

KOREAN Adventures 06 THE GREEN ISLAND



TALES OF
GOR
KOREAN ROLEPLAYING



POSTMORTEM
STUDIOS



Tales of Gor

GOREAN ROLEPLAYING

FANTASTICAL ADVENTURES ON THE COUNTER-EARTH

Authorised and based on the Gorean books of John Norman

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The Green Island

For as long as ships have crossed the seas of Earth or Gor, there have been those seeking fame and fortune upon the waves. For the first time in Gorean history, someone would seek fame and fortune not just on the waves but beneath it. However, it is also true that for as long as ships have crossed the seas there has been, is, and likely will always be piracy.

In this adventure, the characters find themselves at sea, hired by an inventor named Epigonus as guards and aides on an expedition to test out his latest invention, a device people of Earth might recognise as a diving bell. Our first Act starts in medias res, aboard a ship with a pirate vessel in hot pursuit. Options of creative, clever tricks to evade combat are encouraged, but failing that swashbuckling over the boarding ram is always a fallback plan.

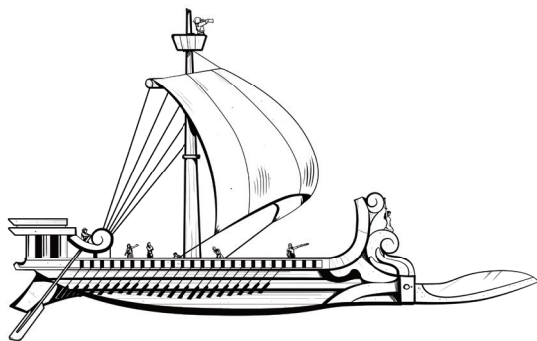
This act probably ends with the pirate vessel being driven off, but some notes are included on how to continue play if the players lose - a good way to remind players that their choices have consequences and characters are allowed to fail.

In the second act, the characters descend below the waves, exploring a lost city in the briny deep. It turns out this mysterious lost city was cast down by the priest-kings for over-reaching itself and disregarding their laws. More surprisingly the city had a name forgotten on Gor but remembered in the old stories of Earth.

Characters from Earth with their schooling and grasp of forbidden technology may have an edge here in making sense of what they find.

In the third act, the characters return to the surface to find the pirates waiting for them, having returned and seized the ship they travelled on while they were below. Perhaps they can use new-found weapons to turn the tables, or maybe they will be captured for attempting a daring escape. Perhaps they can end up as a galley slave chained to the benches of the oars.

In the final resolution, they must decide what to do with any recovered artefacts, and try to come to terms with some of the truths they discovered deep below the seas.



POSTMORTEM STUDIOS

Postmortem Studios is an independent role-playing game company formed and run by James 'Grim' Desborough, with a reputation for tackling unusual, 'edgy' and adult gaming material. Postmortem Studios has published Tales of Gor, but this is far from the company's only game.

- You can find more information at postmortemstudios.wordpress.com
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- We value your feedback and queries and suggestions can be sent to grim@postmort.demon.co.uk

PLAYER CHARACTERS

This scenario works with either a dedicated warrior caste group or a mixed caste party. It works with either an all-free party or one that includes some slaves and can play fine with a mixed-gender group of characters. Having at least one character from Earth is not required but likely to be interesting as they can better make sense of some of what they find, and understand some of the context of the backstory. Without that, play on the dramatic irony of players seeing references lost on the characters.

It's possible for all characters to descend in the diving bell in Act two, but some characters might decide not to (or their masters might choose to leave them on the ship). In that case, the player can play an able seaman joining the player characters in the diving bell in this act. As the player characters return to the surface, you can then run a short scene for the characters left behind, as the ship falls to the pirates and they are suitably 'entertained.'

This scenario assumes the characters have been hired by Epigonus (or his patron) for this expedition. If you want to give the player characters a more personal stake in what is happening than simple hirelings, you could consider some of the following options based on their character concepts and backstories to add an extra layer of intrigue:

A character with a reputation in Port Kar could have been asked by one of the council of captains to join the expedition, both to ensure its success but also to report back to him on what happens. This is a good way to introduce them to Samos of Port Kar, from the books.

A shipbuilder or scholar caste character could be an apprentice or former student of Epigonus. Alternatively, a character could be related to him. Another possibility could be that they are working for a rival inventor seeking to steal his designs.

A character who has a naval past could have had a run-in with one of the pirates previously. This won't affect them joining the mission, but makes fighting them more personal (or perhaps opens up new options to parley if they were friends). Alternatively, a past rival from a previous adventure could have joined up with the pirates, resulting in a surprise meeting.

A character who is an agent of the Priest-Kings could have been asked by their contact to join the expedition, to make sure this inventor is not breaking the laws against technology. Alternatively, a pious man trusted by the priest caste could be charged with the same mission by them independently. This could create some interesting situations between priest and a better-informed agent over who really knows the divine will.

An agent of the Kurii could have been directed by their handler to join the expedition and report back, ideally with anything of value they find - kurii technology may have detected what is below the waves or know of it from their records, but naturally, their agents in the field don't get told such secrets.

If using these options, you could play a short private mini-scene with the player concerned where they are briefed and given their task.

BACKSTORY

Well over two thousand years ago, the priest-kings transported ancient Greeks to Gor. They became settled and prospered across Gor and amongst their greatest settlements was a city named At-lan-tis, defeating other cities in mighty wars and taking many slaves as the head of an imperial confederation of islands. With power and victory came pride, and with pride came arrogance.

They sought to develop forbidden technology far beyond the limits of the wise priest-kings, their philosophers and thinkers empowered by their extended lifespans and used them to lay low their enemies. The city grew ever more powerful until the day came when the priest-kings finally took action. Deciding the guilt lay not with one leader but with the city as a whole, they shifted the gravity around the island, changing the sea level, cracking the crust, and sinking the city down below the waves.

The few survivors from this city (those not present at the time, or able to escape by tarn) were rounded up, their longevity serums disabled and then transported to Earth, to remove any further knowledge of the technology from Gor and in the vague hope the legends would serve as a warning to the men of Earth. Others Goreans of Greek descent turned their backs on this dark time in their history, gradually developing into the mainstream 'civilised' culture of Gor.

The city of At-lan-tis has remained beneath the waves and became lost to the memory of Gor, save for when the tall cylinder towers are glimpsed by observant sailors below the waves on a clear day.

Until now...

