

LEMURIAN CHRONICLES



Adventures & Background for *Barbarians of Lemuria*

Roudier

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

Free your inner barbarian!

Escape from boredom during a fatal stopover on the Island of Shelang, follow in the footsteps of an old dreamer and his Marvel, let your heart be your guide to the sanctuary of the Shanis, track down the wizard Ajhaskar and unravel his dark secrets, and don't forget to keep an eye on the three chests.

In Lemuria, there's always a treasure to steer clear of, a damsel to overlook and a sorcerer to rescue!

You're holding the English translation of the first French supplement to the role-playing game *Barbarians of Lemuria*, Mythic Edition.

Lemurian Chronicles gives you additional background information and new ready-to-play adventures to build on the sagas you've started with the Mythic edition—which you'll also need in order to play.

Here's what you'll find inside:

🐉 A foreword by Simon Washbourne, designer of *Barbarians of Lemuria*.

🐉 The first detailed description of the Khanate region, its mysteries and its people, with new heroic origins and beasts only found in these harsh northern climes.

🐉 The Calendar of Satarla, brought to life with local celebrations and adventure seeds.

🐉 Five brand new ready-to-play adventures. From the frozen wastes of Khanate to the Fire Coast by way of the Axos Mountains, your footloose and penniless Heroes will embark on gripping and death-defying adventures that form an epic tale!



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LEMURIAN CHRONICLES

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

Mythic Edition,

a game created by **Simon Washbourne**, published by **Filigree Forge**.

This Sourcebook is the English translation of *Chroniques lémurienes*,
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Foreword

by Simon Washbourne
designer of *Barbarians of Lemuria*

I was delighted when I received a request from Vincent Basset to write a brief foreword to the English translation of *Chroniques Lemuriennes*, because, when I first saw the artwork of the French edition (and in particular Emmanuel Roudier's gorgeous cover), I felt that us English speakers would be deprived if there wasn't an English version of this fantastic book. Not only is the volume filled with glorious illustrations and laid out beautifully, but the quality of the tome itself is outstanding.

Lemuria is a great place for sword and sorcery adventure - a wild, untamed, almost prehistoric world built upon the ruins of much older civilizations and filled with strange beasts and a wide diversity of peoples. Reading through the five adventures and the additional background I am pleased to see that the authors have not only kept to this original vision but have also built brilliantly upon those foundations to make such a wonderful addition to the *Barbarians of Lemuria* story. It's also great to see the Kalukan (one of my favourite races in any rpg setting) having centre stage, not only on the front cover but also in one of the scenarios.

This book gives you many hours of great gaming and is a work to treasure. Every fan of *BoL* should own at least one copy. If you've never played *BoL* before, this work is probably the best reason to start. Thank you Ludospherik for producing such a fine piece of work.





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Bored to Death

28

On their way to Liu, the Heroes get stuck on the Island of Shelang when early winter storms prolong their stopover. After taking up lodgings in the fortress that broods over the small, wind-swept isle, they quickly find themselves overrun by nasty zombies with pierced foreheads. The lady of the keep has decided to spice up her humdrum existence by dabbling in necromancy! Will the Heroes manage to root out the Bloodless sorcerer that has been walled-up in the deepest chamber of the daunting edifice, and who has been whispering impious spells in the ear of the deranged lady?

Or will the entire island become a horrific bloodbath?

Männ's Oldest Dream

42

Our Heroes are preparing to settle into their winter quarters in a small Valgardian village at the foot of the Axos Mountains when the unexpected arrival of a young woman, Joanna Männ, upsets their plans. A tribe of Winged Men has attacked the small mountain fort where she lives with her uncle, forcing her to flee. Joanna is looking for a few brave souls to escort her back up the mountain to learn her uncle's fate. The Heroes will soon discover the eldritch obsessions of old Zacharias Männ and his niece, and have to deal with the (justified) hostility of the Winged Men of Axos.

The Serpent Bride

58

The Heroes have been invited by Turmar Latia to celebrate his marriage to the ravishing Jil Sendak, a young heiress from one of the noblest families in Satarla. But his fiancée is secretly in love with Eormo, a dashing sky-pilot from a poor jungle tribe. Eormo decides to throw caution to the wind and listen to his heart: following the customs of his people, he kidnaps Jil just before the ceremony as the stunned guests look on in disbelief. Our Heroes will be asked to hunt down the fugitives, who've fled to Eormo's tribal village. They'll soon discover the bizarre wedding rites of the jungle people, who are ruled by a creature that is even more bizarre...and much deadlier than they could've ever imagined.

The Tower of Ajhaskar

76

The wizard Ajhaskar, trusted advisor to King Colmus of Lysor, has not shown his face at court for many days. Servants were dispatched to his tower with a royal summons, but once they passed through the wizard's front door...they never returned. The Heroes are "asked" (or you might say "forced") to enter the feared magician's lair to find out what happened to him. But they'll soon discover that the mysterious tower is only the beginning of their adventure...

The Three Chests

102

A detachment of Kalukan Sentinels belonging to the Witch Queen have been sent to Halakh on a temporary assignment to serve Rutgarr, a Grey Druid from the Cult of Nemmereth. He orders them to deliver three chests to mysterious destinations without bothering to explain why. It's only at the climax of the adventure that the Heroes will learn the terrible truth: Rutgarr is in fact the sworn enemy of their queen, and he's manipulated the unwitting Kalukan to recover a magic artefact which, once in his possession, may lead to the downfall of Methyn Sarr, the Witch Queen of the Fire Coast.



Background Information

THE CALENDAR OF SATARLA

A common calendar has never been established in Lemuria due to the many different peoples and countries that dot the continent. Some regions simply mark the time by the phases of the Moon or the changing of the seasons, while other regions have adopted more sophisticated dating systems. The calendar of Satarla is now widely used due to the city's power and influence, but some of the other cities, such as Tyrus, are vehemently opposed to adopting the Satarlan calendar.

Satarla uses a calendar based on the solar year, with twelve months of thirty days. There are also five “floating” days, for which the date is different each year. The city’s college of astrologists assembles at the start of the year to determine the precise date of the five floating days. They’re considered to be “special days” that are inserted between two days in the normal counting of the month. These are holy days to celebrate various divinities, and it’s considered to be a very bad omen if the astrologists make a mistake in their arcane calculations. Every four years, the calendar includes a sixth floating day that the entire city awaits with dread. And of course, Satarla has many other holidays throughout the year that always fall on the same date.

The first four months of the year (Vishka, Isthā, Sadha and Vana) are the season of clement weather when nature begins to bloom. These are the most auspicious months for marriages and newborns. The next five months (Pada, Vina, Tika, Sha and Pausa) are the hottest time of year. It rains little and the heat is suffocating. The year comes to a close with a long rainy period (Magha, Phal and Chatra); the last month, Chatra, is often filled with foggy days and cool evenings.

MONTH

SEASON

Viskha Isthā Sadha Vana	<i>Season of Renewal</i>
Pada Vina Tika Sha Pausa	<i>Dry Season</i>
Magha Phal Chatra	<i>Rainy Season</i>

THE FLOATING HOLY DAYS

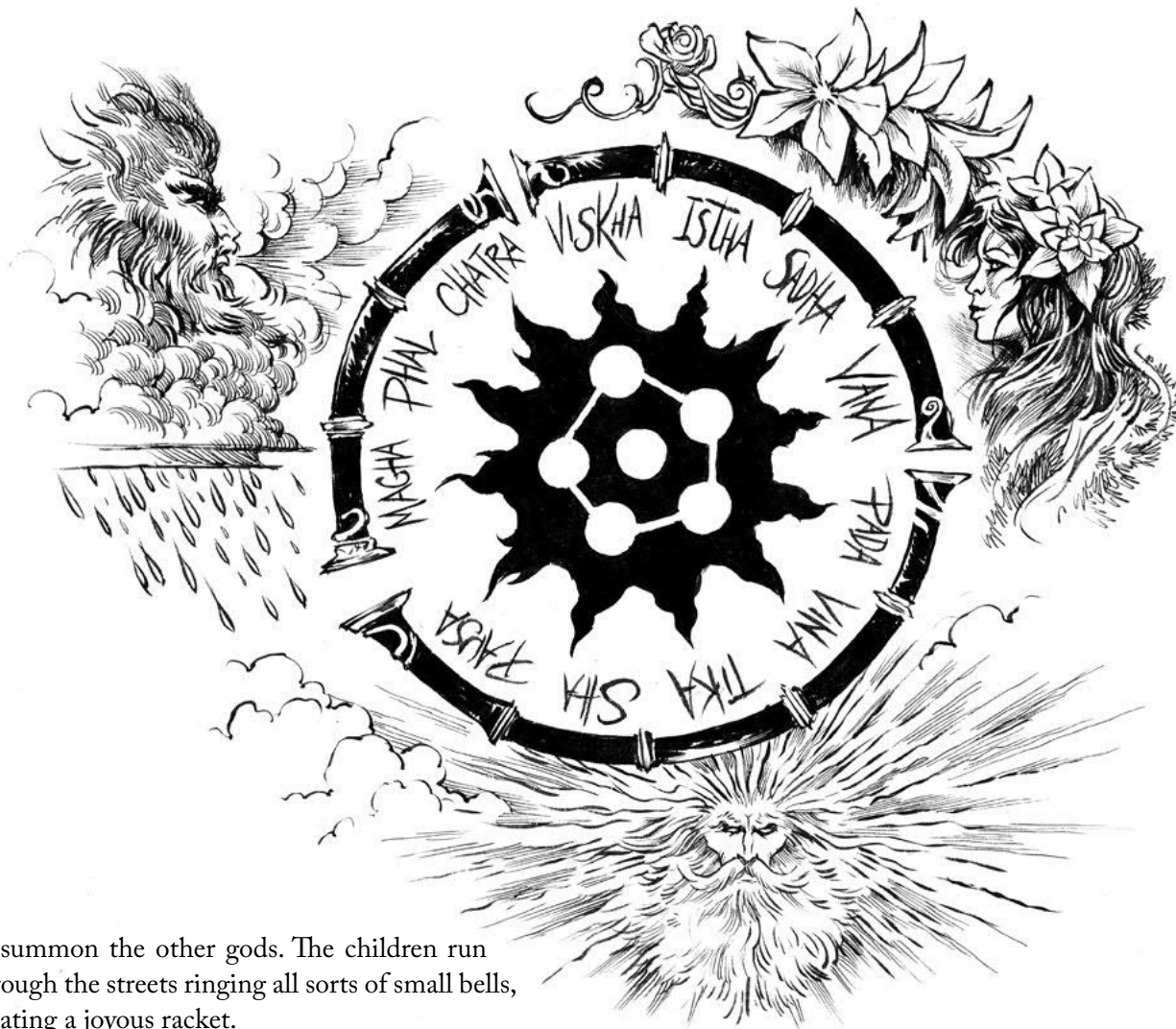
The Day of Veils

This holiday, which may occur in any month of the year, is dedicated to Nemmereth. It’s a day of veneration for the deceased, with fasting and silence to honour the memory of those who have begun the long sleep. The people don veils and visit the graves of their ancestors to leave small offerings. At nightfall, life returns to the city. Joyful celebrations fill the streets and large banquets are held. It is said that the souls of the departed return to the world of the living for one evening to attend the many feasts.

Hurm’s Day

This holiday, which usually takes place during the month of Vina, is dedicated to Hurm, the Father of the Gods. Wrestling tournaments are held in Satarla and the surrounding villages, along with other demonstrations of physical strength and agility that Hurm is said to delight in. The bells in the city ring throughout the day in honour of Hurm’s Great Bell, which he strikes with his sceptre





to summon the other gods. The children run through the streets ringing all sorts of small bells, creating a joyous racket.

Great Harvest Festival

This floating holiday is the yearly peasant festival to celebrate the coming harvests. Its date depends a great deal on the weather, and may take place during the month of Pada, for the first harvests, or during the month of Pausa to celebrate the year-end harvests. There are often heated debates amongst the astrologists to decide which period should be chosen.

Fire Festival

This festival day is in honour of Zalkyr the Bright, the Lord of Light, and should take place, if the astrologists hit their mark, on the hottest day of the year. This floating day is normally inserted during the months of Tika or Sha. It's traditional for each home to keep a fire burning and for everyone to dress in white. If by some mischance the weather turns sour during the Fire Festival (or, heaven forbid, if it should rain), the Satarlans consider this to be a bad omen.

Day of the Five Rains

This day is associated with the Thunder Lord Dyr, the God of Storms, and is supposed to take place on the wettest day of the year. It's usually during the month of Phal. Beginning a voyage on the Day of the Five Rains is generally considered to be unlucky. To ward off ill fortune, it's customary to drink a glass of water mixed with a few drops of bouphon bile, which is said to represent the stormy nature of the gods.

Dark Day

Every four years, a sixth floating day, a day dreaded by all, is added to the calendar. The Dark Day is dedicated to infernal powers and to the Dark Gods, who receive sacrifices to appease their anger. It's a day of bedlam when all notions of law and order are thrown out the window. On the following day, everything returns to normal. For the space of twenty-four hours, the entire



city anxiously holds its breath: the Satarlan city watch deserts the streets and any crimes committed on this day go unpunished. Despite the reigning chaos, there are actually fewer problems than one might expect. The honest folk stay home behind locked doors, and any would-be thieves are faced with a conundrum: how do you rob people when they're keeping close watch over their valuables and expecting you to come at any minute? Mercenaries fill the city during the weeks leading up to the Dark Day, as work is easy to find. The wealthy families, shopkeepers, merchants and even the temples are all looking to hire someone to protect their possessions. Even so, the city is often in chaos, as quarrels amongst neighbours degenerate into violence or noblemen wage bloody vendettas. In Satarla, telling someone you'll "see them on the Dark Day" is considered to be a death threat.

FIXED HOLIDAYS

The floating holy days figure among the most important festivals of the year, but the Satarlan calendar also has many holidays that fall on the same date each year, either to honour one of the Twenty Gods or to celebrate a member of royalty or an important civic event. The following are just a few examples.

The Day of Waves

On the fifth day of Vishka, the people of Satarla throng the streets with processions leading down to the port. Important sacrifices are made to Shazzadion, the Sea Lord, to beseech his good graces in hopes that he will grant them more clement weather after the long and rainy winter, when the dense fog often makes travel difficult. Fishing boats, merchant galleys and warships fill the bay of Satarla with a dazzling display of their colourful sails. Sacrificed animals and all sorts of offerings are thrown into the waves, as the deep notes of conches reverberate in the air.

It's said that, in the old days, a galley slave was sacrificed to the Sea Lord on the Day of Waves, but luckily this practice no longer exists.

Founding of Satarla Festival

The eighth day of Istva is the date (according to the legends) when Satarla was founded. It's also the feast day of Grondil the Builder God. Long processions of his priests walk through the streets sprinkling the walls of houses and public buildings with the blood of animals sacrificed to the god. The meat is then distributed to the people for merry banquets.

All Moats' Day

This holiday, celebrated on the seventh day of the month of Sadha, is in honour of Afyra, the Goddess of Life. Garlands of flowers adorn every balcony and the women of the city don their finest clothing and jewellery. The name comes from an ancient legend that says one day Piandra, the mother of Afyra, was walking along the moat of a palace in Mezzechesh, the realm of the gods, when she had a revelation that she was expectant with child. But some popular folktales give a much more colourful explanation for this evocation of a damp and deep place in association with Afyra...

King Davym's Day

This festival was only recently added to the calendar to celebrate the Satarlan army's victory over the forces of Tyrus about twenty years ago. On the 25th day of Vina, the city commemorates the triumphant return of its king, Davym Tarv, from his victorious campaign with a military parade through the streets of the city. Afterwards, an important archery competition takes place. The competition is in fact Satarla's way of thumbing its nose at the famed longbow men of Tyrus, renowned for their prowess. It goes without saying that this new festival has done nothing to help patch things up between the two rival cities.



ADVENTURE SEEDS

The Satarlan holidays can mainly be used to add more background details to your escapades in Lemuria, but why not make one of them the focal point for a full adventure? The following are a few ideas to get you started.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

A sect of fanatical druids have rebuilt an abandoned temple in Satarla and used their unholy magic to corrupt the bells of the old edifice. When they're rung during the Hurm's Day celebrations, their haunting tolls provoke unpredictable and violent behaviour amongst the people in the neighbourhood, resulting in wanton bloodshed and scenes of panic. Who can step in to silence the accursed bells?

A Fistful of Seeds

A few days before the upcoming harvests and the Great Harvest Festival, hordes of purgats (see *Barbarians of Lemuria*—referred to as *BoL* for the remainder of the book—page 118) invade the fields of crops around Satarla and start to wreak havoc. The astrologists hold an emergency meeting, and foretell that the scourge will only end “when the mother of evil has been destroyed.” Mercenaries are hired by the king to discover what's behind the curse before Satarla is ravaged by famine.

The cause of the disaster turns out to be a humongous female purgat that's spawning wave after wave of the small rodents. But is the monster merely an abomination of nature, or the handiwork of some nefarious witchcraft?

Broken Arrow

The winner of the archery contest held on King Davym's Day is to receive a golden arrow encrusted with precious gems. A group of longbow men from Tyrus, offended by the competition held to mock their defeat, decide to humiliate King Davym of Satarla by stealing the golden arrow from the shop of the jeweller who crafted it. The Heroes are asked to bring back the precious prize without arousing any suspicion before the archery competition takes place...or maybe it's the Heroes themselves who were hired to steal it in the first place?

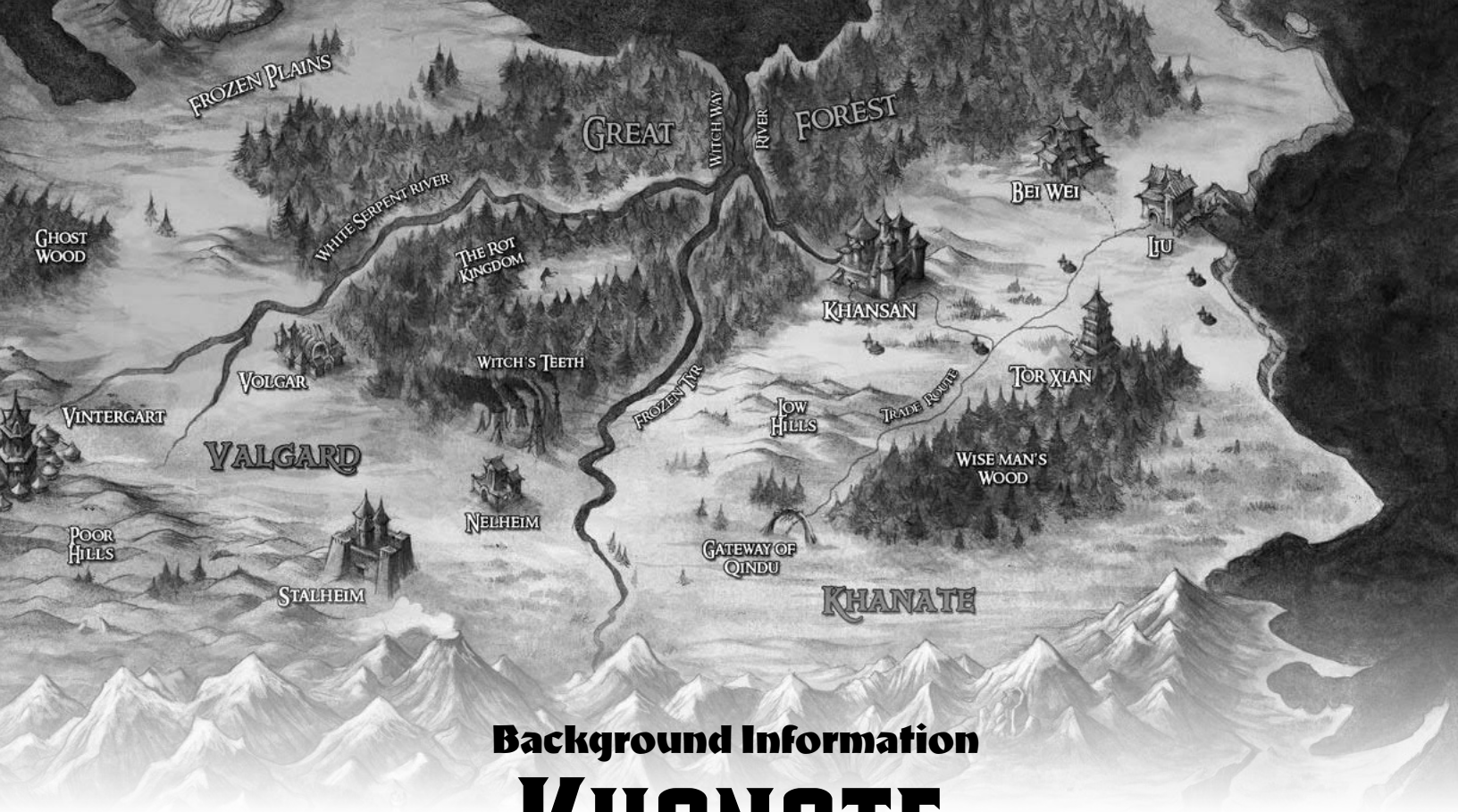
Catch Me If You Can

A pair of star-crossed lovers from two feuding merchant families decide that the Dark Day, when chaos reigns in Satarla, will offer them the perfect diversion to elope. They dream of a better life far away from the city, where the blind stupidity of their respective families will no longer keep them from each other's arms. A ship awaits them in the port to carry them away to a new world filled with love and happiness.

A group of mercenaries, who'd originally been hired by one of the two feuding families to protect their possessions during the sinister holiday, now find themselves hastily dispatched to hunt down the young lovers. The rival family does the same, and a headlong chase begins through the streets and along the docks of the city, where the most vile and reprehensible acts play out before the Heroes' eyes on this dreaded day.







Background Information

KHANATE

OVERVIEW

Imposing natural boundaries enclose the Khanate region in the northeast of Lemuria. The massive Axos Mountain chain separates Khanate from the Plains of Klaar to the south, while the Frozen Tyr River forms the border with Valgard to the west. Its exposure to the Eastern Ocean makes the weather in Khanate a bit more clement than in Valgard, but it's still a frigid and unforgiving climate with long, bitter winters.

The south of Khanate is covered with endless leagues of treeless grasslands. Further north, beyond the Wise Man's Wood, these steppes progressively give way to barren peat bogs that extend all the way to a vast subarctic forest bordered by permanently frozen tundra.

Khanate was undoubtedly settled in successive waves during the First and Second Ages of Man. It's remained relatively isolated from the southern countries. The local populations have always had dealings with the rest of Lemuria (to varying

degrees) throughout their history, but for people from the South, Khanate remains an exotic land with strange customs.

Three different ethnic groups inhabit the region. The Ghatai are a nomadic people from the southern Steppes. They never established any cities of their own, but many generations ago they conquered their neighbours, the Xi Lu, who were earlier inhabitants of the region. The Xi Lu originally established a brilliant urban civilization before falling into decadence under a series of petty kings known for their cruelty and corruption. They had been easy pickings for the Ghatai in their thirst for conquest. The third group, the mysterious Wei, eke out a meagre existence in the harsh Northern Ice Wastes, where they've rarely been bothered by the ambitions of their southern neighbours—after all, who would be crazy enough to want to fight over a country buried under ice and snow, where the endless winter is the only true sovereign?



HEROIC ORIGINS

Below are a few new origins, along with their regional traits, that you can choose for Heroes if you'd like to create a character from Khanate in addition to those from the other countries found in the Mythic edition of *Barbarians of Lemuria* (see page 17 and following).

Bei Wei

The Wei, a people of the boreal forests, are short and stocky (the men are rarely taller than five and a half feet) with round faces, flattened noses and dark skin and hair. Their slanted eyes (black or brown) have an intense expression about them that can be rather unsettling—at least to an outsider who meets them for the first time.

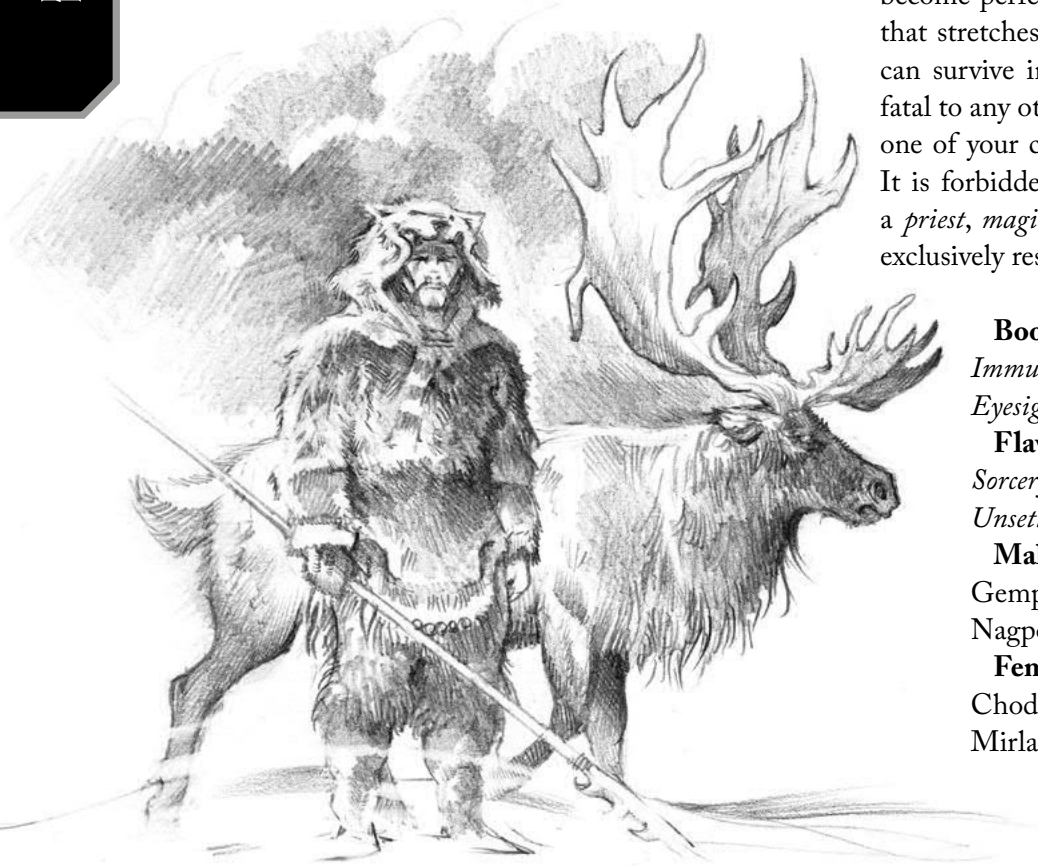
The Wei are herders of xalibu (a domesticated type of large deer), trappers and woodcutters. They've become perfectly accustomed to the frozen tundra that stretches to the far reaches of the North, and can survive in harsh environments that would be fatal to any other people. If you are a Wei character, one of your careers must be *barbarian* or a *hunter*. It is forbidden amongst the Wei for a man to be a *priest*, *magician* or *physician*, as these careers are exclusively reserved for women.

Boons: *Alert, Beast-Friend, Disease Immunity, Fearless, Healing Touch, Keen Eyesight, Mighty Shot, Tundra-Born.*

Flaws: *Country Bumpkin, Distrust of Sorcery, Feels the Heat, Illiterate, Taciturn, Unsettling.*

Male Names: Bongyur, Dongge, Drugpa, Gempo, Jungnen, Kamzo, Kempo, Lungpo, Nagpo, Nyetri, Phagpa, Sengtsen.

Female Names: Bkrubati, Chantra, Chodra, Jigmei, Lhalung, Logzen, Meito, Mirlapa, Paljie, Samaye, Santara, Tangba.



The languages of Khanate

Ghatai: This is the language spoken by the nomadic tribes in southern Khanate. It has certain similarities with an ancient dialect of Lemurian, but also borrows heavily from Pinxi (see below)—in particular the Pinxi vocabulary. With a bit of effort and a lot of patience, a person who speaks Lemurian can have a simple conversation with someone in Ghatai. It was originally only a spoken language, but a written form now exists using the Pinxi alphabet.

Pinxi: This is the native language of the Xi Lu, which they still speak amongst themselves. Most Xi Lu are also capable of speaking a simple form of Gathai, the official language of the government of the Great Khan.

Wei: The Wei have their own language, which is very difficult for outsiders to learn because of its strange sonorities, including many clicking noises with the tongue. The Wei have no written language, and their customs and know-how are transmitted orally.



Ghatai (Steppes of Khanate)

The Ghatai have copper-coloured skin, and their hair may be varying shades of brown or red. Their almond-shaped eyes are normally black or brown, but may be light or dark blue in rare cases. They're of average height but are sturdy and thick-skinned, due to the brutal life they lead in an inhospitable region.

The Ghatai nomads and herders are the lords of the vast steppes between the Axos Mountains in the south and the Wise Man's Wood to the north. Most Ghatai spend half their lives in the saddle, but some have become sedentary after having conquered the cities of the Xi Lu. If your character comes from one of the nomadic Ghatai tribes, one of your careers must be *barbarian* or *mercenary*.

Boons: *Hard-to-Kill, Keen Eyesight, Plains-Born, Night Sight, Trademark Weapon (Ghatai bow or whip).*

Flaws: *Country Bumpkin, Feels the Heat, Hot-Headed, Illiterate, Landlubber, Untrustworthy.*

Male Names: Akta, Alagh, Chimeg, Gentulga, Gorgeg, Khubilai, Mangai, Nemtar, Subotai, Telagu, Ulba, Zhengar.

Female Names: Bolaarma, Enthu, Erdene, Kushi, Narrantseg, Ner, Odval, Oyunn, Setseg, Silta, Suren, Yeshe.

Ghatai weaponry

Ghatai Bow: d6, 75', two-handed (no *penalty* if used when riding).

The emblematic weapon of the Ghatai is a composite bow that is particularly well suited for shooting from the saddle. The Ghatai armed forces are mainly cavalrymen armed with these bows. In battle, the Ghatai prefer harrying their foes in raids instead of making frontal charges.

Whip: d6L

This whip, a tool of the trade for the Ghatai herdsman, can also be a deadly weapon in the right hands. Some of the Ghatai cavalrymen have even made it their speciality.





Khansan, Liu, Tor Xian

The three major towns in Khanate are mainly inhabited by the Xi Lu, the native people of the region who have come under Ghatai rule. The Xi Lu have brown skin, black hair, slanted eyes and very little body hair. Their society is the product of a brilliant past civilization, and the Xi Lu place a great deal of importance on learning and the arts. They're also skilful and audacious merchants.

Boons: *Artistic, Excellent Laboratory, Excellent Library, Friends in High Places, Great Wealth, Learned, Resistant to Sorcery, Savant, Silver Tongue.*

Flaws: *City Dweller, Cravings, Greed, Non-Combatant, Obsession, Unprepared.*

Male Names: Bei, Chei Liu, Fei, Fen, Ji Lu, Leng, Lie Tse, Qi, Tsai, T'sson Du, Xian Go, Ze Dong.

Female Names: An, Chuang, Fang Yin, Hsi, Jia Len, Li Qin, Lo Siu, Ming Hui, Nia, Phu Lu, Shen, Xia, Yinyu.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF KHANATE

Bei Wei

Bei Wei is the northernmost city in all of Lemuria and the only city of the Wei, a people who migrated south from the glacial sea in ancient times. The legends say that they fled their native lands to escape from the ice demons that haunt the boreal regions. It's a relatively primitive town, made up of dry stone, semi-underground dwellings covered by thick layers of peat moss and perfectly adapted to the frigid climate of the region. The Wei are woodsmen, trappers and herders. They harvest timber from the Great Forest, raise herds of xalibu and sell the furs of arctic animals to merchants from Khansan and Liu.

Bei Wei was built over hot springs, which makes life a bit easier for its inhabitants. In a deserted area in the heart of the city, a column of boiling water erupts from a geyser at regular intervals. This natural wonder is a source of fearful reverence for the Wei. Any criminals sentenced to death are tied to a large rock next to the geyser, to be boiled alive by the powerful blast of scalding water and steam.

The city is governed by the Council of Widows, an assembly of wise old women, witches, shamans and healers. The council is exclusively female; amongst the Wei, men are forbidden to practice magic or to become priests.

Two generations ago, the Great Khan of Khansan decided to conquer Bei Wei. He dispatched his army during the short northern summer, but his troops were annihilated by a blizzard the likes of which had never been seen at that time of year. The Khan's successors took this to be a lesson, and have left the mysterious people in peace ever since. It's said that the Wei made a pact with the demons of the North, and that they worship the ice and snow spirits.



Wise Man's Wood

This dense forest of fir trees owes its name to Fen Mei, a sage from ancient times who was renowned for his great wisdom. Many tales and legends still exist about his exploits. It was Fen Mei's custom to stroll through these woods when he needed to ponder over a particularly difficult problem. They say that he vanished one day during one of these promenades, when he was already well over a hundred years old. According to the legends, the old sage is still walking beneath the trees, so absorbed in his thoughts that he's forgotten to die. There are always a few brave souls, thirsty for wisdom and truth, who wander along the paths in the forest hoping to run across the legendary sage.

The people of Tor Xian harvest trees from the forest, as the wood is highly prized at the shipyards in Liu. Besides the woodcutters, hunters and charcoal burners, many learned men also adventure beneath the forest's shadowy branches because it is here, and only here, that a rare variety of juniper grows, called pa-lo. Its dark berries are eagerly sought after by physicians and alchemists. When properly prepared, the pa-lo berries have special healing virtues, which have earned them the name of "berries of long life."

The Great Forest

This immense taiga covering the north of Khanate is a wild, uncharted territory dominated by conifer forests and dotted with lakes and rivers. The edges of the forest are harvested for wood, and herds of xalibu are also brought to the pastures along its borders. But only trappers in search of precious furs dare to penetrate into the heart of the Great Forest to brave the wild beasts and the harsh climate. The Great Forest is home to the dreaded "Spirits of the North," and a source of dark whisperings...many a brave man has entered these woods, never to be seen again.

It's on the eastern edge of the forest that the Wei harvest blue lichen, which they sell to wealthy Xi Lu at astronomical prices (see below).

In the Great Forest that lies west of Khansan, walking dead from the Rot Kingdom have recently been seen beyond the Frozen Tyr. It's not the first time they've made incursions into the region, but the increasing number of sightings is disturbing nonetheless... What (or who?) is making the undead travel east of the river?



Blue Lichen

Blue lichen is mainly found on the eastern edge of the Great Forest. During the spring thaw, small bluish patches of the plant are scraped off the rocks exposed by the melting snow and ice. The lichen is then crushed into a powder. It's a powerful hallucinogenic that induces a euphoric, trance-like state when ingested or smoked. The wealthy Xi Lu enjoy partaking of the lichen to momentarily forget their toil and trouble. The lichen is also used in certain alchemistic preparations and magic rituals; amongst the Wei, only female shamans and witches are allowed to take the powerful drug. Unfortunately, blue lichen can also be dangerous as it can cause bouts of amnesia, which in severe cases may be permanent.

Khansan

Khansan is the seat of the Great Khan's kingdom, and is the most important city in the region. The Ghatai "nobility" rules over the Xi Lu, who make up the majority of the city's population. Although the two ethnic groups still tend to sniff their noses at each other, the populations are beginning to mix. The uncouth Ghatai have come to rely on the Xi Lu scribes, artisans and merchants, while the Xi Lu have gotten used to life under the rule of the "barbarians"; sure they reek of parvalus dung, but they've turned out to be less cruel than the former kings. It's said that the Xi Lu rulers of old were brutal tyrants, well versed in black magic, who constantly warred with one another. Amongst the learned, some whisper that the former Xi Lu lords were descendants of the Sorcerer-Kings who escaped from the battle of Hydral Chasm after their crushing defeat and found refuge north of the Axos Mountains.

Akta-Tul, the current khan, has seen many winters and increasingly depends on his minister Chi Lang, a Xi Lu who has risen to the highest office in Khanate. As is often the case with the Ghatai, a bloody power struggle over the khan's succession appears to be brewing between his two oldest sons, Bara-Tul and Ulba-Tul. His advanced age has done nothing to cool Akta-Tul's lecherous cravings however; he proudly boasts a harem with more than a hundred women, and is always on the lookout for an exotic new beauty from some far corner of Lemuria.

The city abounds with palaces, temples and public edifices built when the Xi Lu civilization was at its height. The Twenty Gods of Lemuria are worshipped here (sometimes under different names), but the veneration of ancestral spirits, specific to this part of Lemuria, is also very important. One of the most unique manifestations of this devotion is the immense Garden of the Ancestors, a wooded parkland in the heart of Khansan. The bones of the deceased, after being recovered from their graves following a ritual time period, are brought here to erect works of art, small sanctuaries, bridges and pyramids of bones and skulls. These strange and macabre customs are a constant source of amazement for visitors to the region.

The Low Hills to the south of Khansan are rich in natural resources, and many small villages in the area earn their livelihood from them. There is a rock salt mine where slaves and criminals toil away, and also several deposits of a red clay encrusted with small, sparkling crystals. After it's been fired in a kiln, the clay becomes a stunningly beautiful yellowish-red. Pottery made from Khansan clay is renowned throughout Lemuria for its elegance and refinement.



Liu

The city of Liu is relatively new, and mainly made of wood (stone constructions are still rare). It's a bustling, cosmopolitan city, filled with life at all hours. Liu has the only port in Khanate that is large enough for high tonnage merchant vessels. Trade has recently picked up with the major ports from the South, resulting in newfound prosperity. Ships from Urceb, Lysor, Parsool and Satarla can now be seen in the port alongside the Xi Lu junks and galleys. Navigation can be quite tricky along the coast of Khanate, in particular during the winter, and pirates are always on the prowl. But it's still much quicker than travel by land, as the merchant caravans have to voyage over the steppe, cross the Axos Mountains and pass through the seemingly endless Klaar Plains before they reach the affluent cities on the Gulf of Satarla.

A Ghatai military governor is appointed by the great khan to run the city, with the assistance of a council made up of the city's most powerful merchants. But the real ruler in Liu is money. The port has become so essential to the city's prosperity that it's the traders who now have the upper hand. Corruption is rampant, and organized crime has recently become a problem as the underworld continues to expand its influence.



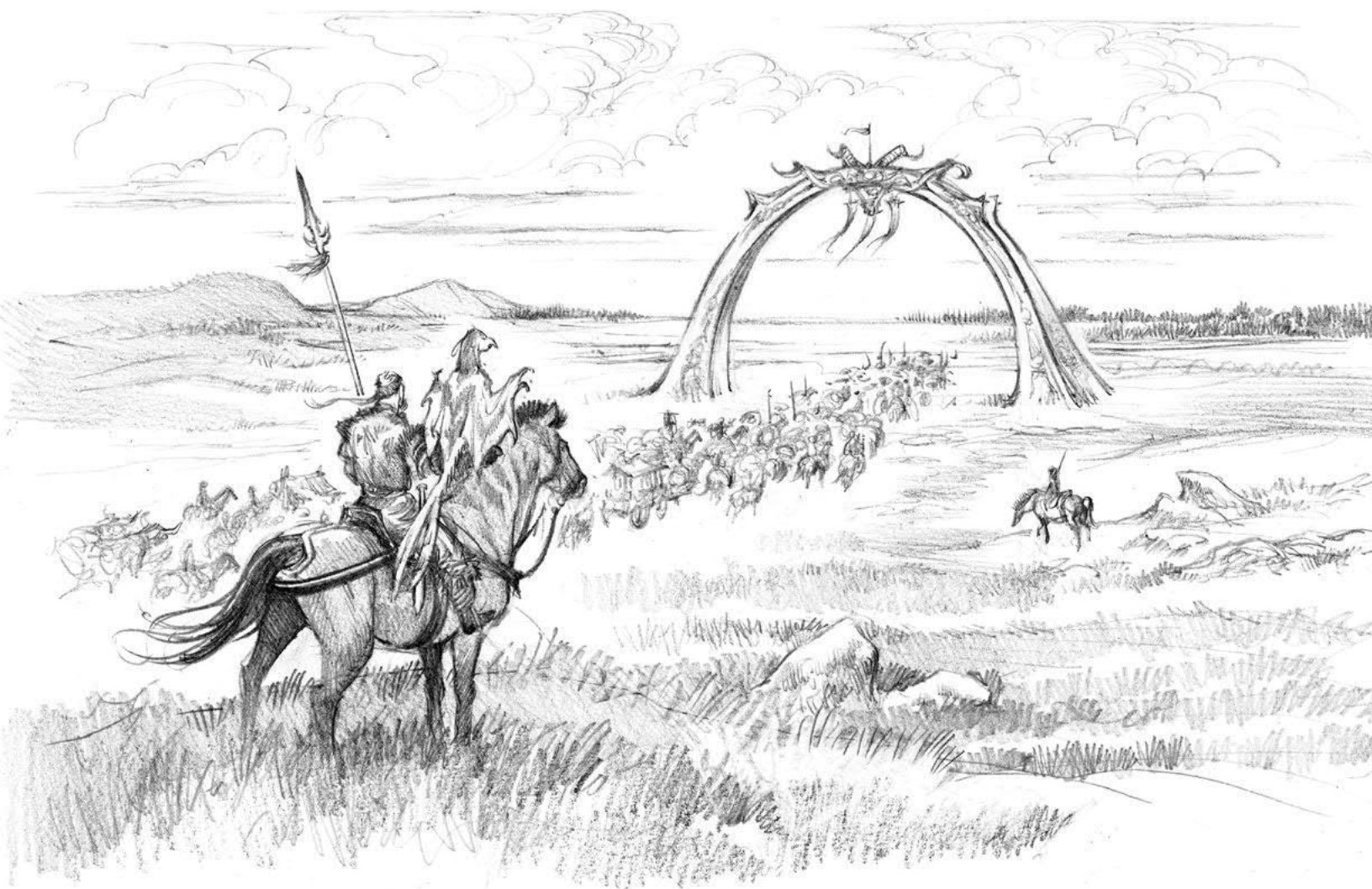
The Steppes of Ghatai

The horizonless steppes that extend northward from the foothills of the Axos Mountains are the cold and arid realm of the Ghatai, nomadic tribes who crisscross the vast grasslands astride their parvaluses. They've raised a particularly hearty breed that has become acclimated to the harsh climate of Khanate. The Ghatai are divided into clans. They're a warlike, unruly folk who place great value on physical strength and their prowess in battle and riding. Ghatai women are also allowed to fight, and those who wish can join the ranks of the terrifying "riders of the wind."

Many generations ago, a legendary war chief, the Great Khan Mangai-Tal, led his warriors on a victorious conquest of most of Khanate. They profited from the discord amongst the Xi Lu to take control of their cities. The successors of Mangai-Tal have become more sedentary, and now rule over the kingdom from the capital city of Khansan. The relationship between the supreme ruler and the nomadic clans is difficult, and disputes often flare up. The khan needs their cavalymen for his army,

but must also make sure that unrest amongst the clans doesn't disrupt trade with the rest of Lemuria. And of course, there's always the risk that an ambitious chief will unite the nomads and attempt to take his place.

Due to their geographical situation, the Ghatai control the passes through the Axos Mountains that lead to the Klaar Plains. Merchant caravans have to pay a tribute before they can across the Steppes of Ghatai, where raiding is not uncommon. Once they've crossed the steppes, the merchants can then use the main trade route that runs along the western edge of the Wise Man's Wood and continues north to Khansan and Tor Xian. At the start of this broad cobblestone road, a monumental stone arch decorated with magnificent bas-reliefs in greenish-blue jade has been erected. It's known as the Gateway of Qindu, named after a ruler from the distant past who had the arch built. The famous Gateway caravanserai, which is located near the monument, offers the caravans a welcome refuge behind its fortified walls.





Tor Xian

Tor Xian is the oldest city in Khanate, as evidenced by the architectural style of its buildings. The city is separated into two distinct parts. The working classes—mainly peasants, woodcutters and artisans—live in the poor neighbourhoods on the edge of town. Their dwellings are huddled together around the ramparts of the “Courtyard of the Wise” in the centre of the city, where the finest residences and the public buildings are all found.

Tor Xian has long been a city of culture and education. It’s a seat of learning with an important library and a prestigious school where the elite Xi Lu seek instruction (in particular future government officials). It’s also home to many scholars, physicians, scribes and alchemists (and sorcerers, although they tend to keep a low profile). With its well-known painters, poets and musicians, Tor Xian is a bastion of refinement and culture in Khanate.

The city is run by a Xi Lu governor chosen by acclamation from all those residing in the Courtyard of the Wise. The elected official must then be approved by the Great Khan. This privilege dates back to the times of the Great Khan Aruk-Tal, the great grandson of Mangai-Tal the Conqueror, who sought out Fen Mei—the legendary sage from Tor Xian—after he’d been poisoned and his personal physicians were unable to find an antidote. After Fen Mei was able to cure Aruk-Tal, the khan allowed the city to select its own ruler to show his appreciation. A horde of Ghatai always remains encamped just outside of Tor Xian to make sure that the city remains loyal to the khan, but the Xi Lu have never shown the least sign of rebellion and the long-standing tradition of self-governance has been maintained ever since.

CULTS OF LEMURIA

The Hand of Jade

The Xi Lu are skilled merchants and have established many trading companies, but none is more famous (or sulphurous) than the powerful house known as the Hand of Jade.

The company's shops can easily be recognized by the open green hand that adorns their facade, and merchants who work for the house often wear a small pendent representing a green hand as a sign of allegiance.

Based in Liu, the Hand of Jade is run by the Pi Yan family and has enjoyed tremendous prosperity over the past two decades. It owns large warehouses along the wharfs and an entire fleet of merchant ships, while its caravans crisscross Khanate and even venture to the southernmost reaches of Lemuria. It has established trading houses not only in Khansan and Tor Xian, but also in other cities in Lemuria such as Oomis, Urceb, Lysor, Satarla and Parsool. It's said that shops with the insignia of the green hand will soon be opening in Tyrus, and even as far south as Malakut and Halakh. What's even more astonishing is that the Hand of Jade is the only company with a permanent trading post in Zalut—quite a feat considering the Zalutis' deeply engrained mistrust of foreigners.

The Hand of Jade also owns countless caravansaries and inns—some of which it controls openly, and others using front men. The Great Kahn recently granted the company the right to manage the famous caravanserai of the Gateway (see page 17). Competing traders are still wondering what

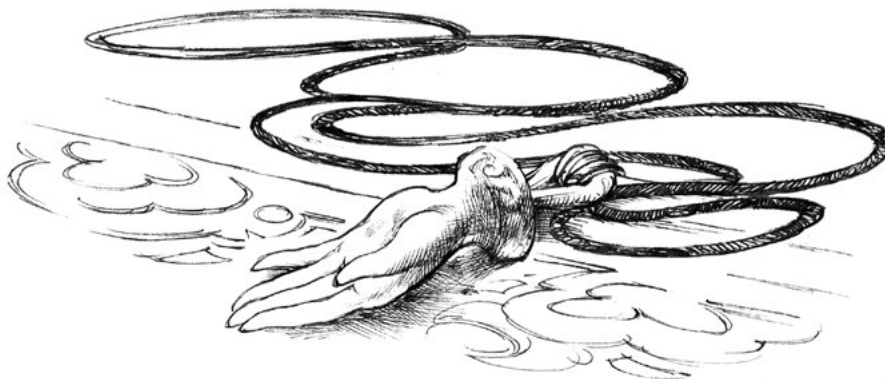
the Hand of Jade could have offered Akta-Tul in exchange for such a prestigious (and lucrative) privilege.

The company is involved in a wide range of activities. It trades in wood, salt and furs, and also luxury goods such as Khansan pottery, precious gems and blue lichen. A good share of its profits come from the many products it imports from the South.

