

Episode 13 Black Lungs

Judges, Chroniclers and Spitalian cults hold dominion over the whole of the Protectorate, let alone the mighty Justitian. However, their influence wanes depending on location. While Cathedral City remains independent as it is situated outside of the Protectorate's borders, the Anabaptists' influence can be felt across the entire Frankan side of the realm.

For a long time, the coalition between Cathedral City and the Protectorate was as firm as the walls that surrounded them. The Spitalians considered the Anabaptists as brothers in arms, and the Judges traded with them for water supplies. The Chroniclers' aversion toward the Broken Cross, nurtured by their age-old feud was mostly ignored. Political landscape and allegiances are subject to change, however, and in light of the recent news of the massacre in Briton to the far West, everything has abruptly changed. The news coming out of Briton is fragmented, and the Spitalians have yet to collect all the necessary pieces. Delegations of Cathedral City are ordered to travel to Uptown for interrogation. The lower ranks are kept as mushrooms amidst the madness. Fed shit and kept in the dark.

A shudder runs through Kiefer's spine that awakens him. He forgets where he is for a moment, stilted by a restless night terror, but the moment passes as he fills his lungs with the musty air inside the sheet metal hut. He can see the rise and fall of his chest in the flickering shadow thrown up against the pitted metal and it calms him. Cool air washed across his bare torso and legs, giving him a chill of goose flesh on his damp skin. The chill was enough to send another shiver snaking through his body. If he had any hair on his arms neck or legs, it would've stood up in response.

Two Anabaptists chatter quietly at the doorway across from his stuffed mattress on the floor. His ears prick up at the mention of the great city Bassham, further south at the Frankan border of the Protectorate.

"...received a radio signal this morning from Bassham. A Spitalian relay station sent word of stray phero-drones spotted several kilometers outside Ignatz. They were just... circling around. Like they were waiting for something." one Anabaptist said nervously.

The other replied boisterously, "Yeah, sure. Waiting to be cleansed with Spitfire and fungicide Chem-X."

Kiefer cleared his throat.

"Ah, good morning. Didn't mean to disturb you brother. There's fresh water and bread here for your morning cleanse and nourishment."

The outspoken Anabaptist pulled a folded razor out of a shoulder slung leather bag and threw it across the room where it landed next to a crude wooden stand set just to the side of the mattress. A wide, clay jar of water and a glass vial full of translucent white scales stood atop. Kiefer nodded in thanks.

"There's some lye flakes there too. They'll work up a bit of suds for yeh. Thank you for your service and care." The soft spoken Anabaptist added.

"Eh quiet you. Let the man get about his business." the other retorted and shuffled him out hurriedly.

Kiefer put his hands behind him and stood up to stretch. Except for a pair of skin-hugging briefs he was naked and he grabbed his neatly folded neoprene suit from a shelf clumsily tacked into the side of the sheet metal. Kiefer had never had much leg hair and the stubble that grew was never enough to rub his legs raw in the sealed suit. One foot followed the other as he pulled the legs taught up to his thick trunk. The top half of the suit was tied in a loose knot around his waist to keep the sleeves from grazing the dirty floor. Strong fingers turned over the lid to the wide pitcher and used it as a makeshift basin, filling it to the brim with water from the jar. A dash of the white flakes into the basin added foam and bubbles to the solution and after the reaction had reached an equilibrium, he began washing his hands and arms thoroughly. Stinging and burning sensations from the acidic tincture bleached his skin, cleaning fungal microbes from his body.

One last razor swipe across his temple removed the last fine bits of hair he felt on his fingertips and he pulled the the top half of his suit over his large shoulders and zipped it up.

Last decent cleanse for a while. Good thing the razor is keen. he thought.

Kiefer greeted the rising dawn with crust still on his eyelids. The yellow sun flashed brilliantly across the East and the walkway leading back to the front gate was illuminated by kaleidoscopic rays shot through the blue red and green glass of the tall spires above.

Anabaptist men and women nodded and moved aside let the Spitalian pass. The eight-pointed cross caught the eye of small children with tiny forehead tattoos as well. Precocious eyes looked up in wonder at the brawny Famulancer, and tugged on their mother's sleeves, full of questions about his white skin and hairless features.

