

Four Paths to Freedom

~ The Children of Malkuth ~

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This adventure is a part of the campaign The Children of Malkuth.

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Four Paths to Freedom

The sun sets over the horn of Africa and three men leave their hotel for the last time. Five months ago they first came to Addis Ababa to set up a secret operation to interrogate enemies of the free world. Over the course of many long nights they convinced several men to tell them what they wanted to know. Sadly, this hard life has damaged the minds of the men. In three days they will meet their families at an airforce base somewhere in the USA, and a week later one of them will kill his child in anger.

Background

Ethiopia – the birthplace of humanity according to science, but nothing can be more wrong. The belief in Elysium has been strong for a long time; the people focus on survival and don't have the power to think beyond their weak bodies. But the Illusion has become weaker over the last 100 years; Archons and Death Angels gather their forces for a final battle in Ethiopia.

To free humanity from Elysium the Archon Malkuth has chosen humans who she thinks can help her. Some of them never know their mission in life. Others will get, as much information as the Archon thinks is suitable. They all go by the name The Children of Malkuth.

This is the first adventure involving the Médecins Sans Frontières, and their personnel in Ethiopia.

In this adventure the characters will be in Addis Ababa during a conference for health organisations. Here they will get to know several important non-player characters, e.g. Peter Saint-Denys who is the Médecins Sans Frontières chief representative in Ethiopia.

During the conference strange things start to happen, and it's almost if only the characters take notice of them. Four homeless children contact the characters, and ask them for help.

This is a **“Gather information and wisdom”** adventure and takes place during a week in **September 2004**.

The characters also get to know several people that play important part in future adventures.

Important NPCs

The Game Master can include several non-player characters, but here are the most important for the adventure.

Peter Saint-Denys¹

He is Médecins Sans Frontières chief representative in Ethiopia; he reports to the organisations board and negotiates with the government.

Peter is a Child of Malkuth and has done lots of important work for the suffering people of Ethiopia. One way to free humanity is to help people on the edge of death, later they will think pure thoughts and maybe walk the light path.

His own future is dark; he has aggressive AIDS and will leave his work in 2005 and move home to his family's mansion. It's a secret that he has the infection. The characters should be or become friends with Peter.

¹ Read the adventure “Et In Arcadia Ego“, it came with the Swedish GM's screen and can be found in English or Spanish on the Internet.

Sarah Wimby

She is employed as an administrator by Médecins Sans Frontières, but is also an experienced nurse. She works as chief over the Amhara region and all decisions go through her. She reports to Peter Saint-Denys.

Sarah is a key person for the campaign. She has few friends but can have a friendly relation to one or two of the characters. But they will almost only talk about work, no one knows much about her personal life. Later in the campaign she will betray the characters and die an unpleasant death.

Asfa Ahemed

He is the head of Hayworth Emergency Aid (HEA)² in Ethiopia and is a friend to the minister of the interior. This gives him some influence over the police and the government. Asfa is a Razide, working for Gamichicoth - the Death Angel who personifies false rescue.

Today HEA mostly works in the regions of Afar, Somali and southern parts of Oromia. HEA works beside the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) in northern Ethiopia. In southern Ethiopia HEA has an agreement with US military Special Forces, which works to gather information about Muslim terrorists.

Mesfin “Jack” Meleta

He is the police officer in charge of the security in the area where Médecins Sans Frontières have their office. Mesfin is one of five lieutenants that work in different areas in this part of Addis Ababa. A captain is in charge of the five areas together, but he is an alcoholic and has no control over what happens amongst his policemen.

Mesfin has no contacts with any non-human creatures, neither is he influenced by anyone. He's sometimes brutal but thinks that he does what's necessary, if he breaks the arm on a thief he won't feel any regret.

When he talks to people from aid organisations he often calls himself “Jack” and his attitude is rather pleasant. But if foreigners start to doubt his methods, he can be aggressive.

The four Children

There are lot of begging children on the streets of Addis Ababa. Foreigners are often surrounded by them, and can be followed for long distances.

But there are four children in Addis Ababa that are different, very different. Three years ago the boys met at an enclosed waste dump outside town, where the government dumps dangerous chemicals. At the dump sometimes a portal temporarily opens to Gaia and *The Wastelands*³. Among barrels of deadly chemicals they found small bushes with some kind of berries, so they return at least once a week.

