

Introduction

Character Creation

The PCs are members of the the 19th Imperial Legion - technically the Third Imperial Auxiliary, Regular Division. They are are one of 500 soldiers divided into four companies of 120. The four companies are:

1st Company: 120 heavy infantry - lorica segmenta armour, heavy crossbow and longsword.

2nd Company: 120 heavy infantry - lorica segmenta armour and shield, spear, pilia (javelins) and drusus (short sword).

3rd Company: 120 archers - studded leather armour, longbow and longsword.

4th Company: 120 skirmishers - studded leather armour and shield, spear and longsword.

In addition t being standard Strators (Privates), the PCs may also be Pentarchs (1 in 10) and take the Warlord class. The players may use whatever class and skills they wish to approximate their soldier.

The Local Situation as the PCs Know It

The division is led by Vicarius Kescius Rumarius, a well known boot licker to Strategos Metrius. Normally they are camped out at the edge of the jungle just outside of Horse tribe territory with regular patrols pushing into the jungle. No cavalry, lots of archers and heavy infantry - the division is designed to hold off attacks until reinforcements can arrive. Morale tends to be fairly low, as Vicarius Rumarius frequently avoids any sort of confrontation no matter what their advantage is. The division hasn't seen actual full-on combat for months, and the Horse tribe has practically been on a rampage.

Raven Scarp itself is officially ruled by Cullius Copanius, the Emperor's installed governor. However, it is run by Strategos Galius Metrius for all practical purposes. Neither one is well liked - Copanius is ruled by his lust for power and Metrius by his lust for wealth. Both are corrupt. If it weren't that the local tribes kept everyone on their toes, those two would probably cause just as many deaths in peacetime.

Getting to Know the PCs

Before the action begins, play out the PCs and some other soldiers idling in camp. This is a good time to introduce any other future survivors that the PCs can rely on.

Orders

The Third Regulars have been roused from their camp - word has arrived that a large force of Horse tribe warriors are advancing on Blackfeather, a Thyatin dominated village in Raven tribe territory on the border of the Wolf tribe lands. The attacking force is large, well over two thousand tribesmen, and is a just over a day away at this point. The village is being evacuated. Additional divisions will be a day late - the Third Regulars are to hold the attack so that the village can be evacuated, preferably until reinforcement can arrive.

This seems somewhat odd to many of the soldiers, as their division should be able to handle two thousand Hinterlanders with ease. There is a good deal of nervousness, as the Vicarius hesitates at the orders and is seen being chastised by the Legatarius for indecision.

Fallout

The villagers are massacred and PCs are eventually rescued by the reinforcing division. They will be recuperating for a few weeks - for some reason clerics are forbidden from healing them and they are getting dire looks. The impression that they get is that someone important was in that village.

Three weeks later they are hauled before a martial court along with a handful of other survivors. Apparently the Emperor's grandson was in Blackfeather investigating a potential uprising among the Raven tribe, but that isn't officially mentioned. The survivors are declared guilty of cowardice for not fleeing from a mere two thousand tribesmen. They are not allowed to speak. As punishment, they are stripped of their citizenship and sent to fight in the games as noxii - those who are to die for entertainment. In addition, they each have magical yellow stripes painted down their backs that shows through any clothing that they wear.

Only a handful of the disgraced soldiers actually end up in the games. Many are sold as common slaves by the Strategos, a few favorites disappear completely. The PCs, however, find themselves sent to the Pit in Raven Scarp...

Death in the Pit?

The day after their sentencing, the PCs are sent to their deaths in the arena. In Raven Scarp, the arena is known as "the Pit", as is small and really is little more than a rocky pit. Since most of the citizens of Raven Scarp are civilized Hinterlanders, they have little desire to see their own people executed for amusement so the local garrison maintains the Pit their own entertainment and for other visiting Thyatians.

The PCs are equipped with leather armor and given clubs to defend themselves with. Their opponents are a pair of bandits who have also been sentenced to death...

A Reprieve

The PCs probably look good in the arena and the corrupt Strategos is convinced to sell them to a local school, Manaeus. The school is owned by Voicius Manaeus and is still considered Sacrificium, but he has dreams and he intends to collect up as many of the surviving Third

Imperials as he can in order to build up the school. The PCs are introduced to the rest of the school, most notably Karlag, the half-orc trainer. This would also be where they reunite with any fellow soldiers that they may care about. Karlag knows about fighting in the arena and little else, but he's not stupid and is actually a pretty straight edge guy who encourages gladiators to avoid the "next day me be your last" attitude: "That only ensures that it will be."

Assassination and Freedom?

That night, the school is attacked by assassins. The PCs and their friends can fight off four themselves before having to flee the burning building. Only they and Karlag survive.

The next day they are brought before Cullius Copanius who has been looking over Manaesus' will. It turns out that he left everything to Karlag - Cullius is most displeased but he can't do anything about it. He doesn't seem to be in any hurry to find out who was behind this.

The next few days reveal that Manaesus had more debt than wealth and that he was in deep with the Kingdom of Thieves. They had sent their final warning and this was their retribution for not paying. Karlag is left with nothing but the survivors, a burnt out building and 400 Luciens.

He lets the PCs know that they can have their freedom if they choose, but the marks on their backs will relegate them to be treated like slaves anyways. The Emperor is an old gladiator, perhaps if they can earn fame and fortune in the games he will relent and undo their curse. He promises to treat them as equals - in fact, he knows little about business and would be willing to split even with them on the school.