



## GM BOOKLET

### A SHORT HISTORY

Long a source of conflict, the Verdigris Valley is the natural border between the Amber Steppes and the Kotalian lowlands. The valley has changed hands between tribes from the steppes and tribes of lowlanders for all of recorded history. Two generations ago, the Kingdom of Kotalia seized the valley and built a fort to guard the southern mouth into the lowlands. The displaced Pashuans moved up into the steppes; their raiding parties have been repeatedly beaten back by Kotalia's guardsmen.

Now Kamraan, a chieftain among the Pashuans, has amassed not just a mere raiding party, but an army. He has used the shady trader Miquela Colom to stockpile arms and supplies throughout the valley, and he knows the fort's weakness: the southern gate is jammed and cannot properly close. The Kotalian fort's officers are distracted at the worst moment: Elionor Carbo, the commander, is convinced that the Pashuans will attack with their spirit-magic and the monstrous Broodmother that haunts the valley. Ricart Foget, the captain of the cavalry, seeks vengeance for his dead brother. Only two people in the valley know the whole story about the Pashuan threat: Alistair, a disgraced guardsman who Ricart blames for his brother's death, and Anise, a half-breed guide who many have cause to suspect or outright hate.

Will the Pashuan attack succeed? Will anyone heed the warnings of Alistair and Anise? Will the Broodmother claim more innocent lives? Will Ricart find a target for his vengeance? Will Miquela walk away richer than she has ever dreamed? One thing is certain: Verdigris Valley will burn.

# CONTENTS

A SHORT HISTORY	1
RUNNING VERDIGRIS VALLEY	3
OPENING SCENES	4
CHARACTERS	5
Alistair, Disgraced Guardsman	5
Anise, Half-breed Guide	6
Ricart Foget, Cavalry Captain	7
Miquela Colom, Shady Trader	8
Elionor Carbo, Commander	9
Kamraan, Savage Chieftain	10
Vidal Pagner, valley farmer	11
Peyman, angry shaman	12
Olivar Carbo, inept officer	13
Brigida, bandit leader	14
Tecla Foget, Ricart's wife	15
The Broodmother, Terror of the Verdigris Valley	16
LOCATIONS	17
Abandoned Ranch	17
Adama Homestead	17
Army Pastures	17
Back Alley	17
Bailey	18
Carbo's Office	18
Cinereal Mountains	18
The Crag	18
East Wood	19
Foget's House	19
The Ford	19
Fort Smithy	19
Hunting Lodge	20
King's Road	20
North Gate	20
The Old Road	20
Old Road Pass	21
Old Outpost	21
Pagner Homestead	21
South Gate	22
The Stables	22
Tinker's Wood	22
Verdigris River	22
West Wood	23

# RUNNING VERDIGRIS VALLEY

This is the GM's booklet for *The Vicious Crucible of Verdigris Valley*, a compact, stand-alone roleplaying game.

## MATERIALS

To play this game, you'll also need Verdigris' character sheets and rule sheets, which can be found at <http://viciouscrucible.joshroby.com>. Lastly, you'll need polyhedral dice: at least six d4s, six d6s, and six d8s, although more makes things easier.

## TIME

Verdigris Valley usually takes about three four-hour sessions to complete. This give you time to get into character and ferret out all the nooks and crannies involved. You can smash-cut your way through the whole scenario in a single session—such as at a convention—and this can be fun, too. It's just a different kind of fun, like reading about the setting lore of your favorite video game on a wiki, compared with playing through all that content yourself.

You can play out Verdigris Valley a number of times and the adventure will pan out a different way each time, producing different changes in the characters as they struggle through the vicious crucible.

## PLAYERS

The Vicious Crucible of Verdigris Valley accommodates three to six player characters. If you have fewer than six, play with one of the following setups:

DRAMATIS PERSONAE FOR FIVE PLAYERS: Alistair, Anise, Elionor, Ricart, Kamraan

ACTION MOVIE FOR FOUR PLAYERS: Alistair, Anise, Ricart, Elionor

BLOOD OPERA FOR FOUR PLAYERS: Alistair, Anise, Miquela, Kamraan

THREE PAWNS ON A CHESSBOARD: Alistair, Anise, Ricart

BACKSTABBY GOODNESS FOR THREE: Kamraan, Miquela, Elionor

If some players are bringing characters in from other Vicious Crucibles, use one of the above sets to give the remaining players Verdigris characters.

Any of the six main characters not selected as a player character becomes an NPC.

## MORE VICIOUS CRUCIBLES

Find more Vicious Crucibles at [viciouscrucible.joshroby.com](http://viciouscrucible.joshroby.com)!

## OPENING SCENES

Kick the game off with the following scenes. Use these only to get the action going; play through them until the player characters' initial intentions are clear, and then cut away to the following scene.

After that, frame scenes to “share the spotlight” around the table. If someone hasn't had some action for a while, check where they are on the map and frame the next scene there.

