the Grinders & a new class of low-born property-owners emerged forming Guilds of their own.

Outraged by this new threat to their power, the nobles in the Imperial High Council petitioned the Emperor to enact laws restricting & regulating all trade not affiliated with one of the major Noble Houses. When Imperial troops moved in to enforce these new measures, the people rose up in revolt. The rising power of the 'Free Guilds' & their mercenary forces took the unprepared & overconfident Imperial troops by surprise. Several Imperial columns were encircled & captured, much of the rank & file opting to fight for the rebel forces in exchange for their freedom. Bolstered by these new recruits & equipping themselves from plundered Imperial armories, the rebel army captured town after town, driving loyalists back to North Bridge, where they were met by the full force of the Imperial military. Making camp on either side of the river, the two forces each waited for the other to attack, pummeling the opposite bank with artillery.

NIGHT OF THE RYE WIZARD

As the stalemate at North Bridge continued, the bodies piled high & the expense of Imperial resources mounted to an unsustainable level. When the Nobles imposed strict rationing on their levies & conscripts, a mysterious old pilgrim visited their camps with a wagon-train full of supplies, handing bread to the starving soldiers & quenching their thirst with strong rye whiskey. That night, a madness overcame these men. In a frenzy spurred by ecstatic visions they rioted; burning their own camps & plundering the supplies of the wealthier household troops before destroying the Southern end of the bridge. The rebel troops watched as the South bank burned through the night & the great army of the Würstriech destroyed itself. Amidst the chaos, the old pilgrim slipped back over the river & took his place in Van Schweinhehaut's inner circle, for he was the Rye Wizard - a mad mountain alchemist Frederick had befriended while wandering in exile.

The household troops of Füdlibürger & Bäredräck were conspicuously absent from this calamitous event. They had been secretly diverted to march through the Witchwood, cross

©GOBLINKO

the river & attack the rebel forces from behind. This desperate gambit to break the stalemate met with disaster during the Night of the Rye Wizard - the flanking forces were set upon by Gütter witches & a horde of unspeakable crawling things on the dark trails of the Hexenwald & were never seen again.

While the rioters at North Bridge were subdued, captured & executed, the Imperial army never recovered & the Emperor's Kriegmeisters were forced to concede victory to the rebel army, granting the North independence from the Würstreich.



Crest of the Schweinereich

THE CURSE OF THE RYE WIZARD

Frederick Van Schweinehaut quickly seized his opportunity, declaring himself Emperor of a new nation; the Schweinereich, with the Rye Wizard as his appointed Grand Vizier & his inner circle elevated as lords & ladies of the land. But the other Guilds were run by shrewd leaders with foresight who refused to swear fealty to another tryant. They turned on Emperor Frederick within the first year of his rule, beheading him in the streets of Pigskin Port & declaring the North a free land of no Kings. The Rye Wizard was captured & hanged, then cast into the river. Somehow unharmed, he rose from the waters of the Stinkendblüt with a newfound hatred for all of mankind. Swearing his revenge, he wandered off back into the Mountains of the Mouth, where through dark sorcery he set his lingering curse upon the Highlands.

Not long after the Rye Wizard's exodus, miners working in the mountains began to disappear & many more claimed to have been visited by nightmarish visions. These visions spread to the herdsmen of the Foothills & soon found their way into Pigskin Port, plaguing the minds of Highlanders with maddening hallucinations & waking dreams. Laborers fled in terror from the countryside as mobs of strange & impossible creatures appeared to raid livestock & spread insanity, warping the abandoned farmsteads of the fleeing commoners into blighted hellscapes of twisted surreality.



A Procession of Horrors

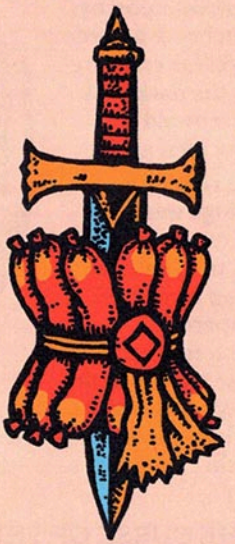
©GOBLINKO

The gibbering things took myriad forms in obscene mockery of ordinary objects, animals & people conjured up from the subconscious of the horrified Highlanders. They rampaged across the countryside & infested the alleys of towns & villages, whispering nonsense & lurking at the corners of human perception. Today, these absurd abominations known as Weirds or *'Nacht Drek'* are an ever-present part of daily life in the Highlands. Many of them harmlessly inhabit human settlements & are little more than an annoyance, but others are quite dangerous & unpredictable; their motives an eternal mystery.

This plague of Weirds & the strange visions that continue to haunt the North are commonly blamed on the Curse of the Rye Wizard, a favorite scapegoat for the various misfortunes that befall the Highlanders.

THE DESCENT INTO CHAOS

With the fall of the short-lived Schweinereich, the Guildsmen struggled to establish their new system of rule as hordes of Imperial refugees & deserters flocked to the North & the Weirds appeared to nibble away at the fabric of reality. They established a High Council of Guildsmen to oversee the defense & economy of this new republic & to preserve their control over production & commerce in the Highlands. Despite the Guilds' efforts to establish order, the ravages of war & the maddening influence of the Weirds pulled the realm back down into a state of lawlessness & chaos where it remains to this day. Many of the deserting Imperial troops, mercenary companies, & rebels from the Lowlands turned to banditry, forming roaming warbands of marauders that prey on the people they once fought to free. Gütter families & escaped fugitives from the Lowlands established their own communities in the North; semi-nomadic bandit gangs that live by their own laws & codes, many of them integrating the ever-present Weirds into their ranks.



Crest of the Council of Guildsmen

LAW & GOVERNMENT IN THE CHAOTIC NORTH

The strongest gangs, guilds & warlords have carved out their own territory where they rule by strength of arms & economic clout. Bloodshed between factions is frequent & alliances are forged & broken as the Noble Houses of the Würstreich secretly meddle & scheme to regain a foothold in the North.

Based in Pigskin Port, the High Council of Guildsmen provides mercantile oversight & struggles to protect the holdings of the guilds & maintain civil order. Though Pigskin Port has no standing army as such, each guild maintains its own force of Mercenaries. Rivalries & hostilities between guilds is common, but those that engage in open warfare with each other run the risk of excommunication from the Council & condemnation or attack by the

© GOBLINKO

other guilds. Because of this, the clever Guildsmen war on each other by proxy, secretly hiring unaffiliated mercenary companies & bandits to do their dirty work.



Highlands Bandit

CULTURE & RELIGION

The culture of the Highlands is a product of Imperial influence on the wide array of Gütter traditions that survived Imperial colonization; their heathen spirit-worship now in a state of resurgence in the absence of Inquisitorial persecution. Puritans, Gütters, cultists, heretics & heathens live in close proximity & over the years their practices & beliefs have intermixed in countless subtle ways.

Most of the outlaws, fugitives & renegades who have flocked to the Highlands to escape the restrictive regime of the Würstreich have no use for the hypocritical morality of the Puritan Order & live worldly lives. Common folk superstitions & folktales take the place of the cyclopean doctrine of the Puritan Holy Order. Others fled or were driven from the South due to religious persecution, leaving the North lousy with cults, witches & heretics; some dangerous & some absurd.

