

# BEASTS & BARBARIANS

HEROIC TALES

UMBERTO  
PIGNATELLI



 CAMEO

THE SOUL IN THE WATER



## The Soul in the Water

*"The soul of every man is trapped in a crystal prison. It is called life."*

*– Quipu of the Dark Flame, Ekul Mountains*

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# CHARACTER REQUIREMENTS

This scenario is an excellent way to start your adventures in the Dread Sea Dominions.

It is designed for a party of four Seasoned characters with 20 XP, but it can be easily altered to fit more powerful or numerous groups.

It includes a variety of situations: social interactions (Persuasion and a good Charisma could be very useful there), some good old-fashioned breaking and entering (Lockpicking and Stealth), a dangerous sea voyage (Boating) and a number of combats (any combat skill).

In addition, having a character with some Knowledge (Arcana) could give some extra insights to the party.

Although all the Skills above are useful, they are not essential to complete the adventure successfully.

Parts in *italics* are meant to be read aloud or paraphrased to the players.





## WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Val Catha and Vanthar are two Jalizaran sorcerers. They are twins, but physically as different as day from night: Vanthar is raven-haired and somber, while Val Catha, only few heartbeats younger, is blonde and pleasant.

They are both powerful and feared in the City of Thieves, with a reputation for being remorseless and selfish, as are many of their kind.

When they started growing old, Val Catha, the more devious of the two, decided he wanted more power and youth.

With an insidious trick, he managed to steal the soul of his brother, and subjugate it to his own.

He hid Vanthar's soul in a special place, a temple in a remote island of the Drowned King Sea, consecrated to Chamuga, an old Zharim deity (see sidebar on SEGM).

The morning after, Val Catha, with an evil smile on his face, abruptly threw Vanthar out of their communal mansion. The older brother tried to oppose the younger one, but he suddenly discovered he had lost his powers, and had aged twenty years overnight, while on the other hand, Val Catha was in the glowing vigor of his twenties, and stronger in the arcane arts than he had ever been in the past.

Vanthar fled from Jalizar, because, without his powers, there were many who wanted to take revenge upon him.

The former warlock, reduced to a shadow of himself, wandered across the Dominions for many years, always trying to understand how Val Catha robbed him of his powers and his youth, but without any success.

Months ago, finally, he reached the ruins of the old coastal city of Pella, not far away from Jalizar. He had heard that in a well among the ruin, dwelt the Jabelizzar (see sidebar), an omniscient entity.

"Spirit of many names," Vanthar whispered to the murky water of the well, "I am here to question you."

Suddenly the black water turned clear and an old, pale face appeared, the face of Vanthar himself.

"And how shall you pay me, mortal?" the thing in the well asked.

"With my soul!" Vanthar replied.

"You have no soul anymore, fool!" the Jabelizzar laughed, mockingly.

"I have no soul?" The mage asked puzzled. "So this is how Val Catha robbed me of my powers and my youth! He stole my immortal spirit! Tell me where my soul is!"

"And how will you pay me?" the reflection repeated.

"With my brother's soul! I swear that when I find mine, I'll give you his!"

"This is a pact I like!" the creature in the reflection was amused. "So evil, giving me your brother's immortal spirit! But it is a fair payment for what he did, I suppose. So hear my answer: your brother keeps your soul in a jewel hidden in a crystal prison. Find and drink it and you'll be young and powerful again!"

Vanthar immediately understood: the crystal prison could only be the glass strongbox where his brother always stored his most precious possessions. Val Catha always kept it in his bedroom and knowing him as only a brother can, Vanthar knew it would surely still be there!

"Thanks, spirit!" the old man said. He left the well and returned to his boat, his sole possession, to set sail for the City of Thieves, a plan shaping in his mind.

"What I need, now," he muttered to himself, "Is a group of fools, greedy enough to sneak into Val Catha's palace to recover the gem for me... even if hiring them will cost me the last spark of my powers."

But if Vanthar had paid notice to the whispers of the winds, he would have heard a cold laugh coming from the deserted city, where the Jabelizzar savored the consequences of its words.

## JABELIZZAR

A Jabelizzar is a demonic entity that cannot be summoned directly into the world, because it dwells only in reflective surfaces, like mirrors, polished gems, calm pools of water, and so on. So, after being summoned, a Jabelizzar resides in such a place.

Jabelizzars usually assume the facial features of the person mirrored in them and twist them. So, when a beautiful girl looks at herself in a possessed mirror, the Jabelizzar turns the reflection into that of an old crone. Jabelizzars cannot interact with the world directly, but they can speak to humans and show them almost anything they want. They use their power to influence people (Persuasion  $d_{12}+1$ ), scare them (Intimidation  $d_{12}+1$ ), or anger them (Taunt  $d_{12}+1$ ). The magic of their words is sometimes so strong that they can convince girls to kill their sisters or children to jump into deep wells to grab imaginary toys.

Some of them, the eldest, know many things, but they use their lore only to bring mayhem to mankind.

Sorcerers often summon Jabelizzars as spies, because they can "jump" from one reflective surface to another if these are less than 12" away from each other, so that they can enter the private quarters of the sorcerer's enemies and eavesdrop. The safest way to banish a Jabelizzar is to destroy the reflective object currently hosting it.



# A NIGHT OF STOLEN KISSES... AND KEYS

*You drank all your remaining Moons in the watering holes of Jalizar and now your purse is as empty as a beggar's belly.*

*This is the only reason why you accepted the risky proposal Vanthar made to you. An old fellow, he offered you a round of wine at the Headless Chicken, your favorite tavern, and told you a story that...*

*But let's start at the beginning.*

*Everybody in Jalizar has heard of Val Catha, a powerful sorcerer and a man with not to trifle with. He dwells in a windowless mansion in the Graytowers Quarter, which stories say is filled with enormous treasures.*

*Vanthar wants just one thing from Val Catha's palace: the contents of a glass strongbox in the sorcerer's bedroom. And he is going to pay you a bag full of Moons for it.*

*Val Catha left the city yesterday, and the palace is now guarded by a single person: a muscular northlander called Wulf, Catha's most trusted servant.*

*Val Catha is a misogynist who lives in seclusion and forces his servant to do the same. So, whenever his master is away, Wulf locks the gate of the palace, the only access to the mansion, and goes to the Headless Chicken Inn, to have a night of love and wine with pretty courtesans.*

*And then you intervene.*

The plan Vanthar devised is the following one.

A pretty heroine (or a hired hooker if no such adventurer is present), referred to below as the Courtesan, must hook Wulf, and when in the bedchamber, must make him drink wine spiced with Green Lotus of Dreams, a powerful narcotic.

At this point, the party must take his key and run to the palace, do the job, and return the keys to Wulf's belt.

The plan is so elaborate because Vanthar insists that the theft must be discovered as late as possible by Val Catha.

The adventure starts with the Courtesan leading a very aroused Wulf into her bedroom on the second floor of the Headless Chicken. The other characters are on the lower floor of the tavern, except for up to two of them hidden in the wardrobe of the bedchamber.

The Courtesan has a bottle of drugged wine with her, but Wulf is interested in more carnal pleasures at the moment.

Depending on the age and mood of your players, you can handle this scene with pure role-play or more mechanically, with opposed rolls of the Courtesan's Persuasion against Wulf's Smarts.

If the Courtesan doesn't convince Wulf, she has to comply with his lusty requests, and another character must sneak into the room and silently pluck the Northlander's keyring from his discarded clothes (with two Stealth rolls – Wulf is considered an Inactive Sentinel) while he is entertained by the girl.

If the Courtesan is an NPC you can decide she automatically fails, so the players are in the spotlight of the scene.

**Wulf's Keyring.** A bronze ring, it holds three keys: a big key (opens the front gate), a silver key (opens the harem), and a gray stone key (locks the living statue).

**A Perfect Plan.** The effect of the Lotus lasts for three hours, after which Wulf wakes up yawning.

If the party managed to carry out the theft and return the keys without alarming him, they should be rewarded with a Benny.

Wulf won't survive Val Catha's rage when the theft is discovered.