This regular experience of the borders of Gaia has changed the children. They should be at least teenagers but regression has influenced them, and today they don't look to be more than 8 years old. Their language is almost gone, they only speak Amharic or English in short sentences and have difficulties understanding others. None of them remembers their names.

² *Legions of Darkness* page 23.

³ *Gaia* by Jason Thompson page 41.

The plot

When a society develops from agriculture to industry it's easy to forget that the earth we walk can and will harm us if we mistreat her. At the waste dump chemicals blend with each other beneath the sun, the dry earth sucks it to its inner being. One day it was there, a small bush growing between the rusting barrels and it was only the beginning.

Plotline

The Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa is a melting pot of cultures. Besides Amharic and the about 80 other local languages and dialects in Ethiopia you can hear English spoken widely. Some people also speak French, Italian and Arabic.

In this city with around three million people of different cultures there it is almost impossible for the authorities to have control over everything.

It's in this environment four teenagers come close to a cut in the Illusion, where Gaia has entered Elysium. They didn't even realize it in the beginning, but now the regression is far-gone. Their chaotic souls scream inside in a cry for help. In a last attempt to come back to their human culture they try to contact persons at the Médecins Sans Frontières office.

Lieutenant Mesfin is the police officer who guarantees the safety of attendees and doesn't like children begging around the conference. So he will try his best to thwart the children.

In this adventure the most dangerous threat against the children is their escalating regression.

The characters will probably never solve the mystery surrounding these children. When the children can't resist the regression any more they will flee from the city.

The name of the adventure reflects the four ways to conquer poverty; **food, safety, shelter** and **education**. It has nothing to do with the four children.

Time schedule

Several health organizations meet to have a conference. There are around fifty participators; most of them aid workers but a security expert from France and a priest from Italy also participate.

It is up to the Game Master to decide if the characters have to participate in all activities or not. There is no information about what they will talk about, improvise.

Day 1

The characters that are invited to the conference are given rooms at a hotel fifteen minutes walk from Médecins Sans Frontières office.

The only thing they have to do the first day in Addis Ababa is to register at the office. There is a small exhibit outside the conference room where the delegates will meet and talk during the day. If they don't visit the exhibit the Game Master may use the event later on in the adventure.

Events: Exhibit

Talking with Peter Saint-Denys

Day 2

The second day there is a big meeting in the conference room. Representatives from the different organisations will give their visions about what they should do during the next year.

The head, Asfa Ahemed, of Hayworth Emergency Aid in Ethiopia will be very critical of the other organisations. He thinks that there is too much talk and too much administration, he wants to act when he has the opportunity.

In the afternoon the French security expert will hold a lecture, then there will be a discussion and question time.

Events: First contact – The Children

Day 3

The third day is allocated for discussion in small working groups, its up to the Game Master to decide if the characters should be included or not.

This is a good day to make contacts, the exhibit is open and during the whole day the participators will come to the small cafe to eat.

Events: Talking with Sarah Wimby
Second contact – The Children

Day 4

On the fourth day all the delegates will meet in the conference room to evaluate what the working groups have done. In the afternoon they will try to reach an agreement about co-operation for the next year.

Events: The Thieves

Day 5

Day five is free from actual work with the conference, but the characters may have to help Sarah Wimby or Peter Saint-Denys organise food transports.

A mad dog will attack one of the four children outside the conference. If the characters wont go there it can happened anywhere in the city.

Events: Mad dog!

Day 6

The sixth day is the last day of the conference, in the morning all of the participators will meet to summarize what they have done. After lunch there are no more activities.

This afternoon is the last time the characters will see the children. They are sitting on the street when a policeman loses his mind and attack them.

Events: The old man is dead

Day 7

The last day of the adventure and Peter Saint-Denys will ask the characters to visit him at the office for a private lunch. This lunch will bring them together and the characters will feel he is an honest friend.

During this lunch the characters will have the opportunity to discuss further work for Médecins Sans Frontières. Or if they work for some other organisation how they can help the organisation in the future. Peter also suggests that they should meet in London or New York some time in the future.

Events: Lunch with Peter

Events

There are ten events described in this section. It's up to the Game Master if and when they should be used.

Exhibit

The small exhibit shows information and photos from different projects that have been successful.