Commoners make offerings to harvest spirits & imps of hearth & home to keep them safe from the hostile & unforgiving world. In the Highlands, they are free to practice their Gütter traditions publicly, without fear of the Puritan Witch Smellers. Soldiers & bandits pray to the gods of luck & death to keep coin in their pockets, steel their sword arms & protect their bodies from harm. Among the Puritan families of the North, there are numerous sub-sects & heretical reinterpretations of the teachings of the Saints - some with beliefs that stray wildly from the monolithic official doctrine of the Order.

The wide range of disparate cultures that inhabit the Highlands are a continual source of tension & conflict. Customs & etiquette can differ from district to district or neighborhood to neighborhood & many groups hold fundamentally opposing beliefs that cannot be reconciled; attitude toward the Weirds being one such topic of contention.



THE CARNIVAL OF SCHWEINEFEST

The festival traditions of the Highlands are derived from the Würstfest of Brüttelburg & the Gütter Kürbisnacht, only free of the strict limitations imposed on both in the Imperial Lowlands by the

©GOBLINKO

Holy Order. During the Schweinefest, months of anticipation erupt into drunken wild celebration, as the people release the stress of their daily struggle for survival against the dangers of the wild North through wanton acts of indulgence, gluttony, lust & drunken violence. The Northern variations of this harvest festival feature their own cast of characters & themes, enacted by masked & costumed locals in parades & games. Though the main event occurs at Pigskin Port & Highlanders travel there from all over the Foothills to participate in the carnival, smaller local versions of the festivities are held in remote & nomadic communities as well as the Bandit Camp, where the Gütter traditions are preserved with little Imperial influence. Wherever the festivities occur, Weirds join the celebrants & in the drunken chaos it becomes difficult to tell monster from mask.

THE BUTCHER PIGS

The butchers & slaughterers of Pigskin Port dress in pig masks made from cured hide & chase swine through the town square brandishing their cleavers & hooks. Pigs caught by these masked men are gutted & roasted on spits in the square as a great feast for the festival-goers to enjoy over the ensuing days of celebration. Herders from the hills bring their livestock to the festival, competing to provide the finest & fattest swine. Some of the Guilds even employ alchemists to breed unnaturally huge specimens augmented with strange serums & concoctions in pursuit of the coveted title of *'Schweinemeister'*.

In remote communities, the head of the village or camp will attend the carnival in a coat or cloak covered in strings of sausages, playing the role of the *'Meat Mayor'*. He must ride a swine backwards through the carnival crowds, who chase him to steal sausages from his meat-festooned attire.

THE JOUST OF FEAST & FAMINE

A besotted & obese youth riding a pregnant sow jousts against a frail elder in rags riding a starving nag. The joust of Feast & Famine, sometimes enacted as 'Prince & Pauper', represents the endless struggle of prosperity & poverty; life & death. The legend says that if Feast wins the following season will be plentiful; but if Famine somehow manages to claim victory, the omens are bad & dark times lay ahead. While the game is stacked in Feast's favor, it is not uncommon for him to fall from his pig in a drunken stupor & be trampled into the mud.

In Pigskin Port, entire neighborhoods fight mock battles against their neighbors, bursting into homes & assaulting each other with pig bladders & old eggs. In some cases, other conflicts are conducted, with participants dressed in imitation Imperial uniform being pelted by rotten refuse from the crowd. This concludes with the burning of an effigy of the Emperor or a crude model of North Bridge. Once, celebrants actually burnt the real North Bridge in a frenzy, forcing the Guildsmen to reluctantly finance its reconstruction.

GÜTTER ENTERTAINERS

Nomadic families of Gütters flock to the carnival at Pigskin Port to make money from the celebration. Gütter caravans bring exotic foreign goods & various entertainers; dancers, jugglers, knife-throwers, sword-swallowers, acrobats, contortionists, fortune-tellers, fools, trained animals, freaks, geeks, mummers & magicians

©GOBLINKO



Gütter Entertainer

ply their trade at the docks & on the outskirts of town. Among their ranks are con-men & pick-pockets who have given Gütter performers & traders a bad reputation. Gütters often conceal small blades, needles or darts in their distinctive hats, shawls, scarves & kerchiefs & they will not hesitate to use these to defend themselves or threaten & rob drunken stragglers at the carnival.

GOBLIN RACES

Spectators at the Schweinefest gamble on the Goblin Races, in which each Guild dresses their healthiest Goblin slave in Guild colors & regalia to compete for the entertainment of onlookers. As the goblins run, they are bombarded & harassed by spectators & tittering Weirds chase them, nipping at their heels or lashing their backsides. In some variations, the goblins are mounted on prize pigs, or suited in armor & made to fight to the death. In Western communities where goblins are unavailable, local vagrants are rounded up & forced to endure similar treatment.

FATHER FUNGUS & MOTHER MOLD

Chosen elders of the Gütter communities are dressed up as Father Fungus & Mother Mold; pestilent spirits of rot who are driven through the camp by youths brandishing pitchforks & sharp sticks. In some of the more remote nomadic communities, the pair are actually speared to death by vicious drunks who are given license to rid the community of unwanted & burdensome elders. In other communities, particularly the wandering mendicant Bell Ringers, Father Fungus & Mother Mold are honored as benevolent spirits & given generous offerings of spoiled meat & produce scattered around the encampment in special pots.



Locals celebrating Vernichtungtag

VERNICHTUNGTAG

The Schweinefest concludes on the final day of celebration, called the Vernichtungtag. The people of Pigskin Port arm themselves with sharpened sticks & clubs & sweep the city, hunting the swarms of vermin that have gathered to feast on the leavings of the festival. Vermin hunters compete to collect the most rat

©GOBLINKO

corpses, tying their tails to long poles that are displayed in the market square for tallying & judgment before being cremated in great pillars of flame.



Bloodsport Brawlers

PIT FIGHTS

Pit fights & bloodsports are common forms of entertainment in the Highlands & a lucrative business for the gangs that host them or run the betting books. While the most common combatants are slaves, beasts & professional fighters, during the carnival these are often joined by goblins, dwarves, freaks, Weirds, or costumed drunkards. Some pits allow spectators to join the competition for a small fee in hopes of winning a large cash prize. These brutal fights to the death are often preceded by more comical combats between children, Goblins, fools & dwarfs. In the bandit encampments of the Northeast, exotic beasts & horrors from the Wasteland are pitted against each other & spectator casualties are a common occurrence.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WÜRSTREICH

In the days following the Night of the Rye Wizard, the borders closed & all official trade between the North & South halted. With economies already devastated by prolonged warfare, the Guildsmen & the Noble Houses soon realized their mutual reliance on each other & one of the first acts of the High Council of Guildsmen was to declare a truce & reopen trade with the Würstreich, signing treaties with representatives of the major Noble Houses under the blessing of the Emperor *(though not the church)*. Since then, the various Guilds & Houses have negotiated alliances & fostered new rivalries, both public & clandestine. Some of the Imperial Houses have even managed to purchase small parcels of property & land in the Foothills, though these are held more by force of arms than by legal writ.