**(H) Wulf (1).**

## THE HOUSE OF VAL CATHA

*It is almost midnight when you reach the mansion of Val Catha, in the Graytowers Quarter, where the nobles of Jalizar dwell. A dark, foggy night, as thieves like you prefer.*

*It is a bulky, impressive palace, with absolutely no windows. What kind of person can live in a place like that?*

*There is a single entrance, a gate made of black wood reinforced with bands of bronze engraved with strange symbols.*

The door is sealed, but using the big key from Wulf's keyring, the heroes can easily open it. If the heroes don't have the key, they must break it down: the gate has Toughness 12, or it can be picked with a Lockpicking (-4) roll.

Any loud sound will lure unwanted attention in 1d4+2 rounds.

When the heroes enter, read the following text.

*Inside, the palace is even gloomier than outside. The walls are made of polished stone, and there is no sign of mortar between the blocks. It is as dark as the soul of a priest.*

Luckily the heroes have a torch with them, so darkness should not be a problem.

The corridor isn't very long, and before it ends, there are two passages, one on the east wall and one on the west wall; but Vanthar, who seems to know the house reasonably well, was adamant on the topic: the heroes should ignore all side passages, and go straight on, till they reach a central room.

There the party will find stairs to the second floor, where Val Catha's bedroom is.

The scenario presumes the heroes follow his instructions so go on with the following text.

*The corridor ends with an unexpected obstacle: a metal grate, barring the entrance to a circular hall, the one Vanthar told you about. You stop in front of it, and, while the flame of your torch makes a sudden flicker, you spy inside.*

*The room hosts a big statue in the middle, placed upon a pedestal, representing some sort of winged woman.*

*A stairway snakes up to the second floor, where Val Catha's bedroom should be. You see two passages inside the hall, one on the east wall and one on the west, so it could be another way to enter the room.*

Unluckily for the heroes, there is no apparent way to raise the grate; Val Catha summoned it himself, as an additional security measure, so the party must find an alternate route.

The most straightforward one is exploring the East or West Passage (see below), but if a hero, alerted by the flickering flame of the torch, searches the wall near the grate, with a Notice (-2) roll he finds a secret door to the Laboratory (see below). The player having the suspicion should be rewarded with a Benny if he also finds the door.

## THE LABORATORY

A perfectly concealed door, which opens silently on well-oiled hinges, leads to the Laboratory.

*You see a small room, lit by the yellowish flames of a small fireplace. This place is cluttered with strange alchemical paraphernalia: a shelf filled with vases and flasks of various types, a small desk and a crude bench with a naked corpse on it.*

Val Catha isn't a Lotumaster, and the things inside this place are more sorcerous implements than the equipment of a serious practitioner of the Lotus arts.

On the desk there are a sharp dagger, smeared with blood, and an empty flask, smeared with a similar, reddish substance.

The body on the bench belongs to an unfortunate beggar and looks very pale and very dead. The cause of death is evident: his throat was slit, probably with the dagger found on the desk. The disturbing thing is that the blood of the poor sod has been collected in the pot slowly boiling on the fire.

The fire itself is a mystery: it is fueled by three yellow brimstones, which it consumes very slowly. If removed from the fireplace they'll cool in 1d4 hours, and they can be rekindled only with a spell with a fire-based trapping. With a Knowledge (Arcana) roll they can be identified as Burning Crystals of the Red Desert, a curio worth 500 Moons to the right customer (an alchemist or similar).

While the heroes are watching the pot, despite how the saying goes, it starts bubbling; its red, liquid contents are going to boil over! The players have ten seconds (count from ten to zero, slowly) to decide what to do: if they remove the pot from the fire, they can save it and store the contents in the flask on the desk.

This is the Wine of Lust, which Val Catha uses to feed his unearthly concubines (see Harem, below).

On the shelves, there are components of a strange nature, with no label. With a Lotumastery or Notice (-4) roll a bottle with a concoction can be found, the Green Lotus of Purifying. It is imbued with the *healing* Power, with the additional effect of acting as an antidote to any poison.

There are no other exits from this place, except the secret door.

## THROUGH THE EAST PASSAGE

### HALL OF TAPESTRIES

*The passage on the east wall leads to short, dark corridor, which opens into a dining room with a long table of black wood and two seats, one opposite the other, on the short sides of the table. Only one of the two places is set, with a silver plate, cup and knife.*

*Long, heavy tapestries hang from the wall, and, in two niches, there are two busts.*

This room was one of the few places where the two brothers, Val Catha and Vanthar, met. But today only Val Catha's side is in use. The cutlery is fine (and worth 200 Moons). On the plate there is a green fruit, perfectly round, of an unknown nature. If cut, it reveals itself as a citrus fruit of some sort, bitter but not bad.

The tapestries are of good quality, but the subjects depicted are disturbing: sacrifices, executions, carnal affairs between non-human creatures. Characters examining them must make a Spirit (+1) roll to avoid being Nauseated until they leave the room.



The most interesting elements are the busts: they represent two men, clearly brothers; a bearded, brooding one, and a beardless one, each with a sly smile on their thin mouths. The first has a strong resemblance to Vanthar, the party's patron, but he is younger (around forty, while Vanthar is at least sixty).

A passage from this room leads east (in addition to the west one, from where the group arrived).

## THE HAREM

*The passage ends at a chiseled door of white wood, engraved in mother of pearl. A small, silver lock protects it and it is locked.*

The door can be opened with the silver key of Wulf's keyring, or can be pried open with a Lock-picking (-2) roll. Despite its frail appearance, it is quite sturdy (Toughness 10).

*This large room is dimly lit by a number of bronze braziers. It is full of alcoves, cushions and filled with sweet, relaxing perfumes. In the middle of the room, there is even a small swimming pool, from which comes a splashing noise.*

This place is the harem, where Val Catha keeps his very special concubines.

*From the pool a naked girl emerges, dripping with water. She is slender and beautiful and approaches the party.*

*"Hello, my friends. Are you friends of Val Catha? You surely brought it along, did you not?"*

The girl's name is Calla, and she isn't the only one in the harem. There are others, dozing in the alcoves, who wake up in the next few moments, and surround the party. They are really beautiful, even if the shadows in the room make their features seem not completely human.

*"Do you have it? Do you have it?" they ask, becoming more insistent.*

The thing the girls crave is the Wine of Lust, a concoction made of human blood, which is their sole sustenance in this world. If the heroes have it, the girls drink from the jar eagerly, smearing themselves with it in a frenzy. After satiating their lust, they become a little sleepy, but very friendly, and more than willing to "entertain" the heroes. If the group accepts their advances, they have a really memorable experience (they gain a Benny) but lose their sense of time, and realize that only after 1d4 hours. The girls don't know much of the palace, they are locked in most of the time (in truth they were summoned).

If the girls don't get the Wine, the situation turns very bad.

*"You don't have it? But we are hungry! Very hungry!" Calla says angrily.*

*And, without any other notice, she hisses and tries to bite you, revealing long, snake-like teeth!*

The combat occurs in the Harem, which is an area 12" by 16", full of cushions, braziers and other similar props (they can be used to gain +2 to a Trick). The pool is 4" by 6" and placed in the rough center of the room (it is Difficult Ground).

The concubines fight to the death.

Once the situation is resolved (by fighting or with a more peaceful approach), the heroes can leave the room, using a small door leading to the Round Hall.

**(E) Otherworldly Concubine (1 per hero + 1):** See SEGM page 25. Calla is the leader of the group, and she is a Right Hand.

## THROUGH THE WEST PASSAGE

This passage leads to a corridor. After a few paces there is a door on the south wall (leading to the Kitchen), while going straight ahead leads to the Library. Both doors are closed but not locked.

## KITCHEN

*This room has soot-covered beams and hosts a table, a large fireplace, and a larder. The furniture, and a strong scent of stewed cabbage make you think this is the mansion's kitchen, apart from the rough pallet in a corner.*

This place is indeed the kitchen of the mansion, but it also doubles as accomodation for Wulf (Val Catha doesn't believe in pampering servants). There is nothing nothing of interest there.

## LIBRARY

*This tall-ceilinged room is filled with shelves of scrolls, tomes, parchments and other assorted books. In the middle of the room, there is a bookstand, with a scroll opened. The room is dark, remember there are no windows in this house, but, near the scroll, there is a greasy candelabrum: a human skull, with a half-melted red candle on it. It stares at you with a grin.*

*On the opposite side of the room, a corridor leads deeper into the mansion.*

Val Catha may be a great sorcerer, but he certainly isn't a very organized person: the room is a total mess, and finding a specific book is almost impossible.

