

SHADOW OF LOCUST

Shadow of Locust is the first part of a trilogy spanning Emer. The players who involve themselves in the upcoming tumultuous time will, with many others, watch the Great Continent shift through an upheaval that will usher in either a new dark age, or a reprise of sorts, but one thing will not go away... where there is light there is shadow.

Shadow of Locust is set primarily in Hæstra and revolves around a slow build up of existing political ties that begin to strangle in preparation for the invasion that soon follows. Unknown enemies and once friends push the tension to breaking point, a prelude to the war. Diplomacy is where the real struggle evokes itself. War will eventually come and there is little the players can do to stop this, although they can involve themselves in whatever struggles that arise and break what ties there are, so as to better prepare Hæstra to survive the storm, or then again, they may only incite its arrival. The Gods play little part in this first part.

In short, Andaras has been consolidating his little games ever since the Second Era of Ire, and while he has had minor time for playing with the affairs of races, never has he involved himself in such a far-reaching gambit as this. His reasons? Nothing more than the fun he will reap, although his actions will change the plans of many others manipulating behind the scenes, but Andaras has no interest in potential difficulties. He would only intervene should the possibility of the races be threatened with extinction, leaving him with little access to his games.

Andaras' web drifts back over 8000 years, more than enough time to stack the dominoes against Hæstra. Ancient cults, priesthoods are openly worshipped, but his true 'shadow cabinet' within Hæstra is the mysterious cult/race known as the Dædekemani. Andaras expects his gambit to path the way for a new and hopeful regime that he can once again swat down with paw. At the same time he seeks the destruction of the waning civilizations in Hæstra, he also encourages the pure to reveal himself through the oppression. Andaras expects his attack to rouse the dormant Masters of Emer and bring them down, a personal vendetta over being robbed over his kill. But even among the dormant Xiosians Andaras has his claws.

The war that will come is dark and carries with it secrets of the K'ta'viir. Genocide will sweep the land, and corruption will bloom. To help in this Andaras has called upon the desire of the Dark Races to wreak havoc, namely the kingdom of Murlogi, the Charn Raiders (mutated to unleash from their chests swarms of unnatural locusts), a plant of the Unlife to cloak the sky in perpetual night and the Ordainer ruling the Lugrôki under the Mountains of Gold.

Kio Viax, the fallen Master of Uj resides close to the City of the Dead and has done so for many years. What the Titan does not realize is that his wanderings among the city older than he are bringing him closer and closer into the arms of the Dædekemani, all under the plan of Andaras.

SHADOW OF LOCUST FACTIONS

The Dædekemani; An ancient cult and race in the service of Andaras since his arrival on Uj, although they are not of his creation. Under the Dark Lord’s control through means of an artifact found in the City of the Dead the Dædekemani are in fact K’ta’viir, although their nature is so perverted and their form and fractured that they barely only distantly remember their origins. Fragmented at the time of death, these once genetic scientists of the K’ta’viir only retain their potentiality to enhance (not imbue) existing traits, the more powerful the being the more aware of oneself they become, in short to flow with their Essence and manipulate their body to use it. Almost like a parasite they attack any host with potential seeking to override its defences, if any, and merge with the host. This desire seems only to be roused among the company of the Free Races, their time in the City of the Dead was spent mostly in dormancy. Andaras discovered them and K’ta’viir artifacts to control them taking them back to the dark moon. The Dædekemani have no desire to break free, theirs is to propagate and evolve. Andaras seeded them across Uj and from there they swooped upon the trade routes throughout Hæstra where they have remained for over 8000 years, moving from host to host, sometimes extending the life of the host beyond its usual tenure. Planted deep in governments and in positions of subtle shadow power the Dædekemani are a very secret cult preferring to manipulate others and stay well out of the limelight. Often physically perfect, but nondescript due to course of evolution. The Dædekemani try not to stand out and appear to cause little waves. Nothing could be more further from the truth.

The Dædekemani are an ancient Order of vestigial, scientific masterminds unlike anything in existence or existing on Emer. Beyond their K’ta’viir origins as an order of genetic scientists they have built nothing that remains, passing from host to host, without discovery. Their history is always a shadow subject, since they take great aversion in leaving trace of themselves. Through their hosts they acquire what they deem necessary for their goals, but never place themselves in the public eye. That is paramount to their survival. Their relationship with Andaras is not one of resentment, but more there is no relationship of emotion at all. Andaras is their centre, their collective seat of intelligence – and what an intelligence to be part of. He is not considered as a God who enslaved them, but as the leader. All this in ‘harmony’ as beings of the Unlife... and even the Dark God’s reign will be as good as it serves the ultimate purpose of the Unlife – evisceration of life.

