

WEIRD WAR I

TWILIGHT OF THE NEW DAWN



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WEIRD WARS!

Twilight of the New Dawn

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Twilight of the New Dawn

Twilight of the New Dawn is an adventure for *Weird War One* set in the final year of the Great War. It details the event that leads to the end of the global conflict, one way or another, and should serve as the culmination of the other plot point campaigns. The characters are part of an international team charged with stopping the New Dawn and saving the world. They can be soldiers or civilians from any of the warring powers, from either side of No Man's Land. Successfully completing this mission will bring about the end of the centuries-long machinations of the cabal and smash the organization once and for all. Of course, if your players are not successful, the war will end in a catastrophe of Biblical proportions and usher in an age of darkness and despair.

The Time is Right

The time is late May of 1918. The world has seen war on an unprecedented scale for almost four years. With the collapse of Tsarist Russia, a tide of Imperial German divisions flowed westward in late 1917, filling the trenches across No Man's Land from the exhausted Belgian, British, and French armies, as well as the newly arrived, inexperienced American divisions.

Beginning in March 1917, the Germans launched a series of attacks code-named *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser's battle). Officially, these battles were designed to break the Allies and end the war before the weight of America's manpower could be brought to bear. The real reason rested in the hands of the New Dawn. With the surge of death and bloodshed brought about by these titanic battles, the time is right for the ceremony dubbed "The Great Awakening."

The adventure starts on May 29th, 1918. The heroes can be from any of the Allied powers and should be Veteran Rank or above. All have experienced the weirdness of the war and are members of the Twilight Legion.

Wherever they were stationed, each hero receives sealed orders sending them to a chateau in the French countryside well away from the horrors of the front. Unless they are all in the same unit, the troops travel separately to the estate, but arrive within a few hours of each other. The mansion's civilian staff greets each hero and shows them to a fairly opulent guest room where they can clean off the grime of the battlefield. At 4 o'clock the soldiers are summoned to a drawing room for cigars and brandy. This is a good time for the characters to introduce themselves before the evening's festivities begin. Those who make a Notice roll (-4) notice the symbol of the half-set sun worked into the decorative carvings around the fireplace.

Wheels within Wheels

Read the following to your players once they have introduced themselves and are settled in.

The chateau's drawing room, with its antique furniture, paintings of old nobles, and ample supplies of port, sherry, and cigars, seems like another world from the trenches you occupied just a few hours ago. No one else has any clue as to the reason for your summoning, but after 15 minutes or so of small talk, the double doors at the end of the chamber open to admit several distinguished gentlemen of obvious military bearing, despite their civilian clothes.

"Good evening lads. Glad to see you all made it here safely. For those of you who I haven't met yet, my name is Arthur Conan Doyle, here representing MI-13. This gentleman is Monsieur Colonel Lebouc of the Bureau des Phénomènes Mystérieux Non Expliqués, while these two men represent the United States' efforts in fighting the strange happenings of the last few years."

At this point, one of the men comes forward and shakes hands, while his partner, a taciturn fellow in a black suit, stays back in the shadows.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"Guys, pleased to meetcha. Name's Henry Walton, from Marshall College in Connecticut. That's back in the States for you Europeans. I'm an archaeologist who works for a group called the Inquiry. That stick in the mud back there is Agent Thompson, of the Alien Enemy Bureau."

"Yes, quite," interrupts Conan Doyle. "Lastly, may I introduce Herr Colonel Doctor Johann Reinmann, of the Kaiser's Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen. I know that's a mouthful, but basically they hunt down the unknown in the Kaiser's territory. I'll let him take it from here."

An immaculately dressed man steps forward, his back ramrod straight, and gives a slight bow to the troops.

"Gut abend, mein herren. We have detected unusual messages between government officials of various nations affiliated with both the Allied and Central Powers. When your MI-13 and BPMNE noted similar activity on this side of the lines, it appeared that something major was happening in the near future at a location in the Ardennes. My organization has noted unusual deliveries being diverted to this spot, called the Giant's Tomb in English, and when my BPMNE colleagues detained and interrogated a French governmental official making plans to travel

there through neutral Switzerland the final pieces of the puzzle were obtained."

"The mission is clear," says Conan Doyle, stepping forward. "This group, the New Dawn, seems to be behind much of this war, and they are planning something on a global scale within a few days, specifically June 8th. You all have been handpicked for your mental and physical abilities as well as your knowledge of the, ahem, unusual happenings during war. Under the codename Group Ulysses you will travel to this spot in the Ardennes and throw a spanner in their plans. While it might not end the war outright, if we can capture or otherwise incapacitate the leadership of this organization we might at the very least remove their malignant influence from the halls of power across Europe and the rest of the world."

