

Shadow Nations

Sample file

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CREDITS

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EUROPE
2299 AD

ATLANTIC
MAELSTROM

DOMINION
OF SILENTIA

ENGLAND

NORTH SEA

GERMANY

FRANCE

SPAIN

ROMAN EMPIRE

GREECE

IONIAN
SEA

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

NORWEGIAN SEA

SCANDINAVIA

RUSSIA

BALTIC SEA

UKRAINA

SLA

MINA

BARLEY

WHEAT

AFRICA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sample file

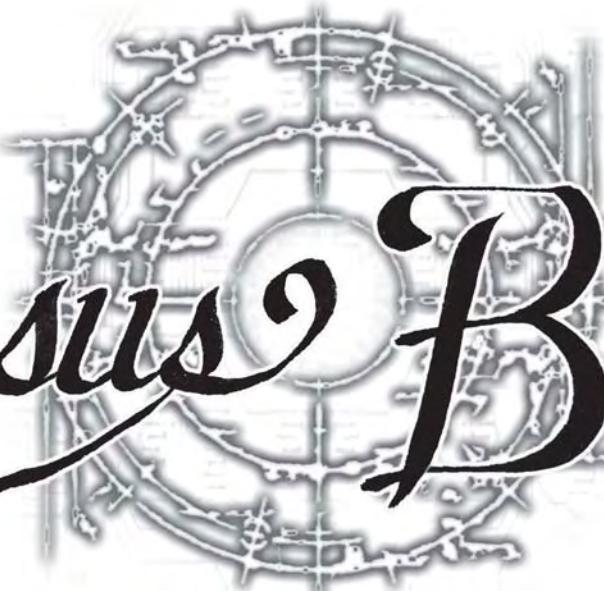
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History	13
Setting	21
England	22
France	28
Germany	35
Greece	40
Roman Empire	46
Russia	52
Scandinavia	59
Spain	67
Ukrainia	73
System Rules	81
Basic Difficulties	83
Attribute & Skills Descriptions	84
Combat	89
Weapon Proficiencies	92
Essence & Endurance	96
Spirit Dimension	97
Terror Rating	105
Glyph Construction	106
Character Creation	111
Ethos	112
Region	113
Social	114
Generation Points	117
Experience Points	118
Mentor Contacts	121
Hellspring	125
Traits	127
Abilities	129
Special Abilities	132
Kultists	139
Avarice	144
Azure Hyaline	149
Box of Under	152
Carnivoria	157
Pestilence	162
Requiem	167
Spiritual Essence	172
Stimulus	176
Torment	181
Mystics	187
Colleges	189
Rituals	203
Newbloods	221
Light Traditions	222
Dark Traditions	228
Focus Items	233
Equipment	237
Common Items	245
Animals	255
Artifacts	258
Antagonists	265
Bestiary	286
Military Forces	299
Regional Threats	308
Index	312
Character Sheet	315

Sample file





Casus Belli

“We already paid the tax!”

The voice was pleading, and, to be perfectly honest, I was not paying that close of attention. I had heard this argument so many times, I stopped listening. It would play the same: the women pleading, clutching mewling babes to their breasts while the men were lined up in the town square and inspected. The stoutest three would be brought ~~with us~~, chained, as I was chained, to the feed wagons that trundled ponderously but implacably forward.

Sure enough, three men were selected. Two of them were resigned to their fates, shuffling into position behind the wagon train and flinching slightly as the manacles were locked over their wrists. One woman clutched desperately at one of the men, pleading that they had been married only recently. The sneering jailor, twisting the key in the lock at the man’s wrist, shoved her roughly away. He proposed that she could follow and become a camp’s whore or wait the two-year period, when he would probably return home—if he were still alive.

The third man caught my eye. Not because he was big, though he was, and not because he was defiant, though he was that as well, but because, when the Roman legionnaire turned to laugh at the newlyweds and their plight, I watched him reach under the waistband of his rough cotton trousers and pull forth one of those German lead-throwing abominations. He pointed it imperiously at the legionnaire and grunted something that might have been a curse. Then, the infernal machine screamed its own condemnation of the soldier.

