

Figures from the past stand tall

The man gave out a deathly scream as the flesh was ripped open. His sword dropped from his fingers as he frantically scrambled to stop his bowels from tumbling out of the hole in his belly. Gasping, he dropped to his knees, his features twisted into a look of horror as realisation dawned that death was upon him. He let out a single anguished cry of utter desolation as the depths of his failure consumed him. He tried vainly to rise, but before he could muster the strength, his head jerked back, as if pulled by some unseen hand. From nowhere an invisible blade sliced his throat open, silencing his protests even as it unleashed a riot of blood over his falling corpse as it vanished into the dark night.

"Have you tried conversing with him?" Gideon asked.

The soldier cast him a withering look filled with pure disdain. "He seems a bit busy with dying. I don't know if you caught that bit where he screams 'noooooo'. That's all he had time to say."

Gideon ignored the obvious sarcasm. This guardian must have seen more than his fair share of battlefields, but it was clear what he'd seen here had left him deeply unnerved.

"Where's he from?" he asked. "He's not Highborn" he said pointedly.

"He looks like a Leaguer to me. Big puffy sleeves - with slashes in them? The only people I ever met who dress like that are the bravos of Holberg."

"Hmmm... best if we had a League priest really. A bishop if we could get one. They might know what to say to him. And even

if they don't he'll be more prepared to talk to one of his own."

Gideon could see the soldier looked sceptical. Understandable really, so he tried to explain a bit, to see if he could engage him in conversation. "That look on his face as he died. That horror. That's not pain or shock. I've seen that before. It's the moment his soul realises there will be no rest for him. This fella died with unfinished business. Our job is to find out what it was."

"Your job." the soldier corrected, pointedly. His voice was calm, but his hand gripped his spear tight, like he imagined that the murdered man's killers might be upon them at any moment. "This is your job." he said again, but quieter this time and almost as if he was talking to himself. "This is your job" he repeated it again, firmer this time, his voice now thick with accusation.

The emotion made Gideon wanted to reach out and touch him, but he knew how dangerous that could be. He was close now. Here in this place where the veil between the living and the dead was so thin you could stop through it without ever realising. All this man needed was the right touch and he would pass on. If he could just unlock the mystery of the bravo he was sure he could help this one let go of his pain.

Overview

For several years, Reikos has known peace. In the aftermath of the Druj invasion and the expulsion of the rot eternal Llofir from Tamarbode, its inhabitants have dedicated themselves to the arts of healing and purification. The Gardens of High Chalcis, once a mighty fortification reduced to ruins, now stand as a symbol of restoration and resilience in the face of the horrors that came from the east decades ago.

The final strands of the Druj resistance in Reikos were cut in 380YE as the Imperial armies attacked their last remaining holdout in Tamarbode. Despite the rebuilding, the dedication and the invitation of people from across the Empire to share in mending flesh and spirit, scars still remain. In the depths of a cold winter, as the end of the year draws near, it is not uncommon to encounter a ghost from battles past. These spirits accost the living, wailing effigies of those killed in the terrible conflict that raged over the land. They come from every walk of life but all have a strand in common; a deep, resentful bitterness over the nature of their end. Some can be mediated with and sent on, others require the specialised attentions of priests armed with liao to restore peace. By themselves, the shades are worrisome but they are not numerous enough to trouble the stewards of the dead. Just another uncomfortable reminder of the bloody history of the territory.

A Strange Toll

- **Reikos is being visited by a plague of restless souls. Obsessed with failures in life or the manner of their death, they seek escape**
- **There are souls from many different battles with the Druj here, from Holberg, Therunin, and Zenith, as well as Reikos**
- **The Stewards of the Dead are appealing for help to placate these spirits**

As the Winter Solstice draws near, priests and exorcists from

around Reikos begin receiving flurries of letters from panicked citizens in Chalcis Mount. Some grim spectral bell tolls, calling the restless dead to come forth in much greater numbers than usual.

Not just Highborn souls are encountered, the shades of dead orcs, Druj warriors mostly, are encountered, as well as the ghosts from other lands. Every nation lost soldiers fighting in Reikos, and for what seems like the first time their spirits are among the restless dead pulled from their slumber. There are ghosts of free company bravos, still dressed in their finery. There are scholars from Urizen wailing about their cruel death at the hand of poison or flux, lamenting a lifetime of work cut short. There are Navarr guides crying out for aid finding their way back to the Great Dance.