With that, the troops are ushered into a lavish dinner, during which the various intelligence agency heads can fill in the volunteers on any questions they might have regarding the upcoming mission. The War Master can disclose as much or as little of the secret goings-on of the Weird Wars, but see the *Weird War 1 War Master's Handbook* for a brief synopsis of the current events regarding the upcoming Great Awakening.

Up, Up, and Away!

The next day the teams are taken to the stables behind the chateau where they are allowed to outfit themselves with the latest and greatest equipment available to any of the warring nations. Those wishing to bury themselves under a mountain of gear are warned that the objective is deep in the Ardennes, and some consideration must be given to cross-country travel.

Once the group is kitted out, Arthur Conan Doyle arrives to brief them.

"I know some of you are wondering how in the world you'll get to the deepest depths of the Ardennes, well behind German lines. Thanks to our friend Colonel Reinmann transportation will be provided tonight by the Imperial German Air Service. A zeppelin will rendezvous in a nearby field and whisk you away on your mission. Good luck and good hunting."

Around dusk the troops and their equipment are taken several miles away by truck and dropped off in a field covered in knee high wheat and surrounded by thick forest on three sides. As the sun goes down, a light mist springs up and covers the area, adding an unseasonal chill to the June air.

Dead Zeppelin

In the light of a waning half-moon obscured by the fog (giving an Illumination level of Dark), the heroes can

make out the drone of the promised zeppelin's engines approaching their position around 11:00 pm.

As the zeppelin approaches the ground, the legionnaires see that the tether lines have been dropped. Anyone making a Notice (-4) roll sees rips in the skin of the hull and the windows of the gondola are shattered. Unless someone sees this and sounds the alarm, the undead crew that drops down the lines attacks with surprise.

✱ **Graf Schmidt:** use Graf Schmidt from *Weird War One War Master's Handbook*. While the normal 18 crew man the zeppelin, 12 undead guards drop to the ground to attack, covered by their fellow walking dead manning the machine-guns in the gondola.

Once the heroes have driven off the Graf Zeppelin or fled into the surrounding woods, they can either return to the chateau or wait. Unfortunately, no airship shows up at the field during the night, and at dawn the soldiers can flag down a passing military truck to return to the chateau. If medical attention is required, there is a doctor at the chateau who can attend to their needs (Healing d10).

Behind the Curtain of Fire

After the aborted attempt to fly across enemy lines, Conan Doyle briefs the heroes again, with a shame-faced Colonel Reinmann by his side.

"Well, that could have gone better."

"Colonel Reinmann hasn't been able to get in touch with his people across the lines, so we'll have to do this the hard way. The Yanks have concluded an attack at a place called Cantigny, and we've impressed on General Pershing the need to straighten the lines a bit. Tomorrow you'll cross German lines in the confusion of a general attack. Our German friend here assures me the units in this sector are in disarray so their defense won't be up to snuff. Once across, you'll change into civilian clothes and travel to Sedan to link up with your German counterparts at a crossroads west of town. Unfortunately, if you're caught in civilian clothes you will most likely be tried as spies, so don't get caught, whot?"

"Here is a picture of your contact," says Colonel Reinmann, handing the team lead a small photograph. "My son, Hauptmann Otto Reinmann, leads a contingent of the AbtWESpezWA/Tr tasked with helping you in stopping whatever the New Dawn has planned. Just be aware that you won't be able to openly carry weapons dressed as civilians behind the lines. My son, however, will have plenty of equipment for you at the rendezvous point."

Occupied Territory

The War Master and players should keep in mind that this is World War One, not the Nazi-occupied France of twenty years later. There is no organized French resistance, nor a Gestapo out hunting the Maquis through the countryside. By 1918 the Germans expected the locals to support their war effort, especially in the production of crops as well as maintenance of critical infrastructure, such as road and rail upkeep and the building of fortifications. While the Germans asked Frenchmen living in the occupied areas for voluntary compliance, when that didn't work they conscripted civilians into such labor.

The local populations in the occupied areas did perform acts of active and passive resistance, although not on the scale of the 1940s. Acts of major sabotage were rare, and usually carried out by Allied agents rather than locals in France. Active resistance usually resulted as a reaction to something done by the Germans and was typically unplanned. Captured saboteurs were subject to the death penalty, although at this stage of the war this was often commuted to life in prison. Most resistance consisted of intelligence gathering and underground newspapers or mail service.

In an attempt to reduce the threat of partisans, the Germans imposed curfews, issued ID cards, and restricted movement. Weapons were confiscated, as well as carrier pigeons and telephones.

The heroes may think that posing as German troops would be a more effective means of moving about the rear areas. Unfortunately, this method will bring even more scrutiny than posing as civilians. Provost marshals rove the rear areas, searching for deserters, and German troops not moving in a large, organized body will be stopped frequently and asked for orders authorizing their travel. These "catch squads" consist of 10 German troops armed with clubs and standard armaments (use German Infantryman from *Weird War One Player's Handbook*).