A large portcullis was drawn open on Kiefer's approach and he found Sudo, Etta, and her horse, Piotr, waiting for him outside. The tent was already broken down and stacked neatly on top of the trunk.

"Morning. We would have packed it all away but we didn't have the key to the trunk." Etta said.

"No trouble. It is a relief to know you two are early to rise. That will make breaking camp much simpler."

click

The two vocal party members chuckled and Kiefer unlocked the trunk with a key from a velcro pouch on his hip. The gear was stowed, Piotr was fed, and the party made tracks.

Kiefer, Etta, and Sudo-19 are beginning their trek across the southern wastes of Borca. It is a long journey to their next stopping point in the outpost of Eixel, about 260km away. Instead of skirting the borders of Borca and Franka, I'll rule that they decide to cut across country to save time and head directly south. Sudo is the slowest party member for overland travel, as we've discovered. She tops out at 15km a day for her travel distance and has already used a good portion of her EGO points, along with Etta, to hustle up and make the Spitalian rendezvous in Ignatz. It will take some time to replenish their EGO points but they can add some extra kilometers as 1 EGO point replenishes every 24 hours.

Instead of getting lost in the weeds or hampering progress with punishing encumbrance with overland travel, I'm going to stick to a few main rules.

- Every 45km I will roll a d6 for a wandering encounter. On a 6, I'll pull results from a table I concocted and we'll find out what the party runs into.
- Every day of travel I will roll for weather to give a little flavor to the meters they cover

- The weather can affect what happens if a wandering encounter occurs. Heat and rain adds a discomfort penalty of -1D to all actions for all PCs, sandstorms can obscure vision with a -1D or -2D penalty for PCs or NPCs, and flash floods may make certain paths dangerous to cross. If the players rest in a flash flood area (within 20km of a dry river bed) they'll have to roll to save from being swept away and killed, although they will get a +1D since Kiefer and Etta put their heads together in Episode 12 to anticipate such events.
- A character suffering from a Discomfort may roll a Mental Defense (PSY+Faith/Willpower) once per day to determine how well he can handle the situation. Each Success will negate 1D of Discomfort penalty for the day, Triggers counting for 2 Successes.
- The party has a 30 day supply of resources and can buy more at markets they come across. If they run out of supplies due to being slowed down, hunger and thirst Discomforts will also accrue for *each* day the party goes without but they can also make Mental Defense rolls to stave off dehydration and famine.



I will eventually update my website echoesofeshaton.wordpress.com with these behind the scenes statistics and information. Check back often for help running your own game! ex: **Kiefer medical supplies = 8 item types, i rolled 8d6 and put the numbers with the supplies that made the most sense**

ex:

Roll Scenarios

Okay, I may adjust the rules as I continue play but I think this a challenging start to overland travel. We'll see how the party does and if I've outfitted them with enough supplies. Each day's description will be abbreviated to help add a sense of progression. The Degeneration maps I've seen don't have a hex-grid, so I'm excited to see what happens with this system! Hopefully I don't write myself into a corner within 3 episodes...

Roll Scenarios

DAYS 1-2 Blistering Heat, N/A

Resources: 27

The party veers off the fortified roads several kilometers outside Cathedral City and navigates through the Zone of Anabaptist influence. It is a wide tract of land that has been patrolled by orgiastic packs since the time of the Baptist Amos. The destruction of the Pheromancer King and his Ziggurath at the hands of Vincent, Amos's ward and battle brother, lives on in the murals of Anabaptist settlements and is built up as legend among the cult, just 2 decades after it transpired.

The sun beats down on the party as they travel without cover. They use an extra day's ration of water to keep cool. There can't be too many days of this summer heat, can there?

Dialogue is brief between the companions. Everyone is anxious to stay on the move as they migrate out of Anabaptist influence. They pass one last long patrol 35km outside Cathedral City, they offer Kiefer and Etta tidings, but ignore Sudo.

DAY 3 Flash flood, encounter with nomads during exploration

Resources: 26

Fast moving blankets of grey swoop over the canvas of drab sands and dry dirt. The clouds start to swell and roil.

etta perception - 4 6 2

Kiefer perception - 4 4 2 1 4

Sudo perception - 6 2

Etta and Sudo take a night watch to allow Kiefer some rest. During the soft evening, Sudo types out a message to Etta, explaining that she wants to explore some ruins she spied gleaming in the sunset. Although she initially vetos the idea, Sudo, as always, persists. Etta relents and follows Sudo to watch her back.