A hero who spends at least half an hour rummaging in the bookshelf can make an Investigation (-2) roll to find something useful. With a success he finds an interesting scroll about Kyrosian plants (worth 300 Moons to a collector, written in Syranthian), while with a raise he stumbles on an apocryphal copy of an ancient Tricarnian tome of demon lore (worth 500 Moons, contains the secret name of a demon of the GM's choice). Obviously only literate characters knowing the languages the books are written in can identify them.

The scroll on the bookstand is very smooth, tattered and difficult to read, because the runes on it are smeared and ruined. It is actually made of human skin (a Spirit roll to avoid being Nauseated is required when the heroes discover this) and contains interesting fragments, which can be deciphered with a Knowledge (Arcana) (-2) roll.

If the heroes light the red candle (see sidebar) they gain +2 to the roll.

The fragments contain interesting clues on the real nature of the heroes' mission.

*... there are various ways for the learned man to retrieve his lost youth, the easiest is...*

*... but beware, because if you manage to steal it, you must immediately seal it in a proper container, and put it in a crystal prison...*

*... keep it separated, apart from the whole...*

If the heroes light the candle, after few moments, they start seeing strange things: first, the skull appears with a halo of red light, then a similar glow appears around other objects. At this point, if they haven't snuffed out the candle, from behind the bookcases black humanoid shadows with glowing eyes emerge, and attack them!

They are only illusions, but can be deadly, and whenever one is destroyed, another one appears.

They disappear when at least half of the party disbelieves them, or the round after the candle is snuffed.

They cannot leave the room where the candle is.

The corridor leads directly to the Round Hall.

**(E) Shadow of the Mind (1 per hero):** See SEGM page 27. Until all the heroes disbelieve them or the candle is snuffed, a replacement shadow appears anytime one of them is killed.

## THE CANDLE OF WISE MADNESS

This object was made using secret Lotus herbs and its light has the power to make things clear: in game terms any person in a Medium Burst Template centered on the candle is under the effect of the *detect arcana* Power and gains +2 to any Knowledge (Arcana) roll.

The drawback is that its fumes are intoxicants, and make the perception of anyone who breathes them too sharp, causing them to experience hallucinations.

This effect is very insidious and no Vigor roll is allowed to resist, but it happens only when the candle is lit in an enclosed space, where the vapors cannot dissipate.

The exact nature of the illusions changes and it is left to the GM (use the one present in this adventure as guideline).

The Candle of Wise Madness last for three hours and can be sold for 300 Moons.

The skull on which is placed has no power, it is only a gruesome detail Val Catha likes.

## THE ROUND HALL

*It took some time and an indirect route, but you have finally reached the round hall. You look upward and see this place has a very strange architecture: the ceiling is domed and very high. A stair running around the perimeter of the room goes up to a balcony, where there are two doors. Probably one of them is Val Catha's bedroom, where the strongbox is.*

*It is deadly quiet there, but the big statue in the middle of the room make you nervous: it represents a woman with wings and a chain coiled around one arm. It is very tall, at least one and a half times as tall as a man, and very beautiful. It looks almost alive...*

Despite its appearance, for now the statue is lifeless, and the party can easily reach the balcony.

## THE BEDROOMS

The first door on the balcony is closed, but not locked, and leads to an empty room. This was Vanthar's room, and has not been used in many years many years.

The second door is much more interesting.

*You enter an elegant bedroom, with a king-sized bed surrounded by silk curtains, and with exquisite furniture. Your attention is caught by another thing: on the right wall there is a strongbox, made of transparent glass, which emits a faint light. Inside it, there is a red cushion upon which lies a crystal, the size of a baby's fist, which is the origin of the light. So this is what Vanthar wants!*

*But the treasure is guarded: while you are looking, a big, golden scorpion, previously concealed behind the gem, scampers into sight.*

*Taking it won't be so easy...*

The scorpion in the box is a deadly guardian, but, given that the heroes are aware of it, the situation becomes more a problem-solving scene than a real trap. Clever players can find a number of ways to eliminate it, the simplest one is coordination: one hero opens the strongbox (it isn't locked) and the other, On Hold, stabs the scorpion, or if a thief feels really lucky, he can try taking the gem without angering it. Consider this a Dramatic Task based on Stealth (-4), in the case of failure the adventurer is automatically stung by the beast, while if he succeeds the character should be rewarded with a Benny.

The scorpion has Toughness: 2, Parry: 5, Fighting d8 and it is Small (-2 to hit). It attacks only unprotected flesh: no damage roll is required, and it injects a Lethal venom (-4, see Savage Worlds). The Green Lotus of Saving in the Laboratory can counter it.

Eventually the party will take the gem and leave the room but their troubles are only starting...



## THE GUARDIAN AWAKES!

The heroes must return to the Round Hall to leave the mansion, and when they are still on the stairs, something happens.

*First you hear a creaking noise, like nails scratching on rocks, and then you see it: the statue turns its head toward you. In the dim light of the room you can see the eyes turning red as burning ember. With a low growl, the creature beats its wings and flies toward you, swirling the chain in a deadly arc.*

The Guardian Idol attacks the hero who has the crystal, but it isn't shy about attacking the other thieves. Remember (see description of the creature) that isn't a mindless construct, but a trapped demon, so it is relatively smart.

The Guardian Idol is invulnerable, apart from its First Weakness: a narrow fissure, similar to a keyhole, on its neck. This can be discovered with a Notice roll if a character explicitly studies the creature for a round, otherwise any hero in close combat with it is allowed a Notice (-4) roll to spot it.

The combat area is the Round Hall, which is a circle 6" in radius. The heroes are probably on the stair snaking around the walls of the room. It is quite narrow, 1" wide on the battlefield, and any character Shaken or wounded while standing on it must make an Agility roll to avoid falling down (a Medium fall, 2d6 damage, if they are on the top, or a Short fall, 1d6 damage, from halfway up the stairs to the ground).

If the party doesn't manage to discover the weakness of the statue they can always decide to run away: the passages are too narrow for the Guardian Idol's wings, so they can easily outpace it.

The text below presumes the adventurers find the Guardian's Idol weakness and use the stone key on it. If this doesn't happen, reword it appropriately.

The Idol will be reactivated later in the adventure by Val Catha and the heroes will have to fight it another time. Note who defeats it each time, because, if this is always the same adventurer, he'll be rewarded at the end of the scenario with the Golden Benny of Smashing (see page 23).

*With a deftly move you insert the stone key in the fissure on the neck of the statue and rotate it.*

*The statue freezes instantly, and falls down on the ground, smoking and weeping a greenish substance from its eyes.*

*You still hear a growl, very low, but very angry. To your surprise, the green stone key has melted into the idol.*

*You hear another sound: the grate in the southern wall of the room, the one which forced you to explore the palace, rises up, as if it was connected in some way with the statue.*

The path is finally clear, the heroes can leave the house, run to the Headless Chicken Tavern to return the keys to Wulf if they want, and then reach the docks, where Vanthar, their patron, awaits them.

**(WC) Guardian Idol (1):** See page 24..

# AN UNEXPECTED VOYAGE

The scenario supposes the heroes go to Vanthar's boat, a small chibbar called the *Gray Eel*, at the new docks.

*The old man awaits you with impatience. He literally grabs the gem from your hands and distractedly throws you a fat purse.*

The bag is filled with old gold pieces in some forgotten coinage. Their value is around 1000 Moons. With a Knowledge (History) roll, they can be recognized as Pellán Drakis. Pella was an ancient city near Jalizar, destroyed centuries ago.

*Vanthar raises the crystal high, with closed eyes. "It's... it's impossible! It isn't there! It isn't there! This is a simple piece of glass!"*

*He throws the gem on the ship's deck and hisses dangerously to you: "Are you trying to fool me?"*

Before the situation gets very tense, something strange happens.

*The gem, abandoned on the ground, starts moving, first slowly then with decision, toward the northeast, stopping only when it reaches the ship's bulwarks.*

*"It is a compass! It shows the way to what I am looking for!" Vanthar says, amazed.*

It is exactly as the former mage thinks; the crystal, which is only a small piece of Vanthar's soul, is attracted to the position where the greatest part of it is.

