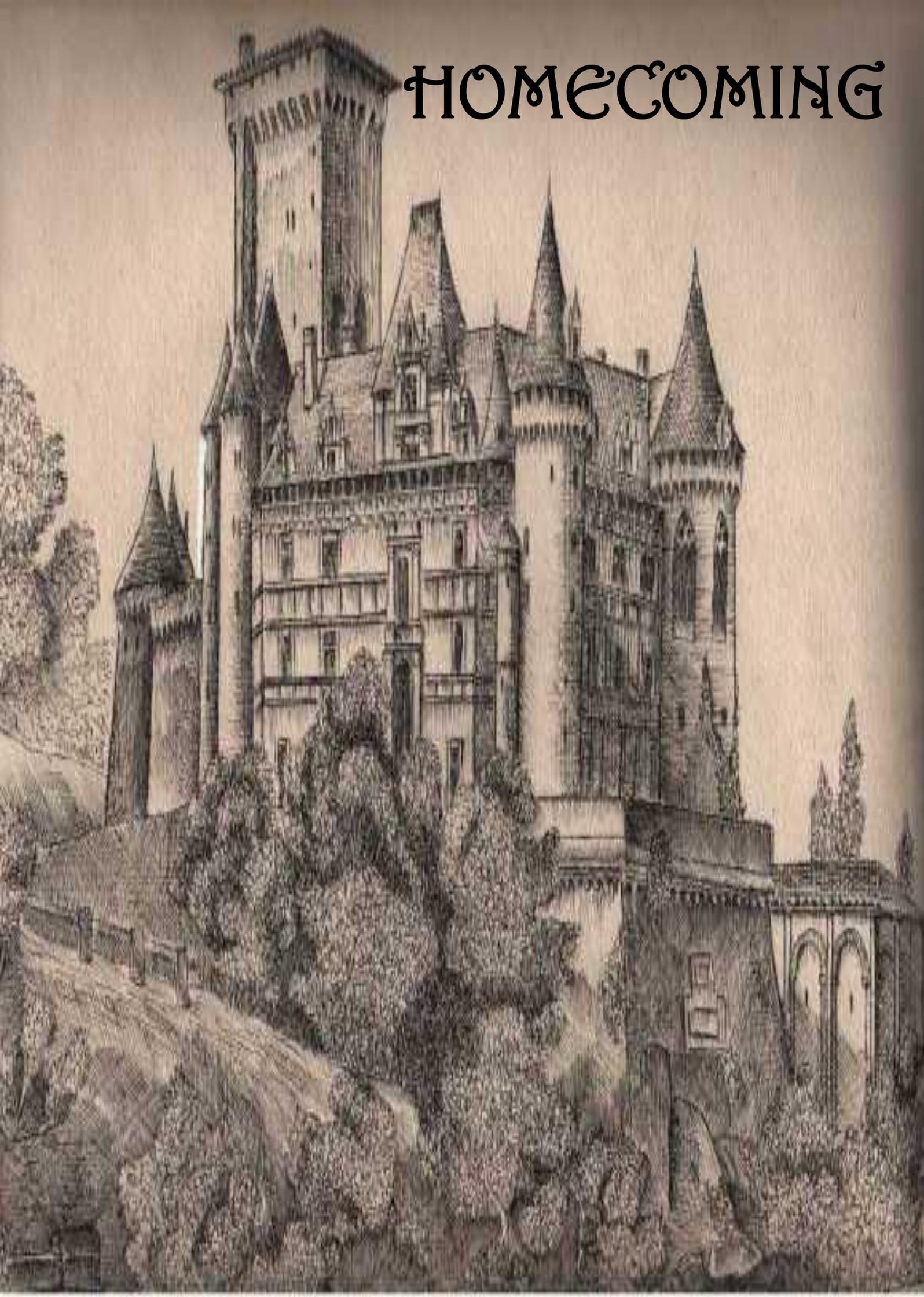


HOME COMING



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5. If you have any questions or comments please contact me at sidicus at yahoo dot com.

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Introduction

Homecoming is a scenario using a cut down version of the Dragon Warriors system published by Magnum Opus Press and Flaming Cobra. The scenario is designed for 3-4 players and to be run in 3 hours. No prior knowledge of the Dragon Warriors setting or system is required.

Setting

The game is set in a fantasy version of Europe during the Crusades (1095 – 1272). Christianity has spread across England and from there knights and holy warriors travel to the holy lands to purge them of the “unbelievers”.

This setting is not meant to be historically accurate, or be set in a specific year or period. Instead it is designed to be a general representation of the conflict and superstition of the time.

Religion

There are three main religions used in this game.

Christianity Christianity has become predominant in “civilised” Western Europe. This religion is new, but has a strong following. Two generations ago many powerful families, such as the Boldhearts still held to some of the old ways, but with the conversion of the king of England to Christianity the rest of the country quickly followed.

Muslim Muslim is the predominant faith in the “holy land”. For most characters little is known about this strange faith. While it seems to believe in a central god figure, it does not acknowledge Christ or the resurrection

Paganism “Paganism” is a catchall for the “old gods”, worshiped by barbaric races and those who follow the dark arts. Elric is the main example of this, believing in Viking gods such as Thor, Odin and Loki.

Please note: These are “stereotypical” version of the religions and are not meant to accurately portray any real world beliefs.

Magic

Magic and mythic creatures exist and still have power in this mythical age. Superstition and rumour cloud reality and only the most learned know the difference between myth and magic.

Christianity’s crusade has wiped most of the “civilised” lands clean of magicians and their ilk. Only those with a powerful patron are saved from being burnt at the stake by an angry mob.

Lands

The land of Norfolk, where the game is primarily situated is on the eastern coast of England. Maps of the lands and town can be found in the Appendix.



Themes

The Journey

Homecoming is a journey with two faces.

Firstly there is the physical journey from the French fishing boat to Boldheart Keep. This is very



linear. Unless there is some significant player rebellion, the players have little real choice on where they go.

The more important journey is the one the characters make as the plot unfolds. Each character will be challenged by the plot and other characters. Decisions need to be made on how to resolve the dilemmas they face. This is the more important journey as here the players are free to grow and explore.

Religion

During the 12th century religion and superstition were very strong forces. As such there are themes regarding religion and faith.

Although this is a time of religious division, it is assumed players will bring a more moderate and tolerant view to the table, allowing the various people to interact without prejudice.

Betrayal

The prevalent theme throughout the game is betrayal. At each stage of the game there is some deception, and it is only through overcoming these deceptions that the party can succeed.



