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Brief Briefs

Corrhéo: A peat-bog province whose natural wellsprings have become clogged with rot; whose nobles have turned to mummification; whose knights grapple with the results of their civil war; whose peasants are thick-skinned slime farmers with froggy features; whose justice system is run by a mis-directed druid far from balanced; who are regularly visited by great elemental powers of an older age; and whose sea, once a fountain of economic resource, was replaced with a roiling ocean of silt and salt that moves like water and is populated by things which can survive in such harsh atmosphere.

Corrhéo: It's a swamped land whose wellsprings once cared for by the alien Popolos have become plugged; aristocracy has fallen off and toy with undeath as a reasonable alternative to cultural dominance; the heraldic knights grapple with their own being supplanted by further insane devotion to cleanliness and order while being pressed by a past steeped in brutal civil war; periodic forays by an enslaving colony of charming ant peoples from the desert make life on the outskirts dangerous; a growing immigrant population of the thick-skinned frog-like berrylmen who relish in the hard-leaf foliage and muck, worshipping seaweed elementals and farming slime; and a faction of druid-led justiciars who seem more like the barb-hook madmen of Mad Max than any staff-wielding tree-lovers from modern fantasy lore.

A Brief Survey of Corrhéo

Ah Corrhéo. It's hard to speak about it without a certain wist coming to my voice. It's like a land that tried to be and couldn't be so many times that it has become something nothing else is.

What you'd know of the place is foremost that it was a country of the sea, and then the sea ceased to be. This simple fact haunts every ruin and every town left miles from why it was once—when the sea left, this country became something else, the bones of its body suddenly naked, exposed, misplaced, dislocated.

Corrhéo is split in two. North and South Corrhéo, once plied coast to coast like a pair of twins holding hands, split now by the Silt Salt Sea. Sure, it can be crossed (or walked around) but the storms that cross the Sea's roiling body are whatever that is more than threat, and the landscape surrounding it are like the unloved gums of a beggar whose teeth are falling free.

Historical aqueducts run the remainder of the country, cracked, often dry, sometimes pooled and full, but never fresh. These are the country's rusted jewelry. Once they went town to town, serving farms and fields and city centers, sluices, wells... now an unrideable road.

The city of Drek's Landing is the cultural capital, once a Venice, now shored up in a lagoon, the remains of Corrhéo's trapped water, the old ocean's bitter edge—now 20 miles inland from the Silt-Salt Sea—still a port, but some port, eh? ...with only the thinnest canals to the greater world now available to traders of the land's produce? And some produce, eh? Once a country of olives, grains, fields and orchards, now, bogged in, blocked up, swollen and undraining, the land produces what it can in such acidic soils—greens as hard and bitter as can be, fungus, dark, salty fruits—and it takes a certain special sort of person to thrive on these types of food.

But they exist. Immigrants float in on barges from lands to the east, frog-like, thick-skinned, speaking in thick tongues. Creatures of the flat wastes to the north make hives in the loess, the sandstone build-up left along the Hard Sea's edge. There will always be life. Just as there will always be death.

And to say that Corrhéo is dying would be false. What Corrhéo was is dying—the colors of the heraldry have lost their saturation, the powers that hold sway wane—but no one but the powers that hold sway would say this is inherently bad. This is the passage of time, to cover over and cover over, again and again.

Natural Environments

On a more practical note, the landscape (and map) are comprised of six terrain types separated in hexes. Each hex reflects three miles of space.

The hex-types are as follows: wetlands, scrublands, low hills, the heights, the salt-flats, and the Silt-Salt Sea itself.

These are generic categories; beneath each lie a complexity of ecosystems depending on altitudes, access to water, proximity to towns and cities, etc, but as some generic points of context for new visitors:

Wetlands will be familiar as soggy spaces: marshes, mangroves, bogs, swamps, fens, peatlands and mires. Some occur naturally, others, polders, created by longstanding practices of agriculture or quarrying. Expect amphibians, orchids, carnivorous plants, insects in these static, flooded spaces.

Shrublands will rise out of these wetlands: moors, heaths, the fynbos: typified by ferns & birds, fire, bees, and a tolerance for long drought. These scrubby landscapes support browsers like wild sheep and goats, low-creeping flora, and often are seen as liminal biomes, landscapes-in-transition, often a result of over-cultivation.

The Highlands might be largely familiar as spaces of growth limited by access to water, but trees and growth thin out and give way to high, cold valleys, warm-coated mammals like the marmot, and some of the few points of regular natural fresh water in Corrhéo.

The Silt Salt Sea & nearby environs is an unreal product, a sea of moving particulate, a crystal in motion. Storms that come off the Hard Sea are nasty and the landscape nearby is an accumulation of geologies. Rich soil, claylands, desert pavements. Expect miles of eroded, natural structures, pirouettes of quartz grains, and rarer pockets of eelgrass, pickleweed, and other pioneer species. As for fauna, well: earthworms, ants, natterjack toads, maybe. And what is within the Sea itself. The Raze.

