



WEIRD WAR I

IN VINO VERITAS



PINNACLE
ENTERTAINMENT GROUP



WEIRD WAR ONE

In Vino Veritas

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Chapter Three: In Vino Veritas

Suggested Sequence of Events

No. of Sessions	Adventure
1	Part One: The Fire Below
2–3	<i>Mission Generator</i>
1	Part Two: What Lurks Beneath
2–3	<i>Mission Generator</i>
1	Part Three: No Easy Duty
3–4	<i>Mission Generator</i>
1	Part Four: Those Who Don't Know History Are Doomed
2–3	<i>Mission Generator</i>
1	Part Five: Bones of a Saint
1	Part Six: Grapes of Wrath

Ancient History

In the early Eighth Century, as Christianity gained prominence among those civilizations rising from the ashes of the Roman Empire, a group of pagans struck a blow for the old gods. A cult of Bacchus established in the settlement of Vicus Leudicus summoned the god's avatar—in his aspect of ritual madness and chaos—in the hopes of disrupting and discrediting the growing Christian church.

In 705 AD, Saint Lambert came to the area that would one day become Liege. His mission was to suppress this pagan cult and convert the locals back to Christianity. He was successful and imprisoned the avatar below the city, but the cost was his own life.

Now, hundreds of years later, war has come to Liege. The resultant battle frees the dreaming god, who uses the chaos of war and the German occupation to make up for lost time. The landsers must deal with this supernatural being before both the native Belgians and their own occupying forces succumb to Bacchus' deadly and blood-hungry insanity.

In Vino Veritas is a Plot Point Campaign for *Weird War I* from a different point of view—that of the Germans. It bears repeating what was said in the core rules—World War I is not World War II. The Germans are the aggressors, but they are not Nazis. Bear this in mind as you and your group try a campaign from a very different viewpoint.

As German infantrymen, or *landsers*, the heroes are at the very tip of the spear wielded by Imperial Germany—aimed at the heart of their longtime enemy, France. Unfortunately for the people of Belgium, that spear strikes through their tiny country on its way to its ultimate goal.

Germany's strategy to deal a knockout blow in the West hinges on the Schlieffen Plan. Key to this plan is a sweeping movement through neutral Belgium across the undefended French northern frontier. Being the meticulous planners they are, the Prussian General Staff accounted for every contingency, from a siege train of heavy artillery to smash the Belgian system of forts to detailed timetables of troop and supply movements to keep their armies moving faster than their enemies can react.

One thing they couldn't plan for, however, was an ancient being that would be released by the fury of combat, and its effects on the German war effort.

Running the Campaign

The following table shows a suggested order of events, beginning with the campaign's first episode and ending with the finale. The sessions in between the Plot Points can be filled with operations developed with the **Mission Generator**, the War Master's own tales, or other prewritten adventures. This gives the War Master a ready-made campaign that can be run with a minimum of preparation over a number of sessions with varying numbers of characters (and even players if need be).

A German squad enjoys a few fleeting moments of peace, 1915.



Part One: The Fire Below

The campaign begins several days into what will eventually become known as World War One. The player characters are regular army landsers of the 14th Infantry Brigade. All have been in the Imperial German army for at least a year, if not more, and should know each other quite well by now. One of the heroes should be the Leutnant of the platoon, or the Sergeant. Their company commander is Hauptmann Plotz, a fair but stern man with some colonial experience.

Their unit is assigned to Task Force Emmich, a specially assembled force of infantry and cavalry units tasked with the capture of the city of Liege. The heroes' battalion is held in reserve while the other units in their brigade battle past the outlying forts and into the city, which gives them a chance to see the fury of battle from the (comparative) safety of the rear.

On August 7, 1914, the heroes' platoon moves forward against the flow of stretcher bearers and their piteous burdens streaming toward the rear as the fight moves into the city. Rumors of furious combat are constant as the battle degenerates into a series of skirmishes on city streets and in alleyways.

As the fighting progresses, the platoon is pinned down by a series of machine gun nests. Hauptmann Plotz motions for the player characters to move on around while the rest of the company deals with the emplacements.

Now on their own, the heroes see a disturbing sight at the next intersection. A group of Belgians have killed two German soldiers and are furiously bayoneting the corpses. The Belgians are clearly mad with bloodlust, and attack with reckless abandon as soon as they spy fresh combatants.

As the fight progresses, the Germans note the Belgians don't communicate—though they do scream war cries and simple phrases such as "Die! Die! Die!" The unfortunate defenders have already been affected by the madness of Bacchus (see page 8).

- **Belgian Infantry (2 per hero):** Use Belgian Infantryman in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. They are armed with Lebel rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1) and have the Madness of Bacchus (see page 8).

The Citadel

After the strange and savage fight, the player characters hear their comrades cheering a few streets over. They rush to join them and find the Germans have reached the lynchpin of the Belgian

defenses—the Citadel. Hauptmann Plotz sees the familiar faces and hurriedly ushers the heroes into the fortification.

The Citadel is an ancient fortification originally built in 1663 and rebuilt many times since. As the heroes arrive, other German units have already forced an entry. Bloody, burned, and soot-covered breaching engineers frantically wave the infantry on into the dark smoke-filled tunnels, handing each of them a grenade from their supplies as the reinforcements pass.

Battle rages in the confined tunnels and rooms of the Citadel against small groups of Belgian infantry and officers trying to make the invaders pay dearly for every room and corridor. The Belgians are as aggressive as those encountered in the street above. Many even rush madly from cover to attack in hand-to-hand combat—and die horribly as waiting attackers gun them down.

