





THE RHYTHMS OF CONQUEST

The Reminiscences, Impressions, and Eyewitness Account of Ptarmigan Burlihoo, Retired Imperial Poet Laureate and Paramount Censor Emeritus, Describing and Explaining the Campaign of Enlightened Domination Upon This Most Fortunate Continent by the Great PowerMonger. Incorporating Additional Expository Material Detailing His Strategic Theora and Many Observations of the Peculiar Customs of the Contentedly Subjugated Populations.

With Instructive Maps.
Deluxe Edition. (Abridged).







CONTENTS

THE PATH OF CONQUEST	4
PROLOGUE	5
LANDFALL	5
THE JUDGEMENT OF THE SCALES	8
OPENING SHOTS	11
WOOLLY FRIENDS	13
THREE SWORDS IN EMGGS	16
IF ALL THE SEAS WERE INK	18
THE VASTBLUE	20
BRIETH ENCOUNTER	22
THE CHAINS OF COMMAND	24
RECITAL	27
ONCE IN A BLUE MOON	29
DOLDRUMS	31
A MOVABLE FLEET	33
SLASH AND GRAB	35
LIFE ON THE EDGE	37

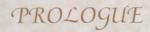
THE BATTLES AROUND GAUNTLET LAKE	3.
THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY	4.
A WAGONLOAD OF HINTS	4.
NO ONE IS INNOCENT	50
WAITING GAME	52
WHITE KNIGHT TAKES RED KING	54
CAPTAINS AND THE KINGS DEPART	56
POISON PEN	58
DISCIPLINE	61
OUR FAME PRECEDES US	63
PTARMIGAN AGONISTES	65
WORDS OF PEACE, ACTS OF WAR	67
NEVER SHOW A MONKEY YOUR TONGUE	70
PTARMIGAN RUNS SHORT	73
THE STORM AND THE CROWN	75
EPILOGUE	78
NOTICE	80



THE PATH OF CONQUEST

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13





LANDFALL

It occurred to me that I was wet. Hazily remembering that I had spent the past several perilous weeks at sea, that could also mean that I was drowned. But the fact that I was still breathing disallowed that possibility. Reassuring as that was, it told me nothing of my current location. I opened a blurry, salt-stung eye to reconnoitre. A crab had ascended my nose and was looking gravely down into my theretofore passive face. Our gazes met only briefly. Disgruntled that I was still alive and that my face would not be providing him with a leisurely meal, he scuttled away to conduct his business elsewhere.

I knew I was on a beach because of the roar of the surf, my interlude with the crab, and the moderate quantity of sand in my mouth, which I languidly scraped out with a white, wrinkled finger. I offered up grateful prayers to the seven national deities, II local demigods, 15 community spirits, and my 21 ancestral quardians, as well as the many fetishes I carry at all times but rarely bother to count. I gave thanks that the sea had spared me, that my voyage was at an end, and that I had enlisted in the army and not the navy in the callow days of my youth. Maritime manoeuvres suited neither my temperament nor my digestion. Both are sensitive. I stood at last on wobbly legs and scanned the sandy shore for my countrymen.

There had been a woeful reduction in the Grand Army whose proud vanguard we once were. Our homeland had been destroyed by unimaginable geologic fury. Many of his Majesty's elite forces were swallowed up by hungry cracks in the earth in the initial disaster. The majority of the survivors were incinerated by steaming lava in the subsequent conflagration, with the better portion of the remnants washed away by the concluding cataclysm. Then the situation began

to deteriorate







he score of us who were spared immediate calamity, including my sovereign lord, raced to the seaside to find a means of escape. I was alarmed to find that we would have

to flee our disintegrating homeland in a fleet of shockingly porous fishing boats. Their condition would have been a scandal in less volcanic times. Still, we had no choice but to consign our fate to their leaky hulls. As we pushed away from the shore, the blast from an explosion struck our sails as an angry mistress strikes an insolent servant, and it flung us far out to sea. We never looked back as the smoke from our burning nation shrouded the sun. Only airborne, glowing ash from our lost homeland lit our way.

The holocaust had changed even the familiar trade routes of the sea. We rode alien currents for weeks through doldrums and squalls, icy swells and tropical eddies. Our noble lord did what he could to maintain morale by taking his turns at bailing, rowing, and keeping watch, shouting encouragement all the while. He would accept no more than an equal share of our meagre rations, although all begged him to partake of more to keep up his strength. Without his noble and unselfish example we surely would have perished, and his name and that of his people would have vanished from the memories of nations. It was his strength, not our own, that brought us to a fair shore.

At this moment, I feared he had saved us only to face new desolation. When I spied him at last, he was standing alone by a rampart of jagged black boulders. His red cloak shone like sunrise on a polished blade even as dusk and stormclouds began to veil the sky. Brooding before a roaring campfire built from the remnants of one of our incontinent vessels, he did not look up as we approached. We did not so much gather around him in the customary militarily precise circle as collapse in a ragged and exhausted oval. Many of us were still gagging up brine, and pulling seaweed away from our sunburned faces and faded, threadbare uniforms. I counted our depleted number; it was the mathematical equivalent of despair.



y lord's voice interrupted my geometric digression. I do not recall now the exact words he said, but even today when I think on them they are fire in my heart and heat all the

think on them they are fire in my heart and heat all the corridors leading from its four chambers. The men rose and the storm broke as he finished speaking. The wind caught his cape in its teeth and flared it behind him like the tail of a comet, a sure prophecy of conflict and strife. The flames of the bonfire flared and convulsed, choreographed by the tempest into a livid dance of war. The pelting rain was hot, but not so hot as our warrior's blood. Then sheet lightning struck the rocks behind my lord and shattered them; and in the place of the rough brow of stone was shining black glass carved into the five distinct peaks of a crown. Mere moments before, we had been a sodden flock of listless castaways. Suddenly, the words of our ruler had torn the weariness from our muscles and bones, and scalded our minds until all hopelessness dispersed like a foolish fog.

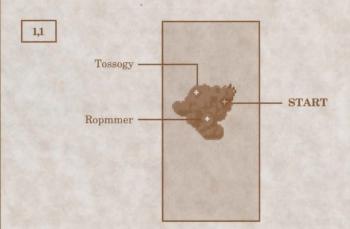
Needless to say, I felt much better. And I so enjoy these opportunities to wax poetic. It is for this reason that I gave up the scholarly life to became a soldier. I began to outline an epic poem to immortalize us all.







THE JUDGEMENT OF THE SCALES



his island seemed an unlikely cornerstone for the foundation of a great empire. It struck me as more analogous to the rude entrance to a gate house than a colonnaded ramp leading into a palace. Still, even the finest marble begins as the basest mud, and no throne is ascended without climbing a few steps. The campaign here also promised to be a brief one and would postpone any premature re-embarkation on the bounding main.



e had constructed a home of sorts, a tower on a hilltop. It was hardly an example of our brilliant national architecture, but then we weren't planning to stay long. It served its dual purpose as a storage facility for provisions and shelter for my noble lord. Before we left the rude shelter, as we did at the beginning of any campaign, we removed whatever food we had stored there. Better we eat it than have it fall to the tower weasels.

Reconnaissance of the island showed it had only two large population centres, a northern settlement called Tossogy and a southern one named Ropmmer. The most disturbing thing about the natives, other than their apparent fondness for unattractive place names, was their demeanour. The regularity of their schedules, the rigidity of their organization, and the uniformity of their dress bespoke one of two things: (1.) A driven mania for unoriginality, or (2.) Militarism. Not that those two possibilities are ever mutually exclusive, of course.

My lord was wise enough to presume that these peasants, although not organized into an army, were nonetheless trained to engage in open combat. His keen judgment echoed my own, as was often the case. I had observed that these blue-garbed foreigners occasionally stopped in the midst of whatever they were doing, saluted crisply, and shouted, "All hail our noble mistress, Jayne III!"

I do not know how my lord arrived at his decision to attack Tossogy as opposed to Ropmmer; as a future poet laureate, I would have preferred Ropmmer since it lends itself to easier rhyming, although Tossogy might have allowed for freer metrical experimentation. But I had long ago resigned myself to the unhappy fact that the poetic muse occupies a rank inferior to that of the martial spirit. And I could always rearrange the facts for literary necessity and effect later. Which I did







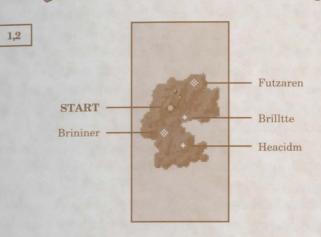
he battle was brief and the victory decisive. Our attitude was casual, even passive, as we overwhelmed the rabble. The vanquished villeins slunk back to their rude dwellings in

disarray. I led my doughty comrades in a victory cheer, although my attempt to get them to harmonize was met with the customary disinterest. The local peasantry was an undistinguished looking lot (I've already mentioned their tendency to slink), and their village had few visible resources. There seemed little reason for us to stay.

I awaited my Lord's next order, which I assumed would be an attack on the bucolic churls of Ropmmer. Instead, he was studying a scales or balance, and pouring gold pieces into one of its tarnished cups. I assumed he was preparing to reward those of us who had shown the greatest valour and warlike spirit against the Tossogians. I endeavoured to commemorate the occasion with a couplet (although I was having trouble devising a rhyme for "well deserved") when the scales tipped to one side and my lord put it and the coins away. "The Conquest Balance has spoken. It is the judgement of the scales that we now control this territory," he announced. "On to the next conquest!"

To decide such a thing on the basis of a tipped scales? At first, I thought my sovereign had fallen under the sway of some preposterous superstition. And as one who allows preposterous superstitions to rule my life, I was all in favour of this innovation. But as time passed, I came to trust the judgement of the Conquest Balance as purest applied science. I detest purest applied science, but what works, works. One may win a territory in the middle of a battle if a careful eye is kept on the Conquest Balance and one acts quickly. The Balance can tip all the way to the right during combat; if it does so, retire. But do not hesitate; it might tip back if the tide of battle turns against you.

OPENING SHOTS





he next territory was reached after a mercifully brief sail; we would have to travel by boat many more times before our campaigns were over, but happily, never over the open sea.