Background

The Boldheart Curse

The Boldhearts are an ancient family once steeped in Pagan tradition. This tradition has left a curse that each Boldheart must walk as an un-dead abomination for 50 years before gaining true release.

Ghosts of dead ancestors frequently walk the castle halls at night and the family crypts are lined with lead and covered in pagan runes to banish the dead. The hauntings and the lingering of the dead unsettle those who have mourned their loss and moved on. Living members of the Boldheart family are haunted by nightmares and ghosts while in the family lands. The same lands they have been sworn from birth to protect.

The pagan rituals of the Boldheart ancestors have never managed to lift the curse, but the advent of Christianity has led to the belief that a relic infused with the holy power of a saint can banish the dead and end the curse.¹

To that end Talwin Boldheart and his brother Michael Boldheart embarked on a crusade to the holy lands to find a relic and lift the curse from their family.



Timeline

Time	Events
5 years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Talwin and Michael set off to the holy lands in search of a holy relic.Eric and a small party of Vikings take a boat to search the southern lands for new raiding grounds.Belina becomes Beliath's apprentice. Has part of her soul stolen by Beliath during initiation.Dhrupert starts training to become an assassin.
4 years and 7 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Eric Svent's ship runs aground. Eric abandons ships. One by one the survivors fall to sickness and the dangers of the wilderness until only he is left.
4 ½ years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Talwin's party is attacked by a large group of bandits. Almost everyone is killed and Talwin is left for dead. (Michael escapes, but abandons quest believing Talwin is dead).Eric stumbles across a badly injured Talwin and although they shared no language he brought him back to health.
4 years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Talwin sends letters home, notifying his family of his brother's death and his determination to continue his quest.The letters never arrive.
3 years and 9 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Talwin's father MARRIK sickens and dies. He was never the same since Michael returned with news Talwin had died.
3 years and 8 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Grief stricken, Talwin's mother Threse throws herself from the battlements, leaving Michael as the lord of Thetford.
3 years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Michael is a weak ruler, and is unprepared for the task. His mother haunts him during the night, and the town is rife with the rumour that the wraith of MARRIK is stalking those that slighted him in life.Dhrupert becomes a full assassin.

¹ Authors Note: This is an attempt to cross the pagan superstitions which have been engrained in generations with the new Christian religion.

Time	Events
2 ½ years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dhrupert is given the task of making contact with a spy in England known as "Star Eye". He knows who has been sending the crusaders to their lands.
2 years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dhrupert finds Talwin and disguised as a Christian boy she becomes his squire.
1 ½ years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belina seeks to gain possession of the orb of darkness held by her master. She finds out that Talwin is looking for a holy relic and uses a potion of scrying to discern Saint Alberic's final resting place. While retrieving the relic she is visited by Saint Alberic.
1 year ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belina plants the finger bone of Saint Alberic in Beliath's tower and leads Talwin and his party to Beliath. Beliath is slain, but in his dying breath he cast a spell of vengeance on the party. Beliath's dark spirit is transported to the ancestral home of the Boldhearts, Thetford where it plots its revenge.
11 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their quest complete, Talwin and his party begin their long journey home. The shade of Beliath grows in power, turning the weak and half-mad Michael Boldheart into his puppet. Mercenaries and hired swords are brought in to compliment and replace the Boldheart household guard. With these mercenaries comes "Star Eye". His silence makes him a suitable guard for the half-mad pawn, Michael.
10 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercenaries, under the direct order of Beliath sack East Harling. There are no survivors and the attack is made to look like Viking raiders, despite the fact it is far inland.
9 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Boldheart, influenced by Beliath declares a vendetta against the Village of Spijkenisse. They are held responsible for the destruction of East Harling.
8 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Beliath's help, the Boldheart soldiers sack Spijkenisse, taking the survivors prisoner.
7 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Egill, seeing no end to the slavery sells his soul to Beliath in exchange for freedom and power. He is made another of Michael's personal guards. Beliath finds out that Ragnhildr is Elric's sister. Using dark magic he plants his seed in her, planning to use the child to continue his own existence.
4 months ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling Belina getting closer, Beliath uses his dark magic to sculpt a doppelganger and infuses it with the stolen part of Belina's soul. He has his apprentice back, and the means to exact personal revenge on her. Beliath uses his power to set supernatural guards on the border of Thetford.
1 day ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beliath's immediate plan is to exact revenge on Talwin, Elric, Belina and Dhrupert. Once this is complete he will use his magic and cunning to take over England and build an empire for himself.
Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talwin and party disembark from a small fishing boat in the dead of night. It is the first time in 5 years that Talwin has been on his native soil.



Rules

Below is a simplified version of the core rules from the Dragon Warriors RPG.

These rules are designed to allow for a free flowing game. The advantage is that the rules are simple and easy to remember. The disadvantage is that the rules do not explicitly cover every intricate detail, and the GM will need to be able to adapt when characters perform actions outside of the rules.

This system is based around the use of a d20. Actions are generally opposed and take the form “Roll under (Attacking Stat – Defending Stat)”.

For example, to make an attack the attacker must roll under their attack – the targets defence on a d20.

COMBAT

INITIATIVE ORDER

Initiative order is based on reflexes. Highest to lowest. All NPCs are assumed to have a reflex of 10 unless otherwise stated.

THE HIT ROLL:

Roll under (Own ATTACK – Opponents DEFENCE) on a d20

THE ARMOUR BYPASS ROLL:

Using the “dX” value listed next to the weapon, roll higher than opponents Armour Factor (AF)

DAMAGE:

Damage is the static value listed next to the weapon

RANGE:

For ranged combat, penalties and ranges are at the GM’s discretion.

- Short: +0
- Med: +3
- Long: +7

MAGICAL COMBAT:

Roll under (Own MAGICAL ATTACK – Opponents MAGICAL DEFENCE) on a d20

Damage:

As per spell

SUPRISE:

The attacking party rolls 1d6. On a roll of a 1 they surprise their opponents and get 1 free combat round

Note: This roll may be modified by mitigating factors (GM discretion)

COMBAT ROUND:

Each combat round lasts 6 seconds. Characters may take ONE action per combat round.