Act one : Heave away and Haul Away

It's likely not all of your players will be familiar with naval matters on Gor so you may want to start this scenario with a little scene setting. The ships of Gor are longships crewed by large teams of oarsmen, like those of the classical era on Earth. Often the rowers are male slaves chained to their benches, but some may also be free crew or travellers working their passage. Films such as *Jason and the Argonauts* might provide a visual image if you need one. It might be useful to colour in some of these details in the player's minds before formally starting, so keep the pace of play moving.

Any Gorean or anyone who has spent any amount of time on Gor should know the following things about ships and sailing:

Slaves are typically shorn and shaven bald on board ships, to control lice. This is done to oar slaves, slaves for transport and usually, but not always, any slave carried on board.

Pirate ships are painted green and have eyes painted on the front of them.

Sailors are even more superstitious than peasants, making offerings and sacrifices – even hurling treasure into the sea – before setting out.

The Island of Gjelbar

The appendix to this adventure details the Island of Gjelbar, the source of the pirates, and the successor to At-lan-tis as the 'green island'. Green is also the colour of piracy on Gor, giving the term a double meaning for this adventure.

Port Kar is the most famous den of pirates on Gor, but Cosians and others also engage in piracy as a form of privateering. Small islands often play host to pirates and the wealth they create, and even the rivers are not free of piracy – despite the unity of the Vosk League.

When you are ready to begin, describe the opening scene.

You were hired by the inventor Epigonous, to join his expedition to test his latest invention. Now you are three weeks or so out to sea from Port Kar, sailing across the vast western ocean. You travel abroad a medium-weight round ship with deep holds and two rigged masts. The weather so far has been fair, and the 120 or so slaves obedient at the oars. 20 free men crew the ship and keep order, with yourselves and Epigonous making up the remaining crew.

All was going well until the lookout caught sight of a pirate vessel, a heavyweight class ram ship painted green, with scowling eyes and with wicked crescent moon arms for shearing oars. Its sail has been removed for combat, and it rows fast towards you. On the edge of your hearing, you hear the beat of the kelenustes, the copper drum setting the rhythm for the pirate rowers.

The crew on Epigonus' ship will try to spur their slaves to row to evade the pirates, using their own drum and whips. Some slaves might be less than keen to row hard since it has been known for pirates to free slaves, to encourage others to go slow in situations like this.

If the players decide to do nothing of note, play out the pursuit as follows:

- Set a starting distance for the pursuit. By default, this is 5. This represents the relative distance between the ships, not their location in absolute terms.
- Make a Command skill roll (or Charm with +5 diff) for the person commanding the rowers. Even if the rowers are fully willing, it's important to have someone to coordinate their pace so they can row effectively in sync.
- This is moderate difficulty (15) for the free crew of the pirates, difficult (20) for a less willing slave crew. Note if this test is passed for each ship. On the player's ship, one of them can take charge and do this, or leave it in the hands of an NPC with 6D.
- Roll a dice pool of one dice for every 20 crew if the previous test is passed, or one dice for every 30 crew if the test is failed (round to nearest). For example, in the first round the player's ship has 120 slaves, so roll 4 if the previous roll was failed or 6 dice if the previous roll was passed. The pirate ship has a total of 200 pirates, with space for 160 at most to work the oars.

However, as they get closer, some will leave the oars (reducing their dice pool) to get ready for battle. Roll these two dice pools separately (have the players roll for their ship), total up these rolls and compare them.

- If the players win, the distance between them extends by one. If the Pirates win, the gap between then closes by one. Go to the next round of the pursuit and make the same rolls again.
- The pursuit ends either when distance reaches zero, in which case a boarding action follows or reaches 8, in which case the players escape. If it swings back and forth for too long, you can gradually drop the target distance to escape - the pirates get physically tired of the long pursuit and more readily give up.

It's sufficient to simply track the pursuit distance as a number. However a more visual approach is to draw a series of lines on a piece of paper and place a nice picture of each ship (or a model ship) a number of lines apart to show the distance, then move them closer or further apart each round.

Due to their higher number of rowers and better dedication, the pirates are very likely to choose with the player's ship. It's up to the players to come up with some creative ruse to foil the pursuit. What they do is up to them, but here are some suggestions on how you might handle some ideas they come up with.

Missile fire

One the pursuit distance is down to 3 or less, it's possible to exchange bow or crossfire between ships. Dropping arrows into the mass of the rowers can be useful - any injury (don't worry about rolling damage) stops a man rowing effectively for the battle, and the general disorder and panic is enough to effectively remove another nine rowers from their total in the next round, which likely reduces their dice pool. Such shots are very difficult (25) at pursuit distance 3, difficult (20) at pursuit distance 2 and Moderate (15) at pursuit distance 1. This accounts for the combination of firing into a massed target, both ships moving at speed, the sea wind and the cloth cover obscuring direct sight.

An alternative strategy is to try to shoot critical people on the enemy ship. Shooting the drummer commanding the rowers will automatically cause him to fail his command roll in the next turn (and for longer, if he dies). Shooting the Captain will demoralise the pirates, dropping the point at which they will give up the pursuit to distance 5. This is the same difficulty as above, as such small targets are more visible.

An intelligent player may think to shoot the leather hide of the Keleustes. This is the same difficulty based on the range, plus an additional +5 for the smaller target. A single hit will prevent its use, making it impossible for the pirates to pass their command rolls as the rowers cannot row at the same time without a drum beat.

Feel free to have a few pirates return fire with crossbows. They are most likely to target archers on the player's ship since they dislike the risk of being shot at themselves. You can also have a few crew on the player's ship follow their lead and shoot at the targets they suggest.

Fire Ships

The player's ship has a couple of smaller rowing boats. Smart players could try to rig one or both as fire ships; their craft has lamp oil and braziers. Set adrift towards the enemy this can be a terrifying threat.

Depending on exactly how the players describe what they do to set these fire ships up, you may ask for appropriate rolls to see if they have a mishap or decide not to, to reward their cunning. Have the player launching the fire ship and the pirates make opposed sailing rolls (essentially, a hit vs a dodge roll). Add +3 to the pirate roll for every point of pursuit distance, so it's better for the players to launch the pirate ship when the pirates get close. If the player wins, the fire ship makes contact with the pirate ship. In the panic that follows the pirates abandon the pursuit to save their ship. If the pirates make the roll to avoid the fireship, they still lose two distance on the pursuit track from making rapid evasive moves. Thus, even a missed fire ship is very effective.

Motivate the Slaves

Some players might decide to take charge of commanding their slaves, using their command skill in place of the NPC drummer.

Some could also inspire the slaves to row harder, perhaps by making a speech to them, threatening them, applying the whip or making a harsh example of the slowest.