Vanthar becomes calm again.

*"Well, you did a good job after all. If you continue helping me, there will be another purse like that one for you."*

The scenario supposes the heroes accept.

*"So the decision is taken. Raise the sails!" Vanthar orders.*

*The Gray Eel leaves Jalizar at first light, its route determined by a strange piece of glass.*

## DARK WINDS

The crystal points directly northeast, and the winds blow favorably for the heroes.

Vanthar is a decent sailor and the heroes have a full day and night to nurse their wounds and to chat a bit, while the *Gray Eel* travels.

It is a good moment to play an Interlude.

During the night Vanthar leaves the helm to one of the heroes and rests a bit, on the deck. The *Gray Eel* isn't large, and space is cramped, so one of the heroes hears him muttering in his sleep.

*"Hidden in a crystal prison, it said. But it wasn't in the strongbox, so where it is? Damn you, I'll have my vengeance..."*

At midday on the second day, the party spots a white sail behind them. This is strange, because this route isn't very well travelled.

After a few hours, it is clear the ship is chasing the *Gray Eel*.

Examining the sails and hull of the ship (which is the twice the size of the *Gray Eel*), the heroes can discover some things. Let them make a Boating or Common Knowledge (only if Jalizaran) roll and check the results below.

**Success.** The ship is surely a Jalizaran vessel.

**Raise.** The ship's hull is typical of the Shallows (a small island of freebooters not far away from Jalizar); it has extra sails, little cargo, and a very large crew. Probably they are pirates.

**Two Raises.** The ship is the *Scapegallows*, a pirate ship commanded by the infamous Captain Chaaran. Usually it beats the southern routes, where the fat cargo ships from the Dread Sea come. It is quite strange it is here.

*Vanthar becomes very scared. "Val Catha! That demon's son found us!"*

Vanthar is right: Val Catha is aboard the *Scapegallows*. He discovered the theft and, after punishing Wulf in a terrible way, he hired pirates to chase the crystal. With his powers, he can track it down at long distances.

The pirate's ship is bigger than the *Gray Eel*, and the crew far more numerous. A direct confrontation will mean death... or a fate worse than that, if Val Catha gets his hands on the party.

The only way out is to evade him.

*Luckily a chance of escape, although a slim one, appears on the horizon.*

*Northward, right on your route, there are dark clouds gathering, very dark ones. A storm like the mother of all tempests, waiting with open jaws. If you manage to dive into it before the Scapegallows reaches you... well, you might have a chance to survive the day.*

It is a dire plan, but there is another problem, a bigger one, making it more desperate.

*You see something taking off from the deck of the enemy ship: a big, winged creature. It is the guardian idol you defeated at Catha's palace! The sorcerer must have reawakened it again!*

If escaping the *Scapegallows* would not be easy, eluding the Idol is even more difficult.

The scene is handled in this way.

The *Gray Eel* begins with three Advantage Tokens, while the Idol has zero Advantage Tokens.





For each of the five rounds necessary for the heroes' ship to enter the storm, the heroes make a cooperative Boating roll, opposed by the Idol's Agility roll (d6, with +4 since it is flying).

Whoever wins each round takes one Advantage Token (two on a raise) from their opponent.

If at any point the *Gray Eel* has zero tokens it means the Idol has reached it and attacks (see below).

Vanthar has Boating d6, but he'll pass the helm to any character who is a better sailor than him.

**Idol's Attack.** The Idol's main goal is slowing down the *Gray Eel*, so that the *Scapegallows* can reach and board it. If it reaches the heroes' ship, it doesn't land, but uses its chain to attack the ship's mast.

This has Toughness 10 and can sustain two Wounds: on the first one, the *Eel* suffers -2 to Boating rolls, on the second, -4. The party can try attacking the beast with their ranged weapons, but remember the creature's Invulnerability. Note that until a hero is in close combat with the Idol he cannot spot its weakness (the creature uses the Reach of the chain to its advantage). So, the best thing the heroes can do is slow it down with some tricks: for example throwing a barrel of pitch at it (Agility Trick at -2), using the boom of the sail to hit it (Trick using Boating vs Agility) and anything else creative players might devise.

The important thing is that the heroes should not destroy the Idol now.

At the end of the fifth round, they enter the storm.

**(WC) Guardian Idol (1):** See page 24.

## IN THE STORM!

*The gale and the rain hits you as hard as a slaver's whip, and a wave tall as a house hits the Idol which disappears among the waters. Has that dreaded monster finally found its fate?*

*You have no time to think about this, because you are too busy trying to survive.*

*"Lower that damned sail!" Vanthar shouts, trying to overcome the howling of the storm.*

The storm lasts the whole day and the whole night, and is a terrible experience. Every character aboard must make a Boating (-2) or Vigor (-4) roll to endure it.

Check the results below.

**One or less - Man Overboard!** The hero loses his balance and is thrown overboard, luckily he manages to grab onto the bulwarks! His friends can try to save him (1d3 randomly selected heroes are nearby). They must succeed in a Strength (-4) roll, which can be cooperative, as per the Cliffhanger Setting Rule (see SEPC). Even the hero who fell overboard can contribute to the roll (but he cannot be the leader). There are three rounds to save him, otherwise he will be swallowed by the storm (unless the GM decides otherwise, see the Saved by the Goddess of Mercy? sidebar).

**Failure - A Nightmarish Experience.** By the time the storm ends, the character is Fatigued and remains so until the beginning of the Under the Island scene (see below).

**Success - A Terrible Night.** The character ends the storm Fatigued until the beginning of the Under the Island scene (see below).

**Raise - A Bad Day.** It is a rough journey, but not the worst the adventurer has endured. The character suffers no ill consequences.

**Two Raises - Laughing in Face of the Death.** The storm only kindles the reckless spirit of the hero, who stays on deck, enjoying the ride! He gains a Benny, and he will probably mock his weak-stomached friends for the rest of the session.

At dawn, the storm ends and the heroes find themselves in a clear sea. There is no pursuer. There is absolutely nothing around them except the sea.

And the crystal looks dead.

A character with an Arcane Background feels something is strange about this place.

If he asks Vanthar for the crystal, the old man begrudgingly hands it to the adventurer.

Once in the character's hands, the GM can ask for a Spirit roll, if he wants, but the result isn't really important. Go on with the following:

*The crystal becomes warmer and brighter in your hands. You feel the urge to raise it high.*

When the hero holds it aloft, a marvelous thing happens.

*The air in front of the ship flickers, like a mirage in the desert, and, after a brief moment, it clears.*

*Where before there was only open sea, now there is an island.*

**Note:** if no character with an Arcane Background is present in the party, Vanthar will discover the island, but the players should preferably suggest to him what to do.

## GM'S TIP: SAVED BY THE GODDESS OF MERCY?

Killing a character for a single missed roll isn't very fair or entertaining, so, if a hero is thrown overboard during the storm, the GM has several ways to re-introduce him into play.

The suggested one is to have the party find him, naked and unconscious, in front of the fountain-statue. When awoken by his comrades, he doesn't remember anything, except a woman with a strange nose ring... maybe the Goddess of Mercy saved him?

# THE ISLAND OF MERCY

*The island isn't very big, and it is quite rocky. It isn't shown on any map, and you have never heard of it. There is a natural bay, with a fine sandy shore where you can moor the Gray Eel.*

*The vegetation on the island consists of strong, brown grass, and tall, tough brambles with yellow flowers. Their penetrating smell reaches you even on the beach.*

At the inland edge of the shore, there is an old, almost overgrown path leading deeper into the island, passing between brambles taller than a man.

Apparently, the island seems to be only inhabited by seagulls and wild rabbits.

*You walk for half an hour, then the path ends at the outskirts of some ruins.*

The ruins are those of Chaza, a small town, abandoned for many centuries. It is composed of a small central plaza, with a building in the middle of it, and a group of houses and palaces around the plaza, with no protective wall.

The roads are paved, a sign that these people were quite advanced, but the stones are occasionally split by brambles.

With a Knowledge (History) or (Legends and Lore) (-2) roll, the architecture can be recognized as probably made by the Zharim, the so-called Cows, the original inhabitants of Valkheim.