### ALISTAIR & ANISE: EAST WOOD

Alistair and Mateu ride as if the world is afire behind them, bearing news of massing Pashuan troops in the highlands above the valley. Suddenly, the horses scream and rear. The air is filled with the scent of blood and entrails. Broodspawn—vicious, scaly creatures with fangs and talons—leap from the trees and tear apart into the flanks of the steeds. The sounds of battle alert Anise, who steps through the trees just in time to see Mateu skewered on the gouging horn of a broodspawn. Five of the beasts now circle Alistair and Anise, hissing and spitting as they prepare to attack.

Alistair, Anise: What do you do?

### MIQUELA: OLD ROAD PASS

Miquela treks northward along the Old Road, heading for the winding switchbacks that lead up to the Amber Steppes and the neglected trade routes to the north. Her pack mule plods behind her, overloaded with goods to trade with the distant Pashuan tribes, ones unaligned with Kamraan. Suddenly, a spear arcs through the air and drives itself into the ground before her feet. Up on a rise above her, she sees warriors with befeathered pashuan shields and spears, clearly ready to descend on her and her little one-mule caravan.

Miquela: What do you do?

### ELIONOR & RICART: THE RAMPARTS

Elionor, Ricart, and Olivar are atop the ramparts of Fort Verdigris. The valley stretches out below them, slowly reaching up to the highlands of the Amber Steppes. Elionor and Ricart are discussing patrol schedules and duty shifts when a cloud of birds suddenly erupts from the distant East Wood.

Elionor: how do you order Ricart to begin training Olivar as his own replacement?

If Alistair and Anise were headed back to the Fort, end the scene with the two breaking from the tree line, hauling a body between them. If Miquela is heading back to the Fort, she can make her entrance at the same time. Then cut scene to...

### KAMRAAN: HUNTING LODGE

The war party is assembled before Kamraan at his hunting lodge, the staging ground for his glorious invasion of the Verdigris Valley. Warriors have come from miles distant to be part of this historic event. They sing and chant, readying themselves for the coming battle. And this is when the shaman Peyman steps forward, arms outstretched, and declares that no Pashuan may raise a spear until the Broodmother has blessed the conquest of her territory.

Kamraan: your son demands you seek the broodmother's blessing. What do you do?

If Miquela is headed to the Hunting Lodge after being waylaid, have her enter as soon as Kamraan's response to Peyman is half-complete.

# ALISTAIR, DISGRACED GUARDSMAN

A strong-headed veteran of the soldiering life, Alistair was assigned to Fort Verdigris a year ago. He almost immediately came into conflict with the fort's new commander, Elionor Carbo, who he sees as inexperienced and naive.

His frequent criticisms have made him unpopular with his superiors, but the rough peasants of the valley, like Vidal Pagner and Miquela Colom, appreciate his honesty. Miquela treats him like an adopted son.

Alistair and Mateu Foget were on a routine patrol when they saw Kamraan's supposed hunting lodge bristling with tribal warriors preparing for action. Now they race across the valley, hoping to reach the fort while there is still time...

## ARC: CONTRARIAN

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CORRECT ANOTHER CHARACTER: claim a Heat and mark a flux.

GIVE UP ON CONVINCING A CHARACTER: spend five flux to unlock a new element.

ACCEPT A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION: buy a new arc

## ELEMENTS

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DISGRACED: claim two Heat instead of one for this element

RUGGED: reroll a die when your grit and rough determination come to the fore

GUARDSMAN: shift one point between dice when defending others

WANDERER: reroll a die when your role as an outsider helps you

COMMANDER: shift one point between dice when you are in command

OUTSPOKEN: reroll a die when putting your foot down

## TOOLS

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GUARDSMAN'S SHORTSWORD

GUARDSMAN'S SHIELD: shift one point between dice to counter a wound when you are also using a Guardsman's shortsword

MAP AND CENSUS OF THE VALLEY

A LITTLE BIT OF COIN

# ANISE, HALF-BREED GUIDE

With her feet planted in two worlds, Anise leads a difficult life torn between and shunned by both sides. She is an expert woodsman and knows the valley like the back of her hand, the result of living with the Pashuans, her father Peyman's people. However, when her grandfather Kamraan came to power, he ostracized her from Pashuan lands.

She spent three years alone in the borderlands before finding her mother, Miquela, a travelling trader based out of Fort Verdigris. Her reception at the fort was less than cordial; her mixed heritage has sparked more than one conflict with the soldiers stationed there. Often alienated and alone, she accepted Ricart Foget's overtures of affection despite his having a wife back home.

Anise offers her services to the denizens and visitors of Fort Verdigris, occasionally working with the garrison but more often for traders, hunters, and trappers. She was hunting, herself, when she stumbled onto Alistair and Mateu today.

## ARC: OTHERED

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LOOK FOR A PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE YOU FIT IN: claim a Heat and mark a flux.

DECIDE THAT A GIVEN PLACE IS NOT FOR YOU: spend five flux to unlock a new element.