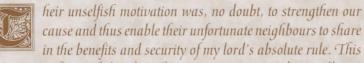
Short coastal or freshwater excursions were all that would be required. We built another simple tower (my suggestion for a cupola and bas reliefs was ignored) and awaited my lord's bidding. Our first target was to be the small settlement of Heacidm. We removed our stored victuals from the tower and sallied forth.

The Heacidmic varlets and knaves were no match for even our most passive assault. However, they proved more skilful at war's manufactures than its practices, for when they were set to inventing they made several swords while in a neutral humour and even a cannon while feeling more aggressive.









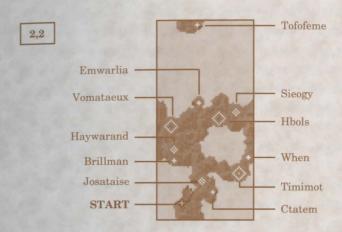
becoming show of loyalty, keen perception, and metallurgy recommended them for inclusion in my lord's crusading legion, so all were recruited.

It is worth noting that Inventing could leave my lord in a vulnerable position. When everyone is off in the woods, chopping down trees and diligently ruining fragile habitats, my lord was left all by himself by the workshop; one lone enemy soldier could have come in and made sure that he'd never be lonely again.

We could now strive to conquer the island's more populous settlements. By my lord's will, Brininer would be the next to fall. The lack of martial mettle we encountered there was complete; the flash of sword's edge and cannon's muzzle o'erthrew the local population with haste. This demonstration of utter helplessness touched the heart of the most calloused of our veterans, so we recruited all the Brininerariarns to provide them with the protection they so clearly required. My lord presumed the citizens of nearby Brilltte were likewise militarily inept, so we hastened thence to take them under our nurturing care. We addressed the Brillteens with a salutary round of cannon fire and a few sword-blows of greeting, and they welcomed us by surrendering politely and without delay.

This brought an end to our strivings in this territory. Upon our occupation of Brilltte, my lord's most prescient Conquest Balance told us that our strategic brilliance had brought these insular peoples within our beneficent sphere. We left our new countrymen behind as we travelled to the next cog in the meshing gears of the imperial machine.

WOOLLY FRIENDS

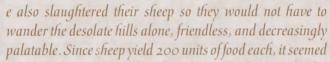


e built our next tower on a hilltop, enjoying a view that was most diverting. Too much so, perhaps, since it concealed from view several rustic hovels; we practically had to turn our rocky precipice to and fro to find them. My lord felt, as did I, that the nearby rough-hewn mountain-folk would seize our tower for sundry unclean and dire purposes if we left it unguarded before they were pacified. Our assault quickly brought them to heel, whereupon they were recruited so they might learn the kindred principles of civilized life and unquestioning obedience.









the most practical thing to do, although we learned subsequently that we could have brought them along. When a farm or settlement's shepherd is recruited, his or her woolly charges will accompany him when he leaves. Sheep could also keep up with our army when it was crossing a body of water. They are remarkably buoyant.

But one sheep we spared. Upon our approach, this most singular ram exhibited the greatest glee I have ever seen a quadruped outwardly express. And when the battle was won, he joined us in our victory shout, and with great effort and patience balanced a plough on his head to mimic our helmets. The men warmed to him because of his warlike ardour and he was immediately adopted as our mascot. I christened him Rupert after our national god of hostile livestock and unusual hats.

We marched away as Rupert Battle-Sheep bleated cadence, and it seemed to us that our woolly new companion brought us luck as this land fell quickly to the fury of our arms. Yet our next battle was not an easy one. The C in Ctaten may have been silent but the natives were not, and their resistance was stubborn. First we saluted their bravery after giving them a severe beating; then we accepted them as brothers and their food as lunch. Both new and veteran soldiers needed to rest before my lord selected our next target, Josataise, named for that goresodden tyrant Jos the Red. We expected a battle fiercer than the last, but Josataise was deserted when we reached it. The natives left with such haste that they left much food behind, which we added to our own stores lest vermin feast on it, growing brazen and rotund.



he men, doughty war dogs though they were, were given rest and repose as often as was practical. A smaller, rested force can cut a larger fatigued force into ribbons and other

decorative materials. Therefore, in most cases when we attacked a settlement and got men and/or food, we typically camped immediately to rest if it could be done safely. While the enlisted personnel were refreshing themselves, my lord would query one of the recently recruited villagers to keep track of his general well-being. He would be very sickly in the wake of our fierce albeit justifiable assault, but when he resumed his customary rural robustness, we pressed on with our crusade. When possible, we gave battle only when the bulk of our forces were well or fit. The merest touch of a weapon or bare fist will send anyone who is sickly to a better world than this where they will do you little, if any, good.

We expected to find the fell inhabitants of Josataise despoiling the countryside as a renegade army, but this did not come to pass. The rest of our stay on this bleak and rocky strand amounted to little more than mopping up, as we invaded Haywarand and reduced its larders and population to more manageable volumes (which is to say, empty) through conscription, and then applied the same theories of resource management and demographics to Joscidist, Brillman, Emwarh, and the very unfortunately named settlement of Vomataeux. This unhurried campaign came to a leisurely conclusion with the taking of Enwarlia and Hools.

Little did we know that this was to be our last casual campaign.



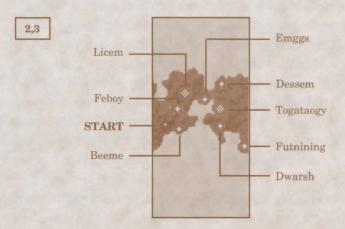
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THREE SWORDS IN EMGGS



ince before the mind of man runneth not to the contrary, my lord had exhorted us to prepare for the possibility of wandering armies. The ruins in many of the settlements we had conquered had obviously been the residue of conquests before ours, and conquests are rarely achieved by posting surly notes to one's neighbours. An army or two is generally involved in such political realignments. We soon learned a simple and eminently practical policy when dealing with such opposing forces: Kill them, kill them all.

Our reconnaissance indicated the settlement of Beeme should be our first target. The valour of the natives would have been insufficient to fill a cavity in an immature tree shrew's molar. So as part of our effort to bring remedial education to the benighted inhabitants of this forsaken strand, my lord accepted the Beemish into his army. On a probational basis, of course. Their first lessons were to kill their sheep, gather all their food, and make a few pikes. Their grades were passable if not scholarly. We repeated these steps upon occupying Feboy and Licem. It would take some effort to separate the men from the Feboys, but as bringers of civilization, we felt obliged to try.

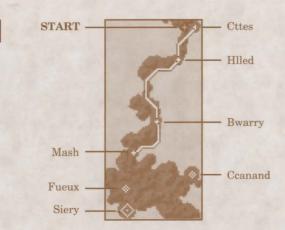
y lord chose Emggs as the next laboratory for his experiment in educational reform. But he seemed uneasy as we travelled, as did Rupert Battle-Sheep, who sniffed the air amid muttered bleats. Rather than going into the unprotected settlement, my lord had us camp near to it and looked warily toward the north. Both sire's and sheep's instincts proved keen, for soon we were set upon by a savage carmine-clad hoard of brigands loyal to Jos XVIII. My lord called out "Three swords!" which is his signal for "No mercy!" The carnage was horrifying, some of our own fellows learned their final lesson upon that gory field, and my lord himself was fairly coated by a frosting of red tunics and nearly undone. But in the end the day was ours. A short time later, the little Emggs and their neighbours the Dessems were helpless before our onslaught, battered though we were. After the Conquest Balance declared our victory, the victors were more weary than the vanquished, and their dreams more troubled.







IF ALL THE SEAS WERE INK



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ecall, if you will, my attitude concerning boats. Doing so, you will understand the discomfort I experienced, while participating the conquest of the next few territories. If all the seas were ink, I should endeavour to write even more and thus do myself the service of trying to empty them. Studying the lay of the land (and lack thereof) in these territories, I was going to suggest to my lord that we take every boat we came across; it would have been difficult to range southward without them. But my lord, ever prescient, had already formulated this policy before I could counsel him. It was always a comfort to know that his judgement was at least as keen as my own.



t likewise came to my immediate notice that the fresh lake air in this vicinity deepened the appetite ferociously. Indeed, on taking the settlement of Cttes as our first trophy here, the

Cttizens barely had time to swear their allegiance to my lord before we hastily slaughtered their sheep for our stores. When we set sail in those few boats in Cttes' meagre fleet, we hugged the shore tightly (displacement had been somewhat increased by our late ravenousness). My lord chose Hlled as our next goal.

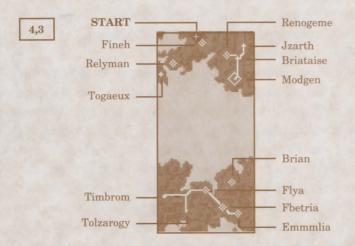
The previous massacre we had inflicted upon Jos' incarnadine mamelukes had not taught them the meaning of fear. The Red gang we faced on the outskirts of Hlled would remain similarly ignorant, since we slew them all with aggressive relish. The boats we removed from their rended corpses proved more durable than they did, and greatly speeded our progress down the peninsula. But as the land broadened, our military difficulties increased. We began to encounter the bloodthirsty rabble who follow the banner of Jayne III, the cruel blue queen of atrocities. As we battled them in their barbarous encampments, my lord frequently had to call to us to become more immoderate in our posture; our natural inclination toward mildness and mercy did not serve us well in some skirmishes. Nonetheless, our progress was rapid through the fetid lanes of Bwarry, Mash, Fueux, and Siery, absorbing all men and edibles as we passed.







THE VAST BLUE



ur accelerated progress continued through the next territory.

Sensing peril in the beckoning shadows of nearby Fineh,
my lord guided us to Relyman. There we encountered but

token resistance from the Relymansmen, who seemed genuinely chagrined by the blandness of their temperament. They clamoured for inclusion in our ranks so they might be influenced by our vigorous attitude, and offered up all their provisions and boats as enticement. How could my lord refuse?



ur next operation, the conquest of gloomy Fineh, put some colour in Relymanic blood. The Finehers themselves marvelled at the salutary effect enlistment in my lord's

service had had on their formerly wan neighbours, and followed their example. Our sweep into 'Renogene turned this into something of a mass movement as, after a brief skirmish, each and every one of the Renogenetic pleaded to enlist in my lord's cause so they might better emulate our hardiness. Indeed, the veterans among us frequently had to admonish the recruits not to perform calisthenics during periods reserved for rest. Our march into Modgen was met with less enthusiasm than we were by now accustomed to, but the Modgenals still yielded to our relentless onslaught. And to prevent any further onslaughting on our part, they invented a serviceable flotilla for our pleasure.