When the heroes enter the ruins, the crystal wakes up again, pulling with some strength toward the plaza's central building.

The heroes can freely explore Chaza (see box), but sooner or later they'll inspect the central building.

**The Shrine of Mercy.** The building at the center of the town is a ruined shrine. The roof is missing, and exposure to the elements has destroyed the inside. The only thing remaining is a fountain-statue in the middle of the hall, representing a woman with four breasts, short horns, and a big nose ring.

Waters should have come out of the breasts of the statue, filling the basin at her feet, but they are dry and the basin is filled with debris.

The statue depicts Chamuga, a Zharim deity (see sidebar).

There is an engraving on the stone basin in the Zharim tongue, saying: "May the Waters of Purity wash your sins away".

The crystal's pull is very strong in the temple, but it points downward, below the feet of the heroes.

The group will probably explore the entire temple, but there is nothing to be found. The statue is only made of earthenware, and the heroes can break it if they want, revealing a system of old tubes going deep underground. The hero shattering the statue is hit by Chamuga's rage, and suffers from the Bad Luck Hindrance till the end of the adventure.

**The Fissure.** Vanthar's soul is beneath the statue, but hundreds of yards below and an indirect path must be found. The first hero leaving the temple and looking for another passage should be rewarded with a Benny (if the characters are stuck, Vanthar, after a while, decides to explore the city methodically).

*On the northern outskirts of the village, you find a deep crevasse in the ground, surrounded by brambles. It is a black, gaping mouth, and the rough steps leading down into the darkness invite you to enter the belly of the beast.*

This is the place the heroes are looking for. When they decide to go down the stairs, go on with the Under the Island scene.



## CHAMUGA, GODDESS OF MERCY

The heroes can discover something about the statue with a Knowledge (History) or (Legends and Lore) (-2). For each success and raise, they discover the info below. Note that the information is cumulative, so success includes failure, raise includes success and failure and so on.

**Failure.** The statue represents a foreign goddess of some type.

**Success.** The statue represents Chamuga, also called the Cow Mother.

Chamuga is probably a Zharim deity. She is also the mistress of herds. Her nose ring is like those used for bulls, but all the sufferings of mortals are engraved on it.

**Raise.** Chamuga is the Goddess of Mercy. Those repenting an evil deed, such as murder, pray to Chamuga for pardon, while merchants toast her after a day's swindling, just to be on the safe side. She is also the goddess of rain and life, the great cleaner of the streets of Jalizar, and she is often depicted weeping milk, because the tears of the goddess cleanse both men and beasts from the evil within them and bring new life. Some say that Chamuga's and Etu's cults are in competition with each other, as both deities have maternal aspects.

**Two Raises.** Stories say that many temples of Chamuga have a secret room, not directly connected with the main one, where the sinners go to atone privately. It is called the Room of Mercy. The entrance to the Room of Mercy can also be quite distant from the main access to the temple.

## THE FATE OF CHAZA

Chaza was one of the main centers of the Cult of Chamuga. Her most devoted followers, real pacifists, abandoned Zharim (today called Valkheim) to found a city here on this Island and burned their own ships because they had no desire to go back to the Dominions.

They were the most beloved followers of the Goddess of Mercy, but fate didn't want them to survive, and a plague destroyed the grain fields, wiping them out.

But before the last priestess of Chamuga died while holding a starving child in her arms, she prayed to the goddess to allow her sons to rest in peace. After her demise, the island was shrouded by the strange veil preventing it from being found.

Sometimes even gods are helpless.

Val Catha found hints of the island's existence, and of the holy fountain, in ancient books of lore.

## EXPLORING CHAZA

An accurate inspection of the town isn't the goal of the scenario, but adventurers love poking around, so a table is given below. For each half-hour of exploration, draw a card from the Action Deck and run the mini-scene below. The heroes can explore the town individually or in small groups.

**Redraw:** if the card was already drawn, the adventurer automatically finds the fissure leading to the underground temple.

**Duce - Treacherous Floor.** The floor of the building the heroes are exploring is rotten. Roll a d4, if the result is less than or equal to the number

of the characters in the party, it breaks and the adventurers fall down into the cellar, suffering 3d6 damage (half damage with an Agility roll). Getting up requires a Climbing roll, ropes and a lot of swearing.

**Three to Six – Trinket.** With a Notice (-2) roll the hero finds an old trinket of the Zharim. Choose one of the following: a dagger, a drinking horn, a vase, a candelabra, a sword hilt, a helm. If the card drawn is black, the item is too ruined to be useful. If it is red, it is worth 1d4x10 Moons (the dice can ace).

**Eight – Snake!** A randomly selected hero disturbs a venomous snake. If he is moving cautiously, he is allowed a Notice (-4) roll to spot it, otherwise the beast attacks with The Drop (Fighting d6), aiming at an unprotected location, before vanishing into the debris. It deals 2d4 damage and is Poisonous (see Savage Worlds). The Green Lotus of Purifying can cure this.

**Nine – Earthenware Tablets.** The adventurers enter a house, which must have belonged to a sage, because they find a room filled with earthenware tablets, probably a sort of library. Sadly most of them are no longer legible, but, with an Investigation or Smarts (-4) roll the characters find fragments of a diary from which they understand that the city was wiped out by a plague, which destroyed the previously very fertile grain fields, three hundred years ago.

**Ten – Nest of Bats.** The building the heroes are exploring is the home of a swarm of bats, which attacks the party when they enter. Each adventurer suffers 2d4 damage. The bats fly high into the sky and then descend down into the fissure of the underground temple.

**Jack – An Old Guardian.** While the heroes explore a building, they feel watched. With a Notice roll, they see a big white dog, with a black patch on his muzzle. The beast seems healthy and isn't aggressive, although he doesn't like being touched. The party can easily gain his trust with some food, which he gulps down eagerly. The dog, once sure the heroes are friendly, leads them to the fissure to the underground temple. The dog was one of the Guardian Shepherds of the Temple, as can be understood from the bronze collar he wears, engraved with a bull's head. He is at least 300 years, but the blessing of the goddess protects him and kept him alive so far. If the heroes treat him kindly, he may join the group.

**(H) “Dog”.** See page 24.

**Queen – The Strongbox.** The house the heroes are exploring hides a secret door (Notice (-4) roll to discover). Behind it is a small room, with a skeleton embracing a small wooden strongbox, which is locked. The key hanging from the neck of the skeleton, otherwise the lock must be picked. Inside there are assorted jewels, and an ivory necklace, worth 300 Moons in total. The treasure may be cursed at the GM's discretion.

**Ace – Dangerous Granary.** There are several big underground granaries in this house. They are all empty except for one, sealed with a stone cover. If the party opens it, a foul smell of fermented grain comes from the bottom. There is something shimmering on the bottom, but the adventurers need to abseil in to recover it. The gas inside the granary is deadly, and the hero must make a Vigor (-2) roll each round to avoid gaining a level of Fatigue. A character Incapacitated by the gas dies after 2d6 minutes of exposure to it. Abseiling down requires a round, climbing up another two rounds. The shimmering thing is the armored body of a man, a Zharim, perfectly preserved. He is armed with a bronze short sword and in ruined medium bronze armor. Probably he died centuries ago.

**King – Council Hall.** The heroes stumble on the old council hall of the town. It is an amphitheater-shaped room, with old paintings on the walls. Inspecting them, with a Knowledge (History) or (Legends and Lore) roll, an adventurer discovers the name of the city, Chaza, and gains a Benny.

**Joker – Sail on the Horizon!** The heroes, exploring a ruined tower, have a clear view of the sea, and see the *Scapegallows* arriving! They must hurry, but won't be surprised in the final scene (they can also decide to set an ambush for the pirates, in which case the outcome of the story is left to the GM).



# UNDER THE ISLAND

*The steps are very rough and very narrow, snaking down the side of the crevasse.*

*They become steeper, so much so that you have to hang on the rough wall to avoid falling off.*

*"Hurry up!" Vanthar hisses. "We haven't much time." And he goes down first.*

Let the heroes make an Agility roll. A character rolling 1 on the Attribute die, regardless of the Wild Die, feels the brittle stone of the step crumble under his feet and slides over the edge! The other adventurers must save him (use the Cliffhanger Setting rule again) within two rounds, before he falls down from a Tall height (6d6+6 damage). Luckily, there is water at the bottom, so the damage is halved (3d6+3) and can be totally avoided with an Agility (-2) roll.