North Bridge has been rebuilt & traders travel the roads between Brüttelburg & Pigskin Port while ore & meat are floated down the river on barges into the Lowlands preyed on by brigands & pirates. Very recently, concerns amongst the Imperial Plaguefinders over blighted & unwholesome provisions coming in from the North have prompted them to petition the Emperor & Imperial Council to block or at least heavily regulate such imports. This suggestion has met with fervent opposition from Houses Bäredräck & Patschesitzen, as well as Guildsmen diplomats - those who profit most from such trade. These opponents naturally claim no involvement in recent assassination attempts against certain High Plaguefinders or the burglary of key evidence. For now, the borders remain open & the Bäredräck & Patschesitzen amass obscene wealth by selling untainted goods from the South at inflated prices, while buying up questionable Highlands product for a discount & reselling it to unsuspecting citizens of the Würstreich & paying a handsome bribe to House Furzgeräusch to keep the Plaguefinders' concerns from the public.

©GOBLINKO

THE GEOGRAPHY OF PIGSKIN PORT

The stench of Pigskin Port is infamous, its main street features row upon row of abattoirs, livestock pens & mazes of ramps & catwalks where herds of swine are led to the slaughter. Surrounding this are the hovels of the commonfolk & on the edges of the city are the docks where workers keep busy loading & unloading shipments day & night. A complicated & chaotic network of chutes & pipes carries the offal & blood of the slaughtering floor to outlet into the river where it is carried South towards the Würstreich. The Northern edge of the city is developed around ancient fortification walls & this is where the chateaus of the Guildsmen & the meeting halls of the Council can be found, guarded by garrisons of mercenary troops.

Surrounding the city on the far banks of the river are the tanneries where stilt-walkers work amongst the overwhelming stench & clouds of flies; curing pigs' hides in pits of skrag excrement. Whether from countless hours of wading through filth or from the vapors given off by the blighted hides, the tanners of the Varkenskloppers Guild are notoriously deformed & deranged. They seldom enter the city proper other than to deliver wagonloads of cured skins & to collect fresh hides from the abattoirs & vats of urine from the public toilets to be used in their noxious trade. The tanners also process the bones, hooves & cartilage of the slaughtered swine into gelatin for use by apothecaries, cooks & confectioners.

Over the years since claiming its independence from the Würstreich & the fall of the Schweinereich, the city has grown rapidly both up & outward with little or no oversight or planning. The result is a confusing mess of narrow streets & hastily-built structures of questionable integrity. To compound the chaotic & bewildering nature of this disorganized sprawl, the Weirds creeping in the cracks & corners of the city have been known to dismantle & reconstruct buildings or even entire neighborhoods with no discernible rhyme or reason. Even stranger, their mere presence seems to have a corrupting effect on reality itself & as they gather in their numbers, the landscape around them shifts & changes in unexpected ways. Some have theorized that they are not the cause of this bizarre phenomena & are merely another symptom of some larger threat. Whatever the case, in the dead of night bird-faced Nacht Drek & strange, lurching Weirds in all their myriad forms gather & the mad cacophony begins. Hammers sprout legs & chase similarly endowed nails & planks through the streets, tittering at each other in obscene childlike voices. The walls sprout faces & scream in pain as the hands & claws of the weirds pull at their wooden flesh. Driving off these nocturnal pests with threat & violence is an exercise in futility & so the people of Pigskin Port must endure & adapt as the shape of their homeland perpetually changes around them.

While this strange ritual is enacted by gibbering troupes of Weirds throughout the Highlands, nowhere are the effects more keenly felt than in the crowded neighborhoods of Pigskin Port. When offal chutes & septic pipes are redirected into workers' hovels, the results can be disastrous & in the daylight hours, work crews hurriedly repair the most dangerous alterations & struggle to retain some order against the unrelenting entropic pull of utter chaos. Day or night, the city is never free from the maddening cacophony of squealing pigs & of hammer & saw.

©GOBLINKO



THE GUILDSMEN

The administrators, property-holders, tax-collectors & executive agents of the Guilds are known as Guildsmen; the wealthy & powerful elite of the Highlands. The most influential of these hold seats on the Council of Guildsmen, an administrative body that provides mercantile oversight & the only form of centralized government in the North. Each Guild maintains its own military force & these sometimes come into conflict with each other, though rarely in the open. Despite minor internal squabbles, the Guildsmen understand their common interests & tend to support each other over any foreign entity; combined they are a force to be reckoned with. Today, they desperately scramble to maintain some semblance of order as the spectres of famine, plague & war loom on the horizon.

Below the surface, the Guilds are responsible for as much bloodshed & criminality as their unsanctioned counterparts. Unlike the gangs & mercenary companies, the Guilds maintain a peaceful facade, blaming their illicit operations on outlaws who make an easy scapegoat. While the distinction between Guild, gang, militia & cult is often vague, it is the Council of Guildsmen who ultimately determine what constitutes a sanctioned Guild or an outlawed organization. Councilmembers grow wealthier from the bribes of lesser organizations hoping to stay in their good graces. Those who earn their enmity & lose Guild status also lose exemptions from crushing taxation & the protection of & from the Council's various mercenary forces.

The Marmalade Guild

Known as *'Marmites'*, they trade in produce, ale, cider, liquor, pickled goods & preserves, dyes, fragrances, sweets & confections. They operate like a religious order, though their beliefs are kept secret from outsiders.

The Meaters' Guild

The Meaters deal in livestock, meats & butchery. A true trade Guild, they represent many independent butchers & slaughterhouses operating in & around Pigskin Port.

The Grossers' Guild

The Grossers are a Guild of teamsters, farmers & herdsmen who deal in produce, livestock, wool, meats, spices, herbs & exotic imports. They supplement the profits from their vast land holdings by buying up the produce of small independent farms who lack the resources to safely transport their stock into Pigskin Port. The Grossers maintain numerous wagon caravans for the transport of goods across the Highlands; merchants, wanderers, diplomats & entertainers follow these caravans, guarded over by road-hardened mercenaries. As the blight ravages their land the Grossers have turned to imports; colluding with the Imperial House Patschesitzen to sell untainted grain from the Lowlands at inflated prices. Meanwhile, their agents wander the Wasteland in search of exotic trade goods offered by shifty Goblin merchants.

The Varkenkloppers Guild

Also known as the Skinbeaters, the Varkenkloppers run the tanneries

© GOBLINKO

producing hides, leather & leather goods, gelatin & meat byproducts. The tanners working in the stinking pits surrounding Pigskin Port are notoriously insane & mutated, but their masters are fabulously wealthy.

The Pumpernickel Guild

With their holdings ravaged by blight, the millers & bakers of the Pumpernickel Guild are in a state of crisis struggling to conceal the full scope of the problem.

The Jellyhoof Guild

The Jellyhoofers make delectable treats from the byproducts of the Meaters & Skinbeaters' industry. These are exported to the Würstreich to be sold in the fancy candy shoppes of Brüttelburg's Obenstadt. They also manufacture expensive medicines to treat the many mysterious ailments that befall the people of the Highlands.

The Grinders' Guild

Though they have lost much of their influence since the fall of the Schweinereich, the Grinders retain a seat on the Council & command prodigious resources. They tade in ore, metalwork, armor, jewels, gems, artifacts & imports.

The Picklebarrel Guild

Control of this Guild has been passed down from father to son over the years like an Imperial House. Currently, it is directed by the sons of the Pickle Baron who died in a tragic accident, or so they claim. Their towering pickelry is a massive complex near the docks of Pigskin Port where the guild pickles vegetables, skrags' eggs, pigs' feet, mushrooms & other delicacies to be floated downriver into the Empire.