The excursion to the southern shore was mercifully brief. Our lightning campaign and sinewy tactics quickly brought Flya, Fbetria, Emmmlia, and Brian into the service of the cause of righteousness and tipped the Conquest balance in our favour. It was a bitter thing to leave the dishevelled, unmotivated foreign scum I had moulded into battle-hardened, disciplined foreign scum, and many soldierly tears were shed as we parted.

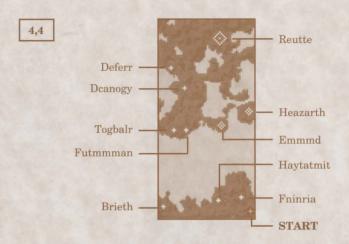








BRIETH ENCOUNTER



almost cried a few more soldierly tears when I realized that my aquatic sojourns were not at an end. The seawinds around Fninria bore away the cries of the wounded as our first campaign here reached a climax. We convinced the Fninrii that their hurts would heal more rapidly if they remained active, but we marched away from them when we left for Haytatmit. Before we began our country sojourn, though, we collected all their boats as we knew we'd have to get off this island at some point. The ensuing battle implied that the sea-going Haytatmitnauts must have been better sailors than warriors; they all would have drowned otherwise. We took all their boats to encourage them to develop their landside skills but left them behind as food was scarce.



e journeyed to Brieth, where we gave them a taste of the single sword. We made a present to ourselves of the food and boats but left the weary Briethers behind as we knew our

journey across the ocean blue was to be long and treacherous.

We plied the somewhat odious waves to Togbalr; it fell easily as spring rain. They also had the first sheep we had seen in weeks. It was here we brought on board our first hired troops. Futnimman proved no more doughty, but the people could hum wonderfully well; we recruited them all to teach them to hum our national anthem as soon as I wrote one. We went to Decanogy and Deferr and repeated the exercise. The position of Deferr to the nearby forest allowed us to build a catapult which was a mighty force in our continued conquests. My lord sensed a lurking Blue troop approaching. Their fate was the same their brothers' had been in the shadow of Brieth.

Our power was now sufficient to overcome the most stubborn countermeasures of the settlements of Emmd and Heazarth, and the Conquest Balance declared in our favour yet again.







THE CHAINS OF COMMAND

onsider this chapter as an interlude between campaigns. No, not an interlude as much as a debriefing. Certain information imparted herein I was able to jot down only delayedly, long after the fact. Other events I was not aware of at the time of their occurrence, and I could describe them only after interviews with my sovereign lord. But these facts, no matter the number of years elapsing between the events and their inscription, must yet be known for a complete understanding of our success. Or as my lord would say with an economy of phrasing I find endearingly quaint, "Better late than never."

Enlisting multiple Captains was imperative to my lord's master plan. In as much as Captains must scatter to carry out a broad strategy, issuing orders to them was often a vexation. The use of carrier pigeons was the only practical avenue for such communication. Because there was always a delay between a pigeon's departure and arrival, careful planning was necessary to issue orders. If pigeons were sent out at properly chosen times, it was possible to "stack up" orders. For example, if my lord wanted a subordinate Captain to get food, then equipment, then men, he could send out pigeons in sequence to carry these orders. However, a newer order overrode an older one, so timing had to be precise and well-monitored

The forces of Jos the Red, Blue Jayne, and even Rather Yellow Harold soon began to mimic my lord's innovation. When a single carrier pigeon not of our own prized flock was espied flying above us, it meant one of my lord's opponents was sharing conspiracies with one of his scabrous commanders. O dreadful cooing messenger of havoc! Happily, my knowledge of ornithology was so voluminous I was able to suggest two alternative strategies for handling this ongoing situation: First, sweep the feathery heralds from the sky's great blind shell; or, second, follow the lice-ridden little statue stainers.

Killing a carrier pigeon on the wing is no task for an unclear eye nor unsteady hand. Their flight is as fast at that of a bow-shot arrow, which is likewise the only weapon that can bring them to earth. But if all an opponent's pigeons are shot down, he will no longer be able to issue orders to his swinish minions. Tracking pigeons is an easier matter, as long as surface conditions do not slow down the tracker. Following them in their flight can also lead one directly to enemy forces which might otherwise be hard to detect. But keen vision is necessary for both endeavours, since it is possible to mistake a solitary flushed coot or migratory flock of grebes for a carrier pigeon.

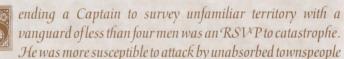
here were also other protocols established concerning subordinate Captains. They were often assigned the tasks that my lord did not have time to perform himself: Inventing,

supplying food to a village, recovering discarded equipment from a battle field, etc. They could similarly be used as my lord's main attacking force, although the lag time in issuing orders might have been irksome and inefficient in battle when managed by a lesser commander. This also allowed Lord PowerMonger to stay in the back lines and thus have a more panoramic and strategic view of the battle.



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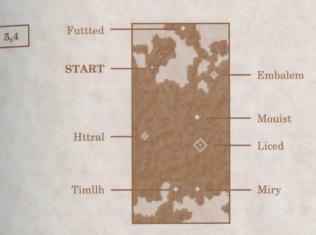


and oafs. If his contingent was less than four, it was often best to assign him to spy, thus allowing him to skulk observantly across the land without being set upon by opposing blackquards.

There is one stratagem, however, that requires a Captain to travel alone: Assassination. To play the assassin's role, the Captain who is given the task must be equipped with a sword or bow and dispatched to an area near his target. When the enemy camped, the assassin moved in as a normal spy would; but when he was inside the circle of camp, he attacked. With luck, the enemy Captain died before his men realized what had happened. If the enemy was very healthy or well equipped, the attempt often failed and my lord lost a servant.



RECITAL





here was a time when I was not as accomplished a versifier as now I am. The following fragment shows this, I think (even though it is not a completely unaccomplished piece):

- Through the flowery fields to Mouist,
- Our armour shining, our valour truest.
- The blackguards! How they cringe and creep,
- Watching while we kill their sheep.
- Their men sign up to avoid impalin',
- And everyone scampers towards Embalem.







We attack from where the warm sun rises

And deliver many rude surprises.

Recruitment will make the locals less insular,

And we head for Futtted, where the land is peninsular.

The battle is brief in flighty Futtted,

And we leave it, like Embalem, looted.



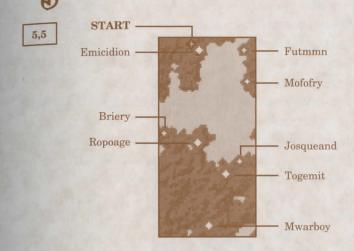
he rigours of camp life left me little time to work on my rhymes, hard though that may be for you to believe after you have read the previous. So I will continue the commentary

on this campaign in more prosaic terms. We turned again toward Embalem, where we paused to make a cannon. We then made our way towards Liced. The Red horde we had seen before appeared. They fared no better than the sheep did before the fury of our aggression. A passive demonstration of the joys of the warrior's life convinced the Licedines to take up the trade, and they brought along all the food to add to the general merriment. They even practiced a bit of warfare on their own sheep.

Following our swift victory, we overcame the town of Timllh. The Conquest Balance declared that no further slaughter was necessary in this land.



ONCE IN A BLUE MOON





came to miss the lobsterback ruffians that follow Jos the Red before I left this territory; even more did I miss the wretched warriors who stumble along ineptly after Rather Yellow

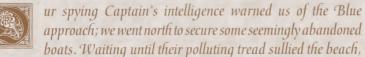
Harold. The scurrilous scoundrels who follow the lead of Blue Jayne were all we encountered here, and they did nothing to soften my harsh estimation of their character.

Emcidion fell with almost embarrassing ease; they would have surrendered to Rupert Battle-Sheep if they'd had the chance. Their rather portly Captain was so eager to please us that he offered to spy on the settlement of Futmmn. He located a boat, as he had to cross the one sea, then went on his merry way. His enthusiasm for treachery did not recommend him particularly, but it was good that his offer was accepted. Even then, an invasion was brewing.









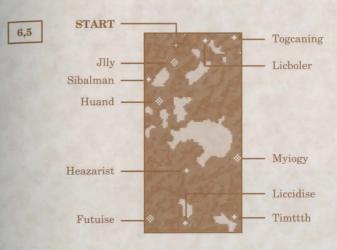
we attacked them without mercy. We recovered a goodly amount of food and boats from the carcass of their slain Captain, but barely had time to secure our gains before more Blues attacked from the south. We dealt with them as we had with their loathsome kith, and left their bodies in the relentless surf.

Before we left Emcidion behind, we decided to produce a catapult to assist us in our onslaughts.

Futmmn was then brought to task for striking at my lord. We had food and boats aplenty, so we took none from this place, and we left some of the townspeople behind so they might inform others of the might of our arms. Mofofry was treated likewise. We crossed the seas to Togemit. This island was roaming with Jayne's hoards so we were always on the lookout. The miners of Togemit raised their picks against us only briefly; we then instructed them in the making of swords to show them what true warriors wielded. And then, Mwarboy, Ropoage and Briery were ground beneath our ravishing stride. The Conquest Balance rarely tilted with the finality it did then.



DOLDRUMS

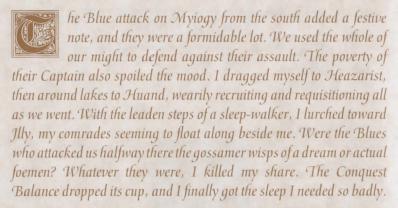


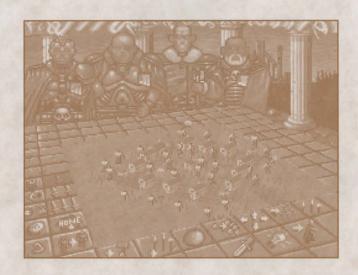
his territory represented something of a lull. Or perhaps my mood was just a bit grey. The attack on Licboler required no tactical improvisation or acts of valour (I found it hard to keep my eyes open during the contest), and was quickly won. Even taking all the men and food in town lent no invigoration. I daydreamed through the siege of Togcaning, was barely able to join the victory cry, and even found killing some sheep passed the time drearily. The conquest and harvesting of Myiogy overwhelmed me with deja vu. Lackaday!