Allow them to be creative and reward them for behaviour that men of Gor deem worthy of respect, perhaps by dropping the difficulty of the command rolls from them on or ruling they automatically pass the roll for that round. If the players have a female slave with them, she could also try to motivate the galley slaves with her charms.

Another variant on this is to tell the slaves to go easy or let some of them rest, letting the distance close. As the pirate close on a slow vessel, more pirates will leave their oars to make ready for combat. The rested slaves can then be told to row hard and outpace the now undermanned and tired pirate ship. If they think to try this allow players to drop any number of dice from their dice pool for a round or two, to then add that number to their dice roll for the following round or two (i.e. the rowers rest, then sprint).

Playing out the Chase

Using these guidelines, play out the chase. Some suggested images to describe when running this scene:

- *Describe the green pirate ship, cutting through the waves with her ram, leaping forward to each drum beat.*
- *Describe Epigonus in a panic if the ship gets close, a sword shaking in his untrained hands.*
- *Describe the smells, with contrast from being on deck in the fresh salt sea air to down in the hold among over a hundred sweaty slaves.*
- *As the pirates get closer, describe the horde of them, with their shouts, jeers and taunts.*

- *Describe the blood on the deck if anyone on the player's ship is hit. Have blood spray over the mass of slaves if the combat drags out, creating a heaving red mass of flesh.*

If you like using background music in your play sessions, find some high energy chase music, perhaps with a steady drumbeat or something from a pirate film.

Don't feel limited to what is covered here, and reward players if they come up with other creative tactics. If the players are smart or lucky, they can escape the pirates. As you can see, one effective strategy is to draw them in by resting the crew while preparing fire ships, have sharpshooters take out their key people and the drum, then deploy the fire ships at short range and speed away with a rested crew.

If the players manage to lose to pursuit: The pirate's ram bites home, locking the two ships together. The key combat is now between the pirates at the head the ram (wide enough for two abreast) and the player characters opposing them. Play this out as a normal melee. Others can continue to exchange missile fire with the pirates.

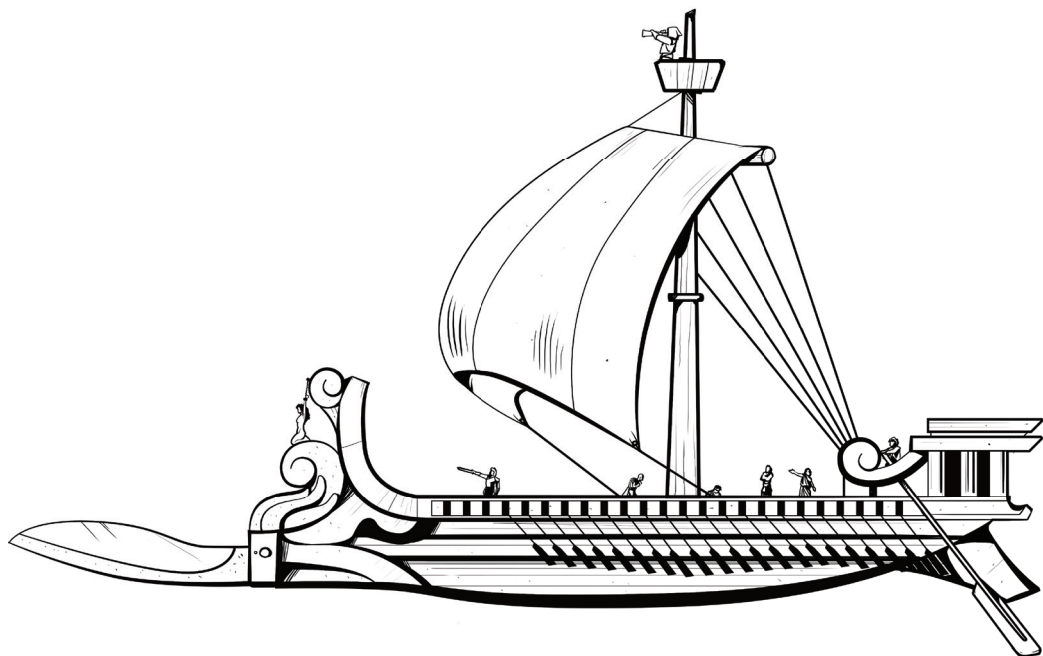
When at distance one, creative players may realise if they stop running and turn the ship, the ram will strike the side and not the rear. This means their end of the breach point is wider so they can put three combatants up against the pirate's two.

If the players hold this breach for ten rounds of conventional combat (new pirates step up if the first are cut down), the other crew manage to push off with long poles, separating the ships and throw hot coals from the brazier over to the pirate ship.

The pirates are too busy putting out the fire and too tired to resume the pursuit at this point.

If the players fail to hold this breach, the pirates board the ship en masse. The galley slaves rebel at this point (as much as they can while chained) and the hopelessly outnumbered ship's crew surrender. Skip directly to Act three for guidelines on how to handle this situation.

Assuming the players win the pursuit one way or another, they escape the pirates. Scene cut to arriving at their destination for Act two.



Act two: Full Fathom Five

SCENE ONE - THE HERO DESCENDS INTO THE UNDERWORLD

Under Epigonus's direction, the crew attach what looks like a winch arm and pulley system to the rear mast. A rope is lashed through this pulley system running through a solid ring attached to the front of the ship near the drum. To the end of this rope, six other cables that run down the length of the hold are tied, one rope for each of the six seated positions of the slave rowers. The other end of the line by the winch is attached by a large metal hook to a ring on top of something significant at the back of the hold.

The slaves take hold of the rope and pull as directed. From underneath a cover comes a large hexagonal pod made of high-grade waterproof leather around a wooden frame. As it lifts upwards, you glimpse the hole big enough for a person to climb through in the base.

If you have kept it secret until now, have Epigonus explain his invention, a device characters from Earth would call a diving bell. He causes it a sea goblet, inspired after he noticed an upside down goblet plunged into water retains the air inside it.

Epigonus believes they have now reached the location of an ancient city, lost below the waves; on the clearest of days, sailors have reported seeing a cylinder down in the depths. Epigonus has hired the player characters to explore this lost city, using his new device.

Assuming the player characters are ready, he asks them to climb up from the deck into the goblet, where there is a ledge on the inside to stand. Naturally, they should remove as much equipment and clothing as possible. Simple wooden tridents of fire-hardened wood (without metal) are stored inside should they need weapons.

If they are taking slaves with them, they will have to consider whether it is appropriate to remove their metal collar. When they are ready, the winch will swing the goblet over the side, and the crew will supervise the slaves to lower the goblet. It will naturally sink of its own weight.