FIND YOUR PLACE IN THE WORLD: buy a new arc

## ELEMENTS

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HALF-BREED: claim two Heat instead of one for this element

ANGRY: inflict two wounds instead of one when hurting the current subject of your anger

WOODS WALKER: shift one point between dice when in the forest

QUICK: reroll a die when you rely on speed and reflexes

SELF-RELIANT: reroll a die when you are on your own.

WANDERER: reroll a die when your role as an outsider helps you

## TOOLS

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WOODSMAN'S AXE

HUNTING LEATHERS

PASHUAN SPIRIT FETISH: (wild sorcery) pray to the spirits of the wild to reroll one die

CANTEEN

TRAIL RATIONS

HALF-FULL COIN POUCH

# RICART FOGET, CAVALRY CAPTAIN

Stationed at Fort Verdigris since it was built ten years ago, Ricart enjoyed a sort of refuge from his loveless marriage to Tecla, who lived at their family ranch in the interior, leagues away. Living as a bachelor with his younger brother Mateu, he caroused to all hours and seduced girls half his age, like Anise.

When Elionor arrived to take command of the fort, Ricart immediately positioned himself to curry favor. By tolerating her inept nephew Olivar and sharing his dislike for the troublemaker Alistair, he quickly became her right-hand man. A little bit of power made his freewheeling life all the more sweet.

The good times came to a crashing halt two weeks ago when his wife came to live with him at the fort. Despite his frantic attempts to cover up his lifestyle, it did not take long before fort gossip about Anise found its way to her ear.

## ARC: VENGEANCE

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BLAME SOMEONE FOR YOUR BROTHER'S DEATH: claim a Heat and mark a flux.  
AVENGE YOUR BROTHER: spend five flux to unlock a new element.  
MOURN YOUR BROTHER AND LET GO: buy a new arc

## ELEMENTS

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VETERAN: reroll a die when disadvantaging another character or resisting disadvantages, yourself.  
CAVALRYMAN: shift one point between dice when mounted  
DESPERATE: claim two Heat instead of one for this element  
GAMBLER: reroll a die when risking it big  
FUGITIVE: reroll a die when escaping or negotiating with your would-be captors  
KILLER: shift one point between dice when your dangerous reputation helps you.

## TOOLS

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CAVALRY SABER  
FELIX, HIS WARHORSE  
SCALE ARMOR BEARING THE VERDIGRIS CREST: shift one point between dice when leading soldiers  
VERDIGRIS CAVALRY: can take two wounds in Ricart's place  
BATTLE-STOCKED SADDLEBAGS  
MATEU'S DIARY

# MIQUELA COLOM, SHADY TRADER

Captured by the savage Pashuans as a child and treated little better than a slave, when Miquela matured she fell hard for Peyman, one of the tribe's princes. She bore him a daughter, Anise, but she knew that she would never be his lifemate. She left for her own people's lands, leaving her daughter in the safety of the tribe.

Her own people did not treat her much better, shunning and deriding her as having "gone native" and pushing her to the fringes of society. Years of struggle later, she became a trader between the two peoples. After supplying the bloody coup of Peyman's father Kamraan, she earned status as the tribe's friend and informant.

She uses Fort Verdigris as a base of operations, and has taken a special liking to brash Alistair, who she treats like a son. In the past few weeks, she's been paid well by Kamraan to create stockpiles of food and weapons throughout the valley, and has told him about the fort's jammed south gate. She doesn't trust Kamraan, but knows he's her route to wealth.

## ARC: SCHEMER

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PLAY KOTALIANS OFF PASHUANS OR VICE-VERSA: claim a Heat and mark a flux.

BETRAY KOTALIANS TO PASHUANS OR VICE-VERSA: spend five flux to unlock a new element.

LEAVE VERDIGRIS VALLEY: buy a new arc

## ELEMENTS

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FORMER SLAVE: shift one point between dice when captured or avoiding capture

TRADER: shift one point between dice when bartering or bribing

OVERLOOKED: claim two Heat instead of one for this element

FRIEND OF THE PASHUANS: reroll any die when dealing with Pashuans

FRIEND OF VERDIGRIS: reroll any die when dealing with Kotalians

WILY: shift one point between dice when you aren't telling the whole truth.

## TOOLS

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PACK MULE

CROSSBOW

TRADE GOODS

PERSONALIZED MAP: shift one point between dice when navigating

SECRET WALLET STUFFED WITH CREDIT-MARKS

# ELIONOR CARBO, COMMANDER

An ambitious petty noblewoman, Elionor Carbo's command of Fort Verdigris is one step among many to win her recognition, title, and lands. She has found a staunch ally in Ricart Foget, and relies on his counsel often. By contrast, she has come into repeated confrontations with Alistair, whose complaints and criticisms undermine her authority.

Since Kotalian military might ejected the Pashuans from the valley fifty years ago, she believes that the savages will turn to treachery and witchcraft to retake the Verdigris Valley. She suspects the half-breed Anise of being a spy, and believes the Broodmother to be incited if not outright controlled by Pashuan spirit-magic.