Min-Ha, the matriarch of the Pi Yan family, presides over the fate of the Hand of Jade. Her eyes are now blind and she's nearly a hundred years old, but the women known by her rivals as the "white-eyed witch" rules over the activities of the house with an iron fist and unsurpassed guile.

What very few people know (but many suspect), is that the Pi Yan family also has its "hand" in more shadowy activities of a much less reputable sort. Its agents are experts in tracking down rare products at the behest of demanding customers for whom money is no object, such as alchemists and sorcerers (and even druids) seeking arcane materials or ancient artefacts. With its extensive network of mercenaries, adventurers and thieves, the company can furnish just about anything (including a choice victim for some godforsaken sacrifice) at the right price. Its many shops and employees also form a formidable network of spies. Secret information is another pricey commodity offered by the house.

Due to its great power and influence, the Hand of Jade now has many enemies amongst the rival trading houses and is a source of concern for the authorities, but it would seem that nothing can stop its long fingers from extending their reach.



THE BEASTS OF KHANATE

Arctodus

Creature Size: Huge.

Normally Found: Steppes, tundra, mountains, boreal forests, glaciers.

The arctodus is a giant bear with a short snout and semi-human intelligence. It can stand on its hind legs (a full-grown male may be over twelve feet tall when in this position) and grasp objects with its opposable thumbs (and razor-sharp claws). It also runs on all four legs with terrifying speed. The arctodus can live in any region in northern Lemuria where there is enough game to satisfy its appetite. It is, by far, the most feared predator in the North, and to make matters worse, small groups of the ferocious beasts sometimes live in tribes, and have even developed rudimentary tools and their own simple language. The chances of surviving an attack by a clan of arctodus in search of prey are next to none.

Traits:

Ferocious Attack: Roll a *bonus die* for the arctodus's Attack Roll.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength 9	Attack +3
Agility 1	Damage d6 x2
Mind 0	Defence 1
Lifeblood 40	Protection d6-2 (2)

Snow Bouphon

Creature Size: Large.

Normally Found: Tundra, mountains.

Stockier than the common variety, the snow bouphon has a thick coat of long black fur and four long, curved horns. This species of bouphon is extremely difficult to domesticate, but some of the Wei have succeeded. They raise herds for their milk and for use as pack animals. Tea mixed with snow bouphon butter is highly prized throughout Khanate.

Traits:

Special Attack: In battle, snow bouphons are able to "fall into rank." They stand shoulder to shoulder in a compact line, or form a circle. When they do so, add +1 to their *defence* and +1 to their Attack Rolls.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength 5	Attack +0 (+1*)
Agility -2	Damage d6H
Mind -2	Defence 0 (+1*)
Lifeblood 20	Protection d6-2 (2)

* See above:
Special Attack.





Eucladoceros

Creature Size: Very Large.

Normally Found: Boreal forests, mountains, tundra.

The eucladoceros is a giant moose-like creature from the far North. The Wei call it the *maikalha*, or “Guardian.” It varies in size (measuring five to ten feet tall at the shoulder), and the males have an extraordinary set of thick, spreading antlers with pointed tips. These antlers are a prized commodity amongst the merchants of Tor Xian and Liu, who say they have magical powers. It’s true that the eucladoceros is a unique creature: certain specimens would appear to be as intelligent as humans, and it’s said that they can cast spells or invoke the powers of Wang Lin, the god who reigns over the forest. According to certain legends, the *maikalha* are the deadly enemies of the windoku (see page XX), whose evil presence is an abomination to the forest.

Traits:

Camouflage: Despite its size, the eucladoceros is hard to spot when it wants to remain out of sight (*bonus die* when hiding).

Magical creature: Some eucladoceroses may have *priest* or *magician* career ranks. You can then assign them Fate Points or Arcane Power if you want (see *BoL*, pages 143 and 144).

Regeneration (minor): When wounded, a eucladoceros can regenerate 1 *lifeblood* point per minute. In a fight, it will usually run away if victory is uncertain, and then come back to launch another attack if needed.

Attributes

Strength 6
Agility 1
Mind -1 to 3
Lifeblood 30

Combat Abilities

Attack +2
Damage d6H
Defence 0
Protection d6-3 (1)



Morska

Creature Size: Gigantic.

Normally Found: Arctic seas, ice floes.

The morska is a gargantuan walrus (50 to 65 feet long) with greyish black skin and enormous ivory tusks, capable of disembowelling a kalathorn or shattering a ship's hull with a single blow. Once a year, when the morskas gather on ice floes in the Glacial Sea to mate, a few of the bravest Wei profit from the occasion to hunt them while they're on land. Many end up crushed beneath the weight of the enormous mammals. Although it's difficult to obtain, Morska blubber is highly prized by the Wei nomads—and also by the greedy merchants of Liu. It's a high-energy food (with a somewhat fishy taste) that also has many practical uses: for fuel, for preparing leather, insulation, etc. The thick skin of the morska is also used by Liu soldiers to make a strong and supple armour.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength 14	Attack +0* (+1)
Agility -2 (0*)	Damage d6x3
Mind -1	Defence 0
Lifeblood 70	Protection d6-1 (3)

*On land.



Blue Tiger

Creature Size: Large.

Normally Found: Boreal forests, tundra.

A solitary hunter from the boreal forests of Lemuria, the blue tiger can reach lengths of over twelve feet and may be almost four feet tall at the shoulder. It has two sabre-like fangs of medium length. Its striped fur is usually white, but may also have a red or bluish tint. But the dreaded cat owes its name to the colour of its eyes, which are like two sparkling sapphires and have the power of mesmerizing its prey. In addition to its bewitching stare, the tiger also exudes a tantalizing and intoxicating scent. The inhabitants of the boreal forests fear this scent like the plague, while at the same time practicing devotion to the fascinating predator.

Traits:

Bewitchment: Any creature who looks into the eyes of the blue tiger must make a Moderate (0) *mind* Task Roll. If unsuccessful, the creature becomes fascinated by the tiger and walks in a dream-like state to a certain death, without giving any thought to its defence. The spell is only broken when the tiger finally pounces, but by then it's usually too late for its prey. Note that if the tiger is in the heart of its territory, the *mind* Task Roll then changes to Tough (-2), due to the omnipresence of the heady fragrance marking its territory.

Camouflage: The blue tiger is hard to spot in its natural environment (*bonus die* for hiding).

Excellent hunter: Roll a *bonus die* when tracking its prey.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength 5	Attack +3
Agility 2	Damage d6H
Mind 0	Defence 2
Lifeblood 25	Protection d6-2 (2)

Xalibu

Creature Size: Large.

Normally Found: Tundra.

Xalibu are wild cervids, resembling big reindeer that are native to arctic regions. Both the males and females have large, pointy antlers, which they keep year round. Immense herds are common in the tundra east of the Great Forest. Xalibu fur is usually white, grey or brown, and offers the best natural protection against the rigorous arctic climate.

Certain tribes of Wei nomads have built their entire culture around the domestication of the xalibu. They use the animal for transport, clothing, food, and to build their huts and tools.

Traits:

Docile Attack: Roll a *penalty die* for the xalibu's Attack Roll.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength 4	Attack +0
Agility 1	Damage d6H
Mind -2	Defence 0
Lifeblood 15	Protection d6-2 (2)

Yi Qi

Creature Size: Small.

Normally Found: Steppes, boreal forests, mountains.

The yi qi (pronounced "yee chee") is similar to a bird of prey, and about the size of a small eagle. It has the talons and pointed beak of a hawk, but the leathery wings of a bat. Its feathers are often a golden, iridescent colour, with touches of brilliant blue and green. The yi qi is highly prized by the Ghatai cavalymen and the noblemen of Tor Xian, as it can be trained for falconry and combat.

The royal yi qi is an extremely rare subspecies with red and golden tail feathers that is sold at outlandish prices.

Traits:

Ferocious Attack: Roll a *bonus die* for the yi qi's Attack Roll.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength -1	Attack +2
Agility 4	Damage d6L
Mind -2	Defence 4
Lifeblood 5	Protection 0





THE BLOODLESS OF KHANATE

Is it because of the frigid climate? No one knows why the undead are much more common in the regions north of the Mountains of Axos, but the fact remains, and there are more than enough blood-chilling tales to prove it. This undoubtedly explains why the burial customs are so elaborate in Khanate, and why people take such great care with their dead. The mere notion of remaining unburied after death is terrifying, as the deceased will never find eternal rest and the living may bear the brunt of the undead's wrath.

Guardian of the Rot Kingdom

Creature Size: Medium.

Normally Found: Frozen forests, tundra.

Although the phenomenon is not uncommon in other regions (Valgard has also been afflicted), skeletons and zombies from the Rot Kingdom regularly foray into the forests east of the Frozen Tyr. No one knows why. Could they be the dregs of some ancient army from the Frozen North, eternally wandering in search of some long-departed foe?

These walking dead are sometimes led by one or more captains who've been mummified by the arctic temperatures. They're covered in heavy armour and wear a breast plate engraved with a crescent moon inside a triangle made of three stars. They can be seen marching in front of their troops of skeletons with the regal and haughty bearing of a feudal lord, sometimes on the backs of parvaluses that are just as shrivelled and decrepit as their riders.

Traits:

Glacial Aura: A deathly frost emanates from the guardians of the Rot Kingdom. Their attacks send a numbing chill though both the bodies and the hearts of their adversaries. Roll a *bonus die* when rolling for damage (already included in the combat abilities).

Captain of the Dead: If it's accompanied by skeletons that are *rabble* (see *BoL*, page 157), the guardian can sacrifice d6H of its *lifeblood* points to raise again a number of them that is equal to twice the obtained result. These skeletons can then take part in the next round using the normal rules for *rabble*.

Attributes	Combat Abilities
Strength 1	Attack +2
Agility 2 (0*)	Damage d6H+1**
Mind 1	Defence 1 (2*)
Lifeforce 15	Protection d6 (4)

*armour modifier, **medium weapon

Protection: Heavy armour and helmet, small shield (-1 to be hit on one attack/round).



Leng Shi

Creature Size: Medium.

Normally Found: Everywhere.

The Leng Shi is the ghost of a creature that has frozen to death under circumstances that prevent its soul from finding eternal rest. Someone who dies alone in the endless forests of the Frozen North may very well become a Leng Shi if their corpse is abandoned on the frigid ground.

The Leng Shi remains bound to the place where its corpse lies, and will linger in the near vicinity, bemoaning its fate, incapable of communicating with the living. It's not necessarily evil, but the longer the forsaken spirit remains bereft of eternal rest, the more its suffering will drive the spirit mad and make it hate the living. To appease a Leng Shi, all that's usually necessary is to give its remains a proper burial or, in certain cases, to obtain justice for the deceased so that he or she can finally rest in peace. In rare cases, an animal may also generate a Leng Shi.

It's customary amongst the Wei, who roam further north than any other peoples, to keep the umbilical cords of all newborns in the family home, along with a few strands of hair that are cut during the rituals performed when children come of age. When a trapper fails to return from the hunt and his body can't be found, the Wei give these relics a ceremonial burial in the hopes that the soul lost in the Frozen Lands will find eternal rest and not become a Leng Shi. But there's no proof that these rites actually work, and their main purpose is to relieve the anguish of the living.

Traits:

Ethereal: The Leng Shi has no physical body and can pass through solid objects. It can only be successfully attacked with magic or alchemy, whether it be spells or alchemistic preparations. When its *lifeforce* reaches zero, the Leng Shi is definitively destroyed.

Moaning: To make its presence known, the ghost may moan, or even howl. During the first round when the Leng Shi moans, any Heroes within earshot of the sepulchral groaning must make a Moderate (0) *mind* Task Roll. If the roll is unsuccessful the Hero is filled with terror (-2 for all Task Rolls), and if he has the flaw *Cowardly* or *Distrust of Sorcery*, he'll immediately take to his heels. He can then attempt another Task Roll in each of the following rounds to get a grip on himself and cancel out the negative modifier. The ghost can also decide to transform its moans into an excruciating howl that causes unbearable pain. Anyone within 10 yards of the Leng Shi when it lets out its deathly howl will take d3 *lifeblood* damage each round, ignoring protection (armour is obviously of no help against it).

Possession: The Leng Shi can take possession of a creature that enters its haunting grounds (i.e. a creature who gets too close to its corpse). The victim must then make a Moderate (0) *mind* Task Roll. If unsuccessful, the Leng Shi possesses the victim, who then becomes its marionette. A Hero who is possessed by a Leng Shi no longer has any control over her actions. The Leng Shi can then communicate through the victim (which is not possible in its bodiless form), and can even leave the area around its remains. Magic rituals do exist to expel a Leng Shi. If not, a possessed creature whose *lifeblood* is reduced to zero, or who is knocked out, will be liberated of the Leng Shi as soon as they lose consciousness if they can make a Very Easy (+2) *mind* Task Roll. If the Leng Shi is far away from its remains when this happens, it will have one round to take possession of another creature; if not, it will reappear in the vicinity of its remains, bound by its ungodly chains to the world of the living, doomed to wait until a new prey gets too close to its corpse.

Attributes

Strength 0
Agility 2
Mind 2
Lifeforce 10

Combat Abilities

Attack See "Moaning"
Damage See "Moaning"
Defence 0
Protection 0 (ethereal)



Mogmai

Creature Size: None (see below).

Normally Found: Dwellings, closed spaces.

The Mogmai is a powerful phantom engendered through the most foul and despicable sorcery. It's said to be the handiwork of the ancient Xi Lu rulers, terrible tyrants with dark souls who used unnameable sorcery to create the Mogmai to protect their palaces. Made by killing an innocent child and performing sacrilegious rituals on its corpse, the Mogmai are tortured souls, deprived of eternal rest, who are forced to obey their unholy creator. They are magically bound to a certain place, and will attack anyone who enters without their master's permission.

Traits:

Poltergeist: The Mogmai has no physical form and cannot be fought directly. It haunts a space (a large hall, a few rooms, or even the entire floor of a building), and has power over the objects found within that space. It can use telekinesis to transform anything it finds into a weapon: small objects, furniture (chairs, tables, dressers, etc.). It can also slam doors and windows. Each round, the Mogmai can decide between different types of attacks:

- Move a large number of smaller objects (pottery, curios, dishware, etc.) to create a general attack on all the Heroes in the room: Attack +3; Damage d3. Make a separate Attack Roll and Damage Roll for each Hero.

- Move one or more large objects, such as furniture. This is an attack on a single Hero: Attack +2; Damage d6L.

Phylactery: The Mogmai's tortured soul is imprisoned in an object, which is often the toy that was used to lure the poor child away from his or her parents. This object is placed in the space guarded by the Mogmai, and may be noticeable due to its strange behaviour (a top that never stops spinning, a small wooden parvalus that keeps rocking back and forth, a marionette hanging on the wall that moves on its own, etc.). The only way to destroy a Mogmai is to break the object that imprisons its soul.

During the ritual to create the Mogmai, the sorcerer cuts a lock of hair from the child's head and keeps it on his person (enclosed in a pendant, a small box, etc.). Whoever possesses the lock of hair is protected from the Mogmai's attacks and can command it (but it will still behave like the impulsive child who was killed to engender it).

Windoku

Creature Size: Large.

Normally Found: Frozen forests, tundra.

The Windoku is a very powerful and malicious spirit that haunts the wild lands in the north of Khanate, born from the cursed soul of a human who has practiced cannibalism. It can take the appearance of a dark and gaunt necrophage, with chilling eyes and shrivelled skin, or else a sort of terrifying giant that looks like an arctodus combined with a xalibu. A Windoku is evil incarnate and will seek to destroy any form of life in its haunting grounds, and in particular humans. Before making a direct attack, the Windoku will first attempt to fill its future victims with cannibalistic cravings, and will then relish in the horrible spectacle caused by their frenzied lust for flesh.

Traits:

Cannibalism: Any creature that enters the region haunted by the Windoku must make a *mind* Task Roll, which will increase in difficulty with each day spent in the zone (Easy on the first day, increasing to Demanding by the fifth day). If the roll is unsuccessful, the creature will first feel a slight craving, which will soon become insatiable, to consume the flesh of its own species. Humans will be filled with a cannibalistic lust that may incite them to kill and devour each other.

Ferocious Attack: The Windoku gets a *bonus die* for Attack Rolls.

Camouflage: Give the Windoku a *bonus die* when it hides from its future victims.

Attributes

Strength 6
Agility 1
Mind 3
Lifeforce 36

Combat Abilities

Attack +3
Damage d6H
Defence 0
Protection d6-3 (1)



ADVENTURE SEEDS

Revenge of the Phantom

It seemed like a good idea to take shelter from a winter squall in an old ruin on the moor. Unfortunately, the abandoned home is haunted by the grieving Leng Shi of a Xi Lu, murdered twenty years earlier by a band of Ghatai mercenaries along with his wife and children. Consumed by vengeance, the Leng Shi will attempt to possess one of the Heroes in order to punish the perpetrators. If the Heroes hope to free their friend from the tortured spirit's grasp, they must seek out the chief of the Ghatai marauders who killed the Xi Lu. To make matters worse, the man responsible for the crime has now become the khan of a small clan of highwaymen who raid the caravans crossing the steppes, and it will be no easy task to seek vengeance from he who massacred the Leng Shi and its family.

Visions of the Sage

A charcoal burner returns to Tor Xian from the Wise Man's Wood, where he claims to have spent the whole night talking to an old man with silvery hair and clear, penetrating eyes. The old sage summoned him to deliver a message to the local officials, warning them of a terrible menace that is secretly growing in a certain place in the forest. The city's governor interrogates the charcoal burner, and is astonished when the man, who is of humble origin and has no formal education, displays great wisdom and insight, as if he's been touched by divine grace.

Could it actually be true that the simpleton met the legendary Fei Mei? And who will the governor send to the Wise Man's Wood to investigate the supposed menace?

The Empty Garden

Hian Du is a wealthy fur trader from Khansan. His most recent caravan to Bei Wei, led by his wife Shen Du, has returned with dreadful news. The caravan was bivouacking near the encampment of some trappers at the edge of the Great Forest when his wife was attacked and killed by a foul beast. Other members of the caravan were killed as well,



and the survivors were forced to flee in disarray and leave behind Shen Du's corpse.

Hian Du is inconsolable. He yearns to place the bones of his wife in the Garden of the Ancestors, as is the custom. He's looking for a few courageous adventurers to return to the scene of the massacre and find his wife's body—or at least what remains of it (they should be able to identify her by her jewellery). But Shen Du and her servants were not killed by a simple predator from the taiga: the perpetrator was a much more sinister and deadly creature. Woe unto those who venture into the territory of the terrible Windoku...





A READY-TO-PLAY ADVENTURE

BORED TO DEATH

Adventure overview

On their way to Liu, the Heroes get stuck on the Island of Shelang when early winter storms prolong their stopover. After taking up lodgings in the fortress that broods over the small, wind-swept isle, they quickly find themselves overrun by nasty zombies with pierced foreheads. The lady of the keep has decided to spice up her humdrum existence by dabbling in necromancy! Will the Heroes manage to root out the Bloodless sorcerer that has been walled-up in the deepest chamber of the daunting edifice, and who has been whispering impious spells in the ear of the deranged lady? Or will the entire island become a horrific bloodbath?

Introduction

Our Heroes have set sail from Urceb on the merchant galley *Lady of Oosal*. Master Vornan, a rich merchant from the city, has chartered the vessel to carry him and his merchandise to Liu, the main commercial port in Khanat. It's up to you to decide why the adventurers are on the ship (perhaps they've been hired as mercenaries to protect the cargo, or maybe they are on their way to Khanat to embark on some other adventure. They could even have paid their way onboard to give the local authorities the slip and avoid yet another scrape).

It was already late autumn when the *Lady of Oosal* left Urceb, but the captain was hoping to reach Liu before the first frosts made sailing difficult on the northern seas. Master Vornan plans to spend the winter in Liu, where he has a few business matters to take care of and would also like to find new trading partners at the bustling port, where business is booming.

On its way to Liu, the ship makes a stopover at Shelang, a small, forbidding island about a three-day sail southeast of Liu. They drop anchor at a fishing village along the bleak, craggy coast. The stone huts of the village are huddled beneath an

imposing fortress and its beacon, which marks a series of hazardous reefs for the ships entering the Bay of Liu. Vornan stops at the island once a year to supply the local brewmaster/cook with provisions from the South. But when a violent winter storm suddenly kicks up, the ship is forced to prolong its stay in Shelang. The commander of the local garrison offers his meagre hospitality to Vornan and the Heroes at the fortress until the storm blows over. The days pass slowly on the forsaken island, as the frigid weather and mind-numbing boredom begin to take their toll on the adventurers...

Note to GM: This adventure is an "escape game" with no escape! The Heroes are trapped on the island of Shelang and will have no choice but to stand and fight. Sinister necromantic forces are at work, raising the dead to punish the living. As the menace continues to spread through the fortress, the only possible solution for the PCs will be to destroy the evil at its root. This is more of a "sandbox" adventure, and the GM will have to quickly adapt and improvise on the spot. If you're a beginning GM, you may want to cut your teeth on a few other adventures with more linear plots before tackling the Island of Shelang.



A Tragic Past

The fortress of Shelang was built ages ago to protect the coast from pillaging pirates and to tend the fire in the beacon that guides merchant ships and war galleys through the bay. More than a generation ago, the island was the scene of a tragic affair. At the time, a learned Xi Lu named Qi Zhang resided in the fortress with the garrison commander. Everyone in the fortress called the scholar “Qi Zhang the Putrid” because of his foul breath. A victim of constant ridicule and bullying, the vindictive scholar began to study necromancy around the clock in order to seek vengeance on his persecutors. Unfortunately for Qi Zhang, the secret laboratory he’d set up in the bowels of the fortress was discovered. As punishment for his impious research, he was encased alive behind the wall of his laboratory, and its doors were sealed forever. But in Khanate, it’s often difficult for the dead to find eternal rest, especially when their soul burns with fierce hatred.

The fortress of Shelang had been abandoned for decades and everyone (or nearly everyone) had forgotten this appalling episode before a new commander was assigned to the fortress. The imposing edifice was restored in response to the growing business activity at the port of Liu, and Muntal the Deaf, an old and disgraced Ghatai warrior, was sent to the island to end his days commanding the garrison. Muntal arrived with his budding young bride Lei Mei, a Xi Lu from a noble but penniless family. The intelligent and cultivated girl had been forced to marry the coarse and ill-mannered dotard and found herself exiled on a frozen rock; in the middle of nowhere, in a fortress filled with a garrison of uncouth soldiers, bereft of friends or any sort of amusement. Lei Mei quickly found life in her new “prison” to be unbearable, and her search for distractions would lead her astray on many occasions. One of Lei Mei’s favourite pastimes was to explore the fortress, and she soon knew every nook and cranny. It was during one of these excursions that she discovered Qi Zhang the Putrid’s sealed-off laboratory, filled with dust but still intact (no one had dared lay a finger on the instruments he’d used to practice his sacrilegious acts). She found his retorts and alembics, his preparations and potions,

and several forbidden tomes exploring the dark arts practiced by the Xi Lu sorcerers of old. She picked through the arcane objects with little interest at first, but soon heard a raspy voice murmuring inside her head. She was frightened initially, but the sepulchral voice whispered wondrous revelations, urging her to read select passages from the moth-eaten manuscripts, and patiently explaining the terrible secrets intended only for the ears of magicians and alchemists. Behind the wall where his cadaver was rotting away, Qi Zhang the Putrid had found a soul to corrupt, an instrument to wield his vengeance on all the living...

As the months passed, Lei Mei slowly lost her mind; poisoned by the ungodly whispering of Qi Zhang. Under his guidance, the girl has learned the forbidden arts of necromancy and is now ready to unleash the curse of undeath on the inhabitants of the fortress. It will be such wicked fun after being bored to death on this godforsaken island!

In the rites taught to her by Qi Zhang, Lei Mei uses an auger to drill a hole in the forehead of her dead victim, and then recites a short incantation to breathe necromantic energy into the orifice. She is then able to bring the bewitched cadavers back to life from a remote distance. The Bloodless will rise from the dead and attack all the living (except for the woman who cursed them with undeath, of course).

As luck would have it, it’s just when our Heroes find themselves trapped in Shelang that Lei Mei first begins to dabble in necromancy. After the initial attack by the Bloodless, the Heroes will have to quickly figure out who’s behind the bane or bodies will begin to pile up all over the Island of Shelang. Paranoia will quickly spread amongst the survivors as new zombies with pierced foreheads continue to join the ranks of the undead.



The Fortress of Shelang

The island is basically just an outcropping of rock lost at sea. It's only about a mile long and half a mile wide, and is a three-day sail from the eastern coast of Khanate across the Bay of Liu. Its rugged coast has only one narrow bay that is accessible by ship. A small fishing village made up of dry-stone huts sits huddled at the back of the bay. It is home to about thirty people. The fortress of Shelang is a grey stone bastion atop the island. It's a totally unappealing military edifice built solely for utilitarian purposes, with no decorative elements whatsoever. The decrepit old buildings could certainly use some upkeep. The ramparts have been eaten away by the briny sea winds and cracked by frost, but are still sturdy and imposing. The beacon tower has been erected on a promontory rising above the northern face of the island. It can only be reached by a stone bridge that arches over the chasm separating it from the fortress. The garrison keeps the beacon fire burning brightly day and night to warn the passing ships of the large, dangerous reefs so that they can find a safe passage to the Bay of Liu when glacial fogs blanket the northern seas.

The main keep is sparsely furnished, decorated only with a few faded tapestries, moth-eaten animal pelts and hunting trophies. On the landing of the second floor can be found one notable specimen—an enormous stuffed arctodus (a young one, it's "only" about eight feet tall!) killed by Muntal in his younger days. He'll happily relate the tale of his feat to anyone willing to listen. Lei Mei's apartments are the only rooms in the fortress with any actual decorations. The lady of the castle brought along a few pricey rugs and curios, and a small collection of illuminated manuscripts to help pass the time during her dull and morose days on the island. Muntal's sleeping chamber, which is connected to his wife's, is austere in comparison; the only thing that might be called decorative is a magnificent Ghatai saddle with inlaid leather motifs that sits proudly on a wooden stand. It's been many years since Muntal the Deaf charged across the steppes on the back of a parvalus in front of his cavalrymen.

The imposing fireplaces can barely heat the fortress, which is constantly buffeted by winds from the icy seas. In these northern climes it's hardly rare to see the bluish silhouette of an iceberg float by.

In addition to the watch towers on each side of the main gate (which remains open all day and is only closed at night), the castle courtyard also includes the entrance to the bridge leading to the beacon tower, the latrines, a rundown stable holding four parvaluses, and an armoury containing a small assortment of weapons (which may come in handy for the Heroes). The door is locked and only Muntal has a key. Inside a corner tower is the small chapel dedicated to the twenty gods of Lemuria, decorated with decrepit frescoes.

The cellar can be reached by a passage beneath the main staircase of the keep. At the back of the cellar is a cold storage room for perishable goods.

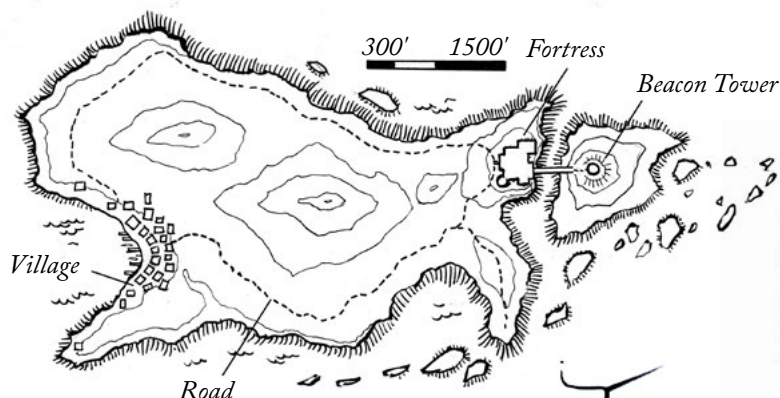
Qi Zhang's secret laboratory has two hidden entranceways: one in Lei Mei and Muntal's apartments, and another one in the cold storage room. The hidden passage in the wall can only be found with a successful Tough (-2) *mind* Task Roll.

The beacon tower rises about 45 feet above the steep promontory on which it was erected. A simple round structure made of sturdy, rough-hewn rock, it boldly defies the raging waves crashing against the rocks below. The only access is from the fortress, via the bridge spanning the narrow channel that separates the promontory from the main island. The portcullis for the bridge entrance is left open day and night for the changing of the guards inside the beacon tower. The guards spend their shifts huddled around the small braziers on the ground floor, playing dice and drinking ale. A large spiral staircase leads to the top of the tower, where large windows all around let in the howling winds. Inside a large bronze cauldron in the centre of the room burns an alchemistic fire capable of burning even in the harshest gales. The guards regularly replenish the cauldron with jars of highly flammable pitch stored on the ground floor of the tower.



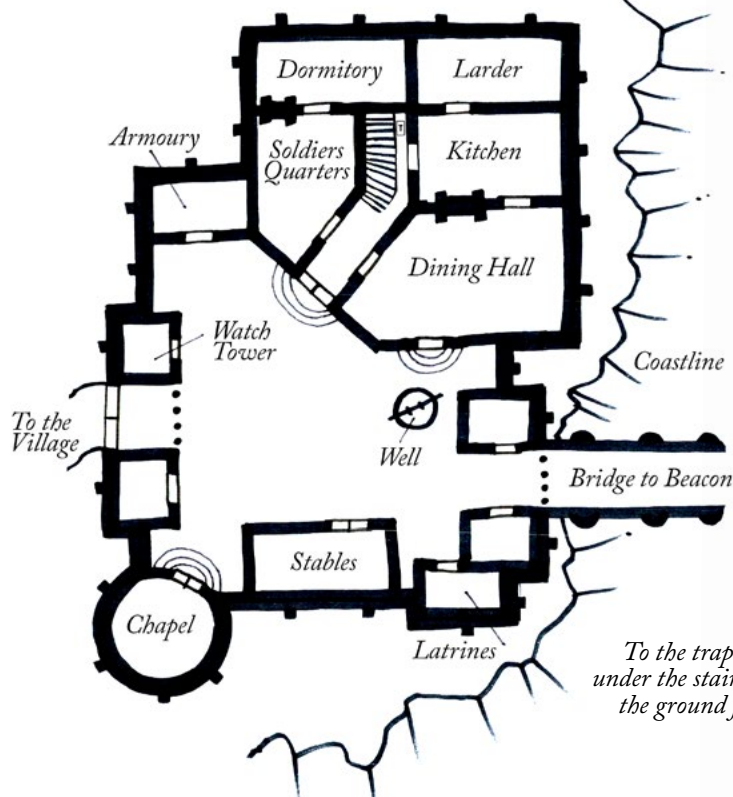


THE FORTRESS OF SHELANG



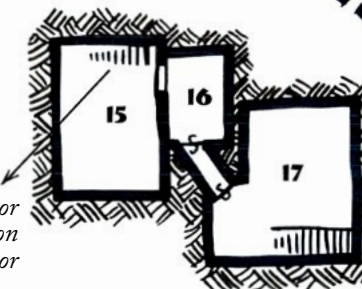
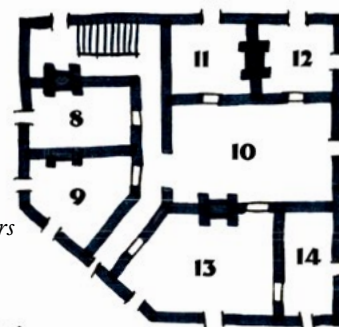
2nd Floor

- 1 Hallway
- 2 Guests Quarters
- 3 Lei Mei
- 4 Kubrog & Vana
- 5 Muntal
- 6 Library
- 7 Wardrobe



3rd Floor

- 8 Lo Han
- 9 Officers
- 10 Dining Room
- 11 Sharthal
- 12 Kamai
- 13 Servants' Quarters
- 14 Arluk



- 15 Cellar
- 16 Cold Storage Room
- 17 Hidden Laboratory

Burning Pitch for Beacon (common alchemist preparation)

The jars are filled with a viscous, highly flammable liquid that is extremely difficult to put out once it's ignited. If a jarful is poured on someone and set ablaze, it inflicts d6L damage per round and will continue to burn for 10 rounds if nothing is done to extinguish it. Unless there's a lot of water handy (or snow), anyone covered in burning pitch will need two consecutive rounds to put out the devouring flames (by taking off their clothes, rolling around on the ground, etc.).

The Inhabitants

The keep is home to a small garrison of twenty soldiers and four officers, along with eight servants and the members of Muntal the Deaf's entourage (see below).

Muntal the Deaf

The old Ghatai warlord has seen more than seventy winters and is now finishing out his days in a relative disgrace, victim of the machinations of the ambitious young chiefs from his clan. Exiled to the desolate island with the unenviable title of "Lord of Shelang," he spends his days rehashing the exploits of his youth as he awaits his eternal rest. Muntal is as deaf as a doornail, which only adds to his detachment from his surroundings. But the old lord is still proud and quick-tempered, capable of flying into a rage unexpectedly for the least supposed affront.

Shartal

This young Ghatai warrior, a distant cousin of Muntal the Deaf, is as strong as a bough and about as smart as one. Shartal is supposed to be Muntal's official bodyguard, but in reality he spends the majority of his time mooning over the warlord's wife, who he follows around like a puppy dog.

Lei Mei

Less than half the age of her husband, Lei Mei is the daughter of a Xi Lu dignitary. She's a beautiful young woman with long, silky black hair. Pleasant but distant, she always seems to be lost in her thoughts or overcome with boredom. She rarely takes part in conversations and lets the head servant at the fortress decide on all household matters. Lei Mei often takes long rides around the island on a parvalus accompanied by Shartal, who remains her devoted minion despite her villainous deeds.

If any of the PCs should have a late-night discussion with the garrison soldiers or the servants, they may hear a few rumours about the mistress of the fortress... she may be shy but she's willing to grant certain favours to the men of the garrison when she gets the itch. Good thing that Muntal is as blind to the indiscretions of his wife as he is deaf to the howling winds that batter the fortress walls.

Kubrog of Stalheim

Kubrog, the castle cook, is a Valgardian by birth who's been exiled to Khanat for reasons that he prefers to keep to himself. He's also an excellent brewmaster, and around the citadel they say he once served a powerful king in the south of Lemuria. But Kubrog never talks about the past, and the soldiers are much too fond of his smooth, dark ale to bother him with any indiscrete questions. He's a cheerful, easy-going sort, always ready to have a drink with the lads under the disapproving eye of his adoring daughter, Vana, a ravishing young blond who helps her father with the cooking and serving. She's a sweet and obliging girl. She is also very shy, which only adds to her charm. Kubrog keeps close watch over her though, and will protect the virtues of his daughter if any young buck pays her too much attention. The soldiers in the garrison have learned that it's a bad idea to "poke the bear."

Master Vornan and Kubrog appear to be old friends, but if anyone asks them about their shared past, both men will remain elusive. Vornan always makes sure that one of his ships stops in Shelang at least once a year to supply Kubrog with the hops he needs to make his renowned ale.

Arluk

The head servant at the fortress is a tiny, unyielding old crone who wields her authority with an iron fist over the dozen or so other servants. Even the soldiers slink away with their tails between their legs when they find themselves at the butt end of one of her furious outbursts or caustic remarks. For Arluk, cleanliness is next to godliness!

Kamai

A retired executioner, Kamai still longs for the good old days when heads dropped like fruit from the trees. He often dons the black leather trousers and purple mask from his executioner days, and spends long hours off in a corner sharpening his broad axe with a sigh. Kamai's a cheerless old sourpuss who has the bad habit of staring at peoples' necks with what one might call a "professional" interest.





Lo Han

The old priest supposedly attends to the small temple in the fortress, but actually spends most of his time dozing next to a jug of Kubrog's beer, or blathering on about some old legend or other. Despite his erudite appearance, Lo Han is actually a spineless and lazy dimwit.

Let the Fun Begin!

The *Lady of Oosal* has now been stuck in Shelang for a week. The ship was only supposed to stop at the island for three days before continuing its journey, but the gods have decided otherwise. An early winter storm has struck the island. A blizzard dumped snow for three days, leaving huge drifts in its wake. The wind has finally died down, but a light snow continues to fall and the thick, frozen fog rolling off the sea has made it impossible to sail. In these waters, this type of weather may last several days, and sometimes an entire week.

Master Vornan and our Heroes have been housed in the fortress, while the crew of the *Lady of Oosal* has been put up by the fishermen in the village until they can continue their voyage.

The Heroes have had ample time to get familiar with their new lodgings and the inhabitants. They've become friends with Kubrog, who's never stingy with his beer and delighted to have southerners to chat with at his table. They've listened to Muntal's drivelling, they've rolled dice with the soldiers and shared many a mug of beer, admired the frigid beauty of Lei Mei, and fallen under the charm of the radiant young Vana. They've also gotten the chills each time Kamai gazes longingly at their necks. But boredom, that insidious worm that gnaws at the hearts of all the fortress's inhabitants (except for Arluk, who always has a million things to do), begins to overcome the Heroes as well, as the endless days of fog and snow crawl by with a mind-numbing slowness.

The Heroes are in a sorry state after the previous evening. Kubrog's stout had flown freely yet again until the early hours, and they're all slumped over the long table in the dining room. They're woken early that morning by Vana as she clears the remainders of last night's meal from the table, while Kubrog blows on the embers in the humongous fireplace to get the fire going. Suddenly, they hear a strange scratching noise at the door to the courtyard.

If none of the PCs are curious enough to open the door, Vana will go take a look. As soon she opens it, two soldiers from the garrison burst through the door into the room along with a blast of cold air that quickly rouses our Heroes from their drunken stupor. The soldiers are both as pale as ghosts and have the vacant look in their eyes of the walking dead. Their faces are twisted into snarling grimaces and they immediately attack anyone in their path.

The whole fortress is soon up in arms and everyone rushes in to see what the ruckus is about. The situation becomes even more confused when they learn that another “zombie” soldier has attacked the three guards at the main gate, killing two of the soldiers before they finally struck him down.

The three Bloodless soldiers are quickly identified: all were on guard duty at the beacon tower the previous evening. If they want, the PCs can examine the dead bodies and take a look at the beacon tower. They won't learn much in the guard room at the ground level of the tower: the door has been left wide open and there are no signs of fighting: just three empty cups on the table, along with some bread, cured ham, a knife and some dice (an attentive hero may notice that their beer jug is missing, which is strange since the empty cups still smell of fresh ale). They might also notice a few drops of dried blood on the table, along with a smattering of white powder (from drilled bone). The dead men look perfectly normal—except for an odd little hole that's been drilled in their foreheads, which couldn't have been caused by the fighting.

Note to GM: Lei Mei slipped some poison into the guards' jug of beer and then waited until nightfall to sneak back into the beacon tower and perform her necromancy. Once she'd completed the rites, she returned to her bed and waited until sunrise to bring the dead back to life so she could watch them attack the others and spread panic inside the fortress. Ooh, what wicked fun this was going to be!

After asking a few confused questions, Muntal the Deaf just shrugs and declares that these types of things happen every so often in Khanate. He gives orders for the bodies to be placed in the cold storage room until Lo Han can prepare the funeral

ceremony. They will also make a sacrifice to appease the spirits of the dead and beseech the gods' blessings. If the Heroes suggest burning the bodies, Muntal will say no: wood and coal are much too precious on Shelang, and winter has hardly begun.

Hold on to Your Hats

Things will start moving very quickly now. Once she's seen for herself that her necromantic rites work to perfection, Lei Mei will begin adding to the ranks of the Bloodless in the fortress, elated by all the chaos and destruction unfolding around her. She's now in the throes of a murderous frenzy induced by the nefarious whispering of Qi Zhang. She may have lost her mind, but not her wits: she'll take all the necessary precautions to cover her tracks and avoid getting caught so she can fill the fortress with Bloodless minions under her control.

To make matters even worse, the necromantic rites of Lei Mei have another horrifying effect: any living being killed by the zombies of Lei Mei will automatically be contaminated by undeath. After ten to twenty minutes, they will rise up and join the battle, making things even more complicated for our courageous Heroes.

This scenario doesn't provide a predefined sequence of events, but instead encourages the GM to use more of an improvisational approach in synch with the players' decisions. The idea is to keep tightening the screws and ratcheting up the stress, without revealing Lei Mei's devious schemes too quickly. As the GM, you'll have to be quick on your feet to decide what she does, based on the circumstances. Below, you'll find a few ideas for scenes that the GM may or may not use, depending on the players' own initiatives. You might want to use a certain scene to create a diversion for Lei Mei and give her time to act freely. This could be a great way to make the players feel as if they're always a step behind the evil-doer (or evil spirit) that's wreaking havoc on the fortress.

Ideally, in order to create an all-time great ending, the final showdown with Lei Mei should take place in the secret laboratory, either after the Heroes have



chased her there or after they've discovered her hiding there (see "Qi Zhang Laboratory," page 40). A Villain Point used at just the right time might allow Lei Mei to slip through the Heroes' fingers after they've caught her in the act, leading to the final confrontation in the dark and gloomy laboratory with the necromancer and her hideous mentor.

The Villagers

Location: Fishing village

Lei Mei sets off as usual one afternoon on her parvalus for her daily ride, accompanied by Shartal, and they run into a group of fishermen. The men offer little resistance when Shartal attacks and kills them. Lei Mei then gives them the curse of the Bloodless and sends them back to their village, where they massacre the other unsuspecting villagers. The crewmembers of the *Lady of Oosal* take refuge on their ship, where they do their best to beat back the zombie assailants. Meanwhile, about a dozen or so Bloodless villagers (including women and children) head up to the fortress to attack the living. Due to the thick fog, the guards at the door realize too late that they never should've let the villagers enter the fortress. Or, if the PCs decide to go to the village to investigate, you might have them get snared in the nets of the fishermen, who'll already be as cold and icky as their usual catch.

The Dead Soldiers

Location: Cold storage room

Lei Mei uses the secret passage to sneak into the cold storage room, where she reanimates the dead guardsmen from the beacon tower a second time. This now makes five zombies (including the two guards killed during the initial attack) that she can send upstairs into the fortress. Or else Lei Mei may decide to keep them in reserve to defend her secret laboratory if anyone should discover it.

A Real Whodunit

The players won't have many leads for their investigation, or much time to waste as they'll quickly find themselves trapped in a nightmare.

Depending on the situation, if they question certain inhabitants, or closely examine certain rooms or certain people, the Heroes may start to figure out who's been making mischief. Here again, it will be up to the GM to drop hints little by little and not betray Lei Mei too quickly. Make sure that the PCs discover the culprit in the most interesting possible way from a gaming point of view (e.g. by having them catch her in the act, or by helping the PCs realize there might be a secret passage by having a character tell them the lady's bedroom is empty but no one ever saw her leave it). And if the players suspect another member of the household for whatever reason, that'll make the game even more fun.

If the players should decide to go question the villagers, they'll quickly be led to the village elder, "Grandpa" Tapaï, the village's "font of knowledge" who actually knows very little of use. The old blind man has seen nearly a hundred winters and has never left the island of Shelang, but it will take great patience to learn anything from Grandpa: his mind tends to drift, and he'll often lapse into old stories that interest no one but himself. However, a patient PC does have something to learn from his meanderings: This is not the first time that the dead have risen on the island of Shelang...and the evil which was long ago buried has now returned!



The Legion of Undead

Location: Soldiers quarters

Lei Mei strikes again, poisoning the drinks of more soldiers. This time her victims are five members of the garrison who'd been up late drinking. Lei Mei again performs her rites on the dead bodies before stealing away to her apartments. She reanimates them during the night, and the zombie soldiers massacre their five brothers-in-arms sleeping in the dormitory (the last five "living" soldiers are on guard duty at the beacon tower and the main gate), before spreading through the fortress (unless an alert PC hears the noise from the massacre and responds in time).

Muntal the Deaf

Location: Muntal's bedroom, second floor

A terrified screech and the sound of a struggle coming from the lord's apartments have everyone at the keep up in arms again. They open the door of his room to behold a horrifying spectacle: Muntal, who is stark naked, is using his huge scimitar to hack to pieces the dead body of one of his servants, which is splayed across the large bed. He's also slashed the covers and reduced the sheets to ribbons. A cloud of feathers, white as snow, gently falls on the whole macabre scene, contrasting with the blood splattered over the bed and walls and Muntal's deathly white body. The old warlord immediately turns on the newcomers and attacks in a furious frenzy. He has a small hole in his forehead, of course, and purple marks on his neck from the powerful hands used to strangle him.

Note to GM: Lei Mei had Shartal strangle her husband before her eyes so that she could watch him die—sweet vengeance for all the years she's wasted in a wretched marriage—before performing her unholy rites and leaving the scene of the crime through the secret passage.

Kamai the Executioner

Location: Servants quarters, third floor of keep

As our Heroes struggle to solve the mystery, they discover a bloodcurdling spectacle up on the third floor: Kamai, who has been "zombified" by

Lei Mei, has massacred all the fortress servants. Decapitated bodies lay strewn about the floor in puddles of blood. Kamai turns to face the Heroes wearing his purple mask. A hole's been drilled through his forehead and his movements are jerky and puppet-like. As he raises his large axe, the headless bodies all around him begin to twitch and come to life. Slowly, they rise up to join the ranks of the Bloodless and attack the living.

Note to GM: It may be unadorned and of simple make, but Kamai's broad axe is nonetheless a masterwork weapon (Common alchemist creation: reroll any result of 1 when rolling damage).

Arluk the Head Servant

Location: Heroes' sleeping quarters

The door to their chamber flies open and a Bloodless Arluk barrels in, holding the filthy boots of a Hero in one hand and her sturdy washing paddle in the other.

The Old Priest Lo Han

Location: Chapel

A distraught Kubrog asks the Heroes (or maybe just one of them) to help him find Vana, who's gone missing. They find the terrified girl tied up in the chapel, where the old priest, blood dripping from the hole in his forehead, is preparing to sacrifice her at the altar.

Kubrog of Stalheim

Location: Cellar

The Heroes hear a strange noise coming from the cellar and go down to investigate. They discover their friend Kubrog amongst his beer barrels, wading through the frothy ale that's spewing all over the floor. The brewmaster has punctured holes in many of the barrels and it looks as if he's drunk more than his fair share: his abdomen has swollen to unbelievable proportions, and a dark brown foam seeps from his lips and from the hole in his forehead. His head snaps around as the Heroes enter. Judging by the venomous look he gives them, he probably won't be offering them a drink...





Cruel to the End

Although the majority of the scenario will be dictated by the PCs' decisions, you may also decide to have Lei Mei attack them directly—especially to create a diversion if they're too focused on figuring out who's placed the curse on the fortress and its inhabitants.

Lei Mei could certainly try to poison one or more of the Heroes—after all, why should they get off the hook? She's prepared a powerful alchemical poison with the help of Qi Zhang, using products from his laboratory.

Qi Zhang's philtre (alchemical poison, Uncommon preparation)

This highly lethal poison slows the heartbeat until the victim loses consciousness and soon dies from cardiac arrest. A PC who drinks the poison needs a successful Hard (-1) *strength* Task Roll to avoid passing out a few minutes later. The Hero will be dead within half an hour if a second Hard *strength* Task Roll is also unsuccessful. After a successful roll, the Hero will wake up trembling and in a cold sweat, but will nonetheless lose d6L points of *lifeblood*.

There's also nothing to prevent Lei Mei from having her devoted minion Shartal try to knock off any Hero who's become separated from the group (as we all know from horror movies, this is never a good idea...). And why not make the adventure cruel to the end by having the poor Hero, transformed into a zombie and with a curious little hole in his forehead, attack his horrified fellow adventurers?