A secondary smaller and slacker rope is tied to the metal ring the hook is passing through at the top of the goblet. They are told to give it three firm tugs when they are ready. This is connected to a bell on the arm of the winch and will be the signal to pull the Goblet up, after a brief delay to allow whoever tugs it to swim back inside.

As noted earlier, if any PCs end up not going for some reason, you can have the player play a hardy crew member taking their place. You can use the limited size of the goblet and the air inside as a reason for not sending surplus characters if the players suggest such an idea.

The players are literally helpless during the descent. Add some narration to build some suspense, but move on if it feels tedious. You might describe being plunged into darkness, the feel of descending in the stomach (quite unnatural for those who do not ride tans), the judder as the slaves lower the goblet unevenly, the knock as an unseen large sea creature (varieties of whales and sharks live in the seas of Gor, incidentally) bumps into the strange object in passing.



SCENE TWO - THE INNERMOST CAVE

There is a bump when the goblet hits bottom. Feeling the weight shift, the crew above the waves pull it back up the height of a man. Seawater waits below the hole the characters entered through for the player characters to go where no man of Gor has been before.

Once the players swim out they can make out, through the gloom of the sea depths, a great cylinder tower, its lower doors standing open and unguarded. Other smaller buildings surround it, but those are flooded and pitch dark inside. Presumably, after getting their bearing, the player characters will swim over through the doors and up. Inside the tower is another much larger trapped air pocket. Smart characters may realise however that this air pocket is finite with no practical way to ever refill it.

Inside the high tower is a series of rooms, corridors and stairs, much like the other cylinder towers that modern Gorean cities consist of; Gorean architecture styles have not changed much with the passing of the years. You could describe individual rooms as player characters search them, but that is likely to drag out. Instead, focus on the action on a series of mini-scenes or flashpoints in the exploration:

It's completely dark inside the tower, so the player's first order of business is likely to find some sort of light source. This could be something they thought to bring with them, or they might feel in the dark to find an oil lamp attached to a wall they can light and remove. For drama, point out each light source will also use up the limited air supply.

They find skeletons lying around on the floor. Goreans do not believe in ghosts, but the sight of such a decomposed body may be a strange sight unusual to many characters. Warriors may be familiar with the freshly dead, but not with raw bones. This may strike panic into the easily flustered hearts of any women in the group.

If the players explicitly search for treasure, have them make search rolls. They can be assumed to find all the coins they can carry given enough time, but good search rolls may allow them to find gems or highly precious small art objects that are easier to transport. You can add that detailed appraisal of gems, and other items are not practical by a flickering lamp, rather than getting bogged down in details here.

When describing the artwork, architecture and so on, describe classical murals or mosaics that depict scenes from the history of the city. The tower was decorated as the city rose in power, so by ascending the tower, the player characters can observe its history. Scenes might include:

- The arrival from Earth, showing people in the strange garb of Greece been preached to by someone from the priest caste and then being given injections (longevity serums) and swearing upon a home stone. The home stone is white marble with veins of green.
- The building of the city by supervised male slaves, including the foundations of this tower. (Note that this is unusual on Gor, with only Port Kar being a significant city built by slaves).

- Depictions of administrators and other figures whose names are lost to history.
- Battles and victory parades, including heroes riding tams defeating those of other cities. Some characters might spot these all depict land battles - the city was originally landlocked.
- A depiction of an aeolipile, a primitive steam engine. Characters from Earth with good schooling might recognise this as something Hero of Alexandria also invented in Roman Egypt the 1st century AD. This appears to be connected to some kind of loom, weaving cloth in a semi-automated fashion. Another mural shows the considerable wealth (in gold and slaves) the trade of this cloth brought to the city. Priest caste or other learned characters would know such a device violates the priest-king's laws since it replaces manual labour as the means of production with machines.
- A depiction of a strange pipe with a screw inside used to carry water to the top of this tower. In Earth terms, an Archimedes' screw, invented in the 3rd century BC. Conservative characters might claim this is against the laws of the priest-kings, but there is no clear position on this (similar to how Ko-ro-ba uses electric lights because they have a more liberal understanding than most cities).
- A depiction of a strange device with multiple gears being manipulated by people looking at the night sky with the stars overhead. The characters might not understand this, but it is actually an analogue computer for computing astronomical positions, similar to the Antikythera mechanism, from 2nd century BC on Earth. Some characters might shrug at such a strange harmless thing, and the laws of the Priest-Kings are unclear, but the Priest caste would regard this grossly offensive and heretical but since this device replaces the human mind and the mysteries of mathematics taught to their caste with a machine. Again, characters from Earth are much better placed to understand the concept of what such a thing is.
- A depiction of a compressed air cannon and it's use against enemy units in battle. On Earth, developed by Ctesibius of Alexandria in the 3rd century BC. This is a massive clear breach of the Priest-King's laws.

There is no depiction of the actual disaster that befell the city; people had better things to do at the time than paint a mural.

Play out exploring the tower in as much detail as seems interesting. This scene likely ends with them reaching the top of the tower.

SCENE THREE- THE BOTTOM OF A POOL AT THE TOP OF A TOWER AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN

Particularly bright characters (if played by smart players) may have noticed something strange already that has gone unsaid - it's not extremely cold down here. The reason for this is the city was built on geothermal vents - boiling water naturally springs up from the ground; clearly a direct action of divinity to the classical mind. They channelled this hot water through pipes in the floors and walls of the city, providing heating, and the buckled crust after the priest-kings destroyed the city only increased that effect. If characters do somehow discover this (perhaps feeling how warm a wall is), some might remember the Romans built something very similar to heat the temple-bathhouse, in the city of Bath (in England, very close to Tarl Cabot's original home city of Bristol).

In what his not quite the highest level of the tower, the pipes run together, making the floor extremely warm, like a Gorean bathhouse. The bulk of this level is literally that - once a bathhouse where the elite of the city could enjoy the warm mineral waters and bath girls high above the city, even holding council meetings there. Now it stands empty and quiet. Murals hint at the pleasures that once transpired within these walls.

However, in another part of this overly warm level, something else dwells in the heat. A tremendous yellow, steaming pool in which a pile of gems gleam. Some player characters may be tempted to dive into the pool for such portable valuables. If they do, the characters find the pool grows firm gripping them, and its digestive acid begins to bite away at them.

This pool is in fact, a yellow pool monster, the same manner of being as Tarl Cabot encounters in *Nomads of Gor*. Like that one, it was brought here as a trophy and dwells in the artificial warm climate. Once criminals of At-lan-tis were fed to the pool and offerings were made to it. For an age it has slumbered in hibernation, waiting for fresh food.