Down the Rabbit Hole

The heroes witness several such events, and can join in if desired. After the smoke clears from one, Hauptmann Plotz emerges and points them toward an iron door down a side stairwell.

"We've got these croissant-eaters on the run! I need you men to head down this stairway and clear out whatever you find.

"If you find the magazine, make sure one of these fanatics doesn't blow up their own ammo and take all of us to hell!"

The flight of stairs is wide enough for two men to go abreast, and descends 30 feet down into gray darkness. Those who make a Notice roll see that the stonework changes subtly from modern construction to rough stonework, and the stairs themselves change from concrete to cut stone blocks, eventually changing to flagstones.

The lighting is dim, with just a few bare bulbs strung erratically along the walls and inside rooms. The squad finds no more Belgians in the next few rooms and corridors, though they do find outdated ammunition stocks, shells, barrels of gunpowder, and even cannonballs in the many rooms they pass. The stalactites on the ceilings and crystalline deposits on the walls attest to the age of these chambers.

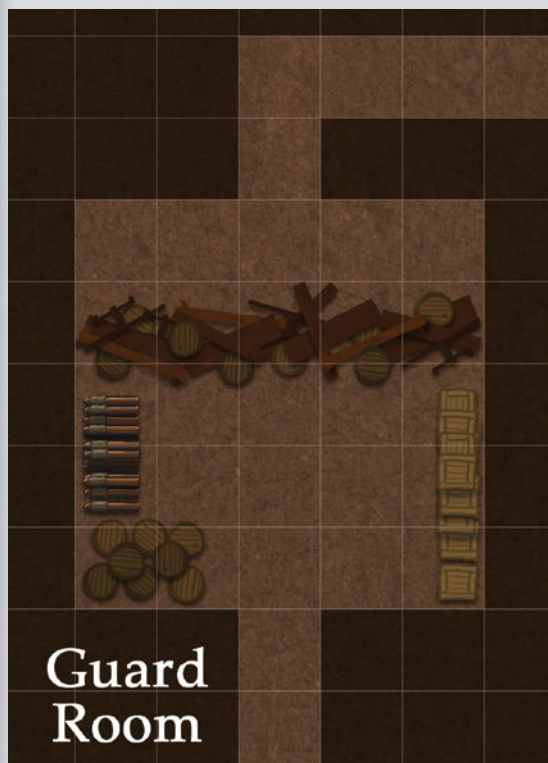
Deeper and deeper into the sublevel, the soldiers finally hear Belgian voices whispering from around a corner. Anyone who speaks French hears them say something about waiting for orders and "hiding the cross."

These are the troops who freed Bacchus and set him loose on Liege several weeks ago. Since they

possess St. Lambert's cross and frequently share it among their group (see the **Cross of St. Lambert** sidebar on page 7), they are not affected by Bacchus' madness.

Unfortunately for the Belgians, they holed up in a room used for temporarily storing unexploded ordnance! Well aware of this danger, the defenders frantically attempt to throw back any grenades the Germans toss in the room (an Agility roll at -4).

- **Belgian Infantry (3+1 per hero):** Use statistics for Seasoned Belgian Infantryman in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*, armed with Lebel rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1).



Collapse!

If any grenades explode in the room (or a similar event occurs), a massive explosion rocks the level. (If no one throws a grenade, a stray shot triggers one of the unexploded shells instead—it's critical to the campaign that the detonation occur so make sure it happens somehow).

The explosion stuns everyone on both sides and sends them tumbling down into another chamber 20 feet below. Each hero must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from the fall.

When the smoke clears, the Belgian defenders are scattered about, dead. More intriguing, one wall of the cave is filled with ancient stonework covered in symbols. A Knowledge (Occult) roll reveals them

to be ancient Christian symbols, while a raise notes they are wards of protection and containment.

The wall has crumbled partially and a small empty chamber can be spied beyond. Just above the hole in the wall is the empty indentation of a three foot tall cross. Clearly one was once embedded in the masonry. A little light and a close examination finds scrape marks around the hole (from the bayonet that pried it out) and flecks of gold!

The cross once mounted here was indeed gold—Saint Lambert blessed the artifact and used it to seal Bacchus in the six-foot diameter chamber beyond. See the **Cross of St. Lambert** on page 7.

The Belgian soldiers lying dead in the rubble were the ones who found the room and pried the cross from the wall, freeing the ancient being beyond to wreak his havoc once again. The thieves heard only a strange, hearty laugh and a whoosh of air—they know nothing of Bacchus—but did note in the weeks that followed how their fellows became murderously quick to anger. One of them surmised it was their actions that caused the event, but he now lies dead in the rubble.

A search of the bodies discovers this relic—a two foot tall cross of gold barely concealed in his pack! Clearly, the artifact is incredibly valuable.

Onward and Upward

The sub-cavern continues on in only one direction. A Common Knowledge roll reveals the passageway is easily hundreds of years old. Following it eventually opens into a sub-basement of Liege Cathedral, the door hidden by old crates and barrels.

As the team exits, they hear German voices above. One of their fellows gives them the good news—the Citadel has fallen! Officers direct everyone out of the fortress and into the general fight.

If the soldiers report what they found to Hauptmann Plotz, he takes the cross, writes down the report with some suspicion, and doesn't mention it again.

On to France!

The following weeks are spent fighting a fast-paced series of battles against a series of Allied roadblocks or hastily constructed defensive lines, punctuated by occasional counterattacks by British or French troops, which briefly throw the Germans on the defensive. Once the counterattacks are defeated and the Allies melt away, it's time for the landsers to shoulder their packs and resume the seemingly endless march into France.