Smoke, noise, and the panicked din of the scattering villagers simultaneously fought for command of my attention. But my eyes were locked on the man with the weapon. The legionnaire had half-turned at the grunted protest of the man, and when the weapon howled its war cry, half the

soldier’s head had fallen apart in a spray of blood and bone. Impressive as it was, twenty-four more soldiers stood ready to punish the man for his insolence, and more than likely, cite him for contraband possession.

Three more cries of the weapon, two more fallen soldiers. One clutched at a leg that hung from a few ragged scraps of flesh and armor, and the other dropped without a sound, only a surprised look of ignorant horror at the massive wounds dug into his chest by the metallic breastplate of his legion armor. The man with the firearm was pivoting on one leg, dropping to a low crouch when a crossbow bolt launched by one of the other Romans punctured his lung from behind. The German device flew from the man’s hands as he stumbled forward, half-lifted back to a standing position by the force of the bolt. He collapsed, rasping and wheezing with a difficulty I knew was only a prelude to the strained and labored breathing that would guide him on his way to the grave.

The legionnaire with the crossbow stepped forward to appraise his work, staring at the man who was being drained of his life fluids. He placed one studded sandal on the man’s back, grinding down slightly as he surveyed the legionnaires, two dead and one wounded.

“Load the wounded one onto the lead wagon. Wrap the *accensus* and the *hastatus* in their cloaks and place them on the last wagon.” He casually reached down and pulled the quarrel from the dying man’s back, eliciting a whimper of pain.

The commands were issued in Italian peppered generously with Latin, but the speech patterns clearly indicated that the man was not the average soldier, and Italian was not his native language. His weathered face and large frame betrayed some measure of Scandinavian heritage, but there was something else. I watched as the men fell into line, accepting the man’s commands as if they had been issued by someone of true rank. I was not well-

Sample file

read enough to know the various titles and command structures of the Roman army, but this man obviously deserved respect and demanded obedience. As it was, my own hands pulled at my chains, dragging me closer to the wounded soldier, as if I might carry the man to the appointed location.

I stopped myself, or rather, the chains around my wrists did as I marched toward the wounded soldier. They whirled me about so that I could see the smirk of contempt on the new officer's face. The villagers remained hidden. It seemed to my eyes that, as the new officer surveyed the village, his contempt only deepened. When he turned back to the wagon train, he spoke with that same voice of authority that forced me to listen and made my body twitch to obey.

"My name is Rufus Felix Secundus, and you will address me as *quaestionarius*."

Seeing blank looks on many of the chained prisoners faces, the officer exhaled briefly in irritation before gesturing and speaking in Common, the trade language. It was as much gesture and tone as it was words, but his message was clear to all: "I am ruler."

The prisoners nodded acceptance. He waited a beat while everyone fell into line. Then he pointed at the man he had shot, who had started this quick change of command.

"This man is carrying contraband property, condemned by the wisdom of the Pope. May God keep him safe."

I had thought that perhaps we were going to be treated to some display of a gruesome, torturous death at the hands of this new officer, but instead, he drew his sword and made a chopping motion through the air, dividing his men in half.

"You ten, watch the prisoners," he ordered, as he swung the point of his sword to the other ten. "You ten, this town has harbored a German heretic and spy. Watch it burn to the ground and kill all who resist."

After issuing the order, the *quaestionarius* casually flicked his sword downward, slicing a deep gash in the dying man's neck. The prisoners that had come from this town screamed in terror and rage when they saw the torches kindled to life by the ten soldiers. Screaming and panic broke out anew amongst the villagers. I ignored it all, watching only the officer. He strode to where the heretic's weapon lay and picked it up. With a casual air of familiarity, the officer swung the cylinder holding the ammunition outward and inspected it briefly before snapping it back and tucking it into his waistband. He bent down to search the corpse of the executed man.

I watched with a certain detachment as the soldiers burned the pitiful excuse for a settlement. A few villagers resisted, and were executed with a brevity that spoke of professional killers. The soldiers seemed to act with alacrity, pitching torches onto thatch roofs and kicking in doors in a fashion that bespoke boredom. Three or four came back with some baubles and trinkets, but most seemed to assess the town with a cursory glance, deeming it unworthy of a raid.