Some guidelines for running the yellow pool:

- Anyone in the pool takes 1D3 of damage at the end of the round, regardless of armour.
- Characters in the pool can attempt a strength roll if they pass at moderate difficulty (15) they can act but not escape. If they pass at difficult difficulty, they can start to escape. Depending on how emerged they were when events started, 1 (ankle deep or one limb), 2 (waist deep) or 3 (shoulder deep) such successful rounds will be needed to entirely escape. Each success moves them up a level. If for some reason (see below) they want to push deeper that only requires the moderate difficulty level of passing - it's easier to go down a throat than back up out of it.
- Characters can attack the pool with their weapons. Have them make rolls and tell them their weapons pass through as if through water - producing no effect.

- To get to the 'pile of gems,' they will need to dive down head under the surface. As well as courage this requires being at depth 3 at the start of the round and then passing the strength test to act. This target is really the creature's vital organs. A single strike on this target (moderate difficulty of 15, to reflect the circumstances) will cause the creature to harden to protect itself, ejecting all of them as if throwing them up. They find themselves on top the hardening shell of its surface.
- The character will likely stir and attack when one or more people are at depth 2 (waist depth). If they change their minds and start to leave, it will grab them at depth 1 before they fully leave. If someone decides to do a full dive into the pool, they can go straight to depth 3 at the start of combat.
- While people are grabbed by the pool, bio-luminescent balls float in the goo. These are the creature's sensory organs but stay too far away to be attacked.

If you are worried that book readers will recognise this creature, change the colour. After all lots of species (including homo sapiens) come in many different colours. You could leave it up to players to figure out the solution, or if some know the answer out-of-character from the books, you could rely on intelligence rolls.

The creatures could eventually be destroyed by fire. Note starting a fire in this air bubble tower is an idiotic idea, so sensible players will just leave it and press on up to the very top of the tower.

If slain the creature returns to liquid form and while the gem-like organs are destroyed, real gems and other items can be retrieved with a worth of a couple of dozen gold coins.





SCENE FOUR - THE COUNCIL OF AT-LAN-TIS

At the top of the tower is the council chamber. Seated around a random table is the skeletons of the last administrator and the high caste members on the council. From a sense of courage, they did not try to flee but choose to go down with their city. Players who think to loot them can find masterwork weapons for taking, in slightly unusual styles being somewhere between the swords of Greece and modern Gorean swords.

In an alcove at one end of this room is a statue-shrine to a strange being, a bearded human holding a thunderbolt. The leadership of the city had reverted to their forefathers' worship of Zeus, and so forsaken the priest-kings. An Earth character will understand this reference, but Gorean characters might be confused by it. Well-travelled characters might be reminded of the northerners who are said to worship gods such as Odin and Thor rather than the priest-kings and wonder if this is similar. The thunderbolt is gold if the characters feel like prizing it from the statue's hands. No particular trap protects it, beyond the silent judgement of the statue of Zeus.

At the feet of the statue is an unworked natural lump of marble, shot through with green veins. Characters might correctly guess this is the home stone of At-lan-tis. While it has no significant value as an item, it has enormous symbolic value as a trophy.

Lying on the table is a wax tablet, in which the scribe on the high council wrote some last words in Gorean while waiting for the end.

We sought to master the world by learning the mysteries.

We sought to build a vast Empire.

We sought too much.

The Priest-Kings are wrathful.

Doom is upon us.

May Father Zeus protect us.

The waters rise.

The city floods.

Ye who come after.

Mark this, as the day At-lan-tis fell.

Elsewhere in the room is a strange device of gears and cogs, the Antikythera mechanism depicted in the murals earlier. What the player characters do with it is up to them.

If you have further adventures planned, you might want to add in plot clues here to another ancient site elsewhere on Gor to explore in a future adventure (such as the lost cities of The Interior. If you don't have the details ready, you could have a coded document, which can read when the code is broken by a scholar later.

SCENE FIVE - THE QUICK FLIGHT

When the players have finished, they can head back. Spend as long as your group is interested in playing it figuring out exactly what they carry back to the Goblet; they could make more than one trip between the cylinder and the goblet potentially. It's probably best to not get too bogged down in specifics.

When they are ready, they can pull the rope to ring the bell, and the Goblet will ascend to the surface, hopefully with them and their loot inside.

Act Three: Returning with the Boon

Hopefully, the player characters have returned from other waves having explored At-lan-tis, learning of its fate, and grabbed all the loot. They might be thinking the adventure is now going to wrap up...

While below the waves, the pirates returned. The ship couldn't run while the goblet was deployed, and the ship has fallen to pirates. They have moved enough of the slaves to their own ship to make space for the crew, who are now themselves enslaved and chained to the rowing benches. The inventor and captain they are being kept in chains separately as high-value prisoners. Any women they found on board have been enslaved and used appropriately for amusement by the pirates.

The player characters first become aware of this when they drop down a couple of feet from the suspended goblet onto the deck. The pirates are at ease thinking their struggle over for the day. They don't expect anyone to come out of the strange device - the concept of a diving bell was beyond them, so they assumed the unusual object was some sort of special anchor. Quick thinking player characters have an element of surprise.

If the players fight:

As brave men of Gor, it's quite likely the player characters will try to fight their way out. Twenty pirates are on board the ship, with the pirate ship they came from drifting a little way off. So, the players are massively outnumbered, but they do have a few advantages:

- A strong element of surprise, while the pirates are stunned and then have to make ready and prepare their weapons.
- Some of the pirates may be tired or wounded from the fight to claim the ship already.
- While all the pirates can fight, many of those on board this ship are more sailors or slave handlers than warriors. The pirates saw no need for their best warriors to occupy a prize ship after the fight.
- The players may have brought masterwork weapons from the depths.
- With one strike of their bonds, the player characters can free a bench of three of the former crew from a bench, who can then fight alongside them or free others. Some of the original slaves may also cry out they will fight for them if freed.

The player characters and the crew likely feel they are fighting for the lives, or at least their freedom. The pirates, on the other hand, have another option, to leap overboard and swim to their own ship. A decisive impact by the players such as slaying their leader, best fighter, or if the fight clearly turns against the pirates can prompt them to flee.

It's also possible a speech by these mighty heroes who explore the ocean depths with appropriate rolls might be enough to break the pirate's morale.

If the fight goes well for them, the player characters recapture their ship. The scene then switches to a chase and pursuit. Reuse the mechanics and guidelines from act one to see if the player's ship gets away.

