



MALIFAUX

2E



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WELCOME TO MALIFAUX

Malifaux is a world aside from our own. Located through the Great Breach, the city is home to monsters and mankind alike. Often, the two are indistinguishable from each other. The true history of this place is lost to the annals of time. Perhaps there are truths buried in the legends told by its native denizens, but for now, the human record must suffice.

1787 - THE YEAR OF THE BREACH

Magic was leaving us. It was becoming more obvious with each passing year. Many men put forth theories. Many believed it to be a natural cycle, a tide of magic that would return on its own in time. Others were fearful that magic was a resource that was forever dwindling. Mystics and healers found themselves unable to glimpse the strands of fate, or heal the sick. Great sorcerers could conjure only the smallest sparks of power.

Great debates filled the halls of academia. Was our society too dependent on magic? Was this, ultimately, for the betterment of mankind? While the world's finest minds went to war with pen and words, the most powerful practitioners took action.

They came from every corner of the globe. Sorcerers, Warlocks, Soothsayers, and Wizards, each came in search of a new source of magic. Only a handful of people have any idea how they discovered the world just outside of our existence, but only the faintest veil kept our two realities apart...

...and all walls can be knocked down.

The assembled practitioners came together in a desperate and noble display of power. They erected a makeshift city, the streets forming the lines of an intricate rune. They called to the world's magically capable, and even the most minor talent was welcomed. They trained each person in the great spell that would bring magic back to the Earth.

When the greatest minds agreed that it was time, they called the entire city to position. The streets teemed with sorcerers at every junction, each prepared to do his part in the most powerful spell ever cast. A spell to heal the wounds of a planet, and to return magic to the grateful nations of Earth.

The destruction was unprecedented. The life force of the lesser sorcerers was torn from their flesh in a torrent of pain and power. The city was gone, and only a monstrous ragged hole in existence remained.

It was called The Great Breach of the Great Boundary. It was a passage to another world, lit by an alien sun. Between the gash in our reality, and the wound we had torn in the other, lay a lightless void. The blood of the dead had paid for this new frontier, and expeditions began through the Breach immediately.

On the other side we found a city. Its features were both familiar and strange, as if all the capitals of man's history had been stacked and shuffled. The buildings leaned and loomed over the streets, familiar elements of architecture, twisted and odd, with unknown writing carved in the stone or painted on the doors. The sun was brighter at noon, but darker in the dusk and dawn. At night, the shadows swallowed the dim illumination provided by the twin moons.

Weeks of searching found nothing living. The people of this city had simply vanished. A team of researchers came from the Voynich institute, and they managed to translate many of the strange markers. Most were simple signs, marking a building as the home of a tailor, blacksmith, or other merchant. Some were odd. What was a "death surgeon" or "mechanical magics"? One thing was clear, however. The city had a name.

Malifaux.

1788 TO 1796 - 1 TO 9 POST FORIS

After half a year The Breach was opened to the general public. They mined into the hills and found Soulstone, a glowing gem that radiated magical power, and contained the ephemeral source of magic. It gave practitioners their old magic, and some argued that it gave even more.

A thriving trade was established Earthside, and the harvest of Malifaux's magical resource had begun. Soulstone was mined to fuel magic, and powerful practitioners were able to use it to work wonders.

A new city arose up around The Breach. A thriving boomtown, it brought countless practitioners and their families. An entire population relocated to within spitting distance of a rip in reality. Life continued, and the city boomed. Magic had been saved.

1797 - 10 POST FORIS

It was the harshest winter in the decade since human occupation of Malifaux began. The people huddled together for warmth in taverns and homes, burning anything they could to stave off the wrath of the December nights. Frozen corpses were cleared from the streets every morning, and dusk brought with it fear and desperation.

A mighty blizzard swallowed the city. The Breach began to tremble. The stone archway that had been built by grand masons began to shake and crack. On Earth, there are those that reported that the cacophony of a great battle rumbled through The Breach.

And then The Breach slowly began to shrink.

The Breach was uncrossable, those who pushed against it were rebuffed by a cold blast of wind. The thaumaturgists on Earth desperately tried to stabilize the rift, but to no avail. Nearly a ton of Soulstones were burnt to blackened husks as they were drained of power in useless attempts to staunch the collapse.

The masonry of the great archway crumbled and collapsed in stone heaps on the ground. Fearful cries of men from the other side of The Breach lasted all evening and into the next morning. As the sun rose, the sounds became silence. The fissure between worlds hung, barely big enough now for a man to pass through.