The officer did not bother to see that his order was carried out. He surveyed my fellow conscripts, looking them over carefully, as though contemplating a purchase at the market. After dismissing us as potential threats, he stepped back, gesturing to one of the ten soldiers guarding us.

The soldier approached him without pause, and even myself and the other prisoners seemed to stumble toward this imposing officer unwillingly at the gesture.

After a few words, the guard nodded quickly and turned to us. He spoke Italian first, and then repeated the information in halting German.

"We are *bucelarii*, that is, privately-funded soldiers," the guard explained. "We are not those who will train you or keep you. We have been hired by the *Tribunus Laticlavius* Titus Cassus to enlist more troops to expand Rome's empire in the northwest. We will be heading to a rendezvous with this legion in two days. At this time, we will be paid twenty Roman coin for each person of sound mind and body that we relinquish to the legion. Your term of service is stated to be two years, but this may be increased or decreased at the will of the *Tribunus Laticlavius*. We desire the money for your heads, and so, we will watch you, feed you, and protect you. However, should you fail to walk with the wagons, or should you prove to be more trouble than the twenty coin your life is worth, you will be executed."

The guard searched a moment for something else to say, but a nod from the officer set the man to repeating his message in what barely passed for German. After the repetition, I watched a few of the men panic slightly, doing their best to conceal it, but I knew what they were thinking: the Roman army meant working with the *praetorians* and *vigiles* of the Inquisition. That translated to death for a great many people in this caravan. I tried in vain to determine the nature of sins that might be punished by the unforgiving arm of the Inquisition, the fiery-eyed Kultists or the Spiritual Essence that cut down sinners and captured their souls to fuel their probing and perceptive powers.

At least one looked to be someone that I might try to speak to later. His eyes, still frightened but steeled with resolve, I watched his hands stretch and relax in a familiar preparation for meditation. The man had obviously been trained in mental arts, and that meant he might be a Mystic of some sort. Perhaps at least one of these fools chained to the wagons might have some measure of aid to offer when I make my escape.

It was two days later that we crested a valley near the French-Roman border. The shallow valley provided some measure of protection from the wind, and inside this depression was an orderly sea of tents and men, clustered about small fires as if to ward against whatever might lurk in the darkness. For myself, I had been to France before, and I knew the terrors of the dark better than most.

We passed three more villages on our way to the encampment. None of them had put up anything that might resemble resistance, and thus, our number had swollen by nine, bringing the total conscription count to an even thirty. We lost one man who had lost the will to continue and was dragged to death behind a wagon. Another had come down with the fever, and after an inspection by the *quaestionarius*, he had been deemed too sickly to be profitable. The man was killed and his body stripped of its tattered rags and shoes. I envied the scavengers that would feast in freedom that night.

As we entered the valley, one of the soldiers unfurled a large eagle standard, showing allegiance to the tribune in command of the assembled army. A first glance made me estimate the Romans to number approximately nine thousand. I wondered how many other conscription detachments were roaming the countryside.

We were met at the base of the valley by a legionnaire who helpfully pointed the way for our ragtag band of murderers and would-be slaves. As we entered the camp, I noticed a tent off to the side, a bit larger than the rest, with torches lining the exterior. I watched a figure, covered in a white cloak and bearing the crimson-stained cross of the Inquisition emerge from within, the muffled cries of someone being put to the question carried to my ears on the bitter, biting wind. The inquisitor watched us pass, his eyes two burning, orange embers in the darkness. At his side, a blade that could have been carved from glass reflected the torchlight. A few of the men cowered from the gaze, and I must admit, I was one of them.

But the gaze moved onward, thankfully, coming to rest when it reached the officer of our travel-worn troupe. The eyes narrowed, and instincts born of arduous training itched at the back of my mind. There was power in the air. I could feel the soul that had been captured and imprisoned inside the glass blade of the inquisitor as it writhed and splintered when a small piece of it was given to his masters in trade for some unnatural sight. He gazed piercingly at the officer, who sneered in contempt.

“Amicus Romae,” he uttered in Latin. In the palm of his hand lay what could only be called a coin, though the small chit seemed to be made of clay or wax.