"He will mention Ulysses when he speaks to you. You should respond to his challenge with 'The stars were not right when Ulysses set forth on his journey.'"

The heroes are issued civilian clothes and identification cards appropriate for French farmers or workmen, given a map to the rendezvous point, a password, and instructed to change clothes once behind German lines. They are then trucked to the American sector at Cantigny, where troops busily work on strengthening newly-captured trenches. The squad has the evening to prepare themselves for the upcoming

assault. Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. is assigned as their liaison, and flashes a Half-set Sun medallion when he's alone with the team. He explains the upcoming assault, using a map of the battlefield drawn from an aerial reconnaissance photo.

"I've been told damn little about your mission, just to get you across the German lines. Whatever it is you're doing, it must be bully for so much to be expended for your success. The previous group went over the top with us last week at the beginning of the battle but caught a Boche shell. Wiped out the whole group in one big splash. It wasn't a total loss, though. For a diversionary attack, we reduced a salient in the lines and captured all our objectives.

My battalion will kick off an attack at 0600 tomorrow morning. We have a specially prepared armored vehicle to take you to the German trenches, while my men clear the way. Once at the Boche lines, aerial recon shows a wooded ravine that leads back a couple of miles and away from the German lines. It's pretty thick stuff, so you should be able to make your way without running into any of the Kaiser's finest. If you need anything between now and the attack, just let me know."

Just before dawn Group Ulysses is loaded into a Schneider tank. The vehicle has been modified to carry personnel, with the machine guns and main gun removed, as well as all the ammunition. Despite these changes, and even with only the driver manning the vehicle, it is a cramped, claustrophobic ride, and any large pieces of gear (bigger than a rifle or web gear) must be secured to the outside of the tank.

Zero Hour

Shortly after the heroes board the tank, a massive artillery barrage lights the pre-dawn sky. Within 30 minutes the tank rumbles forward, staying alongside the American doughboys to either side as they move behind the rolling barrage.

The driver/commander of the tank (Driving d8 unless one of the player characters takes over) must make a series of Driving rolls to negotiate the treacherous terrain of No Man's Land. Four checks are required to get the team to their drop-off point. A failure means the tank has become mired down (a frequent occurrence for the poorly designed Schneider), causing the heroes to move the remaining distance on foot and exposing them to a number of sprints (see Heavy Fire in the *Weird War 1 Player's Guide* for details) equal to the remaining Driving checks to get to the drop off point, but using a d8 due to the rolling barrage and the weak German resistance.

Once at the drop off point just short of the German trenches, the characters move under Heavy Fire to the heavily wooded ravine behind the lines, through which

they can infiltrate into the rear area. Two sprints are required to cross this area, using a d6 due to the volume of crossfire from both the American and German troops.

As the team enters the mouth of the ravine and move below ground level, a strange silence envelopes them. The rocky ground slopes 40 feet down to a forest floor choked with brambles, fallen trees, and a thick carpet of rotting leaves and detritus. A faint game trail winds along the bottom.

When the soldiers get a hundred yards into the ravine, a Notice roll reveals a dirty child in French civilian clothes roughly eight years old hiding in some bushes along the side of the path. She can be coaxed out by gentle sorts, and says her name is Antoinette. She loves the solitude and quiet of the gorge but hates the Germans and offers to lead the team to the end of the ravine and on to her village.

If the troops take the girl up on her offer she merrily skips down the trail humming a nursery rhyme, but veers off in a mile or so, pointing out a fresh, clear spring. The warriors can take the chance to fill canteens or slake their thirst, but if they do, the rest of Antoinette's pack of waifs springs from the surrounding undergrowth and attacks.

The heroes are free to refuse Antoinette's offer. If they do, she shrugs and vanishes into the underbrush. About halfway down the gorge, as the squad negotiates its way across a fallen tree that blocks the trail, the waif pack surges out from the surrounding vegetation and attacks the heroes.

- **Waifs (3 per hero):** Use Waifs from the *Weird War One War Master's Handbook*.

On the Road Again

Once Group Ulysses leaves the gorge, they must travel approximately 130 miles to their meeting place outside Sedan. When they cross the lines it is June 2nd, and they have until June 8th to get there. The Germans restrict the use of trains to troop movement and only for Frenchmen with special passes, so train travel is out of the question. The trains are guarded against saboteurs, so travelers wanting to hop a ride must contend with German soldiers who suspect anyone sneaking onboard as a hostile agent.

Sedan can be reached by force marching cross-country or catching rides on farmer's carts. Troops can force march up to 20 miles per day, and can push themselves an additional two hours for 2 ½ miles per hour at the risk of Fatigue (see Movement in *Weird War One Player's Handbook* for details on travel). Farmer's wagons or other horse-drawn conveyances can provide the same distance without the risk of Fatigue if such rides can be found (Streetwise, Persuasion, or similar skills used in various towns along the way).