If the characters discuss the projects Asfa Ahemed will notice, and join them. He will tell them that one of the so-called successful projects took such a long time that several children died waiting. The only reason was that the UN had to send bottled water from Italy instead of accepting water from Egypt.

Asfa Ahemed is very negative, and says that the UN always has to have 100% control over everything.

Talking with Peter Saint-Denys

When the characters come to Médecins Sans Frontières office for register they will meet Peter Saint-Denys.

It's up to the Game Master to decide if any character already is friend with him or not. Anyway he will be very friendly to them and say that if they have any problems he will always try to help.

Characters with *Empathy* may feel that Peter's mood drops significant if Asfa Ahemed is near.

First contact – The Children

When the characters enter or leave the centre the four children will sit on the ground not far from the gate. When the characters go by one of them will say something in Amharic and reach out as if seeking help.

If the characters don't understand one of them will speak incoherently in English.

"Please mister. There is ... so ... not food. We can't remember home. And ... much hungry. To afraid ... search food where the grass is dangerous."

The child repeats himself and doesn't respond to what the characters say. Another child licks his hand and won't look at the characters, if someone touches him he will snarl.

After a while lieutenant Mesfin comes running up and stops the interaction, he will tell the characters that many children steal. The police officer will force the children to leave.

If a character has *Enhanced awareness, Empathy or Intuition* he may have a faint feeling that there is some strange wildness about the four children.

Talking with Sarah Wimby

During the day Sarah Wimby will make contact with one of the characters that work for Médecins Sans Frontières.

Sarah seems to be a bit asocial and have some problems making small talk. After a while she starts to talk about her job as the MSF chief over the Amhara region.

If the characters ask too many questions she will be a bit unsure and excuse herself. Sarah won't answer any questions about Asfa Ahemed, she knows that he is a Razide.

Second contact – The Children

This time the children will try to contact the characters outside their hotel. During the night the regression will have taken a big step, their language is almost gone.

“Pleaz. Who ... we are? No ... Grass ... Grass ... Lost ... Hungry.”

The children are underfed but an examination will show that they are rather muscular and their teeth seem to have unnatural shapes. But after a while the children begin to panic and break loose from the characters. With great speed they run away and disappear.

The thieves

When non-Ethiopian walks on the streets there are often huge crowds of children that follow them and beg. They have never been aggressive before but today something is different.

This time nine teens approach the characters. They wear torn clothes and some of them have sticks. First they come very close and beg for money and food. Then one of them screams that the characters are too rich and shouldn't come to Ethiopia to humiliate them.

They try to hit the characters on the arm or head with the sticks, then they steal loose objects as bags, cameras or drinking bottles.

Mad dog!

The wild madness in the area around the conference is increasing due to the influence of Gaia. Today the characters see Peter Saint-Denys on the street talking to an old Ethiopian man, they seems to be friends.

If the characters come close Peter will introduce the old man as “grandfather”, but won't say much more about him.

When they stand on the street one of the four children comes running toward the characters. But when he is 30 meters away a huge dog comes up to him and overturns him. It's obvious that the dog is trying to kill him.

The dog is a Dingo⁴ and it has hunted him down from the gate to Gaia at the waste dump. It will take the Dingo four rounds to kill the child.

To see the death of the child is very disturbing, the characters should roll an EGO-check.

See murder: -5

Unexpected: +5

Other: + point value.

Consider e.g. phobia for blood or dogs and Motherliness or Code of honour as protecting children. Disadvantages and advantages can affect the modification.

Even if the characters intervene before those four rounds have occurred, the child will die on the way to medical care.

If the characters can't kill the dog, police lieutenant Mesfin will fire his gun at a safe distance and kill it. He won't allow anyone to touch the dog as he thinks it is infected with rabies.

When the dog is dead the Game Master can let a character hear the old man talk to Peter.

“This is madness, Addis Ababa is a dangerous city. You have to protect the children, promise me that”.

⁴ Legion of Darkness, page 158.

When the doctors (or some one else) examine the body they find out that the child is a bit strange, it has a muscular body, strange teeth and is rather hairy.

This information will spread and soon will *Bianca da Figueira*⁵ at the police force have the information.

She won't accept any disturbance of the Illusion and if necessary she will send policemen to take the body away.

That night wild "dogs" howls at the moon and hunts on the streets of Addis Ababa. Only a fool goes out this night.