A MOVABLE FLEET



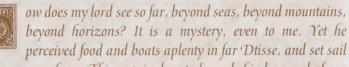
he ways of the sea are mysterious, and the men who sail it fear its intentions. That, at least, we have in common. If, as is claimed, the sea is haunted, then it is not just by the wandering souls of men. The ships that sail it also travel in ways cautious men do not try to investigate.

Our invasion of Ropssral began this campaign on a successful note. Men, sheep, and food were found worthy of our use. We likewise favour Ibroman by accepting all it had to offer. These new recruits quickly proved my lord's estimation of them to be correct (what else could it be?) as they were instrumental in obliterating a Red attack. The Reds' leavings provided us with enough food, but insufficient boats, for our full troop.

33







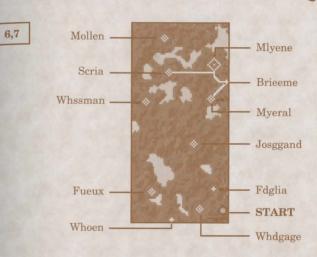
for its unseen shore. This required us to leave behind several of our brothers to an unknown fate. To increase the chances of their remaining safe, my lord left them outside of Jbroman. As we sailed away, I watched them wander disconsolately on the beach until they were at last lost from sight.

We did not take the most direct route; had we done so, we would have encountered a Blue armada that could have been our undoing. Dtisse was deserted by all but one ragged citizen when he reached it; it must have been the site of a great battle at some recent time for we found a beach littered with boats and a cache of food. We took all we found. Their coming was as timely as it was marvellous, for we were at that moment attacked by Blue cutthroats. Our late-arriving brethren contributed much to our total victory.

The rest of this territory we then conquered with ease.



SLASH AND GRAB



inesse in battle is often lost on the Blues and Reds, even if you don't happen to kill them. Any engine of war more complicated than a bow is beyond the scope of their so-called minds. Their tactics usually consist of nothing more than slashing and

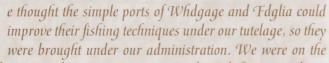
grabbing. Primitive! Fun, but primitive.

This territory was also dominated by Blues on the cutting edge of Blue technology (i.e., they had bows). We learned to change our posture here frequently as conditions and our lord dictated; not all villagers were unprepared for our coming. And while boats were not a necessity here, the numerous lakes puddling the landscape made having them a good idea.









lookout for Jos' Reds as scouting reports indicated they were about. We borrowed their boats to demonstrate advanced fishing techniques, but found in the end we had to use them for military purposes. To ensure their trust, we brought the townspeople along so they might keep

an eye on their property.

Fueux fell happily into our hands, as did the hilltop settlement of Josggand. My knowledge of Geology suggested that this community might be atop a rich vein of iron, and at my lord's neutral urging, a mine was constructed. Indeed, ferrous ore was tucked just beneath the topsoil. To celebrate the event, the hardworking Josgganders constructed many fine ceremonial swords and, with aggressive fervour, a cannon decorated with tableaux of our many victories. Swords and cannon, while able to stand scrutiny as objects d'art, also stood the test of the uses of war. They and the boats we were safeguarding were put to good use as we travelled a complicated route across the landscape to Whssman, Myeral, Brieene and Mylene, all of which provided us with the riches of their fields to fill our bellies and the flower of their young manhood to fill our ranks. Thereupon we were able to safely liberate Mollen and Scria from the grasping hand of Blue Jayne. The drop of the positive side of the Conquest Balance confirmed her defeat.



LIFE ON THE EDGE

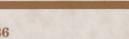


uring my university days, before an unfortunate misunderstanding led to revocation of my academic honours, cancellation of my scholarship, confiscation of my books,

and a death sentence, Geology was among my foremost areas of expertise. Had there been time, I would have studied the river-etched canyon that formed the central and most obvious feature of this territory. My travels around it were necessarily hurried during this visit, however, so I had no opportunity to analyze its strata.

The ramshackle huts of Mynogth were the first to feel the fury of our war making. The Mynogths seemed truly grateful to accept enlistment into our now-legendary force, and offered up all their food as a token of appreciation. There were a number of boats ready for the taking here, but my lord indicated we should pass them by for the time being.









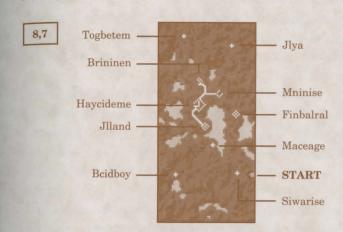
he terrain around the canyon proved difficult to travel, and echoes resounding off the chasm's sheer walls were eerie and confusing. We thought we heard sounds of battle far to the

north, but we could not be certain. It might just have been Rupert kicking rocks into the yawning rift as a prank. After many changes in direction, we reached and conquered Whied. The Whiedbodies had tired of life on the edge of the canyon (the echoes kept them up at night) and were happy to enter the soldier's life. They brought along their food as well lest it topple into the gorge that was the source of their sleeplessness.

Travelling to Licggeux allowed a much straighter path, but the presence there of a Blue army lessened our enjoyment of it. We let the Blues taste of our unbridled wrath, a last meal they found most bitter. We served Licggeux a sweeter repast, but in the end it was our hunger for conquest that was satisfied. Xilling some sheep in Thanksgiving and exchanging booty in a spirit of comraderie, we set out for Emataist; we left a few Licggeezers behind after they began to construct mines in our honour. Emataist was deserted, so we turned our attention to Mywarth. There were signs that Bluebellies had passed this way, but there was no telling when. Mywarth and Futien completed our set of conquests. The Conquest Balance declared that this contest was over.



THE BATTLES AROUND GAUNTLET LAKE





he most notable geographic feature of this territory was the large freshwater lake in its centre. It to me looked rather like a mailed fist, so I named it Gauntlet Lake. We came to

know its shores well as we liberated the settlements that surrounded it from the yokes of Red and Blue tyranny. The first of these was Siwarise, a provincial backwater loyal to Blue Jayne. All the Siwarisers became warriors loyal to my lord in quick order, and we took their food into our care to prevent unnecessary spoilage.

I was devising in my mind a bold campaign to capture the neighbouring hamlet of Maceage when my lord gave the order to march on Finbalral; this sounded like a marshy trek to me, but I learned later that a Red sun was rising in the west and would be set upon us soon enough.











y lord chose our target well, and the name Finbalral was soon added to our battle ribbons. No sooner had the Finbalraliers pledged to our sacred cause than the swinish minions of Jos the

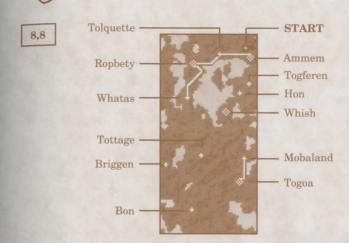
Red attacked us from across the lake. The sound of their paddling betrayed their coming and we slew them as they landed. Their swords made the battle a deadly one, but we overcame them (it is our fate to rule, after all). We took their blades to turn them to the cause of virtue. We likewise turned their food to the cause of breakfast.

Captain Vonoh of Finbalral warned us that a gang of Blue Jayne's torturers and fiends might be lurking to the west within the bloody walls of Haycedime. Rupert Battle-Sheep was ready to storm this bastion of azure woe, but torturers and fiends require a more subtle approach, and bloody walls retain a slickness that makes storming them troublesome. Vonoh's knowledge of the place recommended him as just the spy to penetrate Haycedime's secrets and observe its blue oppressors. So anxious was he to carry out this duty that he left forthwith, pallid and sweaty with anticipation.

Swords at the ready, we marched on Mninise and Brinenen, both of which offered little more than passing sport for our whirling blades. Neither the Mninisise nor the Brinenenmen bled remarkably much when we overwhelmed them; such rapid coagulation recommended them highly for soldierly tasks, so we recruited them all. In the meantime, reports from Captain Vonoh assured us that Blue Jayne's wanton marauders remained awash in unwholesomeness within Haycedime. Now was the time to take their measure, and we had just the ruler to do so.

Massacres are never pretty; then again, you don't stop to look at them much when you're in the middle of one. Haycedime was reduced after a savage battle. After that, only Bcidboy and Illand stood in our way. Illand was left empty after the depredations of the Blues and Reds. But the butchers of Bcidboy paid the same price as the harrowers of Haycedime. The Conquest Balance then tilted in our favour, and our revenge was complete.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY





f there is anything positive I have marked in the natures of Jos the Red's pestiferous thugs and Blue Jayne's noxious yahoos, it is that they are as likely to attack each other as they

are to attack us. It makes them seem almost appealing. When they weaken each other in battle, so much the better for us. This territory allowed us to observe this mutual bloodshed. It is their only good habit. I should add, however, that as we approached our final conquests, both Blues and Reds attacked us somewhat more than they did each other, but never in alliance.

We avoided Ropbety at the beginning of this campaign, as my lord thought its citizens might be tougher than they appeared. The bland appearance of the inhabitants of Tolguette concealed no warrior's mien, however, and it fell like a desiccated pomegranate









e recruited the bipedal population, but left the quadripedal population for a later reckoning, as our lord demanded haste in our travels. Ammem proved less amenable to conquest,

however, and we needfully attacked with a whiff of aggression, inflicting a few instructive casualties on the stubborn Ammembers before they surrendered.

My lord was unrelenting in his demand for lightning travel. Togferen and Hon were the next to fall, and both we left empty as we left quickly. My lord had selected Togoa as our next conquest (our forces would have become too spread out if we had attacked Mobaland). But to our delight we found that Blue and Red armies had met near the city, destroying each other in the process. Out of respect for their valour, we stripped the bodies of bows and food and promised to use them for the good of the people of this land, assuming they were on our side.

The mining centre of Tottage was no match for our new found bows, and Whatas and Ropbety were no more challenging. The Conquest Balance dropped a shoulder, and all was well.