‘Civilizations’

Loosely we’ll call these factions, though some operate without a particular leader or hierarchy and are simply a common set of values or particular approach to making one’s way in the world.

The Clinchin Fold — the aging aristocracy. Rich, people of vast holdings. Allegiance is non-denominational. It’s a class thing. Sometimes you’ll see ‘Clinchen Fold’ or simply ‘the Fold’.

The Corrhéonic Stand—knights, in the residual aftermath of a great civil war. The only outward facing military power in Corrhéo. Travel in groups called Reams. ‘The 8th Ream’ for instance.

What’s Due—a druid-led faction who serve natural balance. Surprisingly clinical relative to the ‘traditional fantasy druid’; leading an extensive interrogation of Corrhéo in the long years of Rot.

The berrylmen—a peasant class people, thick-skinned slime-hunters and swamp-goers, farmers; folk of wet soils. They speak a second tongue (Ribbish) and are relegated to menial tasks for their inability to pronounce common words

The Yaddish—Yaddack borders Corrhéo on its north-eastern side, separated by significant deadlands. Most commonly the Yaddish in Corrhéo are associated with trade in previous years, and slavery now. Insectoid, hive-minded, heavily involved in the use of pheromones for compulsive work & breeding. Very uncommon.

The Apostate Host—a gypsy-bard class, musicians and pilgrims who have abandoned civil disputes, property ownership, in favor of a pirate-life of the land. Many are of an old order of clergy that has abandoned their gods; others lived thuggish, intoxicated lives as soon buried.

Settlements

There are two major cities in the slimming country of Corrhéo: *Plath* and *Drek's Landing*. Plath is the seat of new power, where the reigning government holds office, and Drek's Landing (orig. Drekden Landing) is the seat of culture, once a seaport now sustained by a great, dying lake and rivers that thin and fill further with silt each year.

Numerous towns, hamlets, marketplaces, villages, etc dot the country too, but those are found through exploration, not my broad survey.

Forces a Paladin might Oppose

Undeath—It is typically a paladin's MO to oppose undeath. That said, The Clinchen Fold, Corrhéo's tiny, withered aristocracy is a faction toying with undeath. Most operate invisibly as string-pullers or reclusive types with vast holdings or large constituencies but some are more bold than others. Most if not all toy with undeath. Self-mummification, vampirism, lichdom. Chase most size L income streams and you'll end up in the manse of some lord or another who has attachments to the 'organization'.

The Corrhéonic Rot—is a force of decay and corruption that a paladin might see as their duty to fight against. Ecosystems have become full of mucus & clay, denser and less inhabitable by most inhabitants (inviting new lifeforms, of course, who don't mind the swamper spaces); landscapes full of sodden, drapy vegetation are not exactly 'clean', per se, to a certain type of paladin. Particularly the organization What's Due, which operate as a somewhat vigilant Justice System. Some would call themselves paladins, probably, though they operate more like agents of Inquisition than Protection, in search of the Rot's source.

Unjust rule: the old rule is fading. Perhaps this drapy vegetation and 'new life', with the influx of the immigrant berryllmen, a group of thick-skinned agricultural types who tend towards shrines and a pastoral lifestyle is the cause this paladin might take up. In opposition to the withered Clinchen Fold or even the knightly Corrhéonic Stand, or just mere commonfolk who see the changing ethnography of the area as 'an invasion', the paladin might be a more peasant-defensive character; a defender of What's New instead of What's Due.

The practice of slavery—a paladin would certainly oppose *the practice of slavery*, and Yaddish Slavers, while not commonplace, are the root of a certain fear of the Corrhéonic populace. These bugmen come from the desert to the north and west across the wastes, enslaving with pheromones and charm.

Justice?—Maybe the tight hand of What's Due around the Corrhéic throat who ostensibly operate as '*justice*' (but with barbed sword and noose) have incensed a young noble heart to some kind of pitted resolve?

Selfish dragons—Are *selfish dragons* which seek to dominate certain wasteland regions the driving motivator?

The Void—Or is it *the Obsidian Path*, a sort of antiquated Khmer Rouge who've faded from everyday appearance? Rumors still persist of the void-touched around Corrhéo, anchors to that second plane suspected near certain locales, memories of their travesties notable as shades and imprints dotting the country. Regardless, anyone claiming at knighthood would have some opinion of the Corrhéonic Stand themselves, those knights of faded antiquity whose huge strongholds still serve as the country's most visible 'defense', despite The Holy War at Folly Soma, the land's worst civil war in memory, which split the once-unbesmirchable knighthood in two.

Time and Exploration in Corrhéo

Mapping—Play in Corrheo is via hexmap, theatre of the mind, and on occasional maps found, purchased, gifted, or stolen in game. It's strongly encouraged that players create their own maps for reference, as regardless of their accuracy, they will serve sustainable reference for direction like: 'We will follow the coastline past the Black Mass to the Pilgrim's Road and follow it into the hills to explore C-99'. There will of course always be the possibility of being lost or waylaid, but this is up to the dice.