Note: there are a number of characters in the fortress who'd make a good replacement for a dead Hero: Kubrog, Vana or Master Vornan, for example.



The Stuffed Arctodus

Location: Second floor landing

If the PCs take the stairs to the second floor, they'll notice a stool sitting in front of the humongous stuffed arctodus on the landing—a stool that hadn't been there previously (good thing Arluk didn't see it, she'd have a fit!). Any adventurer who is curious enough to take a closer look will notice that the creature now has a small, barely visible hole in the fur stretched over its forehead—but in the next instant, the arctodus, its mouth agape, will pounce on its victim.

Note to GM: Lei Mei's attempt to reanimate the stuffed arctodus has been successful. Needless to say, using fire against a creature with dried skin and stuffed with straw would probably be a good idea!

Qi Zhang's Laboratory

This large underground chamber, encased in stone walls, is as cold and mouldy as a tomb despite the small duct in the wall for ventilation. The original builders must have intended the room to be a last refuge in case of an attack on the fortress. A hidden staircase leads to Muntal's apartments, and there's also a hidden passageway to the cold storage room in the cellar.

Lei Mei has cleared away some of the thick layers of dust and the cobwebs, but the room has fallen into ruin and is filled with a rank and pestilential smell. A small brazier set on a bronze tripod provides a semblance of heat, and its reddish light illuminates what clearly would appear to be a sorcerer's lair. On two rotting wood tables sits all the paraphernalia of an alchemist: an alembic, retorts, glass jars and flasks of various sizes, tongs, pincers, shears and other tools. Rolls of yellowed parchment are stacked on shelves against the wall, and manuscripts with metal binding eaten away by verdigris are also strewn about. The back wall across from the stairs offers an even stranger spectacle. On a table pushed against the wall sit two burning candles, one on each side of a roughly hewn hole in the wall where several large stones have been pried loose. Inside the hole can be seen the dried-out body of a man imprisoned behind the wall. His head, more like a skull covered with leathery skin, lies slack against his chest. The sight of the mummified body is horrible enough, but even more so because his jaws keep clattering away, as if he were actually talking!

Note to GM: the entombed cadaver is of course the body of Qi Zhang, preserved from death by his all-consuming hatred and nefarious necromantic powers. If Lei Mei is in the laboratory when the Heroes break in, she will do everything in her power to stop them from approaching her "master" and protect him from harm. She's now completely mad and will fight to the death. Surrendering or trying to escape is out of the question for her.

Epilogue

The end of the scenario will depend entirely on what actually happened, and on who and how many people survived. If Muntal is still alive, he probably won't offer his heartfelt thanks to the killers of his young and beautiful wife, despite her crimes, but he will pay them handsomely if they agree to hold their tongues and leave the island as quickly as possible. If the warlord should die during the adventure, one of the surviving officers (if there are any) will take command and give a letter to Master Vornan, telling him to inform the authorities in Liu of what's happened. Regardless of the outcome, it's a safe bet that the Heroes (if they're still alive) will be anxious to leave the godforsaken fortress. If Kubrog and his daughter have survived, they'll ask to come with them after Vana tells her father she refuses to spend another instant on the cursed isle. This could be the start of a beautiful friendship, and many new adventures...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Bloodless Servants and Villagers (rabble)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Attack	+0
Agility	0	Damage	1 or d3
Mind	0	Defence	0
Lifeforce	3	Protection	0

Traits: horde rules for rabble (see *BoL*, page 157).

Zombified Stuffed Arctodus (tough)

The bones and muscles beneath the stuffed arctodus' hide have been replaced by straw, but it has a sturdy metal framework beneath its pelt that gives it a natural appearance and makes it particularly powerful and dangerous.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	5	Attack	+1
Agility	1	Damage	d6H
Mind	-1	Defence	0
Lifeforce	20	Protection	d6-3 (1)

Bloodless Soldiers from Garrison (tough)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	1	Attack	+1
Agility	1	Damage	d6 (weapon)
Mind	-1	Defence	0
Lifeforce	8	Protection	0 or light armour and helmet d6-2 (2*)

*depending on the situation

Note: for the other main characters in the fortress that may be transformed into Bloodless (Arluk, Lo Han, Muntal, etc.), use the statistics found above and tweak them as you see fit depending on the circumstances (e.g. Kamai wields a great axe, d6H damage).



Shartal (villain)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	3	Initiative	1
Agility	2	Melee	2
Mind	-1	Ranged	0
Appeal	0	Defence	1

Careers

Barbarian	2	Noble	0
Hunter	0	Soldier	2

Protection: light armour d6-3 (1),
small shield (-1 to be hit on one attack/round)

Weapons: sword d6+3, dagger d6L+3,
fists d3+3

Points

Lifeflood 15

Boons

Hard-to-Kill: Shartal is a force of nature (+2 *lifeflood* bonus already included in his stats).

Plains-Born: tough luck for a rider from the steppes to find himself stuck on a frozen rock in the middle of the ocean...

Mighty Fists: Shartal could knock out a charging boughon with a single blow. Add his full *strength* to damage when he fights unarmed.

Flaws

Illiterate: Shartal doesn't know how to read or write.

Obsession: Shartal has an unhealthy attachment for Lei Mei and will do absolutely anything she asks.

Lei Mei (villain)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	1
Agility	1	Melee	0
Mind	3	Ranged	0
Appeal	2	Defence	1

Careers

Noble	2	Scribe	2
Alchemist	2	Magician	1

Protection: none

Weapons: dagger d6L

Points

Arcane Power 11 (5)
Villain Points 5
Lifeflood 10

Boons

Silver Tongue: as a result of her upbringing and class, Lei Mei is well practiced in the art of speechifying and double talk. She gets a *bonus die* whenever she lies or tries to con, coax or mislead someone.

Sneaky: Lei Mei has the gift of going unnoticed. She gets a *bonus die* in situations where she wants to remain inconspicuous.

Learned: Lei Mei is very well educated. She gets a *bonus die* for anything having to do with Xi Lu literature or poetry.

Flaws

Morgazzon's Curse: Lei Mei has been driven mad by the insidious whisperings of Qi Zhang.

Non-Combatant: Lei Mei's education was exclusively focused on improving her mind (already included in her statistics).

Note to GM: Lei Mei is only a novice sorcerer, instructed in the dark arts by the sepulchral voice of Qi Zhang the Putrid. She is therefore only capable of using *cantrips*. The only *First Magnitude Spell* that she knows is the necromantic rite to raise the dead. For the final showdown with the Heroes, also keep in mind that she's already used up quite a bit of her *Arcane Power* (shown in parentheses in her statistics) to perform her necromancy.

Qi Zhang the Putrid, Bloodless Sorcerer (villain)

Entombed alive, Qi Zhang has refused eternal rest and spent decades ruminating his vengeance on the living. His spirit still inhabits his dead body, which has mummified behind the stone walls. Qi Zhang can be clearly seen from the laboratory through the hole Lei Mei made in the wall. He cannot move or talk, but is hardly defenceless.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	-	Attack	See below
Agility	-	Damage	See below
Mind	3	Defence	0
Lifeforce	25	Protection	0

Traits:

Master of Vermin: Qi Zhang can summon the hordes of rats and insects that infest the fortress, and make them attack his adversaries. He must perform an action to summon the vermin, who will then arrive during the next round. A furious swarm of purgats, mice, cockroaches and other creepy-crawlies will flow over the dead sorcerer's body before pouring out of the hole into the laboratory and attacking whichever enemy Qi Zhang indicates. Once the swarm attacks someone, Qi Zhang can no longer change targets, and if the vermin finish off their victim they'll then attack the closest person (who may not necessarily be an enemy of Qi Zhang).

It won't be easy for the victims to defend themselves. They'll literally be submerged by a wave of pointy teeth and mandibles, which will burrow beneath their clothes and crawl up their legs. The person attacked by the throngs of vermin will automatically lose 1 point of *lifeblood* per round (ignoring armour) and will add a *penalty die* for all Task Rolls.

Any character fighting off the vermin will make an attack roll (swarm's *defence*: 0) and cause d3 damage + *strength*, regardless of the weapon used (the Hero flails in all directions, smashing the vermin with her hands, feet, the flat side of a sword blade, etc.).

The horde will only be definitively scattered after suffering 10 damage points, and will leave in its wake scores of dead rats and hundreds of squashed bugs.

Demented Whispering: once per round, Qi Zhang may use his impious whispering to poison the mind of one of his adversaries. His *mind* attribute (+3) is added to his Attack Roll, while the *mind* attribute of his victim will be subtracted as a penalty (instead of *defence*). As always, the result must be at least 9 to "attain" his victim and inflicts d6L+3 damage points, ignoring amour, obviously.

Vulnerability to Fire: Qi Zhang's body is as dry and shrivelled as old parchment, and as flammable as pitch. Double any damage he suffers from fire.





A READY-TO-PLAY ADVENTURE

MÄNN'S OLDEST DREAM



Adventure overview

Our Heroes are preparing to settle into their winter quarters in a small Valgardian village at the foot of the Axos Mountains when the unexpected arrival of a young woman, Joanna Männ, upsets their plans. A tribe of Winged Men has attacked the small mountain fort where she lives with her uncle, forcing her to flee. Joanna is looking for a few brave souls to escort her back up the mountain to learn her uncle's fate. The Heroes will soon discover the eldritch obsessions of old Zacharias Männ and his niece, and have to deal with the (justified) hostility of the Winged Men of Axos.

Background

Zacharias Männ certainly is an obstinate fellow. From his most tender age he's had but one obsession: to fly like a bird. As a young boy he would stare wide-eyed at all the winged creatures that passed overhead and fill his notebooks with sketches of their flights. Later he would study with alchemists who had mastered the mysteries of the natural sciences and attempted to recreate life through subtle artifices. After years of tireless labour, he became a savant in anatomy, medicine, surgery and the arcane arts required to breathe life into inanimate matter.

Some twenty years before our tale begins, Zacharias was given charge of his niece **Joanna**, who had been orphaned following a tragic accident. Her uncle had neither the time nor the inclination to care for the girl, who he quickly relegated to the most menial household chores. But, as the seasons passed, the little fledgling managed to

overcome many hardships and her uncle's ill treatment. She grew into a busy little bird who became indispensable for her uncle's alchemistic labours. She got so involved in his work that she was overcome by the same obsession; the same burning desire to fly. All their years of study and sacrifice became focused on a single goal: to create a "marvel made flesh," a golem of feather and bones that would carry the two accomplices on its back through the heavens. They too would soar above the clouds and feel the ecstasy of flight. The dream of a lifetime would finally become a reality!

About two years ago, as our two dreamers were travelling through the icy crags of the Axos Mountains, they came across a large colony of screech crows (see bottom of page 46). The noisy birds were roosting on the steep cliffs of Frozen Pass, a high mountain defile on the former trade route between Valgard and the steaming jungles of Qush and Qo.





A rundown fortress, actually more like a fortified cave protected by a crumbling tower, sat astride the pass. The whole edifice had long been abandoned to the icy mountain winds, forgotten along with the former trade wars and border skirmishes that had once made it necessary. Zacharias realized that the fort would be the perfect place to continue his work, and decided to take up residence. The large colony of screech crows would provide him with an abundant supply of raw materials to complete his construction work. The old tower would be the flight deck for the Marvel, and the sheer cliffs of the Axos Mountains would be witness to the first flight of Zacharias Männ and Joanna, the future lords of the sky!

They quickly cleaned and consolidated the tower and brought up all the provisions and fuel they would need. Then they established their routine. Joanna, who had proven to be quite handy with her sling, would bring screech crow specimens back for her uncle, who would pluck and dissect the birds and then stitch the carcasses together to create bigger and bigger pieces of feathered flesh. Eventually they formed a single monstrous bird with a wing span of twenty feet: his Marvel! Once he'd finished his macabre sculpture, he crafted two magic necklaces that would enable the "pilot" to control the bird's movements through mind control.

When the two necklaces were finally ready for use (in theory anyway; the Marvel had yet to take flight), Zacharias and Joanna still had one important task to accomplish before they could soar into the skies: master the art of flying and perfect their knowledge of wind patterns and air currents.

As they toiled away, our two busy beavers never realized they weren't alone on the mountaintop. The Axos Mountains were also home to secretive tribes of Winged Men—half bird, half human creatures (see *BoL*, page 87). The lands of one of these tribes, who called themselves the People of the Peaks, lie not far from Frozen Pass (see text box, page 53). One day **Oorea**, a young Winged Woman, happened upon one of Joanna's killing fields. A trail of blood led away from the savagely butchered birds, and Oorea followed it back to the "old stone nest" abandoned long ago by the Wingless. Seeing that it was once again inhabited, she flittered over to the tower to take a look around and was horrified to learn the gruesome fate of her feathered friends. Surprised by Zacharias and his niece, she fell into their clutches before she knew what was happening. The old alchemist decided to enchain her in one of the cells of the decrepit fortress.

Zacharias could hardly believe his good fortune: he'd gotten his hands on the last piece of the puzzle!



He promised Oorea that he would release her in no time if she agreed to reveal all the secrets of flight to him. The frightened young prisoner answered her captor's questions as best she could, but the old buzzard was insatiable and always craved for more knowledge. Each night when she was left alone, Oorea would call out to the night skies, hoping that the other Winged Men would be looking for her and hear her desperate cries for help. One day her prayers were answered. The People of the Peaks, normally a peaceful folk, launched an attack on the stronghold, freed Oorea and made Zacharias their prisoner. Joanna barely had time to gather a few things, leap on the back of a kroark and make a mad dash down the trail to Valgard. She had no time to see what the Winged Men planned on doing with her uncle. Oorea implored the other Winged Men to let the girl flee. She'd seen Joanna beseech her uncle to release their captive, and told her brethren that the girl had tried to shield her from the old man's cruelty. The Winged Men acquiesced, convinced that the young flatlander would never dare return. As Joanna hastily made her getaway through the pass, she frightened a large flock of screech crows. A humongous mythunga, alerted by the deafening caws, swooped down for an attack. Joanna had only survived thanks to the sacrifice of her kroark, whose lifeless body now lay in the pass, entombed under blankets of snow.

Following Joanna's escape, the People of the Peaks threw Zacharias into the same cell where he'd been holding Oorea. Instead of killing him outright, they condemned him to a much more cruel fate. After interminable days of agony, the alchemist finally died of hunger, cold and, above all, of utter despair. Just when his Marvel was ready to take flight, Zacharias Männ saw his oldest dream and most cherished hopes shattered along with his frail body.

And now, perched atop the tower, sits the Marvel, immobile. It has become a memorial for the People of the Peaks, who have decided to regularly bring offerings to "the monster." Although they find it repugnant, it nonetheless symbolizes the sacrifice of hundreds of savagely massacred screech crows, those peaceful creatures made of flesh and feathers in their image.

An Unexpected Arrival

Our adventure begins in a small Valgardian village at the foot of the Axos Mountains. The first snows of winter have fallen and the high mountain passes will soon be blocked. Our Heroes are sitting around the fire at the inn quaffing foamy mugs of ale when the door bursts open and a young girl, half frozen to death, collapses in the doorway.

Exhausted, half-starved and chilled to the bone, the girl is incapable of speech at first. But the innkeeper recognizes her: It's little **Joanna**, the young lass who lives with her uncle up in the mountains, about a two-day walk from the inn. The two of them often come down to the village for supplies during the warmer months. Her uncle, **Zacharias Männ**, is a peculiar little bird. Quite the scholar, they say. Not an unfriendly sort, but not much of a talker either, always lost in his thoughts. He's been living up in the mountains with his niece for the past few years in an abandoned old fort that they've fixed up. The innkeeper doesn't know much more, except that Zacharias always pays up front, and anyway, he doesn't like to stick his nose in other people's business.

Joanna is of average height, with the typical features of a highlander: she's stocky but has a certain feline grace. Her red hair is tied into short pigtails, and she has fair skin and freckled cheeks. Her clothes are made of leather and pelts of animals from the Axos Mountains.

She keeps around her neck, well hidden beneath her thick clothing, one of the magic necklaces to pilot the monster bird (see text box, page 51). Her uncle gave her one of the necklaces to keep until they can finally be used, and kept the other for himself.

The girl eventually comes to her senses. They sit her down in a comfortable chair near the fire and give her a bowl of hot soup, and she tells them how she had to flee her home. A band of Winged Men attacked the small mountain stronghold where she lives with her uncle Zacharias. She was in the courtyard when they swooped down on the tower. She ran to the stables, saddled a kroark and fled to



Interpreting Joanna Männ

Joanna's not necessarily an evil or devious person, but she's had a miserable childhood with a fanatical uncle as her lone companion. After toiling for years to help the old alchemist build his "Marvel," she's become just as obsessed as Zacharias and now longs with all her being for only one thing: to mount the feathered monster and fly! She'll do anything to obtain her goal, and once she sees what's happened to her uncle, she'll be overcome by an irresistible urge to take possession of her inheritance and make her dream come true. All her energy will be bent on finding Zacharias's magic necklace because without it she won't be able to fly the Marvel (see text box, page 51).

She needs the Heroes' help and must gain their trust. At the same time, she'll think twice before telling them the whole truth when they first meet, as she'll be afraid they won't understand. Once they reach the fortress, she'll have no choice but to tell them about her uncle's work due to the circumstances – also because she needs their help to recover the necklace.

So Joanna is a complicated character for the GM to interpret. You'll want her to gain the Heroes' sympathy at first. It's only once they reach the fortress that you should reveal the true extent of her obsession and her "madness." The players should want to help her initially, and only later should they ask themselves if it's actually a good idea. Joanna's obsession will dictate her actions. Her behaviour will become increasingly excessive and irrational, which may lead her to commit desperate acts without considering the consequences (or the trouble it might cause for the Heroes).



look for help. Then, after she'd barely had time to leave the fortress, she was attacked in the pass by a gigantic mythunga, a vicious winged predator that haunts the peaks of the Axos. Her kroark became wild with fear and threw her to the ground. She fled by foot as the mythunga winged down to attack her mount. It had taken her two days, with hardly any food or sleep, to reach the village.

In a voice filled with tears, she says she doesn't know what's happened to her uncle. Have the Winged Men killed him? Taken him prisoner? She must return to the fort as quickly as possible to rescue him, but she'll need help. She only has a small purse of gold with her, but she swears to the Heroes that her uncle is a man of means. They'll be paid handsomely if they agree to escort her back to the fort to find out what's happened to Zacharias. If the PCs ask, she'll talk some more about her

past—the death of her parents, her life with her uncle the scholar and his passion for birds, and how they moved into the mountain fortress to study the colony of screech crows. But for the time being she won't say anything about the monster bird they've built, the magic necklaces, the bird woman they took prisoner, or the tyrannical nature of her uncle that caused the whole mess.

After a night of rest, and despite her fatigue, Joanna is ready to leave at once the next morning. If the Heroes don't have mounts, she'll make arrangements with the innkeeper for parvaluses so that they can travel as quickly as possible. There's no time to lose—not only for Zacharias, but also because the winter snows may soon block the mountain passes. If everything goes as planned, it should take three days for the group to reach the fortress.



The Trek to Frozen Pass

After a two-day climb through the foothills of Valgard and up the slopes of the Axos Mountains, the trail winds through a narrow canyon shrouded in shadows. The rock falls, the meandering mountain stream, the icy gusts of wind and the hard-packed snow make the trail difficult for both men and beasts. But if all goes as planned, they should reach the fortress the next day.

In the middle of the day, the Heroes see the tail of a kroark sticking out of the snow. As they approach they can see the rest of the carcass, well preserved by the winter cold. The creature's flanks have been gored and partially devoured. Its legs have also been savagely crushed and are twisted at sickening angles.

The harness and saddle bag are still on the kroark. The Heroes will find a little frozen food inside and a leather case containing an old notebook. The pages are filled with the studies of Zacharias Männ: notes, comments, hypotheses and hundreds of sketches of all sorts of birds, both alive and dissected, with carefully detailed anatomical drawings. It must represent many years of work. There are different types of birds on the first pages, but the more recent entries only concern the screech crows of the region. The handwriting and the drawings are all from the same hand, but there is no way to identify the author.

Joanna will tell them that this was her kroark, and will explain that the notebook belonged to her uncle. He always kept it with him when he went out riding to study birds, and must have left it in the saddlebag of the kroark.

The Roosting Screech Crows

At the end of the afternoon our Heroes exit the canyon and the passage widens between the cliffs, which are splattered with the white stains of bird droppings. The cliffs have been home to a large colony of screech crows for many years, and the birds are not accustomed to visitors—except for Joanna, who has made it her hunting grounds.

The voyagers will need to keep a low profile to avoid scaring the thousands of birds perched on the cliffs above—hardly an easy task as the trail is littered with obstacles. Joanna will warn them about the danger of setting off an uproar amongst the birds, as it will undoubtedly attract the winged predators common to the area—in particular the feared mythunga. She'll get off her parvalus and lead it by the reins, and the Heroes would be wise to follow her lead. But there'll still be a risk of setting off a small rock slide, with all its grim consequences.

The Screech Crow of Axos

This species is native to the Axos Mountains, and was given its name by none other than Zacharias Männ himself, who spent nearly two years studying the birds down to the finest detail. The birds would appear to be half crow, half seabird. An adult may have a wingspan of up to six feet. They live in large colonies made up of hundreds of individuals, and prefer inaccessible ledges and crevices on high mountain peaks for their nests. Notable characteristics are their feathers, which are white in the winter and then turn a light grey as soon as the snows melt, offering them excellent camouflage throughout the year. They are peaceful creatures, and are easily frightened. When scared, the entire flock of birds will take to the air and create a deafening ruckus of fluttering wings and caterwauling. Although no one has ever tried to domesticate the screech crow, it would certainly make an excellent sentinel to warn against intruders.



Note to GM: Go ahead and make the players roll the dice a few times to keep them on edge. A *beastmaster* would be handy here to keep their mounts calm. Have Joanna speak in a low voice and encourage the players to do the same; if they don't follow your lead and talk normally when interpreting their characters, you can consider that their Hero has also talked too loudly and has frightened the birds. They'll then leave their nests and fill the air with their thundering caws, which will of course attract the attention of the mythunga.

In this case, the screeches of the mythunga will soon be heard above the cacophony. An ominous shadow will loom over the pass and the rapacious bird will then wing down in search of a tasty treat.

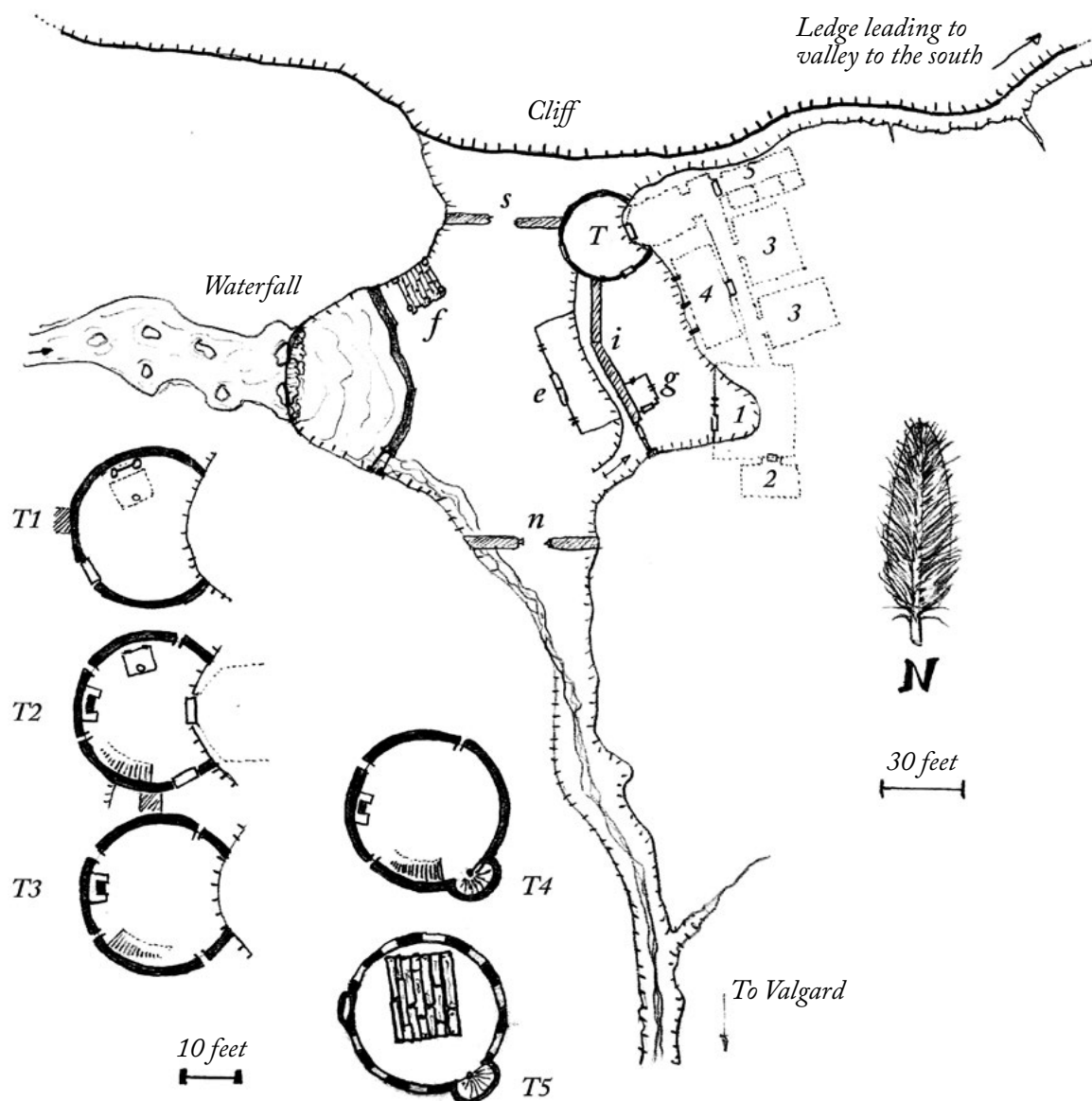
Regardless of how the Heroes respond to the mythunga, Joanna won't wait around to find out. She'll immediately bolt towards the fortress, which is now less than a league up the trail. She'll yell in a panicked voice to the others to follow her lead. If the PCs prefer to stand and fight, the mythunga will attempt one or two reckless attacks before flying away. It will swoop in low despite the tight confines of the pass, and may snatch a parvalus before winging off.

Note to GM: if the PCs are in a fighting mood, make sure that the mythunga escapes without too much damage so that it can reappear on the scene during the end game when the People of the Peaks lure it to the fortress (see "The Shadow in The Sky," page 54). If our valiant adventurers manage to bring down the beast during its initial attack (using a healthy dose of Hero Points, for example), feel free to have another mythunga arrive on the scene for the final showdown.

The Abandoned Fort

In days gone by, this stronghold guarded the border between two rival kingdoms that have long ceased to exist. At the time, the pass was one of the few viable trade routes through the Axos Mountains between the frozen countries of the North and the steaming jungles of the South. It had been heavily used by merchant caravans, who filled the coffers of the fortress with their toll money. But due to the decline of the ancient kingdoms and the opening of more accessible trade routes, the road through Frozen Pass lost its strategic importance and the fortress was soon forgotten and fell into ruin.





Waterfall

The waterfall flows into a reservoir, and then spills over to form a small stream that runs northward down the pass. The basin had originally been built to supply water to the fortress's inhabitants and the forge.

Ramparts (n, s and i)

The stronghold is protected to the north and south by two ramparts, about fifteen feet high. Each rampart has a set of massive double doors made of wood. The walls have partially collapsed and the doors have rotted away with each passing season. The inner rampart (i), which has a gate, protects the upper courtyard. It's less exposed to the weather and is in better shape than the two other walls.

Forge (f)

The military forge sits under a large, dilapidated awning that's somehow managed to cling to the cliff face. Large leather bellows and some rusty old tools lie about. With the right skills (a *blacksmith*, for example) and some elbow grease, the PCs could get the forge up and running. Some fallen rocks near the forge partially cover a pile of iron ingots, and there are sacks of coal inside the tower on the ground floor.

Stables (e)

A long, one-story stone building is all that remains of the former stables. The roof is patchy but the mounts can still be protected from the cold. Inside sits a decrepit wagon from the days when the



road could still be used before the many landslides due to erosion blocked the trail.

A marauding cave bear recently decided that the newly abandoned stable was the perfect place to hibernate. It probably won't be thrilled if the Heroes or their mounts should intrude on its slumber.

Guard House (g)

This small stone building, originally built to guard the entrance to the fortress, has stood up well over time.

Converted Caves

The military barracks that once housed the garrison are in fact a group of caves that were enlarged in the cliff face. They've been better protected from the harsh mountain climate.

They include a dining hall and kitchen (1) that were partially hollowed out of the rock and which contains a large fireplace on one wall and some rotting furniture, a larder (2) that was ransacked long ago, dormitories (3) filled with mattresses made of rotting straw, and an armoury (4) with depressingly empty racks (but a *soldier* or a *blacksmith* could still repair a rusty old piece of armour or a weapon found lying about). The fortress prison (5) has three separate cells with heavy doors made of thick iron bars. The rusty old doors grate on their hinges and have been impossible to close for ages. The keys to the locks (and the jail keepers) are also a distant memory, but inside each cell is a neck collar attached to a short chain, about four feet long and anchored in the ground. In one of these cells lies the enchained and lifeless body of Zacharias Männ (see below).

Guard Tower

Despite signs of age, this stone tower (T) still stands proudly atop Frozen Pass. It is about fifty feet tall and 30 feet wide, and has five floors. Many a crack can be seen in its walls, but it still looks capable of withstanding the wind and frost.

Zacharias and Joanna chose to make their home inside the tower nearly two years earlier, and even managed to transform the cold and barren rooms into a clean and cosy living space.

- **The ground floor (T1)** can be entered through a heavy door that opens onto the main courtyard of the stronghold. The door is locked from the inside with a thick bar. The windowless room is dark and cold, and is used as a larder as it is safe from rodents. There's also a storage area for tools, sacks of coal and firewood. This floor is a disorderly mess where the Heroes may find a few useful things (oil, alcohol, etc. at the GM's discretion). A trapdoor in the ceiling provides access from the second floor via a ladder. A winch attached to the ceiling of the second floor is used to hoist up heavy loads.

- **The second floor (T2)** has a heavy door that opens onto the upper courtyard. This door can also be locked from the inside. There is a second door to the converted caves that is more commonly used. This room, like those on the floors above, has narrow murder holes in the walls that have been covered by thick curtains to keep out the icy winds. This is the living space, with a kitchen and a dining area. Some burnt stew is stuck to the bottom of a large pot hanging in the fireplace - the last supper, which the tower's inhabitants never had time to eat. A circular wooden ladder on the wall connects this floor and all the remaining floors.

- **The third floor (T3)** contains the bedroom shared by Joanna and her uncle. Two comfortable beds separated by a folding screen are on one side of the room, and on the other side are a cosy little sitting room and a library with a wide variety of works (about animals and plants, medicine, alchemy, geography, etc.), including a mysterious grimoire (see text box, page 50). A small chest has been clumsily hidden beneath a floorboard. The gold coins and jewels it contains are the Männ's entire family fortune, which Joanna will use as needed to pay off the Heroes in her quest to recover the missing necklace and fly away on the Marvel.

- **The fourth floor (T4)** is Zacharias's laboratory. There are many tables with stacks of books and scrolls, small dissecting tools, magnifying glasses, inkpots, hourglasses, scales, pestles, alembics, recipients and glass tubes. The walls are lined with shelves that sag beneath the weight of clay pots, flasks and vials. A bench for leatherwork is off to one side.



The Grimoire

One of the works in the library may catch the eye of the Heroes, in particular if they speak Sorceric. It's an extremely rare tome called The Art of The Invisible Bond, and treats both sorcery and the alchemist arts. It provides metallurgical techniques for forging objects with psychic powers. This is in fact the book that Zacharias used to create and to charm the necklaces to fly the Marvel by mind control. A PC who is an alchemist may, after long hours of study, get the gist of the tome, but they'll also have to make a successful mind Task Roll. If the roll is a failure, the Hero will still understand the dark arts described in the tome, but will be struck with a temporary (or permanent, depending on the type of failure) disability, which may include the appearance of strange symptoms (pustules, itching, etc.), an irrational fear, or a behavioural problem (at the GM's discretion).

Screech crows in every possible state fill the workshop. Drawings of them are pinned to the walls, stuffed crows are splayed in awkward positions, dissected birds are on display, and birdcages are filled with them (they've all starved to death). The air is heavy with the acrid smell of bird droppings and the pungent fragrance of formol.

The fireplace holds a small forge used for extremely precise moulding. There are moulds for making links and pendants, jeweller's tools and filings of precious metals. This must be where Zacharias made the magic collars, following the instructions contained in the grimoire down in the library (see text box).

Note to GM: a PC with an *alchemist* career would certainly be capable of using the grimoire to create a copy of the missing necklace. But as is always the case with alchemy, it would take many weeks to study the magic tome and to perform tests and experiments—without forgetting the rare and precious raw materials that would need to be found. The Heroes clearly won't have enough time due to the imminent threat of the Winged Men (and the growing impatience of Joanna).

Lastly, saddles and leather straps in mint condition hang on the wall. Zacharias and Joanna have made a complete system of saddles and harnesses perfectly adapted to the Marvel, complete with two individual saddles and a pack for their bags (or additional passengers). The monster bird will be capable of carrying upwards of 600 pounds while still flying effortlessly.

A small stone staircase leads through a small turret up to the roof of the tower.

- **The roof of the tower (T5)** is open to the four winds and has a crenelated parapet. At least half of the roof is covered by a wooden platform on which a gigantic bird is majestically perched with its wings folded. The creature (see text box, page 51) is inanimate and appears to be staring far off at the southern horizon, waiting for the moment to take flight. The bird has been adorned with garlands of mountain flowers. Wooden bowls and braided baskets have been placed at its feet. They contain wild berries, dried fruits, petals from flowers, bones sculpted into small birds and animals, and beads of different colours (these are uncut gems of significant value). Some of the offerings look quite fresh, meaning the roof must often be visited. They've been brought by the Winged Men, who have transformed the top of the tower into a sanctuary. Joanna will be very surprised when she sees this.

Next to the parapet sits a large cask with a cover. Inside is a gelatinous liquid that reeks of formol and pine oil. This is an alchemist's preparation that must be brushed on the wings and feathery body of the Marvel on a regular basis to prevent it from rotting.

Trail to The South

A trail about fifteen to twenty feet wide leads down from Frozen Pass to the South. It was carved right out of the cliff face and rises perilously above the



southern jungles, which stretch below to the horizon. The former trade route hasn't been maintained for ages and is littered with fallen rocks and blocked by landslides. Danger is ever-present: one false move

means plunging to a certain death, and the long, exposed ridge is also a prime hunting spot for the many winged predators in the region (mythungas, azhdarkhos, drakks, swarms of phongs, etc.).



The Marvel and The Necklaces

The Marvel is the result of nearly two years of demanding, exacting work that cost the lives of hundreds of screech crows. The giant bird is over six feet tall and twelve feet long, with a wing span of twenty feet. It can carry up to four humans or a load of the equivalent weight. It's a repulsive creature made of bits and pieces of bird flesh that have been stitched together and covered with thousands of white and grey feathers. The majority of the stitched, swollen flesh has been hidden beneath a fine layer of down and mountains of feathers, but the creature is still unwholesome and gives off a sickening smell of rotten meat dowsed with formaldehyde.

Zacharias's creation has remained relatively well preserved thanks to the cold climate and the unique know-how of the alchemist, in particular his life-preserving ointment (see paragraph "The Roof of The Tower," page 50).

The monster bird is ready for take-off: the only thing missing is the two alchemist necklaces. One must be placed around the bird's neck (or its claw) and the other around the neck of its master, who can then guide it by mind control.

Once the "pilot" and the bird have donned the necklaces, they must then remain in physical contact with one another to establish a tight mental bond. The rider will then be able to give simple commands to control the bird's flight: take off, dive, glide, land, etc.

But the pilot must still learn how to fly, and will need to master the subtle arts known only to winged creatures. This was what Zacharias wanted Oorea to explain to him when he held her captive, but now it's too late for him. And neither Joanna nor the Heroes have received any flight training, which could be a big problem if they decide to take off on the Marvel.

If the two necklaces are reunited and one of the PCs decides to animate the bird monster on his own (without letting Joanna "pilot" the creature), he'll quickly realize just how difficult it is. You can have him make one or more *mind* Task Rolls, either Tough (-2) or Demanding (-4), in order to maintain mind control over the bird and keep it airborne. *Beastmaster*, *sky-pilot* or *alchemist* career ranks may be added to the rolls as a bonus. It's up to you to decide the consequences if the PC should fail, depending on the circumstances (the bigger they are, the harder they fall...).

The People of The Peaks

As soon as she reaches the fortress, Joanna will hurry to the tower in search of her uncle, and eventually discover his lifeless body chained up in one of the prison cells. After some heartfelt sobs and a few curses for those foul Winged Men, she'll regain control of herself and begin desperately groping her uncle's neck to find the second necklace. It's nowhere to be found. A perceptive PC will notice feathers lying on the floor of the cell, which don't look the same as those of the screech crows. **Note to GM:** these are feathers that were lost by Oorea, the Winged Woman held prisoner by Zacharias.

When she can't find the necklace on her uncle (it was taken by Jaoor, the shaman of the People of the Peaks), Joanna will frantically look for it on every floor of the tower, turning the whole place upside down and asking the Heroes for assistance. The Winged Men, who are not curious folk by nature and take little interest in the affairs of humans, have left the place untouched except for the top of the tower, which they visit regularly.

At this point in the adventure, it's quite likely that the Heroes will start peppering Joanna with questions to figure out what the hell's going on. She'll now realize that it'll be much easier to find the necklace if she places her trust in the Heroes. If they start to dither, she'll be generous with the family treasure to convince them. If Joanna gets the feeling that they sincerely want to help her, she'll stop beating around the bush and tell them the whole story: about the project to create the Marvel, the importance of the mind-control necklaces, and how the Winged Men attacked after they'd captured Oorea.

The Offerings

After spending the remainder of the afternoon exploring the stronghold and talking to Joanna, the Heroes will hit the hay once night falls. But the next morning at dawn, they'll wake to the sounds of strange voices atop the tower...

A half-dozen Winged Men and Women (*rabble*) have come back to the tower with new offerings for

the Marvel (including a handful of "those coloured stones that corrupt the flatlanders..."). They're escorted by four scouts (*toughs*). One of them speaks a few words of Lemurian, and will do his best to communicate with the Heroes if they show him they're friendly.

Joanna will want to know if they have her uncle's necklace, which is identical to the one she herself is wearing (she'll show it to the visitors). The Winged Man tells her that Shaman Jaoor, the spiritual guide of the People of the Peaks, has taken it as a trophy. Joanna will then ask for a meeting with the shaman.

If the Winged Men feel threatened in any way, they'll hurry away to save their skins and spread word amongst their people that intruders have returned to their lands.

Jaoor the Shaman

Regardless of the outcome of the initial encounter, a few hours later an unruly throng of Winged Men, led by the shaman Jaoor, will appear in the sky above the tower. There will be about forty of them (30 *rabble* and 10 *toughs*).

Initially, Jaoor will want to show his people what a wise and peaceful leader he is, who has no fear of these flatlanders. In any case, he knows that he can always use his magical powers to protect himself if push comes to shove (see Jaoor's stats, page 57). He'll therefore stand alone in front of the Heroes (and Joanna), and eye them disdainfully. He can only speak the Heroes' tongue in broken bits and will use vivid imagery (Winged Man imagery) to express himself. First he'll ask them what they're doing here. He'll then make it clear that they're not welcome on these lands, which have belonged to the People of the Peaks since time immemorial. Initially he'll be friendly, but he may try to intimidate the Heroes or even threaten to kill them, depending on their attitude. Joanna won't hesitate to add fuel to the fire. If she can't convince the shaman to give her the necklace (which shines brightly around his neck), you can even have her try to rip it from Jaoor's neck. It's the sort of irreparable act that could immediately lead to a battle with the Winged Men.



Note to GM: Be sure to let the players act on their own initiatives before having Joanna perform any rash acts.

If the Heroes try to negotiate with Jaor and offer him something in exchange, he'll just give them an amused look and say "you Wingless have nothing

that I don't already possess" (which he truly believes). He will not be tempted by weapons, trinkets or gold. If the PCs offer an alternative such as getting rid of the mythunga for the Winged Men, he'll just cackle (as only a Winged Man can) and tell them that the simple presence of this mighty lord of the



The People of The Peaks

The People of the Peaks, as they call themselves, have lived for many generations in caves that have been hollowed out of the steep cliffs of an inaccessible peak in the Axos Mountains, a few dozen leagues as the crow flies from Frozen Pass.

This peaceful community of Winged Men has about 100 members, two-thirds of which are hunters and warriors, both male and female, capable of defending themselves (count around forty rabble and fifteen toughs in the tribe). They are led by a shaman who is their chieftain, the guardian of their traditions and, if necessary, their commander in time of war.

Since the fortress was abandoned many decades ago and the trade caravans along with it, the Winged Men have kept their contacts with humans to the strict minimum. Bartering had once been frequent between the two races but is now a thing of the past. Some Winged Men are still capable of speaking the common language of Lemuria with difficulty, which may result in misunderstandings and confusion.

The People of the Peaks have no particular sympathy for humans, but have always tried to remain neutral in their dealings with them. After having discovered the young Winged Woman Oorea enchained by Zacharias Männ however, their attitude has now radically changed. Unfortunately, the Heroes may learn this at their own expense. They'll have to tread very carefully and show a great deal of tact if they want to avoid useless bloodshed. Joanna knew that returning to the fortress was risky, but she's so determined to achieve her goal that she's blind to the danger. Her obsession may foil the good intentions of the Heroes if they decide to use peaceful means.

The Winged Men want the flatlanders to leave their homeland for good, and will use intimidation, threats, and, as a last resort, force. If the Heroes prove to be particularly persuasive and show little inclination for fighting, negotiations may be possible. But if the PCs decide to use force, the People of the Peaks will attack relentlessly—unless they suffer too many losses in their ranks. They won't risk the annihilation of their entire tribe in a hopeless battle. If the Heroes gain a decisive advantage, the People of the Peaks will call on the mythunga (by sacrificing a few courageous volunteers; see "The Shadow in The Sky" on the next page) to kill the intruders or frighten them off.

skies guarantees that flatlanders will think twice before trespassing in their mountains. The only way to bend his will is by demonstrating magical powers well beyond his own (if the Heroes possess such powers) or by mowing down whole ranks of Winged Men.



Note to GM: be careful with this scene as it can be quite tricky. Let the players get more and more desperate as they keep offering solutions until they eventually run out of ideas and start thinking about using force—unless that's their strategy right from the start. Use the pigheadedness of Jaoor, who's convinced that he holds all the cards, to exasperate them. You don't want the players to think that Jaoor will refuse every proposition no matter what. Carefully explain your point of view while you shoot down their ideas one by one in a logical manner.

In the end, unless one of the players has an absolutely brilliant idea or unless they decide to use force, Jaoor will not give them the necklace (as a matter of principle), meaning there's a good chance their discussions will end in a conflict—either immediately or later on in the adventure.

In fact, the shaman now considers the necklace to be his by right; it is a reminder to all his followers of how he vanquished (with such ease!) the “bad man” who caused so much suffering for Oorea and their feathered friends. Jaoor is very cunning and has no faith in humans (especially since the imprisonment of Oorea). He's also bolstered by all his people gathered around him and their numerical superiority. It won't be easy for the Heroes to intimidate or confuse him.

If the Heroes do attack Jaoor at this point, he'll lead his people into battle. They'll harass the humans from a distance to avoid any messy hand-to-hand fighting that would leave them at a disadvantage.

The Shadow in The Sky

If negotiations go nowhere but cooler heads manage to prevail (despite Jaoor's ominous threats to make the Heroes leave by force), the shaman will hesitate for a moment to think things over.



His attitude will suddenly change. He'll propose that each side take time to reflect on the situation, because "time is a source of wisdom." He'll then tell the Heroes that he will return later in the day (or the next day) to continue their discussions and find a peaceable solution. He'll fly away with most of his troops, leaving behind only a few scouts. They'll take up positions on the remote cliff tops. It's in fact a ruse to gain more time. Jaoor now realizes that he can't convince the humans to leave without their precious necklace, and has decided to change tactics and call in the mythunga.

If things get nasty and the People of the Peaks suffer heavy losses in the battle (more than a quarter of their troops), they will also fall back.

In either case, Jaoor (or one of the tribal elders if he's killed) will curse the stubborn Wingless who've shown him up in front of his people, who may now have less esteem for their spiritual leader.

The shaman will adopt a new strategy. He'll ask for volunteers among his people to perform the ultimate sacrifice by serving as bate for the mythunga. They will lure the horrible roc out of its lair, which is a place well known to them, and lead it to Frozen Pass. By allowing the monster to gulp them down one by one, the Winged Men hope that this new adversary, whose might is much greater than theirs, will finish off the intruders once and for all and save their homeland.

Note to GM: describing the arrival of the mythunga can be a lot of fun. You can tell the PCs that they suddenly hear a horrible, raucous screech in the sky (haven't they heard it before?), and then relate every gory detail to them as the poor Winged Men offer themselves one after another on a platter for the monster's feast, leading it closer and closer to the fortress, until the last poor soul gets pecked to pieces right in front of their eyes.

Once the mythunga tastes blood it will frenetically hunt down other prey to sate its insatiable appetite. If the Heroes don't rise to the challenge, worthy of the greatest sagas of Lemuria, and decide instead to hide inside the fortress, the creature will attack the Marvel. The pungent odour is hardly appetizing,

but it's still made of flesh and blood. At this point, if the Heroes still refuse to take action, Joanna will rush headlong to the top of the tower and try to defend her heritage tooth and nail. If the Heroes should try to stop her, she'll lash out at them with desperate fury and try to use her weapons to hack through them to the top of the tower.

Conclusion

As long as the Heroes and Joanna refuse to abandon the fortress (dead or alive), Jaoor and his people will keep trying to drive them away. If the cost of their sacrifice is too great, the People of the Peaks will eventually give up and agree to give them the coveted necklace if they promise to leave.

At long last, Joanna Männ will take possession of the Marvel (did she really have any other choice?) and fly off into the sunset—unless her prized possession has been torn to shreds by the razor-sharp claws and beak of the mythunga. In that case she'll be inconsolable and vindictive. The PCs may try to prevent her from flying off and even attempt to steal the Marvel for themselves, which would of course force Joanna to embark on a suicide mission to recover her inheritance. Lastly, if Joanna and/or the Heroes manage to leave Frozen Pass on the back of the Marvel, other aerial threats may await them, whether it be a band of Winged Men bent on revenge, a surviving mythunga, or one of the many other winged predators (see the list of beasts in *BoL*) who use the peaks as their hunting grounds.

As you can see the end game is wide open. The PCs may decide to join forces with Joanna, who may come along on other adventures or even become a full-fledged heroine as part of their merry band. Or their choices and deeds may turn her into a villain who'll cross their path somewhere down the road—especially if they've stolen her Marvel...



CAST OF CHARACTERS

Joanna Männ

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	1	Initiative	1
Agility	2	Melee	0
Mind	1	Ranged	2
Appeal	0	Defence	1

Careers

Servant	2	Alchemist	1
Hunter	1	Merchant	0

Protection: Leather vest and heavy pelts d6-3 (1)

Weapons: Dagger d6L+1, sling d6L

Points

Lifeflood	11
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Boons

Trademark Weapon (sling from Axos): Joanna is a great shot and has brought down many screech crows from their nests in the cliffs. Roll a *bonus die* for her Attack Rolls with her sling.