Over the next few weeks, the War Master should run his own adventures or generate random

missions. This early in the war, airplanes are basically nonexistent, so ignore any results that involve aircraft (although the Belgians do manage to shoot down a Zeppelin that makes a bombing raid on Liege). Trench warfare hasn't begun either, so any results indicating trenches are instead hastily dug foxholes, a defensive line behind a railroad embankment or terrain feature, or a large and sturdy building or complex such as a factory or university campus.

Guerrilla Warfare

As the invaders fight across Belgium and over the border of France, supplies run low and deliveries of munitions to the front are erratic. The rumor mill reports that German supply lines running through Belgium are under attack by *franc tireurs*, locals who have taken up arms against the invaders.

These shortages can manifest in a number of ways, from a lack of grenades on the attack to troops suffering a Fatigue level due to short rations. New soldiers assigned to the squad bring with them tales of troop trains under sniper attack and bridges and roads blown up by insurgents. Officers in earshot reprimand any troops spreading such tales for their defeatist attitude.

Part Two: What Lurks Beneath

As the war enters its second month and the Germans approach Paris, the Allies launch a major counterattack on the Kaiser's overstretched forces. The German First and Second Armies continue on diverging courses, allowing a gap to open between them. The French exploit the gap by amassing a large force in front of the capital. British forces, once intent on retreating to the coast, are ordered forward into the attack.

The heroes' unit finds itself in the vicinity of the St. Gond marshes during the night of 8 September when the Allied counterattack kicks off, catching the German forces are caught by surprise.

Mass Battle Specifications

In the ensuing Mass Battle, the French have 10 tokens and the Germans have 8 due to losses in men and equipment from the previous month of combat. The Germans need to hold off the Frenchmen and keep their line intact.

The French commander has Knowledge (Battle) d8, the Cry Havoc! and Death Before Dishonor Edges, and Spirit d6. The German commander has Knowledge (Battle) d10 and the Art of War Edge with a Spirit d8.

CROSS OF ST. LAMBERT

This cross was embedded in the wall of this cavern in 705 AD by St. Lambert's followers as part of the supernatural prison for the avatar of Bacchus.

The two-foot-tall, solid gold cross weighs 20 pounds, and fits with difficulty into a soldier's marching pack. Unlike normal gold, the cross is as tough as steel, and can be wielded as a club for Str+d8 damage.

The owner of the cross and everyone within 10 feet of it are immune to Bacchus' madness. They also gain the Champion Edge, but are plagued by bad dreams of blood orgies, rivers of wine, and human sacrifice. Each hero so affected loses a Benny at the start of each game session.

Attempting to sell the cross for a reasonable fee is impossible in the middle of war, and no mail services exist to send it home. The soldiers must keep the relic, hide it somewhere, or hand it over to Major Hauptmann (or perhaps their unit's chaplain—who then gives it to Major Hauptmann). Fortunately for everyone, if it winds up in Hauptmann's hands, he holds on to it for a while.

The

French add +3 to their first roll to account for the nighttime surprise attack and artillery bombardment. The Germans suffer -2 to their first roll due to the swampy terrain and the excellent aerial reconnaissance the French performed on the German positions prior to the attack.

Each round of Mass Battle lasts a day. At the end of the first day, as the sun sinks in the west, the black water of the stinking peat bogs begins to stir. The mummified bodies of ancient sacrificial victims crawl out of their watery graves, seeking vengeance on the living.

The heroes' squad has dug in for the night in the few bits of dry land they can find in the marshes and peat bogs after fighting all day against overwhelming French forces. Once they get settled in, Major Hauptmann sends the player characters to the rear kitchen wagons for evening chow. The soldiers wind their way through the narrow trails and see black hands reach from the murk!

- **Bog Men of St. Gond (2 per hero):** See the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*.

Aftermath

Once the heroes fight off the swampy undead, the rest of the night passes uneventfully. The Mass Battle continues the next day. Whether the Germans win or lose in this sector, the Allied counterattacks

THE MADNESS OF BACCHUS

Bacchus, in the body of Dennis from the Pinecone Inn, spreads madness and chaos across the city of Liege.

Anyone who spends two weeks in the area becomes imbued with his aura, causing an unreasoning anger toward anyone considered an enemy. The franc tireurs show no mercy toward their occupiers, and undertake an unprecedented number of bombings, assassinations, and attacks against supply lines, rear area personnel, and garrisons—all without mercy.

The Germans are also affected, causing the soldiers to loot, pillage, and plunder, as well as kill civilians in reprisals. The High Command, headquartered in Liege, is also affected, and authorizes terrible retaliations for each German killed.

Anyone in combat in Liege or within 10 miles of the city's limits must make a Spirit roll or succumb to this madness each time they enter combat. If they have frequented The Pinecone Staff tavern, this roll is at -2. All who fail gain the Bloodthirsty Hindrance and the Hearty Monstrous Ability.

Anyone in possession of St. Lambert's Cross is immune to the effects of Bacchus' madness, as are his closest companions (any Wild Cards in the squad).

causes the German armies to fall back to defensible positions. Paris is safe for the moment.

Generate random missions for the next two or three sessions. After the heroes' platoon has fought and bled their way into France they should be Seasoned. Summer then turns to fall and their brigade receives the welcome news that they are to rotate back to Belgium for occupation duty.

Part Three: No Easy Duty

The 14th Infantry Brigade heads back to Belgium in mid-September. The unit is headquartered in Liege, and charged with patrolling the city and surrounding countryside, keeping order among the locals and the supply lines to the front open.