Creating shareable, community-editable maps, however you see fit, is one of two ways the company will remain in unison as players change from game to game. I recommend one player volunteers or is voted as mapmaker at the start of any given foray.

Exploring—the country of Corrhéo will be revealed to you by engagement with the country of Corrhéo, not via probing of your backstories. You are assumed strangers to the land for the sake of this initial campaign, and though there are settlements, plantations, seasonal rituals, trade routes, and other circulars, this should be considered a 'wilderness' for the sake of your own thought process.

As such: players can elect to *explore* any adjacent hex. The process will be narrated and presumed to take one *watch*. A 24-hour day is divided into six watches. I will track these. You're welcome to, but it's not necessary except for your own ... safety?

Traveling—Travel between any known landmarks in an adjacent hex takes a single watch. Players cannot travel into a hex without first exploring it. Players must travel to an adjacent hex before moving further unless transport has been secured by secondary means. Flying or boating for instance.

Encounters—watch-length choices will be subject to an encounter roll. Encounters traverse three tables: beast, intelligent, & alien, and intelligent here is a shorthand for 'groups with deliberate and knowable motivations beyond survival'. You'll find plenty of intelligence on the beast table and plenty of motivation among the alien; it may just simply be unrecognizable at first blush.

To boot: no encounter is fundamentally inspired by combat; violence is a choice. All living beings will react to you based on your stats and your roleplay.

*Dungeons*²—when entering more microscopic territory, time will be measured in turns. A turn is assumed to be about ten minutes. Group dialogue or roleplay will simply be measured in real-time, so ten minutes of interplay is ten minutes, whereas searching the room for hidden doors will be remarked as a single turn.

Dungeons here is a loose term and refers simply to scenes and experiences beyond or within overland travel.

It is my hope to create a living world. Every looted cave will be reinhabited in the right season. Each theatre will play a new show when the first is done. I hope to create a sense that revisitation pays the same dividends it does in our world. I hope you find locked doors that you cannot open today, but hope to open tomorrow. For your own safety sometimes, or simply for the sake of suspense.

Campaign – “The Company You Keep”

Style—many roleplaying games involve a party of two to eight players who meet regularly, often in-person, to follow a story-line that unfolds in front of them. This is not that, but I hope to signal that it should not suggest there is no story. You are a company of twelve to thirty who share a common HQ, and depending on the session, what you pursue and where you go is dependent on your own desires. In fact, against my controlling nature, I will simply ask you before the session begins: what would you like to do? You are a rare thing in Corrhéo: adventurers, and adventurers when judged fall into a hundred moralities: pilgrims, wanderers, plunderers, protectors, caravanners, entrepreneurs, looters, seekers, joyriders, explorers, and on. I’m not asking you to be one or another. I want you to decide.

Rolling Boulder—beyond some initial encouragement and some anonymous map-laying and local history, I will rely on you sharing your experiences to fill the game with interest. The Discord text channel “#the-stitchery” has been set aside for post-game storytelling, and this storytelling will be the fabric from which future forays will be instantiated. Describe what happened, please—what you found, what you sought, what you encountered, what you figure, where you hope the Company might pursue loose ends—as we will not pick your particular foray up right where it left off: you will go back to HQ with only tales to swap in its common room afterwards. I will do my best to make sure those tales are worth your while, but I expect you to galvanize them with your curiosity and ingenious play.

Death—it may happen. Corrhéo is not a safe country, it is a country mid-molt. Do not assume that because you are the level that you are that I am contriving to keep you alive. You only need to be as precious with your body as you care to be, but this is not bowling with bumpers. Perhaps an early death makes sense to the character you’ve imagined. Perhaps the gutter draws you. Up to you.

Naturally: I want you, Player, to keep playing, so character death does not mean you are done if you don’t want to be. You’re welcome to re-roll and fit yourself back into the Company and maybe read a bit of your old character’s story on the wall.

HQ

Your employer HOOD rented you this dwelling under the impression that they would themselves cohabitate, establish, and lead a group of promising but unseasoned persons in the pursuit of gains in the country of Corrhéo. HOOD established a contract: equip yourselves initially, feed yourselves from company stores as you like, take a bed. For every coin you earn, put a coin in the Company box. It sits, wooden, sullen, lockable, on the oak table. The key hangs on a thong on the wall. In some settings it would be a treasure chest, but in this one, it's an empty mouth.

The weapons and armor you've got HOOD happily doubled with a set kept in the equipment locker in a jumble. Mostly they're practice gear, so everything's blunter, more cut through. But at least you know if something eats yours, a second, worse one is available.

HOOD told you how much this place costs. 250 gold a month. They said that when they carved some basic lines into the oak table and said *here's the country*.

That's a city, HOOD said, *and this is the country capital*. The X they drew at least gave you a direction.

They pointed up the hill and explained that the bush-shrouded estate there was A. RESPECTFUL'S HOME, VILLA CHI.

Our landlord, said HOOD, and left the carving knife standing in the table.

First problem: rent. Second problem: it's been three and a half weeks, and waiting for HOOD hasn't made them reappear to tell you how to go about making it.

Good luck.