Actions include:

- *Attack*
- *Draw Weapon*
- *Move up to 10m*
- *Cast Spell*
- *Draw and shoot a bow*
- *Continue reloading a crossbow*

Additional actions that do not require one action for the round include:

- *Move up to 2 ½ meters*
- *Speak a few words*

STEALTH:

Roll Under (Own STEALTH – Opponents PERCEPTION) on a d20

EVASION:

Roll Under (Attacks SPEED – Opponents EVASION) on a d20

HEALING:

1 Hit Point per day (or as per potion)

STORY

Overview

The primary (but not only) theme of this game is that of betrayal. Each player has in some small way betrayed their faith or their family.

- Talwin betrayed his family by continuing his quest despite losing his brother Michael.
- Elric betrayed his clan by following Talwin on his quest rather than returning home.
- Belina betrayed her master by turning on him, and her new faith by continuing to practice magic.
- Dhrupert betrayed the party by lying about her intentions and her faith by pretending to follow Christianity.

In turn, during the course of the game, each player will be betrayed.

- Talwin will be betrayed by his brother, who believes he is dead.
- Elric will be betrayed by his best friend, who sold his soul to escape slavery.
- Belina will be betrayed by the part of her soul that was stolen by Beliath.
- Dhrupert will be betrayed by “Star Eye”, her contact who has ambitions beyond his original mission.

Characters

It is important to give each character enough “screen time” to feel that they are involved in the game and can achieve their goals. While the game is centred on Talwin, it is as a party they will succeed or fail.



Structure and Timing

This story is separated into 3 parts.

Suggested timing is provided for each part but should be modified to suit the Game Master and players involved in the game.

The combat system is designed to be free-flowing but where bad dice rolling is hampering the gaming experience it is recommended the Game Master modify the difficulty and encounter accordingly.



The introduction

A warm-up designed to give the party a chance to interact and hint at what will happen later.

- The introduction should be around 45 – 60 minutes, and depend on the interactions of the party. This timing should be flexible and if the players are having fun getting into character, allow them more time to build a realistic rapport.

The discovery

This is used to reveal important plot points and show the party the extent of the betrayal. This is not the homecoming they were expecting, and this is their time to contemplate and discover what is going on.

- The discovery is a series of dramatic exposition scenes with character interaction in a confined space. It should be around 60 minutes long, or less depending on the interactions the players have with the characters.

During this scene it is important to balance the dramatic exposition with the players need to interact and influence the course of the game.

The confrontation

This is the climax, where the characters will confront the shade of Belial, as well as their own failings and betrayers. This series of scenes should be between 60 – 90 minutes long, given there may be a number of combats involved.

During this scene it is important to control the pacing of the battles. The confrontations should not be a cakewalk, but if the party is stuck on a challenge the Game Master may need to adapt to the situation in order to prevent the game from becoming bogged down in the combat mechanics.



ACT 1: Arrival

Scene 1: Landing

The purpose of this scene is to establish the setting and mood for the rest of the game. It allows the players to interact and stamp their personality on the character they are portraying.

The small fishing vessel creaks and groans as it beaches on an un-named shore. Through the wind and darkness you can see the rocky outline of a disused trail.

Finally, after a journey of two thousand miles you are on English soil. For some of you this is the first time you have seen this land, and for others it is a homecoming.

The chatter of the French fisherman disrupts your thoughts. "Vous êtes ici. Je voudrais mon argent maintenant!" (You are here. I would like my money now.)

The peasant and his oarsmen want their money. Five silver florins, a hefty price to pay even for such a dangerous journey across the English Channel in a leaky rowboat.

The hour is late and the ferry crossing into the land of Thetford is still a good half days march away. It is time to take your next step on this path laid out before you.

Notes:

The characters need to head inland following the disused trail and cross the river Thet to get into Thetford. The time is just after midnight. River Thet is about 4 hours walk in the dark, and the party should arrive just after sunrise.

The French fisherman is motivated by money and fear. He does not want to be found on English soil in daylight. He will not take them any further except to return them to France for another 5 silver florins.

If the fishermen are attacked by the party, they will try to douse the lantern on the ship and flee out to sea. They are strong swimmers and sailors but do not have any combat prowess.

Fishermen (x3, 2 Oarsmen and 1 Captain):

Attack = 10 Defence = 5 Magical Defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 10 Perception = 5 Move = 10/turn

HP = 3 AF = 0 Weapon: Oar (d3,3)



Should the characters manage to steal the boat and try to sail to up the river Thet they will find the going difficult. The party has no experienced sailors and in all likely-hood the boat will eventually beach on hidden rocks, forcing them to abandon ship. A particularly ingenious party may find a way to sail the boat, but should at some point end up at scene 2 below.

Interlude: The party has yet to cross the border into Thetford. Here is the chance to build a sense of normality and routine, something to contrast the strange happenings later in the game. For example the party may wish to set camp, forage for food or set a watch.

Scene 2: The Thet Ferry.

The purpose of this scene is to allow the characters to interact and warm up with the system before the main plot starts.

The Thetford ferry is on the river Thet. This river is the border and a crossing into Thetford.

The ferry is little more than a wooden raft guided across the river by a rope strung between the banks. On the other side is a small hut the ferryman lives in.

Beliath has posted a monster known as a “Death’s Head” to watch the border and attack anyone who might try to come across. In particular it has been set to kill Talwin and his party.

A Death’s Head is a vile supernatural creature with the appearance of a human head with a horn sprouting from the forehead and black bat-like wings behind the ears. During the hours of daylight the monster devours the head of its victim and binds itself magically to the severed head, using its dire sorcery to animate the body as a Zombie. During the hours of darkness it detaches from the body and files around, searching for new victims.

Death’s Head: Daytime (Zombie)

Attack = 12 Defence = 4 Magic defence = 7 Evasion = 2

Stealth = 5 Perception = 8 Move = 6m/turn

HP = 15 AF = 0 Weapon: Staff (d6+1,4), Unarmed (d3+1,3)

Notes: 20% chance a character will immediately suspect something strange about the “Ferry Man”

90% chance hit will damage zombie. Other damage taken directly by Death’s Head (Bat).



Death's Head: Night-time (Bat)

Attack = 16 Defence = 18 Magical Defence = 7 Evasion = 7

Stealth = 14 Perception = 10 Move = 30/turn

HP = 8 AF = 3 Weapon: Horn (d10,4)

By day the Death's Head is posing as a hooded and secretive Ferry Man. He will willingly take the party across; though will insist they cross one at a time.

Once the first of the party is across and isolated, he will attack. (Surprise on a roll of "1" on 1d6).

The more occult of the party members, such as Belina will recognise the creature as a death's head once it reveals itself. She knows the only true way to kill it is to stab it in the head.