The unit is given several days off to rest and recuperate. If they ask around, troops of the garrison recommend The Pinecone Staff as a good place to relax.

The Pinecone Staff is a large tavern identified by a sign showing a staff topped with a pinecone and tied with a ribbon. Inside the troops find a raucous atmosphere with both Belgian civilians and German troops enjoying themselves, all overseen by a portly, bearded Greek ex-pat named Agrios.

Agrios employs a staff of several lovely women and a young man named Dennis. By unspoken consent, The Pinecone Staff is a neutral ground where both Germans and franc tireurs can relax and engage in espionage with their foe. The beer is good, the wine better, and the women who frequent the establishment are willing to provide companionship to lonely German soldiers for luxuries like chocolate or ration packs.

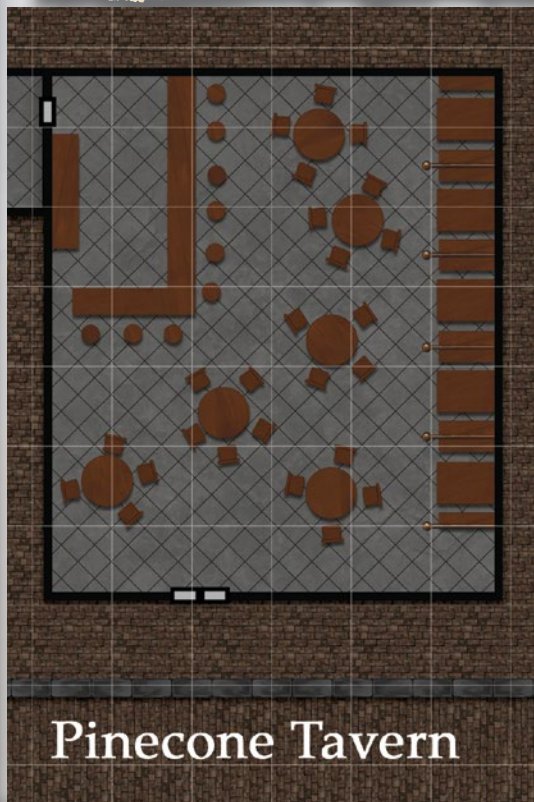
The Bridge

Once the soldiers have a few days to rest, the full squad is called to headquarters for a mission briefing by Hauptmann Plotz.

"Our sources think the rebels are planning to mine a bridge tonight. These bastards always seem to know when our supply trains are coming through, and a big one is on its way to the front tomorrow morning."

"Head out after dark, take up position by the water's edge, and give them a taste of German steel when they show up. And if you can take any prisoners, that's just icing on the strudel."

The bridge is on the outskirts of the city about an hour away from the soldiers' barracks. It crosses the river in a wooded area that still shows signs of the battle fought here several weeks ago. The night is moonless and still. How the squad sets



up the ambush is up to them, but around midnight the weird wars intrude upon their vigil.

Unbeknownst to the troops, the woods are the site of a hasty grave into which the Germans dumped the bodies of a platoon of Belgians. Their shame at failing to stop their hated enemies has brought them back to an unholy semblance of life. Shortly after the soldiers settle in, those who make Notice rolls hear movement in the woods. Failure to do so allows the 'glom to attack with surprise.

✱ **'Glom (1):** This horror consists of five bodies, increasing its Strength and Vigor by three and making it Size +4. It has no weapons other than its claws. See the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*.

Enter the Franc Tireurs

An hour after the unit has dealt with the 'glom the franc tireur saboteurs arrive. Dressed in dark clothing and moving stealthily, they attempt to plant their charges on the bridge abutments. They fight to the death.

- **Franc Tireurs (15):** Use Belgian Infantryman in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*, with Stealth d8, the Madness of Bacchus, and armed with a mix of double barreled shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1-2), Lebel rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1), and pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1). Two carry bundles of five sticks of dynamite with simple timers.

Interrogations

Any franc tireurs captured by the Germans can be interrogated by the heroes or turned over to military intelligence. Talking to the Belgians reveals them to be irrationally hostile, almost rabidly so. They begin at Hostile, and any Persuasion rolls suffer a -2 penalty due to their extreme hatred of their captors.

If the prisoner's reaction is changed to friendly or better, they do let slip that a shadowy figure called "Eleutherios" is behind the franc tireurs attacks. Anyone with

or history background who makes a successful Common Knowledge roll knows the name means "the liberator" in Greek.

