



## CRITICAL - SANCTUARY



### ◆ OVERVIEW OF THE SANCTUARY UNIVERSE

#### Land of the Eight and The Sanctuary

*For as long as humans can remember, the Land of the Eight has been divided into baronies. Eight, to be exact, ruled nominally by barons, but whose real destiny lies in the hands of the gods. The constant presence of these gods; half human, half animal; pervades every aspect of daily life—their magic flows through the fabric of the world itself. They too, number eight.*

*Each of these deities—whether Crab, Deer, Owl or Monkey—offers humankind the cornerstones of a strong and harmonious civilization, communicating their will through nomadic priests, who roam the land. These priest-sorcerers are the gods' power represented in human form, and this magic is marked upon their bodies in the form of magical tattoos. They are both revered and feared by the people of the world.*

*The mighty Guilds—of which there are eight—are responsible for the structure of society. It is they who established the cities and baronies of the land, and who direct the intricacies of political life under the amused gaze of the gods. Over the course of time, however, the Gods have increasingly abandoned and neglected their subjects, preferring to focus on intrigues amongst themselves, leaving their nomadic priests alone in the face of human troubles. The vacuum left by their masters' absence has compelled the barons to pick up their swords and seize power for themselves. As the magic fades, the Guilds have attempted to negotiate accords between the barons. Has the time of the human finally come?*

*Beyond the Neven sea, something strange is unfolding on the Crescent archipelago, the cradle of the gods. Tombs that have long lain dormant have awakened, and ancient tales of monsters now abound.*

*Welcome to the land of the gods.*

#### The Explorers' Guild

*The Land of the Eight has eight guilds, and you belong to the Explorers' Guild. As a group of scholars, adventurers and fighters, you are all armed with courage and an insatiable curiosity—you will go where others dare not tread. Joining the Guild means drawing a line under your past, whatever that may be. It means accepting that you will be working as a team and you must trust your companions, in spite of their strong personalities and backgrounds—which, you might say, can be... colorful.*

*Your mission? To explore the uncharted regions, discover new peoples and uncover the mysteries of this world. Are you ready for your adventure?*

### ◆ SECRETS OF THIS WORLD (GM only)

#### The Owl Goddess

Every thousand years, the Earth's two moons align, creating a rare phenomenon: A total eclipse, known as the Convergence. In the year that precedes it, the essence of the gods becomes more fragile, human nature more aggressive, and magic flows more strongly. The Owl Goddess intends to take advantage of this. While the world is being ripped apart by war, she wants to overturn the pantheon and become the only god, imposing her new religion—the Gray Order—on humankind.

As the god of war, the Monkey God constitutes the main obstacle to the Owl Goddess bringing her great plan to fruition. Only his power is capable of blocking her schemes, but the Monkey God's focus is presently concentrated on the continental war between the barons. The Owl goddess has been unifying the tribes of the Silent Warriors with the help of her champion, the Necromancer Sylas de Taask, to attack the Sanctuary of the Monkey God.

Streams of magic, which have been strengthened by the Convergence, have allowed Sylas to open gateways to an unholy dimension of nightmarish creatures. Hordes of skeleton warriors, corrupt monks, and other abominations are now streaming onto the Monkey God's island sanctuary. These unholy masses constitute an army of the undead, capable of crushing the baronies of the Land of the Eight. But the Owl Goddess does not intend to stop there. She orders Sylas to remove the nomadic priests for each deity and sacrifice them in gruesome necromantic rituals, so that the very essence of the gods is destroyed.

### The Council

The Council is the religious authority above the barons and the Guilds. It comprises eight Great Priests, each of whom represents a god in the pantheon and oversees its corresponding nomadic priests. But now several have gone missing... Concerned, the Council entrusted the task of investigating these disappearances to Tobias, a scholarly nomadic priest. He himself was captured when the trail he was following led him to an ancient necropolis. Suspecting that something serious is brewing, Yrielle heads for the Sanctuary, against the wishes of the Council. Only as she is on her way does she come to understand that the one behind all these abominations is none other than Sylas, her own brother.

### The Taask

The secrets of this great family of the Land of the Eight will be revealed to you in more detail in Season 2. Here we introduce the two successors that the PCs will meet in this adventure.

**Necromancer Sylas de Taask, the fallen heir:** Once destined to become the most powerful baron in the Land of the Eight, Sylas' volatile temper and fiery outbursts have caused him to be cast aside, in favor of his sister Yrielle. The Owl Goddess had no trouble corrupting this troubled soul and making him her champion. Hungry for power, Sylas accepted the dark pact that she proposed to him. Through this alliance, Sylas has gained access to the hidden knowledge of necromancy, and he will stop at nothing to accomplish the will of his mistress.

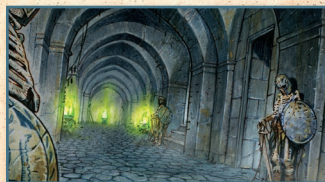
**The one-eyed Great Priestess, Yrielle de Taask:** She has never sought power, and the decision of the Council to eschew her brother and place her at the head of her family does not gladden her in the slightest. Discovering that her brother has made a pact with the darker side of the Owl Goddess, she sustains the secret hope of saving him before he causes the downfall of the Sanctuary.

## SYNOPSIS OF SEASON 1

The heroes are on the Crescent Archipelago, investigating the disintegration of a divine sanctuary hovering in the air. As the Convergence cloaks the world in shadow, they follow the river upstream in pursuit of their goal, and realize that necromancy is being used in this sacred place. With the help of the peoples whose paths cross theirs, the heroes fight the forces of darkness and stand up to a powerful necromancer and his nightmarish creatures. Their strange experiences in combat lead them to understand that the ultimate goal of their quest is no less than saving a deity.