Following the battle, the party may investigate the hut. Inside is the headless body of a young girl. If anyone examines the body closer they will see a blinking eye that appears to be growing in the neck cavity. This is the death head's offspring.



Interlude: This interlude is an opportunity to increase the sense of unease in the party. The goal is to set the scene for when the group comes upon the village and finds it bereft of life.

To this end, describe a feeling of being watched, a sudden cut-off cry in the distance, a voice barely heard whispering "Talwin", Belina having nightmares of being a slave to Beliath or some other portent of what may soon come to pass.



Act 2: Discovery

Scene 1: Empty Village

The purpose of this scene is to give the characters a sense that something is not right. This is a scene for exploration and examination.

Following the encounter on the ferry, the party will arrive at the village of East Harling. It is a poor village of about 20 shacks and houses about a half a day's walk from Thetford. The houses are empty, but show signs of a hasty exit. Food lies rotting on tables and in pots over cold cooking fires. Farming tools lie discarded. Some hovels show signs of struggle, with dark stains of blood on the dirt floors and walls.

The village is empty and quiet. Nothing in the village is left alive. Even the birds, rats and insects common to any town will be strangely absent.

Belina will notice that there is the residue of a dark magic over this town. Something terrible has happened and its effects linger still.

Scene 2: Capture

The purpose of this scene is to rapidly progress the plot and give the characters a feeling that the danger they face is bigger than they are.

As the party exit a hovel, or start down the road to Thetford a squad of horsemen arrive from the direction of Thetford. There are 24 men at arms patrolling the land. They have been chasing an escaped Viking, and are carrying man-catcher poles, nets and bolas.

Despite their apparent mission, they have orders to bring back any travellers they find. By force if necessary.

Men at arms: Human (x24)

Attack = 11 Defence = 5 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 12 Perception = 6 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 6 AF = 3 (Hauberk) Weapon: Net (immobilised), Man-catcher (immobilised), Bola (d6,3 + target roll under Str (20) or immobilised)

Notes: Mounted, able to move and attack.



These men are puppets for Beliath. They believe a Viking raid up the river wiped out the village, and this is the reason for their revenge on Elric's people. But in reality Beliath and a band of mercenaries (now in residence at the Boldheart keep) wiped the village out and used it for dark rituals to strengthen Beliath's form in the mortal world.

The men at arms are led by a Corporal Ralf. He is a bully, loyal to his current master and not known to Talwin, even though he and his men wear the Boldheart crest. The fact that Talwin may wear the same crest does not matter to Ralf, and he won't accept Talwin's authority without proof from Lord Michael.

Talwin will recognise only one man in the group, a Fredrick Green. Fredrick is an honourable man who used to command the household guard. He stays because of his loyalty to the Boldhearts, though he has been demoted to a common soldier. Should Talwin announce himself, Fredrick will try to talk them into coming peacefully, promising to help get a message to his brother, who rules Thetford.

If arrested, the players have their equipment confiscated and are tied to a horse. Should they come peacefully, their weapons will still be taken but they will be escorted to the prison rather than dragged there.

Should the players become inventive enough to avoid arrest and the subsequent manhunt they will be led to Act 3, Scene 2 without the knowledge revealed in Act 2 Scene 3.

Scene 3: Revelations

The purpose of this scene is to hint at the truth and explain why things are so different. Almost every character should feel they have been betrayed or wronged in some way.

Whether they come peacefully, or are bloody and bruised from being dragged through the streets, the group are put into a cell until Lord Michael decides what to do with them.

Shackled and stripped of your equipment, you are left to your own devices sharing a dark cell. Flickering shadows play across the walls from the single torch at the end of the passageway.

In the distance, you can hear your jailers gambling with dice. Drinking and laughing as they play for pieces of your equipment.

As your senses adjust to your surroundings, you see a shape huddled in the corner of the cell opposite your own. Every so often it shakes and whimpers as if struggling to wake from a bad dream.



Guards: Human (x4)

Attack = 11 Defence = 5 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 12 Perception = 6 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 6 AF = 3 (Hauberk) Weapon: Sword (d8,4), Unarmed (d3,2)

Notes: Busy gambling, but still mildly alert to noise. There is a bell mounted on the wall to call reinforcements if they are overwhelmed.

Notes on this scene: This scene is designed to reveal important information. Ideally the characters should not be given the opportunity to escape until the scenes below have unfolded.

There are three obvious ways for the party to escape. It is up to the Game Master as to how easily the party can succeed, but the game is geared towards the ghost of Therese allowing the players to escape.

The players may come up with other ways to escape their prison, and it is recommended such thinking be encouraged.

Obvious escape options are:

- DhruPERT picks the lock (but may need to find tools to do so first)
- The party convinces Father Broderic Mason to help them. (The price of this help is the Relic of Saint Alberic)
- The ghost of Therese Boldheart mystically unlocks the door

Part 1: Own Devices

The shape is actually Ragnhildr Svent, sister of Elric. She is several months pregnant, and believes the father is an evil spirit that came to Spijkenisse and enslaved her and all her people. If spoken to by Elric she will recognise his voice and open up. She will explain that several months ago (coinciding with the death of Beliath), armed men from Thetford raided Spijkenisse. They seemed to be aided by a powerful dark magic which caused evil spirits to rise from the ground and fight alongside the English invaders.

They razed the town and enslaved everyone. Those that escaped the English steel were killed by the spirits. She was singled out by the master of the spirits and raped. His dark seed grows in her, and she will beg for Elric to end her life and her suffering.

In reality Beliath's curse struck Talwin's family. Beliath easily manipulated the already mad Michael by using his magic to kill everyone in the town of East Harling, blaming it on the Vikings. In retaliation Michel ordered a raid on Spijkenisse. Beliath led the raid and used the power of the curse



to take everything Elric held dear. The unloving shade of Belialth raped Ragnhildr and is planning to infuse his soul in the child so he can live again.

Part 2: Puppet Show

Leave the characters to their own devices for a while, and let them rage and plan to escape for a short while. If DhruPERT is in the party, ensure this occurs before she picks the lock and can escape.

There is a sudden metallic grinding sound as the door to the outside world is opened. You can see the light of a dozen torches and hear the jailers snapping to attention. Someone important is coming.

A booming voice echoes down the corridor "ALL PRISONERS STAND FOR LORD MICHAEL BOLDHEART!"

Michael slowly shuffles down the corridor. He is a small shrivelled man, his eyes deep hollows that stare madly at his surroundings. He is accompanied by six men at arms.