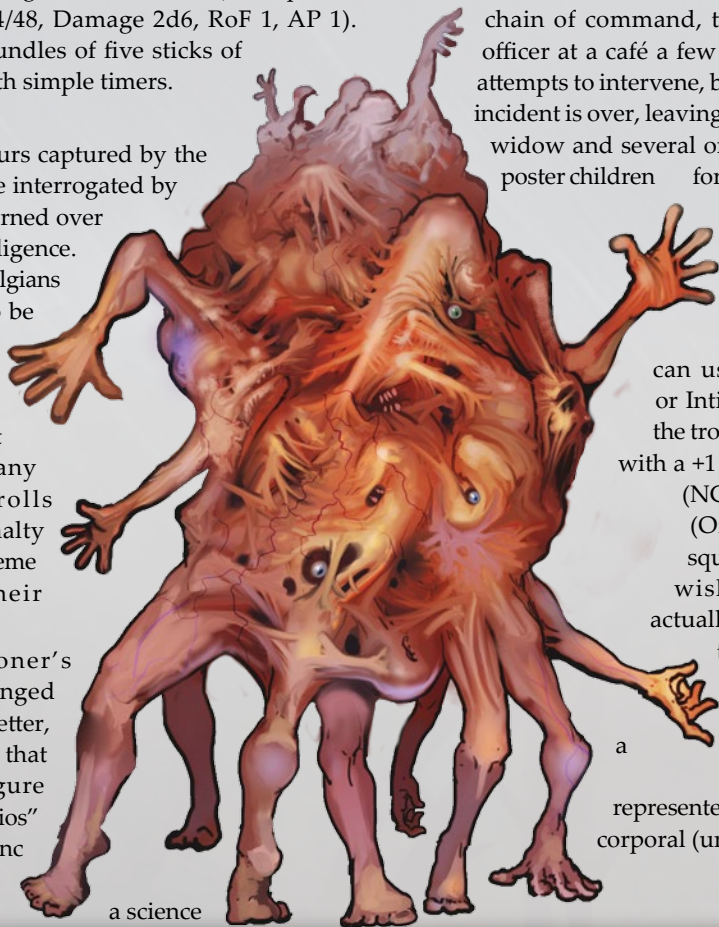
Rock and a Hard Place

During a routine patrol of Liege the squad is alerted to trouble by the sound of shattering glass and screams around the corner of the block. At the scene, they see a rowhouse with a broken door. A shot rings out from inside as they approach, followed by shouts in German and French. If the heroes enter the house, they find a German squad under the influence of Bacchus' madness within.

A male civilian lies dead in the living room. The soldiers present are busy smashing furniture, searching through drawers and cabinets, stuffing their breadbags with anything of value, and generally looting the house. One member watches over a group of crying children. A woman's scream from a back room alerts the heroes to the fact that a crime is in progress. If the squad checks, they find a pair of soldiers assaulting a Belgian woman. Clearly, these troops are out of control and committing war crimes.

How the squad handles this encounter is up to them. If the heroes think to kick it up the chain of command, they find a senior officer at a café a few blocks away who attempts to intervene, but by that time the incident is over, leaving behind an abused widow and several orphans who act as poster children for German atrocities.

Trying to talk the crazed soldiers down is a Social Conflict. The lead negotiator can use his Persuasion or Intimidation to bring the troops to their senses, with a +1 modifier for Rank (NCO) or +2 for Rank (Officer). Any other squad members who wish to contribute actually take away from the spokesman's military authority, giving -1 modifier. The plunderers are represented by a bloodthirsty corporal (unteroffizier).



a science

At the end of the debate, if the heroes win with at least two successes, the looters come to their senses and stop what they're doing. If the player characters can't outtalk the corporal, the madmen continue smashing up the house and eventually set it on fire.

The squad can also take up arms against the soldiers. The new foes fight back with a maniacal ferocity until all are Incapacitated.

- **German Infantry (10):** Use German Infantryman from *Weird War One Player's Guide*. They are armed with Gewehr 98 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 2) with attached bayonets (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1) and have the Madness of Bacchus.
- **German Corporal (1):** As above, but add Intimidation d8. He is armed with a Luger PO8 pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6-1, RoF 1), and has the Madness of Bacchus.

After the Riot

Heroes who stop the looters bring a small measure of goodwill from the local populace, and word spreads about their heroics. Belgians who frequent The Pinecone Staff offer to buy them drinks, but this act of German valor is lost in an increasingly turbulent sea of misdeeds and does nothing to change the downward-spiraling strategic information situation.

Fury

After their defeat of the looters, the warriors' unit spends the next few weeks on anti-partisan patrols in and around Liege. The War Master should generate adventures using the Mission Generator, but enemies are always Belgian civilians. They use the Belgian Infantrymen statistics (see the *Weird War*

I Player's Guide) and are armed mostly with civilian hunting rifles, pistols, and homemade explosives like gasoline bombs, although a few have weapons and grenades scavenged from other Germans they have ambushed. Most are affected by Bacchus—they have the Bloodthirsty Hindrance and fight to the last man and woman.

More worrying, word begins to spread through the barracks of the ferocity of the franc tireurs. They take no prisoners and don't surrender, and prisoners are only taken when a partisan is knocked out and can't out up a fight.

Soon, word comes down from the German command of harsh penalties being imposed on the local population. Missions involving assault, counterattack, and trench raids become reprisals, involving the heroes rounding up locals and taking them into custody where they are held hostage. This may cause some morale quandaries for the squad, since in most cases these are innocents caught up in the smoldering rebellion.

After two of these missions, a German allied Extra goes berserk, attacking an unarmed civilian or a wounded franc tireur. If there are no Extras, one of the heroes must make a Spirit roll (if they frequent The Pinecone Staff tavern this roll is at -2) or be overcome with an inexplicable fury toward the Belgians that can only be quenched by the bloodshed of their enemies.

Once this happens, each hero on the following missions must check to see if they are affected by Bacchus' madness when they encounter enemy civilians. Back in the barracks, stories begin to spread about troops pillaging and plundering.

Deadly reprisals grow more common as the madness of war spreads.



Part Four: Those Who Don't Know History Are Doomed

Once the heroes' squad has conducted several missions against the franc tireurs and September fades into October, they are called into the opulent hotel that houses the German High Command. Once inside, Major Hans Gottlieb introduces himself and escorts the soldiers into a drawing room. There sits a distinguished looking gentleman in well-tailored civilian clothes. The Major is assigned to the newly organized *Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen* (Department of Special Weapons and Troop Development), a fact he keeps from the soldiers. He knows the group's background, having studied their files, and gets right to the point.