Once these threats are taken care of, she can leave Fort Verdigris in the capable hands of Ricart, installing her nephew Olivar as the new cavalry captain to keep an eye on things. Greater things await her on her inevitable rise.

## ARC: BURDEN OF COMMAND

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VOICE SUSPICIONS ABOUT PASHUAN TREACHERY: claim a Heat and mark a flux.

ACT TO THWART PASHUAN SPIRIT-MAGIC: spend five flux to unlock a new element.

LEAVE FORT VERDIGRIS IN GOOD HANDS: buy a new arc

## ELEMENTS

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AMBITIOUS: claim two Heat instead of one for this element

SUSPICIOUS: reroll any die when you try to see through lies

NOBLE: shift one point between dice when you intimidate with your social standing

EDUCATED: shift one point between dice when you call on your education

WITCH HUNTER: reroll any die when you are opposed to witchcraft, sorcery, or spirit-magic

COLD: shift one point between dice when you disdain someone who is not necessary to your plans.

## TOOLS

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SABER WITH CARBO FAMILY CREST: shift one point between dice to counter a wound when parrying

ANTON, HER WARHORSE

STUDDER ARMOR

THE GARRISON: shift one point between dice when maneuvering

A GOOD DEAL OF COIN AND CREDIT-MARKS

# KAMRAAN, SAVAGE CHIEFTAIN

The subject of dozens of horror stories, Kamraan strives daily to live up to all of them. He is the most savage, most terrifying, most powerful war-leader the pashuans have ever seen, and he is intent on retaking the Verdigris Valley.

Many years ago, his son Peyman was stupid enough to fall for a Kotalian captive named Miquela, and even made her great with child. The girl escaped after giving birth to their daughter, Anise, but when she came crawling back years later, Kamraan used her contacts with the light-eyes to supply him with steel spears and gold coin to become chieftain. Then he was able to throw their abomination of a child to the wilds and begin preparing for his conquest.

He heaped a treasure of furs and pelts on Miquela to create caches of food and weapons throughout the valley and has discovered through her that the south gate of the Fort is severely compromised. He has been stymied, however, by the tribe shamans, led by his own son Peyman, who insist that the Beast must bless the invasion before it begins.

## ARC: BARBARIAN LORD

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INTIMIDATE ANOTHER CHARACTER: claim a Heat and mark a flux.

ADVANCE YOUR WARRIORS TOWARDS THE FORT: spend five flux to unlock a new element.

WIN OR GIVE UP ON YOUR CONQUEST: buy a new arc

## ELEMENTS

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PROUD: claim two Heat instead of one for this element

SAVAGE: inflict two wounds instead of one against “civilized” Kotalians

CHIEFTAIN: reroll any die when exercising your authority

WARRIOR: shift one point between dice when in battle

HARRIED: claim two Heat instead of one for this element

BLOODTHIRSTY: reroll any die when you're out for blood.

## TOOLS

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SPEAR

SHIELD

PASHUAN SPIRIT FETISH: pray to the spirits of the wild to reroll one die

WAR PARTY: shift one point between dice to counter any wound when surrounded by his warriors

TORCHES: terrify the Broodmother (a free beaten wound)

# VIDAL PAGUER, VALLEY FARMER

The community of farmers in the valley hold a few of their elders up as their voices of wisdom and unofficial leaders; Vidal Paguer is not one of these. Cantankerous, acerbic, and impatient with others' problems, Vidal prefers to stay on his own farm and ignore most everyone else. His closest family is in Villa Argentate and even that's too close for his tastes. His erasable nature has made him kindred spirits with Alistair, one of the few guardsmen for whom Vidal has any respect.

Vidal is a veteran, so knows his way around a fort like Verdigris. He knows about the Cult insofar as he knows that some farmers "get up to something" out in the woods every full moon, but frankly doesn't care enough to inquire further. A few days ago, however, Vidal saw Miquela Colom leaving the abandoned barn across the way from his farmhouse; when he investigated the "vagrant's lair," he found stockpiles of food, grain, and Pashuan spears and shields.

Use Vidal if Alistair or Miquela are player characters.

## PLAN

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Get somebody in trouble, then go home.

**THREATEN MIQUELA:** if Miquela is in the fort, Vidal would love to shake a finger at her.

**CONFIDE IN ALISTAIR:** Vidal's first choice for who to tell is Alistair, assuming he can find him...

**CRITICIZE ELIONOR:** if Elionor doesn't immediately dispatch a battalion to investigate the "vagrant's lair," she's not doing enough!

## ELEMENTS

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**STUBBORN:** shift one point between dice when you hold your ground

**OLD:** reroll a die when calling on your past experience

**HOMESTEADER:** reroll a die when on your own lands

## TOOLS

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**PASHUAN SPEAR**

**KOTALIAN ARMS PENDANT:** shift one point between dice when dealing with soldiers

# PEYMAN, ANGRY SHAMAN

Son of the chieftain Kamraan, Peyman is a young man boiling over with anger. Worse, he does not know where to direct it. He is angry at Miquela for leaving him, at the Kotalians for stealing Pashuan lands, at Kamraan for taking away his daughter Anise, and at just about anyone else. He tried leaving Pashuan lands, but a falling-out with his travelling partner Dominic sent him steaming back home. He's hurting, has been almost his whole life, and that just makes him more angry.