If the fight goes poorly, the pirates will give the players every chance to surrender - they would rather have slaves than corpses. See below for guidelines if this happens.

If the players surrender:

If the players decide to give up with or without a fight, they are taken, prisoner. If your group has no interest in playing this out, you can end the scenario here, and start the next adventure with them planning a daring escape.

Assuming your group are interested in keeping playing, here is what the pirates do:

The player characters are seized, stripped and bound with warrior's knots.

They are taken to one end of the ship and whipped if they fail to be silent.

One by one, they are taken to the other end and questioned about who they are, what the strange device is, and what they saw beneath the waves. If their stories do not match, the pirates try whipping them and threaten to brand them later when they get a suitable fire going to get the truth out of them. You could leave this up to roleplaying or use the slave breaking rules from other supplements.

The pirates free enough slaves to make space for the player characters at the oars. You could have some other slaves feel loyalty to their former masters and try to set up an escape later. If one or more of the players' characters was particularly mean to one of the slaves earlier, have them return the torment. Alternatively, a freed slave might do this to get the pirates to trust him.

If the player character group includes women characters, they are stripped and enslaved, but not otherwise bound. Such a character may be able to use her wiles to play the pirates off against each other, such as begging for one to claim her and protect her from the other pirates. Alternatively, they might with time be able to help the male player characters to escape. They could also decide the pirates are better masters than the player characters and enjoy their new station as a pirate's slave, which might result in harsh consequences for them if the other player characters escape on their own later.

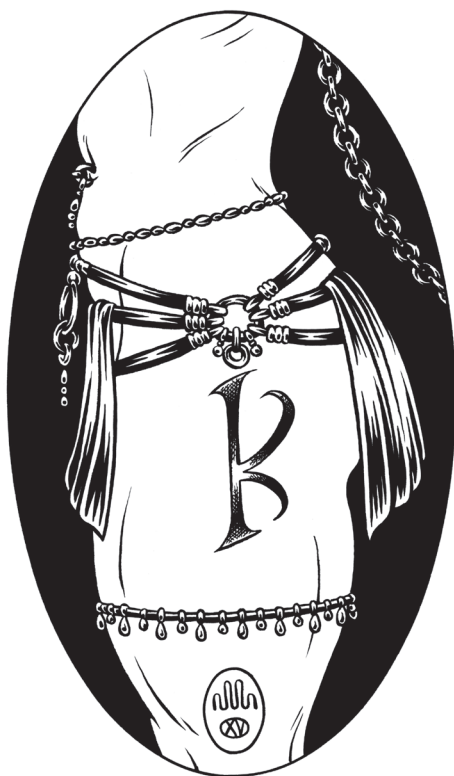
If the player characters end up enslaved like this, the prize ship heads back to port, while the other pirate ship heads off to hunt for additional prizes. Hopefully, the players can come up with some daring escape plan before they reach port, perhaps assisted by a freed slave NPC or female PC as mentioned above. In this case, they won't have to deal with the pursuit from the pirate ship.

Epilogue

One way or another, the player characters and their ship will make its way back to land. They have gained a considerable amount of physical treasure from below the waves - through much of it will go to Epigonus for the invention and the costs of the expedition, even a small fraction will be a goodly prize. The weapons of At-lan-tis may also be of much value to them.

If the player brought up the Antikythera mechanism, they will have to decide what to do with it. Epigonus will want to study it and point out that whatever it is, merely examining it without applied use cannot possibly be against the laws of the priest-kings. Let this play out between him and the player characters.

The player characters have also gained a unique insight into the history of Gor and the real power of the priest-kings. Characters from Earth may see the insight into the myths of their own history and wonder at what other points has the history of the two worlds crossed over.





Epigonus, shipwright and inventor

A member of the Caste of Builders and a former member of the Caste of Scribes who transitioned out – amidst some scandal – Epigonus is a brilliant but slightly unhinged man, fixated on the realm of ideas and full of strange habits. He sleeps at odd hours, writes everything down and tries not to tax his brain, save when he's working on one of his ideas. Increasingly he is frustrated by the codes and demands of the priest-kings.

Agility 2D

Athletics 2D+1

Fistfight 2D+1

Dexterity 5D

Care 6D

Crossbow 5D+1

Draft Beast 5D+1

Rope Work 5D+1

Sleight of Hand 5D+2

Body 3D

Fitness 3D+1

Endurance 3D+1

Swimming 3D+1

Reason 5D

Philosophy 6D+2

Culture 6D

Kaissa 6D+1

Scholar 8D+2

Navigation 5D+2

Arts 5D

Aesthetics 5D+1

Composition 6D+1

Poetry 5D+2

Craft (Carpentry) 9D

Craft (Woodwork) 9D

Charm 2D

Animal Handling 2D+2

Slave Handling 2D+2

Speaking 2D+2

Health: 32/16

Power Bonus: 2D

Accuracy Bonus: 3D

Movement: 9/14/27/45

Hatchet: 3D damage.

Pirate

Pirates are often less disciplined and skilful than regular sailors, many are little more than freed oar slaves, but they learn to be tough and to survive.

Agility 4D

Coordination 4D+1
Acrobatics 4D+2
Athletics 4D+2
Blades 5D+2
Evade 4D+2
Fistfight 5D+2
Throwing 4D+2

Dexterity 4D

Crossbow 5D
Care 4D+1
Rope Work 5D
Sailing 5D

Body 4D

Fitness 4D+1
Endurance 4D+1
Survival (Sea) 6D
Swimming 4D+2

Reason 2D

Navigation 3D+2
Senses 2D+1

Arts 1D

Charm 3D

Health: 34/17
Power Bonus: 2D
Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Movement: 12/18/36/60

Short Sword: 3D+2

Light Crossbow: 4D+2, range 100 ft.

Sailor

A capable sea-dog, as found in just about any vessel on Gor.

Agility 4D

Coordination 4D+1
Acrobatics 4D+2
Athletics 4D+2
Blades 4D+2
Evade 4D+2
Fistfight 4D+2
Throwing 4D+2

Dexterity 4D

Care 4D+1
Rope Work 6D
Sailing 6D
Crossbow 5D

Body 4D

Fitness 4D+1
Endurance 4D+1
Survival (Sea) 6D
Swimming 4D+2

Reason 3D

Navigation 4D+2
Senses 3D+1

Arts 1D

Charm 2D

Health: 34/17
Power Bonus: 2D
Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Movement: 12/18/36/60

Dagger: 3D damage.

Rowing Slave

Slaves come from all sorts of backgrounds, so if you are called upon to reference an essential skill from their former life, use 3D on top of their Ability. Otherwise, when it comes to their regular duties...