"Something odd is happening here in Belgium, something we can't afford. If you haven't heard through the grapevine, the war isn't going as planned. The damn British fought harder than we anticipated, and the front line is grinding up formations and gobbling up supplies at a prodigious rate. The supply lines through this country are vital to the war effort, and these constant attacks are creating disruptions all out of proportion to their size."

"Some sort of mania seems to have taken hold of the locals, and now our own troops are getting out of control in their actions toward the civilian population. Professor Lukas Vandenbosch teaches ancient history at the University of Liege. Please tell us what you saw during the attack on the Citadel."

As the heroes relate the tale of their final battle under the Citadel and what they saw after the collapse, Professor Vandenbosch nods along and says in excellent German:

"I had petitioned the military for years to search through the sub-levels of the fortress. Ancient manuscripts speak of an early Christian shrine from a time when the region was gripped in a madness similar to what we find ourselves in during these troubled times."

If they reveal that they followed the tunnel to its exit under the Liege Cathedral, Vandenbosch jumps to his feet excitedly.

"To think there is a link between this ancient subterranean site you found and the Cathedral is mind-boggling."

If the heroes took the cross from the wall and admit it, the professor becomes apoplectic.

"You fools! That was an ancient relic worth more to academia than any amount you could have gotten for it from some battlefield moneylender!"

If the heroes still have the cross and show it to the Professor he staggers back and collapses into his armchair. If Hauptmann Plotz has it, he's present and pulls the cross from a satchel.

"My god! This is the cross of St. Lambert himself, or a very good imitation. It was supposedly lost when he was killed—stolen by the thugs who murdered him. Could the cave you found house the remains of the Saint and not the crypt in the Cathedral purported to hold his body?"

The unit's tale, combined with things Professor Vandenbosch has told him prior to the soldiers' arrival, convinces Major Gottlieb that further investigation is warranted. He turns to the squad.

"I'm assigning you to this headquarters, reporting directly to me as of this time. You are to accompany the professor to this cavern you found. Once he inspects the area and finds the cause of these problems, take appropriate action."

Even though it is getting dark outside, the Professor insists on heading to the Citadel immediately.

✱ Professor Lukas Vandenbosch

This bespectacled man, with his trim beard, gray hair, and tweed suit, looks like a stereotypical professor. After an encounter with a ghostly spirit while serving as an officer of the Force Publique in the Congo Free State in 1890, the professor dedicated his life to studying the supernatural, much to the dismay of his colleagues. This calling led him to the attention of the Sons of Solomon, who inducted him into their order upon his return to Belgium. Now he believes that something moves in the war's darkness and he is willing to work with Germans to see the task accomplished. Per German directives, as a Belgian civilian he doesn't carry a weapon, but gladly takes a pistol if offered.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Investigation d10, Knowledge (German) d8, Knowledge (History) d10, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Eyes, Curious, Quirk (Atheist)

Edges: Scholar (History and Occult)

Gear: Walking stick, pocket watch, miner's lamp.

Jailhouse Rock

Now that Bacchus has established himself in Liege and begun to spread his special form of chaos through the region, it occurred to him that some meddling mortal might find a way to thwart his plans. To this end, the god sent some of his most fanatic adherents to his prison to erase all trace of his presence. Unfortunately for him, the heroes head there at the same time.

As the unit heads to the Citadel, Professor Vandenbosch answers any questions the heroes may have. He is a specialist in the life of St. Lambert, and doesn't believe the official story of his murder at the hands of a rival family. The professor's studies revealed that a similar madness plagued the region until the death of the saint, and feels there is some sort of link between the two events. An avowed atheist, the scholar is not above believing that Lambert had something to do with the event, especially after finding out the Cathedral is connected to this cavern.

The Citadel sits dark and silent, abandoned after the Germans conquered it. The investigators have to find some sort of light source before entering, then, with some effort, they can retrace their footsteps into the sublevels.

As the troops approach the site of the cave-in, a Notice roll reveals a faint flicker of light down the tunnel as well as the faint clink of metal on stone. If the heroes attempt to move stealthily, the cultists in the cavern are Inactive guards and at -2 to their Notice rolls due to the noise of their labors.

The Cult of Bacchus

In the cavern, a number of cultists of Bacchus are busily at work with picks and hammers, working to obliterate any trace of the various sigils and occult engravings that identify this area as a supernatural prison. Most of the cultists are out of sight beyond the rough masonry wall the soldiers saw weeks ago. When confronted, the fanatics fight until 75% of their number are Incapacitated before fleeing down the tunnel to the Cathedral. If the soldiers decide to not fight the cultists but merely observe them, the fanatics spend 30 minutes defacing the crypt, then head down the tunnel where they scatter and head back to their homes.

- **Cultists of Bacchus (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Cultist stats from the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*. They are armed with double barreled shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1-2), Lebel rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1), and pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1), picks (Str+d6), and the Madness of Bacchus.



THYRSUS OF BACCHUS

The symbol of Bacchus is a thyrsus, a fennel staff topped by a pinecone and wrapped with a ribbon. Leaders of Bacchus' cult are awarded with a lesser thyrsus for faithful service and as a symbol of authority.

A staff has 6 Power Points which can be used to cast *entangle*, spurting out a gout of thick, clinging honey at its targets. It is also a potent melee weapon, doing Str+d8, AP 2.

Bacchus' original thyrsus was lost when he was defeated by St. Lambert in 705 AD. In human hands it exhibits no overt magical abilities, but does exert a gentle tug toward the location of Bacchus. This location ability is a very generalized and doesn't point directly to the god.

Bacchus' thyrsus can also be used as a weapon against the otherwise invulnerable being, striking him as though he were a mortal.