A WAGONLOAD OF HINTS



(Archivist's Note: It was my duty to assemble this chapter from Ptarmigan Burlihoo's notes for the revised edition of Annals of the PowerMonger. This was a challenging task. Except for the original parchment, all other copies of the Annals were lost when they were sold in lot to a fellow named Ououadage who represented himself as a bibliophile but actually operated a fish market in the piscivorous village of Slough. Ptarmigan's notes were very disjointed and confusing; for instance, I have no idea what the chapter's title refers to. Ptarmigan's habitual literary self-indulgence didn't help matters, either. Still, his writing, irritating though it may be, is the most thorough source of information we have on that long ago era. Other than that, I'm glad he's dead.)

43







To Vomdgist; take all food & men and kill some sheep. Hurry to Vonlyion, do same. Go toward Mywarral. Red army from Das will have taken Assral and Mywarral. Will meet Red army halfway to Mywarral; they will still be weakened from last battle, so attack them at Aggressive posture. Kill Reds, take food (they have no inventions). No need to go to Mywarral, Assral, or Das, they've been emptied & have no sheep or goodies. (But check Assral for boats, which you won't need.)

Go to Brioa, Jostattte, and Headgem. Take men & food from each. Was enough.

Recruiting

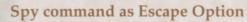
Each tribe at the start of each land has certain characteristics. Some tribes walk faster, some tribes eat more food. When my lord notices this after I pointed it out to him by imitating their various gaits and table manners, it was of great advantage when deciding which people to recruit.

Bowmen

If bowmen were not hitting their targets, my lord issued his attack order form a different angle. For example, target a specific person or a nearby house.

Transferring Troops during Battle

Having two armies, one of which was in a battle and disgracing itself, my lord transferred some of the troops from the first army to the second army as reinforcements. This was a good surprise tactic as well.



If the tide of battle flowed ill, a Captain often attempted an escape by spying on something. His men attempted to retreat home to be recruited later. This did not work if said Captain was fighting hand to hand.

Food Philosophy

Each person in the world has a job and only certain jobs produce food for villages. Of farmers, merchants, fisherman and shepherds, only farmers and fisherman produce food for their villages. Unless you enjoy eating merchants, which has never appealed to me. Farmers will not produce food in Winter but will stay at home. Fishermen will produce year around. If a farmer has a plough, he will produce twice as much food. Each time a farmer returns home, he brings enough food for himself and one other person.

In Winter when people are staying at home in their houses, they will eat more food to stay warm.

If troops are in camp, they eat half the amount of food as when they are marching.

Merchants carry food and equipment around from town to town, whether it is your town or an opponent's town. They are shameless mercenaries, by far their most winning characteristic. So if you see a merchant and you don't want him delivering food to others then kill him.













Enemies

Beware of enemies wandering around your settlements or armies; they might be spies. Both the PowerMonger and I learned this quickly.

Armies and settlements are separate entities. So if there is an enemy army camped in an enemy settlement, one can attack the army without the townsfolk joining in and spoiling the transaction with their unprofessionalism. The attack must be aimed very carefully, of course, and one's targeting must be precise.

If the leader of a large wandering army is slain, his troops may all run to their homes. This can split a large force into two or more manageable portions that can be more easily defeated. Further, if the home they run back to was conquered by an opponent since they left it, the faithless rabble will change their allegiance to that opponent, further diluting the power of their former side, and possibly adding to yours.

Subordinate Captains

My lord sometimes found that sending subordinate Captains toward our destination a little ahead of the main force was an efficacious manoeuvre, but he was ever careful not to sent them into battle by themselves; they'd die and he'd miss them. This sentimental side always endeared him to his men.

Likewise, subordinate Captains provide good standby protection if my lord was attacked. If such subordinates have no troops assigned to them, they might be kept close to the First Captain in case his person is insulted by the enemy while his troops are carrying out such assignments as Inventing.

Equipping Inventions

Battle is a disconcerting experience, and sometimes distorts perception, especially when one is Equipping Inventions left behind by their recently deceased owners. Indeed, one may try to equip one invention, only to equip something else entirely. But if one perseveres, the desired invention will be equipped.

Combat

You cannot divide an individual Captain's forces in combat to execute complicated strategic manoeuvres; you have to use them in a bloc. But if several Captains have troops, they may be used to attack from multiple directions and thus divide the enemy. The PowerMonger employed this tactic several times after I suggested it to him in a private discussion.

Inventions

Boats are valuable Inventions to have equipped, but don't necessarily equip every one of them you see; walking along the shore and picking them up one by one can waste valuable time. Look for opportunities to equip several of them at a time, either from a settlement's store or from the detritus left behind by slain enemy Captains.

Watch for settlements at high altitudes where mines can be constructed. A clanging noise from such a settlement means that either a mine exists there and inventing is going on, or a mine is under construction.

Food

Keep soldiers well fed. If you don't maintain a good food supply, your men will be quickly overwhelmed by irresistible homesickness.









Watch your food consumption CAREFULLY; it is accelerated in some territories. Don't campaign in winter unless you have lots of food or you know large armies are wandering around. The slower movement rate in winter will make your food run out faster. Freezing cold and driving sleet wet the appetite.

Movement & Speed

Beware when crossing a body of water, or moving through terrain that is near a body of water. Any troops who aren't equipped with boats will lag behind or wander about dazedly when confronted by seas, lakes, rivers, lagoons, estuaries, etc. Even a relative puddle in your line of march can send a platoon or two reeling into the countryside. If you do not want to get caught in battle short-handed, make sure you plan your moves through the terrain appropriately; zigzag when necessary.

If you notice that your army is moving slowly, you can take measures to speed it up...sometimes. Rain or snow will cause an army to slow down and there's nothing you can do about it; you might consider just camping out until the weather clears. For unknown reasons, movement in some territories is slower than it is in others. But if you've been picking up everything that isn't tied down during your campaign, you're bound to go slower; carrying 30 boats and three cannons would impede anybody's progress. Mark a Captain's speed to make sure he isn't overburdened. If he is loaded up with a huge cache of inventions, drop some. Keep in mind that one may not have to drop everything to boost the First Captain's Speed up to the desirable level, and you can pick-up what you drop later.

Any weapon you have equipped can be taken on a boat, so you won't have to leave your cannons or catapults behind when you cross water. These implements of destruction can even be used to bombard the shore while you're bobbing along.

Settlements & Towers

You may find abandoned settlements here and there. Keep an eye on them: They may be repopulated later either through birth of new citizens, Deranked troops from opposing armies, or refugees from armies whose Captains have been slain.

If all the settlements in a territory are owned by one opponent, the craven wretch won't attack you until you take one of his settlements.

It was determined that if a settlement is attacked, Captains friendly to the ruler of that settlement will support the settlement if they are sufficiently close by. So if you take a settlement and camp in or near it, and a force allied with the settlement's former overlord attacks the settlement, you'll get dragged into a fight.

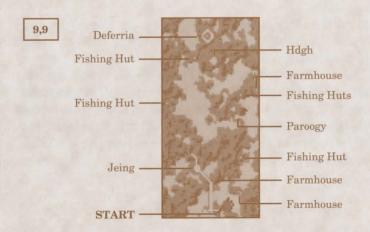








NO ONE IS INNOCENT



ou never know where a recruitment drive might take you. Settlements provide the usual meadows for reaping soldiers; less populated fields are typically fallow. But rustic vales are sometimes fertile fields for harvesting enlistees or even conscripts. Indeed, some of these churls proved to be most able warriors. The image of callow farm youth rambling tawny pastures and trading chirrups with the merry lark is propaganda. When it comes to taking up the sword, few are genuinely unwilling. And on a battlefield, no one is innocent.

We began this campaign with a passive, modest little attack on a small building called Deaand. The nearby municipality of Jeing reckoned our endeavours to be provocative and came to express their displeasure. My lord ordered to increase our aggression as necessary, but not to kill too many of the Jeingites; he had other plans for them. After Jeing's insolent interference was turned away, we procured Deaand's food and men.

But Jeing was still near to our hearts. We killed a few of their sheep as a demonstration of what was in store for them if they continued to resist. When we attacked their town itself, our little visual aid had done its work, and they succumbed to a passive approach. My lord urged haste in collecting Jeing's men, boats, and food; it was only later that he informed us a Blue army was at that moment crashing northward like a poisoned tide. If Jeing's Captain had not been killed earlier, he could have been sent to spy on these Jaynite filibusters. Rupert volunteered for the duty himself but was turned down. Even though he was a master of disguise as horn-bearing ungulates go, he would no doubt have been discovered and would have ended up bobbing in gravy among carrots.

But even without the intelligence a spy could have provided, the doom of the Blue army was ensured when we took Jeing; as long as we recruited everyone we encountered, the manpower of Jayne's bully boys could never exceed our own. A sojourn to the fish hut called Headgh and Parogy town provided us with enough men, food, and conflict to maintain our interest. We were also careful to scan the countryside for any wandering individuals. A sweep through Hdgh, Remms farmhouse, and a few more fishhuts increased out number until we were unstoppable. (I've always enjoyed being unstoppable; it does wonders for one's self esteem.) We had but one logical target left, the tower of Emiand. With the bows we had invented earlier, and an aggressive attitude to improve our aim, it fell quickly. The sweeter cup of the Conquest Balance swung low, and we were once again victorious.













aiting is a soldier's lot, even more so than combat. He must wait for his commanders' decisions, he must wait for the weather to moderate, he must wait for his enemies. It sounds dreary, and often is, but it allows time for observation as well. In this territory, waiting offered us the delightful opportunity to watch our enemies decimate each other.

We attacked Finod as our first movement, and found the Finodes receptive to our overture. We quickly recruited the locals while our quartermaster recruited their edibles; our alacrity inspired second thoughts in a Blue army approaching at the time with the intent of attacking us, I'm sure. They camped sullenly while we expressed loud and exaggerated doubts concerning their hygiene. They departed in tears a short time later. We let them go so they could be tortured by their shame.



ur results in Finod were so encouraging that we decided to repeat ourselves in Fissand. Our accomplishments here were mixed: The conquest was simplicity itself, but there

was only one Fissander present to recruit. We assured him we would enter into a holy crusade to liberate his former neighbours from their servitude to whatever foreign slave-master had spirited them away. Then we killed all his sheep. I hope he didn't think we were sending him mixed signals.