The Earthside sorcerers huddled around The Breach. They had long since lost any hope of keeping it open. They had no doubt that the citizens of Malifaux would be forever trapped on that alien world.

A body came hurtling through the rift, to land at their feet with a sickening thud. On its torso was carved a single word:

"Ours."

The Breach of the Great Boundary lay still for a moment, and then winked into nothingness with a great wail. Malifaux was no more.



1798 TO 1814 - 11 TO 26 Post Foris

A wave of shock spread across Earth. Malifaux was an infinite well of magic one moment, and simply gone the next. There was no corner of the Earth unaffected by the loss. The source of Soulstone had disappeared and in one fell swoop it had become the rarest resource mankind had ever known.

There were those, who saw opportunity. Soulstones were stockpiled, and any of their uses that were deemed 'non-essential' were cut off immediately. This included both public work and many medical applications. Governments began confiscating Soulstones for the national good.

At first glance it appeared that various treaties and trade agreements were soon to be signed, and the world's governments would stave off calamity. However, talks stalled, diplomats were recalled, and troops amassed at borders. Lines had been drawn and war for Soulstone was inevitable.

The Black Powder Wars had begun. The war was fought with sabre and flintlock. Amongst the musket lines and cavalry charges, practitioners slew entire platoons, or fought arcane duels against one another. Some states even employed crude constructs, while others raised their armies from the dead.

When the dust had settled, many of the world's national boundaries had changed, but there was one clear victor.

The Guild.



1897 - 110 POST FORIS

One century after its calamitous closure, to the day (some say to the very minute), The Great Breach reopened. Thousands of soldiers were sent to surround the newly returned Breach. When, after a full month, no invasion from Malifaux came, the Guild allowed a heavily armed expeditionary force through the rift.

The city was empty. As eerily becalmed as it had been when the first practitioners had set foot in it so long ago. Some signs of combat were fresh, as if the battle of a century past had just moments ago been concluded. Hauntingly, the city of Malifaux lacked the corpses of its previous inhabitants. There were throngs of citizens of Malifaux in its earlier heyday, and yet no bodies remained.

With the safe return of its expeditionary forces, the Guild moved quickly to secure the city. The reclaiming of Malifaux was met with mixed emotions. Malifaux, as it ever has, represented great riches and opportunity, but now it also represented a grave new danger.

A bargain of sorts was struck with the great powers of the day. With the loss of Malifaux an assumed inevitability, the political powers of Earth gave the Guild a work force of convicts and the indebted. Poor practitioners and the desperate also came to Malifaux, and it would seem that the city would be repopulated with the dregs of humanity.

In the midst of the empty city sprang life anew. The Guild cordoned off much of the city, dividing her into zones of varying degrees of protection. Some would be well defended and policed, others would have only a scant patrol. The most dangerous (or so the Guild claims) areas were quarantined completely. The first Slums sprang up nearly overnight as people squatted as close to Guild protection as they could manage. New business concerns built structures from the knotwood of the native trees, and the New Construction Zone (which looked more like a frontier town than a thriving metropolis) was designated as well.

The city grew, and in its way prospered, but the old enemies of Malifaux were quick to make their presence known. The Neverborn, twisted mockeries of humanity, stalked the unwary from the shadows. Dark magic permeated the city, and vile undead shambled through the night.

THE PRESENT: 1902 - 115 POST FORIS

Five years have passed since The Great Breach reopened. The city has been resettled, and the Guild claims sovereign reign over the city. They are not, however, the only power in Malifaux.

The Miners & Steamfitters Union holds sway over many of the working poor within the city. Some claim that their leadership has close ties to the Arcanists, a band of magical terrorists (if the Guild is to be believed).

The Guild has also failed to put down the Neverborn or Ressurrectionist threat, and nightly disappearances are growing in number as the city's population swells.

Mercenary outfits have found their way to Malifaux, selling their services to the highest bidder, or acting on their own accord. The desperate and the criminal flock to their banner, along with the disenfranchised.

Amidst this turmoil, Malifaux was turned on its ear by the coming of a great comet. Some say the comet brought with it magic, some say it was a herald of magics, still others claim it was a simple celestial event. Regardless, those with real power in Malifaux felt it, and were forever changed.

The Gremlins in the Bayou have started to become more organized, and what was once a small pest problem has become another minor war, one the citizens of Malifaux are anxious to see stopped quickly and decisively.

Most recently, the Guild has discovered evidence that a secretive organization known as the Ten Thunders Clan has infiltrated many of Malifaux's institutions. What they want is still unknown, but it is a threat to the Guild's sovereign domain regardless of their motivation.