- **Cult Leader:** Use Cult Leader from the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*. He has 20 Power Points and the powers *blind*, *boost/lower Trait*, *confusion*, and *havoc*. He is armed with a lesser thyrsus (see sidebar) and has the Madness of Bacchus.

Deciphering the Symbols

Once the cultists are dispatched, the area can be searched. Professor Vandenbosch is beside himself at the destruction the cultists caused to the ancient symbols. He spends at least 30 minutes examining the area, wailing all the while about the wanton damage and priceless loss.

Anyone searching the bodies finds a matchbook in one cultist's pocket from the Pinecone Staff tavern. Those with a religious background or Knowledge (Occult) can attempt to decipher the mosaics and symbols on the walls with a -2 due to the destruction caused by the cultists. Success determines St. Lambert was involved with what happened here. A raise reveals some sort of being associated with wine and madness was imprisoned within the small chamber beyond the sigiled wall.

Once the heroes and Professor Vandenbosch finish searching Bacchus' prison they can return to Major Gottlieb and report their findings. The officer listens to their report, congratulates them on their success or chides them for their failure, and warns them to keep quiet about any strange things they may have seen.

Part Five: Bones of a Saint

Following their encounter below the Citadel, the squad returns to policing the environs of Liege. If any of the more academically inclined soldiers want to research the things they found in the crypt, several options are available. The University of Liege has an extensive library, while the Cathedral has records dating back to 700 AD.

If none of the troops are inclined to do research, they are approached by the professor a week later. He requests the soldiers escort him while he performs his investigation. Unfortunately, word has spread of his expedition to the Citadel with the Germans, and his life is now at risk from the franc tireurs as a collaborator. If they agree, he heads to the university or the cathedral.

Investigation rolls reveal the following general information:

University

- **Failure:** The squad runs into a group of student anarchists armed with clubs and knives who ambush them among the book stacks. Use

Civilian (see the *Weird War I Player's Guide*) armed with clubs (Str+d6) and knives (Str+d4).

- **Success:** The current outbreak of violence is very similar to one that occurred in Liege in 705 AD and was attributed to a pagan cult.
- **Raise:** The outbreak in 705 AD was called the "Madness of Bacchus," and was linked to a cult of the ancient Roman god.

Cathedral

- **Failure:** The squad spends all day searching unsuccessfully for information and it's dark when they leave. As they pass a graveyard, they are attacked by a pack of ghouls (see the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*) equal to the number of characters in the squad.
- **Success:** St. Lambert was investigating an outbreak of madness and violence in the local population when he was killed in the area that is now the Citadel.
- **Raise:** St. Lambert was buried in the Cathedral with his possessions following the destruction of a pagan cult led by an avatar of Bacchus.

Desecration for a Good Cause

If the heroes decide to search the tomb of St. Lambert, the clergy of the Cathedral objects strenuously but ultimately the soldiers and their weapons (or German authority) prevail.

A Strength roll is needed to pry the lid off the sarcophagus. Inside the casket is a dusty skeleton dressed in once-fine clothing. What catches the eye, though, is a staff familiar to anyone who has frequented The Pinecone Staff tavern. A golden thyrsus is buried with St. Lambert's bones. This is Bacchus' thyrsus, and the only thing that can permanently banish the god from the mortal realm. The holy aura that permeates the saint's bones acts to repel anyone who would seek to desecrate the tomb. Soldiers who attempt to take the relic must make a Spirit roll or be repelled by the idea and unable to retrieve the staff.

Oddly, Professor Vandenbosch doesn't object if a soldier takes the artifact. If asked, he says "I believe you will have need of it. Such a thing attracts... attention."

The next day, Professor Vandenbosch invites the warriors to his office. When they arrive, he takes an antique wooden case from his desk and presents each champion with a polished stone disk on a leather thong.

"These talismans were old when Rome ruled these lands. Legionnaires who successfully dealt with strange and uncanny events were awarded these for their faithful and brave service. I think rather than gather dust in some museum case, they would

TWILIGHT TALISMANS

The medallions predate the Roman Republic. The symbol of the half-set sun represents the Twilight Legion—a secret sect within the Roman legions formed to fight the weirdness that accompanies war. Unknown to all but a few in the Twilight Legion, the secretive Sons of Solomon promoted the Legion's formation to fight their never ending war against the forces of darkness.

The medallions provide the following benefits to the wearer:

+2 to Fear tests versus supernatural creatures (but not scenes of gore or carnage)

+2 Toughness against attacks by supernatural creatures or arcane powers (this stacks with other Edges granting a similar bonus).

be better put to use by soldiers such as yourselves. While I surely don't agree with your government's conquest of my homeland, bravery such as yours transcends national boundaries or the short-lived conflicts of man. There are far greater, weirder wars than these petty squabbles over land and goods."

The medallions are Twilight Talismans—polished stones with a half-set sun carved into the surface (see sidebar). Somewhat warm to the touch, specks of blood are visible here and there on the stone's surface.

Now that the legionnaires know the origin of Liege's madness and have the thyrsus, the heroes should go looking for Bacchus.

Part Six: Grapes of Wrath

The Pinecone Staff tavern is the current abode of Bacchus. Agrios, the original owner and founder, is a portly, bearded Greek man in his 60s. Despite what the heroes may believe, he is a normal man who has owned the tavern for a decade. His young protégé, Dennis, however, is far from normal. He is Bacchus

incarnate, hiding in plain sight in the vessel of some unfortunate

soul who wandered near Liege while the god's spirit roamed. Dennis began working at the tavern shortly before the German conquest and appears to be of Belgian descent.