Clutching Talwin's reliquary he twitches as he speaks.

"So you are the invaders. HA! I was prepared for you this time. This won't be East Harling all over again will it, you Nordic scum?"

"You know, someone tried to tell me you were my long dead brother. Don't try your same lies with me. I was there, I saw him die. There was nothing I could do, nothing. He's dead, my mother's dead, my father's dead. I know. They come to me at night. But THIS will stop them. This will stop you haunting me! God watches over me. Begone demons! Begone!!!"

Michael will tilt his head as if listening to someone as the party tries to plead their case. He doesn't seem to hear it. Belina will notice that there are mystical strings attached to him; someone else is manipulating him.

As Michael turns to leave he mutters to himself "Talwin's already dead. Killing him again can be no worse than the hell I am in now."

He looks to his guards and announces "The prisoners die at dawn."

The largest of Michael's guards nods in acknowledgement. He is dressed in foreign garb and has a tattoo of a star over one eye.

Note: Michael is not completely mad, but swings between lucidity and madness. This is one of his "episodes".



Part 3: Evil Unmasked

This scene should emphasise how everything has gone wrong. It also provides the characters with an opportunity to discover why things have changed.

Hiding in shadows of his own creation, the shade of Belial has remained behind to gloat and taunt the characters.

A shadow detaches from the wall as the sounds of Lord Boldheart's footsteps disappear.

The voice is unnervingly familiar. "Ah Belina, do you like our new home? "Lord" Michael may think you will die at dawn, but that will not end it. You betrayed me and I will make sure your suffering never ends."

"Talwin, you self righteous ass. You know you did this to your family. All these pieces were here long before I arrived. You killed your father, your mother. It drove poor little Michael mad. Now he is my puppet and you are my plaything. I will enjoy seeing you suffer the same fate as your brother"

"Eric, your gods are weak and dying. Soon we will be brothers, with shared blood growing in your sisters' womb. Will you kill her only child or let it live, knowing it will become just like me."

"Dhrupert, they still don't know your secret do they? It seems you have friends in high places. I can't get to them, but here and now I can get to you. I suggest you start praying to YOUR god."

I leave you to pray to your impotent gods and rage against the wall of your prison.

Belial has revealed himself. He feels secure that the curse is in place, and will see the party suffer. Belina can see the links between Belial and the party. The curse is strengthening its grip.

Part 4: A friend

The party is left for a short while to discuss their fate. The characters should be feeling increasingly desperate but should be partway through a plan to escape. .

You hear the door to the outside world open again. It's like you are the only interesting thing left in this town. The guards slowly stand and mutter under their breath.

A calm, clear voice rings out. "Bless you my children. I wish to speak with those that our esteemed Lord Boldheart has condemned, so that their souls can be saved from damnation."

A thin bookish man steps into view. He wears the vestments of a priest of the Catholic church and holds a bible under one arm.

"Greetings, I am Father Broderic Mason. I understand some of you may be God fearing men. I have come to take your confession"



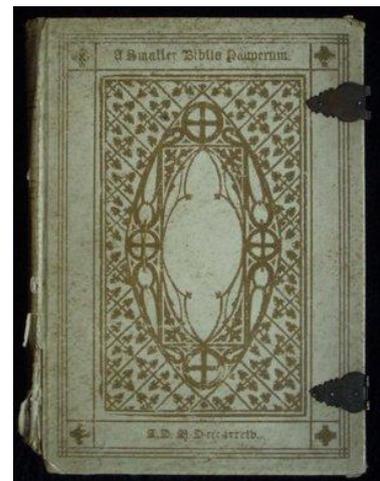
Broderic cannot open the cell, so will take confessions quietly in a corner. Broderic is an open minded man, and can be convinced to help the party. If Talwin reveals himself, Broderic will ask about the relic he was sent to find. Broderic will agree to help the party in exchange for the relic of Saint Alberic.

Broderic can tell the party the following information. He does not realise all of it is important but will explain things if questioned.

- Michael returned to Thetford, reporting that all of his companions, including Talwin had been killed. Michael seemed to blame himself for Talwin's death, but was publicly coping.
- A service was held for Talwin, and an empty place left for him in the family crypt.
- Lord Marrik Boldheart became listless with the death of his oldest son and heir. He died of a sickness of the blood shortly after Talwin's funeral.
- Lady Threse Boldheart, still grieving for the loss of her eldest son was overcome with the death of her husband and threw herself from the battlements.
- Lord and Lady Boldheart were both locked in the family tomb.
- Michael became the new Lord Boldheart. At first he seemed a weak but capable ruler, but over the years he started going mad. He claimed to see his father wandering the streets, and his mother's ghostly presence visiting him every night. The local physician brewed him potions, but nothing could stop the haunting and nightmares.
- Four months ago, darkness crept over the land. Michael started holding closed meetings and hired a large number of mercenaries to "compliment" the household guard.
- The town of East Harling was attacked and everyone killed. Michael blamed Nordic raiders and sent his men to return the favour in kind.
- The Norse village was wiped out, and the survivors enslaved and set to work in a nearby quarry.
- Things have been bad, Michael seems to be straying from the one faith and taking the council of strangers.

If the party has convinced Broderic to help them, he will leave his bible with the words. *"The Lord God's words will provide guidance when you need them most. Read from them after the evening service."*

The book has actually been hollowed out, and inside is a key to the cells. Unfortunately the guards are still there, but Broderic plans to deal with them once he has rallied the people during his evening sermon.



Part 5: Visitor in the night

The party should now be planning their escape, but if they wait until after nightfall the ghost of Threse Boldheart will take measures to free them.

The day turns to night. The bells for the evening service ring, but the guards stand at their posts, drinking and laughing. They hold no fear of a god they cannot see.

As the echo of the last bell fades, a strong gust of wind blows through the corridor extinguishing the lights leaving it pitch black.

One of the guards yells. "Hey, what's the big joke?" Then he screams.

There is a thudding noise and a faint blue glow can be seen from the corridor. As it gets closer you see it is the ghostly form of a middle-aged woman in fine clothing drifting towards you.

It seems to recognise Talwin and reaches out to him. There is a click as the lock turns and the door swings open. She waivers for a moment, and beckons you to follow.

The ghost is Therese Boldheart, Talwin's mother. The guards are all unconscious, and no one else seems to have heard the scream. The guards have been playing dice for each of the characters' equipment. Currently on the table is an obsidian sphere and Talwin's sword. The only item missing is the relic of Saint Alberic.

