The Battle of Madre della Vittorio, 1498 - A *Lion Rampant* Scenario

The Struggle for the Relics of Santo Stephano in Condottiere Italy

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I. Historical Background

It is 1498. Pope Alexander VI sits on the Papal throne. He is one of the Bad Popes, destined to become infamous for lechery and nepotism - a real achievement for the popes of the era, considering the competition! King Charles VIII - perpetrator of the French invasion of Italy in the First Italian War - has died, but his successor has not yet renewed the fighting. The major families of Italy continue their internicene wars, not yet aware that their land is destined to become a battleground for external powers for a prolonged period: France, the Holy Roman Empire, and Spain. The Pope is a Borgia, and his family has great power in Rome. The Sforzas rule Milan (although they are soon to lose it to the next French invasion), and have ties to the Holy Roman Empire (Maxmillian is married, unhappily, to Bianca Maria

Sforza). The Orsini - a powerful Condottiere family with ties to Naples, Florence, Venice, and elsewhere - are the long-time foes of the Sforzas.

This scenario is set at the very end of the Condottiere period in Italy, before the Italian Wars make it plain that the small mercenary forces which have dominated Italy for centuries are no longer the ones which really matter. The French have invaded, and there has been considerable fighting in the south - they have taken much, but have lost it all in the subsequent conflict. The full force of the external powers has yet to be felt.

II. Scenario

This game is based on a fictional (and somewhat whimsical) premise, designed as a multi-player game where there are lots of opportunities to betray your friends and befriend your enemies. In short, it is made to allow Italian Condotierre to behave the way they are reputed to have done!

The premise: the remains of Santo Stephano have been missing for years, stolen from their resting place in Rome. It is of great interest to many when word leaks out that their location has been revealed, through visions, to a holy man living as a hermit in the Romagna. They are said to be buried at the foot of the statue of Beata Vergine Madre della Vittoria, crowning a hill near the city of Forli, a commune dominated by the Sforzas.

The tale spreads far and wide, and many quest after the relics of the martyr, knowing that the value of such is vast: the pilgrim's gifts which will be left at the church that holds those relics, whether in Rome or elsewhere, are of considerable value, and the goodwill of Pope Alexander VI (a Borgia) is guaranteed to whomsoever might return them to their rightful resting place, with the political and financial benefits that entails.

The Sforzas, Borgias, and Orsinis have all set out to recover the relics. They meet at the foot of Monte della Vergine, the site of the statue. A diplomatic conversation ensues, but the following battle is almost inevitable. The real question is, who will be fighting whom?

As many as 6 players can take part, with a minimum of 3. Players are allowed at the start of play, and at any point during the game, to have conversations with each other to create alliances. All conversation must be held within sight of the other players, but may be conducted in whispers or by exchanging written notes. The prize - the relics of Santo Stephano - may be divided in half, but not further subdivided. Two players may win, but no more. There are no rules regarding how any agreements are observed or enforced. Players are encouraged to be duplicitous, conniving, and faithless.

The alliegance of any player to a particular clan or city-state is strictly nominal: each player is in it for himself. In smaller games, some players may have control of more than one retinue, and these should be a single force (that is, the force of a single clan: Borgia, Sforza, or Orsini) when this happens. Otherwise, there are no rules regarding how retinues nominally from a single clan deal with each other. They are *supposed* to be friends, that is all.

To help with betrayal and mercenary motivations, each player (not retinue!) is granted a sum of 100 florins at the start of play. The relics of Santo Stephano are valued for game purposes

at 400 florins (although undoubtedly worth much more in the long term). Players are allowed to promise and/or give each other money at any point during play as a way of lending some weight to their agreements. The player with the highest cash value at the end of the game is the winner, regardless of whether this is in the form of relics or florins.

III. Forces

While three main forces are represented, they are divided into two *Lion Rampant* retinues apiece, so that up to 6 players may be accomodated. Each retinue has its own leader. With 3 players, each player takes one force. With 4 players, split one force between two players. With 5 players, split two forces. With 6 players, each one gets a single contingent (a "retinue" in the language of the rules). The forces involved are described below. Each listing has the unit type per the rules given in brackets.