The two come across a several shard of rusting metal structure sticking out of the ground, exposed by the winds across Borca. They keep their distance, as they both rolled high enough to perceive some activity around the structure. Nomads dressed in

rag throw trash and debris around before giving up and wandering away. Sudo investigates further:

Scrap search base (8) - 4(100km to bassham, - 1 for every 20km away [max is 4]) - 1 (quality of field) = Difficulty 3

But her efforts reveal nothing. After an hour the pair head back. The moon becomes blotted out with the thickened clouds and a downpour ensues as they return at camp.

Kiefer INST+Survival - 1 6 3 1 3 4

PHEW

Although they remain sheltered in the tent Kiefer stirs by instinct and sees trickles and rivulets of water flowing underneath the tent...moving faster than it should.

"A flash flood! Pack up and find higher ground...NOW!"

The party scramble to move their campsite as sheets of rain continue to pelt them. A small hillock east of their location offers some higher ground. The waters climb from their ankles to the shins in less than 20 minutes but retreats as they elevate themselves. They can hear distant screams and wailing from the nomads they hid from earlier among the ruins. Not everyone was so lucky.

DAYS 4-5 N/A, Clear Skies

Resources: 25

The heavy rains came and went as they continue on. A break in the sky leads to a pleasant day, few and far between other days of dangerous weather. The sun warms their faces and their spirits.

Based on the table I created, a roll of 4 leads to clear skies and a pep in the groups step and they're able to cover an additional 5km over their travel distance. I try not to make it all gloom and doom.

DAY 6 Tornado, no encounter

Resources: 24

Kiefer Survival - 1 3 4 6 4

Etta Survival - 4 6

Sudo Survival - 1 1

The party marches along and it's Kiefer who pipes up to share a bit with the group, much to the surprise of Etta. She initially thought he had a very take-charge attitude in his demeanor, which led her to think he was a bit too self-important or prideful. Yet after traveling as a group for a few days, she came to realize his silence was as much about introspection and taking in nature; not exactly the stereotype of most Spitalians.

His brief stories told about how he helped raise a few family members in the Stukov Quarter before joining the Spitalian ranks. Etta was an only child herself, but enjoyed hearing the fond, if not rather humorless, recounting of Kiefer's siblings, Brunos and Yvonne getting stuck on top of the Judge's Peace Walk platforms above. The children cried when they realized their forehead paint for disobedience and stupidity would not wash off after a day or two. Etta swore she could see a small smile cross Kiefer's face just for a moment.

The winds whipping under the party's clothes changed directions with some frequency, and a low roar tumbled over the plains. As Kiefer was preoccupied with fetching some lunch from Piotr's pack, Etta cocked her head to the side trying to make sense of a phenomena a dozen meters ahead. It was a swirling dust cloud but it took on a funnel shape as it moved. Etta likened the shape to what the Scrappers in the forecourt used to separate metal nuts and bolts. It whipped and danced like a pleasure girl in brothel but was gaining speed...and heading straight for the party.

She tapped Kiefer on the shoulder for his attention, the dried meat dangling from his mouth as he re-tightened the buckles on Piotr's saddlebags. The rubber squeaked at his collar as he peered over Etta's shoulder and the mutton dropped out of his slack jaw. He fiercely grabbed Etta by the arm and threw her down, also wrestling Piotr by the neck down to his knees. He covered both with his body and held on tight, as the dust devil washed over them. The miniature gale threatened to tear them apart and tested his firm grip, but their combined mass and the heft of the horse saved them from being tossed like a top.

Whirling dusty columns dissipated and Kiefer spared a glance for Sudo, hoping she had mimicked his actions to stay down. But the Chronicler was nowhere to be found.

A terrified yelp came next, not from the side, but from above as Kiefer looked up to see the Chronicler's cape flapping wildly as she pinwheeled in the air. The packed sand and dirt offered no cushion as she landed with a thud and a sickening crack. Pain seared across her arm and shoulder as her vocoder accidentally switched on...