If followed, Therese will lead them out of the cells and towards the Boldheart crypt. She cannot speak and seems to follow some inhuman motivation to bring her son and husband together. Once this is done she will fade from view, staring at Talwin and reaching for him. Anyone touching her will feel a chill in their bones but will pass right through her.

Act 3: Preparation

This act is split into three possible scenes. The players may explore other options but these are considered the most likely.

Note: If the players decide to escape from Thetford or travel outside of the county to enlist the help of the King or other lords, refer to Act 3a – The price of failure.

Scene 1: Family

The purpose of this scene is to explain the Boldheart curse. The family are potential allies.

Location: The Boldheart family crypt, in the Thetford cemetery on the outskirts of the town.

The party has most likely followed Therese Boldheart to this location. The door to the crypt is locked and will require a successful pick lock check (Dhrupert) or a character rolling under their strength on 1d20. For each failed roll the character takes 1 HP damage.



The door to the crypt swings open, lit only by the moonlight and the torches carried by the party.

Unblinking red eyes stare from the darkness, and a hissing echoing voice exclaims "Warm bloodssss..."

The figure steps forward, walking with the bearing of a true Lord. It wears a tattered tabard of the house of Boldheart. There is no doubt, this must be Marrik Boldheart.

"Son, you have life." It looks confused, expecting Talwin to be dead like it is.

"There is evil. It taking over. Must stop". Marrik points towards the Keep.

Marrik is a Wraith and holds no love for life. Though he will not harm his blood, he will defend himself if attacked. Marrik wishes to end the evil that has taken over Thetford.

Marrik is a powerful, but unholy ally who hates life with a vengeance. He is powerful enough to single-handedly storm Boldheart keep, though the players may not immediately realise this.

Marrik Boldheart: Wraith

Attack = 17 Defence = 4 Evasion = 3

Magic Attack = 15 Magic defence = 11

Stealth = 13 Perception = 12 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 20 AF = 0 Weapon: Sword (d8+2,6), Unarmed (d3+2,4)

Notes: Normal Weapons score half damage and then shatter. Physical touch drains 2d6+1 strength (Magic Attack vs. Magic Defence). If Strength below 2, cannot move, Strength can be restored by sunlight.

Scene 2: Clan

The purpose of this scene is to show the extent of the Viking betrayal. From this betrayal come a number of allies.

Location: The Thetford quarry, a mile outside of Thetford.

The remnants of the Spijkenisse Township are being held here. They are enslaved and work long hours cutting and crushing stone to build a tower for Beliath. There are six guards on duty, four guarding the pens and two patrolling the general area.



Guards: Human (x6)

Attack = 11 Defence = 5 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 12 Perception = 8 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 6 AF = 4 (Mail) Weapon: Sword (d8,4), Unarmed (d3,2),
Crossbow (d10,4) – 3 rounds to reload.

Notes: One horse is onsite. If there is a full scale escape a runner will be sent for reinforcements.

Vikings: Human (x25)

Attack = 11 Defence = 5 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 12 Perception = 6 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 2 AF = 0 Weapon: Unarmed (d3,2), or as per weapon

Notes: Weak and hungry, will attack as a mob.

The people of Spijkenisse include Katlar Svent who has been rallying the people since Gormr's death at the hands of the Thetford raiders. Elric's friend Egill and sister Ragnhildr are also believed to be dead (although this is not true). Elric's elder brother Ulfr is a shell of the man he used to be, the defeat stripped him of his will and he blindly follows the orders of his mother.

Halldóra Sturladóttir is still alive, and very happy to see Elric.

Scene 3: Faith

The purpose of this scene is to provide a third option for getting into the keep in order to confront Michael and Beliath. But the cost of this help is the artefact Talwin quested for over the past five years

Location: The Thetford church.

The people of Thetford are here and ready to take back their town.

Father Broderic is finishing his sermon. Assuming the party has brought him inside he will be preaching about the evil that has infested the lands and the need to root it out. He will be whipping the villagers into a frenzy creating a mob that will try to storm the castle.



Villagers: Human (x50)

Attack = 10 Defence = 4 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 10 Perception = 6 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 2 AF = 0 Weapon: Unarmed (d3,2), Improvised Weapon (d3,3) or as per weapon

Notes: Will attack as a mob and follow Father Broderic Mason.

Act 3a: The price of Failure

The purpose of this act is to describe what happens if the players decide to flee Thetford

As the true heir to the Boldheart lands, it is plausible that Talwin may petition the King of England for help in claiming his birthright from Michael and Beliath.

Although the journey and act of petitioning the king is an adventure in itself, fraught with physical and political perils this quest will give Beliath the time he needs to seal off Thetford and raise an inhuman army to conquer England.



Act 4: Confrontation

This is the finale and should include tension and drama. Although the overall intention is for the party to succeed, if the characters are acting in a suicidal or brash manner, this is where they will most likely perish.

Scene 1: Assault

The purpose of this scene is to build the tension for the final confrontations. It should be cinematic in nature and focus on the role the characters chosen allies' play in gaining entrance to the keep.

The events of this scene will depend on the allies gained in Act 3. It is possible the players will find other nearby allies not explicitly stated in Act 3.

If the players manage to pull off more than one plan, it is possible there will be a mix of villagers / Vikings and the un-dead Marrik all attacking the keep. Here the Game Master is encouraged to be creative. The assault will succeed, but there will be unintended consequences as hostile Vikings meet rioting villagers and the un-dead killing machine that is Marrik.



It is assumed these battles will be cinematic in nature and not require much dice rolling. This is intended to keep the game centred on the party. They should be encouraged to go after Michael / Beliath as not all their allies will hold out for long against the better armed defenders.

The obvious cinematic battles are:

Family – If Talwin has the aid of his undead father, he will walk through the Keep killing every living thing. This includes guards, servants, villagers and Vikings. Due to the relic of Saint Alberic he will be unable to get within 20 meters of Michael or anyone else carrying the relic.

Clan – If Elric has rescued his clansmen from the slave camp, they will be ready for vengeance. In true Viking style they will storm the keep and kill everyone they can, including villagers. This will provide a distraction for the party to get to Michael. This will eventually result in parts of the Keep (stables, wooden buildings) being burnt and looted.