*The stair is long, very long, and the crevasse becomes wider step by step. At the bottom, the sea has invaded part of it, creating a small bay. You are now on a small, underground beach. The sand, white as chalk, is dotted with blue shells, which glow gently, giving an eerie aspect to the whole area.*

*To the north, the beach ends in an irregular rocky wall, in the middle of which there is a large stone gate, which is closed.*

The shimmering blue shells produce their peculiar glow due to a parasite, a form of aquatic Lotus, but they aren't dangerous (they are quite precious too: one of them can be sold for 50 Moons). Among the sand and the shells there are also some scattered bones and skulls, a sign that this place is dangerous, but the characters can only spot them with a Notice (-2) roll, unless they are explicitly looking for something out of ordinary in the sand.

## THE GATE

Eventually, the heroes will approach the gate.

*The gate is as tall as two men and wide enough to let a cart pass. It is closed and has a great, rusty ring on it. A stylized bull's head decorates the top.*

The gate requires a very strong man to open it, but as it was used mostly by the priestesses of Chamuga, there is another way to open it: a small, concealed lever, which opens it using a system of counterweights. Discovering this requires a close inspection of the wall and a successful Notice (-4) roll.

The problem is that, while the heroes are examining the door, something happens. The text below supposes that one hero is keeping watch towards the rear, while the rest of the party inspects the door, otherwise reword it and check for surprise.

*Something bad is going to happen. From the sand, a number of shapes emerge. They are big, shelled creatures, a sort of hybrid between giant crabs and spiders. Quickly, they scuttle toward you, producing a clacking sound with their claws and with a hungry light in their small eyes!*

The creatures are Reef Spiders, dangerous sea predators, and they are going to attack the party. The battlefield is a square area, 12" by 12", delimited by the northern wall of the crevasse. The gate (2" wide) is in the middle of this, and the party is placed within 3" from it. The monsters enter the battlefield from a random side (but not the north).

The sands host an indefinite number of the creatures, and new ones arrive round after round, so the party must open the door as fast as they can and close it behind them. This can be done with a Dramatic Task based on Strength (-4): the group must gather at least four successes/raises to open the gate, unless they find the secret mechanism. The gate is large enough to allow two persons to work on it at the same time (individually or in cooperation).

**(E) Reef Spiders (1 per hero + 1 per 2 heroes at the beginning of each round):** See page 26..



## THE INVISIBLE BRIDGE

*The stone door slams at your back with a thud. You hear the creatures outside clacking angrily, but their powerful claws can do nothing against the stone.*

*You are safe for now, but what other dangers await you in the darkness?*

*As if in response to your question, the crystal starts glowing with a warm, yellow light, and you see a passage in front of you, leading deeper into the mountain.*

*You feel a gentle tug from the jewel proceed along the path.*

*"Come on," Vanthar says. "I feel I'm close now."*

The passage goes on for several minutes of cautious walking.

*The corridor ends in a grotto, on the verge of a large crevasse. Big stalactites hang down from the ceiling, like the teeth of some enormous creature.*

The passage continues on the other side, but there is no apparent means to cross the chasm safely.

There are two ways to overcome this obstacle: the first, very dangerous, is jumping from stalactite to stalactite over the chasm, while the second is hidden in the crystal.

**Jumping Between the Stalactites.** This is a Dramatic Task, based on Strength (even rounds) and Climbing (odd rounds) rolls, both at -2. The heroes must score four successes (raises don't count). The first time they fail, they start sliding down the stalactite, and suffer a level of Fatigue, the second time they get a second level, and the third time they fall down, finding sure death in the darkness. This Fatigue, caused mainly by stress, is recovered when Val Catha arrives (see next scene).

**The Crystal's Power.** There is a passage to cross the chasm; a stone bridge, quite narrow, which is masked by the same power that conceals the island. A character wielding the crystal can dissipate the illusion with a Spirit (-2) roll. Note that in contrary to above, any character can attempt this, but he rolls with +2 if he has an Arcane Background of some type.

If successful, the bridge appears and can be crossed safely. Otherwise, the characters can find it simply by feeling along the chasm's edge. In this case, they can cross it, but they advance very cautiously, making three Notice rolls; the one in front rolls with -2. If they fail two or more rolls, they fall down as above.

## TWO BROTHERS

Once across the bridge, the passage continues.

The heroes are very close to their goal: Vanthar is frantic now, and cannot be slowed down in any way.

*As you advance, you start hearing the sound of falling water, and finally you reach a large cavern, dimly lit.*

*At the end of the grotto, there is a very tall statue, the exact twin of the one you found in the upper temple, but doubled in every dimension. But this statue has water cascading from her eyes, which falls on an altar and then gathers in a small pool. On the altar, under a constant flux of water, there is something, something small.*

Vanthar hurries to the altar, and he picks the item, holding it high: it is a small crystal flask, wrapped in a lock of blonde hair.

The "crystal prison", after all, isn't real crystal, it is only a flow of water. But Vanthar is too busy gloating to think of these details.

*"Finally! It is mine! It is mine again!" he says, triumphantly. "My soul!"*

*"Well, well, my beloved brother, don't be too eager," a voice says.*

*From the entrance of the room, a number of people are approaching: most of them are rough fellows, probably pirates, armed with swords except for one who has a bow. They are led by a young, blonde fellow, with a striking resemblance to Vanthar. It is Val Catha, the sorcerer.*

*"May the gods curse you!" Vanthar hisses. "Why did you do this? Why did you steal my soul?"*

*The blonde mage shrugs. "I wanted more power. That, and to be young again, so I stole your remaining years. And to be honest, well, I never really liked you."*

*"I'll kill you!" Vanthar shouts, and starts uncorking the bottle.*

*"Don't count on it," Val Catha smirks. "There is someone here who is eager to meet you!"*

*From behind the mage a deep growl is heard, and a massive shape emerges, with a deep growl. It's that damned Idol again!*

The final fight of this scenario starts! The battlefield is an irregular grotto, roughly oval in shape, 18" long on the east-west axis and 10" wide at the widest point on the north-south axis. At the western extremity is the passage which the heroes came from, 2" wide. Place Val Catha and his hirelings within 6" of it.

On the eastern extremity is the statue of Chamuga, 2" by 2" on the battlefield. Place the heroes and Vanthar within 4" of it.

The pirate with the bow automatically begins On Hold, while all the others (and the players) act normally.

The archer shoots at Vanthar, making a Called Shot at the bottle (-4, +2 for the Marksman Edge) to make him drop it. If this happens, it lands 1d4" away from Vanthar in a random direction. It is very sturdy (Toughness: 9).

*"Don't let him open it!" Val Catha orders.*

The battle is a savage one: the Idol attacks the party, while Val Catha tries to incapacitate his brother without killing him (not out of mercy, but because if Vanthar dies, his soul leaves, and Val Catha ages, as below).

If Vanthar manages to take the bottle, uncork it, and drink it (three actions), an incredible thing happens.

*You see, before your eyes, Vanthar becoming young again, while his brother, on the other hand, ages!*

*"No! No!" shouts Val Catha, seeing his hands wrinkle, while his brother laughs evilly, the air around him crackling as his magical powers come back to him!*

At the end of the process, both brothers are of middle age, of equal power (see stats) and Shaken.

When they recover, the two mages start fighting each other, throwing bolts of magical energy, ignoring everyone else in the room (remember the Innocent Bystander rule).

Meanwhile, the heroes must deal with the pirates and, for the last and final time, with the Idol.

The battle probably ends in Val Catha's defeat.

But the devious mage has one last trick up his sleeve. With a last effort of will, he unleashes a terrible bolt, aimed at Vanthar, but which instead hits the statue of Chamuga, making it shatter and fall.

If things go differently, see the sidebar; the important thing is that the scene ends with the destruction of the statue.

When this happens, go on with the next scene.

**(WC) Guardian Idol (1):** See page 21..

**(E) Pirate of the Scapegallows (1 per Hero +2):** See page 26.

**(WC) Val Catha (1):** See page 27.

(WC) Vanthar (1): See page 27.