It is a time of great peril in Malifaux, but some would argue that it is no more dangerous today than it was in years past. One thing everyone in Malifaux can agree on, however...

Bad Things Happen.



MAP OF MALIFEAUX CITY

ADLANDS



LEGEND

- 1 THE BREACH
- 2 MALIFEAUX STATION
- 3 THE HANGING TREE
- 4 GOVERNOR GENERAL'S MANSION
- 5 GUILD ENCLAVE
- 6 THE STAR THEATER
- 7 MALIFEAUX RECORD OFFICES
- 8 INDUSTRY STATION
- 9 CAPTIVATING SALVAGE & LOGISTICS
- 10 MCMOURNING'S HIDDEN LABS
- 11 FREIKORPS HEADQUARTERS
- 12 THE PLAGUED PIT
- 13 KATANAKA TRADING HOUSE
- 14 THE QI AND GONG
- 15 SUCCUBUS CAFÉ
- 16 THE RUINED OBSERVATORY
- 17 MALIFEAUX EXPLORATION SOCIETY
- 18 STARLIGHT SALOON
- 19 SOUTHGATE STATION

1 IN. = 3 MI

0

3 MILES

TO LATIGO AND THE
BAYOU

LUCK OF THE DRAW

Edward Crayne looked up from his cards at the unfriendly faces arrayed around the table; dirty, drunken scum of the earth, every last one of them. The smell of gin was thick in the air along with the sickly sweet stench of cigar smoke and less pleasant smells that you really didn't want to think too long or hard about. The clientele of this particular drinking establishment was as equally repellent as the smells, rotten dregs of humanity washed up in a shadowy corner of Malifaux, much like Crayne himself.

"Your bet Mister," one of the faces slurred at him, a half grin exposing the man's faith in his hand along with a set of yellowed rotten teeth.

Crayne paused taking a quick shot of gin and reflected on just how far he had sunk from the fine gambling houses and dance halls of New Amsterdam. It all seemed like a lifetime ago; something that had happened to another man, before he got into trouble and ended up on the wrong side of The Breach with a collar round his neck. Of course that was all rapidly becoming ancient history now, years slipped away like gin or coin and the half remembered faces of less than virtuous women. He had done his time in the mines, worked hard for the Guild and dug their precious ore, pulled himself up by his bootstraps and made a name for himself in the City as a cardsharp, falling back on the same skills that had seen him sent here in the first place.

Although, as every gambler will tell you, luck is a fickle mistress, and the more she pulls you up the further she has to throw you down when your fate turns on you. It was this very series of events which saw him turning his trade here, in the Wilted Rose saloon, very much on the wrong side of Malifaux.

"You hear me fella? You gonna stare at them cards all night or you gonna put down some coin to match that hand?"

Crayne only half heard the gambler as he checked his cards again, the black joker winking at him from the middle of his hand, accompanied by three faded eights, giving him about the strongest hand he'd had so far and

one he was willing to put his coin behind. This wasn't why he paused, though, he'd been playing these men all night, deliberately losing and driving up the stakes, the way it was meant to be done and the way you did it if you wanted to walk away rich. Now, though, amid the squalor and filth of the Wilted Rose taproom, something had raised the hairs on the back of his neck, something which told him perhaps this was the time to lose and walk away rather than press his advantage.

Perhaps it had something to do with the woman who had been staring at him for the last hour, sitting at the bar dressed in a tightly fitting corset and flowing red dress with eyes that never seemed to leave Crayne alone. He didn't recognise her as one of the Rose's regular girls (and he had made the acquaintance of more than a few), but there was something about her which was putting him off his game, something which was tugging at a memory buried somewhere down deep in his mind.

Shaking off thoughts of the girl Crayne looked again at his cards and once more at the table. Unfortunately for Crayne he had never been one to trust his instincts when there was this much money on the table; a small pile of Guild scrip, a tarnished looking watch, and a fine-looking bone-handled hunting knife making it a handsome haul. It was just this trait which was probably why Crayne was here in Malifaux and not back in New Amsterdam spending other people's money. Nethertheless, with a slight smile he tossed his few remaining notes onto the pile and looked across the table at the man with the rotten grin.

"I call." His gaze held the other man's evenly even as part of his mind braced itself for trouble.

Still confident, his opponent laid down his own hand, the rotten grin expanding to show a glint of gold where his incisors had been replaced. Two pair, sevens and fives accompanied by a tired looking queen; a good hand, but not the equal of Crayne's own. Not wanting to draw out the moment Crayne tossed his own cards on the table, waiting only long enough for the man's face to fall, defeat registering in his eyes, before Crayne reached out to claim his winnings.