Then the Blues made another in their chronic series of fatal errors. They attacked the Red capital of Aovery even though it was obvious they hadn't the strength to carry it. Many of our troops wished to go watch the fun, by my lord ordered us to the Blue base of Acidmit instead. We whiled away the time there playing cards and composing ribald songs until the battered Blues returned from their certain defeat. They were no match for us in their weakened condition, and in a trice they were not only defeated but in fact gave up the Blue tunic for the White. They would now learn the ways of the victor.

Their first classroom was Whllh, where an army loyal to Jos was camped. They needed little encouragement from us to despise the poxy nematodes who served the cause of redness. It was a brief melee. Afterwards, we had to reclaim a few of our previous conquests south of Whllh, to make sure their new citizens remained loyal to my lord and had the inestimable opportunity to serve him.

We next attacked Jos' foul seat at Aovery. Seat as in capital, that is. It collapsed like a diseased larch in a monsoon. The rest was beer and skittles. We freed Hmmtte from a Red army of occupation, and then swept Ber and Attem clear of ruddy detritus. The fleeing Reds made a last stand at Whllh, or at least tried to. Upon their inevitable defeat they fled to their homes, which were controlled by my lord. Learning this, they had no alternative but to join and become followers of Lord PowerMonger.



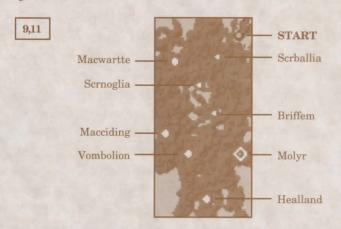








WHITE KNIGHT TAKES RED KING



e passively attacked the town of Scrballia, tried and executed some seditious-looking sheep (who then became part of our provisions as further punishment), and recruited

all the Scrballians. By the time we had reached Scrnoglia, they had all learned to march in step. As a reward for responding so quickly to training, we let them watch the fight between Jos and Emgges of Macciding. After the two armies had decimated each other, we attacked aggressively and killed Jos and Emgges, and the remnants of their haughty hosts. (If we hadn't killed Jos with some dispatch, he could have given orders to other units in the landscape. We later learned, however, that Jos was not quite as dead as we thought.)

Scrnoglia then laid helpless (as well as unpronounceable) before us, and was taken easily and without aggression. All the Scrnogalerts were eager to join our number (they were impressed, I think) and their food and equipment was likewise accepted into our lord's service. As my lord despises littering, we also spruced up the battlefield by picking up what food and equipment we could find there. We did not tarry there for long in case other Red or Blue contingents were on there way to investigate the fates of their overdue comrades. Leaving Scrnoglia, we went thither some distance to rest. Once refreshed, we next overwhelmed the settlement of Macwartte. My lord wondered at the quality of Macwartty handicrafts, and was duly impressed by the pikes he had the Macwarts fashion for him.

Then Rupert Battle-Sheep baaed an alarum; we had almost been surprised by a sea of Blue uniforms. And at their head was Jayne III herself! Even with their sovereign in command, the Blues were overwhelmed by our pikemen. Ruler and ruled alike died on the cruel points of our weapons. We rejoiced at the fall of our master's great antagonist; now surely all the Blue forces would be immobilized, and overcome with ease.

The battlefield was cleansed of all that we might use, and all Macwarts were conscripted for the remainder of our stay here. We learned of Jayne's tower stronghold called Sifofise and it was decided that it, too, must be purged of the pollution of it's late mistress. So disconcerted were the Blue remnants that they fell to a passive attack. After a rest, we made for Macciding. It was conquered rather casually. Upon seeing our Macwart-made pikes, the Maccidinglings were consumed by jealousy. To prove their own superiority in handicrafts they fashioned fine bows for our use and even a fearsome catapult. The Red circle at Vombolion was broken into random parabola by its awful missiles, and the tower of Fferes crumbled also.

The capital of Molyr was last to fall, conquered almost as an afterthought, and surely with passive demeanour. The sweeter cup of the Conquest Balance descended with the surrender of Molyr's last defender.

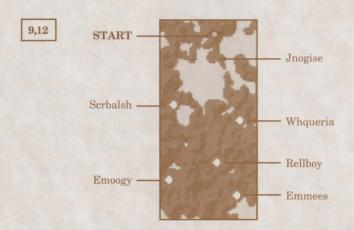








CAPTAINS AND THE KINGS DEPART



hate to miss a good battle. Carnage, suffering, and dying gasps provide me with some of my best source material. I'm sentimental that way. My early experience in this territory led me to believe I was gathering the best research to be had hereabouts, but later reports informed me I had missed some quite

delightful and picturesque massacres. Oh well.

First, we attacked Jnogise passively, which defended itself just as passively, so we carried the day. The Jnognese sheep proved just as nonchalant about life and death and seemed unperturbed as we killed them for food. Adding the provisions of the town to this plethora of fresh mutton and lamb, we had nearly 3000 units of provisions.



e couldn't have eaten that much by ourselves without feeling gluttonous, so we decided to share it with its former caretakers by accepting them as fellow legionnaires.

After a hearty meal of mutton sandwiches, we attacked Scrbalsh. While I usually hate to make aggressive war on a full stomach, I nonetheless did so when ordered by my lord. The size of the Scrbalshian encampment of Blue Jayne's fanatics left us no choice. Many of them fell, as did a few of my brothers-in-arms. In the end, the Blue hooligans surrendered, the few of whom survived taken into our number.

It was then that we first heard of the remarkable events that transpired in this territory just before our arrival. The Captains of Rather Yellow Harold had formed armies, and then in warfare with the Red and Blue blackguards almost everyone had been obliterated. All native Captains were slain, and only a few stragglers survived. The Yellows retained the only viable (if small) army. By the time we reached Scrbalsh, the war's refugees had returned to their homes to reconstruct their shattered lives. My lord decided to shatter them a bit more before the season turned.

The Yellow army was thought to be in Whqueria, where we hastened to congratulate them on their victory and demobilise them as soon as possible. Yellow survivors were indeed found there, but the remaining army had conquered Jnogise and our homebase. The men called for vengeance against such rudeness, but my lord counselled patience. He believed they would return. They did, after which they neither won, nor survived, any more battles.

Then it was just a matter of mopping up the survivors from Emoogy, Rellboy and Emees. We thought we had won, and the Conquest Balance confirmed this surmise.

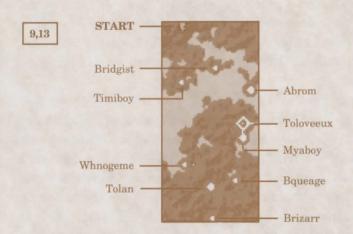








POISON PEN



(The following is adapted from the text of a maddeningly arrogant letter from that shrieking harpy, Blue Jayne. I have added Editor's Notes to correct errors and provide commentary.)

To: The "PowerMonger"

From: Her Most Cobaltine Majesty, Jayne IV

Greetings. Your usurpations begin to amuse us. I take it from the scribblings of your rather over-florid scribe you think me twice dead, but there are many of me. Slay me as you wish, rend my flesh, shatter my bones, drink the spurting blood hot from my opened veins; in the end, it is you who will perish. (Editor's Note: Over-florid!)

58

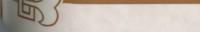
How shall I let you know how closely and precisely I follow your movements? Would a recounting of your most recent campaign suffice? First, you attacked Bridgist with extreme violence, afterward stealing every crumb and kidnapping the peasants. (Editor's Note: Our attack was passive; her other comments are not entirely accurate, either.) Your thirst for blood unquenched, you indulged in the massacre and pillaged Timiboy. (Editor's Note: Another passive attack that everyone survived.) Not even the sheep were left alive! One poor creature was tortured to death, his skull crushed with a plough! (Editor's Note: That was Rupert, of course, and he was only sleeping.)

Back at Bridgest you sought more men and invented a fiendish implement of destruction. (Editor's Note: It was only a catapult.) I sent a lone peace envoy to suggest an end to the carnage, but he was murdered in cold blood. (Editor's Note: He was alone with an army and there was nothing cold about the way we killed him.) The food and boats that should have gone to his widow and children you instead claimed as booty. As if that wasn't enough, you raped Timiboy one more time. (Editor's Note: I wouldn't call taking food and one little boat "rape".)

Your cruel tyranny and looting was then visited upon Macdgboy, where you depleted the place of its stores. (Editor's Note: We settled down for a good meal near Abrom.) After that I could stand no more! (Editor's Note: About time!) My personal guard was patrolling a coastal area when I ordered them to put an end your wanton cruelty. You defeated them, but only through the foulest of tactics. (Editor's Note: Which is to say, we fought better than they did.)

You committed your next atrocities in Abrom, stealing every scrap of food and slaughtering a troop of underprivileged Blue youths on a nature study in the bargain. (Editor's Note: They were soldiers,





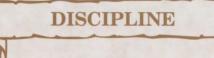


of course.) Using the foulest propaganda measures, you managed to sway the more gullible of my soldiers into joining your fell army. You then walked off with Abrom's finest technological wonders and returned to Bridgest for some unholy celebration. There you found that a small troop you had left behind had "killed" me. As you gathered the food and boats from my "corpse," I was laughing at you the whole while! (Editor's Note: She has an unconventional sense of humour, I'll give her that.)

Next, you used passive attacks to add the following settlements to your menu of carnage: Whnogeme, Tolan, Brizarr, Tower Briwarmit, and Myaboy. All of these offered up some men and provisions, which you then threw against Toloveeux. This last was the site of your greatest act of barbarism as you slew an encampment of Blue maidens gathering flowers for their grandmothers. (Editor's Notes: They were soldiers, they were gathering nothing but dust, and I doubt they could trace their ancestry as far back as their grandparents. We attacked on neutral.) Thereupon, your dark victory was sealed.

(Editor's Note: What an unpleasant woman.)







iscipline has never been a problem in my lord's forces. Even the greenest recruit who had seen us destroy his home and livelihood understood the military necessity of doing so and

was later ready (and occasionally eager) to repeat the exercise elsewhere. If discipline ever came close to breaking down, it was from the enthusiasm our forces had for the cause, and not because of any flaws in their training.