The Brickers' Guild

Their laborers in Pigskin Port who repair damages caused by the destructive predations of the Weirds have a reputation for laziness & lackluster work. In truth, they quickly give up all enthusiasm as they realize the futility of their efforts.

The Burlap Guild

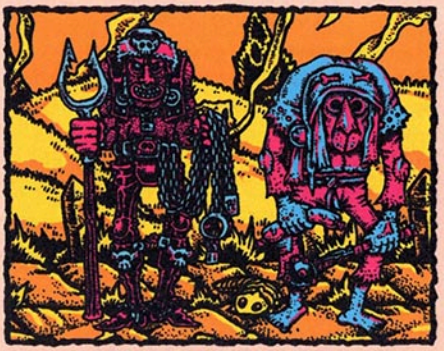
Masters of textiles, grain, dyes, bookbinding, medicine & herbs, the Burlap Guild is known for their high prices. Their agents hunt up & down the river for rare Scrogs whose innards are used to make vibrantly colorful dyes.

THE BANDIT CAMP

Living under constant threat from Weirds, Goblins, & each other, the outcast colonies gathered together for safety, forming a sprawling camp hidden in the Northern Foothills under the protection of the Bandit Gangs; a neutral zone where the bandits are, in theory, prohibited from doing violence on one another. Despite this prohibition, bloodshed & thievery are commonplace here as the bandits quarrel over turf & perpetuate decades-old revenge cycles & rivalries.

This shanty town of tents & crudely built structures is thoroughly infested with lunatic Weirds, while Goblin traders often visit to sell Goon Grass, Skrag Nog & other exotic products of the Wasteland. Living alongside the destructive Weirds, people of the camp have long abandoned attempts to build any permanent structures, instead living out of tents & yurts that can be pulled from site to site by wagons & pack animals. This practice has allowed the camp to relocate several times to avoid goblin attacks or military retaliation from the Guildsmen.

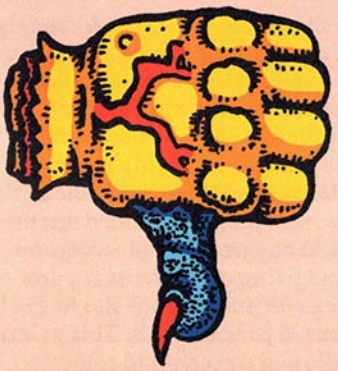
© GOBLINKO



Mancatcher & Mutant

THE BANDIT GANGS

The Highlands are home to countless communities of outcasts, nomads, Gütters, fugitives & refugees. Some of these communities are large collections of families including children & the elderly struggling to survive outside of the hierarchy of the Guilds, while others are no more than small bands of armed thugs. To the Guildsmen, these communities are known collectively as 'bandit gangs'. Over the years, a few of the larger gangs have established their dominance & grown to truly massive proportions, absorbing smaller groups into their ranks & commanding fealty & tribute from various outcast communities in exchange for protection.



BLUE THUMBS

The Blue Thumbs are perhaps the largest of the Highlands gangs, named after the Schweinereich's practice of tattooing the thumbs of convicts & slaves. They control the Hidden Halls, raiding for swine & slaves against communities that fail to pay them tribute. Quite possibly the largest gang in the land, they hold the allegiance of several smaller gangs & have established secretive treaties & contracts with both Guildsmen & Goblins.

Their enforcers are disgusting haemunculi created from ground meat in a vaguely human-shaped sausage casing preserved by the skills of renegade alchemists. These lurching sausage golems may be clumsy & dimwitted, but they loyally follow the simple commands of their masters & never question their orders. These meaty monsters are kept disguised with absurd masks covering their hideous faceless forms.



RIVER RATS

Comprised mainly of Gütters raised around the waterways of the Borderlands, the River Rats haunt the twisting banks of the Stinkendblüt ambushing supply rafts on their way downriver. The Rats' talents for smuggling & piracy have earned them the enmity of Imperial Houses Bäredräck & Patchesitzen, who offer generous bounties on the heads of any bearing the gang's regalia. The River Rats bring their plundered goods to sell in the Bandit Camp at very low

© GOBLINKO

rates & this has earned them the support of many of the smaller gangs & Gütter families that gather there.



MURDERHAWKS

The Murderhawks are a vicious pack of cutthroats, slavers & Weirds who terrorize the North. Covered in warpaint, they descend from the mountains without warning, enslaving entire villages to be taken in chains through Slaver's Pass to the court of Lord Scrott. The Murderhawks are rough & ruthless; toughened by a cruel life in the Mountains & driven beyond sanity by the voices of Weirds carried on the howling winds.



THE ADMIRAL

An old Imperial Man-of-War lays rotting inexplicably marooned in the Southern reaches of the Mountains of the Mouth; its tattered sails flapping uselessly on creaking masts. How this mighty seafaring warship came to be stranded leagues away from the nearest ocean is a mystery, but today it is home to a gang of brigands & Weirds under the command of a madman calling himself 'the Admiral'. Styling themselves after pirates of the high seas, they drag the ship's cannons across the foothills under sails converted into war-banners, extorting villages & encampments under threat of bombardment.

FERALS

When slain, Weirds dissolve into a foul bubbling puddle of goo that seeps into the ground & contaminates the soil. According to Gütter campfire tales, the ferals are men & women who, out of desperation or sheer madness, have fed on this noxious muck. Driven insane by the horrid ichor, they live like beasts in remote areas lost to civilization where they are spurred to savage acts of murder & cannibalism by the spore ravaging their minds. Wearing the gnawed bones of their victims, they terrorize travellers who are unlucky enough to cross their path.

THE HIDDEN HALLS

The Hidden Halls are a secret place somewhere in the Northern Foothills near the Bandit Camp; an ancient subterranean complex of unfathomable depth. A hollow pit receding endlessly into blackness, its walls hewn into a spiral walkway with numerous apertures & passages leading off into the dark.

The concealed entrances to the Halls are known only to the pig-raiding Blue Thumbs bandit gang, who use the upper levels for the storage of plundered provisions, taking advantage of the strange & mystical properties of the place. In the Halls, time flows differently & the ravages of rot & decay are absent. The Blue Thumbs found that meat & grain stored here would stay fresh

© GOBLINKO



Sausage Slaver



Goblin Raider

indefinitely & rumor has it they've stockpiled a massive hoard within the many chambers of the upper Halls. What's more, the Goblins shun the Halls & avoid the area entirely, leaving them free of the raiding & scavenging that troubles the Northern Foothills.

No one knows how far into the darkness the Halls descend. Of those who have ventured below, scarce few have returned. Those who have not are said to still wander below, transformed into the *'Moroi'*; husks of men lost in time & cursed with an eternal living death. Those lucky enough to find their way back have spoken of countless chambers filled with row upon row of the ancient sarcophagi of a hideous reptilian race & of a strange humming noise & rumbling vibrations emanating from the endless blackness below.

THE GOBLIN MENACE

The Eastern edgex of the Highlands border onto the vast & desolate Wasteland where Goblins & savage tribes struggle to survive in the harsh & barren landscape. The rich spoils of the Highlands are an attractive target for marauding warbands of half-starved fiends from the wastes. With the Empire ousted from the North & the combined military might of the Guildsmen busy at war in the South, Goblins gather to gleefully enslave & plunder the roaming communities of Gütters, outcasts & outlaws living in the Northern Foothills.