Agility 4D

Athletics 5D

Fistfight 5D

Dexterity 4D

Sailing 5D

Body 4D

Fitness 6D

Endurance 6D

Swimming 5D

Reason 2D

Navigation 3D

Arts 2D

Singing 3D

Charm 2D

Health: 34/17

Power Bonus: 2D

Accuracy Bonus: 2D

Movement: 12/18/36/60

Heavy Chains: 3D+1 damage, -1 to hit.

Pirate Captain

Captain Tamisch hails from Schendi, the independent equatorial port, close to the jungles of the interior. He's a long way from home, but the most magnificent booty is to be found in more 'civilised' Gor.

Agility 4D

Coordination 4D+1

Acrobatics 4D+2

Athletics 4D+2

Blades 6D+2

Evade 5D+2

Fistfight 5D+2

Throwing 4D+2

Dexterity 4D

Crossbow 5D

Care 4D+1

Rope Work 5D

Sailing 5D

Body 5D

Fitness 5D+1

Endurance 5D+1

Survival (Sea) 7D

Swimming 5D+2

Reason 2D

Navigation 3D+2

Senses 2D+1

Arts 1D

Charm 4D

Command 7D

Health: 38/19

Power Bonus: 3D

Accuracy Bonus: 2D

Movement: 12/18/36/60

Stabbing Spear: 4D+1, +1 attack against longer spears.

Medium Shield: 2D Armour.

The Island of Gjelbar

Gjelbar is one of the Farther Islands, terra incognita, beyond Cos and Tyros – and a good place for you to carve out a little piece of Gor of your own. Gjelbar is my example of a non-canonical island, based on the Illyrian tribes of what is now Albania. In antiquity, they were responsible for a great deal of piracy, something which – on Gor – has become a hard and fast tradition of, at least, this particular island.

Geography

Gjelbar is a small, rocky island topped with grass, shrubs and stocky trees. It is shaped like a rough crescent, with its only settlement – the city that shares the island's name – facing the beach and the docks, protected from the elements – and from attacks – by the 'horns' of the crescent. The bare bones of the island – rising as much as ten yards from the surface of the Thassa – are of a greenish rock, blending from yellow scrub into the grass and greenery, making the island rise like a green flame from the sea.

The 'rear' of the island, back from the crescent, rapidly steepens, terminating in cliffs that drop down into the sea. These craggy cliffs are riddled with caves, and home to vast amounts of seabirds and a sloping grey-green beach of sand.

THE CITY

Gjelbar – the city – is centred around a single high cylinder, which rises from the low, rocky beach and the docks, to several storeys above the 'top' of the island. At high tide, the lower levels of the tower are beneath the water, and these lower levels are also prisons for the island, half-immersed in cold and filthy seawater at each high tide. The tower also has a bridge, which can be raised and lowered, to provide access to the rest of the island for their warriors and high castes. The lower ranks must – instead – travel up and down stairs, carved into the rock face, which snakes back and forth tightly to reach the top.

Besides the tower, the city is made up of buildings of stone and wood, raised on piles and stacks of rock, high enough to avoid the highest tides. The streets exist at two levels, those that are frequently flooded, and rigs of rope and wood that cut above them, moving from building to building in an ever-changing network. Families crowd together in these houses, sharing freely due to the lack of space and resources and with great loyalty to each other.

The Docks

The island's docks are a combination of piers, sandbanks and rocky piles, continually being maintained and rebuilt as a place for their small, pirate fleet to make safe harbour. They are always a hive of activity, ships under constant repair, prize vessels being broken down for anything and everything useful. As one ship is broken down, another one – or more – is repaired or built from the ground up. Fishermen in small boats are also constantly arriving and leaving, though they only fish the more shallow and safer waters around the island.

THE CAVES

All around the island, there are many tidal caves, and these burrow deep into the island – especially in its rear. Also, there are entrances from the back of the city's tower, hidden here and there, to provide access to the caves. These caves have, down the generations, been linked together with crawl spaces and artificial tunnels. They have been filled with caches of weapons, water and preserved food and set with traps, mechanisms to divert tidal waters, false walls, pits and other skullduggery to allow the islanders to retreat in case of an attack or siege and to retake their island by force if need be.

THE HERDERS

Besides the fishermen and the scant crops that are grown in a few scrapes in the centre of the island, as well as caged vulos and seabird eggs, Gjelbar is quite reliant on its herds of goats and verr. Herders range over the whole island so that no particular place becomes over-grazed, staying out for days or weeks at a time, sheltering in beehive-shaped stone huts (similar to Scots or Irish clochán), or in caves – along with their charges – should the elements demand it.

THE CLIFFS

The steep cliffs around the rear of the island are full of seabirds, and while a few, and their eggs, are taken by and large they are left unmolested by the Islanders. Their guano, however, is essential both to make the island's several Croft-like farms productive and as the island's only legitimate export, traded with Cos, Tyros and other island domains.

Economy PIRACY

Gjelbar's primary income, and the source of most of its more refined goods, foods and luxuries, as well as all of its wood and metal, is piracy. Gjelbar attacks shipping with abandon, and it is only the fortified nature of the island and the relatively small size of its fleet that protects it from being crushed by a mightier power or state. There is no love lost between Port Kar and Gjelbar, and each regards the ships of the other as fair game, fairer game – and a preferred target – over standard merchant shipping.

FISHING

Gjelbar fishes its local waters, as much as they judge that those waters can tolerate it. They waste almost nothing, drying and smoking smaller fish and using them for soups and stocks. Boiling bones for glue. Eating the larger fish fresh, cooked on spare charcoal fires. All of this is used locally and none in trade, the excess – if there is any – is preserved in fat, oil, salt, alcohol or vinegar and stored for leaner times.

CHARCOAL

Wood is extremely scarce on Gjelbar and little, if any, is spare for cooking or industry. Wood can be cut from the small, twisted trees only on the order of the council, otherwise dried seaweed, goat dung, driftwood and charcoal made from the hulls of captured vessels and whatever other spare wood that they might obtain. Small amounts are used to heat flat, scraped rocks to grill or fry goat and fish. Most of their legitimate trade is for charcoal as it packs the most heat and power for the smallest amount of cargo.

METAL

Gjelbar has no local source of metal and must get all their metal from trade or piracy. Every scrap of metal they can find they value and they break down weapons that they capture to make their own swords, spear tips and arrow points. Wherever possible, they use other materials, wood, horn and stone.