In the firelight, I saw it reflected briefly and thought I understood: it was a seal of indulgence. Whatever dark sin the inquisitor saw in this officer, the seal showed that he had made amends with Rome and had been granted special dispensation for his evil acts.

I watched carefully as the officer and the tribune exchanged greetings and money as if old friends. They both spoke Latin, and I cursed my bad luck, as it was one of the few languages of Europe that I did not know. When the inquisitor, not content to allow things to pass, approached the pair, I could see them gesturing to each other. I heard our officer growl angrily.

He nearly shouted the phrase, *“Antiquis temporibus, nati tibi similes in rupibus ventosissimis exponebantur ad necem!”*

The inquisitor stiffened in anger and moved to strike the officer.

The tribune intervened with a sharp, “No!”

I felt the unleashing of a tidal wave of power. Similar to the dark compact of damnation every follower of Daemons has with his particular Circle of Hell, I felt souls scream and perish in the span of an instant. I felt them flow from hidden sources on our tribune, and I watched as the arguing Romans ground to a painful halt, their joints and bones locked in an artificial paralysis that seemed terribly comfortable.

The scene was frozen there, hanging in the balance, the inquisitor’s hand bent back in preparation, and the officer’s hand reaching for the German weapon tucked into his waistband. There, paused at the

command of the tribune, the pair grimaced in pain, unable to move, their muscles frozen.

I watched the tribune glance downward at the weapon in the officer’s waistband. He withdrew it and looked over at our officer, who, even though paralyzed, seemed to wither under the glare. If anything, I watched the inquisitor’s eyes gleam in triumph. Technology was a crutch of artificial power, claimed the Church, and it flew in the face of God’s will. There would be no escaping the inquisitor’s wrath now. Even if the tribune chose to ignore the slight, there was still the intent to harm a member of the Inquisition; the possession of damnable contraband; and whatever dark secret the inquisitor had uncovered with his fiery-eyed stare. This was too much. The tribune, absolute ruler of the legion, could not stand against the inquisition. The tribune spoke calmly in Italian.

“You are dismissed from my services, Rufus. We will have no need of your new conscripts. Take them with you, or leave them here to suffer the scrutiny of the Inquisition; it is of no consequence to me. You have until dawn to leave my camp. Take what supplies you need and just go.”

The tribune spoke with such an authoritative air that I wondered what manner of power allowed him to stand before the officer and command him like a common soldier. I recalled the commanding voice of Rufus and his ~~cruel~~ cruelty. I doubted I would ever be so bold or confident as to relax my sense of self-control.

“The Inquisition will not harm him,” spoke the tribune, glaring at the inquisitor who seemed to crack and creak, even as the officer mirrored the sudden, spreading limberness. “He will be given leave to depart freely.”

“You do not command the Inquisition, Tribune Cassus. Only the Pope, in his infinite wisdom, may claim that right,” threatened the inquisitor.

“True, but you will respect my wishes, or you’ll find me a very disagreeable bedfellow,” replied the tribune, staring straight into the flickering fire of the inquisitor’s eyes without a hint of fear.

“I will not harm them within your camp, then,” conceded the inquisitor.

This declaration made me respect and fear the tribune even more, as I had never heard of anyone who could dissuade one of inquisition.

“But after they leave this valley, I and my brethren will perform our duty unto Our Lord.”

The inquisitor left, and I saw the tribune surreptitiously slip the German firearm to Rufus, for safekeeping, of course. I heard a few more Latin sentences in an almost apologetic tone as the tribune added, *“Auribus tenere lupum.”*

Rufus smiled knowingly and replied, *“Aut vincere aut mori.”*

I recognized this last as the final command the Pope always uttered to his legions before sending them into battle. A brief salute and embrace between the two parted their company, and Rufus turned to us.

“You, gentlemen, now have a choice.”

The voice was silken, smooth, belying the threats we now faced. He addressed conscript and soldier alike.

"You may remain with the legion and fight and die for Rome, or you may journey with me, and take your chances against the Inquisition."