Ostracized by his own anger, Peyman became a shaman, and found that the position offered him an opportunity to stymie his father's plans. He has made the Broodmother a totem of the pashuan people, and insists that no invasion can go forward without her blessing.

Use Peyman if Kamraan, Miquela, or Anise are player characters.

## PLAN

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Stall Kamraan until he is shamed, then get him killed on the battlefield.

**UNDERMINE KAMRAAN'S AUTHORITY:** Peyman is eager to tell all the pashuan warriors that Kamraan is ignoring the wisdom of their totem. He will do this right in front of Kamraan.

**CONSULT THE SPIRITS:** after a short but spectacular trance, Peyman can give Kamraan a difficult task to prove that he has the Broodmother's blessing.

**COUNCIL ANISE:** Peyman can give his daughter everything she needs to bring down his father.

## ELEMENTS

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**ANGRY:** inflict two wounds instead of one when hurting the current subject of your anger

**WELL-TRAVELLED:** shift one point between dice when you prove your cosmopolitan and well-travelled history

**SHAMAN:** reroll when using the respect and deference of your position

## TOOLS

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**SPEAR**

**PASHUAN SPIRIT-TOTEMS:** (wild sorcery) reroll any die when requesting aid of the spirits

**WOLF FETISH:** (wolf sorcery) shift one point between dice when performing spellcraft on pashuan territory

# OLIVAR CARBO, INEPT OFFICER

Elionor's nephew by her younger brother, Oliver Carbo is an impetuous young man who was told to join the army to better serve his family. Knowing full well that he will not inherit anything from anyone, he reluctantly accepted the assignment.

Among the Carbos, ambition is a defining characteristic but given little to no guidance. This may be why Olivar has fixed upon slaying the Broodmother as his route to recognition and power. The fact that he is totally unqualified to attempt this feat does not register in his mind. He plans to slip out of the Fort, "do battle," and then return with the monster's head.

Use Olivar if Elionor or Ricart are player characters.

## PLAN

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Go slay the Broodmother all on your own.

GET SUPPLIES: Olivar will need supplies from the fort for his brave adventure.

CONSULT WITH ANISE: if anyone knows where the Broodmother lurks, Anise will.

STRIKE OUT: at the worst possible moment, Olivar will open the gates and ride off to glory.

## ELEMENTS

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GUILELESS: reroll when trying to convince someone of the truth

SPINELESS: shift one point between dice when following orders

HOPELESS: reroll when overcoming disappointment

## TOOLS

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CAVALRY SABER

AUBREY, WARHORSE

SCALE ARMOR BEARING THE CREST OF THE FORT: shift one point between dice when leading soldiers

A SACK OF COINS

# BRIGIDA, BANDIT LEADER

Working along the borders of Kotalia, Brigida's band of ruffians were only passing through the Verdigris valley when they stumbled onto one of the Pashuan's hidden supply depots. In the supply depot was a map of other caches. The bandit leader was quick to seize the opportunity and quickly outfitted her bandits with the pashuan spears and shields. They've cleaned out the caches they've hit, moving the food and feed to an old outpost in the hills a short distance from the Old Road.

Knowing that an invasion is coming and their thefts from the invasion force will be noticed eventually, Brigida is hitting the Old Road's traders hard before they have to move on.

Use Brigida if Miquela or Kamraan are player characters.

## PLAN

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Score big, stay safe, run free.

**PICK OFF STRAGGLERS:** if anyone is out by themselves, Brigida and her thugs can sweep in for the easy pickings.

**FIND MORE CACHES:** Brigida would be very interested in finding and looting the other caches in the valley.

**FLEE THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW:** when things go south, Brigida will just need to collect their stashed loot before bailing.

## ELEMENTS

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**OPPORTUNISTIC:** shift one point between dice to disadvantage an opponent in combat

**AMBITIOUS:** shift one point between dice when you have others working to your benefit

**BANDIT:** inflict two wounds instead of one

## TOOLS

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PASHUAN SPEAR

PASHUAN SHIELD

**BANDITS:** shift one point between dice to wound when backed by her bandits

STOLEN GOODS

# TECLA FOGET, RICART'S WIFE

Married off when she was fourteen, Tecla Foget left her home and little sister Beulah to be installed in her new husband's ranch. There she was then promptly forgotten. Ricart went off to fight the savage Pashuans on the frontier while she, barely more than a girl, was expected to run the entire ranch. It took her years to master the staff and run the business, and juggling all of that left her without the time enter Kotalia's polite society.

As the frontier became pacified, Tecla leapt at the opportunity to leave her overworked and ostracized life for Verdigris Valley, to finally be with her husband permanently. However, when she arrived at the fort, she discovered that he had kept himself busy in her absence—notably with that low-life half-breed Anise. Betrayed and enraged, after all she gave to him over the years, she was quietly recruited by the local Cult of the Broodmother. Her anger gave her focus and fueled her secret ascent to priesthood. Now she plots a bloody revenge on her husband.