The building that houses the tavern has become a temple of Bacchus since the avatar's release. A shrine is hidden behind a false wall in the basement. A cadre of cultists can be found here at all hours of the day, engaging in the hedonistic rituals that give Bacchus his power.

Are You a God?

There are several ways the heroes can move to confront Bacchus. If the investigators determine the tavern is a location of interest due to the thyrsus on the sign or the matchbooks carried by the cultists, they can confront the owner.

If the squad is unable or unwilling to take independent action, Major Gottlieb orders them to investigate the tavern after a particularly vicious unauthorized German reprisal burns down a village outside Liege. The increasing incidents of out-of-control German troops finally reach the point that the *Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen* takes charge. The organization determines the Pinecone Staff to be connected to the resistance and sends the heroes in at the insistence of Professor Vandenbosch. In this case, due to their desire for a minimal amount of troops to be exposed to the supernatural, only the player characters are sent on this mission.

Agrios proclaims his innocence. If arrested and turned over to Major Gottlieb, he is tortured for information—unsuccessfully. The tavern owner dies under interrogation within a week. His death does not resolve the madness gripping the city.

If Dennis is arrested, he takes control of his interrogators once he is alone with them and escapes the city. He reestablishes himself in another city in Belgium, and German control over the country continues to remain tenuous.

If the heroes bring the thyrsus into the building, Bacchus flies into a rage, dropping his pretense of innocence and uses his Chaos Aura to send the patrons against the soldiers in an attempt to retrieve it. After two rounds into combat, cultists of Bacchus burst out of the basement entrance behind the bar and attack.

If Bacchus manages to defeat the heroes or gain possession of his thyrsus, he flees the tavern and the city.

✱ **Dennis/Bacchus:** See below.

✱ **Agrios:** Use Civilians from the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*. He is armed with a pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6-1, RoF 1, AP 1) and is *not* affected by the Madness of Bacchus.

- **Belgian Tavern Patrons (10):** Use Civilians from the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*. They are armed with improvised weapons (Str+d4) and suffer the Madness of Bacchus.
- **German Tavern Patrons (10):** Use German Infantryman stats from the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. They're armed with Gewehr 98 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 2) and bayonets (Str+d6), and suffer the Madness of Bacchus. At first, the Germans attack any civilians who attack the heroes. Once under Bacchus' influence they fight their fellow Germans.
- **Cultists of Bacchus (1 per hero):** Use Cultist from the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*, with the Madness of Bacchus and armed with pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1).
- ✱ **Cult Leader:** Use Cult Leader from the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*. He has 20 Power Points and the powers *blind*, *boost/lower Trait*, *confusion*, and *havoc*. He has the Madness of Bacchus and is armed with a lesser thyrsus (see sidebar on page 12).

✱ Avatar of Bacchus

Bacchus appears as a well-built young Belgian man with dark curly hair. He seems to always have a cup of wine nearby.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Chaos Aura:** Every other round, Bacchus can radiate an aura of chaos tinged with sensuality. This acts as the *puppet* power cast on any one target in sight or earshot.
- **Drunken Brawler:** Bacchus can turn anything found in a tavern into a thyrsus, which he wields against enemies of his cult for Str+d8.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, further Shaken results have no effect.
- **Invulnerability:** Immune to all non-magical attacks. He is affected by magical weapons including his thyrsus.
- **Weakness (Thyrsus):** Bacchus can only be permanently slain by his thyrsus.

Sobering Up

Failure to discover and destroy Bacchus results in increasing franc tireur attacks in and around Liege, which eventually expand into other cities as the god grows in power. This is matched by more German retributions and abuse of the population,

sending the country into an ever-increasing spiral of violence and misery. Movement of reinforcements and supplies through Belgium slows to a crawl, and more troops are pulled from the front line to suppress the revolt. Eventually both the New Dawn and Twilight Legion send agents into the country to suppress this weirdness. Bacchus is eventually hunted down and destroyed, but the damage is done.

If the squad succeeds in defeating the avatar of Bacchus, they have averted a major crisis for the Germans on the Western Front. While the madness fades from both the civilian populace and their German occupiers, the atrocities already committed on both sides inspire enough hatred to fuel a continuing series of attacks and reprisals that last until 1918, though at a much lower level than previously seen. The New Dawn uses this as a propaganda opportunity to sway public opinion against the Central Powers, especially Germany. The "Rape of Belgium" is promoted in the recruiting drives of Britain and France, providing more bodies for the furnace from which the Awakening will be forged.

If the heroes report they fought and defeated an ancient Greek god to their chain of command, they assume the troops are suffering from shell shock and have them committed to a sanatorium for several weeks for electroshock treatments, augmented by various chemical cocktails. Then they are returned to their unit for more anti-franc tireurs duties. If the heroes continue to spread wild tales of the supernatural, they are sent to one of the hottest sectors of the front that autumn: Ypres.

If Professor Vandenbosch survives he reports the events to his contacts in the Twilight Legion. This encourages the organization to strengthen their presence in the German army and provides a reason for the War Master to introduce the heroes to the shadowy society. The Legion typically use the soldiers on an "as needed" basis when weirdness appears on the battlefield.

Major Gottlieb of the *Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen* may also recruit the heroes upon the successful completion of their assignment. Transfer to AbtWESpezWA/Tr means the troops are pulled from their original units and become a quick reaction force used against the supernatural. While this ramps up the level of weirdness in the campaign, the heroes now have access to a variety of experimental weapons and equipment theoretically designed to deal with the creatures of folklore and myth.