The old man is dead!

The heat is getting stronger, the rainy season is coming to its end, and today the air ripples in the heat.

It's the last day of the conference and all the participants will be at Médecins Sans Frontières office.

The three remaining children wait next to a small wall not far from the entrance. But their presence makes the Illusion weaker and the pure wilderness from Gaia sweeps through the area once again. This time a policeman loses control, he screams (in Amharic or English) and attacks the children.

"Haven't I told you bastards to get the fuck out of here? Sons of whores and thieves ... this time you pay the price".

One of the children gets a direct hit in the head from his nightstick and falls to the ground bleeding. The old man isn't far away so he tries to stop the rage but is also beaten. The two remaining children flee and there is no way to stop them.

It's up to the Game Master to decide if the characters are near enough to stop the madness or not. Otherwise, police lieutenant Mesfin will take control over the situation.

Peter Saint-Denys is outside the office and hears the fight. He comes to the scene just in time to hear the old man say his last words.

"Peter my friend. Promise, promise to do anything to save the children. Look around, it's dangerous. They must grow ... so they can save the world".

Then the old man is dead.

The beaten child is taken away by the police and if anyone starts to ask questions he seems to have disappeared.

If the characters start to investigate where the two last children went, a man has seen one of them jump up on the roof of a bus with a Rastafari man. The last boy is nowhere to be found in this huge city, there are too many children.

Lunch with Peter

The characters are invited for lunch in a nice room with air-conditioning. The food is excellent and wine or beer is served.

Peter is a perfect host and the lunch goes on for several hours. He proposes deserts and a game of pool in his private quarters on the second floor.

As the Médecins Sans Frontières chief representative in Ethiopia Peter can do much to help the characters.

After the lunch he thanks them for their time and the characters leave to continue their work, whatever it is they do.

⁵ GM handbook – Ethiopia, page 5.

The waste dump

If the characters follow the four children from outside the office of Médecins Sans Frontières, they may be lead to the waste dump. This is an event that should be used only if it's important for the feeling of the adventure. The characters shall not get any information about the connection between Gaia and the children.

The waste dump can be outside the town or in an industry area with poor houses and small population. Either way the area is behind a tall fence with barbed wire, an armed man guards the gate. This is government property and the dump is used to hide away dangerous chemicals. Once a week a lorry with barrels comes during night and dumps the waste.

No one knows that a gate to Gaia has opened in this area, but the guard has heard strange noises and is scared.

From the outside it looks like the dump isn't used any more. Several huge piles of concrete raises ten meter high, and it looks very dangerous to walk among sharp iron bars, asphalt, broken glass etc.

The whole area is almost overgrown by high grass; witch makes it hard to move safe. In case of combat or running the characters must roll an AGL-check every second round, or taking falling damage⁶.

AGL - Check

Normal, during day light	+0
Hard, moon light, torch	+5
Extreme, total darkness	+10

Falling damage

Normal, concrete etc	+5
Dramatic AGL-failure	+10

In the middle of the area there is a small lake, that is almost two metres deep in the middle. Several barrels lie in and besides the stinking pool. The smell of petrol and other chemicals is strong.

This is a low exposure adventure so the characters shouldn't find any obvious clues that there is a gate to Gaia here. But if they come here by night a huge Dingo⁷ will sneak around in the high grass, the characters will hear its breath. If it's exposed in light or the characters come to close it will attack them.

There is one more danger at the dump, in the case where a character flees in panic the fear may temporarily break some of the boarder between Elysium and Gaia. The result is that small bushes with sharp thorns appear in the high grass, and the running character may get several wounds on hands and legs.

Roll one damage roll each round, it may be modified depending on armour.