A. Sforzas

Through his unhappy marriage with Bianca Maria Sforza, Emperor Maxmillian has ties with the rulers of Milan. To aid the Sforzas (and anger the French), Maximillian has lent (rented?) them some of his Landsknechte, which form part of the force sent to the Romagna. There are two commands, one Imperial, and the other Milanese:

Imperial Contingent: 2 x Landsknecht pikes/halberds/two-handers [Landsknecht Expert Foot Serjeants], 1 x Landsknecht crossbows/arquebus [Bidowers], 1 x German handgunners [Crossbowmen], 1 x dismounted Imperial knights [Foot Men-at-Arms]

Milanese Contingent: 1 x dismounted condottiere knights [Foot Men-at-arms], 1 x mounted condottiere knights [Mounted Men-at-Arms], 1 x *provisionati* handgunners [Crossbowmen] , 1 x *provisionati* spearmen [Foot Serjeants], 1 x bombards [Artillery]

B. Borgias

The Papal forces include a strong contingent of Swiss mercenaries and another of Italian troops:

Swiss Contingent: 2 x Swiss pikemen/halberds [Ferocious Foot], 1 x Swiss crossbows/handgunners [Bidowers], 1 x Swiss mounted crossbowmen/handgunners [Mounted Serjeants with Crossbows], 1 x Swiss knights [Mounted Men-at-Arms], 1 x bombards [Artillery]

Roman Contingent: 2 x dismounted condottiere knights [Foot Men-at-Arms], 1 x Roman militia [Mixed Foot Yeomanry], 1 x *provisionati* crossbowmen [Crossbowmen], 1 x Roman peasants [Serfs], 1 x condottiere mounted retainers [Mounted Serjeants]

C. Orsini

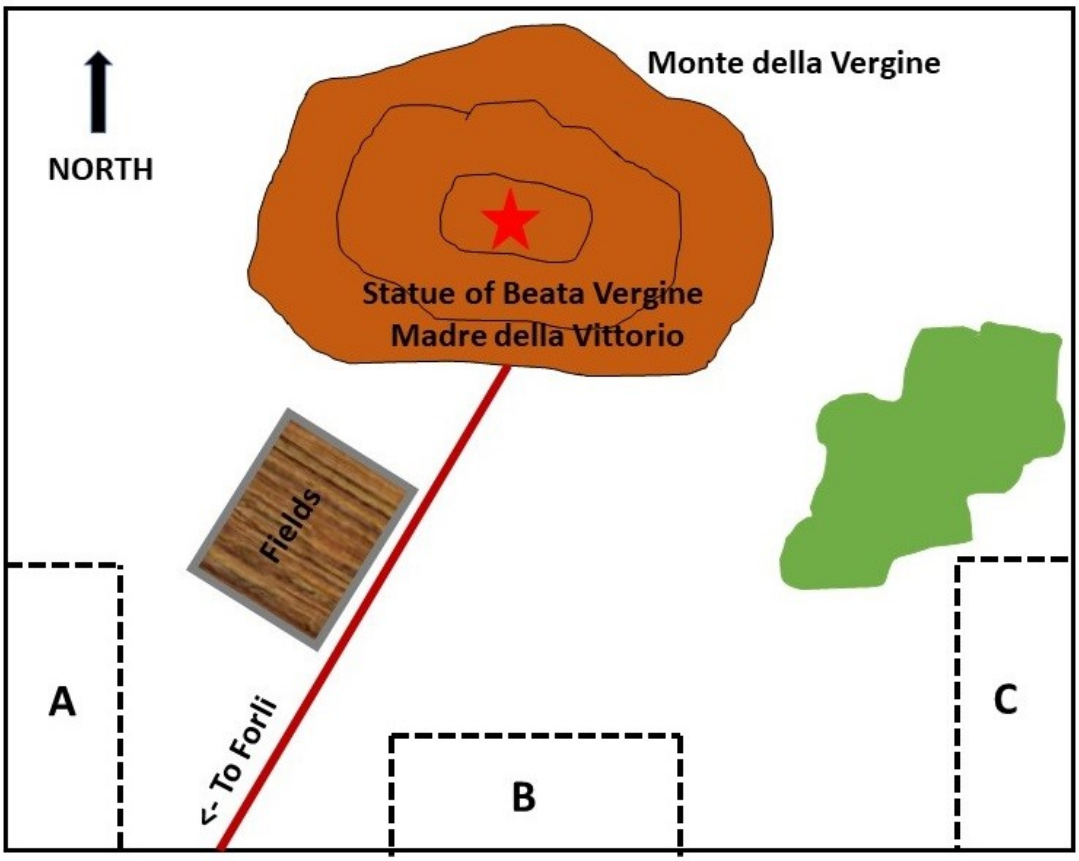
The Orsini are the sworn enemies of the Sforzas, and see this as an opportunity to injure their traditional foes by stealing the valuable relics out from under their noses. They field two commands, both assembled through their various contacts as a powerful Condottiere family.