Faith – If Father Broderic Mason has managed to rally a mob, they will be storming the main gates. This will provide a distraction, as Fredrick Green is in charge of the evening guard and will initially be unwilling to kill or fight his fellow villagers until they have already made it through the gates. The villagers follow Broderic's commands (mostly) and will fight the guards and escaped Vikings with equal fervour.

Alternatively, the party can try to sneak into the Keep. Unless the players provide a good plan for sneaking past the guards, this will require four stealth rolls for each character, against the guards' perception of 8. Failed stealth rolls will mean 1 to 6 guards see and attack the party.

Guards: Human (x6)

Attack = 11 Defence = 5 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 12 Perception = 8 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 2 AF = 4 (Mail) Weapon: Sword (d8,4), Unarmed (d3,2),

Notes: "Throw-away" guards, intended to be a consequence of failure rather than a challenge

Scene 2: Boldheart

This is the confrontation with the mad Michael Boldheart. Talwin has a moral choice here which will determine if he is labelled a kin-slayer.

Michael Boldheart and his mercenary guards are holed up in the main hall. This is a grand chamber, opulently furnished and normally used for holding court.

Michael has a small squad of elite bodyguards. They are loyal to Beliath, but will defend Michael with their lives. Each of the bodyguards is meant to test the party and each member has a personal grudge against their "nemesis" in some way.



Michael Boldheart: Partially mad and the obvious ‘nemesis’ for Talwin. He clutches the relic of Saint Alberic as if his life depends on it. He has been haunted by his dead parents for four years and is physically weaker than Talwin. Michael’s purpose is to force Talwin to make the moral choice to kill his own kin, or let him live.

Michael will not pursue the party. If they flee he will ask them where they are going to go.

- Michael will listen to Talwin, but will need to be convinced by emotional pleas rather than logic.

Egill Ketill: Elric’s closest friend. Had a crush on Ragnhildr but sold his soul to Beliath in exchange for freedom and power while his village was enslaved. Egill is the reason Ragnhildr is pregnant and confined with Beliath’s child. Egill’s purpose is to try and force a choice between his family and his friends.

Egill will try to get Elric to turn on his friends, and join him in conquering England.

- Egill is selfish, but considers Elric the brother he never had so will listen to reason as long as he gains from it somehow.

Belina Doppelganger: Someone who looks remarkably like Belina. A doppelganger made from part of Belina’s soul using dark sorcery. She has the powers and abilities of Belina.

The Doppelganger’s purpose is to force Belina into choosing redemption or to destroy her soul. This is the dark part of Belina that has enjoyed all the horrible things she has done. The Doppelganger will not attack unless attacked first. Belina can only win if she acknowledges and “forgives” her darker part and seeks the road to redemption.

The form of this redemption is at the Game Master’s discretion, but is expected to involve Belina accepting and forgiving the part of her life that was spent as Beliath’s apprentice.

As soon as Belina lashes out at her doppelganger with darkness magic, she has failed and the Doppelganger will try to kill and become her, claiming that the darkness is all she has left. If the doppelganger is killed, that part of Belina’s soul dies with it.

- The Doppelganger will try to get Belina to attack her, but will not attack until attacked first²

² If the Doppelganger kills Belina, it will consume and “become” her. Unless they were following the battle closely party will not be able to tell the difference.

Star Eye: DhruPERT's contact and the man she has been sent to find. His real name is Hassam. He is a large man with a bare chest and a large curved sword. Physically he is more than a match for DhruPERT.

Hassam's mission was to travel to England and find out who has been sending crusaders to invade their homeland. He has discovered it is a conspiracy between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the King of England.

While his mission was only to get a message back to the homeland, he has taken matters into his own hands. When arriving at Thetford he found the evil spirit of a dark magician known as Beliath, was plotting to take over England. If that occurred both the Archbishop and the King would be destroyed and his homeland saved. Having fallen under Beliath's sway, Hassam firmly believes that Beliath's plan is the only way to ensure the freedom of their homeland.

- Physically Star Eye is stronger and more skilled than DhruPERT. DhruPERT needs to try and convince Hassam to abandon his current role for their greater quest.

Michael Boldheart: Human			
Attack = 12	Defence = 6	Magic defence = 3	Evasion = 3
Stealth = 12	Perception = 5	Move = 10m/turn	
HP = 9	AF = 2 (Leather) Weapon: Sword (d8,4)		
Notes: Holds the Relic of Saint Alberic. Will repulse undead.			

Egill Katill: Human			
Attack = 15	Defence = 5	Magic defence = 3	Evasion = 3
Stealth = 13	Perception = 5	Move = 10m/turn	
HP = 13	AF = 4 (Mail)	Weapon: Sword (d8,4)	
Notes: Will try to talk Elric into helplessness.			



Star Eye (Hassam): Human

Attack = 16 Defence = 7 Magic defence = 3 Evasion = 3

Stealth = 13 Perception = 5 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 15 AF = 0 Weapon: Two Handed Sword (d10,5)

Notes: Is physically better than Dhruvert but will listen to her reason and try and convince her of their greater mission.

Belina Doppelganger: Darkness Doppelganger

Attack = 11 Defence = 5 Magical Attack = 16 Magic defence = 6

Evasion = 3 Stealth = 13 Perception = 5 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 7 AF = 0 Weapon: Dagger (d4,3) x2

Spells:

Darkness: Catspaw (Self) +1 Stealth, Moves with silence (10 mins)

Darkness: Rend Soul (Target) Magical Attack – Magical Defence (d20). 3 pts damage. (armour provides no protection from attack)

Fire: Candle of dark (Self) Creates 10m area of darkness around .
Caster get +3 Evasion +3 Defence to attacks made outside this radius

Air: Cutting Power of the Mind (Self) INT becomes 18. +1 Attack, +1 Defence, +1
Magical Attack, +1 Magical Defence.

Caster also gets additional +2 Attack +1 Damage with ranged weapons

Notes: If attacked will try to kill Belina and “become her”. Belittles her as the “weaker” one and that Belina is denying her true self. Is a product of darkness magic. Any raw darkness used on her will do 5 HP damage per MP spent. (Magic Attack vs. Magic Defence)

Is an agent of darkness, has no limit on number of spells can cast.

Scene 3: Beliath

This is the final climatic confrontation against the shade of Beliath a vengeful agent of darkness.

Following a brief respite, the cinematic battle seems to be quieting down and the party may feel like they have won. Then Beliath shows his hand. Torches will flutter; darkness will creep and swirl from around the room to form the shape of Beliath.



Torches gutter and lanterns flicker as a gust of wind sweeps through the room. Shadows lengthen, momentarily blotting out what little lights you have.