The Dædekemani K’ta’viiri were the geneticists of races, followers of Kadæna. Their memory of the empire they were once part of is fragmented and impartial based on Andaras’ will. During their time in dormancy in the City of the Dead, the Unlife pushed its head deep in the bowels of the earth and the Dædekemani have undoubtedly become corrupt with the Shadow, though their capricious and clinical attitude has remained unchanged in Andaras’ eyes who knows nothing of the infection of the Shadow. The Dædekemani, without holding back from Andaras, have awakened the people to be known as The Charn Raiders for the genocidal purpose as much as their penchant, intrinsic as it is, for obfuscation. In short the Dædekemani are a sect of the unlife, spreading its control in a unique way.

The appearance of the Dædekemani varies from each to each, depending mostly, at core at least, upon their host, all of whom which transform their hosts over a period of time to whatever level of requirement each host requires in the plans of the Dædekemani. One feature that exists with all, and which the Dædekemani genetically modify on their host is the thin, transparent inner lid which screens the certain ultraviolet radiation as well as dust and impurities. They often avoid the violet eyes and six fingers, for the reason of identification by beings that would take horror at their actions. The genetic modification to each host always enhances the senses and powers already inherent in each host, and in each case a powerful host is sought more although little care is taken to prepare hosts, or groom them. The Dædekemani do not try to wear out their hosts, but sustain them as the enhancements and modifications take a period of time. The Dædekemani often take races of the immortal lines, more for the reason of obfuscation. The human and other non-immortal races' lives can be extended far beyond the ken of natural life spans, but unless shifting and changing identity, such peoples become a burden over millennia. Death of a host is always a setback, but the Dædekemani exist as long as there are suitable hosts nearby, but only intelligent hosts. After death of the host a Dædekemani can pass over an area of 1 league to find a new host. Failure to do so within an hour after death causes the Dædekemani to slump into dormancy, awakened only at the direct close presence of a host. They do not breed, and they are a finite race. Destruction of a Dædekemani is a difficult business requiring K'ta'viir artifacts only found in the City of the Dead.

The Charn Raiders; of the Charn Plateau in Uj, a K'ta'viir genetically modified race bred originally by the Order Dædekemani to survive the surface and serve a long-lost purpose. Often thought coward, crude, they have in oral tradition a genetic trigger, sparked with an event that in their tradition is a riddle of darkness with wings... the Gogor. Andaras discovered this secret when he first attacked Uj in the Second Era of Ire, and has since instructed Morgu to rouse the Gogor for the purpose of triggering the Charn Raiders into action. With the riddle illuminated in fluttering black skies, each Raider, man, woman and child become a walking locust hive, semi-conscious and breeding the locusts at will under their command. The Raiders essentially die, their bodies becoming husks for the true collective of the unique insects, and the raiders also form a collective among each other. Selas Vey controls their actions through his powers so accentuated by the Dædekemani. Selas Vey has them eliminate the Rhiani Tribesmen at first, to counter any potential flanking move, full elimination proving difficult, but it sparks the seed of some thing brewing in the south, drawing away from the political tensions in Hæstra. Once the majority of the Rhiani Tribesmen appear to be wiped out, the Charn Raiders strike northward between the Morbek Highlands and the Forbidden Ridge of the Storm Pass striking for Sarnak where they will unleash the thousands of insects and cover the skies with Gogor.

The Order Dædekemani, genetic scientist K'ta'Viir who modified the race that would become known as The Charn Raiders, did so for one purpose, for genocide and erosion of all organic material. Their genetic trigger locked in a specific moment which the Order Daekemani modified to awaken at an eclipse at particular moments out of the sun's arc so as a modified event would awaken their minds and ancient pathways in their mind, triggering essence-powered physical changes.