One is from Siena, the other from Florence, cities which have their own history of conflict and competition in Tuscany. (Siena, while traditionally an enemy of Florence, has recently changed its policies under the guidance of Pandolfo Petrucci.) Note that while slightly stronger than their opponents, the Orsini also start in between their potential enemies.

Florentine Contingent: 1 x dismounted condottiere knights [Foot Men-at-Arms], 1 x mounted condottiere knights [Mounted Men-at-Arms], 1 x *provisionati* Billmen [Expert Foot Serjeants], 1 x English longbowmen [Expert Archers], 1 x Neapolitan *rodeleros* (sword &: bucklermen) [Expert Foot Serjeants]

Sienese Contingent: 1 x dismounted condottiere knights [Foot Men-at-Arms], 1 x mercenary Billmen (Expert Foot Serjeants), 1 x mercenary longbows [Expert Archers], 1 x Sienese militia [Mixed Foot Yeomanry], 1 x Flemish pikemen [Foot Serjeants]

IV. Tabletop Set-Up



The table should be a minimum of 4 x 6 feet. The Monte della Vergine is a rocky hill located at the center of the north (long) edge of the table. It is rough and provides cover. The fields (vineyards or wheat) are also rough - they are surrounded by a stone wall/hedge which provides cover to units immediately behind it - the crops themselves provide no cover. The wall is an obstacle for movement purposes. The woods are also rough and provide cover.

The Borgia contingents set up in area A. The Orsini set up in area B. The Sforzas set up in area C. Players should set up their retinues so they are not intermingled, and should dice for

exact poisition within their area if disagreements arise. All clan forces should be equidistant from the statue at the start of play, measuring from their closest unit - the exact dimensions of the set-up areas should be adjusted to allow this (area A and area C may need to be extended northward, or even further east/west, so that they are the same distance from the statue as area B.)

The red star indicates the location of the statue of the Beata Vergine Madre della Vittorio. Any unit in contact with the statue may use a Move action to dig up the relics of Santo Stephano. At this point, they become a "convoy" as per the relevant rules given in Scenario G of the *Lion Rampant* rule book. They may at any point - at the controlling player's discretion - be split into two convoys, each containing half of the relics.

V. Game Length and Victory Conditions

The game will continue until all of the relics have been conveyed off the tabletop, or all players agree that it is over. Relics may only exit the tabletop on the board edge of the initial set-up areas - any given unit may only exit the board edge of their contingent's initial set-up area. Before play starts, a round of discussion/negotiation should take place. Other rounds may be held between turns. (Conversations held during the turn are permitted, but should be conducted so that they do not impede play.)

Players should dice for each contingent to establish the order in which each will attempt to activate units during the turn.