Mountain-born: Of great help for surviving in the Axos Mountains. *Bonus die* when tracking, trapping, hunting (but not fighting) in a mountainous terrain.

Flaws

Obsession: Joanna wants only one thing in life — to take off on her uncle's Marvel and discover the world on wings. Whenever in the presence of the object of her obsession, Joanna has a *penalty die* on all rolls that require her to ignore it.

Belongings

Clothing and weapons, basic survival gear, animal traps, a purse full of gold coins.

Cave Bear

(see *BoL*, page 104)

The bear has transformed the stables (e) into sleeping quarters for its hibernation. You can lower its attributes a bit if you want, as the bear is already half asleep.

Winged Men, People of the Peaks (rabble)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	-1	Initiative	0
Agility	2	Melee	-1
Mind	0	Ranged	1
Appeal	0	Defence	0

Careers

Hunter	1
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Protection: None

Weapons: Primitive weapons (javelin, club, bone knife) d3

Points

Lifeflood	2
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Boons

Winged-Man Agility: +1 to *agility* (already included in stats).

Scouts and Guards, People of the Peaks (toughs)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	1
Agility	2	Melee	-1
Mind	0	Ranged	1
Appeal	1	Defence	1

Careers

Hunter	2
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Protection: Leather bracers and battle harness (light armour) d6-3 (1)

Weapons: Javelins d6L, club or dagger d6L, or spear d6

Points

Lifeflood	6
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Boons

Winged-Man Agility: +1 to *agility* (already included in stats).



The Myfhunga

(see *BoL*, page 116)

It may be on its own or may have a mate; it's up to the GM to decide depending on what happens (see recommendations above).

Jaoor, Shaman, People of the Peaks (villain)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	2
Agility	1	Melee	0
Mind	2	Ranged	0
Appeal	2 (3*)	Defence	2

Careers

Barbarian	0	Hunter	2
Healer	1	Shaman	2

Protection: See below

Weapons: Sacrificial bone knife d6L, ceremonial staff d6L

Points

Faith Points	2
Lifeblood	10

Boons

Inspire: Give a *bonus die* for all the Attack Rolls of his followers for one round, once per day.

Winged-Man Agility: +1 to *agility* (already included in stats).

Flaws

Arrogant: Roll a *penalty die* when dealing with foreigners.

Belongings

Talismans: Jaoor's body is covered with sacred talismans and amulets made of feathers, bird bones and small, coloured pearls. This gaudy attire has mystical powers which give him a protection of d6-1 (3) from the first damage taken, d6-2 (2) from the second damage taken, and then d6-3 (1) from the following damage. As he takes hits, the



shaman's talismans will be smashed to pieces and progressively lose their protective power.

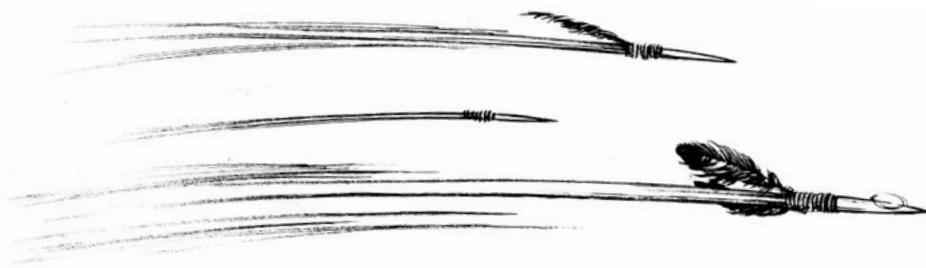
Ceremonial staff:* Jaoor's sceptre is a gnarled wooden staff about five feet long with a shiny, polished human skull perched on top. Its eyes are two ruby-red gems that give off an eerie glow and have an unwholesome, disturbing effect. Jaoor has a bonus of +1 for *appeal* when the sceptre is in his hand, and his enemies roll a *penalty die* for *Priority Rolls*. Jaoor's sceptre only has magical power when it is held by a shaman of the Winged Men.





A READY-TO-PLAY ADVENTURE

THE SERPENT BRIDE



Adventure Overview

The Heroes have been invited by Turmar Latia to celebrate his marriage to the ravishing Jil Sendak, a young heiress from one of the noblest families in Satarla. But his fiancée is secretly in love with Eormo, a dashing sky-pilot from a poor jungle tribe. Eormo decides to throw caution to the wind and listen to his heart: following the customs of his people, he kidnaps Jil just before the ceremony as the stunned guests look on in disbelief. Our Heroes will be asked to hunt down the fugitives, who've fled to Eormo's tribal village. They'll soon discover the bizarre wedding rites of the jungle people, who are ruled by a creature that is even more bizarre...and much deadlier than they could've ever imagined.

Introduction

The Heroes have gathered to attend the wedding of the beautiful **Jil Sendak** and the young parvenu **Turmar Latia**. The Sendak family belongs to the upper crust of the Satarlan nobility and is known for its refinement, attachment to tradition and culture; whereas Turmar's family has built its reputation and power on an immense fortune gained through the bouphon trade. But this supposedly happy event has nothing to do with love: Turmar only wants to marry Jil to elevate the standing of his family and cast off their common origins as dealers in chattel. He doesn't have the slightest regard for Jil, who's secretly burning with desire for **Eormo**, a young sky-pilot from a jungle tribe north of Oomis. His humble origins rule out any hopes of marrying the heiress of such a noble Satarlan family—unless he decides to listen to his heart and commit a

foolhardy act: kidnap Jil on the day of her marriage and steal away with her to his homeland to marry her according to the customs of his tribe.

The Heroes can only gawp in amazement along with the other guests as Eormo swoops down with his sky-boat to abduct Jil right in front of their eyes. An incensed Turmar will ask the adventurers to track them down and bring back his bride-to-be.

Party Crashers

Our story begins with the Heroes being invited to the marriage of the ambitious social-climber **Turmar Latia**. You can keep it simple by saying he has close ties with the adventurers (he might be a friend or a family relation—maybe someone's cousin). Or they could just be part of his entourage,





mercenaries hired as escorts to make him look important (big shots like Turmar must have an escort, of course). You'll have to decide why your group of players would be invited to a fancy event with all the high society of Satarla. All that really matters is that they have strong enough ties to Turmar to justify their willingness to help him (either because he's their boss or their friend).

The guests have gathered in the luxurious villa of the Sendaks, one of the wealthiest families in Satarla, in the hills above the city. The multi-tiered estate is in fact a series of beautiful terraces extending up the hill, embellished with slender, white marble columns that only add to the baroque splendour of the luxurious manor. It's early evening. Warm, gentle breezes carry heady fragrances from planters filled with jasmine through the late summer air. White flowers adorn the long tables, where the guests enjoy the choicest delicacies of the region. Wine flows in abundance. The guests have gathered in small groups on the terraces of the palatial estate, enjoying the refreshing breeze as they wait for the ceremony to begin. The beautiful **Jil** is alone on the top-floor terrace with her father and a priest of Lilandra, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her future husband.

The bridegroom and his retinue finally enter the courtyard of the estate, preceded by a merry troupe of minstrels announcing their arrival, and the guests are waiting expectantly for the ceremony to begin. Suddenly, the dark shadow of a sky-boat looms above the house. A rope drops down to the waiting hand of Jil, who grabs hold and is immediately swept away by the mysterious and astonishing aircraft. As the guests look on in disbelief, the PCs may try to chase down the fugitives by making a *Priority Roll* with a -4 modifier. They'll be surprised when they reach the top-floor terrace by six guards on duty who, to everyone's amazement, will halt them in their tracks. The guards will do everything in their power to stop the PCs from gaining access to the terrace or the parapets, and will prevent any attempt to tie down the sky-boat. A foolhardy PC who may consider leaping from the terrace to catch Jil will quickly realize this is a bad idea: even the most courageous adventurer can't defy the laws of gravity.

After a few moments of confusion, while the two fathers heap insults on each other and take turns blaming each other for the calamity, Turmar bursts onto the scene with another young man. It's Jil's brother, **Khalaman Sendak**. He has an aristocratic and military bearing, and wears the uniform of the elite pilots of the Satarlan Sky-Navy.





Turmar is apoplectic. He immediately asks the Heroes (as he knows full well how capable and adventurous they are) to bring back his fiancée at any price. Jil's kidnapping is an affront both to him and to Jil's family. Their honour is at stake! Thanks to the immense fortune and influence of the two families, they'll quickly make arrangements and find a sky-boat to chase down the fugitives. Khalaman will pilot the vessel. If the Heroes can bring back his betrothed, Turmar promises them the girl's weight in rare gems from the Plains of Klaar. Khalaman quickly adds that the Sendak family will also be most generous in their display of thanks.

While they wait for the sky-boat to arrive, Khalaman says that he knows who carried off his sister: he saw who threw down the rope to Jil. The instigator of this spectacular crime is none other than **Eormo**, a muscle-bound hothead from the jungle of Qush who joined the Satarlan army a few years back. He's the same age as Khalaman, around twenty. After joining the army, Eormo quickly made a name for himself thanks to his prowess and valour. Despite his humble origins, he was allowed to join the elite fighting men of the Sky-Navy about a year ago in recognition of the great bravery he showed in combat. The young barbarian once again showed his worth, as he proved to be an excellent pilot and particularly courageous.

It was Khalaman who introduced Eormo to Jil at a Sky-Navy banquet. He never dreamed that their chance meeting at the dinner party would lead to this. In any event, if he'd had even the slightest doubt about the two of them, he would have intervened immediately. Eormo is hardly worthy of his family (Khalaman has a hard time concealing his rivalry with Eormo, who is undoubtedly a better pilot).

The two pilots had been good friends when they'd first met, as they shared the same passion for aerial combat. But over time their friendship soured as each tried to outdo the other in the air. Their fierce rivalry left no room for friendship. They rarely saw each other anymore.

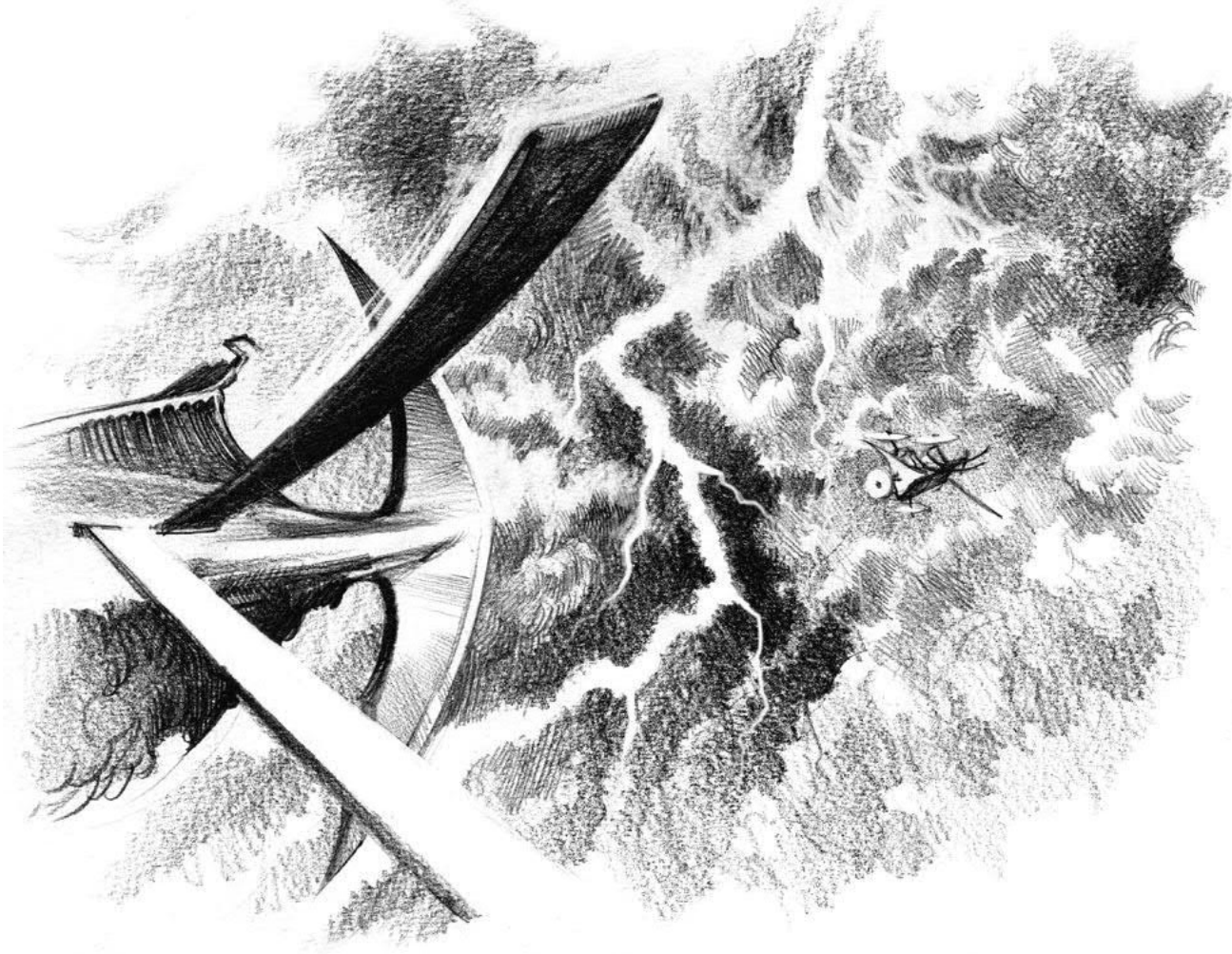
Eormo often spoke of his native village in the Qush jungle on the banks of the Oom River. It's a two-week march north of Oomis. His tribesmen, called the **Shanis**, are mainly hunters who, according to Eormo, are known in the region for their fierce bravery and unrivalled prowess in hand-to-hand combat. One evening, Eormo had also explained to him how all the Shanis had a visceral attachment to their village, and that according to their customs, they had to return to their homeland to be wed.

The PCs can also try to gather more information from the guards and from Jil's entourage. Turmar's family and the priest of Lilandra were of course completely unaware of the girl's plans.

- If they interrogate the guards on the terrace, the guards will say that it was Jil herself who told them not to let anyone in, claiming she wanted to be alone before the ceremony. She'd paid each of them a tidy sum and insisted that no one was to enter, even if it meant using force. After being so handsomely paid, the guards had blindly followed orders.

- If they ask the members of her immediate entourage, such as her old, half-deaf governess **Enalle** or her faithful servant **Daliluna** (have the PCs make a Demanding [-2] *appeal* Task Roll for the governess and an Easy [+1] roll for the handmaiden, who's willing to help), they'll learn that Jil and Eormo had been meeting in secret for months. Jil had made Daliluna her confidante, telling her that one day Eormo would take her to





his village, where they would be married according to the customs of his people. But Eormo had only decided very recently to kidnap her, due to Turmar's marriage proposal. In a hushed voice, Daliluna will also reveal that Jil told her Eormo's tribe worshipped serpents, and had built an enormous temple in their village devoted to snakes.

Once the PCs are satisfied with all they've learned and have recovered their gear (or have asked for more weapons), it will be time to get on board the sky-boat piloted by Khalaman, who'll now arrive looking for our courageous adventurers. Turmar has had ample provisions prepared for their journey: plenty of water and three bags of food if their quest should prove long. He'll also give them a map of the region, which has been annotated by Khalaman.

It should now be clear to the Heroes what's in store for them: if they don't manage to catch up to Eormo's sky-boat, there's a good chance that he'll seek refuge in his village, where he'll then be able to wed his beautiful bride in accordance with the customs of his people.

Thunder and Lightning

There's no more time to waste. At enormous expense, the two families were able to quickly locate a sky-boat and the Heroes must take off immediately if they want to find Jil before nightfall! (For more information about Satarlan sky-boats, see *BoL*, page 78).

The tension is thick for the first few hours on the sky-boat. There's no trace of Eormo and the skies are growing menacingly dark. Looks like a summer storm is approaching! The boat remains on a northwest heading and, after a few hours, they finally make out the silhouette of a sky-boat on the horizon. The duel between the two rival pilots can now begin, and Khalaman and his two crew members work up a sweat as they try to intercept the rogue boat. The chase continues as the dark clouds gather and the sun sinks below the horizon. The first drops of rain splatter against the ship, and quickly transform into hail stones. Thunder roars and the dark skies are split asunder again and again by flashes of lightning. They continue to gain altitude



and Khalaman won't hear any talk of turning back or trying to land, now that their objective is so close! But their pursuit comes crashing to a halt when a lightning bolt strikes the prow of the sky-boat and fries a member of the flight crew. The vessel spirals out of control and begins to plummet towards the ground...the end of their wild chase is near.

After The Crash

The Heroes awake in the morning in a small clearing. The sky-boat has been severely damaged. The lightning has ripped a gash through the allanium hull and the vessel's out of commission. Debris is strewn about and the smell of ozone fills the air. The electrical discharge has robbed the hull of its normal lustre and its alchemical properties. The Heroes soon discover Khalaman's lifeless body impaled on a small tree. One of the crew members has been crushed beneath the boat, and the other one is nowhere to be found—he must have been thrown overboard. The adventurers have miraculously survived, but they're a bit shaken up after the crash landing; **each PC takes d6L of damage, ignoring armour.**

They're in a vast, sandy marsh, with a smattering of vegetation scattered around them. A few clusters of thorny shrubs dot the landscape. After quickly getting their bearings (you can have them make a *mind* Task Roll if someone has an appropriate career,

or they can use past experiences or their origins), the PCs will realize that the storm has blown them way off course: they're now in the Plains of Klaar. They'll have to head west and ford the Oom River to look for the village of the Shanis (assuming of course that Eormo made it home safely: but don't they say that Piandra smiles on the brave of heart?).

The Hunt for Jil

Sunny skies have returned, and the Heroes spend the first day walking through the shifting sands, which are more or less dry. They reach grasslands at the end of the day, where high grasses, yellowed by the sun, sway in the hot, dusty wind. To break up the monotony of another uneventful day spent crossing the Plains of Klaar, use the table below to force a random encounter. You can roll a die or pick whichever one you prefer.

At the end of the afternoon, the Heroes hear a low thundering sound far off in the distance. It gets louder and louder and soon they can see a hundred or so boughons (see *BoL*, page 103) barrelling down on them. The reasons behind the stampede aren't clear, but the PCs won't have time to mull it over if they want to save their skins. Taking to their heels would appear to be the only reasonable solution! After a quick look around, they'll see a large rock sticking out of the bush about a half mile away. It could offer them shelter.

- 1 *The Heroes stumble upon what looks to be the ruins of a former guard tower. After carefully picking through the rubble, the PCs will find an ancient rune-inscribed axe. Strange... its blade is still razor sharp (alchemical weapon; reroll any result of 1 when rolling damage; only one reroll allowed). A skittering hand (see *BoL*, page 130), the only cursed remains of the axe's previous owner, will then sneak into the thief's gear to try to retrieve its weapon.*
- 2 *The cries of a young elasmotherium attract the attention of the Heroes. It's been abandoned by its mother and is scared out of its wits. It will be extremely hostile to anyone who crosses its path (see *BoL*, page 109 with a lifeblood of 25).*
- 3 *A group of 2d6H parvaluses (see *BoL*, page 116) are drinking tranquilly at a watering hole. Wild parvaluses can be very jittery and it will take a Demanding (-4) Task Roll to catch one.*
- 4 *A gaggle of d6-3 (1) azhdarkhos (see *BoL*, page 101) have been circling ominously overhead, and will swoop down to attack if the PCs should ever drop their guard!*
- 5 *An andrak (see *BoL*, page 101) decides that the Heroes could be a tasty treat.*
- 6 *The half-eaten body of a dead Blue Giant lies rotting in the sun...*



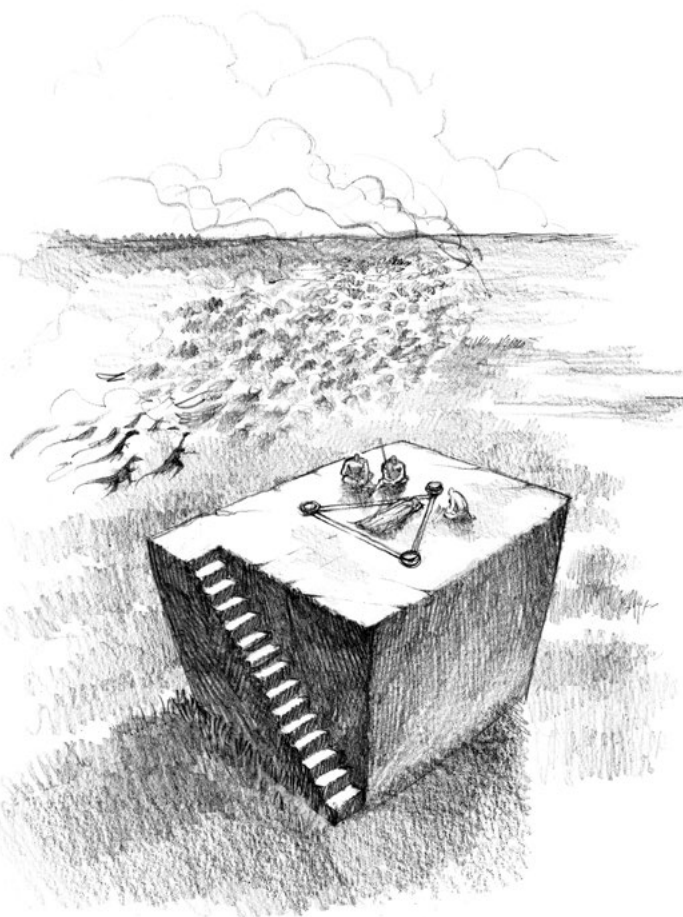
The Nomad Ruins

As the Heroes scamper towards the only outcropping offering shelter from the rampaging herd, they'll quickly realize that the "rock" is in fact a rectangular block at least 25 feet tall, which appears to have been sculpted from a smooth, black obsidian-like stone. As the boughons get closer, the reason for the stampede becomes all too clear; a pack of venators (see *BoL*, page 125) is hot on their heels. The PCs need to quickly take shelter.

A set of stairs leading to the top of the structure has been carved out of one corner. The climb up will be slow-going as each step is almost two feet tall. As the Heroes sweat and curse, they'll be able to see through clouds of dust the hordes of venators harrying their prey. Of course, it's entirely possible that a few of the predators will see the Heroes and stop by to greet them before they reach the top of the stone block...

At the top of the stairs they'll find a wide open terrace with a triangle carved in the stone floor. Small urns holding burning coals have been placed at each corner. In the centre of the triangle lies an enormous body covered by a shroud made of tanned pelts. Around the triangle, three Blue Nomads are seated with their legs crossed.

The Heroes have arrived right in the middle of a funeral ceremony: **Kalzo**, **Venik** and **Tol** have come to the nomadic vestiges to mourn one of their brethren killed in combat. According to their customs, the Blue Giants must first abstain from eating or drinking for three days, then from sleeping for another three days, and finally from speaking for the last three days. The idea is to accompany the deceased into a world where the senses have lost their meaning. The body is then left atop the ruins to be devoured by scavengers.



The Heroes have arrived on the final day of the ceremony, which will end at sundown. The nomads will show no signs of hostility, but will refuse to break their silence. They'll gently push back anyone who tries to get too close or speak to them. However, if any of the PCs should try to take a peek under the shroud, the Blue Giants will quickly intervene and lose their cool: it's absolutely forbidden to touch the deceased. If the PCs insist, the giants will use their spears to hold them at bay and force them back down the stairs—without ever uttering a word, of course. But if the PCs show respect and don't interrupt the ceremony, the eldest of the three nomads will make gestures indicating that they must remain quiet and are welcome to sit down and wait until the end of the ceremony.

After the funeral rites have been completed, the old nomad and his brethren will rise to their feet and, after a final gesture of farewell to the deceased, will head down the stairs and beckon to the Heroes to follow. The old giant, whose name is Tol, is the shaman of the Kavaars, a small tribe of Blue Nomads. He'll finally break his silence and thank

the Heroes for having respected their ceremony. He'll then invite them to share their fire at their encampment in a nearby dale. Once they arrive, he'll explain why they couldn't speak and the meaning behind the funeral ceremony. If they ask him about Eormo, or more specifically about the Shanis, Tol will have a lot of useful information for them.

Note to GM: If for one reason or another the PCs leave the ruins without talking to the nomads (which is very important for the adventure), they'll then run across the Blue Giants' encampment later on, as it's not far from the vestiges. A young Blue Giant named Bork, the son of Kalzo, has grown restless back at the camp waiting for the interminable ceremony to end. He'll explain to the PCs that the ceremony will soon be over, and will invite them to keep him company until Tol comes back for a talk around the fire.

🐉 Tol only knows the Shanis by reputation. It's a warlike tribe, known for their savagery and the barbaric way they treat their enemies killed in combat (see text box "The Shanis," page 65).

🐉 Tol knows exactly where their village is, and he'll give the PCs a few waypoints to look out for along the way. Luckily for them, the Oom River is nearby and once they reach its banks the following day, it will only be about a half-day's journey upstream to reach the Shani territory. The village is on the opposite bank, hidden in the jungle not far from the river. They should be able to see the top of the Shanis' black-stone temple rising above the jungle canopy.

🐉 People say in these parts that the Shanis worship a snake god in their temple. Tol doesn't know anything about their religion, although he does know they jealously guard their sanctuary, which is forbidden to outsiders.

A merchant by nature, Tol will try to sell them some medicinal plants (Improved Senses potion; see *BoL* page 139) and a flask filled with water from the Hydral Chasm that has miraculous powers (Appearance of Youth potion; see *BoL*, page 140). If anyone has been hurt, he'll offer to take care of their wounds (he has a *healer* career rank of 2).



Off to The Temple

This part of the journey is uneventful. The Heroes will reach the western bank of the Oom River late the next morning, and will soon be able to make out the imposing silhouette of the temple through the canopy of lush foliage.

Crocators (see *BoL*, page 106) are common in these parts. Three of them will attempt a surprise attack on the Heroes when they're at the river bank (*Priority Roll* with a -1 modifier). Crossing the river, which is about fifty feet wide, can also be a risky business. The Shanis use two small rafts roped between the banks to make their crossings. The PCs can use them as well, but may prefer other means to avoid the risk of being discovered. They could float across on one of the logs washed up along the bank, or the more courageous may simply swim. In this case they could hang on to a rope or a vine to make it easier. The entrance to Eormo's village is about a hundred yards east of the river.

The Shani Village

The village is surrounded by a solid palisade about seven feet high, made of sharpened bamboo stalks. There's only one entrance. About twenty huts, made of branches and woven thatch, are grouped together around a central square. None of the huts is bigger or fancier than the others (the tribe is a communal society, with no designated leader). The priests live in the sanctuary with their divinity, **S'pyrr**. There are about a hundred people in all, including the village and the sanctuary (with around thirty warriors and fifteen priests).

When the Heroes arrive at the village, around thirty of the Shanis are busily preparing for some sort of ceremony. They're mainly **women, young adults and old people (rabble)**. In the square, the women are roasting what appears to be suckling feral pigs, while the young villagers make garlands out of bright purple flowers (see the text box "Ferocine," page 66). Off in one corner, two women are tending to a cauldron over a small fire. Under the instructions of a priest, they're preparing the infamous ferocine liquor (**note to GM:** the

cauldron contains four doses of ferocine, which the Heroes may be able to steal). An attentive PC may be surprised by the many different ethnic origins of the women in the village, and also by the absence of any small children (see "The Worshipers of S'pyrr," page 67).

The village is guarded all day long by **six tribesmen (warriors, toughs)**, including two guarding the river bank who may intercept the Heroes if they arrive during the day and don't take any special precautions. The other tribesmen of fighting age (about twenty hunters) are roaming about in the nearby plains and jungle looking for ways to slake their thirst for violence.

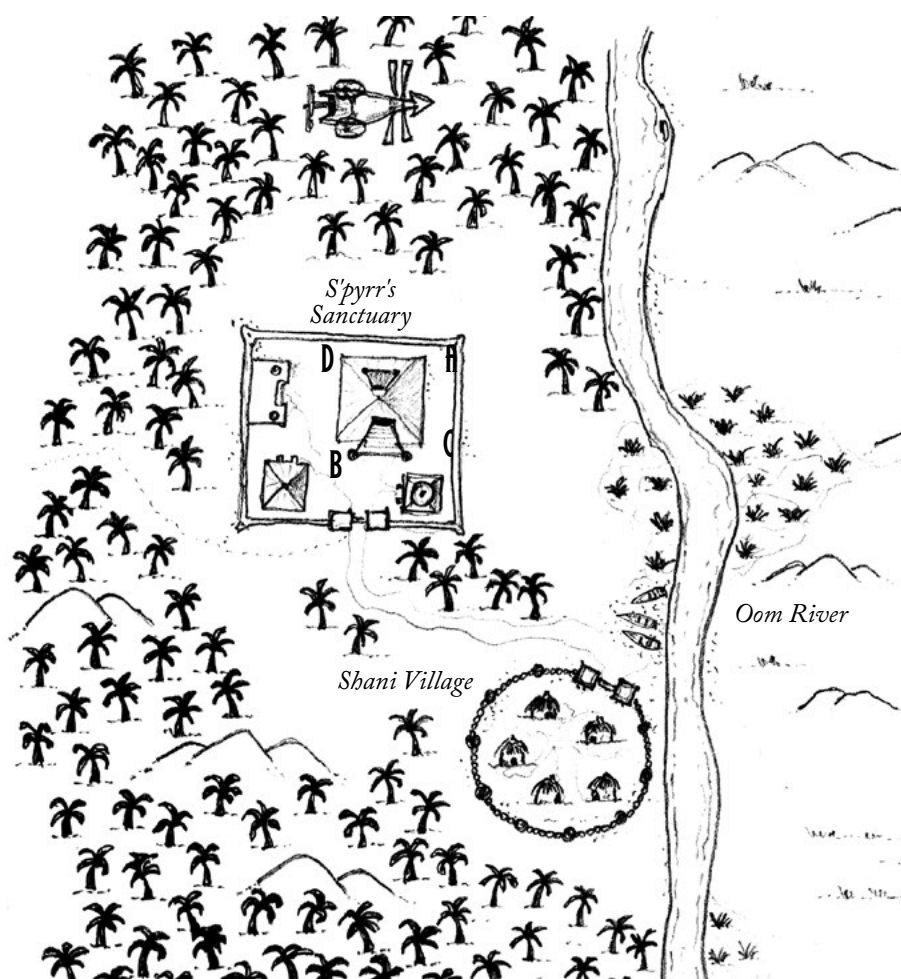
The Shanis

The Shani tribe has been living at the edge of the Qush jungle since time immemorial. The tribe was first gathered together by S'pyrr, a Slorth (see BoL, page 86) who has survived down through the ages. The putrid creature reigns supreme over the village, and has established the cult of the serpent in commemoration of her origins. S'pyrr lives in the temple, an ancient structure revered by the snake-worshipping tribesmen.

The Shanis adorn themselves with tattoos of interwoven snakes, and their preferred weapon is the assegai, a long wooden javelin. One charming custom of the tribe is that each warrior keeps tied to his waist a small leather pouch to collect the teeth of his enemies. Yanking out the dead man's teeth symbolises that he's been shut up once and for all. Renowned for their savagery, they spread terror amongst the other tribes in the region on their never-ending quest to satiate their voracious thirst for blood and violence. The men of the tribe consume a liquor made from a sacred plant, ferocine, on a regular basis, which only adds to their belligerent nature.



All the villagers have been informed of Jil's "kidnapping," and will be extremely wary of any strangers. If asked about Jil or Eormo, they'll avoid the question, saying that they're too busy preparing a religious festival to receive the blessings of their divinity for the upcoming hunting season. Strangers are strictly forbidden from entering the temple.

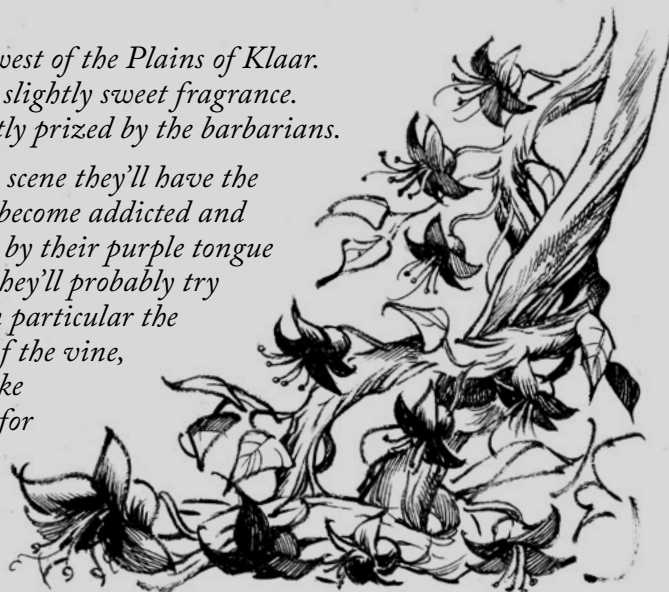


In any case, if the PCs get too nosey the villagers will quickly clam up and start reaching for their weapons. The Shanis won't be willing to negotiate either. They don't want any strangers in their village and the warriors, who are high on ferocine, will immediately attack if the PCs don't skedaddle. The six guards on duty, along with some of the villagers (about a dozen women and young adults will join the battle), will fight to the death. Their devotion is absolute, and it's unthinkable for them that any outsiders should disturb the peace in their village—especially now, as they prepare for the sacred wedding ceremony. So it's more than likely that if the PCs just barge into the village, it will quickly turn into a blood bath. Once they reach the Shani village, the PCs will have one day at the most before the first band of about ten hunters return for the marriage, which will make the situation even trickier!

Ferocine

Ferocine is a rare vine that only grows in the jungles to the west of the Plains of Klaar. However, it's easy to identify by its small purple flowers and slightly sweet fragrance. It can be distilled to make a bright purple liquor that is greatly prized by the barbarians.

Once ingested, it fills the drinker with a violent rage: for one scene they'll have the Fearless and War Cry boons. After $d6+2$ uses, the user will become addicted and contract the Cravings flaw. It's easy to identify regular users by their purple tongue and the purplish gleam in their eyes—and of course because they'll probably try to rip your head off! Among the Shanis, only the men, and in particular the warriors and hunters, are permitted to consume the flowers of the vine, which has the same sinuous shape as their divinity. To provoke religious ecstasy, certain Shanis even mix ferocine in the ink for their tattoos. They're then permanently in an altered state and will slowly go mad. Ferocine is lethal at high doses.



The Worshipers of S'pyrr

Slorths are strange creatures spawned ages ago in deranged experiments by the Sorcerer-Kings, say the ancient legends. The specimen that resides in the temple strayed far from her homelands to the South, but decided nonetheless to establish a community to the west of the Plains of Klaat. She quickly opted for the Shanis. Their bravery in combat and devoutness made them the perfect servants. S'pyrr is completely fascinated by humans, and in particular by their need for love—that mysterious emotion which will always remain foreign to her. She can never reproduce because no male Slorths were ever created. Over the years, lulled into somnolence by her solitude and tormented by the injustice of her creators, she has become obsessed by the mysterious rite of love, leading to the construction of a temple dedicated to the physical and symbolic union between men and women. Each floor of the temple symbolizes the pathway to be followed by the man and woman towards their shared destiny as husband and wife.

Over the ages, she has made it the Shanis' religious duty to be wed in her temple, and also to entrust their children to her until their tenth birthday. The Shanis consider it an honour to grow up and take their first steps under the protective eye of their divine priestess S'pyrr. To keep her cult alive, S'pyrr has the Shanis raise snakes in the sanctuary for their religious ceremonies, and also encourages them to add new tribe members (which partially explains Eormo's act and the many different ethnic origins amongst the women villagers).

The Sanctuary of S'pyrr

The Sanctuary of S'pyrr lies in the heart of the dense jungle, about a hundred yards away from the village (see map). It is surrounded by a stone wall about ten feet high (Hard [-1] *agility* Task Roll to climb the wall). The main entrance is guarded day and night by **two warriors (toughs)**. During the day, an additional **four warriors** protect the holy grounds (two on duty in front of one of the sanctuary buildings [B], and two on patrol duty).

Fifteen priests live inside the sanctuary, where they serve S'pyrr and raise the small children entrusted to their care (see below). They wear ceremonial garb (long purple gowns decorated with black serpent figures) and a white gem around their necks. They constantly walk around inside the enclosure during the day, whispering prayers and performing diverse religious rites or chores. But what's most surprising are the twenty or so **small children** who play and run around inside the walls (the oldest look to be about ten years old). Their playful and carefree laughter is in sharp contrast to the austere nature of the place.

The sanctuary is forbidden to all except the Shanis and all the people living inside the sanctuary, including the children, will react violently to any

intruders found inside the walls. The children will scamper away to tell the adults what they've seen, while the priests and warriors will immediately sound the alarm and launch a fierce attack.

At night, the children sleep in building (C), together with most of the priests. The six warriors take turns on guard duty during the night, two by two. They guard the front entrance and perform regular rounds inside the sanctuary. The four remaining off-duty guards sleep in the building with the priests and the children.

Inside the enclosure, the **temple (A)** rises majestically from the centre of a large esplanade paved with flagstones. It's an enormous pyramid made of black rock, about fifty feet tall. The temple only has one entrance on the south side, with steps leading up to a porch. A few slender murder holes can be seen on the sides, and on the north face, a large terrace extends out from the top of the pyramid. The walls at its base are decorated with bas-reliefs of snakes in battle scenes; probably images from some long-forgotten era. One of the figures included in several scenes will especially attract the Heroes' attention: a snake-like creature with the



face of a woman sculpted in white marble. Above these decorations, the walls of the pyramid are completely smooth, without the slightest handhold. Scaling the wall to reach the terrace will require two successful Demanding (-4) climbing Task Rolls in a row, with no place to attach a rope or a hook before reaching the terrace. Obviously this option won't be very tempting for the PCs.

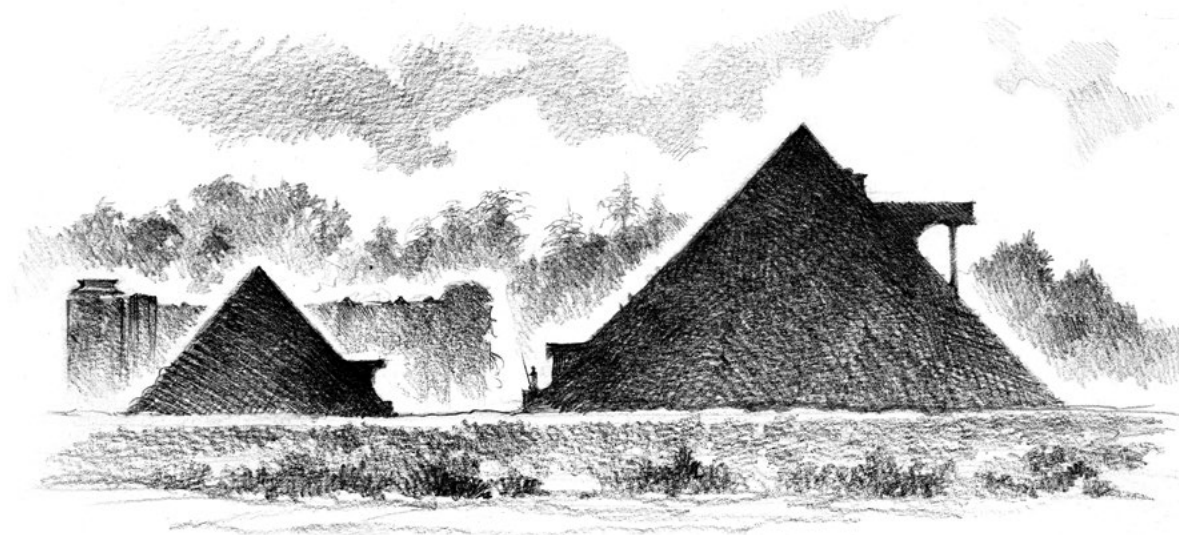
The sanctuary also includes three other buildings at ground level. They're made of the same black stone as the pyramid and are copiously decorated with the same motifs, in which the snake with a woman's head is omnipresent.

- Building (B) is a **small pyramid**, a miniature copy of the main one. Only the priests are allowed to enter and the door is protected by **two beefy guards** armed with massive halberds (*toughs*). Inside, a humongous snake, as black as onyx, dozes in its pit. This is the nesting area for the spawning serpent that provides the Shanis with a steady supply of snakes. The air inside the building is unbearable, heavy with the suffocating odour of incense burning round the clock and the putrefied stench of the offerings brought by the priests (which range from a simple garland of flowers to suckling pigs thrown in alive to feed the snake). Normally the place is empty, as the priests only come to leave offerings and quickly mutter a brief prayer. Once a month, they recover the new snake hatchlings and distribute them around the village and in the main temple. The female snake may be sleepy, but it's a

dangerous enemy who'll do anything to protect its eggs and spawn. Anyone who gets too close to the edge of the pit will have to make a successful *agility* + *defence* Task Roll (you can add -2 for a failed Priority Roll if you want) to avoid a surprise attack from the snake, which will then pull the Hero down into the pit. Once in the pit, it's a fight to the death. Each round, the miserable PC will also need a successful *agility* Task Roll to avoid being bitten by the other snakes (see the stats of the sacred snake, page 74). At night, the building is left unguarded.

- **The living quarters of the priests in building (C)** contain about a dozen cells arranged around a small courtyard. This is where the priests meditate or quietly study their sacred tomes during the day. At night they use eight of the rooms as a communal dormitory shared with the guards. The last five rooms house about twenty children. The older ones pore over ancient moth-eaten books, while the youngest sleep in bunk beds. In the centre of the cloister is a white marble statue, about ten feet tall, representing a snake with a woman's head. It has two magnificent emeralds for eyes, which only further accentuate the immaculate whiteness of the marble face.

- Lastly, a **large covered hall (D)** sits in the northwest corner of the enclosure. This is where the priests gather to talk over theological questions, to eat, or to nap on rudimentary mats during the hottest hours of the day. This building is always empty after nightfall.



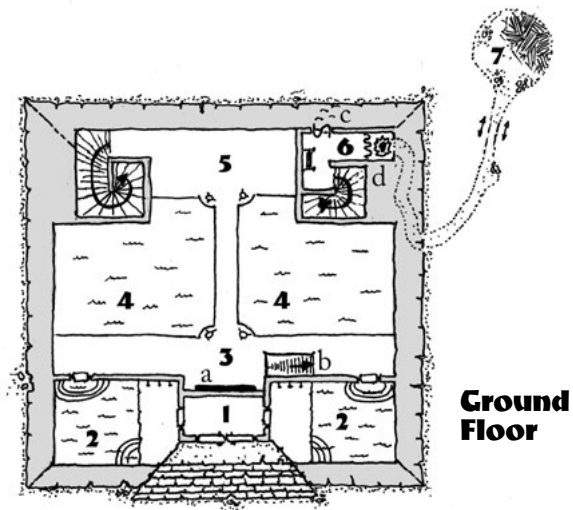
S'pyrr's Temple (A)

Ground Floor

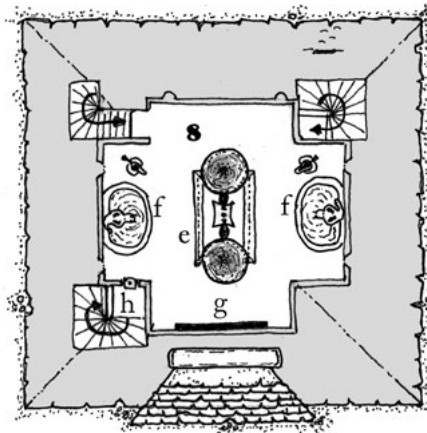
The temple is a holy place and the entrance is left unguarded. Steps lead up to a massive double door made of bronze, which opens into a front hall (1). Two doors, one on each side of the hall, lead to twin ritual chambers, each containing a large bath that fills most of the room (2). This is where the betrothed and the funeral processions come to purify themselves prior to any ceremonies. A magnificent mosaic that lines the entire bath can be seen through the crystal-clear, lightly perfumed water. As usual, the overriding theme is snakes. In the far corner of each basin, three steps lead to a door that opens onto a wide deck (3) above a shallow pit teeming with hundreds of small black snakes (4). Words in the Lemurian dialect have been carved into the southern wall, reminding the readers that the lives of the future bride and groom must begin by overcoming many hardships in solitude: "Alone, before their union" (a). More stairs (b) lead down to the underground level. On the lintel above this staircase, a second inscription reads "To earth forever." The gloomy light, low ceiling and hissing snakes all create an oppressive atmosphere. A walkway, only about a foot wide, crosses over the snake pit and ends at a second platform (5) at the far end of the room. On the western wall of this platform, a staircase leads up to the second floor.

The Backstairs and S'pyrr's Cave

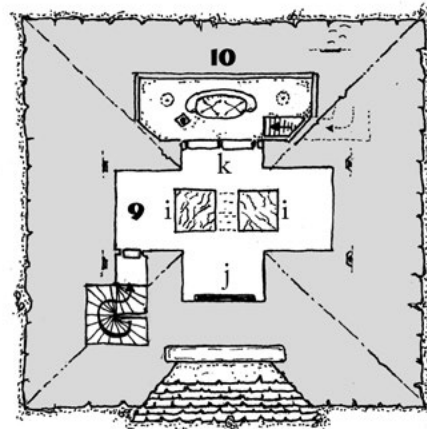
The backstairs (6) are used to gain access to the temple terrace without having to go through the rooms reserved for the sacred rites. These stairs can be reached through a secret door (c) at the back of the temple, which is cleverly hidden in the bas-reliefs that decorate the base of the pyramid. Unless a PC happens to be looking for a secret passage at this exact spot (Demanding [-4] *mind* Task Roll), no one will find the hidden door. The priests use these stairs when they visit S'pyrr and bring her children to keep her company. The newlyweds also descend these stairs following the wedding ceremony to leave the temple and begin their new life together.