Selas Vey; and the city of the dead, from where the fallen Loremaster stalks and commands the armies with Morgu. In the city hailing from before the time of the Masters of Emer, the Loremaster entered, became lost, and became devoured in part. Here Andaras had left the seeds of the Dædekemani and the Loremaster was confronted with these powerful spirits which infused his being, weakening him. He fought long against the war against him, but eventually, weakened after months of continuous struggle, fell and one of the Dædekemani merged with his Essence, his being. It took him 1000 years to adjust to this change, with help from Andaras. *Selas Vey*, already a powerful elven Loremaster found his abilities accentuated beyond anything he thought possible, albeit under the subtle will of Andaras. Now *Selas Vey* could control some of those within the City of the Dead, and sectioned off portions for himself to follow through with the Dark Lord's plan. *Selas Vey* fell under Andaras' control with merging of the Dædekemani, the former Loremaster is Andaras' appointed leader, one of the few hosts to retain strong consciousness of their past lives, it took over 1000 years for *Selas Vey* to submit.

Selas commands a regiment of Dædekemani who have pooled from other locations to aid where necessary in the war. Sorcerers are sent to aid the Murlogi in taking several towns on the Scorpion Ridge.

Selas is aware of the close presence of the Titan, *Kio Viax* who still returns to the city. His prime concern is trapping the Titan and to have him bound to the Dædekemani, something that will only be achievable with Andaras' power.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE DÆDEKEMANI WITHIN THE CITIES

Dynax; the city of Vornia whose ruler, Lord Wurlek was recently overthrown was pushed from behind the scenes by the Dædekemani, but regardless are facing opposition and worse, the Witch Midenna is looking to intervene. Corruption though growing may pale if she does step in to restore order. The Dædekemani are working through the growing thieves loyal to Andaras from the political positions they wield, albeit unsteady as they may be.

The Emerald Forest; is the thorn in the invasion’s path, but one overcome. Though powerful, it remains neutral, and while impossible to assail beyond the Storm Pass one can either head towards this strong opposition or tackle a more physical presence, the lands and city of Sarnak.

Jennis; city of Vornia, of little concern to the efforts of Andaras, whose forces may capture it only as a token, declaring martial law to allow the Bishop Timmon V’nar to continue his orgiastic rituals to Morgalis. Andaras has little interest in interfering with the affairs of the other Dark Lords. No Dædekemani presence.

Gelbentex; city of Vornia, haven to thieves who have insinuated themselves among the lower class with some modicum of success. No Dædekemani presence.

Bentara; city of Vornia, ruled by the Count Bryce Korel, who arranged his late father’s death and is proving quite the controlling leader. Previous to this, his father was firmly under the control of the power-hungry sorcerer Ventine, who as a Dædekemani is chaffing at the sudden loss of control. Ventine’s manipulative tree spreads across Bentara and even into the city of Sarnak.

Orian; once capital of Miir, once the proud jewel of the Kings of Orian – the hub of a peaceful co-existence in the land, was shattered nine years past by the Katra of Stroane. Many of Andaras’ servents reside here and corruption is rife. Many of the nobles gave much of their souls away during the purging, and a strong underground priesthood to Andaras has its ties deep among the ruling council that has sprung up in the absence of the King. Six of the eleven councilors are firmly under the control of Andaras’ minions. Dædekemani exist here and watch deep in the shadows the council and the priesthood, but the priesthood are not entirely aware of them.

Relian; city of Miir, is a growing metropolis whose future is mired with difficulty. Northernmost of the Miirian cities, it will be the last to act and offer help to any Hæstran invasion, especially since it considers itself an independent trade city, and would wish to avoid potential destruction. Refugee Pochanti have quickly allied under the Dædekemani working through the powerful thieves and subversive organizations flowering in Relian. The Pochanti are closest to the Dædekemani, somewhat beguiled by the power of these beings who serve Andaras. Relian is quickly becoming firmly under the talons of the Dædekemani who with the Pochanti support are eliminating their opposition with the bloody zealotry of the refugee Pochanti.

Bornay; city of Miir, is for the most part, free of difficulty. A small town, it has only a few shadowy ears listening with little manipulation as there is little reason for it.