It is a testament to the horrible legends and terrors of the Inquisition that of the fifty men, thirty conscripts and twenty soldiers, a full forty-four of them would rather face the endless undead armies of France, rather than take their chances against a small handful of inquisitors. For myself, I chose to link my fate to the commanding and charismatic former-*quaestionarius*, Rufus Felix Secundus.

Three days, two deaths, and four horses later, our band was limping into what remained of something that appeared to have once been a major city. Today, after Hell and wars had scoured the land for so long, the city was a husk. It consisted of walls with no interiors, and structures without substance. As we approached in the dead of night, vehicles roared to life, their engines churning some bizarre combination of fuel and energy that spit a dark cloud behind them, illuminated in the searchlights that burned and sought us quickly and efficiently as they advanced upon us.

Our party numbered five. There was our nominal leader, Rufus Secundus, who had been so recently cast from his lofty position as torturer (as I had been given to understand from his gradual conversation) to that of quarry for the Inquisition. I had been cast into a secondary role when Rufus quickly ascertained my Mystic talents and recognized that I was as much a heretic as he was. The others were a confusing lot, and I suspected that I knew less of them than their words would have me believe.

Gregor was an outcast from Germany for strangling his wife. He sought to make a name for himself as a mercenary and felt that the trophies of a few crystal blades of the Inquisition would be an excellent start to his new career in paid murder. Dragomir Koslovich was a Ukrainian trader who had found a home in a small village. He was something of a healer and knew the ways of the land. Then there was the other Mystic, Loren, a man of muddled heritage that spoke little and performed less.

We had to leave our dead behind. One had taken an arrow to the throat, and his horse rode on with us for two miles before we realized that the rider was not merely hunching over his horse to make himself a smaller target. The other, Jacob, was a man whom I believe Rufus suspected was an informant, or, at the very least, had judged him to be a liability. As we made camp one night, the pair went for firewood, and only Rufus returned. None of us had mustered the courage to ask him what happened.

And thus, as the vehicles bore down on us, Gregor rode to the fore. Rufus nudged his mount backward, allowing the German to take the lead. When the vehicles ground to a halt, bathing us in lights so numerous and varied that I had a hard time discerning exactly how many had ridden out to greet us. As I listened, however, I heard three distinct tones come from the engines. When the creaking and squealing of metal upon metal indicated that a door was opening, I made no swift movements nor gave any indication that I had heard.

"State your name and your business here at our dig site," came the tinny command, amplified through a speaker system and made indistinct

by the horrible state of the electronics. The voice was speaking German, but the vehicles had all but assured me of their nationality.

"We are travelers seeking passage to Ukrainia," replied Gregor. It was true. We had decided upon Budapest as a starting point, as Rufus claimed to have allies there that would ensure that the hunt from the Inquisition would pursue us no further.

"Lay down your weapons, dismount your horses, and submit to inspection," was the only reply.

My sensitive ears detected the sound of a weapon's action quietly being slid into place to our left. I glanced at Rufus and noted that he, too, had heard the noise. I slowly dismounted my horse and dropped my weapons, a crossbow and sword I had acquired from the Roman encampment. At my example, Loren and Dragomir followed suit. Gregor gave us a nod of approval and mimicked our actions, dropping a handful of knives and a wood axe.

Rufus remained seated on his mount, staring at the lights with something flickering between contempt and outright anger. Perhaps his dignity was bruised by having to bow to someone that hid behind lights and speakers; I could not tell. When I heard the sound of vehicle doors swinging open once more and saw two men carrying much larger versions of the firearm owned by Rufus come striding forward, Rufus dismounted, dropping the sword and the firearm.

The men searched us quickly, one going so far as to retrieve the firearm belonging to Rufus and examine it. When the German moved to keep the weapon, I knew then that we were in trouble.

Rufus' hand shot forward, quickly, more quickly than even I could react, and drew the appropriated firearm from the German's waistband, holding it flush against the man's belly. Without even pausing, Rufus stepped forward into the man, turning his knee against the inside of his captive's leg and pulling him forward with his free hand, putting him inside the range of the man's larger weapon. Acting on instinct, I reached outward with my mind, bending the will of the other German scavenger and twisted. I felt the self-control of the man shatter beneath the weight of my dominance and I turned him, twisting his body back around toward the vehicles and unleashing the killing power of his firearm against the vehicles of his former comrades.