Ground Floor



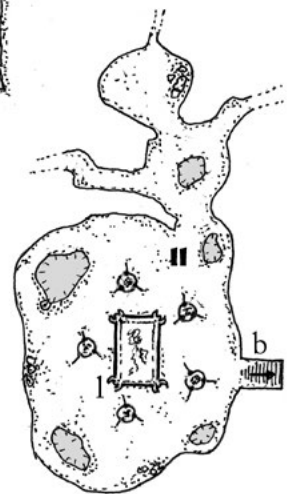
Second Floor

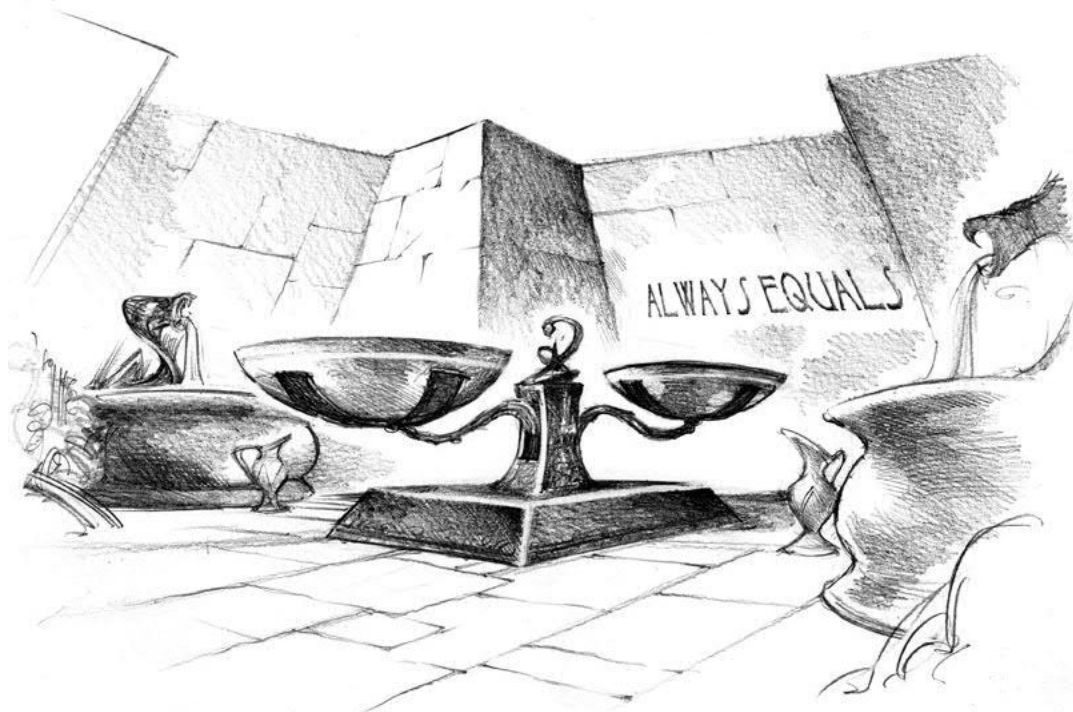


Top Floor

S'PYRR'S TEMPLE

Underground





S'pyrr uses the backstairs when she comes down from the terrace to sleep in her lair (7). At the bottom of the stairwell, hidden behind a heavy curtain (d), a dark tunnel has been dug in the clay soil beneath the foundation of the temple. It's about a hundred yards long and leads to S'pyrr's cave. A determined Hero who's not afraid of crawling through the dark, dank tunnel will eventually arrive at a small cave furnished only with a simple mat made out of branches where the Slorth spends most of her time dozing when she's not needed for the religious ceremonies. A small bronze gong hanging at the bottom of the stairs is used by the priests to summon S'pyrr from her lair when they need her in the temple.

Almost all the Shanis know about the backstairs and the secret door (many of the warriors may have used it at their own wedding ceremony, and the priests and children are constantly clambering up and down), but they'll refuse to reveal the secret, even under torture, as that would be blasphemy and treason. As for the Slorth's lair, no Shani has ever entered it. The subject is taboo for them and they'll never dare mention it.

Second Floor

The second floor is a single room in the form of a cross (8), illuminated by natural lighting filtered through four murder holes. In the centre of the room sits a gigantic weighing scale (e) made of a

gleaming blue metal alloy. A complex mechanism at its base goes down into the floor. Clear water flows into two small fountains on each side of the scale (f). A finely-sculpted long handled vase made of alabaster sits on the floor next to each fountain. The sloped southern wall contains another inscription: "Always equals" (g). When the two platters of the scale are balanced (by pouring water into them from the vases, which are intended for this very purpose), the rack and pinions will begin to grind beneath the scales and a door to the stairs (h) leading up to the third floor will open automatically.

So the players will really need to use their eyes and their wits to figure out the enigma. The two platters don't weigh exactly the same, which is why they're unbalanced. Attentive PCs will note the marks of evaporation and rust on the platters, left by all the water that's been poured into them over the years (each time a new couple is presented to S'pyrr for her to bless their union). To get to the top floor, the Heroes will have to pour water into the platters to balance the scales—or smash down the door, which is held shut by a massive iron bar. It will be long and noisy work, requiring a Formidable (-6) *Strength* Task Roll, or they'll have to inflict 20 damage points with the appropriate weapon (an axe or mace, for example). Once the couple seeking S'pyrr's benediction has passed through the doorway, a priest will empty the water from the platters, causing the door to close behind them.



Top Floor

Once the system has been activated on the second floor, the Heroes will be able to enter the room on the top floor, which also is in the form of a cross (9). The room contains two large blocks made of smooth black marble (i). Each one is a cube, with a dimension of about three feet. They're separated by a space of about 18 inches. A bas-relief on the south wall bears the inscription "United forever" (j). Facing it is a securely locked double door (k) that opens onto the terrace. This door will only open if the two marble blocks have been pushed together (Easy [+1] *Strength* roll). When the two cubes touch, a mechanism is activated and the door slowly grinds open. It'll remain open for a few minutes, and then slowly close again as the two blocks of stone return to their initial position.

Terrace

During the day, the view from the terrace (10) is breathtaking: to the west, the lush and verdant jungle stretches away to the horizon; to the east, the River Oom forms a natural boundary with the vast Plains of Klaar; and along the misty northern horizon can be seen the snowy peaks of the Axos Mountains. A low parapet surrounds the terrace, where S'pyrr lies curled up on soft cushions on her throne—a sort of long divan made of exotic wood, with sculpted wooden snakes for feet. Next to the throne is a small column, about four feet tall, made of black stone. Atop the column sits a skull, worn smooth with time; this is the skull of the Sorcerer-King who originally created S'pyrr. The necromancer's skull still has eyes in its sockets, and they're in perfect condition! The piercing eyes gleam with hatred and swivel sickeningly in their sockets to follow the movements of anyone in their field of view.

Bedding has been laid out on the floor in the southwest corner of the terrace, next to a small table holding some food. This is where the fiancés sleep during the ceremony. It lasts several days and they must always remain in the presence of S'pyrr (who looks on hungrily while the newlyweds consummate their marriage).

The ceremony is quite lengthy so it probably won't matter if the PCs barge in during the day or at night: they'll be considered party crashers in any case. When they enter the terrace, they'll see Jil and Eormo kneeling in front of S'pyrr to receive her blessing as part of the sacred wedding rites to seal their eternal union. According to Shani tradition, S'pyrr is accompanied by four children, who are curled up lovingly in her coils. Eormo will go berserk when he sees the intruders, and since he's high on ferocine he'll fight it out to the death! S'pyrr will use the more subtle arts of witchcraft, and cast spells to freeze the Heroes in their tracks. The Slorth will also be quite an adversary in a melee. She's quick as lightning and venom flows through her needle-sharp fangs. She's so confident in her superiority that she'll fight alongside Eormo until the very end. Jil will take cover behind the throne during the fighting. If she gets the feeling that her beloved is doomed, she'll kill herself with her dagger—a gift from her boyfriend on the day they



The Skull of S'pythan

The skull of S'pythan, the Sorcerer-King who created S'pyrr, has long been one of the Slorth's treasured possessions. The skull has turned a pale ivory colour over the years, and still has living eyes, which can move like those of a normal person. Its chilling gaze is filled with hate.

This rare object could be sold for a hefty price—if anyone is stupid or crazy enough to buy such a relic! Any PC tempted to take the skull will be afflicted with the flaws *Unsettling* and *Cursed* whenever the skull is in on their person.



met. The little brats will clutch at the Heroes' legs to stop them from harming their protective mother and the young lovers. Whenever a child is close to one of the PCs' targets, add a -2 penalty to the Hero's Attack Roll. If the roll's unsuccessful, have them roll a 1d6: if they roll a 1 they hit the child (*rabble*). The ruckus up on the terrace might attract the attention of the two guards making their rounds (and/or a few priests), who'll then race up the backstairs to rescue their earthly goddess.

Once the dust has settled on the terrace, the PCs will notice a bright light off to the northwest, flickering through the fronds of the dense jungle vegetation; this is sunlight (or moonlight) reflecting off the allanium hull of the sky-boat used by Eormo to kidnap Jil. It's two or three hundred yards from the village as the crow flies, and was only hastily covered up by a few palm fronds. Large sections of the metallic hull are clearly visible. If the PCs go take a look, they'll find the sky-boat moored to the ground with ropes; it's in perfect condition and ready for takeoff!

Underground

The underground level (11) is a vast room carved out of the living rock. This is where the priests perform the funeral rites. In the centre of the room sits what appears to be a crude altar, made of roughly hewn white marble (1). This is where the priests place the body of the deceased. Around the altar are five braziers which contain a mixture of burning sticks, vines (ferocine) and snake skins that give off an acrid smoke. This mortuary chamber is in fact the entranceway to a vast underground network under the dominion of six necrophages (see *BoL*, page, 130) that collect the dead and disappear with the bodies. Any Heroes who should venture underground are in danger of rousing the interest of these foul guardians, who won't resist the temptation of tasting some fresh meat for once.

S'pyrr has no access to this part of the temple. Death is a concept of no interest to her. It's the priests who preside over the funeral ceremonies: they bring the dead bodies in through the main entrance (1) after having gone through the purification baths (2).



Conclusion

The Heroes will only have a slim chance of bringing Jil back to Satarla alive. Life without Eormo is inconceivable for her, and the idea of remaining alive without her beloved at her side is absurd. As this doomed love story sadly reminds us, there may be a grain of truth in that old saying so popular among the old crones of Satarla, “Love stories always end in sadness.” So the Heroes may have to return from their adventure all alone in the sky-boat—if they find it, that is (see page 72). And the most difficult part of the entire adventure might be explaining it all to Turmar: Jil’s death will have dashed his most cherished dream of becoming a member of the Satarlan aristocracy...and let’s not forget that his future brother-in-law died during the chase...and oh, there’s also the wrecked sky-boat... Well, the heroes could always try to make amends by revealing the secret powers of the ferocine liquor to Turmar: he could sing its virtues to the city’s authorities to help solidify Satarla’s military supremacy. But when you think about it, why even bother flying back to Satarla when you have a flying machine that’s worth its weight in gold?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Three Blue Giants

There’s very little risk of a fight breaking out with the Blue Giants. If tempers do flare, use the statistics for the Karvoona Nomads and their shaman in the Mythic Edition of *BoL* (page 187).

The Shanis Warriors (toughs)

There are a total of 32 Shani warriors. Six warriors guard the village, six others guard the sanctuary, and two groups of ten are roaming about in the Plains of Klaar, hunting game and looking for excuses to kick some ass.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	2	Initiative	0
Agility	1	Melee	1
Mind	0	Ranged	1
Appeal	-1	Defence	0
Careers			
Barbarian	1	Hunter	1
Protection: None			
Weapons: Assegai d6L +1 (range incr. 20’), spear d6+2			
Points			
Lifblood	8		

Note to GM: Each Shani warrior normally keeps a dose or two of ferocine with him (see text box, page 66).

Priests (toughs)

There are 15 priests. When the Heroes reach the village, only one priest is there to help concoct the ferocine liquor. The other priests spend nearly all their time in the sanctuary with the children and S’pyrr. They take the hidden backstairs to go to the terrace, but they’ll never reveal its existence to the PCs: such an act of betrayal would be punished in the most horrifying manner imaginable by S’pyrr. The Shani priests never marry and never consume ferocine.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	0
Agility	0	Melee	1
Mind	2	Ranged	0
Appeal	0	Defence	1
Careers			
Barbarian	1	Priest	1
Protection: None			
Weapons: Dagger d6L			
Points			
Lifblood	5		

Note to GM: S’pyrr is not really a divinity, so her priests can’t gain any Fate Points.



The other villagers: women, young adults, children (rabble)

Careers

Barbarian 1

Protection: None

Weapons: d3 or fists 1

Points

Lifeblood 1

Traits: Horde rules (see *BoL*, page 157).

The Sacred Serpent (villain, Building B of the sanctuary)

According to the legends, the humongous snake nesting in S'pyrr's sanctuary was born of an egg brought back by a mariner from a tragic shipwreck on the Island of Metunga. S'pyrr's snake would appear to be somewhat smaller than the specimen on the mysterious island, however. In addition to its astonishing size, the species is capable of fertilising itself and laying eggs without needing a mate. However, this form of reproduction only spawns small snakes, much to the chagrin of the Shanis.

Creature Size: Large.

Attributes

Strength 4
Agility 2
Mind -1
Lifeblood 20

Combat Abilities

Attack +1
Damage d6H
Defence 1
Protection d6-2 (2)

Traits:

Venomous bite: the snake will inject its venom into any Heroes it bites (if it can pierce any armour they may have). If they don't succeed a Moderate (0) *Strength* Task Roll, they'll become groggy (-2 modifier for all Task Rolls) for the entire scene. If they get bit again, they'll have to make another *Strength* Roll or they'll get hit with an additional -2 (-4 for all Task Rolls), and so on and so forth.

The snake pit: any Heroes who tangle with the snake in its pit (see Building B of the Shani sanctuary) must make a Moderate (0) *agility* Task Roll at the start of each round. If successful, they'll avoid being bitten by the spawns of the giant reptile. If they blow the roll, they'll automatically lose 1 point of *lifeblood* per round (ignoring armour) and add a *penalty die* for all *strength* Rolls to withstand the effects of the sacred serpent's venom. If they get bit more than once by the little snakes, they'll lose 1 point of *lifeblood* for each bite, but there'll be no other effects.

Eormo (villain)

With his dark skin and sharply-cut features, Eormo has the severe and handsome looks of a true warrior. The young man's muscular body is covered with tattoos of interlacing snakes. His eyes have a slightly purple gleam due to the ferocine he consumes on a regular basis.

Attributes

Strength 3
Agility 2
Mind 0
Appeal 0

Combat Abilities

Initiative 1
Melee 2
Ranged 0
Defence 1

Careers

Barbarian 1
Soldier 1
Hunter 1
Sky-Pilot 2

Protection: None

Weapons: Longsword d6+3

Points

Lifeblood 15

Boons

Trademark Weapon: Eormo gets a *bonus die* when he uses the longsword he inherited from his years of service in the Satarlan army.

Hard-to-Kill: +2 added to his *lifeblood* (already included in his stats).

Flaws

Cravings: For ferocine.

Hot-Headed: Eormo is impetuous by nature, and his craving for ferocine only makes matters worse.





He'll fly into a rage and come to blows at the slightest provocation.

S'pyrr (villain)

S'pyrr has the body of a gigantic python, about fifteen feet long. Her pallid, iridescent skin is a sickly white. The Slorth has a bald head and the face of a woman with smooth skin and an indefinable age. There is a frigid and troubling beauty about her—fascinating rather than seductive—and something inhuman about her large green eyes. Madness and cruelty gleam from their unfathomable depths. Behind her full, sensual lips are two needle-sharp fangs.

Traits:

Venomous bite: S'pyrr's fangs will inject venom on a successful attack inflicting damage. The victim will have to make a successful Hard (-1) *strength* Roll, or else she'll sink into a semi-comatose state after d6L rounds and remain fast asleep for 1 hour. If someone roughly shakes the victim (or inflicts damage on her), she then gets another Hard (-1) *strength* Roll in order to wake up. If successful, she can jump back into the action in the next round, but

Attributes

Strength	0
Agility	1
Mind	3
Appeal	2

Combat Abilities

Initiative	1
Melee	2
Ranged	0
Defence	1

Careers

Barbarian	0	Physician	1
Scribe	2	Magician	3

Protection: 1 (thick skin)

Weapons: bite d6L + poison (see below)

Points

Arcane Power	13
Villain Points	5
Lifblood	10

will remain groggy while the effects of the venom last (1 hour), with a -2 Modifier for all Task Rolls and *defence*.

Boons

Silver Tongue: S'pyrr is an expert in the art of manipulation. She gets a *bonus die* whenever she lies, cons, dupes or tricks someone.

Magic of the Sorcerer-Kings: S'pyrr gets a *bonus die* whenever she uses magic.

Thick Skin: S'pyrr's scaly hide adds +1 to her protection.

Flaws

Feels the Cold: S'pyrr takes a *penalty die* for any tasks undertaken in a cold environment.

Unprepared: Although she's lively by nature, her great age and years of inactivity have made S'pyrr somewhat lethargic. She takes a *penalty die* for Priority Rolls.

Morgazzon's Curse: Countless years spent alone in her temple have driven S'pyrr mad, to the point where she actually thinks she's a goddess.

Obsession: S'pyrr is fascinated by coupling and procreation, which are impossible for her. The wedding ceremonies she presides over for the Shanis are sacred to her, and she considers any intrusion to be highly sacrilegious.





A READY-TO-PLAY ADVENTURE

THE TOWER OF AJHASKAR



Adventure Overview

The wizard Ajhaskar, trusted advisor to King Colmus of Lysor, has not shown his face at court for many days. Servants were dispatched to his tower with a royal summons, but once they passed through the wizard's front door...they never returned. The Heroes are "asked" (or you might say "forced") to enter the feared magician's lair to find out what happened to him. But they'll soon discover that the mysterious tower is only the beginning of their adventure...

Background

The origins of this adventure date back to ancient times, to the era of the Return of The Sorcerer-Kings, when the evil wizards strived once again to spread their dominion over the world. As the battle raged against their human foes, one of the Sorcerer-Kings, **Shrinazor Shamaaraz**, had a premonition that the fates may turn against them. He used his arcane crafts to create a safe haven, hidden from the vicissitudes of this world.

After many years of toil and through the use of powerful sorcery, Shrinazor was able to isolate a small mountain vale outside the earthly realm, by transporting it into another space-time dimension. In the wall of his palace in Lemuria, he encased a tall pewter mirror that was in fact a magic portal to his otherworldly refuge, offering him an expedient means of escape if his fortunes should sour.

He named his refuge the Moon Vale, as that nocturnal voyager bathed the valley in a particularly dazzling light. He peopled the Vale with a few hundred slaves, commanding them to build him a palace while they awaited his return. And he ordered one of his familiars, the demon **Labashaah**, to supervise the construction and oversee his labourers. But a few years later, Shrinazor Shamaaraz and his fellow sorcerers fell in the battle of Hydrdal Chasm, sealing the fate of the Sorcerer-Kings and ushering in the Second Age of Man.

Meanwhile in the Moon Vale, each new generation of slaves has continued to work on the palace, awaiting the return of their "Master"; revered since time immemorial. They also remain at the mercy of the demon Labashaah, who, like them, has remained a prisoner in the valley.



Many centuries have now passed. In the city of Lysor, on the Gulf of Satarla, the mysterious and powerful magician **Ajhaskar** resides in a black stone tower in the hills overlooking the city. A trusted advisor to King Colmus Kavataz, as he was to his father before him, the wizard is both feared and respected in the city.

A few months before this adventure takes place, Ajhaskar discovered the ruins of the palace of Shrinazor Shamaaraz in the heart of the forest on the eastern edge of Festrel Swamp. Shirinazor was a Sorcerer-King of old, renowned for his arcane knowledge. In utmost secrecy, Ajhaskar assembled a band of adventurers and labourers to clear a path to the ruins and explore them. A month ago, his men brought him a strange artefact they found amongst the rubble: a large pewter mirror with Sorceric runes engraved on its frame.

In the darkest hours of the night, as Ajhaskar and his apprentice **Robos** attempted to decipher the runes on the mirror frame, an astonishing event occurred. Robos had just finished reciting the runes in a new order (the sequence in which the runes are read is essential) when the artefact began to glow with a strange light. Before an exclamation of surprise could escape the apprentice's lips, he was sucked into the mirror. The runes around the mirror pulsed with an eerie orange glow for a moment, and then regained their appearance of ordinary metal... Robos had disappeared!

Ajhaskar's curiosity was heightened to a fever pitch: he immediately realized that the incantation pronounced by Robos had reanimated the mirror's magical powers, and that the artefact must be a gateway of some kind. He quickly performed a divination (involving the bloody sacrifice of two pigeons) to seek guidance: the omens indicated that the passageway through the mirror was without danger, but that new perils might await him on the other side. Loath to abandon his apprentice, but above all burning with curiosity to discover what might lie beyond (who knew what treasures the Sorcerer-Kings may have left there?), Ajhaskar quickly threw together his gear, cast powerful spells to protect the tower during his absence, and

instructed his demon guardian to keep watch over his abode until he returned. In his haste, he forgot to tell his servants to leave the tower. Then, without a moment's hesitation, he passed through the mirror.

The next day, Ajhaskar's servants soon discovered that their master was gone and that they could no longer leave the tower, which had been sealed shut by a magic spell. After three days had gone by, a servant of the king arrived at the tower with a royal summons, but neither the servant nor Ajhaskar ever appeared at court. The following day, the king commanded one of his courtiers to fetch the magician, but with the same result. Fearing the worst, Captain Dramik of the royal guard sent one of his sergeants with an escort of soldiers to the tower of Ajhaskar. They too entered the tower and never reappeared.

The king demanded answers and ordered Captain Dramik to elucidate the mystery: a delicate task for the captain, as he knew his men were terrified by the mere thought of entering the magician's tower and would sooner be punished for mutiny than obey orders. Dramik was hardly enthused by the idea of sacrificing any more good men, and came up with another plan: why not "ask" a few brave souls to enter the tower, without really giving them a choice?

Prisoners!

The Heroes start the adventure in the jails of Lysor. The night before, in the tavern where our footloose and carefree adventurers were squandering their few remaining coins, a minor scuffle had turned into an all-out barroom brawl. They'd been in deep discussion with **Samzara**, a stocky, clever-looking little man with a thin moustache who they'd met a bit earlier. Just as he was entering into the details about a lucrative scheme of his that would require a few hardy souls, a drunken dispute at the next table interrupted their discussion. Tables were soon being overturned and fists were flying. A brawny band of local militiamen crashed the party and quickly cooled tempers with a few vicious strokes of their cudgels, and the Heroes were hauled off to the local jail along with the other revellers from



the tavern. Bruised, battered and stripped of their gear, they're in a sorry state after spending a long night in the communal jail cell with the dregs of Lysor: drunkards, cut-purses, reavers and other highwaymen.

There's not much they can do except stew in their juices while they wait for the city authorities to decide on their fate—the prison guards are deaf to their vociferous pleas. After waiting all the next day, a small company of guards walk up to the cell just as the sun is setting over the prison walls and release the Heroes, along with Samzara.

They're led into a room where a dozen or so guards line the walls. At the back of the room sits a powerfully-built man in his forties on an old wooden stool. He has light brown hair and green, piercing eyes, and wears a breastplate and a sword. Everything in his bearing and his appearance breathes the soldier.

The man on the stool quickly sizes up the Heroes, then questions the soldier who brought them in. He nods his head as his subordinate tells him about the brawl of the previous evening, then turns to speak to the Heroes. He is **Captain Dramik** of the royal guard. He tells them in no uncertain terms that disturbing the peace in Lysor is severely punished, that the tavern's a wreck thanks to them, and that someone's going to have to pay for the damages. The fact that they resisted arrest and exchanged blows with the guards only makes their case look worse. They'll be sent off to the galleys as punishment and also to pay off their debts.

The captain waves away the Heroes' protests with the back of his hand, and lets them mull over a six-month pleasure cruise on the hard benches of a Lysorian galley before offering them an alternative...

One of the king's most respected advisors has been missing for a few days, says the captain, and they're looking for a few "volunteers" to go to his residence and figure out what's happened to him. If the Heroes agree to accept the mission, Captain Dramik is willing to forget everything that happened the night before.

Samzara politely interrupts and asks the captain if he could please tell them the name of this esteemed advisor who has disappeared? Dramik, taken aback, clears his throat uneasily before replying that it is master **Ajhaskar**. Samzara immediately grows pale, swallows hard and says that in that case, he prefers the galleys. Dramik frowns and orders one of his men to take him away. Samzara looks sheepishly at the Heroes as a guard escorts him from the room, while the captain talks under his breath to his sergeant (an attentive PC might overhear part of their conversation...the captain appears to be reprimanding the sergeant: didn't he tell him he only wanted strangers, and no natives of Lysor!).

The captain turns back to the adventurers with a dark look on his face, and reluctantly agrees to give them a little bit more information. He hesitates a moment, then informs them that Ajhaskar is...a wizard, before quickly adding that he's a very learned man and one of the most trusted advisors of King Colmus. He's been missing for several days but no one saw him leave his home. The men who were sent into his tower to look for him never came back out. No one knows what's happened to him and they're worried about his safety. The Heroes must enter the tower, find out what's going on and, if Ajhaskar is still alive, convince him to answer the king's summons without any further delay.

If the Heroes accept the mission, the captain will pardon their crimes. He also makes it clear that the king, who has been very upset by the whole affair, will be extremely munificent to those who can clear up the mystery.

Let's assume that the PCs have an adventurous spirit and will accept the mission! As soon as they do, they are led into another room, where they're given food and drink and a local healer cares for their cuts and bruises. Straw mats are strewn about the floor where they can rest for a few hours before being escorted to the magician's tower, at dawn. Captain Dramik also stays for a few minutes to answer the Heroes' questions. He may provide them with the following information, depending on what they ask him:





🐉 Ajhaskar is a renowned magician who was also a royal advisor to the previous king, Colmus's father. In the city, they call him "the andrak" (likening him to the black lion-like beasts that roam the Axos Mountains), not only because he has dark skin and thick black hair, but also because of his cat-like eyes. The wizard has certainly seen more than seventy winters, but he's solidly built and his hair is still black as night, without a single strand of silver. Only the deep lines in his face betray his age. He is esteemed as a master of the arcane arts, and his name is spoken with fear and respect by the inhabitants of Lysor. His magical powers are a constant source of rumours in the city.

🐉 Ajhaskar lives in a tower atop a small hill overlooking the temple district in the city. Lights can be seen in the tower windows every night when the magician is home. The windows are dark when he is absent, but the lights have been visible the past few nights.

🐉 Ajhaskar has a young apprentice named **Robos**, who has blond hair and blue eyes. Dramik knows nothing else about him. The magician also has **two servants**, an old woman and a young boy. They also live in the tower, except when their master is away. Neither his apprentice nor his servants have been seen in town over the past five days.

🐉 Two days earlier, the king sent one of his servants to summon the magician, but the servant

never returned and Ajhaskar failed to appear at the palace. The next morning, a royal courtier was sent to the magician's tower, but he never returned either. A few hours later, Captain Dramik sent a patrol of four men from the militia. They entered the tower and were never seen again.

🐉 The captain himself has never been inside Ajhaskar's tower, so he can't tell them what to expect. Whenever palace servants were sent to summons the magician, they always remained in the front hall, so they won't be able to help the PCs either, if they should think of asking.

🐉 Captain Dramik will convince them that he's a man of his word and reiterate his promise: the Heroes can trust him and if they successfully complete their mission they'll be freed and will be generously rewarded for their efforts. True, he hasn't given them much of a choice, but he has given them a chance to become rich and famous...if they survive.

🐉 If any of the PCs should try to squeeze more information out of one of the guards after Dramik leaves (or the next morning on their way to the tower), they won't learn much more, except for a few unsettling rumours about the powers of Ajhaskar... like the story about a drunkard on a late-night binge who began mocking the magician, raising his glass in derisive toasts to "the black wizard" of Lysor. The man was found dead the next morning. The people who discovered him said his face was frozen in a



rictus of abject terror, which gave them nightmares for many days after. It was also said that, a long time ago, a notorious thief from Lysor had tried to break into the magician's tower, which was reputed to be impregnable. He was never heard from again.

Off to the Tower

The guards are friendly enough with the adventurers, but keep a close eye on them. Shortly before sunrise, a small troop of armed guards led by **Sergeant Jenko** shake them awake and escort them out through the walls of the keep. All their gear is returned to them and, if the PCs ask for additional equipment, the guards will give them whatever they want (within reason).

The Heroes are escorted through the quiet streets of Lysor as dawn breaks. The city is still asleep... apparently their mission is being kept under wraps.

They soon arrive at the foot of a small hill in the heart of the city. At the top sits a hexagon-shaped tower made of black stone. The lights that the captain mentioned are still burning in its narrow windows.

The hill is covered by a copse of woods that runs right up to the foot of the tower. No other habitations have been built on the hill—not the slightest dwelling or hut, even though no barrier of any kind protects the place. Quite surprising in a densely populated city like Lysor...apparently Ajhaskar's reputation has been enough to dissuade the locals from settling here.

The Heroes, still under the watchful eyes of the guards, climb a cobblestone path that winds through the trees to the top of the hill, and finally arrive at the foot of the black tower. The edifice, which has three floors, rises about 40 feet above their heads. Broad steps lead up to a large front porch and the tower doors, which are slightly open.

At the bottom of the steps, a detachment of five other guards is standing around a small brazier holding a few smoking coals. They're nervous and exhausted after having spent the entire night keeping watch. There's nothing new to report. The lights in

the tower windows kept burning throughout the night, but no sounds were heard inside. The winds moaning through the tree branches have kept them on edge, and they're sure they heard strange whispers in the night...

It's time for the PCs to get ready to enter the tower (see boxed text "Enter at Your Own Risk..."). If they decide to look around the outside of the tower, they may learn the following:

🐉 The tower only has one entrance.

🐉 The windows on all three floors are tall and narrow, almost like murder holes; no way to slip through here!

🐉 A wall of glass can be seen on the east side of the tower on the second floor. It's possible to scale the tower and break the glass, but this will require a few successful Task Rolls (at the GM's discretion). This would provide direct access to Ajhaskar's conservatory (no. 11).

🐉 It's also possible (with the right equipment) to climb to the top of the tower. The roof is in fact an empty terrace. A thick metal trapdoor provides access to the third floor stairwell, but it's closed from the inside with a sturdy lock and has been reinforced with iron bars. It cannot be unlocked from the outside. The only way in would be to break through the trapdoor, which will require the appropriate tools and several hours of hard work.

🐉 One of the heavy doors at the front entrance is slightly open, and through the crack can be seen a rectangular marble hall, with black-and-white tiles on the floor in a geometrical pattern. The bottom of a staircase is visible to the right of the front hall. Across the hall from the entrance, there is a double door, which is also ajar.

The guards have received orders to escort the adventurers up to the tower and make sure that they enter by the front door. They won't be too keen on any alternative solutions the PCs may propose (such as breaking in through the large glass window on the second floor). The players will have to be incredibly persuasive if they don't want to enter the tower through the front doors.



Enter at Your Own Risk...

The tower of Ajhaskar is protected by powerful spells when its owner is away. Surprisingly enough, the spells don't stop intruders from entering the tower: they prevent them from leaving!

Seen from the outside, the tower's interior looks just as the PCs would expect. Through the slightly opened front doors, an observer can see the front hall in marble, the door to the audience room, and the bottom of the staircase. If someone enters the tower, the observers will see them walk through the front door into the front hall and vanish from sight in one direction or the other, as if they'd walked out of the observers' field of view. But the person will never reappear, because what is visible from the outside is actually an illusion and not the real interior of the tower.

When the PCs enter the tower they'll feel a strange chill, almost as if they've plunged into a tub of cold water. The feeling quickly dissipates but the intruders have now been trapped inside by powerful witchcraft. They're prisoners inside the tower. If they attempt to leave, they'll be stopped by an invisible barrier blocking the front entrance. They can see outside the tower but can hear no sounds coming from the exterior and, no matter what they do, no one outside will be able to see or hear them.

A hero with a *magician* career may (after a successful *mind* Task Roll) gain a general understanding of how the spell works. It's a difficult spell to break and may, at best, be temporarily negated by casting a *Second Magnitude spell* with a Demanding task modifier (-4).

The whole tower is under the spell. If the PCs should climb up the walls and look inside through the windows, they'll see the rooms with their actual appearance, but always empty and quiet. If they enter the tower through the large glass window, they'll feel the same strange chill and will not be able to escape through the window, even if it's broken.

Note for GM: if Ajhaskar is killed, the spell around the tower is immediately broken.

PART ONE: INSIDE THE MAGICIAN'S TOWER

1. Front Hall

The front doors of the tower open onto a large marble hall with a black-and-white geometrical mosaic on the floor. To the right is an imposing staircase, also in marble, leading up to the second floor. To the left is a door to a small parlour (no. 2). Across from the front entrance, a double door with sculpted panels made of *urld* (an exotic, black hardwood imported from Valgard) has been opened just a crack, slightly revealing the interior of a large room (no. 4). On the floor, a human hand with stiffly-clenched fingers extends through the opening in the doors. A dark stain has spread beneath it on the tiles. How strange that this ghastly detail had escaped the PCs' attention when they were outside, even though it should have been clearly visible from the exterior...

2. Small Parlour

This small parlour contains a few armchairs and a low table and is most likely a waiting room for visitors. A large tapestry depicting a mountain landscape hangs on the wall. There is a connecting door to a corridor (no. 3).

3. Corridor

This long, curved hallway connects all the rooms on the first floor. It's filled with shadows, only faintly illuminated by the pale light filtering through two windows in the kitchen (no. 6a).



10 feet

Steps & Porch

Windows

THE TOWER OF AJHASKAR

Basin



Stairs to the Kitchen

Hidden Stairway

Mirror

- 1** Front Hall
- 2** Small Parlour
- 3** Corridor
- 4** Audience Room
- 5** Servants Quarters
- 6a** Kitchen
- 6b** Cellar
- 7** Baths
- 8** Receiving Room
- 9** Second Floor Landing
- 10** Sleeping Chamber
- 11** Conservatory
- 12** Ajhaskar's Apartments
- 13** Library
- 14** Robos' Bedroom
- 15** Magician's Laboratory
- C** Fireplace
- F** Fountain
- N** Noria

4. Audience Room

This large room has a marble floor and is lit by a strange, wrought-iron chandelier with small luminescent globes on the tips of each of its branches (more witchcraft!). A large, purple damask curtain partially covers the back wall (and hides a door to the corridor). On a small podium in front of the curtain sits a sculpted wooden chair with a high back. On each side of the chair are two andraks sculpted in obsidian. Their raised heads have a regal bearing. A little smaller than real andraks (they're about five feet long from head to tail), the impressive sculptures are incredibly realistic.

On the floor, the body of a guard bearing the livery of the city of Lysor lays stretched out on his stomach in the doorway, his hand reaching out towards the exit. His back has been gouged and gored and a pool of blood has dried around the cold, stiff body. It looks like he's been dead for a day or two. The mangled bodies of three other guards also lay about. Blood has been splattered everywhere and has gathered into large pools on the floor.

As soon as one of the PCs enter the audience room, before he even has time to take in all the bloodshed, the two stone andraks will come to life. They'll bare their fangs and advance, quiet and deadly, towards any intruder (see page 97).

Note to GM: once the two stone guardians have been "activated," they'll continue to pursue the PCs no matter where they go in the tower, and won't return to their place in the audience room until they've eliminated the intruders.

5. Servants Quarters

This large, simply furnished room has four beds, a table with two benches, two dressers and a chest. A quick scan of the room will suffice to note that only three of the beds are being used. They've recently been slept in. The dressers and the chest are filled with men's and women's clothing of simple make. Someone's knitting lays across a bed. A water pitcher and three cups are on the table (the water looks nice and fresh, as if it's just been poured), along with some dice made of bones. A door leads to the kitchen (no. 6a).



6a. Kitchen

This large room contains all basic cooking equipment: a large fireplace with a cooking pot, two long tables, pots & pans and utensils. Cured meats and bouquets of dried herbs hang from a rafter. The southern corner of the room contains a small basin with water pouring into it from a spigot in the wall. The water is cool and appears to be quite drinkable. In the corner across from the door to the corridor, there is a curtain hiding a small spiral staircase, which is partially encased in the wall. The stairs go up to the second floor, and also lead downwards (to the cellar, no. 6b). The PC who discovers the staircase will hear a soft, squeaking sound coming from downstairs at regular intervals.

In the northwest corner is a small door to the pantry which is filled with food; bags of flour, barrels, kegs, etc. The cook **Ilda** and her nephew **Kurik** are hiding in the pantry behind the barrels, along with **Otos**, the king's servant who was sent to look for master Ajhaskar and who was then trapped inside the tower. Any player who rifles through the stored goods for even a few seconds will quickly discover all three of them. If not, Ilda and Kurik may come out of hiding on their own (see the text box "Ajhaskar's Servants" on next page).

The PCs might be interested by a few things in the kitchen: a fire is crackling in the fireplace, heating a large pot filled with soup that smells extremely tasty. On the table sits the remains of recently eaten pâté, along with a half-eaten piece of bread and a jug of beer.



Ajhaskar's Servants

Ajhaskar has a servant named Ilda, a gnarled old woman with stringy grey hair and a pinched face. Her nephew Kurik, a 16 year-old ginger-haired boy, helps her with the household chores. A magician's servant is not easily ruffled, but the events of the past few days have left them a bit unhinged.

Five days earlier, Ilda and Kurik arose as usual and went about their daily work, but they quickly realized that something was amiss. Master Ajhaskar and his apprentice Robos never came downstairs and, when Kurik tried to leave the tower, the entrance was sealed. Ilda sent the boy upstairs, but he quickly scampered back down with Krulak, Ajhaskar's familiar, snapping at his heels. Ilda and Kurik were familiar with the master's demon which normally left them alone. Unsure what to do, they tried calling up the stairs to Ajhaskar and Robos, but nobody answered. After three days of waiting and hand-wringing, a servant from the royal court, a certain Otos, came to the tower with a summons from the king. Ilda met him in the front hall and explained the situation, and he soon realized that he, too, was now trapped. Since then, he's been a prisoner inside the tower with the two servants.

The following day, a royal courtier came to the tower, a bit miffed to have to perform such a demeaning task. Despite the panicked warnings of the servants, he had bounded up the stairs to the second floor. They'd heard him shriek in terror for a few moments, and then nothing but silence...

That evening, some guards had entered the tower while the servants were in the kitchen. Before they had time to call out, the men entered the audience hall and were torn to shreds by the andrak statues.

(Note to GM: Ajhaskar has trained his andraks not to attack Ilda and Kurik; they've always remained frozen in stone in the servants' presence, so this is the first time they've seen the statues come alive. Unaware that they've nothing to fear from the andraks, the two have remained holed up in the kitchen with Otos).

Ilda and Kurik are now so nerve-wracked that they quickly take cover in the pantry as soon as they

hear anyone enter the tower (especially if they hear fighting). If no one discovers them, they may (at the GM's discretion) reveal themselves to the PCs, depending on the situation, or on the conversations they overhear when the Heroes are in the kitchen, etc.

The heroes won't learn much from Otos as he's now scared witless. Once Ilda and Kurik have been reassured by their latest visitors, they may provide the PCs with some precious information:

 A general description of the first and second floors. However, they've never been on the third floor, and have also been forbidden by their master to go into the cellar. As for the demon guardian Krulak, they've only had a few brief glimpses of him, and this was the first time he'd ever attacked them. They describe the demon as a "grey monkey-looking creature with beady little red eyes and horns."

 They can confirm the chronology of events: five nights ago, when they went to bed, the master and his apprentice were still working up in the tower. When they woke up the next morning, both men were gone and the tower had been sealed by witchcraft. Usually, whenever the master was away, Ilda and Kurik left the tower and lived in a small lodging they had in the city; they only came back when the master informed them that he'd returned.

 If they're asked if anything unusual has happened recently, Ilda and Kurik will say that their master and his young apprentice had been particularly absorbed by their work. Some new research was taking up all their time. Kurik will also recall that some men had come with a big, heavy, wood crate about three or four weeks ago. These same men had come to the tower about two months earlier with many other crates (smaller ones). Ajhaskar had looked extremely pleased and eager to examine the crates, which he had the men carry upstairs. Kurik never saw what was inside.

 If someone asks about the noises in the cellar, Ilda will tell them that the basement is off limits. The master told her that the noise came from some contraption that pumps the well water up to the fountain and the baths.

6b. Cellar

The stairs in the kitchen go down about fifteen feet to a cellar with roughly-hewn walls. It's quite likely that a pre-existing cave has been enlarged. An artesian well is connected to a complex device made of pipes and pumps, driven by a gear wheel that supplies fresh water to all the floors of the tower. It's not an animal that turns the wheel, however, but a human skeleton locked in heavy shackles engraved with arcane symbols. The skeleton takes no notice of the adventurers, and continues to tirelessly rotate the mechanism. At one point, it stops its work and passes the back of its hand across its forehead, as if to wipe away the sweat...the last vestige of a profoundly human gesture. The skeleton will offer no defence and a single stroke will reduce it to a pile of lifeless bones (and immediately cut off the tower's water supply). What could this person have possibly done to incur the wrath of Ajhaskar, to deserve a punishment even beyond the grave? Could this be the infamous thief who had been foolhardy enough to try to break into the abode of the formidable wizard?

At the back of the cellar, a young xolth is napping in a shallow pit, awaiting its next meal. The hideous, slug-like creature, which has already reached the size of an adult man, is starving to death. If the Heroes get too close to the creature without throwing it something to eat (which is how it's normally fed), it will attack. A few bones (including a human skull) are strewn about the bottom of the trench.

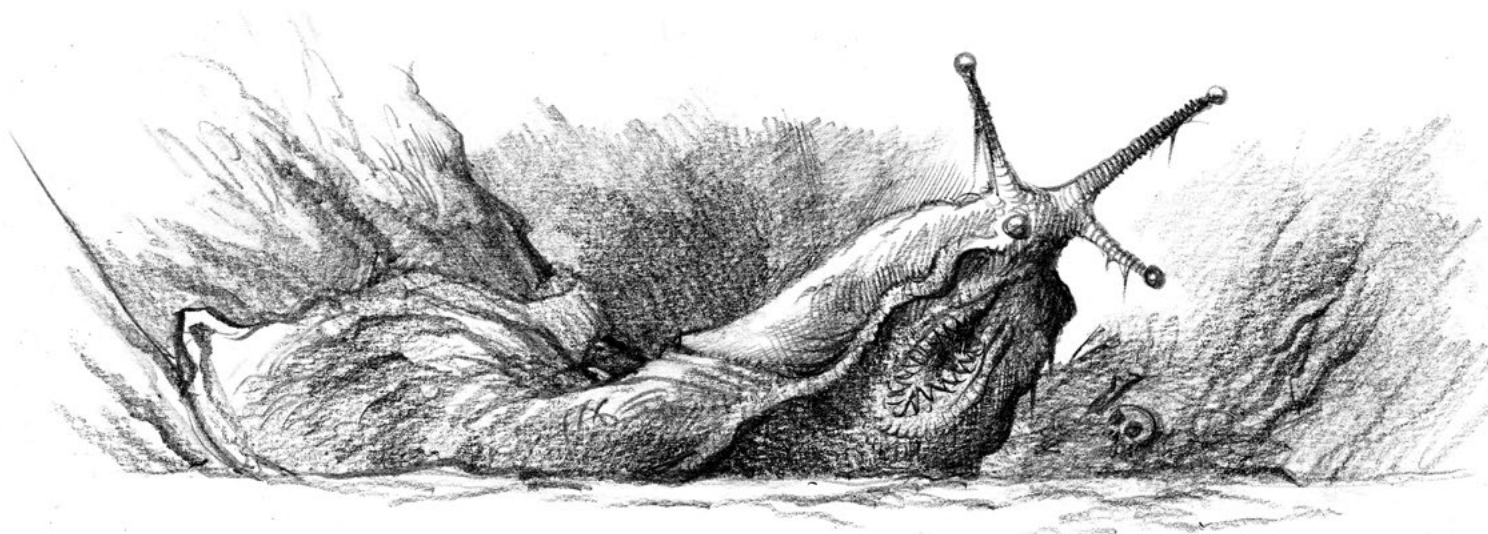
How could Ajhaskar have possibly gotten his hands on a baby xolth? And why on earth would he keep it in a cave that will soon be much too small for it? More questions that the Heroes are at a loss to answer...

7. Baths

The luxurious baths are decorated with beautiful tiles and contain a large encased basin, a big sink with water pouring in from a fountain, latrines, various toiletries, colognes and ointments. A duct in the ground carries the water from the fountain to the basin. A small coal oven can be used to heat volcanic rocks that are then placed in the bath to warm the water.

8. Receiving Room

This sumptuously furnished room has an imposing fireplace with comfortable chairs set around it. A long bench sits on each side of a broad table decorated with intricate inlays. A large earthenware vase (nearly as tall as a man) stands alone in an alcove. It is a warm, red-orange colour, with sparkling chips of inlaid gold. One of the heroes may recognize this precious Khansan pottery imported from Khanat. The mantle of the fireplace is decorated with a collection of small bronze figurines representing some of the twenty gods of Lemuria. They look very old, and are probably very precious. Candelabras holding beeswax candles are spread around the room.



9. Second Floor Landing

The stairs from the front hall lead up to a small landing, where a corridor opens into the tower. The corridor is very dark, as it is only dimly lit by the window on the landing and another window at the far end of the hallway. The body of a man dressed in fancy clothes is sprawled out on the floor. His head has been smashed in (this is the courtier who was killed by Krulak, the demon guardian). What's even more unsettling is that it looks as if someone (or something) has eaten his brain...

The stairs continue up to the third floor. But if the PCs should try to climb them, they'll discover that the stairwell never ends...they can keep climbing up the stairs but, try as they might, will never reach the third floor. If they turn around and come back down however, they'll be back on the second floor landing in no time!

Note to GM: a spell has been placed on the stairs and they cannot be used to reach the third floor, unless Ajhaskar is present and authorises his visitor to go up to his laboratory (no. 15).

10. Sleeping Chamber

This large room has several beds and a few other pieces of furniture. Large sheets have been thrown over everything. It's clear that this room hasn't been used for quite some time.

11. Conservatory

This room is bathed in light pouring through the huge glass window covering most of the north-east wall. Large stone planters are bursting with leafy plants, shrubs and tropical flowers. A small stone basin in the centre of the room holds aquatic plants and a few small fish. In a large wicker cage, birds begin to chirp and warble to greet the Heroes when they enter the room. The thick, heady fragrance of turalons (jungle roses) fills the air.

A PC with the appropriate career (*alchemist*, *magician*, *physician* etc.) may recognise some medicinal herbs, as well as the dream lotuses growing in the stone basin (see *BoL*, page 134) and various preparations on a table filled with cuttings, seedlings and distilling equipment.

The PCs could find here a **healing balm** (recover 1d6 *lifeblood* points per use, 2 doses, uncommon alchemist preparation), **sleeping powder** (ingested, give 2d6 hours of sound sleep, 3 doses, common alchemist preparation), a vial containing an **antidote to natural venoms and herbal toxins** (recovery in 1 hour, 1 dose, common alchemist preparation), and a small metal box filled with dream lotus pollen.

If the PCs should break the large glass window, they'll be chagrined to learn that all the shards of glass fall back into the room and, like the entrance on the first floor, an invisible barrier prevents anyone from leaving the tower (or from being heard or seen by anyone outside).

12. Ajhaskar's Apartments

This is a spacious room with an imposing canopy bed with hanging curtains. Expensive rugs cover the floor and large, decorative tapestries hang on the walls. A comfortable armchair sits next to the fireplace. A dresser is beneath the window next to a basin with water trickling into it. There are also a few pricey curios. A massive wardrobe contains men's clothing, including silk robes brocaded with astrological patterns and arcane symbols. A large chest at the foot of the bed contains other articles of clothing and several pouches filled with gold coins and precious gems. It's a small fortune (but who would even think of stealing from a magician?). Hidden behind a heavy purple curtain is the small door to the spiral staircase leading down to the kitchen.

A close inspection of the room will reveal a few interesting details: two dresser drawers have been left open, clothes are strewn across the bed and the chest has also been left open. Could it mean that the tower's owner left in a hurry? Or that someone's been rifling through his affairs? The door to the library is ajar.

13. Library

Large bookcases line most of the walls in this room. The shelves sag beneath heaps of manuscripts and carefully-stacked parchment rolls. A large nook in the shelving holds a stone idol, simian in nature. It has small horns on its head and four red eyes made





of rubies. This statuette is a representation of Krulak, and contains his essence (see page 97). Beneath the window, papers are strewn about on a large desk, which also contains quills, small inkpots, sealing wax and other writing tools for a scribe. A table and two stools sit in the centre of the room. On the table, a lectern holds open an ancient manuscript, containing passages recopied from the legendary Ygddar Codex. This is the manuscript that enabled Ajhaskar to determine the location of the ancient lair of the Sorcerer-King Shrinazor Shamaaraz. The manuscript would be of inestimable worth to a magician, alchemist or any other person interested in the secrets of the ancients.