### Episode 0 - Prisoners

In the service of the Explorer's Guild, the Player Characters (PCs) find themselves imprisoned in an ancient necropolis that is not as abandoned as they expected. They manage to break out of their cell, and as they escape, they meet another captive of the living-dead. With the help of Tobias, the heroes fight a difficult battle. Together, they all manage to flee the cursed ruins and return to civilization.



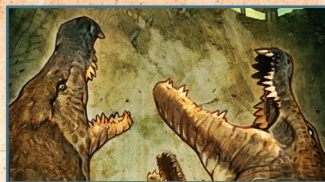
### Episode 1 - On the river

The heroes have been given the task of investigating the evil that is awakening in the jungle by Master Theophilus of the Explorers' Guild. They board a smuggler's boat, but their journey is interrupted when they are ambushed by Silent Warriors. After forcing the warriors to retreat, the PCs cross the rapids, trying to save their cargo, before falling into the clutches of a tribe of Amazons.



### Episode 2 - Verterive

When they are captured by the Amazons, the PCs risk being fed to the queen's crocodiles but they are able to glean some new information. Accompanied by Irna, the tribe's war chief, the heroes resume their river journey, and finally reach Verterive. But the abandoned trading post has been attacked by the Silent Warriors.



### Episode 3 - Enemy territory

The PCs' boat is attacked by a terrible creature that emerges from the river. Completely spent after the violent combat, the PCs tie up the boat and continue their journey on foot. But when they pass through the hostile territory of the Silent Warriors, they have to be as discreet as possible, even when Irna is struck down by some sort of evil curse. The heroes then start their difficult ascent of the Black Mountains.



### Episode 4 - The people of the Nefs

After crossing the Black Mountains, the heroes meet the whimsical Eusebius, who introduces them to the Zepheols. The PCs must pass a test before the people of the nef's will let them proceed to the island sanctuary. Time is of the essence, so the heroes continue their journey in a flying galleon.



### Episode 5 - The Monkey God Sanctuary

After landing so disastrously on the island sanctuary, the heroes explore a small, ruined fort—with a mysterious beast prowling around. Their path takes them to a prisoner camp, where Yrielle is being held. This leads to a confrontation with the guardian monks, who have been corrupted by black magic. Suddenly, a great abyss opens up beneath the PCs feet to the rhythm of the necromancer's sinister ritual.



### Episode 6 - Yrielle

The heroes learn more about Yrielle: She is a Great Priestess of the Council of the Eight. It gives the PCs a chance to get some of their questions answered and find out some more information. However, they are then attacked by savage beasts that are being controlled by the necromancer. After a bitter fight, the PCs finally reach the foot of the forbidden tower—Sylas' lair.



### Episode 7 - The Dark Tower

While the island crumbles around them, the heroes go into the Dark Tower. The bizarre architecture and moving walkways cause problems, but once they have solved the puzzle, the PCs find the correct route and eventually make it to the top. However, the necromancer summons a monstrous creature so he can flee. Caught in a bitter combat that demands their all, the PCs can only watch as the sorcerer escapes on his black nef.



### Episode 8 - Until their final breath

Having managed to see off the horror that Sylas summoned, the heroes pursue him. Nightmarish conditions are raging around them. In rain worthy of a monsoon, the island crumbles and a desperate combat commences in the skies above the archipelago. Beneath the alignment of the stars, even the gods themselves start fighting. The characters fight this final battle as their sacrifice to secure the future of this world.





## EPILOGUE FOR SEASON 1



*“It happened just as I told you, folks! For sure, because I was there myself! We went along with the Port Azure guards, to give them a hand, and we got there in the nick of time. Or just too late, you might say.” Captain Kald signals to the innkeeper to refill his tankard. All the other customers have gathered around his table, wanting to hear him tell the tale one more time.*

*And so once again, he describes how he steered the heroes upriver, for three whole weeks. How he supported them as they embarked upon their quest. “They were so green behind the ears when they first arrived. But right away, I could see their potential. An’ I said to myself: If these young’uns just listen to me, they could really go places—and look how it all turned out!”*

*In a serious, gruff tone, he recalls the final battle. The battle that unfolded across the sky, centering around the floating island. Kald mimes the maneuvers executed by the Zepheol ships. He proclaims, thunders and rages, as he mirrors the events of the titanic battle. And his audience shudders with him, trembles at the description of the sinister necromancer, whimpers at the idea of the gods lighting up the skies, and applauds the heroes’ achievements. “They were still on the ship, they were. Battling with all their might, and all their courage, against the sorcery and fury of Sylas the Cursed. No one could have made it out alive, let alone defeat him. But they...”*

*A shadow of sadness passes before the old captain’s eyes. He swigs half of his drink in one slurp and then smacks it down on the wobbly table. They are all hanging on his every word, waiting excitedly for the end of his story. “But they...are heroes. Yes. They won. They saved the Crescent Archipelago. But, like I said: No one could have made it out alive.”*

*Captain Kald rises and the crowd has already parted to allow him to leave. He is still muttering, as if to himself: “And the nef they were on fell from the sky. Nothing more to do. We spent two weeks searching the area. Debris was strown for miles around. But I never found them... Heroes, they were...”*

Show the PCs the Episode card **Yrielle** (📖 32).

End of Season 1