THE FOOTHILLS

The Foothills are a prodigious expanse of rolling hillsides & pastures spotted with farmsteads & ancient stone fortifications eroded by the wind that offer shelter to vagrants, cults, refugees & robbers. Processions of Weirds travel freely across the countryside; part warband & part circus parade, they spread their

© GOBLINKO

insanity unchallenged & unabated. Some theorize that they follow lines of energy across the land marked by old standing stones placed in esoteric patterns described in the arcane texts. The rogue alchemist & philosopher Luciduous claims to have witnessed entire regiments of Weirds gathering at some nexus point hidden in the hills, where they took formations & made war on each other in perverse mockery of Imperial military tradition. Walking mortars bombarded towers that screamed & bleated like swine at the slaughter while mounted heavy bird lancers charged into pike columns of rat-tailed & pig-faced imps dressed in Imperial livery, tittering with insane glee even as they were brutally impaled on razor-toothed steel. Spider-legged mitre caps crawled over the bodies of the whimpering wounded, shouting nonsensical litanies in shrill voices. It is no wonder that Luciduous is wanted for questioning by the Inquisition; the same man also claimed to have discovered the secrets of the universe hidden in the patterns of holes in a moldy old block of cheese.

The hills are riddled with hollows & caves where the children of the Vermin Queen dwell. Her realm has no boundaries & her cult is strong in the Highlands; both in the gore-spattered alleyways of Pigskin Port & in the rural countryside. Deep in the hills are desolate & lost villages, overtaken by Weird raiders, swarms of vermin, or blanketed in mold & fungal growths; forever blighted by the Curse of the Rye Wizard. The Guildsmen struggle to keep these hellish places secret to prevent panic & unwanted questions & some they have cleansed with fire, leaving them in charred ruins to be slowly reclaimed by nature.



THE WINDMILL

The Foothills were once covered in windmills to harness the cold winds whipping down from the Mountains of the Mouth to grind grain into flour. Today, only one remains, known simply as 'the Windmill', this absurdly tall edifice towers over the countryside & dominates the horizon in the Southern Foothills.

Over the years since the Rye Wizard's departure, a horde of Weirds has descended on the windmills, towers & hovels of the Foothills, tearing them apart one by one & bringing the raw materials to the great Windmill. Under the light of the moon, the drooling & tittering hordes of surreal creatures converge at this place, scrambling across its surface to build on top of the insane structure for some unknown purpose. With each gathering this absurd structure grows; patched together from the scrap of dozens of smaller buildings, its mighty arms turn slowly in the breeze. This creaking colossus now stands perhaps six or seven times its original height & with each growth the base has been extended so that the interior contains several layers of older,

© GOBLINKO

smaller windmills within an ever-growing outer skin, like the layered dolls of the Gütters.

This bizarre looming curiosity has become a favorite attraction for wealthy Brüttelburgers & Gütter merchants gather beneath it to sell souvenirs for the gawking tourists & candied gummi windmills for the children. As the windmill turns, visitors can hear the distant rumbling of impossibly huge machinery hidden below, hinting at some mysterious purpose for the mighty mill beyond the grinding of grain. If the Millers know the secret of this subterranean machinery, they do not say.

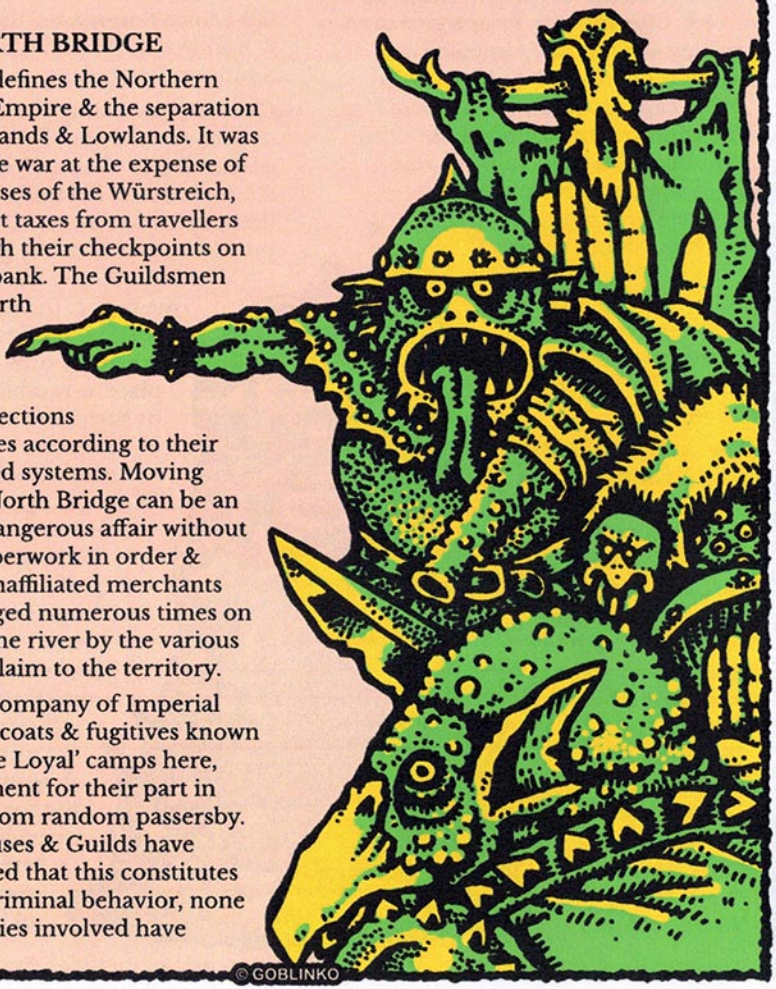
NORTH BRIDGE

North Bridge defines the Northern border of the Empire & the separation between Highlands & Lowlands. It was rebuilt after the war at the expense of the Noble Houses of the Würstreich, who still collect taxes from travellers passing through their checkpoints on the Southern bank. The Guildsmen control the North side of the bridge, conducting their own inspections & imposing fees according to their own convoluted systems. Moving goods across North Bridge can be an expensive & dangerous affair without the proper paperwork in order & bribes paid. Unaffiliated merchants are often charged numerous times on both sides of the river by the various factions with claim to the territory.

A mercenary company of Imperial deserters, turncoats & fugitives known as 'Those Once Loyal' camps here, claiming payment for their part in the uprising from random passersby. While the Houses & Guilds have mutually agreed that this constitutes banditry & criminal behavior, none of the parties involved have volunteered to finance any effort to put an end to it, even as the ranks of Those Once Loyal swell with fresh deserters & fugitives by the day.

THE WATCHTOWER

The crumbling walls surrounding this stone tower once defended the borders of the Würstreich from the Goblins & lost tribes of the Wasteland. It now serves as a gathering place for bandits & guildsmen, frequently changing hands as allegiances shift & the factions of the North struggle for dominance. Though the tower was built to withstand prolonged artillery bombardment, the



©GOBLINKO

destructive Weirds labor at it with pickaxes; rearranging hallways, revealing lost hidden chambers & digging twisting tunnels below that undermine its effectiveness as a defensive position.