GUANO

Guano collected from the cliffs is a crucial fertiliser, and the citizens raise food plants wherever they can, from local, bitter berries to suls and other vegetables grown in planting boxes, buckets and hollows in the stone. The remainder goes to their croft farms and in trade, much valued by builders, physicians and peasants alike for its various properties.

Culture

Gjelbar's culture is a tough one, and they are hardy people with little or no tolerance for weakness. Even their women pour scorn on people from the mainland and see themselves as more robust, sturdier and more capable than their pampered opposites. This culture is a mix between both the tribal cultures of the less civilised parts of the mainland, and the castes of 'civilised Gor'.


All the men of Gor are first, and foremost, warriors. Even without aptitude for it, they are raised to be able to fight, and all participate in at least one pirate voyage. Male characters from Gjelbar should use the tribal template, and then customise it to suit the caste that they wish to follow, female characters can take either the tribal template or a caste template as they wish.

While not an especially religious people the denizens of Gjelbar do venerate the priest-kings, but also reserve a great deal of their veneration and tradition for the sea. Gjelbar still practices human and animal sacrifice, making these sacrifices before their voyages, using goats, prisoners and slaves according to the state of their need.

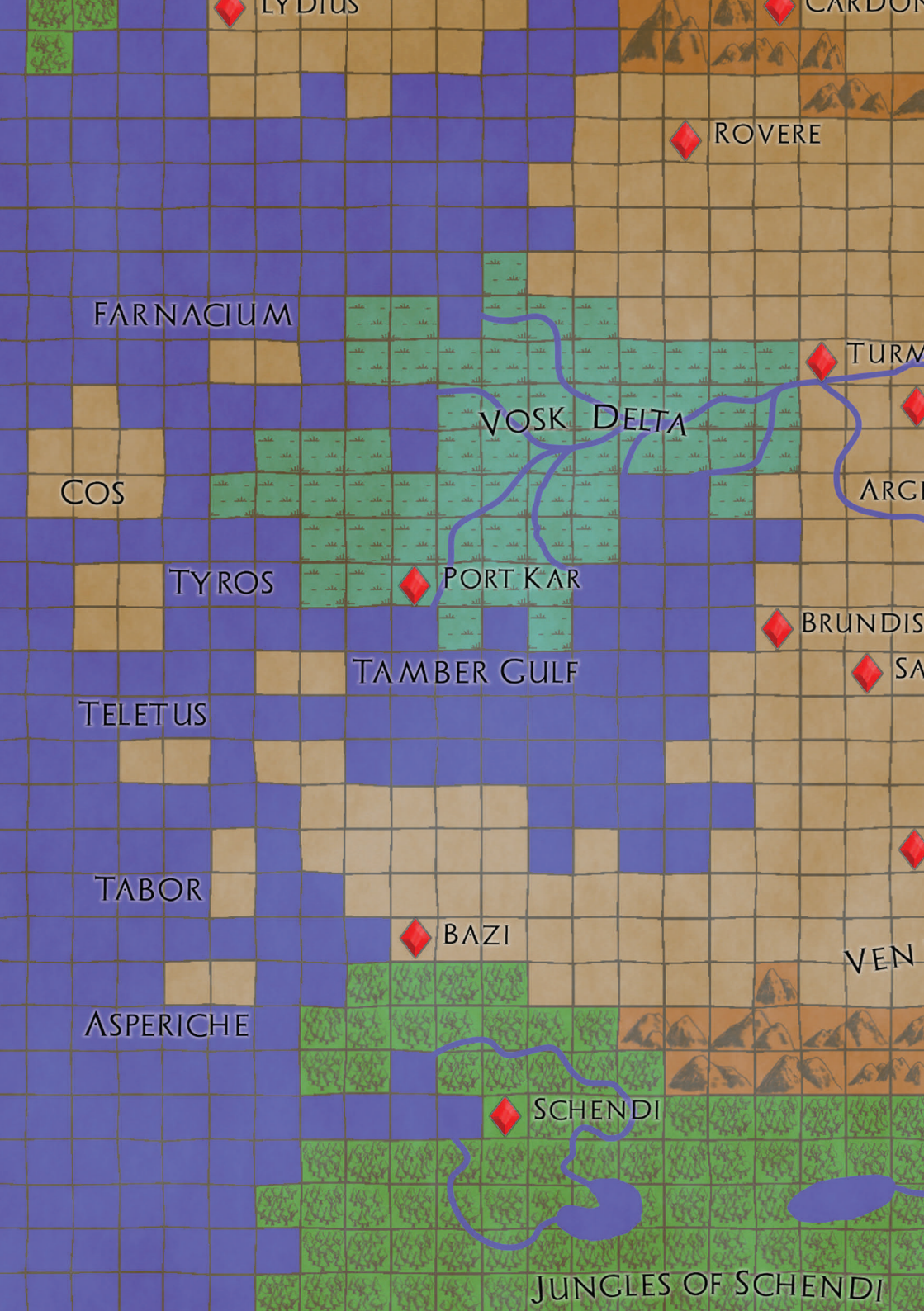
In battle and for their sacrifices, the Gjelbar use curved, hooked swords. In a battle at sea, they use these to cut, cleave and to hook enemies to throw them overboard, even without killing them (though sharks and sea tharlarion will likely soon kill them). Their helmets are conical, wicker, hung with chains to protect their heads and topped with tufts of goat hair and otherwise, toughened to the elements, they often fight bare-chested, even in weather that would freeze others.

Unusually for Gor, the Gjelbar pay particular attention to their dead, interring them in stone cairns, buried with their swords – and nothing else. The island is dotted with thousands of these, many now overgrown or wound with the roots of their stubby trees.

What especially marks out most of the pirate ships of Gjelbar (though they also provide a haven for other pirates) is that so few of them use sails. Their vessels are low, close to the water, hard to spot until they are in striking distance. They often lash up to four of their ships together, hiding their numbers and even encouraging an enemy to ram them, before swarming their decks with superior numbers. This kind of craft, the 'lembus', has between 16 and 50 oars, and typically carries 50 soldiers, in addition to the oar slaves.



Ultimately those people from Gjelbar are most loyal to one another, a large, extended pirate clan who prey on anyone and everything they come across, while still providing a safe haven for those other pirates that they would otherwise prey upon. They make good characters for games that are based upon the Thassa, or sailors working out of Port Kar, Cos or Tyros.



LYDIUS

CARDON

ROVERE

FARNACIUM

TURM

VOSK DELTA

COS

ARG

TYROS

PORT KAR

BRUNDIS

SA

TAMBOR GULF

TELETUS

TABOR

BAZI

VEN

ASPERICHE

SCHENDI

JUNGLES OF SCHENDI