There was nothing remarkable about this territory. Our first target, Tolbaleme, was taken with tolerable ease, men were recruited and food was accepted without incident, and a rather portly Captain joined us. After a period of rest to get acquainted with our new comrades, we turned our attention to Whicidd. The Whicidders' stubbornness required a moderately strident attack, which was quickly modified to passivity when their reluctance began to crumble.











oon there was more food, more men, another Captain, slaughtered sheep, you know the pattern by now. The Wheidd Captain warned of dark deeds afoot in Jtatry, and

so was sent there as a spy to investigate.

While my lord's agent attempted to ingratiate himself with the Itatrians, our lord directed us to Togish. It was overcome in a routine operation, and its resources were exploited in a routine manner. A third Captain joined us, which was a little out of the ordinary. My lord left in him in Togish with orders to react aggressively if the need arose.

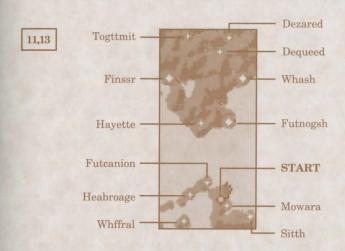
In the meantime, that undying virago Jayne III was combining her forces from Tolbolise, Finataed and Han. While we attacked Togish, she had engulfed Wheidd into her empire. The insatiable Blue harridan then attacked Tolbaleme, and then Togish; but my lord Power Monger had by now devised a brilliant plot to counter and defeat her.

As Blue Jayne attacked helpless Togish, my lord sent us to camp near Jtatry. Some in our camp broke ranks to go rescue the unoffending settlement, but my lord called upon the discipline he had taught them and called them back from what would have been certain defeat. The Captain of Togish was captured in the melee, and he then joined the van of the Blue witch as she turned her cold, hungry eyes on Itatry.

She had tried to do too much. Jtatry was left to fall into her hands, but we then attacked the settlement ourselves. The beating she had inflicted upon them had left them weak, and the settlement was ours in a trice. We then immediately attacked the Blue army aggressively; they, too, were still recovering from battle, so they were slaughtered. If we had attacked them while they were fit, as some overzealous recruits had wished to do, their superior weapons would have been our undoing.

Our faith in our lord PowerMonger was again proven wellfounded when the Conquest Balance tilted after the Blue army was slain.

OUR FAME PRECEDES US





ord, as they say, spreads fast. When we arrived in this foreign place, we found that the enlightened population of Sitth had already declared for our cause. But this was not the first place we visited.

My lord granted Mowara his first audience. Their resistance to his message was brief. We removed a quantity of food from the settlement to determine its wholesomeness, but the people we left behind, if only for the moment. We also took three boats so corsairs might not use them for piracy, and looked for more as we travelled along the coast.

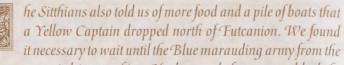
The welcome we received in Sitth made all our hard campaigning seem worthwhile. Our larders were almost bare when we arrived, so we took all the settlement's food, which they seemed glad to give.











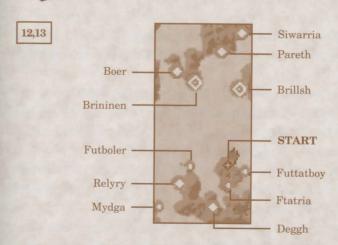
north was occupied in attacking Heabroage before we grabbed the formerly Yellow possessions.

In his generosity, our lord did not want to deny the men of Nowara the glory of combat, so we returned to the settlement. Meanwhile, the Blue army was besieging Whffral, leaving their recent conquest Heabroage ripe for plucking. And plucked it was, although the Blue army came to rescue their prize. Their tragedy was that none came to their rescue as we slew them with gusto.

After a whirlwind campaign through Whffral, Futcanion, Hayette, and Finssr (Futcanion was deserted except for some unusually tasty sheep) we encountered a lone enemy Captain wandering the countryside. His suicidal attack impressed us by its valour and we did him homage after cutting him into bits. The ragtag remnants of a Blue army appeared, and we dispatched them with equal respect. The Conquest Balance avowed the completion of our strivings here.



PTARMIGAN AGONISTES



y name is Belshezar. I am writing this for Ptarmigan, who was "wounded in the last battle" and claims he cannot hold a quill to write with. He does not know that I know his hand was injured when that crazy ram he keeps as a pet bit him when he tried to take chicken lea from it I writers! Give me the old hard grices to take chicken lea from it I writers!

was injured when that crazy ram he keeps as a pet bit him when he tried to take chicken leg from it. Writers! Give me the old barbaric preliterate days anytime. Maybe if I write this down for him he'll quit his whining. I'm just scribbling down most of what he says — he uses a lot of words I can't spell and would not care to learn to.

These are his words (most of them):

Attacked Futtatboy passively, get food and men aggressively. Rested.

Attacked Ttatria passively, get food and men aggressively. Rested.







lues sent out a scout who conquered our homebase and then started to go to Ftatria. Killed him, grabbed his food and about a score of boats. In the meantime, a Blue army

conquered Futtatboy and was making it's way to Futatria. Our men were spurred into battle by the attack, but Lord PowerMonger called them back since they were outnumbered. Attacked lone Blue Captain called Bribroman instead. Grabbed all his food and equipment as before.

The Blue army then left Futatria to attack a Red-owned city called Deggh. We attacked them while they were weak and defeated them. We proceeded to attack the city while the yellow and red armies were fighting; they had exhausted each other so we won. We camped in the centre of the city. Then the Red Captain wandered home and attacked. We killed him, getting much food and equipment. Also got all the food, men and equipment from the city.

Went to Relyry which has been attacked (by Blues?) and were only a few men there. Killed all the sheep in this area after conquering settlement.

There was a fairly large army now advancing towards Deggh. We attacked them aggressively and killed them all. We got the slain Captain's food and picked up all the boats.

Then it was just a matter of defeating, grabbing all the food, men and equipment from the remaining towns: Boer, Brininen, Brillsh, Pareth, and Siwarria.

That is all Ptarmigan said. And this is all I, Belshazar, can write. My hand is cramping and must hurt more than Ptarmigan's. I don't know how he does it. Perhaps all his talking strengthens the muscles used in writing as well as his flapping jaw.







gain, I am moved to interrupt my commentaries on our brilliant campaigns to cast greater light on the details that ensured their success.

First, I offer a summary of the unpleasant mechanics of killing. We are discussing war, after all. It was ever my fantasy that our enemies might be overcome by the power of our eloquence; alas, dreaming could not make it so. Briefly, a pikeman can kill two unarmed people, a swordsman can kill four unarmed people, a bowman can kill one person no matter what weapon they have, and artillery such as a cannon or catapult kills everybody in a small area.

Catapults and cannons were our most effective weapons, but could only be used by Captains, and were a long time in the making. It took one year for one person to forge one, although naturally it took two people one/tenth the time. It was futile for a subordinate Captain to carry more than one unless it was his lord's intent that he transport it to another subordinate. The destructive power of such artillery could blast houses and workshops into slats; if a workshop was destroyed, all the inventions in the shop would be destroyed as well. Left to their own devices and faced with the draft alternative, the villagers rebuilt their houses, and sometimes decided to build workshops even though there may not have been one there in the first place.

When we projected our force upon a settlement, we bore in mind the following tactics. If we attacked from the sea, the villagers were not be able to reach us unless they had boats. This assumed, of course, that we had bows and arrows to attack from a distance. All that should be obvious. What might be more obscured is that villagers will go







towards their workshop to pick up any weapons stored there. It was thus our practice to get as close to the village as possible to surprise them and prevent them from getting to their weapons.



nce we defeated a village, our ungrateful new fellow citizens always seemed dissatisfied. To sweeten their humours (whenever it seemed necessary), we would give them food.

If we did otherwise, they would often turn traitorous, or even go to the extreme of joining another tribe. And if we left surplus equipment in a settlement, the cunning yokels would automatically pick them up if they had a use for it.

Attacking armies travelling overland was a more hazardous endeavour as we were never certain how many of these brigands were equipped with weapons. It is likewise a brave soul who attacks a Captain who has a cannon or a catapult because one of these weapons can literally wipe out an entire army with one salvo.

After an enemy Captain was vanquished but not killed, he would always return home, whereupon he became one of my lord's Captains if we had previously absorbed his settlement or tower into our enlightened commonwealth. Happily, our soldiers would never attack someone who is running away, even when mistakenly urged to do so.

It's a good idea to have half your men equipped with bows and the other half equipped with pikes.

If you are faced with an army of bowmen, try and instigate the attack in the trees since foliage will offer cover for your men.

If you've been playing a particularly long game then the people in your army can grow old and feeble. If they are over 60 years old, you will notice them start to slow down. If they reach the age of 80, they will seek to leave your army and go back home to die. So think about replacing your army with younger, more robust troops.



othing expedited making an alliance quite so much as the high opinion of a prospective ally. Thus anything we were carrying when an offer of alliance was made was given

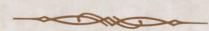
over in the form of a tribute.

This is totally non-refundable. And once you have attacked an aligned partner, then the alliance is immediately broken and you have

very little chance of reforging that alliance again.

Forming alliances proved to be of mixed efficacy. It enabled us to trade for better weapons, a less strenuous practice than taking them as booty, and to maintain an ample supply of food. And in territories where local populations had not yet learned the fulfilment to be had by catering to our every whim, having a safe place where we could fall back, minister to my lord's hurts, and gather our wits about us was often the difference between victory and its bleak alternative.

Alliances also had their contrary aspects. When a tribe with whom an alliance had been struck took over or already controlled a large part of their native territory, we were inevitably obliged to break the alliance and confront the ambitious bumpkins on the field of battle. If these erstwhile comrades had been busy conquering land and gathering resources, the resulting negotiations were all the more frank and lacerating.