River Pirates

THE STINKENDBLUT RIVER

The cold, milky waters of the Stinkendblut spring from the monstrous gaping maw of the Tunnel of Terror in the North & flow to Pigskin Port & the Watchtower, where they split, forming East, West & South branches. Its many bridges are supplemented by fords & crossings hidden along its winding course, used by locals & smugglers. Pirates camp in hidden marshy outlets & crumbling riverside battlements, waiting in ambush for anyone with something worth stealing. The River Rats gang in particular has a widespread network of hiding holes & buried stashes along the borders of the Empire.

Strange things float down the river from the Tunnel of Terror; unwholesome fish, shimmering goo & odd fungal growths drift with the current to Pigskin Port where they are joined by torrents of blood, offal & filth from the slaughtering houses & tanneries. This sickly stew carries the stench for which it was named far downriver into the Lowlands where it disgorges into Tomb Lake.

During market season, the river near Pigskin Port is packed with the rafts, boats & barges of traders going about their business & inexpensive passage downriver can be easily obtained, with no questions asked. Officially chartered ferries are also available for slightly higher prices for those frightened by tales of freelance boatmen working in collusion with pirates, delivering their fares into the clutches of riverside robbers & slavers.

THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOUTH

Jutting crags fill the horizon at the top of the world; mountains shaped like Daemons & monsters of solid rock carved by ancient giants loom over the Foothills with leering ghoulish faces as if to ward away travellers. Above these lofty crags, colors shimmer in the night sky & in the daytime they are shrouded by a swirling haze of unnatural fog thick with spores erupting from strange gnarled chutes that sprout from the mountainous terrain.

The treacherous mountain paths are wind-blasted & barren. Wildlife & vegetation are sparse here; the hammering winds & chill frost create a treacherous & unforgiving climate. Caves & tunnels both natural & fabricated riddle the hollow mountain peaks; within they are lush with luminescent fungal growths sprouting wherever moisture from the snowy mountaintops seeps through the layers of ancient rock. The Weirds seem to thrive in this environment & travellers on the mountain paths can hear their disturbing insane voices carried on the wind & echoing across the lofty peaks & hollows.

The Southern reaches of this massive mountain range are home to numerous mines & quarries built during the years of Imperial rule in the North. Over time, these have mostly been abandoned due to

© GOBLINKO

constant harassment from Weirds who gleefully collapse chambers & dismantle the shelters of the workers. Today, only a handful of mines still operate, the workers protected by large forces of mercenary guards.

The ancient mine once discovered by Van Schweinehaute has been lost along with its treasures; the inner circle of Grinders were executed during the fall of the Schweinereich & none remain who can decipher the cryptic notes & maps they once kept. The Guildsmen periodically finance teams of explorers to seek out this lost & wondrous hoard, but no one has succeeded thus far.

SLAVER'S PASS

Hidden in the Northern Foothills is the entrance to a wide & winding pass leading deep into the Mountains of the Mouth. Along the pass are the cliffside cave dwellings of Murderhawks, Wound Lickers & Blue Thumbs who use the saddle points & cliffside ledges to travel further North than the men of the Empire ever reached. Bundled in bearskins & leading processions of human & Goblin slaves taken from the Foothills & Wasteland, the Murderhawks bring their prisoners through Slaver's Pass high into the mountains where the Nacht Drek Servants of Lord Scrott pay for captives in pure glittering gold.

The path is long & treacherous, frequently blocked or altered by landslides & treacherous weather conditions. To facilitate the journey, the bandits have hidden camp provisions in caves & crevices along the cliffside trails, protected from the hammering high winds that sweep through the pass.

The gusts & gales & strange acoustic properties of the pass carry the disturbing voices of the Nacht Drek court echoing across the mountaintops. The nightly song of Lord Scrott's subjects takes its toll on the minds of the slavers who make this trek continuously throughout the calmer seasons & no doubt those that dwell in the caves are all quite thoroughly insane, living side by side with the Weirds that torment their sanity day & night.

Murderhawks, Wound Lickers & Blue Thumbs mark their territory here with long ropes strung between tall spires & strange coral chutes jutting from the cliffsides. These are decorated with tattered pennants that flap violently in the chilling mountaintop winds bearing symbols & ciphers of the gangs. The slavers' cliffside cave-dwellings are connected by complicated & dangerous rope & pulley systems, ladders & plank bridges. These are frequently molested by the elements or Weirds & they require continuous upkeep. Here on the top of the world, far away from the laws of civilization, the gangs attack each other openly; raiding the camps & caravans of their rivals to steal valuable slaves & provisions.

THE TUNNEL OF TERROR

A colossal stone verm carved from the rock coils through the mountains like a monstrous leviathan of the deep. From its gaping toothy maw ushers the Stinkendblüt river that spans the border of the Empire. The mouth itself creates a natural conduit known as the Tunnel of Terror that reportedly leads deep into the mountains, all the way to the fabled Temple of Madness. The Mountains of the Mouth take their name from this gargantuan opening that catches & funnels the wind to generate a resounding roar like some great screaming beast. The howling mouth echoes across the hills, but within the Tunnel of Terror, the roar of funneled winds & rushing waters rise to an unbearable pitch. The mad monk Brother Bellringer,

© GOBLINKO



in his journal entitled *'The Revelation of Lord Scrott'*, claims to have walked the entire length of the great beast & makes no mention of the maddening howl of the verm, presumably because he was deaf as a post. Travellers clever enough to stuff their ears describe an interior shaped like the innards of a gargantuan serpent; the walls shift as if breathing & veins, orifices, & secretions cover the glistening inner walls. Harrowing tales of travellers fallen into pits of acid, devoured by bizarrely oversized insects, lost in squishy maze-like corridors, or carried off by cackling cadres of Nacht Drek keep all but the bravest explorers from this hellish hole of horrors. The Weirds & Bellringers that serve Lord Scrott, however, have no such fears about the Tunnel of Terror & use it frequently as a passage between their realm & the lands of mankind.

THE TEMPLE OF MADNESS

The only accounts of this place come from the deranged scribblings of wizards & lunatics who claim to have visited or observed the Temple from afar through dreams & astral wanderings of the mind's eye. Whether or not it even exists at all is a matter of some debate amongst the scholars of the Empire, though it appears again & again in sketches & carvings made by madmen citing feverish ecstatic waking visions. This fabled palace appears so frequently in the hallucinatory episodes of the mad that it has been named the Temple of Madness & is widely regarded as an imaginary gathering place for the hopelessly insane.

If the heretical etchings of alchemist-illuminator Jan Vandermaan are to be believed, the interior of the Temple is a labyrinth of claustrophobic twisting hallways where gravity plays tricks & one can easily get lost among winding corridors leading every direction in confusing geometric patterns completely unlike anything wrought by the hands of men. The walls of corridors bubble & sweat or run like melting wax. Chutes & openings appear at random to spew streams of goo or wisps of vapor & faces form to whisper secrets & nonsense. Passages curve with no consideration for up, down, right or left as if designed by floating beings or as if the Temple itself was constructed without any particular axis of reference.