The weapon erupted in fire and a riot of noise, spewing bullet after bullet in a torrent I feared might never end. My puppet fanned his weapon back-and-forth slowly, making certain to distribute the punishment of the weapon effectively across as much of the vehicle as he could. My ears heard glass shatter, flesh tear, and lips peel back in screams. Most of the lights shattered, leaving us only enough illumination to be comfortable in our battle.

The sniper from our left shot the only available target: Gregor. The rest of us had dismounted, whether due to our keen hearing, or merely luck, so as to place our horses between the sound and ourselves. Gregor, however, had stepped forward, displaying his cooperation and tossing his weapons forward. The sound was loud, but the sound of the bullet biting into Gregor was even worse. I saw the blossom of red erupt from the side of Gregor's face, and an explosion of bone and blood from the other side. The bullet had shattered his jaw, taking most of his tongue and teeth with

it. His ghastly form stood, gurgling in some horrible mix of agony, shock, and wonderment, hands slowly pawing at his face, assessing the damage.

Loren ran forward toward the gunshot in the darkness, his form becoming indistinct as it ran, then vanishing altogether, fading from the world of flesh into the realm of spirit. A prodigious power, and one that made me nervous at the might the quiet man held at his fingertips.

Dragomir rushed toward Gregor. Whether he thought that all the men in the vehicles were killed, or whether concern for his fellow man overrode his concern for his own safety, I will never know. A twanging sound echoed in my ears and a barbed metal bolt shot from the area near the vehicles, piercing Dragomir's gut.

The horses, all except Rufus' mount, obviously trained and acquainted with the scent of death, were scattering in a panic. The screen of panicked animals and the smoke emitted by the German firearms gave me a small window to assess the situation.

Rufus, at some point during the barrage of weapon fire and chaos, had decided to fire two rounds into his foe, tossing the man aside and bringing the weapon to bear on the darkness amidst the vehicles. I watched the torturer crouch low by his panicked horse, holding it steady with one arm on the reins and the other training the firearm.

As for myself, I watched the man whose mind I had seized pull a small metal box from the underside of his weapon and reach for a replacement on his belt. He was reloading.

I rolled forward, grabbing my sword and waiting for a horse to pass by as I came to a crouch beside the reloading former-puppet. When I heard the click of the box being inserted and the action get yanked backward, I swung my blade as hard as I could at the man's thigh. The man screamed in pain, tumbling backward onto me, and I pulled him with me, using his writhing form as a shield.

Rufus, seeing a silhouette flinch in the space between vehicles, fired three rounds, two striking a vehicle, but one finding flesh. Loren strode out of the darkness, a long-barreled firearm slung across his shoulder and a small pack in his hand. Rufus strode toward Gregor and Dragomir and examined them. For Gregor, he cut the man's throat, and, after seeing the ruin his face had become, I counted it a mercy. Dragomir, however, he seemed to deem worthy of saving. He looked over at Loren and me and I watched his entire body assume an air of authority that I had not seen since our dismissal from the Roman camp.

"Do you know where we are?" asked Rufus, glancing around as he lifted Dragomir, carrying him toward a vehicle. To his credit, Dragomir seemed to swallow the pain for a moment to consider the answer.

"We are in Vienna," he replied, gasping as he looked around. "It was destroyed nearly two hundred years ago. It is a popular place for scavengers and workers to gather materials for other towns and cities, but there is little left here other than bandits. Budapest is east and slightly south."

Rufus nodded and placed the man in the backseat of the largest vehicle. He pulled the dead from all the transports, lining up three more men on the dirt in front of Loren and me.

"Do either of you know how to drive?" asked Rufus, his voice demanding an answer and my lips already forming the negative even as

my head was shaking. Loren seemed to be as technically adept as myself. Rufus sniffed angrily and gestured at the vehicles.

"I will teach you this night and you will follow me," he explained, as if the concept of operating one of these vehicles was no more difficult than writing one's name. He reassessed the bodies we had collected during our killing spree and nodded in approval, "Strip the bodies of anything useful, bring all the weapons and armor, and throw them in the vehicles. I must inspect our new acquisitions."