In the south-east corner of the room, a section of the bookcase swings open to reveal a small stairway in the wall leading up to the magician's laboratory on the top floor of the tower.

Note to GM: it's more of a hidden door than an actual secret passage, and an attentive PC will easily notice it. These stairs from the library are the only way for the Heroes to get to the magician's laboratory on the third floor.

The library is illuminated by a chandelier similar to the one in the audience room (no. 4). There is a connecting door to Ajhaskar's apartments (no. 12), which is ajar.

Krulak, the demon guardian of Ajhaskar, is in the library. He's comfortably installed in an armchair with a glass of raku-wine, drinking his master's health. If the Heroes take the main staircase up to the second floor, Krulak won't be aware of their presence until they enter the library, unless they're particularly noisy for some reason. If they come up to the second floor by the stairs in Ajhaskar's apartments, Krulak will hear them coming through the slightly opened door, unless they are particularly stealthy. As soon as he discovers the intruders, Krulak will immediately fly into a rage and attack (see page 97 for more information about the demon and how he can be destroyed).

14. Robos' Bedroom

These are the sleeping quarters of Ajhaskar's apprentice, Robos. The furnishings are much simpler than elsewhere on this floor. There is a small bed, a dresser and chest containing men's clothing, and a desk covered with parchments and books. Lines of Sorceric runes have been written on several pieces of parchment; by looking closely at them, even someone who can't read Sorceric will notice that there are different combinations of the same runes, as if the person who wrote the lines was trying to break a code.

Note to GM: the parchments show Robos' attempts to find the right sequence for the runes on the frame of the magic mirror.

15. Magician's Laboratory

The laboratory occupies the entire top floor of the tower. The immense room is also somehow magically illuminated, and contains all the paraphernalia you'd expect in a magician's lair.





The tables and shelves are crowded with arcane artefacts, alchemist's instruments, manuscripts and strange trinkets. There are skulls of exotic creatures (and humans), obscene amulets from the primitive tribes of Qush, bundles of dried herbs and roots, jars filled with powders and foul-looking liquids, astronomical charts, small ingots of various metals, a collection of crystals and precious stones, etc. The lingering smell from a powerful incense barely masks a slightly rotten odour emanating from a basket on the ground, which holds two decaying pigeons with slashed throats (**note to GM:** the birds were killed for the divination performed by Ajhaskar before he passed through the magic mirror). Their coagulated blood fills a bowl sitting on a table engraved with astrological signs. Drops of blood have been splashed over the table using a bundle of dried twigs (a knowledgeable PC will recognise these as signs that a divination has been performed). A strange vat with a bitter smell contains an acid bath filled with corroded objects (probably not a good idea to stick your fingers in there!). These are the talismans and ancient coins recovered from the ruins of Shrinazor Shamaaraz's palace. Propped against the wall is a large wooden

crate, about six feet long and three feet wide and filled with straw. It must have been used to transport the large mirror set down next to it (the pieces of straw stuck beneath the mirror clearly indicate this). The mirror, which is as tall as an adult man and about two feet in width, is a pewter panel framed in a darker metal engraved with mysterious runes. A character who knows Sorceric will recognize the script of the Sorcerer-Kings.

The room contains all sorts of precious and potentially useful objects. A Hero who considers using a Hero Point may find something useful here, whether he or she selects the object randomly or designates a specific object (at the GM's discretion).

The PCs can take the main staircase (which is enchanted; see room no. 9) back down to the second floor, but won't be able to return to the laboratory using these same stairs. A wall-mounted ladder on the landing leads up to an iron trapdoor closed with a massive lock that provides access to the roof (where there is nothing of interest except a splendid view of Lysor). The spell that protects the tower also covers the roof; if the PCs should open the trapdoor and try to climb onto the roof, an invisible barrier will stop them.

As soon as anyone approaches the mirror to examine it, they will see their image reflected in the murky depths of the mirror. But almost immediately, they'll start to hear the distant singing of birds from some faraway realm, and see a pale halo of light in the mirror and the indistinct outlines of a room. When they move their face closer to the mirror and squint to get a better look, they'll suddenly feel as if they are being pulled forward, like a piece of iron attracted by a magnet, and will immediately disappear through the mirror. The runes on the frame will briefly glow a strange orange colour, and then quickly return to their normal appearance.

After hesitating a few seconds and uttering a few oaths, the PC's courageous companions will, of course, follow their cohort through the magic portal... for better or for worse.





PART TWO: THE MOON VALE

The passageway through the magic mirror leads to the “Moon Vale,” directly inside the palace still waiting in vain for the coming of Shrinazor Shamaaraz. The descendants of the slaves brought here by the Sorcerer-King have remained imprisoned in a small valley walled in by towering mountains. Actually, they’ve been doing fairly well. Each generation has ensured the upkeep of the palace and added to its splendour as they fervently await their “Master,” who’s now considered to be more of an ancient and mysterious divinity.

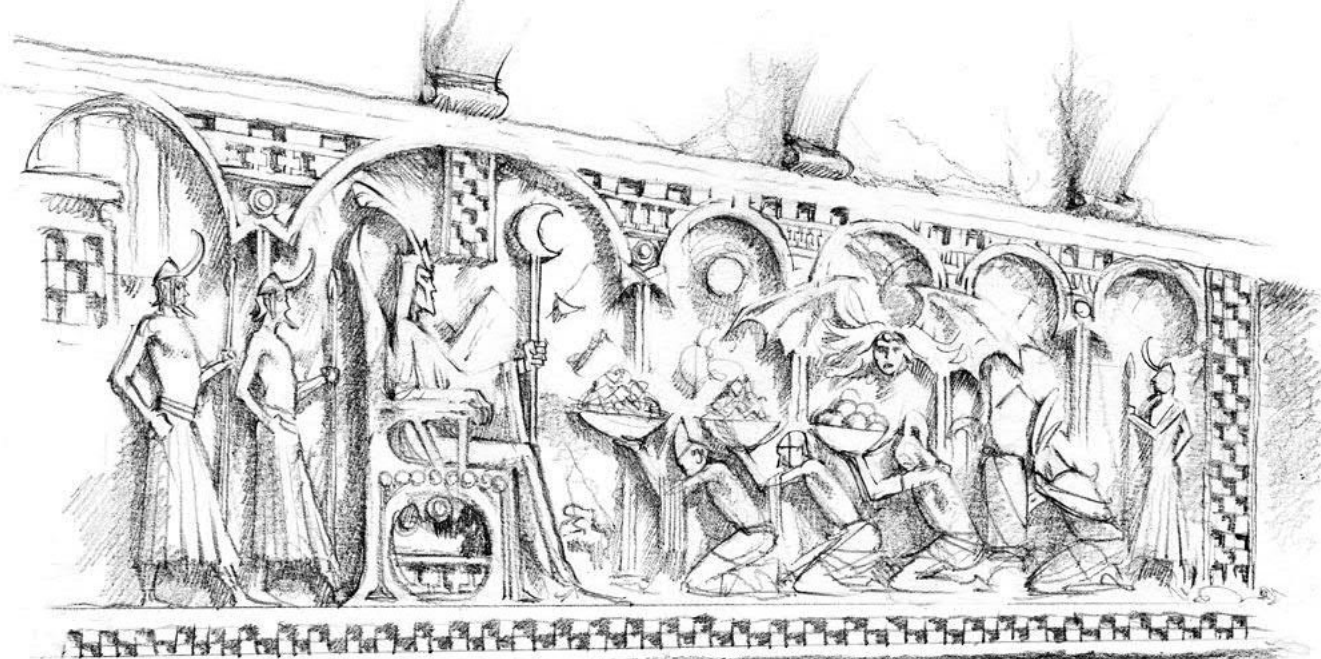
In this confined realm, cut off from the world, the only possible means of escape is by using magic (after walking for a day in any direction, the traveller will end up back in the centre of the valley, as if they’d been walking around in circles). The small group of about 200 souls has become a well-organised community. The thick jungle that covers the valley and the foothills of the mountains provides them with all the food and materials they need. The seasons are the same as in Lemuria, with the same hot and humid climate as in the foothills of Axos, with two notable exceptions: first, time appears to be ‘stuck’ in a repeating cycle; each year, the weather is exactly the same on the same date as it was the year

before. This means that the inhabitants know the exact days when it will be rainy or windy, hot or dry. Second, due to the strange nature of this magical realm cut off from the rest of the world, the moon is unusually large and bright. The waxing moon is already as bright as a full moon would normally be, and when the moon actually is full in the Moon Vale, it fills the valley with a light as bright as the sun on a cloudy day.

The **Xaliir**, as the members of the tribe call themselves (a distorted form of the word “slave” in the Sorcerer-Kings’ tongue), lead a peaceful existence as hunters and gatherers, and continue with their unending task of caring for the Master’s palace, decorating it with ornate sculptures and bas-reliefs.

The only danger they face (besides a few predators from the jungle and other natural hazards) is **Labashaah**, the demon that Shrinazor Shamaaraz left behind in the vale to oversee the construction of his palace. At first, Labashaah simply went about her work, but as the years passed, she realized that Shrinazor would never return and that she was imprisoned in the valley with no means of escape. She eventually built her nest in the old quarry





where the slaves extracted the luminous white limestone to build the palace. At certain appointed times, she kidnaps young men from the tribe and forces them to mate with her. Over the years she has spawned a degenerate race of winged humanoids with grotesque, bestial features and scaly wings that betray their demonic origins. As for her male progenitors, who all perish following the mating, she has maintained them in a state of preservation, as a harem of mummified “spouses” condemned to serve her from beyond the grave. Labashaah has become bored out of her skull in her monotonous prison, and would give anything to escape back to the real world.

It was to this magical vale, then, that Robos and Ajhaskar were transported five days before our Heroes. Their appearance caused a great commotion amongst the Xaliir. Communication was difficult at first (the Xaliir speak a particularly archaic form of Lemurian), but Robos and Ajhaskar were quickly able to pass themselves off as envoys from the “Master,” whose portrait can be found in a bas-relief in the throne room of the palace. After being welcomed to the village (a smattering of huts near the palace), the magician and his apprentice began to unravel the mystery surrounding this enchanted realm. Robos’ innocent and youthful heart was won over by a savage young huntress named **Nyssa**, which will (of course) only complicate matters later on.

Four days after the strangers’ appearance, a gaggle of “Moon Demons” (as the Xaliir call them) converged in the sky over the village. They had come to select a new lover for Labashaah. Surprised at first to find strangers in the village, they then winged down to carry the two men away by force. Ajhaskar used his magical powers to fell several of the fiends, and the others fled. The Xaliir, filled with panic and fearing the wrath of Labashaah, urged the visitors to go hide in the jungle. With Nyssa as their guide, Robos and Ajhaskar left the village. The day after this scuffle, the Heroes arrive in the Moon Vale.

Welcome to the Moon Vale

Just one small step forward...a short burst of dazzling light...the sickening feeling that you’ve unexpectedly walked off a cliff...and the Heroes now find themselves at the back of a long, narrow room lined with ornate columns. Embedded in the stone wall behind them is a pewter panel, much like the mirror they’ve just passed through in Ajhaskar’s laboratory. The runes around the rim of the panel briefly glow with an orange light before dying out. The portal has closed on this end: no way to go back! They’ll now be even more eager to find the magician, who certainly must be capable of opening the magic portal.



The Heroes are standing on a stone dais at the back of what appears to be a small throne room. It's completely barren, without the slightest furnishings. The white stone walls and floor are immaculate. The columns, walls, and ceilings are all sculpted with bas-reliefs and decorative mouldings with floral and geometrical motifs. The entire room forms a stone lacework of breathtaking beauty. On one of the walls is an immense bas-relief representing a man in rich garb seated in a hieratic pose, with elongated limbs and a foreboding look on his gaunt face. Men in loincloths kneel before him in worship. There's something strange about the seated figure, some inexplicable quality that makes the onlookers ill at ease...his features are slightly deformed, or maybe his body is too elongated, which makes him look not quite human (this is the portrait of the Sorcerer-King Shrinazor Shamaaraz). Some offerings—freshly-cut jungle flowers and a few victuals—have recently been placed at the foot of the bas-relief. All is quiet, except for birdsong from far off in the distance. A pale light filters through the many windows and openings, and the breeze carries the heady fragrances of dense vegetation, as if from a jungle.

If the PCs decide to take a quick look around, they'll discover the rooms of a small palace. It may not impress them by its size, but it is fabulously ornate, with every inch of the walls and ceilings covered with finely sculpted decorations. The whole edifice is absolutely magnificent, the equal of the most beautiful palaces in Lemuria. The edifice has been built on a mountainside, and some of the rooms have been carved out of the hill. The place is completely deserted. Apparently no one lives there, but the Heroes do discover scaffolding in different spots where new sculptures are being made (or restored).

At the far end of the throne room is a long vestibule leading outside. The palace has a large entranceway (with no doors) that opens onto a vast patio made of white stone. A series of stairs lead down from the patio. When the PCs reach the doorway, they see a man in a loincloth sweeping the patio. He drops his broom in terror as soon as he sees them and barrels down the steps, howling with fright.

Once they leave the palace, the Heroes can contemplate the magnificent view of their new surroundings. High mountain peaks enclose a long valley that disappears in the distance beneath a canopy of thick, luxurious jungle vegetation. The palace itself is built on a mountainside. At the bottom of the palace steps, small shelters built of wood and thatch protect stacks of sculpted stones and workshops, where partially completed sculptures can be seen. A dirt footpath winds through the trees down into the valley. Smoke can clearly be seen rising from a village a short walk down the slope.

The Xaliir

If the PCs don't decide to walk down to the village, a contingent of Xaliir will eventually come up to the palace to greet the new arrivals and invite them to the village.

The **Xaliir** are a small tribe of about 200, with dark skin and hair. They wear simple clothing—tunics or leather loincloths—and live in large, thatched huts. The Xaliir are adorned with a few trinkets made from things they've found in the jungle (wood, bone and ivory beads), and all have the same scarification on their left shoulder. If the PCs should take a closer look, they might notice that the marks bear a strange resemblance to the runes around the rim of the mirror (the scarification is the mark that Shrinazor placed on his slaves, and the tribe continues to blindly perpetuate the tradition on each new generation). Some of the Xaliir are armed (both the men and women) with fire-hardened wooden spears, cudgels, and bows and arrows tipped with sharpened bone or flint. There are almost no objects made of metal, except for a few old tools that look as if they've been repaired many times. There are no mineral deposits in the jungle so the Xaliir reverently maintain the metal tools of their ancestors. They do have a small forge, but no metal to make new tools. The Xaliir would be very appreciative if someone were to give them some metal, as they are in desperate need in order to complete the decorative work on the palace before their Master finally arrives.



The Heroes are brought before an elderly woman, **Ilkhta**, the leader of the tribe. Communication is difficult at first, but the PCs will soon be able to gather some information. What they actually learn will depend on how they lead the discussion and the type of questions they ask. Ilkhta will ask them if they, too, are emissaries from the “Master”—the Great One whose coming was foretold by their ancestors, and for whom they’ve been building the palace? Like Ajhaskar, the PCs may pass themselves off as envoys from the Master; this will be the best way to obtain help from the tribe.

Depending on the questions they ask, the PCs may learn more about the Xaliir and their valley:

 The Xaliir have lived here for a very long time, serving their Master; they’re the only humans in the valley.

 It’s impossible to leave the valley and they have never heard of Lemuria, although their legends do speak of a world beyond the valley where the Master will lead them one day, in recognition of their devotion.

 The Moon Demons punish them when they work too slowly, and sometimes carry away young men who are never seen again. The Moon Demons are ruled by a queen, **Labashaah**, but she has not been seen by the villagers for at least a generation.

 A few days ago, other envoys from the Master had arrived: two men who went by the names of Ajhaskar and Robos. The Xaliir brought them to the village, and they had asked many questions. The previous evening, the Moon Demons had come to the village. They had attacked the Master’s envoys and tried to carry them away. That’s when Ajhaskar (who must be a god himself!) had struck them down! Lightning bolts, like those in the clouds when the sky is angry, had flown from his fingers! He’d killed several of the demons and the others had fled (if the Heroes want to see the dead demons, their bodies are lying in a ditch dug in the jungle floor within a bowshot of the village). Ajhaskar and Robos have gone to hide in the jungle, accompanied by a huntress named Nyssa. Her younger brother **Rirtu** knows where she’s taken them and can show the Heroes.

If the PCs dither too long in the village (see inset: “The Moon Vale: Chronology of Events,” page 94), screeches will be heard in the skies above the village at the end of the afternoon, announcing the return of the Moon Demons. Ten **spawns** will then swoop down on the village, led by three **first-born** (see pages 100–101). Unless the Heroes intervene, they’ll carry off Ilkhta and take her to Labashaah, who will interrogate her to learn more about the strangers who’ve entered the valley. If the Heroes stop the demons from carrying off Ilkhta, one of the first-born will flee as soon as the fighting starts to confirm to its mistress that intruders have truly entered the valley.

The Long-Awaited Meeting with Ajhaskar

With the young Rirtu as their guide, the Heroes strike off into the jungle and, after a two-hour hike, arrive at a small clearing. A brook spills over the rocks to form a waterfall at one end of the clearing, and then meanders away through the trees. In the wall of rock next to the waterfall is a shallow cave used by Xaliir hunters as a rudimentary lodging. At long last, our Heroes finally meet Ajhaskar.

Ajhaskar is a dark-skinned man with a regal bearing. He is also very tall (about six and half feet), and has a thick mane of black hair. The deep lines on his face betray his age, but he still emanates physical power. It’s his eyes that you notice first though: they’re emerald green with vertical slits for pupils, making Ajhaskar’s gaze both fascinating and disturbing. He’s wearing a dark red brocaded robe and sturdy leather walking boots. His long fingers are covered in rings with precious gems, and several necklaces with arcane talismans hang around his neck. A long knife with a wavy-edged blade is attached to his belt. When the Heroes enter the clearing, he’s sitting on a large rock with his rucksack resting against it. **Robos**, his apprentice, is a young man of about twenty, with blond hair and blue eyes. He has the healthy complexion typical of Lysorians, and a very friendly face. His clothes are much more modest than those of his master: coarse linen robes with a few ink stains on them. Unlike





Ajhaskar, he has no gear. A beautiful young woman with an athletic build stands next to a small fire. She has dark brown hair and black eyes. This is the young Xaliir Nyssa.

The trio is surprised by the arrival of the Heroes. Ajhaskar will look them over suspiciously at first and demand to know what they're doing here. He'll hardly be thrilled when he learns that the Heroes trespassed in his tower, but will nonetheless be impressed that they managed to find him without coming to harm. Since it was the king of Lysor who sent them to find him, Ajhaskar will tend to treat the Heroes as his servants. But he's a clever and cunning magician, obsessed by his discovery of this strange realm, and itching to resolve its mysteries so that he can become its new ruler. Depending on how the PCs react, he will either be authoritarian or accommodating, and will attempt to gain their trust. He may explain a few things to them, such as the origin of the magic mirror and the conclusions he's drawn about this enchanted realm, which has been magically sealed off from the real world as it awaits the return of the long-dead Sorcerer-King.

However, Ajhaskar won't hesitate to lie about the magic mirror, claiming that it's now been sealed off, undoubtedly by the daemoness who reigns over the valley. Only her death will unlock the gateway and enable them to return to Lysor, he says. Of course he's lying through his teeth: all he has to do is recite

the runes on the frame of the mirror in the palace to open the passageway.

Robos, too, knows that the gateway can be opened, but at first he won't betray his master. Robos is actually a good lad who still hasn't been led completely astray by his training in the arcane arts. He knows full well that Ajhaskar is cruel and heartless; capable of the most vile and despicable acts to get what he wants. Robos truly loves Nyssa (and the huntress, completely captivated by this strange youth, so different from her, shares his affection) with all the passion so typical of his age. If he senses that the Heroes could be potential allies, or that they don't trust Ajhaskar (or if one of them should show some sympathy for his budding love affair), Robos may discretely warn them that Ajhaskar shouldn't be trusted. He's worried that the magician wants to take the place of the fallen Sorcerer-King so that he can impose his own iron rule over the enchanted realm and the Xaliir. Robos also knows full well that Ajhaskar won't have the slightest consideration for the well-being of Nyssa or the other slaves.

Robos is perfectly capable of opening the portal: he too is a magician, after all, and knows how to read the runes in the empty palace, which are the same as those on the mirror in Ajhaskar's tower. Correctly reading the runes on the magic portal is equal to a *Second Magnitude spell* of Moderate difficulty (0).



An alliance is therefore possible between the PCs and Robos, but the young apprentice will hesitate at first before openly defying his master.

So, Ajhaskar will propose to the Heroes to accompany him that very same night to the demon's lair in order to attack her while her brood scours the jungle to find the intruders (this actually is a valid plan: they will have an opportunity to attack Labashaah in her lair during the night). He will offer his magical protection to any three of the Heroes willing to accept it. Following a lengthy ritual, and the sacrifice of a large hedgehog captured by Nyssa, Ajhaskar will place a mysterious seal on his own forehead and on the forehead of any willing heroes, using a signet dipped in a mixture of the animal's blood, the wizard's blood, and the blood of those who will be under his protection. The signet will leave a crimson-red, perfectly-drawn arcane symbol on their foreheads. But without their knowledge, the wizard has secretly modified his spell. The PCs will in fact be protected from the demon, but they'll also be more vulnerable to the wizard's magic (see the full explanation of the spell in Ajhaskar's profile, on page 99). You can never be too careful with hastily-made alliances...

The Heroes may refuse the magician's proposition, and decide to return to the village or to the empty palace. If they prove to be obstinate, Ajhaskar will accept their decision, and will then decide to deal with Labashaah later. They'll then discover that, during their absence, a large host of Moon Demons (20 spawns and 5 first-born) have taken up roost at the palace, perched like hideous gargoyles on every cornice and recess of the sculpted facade. Labashaah herself will soon arrive in person, before dawn.

The PCs may obtain help from the Xaliir, provided that someone can convince them that Labashaah has betrayed the Master, and that she wants to prevent him from coming so that she alone can reign over the valley. If they can be convinced, the Xaliir may take up arms and fight alongside the PCs. In this case, about thirty warriors (both men and women) will join their cause, and may, for example, join in an epic attack on the palace (using the combat rules for *rabble*, see *BoL*, page 157).

It's also possible that a fight will quickly flare up with Ajhaskar. In this case, he'll use his magic to offer fierce resistance, but won't hesitate to take to his heels if things don't go his way. Robos will be

In the Moon Vale: Chronology of Events

There are several ways this can go, and it will mainly depend on what the players decide to do.

Day 1: Robos and Ajhaskar arrive in the Moon Vale during the night and meet the Xaliir the next morning.

D2 to D4: They stay with the Xaliir and learn more about the new "realm." Robos falls in love with Nyssa.

D4 night: The Moon Demons arrive in the village of the Xaliir and a fight breaks out. Ajhaskar, Robos and Nyssa go hide in the jungle. The surviving demons return to Labashaah's lair, but only a few of her spawn have survived and their story is garbled (they're primitive creatures with only rudimentary language skills). Labashaah dispatches her demons (under the command of a few "first-born") to find out what's going on and to fetch the village elder.

D5: The Heroes pass through the magic portal and arrive in the Moon Vale (probably in the morning, unless they spent a lot of time exploring Ajhaskar's tower).

D5 afternoon: The Moon Demons return to the Xaliir to capture the village elder and bring her back to Labashaah. The Heroes either fight the demons or hide, unless they've already set off to find Ajhaskar.

D5 night: The Heroes meet Ajhaskar and Robos near the waterfall. Labashaah now realizes (more or less, depending on the outcome of events) that strangers actually have entered the valley and that one of them must be a sorcerer, which means she may finally escape from her "prison." She tells her demons to fly over the jungle and find the intruders, while another group goes back to the palace to keep watch. She remains in her lair at first, trying to decide what to do, before finally joining her troops late that night at the palace to stop the strangers from going back through the portal without her.

completely at a loss. He won't defend his master but won't attack him either, and will simply do his best to protect Nyssa.

If Ajhaskar manages to escape, he'll have several options: he can attempt to quickly regain the palace and escape through the portal; seek out Labashaah to form an alliance (her freedom in exchange for her help against the Heroes), or return to the Xaliir and convince them to help him (they're fully convinced that he's an envoy from the Master. Plus, they've seen him use magic, which will help convince them that he truly is who he claims to be). You'll have to decide based on what your group of players ends up doing.

What Labashaah Hopes to Gain...

Depending on what the PCs decide, they may either end up fighting Labashaah in her lair or back at the palace, where she'll be accompanied by a horde of her offspring. When push comes to shove, Labashaah will first concentrate her attacks on the heroes who look the least like a sorcerer (e.g. a warrior with armour). She wants to avoid killing the wizard at all costs, as only he can open the gateway to Lemuria. She'll try to gain control in order to negotiate her safe passage out of the Moon Vale. Ajhaskar will be more than willing to make a pact with her, as he would then have full control over the enchanted realm. He'd have no qualms about unleashing a demon in the streets of Lysor—unlike Robos, who'll quickly warn the Heroes about this risk if they don't figure it out by themselves.

If Labashaah and Ajhaskar do come to an agreement, the gateway will immediately be opened and Labashaah will quickly fly through...followed by her brood of offspring. Back at the tower, the Magician's Laboratory will soon be teeming with the winged beasts that have managed to follow their mother. Ajhaskar will then allow them to leave the tower (by removing his protective spell), unless a combat starts with the Heroes. Let's hope they still have a few Hero Points left!

LABASHAAH'S LAIR

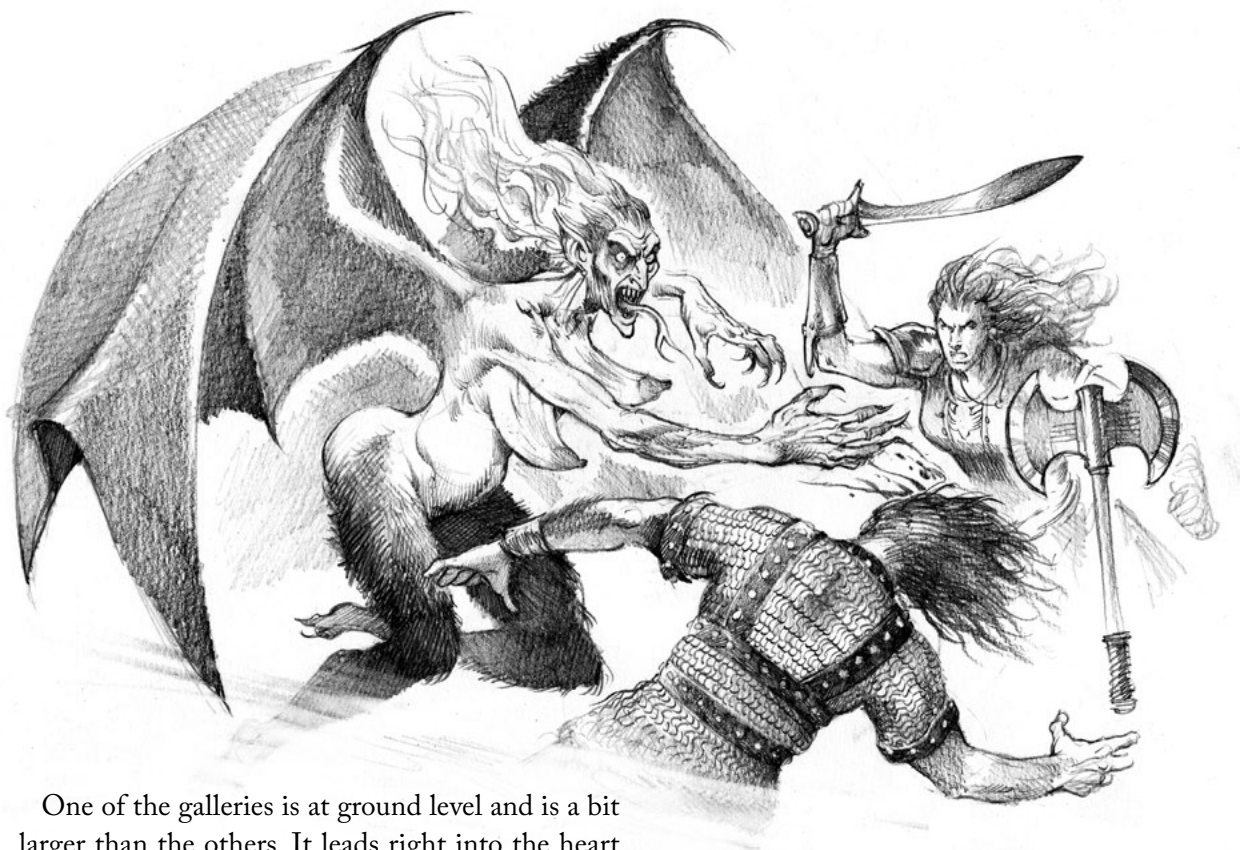


Labashaah's Lair

The den of the nocturnal daemones is hidden inside the cliffs where the Xaliir's ancestors extracted stone to build the palace. It's an open-air quarry dug out of the mountainside, a three-hour walk from the village. From the clearing with the waterfall, it will take at least two hours to walk through the jungle to Labashaah's lair.

The side of a hill has been excavated to form a large half-circle in the rock face. The back of the quarry is littered with piles of debris and massive stone blocks extracted from the cliff (offering excellent cover for sneaking in unnoticed). The entire place is overrun with thick jungle vegetation; small trees and shrubs grow out of the cracks and crannies. Vines hang down from the top of the cliffs. Gaping holes—abandoned entranceways from the old mining days—have been dug into the cliff face at various heights. Some are still accessible via ramps or rickety old scaffolding.





One of the galleries is at ground level and is a bit larger than the others. It leads right into the heart of Labashaah's lair. No one's guarding the quarry; the foul demon and her offspring have never had to worry about enemies.

After entering the main gallery, a long tunnel with smooth walls continues straight ahead for about thirty feet. It opens onto a large, natural cavern about a hundred feet wide and thirty feet high. A network of galleries has been dug out of the wall near the top of the cavern. They're connected with some smaller niches where Labashaah's offspring have their nests. The cave floor is littered with broken pieces of stone and a layer of foul-smelling white filth—the pungent excrement of the brood. Long rays of silver light from the dazzling moon pass through the fissures in the ceiling, bathing the cave in a spectral half-light.

In the back of the cave, Labashaah has built herself a "cosy" nest made up of interwoven branches, leaves and dry grass. She spends most of her time sleeping, in a bored stupor. Smaller niches crudely carved out of the cave wall contain the shrivelled, mummified bodies of her former lovers. Folded up in a foetal position, they're ready to rise from the dead at the behest of their mistress. When awoken, they will obey her every command.

If the Heroes attack Labashaah in her lair, she'll be awake when they enter the cave, ruminating over the recent events. **Two** of her **first-born** attend her, along with **ten spawns** perched higher up on the walls; they will quickly detect the intruders' presence. **Ten mummies** from her harem also await her command to jump into the fray.

End Game

There are many ways the adventure may end, depending on how the PCs have aligned themselves. If they do make a pact with Ajhaskar and return with him to Lysor after having killed Labashaah, the wizard, always a pragmatist, could pay them handsomely if they agree to keep the secret about the Moon Vale and the recent events. He could even have more work for them (maybe he needs a few trustworthy adventurers to delve deeper into the ruins of Shrinazor's palace). If on the other hand they kill the magician and return to Lysor with the help of Robos, they'll have to come up with a convincing story for Captain Dramik and the authorities. And what about the Xaliir and the magic mirror leading to the Moon Vale? Only the GM and the PCs will know the answers!



CAST OF CHARACTERS

(The Tower of Ajhaskar)

Stone Andraks (x2, room 4)

The two obsidian lion statues are brought to life by a powerful spell and will relentlessly defend the tower. They'll immediately pounce on anyone who enters the audience room. When their *lifeblood* reaches zero they shatter into a million pieces. If any of the Heroes should pick through the rubble, they'll find a few shards of andrak bone engraved with occult symbols.

Creature size: Medium

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	3	Attack	+2
Agility	1	Damage	d6H
Mind	—	Defence	1
Lifeblood	15	Protection	d6 (4)*

*Heroes with a blunt, metal weapon (hammer, mace) get a *bonus die* for damage rolls against the stone andraks.

Young Xolth (room 6b)

See *BoL* page 126 for more details about xolths.

Creature size: Large

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	4	Attack	+1
Agility	-3	Damage	Special
Mind	-3	Defence	0
Lifeblood	20	Protection	d6-2 (2)

Traits:

Fear of fire: A xolth will avoid fire whenever possible.

Special attack: The xolth envelops its prey in its pulpy, amoeboid flesh. Once absorbed, you must kill the beast and hack your way out. You take d6L *lifeblood* damage each round you are inside the

creature. This is a smaller, baby xolth, so it can only ingest up to three PCs. At that point the xolth is too full to swallow any new prey.

Krulak the demon guardian (lesser demon, tough, room 13)

Krulak is a squat, monkey-like creature with matted grey hair, abnormally long arms and short, bowed legs ending in three-fingered paws with razor-sharp claws. The pupils of the four lidless eyes on his hideous face gleam an evil red, and four horn-like growths protrude from his mangy scalp.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	1	Melee	3
Agility	3	Ranged	1
Mind	2	Defence	2
Appeal	0	Damage	d6
Lifeblood	21		

Powers

Demonic Screech

Incarnation

Vulnerability (Statuette)

Powers :

Demonic Screech: As soon as Krulak detects intruders, he'll let out a horrendous, ear-piercing screech ("GO AWAAAAAY!"), which will instantly deafen anyone within hearing range. Each PC will have to make a successful *mind* Task Roll or else they'll fall to the ground and cover their ears, and will be unable to perform any action for one round. Any bonus they have for their *defence* can no longer be added, nor can any shields. In the next round, the player can make another *mind* Task Roll to end the effects of the screech. If this second roll is also a failure, they'll be unable to take any action for the second round as well. After the second round, the effects of the screech will stop.

Incarnation: During a combat, Krulak can replicate into multiple copies of himself. There will be one incarnation of lesser power (see *Krulak's Incarnation*) for each Hero (up to a maximum of 6), and they will immediately attack the intruders.



Whenever an incarnation is killed, it vanishes in a puff of foul-smelling, sulphurous smoke that hangs in the air. The small clouds of smoke from the killed incarnations will join together, and when they've all been eliminated, the cloud condenses and becomes the body of Krulak again in its original form as a lesser demon. He'll keep on fighting tooth and nail and, once destroyed, will disappear in another cloud of black smoke that quickly disperses. An attentive PC may notice that the smoke doesn't actually disperse, but is in fact sucked up the nostrils of the statuette in the library (no. 13). If the combat takes place in a different room, the PCs may notice that the wisps of smoke slowly drift back towards the library. If the statuette is not destroyed (see below), Krulak will be rejuvenated inside the statuette and will reappear after **ten rounds**, and the whole combat with the screeching demon monkey will have to be fought all over again...

Incarnation of Krulak (minor demon)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0		
Agility	2	Melee	1
Mind	0	Ranged	0
Appeal	0	Defence	1
Lifeblood	10	Damage	d6L

Vulnerability (statuette): Krulak's fate is tied to that of the statuette, which bears his likeness and contains his essence. The only way to definitively eliminate the demon is to destroy the statuette, which requires two successful *strength* Task Rolls (to shatter the stone statuette against a wall or on the floor) or two attacks with a suitable weapon (a mace or a broadsword, for example; it won't be possible to shatter the statuette with a dagger). Of course, an astute PC might decide to spend a Hero Point to destroy the statuette with a single stroke! Once the statuette has been shattered, Krulak and any of its remaining incarnations will disappear as a final shriek resounds throughout the tower ("GO AWAAAAAY!").

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(The Moon Vale)



Robos

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	0
Agility	1	Melee	1
Mind	2	Ranged	1
Appeal	1	Defence	2

Careers

Magician	1	Physician	2
Scribe	1	Merchant	0

Protection: None

Weapons: Wooden spear (taken from the Xaliir) d6

Points

Arcane Power	11
Hero Points	5
Lifeblood	10

Boons

Attractive: Robos is particularly handsome and charming. He gets a *bonus die* in situations where good looks might be important.

Quick Recovery: Robos has a much better constitution than many. When recovering after a combat, he regains 1 additional *lifeblood*. In addition, he recovers 1 *lifeblood* each day regardless of the type of activity he carries out after being injured.

Flaws

Unprepared: Robos has a tendency to think too much, making him slow to react to danger. Add a *penalty die* for Priority Rolls.



Ajhaskar (villain)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	0
Agility	1	Melee	1
Mind	4	Ranged	1
Appeal	2	Defence	2

Careers

Magician	3	Alchemist	2
Physician	1	Merchant	0

Protection: None

Weapons: Halakhi kir d6 (harder weapon; see below)

Points

Arcane Power	15
Villain Points	4
Lifeblood	11

Boons

Excellent Library: Ajhaskar has a first-rate collection of manuscripts, and when he conducts research in his library he gets a *bonus die* to help him figure things out.

Power of the Void: Receives two extra points of Arcane Power (already included in his statistics).

Savant: Receives one extra point for *mind* (already included in his statistics).

Flaws

Unsettling: There's something creepy about Ajhaskar, and it's not just his weird eyes (he takes a *penalty die* in social situations or when dealing with animals).

Obsession: Ajhaskar is completely obsessed with the lost powers of the ancient Sorcerer-Kings and will stop at nothing to regain even the slightest bit of their power.

Distinctive Appearance: Ajhaskar has cat eyes, with vertical slits for pupils.

Belongings: Besides all his magic talismans and amulets, Ajhaskar has brought along a vial of Universal Antidote (can cure any poison, even a magical one, instantly reversing its effects) and is armed with a long, inlaid Halakhi kir with a magnificent opal embedded in the pommel (Harder



Weapon, roll a *bonus die* for damage), and a sturdy walking stick.

Description of the protective spell (see page 94):

Mystical protective seal (*Second Magnitude spell*; requirements: special item, ritual sacrifice; difficulty: Tough (-2); cost: 9 Arcane Power). When Ajhaskar places his signet soaked in blood from the ritual sacrifice on the forehead of a PC, he or she will be protected by a magic spell against attacks from a specific demon (Labashaah in this case). The protection lasts one day (24 hours). The demon has a *penalty die* for all attacks during hand-to-hand combat with a PC protected by the spell, and the PC gets a *bonus die* when resisting the effects of spells or powers of the demon. When Ajhaskar casts the spell, he can protect himself and also one other person per magician rank that he possesses.

For the present adventure, Ajhaskar secretly tinkers with the spell so that the PCs protected from the demon are more vulnerable to his spells over the same period of time. Ajhaskar gets a *bonus die* whenever he casts a spell on one of the PCs protected by the magic signet.



Nyssa (villain)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	0
Agility	2	Melee	1
Mind	1	Ranged	2
Appeal	1	Defence	1

Careers

Hunter	2	Barbarian	1
Minstrel	0	Slave	1

Protection: None

Weapons: Bow d6, flint knife d6L

Points

Hero Points	5
Lifeflood	10

Boons

Jungle-Born: Nyssa grew up in the jungle (*bonus die* for tracking, trapping, hunting, etc. in the jungle).

Keen Eyesight: For any *mind* Task Roll to perceive something with her eyes, Nyssa receives a *bonus die*.

Flaws

Gullible: Nyssa has lived her whole life isolated in the hidden valley. Little accustomed to the cunning ways of men, she can easily be duped or persuaded.

Xaliir Warriors (rabble, x30)

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	-1
Agility	1	Melee	0
Mind	-1	Ranged	1
Appeal	0	Defence	0

Protection: None

Weapons: d3 (primitive weapons)

Points

Lifeflood	2
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Traits: rules for horde (see *BoL*, page 157).

Labashaah (Greater demon, villain)

Labashaah is a sort of succubus; she has the torso of a woman, with pale, milky skin and withered dugs, but from the waist down her body is covered with short black fur, much like a bat's, and she also has leathery bat wings. She has the face of a hideous old hag, with deformed features resembling a bat's, but she also exudes an unsettling aura of seduction and authority. Her wings enable her to flutter around very quickly and with surprising agility, and she can tear an enemy to shreds with her clawed fingers.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	2	Melee	3
Agility	3	Ranged	3
Mind	3	Defence	4
Appeal	4	Protection	d6-2 (2)
Lifeflood	32	Damage	d6H+1

Powers*

Speech

Offspring (special: Labashaah gives birth to "first-born"; see below)

Regeneration

Seductive

* See *BoL* page 131 for a full description of these demonic powers.

First-Born of Labashaah (tough)

These creatures resemble primitive men and women with bat's wings. They're the first-born of Labashaah, the offspring of her coupling with the Xaliir tribesmen. They then spawned a degenerate race of bat-like humanoids (see Labashaah's Spawn).

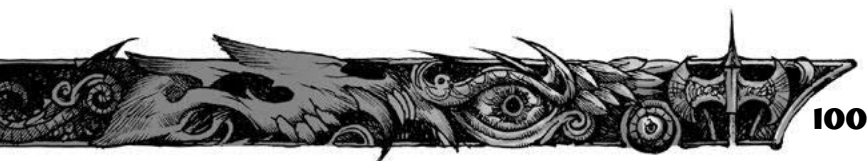
Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	2	Initiative	0
Agility	1	Melee	2
Mind	0	Ranged	-1
Appeal	-1	Defence	1

Protection: None

Weapons: Claws d6L+1

Points

Lifeflood	10
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Labashaah's Spawn (rabble)

Smaller than their progenitors, these creatures look more like giant bats, with a few vaguely human features. They're incapable of speech and communicate by high-pitched squeaking noises.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	0
Agility	1	Melee	1
Mind	0	Ranged	-1
Appeal	-1	Defence	0

Protection: None

Weapons: Claws 1

Points

Lifeforce 3

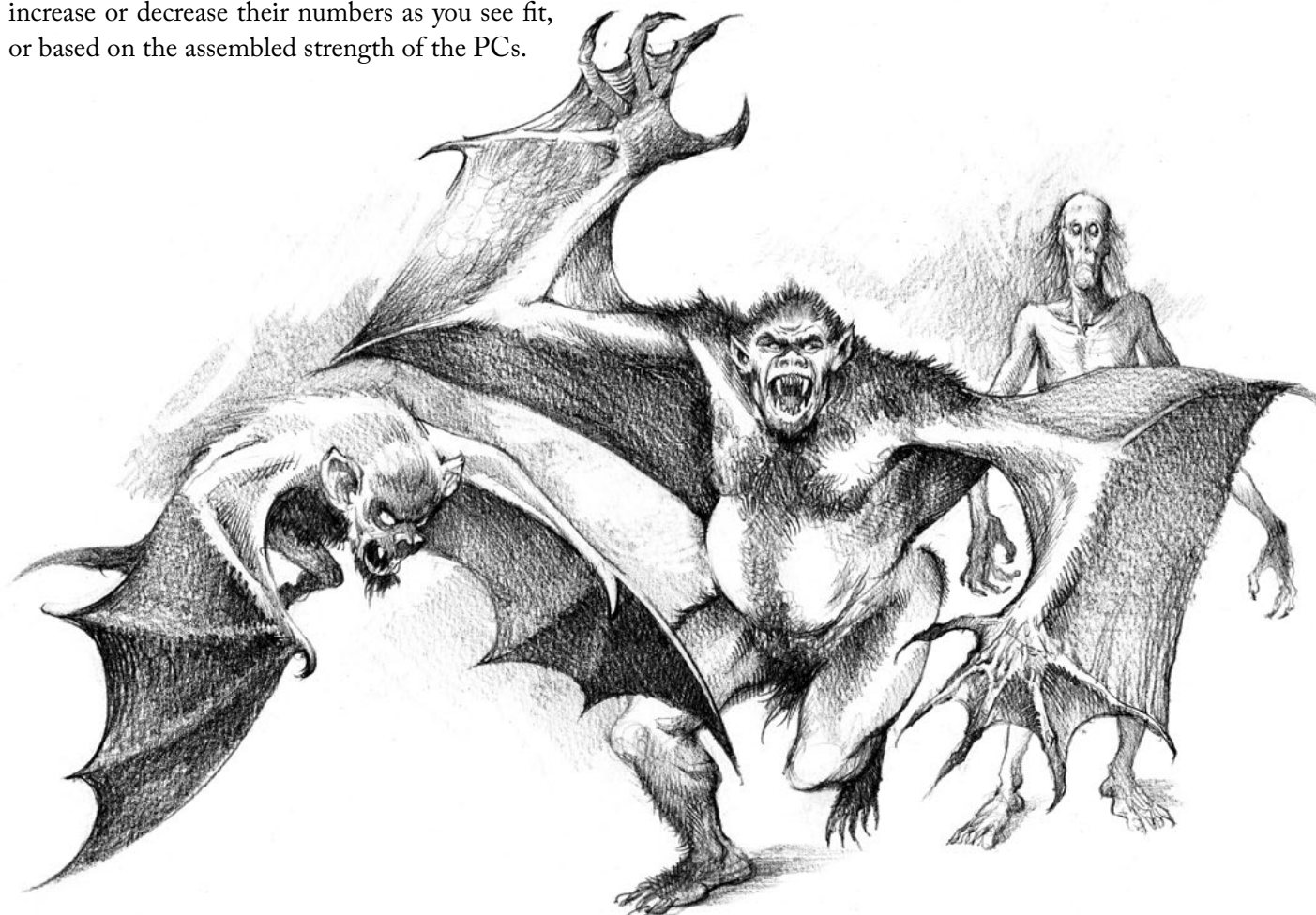
Note to GM: the number of first-born and spawn indicated above are only suggestions. Feel free to increase or decrease their numbers as you see fit, or based on the assembled strength of the PCs.

Labashaah's Mummy Harem (bloodless, rabble)

These shrivelled-up corpses are Labashaah's former "spouses." When coupling, she sucks all the life out of her victim, who shrivels up and dies, eventually becoming as dry and brittle as a desert mummy. Death does not free him from the demon's clutches, however, as he continues to serve her as a reanimated corpse.

Labashaah has 10 of these bloodless attendants, who never leave her lair.

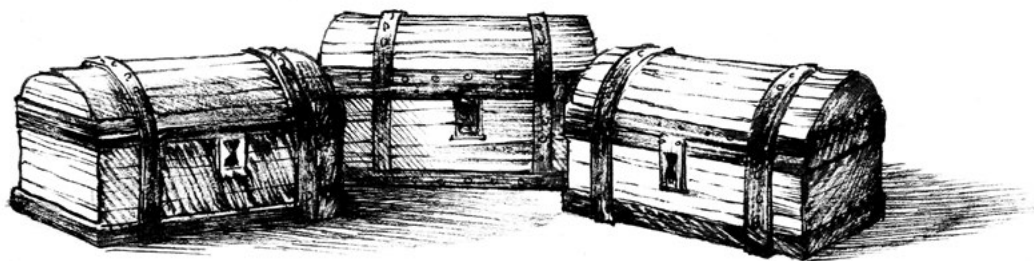
Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	1	Attack	+0
Agility	0	Damage	1
Mind	-1	Defence	0
Lifeforce	3	Protection	0





A READY-TO-PLAY ADVENTURE

THE THREE CHESTS



Adventure Overview

A detachment of Kalukan Sentinels belonging to the Witch Queen have been sent to Halakh on a temporary assignment to serve Rutgarr, a Grey Druid from the Cult of Nemmereth. He orders them to deliver three chests to mysterious destinations without bothering to explain why. It's only at the climax of the adventure that the Heroes will learn the terrible truth: Rutgarr is in fact the sworn enemy of their queen, and he's manipulated the unwitting Kalukan to recover a magic artefact which, once in his possession, may lead to the downfall of Methyn Sarr, the Witch Queen of the Fire Coast.