The Arch-Weird Bird King Lord Scrott

THE REVELATION OF LORD SCROTT

This rambling & unedited manuscript describes the feverish hallucinations of a wandering pilgrim who, while wandering alone in the mountains with only a crust of stale bread & a large iron bell, supposedly entered the temple of Madness & found the hidden court of the arch-Weird Bird King Lord Scrott. Esteemed scholars of the Würstreich consider this manuscript a study in pure insanity, refusing to believe that any kernel of truth lies within. The Inquisition

© GOBLINKO

has declared the text heretical & has hidden it away in their secret library, though followers of Bellringer's cult have preserved the words onto hand-copied scrolls. When Brother Bellringer was finally put to death by the Inquisition, his body burst apart 'resembling a grotesque flower of flesh', according to eyewitness accounts. Some even say that, when hung by his ankles from a gibbet pole, the blood gathered to his head & escaped 'as a whispe of cloud'.

IN THE COURT OF LORD SCROTT

In the heretical scripture of the apostate monk Brother Bellringer, Lord Scrott is only vaguely described; a towering & magnificent being of incandescent glory, not unlike (& perhaps derived from) descriptions of the Celestials found in the ancient Puritan texts.

In the etchings of Jan Vandermaan the alchemist-illuminator, who claimed to have visited the Bird King's court in drug-induced ritual visions, Lord Scrott is portrayed as a terrifying bird-like creature shrouded in a toxic cloud with an iron pot for a crown & ceramic jars for shoes. Vandermaan rendered the arch-Weird's court at the heart of the Temple of Madness in vivid detail; rank upon rank of Nacht Drek knights gathered under the banners of their king in crude imitation of ancient Imperial culture.

Gütter grandmothers tell tales of Lord Scrott at the campfires of the Bandit Camp, passed on from survivors of the Night of the Rye Wizard. The tales claim that Lord Scrott was once a noble of the Wurstreich who unknowignly ate a loaf of witch's bread from the Rye Wizard's wagon that fateful night at North Bridge. Distorted by the wizard's tainted grain, Scrott's skull split & flowered, spewing out a pink mucus called *'Nacht Milch'*. The infection invaded his body, turning organs into purple-black sclerotia & he emerged from his gaseous cocoon fully changed into the towering & horrific Bird King. He still travels in a toxic cloud which causes violent muscle spasms, vomiting, delusions, hallucinations & crawling sensations. Those that hear the tink-tinking of ceramic jars on the rocks & smell the sweet aroma of the Nacht Milch in the air tickling their sanity would do well to run & hide; for such signs herald the approach of the Lord of Weirds!



©GOBLINKO



THE BLIGHT

Across the Highlands, an invisible threat grows hidden in the air, water & grain through which it infests the people & animals, slowly working its way into their minds & sending them surreal & terrifying visions. While the initial signs are little more than a mild intestinal discomfort accompanied by sporadic & subtle multi-sensory hallucinations & a growing detachment from reality, the later stages of infection in those who have ingested extreme levels are truly a horror to behold. Convulsions & seizures wrack the victim's body, twisting it into unnatural shapes. The gut & head bloat & distend while the extremities lose circulation & necrotize; blackening until they eventually fall off. The victim's skin dries out & flakes, revealing irritating patches of fungus that slowly grow to coat the body in a mossy shell. Approaching death, the host's mind is tormented by endless visions that often drive them to violent, destructive & suicidal behavior. Weirds seem to be drawn to those dying from lethal exposure to the Blight, arriving out of nowhere to witness the final transformation of the Blighted. The bloated belly & skull burst from within, showering the area in a fine mist of spores. From the body & the newly contaminated land around it, strange formations of fungus stalks & spongy molds sprout like an oasis of rot where the Weirds frolick & dance.

Most denizens of the North live with mild levels of contamination, unaware of the cause of symptoms they barely notice. However, some remote colonies have fallen victim to massive outbreaks that reduced them to ghost towns. In the lost blighted villages of the Foothills, the corpses of villagers & animals still lay in the mold-coated streets, frozen forever in time like perverse statues; exploded from within & host to tall stalks of fungus growing from every orifice of their infested carcasses. Lizard-skinned & bird-faced Weirds stalk amongst these macabre gardens as the inheritors of a strange new world; their stilts, hooves & talons tracking through the mold & kicking up spores to coat every rotting shack & hovel. These overgrown areas are sacred places to Lord Scrott's human subjects; the Bell Ringers.

©GOBLINKO

VISIONS OF MADNESS

The visions of surreal landscapes described by the alchemist Vandermaan in scrolls & etchings give the impression of ever-changing, quivering & twisted scenery that seems to writhe across the parchment on which its printed. The texts of Luciduous claim numerous accounts of mass hallucinations, strange dreams, waking nightmares, ecstatic revelations & spatial or temporal distortions. Within his scrolls are stories of lights & shapes in the night sky, hallucinatory pests, bizarre animal behaviors & strange undulating patterns seen on the surface of the moon. Faces appear on inanimate objects to bite their owners or whisper horrible secrets while spore clouds & ectoplasmic whisps float overhead. Towers sprout legs & lumber across the land under downpours of strange bubbling liquids. These are but a few of the mad visions that torment the minds of those living in the shadow of the Mountains of the Mouth.

MERCENARY COMPANIES

In the lawless North, disagreements are settled by strength of arms; whoever commands the most swords sets the rules until a stronger force comes along. For those with skill & experience in the ways of war & even those with nothing more than the strength to lift a weapon, work is readily available guarding caravans & storehouses or enforcing the dictates of local warlords. The Highlands are home to numerous Mercenary Companies; warriors gathered under one banner who sell their services to the Guilds & other interests.



WATTY'S DOGS

Led by a barking beast of a man known only as Watty, this band of cutthroats & brigands fights for coin but is widely considered to be little more than a pack of marauding thugs. The wild & dangerous Watty's Dogs dress in outlandish garb to frighten their enemies & are thoroughly addicted to rare stimulants supplied by Goblin smugglers.

Once, Watty was a slave-brawler in the bloodsport arenas of the Highlands & many of his minions are trained on the blood-soaked floors of the fighting pits slaying wild beasts in hand-to-hand combat. His force includes a large pack of fighting hounds trained for ferocity; slavering beasts starved before battles & given stimulants to enhance their vicious temperament. In war, the hounds are used to harry skirmishers, frighten cavalry & chase down retreating enemies.

©GOBLINKO

They don the colors & stolen armor of Imperial Militants in ironic mockery & they bear cobbled & scavenged weaponry or clutch mallets, saws, hammers, tongs, hay-forks, boar-spears, hooks, crooks, lanterns, sickles, barrels, censers, fish, flags, flagons, or fowl.

The cacophonous din of their bells, trumpets, drums, rommelpots, gongs, whistles & chimes mixed with their singing, croaking, squealing, squawking, bleating & gibbering voices combine into a maddening hypnotic mantra known to compel the weak-willed into bouts of sudden insanity.

NACHT DREK

The Nacht Drek are Weirds who serve the Lord Scrott as knights & agents of his court. They range in size, though often smaller in stature than humans. Their beak faces grin with rows of sharp teeth & their skin is rough like a lizard or plucked bird. Their scrawny limbs end in vicious talons, webbed digits, or other bestial deformities. These impish fiends enact roles from Highland & Imperial society, dressing in mockery of their human counterparts whether they be knights, nobles, monks, ministers, musicians, courtly attendants, fools, paupers, or pigherds.

Sneaking down out of the mountains in small groups, they linger around Highlands communities, mocking them in a strange pantomime of human behaviour. Luciduous speculates that the tittering beasts have some message to share; that their bizarre performances & nonsensical ramblings are in fact obscure allegories containing valuable warnings & portents for those with the skill to interpret them. Whether or not this is true, the Nacht Drek are infamously cruel & ferocious enemies, known for sudden & unpredictable outbursts of wanton destruction & gleeful bloodlust.