That night, I learned more about mechanics and driving than I had been taught before or since. More importantly, however, I learned everything I needed to know about Rufus Felix Secundus, *Immunes* and *Bucelarius* of the 23rd Legion, Torturer and Hellspring of Avarice.

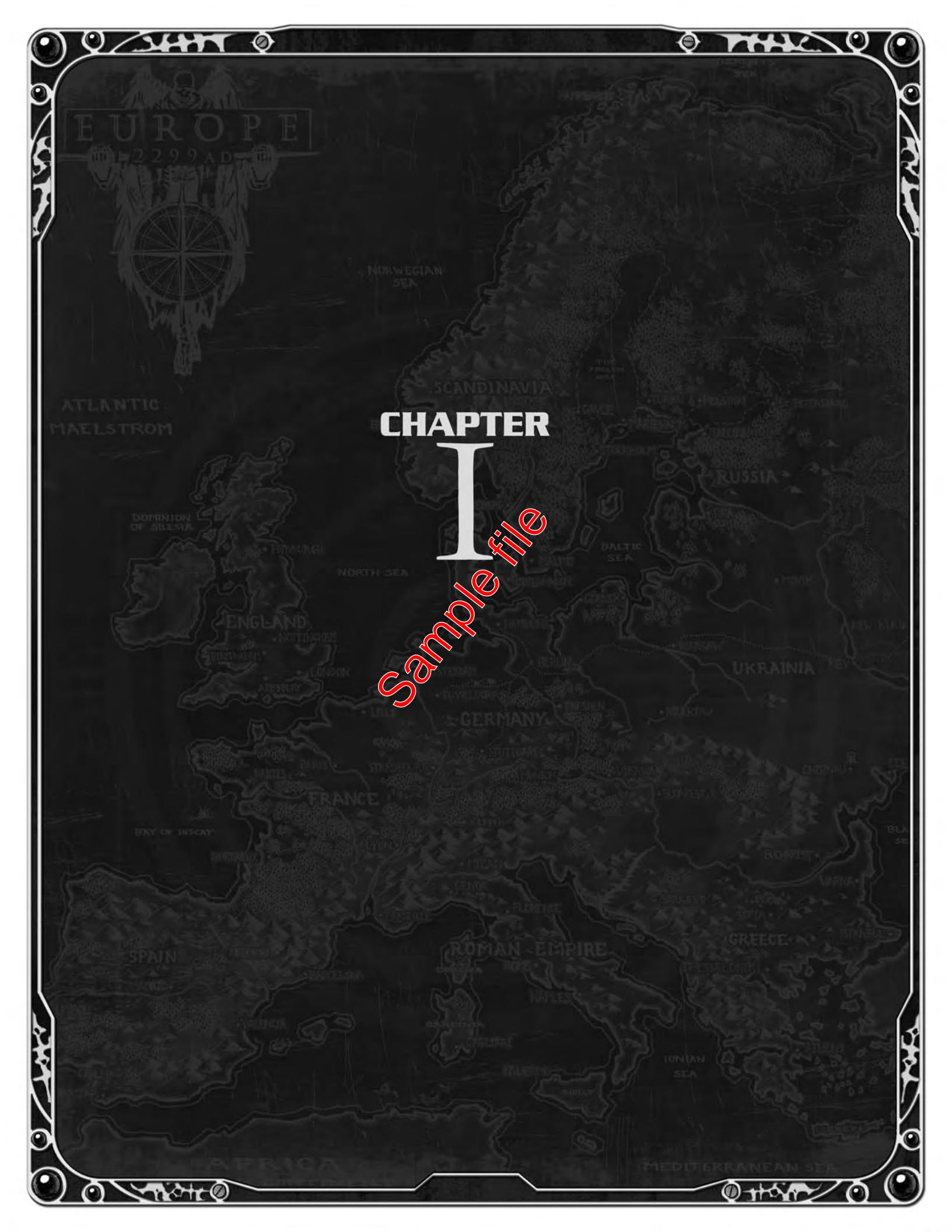
I know that you had sent me to Rome to establish myself as a soldier and work my way through the ranks to become indispensable to the army. You wanted me to learn Latin, to bring back texts that we might all learn the language of our enemies. In Rufus Felix Secundus, however, we have found an ally. His connections in Ukrainiania are other followers and half-breeds of that dark Circle of Hell.