In the middle of the room a figure manifests. It is Beliath.

So you have come this far, and now you are weak. You steal into my home, stab me and take my belongings. I have returned the favour, returned the suffering. Your impotent gods can do nothing. Prepare to suffer a slow and painful death.

Beliath is certain of his victory. He will toy with the party until he is hit by a faithful who holds the relic (or is below half hit points). When hit he will scream in agony and attack with renewed vigour.

Shade of Beliath: Spirit of Darkness

Attack = 13 Defence = 7 Magical Attack = 20 Magic defence = 12

Evasion = 4 Stealth = 20 Perception = 7 Move = 10m/turn

HP = 20 AF = 0 Weapon: None

Spells:

Javelin of Darkness: (Target) Magical Attack vs Magical Defence (d6,3) and target blinded for 3 rounds.

Sheet of Flame: (Target) Speed = 14. Creates wall of flame 5m long and 1m wide 8 points of damage for anyone jumping through it. Can move 1m per round

Manipulate Darkness: Extinguish any or all light.

Shadows of Guilt: Summon shade of any character the party has killed (1 HP). Will fight for Beliath. Susceptible to fire and bright light.

Notes:

- Beliath is incorporeal and cannot physically touch anyone. All weapons do 1 HP damage. A weapon used by a "faithful" who holds the relic of Saint Alberic does normal damage.
- Bright Light (such as flash pellets) and fire do 2HP damage.
- Belina can use darkness manipulation and the orb to disrupt Beliath. Each MP channelled this way does 1 HP damage.

Beliath is an agent of darkness and has no limit on number of spells he can cast.

Dramatic Ending Option 1: If the party figures out that the relic of Saint Alberic is the key to killing Beliath, Michael (or the spirit of Michael if slain) will awake from his nightmare and throw himself onto Beliath, screaming for the holder of the relic to "kill it".



But the easiest way for a clean hit is through Michael. Regardless of hit points this is a killing blow for both Beliath and Michael.

The sword pierces Michael and Beliath. Beliath howls in agony as his shade is sucked back into hell.

Michael reaches towards Talwin and to tries to speak... but then he is gone.

If the party delays in making the killing blow, Beliath will start draining the life force (or spirit energy) from Michael and start looking stronger and more powerful.

Dramatic Ending Option 2: If the party make the conscious choice to destroy the relic, this will allow Marrik to join the fight.

The relic shatters into small fragments of bone. A howl of victory is heard as Marrik Boldheart, former Lord of Thetford rushes into the room.

Marrik is creature born of death and his blows cause Beliath to scream in pain.

Marrik continues clawing and biting Beliath as a vortex opens beneath them both, dragging the un-dead Marrik and shade of Beliath into the fiery depths of hell.

This is a victory through betrayal, and should ring hollow with the faithful of the party. Only by destroying a holy artefact and using an un-dead ally did they succeed.



Act 5: Aftermath

Scene 1: Conclusion

The purpose of this scene is to give the players closure and decide how life will carry on for them following the events of the past few days.

After the dust has settled, the players will want closure. Any reasonable requests should be allowed. Unless Father Broderic Mason has been killed, or Talwin has raised the ire of the people of Thetford he will be named the new lord.

The ghosts of his ancestors (including Michael) will continue to haunt Talwin. Should the relic survive it can be used to keep them at bay, but the recent events should have taught Talwin that his un-dead ancestors have his interests at heart.

Elric's people are angry, and their immediate reaction will be to go home having raided the village. They respect Elric and will listen to reason and return to their lands if convinced to.

Dhrupert will find evidence in Hassam's quarters of a conspiracy between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the King of England to raid her homeland for the gold and relics of her people.



Appendix

CAST

Players

NAME	DESCRIPTION
Talwin Boldheart	Honourable Knight
Elric Svnt	Barbarian Warrior
Belina Avana	Repentant Sorceress
Dhrupert Haneefa	Love-struck Assassin

NPC's

NAME	DESCRIPTION	KNOWN BY
Beliath	Sorcerer's Shade – Main Antagonist.	All
Michael Boldheart	Cowardly and half-mad brother of Talwin Boldheart.	Talwin
Marrik Boldheart	Angry Wraith. Now undead. Father of Michael and Talwin.	Talwin
Threse Boldheart	Grieving Ghost. Now undead. Mother of Michael and Talwin.	Talwin
Father Broderic Mason	Local Clergyman. Concerned over Michael's lack of faith in God.	Talwin
Fredrick Green	Former master of the Thetford household guard. Reduced to a common soldier by Beliath.	Talwin
Juliet Franklin	Talwin's former love, but born below his station. Not explicitly involved in adventure.	Talwin
Gormr Svnt	Elric's father. Killed in Beliath's raid on Elric's village.	Elric
Katlar Svnt	Elric's mother. Now a one of the many Viking slaves building a tower for Beliath.	Elric
Ulfr Svnt	Elric's older brother. A defeated shell of the man he once was. A slave like his mother.	Elric
Ragnhildr Svnt	Elric's younger sister. Heavily pregnant with Beliath's spawn.	Elric
Halldóra Sturladóttir	A girl Elric is fond of. Also a slave building Beliath's tower.	Elric
Egill Ketill	Viking Warrior. Sold his soul to Beliath. Now Michael's personal guard.	Elric
Star Eye	Known as "Star Eye" by Dhrupert, his real name is Hassam. Is Dhrupert's contact. Has a four pointed star tattoo over one eye. Is currently working for Beliath to rid the world of the Archbishop of Canterbury and King of England.	Dhrupert

Map of 12th Century Europe



Map of England

The adventure takes place in the county of Norfolk.



Map Thetford³

Although not required to run the game, a map of Thetford is below for use as reference material.



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1	Thetford Keep	6	Wine-spring Inn
2	Thetford Holy Church	7	Smithy
3	Thetford Cemetery	8	Prison Cells
4	Thetford Quarry (Viking Work Camp)	9	Barracks
5	Market Plaza	10	Partially Built Tower

³ Authors note: This is not a historically accurate map of Thetford, but should be indicative of the layout of the town surrounding Thetford Keep.

Character Tags

Used to identify each player and the character they portray during the game.

Instructions:

- Cut along SOLID lines
- Fold along DOTTED lines



TALWIN BOLDHEART
Knight



ELRIC SVENT
Barbarian

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BELINA AVANA
Sorceress



DHRUPERT HANEEFA
(RUPERT)
Squire