Use Tecla if Ricart or Anise are player characters.

## PLAN

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Lure Ricart out of the Fort, then slaughter him.

**INFLAME CHAOS:** Tecla will suggest to Ricart and Elionor that her husband investigate... well, anything that comes up. Broodmother? Bandits? Invasion? As long as he gets outside.

**CONJURE AVATAR:** Tecla can conjure up an avatar of the Broodmother—invisible but by no means stealthy—to attack Ricart once he's vulnerable.

**IMPLICATE ANISE:** Tecla will take any opportunity to malign Anise's name or maneuver her along side Ricart for the attack.

## ELEMENTS

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**BETRAYED:** shift one point between dice when you loose your anger and frustration

**WIFE:** reroll when you perform your wifely duties

**PRIESTESS:** shift one point between dice when backed by your followers

## TOOLS

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**FINE LADY'S DRESSES:** shift one point between dice when your respectability helps you

**CEREMONIAL DAGGER:** (wild sorcery) summon an avatar of the Broodmother, borrowing its Features for the duration of a scene

**CULTISTS:** can take two wounds in place of Tecla

**ANGER (EMOTION)**

# THE BROODMOTHER,

## TERROR OF THE VERDIGRIS VALLEY

Not at all native to the Verdigris Valley, the Broodmother is something akin to a homocidal rhinoceros: huge, armor-plated, possessed of a massive horn, and incredibly territorial. She is also carnivorous, preferring cattle, horses, and the occasional human.

As ornery and dangerous as the Broodmother is, she is not stupid. She lurks in the forests that still sprinkle the valley and comes out to hunt mostly at night. She fears fire, which is how the pashuans herded her across the steppes and down into the valley many years ago. She still has a pashuan hatchet lodged between the armor plates at her neck from that ordeal.

Always use the Broodmother.

## PLAN

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Defend your territory; fill it with your brood.

**MY FOREST:** in any scene set in one of the forests, the Broodmother or her spawn can turn up to make things exciting.

**DISDAIN HUMANS:** if any player characters actually approach the Broodmother, well... let's just say she will not respond with hospitality.

**FLEE FIRE:** the only thing the Broodmother fears is fire, which anyone familiar with pashuan lore might know...

## ELEMENTS

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**BESTIAL:** inflict two wounds instead of one

**ARMOR-PLATED:** shift one point between dice to counter any wound

**TERRITORIAL:** shift one point between dice when in the wilds of Verdigris

## TOOLS

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**HORN:** shift one point between dice to any attempt to wound when charging

**HIDE:** shift one point between dice to counter any wound

**BROODSPAWN:** work as pawns, allowing the Broodmother to "act" in scenes where she is not. Use her Facets and Features, but no sparks.

## LOOT

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If the Broodmother is killed, her conquerors can pull out the hatchet wedged between her armor plates. They have little time, however; the broodspawn will quickly congregate to feast on their dame and fight over which will become the new Broodmother...

**HATCHET OF HEAVEN:** inflict two wounds instead of one when the hatchet is thrown; shift one point between dice when the user draws attention to herself with a battle-cry (pashuan or otherwise).

# LOCATIONS

## ABANDONED RANCH

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Verdigris Valley is not an easy place to live, and more than one parcel of land once filled now stands empty. The ranch house, a simple two-room structure, has a collapsed roof. The well is stopped up with detritus from a wind storm. Only the barn still stands whole, minus a few slats off one wall. And inside said barn is a cache of spears, shields, bandages, smoked meat, and feed.

If she's an NPC, Miquela might be found here, stocking the cache. On the other hand, Brigida and her bandits might have just found it, and are in the process of looting it.

### ELEMENTS

DERELICT  
SECRET CACHE (D8)  
OPEN

## ADAMA HOMESTEAD

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The Adamas pride themselves on living as far up the valley as any Kotalians dare; from their porch they can see the smoke and hear their drums from Pashuan encampments on the plateau above. The matriarch of the clan, Willa, and her daughter, Leigh, know that something is brewing up there and have started to gather food and weapons in case they have to bolt with little warning. Their preparations, however, look a lot like a cache...

### ELEMENTS

FAR-FLUNG  
SELF-RELIANT  
RANCH

## ARMY PASTURES

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This broad field lies between the fort and the river, and the cavalry stationed here use it to pasture and train their horses. The fort's food supply is also kept here, on the hoof. There is no retaining fence; the field blends seamlessly into the surrounding woodlands and hills.

### ELEMENTS

OPEN  
CATTLE  
HIGH GROUND

## BACK ALLEY

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The buildings within the fort should not be built so close to the east wall. This leads to a cramped, dark space with a reputation for clandestine dealings. It's also easier than it should be to scramble up onto the ramparts above.