There are too many for the stewards to deal with, but they speak with those they can and their reports are strange. The dead who have been called from their graves are not just from this region, but from the terrible wars in lands nearby. There are victims from the bloody siege of Holberg, as well as those murdered only recently by the brutal Druj in Therunin. There are ghosts that died in Zenith, slaughtered by the bloody magics the Druj unleashed there.

How they come to be here, now, in Reikos, is a mystery that will never be answered. Perhaps it is the tide of blood unleashed so recently in Therunin. Perhaps they are drawn

here somehow knowing this is the one place they might finally find peace. What is clear is that the stewards of the dead who dwell in Reikos are overwhelmed and will need significant help to deal with so many.

A Dark Door

- **There is a conjunction for a hundred Imperial citizens to visit the High Arboretum in Chalcis Mount at 23:30 on Saturday**
- **The civil service have asked the High Exorcist to ensure that the Highborn stewards of the dead lead a party from all nations to deal with the ghosts**

Fortunately there is an unusually large conjunction to *High Arboretum, the Gardens of High Chalcis*, at 23:30 on the second day of the summit. The conjunction is enough to permit a hundred people to pass through, and leads directly to the site where the majority of ghosts are gathered, surely no coincidence.

It doesn't escape the notice of the stewards that this will be just a few hours after the Day of the Dead procession makes its torchlit way through Anvil. Given the nature and timing of the conjunction the civil service have asked the Highborn High Exorcist, **Alessi of the Basilisks of the Labyrinth**, to ensure that the Highborn stewards of the dead at Anvil lead a party to the area to deal with the restless ghosts, through whichever methods they might see fit. Many of the ghosts may be encouraged to pass on by mediation with someone of stout

enough virtue, but that some more recalcitrant spirits may need to be exorcised by force if necessary.

As the ghosts that have manifested have not all been Highborn, and some of them appear to be from very recent conflicts, local stewards have recommended that the Highborn may want to invite citizens from other nations to assist with the job of dispelling the spirits, as they may respond better to more familiar faces. As the pre-eminent experts on matters of the dead, the Highborn should lead the other nations in this endeavour and bring any other citizens along under their stewardship.

Participation

- **Characters who spent time in Reikos this season, or had to visit it, may have encountered one or more ghosts in the weeks leading up to the event**

Characters who spent time in Reikos may roleplay that they have encountered one of these ghosts in the weeks leading up to the event. The ghosts may be someone your character knew, a stranger, or someone long dead. All are ghosts of people who died as a results of the Empire's wars against the Druj, and who are tormented by the cruel manner of their death and some failure in life. You may roleplay that you let the ghost be, talked it down until it accepted its fate and disappeared, or exorcised it using a liao ceremony (this does not cost any of your character's liao).

Volunteering

- You are welcome to volunteer to NPC for this encounter if you wish to portray one of the restless spirits in Reikos
- If you played a character who died in battle against the Druj who did not take Kaela's Gift, or did not die under a Litany of the Labyrinth, or was not summoned by Whispers through the Black Gate, and has not already appeared as a ghost and passed on, you can play your ghost in this encounter
- If you have a complete Druj costume, including mask, you can volunteer to play one of the angry Druj ghosts
- You must email plot@profounddecisions.co.uk by 18:00 on Friday 18th of April if you wish to volunteer

This encounter has an opportunity for players to volunteer to support it, if they wish. If you have a character who died at the hands of the Druj at any point in the game, who did not take Kaela's gift, or did not die under the effects of a Litany of the Labyrinth, nor been summoned using Whispers through the Black Gate, and who has not previously appeared as a ghost then you are welcome to portray the shade of your dead character in this encounter. If you have your own complete Druj costume, including an appropriate mask, then you are welcome to play one of the angry Druj ghosts in the area.

This is a **combat unlikely** encounter and will involve some amount of walking in the woods or field. Please

email plot@profounddecisions.co.uk by **18:00 on Friday 18th April** if you are interested in volunteering so we can provide further information prior to the event.