## TERRAIN AND PROPS

- ❖ **Depressions and Stalagmites.** The ground of the cavern is irregular, with depressions and stalagmites. Place three areas 2" by 3" which are considered Difficult Ground. Also place five 1" by 1" stalagmites, which have Toughness 7 and grant Medium Cover.
- ❖ **Holy Water.** The water in the basin is holy to Chamuga, or maybe there is some strange micro-organism in it. Whatever the reason, if drunk while fresh, it removes all Fatigue.
- ❖ **Statue of Chamuga.** This statue-fountain of the goddess is fifteen feet tall, and made of earthenware. It is quite fragile, it only has Toughness 6. When it is destroyed, go on with the next scene, Chamuga's Rage.

## THE MESS OF THE BATTLE

The main text of the scenario supposes that Val Catha is defeated by Vanthar, but things can go in other ways.

Below are some suggestions on how to end the adventure in these cases.

**Val Catha defeats his brother after he drinks his soul.** Vanthar, with his last strength, throws a misplaced *bolt* at Val Catha, shattering the statue. Val Catha is then killed by the falling stalactite.

**The Soul's bottle is destroyed before Vanthar can drink from it.** In this case Vanthar suddenly dies, but his soul briefly returns to him, for just long enough for him to throw a misplaced *bolt* at his hated brother, which hits the statue. Val Catha suddenly ages and is then killed by the falling stalactite (see below).

## CHAMUGA'S RAGE!

*With the statue destroyed, water pours from a hole in the wall, and, more worrying, the ground starts shaking, as if destroying the statue has angered the goddess!*

*You must leave this place as soon as possible!*

If one of the mages is still alive, Chamuga doesn't spare him.

*But for one person it is already too late: from the ceiling, you hear a cracking sound and a huge stalactite falls down, impaling Vanthar. His newfound youth didn't help him much.*

It is really time to go for the heroes. The last scene of the adventure is a furious chase, five rounds long, based on Agility!

There is no real pursuer, but the falling boulders are a great danger. Depending on the Action Card drawn (see table below), the characters must make an Agility (or other Trait roll) to avoid being hit. If a complication (a club card) is drawn, the roll suffers another -2.

Note that, even if the party didn't discover it, the invisible bridge is now visible (Val Catha knows how to temporarily dispel the enchantment).

### FALLING BOULDERS TABLE



CARD	EFFECT
No Card Drawn	<b>Big Stalactite!</b> If the Agility roll fails, the character suffers 3d8 damage, AP 3!
2	<b>Big Boulders!</b> Two Agility rolls are required. Each of them, if failed, causes the loss of 2d8 damage, AP 2.
3-5	<b>Single Boulder!</b> An Agility roll is required. In the case of failure, the character suffers 2d6 damage.
6-8	<b>Fissure in the Ground!</b> A fissure opens in front of the hero. He can choose to jump over it, with a Strength roll. If he fails, he falls into the fissure, suffering 3d6 damage. Otherwise he can try to go around, losing time: this adds an additional round of Chase for him only.
9-10	<b>Ground Shaking!</b> The ground moves violently under the character's feet, he must make a Strength roll to avoid falling down (and suffering -2 to the Agility roll next round).
Jack-Queen	<b>Minor Debris!</b> The hero is pelted by a cloud of small stones. He must make a Vigor roll or suffer from Bumps and Bruises.
King-Ace	<b>Nothing Falling.</b> Nothing dangerous is in the hero's path this round.
Joker	<b>A Moment of Respite.</b> The character isn't hit by anything, and receives a Bennie, which, if not used, expires at the end of the Chase.

## THE END

Running frantically, you leave the fissure before it collapses in on itself, and then you make for the beach, while the ground continues to shake like a dying giant.

*On the shore, you see a group of pirates, the rest of the crew of the Scapegallows, very worried. When they spot you they unsheathe their swords and prepare to fight, but another, strong shake of the ground persuades them to try something else.*

*They quickly board their ship and set sail. And you do the same, while large cracks split the shore.*

*Once you are out at sea, you hear a terrible sound, like the wailing of a thousand of mothers in childbirth, and the island sinks below the waters, never to be seen again.*

*The adventure didn't end with the pile of gold you expected, but at least you are alive, and you have the first purse of Vanthar's gold... but... wait a moment, why is it so thin? The gold has turned to dust!*

*Damn' warlock! You should never have trusted them!*

In truth the real reward for the heroes is the *Gray Eel*, which is a fine little ship, and in the galley, isn't that a barrel of good Jalizaran rum? There is enough of it to make the trip back to the City of Thieves comfortable...

## SPECIAL REWARD: THE GOLDEN BENNY OF SMASHING

This adventure has a recurring enemy: the Guardian Idol. If the same hero defeated it three times (in Vanthar's palace, turning it away on sea and finally destroying it in the underground temple), he is rewarded with the Golden Benny of Smashing. If spent to reroll an attack roll, it grants +2 to the roll, which becomes +4 if the enemy has a Weakness of some type.

# CREATURES AND NPCs

## “DOG”

This large, white, shepherd dog is one of the Guardian Shepherds of Chamuga, beasts devoted to protecting the temple of the goddess. When the dwellers of Chaza died, the goddess, for some reason, protected this beast, which survived.

Although many years have passed, “Dog” (no man knows his name anymore) has survived, untouched by time.

Dog is a powerful, and merciful, beast. He hasn’t had a master for many years and will gladly follow a good-hearted adventurer.

“Dog” is a Henchman.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Loyal.

**Gear:** Ancient bronze collar of Chamuga (+1 to opposed rolls to resist magic).

### Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **DangerSense:** “Dog” isn’t a normal beast. He can sense when something bad is about to happen. Anytime he’s about to be the victim of a surprise attack, ambush, or other nasty surprise, he gets a Notice roll at –2 just before the attack or event occurs. If successful, “Dog” knows something is about to happen and may take appropriate action against it. This means that “Dog” is On Hold for the first round of combat. If he succeeds with a raise, he also warns his master.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Go for the Throat:** Dogs instinctively go for an opponent’s weak spots. With a raise on his attack roll, he hits the target’s most weakly armored location.



## GUARDIAN IDOL

Nobody knows the real origin of this statue. The green-veined stone vaguely resembles that of the statues of the Land of the Idols, but the subject, an inhumanly beautiful woman, is very different from the animal and monster shapes typical for the statues of that faraway land.

In fact the Guardian Idol is hollow, and contains a demon, forced to obey Val Catha’s orders. Once the shell is destroyed (see Second Weakness), the demon inside is revealed in its true form: a green, scaly monstrosity, with razor-sharp claws.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (7)

### Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** The Guardian Idol is surrounded by a shell of stone.

- **Chain:** Str+d4, Reach 4, ignore shields' Parry bonus. The Guardian Idol, so long as its Second Weakness isn't exploited, attacks with a long chain. This can also be used for Grapple attempts, receiving +2 to the roll.
- **Claws:** Str+d4. The Guardian Idol can use its Claws only after its Second Weakness is exploited.
- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.
- **First Weakness (Stone Key):** The Guardian Idol has a fissure in the neck, and if the stone key is inserted into this and turned, the monster is paralyzed (consider it defeated). This is a safety measure Val Catha devised to protect himself from this monstrosity. Inserting the key during a fight requires climbing over the beast (a successful Grapple attempt), and then making an Agility (-2) roll. After the key is used, when Val Catha re-awakens the statue, it melts into the keyhole, but this creates a crack in the stone shell of the demon (the Second Weakness, see below).
- **Flight:** The Guardian Idol, until its Second Weakness is exploited, can fly at Pace 6 with Climb 0.
- **Invulnerability:** The Guardian Idol can be Shaken, but not wounded, by attacks not connected to its Weaknesses.
- **Second Weakness (Neck Fissure):** This Weakness appears only after the monster was paralyzed with the Stone Key, and then reawakened by Val Catha. When this happens, the key melts inside the keyhole, but now there is a small crack in the statue's neck. If a character hits it hard enough (Called Shot (-2), Toughness 7) the shell breaks, revealing (and freeing) the horrible monster inside, which quickly shakes off the remnants of the stone armor (it loses the Armor and Invulnerability Special Abilities and is automatically Shaken). When this happens, any character seeing the horrible demon for the first time must make a Fear check. Note that spotting this weakness requires being in melee, in close contact with the creature, for a round, and a successful Notice (-4) roll; ignore the penalty if the hero is actively looking for a weakness. The monster, when this second weakness is exploited, is free from Val Catha's influence, and attacks enemies at random.
- **Size +3:** The Guardian Idol is much bigger than a man; it is almost nine feet tall and weighs around a ton.