Pellern; city of Miir, will be the heart of a dangerous and sudden attack. The discovery of White Eog in the Mountains of Gold is seen as a dangerous resource by the Dædekemani. After the fall of the Northern Eye and the death of Lord Dreygen, Lady Willona his daughter takes a strong leadership role with the backing of most, if not all of the advisors and knights, dethroning the promiscuous Lady Wintessa to a powerless position in the court. Lord Stjepan Nemeck who marries Lady Willona, is not seen as a strong leader and is placed in a position of diplomat. The deposed Lady Wintessa is shortly thereafter introduced into the ways of Andaras through Lord Constans who seeks, under the advice of Daubon, to take Pellern for himself and quell the threat of the dangerous White Eog. Previous to this the Dædekemani had little interest in the dying town, much as they had with Bornay.

Chelzaria; city of Miir, has been a sticking point of Andaras' efforts. Dædeke mani have unsuccessfully tried to infiltrate it, the dwarves and dyari cities close by always on the watch for danger to the trading and mining city.

Helberna; city of Miir, bustling with trade is a battleground of sorts for the Deadekemani who have tried and tried to break the presence of the powerful Goddess Mynistra, but have had little success in the matter. They have little eyes nor ears within the city.

Tovor; city of Miir, is of little interest to the machinations underway, even less considering the close presence of the Red Dragon, Motar Voorg.

Alkartek; city of Miir, fell slowly under the sway of the Dædekemani with the arrival of Daubon, trainer to Lord Alkartek's twin sons. Daubon spread his control through the advisory of the aging Lord and prepped the strongest of the twin sons for succession, pushing the other out.

Bokpentok; city of Miir, is of strategic importance to the invasion, being a strong castle and a centre of Mynistrarian worship. With the loss of Stroane to outside forces, the Dædekemani have been filtering travelers to the city building a small network in preparation for assault.

Stroane ∅ Arakin; fallen nation and capitol, once a bastion and stronghold for the Andaras and some Dædekemani during the reign of the Katra. In the hands of the Ahn Sye Zonar whose inquisitors travel Hæstra searching for their enemies, they backed the coup led by Lord General Terell which summarily quashed Andaras hold on Arakin. Andaras' revolt against this was to inspire his remaining priests across Miir and Vornia to sever their ties to Arakin. The Teterantor Manor remains Andaras' ears and eyes, where his servant Xonar Trellian (the Minstrel who travels only at night) passed on the curse of vampirism to the Lord.

Niéu; a city within Stroane, yet proclaimed independent is utterly in the claws of Andaras, whose priest Robersin, holds the real control over the city, even if through the puppet lord. Anyone not of Shay descent is looked upon with suspicion. The city will isolate itself from the war and will remain untouched by the sweeping genocide; moreover, Robersin calls it judgement to the non-humans. The irony being Robersin is not as fully human as he claims to be, long a Dædekemani. It was he who sent the warrior Daubon to Alkartek, partially also to subdue the influence of Tærænor, the elf tutoring the two twins.

Qye; a city of Stroane, where Shreck’s new warriors, the Shards reside close to this bleak city in the Forest of Norg. No Dædekemani goes here.

Sarnak; the city and its lands are perhaps the most undesirable place to be when the Shadow of Locust marches through the Storm Pass to the very walls of this seemingly bleak city. From there the Locusts will sweep down and bring doom to Sarnak. Andaras has a special place in his black heart for the women of Sarnak. It was their assassin that bought down his growing empire, setting his plans back some several years. Beside that, Andaras has had difficulty inserting the Dædekemani into the city, managing only one position of note. Outsiders have been his only source of information, namely the Sorcerer Vitane sending young women, trained in subterfuge to observe and report.

Falkenna; port town on the coast of Izar, whose fealty is to Sarnak. Resentful of this, Count Dennik and his knights have proved useful allies under the burden of heavy taxes to the women. Already the seeds have been sown to use his position to advantageous means in the upcoming invasion.

Jantanen; port town on the coast of Izar, under the close eye of the Murlogi who will use the support of Selas Vey’s sorcerers to try to take the town in a pitched battle. The pirates are a rogue force who may swing either way, but only if plunder is top of their list, even if that means striking a deal with the rulers of Jantanen.

Fen-Jorl; city in the Bay of Izar, whose insane Count’s son is backed by the Dædekemani on a coup to strike the seat of power.

Komaren Cluster; and the capitol, Aquitar has its fair share of danger lurking with shadow. Dædekemani silently and with greatest care manipulate others within the cluster, taking hundreds of years to build up favours. No concerted attack will be made here, but the Dædekemani continue their observations.