Immediately, the mood in the taproom shifted, and though no one reached out to stop Crayne gathering up his money he could feel the intense, unfriendly stares levelled at him. He was also becoming aware that he was an outsider here, the bulk of the patrons being miners and rail workers like those he was gaming with, doubtless all members of the Miners and Steamfitters Union. In fact, he would bet money on the fact most of these men worked in the same factory or mine, judging by their looks and the dust that still clung to their clothes, speaking of a recent trip into the city to spend their pay; pay Crayne had just lightened them of considerably.

Aside from the M&SU mob, a few locals lurked in the shadows or leered from nearby tables, drunkards and whores gearing up for some free entertainment, and judging by the expression on old rotten grin's face they were about to get it.

Still gathering his winnings Crayne started to rise from his chair, intent on leaving as quickly as possible, but was stopped by a heavy hand on his shoulder, pushing him down. Looking up he met the gaze of a heavysset miner with an expression as equally grim as the ones around the table.

"I don't think you been playing fair Mister," rotten grin said, his yellow teeth now hidden by the hard line of his mouth.

"Hey, I just take the cards as they are dealt, my friend. Nothing going on here but some good honest gambling." Crayne held out his arms showing his empty sleeves to further prove his point.

"I an't your friend Mister, and perhaps you are being honest but I don't reckon I fancy losing tonight. So you just put that money back and walk away, while you got two good legs to do it."

Crayne could see where this was going. Even though he hadn't outright cheated, he had been playing the miners and getting them to raise the bet until he could let his real skill show. Turns out rotten grin was just smart enough to pick up on this and was going to use it as an excuse to take back what he had lost. Crayne could also see that there was only one way he was going to get out of this with his money.



Crayne made a lunge for the knife still sitting in the center of the table just as rotten grin and the other miners leap to their feet. His fingers almost closed on the hilt before the table was thrown over, sending it skittering off across the room. Someone landed a blow on his jaw and the heavyset miner who had pushed him back into his chair tried to grab him.

Crayne was no stranger to a good brawl (even though he preferred to avoid them where he could), and his first instinct was always to escape. Rolling with the punch and slipping away from the heavyset man Crayne fell to the floor and threw himself under a nearby table. Scrambling across the beer soaked floor and trying to avoid kicks from startled patrons, he staggered to his feet and turned to look for an escape route as well as size up his opposition.

Pushing past the table rotten grin and heavyset were closing in, along with two other men from the table, though for now it looked like the bulk of the miners were content to watch. Among the other onlookers Crayne once again locked eyes with the woman by the bar, a wry smile twisting her lips in apparent amusement at his predicament. The nearest exit was a window about a half dozen paces away, but Crayne had no idea what lurked on the other side. The other option was trying to get around the miners and to the front door.

Thinking fast Crayne decided it was time for a new tactic, and though he hated doing it, he took out a fist full of Guild scrip from his hastily gathered winnings and held it above his head.

"One hundred scrip to anyone that gets these gentlemen out of my way!"

Hearing his plea the miners paused, rotten grin showing his yellow teeth once more as he looked around the room at the stony faces of his fellow workers. Then a group of wastrels rose from a table in the corner hefting their canes, while a beefy looking man dressed in a faded duster put down his drink and rose from the bar. For a moment everything was still as his new 'allies' sized up the miners, and the miners' companions started getting up to aid their friends. Then one of the wastrels cracked his cane on a table and all hell broke loose.

Rotten grin and heavyset were suddenly fighting an onslaught from both sides while the bruiser in the duster waded through the crowd toward Crayne, laying out anyone who got in his way. Crayne

meanwhile tried to circle round the growing brawl and make for the exit, hoping to make it to the street before either the miners got him or he was forced to make good on his promise to one of the wastrels or the bruiser. From all sides more of the miners piled into the fray, and what a second ago had been an altercation between Crayne and the other gamblers was now expanding into a full-fledged bar brawl.

Skirting the action he could see it was not just his newfound friends which were struggling against the miners, but it seemed others had taken the opportunity to settle scores amidst the mayhem or simply join in the violence of beating their fellow man bloody. Nearby a miner with a steam-powered augmented arm was hammering a man into the floor, until suddenly two or three others bore him to the ground under the barrage of swung chairs and bottles. Elsewhere, a man was trying to drown another in a spittoon while behind the bar some wretch was attempting to liberate as much alcohol as he could carry.