### ELEMENTS

DARK  
SECLUDED  
NARROW

## BAILEY

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The central courtyard within the fort is a wide, open space crammed to capacity with all manner of business that occurs in the fort. This is simultaneously the drill yard, the soldiers' break room, and the service porch for the quartermaster. The ramparts ring the bailey—making this no safe place when the archers are up there—and the gates north and south are plainly visible.

### ELEMENTS

SECURE  
OPEN  
WAGONS, CRATES, AND BARRELS

## CARBO'S OFFICE

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The bottom floor of this building is lushly decorated with every luxury that can be imported into the valley. A thick, plush carpet spreads across the floor; the desk and sideboards are polished mahogany. The chairs are upholstered in velvet and heavenly comfortable. Stairs along the back wall leads up to Carbo's living quarters.

While Elionor can often be found here, Olivar can, too... perhaps grabbing what he "needs" for his "quest."

### ELEMENTS

QUIET  
WELL-APPOINTED  
INTIMIDATING

## CINEREAL MOUNTAINS

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The east wall of the Verdigris Valley rises up to merge with the Cinereal mountain range, which separates the lowlands from the steppes. While not as treacherous as the crags that define the west edge of the valley, only skilled hinterlanders can pick out the secret ways through the peaks. There is one path in particular, known to Kamraan and his forces, that will bring a column of warriors to the south gate of the fort.

### ELEMENTS

HIGH  
ROCKY  
SNOW-CAPPED

## THE CRAGS

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The land rises in twisting fingers and bluffs, eventually hitting the grey granite of the valley wall. There is no easy way up the west wall of the valley, but determined individuals can scramble up the rocky crags. It's hard-going and incredibly dangerous. Much easier to take the Old Road north and then double back across the Steppes.

Rumors insist that the Broodmother makes her lair here, a theory supported by the many caves infested with broodspawn.

### ELEMENTS

HIGH  
TREACHEROUS (D8)  
SHARP

## EAST WOOD

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Of the three woods in the valley, the East Wood is the smallest and also the least pleasant. The land is jagged and treacherous, the trees thick with winding, low-hanging limbs. Standing pools of fetid water and slippery mud are common; some are quite deep.

This is a favorite haunt of broodspawn. The East Wood also hides the terminus of the Pashuan Way, the narrow trail that leads up and down the valley's east wall. Patrols regularly sweep the area, ensuring that there are no Pashuans on the Pashuan Way.

### ELEMENTS

DARK  
UNEVEN TERRAIN  
SAVAGE

## FOGET'S HOUSE

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The home of Ricart and Tecla Foget, this is the largest of the officers' houses. It is also the best-kept ever since Tecla has come to live with her husband. It is the cleanest, best-furnished house in the fort... and it radiates stifled rage, a sickening aura that no amount of cleaning seems to clear.

Tecla can obviously be found in her own house, although she might be in the cellar, with her fellow cultists...

### ELEMENTS

CLEAN  
WELL-APPOINTED  
VIBRATING WITH ANGER (D8)

## THE FORD

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The Verdigris River sweeps through the valley before tumbling down the Craggs to the west to the lowlands below. The bend where it turns is broad and the water shallows, here, leading to its use as a fording site. The Fort was built just above the south bank to guard this essential byway, connecting the Kotalian heartland to the valley's interior up the Old Road.

### ELEMENTS

SHALLOW  
SWIFT  
WELL-TRAVELLED

## FORT SMITHY

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The fort's Smithy is a locus of fort activity, continually repairing breastplates, shields, and swords; churning out endless supplies of horseshoes; and doing a little contraband business in shovels and pitchforks on the side. It is the lifeblood of this distant outpost, and is always well-supplied and scrupulously maintained.

This will be one of Olivar's most important targets as he gears up.

### ELEMENTS

STACKS OF ARMS  
WORKSHOP  
HOT

## HUNTING LODGE

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Kamraan's hunting lodge is a timber longhouse situated at the top of the valley's eastern wall. While it was originally built to host hunting parties as they traveled the plateaus above the valley, it has recently been expanded, and ranks of hide yurts encircle it. Spears without number are racked nearby, and horses fill the fields. This is the staging ground for Kamraan's invasion.

Kamraan, Miquela, and even Anise might be found here if they are NPCs. Peyman will stay at the Lodge until the invasion, when he follows along, waiting for his opportunity to get his father slain.

### ELEMENTS

TRADITIONAL PASHUAN  
WELL-STOCKED (D8)  
MANNED (D8)

## KING'S ROAD

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Once the southern extent of the Old Road, much work has been invested in raising, grading, and leveling this stretch of road. Proceeding south from the Fort, it leads down to the Kotalian lowlands, terminating at the trading hub of Villa Argentate.

### ELEMENTS

PAVED  
RAISED  
THOROUGHFARE

## NORTH GATE

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High and broad, the North Gate stands sentry over the Verdigris Ford. The gates are usually left open through the day, although sentries on the crenellated walkway above the doors stand watch for any reason to haul them shut.