Nacht Drek Knight



Nacht Drek Soldier

©GOBLINKO

THE BELL RINGERS

The Bell Ringers are a cult dedicated to the words of their prophet, Brother Bellringer. They claim the Blight is a gift from their Lord that will cleanse the Borderlands of the corruption & evils of human civilization. Their pilgrimages across the Highlands are often banned from villages that regard them as filthy bringers of disease & bad luck. These travelling throngs of cultists can often be found camped outside of larger communities, ringing their bells while intoning the litany of the arch-Weird Lord Scrott & the sacred hymns of mycoremediation. Having gathered certain specimens from the countryside & after burying others in pots near water supplies & swine-pens, they return to their secret sanctums & fungus farms hidden in the hills to study their sinister science.

THE WEIRDS

Nightmare imps of the subconscious; the hallucinations of blight-stricken northerners given life & physical form. The manifestations of some immense & intelligent fungal entity sent as emissaries in a strange attempt at interspecies communication or assimilation. A virulent living plague sent by the Rye Wizard to scourge the land of his hated enemies. The spirits of madness, corruption & disease given flesh. Daemonic invaders from another plane of existence. A punishment for the wicked sent by the Celestials to torment those who have strayed from the Puritan path. The theories are endless as the threat of the Weirds grows.

They take myriad grotesque forms, like mismatched copies of objects built by mankind & the natural shapes of animals. Smaller weirds ride larger ones, or those in shapes resembling beasts of burden, wagons or buildings. Others walk on stilts, frog's legs, bird's talons, cloven hooves or rodent's paws, while some slither like worms with useless & malformed limbs or drag themselves along with makeshift crutches made from oars, farm implements & planks of rotten wood.



Bird Riders



Tongue Runner

© GOBLINKO



THOSE ONCE LOYAL

Those Once Loyal are a company founded by former Imperial soldiers who expatriated to the North & now fight for the highest bidder. Many of these were conscripts in the Imperial army; poorly armed & untrained troops who were the first to turn traitor against the Würstreich. Their ranks are bolstered by a cadre of Puppet Soldiers cobbled together from parts & repaired carefully after each battle. They barely hold together now, but are used mainly for shock value; to scare the peasantry into coughing up tribute.

Their Captain Byron Creamsaw is no soldier & though he is an incompetent tactician, he is a brilliant salesman & gifted negotiator who excels at drawing new recruits into his service; renegades & criminals devoid of discipline, training & common morals. Stories say that he once fainted at the sight of blood & whether or not they are true, he is certainly not one to 'lead from the front'.



THE MAIDEN'S MEN

The Maiden's Men are a militant Puritan order excommunicated & banished for their heretical dedication to their living saint; a miracle child with powers of divination. A small cadre of heavy knights leads a horde of poorly armed pilgrim-soldiers devoted to the cult of the Maiden. This mob of zealots is joined by a gibbering parade of Weirds who supplicate themselves to the maiden in bizarre imitation or mockery of her human subjects. Whatever their purpose, they throw themselves against the Maiden's enemies with a ferocity rivalling that of her human cult. This strange alliance is aided by the Maiden's power to anticipate her opponent's every move.

Those fated to die in the battle are chosen by the Maiden to form the Forlorn Hope; a front line of suicide troops who fling themselves into melee with no regard for their own survival, rejoicing that the time has come to give their lives in the Maiden's service. These doomed zealots are deployed as shock troops, taking the opening volley of enemy fire & making first contact with the enemy's battle lines in a wild gambit to disrupt formations of ordered heavy infantry.

©GOBLINKO



LORD SCHWARZESCHLANGE & BATTALION BLACK

Once a minor Noble House of the Würstreich, the Schwarzeschlange were excommunicated for mutiny during the Night of the Rye Wizard. In exile in the North, the ancient Lord Schwarzeschlange still leads his veteran household troops in service of any guild wealthy enough to pay them, his life somehow extended through dark sorcery. Battalion Black are infamous for their ruthless tactics & mastery of the ways of war. Though old & feeble, Lord Schwarzeschlange is a brilliant military strategist & a veteran of countless campaigns. His closest advisors are two Goblin witches who are themselves masters of illusion & misdirection. Clad in imposing black armor, Battalion Black strikes fear into the hearts of their opponents on the battlefield; their reputation alone is often enough to settle conflicts & prompt the opposing force to retreat or sue for peace. When war is joined, rank upon rank of heavily armored & unbreakable pike infantry advance relentlessly & crush all opposition. Battalion Black is said to be undefeated in the field.



THE WOUND LICKERS

A murderous death cult of sadistic freaks & their Nacht Drek allies, the Wound Lickers practice obscene blood-letting rituals & self-scarification.

It's said that the Wound Lickers drain the blood of their captives into enormous ceramic jars that they carry in their supply train from battle to battle. Where their jars are full, they retreat from battle to their hidden lair in the Foothills.

Their leader Remert Tonguebiter despises Baron Coagula of House Schadenfreude. Baron coagula has reciprocated this enmity by placing a hefty bounty on Tonguebiter's head that none have been able to collect, though many have tried.

©GOBLINKO


XIII
SEAN 2017
©GOBLINKO


SLAVER'S PASS
THE TEMPLE OF MADNESS
BANDIT CAMP
PIGSKIN PORT
THE WATCHTOWER
THE WITCHWOOD
EAST BRIDGE (WITCHWOOD)
WITCH HILL

BANNED IN THE WÜRSTREICH!

DUNGEON DEGENERATES™

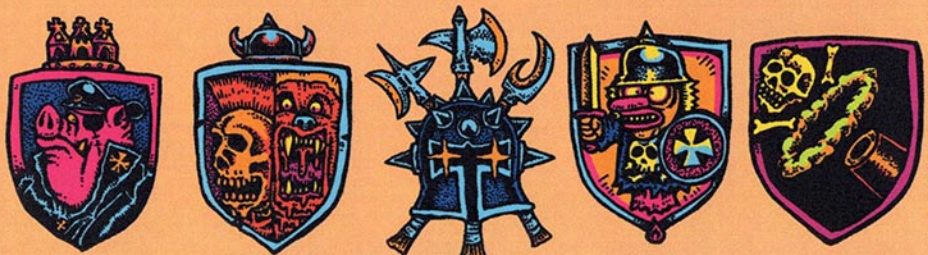
A LAWLESS REALM TEETERING ON THE BRINK OF COMPLETE & UTTER INSANITY!

Imperial historians call the Highlands the Kingdom of Madness; a chaotic realm where up is down & everything is wrong. Murderous madmen & monsters run rampant through the streets & men live in fear amidst the utter absence of law & order. Brigands, witches, vermin & disease take their toll on the wretched & amoral populace; a people cursed by the Celestials as punishment for their wicked worldly ways.



The land itself is cursed as well, seething with rot & warped by Daemonic presences. Are these merely lies penned by the Puritan propagandists of House Furzgeräusch, or is there any truth in these harrowing tales?

Lies or no - each day fugitives, deserters, pilgrims & exiles leaving the Würstreich walk the North road to Pigskin Port, where their freedom & an uncertain future await them.



© GOBLINKO