Warning

This scenario includes a new twist, as the players will be playing a group of **Kalukan**, the mute (but hardly deaf!) one-eyed eunuchs magically created by the mightiest of the ancient sorcerers to serve as their slaves. So you'll be asking the players to set aside their usual Heroes for awhile and to don the tattooed skins of these bizarre creatures. **Five ready made characters** have been provided for you at the end of the book (pages 126 to 130), but you can also let your players make up their own Kalukan using the standard rules for creating Heroes.

Background

Since time immemorial, the Cult of the Grey Druids has been a fixture in Halakh, where they worship the Death God, Nemmereth. These creepy adulators of the Dark Lord are right at home in Halakh, also known as the Assassin City.

One of the orders of the Grey Druids, known as the **Cult of the Dark Fire**, has earned a sinister reputation due to its practice of burning victims alive in sacrifices to the Death God. They're the sworn enemies of the Red Druids who worship Zaggath, the Lord of Fire. Their mutual loathing most likely originated in a theological dispute: the Grey Druids of the Dark Fire consider fire to be a transition, a passageway to the Long Sleep, whereas the worshippers of Zaggath venerate the



sacred flame as an end in itself. It is unbearable to the Red Druids that fire (the sacred instrument of their god) is used by the fanatics of Nemmereth for their own sacrifices. No one knows for certain the actual reason behind the animosity, which has been lost in the annals of time, but the feud continues to rage between the Cult of the Dark Fire and the worshippers of Zaggath, and in particular their most powerful member, **Methyn Sarr**, the Witch Queen of the Fire Coast (see *BoL*, pages 91 and 161). So far, the Grey Druids of the cult have been bedevilled in every attempt to eliminate the sorceress, who wields powerful magic.

About two decades before our story begins, the members of the cult obtained an ancient, blasphemous grimoire, the *Treatise on Time*, a written record of the unnameable experiments carried out by a faction of Sorcerer-Kings to control the passage of time. In its unholy pages can be found references to a powerful magical artefact, the **Grey Hourglass**. When the hourglass is filled with the ashes of a Morgal, following its cremation in a complex ritual, the wielder of the artefact can stop time in his immediate vicinity for as long as the ashes continue to trickle in the hourglass (see text box on following page, “The Grey Hourglass”).

Convinced that the hourglass offered a sure-fire way to destroy the Witch Queen by circumventing her powerful magic, the cult began a feverish quest to find the artefact. About ten years ago, after endless searching, they finally found the underground complex where the hourglass was hidden, only to discover that it was protected by immortal guardians who quickly dispatched anyone who attempted to enter. After an unsuccessful attempt ended in disaster, the druids once again began poring over the grimoire to find a solution. Finally, **Rutgarr**, an eminent member of the Cult of the Dark Fire, found the key in an enigmatic passage of the old manuscript.

According to the *Treatise on Time*, the hourglass’s sanctuary could only be entered when it was **neither night nor day**, by someone who was **neither man nor woman**. To satisfy the first requirement, Rutgarr deduced that they must wait for the next

Playing as a Kalukan

Playing the role of a headless, sexless and mute creature created through alchemy to serve fanatical sorcerers may seem a bit weird at first! So it would probably be a good idea to have the players read the page on Kalukan in *Barbarians of Lemuria* (page 86). The Kalukan were “born” to serve, so it’s in their very nature to follow orders and faithfully obey; it’s why they were created in the first place. This is especially true for the Kalukan Sentinels of the sadistic Methyn Sarr, who punishes any form of disobedience in the most horrific manner imaginable.

But that doesn’t mean the Kalukan are mindless automatons who’ll blindly follow orders. They’re endowed with reason and a conscience, and are capable of learning and of making their own decisions. This adventure will play off these seeming contradictions: Kalukan are used to obeying orders without hesitation, and should be ready and willing to accept their mission at first...only to later realise that they’ve been manipulated and must take the initiative. As for their apparent problems communicating, you’ll see that the scenario offers a way for them to communicate—at least partially.

eclipse before making another attempt. As for the second part of the enigma, the answer must be the sexless Kalukan, the unholy handiwork of the Sorcerer-Kings!

The stars appeared to be favourable to the followers of Nemmereth: a solar eclipse was imminent, and the Grey Druids had to seize the opportunity to recover the Hourglass! The phenomenon would not occur again in the region for many years.

Tasked by the cult to recover the hourglass, Rutgarr hatched a diabolical plan. He contracted the services of a certain **Ram Verda**, one of the leaders of the Bloody Blades, a powerful thieves’ guild in Malakut. Verda would kidnap a group of Kalukan Sentinels in the service of the Witch Queen (what could be more fitting than having Sarr’s own slaves cause her downfall?). Using a potent mixture of drugs and deceit, Rutgarr would convince the Kalukan that they were serving their queen and have them recover the Grey Hourglass, without ever revealing the true nature of their mission.



Rutgarr gives the Heroes 3 tasks to perform:

The Ashes: Carry a chest containing the body of a Morgal (see *BoL*, page 86) to the Lighthouse, where it will be burned to create the ashes to fill the Grey Hourglass. The druids have had to overcome enormous difficulties to capture such a rare and dangerous creature, and they're now pressed for time: a solar eclipse (the only time it's possible to enter the sanctuary holding the hourglass) is quickly approaching. To speed things up, Rutgarr has crafted a powerful spell that will instantly transport the Kalukan back to his residence once they've completed this first task.

The Hourglass: Go to the "Pit" where the Grey Hourglass lies hidden. They must bring along a chest containing the artefact's demon guardian, as

only it can recover the hourglass. Since Rutgarr will not be accompanying the Kalukan, he's summoned the demon using a ritual from the *Treatise on Time*, and has imprisoned it in the chest that the Kalukan must place next to the hourglass. The demon guardian is bound by the spell of the sorcerer who summons it and must obey his commands.

The Pact of Malakuf: Rutgarr will then dispatch the unsuspecting Kalukan to Ram Verda, whose job it will be to make them disappear for good, since they no longer serve any purpose (and might start to suspect that something fishy is going on).

Then, at long last, Rutgarr will be able to carry out his demented attempt to murder Methyn Sarr and be remembered for time immemorial amongst the Grey Druids of the Cult of the Dark Fire as the man who brought down the Witch Queen of the Fire Coast!

The Grey Hourglass

The Grey Hourglass was created by the Sorcerer-Kings in their quest for almighty power, as conquering time was further proof of their divine nature.

The hiding place and the means for using the Grey Hourglass are described in an ancient and unique manuscript, the *Treatise on Time*. This immensely powerful artefact is an hourglass about twelve inches tall, with a frame made of a dull grey metal and engraved with runes. The two glass bulbs are translucent and give off a strange glow. The hourglass can be filled through a screw-on plug on one end. When the ashes of a Morgal—a vampire that, according to legend, drinks blood to defy the laws of nature and obtain eternal life—are acquired through an extremely intricate ritual and poured into the Grey Hourglass, its wielder can stop the passage of time in his immediate vicinity for as long as the ashes continue to trickle. While the temporal stasis lasts, the world around him will remain in a frozen state, and he can act with complete impunity for a short period of time. The diabolical possibilities are endless. Tragically, whoever uses the Hourglass will also age several decades in an instant and be afflicted by psychological disorders that may drive him mad: there's always a heavy price to pay for breaking the laws of the universe.

The creation of such a powerful artefact, capable of having disastrous consequences, necessitated strict limitations on its use. So its creators hid it away in a secret location that could only be entered under certain conditions. The Grey Hourglass was also placed under the protection of a demon guardian that is magically bound to it; only the demon can remove it from its sanctuary, and each time the artefact is used, the demon will immediately return it to its hiding place once the ashes stop flowing.

The *Treatise on Time* contains the ritual to be performed to conjure the demon, and other information about the Grey Hourglass and its use. Before the Cult of the Dark Fire's attempt to acquire the artefact, it had already been successfully used three times in the past, and each time it was returned to the Pit by its demon guardian. Those who use the Grey Hourglass are fully aware of its supernatural powers and the hazards it entails, but the possibilities offered to he who masters time are absolutely mind-boggling: killing a despised rival with complete impunity in the most cruel ways imaginable, while savouring each moment of such a perverse death; stealing the magnificent diamond of Kaijoon right under the watchful eyes of the terrible Xian Kahn, reduced to powerlessness; or simply changing the course of events that seemed destined by fate.

A Whole New World

So to get things going, a small band of Kalukan Sentinels on patrol near the fortress of the Witch Queen are ambushed by Ram Verda's henchmen. They're quickly subdued by a powerful sleeping potion and spirited away to Rutgarr's residence in Halakh. To keep them asleep during the voyage, alchemistic drugs are administered that also cause memory loss, meaning they won't remember recent events.

Rutgarr is counting on the legendary discipline of the Kalukan and their obedient nature to make them accept the mission without hesitation. He also knows that Methyn Sarr is a cruel and fickle mistress, who would sacrifice any of her slaves without the slightest hesitation: so there's nothing unusual about the idea that she would "loan" a few of her Kalukan to a supposed ally without even bothering to tell her sentinels beforehand.

Our adventure begins when the Kalukan finally wake up. They're completely disoriented, as if they've resurfaced from a deep, dreamless sleep. They have no memories of the previous days, and have no idea how they got here. The last thing they remember was their daily grind, serving the Witch Queen at her fortress. They must have been the victims of some powerful spell...

When each Hero opens its one eye, it'll take a few seconds to get used to the gloomy half-light... they're in a cave filled with an assortment of crates and hastily-stacked barrels. The cave is dimly lit by a small oil lamp. An astrolabe gathers dust off in one corner and an underground passage, barely visible in an alcove dug out of the floor at the back of the cave, leads off into the darkness.

Everything in the cave appears strange to them. This is certainly not their queen's fortress. After taking a few seconds to clear the cobwebs from their heads, they'll quickly realise that they've been stripped of all their gear, except for their usual clothing: no weapons, no armour...nothing.

A deep, imperious voice suddenly resonates in the cave as a tall man wearing a grey, richly adorned toga walks out of the shadows to introduce himself.

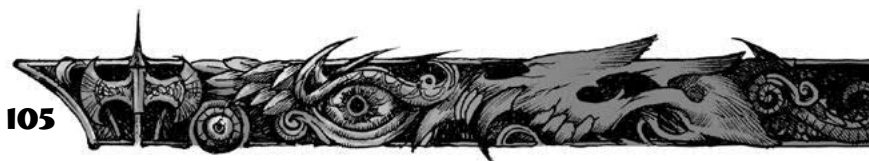
He looks to be around sixty. He has refined and meticulous manners, but his elegant appearance is somewhat diminished by the scars on his face left from a bout with smallpox. After quietly sizing up our Heroes for a few moments with evident satisfaction, he walks out into the light to speak.

"Welcome to Halakh. I am Rutgarr, your new master. Yes, the Witch Queen has lent you to me for a mission of the utmost importance to her. She told me she would send only her finest Kalukan Sentinels, so I hope you will not disappoint your queen! But we have little time. Rest assured, your task is quite simple: you will be conveying three chests to three different locations. And each time, you will bring me back the proof that you have successfully completed your mission. For your first task, you will be delivering this chest to an old friend of mine, who lives not far south of here at the confines of the Beshaar Desert."

Rutgarr then shows them a large wood chest sitting next to two others that are about the same size. They're of equal width and height (about two feet) and about three feet long. Each is locked with a heavy padlock covered with cabalistic symbols, and the shackle has an hourglass engraved on it. The chest weighs over a hundred pounds, meaning two people are necessary to carry it. A small leather pouch filled with soil sits on top of the chest.

"You will deliver this chest to the guardian of the Lighthouse, and also give her this small pouch. You will follow her instructions and bring me back whatever she gives you in exchange for the chest. We have little time and I expect you to show great diligence and the utmost discretion in completing your task. Ah yes! It is also absolutely forbidden for you to open the chest. Its contents are not your concern. The Witch Queen has of course seen to it that you have all your gear." Rutgarr lifts the flap of a large bag lying on the floor next to a table. It contains all their belongings. They also see that their weapons have been laid out on the table.

"In this bag here, you'll also find a set of bracelets of long speech to facilitate your task. I'm sure you're familiar with them. As I said, you must go unnoticed! Although many people are aware of



The Bracelets of Long Speech

The origin of the bracelets dates back to the murky past when the Sorcerer-Kings reigned. It had always proven difficult for the Kalukan, who are mute by nature, to communicate with their masters. Horsted, a renowned alchemist, discovered an ingenious solution to this problem during his research on allanium and its alloys. He created bracelets made of an allanium and bronze alloy that enclosed a powerful spell. When bracelets from the same casting were linked by a magical bond, the Kalukan who wore them could then communicate telepathically. Horsted's invention soon led to his demise: he was killed shortly after by his master, who wanted to keep the secret to himself. This tragic ending helps to explain why bracelets of long speech are so rare: the secret formula for making them is even more closely guarded than the secret behind the production of allanium, the famous metal now used in the hulls of the Satarlan sky-boats.

Anyone who wears pairs of the bracelets (forged from the same bronze casting) can communicate through a simple form of telepathy, as if they were talking out loud. The range of the bracelets is about the same as the human voice: beyond a distance of about fifty or sixty feet, the bracelets won't work.

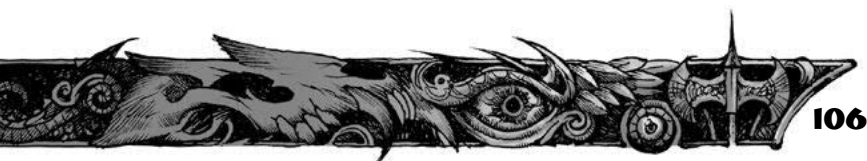
It's not possible to read peoples' thoughts with the bracelets. They work more like a bullhorn (everyone wearing the bracelets and who is within range will "hear" the thrown voice). All bracelets forged in the same casting have the same engravings on them, making it possible to know which ones work together.

the existence of Kalukan, an entire troop of them strolling through the streets of Halakh could draw... undesirable attention, shall we say? I've therefore had some disguises made for you. Dawn is about to break, you must be on your way. This map will guide you to your destination, and a cart drawn by two boupmons is waiting for you in the courtyard of my residence. Right then...I don't imagine you have any questions?" he adds with an ironic smile. "So off you go, oh loyal servants of the Witch Queen!"

Our Heroes won't have much time to don their gear, and even less time to mull over their predicament. **The bracelets of long speech** (see text box) are uncommon alchemistic artefacts, but not unknown to the Kalukan. Rheumy (see the ready-made characters at the end of the adventure) may be able to show his young companions how the bracelets work. Rutgarr also wears a pair, so there could be a discussion with the Heroes if someone is bold enough to ask questions. But if any of the PCs should pester him, Rutgarr will remain evasive and quickly cut short the conversation, reminding the underling of its duty to Methyn Sarr.

A rudimentary map of the region lies on the table next to their weapons. Their destination is shown by an X marked in brown ink, with the word "Lighthouse" scrawled next to it. To help the Kalukan pass unnoticed, Rutgarr has had a large grey cloak prepared for each of them with a fake head made of cloth sewn into the hood. Their disguises will hardly stand up to close inspection, but should enable the Kalukan to pass themselves off as pilgrims or penitents.

When they leave the cave, the Heroes will see that the Grey Druid's lair is actually a posh mansion surrounded by a magnificent garden on the outskirts of Halakh. The Heroes place the chest in the back of the cart and cover it with a burlap cloth, and Rutgarr then accompanies them to the gate of his property. After a quick word of parting, he turns on his heel and ambles off to his rose garden, whistling a merry tune.



THE ASHES

The Heroes' voyage to their first destination will be without incident. The road will eventually turn into a lonely trail winding through the driftless sands. It's rare to run across anyone in these parts of the Beshaar Desert, which is infamous for its parched and barren landscapes. During their three-day journey to the Lighthouse, the Heroes may notice that, despite the cover they've placed over the chest, a cloud of flies are constantly buzzing around it. If they take a closer look at the chest, they'll notice a thick black ichor seeping through the bottom planks. The chest is sealed shut and it looks like it would be difficult to open without causing damage.

Note to GM: If you have to, gently remind the PCs that the Kalukan are known for their legendary sense of duty, and wouldn't attempt to open the chest.

The Encounter

Early on the third day of their odyssey, a scruffy little girl wearing a filthy, mud-coloured robe stumbles onto the trail and staggers towards the Heroes in a panic, flailing blindly about with her outstretched arms. She tends an ear towards the approaching cart, guiding her movements based on the sound of its squeaky wheels. When she's just a few feet away from the travellers, she collapses on the ground and calls out for help. A pack of hyenas springs out from behind some rocks, baring their teeth as they move in for the kill...

Once the scavengers have been repelled, little **Lana** tells them in a stuttering voice, as she clutches at one of the Heroes' sleeves, that she's run away from the Lighthouse. Life's miserable there, she hiccups. She's forced to slave away for the community night and day, and worst of all, she doesn't want to go back to the Lighthouse ever again or she'll end up blind like all the others. They then notice that the little girl has a faraway look in her eyes, as if she can only vaguely make out shapes by squinting closely.

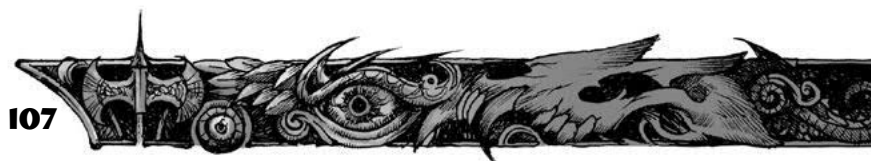
Note to GM: If the PCs haven't thought of it yet, this would be the perfect occasion to make them realise

that they have to give a pair of their bracelets to someone if they want to have a conversation (don't forget that the Kalukan who offers up his bracelets won't be able to talk).

The Lighthouse

The story behind the Lighthouse is closely linked to the Grey Hourglass, as it is essential for the creation of the magic artefact. The Lighthouse fire is the only way to create the ashes used in the hourglass. The cult of the Dark Fire managed to locate the vestiges of the ancient Lighthouse and to rebuild the compound based on its original layout, following the instructions given in the *Treatise on Time*. Its upkeep has been entrusted to a small community of female devotees of Nemmereth. Over the years, they've been kidnapping young girls from tribes of Beshaari nomads and initiating them in the rites of the cult at an early age. The guardians of the Lighthouse carry on the antique traditions without really understanding their significance: once a week, they cremate a body (usually an animal, but also human bodies when given the opportunity) and spread its ashes to the four winds as they await the day of the "Great Cremation," when they will create ashes for the Grey Hourglass. According to their customs, it is the eldest member who leads the group and who is the keeper of the precious key that will be used to unlock the chest on the appointed day. A notable feature of the guardians of the Lighthouse is that their eyes have been burned by the sun. During the cremation ceremony, they place the body and pieces of kindling in a basket that is hoisted up to the top of the Lighthouse. A set of mirrors inside reflect the light when the sun is at its zenith, focussing all the rays on the basket. Once the fire has consumed the body, the ashes are collected and scattered in the desert. Over the years, the guardians have gone blind performing the ritual, and now have an enigmatic look in their strange, bleached-blue eyes.

The Lighthouse is surrounded by high, reddish-brown rock formations, eroded by countless sand storms. The compound, which looks as if it's been rebuilt on old ruins, includes three domed



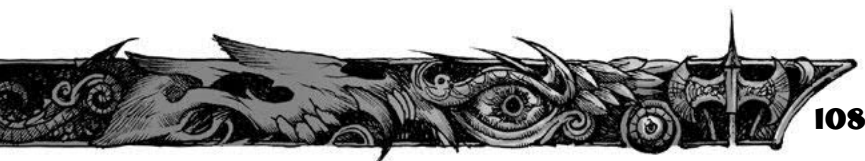


buildings around a central tower (the Lighthouse). The first building is used for storage (mainly for staple provisions and piles of wood). Three sand runners are tied up behind this building. The second building contains one large room beneath its domed roof. This is where they take their meals. An oven at the back of the room is used to cook and to make the flatbread that the guardians eat with a sort of honeyed sap they gather from shrubs common to the region. The third domed building, which is larger than the other two, contains about fifteen beds. The guardians of the Lighthouse spend their days hunting, tending their encampment, performing evening prayers to Nemmereth, and conducting their ritual cremation once a week.

The main building is a large tower that tapers slightly at the top. Stairs wind around the outside of the tower up to a rooftop terrace covered by a tightly-stretched canvas. The mud-brick colour only adds to the austere nature of the edifice. A wood door at the base of the tower leads to a small antechamber opening onto an enormous, circular room that occupies the entire edifice. The walls are completely covered with rectangular mirrors that have been positioned at precise angles, and which can be adjusted using a complex system of gears and racks. Pulleys in the centre of the room can be used to hoist a small metal platform to the top of the tower. A few rays of sunlight filter through a

canvas stretched across the top of the Lighthouse and reflect off the mirrors. It's very hot inside. After raising the body to the top of the tower, the canvas is removed (by guardians who climb up the stairs on the facade), and the tower quickly becomes an inferno. The guardians then hurry out of the main room to seek refuge in the antechamber until the cremation ceremony is over. The ashes are usually recovered once three days have passed.

Once the Heroes have given the chest to the guardians, they'll have some time on their hands as they wait inside the compound. If they let one of the guardians use a pair of bracelets for a while, they'll be able to learn a few things. The members of the sect perform a ceremony that has existed, it is said, since time immemorial, maintaining the Lighthouse as they await the day of the Great Cremation. On that day, a body will be entrusted to them from an eminent member of the Cult of Nemmereth, with very special instructions. They already performed a Great Cremation, about ten years back, after receiving orders from Rutgarr. He visits them at the Lighthouse at least once a year to make sure that they still adhere to the strict rules of the ritual. Whose body are they waiting for to deliver to the sun's fire, and what's the purpose of the ashes produced during the Great Cremation? The guardians have no idea; they only exist to serve the will of Nemmereth.



At the end of the third day, the mother superior of the Lighthouse, **Shan**, gives the Kalukan a copper urn engraved with runes. The cover has been sealed tight. If the PCs don't ask any questions, she'll tell them anyway that the urn is the proof that they have accomplished their mission, and they must bring it back to Rutgarr. Then she asks the Heroes (if she hasn't already done so) for the small leather pouch filled with earth, and leads them away from the compound to the large rock formations surrounding the encampment. The PCs will follow her as she slips through a narrow passage between the large boulders. They arrive at the entrance to a cave. She'll enter the dark tunnel alone, asking the Heroes to wait a few minutes.

As she was instructed by Rutgarr, she pours out the soil in the pouch (which is from Rutgarr's cellar) onto the ground, forming a cabalistic symbol. Rutgarr has placed a spell on the soil, and when it's arranged in a certain pattern, it will magically transport the Kalukan back to the cellar under his house, allowing them to make the return trip in the blink of an eye (because they're running out of time; the eclipse is now imminent).

Shan reappears at the entrance to the cave and invites the Heroes in. When they walk over the pentacle that she's traced on the ground with the soil, they're magically transported back to the alcove in Rutgarr's cellar, without even realising it. They'll simply feel as if they've been walking through a pitch dark room for about fifty feet, and then suddenly find themselves back in Rutgarr's lair. He'll of course be waiting for them with a large smile on his face, and will quickly order them to give him the urn with the ashes.

Their first mission has been successfully completed, but something seems not quite right. The Heroes are overcome with a sick, nauseous feeling, and are a bit woozy. During the teleportation, their bodies and minds have become intermingled—it's a sinister side effect of the powerful sorcery. The Heroes are all bewildered, filled with the fleeting sensation that their personalities have split in two, as if they were leaving behind their original identity to adopt a new one...

Note to GM: In terms of how this will affect the adventure, the Heroes have now changed characters. The players must pass their character sheet to the person to their left and become a different Kalukan. Everyone should be utterly confused at this point!

As for Rutgarr, he won't notice any of the commotion. What the hell does he care? The Kalukan are nothing but slaves, instruments of his will. This is no time for hand-wringing; it's time to go find the Grey Hourglass! The solar eclipse will be here soon!



THE HOURGLASS

Rutgarr will explain to the Heroes that they now must travel to the foothills of the Besharoon Mountains with the second chest, which is similar to the first. They'll be meeting with a man named **Parsi**, who lives in a small village of shepherd folk at the foot of the plateau of Lhend. He'll provide them with the information they need to continue their mission. His orders remain the same: it's forbidden to open the chest; they must always keep "an eye" on it (sic); and they must be as inconspicuous as possible (time to put their disguises back on). He tells them that Parsi's hut will be easy to find as it stands above the village and has a pole decorated with pennants next to it.

Along with the chest, Rutgarr also gives them a scroll that they must hand over to Parsi. If any curious PCs should unroll the scroll (when Rutgarr's not looking, if they're smart), they'll see that it's a map of the heavens, with easily recognisable symbols (*mind* Task Roll) of the Moon, the Sun and the Earth. The cart has been readied and they'll be leaving the next day at the crack of dawn.

The Climb

The climb up the rock-strewn path to the plateaus of Besharoon is a real slog. Each day, the imposing outline of the plateaus looms larger on the horizon. They'll hear thumping and muffled cries from inside the chest throughout the journey, as if someone (or something) inside was pounding on the lid.

The Kalukan reach the village after a five-day hike. They quickly notice an old drystone farm half in ruins above the village, a few hundred yards up the slope leading to the plateau. A flock of goats grazes peacefully on the rocky hills, and next to the farm is a post decorated with pennants in faded colours that flap in the wind (offerings to Karyzon the Wind Lord, son of Nemmereth).

An old man at the farm contemplates the Heroes as they slowly make the climb to his dwelling. He's lost one of his legs above the knee, and leans on the long staff he uses as a crutch. As they approach,

they'll see that his face has been disfigured by a horrific scar. This is Parsi, and he invites them in. He lives in a single room, sparsely furnished with a wood table and two stools. There's also a pile of hay he probably calls his bed. A fireplace in one corner heats a pot in which a mealy-looking gruel is bubbling. The only things of note are a stack of astronomy books on the floor and a fine-looking telescope off in one corner.

Parsi is on his guard at first. He sizes up the band of Kalukan, with their strange accoutrements, before quickly realizing who they are and why they've been sent. His face breaks into a wide grin (after looking at the Heroes, Parsi has now understood the meaning of the riddle in the cabalistic grimoire, "neither man nor woman").

If the PCs still haven't realised that they can talk to Parsi with the bracelets, he'll start the conversation on his own, after having asked them a few questions. The Kalukan will confirm that they've been sent by Rutgarr. Parsi will be much more expansive than the mysterious druid, and will provide the PCs with the following information:

 The Kalukan have to carry the chest into the "Pit," which is actually the former underground fortress of the Sorcerer-Kings. It's said that in ancient times, a group of learned sorcerers had congregated in the fortress to work on a singular problem: how to conquer time. Parsi doesn't know much about their work. It's all explained in a book called *Treatise on Time*, but he's never seen the work, to his great regret.

 Through their research, the Sorcerer-Kings were able to create a magical artefact with terrifying powers, which is kept in the Pit under close watch by two magical guardians. The Cult of the Dark Fire, a branch of the druids who worship Nemmereth, has been searching for the magical object ever since the *Treatise on Time* was discovered, some twenty years earlier. They've never given up hope over those long years, as time is only a web of illusions spun by Death. This mysterious object, the purpose of which is unknown to him, is called the Grey Hourglass.



🐉 Parsi is also a follower of Nemmereth. He is a renowned astronomer who was sent on a mission to the Pit, about ten years ago, with a chest very similar to the one the Kalukan have brought. The Grey Druids had learned from the grimoire that the guardians of the Pit only permitted access during an eclipse, and he had patiently awaited the right moment (a lunar eclipse) to attempt an expedition. Despite these precautions, the mission ended in disaster: the guardian awoke (“the beautiful woman made of blue stone awoke without warning and smote us mightily, sending many brave souls to the long sleep”) and massacred the intruders. Parsi was the only survivor and, to this day, he bears the scars of this fateful attempt.

🐉 Parsi was asked by the druids to remain near the Pit, awaiting the next attempt to enter. He has been able to continue his astronomical studies, and prefers living alone to work in peace. He knows that another eclipse, a solar eclipse this time, will be occurring very soon. This is why the Kalukan have been sent to him. He also tells them that he’s familiar with one of the riddles found in the *Treatise on Time*, which says that those who may enter the Pit must be neither a man nor a woman. This point had been overlooked by the cult in the past, but Parsi now understands that Rutgarr has found the solution: he can use the Kalukan to enter the sanctuary because they’re sexless! Everything should go as planned this time!

🐉 The parchment that Rutgarr has sent with the Heroes contains astronomical calculations that confirm Parsi’s own computations, with some added details. After perusing the document, Parsi tells them that a solar eclipse will be occurring the day after tomorrow, at around noon! It’s unheard of for two eclipses to occur over such a short time span, so they have to profit from the occasion. However, the eclipse will only last about fifteen minutes. They’ll have to act quickly once they enter the sanctuary, to avoid the wrath of the guardians!

🐉 With his missing leg, Parsi won’t be able to accompany them. But he can tell them how to get to the Pit. They’ll have to walk—the path is too steep for their cart. He’ll keep it safe for them until



they return. It should take about a day to make the hike. They’ll have to leave early the next morning to make sure they reach the Pit on time. Parsi can’t tell them what’s inside the Pit, as he’s never entered himself. All he knows is that they have to get inside with the chest. What will happen next? He has no idea. The best he can do is wish them luck. As for the rest, Nemmereth will surely guide their steps.

The Pit

The entrance to the Pit is a day’s march from Parsi’s farm. The Heroes will first have to climb a steep slope leading to the plateau at the foot of the Besharoon Mountains. Vegetation is very sparse, and only a few scattered boulders break up the monotony of the lunar landscape. Thick clouds of reddish dust swirl about, driven by cutting winds. After a successful *mind* Task Roll, a Hero with the appropriate career (a *hunter* for example) will soon realise that they’re not alone: a band of around a **dozen Grooth** exiled from the Qo jungle have moved to the plateau, and are following the Kalukan from a safe distance (they haven’t found much to eat the past few days). Once the Grooth have been discovered, their presence will become



increasingly oppressive for our Heroes. If the PCs try to confront them, the Grooth will run away. But the beast men won't hesitate to launch an attack at some point—most likely on the return trip from the Pit—if the Heroes' are in a weakened state. Or maybe in the dead of night, when the Heroes let down their guard?

The Pit can't be seen from the edge of the plateau. The Heroes will have to walk a few more hours before they come across a deep chasm in the rocky hills. It's a large hole nearly a hundred feet in diameter, dug out of the ground in a slightly conical shape (the bottom of the hole is slightly smaller than the top; an attentive PC may notice a certain mirror-like symmetry between the Pit and the Lighthouse they recently visited). A spiral staircase winds down the steep face of the wall into the dark hole. The steps are made of small wooden logs, which are in pitiful shape due to the harsh climate. There's also no guardrail, which means that walking down the steps will be an adventure in itself. As they gingerly make the descent, a throng of bats will burst out when the PCs are about thirty feet from the bottom of the stairs. They'll have to make a successful roll to keep their balance (*agility* Task Roll plus any appropriate career, with a -2 modifier for whoever's carrying the chest), or they'll suffer damage: from d6L to d6H ignoring armour, depending on the height they fall from. If the chest falls, the Heroes will be surprised to discover that it's miraculously intact...and they'll hear furious thumping noises inside the chest for a few moments, before all grows calm again.

During the day, the sun will illuminate most of the Pit floor, revealing two enormous statues. Both are nearly ten-feet tall, positioned one on each side of a large bronze door. The first statue is made of light blue stone. It's a woman, naked down to the waist and garbed only in a long loin-cloth. She wields two scimitars and appears to be performing an elegant dance step. She has a calm and determined look on her finely chiselled face. A crescent moon on her forehead holds back her long hair. The second statue is made of a dark red stone, and is just as impressive. It's a warrior with a regal bearing, accentuated by his beard and turban. He appears to be looking defiantly at anyone who dares approach the door.

Bones from human skeletons are scattered about in the dust at the statues' feet. This must be all that remains of Parsi's unfortunate companions.

In the centre of the Pit sits a large brazier, long since abandoned.

Note to GM: The two statues are the guardians of the Pit, and take turns keeping watch over the door. The warrior guards the entrance during the day, and the dancer takes over at night. Depending on the time of day, anyone who touches the door will awaken one of the statues and be immediately attacked. To protect their precious artefact, the Sorcerer-Kings installed the two guardians to make sure no one could enter except during a lunar or a solar eclipse.

The Eclipse

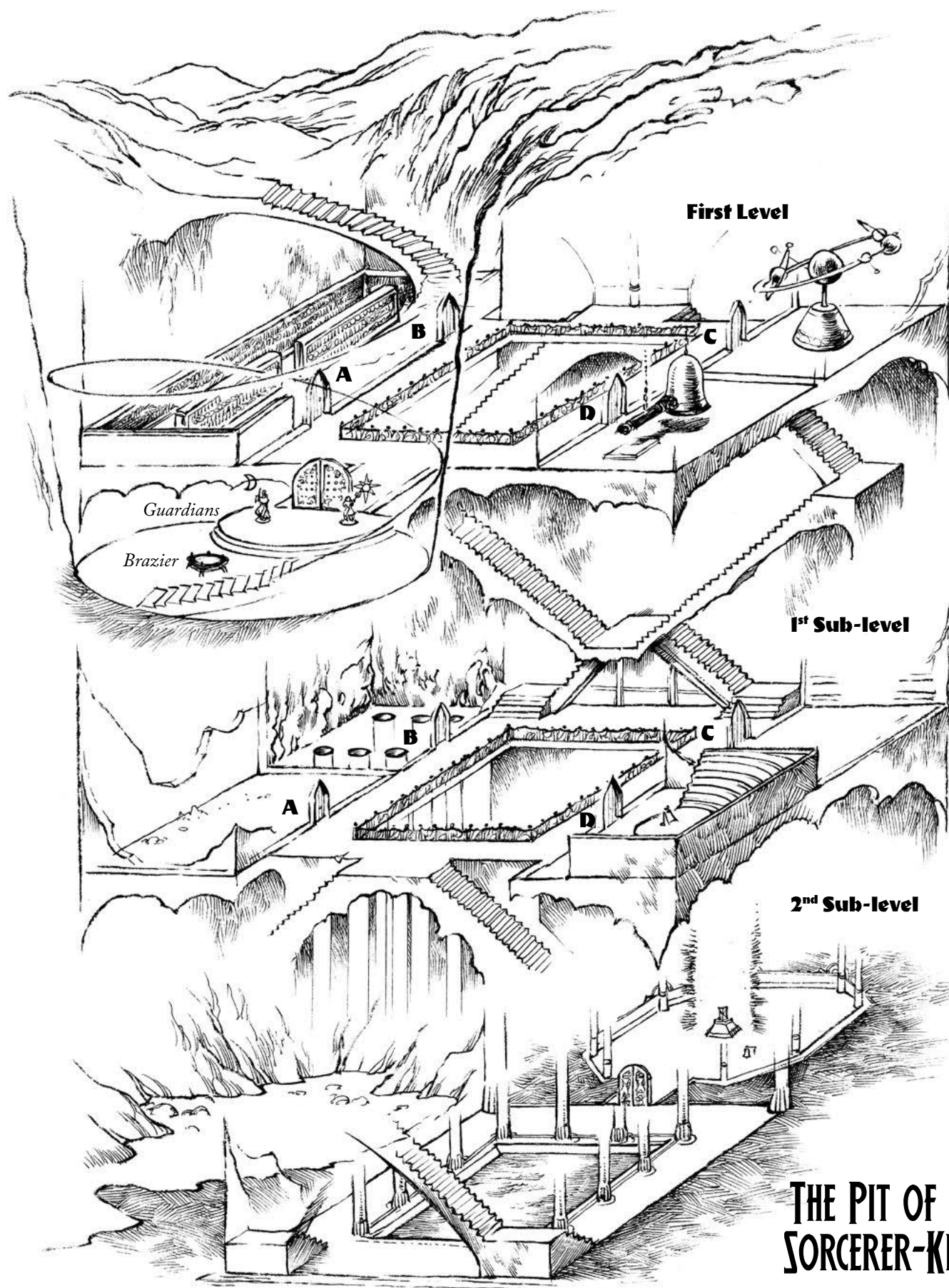
Parsi's calculations were correct; right around noon, the sunlight will grow dim and a shadow will spread over the earth. The heavy double doors can now be pushed open, and the two stone guardians will remain frozen on their pedestals.

First Level

The doors open onto a vast square hall, at least forty yards long on each side. The whole room is actually a long balcony with a gaping pit in the middle. It's very dark, with only a bit of spectral light filtering in through the bronze doors. The otherworldly dimension is accentuated by the smooth black walls and the ominous silence. When they approach the parapet, the PCs will see that there are two other floors down below, both built around the same central pit. Down at the very bottom they'll be able to make out a basin filled with perfectly still black water. There are two doors on each side of the balcony on this first level, off to the right and left.

FL-A: This is the door to a library where the Sorcerer-Kings, in their unquenchable thirst for knowledge, stored all their erudite works. The walls, which are made of large irregular blocks of stone, are lined with stone shelves almost fifteen feet high that are crammed with books. Two long bookcases separated by a passage in the middle run the entire length of the room (which has a second





entrance, at B). If the Heroes dillydally in this fount of knowledge, they'll be attacked by a **necropede** hiding in the shadows on the ceiling.

FL-B: This is the second entrance to the library.

FL-C: This is the room where the Sorcerer-Kings studied the movements of the stars and planets. The ceiling is covered with engravings showing the orbits of the celestial bodies, represented by huge diamonds! A large planetarium made of semiprecious stones sits in the middle of the room.

FL-D: This room contains a humongous bronze bell. A knocker made of jallallabar wood hanging from the ceiling on two chains is still operational. In the days of the Sorcerer-Kings, the bell must have been used to mark the passing hours for the reclusive scholars.

On the north side of the balcony, two stairwells lead down to the lower level.

Sub-level 1

This level is basically the same as the previous one, with a balcony around the central pit and two doors on each side. It also has two stairwells leading down to the next level.

I-A: This is a vast, empty chamber. From the ceiling hang massive chandeliers covered with cobwebs. It may have been a common room in former times.

I-B: This room is much different from the others. The walls are not as smooth, and the living rock shows through in certain places. Six large holes (three on each side of the room), each about three feet in diameter, have been dug out of the rock floor, and are in fact vertical conduits about thirty feet deep. Any intrepid Hero who decides to climb down a shaft to investigate will find a large cave, about 100 feet long on each side, filled with a layer of debris several feet thick: broken pieces of wooden structures, bones whitened with age, and bits and pieces of rusty metal. A necropede lives here. Anyone who hangs around too long may attract its attention...

I-C: In this room, recesses have been dug out of the walls at regular intervals. They may have been used for shelving or for bunk beds. An old dormitory? Perhaps a storeroom? Impossible to say, as time has effaced all traces of the past.

I-D: The door opens onto a small, semicircular amphitheatre carved in stone, with tiered seating for about thirty people. An elegant lectern carved from basalt stands at the bottom. The room was probably used by the Sorcerer-Kings to discuss their blasphemous research to master the mysteries of time.

Sub-level 2

Two sets of stairs lead to the lowest level of the pit. Rows of columns surround a central basin, forming a sort of cloister. The dark green water, which has a weird viscosity, is only about a foot deep. Double doors in the north wall lead to the Hourglass Chamber.

The chamber has an octagon shape, and in the centre on a pedestal sits the Grey Hourglass, illuminated by a column of white light which appears to be coming up from the floor and also descending from the ceiling. On the right side of the room, a small silver bell covered with dust sits on a stand sculpted in black marble.

Any attempt to immediately seize the hourglass will end in failure. The column of light will burn the person's flesh (automatically causing d6L damage, ignoring armour), and any object placed in the light will be burnt to a crisp. If any of the Heroes try to withstand the burning and grab the hourglass, their *lifeblood* will be reduced to 0; simply put, it's impossible for the Kalukan to immediately grab hold of the object.

The solution can be found in the chest: only the demon guardian can recover the Grey Hourglass without being fried by the column of light. What's more, the bumping and thumping inside the chest will become frenzied as soon as the Heroes enter the chamber.

There's very little time, and the PCs will have to quickly find the solution to the enigma. All they





have to do is ring the bell, which then “summons” the demon to fulfil its duty; the demon will grow more and more agitated inside the chest, impatiently waiting for someone to ring the bell so it can be released from its prison.

When someone finally rings the bell, the sound of a melodious glass chime will fill the room, mysteriously modulating its tone as it reverberates off the walls. The lock on the chest will then make a clicking sound and the cover will fly open. A squat little demon with bulging eyes and scaly bright-orange skin will burst out of the chest, whisk the Grey Hourglass off its pedestal and dash back into the chest, hugging the artefact to its chest as if it were a baby. He’ll give the Heroes a smug look and then let out an ear-splitting cackle as he quickly closes the lid back over his head. The sound of a key turning in the lock can then be heard.

It’s time to get going. The light from outside is getting brighter and brighter, and the Heroes have to escape the Pit before the eclipse ends. To add

to their fun, they’ll soon run across an unexpected visitor: a necropede has been shadowing them all along, licking its chops in expectation of its upcoming dinner. The macabre millipede will cross their paths when the Heroes reach the top floor.

Note to GM: The idea at this point is not to kill off the Heroes in the Pit, but to ratchet up the tension. Goad them on as they make their final mad dash to escape—hurry hurry! or the stone guardians will awake and block the exit!

Once they’ve hacked to bits the horrible beast, the Heroes can escape from the pit and return to the high plains of Lhend, where the hot sun and biting winds await them. They’ll then head directly back to Halakh.

They’ll find the Grey Druid placidly pruning his roses. When he sees them arrive with the precious chest, he’ll beam with joy and immediately head off to the cellar, beckoning them to follow. He’ll then inform them of their third and final mission.



THE PACT OF MALAKUT

The purpose of this third and final mission is simple enough: carry a chest filled with gold and precious gems to handsomely pay Ram Verda for having provided Rutgarr with the inimitable Kalukan—and also for getting rid of them, as they're the only witnesses to the whole sordid affair.

Rutgarr now gives the Heroes the final chest, and tells them to take it to Malakut and deliver it to a certain Ram Verda, a wealthy merchant who's made his fortune in the antique trade. Once they've completed this final mission, he says, he promises that they'll be taken back to the Witch Queen's fortress. He'll be sure to inform her what wonderful and faithful servants she has. After telling the Heroes these bald-faced lies, he gives them a dagger that they also must give to the merchant, as well as one half of an ancient coin that's been cut in two. They'll use the coin to establish contact with a guide, who'll lead them to Ram Verda. They've agreed to meet at the bridge over the Malak River that leads into the city on the western bank. How will they recognise their contact? "Birds of a feather flock together," quips Rutgarr, who's in quite a jaunty mood. He once again tells them that it's forbidden to open the chest (the clinking sound of the coins will certainly pique their curiosity), and that discretion is a must (time to pull out their disguises again!).

Rendezvous in The Garden of Martyrs

The journey from Halakh to Malakut is long and tiring. The Heroes will travel up the banks of the Malak River for nearly two weeks. You can always break up the monotony by having a band of highwaymen attack the Kalukan if your PCs are restless for some action.

At long last, the road will end at a large fortified bridge across the Malak River that leads to the sprawling city of Malakut on the far side. A few shacks are huddled beside the road near the bridge, where groups of porters wait in the dust, offering

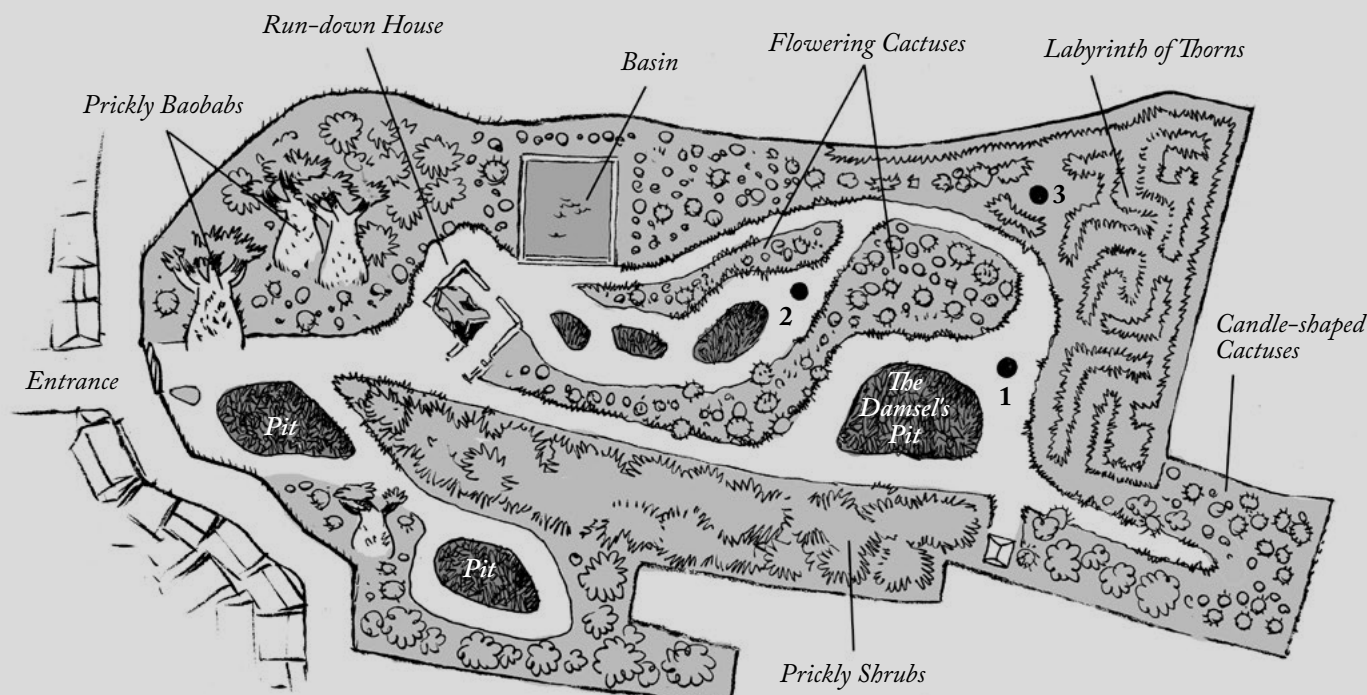
their services to the passing caravans of merchants. Amid the hustle and bustle, the PCs will quickly locate their contact: an old, one-eyed (of course!) beggar sitting off to one side near the front of the bridge. The Heroes will see the second half of the ancient coin in his begging bowl, and will naturally conclude that they should throw in theirs. As soon as he sees the coin, he makes a sign to the Heroes, indicating that they should wait behind a group of huts, then climbs to his feet and walks across the bridge into the city.

After they wait for about an hour, a ferret-faced young boy arrives. He's barefoot and covered in dirt, and has the sly look of a cutpurse about him. He says his name is **Faldir**, and officiously proclaims that master Ram Verda extends his warmest welcome to them. He doesn't look the least bit surprised to act as the guide for a bunch of Kalukan, and was most likely tipped off in advance. He then explains that their final rendezvous will take place in the evening, at nightfall, in the Garden of Martyrs next to the statue of **Plutt**. Like any guide worthy of the name, he'll be happy to tell them the story behind the strange park dedicated to fallen heroes (see the text box, "The Garden of Martyrs"). He won't have much to say about Ram Verda however, only saying that he's a rich merchant who is most generous with his servants (don't forget that they'll have to give him a pair of bracelets if they want to talk to the boy).