We could gather these people and band them together to create a force that knows the ways of Rome. The group could teach us so much more than what we might learn through the scraps of information passed to one, paltry soldier. I will travel with this half-breed a ways further, yet, as we four survivors of the mad hunt of the Inquisition are now prosperous, having sold our vehicles and many of the firearms for great profit in Budapest. We will recruit more men, more supplies, and we will train them.

The next time I write, I hope to be in Chisinau, where Rufus assures me we might find allies that are willing to aid us in pursuit of our aspiration to become hunters of hunters—the Inquisition. I do hope that you find some method of establishing communication, as our new band hopes to make a name for itself very soon. Thank you for your teachings and your guidance, and I hope that my actions make you proud.

Always,
Your Student

Sample file



CHAPTER I

Sample file



Sample file

PrePortal- Before Hell came to Earth, humans ruled. They were the dominant species, using other animals for food, clothing, and scientific experimentation. Humanity had built grand cities, acquired incredible knowledge, and even ventured into the space that surrounded their world. Unfortunately corruption plagued these creatures from their very creation. Free-will led to hatred, greed, debauchery, and lust. They were ignorant to the fact that Earth was an energy reservoir used to sustain foreign dimensions.

These evil energies slowly corrupted another plane, somewhere in another existence. After millennia of trial-and-error attempts the creatures from this plane found a way to follow the corruption back to its source: Earth. They were able to send hellish emissaries to this plane, bartering power for human sacrifices. The very corruption that created these Daemonic entities to Earth also lead humanity to sell itself for simple pleasures. Great leaders rose to conquer distant lands, bed numerous wives, and destroy all those that opposed them. These feats were paid for by hundreds of thousands of human souls.

This vicious cycle continued. Death, suffering, and agony- all fed back into the stream of energy that sustained the distant plane, further corrupting these dark entities. Soon the accumulation of human souls grew to such epic proportions that the Circles of Hell no longer needed to be summoned by humankind. They could open portals that lead directly from their plane to Earth. These portals are what allowed the armies of Hell to invade Earth.

Coincidentally, seven of the eight Circles of Hell chose the hour of midnight, December 31st, 2026, to break the fabric of time and space. They opened over 32,000 portals all over Earth. Each portal spewed forth hundreds of ravenous, calculating, and terrifying fiends to feast upon mankind. The dates below have been recorded and documented in the hopes of finding a way to rid the Earth Plane of these infernal beasts.

2027 Portals Open- Hell engulfs the Earth like a tsunami. Oceans boil, plagues spread, and the dead rise. Earth's human armies mobilize against a supernatural force that has been planning this day for thousands of years with the help of human Kultists. A biblical Armageddon manifests.

2027 Europe Scattered- Transoceanic communications are severed on the first day. The world is fragmented and thrown into chaos. Armies disband; soldiers run for cover, desperately seeking sanctuary from hellish legions.

2027 Nuke Launch- Days after the initial attack, nukes from around the world are launched. Two warheads strike England, three hit the western portion of Russia, and four clouds rise from Africa, seen from the coasts of Spain on the horizon. The world shudders at the violent upheaval.

2027 Bombs Fell and Plagues Killed- Bizarre aircraft scream across the European skies, strategically bombing large cities and military installations. Plagues sweep across countries just as fast, turning entire towns into nests for flies, maggots, and soon, the walking dead. Not since the Dark Ages has Europe seen such mass devastation. The Circle of Pestilence has struck its blow in Europe.

2027 Machine Rising in Germany- A strange machine presence reveals itself in Germany. Man-made factories are quickly converted into assembly plants for hellish designs. The populace of Germany has born witness to the Circle of Torment and its machinelike human followers.

2027 Undead Migration to France- Across Europe, corpses of men stumble towards France. Paris falls into darkness as legions of undead extinguish all life within the city of art. This migration is an indication that the Circle of Requiem's has touched the Earth Plane.