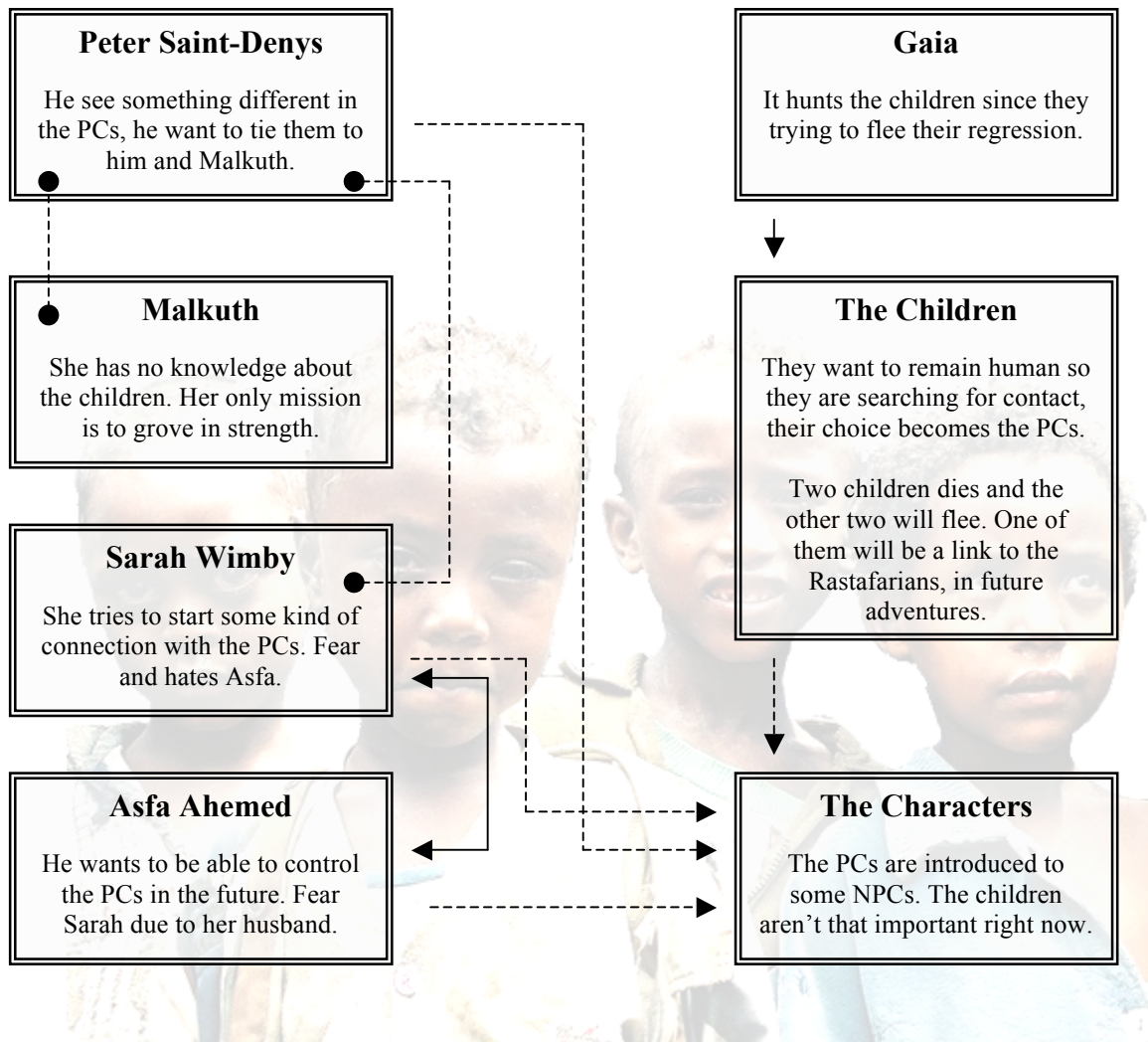
Damage from thorns

1-5	No damage
6-10	One scratch
11-15	Two scratches
16-20	Three scratches

If any of the four children find out that the characters are at the dump, they will immediately run away and hide. It's hard to follow or find them.

⁶ BtV, page 104.

⁷ Legion of Darkness, page 158.



The End

When the characters leave Peters lunch the adventure is over for this time. It is up to the Game Master and the players to decide what the characters will do now.

This happened during the adventure.

- The characters have talked to Peter Saint-Denys, Sarah Wimby and Asfa Ahemed who are three important NPCs.
- The characters have meet four children that have become transformed by the force of Gaia.

- The name of the campaign has, hopefully, been connected to the four children in this adventure. Nothing can be more wrong, but it's good if the players think so.

In the next adventure the characters will come to a small health centre. The senior doctor and founder of the Clinic is Buba Bajibe, a man that is very evil. He and his wife Sarah Wimby play important roles in the whole campaign.

It will be around one month before the next part of the campaign, which takes place in the area west of Addis Ababa in **November 2004**.