Players are each given 100 florins (we use metal pirate coins as 10-florin pieces) at the start of play. These may be exchanged, irrespective of where the players' units are. The money does not appear on the tabletop as such. If all of the units in a player's retinue are destroyed, the player who removes the final one from the tabletop will take possession of their treasure. Note that transfer of money may only be performed at three points during the game:

1. At the very beginning of any turn, before any player activations are made.
2. At the very start of each player's round of activations for the turn, and the activating player must either be a sender or recipient. (This stops players from performing "instant transfers" to other players in the seconds before their own demise. In 1498, the technology for this still lay well in the future!)
3. After the last turn of the game, to make good on deals for which money is owed. New deals are no longer permitted at this point.

At the end of the game, each half of the relics is assigned a value of 200 florins (400 total if not divided) and added to the number of florins each player is holding (not owed or promised). The winner(s) are those holding the largest cash value in florins. The honours of victory may be shared, although those winners with the largest surviving contingent will have bragging rights over the others.

For this game, florins replace the normal system of Glory points. Boasts may be added to the scenario if players desire, but boasts should be valued in florins at a suggested rate of 10 florins per Glory point. (As the condottiere captains of Italy were far more concerned with wealth than with glory, it is felt that boasts may appropriately be left out of the game.)

VI. Special Rules

All troop types are as per the rule book. There are two troop types involved in the game which are not described there - Artillery and Landsknechts. Landsknechts are Expert Foot Serjeants which retain the Schiltron special ability. Artillery is played according to the rules appearing on the *Dux Rampant* blog as suggested by the rules author:

- *Use 1 artillery model plus 6 crew (Your Leader can't be part of this unit).*
- *May be operated so long as 1 crewman is still alive.*
- *Points cost: 4 points (maximum of 1 artillery piece per Retinue).*
- *Range: Anywhere within line of sight on the tabletop.*
- *Shoot value: 7+.*
- *Damage: Roll 12 dice against the target unit, hitting on 3+. Ignore cover.*
- *Reload value: 10+. After a successful Shoot action, the artillery may not be fired again until a successful Reload action has taken place. This is carried out as a normal, ordered activation.*
- *May not move during the game and must be deployed in the player's deployment zone.*
- *If contacted, shot at, and for Courage tests, the crew count as Serfs at their current strength (6 models or less).*
- *The crew must maintain cohesion around the artillery model (not moving more than 3" beyond it).*

In addition, there is a special rule for the "bad war" between Landsknechts and Swiss mercenaries: Landsknechts must test for Wild Charges against any Swiss units within range. Swiss - already having the Wild Charge rule - will target Landsknechts by preference, and their Wild Charge activation tests are always successful against Landsknecht targets. (This is essentially the Hatred Special Rule from *Dragon Rampant*.)

Addendum: St. Stephano and the Dragon

We have played this scenario with some unexpected quasi-historical twists, just to keep players on their toes. Many of you will be familiar with Renaissance depictions of *St. George and the Dragon,* such as that by Raphael shown below:

Having decided that such images were certainly documentary proof of the existence of dragons in 15th Century Italy, we added one to our scenario. (Please note that while in depictions of St. George's feat his triumph is always being witnessed by an admiring woman of evident virtues, we have replaced her with a gnarly hermit in our version.)

There is a hermit who lives beside the statue of the *Vergine* at the top of the mountain. Players who reach the top of the mountain may choose to speak with the hermit before digging up the relics. This is a move action on the part of one unit, which may not then dig until the following turn. If the hermit is consulted, he will advise that there is a sleeping dragon which will awaken if disturbed, and will show the players where it lies. When they dig up the relics, the dragon only awakes on a roll of 1 on a single die (some clumsy soldier has hit it with a shovel). If the hermit has not been consulted, the dragon will awaken on a roll of 1-5 on the same die.

The dragon is a flying Greater Warbeast with Flame Attack, straight out of *Dragon Rampant*. The dragon is played by the game master (or any idle players whose retinues have already been destroyed). It will assume the last position in the turn sequence of the turn during which it awakens. Once awake, it will attack any of the annoying humans it sees, especially if they have dug up the relics.

This or similar ideas can add an unexpected turn to the game - we offer this one as inspiration, rather than as a stock part of the scenario. The key is not to overwhelm the game with fantasy elements, but to add something quasi-historical that has the right feel to it which the players do not expect.