### ELEMENTS

SECURE (D8)  
MANNED (D8)  
WELL-EQUIPPED

## THE OLD ROAD

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No one is quite sure who built this road, or who improved it ages ago, but the Old Road stretches the length of Verdigris Valley, raised a few feet above the fields surrounding it. The cobblestones are almost all gone, but the construction's drainage is good enough to keep it standing. The farmers of the valley use this road as their main conduit to the Fort and buyers in the lowlands below. Some traders follow this road further, up to the Amber Steppes and the trade routes beyond the Pass.

Brigida and her bandits prey upon this area. Broodspawn aren't uncommon, either.

### ELEMENTS

CRUMBLING  
RAISED  
WELL-TRAVELLED

## OLD ROAD PASS

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An extension of the Old Road, the pass winds its way up the narrowing valley to the steppes above. Large portions of the pass are little more than a cart-width of packed dirt trail, and much of it lies exposed to the elements and bandits. Still, a trickle of trade has passed along this route for centuries.

Brigida's bandits make good use of the ambush opportunities, here. Miquela, if she's an NPC, will likely use the Pass to escape the valley before the fighting starts. She'll trade with the upland pashuans for a season and come back when the dust settles.

### ELEMENTS

HIGH  
NARROW  
EXPOSED

## OLD OUTPOST

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A blasted stone keep situated high above the Old Road Pass, this ancient construction is barely more than crumbling walls surrounding a central courtyard. It has recently been occupied by Brigida's bandits, who stockpile their booty in the corners with the best protection from wind and rain. A winding trail connects the outpost to the pass, although it would be easy to overlook it in passing.

This is the haunt of Brigida and her bandits, and it's unlikely they'll leave it abandoned for long.

### ELEMENTS

CRUMBLING  
HIGH  
HIDDEN

## PAGUER HOMESTEAD

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The home of the cantankerous old bachelor, Vidal Paguer, his homestead consists of a few broad fields, a small corral filled with pigs, and three outbuildings: a barn long missing its cows, a slope-walled shed housing a plow and other implements, and a carriage house. All are in a state of disrepair that keeps them just barely functional.

After he stirs up trouble at the fort, Vidal will return here.

### ELEMENTS

OPEN  
CORN FIELDS  
RANCH

## PASHUAN WAY

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This pass leads from the East Wood up to Pashuan lands on the steppes, and has long been a source of frustration for the Kotalian military. Easily fortified and defended, as it's too narrow to permit more than a single-file column of swordsmen and cavalry, it is a natural chokepoint for troop movements.

This pass will be guarded by pashuan warriors until the invasion is fully under way. Peyman might be found here before or after, as he consolidates his schemes.

### ELEMENTS

HIGH  
NARROW  
GUARDED (D8)

## SOUTH GATE

---

Like its brother to the North, the South Gate is wide and tall and impressive...but it's also built atop an unstable rocky abutment that has recently started to crumble. Consequently, the door on the east side has swung too far out and jammed open. Carbo has made a show of keeping the South Gate open through all hours, hiding the fact that it simply can't close.

The South Gate is manned around the clock. Any of the fort characters—Alistair, Elionor, Ricart, Olivar—might be encountered here.

### ELEMENTS

POOR FOUNDATION  
JAMMED OPEN  
MANNED (D8)

## THE STABLES

---

A long, sturdy building smelling about as nice as you would expect, the fort's Stables houses the cavalry horses as well as a handful of personal mounts for the commander and others.

Olivar will need a horse to ride out to his destiny, so player characters might run into him here.

### ELEMENTS

WELL-STOCKED  
STINKY  
HORSES

## TINKER'S WOOD

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The northernmost wood in the valley, Tinker's Wood is the nexus of many local tall tales, most likely because of the ancient stone shrine that sits at its center. Alien to both Pashuan shamans and Kotalian priests, the shrine depicts a robed goddess figure with eyes downcast across a stone altar. A wide slope wraps around the shrine, creating a natural amphitheater. The Cult of the Broodmother have claimed the shrine for their rites, but even they don't know who the stone figure represents.

High in the trees on the north edge of the wood is another cache of war supplies for the Pashuans. Brigida knows it's in the wood somewhere; her bandits are searching for it.

### ELEMENTS

SECRET CACHE (D8)  
TALL TREES  
OLD HOLY SITE

## VERDIGRIS RIVER

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The green-tinted Verdigris River courses down the length of the valley, a warm torrent descending from the mountains beyond the steppes. While most make use of the ford, the river can be crossed nearly anywhere...just not without some danger. The current is strong. The visibility poor.

Broodspawn like to swim.

### ELEMENTS

SWIFT  
MURKY  
WET

## WEST WOOD

---

The oldest of the three woods of Verdigris Valley, the trees here are thick with boles and their roots intermingle in a network of grasping limbs. Thankfully, much of the ground is even, if a bit mossy, and wide clearings dot the wood.

The Broodmother is often sighted here, sunning herself in these clearings...although once she knows she's been spotted she quickly turns to territorial violence. Even the Cult, which sometimes conducts its rites here, stays clear of the dangerous beast.

### ELEMENTS

THICK  
LABYRINTHINE  
OLD