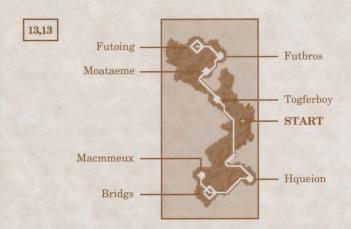








NEVER SHOW A MONKEY YOUR TONGUE



believe I have previously mentioned my absolute faith in superstition. Not that I approach it uncritically; I obey only those superstitions whose efficacy I have observed first hand. I never carry salt in my hat, I never extinguish candles in a vat of broth, and I never show a monkey my tongue. Nor have I broached the greatest of all prohibitions, killing all the sheep in a territory. And look where I am today, having attained high station and rank as a result

of avoiding these dreaded taboos.

ome think of reincarnation as superstition, but this is not so. If a person is killed, they will be reborn, but not necessarily in the same village from which they come. And the requirements for rebirth are not that different than those for birth: A person will only be reborn if a husband and a wife are in the same house at the same time. So if all the men or women from all the villages are recruited into an army, then no people can be reborn in that village no matter how many have died.

The issue of superstition arose in this campaign since it takes place in a territory our maps reckoned as being 13 measures to the east and 13 measure to the south. Some of my less sophisticated comrades thought this to be the worst possible luck. Being better educated, I know it is just the opposite. As long as everything said about this territory is written in the present tense, that is.

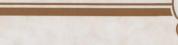
Attack Togferboy passively, you will only just win, but will get a second Captain. Get all the food, send the second Captain to spy on Futoing. A lone Blue Captain called Diing will attack you while you are in Togferboy, kill him and grab his food and equipment. Send your army to camp near Moataeme, and wait. A few armies will pass you by without giving you a second glance.

Wait until Moataeme is uninhabited and attack. Then nearby on the coast a Red Captain has been ambushed and killed by a Blue army. Kill the Blue army and its leader and grab all his food and equipment. Go to Futbros and conquer it. It is uninhabited and so causes no problems. Invent a catapult and equip it. Go to Moataeme where survivors are returning and are joining your army as the city is now owned by you.

Get all the men from Moataeme and go camp near Futoing. Attack Futoing and using a combination of passive and neutral postures get all the food and men from Futoing.











ow the next target is Hqueion. On the way there, pick up as many men from all your cities and any food, weapons that you come across on the way. (There is a bow, some food and some boats to the south west of our homebase.) Attack Hqueion. Get food and men from Hqueion. Go and camp outside your homebase.

The final battle. There are in fact two Red armies camped outside the tower, and a Blue army that owns the tower. Attack the smaller Red army first. Then attack the tower. The first catapult fire will kill the Red Captain as well as the entire Blue army that is camped within the tower. The Conquest Balance is quick to declare our victory.



72

PTARMIGAN RUNS SHORT





hortage of paper when written. Making do with birch bark. Must be brief. Writing will lack artistry. I weep.

Attacked Moggage passively. Army was camped there but no competition. Food. Men. Subordinate Captain. He slouches.

Red devils of Jos from Rebeteux attack. Arrows, bows, death from above. Reds slain but not before Subordinate Captain falls valiantly. Dropped much food and more than 20 boats he was carrying. Explains poor posture. Got boats, bows.









ebeteaux paid for crimes. Taken in battle. Men enlisted, food taken, sheep killed, Rupert sheared. More comfortable now.

Danger! Peril! Raiding party from Moggage attacked. Killed them, killed them all. Got their food, more bows and boats. Practiced archery. Didn't go fishing.

Went to Whssth. Two people, no vowels, no resistance, some food.

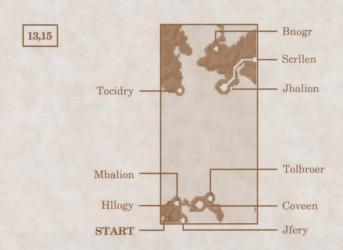
Reds camped outside Iffy. Only 16 Reds, attacked them passively. Complete victory, survivors returned home to Whssth. Learned my lord was now their ruler, joined our side. Much rejoicing as my lord promised to grant them a vowel for their city as soon as possible.

Learned of red tower called Emttes. Many Reds, but fewer then us. Rested, attacked passively, won. Conquest Balance proclaimed our victory. No need to attack Blue Jayne's city; cost might have been terrible.

Found paper. Finally. Just in time for the final battle.



THE STORM AND THE CROWN

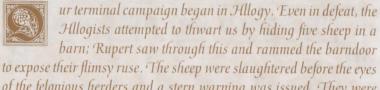


hen did I truly lose my former home? Ayear ago? A decade? It is almost lost to memory; even my vaguest dreams seem more tangible now. Did I have life then, or was I born when I dragged myself along that beach so long ago, and a violent sky bellowed to my lord of a new realm? My old life ended as it sank from view beneath waves thick and bitter with dissolving ash. This new life would truly begin only when the final battle was over and the promise of the storm was kept. And that battle was soon to come, somewhere in this isolated corner of the world. Our 27th conquest would be last one we would need to accomplish.









of the felonious herders and a stern warning was issued. They were also taken into service to purge them of their contrariness.

It was hard to rest with the bouquet of final victory succulent upon the zephyr, but my lord ordered that we conserve our strength. Refreshed, we marched upon Jfery and secured it against only a modicum of resistance. No sooner had the Iferians joined our cause and made the appropriate offering of food than a band of Jayne's carrion-crows appeared with blue murder in their eyes. Their hearts seemed not to contain their eyes' murderous aspect, however, for they fled without a fight. We sent only our derisive laughter to follow them as we took some rest, finding some diversion from battle in piecing together a sturdy catapult.

My lord guided us next to the environs of Mbalion. We imitated the action of the tiger, watchful, silent, and deadly as we observed the poisoned witch Blue Jayne form an army of corrupt Mbalionites. Then we sprang, and gathered in the prey for the kill. None survived our pounce. The dregs of Mbalion were likewise defeated, but allowed to live to they might serve us their food and surrender their equipment in a humiliating ceremony.

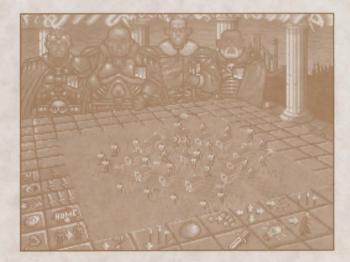
Red Jos decided at this point to test our resolve as well. His fleet landed north of Mbalion, and we hastened there lest they have time to fortify their beachhead. Never have I seen the battle light shine so fiercely in the eyes of my lord's minions as I did on that day. We left the Red host to be food for crabs and gulls, took their meagre leavings, and built a sandcastle as mockery of Jos' ever fleeting power.



e began to surge over the landscape, restless and relentless as the storm that drove us onto that distant beach so long ago. We fell upon Coveen like burning hail, consuming all

that we touched. After resting, we precipitated on Tolbroer much the same manner. Gathering all the men, food, and boats we could, we pointed our prows toward Tocidry's loathy environs. Sweeping over the unsuspecting settlement as a tempest-swollen river bursts through weakened levees, the flood that was my lord's army swept away men, food, a catapult. And when that catapult mimicked the lightning as we attacked Ibalion, the Conquest Balance tilted one last time, slowly, as if exhausted from weighing out victory after victory.

The promise that had been made on that beach long ago to a landless ruler.









EPILOGUE:

The Colours Fade

retired from my lord's army soon after he was crowned, but not from his service. Accepting appointment as his poet laureate and paramount censor, I spent the next several decades composing poetic tributes to my lord's past victories. Now, I, the chronicler of those campaigns, am their last veteran.

All my old comrades in arms have gone to their reward. Even Rupert Battle-Sheep, fiercest of the ruminants, passed from the scene. He grew near-sighted with the passing years, and put away his plough-helmet. One day, he saw what he believed to be a Josian trooper standing bold as you please in a public square, brazen in his scarlet tunic. With a savage bleat, Rupert charged his ancient foe. Tragically, what Rupert had myopically observed was a bullfight, a colourful sporting event adapted from a quaint Josian warcrime. Some silly fellow was standing in the middle of an arena, waving a red cape at a bull in a manner I assume bulls find irksome. At any rate, Rupert and the bull simultaneously converged on the provocative garment at breathtaking velocities. The impact killed Rupert instantly. The bull died several days later without regaining consciousness. The fellow with the cape was so shaken by the experience that he retired to a cave for a quiet life of contemplation and vegetarianism.

I was inconsolable when I heard of my comrade's fate. My grief poured itself out in a cycle of sonnets that still makes even the most down-to-earth sheep farmers weep when they hear it recited. They weep because they hate it so profoundly, but I enjoy the intensity of their response nonetheless.



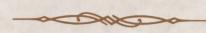
buried Rupert in a field of sweet clover on a windswept hill, where the silver rain falls gently and the golden sun shines warmly, adjacent to a swift rushing stream fragrant with the run-off from a nearby slaughterhouse. I knew he would have wanted it that way.

Call me sentimental, but it was too hard for me to bid Rupert farewell without keeping some momento, some token of our now legendary campaigns. I had been searching for some time for just the right length of parchment or vellum upon which to enscribe my epic poem. No stationer had what I was seeking. It occurred to me that no other surface would be as worthy to bear the record of my exploits as the scraped, stretched, and bleached hide of my woolly comrade.

So the great masterpiece of my career was enscribed using the finest blended inks on the meticulously prepared hide of one of the participants in the events it describes. Rupert's hide was everything I had hoped it would be, soft, supple, yet sturdy enough to resole a pair of boots (which I did using a leftover scrap, with the utmost respect and gravity).

But the larger piece bears my epic. I cannot read it myself now (curse these dim eyes that once shone so brightly!), and few now frequent the dusty corner of the archives where it is shelved. People nowadays have no interest or respect to spare for bygone triumphs. Insolent young scallions!

Then again, perhaps it is unavoidable that my story will be forgotten. Perhaps ancient warriors and ancient war stories share the same fate: They just fade away.









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"We marched to Mninise and Brinenen, both of which offered little more than passing sport for our whirling blades...We stripped the bodies of bows and food and promised to use them for the good of the people of this land. Assuming they were on our side, of course."

An Armoury Of Hints!

"If all settlements in a territory are owned by an opponent, the craven wretch won't attack you until you take one..."

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"I hate to miss a good battle. Carnage, suffering, and dying gasps provide me with some of my best source material. I'm sentimental that way."

NOW POWER IS IN YOUR GRASP!



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