When they enter the park that night, they'll see a young woman leaning against an enormous white baobab tree. A lamp filled with red oil sits next to her, revealing her suggestive clothing, and her shameless propositions will leave little doubt about why she's in the park at this late hour (she's actually one of Ram Verda's agents on the lookout for the Heroes. She'll give the signal with her lamp to let her conspirators know that their prey have arrived). The courtesan will be amused by the lack of response from the adventurers, and mistake their silence for bashfulness (she doesn't know they're Kalukan).

Faldir will quickly bring the PCs to the back of the park, where they'll see the outlines of the Labyrinth of Thorns looming in the shadows. The



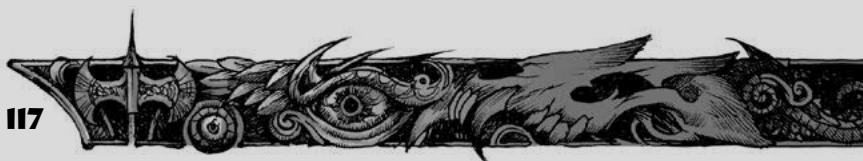


The Garden of Martyrs

The Garden of Martyrs, located on the outskirts of Malakut, is a botanical curiosity that was created by Plutt, a learned Malakuti from the times of King Lian Klodis. Plutt devoted his life to the study of rare and exotic plants, and travelled far and wide in Lemuria to collect specimens for his extraordinary cactus garden. Historians say that the monarch showed little interest in the extravagant garden, but by all accounts, he was quite fond of the many open pits found in the park: he had traitors and snitches thrown into them to be impaled on the sharp-needed cactuses that line the bottoms. These grisly practices are now a thing of the past, and the neglected garden has fallen into ill-repute (there's a lot of other gardens and parks in Malakut that are much more enjoyable). It's become a favourite spot for all types of clandestine meetings.

The large, rectangular park covers several acres. It's surrounded by a rusty old fence and a green wall of prickly hedges. There are many small alleyways inside the Garden of Martyrs, and the six pits that have made the park famous can be found in various locations. Each pit is about ten to fifteen feet wide (except for the largest one in the central square, the "damsel's pit," which is about twenty feet wide). They're about ten feet deep, and the bottom of each one is covered with pale yellow cactuses that have long, curved spines known for their extremely painful sting (d6L damage for each round spent in the pit). Along with the infamous pits, the park also contains the following:

- 🦂 A small run-down house where the gardener used to live. It's now used for secret trysts.
- 🦂 An ornamental pond filled with stagnant water, home to all sorts of frogs and small, inoffensive water snakes.
- 🦂 Large clumps of magnificent cactuses with fantastic flowers, others shaped like enormous candles arranged in astonishing columns, succulent plants with strange, globular forms, and many other prickly and stinging curiosities.
- 🦂 A labyrinth with walls made of prickly hedges some ten feet high, about fifty yards long on each side. The meeting place with Ram Verda is in this part of the park, which is called the "Labyrinth of Thorns."
- 🦂 Three white marble statues, representing the former king Lian Klodis (1) on the large esplanade; Argos (2), the first martyr, depicted covered in spines and howling in agony (a very impressive, and chilling, work of art); and lastly, the statue of Plutt (3), who created the botanical garden. This statue is hidden in the heart of the "Labyrinth of Thorns."



boy will then guide them to the statue of Plutt, which is about twenty yards as the crow flies from the entrance to the maze. The little imp will take a mischievous delight in leading them through every twist and turn to make sure they lose their bearings. When they finally arrive at the statue, they'll see three heavily armed guards standing around a portly man about fifty years old, with a ruddy complexion. Three other henchmen are hiding nearby, waiting to pounce on the Heroes. Verda's toothy grin and flashy attire leave no doubt that he's acquired his ill-gotten fortune through shady deals and underhanded schemes. When the Heroes arrive, he'll ask them in a sugary tone to hand over the chest. Once he has the chest and the dagger in his possession, his manners will quickly change. "Do you know why your 'master' asked you to give me this magnificent dagger?" he asks tersely. "No? Why, to kill you with, of course!" He'll then beckon to his henchmen to finish them off. The time has now come to fulfil his part of the deal! As soon as the fighting begins, Faldir will slip away into the night without asking any questions.

Note to GM: The men from the thieves' guild are seasoned killers who are loyal to their boss. They won't be easily intimidated (and Ram Verda will have warned them about the particular nature of their "customers" for the evening). At the same time, they're not over-zealous fanatics either, and if the Kalukan clearly have the upper hand, they won't hesitate to make a break for it (at the GM's discretion).

If the Heroes manage to capture Ram Verda alive (like his men, he'll try to save his own skin, and will eventually surrender if he's backed into a corner), he'll attempt a plea bargain; if the PCs spare his life, he'll tell them everything they want to know. He'll explain that Rutgarr paid his guild a small fortune to kidnap a few of the Kalukan Sentinels serving the Witch Queen. Ram Verda was in charge of the operation. The chest that they've brought contains the remainder of his fee, and he was instructed to eliminate the sentinels without leaving a trace. Nothing personal, you understand...it was just a business deal!

Ram Verda doesn't know anything else about Rutgarr's plot. But he will tell them that the druid is a member of the Cult of the Dark Fire, a sect of Grey Druids in Halakh who worship Nemmereth, and who are known to be the sworn enemies of the servants of Zaggath, the Lord of Fire (who is none other than the patron god of their queen, Methyn Sarr!).

Whether they're able to make Ram Verda spill the beans or not, the PCs will still find themselves abandoned in Malakut, now fully aware that Rutgarr has double-crossed them and is undoubtedly plotting against their most revered queen...and what magical powers did he hope to obtain with that strange hourglass that they'd fetched for him?

At this point in the adventure, the PCs should naturally decide to return to Halakh as quickly as possible to give Rutgarr his comeuppance. They may entertain thoughts of heading directly back to the Witch Queen's castle to warn her of the danger, as any faithful and obeying servant would do, so you should subtly remind them that it would take nearly two months to reach her fortress, giving Rutgarr ample time to carry out his sinister plan. Plus, they should keep in mind that Methyn Sarr is a cruel and heartless mistress: it might be a better idea to return home once they've cleaned up their mess so that they can at least hope for some leniency from her. And lastly, Rutgarr now believes they're dead; he has no reason to be on his guard or to quickly put his plan into motion. They'll be able to use the element of surprise to their advantage.

Rutgarr's Villa

When Rutgarr said adieu to the Kalukan, he was firmly convinced that Ram Verda was more than capable of getting rid of them. He now thinks this part of his plan is over, and is already busying himself with the final preparations for his upcoming mission: announce the good news to his fellow brethren from the Cult of the Dark Fire so that a secret gathering can be convened, where they'll give him their blessings and send him off under favourable augurs; recruit the Halakhi assassins who'll help him get into the Witch Queen's fortress (and get back out); and prepare the powerful rites that will give him



(and his accomplices) the appearance of Kalukan so that they can enter the fortress and get close to the queen. These preparations will take some time, but Rutgarr relishes these protracted preliminaries, filled with expectation as he excitedly awaits his moment of glory.

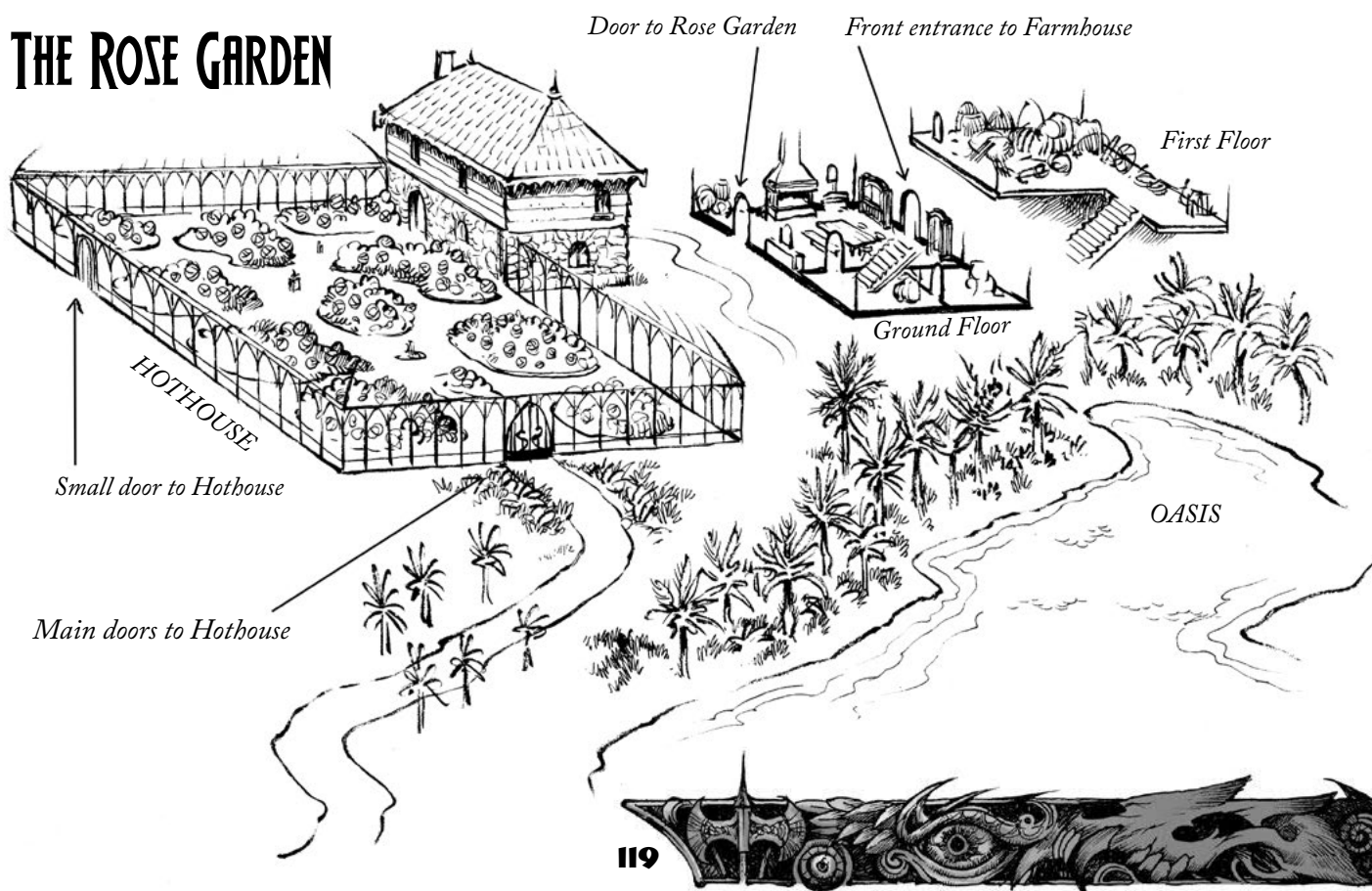
When they return to Halakh, the Heroes will find Rutgarr's villa abandoned except for **Assim**, the old gardener, who's been told to take care of the gardens during his master's absence (the other servants have all been dismissed). If the PCs decide to put voice-throwing bracelets on his wrist to make him talk, he'll tell them in a quavering voice that he doesn't know anything, except that Rutgarr left two days earlier for the Rose Garden, one of his properties a few leagues west of Halakh.

The PCs will finally have the opportunity to explore the Grey Druid's house. It only has two floors, in addition to the cellar that the Kalukan know so well. On the ground floor are the living quarters (a front hall, a spacious and richly furnished living room, and a well-stocked kitchen). A door in the front hall leads down to the cellar. Upstairs they'll find two bedrooms and a third room with a locked door. This is none other than Rutgarr's study.

The walls are lined with shelves and bookcases, and a finely-sculpted desk sits in the middle. If they carefully search the sorcerer's den, which contains letters, notes, and excerpts from the *Treatise on Time* copied out in Rutgarr's own hand, the PCs will be able to put together the final pieces of the puzzle. They'll discover that the Cult of the Dark Fire has been searching for the Grey Hourglass for a long time, and that they intend to use it to kill the Witch Queen, the most powerful figure of the Red Druids of Zaggath. It's taken many long years for Rutgarr to figure out how to enter the Pit to recover the hourglass, and he's carefully planned the entire operation, beginning with the kidnapping of the Kalukan by Ram Verda, who was also tasked with killing the sentinels once they'd completed their mission. They'll also find the bracelets of long speech worn by Rutgarr, and a half-empty vial containing a thick, greenish liquid (Sleep Inducer potion, see *BoL*, page 139).

Even if the PCs turn the place upside down, they'll find no trace of the Grey Hourglass, except for the chest they brought back from the Pit. It's sitting open in the cellar—empty now, of course. The Rose Garden outside of town may be their last hope...

THE ROSE GARDEN



The Rose Garden

The old gardener Assim told them the truth: the Rose Garden is only a few leagues west of Rutgarr's residence on the outskirts of Halakh, on the road leading to the Lighthouse. There aren't many houses in the district, just a smattering of barns and a few simple dwellings for the local farmers. The Rose Garden itself, a verdant green emerald in the parched yellow countryside, is easy to find. It's been built next to a small oasis. The Heroes will soon discover a large hothouse, about fifty yards long and thirty wide, filled with hundreds of flowering rosebushes. A small two-story building with a stone foundation and a second floor made of wood communicates directly with the hothouse.

It is here in his cherished retreat, away from the prying eyes of the city, that Rutgarr has decided to put the final touches on his spell before heading off to the Witch Queen's fortress. Four assassins have accompanied the magician to his refuge. They while away the hours doing target practice with their daggers, so it might be easy to catch them off guard. Isolated from the others, Rutgarr is in deep meditation: he's preparing a powerful Second Magnitude illusion spell to get past the guards at the entrance to the Witch Queen's fortress. He intends to cast an illusion that will give him and his henchmen the appearance of Kalukan. When the Heroes had first arrived at his residence at the beginning of the adventure, he'd actually taken a few hairs and fingernail clippings from them that were needed for his spellcasting. Five apprentices attend Rutgarr. They're helping him to cast the intricate spell and, unbeknownst to them, they're to be sacrificed at the end of the ritual (the rites require

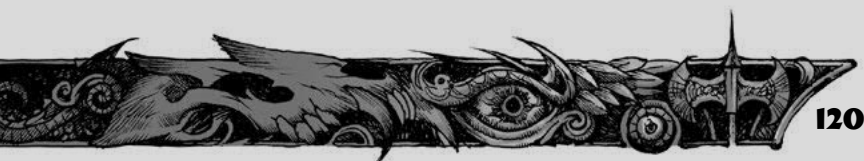
one victim for each person whose appearance is transformed by the illusion: Rutgarr plus the four assassins). Rutgarr has also been fasting for a full week now.

Depending on how the PCs plan their assault, the encounter may turn into a bloody game of hide-and-seek between the rows of rosebushes. The small farmhouse that abuts the rose garden has only one entrance, which opens directly into the living area. It's a single room with rustic furnishings. A large mezzanine overhead contains stacked hay bales and a few sacks of fertilizer. Across from the entrance on the ground floor is another door that leads directly into the hothouse (which also has another entrance outside). The apprentices and the assassins are in the living area, while Rutgarr is preparing his spell in the quieter confines of the mezzanine.

Note to GM: This time, the Heroes will be facing fanatics who are devoted to Rutgarr and ready to fight to the death for their cause. The battle should be fierce and bloody. Unless the situation becomes entirely hopeless, Rutgarr will not try to escape, as he knows full well the Kalukan will warn the Witch Queen, thereby ruining his plan, and that Methyn Sarr will then hound him to his death. He'll also hesitate to use the Grey Hourglass. It would be a shame to waste such a powerful artefact just to off a few Kalukan. Plus, he'd planned on waiting until the last moment before filling the hourglass with the precious ashes to avoid accidentally tipping it over. So it'll take him quite some time to open the urn, pour the ashes into the hourglass, screw in the plug, and turn it over to stop time. Let's assume that the Heroes won't give him the opportunity!

Kalukan versus Kalukan

An interesting option could be to have the PCs arrive just after Rutgarr has finished casting his spell to change appearances. The Heroes would then find themselves confronted by a group of Kalukan that are their mirror image! This turn of events could offer many amusing possibilities, plus the bodies of the five sacrificed apprentices could confuse the PCs and throw them off track. But it will be up to you to decide what's best.



What about the Demon Guardian of the Hourglass?

The imp has one task only. When summoned, he recovers the Grey Hourglass and takes it back to the Pit after it has been used. While he waits, he “hangs around,” invisible, never too far from the artefact. He may flash into view every so often when he gets the urge. When the PCs launch their attack on the rose garden, feel free to add in a few unexpected appearances by the bright orange demon, just to make the situation even more tense.

The PCs will probably wonder if they have to fight the little imp as well. If a Hero tries to attack the demon, it will simply disappear in a cloud of stinky orange smoke, and may then reappear a bit further off and bare its fangs with a snarl. It will take no part in the fighting, nor will it try to stop the Heroes from destroying the Grey Hourglass if they should wish to do so (on the contrary: if the hourglass is destroyed, it will break the magic spell that has bound it to the artefact).

Conclusion

Once they’ve gotten rid of the Grey Druid, the Heroes will finally be able to go home and rejoin the ranks of the Witch Queen. If they’ve got the Grey Hourglass with them (they may have destroyed it during the battle with Rutgarr, for example), Methyn Sarr will order them to give her the precious artefact, and may have them accompany her on an important mission. Once she has the Grey Hourglass in her possession, who knows what a powerful sorcerer like Methyn Sarr could accomplish? She’ll now have the power to dethrone a king, bring an entire city to its knees, or utterly destroy one of her fiercest enemies. Until she decides what to do, the Witch Queen will have to get used to a scaly little demon with bright orange skin, who’ll make its appearance every so often in the halls of her fortress, as it patiently awaits (what does time matter to a demon anyway?) until the Grey Hourglass is used, and it can once again whisk it back to the Pit, as it has done since time immemorial...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Hyenas of Besharr (toughs) x9

Creature Size: small.

Normally Found: Deserts.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Attack	+0
Agility	1	Damage	d6L
Mind	-1	Defence	1
Lifblood	5	Protection	0

Traits:

Hunting pack: The hyenas of Besharr aren’t *rabble*, but you can use horde rules when they attack (see *BoL*, page 157).

Leader of the Hyena Pack (tough)

Creature Size: medium.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	1	Attack	+2
Agility	2	Damage	d6
Mind	-1	Defence	1
Lifblood	10	Protection	0

Grooth (toughs) x10

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	2	Initiative	0
Agility	1	Melee	2
Mind	-1	Ranged	0
Appeal	0	Defence	0

Careers

Barbarian	1	Hunter	1
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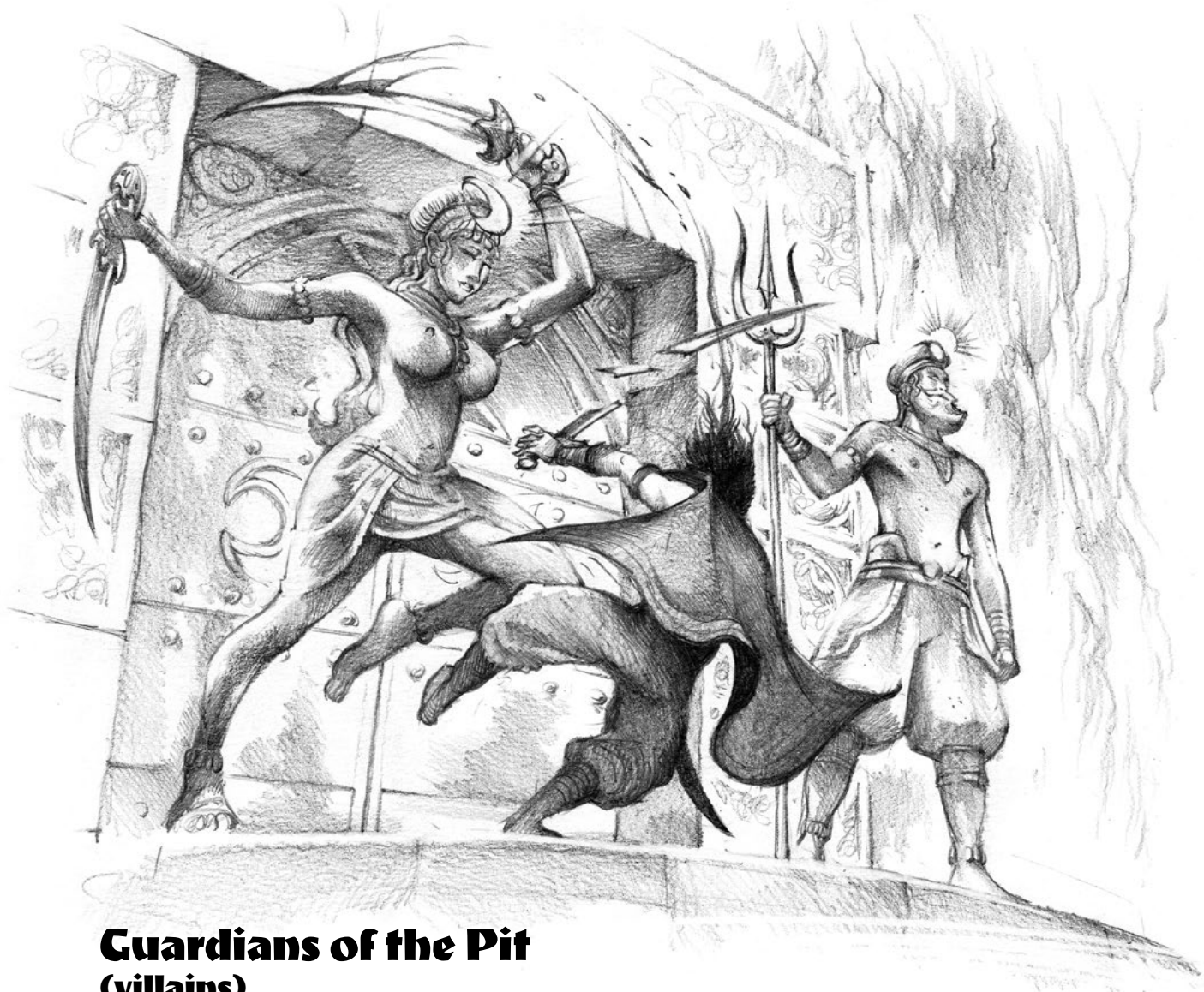
Protection: None

Weapons: Cudgel d6L+2

Points

Lifblood	8
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Guardians of the Pit (villains)

These ten-foot tall statues magically come to life and attack anyone who comes near the doors to the sanctuary: the red warrior guards the doors during the day, while the blue dancer guards them at night.

Note to GM: As soon as one of the guardians are animated, the doors to the sanctuary lock shut, meaning it's impossible to get in (there's no way anyone can sneak into the Pit while the other PCs try to "distract" the guardian).

Attributes

Strength	8
Agility	3
Mind	0
Lifeblood	40

Combat Abilities

Attack	+4*
Damage	d6x2*
Defence	2
Protection	d6 (4)*

* See the traits, below.

Traits:

Elite fighter: The Guardians of the Pit get a *bonus die* for Attack Rolls.

Alchemical body: The most powerful magic and alchemistic sorcery were used to create the Guardians of the Pit. Their stone bodies and weapons are therefore considered to be Legendary alchemist creations. The guardians roll a *bonus die* when rolling for damage, and ignore armour. Likewise, they roll a *bonus die* when rolling for protection, and halve the additional damage caused by Mighty and Legendary Successes.

Necropedes

(See *BoL*, page 129).



Ram Verda (villain)

With his ruddy complexion and protruding paunch, Ram Verda clearly likes his food and drink. He's around fifty, and has the inoffensive and affable appearance of a prosperous merchant. But behind this veil of respectability hides a dark truth: Ram Verda is one of the leaders of the guild of the Bloody Blades, and has built his fortune on blood and sweat: fencing, slave trafficking and hired assassinations are but a few of his occupations. He's greedy and not afraid to take risks. He'll accept any contract if it means filling his pockets: even battling the sentinels of the terrible Witch Queen!

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	2
Agility	2	Melee	1
Mind	2	Ranged	0
Appeal	1	Defence	1

Careers

Mercenary	0	Merchant	2
Thief	1	Assassin	0

Protection: Light armour d6-3 (1)

Weapons: Dagger d6L*

Points

Villain Points	5
Lifeblood	10

* The dagger that Rutgarr orders the Heroes to give to Ram Verda is of exceptional make (legendary weapon: add a *bonus die* when rolling for damage).

Boons

Friends in Low Places: Ram Verda is right at home in the seedy underworld of Malakut.

Trademark Weapon (dagger): Ram Verda gets a *bonus die* for Attack Rolls when he wields his dagger.

Detect Deception: Ram Verda certainly wasn't born yesterday. He receives a *bonus die* to sniff out any dirty tricks or phony-baloney.

Flaws

Arrogant: Ram Verda may at times be a bit too sure of himself...

Greed: Ram Verda would never pass up an occasion to line his coffers, even if it means taking great risks.



Ram Verda's Henchmen (toughs) x6

Verda's brown-skinned hirelings are lean and quick. They're evil-looking reprobates with leather doublets and, like all good ruffians, are armed to the teeth.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	0
Agility	2	Melee	2 (1)*
Mind	0	Ranged	0 (1)*
Appeal	0	Defence	1

Careers

Thief	2
-------	---

Protection: Light armour d6-3 (1)

Weapons: Dagger d6L, sword d6*

Points

Lifeblood	6
-----------	---

*Two of the henchmen in hiding are armed with crossbows (d6) and have the following combat abilities: *initiative* 0, *melee* 1, *ranged* 1, *defence* 1.

Rutgarr, Grey Druid of Halakh (villain)

Rutgarr is a member of the Grey Druids who worship Nemmereth. A long-time resident of the city of Halakh, he belongs to the Cult of the Dark Fire and has become a prominent member as a result of his religious fervour. A sorcerer of great



learning, he was given the task of locating the Grey Hourglass. For nearly twenty years, he has been tirelessly searching for the profane relic.

Rutgarr is around sixty, tall and lean. His face has been burned dark by the sun of Halakh, and still bears the scars of a past bout with the pox. He cuts an elegant figure, but behind his affable manner hides a demented fanatic capable of the worst infamy to achieve his goal.

Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	1
Agility	1	Melee	1
Mind	4	Ranged	0
Appeal	2	Defence	3
Careers			
Noble	0	Druid	3
Magician	1	Scribe	0
Protection: None			
Weapons: Dagger d6L			
Points			
Arcane Power	12		
Faith Points	3		
Villain Points	5		
Lifeblood	10		

Boons

Silver Tongue: Rutgarr can lie through his teeth. Add a *bonus die* whenever he tells lies or tries to hoodwink someone.

Learned: In his endless quest for the Grey Hourglass, Rutgarr has become very well-read and has learned a lot about the world.

Keen Scent: Rutgarr is also fanatical about his rosebushes and has developed an excellent sense of smell. Add a *bonus die* when he uses his olfactory powers to perceive something.

Flaws

Zealot: Rutgarr is a religious fanatic who will do absolutely anything to serve Nemmereth in his aspect as a Dark Lord.

Landlubber: Rutgarr knows nothing of seamanship and takes a *penalty die* for any activities at sea.

Obsession: The destruction of the Witch Queen is now the only thing that Rutgarr lives for.

Rutgarr's Acolytes (rabble) x5

These worshipers of the Dark Fire are Rutgarr's faithful servants who will blindly follow his orders and give their lives for him. They wear long grey robes and are armed with knives.

Careers	
Magician	1
Attack:	+0
Weapons:	Dagger d3
Points	
Arcane Power	1
Lifeblood	2

* Horde rules, cf. *BoL*, page 157.

Halakhi Assassins (toughs) x4

These killers are amongst the elite Halakhi assassins. They wear black leather armour, and each is armed with a pair of kir, their trademark dirks that they wield with deadly efficiency.

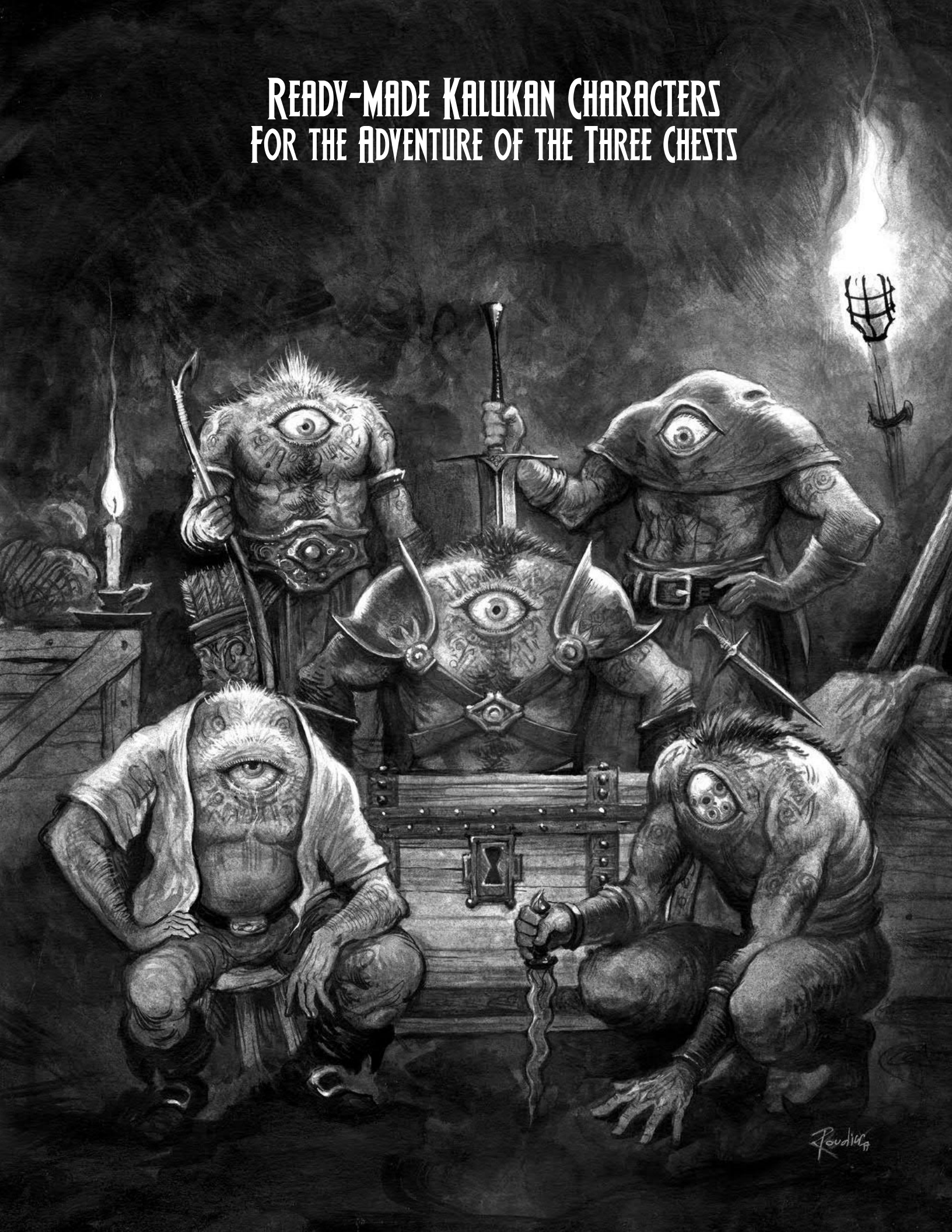
Attributes		Combat Abilities	
Strength	0	Initiative	1
Agility	2	Melee	1
Mind	0	Ranged	-1
Appeal	0	Defence	1
Careers			
Assassin	2		
Protection: Light armour d6-3 (1)			
Weapons: Pair of kir d6L			
Points			
Lifeblood	8		

Traits:

Master assassin: These elite assassins were born with a kir in their hand and get a *bonus die* when they use their trademark weapon.



READY-MADE KALUKAN CHARACTERS FOR THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE CHESTS



Roudier

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

NAME **DART**

HERO ORIGIN **FORTRESS OF THE WITCH QUEEN**

LANGUAGES **LEMURIAN, BESHAARI**

ADVANCE



ATTRIBUTES



STRENGTH



AGILITY



MIND



APPEAL

WEAPONS

DAMAGE

LONG BOW (D6+1)

AXE (D6+1)

()

()

1

INITIATIVE

0

MELEE

2

RANGED

1

DEFENCE

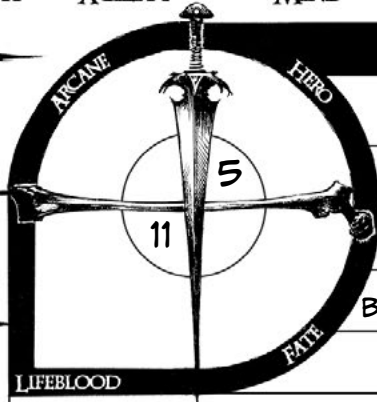
CAREERS

SLAVE 0

SOLDIER 1

HUNTER 2

BEASTMASTER 1



ARMOUR & EQUIPMENT

QUIVER WITH 25 ARROWS, INCLUDING 5 ARROWS

OF ZAGGARTH (SEE BELOW) 0 0 0 0 0

LIGHT ARMOUR D6-3 [1]

BOONS

DESERT BORN, MIGHTY SHOT

FLAWS

COUNTRY BUMPKIN, MUTE

BACKGROUND

DART HAS GAINED QUITE A REPUTATION AT THE COURT OF METHYN SARR FOR ITS PROWESS WITH A BOW AND ARROW. MANY TALES ABOUND ABOUT ITS EXPLOITS: IT'S SAID THAT DART CAN BRING DOWN A KYPHUS AT 200 PACES AND THAT ITS ARROWS ARE FLETCHED WITH MYTHUNGA FEATHERS.

IN ITS QUIVER, IT KEEPS FIVE "ARROWS OF ZAGGATH" WITH SERRATED TIPS SHAPED LIKE FLAMES (ALCHEMIST WEAPON, COMMON PREPARATION; ROLL AGAIN FOR A DAMAGE ROLL OF 1).

ADVENTURE NOTES

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

NAME SQUELCH

HERO ORIGIN FORTRESS OF THE WITCH QUEEN

LANGUAGES LEMURIAN

ADVANCE

ATTRIBUTES



STRENGTH



AGILITY



MIND



APPEAL

WEAPONS

DAMAGE

GREAT SWORD (D6H+3)

DAGGER (D6L+3)

()

()



CAREERS

SLAVE (0)

SOLDIER (1)

GLADIATOR (1)

EXECUTIONER (2)



ARMOUR & EQUIPMENT

EXECUTIONER OUTFIT (LIGHT ARMOUR D6-3 [1])

COMBAT ABILITIES

1

INITIATIVE

2

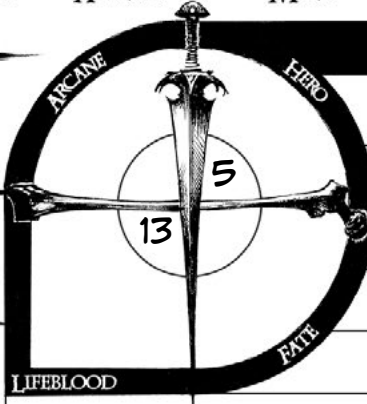
MELEE

0

RANGED

1

DEFENCE



BOONS

FEARLESS, FEARSOME LOOK

FLAWS

ILLITERATE, MUTE

BACKGROUND

THE SQUAT AND BURLY SQUELCH IS ONE OF THE WITCH QUEEN'S TRUSTED EXECUTIONERS. IT PROUDLY BRANDISHES A GREAT TWO-HANDED SWORD—THE SYMBOL OF ITS LONG AND DEDICATED SERVICE. IT TAKES GREAT PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT IT'S NEVER NEEDED MORE THAN A SINGLE STROKE TO LOP OFF THE HEAD OF ONE OF ITS MISTRESS'S ENEMIES. DISCIPLINE AND EFFICIENCY ARE SQUELCH'S WATCHWORDS AND IT HAS LITTLE PATIENCE FOR IDLE CHITCHAT AND PALAVERING, WHICH IT CONSIDERS TO BE A WASTE OF BREATH.

ADVENTURE NOTES

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

NAME **BRAVE**

HERO ORIGIN **FORTRESS OF THE WITCH QUEEN**

LANGUAGES **LEMURIAN**

ADVANCE



ATTRIBUTES



STRENGTH



AGILITY



MIND



APPEAL

WEAPONS

DAMAGE

TULWAR (D6+4)

MACE (D6+4)

()

()

ARMOUR & EQUIPMENT

MEDIUM ARMOUR D6-2 [2], SMALL SHIELD

CAREERS

SLAVE 0

WORKER 1

BLACKSMITH 1

SOLDIER 2



BOONS

INSPIRE, TRADEMARK WEAPON (TULWAR)

FLAWS

ALL THUMBS, MUTE

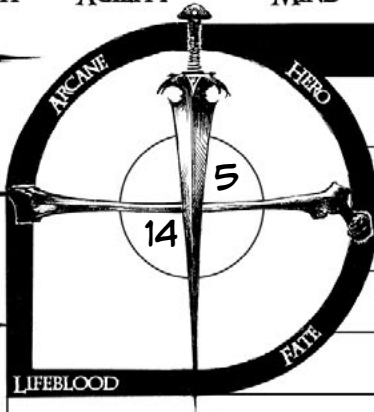
COMBAT ABILITIES

0 INITIATIVE

3 MELEE

0 RANGED

1 DEFENCE



BACKGROUND

THE MUSCULAR BRAVE STANDS OUT FROM THE OTHER GUARDS DUE TO ITS MASSIVE FRAME, WHICH IS IMPRESSIVE EVEN BY KALUKAN STANDARDS. IT'S A PROMINENT FIGURE AT THE FORTRESS ON THE FIRE COAST, KNOWN FOR ITS GREAT PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND PROWESS. BRAVE HAS NATURAL AUTHORITY AND THE OTHER GUARDS HAVE LEARNED TO RESPECT IT. BRAVE AND DART HAVE OFTEN VALIANTLY FOUGHT SIDE BY SIDE AND HAVE PROVEN TO BE A LETHALLY EFFECTIVE TEAM. BUT AWAY FROM THE WITCH QUEEN'S COURT, BRAVE OPENLY DISPARAGES THE ELITE BOWMAN. IT SCORNS ARCHERS, WHO KILL THEIR ENEMIES FROM A SAFE DISTANCE INSTEAD OF PARTAKING IN THE NOBLE TRIAL OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT (IT'S ALSO JEALOUS OF DART'S INCREDIBLE DEXTERITY, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NEVER ADMIT IT).

ADVENTURE NOTES

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

NAME RHEUMY

HERO ORIGIN FORTRESS OF THE WITCH QUEEN

LANGUAGES LEMURIAN, BESHAARI, SORCERIC, YGDDARI

ADVANCE



ATTRIBUTES



STRENGTH



AGILITY



MIND



APPEAL

WEAPONS

DAMAGE

DAGGER (D6L)

QUARTERSTAFF (D6)

()

()

CAREERS

SLAVE (1)

WORKER (0)

PHYSICIAN (1)

SCRIBE (1)

ALCHEMIST (2)

ARMOUR & EQUIPMENT

VIAL OF UNGUENT OF RALUK (UNCOMMON POTION,

CURE 1D6 LIFEBLOOD OF DAMAGE; 1 DOSE);

POTION OF MINOR RESILIENCE (UNCOMMON POTION;

IMBIBER'S SKIN COUNTS AS PROTECTION D6-2 [2]

ARMOUR FOR ONE SCENE; 1 DOSE)

BOONS

DEFT HANDS, LEARNED, NOSE FOR MAGIC

FLAWS

DISTINCTIVE APPEARANCE, MUTE, POOR EYESIGHT

BACKGROUND

RHEUMY IS AN ELDERLY KALUKAN WHO'S SPENT MANY YEARS TOILING IN THE LABORATORIES OF THE WITCH QUEEN. IT'S EARNED ITS MONIKER DUE TO THE CONSTANT FLOW OF WATER FROM ITS RHEUMY EYE. IS IT BECAUSE OF OLD AGE, OR BECAUSE OF THE CAUSTIC VAPOURS FROM THE ALCHEMISTIC CONCOCTIONS IT'S HANDLED OVER THE YEARS? NO ONE CAN SAY FOR SURE. RHEUMY HAS SPENT LONG HOURS READING THE EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS IN THE FORTRESS LIBRARY AND IS VERY LEARNED, EXTREMELY METICULOUS, AND SURPRISINGLY NIMBLE WITH ITS FINGERS.

THE CYNICAL AND GRUMPY OLD RHEUMY HAS NOTHING BUT CONTEMPT FOR ITS FELLOW GUARDS, WHOSE UNCOUTH BEHAVIOUR ONLY REINFORCES THE POPULAR MISCONCEPTION OF KALUKAN AS A BUNCH OF VIOLENT, KNUCKLE-DRAGGING OAFS.

GRATUITOUS AND SENSELESS VIOLENCE MAKES RHEUMY LIVID, AND IT WON'T HESITATE TO LASH OUT WITH ITS ACERBIC TONGUE.

ADVENTURE NOTES

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA

NAME MYRIAD

HERO ORIGIN FORTRESS OF THE WITCH QUEEN

LANGUAGES LEMURIAN, BESHAARI, KASHTIAN

ADVANCE



ATTRIBUTES



STRENGTH



AGILITY



MIND



APPEAL

WEAPONS

DAMAGE

DAGGER (DGL+1)

DARTS (DGL)

()

()

CAREERS

SLAVE (1)

SOLDIER (0)

DRUID (1)

THIEF (2)



ARMOUR & EQUIPMENT

TWO DAGGERS, FOUR DARTS

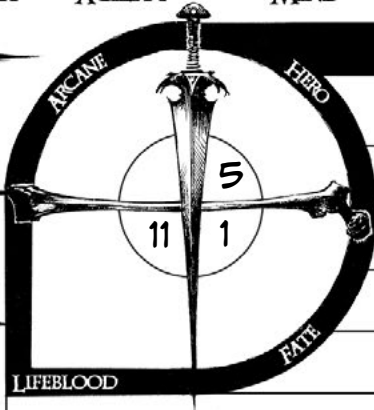
COMBAT ABILITIES

0 INITIATIVE

1 MELEE

1 RANGED

2 DEFENCE



BOONS

ALERT, NIGHT SIGHT

FLAWS

MUTE, UNSETTLING

BACKGROUND

DOES IT EVEN MAKE SENSE TO TALK ABOUT A CREATURE AS BIZARRE AS A KALUKAN HAVING A "PHYSICAL DEFORMATION"? IN ANY CASE, THE SINGLE, WHITE GLOBE OF MYRIAD'S EYE IS COVERED WITH ABOUT A DOZEN SMALL IRISES. THE STRANGE, DARK-BROWN DOTS DILATE AND CONTRACT EXACTLY LIKE NORMAL PUPILS, DEPENDING ON THE SURROUNDING BRIGHTNESS. THE OTHER KALUKAN ARE PUT OFF BY THIS STRANGE TRAIT AND TEND TO SHY AWAY FROM MYRIAD. HOWEVER, THIS DEFORMITY HAS GIVEN IT REMARKABLE EYESIGHT, AND MYRIAD IS ONE OF THE WITCH QUEEN'S TOP SPIES. COULD THIS STRANGE EYE BE A SIGN THAT MYRIAD IS ONE OF THE "CHOSEN FEW"? HARD TO SAY, BUT IT'S TRUE THAT MYRIAD IS PASSIONATELY DEVOTED TO ZAGGATH, THE LORD OF FIRE, AND WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE GAINED A CERTAIN ESTEEM AMONGST THE RED DRUIDS WHO RESIDE IN THE FORTRESS ON THE FIRE COAST.

ADVENTURE NOTES

BARBARIANS OF LEMURIA



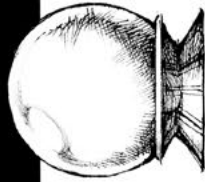
NAME _____

HERO ORIGIN _____

LANGUAGES _____

ADVANCE

ATTRIBUTES



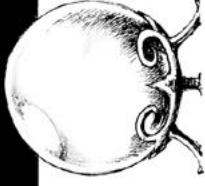
STRENGTH



AGILITY



MIND



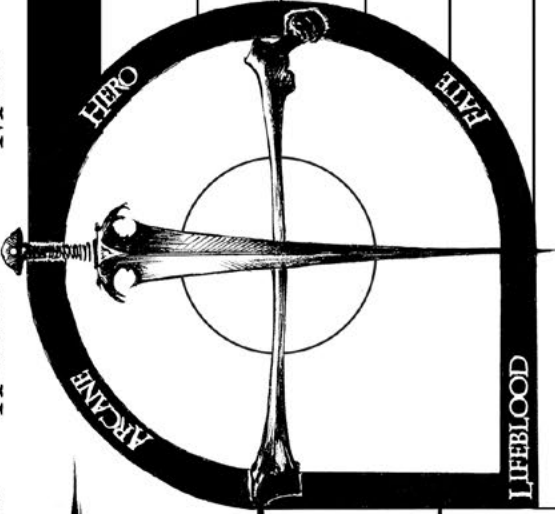
APPEAL

INITIATIVE

MELEE

RANGED

DEFENCE



CAREERS

ARMOUR & EQUIPMENT

BOONS

FLAWS



RULES SUMMARY

HERO POINTS *(cf. BoL p.62-63)*

A twist of Fate: Add one element to a scene.

Defy Death: *Lifeflood* between -1 and -5, your *lifeflood* comes back to zero; *lifeflood* below -5, you stabilize your wounds (and don't die), but stay unconscious.

Lack of the Gods: Roll the dice again for a failed Task Roll.

Shake off wounds: Using your next action to rest, you recover d6 *lifeflood*.

Splintered Shield, Shattered Sword: You absorb all damage of a single blow, but your shield or weapon is destroyed in the process.

Mighty Success: In combat, choose one of the following options:

Bloody Slash/Crushing Blow: Add +6 to the damage caused;

Carnage: You may make another attack immediately following this one;

Disarm: You disarm your opponent instead of inflicting damage;

Knockdown: Your opponent (up to one size larger) is thrown back and takes a *penalty die* on his next action;

Precision Strike: Damage as normal, and you give your opponent a *penalty die* to specific Task Rolls (or similar effect);

Rabble Slayer: If fighting *rabble*, the damage result becomes the number of opponents taken out of the fight.

Legendary Success: In combat, choose any two of the options of a Mighty Success.

Decide with GM: Any other situational advantage that your GM can be convinced to allow.

COMBAT *(cf. BoL p.67)*

Two-Weapon Fighting: Only 1 attack/round. -1 to Attack Roll and +1 to *defence* against one attack, or -1 to Attack Roll, but you cause damage as if wielding a heavier weapon.

Defensive Stance: -1 to your Attack Roll, but +1 to your *defence*.

Full Defence: You don't get to attack in the round, but get +2 to your *defence*.

Offensive Stance: +1 to your Attack Roll, but -1 to your *defence*.

All-Out Attack: +2 to your Attack Roll, but -2 to your *defence* (and you cannot use a shield or off-hand parrying weapon).

Bypass Armour: Negative modifier to Attack Roll equal to the static armour rating. The armour protection doesn't apply to the damage of the attack.

SPENDING ADVANCEMENT POINTS *(cf. BoL p.156)*

Improve Attributes: Current value + new value (from -1 to 0: 2 AP).

Train Combat Abilities: New value +1 (from -1 to 0: 1 AP).

Develop Careers: AP cost equal to the new rank (or new career at rank 0: 1 AP).

Buy boons and buy off flaws: 2 AP.

Gain Followers: Ask the GM.



MAP OF KHANATE