The wastrels meantime were standing back to back, smashing and cutting anyone who came close, and for an instant Crayne met the gaze of their leader, a stringy haired fellow in a bent top hat. The man smiled cruelly at Crayne, as the gambler caught a glimpse of a knife, flashing in the light and then coming away bloody. The sight chilled Crayne more than any threat from rotten grin had, and he hoped he could escape before he had to settle up with this man, or worse, find himself in his debt.

By contrast his other saviour, the bruiser, seemed to have become lost in the melee, and Crayne could only hear the occasional scream or crack of wood (at least what he assumed was wood) to mark the man's location behind the moving throng of unwashed bodies.

Seeing a break in the crowd Crayne made his play and dashed for the entrance, swaying to avoid a few hastily thrown punches and dodging under the odd bottle tossed in his direction. Before he could reach the doorway, however, a shape moved to block his path, and a familiar rotten grin filled his vision.

"Had 'bout enough of you Mister, figure you'll be giving me my money now."

Crayne's gaze fell from the man's grin to the clockwork pistol in his hand, its barrel squarely levelled at Crayne's chest. Crayne himself had a holdout pistol tucked into

the back of his belt, but knew that there was no way he could hope to reach it before the miner put a fist-sized hole in him.

Spreading his hands in what he hoped was a placating gesture and giving a lopsided smile, Crayne tried to buy himself a few more moments of life.

"No need for this, fella, I can see now the error of my ways. Here let me just get that scrip for you."

"Heck, I was going to try and keep my money from getting bloody, but I think we're done, mister."

Crayne could only watch as rotten grin cocked the pistol ready to fire, bracing himself for the end. The gunshot rang out across the bar, momentarily stopping the brawl as heads snapped around to see its source or men ducked for cover. Crayne himself flinched at the sound but after a second he realised he was still alive, his would-be killer lying at his feet, the woman who had been making eyes at him earlier standing over him with a bottle in her hand and a bullet hole in the ceiling.

"Come on you fool!" she cried, grabbing his arm and dragging him toward the exit. "This situation is about to get a lot worse and we really don't want to be here!"

She was not wrong; already the miners were recovering from the gunshot and many, believing their companion had been gunned down, were drawing firearms of their own. As Crayne and the woman ran out of the Wilted Rose, he could hear more shots and screams along with the crashing of glass and the breaking of wood.

"Wait! Who are you and why did you save my life back there?" Crayne yelled as they rushed out into the cold night air and shadowy streets of the Malifaux slums.

For a moment the woman looked back, pale green eyes locking with his own, a pale delicate face framed by bright copper hair.

"They call me Jezebel, and I know your name, Mr. Edward Crayne."

"So what does one of the Wilted Rose girls want with me... or is it the money?"

"Edward, if I had wanted your money I would have hit you with the bottle, now wouldn't I?"

Crayne tried looking into her eyes to see if he could

detect any evidence of treachery or danger there, but only the well-practiced innocence of her expression was reflected back at him (a trait common to many women in her line of work).

"Fine, so where are we going then?" Crayne was looking around trying to figure out where he was and deciding if it was time to slip away now that the Wilted Rose seemed to be behind them.

"Somewhere safe. That man you cheated..."

"I didn't cheat anyone, I just let him believe I was a poorly skilled card player and then disabused him of the notion."

"As I said, that man you cheated was Caleb Muller, not just a boss in the M&SU but also a friend of Ramos and an Arcanist, if you believe the rumours."

Crayne had heard of the Arcanists; dangerous magical terrorists with strong ties to the Miners and Steamfitters Union. Definitely not people to get on the wrong side of.

"To make matters worse that stunt you pulled offering money for protection drew the attention of some other less than pleasant characters. Those wastrels are led by Finlay Rorschach, a vile thief, murderer, and worse, while the big man in the duster is a hired gun by the name of Maximillian de Rais, of equally unpleasant demeanour."

Crayne couldn't be sure, but Jezebel seemed to be getting more and more excited as she listed his new cadre of enemies, almost as if she had been waiting for a very special present and was finally about to unwrap it.

"I guess that's my luck. Fate, it seems, has it in for me tonight."

For an instant Crayne noticed a change in Jezebel's expression when he mentioned fate, but it was gone before he was sure he had seen it. He was about to continue his thought but Jezebel interrupted him.

"So, I thought I might help, find somewhere safe to hide, at least until they stop looking for you - and trust me they will be looking, each and every one of them has a reputation to uphold and takes a very dim view of getting cheated."

"I didn't cheat anyone..."