



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.

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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!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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