## OTHERWORLDLY CONCUBINE

These exotic creatures look like marvelous women, but in truth they are something else, spirits of another world summoned and imprisoned in flesh by Val Catha to satisfy his lust.

They need human blood, or a similar concoction, to stay in this world, and when without it for more than three days, they feel intense pain.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

**Cha:** +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

**Special Abilities:**

- **Flesh Prison:** When the first Concubine is killed by a cutting weapon, her body literally explodes in a cloud of bluish blood. Every enemy in a Medium Burst Template must make a Smarts (-2) roll to avoid being Shaken. Once the first Concubine is killed, the roll is made without penalty.
- **Supernatural Beauty:** Concubines are inhumanly beautiful, and have +4 Charisma. They know how to use their appeal to distract mortals (of both sexes), and can add it to their Tests of Will.
- **Sucking Bite:** Str+d4. If the Concubine hits with a raise, she plants her teeth in a vein, and continues dealing damage until she is detached in some way (by winning an opposed Strength (-2) roll).



## PIRATE OF THE SCAPEGALLAWS

This man is one of the worst scum of the Drowned King Sea, and that is why Val Catha hired him.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Boating d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d4, Throwing d6

**Cha:** -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor (Pirates'), Mean

**Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6) or boarding axe (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4, Range 3/6/12).

**Special Abilities:**

- **Born on Deck:** These men are skilled at risking their lives while boarding enemy ships. They receive +1 to Tricks while fighting aboard a ship.
- **"Hawkeye":** One of the pirates is a skilled Right Hand archer, with Shooting d10 and the Marksman Edge. He is nicknamed Hawkeye by his comrades. He is armed with a bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48).

## REEF SPIDER

This beast resembles a strange crossbreed between a giant spider and a crab. Large as a pony, it is covered with a thick brownish carapace and has eight legs, the front ones ending in razor-sharp claws, which emit low clacking sounds when it walks. Reef Spiders dwell mainly on the shores of the Drowned King Sea, and pass the greater part of their lives in underwater caverns at the base of cliffs. During low tides they come out from their dens and go hunting on the shore. People living on the coasts of the Drowned King Sea fear Reef Spiders greatly; they call them Green Moon Hunters because there is a legend according to which during the lowest low tide of the year (which always happens when the moon turns green), they go hunting en masse, attacking travelers, mariners and even sneaking from the water into coastal villages. During this night, babies in particular must be protected, because the Green Moon Hunters kidnap them and take them to their lairs, never to be seen again. But this must surely be a legend, because no animal could be that smart...

These stats represent a smaller and less dangerous subspecies.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

**Special Abilities**

- **Armor +2:** Reef Spiders have a thick carapace.
- **Aquatic:** Reef Spiders are excellent swimmers. They can move at Pace 6 in water.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Crab Fencer:** Reef Spiders use their frontal claws with almost human skill. In particular, they are very good at parrying and launching vicious counterattacks. Once per round, if a Reef Spider is attacked in melee but the attacking roll doesn't beat its Parry, it can make an immediate free attack at -2.
- **Weakness (Soft Abdomen):** Reef Spiders can be very dangerous, but they have a weak point, their abdomen, which is very tender. The tricky thing is exposing it. Crab hunters know a couple of dirty tricks, mainly kicks, which can be used to capsize Reef Spiders. In game terms this is an Agility Trick, with the Reef Spider rolling at +4. The secret of capsizing them is getting the timing right, so if the Trick is attempted while interrupting their action (this requires the attacker to go On Hold), the bonus is neutralized. A capsized Reef Spider is almost helpless. It cannot

attack or move, and attacks against it have The Drop. The beast can regain its feet only by making a successful Agility roll.

## SHADOW OF THE MIND

The worst enemy of any warrior is his own fear. Sorcerers, certain drugs and evil entities can bring it to life. A Shadow of the Mind is, as its name suggests, an illusion, which exists only in the mind of the victim: for spectators they don't exist, but for the chosen targets they are as solid as reality!

The profile below represents an illusionary shadow made of pure darkness, with red glowing eyes and elongated claws.

They are the fruit of the obnoxious gas produced by the candle in Val Catha's library.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Stealth d10.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Special Abilities:**

- **Claws:** Str+d4.

- **Creature of the Mind:** A Shadow of the Mind only exists so long as the victim believes reawakened. Immediately after being Wounded or Incapacitated, a Shadow of the Mind forces its victim to make an opposed Spirit roll (the illusion rolls with +2); for each success and raise, the Shadow immediately recovers a Wound and becomes unshaken. Wounds inflicted through Disbelief (see below) cannot be recovered.

- **Weakness (Disbelief):** If the victim of a Shadow of the Mind has reasonable grounds to suppose his enemy is an illusion he can make an opposed Spirit roll against the illusionary opponent; if he wins the Shadow is Shaken (this counts as a wounding effect), with a raise the illusion shatters. Characters with any Arcane Background roll with +2 to disbelieve these particular illusions.

## VAL CATHA

The younger brother, even if only by a couple of heartbeats, he is also the more devious of the two. A skilled sorcerer, he stole his brother's powers and youth to increase his own.

He is a real bastard, even if he is always smiling.

**Restored Version.** When Vanthar gets his soul back, Val Catha's attributes and skills drop to the values shown in *italics*, and he loses the Edges and Powers in *italics*.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6 (*d4*), Vigor d8 (*d6*)

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Sorcery d12 (*d10*)

**Cha:** +2 (*0*); **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (*5*)

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Greedy

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Sorcery), *Attractive*, New Power x4 (*x2*), Power Points x4 (*x2*), *Rich Powers* [30 (20) PP]: *armor* (whirling energy), *bolt* (bolt of fiery energy), *deflection* (shroud of protective darkness), *draining touch* (hand of the black disciple), *fear* (terrible gaze), *summon ally* (Swarm, Twisted Servant).

**Gear:** Dagger (Str+d4), golden robes.

## VANTHAR

Vanthar, years ago, was a powerful sorcerer of Jalizar, his name feared in many places. Val Catha stole his youth and his powers, and now Vanthar is only an old man, full of hatred.

**Restored Version.** When Vanthar gets his soul back, he regains the attribute values, skills, Edges and Powers shown in *italics*, and drops the Hindrance in *italics*.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d4 (*d6*), Vigor d6 (*d8*)

**Skills:** Boating d6, Fighting d6, *Intimidation d8*, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, *Sorcery d10*

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 5 (*6*); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (*6*)

**Hindrances:** *Elderly*, Vengeful (Major)

**Edges:** *Arcane Background (Sorcery)*, *New Power.x2*, *Power Points.x2*

**Powers** [20 PP]: *armor* (whirling energy), *Bolt* (bolt of fiery energy), *deflection* (shroud of protective darkness), *summon ally* (Swarm, Twisted Servant)

**Gear:** Dagger (Str+d4), old robes.

**Special Abilities:**

- **Minor Dabbler:** Vanthar isn't a sorcerer anymore, but he knows a lot of arcane lore, so he is still able to do some minor conjuring. By spending a Benny, he can do a Trick using Knowledge (Arcana). In the same manner, by making a pact with a minor demon, he managed to have a bag of enchanted gold, which lasts exactly for one week before turning to ash (Vanthar doesn't plan to honor his debt after retrieving his powers).

## WULF

Wulf left his clan years ago, and, after some rough times, he entered the service of Val Catha as house guardian. He isn't very smart but he is strong and loyal to his master, though he has a soft spot for pretty women and booze.

After years in the City of Thieves, he is quite civilized now, but he remains temperamental.

Wulf is a Henchman.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

**Hindrances:** Loyal, Quirk (loves wine and women too much)

**Edges:** Brawny

**Gear:** Short Bronze Sword (Str+d4), keyring (see page 5).